



H. A. KRISNA PILLAI.

LIFE OF POET H. A. KRISHNA PILLAI

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FOREWORD.

H. A. KRISHNA PILLAI was a distinguished Tamil Christian poet. His books are of great beauty and will probably live as long as the Tamil language is spoken. He was a devout Christian and had a rich religious experience. He was a born personal worker and brought to the feet of Christ about a dozen young men, one of whom was my father, Dewan Bahadur A. S. Appasamy. Unfortunately there is no complete biography of the poet. In response to my request, his nephew, Sir David Devadoss, for sometime High Court Judge, Madras, has put down his reminiscences of the poet and they are now being published in this little book. Sir David Devadoss's father, Muthiah Pillai, was himself a convert and a distinguished Tamil scholar; he and his brother H. A. Krishna Pillai grew up together and were intimate all through their life. It is but natural that the author should often refer to Muthiah Pillai, his father, when telling the story of his uncle. The thanks of the readers of this little book are due to Sir David Devadoss for the trouble he has taken to prepare it.

A. J. APPASAMY.

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LIFE OF POET H. A. KRISHNA PILLAI.

நாடிய கருமம் பீடுற முடிய

நீடருள் தருமிறை தாடொழுதிடுவாம்.

(*Rakshanya Manoharam.*)

The Christian missionaries who came out to India in the early years of the last century were of opinion that the imparting of education in English to Indian youth would greatly facilitate the achievement of their supreme object, the evangelization of India. With this noble purpose in mind, wherever they started work, they established schools and taught the students English, the language of the locality, Arithmetic and the elements of History. They encouraged the study of English Literature whenever possible. The more intelligent students naturally took a liking to Literature and made their reading in it deep and wide, which brought new ideals before their minds and made them contrast their own ideals with the new ones. The Indian mind readily turns to religion, and the students' curiosity about the Christian religion was aroused. Those who had studied their own classics and philosophy made a study of the Christian Scriptures and Christian theological works. They found that there was a clash between

their own ideals and those of the Christian religion. Instead of muttering a few *mantras* and performing a few ceremonies, the Christian religion insisted upon a personal religion, faith in the Living Saviour, purity in thought, word and deed, and inculcated the principles of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man. This impact of the principles of the Christian religion upon serious minds and well-educated youths, produced a strong ferment. The social and moral standards they learnt were different from those of their own religion.

The result of this reaction was the rise to prominence of men like Rajah Ram Mohan Roy in Bengal. He was a man of great intellect and was well-versed in the Hindu classics and philosophy. His careful study of the Christian religion and its teachings made him feel dissatisfied with the popular Hinduism of the day. Being a deeply religious man he wanted a pure form of worship and yearned for a higher life than that which he found around him and revolted against the social bondage and superstition that were the concomitants of the popular religion. He worked for reform of the Hindu religion and, not succeeding as he wished owing to the opposition of the priests and the conservative leaders, he resolved to establish what came to be known as the Brahmo Samaj, an organization for carrying on a form of Christian worship without acknowledging the Divinity of Christ. A person attending Brahmo Samaj worship could not easily distinguish it from a Unitarian service.

One of his objects was to free his followers from the cramping superstitions and absurd customs which, though not a part of the Hindu religion, were considered essential by its devotees. He insisted upon the education of women and their coming out of the *Purdah*, and aimed at the development of the highest and best in man. His work was continued by men like Keshub Chunder Sen, one of the best products of the English education imparted by the missionaries. In other parts of India this impact of Western ideals upon the Eastern mind produced remarkable men like Nehemiah Goreh (an erudite scholar), Vedanayaga Sastriar of Tanjore (a lyrical poet), and many others, all of them earnest Christians.

1. *Christian Missions in Tinnevely.*

In the Tinnevely District the Protestant missionaries began work in the beginning of the last century. One of the earliest of them was Rhenius, an erudite and talented man who was able to gather a large number of Christians. He got free grants of land from the Government and settled many of the converts in new settlements like Meignanapuram. He was very successful in inducing whole villages to become Christians by helping them against their landlords and in other material ways. Schaffter, another talented missionary, joined him and they both worked in several parts of the District in connection with the C.M.S. They and those who came after them opened schools and taught English, Tamil and

other subjects. The demand for English education was fast growing by reason of the well-known minute of Lord Macaulay on Education. The need for English clerks was greatly felt. Young men and boys joined the mission schools for acquiring a knowledge of the English language so that they might get employment under the Government. The missionaries naturally instilled into their minds the truths of the Christian religion. One of the early fruits of their labour was the conversion to Christianity of a young man belonging to a well-to-do high caste family at Sindupundur, a hamlet near the Tinnevely Bridge Station. He embraced the Christian religion in the eighteen forties and married the daughter of Rev. John Devasagayam of Palamcottah, the first Indian clergyman. He migrated to Madras, was ordained, became famous as Rev. W. T. Sathianadhan and did very good work in the Zion Church at Chindadripet, where his grandson Canon S. S. Clarke carried on for many years the family tradition. There were several conversions after Sathianadhan received baptism. The writer does not intend to deal with them in detail as it is his object to confine his attention to the life of H. A. Krishna Pillai, his trials and temptations, his final victory and his devoted life and service in the cause of the Lord and Saviour, for whose love he forsook social position, home, mother and dear relations.

About the forties and fifties of the last century, besides the two men already mentioned, there

were several able and devoted missionaries in the District. Perhaps the most learned and talented of all the Protestant missionaries that came out to South India was Robert Caldwell, afterwards Bishop. He started work in connection with the Wesleyan Mission but soon joined the S.P.G. He settled at Idaiyangudi in South Tinnevely and made that sandy tract bloom like the rose. He mastered the Tamil language, studied Sanskrit and published in the early fifties a monumental work entitled *The Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Languages* in which he proved that Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Canarese and Tulu were not derivative dialects of Sanskrit but independent languages with literature and grammar of their own. This work was greatly admired in England and in India and established his reputation as a scholar of the first rank. He was also a profound Greek scholar. Such was his reputation that he was asked to be one of the Fellows who constituted the Senate when the Madras University Act was passed in 1857. He was greatly interested in Archaeology and carried out some excavations. He was able to prove that Kolkai of the Periplus was Korkai near the mouth of the river Tambaraparani. He maintained that Ovari, now a fishing village, on the south coast of Tinnevely was the Ophir of the time of King Solomon whence were exported gold, apes, peacocks and ivory. The names of the last three in Hebrew are Tamil names showing thereby that when a new article was imported its name in the place of its origin

was also imported. Caldwell was selected to deliver the Convocation address of the Madras University in 1876 and his address is well worth study even to-day. He was asked to write a history of Tinnevely which he did with considerable skill for which the Government paid him Rs. 1,000. It was published in 1879. His profound knowledge as a theologian and Greek scholar was of great help during the revision of the Tamil Bible.

Edward Sargent, afterwards Bishop, was a man strong in mind and body. He was a learned theologian and a good Tamil scholar. Of his physical prowess one incident may be mentioned. Several missionaries went for a swim in the large pool below Kaliyana Thirtham in Papanasam. One of them found himself in difficulties and Sargent plunged in and brought him safely to the bank. He took great interest in the physical sciences and was in the habit of explaining to the intelligent members of his congregation the properties of air, water, etc. His physical science apparatus such as air pump, Magdeburg hemispheres and many other articles were presented to the C.M.S. High School, Palamcottah in the beginning of 1883. He made Palamcottah his headquarters. Thomas, an able man, was at Meignanapuram where he built a beautiful Church, which is a monument to his careful planning and excellent execution. Ragland, a Senior Wrangler, was a saintly man who took no pay from the

C.M.S. but lived on the fellowship granted by his College. He did very successful work in North Tinnevely. There were other C.M.S. missionaries like Whitchurch of Pannikulam, which is now the headquarters of a circle. G. U. Pope was a Sawyerpuram and did good work in connection with the S.P.G. In numerous places schools were established and the missionaries endeavoured to do their best to improve the material and moral condition of the converts, who were generally poor and ignorant. Most of them became Christians not from conviction but for obtaining worldly advantage and security from the exactions of landlords and petty Government officials.

2. *Childhood and Youth.*

Krishnan was the son of Sankaranarayana Pillai and was born in 1827. The place of his birth is not known. His father was the second of three brothers belonging to a respectable Vellalah family and was the most talented of the three. He was a learned man as understood in those days but a bigoted Vaishnavite. As he was a good business man and a capable administrator, his services as a manager of estates were in great demand. He was a tall, handsome man with a commanding presence, and those whom he employed always obeyed him cheerfully, and he managed the estates to the satisfaction and advantage of his employers. He made it a rule in later years not to take his midday meal without reading a portion of the great Tamil classic, Kamban's *Ramayana*.

His practice was to read aloud a few stanzas and to explain their meaning to those who came to listen. His wife Deivanayaghi Ammal, being a very intelligent woman, committed to memory the stories, poems and proverbs she heard when her husband expounded the text of Kamban's work. She learnt in this way a good many didactic poems and a large number of proverbs, many of which contained the wisdom gained by long experience. Her knowledge of proverbs was such that after Krishna Pillai became a great Tamil scholar he asked his mother many a time for an appropriate proverb and she readily helped him. Though Sankaranarayana Pillai was a staunch Vaishnavite yet at times he paid adoration to other deities as well. He was till his death the manager of Tippa-nampatti village near Pavor, Tenkasi Taluq.

After Krishnan two or three children were born but they died in infancy. To prevent such calamities Sankaranarayana Pillai made a pilgrimage with his wife and others to Sori Muthayyan's temple, which is prettily situated on the banks of the Tambaraparani river on the hills below Vana Thirtham, one of the largest waterfalls in South India. As the child born after this visit to the temple lived to grow up he was named Muthayyan in the belief that the deity (Sori Muthayyan) granted the prayer of Sankaranarayana Pillai and that therefore the child did not die in infancy. Krishnan and Muthayyan, being the only surviving children of their parents, were greatly attached to one another.

Krishnan went to a school kept by a village schoolmaster and was diligent and studious. The custom then was for the village school master to beat the boys in the order in which they came to school. He who came first got no beating but the cane simply touched his palm. The boy who came to school after him got two cuts and so on. If there were ten boys the last one got as many as ten cuts. They had to sit on the floor and write the letters of the alphabet on the sand spread before them. There were no slates. They had to learn to write on palmyrah leaf with an iron style. The schoolmaster was not given any salary nor did the pupils pay any fee. At the time of harvest he was given quantities of grain according to the capacity of the parents. On festive and other occasions the pupils used to supply him with oil, ghee, curry stuffs and other necessities of life. The schoolmaster was held in great reverence by his pupils and others. The profession of teaching was regarded with much veneration. The boys had no holidays except on festival days. They sometimes wished the teacher's death so that they might have a holiday. When Muthiah Pillai in later life gave these details, he was asked by his son, 'Why did you expect only one holiday if the teacher died? There would be no school till another was found,' and he replied, 'Our young minds did not think of all that'. The prospect of one day's holiday was alluring enough. The village schoolmaster had no assistant. He was the sole teacher and he taught the three R's. The senior boy was called *Sattam Pillai* (monitor)

and had to keep order in the teacher's absence. The day began with a song in praise of Ganapathy or Saraswathi, the goddess of learning, and before the school closed the boys sang another song, the purport of which was that they would go home and pursue their studies and not waste their time. There were no school games. The boys had to amuse themselves in the best way they could. They played village games without any apparatus or implements. Krishnan, being a very intelligent boy, soon acquired an excellent knowledge of the Tamil language and was able by his twelfth year to read aloud Kamban's *Ramayanam* to his father before his midday meal, who explained the meaning to those who were assembled.

Sankaranarayana Pillai, being a man of means, arranged for the marriage of Krishnan when he was only fourteen years of age to a girl aged nine named Muthammal belonging to a respectable family at Trichendore. The wedding was celebrated with great pomp and at considerable expense. When the marriage party was returning from Trichendore a number of robbers came near Alwartirunagari to attack it and finding that it was guarded by a strong escort they did not attack it but said loudly, 'What a loot we have lost!'

3. *Death of Krishna Pillai's Father.*

While the family was in the midst of affluence and pleasant surroundings, misfortune suddenly overtook it. Sankaranarayana Pillai had an attack of high fever with a splitting headache.

There were no qualified physicians then. In most places the village barber was the physician or one belonging to a family which had practised medicine for generations. The saying was, 'He who killed a thousand persons was half a physician'. One physician who was called in to see the patient prescribed an application of leeches to the head to draw off the blood in order to relieve the headache. Too many leeches were applied and they drew a large quantity of blood which brought on a collapse and Sankaranarayana Pillai died in his forty-ninth year.

Krishnan was only sixteen years of age and Muthayyan only nine. The family was plunged in the deepest grief, for Sankaranarayana Pillai was the mainstay of his brothers and other relations. The mother was completely heart-broken. Great was the mourning of the country side as he was a just and wise man who had settled their disputes and helped them in difficulties. An instance may be given of his wisdom. There was a dispute between two women as to the yarn spun by them and they came before Sankaranarayana Pillai to settle it. He told them to bring their respective spinning wheels and when they brought them he told them to put the spindles in the hole in the spinning wheel and decided that the yarn and the spindle that filled the spinning wheel belonged to the owner of it. This decision was received in the same way as Solomon's decision between the two women as to who was the mother of the living child. His

reputation as a wise man was very great and all sought his help to settle their disputes. Sankaranarayana Pillai was well-known for his generosity and subscribed to the building of the bridge on the Tambaraparani river near Ambasamudram; his name is inscribed on the pillar erected to commemorate the names of the donors. His sudden death was deeply lamented by all who had known him or had heard of him.

