

ON THE SAND-DUNES

to: 189

BY

K. S. VENKATARAMANI

SVETARANYA ASHRAMA

MYLAPORE, MADRAS

XI

(1)

THESE sand-dunes, the bridal home of the river and the sea are the Poet's *Ashrama* for thought and play. The restless water ebbs and flows like life. The salt-laden breeze blows the message of unpolluted space from sea to star and star to sea—all one stretch of blue and sparkling water to the East, and twinkling studs of light high above the head.

(2)

Far away from the throng and dust of towns and their soiled ways, on these sand-dunes Nature plays in perfect rhythm on the lute of life. Pain and

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pleasure lose their names and notes, and mingle together in one simple cosmic song, the song of slow-evolving, painful life, steadily taking shape over the slow fire of sorrow.

(3)

Silence is to me the creative message of the universe, the sky and the stars. The epic and the lyric, the sweet and the bitter, flow together in silence. It is the soul of creation and the mother of true joy. The mid-ocean, deep and peaceful, is the real sea and not the idle breakers on the shore.

XII

(1)

MAN as God made him is the noblest work on earth. He is the cream of life. He is truly of the Potter's Wheel. He is the ripe fruit of many year's toil in the garden—from the amoeba to man: a great career with a grand destiny. Will he lose it all for a toy of scrap-iron or a grain of gold? Surely he will not, if only man leaves him as God made him and does not play the God himself, and misshape him on the wheel of his own pride and selfishness.

(2)

Now a fresh wind blows on me from the sea. The soft bed of sand seems a

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couch for the Gods. The sacred Cauvery gurgles a new note of liquid music. The stars seem to twinkle brighter than ever. My heart feels the surgé of a new pleasure.

(3)

Wake up man, a prouder hour waits for you near at hand. Spin no more the cob-web of your complex industrial life where millions sweat for the idle pleasure of a few.

Strangle not your soul by the thread of your own mouth. Supply not the shaft to the axe. Surrender not your primacy hoist with your own gifts.

XIII

(1)

LIFE is nothing but for its difficulties. The triumph of the sea-girt land-dwellers is the triumph of navigation. Often on the frailest bark with neither light, chart, nor compass, but with the faith and courage of a high purpose, we have reached the farthest shores.

(2)

Man's glory is in his victorious struggle through doubts and difficulties gaining the things around him through love and devotion, making a new world of all for all.

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Beauty and Joy, Peace and Bliss await him who has vision and faith to labour selflessly for the human race.

(3)

Love and Knowledge shall be the cargo with which the frail human bark shall be laden, against wind and rain, on its precious voyage across the circling seas of new ages. May the sails be ever ready to catch the fresher and purer breath of the Time-Spirit and take the vessel on to unknown lands of immutable beauty !

May the Beacon Light on the shore and the Higher Light from above shine to guide the ship to the next haven of rest and peace !

XIV

(1)

GENTLY blows the ocean breeze. The stars above shine with silent glowing eyes. Peace sits even on the crest of the riding waves. The Cauvery steals along, eddy-eyed, thrilling with the joy of the approaching sea.

Creation seems thoughtful for a change, and pauses for a moment in tranquil ease.

For, ere long the monsoon clouds will break over hill and dale, over earth and water and everywhere, in one soul-rending, soul-renewing shower spreading over land and river the nascent joy of a new-born life.

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(2)

East and West are in the pangs of another birth.

Now the gentle South Wind blows the scent of forest perfumes awakening in me thoughts of a newer life of uncorrupted pleasures. The dry West Wind tells me of the roaring life of sweat and strenuous nothingness beyond on the vast Atlantic shores. The cold North Wind brings me from the Himalayan heights a simple pastoral tale of lofty peaks and river valleys, of rills of melting snow and rushing streams. The fresh East Wind whispers to me the exiled message of the Spirit Eternal.

(3)

Is this not a tale of Renaissance? Is this not the time for a new religion, a

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world religion for all men, a common, moving faith in work and love? Does not something new wait for mankind or mankind wait for something new?

The murmur of awakened life is everywhere. A world change is coming over the race of men. The warp of the East and the woof of the West shall make the fabric of future life, and a divine mantle for all.

Let the wise lead the struggling caravan of man to the hidden springs in the desert and the quiet shade of a palm.

(4)

The sea and the river mingling together in happy union gurgles 'yes' to these my eager thoughts in the air, and lashes on to the shore the message of hope in songs and symbols of embroidered foam.

XV

(1)

BUT what do I care for the freshening Renaissance wind or wave? The river has the sea. The flower has the bee. But I am alone and unfriended on the sand-dunes pining for things that will never be mine.

(2)

I am a grown-up child, and all the gold and silver in the world cannot turn me away from an hour's play on these dunes. Even if all men are changed to angels by some magic overnight, what does the change mean for me: more shells and pebbles on the shore?

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(3)

I love to watch the rolling river with eyelids that never close on eyes. I delight to throw pebbles into its smiling eddies day by day, sometimes keeping count, sometimes not. The sands shall never sink in the hour glass of my youth. For have I thrown into the river all the pebbles in my hands, or into the sea, all the shells in the sands ?

XVI

(1)

O! for the happy days of my childhood. Thirty years ago I was born in a little village, all my own. I grew lithe and active day by day, like the dew-fed *kusa* grass on the river-bank, which disdains the common water that rolls in plenty at its feet.

I gathered round me a group of boys and girls, rich and poor, high and low, handsome and ugly, brave and timid. I gave them orders to march, and waged a playful war against the whole insect world.

(2)

I ran along the winding stream that skirts my village. I spoke in a voice of

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love to the poor little channels that patiently watered my fields amid bush and tree. And when they seemed not to listen to my caressing words or heed my quick orders to flow to my fancy, I arrested the truant water with mud and twigs, and sentenced it for an hour for my infant, despot pleasure. Then I set free the liquid prisoner who escaped with gurgling joy.

(3)

I captured the butterflies and kept them in between my fingers for a while for having eluded me so far. But the gentle struggle of the poor thing brought on me kinder thoughts. Then I set it free to roam from flower to flower. What does it matter if it knows not how to suck the honey like the exploited bee?

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(4)

I felt not the thorns I ran in haste. I cared neither for food nor for sweetmeats but strolled up and down like a little angel gone astray on earth.

(5)

All these vexed my father. And my father's anger I appeased with a lisping word and an open laugh. My mother's love made me a naughty lad. For I was the only boy in a nest of girls. My grandmother's doting fondness made me a tyrant at home over pretty little girls whom I pinched for sheer joy from cheek to cheek. And when they cried I stroked their eye-lids and kissed their eyes till we began a fresh life in another play for another half-hour.

