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PREFACE

The Tamil race traces its culture and civilization to a period several millennia before Christ. Its language and literature had also had an unbroken continuity and growth from that remote past. Several great universities had flourished in the Tamil country and a large volume of their records is still available to us in the form of the literature of the period. An attempt is here made to give in a short compass the ancient Tamil people's concept of education. This is based chiefly on what are known as the Classics of the Sangham Age, consisting of the Eight Anthologies and the Ten Long Poems. Later books are also briefly referred to. This booklet pieces together notes of my talks to the teacher-trainees on this subject. It is hoped this will induce students in the Tamil research field to make a more elaborate study of the subject.

Mediaeval and Modern Education have not been dealtwith here.

I am happy that this book is published on my sixty first birthday.

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INTRODUCTION

The history of education in Ancient India has been written by many scholars, both Indian and British. They had all confined themselves to the evolution of such educational theory and practice as could be gleaned from Sanskrit literature. They had called it Brahminic Education. But education in Tamilnad, in the centuries round the beginning of the Christian era, had been wholly indigenous and not brahminical in character and content. Unfortunately, no one has so far attempted a study of the history of education in the Tamilnad in the ancient days.[1] One reason for this neglect is that everything worthwhile was sought to be traced to Sanskrit sources. That Tamil had a great history,

[1] Perhaps the only writer who had thought on this subject was M. S. Poornalingam Pillai *(Tamilian Antiquary*, II-1, 1910, and *Tamil India*, chapter 12, 1927).

literature and civilization, independent of Sanskrit, had not been conceded by oriental scholars till recently. Only now, Tamil is coming into its own in regard to these aspects of its culture, and hence all history connected with it has to be written anew, for the first time.

We are here concerned with the ancient Tamil Education, not out of any anti-Sanskrit attitude but only out of a regard for factual veracity. In this brief discussion, we shall confine ourselves mainly to the books known as the Sangham classics.

Another reason for the neglect of this subject is the paucity of books and other sources of reference on the subject. Although we trace our civilization and culture to several millennia B.C., there is no recorded evidence to give us definite ideas on the subject. There were indeed the Tamil Universities of Southern Madurai and Kapatapuram in the hoary past, before a vast stretch of land south of Cape Comorin, now referred to Lemuria, was deluged by the sea. Those Universities were patronised by many generations of ruling princes, and many hundreds of scholars had graduated from those Universities. Ilampooranar, the Commentator of *Iraiyanar Kalaviyal* and Adiyarkku Nallar make many

references to the books and literature of those Universities but, apart from legendary anecdotes, we are not in possession of any connected account of the period.

THE ANCIENT UNIVERSITIES

Ancient writers have said that the First University at South Madurai extended over a period of 4440 years. The professors employed therein were 4449 in number. The chancellors of that University during this period were 89 Pandiya princes, beginning with Kai-Sina-Valudi and ending with Kadunko, of whom seven wrote poems, in other words, were themselves professors also. Their text books were *Paripadal, Mudunarai, Mudukurugu, Kalariyavirai* and similar others. The Second University was established at Kapatapuram and it flourished for 3700 years with 59 chancellors beginning with Venn-Ther-Chelian and ending with Muda-Thiru-Maran, of whom five were also professors. Their text books were *Agattiyam, Tolkappiyam, Mapuranam, Isainunukkam, Bhutapuranam* and many others. Tradition has it that Iraiyanar (God Himself) presided over the First University (Sangham) at south Madurai and that Agastya, who was taught Tamil literature and grammar by Lord Kumara Himself, presided over the

second one at Kapatapuram. The latter place is referred to by Valmiki.[1]

He refers to Kapatapuram as the capital city of the Pandiyas and also says that it was situated to the south of the river Tamraparni. Sage Vyasa, who came later, mentions Manalur as the Pandiyas' capital; this refers to the period just before the deluge of Kapatapuram, when the Pandiyas had an inkling of the impending fate of the city and had built a temporary capital at Manalur. These are all semi-historical accounts and are generally accepted by all scholars as authentic. Manalur is also mentioned in the

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[1] For a learned discussion of Valmiki's references to the Tamilnad, *vide* the collected papers of M. Raghava Ayyangar, 1938. Valmiki mentions the Chola and the Pandiya countries, the Kaveri and the Tamraparni rivers, and lastly the Kapata of the Pandiyas. He mentions also the Malaya hill and sage Agastya. He also refers to the west coast seaport town of Musiri, and Tiruvenkadu (Svetaranyam) in the east coast. Again he says that it was the custom of the people of Tamilnad (soldiers) to wear flowers on their hair. Besides, he mentions a Tamil grammatical convention: Maareecha says that his terror of Rama is such that even such words as *ratha* and *ratna*, whose first letter is a ra-kaara (R) as in the word Rama, make him tremble. Sanskrit grammar, when referring to the letter R would say 'repadini', whereas in this one place Valmiki says 'ra - kaara', following the Tamil grammar.

legendary history of the Pandiyas narrated in the Tiruvilaiyadal Puranam of Paranjoti Munivar.

Agastya had written a text book on grammar and poetics in his own name. Except for a few stray verses quoted from it by later writers, the book is not extant now; a collection of about 180 verses, said to be quotations from the original and published in 1912, is considered to be spurious However, many authentic verses from Agastya's book are quoted by subsequent writers.

Agastya had a school of twelve disciples, including Tolkappiyar. Each had founded a separate school of thought in language and literature, particularly grammar and poetics. We have references to the works of Palkaya, Voyppiya, Avinaya, Natratha, Kakkaipadiniyar and Panambara, but the works had ceased to exist long ago. *Avinayam* seems to have existed even as late as the XIII century. However, the only book that has been preserved for us in its entirety is that of Tolkappiyar. This is supposed to have been published in the Second University, when a Pandiya prince by name Nilam-tharu-thiruvil Pandiya was the Chancellor. The publication was presided over by the Master of Athankodu and a commemorative verse was

sung on the occasion by Panambarar. These were all co-students with Tolkappiyar under Agastya. One verse attributed to Poet Mudinagaraya of Muranjiyur[1] of the Second University is however avilable now, since it had somehow survived the deluge and been compiled as the second verse of the later day anthology, *Pura-nanooru* of the third Sangham. This is a poem of 24 lines, praising the Chera prince, Perunchotru-Udiyan-Cheral-Adan, who was reputed to have fed both the warring Pandava and the Kaurava forces during the actual combat. The antiquity of the poem may also be understood from its contemporary reference to the Mahabharatha war. The poem eulogises the prince's tolerance, administration, military strength and generosity.

THE MADURAI UNIVERSITY

We shall now pass on to the third university which existed in the modern city of Madurai. A period of about five centuries, three before and two after Christ (B. C. 300 to A. D. 200) is roughly called the (third) Sangham Age. To this period belong the works which are now called the Sangham classics - the Eight Anthologies and

[1] A poet of the same name and place is mentioned as a member of the first university also.

the Ten long Poems. The 18 minor works and the five Epics come a little later in point of time. The Sangham Age is so ealled because there flourished during this period a Tamil Sangham at Madurai, under the patronage of the Pandiya princes. We call it the ancient Madurai University. Successive Pandiya rulers had been its chancellors. A succession of poets and teachers during this period of about 500 Years lived at Madurai and had their writing recognised by the University. We know there were many faculties in the University such as Literature including Grammar and Poetics, Mathematics and the Sciences, Teaching, Medicine, Astronomy, Engineering and Commerce; also perhaps Animal Husbandry and the like. Many were professors in these faculties, and some were perhaps visiting professors.

These details are not mentioned expressly in so many words, but we infer them from the literature of that period available to us today. To give examples. Uraiyur Maruttuvan Damodaranar was a poet of that age. He was evidently a professor in the faculty of Medicine[1]; Koolavanigan Sattanar was in the faculty of Commerce; many go by the name of Kottanar

[1] There existed a Medical College under the later Cholas.

(mason), Tachanar (carpenter), Kollar (metal worker) and Pon-vanikan; they were in the Engineering faculty.

We may safely state that Engineering was an advanced branch of science in the Tamilnad at the beginning of the Christian era. Not only oral and literary tradition, but also history tells us that Karikal Chola I built a great irrigation dam across the Kaveri (a mile wide) by about B. C. 100. The dam, known as the Grand Anicut, continues to exist and function usefully even to this day. Not only this. Tiru-thakka-devar (IX century) introduces us to two marvels of engineering in his day. One is the construction of a peacock-plane, something like a helicopter, which was capable of climbing into the air, flying in the air and descending to the earth, under the control of the pilot. We are told in the author's *Jeevaka Chintamani* that an engineer was commissioned by the king to construct such a plane for the use of the queen in times of emergency, that he constructed one in a period of seven days, and that he also taught Queen Vijaya to fly it. When the King's palace was in danger of falling into enemy hands, the queen flew the plane from the palace grounds to a place of safety. Again, the same book tells us that huge machines were mounted on the walls of the city's fort, which

were powerful enough to hurl huge boulders on the advancing enemy's army, killing one hundred soldiers at one throw.[1] We should not consider these engineering feats to be mere fiction born out of the author's imagination, but should consider them practically possible, and to some extent in use, in the author's days. This indicates how the engineering science had advanced since the days of Karikala. Hence we may not be wrong in assuming from the names of the poets mentioned above, as mason, carpenter etc., that there was indeed an Engineering faculty also in the Madurai University.

Those whom we designate as professor today were then called poets, because all writing was in verse and pupils got by heart the verses. Each professor was in charge of one faculty or a branch thereof and had many scholars and assistants working under him. The faculty of Arts was divided into many branches such as Palai, Neidal, Marudam, Mullai and Kurinji. The branch name was attached to many of the

[1] The *Silappadikaram* mentions a dozen mechanical contrivances with which the besieged forces repulse the attack of the advancing enemy. The commentator mentions a further ten of which this particular contrivance is one; its technical name is 'a hundred fires' or 'killer of a hundred'.

professors, such as Palai-padiya-Perumkadunko a Chera prince, Palai-Gautama, Neidal-Gargi, Neidal-Datta, Marudam-padiya-Ilam kadunko, Marudan-Ilanagan and Mullai-Bhutan. The Famous poet Kapilar was head of the Kurinji section, although this term does not occur as his title.

We have said that Kurinji, Mullai etc. were different branches in the facutly of Arts. Many modern students wrongly identify these names with the different natural geographical regions answering to the description of the five. But in reality, they signify not mere region alone but the people of the respective regions, their way of life, the animals, the fauna and the flora, and all the other characteristics pertaining to that region. Kurinji denoted the people of the hills, their way of life and all that had anything to do with hills and hilly tracts. Mullai similarly dealt with the forest region; Marudam with the plains and pastures; Neidal with the sea coast, and lastly Palai with the arid desert. Just as we have specialised study on the different aspects of a wide subject in any branch of modern knowledge, the ancient University had a form of regional specialisation.

Makkayar was a poet, who was there just after the period we are discussing. He seems to

have been a professor of Medicine. Two or his disciples, Kari-asan and Gani-medhavi have written two ethical books and named them Siru-pancha-moolam and Eladi respectively; these two are medical terms, signifying respectively the lesser grouo of five roots, and the six ingredients beginning from elam (or cardamom). This goes to prove clearly that there was indeed a faculty of Medicine in the University.

The University was no doubt located in the capital city of the Pandiyas; but polcitical feuds did not preclude the rival Chola and Chera chiefs from participation in the University as Professors.

We know from literary tradition narrated by later commentators like Ilampooranar, *Kalaviyal* Commentator and Adiyarkku Nallar, that there were many schools in the Arts branch. For the present discussion, we shall leave alone the school of Agastya. Tolkappiyar, one of his disciples, founded an independent school and he is said to have had twelve disciples. Another school was that of Yamalendrar, who wrote the *Indra-kaliyam,* perhaps a rival school. His work dealt with poetics and dance and was published in the Second University period. It seems to have been extant even as late as the X or XI century A. D., but however, this school

became extinct very soon, at any rate, before the XIII century. Another equally important school was that of Avinayanar, who wrote the *Avinayam;* this school also met with an untimely end. This is extremely to be regretted, because these two schools did a lot of original work on poetics, which subject was not touched by the *Tolkappiyam* school. Perhaps there was unhealthy rivalry and Tolkappiyar, who had greater influence as the disciple of Agastya, was responsible for the suppression and extinction of the other schools. There is also a legend that for some reason Agastya uttered a curse on Tolkappiyar, who retaliated by cursing that the rare treatise of Agastya on poetics and dance should become extinct; it is indeed a fact that Agastya's book had a premature death. We learn that besides the two mentioned, there were scores of other schools, but all of them ceased to exist.