While the family was in the deepest mourning, the proprietors of the estate who were in Madras did a very generous thing. They appointed Krishnan, manager of the estate in consideration of the father's service to them. Krishnan managed the estate with great prudence and ability with the help of his father's servants. While the family was in a way getting reconciled to the loss of the father, an event happened which completely upset the fortunes of the family and made it quit the village with all the advantages of country life in addition to the loss of a lucrative employment with its attendant influence and position, and settle down at Palamcottah which was the home of the mother.

4. *Persecution of Christians.*

For about a decade before this time Christianity began to spread among the lower orders of society in and around Nallur. The cultivators of the lands who became Christians adopted a defiant attitude towards their landlords and often defaulted to pay their dues regularly. When pressed to

pay, they complained to the European Missionary at Nallur of oppression by the landlords: and he, not caring to find out the pros and cons of the matter, sided with the Christian tenants and used his influence with the authorities in their favour and often personally interfered in the disputes between landlords and tenants. This gave great offence to the landlords and others and caused irritation among the upper classes. As long as Sankaranarayana Pillai was alive he managed matters very tactfully and his influence and prestige prevented any clash between the land-owning classes and the Christian cultivators. After his death many hotheads wanted to teach the Christians a good lesson.

Several land-owning men of the locality with the help of the Marava kavalgars (watchmen) and others arranged a punitive expedition against the Christians. In order to give it weight and influence they prevailed upon young Krishnan to lead them. Being a bigoted Vaishnava with a strong bias against the Christians he readily consented to lead them. A large body of men went one night to a neighbouring village of the Christians and mercilessly thrashed them, while the bad elements in the crowd committed looting and broke the earthen pots and pans and caused considerable damage to property. The matter was brought to the notice of the district authorities by the European missionary at Nallur. Information leaked out that warrants had been issued for the

arrest of those who took part in the raid. That very night a faithful servant named Muthusami almost carried Krishnan as far as Seethaparanallur, a distance of nearly eighteen miles and insisted upon his escaping to Palamcottah to avoid arrest.

Next morning the Police officers arrived and arrested many persons including Krishna Pillai's maternal uncle and they were tried and punished with various terms of imprisonment. Before the Police came the servants emptied into the fresh water well in the compound of Krishna Pillai's house several bags of common salt, the proceeds of the loot, and thus did away with the material evidence of the raid. The water of the well became undrinkable for many years and when Muthiah Pillai visited the place more than thirty years after to show his young son the house in which he was born and spent his early years, the water of the well was only then becoming drinkable. This Krishnan who persecuted the Christians in his teens became the St. Paul of Tinnevely and led many to the feet of his Lord and Master whom he loved with all his mind, soul and strength and devoted his whole life and great talents to singing His praise and glorifying His name.

5. *Early Studies.*

At Palamcottah the family was in reduced circumstances as they had to depend upon the income of a few acres of paddy lands near Palamcottah. Owing to the vagaries of the monsoon a

good crop was not often available and paddy had to be bought. When there was a good crop there was no market for the paddy as many people had paddy to sell; and when money for paying the Government revenue could not be found, the family jewels had to be sold for the purpose. The mother, a very capable woman, managed to make both ends meet. Krishnan would not take up any employment as he considered it beneath his dignity to work in a retail dealer's business. Muthayyan consented to be employed in order to help the family. A trader engaged him on a small salary: and as he was asked to sprinkle cowdung water in front of the bazaar he threw up the employment and came home. Krishnan spent most of his time in games and gymnastics. The mother was obliged to sell the paddy fields bit by bit to keep the family going.

When family affairs were in this unsatisfactory condition, the brothers had the good fortune to live near the house of a rich man who had collected a large library of Tamil classics and literature. This Vengu Mudaliar (for that was his name) was a native of Madras and had settled at Palamcottah after making a large fortune by trade, mostly in cotton. He was a very charitable man and had built a temple to Siva and had dug a *teppakulam* (a tank for floating festivals). He had also established a *chatram* at Vannarpet in the name of his deceased daughter Gnanamani Ammal and had well endowed it. He was a patron of learning.

He took a liking to the brothers and allowed them to borrow books from his library. In those days all Tamil books were in palm leaf manuscripts. There were no printed classics. Books could not be had at any price. To read a book students had to go to the house of the man who possessed it and to read it there. Krishnan took out a copy of *Nannul* (Tamil Grammar) with an elaborate commentary and told his younger brother to copy it so that he might study it at leisure. Young Muthayyan copied the whole of the work with his own hand on palm leaves with the result that he knew Tamil Grammar well before his elder brother began to read it. Both of them read the Tamil classics and all the philosophical and didactic works they could lay their hands on.

It was deemed necessary that they should study Tamil Grammar under some well-known scholar versed in it. Such a person lived at Vannarpet near Palamcottah and his name was Tirupalkadalnatha Kavirayar. He did not take any fee for tuition but exacted service from his pupils. He was a widower with an only son named Kasinivendan. When the brothers went to study with the Kavirayar two other brothers joined them—Ulaganathan and Vallinayagam. The four pupils had to do all the work of the house. They had also to water the garden and do all other outdoor work. Ulaganathan had to attend to the cooking. Vallinayagam had to go out shopping and do other errands. Muthayyan, the youngest of the lot, was to see that the fire was kept burning

under the cooking pot. After the pupils had worked for two or three days the pandit would begin to teach them. He sat on his cot. The pupils sat on the floor with legs folded and hands on the knees and they had to be all attention. Sometimes when the lesson was half way through, the son Kasinivendan scratched his legs or his head or yawned and at once the Kavirayar threw down his book and cried out that Satan had come, and told the boys to get out. This happened several times. All the two or three days' work went for nothing. In this manner the two attended his tuition for nearly two years. During this time they read the Tamil classics, general literature and didactic poems and became proficient in Tamil. The Kavirayar said more than once that the little chap (meaning Muthayyan) near the fire was a remarkably intelligent fellow.

6. *Work as a Munshi.*

Both the brothers looked for work as *Munshis*. Persons who had a good knowledge of Tamil were called *Munshis* as the Europeans (civilians, military officers as well as missionaries) employed them to learn from them the Tamil language. A *Munshi* was wanted for the Sawyerpuram Seminary and the appointment was to be given to the best candidate who came out first in a competitive examination. Krishna Pillai had become a learned man and was induced to apply for it; he easily came out first as he was probably a better Tamil scholar than his examiners. One of the examiners

was John Arivanandham Pillai, who was afterwards a leading lawyer at Trichinopoly. He had adopted the European mode of dress and was known then as John Durai (*i.e.*, John Sahib). Krishna Pillai accepted the appointment and went to live at Sawyerpuram. As he was an orthodox Hindu he could not take water from any well used by the Christians. For a time he had to bring water from a distance. The missionary in charge of the Seminary, seeing that the *Munshi* was put to great inconvenience, had a well dug for his sole use and built him a cottage as well. Krishna Pillai's proficiency in Tamil and his method of teaching greatly impressed the missionary and commanded the respect of the students. Krishna Pillai's high character, scrupulous regard for truth and exceedingly simple life drew forth the admiration of those who came in contact with him. He always took great personal interest in the welfare of his students both in school and out of it, so much so that after they became grown up and were employed in various walks of life, they regarded him as their *Guru* and treated him with great respect.

Shortly after Krishna Pillai left for Sawyerpuram, a *Munshi* was wanted by Mr. Schaffter who was then at Nallur, and young Muthiah Pillai who was then only seventeen years of age was sent there by the missionary at Palamcottah. Muthiah Pillai's ready answers and quotation of authorities for any position he took up or any

assertion he made and his proficiency in Tamil grammar and literature soon won the regard of Mr. Schaffter. His son, Rev. H. S. Schaffter, the well-known educationist and Principal of the G. M. S. College, Tinnevely, for nearly forty years, was a very young boy then and attempted many a time to rub off the Vaishnava mark on the forehead of young Muthiah Pillai. In a few months he earned such a reputation for scholarship and ready application that Mr. Sargent requisitioned his services for work in the Pre-parandah Institution at Palamcottah which was under his charge.

Muthiah Pillai was younger in age to many of the students whom he had to teach and Mr. Sargent, who was a strict disciplinarian, told the students that if any of them showed the least disrespect to the *Munshi* he would be sent away from the Institution and could not be readmitted. Young Muthiah Pillai's scholarship and his way of teaching the Tamil subjects so impressed the students that they readily followed his lessons and behaved very respectfully towards him. Mr. Sargent, who was a Tamil scholar himself, soon discerned that the *Munshi's* scholarship was of a high order without the pedantry of the ordinary *Kavirayar* or Pandit, and he began to indent upon his services to help him in his work connected with the Tamil language. His scholarship was not only profound but also exact. Muthiah Pillai's becoming a *Munshi* and earning a good salary relieved

the mother of all anxiety about household expenses. He began to save a little money and the first thing he did was to improve the family house at Palamcottah. He had his own ideas of lighting and sanitation. At that time the houses in Palamcottah as a rule had low doorways and hardly any windows, for it was considered improper, if not unlucky, for private houses to have high doorways or windows at the sides. The Tamil poetess Avvai has said 'Build not a spacious house'. In improving the house Muthiah Pillai wanted to have a doorway at least six feet high and directed the carpenter to make one for the front entrance and went to his work in the Institution. Shortly after he left the house a neighbour and friend, Andia Pillai, turned up and saw the high door frame and found fault with the carpenter for making it. On the carpenter replying that it was Muthiah Pillai who had ordered him to make the frame, he stormed at him saying 'What does that young boy know?' and insisted upon his cutting it down to the approved height and building it in. When Muthiah Pillai returned home in the evening he found that his plan had been frustrated by an elderly neighbour and friend. Such was the force of public opinion then.

When Krishna Pillai's eldest child was born at Palamcottah, Muthiah Pillai, who was eighteen years of age, was sent to inform the wife's relations of the happy event. Muthiah Pillai started in the morning and reached Trichendore, a dis-

tance of thirty-three miles, in the evening. He walked all the distance in about nine hours.

7. *The Conversion of Krishna Pillai's brother.*

There was an Anglo-Vernacular School at Palamcottah popularly known as Cruickshanks' School (from the name of its headmaster) which was started in the forties of the last century and gave instruction in English, Mathematics, History, Geography and Tamil. Mr. Cruickshanks was an Anglo-Indian who had become blind in his twelfth year but he was a remarkably clever man, well up in English and Mathematics. He was a pious Christian and by his example and precept he influenced the conduct of his students for good and was the means of several of the Hindu students embracing Christianity. Two of the students in that school were Dhanakoti Raju and Manakavala Perumal Pillai. The former belonged to the clan of Rajus who had settled in Rajapalayam and claimed to be Rajputs, and the latter was a Vellalah belonging to a respectable family in Tinnevely Town. These two became friends of Muthiah Pillai, the brother of Krishna Pillai. Dhanakoti Raju had a keen intellect and was an enthusiastic student. He made it a rule to tell Muthiah Pillai of all that he had read and been taught in the school. Both being residents of Palamcottah they went to the Tambaraparani river for an early bath as was the custom among the Hindus. Sometimes they went too early not knowing the time and would sleep till dawn on the

sand after removing the dew-drenched upper layer. They would then bathe and return home. Being of a religious turn of mind, their conversation naturally turned to religion. Muthiah Pillai had become troubled in mind as the result of a close study of the *Puranas* which made him feel disgusted with the grotesque and obscene stories of the gods and goddesses portrayed therein: and his pure mind wanted something purer and noble than what popular Hinduism offered. A study of the Hindu philosophy of *Advaita* did not satisfy him. Dhanakoti Raju, who had a thirst for knowledge, discussed with Muthiah Pillai the doubts and perplexities which troubled the latter's mind. Their attention naturally turned towards Christianity. As Muthiah Pillai did not know English, Dhanakoti Raju taught him the rudiments of the language. Being proficient in Tamil, Muthiah Pillai soon acquired a good knowledge of English and they both began to read books on the Christian religion as well as the Bible. They read Paley's *Evidences* and such other similar works as could be got from the Palamcottah Institution. Manakavala Perumal joined them in their reading and discussions. Being strict Hindus they could not consult anybody for fear of their state of mind becoming known. They earnestly prayed for light and guidance. Gradually light dawned upon their minds. They came to the conclusion that Christianity was the true religion after being tossed to and fro for nearly three years on the sea of doubt.

Though they were convinced that Christ was the Saviour of mankind and that to love Him with one's heart, mind and soul was the way to salvation, yet there were difficulties in the way of their becoming converts to Christianity. Muthiah Pillai had a mother who loved him more than her own life and a dear brother (Krishna Pillai) who was more than a brother to him since the time of their father's death. Dhanakoti Raju being a Rajput, was married to a young girl, the daughter of the Public Prosecutor and Government Pleader of the day. Manakavala Perumal, who had lost his father, had a doting mother, and brothers and sisters. A change of religion meant social ostracism and the severance of all natural ties. Becoming a convert was considered worse than death by the Hindu relations and friends. The loss of caste by the converts was a reflection on the family, which became dishonoured thereby and would gladly see one of their number die rather than become a Christian. The young men's mental state could be better imagined than described. They could not consult any Indian for there was no one as learned as Muthiah Pillai in the Hindu religious books and philosophy. Dhanakoti Raju's logical mind could not be satisfied by the people who were at Palamcottah. They could not consult a missionary as he would only insist upon their becoming Christians. They resolved that they would keep their belief secret, and keep their convictions to themselves, as they thought that it was not necessary to be baptized and become professing Chris-

tians in order to obtain salvation. They remained in this state for some months. This involved their following the customs and ceremonies enforced by popular Hinduism, which were revolting to their convictions. They felt they were living a double life—prayer and reading of the Bible in secret and observance of Hinduism in public. They went on with their work—the Munshi taught in the school and the others were busy with their studies.

