

A BUNCH OF ESSAYS ON TAMIL LITERATURE

P.N. APPUSWAMI



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TAMIL STUDIES

உலகத் தமிழாராய்ச்சி நிறுவனம்

சென்னை - 600 113

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FOREWORD
(Second Edition)

The author, Thiru P.N. Appuswami was a great scholar in Tamil, English as well as in Sanskrit. Though he was an advocate by profession, he dedicated his life to Tamil Studies. He was a pioneer in writing articles and books on Science in Tamil. He was also an eminent scholar in the field of translation.

Translation is a difficult art. Translating Tamil literature into English has some special problems because of its pattern of language and culture. Particularly a verse translation demands more effort and more skill than the effort and skill given to a prose.

The book 'Tamil verse in Translation' by P.N. Appuswami was published by International Institute of Tamil Studies in 1987. "Science articles" written by P.N. Appuswami was also published in two volumes by this Institute in the year 1995 and 2000 respectively. We are very happy to publish this book '**A Bunch of Essays on Tamil Literature**' by P.N. Appuswami, which was already published by Bharati Tamil Sangam (Regd), Calcutta, in July, 1992.

In this book, the author expressed the beauties of various kinds of Tamil literature in 14 essays. It deals with Bharati's poems, Three ancient Tamil women poets, Muttollayiram, Silappatikaram, Kuruntokai, the battle scenes from Kamban and etc. The author P.N. Appuswami presented these articles with suitable verses in translation. His translations of verses from Tamil to English is delight to read. These 14 essays presented in this collection which are inspired by the author were published in various reputed magazines.

In his book 'Tamil verse in Translation', P.N. Appuswami said "I hope that the readers of this book will be able to see beauty of the original Tamil verses through the veil of my translations". This attempt will be very useful for non Tamils to understand the spirit of Tamil literature.

I would like to thank Mr. P.N. Kumar, the grandson of P.N. Appuswami, who gave a copy of book to publish again through the International Institute of Tamil Studies.

Our sincere thanks are due to the Hon'ble Minister for Education Dr. M. Thambidurai and to Thiru. P.A. Ramaiah, I.A.S., Secretary to Government, Tamil Development - Culture and Hindu Religious Endowments Department and Thiru. T. Chandra Sekaran, I.A.S., Additional Secretary to Government, Tamil Development-Culture Department. They have evinced perennial interest in the qualitative improvement of this Institute and have rendered help in all possible ways.

Our thanks are also due to Dr. M. Rajendran, the Director, Department of Tamil Development for the financial assistance to publish this book under the scheme of grants for good Translation works.

I would like to thank Dr. M. Valarmathi, Research Assistant, for her sincere responsibility in publishing this book.

I would also like to thank for services rendered by Mrs. P. Kousalya, D.T.P. staff of the International Institute of Tamil Studies.

My thanks are also to the United Bind Graphics for the neat execution of this book.

10th August 2002

Director

FOREWORD

(First Edition)

Along with its Golden Jubilee, the Sangham also celebrated the birth centenary of P.N. Appuswami Aiyar in January this year. A remarkable man in many ways, the late Appuswami Aiyar was a great scholar in Tamil, English and Sanskrit. He wrote critical essays on Tamil literary works, more often comparing them with those of other languages like Sanskrit, English and even Greek, thereby establishing the glory of Tamil poetry through the ages. He popularised the sciences with his lucid essays in Tamil. He edited early Tamil works. He brought out the beauties of Sanskrit literature through short essays and stories. He wrote for children too. He was the editor of reputed Tamil journals. He wrote for over sixty years and enriched Tamil in many ways.

One of the main areas of interest of Appuswami Aiyar was translation of Tamil poetry into English. This was a cause very dear to him as it was to Bharati and he carried it on, almost till the last day of his life. Fittingly, his last known-article was an essay on Bharati's glorification of India, told through the venerable Vidura, in his Panchali Sapatham. This article, which appeared in the Hindu, immediately after Appuswami Aiyar's death is included in this volume.

Our association with Appuswami Aiyar started in the year 1956 and continued for thirty years till his death in 1986. Many of his essays and translations have appeared in the Bharati Jayanthi Souvenirs and it is noteworthy that he wrote many of them specially for us. In 1968, when the Sangham brought out a collection of essays on 'The Sangham Age' (also the title of the book), he gladly accepted our suggestion and translated selected poems from the eight anthologies (Ettu Thokai), being roughly a cross-section of the Tamil poetry of those ancient days.

We may claim that in his long life of about 95 years, at a time when he had lost many of his literary friends like Vaiyapuri Pillai, T.K.C., Kavimani, Srinivasa Raghavan, and others and was a sad man, the Sangham gave him such work that gladdened his heart and kept him from boredom, as he himself confessed. We have always considered it a great privilege, to be associated with this rare savant of Tamil.

It is therefore, with great joy, that we have gathered together some of his articles, which appeared in our souvenirs and publish the same in a book-form as a mark of our respect to Appuswami Aiyar's memory.

This volume also carries J. Parthasarathy's tribute to Appuswami Aiyar which appeared in the Hindu.

We wish to offer our thanks to the members of Appuswami Aiyar's family with whom we are in touch regarding publication of his hither-to unpublished essays and translations. Articles from the Hindu and the Triveni have been included with due acknowledgement.

We do hope that reading through these pages, genuine lovers of Tamil will gain some insight into the type of work that P.N. Appuswami Aiyar was doing all his life for the spread of Tamil and emulate his example.

10th August, 1992.

Bharati Tamil Sangham

A GREAT BENEFACTOR OF TAMIL

By J. Parthasarathy

The news of the passing away of P.N. Appuswami at the age of 95 on May 17, collapsing in the heat of the morning sun on the roadside, made sad reading for all interested in culture generally and Tamil specifically. He seemed set for living at least a hundred years with his unabated enthusiasm for enriching Tamil, his erect gait as he carried himself along to City gatherings and his ringing declaration that while others may 'die for Tamil' he would 'live for Tamil' as long as he could. He remained in his advanced years an epitome of a vanished age in which he had led and promoted various activities for the greater glory of the Tamil language.

These activities are not limited to his science writing in Tamil which has recently received some publicity but cover the whole spectrum of Tamil studies, taking in their stride textual criticism, literary exposition, **vers libre**, children's literature, and translations from Tamil to English and vice versa.

Though Appuswami's father was a municipal doctor in Tirunelveli, he was born in Triplicane, Madras, on the last day of the year 1891. When Halley's comet appeared last in 1910 he was in the junior B.A. class at the Presidency College, Madras, and he took the trouble to watch it with a few friends, from the open terrace of the Victoria Hostel near the college. Setting up as a lawyer after his B.L. in 1914, he practised far into the 1960's.

For over half a century he worked and moved with luminaries like Sir S. Varadachariar, V.L. Ethiraj, Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar, T.M. Krishnaswami Aiyar, K.V. Krishnaswami Aiyar and P.V. Rajamannar. The fine moments of his scintillating advocacy on the appellate side before exacting judges of the calibre of Wadsworth and Leach may be found reported in matter-of-fact legal journals of old.

Of more immediate interest here is the variegated cultural life that blossomed within his home and outside under his sponsorship. His residence in Mylapore upto the forties and in Adyar thereafter was ever a clearing-house of men of Tamil learning, thanks to the innate love of the mother-tongue characteristic of his family environment. For many years he hosted monthly meetings in which scholars like 'T.K.C.' and Vaiyapuri Pillai, whose names have now become legendary, participated in lively discussions on Tamil poetry and Kamban. These get-togethers in Mylapore were admittedly the predecessors of the literary meets held by 'T.K.C.' in Tirunelveli and familiarly known as vattat-totti (round tub).

The Madras University's Tamil lexicon is the most comprehensive and authoritative dictionary of Tamil we have as yet, and it is good to know that Appuswami's shaping hand lies unseen behind this unique compilation. As a valued consultant of the lexicon and as the trusted friend and guide of its chairman K.V. Krishnaswami Aiyar he not only contributed lexicographical notes but also basically re-moulded the project by bringing a person of the competence of S. Vaiyapuri Pillai to the editorship of the work.

In 1934 along with K.V. Krishnaswami Aiyar he did the magnificent job of conducting a conference of Tamil lovers for three days in Pachaiyappa's College hall in G.T., Madras, attended by the most esteemed men of Tamil letters of the day. Its proceedings and forward-looking resolutions have become a landmark in the history of the new era of the language.

Scientific writing in Tamil was field to which Appuswami stood always committed. It arose out of the resolve he made early in his life when his European professor of Chemistry regretted the waste of his labours of love when his student joined law. From the twenties he began writing on topics of science in journals like

Tamizhar-Nesan he helped to found and edit for ten years till it ceased. Kalaimagal which he edited initially for a decade and Veera-Kesari then issued in Ceylon. In later years Dinamani particularly was the recipient of his scientific largesse, though other periodicals like Kalaikatir, Ilam-Vijnani etc. have also received some contributions.

Text-books on physics with a co-author, expositions on topics like electricity, x-rays, atoms, etc., exceeding twentyfive publications, awarded prizes on different occasions, translations of works of science by well-known authors like H.G. Wells and J.B. Conant - these do not exhaust his writings on science. Equally his books for children and neo-literates on science and non-science subjects including readers from the infant standard to the high school level go up to 35 or more in number and have won recognition from UNESCO, university and government agencies.

The art with which he has re-told stories in these multifarious publications, the child-like wonder which he has imparted to the presentation of both science and traditional stories and the delicate responsive use of the Tamil language he has made throughout have all to be experienced to be believed.

To his wealth learning equal to that of the best Tamil scholars, Appuswami added a comparative dimension with his perceptive study and appreciation of the treasures of Sanskrit and English literature. His unequalled capacity for methodical and sustained labour in analysing and indexing a mass of literary texts can be seen in the collation of the editions of the Sangam and other Tamil classics published by Murray S. Rajam (now unfortunately not with us) in the fifties, and now acclaimed as models of their kind.

It has also to be remembered that he had done earlier in the thirties similarly work of editing Saiva religious texts for the Saiva Siddhanta Samajam and had been honoured for such help.

Introducing the beauties of the masterpieces of Tamil to wider audiences through the medium of English was one of his dearest avocations to which he would repair ever and anon, in the midst of all his preoccupations. His articles of appreciation on Tamil classics and translations of chosen portions of Kuruntokai, Akam, Puram, Silappatikaram, Kamban and Bharati appeared over the years in many well known periodicals; apart from Muttollayiram and selections of Sangam poetry published in book form, a lot remains to be collected and published.

His English translations from Tamil are a delight to read and mouth as well, displaying as they do a shimmering balance of felicitous yet idiomatic phrasing in the target language with an easy fidelity to the nuances of the original texts. No wonder such a connoisseur of English as V.S. Srinivasa Sastri spoke gratefully of the hours of sheer enjoyment that Appuswami's Kurinjippattu had given him.

Having spoken thus much, many other things about his later years and their achievements still remain unsaid. Behind all his work lay his unique personality which grew with the years and systematic, open to all new influences, scientific in temper and poetic in generous appreciation of all good things. Perhaps his greatest achievement was to have remained, through a long life, young, dynamic and creative in the areas of work he had chosen and developed, right up to his death. Can the world of Tamil learning, to which he had pledged himself, adequately repay the debt it owes to this rare benefactor?

(From The Hindu)

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BHARATI'S SPARROWS

' A beak like a small grain of paddy corn;
A pair of little eyes;
A little head;
A white neck;
A lovely cream coloured belly, soft as silk;
A back covered with glossy silken feathers;
Here white, here black,
And the whole an ash grey;
A small tail;
Tiny, Tiny, legs'.

All these together could be held by a little child in her hand. Two such creatures, endowed with life, live in my house. one is a male; the other female. They chat with each other. Forage for food for their family. Build their nest. Fondle and caress each other; live happily; lay eggs; and keep their young ones free from hunger.

This is how Bharati begins a beautiful little essay on 'sparrows'. He envies the sparrows their power to fly. He wonders whether those cheerful birds would ever have had a headache. 'Such an innocent countenance could never go with a headache ever' he concludes.

But no naturalist agrees with this picture. Not one of them says that the bird is good, though it may have a few good points.

There are more sparrows than any other birds in the country. They nest thrice a year, and each clutch consists of five eggs. They can live up to forty years. They teem all over the world. They go everywhere and eat everything. They flourish where no other birds could live, and thrive where daintier birds would die.

They build their untidy nests all about our houses, in all imaginable and unimaginable places. Nothing discourages them. If one nest is pulled down, which is not often done in our country, in no time at all, they build another, and in the same place too !

