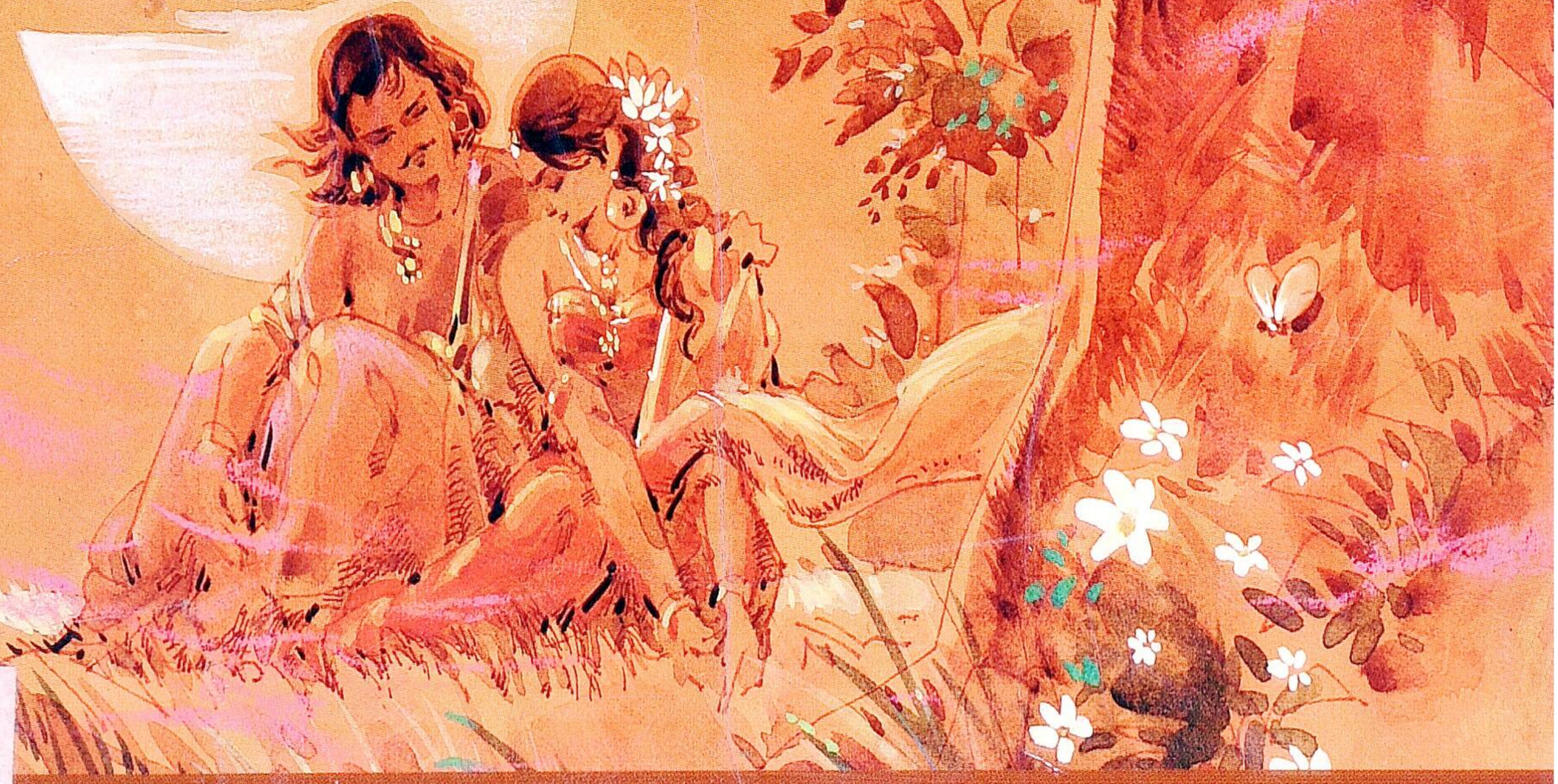
Kalaignar in English Translation

Showers of Poetry

VOLUME I



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BHARATHIAR UNIVERSITY

Kalaignar M Karunanidhi is essentially a poet, and even his prose writings have a heavy preponderance of poetic diction and poetic deviances. His intrinsic passion for poetic expression transcends his apparent limitations on technique, and the resultant poetic style has become a defining characteristic of all that he has written, both prose and poetry.

Kalaignar's is poetic prose or prose poetry, which is poetic insofar as it is infused with imagery of an original kind, and expresses things in adequate language, matching language to the thought and the mood. His poems, in particular, demonstrate his uncommon ability to strike at the right word and the right image by which to evoke his thoughts.

Most of his poems touch and disturb the mind of the learner or the reader, born as they are out of the disturbance the poet feels at the innermost depths of his heart over the external happenings, which range from the significant socio-political events of the day through concerns about the Tamil language and the Tamil culture to things romantic at one end and rational at the other.

Kalaignar's poetic expression is natural and spontaneous. It is not interesting thoughts dressed up in flowery language, nor is it a mental exercise of a laboured kind, metrically structured. He neatly fits into the Keatsian conception of poetry coming naturally as leaves to a tree, surprising by fine excess, and not by singularity.

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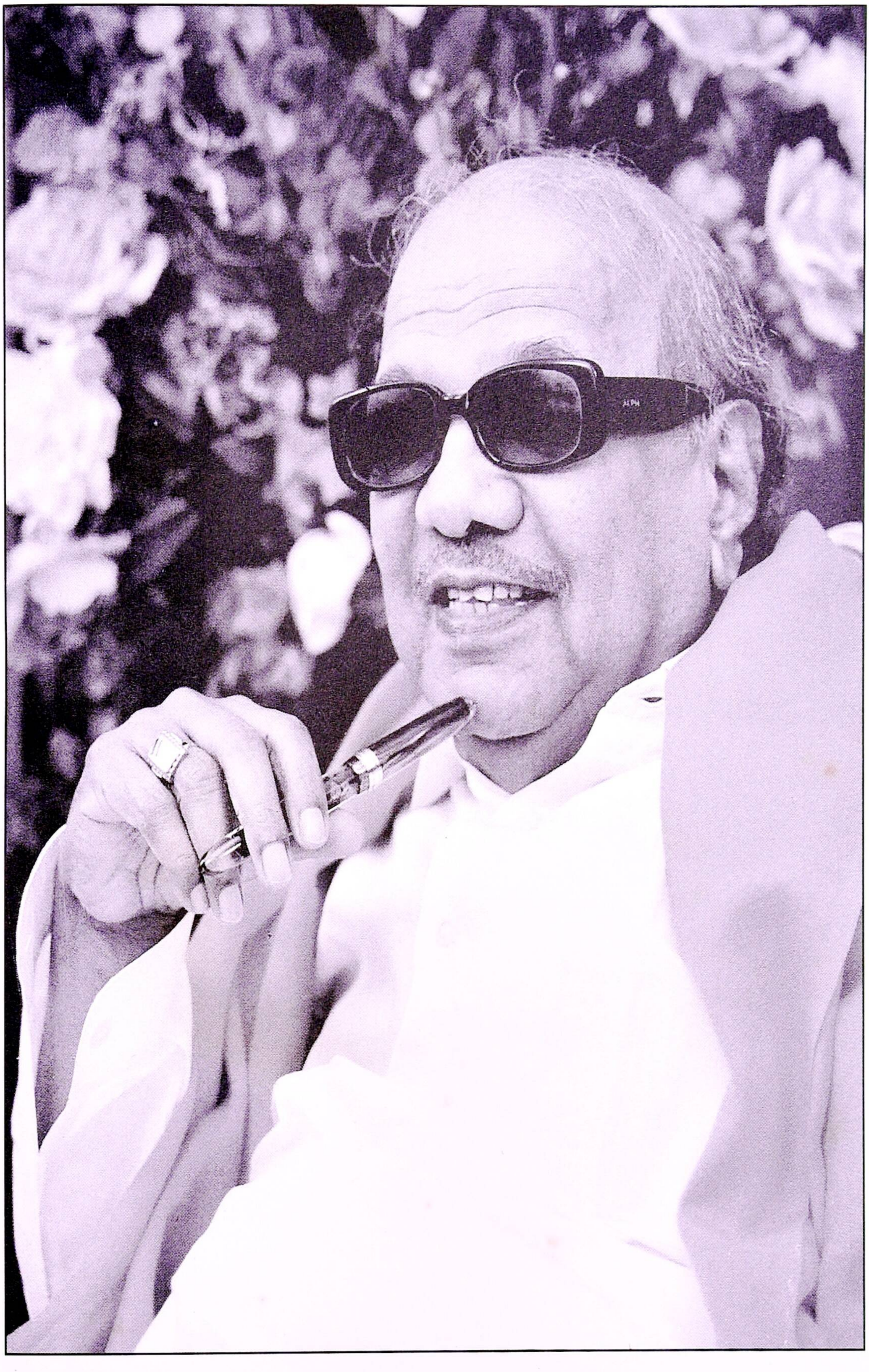

Dr Kalaignar M. Karunanidhi

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Kalaignar in English Translation

Shower of Poetry

Volume I

Translated by
R. Ganapathy

Edited by
P. Marudanayagam
V. Murugan

8824

Bharathiar University
Coimbatore, India

MACMILLAN

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M. Karunanidhi
Chief Minister

Secretariat
Chennai - 600 009
Date: 12.05.2009

Foreword

I am extremely happy to know that Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, has taken the initiative to bring out a selection of my writings in English.