The double life and the mental struggle became too much for them to bear. The crisis came in the beginning of 1857 and the three made up their minds to declare their belief openly and take the consequences. They went one morning to Sargent's bungalow and told him of the state of their minds and disclosed their intention to become Christians. Sargent, who had had no inkling of what had been going on, could not believe his ears. He knew that Muthiah Pillai was a staunch Hindu and a Vaishnava, and that the other two belonged to very influential families—one the son-in-law of a leading Vakil and the other the scion of a well-to-do family. Though overjoyed with the news he hesitated to take them at their word. He questioned them about the fundamentals and truths of the Christian religion, and great was his astonishment when he found that they were not only familiar with the Bible and the essentials of the Christian religion but had read such books as Paley's *Evidences*. After being satisfied that they were genuine in their determination to become

Christians openly, he consented to receive them and made arrangements for their stay in his bungalow: for he knew that as soon as the news spread in the town that the three young men had resolved to become Christians, there would be an uproar, and perhaps a riot in the attempt to rescue them, and that in consequence their lives would be in danger. Somehow or other the news leaked out and the students of the Preparandah Institution, who were all Christians, were in transports of joy that their beloved young *Munshi* was going to become a Christian.

The news soon reached the town of Palamcottah and caused a great commotion among the inhabitants. People crowded in the roads and all kinds of rumours were circulated. Feelings ran high and many thought of a rescue by force. Some one ran and told Muthiah Pillai's mother that her son had become a Pariah. She cried aloud and lamented as if her dear son had been suddenly struck dead. When the news reached Raju's and Manakavalan's houses the relations cried as if their loved ones had been suddenly killed. The relations of the young men begged Sargent to be allowed to interview them, but he stoutly refused as he feared an assault. When he heard of the commotion in the town, he wrote to the District authorities for protection against violence, and they sent Policemen to guard his bungalow. The relations went away highly incensed at the conduct of the missionary whom they accused of

having kidnapped the young men. Some of the Christians who went over to the town for marketing were abused and ill-treated and brickbats were thrown at a few of them. The excitement in the town lasted several days. Sargent's house was guarded day and night by his own servants and also by the students of Preparandah Institution in batches of four and five. Nearly ninety years after these events, it is impossible to conceive what the feelings of the Hindus were when promising orthodox young men of good families left their homes and dear ones, and became members of a hated and despised Christian community whose profession was a negation of all that the Hindus held dear—caste observance, devotion to their gods and goddesses and respect for family tradition.

The young men remained without food for nearly a day as they could not take food cooked by Christians, and they could not send for food from their houses as Sargent feared they might be poisoned. After searching high and low, Sargent found that Rev. Mr. Periyamayagam had belonged to the Vellalah caste and he asked him to send food from his house; the first meal was brought to them by a young boy named John whose family belonged to the Vellalah caste. This John became in after-life J. D. Savariraya Pillai, a distinguished Christian and the well-known Sheristadar of the District Court, Tinnevely. Dhanakoti's father-in-law, popularly known as Vakil Rajah, applied to the District Court for the release of his son-in-law

alleging that he was a minor and that the Christian missionary had kidnapped him. Manakavala Perumal's relations made a similar application to the Court. None applied on behalf of Muthiah Pillai as he was twenty-three years of age at the time. Raju was twenty-one and Manakavalan was nineteen. The applications were heard by the District Judge, Mr. Silver. Sargent took the three young men in his carriage to the court. The District Judge closely questioned Raju and Manakavalan as well as Muthiah Pillai, and found that not only were they educated young men but also well-versed in the principles of the Christian religion. He held that there was neither coercion nor false inducement on the part of Sargent, but that the young men of their own accord could change their religion as they were not minors, and dismissed the applications against them. When Sargent was entering his carriage after the case was over, Manakavalan's mother came behind him, threw dust on him and beat him on his back with the palms of her hands, saying, 'May you perish for ever!' Great was the rejoicing in the Christian circles when the decision of the District Court was known.

The question of the supply of food to the young men was one of great difficulty. Apart from caste scruples, they were strict vegetarians, and there was no Christian family in Palamcottah which was vegetarian. For some time a caste man was made to cook for them. Muthiah Pillai's mother pleaded hard to be allowed to send food

to her son. She swore that she would never harm her son even though he had become a Christian and was lost to her. After a month or two the feelings in the town quieted down and Sargent permitted food to be sent to the young men from their respective houses. They could not go to their homes for fear of wrongful confinement or something worse on their way to and fro.

The young men's trials were not yet over. Sargent wanted them to remove their *Kudimis* (top knots) before he could baptize them. They refused to remove them. The missionaries of those days considered all social customs, habits and modes of dress to be connected with the Hindu religion. Owing to their ignorance and want of understanding of what was part of the Hindu religion and what was not, they insisted upon all Christian men (young and old) having shaven heads. The Catholic missionaries did not interfere with the modes of dress or the social customs of their converts. The converts to Muhammadanism in parts of Tinnevely District, such as Melapalayam near Palamcottah, wore no hair on the head but only grew their beards. The young men would not yield. They argued that having a *Kudimi* or not had nothing to do with religion and the missionaries, who were foreigners and who did not understand the customs and habits of the people, had no right to ask them to disfigure themselves. Sargent would not yield and the other missionaries supported him. Muthiah Pillai retorted that in that case he did not want to be baptized. The

matter was argued vehemently on both sides. All the Indian Christians and the students of the Preparandah Institution begged Muthiah Pillai secretly not to yield to the unreasonable demand of the missionaries, for they hated to be clean shaven, which affected their appearance. The missionaries objected to several other things which the Hindus were in the habit of doing such as bathing in the river, cleaning the houses with cow-dung water and washing the clothes in the canals.

The argument about *Kudimi* went on for nearly three months. Sargent could not meet Muthiah Pillai's objection except by saying that it was a sign of the Hindu religion, and Muthiah Pillai said that so was wearing a *dhoti* or talking the Tamil language and eating rice. Sargent at last found his position untenable and yielded to the young men. He somehow managed to persuade the youngest of the three to crop his hair to the neck as a compromise and the other two were baptized with their long tufts on. The controversy was so prolonged and so bitter that Caldwell thought it best to write a pamphlet called *Kudimi*. All the Christians were mightily pleased at the moral victory of the new converts and gradually began to grow the hair on their heads. The fight with Sargent, who was a strong man and whom the Christians dreaded, raised Muthiah Pillai and his two friends in the estimation of Sargent himself that on a question of principle they could stand firm.

The young men could not conveniently live in their family houses with their relations as, accord-

ing to Hindu notions, they had become outcastes. Sargent tried to find quarters for them between Adaikalapuram where the Christians lived and the town of Palamcottah. It may be mentioned here that Palamcottah (anglicised form of Palayamcottai meaning garrison fort) was a walled town with four large gates. Its fort was a strong one built more than five or six hundred years ago with huge dressed stones and mortar. The Christian Church and settlement were to the west of the fort, about half a mile from it. The fort was demolished after the great mutiny of 1857. Mr. Silver, the District Judge, who had heard the case against the young-men came forward, and gave a handsome donation of Rs. 1,000 for building houses for the new converts, and quarters were built for them between the fort and Adaikalapuram near the Trichendore Road. Two of the houses, still known as mission houses, are in the occupation of mission agents even now. Sargent acquired considerable plots of land which he some years after sold to the new converts. The converts lived in the new houses built for them.

As soon as Muthiah Pillai and his two friends announced their decision to become Christians and were housed in Sargent's bungalow, information was sent to Krishna Pillai at Sawyerpuram. The news reached him when he was about to take his oil bath. He simply wiped the oil from his head and refusing to take his bath or food hurried to Palamcottah on foot and went straight to his mother.

In those days there were bullock bandies only, and they took nearly a day to travel a distance of eighteen or twenty miles. So Krishna Pillai was in the habit of walking to and from Sawyerpuram. He found that the news was only too true. Both mother and son cried long and mingled their tears and lamented as if Muthiah Pillai was dead. Krishna Pillai sought an interview with his brother, but Sargent, who knew how dear the brothers were to one another, would not permit it as it would be very painful to both brothers, though he had not the least doubt about Muthiah Pillai's firmness in the new faith. Krishna Pillai stayed with his mother for a few days at Palamcottah, and finding that he could not do anything to bring back his brother told his mother to be reconciled to the inevitable, and went back to Sawyerpuram in great mental distress, for he was greatly grieved to lose his younger brother who was everything to him and whom he loved passionately. His future appeared to be dark. He was fully convinced that Christ was his Saviour. He began to pray regularly in secret. His sleep often left him. His wife could not understand what was troubling her husband, and attributed his mental condition to the grief caused by his brother's conversion to Christianity. He spent some miserable months and threw up his appointment as Munshi, took his wife and children to Palamcottah, left them with his mother and started for Madras. The journey took nearly a month as there was no railway communication then between Palamcottah and Madras. He accepted

the post of Tamil Pandit in the Presidency College, then known as the High School. Dr. Percival, a reputed Tamil scholar was the Director of Vernacular Studies in the High School. He soon found that Krishna Pillai's attainments and scholarship were of a high order and not like those of the ordinary Pandits or Munshis, and treated him very kindly. He requested him to go to his house in the mornings and read with him Kamba Ramayanam and other classics. Often Krishna Pillai was at Dr. Percival's house in Adyar before 5 a.m. and tapped at his door. On hearing who it was he said, "Please wait a minute, Mr. Krishna Pillai", and got up, lit his lamp by the bedside, read a portion of the Bible and offered prayer, and then opened the door.

8. *Krishna Pillai becomes a Christian.*

At the request of a friend Krishna Pillai wrote in Tamil a full account of his conversion to Christianity. A summary of this account may be given here.

'Before I went to Sawyerpuram as a Munshi I did not know anything about the Christian religion. When I was about ten years old a tract entitled *The Incarnation of Grace* had been handed to me by some Christians who had come to preach in the village where I lived. This tract set forth in order the ten incarnations of Vishnu and pointed out the evils connected with them. This criticism alone remained well impressed in my mind. What the latter part of the tract said about the fine

qualities of our Saviour Jesus Christ and about His good deeds did not at all make any impression on me at that time.

When I was a Munshi at Sawyerpuram Rev. H. C. Huckstable, who was the Principal of the institution, not only treated me most kindly but taught me about the Christian religion every day when I went to teach him Tamil. The words which he spoke with great kindness and love were at first quite unpleasant to me. But his excellent character impressed me and led me not to oppose his words. After some time I borrowed from one of the teachers a copy of the Tamil Bible and set out to read it from the beginning. I read as far as the twentieth chapter of the Book of Exodus. The accounts of the creation, of the fall of man and of the flood struck me as quite true. In contrast with them the narratives in the Saiva and Vaishnava religious books were clearly fictitious, legendary and amusing. As a result the various ceremonies and rites of the Hindu religion became unacceptable to me. It was at this time I began to realise that I shall be held responsible for all my sins and misdeeds and that the various methods of easy atonements which were set forth in the Hindu religion were quite useless. And yet my old leanings towards sin did not leave me. My sinful habits, which had been formed through a long stretch of years, did not become any less. So I gave up the company of Christians and the study of Christian books completely as I found these constantly to distress my

mind. I used to go to my work and return, and if on the way any Christians spoke to me I did not listen to them. When, however, Mr. Huckstable spoke to me I merely listened to him.

I had become an intimate friend of Dhanakoti Raju two years before his baptism. Though he was younger than me I respected his words as that of a *Guru* because of his mature, knowledge, clear intelligence and fine character.

When Mr. Huckstable heard of the baptism of the three friends, he sent for me to Tuticorin where he had gone for a change. He said to me sharply, 'What obstacle is there now to your becoming a Christian? Has not your brother become a Christian? What do you say?' This was quite contrary to the fine qualities he had exhibited before. I was greatly troubled in mind, and lost all the respect I had for him. I said to him, 'I may or may not become a Christian, that is as I wish. What need is there for you to ask me so severely?' I left the room, wrote my letter of resignation, handed it to a servant to be given to Mr. Huckstable, and returned to my house. That evening he sent for me and told me 'I will not accept your resignation. I will not ask you any more to become a Christian. Your work is very satisfactory. I will be kind to you. You need not have any doubts about this'. He spoke at length in this strain and sent me home. I decided to see for some time what would happen and continued to work as before.

Whenever I came to Palamcottah, my friend Dhanakoti Raju counselled me not to make my mind easy by giving up the study of Christian books. With adequate reasons he persuaded me to read four Christian books in Tamil, one of which was Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. He also taught me to abandon all sinful habits to the best of my lights. I followed his advice, read eagerly the books mentioned and abandoned some of my worst sins. But I did not attain inner purity nor did I get peace of mind.

On another occasion in my house at Palamcottah my friend and I talked one night about my doubts and difficulties. He explained to me how Christ accepted the punishment due to us men and suffered death on the cross and how by believing in this supreme act Salvation is wrought. That very day the spirit of God made this truth enter my heart. That very day I believed in Christ; that very day I learnt to pray in His name. The sins which had been sweet to me became bitter from that day. That very day I resolved to become a Christian.

No one in my family knew about this change of mind. As my people observed my neglect of the usual religious ceremonies, they began to suspect me and to ask me questions, which I evaded. At night after every one went to sleep I formed the habit of sitting up in bed and praying. When on some nights my wife came in and began to talk, I kept silent and her suspicion became strong. One day

unable to hide the truth any longer, I began to speak a word or two gently to my wife about the Christian religion. She shouted and cried and said 'I am going to kill myself immediately'. We had also three small girls. It became clear to me that if I become a Christian by myself there would be considerable distress in the family. My mind wavered. I had not the courage to give them up and to become a Christian by myself. I decided to go to Madras (a distance of four hundred miles), to send for my people there and to get baptized there in Madras. I thought that living among strangers, there would not be the same difficulty about my becoming a Christian. Accordingly I left for Madras in September 1857. When after sometime I wrote to my people to come, they refused to do so as some mischief-maker in Madras had informed them of my intentions.