We should however remember here that the University and its various branches did both teaching as well as examining work. The lineage of disciples indicates that they did teaching work, while their acceptance of *Kural* after an examination clearly indicates that they did examining work also, before bestowing their imprint on any literary production or thesis, or before admitting

an author into their faculties. But these were advanced schools for art and research, and apparently were not concerned with primary education.

Even a casual survey of the Sangham literature will reveal the high standard of education in the Tamilnad then. It is not as though only the higher class people were educated. We learn from the *Malai-padu-kadam*, one of the long Ten Poems, that even the wandering bards, members of the Harijan community, were well learned men, who had mastered not only music, but all the branches of literature and art (lines 39–40 and commentary).

OTHER CENTRES OF LEARNING

Historians of Indian Education have written in glorious terms about the Taxila (Taksha-sila) University which flourished after the VII century B. C. and the Nalanda University (V century A. D.). But it is a sad comment on the scholarship and alertness of the Tamilians themselves that their three most ancient Universites had never had mention anywhere in such accounts. The first two Universities of South Madurai and Kapatapuram have certainly as much relevancy about them as the two Sanskrit Universities here mentioned; the Tamil Universities were indeed

much more ancient. The third one at the site of the present city of Madurai is a historical fact. This seems to have had a glorious career for a period of at least five hundred years, producing some of the cream of Tamil thought and literature ever written. Even in variety of matter and subjects, in quantity, in language and in simplicity of description and imaginative realism, in poetic quality and beauty, it is still unequalled. Tamil scholars complacently call it the Golden Age or the Sangham period and imagine that it is nothing more. That it was a full University in the modern sense of the term could not be visualised by them.

The *Silappadikaram* and the *Pathuppattu* give us a picture of Kaverippattinam (Puhar) as the city of the greatest culture and learning in those days, a period of five hundred years round the beginning of the Christian era. All the arts had been well developed there and had reached the zenith of their perfection and glory. The early Chola rule, two thousand years ago, had conferred the highest education to every one in the land and it was one of the golden periods in the history of Tamilnad. The two works mentioned above give us an insight into the general civilization and the state of education in the land.

Kancheepuram, known as the Temple city, came into prominence some centuries after Kaverippattinam had been washed away by the sea. Like the city of Madurai, this also was a great university city during the first thousand years after Christ and continues to be a city of learning even today. It is the only Tamilian city included in the list of the seven great sacred cities mentioned in Sanskrit lore, wich are considered capable of leading one to final emancipation from earthly bonds and of conferring bliss. Later day Saiva books say that there are more than 108 Siva temples in the city. Manimekhalai, heroine of the Epic of the same name, repaired to this city when she wanted to have philosophical training on the nature of the soul, matter and the Ultimate Being. Even if this book belong to a little later period, we know that it was a great city in the days of Saint Appar (middle of the VII century) He refers to the City in one of his songs as the "City of infinite learning". Under the Pallava rule, the city was the capital of a vast empire and had grown to the height of its glory in learning and culture. Many colleges, secular as well as religious, had flourished there under the Pallava Emperors.

A passing reference may be made to some later day educational institutions. The rise of well-endowed temples under the Pallavas and the Cholas created also a number of colleges and hostels for pupils for advanced Sanskrit learning. The fact that Sanskrit colleges were organised, only shows that there already existed a sufficient number of Tamil educational centres. We have inscriptional evidence about the newly started Sanskrit colleges. Such colleges existed at Ennayiram, Tribhuvani, Tirumukkudal, Tiru-avaduturai, Tiruvottiyur, Tiruppunavayil and similar places. Hostels were attached to these colleges. The Ennayiram college had a hostel for 340 pupils with 14 teachers; it taught grammar and the Vedas. The Tribhuvani temple college was a much smaller one with 60 pupils; it taught grammar and some branches of the Vedas. The Tiru-avaduturai school was a medical college, which taught medicine and grammar. The Tiruvottiyur Temple college taught Vyakarana (grammar) and Vedanta. The Tiruppunavayil grammar college was perhaps the biggest.

We may note here that the elementary school in England was referred to as the Grammar School till recently.

There was also a recorded instance of the education of the handicapped. Arrangements had been made in the Tiru-amattur Temple to educate 16 blind persons and train them to sing the *Devaram* songs in the Temple. Two guides were appointed to help them, in addition to cooks to prepare their food. That the handicapped were trained to have their full share of life and education can be seen from the fact that several scholars have their physical handicaps mentioned, such as Muda-Mosi, Mudavanar and Muda - Tirumaran, in the Sangham period no stigma seems to have been attached to the deformities.

These instances are here referred to in order to indicate how the ancient Tamilian systems of education began also to specialise in other branches such as Sanskrit studies, education of the handicapped, healing of the sick[1] and so on.

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[1] Mahatma Gandhi in our age had rebelled against the ostracism on leprosy patients and had included service to them as an item of his constructive programme, on humanitarian and health grounds. We find the *Eladi* (57) attributing great merit to those who serve leprosy patients.

THE SOURCES

Books devoted exclusively to the consideration of educational topics, the theory and practice of education, were not written in the West even till the XVII century. This period (XVII century) in the history of India witnessed the subjugation of the Indian peoples and the negation of their culture by western exploiters and so naturally no such history could be written here then or even later. We have to gather such material only from occasional references occurring in the vast wealth of literature of the early period.

The *Nannool* of Saint Pavanandi, a Jaina grammarian, is the only treatise which gives us any clue to the ideals - the theory and practice -of education in ancient Tamilnad. This is a comprehensive textbook on grammar, commanding full currency even today. (It has not been bettered or an uptodate treatise written, till this day.) It has an introductory chapter of 55 verses, where the general principles of literary composition and pedagogics are set forth. This discusses in some detail the aims of literature, literary composition, its nature, the author and the reader.

The ten flaws or weak points which the writer has to guard against, the ten salient features or artistic embellishments which the author should incorporate into his book, and the thirty two devices he has to employ in order to beautify his work and drive home his points, are elaborated. Next are mentioned the nature of the work, the chapter arrangement and the gloss thereon. The writer then takes up pedagogics proper. Here four subjects are dealt with in detail - the teacher, the pupil, teaching and learning.

Although these subjects form the subject matter of the exordium of the *Nannool*, we learn from Mayilainathar (XIV century), its earliest commentator, that these verses were merely quotations from earlier writers such as Panambarar.[1] Panambarar was a contemporary of Tolkappiyar; he had written a verse on the occasion of the publication of *Tolkappiyam*, eulogising it. Some writers claim that the *Tolkappiyam* was composed by 1000 B. C. But, even granting that Tolkappiyar lived as late as about the first century before or after

[1] The commentator on *Yapparunkalam* (XI century) refers to some verses as being quotations from Patalanar. Nakkeerar, the commentator on *Irayanar-kalaviyal*, also quotes some of the verses.

Christ, we may be certain that all these verses were composed during that period, if not earlier. We may therefore conclude that the thoughts contained in the verses were prevalent among the learned in the land some time earlier still[1]; the V to III centuries B. C. may safely be fixed as the period when these thoughts on pédagogics were being practised. Although Pavanandi (first quarter of the XIII century A. D.) quotes them, we now see that they belong to a period, at least a thousand and five hundred years earlier.

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[1] A verse in the *Chintamani* bears ample testimony to this conclusion. It says that when the sons of a prince learnt the military sciences under Jeevaka (verse 1648), "they bowed at his feet, followed him like his own shadow, carrying out promptly his very thoughts, and moved with him as though with fire, neither too close nor too distant". Pavanandi, the author of *Nannool*, lived in the XIII century, while the *Chintamani* was written in the IX (or the X) century. The fact that the *Nannool* expresses the same thought in similar words goes to prove that Pavanandi was merely quoting this idea from an earlier writing.

AIMS OF EDUCATION

The aims of Education have been defined in the *Nannool* as the attainment of the four objectives worthy of human pursuit. They are the righteous life, the creation of wealth, the enjoyment of the good things of life, and finally the renunciation of all these and the attainment of salvation or bliss; in brief, virtue, wealth, pleasure and bliss. The emphasis had always been on the last objective. "The ornament that will prepare you for the life beyond is education" says *Tirikadukam*. The purpose of writing a book is also defined on the same lines: "An important book is written in order to lead one to a righteous life" *(Tirikadukam 90)*.

Although we have many references to God in the books known as the Sangham classics, we do not find any mention of spiritual education. In his long poem in praise of Murugan, Nakkeerar says: "The sages, who had been fasting for many days, who had banished anger from their hearts, who are the leaders among the learned - they go to worship You". A solitary reference in the *Purananooru* (6) is noteworthy. Poet Kari-Kilar, blessing Pandiyan Peru-Valudi of many sacrifices,

says among other things: "May your umbrella (the insignia of sovereignty) bow before the Lord Siva, with the three eyes, when He goes round the city in procession". The *Kural* has its first chapter[1] "In Praise of God". The second verse therein comes nearest to any mention of religious education: "Of what avail is learning, if the learned do not worship at the Feet of God?" This verse seems to imply that the aim of education is to worship God.[2]

Another aim of education, very much spoken of in modern days, the days of democracy, freedom and independence, is freedom of thought. It is now almost axiomatic to say that education must help free thinking. One should develop his powers of reasoning, and

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[1] There is a school of thought which considers this chapter to be a much later interpolation in the *Kural*.

[2] An Avvai of a much later period has ably defined the aim of education in the following terms: "That indeed is education, which helps man to perceive humanity as one family and realise the oneness of all religions, to consider the conquering of the senses as the greatest valour, to realise that true education is that which makes his name immortal, through his own achievements, and to eke out his livelihood, independently, without slaving for any one.

bring to bear on any problem his own shrewd commonsense, deep thinking and independent judgement. This modernity we find in the *Tirukkural*. It says the same thing in two places, using the same words and changing only one phrase: "To discern the true import in every thing, *by whomsoever spoken*, is real wisdom"; "To discern the true import in everything, *whatsoever be its nature*, is real wisdom" (423,355). The two phrases emphasize free thinking.

The most progressive concept of education now is said to be that 'education changes the character of the man'. In other words, 'learning is a change in behaviour'. The same concept we find echoed in many of the books of the Sangham age. Vilambi-Naganar, author of *Nanmanikkadigai*, says (93): "Behaviour is the result of education. The administration of wealth is righteous enjoyment. Being partial to none is justice. He who rules properly will not do anything without careful investigation". Here we see the relationship between learning and behaviour defined. The *Kural* has expressed it more pointedly : "Learn well whatever is worth learning, and then behave accordingly" (391). The verse is too well known to require any elaboration. The seeds

of good behaviour are said to be the following eight traits: gratefulness, tolerance, pleasing words, kindness to all beings, education, good neighbourliness, commonsense and good company (*Acharak-kovai 1*). Devoid of education, we are mere beasts; education elevates us to the human level (*Kural 410*). Even a mother will ignore an uneducated son and favour only an educated son (*Puram 183*).

"The definition of a human being is the possession of such rare features as noble birth, a body without any physical deformity, enlightenment through education, wisdom, and righteous conduct" says *Valaiyapati*, one of the five great epics (now lost).

Education for character has been one of the most fundamental and noble aims, not only in the Tamilnad, but in the whole of India. Every ethical code has several verses on character education. Character is far superior to learning; only education confers real personality, because it teaches one to be upright: these are some of the lines on education and character.

Of the eighteen minor poems (*Kil-kanakku*) attributed to the Sangham age, eleven deal with ethics and emphasize a code of upright

conduct for the learned. Education for character is one of the problems of modern educational practice, not only here, but the world over. Freedom and independence somehow appear to relegate character and right conduct to the background. It is indeed refreshing to note that character training had been the foremost aim of all Indian education in general, and education in the Tamilnad in particular, in the ancient days.

Education should enable a man always to champion the cause of Truth and Justice and the higher and eternal values in life. The legendary story of Nakkeerar is a classic instance. Lord Sundara, the presiding eeity in the Madurai Temple, had given Dharmi, an indigent Brahmin, a short poem to take to the court of the Pandiya, in order to clear a doubt which the prince had whether the fragrance of a damsel's hair was natural or acquired through contact with flowers. The poem aid that the fragrance was natural to the hair. Nakkerar challenged the poem in the court, saying that the fragrance was not natural, but was only aquired. Lord Sundara Himself appeared in the Prince's court in the guise of a learned poet to answer the challenge but Nakkeerar would not flinch. When the Lord

opened His central eye to indicate to Nakkeerar that He was God Himself, the poet could not be cowed down; he just said, "Even if you possess eyes on the whole of your body, the flaw in your poem is indeed a flaw. I cannot concede that it is correct". The incident may be beyond the realm of fact, but it does indicate the bold adherence of learned men to what they considered to be the Truth.