Bharatidasan, a formidable revolutionary poet, instilled in the Tamils an intense love for Tamil in such exhortations as

May you thunder, O Conch!
That the never diminishing Tamil
Is our life-breath and our prosperity.

Periyar E.V. Ramasamy and Perarignar Anna devoted their entire lives to promote among the Tamils an awareness of the dignity of their race. Following in their footsteps, from my childhood to this day I have immersed myself in the task of writing in order to keep the Tamil youth ever vigilant because of my desire that the Tamil land and the Tamil society should progress rising to the level of the rest of mankind. With this end in view, my writings have taken numerous forms such as poetry, drama, fiction, essay, epistle and travelogue.

Many have admiringly observed and continue to observe that my literary output has also contributed to the onward march of the Tamils in several spheres. In such a context, let me unreservedly and to my heart's content praise Bharathiar University, especially its Vice Chancellor, Dr G. Thiruvasagam, for his efforts to publish the most significant of those writings in English.

My thoughts have always centred round the idea that the Tamils should awaken and that the Tamil land should achieve worldwide progress. May these translations effectively serve that cause dear to my heart!

To
Dr G. Thiruvasagam
Vice Chancellor
Bharathiar University
Coimbatore

அன்புடன்

(M. Karunanidhi)

Vice Chancellor's Note

There is a close parallel between the nationalist Tamil poet Subramania Bharathi (after whom this University is named) and Kalaignar M. Karunanidhi in that both of them have a deep-rooted conviction in art being an agent of social transformation and the writings of both seek to release people from the shackles of slavery and show them the way of dignity and self-respect.

Bharathiar firmly believed that at the root of all social problems lay the evil of the caste system. All his life, he stressed that there were only two castes – the righteous and the unrighteous, the former superior and the latter inferior. A standing example of the might of the pen over the sword, Bharathiar's writings played a very significant role not only in gaining freedom for India from foreign yoke but also in unfettering his countrymen from the utterly dehumanizing beliefs and practices of the Indian society.

Kalaignar, remaining in the forefront of the fight against social inequality in all its forms, is a writer with ingrained social consciousness and has fathered numerous social reforms as the head of the government and as the leader of a political party, thanks to which people from the sections of the society once looked down as being incapable of thought and knowledge are today intellectuals, professionals and leaders of men.

A grand fusion of Periyar, Anna and Bharathiar, Kalaignar stands as a towering personality. Kalaignar now at 86, age has not withered his intellect nor has time made his writings stale.

Determined to secure a presence for Tamil literature and culture on the global scene, this University has already translated Bharathi's poems into English and conferred the"Bharathi Tamil Chemmal"award on Kalaignar in 2007, the University's Silver Jubilee year. The present endeavour, translation of Kalaignar's works into English, is a major step towards realizing this goal.

G. Thiruvasagam

Prologue

Kalaignar M. Karunanidhi's literary works in English translation should constitute a gift of the Tamil language to world literature.

In so far as Kalaignar is both a visionary writer and an active practitioner of his vision, he is a phenomenon unto himself, standing a rung or two above his fellow artists of all genres.

Kalaignar's significance in the history of Tamil literature primarily lies in his restoration and renewal of the pristine glory of Tamil, the language that is the mother of the Dravidian family of languages and that is one of the primary classical languages of the world.

Kalaignar's creativity began to manifest in his concern for the ethnic identity of the Tamils and the aesthetic exuberance of the Tamil language, and today it has matured into a seminal contribution to world literature.

Looked at the need for winning international recognition for Tamil literature, especially in the context of the other pan-Indian language, Sanskrit, enjoying worldwide attention and study, the present translations of Kalaignar's selected works into English are an attempt in the right direction.

Such of these translations are also a need of the hour for the Tamil language to demonstrate its capacity for indestructibility and rejuvenation, at this hour of the prognosticatory threat of the social scientists that globalization would in its wake see the languages of ethnic communities either wear off or die out.

Kavipperarasu Vairamuthu

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Introduction

Kalaignar M. Karunanidhi, born in 1924 in a hamlet of Thanjavur in the southern part of India, has eminently succeeded in making spectacular contributions both as a statesman and as a man of letters. His has been a full life providing ample space for diplomacy, social reformation and creative writing. Neither a philosopher nor a full-fledged academic living in an ivory tower, he has the courage and the wisdom to think and to act remarkably. A prolific writer endowed with unusual powers of observation and meditation, he has been ceaselessly adorning his beloved Mother Tamil with a steady stream of writings, leaving no genre untouched. It may be poetry or prose, song or verse, essay or story, play or fiction, social novel or historical novel, creative writing or criticism, memoir or autobiography, script for a film or a play, broadcast or speech – he can handle it with astonishing ease. What he has written till today may run to more than fifty volumes of 300 to 400 pages each.

What Karunanidhi states in the first volume of his autobiography about the year in which he was born is a telling comment on the ethos of the times as well as on the political, social and cultural forces that moulded his world-view. That was a year that witnessed momentous events. Lenin, the supreme architect of the communist revolution in Russia, died and Stalin came to power. Trotsky's advocacy of violent worldwide revolution was abandoned in favour of Stalin's plan for *"socialism in one country"* and the communist leaders decided to adapt the movement to the differing situations in various countries. Turkey became a republic under the presidentship of Kemal Ataturk during whose fifteen-year reign, the country's political and economic structure as well as its religious and social bases was totally transformed. Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, written during his incarceration in Bavaria, preaching anti-semitism, power worship and disdain for morality and outlining his strategy for world domination later became the bible of

the Nazi party. Since all the empires had been weakened by the first world war, many colonies boldly rose in revolt against them.

When Nazism, Fascism and Communism were becoming prominent in the West, Gandhian ideology started taking shape in India. It was in 1924 that Gandhiji, released from prison, became the President of the Indian National Congress and Jawaharlal Nehru was elected its General Secretary. India had awakened from its deep slumber and Gandhiji's appearance on the political scene electrified the Indian masses. The Belgaum Congress meet had the party's future course of action mapped out. Though most of the Indian political leaders were unanimous in their view that the British should be driven away from the country, they were hopelessly divided with regard to the strategies to be developed for dealing with the foreign power. The labour unions in the country were gradually becoming stronger and stronger. The feudal lords and zamindars were waging a losing battle against the tillers of the soil. If in the south seeds were sown for organized fights for social justice, in the north there appeared signs of disruption of communal harmony.

It was in 1924 that Periyar E.V. Ramasami planned an epic battle against the evil of untouchability that later earned him the title of Vaikkam Hero. Besides laying a firm foundation for the labour movement in Tamilnadu, Thiru. Vi. Kalyanasundara Mudaliyar became a fierce fighter for the country's freedom. Finally, Karunanidhi significantly adds that it was the year in which "the revolutionary of revolutionaries, who dispelled the thousand-year-old darkness of the Tamil land," Arignar Anna, was a high school student equipping himself for the historic role he was going to play.

In this chronicle he is able to identify, of course with the benefit of hindsight, the intellectuals and men of action who later became his models as well as those against whom he had to define himself. Though all those personalities, movements, parties and ideologies might have attracted his attention at an impressionable age, he was going to choose Periyar and not Gandhiji, Arignar Anna and not Jawaharlal Nehru, the party wedded to Dravidian ideals and not the Congress, Periyar's Marxism and not Nehruvian socialism, and Tamilnadu and not India. To him, as to his guides and companions in the Dravidian Movement, the social and cultural emancipation of the Dravidians was of greater importance than even the political freedom of the country.