At first sight, the sparrow does not seem to be a handsome bird. The hen-bird is a quakeress, demure and clad in subdued brown. The cock-bird who is somewhat bigger and stouter, is, if we look closely, fully as beautiful as Bharati sees him. The naturalists deluge him with their adjectives - audacious, bold, brawling, chattering, confident, courageous, greedy, impudent, omnivorous, perky, quarrelsome, saucy, truculent, untidy, voracious. He seems to deserve them all.

Yeats speaks of 'the brawling of a sparrow in the caves' and a naturalist describes 'the truculent battles in which they will occasionally engage in troops, when excited upon some difference of opinion arising out of questions of love or nestproperty', 'still their fighting does not often come to anything very serious'. In spite of their noisy mock battles, they are very sociable birds, friendly to their own kind. You can see rows and rows of them on the twigs of trees, on roof tops, on telegraph wires, and on the meadows. But they are vile thieves, stealing other birds' nests, and driving them away with their strong, short beaks, when the true owners seek to come back to what were their own houses. They are very troublesome to the farmer. They pick the seeds from the ground when they are sown, they pull off the seeds from ears of corn, and steal them from the harvested stocks, and from the stored piles of grain- coming literally in their hundred. They peck at flowers and vegetables and fruit. And they steal the poultry feed. A pair of sparrows will destroy three thousand insects in a week. And they mean to be friendly and sociable to us, always choosing to dwell near us.

They have a glorious record. They figure in nursery stories and rhymes. They are mentioned in the Bible in more than one place. Catullus laments the death of a pet sparrow. The venerable Bede

compares their flight in and out of a house to man's transient, fleeting life upon this earth. Shakespeare himself gives them a place in his dramas. Lyly makes cupid offer his mother's 'team of sparrows' as a stake, when he played with Campaspe and lost. Pope and Longfellow and Jean Ingelow, all sing of the sparrow ; and Humbert Wolfe in a poem entitled 'Two Sparrows' records their conversation. It is wonderful how some people seem to know the language of birds. Fabulists, like Aesop and Vishnusarma, story tellers and poets of all periods and countries and even viziers like the Persian Vizier who understood the language of owls- in fact, all who live in the world-of-make-believe seem to know their language. Here is Wolfe's poem.

“Two sparrows, feeding
heard a thrush
Sing to the dawn.
The first said, ‘Tush !
‘in all my life
I never heard
A more affected
Singing bird’.
The second said
‘It’s you and me,
Who slave to keep
The likes of he’.
‘And if we cared’.
Both sparrows said,
‘We’d do that singing
on our head’.
The thrush pecked sideways.
and was dumb.
‘And now’, they screamed,
he’s pinched our crumb’.

Of course, the sparrow has been referred to again and again, in our Tamil poetry, from the *Sangham* period down-wards, in various

contexts. Here is one from *kurun-tokai* (verse 46). The poet's name is Maamilaatan.

"A few little sparrows,
 Whose folded wings
 Seem like wilted lilies,
 Nest in our house ;
 They fly out and peck
 At the corn left out to dry
 In our courtyard ;
 And roll with abandon
 In the dust which lies
 Upon the village common ;
 But, towards evening's close,
 They all come home
 To nestle with their young
 In the eaves of our house,
 O, my dear,
 Are there no nesting sparrows,
 Or such lonely evenings,
 In that far off land
 Where my beloved has gone ?

This is a touching poem whose echo (all unconscious) we find in Jean Ingelow's.

' When sparrows build, and the leaves break forth,
 My old sorrow wakes and cries '.

We might now go back to Bharati's essay where he moralises in an altogether different vein.

He prays to God to give him wings to fly away from the crowds of men ; from their bonds, and their illnesses, sorrows, and untruths. He wishes to fly into space. How many countries, forests, flowers, hills, tarns, waterfalls, rivers, and broad oceans, can I not see then, he ruminates.

He envies the sparrow yet once more. It can speak, but cannot tell a lie. There are male and female among them but there is no cruel domination, nor oppression, of one by the other. They have houses, but no taxes to pay. They have food to eat, and work to do. There is no master, and there is no servant (slave).

Bharati listens to the talk of the sparrows. One says to the other 'Quit', 'Quit', 'Quit', 'Quit'. Bharati thinks that message teaches him the way of happiness.

Quit, Quit, Quit- do not quit your work; do not renounce your food; do not forsake your partner; do not abandon your nest; do not desert your young ones.

Unloosen all ties of bondage. Drop all foolish thinking. Put away all your sorrows.

Then he declares : " I shall be free. My bonds will be severed. I shall be free. Always act as I please. But my actions will never harm another, not myself. My desires are all pure. May my strength grow from more to more, every instant, so that I may achieve what I wish.

I seek life- life which will not perish, even if the heavens fall.

I seek knowledge-true knowledge, to see all things clearly and unafraid.

I shall never seek to hurt another. And no harm will ever befall me.

O Goddess of, Power, by your grace, I shall live free in this world.

THREE ANCIENT TAMIL WOMEN-POETS

Dr. Avvai Natarajan in his doctoral thesis lists thirty-nine women-poets who lived and composed verses in the most authentic ancient literary period in Tamil, now called the Cankam Period. Their verses included in the Cankam Anthologies number one hundred and eighty one, which is quite a sizeable percentage. It is just possible that the percentage may be higher both as regards that number and the verses to their credit, as the anthologies list quite a few verses as anonymous or pseudonymous and some of these may possibly be by women-poets. We know practically nothing about these women whether they were young or old, single, married, or widowed, how they learnt their art, and how they lived and moved in the company of sister and brother poets, chieftains, princes and kings.

After that early period, which modern conservative scholars estimate as about eighteen hundred years, or almost two thousand years ago, there seem to have been but two or three women-poets, and they were mainly concerned with religion, and not with all aspects of life as the ancient women-poets were. And even they conform to and accept male dominance, unless the anthologists of old had deliberately or otherwise, omitted the verses of women who asserted their rights.

In Sanskrit too there were sizeable numbers of women-poets in ancient times, and very few later on. We do not, and perhaps cannot, know what sociological or other factors operated to produce this near vacuity in the later periods.

I shall present here one verse each from three Tamil women-poets of olden times, in English translation in the modern method of

translation. Translation is in one sense the most ancient literary art. A thought has no language in the mind, and it is expressible, and is expressed, in different languages in words of differing form and sound, and each such word is a 'translation' of the thought into words. Nothing moves without a 'translation' says Bates who was regarded as an authority on 'translation' his day. Everything evolves, everything changes, and anything that does not move or change is dead. Evolution is a universal phenomenon. And so, this is true of translation as well.

Once upon a time translation was regarded as a Cinderella, a humble maid of the queenly original, a pale shadow of the burnished words of a poet. The translator was therefore expected to step on the footprints of the original. He had to aim at "faithful correspondence" and was called names if he did not. At the present day his aim is stated to be "dynamic equivalence." He has not to render word by equivalent word, but has to render a great thought by an equally powerful word or set of words in his translation. Two examples might help make this idea clear. Rieu has translated Homer's Iliad, and his Odyssey into idiomatic English prose. Critics regard his translation as one of the best. In one of the introductions he gives an example of the "faithful correspondence" method, and the "dynamic equivalence" method. A passage in Homer according to the "faithful correspondence" method would run thus : "What words have escaped by the fence of your teeth !" These words though correct do not convey the poet's idea well enough. The correct translation should read, "What nonsense !".

Another example is one given by Eugene Nida, acknowledged as the greatest authority on translation generally, and on translation of the Bible in particular. He cites an example from a Hebrew (Aramaic) verse in the Bible. Faithfully translated, it should read, "They glorified God." All the three words are modern English words, and they seem to be well understandable. Yet Nida says that the translation is not acceptable. He says that the translation of the original passage should

be "They said God is wonderful ". It is difficult for an Indian whose mother-tongue is not English, and who is not living in the country where the natives speak it, to appreciate Nida's remarks. Yet they must be accepted as right. The English language is not static; it changes from day to day. An authority on translation observes that if a native Englishman is absent from his country for more than two years, his English would be out of date.

So my translation is greatly daring, and possibly out of date. I have done it, so as to provide a roughhewn piece of rock which may induce a good sculptor to chisel a beautiful statue. These words are not written in self-disparagement, but with a recognition of modern trends, and in a spirit of true humility. Mine is an export effort of raw goods.

Auvaiyar is the greatest of the women-poets of ancient Tamil both in respect of the number and of the quality of her verses. As already mentioned, we know practically nothing about her real name, or who she was, where she was born and bred, or how she learnt her art. Yet we know a little more about her than of some of the others. We know that she has sung of Cera, Cola and Pandya, the three great kings of the Tamil country. She has also sung of some princes and chieftains. She has referred to three poets - two men and a woman- Kapilar, Parinar and Velliveetiyar and so must have been their younger contemporary or of a later date. Her verses are included in Akananuru, Kurum-tokai, Narrinai and Purananuru- four of the ancient Tamil anthologies.

There are several women-poets of later dates who bear or have assumed the name Auvaiyar, which is a causal name and not likely to have been a personal name. Legends galore have gathered about her, many of them bordering on the miraculous. Even a beautiful film has been produced about her, but it treats of the various Auvaiyars as if they were one and the same. The film, though aesthetically pleasing, is chronologically inexact.

And now for the translation of a verse of her (verse 235) from Purananuru.

POETS AND PATRONS

When our chief had but a little store
Of palm-wine, he used to give all of it to us;
Gone are those days now:
When he had a large store of palm-wine,
He was wont to drink it along with us,
Rejoicing greatly as he shared it,
While we sang as we drank it,
Gone are those days too:
When he had but a little food in stock,
He divided it equally, and laid it
On numberless plates and gave us our shares;
Gone are those days as well;
When he had a large stock of food,
Then too he shared it with us
Serving it in equally numberless plates;
Gone are all those days too:
He let us stroll as we pleased
All over his territories where there was
Much luscious bone thick with meat ;
Gone are those days :
But he himself took those paths
That led to where sharp spears were hurled
And countless arrows flew ;
Gone too are those days :
He used to gently stroke and smooth down
My foul-smelling hair with his hand
Perfumed by the scent of fragrant flowers ;
That too is gone.
The cruel spear which sank deep
Into his handsome manly chest

Has crashed through the hole it had punched
 In the bowls of splendid songsters of exquisite skill ;
 Has pierced the held-out palms of all suppliants,
 Has dimmed the dazed pupils of dependent kinsfolk,
 And has pounded with force upon the tongues
 Of poets skilled in the use of choicest words
 Of beauty and power.

Alas ! Alas ! I do not know
 Where my lord and protector is now,
 He who was wont to shield me
 Like an arching canopy.

There are no bards who sing,
 Nor any patrons who give.

The honey-rich flowers blossoming wide
 In the cool waters of drinking pools
 Waste their sweetness in the air around,
 As none may pluck and wear them :
 Likewise, numbers of men on earth
 Waste their lives without ever having given
 Gifts to others.

Here is a poem from another woman-poet. The colophon states that she belonged to Amur, and was the daughter of Perun-koli-naikan. The anthologist states that this verse is autobiographical, but I have dared to differ, and have interpreted it as the expression of a character created by the poet. 'Sally in our Alley' has not been held to be autobiographical.

THIS CONFOUNDED CITY

The bangles slipping from my wasting arms
 Betray my unfulfilled love for the sturdy youth
 Who wears on his legs hero-anklets,
 And on his face a moustache black as my eye-salve

So I am afraid of my mother,
I dare not clasp my beloved close,
For I am afraid of the obloquy
Of the Council of Elders,
May this bemused, confounded city
Which, instead of standing solidly on my side,
Opposes me thus in a two-fold way,
Quake and tremble in fear forever
As I do now.

Here is yet another verse of a woman-poet named Pon-mutiyar. Some verses by her are included in an anthology, Purattirattu. Nothing more is known about her.

HIS CAVALRY

He is the lord of a few petty villages
Bordered by hedges of cotton shrubs ;
And his war-horses which had been fed ill
On the dry and sapless shells of the pods of black-gram
And had stood in their stable, wearily
Upon tottering and nerveless legs,
Break easily through the massed ranks
In the van of his enemies' armies,
Even as a boat cleaves its way
Through the serried billows of the sea.

But the war-horses of the lords
Of fair cities lying among fertile lands,
Well-fed on good food soaked in fat,
And well-groomed with their manes trimmed neatly,
And with bells clinking around their necks,
Stand fearfully far from the fray,
As impure maidens stand aloof
From the sacred shrine
Of Muruga, the dreaded god.

MUTTOLLAYIRAM

Lost Classics

Every country bewails its 'lost classics'. We do not know, however, how many of them were actually lost. Some of them surely have been. We in the Tamil country claim our own share of such losses. We claim too, I am afraid, more than our share, through some imaginary losses. But that is a disputable ground, and it would be wise to leave it alone.

