

# KURUNTOKAI

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உலகத் தமிழாராய்ச்சி நிறுவனம்  
INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TAMIL STUDIES

# KURUNTOKAI

an anthology of classical tamil love poetry

translated by

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International Institute of Tamil Studies



## **BIBLIOGRAPHICAL DATA**

Title of the book	: <b>Kuruntokai</b>
Translators	: Dr. M. Shanmugam Pillai David E. Ludden
Publisher & Copyright	: International Institute of Tamil Studies, CIT Campus, Tharamani Post, Chennai - 600 113.
Publication No.	: <b>258</b>
Language	: English
Date of Publication	: August 1997
Edition	: Reprint
Paper used	: 18.6 Tamil Nadu Super Printing
Size of the Book	: 1/8 Demy Size Royal Octova
Printing types used	: 10pt, 12pt, 18pt.
Number of pages	: xxiv + 464 : 488
Number of Copies	: 1000
Price	: <b>Rs.110/-</b>
Printer	: Udhayam Offset Printers 44, Singanna Street, Chindadripet, Chennai - 600 002
Binding	: Pulp Board
Subject	: An English Translation of Kuruntokaippadalgal.

## EDITORIAL NOTE

### KURUNTOKAI

**Dr. S. Ramar Ilango**

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Chennai**

The classical literature of the Tamils more widely known as 'Sangam Literature' reveals in unambiguous terms the culture and ethos of the Tamils of the Sangam period. The major portion of the Sangam literature speaks of the Akam love. Kuruntokai an anthology of 400 poems on Akam love occupies a special place for its brevity and beauty.

Many attempts have been made to render this monumental work in English. Most of them have been only selections of few poems. For the first time an attempt has been made to render all the 400 hundred poems in English.

The International Institute of Tamil Studies chose to republish this translation since the first edition is not available now. The ideal and most desirable way of translating the ancient classics of any language would be, theoretically speaking, a collaborative effort by native scholars of both the source language and target language. This translation is accordingly a team work by Prof. Muthu Shanmugam Pillai and Prof. David. E. Ludden.

Utmost care has been taken to present these poems in English without mutilating the original emotional content of the poems.

The International Institute of Tamil Studies is grateful to the translators for according the necessary permission to republish this work.

We hope that this will be eagerly received by the lovers of Tamil classics, the scholars and the laity, in India and abroad as well.

This book is published with the financial help of the Directorate of Tamil Development under the scheme of translation of Tamil works into other languages. We are grateful to the Director, Tamil Development, Govt. of Tamilnadu.

Our sincere thanks are also due to the Hon'ble Minister for Tamil Official Language, Culture, Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments, Dr. M.Tamilkudimagan and to Thiru V. Palanichamy, I.A.S. Secretary to Govt., Department Tamil Development - Culture for their sustained help and guidance for the Development of this Institute.

**DIRECTOR**



**Published with the Financial Assistance  
given by the Directorate of Tamil Development-  
Govt of Tamil Nadu under the scheme of  
"Grants for Good Translation works"**



## PREFACE

We present in this volume a complete translation of the *Kuruntokai*, a classical Tamil anthology of love poetry, rendered from the original as compiled and edited by Dr. U. V. Swaminathaiyar (2nd Edition, 1947).

This is a joint effort in the fullest sense: it is inconceivable that the translations could have been completed in their present form by either one of us without the other. Our intent is both to translate with scholarly accuracy and fidelity to the original, and to render the translations in a pleasing and readable English format. We feel that there are crucial features of Tamil literature that become more explicitly elucidated when it is subjected to the process of translation: so we fully intend to add to modern understanding of classical Tamil literature by confronting and seeking to resolve problems of translation. At the same time, we are concerned that the classical literature of South India be made available to a much wider audience than is now the case: so we also intend to portray the beauty, depth and complexity of the original as fully as possible in an English version.

Our collaboration enables us to take many of the traditional problematics of translation head on. We are a native speaker of Tamil and a native speaker of English; a South Indian linguist and an American student of Tamil. We collaborate in constant struggle between the accuracy of the translation and the beauty and comprehensibility of the English. This struggle is especially important when translating this type of literature, for a literal rendition of the classical Tamil can produce very bizarre English; and, at the same time, a more free-flowing English rendition can obscure or distort beyond recognition the intent and integrity of the original.



Neither of us aspire to be poets. Moreover, many of the beauties and characteristics of poetry cannot be portrayed in translation: that which is most beautiful in poetry is least subject to translation. When our English is awkward or difficult to understand, it is because problems of grace and style have not yet been overcome. On the other hand, though our bed-rock is accurate translation, we do not present a critical edition, nor do we attempt to justify and document every single choice we have made in our portrayal of the original. The ambiguities of the classical Tamil poems arise at every level of analysis: the meanings of words, the syntax, the grammar, connotations and implications of phrases and images, as well as the intent of entire poems - - - all these are subject to myriad interpretations. Choices on all these matters must be made definitively in translation, and cannot be accounted for in every case if the text is to be unburdened with extensive technical footnotes.

Some explication of our method is required here, so that the reader may have some notion of the systematic logic through which these myriad choices have been made. There is a second reason for a brief explication of our process: if it is all successful, it may serve as a tool for future translation of the vast body of Tamil poetry that remains beyond the appreciation of non-readers of Tamil.

We will consider our method here in three parts: 1. the translation of the poem itself; 2. the presentation of the poem on the page, with other material; and, 3. the arrangement of the poems in this volume

1. To illustrate some phases and the logic of choices inherent in these translations, let us take a relatively simple poem: number twenty four in this volume. The original in transliteration reads as follows.

neytal parappil pāvai kiṭappi  
 niṇ kuṟi vantaṇṇi iyal iēr koṇka  
 celkam celaviyaṇi koṇmō alkalam  
 āral arunta vayiṟṟa  
 nārāi mitikkum eṇ makal nutalē

A word-by-word translation might be rendered as follows, with grammatical indicators represented in parentheses.

neytal expanse (in) doll laying  
 your meeting I came / constructed-chariot man  
 (voc.)  
 I go. Make go (imp.) evening (conj)  
 āral eaten stomach (gen.)  
 crane trample my baby forehead.

The three finite verbs indicate three sentences. The vocative address of the man in line two could be construed as prefacing the entire poem, or could be attached to any one of the sentences. We translate this vocative as attached to the imperative verb ("make go!"), which is a command ordered to the man by the speaker of the poem. Lines one and two remain as one sentence: "Laying my doll on the expanse of *neytal*, I came to your meeting". *Neytal* can mean both water-lily and the region of the seashore. Number is rarely indicated in these poems for the nouns. And here there is no designation of number for the nouns *neytal*, chariot, *āral* (a kind of fish), stomach, crane, baby, and brow - - all of which could be construed to be singular or plural. Choices concerning number must be made on the basis of contextual evidence.

In the case of *neytal*, the word would denote "water-lilies" if plural, and "seashore", if singular. We take it to be plural, designating the flowers that grow in the seashore region; the "expanse" becomes a "bed" of lilies. The word denoting "meeting place"

(*kuri*) is a technical term in the poetry, meaning "the meeting of lovers". Here it is rendered as the place of the meeting. The first sentence of the translation emerges thus:

I laid my doll  
on a bed of water-lilies  
and came to the place  
of your meeting.

Note that the participial construction of the original has been altered to an English structure conjuncting two finite verbs. The participle is used so often in Tamil that translation into English is often made smoother and clearer by splitting up extended Tamil sentences and conjuncting finite verbs, or by making two or more sentences in English, where only one exists in the Tamil. This practice is followed throughout the anthology.

Having decided to place the vocative in close proximity to the imperative verb, the second sentence takes shape. The man addressed is described as having "constructed chariot(s)". This way of attaching attributes to nouns is basic to classical Tamil: it is called noun-attribution, and is done by merely placing nouns that are attributes immediately in front of the nouns that possess these attributes. In many cases the attributes themselves are in turn modified by extended phrases presenting descriptions of scenes that take place in his town, on the path he travels, etc. See, for example, poem 217. Though such attribution precedes the noun in Tamil, in English it must follow the noun, in a phrase or clause introduced by a relative pronoun; when these phrases are long, literal translation becomes very awkward, for too much material intervenes between subject and predicate. In such cases, we have chosen to repeat the noun as a pronoun: in some instances, this is done by splitting one sentence of Tamil into two or more of English; in others, one-sentence construction is retained, with the use of a colon - - - as in poem 217.



That man

from the village where carp

in the pond

snatch ripe mangoes as they fall

from trees beside the field:

he flattered me with big words

when he was here.....

But our present example is simpler: he is described as being one with the attribute of "constructed chariot (s)". We take "constructed" to mean "well-made", and translate *tēr* in the plural, as "chariots", though it could equally well be singular.

Complexities increase in the last three lines. "I go" is clear enough: the speaker of the poem, having come to their meeting, is leaving. What is the object of 'make go'? This question cannot be resolved by analyzing the grammar of the poem, nor by looking merely at this poem in isolation. As with the word *kuri*, recourse must be made to the poetic tradition of which this poem is a part. The speaker of the poem is female, and has come to the meeting of lovers only to leave again. With a familiarity with the narrative tradition of classical Tamil love poetry (for which see the Introduction), it becomes clear that the speaker is the girl's friend, who speaks here to the girl's lover, after having accompanied the girl to the meeting. "Make go", then, means "see that she goes": she is telling him to see that his lover goes home before her parents miss her and suspect their clandestine meetings. Her friend places her in his care, and instructs him to send her home. Perhaps the girls had told their parents they were going to play on the beach, and they left the beach for the meeting. If he does not make sure she gets home in time, the secrecy of their meetings will be in jeopardy.

*Alkal* (evening) could refer either to that time by which the man must get the girl home, or to that time at which the cranes will be trampling on her baby's brow; or to both of these. We take it to mean that time by which the girl needs be home. The coming of evening is a slow process, with no specific time attached to it; so we render *alkalum*, which Dr. Swaminathaiyar renders as "the coming of evening" in his notes, as "when daylight fades". Thus, we interpret her message as being that, at the very first signs of the coming of evening, he should send her off to her parents.

The last sentence of the poem presents the image of the cranes trampling on the brow of her baby, which refers to her doll. Again, the meaning of this image is subject to interpretation only by recourse to the tradition of poetry in which this poem is embedded. Grammatically, and for translation, the sentence is clear, however: she must leave their meeting to go back to the seashore and save her doll from the ravages of the crane(s). But, interpretation of this image cannot be included within the translation itself; at the same time, such interpretation is important to include with the translation. Thus, notes accompany the poems, both in the text of Dr. Swaminathaiyar and in this volume. Notes are included to unravel complex images and interpret them in the light of the larger poetic tradition. In most cases, images are suggestive to varying degrees of interpretation bearing directly on the context in which the poem is spoken. In this case, the cranes could represent his abuse of his lover, after he has enjoyed her company and tasted of her charms, as the cranes abuse the doll after eating the fish. If he does not take good care of her, by following the instructions of her friend, he will end up trampling on her, and causing her harm. Or, the cranes might well represent gossips, who would abuse the girl with

words (as in poem 185), if their meeting should become known. These gossips might well be the other girls who have gone to play with them on the beach (as in poem 249). In any case, the girl's friend cares for her as she does for her doll, which she regards as her child. She hopes he will care for her in the same way, lest she be harmed as her doll will be harmed by the cranes. Her friend has a maternal love for both lovers in poem 272.

2. Each page of our text has three parts. At the top, the speaker of the poem is identified and the context in which the poem may be spoken is described. This material is translated from Dr. Swaminathaiyar's edition, and represents material that accompanied the poems on the original palmleaf manuscripts, from which he compiled and edited the text. It must be kept in mind that this material was not composed by the poets themselves, and was added to the poems by later commentators. In several cases this information (referred to as the colophon) does not seem to fit the poem at all. In most instances, however, the colophons seem adequate and aid understanding of the poems. Sometimes, more than one context is given for the speaking of a single poem. We acknowledge gratefully Dr. A. K. Ramanujan who, in his selected translations of poems from the *Kuruntokai*, first used the English format employed here for designating the speakers of the poems --- "WHAT HE SAID", "WHAT SHE SAID", etc. (See his *The Interior Landscape*, Bloomington, 1967.)

The second part of the page is the poem itself. It is not always possible for us to account for crucial choices and decisions made in the course of translation, though some are indicated in the notes. Choices are made on the basis of internal evidence as much as possible. Recourse is constantly made, however, to the commentary of Dr. Swaminathaiyar's



notes, which we take, in most cases, to be authoritative. We have not taken the variant readings presented in his text into account in our translations.

Images within the poems describing natural and social scenes so as to make statements bearing on relationships presented in the poems are most often indented on the page. This has been done to facilitate both the emphasis of these portions as thematic units, and their bracketing as parts of the sentence structure. Though these portions are almost always clauses and phrases in a parenthetical relation to the main sentence structure, they are important for an understanding of the poem: in many cases, their importance is spelled out in the notes. It is hoped that this indentation will prove helpful to the reader.

As for the poetry of our translations, it must be said that no attempt has been made to carry over the metrical form or rhythm of the original, nor its terse ambiguities, its euphonic constructions, nor its syntax. We try to make the English clear, even when the original is not. Hence there are places where the English contains certainties that are absent in the Tamil. The translations are uniformly much longer than the originals for this reason, even though superfluous articles, conjunctions, and other standard elements of English prose have been omitted at times. The poems have been read aloud; and lines are structured so as to create clarity, interesting rhythms, and occasional euphonic effects. No meter whatsoever has been employed.

Beneath each poem, the poet's name has been transliterated from Dr. Swaminathaiyar's text. Poems 77, 138, 139, 149, 161, 251, 254, 302, 341, and 392 had no authors indicated on the manuscripts at his disposal. The number of each poem as it appears in his text appears in parentheses on the left

margin, beneath each poem. The reason for this will be explained shortly.

The third part of the page is our notes. These are often no more than interpretive paraphrases of the poems; and some poems have no notes at all. The notes include material gleaned from several sources, which we cannot acknowledge point-by-point in the text. Dr. Swaminathaiyar's commentary is the bed-rock of our notes. The commentary of Puliur Kesikan in his more recent edition of the *Kuruntokai* (1970) has been suggestive, and many of his observations have been incorporated into our notes. R. Raghava Iyengar's *Kuruntokai Vilakkam* (Annamalai, 1947) has been consulted for the first one hundred poems (as numbered in Dr. Swaminathaiyar's text). We have added our own considerations to our commentary and attempted to link the poems together cross-references.

All quotes and references to the *Tolkāppiyam* in our notes refer to the English translation by S. Ilakkuvanar (Madurai, 1963); and references to the *Tirukkural* are those given by Dr. Swaminathaiyar (translation of these passages are our own).

3. The poems are arranged in this text according to the five regions within which the poems are situated in virtue of their respective central mood, narrative context, and imagery. See the Introduction for an explication of these elements of the classical Tamil poetic tradition. Allocating poems to regions is never a fool-proof process, however: for there are many poems that could be placed in different regions, on different criteria than we have chosen as decisive. Puliur Kesikan's attempts to designate a region for every poem in his edition have been helpful in this regard, though we have not been bound by his conclusions in every case. Some instances of questionable allocations are indicated in the notes.

Within each region, we have arranged the poems dramatically, according to a rough approximation of a narrative order. This narration does not procede from the beginning to the end of the text, across regions. Rather, each region has its particular set of narrative themes, within which the narration is suggested by the ordering of the poems. For a description of these narrative themes, and the sequence in which they occur, see the Introduction. This arrangement of the poems has been contrived to facilitate a presentation of the poems that creates a sense of how the poems, relate one to another as a part of a larger poetic tradition.

When there seems to be no particular advantage to a dramatic ordering of the poems - - when, for example, several poems occur within the same dramatic context; - - the poems are arranged alphabetically by author. In most instances, we rely on the colophons for our arrangement into dramatic sequences, though this is not always the case. A certain intuitive freedom has been employed in ordering the poems, in the hope that this will prove helpful for the reader.

Since our numbering of the poems does not coincide with that used in the text from which we translate, which is arranged randomly, the number corresponding to that given in the original text is shown at the foot of each poem, on the left margin, in parentheses. Indexes correlating the two numbering systems are added as an appendix. An outline of our narrative ordering of the poems follows the Introduction.

Appendices identify flora and fauna that appear in the anthology, and indicate the number of the poem in our text in which they occur. A list of chieftains and the poems in which they are cited is also included as an appendix. Finally, a chart is given showing the number of poems attributed to each of

the various speakers in each of the regions of imagery.

We recommend the following works to interested readers, as being helpful for an understanding of classical Tamil love poetry: *The Tamil Concept of Love* by Valliappa Sp Manickam (Madras, 1962), *The Treatment of Nature in Sangam Literature*, by M. Varadharajan (Tinneveli, 1957); *Landscape and Poetry* by Xavier Thani Nayagam and *Sangam Polity* by Dr. N. Subrahmanian (Asia Publishing House, 1966) and, especially, *Tamil Heroic Poetry*, by K. Kailasapathy (Oxford, 1968) The previously cited work by A. K. Ramanujan is a useful and well-written introduction to the literature, and its selected translation of the *Kuruntokai* inspired our work to an appreciable degree.

We thank Ligeia Fontaine for her help in resolving our many problems of English composition; the South Asia Studies Department at the University of Pennsylvania for its financial and material support in preparing the manuscript; Hedy Wassmer for her labor in preparing the appendices; Susan Leigh for her careful proof-reading of the typescript; Dr. G. Vijayavenugopal and T. Sethupandian both Dept. of Tamil, Madurai University, for proof-reading while printing; K M. Natarajan, V. R. Sankarasubbu and S. Loganathan of the Koodal Publishers and S. Jeyapragasam, Lecturer in Ancient History, Madurai University, for their consistent support in bringing out the publication of this work; S. Krishnasamy, R. Balakrishnan and other workers of the Vaigai Achagam for the fine execution of this work; and, lastly, all the many people who have encouraged us to finish this project when things looked bleak.

M. Shanmugam Pillai  
David Ludden



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## TRANSLITERATION SCHEME

### Consonants

- k : when single pronounce as slightly guttural "h", except when it appears initially, when it is pronounced like an English "k"; when doubled, pronounce as "kk".
- c : pronounce always as "s" when single ; as "tch" when doubled.
- ṭ : pronounce as "t", but with tongue rolled back, with the tip touching the palate ; (retroflex t)
- p : pronounce as English "p".
- ṛ : pronounce as slightly rolled "r" ; when doubled pronounce "ttr".
- ñ : pronounce as the "n" in "ing".
- ṇ : pronounce as the "ny" in canyon.
- ṇ : pronounce with tongue rolled back, tip touching palate ; (retroflex n).
- n̄ : English n.
- m : English m.
- n : English n. with the tip of the tongue over the upper row of teeth.
- y : English y.
- ṛ : pronounce flicking tongue over lower ridge of palate above teeth.
- ḷ : English l.
- v : English v.
- ẓ : pronounce as "zh".
- ḷ : pronounce with tongue rolled back, tip touching palate ; (retroflex l).

### Vowels

- a : pronounce as the "u" in "but".
- ā : pronounce as the "a" in "Ah!".
- i : pronounce as the "i" in "it".



- i : pronounce as the "ee" in "teeny".
- u : pronounce as the "u" in "put".
- ū : pronounce as the "u" in "union".
- e : pronounce as the "e" in "bet".
- ē : pronounce as the "ei" in "neighbor".
- o : pronounce as the "o" in "oven".
- ō : pronounce as the "o" in "over".
- au: pronounce as the diphthong in "out".

# Introduction

## I. The Kuruntokai

The *Kuruntokai* is an anthology of 401 love poems belonging to the earliest strata of extant Tamil literature. This strata consists of Eight Anthologies (*eṭṭuttokai*), Ten Idylls (*pattuppāṭṭu*), and a grammatical work called the *Tolkāppiyam*, which codifies the semantic, grammatical, and prosodic constituents of poetry. This corpus of literature is called Sangam Literature in virtue of a legend that three sangams (academies) were held in the ancient days, from which this literature emerged. The legend further holds that the grammar *Tolkāppiyam* is a work of the second sangam, and hence antedates the Eight Anthologies and the Ten Idylls, which are products of the third sangam.

Precise dating of literature is problematic, and the subject of some controversy. The poems and grammar are said to have been composed in their present form between 300 B.C. and 300 A.D., though there is evidence in the literature of an oral poetic tradition that might extend to a much earlier period. In addition, the existence of a grammar codifying the poetic tradition makes it seem logical that a corpus of poetry now lost to us preceded the composition of the *Tolkāppiyam*. The poems were compiled into anthologies long after their composition, however, but sometime before the ninth century A.D., when they are referred to as anthologies. The *Kuruntokai* is said to have been compiled by one *Pūrikkō*, about whom nothing is known.

The poems have come down to us through the centuries inscribed with stylus on manuscripts of palm-leaf. These were passed on generation to generation within South Indian families, and re-copied every three hundred years or so to protect the poems from the ravages of white ants. The palm-leaf manuscripts were compiled and edited through the labors of Dr. U.V. Swaminathaiyar, the first edition of the *Kuruntokai* appearing in 1937. In his introduction to this edition, Dr. Swaminathaiyar concludes, through an analysis of the names of the poets whose work is included in the anthology, that the *Kuruntokai* contains the oldest poems in the Eight Anthologies.

Each manuscript had at its head a sentence called a *kūrru* (referred to in English as the colophon), which identified the speaker and narrative context of the poem: these speakers and contexts are part of the poetic tradition codified in the *Tolkāppiyam*. We will discuss them more fully shortly. In any case, the colophons seem clearly to be additions to the poems, added long after the original compositions, perhaps during the process of their compilation into anthologies. Dr. Swaminathaiyar's edition, from which we translate in this volume, includes these colophons, the poems, lists of variant readings, and commentaries on the meaning of the poems.

Sangam poetry as a whole (excluding the *Tolkāppiyam*) comprises 2381 verses, sung by 473 different poets, and ranging in length from three to three hundred eighty-two lines. Each *akam* poem is a dramatic monologue, never spoken by the poet in the first person, but by a character in a narrative context that is part of the tradition itself. The characters have particular episodic moments when they may speak. Each poem is placed in specific geographical region, during a certain time of the day and year, and utilizes elements of natural imagery for a depiction of its central message. There are particular verse forms that are appropriate for

certain types of poems; and, in all, twenty-seven different elements of prosody...from the placement of sounds in the line to the orchestration of nature imagery within a poem . that are essential for the proper composition of a Sangam poem. These are detailed in the *poruḷatikāram*, the chapter on prosody in the *Tolkāppiyam*.

Sangam poetry is divided into two major categories: *Akam* (pronounced "aham"), and *Puṇam*. *Akam* means "inside", "heart", "that which is internal, enclosed, and subjective"; and, "home". *Akam* poetry is love poetry. *Puṇam* means "outside", "external". *Puṇam* poems are, in some sense, all those that fall outside the category of *Akam*, which is far more rigorously defined in the tradition. *Akam* poetry deals solely with the moods of love, expressed in rich and complex, yet minutely organized, symbolic imagery. *Puṇam* poetry deals with people in historical time, moving in society, with the affairs of states, wars, and the lives of kings; it includes satire, elegy, battle-hymns, flatteries and reveries. *Puṇam* poems may embody feelings; but feelings are expressed in the context of social activity, and about a wide range of topics . from the poverty of poets, to the graciousness of kings, to the brutality of war.

In *Akam* poetry, in contrast, no character can be identified by name, and each poem is situated, not in historical time, but at a moment within a paradigmatic course of love. The love relation portrayed in *Akam* poetry is not the relation of a legendary or real couple; but rather, a love relation that is a paradigm of all love relations, portrayed as an archetype, through statements by various characters in the relationship, at specific episodic moments in its unfolding. Each character is an archetype, speaking in a culturally archetypal (if not idealized) relation of love. When the same character responds differently in different poems to the same narrative situation,

this should be seen as portraying two different archetypal responses, not as contradiction. The paradigmatic narrative course of love and the nature of the statements made at moments in it are described in the *Tolkāppiyam*, and in commentaries, written on it and on the poems themselves.

The *Kuruntokai* is an *Akam* anthology, compiled on the basis of its meter and the length of poems included within it. There are three meters used in the Eight Anthologies: *ācīriyappā*, *kalippā*, and *paripāṭal*. The *Akam* poems using each of these meters were gathered together, and one anthology was compiled from poems using each of the last two meters: they were named after their respective metrical qualities...*Kalittokai* and *Paripāṭal*. The poems using *ācīriyappā* meter were divided into three anthologies, on the basis of the number of lines in the poems. The *Aṅkurunūru* ("five short hundreds") consists of five hundred of the shortest poems, each between three and five lines in length. The *Akanānūru* ("four hundred *Akam* poems") is the collection of the longest poems in *ācīriyappā*, and is called the "long anthology" (*neṭuntokai*). The *Kuruntokai* ("short collection") is an anthology of 401 poems that are between four and eight lines in length. However there is one poem which has nine lines. There are two hundred and five poets represented in the anthology, excluding the author of the Invocation. However the names of the poets of ten poems were not inscribed on the manuscripts at the disposal of Dr. Swaminathaiyar when he compiled the printed edition.

## II The Narrative Course of Love in Akam Poetry

There are two phases in the paradigmatic narrative course of love: pre-marital love and marital love. These two phases are described in two separate sub-chapters of the *poruḷatikāram*. Though a eleventh century commentator *Iraiyaṇār* says that pre-marital love (*kaḷavu*) is the way to marital love (*karpū*), we cannot suppose this to mean that it is the only way. From the evidence of the poetry itself, it appears that marriage would always ensue from pre-marital love, but that other forms of arranged marriage were also practiced as well.

The essence of pre-marital love is secrecy. A sexually mature boy and girl meet, fall in love and procede toward marriage; and as long as their relationship is known only to themselves and their intimate friends, it is called *kaḷavu*. A love that is known with certainty by the public is said to be the equivalent of married love in the *poruḷatikāram*. There are three thematic divisions within the narrative course of pre-marital love: 1) the meeting of the lovers, 2) their returning to the place of their meeting for further clandestine meetings; and 3) their meeting secretly during the day and night with the aid of his friend and/or her friend. Within these three themes fall all the episodic moments that serve as the occasion for the characters to speak during the phase of pre-marital love.

1. Though the boy and girl may have known each other since infancy, one day they exchange a look

of passion and they meet as lovers for the first time. This meeting is called *Iyarkaippunarecci* ("natural union"), and is translated here as "union-by-fate"; for this union is the working of fate, which has bound them as lovers to one another for birth after birth, for eternity.

It is characteristic of this fated union that the lovers be of equal social status, though it is not forbidden for the man to be of higher status. They must be compatible with regard to eight elements of social character and virtue for this equality of status to be fulfilled: birth, that is, the status of their families; family character, or the moral conduct of their families; their own strength of character; the intensity of their love for one another; chastity; graciousness; understanding; and, wealth. In addition, it is said that the boy should be sixteen years old, and the girl should be twelve. So the pre-marital romance described in this tradition is no indiscriminate affair. All the social traits and compatibilities that are essential to the arrangement of marriage are regarded as preconditions for pre-marital romance. The characters in *Akam* poetry must be socially and morally equal in order for their love to exist at all. All characters are, moreover, exemplaries of honorable personality and righteous social conduct, according to the *poruḷatikāram*.

Their union-by-fate is both a reincarnation of their most ancient love, and the beginning of their life together. It is both physical and spiritual union. Though there is no vivid description of its sexual content, there is little doubt that their embraces are filled with passion. At the same time, their first meeting is the full spiritual equivalent of marriage, and is considered as such, at least by the woman, from the very first (49,251).

2. The two lovers return to the same place to meet one another as long as they can. She may be watching the millet fields, to chase away parrots that land on the crop, and he may come by and meet her as she is at her post. This meeting at the same place is called *iṭantalaippālu*.

3. When meeting at the same place becomes impossible, because of any change in circumstances, they must begin to arrange clandestine meetings. This is done through the aid of their friends. Though his friend is initially upset by the changes that have come over the male lover as a result of his union-by-fate (e.g. 4,15), he ultimately agrees to aid him in meeting his lover. He may go to the place of their meeting, for example, and report of the girl's arrival.

The girl's friend plays a far more active role in their love affair. She is the main intermediary between the lovers before marriage. Among all *Akam* poems of pre-marital love, nearly ninety-five percent fall under the theme of their meeting with the help of her friend.

The relation between the women in the tradition is very intimate, and spans successive generations: the girl's friend will become the foster-mother of her children after marriage; and the girl's mother's friend is the girl's foster-mother. The girl's friend is her intermediary with the outside world... with her lover, her foster-mother, and her own mother... in matters of love: for the girl's modesty would be grossly violated if she were to speak of these matters herself. All communications in matters of love go through this chain of women: for example, from the girl, to her friend, to the foster-mother (who is the friend's mother), to the girl's own mother. Her friend accompanies her everywhere, and serves as a combination of playmate, confidant, and chaperone for the girl during her pre-marital romance. Their



intimacy is so great that they refer to the boy as "our lover", and to the love between the boy and the girl as "our love". Their use of the plural possessive pronoun indicates that the girls are as bound together by fate as the lovers. The relation between the girls is as strong and as destined as the love itself.

During pre-marital love, the main preoccupation of the girl's friend is to hasten the advent of marriage. At first, she encourages meetings between the lovers, during the day and night (25). She reports his longing for such meetings to the girl (22). And she tells him of the girl's great love for him (55). But the girls are worried that he does not intend marriage, and that his vows to them are lies (46,47,49). Her friend consoles her (44), but affirms that faint-heartedness will not succeed in bringing them to marriage (80). Then, the girl's friend begins to pressure him in decreasingly subtle ways to end the period of clandestine meetings and move toward marriage. At first, she merely dwells on the dangers of coming at night through the forest (36); but she escalates her pressure by refusing his gifts (78) and refusing to arrange any more meeting for the two of them (79). When he complains, her friend lets him know in no uncertain terms that his passion and excitement are not the binding force uniting the lovers, and that even when they are old and their passion is gone, fate will bind them still as eternal lovers (82): so he might as well stop fooling around and propose marriage right away.

There are four important narrative themes that fall within this larger theme of "meeting with the help of her friend".

- i. He may go off in search of wealth for their wedding. Other forms of long-term separation before marriage are forbidden until after the marriage of the lovers,

according to the *poruḷatikāram*. This journey takes place when he has set his heart upon marriage, and he leaves in order to get enough wealth to complete the marriage arrangements and provide for the comfort of his marital household. He leaves, promising to return by a certain season usually the winter or the early-dewy season. Her anxiety concerning his return is heightened by the approach of the season of his promised return, and is complicated by her concern about the good faith of his vows to marry her.

ii. When the girlfriend refuses to facilitate meetings between them, he gets very upset. In his extreme frustration, he may threaten to reveal their secret love to the whole world, by screaming through streets as he rides a horse made of palm-stems. He threatens to build horse from the rough-edged stems of palmyra leaves and decorate it with bells and garlands, and go screaming through the streets like a madman. He hopes this threat will induce her friend to arrange more meetings, out of fear that he would actually go through with this degrading ritual. He shrinks from actually going through with it, out of the shame it would cause him and her: for, in virtue of the fact that their love would become public knowledge with the performance of the ritual, it would comprise the most shameful sort of announcement of marriage. Nevertheless, there are five poems in the *Kuruntokai* in which he threatens to ride the palm-stem horse (86-90).

iii. During her separations from him in the course of their courtship, she begins to show signs of worry, depression, and emaciation. This may occur during separation between meetings, after the cessation of meetings, or when he is gone off for wealth for marriage. She is worried about a host of things: that her parents will find out about their relationship, and, disapproving, lock her in the house; that he is

not sincere in his vows to marry her, and that he will delay marriage indefinitely; but most of all that somehow he will not become her husband...whether because he might die in the course of his perilous journeys across the forest to meet with her, or because her parents might arrange for her to marry someone else, ignorant of her love for him. She displays all these worries in physical symptoms: laziness, distractedness, forgetfulness (313), pallor (*pacalai*), and perhaps, bad temper.

At some point her parents may notice her condition, but they do not know the cause of it. So they call in a diviner (*kaṭṭuvicci*) to diagnose her ailment. The old woman sings the praises of Murugan, calling out the names of hills sacred to the god, and becomes possessed. Then she reads in molucca beans that the source of all the girl's problems that she is possessed by a demon. At this point, the dancing Murugan priest (the *Vēlaṇ*) is called in to exorcise the demon from the girl, by dancing his "frenzied dance" (*veriyāṭṭu*). He prepares a ritual dancing ground for this purpose.

The song of the diviner, the dance of the *Vēlaṇ*, and deliberations of the parents concerning the choice of a husband for the girl...these are the three occasions established in the tradition as providing scenes wherein the secret love may be revealed virtuously by the girls. They may reveal their secret at any of these points, to prevent the violation of their virtue that would occur if their parents should decide on any, other than their lover to be their husband, or if the divination or exorcism should be carried out. The theme of their revealing the secret under these conditions is called *aṛattoṭunirral*, which translates literally as "standing with-virtue", and which we refer to as the "revelation-with-virtue". This revelation usually follows the

customary chain of communication from the girl to her friend, to the foster-mother, to the mother.

Since the revelation makes their relationship public knowledge, its actual occurrence falls in the phase of wedded love. But it is referred to many times in poems of the pre-marital phase, and their threat of revealing the secret is used to get the man to hurry his plans for marriage. The revelation is actually resorted to only in the last resort, however. If all goes well with this romance, the marriage will be arranged without anyone knowing that the couple had been lovers before their wedding.

iv. The couple may elope, under pressure from the same sort of problems that necessitate the revelation of their secret. The causes of elopement are stated as 1) her fear of losing him, 2) her desire to be with him, 3) her fear that their love would be revealed through scandalous gossip, and 4) her fear of revealing the secret to her mother. Thus it seems elopement is resorted to in place of the revelation-with-virtue, rather than after its failure to secure the blessings of the parents for the marriage of the lovers. The actual elopement falls in the phase of marital love, for with it the relationship is made public. But its background is in the phase of pre-marital love.

Marital love can thus begin with or without pre-marital love, and with or without public knowledge of the pre-marital relationship, if it existed. The themes of wedded life that present moments for the poems included within this phase of love are these: 1) marriage itself (including elopement and revelation with-virtue); 2) the joyousness of married life, freed from the torments of pre-marital romance; 3) feigned love-quarrels; 4) real love-quarrels; 5) the resolution of love-quarrels; and 6) separation. Though there are some poems depicting the happiness of married life

in the *Kuruntokai* (205-211), the majority of poems in this phase depict either love-quarrels and their resolution, or separation of the couple because of his long-term journey away from the home

There are four duties for which the husband must leave his wife for extended periods of time: for wealth, education, fighting a war, and serving as an ambassador in the service of king. Of these, only separation for wealth can take place before marriage. Separation for education can last up to three years, but the others can last only one year. The voyage is never undertaken with the wife. The narrative course of these various modes of separation is virtually the same; and, in most instances, it is not clear what the reason for his separation actually is.

He feels his heart tugging at him to leave (let us say) in search of wealth (334). Realizing that this means leaving her behind, he tries to convince himself that he needs no more wealth than his beautiful and loving wife (336). He is torn between his duty to add to the wealth of his forefathers (368) and his duty to make her happy: on the one hand, wealth is required to fulfil his duty to support her and their children; but on the other hand leaving her will make her very unhappy, and will constitute a failure to support her with loving kindness.

Sensing his impatience to leave, she begins to worry, and her friend tries to console her, saying he would never leave her to pine away in misery (381). Each of them is afraid to raise the subject, and they both deny the possibility of his ever leaving and his real desire to do so. In the process, he may even leave without telling her (361). On his journey he must cross the wild jungle or the wasteland, and she and her girlfriend worry for his safety in many poems (384,371). Both she and her friend wonder if he will see scenes in nature that will remind him of them (377). As the season of his return approaches, she

is caught in a double anxiety: she worries that he will not return by the appointed season (183); and she worries that he will be so anxious to return that he will abandon his work at the instant the season arrives, and return home without completing that for which he went away (173). She often deals with her anxiety by denying that the season has come at all; and her friend often tries to dissuade her from grief by denying the season for his return has arrived (171-178). They watch for signs; and, ultimately, he returns (199-202; 397-401).

Nearly a quarter of all poems in the phase of wedded love deal with the theme of their love quarrels, which arise from his having kept the company of harlots, or concubines. Most of these quarrels take place on his return to the house after such a visit, and often are mediated through the aid of messengers from him, who seek to regain her acceptance of him into the house. Sometimes this messenger is her friend. His affairs are not purely nocturnal: for he and his harlot go to play on the river bank in the day (219), and he rides off to see the harlot first thing in the morning (236).

The narrative moment most portrayed within this theme is her interactions with the messengers that have come to secure his re-entry into the house. His wife exhibits three main tactics in dealing with him and his messengers: 1) saying nothing, and pretending nothing at all has happened, so that he will come into the house ashamed of himself, in the face of her unsuspecting constancy; 2) giving in to the pleas of his messenger or himself, and re-admitting him into the house; 3) refusing his messenger, and refusing to allow him back into the house. Though her friend sometimes is his messenger, at others her friend is the mouthpiece of his wife, and criticizes him in ways his wife might not feel free to do (229). The scene with the messenger is

the best occasion for the wife or the friend to express the sadness of their predicament, as virtuous women, when faced with the antics of the husband (214,236,237). However; when all is said and done, they are not able to keep him away forever, they must re-admit him eventually, for it is their duty, and they cannot live without him (238). Their refusals to allow his re-entry are part of their love-quarreling; and, even when the joy of quarreling and making up again has waned, as a result of their miseries, they are still left with their duties toward him... even when love is gone (234).

### III. The Symbolic Language of Akam Poetry

There are three levels of content in *Akam* poetry: in ascending order of importance, they are 1) temporal and spacial imagery, including times of day (*cirupoṟutu*), seasons (*perumpoṟutu*), and the names of geographical regions; 2) nature imagery, including flora, fauna and scenes from the human social world and; 3) emotional content, describing the central emotional message of the poem, or its mood.

All descriptive imagery in *Akam* poetry is intended to aid in the expression of the central emotional message (*uripporu!*) of the poem. The shorter the poem, the less room for the inclusion of imagery exists. So, in the short poems of the *Aiṅkurunūru*, there is very little temporal, spacial, or descriptive used; and what there is of imagery in these poems is portrayed in a cryptic manner. In the long poems of the *Kalittokai* and the *Akanāṇūru*, on the other hand, extended descriptions are given, to provide ornate and detailed pictures of nature and the human social world. The poems of the *Kuruntokai* lie between these two poles, with regards the extensiveness of imagery: descriptive and symbolic imagery plays an important part in the poems, but there are very few poems in which a direct statement of mood does not appear.

All three levels of content are represented in the organization of descriptive imagery into the "five aspects of love" (*aintinai*), each of which is identified with and embodied in one of the five geographical



regions within which the poems take place. The poetry uses the natural elements of the five regions to portray central emotional contents that are associated with each of the regions.

The five regions are the mountains (*kurin̄ci*), the forest (*mullai*), the lowland or agricultural region (*marutam*), the seashore (*neytal*), and wasteland or desert tract (*pālai*). Each region embodies one of the aspects of love, and contains within it myriad elements of natural imagery, the foremost of which is the flower bearing the region's own name. The flower, region and aspect of love in each case are used almost synonymously in *Akam* literature: so much so that there is some controversy as to which of these three the respective names came to designate first. But the *poruḷatikāram* makes it clear that the aspect of love is the most important attribute of a region ...more important than the flowers, animals, or landscapes contained within it: for the flowers of two regions may appear in the same poem, but the intermingling of aspects of love within one poem is not allowed.

i. The aspect of love embodied in the mountain region is union (*punarcci*): all natural descriptive elements of the region are used to describe the moods associated with the union of lovers.

The mountain region is associated with pre-marital love, in which the lovers are united in their fated first meeting and procede toward marriage. In addition, the revelation-with-virtue is portrayed in imagery of the mountain region: for the girl is said to be possessed by the "demon of the hills" (144), and the diviner and Muguran priest both become possessed by Murugan, the god of the mountain region. Even when poems portray lovers separated from one another they may be poems of the mountain region: for one of the main problems of pre-marital

love is the difficulty of union and the traumas of their meetings. All the themes of pre-marital romance are contained within the mountain region; as are post-marital poems dealing with their union... union, for example, after a love-quarrel (151-152).

ii. The aspect of love embodied in the forest region is waiting (*iruttal*). Usually, this is the waiting of the woman: for she must wait for him to initiate meetings, propose marriage, come to meetings, and return from work and from journeys.

The characteristic season of the forest region's poems is the rainy season... the season by which he promised to return from his journey. Almost half the poems of the forest region in the *Kuruntokai* are identified in the colophons as being spoken at the "coming of the season", which is invariably the rainy season. Though the forest region is associated with that tract of land through which he must travel to come to their pre-marital meetings (36), it is important to keep in mind that poems of the forest region can refer to any period of waiting, in either phase of love. So, unless otherwise indicated in the poem, her statements at the coming of the season can refer to any of the modes of his dutiful separation, in either phase of love.

At the coming of the season she relates her feelings through descriptions of her relation to the season itself. Often, she and her friend deny the season has come at all: for if the season had really come, he would have already returned. She compares her own condition to the colors and occurrences of the season. And at other moments, she wonders whether or not he will see scenes characteristic of the forest in the rainy season, and seeing them, think of her. If he thinks of her, she thinks, he will not be able to stay away any longer; and he will return at once.

The waiting of poems of the forest region connotes patience and a degree of faith in him and his returning soon. Though she may be emaciated by worry and grief, she has faith still. The coming of the rainy season is often compared to his return in this way: as the land is refreshed and enlivened by the coming of the rainy season, after the dryness of summer, so she will be refreshed by his return, and by the raining of his love on her.

iii. The aspect of love embodied in the lowland region is love-quarreling (*ūṭal*), which arises from his involvement with the harlot(s). Hence, all poems of the lowland region take place in the phase of wedded love; as such, it is the only region that coincides precisely with a specific narrative theme within a single phase of love. All the imagery of the lowland region is brought to bear on the love-triangle and intrigues resultant from his affair(s): scenes in the agricultural region represent aspects of his relation with the harlot, her quarrels with him, the harlot's response to the criticisms of his wife, the harlot's competition with concubine, their refusal to let him back into the house, and their ultimate acceptance of him back into their hearts and home, etc. Whenever elements of lowland imagery appear in a poem, they are interpreted as referring to this nexus of relationships.

iv) The aspect of love embodied in the seashore region is extreme sadness (*ironkal*). The seashore is the only region that has as its central aspect a specific mood: elements of seashore imagery are invoked to portray sadness whenever it occurs in the course of love relations. It is especially associated with the sadness of loneliness; and, in fact, the word used most often for miserable loneliness (*pulampu*) is synonymous with this region. The rhythmic, lapping waves, the mist, the sand dunes, the groves, and all the elements of seashore imagery are said to be

conductive to the portrayal of extreme melancholy, in the *Akam* tradition.

Poems of the seashore region always occur when the lovers are apart, but this may be the case at many points in the course of their relationship. Hence, it is not always possible to discover just why the speaker of the poem, which is almost always the woman, is so sad.

v. The aspect of love embodied in the wasteland, or desert region is separation (*pirivu*), often, but not always, accompanied by moods of desparation. The wasteland is especially associated with separation caused by his long journey away from her, in which he must cross the rugged and dangerous wasteland and return to her with his mission accomplished. The other narrative theme associated with the wasteland region is their elopement: for they must separate from their parents and go off together into the wasteland.

There is no specific region that corresponds to desert or wasteland in South India. It is said that either the forest or mountain regions can become wasteland in the summer, when the heat of the summer dries up all vegetation and shade, and leaves vast waterless tracts that are infested with robbers. Death lurks in the wasteland, and travel through the wasteland is difficult and lonely. The one left behind (ie. the woman) worries for his safety, and questions the nature of the love of any man who could be so cruel to leave her behind. As miserable as it is to cross the wasteland, it is worse to be left alone at home: these poems are suffused with her desperate longing for his return.

In addition to the "five aspects of love" and their respective regions of imagery, there are two "deviant forms" of love, called *kaikkilai* and *peruntinai*: these

forms represent aborted or unrequited love, and love that exceeds the bounds of modesty and social propriety, respectively. The deviant forms have no regions, and no elements of natural, temporal, or spacial imagery associated with them. There are, very few poems in the *Akam* anthologies written within these themes, but the themes pervade the poems of the five regions, nonetheless: the two deviant forms are alluded to obliquely in several poems in the *Kuruntokai*.

Aborted, or unrequited, love occurs when the preconditions for mutual love have not been fulfilled. It is defined as that form of love in which a man feels passion for a young girl who has not yet reached sexual maturity, addresses to himself poems about the agony of his love, and receives no response whatsoever from her. This impotent manifestation of love is treated in only four *Akam* poems, and not at all in the *Kuruntokai*. But fear of this incompatible asymmetry may confront either of the lovers before they exchange their first look of mutual affection... as, for example, when he might see her from a distance, and love her, without knowing anything at all about her. Since their look of love is the first occurrence in their love relationship, this experience and poems describing it fall completely outside the five regions and the five aspects of love.

The second deviant form...the "form of excess" ...is referred to more often in poems of the five regions. It is defined as 1) the act of riding the palm-stem horse, 2) falling in love with an aged person, 3) lust in excess that cannot be satisfied, and 4) lust satisfied by acts of violence. The excess can be either an excess of lust (or, grief according to some authors), or an excess of immodesty in acts performed to gain objects of desire. We have already said that he threatens to ride the palm-stem horse, in response to her friend's refusal to arrange meetings;

in addition, there are several poems that refer to his excess of passion which overflows all bounds (201,219). In several poems, she worries that she will die of grief, in his absence (e.g., 55,57,79,266,310). Within the five regions, he does not ride the palm-stem horse, and she does not die of grief: but these events and anxiety about their occurrence is an important element of the expression of emotions within the five regions. The form of excess is the limit against which their feelings of love define themselves. They are afraid that their love will be too much for their lives to bear...too strong to be restrained within the bounds of social convention. The form of excess, then, stands in the *Akam* tradition just as insanity and crime stand in the culture: the lovers are afraid of madness and death, and of deviant behaviour, resulting from the overwhelming power of their love. The form of excess, then, appears as a persistent possibility in the cultural imagination, and permeates the ethos of the five regions, although, as a form of love, it lies completely outside the regions, and aspects of love.

#### IV. Summary of Literary Conventions in Akam Poetry

In *Akam* poetry there are two phases of love: secret, or pre-marital love (*kaḷavu*), and marital love (*karpu*). Pre-marital love is a sufficient but not necessary condition for marital love: every pre-marital relation proceeds into a marital phase, but marital love need not be preceded by pre-marital romance.

Within each phase of love there is a paradigmatic narrative course, through which the lovers progress. In the course of each phase there are myriad narrative or episodic moments (*turai*), which serve as the occasion for the various characters in the love drama to express themselves in *Akam* poems. Each poem is a dramatic monologue spoken by one of the characters at one narrative moment, although ambiguities in composition and interpretation of the poems sometimes renders it the case that one of several characters might be speaking in the poem, at one of several possible narrative moments. For example, many of the poems attributed to "her friend" by the writers of the colophons might have been spoken by the female lover herself, and vice versa.

Each poem attempts to express one central emotional message (*uripporu!*). Two levels of descriptive material are employed for this purpose, when descriptive material is included in the poems at all: 1) temporal and spacial description (*mutarporu!*), including seasons, times of day, and names of geographical regions; and

2) natural descriptive imagery (*karupporul*), including all the elements of nature... animals, plants, gods, cities, clans, and the entire world of human social activity. The relation between these levels of content in the portrayal of the central emotional message is this: temporal and spacial elements serve as a stage for the descriptions of nature, which describe symbolically aspects of real relationships among the characters in the love drama. Also, natural description may embody in itself the emotional content of the poem: as in poems of the seashore region, which embody in their descriptions the sadness of the woman. Hence, descriptive elements describe and explain the emotional content of the poems; and often serve to place the poem in its narrative context, by symbolizing the episodic context from which the expressed emotion arises.

All elements of natural description, and the emotional contents that they are orchestrated to portray, are organized into five aspects of love, which are equated with and embodied in five geographical regions. These are the mountain, forest, lowland, seashore, and wasteland regions; and the aspects of love relations with which these are identified are union, waiting, love quarreling, sadness, and separation, respectively. Each region is in itself a special description, and each contains natural and social elements that represent and describe the central aspect of love associated with it. Each aspect of love is associated with specific moods and narrative themes, situated within the narrative course of love.