Somehow, we do not find training for breadwinning anywhere laid down as an end in itself, as an aim of education. Education always aimed at higher lasting values and the educational codemakers never gave thought to material considerations. The nearest approach to this ideal is perhaps contained in the original and basic conception itself, namely, that the main objectives of human pursuit are four, of which second is the making of wealth. Worldly possessions have their definite place in the ethical and economic codes, but that is not the first place nor the important place.

However we should realise that learning was related to living. We had pointed out earlier how university men were also experts in various handicrafts and trades. Economic welfare and independence were never lost.

sight of in learning. A threefold purpose has been enunciated in the *Tirikadukam*: "A well learned man should have studied all the best books; he should lead a good householder's life, sharing his worldly goods with others; he should work hard and produce economic wealth." Production in those days consisted only of agricultural production and so this may be taken as a direction to produce more food. This is also in agreement with the dictum in the *Taitireeya Upanishad*, where the guru asks the graduating pupil, in the convocation address, to produce more food.

We may also note here in passing, another important aim. The educated man was then in charge of all public affairs and administration. He had to be in the royal court, honourably fulfilling many public offices. Those were very uncertain days, when every ruler was frequently at war with his neighbour and the entire nation had always to be in a state of military preparedness. The rulers were exchanging ambassadors, and women also were sent as ambassdors, as we learn from the story of Avvai who was sent to the court of Tondaiman by Adigaman. We also see the poet Kovur-Kilar, in the role of a peace-maker, when he talked to the two warring princes of the same

dynasty, Nedumkilli (Killi the tall) and Nalam-killi (Killi the good), and brought about peace. In another instance, a visiting bard was suspected to be a spy in the capital of Nedumkilli and here also the same poet interceded with the prince to spare the life of the bard, Ilam-datta. Pegan was one of the famous seven patrons of the Sangham age. He had some quarrel with his wife Kannaki and had sent her away. We find many illustrious poets like Kapilar, Paranar, Arisil Kilar and Perum-Kunrur Kilar interceding with him on her behalf. Similar instances can be multiplied. In all these cases, we find the power of persuasion and eloquence coming handy to the poets to achieve their purpose.

No wonder therefore that eloquence in public oratory and the command over language were very early considered to be one of the important aims of education. The *Kural* has a whole chapter on this subject and some of its thoughts may be extracted here. This chapter is placed next to that on the qualifications of a counsellor to the King. The counsellor should acquire the power of expression or eloquence in assemblies; in other words, the art of persuasion is an important skill which education shoul d develop in him.

'The art of eloquence is a gift apart from the others. Brevity is the soul of wit; a long speech is not necessary. The speaker should feel the pulse of the audience and regulate his matter accordingly. He should be able to hold his hearers spellbound and even those who had not heard him must yearn to listen to him. An impressive style, good memory and boldness are the essential traits of a good speech. He should speak pleasingly and welcome good ideas from all quarters. Cogency and sweetness of speech will easily win over the world. Success or failure depends on speech and hence the speaker should zealously attend to the words he utters. Learning much without the power of expressing it to others, is of no avail, like the blossoms borne in profusion without any fragrance". The Kural has also two more chapters on this subject on self-confidence in facing the audience, and on feeling the pulse of the audience.

Hence the *Eladi* (20) prescribes the power of persuasive speech as an aim of education. 'Handsome is as handsome talks' says the *Sirupanchamoolam* (50).

The essence of all good breeding and education is to share what one has got with

the large needy humanity (*Kural 322.*) Perhaps this dictum was laid down at an age when the wherewithal to live was scarce and numbers were large. Even though one is very learned, if one does not know to live in harmony with the world, one is no better than a learned fool (*Kural 140*). The essence of culture consists in draining even a cup of poison when offered by friends (*Kural* 580)

THE CONTENT OF EDUCATION

The accomplishments for a truly educated person were considered to be the traditional sixtyfour arts and sciences. These have been emphasized both in the Sanskrit lore and in the Tamil lore. They include the traditional education in literature, shastras and yogic practices, arts such as music, dance and sculpture, sciences such as astronomy, arithmetic, animal husbandry and allied subjects, the military sciences, and magic and the black arts also. These have been prescribed for men and women alike. Though this was considered to be the ideal, the stress for all practical purposes had been only on certain aspects.

A well known legend connected with the Nataraja of the Silver Hall of Madurai is noteworthy. One of the ruling Pandiya princes had mastered all the arts and sciences except dancing. His courtiers told him that his education was not complete if he did not master dancing. So the prince learnt this and was practising one day in front of Lord Nararaja in the temple. Nataraja usually stands on the right foot and dances, lifting the left foot. The prince practised the dance of Nataraja for a long time but his foot began to ache. Unable to hear the pain, he cried: "My Lord, I have been practising for only a short time, but my foot aches with intense pain. But you have been practising for a very long time. How much should your foot ache!" He cried in pain, but would not change because Nataraja did not change his foot. Nataraja was much moved by his devotion, and so changed His pose from the right foot to the left. The prince also changed his foot and felt his pain relieved. Even today the Nataraja of the Silver Hall of Madurai may be found to be dancing on His left foot. This legend will illustrate how all the arts were considered necessary for cultured persons.

Literacy has been emphasized the world over as one of the goals of education and we find the three R's given their due place in education in the Tamilnad also. The three R's are really only two; they are known in Tamil as numbers and letters; the first being arithmetic, and the second letters, comprising in itself reading and writing. Tamil sayings have always placed arithmetic first and letters next. From the days of the *Kural*, arithmetic and the letters had been likened to the two eyes of the human being. Avvai (later XII century poetess) mentions the two and says that they are equivalent to the two eyes and should not be ignored (*Aathisudi* and *Konraivendan*). *Eladi* says that only the mastery of the two constitutes real beauty for man. The three R's are generally used as symbols to denote a liberal education.

Literary training in the language had three distinct branches - iyal or literature and grammar, isai or music, and nataka or dance and drama. These had been developed into several faculties and the *Silappadikaram* gives us an insight into the far advanced learning and study in these faculties. A student entering an educational centre was expected to specialise in one of the branches. The branch Iyal alone

is, as is well known, further divided into the five sections - orthography, etymology, literary theme, poetics and rhetoric.

Arithmetic as a subject of instruction was in a greatly advanced state. Terms then existed for denoting numbers which were squares of millions and billions, and for denoting small fractions also. Even upto the first two decades of this century, muliplication tables for fractions of one - in - three - hundred - and - twenty and less were learnt by heart by the school children. Similarly, the existence of specific terms for the measurement of length, area, space and time and for weights and measures, indicates the advances in the science of arithmetic. Astronomy was taught then as now, as a branch of arithmetic and we find the position of the celestial bodies studied and forecasts of their position, happenings in space, and their effect on human destiny worked out years in advance. The specialist in astronomy was called a gani; some scholars of the period were known by that name. They were also well-versed in astrology. Kudalur Kilar, Poongunran and some other poets were learned men in these branches.

The two terms, *Enn* and *Eluthu* were synonymous with arithmetic and the letters.

There had been books on arithmetic. Mayilainathar quotes one such book. Kanakkadhikaram was a treatise on arithmetic written in the XV century. But in a broader sense, we may state that the two symbolised the wide range of subjects now known as the sciences and the arts.

In later day writings, we do not find literacy specially emphasized. This has to be taken to mean that literacy was the basic qualification for all men and women and, speaking of education, the writers mentioned other accomplishments for man and woman, on the assumption that every one was literate. Love and war were the two main themes for poetry in the ancient days. Just as every male member was expected to be a soldier, he was also expected to know some music and to have mastered the instrument, yaal. After mentioning the qualifications or accomplishments necessary for one of the elite group, the *Sirupanchamoolam* lays down the accomplishments expected of a member of the next class of society: "He should have mastered these fine arts - arithmetic, playing the yaal, and art work on leaves". We know from the *Perunkathai* that prince Udayana was a great master in playing the yaal, and in art work on leaves and with

sandal paste. Jeevaka, the hero of the *Chintamani*, was also a great master of the yaal. We may therefore be certain that the arts mentioned in the above book were actually learned by the average student and practised.

Another verse similarly prescribes the accomplishments for women: "Arithmetic, art work with leaves, and with sandal paste, stringing flowers, and music are the arts to be practised by women". The art of making flower garlands had been developed as one of the fine arts in ancient Tamilnad, Both men and women were engaged in this work. Women did this for the decoration of their own person and for temple worship. The classic instance of Andal preparing garlands for Sri Ranganatha is very well known. We know Tilakavati, sister of Saint Appar, and many other saints had been garland-makers. A well known legend of Tiruppanandal deals with Tadagai and her garland making. In those days, men also wore flowers on their hair and person.

There had been national floral emblems for the princes like the Cholas, Pandiyas, Cheras and Pallavas. Flowers symbolized the different acts of warfare. The *ixora* meant that the army was bent on capturing the enemy's cattle. The *vagai* (or *albizzia*) corresponded to the laurel and

signified victory. The various ~~atievetiis~~ connected with warfare were classified into seven stages and each was given a floral symbol in the literary tradition. The very classification of the lives of the people according to the nature of the region where they lived was on the basis of the flowers which abounded in the region. *Kurinii*, a hill flower, signified people of the hill tracts and their ways of life; *Mullai*, the jasmine, indicated people of the forest region; *Marudam*, a large tree of the plains, symbolised the agriculturists' way of life; *Neidal*, the lily on the sea coast, symbolised the coastal people's or the seafarers' life; and lastly the *Palai*, a tree of the arid desert region, stood for the nomadic hunters' life. No wonder therefore that making of flower garlands was considered a fine art to be learnt by the womenfolk in general.

Music was one of the important subjects in any school. There were any number of wandering bards and minstrels who went to the courts of princes and chieftains and sang their praises. These minstrels always travelled with their wives. The two together visited the courts and enlivened them with their song and dance and thus earned their livelihood.

Our books have not said anything about vocational education. As pointed out earlier,

breadwinning was not considered the aim of education and so it was only natural that our writers had ignored this area of educational activity. But one point may be remembered. All crafts were practised by professional workmen in their homes for generations. All technical skills and secrets of the trade were handed down from father to son. The father did not teach it to his son as a course of instruction. From his infancy, the little boy lived and moved in the father's work atmosphere and picked up there all his technical knowledge as well as the dexterity of his hands and fingers. Hence the father's trade or the family trade came to him as though through heredity. The father never took pains to teach his boy; the son never took pains to learn; but the boy was as much an expert in the trade as his father, at a much younger age. 'The family trade is easily mastered without even learning' says the *Palamoli Nanooru*. Each trade had later eveloped into a guild or caste, with a specialized skill and knowledge. The carpenter, mason, sculptor, weaver, blacksmith, goldsmith, silk weaver and potter are all examples of such castes which had mastered one particular craft each. Artistes like the piper, the drummer, the dancer etc. all acquired their skills in like manner, through family association. It is because of this, because

skills were acquired in this manner, we believe, vocational training had not been separately provided for in our edcational codes.

There appear to have been text books connected with very many branches of knowledge,[1] considered to be quite modern. There have been books on painting, music, musical instruments and architecture. We learn

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[1] We have a curious mention of the art of stealing in the *Silappadikaram*. In modern times, we find training in 'gorilla warfare' being given to volunteers of nations, which have not been able to come out succcssful in open battle. Perhaps stealing was such an under-hand practice even in the ages which produced the *Kural* and the other ethical books. When the goldsmith accused Kovalan of stealing the Pandiyan queen's anklet, and asked the king's myrmidons to arrest him, one of them however was charmed by the physical appearance of Kovalan and exclaimed, 'This can be no thief'. Thereupon, the goldsmith broke into a long piece of oratory, describing the magic and the viles of those who had mastered the art of stealing with the aid of books on the subject. This is a small piece of masterly narration. We understand him as referring to a "Treatise on Stealing". Dr. Swaminatha Ayyar has noted that this was known as Steya-shastra, written in Sanskrit by Karneesuta. The kalavu-nool or karavada-nool mentioned here had been a book, not on stealing but on detection of crimes such as stealing. Commentators of Maduraikkanji and Dakkayagapparani mention it.

that there was a learned treatise on elephants and perhaps their taming. There was a book on horses-their description and classification. Aiyan-Aarithan refers to a treatise on poultry. Poultry-farming, we imagine, is a modern science; this author,a grammarian, refers to a book on the subject when he speaks of cock fight as an item of entertainment to engage soldiers, when they are no longer engaged in battle. The author here mentions three classes of cocks and says that each class should be made to fight with its own class, according to experts on the science of poultry. The classes of poultry mentioned are *sol, aamai* and *thungu*; and *thoni* (in *Chintamani).* Similarly we have here fights organised between quails, rams and elephants. From all these, it can be clearly inferred that there were scientific treatises governing these branches of animal life. Commentary writers refer to books on gems and jewellery, painting, sculpture, food and nutrition, and many other subjects also.