Of the actual, post-diluvion losses we know precious little in actual fact. We do not know much about their quality for instance. We do not know for how many of them we should really grieve, and for how many of them we should rejoice at their demise. But there is a general tendency to regard all dead people and all lost things as the best, or nearly so.

The reason

But why were the classics lost ? One major reason alleged is the devastation by a great flood, or deluge, which wrought unimaginable havoc in some far off day. We cling to legends which claim that quite a sizeable area of our country was washed off by the sea. A tremendous tidal wave, an oceanic invasion, destroyed the southern portion of our fertile country. It destroyed too, without leaving a single trace, every bit of writing produced till then. The devout accept this story as a matter of faith, and in a sense are even proud of it, as something which has not happened to any other country. But there is no geological or geographical evidence for it. There are no literary lamentations of such a selective yet complete destruction of ancient Tamil classics.

Instances

Records in stone, and seals in clay, and similar ancient things, have in some places been subjected to the ravages of time, of flood or fire, of insects and vermin, and even of the wanton vandalism by frenzied men flushed with victory, in the insolence of their wine, or in the fanaticism of their religion, or even in their sheer ignorance.

Other Causes

There have been other causes too for the loss of precious literature. Some of them are common to most countires; and they apply, it seems to me, particularly to ours. Some of those reasons may be stated as follows : the apathy of the general, mostly illiterate, public to all literature; the fact of their having been in verse (to enable them to be perpetuated by memory), but which, however, is not a medium which can be easily understood ; the limited nature of their appeal on account of the subject matter; the use of the language of the elite ; the manner of their expression or presentation ; the easily perishable nature of the material on which they were written or inscribed ; and finally, the absence of facilities, such as carefully maintained private or public libraries, where they could be stored, preserved, maintained, and made use of by the present population, and saved for future use.

Some Examples

We have lost fiftysix out of the seventy poems of Pari-patal (one of the Sangham anthologies), and two Patirrup-pattu. But a few remnants of the lost poems (alas too few) survive through their quotation in the commentaries of the middle period of Tamil. The cause is mainly apathy, and indifference to scholarship and the preservation of scholarly works. We find even today such indifference, and some losses.

Muttollayiram

One such classic (of a slightly later period), which has been lost in the main, is known as Muttollayiram. We know very little about it

today except that it was a fairly long poem, in praise of the three kings of the Tamil country- Chera, Chozha and Pandya. It is rather remarkable that in the early days Tamil poets seem to have been fond of praising kings, chieftains, and patrons, in a measure and quantity almost unknown in the other great languages of the world. Whether the later neglect of Muttollayiram was due to the fall of those kings from power, or not, we do not know.

The Views

There are two strong views about how long the original poem was. One view is that it consisted of about nine hundred verses in praise of the three kings, but none knows the proportion devoted to each of them. Another view is that the poem consisted of nine hundred poems in praise of each of the three kings ; and it was therefore two thousand seven hundred verses long- quite a sizeable piece of flattery.

Our Ignorance

We know nothing about the author, or the region in which he lived, nor when he lived and wrote, nor who his patron or patrons were, or even whether it was a he or she. The poem seems to have been extant in its entirety, right up to the time of the famous commentators, roughly over six hundred or seven hundred years ago.

The Survivals

But since then the poem has mostly perished, except for one hundred and ten verses, -one hundred and nine of them in an anthology, and one other verse quoted in a commentary. These have been dealt with at some what greater length in the 'Introduction' to a translation of Muttollayiram, done by me, and which is now going through the press in Calcutta.

Salvage

The rediscovery of the surviving fragments of the poem in the anthology Pura-t-tirattu, was made by R. Raghava Aiyangar, who published the remnants in book form in 1905.

The anthology has included the verses under twelve heads : but we do not know how they were arranged in the original poem. It is too much to hope that the whole poem may yet be recovered.

Samples

I give below just three specimens (one for each king) of the translations as samples. They bear numbers 12, 42, 68, 72, 88 and 99 in the book which will be published soon. Those interested may get more from that book.

Specimen-1 : PANDYA

(No.42 in the Book)

This is a shy and delicate request made to her friend by a love-torn maid, who hopes that the king would be interested enough to seek her out.

JUST TELL HIM THIS

Do not tell him
Of my father ;
No, nor reveal my name ;
Do not tell him
Of my city ;
Nor tell him
About my mother ;
But, please,
Just tell him,
The hard hearted lord
Of the Tamil folk,
The lord of elephant hosts
Whose red-hot temper never cools,
That in his city
There dwells a girl
Whose eyes do not close in sleep.

Specimen-2 : CHOZHA

(No. 68 in the Book)

The king's birthday came, and there were lavish gifts to all learned men and poets. There was also a wholesale birthday clearing of houses, and alas ! the clinging spider webs were all swept away.

THE LONE UNFORTUNATE

On this festive day
When the star *Revati* rules.
Revati, the birth star
Of our Lord King-killi,
Who wields a spear
Whose tip is like a gleaming leaf,
Pious Brahmins
Receive gifts
Of cows and gold ;
And sweet-tongued bards
Ride upon the backs
Of stately elephants
Huge as Mandara Hill.
But, tell me why
Upon this happy day
The poor spider alone
Has to lose
Even her home
A tenuous web.

Specimen-3 : CHERA

(No.88 in the Book)

The poet's love of nature both animate and inanimate find beautiful expression in this poem, which describes both the charm of the well-watered land, and the might of its ruling king.

THE FLOOD IS ON FIRE

When the buds of red lilies
Opened their vermilion mouths
Upon the rich
Well-watered fields,
The flooding waters
Are on fire
Think the startled birds
And with clamorous cries
They gather close
With wings for arms
Their cowering brood
In King Kothai's land-
Of Kothai who wields
An envenomed spear
With leaf-like tip.

SILAPPATIKARAM

(PROLOGUE)

Silappatikaram (The Lay of the Anklet) is a long story in verse narrating the marriage and love of Kannaki, the lovely daughter of a merchant prince who lived in Pukar (Kaviri-p-poom-pattinam) and was the owner of a mercantile fleet. She was married to Kovalan, the accomplished son of another merchant prince, who was a trader by land, and who owned a caravan of carts. It tells of her desertion by her husband, and their subsequent reunion ; of their secret flight from their city to seek their fortune in far off Madurai ; of his tragic murder there ; and of her anger ; and of her beautification; and deification. Its author is Ilam-ko-atikal. Its date is still debated- the earliest is the first century A.D. and the latest the sixth century or so. This is the poetical prologue to the poem which has thirty sections spread over three cantos. The poem relates the events which took place in Pukar, Madurai and vanchi, the capitals of Chola, Pandya and Chera the three kings of the ancient Tamil country.

Kannaki, the ideal wife, is now regarded as the Goddess of Chaste Wifehood- the Goddess of Chastity.

This foreword now forms part of the poem ; but some scholars think that it seems to be by another hand, a view as hotly disputed as supported.

PROLOGUE

At the East-gate Monastery,
Renouncing royal rank and state,
As a humble monk abode
Prince Ilamko, the younger brother
Of the Chera, king of Westland.

A group of mountain tribesmen came
To him in a body, and said :
'May it please your Grace to listen
To this which seems a wondrous miracle,
In the delightfully thick shade
Of a golden-blossomed kino tree,
Reft of a breast there stood a lady,
Beautiful and sublimely chaste.
Angels attendant on Heaven's King
Came hastening there ; and showed to her
Her dearly beloved consort,
And, while we stood with amazed eyes,
Escorted her to the land of heaven'.

At the monk's side then was Sattan,
That master of delicious Tamil :
And he said, 'I know everything
That happened there' and thus began :

'In Pukar city of abiding glory,
The hoary city of Chola,
Whose chaplet is the mountain ebony,
Dwelt one Kovalan, a merchant prince
Who with a glamorous dancer
Dallied so long in amorous love,
That all his precious wealth was lost,
Kannaki was his wedded wife.
It so chanced that, in order to sell
A tinkling anklet of her foot,
He entered many-mansioned Madurai,
The celebrated city of the pandyas,
Glorified in many a song.

'Taking it in his hand he went
Through its great and splendid
Shopping Street,
And showed it to a craftsman in gold.

"None other than our crowned queen
Is worthy to wear this anklet ;
Please stay here a while"
Said he, and went forth.

"The exquisite anklet with tiny beads
Which I took from you so long ago,
I saw just now
In the hands of a stranger, thief",
Said he to the king.
And the king who wore garlands
Of flowers which had blossomed
Upon the boughs of the neem,
(Since the destined time had come
For his evil deeds to bear their fruit).
Gave it not any considered thought,
And he ordered his veteran guards,
'Go, slay the thief ; bring that anklet here !"
And Kovalan was slain,
Executed on the murderous spot.
'His wife, seeing no haven anywhere,
From her long eyes shed such tears
As drank the life of the Pandya,
Since she was a chaste wife :
And from her impearled bosom
She tore off a single breast
With a cruel twist ;
And fed the flames which leapt there from
With Madurai, the Eternal city.
This is she, that chastest wife,

So universally praised'.
Thus he ended : and the other asked,
"You said the time was ripe
For his evil deeds to bear their fruit.
Tell me, pray,
What this deed of evil was".
'May your Eminence delight to hear me.
Within the hoary city of Madurai,
Whose lustrous glory can never grow dim,
In the public temple square
Of the Lord whose crown of matted hair
Is decked with yellow laburnam flowers ;
Stands the open Silver Court,
Once I lay there in dark midnight ;
And I saw the great God
Who watches over Madurai city
Appear before her who seemed
Like incarnate chastity in a fury,
And stood writhing in deepest anguish.

"O Lady who, in an indignant mood,
With your breast kindled a raging fire !
Both of you have but reaped the fruit
Which your prior deeds have borne.

"O Lady who wears golden bangles :
In a former birth of yours,
The wife of Sangama, the merchant
Of Singapura of untarnished fame,
Cursed both you and your husband ;

And that curse has sought you out,
O Lady whose tresses are long and dense !
You will see your wedded lord
When twice seven days are done,

But in an angle's form and mould,
And not in any lowly, earthly shape.
Not illusive, but authentic,"
Were her words : I heard them said he.

"To those who err in kingly duties
Avenging justice will come, and slay them :
To a woman most sublimely chaste
Noblest men will pay their homage :
The fruit of every deed ever done before
Will come in concrete shape, and cling"
'All these truths have now been proven
By this anklet of expert art,
We shall of this a poem make-
A poem named 'The lay of the Anklet',
With prose and song said the monk.

'As this excellent theme concerns
The crowned monarchs, all the three
May your Reverence deign to do it'
Suggested Sattan. Then said the monk ;
'The song of nuptial blessing ;
The tale of how their elders
Set them up on household duties ;

The tale of the debut on the stage
Of the Maid Madhavi expert in the dance ;
The tale of the glory of sunset ;
The tale of how the city turned out
To celebrate the Feast of Indra' ;
The tale of the revels by the sea :
And of the lyrics so sweetly sung
In the flowery groves by the ocean shore ;
The tale of spring's fresh arrival,
And forlorn Madhavi's distress then ;

The tale of the ill-omed dream ;
The tale of how eager Kannaki
Saw the sights of the country ;
The tale of how they saw the wilderness ;
Of the dance of the huntsmen ;
The tale of how he and she,
Who wore flowers in her hair,
Sojourned In the outskirts of the city ;
The tale of how they saw the city
Whose resonant drums beat sweet music ;
The tale of how that lovely lady
Was left safely in a sanctuary ;
The tale of how he was slain as a felon;
The folk-dance of the shepherd women ;
Of how they heard the evil news
With all its string of woe ;
The song of lamentation
Of the trembling city folk
As she went around at mid-day ;
The tale of how she argued her case
Before the far-famed king himself ;
And of the terrible vows she made ;
The tale of the great conflagration ;
The tale of how the great deity
Appeared and spoke authentic words ;
The folk-dance of the hill-women
With nectarine flowers in their hair ;
All these, and the tales of how
They chose the stone, and how they worked it ;
And how transported it across the water ;
And how they installed and consecrated it ;
And how she blessed, and how bestowed her boons-
All these tales five time six

The famous monk deigned to sing
In a poem with prose and song.
While Sattan of Madurai city,
Who dealt in many a grain, listened.
This is the prologue which narrates in brief
All the divisions of this poem.