Even as a fourteen-year-old adolescent, Karunanidhi was captivated by the self-respect movement of Periyar E.V. Ramasami, whose fiery speeches and writings exerted an irresistible influence on several thousands of young men and women of Tamilnadu during the early decades of the twentieth century. To the politically,

socially, economically and culturally oppressed of the Tamil land, Periyar appeared as a new messiah who could save them from the atrocities perpetrated against them in the name of religion. His words and deeds, ideas and activities, principles and practices took the southern part of India by storm as he travelled the length and breadth of it tirelessly, asking the Dravidians to become aware of their racial identity and to boldly fight for their release from the shackles of slavery, superstition and inferiority complex which, in his view, had been the handiwork of an alien race. The young Karunanidhi was one of his prize catches.

If Periyar's thoughts made an indelible impression on him, Arignar Anna's powerful oratory became a perennial source of inspiration. He thoroughly soaked himself in Anna's speeches and writings, committed numerous admirable utterances of his to memory and revelled in quoting them as often as possible. When it came to his own speeches, he didn't slavishly imitate Anna but scrupulously developed a distinct style of his own. If Anna's ornate and colourful prose is almost verse and if every paragraph of his can be turned into a *viruttappā* by a few slight modifications, Karunanidhi's prose is punchy, heavily ironic and full of witticisms. If every sentence in the former's speech, having a lyrical charm of its own, is a case of "linked sweetness long drawn out," every sentence in the latter's speech moves fast and quickly reaches its carefully planned climax. If Anna's mastery of Tamil prose is almost unsurpassed, every speech of Karunanidhi is a sparkling performance. One would be reminded of the comparison Dryden draws between Demosthenes and Cicero:

> One warms you by degrees; the other sets you on
> fire all at once and never intermits his heat. …
> One persuades, the other commands.

Of all the modern poets, it was Bharatidasan, the organ voice of the Dravidian movement, who won his heart by a poetry that galvanized the Tamils into action. He can use Bharatidasan's similes, phrases, lines and whole poems to dramatic effect in his own speeches and dialogues for films. Inspired by Bharatidasan's play *Iraṇiyaṉ allatu Iṇaiyaṟṟa Vīraṉ*, he reconstructed the myths relating to Ravana, Vali, Hiranya and Indrajit. The Dravidian stance on many more legends, myths, literary representations and historical personages was later exquisitely articulated by Karunanidhi in different genres and modes.

Kalaignar's lack of college education or of classroom learning of ancient Tamil writings never stood in the way of his becoming an accomplished writer and competing with the university wits of his time. Energetic and strenuous self-schooling more than made up for it. Plunging into studies of classical and modern Tamil works, he got as much out of them as any contemporary Tamil scholar

could. He took to *Tolkāppiyam, Tirukkuṟaḷ, Eṭṭuttokai, Pattuppāṭṭu, Cilappatikāram, Maṇimēkalai, Kaliṅkattupparaṇi* and Sundaraṉār's *Maṉōṉmaṇiyam* just as fish take to water, and a sound knowledge of these stood him in good stead by shaping his vision of life and having quite an impact on the texture of his prose and poetry. Besides writing learned expositions of some of these texts, he could provide new renderings of many of these into lucid modern Tamil so that they could easily reach the masses. Because of his re-presentations of *Tirukkuṟaḷ* in more than one form, Tiruvalluvar became a household name in Tamilnadu.

There is no simple yardstick with which the performance of any writer can be assessed. It has to vary from group to group if not from individual to individual for there are writers and writers. Their missions vary; their methods differ. Gandhiji was a prolific writer but would never claim the title of an artist. Among those that have produced many works of lasting value, there have been political revolutionaries such as Lenin, Trotsky and Mao Tse-Tung, political theorists such as Hobbes, Thomas Paine and Karl Marx, statesmen such as Abraham Lincoln, Winston Churchill and Malraux, philosophers such as Voltaire, Bertrand Russell and Sartre, activists such as Mahatma Gandhi, Periyar E.V. Ramasami and Martin Luther King and scientists such as Charles Darwin, Julian Huxley and Einstein. The writings of these can't be measured against those of creative artists such as Flaubert, Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot, who firmly believed that artistry was of primary importance and that their loyalty to language came before everything else.

Karunanidhi is almost equally split between his responsibilities to art and politics. He may be in or out of power; he may be the Chief Minister of Tamilnadu or the Leader of the Opposition but his creative vigour shows no signs of abating. The older he grows, the more voluminous the literary output happens to be. For the life, career and achievement of Karunanidhi, we can find three amazingly close parallels in contemporary world histoy: Arthur Koestler, Pablo Neruda and Wole Soyinka. Koestler, who, interestingly begins his autobiography with an account of what happened in different parts of the world on his birthday, was a communist when he was in his twenties, left the party during the Stalin purge trials, became an influential spokesman of the non-communist left and is now remembered for his writings characterized by an impressive journalistic style and a sense of commitment. Neruda earned a name as a poet, diplomat and communist leader, received the Nobel Prize for literature while serving as ambassador to France and is known for his highly personal poetry in the collection *Twenty Love Poems and One Song of Despair* and for his writings that glorify his home country's landscape and condemn the exploitation of the Red Indians. Soyinka, a Nigerian

revolutionary, playwright, poet and novelist, has won international acclaim for his writings which combine Western and Yoruba traditions.

Karunanidhi's writings, dashed off in the white heat of inspiration in the midst of a hectic schedule, are in Tamil, at once a classical and modern language that has, because of several centuries of constant use, become a supple medium of prose and verse. They have to be made available in English if the world at large, especially the West, has to recognize their power and glory.

Prof. P. Marudanayagam

Preface

When I first looked into Kalaignar's *Kavithai Mazhai*, as an academic in English and a translator, I was struck by several original and unique dimensions of his poetic output.

First, I note, his mastery over diction in Tamil, in all its pervasive usages, from classical to modern times, is amazing. His word power is his great native strength and merit.

Wake him up from his deep slumber, on a midnight, and offer him without prior notice, the most obscure, abstruse, abstract, or outlandish Tamil word or words, for meaning pat his reply will come, enlightening us on all their variegated meanings, and how they came into being in Tamil. There is no gainsaying the fact, he is a veritable and versatile student of the Tamil language and its literature!

One really wonders how he had the time, inclination, eagerness and patience to so richly store up such an astronomical array of words in his stupendous memory! Indeed, a walking dictionary he is, and a Dr. Johnson in Tamil at that! How nice it will be to have a devoted Boswell, to hang on to his lips, and jot down notes on a table-book, for the sake of posterity!

Now, how does he use these words? On his slightest signal, they ever stand at his beck and call, to tremble into an automatic and aesthetic construct of symbol and image, sound and structure, sense and spirit, as the "best words at the best places," surprising the reader with a "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," and in a "rhythmic creation of beauty" and as "lightings of songs," showered on the reader. And so, the title, *Kavithai Mazhai* (Shower of Poetry), aptly fits his volume of poetry!

Where did he get all the wherewithal for being a poet? Did he pedestrianly swot up and burn the midnight oil, to do his homework in the arduous mechanics of

writing poetry? Or did he painstakingly pore over the writings of his predecessors as models, to imitate and draw inspiration from them? No! No! He is a poet self-made, a maverick, standing on his own grounds, and blazing his own trail, as a natural genius, every inch, and, not indebted to any poetic movement, to any set poetic methods and manners, to any poetic genius, either in his own language or in English or in any other.

This comes as a great surprise and bafflement, especially in so far as poets like Bharati had come under the influence of a number of English, American, and European Men of Letters. In fact, many academic theses have been written on the impact of Western thought on Bharati.

Puthumaippithan traces discernible affinities to master story-tellers—English, American, French, German and Russian.

The influence of English, American and French historical novelists (like Walter Scott and Alexander Dumas), on 'Kalki ' is only too well-known.

Possibly, Arignar Anna too was inspired by Goldsmith, Burke, Sheridan, and Tom Paine, both as speaker and writer.

Even in Bharathidasan, some unconscious literary parallels from French and English poets may be found.

English and English literary traditions inevitably dominated the Indian literary scene, and had a hold on the Indian Mind for a long, long time!

But, suffice it to say, Kalaignar stands insularly and imperviously all alone, striking his own hard chosen path, an avant-garde, listening to the music of his own heart and creating his own harmonies, with none before him, and none after him in the galaxy of creative writers for comparison!

Thus, Kalaignar's poetic felicity and spontaneity enable him to burst into song even on the slightest occasion, without reference to inspiration from elsewhere. .