In addition, there are two "deviant forms" of love provided for in the tradition, though they are sparsely represented in the literature. They are aborted, or unrequited love, in which the preconditions for mutual love are not met; and, excessive love, in which the socially acceptable bounds of emotion and behaviour are transgressed. These deviant forms are



isolated from the rest of the literary tradition, in that they do not possess descriptive, symbolic, or emotional contents of the sort that occur in the five regions and aspects of love; and they do not occur at any narrative moment encompassed by the five aspects. But, at the same time, their existence is important to the five aspects of love, in that they are feared and referred to obliquely in different contexts. The form of excess is particularly feared and often mentioned... as a kind of abyss into which the lovers may fall as a result of their love's strength and overwhelming power over them.

All these elements blend in the poetry like this: the temporal and spacial imagery combine with symbolic natural imagery to portray the central mood of the poem, which is expressed at a particular narrative moment in the narrative course of one of the phases of love. The five aspects and regions of love organize the descriptive elements into the portrayal of the central mood. Through this organization, it is possible for a poem to portray its emotional content in the most implicit manner, without recourse to direct statement of it. With a familiarity with all the elements of the *Akam* tradition, it is possible, with varying precision, to locate any poem in time, space, and narrative context, and to discern its central emotional content, though all of this may be spoken in the most obscure implications.

## The Arrangement of Poems in this Volume

We have arranged our translation of the *Kuruntokai* according to the five regions of imagery, and within each region according to a dramatic arrangement that attempts to approximate the ordering of narrative themes within the paradigmatic narrative course of love. An outline of our arrangement appears below. Some freedom has been taken with this arrangement. For example, poems concerning "marital bliss" occur within "poems of the lowland region", in our arrangement, in spite of the fact that the aspect of "love-quarreling" is central to the region. This is because the poems in question utilize elements of the lowland as natural imagery; because the lowland is the only region specifically concerned with the phase of wedded love; and, because there is no other region into which these poems clearly can be fit. In addition, this group of poems (206-211) creates a nice contrast to the rest of the lowland poems, which present the main theme of the region... his affair with the harlot. There are other freedoms of this sort taken in our arrangement, some of which are specified in the notes to the poems in question.

### I. POEMS OF THE MOUNTAIN REGION: 1-153.

- i. Their union-by-fate: 1 - 3.
- ii. His response to the union by fate; and his friend's response to the changes in him: 4 - 20.

- iii. The arrangement of meetings between the lovers: 21 - 29.
- iv. Meetings missed because of mistakes in the signs: 30 - 32.
- v. Changing the place of meetings; and the dangers of night-meetings: 33-40.
- vi. The growing anxiety of the women; the traumas of an extended courtship; and his long delay in coming to marriage: 41-59.
- vii. Gossip: 60-62.
- viii. Her over-protectedness in her mother's house: 63-71.
- ix. Their meetings are in jeopardy: 72-75.
- x. Ending the meetings: 76-91.
  - a. His response: 83-85.
  - b. His threats to ride the palm-stem horse: 86-90.
  - c. Her friend reports his condition: 91.
- xi. His journey for wealth for marriage: 92-123.
- xii. Her friend encourages elopement: 124-126.
- xiii. The "frenzied dance" of the *Vēlaṇ*: 127-129.
- xiv. The revelation-with-virtue: 130-140.
- xv. Their marriage becomes certain: 141-148.
- xvi. Post-marital poems of the mountain region:
  - a. She responds to her friend's praise that she had withstood the pre-marital traumas so well: 149-150.
  - b. She accepts him into the house, after his trip to the harlot: 151-152.
  - c. During a love-quarrel, he looks back to how she was in the days before their marital strife: 153.

## II POEMS OF THE FOREST REGION: 154-205.

- i. What she said, when he was gone; (before or after marriage): 154-161.
- ii. Shē responds to her friend's encouragement: 162-170
- iii. Their denials that the season of his promised return has really come though the signs of its coming have appeared: 171-178.
- iv. The coming of the season of his promised return: 179-190.
- v. His return approaches: 191-195.
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- ix. Her responses to her friend's encouragement:  
383-388.
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# A CHART OF IMAGERY IN AKAM POETRY

Region	Mountain	Forest	Lowland	Seashore	Wasteland
Aspect of Love	Union	Waiting	Love-quarrel	Sadness	Separation
Season(s)	winter, early dewy season	rainy season	all seasons	all seasons	summer, late dewy season
Time of day	midnight	evening	dawn	sunset	mid-day
God	Murugan	Vishnu	Indra	Varuna	Durga
Flowers (e. g.)	<i>kuyiñci</i>	jasmine	lotus, <i>marutu</i>	water-lily	<i>vākai</i> , <i>pālai</i>
Plants and Trees (e.g.)	<i>vēñkai</i> , jack tree, bamboo	<i>konyai</i> , neem, <i>cēmpu</i> , <i>pīcai</i>	banyan, mango, rattan vine	palmyra tree, <i>tāzai</i> shrub	spurge, <i>vākai</i> , <i>yā</i> and <i>ōmai</i>
Birds	parrot, peacock and heron	peacock	sparrow	seagull, crane and stork	eagle, vulture, kite, dove
Animals	lion, tiger, monkey, elephant	deer, rabbit	cows, buffalo, fresh-water fish	shark, crocodile	wild dogs, tiger, elephant, and lizards
Types of water	rain, waterfalls, springs, mountain rivers	spring and rain water,	rivers, tanks, fields, ponds	ocean, wells, back-waters	stagnant water, dried springs
People and Occupations	<i>kayavars</i> , hunting, guarding millet	planting	ploughing, farming	selling fish and salt, fishing	travelling, robbing and hunting, <i>Mayavars</i>

# Invocation

Murugan's beloved feet  
are red like the lotus;  
his body is red like coral;  
and his garments are red  
as *kunri* seeds.  
He threw his long  
and shining spear  
to split the heart of the mountain;  
and his battle-flag bears the cock.  
As long as he protects,  
the world will live in days of bliss.

(1)

*Pāratampāṭiya Peruntēvaṇār*

This poem is added to the anthology and is not an *Akam* poem. One such invocation was added to each of the Eight Anthologies, five by this same poet. All five regions are represented in the imagery of this invocation. The lotus, coral, mountain, *kunri*, and the word used for "shining" represent the lowland, seashore, mountain, forest, and wasteland regions respectively. The mountain referred to is *Mt. Kiravuñcam*, which Murugan split in half to remove it as an obstacle to his devotees. Here, Murugan - - the god of the mountain region - - is depicted in his more familiar form, as a warrior god. See also 78. This invocation suggests that in an epoch of warrior kings and chieftains, the benevolent protection of a warrior god facilitated domestic life and all the affairs of love portrayed in *Akam* poetry.





POEMS OF THE  
MOUNTAIN REGION



## 1.

## WHAT HE SAID

(to her, during their union-by  
-fate, to ease her embarrass-  
ment; addressing it to a bee:)

O bee  
with your hidden wings:  
you have lived a life in search  
of honey.  
So tell me truly  
from what you have seen:  
among all the flowers you know,  
is there one that smells more sweet  
than the hair of this woman,  
    with her peacock gait,  
    and close-set teeth,  
    and ancient  
    eternal  
    love?

(2)

*Iraiyanār*

It is said that this song has a legendary history. A Pandya king wondered if there was a smell to a woman's hair. A contest of poets was held, and *Iraiyanār* won with this poem, but not before being challenged by the great poet *Nakkīrar*. As it turned out, *Iraiyanār* was none other than the god Shiva in his form as Madurai Somasundara. In this poem, "ancient, eternal love" is a rendering of *keṇīya naḷpu*, which is the love of lovers bound together birth after birth. For other expressions of this love, see poems numbered 3,82,236,243. The man seeks to overcome her bashfulness with this flattery. Shyness is one of the four essential virtues of women in this tradition: the others being fearfulness, modesty, and innocence. Thus, her shyness is both a characteristic that attracts him and one which he must seek to overcome in order to further their intimacy.

## WHAT HE SAID

(to her, during their union-by-fate,  
to allay her fears that he will  
separate from her.)

O woman of dark complexion,  
with heaps of hair smelling of *kuvaḷai* flowers;  
with a red mouth packed with honey  
and fragrant as a lily;  
and with many tiny passion marks, like  
the pollen of a lotus in deep water:  
listen  
when I tell you not to fear,  
and do not be afraid!  
If I could have the whole world  
girded by oceans,  
    where swans with tiny feet  
    live on dunes of sand,  
I would not think  
of foresaking your love.

(300)

*Ciraikkūṭiyāntaiyār*

The introduction of imagery from the seashore region... the lily, lotus, oceans, dunes and swans... does not remove this poem from the mountain region: for the central aspect of the poem is union, and his vow not to leave her. Seashore imagery does, however, foreshadow the sadness that she would feel if he should separate from her.

## WHAT HE SAID

(to her, after their union-by-fate  
when she was afraid he would  
leave her:)

Your mother and my mother,  
how are they related?  
Your father and my father,  
what are they to  
one another?  
You and I,  
how do we know each other?  
Like the rain  
and red earth,  
our loving hearts are mingled  
as one.

(40)

*Cempulappeyanirār*

The poet's name is a pseudonym taken from the main image of the poem: it means "the man of red earth and rain-water". As in poem 1, the intent of the poem is to convey the eternal nature of their love. Their parents too are eternally related in virtue of the love that is reborn between them birth after birth. The hearts of the lovers are united like the rain and the earth, which, though each is distinct and different, are united as one substance during the rains. There is an Advaita aspect of this image, which is consciously portrayed in the translation. The red earth may symbolize Murugan, or may be just the clay-laden earth so common in Tanil Nadu.

## WHAT HE SAID

(to his friend, who had noticed  
changes in him since meeting  
the girl:)

She is the wide-shouldered young  
daughter of a *Kuravar*,  
whose small house  
is on a hillside filled with flowers,  
    where a clean, white waterfall  
    drops from a high mountain  
    and bubbles  
    in a cleft of rock:  
her tenderness,  
like water,  
subdued the fire  
of my strength.

(95)

*Kapilar*

He responds here to his friend's comments about the change come over him since meeting the girl. He says that his strength of will (*uran*) has been conquered by the tenderness of the girl. This strength is one of the two essential characteristics of virtuous men: the other is nobility. The *Kuravars* are a clan of the hills, and are identified with the basket-weaver clan of today that bears the same name. The waterfall is an important image of the mountain region, representing that which is cool, refreshing, and life-giving. Here, as in poem 5, its usage may symbolically portray ejaculation.

## 5. WHAT HIS FRIEND SAID

(to him, when he found out the changes  
in him are due to the love of a woman:)

O man of the hills,  
where the long, white  
waterfall  
drops from the tip  
of a high mountain,  
making sounds like the drums  
of wise, old dancers:  
the stupidity of love  
which comes for people who  
don't know even a little  
about what is good,  
is really  
contemptible.

(78)

*Nakkīraṇār*

His friend contrasts the nobility of the man with the stupidity of love, and thus says such love is not fitting for him. The same contrast is portrayed in the waterfall image: the waterfall sounds like noble drums of wise, old dancers, but it shelters the play of lovers, and symbolizes their falling in love. Love is stupid because it "comes for" ignorant people. His friend may be saying one or all of the following here: love itself is foolish for possessing people who act crazy under its influence; the man is foolish for falling in love; or the girl somehow is not a fitting object of love.



## WHAT HE SAID

(to his friend:)

"Love, love", they cry;  
 but love is neither devil  
 nor disease;  
 never does it grow  
 invisible  
 and then throb  
 or fade away.  
 But, ones who see the truth  
 say this: like the rut  
 of an elephant eating leaves,  
 love reveals itself  
 in time.

(135)

*Milaipperunkantan*

His friend has ridiculed him for falling in love. But, he says, love does not strike, like a disease or a demon; nor does it exist invisibly like a spirit, and then swell up, or die off. The ones who know, ie: him, say love exists latent in everyone; and, like the rut of an elephant may appear when it is eating leaves, love becomes manifest unexpectedly, but inevitably, in its season. That love is an affliction or disease will become clear, however, during the period of love - sickness, especially for the girl. The image of love as a demon refers to the parents' belief that it is the god Murugan who causes the grief of the girl during pre - marital love. Images of love as devil and disease, thus, are standard elements of poems portraying pre - marital love. See poem number 127.

## 7. WHAT HE SAID

(in response to the criticism  
of his friend : )

My friend,  
you criticize me,  
but I too wish someone  
could stop my love.  
That would be good.  
But  
    like butter laid  
    on a hot rock, baking  
    in the sun, and  
    guarded by a deaf-mute  
    without hands,  
    with only his eyes,  
my love - sickness spreads,  
and it is so hard  
to contain.

(53)

*Vellivitiyār*

He is love - sick between their meetings. He has no control over it, both because his love itself is out of his control, and because the meetings are being arranged by her friend, in all likelihood. The deaf-mute has no voice to call out for help, and no hands to contain the butter himself, so it melts and spreads over the rock in the sun. Like this his love-sickness spreads out of his control. See also 83.

( to him: )

Love, love...

they always talk about love:

but love is neither devil nor disease.

O man of wide shoulders

if you think of it,

love is a sweet,

surprising feast,

like an old cow licking

tender young grass

that sprouts on an old

high plateau.

(204)

*Milaipperunkantay*

The grass on the old plateau is so new and short that the cow cannot even get it in its teeth, so it only licks. So, even a little love is enough to satisfy. A slightly more cynical interpretation might read some sarcasm into the friend's words. He could be saying love is so little sweetness among so much misery and pain, just as this tiny grass is so little sustenance in the wasteland. There is some derogation implicit in his friend's comparison of the girl to "young grass", just sprouting, and of him to an old cow licking at it. He may be saying he is too old for love, or she is too young to be a proper object of affection.

## WHAT HE SAID

(to his heart, after their  
fated union:)

The woman I longed for,  
and stayed with,  
has hair that bees  
swoop down on;  
it is well arranged  
and wavy,  
    like fine, black sand  
    in ripples on the long beach  
    of the prospering *Cōṣa*'s  
    *Uṛantai* town;  
it is cool and fragrant.

(116)

*Iḷankṭraṇ*

The city of *Uṛantai* was on the Kaveri River, hence the black, wavy sand is an attribute of the city. Her beauty is compared to the beauty and prosperity of the city, as well as to the wavy sand. Her hair is full of flowers that bees come down on to obtain pollen. The flowers are so fresh as this. She is also in blossom, like the flowers, and he is like the bee. The image of her as a flower and of him as the bee will be developed in detail throughout the poems of the mountain region.

## WHAT HE SAID

(in response to the ridicule of his  
friend : )

How could I ever  
forget her?  
She with her brown complexion  
and enticing beauty,  
so willing to be embraced,  
with her soft and heaping  
breasts, and long hair  
entwined;  
and her look: with her gaze  
tilted,  
    like a calf so young  
    that its head quivers  
    in longing  
    to see its mother  
    with her udder full of milk.

(132)

*Uṣṣaikkūṭiyāntaiyār*

His friend criticizes him for thinking of nothing but her. He responds by saying how could he possibly think of anything else when she is as amazingly beautiful as she is. Her look is the central feature portrayed: it is innocent, expectant, and full of longing. See also poems numbered 191, 311.

## WHAT HE SAID

(to his heart, when he was not  
with her, but craving to meet her:)

The body of this woman,  
whose fragrance is like  
a beautiful garland  
made from bunches of *kāntal* flowers  
and tender blossoms and buds  
of jasmine,  
mixed among fragrant *kuvaḷai* petals,  
is more tender  
than a tiny sprout,  
and sweeter to hold.

(to his friend, after their union  
-by-fate:)

Just like the striped young  
of the small, white snake  
torment the forest elephant,  
that young girl,  
    with bright teeth  
    like tender sprouts  
    and bangles on her arm,  
torments me.

(119)

*Caiti Nātaṇār*

She may be tender and innocent, with tiny teeth that resemble sprouts. But she torments me, he says. He is often compared to an elephant. So much so that every image including an elephant can be interpreted as referring to his behaviour in relation to his lover. Her teeth are like sprouts in that they are young, and pointed, like leaves when sprouting.

## WHAT HE SAID

(after their union-by-fate:)

The young girl, with eyes  
 like flowers,  
 who drives away parrots from millet fields,  
 with her garland tied,  
 of flowers picked from mountain springs:  
 does she know?  
 Or not?  
 Even after I left,  
 my heart remained with her,  
     like an elephant  
     breathing a deep sigh  
     as it lays down at night.

(142)

*Kapilar*

She chases away parrots from millet as a part of her work in her family. He met her as she was engaged in this, perhaps. Again, he compares himself to an elephant. This time, however, it is his heart that lay down with a big sigh and remained with her, like an elephant at night. A common Sangam usage is introduced here: his heart is portrayed as having a life of its own. He may have left, but his heart remains with her. This usage is developed in great depth, for many purposes, in the anthology.



(to his friend)

The vine - like girl chases parrots  
 that land on millet  
 flourishing in fields burnt  
 from forest;  
 the sound she makes to chase them away,  
 with the *kulir* in her hand,  
 is like music,  
 and the rhythmic tune is so sweet  
 that the birds think she is welcoming them;  
 so they do not fly away:  
 at this,  
 her eyes that cry,  
 as she sobs, become like  
*kuvalai* flowers  
     blooming by deep waters  
     near mountain springs,  
     with their many petals spread  
     and covered with cool drops  
     of water,  
     and swarming with bees.

(291)

*Kapilar*

The *kulir* is an unidentified instrument for driving  
 away birds. When she cries her eyes fill with tears,  
 like flowers with drops of water on them. The  
 swarming bees indicate how attractive her eyes are  
 to him, and how understandable his infatuation with  
 such a girl is. The "swarms" may intend to tell  
 his friend that all men think she is beautiful.

## 15. WHAT HE SAID

(to his friend:)

She is so innocent,  
 like the goddess-image on the western slope  
 of strong-bowed Ōri's *kolli* hill,  
     where the people, whose homes  
     are small and fenced by the *kāntal* bush,  
     weed the *maral* plant and thick jasmine  
     from the wild rice they planted  
     in the plains, near waterfalls,  
     and,  
     when they are hungry,  
     they sell the tusks  
     of proud male elephants.

But that woman,  
 with her shoulders like bamboo,  
 is so hard to embrace.

(100)

*Kapilar*

Ōri is a chieftain of the *Cēra* country, modern Kerala; and a patron of poets. The goddess image is often compared to the woman: for, though it is beautiful in form, it is dreadful in action. Gazing on the image is purported to cause death. He expresses here his torment in not being able to meet her readily. He blames his torment both on her, and on her relatives, it seems, for they are sturdy people who sell the tusks of male elephants when they want income. He is upset because of his inability to meet with her and explains it here to his friend. Shoulders like bamboo are perfectly formed and round.

## WHAT HE SAID

(to his friend, who ridiculed him:)

Her hair is so black  
and fragrant; but will I ever  
be able to embrace her shoulders again?

In the wide forest, her brothers  
are great bowmen, who whistle  
and throw stones.  
Once they stood facing  
an innocent doe with sad eyes,  
separated from her herd;  
when her mate came,  
only then, suddenly,  
their arrows sunk  
into his chest with a thud;  
and then the arrows were pulled out,  
stained with blood:

her eyes, lined with mascara,  
are like those arrow heads,  
pointed at one another.

(272)

*Orucirupperiyon*

He cannot meet with her because her brothers are frightening hunters, and he fears they would kill him. Hunters whistle and throw stones to separate deer from herd. Hunters do not shoot does, but they kill the buck immediately. He fears, should he go to meet her, as the buck did, he would meet the same fate. Her eyes pierced his heart and now he is smitten with love; but he fears the real arrows of her brothers.

## WHAT HE SAID

(to his friend, in response to his ridicule:)

O my friend, may you  
prosper:  
the young girl who has trapped  
my heart forever  
has large shoulders, and beautiful  
fine hair;  
if I could have  
just one day entwined  
with her small and tender body,  
I would not ask for even  
one half-day more  
of life.

(to his friend:)

Friend:

playmate of young children,  
 who makes them glad;  
 friend of poets!

Listen:

a small forehead shining near black hair,  
     like the young, white,  
     crescent moon  
     appearing on the eighth day,  
     amidst the vast ocean,  
 has bound me,  
 like an elephant freshly caught.

(129)

*Kōpperuñcōzay*

Her forehead shines near her black hair the way the  
 crescent moon shines in the dark, vast sea on the  
 eighth day of the month. He is trapped by her  
 beauty, and struggles against it like an elephant  
 freshly caught. The elephant is trapped, tied, and  
 after struggle, finally succumbs with a sigh. He too  
 was caught; he has struggled and succumbed. He asks  
 his friend to understand this.

## WHAT HE SAID

(to his friend who ridiculed him  
about his changes since meeting her:)

The woman,  
    with her sweet words  
    and soft, round shoulders,  
drives away sparrows  
from millet and cotton  
planted in the hills.  
Her large, wet eyes are like flowers;  
they look afraid,  
but,  
like arrows they have given me pain,  
so that everyone will know.

(72)

*Maḷḷaṅār*

Cotton and millet are planted at the same time, and harvested one after another, on the same plot of land. This practice continues today. See 147. They probably met when she was on duty in the fields. As in poems numbered 12, 15, 16, 18, she is innocent and beautiful, but she gives pain. In this case she gives pain, so that everybody will know. This could refer to the gossip surrounding their courtship; or, to the fact that when people know of their relationship, marriage is accomplished. Specifically however, the reference is to her giving him pain that made him show signs of love-sickness, which his friend recognized as such. Thus his friend found out through the symptoms. Through the pain of courtship, the pain of not being able to be with one another, they will come to marry.

## WHAT HE SAID

(to his friend, who had ridiculed him:)

Her words are sweet  
as ambrosia  
and her personality  
is just as sweet.  
If a girl like that can cause  
such bitter suffering,  
then living with love  
is torture.  
So, my wise friend,  
keep love at a distance  
from you.

## WHAT HE SAID

(to himself, thinking that her friend would  
be the best messenger through which to  
approach the girl, for she is so dependent  
on her friend; as he watches them play  
in the water:)

Her body is like a sprout  
freshened by rain - drops;  
her eyes are cool and wet,  
with enticing corners and a reddish hue,  
like the back of fat buds  
from a *picot* shrub drenched in rain:  
when her friend grasps hold  
of the front of the float,  
so does she;  
if her friend holds the back.  
she does the same;  
and if her friend lets go  
and glides along in the current,  
this too she does ---  
just the same.

(222)

*Ciraikkūṭiyāntaiyār*

Here he contemplates the relation of the girls, and  
thinks that the pain of not being able to meet with  
her after their union - by - fate might be ended  
through the mediation of her friend. She will take  
her friend's advice, he thinks, for she does just as  
her friend does when they swim together.



## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to her, when he had requested that her  
friend arrange a meeting for them:)

That man of the hills  
     where fresh bamboo  
     whips up, as if  
     to touch the sky  
     with the swiftness of horses  
     set free;  
 he just does not know  
 how much we think of him;  
 and,  
     like a bull  
     in the heat of summer,  
 he grows thin,  
 longing for our beauty.

(74)

*Vittakutiraiyār*

The poet's name is a pseudonym taken from the first image in the poem: it means "the man of set-tree horses". The image is a cryptic reference to a scene portrayed again in poem numbered 46: an elephant comes to eat a tender young bamboo, and pulls it over with his trunk in order to eat its top leaves; when he lets go, the bamboo whips up again with great speed. This may refer to their union-by-fate, and the degree to which they have retained their vigor, even after he tasted their beauty and let them go again. Or, it could reflect their anxiety about being let go in the future. He craves "their" beauty: this indicates both the intimacy of the girls and his longing for them as exemplaries of virtuous womanhood.

## 23. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to him, to name the place and  
method of their daytime meeting:)

The small forest stream  
is not far from the pond  
near the village.  
Nothing will even  
approach that grove,  
except white herons  
searching for food.  
The young and innocent girl  
will come there with me;  
and I will go off,  
to gather river-sand for our hair.

(113)

*Mātiratāy*

The two girls will go off from their home, saying they are going to collect river-sand for their hair, to wash out the oil with. They will arrive in the specified grove, which is secluded, and where no one will see them meet. Then her friend will go off and gather sand for both of them, while the lovers are with each other for a while, without fear of interlopers or suspicion at home.

## 24. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(To him, on taking her leave, having  
brought the girl to their meeting place:)

I laid my doll  
on a bed of water lilies  
and came to the place  
of your meeting.  
O man of well-made chariots:  
as daylight fades,  
see that she returns home,  
for I am going.  
The cranes,  
with bellies full of *āra* fish,  
will be trampling  
my baby's brow.

(114)

*Poṇṇākāṇ*

The first line of the poem could also be interpreted as meaning she laid her doll on the beach. The girls had dolls made of reeds or pollen dust, which she left on a bed of lily flowers. The cruelty of the herons toward her doll foreshadows the sadness the girls will suffer, if he is not kind and does not take good care of them. The cranes could also represent the gossips, who will trample on her with their tongues, if they should find out about their meeting. Crabs are used in the same way in poem 185's imagery.

## 25. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to him, after a meeting she had  
arranged for them:)

She accepted my word  
when I told her what you said,  
and, hidden in a spot  
among fresh, wet branches  
of *nāzal* trees, she lost  
her young virginity.  
She is so lonely!  
you must think of her:  
look there,  
to our small, good village  
where palm trees hang low,  
and where the sea  
with waves that smell of fish  
appears like the moonlight,  
and the forest grove appears  
like darkness.

(81)

*Vaṭamavannakkaṇ*

The seashore imagery in the poem accompanies the sadness of the message: she has lost her innocence with him, and he must be kind and marry to protect her virtue. "Virginity" here should not be thought of in the narrowest physical terms, but should also not exclude these. Her friend says to him he should come to their village. The sea is illuminated by the moonlight, and grove is a secret, dark place, perfect for meetings. So she says that there are places for meeting secretly in their village.

## WHAT HE SAID

(between their meetings, to his heart:)

This woman,  
     whose forehead is bright,  
     with her hair lying, moist on her head,  
 smells so sweet  
 and speaks but a few,  
 soft words.  
 I don't know how much to praise  
 such a woman:  
 for her manner is calm,  
 and she is softer than a quilt  
 to hold;  
 but she gives such pain.

(70)

*Ōrampōkiyār*

As in 19, he contrasts her beauty and softness with her ability to give pain. He too is tormented between meetings. He constantly refers to her physical attributes; her loveliness is her hair, arms, mouth, waist, and her manner: she is the embodiment of virtue and beauty. She is portrayed as beautiful to all the senses, (as in *Tirukkural* 1101). But the difficulty of meeting causes pain: her beauty itself torments him.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(when he was gone, after a meeting  
arranged by her friend:)

My man of the land  
where a round, black rock  
lies in a green region,  
and looks like an elephant  
cleansed of all dirt  
after a heavy rain,  
has given me grief,  
my friend.  
My eyes,  
once bright like a *Kuvalai* flower,  
are sick  
with grieving.

(13)

*Kapilar*

"Sick with grieving" is a rendering of *pacalaiyārntana*, meaning "filled with *pacalai*". *Pacalai* is the sickly yellow-green pallor associated with love-sickness in the poetry. Love sickness causes her body to grow thin, and a depressed anaemic state to set in. Her body itself becomes stricken as a result of her heart-sickness. Her own state is contrasted to the state of the rock in the green region, which is cleansed and clean after the rain. The black stands out in contrast to the bright green grass. However, she is not cleansed; her pallor hides the beauty of her eyes. She will be cleansed only by their love, by being with him. As in 3, rain symbolizes their love.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to him to arrange a night meeting,  
when he had come during the daytime:)

In the clamor of the forest  
daylight fades and even  
your hunting dog grows weary  
as you chase the *Kaṭamā*:  
but do not go away, my lord!  
There  
is our village:  
    among heaps of wasted bamboo  
    tasted by innocent elephants  
    with deep mouths,  
    grazing on tender, crowded bamboo  
    that rub honeycombs on hillsides.

(179)

*Kuṭṭuyan Kaṇṇan*

*Kaṭamā* is an unidentified beast: here it could well be an elephant chased in the hunt. The bamboo is tender and sweet, for having rubbed on the honeycombs. Perhaps she implies they are sweet and tender for having rubbed him. (See 56). In any case, elephants have wasted much bamboo in their village, just as he has tasted and consumed their beauty. She says to him: do not go home at night, but come to our village instead, and restore our beauty to us with your presence.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to him, at a night meeting, to alter  
the place of rendezvous:)

We are going to a place  
where *yā* trees are cut and burnt,  
to chase parrots that swoop down on  
young millet stalks,

like female elephant's trunks  
with bases as thick as sugarcane,  
and which bend low with ears  
full of milk  
resembling prongs that  
pick up charcoal.

O man with your chest  
smelling of sandalwood,  
from the forest of *Malaiyan*  
with his large hands  
and weapons to slay  
enemies in battle:

don't come here!

Our mother is coming.

(198)

*Kapilar*

She says to come to where they will be guarding the millet, which is so ripe that its base is as thick as sugarcane, its stalk as thick as an elephant's trunk, and its ears so full they bend to the ground to resemble prongs. For *Malaiyan*, see the notes to poem numbered 37.



## WHAT HE SAID

(to his heart, after failing to meet her  
because of a mix-up in plans; or, when  
separated after their first meeting:)

Like a poor man  
craving pleasures,  
you want most  
what is most precious,  
my heart.  
The same way you learned  
how good she is,  
you didn't learn  
how rare she is,  
and difficult to obtain.

(120)

*Paraṇar*

There is a set of themes depicting what happens when they have missed a meeting because of a mix-up in plans or a "mistake of signs". For example, they might make a plan for him to come near the house she lives in and break a branch to signal his coming, and then she is to make her way to him by giving her parents one excuse or another. If a monkey breaks a branch and she "mistakes the sign", she cannot get out of the house again and the meeting is missed. See 32. This poem is his complaint after such a missed meeting.

## 31. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to her, the day after a meeting missed  
because of a mistaken sign, when he  
was near, but hidden, for him to hear:)

Even though the whole  
large town sleeps,  
we do not sleep,  
hearing distinctly the sound  
of blue flowers  
shaken off the beautiful, soft branches  
of the *nocci* tree, with leaves  
like peacock's feet,  
and dark flower bunches on *ēzil* hill,  
near my home.

(138)

*Kollar Azici*

Even though they missed the meeting, she says, it is not because they were careless or inattentive. They stay awake all night listening for signs, so they hear even the "flowers shaken off" the trees. There are many poems spoken by one of the girls when he is "nearby, but unseen, hidden", which are spoken so he will hear. The exact circumstances of such a scene are unclear, but in all likelihood a meeting is in progress. The intent of this description is clear, however: all such poems are spoken by one of the girls to the other, but in such a way as to give him a particular message. In this case it is to tell him they were not at fault for missing the meeting. *ēzil* is the hill of the chieftain *Nannan*, for whom see poems numbered 64, and 80.

(when her friend told her he had  
come, after missing a meeting  
because of a mistaken sign:)

Is it true, my friend?  
If it is, may you prosper!  
Before, because it was not  
my lover's own sign,  
and we were mistaken,  
like a male ape of the hillside,  
with a face so black it looks  
like mascara is on it, who  
falls down  
holding the branch he climbed on  
by accident,  
not jumping on one  
that could hold his weight,  
my soft, wide shoulders  
have become pale.

(121)

*Kapilar*

She went to meet him because she heard the  
branch break, which was to be their sign. This time,  
her friend says he has come, and she says, if it is,  
that is good; for the last time, because of the mistake,  
I became sad and my shoulders became afflicted with  
pallor (*pacalai*).

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, but for him to hear:

What wrong is it,  
 my friend?  
 If you tell him,  
 "O man of sloping hills,  
 now you come at dark  
 and dangerous midnight,  
     when, in the forest, the black  
     male tiger, that excellent hunter,  
     suffers the wrath of the strong  
     and long-trunked elephant,  
     and longs to ambush the red dog  
     with wet eyes.  
 Do not come then.  
 Her mother has told her  
 to chase small parrots with curved beaks  
 from the ripening millet!"

(141)

*Maturalp Perunkollay*

The tiger attacks the elephant, and gets beaten; then he seeks to take his wrath out on the wild dog. The night is so dangerous, when such scenes take place; so he should come at a safer time. Her mother has asked her to watch the millet, so he should come and meet with her when she is engaged in that. But this kind of meeting will become impossible too.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to him, when he came for a night meeting:)

You cannot see the sky,  
 for it is hidden by raining clouds.  
 You cannot see the ground,  
 for water spreads all around.  
 A great darkness has fallen,  
 for the sun is gone.  
 O man of towering hills:  
 how do you ever come at night,  
 when most people sleep?  
 How do you ever find our tiny house  
 where the *vēnkai* fragrance abounds?  
 I worry so!

(355)

*Kapilar*

As in the previous poem, the difficulties of night meetings are stressed. Perhaps he finds the house by the strong fragrance of *vēnkai*. The sly introduction of this flower into the imagery is the essential message of the poem. The *vēnkai* flower is used in marriage ceremonies; and the season of its flowering is considered auspicious for and symbolic of marriage. So, she is saying this: meeting at night is too difficult; meeting by day is also difficult; marriage is the only solution to these problems. Now is the time to marry. Through marriage you will find your home, and end the tortures of pre-marital romance.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(when he had come for a night meeting,  
and was hidden nearby for him to hear;  
concerning the dangers of meeting by  
night and the urgency of marriage:)

Like a night watchman who counts  
the hours, my eyes cannot sleep,  
my friend;  
and I grieve with a wounded heart,  
even at the frightful hour  
of blackest midnight,  
when a red-eyed he-buffalo  
moans,  
loathing to stand in a muddy spot  
where a little rain has fallen  
on the last day of the rainy season,  
when sesame seeds were wasted  
in soil ruined for planting,  
as the old rains fell.

(261)

*Kazârkîran Eyirri*

"Old rains" refer to rains that fall before the rainy season. They may refer to the southwest monsoon, but are said to be rains left over from last year's rainy season, which must fall before the "new rains" can. They fall too soon to make the crops prosper. In this poem, more rains did not fall until the last day of the rainy season—too late to make crops (here sesame) prosper. "The suitability of the soil for planting" (patan) was ruined by these conditions. Her fertile youth has also been ruined by the trials of meetings, and she says, like the sesame, she has been ruined by not enough love. Here rain, again, is symbolic for love. But, unlike sesame, she can be saved from this condition, like the bull buffalo. She can be saved if he hurries to marry and doesn't insist on prolonging the tortuous period of pre-marital romance.

## 36. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to the moonlight, but intended for  
his ears, during the time of night  
meetings:)

O long, white moonlight:  
you are no help  
for the romance of this man,  
who must come through the forest  
in the dark of night,  
when the yellow flowers  
of the *vēñkai* tree  
fall on a bolder,  
to make it look  
like a huge tiger cub.

(47)

*Neṭuvenṇilavinār*

The poet's name is a pseudonym taken from the first image in the poem: it means "the man of long, white moonlight". Because the moon does not shine all month long, he must travel at night through forests in the pitch dark at times, when real tiger cubs might be there, or when he might be frightened by any likeness of them. As in 34, however, her friend is also telling him that the solution to the problem of night - meetings is marriage, for the *vēñkai* flowers are strewn on the rock in this poetic image just as they would be strewn around at the marriage ceremony.

## WHAT HE SAID

(to his heart, desiring marriage, after  
a night meeting with her:)

My love has two selves:  
at humming midnight,  
she is mine---

    she comes to me smelling like  
    the *Mullūr* forest of *Malaiyan*,  
    who has red spears  
    and is strong enough to oppose anyone;  
but at dawn again,  
she is her relatives' ---  
    with a grouchy face,  
    she throws away the mixed flowers  
    that adorned her hair,  
    and rubs oil in her hair,  
    which had been fragrant with sandalwood.

(312)

*Kapilar*

She must hide her courtship from her parents; so she must play two roles in order to carry out the deception: he says she plays so well that she appears to be two different people altogether. We do not have evidence that he was forced to play analogous roles. *Mullūr* is a town. *Malaiyan* is a chieftain, whose full name is *Malaiyamāṇ Tirumuṭikkāri*. The redness of blood on his spears connotes the bravery with which his lover plays her roles. She erases all evidence of their meeting at dawn: throwing away flowers, and rubbing oil in her hair to eliminate the fragrance of sandalwood.



## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to her, but so he would hear, when he was nearby, during a meeting by day:)

As the flowering grove  
 of black-stemmed *puṇṇai* trees  
 weeps in loneliness,  
     in a spot where white sand  
     is like gathered moonlight,  
     and thick shade, so wet  
     and cool.  
     is like compact darkness,  
 he has not come:  
 and soon the boat of my brothers,  
 who went fishing for loads of fish,  
 will return.

(123)

*Aiyūr Muḷavaṇ*

As in 25, the lightness of the sand is like moonlight, and the shade is like darkness: the latter spot being perfect for meetings. The landscape embodies her feelings: the grove is lonely, just as she is, without him. The same word (*pulampul*) is applied to loneliness and weeping. Soon her brothers will return, so he must hurry, and come. The urgency and loneliness also apply to her relation with him with regards marriage: for in courtship she is always lonely between meetings. She wants him to end this condition and marry.

## 39. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to her, so he would hear, during the period  
when he was coming faithfully to meetings, tub  
not progressing towards marriage:)

That man from mountains  
where elephants with curved trunks  
stroke innocent mates with fragrant breath  
and descend near tiny hillside homes  
into the village square:  
if you should want to,  
and should tell him to end the misery  
that you swim in,  
which gives you painful grief  
late at night, when cold winds blow,  
and drizzling rain falls,  
what harm would it do?

(332)

*Maturai Marutaṅkizārmakāṇ Iḷampōttāṇ*

The last line in the translation is interpolation: the Tamil says simply, *evāṇō*, or "what?". This is a rhetorical question, meaning that she should tell him to end the misery of meetings and marry, for "what harm could it do" to tell him? He, like the elephant, should descend from the mountain region into the village square, from the arena of pre-marital courtship into the public arena of marriage.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to her, on the night of a meeting  
she arranged at his request:)

Even if our man  
from the land of high  
mountains and shining  
and noisy waterfalls  
comes at midnight  
along mountain slopes,  
where a huge bull elephant  
with tiny eyes  
attacks a fierce tiger  
to end their ancient  
enmity,  
at least he comes.  
We will not be ashamed  
by the gossip,  
my friend.

(88)

*Maturaikkatakkanan*

The enmity of the tiger and elephant is proverbial to poems of the mountain region, indicating the dangers of the path he must travel to meet with her. See poems numbered 36 and 79. They worry about the dangers of his journey. But they also have their own traumas to go through: the gossip of villagers is introduced in this poem. As he must brave the dangerous path, they must brave the shame of gossip. Her friend asserts that they will bear it; for they must fight off fear of gossips, just as he must fight off fear of the path, if they want to nurture their love to fruition.

## 41. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to him, when she had seen his lover's  
anxiety over his delay in fulfilling his  
promise of marriage:)

You made an oath  
to the frightful goddess,  
while holding your lover's tender wrist,  
on the wide goat of our town,  
with its sandy hills,  
    where the flowers of the *puṅku*,  
    full of ripe buds, lie  
    on the sand, like puffed rice  
    spread around in front of houses  
    for the *Vēlaṇ* dancer,  
    to prepare the ground for his dance.  
It makes us suffer so!

(53)

*Kōpperuñcōṇ*

The goddess is only described as frightful in this anthology. She resides, or perhaps her image is placed, on the wide banks of a river (called a ghat). She can presumably deliver retribution for promises not kept; see 106. He promised to marry, but has delayed long in keeping it. The trials of courtship previously described have caused them to show symptoms of sadness, for which the mother has become worried, and perhaps called in the *Vēlaṇ* to dance his dance for Murugan. If the *Vēlaṇ* has not yet been called, it is the grief of pre-marital courtship that will bring it on. So she says, in effect: it will be easier on all of us if you marry right away, and fulfill your oath now. For the *Vēlaṇ* see poems numbered 127, 128, 129.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, who was arranging  
meetings by night:)

When I think of the chest  
smeared with sandalwood paste  
of my man,  
from the land of high mountains,  
    where sweet-smoking fires,  
    lit by watchmen of fields  
    in their towers,  
    twinkle here and there  
    like stars in the sky,  
my heart-sickness grows.  
But when I hold him,  
it dies away.  
How amazing it is,  
my friend!

(150)

*Māṭalūrkizār*

The fires lit by watchmen during the time of the harvest illuminate the night, and make meetings by night more difficult. She is grieved by the loneliness that afflicts her when he is gone; and now, meeting by night will be more problematic: marriage is the only answer. For exact parallel construction in the seashore region, see poem numbered 262.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, who had told her not  
to pine away, during the period when  
he was coming for night meetings :)

Pallor spreads on my forehead;  
my passion marks fade away;  
my soft, broad shoulders  
droop,  
and my bangles slip off:  
would it be wrong to say to him,  
"It is your fault I am like this!"  
my friend?  
The ruin of my beautiful  
brown body  
is all for the sake of that man  
from the land where bright red *kāntal* flowers  
fold up like hoods on many-striped snakes,  
and then are knocked off, by the east wind,  
and cover rocks.

(185)

*Maturai Aruvai Vānikan Iṭavittan*

Her beauty is being ruined by the misery of the  
period of meetings: pallor (*paalalai*) is on her forehead,  
her shoulders have grown lean, and her arms are so  
emaciated with worry that her bangles no longer  
stay on her wrists. These are all standard images by  
which her body is portrayed as embodying her grief.  
She asks her friend to go and tell him it is all for  
his sake; she asks to have her friend let him know  
that marriage is the only way to end this.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to her, during the period when he kept  
putting off marriage, to be heard by him:)

Our man from the hilly land  
where ripe pepper vines grow  
on hillsides,  
where, at night,  
as great cascades fall from clouds,  
a hairy monkey grabs at a jackfruit,  
with its sweet smell,  
and it falls into a stream,  
which carries it down  
to our drinking ghat:  
though his love  
has made our soft shoulders  
grow thin,  
it has given us peace,  
my friend.  
What sort of love is this?

(90)

*Maturai Ezuttāḷaṇ Cētaṇ Pūtaṇ*

Her friend re-affirms her faith in him, while at the same time expressing the fact that he is causing them a lot of grief. The monkey grabs roughly at the jackfruit, in the night, just as he handles their love with rough hands, and makes them unhappy. See poem numbered 50 for an exact parallel. The behaviour of the man is very often compared to that of a monkey. But, at the same time, the sweet fruit comes down to the bank of the river where they get their drinking water. The fruit reminds them of him and they remain steadfast in their love. The fruit gives them peace as a remembrance of him. This image also bears testimony to their faith that their love will come into the public place, through marriage. So, the message is this: though he causes grief, we still have faith and peace of mind.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(as though addressed to the rain-clouds  
so he might hear, during the period  
of their night meetings:)

O great rain clouds, pregnant  
with child, approaching  
with winds mixed with the roaring voice  
of thunder, who frighten snakes  
on the slopes of long mountains:  
you have a character strong enough  
to shake the glorious Himalyas.  
What is this?  
Have you no pity for poor women  
separated from their men?

(158)

*Auvaiyār*

Snakes are believed to be afraid of thunder bolts, which are said to kill them, and sever the heads of cobras. The rain prevents their meeting, and aggravates the grief of pre-marital romance. The rain-clouds are strong, but what will happen to poor, weak people separated from their lovers? The import of the message is that they should not remain separate, but marry.



## WHAT SHE SAID

(unable to bear the long delay in  
his coming to marry her:)

I am here.

But my virtue is gone  
with that man of the forest,  
where an elephant is frightened  
by the sound of  
the millet-guard's sling,  
and lets go with his trunk  
the tender bamboo,  
which whips up  
like a fishing pole  
cast for fish.

(54)

*Mīṇeri Tūṇṭilār*

The poet's name is a pseudonym taken from the last image in the poem: it means "man of a fishing pole cast for fish". The elephant eats the bamboo greens at the top of the stalk, until frightened by the guard of the millet field. Then, when the elephant lets go, the bamboo whips up, resembling a fishing pole being cast. She here expresses the worry that he will leave her, after having tasted her beauty, out of fear of marriage. Her virtue is "gone with him" in several senses: he took it (ie: he ended her innocent youth); its maintenance depends on him (ie: for he must marry her for her to remain virtuous); and, her virtue will only be secured when he returns to her and marries her. For parallel expression, see 256.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, unable to bear separation  
from him:)

Like a cripple  
seated,  
who sees a beehive  
on a swinging *kuta/i* plant  
on a high hill,  
and who,  
from below, folds his hands into a cup,  
and then, pointing up,  
licks and licks:  
even though my lover may not give  
of himself,  
or love me,  
just to see him, many times  
is sweetness to my heart.

(60)

*Parāṇar*

The cripple cannot get up to the beehive, for it is high on a vine, and he is confined to the ground. Like this, she cannot go to him; he must come to her if they are to be together. He does not do this properly: which could mean he has not been coming to meetings regularly enough for her, or that the separation she is grieving in is that caused by his delay in coming to marry. In any case, here she consoles herself, saying just to see him is enough. But the cripple cannot live on the mere sight of the beehive.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to give her strength, by criticizing  
her lover's character:)

The soft-headed calf of the black  
female elephant, with feet like drums,  
once gave joy  
by running around  
with the small-wristed children  
born of the *Kuravar's* daughter,  
from a village full of toddy;  
but later, the calf  
became hateful, when it ate  
the *Kuravar's* millet:  
like this,  
the laughing play  
of our man  
has become very painful for us.

(394)

*Kuriyiraiyār*

The poet's name is a pseudonym taken from an image in the poem: it means "the man of a small wrist (or arm)". He frolicked with his lover and gave her joy. But he consumed her beauty and left alone, giving her grief. Her friend berates him for this, saying he has no more sense of duty and responsibility in life than a soft-headed calf. It is his duty to marry her to fulfill their relationship.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(when she was worried because he  
had not hurried to marry:)

There was no one there.  
If he is a thief  
and his promises are lies,  
what shall I do?  
Only the heron was there  
on his thin, young legs,  
like millet stalks,  
watching the *āral* fish  
in the running stream,  
on that day when our hearts  
were wed.

(25)

*Kapilar*

His vows to marry (see 3) have not been fulfilled (see 41). Now she wonders if they were lies. If they were, he is a thief, for he stole her beauty and virtue from her, and she is doomed: for, after having begun a courtship, she cannot marry any other man than her lover and retain her virtue. Only the heron was a witness to the wedding of their hearts that took place on the day of their union-by-fate. But this witness is not sufficient to insure the fidelity of the man, she says. Only marriage, only public witness, will suffice to give her peace of mind. "It is said that after falsehood and failure appeared (in the conduct of love) the leaders of society caused (the marriage) ceremony to be held." (*Tolkāppiyam*, *poruḷatikāram*, 145)

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, in desparate grief,  
when he had delayed long in marriage:)

In his hilly land  
a peacock lays her eggs  
on a bolder,  
and baby monkeys make games in the sun  
by rolling the eggs around.  
His kind of love is good enough,  
my friend,  
for someone strong enough to bear it,  
without thinking,  
when their eyes are eaten away  
by endless tears,  
when he is gone.

(38)

*Kapilar*

The peacock lays her eggs on a rock for them to hatch in the sun. The monkeys play with the eggs mindless of their fragility. Like this, he plays with the life of the girl, and of their love. This kind of thoughtless, careless love is good enough, she says sarcastically, if one can stand to live without thinking as one cries in his absence.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend when he had delayed  
long in coming to marry her:)

My man is from the land  
of hills possessed  
by demons,  
    where a peacock stupidly ate  
    small kernels from ears of rich millet, like gold,  
    grown in a *Kuyavar's* field, which were placed  
    as an offering to god, from the new harvest;  
    then the peacock shook all over,  
    intoxicated,  
    like the beautiful dance  
    of the possessed woman.  
As my eyes fill with tears,  
I think of him.

(105)

*Nakkirar*

It is the practice to place the first fruit of the harvest out as an offering to the god (s) traditionally worshiped by the farm family in question. Like the peacock, the girl ate unknowingly of love, and was possessed by the demon of love. Love is referred to as "the demon of the hills" in 144 as well.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, when he had delayed long  
in coming to marry her:)

My friend,  
even though my strength  
is lost, and my virgin beauty  
is eaten away,  
I am still alive  
in loneliness,  
like the leaves that sprout in heavy rain  
from the stubble of golden millet stalks  
that parrots ate and destroyed,  
in fields of hillside tribes.

(133)

*Uraiyūr Mutukannan Cāttan*

Like the millet, she was ravaged, and her beauty  
lost to the man. But, as the stubble of millet ravaged  
by parrots stands lonely on the hillside, tiny sprouts  
appear as the rain pours down. Like this, her life  
remains, and she has strength, though he has left her  
alone.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( when he was standing nearby, but  
unseen, to her friend for him to hear:)

Our man is from mountains  
with bamboo fences,  
where a small-winged *tumpi* bee,  
humming on sweet-smelling *kānta!* flowers  
that sway in bunches all over the hills  
with clefts and caves,  
looks like a jewel spat up by a snake.  
Because of him my shoulders  
are so thin,  
and my bangles have fallen off:  
do I have any more shame to lose,  
my friend?