LITERARY CRITICISM

A few words on the concept of literary criticism in the period may be not out of place.

'To spin a yarn' is a phrase in the English language which means to narrate or to tell a tale.

There is a similar significance to the expression in the Tamil language also. The Tamil word for a learned book is *nool;* this term means also a yarn. A verse in the *Nannool,* describing how a book is written, gives an analogy between the yarn and the book. 'The poet with the happy phrases is the damsel who spins. His words are the lint and the resultant poem is the yarn. The lips that utter the phrases are the fingers of the spinner, and his intellect is the spindle. Thus is created a *nool* (poem, yarn).

Literary tradition tells us that scholars did indeed exercise considerable literary judgement in assessing the merit of new literary works. The story of Nakkeerar and Dharmi is well known; Nakkeerar would not approve of the sentiments contained in a verse produced by Dharmi, although it was said to be written by the Lord Himself. Similarly, legends connected with Tiruvalluvar say, that his great work *Kural,* was first subjected to a test and then approved by the Sangham scholars.

The names Nakkeerar, Kapilar, Paranar and Avvai were the most celebrated ones. Kapilar and his poems had been praised by many contemporary poets. A woman poet calls him, "the Brahmin poet who is pure in

heart''. Kapilar whose words never fail, the poet of good repute, he whose fame has spread all over the earth - these are some of the praises showered on him. When other kings slighted Pandiyan Neduncheliyan, he takes a vow that he would raid their land and vanquish them. Among other things, he says: "If I fail to subjugate them, let my state cease to receive eulogies from the poets, famed throughout the earth, headed by the learned and celebrated poet Mangudi Maruda".

Petty jealousy and rivalry among the learned is a matter of the recent past in the Tamilnad. In the age of the universities which we are discussing, such jealousy did not exist. Poets, we may well believe, rejoiced when they saw good poetry. We mentioned Kapilar earlier. Muda-Mosi is mentioned as 'Mosi of choice words'. Referring to a poet by name Kalathalaiyar, Kapilar says, 'A chieftain who did not show respect to Kalathalai of great literary fame came to grief.' Kudaloor Kilar is referred to as he of mature wisdom. Velliveedhi, a woman poet, is celebrated by Avvai.

We find the proper names of some poets had been forgotten long ago, but some happy expressions used by them in their poems had

caught the attention of the readers and the poets are known to posterity by these expressions. Anil-adu-munrilar (the courtyard where squirrels frollick), and Todi - thalai - vilu-thandinar (the staff having a knob at its head) are some such expressions. There are about thirty such names.

The patrons who were themselves critics of good taste, had showered gold, silver and gems, chariots and elephants, and cultivable land on the singers.

The *Nannool*, which deals with pedagogics in general, also deals with some aspects of literary criticism. According to it, a book i. e., a piece of classical literature, belongs to three categories. The first or basic is one that is revealed by God Himself (or inspired by God). The second is supplemental; this is also a classic, current for all time, dealing with the same subject as the basic, and incorporating new and divergent thoughts to suit a later age and different circumstances. But the third category called a derivative is no doubt based on the first two, but contains considerable variation in subject matter and in treatment.

Arun - kala - cheppu, a short work of 181 couplets on the Jain philosophy and discipline,

has two couplets defining a book: "That is a book which is revealed by God Himself and is valid for all time. It should reveal the Truth, be a haven of safety for men and dispel suffering" (9, 10).

The principles of criticism and the manner in which a literary critic functions are said to be seven. The first is to see if the author has followed established traditions and ideals and, if so, to agree with him. The next is to reject or refute him if he is found to have disregarded such ideals. Then he may accept the principles followed by the author himself, and, even while adopting them, may condemn him as wrong or unsound. He may seek to establish his own convictions and stress them at every stage. He may put forward and discuss contrasting views and advocate one of them. He may just point out the flaws in the other's work. Lastly, he may expound his own view, disregarding that of the writer.

The flaws in any writing are grouped under ten heads. Excessive brevity, over elaboration or diffuseness, frequent repetition, inconsistency, faulty language such as slang, dialects, vulgar words etc., ambiguity or confusion, pointless verbosity, unnecessary digression, lack

of progressive development in thought and expression, and purposeless phraseology are some of such flaws.

Good writing should steer clear of all these flaws and incorporate in itself ten features of gracefulness. They are brevity in expression, perspicuity in exposition, sweetness in diction, use of appropriate and elegant words, rhythm and cadence, depth of thought, cogeney in arrangement, conformity with noble conventions, inculcation of noble doctrines, and the employment of arresting illustrations.

Besides, the writer has to employ thirty two literary devices to make his writing perfect and popular. These devices are fully explained by the commentary writers.

We find a rare reference to writing as a creative art in the *Sirupanchamoolam.* Considerable thought should precede writing. "Scholars mastered the various branches of literature. The poet was able to produce excellent poetry only as a result his deep thinking" (43).

Learning helps a man to understand the classics correctly. But we find modern scholars and learned men twisting the text and the context to suit their purpose and giving a distorted

interpretation which is far from what the author could have intended. But the classics themselves have a word to say on this subject of interpretation. The scholar should not, in a scholarly debate, proceed on a literal interpretation of the text, but should strive only for a broader and liberal exposition of the subject matter (*Tiri. 18*).

The scholar shall search for the true and subtle significance of the texts. He shall desist from expressing worthless words and sentiments unsuited to the general purpose of the text, though they may be appropriate and the temptation to say them strong. He shall speak words of lasting wisdom before good people. These are the characteristics of learned people (*Tiri.33*).

THE TEACHER

In all branches of the Hindu religion, the teacher (guru) plays a very important part. The Supreme Lord manifests Himself to the chosen disciple through the form of the guru; he is thus the embodied God. The systematised Saiva Siddhanta religion of later times gives the greatest reverence to the guru. Mortals cannot perceive the working of the Hand of God. They have therefore to see Him in their guru. The form of Dakshinamurti in all the Siva temples

is the form of the Supreme Guru; four sages, all very aged rishis, are His disciples and they receive their initiation through His Grace. Similar reverence is also shown in the Vaishnava religion to the acharya.

We have to look upon the secular teacher with this concept in the background. The qualities of this teacher are not in any way less than those of the spiritual preceptor. The parents have given the boy his physical body and the eyes with which to perceive worldly objects, but it is the teacher who opens up his inner vision and enables him to perceive nobler and spiritual values. The upanayana ceremony, a Vedic rite, signifying the opening of the inner vision of the young boy at the age of seven, now consists merely of investing him with a thread; it was really a symbol of the opening of his inner eye to prepare him for spiritual education. Acharya, the teacher in the Sanskrit language, is called in Tamil, the asiriyar (aasu-iriyar), one who dispels ignorance. Hence has risen the old saying, "he who has introduced the letters to the child is the Lord Himself". A casual glance through any ancient manuscript will reveal the veneration in which the teacher was held in those days. Each manuscript had a fly leaf in the beginning which contained the name

of the book and an invocatory verse. This usually ended with the words: "Let there be peace. Hail to the guru. The guru is our help". The colophon of the manuscript also concluded with the same words.

But it is accepted on all hands that today the least qualified go to the teaching profession as the last resort. Having failed to secure any other decent job in life, men who have no aim in life, no ambition to spur them on to higher things, men who have failed in other walks of life, try their hand at teaching. Such is the woeful condition of the entrants to this noble profession today. But the qualifications prescribed for a secular teacher - not a spiritual preceptor - are some of the highest. We shall summarise them below.

The good teacher should be of high birth and come of a noble family. He should possess goodwill towards men and compassion to all beings. He must have faith in God and be of a pious disposition. He should be of a generous temperament. The classics should have been thoroughly mastered by him. He must have a good grasp of the subjects and be capable of clear exposition. He must be aware of popular trends and the ways of the world, which alone

will be a corrective to mere bookish knowledge; bookish knowledge may otherwise tend to make him quite impractical. Besides these qualities, he should possess also the attributes which characterise the earth, the mountain, the balance and the flower.

The attributes of the earth are limitless expanse, depth, imperturbability, exemplary patience and productivity in response to the season and the effort. Applied to the teacher, these signify vastness of erudition, capacity to maintion his own in disputation, tolerance when others seek to deride him or belittle his knowledge, and capacity to help his pupils to the extent of their endeavour.

The attributes of the mountain are immeasurable size, an endless variety of matter, unshakable stability, majesty in appearance, and abundance of resources to succour those who go to it even in times of drought. Applied to the teacher, these signify depth of knowledge, inexhaustible variety of subjects, unassailable firmness of views, majesty in appearance, and willingness to teach pupils without any recompense.

The quality of the balance is accuracy in measuring out things and just standards. The

teacher shall likewise be capable of giving definite interpretations and of resolving doubts and be impartial.

The flower is the symbol of an auspicious occasion, without which nothing could be inaugurated or done; it is soft and sweet, and is desired by all. So also, the teacher shall be indispensable for all good enterprises in his area, soft in manners, sweet in temperament; and be a willing teacher; he must be able to draw the world to himself by his personal charm.

Such should be the qualities of a teacher. The teacher should have the capacity to meet the objections and doubts raised by the pupil and answer them. Says the *Eladi* (75): 'The teacher should know the thoughts of the six different schools, be of exemplary character, and effectiviely meet the objections raised by his students and others'. These attributes make of him not only a good scholar and teacher, but also an influential leader of the locality. Modern trends in education try to emphasise the point that the school master must be capable of assuming local leadership in an undeveloped countryside such as we have. It is gratifying to note that our ancients also seem to have thought on similar lines. Sometimes a teacher's name may be

forgotten but his personality remained. Adai-nedum - kalviyar is one such. He had acquired great erudition easily and so is remembered by this epithet.

The disqualifications for a teacher are also enumerated in a similar manner. One who is incompetent in teaching, is mean in character, is jealous, greedy, or dishonest in interpreting texts, and frightens the listener, is unfit to be a teacher. The pot which contains round nuts, the palmyrah with sharp-edged leaf stalks, the cotton jug and the crooked coconut tree are the illustrations for a bad teacher.

The pot will give out the nuts not in the order in which they were put in, but in a disorderly jumble. So is the immethodical teacher: he has no plan of work and so is unable to teach things cogently or in their natural order. The palmyrah fruit can be gathered only when the tree drops them, as otherwise the sharp edges of its leafstalks will slash one who dares climb the tree. So is the inaccessible teacher, unable to guide the boy when he wants help; it will not be possible for the student to approach him and get instruction, unless the teacher himself offers it. It is very difficult to fill the jug with cotton and much more so to

extract cotton from it. So is the slow teacher, slow to learn himself, and slower still to communicate what he had learnt. The crooked coconut tree drops its fruits, not for the one who watered and tended it, but bends across the fence and drops them in the garden of the neighbour, who is a stranger who had done nothing to help it grow. So is the careless or irresponsible teacher, who will not help deserving pupils and his own benefactors but may help strangers and undeserving pupils.

The importance attached to the teachers was always great. 'Learning without a teacher will come to grief' is a well known proverb. This importance was such that when others were sought to be honoured, they were also classed with teachers. Teachers for the individual were said to be five: 'The ruler of the land, the teacher, the two parents and the elder brother are the five teachers' says the *Acharakkovai (16)*. Apparently this is a development on this thought found in the *Purananooru*.

When the learned men were held in high esteem, naturally the people at large would not like to offend them. The *Kural* specificaly lays this down as a rule: "Though you may incur the wrath of the archer, beware of

incurring the wrath of the learned men." The teacher had proverbially been a poor man. The poets we see in the classics were poor men in material goods. But they had in abundance the wealth of the heart and of the intellect. Very often, out of his excessive anxiety to teach the deserving pupils, the right teacher took into his household any number of deserving students: all of them were of the tribe of Kuchela; rarely do we see a Krishna among them. The plight of the school community can well be imagined. Hence it was considered a greatly meritorious act to feed and clothe the community and supply the pupils with educational equipment. "Those who supply food, clothing, the stylus and books to the indigent pupils who sit at the feet of a teacher will wield great power even in this birth" (*Eladi* 63). The concept of a grant of public scholarship to the pupil in the modern sense seems to be contained in this.

Again, payment to the teacher is emphasized in all books. 'When the teacher is in any kind of trouble, the pupil should assist him and give him money as fees; he should not refrain from adoring the teacher; in this manner he should learn' – Pandiyan Nedun cheliyan in *Puram* 183. One who wishes to

learn shall not neglect worship of the master (*Mudumolik kanji*, 10). In the Vedic times, we see new pupils going to their master with firewood in their hands (*samit-panayah*). This was quite necessary because on his admission the pupil became an inmate of the teacher's household; the teacher's wife cooked all the food; but gathering or splitting of the firewood was a major problem, The teacher's wife, the mother of the community, could not manage it: the teacher, rather an aged man wedded to his books, could not of course think of it. So, carrying *samit* (twigs) was symbolic of the new entrant's willingness to shoulder all manual labour in the community.