So in 1858 on the 29th of March I was baptized in the Church in Sullivan's Gardens. I ceased to wear the caste mark on my forehead. Thus the hand of God removed all the obstacles and brought me into the straight and narrow path that leads to the Light of Life.

Krishna Pillai added to his name Henry Arthur, the Christian names of Symonds, and was afterwards known as H. A. Krishna Pillai. When the news of his conversion reached Palamcottah, great was the rejoicing in the mission circles that a very learned, devout Hindu had become a Christian. The younger brother fell on his knees and thanked

his Lord and Master for restoring his brother to him. While the brother and his friends rejoiced at the news, there was much lamentation in the house of his mother and kindred. Krishna Pillai's wife's brothers, coming to hear of his conversion, went to Palamcottah, and said to their sister that her husband had become an outcaste and a *Pariah* and that she should not stay in a degraded family; they took her away with her youngest daughter, a child hardly a year old, to their house in Trichendore and left the elder girls with their grandmother who was greatly attached to them.

Krishna Pillai returned to Palamcottah a few months after this baptism and the meeting of the two brothers could be better imagined than described. They wept tears of joy; so did the two other converts, who rejoiced that one much older than themselves had also become a convert. They were all happy together for nearly a month. Sargent saw Krishna Pillai and congratulated him on the bold step he had taken, forsaking his wife and children, in the cause of the Saviour. The S.P.G. mission hearing of his return, requested him to take up his appointment at Sawyerpuram at an enhanced salary, which he did. When he went to Sawyerpuram the Christian students and Huckstable gladly welcomed him, and glorified God for leading such an orthodox Hindu to the feet of Christ. He found life there pleasant. Everybody admired him and the students revered him, and he began to talk to them regularly of Christ's love and the way of salvation. His

earnestness as a Christian was considered to be a miracle, for he had been an intolerant and bigoted Hindu before his conversion and evinced the same traits as a Christian. Owing to the absence of his wife he cooked for himself, for he kept his strict vegetarianism to the end of his life, and there was no one who could cook for him. After a short time he got a man from Palamcottah to do the cooking and other household work. It may be observed in passing that neither Symonds nor any other missionary in Madras asked him to remove his *Kudimi*. He had long and beautiful hair, and even when he was old the hair which he tied in a knot was long enough to reach his hip.

In the meantime things were taking shape at Palamcottah. Dhanakoti Raju and Manakavala Perumal Pillai went one day to the mother's house stealthily and brought away the two young daughters of Krishna Pillai to their uncle Muthiah Pillai, who looked after them like a mother and persuaded them to be reconciled to the separation from their grandmother who was greatly distressed at their loss; all her attempts to get them back proved unavailing. She abused Dhanakoti Raju and Manakavala to her heart's content and cursed them. • After a few days Dhanakoti went to her house and she drove him away with abuse. He was not a man to be deterred from achieving his object by abuse. He was patient and went day after day, to be turned away with angry and insulting words. After he visited her a dozen

times the mother asked him why he was pestering her with his visits and he replied, 'I want to talk to you'. She said, 'Are you not satisfied with kidnapping my dear children? Is there anything left for you to do?'. 'Yes', he said, 'I want you to hear me'. She would not hear him. He repeated his visits and at last she said, 'Say what you have to say, but don't think you can move me'. He spoke of salvation through Christ and also about the hollowness of the Hindu religion. She said, 'Do you want me to be an outcaste like you? Go away'. He repeated his visits and at last she made up her mind to listen to him. He expounded to her the principles of the Christian religion and convinced her that it was the only way to salvation. She asked him to pray to God for guidance. He prayed with her more than once. She, being a very intelligent woman, understood what he said and was convinced that in order to be saved she ought to become a Christian, but she had to consider her Hindu brother and other relations. Dhanakoti visited her every day and read to her portions of the Gospels. She prayed earnestly for guidance, and in a few months' time she felt convinced that for her salvation and peace of mind she ought to become a convert. She had with her a young woman named Muthammal, her husband's elder brother's daughter who had been married to her younger brother and had become a widow and lost her only daughter. Muthammal was slightly older than Krishna Pillai. Dhanakoti Raju instructed her also in the principles of the Christian

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religion and taught her to read. They both consented to become Christians. Muthiah Pillai's joy knew no bounds when he learned that his mother and cousin had consented to become Christians. He visited his mother and they both cried for joy for the reunion after more than a year's separation.

Krishna Pillai was informed of the decision of his mother and cousin and he promptly came to Palamcottah and saw his brother, mother and cousin. Great was their joy at this unexpected turn of events. They went and informed Sargent of the decision of their mother and cousin, and he was only too glad to baptize them. The mother and her adopted daughter Muthammal took up their residence with Muthiah Pillai in the house built for the converts at Palamcottah.

About six months after, Krishna Pillai's wife's brothers coming to know that his mother and cousin had become Christians brought back his wife and child to Palamcottah and left them saying "Your husband and his relations have become outcastes. You had better stay with them and remember that you are dead to us from this day." Dhanakoti Raju again played the good angel and taught her the fundamentals of the Christian religion; after a month or two she too was baptized with her little child. Her other two daughters had been baptized with their grandmother. Krishna Pillai took his wife and the youngest child to Sawyerpuram where their life was a happy one. The two elder daughters remained with their grandmother, and their uncle

taught them Tamil and English, and they were very much attached to him, while the grandmother and the aunt looked after them in such a way as to make them not feel their separation from the mother.

Ulaganathan Kavirayar, who had formerly studied Tamil Grammar with the two brothers Muthiah Pillai and Krishna Pillai, had become a Christian with his wife. He was known as Thomas Jesudasen Kavariyar. His brother Vallinayagam Pillai, afterwards known as Jothinayagam Pillai, became a Christian one or two years after this. His infant daughter was kidnapped by Dhanakoti Raju and Manakavala Perumal and his wife joined him shortly after. Ganapathy Pillai, who had married the sister of Thomas Jesudasen Kavirayar, became a convert with his wife. He was a student of Mr. Cruikshanks.

Some others also became Christians. One or two of them did not remain professing Christians, but their lives were greatly influenced by their early conversion to Christianity.

The effect of these men belonging to respectable families becoming Christians was that the Hindus felt that men who could have got on well in life as Hindus gave up their social position and family for the sake of their faith and not for material gain. The conversion of such men to Christianity raised the status of the Christians in the eyes of the Hindus and others. Instead of being a despised community of poor people, the

community assumed importance and position as containing learned men of great integrity, probity and honour. In a few years their attainments and high character came to be acknowledged and admired. It became a proverb that Christians will not tell lies. In this connexion it may be mentioned that Muthiah Pillai in partnership with others, opened in 1864 a retail business at Palamcottah. Many people asked him how he, being a Christian could engage in trade, for it was an accepted maxim then that without telling lies as to the value and quality of things no trade could be carried on successfully. He solved the problem by having the price of each article marked on it so that any one could see what the price for a thing was, and the servants could neither increase it nor reduce it but had to sell it at the price marked on it. Such was the regard in which the Christians came to be held within a few years of the conversion of these men.

9. *Life at Sawyerpuram.*

Krishna Pillai's life at Sawyerpuram was not only a happy one but also it was one of spiritual blessing. He had daily family prayer with his wife and friends that happened to call at the time. His private devotions were regular, earnest and deep. He felt that he was in the presence of his Saviour whom he loved with all the devotion of his ardent nature. He grew in grace and was given power to control his passionate temper, to give up his prejudices against Christians and to treat one

and all, high and low, as brothers. Several whom he would not allow to cross his threshold before his conversion often enjoyed his hospitality. In the evenings, many of his students and others gathered in his house, and listened to his exposition of the Scriptures and of the way the Father loved his children and sent His only Son to be born on earth in order to save mankind. Those who listened to him were lost in wonder that the bigoted Vaishnava, who a year before would not allow a Christian to enter his front verandah, and treated with supreme contempt all who bore the name of Christ, should in the course of a few months be so thoroughly changed as to become a champion of Christ and treat all as brethren. When God touches the heart there is a remarkable transformation as the lives of saints, beginning from St. Paul, exemplify. In the school his instruction in his subjects was listened to with great attention by the students, who strove hard to merit his good opinion. He commanded not only the reverence but also the love of his students. Rev. Huckstable, the missionary in charge of the Institution, treated him with the greatest regard and kindness and helped him in every way to make his stay in Sawyerpuram comfortable, if not pleasant. Krishna Pillai felt keenly the separation from his revered mother and beloved brother who lived at Palamcottah, and in order to spend a day or two with them often walked to and from Palamcottah during the week-ends, a distance of nearly twenty miles.

Almost all his students did well in after life and whatever position they attained to, they never ceased to have the reverence and love for him which they had when they were his students. In fact they looked upon him as their *Guru*. Many of his students became good Tamil scholars and spoke and wrote the language correctly. Such was the regard of his students that whenever they happened to visit the place in which he resided they seldom failed to call on him and pay their respects. He, on his part, was most pleased to see them, and made kindly enquiries of their welfare and spoke to them as a father would do to his children. One instance may be mentioned in order to show how deep and genuine were the love and regard of his students. Many years after his death, in 1911, one of his old students who had become a famous clergyman, Rev. S. Paranjothi of Bangalore, happened to meet me in Madras, and the moment he learned who I was came up to me and almost embraced me exclaiming 'Are you the brother's son of my old *Guru*, Krishna Pillai?' and spoke to me and made my acquaintance. Though Rev. Paranjothi had then nearly attained the psalmist's age of three score and ten, yet he had not lost the love and respect for Krishna Pillai which he had nearly half a century before. Although Krishna Pillai's subject was Tamil he did not confine himself to his routine work, and often, when opportunity offered itself, compared the principles of the Christian religion with those of the Hindu religion and exposed the falsity and shallowness of the latter.

In 1860 a fourth daughter was born to him; and his mother, who was most anxious that her son should have a son and heir, on hearing that the new arrival was a girl expressed her disgust by saying, 'Throw it on the dunghill' for she was grievously disappointed in not getting a grandson. Krishna Pillai, whose life was happy and peaceful since his conversion, had her christened with the name of Pakkiam 'happiness'. While his days were happy he was not content with only the work in the School and the edifying and helpful conversations in the evenings, but wanted to honour the name of his Saviour by exercising his poetic gifts. With this view he composed a hundred stanzas in the style of Kamban's *Ramayanam*, calling upon the people of the earth to give up their useless practices and devotions which could not save them, and to have their sins cleansed in the blood of Jesus. He named this book *Rakshanya Navanitham*.

About 1865 he came across *Vedaporul Ammanai* composed by a devout Christian, Vedamanicka Nadan. He corrected it and edited it and it was printed at the C.M.S. Press, Palamcottah in 1868. It is the Biblical story from the beginning of the creation, written in what is known as Ammanai metre and is intended to be sung. This work was justly appreciated by Christians; and its copies were eagerly sought after even in the eighties.

To the great joy of Krishna Pillai and his family and his mother a son was born to him early

in 1864. In the same year, his brother who had remained a bachelor till then, married the eldest-daughter of Rev. Muthusamy Devaprasadham, to the great joy of the aged mother and elder brother. The wedding was at Edayankulam and the festivities connected with it were on a moderate scale. Krishna Pillai, who compared the pomp and grandeur of his own marriage in his father's lifetime with the simplicity of his brother's wedding, actually shed tears. A second son was born to him in 1866 and in 1868 he celebrated the marriage of his eldest daughter Devanayaghi, named after his mother. The bridegroom, M. Kanthimathi Pillai, who belonged to a wealthy and influential family in Tinnevely town, was a student of Mr. Cruickshanks and followed the example of Muthiah Pillai and his two friends. He gave up his high social position and worldly advantages and after enduring severe persecution became a convert to Christianity in 1862. He was even shut up in Dharmapuram Mutt in the Tanjore District, and effected a clever escape and took shelter in some Christian's house, and returned to Palamcottah to the great joy of his Christian friends. Rev. E. Sargent actually danced with joy when he got the news of his escape. A third son was born to Krishna Pillai in December 1868, and a week after a son was born to his brother. Krishna Pillai wanted both the infants to be christened together, and Muthiah Pillai with his mother and wife went to Sawyerpuram in March 1869. Krishna Pillai

stood God-father to his brother's son along with the maternal grand-father, Rev. M. Deva-prasadham, while his mother was God-mother..

Things went on smoothly for some years and Krishna Pillai was happy in his work, in his home and in his friends. Suddenly in January 1873 a great calamity overtook the family. His mother, who was living with her younger son at Palamcottah, began to lose her eye-sight gradually. She, who was vigorous and active, felt the affliction keenly and did not live long as a blind person. The end came without warning. One afternoon she felt unwell and immediately a special messenger was despatched to Sawyerpuram and Krishna Pillai and family arrived next morning, and the mother breathed her last in the presence of her dear sons, their wives and children. Both the brothers, who felt the loss of their beloved mother very deeply, wept like little children. Her body was buried the next morning in the C.M.S. cemetery at Adaikalapuram, Palamcottah, and the brothers erected a beautiful tomb over the grave and put up a tablet with a suitable inscription.

The mother was a remarkable woman. Though she was never taught her letters, as reading and writing were not considered suitable accomplishments for a woman in her day, yet she knew the *Ramayanam* by heart by listening to the reading by her husband and by his discourses. She knew many proverbs and wise sayings contained in some of the Tamil didactic works. By her careful management she carried on effectively

the affairs of the family after her husband's death. Her devotion to the welfare of her two sons was fully appreciated by them and they loved and revered her greatly. Though a staunch and devout Hindu for fifty-five years, yet when she became a convert to Christianity she gave her full allegiance to her Lord and Saviour, and showed by her life how a bigoted Hindu could be an ardent Christian. Her younger son has left on record her sound advice to him as to how he should love the Saviour above everything in the world. An example she gave is a striking one. Muthiah Pillai who married late in life had no child for four years after marriage, and his first-born was a son whom he dearly loved. The mother told him, 'You must love your Saviour more than you love your son'. She was a true Christian and her simple and pure life was an inspiration to all. She gave up the prejudices against Christians which she had before her conversion and treated all with kindness. She loved her younger son's wife who was born of Christian parents as her own daughter, and never used a harsh or unkind word towards her all the nine years she lived with her, though the daughter-in-law was new to the ways of her husband's family and had to learn a good many things before she could adjust herself to her new surroundings. Though very strict in many things connected with housekeeping and cookery, yet she made the life in her younger son's home happy by her good and kind advice. Her piety and devotion were exemplary. Her death was a grievous loss to both the

sons, for they always asked for her advice in regard to all important matters and she helped them with her ready and sound wisdom.