(239)

*Āciriyaṇ Perunkaṇṇaṇ*

He is compared to a bee, and she to a flower, in many poems. Bees are thought to make flowers bloom, but in doing so, they initiate their withering. They eat the nectar of flowers, and hence cause the flower to fade, and then they go off to other flowers for more nectar. Like this, he is said to end the innocence of youth for the girl, and to partake of her blossoming, but he also consumes her virtue, and causes her beauty to fade, when he does not marry her, but rather flits back and forth between being with her in meetings. Shame here probably refers to gossip, which is no problem, she says, when compared to the grief of his delay in marriage.



## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to her when he was close enough to  
hear:)

Your shoulders,  
whose beauty has faded  
with the tears that fall  
from your sleepless eyes  
that suffer maddening grief;  
they are emaciated now.  
All we can say is that once  
they were beautiful:  
that is,  
before he held them---  
that man from the land of mountains  
that touch the sky,  
where a good, tall elephant  
is frightened by the torch of *Kuravars*  
guarding millet, in a tower in the fields,  
and afterward, is afraid  
of the light of a falling star.

(357)

*Kapilar*

The elephant is scared by the torch of the guards,  
and later is scared, by association, with the light of  
a falling star. Somehow he has been scared too, and  
is afraid to marry. But he should overcome his silly  
fears and marry soon.

## 55. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID.

(to him, when he was coming by  
night, to get him to hurry marriage:)

O man of sloping hills,  
     where the sweetest jackfruit grows  
     by the root of the tree,  
     fenced in by young bamboo:  
 be kind to her!  
 Who knows what a state she is in?  
     Like a huge fruit  
     hanging  
     from a tiny stem  
     on the hillside,  
 her life is so frail,  
 and her love so very great.

(18)

*Kapilar*

The jackfruit is huge, about the size of a watermelon. The sweetest fruits grow at the base of the tree. Here, they are fenced in by bamboo, which grows in a fence to protect them. Her friend would have him protect the girl like this, so their love might grow to fruition in marriage. But, because the girl is left alone by the man, she is like a huge fruit hanging from a tiny stem: her love is so great and the life that supports it is very frail indeed. If the fruit falls, it will smash on the ground, and/or roll down the hill. Like this her life, her love, is in jeopardy. He should hurry to marry and save her from this predicament.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(so that she would sympathize with him, and understand why he had not rushed to marry:)

He did not come just  
 one day or two;  
 but he came many days  
 speaking humble words:  
 melting my pure heart,  
 he went away,  
     like a dried-out honeycomb.  
 He is father and support for us;  
 where is he?  
 My heart is all mixed up,  
     like pure waters that fell  
     with thunder  
     on a good foreign land,  
     and now are all muddy.

(176)

*Varunalaiyāritti*

He came many days and spoke humble words, but because we did not appreciate him, he went away, like an old, dried-out and useless honeycomb. If the honey dries out and falls down it is wasted; and so his love is wasted because we did not understand him. Her heart is confused like waters that fell pure and clean on a foreign land and then rose in a flood, coming to their land all muddy. Like this, their love began in purity and has gotten all confused; like this, the image of a pure and clean man is confused and muddled by the time it reaches them. The girl herself might have said these words.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, in anger, when her  
friend berated him for not hurrying  
to marry:)

O my friend,  
with your bright forehead:  
if I had not thought you were kidding  
when you said, "what shall I do  
with this man  
    from the mountain country,  
    where the *vēṅkai* tree grows  
    by a waterfall?"  
do you know what would have  
happened to you?

(96)

*Allūr Naṁmullai*

This is in response to a comment of her friend's, similar to that made in poem 48. She herself criticizes him at times. (See poems numbered 310 and 212). Here she expresses her sensitivity to her friend's criticism and re-affirms her love and faith in him. As the tree is dependent on the waterfall for its beauty and freshness, so she is dependent on him and his love for her. Also, it is the *vēṅkai* tree that grows by the waterfall; and, as we have seen, it is symbolic of marriage. So she is also saying, perhaps, that she has full faith that the pre-marital romance will nurture marital bliss, just as the waterfall nurtures the tree. Because this image is included in what her friend said, she had thought her criticism was in jest.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend who had talked ill of him when he could overhear, so he would hurry to marry:)

Wider than the earth,  
and higher than the sky,  
and deeper than the vast ocean  
is my love for this man of the hills,  
where bees make honey  
from the black-stalked *kuriñci* flower.

(3)

*Tēvakulattār*

The *kuriñci* flower is the flower of the mountain region. It blooms every twelve years. As the bees will make honey from the *kuriñci* and no other when it blooms, so he will come to her and no other woman. Here she re-affirms again her faith in him.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, when he had delayed  
long in marriage:)

If I fear gossip,  
my love will wither away.

If I let love go,  
to end this abuse,  
all that is left for me  
is shame.

Look, my friend,  
at the virtue of mine that he  
has consumed:

it is like a branch  
with fibrous bark,  
broken by a huge elephant  
that bent it low,  
but still not fallen to the ground.

(112)

*Ālattūrkiṣār*

The elephant bent the branch low to eat the leaves, and the branch broke; but because of its tough bark, it does not fall to the ground, but hangs on, broken. So her lover has tasted her beauty, and broken off her innocent virginity, which caused her to worry and show signs that started gossip. If she worries about the gossip too much, her love will fade, she says (see *Tirukkural* 1163); but if she lets go her love, to end the gossip all that is left is shame. Her virtue is just hanging on in this predicament. The message is similar to 55: if she is not to fall, she needs his support, in marriage.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(when gossip was becoming too much  
for the girl to bear:)

Even is the whole world  
became disordered, and  
fire and water exchanged their properties,  
or a boundary appeared in the wide sea  
of shining waves,  
what harm could ever come,  
from the fear of gossip of hot-mouthed women,  
to our relationship with that man  
from the land of towering mountains,  
where jackfruits with fragrant flowers  
are broken and scooped out  
by black, male-monkeys,  
with black fingers, sharp teeth, and long hair,  
and smell sweetly by small  
homes with *kāntal* flowers?

(373)

*Maturaikkollan Pullan*

Her friend reminds her that their love is eternal and more immutable than the earth, the sky, the sea, and the elements. (See poems numbered 1 and 3). Gossip cannot harm their love, even though it may cause embarrassment to them. The male monkey scoops out the sweet jack fruit, just as he tasted her beauty; just as the smell of jackfruit came into the town, word of their love has come into the town, and gossip has arisen. But, the entry of their love into the town is also symbolic of marriage, which will ensue in due course, she assures the girl.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to inform him that gossip was over-  
plentiful and marriage was the only  
way; as though to her, but for him  
to hear, when he was nearby, unseen:)

The days when that man  
has held you close, making  
your garland of many flowers  
fade: they are very few.  
But the gossip!  
It is louder than the din of victory  
on the battlefield of *vākaipparantalai*,  
with its hen-owls,  
on that day when *Atikaṇ*, the general  
of the tender - jewelled *Pāṇṭiyās*,  
fell, with his elephants,  
to the bright - sworded *Koṇkars*.

(393)

*Paraṇar*

This poem could also be classified as one of the lowland, though it does not seem to fit into the narrative sequence of that region: for the word used to refer to him in this poem (*makiznaṇ*) is that name characteristic of the poems of the lowland region. The hen-owls, (or merely "wild fowls") added to the din of victory (the drums, shouts, songs, etc.) with their screeching. *Vākaipparantalai* could be a town, a place designated by a mimosa tree (*vākai*), or a victory. The same phrase appears in *Akāṇāṇūru* 125: 19, also by *Paraṇar*. The *Koṇkars* fought the *Pāṇṭiyās* on at least this one occasion; another reference to war between them is given in *Akāṇāṇūru* 253: 4-5.



## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(as though to herself, when he was  
standing near, for him to hear:)

Let unfriendly people  
talk their evil talk,  
whenever this tender and short woman,  
    who is beautiful to see  
    like the dark-eyed and pleasant goddess  
    drawn on the western slope  
    of many-jewelled *Poraiyan's Kolli* hill,  
sings of her love,  
over the wide mouth  
of her broad-based paddy mortar.  
Why should we grieve because  
of this stupid village?

(89)

*Paranar*

The image of the goddess drawn on the western slopes of *Kolli* hill is described in the notes to poem 15. In this poem, however, another Chera chieftain is said to control the hill. The scene is this: she has sung of her love as she worked pounding paddy with her mortar and pestle; the neighbors had heard and unfriendly neighbors had started gossip. Her friend says, let them, for why should we care? But, she is letting him know also that gossip is about, so he better hurry to marry soon. There is a second colophon for the poem: it situates it as a poem of the lowland region, wherein the unfriendly peoples referred to mean the harlot; and her friend assure him they will not be bothered by the harlot's talk.

63.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to him, after he failed to meet with  
her one night, because of the over-  
protectiveness of her mother:)

It is not that we  
did not hear you, last night,  
trying at our door,  
    having come, like a strong elephant,  
    at humming midnight, when  
    most people sleep:  
we did hear.  
But, O great one:  
our mother holds us so tightly,  
whenever we show signs  
of sadness.  
We are like beautiful peacocks  
caught in a trap,  
as the tail-feathers fade,  
and head-feathers die away.

(244)

*Kannan*

This poem introduces yet another problem of their courtship: the over-protectiveness of her mother. He came last night to meet with them, and when they showed signs of apprehensiveness, their mother hold them tightly, thinking, perhaps, they were afraid. Note the imagery: they are like peacocks fading away in a trap. They are trapped in their mother's house. He must liberate them from this prison, through marriage. Their sadness at the delay in marriage makes their mother worry, and watch over them closely in her concern.

## 64. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to him, when he was hidden nearby,  
to inform him the girl was over-protect-  
ed in her house, during the period of  
night meetings:)

One day  
mother found out  
that the man with a smiling face  
had come as a guest.  
Since then, she has not slept a wink,  
like a village on the battlefield  
of enemy armies.  
May she suffer in hell  
forever,

like *Nannan*, who refused  
the fine of eighty-one elephants  
and a golden doll equal to the weight  
of the girl with bright forehead  
who ate an unripe fruit  
from the water, when she went to bathe;  
and he killed her instead,  
for her crime.

(292)

*Paranar*

*Nannan* was a chieftain who had ordered anyone killed who stole fruit from his garden. An unripe fruit fell into a river, and a girl picked it up and ate it when she was bathing. *Nannan* had her killed for the crime, refusing the gifts offered as a fine. He is said to have suffered in hell for it: for it is a great sin to kill a woman. Parental attitudes toward courtship are revealed here: for some parents, at least, courtship was bad. Her friend considers her mother to be severely unjust in her treatment of her daughter's romance. Indirectly, she says the crime of her mother is as bad as murder, for the girls are dying in over-protectiveness, as was portrayed in poem 63.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to a bee, so her lover would hear  
when he was standing hidden nearby  
concerned over his lover's condition  
as he delayed long in marriage:)

Listen to me  
O beautiful-winged bee:  
you need not fear to tell good things.  
If you go to that long and magnificent hill,  
tell this to our man from the mountains,  
    where beehives hang down,  
    like so many tiny, curved shields  
    of kings' warriors moving all in a row:  
the sister of the folks who get all dusty  
plucking weeds from millet in their garden,  
where deer flock together,  
is still  
with her relatives.

(392)

*Tumpicērkīraṇār*

This colophon is contrived. The poem is of the "messenger" (*tūtu*) genre, which flowers into a type of literature unto itself later in the development of Tamil letters. In the genre, some element of the natural world (in this case a bee) is sent to deliver a message. Here the message is this: your lover is over-protected in her house, pining away; you should come bravely, like a phalanx of soldiers going into battle, and propose marriage.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, but for him to hear.  
to inform him that she was unable  
to come to their night meetings, because  
of the strict watch on them )

The sun gave no light;  
and that night the rain blew about,  
never stopping, bad enough to make  
devil's eyes tremble;  
on top of that, my mother held her son,  
who wears a tiger's tooth on a necklace string;  
and she kept calling me, saying,  
"O my darling".  
It was then my man, whose chest  
smells of sandalwood from his hill,  
came and stood nearby,  
like an elephant drenched with rain.  
What could he have thought of me?

(161)

*Nakkīrar*

Here her mother's protectiveness doesn't seem consciously geared to prevent meetings, as in 64; rather, a domestic scene is described that just happened to prevent meeting. The tiger's tooth is an amulet to keep away evil spirits. Usually it is the tooth of tigers hunted by men in the family. Often she will wear a tiger's tooth from a tiger hunted by him. She worries here what he would have thought of her for not showing up to the meeting.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(as he was standing near, but unseen,  
for him to hear:)

They say a single chariot  
came and went  
in the middle of the night,  
    when a small, white crow  
    on the shore of the vast ocean,  
    rustles among green leaves,  
    like elephant's ears,  
    and mingles with cool back-waters.

My mother took it to heart  
and is tormenting me.  
There are other girls  
with shining jewels and braids  
hanging down,  
who are young and innocent  
with mothers who do not torture them so:  
they are the lucky ones.

(246)

*Kapilar*

The seashore imagery portrays her sadness, though the poem remains in the mountain region in virtue of its theme, which is union. She can hear the crow playing around on the lily leaves floating on the estuary waters, as she lies awake, guarded closely by her mother, waiting for him to come. "They say" indicates gossip has prompted her mother's protectiveness. This poem indicates that some parents were obstacles to pre-marital romances, and others were not. Contrast poem 150.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(when he was nearby, unseen, for him to hear, when he had requested night meetings, fearing day meetings were too difficult; to inform him their mother is keeping close watch on them, making meetings near impossible; saying that marriage is the only way; to the girl:)

How sweet were the days  
when we played among sweetly singing  
waterfalls,  
on slopes of high mountains with curved tops:  
the chest of our lover was our raft.  
How bitter is our sleep at night  
with our eye-lids never touching,  
in our prosperous house lit up  
by the bright-red flame of a cotton wick,  
with mother embracing and stroking your neck,  
where your braid hangs down.

(353)

*Uṛaiyūr Mutukūṛṇṇ*

In the old days they played in the water with his chest as their raft. (See 21). Now they are sleepless all night, their eyelids never touching, in worry and anguish as their mother guards over them. Will he continue to be their support in these difficult times, as he was when all was well? That is, will he save them from this torment by proposing marriage soon? She hopes he will.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(when he was standing near, to inform  
him of the girl's torment, as she is  
restrained in the house:)

Her waist is suffering:  
unable even to bear the weight  
of the leaf-skirt that covers her loins,  
and  
her large, lined breasts that swell  
to fill her chest, and vie  
with the *ceppu* for perfect shape.  
The ignorant village is full of worried people  
who would never ask, with a concerned heart,  
"What is tormenting that girl  
of lovely ear-rings?"

(159)

*Vaṭama Vannakkaṇ Pēricāṭṭaṇ*

Her waist has grown so thin from worry that it can barely hold up the leaf-skirt that might well have been given her by him; and it strains under the weight of her breasts, that have lines on them, drawn, perhaps, by him, (see poem 72). The *ceppu* is a wooden jar often used as the model of perfection for the shape of breasts. Her breasts are so well shaped as to compete for the honor of providing that model. People worry about her, they lock her in the house, but no one cares to ask why she suffers so. But he knows: if he cares for her he will save her from this state of affairs. In poem 135 the foster-mother does ask why she suffers.



## WHAT HE SAID

(to his heart, when her friend had told  
him that her parents had begun to  
guard her closely in the house:)

Even though she is impossible  
to obtain, I will have my reward:  
so rejoice, my heart!  
There is no way to end the pain  
born from my love for this dark woman,  
whose hair is black as ink  
and neatly combed  
and fragrant like the wind  
that blows caressing  
the forests of *Ōri*, with his  
strong chariots and liberal hands.  
In the next world  
I will have her for sure,  
with a love just the same  
as it is today.

(199)

*Paraṇar*

For *Ōri*, see poem 15. This poem again alludes to the eternal nature of their love. But here, it seems to be the case that there did exist obstacles that could prevent the realization of that love in a given birth. The anxiety of the lovers in the period of courtship might well stem from this fact, and is hard to explain otherwise. Her parents' over-protectiveness seems to be such an obstacle to him; but, it is clear that there is a way around it...marriage.

(to him, to discourage night meetings,  
when the girl was guarded closely in  
her home:)

The broad shouldered girl is the sister  
of a forest bowman with a strong bow,  
and long arrows:

her village is in the mountains  
where girls with well-carved jewels  
and rows of bangles on their wrists  
spread out red millet on wide boulders  
in the dark hills;  
green-eyed she-monkeys  
watch for the girls to dive  
and play in the springs,  
so they can climb down from branches  
with their cubs,  
and snatch the grain.

(335)

*Iruntaiyūrkkorayan Pulavan*

The monkeys in the hills snatch the grain in spite  
of the close watch of the girls, waiting for the  
moment when the girls jump into springs to cool off  
and play. The girl suggests that meetings will be  
impossible, because of her brother; but he might  
wait for the right moment and snatch the girl and  
run, like the monkeys. The monkeys do not waste a  
second, and neither should he, she suggests: perhaps  
she has elopement on her mind here.

## WHAT HE SAID

(to her friend, to get her to arrange meetings:)

Those who guard her  
know nothing ..

I went deep into a marshy hollow  
to get *pañcāy* grass to make a doll with  
and give it to the young girl  
with bamboo shoulders.

I drew figures to make her  
thrusting, well-shaped breasts  
radiant!

If I interrogated her  
in the court of a just king,  
what would happen?  
All this is foolishness!  
But I pity the villagers  
who suffer.

(276)

*Kūzikkorāṇ*

All the difficulties and intrigue in meeting with her are foolish, he says: for he has already become intimate with her; so what do they think they are protecting her from? If he questioned her in the court of a just king, where the truth would come out, it would be shown that he had already given her the doll of *pañcāy* grass and painted designs on her breasts, which means that their intimacy is already of a sort that cannot be destroyed. Then the foolishness would end. Then also marriage would ensue. But he pities her friend, who must suffer for both of them.

(to him, when he was craving night meetings:)

O man from the shore  
 where honey flows:  
 do you come here just to make  
 us sad, and our enemies  
 glad?  
 The girl you leave behind  
 is so pitiful:  
 she suffers,  
     like a lily on dark back-waters,  
     crushed by the wheels of your high chariot,  
     with its swift steed,  
     while the shining bells with small clappers  
     play the sad *Vilari* tune.

(336)

*Kunriyan*

Each night when he comes to meet her, she is left behind when he goes. When he leaves she is like a lily crushed by his chariot, the bells of which play the sad tune. The imagery of the seashore region predominates in this poem, but its theme puts it in the mountain region. Their "enemies" are the gossips, perhaps. Here she tells him straight: if you want to make us happy, cease these meetings and marry!

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to him, when he continued to crave  
night meetings, after she had told him  
marriage was now the only solution;  
saying that his lover is guarded closely  
by her mother:)

O man from the hilly land  
where a watchman forgot  
to guard a large jackfruit with fragrant pulp,  
and a male monkey stuck his fist into it;  
then, the watchmen tied nets  
to trees,  
for monkeys to fall into:  
does it befit you to have  
such a good-for-nothing character,  
which will not relieve the misery  
of the one you love...  
she who suffers here,  
with her cool leaf-skirt  
tied with *kuvaḷai* flowers  
from fresh springs?

(342)

*Kāvīrippūm paṭṭinattukkantāṭarattanār*

Her relatives did not guard her closely at first, and he got close to her for meetings and romance, just as the monkey got into the jackfruit. But now, that sort of stuff is impossible, for they are on the lookout, and traps are set. But he should not be such a good-for-nothing, with a character unable to take the responsibility for marriage and the protection of his lover. She wears the leaf-skirt her lover gave her, but he will not give her more than this, it seems. Her friend criticizes him for this failure.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to her, to get her to desire night-meetings:)

In his land a young bull elephant  
 with tusks like bamboo shoots,  
 and anxious to join his young mate,  
 wanders into the village square  
 at the sound made by hill *Kuravars*.  
 Though he comes by day  
 and gives garlands of *Kuvaḷai* flowers,  
 blossomed by springs,  
 and helps you chase parrots  
 that light near millet fields,  
 at evening  
 he craves your affection and grieves  
 all alone:  
 he is too shy to tell you  
 to let you know.

(346)

*Vāyilīṅkaṇṇaṇ*

Like the bull elephant, he wants to be with her badly enough that he would walk right into the village at night to do it. Here her friend tells her that he is too shy to report his need for meetings with her, to her directly, and the friend takes his side. As the elephant runs away from *Kuravar* hunters and runs right into their town, meetings by night in her town are necessitated by the watch of her brothers, and involve more daring and risk.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, whom she had asked  
to stop arranging meetings, and who  
had asked why:)

Every time an owl calls out in the hills,  
or a male-monkey jumps,  
leaping from dark branches  
of the jackfruit tree in the yard,  
my pitiful heart is so afraid.

Now:

my heart will not stop  
following him as he comes  
along hillside paths,  
in the thick dark of night.

(153)

*Kapilar*

She had asked her friend to end their meetings and she had replied with a question of why. The girl replies here that she is always afraid for him as he travels the long path in the dark of night, and consequently she stays awake, as her heart follows him. Also, she is constantly anxious lest they miss a meeting: see numbers 30 and 32. As a result of this hardship, she wants to end the meetings and marry. This poem begins the section treating the termination of meetings by the girls (76-82) and his response to it (83-91).

## 77. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(during a night-meeting, when he was  
hidden nearby, for him to hear;  
refusing both day and night-meetings  
and demanding marriage:)

Listen to me, my friend!  
It is good if he  
does not come tonight:  
on wide, dark, hillside fields,  
where small-grained millet grows ripe,  
the small drums called *tonṭakam*  
sound at midnight.  
Like those who reap in the dark,  
to keep the guards from sleeping.

(375)

Poet's Name Unavailable

She having requested it, perhaps, her friend here  
speaks to her so he will hear, saying that meetings  
are impossible now. The drums sound all night to  
keep the guards awake, who guard the fields as  
people reap all night long. Since the grain is ripe,  
she is no longer required to guard the millet by  
day, and meetings on that pretext are impossible too.  
Like the grain, their love is ripe and ready for  
harvest. It is time for marriage. Furthermore, no more  
clandestine meetings are possible. So marriage is the  
only way to proceed if they want to see each other  
any more.



## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to him, refusing his gift of a *kantal* flower, to tell him that the romance stage is over, that meetings are no longer possible, and marriage is the only way:)

This blood-red *kāntal* flower  
grows by the bunch  
in Murugan's hills,  
where dressed in shoulder  
and ankle armor, he slew demons,  
and, as the battlefield grow red,  
his arrows and elephants' tusks  
rubbed red in their blood.

(1)

*Tipputtōlār*

She refuses his gift, saying the flower grows by the bunch on the hills near their home. His gifts of courtship are no longer pleasing to them, for marriage is the only way now. Though the exact meaning of the Murugan story in this poem is obscure, it might be suggested that a battle rages in the mountain region (ie, in courtship), which ends in marriage. Love is a demon only in the pre-marital phase; so perhaps the friend's message is that the demon love must be killed for marriage to ensure. Also, Murugan is the god invoked by the diviner and the *Vēlaṇ* (see poems numbered 127-140), and it is on the occasion of their invocations of him that the revelation-with-virtue is made (see poems numbered 130-140). So, by speaking of Murugan, her friend tells him that marriage will ensue through the revelation-with-virtue, whether or not he takes the initiative in proposing marriage; so he might as well propose now and eliminate the embarrassment.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to him, refusing to arrange more night meetings:)

O man of the hills,  
 where,  
 when a black-eyed, jumping. male monkey  
 died,  
 his beloved wife, unable to escape  
 her widowhood, left her strong  
 but unlearned young  
 in the care of close relatives,  
 and leaped off the side of a high mountain  
 to end her life:  
 we worry about you.  
 Do not come at night!  
 May you live, and prosper !

(69)

*Kaṭuntōṭkaraviraṇ*

In this one image she portrays seven important messages: 1) the danger of his coming at night through the hills; 2) the devotion of the girl to her lover; 3) the unbearable sorrow that would come to them if anything would happen to him; 4) the misery of widowhood; 5) the fact that, though unmarried, she is as a wife to him, and his loss would mean her eternal widowhood; 6) the desire that he lives and prospers by ceasing the dangers of travelling at night; 7) her desire that he ends the dangerous, though for him exciting, business of night meetings, and settles down to a more safe, regular, and secure existence in marital life.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to her, after having refused him both  
day and night meetings:)

You long for his chest,  
but do not pine away.

Like the *Kōcars* who made an oath  
and went into *Nannan's* land  
to cut down his mango tree,  
we need  
a little hard-hearted  
scheming

(73)

*Paranar*

*Nannan* is the chieftain of *Cenkanmā*, and the hero of *Malaipatukātām*, one of the Ten Idylls in Sangam literature. The *Kōcars* are a tribe noted for their truthfulness and valor (see poem 320). To cut down *Nannan's* mango tree, they had to make an oath, a plot, a strategy, and to carry it through with complete dedication. Cutting down the tree is analogous to capturing the capital city, as it symbolizes complete victory for the invader. This poem shows that the girls too were pained by their inability to have meetings with him; but, her friend reveals that, though it is difficult, they must persevere, for they have a goal to attain...marriage. For them, marriage is their victory in the contest between their lover and them during the period of courtship. He wants more meetings; and they want marriage. They must continue to scheme and dedicate themselves unswervingly to their goal if they are to win, her friend says. Also, by identifying themselves with the *Kōcars*, she asserts that their goal is righteous. As we saw in poems 64 and 74, the acts of *Nannan* and the delay of their lover in coming to marry are seen as less than righteous. Their victory is a victory for virtue.

## WHAT HE SAID

(to her friend, who had emphasized  
how young the girl is, when he was  
begging for meetings; to show how  
great is his longing for her)

Her breasts are blooming buds  
Dense strands of soft hair  
hang down from her head.  
Her close-set, straight and hite  
second teeth grow in rows,  
A few passion marks have even appeared  
I know it is she who causes my pain,  
But that innocent daughter  
of the old, rich man  
does not know.  
What is she like?

(337)

*Potukkayattukkiranai*

This poem could be placed earlier in the narrative sequence: when he is trying to get her friend to arrange meetings for them. Passion marks apparently indicate the coming of sexual maturity. He is fixated on her physical attributes, and many poems betray his passion for her. By ending meetings, the girls have made him very frustrated, and he tries to get her friend to change her mind, and arrange meetings for them.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to him, refusing politely, when he said  
he wanted more and more meetings  
with her at night:)

O man from the land  
where a waterfall  
in the cleft of a mountain  
declares that a great rain  
fell in torrents  
last night:

even if your passion dies,  
will the love between us  
ever fade?

(42)

*Kapilar*

Again, she stresses the eternal nature of their love. The waterfall indicates that the rains fell in torrents the night before. Just like this, their love in this birth indicates love from many births before; like this, the wedding will reveal the romantic love born in the mountain region during their courtship; like this, the secret of their love was revealed by the changes that came over the girl during courtship, and the gossips talked to make noise like a waterfall. These parallel interpretations of the image all expand on her basic message: that his passion for the girl will die away when he is old, but their love will not; that he should not think of passion and immediate gratification for it now, but think of marriage; for their love is eternal and will live long beyond any passion, and it will be fulfilled in marriage.

## WHAT HE SAID

(to his mind, when her friend had refused to arrange night meetings for them, when he is pining away for her, but her friend insists upon marriage:)

O my heart,  
 all the good and helpful words  
 have disappeared, and worthless  
 words abound;  
 you want most  
 what is hardest to have:  
     and like an unbaked clay pot  
     unable to hold the rain,  
 my passion overflows,  
 and you swim blindly in it.  
 It would be so good,  
 if there were only someone to hear  
 your complaint,  
 and hold you tenderly,  
     like a young monkey  
     holds onto her mother  
     in the high branches.

(29)

*Auvaiyār*

The good words are those with which her friend arranged meetings; the worthless ones are those with which she refused. His passion overflows the clay pot, both because there is too much water and because the pot is too weak to bear it all. So too, he has too much passion and is too weak to propose marriage. He is caught in the dilemma, and his heart is swimming in the confusion and frustration caused by their refusal to have more meetings. He wishes she would hear his complaint and hold onto him like the monkey cub holds onto its mother (breast to breast) as they go jumping through the mountains.

## WHAT HE SAID

(to his heart, so that she would hear,  
after failing to get her friend to arrange  
meetings for them:)

When you saw the natural beauty  
of her thick, black hair,  
you were like  
a cart full of salt  
on a muddy river bank...  
ruined, as the great rains  
poured down;  
and, like a happy drunkard  
who wants but more and more  
to drink,  
you crave just that  
which you have already craved  
so much.

(165)

*Parāṇar*

The cart of salt is stuck on the muddy river bank,  
and so the salt dissolves in the rain. So does his  
heart melt in love for her, on seeing her beauty.  
Because of this passion, he is crazy as a drunkard  
for her, craving just more and more of what has  
already been craved so much by him. These images  
of uncontrollable love became standard images for  
the love of god in the much later literature of  
Tamil *bhakti* poetry.

## WHAT HE SAID

(to his friend:)

O Brahmin, O son of a Brahmin,  
 with your penance food  
 and water bowl held low,  
 and the staff you clutch, made of a sturdy  
 branch from the *murukku* tree,  
 with its bark ripped off;  
 O Brahmin's son:  
 in all your learning, without writing,  
 is there any medicine that will re-unite  
 those who are separated?  
 Is this that I feel  
 what people call infatuation?

(156)

*Pāṇṭiyan Ēṇāri Neṭuṅkannan*

Brahmins are one of the six types of messengers listed in the *Tolkāppiyam*. The "learning without writing" has been said to refer to the unwritten Vedas. But it could well refer to the unwritten nature of learning generally in a period of oral learning and verse composition. See *Tamil Heroic Poetry*, by K. Kailasapathy (Oxford, 1968), and especially the discussion of *pulavars*, pp. 112-114.



## WHAT HE SAID

(when her friend refused to arrange  
night meetings:)

When I throw off my shame  
and mount the hopping horse  
made of palm stem,  
    tied with a many-stringed garland  
    of tightly-wrapped and fresh flowers  
    from the golden *āvirai* shrub,  
to make the bells on its neck ring,  
shouting, "This is the sort of woman  
who would do this to me,  
making the love-sickness that destroys me  
grow and grow,"  
the village will blame her to her face.  
I know what I am doing.  
I must go.

(173)

*Maturaik Kāñcip Pulavaṇ*

In his frustration and confusion, he threatens to ride "the palm-stem horse", which is hung with bells, and made from the rough-edged stem of the palm leaf. This ritual is not actually carried through in the poems of the anthology, and the threat is intended to get her friend to arrange more meetings for them. Here he indicates that the girl would be terribly ashamed if their love were revealed by this ritual, and she would be blamed by the villagers for treating him so badly. To avoid this embarrassment, he says, her friend should arrange meetings for them.

(to her friend, so that she would not  
refuse again his pleas for more  
meetings:)

When love is over-ripe,  
men will ride palm-stems,  
thinking they are horses,  
and wear garlands of *erukkam* buds  
as though they were flowers,  
and go screaming through the streets,  
and  
worse.

(17)

*Pērayiṁ Muṟuvalār*

The essence of this picture is his sexual frustration, and the crazy behaviour that it brings on. *Erukkam* buds are a horrible thing to make a garland out of: they ooze a putrid white juice. Shiva wears the *erukkam* flower in his dance of the destruction of the worlds, for they are the flower of the cremation ground. In addition, proper garlands are made of flowers, not buds. The image of the poem is one of complete madness, which, if her friend should want to avoid, she should arrange meetings.

## WHAT HE SAID

(to his heart, when the girl had  
refused to meet with him, through  
her friend:)

That girl of shining beauty  
and swaying walk:  
her heart has not melted for me.  
Shall the messenger I send  
be riding through the streets,  
casting off my great shame  
and appearing one day  
so people will rebuke me,  
wearing white bones  
with a customary garland  
of bells and stones,  
on a horse made from ripe  
palm-stems from the rich  
tops of trees?

(182)

*Maṭal Pāṭiya Matāṅkiran*

He says, shall my reply to her refusal be riding the palm-stem horse and announcing my love to the whole world? All the wealth of the palm tree is gathered at the top: fruit, toddy, leaves, fiber, stalk, etc. This poem introduces another element into his presentation of the palm-stem horse ritual: people will rebuke him for doing it too, and it will cause him great shame.

## WHAT HE SAID

(to her friend, to impress her with  
his sadness, and get her to arrange  
more meetings:)

Morning, mid-day,  
broken-hearted evening,  
dawn and  
midnight, when the village sleeps...  
separate from my love,  
if I could tell these one from the other,  
my love would be a lie.  
But, if I should ride the palm-stem,  
thinking it a horse,  
and proclaim openly my love  
in the streets,  
she would be disgraced.  
And after that,  
life itself is a disgrace.

(32)

*Allār Naṇmullaiyār*

Life is unbearable for him because she refuses to meet with him. But, if he were to ride the palm-stem horse, she would be disgraced; and in fact, since their love would be public knowledge after the ritual, this would constitute the most degrading wedding ceremony possible. So he hesitates, and is trapped between his inability to stand not meeting, his hesitancy to marry, and his shame at riding the horse. Note that all five regions of nature imagery are represented by the respective times of day in this poem, indicating that the lovers can be separated in any of the regions.

## WHAT HE SAID

(threatening to ride the palm-stem horse,  
when her friend refused meeting )

This young woman  
speaks so rarely that her tongue,  
full of nectar, fears her close-set teeth,  
so sharp and white.  
I could make this woman mine  
and let the whole town know;  
but, I hesitate,  
embarrassed:  
for in the streets  
many people would say,  
'That man is the husband  
of this fine and lovely woman.'

(14)

*Tolkapilar*

She speaks so seldom that her tongue fears her teeth.  
It is curious that, although there are many  
references by him to the nectar in her mouth, there  
is no description of kissing in the Sangam tradition.  
Again, as in the previous poem, he worries because  
the palm-stem ritual would constitute a shameful  
marriage ritual, and he would seem like a fool next  
to his fine and virtuous wife.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to her, informing her of his threat  
to ride the palm-stem horse:)

Think of his tortured look,  
my friend:  
his color had changed,  
as every day he comes meekly  
down our street,  
opening his mouth but rarely  
to say sweet words.  
His standing so long  
behind me  
means he expects something,  
like the women who sing the *akaval*,  
with their white-tipped rods,  
who stood behind *Akutai*, with his  
sweet liquor, to receive  
an innocent female elephant  
as a gift.

(298)

*Parayar*

*Akutai* is a chieftain, and the "singers of the *akaval*" are diviners, who attribute the symptoms of love-sickness to possession by demons, and seek to placate them. See poem 132. He has been standing meekly behind her friend throughout courtship, sending her as messenger to his lover. But, like the diviners, he has done so for a purpose... to get a reward. Her friend says he wants the reward of more meetings, and has threatened to ride the palm-stem horse in order to get it. Mentioning the *Akaval* singers, however, has another import as well. In the course of their courtship, the girl too has begun to show signs of love-sickness that eventually will lead to the calling of the diviner by the mother. The diviner's ritual will be the occasion for the revelation-with-virtue.

## WHAT HE SAID

(to her friend, praising the joys of domestic life; or, to his heart, when it pushed him to leave for the sake of wealth, to dissuade it from the thought:)

For me, glorious heaven,  
so hard to obtain,  
and the world surrounded by wide  
seas of spreading waves,  
cannot compare  
with the days spent embracing,  
with our opposite shoulders touching,  
this small woman,  
    with such beautiful folds  
    on her lap,  
    her complexion like gold,  
    and her painted eyes, like  
    flowers.

(101)

*Parūmōvāyppatuman*

This poem begins a section of poems concerning his separation for wealth for marriage. Here, he speaks of the joys of life with her, to dissuade his heart from its longing to go off for wealth. Neither wealth nor heaven are easy to obtain, but they are nothing compared to days spent with her. The embrace mentioned is the most intimate sort, wherein the right shoulder of one touches the left of the other, and vice versa.

## 93. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to her, when he was standing nearby,  
and unseen:)

That man who comes at midnight

when lightning severs

a snake's dark-hooded head,

and holds your soft shoulders

like bamboo:

I have not the strength to ask him

if he is going away;

I cannot ask him

if he will return.

What can we do,

my friend?

(268)

*Karuvūrc Cēramāṇ Cāttāṇ*



## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to him, when he asked whether she  
would be able to bear his separation  
for wealth or marriage:)

O man from the land of high mountains  
where jackfruit trees grow beside  
waterfalls crashing from high  
and unapproachable cliffs,  
making sweet music  
like the drums that say "tan":  
the eyes of the girl you love  
everyday will be sleepless  
and confused;  
as her shining bangles,  
carved from conch shells,  
fall off; and her tears  
will be never-ending.

(365)

*Maturai Nalvetti*

Drums announce the marriage; and their love will  
bear fruit in marriage, as the fruit of the jackfruit  
tree is nurtured by the waterfall. But her heart will  
be sad when he is gone.

## 95. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to him, who was about to leave in  
search of wealth for marriage:)

O man from the land of rocky hills,  
where a female elephant eats millet  
in the front yard,  
as her calf drinks from her milky breast:  
if you do not go away,  
ungratefully,  
forgetting all the good that has been done for  
you,  
like a king who forgets  
all the help given to him in hard times  
as soon as he ascends to the throne,  
then you deserve this girl,  
who has sprouting soft hair  
like soft feathers  
on a noisy peacock.

(225)

*Kapilar*

He has perhaps said he needs to go off for wealth in order to be deserving of the girl. Her friend dissuades him of this thought, saying it is loving kindness and staying with her that make him deserving of her, not wealth. It is not clear whether the journey for wealth for marriage was necessary: expressions of sadness by the women may be attempts to keep him from going away, or sadness expressed in the understanding that he must go for the sake of their marriage. This poem, clearly, is of the first sort: she is trying to keep him from going away.

## WHAT HE SAID

(to her friend, who told her of his  
departure, telling her she had already  
guessed he would leave:)

They say my man,  
whose chest is like a rocky hill,  
is going to the land where *kāntaḷ* grows  
like a fence in the mountains,  
so that I might tremble with grief,  
in the harsh, dewy season,  
when cold north winds  
on the hill  
lift and stroke  
the strong, shaking leaves  
of the *cēmpu*, which look  
like elephants' ears.

(76)

*Kiḷḷimaṅkalāṅkiḻār*

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(explaining to the girl, who grieved  
because he left before marriage, the  
reason for his leaving and why he did it:)

That man from high mountains  
where fat, white buds of the *kānta!*  
are opened up by bees  
who cannot wait; and the buds  
give way and open up,  
like people who know their duty  
and welcome wisemen who know good:  
that man has a good heart,  
my friend.  
When I told him the state you are in,  
he was ashamed, saying,  
"This should not have happened!"

(265)

*Karuvūrk Katap Pillai*

He opened her up during courtship, and she trusted  
his wise virtuousness, and gave way to him. Then,  
she became sad as he delayed marriage, and her  
friend told him. He was ashamed of having caused  
her grief, so he set out for wealth for marriage, so  
that the grief of the girl might end in a marriage  
wherein he could provide well for her.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, who expressed fears that  
she would be unable to bear his  
separation:)

We can bear our love.  
But my eyes cannot,  
for they have seen our man,  
from the land where children  
herding calves among green paths  
see the beautiful *vēṅkai* flowers  
in public places, and cry out  
joyfully, without climbing the tree;  
and their cries echo among clefts  
of mountains that touch the sky:  
my eyes weep because  
of their intimacy with him.

(241)

*Kapilar*

During his absence, her friend is concerned whether or not she can bear his separation. She replies in many poems. Here she says that she can bear it, but her eyes cannot so they weep. Children cry out, "tiger, tiger", when they look at the yellow *vēṅkai* flower, in the belief that the flowers will come down to them. In Sangam poetry, it is mostly little girls that do this. Perhaps the children are too young to climb, or they may fear to climb the tree, for it is sacred to Murugan. Citing the *vēṅkai* may also indicate her great longing for marriage; (see poem 34).

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, who worried she would  
be unable to bear his separation:)

The great beauty of our eyes  
like flowers  
is gone;  
and our lovely, soft, shoulders,  
with bangles on them,  
have grown thin;  
but the good, young love that I have  
for this man who I cannot understand  
is a cure for all this  
for me.  
It is only you who cannot bear it,  
my friend.

(377)

*Mōci Kōryō*

Here the girl responds to her friend's concern with a re-affirmation of the curative powers of her love. Though they suffer, the pain of suffering is cured for her by his love and their relationship. She tells her friend to worry about herself.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, who asked her if she  
would be able to bear his separation  
for wealth for marriage:)

At midnight...

in her nest of tiny twigs  
built on the fat leaves of a palm tree  
with a curved stance, and drum-like base,  
the sickly female nightingale  
with black legs  
calls out in pain,  
with her first pregnancy,  
which she longed for so;  
even though his chariot,  
tall with flocks of bells on it,  
has not come to cleave the village square,  
my eyes  
have abandoned sleep:  
for a sound rings in my ear  
as though he were coming.

(301)

*Kunriyan*

She lies sleepless at night in anticipation of his return: she hears sounds that she keeps expecting to be those of his chariot, one of which is the sound of the nightingale. The introduction of this image, as with the first image in poem 95, indicates her acute longing for children. It is not impossible that she herself is pregnant.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to her, after telling her that the marriage would be soon; or, when he had delayed long in marriage. to give her strength:)

Even though our wicked man  
has not been benevolent and come  
to marry, so you might regain  
the beauty of your shoulders,  
with bangles shining on the joints:  
just look at his towering mountain,  
with cool boulders that appear  
like sapphires  
when washed by waterfalls  
that screaming groups of girls  
go to play in,  
as the rain that makes the earth soft  
has begun in the land.

(367)

*Maturai Marutan Ilanākan*

Her friend says that she should look to his hill for strength, even though he himself has not come. She should look to his hill and remember the joy that they have had together, to have some consolation during his absence.



## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, who asked whether  
she would be able to bear his séparation  
for wealth before marriage:)

Look my friend:

I have gazed on the hill of my man  
from the land where flocks  
of peacocks shout in forests  
dense with trees,  
and white-faced black monkeys  
shiver with their children  
in the loud rain falling  
on the hillside.

Is my forehead not  
just as it used to be?

(249)

*Kapilar*

Here the girl responds to encouragement from her friend, like that of the previous poem. Even though she gazes on his hill, her forehead is still covered with pallor (*pacalai*); for she is still lonely and grieving without him, no matter how much she looks at his hill. Her problem will not be solved until he returns and they marry. Note that familiar scenes have begun to appear more often in the nature imagery of the poems, as, in the poems spoken by the women, the longing for family life is portrayed.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend who encouraged her,  
when he was gone before marriage:)

My body is growing pale;  
my bangles are slipping off  
I will have neither very soon:  
but my love is so great for that man  
from the land where seeds  
of wild rice are sown  
and grow ripe with water  
from waterfalls  
in hills touched by clouds.

(371)

*Uṛaiyūr Mutukūṛṇan*

Paleness here is *pacalai*. Wild rice ripens by the waterfall, as their love grew ripe in the mountain region, during pre-marital romance. But the rice, to be enjoyed, must be gathered, brought into the house, prepared and served: so to their love must enter the domestic stage for it to come to fruition.. they must marry. Here she seems to be saying that even though she is suffering in his absence, she realizes his quest for wealth is necessary for their marital happiness; and that her love gives her strength to bear the pain.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, who asked how she  
could bear his separation before  
marriage:)

My man from the land of high mountains,  
where a falling white  
waterfall is like  
the rising moon  
shining in the sea;  
he is like the sun,  
my friend.  
And my wide, bamboo shoulders  
are like the *neruñci* vine  
that follows the sun.

(315)

*Maturai Vēlātattan*

The last line of the translation, is extrapolation and not found in the Tamil original. The *neruñci* (*tribulus terrestris*) is a tough, thorny vine, with little yellow flowers that are said to always face the sun. Her shoulders are like this creeper, in that they are tough and capable of with-standing his absense: but her toughness comes from the fact that her mind is always turned toward him. Contrast the use of the *neruñci* in the imagery of poem 233.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, who feared she would  
be unable to bear his separation:)

Even if his love  
should bring me pallor,  
the pallor itself will not stay long,  
because of his love:  
    he is my man from the land  
    where peacocks,  
    with sprouting long tails  
    shaking as they walk,  
    dance and shout on the banks  
    of the forest river,  
    where rain makes so much noise.

(264)

*Kapilar*

Here, pallor again is *pacalai*. She expresses her faith in his love: for though it causes her pain, it also cures her pain. Though his going away is difficult for her to bear, his return will bring her great joy: both are the product of his love. The rainy season will be the season of his return. This poem could also be placed among those of the forest region.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to the village god:)

It is said

that the frightful god  
of the *marām* tree in the village square  
will punish evil ones.

But my man of the hilly land  
is not one bit evil:

because I long for him so,  
my forehead turns pale;

and because my heart melts for him,  
my wide shoulders are growing weak.

(87)

*Kapilar*

The *marām* tree is the pipal tree, sacred in Tamil Nadu, and sacred to the god Murugan. She is afraid the god will punish him for having done evil to her. But, she says, it is not he that has caused her to become pale (with *pacalai*) but rather it is her own longing for him.

(to her friend, who showed signs of  
grief during the pre-marital separation )

That day when my man  
from the hilly land,  
where a *mānai* vine clings  
to an elephant that sleeps  
by a bolder,  
embraced my shoulders and spoke  
an undying oath,  
saying, "You are in my heart,  
and without you. I am not!"  
was it painful to you,  
my friend?

(36)

*Paraṇar*

She responds sarcastically to her friend's worry, by saying that she has as much faith in him now as when he made his undying oaths to her. If her friend worries now, her faith must have slipped away; or else, his oaths themselves must have made her worry. But an element of doubt is expressed implicitly in the girl's own imagery. For the vine clings to the elephant by mistake, taking it for a stable and steady bolder. When the elephant gets up, the vine is uprooted, and may die. If the elephant is her lover, then perhaps she is saying that she too was surprised by his leaving, and her faith in him is all by which she can retain trust. Her faith, then, stands over and above his actions; it keeps her trusting even when he has gone away. It is this sort of faith that she accuses the friend of not having.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, when she felt that the girl  
would be unable to bear his separation)

At midnight,  
in winter,  
when cold winds blow and sprinkle  
rain about,  
are there other hearts confused  
by tormenting loneliness  
and unbearable grief,  
    with cool eyes streaked with red,  
    by tears broken loose from their jail?  
Do others hear the pathetic voice  
of the crooked cow-bell,  
    as each time a gnat  
    buzzes near the cow,  
    the shaking clapper  
tolls?

(86)

*Venkorraṇ*

She lies awake at night, waiting for him to return,  
and hears the sound of the bell on a cow's neck  
ringing as it shakes its head. She wonders whether  
there are others who lie awake like this; she wonders,  
perhaps, if he is stricken with the same kind of  
loneliness as she is.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(when he was nearby, but to the river  
that flowed down from his hill, for him  
to hear:)

O river: you are even more wicked  
than my man from the hills,  
    who thinks it is good  
    to give nothing to me,  
    though I live on what he gives  
    and am starving.

But you, river:  
you never consider how frail  
and timid, and pitiful I am;  
so you swept down banana trees  
from the hills, to make them  
desolate.

(327)

*Ammūvaṇ*

The trees expected sustenance from the river, but got blown down and swept away by it instead; just as she was destroyed by him from whom she expected sustenance. The slopes became desolate of beauty, without their trees; just as she was left empty of beauty, without her virgin freshness, by his wickedness in relation to her. The wicked river reminds her of this, as she grieves, so it is more wicked than even he.



## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, who had strongly encouraged her, seeing her change because of his separation for wealth for marriage:)

Mother gave me  
the *tazal*, *tattai*, and *muṟi*  
for chasing away birds,  
and said it was best if I went  
to the fields.  
She sought to protect my virtue.  
But she was too late:  
you had already said, "Let's go,  
let's go to the loud and joyous  
festival in the big town;"  
that day the words of the elders here  
bode well; and that day  
my lover took for himself  
the virtue my mother guarded so.  
Now I am like this.

(223)

*Maturaikkaṭayattārmakan Vennākan*

*Tazal*, *tattai*, and *muṟi* are unidentified instruments for chasing birds. The lovers apparently met at a festival (see poems numbered 140, 218), to which they went at the behest of her friend. After that they met in the field, to which the girl was sent by her mother. In response to her friend's strong encouragement in his absence, she says that her friend's advice had not done her any good in the past, so she best keep it to herself.

(to her, who showed changes since his  
departure, to encourage her with strong  
words:)

That man from the land  
that slopes down to the village of *Kuṇavars*,  
where the sweet smoke of *aquila* wood  
floats like rainless clouds:  
if he would only embrace your good chest,  
adorned with a garland of mixed flowers,  
it would be so good,  
my friend:  
that is,  
before you become pale,  
and before your eyes .....dark with mascara,  
like *kuṇḍalāi* flowers.....  
cry.