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(6)

I played with calves, and built castles on sands. I ran with the running cart till I tripped and fell and cried. I fed the village puppies with food pilfered from the kitchen with secret, silent steps, and crushed their ears till they pealed out their grateful cries to me. And I clapped my hands. As a pet child I forgot myself in a world of freedom that was bliss.

(7)

But, O, Lord! Where and why has vanished such a joyous world from me? O! for the celestial hours of eternal childhood, something of the unchanging childhood these ever-changing sand-dunes have.

XVII

(1)

AND what a childhood frosted in the bud
and with it the manhood that would grow
as lovely as the flower from the bud ! The
prison walls did indeed close upon me for
ever at school.

The parrot in the green of cocoanut
leaves, roaming in the sky blithe and free
as the wind, was one day made a captive
to adorn a cage and tell a tale of life's
sorry fate on earth.

(2)

Fifteen years I withered and waned
in school and college cells, bearing
the smell of lime and mortar and of fleshy
boys. Professors killed my soul, and

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text-books crushed the sweet and native glories of youth, and the yawning splendour of the sky and the meadow.

I longed in vain for the open air, the rippling tanks and the village games, the shrub flowers and fruits, and singing birds. But break away I could not from the tether of stone cells and wooden benches.

Then from the iron cage of the school to the even less spacious cage of the world—what a tragic change !

(3)

When I think of all these things and life's sorry tale on earth, I think—its fecundity a sin and a waste : a blind profusion like withered leaves in valleys before the autumn wind.

I scatter in haste and anger the sands around me and throw but more

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vehemently the pebbles into the sacred Cauvery which, eddy-faced, seems to smile pity at me.

(4)

I dream and pass into a mood of *tapas* on the dunes, and think still more intensely of life's cruel and chaotic mould and man's eternal problems.

I dig the sands around me with my little fingers searching eagerly for the triple streams of Love, Knowledge and Bliss. May the springs buried in sands well up to the sincere touch and slake the thirst of a fevered soul !

XVIII

(1)

O, WEST! in whom has vested the leadership of a thousand years! What have you done for us? Taught us how to send factory smoke to eagle heights to cloud the fair face of the sun and the sky! Laid for us a thousand miles of railways and thousands more of sky-sweeping, God-annoying poles to flash the message of our woe to our Maker in Heaven.

(2)

The shadow of the factory smoke, and sweated labour has covered the fair face of the whole world, has spread over river-valleys and virgin forests, over

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ancient villages and paddy fields, over tower and temple, over church and mosque. The tallest and the fairest everywhere, from man to flower, look in vain for the sunlight from the sun.

(3)

Vehicular motion annoys me and the petrol-fed rush everywhere. All work and no leisure; a fevered haste and an aching throb instead of the steady pulse of life. It has crippled the speed and the career of man on this little planet. O, for the lost glory of motion in simple strides!

God made the meandering foot-track across the meadow leading down to the river. And man made the metalled roads ugly to the eye and hurtful to the sole, which lead nowhere. The big banyan trees that once shaded the avenues as mud

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roads, where are they now? Ask the birds that have lost their homes?

(4)

What a lifeless throb has become our life! The work that is meant to feed oneself feeds another and the sacred toil for the day becomes a chill, dreary loveless waste. Man is set on the treadmill and he goes round and round, footsore and palsied in a circle of pathetic waste.

That man, the giant of evolution, should become the slave of the very slave he himself has forged! The ghost whom you raised to work for you has become your master. Why? The Nemesis of your own greed!

XIX

(1)

WHAT is wrong with the world? The din and the roar, the rattling throng and the sweating crowd, the few rich and the many poor, and the bank account which makes barren metal breed—for the unearned increment of pleasure, sloth and waste of the few.

(2)

Even when you forged the sword you did not fetter your soul; I did not rate you low. For there is a nobleness in fight which even a lonely and peaceful

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mind like mine enjoys. You have indeed sold yourself for nothing only when you learnt to mint your soul into coins.

(3)

One man's labour is meant for all. One man's gift is the asset of all. One man's genius is the treasure for all like the sunlight from the sun or the descending rains from the heavens.

(4)

Then wherefore, man, seek you to turn to selfish use Nature's seasonal produce meant for all? Hundreds knock at the door, skeletons by day and ghosts by night, for daily bread which you have taken from their mouths.

In the name of civilisation, man has denied to man his god-allotted right to

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share commonly in the fruits and riches of Mother Earth.

(5)

Creation wisely makes everything perishable. The corn that grows in the field, the fruits that ripen in the orchard, the bananas which my garden brings forth in bunches, do last but the season by God's behest, so that no man may corner for ever the food stuffs of the world. Nature never means its grains and fruits to be preserved in the cold storage of coins and passed on to sons and grandsons.

XX

(1)

O, that man has never learned to
market his goods for copper or gold !

O, that man has never learned the
soul-blasting science of Economics !

O, that man has never learned to rip
open the bowels of the earth for the
precious ore and stamp it with false
names and false values !

(2)

In the name of Society, its patriots,
prophets and priests have wrought this
change from free man to slave nothing.
Man has learnt to govern man as beasts
never do or can. Why? That he may
rob the bread of his living brother and

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preserve it for children that may never be born.

(3)

O, restless Sea ! Did man first learn from you to fret and foam for nothing, and wage an unceasing war with all around ? But yours is a war of love and worship, one pure ablution. Why did not man learn from you the higher lesson ?

When will our patriots and statesmen turn their minds from selfish pursuits and begin to think of the teeming millions of the world, who are eager to work for their daily bread as God has ordained man alone in this beautiful planet ?

(4)

O Stars ! ever-shining that you are with the tranquil ease of ages ! Tell me,

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do you labour for your twinkling light ?
Why this curse of labour for food on
man alone of all God-created things ?

Do giant trees and long-winding
creepers labour for their food ? Or the
most fragrant flowers sweat for their
perfume ?

Do beasts in forests who roam at
pleasure toil for their prey ? Do not birds
get their food even as they sing ?

Then why should man alone on earth
slave for his daily food ?

I will never : rather starve and die on
these star-lit sand-dunes, free, unfriended
and alone, cheered by the cadence of the
low murmurs of the sea, than take in a
morsel of sweated, slaved food.

(5)

Alas for Democracy and Civilisation !
What a fine, false name to cover a crowd

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of sins which neither poets nor saints
can wash off with their tears, or change
by their magic words !

Only when man ceases to govern man
for the pride and profit of it, will he set
free the flowing rill of life, pure and
clear.

Lop the limp and leafless branches
and then slowly begin to water the roots
afresh. Then only the tree will begin to
bloom.

XXI

(1)

WHAT do I care for blossoms? Why should man and his civilisation please or vex me? I love my lonely place on the sand-dunes and it gives me pleasure to pine for things that will never be mine.