What are the staples of his poetic fibre? A burning sincerity of utterance, as evidenced in his elegiac tributes to friends, contemporaries, and celebrities, which always brings tears in our eyes, for he so successfully transfers his empathy for and sympathy with the subject of the poem. His elegies are a class apart, and the most famous one on Anna has all the makings of a great elegy, comparable to Milton 's 'Lycidas', in content, tone of voice, presentation, technique and references to Nature. Kalaignar's impassioned request and appeal to Anna to lend his heart to him is as bold as it is original and novel, and it serves as s dramatic resolution of his intense sorrow and emotional conflict.

As for his poem per excellence, I may quote in full his miniature marvel, on his mentor and guru, Periyar.

Those that did divisions of castes create,
Stunned they were as though they had a crash of thunder heard.
God, religion and superstition – subtly knit as one,
See, they flee in lightning speed!
The ignorant old world – adored and admired,
See, they disintegrate by the Erode Quake!
Ee . Ve . Ra . is the storm that shakes
The country's Aryan Base!
Even if his beard white just did sway,
Even if his subtle glance just did signal,
Those in black shirts donned,
Sure as swords would injustice
Cut asunder and come back!

This poem not only brings out the poet's unalloyed love and worshipful adoration of his mentor and guru, but it also fixes rationalist Periyar in the back-drop of the prevalent religious fanaticism and communal intrigues, rife in the country, at the time when he wrote of Peiryar and of his dour battle against these. The poem is so succinct, so telling, so forceful, so real, so brief, featuring such an amazing minimality of words, that it could have come only from the pen of Kalaignar – an impressive cameo and political vignette, an instance of the best words at the best places.

Another poem, a brief and impromptu one, on Kalaignar seeing an eye-catching waterfall, in all its symphony of colours, on the banks of the Lake of Orlando in the city of the same name, is a photograph in poetry, ending incidentally with the poet's inimitable humour about 'his' lady's possible demand for a silk saree, in every conceivable shade of the rainbow seen there!

Kalaignar's sense of humour and his incurable penchant for repartee are only too well known to readers. As the English idiom goes, Kalaignar is "quick on the rebound," though he is by no means a pistol shooter, but, suffice it to say, his opponents do not remain on the spot for a second shot! When he is hemmed in from all sides, especially at a press-conference, his repartee is a self-defense, a coup de grace, and a magic manoeuvre, like Houdini's, to escape from the bind!

Poet Kalaignar has such a powerful sense of the historical presence in him that he is inevitably wedded to the great and glorious past of the Tamils in all its vitality and actuality, in all its pomp and splendour, which he describes as though he were right there at the centre stage, seeing with his eyes, hearing with his ears, and feeling with all the intensities of his mind and heart.

Even the circumstances of the death of the Party's loyal follower, E.V.K. Samy, are described in epic terms, as though Samy were a hero of the ancient wars. The willing suspension of disbelief is so complete that we are with the poet-narrator, seeing with his eyes, hearing with his ears, and feeling with his soul. In this narrative, as generally in many others too, he seems to be a cinematographer-cum-script-writer turned poet-lyricist, to captivate and hold us to spellbound attention. Thus, he is a remarkable story-teller in verse, an absorbing raconteur, and a modern minstrel or a troubadour, or a rhapsode , singing out his songs before a chosen assembly of the well-informed.

His poetic presidential addresses at symposiums, before a coterie of debating poets, are unique, in so far as he is an extempore poet on such occasions, using his panache and intellectual resources, to maximum impact, before the audience.

This poet-politician's burning sincerity of purpose, his uncompromising devotion to the causes he holds dear, his passionate love of the Tamil language and the Tamil people, his devotion to the upliftment of the poor and the downtrodden, his relentless fight against social injustice, his crusade against language hegemony, his long political marches are the various facets that are reflected in *Kavithai Mazhai,* to reveal the life and vision of the poet – a doyen among his contemporaries.

Kavithai Mazhai has so much of life in it – the poet's and inextricably, the Tamil people's – that it seems to be a vast contemporary pageant and drama that unfolds itself before us in a grand poetic mosaic. And we feel that another *Puranaanooru,* a modern one of the twentieth century, has been written by Kalaignar!

Dr R. Ganapathy
Professor of English (Rtd)
Annamalai University

A Guide to the Pronunciation of Vowels

அ	a	ஆ	aa
இ	i	ஈ	ii
உ	u	ஊ	uu
எ	e	ஏ	ee
ஒ	o	ஓ	oo

1 O Panneerselvam!*

Sitting in a dark room,

Closing both eyes,
There are those who say,
The people of the world,
Are in tricks and frauds engaged.
May their ignorance cease!
This to inculcate,
Periyar's drumbeats sounded loud.
As a follower of that path, he came….
Beloved friend, trusted companion, scion cherished,
And hero of the Rationalist Movement.
The radiant sun had left before its time,
And thus there came a darkness then.
If the morning sun rising from the East,
Suddenly into the ocean fell,
Wouldn't the world be shaken and in sorrow be!
This Land, when march forward it did,
To dispel darkness, and enlightenment gain,
The dark and deadly clouds,
The young sun from view did hide!

Descendant of the Race of Warriors Dauntless!
Lion-hearted, you did from the den come out,
With your fell sword to finish
The pack of scheming jackals!
Massive shouldered! Paragon precious!
Your speech was sweet! Your glance was kind!
Gone you are! But will your fame ever go with you?
O Panneerselvam! Where is your youthful looking face?
Your moustache, like the Pandya king's,
Where is it?
The fierce and hungry waves that ravage,
Appeased were they by their consuming you?
Saying, "Let them devour me and gratified be,
And let the people of the world ever thus think,"
Where did you disappear thus?
Though born and brought up rich,
How did you get to know
The traits of the working class?
Noble youth! The tears profuse we have shed,
They a thousand Oman seas will surpass.
Witnessing the flourishing of blemishless and beautiful Dravida Nadu,
And the awakening of those drunk in traditions old,
Is indeed the gift of tribute
That's to your service thus offered!
Even if opposition all around,
Like a storm does rage,
We shall march ahead, as victory sure is ours!
We are not cowards.
Descendants we are of the Defender of Thanjai!
If we have to fall at all,
Fall we shall,
Singing in praise of your glorious deeds.

---

*Leader A.T. Panneerselvam proceeded to London, in 1940, to serve as an adviser to the Indian Minister in London. His plane drowned off the Oman Sea. Kalaignar, at a young age, penned this tearful tribute, in *Murasoli*, in memory of the late Panneerselvam.

2 Periyaar

Those that did divisions of castes create,

Stunned they were as though they had a crash of thunder heard.
God, religion and superstition – subtly knit as one,
See, they flee in lightning speed!
The ignorant old world – adored and admired,
See, they disintegrate by the Erode Quake!
Ee.Ve.Ra. is the storm that shakes
The country's Aryan base!
Even if his beard white just did sway,
Even if his subtle glance just did signal,
Those in black shirts donned,
Sure as swords would injustice
Cut asunder and come back!

1945

3 The Mother in *Puranaanooru* - 1

Only a hut it was!

Spears and swords sharp
Were lined up on one side –
To capture the world,
And conquer enmity.
They would gleam and shine,
Like armour wrought.
No beauty there is in a tiger's den –
This is nothing new!
Fear, trepidation and defeat –
They would not show up here,
This seat of honour –
The warrior's mansion!
Holding a bowl of cooked rice,
With sugar cane candy,
An old gray-haired woman,

Stood at the threshold,
To feed an infant's toothless mouth,
With a handful of cooked rice.
Ran a warrior towards her.
"Grand Mother!
News for you," he said.
"Like a young girl at play,
A heavy breath you breathe,
Young fellow! Manly are you?
Let there be some gap between breaths,
And afterwards you can begin to speak,"
Said that Tamil granny, for her banter known!
"This is no time for play, granny –
Your usual jokes you stop.
Your son was killed at the battlefield," he said.
The granny wilted and straightened herself for once!
"While playing at dice, the pieces are usually cut –
So also in the battlefield.
Say whether the wound was on the chest, or on the back?"
"On the back," he said.
Agitated she was. Broken was her heart.
She took out a sword,
And hastened to where the drumbeats were heard,
"I fed a coward with my milk.
Is he a coward fallen on his chest!
A battle warrior!
Long ago, my immortal husband bared his chest,
And he fell challenging a speeding spear.
Was he born to him?
Alas! Where is honour gone?
He fell like a crumbling wall.
Bravery echoes from the lofty peaks of the Himalayas –
Here, music vibrates from the veena's strings,
And that too as 'honour,' 'honour' sound it will!