(339)

*Pēyār*

As the clouds of *aquila* smoke are sweet-smelling, but  
waterless, so his love is full of sweet words and promises,  
but without the loving kindness that would prevent  
him from going away. Paleness here, again, is *pacalai*.

112.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to her, during his absence for wealth  
for marriage:)

Our man is from a land of high mountains... ..  
 where a male elephant becomes faint  
 and confused,  
 when his rut is ended by a tender,  
 rolled-up, young banana leaf,  
 that rubbed against his forehead  
 where his divinity rests;  
 and his female sighs painfully  
 as she strokes his sad back,  
 and sleeps with him on a hillside,  
 where water falls:  
 his love dwells only in acts  
 of passion.

(308)

*Peruntō! Kuruñcāttan*

The rolled-up, young banana (plaintain) leaf is said to cure the rut of elephants. He is confused as to how it ended so suddenly, and tried from the exertion of running around in rut. Woman's love is expressed in her caring for him in this time. Her lover has gone away out of passion for wealth, and the poem expresses how she must care for him on return. The quality of love in men and women is admirably contrasted here. Her love is duty-bound to care for him, to provide comfort and careful attention to his needs. His love is bound up in his passions ..... for her, for wealth, and for the harlot, as we will see. He has already compared his love to the rut of an elephant (6); and the specifically sexual nature of his love has been portrayed in several poems (numbers 17, and 81-84, for example). In addition, sex role differentiation is portrayed clearly in the descriptions of the other by each of the lovers. She dwells on his character as he behaves toward her; he dwells on her physical beauty and sensual appeal to him.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, who worried when he  
left for wealth for marriage:)

I cannot bear this bitter agony.  
But worse than this:  
I fear death.  
Now does he fear the gossip  
that says we two are inseparable lovers?  
Or does he not?  
In this night when many people  
sleep with their lovers in the village,  
he does not come, except  
in my heart.  
Tell him, my friend:  
is all this not wrong?

(302)

*Māṅkuṭikiṣār*

She fears that he will not hurry and return, before she dies of grief. If he feared the gossip, he would return right away and marry, she believes. Besides this, she is lonely at night, when others sleep with their lovers, and would have him return so they can be together. His staying away when she grieves so makes her wonder whether or not he knows her grief. So she sends her friend to tell him. Again, she perceives it as wrong for him to make her grieve so: it is his duty to care for her, and to marry before disgrace befalls them.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, who had criticized him  
for taking such a long time, when he  
had gone off for wealth for marriage:)

Our man is from a land  
where the young of *Varuṭai* deer,  
living on the red hillside,  
drink their fill of sweet milk  
pouring from their mother's breast,  
and jump and play in the shade  
of the steep hillside.  
His heart is hard as stone;  
but my heart will just not realize  
how strong he is:  
it melts for him.

187)

*Kapilar*

She tells her friend not to scold him, for she herself worries for him, even though she knows that he is strong. His hardness of heart is indicative of his strength, she says; but, like the deer that gives milk abundantly to her children, only to watch them leave her for play, she gives all to him, and her heart follows out after him when he leaves, without thinking of her own condition. The maternal imagery, which has become prominent in her poems in this section dealing with his absence before marriage, is extended here to clearly include feelings toward him, amplifying her friend's description of her relation to him in poem number 112.

## 115. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to encourage her to be strong, during  
his absence:)

That man from the land  
of towering mountains,  
where the big, black, buck,  
with an endearingly innocent doe,  
ate bitter sweet *nelli* fruit  
and drank from a fresh spring,  
as he shook honeyed flowers, nearby,  
with his panting hot breath:  
on a cool winter day,  
when rainclouds come from the north  
to the south in the wind,  
will he be able to stay away,  
without us?

(317)

*Maturaikkaṇṇaratattāṇ*

She encourages the girl by saying that, when the rainy season comes, the season of the northwest monsoon, he will see the deer drinking with his mate, and be unable to resist the longing to return home, to be with his mate as the deer is. The image of the *nelli* fruit is also important: as the bitter *nelli* fruit makes cool water drunk after it taste sweet, so his absence will make their days together after his return even more sweet. He will come back with panting hot breath, from the exertions of his journey, and drink with his lover.

116.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, who encouraged her to  
be patient, during his absence:)

It is not that I  
was unfit for him:  
I was perfect.  
But now it seems I cannot  
mold myself  
to agree with him:  
that man from the land  
where *vēṅkai* trees have broken trunks  
because roaring elephants knocked them down:  
but the trees still bloom  
so *Kuravar* girls can pick the flowers  
standing on the ground,  
to adorn their hair.

(208)

*Kapilar*

She responds to her friend's encouragement by saying that she has a good reason to be distraught: she had gone through great changes in the course of pre-marital love, perhaps becoming ready to elope with him; but then, he went off for wealth. This lack of synchronism in their activity and changes is what she means by not "agreeing" (*onrutal*). She has been battered like the tree, but she remains strong and able to flower. Also, as the *vēṅkai* represents marriage, the course of their love, though difficult, will facilitate marriage, perhaps by provoking gossip: like this, the elephant knocking the tree down makes it easier for the girls to pick the flowers. See 136, where the girls have to climb trees for flowers.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, who tried to console her,  
when he had gone for wealth for  
marriage:)

Listen, my friend,  
and prosper!  
Our man is from mountains,  
obstacles to travel: there  
a waterfall slithers down the slopes,  
like a snake; and drops quickly  
to make rocks bang together;  
and it hits the flowered and swaying limbs  
of the long-trunked *vēṅkai* tree,  
growing among the stones,  
to make them barren.  
The love we mingled with him  
is good,  
as long as he never goes away

(134)

*Kōvēṅkaip Peruṅkatavan*

His passion for meetings and then for wealth knock  
about her plans for marriage, and make marriage more  
difficult, just as the waterfall knocks off the flowers  
of the *vēṅkai*. As long as his love nurtures and fosters  
marriage, it is fine; as long as he stays with her, love is  
a wonderful thing. But when he goes away, it is not.  
There is no encouragement that will change that fact,  
she says. Again, the waterfall seems to represent his  
passion, nurturing on the one hand, and damaging on  
the other, their love and its progress toward marriage.



## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, who had tried to console her, as she suffered in expectation of his return, at the coming of the season by which he said he would come back:)

He stood by me,  
 stroking my long, waving hair,  
 and told me not to cry.  
 He wiped my weeping eyes.  
 But now, when the dewy season,  
 with its heavy mist,  
 has come,  
     when country beans flower  
     on thriving vines, as a  
     second crop, after millet,  
     for the *Kuravar* clan,  
     on the dry land of the hillside,  
 he has not come.  
 What has become of him,  
 my friend?

(82)

*Kaṭuvaymaḷḷaṇ*

As they once loved when she guarded millet, she seeks to have a second crop of love, after his return, just as the country beans thrive after the millet is harvested. He was so kind to her then, but now? He has not returned and the season has come. She wonders whether he is so kind now as he was then; if he were, would he not have returned?

## 119. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to her, during his separation for wealth  
before marriage:)

That man from the land  
where many bright-red *Kānta!* flowers  
lie on a bolder in the village square,  
making it look like an elephant  
speared in war  
with wounds on its face:  
whether he is trustworthy  
or not:  
miserable people from the small town  
where a clear-white waterfall  
drops from a mountainside,  
crashing near homes  
thatched with fearful leaves:  
they rebuke us anyway,  
do they not?  
Do they have no faults to blame?

(284)

*Milaiwē! Tittan*

Whenever he acts out of passion (either in craving meetings, or now, going for wealth), the people of the village hear about it, just as they hear the waterfall crashing near their homes. The leaves on thatched roofs tremble, seemingly afraid. Since people misunderstand him, they gossip and make life difficult for the girls. It hardly makes any difference if he is trustworthy or not, as long as he acts the way he does, she says. The red flowers on the bolder make it look like a wounded battle-elephant.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(during the separation:)

This misty season  
 is so hard to bear,  
     when flocks of deer steal  
     the dried, ripe grain from the black gram  
     with its red legs, like the forest hen.

His chest,  
 close to me,  
 is the only medicine  
 that will end this misery

(68)

*AllārNaṇmullai*

As this separation uses imagery of the mountain region, it is placed among poems about pre-marital separation for wealth. It might also be placed among poems of the forest region. The actual Tamil phrase translated in the last sentence is literally, "there is no medicine other than his chest close to me that will end my misery".

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, who had assured her  
he would hurry to marry, when he had  
been away long in search of wealth  
for marriage:)

Even in this wintry season,  
with its cold, north wind  
in the humming dead of night,  
when a nightingale,  
whose head is red like fire,  
together with his mate, with her  
bent beak like a shrimp,  
calls out  
from their nest in the high branches  
of the spreading *talavu* tree,  
to break the hearts  
of lovers separated from one another,  
he has not come.  
Is this the way he will marry me,  
my friend?

(160)

*Maturai Marutaṇ Iḷanākaṇ*

She wants to have a domestic life with him like the nightingales do with each other. She hears their call and thinks of him and their separation with longing grief. She also wonders that, if he is so intent on marriage, he could witness scenes like that of the birds together and not hurry home to her. She wonders about his trustworthiness.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, when she heard of his  
return, after her friend had said he  
didn't love them anymore:)

My man is from a land  
of big hills, where monkeys in gangs  
eat tender leaves on slopes  
where pepper grows:  
he is such a sweet one.  
Could even heaven be as sweet  
as the most unsweet things  
he has done  
in his relation to me?

(288)

*Kapilar*

In heaven sweetness itself would disappear in the  
absence of unsweetness. I know pleasure because of  
the pain of our love, she says. Compare poem 115,  
wherein the *nelli* fruit's bitterness makes the cool  
drinking water even more sweet. All is forgiven  
on his return.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, who had belittled his character during his prolonged absence; when she found out he was coming back:)

Is there anything sweeter  
than homelife:

as when a wild cow's beloved calf,  
with beautiful ears,  
is frightened, and goes off,  
away from the herd, as a forest hunter  
chases it; and coming upon  
a small, forest hut,  
the calf draws near, for the young girls  
to protect it; and liking it there,  
it gains strength from life  
in the home.

I will walk as far as I can  
to go and meet him,  
my friend?

(322)

*Aiyūr Muṭavan*

He has wandered off and returned to the home. She will go off too, and go to her home, which is with him. They will gain strength together in the home they will make together. Note that it is homelife together that is portrayed in the imagery of this poem, and not the specifically maternal feelings that she portrayed in the imagery of poems during his absence. Now the image is more playful. However, it is still young girls that provide a home for the wandering calf. Compare poems numbered 95, 100, 114.

(to her, to encourage elopement:)

Love is such a delicate matter:  
 I told him, "If we had been told  
 to chase parrots from millet, by day,  
 that would have been fine;  
 but I fear the hazards of your coming  
 by night.  
 What shall we do to end the agony  
 of this love-sickness?"  
 The man from high mountains  
 thought of a solution to all of this,  
 and sighed heavily.  
 I said, "Your plan is wise,  
 but it will cause gossip too!"

(217)

*Taṅkāl Muṭakollanār*

This poem introduces the reasons for elopement. Poems depicting elopement itself, however, come in the poems of the wasteland region. When confronted with the dilemmas of meeting by day or night, and the agony of love-sickness between meetings, he comes up with an answer. But he is afraid to say it. Her friend thinks it is a good idea, but warns him that it will cause gossip. She reports the conversation to the girl, so that she might be ready and willing. The solution is elopement.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to him, after urging her to elope with  
time:)

O man of the good mountain land,  
where wild deer, with slow gait,  
steal and eat the leaves  
of dancing bamboo,  
and sleep on cool hillsides:

if someone should do great, good deeds,  
is there anyone who would not give praise?  
Though she has but a little goodness,  
protect her always, with  
an ever-growing love,  
and put an end to your feigned quarrelling.  
Without you,  
she has no one.

(115)

*Kapilar*

"Feigned quarrelling" *pulavi* is the coolness lovers affect toward one another. Perhaps the necessity of elopement has engendered this coolness; and her friend begs him to end it for a more active kind of support. For elopement is a traumatic affair, when she must leave her family and go off with him alone. She has only his love and support to rely on. Perhaps her friend fears she will not go if he does not act more lovingly.



## 126. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to her, who desired him to marry:)

This I knew  
 even before he realized it:  
 that you two would go off  
 in unity,  
 after saying good words,  
 to the wide space covered with high rocks,  
     where new travellers opposed  
     *Maṇavars* with bent bows, with bowstrings  
     tied to the ends,  
     and were unable to endure  
     their fierce enmity of their long, sharp arrows;  
     and then, heaps of dried leaves  
     covered their corpses,  
     and appeared like a village of huts.

(297)

*Kāvrippūmpaṭṭiṭattukkārikkannan*

This poem could well be included among poems of the wasteland, as it depicts the wasteland region. It is placed here as a foreshadowing of their actual elopement. The *Maṇavars* are a clan of hunter-robbers, who kill travellers and bury their corpses under heaps of dried leaves. The new travellers knew no better than to oppose the robbers; they were killed, and their corpses were so many that the heaps of leaves covering them resembled a village of huts. For more on the *Maṇavars*, see poems numbered 346 and 368. Elopement is one solution to the problems of pre-marital love: in poems 124-126, her friend advocates this solution, which, in itself, constitutes a type of marriage—a marriage of lovers on their own initiative, without the previous consent of their parents. The foster-mother, who also may be her friend's mother, may have a hand in their elopement however. See poems numbered 320-326.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(as though to her friend, who feared  
their parents would call in the  
cancer of the "frenzied dance";  
when he was nearby:)

Just so my mother would see  
that the frenzied *Vēlan*  
does not know the cure for our disease,  
this is my wish:  
that he should not come tonight,  
my friend,  
that man from the land of shining mountains,  
with groves where the *kuṭir* in the hand  
of girls chasing parrots that eat millet  
with large kernals, bending, like a  
female elephant's trunk,  
sounds like anklets jangling;  
even though today  
we suffer unbearable grief

(360)

*Maturai Iṣattup Pūtaṇ Tēvaṇ*

During their courtship, she begins to show signs of emaciation, paleness (*pacalai*), distractedness, and grief (see, for example, poem 27). Her mother worries that these symptoms are caused by disease. The diviner (*kaṭṭuvicci*), however diagnoses the problem as possession of the girl by a demon, which the *Vēlan* is called in to exorcize. Here, she is saying that she wants her mother to call in the exorcist, so she can find out the real cause of the symptoms, which is "neither devil nor disease" (see poems 6 and 8). This means that they will make a revelation-with-virtue. She wants him to hear of all this, however, so he can come to propose marriage, and make the revelation unnecessary. It will be more honorable for him to propose than for the revelation to be made, perhaps.

## 128. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to her, when he was nearby, but  
hidden, for him to hear, as though  
to inform her that her parents have  
called in the exorcist:)

The *Vēlaṇ* will say  
that victorious and glorious Murugaṇ  
has caused your grief and made  
your shoulders thin.  
When mother is convinced of this,  
you best have him come quickly.....  
our man from the land  
where a black bolder in his mountain country  
looks like a short, black, female elephant  
hiding her trunk:  
for then there is little time left  
to see the great foolishness  
of our parents.

(111)

*Tiṇṇitākaṇ*

As in the previous poem, the message is that he  
should come quickly to propose marriage, to expose  
the foolishness of their parent's belief that her grief  
is caused by demons. In this poem, Murugaṇ himself is  
cited as the cause of the disease by the *Vēlaṇ*, where  
in others it seems Murugaṇ is merely invoked to  
exorcize the demon that possesses the girl.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to her, when he was nearby, telling  
her that her mother had decided to  
call in the dancer of the "frenzied  
dance":)

We have done no wrong to our man  
from high mountains where rainclouds play.  
We are sure of this.  
But, it makes me sick,  
my friend,  
when they cut a goat's throat,  
laying out a feast of grains,  
and, playing many instruments in an island  
amid a running river, worship many gods,  
praising them,  
saying, "she is possessed by a demon":  
it is all a show,  
and not a cure for what ails us.

(263)

*Peruñcāṭṭan*

Here the message is identical in import as the previous two poems, but a description of the ritual is included. It seems here that an anonymous demon, rather than Murugan, is believed to cause the disease. It was believed that gods lived in islands in running rivers. Her friend is very cynical about the value of such rituals, and for good reason: the only cure for what ails them is marital union with their lover. Here is the only fitting object for worship, if there need be one. The gods have nothing to do with it. Here she implores him indirectly to come and marry so the ritual can be avoided.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to herself, to get her friend to make  
the revelation-with-virtue, when she  
was wilting in the over-protectedness  
of her home:)

Even though the bright fire of love  
that my eyes gave me  
afflicts me to the bone,  
it is so hard to go there  
and embrace him.

And he is not strong enough  
to come here and end my misery.

The pain I suffer

is like that of two chickens  
fighting in the dust,  
all alone, with no one  
to start the fight or break it up,  
or make them go away:

if it does not end by itself,  
there is no one else to dispell it.

(305)

*Kuppaikkōziyār*

The poet's name is taken from the central image in the poem; it means, "he of chickens in the dust". She cannot go to him; and he has not taken the initiative to come and propose marriage. She is locked in the house, unable to meet with him, and unable to marry. Like the chickens, who fight to the death if no one breaks them up, she will surely die of grief, if someone does not intercede on her behalf. She asks here that her friend intercede, by revealing the secret of their love to her mother, making a revelation-with-virtue, so that marriage might ensue. The first lines of the previous poem indicate clearly that the girls consider it his duty to propose, and an injustice that he has not done so. We have no evidence in this anthology as to how he perceives the situation. This poem could also be placed among those of the lowland region, because of its imagery.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to her, saying she would make a  
revelation of their secret: )

If I should decide to reveal our secret,  
to end this sadness,  
caused by the duty left unfulfilled  
by our man of the hilly land,  
where green-eyed elephants  
chased away from eating millet  
by hunters armed with bend bows  
and arrows chased off by girls  
in fragrant leaf-skirts,  
look up together and head  
for a small bolder:  
what harm is there?

(333)

*Uzuntinain Pulavan*

He is being chased by hunters, and she by gossips (young girls): they should go together to a place of safety, away from all this torment. The elephant chased by hunters represents both his being kept from meetings by her brothers' awesome protectiveness, and the dangers of his path to their meetings. She is being locked in her house as a result of the gossip of young girls. Like the parrots and elephants, they should get away: they should marry. Her friend says she will reveal the secret to save them both. The last line is interpolation; see 39.

## 132. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to the diviner, as a revelation-  
with - virtue: )

O woman who sings the *akaval*,  
old woman who calls the gods.....  
with your beautiful, long hair,  
as white as a string of pearls:  
sing your song again!  
The song about his good, long hill:  
sing that song again!

(23)

*Auvaiyār*

*Akaval* is the name of the meter in which the song of the diviner (*kaṭṭuvicci*) is sung, and also stands for the song itself. See poem 91. The diviner sings the praises of Murugan by describing the beauty of his seven holy hills. The seven hill-temples of Murugan are the subject of the *Tirumurukarruppaṭai*, one of the Ten Idylls. Her friend reveals the secret of their love by telling the diviner to sing the song that names the hill from which their lover comes. Thus she reveals the cause of their misery as a human lover, not a supernatural demon. Poems 130-140 treat the revelation-with-virtue, the occasions for which may be the song of the diviner (*kaṭṭuvicci*), the dance of the *Vēlaṇ*, or deliberations by the parents concerning a husband for their daughter; in poem 135, the foster-mother's inquiry into the reasons for the girl's sadness prompts the revelation.

## WHAT HER FIREND SAID

(as a revelation-with-virtue, when the  
"frenzièd dance" was about to be  
performed :)

This town has gone beserk :  
they shout and put on a garland  
from the *aralai* plant,  
when it stands right next to the Asoka tree,  
stripped of its leaves at the base.....  
the leaves were used  
to cover the loins  
adorned with jewels of fine workmanship  
on this girl of swaying walk  
and beautiful thin hair hanging low down  
her back,  
when she guarded gleaming-eared  
millet, planted by forest men  
on high ground ploughed where trees  
were cut down.

(214)

*Kaṭalūrkiṣār*

The friend tells publicly, though indirectly, the story of their courtship. When the girl used to guard the millet, her lover would come to meet her there. He made for her one day a leaf-skirt with leaves stripped from the lower reaches of the Asoka tree in the village square. Now, the people where garlands from the willow plant, which is right next to the Asoka tree, without knowing why the tree is bare at its base. By telling them why, she tells them of their love, revealing the secret, and exposing the stupidity of exorcist rituals.





(to the foster-mother, who had asked during the period when the girl was over-protected and pining away, "What could be the cause of these changes in her?" as a revelation-with-virtue:)

Fate has made them what they are ;  
 so who are we to judge their compatibility ?  
 Even though I spoke  
 to keep her mind off him,  
 our girl cannot be consoled.  
 But more than this :  
 the girl with crying eyes  
 gazes at the full-petaled *nīlam* flower  
     blossoming in a green spot  
     by a dark spring,  
     its many petals untied.  
 Her daring is no mistake !

(366)

*Pēricāṭṭan*

She is daring because, despite the advice of her friend, she continues to think of him and pine away, and more, she stares at the flower that represents their love, perhaps because it grows in a spot where they used to meet. Like the petals of the flower, their secret has been untied; now it is opened up, for all to see. Her daring is no mistake, because her behaviour has made the foster-mother worry about her enough to ask what the matter was with her: this question is the occasion for the revelation of the secret, which insures marriage, even in the absence of her lover's initiative of proposing.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to her mother, when the diviner had  
said her sickness was due to gods:)

Your words imply that he  
is unworthy:  
our man from the land  
where peacocks sit  
on the high branches of the *vēṅkai* tree,  
with its black and fully bloomed,  
and appear like women  
come there to pick flowers.

But,  
the father monkey  
whose strong cubs play in the mountains  
eating mangoes with their thorny teeth  
and red mouths:  
he knows that deceitful man;  
what he saw is no lie.

(26)

*Vellivītiyār*

As in the previous poem, her friend asserts that the actions of the parents (over-protectiveness), and here, the words of the diviner, imply that their lover is not fit to be the cause of their distress. The compatibility of lovers is a product of fate; and the parents should not act as though they were not meant for one another. Here, she reveals the secret and criticizes him at the same time. His love seems like an illusion, like the peacocks in the tree, for, though he professes love, he has not come to propose marriage. Though his oaths seem to be lies at this point, the father monkey that saw them meeting, and bore witness to his oaths (as the heron in 49), saw the truth. The truth is that they are fated lovers, bound together forever. No diviner or over-protectiveness, nor even the deceitfulness of her man, can stand in the way of their marriage. Now the secret is bloomed, and marriage is sure: as the *vēṅkai* tree is in full flower.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, to get her to make a  
revelation with-virtue when relatives  
had come to marry her to someone  
other than her lover:)

He is from a high hillside:  
on its slopes, a male, black monkey  
from a herd and eating jackfruit,  
is scared away by the sharp arrow  
of a forest hunter, with his bow  
of *cilai* wood;  
and it leaps as fast  
as a horse on a battlefield  
down a long bamboo,  
to make it quiver.

His love is unchanging:  
forever it is the same  
as it was that day.  
But there are newcomers in town.

(385)

*Kapilar*

She trusts in his love, and claims that he has not  
been undutiful in not coming to marry before this:  
he has been scared away, just as the monkey is  
scared away from eating the jackfruit by the arrows  
of the hunters. But, the arrival of her relatives to  
decide on another husband for her make it necessary  
not to wait for her lover's proposal. As the hunters  
tried to take the jackfruit away from the monkey, so  
someone is trying to take her from him. They must  
move fast: they must make a revelation of their  
secret, so that she may be married to her lover.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to her, when there were many coming  
to propose marriage to her, to say she  
would make a revelation of their  
secret: )

O innocent girl:  
the lover dear to your breast  
has red mountain-sandalwood  
on his chest, and a wreath on his head  
of *kuvalai* flowers that bloom  
near springs, and swarm with bees;  
he has come to our house  
by night,  
and gone away.

In the public square,  
a red-eyed, black tiger  
kills a bull, separated from  
its black, frightened cow,  
and roars:

so this is no time for secrets!  
I will open the door!  
May you agree to this,  
and prosper!

(321)

Poet's Name Unavailable

The image of the tiger and the bull has many interpretations, all meaning it is too dangerous to continue clandestine meetings. Even the public square in her village is too dangerous for him to travel through in safety: so night meetings endanger his life. The roar of the tiger may startle people awake at night, and they might see our lover leaving our meetings. The bull separated from its mate is an easier target for the tiger; like this, the lovers should unite in marriage to overcome the dangers they face. The tiger may represent gossips trying to kill them; or their parents, who are trying to kill their love by marrying her to somebody else, without knowing. Opening the door is revealing the secret, so marriage to her own lover will be insured.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( in a revelation-with-virtue, when  
 relatives had come to decide on a  
 husband for the girl; addressing it to  
 the girl: )

That man  
     from the land where hunters  
     dig holes in the hills,  
     and there discover large,  
     clear gems, along with edible roots ;  
 that man who said to you,  
 when you reached the age of wisdom,  
 "Come to my house, O girl  
 of tight bangles!",  
 that man who stroked your thick hair  
 where is he today,  
 my friend?

(379)

Poet's Name Unavailable

Hunters who dug holes for roots, for eating, found  
 gems in their good fortune. So he, who went hunting  
 one day, found her. He asked her to come to his  
 house: ie, to marry him. But even though he had  
 asked her, he had not come to propose to her parents,  
 and put them in the predicament of having to make  
 this revelation.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, to reveal the truth,  
when others had come proposing  
marriage: )

I have searched  
for my high-born man  
at the festivals of warriors  
and among the dances of girls;  
but, I have not found him.  
Now, even I  
am a dancer.  
and the king,  
    who has made these bangles,  
    carved from the shining conch,  
    slip from my hands,  
he is a dancer too.

(31)

*Āṭimantiyār*

This poem cannot be located within the sequence of narrative moments catalogued in the *poruḷatikārām* of the *Tolkāppiyam*, or within the paradigmatic narrative sequence of *Akam* poetry. The poetess is a legendary figure who lost her husband in a flood and spent the rest of her life wandering throughout the Tamil country singing songs in mourning for him. This colophon is expediently attached to the poem, which indicates that the girl herself has gone out searching for her lover and sings of it shamelessly when others come to marry, condemning herself to a life of widowhood as a sacrifice of her love. The poem is included in the anthology because it does not violate the rule that *Akam* poems cannot mention names. Though its contents cannot be seen as adequately described by the colophon, it is placed here because of the colophon.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to her, concerning his intention to  
marry: )

These things I have learned  
my friend:  
our man  
    from the land where elephants,  
    lying down to sweep sleep,  
    make a great sound  
    as flowers fall from unbroken  
    soft limbs of a *yēnkai* tree,  
his love is faultless,  
and it has made his chest  
our own;  
his love is beautiful  
and drawing near;  
the worts of skillful ones  
are virtuous,  
and the support of beloved ones.

(247)

*Cēntam Pūtan*

He will marry, for his love is good and faultless. He will perform his duty with skill and virtue, and support us by coming to marry; for his chest is our own: he feels his needs are ours and ours are his. Since he feels our longing for marriage in his chest, just as we feel it in ours, he will marry soon. The *yēnkai*'s limbs are unbroken because he is progressing of his own toward marriage. Contrast poems numbered 116 and 117. Poems 141-8 treat the period when marriage is certain, whatever the pre-marital course which preceded it.



## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to her, who was over-protected in the  
house; after the revelation-with-virtue;  
to say his heart is good, and fixed upon  
marriage: )

O woman of dark brown color,  
with wet eyes like the many-petaled lotus,  
with a forehead that smells of fragrant,  
blooming *kānta!* buds, that spread out  
near waterfalls in mountains where clouds  
gather and rise up, to give their rains:  
if you accept what I have done,  
or hate it and kill me,  
you know how good you are.  
what is the use of telling lies  
as though they were true?  
His heart will do only good for you!

(259)

*Paraṇar*

The lies are the lies of the diviner and exorcist, and  
also all the lies they had to tell to continue meetings  
which are now impossible. Whether or not the girl  
agrees with her having made the revelation of the  
secret, she says, she knows that she is too good to  
go on telling lies forever. Anyway, they are of no  
value now, for his heart is fixed on marriage.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to the girl, when she had heard  
from his servant that he was  
undertaking the necessary steps for  
arranging their marriage : )

I stood before his manservant  
and asked if all was well.  
He said, "It looks like everything  
is going perfectly!".  
So now it is certain: the man  
from the hills will marry you.  
May the one who brought us such good news  
enjoy a feast of quail dripping  
with ghee and cooked  
with spicy curry!

(389)

*Vēttakannan*

Wishing well to bringers of good news is a form of  
praise and gratitude.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to her, as she was rejoicing at the news that the marriage had been arranged, to explain she had revealed the secret to their parents : )

O innocent girl,  
     with your shining white  
     and close-set teeth,  
     and your thickly piled, black hair,  
     that smells of the *naraṇṭam* flower :  
 when I saw you trembling in fear,  
 as though you were someone loved  
 by the demon of the hills,  
     where puddles of water sparkle  
     where roaring elephants have stepped,  
 didn't I pity you  
 even a little ?

(52)

*Paṇampāraṇār*

When her friend saw the girl trembling and quaking in ways that made others, who did not know of her love, think that she had been possessed by a demon, how could she help but reveal the secret and end her misery? She did it out of concern for her. When she told the secret, the marriage was speedily arranged.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to her, to say she had made a  
revelation-with-virtue : )

After I told them,  
revealing the secret we have hidden,  
and showing it so mother  
and father would know;  
when that man from mountains came  
and begged for marriage;  
everyone became united in doing good .....  
everyone in our town,  
which had been in chaos,  
like the nest built high  
in a dark palmyra tree,  
by the *tūkkaṇam* bird with bent wings.

(374)

*Uṛaiyūrp Palkāyanār*

The way the nest of the *tūkkaṇam* is woven, it appears to be a total chaotic mess. But it is also beautiful, and the home of the bird's family. In the same way, the town had been in chaos during the period of gossip and the lovers' courtship, but it all turned out well, and beautifully: they will build a home together in marriage. The intricate drama of pre-marital love has come to a resolution in marriage. The "good" that the towns-people are doing is preparations for marriage.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to her, when his kinsmen had come  
to speak of their marriage and she  
was afraid her kinsmen would  
refuse : )

Are there not people in our town  
who unite those separated from one another?  
Listen and prosper,  
my friend:  
his folks came with their walking sticks  
and their grey heads wrapped in cloth,  
saying, "It is good.  
Yes, it is good,"  
and the gathering of our kinsmen  
has said, "This is a big day!"

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to praise the foster-mother for having  
accepted him as the husband of  
the girl: )

O mother,  
may you obtain that glorious world  
where the rarest ambrosia  
is staple food to eat,  
for saying that he will come:  
that man from high mountains where  
the sweet jackfruit hangs  
from every branch  
as sweet as  
the fruit of one's own labor  
eaten in one's own home.

(83)

*Venpūtan*

When the choice of a husband is made, the foster-mother is first told by the girl's mother; then she tells it to her daughter, who is the girl's friend. Here, her friend praises the foster-mother, her mother, for having made such a happy choice. The last image portrays happiness in expectation of domestic life. "Saying he will come" means saying that he would come to marry: ie, that he had been chosen as her husband.

148.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who informed her that  
her wedding was to take place : )

That man from the noisy mountains,  
 where jackfruits hang down  
 from trees in rows upon rows,  
 till it seems the tree should fall;  
 so many grow that one cannot tell  
 roots from limb from trunk  
 on the tree:  
 every time he comes,  
 our enemy, love,  
 comes too.  
 But when he goes away;  
 it does not;  
 it stays to quarrel with me.

(257)

*Uṛaiyūre Cīrukantaṅ*

Jackfruits are symbolic of sweetness and pleasure: here the plentifulness of the huge fruits, which cover the tree, represents the wealth of joy she anticipates in wedded life. He will not leave, so love will not quarrel with her, and will be her enemy no more.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, who came to their house after marriage, and marvelled that she had born so well the pre-marital miseries:)

A woman from the house next door  
told me he would come  
to marry me:  
that man from the land of hills  
with groves of tall bamboo,  
    where a bat with soft, black wings  
    and strong claws, eats a mango . . .  
    sweet as honey mixed with milk . . .  
    and tastes bitter *nelli* fruit,  
    before hanging asleep  
    nearly,  
    among thick and thornless bamboo.  
May that woman taste ambrosia!

(201)

Poet's Name Unavailable

Like the bat, I had to taste the sweetness and bitterness of pre-marital romance before I could rest in domestic life, which is secure and painless, like thick and thornless bamboo. I heard from a woman next door that he would come to marry, so I did not pine away over-much during our courtship; and what pain there was helped me enjoy the sweetness all the more. So may she eat ambrosia for making all that possible. Poems 149-153 are post-marital poems of the mountain region.



## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who had praised her  
for bearing so well the period when  
he did not come to marriage of his  
own accord : )

Listen to me and prosper,  
my friend;  
my mother did not rebuke me  
when I embraced the tender leaves  
of the *kāntal*,  
    which came down to us in the morning  
    in the fragrant river of last-nights rain,  
    from our lover's mountain;  
she did not scold me  
when I brought it into the house  
and planted it.  
For her the highest realms of heaven  
are small reward.

(361)

*Kapilar*

The flower is symbolic of their love, as the *nīlam* in 135. Seeing it and caring for it consoled her in the period when he was not with her and she could not meet with him. Her mother did not begrudge her this consolation. So her mother helped her get through those hard times. Here, she portrays her mother as an aid in the period of pre-marital love: contrast 67.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, when his messenger  
came; after he had gone to the harlot,  
and was seeking re-entry into the  
house through his messenger : )

Words that reflect the spotless heart  
of our man

from the land where the roots  
of the white fig tree, with its tiny  
falling tendrils,  
crawl over a rock,  
resembling a waterfall  
crashing down a hill,

have come to us.

My friend, may you prosper.

Let us welcome him,  
as the fire  
welcomes the ghee;

and let us send this messenger to him,  
saying that we are just the same  
as the day he married us.

(106)

*Kapilar*

The theme of accepting him back into the house after his trip to the harlot is portrayed in poems of the lowland region numbered 233-243. This poem is placed here because of its pronounced mountain region imagery, and to introduce an important theme of marital life.....his infidelity with the harlot. The waterfall, again, may symbolize his passion: for his passion is directed toward the harlot, as it was toward his lover in the mountain region. The harlot appears to be a fit object for his passion, as the fig roots appear like a waterfall. During worship, the fire blazes when ghee is poured into it. She proposes to re-admit him into the house with a love blazing as brightly as it did when they were first married. The central theme of the union of lovers after a love quarrel engendered by his trip to the harlot also makes this poem fit to include in poems of the mountain region.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, after his trip to the harlot, when her friend asked why she merely accepted him back into the house, without difficulty: )

My friend,  
 don't be angry with me,  
 saying I am a fool,  
 for greeting him when he came back,  
 with my virtue divine,  
 and undisturbed smile.  
     He is from a hilly land.  
     He is evil and makes my bangles fall  
     from my wide, round shoulders:  
 but wise men are ashamed  
 if praised to their face;  
 when you think of it,  
 how could they ever bear a scolding?

(252)

*Kiṭāṅkirkulapati Nakkannan*

As with the previous poem, this one is included here because its theme is union. She tells her friend that she accepted him into the house because of her concern for his not being able to bear blame and rebuke from her. Her love and faith in him is independent of his behaviour. Though he is evil and a fool (for mistaking the harlot for a proper outlet for his passions), she trusts him, not because he is good, but because she is strong, loving and virtuous. See poems 107 (and note), 114, 112. In this poem, she is kind and considerate of his weakness, even though he doesn't deserve it.

## WHAT HE SAID

(pleading with her friend to be his messenger, portraying their love as it was before quarrels resulting from his trip to the harlot; or, to his friend : )

May be  
if I look back  
I will see the proud look,  
with smiling teeth,  
of that vine-like girl,  
with her hair like black sand  
that smells of sandalwood and *aquila* smoke,  
and her red mouth  
with ambrosia oozing  
from thorn like teeth.

(286)

*Eyirriyañūr*

Sandlewood and *aquila* are fragrant woods. Her teeth are thorn-like because they are sharp and pointed. Here he looks back to how she looked before the trials of pre-marital life, and before she took on the scowling look of marital life, engendered by his infidelity. Married life is not the secure and painless abode she expected. See poem 149. He wants her friend to help him restore her to her former condition, and make her happy by reconciling the husband and wife in their quarrel. The poem is spoken during the quarrel itself, when she has refused his re-entry into the house. The same theme is dealt with in poems of the lowland region numbered 222-230.



**POEMS OF THE  
SEASHORE REGION**



## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, growing lean during  
their separation :)

My eyes have no shame:  
that day he left, they consented;  
but now,  
    in the cool *vāṭai* season,  
    when sugarcane buds  
    swell like a green snake  
    pregnant with child, and open  
    with the tiniest drops of rain,  
they cry  
for my man, who is gone.

(35)

*Kazārkkiraṇeyirri*

Poems 154-205 are poems of the forest region, the central mood of which is waiting (*iruttal*). Most poems in this section depict the feelings of the woman waiting for the return of the man, who is gone on a journey. The nature of the journey is rarely specified, and it could take place either before or after marriage. The first section (poems 154-61) deals with her feelings when he was gone..... her general response to his absence and her waiting for him. Here she says, that even though she consented to his leaving, she is crying in the wintry *vāṭai* season, when waiting becomes painful for her. Her eyes embody her feelings, and "have no shame": for they have not maintained their stoic acceptance of his absence, and have broken down into tears. They have poured forth tears as readily as the sugarcane buds have opened, at the first drops of rain.



## WHAT SHE SAID

( when he was gone, before marriage:)

I have learned well  
 that my love for that man  
     from the land of hills,  
     where an elephant eats his meal,  
     after seeking out a pond where fresh kernels  
     of the *korukānta* are washed by a waterfall,  
 is everlasting.  
 The many others who do not know this,  
 let them talk !

(170)

*Karuvūr Kizār*

She says that their love is everlasting and eternal,  
 and that she does not worry about its fading in  
 separation. But gossips worry. Let them talk, she says,  
 for they know nothing about the nature of love.  
 The elephant went to the pond to bathe, perhaps,  
 and found a meal; in the same way, her lover found  
 her and will not give her up for anything. She  
 re-asserts her faith in him and their love.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, unable to bear his  
separation, when he had not returned  
by the late dewy season:)

Listen, my friend:  
my lover left one day  
in the late dewy season,  
    when cows graze at daybreak  
    on cool vines of *tālī* grass,  
    as the cool dew forms like pearls  
    spread from a broken string.  
So many days have passed  
since then.

(104)

*Kāvaṇmullaip Pūtaṇār*

He left in the late dewy season and said he would return by the same season in the next year. At the arrival of the season, she responds to her friend's advice to be patient by saying she has been patient already for many days.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, who feared she would  
be unable to bear his absence for  
wealth for marriage :)

Look, my friend:  
the winter wind has come,  
with many bright flowers,  
like parrots' beaks,  
on country beans on green vines,  
laying in cool grass among  
jasmine blossoms that look  
like wild-cats' teeth.

But even worse:  
evening has hidden his long, jewel-hill,  
which looks like a ship disappearing  
in a sea of clear waves

(240)

*Kollar Azici*

Gazing on his hill gave her consolation in his absence (see poems 101, 102). Now even the hill is disappearing at night, and it seems to be leaving her just as he did. The jasmine is the flower of the same name as the forest region (*mullai*). The jasmine and the flowers on the country bean vines remind her of the forest animals of the tract he must pass through to return to her. He is travelling; she is alone, and even his hill that shone like a jewel is going away from her. Compare poem 162.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, who was worried she  
would be unable to bear his  
separation before marriage :)

Look my friend,  
and prosper:

we are like helpless water animals  
caught in a fishing net  
strung on the banks of a wide pond,  
as it fills with newly rushing water.

What good is all our effort  
in the face of gossips?

(171)

*Pūṅkaṇuttiraiyār*

The rainy season and its coming are major imagery elements in poems of the forest region. Here she alludes to a practice whereby people string nets on the banks of ponds at the coming of the rains, in order to catch the fish that swell the pond, having been trapped in the bottom preceding dry season. Like the fish, they swell up with hope and anticipation with the coming of the season of his return. Like the animals caught unwittingly in the nets, they are trapped in the net of gossip that surrounds their courtship. Note that the same narrative scheme is presented here as in the poems of the mountain region, with special emphasis—embodied in the imagery—on the aspect of waiting for his return: in this poem the narrative element portrayed is her relation to the gossips during his absence before marriage. Compare poems 40.48.53, and 59-62.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( unable to bear the loneliness, when  
he was gone in search of wealth; to  
her friend: )

That man  
who stroked my thick black hair,  
and my wide shoulders,  
and then went off for the money to be made,  
as he made my bangles slip off:  
at midnight,  
    when ferocious thunder roars  
    to sever the tender head of an  
    angry, striped and spotted snake,  
does he know,  
my friend,  
the sound of the bell that rings  
with each step of the fine bull  
in the shed full of many cows?

(190)

*Pūtampullaṇ*

The cobra is afraid, so it hisses in anger. It is believed that the snakes fear lightning so much because it severs their erect heads. She asks if he will not hear the sound of the bell and think of her. Thinking, will he not return? Compare poem 108. Though his position and disposition are as different from her as the bull from the cows, she wants his heart to reach out to her in the same way hers reaches out for him. She wonders in many poems whether or not he feels what she feels during their separation.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who felt she would be  
unable to bear his separation: )

In that land where he has gone,  
my friend,  
are there no sad evenings,  
when sparrows, with wings that fold  
like petals of a fading lily,  
eat grain in the courtyard  
and play  
as they scoop out bits of dust  
from dung in public places,  
and live with their young  
in the eaves of the house?  
Is there no loneliness  
where he is?

(46)

*Māmalāṭan*

She wonders if he will not see the happy domestic scene of the sparrows and long to be with her again. And longing, return. She contrasts the joyous, and responsible homelife of the sparrows with her own, where her mate and father (or future father) of her children has gone away from the family on his own pursuits, leaving them alone. Contrast poems 100 and 112, where the imagery portrays specifically her longing for him, and the family scene is less prominent.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who worried she would  
be unable to bear his absence: )

Even after having heard  
a flock of birds crowded together  
on a strong branch, with mates united,  
call sweetly,  
he left us,  
without thinking of lovers  
who are separated from one another :  
if that stranger comes,  
what shall I say to him ?  
I will say, "Don't you dare  
adorn my thick hair with flowers;  
and don't you touch me !"  
Just you wait and see.

(191)

Poet's Name Unavailable

Even after having heard how sweetly birds call out  
when mates are united and crowded together on a  
strong, sturdy limb, he left, without thinking how  
miserable it is for lovers to be separated from one  
another. Anyone who could do such a thing must  
be a stranger to me, she says, for obviously his  
sensibilities are of a completely different sort. After  
experiencing the sweetness of conjugal life, how  
could he ever go away, for any reason? At least  
he should know that she would suffer in his absence  
and not leave for that reason, even if it would  
not be so very painful to him. She is indignant  
at the thought of his cruelty.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who encouraged her  
to be strong, when he was gone  
as she was growing thin: )

Even if I should swim through evening,  
the border of the night,  
my friend,  
    when daylight fades and  
    jasmine flowers bloom;  
    when the sun's heat cools down  
    and it is hard to do anything:  
what good is it?  
The flood of night  
is wider than the sea.

(387)

*Kaṅkul Veḷḷattār*

The poet's name is a pseudonym taken from the last image in the poem: it means, "he of the flood of night". Even if she can survive the evening, the saddest time of day, she still has the loneliness of the whole night to live through, when her friend's encouragement cannot do her any good, and only her lover by her side will heal her pain. This poem begins a section portraying her responses to her friend's encouragement (162-170). At the end of the day, the work is done, the air cools down, and it is much more comfortable; it is a social time, when people sit and talk and are with their families. It is then when she begins to feel great longing for him, when it wells up in her. But evening is but the border of night, when the full flood of her longing rises in her.



## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who encouraged her  
to bear it, when he was gone: )

In this cold, harsh month,  
when drops fly about  
chilling the dreary evening,  
    when a bull grazes on field grain,  
    with his cow — her udders like a beard  
    hanging down to the ground, swollen  
    with milk that drips  
    when she thinks of her child —  
    when she leaves the rest of the herd  
    to return to the village:  
those with their lovers gone away,  
tied to wealth so hard to obtain,  
who see them come home again,  
they are the lucky ones,  
my friend. They have done  
a great penance.

(344)

*Kurūṅkuṭi Marutaṇ*

The cow leaves the herd to return to her calf, as her udders drip just thinking of it. If he would think of her and return to her, as the cow does to its calf, it would be so good, she says. Perhaps they have a child; perhaps she compares herself to the calf. Those whose lovers return to them are lucky ones, she says; they have done a great penance: that is, they have done great works of sacrifice in former births to deserve such luck in the present birth. Note that she shifts the cause of her ill-luck onto herself (her own lack of penance) rather than blaming him. His going and staying away she considers to be unkind and insensitive, but not unjust. Contrast the way the girls relate to their mothers' over-protectiveness in poems 64 and 67: their ill-luck in that circumstance is considered a function of their mothers' injustice.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who spoke strong  
words exhorting her to be strong,  
during his absence: )

That man who never thinks of my bamboo shoulders  
with perfect joints,  
who went away over many black mountains  
that seem to shine  
like elephants rolling in the dust,  
like great black bolders,  
unwashed by the rain:  
even now,  
at lonely midnight,  
when a clear-sounding bell  
with a split mouth, tied to the growing  
neck of a water buffalo with twisted horns,  
black as inky night,  
rings every time he moves,  
he has not come,  
has he ?

(279)

*Maturai Marutaŋ Iḷanākaṇār*

The hills are compared to elephants, which are in turn compared to bolders. Compare poem 27. She lies sleepless at night, and hears the sound of the split-mouthed bell ringing on the buffalo's neck. What good is it to be strong, she says, when he has not come? Strength is no solution for sleepless nights spent in anticipation of his return: only his return will make her strong.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who encouraged her  
to be strong, at the coming of the  
season by which he said he would  
return: )

He has not come;  
and even the jasmine has bloomed:  
a shepherd, with his goats  
and his rain-shelter in his hand,  
goes away with milk  
and returns with food, to stay  
with his flock;  
and all the fresh flowers  
tied in his hair  
are jasmine.

(221)

*Uraiyūr Mutukorran*

The rain-shelter (*pari*) is made of palm-leaves woven into the shape of an envelope open at one end, so the shepherd can put it on his head, or lay it on the ground and get into it to sleep at night. It is still in use. The shepherd takes milk into town and returns with food for the night. The season by which he said he would return is the rainy season, when the jasmine blooms.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who worried she would  
be unable to bear the coming of  
the season: )

My friend:  
my eyes have foresaken sleep  
for this man  
from the land where soft jasmine vines  
bud, with buds like teeth,  
in a forest grove where rainclouds  
mingle with roaring thunder.

(186)

*Okkūr Mācātti*

The coming of the season is portrayed as occurring in the land from which he comes. He should know the signs that indicate the coming of the season: seeing them, he should remember his promise and return immediately. She cannot sleep, overwhelmed with worry about whether or not he will return as he promised.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, who feared the girl  
would be unable to bear the coming  
of the season:)

In this season when  
young flowers of the *konrai*  
become as yellow as our pallor,  
will our man see the stag  
with erect horns  
separated from his mate  
with a small head  
in that barren forest land  
where the long branch of the *kāyā* tree  
that should have flowers on it  
is barren  
and seems like a peacock's neck?

(183)

*Auwaiyār*

The stag will not separate from his mate in the rainy season. See poem 169. If he sees the stag, it will be with his mate; so should he be with his mate in this season. Because he is not, she is stricken with pallor (*pacalai*), yellow as the *konrai* buds; and her life, which should be flowering like the *kāyā* tree, is barren.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who feared she would  
be unable to bear the coming of  
the season: )

What would you say was happening  
my friend ?  
Is it only flashing clouds  
rising into the sky and  
roaring ?  
But, the forest peacocks screech so loudly.  
It is both of these,  
my enemies,  
joined together  
that fill my foolish heart with confusion.

(194)

*Kōvatattan*

Both the rising clouds and the screeching peacocks  
are signs that the rainy season is come. Both of these  
signs joined together make it impossible for her not  
to notice, or to deny, the coming of the season.  
Seeing them causes confusion, for he has not returned  
yet: she is confused because he could not have lied  
to her; he must be coming; but, the fact is that  
the season has arrived and he has not.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( in response to her friend's strong  
words about bearing it all, at the  
coming of the season: )

Evening has come  
with the great seasonal rains:  
dark clouds adorn hillsides,  
where bull elephants with trunks  
are together with their mates,  
and a stag hides  
concealed in shrubs in the forest,  
striking his innocent female,  
who is greatly confused.