(2)

What do I care for the present or the future of man? Do I buy or sell in his market-place?

Let him lapse by sin and neglect into the ape from which he rose to all the glories of man to stride across the earth, erect, bold and lovely.

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Or evolve into a higher being and
make the name of man a memory of
shame forever. •

XXII

(1)

THE problem of the world is the problem of the poor and the hungry. Every one, be he the veriest pariah, by the sovereign right of birth, shall ask for his place in this earth, his garden home and his own three-acre farm, and get it from 'vested interests and oil-kings,' from 'crowned heads and parliaments,' from 'maharajahs and merchants,' from 'democracy and civilisation,' and all such ivy growths on the ancient and beautiful turret of life.

(2)

By temperament I have no interest in politics or the ways of government. But

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when the wind blows with the sand-dust
the eyes quiver with pain.

The cry of the age is for freedom.
Politics which makes the rich richer,
the poor poorer, digs the very roots of
life which it pretends to water. The
council chamber and the statute books are
but the magic fetters of the few to chain
the many and thus chain themselves.

XXIII

(1)

STILL even my reveries on these sand-dunes cannot help the sadness and the politics of my race.

Is there no future for man—a future worth the long labour and the long struggle of evolution?

Is he to be caught swooning in his own complexity?

Is he getting complex only to become more complete?

Has the West for the East no message or the East for the West none?

Yes, there is. The West to the East, the Philosophy of Work. And the East to the West the philosophy of Leisure.

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(2)

The West throbs with the roar of the machine and the sleepless work of a thousand years. It has bravely fought for and acquired the freedom of man only to become the slave in turn of the machine.

Industrialism is the bane of modern life—not the machine but the mastery which the machine has gained over the ancient heritage of man, freedom, peace and love. Ugly urban life with its countless poor and the degrading slums is the gift of industrialism.

(3)

Ruralise your urban areas, now clotted with slums, into garden cities. Electricity is a great gift of Nature to man. Carry this streaming life to every hut in every

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village to relieve man and maid from the drudgery of low and exhausting labour. Win leisure from work. Win work from leisure. And a higher life awaits you like the early dawn after the twilight.

In the golden isle between the river and the sea build a new and spacious Temple of Life for the East and the West for the common worship of the race.

XXIV

(1)

NOURISH your soul upon the broadest gifts of Nature, the open air and the blue sky, the green meadow and the smiling fields, the silent stars and the silver moon, mountain glades and water falls, and everything in Nature that pleases the eye and charms the heart.

(2)

Toil not, sweat not for sons and grandsons, that may never be born. Till your one acre of land with pleasure, working in play and playing in work, tend your cow, spin and weave your cloth, and toil no more. Under the noble and peaceful

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shade of a *vata vriksha* lead a life of utter simplicity and *tapas*.

(3)

Build no more in brick and mortar. Dig no more into the bowels of the earth for silver and gold. Hoard no more the surplus food. Nor mint your soul into copper or gold that you may pass it on to sons unborn.

XXV

(1)

THE new religion shall teach man to break away from the silken bonds of selfish pleasures, and move onwards to a life of utter simplicity and *tapas* where each has the freedom to spin his own thread and weave it in meditative leisure into a glorious mantle of God.

Let the spirit of man get the higher control of the flesh and make the willing slave for the nobler urge in him.

(2)

Work with detachment and dignity. Work neither blindly nor selfishly but with love and courage.

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Work on selected lines of *Dharma* to suit the Time-Spirit and the roll of life. The rules of *Dharma* spring from the womb of cosmic good : that which is good for all for all time. *Dharma* is both for individual refinement and collective good. For it holds the fine scales of subjective and objective life, even and true, in all the tilts of the day.

May Peace descend on earth like the soft dew overnight !

v

XXVI

(1)

I AM tired of this reverie-song.

What share have I in the commonweal
of the world? Its joys and sorrows are
not for me. Do I buy or sell in their
market-place? Frail, pulsing, weak and
dreamy, I am for ever a wreck on the
shore on these sand-dunes.

(2)

What do I care for the future of man?
The joy of life is not for me. The river
has the sea. The flower has the bee.
My life will end with me.

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(3)

Let me spend out this night alone on these sand-dunes pining for things that will never be mine. These dunes are paradise enough to me. The lonely pleasures of the star-crowned night fill my mind with the rarest thoughts and the grandest. They are dreamy hours of soulful joy.

The rolling Cauvery eddy-throated, hastening to the embrace of the sea seems to heave an accent of pity at me, the lonely me. Roll on gladly, thou celestial water, fresh and pure. For thou art joining the sea.

(4)

Sacred Cauvery, how cool and gentle to the touch you are, withal so near the sea! Virgin river, your holy quest is now at an end. For you are now at the

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feet of your Love. The angels from the
world of stars shower their invisible
flowers on you at this your bridal hour.
Fulfilment is now yours !

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the land and the sea. For, loneliness alone yields you the rhythm of life.

Whistle a note to the winds that play with me. Sing a song to the birds that sing with me. Chant a mystic tune to the stars that seem to pray silently for a cradle song from me.

For, Loneliness is Life.



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SOME OPINIONS ON "KANDAN, THE PATRIOT"

1. *Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviyaji*: I cordially congratulate you on the excellence of your production. God has blessed you with a fine imagination, remarkable power of expression in a difficult foreign tongue, and lofty patriotic sentiment which breathes through the book. I wish you many long years of distinguished service to the Motherland.

2. *C. R. Reddy*: It is the best book you have so far written, not merely best but great. It is the issue of noble deep emotion joined to lofty, effective thought. It crashes into our darkness like a streak of lightning. The substance is steel but the style is velvet. You are the Keats of prose.

3. *Babu Bhagavan Das*: It is a deep pleasure to me that you have won such extensive and high recognition outside India and have come into the ranks of those who are living proofs to the world of the capacity of India to stand on her own feet in all departments of national life.

4. An observant and loving delineator of the Indian scene. There is a delightful blend of sympathy, humour and irony. In spite of the tragic close the general impression that the book leaves is one of quiet exaltation.—*The Hindu*.

5. Mr. Venkataramani always wields a gentle and tender pen and his style is singularly simple and delicate, often exquisitely poetical. Mr. Venkataramani is a powerful writer and thoughtful observer. His style is unique combining in itself the simplicity and purity of diction of Newman and the analytical and descriptive qualities of Dickens. He writes in beautiful, excellent and masterly English and everything in an admirable spirit.—*The Liberty*.

6. In beautiful, flowing poetic English Ramani unveils with an unerring instinct the thoughts of the Indian intelligentsia . . . perfect pen-portraits. His wisdom

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every now and then crystallises into shining gems, sparkling with humour, in never-forgettable phrases.—*The Theosophist*.