In 1874 Krishna Pillai married his second daughter to Ponnavaanam Pillai, one of his former pupils at Sawyerpuram who had become a convert to Christianity in 1872. He belonged to a well-to-do family who greatly resented their son becoming a Christian, though in later years the members of his family were reconciled to his change of religion and were on visiting terms. In 1875 the third daughter's marriage was celebrated with Shanmugasundaram Pillai, the son of the elder brother of Thomas Kavirayar, who had become a convert to Christianity in 1871.

After the mother's death Krishna Pillai wished very much to live near his brother in Palamcottah, and an opportunity occurred in 1875. The English School at Palamcottah, popularly known as Spratt's School after the name of its headmaster Rev. Spratt, who was a good teacher and disciplinarian, had done so well that the C.M.S. wanted it to be raised to a Second Grade College. The missionaries at Palamcottah desired to secure the services of a competent pandit to teach Tamil in the College classes, and they approached Krishna Pillai with an offer of higher emoluments to go to Palamcottah. He accepted the offer not because of better emoluments but because he wanted to live at Palamcottah near his brother and take a share in the larger life there, for at Sawyerpuram except-

ing a few Christians, there was no one with whom he could move on equal terms intellectually. None of his relatives lived there, and though his life was full of activities, yet the members of his family felt lonely as there were no relations or friends with whom they could have social intercourse freely. The S.P.G. missionaries were reluctant to part with such a distinguished scholar and earnest Christian. However, they reconciled themselves to the separation as he was going to a larger field of work and parted with him and his family with real regret. All the students of the Seminary and the staff gathered together to give him a good send-off, and Krishna Pillai felt that it was a wrench to leave his students and his field of work for over twenty years; he exhorted the students to join the new College at Palamcottah for passing the University Examinations. He went to Palamcottah in 1876 and took up his residence in his house which he had built the previous decade.

10. *Life at Palamcottah.*

He greatly enjoyed the work in the College and teaching the students for the Matriculation and F.A. examinations. The selections from the classics for the examinations were not so simple or elementary as at Sawyerpuram, and he delighted in explaining the difficult stanzas in poetry and the beautiful couplets in Tiruvalluvar's *Kural* which are full of noble sentiments and deep wisdom. His method of teaching and exposition of the difficult portions of the text books, and his simple yet new

mode of teaching Tamil grammar elicited the admiration of the students. In Sawyerpuram more than ninety-five per cent of the students were Christians. In the College there was a large number of Hindu students, with a few Muhammadans, in addition to the Christian students. There was a wholesome rivalry among the students as to who should stand first in the class in Tamil. He was very kind to students though he was a strict disciplinarian, and if he raised his voice at any irregularity or gross mistake the students actually trembled to see his wrathful countenance. Notwithstanding their wholesome fear of him they always looked forward to his class with keen interest, and listened with rapt attention to his explanation of difficult passages with apt illustrations. The stories from Hindu mythology and classics as told by him were treasured by the students. All were anxious to stand well with the pandit, for they dreaded his biting sarcasm if they stood looking foolish without being able to answer his questions. The result was that all the students were well up in his subjects and never neglected to study their Tamil lessons, however ill they might do in other subjects. At the end of the year all got through the University Examination with hardly an exception, and the College justly acquired a reputation for Tamil scholarship.

The principal, Mr. Schaffter, and the staff of the College treated Mr. Krishna Pillai with the greatest consideration and regard. In the even-

ings he gladly welcomed the students who went to his house to have some difficult passages explained or some allusions cleared up, and he solved their difficulties with great pleasure. He had a kind heart and helped all those who sought his help, and his students were quite at home in his front verandah. Tamil Pandits and *Munshis* in Tinnevely and Palamcottah went to him frequently for getting explanation of difficult passages in the text books they had to teach, and for a discussion about Tamil classics and grammatical points.

On Sunday mornings after divine service in the Trinity Church at Palamcottah, it became a custom for most of the senior converts to meet in the front verandah of the new house of his brother in Trichendore Road. Among those who met regularly were Krishna Pillai, Thomas Jesudasan Kavirayar, Manakavala Perumal Pillai, Gopaul Pillai, Ramasamy Pillai and Muthiah Pillai. They discussed various subjects, mostly religious, in an informal manner. These Sunday morning meetings became almost an institution and all attended unless prevented by illness or absence from Palamcottah. Much benefit was derived from these discussions, and doubts on various points were cleared up, and the meetings seldom broke up before twelve noon.

In the middle of 1873 Dr., Dhanakoti Raju, who had become a very successful and famous medical practitioner in Madras, the first Indian to make a name in Madras as a great doctor, paid a

visit to Palamcottah and spent a few months at Courtallam during the season. He was keenly interested in improving the industrial and economic condition of the country, and visited several coffee estates on the hills near Courtallam and was convinced that coffee planting would be a profitable industry, and infected his friend Muthiah Pillai, who was also at Courtallam at the time, with his enthusiasm for coffee planting. The coffee industry was a very paying one in the middle of the last century. There were many estates near Panagudi. The big estates belonged to European planters who made good profits. The coffee industry was very lucrative in Ceylon also till the Brazilian coffee trade hit the industry very badly in the early eighties, whereupon most of the Europeans who owned estates gave up coffee and turned to tea in Ceylon and India. Muthiah Pillai made enquiries and after satisfying himself that the coffee industry was profitable, arranged to buy a plot of land of about 100 acres in Aryankavu, about eighteen miles from Courtallam within the Travancore State. His friends wanted to join in the enterprise and a partnership was formed, consisting of Thomas Kavirayar, Jothinayagam Pillai, Ganapathy Pillai, Appasamy Pillai, Muthiah Pillai, Manakavala Perumal Pillai and Kanthimathi Pillai and was named M.M.C. Company. The concern proved successful beyond expectation, for the virgin crop produced nine hundred bushels which were sold for Rs. 9,000.

This phenomenal profit within two years created a sort of fever for coffee planting in the Tinnevely district. Almost every body who could spare some money bought lands on the hills for planting them with coffee seedlings. Krishna Pillai bought about fifty acres near the M. M. C. Company estate and began to plant coffee seedlings after clearing the forest. He made Shanmugasundaram Pillai, his son-in-law, manager of the estate; the manager of the M.M.C. Company estate was Jothinayagam Pillai. Things went on smoothly for some time till 1878 when Jothinayagam Pillai claimed a portion of Krishna Pillai's land as belonging to the M.M.C. Company. Shanmugasundaram Pillai naturally resisted the claim. From words it nearly came to blows. Feelings ran high. The yield of the virgin crop had turned the heads of some of the partners of the M.M.C. Company. Saner counsels did not prevail. The dispute led to litigation and estrangement between friends and bitterness of feeling. Krishna Pillai had right and justice on his side. The litigation went on for over two years and ultimately Krishna Pillai succeeded by appealing to the Dewan of Travancore, who decided the dispute in his favour. Meantime, Muthiah Pillai Manakavala Perumal Pillai and Kanthimathay Pillai dissolved the partnership with the others who had sided with, and supported Jothinayagam Pillai in his untenable claim against Krishna Pillai, and got their share of the estate separated from that of the others.

In 1878 there occurred a domestic calamity which clouded for several years the lives of Krishna Pillai and his family. A fourth son was born to him in 1874. He was the Benjamin of the family of ten children. He was a very intelligent and bright boy. Krishna Pillai's grandson, of the same age as his youngest son, contracted typhoid fever and was brought to his house for treatment. Not knowing the nature of the disease the young boy was allowed to be near the bed of his nephew, and he got the infection after ten days. The nature and seriousness of the disease were not properly understood in those days, as there was hardly any medical man in the district who could treat it successfully. The boy grew worse day by day, and on the night of the twelfth day of the fever Krishna Pillai went to the Trinity Church, Palamcottah, about 3 o'clock, and kneeling in front of the portico prayed earnestly to the Saviour whom he loved with all his heart to spare his son: and after pleading with Him for an hour, he rose from his knees saying, 'Thy will be done'. The boy passed away the following afternoon.

Great was the grief of the mother at the loss of her last and youngest child. Krishna Pillai's grief was intense. The whole family was plunged in the deepest sorrow. The mother added to the distress of the family by refusing to take any food and by declaring she wanted to die in order to be with her departed son. Krishna Pillai, with all his grief, spoke gently to her and begged her to

save her life for his sake and the welfare of the other children. After several days of absolute starvation she was prevailed upon to take a little nourishment, and it may be mentioned here that for nearly ten years she washed her teeth only after nightfall and broke her fast by taking a light meal. This conduct on her part affected the health of all the children, especially that of her fourth daughter, who was about eighteen years of age at the time and was unmarried.

This great calamity did not affect his work in the College or diminish the interest with which he helped those who sought his help in matters religious or literary. His coffee estate engaged a good deal of his attention after his College hours, and the litigation in connection with it went on for two years, and it necessitated his going to Trivandrum more than once; during his absence his brother Muthiah Pillai acted for him as Pandit in the College. One result of his visit to Trivandrum was his bringing into the College as Professor of Mathematics Muthukumarasamy Pillai, a distinguished graduate and a native of Travancore.

Krishna Pillai's coffee estate did well for two or three years: but owing to the prevalence of malaria on the Aryankavu hills the coolies began to desert it in large numbers, and Krishna Pillai himself had a serious attack of malaria in 1879 which nearly ended fatally. Many other people, including his brother, suffered from attacks of malaria, and a young and prominent Vakil, Gopala

Iyengar, who had also taken to coffee planting contracted it and died after a few days' fever. In the Tinnevely District there was no medical man who could treat malaria successfully. A slump had set in in the coffee trade owing to the competition of the Brazilian coffee. In addition to these unfavourable circumstances, most of the coffee plants were affected by a pest, in consequence of which the yield became poor in 1880 and 1881. The difficulties, but most of all the fear of the fell disease malaria, made Krishna Pillai abandon his estate, as did his brother and many others. This meant a great financial loss. He had incurred some debts which he found it hard to meet out of the savings from his salary. The financial difficulties led to grave consequences and serious estrangement between the brothers and the disruption of the close bond which united both of them.

Muthiah Pillai started a retail business at Palamcottah in English goods such as oil-man stores, piece-goods, etc., in 1864 in partnership with some friends. Knowing that his elder brother, Krishna Pillai, had a growing family and that he had only his salary as a pandit at Sawyer-puram to provide for the family, Muthiah Pillai allotted to him a sixth share in the business without consulting him or asking him to contribute his quota of the capital. The partnership under the name of Edward & Co., flourished owing to the careful and prudent management of Muthiah Pillai

and Manakavala Perumal Pillai. Krishna Pillai took no part in the management of the concern and hardly considered himself a partner in it. The concern was amalgamated in 1877 with another partnership carried on by Thomas Kavirayar and his younger brother Jothinayagam Pillai under the name of Thomas & Co. The amalgamated concern was named Edward Thomas & Co. Branches were opened in Nagercoil, Travancore State, and in one or two other places besides the existing branches at Tuticorin and Courtallam. Muthiah Pillai was asked to look after the business in the branches, all of which did well under his supervision, while Thomas Kavirayar and Manakavala Perumal Pillai managed the business at Palamcottah, and another partner Jothinayagam Pillai, managed the M.M.C. coffee estate. The joint concern was the most leading firm dealing in oil-man stores and other English goods south of Madras. It manufactured aerated waters, had a forwarding agency and some other side lines. Jothinayagam Pillai's untenable claim against Krishna Pillai in the boundary dispute between the coffee estates led to this joint firm being split up into its component parts in 1878, and Muthiah Pillai and Manakavala Perumal Pillai carried on their partnership under the old name of Edward & Co., while Thomas Kavirayar and Jothinayagam Pillai carried on their business under the name of Thomas & Co.

About the close of 1880 Krishna Pillai demanded the value of his share of the partnership

in order to liquidate his liabilities. Muthiah Pillai and his partner made no objection to doing so, and accounts were looked into for estimating the value of his share. In 1881 Shanmugasundaram Pillai came back to Palamcottah after the abandonment of the coffee estate, and put forward various objections to the management of the business by the other partners, and created difficulties in the way of the peaceful dissolution of the partnership. His object was to swell the value of his father-in-law's share, and Krishna Pillai in his guilelessness and simplicity believed the specious arguments his son-in-law put forward and pressed his contention with his usual impetuosity and vehemence. Muthiah Pillai, who had a clear and logical mind, found the contentions untenable and objected strongly to the many claims made by his brother. The accounts were scrutinized by Shanmugasundaram Pillai for nearly two years. He went into transactions extending over eighteen years and urged that this amount was over-paid and that amount ought not have been paid. He was a man of very keen intellect and was very calm and persuasive in his arguments. Only very clever people could detect the flaws in them. Krishna Pillai had neither the time nor the patience to scrutinize his contentions carefully but accepted them at their face value and believed that all he said was right. Though a great poetic genius he was simple and straightforward in thought, word and deed, and could not see through the unsound and false reasoning of his son-in-law, and thought that his brother

and his partner were bent upon reducing the value of his share and thereby doing him serious harm. The relations between the two brothers, who had loved each other dearly, became strained. Some mutual friends like the late Subramania Pillai, who was a District Munsiff at the time, tried their best to settle the dispute amicably, but the various contentions put forward by Shanmugasundaram Pillai were so grotesque that Muthiah Pillai refused stoutly to accede to them, and reminded the mutual friends that it was he who gave his brother a share without his asking for it as a provision for his family, and that his brother never took exception to anything done by the managing partners, and to say after the lapse of many years that so much should not have been spent and such a thing ought to have been done was not only unsound but was also against businesslike management of a big concern. In a large business many things are done in the course of efficient and profitable management, and unless there was gross carelessness or fraud it is not proper to object to items of expenditure after a lapse of many years. Muthiah Pillai and his partner Manakavala Perumal Pillai had lost heavily in the coffee industry by the abandonment of their estate owing to the prevalence of malaria, and could not afford to be over-generous to a partner who wanted to dissolve the partnership and claimed a larger amount as the value of his share.