A similar practice obtained in Tamilnad also, where the pupils carried dried cowdung cakes (for fuel) and oil to the teacher, one

[1]Even pupils hailing from royal families had to do menial service in the teacher's household. *Perun-kathai* says that Emperer Prochadana had asked his sons to perform all petty manual sevices to Udayana when they were placed under him for military training.

day in the week, a practice which continued even to the first two decades of the XX century.

The pupil is enjoined to be very careful to render his contribution to the teacher's household. 'The pupil can learn nothing if he does not pay his dues properly'. *Mudumoli-kkanji* 5-6. Though the teacher was a married man, he seems to have been expected to lead the life of a bachelor, so that all his attention might be focussed on the work of instruction *(Siru.* 27*)*.

A literary convention of the age was that the poet and the teacher were always referred to in the honorific plural. But any one placed high in the secular life was referred only in the singular. Be he a king, a prince or a commander, the third person singular was used when referring to him. The scholars and teachers were always referred in the third person plural. This honour was extended often to women also. These indicate the esteem in which learned men were held and also the chivalry which characterised the treatment of women.

THE PUPIL

The qualifications of the pupil are described at great length in the grammatical treatises. Society in the early days consisted of a small group or community, and the pupils were drawn only from that group, unless it be that large Universities like the one at Madurai attracted brilliant students from distant parts of the country. We find that consideration of caste never interfered in the selection of the pupils under any teacher. The following are qualified to be recruited as pupils: the teacher's own son, the son of his guru, the prince, one who offers much money for the instruction, one who reveres and worships the teacher, and lastly one who is sharp of intellect. From this it can be seen that every one could not demand admission as a matter of right.

Disqualifications for a student are also enumerated in detail. The teacher need not teach much to a pupil who does not possess good qualities (*Siru.* 61). Character traits such as stealing, lust, falsehood, conceit, indolence and dullwittedness, temperamental traits such as quarrelsomeness, hot temper, heavy slumber and bluff, and sinfulness, are disqualifications for a pupil's admission. He should not be easily confused by the ancient books. Poverty,

though by itself not a vice, is here excluded, perhaps because a poor person cannot fix his mind on studies alone; where the teacher admits him, he may certainly have to provide him with food, clothing and shelter. Want or dire poverty had always been dreaded as the greatest enemy of education. Among other things, it will make one give up even education which is the raft that can help him to cross the stream of life (*Manimekhalai* 11. 77); it will obliterate noble birth and personal valour, and also distinguished learning (*Naladi* 285); the words of the poor will not carry weight, though they be sound and thoughtful (*Kural* 1046). The pupil should have overcome the three vices – desire, anger and delusion. Other wise, he will be a perpetual worry to his teacher (*Sirupanchamoolam* 27).

He shall never disobey the teacher. He shall never display his scholarship in the teacher's presence. When the teacher gives him anything, he shall stand up and receive it. When giving anything to the teacher or receiving anything from him, the pupil shall use both hands and shall not do it with one hand.

The ideal student was never a burden on his parents or on his teacher. When he attached

himself as a full time student in the house of a teacher, he did all the chores in the teacher's household. He collected alms from a few houses and thus maintained himself. When he lived on the alms given by others, the food gathered was perhaps not adequate; hence we see an young woman making fun of a student for his famished appearance (*Kuruntogai* 33).

Admitted pupils will again be of three standards – the brilliant, the average and the below-normal. The first class is likened to the swan and the cow; the average class pupil is compared to the earth and the parrot; while the last resembles the broken pot, the buffalo and the fibrous covering at the base of a coconut leaf stalk. The aptness of the comparison is worth considering here.

The legendary swan is supposed to have the capacity to separate water from milk and take in only the milk leaving out water. So also the good pupil will imbibe the best in the teaching and leave out the rest. The cow avidly grazes in the field where there is good pasture, lies down in a shade and slowly munches all that it had grazed, at its own leisure. So also this pupil learns all that he can from the teacher and leisurely chews the cud and meditates on it.

The earth pays back the tiller to the extent of his labour. So also the average pupil grasps to the extent the teacher has taught him. The parrot can repeat what it has been taught and nothing more. Likewise this pupil will know only what has been taught to him and cannot interpret another text.

The cracked pot will not hold any water. So also, the last grade pupil will not learn anything, but all things taught will escape him. The goat is fickle-minded; it just grazes from one bush, then passes on to another without satisfying its hunger from the first. So also this pupil will move on from one teacher to another without picking up any knowledge. The buffalo entering the pond will agitate the water, make it muddy and then drink it. This pupil also will easily cause annoyance and displeasure to the teacher. The fibrous covering on the leaf stalk acts as a filter for oil, retaining only the worthless dregs, allowing the valuable oil or ghee to flow away. So also the last grade pupil holds fast to the unimportant and useless things in the class teaching and leaves out the best.

Very rarely do we come across any personal description of the pupil or the master. However, a verse in the *Sirupancha - moolam*

describes the pupil: "The young pupil should have a tuft, of the size of a lily bud. He can have an oil bath for the hair only once a month. He should circumambulate the teacher, study good books and listen attentively to the instruction". The pupil of course is always a bachelor. He is enjoined always to be in the company of the learned; even superior to learning is revering and following the learned.

The scholar is particularly enjoined to cultiuate the virtue of humility. He shall not boast about the recognition which his erudition had enjoyed in an assembly (*Tiri.* 9). He shall not start expounding poetry in an assembly of learned persons (*Siru.* 85). But the *Nannool* makes an exception: "Even if he has written a valuable work, embodying therein subtle points not easily known to others, self praise is improper. But where he is writing an epistle to the prince, where he is amidst strangers who do not know his scholarship, where he is engaged in a disputation with another in an assembly, or where an opponent in a debate berates him, it is excusable on his part to indulge in selfpraise." Even here, the implication is that selfpraise vain boasting should be avoided.

One of the minor poems (*kilkanakku*) attributed to the Sangham period is *Achara-k-kovai*, a short and sweet poem of 100 verses, dealing with some rigid maxims of personal discipline. It mentions, *inter alia*, many maxims which apply to the pupil and his behaviour towards the teacher. On seeing the teacher, the pupil shall get up and fall at his feet in salutation and shall rise up when the teacher says 'get up'. When he takes leave of the teacher or when the teacher leaves the pupil, the pupil shall circum ambulate him. He shall never utter the name of the teacher anywhere.[1] The pupil shall never ask his master. "Are you well?" or, "what lunch did you have?" The second question was prohibited apparently beeause the teacher was always a very poor man and his meagre meal might not bear any dignified mention.

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[1] A woman shall never utter the name of her husband, nor a son his father; so also the pupil his teacher. This was in essence a very ancient religious observance. A classic example of this observance is that of Dr. Swaminatha Ayyar (1855–1942) who never uttered the name of his master, Mahavidwan Meenakshisundaram Pillai, either in speech or in writing, but simply referred to him as 'Pillai-avergal'.

The pupil shall not learn bad practices such as flinging of objects, throwing stones, whistling, shouting to one from a distance, mimicry, rushing amidst others, hiding things, clapping of hands, winking and the like.

To summarise. The distinguishing marks of the first class pupil are punctuality in attendance, cheerful and implicit obedience to the teacher, thirst for knowledge, concentration of mind and a retentive memory, besides humility and a general cultured behaviour.

THE PARENT

The home and the family were in the ancient days, as they are even today, the first centres of education for the child. They shape the personality of the child before formal education begins and continue to influence the boy, the adolescent and the adult throughout life. In the primitive Tamil society, the father was the educator of the boy and also his trainer in warfare. In a family where the father was the head, naturally the proper education of the boy was always the responsibility of his father. An interesting verse in *Puranaooru* distributes the duties of bringing up a child to various persons. Ponmudiyar, a woman poet, pointing out the soldier's duty in a war, says: "My duty is

to bring forth the boy and rear him well. His father should make him an honorable citizen. The blacksmith has to forge his spear for him. The ruler of the land is responsible to see that the lad evolves into a youth of good character. But it is his own responsibility to enter the battle field with his shining sword, slash down elephants, and return victorious.

The same spirit pervades all the writings in the Sangham age. It is always the mother who gives expression to such thoughts of valour and heroism. Giving up his life fighting for the country is a sentiment that has evoked the greatest response in literature. Masatti, a poetess, looks at her neighbour's heroic act and exclaims: "Look at this woman of a heroic tribe! Her fearlessness is terrible! Her father had died in battle, after killing elephants. Very recently her husband had fallen in battle after slaying many soldiers. Now she rejoices at the sound of the wardrums, and, with a smile on her face, sends her only son to the battle front, decking him in fresh fighting dress and placing a spear in his hand!" Verses like this are many. They always portray the valour of the mother and her pride in the heroism of her son.

The responsibility for bringing up the boy as a responsible member of society devolved on the father. He is indeed to be pitied as a poor man who does not have children distinguished through learning (*Tiri* 85).

We find responsibilities thrown mutually on the father and the son in the *Kural*: "The duty of a father is to see that his son takes the first rank in an assembly; but the duty of the son to the parent is to cause the world to exclaim, 'Great indeed is the fortune of the father to have begotten such a son' (67, 70)" These instances are enough to show that the responsibility for educating the son properly devolved on his father. People are generally jealous at another's superior knowledge and learning. But when their own children are more learned and wise than themselves, they are happy over such superiority (*Kural* 68).

Similarly, an old verse enumerating the losses a man may have to sustain, says: "With the death of his mother the boy has no more tasty food; and no more learning, after the death of his father."

'Spare the rod and spoil the child' is an old saying in English. The parents, particularly the father, was responsible for the proper

education of the son. The ancient books say that the father should exercise a judicious combination of love and fear in dealing with children who play truant to school. 'When children do not heed the words of the parents, they use the cane and punish the children severely. This hard treatment is born only out of love towards the children' say a religious treatise of the XIII century.

A waster of a later day bemoans the neglect of his father in the matter of his education: "O! my father gave me a lot of money and gaudy clothing. But at the age when I roamed about as an uncontrollable urchin, he failed to put down my mischievous pranks and to send me to school. He is criminally to blame for such neglect."

THE SCHOOL

We understand the teacher's home was the school where pupils assembled. Very often the shade of a large tree served as the class room. Platforms of brick or earth were put up in the shade of the tree, around its trunk. These served as benches for the school pupils and also for the village assemblies; these assemblies were conducted in such shades, and a *manram* in those days (equivalent to the

modern hall) meant such a shady place under a tree. These manrams were the same as those which came to be later known as 'pial schools'. The *Kurunthogai* (33) mentions such a manram. When a damsel received a young pana (ministrel) as a messenger from her lover, she noticed that his deportment before her was shy, like that of a new entrant in a school. She remarked to her maid: "My dear, look at this young student. How does he conduct himself in his school?"

The Tamil word for a school – *palli* – meant then many things - a school, a temple, a palace, a monastery and a sleeping couch; perhaps the first four in turn housed the school, in its evolution from the ancient tree shade to the modern multi-storied building.

In later times when huge granite efices were built by the Chola emperors between the IX and the XIII centuries, schools were housed in the temple halls and corridors. But we should remember the ideal of the separate 'school premises' is quite modern. In the ancient days, we did not have any school building as such. Even as late as the XIX century, we know, Mahavidwan Meenashisundrram Pillai symbolized in himself the teacher, the school, the books and the library, and even the school

hostel; he arranged not only for the midday meals but the full round of three meals a day for his pupils, and also for their clothing.

What was considered important then was not the provision of a school building, but the presence of the proper teacher in the village. Just as the scriptures enjoined us not to live in a village without a temple, so our ethical books declared that a village without a teacher will come to grief. The *Tirikadugam* says: "The village without a teacher, the assembly without elders to settle disputes, and neighbours who do not share their food with others, will come to no good" (10).

The school was necessarily a small unit, as it centred round one teacher and his family. But we also learn that there were large schools, where many teachers lived together with their families and taught the pupils. There seem to have existed large schools with several hundreds of residential pupils. A teacher who fed a thousand pupils and imparted higher learning to them was called a *Kulapati*. (This is a Sanskrit term, which had been in use in the Sangham age in Tamil also. Sometimes the number of pupils was mentioned as even ten thousand.) We find a Kulapati in this

period. Kidangil near Mayuram is a small village whith had produced several poets in the Sangham age. One of them was Kulapati-Nakkanna, in other words Professor Kanna the good. Evidently he was not only a teacher, but also the Superintendent of a large hostel, where more than one thousand pupils lived and learned. His wife Nakkannai, was a poetess of the period and also a teacher in the same institution.