But that man, who ruined  
the good beauty of my body,  
like gold:  
he has not come.  
What will happen to my sweet life,  
my friend ?

(319)

*Tāyaṅkaṇṇaṇ*

The male and female elephants are together; and the stag takes care of his mate, who is confused by the coming of the season. But her man is not so dutiful as these animal males, it seems. Bearing his absence is not so easy as her friend's exhortations make it seem. She fears for her life: this does not mean that she fears death by grief, which is a theme of the seashore region; she fears her life will be wasted if he does not come soon. Compare poem 185.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who encouraged her  
with strong words, at the coming  
of the season: )

That man who is crossing  
the wasteland full of treacherous places:  
at evening, when it is sad,  
as rain pours down and  
it is growing dark,  
as bright lightning flashes  
from cool, loud clouds;  
pregnant with water,  
in the distant, high heavens,  
he has not come,  
my friend,  
to press my growing, young  
and flashing breasts  
with his embraces.

(314)

*Pērioattan*

Even at evening, when it is saddest, when the rain forces people indoors, and homes are filled with family; even then, he has not come, when the sky is pouring rain from clouds pregnant with water, when her expectation is greatest, when she is full of love and longing and unable to release it, as the clouds are. As we saw in poems of the mountain region (poems 3, 27, 35, 44, 82, 94, 112 etc.) the rains symbolize their love: the coming of the rainy season brings expectation of the return of his love to her, and the pouring forth of her love onto him. But he has not come. She cannot be encouraged with strong words out of her longing to have the season fulfilled for herself.



## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who felt she would  
suffer at the coming of the season: )

Even though the forest says  
the rainy season has come,  
appearing  
with the newly-blossomed *koṇṇai*  
like the black hair of women  
sprinkled with golden jewelry  
and flowers in bunches  
from vines, so fresh that bees  
come down on them,  
I won't believe it.  
He would never lie to me.

(21)

*Ōtalāntaiyār*

He said he would be back by the rainy (*kār*) season but he is not back. So, even though it looks as though the rainy season has come, it cannot have come, for he is not back yet, and he would not have lied to her. This is the first of the poems portraying the denial of the coming of the season, by the women: poems 171-178. The image of the forest appearing like the hair of women adorned with jewels and flowers anticipates her adorning herself in this fashion on his return. The virtuous innocent simplicity exemplified by this approach to the coming of season- is extolled by the woman in poem 366.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to her, to deny the coming of the  
season, when he was gone: )

Dark flocks of peacocks  
think the seasonal rains have come,  
and they dance, staring at the clouds;  
and the *piḷavu* blooms;  
    they too hear the roaring voice  
    of the strange sky,  
    as it pours forth old, stored-up  
    rains, to take on new water.  
My friend, they are foolish,  
those birds,  
It is not the rainy season:  
so end your grief.

(251)

*Iḷaikkāḷay*

Her friend says that the rainy season has not come, though the rains are falling. She accounts for the rains and the dancing peacocks and blooming vines by saying the clouds are pouring forth rains left over from last year's rainy season, so they can take on the new rains to pour them forth later during the real rainy season. Though rains fall and other signs have appeared, to make it look like the rainy season. then, there is still time until its arrival, and time for him to come back by the promised time. So the girl should not grieve, she says.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who thought she would  
be unable to bear the coming of the  
season, in order to say she will be  
able to bear it: )

These stupid buds of the *picci* vine,  
which blooms in the rainy season:  
they have become red before their season.  
But I too am confused, my friend.  
My man, who went away,  
is, even now,  
alone at night.  
And, if he hears the roaring  
voice of the rains,  
    which come from large clouds  
    to make the waterfall trip  
    and stumble down the high mountain,  
what will become of him?

(94)

*Kantakannan*

She denies the coming of the season; but the reason is not her own frustration and worry about herself. She is worried here that he will see the signs of the coming of the season, and, like the *picci* vine, think the season has really arrived. She fears his passion will rise up and he will come home without having finishing the duties for which he went away. Then what will happen to him, she wonders. The waterfall, again, seems to represent his passion. She hopes he will not hurry back out of blind passion, but stop and consider whether or not the season really has come, so he can finish his work before the season arrives.

## 174. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( denying the coming of the rainy  
season: )

The wide-spreading *koṇrai* tree  
is certainly foolish:  
    thinking these unseasonal rains  
    to be the rainy season,  
    it flowers in crowded, but orderly,  
    bunches, along its branches;  
but the season when our man,  
who travels the desert path,  
full of rocks,  
said he would return,  
has not yet come.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who worried about  
the changes come over her, at the  
coming of the season: )

To add to my suffering—  
as I fade away without my lover.  
becoming like crushed leaves  
with miserable love-sickness,  
which makes my bangles fall off my joints,  
and grows greater and greater,  
like the waxing moon—  
even the rain is confused  
and has poured down out of season.  
But, my friend:  
even before it rained like this,  
this gabbing town pitied me  
more than I pitied him.

(289)

*Perunkannan*

She is becoming like a crushed leaf both because her love-sickness has made her pale (with *pacalai*), which is the color of crushed leaves, and because she herself, who is often compared to a tender leaf, is being crushed by her grief. "The gabbing village" refers to her friend, who had criticized him, perhaps, out of pity for her; she says she does not need that kind of pity.

## 176. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to her, who was agitated at the  
coming of the season, to deny its  
coming and console her: )

These are unseasonal rains:  
but flourishing jasmine buds  
on tender vines that receive cool drops  
have opened, spreading their fragrance;  
and the smell has mingled with  
many flowering *tavalam* buds,  
and with honey, and spread  
throughout the garden.  
If these were seasonal rains,  
would our lover not  
have come?

(382)

*Kurunkiran*

See notes to poem 171.

177.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( when her friend told her the season  
for his return had not yet really  
come, though all the natural signs  
had appeared: )

Since you insist that even this season  
is not the rainy season,  
when it is cold and miserable,  
and when the lemon tree and the *koṇṇai*  
give forth buds,  
    like gold coins in golden bells,  
    with mouths like frogs,  
    that shine on the tiny feet  
    of rich children,  
I ask you:  
is this all no more  
than a dream ?

(148)

*Iḷaṅkīraṇtaiyār*

The bells are like *koṇṇai* buds, and resemble an acorn  
split on one side, with a clapper in the middle.  
The split in the bell is said to seem like a  
frog's mouth.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( at the coming of the season, to her  
friend, who was worried she would  
be unable to bear it, and hence denied  
the season had come at all: )

Above cool, turbulent waters  
spread with fragrant flowers  
washed down by rain from the hills,  
a waterfall rumbles down,  
beaten by the wind, and  
bearing blossoms.

Thunder bellows its sweet sound  
from dark clouds at evening,  
in the rainy season.

He has not come, my friend:  
the man who said he would come  
before this, to protect us.

Surely he has forgotten.  
But we will not forget.



## WHAT SHE SAID

( upon seeing the coming of the  
season: )

That time of day has come  
when boisterous ploughmen return home,  
filling their small seed-baskets with buds,  
having tilled the old hillside fields.  
But word has not yet come,  
to tell us his chariot is drawing near,  
    with its clear-sounding bells,  
    with split mouths, made from  
    wax mold and blacksmith's forge,  
    ringing in a grove full of trees:  
drawing near along the desert path,  
for a huge feast  
at evening

(155)

*Urōḷakattuk Kārattay*

Early in the morning, the ploughmen went to till the fields, with seeds in their baskets. After sowing, they return home, filling the baskets with the many buds that bloom in the rainy season. This image of the ploughmen returning home from their work, with flower buds, perhaps for their wives' hair anticipates his return from his journey. Poems 179 - 190 concern their feelings at the coming of the season, when all denials of its coming are impossible.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, at the coming of the  
season; )

Look, my friend:  
that man who left for wealth  
will not come  
even by evening, when bees  
swarm in a plot of fragrant flowers,  
    where blossoms of jasmine  
    blooming from tiny, soft, buds,  
    like the smile of a wild-cat,  
    are near the stubble of millet  
    newly sprouted from old rains,  
    eaten and cut short  
    by male deer.

(220)

*Okkūr Mācātti*

The "old rains" are those left over from last year's rainy season; see notes to poem 172. The tiny white jasmine blossoms look like the smile of a wild-cat, as they bloom near millet stubble, which resembles her own beauty, which has been eaten by him who is gone. The millet, which is so common to the imagery of the mountain region, is eaten by the deer in the rainy season, representing his consuming of her beauty and their love, during his absence.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, at the coming of  
the season: )

My friend:  
in the cool and rainy season,  
the jasmine,  
nurtured by the rain, with clustered buds,  
on the flowering vine, like teeth,  
laughs at me,  
saying, "Where is that man who left  
craving wealth, and so careless  
of youth? He surely has not come yet?  
Where is he?"

(126)

*Okkūr Mācātti*

Their youth is being wasted in this separation: his  
in searching for wealth and the difficulties of  
travelling; hers in the emaciation and loneliness of  
waiting for him to return.

## 182. WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, at the coming of the  
season: )

That man who does not  
even wonder how I am,  
as the cold and bitter winds blow - -  
to shake off clean, red, flowers  
from the sharp-thorned mimosa;  
and make the *karuvilai*, with marks  
on it like a peacock's tail; dance  
in the bushes; as it spreads around  
the fresh buds of the *nīlam* flower,  
which grows on water:  
whether he comes  
or doesn't come, what  
is he to us, my friend?

(110)

*Kiḷimaṅkalāṅkizār*

If he is the sort of man who can stay away when the winds of the rainy season are blowing all the flowers around, without realizing that they will toss me about with confusion and unhappiness without him, and realizing this, return home, then he must be a total stranger. If he is so thoughtless as to be able to stay away during the season by which he said he would return, then he could not be our lover; or at least not the kind of lover we want him to be.

## WHAT SHE SAID

. ( to her friend, at the coming of the  
rainy season: )

If there were only  
someone  
to take a few of these yellow buds  
from the *piram* plant  
that springs up in our garden,  
among green bushes dripping  
with water in the rainy season,  
and go to him, saying,  
"This is how she looks: that  
woman of the bright forehead,"  
it would be so good,  
my friend.

(98)

*Kökkulamurran*

The yellow of the *piram* (*pīrkku*) buds is the same as that of her pallor (*pacalai*), on her forehead, which was once bright and clear. The rains rejuvenate and bring to life of the flowers, dried out by the summer. She should have been rejuvenated by his return, by the showering of his love on her. But instead, her pallor blooms, and she is sickly pale: for he has not returned. If someone should go and show him the state she is in, by showing him the buds, perhaps, she thinks, he will have pity on her and return. She hints that her friend should take the buds and the message to him.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( upon seeing the coming of the rainy season, by which he was to have returned: )

The cool and rainy season  
has come, with showers,  
as a male deer drinks clear water,  
with hard pebbles in it,  
and leaps around playing  
with his joyous mate,  
as if to say to me,  
"Are you still alive,  
as you stay here suffering  
and groaning; longing  
for your man who stays away  
to come home to you?"

(65)

*Kōvūrkiṣār*

The pebbles in the water are at the bottom of a puddle, and serve to keep the water clear and clean. She wishes she could be with him as the deer is with his mate.

## 185. WHAT SHE SAID

(when her lover had not returned  
by early summer:)

Because my lover is not here,  
will the bright new flowers of the *neem* tree  
go to waste?

While my lover is gone,  
the tongues of these evil people  
are pounding me to pulp,  
with words,

like seven crabs  
trampling the fruit  
of the white-branched fig tree  
that grows near the river.

(24)

*Paraṇṭar*

The flowers will go to waste if he does not return, because she will not be able to adorn her hair with them in celebration of his coming. Also, since the *neem* flowers are the emblem of the *Pāṇṭiya* kings, he might be in their service. The crabs cannot chew the fig, so they trample on it until it is pulp, so they can eat it. Her warfare with the gossips is well illustrated here: they are trampling on her and pummeling her with words. This is probably spoken during a pre-marital separation, when gossip abounds.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, at the coming of the  
season: )

On branches without leaves  
soft buds spread out  
like breasts  
so that flocks of bees hum loudly:  
the first flowers of the *kañku* have bloomed,  
my friend.  
But the messenger has not come,  
saying our man, who left craving wealth,  
has returned.  
He has forgotten sweet sleep  
at midnight, when sleep is sweetest.  
He does not remember the bed  
that my fragrant hair was for him.

(254)

*Pārakāparāṇ*

The bees have come to the flower, but he has not come to her, the way he did in their early courtship. If he remembered her hair, he would have come by now. Note that here she assumes that he is in the same state of sleeplessness at midnight that she is. But, forgetting her hair that was his bed, perhaps he has gotten used to being sleepless. She has not.



## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who worried she would  
be unable to bear the coming of  
the season; pining away: )

Now the sweet rain falls, mingled with thunder,  
slicing the hood of a cobra with a thunder-bolt,  
on the high ground,

where deer had been agitated  
and bulls lay down, without ploughing,  
because there had been no rain.

Now, at evening,  
when those separated from their lovers  
are touched by the rain  
and can do nothing,  
a peacock,  
with open eyes in its feathers,  
is all alone on a flowering branch,  
in a wide, rainy space:  
it calls out, wailing.  
It is so pitiful, my friend.

The land had been parched, and the bull and deer  
had been perplexed and tortured by the waterless  
heat. But the land has now been revived. Now,  
because he has not come, she is like the peacock,  
alone and wailing in the wide, empty, rainy space.

188.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, despondent at the  
coming of the season: )

In the cool, rainy  
season, the jasmine  
buds have blossomed;  
and with the jasmine,  
the beauty of the forest  
has bloomed; now,  
evening has come, marking  
my noble beauty  
for the man who made my white bangles fall  
has not come.

(188)

*Maturai Aḷakkarñāzalārmakaṇ Maḷḷaṇ*

Her beauty is marked for destruction by the coming of the rainy season, which spells the birth of the forest's beauty. The rains have come to the forest, refreshing it and giving it beauty. But he has not come to her, to give her life again: so her beauty is marked; it will fade in her sadness.

189.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, at the coming of the  
season : )

Those who say that evening  
is when grief sharpens,  
as the sky reddens  
and the sun is going down;  
that evening is when the jasmine blooms  
and the light fades:  
they are fools.  
For those without companions,  
even the bright-dawning daybreak  
is evening,  
when roosters cry aloud  
in the long town:  
all day long is evening.

(234)

*Milāip Perunkantāṇ*

Early evening is the characteristic time of day for poems of the forest region, and for the grief of waiting. She says here that all the physical attributes of early evening do not define it as such: for people separated from their lovers, all day long is evening, because they are always waiting and suffering, in anticipation of their lovers' return.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, at the coming of the  
rainy season, when he had not  
returned: )

In the forest,  
    where a milking cow, from a tiny house  
    in the hills, where rain-clouds play,  
    goes looking for its calf,  
the faultless, bright flowers  
of the jasmine vine, with green leaves,  
have become the color of the red sky.  
It seems  
I will not survive.

(108)

*Vāyilāṇ Tēvaṇ*

The cow returns from grazing to feed her calf; she wishes he would return in the same way. See poem 163. The sky turns red at night during the rainy season sunset. Her eyes also turn red, taking on the color of the sky, like the jasmine buds, as she become sad with his not coming. The patient waiting of the forest region poems can turn to bitter grief and tears, characteristic of the seashore region, when he does not return during the promised season.

191.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, in response to her  
statement that their lover would sense  
their grief, and return: )

When cows have gone far away graze,  
as evening comes, the calf looks  
at the empty stall, and gazes up,  
expectantly,  
with perplexed eyes  
Like this I grieve;  
and, even though my man,  
who is in a distant land,  
may know,  
he is still very  
very far away.

(64)

*Karuṭṛkkatappillai*

Though he may know of my grief, and may even be  
on his way to me, he is still far away, she says.  
My problems will not be over until he is here.  
Poems 191-195 portray the period when his return  
becomes 'certain.'

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to her, when the friend saw signs of  
his coming, at the approach of the  
rainy season: )

I hear singing !  
Is it bells tied to good cows  
who have eaten their fill of grass  
and reach home at nightfall  
in their herd with bulls ?  
Or is it the bells on his chariot  
coming through the forest path,  
with its wet sand:  
his chariot with young warriors  
with bows at their sides,  
with hearts well satisfied  
at a job well done ?  
Come !  
Let's go look from atop  
that high rock where jasmine  
vines climb !

## 193. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to her, to encourage her to be  
strong, when he was gone:)

Do not become faint-hearted  
like this,  
with your eyes hurling tears,  
sobbing, and your once-tight bangles  
slipping off.  
At bitter-cold evening,  
when lonely ones weep,  
the white jasmine buds seem to speak  
from the garlands of herdsman,  
with many cows.  
Look:  
it is the season when he said,  
"I will come to put an end to your grief,  
when you stand by the wall,  
scratching lines to count the days"

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to her, to assure her he would  
come, at the coming of the season:)

Now

great rain-clouds are full of water,  
like a first-pregnant woman  
who has born her child for twelve months,  
and is tired,  
who craves tamarind raw,  
unable to walk,  
and so, unable to climb into the sky,  
they bear the waters' weight,  
and join together;  
and aspiring toward many rich hills,  
these great loud clouds  
rise up.  
Listen to me, my friend:  
could he see all this  
and foresake us?

(287)

*Kaccippēṭṭu Nannākaiyār*

The clouds bear their rains' weight for twelve months between rainy seasons; and it is difficult to say whether it was believed that women bore their babies just as long. Perhaps the message is this: the clouds can wait twelve months to rain, but the woman cannot bear her child for a year. She bears her expectation of his return with great pain, and the expected relief she will feel when he returns is strikingly portrayed. Tamarind, which is bitter, is still craved by pregnant women in Tamil Nadu.



## WHAT SHE SAID

( to the messenger, when he told  
her of her lover's return:)

Did you see yourself?

Or did you hear from someone else  
who saw?

I want one thing to be clear,  
and may you obtain *Pāṭali*  
with all its gold, lying  
on the *Cōṇai* river, with all  
its white-tusked elephants:  
from whose mouth did you hear  
of my lover's coming?

(75)

*Paṭumarattu Mōcikīraṇār*

*Pāṭali* is the capital of the Magadha kingdom,  
on the northern bank of the *Cōṇai* river, at its  
convergence with the Ganges.

## WHAT HE SAID

(to his friend, when he had finished  
the work he had set out to do:)

In those days I really lived  
in this world, my friend:  
when I slept on the pillow  
of her shoulders--  
she whose forehead smells of pollen  
from fresh jasmine buds,  
    which flower on high grounds in the rain,  
    as the fine music of *pāṇars* playing  
    the *paṭumalai* tune  
    rises high into the frightening skies.  
All the other days of my life:  
what good are they?  
They are nothing but chaff.

(323)

*Pataṭi Vaikalār*

The poet's name is a pseudonym taken from the last image of the poem: it means, 'he of days of chaff'. The *pāṇars* played music to the crops to make them grow. His friend may also be his charioteer. Poems 196-202 depict his return.

## WHAT HE SAID

(to his friend the charioteer, after  
having obtained the wealth for  
which he went away; after their  
romance was public knowledge,  
but before marriage:)

The girl has bangles--small, round,  
and all in a row.  
When her father gives gifts to learned ones,  
pouring water on their palms,  
what is left is still boundless  
amounts of cooked rice, enough  
to leave no one unfed:  
his town is in the forest,  
which anticipates the rainy season,  
where small holes dug with wide mouths  
for *kavalai* roots, and filled  
with shining *konrai* flowers,  
look like the closed coffers of a rich man,  
filled with gold, and opened up.

(233)

*Pēyaṇ*

Gifts given are often accompanied by pouring water on the palm, to seal the gift, as the nature of the gift is recited. Her father is portrayed here as being so rich that even when all charity is given, he still has enough to feed anyone who wants food. His wealth is also described in the picture of the town, in which holes dug for edible roots are filled with yellow *konrai* flowers and look like coffers opened up. The image of charity and opened coffers is meant to depict the virtuous generosity of her father, as well as his wealth: in fact, his virtue is part and parcel of his wealth.

## WHAT HE SAID

( to his charioteer, when he had  
finished the work he set out to  
do, and was returning home:)

O wise and powerful charioteer,  
who knows how to break new paths  
through clay ground,  
going crashing through stony high lands,  
thinking, "If we don't end this long journey  
soon,  
we will not end the grief, and  
love-sickness of the wide-shouldered girl;"  
O man with a good heart that strives to do  
good:  
are you merely driving this chariot today.  
No!  
You are bestowing on me the girl  
who stays at home suffering misery!

(400)

*Pēyaṇār*

## WHAT HE SAID

( on his return from his journey,  
when his work was done, on  
seeing the jasmine buds in the  
forest:)

O jasmine of the wide forest,  
so full of water and nurtured  
by rain-clouds;  
you have taken on a smile, with your white  
buds,  
at evening, so lifeless,  
when many people go into their homes;  
may you prosper!  
But is it just for you to smile like this,  
in the face of someone who is alone?  
To display your smile  
as though in ridicule?



## WHAT HE SAID

(on his return, in answer to her  
questions as to whether or not he  
thought of them when he was gone:)

Oh  
didn't I remember?  
And remembering you in my heart,  
didn't I think and think so much  
that I became confused in the affairs of the  
world?

All the while knowing  
that my great desire would end only  
here with you,  
like a great flood that soaks  
high branches of trees,  
and recedes for men to drink of it,  
scooping it with their hands.

(99)

*Auwaiyār*

His longing and passion were so great in his absence, like a flood that is so great that it is useless as a source of drinking water -- all muddy, knowing no bounds. His passion receding to a point that he could enjoy it was dependent upon his return. He thought and thought of them when he was gone: so much so that he became confused. But his thinking was all tied up with his passion for her which is indicative of his love: see poem 112. Her concerns on his absence are quite different: compare poems 160, 184 and 191, for example.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to him, when he had returned  
from his journey, and praised her  
for comforting his lover in his  
absence:)

Even if we had laid out seven pots full  
of steaming rice cooked from white grains  
grown fully ripe at *Tonṭi*, and mixed it  
with ghee from the milk of many cows, grazed  
by shepherd in the forest of *Naḷḷi*, with his  
strong chariots,  
it would have been small reward  
for the crow that called out  
the omen that foretold  
of your coming for the feast,  
which ended the grief  
that emaciated the wide shoulders  
of my friend.

(210)

*Kākkaiṭṭiṇiyār Nacellaiyār*

If a crow cries while sitting on a house top, it is said, to be an omen foretelling the arrival of guests for the day. It was the omen that dispelled her grief, not my consolation, she says; I could never have consoled her; for only your return could end her misery. *Naḷḷi* is *Koṇṭīrak Kōpperu Naḷḷi*, one of the famous seven munificent kings of Sangham poetry. *Tonṭi* is a west-coast seaport town. The poet's name includes an epithet (*Kākkaiṭṭiṇiyār*), meaning "he who sings of a crow".



( to her, to tell her it has been  
decided that he will be her  
husband, when she was worried  
about the long delay in marriage:)

I too like the man  
from where the cool black flowers  
of the thorny *munṭakam* shrub  
scatter in the wind,  
like pearls off a broken string,  
and spread on the river bank,  
where people bathe.  
My mother wants this marriage,  
and my father wants to give  
you to him,  
and the whole village is talking  
about you and him.

(51)

*Kuṇṛiyanār*

Poems 203-205 are poems of the forest region that lie outside the narration of his journey and return. Here the context is waiting- -waiting for marriage. Her friend assures her marriage is certain. The flowers of the *munṭakam*, which are usually difficult to pick, are spread around to be picked up with little effort. Just like this, the marriage that they expected to be difficult has been arranged with ease: the flowers adorn the bank as flowers will be strewn at their wedding.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who, upon coming to  
their house after the marriage, praised  
her for bearing so well the grief of  
the pre-marital period: )

In those olden days  
he held my shoulders  
in the long white moonlight - - -  
that man from the land where  
split-mouthed frogs, in springs with  
narrow mouths, like vessels of glass  
into which toddy is poured,  
make sounds like the *taṭṭai* drum:  
and I still smell of jasmine !

(193)

*Arivoli Kizār*

The frogs sound like the drum, made of bamboo split and rattled, which is used to scare away parrots from crops. She perhaps refers here to their first meeting, or to their meetings that were arranged by her friend, whom she could be indirectly thanking for her services. It was the memory of this meeting that made waiting for marriage possible. Gentlemen are said to smell of jasmine: the lingering smell of his body on hers, and the sweet memory of their meeting, enabled her to bear the traumas of pre-marital courtship, she says.

## 205. WHAT THE FOSTER-MOTHER SAID

( to the girl's mother, upon returning  
from the house of the newly-wedded  
couple: )

The innocent girl  
lives in a village in the wood  
that smells of flowers - - -  
    flowers full of rain-drops,  
    which fall on shrubs,  
    drops that sprinkle on the spotted neck  
    of the rooster with a hoarse voice  
    calling in the forest:  
even if the chariot of her great man  
should go off to another town  
on work despatched by the king,  
it does not know  
how to stay away for long.

(242)

*Kuzaryatan*

The foster-mother assures the mother that he will  
take good care of her, that their forest home is well  
watered and fertile, and that he will stay with  
her always. Even if the king commands it, he just  
does not know how to stay away for long.

**POEMS OF THE  
LOWLAND REGION**



## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( when the one chosen for marriage  
and coming to the wedding as bride-  
groom was her lover: )

The grief of sleeping alone,  
when those who gave her no peace  
abused her, and those  
who didn't know her misery  
rejected her,  
is gone.  
May the village hear the good news  
and rejoice:  
the man who is loved  
by this woman,  
with her hair twisted in a bun,  
and who now looks like *Kuḷṭuvay's* city  
of *Marantai*,  
where flocks of herons by the sea  
were startled into flight  
by the loud shouts of victorious armies,  
is now  
her husband.

(34)

*Kollikannan*

Gossips abused her verbally; and even her friends, who did not know why she acted the way she did, rejected her, during her courtship. All this grief is ended, now that the marriage is to take place and their love can be proclaimed publicly. Wearing the hair in a twisted bun is one of the five hair styles of the period, depicted in the poetry: it is called *kuzal*. Here the woman is compared to a town, a convention of the poetry that appears to have thematic implications, which I will point out as the anthology proceeds. Here the town is celebrating victory: just as she is victorious in coming to marriage. Her worries fly away, like the herons, in the celebration.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, joyful at the coming of  
the wedding: )

O girl of tender character,  
O fragile girl:  
on that day, my faultless brown complexion  
left me;  
if I have not born the loss by strength alone,  
I cannot say how I bore it at all.  
O tender girl:  
in a town without evil,  
where young and old live together,  
we will embrace our man  
for days without end,  
like a huge tree on a strong shore,  
standing by a river  
full of running water everyday.

(368)

*Nakkirar*

Poems 206 - 211 depict marital bliss. Rivers in India generally dry up considerably, if not completely, in the summer. Here she says they will be together in a virtuous town, where water is never low in the river. Symbolically, she says her lover will never cease to support her with his love, as the ever-full river supports the tree with water. She has been able to bear the pre-marital traumas by her strength alone, as a strong tree would bear the dry, hot, summer. But now she will not be alone; now her strength alone will not need support her: she will have the strength-giving love of her man for ever and ever; and it will never dry up, or even diminish a tiny bit.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to him, when she came to their house  
after marriage, and saw how much  
he loved his wife: )

You have not  
even now  
ceased to quiver when you lie  
between her breasts,  
    like someone craving water  
    while plucking lilies, with round  
    and tubular stems, supporting flowers  
    in a cool, clean field,  
    full of *ayirai* fish:  
you must have suffered greatly  
in those wretched days  
when we were as hard to see  
as a third-day crescent moon  
is to worship.  
I suffer to think of it.

(178)

*Neṭumpalliyattai*

Rice-fields filled with water have lilies growing in them and are full of fish. He is like someone who wants to drink when standing in cool waters, plucking lilies: he has her love, now, whenever he wants it. But he still quivers. She suffers to think how hard on him it must have been when they were impossible to meet with: as difficult as it is to see the crescent moon on the third day of the lunar month, when virgins and others worship it.  
See poem 387.



## 209. WHAT HER FOSTER-MOTHER SAID

( when she returned from visiting the  
couple after their marriage: )

She mixed the tasty tamarind sauce  
with her very own hands:  
her eyes, like *kuvaḷai* flowers,  
became filled with smoke, from the seasoning;  
she straightened her unwashed sari,  
which had been stained when touched  
by her tender fingers, like *kāntaḷ* flowers,  
after they had squeezed the thick curds.  
When her husband tasted it  
and said, "It is good",  
the face of the girl with a bright forehead  
smiled  
almost imperceptibly.

(167)

*Kūṭalūrkizār*

From the description of her cooking, she might be new at it, either because she is so young, or because she had servants at home. In any case, she is nervous—she stained her sari with her hand, after she had prepared the curds for the sauce, and, without washing the sari, she straightened it before serving the meal. She was anxious to see how he liked her cooking, and was gladdened by his response.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( when he returned from his journey  
for wealth, with great passion: )

O rooster  
with your comb so red and dense,  
like shining red *kāntaḥ* flowers  
that grow in bunches and heaps:  
you woke me up from a sweet, blissful sleep  
with my man,  
from the town that reaps  
new wealth from wide seas.  
May you suffer endless torture:  
may you become many days' food  
for the kitten that hunts  
for house-rats at midnight !

(107)

*Maturaik Kaṇṇaṇār*

She does not want the day to dawn, and curses  
the rooster, who signals the end of night and of  
her sweet sleep with him. She wants it still  
to be midnight, which, when he is gone, is  
filled with misery, but, when he is with her,  
is filled with bliss.

211.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( during her menstrual period, waiting  
to hide it: )

The rooster cries, "kuckoo":  
right away my purest heart  
is full of fear,  
thinking dawn has come,  
like a saw that splits me  
from the lover who has caressed  
my shoulders.

(157)

*Allūr Naṇmullai*

This poem could be well described by the same colophon as that of the previous poem. However, the explanation of this colophon is this. He must leave in the morning for work. She knows her period has arrived, and that after dawn she will not be able to see him for three days, during which she must be isolated from him. Hence, the fear of the coming of dawn that was expressed in the previous poem is even more exaggerated here. She is seized with panic, and speaks this poem only to herself.

## 212. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( of her, when her friend had come  
pleading for him, on his return from  
the harlot: )

She has become like a mother,  
presiding at every household festival.  
Her man is from the land  
    where ploughmen bend low the soft branches  
    of the *kāñci* tree, with its fragrant flowers  
    in bean-like bunches,  
    to adorn themselves with fresh pollen.  
She hides his wickedness,  
even from him,  
and welcomes him,  
so that he will come to her  
ashamed.

(10)

*Ōrampōkiyār*

The remainder of poems of the lowland region depict the major theme of the region: his affair with the harlot and the domestic strife it causes. In the first section (poems 212-216), her friend or other messenger has come from him, to affect his re-entry into his wife's good graces. Here her friend portrays her response to his deed: she is stolid and stoical, pretending that nothing at all has happened, so he will be ashamed of himself. She is the ruler of the household, presiding at all household functions: and her friend may be criticizing her slightly for having become such a hard, wizened mother. She hides his deeds even from her friends in poem 310. She is the captive queen of the house, locked in the home as her misery and predicament are locked in her heart. As the ploughmen adorn themselves with pollen, perhaps he has returned from the harlot smelling of her perfumes. See poem 310 for the same description of her within a poem of the seashore region.

## 213. WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who had come as his  
messenger, after his trip to the harlot:)

O red-jewelled girl:  
she is like the old village of *Āti Aruman*,  
where men who come in search of toddy  
go home with tender fruits  
as well ... both from the tall, dark, palmyra tree,  
with soft, sweet fruit, growing from stems;  
when she comes to see my husband,  
    with the close-packed and overlapping  
    petals of white water - lilies  
    bouncing rhythmically on her thighs,  
    which are dotted with passion marks,  
I will be the loser.

(293)

*Kaḷḷilāttiraiyaṇ*

The village is so rich that men who come for toddy can go home with palmyra fruits as well. She praises the attractiveness of the harlot with this image. She is afraid the harlot will snatch him away from her. Lilies bouncing on her thighs as she walks are tied to her waist by their stems. Passion marks on her thighs represent aroused passion and beauty. She, who has been described as a wizened mother in the previous poem, fears the seductive harlot will attract the passions of her husband. The contrasting nature of their respective experiences of love should be kept in mind throughout the poems of the lowland region: see poems 112 and 201, and notes.

( to the messenger who came pleading  
for him: )

In his town the bathing ghat  
is beautifully adorned  
with small white *nāṇal* flowers  
that look like mustard seeds, mixed  
with the redness of the *marutu* flower.

But,

the bangles slip from my wrist,  
and the shoulders he embraced  
are faded,  
and adorned with loneliness.

(50)

*Kuṇṛiyaṇār*

A ghat is a bank of a river, pond, or man-made tank. He and the harlot go to play at the bathing ghat, which is described as beautiful, for they are having a good time together. The red and white design produced by the *nāṇal* and *marutu* flowers reminds one of the *kōlam* designs drawn by women in front of houses, daily, with colored rice flour, in Tamil Nadu today. Here she contrasts her condition, with his by contrasting the beauty of where he is with her own pitiful condition, which is caused by his infidelity with the harlot. She also compares the beauty of the harlot (symbolized by the bright flowers) with her own faded lusterlessness. He and the harlot are frolicking in public places, while she is lonely, at home.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, who came as a  
messenger from him, after his trip  
to the harlot:)

He is not from a land  
separated from mine by mountains;  
nor from a village  
the tops of whose trees  
we cannot see from here;  
even though there is a path  
on which to come and see me,  
which he can see with his eyes,  
he lives avoiding me,  
like someone who  
has delivered himself  
up to god:  
once I really cared for him,  
but now...

(203)

*Netumpalliyan*

Those who have delivered themselves up to god  
(ascetics) are cool and indifferent toward things of  
this world, even the people of their own family; for  
they have given up attachment to all material things.  
Like this, he has given up attachment to her, and is  
indifferent towards her, avoiding her look and her  
presence.

216.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who came as a  
messenger from him: )

Even though we live in the same town,  
he doesn't come down our street.  
Even when he comes,  
he does not hold me to satisfaction.  
He passes me by without looking at me,  
as though I were a cremation ground  
for foreigners.  
Love has gone far away,  
    like an arrow shot  
    by a bow :  
it has lost all reason  
and killed all shame.

(231)

*Pālai Pāṭiya Perunkaṭunkō*

He comes very seldom; and when he does, he is distant and does not satisfy me, she says. Cremation grounds are avoided as frightening places, and much more so if they are those of strangers. The "love" here (*kāmam*, which could equally well be translated as "passion") can be his or hers. His passion has gone to the harlot, and forgotten all shame in his play with her in public places. Her passion has followed his, in longing for him. He cares for her now as little as one would care for corpses of complete strangers as they were being burnt; even though he passes by, his heart does not go out to her even as much as it would to those whom we might know, who were being cremated.



## 217. WHAT THE HARLOT SAID

( when she heard that the man had  
spoken ill of her: )

That man  
from the village where carp  
in the pond  
snatch ripe mangoes as they fall  
from trees beside the field:  
he flattered me with big words  
when he was here;  
but now, in their house,  
he lifts his arms and legs,  
like an image in the mirror—  
a puppet to every wish  
of his son's mother

(8) *Ālaṅkāṭi Vaṅkaṇār*

Poems 217 - 221 depict the harlots' side of the story. He had gone to the harlot and returned home, belittling the harlot as a part of his strategy to regain his wife's good graces. Having heard of this, the harlot here criticizes him for it. In addition, she refutes the claim (implied in poem 213) by the wife that the harlot seduced her husband. She says that she did not go after him, but rather he came to her, just as the mango falls into the mouth of the carp in the flooded rice fields. The fish cannot go after the mango; it must come down and into the water for the fish to eat it. She also degrades his flattery of her, saying that he is a weak fool who says whatever pleases the women in his life. But she also expresses her enmity for his wife; for, in virtue of being his wife and his son's mother, the wife has power over him. The harlot does not; she must wait for him to come to her, and he could go elsewhere if he wished.

## 218. WHAT THE CONCUBINE SAID

( when she heard a harlot had slandered her, for a messenger to hear and report it to the harlot: )

They say a harlot, well suited to this man,  
 from a village where seals, with  
 stripes on their backs, like  
 a twisted *rattan* vine,  
 eat carp for their daily meal,  
 with her golden round and shining bangles,  
 has slandered me behind my back,  
 which also suits her.  
 The days when women,  
 with gleaming bangles on curved  
 shoulder joints, like bamboo,  
 will dance the *tunankai*  
 have come:  
 warriors crave to fight one another,  
 challenging each other with looks  
 during the dance,  
 for the right to marry their girls.

(364)

*Awaiyār*

The concubine (*irparattai*) is apparently in residence with or near the man, and in competition with the harlot, who has slandered her. During the *tunankai* dance, warriors and women hold hands, and men fight each other for the women of their choice. Here the concubine says that the harlot's words will be revealed as empty boasting when the dance is done, for he will choose her over the harlot, she asserts. This is the only poem in the anthology in which the concubine speaks. It portrays a courting ritual that may be referred to in poem 140. The relation of this ritual, which may be tribal, to the other poems is uncertain.

## 219. WHAT THE HARLOT SAID

( to be heard by her messenger, upon  
hearing that his wife was insulting  
her: )

We long for the wide bathing ghat,  
overfull with water,  
where women remove the outer petals  
of lilies, and wear them in their hair;  
and we are going there to play.  
If she is so afraid,  
let her come with her friends,  
like a huge herd of cows  
on the battlefield of *Eṣini*,  
who wins wars justly,  
to save her man  
from me.

(80)

*Auvaiyār*

He and the harlot go to the bathing ghat to play, which provokes the wife, because of the public display of his infidelity. The women with lilies in their hair represent the adornments of the harlot, and the over-fullness of the water at the ghat portrays his passion, which overflows its natural bounds in his relation with her. See 201. *Eṣini* is *Añci* of poem 237, and the poetess *Auvaiyār's* patron king. In the conduct of war, an opponent's cows are led out of his land by the challenger, to initiate legitimate warfare. The harlot challenges his wife to war: he is the spoils.

## 220. WHAT THE HARLOT SAID

( so the messenger would hear, when  
she heard his wife had spoken ill  
of her : )

If we are the sort of people  
with her husband  
that the woman of the house,  
hysterical,  
says we are :  
may the cool, wide ocean  
east of *Kuṇṇūr* of the ancient *Vēḷir* people,  
where a fully pregnant female carp,  
with well shaped sides,  
catches the sweet fruits that grow  
in bunches on the sweet mango tree,  
make us suffer,  
my friend !

(164)

*Māṅkuṭi Marutaṇ*

She again denies that she actively seduces the man: rather, he comes to her as mangoes come to the carp. She may be pregnant by him. Just how the ocean would make her suffer is unclear. But, the seashore region is associated with loneliness and extreme sadness. It seems clear from this poem that seduction by the harlot was censurable social activity. Perhaps she is saying that, if she is guilty of this act, may she be ostracized from her community and left lonely.

## 221. WHAT THE HARLOT SAID

( when she heard the wife had accused  
her of inviting him to her, to be  
heard by her friends: )

When I am with that man  
from the cool, seashore town,  
    where bees open petals of fat  
    and beautifully colored lilies  
    in the pond,  
we have two bodies.  
When we lie together,  
when I join the chest of that man,  
    as when his fingers are held  
    tight together in grasping the bow,  
we are one body.

(370)

*Villakaviraiṇār*

The poet's name is a pseudonym taken from the last image in the poem: it means, "man of fingers wrapped around a bow". She defends herself against the charges of his wife by saying that it is he who opens her up, as bees open the petals of the lilies; it is he who holds her, as he holds her, as he holds the bow.

## 222. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to refuse his messenger, who had  
come after his trip to the harlot: )

May you prosper, sir,  
but don't come down our street  
with evil gossip,  
which sounds like the screeching  
of a mother hen, with small feet,  
who lives in the house,  
when she gathers her frightened chicks  
into a bunch, as they don't know where  
to go for safety,  
when she thinks that wildcats  
have come through the fence  
at nightfall.

(139)

*Okkūr Mācāttiyār*

The messenger comes to her, perhaps with pleas that include saying something of what the harlot has said in the previous poems. Her friend refuses to accept him back into the house, and refuses to listen to any of the gossip he brings with him. The harlot may have started the gossip in the hope that the wife would be afraid to do anything to stop the affair, fearing the scandal of having refused him into the house. Poems 222 - 230 depict their refusal of him and his messengers --- their denial of his re-entry into the house after his trip to the harlot.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to him, when he had sent a  
messenger to plead for him, after  
his trip to the harlot: )

O man of the village  
with *kāñci* groves and fields,  
where *kenṭai* fish dive deep in a pond,  
as herons leap at them,  
and then are frightened  
by bright - colored lotus buds nearby:  
because your messenger was a liar,  
all messengers seem to be thieves,  
to those you have deserted.

(127)

*Ōrampōkiyār*

*Kenṭai* fish indicate the wealth and fertility of the fields. They distrust his messenger, just as the fish fear the lotus buds; but for good reason: for they know for a fact that his messenger has lied. His lies consist in his having said their husband was good and virtuous, and that he loved and cared for them. They know now that this is not true.

## 224. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to him, refusing his re-entry into the  
house, after his trip to the harlot: )

Your oaths are so very trustworthy,  
now that you have enjoyed  
the beauty of that woman,  
with tiny bangles and many styles  
of dressing her long hair  
with bamboo shoulders, resembling  
a pestle used to beat black gram,  
with a sugar-cane drawn on them,  
and deserted her too.

(384)

*Ōrampōkiyār*

The sugarcane arrow drawn on her shoulders is symbolic of Kāma, the god of love, for it is his instrument for inflicting love. He made oaths to his wife and left her for the harlot; then he went and made oaths to the harlot, only to desert her too for his wife. So his oaths are not believable at all. He is refused entry into the house, for he is just not trustworthy.



## 225. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to his messenger, refusing him, after  
his trip to the harlot when he  
begged forgiveness : )

If you play too long in the water,  
your eyes grow red; and,  
in the mouth of one who eats too much,  
even honey tastes sour.  
If you leave me,  
drop us off at our house,  
and then go:

leave me in my father's village,  
with its cool, lovely pond,  
on a street where fearful snakes  
roam about  
where you once saved me  
from trembling misery.

(354)

*Kayattūr Kizār*

This is a message to be given to him. Once he saved her, it seems, from snakes that roam on her father's town streets. This may mean he saved her from gossips by marrying her. But, like the swimmer and the glutton, they have had too much of his treatment. If he should want to go off to the harlot, he should leave them off at their father's house before he goes. Even the snakes are better than his treatment, at this point. This poem seems to be more a refusal to allow the continuation of his relationship with the harlot than a refusal to let him into the house.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( refusing to accept the oaths he  
swore, on his return from the  
harlot: )

Give back our young virtue,  
as beautiful as *Ton̄ti*,  
    where bright-bangled girls,  
    after pounding rice flakes,  
    lay their hard, black mortars to rest  
    on dikes, bordering on fields of rice  
    with choice ears; and only then  
    go out and play the *van̄tal*:  
take your oaths  
and go away!

(238)

*Kun̄riyan*

*Ton̄ti* is a town renowned for its beauty and wealth. Here that wealth is tied to the virtuous lives of girls in the town, who lay their tools down respectively, after all their work is done, before they go out and play. *Van̄tal* is a game in which girls dance and sing holding hands. Whatever wealth and happiness he may have had was a result of their virtue (see poem 228); now they are fed up with him and his lack of respect for them. He can go, but they would like him to give back their innocent youth--their young virtue--which he has taken from them, before he goes away.

## 227. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to him, refusing him, when he had  
come, after visiting the harlot : )

Her faultless beauty was like *Ārkkaṭu*,  
the city of *Azici*,  
who has toddy as his food  
and young warriors with bright swords  
that make enemies suffer hell;  
he who hunts to bring home game in bunches;  
he who is the father of *Cēntaṇ*,  
who has long-tusked elephants tied  
to *marutu* trees growing along the wide  
shore of the *Kāviri*, where people bathe:  
you have seen,  
good sir,  
how her beauty is faded and gone away.  
Don't come down our street !  
Don't give us garlands !  
Now everything is gossip.

(258)

*Paraṇar*

The city mentioned in the poem may be modern Arcot. If it is, then the reference to elephants tied on the banks of the Kaveri River may indicate an expedition of *Cēntaṇ*, which would express the extent of his army's power, and hence the might of the king. She once was beautiful and victorious too; but now, because of him, she is faded and defeated. He should go away, and not give them any more gifts to placate their anger: for gifts will not satisfy them, and only fan the flames of gossip.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to him, when he wanted her to be  
his messenger to his wife, after his  
trip to the harlot: )

You have come with the signs of a festival on you:  
you have been intimate with groups of girls  
luxuriously dressed in leaves, with flowers  
tucked in and tied among their jewels.  
But this town knows that your life,  
which was not worth even so much  
as the income of one cow,  
is now a festival because  
that beautiful woman of great virtue  
came into your life!

(295)

*Tāṅkalōri*

All his happiness is based on the virtue of his wife,  
but still he goes out and frolics with harlots. The  
income from the products derived from one cow is  
not very much. He became prosperous only  
because of his virtuous wife.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to his messenger, refusing to accept  
his pleas : )

That man

from the village where  
the male sparrow of the town,  
with his hopping gait, gathers one-by-one  
the white and odorless flowers  
of the sweet-stalked sugarcane,  
packed with honey,  
to build a home for his pregnant wife,  
for the birth of their child:

he is the sweetest of all men  
and the most full of love,  
in the words  
of his minstrel.

(85)

*Vaṣamantāmōṭaraṇ*

Her friend contrasts the empty praise and flattery that his messenger heaps upon him with the unpretentious, but truly loving, actions of the sparrow. Perhaps his wife is pregnant. But where is he? Off with the harlot, instead of preparing a home and providing for his wife and child. The sparrow does not get distracted by the sweetness of the sugarcane, but collects the odorless flowers; but the man becomes enamoured of the perfumed harlot, instead of tending for and appreciating his lovely wife.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(in a change of heart, when he  
assured her that he had not visited  
the harlot:)

Yes,  
my pure white teeth have smiled with you:  
may they break off,  
as the tusks of an elephant  
roaming the desert  
snap off suddenly  
when it butts against a stone.

Sir:  
my life is putrid for me,  
like a pot in which fresh fish  
is kept when caught by the *pāṇars*;  
since I don't have you,  
may it perish!

(169)

*Vellivittiyār*

During their love quarrel, perhaps he referred to  
the days when they used to smile together, and  
asked her to smile like she did in the old days.  
(See poem 153.) But this is her response.

## WHAT HE SAID

( to her, during their love quarrel  
which arose from his trip to the  
harlot; but addressed to his heart: )

Grieve,  
O my heart,  
for you have lost your beauty,  
just like the poor lute players  
who were so desolate  
without flowers in their hair,  
at the loss of their beloved *Evvi*.

This woman,  
with her many-styled black hair,  
which smells like the bright, wild jasmine  
that clings to the tree by our house:  
who is she to me?

(19)

*Paranar*

*Evvi* was a patron of arts and music. When he died, lute players expressed their grief in mourning by not wearing flowers in their hair. She has been intransigent in her criticism of him, and he says he cannot recognize her anymore. (See poem 153) He says this so she might give up quarreling and accept him with an embrace, the way the jasmine clings to the tree. His heart has lost its support he says, just as the lute players lost theirs when *Evvi* died; his life is now empty and lifeless, just as their hair was desolate without flowers in it. He feels that she is violating their relationship by arguing in this way, and so he brings their very relationship into question by saying he does not recognize her. (See poem 3.)

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to him, when he had asked her to  
reconcile him with his wife, during  
a love quarrel: )

Once, if my friend had given you  
the unripe and green fruit  
of the *neem* tree,  
you would have said it was  
a honeyed ball of sugar.  
But now,  
even if she gives you clear water  
from cool springs in *Pāri* hill  
in the coolest month of *Tai*,  
you say it is hot and brackish.  
My Lord,  
is this what you call love?

(196)

*Milāikkantāṇ*

In response to his complaint about the changes in his wife, her friend says that it is he who has changed. Once he would have said even a bitter fruit given to him by his wife was sweet. But now, he avoids her and does not appreciate anything she does. It is his heart that must change, if they are to be reconciled.



## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who came as a  
messenger from him, after his trip  
to the harlot: )

My heart aches; Oh  
how my heart aches:  
as the small-leaved *neruñci* plant  
growing thickly in dry lands  
has fresh flowers sweet to the eye,  
which  
produce thorns,  
so my lover  
who made my life sweet  
has hurt me so.  
My heart is aching.