HERE IS ANOTHER CONFLUENCE

From very early times, and among various peoples of the world, the number "three" has been regarded as memorable and mystic, and has gripped the imagination with something akin to awe and wonder. The "Trinities" of the Hindu, Christian and Moslem faiths ; the divisions of time - past, present and future, ; the dimensions of space - length, breadth and thickness (height or depth) ; earth, sky and heaven ; sun, moon and stars ; thought, word and deed ; prose, poetry and drama ; and so on and on, have been conceived and regarded as three. The idea has permeated religion and faith, politics and even science. We have the three states of matter (solid, liquid and gas) ; and the three fundamental particles of the atom (electron, proton and neutron). There are several other confluences of three - Ganga, Jamuna and Saraswati ; of Love, Wisdom and Power. The *Triveni* is declaredly devoted to Art, Literature and History and its symbol is a combination of three- the Lotus, the Flame and the Thunderbolt. The ancient kings of the Tamil country were three- Chera, Chola and Pandya. We are said to be governed by the "Three Language Formula"- the International, the National and the Regional languages. What these three are, or should be, is a matter of personal preferences, and of acrimonious debates. For the purpose of this article they have been conceived to be English, Sanskrit and Tamil (the writer's regional language). We shall look at a few selected examples where the poets in these languages agree in a remarkable degree, though, at the times in which they wrote, they could not have been aware of each other's writings- which, perhaps, is a strong indication that, divided though it may be by space, time, colour, faith, or even culture, all mankind is fundamentally one in thought and spirit, and in expression as well.

Every nation, and group of people, have from time immemorial conceived of a god or gods, all-seeing, all knowing, all-powerful, and present everywhere. Each man and woman has sought solace from the god of his or her in mind- imposed though it may be by birth or environment- and has sought also guidance from it ; and has tried to gain both by prayer and offerings, Early thoughts about God and the external world, rising from the unploughed field of ignorance, started with fear- an abysmal and all-pervading fear. They took shape with a vague impression of magic, and developed, into philosophical speculation, and then case-hardened into various and specific religions, each with its own galaxy of gods, and devils, beliefs and rituals.

There were great thinkers in all the countries where civilisation and culture developed, and some of them created magnificent poetry, which may be said to be fine thought clad in finer art, and expressed in finer words.

Like the worship of God, which may be universal and magnificent, or narrow, sectarian, and fanatically crooked, cruel and intolerant, patriotism too may be wide and tolerant, or narrow and inhibited. It also stimulates great poetic urges. So too does the first and greatest love, the love of man and maid. Poets have felt that the anguish of parted lovers inspires greater poetry than the delights of united lovers.

Moralising is a common failing, though men, whose hearts are sapless and dry, may indulge in it, mostly in their old age, after much licence in their youth.

Of God

This is a translation of the Dhyana Sloka (meditative verse) of Vishnu Sahasranaama (The thousand names of vishnu, God. The Protector of the Hindu Trinity). The language is Sankskrit.

I bow to Vishnu,
Whose feet are the earth,
Whose navel is the sky,

Whose breath is the wind,
Whose eyes are the moon and the sun,
Whose ears are the eight directions,
Whose head is the firmament,
Whose mouth is fire,
Whose garment is the ocean of water,
Who contains within His body
All the three worlds
Of many and varied shapes and forms-
As gods, and men,
As birds of the air, and beasts
As hooded snakes, and singing celestials,
And as beings of the nether world,
Which please and rejoice by their variety,
To Him who is Lord over all
I bow.

We have a parallel in Tamil. This is a translation of the benedictory verse by Perum Tevanaar- who sang the Bhaarata. It is prefixed to Narrinai, one of the anthologies of what is now known as The Sangam Anthologies. In Translation it runs thus :

The spacious earth
Is His comely rose-hued feet ;
The clear-watered sea,
Where the whorled conchs resound,
Is His raiment ;
The ethereal sky is His body ;
The four quarters are His arms ;
The cool-rayed moon and the fiery sun
Are his twin eyes ;
He pervades all things that are,
And enfolds them within Himself.
He is the Supreme God

Of whom the Vedas speak
 So declare the wise of Him,
 Who, in order to destroy evil altogether.
 Wields the flashing discus.

This is not to be wondered at, perhaps, for, notwithstanding all the diversities of languages, regions and faiths, India has been one country in thought and culture. But here is another parallel from ancient Greek of an Egyptian god. It is a poem entitled Oracle of Serapis, by a Greek poet named Philetas. His date is uncertain. Nicocreon, King of Cyprus, asked the Oracle of Serapis, what sort of God He was, and this poem is the answer. It is No.482, in Higham and Bowra's Greek poetry in translation.

Listen and learn
 What manner of god I am :
 My head, the firmament ;
 the sea, my belly ;
 Earth for my feet ;
 my ears in aether fixed ;
 And radiant sunlight,
 my far-flashing eye.

Of Love

We shall now look at another theme-Love ; and lover's joy, and lover's anguish.

The second poem in Kuruntokai one the Sangam Anthologies is in the form of an address by a delighted lover to a bee. It runs thus

O Honey-bee with dainty wings.
 Whose life is a quest
 Of flower's dust !
 I charge thee speak,
 But not as thou listeth ;
 And tell me truly

What, in sooth, thou knowest,
 Is there aught
 Among the flowers thou knowest,
 Which hath the fragrance
 Of her flowing tresses-
 Of her with peacock's grace,
 And shining, even teeth
 Who in sweet surrender
 Has loved me for aye ?

We have a surprising parallel in Robert Browning's 'Nay But You'. This rhapsody too is about the beloved's hair, but of its colour and not of its perfume. This poem of two verses runs thus :

Nay but you, who do not love her,
 Is she not pure gold, mistress ?
 Holds earth aught, - speak truth- above her ?
 Aught like this tress see, and this tress,
 And this last, fairest tress of all,
 So fair, see, ere I let it fall.
 Because you spend your lives in praising,
 To praise you search the wide world over,
 Then, why not witness calmly gazing,
 If earth holds aught-speak truth-above her ?
 Above this tress, and this, I touch,
 But cannot praise, I love so much.

Here is something from the Sanskrit- by a lover not about a maid but about a flower, and its fragrance. This too is in the form of a question to a bee. It is no.107 in John Brough's Poems from the Sanskrit.

Bee, you fly so far around ;
 Tell me, have you ever found,
 Seen, or ever heard men tell,

Of a flower to match the grace-
Speak, and do not fear to tell-
Of the gentle lily's face.

In the following set of three poems-one is translation from Kuruntokai (Tamil), another directly from Tennyson's Oenone, and the third in translation by Helen Waddel of a poem from Medieval Latin Lyrics, we find the anguished expression of lovelorn maids lying lonely in the night, sleepless, and with only their sorrow for company.

The Tamil poem in translation.

Pitch dark
Is this midnight hour ;
All speech is hushed,
And mankind is lapped in slumber sweet,
Anger and hate are laid aside ;
And the whole wide world
Sleeps - now ;
But, alas ! I am sleepless,
I'm sure, I alone.

The Latin Lyric in translation runs thus :

Laid on my bed in silence of the night,
There is no sound of voices; hushed the street,
Not a bird twitters ; even the dogs are still ;
I alone of all men dare not sleep.

The poet is Petronius Arbiten.

Tennyson has this in his Oenone

The grasshopper is silent on the grass ;
The lizard with his shadow on the stone
Rests like a shadow ; and the cicada sleeps.
The purple flowers droop ; the golden bee
Is lily cradled : I alone awake.

Of Patriotism

And now for another triad dealing with the devotion of a patriot to his Motherland. The basis is Bankim Chandra's famous Vande Mataram song, which yielded the first place to Tagore's 'Jana-gana-mana' as our National Anthem.

A fairly close, but not an inspired translation of the first two verses, is given below :

Good and plentiful are thy waters ;
Good and abundant are thy fruits ;
And cool art thou
With mountain breezes ;
Dark green are thy pastures.
And thy fields of corn.
Mother, I salute thee.

Thy nights are thrilled
With pure moonlight ;
Splendid art thou
With the blossomed flowers
Of thy branching trees soaring high ;
Delightful is thy smile ;
Dulcet sweet are the words thou speakest ;
O giver of happiness ;
O bestower of boons ;
O my mother !
Mother, I salute thee.

Subrahmanya Bharati, the Tamil poet, felt that this poem was so good that he must translate it ; and he has given us two translations-one beginning with the words, "Iniya neer-p-perukkinai" and consisting of twenty-six lines, and the other beginning with the words, "Nalir mani neerum" and running to twenty-nine- lines.

Sri Aurobindo, another patriot-poet who like Bharati found political asylum in Pondicherry, has translated the first two verses in twelve lines as below. In the Sanskrit original the first two verses run to six lines only. The other verses are not given here to save space. Sri Aurobindo says :

Mother, I bow to thee !
 Rich with thy hurrying streams,
 Bright with thy orchard blooms
 Cool with thy winds of delight,
 Dark fields waving, Mother of might,
 Mother free !

Glory of moonlight dreams,
 Over thy branches and lordly streams,
 Clad in thy blossoming trees,
 Mother, Giver of ease,
 Laughing low and sweet !
 Mother, I kiss thy feet.

This is a poet's free translation of a poet. He has also sought to use rhyme, which, while it makes the translation stray, adds other beauties to it.

The above selections have brought together not merely Sanskrit, English, and Tamil, but Greek and Latin as well ; not merely North India, South India and England, but Greece, Crete, Egypt, Italy, Bengal and Pondicherry as well. Languages provide links, if only we have the heart and mind to use them.

We can and should feel if we are and women of culture, that all the world is kin, and we should behave and act accordingly.

May *Triveni**, which has been endeavouring to promote such a feeling and attitude, flourish. May *Triveni* live for ever.

* *Triveni* is a famous literary journal in English

LYRICS OF OLD

Ancient Tamil Poetry abounds in lyrics of matchless beauty and grace, dealing with themes of love and war. Here are a few renderings specially done for this publication. The foot-notes given below each poem will, help the reader to appreciate it the better.

FASHIONED OF FLOWERS

(From Kurunthokai)

Like a superb garland
Skilfully woven
With blossoms of white glory-lilies
And jasmine flowers
Fresh bloomed from buds,
Twining in between them
Blue water -lilies
Whose petals are fragrant
Is the fair form
Of my beloved unto me.
O ! How deliciously fragrant it is,
And how far surpassing
The soft loveliness
Of tender sprouts,
And how delightfully sweet
To my embrace !

Note : The hero soliloquises in a reminiscent mood. Each limb and feature of his beloved recalls to him the fragrance, softness, or colour of a flower. Compare the idea in the sloka "Of lilies blue he made thine eyes"; but here there is no poignant ending, for the lover's love is returned.

The poet is Siraikkudi Anthaiyar, nine of whose poems are included in the Sangam Anthologies.

THE FLOWER AND THE THORN

(From Kurunthokai)

Alack ! My heart is sore.
 Alack ! My heart is sore.
 As the small leaved cow's thorn
 Thickly growing on the common
 Displays fresh flowers
 Which are sweet to the eye,
 Yet bears many a secret prickle ;
 Even so, my beloved lover,
 Who gladdened my heart
 With his winsome ways,
 Now harrows my heart
 With his unkindness.
 Alack ! My heart is sore.

Note : The fickleness of man and his unfaithfulness in love are themes which are common to all poets and in all climes.

In this poem a mistress bewails such an unkindness, and by her language reminds us that 'sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things.'

The poet Allur Nan Mullai has eleven poems in the Sangam Anthologies-one in Akananooru, nine in Kurunthokai, and one in Purananooru.

HAVE A CARE !

(From Purananooru)

Hark, ye warriors, have a care.
 I warn ye, beware.
 In the shallow waters, ankle deep,
 Which become disturbed and muddy
 Even by the play of little village boys,

There may lurk a crocodile
Which pulls a mighty elephant down
And drags it under, killing it.
Even so is my chieftain.
If ye ponder not
On the many fine deeds he hath wrought,
But treat him with disdain
As one young in years,
I warn ye,
Ye can hardly hope to win.

Note : Avvai the poetess is the author of this piece. She needs no introduction to the Tamil loving people, which ought, however, to be warned that there are many bearing that honoured appellation and who must have lived at far different periods of time. In fact, Avvai is not so much a name as a description. That such a famous person has really remained anonymous is a matter for thought. She seems to have been an ambassador for peace which, then as now, seems to have been sought through a display of might.

WOULD YOU CALL THIS RIGHT ?

(From Purananooru)

That thy minstrels may wear
Lotuses of gold,
And that thy poets may caparison
Their elephants foreheads
With gay brocade,
And their well wrought chariots
Burnish bright,
Thou seizest on other's domain
O most unkindly ;
But thou art kind and gentle
To those who thy bounties seek.
O Kudumi, glorious in thy victories !
Would you call this right ?

Note : The poet Nettimaiyar has only three pieces of his included in the Sangam Anthologies and all of them are in the collection known as Purananooru.

The theme of the poem is praise of his patron. While it seems to rebuke, it really seeks to flatter.

THE EARTH IS MORE GLORIOUS **(From Muththollayiram)**

The heavens are far surpassed
By the earth's loveliness ;
Excelling the stars of heaven
Are the earthly kings of might ;
And as glorious as the moon
Moving among the stars of heaven
Is he.
The Chera called Kothai,
The suzerian lord
Of the people who dwell
On the Kolli mountain
Which towers up to heaven.