The teacher was called a *kanakkayar*, one who had mastered many books and sciences and retained them in his mind. The father of Nakkeerar, the most famous and fearless poet of the University, was himself a kanakkayar. There was also Datta, a teacher. In recent times, Pillai was a shining example of such a teacher. He was a walking library and encyclopaedia. No book was worth knowing that he did not know by heart.

A proverb says, where Rama is there Ayodya is. Similarly, where the teacher was, there the school was; the Maha vidwan was a complete mobile school. Be it a monastery, a verandah, the shade of a tree, the tank bund or river bank, be it a wayside stop or a bullock cart, there some pupils surrounded

him and the place was temporarily a school, maybe for some minutes or some hours. When he walked from one village to another, half a dozen pupils accompanied him and the walking time was devoted to instruction; he could give out all the texts from memory and explain them. Teaching in the remote past was also similar.

No wonder that the XVI century prince Ati - Veerarama Pandiya said: "The teacher who taught you the letters is the Lord God Himself." Side by side with eminent all round persons like the Mahavidwan, there were also the ordinary schools. Subramanya Bharathi, the poet of modern national and Tamil renaissance, had always lived in urban areas; he declared that there should be one or two schools in every street.

Unlike the modern school which starts work three hours or four hours after sunrise, these ancient schools began to hum with life an hour and a half before sunrise. As the students lived with the teacher, this offered no problems. Attendance was strictly insisted upon and the first comers had pride of place n the class. Daily routine connected with personal discipline was also strictly enforced.

The first and the last rite to be performed everyday without fail was prayer. Reverence to the parents and the teacher was very strictly enforced. Rules for moving with the teacher were very elaborate. The student shall never refer to his teacher by name. Other rules regarding learning are given elsewhere.

We understand the modern idea of the monitorial system in schools had been in vogue in very ancient days also. The teacher was all the time teaching. He had no other calling in life. But as the subjects were many, he would reasonably attend full time only to the advanced students; he might only occasionally teach the beginners. The advanced students took upon themselves the responsibility of teaching and training the new entrants. We may be sure there was no ragging in our country; this undesirabee practice is a recent legacy from the West.

The number of pupils learning under a teacher was always small, so far as secular education was concerned. Agastya was reputed to have had twelve pupils studying under him; so also Tolkappiyar. The name of the disciples of Agastya are known and each of them is also known to have written a poetical treatise

after his own name; Of these the book of Tolkappiyar is fully available; none of the others are available; yet some quotations from most of the other writers have been given by later gloss writers. We have no other direct evidence regarding the number of pupils in a class. Dakshinamurti, the Supreme Guru, had only four sages receiving instruction from Him; but coming to the XIII century, legend says that Saint Meikandar, the first guru in Saiva Siddhanta, had 49 disciples; their names are not given and there is no means of verifying the truth of the legend.

Literary debates seem to have been conducted by eminent scholars. When one such desired to challenge others on some matter of literary dispute, he unfurled a specifie banner for the purpose which was an indication that he had thrown out a challenge. Mangudi Maruda (in *Maduraikkanji*) and Kadiyalur Rudram - Kanna (in *Pattinappalai*) mention that many sueh banners were gently tossing in the wind in the cities of Madurai and Kaverippattinam.

It is indeed remarkable how the human race frequently reverts to what is called its own primitive ways and habits. Pupils of old

resorted to shady trees and groves and even to forests for the sake of instruction and study; in modern days, they seek to reverse the process, by bringing trees to school in the form of pot plants and table decoration!

ADMISSION

The teacher is asked to admit only pupils who show him love and respect (*Sirupanchamoolam* 27).

An auspicious day was generally chosen for admission of a pupil to the school. "Learning on the ashtami day (the eighth day after the full-moon) will bode ill to the teacher. The forteenth day is not good for the pupil, The two days, the full moon and the new moon, are bad for learning itself. The first day after these two, is unsuited even for fools" says an old verse. Perhaps these days were intended as monthly holidays. This is also borne out by the ancient Tamil term for a holiday, *vavu*; this is a corrupt form of the Tamil word *uva*, which meant both the new moon day and the full moon day. Since these two days were evidently holidays, the term *uva* had come to mean a holiday. Till the middle of this century, this term in its corrupt form, *vavu*, had denoted a holiday in village schools;

it has now been replaced by the phrase *vidu-murai*.

The *Acharakkovai* mentions all the above inauspicious days and adds a few more: "Learning will have to be suspended during a period of danger to the crown, an earth quake or meteor-fall, and the days of personal pollution for the pupil; during these days, a Brahmin shall not study his scriptures."

Children were generally sent to school i. e., to a teacher for the first time, on the Vijaya-dasami day, considered even now as the most auspicious day for starting education. The teacher in the olden days was brought to the boy's house, on the first occasion. It was a festive day for the entire village. There was a special worship and distribution of sweets to the older children and presentation of clothing, food and similar articles was made to the teacher and his wife. The teacher would alrcady have prepared cadjan leaves and shaped them into a book form for the new entrant. The boy wrote his first letters on the palm leaf with a steel stylus. The teacher guided the boy's hand. This initiation ceremory was known *mai-adal* or mai-olai-pidittal (holding the oiled leaf). The first words were as said

before, "Let there be peace. Hail to the guru". Thus commenced the little child's initiation into the mysteries of the alphabet. In later years, the first writing was something like "Om Namassivaya" or "Om Namo Narayanaya" (homage to God). A special paste consisting of well ground turmeric, a thick oil, some soft charcoal, the *kovai* leaves (*coccinea indica*) and the acorus root (an insecticide) was smeared over the writing, to make it legible and to prevent worms from damaging the palm leaves. The age of admission was five years (*Chintamani* 2706).

Mahatma Gandhi has observed in recent times that 'education is from the cradle to the grave'. This has also been said in so many words in our ethical books. The *Kural* says: "To the learned, any clime is his and any place is his place. Why then does he not study, even to the last moment of his life?" An old adage of a much later date says: "Even on the funeral pyre let the book be in your hand." This is also borne out by a familiar proverb in three Sanskrit words: "The book is an ornament to the hand." Another Sanskrit verse says that the true teacher is a student to the end of his life. This concept is also symbolically represented in the image

of Saraswati worshipped in many temples and also celebrated in verses. On her left hand she holds a book and she is said to be still studying. There are a number of verses and poems celebrating this aspect of Saraswati (the Namakal, the Muse of Arts and Letters), from very early times.

The age for admission to the school is emphasized in all books: 'Learn when you are quite young' is an axiom. Learning in childhood is permanent, like the writing engraved on stone; it is a crime not to learn when one is young, it is harmful to let the children grow without education (*Nanmani*. 91, 92).

Although we do not have any direct reference to a primary school, the name of an author suggests such a school. Koothan, son of Sendan of Madurai, was known as Ilampaal-Asiriyar, the teacher of little children. Presumablyhe was a primary school teacher.

School age is clearly indicated in the story of Saint Siruth-thondar in the *Periya puranam* (early XII century). Siruth-thondar had sent his son at the early age of three to the school. The school was a separate institution where children were sent to study and, when Siruth-thondar wanted his son in his house, he

went to the school and brought him. Siruth – thondar is a historical figure who lived in the middle of the VII century in the days of the Pallava ruler, Narasimha Varman. Thus we learn from this story that children were being sent to school even at what is now known as the pre-school age. " What cannot be bent at five cannot be bent at fifty " is a Tamil proverb, referring to the age of education. We may conclude that there were even nursery schools for very young children.

Another literary convention may also be considered here. Man is never too old to learn. Laying down the purposes for which a married young man may leave his wife and go away for a short period, Tolkappiyar mentions learning. The period of such separation is fixed by him as three years. In an age when people were living a life in tune with nature, the first concern was a simple means for earning a livelihood. When the young man chose a suitable bride for himself, married her and settled down, no one gave any thought to learning or to cultural accomplishments; a proper mate was the only consideration. But having been in the married state for some time, the young man feels in his life the absence of learning and the lack of the fulness that lear-

ning confers. So he breaks away from the home, for a short spell of apprenticeship to a teacher in some cultural entre. The period of separation from his wife is laid down as three years. It is not as though he is now going to begin with the alphabets. He is no doubt literate, but now, he goes out to acquire some higher education. This is quite understandable. The higher arts and sciences and philosophy are understood better by men who have had an experience of life and its problems. Youth may have fresh vigour and enthusiasm but the mature and sober intellect which are evolved out of a richer and fuller experience of real living cannot be there. Hence probably our elders had ordained that married men may leave their home after a certain stage in quest of higher education [1].

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[1] The commentator Nachinarkkiniyar has wrongly construed the line in the Tolkappiyam. Instead of taking the line to refer to three years, he says that it signifies the three entities - the soul, matter and the Absolute, and goes on to say that here the author was thinking of final renunciation and so has not fixed a limit for this higher education. The commentator has missed the point and hence his far-fetched explanation.

THE BOOK

As is well known, there was no printing and no paper in the ancient days. All books were written by hand on palm leaves, with a steel stylus. The leaves of two palms, the ordinary palmyrah and the talipot palm, were utilised for the writing. The talipot palm leaf was longer, broader and thinner than the ordinary palmyrah leaf; it was also more flexible; but it lost its yellow colour very soon and became blackish. Its surface became indecipherable, after the passing of a century or two. But the ordinary palmyrah retained its colour and clearness for a much greater length of time; hence the palmyrah leaf was generally preferred. The leaves chosen were neither too tender nor too mature; they were dried in shade, cut to size and the edges well trimmed and corners rounded. Two holes were made in the leaves so prepared, in the central line, midway between the centre and each end; one of these was for inserting the binding pin, which was of steel, copper or even silver; generally it was shaped out of bamboo, with a carved knob at one end; a neat cotton string passed through the other hole and this bound together all the leaves into a book. When devotional books were prepared, this string was of silk. A small

thin wooden board covering the entire length and breadth of the leaves, cut to their size and polished, was added at the beginning and at the end of the leaves, something like the enclosing boards of a modern calico bound book. The wooden pieces were also replaced by copper or silver plates. A few blank leaves at the beginning and at the end of the written matter were added, presumably for notes and indices. This constituted a book, also called a manuscript.

The leaf was held in the left hand and the right guided the stylus on it. The left thumb and forefinger moved the leaf slowly to the left, as the right hand went on writing. As the leaf moved between the thumb and the forefinger with the joint as the base, the lines were all marvellously straight and no line in the manuscript was bent or curved. Expert and skilful writers had grown their left thumb nail by half an inch, made a hole or semicircular dent at its tip and inserted the stylus in the hole or dent, and guided it (i. e., wrote) with the right hand. This dexterous practice accounted for the uniform size and shape of the characters in the writing.

The binding pin was passed along the right hole through all the leaves. A cotton string was

tied to the knob at the head of the pin on the opening side. The other end of the string passed through the left hole in the leaves. This string was of sufficient length to go round the leaves a number of times and tie them up into a neat volume. The pin and string passing through the two holes with the boards at either end kept the leaves in tact.

Generally, scholars and professional scribes wrote a good hand. For uniformity of letters, roundness of alphabets and beauty of shape, these manuscripts are unsurpassed. [1] By the side of these manuscripts, typewritten script and print appear as merely ugly reproductions of a superior work of art.

Even comparing the size of the book, we may say a cadjan leaf book was just about the same size as a modern printed book. We know the cadjan leaf is very thick, but still many expert scribes wrote such a tiny but distinctive legible hand that writing did not occupy much

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[1] The author has seen a large manuscript of the Devaram hymns in the Tiru-Avaduthurai Mutt. The writing there of, perhaps in the early XVII century, is a unique work of art. There are 30 lines to a page on it. Thirty lines on a width of barely two inches is indeed a supreme marvel.

space. It is a great wonder how the manuscript and the printed book are almost identical in the matter of page arrangement. The eadjan leaf is written on both sides and the lafe number is noted on the left hand bottom margin of the first page of each leaf. Whenever a new chapter commenced, its name was noted on the left hand margin.

At the end of every book a list of contents was added. This showed the page number and also the number of verses for each chapter. Sometimes index to the first lines was also written. Considering all these, we have sometimes to think that the present printed books are merely mechanical reproductions of what was originally a work of art. Every manuscript was stamped with the individuality of the writer. What individuality does a printed book possess today ?

The first book for a pupil was written by the teacher and thereafter the boy was helped to copy out his own books. Writing on the palm leaf was a wonderful art. The length and width of the leaf varied with the leaf chosen and with the matter written. Large leaves are twenty inches long and two inches wide; the average width is one inch; there are also very

small sizes, two inches by half an inch. The number of leaves goes up to more than 400, reaching a thickness of even twelve inches. Big books naturally required a large number of leaves while small ones could be copied in a few leaves. The finish of the book in general was always artistic, to suit individual tastes. Pocket books, the fashion of the modern book industry, were very common; the students prepared small sizes, even the size of a thumb, for the books they liked to get by heart, and carried them in their lap (which corresponded to the modern shirt pocket). Sannyasi students of the mutts, just tucked in such small editions into the matted locks on their head.