The dispute and haggling went on for three years, and at the end of 1883, Krishna Pillai filed

a civil suit for dissolution of partnership and incidental remedies. The suit was contested as to the amount and was dismissed on a preliminary point. On appeal to the High Court of Madras by the plaintiff it was ordered to be tried on the merits by the Sub-Court at Tinnevely. Meantime, Shanmugasundaram Pillai left Palamcottah and went to Madras to manage the iron foundry of Dr. Dhanakoti Raju, and his absence from Palamcottah greatly facilitated the settlement of the suit against Edward & Co. amicably by paying a sum of money to Krishna Pillai.

The estrangement of the brothers continued till the middle of 1886, and on the morning of the wedding of Thyagaraj Pillai, the eldest son of Krishna Pillai, his eldest daughter and other near relations went to Muthiah Pillai's house, and earnestly entreated him to overlook the past and go to the elder brother's house who was most anxious to meet his brother and be reconciled to him. Muthiah Pillai did not steel his heart against the pleading of his niece, his nephew and others, and went to his brother's house: and when Krishna Pillai saw his brother approaching him he burst into tears and both brothers mingled their tears and got reconciled to each other. From that time till death separated them their tender love and affection did not cool even for a single moment.

To go back a few years, in the beginning of 1880 the C.M.S. College which worked at Palamcottah in a commodious building with a large com-

pound of several acres with playgrounds, tennis courts, gymnasium, etc., was shifted to Tinnevely by the Principal Rev. H. J. Schaffter in the vain hope that if the College was located in Tinnevely, a town wholly inhabited by Hindus, it would exercise much Christian influence in the life of the inhabitants. Adverse critics attributed other motives to the Principal; for instance, that he did not want to be overshadowed by Bishop Sargent but wished to be independent of him. The College was located in rented buildings at the western end of the town which were not suitable for a big College. Mr. Schaffter built for himself and his European Assistant two bungalows about two miles to the west of the town, and built a hostel for Christian students near his bungalow. This move to Tinnevely did not bring in any tangible results; on the other hand, it was a source of great inconvenience and hardship to the Christian students and teachers. In those days there was no strong public opinion and the missionaries were a law unto themselves. The unwisdom of this transfer of the college to crowded and unhealthy surroundings was realized before long, and a big building midway between Palamcottah and Tinnevely was built at a great cost and the College was again shifted to the new building in 1892. Krishna Pillai, who lived in his house at Palamcottah, attended the College regularly though he had to travel five miles daily to reach it. He did not absent himself even a single day from the College unless he was prevented by illness.

Notwithstanding his financial troubles he continued to work as usual. Friends met him at his house for advice and help. When he found time he composed stanzas of *Rakshanya Yatrikum*. During these years he was examiner in Scripture for the Divinity examinations in Tamil. He was also examiner in Tamil for the new missionaries who were required to pass an examination in Tamil. In 1883 his fourth daughter's marriage was celebrated at Palamcottah with pomp. In 1885 he found that his travelling to Tinnevely and back every day took up too much of his time, as travelling in a bullock coach meant proceeding at the rate of four miles an hour. So he rented a house at Tinnevely Town near the College where he lived with his third son who had passed his Matriculation examination and was now studying in the F.A. class. His wife and his second son and youngest daughter lived at Palamcottah. His first son having passed the Matriculation examination went to Madras in 1883 to prosecute his studies.

In 1886 the post of Head Tamil Pandit of the Maharaja's College, Trivandrum, fell vacant, and Krishna Pillai who was disgusted with living in a small house at Tinnevely Town amidst unhealthy surroundings, while his wife lived at Palamcottah, applied for it, and asked his brother who happened to be in Madras at the time to write to his friend, the Hon'ble Mr. Rama Iyengar, Dewan of Travancore, recommending his brother's application for favourable consideration. Muthiah Pillai who had known Rama Iyengar in

Madras in the sixties when he was working as the Tamil Referee of the Bible Revision Committee and to whom he had read and explained *Kamba Ramanayam* on many mornings, in consequence of which the latter felt and showed great regard and esteem for the former, sent a telegram on behalf of his brother. Mr. Rama Iyengar who had heard of his elder brother's great scholarship and proficiency in Tamil Literature and Grammar, appointed him to the vacant post. Krishna Pillai resigned his place in the C.M. College, Tinnevely, to the great regret of the Principal, the staff and the students, and went to Trivandrum in the beginning of 1887 with his family, and took up the post of Head Tamil Pandit of the Maharaja's College there.

11. *Life at Trivandrum.*

The life at Trivandrum was a happy one, as his wife, who had sorrowed over the death of her youngest son and who had made her dear and near ones miserable for years by her starvation and unsociable ways, went to Trivandrum and resumed her duties as the mother of the family. Their two younger sons and their youngest daughter were also with him. The third son who had passed his F.A. in the examination held in December 1886, joined the B.A. Class of the College. Krishna Pillai felt much pleasure in teaching the students of the B.A. Classes as the College was a First Grade College. Being free from worry of any kind he felt happy, and began to compose rapidly

the stanzas of the *Yatrikum*. Krishna Pillai's work as Pandit was greatly appreciated by the students and Principal. They were agreeably surprised to see in him a most erudite scholar without the pedantry associated with Tamil Pandits. All the students listened to his teaching with the greatest attention and strove hard to stand well in his examination. In a year's time the results, which were extremely good in the University Examinations, showed with what attention and care the students had assimilated the Pandit's elucidation of difficult points and allusions. The Principal, Dr. Harvey, and the staff treated him with great consideration on account of his eminence as a scholar, and his high character as a Christian. The evenings being free from disturbance he worked at his favourite poem steadily.

While things were going on well with him, a great calamity occurred in Madras which cast a gloom upon the happiness of the family. His fourth daughter's husband, Mr. Ramachandriah, who belonged to the last batch of Brahmin converts of Rev. W. J. Noble of Masulipatam, died of pneumonia on the 13th April 1889. On receipt of a telegram Krishna Pillai went to Madras, accompanied by his wife, in great distress of mind. Loud and long were the mournings of the mother and daughter, and Krishna Pillai was deeply grieved at the fate of his daughter, whom he loved most dearly. The poignancy of the grief was enhanced by the daughter's firm refusal to go and live with her parents. She had

no child of her own, and the parents naturally felt that she would be without help in Madras, whereas her natural home was her parents' house. The daughter, being a strong-minded person, did not want to be a burden to her parents, and preferred to live in Madras with her brothers and cousin who were students there. Krishna Pillai and his wife, after spending a month with their daughter, departed with aching hearts and in deep grief to Trivandrum.

Dr. Dhanakoti Raju, whose passion for improving the industries of the country has already been noticed, studied among other things the subject of the manufacture of salt, and devised a method for manufacturing common salt from seawater—a method better than that in vogue in the Government and Excise factories. He convinced Mr. Bliss, the most influential member of the Board of Revenue, Madras, of the superiority of his method to that of the Government method, with the result that the Government granted him permission in 1886 to open salt factories, and assigned to him large tracts of land in Arumuganeri and Kulasekarapatnam in the Tinnevely District. Work was started in Arumuganeri early in 1887, and several well-to-do persons in Tinnevely and Palamcottah, hoping that the industry would be a profitable one, asked Dr. Dhanakoti Raju to give them shares in the concern, which he did. The factory soon proved a success, and the salt manufactured by the new method proved purer and better than that in the neighbouring Government factory

at Kayalpatnam and found ready sale. Shanmugasundaram Pillai, the son-in-law of Krishna Pillai, was in charge of the finances and accounts and he did his work efficiently. In the middle of 1889 his wife, who had been in indifferent health for some time, was thought to be in danger, and on receipt of a telegram, both Krishna Pillai's wife and his youngest daughter left Trivandrum for Palamcottah to see the ailing daughter. The daughter improved in health for sometime but died at the end of 1889. Krishna Pillai and his wife were greatly distressed at the loss of their daughter. Krishna Pillai continued to do his work in the Maharaja's College with his usual zeal and interest and in the leisure hours went on with his work on the *Yatrikum*.

As the Government of Madras insisted upon Dr. Dhanakoti Raju manufacturing salt at Kulasekarapatnam also, as salt was badly needed in those parts, he began to lay out salt pans there in 1889. He wanted an efficient and capable person to look after the work and prevailed upon his dear friend Krishna Pillai to take up the job. Krishna Pillai, who valued friendship above other considerations, could not refuse the earnest request of his friend, and resigned his post of Senior Pandit of the Maharaja's College, and went to Kulasekarapatnam in the beginning of 1890, and laid out the factory with great skill and care and began to manufacture very good salt in a few months. Here also he continued his work on the *Yatrikum* in his spare hours. The greatest calamity of his life occurred in 1891 when his beloved wife who had shared his life for

fifty years passed away. Her body was brought to Palamcottah and laid to rest in the cemetery at Adaikalapuram in which his mother and their much lamented son were buried. Great was his grief at the loss of his dear partner for life and he wept like a child. His married daughters, his brother and others, who were also immersed in grief, did all they could to assuage his grief. His wife was an ideal Hindu wife who loved and adored her husband. She had no thought for herself but always for her husband, and after him for her children. She was a very careful and thrifty housewife and always saved something out of what was given her for housekeeping expenses, and when he was in need of funds and asked her whether she had any money with her she readily opened her small box and gave him whatever she had saved. More than once the suggestion to ask the wife for funds came from a friend or relative and he acted upon it.

He stayed a few weeks at Palamcottah and went back to Kulasekarapatnam and continued his work at the salt factory. Before the end of 1891 he completed his *Rakshanya Yatrikum*.

12. *Literary Missionary.*

Dr. Murdoch, the head of the C.E.S. in Madras, was convinced that the Society's publications in Tamil, religious as well as literary, required revision and correction by a good Tamil scholar and mentioned it to Rev. T. Walker of Tinnevely. Mr. Walker, who had known from Bishop Sargent and other missionaries about

Krishna Pillai's talents and scholarship, told Dr. Murdoch that if Krishna Pillai could be induced to undertake the work he would be a great acquisition to the C.L.S. Dr. Murdoch accepted the suggestion and commissioned Mr. Walker to persuade Krishna Pillai. He accordingly approached Krishna Pillai in the beginning of 1892 with a view to induce him to give up his work at Kulasekarapatnam and to become a literary missionary. Krishna Pillai was unwilling to give up the work he was doing for his friend Dr. Dhanakoti Raju and said that he would consider the matter. After completing my education in Madras I was returning to Palamcottah in the beginning of April 1892, and happened to travel in the same railway compartment with Mr. Walker. The latter, coming to know who I was, spoke to me and asked me whether I could speak to my uncle and induce him to accept the post of literary missionary, as it would be a great boon to the Christian Church to have the services of a great scholar, poet and theologian, to go through and correct where necessary the books in Tamil intended for publication by the C.L.S. I promised to speak to my uncle about the proposal of Mr. Walker, as I felt that by becoming a literary missionary my uncle would be able to do a great deal of good, and that his great talents were only being wasted in managing a salt factory, however efficient the management might be. After mature consideration the offer of Dr. Murdoch was accepted, and Krishna Pillai left Kulasekarapatnam in the middle of 1892 to the great regret of Dr. Dhanakoti Raju,

and came to Palamcottah and began his work as a literary missionary, which work he continued to do till his death.

In this year he celebrated the marriage of his second son, as he had felt that his youngest daughter who was unmarried should have a companion of her sex. He repaired and extended his house which he had built in the sixties by building an upstairs room in front.

Domestic calamities came thick upon him in these latter years. The husband of his second daughter, Ponnavanam Pillai, bought a house in 1891 and improved it by building a fairly large hall and side rooms in front of it. The new building was completed in a few months and he wanted to live in it before the walls were quite dry. Krishna Pillai strongly advised him and his daughter that it would affect their health if they lived in a house whose walls with lime plaster were not quite dry. Notwithstanding this sound advice his daughter and her husband moved into it after performing the house-warming ceremony. As they did not listen to his advice and as he felt that their health might be affected thereby, he refused to attend the house-warming function, notwithstanding the entreaties of his daughter, and left for Courtallam. As misfortune would have it, Ponnavanam Pillai developed cough and fever within six months of his beginning to live in the new house. He had been suffering from a mild form of diabetes for a few years previously and he developed ascites. He

went to Madras for treatment and stood manfully two or three tappings, and not getting better, returned to Palamcottah where Dr. Dhanakoti Raju, who happened to be there in connection with his salt factory affairs, treated him and did all he could to cure him: but the disease ended fatally in the middle of 1893 to the great regret of all relations. His wife who was most devoted to her husband died in the beginning of 1894. Krishna Pillai's grief was great and deep. He felt the death of this daughter very keenly.