7. Mr. Venkataramani writes not only delightful and fascinating English but also gives a wealth of constructive and original ideas. His works have won universal appreciation. He is a true interpreter of Indian Renaissance.—*The Hindu Illustrated Weekly*.

8. It is a privilege and a pleasure to read this book : it is also a purifying experience. *Kandan, the Patriot* is a very vital book. It is indubitably literature. It hums, it sparkles, it transfigures. Its structure is pure marble.—Professor K. R. SRINIVASA IYANGAR in *The Federated India*.

9. He dips his brush in beauty and paints the little comedies, little tragedies, and little ironies of life. His book has characters that live, a delightful humour and much poetry. It is written throughout with a sensuous intuition and with a reserve of the sublime —M. CHALAPATHI RAU in the *Triveni*.

SOME OPINIONS

10. Mr. Venkataramani writes beautifully about Indian village life. I have read books of his for some years and now "Paper Boats," is in its third edition. Charming and accurate descriptions : attractive essays.—HAMILTON FYFE in *The Daily Chronicle*.

11. Mr. Venkataramani is known to a small but discriminating public as the author of some attractive sketches of Indian village life.—G. T. GARRATT in *The Nation*.

12. One of the best of Indian writers of to-day is Mr. K. S. Venkataramani.—*Cape Argus*.

13. Mr. Venkataramani is a village prose-poet. He frames a political programme while he plays the lyre.—*The Literary Guide*.

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14. An Indian who writes with rare charm and sympathy about his own people.—J. A. SPENDER in *The Changing East*.

15. One of the foremost writers of India ; an Indian thinker.—*Public Opinion*.

16. As a writer of short sketches and essays, Mr. K. S. Venkataramani has achieved no small reputation. Prominent British writers have commended his work, so respected an authority as Mr. Frederic Harrison remarking that "the English style is graceful and correct," while Mr. William Archer found in the author's sketches "much grace and sincerity of feeling."—*The Madras Mail*.

17. Steadily advancing to the front rank of his generation is Mr. Venkataramani. We first knew this author from "Paper Boats," a fine performance which earned him just praise for his command of that almost lost art, the Essay.—*The Daily Herald*.

18. Mr. Venkataramani is a man of refinement of sentiment, of lofty ideals, and immensely sincere. He is an artist within his *genre*, the interpretation of his own people.—*The New Pearson's*, New York.

19. Mr. Venkataramani writes a sensitive, idiomatic English and the sympathy and intimate understanding with which he interprets his people should make the reading of his book a liberal education for Englishmen.—*The Bookman*.

20. The success he has achieved in English authorship is indeed remarkable.—*The Cape Times*.

21. The writer is a complete master of English simple, dainty, with a sense of humour steeped in the sweetness of affection, running through the living descriptions.—DR. ANNIE BESANT in the Foreword to *Paper Boats*.

22. An Indian idealist: clear reasoning and obvious sincerity tranquil charm and boundless human sympathy; idealism is writ large in every page of Mr. Venkataramani's book.—*The Aberdeen Press*.

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OPINIONS ON "MURUGAN, THE TILLER"

1. *Lord Haldane* : A little time ago you were so kind as to send me through His Holiness Shri Sankaracharya Swamigal, a copy of your book, *Murugan, The Tiller*. I have now read your volume carefully through. I have been much impressed by the art which you have displayed in the story, and the way in which you have made village life in India live for the reader. The picture has value for the student of native institutions. I have read your story, and have gained not only pleasure but knowledge.

2. *Romain Rolland* : I thank you for the volumes that you have been pleased to send me, particularly the last, *Murugan, the Tiller*. I have experienced considerable pleasure in evoking (in my mind the picture of) rustic life which has been half heaven and half dream but a dream which should be the guide and the light of reality. I congratulate you sincerely.

3. *Laurence Binyon* : Thank you so much for *Murugan*. It is very difficult for us to have a vivid, intimate picture of Indian life in our minds ; and your story gives me that. There is much beauty in the picture, as well as things which make one think and be sorry. The divorce of human life from Mother Earth is surely a great cause of modern unhappiness, both in East and West. Our balance is upset. But I do not lose hope for the world.

4. *J. A. Spender* : You bring back to me most delightfully the atmosphere of India and give me a sense of Indian life and character which I could not get from any English writer. I hope you will go on, for you have it in your power greatly to help English readers to understand India.

5. *R. B. Cunninghame Graham* : Many thanks for the beautiful little idyll of Madrassi life. I know nothing of Indian life but I can see at once that yours is a true picture of it from the inside

Books by K. S. Venkataramani

6. *Jean Buhot* : I was truly delighted to receive your new novel. I like it immensely. There is in it a gentle, tender, refined feeling which appeals to me very much, something that is very Indian and is, or was Latin as well.

7. Clear reasoning and obvious sincerity ; beautifully chosen phrases, often poetic but never over-sentimental. The delineation of character is masterly. *Murugan* is distinctly a book to read and to think about, whether on holiday or in the study.—*The Review of Reviews*.

8. He brings out with all the simplicity and charm of his earlier work the best sides of Hindu family life.—*The Times Literary Supplement*.

9. The thought is gentle and profound. *Murugan* is more useful than many more pretentious tomes, and very readable.—*Foreign Affairs*.

10. I missed the fast train and the best tribute to the book is that I did not find the journey long, though we stopped at every station. Mr. Venkataramani's genius for observation is illustrated in this book.—A. FENNER BROCKWAY in *The New Leader*.

11. Mr. Venkataramani's descriptions of rural life, the river scenes and the life of college students are all vivid.—*The Cape Times*.

12. Ramu, a very lovable character. He represents the highest form of natural religion. His extraordinary power due to sheer benevolence is well brought out.—*The Egyptian Gazette*.

13. The same intimacy and the graphic talent for description make *Murugan* valuable to the student of India. It is a well-told story.—R. M. BLOCH in *The Birmingham Weekly Post*.

14. The conception of the story and the agrarian project which reconciles all to the simple life are rather fine and noble. Something curiously attractive about the tale.—*The Irish Statesman*.

Books by K. S. Venkataramani

15. Broad views and a singularly agreeable literary style. The book throws a wonderful light on various problems in India.—*The Sussex Daily News*.

16. The author has given us a novel of Indian life in South India to-day which possesses distinction, grace and that rarer quality, fidelity to every-day life.—*The Madras Mail*.

17. The author of "Paper Boats" and "On the Sand-Dunes," those sensitive transcriptions of Indian life and thought, here gives us his first novel. Beautiful picture of idealistic peace painted with evident sincerity.—*The Times of India*.