Note : The author of the poem is not known. It is one among a hundred and odd poems which are all that are left out of a bigger work called Muththollayiram ; and these lie scattered in an old anthology named Puraththirattu.

The original poem was one dedicated to the praise of the three kings of the Tamil country- namely Chera, Chola, and Pandiya. Each section may have been about nine hundred verses ; so that there may have been 2700 verses or so in all. Or again, it is possible that the total was only about 900. The verses are full of delightful and delicate conceits, and we are definitely the poorer for their loss.

THEN AND NOW

Is it human nature to compare the present with the past, or rather to contrast it, for comparisons are never so effective as contrasts are. It is also human nature, except rarely, not to think of or re-call an unpleasant past in a happy present. It is usual, however, to re-call a happy past in a sorrowful present. Though it has been declared with truth that 'sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things', men and women too, often indulge in this self-torture, and crown themselves with remembrances, which, however happy they were once, now merely accentuate their sorrow and throw it into greater relief against the background of old joyousness.

We find such material in the poetry of all nations. In Sanskrit poetry we find many such instances e.g. the sloka in Amarusataka commencing 'Puraaboot', and which contrasts the old happy days when they were lover and beloved, with the not so happy days when they are husband and wife. As also the sloka which says sadly 'Once I was you ; and you were I ; but now, I am I ; and you are you' and so on. We find quite a number of such poems in English poetry. We may also look at this poem from the Chinese (Waley's translation).

' Zip. zip the valley wind
Across the rocky hills
No grass but is dying,
No tree but is wilting.
You forget my great merits,
Remember only my small faults.'

Often such a poem is not merely a sad reminiscence, but a rebuke as well. We have a number of such poems in Tamil. We might recall some lovely lyrics of that kind in Silappadhikaram. Such poems belong

to no period or language in particular. For, the hearts of men and women are the same all over the world, and have been so at all times. We give below a simple poem in which a Lady's Maid rebukes a fickle lover, who paid his court with extravagant praise, but has now cooled down somewhat.

This poem is from *kurunthokai* (No. 196), and the poet is *Milai-k-kandan*, who has only this one poem to his credit in the *Sangam Anthologies*. Incidentally, he sings of the sweet and limpid water of the 'Pool of Ice' of the hill top of *Paari*, chief of the *Parambu* country.

O FICKLE LOVER

Formerly,
When my dear friend
Gave these to eat
A green and unripe fruit
Of the bitter neem,
Thou didst cry in joy,
'O How sweet and delicious
Is this lovely lump of sugar !'

But now,
Even when she offers thee
The clear and sweet water
From the cool 'Pool of Ice'
Upon *Pari's* hill top,
Still colder now
In this wintry month
Thou dost exclaim in disgust,
'O ! How hot it is !
And how brackish too !'-
Such, my lord,
Such is the texture of thy love !

KURUNTOKAI

[Kuruntokai is one of the eight anthologies of the sangham period of Tamil literature (roughly the first two centuries of the christian era). It deals with amatory themes.]

(1)

This touching little poem from Kuruntokai is by Karuvur-k-kata-p-pillai.

The maid seeks to comfort her mistress, assuring her that her lover will return soon. But the mistress finds little solace in her words, and tells her how she feels.

It is a familiar theme, and the simile is homely, yet what a little gem this pastoral is !

ALAS ! HE TARRIES YET

Like tender calves,
With soft and innocent eyes,
Which, in the evening,
Oft raise their heads
To gaze at the little pens
Of the bare farmstead,
When all the cows
Have gone out to graze
On the long, long trail,-
That I too suffer acutest pangs
He knows- he who has gone
far, far away.
Yet, O my dear,
He doth tarry still
In that far off land.

(2)

This little poem has the wilderness as its back-ground. A lover is torn between love and duty- love to his mistress ; and duty to seek wealth which is the **Sine Qua non** of all happiness, both in this world and in the next.

The poet Ukai-k-kuti-k-kizhar seems to suggest that love triumphs.

DOST THOU URGE ME TO LONELINESS ?

Since the poor
Can ne'er bestow
Nor alms, nor gifts ;
Nor pleasures taste,
Methinks, my heart,
Thou plannest deep
To work for wealth-
Overmuch.
Say, will she,
That lovely lady
Whose body gleams
Like tender mango sprouts,
Will she come
And be with thee
At thy work ?
Or dost thou urge
But poor me alone ?
Tell me, pray.

(3)

This voluptuous little love poem has its setting in the highlands. This also is by another poet of Karuvur -Karuvur Otajnani.

The result of this soliloquy is that the lover gives up his quest of adventure, as he finds in his love all that his heart can desire.

MY LITTLE FAIRY

Do I seek
For divine nectar ?
Then is she
As divinest nectar
Unto me.
Do I seek
For hidden treasure ?
Then is she
As a hidden treasure
Unto me.
How lovely
Are the spots of beauty
Which begin to peep
From her young bosom
So fair and firm !
How plump
Are her shoulders ?
She is the daughter
Of the hunter's clan
Whose dwellings are
Among rocky wilds.
How dainty
Is my lovely little fairy !

THE DIVINE FLUTE PLAYER

Perialwar is one of the greatest of vaishnavite saints, who sang of the Lord. He lived roughly about twelve hundred years ago.

The following is a free translation (almost a paraphrase) made over forty years ago-of verses 7 and 8 of a decad of his (sec. 3, No.6). It is entitled 'Kannan playing on the flute'.

I can never forget the thrill, when I first heard it sung by Sri A. Mahalingam Aiyar, who was gifted with a rich and mellifluous voice and which he perfected by his training under very able masters. However he gave to teaching what he owed to music, and remained, for long and very foolishly, as a teacher.

Listen to this wonder
That I saw on the earth.
The young shepherd swains
Who tended the cattle
Had all gathered there ;
And in their midst
The Lord whose couch is the snake
Was playing on the flute ;
And its melody
Reached upto heaven :
And the gods there,
Forgetting the offered sacrifice,
Hastened to the cowherd's hamlet,
And crowded and jostled there,
And with ears for lips
They tasted delight.

And followed Govinda ever,
And clung to him.
His slender fingers
Glided over the stops ;
His red-veined eyes
Slanted at the reed ;
And his red lips pouted;
And tiny beads of sweat
Formed on his puckered brow-
When Govinda took up his flute
And played thereon,
Flocks of birds
Left their nests
And gathered around him,
And lay motionless on the ground ;
Herds of milch cows
Bowed down their heads,
And stood on lazy legs,
And never so much
As flicked an ear.

THE EPISODE OF THE JAVELIN

(From Kamban)

'Courage leads to heaven, fear to death' said Seneca. However, the road to heaven is quite often through the gates of death. Nevertheless, brave men and women have risked their lives, and performed miracles of heroism with no expectation of any reward other than that provided by the mere doing ; and, quite often too, their acts have gone unnoticed. There are others, however, whose immortal deeds have survived their mortal bodies and have been enshrined in poetry and song, and have won awards of the highest merit. Though heroic deeds are done, now and then, on quiet and peaceful fronts, such acts of courage are shown most often on the battle-field, and have been described as 'generosity of the highest order' for the truly brave are quite prodigal even of their life.

Such an act of rare courage on the battle-field, in a moment of extreme danger, is recorded in the Ramayana in words of imperishable beauty. The cool intellect of the chief actor dictated to him the path of duty. He answered the call quickly and correctly, with no thought at all about the danger-death-to himself.

The fight by Rama and his army against the vast army of Ravana had been going on for a number of days. The losses were great on either side. But Ravana lost more heavily. All his great generals, all his brave sons, including his bravest and best, namely, Indrajit, and his mighty brother Kumbhakarna, and his old Guard, had fallen in battle. Ravana took the field himself, vowing vengeance, while terrible grief harrowed his heart. Fierce anger added strength to his resistless might.

He took up his mighty bow, which none but he could wield ; and donned his great quiver of arrows which had laid the gods low in the days of his glory ; and he donned his gold armour.

He mounted his gigantic battle-car, one-thousand wheeled, and drawn by a thousand horses. When he drove out of the city and climbed into the sky his car shone in the firmament like another midday sun. A great army went with him into battle.

That giant among the giants;
That embodied fruit of the wrongs
Which the gods had been tricked
By their enemies into committing ;
That fire which scorched
The minds of the bravest men
Whenever they dared
To let themselves think of him ;
And that vast and roaring sea
Risen into a swollen flood,
And whose numbers transcended count. . . .
His army too-
The monkey hosts saw.
The rakshasa army,
And the sea of the monkey hosts,
Both ready to lay down their lives.
Were locked in mortal combat
Facing each other ;
And, in the twinkling of an eye,
Sparks of fire flew ;
And like fluent streams of copper
Molten by that blazing fire
Streams of red blood
Flowed into the nearby sea.

Ravana too joined in the fray. Again and again, he shot from his great bow fiery arrows swift as the wind, and as powerful as bolts of thunder, and as deadly as messengers of death. Innumerable soldiers of the monkey army of Rama were slain, and Lakshmana had to hasten to their rescue, and stem Ravana's onslaught.

Then a great fight was on between the two great warriors. Ravana aimed a missile, and a potent one, propelled by cruel magic, against Lakshmana. Lakshmana, ignorant in magic's ways, stood dismayed not knowing how to ward it off. But luckily vibhishana, Ravana's brother, was by, and he knew its secret, and told Lakshmana how to ward it. Lakshmana followed his advice and saved himself. Ravana's anger flared up against his brother for this now piece of treachery. With murder in his heart, he flung, with all his might, an irresistible and deadly javelin straight at him.

It was a glorious weapon,
Given to him by Maya,
(The architect of the demon world),
When he bestowed his daughter on him ;
Forged by the creator himself
In the pure flame of a sacrificial fire ;
As resistless as the discus (of Vishnu),
Or the thunderbolt (of Indra) ;
Mightier than invincibility ;
Hotter than the fire of doomsday ;
And as fearsome as a crash of lightning
He flung it hard at his brother
Who stood there like victory incarnate ;
He flung it with deliberate intent to kill.

And when it was so flung,
Vibhishana who was well aware
Of its superlative might, shouted,
'This will, surely, destroy my life'

For there is nothing on earth
Which can impede or divert it.'
But noble Lakshmana hastened near,
And cried, 'Indeed
I shall find a way to thwart it,
So, fear not at all'.

Even the Gods were not so sure. They saw that all the arrows and all the other weapons which were aimed against that speeding javelin by the men of Rama's army, availed nothing against its potent might, and all of them fell down, blunted, broken, and useless- like the angry words spoken by a puny wretch against saintly man of austere penance. And all who saw trembled for Vibhishana's life, for they could not see the faintest glimpse of any hope for him.

Then Lakshmana thought within himself :

What matters it if I should die ?
My good name will live,
And virtue will endure ;
And good men will applaud me.
How can I let him die,
When he has sought sanctuary with us ?
Lest eternal infamy should cling to us,
Let me receive this fearsome dart
Upon my own chest.

Then the poet portrays a noble scene, which moves us with the grandeur of its sacrifice. The assembled heroes vie with each other in offering themselves as a target for the oncoming and deadly missile.

Vibhishana jumped in front of Lakshmana ;
And Angada, pushing both aside,
Jumped to the front himself ;
(Sugriva), the commander
Of the monkey host,
Quickly brushed him aside ;

And Hanuman hastened before them
No words can ever describe
The deep pathos of that grim moment.

Rushing ahead of all of them
Lakshmana moved faster than the wind,
And crying out.

'Stay where you are, all of you !
I shal myself avert this',
He received upon his golden chest
That flashing, flying, javelin ;
And while all the watching Gods
Smote their eyes with their hands
In utter grief,
It pierced his body,
And came out at his back.

Ravana saw Lakshmana fall with a wound through his chest ; and he felt that victory was his. There was no more need to kill poor, puny Vibhishana. And so, he did not pause for even a moment, nor did he look around ; and shaking off his anger, he entered his goldwalled city.

But fate willed otherwise. Lakshmana was revived miraculously by a potent medicinal herb which Hanuman brought from a mountain. And lakshmana and all his companions of that fateful hour went to report the news to Rama.

When Rama heard about all that had happened, he blessed Hanuman for saving his brother's life. Then he embraced his brother, who was as dear to him as life itself ; and praised him for his almost fatal bravery. 'It was a deed worthy of our clan, and worthy of you' said he, and these words of his brother were reward enough to him for all that he had braved and suffered.

Chivalrous conduct needs nor seeks any higher guerdon than the deed itself.