Eating shark and drinking mead,
Did you hail from a cowardly clan?
Blemish you have heaped
On the bold warriors of the Tamil race.
I fed you with my breasts,
I reared you, my son –
Where are those shoulders stout and strong?
Didn't you itch for a battle?
Alas! A coward you are,
Who could not stand the spear.
The milk of courage I gave you,
Answer do make to it!"
Thus she, the woman who neared eighty cried.
To the field she went,
And turned over the Tamil warriors dauntless.
There, blood did run like a river in spate,
For guarding the goodly land of the Tamils.
With a heavy breath,
She walked amid the heap of the dead!
Happier was her son's birth,
Than when she married.
There he lay dead,
With a spear piercing his chest!
She saw this. Her heart was pleased!
"Perturbed I won't be by any scene!
My son as a warrior died.
I was about to pluck away my breasts that fed him.
Oh! Where is that wicked one who told me a blatant lie?
A sword here there is! I shall now seek his tongue."

(Source: *Puranaanooru* 278)

4 Students' Awakening!

Where is the land renowned the Cheras ruled?

The dauntless Pandya kingdom, Why did it decline?
In the rich land the Cholas lived,
How did cowardly thoughts creep in?
Questions burst forth thus in the simmering minds.
"Kill we shall!"
"Give us the land!"
"The great sermon,
'Give up the rights,'
The jackal's shrill cry it is!"
O robust youths in fierce love of the land!
Do spit on cowardly men!
On the peak of worldly life,
Let us ever etch the new!

1945

5 Green Parrot!

If a ripe chilly is thrust

Into the top of a tender bottle gourd,
If jasmine flowers in the middle are stuck,
And screw-pine-blades behind,
A parrot green you are!
These indeed make a parrot of you, a parrot of you!
Round head! Red nose! Slender wings! Long tail!
Parrot sweet! My description, wrong is it?
Hearing you depicted thus, won't you your good wishes give?
Words of praise, accept you won't.
The reason I know, parrot petite!
Because you were trapped in a cage,
Like a worm in the hook you too fret.
Gladly in a prison I put you.
Aware now I am –
A prison, very cruel, very cruel, indeed it is!
Forgive me! Forgive me!
Maid golden voiced, do forgive me!
When my imprisonment does end,
Your prison I will break.

The prison did the ills of a prison teach me.
Bird enslaved! Parrot beautiful!
I gained experience. I did experience gain indeed.
A life of freedom,
Offer I shall, as soon as I come,
Higher and higher you shall soar!
Free will be your feet that are bound,
And fly you shall as soon!
Maid, beauteous and fair!
Fly you shall everywhere!
Parrot! In a cage I put you!
Forgive me!
The cruelties of prison,
I have come to know.
The ills of prison as I am now aware,
The caged bird I shall release.
But those who are of the ills of prison aware,
Came over here to rule.
To let me die, put me in a cage they did.
Why so parrot! Why so parrot!
Reply do make, parrot green!
"Because, you I imprisoned
Me, they imprisoned!
Say clearly thus parrot green!
"Whom did you imprison, for me to imprison you,
Parrot green!"

1953 – Tiruchi prison

6 The Mother in *Puranaanooru* - 2

It was the time when the Chera, Chola and Pandya kings of Tamil land

A war among themselves waged,
On the sandy plains of the Kaviri,
As to whose flag should flutter on the temple's cupola,
When a beauteous belle of Tamil land,
On hearing that her father a valiant battle fought
In the field and died for the motherland,
Melted like wax on fire!
Her husband, fierce-eyed, had also returned
From another town.
Her tearful eyes the news of war announced.
"Unhappy are you that your father died at the battlefield?"
"No, my love!"
"This fragrant land becoming less by one warrior,
Is like a tear that has occurred in a good apparel.
Freely enter the enemies would, I thought.

Tears swell and gush forth, my love!"
His fell sword he drew,
And like a tiger leaping out of its lair
And a volcano that spews,
Lifted her bright face and his challenge thus uttered.:
"The gathering enmity into smithereens I shall break!
Without redeeming the Land, return home I shall not!"
The girl smiled in joy intense and said,
"Go my love!"
I may not return;
And so to me do turn, and give you a kiss I shall!"
He kissed her, and straight to battle went!
War! War! War!
Thus did resound the battledrums!
"See! See! See!
How that Beauty's husband,
Boldly dispatched his enemies!"
The companion warriors,
In surprise thus exclaimed!
The eyes of that pearl-like damsel,
In happiness smiled,
On hearing of her husband's victory
That came one after another!
Freed were the fortresses!
Broken were the legs of enemies' horses!
Vanquished was the elephant force!
Pulverized were the spears!
Our king's warriors beat the drums,
And they were heard like thunder in summer!
Thus she jumped in joy and a new song sang.
The warriors returned.
"Victory of your husband it is," they said!
The king's messengers came,
And a scrolled message they happily read!

Tears of joy the Beauty shed.
Why did then that man come?
To convey news of death?
"My dear girl! A nice one! Disturbed do not be!
The last news from the battlefield, do hear!
That man of splendid excellence,
Who declared at the altar of marriage
That he had become one with you,
Had died a glorious death,
Confronting the spear on his chest".
The Tamil belle beautiful loudly cried,
And blamed that cruel death had destroyed.
The well-knit family.
"What does remain hereafter," she asked!
"The ripened fruit had fallen and gone."
Thus she cried and wept!
"Showing warmth in his eyes,
And speaking with such sweetness,
Songs of love he did in bed sing to me.
Are all these days gone for nothing?
These eyes will never fall asleep!"
Thus she wept
And prayed in the direction of the battlefield,
Where lay her husband dead.
She who was by sorrow felled,
As soon as the drums of battle,
The enemies beat, she heard and rose:
"My family it is that is destroyed
Let the whole of it be gone.
Live I won't for the sake of my home,
But only for my famed Land, I shall live!"
The queenly woman of Tamil land,
Thought of her son,
Who had gone to learn under a mentor

Beneath a banyan tree!
There she went:
"Mother!" he rushed,
Darling of a lisping tongue beautiful!
"Father and grandfather, have they come back home?"
"On return, they to a place of death did go.
"Sweet one! You also come!
She thus did invite him.
"What did they bring?" he asked!
"Honour! Honour! Lasting Honour!" she said!
"Son! You too do come to taste it," she said!
"By enemies' invasion,
Our family tree has become a parched tree!"
No worry at all!
They went to battle and died!
And an immortal honour they earned!
My son! Fight the foe with all your might!
Your dear motherland this is!
Sing a song in praise of it!
Speed immediately!" So saying,
She embraced her tender young son,
Spruced him up and a bloody sword to him she gave
And said: "Go! Go! My son! To the battlefield!"
Dear girl!
Are there folks who haven't on earth,
Celebrated and sung of this great scene?

(Source : *Puranaanooru 279)*

Pongal Issue of *Murasoli (1955)*

7 A Heroic Warrior Killed*

A robust youth was he who declared:

"The garden and the southern breeze I shall enjoy,
Then I shall swirl the sword to defend my land."
When he was a budding flower of youth,
Like a lighted lamp was his bright face!
He declared: "I shall enmity scotch in full."
A damsel called Poovai did eagerly wait,
His shapely frame to clasp.
He was called the pearl of his family.
A splendid fruition was he,
And she, a flower endewed.
She her lover stopped, ready as he was
With his drawn sword,

To fly to the battlefield
That roared with drums of war.
"When shall we two become one?
Put the drawn sword back into the sheath for a while, dear!"
"Bent as I am to gain freedom,
Do not to love sacrifice me, maid!
Joining hands with the force that will save
My glorious land of the Tamils,
Which the mean in contempt have ruined and belittled,
I shall redeem
And so, the comfort of a beautiful hall, and a beauteous maiden's speech
I do not need."
Do you hate all these then?" she asked.
I do not say I do not love you.
Until our Southern gardens are rid of snakes,
Let us not be in the lore of love engaged," he said.
Taken aback she was.
"Let us together in battle be.
If end comes,
Let that be so for us both!
Dear! What's your reply to this?"
"Lovers do adopt this method!
But darling! Agreeable this is not to me.
When in the battlefield, I do my enemies attack,
My heart for a trice would hesitate,
As to what would happen to the eve in my heart ensconced,
And before that, my forces would in confusion be,
No! My dear girl! Please let me go!"
"To marriage consent if you do not,
At least to the flower-bed do come!"
"Let food sweet in the pot remain.
Though hungry I am, spoil you I shall not!
Love! Let me go without delay!"
"Bar is there for you to kiss my