18. A fascinating and faithful portraiture of social life to-day: the magic of his art steals upon us. The sense of humour as enlivening as it is natural, plays gracefully over the whole book.—PROF. K. SUNDARAMAN in *The Hindu*.

19. A charming story. The author has imagination. The language is simple and charming and the book will amply repay reading.—*The Statesman*.

20. There is a subtle fascination about his river-side scenes. He has quite an original, interpretative way of expression and there are passages in his story which are full of beauty.—*The Indian National Herald*.

21. Idealism is writ large on every page. Language of rare delicacy and sweetness, deliciously outlined by an artist who knows how to write tender and wholesome English.—*The Rangoon Times*.

22. The story, on the whole, is very powerful; it is brilliant. He possesses an eye for telling incidents, the capacity for manipulating a complex plot, an ability to individualise characters, and a mastery over language which serves him equally well in dialogue (the scenes on the Alavanti river are unforgettable), description and reflection.—*The Modern Review*.

Books by K. S. Venkataramani

23. For delicate humour and graphic description of women, the river-scenes stand unexcelled in the story. All the charms of village gossip, unaffected and innocent, are irresistibly felt.—KRISHNA KUMARI in *The Forward*.

24. Feliculously written in correct and graceful English. Realistic and charming.—*The Pioneer*.

25. By far one of the few beautiful English novels written by an Indian. Every graduate should make a point of reading the novel.—*The Mahratta*.

26. Brings to the knowledge of the West a highly valuable philosophy of life. It supplies a most valuable insight into the Hindu mind and social point of view. Language both apt and colorful. The price is very low for a book of such a great value. Another beautiful quotation will give you an inkling of the wonderful philosophy that this book contains.—*Llano Colonist, U.S.A.*

27. Mr. Venkataramani's story is of the greatest value to English and African readers for its clear exposition of problems of land, education, and racial differences as they appear to one, who while preserving his own point of view, has completely avoided racial bitterness and over-complacency at the institutions of his own people.—*West Africa*.

OPINIONS ON "PAPER BOATS"

1. *Frederic Harrison*: I am much interested in your *Paper Boats* and shall show it to qualified readers with my good word. The English style is graceful and correct and the intimate life of the Indian Village is told with such familiar and sympathetic feeling that it must have the effect of a charming novelty to us in Europe. We are all deeply concerned with the future of India and your book will help to show us how strong is the contrast between the historic spirit of Indian civilization and the present form of our Industrial progress and modern democracy.

Books by K. S. Venkataramani

2. *William Archer*: Thank you for your *Paper Boats* which I have read with interest and pleasure. I find in your sketches much grace and sincerity of feeling.

3. *Mr. E. V. Lucas*: I have read your *Paper Boats* with very much pleasure. They tell more of India than shelves of more pompous works and they deserve, both for themselves and just now a propaganda to be widely known.

4. *Prof. Gilbert Murray*: It is very interesting to read an intimate and artistically written account of Indian village life.

5. *Sir W. Robertson Nicoll*: I send you my cordial thanks for your book *Paper Boats*. I have read it with much interest. It is written in excellent English and in an admirable spirit. I think I like best the article on the "Grandmother". But they are good.

6. *Mr. J. C. Squire*: I have already looked at the book and am most interested in it. I hope I may be able to write something about it.

7. *Lord Haldane*: It is refreshing to us in the unimaginative West, to read your pictures, so suggestive of village life in India.

8. *Lord Northcliffe*: Charming little book, *Paper Boats*. I have read "Village Cricket," "My Grandmother" and the "Fishermen" with much delight.

9. *Lord Meston*: It is a most delightful navy on a halcyon sea and in all my wanderings I never enjoyed a trip more heartily. I love your delicate, little sketches . . . I admire their gracious fidelity to Hindu life. My warmest congratulations on a difficult and perfectly accomplished literary feat.

10. *Prof. George Saintsbury*: *Paper Boats* is a most pleasant little book and I am much obliged to you for sending it to me.

Books by K. S. Venkataramani

11. *Maurice Hewlett*: Your *Paper Boats* are charming, both for what they say and the manner of saying. You have caught the idiosyncrasy of my language, so far as I can judge, perfectly.

12. *A. C. Benson*: I have read it with interest and sympathy and I have found the stories vivid and touching.

13. They are drawn with a loving intimacy. He has presented them in a peculiar atmosphere of his own . . . A corner of the veil which is always down is lifted and we catch a glimpse of the real household life. *Paper Boats* is a book wherewith to beguile an hour over the fire.—*The Times Literary Supplement*.

14. A vivid, very attractive picture of life in an Indian village. The book has atmosphere. Some of the studies of rural life are very charming.—*The Bookman*.

15. Hindu Village life in the prose of Addison.—*The Daily Herald*.

16. Indian village studies that might have delighted Lamb.—*The Nation*.

17. A series of delightful, little essays.—*The New Leader*.

18. A pleasant little volume of essays.—C. E. B. in *The Illustrated London News*.

19. There is a certain imperishable quality; a kindly and whimsical touch which continues to charm.—*The Statesman*.

20. Beautiful, vivid and attractive. One of the best of English reviewers has compared the author's prose to that of Addison and there is good deal to be said in favour of that comparison.—F. W. WILSON in *The Indian Daily Mail*.

21. Rare charm and delicate insight and written in quaintly felicitous English . . . Floating on their

Books by K. S. Venkataramani

native waters they have absorbed the delicate odours of jasmine and lotus.—*The New Pearson's*, New York.

22. It will give the English reader a better insight into the Hindu mind and a better appreciation of the Indian social point of view than half a dozen of the many weighty treatises by the Pundits. Mr. Venkataramani's sketches are very real and very human.—*The Review of Reviews*.

23. The first seven lines of this book tell the reader that he is in the presence of "Literature". The rest of the book confirms it. Mr. Venkataramani touches humanity with the compassion of blood relationship. A writer of unimpeachable English, and a translator of the essence of Modern Indian life, as its source, the village.—*To-Morrow*.

OPINIONS ON "ON THE SAND-DUNES"

1. *A. C. Benson*: I find your ideas both retrospective and introspective expressed with much poetical feeling and charm.

2. *H. F. Ward*: I was of course greatly impressed by your beautiful treatment of the theme.

3. *E. V. Lucas*: It is of a more personal and spiritual nature than *Papers Boats*.

4. Mr. Venkataramani's musings addressing to his listener, a series of philosophical reflections, each one of which is distinguished by peculiarly musical, poetical prose.—*The Daily Herald*.

5. Mr. Venkataramani's "Paper Boats" (reviewed in these columns on March 9, last) attracted considerable attention on its appearance for the distinctive native atmosphere with which he had managed to envelop his slight sketches of Hindu Life. The same atmosphere is felt in this new book.—*The Times Literary Supplement*.