TWO BATTLE SCENES FROM KAMBAN

I

THE FIRST ENCOUNTER

Painters of old used vast canvases. Their figures were as big as life, or bigger. Their brushes were dipped in paints of gold, colourful, pure, and imperishable. The old poets too wrought in a similar vein. They used winged words which were iridescent yet pure, vague yet clear, improbable yet true. Cyclops and Titans, gods and giants, were as familiar to them as normal human beings. They narrated too varied incidents of peace and war with equal verve and sympathy.

Their battle scenes were many, yet each duel and combat was different in detail from every other, and seemed to be described with all the vividness of a close onlooker. It is certain, however, the blind Homer never saw a battle, nor, perhaps, the sage Valmiki, the first of those who sang, nor even the gentle Kamban, whose learning was surpassingly great.

The greatest of these duels in the ancient Indian scene is the one between Rama and Ravana. Valmiki in his great poem-the Ramayana- in Sanskrit says of this great combat (in fact there were two of them), 'The sky is comparable only to the sky's own expanse ; and the ocean only to the vast ocean ; and the battle between Rama and Ravana is comparable only to itself'.

War and battle, despite all their horrors, appeal to men's imagination, and have found grand expression in all the great languages of the world. The ancient Tamils seem to have been very warlike, judged from their old poetry ; and scholars claim that war poetry in Tamil has found its peak in Kampan's canto of war (in his stupendous Ramayana or Ramavatara as he himself called it). There, the scholars state, he has risen to his greatest stature.

Both in the Sanskrit epic of Valmiki and in the Tamil epic of Kampan, the canto of war is bigger far than any of the other cantos. The hazards of war always make thrilling reading for everybody, and are particularly exciting and stimulating to men of valour and heroism. It might be mentioned here that, in the recent past, a version of Kampan's canto of war in Malayalam script and partly hybridised in language was in vogue in the Malabar country (modern Kerala State), and the soldiers there seem to have been encouraged to read it, and to recite it, so that they may be thereby stirred to deeds of bravery on the field of battle.

The story of the Ramayana would be familiar to most Indian readers. A short summary may be of help to others. Rama, prince of Ayodhya and heir to the throne, was banished from the kingdom, as desired by his step-mother so that her son may become ruler. He roamed in the forest with his wife Sita, and his brother Lakshmana. They built a cottage on the banks of the Godavari, and started leading in idyllic life in sylvan surroundings. Ravana the mighty king of the Rakshasas, heard of Sita's beauty, and was greatly tempted. So, he carried her off by stealth, and kept her a prisoner in his island fortress in Lanka. He pressed his unwelcome suit on her, again and again, though repulsed with contempt. Rama gained the help of a king of the monkeys, and invaded Lanka, crossing the sea by building a bridge of rocks. A great fight ensued, and the carnage on both sides was

considerable. Reports reached Ravana that many of his generals were killed, and that millions of his men were slain. He was greatly moved, and rebuked himself for his having foolishly under-rated his foe, and having let so many of his men be slain. Vexedly he tells himself :

‘It wouldn’t be wise, would it,
To regard an enemy
Or a blazing fire,
As insignificant,
And treat them with nonchalance.’

He then decided to join battle himself. This is how kamban describes that tense situation and his momentous decision :

His eyes brimmed with tears
As he cried ;
‘Enough of this thought !
With all the serried ranks
Of my great army, go !
Do not yield to craven fear,
And bravely press upon the foe !
Thus he ordered the bold warriors
Of his deadly archer host.

For a moment he stood surveying
The fortunes of the thickening fray-
He, who had torn from its roots
The Kailasa mountain.
His eyes became bloodshot
Like reopened wounds ;
His wrath flared up ;
And then,
He mounted his own chosen battle-car,

Massive, mighty, and supernally tall.
It was yoked with a thousand coursing steeds ;
It loomed large like a rolling sea ;
Dark, vast, and reverberant ;
All over the realms of the celestial gods
It had ridden unhampered ;
Indra himself had given it to him
On the day, so long ago,
When his suzerain might
Was laid low.
He praised his favourite god,
And bowed to him
In silent meditation of the mind :
And with his left hand
He firmly grasped
His own blazing fiery bow ;
And when the deep twang
Of its long bow-string rose,
It seemed like an embodied voice
Which plucked at the vital core
Of the God of Death himself.

When Ravana drove his car into the fields of battle, the army of monkeys reeled from the shock. Soon, Rama was informed of Ravana's entry, and he too armed himself.

And that noble prince, dark of hue
Prepared himself for the coming fray.
He twanged the bow-string of his bow
Of inconceivably great and unique might.

Then a number of major and minor skirmishes followed and the battle swung to and fro. Ravana met Sugriva, Hanuman and Lakshmana, one after the other, and defeated them all, and continued

his victorious advance. This was reported to Rama, and Rama hurried forward to face Ravana. The two great champions then met and clashed in their first encounter, and a great fight was on.

And Ravana aimed seven terrible arrows
All speeding simultaneously.

They seemed like the devastating fire

On the dread day of doom,

And were a deep coral red ;

At a single draught, they could drain

All the water of the ocean dry ;

They could reach and measure

The utmost ends of space ;

Or could, falling or else rising,

Pierce the earth and the sky.

But Rama cut down

All those arrows aimed at him

Into seven times seven fragmentts

With seven arrows of his,

And, he let fly from his bow,

In one continuous stream,

Five fierce arrows close strung,

Which poured showers of sparks

As they sped swiftly on their course ;

And Ravana parried them all.

Thus the peerless combatants matched arrow for arrow and weapon for weapon, and the great fight went on, while the world stood amazed.

And in the end, the men who had accompanied Ravana were all killed, and they lay dead in great heaps upon the field. All the steeds of Ravana's battle car were slain ; his pennant was cut down ; his

armour was severed ; his bow was sundered ; and his diadem, gleaming with gems, was knocked off his head with such violence that it flew far and fell into the sea like a blazing sun.

And then,
While all the world exclaimed
'This is the fate of those
Who transgress virtue !'
His visage grew black,
And he stood ashamed,
His toes scratching meaningless lines
Upon the ground.
His eyes were downcast ;
His face was lacklustre, dull ;
And his head was bare ;
His arms, now empty-handed,
Hung limp ;
And his huge frame seemed
Like a banyan tree
With hanging ariel roots.

Then Rama spoke to him in his dulcet voice and said :

'Even the gods cannot hope to win
In fierce battles, through their Might alone,
Unless Right helps them.
Keep this truth firmly in your mind
And now,
Fly, miscreant wretch,
Fly with all your kin
To seek shelter inside your long-walled city.
You should have died by my hands,
Before now,
But since you stood solitary and alone

I pitied you,
And put that thought aside.'

Rama, the flower of chivalry, thus admonished Ravana, who had so cruelly wronged him, and let him go back alive heaping coals of fire on his head. He told him, 'Go back today ; and come again tomorrow and resume the fight'.

This pathetic scene where Ravana has his first taste of defeat, is described by Kamban with great delicacy and strength. Rama speaks gently, not sarcastically. The poet's portrayal of Ravana smarting under his defeat and going back with his head bowed in shame is superb.

His mighty chest
Which had battled with mammoths,
His powerful shoulders
Which had lifted up mountains,
His melodious tongue
Whose soft cadences
Sage Narada himself had approved,
His ten diadems
Festooned with flowers,
His sword
Which God Sankara had given him,
And his indomitable valour-
He shed all these
On the field of battle ;
And alone, and empty-handed,
He turned back, and went away.

He did not look in any direction ;
He did not look at his fair city ;
He did not look at his darling children ;

He did not look at his army
Vast as the ocean ;
And while each of his wives,
The flower buds set in whose hair
Were just breaking into blossom,
Looked at him with furtive, anxious looks,
He did not look at any of them at all,
But looked only at the maid called Earth ;
And thus he entered
Within the precincts of the city.

The picture which the poet conjures up before our mind is harrowing in the extreme. Though Ravana had committed a grievous wrong by abducting Sita, he was a chivalrous fighter, and a valiant foe, who had until then triumphed over everything on earth, or in heaven, or in any other world. We see such a peerless warrior beaten and humbled, and heart-broken. Our sympathies go out to him. We admire the victor, and the vanquished too.

II

THE FINAL ENCOUNTER

When Rama and Ravana met in battle for the first time, a fierce fight ensued, and heaven and earth watched it in anxious suspense. Both the combatants performed miracles of valour, and the issue seemed doubtful even to gods and sages. But Rama won ; and when he saw Ravana standing disarmed, defenceless, and alone he chivalrously spared his life.

Defeated and disgraced, Ravana entered his city crest-fallen, and retired to his chamber to ruminate on the terrible and undreamt of disaster.

He, whose shoulders were
Sapphire hued and adamant hard,
Did not feel ashamed at the thought
That all heaven would laugh at him;
Or that the whole world would;
Or that his enemies,
Whom he had laughed at, would ;
That all of them, would now laugh at him.
But he wilted with shame
At the bare thought
That Janaki, who came from Mithila,
Whose long eyes laughed to scorn
The sharpness of the sharpest lance,
Whose mouth was so red,
And whose limbs were so soft,
Would now, and surely,
Laugh at him.

In his dispondent and angry mood, none dared to meet him. Yet it had to be done. So his advisers, ministers, and generals met him and calmed him by degrees. They prevailed upon him not to go out the next day and fight again with Rama. They suggested that he should let his brother and son and generals, and his famous Old Guard-for their's was the duty and the privilege-to go out and to battle with Rama and his hosts. All of them did, and one by one they were slaughtered, and finally, Ravana had to, and did, go into battle again.

This is how the poet Kamban describes Ravana driving his battle-car to the field of battle, to fight again with Rama and his army and generals.

One-thousand-wheeled,
Yoked with a thousand horses
With fine and tufted plumes,
Flashing and sparkling
Like the radiant orb of the sun,
Was that swiftly driven battle-car
Upon which he drove,
In sovereign, dazzling splendour,
Armed with the bow
Which had put the gods to flight,
And donning a quiver
Full of fiery arrows.

That car could run on the earth,
Or else through the sky,
Or over broad expanses of water,
Or else through fire ;
It could run through the thick of any fight,
Or soar to loftiest heights,
And run in the creator's realm ;
It could indeed run in every world,-
In the twinkling of an eye.

He sallied forth thus from the city gate accompanied by a large army. A battle royal followed when he attacked the enemy hosts with the utmost fury.

Fiery arrows he aimed,
Again and again,
Arrows which flew swiftly,
Like crashing lightnings,
Piercing through all the worlds
And tearing them apart,

Impaling the stupendous cosmos,
And measuring the limits of space.
They were messengers of life-sundering Death,
Which knew no impediment.

He then fought with Rama's brother Lakshmana, and laid him low with a javelin which pierced his chest. He left him for dead (and everybody else thought so too), and returned home in triumph. He had avenged his defeat, But Lakshmana did not die, and was only sorely wounded. He was revived most miraculously by potent herbs. Rama fought against the Old Guard of Ravana, and annihilated it.

When Ravana's messengers brought these news to him he could not believe that they could be true. He refused to believe them, even though every word they haltingly spoke in fear proclaimed that the news was true.

Their limbs atremble,
Their tongues dry,
With bated breath,
And panic-stricken hearts,
And their eyes flinching in fear,
Hopelessly dejected, and desperate,
And with terror clutching at their vitals,
They stammered out the news.

When Ravana refused to believe the news, his minister gently reminded him that his messengers would not dare to lie. Still unbelieving, Ravana climbed up a out-look tower and looking at the battle-field, saw for himself. His anger rose like a consuming fire and was terrible to behold.

Once more, he armed himself to avenge the slaughter of the flower of his army. Kamban describes his arming thus :

The delving sea,
Time,
Ocean sands,
Teeming fish, and crowding stars,
Learning with its expanding bourne,-
What use recalling these ?
Even if all things that are,
Both corporeal and incorporeal,
Should perish, and die, and end,
The arrows in the inexhaustible quiver
Which he donned
Would surpass them all in their number.

When Ravana took the field again, Rama was informed, and he too armed himself to face his angry foe. At this stage the gods, who had been watching and hoping, decided to take a hand. Indra, the god of the celestials, and ruler of the kingdom of heaven, sent him his own battle-car. It was a mighty golden vehicle festooned with strings of stars. It was as vast as the earth, as strong as the mountains and as lofty as the sky ; and when it moved it rumbled like the tempestuous sea on the Day of Doom. When the car was offered to Rama, he accepted it gratefully ; and admiringly, and almost reverently, he mounted it. Thereat the poet's eye saw Evil being laid low, and good dancing in glee, and gods and saintly men raising their hands in reverent prayer.

Ravana then urged his car towards Rama's. He saw many evil omens, but disregarded them all, and closed up with Rama, and faced him-like Ignorance facing Knowledge, like Wrong facing Right, and like Night facing Day.