In spite of all this grief and sorrow, he continued to do his work as a literary missionary, regularly and systematically, and helped those who sought his help as a pandit and friend. He was also examiner for Divinity examinations in Tamil, as well as for the new missionaries who had to study Tamil and qualify themselves in it for work in the Tinnevely District. In 1893 there was litigation in connection with the affairs of the salt factory at Arumuganeri between Shanmugasundaram Pillai and Dr. Dhanakoti Raju and his partners. Krishna Pillai, who had a share in the factory, attended the hearings of the case before Mr. V. Rengachari, a leading Vakil (who was appointed arbitrator by the Sub-Gourt, Tinnevely, as accounts extending over five or six years had to be gone into) and gave evidence elucidating many intricate points. After a prolonged enquiry the arbitrator gave his award, and the case dragged on its weary length even after the death of Shanmugasundaram Pillai in 1896.

In the beginning of 1895 he had a boil in his right thigh which, it was feared, might turn out to be a carbuncle. The Assistant Surgeon of Palamcottah was called in to treat him, and he advised incisions with carbolic acid around the boil, and remarked that if it did not subside under that treatment removal of the affected portion by operation would be necessary; and added unwisely, thinking that Krishna Pillai did not know English, that otherwise it would be fatal. Krishna Pillai at once burst out, 'Even if I am to die I won't permit an operation', whereupon the Assistant Surgeon advised the application of hot poultice and left. Dr. Dhanakoti Raju, who had established a hydro-pathic clinic in the open and airy plain opposite to the Jail buildings, to which persons from all over the Presidency came for treatment, hearing of Krishna Pillai's illness went to his house and gave him hot air baths; in a few days the boil simply dried up, and he was completely cured and was able to move about and attend to his work as usual. During the few days when it was feared that the abscess might turn out to be a carbuncle and endanger life, he and his brother had heart to heart talks about their beliefs and their faith in their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Each encouraged the other and they were satisfied that their hope of salvation was firm and unshaken. Both brothers were comforted in the conviction that their early faith in Christ was as strong (if not stronger) as it was when they gave up so much to follow their beloved Saviour.

On the first of September 1895 his brother Muthiah Pillai, who was apparently in sound health, had an attack of fever, and Krishna Pillai who visited him often thought it was simple cold and fever, as the brother was not confined to bed but was able to move about in the house till the night of the fifth. On the ninth day of September it suddenly took a turn for the worse and he passed away the following afternoon. Krishna Pillai, who loved his brother with almost a father's love, wept like a little child and felt the loss greatly. With all his grief and misery he tried his best to comfort the brother's widow and the children. In 1897 his fourth daughter, who had become a widow in 1889, died in Madras. On receipt of a telegram that she was very ill he proceeded to Madras, but before his arrival she breathed her last. Her death was a serious blow to him as she was a greatly beloved daughter. She was a highly intelligent and well-educated woman who loved and respected her father greatly. She always gave sound advice and never minced matters. He always sought her advice and gave due consideration to it. Such was her love for her father that when he was in want of funds for filing an appeal in 1884 in the High Court in the case against Edward & Co., and did not know how to raise the money, she gave him her necklace of gold sovereigns and asked him to sell it and out of the proceeds of the sale to pay the Court-fee for the appeal. She died in her thirty-seventh year to the great grief

of her brothers and sisters and sister's sons who were students in Madras and were looked after by her. Ever since her husband's death in 1889 she refused to take any rice and ate very little in the way of solid food. Her strong constitution broke down for want of proper nourishment and she developed consumption about 1896. She was of a very affectionate disposition, and very loving and kind to me when I was a student in Madras, and got me a house near her own and looked after me as if I were her own brother. Her advice and guidance were helpful to all those who came under her influence. She gave help to the Salvation Army to such extent as her means allowed. After she became a widow she brought up for nearly three years a European child who had lost his mother. Early in 1898 Krishna Pillai celebrated the marriage of his youngest daughter:

13. *Illness and Death.*

In 1898 his third son, who had lived with his sister in Madras, came down to Palamcottah to be with his father. He was a very intelligent young man who had passed in two subjects but did not complete his course for the B.A. degree owing to indifferent health and his sister's illness. He was a good Tamil scholar and helped in reading the proofs of the *Yatrikum* in 1893 and 1894. He developed phthisis early in 1899, though few suspected that he suffered from that fatal disease. Krishna Pillai's eldest daughter, who lived at Palamcottah after her husband had retired from

public service as Deputy Tahsildar and Sub-Magistrate, and who was apparently in good health was found to have a tumour in the abdomen. She went to Madras in the middle of 1899 to consult the best doctor there and was advised that it was too early for an operation. She went again three months after and the doctor said that it was now too late for a successful operation. Krishna Pillai came to know of her condition only towards the close of the year.

The knowledge of the serious illness of his beloved eldest daughter and that of his dear third son was a great shock to him. In the beginning of December he went to see his daughter, and after seeing her he went out for a short walk and felt giddy and sat on the parapet wall of a culvert close by. That was the beginning of the end. About the middle of the month he took to his bed and became semi-conscious; a wire attached to a false tooth got into the gum of his mouth and caused profuse bleeding. Missionaries, friends and relations visited him daily but he could not talk to them. Miss Carmichael of Dhonavur, who had known him and respected him greatly as a Christian and a poet, visited him and mentioned the name of his beloved Saviour, whereupon he smiled faintly. He never recovered full consciousness, and in spite of all the treatment and attention and loving care of his youngest son and daughter he passed away peacefully on the afternoon of the first of February 1900. His mortal remains were

taken the next morning to the Trinity Church, Palamcottah: and, after the service which was attended by hundreds of people, European and Indian, Hindu and Christian, they were committed to the earth in the G.M.S. Cemetery at Samadhana-puram to the east of Palamcottah.

Thus ended the earthly life of the great Christian poet and savant. His third son, whose fatal disease had made rapid progress, died on the eighth day after his father's death, *i.e.*, on 8—2—1900. A few moments before his death he asked those who were nearby to sing to him the *Thevaram* in the *Yatrikum* beginning with the words சுத்தாய், etc., and he passed away saying ஒளி, ஒளி, light, light. The father and the beloved son were not long separated from each other.

14. *Rakshanya Yatrikum and other poems.*

Krishna Pillai after his conversion did not confine his teaching to his text books, but on suitable occasions expounded the truths of the Christian religion to his students and the utter inability of the popular Hinduism to save man from his sin and divine punishment. Most of the evenings were occupied in conversing with those who went to his house and explaining to them the truths about Christianity. Many were greatly benefited by these conversations. He edited a work in Ammanai verse composed by one Vedamanika Nandan, a pious Christian. In the midst of all this activity, he longed to do something which would show his great love for his Master and at the same

time reach a wider public. With this object he composed a poem which is a clarion call to all mankind to come and be saved. It begins with the story of the creation and God's great love in sending His only begotten Son to be born a man and to die for our salvation. He exhorts every one that self-righteousness will not bring about salvation, and that the only way to salvation is by the blood of Jesus. He examines popular Hinduism and condemns it. That the Puranic stories about gods and goddesses are all false he points out in irresistible language. He gives the Ten Commandments in beautiful verses and asks everyone to walk in their spirit. In short, it is an epitome of the Christian teaching of the way of salvation. The poem consists of one hundred four-line stanzas which he named *Rakshanya Navanitham*. Its beautiful language and flowing diction are above praise. As a work of art it can bear comparison with the best of Tamil classics without their puerilities. It was printed at the C.M.S. Press, Palamcottah and published in the middle sixties and it became immensely popular. Both Hindus and Christians read and admired it, and its stanzas were committed to memory by many persons and sung at different times. It was in great demand till the edition was exhausted. About 1881 Krishna Pillai happened to halt at Mayavaram on his way to Madras, and wished to see Mr. Vedanayagam Pillai, the well-known lyric poet and writer of Tanjore, who was at the time the District Munsiff of Mayavaram. As soon as he heard who it was

that had called on him, Vedanayagam Pillai came rushing out of the house reciting one of the beautiful stanzas of *Navanitham* and said 'Are you not that Krishna Pillai who composed that beautiful poem?' After conversing with him for a considerable time about various subjects he invited Krishna Pillai to dine with him, but Krishna Pillai asked to be excused as he was a vegetarian and not a meat eater, whereupon Vedanayagam Pillai pressed him to take milk and fruits which he did. This poem is now incorporated in the *Rakshanya Yatrikum* in an appropriate place.

It is not known when Krishna Pillai conceived the idea of composing *Rakshanya Yatrikum*. A few years after his conversion to Christianity he began to appreciate Bunyan's immortal work, *Pilgrim's Progress*, in its Tamil translation. He studied it closely, and perhaps found in it a vivid portrait of the misery and anguish of mind he underwent and the gloom that enveloped him, before he fully gave himself up to his Saviour, forsaking wife, children, mother and near relations and casting aside social status and caste privileges. A study of it made him realize that almost all true Christians must have felt at some time or other in their lives what 'Christian' did when he ran away from the City of Destruction leaving his wife and children behind him. A few stanzas of *Rakshanya Yatrikum* were probably composed when he was at Sawyerpuram, but a good portion of it was composed after he took up work in the C. M. S. College,

Palamcottah, in 1876. In 1880 and 1881 he could often be seen resting during midday on his cot, getting up and going into his office room, reading a few pages of *Pilgrim's Progress* in Tamil and composing stanzas and writing them down in his clear and beautiful hand in a bound note book. About this time he could be seen helping a person with a musical taste to sing to him the Thevarams composed by him. After he went to Trivandrum in 1887 he made good progress with the work, as his home life was happy, for his dear wife had given up sorrowing for her youngest son and had resumed her duties as the mother of the family, and as he had leisure in the afternoons after his college work was over. The late Mr. Sundaram Pillai, Professor of Philosophy in the Maharajah's College and a reputed Tamil scholar and writer, was a friend of Krishna Pillai, and admired the facility with which Krishna Pillai composed stanza after stanza without much effort, and said, 'I labour so hard to produce a few lines of poetry in Tamil and you go on composing stanza after stanza as if you were writing them down from memory'. He composed them in his mind and wrote them after he was satisfied they were all right. The bound note books in which he wrote the stanzas had hardly any erasures or corrections. Alas, these manuscripts are now lost. He completed the book early in 1891 and submitted it to several pandits including his brother, Muthiah Pillai, for their opinion. They all praised the work and gave their

opinion that it was a work of rare merit, fit to rank with the best Tamil classics, and advised him to have it printed soon. In September 1891, a prospectus of the work containing a selection of one hundred stanzas, was printed and sent to various people to ascertain whether it would find a ready sale. Replies were received from several people offering to take four hundred copies if the work was printed. The writer took a copy of the prospectus and showed it to the Head Tamil Pandit of the Presidency College in Madras. As a Vaishnavite devotee he was not interested in the theme but he praised the work as fulfilling all the canons of a Tamil epic poem and greatly admired the flowing language and the apt and beautiful similies. In the beginning of 1892 the late Mr. Rees (afterwards Sir John), a well-known Civil servant and literary man, happened to preside over a meeting of the Literary Society of the Presidency College, Madras: and in the course of his address remarked that it was to be regretted that no work of real merit was written in the Tamil language in recent years. A correspondent who had seen the prospectus of *Rakshanya Yatrikum* wrote to the *Madras Mail*, the leading daily of those days, that he was glad to inform the public that a poem of great merit had been composed in Tamil, based upon the immortal story of John Bunyan, and that it bore the same relation to *Pilgrim's Progress* as the plays of Shakespeare did to Plutarch's *Lives*.

Walker of Tinnevely, who was a good Tamil scholar, came to hear of the work and of Mr.

Krishna Pillai's desire to publish it at his own cost; he prevailed upon him to allow the first edition to be printed by the C.L.S., Madras, as a publication by a well-known society would reach a wider public than a work published by a private individual. The author, whose sole object was to benefit the readers and not to make a pecuniary profit for himself, consented to the course suggested by Mr. Walker, who thereupon wrote to Dr. Murdoch, the head of the C.L.S. Mr. Walker who had a suspicion that, like all classical works, *Rakshanya Yatrikum* also might contain some erotic expressions and obscene similies, requested Krishna Pillai to read to him the whole poem which he did by going to his bungalow almost daily at 7-30 in the morning. Walker greatly admired the work and was satisfied with its theology. He wrote an appreciative preface, extolling its freedom from conceits and archaic and quaint expressions, and said that a work of such excellence was not to be found in the Tamil language among Christians. It was published in the middle of 1894. It became very popular, and all who read it praised it as a work of very high order. Some said it could be compared only to Kamban's *Ramayanam*, which is the high water mark of a poetic work in the Tamil language. As this is not a critique of the poem, it is not necessary to say more here.

Krishna Pillai wanted the Christian public to have a small devotional book which they could easily understand and commit to memory, and use

morning and evening. With that object he selected some stanzas from *Yatrikum*, composed many stanzas which express the longing of the soul for union with the Divine Spirit, prefixed to the whole the prayer which he composed in 1865 to teach his infant son, and called it *Rakshanya Manoharam*. It was published by the C.L.S. in 1898. In it the sense of unworthiness which a follower of Christ feels, and his repentance for his past sins of omission and commission, are brought out in moving language. The metre is flowing, the language is simple and the sentiments are beautiful and elevating. It is a fine devotional work and any one reading it morning and evening will be greatly benefited in his Christian life.