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6. His snatches of reflection, and aphorism and small word-pictures in poetic prose pleased me greatly.—*The Birmingham Weekly Post*.

7. "Modern life, its miseries and uncertainties."—*The New York Times*.

8. A very accomplished writer of English . . . series of reflections on life, which in their hatred of industrialism as well as in the beauty of the style, recall Ruskin.—*The Glasgow Bulletin*.

9. To appreciate it properly one has to read it leisurely from cover to cover and to drink slowly the exquisite melody of the words as they from themselves into passionate appeals for what Carlyle calls the eternal verities of life.—THE HON. MR. JUSTICE C. V. KUMARASWAMI SASTRY in *The Indian Review*.

10. Suffused with a mystic glow, these charming song reveries plaintively appeal for a return to simplicity, to peaceful contemplation and joy of homely, simple life.—*The Hindustan Review*.

11. It is scarcely possible to bring out fully the delicate fragrance of this charming brochure. With its fine chiselled English, its pathos, its inimitable touches of life and its gentle irony . . . real literature . . . to read it is to love it.—*The New Empire*.

12. A very touching prose poem, there is such a deal of pathetic beauty in it.—*The Hindu*.

13. The little book is itself a first fruit of that Renaissance which Mr. Venkataramani feels is approaching.—*The Madras Mail*.

14. The burden of his song, which is in poetic prose is that we should strive for a better harmony of cultures and civilisations in this land of ours. What aim can be nobler and what ideal more uplifting.—*The Janmabhumi*.

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OPINIONS ON "THE NEXT RUNG" AND "RENASCENT INDIA"

1. *Rabindranath Tagore*: I have a very genuine appreciation of your originality of thought and felicity of expression.
2. *Mr. Upton Sinclair*: I congratulate you upon your intelligent and clear-sighted point of view. I am very glad to know there are such writers in far-off India.
3. *Sir Arthur Keith*: One has only to open your book to find you have dived deeply into the affairs of men and conditions of human life. I shall study what you have written.
4. *R. B. Cunninghame Graham*: It is fully worthy of the talented author of *Paper Boats*. There is much in it for thought and much for instruction. Your idyll of the Indian village is beautiful. I feel sure that in your theories lies the path of salvation for India.
5. This notice cannot do justice to the exquisite literary beauty with which the author's idealism is expressed.—*The International Journal of Ethics*.
6. Brilliance and much insight; a complete revaluation; a book provocative of much thought.—*The Theosophist*.
7. Every page of *Renascent India* is fragrant with profound thought and beautiful sentiment. Thought-provoking book.—*The Mahratta*.
8. Undoubtedly thought-provoking.—*The Egyptian Gazette*.
9. Breathes of the mystician which is peculiarly Indian.—*The New Leader*.
10. An addition to the wisdom of the world. Charming style and ideas mostly original.—*The Leader*.

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11. Searching and critical, warm-hearted and touched almost with the gift of prophecy; mosaic of words and phrases perfect in design and outline.—*The Scholar*.

12. Provocative of various thoughts about the future of India. The benefits to be derived from this excellent book are indeed enormous.—*The Mahratta*.

13. Pleads the cause of his countrymen with intense moral fervour and on an idealistic rather than a political level.—*Cape Argus*, Capetown.

14. As an exposition of Indian idealism *Renascent India* is lucid and inescapable. Mr. Venkataramani conceives remarkable hopes and writes them with a poet's prose.—T. H. REDFERN in *The Indian News*, London.

15. Aroused considerable interest in India as it is an impassioned appeal for Home Rule for India. It is written with all the picturesque style of the East.—*Natal Mercury*.

OPINIONS ON "A DAY WITH SAMBHU"

1. *R. B. Cunninghame Graham*: It embodies your healthy, pure and rational philosophy.

2. *E. V. Lucas* writes: Your little book has much beauty.

3. A picture of an ideal day in the life of a school boy in tones that will make a general appeal. There is so much wisdom contained in brief phrase. This is one of the very best and is the most simple, the most direct and the most pleasant we have read for many a day.—*The Madras Mail*.

4. Delightful booklet, a pure joy to read; much wise and lofty advice in exquisite prose, a delicious contribution to Anglo-Indian Literature; so quiet, gentle and

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Christ-like that we modern "Christians" are put to shame by the ethical sublimity of it all.—*The Rangoon Times*.

5. Simple yet delicate style; this dainty booklet is a joy of the young.—*The Hindu*.

6. Usual lucidity of exposition and felicity of diction.—*The Swarajya*.

OPINIONS ON "HIGHWAYS IN ASTROLOGY"

By Kumbha

1. Cheiro, the well-known palmist and astrologer, writes: "It is extremely, clearly and beautifully written."

2. The science is treated in a masterly and easily assimilable fashion. He sublimates a somewhat discredited study into a medium of the highest ecstasy rivalling in its spiritual elevation that of great art poetry or music.—*The Rangoon Times*.

3. Some of the theories advanced are original and ought to stimulate interest in further research. We have no doubt this book will amply repay perusal.—*The Hindu*.

4. The book will prove to be an excellent guide. The main principles have been clearly explained.—*The Mahratta*.

5. Written on original lines, Kumbha has rendered valuable service by this useful Primer.—*The Theosophist*.

6. A straightforward and understandable outline of the general principles and application of Astrology.—*The Occult Digest*, Chicago.

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PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

SAND-DUNES are never the same even for an hour. And ten years have wrought a magic change over every familiar form and shape on these ancient shores. But sand-dunes are sand-dunes for ever ; ever-lasting, ever-changing, ever-fresh, wind-swept and water-laved, smiling welcome and pity to all land-dwellers and to me.

ON THE
SAND-DUNES K. S. VENKATARAMANI
May 28th, 1932

TO
S. PATTABHIRAMAN

I

(1)

THE Sun has set in the bosom of a cloud like a sleeping child in the cradle. The evening is full of joy. A beautiful calm is in the air. Peace reigns on land and sea. The sand-dunes lie scattered all over, wind-blown into lovely heaps, gleaming in the fading light of gold over land, sea and river.

(2)

The sea rises and falls in a rhythmic swell. Wave after wave woos the land and the river, leaving on the trackless sands love-tokens of embroidered foam.

ON THE SAND-DUNES

The long-running Cauvery eddy-eyed, love-laden and lying in trance quickens her rolling pace to the sea. And the ever-sighing sea rears his head like a serpent in love, leaps on to the shore and mingles with the rolling river in one embrace. Eddies dimple the liquid face of beauty with little whirl-pools of love at the trysting-place of the hastening river and the approaching sea.

(3)

Joy is in the air. It merrily rides on the crest of the wave. It dances on the running water and the drifting foam. Joy is everywhere pinching life to eager work.