While Ravana started raining arrows on Rama, the watching gods were excited and frightened ; they fidgeted anxiously, and wondered what the out-come was going to be. They had seen Ravana fight

against them, and an angry Ravana was a dreadful foe. They saw the arrows which vengeful Ravana aimed fly from his powerful bow and speed towards Rama- and what arrows they were !

Some were like bolts of thunder ;
And some like coals of fire ;
Some could pierce the vitals
Of even the mighty God of Death ;
They showered like rain-
The arrows which the gods had forged ;
And they sped straight and true ;
And all other arms they shattered,
They screened the sky from view,
And hid all the directions,
And overly the mountains,
And hid the eye's quick vision
They overspread the oceans,
And wrapped up the earth ;
And outnumbered all the numbers
Known to the academicians,
Overtopping them all ;
They spread a pall of fire,
And hung a curtain of darkness.
Even the great God marvelled,
'What a wonderful feat of arms!'
The mighty warrior
With unabating strength
Aimed in a trice
A hundred thousand sharp and fiery arrows ;
And when the unique hero
Cut them all down,
The severed fragments, shedding fire,

Hastened to the oceans
And drank their water up,
Reducing them to slush,
Dust, and parched up earth.

As the battle went on, its tempo increased evermore. The two combatants were no longer content to fight with their cars racing on the ground. They rose up into the sky on their battle-cars. (The description by the poet of the two cars rising and dipping, wheeling, turning and circling, and chasing each other, reads almost like a vivid narration of a modern aerial combat, an intensive dogfight, between two fighter planes). They moved and changed places so rapidly, that no one could say which was Rama's car and which was Ravana's. One moment, they were up in the sky, at the next, on the earth, and at the third, down in the worlds below. The thrilling fight grew fiercer and fiercer, and the fortunes seemed to swing to and fro.

Rama's pennant was cut down, and his charioteer was wounded; then Ravana's pennant was cut down. Both of them used several potent weapons against each other, weapons which were propelled not only by the bow, but also by mystic power. (Since they sought out the targets aimed at, and were directed by the unseen power behind them, they could almost be called 'guided missiles').

Then Rama cut down Ravana's heads and arms with arrows, but for a wonder, they grew again miraculously. Again and again this happened. But as the fight went on, Ravana began to tire, and Rama pressed his advantage home. Ravana reeled under the shower of arrows and was knocked down senseless. Rama's charioteer urged him to kill Ravana at once, while he may, for, he said, 'Such an opportunity will not occur again'.

'If he should recover now,
Nothing could be done against him later ;
He is now down with the blow,
Kill him forthwith !'
Thus urged his charioteer.
But that noble hero
Spoke these words in reply,
'His weapons cast off lie,
And he is senseless ;
Taking advantage of this mishap,
Which has befallen him now,
And breaking all the laws
Of chivalrous warfare,
Shall I now take his life ?-
Would that be good ?
Can you think so ?
My mind has banished every thought
Of fighting him now' said he.

And so, once more, Rama nobly stayed his hand, and Ravana's charioteer turned his car back, and drove him to safety. But Ravana recovered quickly, and rebuked his charioteer for having disgraced him by retreating, and bade him turn the car, and drive it once more to the van of battle. He began to fight again with trebled vigour. It seemed to those who looked at him, that another, and fresher, and more terrible warrior had taken Ravana's place, and was fighting a fresh battle. And all who looked on were greatly afraid.

The Rama cut Ravana's bow in two ; and then cut down all the other bows which he successively took up. He also shattered all the missiles which Ravana aimed at him. Then he pondered for a while, and recalled to mind the supremest weapon in his armoury, which alone could kill Ravana.

He took up that powerful arrow endowed with mystic might, and offering it a reverent prayer, fitted it on his bowstring. With his mighty soulders, as massive as mountains, he bent his bow to the full, and aimed that divine missile at Ravana's heart. It flew straight and true, and shone with such lustre that it made the blazing sun of Dooms-day seem like a firefly.

And then
Rama's sanctified arrow devoured
Ravana's three crore years of life,
And the great store his of penance,
Which had been so austere performed ;
And it devoured too
The boon granted to him
By the foremost God, who said
'You shall not be defeated
By any among the gods !'
It devoured the might of his arms,
Which won all his battles
In every quarter of the earth
And in all the worlds,
It pierced his chest,
And entering in,
Coursed through his body,
And emerged there from
After drinking his life.
He fell headlong, and face down,
From his high battle-car,-
He, who was like a pinnacled mountain-top ;
He fell upon the wide battle plain,
And multitudinous jewels,
And myriads of gems,

Fell on the ground,
Broken and shattered,
Shed from the forests
Of his massive shoulders.
And from the mountain
That was his chest.
They seemed like thunder bolts hurtling
From a black rain-cloud.
And, from his eyes.
Which had been on battle bent,
Flew a train of sparks
Belching smoke and blood.
Quelled was his fury then,
Ferocious as that of a lion.
Quelled was his mind ;
Utterly destroyed were
His cunning and deceit ;
rolled up was his enmity ;
Stilled were the doughty deeds
Of his massive, battling arms ;
Stifled was his lust ;
Wasted lay his imperious might.
Yet, the transgressor's lifeless face
Shone now thrice as bright
As on the day
When with unabashed head
He had humbled and laid low
The sages who had conquered their senses.

The fight was at last over ; and Rama, the victor, directed his charioteer to take the golden car down to the earth. No sooner had he said so than the car grounded automatically.

Then Rama, the merciful, Virtue's patron and refuge, beloved of all good men and women, the over flowing fountain of love, came near the dead Ravana, and saw

The whole length of him,
Who lay weltering
In a mountainous sea
Of streaming blood,
Which seemed to measure up to
High heaven's vault.

The sight of gory death did not repel Rama, the achievement of victory did not make him elated. But, when he saw Ravana dead, Ravana who had never retreated in battle, nor ever lost one, in all the years of his long and eventful life, till he faced him in battle, his heart rejoiced at the thought that such doughty warrior died a hero's glorious death on the field of battle.

Kamban makes us feel that Ravana alive was a bad man, undoubtedly, and that, nevertheless, Ravana dead is a worthy hero.

POETS AGREE - WITH A DIFFERENCE

The human mind likes to perceive similarities and dissimilarities, and to note agreements and contradictions. It seeks to lay emphasis on one aspect or the other in accordance with its make up, its background, and its pursuit of an object. We feel happy when we discover that poets agree in some of the things they see, some of the thoughts they express, and some of phrases they use. We feel almost equally happy when we note that they sometimes differ among themselves. In both cases, we realise that they often differ from us. We wonder why, and speculate upon the reasons.

Such agreements among poets are sometimes conscious and deliberate (as in translations, quotations, and plagiarisms), sometimes semi-conscious or vaguely induced (as in echoes), and sometimes unconscious, and unknown to themselves (as in parallels). Examples of this last category are far more numerous than we expect. These are due to the poets characteristic ways of thinking, and expressing which are different from ours. While we see darkly as through a glass, poets capture a picture, a song, a flair, in a deliberate prism of words'. We cannot accuse poets of any obscurity of vision ; if anything, they are guilty of a deeper and keener perception, with a different outlook, and a different view-point. Poets see, but not with the eye merely ; they feel but not with the hands solely. Their imagination gives them a greater sensibility, and their discipline gives them a greater power, than we possess. They build up a different sort of image, prismatic and colourful. Their technical mastery of words and form raise them to heights of fame.

Bharati is a true poet. He has the poet's perception, the artist's touch, the reformer's zeal, the devotee's faith, the scholar's erudition, the patriot's nationalism, and the cosmopolitan's internationalism. He is a liberal rooted in the past, and a conservative who holds forward-looking thoughts. He is a rich blend of the old and the new. He expresses new themes in classic metres, and classic themes in the newer modes. Some of his themes are bold and unconventional- so bold that some of his contemporaries gasped in wonder, or railed at his temerity. Yet that is the way of progress, and in these adventures of his he does not stand alone. There have been men like him at all times, in all lands. From Chaucer, through Shakespeare, and the moderns, from Sangham literature, through Kamban, and Bharati, language has evolved, because poets dared to differ in theme and form. They have agreed too, and that is why we find so many parallels.

PARALLELS

In Bharati's poem Kannamma- my love, a lover sits gazing 'at the sea and the sky' and sees 'afar the circling heavens high kiss the sea's hem and clasp it with a smile. His beloved softly steals behind him, and lightly closes his eyes with her hands. He feels their softness and smells her fragrance and he knows it is she, and a joy wells within him.

She teasingly asks,
 Whatever did you find in the rolling ocean's wave ?
 Whatever did you find in the blue of the sky ?
 And what in the whirling foam, its twist and break,
 And among the tiny bubbles that flash and dart ?
 The poet lover answers thus ;
 "In the rolling ocean's wave I saw your face ;
 And only your face in the broad expanse of sky;
 And amidst the foam as it whirled and broke high ;
 And only your face in the tiny bubble's race."

It is rather surprising to us that in all the beauty of the sunset and the evening's russet glory, in the never ending beauty of the wave and the breaker, in the bubbles on the water and the blue of the sky, the poet sees only his beloved's face and nothing else.

If Bharati stood alone in saying this, we might have dismissed it as a dream, an unreality, a fancy, or a hallucination. But another poet, who lived in a far off country which has other manners and customs, and who spoke and wrote in another language, says nearly the same thing. The poet-lover is engaged in writing a poem, (with a dreamy far away look, we may expect); and his beloved apparently puts him the question 'What do you see in this poem?' The poet is Carl Sandburg and the poem is Pavla.

The answer given is this.

'Nothing else in this song-only your face.

Nothing else here-only your drinking night-gray eyes

* * * * *

It is not your eyes, your face, I remember

It is not your dancing race-horse feet.

* * * * *

Your hands are sweeter than nut-brown bread,

when you touch me.

Your shoulder brushes my arm- a south wind

crosses the pier.

I forget your hands and shoulder, and say again.

Nothing else in this song-only your face.

Nothing else is here-only your drink night-gray eyes.

This poet-lover too sees nothing but his beloved's face- in the poem he is writing.

How wonderful that two poets apart in space and time, should confirm each other thus, and confound us. We are rudely shaken in our belief that we are the ones who actually see, and that the poets just fancy. We begin to think, perhaps, that the poet is right who said.

'Eye you tell a lie
that Near is Large, that Far is Small.
There must be other deceits'

Another poet sees his friend Sylvia in 'fire, or cloud, or bush, or whirlwind'. Similar parallels occur in our classics, where the love-lorn hero sees his beloved in bird or beast, tree or bush, and flower or leaf.

Both Bharati and Sandburg 'agree' in several things. Both are people's poets, though the latter is so in a greater degree. Sandburg lived among the people even more than Bharati did. 'He became a migratory labourer roaming from job to job in Kansas, Nebraska, and Colorado. He was at various times a milkman, a harvest-hand, a hotel dish washer, a barber, shop porter, a stage-hand, a brick-maker, and a sign-painter'. He too was a news-paper correspondent, reporter, and article writer. He too gave public recitals of his poems, sang ballads, and wrote children's poems and stores.

Both of them 'gave shape and prominence to the phrase, the rhythms and symbols of the popular idiom, while embodying the common idealism of the people in forms often of notable subtlety'. Both loved their country with intense patriotism, and both sang of the country's industrial regeneration. But the planes are slightly different.

Here is another parallel. Bharati, who lived in an emerging India, poor still and mostly, yet so inadequately, agricultural, exhorts his people to turn their attention to industry, to invent new machines, and

to try and make the country rich by strenuous labour in every field of work. Unconventionally he sings of the throbbing machine and painting labourer themes which were never before his time considered fit for great poetry.

Bharati sings,

‘Heat the iron and melt it down.

And ingenious machines make.

While beads of sweat brim on your brow

Toil on this earth in a thousand tasks.’

Sandburg, who lived in an already industrialised America, makes steel itself pray

“Lay me on an anvil, O God,

Beat me and hammer me into a steel spike,

Drive me into the girders that hold a skyscraper together.”

The agreement and the difference are apparent in these songs, and the reasons are obvious.

Both Bharati and Sandburg wrote for the children of their land, with love and feeling, and of birds, animals, of rain and storm each in his own way. Both sing of the dignity of labour, and exalt the labourer, and both look at, study, and accept ‘the world as it is ; lovely, terrible, sensible, grotesque’. In many poems and passages, we can see subtle parallels of thought and expression.

We shall now look at some ‘echoes’.

ECHOES

Bharati was a good student of the ancient Tamil Classics, and its mediaeval religious literature. So we find echoes of them here and there in his poetry. In his famous poem *Sen-Tamizh Nadu*, he sings

“Sweet Tamil land : The sound doth fall
Like honey on the ear”

These lines have been praised by critics as containing a marvellous figure of speech. Yet those who are familiar with the hymns of the Vaishnavite saints, as Bharati was, will realise that these are an echo of a hymn of Periyalwar’s

“Listen to this marvel that I saw on earth
The Lord played on the flute
And its melody reached high heaven
Gods neglected the offered sacrificial fare,
And with ears for lips they tasted delight.”