The finish and binding of the book was in different patterns according to the fancy of the owner. Many had it oblong, as is generally the case; some had cut the leaves to a cyclindrical volume; rarely into a spherical volume also, like a ball. Some others had done books, like the *Tiruvachakam* in later days, into a Sivalinga shape. The end boards were studded with precious stones and sometimes inlaid with gold or silver.

Although scholars prepared their own copies of the books, there were professional copyists

who were maintained in important places and they did the work of copying new books and duplicating existing books. These were all experts in the copying work. Their scholarship in the language might not have been of a very high order and naturally errors had crept in. This explains to a large extent the variant readings which we find in the text among many manuscripts. The copyist usually writes his own name at the end of the book, besides the name of the owner for whom it was written, the date of commencement of the writing and the date of the manuscript.

The process of unwinding the string and opening up the manuscript book at the required page and again retying it was itself a delicate work of art. Some teachers in the olden days used it as a test for admission. They would ask the new comer to watch the process when the teacher did it and then would ask him to re-do it; or casually ask him to tie up an open book. The gentleness, care and tidiness with which the boy did it would tell the teacher if the pupil deserved the admission or otherwise.

We know the Saraswati Pooja day is set a part for the worship of the Muse of Letters. On the eve of the pooja, members of a house

hold would assemble together, take over the old manuscripts from the moth-eaten vaults and crypts, dust them and prepare them for the worship the next day. Not all the books in a modern library are used or consulted daily or even once a month. Similarly with the ancient manuscripts. The books were not in daily use but all the books were handled on the pooja day. The books were opened leaf by leaf and the special oil preparation was applied to each leaf and page. This made the writing legible and gave the manuscript a fresh lease of life for some more time, as otherwise the untreated palm leaves would be brittle and easily crumble to powder. The oil paste had also the effect of killing insects and germs and of giving the leaves protection against any further attack from them and from the atmospheric changes.

Even though there were no educated persons in the family, the members considered it a matter of family pride not to allow the manuscript book kept by their forefathers to perish. Hence they went through this ceremony at the pooja time. Very old and crumbling manuscripts were copied with the help of paid scribes. Thus were kept alive the Sangham classics and similar works which were collected by Dr. Swaminatha Aiyar and some others from the

length and breadth of the land and published. But for this altruistic restoration on the part of the descendants of ancient scholars, we would have lost even the classics now existing, as we had lost hundreds already.

Libraries no doubt existed in the past. Although each good teacher could carry on his instruction from memory without reference to books, still he possessed a good library. Part of the library was handed down to him by his ancestors, part was copied by him and part was copied by his own disciples. But possession of a library did not mean acquisition of the knowledge contained therein. "Unless the teacher is master or all the thought contained therein and unless he practised whatever he had learnt, there is no use even if he fills his whole house with books" says the *Naladi*.

Unfortunately, a darkness had descended on the culture of the land. The descendants of scholars and the cultured families which had preserved large libraries of manuscript books no longer realised the value of the books with them. In course of time, instead of rewriting and renewing the decaying books and manuscripts on the Saraswati pooja day, they merely took out such manuscripts and dropped them into

the stream of the Kaveri. Out of ignorance and indifference had thus been lost hundreds of ancient books, many of them not available in print and no longer extant. Most of such families had even come to believe that the 18th of the month of Adi (about the 2nd of August) was the day religiously set apart for consigning the old manucupts to the stream !

INSTRUCTION

Instruction is teaching. It is an axiom in modern educational thought that teaching and learning are different. Teaching is an effort by the teacher, to make the pupil grasp certain things which the teacher wishes to communicate. But learning is an effort on the part of the pupil to understand something or solve some problem of his own. In the first case, there may not be any urge or motivation on the part of the boy, while the second is the result of a real urge on his part. The general belief is that when instructed the boy remains passive, but while learning he becomes active. Though it is only the second case of effort that will be education in the full sense of the term, educationists are agreed that there should be a judicious combination of both, to be productive of the maximum benefit to the pupil. The

teacher creates an interest in the pupil. Interest in its turn raises problems and, in trying to solve them, the pupil begins to acquire knowbdge. So, the good teacher's aim in instruction is to arouse an interest in the puil in any matter which the teacher considers to be worth learning. Thus the ideal teacher is one who can guide and help the pupil to learn; one who can be a guide, philosopher and friend. The distinction had clearly been made by our elders who had written on these subjects.

Under teaching, most of the modern class room procedure has been emphasized. Teaching will be governed by the weather conditions and by the environment. The teacher will sit on a high platform. The first thing is prayer. The teacher will then recall in his mind the subjects to be taught, without undue haste or any impatience. He shall enjoy the teaching and do it with a smile on his face. He shall teach each pupil according to his capacity to grasp and in such a manner that the pupil imbibes all that is taught. He should do it with a balanced mind.

It is worth noting here that on the spiritual plane, the steps leading to the attainment of wisdom do not begin with learning, but with

instruction or listening. In the Tamil as well as the Sanskrit shastras, listening, meditation, and concentration are the progressive steps to the attainment of wisdom. In like manner, the *Kural* goes on to speak of the great importance of listening (instruction) over mere learning.

Even if a man be illiterate, let him sit at the feet of a master and listen; the words of the master will be like a staff to lean on, in moments of weakness. Let him listen to sound instruction and assimilate it; it will do him good. Searching inquiry and wide listening will save him from error. This will confer on him true humility, which is the mark of all real learning. Sitting at the feet of a master and getting instructed by him is always superior to trying to learn every thing by one's own efforts, as this will make one's vision narrow; the latter will be like the frog in the well, which with its narrow experience, imagines that there is no better source of fresh water (*Palamoli*, 61).

The technique of teaching has also been fully evolved so far as language teaching is concerned. A casual reference in the Tolkappiyam throws considerable light on this. "We have to proceed to the unknown from the known. A word has to be understood by the

learner through another term. If he does not understand even this term, how is he to be taught ? Take for instance the term 'உருகல்' *uru-kal* (strong wind). If the learner is so ignorant as not to know that *uru* means strong, then explain it to him saying that it is the force of the powerful wind; employ that term in a separate sentence so that he may understand the general purpose of the whole sentence; if he does not know even then, then show him when there is a strong wind and let him experience it through his own sense perception. If he still fails to perceive it, then it only means that he is unfit to learn and therefore leave him out. for, in teaching, the learner has to meet the teacher half way; if the learner could not come up to this standard, there is no use in trying to teach him". [1] This passage clearly illustrates the various techniques involved in teaching, including visual education and what we now call the direct method in language teaching.

We have a unique instance of language teaching to a foreigner. Brahatta was an Arya prince and he seems to have been a student learning the Tamil language under Professor Kapilar of the Kurinji department. To acquaint

[1] Tolkappiyam, Solladikaram, 391–3, Senavaraiyar.

him with the scope and extent of the Tamil languge. Kapilar wrote his *Kurinji-p-pattu*, a blank verse of 261 lines. The intention is said to be to introduce the prince to the treatment of the love theme in Tamil literature but we may interpret the context more liberally and infer that language teaching was also undertaken. In this poem, Kapilar gives a list one hundred flowers with which the heroine of the poem adorned her hair after her bath in the hill fountain. The list makes us wonder at the immense botanical knowledge of the author. The Kurinji deals with the hill people and the conventional themes of love which belong to them. This therefore restricts the choice of the flowere to only hill areas. That the poet s able to reel off at random the names of one hundred flowers, even under this restriction, shows his mastery of the subject and his remarkable attunement with nature.

LEARNING

The learner must be punctual in the class and should first salute the teacher with all humility and respect his moods. He shall enter the class when permitted to do so and may sit down after he is bid to sit. When addressed, he shall reply promptly. He shall evince full

interest in the lesson, as a thirsty man shows towards a cup of water. When the master is teaching, he should keep still like a figure in a portrait and listen, focussing his thought, word and deed on the lesson. His ears will be the mouth that takes in the lesson which enters into the mind serving as the stomach. The matter learned should be firmly implanted in his mind. He may leave the class only after the teacher dismisses it.

So far in the teacher's presence. Other efforts are also to be made by the pupil in his spare hours to learn the lesson and these have reference to the Second Law of Learning in modern Educational Psychology. In studying literature, he should realise that there are two conventions, the sociological and the literary conventions. He should memorise the text carefully, and frequently recall to mind all that he had been taught. He may go to the teacher again and sit at his feet calmly for clarification of obscure portions. He should move closely with his classmates who are good students, question them about doubtful points and answer them well when he is questioned. If a pupil practises these methods studiously, ignorance will drop away from him.

If he learns the lesson a second time, his knowledge will be flawless. If he learns it thrice, then he will be capable of teaching it to others also. However patiently he may learn it, he should remember that he may not have grasped a quarter of what the teacher had taught. When he freely mingles with the other students and discusses the lesson, he will learn another quarter. Finally, only when he is able to repeat it to his own pupils and to the public at large, will he be able to grasp the remaining half of the teacher's instruction.

The student shall move with the teacher as though with fire, neither too close lest he be considered impertinent, nor too distant lest he miss much of the teaching. Respect and devotion must fill his heart. He should behave in such a manner as will be liked by the teacher and should show dutiful respect to him.

Naladi (135) stresses the need for selective learning. " The fields of knowledge are infinite. The student has only a few years before him. If he is slow, there may be many occasions for ill health, when he cannot learn. Hence, he should concentrate carefully on selective learning, like the proverbial swan, which separates water from milk and takes only the milk ".

We may observe here that the *Kural* has three chapters on education, under the titles learning, the unlettered and oral instruction (literally, listening). Their chief thoughts may be summarised here. 'Man should learn what is to be learnt, properly, and then behave accordingly. Numbers and letters are like the two eyes to all human beings. The learner must approach the learned with all humility and learn. Just as water springs forth from the well to the extent of our digging, so also wisdom dawns to the extent of our learning. Knowledge once gained, will help man even in seven births. Education is the only wealth a man can possess: the rest does not count. Though the uneducated may show much good sense, it cannot command recognition. The personality of the uneducated is simply like the grandeur of a clay doll. Learning confers penetration, loftiness and richness in thought. The learned may be proverbially poor, but wealth in the hands of the uneducated is a source of potential danger to the community.'

A verse from the *Naanmanikkadigai* is worth quoting here: 'Women shed lustre on the home; it is the noble children who shed lustre on the mother; learning illumines such beloved children; and it is perception (or wisdom) that sheds lustre on learning (101).'

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

We infer that physical development or physical education was also given sufficient attention. A considerable volume of the Sangham literature is on the war theme. The fearlessness and fighting skill of the soldiers are very elaborately described in the poems. Many soldiers and princes had fought with huge elephants and felled them. Naturally we can rightly surmise that the warriors themselves had undergone a strenous course in physical education. Codes of conduct had also been elaborataly laid down for fighting men.

Maakkaayar was a teacher who had two distinguished pupils, Kari - Asan and Gani - Medhai, who had written two of the 18 minor poems. Maakkaayar is referred to as 'mallivar-thol-Maakkaayar' meaning, 'he on whose shoulders abided wrestling'. This in effect means that he was not only a secular teacher but also a fighter or a soldier, and possibly also a physical education teacher.

The people were experts in animal husbandry and animal taming. One of the eight types of marriage, mentioned in classical literature, is *Eru-taluvudal*, where a member of the cowherds' community bridles and tames a

fierce bull set free by the bride's party and thereby earns the right to wed her. This practice of battling with a bull may give us an idea of the individual physical might of the people in general and of the requisite training they had.

Similarly, we have references to ram fights and elephant fights which occasionally served as entertainment to the warriors and pastime to the people. Ram fights may not be very dangerous to the onlooker, but not so elephant fights. The *Kural* mentions the two and also says that spectators climbed on to hills around, to witness elephant fights.

From all these we can rightly infer that the physical education among the early Tamils was of a very high order, perhaps akin to the Spartan standards.

Incidentally also, we may note that the science of perfection in the human form was known among the early Tamils. When the goldsmith pointed out Kovalan as a thief to the palace guards of Pandiyan Neduncheliyan, a shrewd man among them, surveyed Kovalan and remarked, " This can be no thief. His physical features are perfect according to the books on the subject." Here we realise that

the science of physical beauty and perfection was also studied by members of even the average class of society in the ancient days. The points of perfection have been noted as thirty-two in later books; these were of course different for men and for women. Perhaps these and the various references in the epics, like the *Silappadikaram*, *Chintamani* and *Perumkathai*, to physical perfection may be deemed to anticipate the beauty contest for women now organised by various nations.