(202)

*Allūr Naṇmullai*

*Neruñci* flowers are beautiful to look at, but when one goes to pick them, the thorns prick one's fingers. In this way, he was wonderful and made her life wonderfully sweet, but he has hurt her since they have been married, by his affair with the harlot. Poems 233—243 depict her response to his affair and her eventual acceptance of him back into their house and her heart. Acceptance: but not without grief.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who had come to  
plead for him, after his trip to the  
harlot: )

Though my good virtue  
is gone,  
and my beauty  
is faded,  
and my life is ruined,  
say no more,  
my friend.  
Is he not like father and mother  
to us now?  
Where there is no love,  
what is the good of quarreling?

(93)

*Alḷūr Naṇmullaḷ*

Even though her virtue is gone and her beauty ruined because of the course of their relationship, she must take him back into her house, for that is her duty. So her friend need argue no more. Their relationship is one of duty for her now: he is like a mother and father, with whom a child is related in virtue of duties required to be performed. There is no mutual love and bond of affection left, as a result of his cruelty. When there is no love, quarreling is useless: for there is no heightening of love in the reconciliation. (See *Tirukkuraḷ* 1330: "Quarreling is sweetness for love; but even sweeter is making up, with embraces.") His passions have killed their love, and left her with only her duties toward him. Contrast poem 112.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who came as his  
messenger after his trip to the  
harlot :)

I chose that man  
from a land where drops  
spray from a river in full flood  
as though from a waterfall;  
and I stayed with him  
one day.  
But since then,  
for many, many days,  
grief has stayed on my shoulders  
and consumed all my charms.

(271)

*Azici Naccāttanār*

The waterfall is an element of mountain region imagery, which represents his passion. (See poems 83, 84, 117, 119, 152, 173 and 151.) The river is an element of lowland region imagery; and the full flood represents the over-flowing of his passions, in his affair with the harlot. His love flies away from her toward the harlot, just as it flew toward herself in their courtship. Her chastity consists in complete fidelity to him from their first meeting. She had one day of joy with him; and ever since, she has had grief, which has consumed her beauty. Nevertheless, this poem indicates that she accepts him back, in her virtue.

## 236. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to his messenger, when he had come  
pleading, after his trip to the harlot: )

He arose in the morning,  
prepared his speeding chariot,  
and rode off  
to embrace that bright-jewelled woman.  
Now  
the mother of his little son  
greeted the man from the wealthy town,  
saying he is bright;  
and her heart is whirling in confusion:  
it is really miserable  
to be born a woman.

(45)

*Ālaṅkuṭi Vaṅkaṇār*

Saying he is "bright" refers to her praise of him on his return, and also, perhaps, to his glowing look on his return from the harlot. "Miserable" renders *teruvatu*, which means, "gives misery". In poem 106, it is used to mean "punish". "Woman" renders *tiṇai*, which means state, category, condition, family, or home. Here we take the word to refer to the condition of birth as a virtuous woman, and, in addition, the condition of women in love relationships portrayed in the poetry: for all characters in *Akam* poetry are exemplaries of virtue and character.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to herself, as she felt herself giving  
in to him, when he pleaded on his  
return from the harlot: )

Because you are the woman of this man  
from the town with a cool  
bathing ghat,  
where, in a deep pond,  
carp snatch the striped fruit  
of the tanglet *rattan* vine  
growing on the bank,  
your heart has many sufferings.  
And,

like a village at night  
on the deadly battle-front  
of *Añci*, who gives like unending rain,  
with his high chariots, and  
swift elephants,  
your nights of sleep  
are few.

(91)

*Auvaiyār*

The carp eating the fruit represents his relation with the harlot, as we have seen. *Añci* is the poetess's patron, and is praised for his liberal giving. Auvaiyār has no ambivalence about the cause of the woman's suffering: it is he that causes it; just as armies cause destruction of villages caught on their battle-fronts. Again, the woman is portrayed as a town; here, a town caught between warring armies. Villages only lose in war, and cannot defend themselves. In just this way, the wife is caught and helpless: she is unable to prevent his affair on the one hand, and must let him back into the house, on the other. Contrast poem 106, where *Kapilar*, a male poet, presents the cause of her problems as being her own feelings for him.

238.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to him, to accept him back, after  
his trip to the harlot: )

O great one :  
in your town, ploughmen done with their work  
pluck lilies that bloom for bees to eat,  
and throw them down to die on long ridges of fields,  
wasting their fragrance.  
But the flowers, without thinking,  
"These men are evil, so we will move to other fields,"  
blossom again, in the same field  
that discarded them.  
We are like the water-lilies of your town :  
even though you have done us  
so many wrongs,  
we are not strong enough  
to live without you.

(309)

*Uraiyūrccalliyan Kumāran*

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who had criticized him  
for going to the harlot : )

What good is it,  
my friend,  
to say he is wicked  
in our anger ?  
We are greatly matured  
and have taken on many duties  
in the wealthy household of that man  
from a town where a twin-horned  
water-buffalo  
will not wander far  
from her new-born calf  
that a ploughman has tied up,  
and so she eats young crops  
nearby.

(181)

*Kiṣimāṅkalāṅkiṣār*

She is tied to her house and her family, and cannot wander off to eat tastier grass far away; so she must be content. But he can wander off, and taste the pleasures of the harlot. She says she is too mature to begrudge him in irresponsible pleasures. She has her work and her children to care for, and has no time for anger at him over his affairs. But more : what good is it to be angry ?

( to the messenger : )

The young child cannot mount  
and enjoy his toy cart,  
with its tiny horse, made  
by the carpenter ;  
but how he delights  
in pulling it around  
with his hand.

Like this,  
though we cannot delight  
in being with our man,  
from the village of fine chariots  
with its public tank,  
just loving him gives us joy.  
Our bangles are securely joined.

(61)

*Tumpicérkiray*

As the toy is only good for pulling around with the hand, and not for mounting and riding, he is only good for dutiful love, that binds them to him regardless of his cruelty to them, in his affairs with the harlot. He is just not made for the kind of love they desire. But they are strong and able to bear it: as is represented by the securely joined bangles. His village has chariots and a public tank: he rides on his chariot to meet with the harlot (poem 236), and he meets the harlot at the public ghat (219). He can ride his chariot away from them, but they are left home with the children; with only toy chariots; with only their love for him: without his reciprocal loving care for them.



( to her friend, to be heard by the messenger, who had come from him to express his goodness and get him back into the house, after his trip to the harlot : )

My friend,  
he is but a young student.  
I wonder how he fares among  
the assembly of his own village.  
Now, with his body unfilled out  
by the food he begs:  
soon, he will be a guest of honor,  
riding from banquet to banquet.

(33)

*Paṭumarattu Mōcikīraṇ*

She succumbs to the flattery of the student who is his messenger, and then praises him for the skill with which he convinced her of her husband's essential goodness. She agrees to admit her husband back into the house, and says that the student will have great success as a result of the skill he displayed with her. Students ate by begging food from door to door.

## 242. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to the **Pānar** who had refused to go  
as his messenger to her, after her  
husband's trip to the harlot; when  
her husband himself had gone and  
became reconciled with her: )

Look, *Pānar* !

This is the nature of wedded bliss :  
in moonlit evening  
the victorious man lays down  
in a low bed filled with fragrant flowers,  
with a big sigh,  
like an elephant lying down ;  
he caresses the back of his son ;  
and then his son's mother comes  
to hug his back.

(359)

*Pēyaṇ*

Unable to approach her directly, he goes to his son's bed, and caresses him. Seeing this, she comes up behind him and hugs his back, having forgiven him. Her friend tells this to the *Pānar*, perhaps with some amazement, to say that there is no use in arguing with him, when his wife is so willing to accept him back.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to him on his return from the  
harlot's house : )

O my man

from where the *mulli* bush  
floats on dark back-waters,  
blue as sapphire, with flowers  
like squirrels' teeth :

even when this birth  
changes into another,  
may you be my husband  
and I  
the one close to your heart.

(49)

*Ammūvaṇār*

This poem contains imagery from the seashore region, but is included here because of its narrative context and central theme, which concerns her accepting him back into the house after his trip to the harlot. She expresses her virtue and faithfulness to him: their love is eternal, and she wishes to be with him forever, regardless of his treatment of her. She calls him her "husband", and refers to herself as "the one close to your heart". This suggests again the difference between their respective types of love: hers being duty-bound (to him as her husband), and his passion-bound. The sadness of this asymmetry is implicit in her use of the seashore imagery.

**POEMS OF THE  
FOREST REGION**



## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( after a meeting that was missed  
because of a mistaken sign; when he  
was standing nearby; to tell the girl  
that he had indeed come the previous  
day, and had not stayed away : )

That man who rides a chariot  
has gone through the grove.  
Look :  
the severed water-lilies  
with their healthy petals torn  
by his golden wheels,  
made like jewels,  
and which cut like a sword's mouth.

(227)

*Ōtañāni*

Poems of the seashore region have as their central theme sadness. Since this sadness can come at any point in the course of pre-marital or marital love, there is no narrative course that proceeds through the poems, in the way the course of courtship, separation and return, and the harlot affair can be portrayed in the previously presented regions. The poems in this section are arranged according to the context of the sadness; in groups depicting sadness during courtship, separation, at the end of courtship, and during the harlot affair. The first group (poems 244-272) portrays their sadness during the various traumas of pre-marital love, most of which have been described, with different emotional messages, in poems of the mountain and forest regions.

245.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(as though to her friend, when he  
was nearby, for him to hear:)

The wound inflicted by the strong shark  
has healed  
and my father has gone out  
into the dark, blue sea;  
my mother, who sells salt  
to bring home white rice,  
has gone to the salt digs:  
it would be good if there were  
someone to advise that man  
from the cool, wide shore,  
and,  
hurrying down the long path  
without tiring,  
tell him, "If you come now,  
she will be easy to meet!"

(269)

*Kallāṭaṇār*

The last two words are extrapolation. The original says merely, "she is easy": meaning she is easy to meet with now, because her parents are both out of the house today, because her father is healed. The lovers apparently could not meet for a few days because both parents were home, on account of his wound. This and the next poem depict the arrangement of meetings, and, as such, could be included in the poems of the mountain region. The predominance of seashore imagery raises a problem, however: is the poet merely utilizing the natural imagery with which he is familiar in order to portray a theme whose central mood falls in the mountain region; or, does the predominance of seashore imagery intend to create a mood of sadness, whatever the theme? A definitive solution to this problem is ] not always possible in the allocation of poems to regions, for the central mood is not always explicit.

## 246. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to him, who was coming for meetings  
during the day, to tell him that  
henceforth he should come at night  
only : )

If you stay and rest for a while  
at our good, small town,  
    with the wide sea as its fence,  
    with meandering back-waters that moan,  
    and shining waves and *tāzai* shrubs;  
if you should stop your high, moving chariot,  
with its golden lotus staff,  
beside the dunes as high as mountains,  
to end the loneliness of that girl  
with a leaf-skirt hanging over her loins;  
if you should,  
what harm is there?

(345)

*Anıarmakan Kuruvaçutı*

He should stop his chariot by the dunes for meetings with her, when he is on his way home from his day's labor. The leaf-skirt may have been a gift from him to her, which was a custom. The allocation of this poem to the mountain region could be justified by its theme and the comparison of the dunes to mountains.



## WHAT HE SAID

( to his friend, who had ridiculed  
him : )

Good men do not bear false witness :  
I tell you, do not go near that tiny house  
without thinking what is good and proper!  
My heart was drawn there ;  
and it remains :  
in that forest where the daughter of a fisherman  
with his fine net,  
a girl with hair as beautiful  
as the eyes of a peacock's tail,  
spreads out  
the net of her eyes.

(184)

*Āriyavaracaṇ Yāzppiramatattaṇ*

He warns his friend not to go near the girl's house  
for there he has gone, and there he has been  
trapped by her eyes. Compare poems 18 and 20.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who told her that he  
would come for a night meeting: )

My heart is grieving:  
because of great love,  
it remembers him and goes  
to dwell with him;  
but, because we are so lonely,  
it remains with us.  
Never resting on one side  
or the other,  
it is always going back and forth:  
like a flowering *tāzai* tree by the ocean,  
bending over shifting back-waters,  
which rises and falls  
as the waves come in  
and go out.

(340)

*Ammūvan*

When the waves come in, the back-waters rise up  
and the tree is immersed. When the waves go out,  
it is high and dry. Her heart goes out to him,  
remembering him and worrying about the dangers  
of the path he travels to meet with her. But then  
it returns to her to worry about her own condition.  
Her heart's movement describes her thoughts,  
which shift constantly between him and herself:  
she has no peace of mind.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( as though to her, when he was  
standing nearby and unseen, for him  
to hear; during the period of their  
day meetings : )

When he came to embrace you,  
swiftly, like a stranger,  
as we played in the ocean  
or danced, holding hands, in the grove,  
with our girlfriends,  
of course there was gossip!  
He will not go any farther away from you  
than that tender-leaved skirt of your's,  
which shakes on your broad loins  
with passion-marks spread on it,  
below your swaying girdle  
of well-made jewels:  
he himself has brought on  
your mother's over-protectiveness.

(294)

*Añcilāntai*

For "passion marks", see poem 363 and notes.

## 250. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to her, when he was coming for night  
meetings, for him to hear: )

Gossip rises in our town  
even before the sand  
dries out at dawn,  
    when black sand is piled up by waves  
    from the ocean, like the mounds of sand  
    that girls make to wash their hair,  
    in frightening seaside groves,  
    where  
    bright-white dunes are built so high  
    by the swift wind, that the palmyra's  
    old leaves with rough edges, and young  
    tender leaves, are covered up.

(372)

*Viṟṟurru Muteyinaṇār*

Gossip begins even before dew dries out on the sand in the early morning. His footprints in the sand are visible when the dew is wet, and invisible when the dew is dried. Girls make piles of sand in groves, which are frightening because of wild animals, in order to wash the oil from their hair with it. See poem 23. For an attempted explanation of the image of the palmyra trees being covered with sand, see poem 257.

251.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, who accused him of not loving her, when he was standing nearby, but unseen, at a night meeting; to proclaim her faith in his undying love: )

I am bound forever  
 to that man from the shore,  
     where a crow with white on him  
     searches out and eats food by the edge  
     of the wide ocean, among flooding back-waters,  
     and then rests  
     in a fragrant and flowering grove:  
 my love is bound to him,  
 and now it is impossible to unbind.  
 It is complete and final.

(313)

Poet's Name Unavailable

(to her friend, so that he would hear,  
when he was hidden nearby; during  
the period of their day meetings,  
when she could rarely meet with him:)

Listen, my friend:

when you see that man from the cool seaside,  
where a stork with beautiful wings,  
on the waving *punnai* branch,  
craves the lily that smells  
of honey, and ears of grain,  
because he loathes the tiny fish  
in the salt river,

please

do not stand before him boldly  
and say, "Is it right for you to go  
away, and make the girl with bangled shoulders  
like this?!"

(296)

*Perumpākkāṇ*

During the period of meetings, she interprets his not coming to see her more often as his not wanting to see her. The stork shuns the small fish in the salt river, even though they are the natural object of his desire, and craves the lilies and grain, which he cannot have as food. In the same way, he shuns her, even though she is the only one in his heart of hearts, the only true object of his craving. But, she tells her friend not to scold him for the pain he seems to be causing her: for he will realize that she is the only one for him and come to her eventually.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, when he was nearby  
unseen:)

During these days  
of our meetings on shaded dunes,  
beneath *punnai* trees flowering  
in bunches in the grove,  
where birds call, and ocean waves abound,  
my eyes  
have seen him,  
and my ears have heard his words.  
But my shoulders:  
when he is near, they are beautiful;  
when he is gone, they grow thin.  
What is happening, my friend?

(299)

*Veṇṇanip Pūti*

Her eyes and ears have experienced him, and do not change when he comes and goes: she has faith in him, in her mind. But her body still responds to his presence and absence: she is worried that her body is not convinced by his words. Stable and steady marital life is the only condition under which the ups and downs of her body's beauty will end.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( when he was standing nearby,  
unseen:)

If my love should go away,  
even for a day,

I have many days of suffering:

because of the love that was born  
one day, playing in the doll-house  
built by girls in the grove,  
who frolic in the sea, with their  
shoulders like bamboo, and garlands tied.

(326)

Poet's Name Unavailable

It is not clear whether they first met when she was playing with her friends in a doll-house they had built, or whether the two lovers met and went to play in a doll-house built by girls other than her own friends. Both are possible. They might well have met when she was playing with her friends, and returned to the same spot for meetings. The love that was born between them in those days gives her pain when he goes away, even for the shortest time.



(to her friend, when he was nearby,  
unseen, for him to hear:)

My body is sickly pale;  
for my love is in his loveless heart,  
so difficult to enter.  
Even my shyness has left me  
and gone away.  
My good sense tells me, "Rise up,  
and go to him."  
It says to do just that  
which I cannot do, and it  
stays here with me.  
That man from the seashore of wide-spreading  
and thorny *tāzai* shrubs:  
even if he had just asked us  
how we were,  
it would have befitted his character.

(219)

*Vellūr Kizār Makaanār Venpūtiyār*

She is saying that he does not care for them, because he has no concern for their suffering when he is not their's, between meetings. Her love is trapped in his heart, which is hard to enter, for it has not melted for them: he has not empathized sufficiently with their predicament. She cannot go to him and tell him, even though the trials of meetings have removed her shyness. So her good sense stays with her to torment her. Even if he cared enough about them to have asked them how they were, she could have told him, and it would have befitted his noble character. But he did not. "Sickly pale" renders *pacalai*.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(when he had not yet come for marriage, to her friend:)

I am here.  
 My virtue lies in incurable grief  
 in a grove by the sea.  
 My man is in his town,  
 and  
 our secret has become gossip  
 in public places.

(97)

*Venpūti*

Her virtue lies in a grove by the sea, where they met. See poems 25 and 46. She grieves for her virtue until the day when marriage to her lover is accomplished, for only then is it secured: for it is essential for the maintenance of her virtue for her to marry her lover. It is grief in the anxiety that this will not happen, because of some failure in the progress of their courtship, that plagues her throughout the pre-marital period. In addition, gossip has begun to spread, so that, perhaps their romance will be obstructed by the over-protectiveness of her parents (see poem 249). In addition, she is shamed by the gossip, because he has not come to marry.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to console the girl, who was unable  
to bear his long delay in coming to  
marry:)

The day when you will hold his chest  
is very near;  
it is impossible now  
for marriage not to come:  
mother has found everything out  
and called him "the great one"---  
that man from the seashore  
where tall palm trees  
seem to be short,  
as spreading dunes, with *aṭumpu* vines,  
made of sand dropped by the west wind,  
cover their swaying trunks  
in the grove.

(248)

*Ulōccan*

Her mother having called him "the great one" means this: her mother thought Murugan ("the great one") was causing the girl's grief, and called in the diviner, at which point the friend made a revelation-with-virtue. So now her mother knows everything, and marriage is certain. The image of the tree appearing to be short in the dunes may mean this: the tall, proud palmyra trees seem short in the dunes, just as his virtue and desire for marriage seemed short in her grief caused by his long delay in coming to marry. But the palms are tall; and marriage is certain.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to her, when he had delayed long  
in marriage:)

That man from the seaside,  
where a wet crab fears the look  
of the stork, which looks like a  
rainy-season lily,  
and, in distress,  
darts as fast as a bull  
off a severed herdsman's rope,  
to hide in holes at the root  
of a *kaṇṭal* shrub  
if he doesn't come,  
let it be.  
There are smaller bangles at the shops.

(117)

*Kuṇṛiyan*

The statement is intended to console the girl. The last line says that, even if we become emaciated with grief, there are smaller bangles that we can wear comfortably on our thinner wrists. So do not worry. But, the image of the crab seems to be saying that he will hasten to marry at a certain point; perhaps when he fears the gossips (see poem 271): when he is as stricken with fear as we are, he will run as fast as he can for a home in marital union, just as the crab runs for safety in the holes at the foot of the *kaṇṭal* shrub.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who thought her unable to bear it, when he had delayed long in marriage : )

Gossips know nothing :  
 when the one you love,  
 with a love like the look  
 of a young turtle,  
 leaves you broken hearted,  
 what else is left  
 beside dying inside,  
     like an egg left to rot  
     without its mother ?

(152)

*Kilimāṅkalāṅkizār*

Between each meeting, he leaves her broken hearted, and she grieves without him. The love she has for him is like "the look of a young turtle" because it grows in quantity and quality every time she is with him, just as the turtle grows in size and character as it looks upon its mother. But, the mother turtle is there for its young to see. He is not there. So she dies inside, like an unhatched egg, rotting in the sun, without its mother's protection. The gossips do not understand this, and talk about her without sympathy.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, when he had delayed  
long in marriage, when he was nearby,  
unseen, for him to hear: )

As my shining bangles slip from my arms,  
I am wilting.  
But, I am alive, my friend.  
My glorious virtue,  
which was so important,  
like a festival of all the hillside women,  
with their skirts of leaves on their loins :  
it is with that man  
from the cool seashore,  
where a sorrowful crane  
that has lost its old strength  
and cannot fly,  
sits on a branch that bends  
to touch the waves.

(125)

*Ammāvan*

As the crane cannot fly, and must wait for the fish  
to come to him, so she cannot go to him, but must  
wait for him to come to her. She has lost her  
strength because her virtue is with him.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, when he had delayed  
long in marriage:)

At loveless evening  
that comes buzzing,  
when animals and birds remain in loneliness:  
even though they called out  
before closing the gate through which  
many had come, asking,  
"Is there anyone else to come in?"  
our lover has not  
come, my friend.

(118)

*Nannākaiyār*

The scene depicted is the closing of the village, or compound, gate, at evening. He has not come by the closing of the gate, even though they called out to see if anyone still wanted to come in. It could be that he was to come as a guest for a feast, as a pretext for their meeting; or, that he has not entered the village by the time he must, in order for them to have a night meeting. Also, this could be symbolic: he has not become part of their family yet--- ie: he has not come to marry her yet, even though time has come for this to happen. The calling at the gate may remind her of how her heart calls out for him, and how he has not responded to her desires by coming to marry.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, when he had delayed  
long in marriage:)

My pallor is like  
green algae growing on the pond  
where the village gets its drinking water:  
every time he caresses me,  
it goes away;  
and when he leaves me alone,  
it spreads back over  
again.

(399)

*Paraṇar*

Pallor here is *pacalai*. Algae on the pond disperses  
when stroked with the hand; and when the hand is  
removed, it spreads back over again.



## 263.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, so he would hear,  
as she was unable to bear the  
fear of gossip:)

I am not guilty  
of spending even one day with him  
in bliss---

he who is from the seaside,  
where,  
on every one of many spreading  
dunes of sand, of moonlit color,  
dried-out fish, caught by fishermen on the  
wide sea,  
smell, along with shrimp, from  
the difficult back-waters.

In this town,  
with beautiful streets, lined  
with *punnai* trees with branches buzzing  
with bees, and with golden flowers blooming,  
gossips gossip in vain,  
in all their wickedness.

(320)

*Tumpicērķīran*

The first lines are ambiguous, and important for an understanding of the way courtship was regarded in the culture. *Oru nāl nakkatū ōr paṣiyum ilamē* could mean that she was not guilty for spending a day with him either because it is not a sin to do so, or because she has not done it, even if it is a sin. In either case, the gossips gossip in vain, for she is guilty of nothing.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, fearing gossip, when  
he was standing nearby, unseen : )

How can we end the gossip,  
my friend ?

I saw his loud and swift chariot,  
which travelled without pausing,  
though the driver begged him to,  
along the wide beach reeking of fish,  
by the great sea;

did I not ?

But all the girls  
who pick bright flowers with pollen  
from the *puṇaṇi* tree hanging down  
on high dunes of white sand,  
at mid-day:

they saw it too !

(311)

*Cētanākīraṇ*

He came at mid-day, and everyone saw him. Hence gossip. Marriage is the only way to end the gossip completely. But they could diminish it somewhat if he came more discreetly.

## 265. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to her, so that he would hear about  
the changes in her, caused by his  
delay in coming for marriage, and by  
the gossip of neighbours: )

Even on that day  
when he was here embracing you - - -  
that man from the shore,  
where retreating waves of the ocean  
throw up myriad shrimp,  
with bent backs and legs,  
onto the shore:  
the beauty of your forehead  
was like this.

(109)

*Nampi Kuttuvan*

"Like this" means that her forehead had pallor (*pacalai*) on it even when he was with her. Even when he was with her, she worried so much about his delay in coming to marry and about the gossip that her forehead's beauty was ruined with the symptoms of love-sickness. How much worse would it be when he goes away, or if he continues to delay? Contrast poems 253 and 262.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to be overheard by him, to express  
the misery she suffers, because he  
has not come to marry : )

Our town is covered with clouds,  
and with a mist that flies from clear waves  
to make the *nīlām* flowers in dark back-waters  
close up on the limb.

And now,  
as better-cold winds come  
to make us helpless,  
this village of sorrowful homes  
has but a few days to live.

(55)

*Neytal Kārkkīyār*

Here the descriptive paradigm of woman-as-town is the sole image of the poem. Her state is described through the description of the town. See poems 206, 213, 214, 226, 227, for comparison. She is closed up by the cool mist, like the flowers. Her very life is in jeopardy, as the winter season comes. The life of the village dies away in the winter: how much more will she suffer in the bitter isolation from her lover, in her frustration caused by his long delay in marriage?

( to him, to say he should marry immediately, because her mother noticed the changes in her, and plans to guard her closely in the house:)

O man of the seashore,  
 where herons with black legs,  
 after searching for food in back-waters,  
 rest in groups on the shore,  
 and sleep to the sound of waves  
 lapping in the wide sea:  
 the very same day that we played  
 with crabs with golden stripes,  
 in the speckled shade of *punṇai* trees  
 with glittering flowers,  
 my friend became pale,  
 as her bangles--tight for years--  
 fell off.

(303)

*Ammūvaṇ*

The same day they met and played together, as soon as he left, she became afflicted with pallor (*pacalai*), and grew so thin from worry that her bangles fell off. Her mother has noticed these changes and is guarding her closely --- for her bangles had been tight for years. If she was like this on the first day, how much worse must it be for her now? Marriage is the only way to remedy the situation.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( when he was gone, and she was  
unable to bear the over - protective  
atmosphere of her home:)

How I wish  
I would just die  
with this insatiable love,  
impossible to separate,  
    like the union of love-birds that live  
    by the water, for whom,  
    if a flower should pass between them,  
    it seems like a year.  
In a world where we have known our duty  
and lived together,  
birth after birth,  
how I long to escape the misery  
of being alone.

(57)

*Ciraikkūṭiyāntaiyār*

They have known and lived by their duty (*kaṭan*), by being together as a couple birth after birth. But now they are separated. The theme of her being near death with grief and loneliness is characteristic of the poems of the seashore region. See also poem 266.

## 269 WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to her, who was being over-  
protected and guarded closely in  
her house:)

*Marantai* is such a nice town:  
where white-winged storks move out of line  
to eat *ayirai* fish,  
because the stirring waves of the cool ocean  
carry the fish away.  
But when you are alone,  
it is miserable.

(166)

*Kūtalūrkizār*

Storks stand all in a row, when wading in the sea for fish. But, when the stirring of the waves carries the fish out of reach, they must move out of the line to catch the fish. Her friend might be telling her that they must step out of line a bit in order to improve their situation: perhaps the friend will go to him, since he cannot come to them. The stork might also stand for him: he must come to them, for they cannot go out and meet him; he must come and save them from their condition by coming with a proposal of marriage.

( when suffering in over-protectiveness,  
to her heart:)

Even though I vow  
not to say words that are  
sweet, loving, and desirable  
to him;  
when I see that man  
    from the seashore by the cool sea,  
    with its groves,  
    where many beloved mango trees,  
    with pollen on flowers, make bees  
    come down to them:  
O my heart,  
you forget that vow!

(306)

*Ammiway*

In her heart she vows not to be loving and sweet, when he comes, because of all the pain he has caused her. But when he comes, she forgets the vow and is sweet to him. Her heart just melts in his presence, and she cannot be angry. Like the mango flowers, it is just not in her nature to repell him, as the mango by its very nature attracts the bees. Compare *Tirukkural* 1259: "I go to him saying I will quarrel. But seeing him, I melt and embrace him."



## WHAT SHE SAID

(to herself, when she was over-protected  
and closely guarded in the house: )

The love that led to our embrace  
has ended forever the days  
of mere laughing play with him:  
that man from the shore,

where a crab is frightened by young girls  
playing, with their long hair dripping and  
tied with garlands of lilies mixed  
with the *atumpu* vine's lovely flowers;  
and then it runs  
into the sea.

How amazing it all is!

(401)

*Ammūvan*

Their innocent love-play flowed from the mere  
laughing play of their childhood. When their  
childhood relationship became a love relationship,  
they ceased to be unafraid of gossip, which began  
to plague them, as the young girls playing frightened  
the crab. The young girls represent her friends, who  
saw their meetings, and perhaps began the gossip  
about them as lovers. See poems 249, and 264. As  
the crab ran into the sea, they need to run into  
marriage for safety.

( to him, after she had told him  
that the girl was closely guarded  
in her house, when he replied he  
would come by night to meet her,  
and then marry:)

Because of your desire  
you come to us swimming across back-waters,  
where flocks of fish swim  
near the wide beach,  
and where there is a grove  
that people avoid because  
vicious male, bent-legged crocodiles  
kill in that place.

She is afraid,  
because of her innocence.  
O great one: my heart fears for you both,  
as it would for my own twins  
who had swallowed poison.

(324)

*Kawai Makan*

The poet's name is a pseudonym taken from the last image of the poem: it means, "twin son". The poison is their love: his passion makes him risk death to come and see her; and her love causes her to fade away in emaciated grief in the over-protectiveness of her home. Love is deadly stuff. She is afraid for them both. So he should cease to come for meetings, and marry.

## 273. WHAT HE SAID

( to his heart, which pulled at him  
to go off in search of wealth;  
fearing separation:)

In summer she is cool,  
like sandalwood growing in the place of the gods  
on Mount *Potiyil*, so hard to approach,  
and unknown to living men,  
In winter she is gently warm,  
like the heart of a lotus,  
blooming in frail sunlight -  
beautiful and foleded up,  
as rays of light  
are trapped and hidden  
within.

(376)

*Paṭumarattu Mōci Korraṇ*

He praises her as cool in summer and warm in winter, for he does not want to be away from her in any season. He says this to convince himself not to go, when his heart tugs at him to leave. The second group of poems of the seashore region deals with their sadness during separation, and in its anticipation. Poems 273-275 depict their anticipatory anxiety and his departure itself; poems 276-286 deal with their separation before marriage; and poems 287-306 treat their feelings during separations the nature of which are not specified.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to him, who was about to leave  
before marriage:)

O man from the shore, where winter  
winds toss about sea waters,  
which resemble *nāḍal*, buds  
like tiny eggs sprinkled on dark lilies:  
just like a baby that opens its mouth  
and cries, "mommy!"  
when its mother gets mad  
and torments it,  
whether you hurt her,  
or kindly fondle her,  
she lives within the bounds you make.  
She has no one else  
to pluck out the pain from her.

(397)

*Ammāvan*

She is as dependent upon him as a baby on its  
mother. See poem 163.

## 275. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to him, as he placed his lover in  
her care, on his departure before  
marriage, saying, "Take care of  
her, so she does not pine away:")

O man from the cool seaside,  
where an innocent heron rests  
on a *punnai* branch that hangs to the ground  
on the beach of sand dunes  
piled up like hills:  
let the day of your departure  
arrive,  
when you say you are leaving;  
but, if you are so  
adamant about going  
give back the virtue you consumed  
before you go away

(236)

*Nariverūttalaiyār*

*Nalam*, translated here as "virtue", is both virtue and beauty. He consumes her virtue and beauty the way the bee eats nectar from the flower, opening it up and causing it to fade at the same time. If he leaves, he should give back her virtue, for in it is her strength. In its absence, she needs him. There is no way to console her if she has neither one nor the other. Her virtue now depends on his staying and marrying her. The heron eats and rests on the branch, without going home. So the man thinks he can consume her innocence and virtue and then do just as he pleases, without caring for his lover. See poem 53 and 97.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, who worried that  
the girl would be unable to bear  
his separation for wealth for  
marriage:)

It would be even more painful  
than losing the virgin beauty,  
praised by playmates in seaside groves,  
if the wickedness of our man  
from the soft shore,  
where *tāzai* shrubs with fat limbs  
with edges like saws,  
grow like a fence of spears, all in a row,  
should be revealed and spread around,  
so many people know.

(245)

*Mālai Māran*

She will be able to bear their separation if the  
secret of their love is contained, and gossip does not  
arise. But if, on top of her loneliness, she must deal  
with the shame of gossip, it will be too much.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, who had told her to  
bear her love-sickness for him,  
during his absence:)

People say, "Bear that love-sickness!"  
Do they know nothing at all  
about love.  
Or are they just strong?  
As for me,  
because I cannot see my lover,  
with a swollen heart and piercing agony,  
I am becoming nothing at all,  
little by little,  
like the fine spray dashed  
against rocks, in a great flood.

(290)

*Kalporu Cīrunuraiyār*

The poet's name is a pseudonym taken from the last image of the poem: it means, "he of fine spray dashed on rocks". Just as water in a rushing flood is pounded on rocks into drops, spray, and, finally, mist, her life is being pounded away little by little, as her surging longing for him crashes on the hard fact of his absence. She is becoming nothing at all. The Tamil, rendered here as "becoming nothing at all little by little", is highly alliterative: *mella mella illākutamē*.

( to her friend, who worried she  
would be unable to bear his  
separation for wealth for marriage:)

That man is from the seashore  
of beautiful, cool waters,  
of groves of *tāzai* trees, full of flowers,  
where, on the long beach,  
white flocks of small-footed swans  
are scared away  
when fishermen in swift, curved boats  
on the torturous sea,  
throw on the water their battle-axe,  
famed for killing, with its sharp edge and long  
bamboo handle tied tightly to its face,  
to kill a horned shark:  
surely I have formed an affection  
with him, which is now  
our enemy.

(304)

*Kaṇakkāyaṇ Tattaṇ*

*Naṭpu* rendered here as "affection", means relationship, liking, or friendship: its connotations are less passionate than "love". Their affection for one another is their enemy because of the pain it causes them during separation.



## WHAT SHE SAID

(growing angry, to her friend, during  
his absence for wealth for  
marriage:)

Birds lament.

Flowers fold up.

Seaside groves are full of bitter sadness.

Even the sky, like us,

becomes distressed and grows dismal,

as day passes away.

I live still, my friend,

in the hope that someone

will tell that man from the cool

seashore of cool and fragrant *nāṇal* shrubs

that this is how it is

with me.

(310)

*Perunkannan*

She is angry at her friend, perhaps, for not having  
told him of her grief, assuming that, if he knew of  
it, he would end it for her, out of his love.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend who asked about the  
changes in her since he left for  
wealth for marriage:)

He is from the seashore:  
where girls, all as one,  
play and chase a crab  
that is frightened of them,  
on the beach of sand mixed and battered  
by the strong, undying sea;  
and the crab's distress is ended  
only by the spreading waves  
that rise up and come in.

His words have turned to lies.  
If mother should discover my grief,  
as weariness dwells on my body  
and my beautiful bangles fall off,  
will I live through it,  
my friend ?

(316)

*Tumpicērkrāṇ*

His words vowing that he would never leave, that he would marry soon, that he would be back by a certain time, etc., have turned to lies: for he has not done as he said he would. The crab is chased by the girls just as she is chased by the gossip of her girlfriends. Her mother may find out about their affair through the gossip and the symptoms of love-sickness she displays; and, if she calls in the diviner, the girl wonders if she will be able to live through it all, combined with the misery of his absence. As the crab is saved by the sea coming in, she will only be saved when he comes to rescue her in the safety of marital life.

## 281. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to the girl, who feared gossip during his pre-marital absence; to say that the gossip would prove helpful for them : )

That man from the shore,  
 where waves rumble like  
 drums beaten with sticks,  
 destroying the tiny homes of crabs  
 in their holes among the roots  
 of the *ñāṣaḷ* shrubs with small flowers:  
 the days he has granted us  
 are very few.  
 But the gossip !  
 It is louder than the great tumult  
 in the town of *Kurumpūr*  
 on the day when the great king of the  
*Vicciyars*,  
 with his arrow-slinging army, fought other  
 chieftains;  
 and *pāṇars* appeared with eyes  
 red like tigers.

(328)

*Paraṇar*

The *pāṇars* are minstrels, who sing the praises of kings, in order to gain rewards: they have predatory red eyes because they are eagerly trying to see who will win the battle, so they can sing the appropriately laudatory hymns in praise of the victor. The gossips make a big deal out of the few days they spent with him, making a lot of noise where there has been very little action. Perhaps this noise, however, will hasten marriage. The theme of courtship as a battle is presented again. See poems 28, 80, and 206. For *pāṇars* and their activity, see poems 223, 229, 230, 231, 242, and 196.

( to her friend, during pre - marita  
separation : )

That man from the shore  
where waves pile up the sand:  
now he is gone,  
    mounted on his white chariot  
    loaded with golden weapons,  
    whose wheels are wet with drops of mist  
    from the roaring surf that rises  
    like the flight of a swan dancing  
    in a sky hung with clumps of clouds  
    full of rain that lightning brings.  
The pallor spreading on my forehead:  
how did it know he was gone ?

(205)

*Ulôccan*

The white wheels of his chariot are wet with drops of water from the surf, just like the wings of the swan are wet with rain. Her eyes too are wet, with tears. Pallor (*pacalai*) spread on her face as soon as he left: she wonders how it felt his absence before she herself had recognized her own sadness at his leaving, perhaps.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, when she felt the pangs  
of separation before marriage : )

At midnight  
every word has disappeared;  
people are wrapped in sweet sleep,  
without anger;  
and the whole wide space of earth  
is asleep :  
they cannot hear the humming of the night.  
Only I  
am awake.

(6)

*Patumañār*

Before marriage, she is trapped between her loneliness and her inability to share the cause of her feelings with anyone else. She feels estranged from her own people. The "anger" in the poem is perhaps the anger of her parents and relatives at her for the signs of depression and melancholy that she displays: for they do not know the cause of her condition.

( to her friend, who worried about her  
being helpless when he was gone in  
search of wealth for marriage : )

Before I laughed with that man  
from the shore,

where the ocean stretches along a wide beach,  
and white flowers of the *tāzai* shrub, beaten  
by shining waves, night after night,  
bloom like herons:

my eyes were like flowers;  
my shoulders were beautiful and victorious,  
like bamboo; and my forehead  
was like the crescent moon - - -  
it made even wisdom confused.  
They were so beautiful:  
but now, my friend ... .

(226)

*Maturai Ezuttālan Cēntampūlan*

Blooming like herons could mean either that their  
color is white like herons, or that the flowers are  
shaped like herons' backs.

( when he was gone before marriage : )

That man who left here to make me lonely:  
 is he happy being all alone,  
 at evening, which is full  
 of misery,

when a bat with strong wings  
 and gentle flight, glides toward  
 a ripened tree?

My heart has a grief  
 that knows no limit,  
 like the forge bellows in a village  
 that does the public work  
 for seven towns

(172)

*Kaccip Pēṭṭu Nannākaiyār*

Her heart sighs constantly, like a bellows at a forge doing all the work for seven villages. Town, village, and city are not distinguished by different nouns. She wonders if he feels the same as she. Compare poem 160. For a more extensive presentation of the bat image, see poem 357, and notes.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( in extreme love-sickness, when he  
was gone, at the coming of evening: )

Pity these birds  
with their bent wings  
in the wide space of sky,  
as the sun is going down:  
they fly so hurriedly;  
for they bring food to put  
in the mouths of their young,  
who live by the path  
in the high *pipal* tree.

(92)

*Tāmōtaraṇ*

She wishes her man would hurry home to take care of his family, which she may be at home with, or merely longing for, depending whether the poem is interpreted as depicting pre-marital or post-marital separation. Compare poems 160 and 229. The *pipal* is a sacred tree: sacred to Murugan.



## WHAT SHE SAID

( when he was gone : )

My heart is aching:  
bearing tears that burn my eyelids  
like fire,  
my heart is sick with grief.  
Because our lover,  
who was born to wipe my tears away  
and comfort me,  
is gone,  
my heart is full of pain.

(4)

*Kāmañcērkuḷattār*

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who felt she would  
be unable to hear his separation: )

Is this love-sickness,  
my friend?  
My man from the sea-coast,  
    where the *punnai* tree blooms  
    in the mist of broken waves,  
    and the heron sleeps in its shade,  
is gone;  
and my eyes,  
like the many-petaled lotus,  
cannot sleep a wink.

(5)

*Nariverūttalaiyār*

The heron can sleep in the shade of the *punnai* tree, but she cannot sleep at all. The sad mood of the seashore poems is embodied in the imagery: the waves come in, like sobs, and the mist flies, like tears. The word used for sea-coast in this poem means also "loneliness", *pulampu*.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who worried she would  
be unable to bear separation : )

If I think, my heart burns.  
If I try not to think,  
there is no way to control myself.  
This love-sickness makes me miserable,  
and reaches the sky.  
The man I embraced  
is not such a gentleman  
after all.

(102)

*Auwaiyār*

In this poem, thinking is linked with remembering their good times together and of the other lover's present condition: thinking is thinking of one's lover. See poem 201, also by *Auwaiyār*. If she thinks of him, it gives her pain. If she tries not to ... it is impossible to control herself: she cannot help thinking of him. *Cāṇṇōr*, rendered here as "gentleman", means a good, noble character. She says that any man who could give her such pain could not be such a noble character as she previously thought he was.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, when he had not come  
back by winter : )

It seems our lover will not come back  
even by winter, with its bitter suffering  
and drizzling rain,  
when the crane is so sorrowful  
with its feathers like petals  
on the *kavir* tree, and its red beak,  
as it stands in the mud piled up  
by the waters,  
shivering and searching for food.  
It does not seem that I will live,  
my friend.

(103)

*Vāyilāṇ Tēvaṇ*

She suffers in winter like the crane, whose red mouth is like the redness of her eyes. Her wondering whether she will live is a theme characteristic of the seashore: death would be the natural extension of the emaciation and progressive weakness she feels as a result of her love-sickness. Actually dying of grief, however, is a theme inappropriate for *Akam* poetry.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( when he was gone; sad at the  
approach of evening : )

The lily of deep waters  
is folded up,  
    like the small back  
    of the heron with tender legs:  
evening has come.  
May it live!  
But that is not all:  
darkness comes in its wake.

(122)

*Ōrampōkiyār*

Evening is a sad time. But she says that it may come, for she can bear it. But the darkness that comes in its wake will make her sad and lonely, longing for him. Compare poem 162. The lily is shaped like the back of a heron when it folds up at night.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, when he was gone,  
unable to bear his separation:)

This is not my home:  
it is full of long nights  
and brutish folks with sleeping eyes,  
who don't ask why people like me  
are sleepless at midnight,  
as I grieve with endless sorrow,  
thinking of the wickedness of my man  
from the grove by the shore,  
with its tiny homes.

(145)

*Kollanazici*

Unable to tell people what is the matter with her, she can get no sympathy. She feels estranged. If only her friend would stay up with her at night. Or, if only someone would ask what was wrong with her. In Poem 135, her foster-mother has asked just that, and received a reply: the revelation-with-virtue. This poem seems to be in the context of separation before marriage. She denies that her parental home is a home at all: she will have a home only with him, in marriage. At this point in her life her marital home is her only real one.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to the ocean; saddened by his  
separation from her: )

Ocean:

who made you so sad?

So that even in the dark of midnight

I can hear your voice,

as waves shake the *tāzai* bush

with white flowers, on the beach

with its grove,

and,

herons spread out, looking for fish,

like a flock of *Pūziyar*'s goats

with their tiny heads.

(163)

*Ammūvaṇ*

Contrast the fishing patterns of herons (*kuruku*) in this poem, and storks (*nārai*) in poem 269. The sound of the sea is what she hears as she lies awake at night: it sounds so sad that she wonders who could have caused its sadness, as he has caused hers.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who encouraged her  
with strong words to be patient,  
when he was gone: )

My friend :

I do not pity that man from the shore,  
with its flowers opening in dark waters,  
where swarms of bees crave the seasonal  
honey

and cluster around black branches  
of wet *punnai* trees, on the sandy shore  
beaten by waves, where flowers bloom.

Let others gab about what they know,  
saying, "What has happened to this girl?"  
Let it be.

What do I care about gossip?



## WHAT SHE SAID

(growing thin, at the coming of the  
season of his promised return:)

At painful evening,  
when the sun loses its fierceness  
and settles in the hills;  
when grief descends on me,  
and sadness grows;  
where is he?  
He does not know that my body,  
like a doll perfectly made,  
has become something else entirely,  
as the moving wind flows over it.  
Yet he,  
who has finished the work he wanted to do,  
does not think that I am grieving;  
nor does he think that evening  
is so miserable.

(195)

*Tōrataray*

Since the season has come, she thinks he is done his work and is staying away out of ignorance of the changes that have come over her, and out of insensitivity to the misery of evening. He does not know that her body is wasted away; he does not feel so miserably alone at evening. He is thus insensitive to her; and does not feel as she does. If he did, he would have come by now.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who tried to give  
her strength at the coming of the  
season of his promised return : )

What can we do, my friend?  
Yama himself has come  
in the shape of the rainy season,  
mixed with maddening cold winds and  
dense rain from clouds pregnant  
with water and causing pain!  
He has marked me,  
for my lover has left me behind.

(197)

*Kaccip Pēṭṭu Nannākaṭṭār*

She is marked for destruction, by the god of death himself, Yama. Compare poem 188. There is no consolation that her friend can give her, when the god of death and the season itself torment her, because he is gone. The only solution is for him to return.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who said she was  
bearing well domestic life with him:)

They say the waves that come  
to the front - yard of my tiny house,  
near a grove with fat and flowering buds  
of *tāṣai* shrubs, with tendrills hanging down  
where palm leaves stretch out  
like herons pruning their feathers,  
go back  
to the cool, seaside land  
for which he left us.  
So even though he is in a land  
far away,  
he is very close,  
here,  
in my heart.

(228)

*Ceyti Valluvan Peruñcāttan*

Despite the colophon, it is clear he is gone. The waves that come to her yard go back to the land where he is: they are messengers carrying her thoughts to him, and his to her. So, she can bear well his absence, because the waves make him close to her, in her heart.

( to her friend, who encouraged her  
to be strong, during his absence : )

My friend,  
that man is from the wide ocean,  
where birds make so much noise  
and bright-bangled girls  
play the game of *vaṇṭal* picking  
radiant flowers, shaped like  
bells around a horse's neck, from the  
*aḷumpu* tree with leaves  
like the forked feet of a deer:  
I will not think of him,  
so my eyes may sleep.

(243)

*Nampi Kuḷṭuvan*

Whenever she thinks of him, she cries and cannot sleep. So she will try not to, perhaps distracting her mind with memories of her innocent childhood, when she played the *vaṇṭal* with her girlfriends. For the *vaṇṭal*, see poem 226 and note. On trying not to think, see poem 289.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who worried about  
the changes come over her, at the  
coming of the season of his  
promised return : )

In this season,  
when branches are sweet  
and groves beautifully adorned  
with flowers from the *pun̄ku* trees,  
like popped rice, and with *kuravam* trees,  
with soft buds, from which many  
flowers emerge,  
even though our lover  
does not long for us,  
my fainting heart is encouraged,  
thinking, "great ones never fulfill  
what their hearts set out to do;"  
I live now, my friend,  
on courage alone.

(341)

*Mīlaikizān Nālvēttan*

If he longed for her, he would have returned,  
regardless of whether his work was done. But, she  
gets solace from the fact that it is very difficult to  
get one's work done when one is great, she says. He  
will return when it is done, even though that may  
take some time. Now, she cannot live on the hope  
that he will return by the promised time. She lives  
on courage alone.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who worried she  
would be unable to bear his  
separation; sadly : )

He said, "I am going,  
I am going." Because I thought  
this to be nothing but another  
of his many fake departures,  
I said, "Surely, leave my side,  
and go!"  
But Oh! Now where is  
my love? Who is support  
for me?  
The space between my breasts  
is filled with tears,  
    like a pond  
    where black - legged, white storks  
    graze.

(325)

*Naṇṇākaiyār*

He is in conflict about leaving: being torn between his desire to go and his desire to stay with her. See poems 334—341. This poem is a variation on the theme of her consenting to his departure, and feeling the pain of it only later, as she begins to feel the symptoms of grief and love - sickness. Compare poems 154 and 282.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who asked her  
during his absence, "Will you be  
able to bear it? ")

That man from the wide - spreading sea,  
where a huge flock of small, white  
red - mouthed crows has their backs sprayed  
with drops flung from waves,  
and, hating the cold,  
gathers together in a grove of many flowers  
if he goes away,  
will anything less than our own sweet life  
be lost for us,  
my friend?