Fruitlike cheeks?"
"Bar there is! As one who leads the force,
Marry you I should even if I die,
My love! If you I sullied,
What profit is it to me?
A great loss it is for you!"
"No! A kiss please!"
"No! In a big lumpsum on return!"
"Don't let me cry, dear!"
"Don't you worry! We shall as joyous ever be!"
After victory at the battlefield,
Consent for our love's fulfilment!"
"My beauteous peacock of thousand hues!
After bringing joy to the hapless people of the South,
Do know, bar there is none
For exchanging garlands with vows of marriage!"
"In triumph do soon return!
I shall a garland make with pearls from the roaring seas.
"My dear Pandya Deva from the South!
Until you return, here I shall stand,
Otherwise, this seashore shall my cemetery be!"
"A pearl-white smile that doesn't from the oyster grow
Display you will.
Singing in praise of Tamil pure
That pervades my heart, return I shall."
So saying depart he did, leaving the maiden alone,
On the sandy white shore of the sea!
The waters of the ocean vast,
That offer pearls from the oysters beautiful,
And the desired salt from the tossing waves,
We do not hate, as we cannot even
Wash our mouth with it!
In the manner same,
That maid with spear-like eyes,

Did not that noble warrior hate,
Who did the cause of his country serve.
The lion that left,
The commander met
And the situation he well understood.
At the vanguard of a big force he stood,
As a captain poised to wage a war for justice.
A battle cry he let out,
Challenging the wicked to oppose.
Encampments in all the streets there were.
Stationed were warriors all over the Southern Region.
The day must be settled for waging war.
The Tamil clan ancient,
In numbers large had gathered saying,
"None there is to challenge our shoulders strong,
None to clash swords with us!"
The Southern Region did as one man rise,
A battalion of youths, a formation of toiling forces,
All these together in an array joined,
And they did a scroll send
To the Commander-in-Chief,
For fixing the date for battle.
The Commander was he
Who in the principle of the *Kural* believed
That the strength of his force and that of his enemies,
Should be gauged. A reply he sent:
"War would begin soon, wait till then."
Happy he was in thought that there were a few days more
To lead the force to battle.
But then, whoever thought that a cruel wonder
Would take place?
As he was in deep thought about battle strategies to adopt,
Six or seven men, crafty as jackals,
Rushed to pounce on him.

"Useless beings! What do you want? he asked.
"We want your life," they said.
"You dogs and jackals in men's form!
To the battlefield I plan to go,
To offer my body to eagles and vultures.
If you "so badly need" it before that, do take it and go
But one thing -
My life alone you could take.
But the thoughts I gave rise to,
Namely, the warriors true,
Do know, You could not take them."
The sinister men, so deaf to the Tamil tongue,
In haste did surround him,
Cutting his limbs away,
Like the shoots of the banyan tree.
The fingers of the arm that drew the sword
To defend himself were in quick succession cut
And they fell scattered to the ground.
Like an explosive that cleaves a rock,
His head was cleft and he fell to the floor.
The lips which his loved one longed to kiss,
Were by a billhook cut.
The handsome chest on which she once leaned,
Were with blood splattered.
The wicked who came to kill fled.
The noble one, his last breath gave to the country,
And slept an eternal sleep.
The Beauty who at the seashore stood,
A garland of pearls stringing,
Heard he was gone!
The sinners my wedding garland have destroyed!
The lion that led the force,
Was cut to pieces and by traitors killed.
Did I live this long, to hear thus, alas!

"Dear girl! Do be standing on the white sands,
Come soon will I to marry you."
"The mouth that said so was shut.
The legs that strode so majestically,
In lassitude suffer did they?
His hot eyes would shower cool,
When he married me, I said and lived.
My Honey sweet!
The treacherous, into the mire of death have thrown you.
Why should I live," she cried.
The garland of pearls into the sea she cast,
And following that,
To the bottom of the deep sea she went,
Thinking of him, her loved one so dear to her.

*K.V.K. Sami was known as the Pearl of the Southern Seas. He was proudly called the Dravidian Captain by Periyar. He was murdered on 20-09-1986. Based on this incident, Kalaignar wrote this tribute.

8 The Beloved Son of the Muse of Arts*

Soft looks, sweet speech, and singular talent were his traits.

With these, a musician skilled he was,
To present music that was scenic, and delightfully beautiful!
He was a good Samaritan come,
Ever to respond to people's call,
And service do for them!

A Tamil full of laughter he was, ever in stature growing!
An unstinting donor to the aid of conferences,
And a dauntless Tamil who always deemed
The fame of selfless service as the only service!
In the art-world, he was a leader in his own right.

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Vast as an ocean was his heart!
An eternal sleep he now sleeps,
Steeping us into the depth of despair.
O what a cruelty is this!
He lived stating:
"The salve for human life is laughter alone.
Drink it deep, mixing it with delicious thought.
As long as I live, the feast of laughter, lessen it won't."
Alas! Into the red hot fire he fell.
He made the poor laugh, the cowards bold!
To the world of death gone is he,
Engulfing all of us into sorrow deep.
He made the art of film making an enlightening one.
A 'good brother' was he who stood steadfast.
As the Land's friend in need.

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The narrow thoughts of those who schemed
To lay their hands on huge sums of money,
Nipped in the bud did he, and instead,
This poet-singer donated as liberally!
A truthful devotee of duty was he,
Who induced widows to re-marry,
And made them see a bright new world!
Amidst brickbrats and scathing censure
That came from the bad,
His principles he preached and explained them with skill,
Through the art of folk singing,
With the help of a native instrument.
Pleased were even the quarrel-mongers!
To the Temple of Cosmic Dancer did Nandan go,
But this new 'Kandan' to the Temple of Knowledge went.
The good-for-nothings ran away from him,
And happy we were!

But now pained at heart we are by the loss of you!
Carry a smile you did in the corner of your lips,
And the soft eyes warmly welcomed.
This scene, where is it gone now?
Betel leaves, green as parrot,
Lime, white as shells, and betel nuts.
You mixed and chewed your reddened mouth to show.
The face that displayed the mischievous smile,
Where is it now?

O Master of the Arts!
Did you with fire become one,
And let the Tamils in water float and struggle?
In our hoary Tamil Land,
So full of lovely streams,
In glory like a king you lived!
Had it been known that a storm would rage,
As you fell uprooted,
Myriad hands would have tried and stopped it!
"With a refreshing smile, defeating opposition,
I shall by the side of Anna stand," you said.
But before that into the lap of death you fell!
O my life! Nectar sweet! In what thoughts did you die?
"A mountain of wealth I heaped,
But now on a dust hill's slope I lie!"
So saying, climb did you the peak of fame?

New-found gem! Pearl cherished!
You went on a mission to Communist Russia,
For the spread of Arts.
In similar thought, did you on a long journey go,
Putting all the blame on us?
Symbol of Arts! Vessel of Imagination!
Beauty's Image! Epitome of Enlightenment!
Emblem of Love! Embodiment of Virtue!

Who is there hereafter to be so good as you?
You and the halo of your fame,
Forever shine they will in the hearts of the Tamils!

*Kalaivaanar N S K died on 30-08-1957. This is the poem Kalaignar wrote on his death.

9 Long Live, Jeeva!

Tamil sweet our tongue will taste,

Nanchil will a pleasing fragrance waft,
Sweet will sound the celebrant song,
Famed will be the town of Boothapandi,
And honeyed will be the mouth
That sings in praise of gentleman Jeeva!

In the boisterous age of youth,
In the prime of his hale and hearty life,
Keen was he to serve the cause of public life,
And so of his land be thought foremost!

Though flowers aplenty in the garden there be,
Like the bee that flies far away,
Round and round the land he went,
As his life as service he deemed.

For a few days at home he stayed,
But for many days in prison he languished!

On stage his vibrant voice would resound,
And even in the summer of his life he did go about.
Release on time he would the journal, *Thamarai,*
And from it the elixir of Tamil drink we would!
He would raise his arms and orate,
And there, a raging storm would rise!
Greeting, "Come! Come!" he would welcome us,
And thrilled we would be by his affection warm!

His rock-like shoulders, where are they?
His ability undimmed, where is it?
His qualities great, where are they?
His devotion intense to serve the land, where is it?

His face of courage, where is it?
The lustrous light his eyes shed, where is it?
As a tiger striped,
Revolution's fragrance did his blood exude.
In his ideals firm was he,
As a Tamil poet.

In great glee,
Cruel death him did rob?
Thus did the countrymen in anger ask!
Long Live, Jeeva! Forever may you live!