Again, though we have no information about how women's physical education was organised, we know that they played a large variety of games and dances. The *Silappadikaram* describes the dances of the women in the hilly regions and the forest regions; it is in fact a text-book on the dance and drama of Tamilnad, of the first few centuries B. C. and A. D. It mentions also the several outdoor games played by women with balls, and indoor games played with cowries and the like. Many hymn-singers in later days sing of Ambikai, as the consort of Siva, holding a ball in her fingers. Many legends and shrines are associated with the ball games of Ambikai. The *Perunkathai* of Konguvelir describes a tournament with balls between two competing teams of young girls, in 245 lines.

There is a running commentary here of the individual play of five girls in particular. The description of the girls, their dress, their postures, their skill in handling the balls, their bowling and catches, the general description of their person, and the tempo of the game and the rapidity of their movement are something unique in the wide range of literature.

THE CASTES

The question of birth in relation to learning has been discussed in many ancient books. Nedun-cheliyan, a Pandiya Prince of the I century A. D. has a verse in *Purananooru* (183) on this subject: "The pupil should render all possible aid to the teacher when he needs it and also give him money for the instruction. He should not be reluctant to revere him. If a mother has several sons, she may not show equal affection to all of them, but may love the learned son more. The ruler of the land may not extend greater welcome to the eldest member of a family, but will follow the counsel of the wise therein. Even among the four castes, if one of the lower caste is learned, another of the higher caste will forget the learned man's low caste and will go to him for instruction." This idea has been expressed by many ancient

writers, among whom the author of *Naladiyar* may be quoted here. "The ferryman always belongs to the lowest caste; on that account he is not depised; the stream is crossed with his help; so also, good things are absorbed with the aid of the learned (irrespective of caste)". The *Kural* says: Birth alone does not confer social status; even if a learned man is born low, he is far superior to an uneducated man, born high.

In like manner, the profession of teaching does not appear to have been the monopoly of the higher caste. Tradition says that the *Kural* was written by Tiruvalluvar, a member of the lowest caste. (But this tradition is rejected by many scholars.) We find quite a large number of the so-called low caste men and women among the Sangham poets. On the spiritual plane, caste had not been a bar for the teaching profession. There is evidence to show that Vedic teaching was not the monopoly of the Brahmin community; members of the lowest castes also were sometimes Vedic teachers; the Vaishnavite genealogy of preceptors recounts a story that when Tirumalai-alwar, a high caste brahmin, desired to study Nammalwar's *Tiruvoi-moli* and master it, he was advised to learn it from Vilan-Cholai-Pillai,

a harijan; Tirumalai accordingly went to Pillai, sat at his feet and learnt it and mastered it so well under him that he came thenceforth to be known as Tiruvoi-moli-Pillai.

EDUCATION OF WOMEN

Women we understand had attained a very high standard of education and culture even in very ancient times. Kakkai-padini was one of the disciples of Agastya and a colleague of Tolkappiyar. She seems to have been a gifted scholar and had written a book on poetics and grammar in her name. There appear to have been two women of the same name; the second one, Kakkaipadini Junior, had also written a poetical work in her name, referred to as *Siru-Kakkaipadiniyam*; both books are however not available today.

Among the poets of the Sangham age, we find more than thirty women poets who had sung verses which were later collected together into the anthologies known as the Eight Collections. The story of Avvai is a well known classical example. Brought up in a very low class family in her infancy, she seems to have mastered all the arts there were for women, and, in her day, all people high and low, including princes, poets and priests, bowed

before her. The ruling princes considered it a great honour to be associated with her and get a song from her in their praise. She had sung about the highest and the lowliest in the land, and her songs carry in them the sober perennial wisdom of mature age and culture. She was always bold and outspoken in her criticism and every one quailed before her wrath and sarcasm. Though poor and lowly in birth, her status as a poet was so great that she was asked to act as ambassador from one prince to the court of another. A Chola prince, meeting her in a lonely jungle, accosted her, saying 'Oh learned damsel'. Her fame was so great that many later poetesses had assumed her name, and today we find in the pages of Tamil literary history, many an Avvai.

Avvai is not a solitary instance: there have been many such poets of humble origin who had earned the esteem of princes and the like. Chellai[1] the good, Kannai the good and Pasalai the good are some examples. Chellai had received great rewards from a Chera prince on whom she had sung ten songs. Women of royal lineage

[1]One Na-chellai was a poetess of the Third Sangam. Her order to the crow was so popular that she came to be known also as Kakkai-padini, she who sang on the crow.

had also composed poems, which display their great erudition and culture. The daughters of Paari and the royal widow of the prince Bhoota-Pandiyan are shining examples of learned womanhood.

The song of the queen of Bhoota Pandiya is worth reproducing here. The Pandiya prince Bhootan had died in battle, while yet young in age. When the elders were making preparations for cremating his body, the queen desired to mount the funeral pyre beside the body of her dead husband and give up her life in the flames. But the court counsellors tried to dissuade her from this. Thereupon, she uttered these words: "O Elders! Ye who would not bless us, but would seek to dissuade us from giving up our life on the funeral pyre of our lord and husband here! Know that we are not cast in the mould of those widowed women, who renounce the pleasures of the world and lead a life of penance and hardship. To us, the fire or the funeral pyre of our husband will be as cool as the deep waters of the lotus tank." Uttering these words, she mounted the pyre and gave up her life in the flames.

An interesting story current in the folklore of Tamilnad from ancient times, linking Avvai and Nakeerar with a highly accomplished young

woman, throws considerable light on the education of women in those days. An young woman, by name Tamil-ariyum-perumal lived in the days of Karikal Chola in the capital city of Uraiyur. She became a gifted scholar through the blessings of Avvai. She was prepared to wed only the man who was her superior in scholarship. Many scholars competed for her hand but failed to win her. Finally Nakkeerar came there on behalf of a wood-cutter, pitted his wits against her and defeated her. The story has detailed anecdotes about the battle of wits between the two. This story is an instance to indicate the high standard of education of the women of Tamilnad in those days.

Muda-thamakkani was a renowned poetess of the Sangham age. She has sung a long poem on Emperor Karikal Chola, directing soldiers to him for patronage, At the close of the poem, she blesses the King with the words, "May your realm prosper and yield a thousand *kalams* of paddy per *veli*". This quantity is equivalent to about ten thousand pounds per acre. With all scientifie advances in the field of agriculture and with all technological, mechanical and scientific aids in ploughing, manuring and pest control, we have not reached even five thousand pounds, which is half the yield mentioned by our poetess.

This may give us a glimpse into the vision of agricultural production which our learned people had in the early centuries. Ten thousand pounds mentioned by our poetess is not an impossibility. Poet Kalladar also mentions the same rate of yield. It also indicates to us the expert knowledge in agriculture which they seem to have had.

Referring to a padini (a female wandering minstrel), Muda - thamakkanni says that she was a learned woman (*Pathuppattu*, II. 47). There had been large groups of such padinis migrating from one prince's court to another, and they bear witness to the high state of learning among women of such poor classes also. Although we have now no direct knowledge of women's education in the early centuries, these instances will clearly illustrate the highly educated and cultured state of women, high class as well as low class,during that period.

Training in the fine arts seems to have been an essential and integral part of women's education. We have seen that of the three–fold classification of Tamil as iyal, isai and natakam, the last two, namely music and dance, directly deal with the fine arts. These two arts had been considered from very ancient days, as exclusive

accomplishments for women, although we find men also dabbling in them in modern days. As social arts, and also as pieces of literary tradition, these had then been in a highly and technically developed state. The padinis, both as a community and as individuals, were no doubt experts in the arts as mentioned earlier, but we know from the classical epic poems that members of the various other classes of society had specific training in these arts. In fact, these arts seem to have formed part of the curriculum of women's liberal education.

The *Silappadikaram* gives us as it were a complete syllabus and curriculum of the two arts. When an young damsel is trained in these arts, a public function was held on the day of her graduation. (We hear of similar graduation day celebrations for men in the case of the Pandava and the Kaurava princes, after they had completed a course of instruction in archery and other military sciences under Dronacharya). Madhavi had completed a course of dancing instruction and a public graduation day function was arranged for her, in the presence of the Chola Emperor Karikala. The qualifications and other characteristics of all the persons and instruments concerned with the dance are very fully enumerated here in the text,

and more elaborately explained in the commentary. The age of graduation is given as twelve years for girls. We have then details about the dance, the dance tutor, the two types of dances in general, the various branches of the dance and its parts, the nine poetic sentiments which it has to portray, folk dances, the mudras (symbolic portrayal of objects and sentiments with the hands and fingers), the music teacher, the composer and teacher of poetry, the drummer, the flute master, yal (harp) instructor, the stage, the head ornament of the dancer, and the dance proper. The elaborate description of all these features and the very large number of literary references and verses quoted by the commentator Adiyarkku - nallar from classical books on music and dance, which are no longer extant, reveal the very highly developed nature of the arts and the training in them and the popular esteem in which they were held. Similar details are also given in the later epic poems, Chintamani and Perunkathai.

All these instances will clearly indicate the exalted condition of womanhood and the nature and scope of its general and physical education as well as cultural and aesthetic training, not only among the higher classes, but also among the middle and the lower classes.

CONCLUSION

We have so far had a glimpse or the state of education in ancient Tamilnad, from the few disconnected and scanty literary references found in the Sangham classics. There were the Brahmins, learning the Vedas and teaching them to others. The *Kural* says : We may forgive the Brahmin if he forgets the Vedas, (the implication is of course that he shall not forget his scriptures) but he is lost if he swerves from right conduct. The study of the Vedas by the Brahmin was something special and it had nothing to do with the general scheme of education in the land and its curriculum. The scope of the curriculum has been referred to under 'the content of Education'.

The three R's were no doubt emphasized, but equal emphasis was placed on mastery of the classical literature and on literary appreciation. Grammar was a very important part of the curriculum. Whatever the pupil learned, he learned well and accurately. Memory was well trained. A good scholar was expected to have developed the capacity to write good verse, as all composition in those days was in verse. The period of study depended on the individual's own capacity and leisure. There was no central

or organised control in general. The seal of the master was more than a certificate for the disciple and, after the training, he faced the world with his own scholarship. When he went to a different place where neither he nor his master was known, his erudition was put to the test before he was admitted as one of the elite group in the new place.

Learned men always led a life of study and dedication to the cause of learning. As they did not run after worldly fame and wealth, they were always poor in material goods. Says the *Naladi* (252): 'You know the wise and the learned suffer from extreme want. Where the Muse of learning dwells, the sulking goddess of wealth does not step in.' But the learned commanded the greatest respect from all people, from the ruling prince down to the lowest citizen. The realm of learning is a democracy which knows no barriers of land, religion or race. The *Kural* has emphasized this. 'Any place is his; and all people his kin' says the *Puranaanooru*. "Only the deeply learned is wise; there is no land which would not welcome him; such land is his native land, no more a foreign land" says an old verse. As pointed out earlier, they were able to influence the rulers even in political affairs. Military training i.e.,

training in arms and warfare, was part of education and was compulsory for all young men.

The average teacher or scholar would have mastered all the sciences, not only language and literature, but some astronomy, medicine and, may be, arithmetic also. His learning was not compartmentalised and so he had developed an all round personality. When later, in the XIX and XX centuries, the compartment system or specialisation in education was introduced by the western rulers of the land, naturally it could produce only warped personalities. The teacher in those days was such an important institution in any place that a place without a teacher was considered not good to live in.

We are led to surmise that the profession of teaching was handed down from father to son. We find in the Sangham poetry scores of instances where a father and his son are both eminent poets; in rare cases we come across a father and his sons as poets. In this manner, ancient texts were specialised in a particular area and this perhaps accounts for the different commentaries and the different schools of thought in grammar and poetics. There seems to have been no distinction as primary, secondary or advanced standards. A particular

teacher was the guru for the pupil from his earliest period till the very end. Each teacher worth the name had of course qualified himself for this life long task. Each village or group of villages was ruled over by a petty chief, but for all practical purposes, it can be considered as an autonomous and virtually democratic unit. Naturally the teacher had to be master of all the subjects and trades in that unit. He did not receive help from any authority and so owed allegiance to none. The dignity of the profession was the only factor governing him. Quite in consonance with his own independence and dignity, he always aimed at producing fearless men of character.

The princes as a class were not only great warriors but were greatly cultured and were themselves poets and patrons of poets and artists. The agricultural classes were of course a highly cultured race, producing some of the best poets and artists of the age and carried great influence with the rulers. The working class was also well educated in all the arts and sciences and also in music and dance. Education of women was perhaps universal and they took part in all walks of life along with men as equal partners.

Such is the picture of Education in the Tamilnad of two thousand years ago.