It is an unforgettable hymn and Bharati’s lines are a beautiful echo. In another poem of his he echoes the same idea. In the poem ‘The Reed Pipe’ a maid tells her friend, who is thrilled by the sweet music of Krishna’s flute, to beware. She warns her

“It is nectar to the ear,
But hemlock to the heart.”

Echoes are inescapable, and no well-read poet can wholly avoid them. They intrude so subtly, and form part of the poet himself. They pervade and permeate the atmosphere in which he has his being. It is said of Tennyson that whenever he achieved a notable line he was troubled by the thought that somebody had said it before him and that he might be held guilty of a plagiarism.

Now let us look at some deliberate planned agreements, through translation.

TRANSLATION

Bharati is a good translator, as all great poets are when they choose to sink their originality and to sit down to translate winged

words, happy phrases, or beautiful thoughts. It is no disparagement to Kamban that he has translated some exquisite phrases and lines from Valmiki. It is a generous tribute which one great poet pays to another. Kamban has bravely lifted a noble idea from Kalidasa also, and has put it in his Ramayana.

Rama and Lakshmana, escorted by Viswamitra, walk along the streets of Mithila. In the balcony of a palace Rama sees a lovely girl and loses his heart to her. He spends restless night thinking of her beauty, and suddenly a doubt assails him. 'Could she be the wife of another?' And then the thought occurs. "How can my heart ever go wrong ? She must be a virgin. There can be no doubt of it."

This is an echo of a very similar situation in Kalidasa's Sakuntala. King Dushyanta goes a hunting. He sees Sakuntala in sage Kanva's hermitage, and loses his heart to her. Suddenly, he is dazed by the thought that she might be Brahmin, and that therefore he, a Kshatriya could not wed her. Then, similarly, he says, 'my heart is ever a true guide. She must be a girl whom I can wed. There can be no doubt of it.'

Kamban's verse is more than echo. It is almost a translation.

In his Panchali Sapatham Bharati expressly acknowledges that his work should be regarded rather as a translation of Vyasa's Bharatam, than as an original poem. Bharati says, 'my own contribution to the imaginative portions is not much. I am responsible for the style merely'. There are in it several echoes too from the Tamil villi-Bharatam, which in turn follows Vyasa's great epic.

Bharati has translated some Vedic hymns, some passages from the Upanishads, and the whole of the Bhagavad Gita. He was fairly proficient in Sanskrit as these translations will show. He has even composed a poem 'Bhu-Loka-Kumari' in Sanskrit. He knew English too fairly well, enough to translate some of his own poems, and some Sanskrit hymns into English.

He had no linguistic prejudices, no narrow chauvinistic outlook. He loves Tamil and Tamil-land with unparalleled fervour. Yet he loved India more, with the supreme love of a child for its mother, and the reverent adoration of a devotee to his goddess.

Bharati was stirred to the core of his being, as many other ardent patriots were, by Bankim Chandra's famous poem Vande Mataram. He had made two translations of it. Perhaps he made one translation first and not being satisfied, made another. The poem Vande Mataram, as we all know begins thus :

Good are thy water ;
Good are thy fruits ;
And cool art thou
With mountain breezes ;
Dark green are thy pastures
And thy field-of corn
Mother, I salute thee.

BHARATI'S VISION OF THE MOTHERLAND

Dhritaraashtra was the titular head of the Kuru dynasty called the Kauravas. But as he was born blind, he could not inherit the kingdom, according to the laws then prevalent. So his younger brother Paandu, the Pale, became king. But he could marry and he did. So did Paandu as well.

In course of time, Dhritaraashtra's wife Gaandhaari who was a princess of the country of Gaandhaara, and Kunti who was the elder wife of Paandu, and Maadri, who was a princess of the country of Madra, and the younger wife of Paandu, were in the family way. It so happened that Paandu's wives bore five sons ; and Dhritaraashtra's wife Gaandhaari bore one hundred sons and a daughter.

But Kunti's eldest son Yudhishtira was born before Duryodhana, the eldest son of Gaandhaari ; and so, again according to the laws of those times, he became heir to the throne. Four children were born after him in the Paandu family. They were named, Bheema, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva respectively. They loved each other dearly and the younger brothers obeyed every wish and whim of their eldest brother, Yudhishtira ; and all of them stood closely united. They were known to the world as the Paandavas.

Duryodhana was ambitious, and he felt that he had been unfairly deprived of his rights to rule. So he brooded long and much over this, and then decided that the best way would be to deprive the Paandavas of their wealth and glory and to usurp the kingdom if he could. Though he thought long and earnestly, he could not hit upon any way to do so. So he sought the advice of his maternal uncle Sakuni. On his advice it was decided that they should invite Yudhishtira who was dice-mad, but yet a novice and a very poor player to play a game of dice against Sakuni, an unbeatable and unscrupulous expert in the game and who usually played with his own loaded dice.

Under threat of committing suicide, Duryodhana forced Dhritarrashtra to agree to send Vidura (his half-brother and a senior member of his royal court) to Yudhishtira inviting him to come from Indraprastha to Hastinapura, the capital of the Kaurava dynasty.

Vidura tried his best to dissuade Dhritaraashtra by telling him of the possible disasters to his sons and to all the kings of the land. But Dhritaraashtra replied that his mind was made up.

So Vidura went on his fateful errand. As he went he saw the beauty of the country he was passing through and he describes it. Actually, it was Bharati's love of country that comes out through Vidura, but in a gentler language and befits an elder and seasoned statesman. It is expressed in Bharati's "Paanchaali Sapatham" in three elegant verses. The title "Paanchaali Sapatham" that Bharati has given to his poem may be expressed adequately in English as "The awesome vow of an outraged Queen."

This is how Bharati's poem runs :

A land of mountains
crowned with peaks
of sapphire blue;

and of ambrosial water
in all its brooks and pools ;
a land of lovely woods
and trees of clustering fruit,
and of groves
dense with trees
with cool and luxuriant leaf;
a land of fertile
fields of paddy-corn
and of fields of other grain
that could keep
the whole world free
for ever from hunger's pangs,
a land where all people have
as their routine daily fare
tasty cream, rich butter,
and sweet delicious honey ;
a land where all people dwell
in the harmonies of music
and of rhythmic dance
like the demigods
of the upper world,
a land of generous men,
a land where swans
glide gently and smoothly
upon the unruffled water
of gold blossomed lilly pools,
a land of humming bees,
of lisping parrots,
and of singing cuckoos

that delight with nectarine sounds
the ears of all that hear,
a land where
the southern breezes
waft the scent
of the fragrant flowers
of the gorgeous forests,
and caress the limbs
of the glamorous women
who sport in storied mansions
with amorous joy
with their handsome lovers
who have shapely shoulders
hard as rocks,
and flash upon them
charming and rapturous looks
of eager desire ;
a land where
the splendour of noble deeds
matches the grandeur
of noble thoughts ;
a land where
fair young women
equal in beauty
the nymphs of heaven
a land where
the glories of brave deeds,
wisdom, arduous penance,
massive learning,
and offered sacrifice,
shine bright and far :

a land where
theft and deceit
or other deeds
of meaner kind
never raise their ugly heads ;
a land that shines afar
as bright as the jewel
on the glittering diadem
of the ancient world.

Bharati makes Vidura who according to the Sanskrit Mahabharata of Vyaasa travels in North India, where the mountains that Vidura could have seen would have shone with peaks of silver snow, travel in his own dear Tamil South India and describe the mountains of the warm south as crowned with peaks of sapphire blue.

When Bharati's Vidura goes on his unwilling errand, a part of his mind dwells on the beauty of the scenes he witnesses. Another part of his mind that foresees the future, thinks with anguish of the dire calamities that he can foresee coming. And so Vidura's concluding words in Bharati's poem are,

'Alas ! alas !
What a great sinner am I
thus to be the cause
of the destruction
of this glorious land !'

* (This article was sent to the Hindu by the author a day before his death on May 16, 1986).

DESIKAVINAYAKAM PILLAI

Desikavinayakam Pillai was a gifted modern poet who belonged to the western region of Tamil Nadu which was once part of Travancore (Kerala). There the people lived almost ideally in little cottages which stood by themselves in a sort of rural garden. There flowers of every kind abound, for Nature is kind, the soil is fertile, and the rains are plentiful.

In this touching poem, a poor mother puts off her little daughter's pleading for a watch.

THE WRIST WATCH

The cock and the crow,
And the sky's red glow,
Show that it is dawn ;
My precious gold !
Why should we have a watch?

Red gold sunbeams
Flood the sky,
And rosy lotuses
Blossom fair,
Surely now
It is morning time ;
Why do you ask for a watch ?

The shadow crouches
Under the feet,
And the blazing sun
Is overhead,
It is the noon of day ;
My nectar sweet !
Is there any need for a watch ?

The bright sun
Falls into the sea;
The fragrant ebony
Blossoms now :
It is evening ;
Jewel of my eye !
Need you wear any watch ?

Jasmine flowers
Which blossom wide,
And lily buds
Which open gently ;
Proclaim the time of dusk,
My dear !
Why long you for a silver watch ?

The shining moon,
And the twinkling stars,
They tell the time
From hour to hour
My life's delight !
To know the time of night,
Why do you want a watch ?

When the red stemmed jasmine
Smiles so bright,
And in our garden
Rains its flowers,
It is midnight time ;
My darling child !
Who ever wants a watch ?

The sun-flower blossom
Turning tells
Every hour
From morn to eve;
My little goddess
Risen from the wave ;
Why should you have a watch ?

Look and listen
Around you, love !
And in pleasure
Learn the hours ;
My pearl !
No other watch they need
Who know the birds and flowers.

LET US ARISE

This rhetorical poem too is by Desika Vinayakam Pillai and in a far different vein from the previous poem. He wrote it when Hitler, and Mussolini ruled their worlds. But dictators belong to no time or country.

In the roar of the lion
Ravening for prey.
Sweet music may be heard,
And in his fierce look
Some mercy seen;
But in the tyranny
Of the traitor
What comfort can we find ?

He has taken the bread
From our hungry mouths,
And left us starving,
To count the stars
Up in the sky.
Food to eat,
And clothes to wear,
We gave him ;
His battles we won for him,
Shedding our blood ;
King over countless heads
We made him ;
And crowned him too
With a crown imperial ;
Many hard feats
We wrought in his service,
Spreading his fame for him ;
Till at last,
Our grateful master
Has turned into a poison-toothed serpent.
He who came to us
As a famished beggar
He crushes us now

With vile oppression.
The slave
Who whined and whimpered to us,
He scoffs at us,
Scorns us,
And spurns us like dogs
The helpless fugitive
We sheltered in our midst,-
He now tramples on our heads.
Are we to fear and tremble,
And timidly crouch in a corner?
No, no, my brothers !
Let us arise
In the might of our valour.



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சொற்பிறப்பு - ஒப்பியல் தமிழ் அகராதி	200.00
THIRUVACHAGAM	175.00
இருபதாம் நூற்றாண்டுத் தமிழ் நாடகங்கள்	75.00
நானும் என் எழுத்தும்	50.00
தமிழர் கட்டிடக்கலை	30.00
THE NARRINAI FOUR HUNDRED	175.00
சாவக்ஞர் உரைப்பா	40.00
தமிழில் ஆவணங்கள்	75.00
தமிழ் மேடை நாடக வரலாறு	55.00
பரதநாட்டிய சாஸ்திரம்	150.00
இந்திய விடுதலைக்குப் பின் தமிழிலக்கியச் செல்நெறிகள்	55.00
மேலை நோக்கில் தமிழ்க்கவிதை	100.00
SOUND CORRESPONDENCES BETWEEN TAMIL & JAPANESE	35.00
அயலகத் தமிழ்க்கலை, இலக்கியம், சமகாலச் செல்நெறிகள்	125.00
TAMIL LITERATURE AND INDIAN PHILOSOPHY	200.00
சதகத்திரட்டு தொகுதி-1	80.00
தொல்காப்பிய இலக்கண மொழியியல் கோட்பாடுகள்	70.00
எழுத்திலக்கணக் கோட்பாடு	70.00
சதகத்திரட்டு தொகுதி-2	55.00
தமிழ்ப் பண்பாடு	25.00
உலகத் தமிழாராய்ச்சி நிறுவனச் சுவடி விளக்க அட்டவணை-4	70.00
சுவடிச்சுடர்	120.00
தமிழிலக்கியத்தில் ஊனமுற்றோர்	45.00
தமிழக மகளிரியல்	80.00