10 The Mother in Puranaanooru – 3*

Like a chariot beautiful that comes swaying,

On the grassy ground with dew drops filled,
A beauteous lady did come walking!
Conversant she was with speaking Tamil sweet.
Superior in Tamil she was
To Kaakkai Paadini Ponmudiyaar.
Of the fame of Athiamaan Nedumaananji,
King Paari the munificent, Cheramaan Kovan,
Dour warrior Vazhuthi, and Cholan Perunarkilli,
In Tamil she sang, embellishing it with many an adornment!
And she was indeed the goodly Avvai of an intellect keen!

Dauntless warriors many there were in Tamil Nadu,
Whose hands appeared red like the rising sun in the morn,
By the munificent gifts they gave away!

If a messenger a scroll did bring, announcing war,
These, even unmindful of the ceremonial occasion of their marriage,
And dismissing the beauteous maid who comes behind him,
Their swords would sharpen and hold high their heads.
A home for such warriors bold was the Tamil land!
Among the Tamils who lived in the land,
Classified as desert land, hilly tracts, sylvan stretches,
Farm lands, and seaside regions,
She let Tamil poesy flower,
Like blossoming blooms in a beautiful bower.
She sang of love devoted to steadfast chastity,
She sang of the dauntless bravery of warriors at the field.
"Let death right now come in the battlefield,"
Said the foremost sons of mothers,
Who blessed them with all their hearts,
Saying, "May the fame of your exploits
Spread like the fragrance of sandalwood,
And be celebrated in literature!"
Avvai walked thinking of these women,
And felt immense pride in them.
By the tread of her soft feet,
The dew drops would be destroyed.
In the tumult of the battlefield,
The heads of foes would fall like grains of paddy!
Mother of fragrant Tamil! Mother of Knowledge,
And Mother of Beauty!
Before this mother who walked on the snowy plains,
Came another holding on to a pole.
"You! With locks of white hair on your head,
Why did you come at such a time as this,
When both my legs are cold,
As a banana tree trunk?
Young girl! Your husband did describe you
As one with eye brows like a bow!

Gone now is that time,
When you come to me with the back bent like a bow!
Your eyes were described then as a pair of spears sharp!
Now with a stick you walk, with both eyes gone?
When all the pearls in the Tamil land
Were sold in full.
You did your pearly tooth remove,
And sell in foreign lands as pearl!
Why have you come? Why this trepidation?
Why this sadness?"
In banter Mother Avvai thus did ask!
The way you joke, I don't understand,
"Don't you know that youthhood,
Cannot be in bounds enclosed?"
Cutting in thus, the mother did speak –
"Aware I am, your banter does enter
My troubled heart, as a Tamil salve pleasing.
Even after the loss of my sight,
Forget I did not that robust young man,
Who with love held my hands and left!
His frame, like a tall mango sapling it was.
His strength of will could never be bought by any gold.
Tiger cubs would play on his lap!
The wild beast hidden in a bush,
Would tremble in his hold!
A formation he led and for his motherland fought!"
She did not finish yet,
And impatient Avvai was.
She cut in thus:
"Tamil tradition it is for mothers to praise
The sons' dauntless courage at the battlefield!
And display their undeterred boldness!
Women old! Surprised I am!

New you are to the customs of the warrior class!"
"Do listen to me fully, noble lady!
You cannot a defect impute to my condition!
Deny I do not my weeping ever had swollen my eyes,
False it is not my wailing all day long,
Careworn I thus became!
Do know why, as I do not hide!"
"Do tell then" said Avvai.
And she a reply made:
"A king he was of an ever erect canopy of power,
And a flag flying high on his chariot.
And he was one praised by poets well-read,
As a duteous warrior.
Many a warrior bold there was in his army.
Who would not hesitate to march behind the king,
Like a flock of rams arrayed.
Though thousands there were behind the king,
A boundless love he had for my dear son.
During periods of rest in the battlefield,
Douty warriors would throng in numbers,
An inebriating drink to partake.
It was at those times that the king would my son draw close,
And pleased he would be to offer him the drink,
In excess of what he would give to the rest.
Do listen to my sorrow, mother!
The jackals in the battlefield,
Float on bones in blood,
And flocks of birds like balls do topple heads!
If only my son's head were to be there, among those fallen heads,
Fame there would be for the liquor by God given.
The king's love he received in excess,
And inebriated full was his head.
He died in war.
Disturbed and doubtful I am,

Whether fame he attained?
Mother! Wrong in this?"
Deeply moved at heart was noble Avvai
That she wasn't that valiant mother!

(Source: *Puranaanooru* – 286)

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*1964

Puranaanooru is a rich *puram* anthology in which great poets sang in praise of the bold battle-traits and the generous munificence of warriors of the Sangam Age. Like the dauntless valour of those warriors who put to flight the Aryans of the North, on the banks of the fiercely flowing Ganga, the style of *Puranaanooru* is also tough.

11 Freedom Fighters*

My brother Anna, dear as my life,
Mothers, fathers, brothers cherished,
Poets renowned,
Protectors of beloved Tamil,
Yielded by the Tamil land, protected by the roaring seas!
My respects deep do accept.
On this memorable day.
Oh! Where is the glorious place where the Cheras lived?
Why did the kingdom of the Pandyas dauntless fall?
In the land of unceasing action,
Where the Cholas ruled,
How did cowardly thoughts gather?
Such questions did burst forth from simmering hearts.
"Kill we shall! Give us the land!
'Freedom, required it is not,' is a sermon useless,

And a jackal's howling it is."
Young men robust!
With fierce love for the motherland,
Cowardly men you cut to pieces and throw them away.
At the height of our valiant life,
Let us etch what is new.
Thus did fiercely rise the freedom fighters of the Tamil land.
For such men to be born again through these celebrant songs,
Poets creative have come, responding to the invitation
Of All India Radio,
And the President I am of this symposium!
The story of the valiant Tamils
Who fought for freedom,
Let us listen to from our poets,
And our obeisance pay to them.
First of all,
Listen let us to the history of that lion undaunted,
Who loudly beat the drums of battle,
Against those who curbed the thirst for freedom,
And quenched the fire of freedom,
And who was by the guilty British put to death.
"The sky pours, the earth gives,
Why should the King tributes pay to you?
The Race that ruled shall lay siege.
Dying worms you are, you the crown lay down".
Fire thus did Kattabomman breathe,
But his life-breath,
Cut away it was by a length of rope *(kayir)*,
So we call the place Kayathaar,
Where Kattabomman breathed his last.
Its hallowed history as let us eagerly receive.

(Thiruchitrambalakkavirayar finishes his poetic presentation on the "History of Kattabomman")

President Kalaignar:
Kattabomman we thought had passed away.
But this Chittrambalam got him alive again.
May he prosper!
Many poets there are to bring forth sons such as Kattabomman.
To receive them with joy we are eager.
To destroy the evil of slavedom,
And secure freedom, a mother to her sons
Said: "Offer your head!"
Thus the bold Marudhu Brothers,
Their heads offered and acclaim achieved,
Now comes Nataraja Kavirayar,
With his spontaneous verses of fire-new words,
To bring alive the memory of Marudhu Brothers.

(Poet T.K. Natarajan finishes his poetic presentation on the "History of Marudhu Brothers")

President Kalaignar:
Our friend brought alive the Marudhu Brothers.
And their heroic history offered.
Let us now listen to Poet Murugusundaram,
Who is keen to present the great poet Bharati,
Born as the embodiment of the two Marudhu Brothers.
"Bharati did not rise to poetic eminence,
Imitating old styles, ancient poems and Tamil works old.
If the world did not understand
Bharati's brilliant and beautiful verses,
The mistake of the world it is.
Subramania Bharati offered
To the unlettered Tamils
Simple and sweet poems.
He is the beautiful moon that sang
To wake us up from our long stupour,
And he is the king of fragrant words."

Of him thus did Bharathidasan sing.
Let us see what this poet Murugusundaram does.

(Poet Murugusundaram finishes his poetic presentation on "Bharati")

President Kalaignar:
Indeed he has showered poetic praises
On proud Bharati, showering verses
Like a waterfall.
Because of the wantonness of a waterfall,
Did not Tamil Nadu bear the storm
That came as a stunning shock?
The honest and heroic V.V.S. Aiyar,
Drowning, died in the whirlpool of a waterfall.
A poet has now come,
To revive Aiyar in verses.
To upset foreign forces that raised walls,
And freedom imprisoned amidst them,
And kept guard all around,
He rose, but in the middle he died.
But now revived he arrives,
Brought to life by the beautiful
And splendid Tamil of Abdul Rehman.