The river has the sea. The flower has the bee. But I am alone and unfriended on these sand-dunes pining for things that will never be mine.

ON THE SAND-DUNES

(4)

The golden streaks of evening light are gently fading on the sand-dunes. Darkness is falling around thicker and thicker on land and sea. Stillness is getting stiller except for the moaning sea, the sighing river, and poor me, lonely on drifting sheets of sand.

II

(1)

THE stars are coming out in the sky with the calm of eternal vigils. The sea seems to pause awhile to catch the music of the twinkling orbs wheeling on their never-ending course in ether ; to return now the wonder tale of the spangled sky and the serpent river, in wave after wave, restless and ever new but ever old, of the ancient message of the brooding sea to the thirsty land and the winding river.

(2)

While I gather shells and pebbles on the sandy shores of the Cauvery listening to the boundless voice of the sea, I feel a

ON THE SAND-DUNES

sun-lit melancholy, a vague vast ecstasy, a strange fascination and regret for life. The soul of the universe, of land and water, sea and sky, ether and space, seems to yield its secret *advaitic* treasure, whisper the great truths of life, in tones of vague, mild music to the pious listener of the love-laden voice of the river and the sea in this holy hour. The creative solitude of the star-lit sky is on the shores of the sea.

The cosmic dance of life goes merrily on around me. I witness silently Nature's tireless energy with rapture at heart and wonder in mind.

May God touch me with his gracious toe in his hour of highest kindliness, and wake me up to the divine work of an active and selfless life in this conflicting world.

III

(1)

THE sand-dunes that lie scattered at the mouth of the sacred Cauvery make a lovely, lonely place, now far away from the throng of men and the dust of roads. Underneath lies buried one of the Imperial cities of the ancient world; the royal city of the Chola King, Karikalan, ten miles square; once the cradle of civilised life as mighty and confused as ancient Rome, Egypt, Greece, or Babylon. But all that glory is now but ten miles square of sand. Man's little hour of triumph has left no prints on these trackless, wind-blown miles of pure and spotless sands.

ON THE SAND-DUNES

(2)

A lonely splendour now lights the shores, and the eternal liquid murmurs of the sea now fill the once busy market-places of ambitious men and the bathing *ghats* of fair women.

The wind blows sea-songs wherever it listeth, unfettered by turret or tower, on these luxurious miles of sand, driving them for fancy's sake into lovely heaps for the bridal play of the river and the sea, in the deep hush of the night when elsewhere it is the hour of rest for all.

(3)

These sand-dunes are the richest place for reverie : to chew the cud in peace and leisure. But for the cruel call and empty needs of civilised life, I would fain spend all my days from dawn to dawn, betwixt

ON THE SAND-DUNES

the boundless sea and the winding river,
and these sand-dunes never-changing but
ever awake to the slightest pat and kiss
of the wind.

(4)

Alas! Has civilisation taken away for
ever from man and me some primitive
and virgin joy in life in its first forms.
Alas! that I should soon return to the
busy thoroughfares of men and to urban
work in crowded cells.

Give up this sweet comradeship with
Nature: earth and water, wind and rain,
sunlight and star, the first born of the
Gods! How shall I bid good-bye to these
sand-dunes, wind-swept and water-laved,
these sweet and gracious gifts of Nature,
the land and the river, the sea and the
sky, and the gentle breeze that fills the
evening calm with a restless cheer.

ON THE SAND-DUNES

But alas, even on the sand-dunes all these joys are not for me in any measure. The river has the sea. The flower has the bee. My life will end with me. I am alone and unfriended on these changing mounds of sand pining for things that will never be mine.

IV

(1)

EVERYTHING grows in plenty around me. The creepers greet me at every step with a crown of flowers. The trees on the river-banks bend with fruits. The birds are merry on the boughs. Cattle bellow with pleasure, for it is the season of the year.

Life is happy on the meadow. The grass is rich with dew. The fields are ripe with corn. To-morrow's harvest-song is in the air. The joy of fulfilment is singing in the hearts of all: from the blade of grass that dances in the sunlight of early morn decked in Nature's own

ON THE SAND-DUNES

pearls, to the ocean that seeks the river
in wave after wave of restless wooing.

(2)

The Cauvery eddies along in little
love-dimples smiling at the sight of the
fecund life it waters with careless plenty
and queenly ease.

The village hums with life. The
temple is full of the pious crowd of
worshippers. Girls and boys wait eagerly
for the smash of cocoanuts before
God Ganesha. Busy gossip is every-
where while priests are droning before
the Lord. Every shade and slice of life
is adorned with a tale for the matin hour
before the All-High. And the temple
bells reach me in subdued tones of
bronze on these sand-dunes, in mellow
peals, mingling sweetly with the sigh of
the river and the sea, and poor me, telling

ON THE SAND-DUNES

me that this consoling evening hour,
sacred to man and God is not for me.
Once I was there a darling petted by all
as a lad roaming and chanting from one
sacred precinct to another, and burning
camphor to all the Gods.

But I am now a stranger to this scene
of joyous and full life. For my heart is
elsewhere.

(3)

I ache with the thought of the final
waste and sadness of prolific life. I am
tired by its age. I am sick of its barren
fertility. Only the stars that shimmer in
the skyey space greet me with a friendly
twinkle.

(4)

The joy of life anywhere on earth is
not for me. The river has the sea. The

ON THE SAND-DUNES

flower has the bee. But I am alone and unfriended on these sand-dunes, lit only by the strange glitter of the evening sea and by the broken light of the stars.

V

(1)

THE sea has moods every moment.
The sand-dunes have moods every hour.
The truant wind lingers and loiters
as it pleads. Why not I, at least once in
seven years? Is humble human birth a
bondage for ever from all freedom and
all play?

(2)

Alone and pensive am I. The sense
of tears in things of death in life, is every-
where around me—the floating straw
and the running stream, the quick flower-
ing bud and the just born child.

ON THE SAND-DUNES

Life is death. Life is waste. Let poets and philosophers sweeten the fact with the sweetness of fine words.

(3)

The pathos of creation haunts me like the wrecks of a dream in the small hours of the morn. Sorrow in life seems as inseparable as the saltiness from the moaning sea. Nothing moves me, neither pain nor pleasure. Like winter floods on land and rain in the sea, work and motion seem but a tragic waste.

(4)

Listlessly we float down the river, mere truant twigs broken from the branch of life. We roll down diving and floating, seeming merry with every little eddy on

ON THE SAND-DUNES

the way, a kindred thing of changing,
fleeting life.

(5)

But even bubbles have prismatic hopes,
and a life of their own for a moment.
Even so we hope to reach some day the
peace and the beatitude of the ever-lasting.

Only the mystery cycle renews again
at random notice.