15. *An Estimate.*

To make a proper estimate of the life and work of Krishna Pillai is not an easy matter. As a Hindu he was a staunch, one might say, bigoted Vaishnava. He had his left upper arm branded with a red hot seal as a devout Vaishnava, and the mark was visible even in his old age. He went to Srirangam to worship at the famous shrine there, and as the third daughter was born after his visit he named her Srirangam. After mature consideration and deep conviction that the only way to salvation was through the mediation of Jesus Christ, he became a Christian and his life thereafter was a thoroughly changed one. He loved his Saviour dearly and devotedly as his ardent nature demanded. The very name of Jesus was

sacred to him and his *Bhakti* was unwavering. As a man he lived above reproach. His great aim in life was to lead as many as possible to the feet of Jesus. By his example and conversation he convinced many of his students and others belonging to respectable families, that Christianity was the true religion, and induced them to embrace it. His work in this direction was recognized by all. In the late seventies the Metropolitan of India Dr. Johnson visited Palamcottah, and there was a gathering of missionaries and Christians in the Trinity Church to hear him; in the course of his address, pointing to Krishna Pillai he said, 'You have led many to the feet of Jesus and may you be spared for many years to come to bring many more into the Christian fold'. In his habits he was simple, and almost austere in dress and food. He remained a strict vegetarian all his life. In his conversation and address he never used pedantic or high flown language or sentiment. His enunciation was clear and distinct, without the least affectation. He was the soul of truth. Any prevaricating or false statement roused his wrath. He never tolerated an untrue word. He hated crooked ways and over-reaching. He was blunt at times to a fault. With him yea was yea and nay was nay. An instance of his strict regard for truth in word and deed may be mentioned. A few years after his conversion he was on a visit to Palamcottah and called on Rev. E. Sargent one morning. Mrs. Sargent talked to him for some time and then asked him why he had not sent his daughters to

• the Girls' School under her management. He replied that he could not send his daughters to the School as they were vegetarians and the food and surroundings would not suit them, and that they were being taught by his brother at home. It must be mentioned here that all the students were boarders and that no day scholars were admitted to the School. Mrs. Sargent evidently believed that the way of salvation for Indian girls was by being students in her school. She said, 'My school is a very good school and all Christian girls should become scholars in it'. This irritated Krishna Pillai and he retorted, 'Would you make your daughters boarders in the school?' She had no daughters of her own but she had two step-daughters. She said that all this was vain excuse. Krishna Pillai's wrath was roused and he shouted, 'Do you imply that my statement is a lie?' How dare you call my word a lie?' Poor Mrs. Sargent was greatly non-plussed and did not know what to say. Sargent who was inside, hearing Krishna Pillai's angry voice came out running and said 'Please excuse her. Ammal (meaning his wife) did not know the meaning of the Tamil word she used' and thereby pacified him. In those days no Indian dared to speak to a European in the way he did, and such was the esteem in which he was held that neither Sargent nor his wife bore the least grudge towards him for what had happened, but always treated him with the utmost consideration and regard all their lives, not only for his great attainments but also for his simple and straight-

forward speech and conduct. All the missionaries, old and young, who knew him treated him with the same regard and consideration. Though Krishna Pillai's anger was easily roused by unbecoming word or conduct, it was easily cooled after he had reprimanded and corrected what was amiss. He was like gold, easily heated and as easily cooled.

Though he was a deeply religious man his religion was not of the Pharisaic kind. It was the custom in those days for Indian gentlemen to be shaved once a week preferably on Saturdays. The barber went round to the houses of his patrons and shaved them. In 1881 he was being shaved on a Sunday morning and a close friend happened to call, and seeing him in the hands of the barber remarked, 'What! You are having a shave on a Sunday'. Quick came the retort, 'Am I a Pharisee like you?' The hit was justified, for the friend was a sanctimonious person who was a great stickler for forms and ceremonies. Notwithstanding his great gifts he was very simple in many things. He believed people easily. He would never pause to consider whether any one was trying to cheat him or over-reach him. He thought others were as straightforward and truthful as he was. Whenever anyone went to him and asked him for money, he readily gave what he had on hand, without bestowing a thought how his act would affect the family budget. This beautiful trait of his character, that is, his anxiety to relieve distress, deserved or undeserved, often caused some inconvenience to the family. His young nephew often told him between

1892 and 1894 not to give away money to undeserving people without proper enquiry, and he did not resent the advice but said, 'I cannot resist any appeal for help. I do not care for money; money is nothing to me'. He felt at times that he was not wise in giving away money to people who were not in real want. In 1892 he got a large sum of money as the proceeds of the sale of his salt at Arumuganeri, and he handed it over to his brother to keep it for the benefit of his youngest daughter, who was unmarried at the time, remarking, 'If I have it with me I might spend it or give it away'.

He never objected to criticism, but listened to it patiently and tried to amend his ways if he was wrong. He always gave a patient hearing to all who approached him and sought his advice and help in literary or theological matters.

He had a tender heart and was easily moved to tears. He was a strict disciplinarian and would not suffer delinquencies easily. His eldest son who was born after the birth of four daughters, was greatly loved by the father, mother and sisters, and in fact he was idolised by the family. When he was about thirteen years of age he committed some wrong—either he told a lie or did something unbecoming. The father thrashed him severely for the fault, and after the chastisement love overcame him and he took his son on his lap and wept. Though there was a conflict between love and duty, duty overcame love. He cared for others more than for himself. A memorable instance happened in

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December 1886. On the last day of the month there was a fire in the People's Park Fair in Madras in which hundreds of people perished. Krishna Pillai was in Madras at the time, and about 8 o'clock at night there was crying and mourning in almost all the streets on account of the wounded and dead being brought into them. It was suggested to him that a wire should be sent to Palamcottah that all were well, lest the relations should think that one of them had got burnt or perished in the fire. Krishna Pillai said, 'We should not send a wire to our people, for I saw Appasamy Pillai this afternoon, and we do not know what became of him, and his people might feel worried about him if we send a wire that we are all well and they not knowing anything about him'. The result was that the members of Krishna Pillai's family and his brother's family spent the New Year's Day in the greatest anxiety and distress of mind, fearing that the worst had happened to Krishna Pillai, his daughter, son-in-law and his brother's son (the writer of this sketch) who was a student then in Madras. Such was his consideration for others' feelings.

Though staunch and orthodox in his belief, he tried at times to read into the Epistles of St. Paul what he had learnt in Hindu philosophy. In 1889, in a conversation with his brother's son the subject of *Advaita* turned up, and Krishna Pillai asked his nephew how he understood the words of St. Paul, 'God may be all in all'. (1 Cor. xv. 28). The Tamil rendering of the passage would seem to

support the postulate of the *Advaitin* that everything would be absorbed in *Brahmam*.

He had strong prejudices, but his simple and trusting nature was easily deceived or won over. In 1879 he had a serious attack of malarial fever which he had contracted in his coffee estate, and his life was thought to be in danger. He had a violent prejudice against taking quinine, and he told the physician who attended on him that he could not take quinine under any circumstances and asked him not to give him the stuff. The physician, an experienced man who knew that quinine was the only proper medicine for malaria, replied, 'Do you think that I will give you quinine when you so strongly object to taking it' and he made quinine pills disguising the taste and asked him to swallow them, which he did. The administration of the pills was continued for a few days, and he was restored to health and was able to resume his usual activities.

He did his best to help his students in every way possible, without expecting any return for his love and help. The mere fact that they were his students and needed help was sufficient to make him do all he could for their comfort. In 1867 a youth went to Sawyerpuram and met Krishna Pillai and said he wanted to become a student in the Seminary. The former asked him who he was and where he came from. The youth replied that he came from Kulasekarapatnam and belonged to a respectable Vellalah family and that his name was Sudalaiadum.

perumal. Krishna Pillai said that it was not a nice name and asked, 'Have you any other name?' and the youth replied, 'My mother calls me Appavoo', whereupon Krishna Pillai said, 'I will call you Appasami' and that was his name ever after. He became in after years the well-known lawyer and devout Christian, Dewan Bahadur A. S. Appasamy Pillai. Young Appasamy was a strict Hindu and he could not take food cooked by Krishna Pillai's people as they were Christians, though they were as strict vegetarians as he was. Young Appasamy was determined to get on as he was an ambitious youth, and though there were no Hindu houses within three or four miles from that place where he could board, he said he would stay and become a student of the Seminary in order to study English. Krishna Pillai asked him if he knew how to cook and he replied that he did not. Krishna Pillai showed him an outhouse, gave him cooking vessels and taught him how to cook his meals. Young Appasamy would not allow any one of the children to help him to cook his food. He remained a student for about four years and was taught the principles of Christianity and the Christian way of life. Appasamy went to Madras for study and was baptised there, and he always said that his conversion was due to Krishna Pillai's example and teaching. All his life he spoke highly of his indebtedness to Krishna Pillai and called him his *Guru*, and whenever an opportunity occurred he delighted to speak of him and often quoted the

stanzas of the *Yatrikum*. Another notable conversion to Christianity was that of Krishna Iyer, a young man belonging to a very respectable and well-to-do Brahmin family in Arumugamangalam. He was a student at Sawyerpuram and was led to Christ by Krishna Pillai's teaching and example. There were two or three converts from the upper strata of society who were led to become Christians by Krishna Pillai's teaching while at Sawyerpuram.

He would never tolerate any wrong-doing or unjust act. During his brother's last illness, a neighbour of the latter who objected to a right of way, illegally no doubt, attempted to build a wall in front of the opening to prevent egress and ingress. Krishna Pillai coming to know what was going on, went to the place and pushed down with his own hands the partially built wall saying, 'How dare you do this when my brother is ill?' The brother-in-law of the neighbour threatened to hurl a big stone at him and had lifted his hand with a big stone in it. He did not mind his personal safety; such was his resentment at an illegal proceeding. Many years before this occurrence, a neighbour of his own built a structure on a wall belonging to him and the neighbour in common, without first getting his permission, and on his coming to know what was happening he went to the place and pushed down the structure with his own hands saying, 'Do your worst'. He always loved fair play and justice.

APPENDIX.

Rakshanya Yatrikum contains 3622 four-line stanzas and 144 lines of *Thevaram*. *Rakshanya Manoharam* contains 566 four-line stanzas. A few stanzas are printed below to give an idea of the elegance and excellence of the two poems.

தந்தையாகி யுலகனைத்துந்தந்து மறுக்கடமைப் புரக்க
மைந்தனாகி புனிதாவி வடிவாய் ஞான வாமருளிப்
பந்தமற நின்றி லங்குதிரியேக பரமன் பதாம் புஜத்தைச்
சிந்தை யாரத் தொழு தேத்திச் சேர வாரும் ஜெகத்திரே.

மண்ணை விழுங்கக் கொதித்தெழும்பி வருந்தியாற்றைக் கடப்பதற்கு
வெண்ணெய்ப் பாலஞ் சமைப்பார்போல் வேத நாதன் வெகுளிகய
புண்ணி யத்தாற் றீருமெனப் புலம்ப வேண்டாம் புரைதீர்த
அண்ண லேசு குருதி முகத் தவிக்க வாரும் ஜெகத்திரே.

கம்ப நாகம் பொய்க்கடுவைக்கக்கி மதுர கவியென்னும்
அம்பொற் கண்ண நிறைத்துவைத்த தறியா தமிழ்த் மென வருந்தி
வெம்பி யறிவு மாண்டரவ் விடந்தீர்த்துய்க்கும் கிறிஸ்தெமது
சம்பன் வசனசஞ்சிவி நயந்துட் கொள்ளும் ஜெகத்திரே.

காலேத்துதியோ டெழுந் திருந்து கடவுண் மொழியாங் களங்கமற்ற
பாலைப் பருகி யாவலுடன் பணிவாய் முழங்காற்படி யினின்று
மூலப் பொருளாங் குமரோசை முன்னிட்டேத்தி ஜெபம்புரிந்து
சூலப் பரமதந்தை யருட்டயை பெற்றுய்மின் ஜெகத்திரே.

என்னுயிர்க் குயிரு நீயே மீடேற்று மீசனீயே
மன்னுசற் குருவு நீயே வழிததெத் தெனையாட் கொண்ட
முன்னவன் ருனு நீயே முற்றுநீ சுற்று நீயென்
றுனை நன் கறிய நியென் னுளத்தறி வுறுத்து கெக்தாய்.

தேவாரம்

சத்தாய் நிஷ் களமா யொரு சாமியமும் மிலதாய்ச்
சித்தாயா னந்தமாய்த் திகழ்கின்ற திரித்துவமே
எத்தால் நாயடியேன் கடைத் தேறு வனென்பவந்தீர்
தத்தாவுண்ணை யல்லாடுவெனக் கார்துணை யாருறவே.

மையார்கண் ணிருண்டு செவிவா யடைத்துக் குழறி
ஐயான் மூச்சொடுங்கி யுயிராக்கை விட்டேகிடு நான்
கையேல்கை நெகிழேனுனை நானுண் டஞ்சலென
ஐயா வுண்ணை யல்லாடுவெனக் கார்துணை யாருறவே.

ஆதிமத் யாந்த ரகிதநிஷ் களங்க
வசாதியங் கடவுளே போற்றி
ஜோதியா யகண்டா காரமாய் விளங்குக்
தூயசை தந்யமே போற்றி
பேதியா நில நின் றுலகெலாந் தந்த
பிரணவ தெய்வமே போற்றி
நீதியோ டுரக்க சமாச நெறியை
நிறுவிய நிமலனே போற்றி.

பானேபாம் பானேபா ப்பொருளே பாஞ்ஜோதி
உரனுடிய விசுவாசிகட் குவந்தாதாம் புரியும்
பெருமானடி யேனோ பெரும் பாவி பிழைபட்டேன்
சரனுடிவந் தடைத்தேனொரு தமிழேன் கடைக்கணியே.

தேவ தேவத்ரி யேகதெய்விக ஜேசுவின்றிரு நாமமே
ஜீவரக்ஷணை நல்குதிவ்விய சீலமார்திரு மந்திரம்
ஆவதன் நிமற் றில்லை வேறிதை யாயுமின் விரைந்து லகுளீர்
தாவரும்பா மார்த்தரக்ஷணைய சமயநிர்ணயந் தானிதே.

தேவதேவத்ரி யேகதோத்திரம் ஜேசநாயக தோத்திரம்
பாவகா ரிகி ரஞ்சிதைத் தெழு பாதபங்கஜ தோத்திரம்
ஜீவபாணையில் வழிநடத்திடுந் திவ்ய வாத்தும் தோத்திரம்
ஆவலோடுனக் கனந்த தோத்திர மகிலலோக சர்வேசனே.