(334)

*Iḷampūtaṇār*

The last lines could also be rendered thus: "Do we have anything to lose (after he goes) other than our own sweet life?" His town is a place where even shivering crows can take shelter. Would he be so cruel as to leave me with no one to protect me, without any shelter. Without him, our life is in jeopardy; or, without him, our life itself is lost."

## 302. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( when he was gone, to the girl who  
could not bear it: to give her  
strength by criticizing him : )

Our former loveliness is gone;  
the beauty of our shoulders  
is faded;  
with a sad heart we are sleepless  
every night; and we are so pale:  
is dissolution our only reward  
for having shown our bright teeth  
in laughter with that man  
from the shore, where  
curving waves break up, confusing  
fresh flowers that abound in groves,  
with cool and fragrant flowers  
and white storks calling?

(381)

Poet's Name Unavailable

Like the flowers. they are confused and confounded  
by his going and coming, which refreshes and stirs  
them, and then leaves them dry and alone. Their  
paleness here is *pacalai*. She implies that he is  
wicked and cruel for causing this dissolution for  
them, when they only smiled and laughed with him,  
doing him no harm.



## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who encouraged her  
to be strong, during his separation  
when she was growing thin : )

Before my man  
from the cool seashore,  
with its grove of flowers  
spread thick on the white sand,  
went away,  
I knew evening  
as a time when girls with bright jewels  
put on bunches of festive ornaments.  
Now that is over:  
I did not know that evening  
is a lonely time filled with grief  
as wide as the earth.

(386)

*Vellivītiyār*

Women put on ornaments to greet their husbands  
and lovers returned from the fields, returned from  
their labors; or, they put them on for festivities of  
various sorts. Now there are no festivals for her;  
now she knows evening for what it is - - - the lonely  
time when one is alone and most longing for one's  
lover who is gone.

( to her friend, during his absence,  
beginning to show changes :)

In that land where he has gone,  
is there not evening to bring him sadness,  
my friend?  
When bright flowers emerge from blooming buds,  
scentless like the sweet but wicked liquor  
on the *pakanyai* shrub,  
with its leaves like the cloth  
that is twisted to wring out the water,  
after being soaked in starch  
and beaten and dunked in a cool tank  
by beautiful washer-women,  
is there no loneliness?

(330)

*Kazārkkīran Eyirriyan*

Compare poem 160. This poem contains a mixture of images: evening is characteristic of forest region imagery; washer-women are characteristic of lowland imagery; and the theme of loneliness is characteristic of the seashore region's imagery.

## 305. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( when it was known that he had  
arrived home : )

The sea is quiet;  
dusk is in the grove;  
the watery shore  
and dark back - waters are dismal,  
aren't they?  
And the nightingale calls out softly,  
living among leaves of palmyra trees  
in an open yard;  
be glad, my friend:  
is he not coming - - -  
our man who suffers so,  
because of his insatiable love?  
He dread separation from us  
even then,  
when we were quarreling?

(177)

*Ulōccan*

His return prompts her friend to remember how he  
dread leaving, even when they were quarreling: his  
return brings feelings that he too suffers greatly  
because of the separation.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( for him to hear, but to her friend  
when he was nearby, unseen : )

Our man is from the seashore,  
which appears like the dancing ground  
for the frenzied dance,  
when it is spread with beautiful *nāṇḍal*  
and *puṇṇai* flowers;  
where sharks are plentiful  
in the vast expanse of shining sea:  
whether or not  
he has marriage on his mind,  
can I let him know that another  
comes to marry me?  
He made unflinching oaths to me,  
on that wonderful day  
when he held my lovely, soft, and bamboo  
shoulders.  
But now: they are faint.  
He may be deceitful, but he  
is dutiful as well: he is our support.

(318)

*Ammūvan*

He made oaths that he would marry, that he would never leave, etc.; but he has not fulfilled them yet. Hence, he is deceitful. But, if another comes to marry, the girls will have to make a revelation with virtue. If the dance of the *Vēlaṇ* takes place, they will also have to make a revelation. So, he should take it upon himself to be their support, to fulfill his responsibility to them, and propose marriage right away. See poems 41, 127, 128, and 134, for the *Vēlaṇ* and his dance.

## 307. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to her, who worried that their  
parents would not accept him as  
her husband, when he came to  
propose : )

O bangled one; be glad !  
Our parents have spoken their consent  
to that man from the seashore,  
    where thundering waves roar steadily  
    as they destroy tracks scratched  
    in the wet sand by the sharp nails  
    of swift crabs,  
    with bent legs, who live in holes.  
Will this laughing and gabbling town,  
    with its streets smelling of fish  
    and its towering *punnai* trees  
    with rows of flowers,  
ever be the same?

(351)

*Ammūvaṇ*

The gossip has been removed with one fell swoop,  
as the tracks in the sand are wiped out by the  
waves, by the news of the marriage. The town,  
which had been as pervaded by the gossip of women  
as by the smell of fish, will never be quite the  
same. Poems 306—309 depict the end of their  
courtship and the approach of marriage.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to her, so she would sympathize  
with him and want to end his  
misery, after the termination of  
meetings; having agreed to help  
him : )

The high chariot that our lover  
mounts and rides,  
with its bells sounding clearly  
on the shore by the clear sea,  
and with its lotus ornament in front:  
it comes for us to see  
and then goes away,  
ashamed.  
Our love is surely pitiful,  
and doomed:  
I am heartsick.

(212)

*Neytal Kārkkīyan*

His lover has refused meetings; he has begged her  
friend to help him gain more meetings: this is what  
the friend says to her in order to make her pity  
him. He is ashamed because he has come and been  
denied meetings with her, which humiliates him.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to her, telling her how miserable  
he is, after she told him meetings  
were impossible; to make her feel  
sorry for him: )

Listen, my friend:  
for a few days he has not come  
along the path by the water  
inhabited by sharks;  
he is not the sort of man  
who would do such a thing  
of his own accord.  
Did I speak too freely  
out of intimacy,  
and hurt him  
out of my ignorance?

(230)

*Arivutai Nampi*

Her friend implies that she had encouraged his lover to end meetings, and then told him, reporting his lover's decision. He is not the sort of man to come crashing down the path, only to be humiliated by being told meetings are impossible. He is gentle and shy. Her friend wonders aloud whether or not she misjudged him, and whether they should perhaps send word to him that meetings are again possible. She says this so the girl will agree to this, and have pity on him. Or, her friend might have told him not to come without asking the girl, and tells her here by saying that he would not cease to come of his own accord.

(about the way she behaved on his  
return from the harlot : )

The brown - skinned girl is acting like a mother,  
and, like a flower not yet worn  
and sealed tight in a jar,  
her body fades away.

Her man is from the sea-coast,  
where water - lilies rise above their green  
leaves

on their strong stalks,  
in dark back-waters, filled with fish;  
and, when the water swells,  
the flowers look like  
the eyes of ladies who have dived  
beneath the tide.

She is ashamed of his wickedness  
in front of us,  
and so she hides it in her heart.

(9)

*Kayumanār*

In the mountain region poems, she was portrayed as being locked in her parents' house, fading away: poem 63. Now she is locked in his house, in marriage: she is locked in the house and fading, like a flower that is wasted because not worn as human adornment; (see poem 185 for this concept). Water—lilies (*neytal*) are the characteristic flowers of the seashore region (*neytal tinai*). The image of lilies submerged under the water connotes her drowning in tears as her grief and longing swell up. As she is locked in the house, her feelings are locked in her heart, and she appears hard, self-sufficient, and stoic, like a wizened mother. See poem 212 for the same image.



## WHAT HE SAID

(to his heart, after failing to meet  
her due to a mistake in the signs;  
or, during a love-quarrel, when she  
refused to be convinced by his  
pleadings : )

O my heart,  
You long for a girl who is far away  
and difficult to be with:  
like a heron who cannot fly,  
standing in waves of the eastern sea,  
who lifts his head  
toward the unobtainable meal of *ayirai* fish  
on the western shore of *Tonṭi* city  
of *Poraiyan* with strong chariots.  
You suffer so:  
and suffering is your fate.

(128)

*Paraṇar*

For poems on the theme of meetings missed because of mistakes in the signs, see poems 30-32. For poems depicting his responses to her intransigence in love-quarrels arising from his trip to the harlot, see poems 153, and 231. The heron stands in the waters of the eastern sea, east of the south Indian peninsula and looks up helplessly in yearning, toward the meal of fish on the western sea, all the way across the peninsula: but he can only long for it and suffer, for he cannot fly. Poems 310-312 depict sadness during the affair with the harlot and the attendant love - quarreling.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(when he had gone to the harlot and returned, as he was standing nearby; for him to hear, but addressed to her friend:)

My friend:

you say we will regain

our virtuous beauty, when we hold

that man from the cool seashore,

with dunes where broad-footed storks

stand, after eating fish and wrecking

flowers blooming on *aṭumpu* vines.

Yes we will get it back.

But even so: is even losing our own sweet life  
more painful than saying, "Give it back!"

When we ask, in our destitution,

for just that which we gave

to someone who begged for it?

(349)

*Cāttan*

It would be humiliating to be reduced so low as to have to ask a beggar to give back that which he begged. He begged her to give him her beauty and her virtue, suing with kind and mellow words; and they gave it to him. Now, having robbed her, he has gone off to taste the harlot's beauty, and wreck her own beauty; as the storks eat fish and wreck flowers. She says, in her pride, that she will not go begging to him to be kind to her, thus returning her beauty; but she does hope that, overhearing, he will be good to her, protect her, and allow her beauty to emerge again.



**POEMS OF THE  
WASTELAND**



( about her, as she began to change  
when she could see her lover no  
longer for day meetings:)

Her playmates say to her,  
"Save your doll, made of pollen dust,  
from its helplessness, for it lies cold  
in the dew, suffering all day;"  
but, though she hears,  
she herself suffers that same  
helpless misery.  
Won't her lover ever say  
the words she longs to hear,  
to erase the pallor  
from her bright forehead?

(48)

*Pūṅkanuttiraiyār*

The theme of the wasteland region is separation (*pirivu*). Here, she is separated from her lover and wasting away in helplessness: so much so that she forgets to pick up her doll at night, and it becomes cold in the dew, and suffers all the next day. As the doll must await the girl's care, unable to end its own suffering, she must await his words - - - his proposal for marriage. Her pallor is *pacalai*.

( to her, so she would want to  
elope:)

In his mountain land  
a strong, black, male tiger,  
with open mouth,  
leaped on a huge, wet-cheeked elephant  
with a beautiful face,  
and was killed - - - leaving red stains  
on white tusks;  
now that tiger lies in a cave of split rock,  
like a branch of a black-stemmed *vēṅkai* tree  
with old flowers  
felled by the west wind:  
may you prosper, my friend;  
and resolve  
to go away with him.

(343)

*Iḻattuppūtaṇ Tēvaṇ*

The *vēṅkai* is yellow - flowered, resembling the striped tiger. It also represents marriage, which will ensue if they elope. The theme of elopement, one of the resolutions to the problems of pre-marital romance, is dealt with extensively in the poems of the wasteland: for it presents separation (*pirivu*) of the couple from their parents; in elopement, they travel through the wasteland region, together. Her friend says here that the girl need not fear elopement, for he is strong as an elephant, and will protect her from the harsh cruelties in the wasteland. Poems of the wasteland numbered 314—329 deal with the theme of elopement.

## 315. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to her, telling them to elope together :)

Our man has bestowed his love,  
 my friend:  
 so we will go across the wasteland,  
 where the west wind shakes  
 bright-white and dried-out seed pods  
 of the desert *vākai* tree,  
 which rattle like anklets with pebbles  
 inside.

(369)

*Kuṭavāyil Kīrattaṇār*

Her friend encourages elopement to the girl, citing the fact that the man has given them all his love; and that they need to respond by going with him. The *vākai* seed-pods are dried-out and rattle, like hollow anklets of metal, with pebbles inside.



## 316. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to her, favoring elopement:)

Let gossip rise in the village;  
 let the streets whisper;  
 and let that mother without justice,  
 who torments unrelentingly,  
 stay in her house alone!  
 This is my decision:  
 your thorn-like teeth that have eaten the *nelli*  
fruit  
 should drink the water that stays in pools  
 made by the steps of giant elephants,  
     pools that look like divisions in fields  
     where sugarcane is planted;  
 you should drink with him  
 in a far away land,  
 at the foot of towering mountains  
 that touch the sky.

(262)

*Pālai-pāṭiya Perunkaṭunkō*

Divisions in a sugar-cane field (*pātti*) are regular,  
 deep, and seemingly impressed into the ground, like  
 puddles formed by the imprint of elephants' feet. The  
 bitterness of the *nelli* fruit makes water drunk  
 after it, taste sweet; the troubles and harshness of  
 the wasteland will be sweet to them after the bitter  
 experiences of gossip and their mother's torment. For  
 the mother's injustice, see poem 64.

(to her friend, who had urged her to  
elope with him:)

How sad.

This bashfulness has suffered long  
with us;  
but now,

just as a small, sandy river bank,  
where bright - flowered sugarcane grows,  
is eaten away by sweet river water,  
and falls away,

it has taken all it can bear,  
being eaten away by love:  
it will not last long.

(149)

*Vellivītiyār*

She objectifies her own bashfulness, which had kept her from even considering the possibility of elopement, until recently: now, as a result of the erosion of her bashfulness by her deep and sweet love for him, her bashful reticence about elopement is disappearing. See poem 207 for another use of the river bank image.

(to him, after he had learned of  
his lover's agreement to go off  
and elope; when he worried about  
the heat of the wasteland and her  
tenderness; to allay his fears:)

Even when beaten by the west wind,  
the water-lily does not wither,  
    with its layer of petals  
    and water tied in its base-root.  
In the wasteland elephants  
do not even have the strength  
to break off dried branches,  
    which are like many salt-merchants' carts,  
    all in a row, with oxen that struggle  
    on yokes like slings;  
so they fold up their trunks  
and grieve.  
If she comes with you,  
even the wasteland will be sweet.

(388)

*Awaiyār*

There is no single region that corresponds to the wasteland in South India; either the mountain or the forest region can turn into wasteland in the heat of the summer. Here, the mountain region - turned - wasteland is described: for an elephant tries to provide for the sustenance of his mate, by breaking off limbs of trees to feed her with. The poetess portrays the strength of the woman, who may look tender like the lily, but is resilient as well. He will not be able to provide for her comfort adequately in the wasteland, as not even the elephant can do that. She will be able to bear it, however: with him, she can bear physical harshness; and she will make the way sweet for him. So he should not worry.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to her, after having arranged the elopement, when the girl balked and stalled; after the friend had already gone and fetched him:)

Because you agreed with me,  
that man from mountains came at my request,  
and he is here at the appointed spot:  
but now you say,  
"Let's let today go by."  
There is nothing left for me to do,  
except quake like a baby leaf  
thrown into a fire,  
and be miserable,  
with my arms and legs grown faint.

(383)

*Paṭu Marattu Mōcikirāṇ*

The girl balks, and wants to wait until tomorrow.  
Her friend is afraid to tell him.

## 320. WHAT THE FOSTER-MOTHER SAID

( to inform the girl's mother of her  
elopement:)

My friend,  
the loving intimacy of your daughter,  
with an array of bangles on her arm,  
is fact,  
like the good words  
of the *Kōcars* of four villages  
assembled beneath the ancient banyan tree,  
among the roaring of the conch  
and the beating of drums:  
for she is with her man,  
who wears a warrior's anklet  
and carries a white spear  
with a tip like a blood-red leaf.

(15)

*Auvaīyār*

The girl's friend has told her mother of their elopement, and here her mother tells the girl's mother. As in poem 80, the *Kōcars* are depicted as just and righteous people, whose word is fact. Now, the relationship of the lovers is fact: because they have declared their love publicly, by eloping; and marriage will follow soon. The scene of the *Kōcars'* meeting under the banyan tree represents the fact of their marriage, which will take place to the beat of drums and the roar of conch shells.

## 321. WHAT THE FOSTER-MOTHER SAID

( after she had induced the girl to  
elope with her lover:)

My little girl, wearing small  
carved bangles,  
is tender as a leaf-bud:  
she would not even eat milk  
mixed with puffed rice,  
in a bowl adorned with gold,  
complaining that it was too much.  
But now, protected by him who wears  
a warrior's anklet,  
she drinks hot, muddy water from dried-out  
and shrivelled springs,  
travelling hurriedly through regions  
with little shade and no water at all!  
How did she ever get the strength?

(356)

*Kayama*

All the luxuries of homelife were even torturous for her when she was separated from her lover, during the pre-marital romance. But now, with him, she has the strength to undergo such harsh conditions. How did she get the strength? From him and from her love for him.

## 322. WHAT HER FOSTER-MOTHER SAID

(after she had urged the elopement  
of the couple, and they had gone)

Once she was so absorbed  
in playing with her friends  
that she would not drink milk,  
or play with her ball.  
Now,  
does she think it is so easy  
to go with him across wretched places  
strewn with bamboo,  
where a male elephant with long tusks  
rips at a sapless *ōmai* branch  
and then,  
at the foot of parched slopes  
of hillsides in summer,  
listens closely for the great noise  
of thundering clouds?

(396)

*Kayaman*

The elephant hopes it will rain, for there is no nourishment at all in the sapless *ōmai* branch. Like the elephant, her man struggles to support her. She had such a soft life at home, and forgot the mundane details of survival, like eating; now, because she is not pre-occupied with the grief of separation and courtship, she has the strength to sustain herself with him. She had it so easy, but not now.

## 323. WHAT HER FOSTER-MOTHER SAID

(after the couple had eloped:)

The innocent, dark - skinned girl  
 and the young man,  
 with a long, bright-tipped spear,  
 have left us and now  
 they travel through the wasteland:  
 may there be cool rain today  
 on a narrow path near mountains  
 in a spot where sand is spread around  
 under a shady tree,  
 through which the sun cannot be seen.

(378)

*Kayamañār*

The foster-mother wishes them well: she hopes for  
 shade, water, and a soft, sandy place for them to sit  
 and rest themselves on their journey.



## 324. WHAT HER FOSTER-MOTHER SAID

( upon the elopement of the girl  
with her lover:)

Her friends

plucked blue lilies from back-waters  
and danced in white-topped waves;  
she had always been inseparable from them.  
But she became unable to play  
their games.

Now:

she is gone along a path  
where gravelstones beat upon  
her beautiful feet;  
to a land where shining mountains reach the  
sky  
and block moving clouds that crawl on their  
peaks.

(144)

*Maturai Āciriyaṇ Kōṭaṅkorraṇ*

She became listless and unable to play with her friends, during the period of their pre-marital courtship problems. Now her foster-mother understands the girl's distractedness in that period. The mountains block the clouds that bring rain - - - relief for them. Now the pattern of the girl's behaviour, and the source of her strength to undertake the strenuous journey, make sense.

## 325. WHAT HER FOSTER - MOTHER SAID

(upon the elopement of the couple:)

That girl has the fragrance  
 of *yěnkai* and *kāntaḥ* flowers  
 from loose - braceleted *Āy*'s  
 cloud - covered *Potiyil* hill;  
 and she herself is cool as a lily  
 After a time,  
 when I embraced her, again,  
 she complained she was sweating.  
 Now I understand  
 her revulsion.

(84)

*Mōcikīraṅ*

*Āy* was one of the seven munificent kings. The beauty of the flowers is enhanced by the virtue of the king, and vice versa.: The image of the mountain and the lily expresses coolness: her character had always been cool, calm, and even-tempered. But, at a certain point she changed; and when her foster-mother went to embrace her, she became irritated, and complained of sweating. She did not understand this change in her behaviour at the time. But now she understands: the girl had fallen in love, and was revulsed by the embraces of her foster-mother, because she craved the embraces of her lover. She used the sweating as an excuse, because she could not admit the real cause of her irritation. Now it is all clear, and out in the open: for they have eloped.

## 326. WHAT HER FOSTER-MOTHER SAID

( when looking for the eloped  
couple in the wilderness : )

My legs are weary and miss their steps;  
my eyes have searched and searched  
and lost their luster.  
There are so many other couples  
in this world :  
more than all the stars  
in the wide, dark sky.

(44)

*Vellivītiyār*

The foster-mother has gone out to search for the couple, perhaps to tell them to come back home and marry there. "Other couples" is extrapolation: the original says merely, "others".

## 327. WHAT SOMEONE WHO SAW THEM SAID

( to them, as they were crossing  
the wasteland, to warn them of  
the danger of robbers: )

The light of day is waning.  
O protector of this girl,  
who is like a small, female elephant :  
do you not hear the sound of drums,  
as ferocious as on an enemy king's  
battlefield  
as robbers wearing anklets  
and carrying long spears  
come to a boundary forest  
to sack a band of merchants ?  
Do not go on !

(390)

*Uṇaiyūr Mutukorran*

"Boundary forest" is a rendering of what in the Tamil is "protective forest", which refers to the practice of allowing forests to grow on the boundaries of kingdoms, so that they would become infested with robbers and deter any encroachment on the kingdom by outsiders. This practice was continued by South Indian kings down through the period of the Vijayanagar Empire, when it was recommended by Krishnadevaraya, in his aphorisms on rulership.

328.

## WHAT SOMEONE SAID

( when they saw the couple  
eloping through the wasteland : )

He wears armor on his ankles  
and carries a bow.  
She wears an arm - band  
and anklets above her tender feet.  
Who are these good people?  
They think to go off to the wasteland,  
    where bamboo lies all around  
    and parched white seeds of the *vākai*  
    rattle when beaten by the wind,  
    like the drums in the rope - dance  
    of the Aryans.  
They deserve our pity  
and care.

(7)

*Perum Patumaṇār*

For the woman, anklets and arm-bands are symbols of unmarried status. For him, the bow and anklets are signs of his valor, and of the dangerousness of the path they travel. The seed-pods rattle like the drums of rope-dancers, who are tightrope walkers who accompany their act with drums. Today this is performed by itinerant, low-caste people. The drums also might represent the marriage drums; or the rattle of gossip that may have forced their elopement.

( seeing them elope across the  
wasteland ;)

They used to have unfriendly  
little feuds; their loving nurse  
always had to break them up :  
he would grab her five - plaited braid,  
and she would pull his short hair  
and run away.  
O Fate : you are wonderful !  
Here you show us  
the nature of wedded joy :  
now they are like two soft flower garlands  
entwined into one.

(229)

*Mōtācaṇār*

They were feuding little children together, but fate  
has now brought them together as lovers. Note the  
similarity between this image of their fated unity  
and that in poem 3: two distinct elements become  
one in fated love.

## WHAT HE SAID

( after their union - by - fate; to  
allay her fears by assuring her  
that he could never leave her : )

O woman of such tender personality :  
if I should ever leave you and stay away,  
to make your good heart lonely,  
may the reward of my journey  
be  
that the days are many  
when beggars shun me  
and will not come to me.

(137)

*Pālaipāṭiya Perunkaṭuṅkō*

The point of going away on a journey is to fulfill one's household duties, one of which is giving to beggars. But beggars will not come to misers or men of low virtue. In effect, he says, that if he should go, he wishes a curse on himself: that his wealth be worth nothing, because beggars shun him. Poems 330-341 depict scenes preliminary to his departure, foreseeing their separation. Here: his vow never to leave.

## 331. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to her, who was worried he  
would go away: )

You are as cool  
as the wind that comes feeling its way  
through the wide forest, when buds with pollen  
gleam at nightfall.  
O woman of bright and fragrant forehead:  
you may grieve, but let me  
tell you what I have seen.  
The world is crazy  
as a fool who unknowingly  
climbs an old, rickety ladder  
on a hill, to get at  
large honeycombs;  
but know this well :  
as long as we live,  
he will not leave you.

(273)

*Cīṛaikkuṭiyāntaiyār*

Her friend assures her that, even though many men  
are foolish enough to go out all alone to seek wealth,  
as a fool climbs a rickety ladder for honeycombs,  
their lover would never be so foolish; for she is  
more valuable than any amount of wealth.



## 332. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to her, to end her anxiety that he  
will leave for an extended  
separation : )

Who could ever desert you,  
leaving you here to waste away  
in tears of grief?

My friend,  
with your forehead so bright  
and sweet with the fragrance  
that spreads from summer flowers  
from the right-twisting trees  
adorning the hillside :

if he goes,  
he goes with you.

(22)

*Cēramāṇṇtai*

Right-twisting trees are auspicious: right-twisting means that the trunks twist in a clockwise direction. This auspicious sign is used to assure her that the signs indicate he will stay with her. This poem contrasts her beauty with the horrible condition she is reduced to in his extended absence; (see poem 363, for example). She says that he could never bear to do such a thing to the woman he loves so much.

## 333. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to her, who thought he was about  
to leave for a journey : )

Do not cry, my friend.  
That man told us,  
"Work is life, for men;  
and for women with bright foreheads,  
who stay at home,  
their men are their lives."  
Such a man will dispense  
with thoughts of going away.

(135)

*Pālaiṇāṭiya Perunkaṭṭṇkō*

( to his heart, which was deciding  
to go in search of wealth, leaving  
her behind : )

Knowing that a man  
without money  
cannot give charity  
nor enjoy life,  
you think alot, my heart,  
about what must be done.  
Tell me,  
will this dark and lovely woman  
come with me?  
Or  
are you sending me away  
alone?

(63)

*Ukāykkutikizār*

It is his duty to give charity and provide a good living for his wife and family. See poem 330. He worries about the grief it will cause her. But, at the same time, he is pressed with the necessity of going off to earn wealth. Poems 334 - 341 depict his anxiety and the ambivalence he feels. This condition of ambivalence and contradiction between his duties - - - both going away and staying are part of his duty to care for the happiness of his wife and family - - - causes him to balk at going for some time. See poem 300, for reference to his false starts.

## WHAT HE SAID

( to his heart, which was tugging at  
him to go off in search of  
wealth : )

If I go along thinking  
of the adorned breasts of the innocent girl,  
with her loins bedecked with jewels and gold,  
even the horrible wasteland  
will be sweet:  
    where cruel men clutching bows and arrows  
    climb high branches in the *ukā* tree,  
    with its dried trunk like a pigeon's back,  
    and knock down fruit, like gold coins,  
    to watch for travellers ;  
    and there they quench their thirst  
    by chewing on bark.

(274)

*Uruttirāṇ*

The image of her that he wants to carry with him seems to be that of her bedecked with the fruits of his quest for wealth. Thinking of her so adorned with gold and jewels will make the trip more bearable. But then, there are robbers on the path who would take away all the wealth from him. The trip is full of risks. Note his emphasis on her breasts and loins on the eve of his departure, rather than on the smell of her hair, etc

## WHAT HE SAID

( to his heart, when he was  
thinking of going off for the sake  
of wealth : )

The daughter  
who was given  
to that man of the rocky forest,  
    with her slender waist and broad shoulders,  
    and large, young, and beautiful breasts,  
    budding with beauty marks :  
if I need a cure,  
she is my medicine ;  
if I need wealth,  
she is my treasure.

(71)

*Karuvūr Ōtañāṇi*

She is the cure for the love-sickness that will afflict him when he is separated from her; she is also all the wealth he needs: so why should he go away? What more could he ever want than her. "Beauty marks" renders the Tamil *cunāṅku*, which are white spots appearing on breasts or shoulders. In modern Tamil they are called *tēmal*: but they are not associated with beauty, and connote something more like heat rash. It might be that these marks denote erotic excitement, and sexual maturity, and hence are considered signs of beauty by the man, like the "passion marks" (*titalai*) in poem 363.

## WHAT HE SAID

( after thinking he should follow the  
path of his forefathers, and go off  
in search of wealth ; to his heart,  
as these thoughts are undermined  
by his thoughts on the value of  
youth, and the shortness of life :)

Anyone who knows the deadly  
and heartless work of Yama,  
who works methodically, day by day,  
will not go off  
for the sake of brave deeds,  
leaving her to pine away :

that girl who is small, with tiny,  
round bangles of fine workmanship,  
and pure water - - - as sweet as the juice  
of a piece cut from the bottom of  
sugarcane - - -

oozing from her white teeth.

He would not go off,  
even if all the useful riches  
of the whole wide earth  
were gathered together  
and ready for the taking.

(267)

*Kāleṛi Kaṭikaiyār*

Yama is the god of death, whose methodical work  
is the ending of life and youth, both of which may  
end - - - for both of them - - - when he is gone. See  
poem 296, for Yama's threat to the woman. See poem  
368 for the necessity of challenging the god of  
death and gaining wealth, for the virtuous man.

## WHAT HE SAID

( to his heart, which was tugging  
at him to go away for wealth;  
sadly: )

Longing for wealth as you do,  
my heart,  
your goading me would be fine:  
if only this girl could come with me  
to make love along the long, jungle path,  
where fragrant flowers on the stalks  
of young *vākai* trees growing in wasted  
deserts,  
where springs once bubbling are all dried  
up,  
appear like the crests  
of young, black peacocks.

(347)

*Kāvīrippūm Paṭṭinattuc Cēntaṅkannan*

Though the desert tract is dried and harsh, the  
flowers of the *vākai* make it beautiful. So his journey  
through the wasteland would be beautiful, if only  
she could go.

## WHAT HE SAID

( to his heart, which was urging  
him to go off in search of wealth:)

Her beautiful, dark body smells as sweet  
and feels as cool as a large basket  
made of palm leaves and filled  
with many fat and dripping wet buds  
from the *picci* plant,  
which blooms in the rainy season,  
spread out at dawn in a great rain.  
Her large shoulders, with sloping joints,  
are like a raft in the water  
for me :

I neither hold them nor let them go.  
But living separate from her  
is impossible.

(168)

*Ciraikkūṭiyāntaiyār*

Because he lies on the raft, and because he is never  
far from her, he neither holds her nor lets her go.  
He cannot live without her support, however, in the  
wasteland.



## WHAT HE SAID

(to his heart, which was urging  
him to go off in search of wealth:)

So this is the end of my youth :  
following narrow paths through mountains,  
not expecting them to be difficult,  
where the mate of the red - legged *vaṅkā* bird  
that went away  
cannot find her husband,  
and calls out with many, short cries,  
which sound like a flute,  
as the *eṣāl* bird falls on her  
for prey ;  
as my lover,  
impossible to forget,  
stays behind.

(151)

*Tūṅkalōri*

His youth will end as he goes through the dangerous path in the wasteland, where predatory animals and humans abound. His wife, who he will not be able to forget, will be preyed upon by pallor (*pucalai*) and tormenting loneliness, just as the *vaṅkā* bird, left behind by her mate, is preyed upon by the *eṣāl*. She will call out, and he will be able to bear her in his mind; but he will not be able to help her: he will be tormented throughout his journey by his thoughts of her helplessness.

## WHAT HE SAID

( when he saw her weeping, after  
he told her he was thinking of  
going off for wealth; addressing  
his heart, to dissuade it of the  
thought of going :)

I was telling her,  
"O you with beautiful ornaments:  
I will put the forest behind me,  
    where male deer with their mates  
    fill their bellies eating soft,  
    twisted branches of *aruku* vines as dark  
    as if studded with sapphires ;  
    and then they jump around ;  
I will finish my work and return.  
Can you bear it until then ?"  
But before I could finish,  
the eyes of my beloved  
overflowed  
and cried endlessly,  
blocking my chariot.

(256)

Poet's Name Unavailable

Though he says he will hurry back, and be in a  
place where natural scenes will keep her memory  
ever, before his eyes, she cries. And he balks at  
going. See poem 300.

## WHAT HE SAID

( to his charioteer, when he was  
ordered to go away on duties:)

Today we will go  
and come back tomorrow:  
driving swiftly our chariot  
white like a waterfall in the hills,  
as the wheels that shine like a crescent  
moon  
cut down young crops like lightning  
fallen from the sky ;  
with the speed of the wind  
we will reach her by evening,  
and rejoice,  
embracing the young girl  
with many beauties and  
bangles all in a row.

(189)

*Maturai Īzattuppūtan Tēvan*

He seems to be despatched by the king here.  
Compare poem 205. The wheels of his chariot,  
partially immersed in sand or water, shine and look  
like the crescent moon. The warrior in his chariot  
cuts down the young crops of the agriculturalists as  
he goes. Poems 342 - 350 depict his departure itself,  
and their feelings about it.

## 343. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to him, when he said he was  
going off on a journey: )

O great one:  
will it be so sweet crossing  
the bitter and difficult wasteland,  
where a good bull, with horns curved  
like a garland, sees an innocent-eyed wild  
cow  
grazing on long tassels of red - stemmed  
grass,  
and,  
panting in jealousy,  
remains in the striped shade  
of the *ukāy* tree with dried-cut base,  
separated  
from your sweet lover ?

(363)

*Cellūk Korran*

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to him, when he had expressed  
his desire to go away, and had  
said she could not come, because  
of the dangers of the wasteland  
journey: )

O my big man:  
if you say the vast wasteland  
with *ōmai* trees  
is so horrible,  
    where there are large and desolate villages  
    with troupes of salt merchants passing by;  
is the house so sweet  
a place to be  
for someone left alone?

(124)

*Pālaipāṭiya Perunkaṭuṅkō*

He had said that the lack of shade, the burnt-out villages, and the lack of any companions make the wasteland a horrible place to go through. He doubted that she could bear it. But her friend says that it is not so much physical hardship that is difficult to bear: rather it is the hardship of being all alone, wherever one is. In poems of wasteland depicting elopement, it became clear that the physical harshness of the wasteland was no problem for her. See poem 318, for example. But still, elopement is the only circumstance under which she goes with him.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who told her he  
was leaving, upon seeing signs  
foretelling his departure: )

Many of our loved ones  
have heard he is going away,  
saying to himself, "If I should tell her  
before leaving, it would be impossible  
to go!"  
He is going to tread his feet  
on the narrow and ancient path  
near rocky hills,  
where the clear and lonely call  
of a hawk, estranged from his flock  
and perched on a branch  
of an *ōmai* tree in the wasteland,  
is the constant companion of travellers.

(207)

*Uraiyan*

The signs foretelling his departure are the gathering  
of weapons, provisions, etc. The loneliness of the  
journey is always with travellers; and the hawk is  
there to remind them of the horrors of estrangement  
from ones' loved ones, if he should happen to forget.

(331)

*Vāṭāppiramantaṇ*

The *Maravars* were a war-like tribe of the southern districts of the Tamil country, famed for their abilities at looting and plunder well into the 19th century. See also poems 126 and 368. It is hard for her to believe that he would go off into such a harsh tract and leave them to fade away in paleness (*pacalai*). Her friend seeks to reassure his lover that he would never do such a thing. This poem could also be spoken by his lover herself.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to her, who changed in countenance  
on learning of his departure: )

O woman of beautiful jewels:  
even if our lover goes away alone,  
will he not see how your lovely  
blossoming and jewelled breasts  
are soaked with tears  
that pour down and make your eyelids  
swollen,  
like small jasmine flowers on a vine  
ripped up and up - rooted  
by the tusks of an elephant  
foraging through forest fields ?

(348)

*Māvaḷattan*

She will be destroyed in the same way as the  
jasmine buds are destroyed by the elephants looking  
for food. The beauty of her breasts will fade with  
pallor (*pacalai*), exactly as the blossoms of the jasmine  
will wither and die when the vine is up-rooted.  
Will he not realize this and cease from going; or,  
at the very least, return before the jasmine vine  
dies, to re-root it and save us from grief?



(to encourage her on his departure,  
when she showed despair in her  
look, though agreeing in word to his  
going:)

Listen to me, my friend!  
That man who left here  
tied to ephemeral wealth,  
to cross the mountainous jungle,  
where, along the way, black flocks  
of long-legged and beautiful-winged  
*kañantul* birds  
inform travellers, who change  
their course accordingly:  
even though we told him,  
"Don't go, for we will suffer in cold winter!"  
would he have gone away?

(350)

*Ālattūr Kizār*

Since we agreed verbally, he left. If we had told him not to go, he would have stayed, she says. So do not think he does not love us, just because he went. She further encourages her by saying that the birds on the path aid travellers by warning them of robbers, so they can change their course accordingly: so she does not need to fear for his life either.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, who had informed her  
he was gone:)

If he went away from me for the sake of  
wealth,  
knowing full well how difficult  
that land is to cross,  
where male and female doves,  
with dense, soft feathers,  
are frightened off  
as the fruit of the forked  
and thorny milk hedge  
pops  
in the lonely desert  
foresaken by rain,  
then surely wealth is all  
that people care for.  
No one cares at all for kindness.

(174)

*Venpūti*

If he who was so kind to me before could do  
something as cruel as go off into the dangerous  
wasteland, where I have to worry about him all the  
time, as well as bear my own loneliness, then no one  
in the world cares for kindness. For popping cactus  
fruit, see also poem 370. The *kalli* bush is called a  
milk hedge or milk bush: it is a spurge (*Euphorbia*  
*tirukalli*) that resembles a cactus and has a milky  
juice.

## WHAT HE SAID

(to himself, after he had left in search  
of wealth, without her :)

If my woman of bangled arms  
had come with me,  
she too would have to drink  
this putrid little water  
with the remnants of a hunting dog's  
scratched out meal floating in it,  
and covered with jasmine flowers.  
I feel so sorry  
for the woman who is close  
to my heart.

(56)

*Ciraikkūṭiyāntaiyār*

He feels sorry for her because she loses either way: if she goes, she has to drink the putrid water with him; if she stays she has to suffer the loneliness. He only suffers the physical hardships with any intensity it seems. His anguish, when described, seems to be sexual longing. Her anguish in separation is the subject of the vast majority of wasteland poems. Poems 351 - 372 depict the women's worry and despair during his absence.

351.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, who was sad that the  
bloom had gone from her body,  
since his departure :)

When he is by my side  
I will declare my joy  
like a village celebrating  
a festival.  
The day he left,  
my friend,  
I became empty and sad:  
like the loneliness of a house  
in a small desert town  
of lovely homes,  
when its people have all deserted,  
and only squirrels  
play in the yard.

(41)

*Anilālumunrilār*

The poet's name is a pseudonym derived from the last image in the poem: it means, "he of squirrels playing in the courtyard of a house". In poem 191, the calf's stall is empty without its mother; in poem 231, his heart is empty without her love, just like the lute-players' hair is empty without flowers, and their lives are empty without their patron. The same word for "empty" is used here as in those poems: she is empty without her lover, just as the courtyard of a house is empty without children playing in it. The woman's condition is again described through a description of a town. She contrasts the happiness of a village celebrating a festival (full of people and loved-ones united), with that desolate emptiness of a village without any people at all in it, to contrast her condition when he is gone with that condition which will only return when he comes home. As the fullness of a house or a town is the people in it, her fullness and life is her lover and her family.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, who said she was  
unable to bear his separation for  
wealth:)

My lover has gone to the wasteland,  
where an old male chameleon,  
with a back like a saw,  
gives omens to people along the way.  
How will this pathetic town  
ever know the grief  
I bear,  
with all my strength destroyed?

(140)

*Allūr Nanmullai*

He has the chameleon, at least, to aid him in his journey; she has nothing. For her strength came from her relation to him, and now he is gone. The people in the town, including her friend, have no way of understanding this, she says: their experience of his leaving is too different, for they did not feel their very insides, their deepest strength, leave them when he went away.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, unable to bear his  
separation:)

Our man is crossing  
the wasteland with its parched  
earth and *kaḷḷi* bushes  
where the shining *neem* fruit  
in a parrot's curved beak  
appears like a golden jewel  
held in the tips of strong fingernails,  
as it is strung on a new  
necklace thread.

Will he not think of us,  
my friend?

(67)

*Allūr Naṇmullai*

Will he not see how the fruit in the beak of a  
parrot looks like a jewel that I might be threading  
on a new necklace thread? Will he not think of me  
when he sees this, and grow unable to bear our  
separation - - - as I have - - - and return to me?

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, who thought she would  
be unable to bear his separation :)

They say the path he travels  
has many forks, and that  
watersprings there are smaller  
than antholes,  
and hunters with bent bows  
climb rocks as hot as a blacksmith's oven  
and sharpen their arrows.  
This gossiping town does not understand  
my worry,  
but it rings with evil words.

(12)

*Ōtalāntaiyār*

The people in the town do not understand how much she is worried for his safety on the wasteland path he travels. There are many forks: so he might easily get lost. There is not enough water. Hunters climb hot rocks and sharpen arrows: the heat and robbers threaten the lives of travellers. But the town rings with gossip, instead of sympathy. Just what the gossip is about is unclear: if this is pre-marital separation, the gossip concerns her changes since his departure, and perhaps deprecations of his character. She is alone in her grief.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(when he was gone :)

I wrongly thought  
he would not leave ;  
and he wrongly thought  
I would never agree.  
We both made light of it.  
But, because of this obstinate combat,  
my sad heart is dazed,  
as though seized  
and bitten by a cobra.



## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, when he was gone:)

Shall I beat against them  
 or attack them  
 or go screaming at them,  
 "OH!" and "AH!" ?  
 I just don't know what to do,  
 and cannot decide;  
 while the swirling warm south wind  
 torments me,  
 this village sleeps,  
 ignorant of my love sickness.

(28)

*Auvaiyār,*

This poem certainly depicts pre-marital separation: when she cannot share her grief with anyone, and hence can get no relief from her tormenting loneliness. Her frustration and exasperation has turned to anger for her fellow villagers, who seem so ignorant and dense, because they just do not perceive her despair. In her loneliness she is placed in a position such that she feels the whole town is against her, and she wants to fight back. See the battle-imagery depicting her relations with the gossips, poem 185; and the harlot, poem 219; for examples of parallel uses of imagery portraying her as at war with her surroundings, see also poems 64, 80, 206, 237 281.

357.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(growing thin, when he was gone;  
to her friend :)

When I cannot see him,  
I know the truth  
about dismal evening,  
my friend,  
    when bats with sharp claws  
    and soft, bent wings, like the backs  
    of lily leaves,  
    head toward slopes full  
    of wide-leaved jackfruit trees,  
    leaving the ancient tree where they live  
    all day  
    alone to grieve.

(352)

*Kaṭiyalūr Uruttirāṇ Kaṇṇanār*

She compares herself to a home, again. She is like the day-time home of the bats in the ancient tree, which they leave at night in search of food from the jackfruit tree. As they leave the tree, he left her: alone to grieve. Now, when he is gone, she knows the truth about evening: when one's lover is gone, it is dismal and lonely. The scene of the bats leaving the tree takes place at evening; and she never realized how sad a scene it was, until now, when she knows its true meaning. See poem 285 for another use of the same image, in abbreviated form.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, when he was gone  
in search of wealth for marriage : )

Listen, my friend :  
one night I had a dream  
and it confused me so....  
my man,  
that skillful liar,  
held my body close....  
it was so  
real I woke up stroking  
the bed.  
I was so alone and pitiful,  
like a *kuvaḷai* flower that fades  
when bees have touched it.

(30)

*Kaccippēṭṭu Nannākaiyār*

His lies are the unfulfilled promises. Her anxiety for his safety mingles, in this case, with her anxiety about his intentions concerning marriage. As the *kuvaḷai* flower fades when the bees come to take nectar from it, so she fades after he has enjoyed her physically, and taken the bloom from her body. That which is gone is her beauty, and her virtue (which is literally gone when he is gone, or when there is any chance that their marriage will not happen) (see poems 25, 46, 234, and 256, for example). For bee imagery see poems 53 and 97, and notes.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to express the worry of the girl,  
so she would hear; when he was  
gone and winter had come; he  
having said he would return by  
the early dewy season : )

The rain never stops;  
it pours from clouds that spread  
to hide the sky,  
and boom like so many good drums  
beaten by kings victorious in war.  
Our lover is in a far-away land;  
and he has forgotten us.  
What shall we do, my friend,  
in the tormenting winter days  
we face,  
when colorful and downy flowers  
of the mimosa tree drop off?



( to her friend, upon thinking of  
him ; when he was gone : )

My man was so determined  
that he left without saying a word,  
thinking I would never agree  
to his going.  
Is he now in that small desert town  
of lovely homes,  
where a dove sits  
on a dried twig of an *ōmai* tree,  
with its dried-out base  
and bark that elephants love  
and peel to eat, and long branches  
swaying in the wind,  
and,  
clinging there, calls, "Oy",  
in a pathetic, lonely voice  
to his mate ?

(79)

*Kuṭavāyīrkīraṇakkaṇ*

Even though he left without saying a word to me,  
won't he hear the lonely voice of the dove calling  
its mate, and think of how my heart cries out for  
him? Hearing this, will he not return? For birds in  
the wasteland reminding him of her, see poems 340  
and 345.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who was afraid she  
would die of grief, during his  
separation : )

I cannot bear it,  
like a deaf-mute at night  
who sees the misery  
of a tawny cow  
fallen into a well :  
my anguish for my friend's suffering,  
is worse than my own suffering  
as I think of the wickedness of that man,  
who went down the long and forked roads  
with *yā* trees and full of danger.

(224)

*Kūvaṇ Mainṭan*

She is as helpless to help her friend as the deaf-mute is to help the tawny cow, because he cannot call for help. She herself is helpless because of her own grief, thinking about how evil he was to go off the way he did, and worrying about his safety in the wasteland. They are both helpless to help one another: and there is no one else with them to make them feel better. For the deaf-mute as an image of helplessness, see poem 7.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who thought she  
would be unable to bear his  
separation : )

The sweet milk of a good cow,  
if not drunk by a calf,  
nor caught in a pail,  
falls wasted on the ground.  
Like this,  
the beauty of my dark body,  
with its passion marks on my loins,  
is no use to me,  
nor to my lover,  
but,  
must be eaten away  
by pallor.

(27)

Kollan Azici

Pallor is *pacalai*. "With its passion marks on my loins" renders *titalai alkul*, which is the erogenous zone, including lap, crotch and inner thighs, covered with white spots associated with passion on it. See notes to poem 336. Her passionate, procreative powers - - - her youth - - - is being eaten away by anaemic pallor in his absence. She is like the good cow; her passion is like the milk; he is like the calf; and the pail is like the way she could save up her passion if she were not beset by worries during his absence. Perhaps, if she had a child, she could preserve her youth and vigor by caring for it, in his absence. But, the way it is, the pallor is like the earth, which eats up the wasted milk. "Must be eaten" denotes the inevitability of this happening in his absence: the Tamil phrase *unī iyar vēṇṭum* also connotes that the pallor eats the passion with some craving, that it "wants to eat" her passion up. For *titalai*; see also poem 43.



## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, who worried she  
would be unable to bear his  
separation : )

We will make no offerings  
to the goddess of victory  
in the hills with clefts and caves;  
nor will we tie string on our hand;  
nor watch for omens;  
nor wait for oracles;  
nor will we even think,  
my friend,  
for the sake of any man strong enough  
to stay away and forget us:  
we,  
who cannot bear to live without him  
even for the blink of an eye,  
for he is the very life  
of our life !

(218)

*Korran*

Tying sacred string around the wrist keeps evils away and brings good things. Offerings are made to the gods to procure desired ends. Omens are watched for to signal his return (see poem 202). Since a chaste woman is said to worship none but her husband, this all may mean that she has complete faith in his ability to finish the work he has done and come home, without the intercession of gods or the help of rituals. More likely though, she is angry at him for leaving; and for being so strong and hard that he could stay away without them. If he loved them, he would not be able to live without them, and would return right away. Women worship Murugan and Kāḷi to keep their men at home, once they have gone and returned. See *Paripāṭal* 14 : 23-4.

## WHAT HE SAID

( when separated from his lover,  
after a dream : )

O dream :

today you woke me from sweet sleep,  
appear to me as though  
you had brought me the innocent girl,  
with fine jewels and a body  
of beautiful brown, with hair  
on her skin like the bent flowers  
of the *pātiri* tree in spring.

Those separated from their lovers  
will not scold you for this.

(147)

*Kōpperuñcōzan*

Those separated from their lovers do not scold  
dreams for waking them with visions of their lovers;  
even though it is usually unpleasant to be awakened  
from sleep. The poet himself is a king; perhaps he  
had a dream of his wife when he was on a  
campaign of war.

( to her friend, when he was gone : )

That man who forgot love  
 and giving,  
 abandoned his mate,  
 and left for the sake of wealth :  
 if he is so clever,  
 let him be.  
 And let us women just  
 be innocent.

(20)

*Kōpperuñcōzan*

"Innocent" renders *maṭavam*, which is simpleness, uncomplicatedness, and one of the five virtues of women. It is the simplicity of conviction based upon subjective feeling, not upon complex calculations of profit or meaning. Her emotional logic, with which she is quite contented, would figure in this way concerning a trip for wealth: "if it will hurt her and me to go, I will stay; regardless of the material wealth that is missed". He did not think in this way; he forgot kindness in his leaving her: his cleverness she does not need. She wishes he did not think the way he does either.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, when he had gone  
away before marriage, and she  
was sad : )

Our man, who was strong enough  
to leave us and go away :  
even though he said  
nothing to us,  
did he even forget to send a bird  
as messenger to the *vēnkai* tree in the garden,  
which was our sweet aid  
during nights of unhappiness ?