(6)

A tiny rill streams its way for a
distance and perishes in the ruthless
sands. But the mother ocean wins back
motherwise her dear daughter drop, and
feeds her in her bosom for a while and
undaunted sends her back again while the
monsoon winds blow the call.

Even so is the Cycle of Life.

VI

(1)

WHAT is Life? The stars twinkle a query in space.

Is it the bubble on a rainy day?

Is it the foam on the falling water?

Is it the rainbow in the fleeting sky?

Is it the cloud in the Moon or the spot
in the Sun?

Is it the wave that ebbs and flows for
ever, and knows not why this cease-
less motion from sea to land in a
strange thirst for love and freedom?

Is it the gleaming light on the idle
breakers on the shore?

Is it the flower that fades in an hour?

Or is it the childhood that is mine no
more?

ON THE SAND-DUNES

(2)

Deeper still grows the silence. No answer floats on to me either from the deeps of the sea or the heights of the sky. The stars continue to twinkle with the rhythmic, cynical smile of ages. The ever-roaming winds spray on my eyes innocently a little of the salt-sea water mixed with the finer dust of the sand-dunes.

(3)

The temple-bell continues to peal in vain for it carries to me no more any message from the Gods but only the anguished tones of melted and beaten bronze.

The hum of village life musical with the silver voice of lassies comes on me in the wilderness of my heart like a

ON THE SAND-DUNES

solemn waste of desert wind. The lonely murmurs of the sea remind me but of the pain of life and motion everywhere both on land and water.

May God touch this restless but simple me with his healing touch of his cosmic dance, and give an hour of true peace, and show the path to final freedom.

VII

(1)

URBAN man! born leader of men, wise in all the ways of life: tell me, poor me aching with sad thoughts on these sterile sand-dunes, something of your civilisation which has made everything on this earth a complex and ugly knot—even the fairest flower a nest of bacilli.

(2)

In this world of your strenuous making, misery and exploitation grow like weeds on turned soil. Happiness is fleeting like the waters of a receding wave.

Without, man is growing bigger and bigger, and inward less and less. The

ON THE SAND-DUNES

true channels of life are getting choked with sand. The eternal rules of *Dharma* lie neglected. Human effort all over seems a waste.

(3)

Intense misery and struggle have left deep ruts on the ancient roads of life. And the road-menders have changed their tools for toys of pleasure. The face of man is seared all over with the scars of misery. God creates with loving care. Man destroys without a thought.

(4)

But Sorrow has a pouch of musk in its bosom. If only you know how to get at it, it has a life-giving value, a spiritualising message. Sorrow crushes the juice of life only to make wine of grapes. It

ON THE SAND-DUNES

is a flame of light in the darkest turns of the lane. It is the ancient and only book of man wherein is written in letters of gold the secret sayings of God.

Only in the slow, alchemic fire of sorrow shall man cleanse the sin of ages, turn the copper plate of *Karma* into the pure gold of a life without rebirth. Man shall rid himself of all scum and dross and suffer a slow, atomic change, and become quite a new being wholly pure, selfless and bright. Sorrow is God's own splendid and special gift to man, and man's own gift to man.

VIII

(1)

THE rich become richer and the poor poorer in worldly goods, and both the poorest in the light divine. There is a stoop in the stature of the modern man, a crack in the pile, a rent in the garment of life. The cosmos of the individual is lost in the chaos of society.

(2)

O! Urban man! You are futile for all your perfect attire and seeming grace. Courtesy may adorn your lips, and kind accent soften your speech. But

ON THE SAND-DUNES

your heart pulses with false ambitions, and your head is crammed with vile dreams of profit and exploitation.

You may appear planed and polished. It is the work of sand-paper and not the gift of God nor the reflection of your inner self. The surface gloss mirrors to me nothing but the loss of soul within.

(3)

Our great men who rule the world and walk like ancient kings admired by crowds of humble folk are poor things in every way in the eye of God.

They are the creatures of a triple alliance, the Fuller, the Barber and the Tailor. They are mere toy boats floating in a sunless pond: they have never once known the pressure of real cargo or of the ocean beyond.

ON THE SAND-DUNES

(4)

O! for the wilderness and waste of urban life! Man was planted in the garden of life as the true rose. Society has changed the sprout in the very hour of its birth.

IX

(1)

OFTEN the surroundings check a noble growth. The weeds choke the rarest flower. Life has lost its life in the swamp of civilisation. Man moves, seems to move from endless error to endless wrong.

Impounded is the running river in the death-trap of brick and mortar: for, the channels of *Dharma* are not planned, cut out and ready for the age. The fields are yet fallow lands covered with but the rank growth of weeds.

(2)

Urban life is but an obstruction to life's own sweet and simple way. It is but

ON THE SAND-DUNES

a chasm across the winding track up-hill
to the sacred shrine.

When will we run away from the
tottering piles of town life, and seek
for ever the peace and the beauty of
the open sky, and the smiling farm,
rich with the smell of straw and the
golden heaps of corn?

Give up your crude architecture and
house-building, dividing beautiful lawns
into ugly lanes. Exile your masons
and experts and lecture no more to me
on the ethics and economics of a
perverted life. Call no more your little
house by a beautiful name. It is
your prison and not your paradise. You
have made it so in an hour of greed,
pride and untruth.

X

(1)

WHAT do I care for the modern man and his ugly love of urban life? The Queen of Flowers, the Lotus, clings to the mire, and wastes its loveliness in the pond. God's ways are inscrutable, and I care not go the philosopher's heavy way so long as I have left for me a single sand-dune on these sublime shores, hallowed with the memory of the work of man in his most ambitious and royal hours.

(2)

In common with the urban man, with his flowing robes and false speech,

ON THE SAND-DUNES

What have I, frail, pulsing, weak and dreamy? I neither buy nor sell in his market-place. His tokens of pride and pleasure are the coins of shame and sin to me.

(3)

I am happy where I am on these sand-dunes. I am happy alone, free and unfriended on the banks of the Cauvery pining for things that will never be mine.

Let the river have the sea and the flower have the bee. Let every life except mine find its fulfilment in another.

(4)

Blessed be the Cauvery for it carries the gold-dust in its rolling waters. And what a sacrifice of love she makes to

ON THE SAND-DUNES

the salt-sea when she offers meekly
all the gold to her lord in return for
the biting, bitter embrace of the waves!

I drink the sacred water of the river
which finds her fulfilment in the place
of my birth, leaving me alone. But I
forget the throb of pain in the joy of
her triumph, and drink and dance in
sunlight and wind for the fecund joys
of the water, laden with gold-dust—for-
getful of the care-worn, cruel corrupt
world around me where everyone looks
upon his neighbour with the ambushed
eyes of the tiger on the fawn.