(266)

*Nakkirar*

The meet under the *vēnkai* tree perhaps, which hid  
them from the look of others, during the troubles of  
their courtship. Birds come and sit in trees, as  
though bringing news. He should have at least sent  
a bird to console the *vēnkai* tree, if he did not  
bother to tell me he was going.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who worried at the changes in her since his departure for wealth; to explain the cause of her grief : )

He showed me clearly his strength  
by saying,

"Those who only use up what there is  
are said to have nothing at all ;  
a life lived without adding  
to one's own wealth  
is more degrading than beggary ! "

Only then did he go,  
my friend,

down the long, ancient, and waterless path,  
where hawks watch the putrid flesh  
of wayfarers killed by *Maṇavars*,  
who live there and murder with spears,  
like the eternal god of death.

(283)

*Pālaipāṭiya Perunkaṭunkō*

For the *Maṇavars*, see poems 126 and 346. The duty of the man becomes explicit here: he must go off through the wasteland, daring the god of death, to bring back wealth and add to the stores of treasure and achievement of his forefathers. It is worse than beggary just to live off the earnings of one's fathers, for him. His strength is his virtue, and, to some extent, his virtue depends on his surviving this ritual of initiation - - - traversing the wasteland for wealth, and returning home.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who had informed her  
of her lover's departure and told her  
to be strong, saying, "Women in  
this world wait patiently for their  
men to finish their appointed  
tasks : ")

My friend,

it will be lonely evening then,

when women with eyes like *keṇtai* fish  
and heavy ear-rings, pour ghee  
and hold in their hands the lamps  
that rouse up their sadness ;

in winter,

when cool drops of water  
strewn about  
make their unhappiness  
even worse:

I don't know who will wipe away my tears,  
with a joy from deep within their body,  
when they have made a feast,  
having heard, "That lover, so hard  
to obtain, has come!"

(398)

*Pālaipāṭiya Perunkaṭuṅkō*

Having heard of his departure, she looks forward to his return, and tells her friend that she hopes she will bring her the news of his coming, as she did of his going. It will be winter then, when he comes, when women pour ghee into lamps and sit inside during the cold rains, waiting sadly for their lovers' return. She wants that day to come, and for her friend to support her until then, and bring her the news of his arrival gladly.

370.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( thinking of him, when he was  
gone, to her friend r )

My friend:

how did my brave man learn  
to be strong enough to live  
apart from me,  
in the wasteland tract so difficult  
to cross,

where heatwaves glimmer  
like the peeled-off skin of snakes  
floating up,  
and a female dove, with spotted  
hair on her neck, and short steps,  
cries out in loneliness,  
sitting perplexed on a forked branch  
of a milk hedge with dried-out base  
and splitting fruit.

(154)

*Maturaic Cittalaic Cāttan*

She can understand how he is brave enough to bear the hardships of the desert tract, more than she can understand how he could ever be strong enough to stay away without her. How he learned is clear, however: sex-role differentiation is clearly portrayed in this and other poems. He is emotionally and socially able to go away from her; she is emotionally and socially tied to the home and the people and responsibilities there. Thus, she is compared in many poems to a town, village, or home. She says that he should see the dove and think of her condition, and return home to her, if his strength does not preclude his caring for her. The cactus fruit splits at a certain point in its ripening: see poem 349. For milk hedge (*kaḷḷi* bush), see notes to poem 349.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, unable to bear his  
separation : )

Listen, my friend:  
if you think my wide shoulders  
are mistaken in growing thin  
for the man who is crossing  
the treacherous wasteland,  
where a pile of dried leaves  
is laid over dead travellers  
in the hot desert, and becomes  
shade for a tall elephant;  
it is no mistake.

(77)

*Maturai Marutaṇ Iḷaṇākaṇār*

*Maṇavars* cover the bodies of their victims with dried leaves; see poem 126. She justifies her shoulders' growing thin with worry by saying that the desert tract is dangerous enough to make worry well justified. Here, the elephant embodies indifference to the fate of the slain men. Animals are used to reflect and embody aspects of relations among people in the poetry: see for example the roles of the monkey and heron in poems 136 and 49 - - - they serve as dumb witness to acts among people. The monkey embodies straight-forward honesty; the heron represents a scheming predator. There are many examples of this sort of usage in the anthology. Here the elephant may embody the indifference of her neighbors (and even her friend) to her grief; and their ignorance of its causes and justification.



## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her heart, to be heard by her  
friend when he was gone : )

These bangles,  
carved from the shining conch,  
slip from my wrists.  
Everyday, sleepless, I live in loneliness  
with my weeping eyes.  
O my heart:  
we will escape from living here  
like this;  
rise up and lead the way  
to where he is !  
He is beyond the good land  
where *Vaṭukars* where garlands of basil flower,  
beyond the frontiers of many-speared *Kaṭṭi* :  
and even though they speak in foreign tongues,  
I will follow him.

(11)

*Māmūlanār*

*Kaṭṭi* was a *Cēra* king who ruled the northern portion of the kingdom. The *Vaṭukars* are Telugu tribes living north of the *Vēṅkaṭa* Hill, which was the northern boundary of the classical Tamil country. She implies here that her friend should lead the way. Though she decides to go after him, there is no conventional situation in which she actually does this; though there is a poem in the anthology describing such a quest - - - poem 140.

373.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( upon noticing her inability to bear  
his separation, when he was gone  
in search of wealth : )

Our man

is crossing the wasteland,  
where the red - legged lizard  
invites his mate  
from the cactus stem  
with a sound like that of robbers  
flicking their arrows  
with the tips of their fingers  
to test the sharpness.

Will he not think of us,  
my friend ?

(16)

*Pālaipāṭiya Perunkaṭunkō*

He will be able to bear all the dangers of the desert tract; but, if he should be reminded of us, by the lizard (gecko) calling its mate, he will return in haste, she implies. Poems 373-382 depict her friend's encouraging words to her, when he is gone.

( when he was gone : )

Does he not think of us,  
 my friend ?  
 If he does, perhaps  
 he has no chance to come :  
 our man who is crossing mountains  
 with huge and dark groves,  
     where a black buck eats a *maral* shrub  
     and sleeps in the speckled shade  
     of a *yā* tree broken and eaten  
     by an elephant with legs like mortars.

(232)

*Upittai*

If he saw the deer eating and sleeping, he would have thought of home and returned. Since he did not return, and could not have missed seeing sights like that of the deer, he must have had no opportunity to return and come back to us, because of the demands of his labor. But she is still broken, like the *yā* tree, by his leaving and staying away. He breaks her in the process of supporting her, with the wealth from his journey. See poems 377 and 387 for comparison.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to encourage the girl, who had  
grown despondent during his  
absence : )

That hard - hearted man  
who left here so the folds on your lap  
would fade away :  
he is crossing the desert,  
where a single, withered bamboo stalk  
stands as tall as the space between the joints  
of a dead, fallen sugarcane  
crushed by an elephant leading  
a herd of black elephants with wide feet  
and nails like the teeth of demons.

(180)

*Kaccippēṭṭu Naṇṇākaiyār*

"Lap" renders *alkul* (see poem 363 and notes), which here seem to refer to the lower belly, on which the folds of flesh disappear as one grows thin. During his absence, her voluptuousness fades away, as she grows thin in despondence. The desert is so harsh that the bamboo is only as tall as the space between the joints of a sugarcane stalk. The sugarcane has been broken by the elephant just as she has been broken by her man, who left out of the same sort of responsibility that the elephant has in leading the herd. The encouragement of the message is this: the wasteland is so desolate that it is very difficult to gather wealth on a journey through it; so he could not have yet gathered it and come back. He is not staying away out of lack of love for us, but out of responsibility to us and our family.

## 376. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to her, when he was gone for  
work : )

If he sees the chilly fields  
welcoming the rainy season,  
    where baby deer do their duty  
    by eating - - - seizing a single, pitch - black  
    leaf of noisy, sprouting millet  
    flourishing on red palteaus  
    in the morning ;  
will our lover think  
that our bangles will never  
fall off,  
    like new flowers on the hollow stem  
    of a white *kūtaḷi* bush  
    blossoming on hills with glimmering  
    water ?

(282)

*Nākam Pōttan*

The baby's duty is to eat His duty is to provide for the feeding and caring for our children. He is off doing his work for that purpose. He will not think that we are of infinite strength, that our bangles will never fall off our emaciated arms, no matter how long he stays! He will return before too long: for he will balance his duty to provide for us with the duty to care for our physical and mental health. If he stays away too long, he will not be doing his duty, because he will be doing us more harm by his being away than he is doing good by bringing home wealth. When he sees the deer eating, he will think of these things and return.

## 377. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to console her : )

Those filled with love  
 bestow their love,  
 my friend.  
 The path he follows  
 is full of love :  
     the male elephant peels off  
     tender branches of the *yām* tree  
     with his long trunk  
     to appease the hunger of his mate,

(37)

*Pālaipāṭiya Perunkaṭunkō*

His love for her is illustrated by his devotion in the quest away from her. And on that quest, he will see the elephant providing for his mate, and realize both that he must finish his duties and that he must return home as fast as he can, to care for his wife.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to her, during his separation :)

That man who crosses  
 the high mountains,  
     where travellers stay in caves  
     that smell of flesh  
     stored as food by a tiger  
     on the hillside, where  
     bamboo rustles :  
 he must not have heard  
 of your daily suffering,  
     as you lie on your couch,  
     tied with a loosely - strung garland,  
     with your great beauty  
     gone ;  
 for if he had, even though  
 he might lose great wealth,  
 he would have hurried back  
 instantly.

(253)

*Pūṅkannan*

The horror of the wasteland would not make him turn back. But, if he had heard of the degree to which his lover suffered, he would have turned back right away: for there is no love in providing for one's loved ones by making them suffer. But, if they send a messenger to tell him to return, because they are suffering too much without him, he will have to return and lose much wealth: and, in that event, they will suffer too. They are in a predicament. See poem 394.

## 379. WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to her, during his separation  
forcefully : )

Your misery will fade away,  
my friend,  
little by little :  
even the blazing sun disappears  
among high mountains.  
Rejoice, for he will come  
today :  
our man who crossed the wasteland,  
by the long mountain slopes,  
where male elephants with gleaming trunks  
stir up parched and waterless ponds,  
and stroke their women near small boulders,  
protecting them from huge  
and fierce tigers  
with curving stripes.

(215) *Maturai Aḷakkar Nāzār Maṇṇār Maḷḷaṇār*

She encourages the girl by predicting his arrival soon.  
For his arrival is the only real consolation for her.  
The picture of the elephant protecting his mate is  
their image of him protecting her.



## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to her, when he was gone before  
marriage : )

O girl of fine ornaments,  
do not despair;  
the man from the land of useful mountains  
is also afraid of disgrace  
and full of frailty.  
In a world where impermanence  
is all that is sure,  
it is not right for the pallor  
settled on your beautiful body  
to remain with you,  
like the wealth of a righteous  
and kind man,  
who desires fame in this world.

(143)

*Maturaik Kaṇakkāyaṇ Maṇaṇ Nakkiraṇ*

He is afraid of disgrace, so he will hurry back and marry before the gossip gets too much to bear. Pallor is *paalai*. It is said that there is no permanence except through fame (*Tirukkuraḷ* 233). The pallor should not stay with her any more than the money of a righteous and kind man seeking fame: this may be intended to tell a patron-king to be generous with his money. For the best way to gain fame is through having one's name spread through the medium of poets: and such fame is only gained through the liberal dispersal of funds for the patronage of poets.

381.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to her, when he was gone : )

He will not forget your fragrant forehead  
 that smells of wild jasmine  
 and waterlilies that grow by deep  
 and wide - mouthed springs in the hills,  
 where the king of *Aralai* mountain  
 receives those who ask for gifts,  
 as they play on their drums.

And though he may try  
 his best, and walk down  
 many winding desert paths,  
 he will be unable to fill himself  
 with wealth,  
 and he won't last long  
 without you.

(59)

*Môcikirāṇār*

Perhaps he has gone off to request fine gifts from a king. She encourages her by saying he will not be able to fill himself with wealth alone: for his lover is the treasure he really needs. See poem 336. She says it will not take him long to realize this and return to them.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to her, when he was gone, to  
end her suffering : )

Our lover has not dug a pit  
and crawled into the earth ;  
nor ascended into the sky ;  
nor gone with the wind  
across the long, black sea.  
If we search from land to land,  
from town to town, and house  
to house,  
he cannot escape being found.

(130)

*Vellivītiyār*

He has not performed any of the miracles associated with the Jain and Buddhist *Sittas*: he has not just disappeared. If we look we can find him. This is meant to console the girl, not as a real declaration of intention of going in search for him. See poem 372.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who exhorted her to  
bear it during his absence: saying,  
"I can bear it, my eyes just  
cannot sleep for their crying." )

That man is crossing  
the desert of shining hills,  
    where white flowers on the forest olive tree,  
    blooming in summer,  
    fall from long branches battered by wind,  
    to cover the narrow path  
    where elephants roam :  
at midnight,  
thinking of him makes sleep  
so difficult.  
Tears come so easily to my cool eyes,  
like flowers blooming brightly  
in clear waters.

(329)

*Ōtalāntaiyār*

Poems 383 - 388 depict her responses to her friend's  
encouragement.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who said she should  
not worry for his safety : )

They say the wasteland path he travels  
is full of hills, and  
difficult to cross,  
    where the bitter, scorching wind  
    beats the branches and rattles  
    the dried - out pods of the *vākai* tree.  
He was unhappy  
between my breasts.

(39)

*Awaiyār*

See poem 334 for the nature of his discontent  
between her breasts. He was unhappy when lying  
between my breasts, she says; so he went to the  
wasteland, all alone. She is as worried because he  
was unhappy then as she is for his safety now. The  
*uṣiñcīl* (here rendered *vākai*, with which it is equated)  
is a golden-flowered tree, the withering of whose  
leaves and flowers is considered a bad omen,  
foreshadowing trouble.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who worried she  
would be unable to bear the  
coming of the season of his  
return : )

He journeys across the wasteland,  
where lovely, green - leaved *valli* vines  
never fade,  
to bring back great  
undying wealth.  
I suffer terrible grief  
on a bed made for sleeping ;  
I am so worried that my  
bunched - up bangles fall off.  
But  
the dark clouds do not  
know that I am like this,  
so pitiful :  
so they thunder to make it rain,  
and flash lightning to mark my life.

(216)

*Kaccippēttuk Kāñcik Korraṇ*

The coming of the season of his promised return marks her beauty for destruction: see poems 269, 288 and 290. This destruction of her beauty is the end of her very life, in poem 266. At the coming of the season there is no more hope; for, on top of all the grief that attends his absence, there is the added concern as to whether he died, forgot about her altogether, or is putting off returning indefinitely.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who told her not to  
be depressed, when he was gone : )

O my friend,  
who stays with me in sadness,  
suffering : you say,  
"Don't be sad ! As kind as he is,  
he will come back !"  
But can I stop my weeping ?  
Even in this season  
    when a black cuckoo with gleaming feathers  
    looks like a touchstone rubbed  
    with gold dust,  
    as it pecks at fragrant pollen  
    on a mango branch,  
I stroke my long  
and empty hair.

(192)

*Kacciappēṭṭu Nannākaiyār*

The cuckoo is black, like a touchstone; and the mango pollen is yellow, like gold. When the pollen gets on its wings, it looks like a touchstone rubbed in gold. She strokes her hair at night, when she is lying in bed. It is empty because he is not lying on it next to her. Also it is empty because she does not adorn it with flowers in his absence. See the notes to poem 351, for a discussion of "emptiness" and poem 231.

## WHAT SHE SAID.

( to her friend, who told her  
forcefully to be strong, during his  
absence : )

Look :

the crescent moon suddenly  
appears in the reddening sky,  
like a broken bangle,  
for many to worship,  
while we suffer.

Our man left to make us weep  
and cross the long wasteland,  
where a male elephant cannot bear  
the sadness of his mate with her  
melancholy gait, and so  
he pierces the high *yām* tree  
to break it,  
and brings its white bark to her;  
but, tasting it in his trunk,  
he looks up with a sad heart,  
and cries :

he has foresaken us,  
my friend.

(307)

*Kaṭampanūr Caṇṭiliyan*

Virgins worship the crescent moon, to bring them  
lovers. As she did not worship, people knew she had  
a lover, which started gossip. So the crescent moon  
makes her suffer. The elephant realizes that the bark  
has no moisture in it, with which to quench the  
thirst of his mate; so he cries. Her lover's quest  
for wealth will bring back fruits that are equally  
dry and lifeless to her: for there is nothing that  
will give her pleasure like his mere presence, which  
has been denied her so long.



## WHAT SHE SAID

( in response to her friend's  
forceful words exhorting her to be  
strong; when her friend had noticed  
changes in her since her lover's  
departure : )

O girl with red jewels :  
did our lover not put on his curly head  
a wreath to make it shine - - -  
    made from young, white leaves  
    from atop the palmyra tree, with its  
    tender trunk, flourishing in the white sand,  
    entwined among white flowers  
    of the desert *neem* tree ?  
Did he not go into the wasteland,  
studded with mountains,  
my friend ?

(281)

*Kuṣāvāyil Kīrattan*

The *neem* garland indicates the season of his departure, for the *neem* blooms in early summer. It also indicates that her man is connected with the *Pāṇṭiya* kings, either by region or service, for it is their ancestral emblem. See poem 185. She says, in effect : should I not worry for him when he has gone off o the dangerous wasteland ?

389.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to her; encouraging her with strong  
words, during his absence : )

In the early dewy season,  
which brings cool dew and chills  
in the morning ;  
at dreary, lonely evening,  
when a valiant buck with twisted horns  
stays with his soft and innocent mate  
in the spotted shade; and sleeps  
in thickly-flowered undergrowth;  
and, as day light fades away,  
eats ripened field beans;  
his great, victorious chariot  
has come :  
to end the loneliness  
of that virtuous, calm and beautiful girl,  
in her shining house  
with her bamboo shoulders.

(338)

*Perunkuṇṇūr Kizār*

Poems 389 - 396 anticipate his return. Here her friend  
says he has come, and will stay with her like the  
buck, during the early dewy season.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who encouraged her  
with strong words when she  
noticed the changes in her at the  
coming of the season of his  
promised return : )

In the wink of an eye  
there can be so much joy:

a sweet male dove calls out many times  
by the dreary side of his mate.

But my man,

who crossed mountains that reach the sky,

where, in the top of a *nemai* tree,

a hawk craves the flesh of travellers:

even as day by day

dawns turn to daylight,

he has not come home;

even as evening comes

at the end of the day,

he has not appeared.

This is the season in which

he said he would be back,

my friend.

Where is he ?

(285)

*Pātattēvaṇ*

The plumage of the female dove is more dreary looking than that of the male. In the wink of an eye the male dove calls out many times, expressing the joy of being united with its mate. But day after day, and night after night, even in the season of his promised return, she experiences lonely anxiety in anticipation of his return.

## WHAT SHE SAID

( to her friend, who encouraged  
her to be strong with harsh words,  
during his absence : )

My friend :

that man who journeys over mountains  
where there is a mother monkey  
with cubs  
that eat what is best, staying on  
the ground,  
while their father shakes down  
sweet, ripe, fruits:

he doesn't even think of me;  
nor of my small, young doll  
with tender feet, soft as  
fragile leaves on mango trees,  
with its beautiful leaves  
shaken by the wind.

He is wicked.

(278)

*Pēri Cātṭan*

The father monkey provides for his family, but without leaving them. He surely would have seen scenes like this one in the mountains. Seeing them, he did not return. Therefore he is wicked : for he must not have thought of her, nor of her young doll, which is made as tender as leaves on the mango tree.

## WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend, unable to bear  
separation from him before marriage,  
saying that she is going where he  
is : )

My heart will never be filled  
with satisfaction;  
for he will not believe  
that loving kindness itself is wealth.  
And so, he has the strength  
to bring me this unhappiness;  
and he sleeps sweetly,  
like the people who are unable to end  
the suffering of the moon  
when it is consumed by snakes;  
and like all those who cannot help me :  
for there is no one to comfort me,  
saying, "Don't be afraid !"  
But, if I go where he is, my shame  
will be pitiful.

(395)

Poet's Name Unavailable

The lunar eclipse was said to be caused by the moon's being swallowed by two snakes - - - Rāgu and Kētu. People used to cry and shout, waving their hands, to drive the snakes away. As people are unable to end the moon's suffering, they are unable to end her misery, and they go to sleep in peace, without worrying about her grief. Only she is awake and tormented. She says that he too, like the villagers, sleeps without concern for her. Going where he is, however, is shameful. Like his riding the palm-stem horse (see poems 86 - 90), it is something she threatens to do, but draws back from, out of shame.

( to her during his separation, when  
the girl had said he would sense  
their great longing for him, and  
return, leaving his work undone :.

Yes, my friend:  
he is full of love.  
But they say that on the path he travels  
--- he who grew tired of sweet sleep  
with us ---  
an old stag with forked horns  
kicks thick bark with his feet  
to bend a branch  
and appease the disease of hunger;  
and he eats himself only what is left over;  
and he stands to block the sun,  
becoming shade for his child  
with a sinless heart  
and hopping gait.

(213)

*Kaccippēttuk Kāñcik Korraṇ*

In response to the thought that he would abandon his work to return to them, her friend says that his love is more than concern for their happiness in his absence : he has also to fulfil his duties to his children. He is too strong and dutiful a man to return without finishing his work. Like the stag, who eats only after his family has eaten, and stands to block the sun for his young child, he will return only when his work is finished.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to her, who feared he would  
worry about them, and return  
without completing his work : )

The man we love goes from place to place  
with his heart bound only to beloved wealth,  
thinking to fulfill his duty:  
on the path he travels, my friend,  
he has seen an elephant  
with bent trunk,

who ends the hunger of a long line  
of small - eyed elephants,  
with tired gaits,  
by jabbing and ripping the rough  
dried base of the *yā* tree,  
with hard wood and no holes,  
and serving it to them  
with his long trunk.

(255)

*Kaṭuku Peruntēvaṇ*

As in the last poem, her friend assures her that he is too dutiful a man to return without accomplishing that for which he set out. The elephant provides for the whole herd by ripping the *yā* tree with his tusks, and serving the bark with his trunk. Like this he struggles to provide for us, she says.

## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

(to her, who unable to bear his  
separation; to inform her that she  
had seen signs foretelling his  
return : )

Our man is crossing the wasteland  
where the shade of a small - based  
*ōmai* tree  
keeps a calfless cow from moving on,  
near mountain slopes where desert palms  
grow close together in the land of the  
*Tonṭaiyar*,  
who have strong chariots and great  
elephants,  
and who enjoy the fruit of conquered  
enemy land.

Hérons fly in the dark sky:  
in bushes, buds open  
as bright bees hum on them:  
and the spiralling conch bangles  
are tight on your beautiful arm:  
so will he not come,  
my friend ?

(260)

*Kallāṭuṇār*

Hérons blooming buds, and light bangles of right-  
spiralling conch : all these are good omens, foretelling  
his return, she says. *Tonṭaiyar* country is  
*Tonṭaimaṇṭalam*, the northern regions of the Tamil  
country, which corresponds to modern North Arcot  
and Chinglepet districts. The region gets quite dry  
and hot in the summer : so much so that the shade  
of the small *ōmai* tree is gratefully accepted as a  
respite for the cow. She says, in effect, that she has  
seen the signs, and he will return, because of the  
harshness of the waterless wasteland.



## WHAT HER FRIEND SAID

( to a wiseman, inquiring about the  
season when their lover would  
return : )

When do you say the cold, rainy season  
will come,

with its last rains  
that make the girl  
with lightning waist  
shiver ?

For in that season our lover will return.

May you eat your fill  
of rice from red grains,  
with white ghee on it,  
at a single house  
where you beg,  
with no dogs at its gate,  
on a spotless street;  
and may you receive, in a brass vessel,  
the hot water you long for  
in the rainy season !

(277)

*Ōril Piccayār*

The poet's name is a pseudonym taken from an  
image in the poem : it means, "beggar at one house".  
She inquires about the time for the coming of the  
season, and then wishes the wiseman well. It is a  
great luxury for a beggar to get all the food he  
wants at one house ; and to have that house be on  
a spotless street, with no dogs to pester him ; and  
to get warm water in a clean bowl in the cold  
season.

## WHAT HE SAID

( to his friend the charioteer, on  
their return from his quest for  
wealth ; )

My heart that knows no fear  
has left me  
to embrace my beloved ;  
but what good is it  
if my empty arms embrace the air ?  
We are far apart ;  
and between us  
how many groves will I count,  
    where killer tigers  
    that attack from the right  
    roar like the waves of the black sea !  
How many obstacles to our union !  
It all overwhelms me.

(237)

*Allūr Naṁmullai*

His heart (ie : his fantasies, imagination) has gone to embrace his lover, and he finds himself embracing the air. He is overwhelmed by the number of obstacles that stand between him and his lover : including tigers that attack their prey from the right. Poems 397 - 401 depict his return.

## WHAT HE SAID

( when the season of his return had  
come and his appointed work was  
done : )

The village of the girl,  
with large eyes that torment mens' hearts  
and beautiful, large shoulders, like dancing  
bamboo,  
is far away  
and hard to reach.  
My heart rushes toward her,  
like a ploughman with one plough  
to his field when it is wet  
and ready.  
How I suffer !

(131)

*Ōrēruṣavaṇār*

The poet's name is a pseudonym taken from the last image in the poem : it means, "ploughman with one plough". The man with one plough has no one else to work for him, and must hurry to plough the fields while the moisture is yet on it, so as not to waste the chance. His heart has gone off to her in the same way, as the season is ripe. He suffers for he is unable to get there as fast as he desires.

## WHAT HE SAID

( to his charioteer : )

Drive swiftly the horses that run  
 like the wind, my friend,  
 to relieve the suffering  
 of our intelligent and sweet - worded woman  
     with black eyes like  
     two *kayal* fish  
     facing each other in a deep pool,  
 before the coming of the season,  
     when a good male deer  
     drinks water from a puddle  
     with stones in it  
     and jumps about in the path,  
     frolicking with its mate !

(250)

*Nāmalār Mukuṇ Iḷaṅkāṇṇaṇ*

Stones in puddles make the water clear. He wants  
 to frolic like the deer, as soon as possible. This  
 poem could also be placed among poems of the  
 forest region. Compare poem 184.

## WHAT HE SAID

( to his friend, but addressing the  
cold north wind, on his return from  
separation before marriage : )

O winter wind:  
protect that fine woman  
and prosper!  
Her village has houses thatched with grass  
and deer eating *nelli* fruit in front yards;  
it's the one near a high mountain  
where a pure - white waterfall  
resembles a snakeskin  
hanging down.

(235)

*Māyentān*

He sends the wind to her, to protect her. And he describes her village so that the wind will recognize it. This poem is of the *tūtu* or "messenger" genre.

## WHAT HE SAID

( to her friend; to convey his great  
love, on returning from a successful  
quest for wealth : )

O girl of short steps:  
I crossed those hills  
so difficult to cross,  
    where the green fruits of the *nelli*,  
    which gives alms to travellers,  
    roll about in a place  
    where children of ferocious tigers  
    hunt;  
I did not think of anything other  
than my love for that innocent girl  
    with hair black as ink  
    and fragrant with many  
    loosely - tied buds of the *veḷci* tree,  
    with its bent boughs flourishing  
    in the forest along the narrow path.

(209)

*Pāṇipāṇiya Perunkaṭunkō*

The *nelli* gives sustenance to travellers, but the  
tigers nearby make the way dangerous nonetheless.  
He thought of his lover only : he did not think  
about the dangers of the way, nor of wealth, nor of  
his own difficulties. He was sustained by thoughts of  
her.



## APPENDICES\*

- I. Index to Numbering : index correlating poem numbers in Dr. U. V. Swaminathaiyar's edition of the *Kuruntokai* with the poem numbers in this text.
- II. Index to Numbering : index correlating poem numbers in this text with poems as numbered in Dr. U. V. Swaminathaiyar's text.
- III. Fauna : index identifying animals and showing the poems in which they occur.
- V. Flora : index indentifying plants, trees, flowers, and crops, and showing the poems in which they occur.
- V. Chieftains : index showing the names of chieftains mentioned in the text and the poems in which they are cited.
- VI. Chart of Speakers and Regions : a chart showing the number of poems spoken by the various characters, and the regions in which their poems are situated.

### \*Notes to Appendices.

1. In appendices III - V, all references to poem numbers are to the numbers in this text.
2. Flora and Fauna indices are based on information available in the *Tamil Lexicon* and *Webster's New Third International Dictionary* (unabridged, 1966).
3. Flora are listed first in Tamil transliteration, in Tamil alphabetical order, as most flora appear transliterated in the text.



4. Flora marked (?) are of questionable identification either because available information was ambiguous or insufficient.
5. Fauna are listed first according to English alphabetical order. Sub - categories of fish and birds are in Tamil alphabetical order, and in transliteration, as they appear this way in the text, in most cases.
6. The index of chieftains is based on one given by Dr. Swaminathaiyar in his edition of the *Kuruntokai*.

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332 - 39	347 - 338	361 - 150	375 - 77	389 - 143
333 - 131	348 - 347	362 - 134	376 - 273	390 - 327
334 - 301	349 - 312	363 - 343	377 - 99	391 - 187
335 - 71	350 - 348	364 - 218	378 - 323	392 - 65
336 - 73	351 - 307	365 - 94	379 - 139	393 - 61
337 - 81	352 - 357	366 - 135	380 - 359	394 - 48
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339 - 111	354 - 225	368 - 207	382 - 176	396 - 322
340 - 248	355 - 34	369 - 315	383 - 319	397 - 274
341 - 299	356 - 321	370 - 221	384 - 224	398 - 369
342 - 74	357 - 54	371 - 103	385 - 137	399 - 262
343 - 314	358 - 193	372 - 250	386 - 303	400 - 198
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335 - 274	350 - 56	364 - 218	378 - 253	392 - 395
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338 - 347	353 - 67	367 - 266	381 - 59	395 - 260
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### III. FAUNA

English	Tamil	Poems
1 bat	<i>vāval, vauval</i>	149, 285, 357.
2 bees	<i>tumpi, tēṇi</i>	1, 53. 65, 360; 28, 56, 65. 176, 294, 331, 360; 9, 97, 138, 263, 270, 358.
3 birds		
nightingale	<i>aṇṇil</i>	100, 121, 305.
swan	<i>aṇṇam</i>	2, 278, 282
	<i>eṇṇāl</i>	196, 340.
	<i>kaṇantul</i>	348.
crow	<i>kākkai</i>	67, 202, 251, 301.
forest hen	<i>kānakōṇi</i>	120, 205.
parrot	<i>kili</i>	33, 52, 75, 131, 157, 353.
(chasing parrots:		13, 14, 29, 33, 110, 124, 127.)
cuckoo	<i>kuyil</i>	386.
sparrow	<i>kurii (kuruvi)</i>	19, 145, 160, 229.
stork	<i>kuruku</i>	284, 288, 293, 302.
heron	<i>kuruku</i>	23, 42, 136, 223, 267, 297 395.
quail	<i>kurumpūz</i>	143.
owl	<i>kūkai</i>	76.
stork (crane)	<i>kokku</i>	220, 258, 291, 297, 395.
hen	<i>kōṇi</i>	61, 130, 189, 222.
cock, rooster	<i>cēval</i>	205, 210, 211, 229, 370.
peacock	<i>ṇamali</i>	28.
	<i>tūkkāṇam</i>	145.
peacock	<i>tōkai</i>	136, 338.
stork (crane)	<i>nārai</i>	24, 49, 206, 249, 252, 260, 269, 284, 288, 290, 302, 311, 312.
hawk (kite)	<i>paruntu</i>	345, 368, 390.
dove	<i>purā (puravu)</i>	190, 335, 349, 361, 370, 390.
(aquatic		
love-bird)	<i>maṇṇil</i>	268.
peacock	<i>maṇṇai</i>	50, 151, 168, 172, 187.



English	Tamil	Poems
peacock	<i>mayil</i> <i>vaṅkā</i>	1, 31, 51, 63, 95, 102, 105, 167, 172, 182, 187, 247, 338. 340.
4 buffalo calf	<i>erumai</i>	35, 164, 239. 239.
5 bull(bullock)	<i>ēru</i> <i>erutu</i> <i>eru</i>	163, 343, 389. 258, 318 (ox) 22, 56, 81, 93, 115, 138, 156, 163, 187, 192, 343.
6 cat(wild-cat)	<i>verukū</i>	180, 210, 222; 157.
7 cow	<i>ā</i> <i>kurāl</i> <i>pacu</i>	108, 190, 191, 202, 363, 395; 8, 10, 156, 193. 362. 163, 192.
wild cow	<i>maraiyā</i> <i>varaiyā</i>	115, 125, 138. 64, 343.
calf	<i>kaṇṇu</i>	10, 95, 123, 190, 191, 363.
8 crab	<i>ñeṇṭu, naṇṭu</i>	185, 258, 267, 271, 281.
male crab	<i>alavaṇ</i>	228, 267, 271, 280, 307.
9 crocodile	<i>mutalai</i>	272.
10 deer	<i>māṇ</i>	16, 33, 65, 115, 120, 123, 125, 169, 298, 341, 374, 376, 399.
male deer (stag, buck)	<i>iralai</i>	167, 180, 184, 374, 377, 389, 399.
male deer (stag, buck)	<i>kalai</i>	16, 74, 137, 393.
female deer (doe)		16, 115.
	<i>pukari</i> <i>varuṭai</i>	187. 114.
11 dog	<i>nāy</i>	28, 33, 350, 396.
12 elephant	<i>yāṇai</i>	6, 12, 13, 18, 22, 28, 33, 39, 46, 48, 54, 66, 75, 96, 119.

English	Tamil	Poems
		131, 141, 155, 164, 169, 195, 206, 230, 237, 242, 277, 282, 298, 314, 318, 322, 342, 346, 347, 361, 371, 374, 375, 377, 379, 387, 394, 396.
male elephant	<i>kaḷiru</i>	33, 40, 59, 61, 63, 64, 75, 107, 116, 144, 185, 316, 375. 383, 387.
male elephant	<i>vēṇam</i>	15, 112, 268.
female elephant	<i>piṭi</i>	39, 48, 75, 91, 95, 112, 127, 128, 169, 312, 327, 377, 387.
calf		48, 95, 98.
13 fish	<i>ayirai</i>	208, 269, 311.
	<i>āral</i>	24, 49, 269, 290.
	<i>kayal</i>	399.
	<i>keṇṭai</i>	223, 237, 369.
	<i>kiṭṭu, kūṇ</i>	278; 263.
shark	<i>cuyā</i>	245, 306, 309.
	<i>pacumiṇ</i>	230.
carp	<i>vāḷai</i>	207, 218, 220.
14 frog	<i>tavaḷai</i>	177.
	<i>tērai</i>	204.
15 goat (sheep)	<i>maṇi (āṭu)</i>	129, 134, 165.
sheep	<i>vellāṭu</i>	293.
16 horse	<i>kalimā</i>	86.
	<i>kutirai</i>	22, 137, 282, 399
17 lizards		
chameleon	<i>pōttu</i>	352.
gecko	<i>palli</i>	373.
18 monkey	<i>kuraṅku</i>	60, 122, 136, 137.
black monkey	<i>ūkam</i>	102, 331.

English	Tamil	Poem
black		
monkey	<i>mucu</i>	50.
male monkey	<i>kalai</i>	32, 44, 74, 76, 79, 391.
female		
monkey		71, 79, 83, 391.
monkey cub	<i>kurulaḷai</i>	71, 50, 79, 83, 102, 136.
19 rat	<i>eli</i>	210.
20 shrimp	<i>iravu</i>	121, 263, 265.
21 snakes	<i>pāmpu</i>	43, 45, 53, 93, 117, 154, 159, 187, 225, 355, 370, 400.
cobra	<i>nallapāmpu</i>	355.
green snake	<i>pacupāmpu</i>	154.
baby snake	<i>kurulaḷai</i>	12.
22 squirrel	<i>aṇil</i>	243, 351.
23 tiger	<i>puli</i>	33, 36, 66, 138, 281, 314, 347, 378, 379, 397, 401.
tiger cub	<i>kurulaḷai</i>	36, 401.
24 turtle	<i>āmai</i>	359.
25 water animals		
(unspecified)		159.
seal (?)	<i>nīrnāy</i>	218.
26 (?)	<i>kaṭamā</i>	28.

# IV FLORA

Tamil	English	Scientific Nomenclature	Poems
1 <i>akil</i>	( <i>Aquila</i> wood) Eagle-wood	<i>Aquilaria</i> <i>agallocha</i>	111, 153.
2 <i>acōkam</i>	Asoka tree	<i>Saraca indica</i>	133.
3 <i>aṭumpu</i>	Hair-leaf	<i>Ipomaea biloba</i>	257, 271, 298, 312.
4 <i>atavam</i>	Country fig (tree)	<i>Ficus glomerata</i>	185.
5 <i>aralai</i>		(same as)	133.
6 <i>avarai</i>	country beans	<i>Dolichos lablah</i>	118, 157, 389.
7 <i>aruku</i>	Harialli grass	<i>Cynodon dactylan</i>	341.
8 <i>āmpal</i>	waterlily	<i>nymphaea lotus</i>	2, 160, 208, 213, 219, 221, 238, 244, 252, 258, 279, 291, 318, 324, 325, 357, 381.
9 <i>ālamaram</i> ( <i>paṇu- marm</i> )	Banyan tree	<i>figus bengalensis</i>	285, 320.
10 <i>āvirai</i>	tanner's senna	<i>cassia senna</i>	86
11 <i>iruppai</i>	South Indian mahua	<i>bassia longifolia</i>	263, 383.
12 <i>irri</i>	tailed, oval-leafed fig tree		151.
13 <i>īnkai</i>	species of sensitive tree	<i>Mimosa</i> <i>rubicaulis</i>	182, 359.
14 <i>ukāy</i>	toothbrush tree	<i>Salvadora pasica</i>	335, 343.
15 <i>uṇṇi</i>		(same as <i>vākai</i> )	384.
16 <i>uṇuntu</i>	black gram	<i>Phaseolus</i> <i>mungoglaba</i> )	120.
17 <i>erukku</i>	Yarkam, madar	<i>Calotropis gigantea</i>	87.
18 <i>ēṇal</i>	black millet		(see <i>tiṇai</i> )
19 <i>aigavi</i>	white mustard	<i>Brassica alba</i>	214.
20 <i>aivaṇam</i>	wild rice	<i>Oryza mutica</i>	15, 103.

Tamil	English	Scientific Nomenclature	Poems
21 <i>ōmai</i> (tree)	toothbrush tree (same as ukāy)(?)	<i>Salvadora persica</i> , 322, 344, 345, or <i>Dillemia Indica</i> , 361, 395. or (same as mango tree)	322, 344, 345, 361, 395.
22 <i>karumpu</i>	sugarcane		29, 154, 224, 209, 316, 317, 337, 375.
23 <i>karuṇilai</i> (?)			182.
24 <i>kavalai</i>	(an edible root; tubor)	(?)	197.
25 <i>kavir</i> (tree)	East Indian coral tree	<i>Ethyria Indica</i>	290.
26 <i>koṇṇai</i>	bamboo		(see <i>mūṇkil</i> )
27 <i>kaḷḷi</i>	spurge	genus <i>Euphorbia</i>	370, 373 (see notes) 349, 353.
28 <i>kāñci</i>	riverine portia (flower and tree)	<i>Thespesia</i> <i>populnea</i>	212, 223.
29 <i>kāntaḷ</i>	Malabar glory lily	<i>Gloriosa superba</i>	11, 15, 43, 53, 60, 78, 96, 97, 119, 142, 150, 209, 210, 325.
30 <i>kuravam</i>	bottle-flower	(?)	299.
31 <i>kulavi</i>	jasmine		(see <i>mullai</i> )
32 <i>kuṇḍalai</i>	a blue lily	genus <i>Nelumbo</i>	2, 11, 14, 27, 74, 75, 81, 111, 138, 200, 209, 318, 358, 381.
33 <i>kuriñci</i>	conehead	genus <i>Strobilanthes</i>	58, 86, 113.
34 <i>kūṭaḷam</i>	convulvulus	<i>Ipomea</i>	47, 376.
35 <i>koṇṇu</i>	mango tree (and fruit)		(see <i>māmaram</i> )
36 <i>koṇṇukān- taḷ</i>			155.
37 <i>koṇṇai</i>	Indian laburnum	genus <i>laburnum</i>	167, 171, 174, 177, 197, 226.
38 <i>kōṇku</i>		<i>Hopea wightiana</i>	186.

Tamil	English	Scientific Nomenclature	Poems
39 <i>kauvai</i>	green sesamum seed		376.
40. <i>cāntu</i>	sardal tree (and wood)		24, 37, 42, 66, 138, 153.
41 <i>cilai</i> (wood)	(?)		137.
42 <i>cēmpu</i>		(?) <i>Colocasia indica</i>	96.
43 <i>nāzal</i>	fetid cassia	(?) <i>Cassia sophera</i>	25, 214, 274, 279, 281, 306.
44 <i>ñemai</i>	(?)		390.
45 <i>taṭavu- maram</i>	(a tree)		121.
46 <i>tavaḷam</i>	white pepper		176.
47 <i>tāmarai</i>	lotus	<i>Nelumbium speciosum</i>	2, 223, 273, 288, 347.
48 <i>tāzai</i>	fragrant screw- pine	<i>Pandanus odo- ratissimus</i>	246, 247, 255, 267, 276, 278, 284, 293, 297.
48a <i>tāḷi</i>	(?)		156.
49 <i>tiṇāi</i> (ēṇal)	millet		14, 19, 29, 33, 48, 49, 51, 52, 54, 65, 71, 75, 77, 95, 118, 124, 127, 129, 131, 180, 274, 376.
50 <i>tēkkokku</i>	mango tree (and fruit)		(see <i>māmaram</i> )
51 <i>tēmā</i>	mango tree (and fruit)		(see <i>māmaram</i> )
52 <i>narantam</i>	an orange tree	<i>Citrus aurantium</i>	144.
53 <i>nilam</i>	blue nelumbo		135, 182
54 <i>neytal</i>	white Indian water lily	<i>Nymphaea lotus alba</i>	24, 73, 238, 244. 252, 256, 271, 274, 310.
55 <i>neruñci</i>	cow's thorn	<i>Tribulus terrestis</i>	104, 233.

Tamil	English	Scientific Nomenclature	Poems
56 <i>nelli</i> (fruit)	fruit of	<i>Phyllanthus emblica</i>	115, 149, 316, 400, 401.
57 <i>nocci</i>	three or fiveleaved chaste tree	<i>Agnus Castus</i>	31.
58 <i>pakaṇṇai</i>	(a plant)	(?)	304.
59 <i>pañcāy</i>	(a grass)	<i>Cyperus rotundus tuberosus</i>	72.
60 <i>paṇai</i>	bamboo		(see <i>mūṇkil</i> )
61 <i>parutti</i>	Indian cotton plant	<i>Gossypium herbaceum</i>	19.
62 <i>palavu</i>	Jack tree (and fruit)	<i>Artocarpus Integrifolia</i>	44, 55, 60, 74, 76, 94, 137, 147, 148, 357.
63 <i>paṇai</i>	palmyra-palm	<i>Borassus flabellifer</i>	86, 100, 250, 388.
64 <i>pātiri</i>	yellow, purple, or white trumpet- flower	<i>Stereospermum</i>	365.
65 <i>picci</i>	(a vine, a kind of jasmine)		(see <i>pittikam</i> )
66 <i>piṭavu</i>	Bedalz emeticnut	<i>Randia malabarica</i>	172.
67 <i>pittikam</i> ( <i>picci</i> )	large-flowerd jasmine	<i>Jasminum grandibrum</i>	21, 173, 339.
68 <i>pirampu</i>	rattan vine	<i>Calamus rotang</i>	218, 237.
69 <i>pīrkku</i> ( <i>pīram</i> )	sponge-gowd, or strainervine	<i>Luffa acutangula</i>	183.
70 <i>putal</i> ( <i>putar</i> )	(any thicket)		157, 169; 176, 183, 205, 395,
71 <i>punṅku</i>	Indian beech tree	<i>Pongania glabra</i>	41, 299.
72 <i>punṇai</i>	mast-wood tree	<i>Calophyllum inophyllum</i>	38, 252, 253, 263, 264, 267, 275, 288, 294, 306, 307.
73 <i>pennai</i>	palmyra-palm	(same as <i>paṇai</i> )	88, 145, 213, 257, 297, 305.
74 <i>maral</i>	bowstring hemp (a stemless plant)	<i>Sansevieria zeylanica</i>	15, 374.

Tamil	English	Scientific Nomenclature	Poems
75 <i>marā</i> <i>maram</i>	pipal tree	<i>Ficus religiosa</i>	106, 286, 332, 360.
76 <i>marutam</i> ( <i>marutu</i> )	flowering murdah	<i>Terminalia paniculata</i>	214, 220, 227.
77 <i>mā</i> ( <i>kokku</i> , mango (tree and <i>tekkokku</i> ) fruit)		<i>Mangifera indica</i>	80, 115, 136, 14.
78 <i>mānai</i>	(a vine)	( ? )	107.
79 <i>miḷaku</i>	black pepper	<i>Piper nigrum</i>	44, 122.
80 <i>muṇṭakam</i>	(a shrub)	( ? )	203.
81 <i>murukku</i>	Palas tree (?) (or, same as	<i>Butea frondosa</i> <i>kavir</i> tree)	85.
82 <i>mullai</i>	jasmine (any of several varieties)	<i>Jasminum</i> <i>sambas</i> <i>Jasminum</i> <i>trichotomum</i> <i>Jasminum</i> <i>malabaricum</i>	11, 15, 88, 157, 162, 165, 166, 176, 179, 180, 181, 188, 189, 190, 192, 193, 196, 199, 204, 231, 347, 350, 381.
83 <i>mulḷi</i>	(thorny plant)		203, 243 294
84 <i>mūṇkil</i>	bamboo	<i>Bambusa</i> <i>arundinacea</i>	2, 15, 22, 28, 43, 46, 53, 55, 125, 137, 149, 257, 278, 322, 346, 375, 378, 398.
85 <i>yā</i>	(a tree)	( ? )	29, 135, 362, 374, 377, 387, 394.
86 <i>vaḷḷi</i>	(a vine)		385.
87 <i>vākai</i>	Sirissa (tree)	<i>Albizzia</i>	61, 315, 328, 338, 359, 384.
88 <i>vāzai</i>	plantain	<i>Musa</i> <i>paradisiaca</i>	109.
89 <i>vetei</i>	Scarlet ixora	<i>Ixora coccinea</i>	401.
90 <i>vēṇkai</i>	East Indian kino tree	<i>Pterocarpus</i> <i>marsupian</i>	34, 36, 57, 98, 116, 117, 136, 141, 314, 325, 367.
91 <i>Vēmpu</i>	neem, or margosa tree	<i>Melia</i> <i>azadirachta</i>	185, 232, 353, 388.



## V. CHIEFTAINS

<b>Name</b>	<b>Poem(s)</b>
<i>Akutai</i>	91
<i>Añci</i>	237
<i>Atikan</i>	61
<i>(Āñi -) Aruman</i>	213
<i>Aziei</i>	227
<i>Āy</i>	325
<i>Evoi</i>	231
<i>Eziñi (Eziñi)</i>	219
<i>Ōri</i>	15, 63, 70, 329.
<i>Kaṭṭi</i>	372
<i>Kuṭṭuvay</i>	206
<i>Koñkar</i>	61
<i>Kōcar</i>	80, 320.
<i>Cēntan</i>	227
<i>Tonṭaiyar</i>	395
<i>Nalli</i>	202
<i>Nannan</i>	31, 64.
<i>Pacupūt Pāñṭiyan</i>	61
<i>Pāri</i>	232
<i>Pūziyar</i>	293
<i>Poraiyan</i>	311
<i>Malaiyan (Malaiyamāñṭirumuṭikkāri)</i>	29, 37.
<i>Vaṭukar</i>	372
<i>Vicoikkō</i>	281
<i>Vēlir</i>	220

# VI. CHART OF REGIONS AND SPEAKERS

## Regions

Speakers	Mountains	Forest	Lowland	Seashore	Wasteland	Totals
He:	35	6	1	3	17	62
His Friend:	2	—	—	—	—	2
Men (sub total) : 64						
She :	51	37	15	46	31	180
Her Friend:	65	8	16	20	31	140
Foster - mother :	—	1	1	—	7	9
Harlot :	—	—	4	—	—	4
Concubine :	—	—	1	—	—	1
Women (sub total) : 334						
Passerby* :	—	—	—	—	3	3
TOTALS :	153	52	38 <sup>o</sup>	69	89	401

\* The gender of the passerby is unknown; but probably male.

\* Six poems of the lowland region are on "wedded bliss"; the remainder concern his affair with the harlot.

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