(Poet Abdul Rehman finishes his poetic presentation on "V.V.S. Aiyar")

President Kalaignar:
In Tamil Nadu where lived the famed
Elder scholar Rajaji,
We saw V.V.S. Aiyar of a family so distinguished.
Another noble man of a family famed,
Was determined to secure freedom for the country,
And steer a steamship from the port of Thuthukkudi.
"My cherished gem of purest ray serene,
With all the glory and fame imbibed!
Half of my life and heart gladly to you gave.
And the rest, at the feet

Of my beloved nation I laid.
Truth this is!"
By this poem did V.O.C,
The lofty and fitting leader of Tamils,
His heart did open thus.
To sing in praise of him comes
Poet Ilanchezhian with his diction sweet of Tamil.

(Poet Ilanchezhian finishes his poetic presentation on V.O.C.)

President Kalaignar's concluding address:

He in prison lived, and pulled the oil press,
To drive away the White who ruled the Land.
Many were killed before the prime of their lives.
He fought like a sword drawn from out of the sheath,
With no care for his life.
Of his glory to hear,
We are all arrayed here today.
But to describe the greatness of all those
Who have their lives laid down for freedom,
I have neither the poetic ability acquired,
Nor the art of poetry learnt.
Though my verses may poetic metre lack,
Guided as I was by the sole principle,
That our land, language, honour and feelings
Should not go undefended,
I make poetic lines of my feelings
That from my heart do gush forth,
To let those treacherous ones,
The turncoats of principles, gain awareness
I shall say this.
Freedom was gained,
By the loss of so many lives, by the loss of so much blood!
After great loss and labour on earth,
Freedom, like purest gold, was earned.

Can we throw it away?
Good is it to hand over this rose beautiful,
To a monkey wild?
Our freedom, let us zealously guard.
Let us add glory to those freedom fighters.
To let a few among the kin,
And some near and dear ones alone,
Live in eminence is not freedom indeed!
The lettered, the unlettered, the toilers in the field,
Humble labourers, blacksmiths, small-scale artisans,
Goodly women, students –
To let these prosper in life sans ills,
Is freedom.
To let this principle flourish well,
And to let useless tenets go,
Let us in pleasing Tamil proclaim:
Mother Tamil! Vessel of virtue!
We did your bold sons glory celebrate!
To let the Tamil land,
Victory experience everywhere,
Your blessings do grant us, Mother!

*A poetic symposium on "Freedom Fighters" was organized on 15-08-1967, at the studios of the All India Radio, Tiruchy. Here is Kalaignar's poetic Presidential Address, delivered on the occasion.

12 The Five Senses*

Senior participants who have come to make

A poetic presentation in Tamil at this symposium,
Lion-like youths,
Kindly accept my respectful greetings.
Stating that a poetic symposium
On the five senses – body, mouth, eyes, nose and ears,
Was to be got up,
Abdul Rehman invited me to it.
He mentioned orally it was to be a poetic symposium.
Overjoyed that he deemed me a poet,
I asked him: "Is that so?"
His eyes twinkled when he said, "yes!"
"Was it for fun," I wondered!
But later, I read a letter he wrote.
He invited me again for the poetic presentation.
I was being treated then for a nose-injury,

Incurred in a car-accident.
As I thought it wasn't possible for me to go,
Silent I was.
But my friend would not let me alone.
When the telephone rang with alacrity,
I heard Rehman's voice.
I was glad indeed of his personal invitation first,
And then his letter drew my attention.
Now, he again called me over the phone,
At quite an expense to himself.
Spare me he would not, he said,
Despite my nose-injury!
After all this, if I did not go,
Would he not blame me?
Afraid, I soon did hurry,
Composing some verses in great haste.
Though composed in the morning, like flowers unripe,
My poem would flower in full in the evening, I thought!
It is said, if the moon beautiful in the sky there is,
The buds of lilies would soon flower.
Five or six poets, poetic moons, there are here,
Like the beautiful moon. So I expect,
My budding poem would also bloom! Wouldn't it?
If it doesn't, at fault is the moon!
It is the fault of those who deemed me a poet!

** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** **

The body in joy goes gaily about before it comes to its end.
The mouth does speak a lot before it comes to its end.
The eye does roam about before it comes to its end.
The nose does chafe and suffer before it comes to its end.
The ear does seek to hear a lot before it comes to its end.
To control these five senses is good, it is said.
How is this possible?

Can the ear be deaf to the delight of the bird's song?
Can the body reject a belle's soft embrace?
Can the mouth decline to speak Tamil delicious?
Can the eye be shut to the moon sweet?
Can the nose avoid cool bloom's sweet fragrance?
The sages of all the worlds,
What penance did they do? What pains did they suffer,
To conquer the five senses!
The pleasures of the palace, the glory of the crown
Viswamithra renounced,
And to a garden retired, as a sage.

Don't you the story know how he became
Menaka's Visvamithra?
Likewise, do also know the story of Arunagiri.
The five senses of the eye, ear, nose, mouth and body –
Like horses unbridled,
Like a turbulent river in a spate,
Blind despite eyes,
Deaf despite ears,
The body in sores,
The mouth blabbering,
Uttlerly lost stood Arunagiri.
Do you his history know?
Everything should in order be.
And that should be in steadiness followed.
For this, I do these two stores tell you.
Because a knife you hold in your hand,
Do not go stabbing!
Use your brains and do not hesitate to cut a fruit with a knife and eat it!
For attaining final bliss,
Do not act as though the five senses are in control.
This will be an illusion.
Letting loose the five senses,

And roaming like a maverick is bad.
Let us leave it at that.
A word to you who have come to begin
A debate on each of the five senses:
Those that have come to present their poems
At this College Hall would argue that this subject
Alone is important. I shall to you a warning extend!
If the body becomes big, it will be deemed an elephant!
If the eye becomes big, it will be deemed an owl!
If the nose becomes big, it will be deemed a capsicum!
If the mouth becomes big, it will be deemed a chatterbox!
If the ear becomes big, it will be deemed a winnow!
Therefore,
Let each one speak, keeping the subject under control.
If it is a wanton fight, intervening, I shall stop it!
If it is a hot debate among poets, glad I shall be!
Play with words and direct your arrows of poetic attack.
At the same time do with kindness forbear.
Explain the nature of taste, light, relish, sound and smell.
Opposition, blame, victory, pride — put these into your poems,
Laughter, friendliness, self-awareness - keep them deep in your heart,
And rise and come for battle!
A cock fight is for cash, a king's fight is for the country,
Your fight, for winning fame by song
Your poetic fight we are going to see is for Tamil.
First comes Shahul Hamid. He will in Tamil,
A sweet poem present, on the "Body."
What would he say?
Sans body, no eyes, no nose, no mouth , no ears there are!
That is true, isn't it?
To support him Valluvar also had said:
'Hugging of children, to body gives pleasure.'
Whether this is true or false,
Let us wait and enjoy the debate.

Let us first listen to Sahul Hamid's Tamil.
(Poet Sahul Hamid makes a poetic presentation on the 'Body')

President Kalaignar:
Next comes Murugu Sundaram from Salem.
Won't Salem iron melt?
This is what all of us have been waiting for
With intensely longed for expectation
In the past ten years of the Congress rule,
But Murugan's heart won't melt. Soft iron!
Though that is so, he comes to present his poem
To move our hearts!
Without the mouth, the poem could not be recited.
Thus he would a case make out.
He would ask me to decide whether possible it would be,
And I would in confusion be.
He would say, the judgement should be
Only by the mouth delivered.
I would say I could write it by the hand!

** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** **

Now Murugu Sundaram would make a
Poetic presentation on the "Mouth"
Shutting our mouth in silence, let us listen to him,
For mouth it is that is the main entry for
Partaking of food!
(Poet Murugu Sundaram finishes his poetic presentation on the "Mouth".)

President Kalaignar:
Next comes Rajendran to the Hall,
To present his poem on the "Eye."
My eyes have seen his poem. Honeyed candy it is.
Words by the mouth uttered are of no use,
If eyes do glance at eyes. So argues Rajendran.
Valluvar has also given a place of prominence
To the eye in his *Kural.*

As many of Valluvar's *kurals* are in his favour,
Don't you be worried as to how my verdict I would give!
By the help of the brain which is not covered
By these five senses, we shall carefully think,
And with eyes wide open.
For now, let us keep them closed,
To be enthralled by the poetic beauty he presents.
(Poet Rajendran finishes his poetic presentation on the "Eye.")

President Kalaignar:

Next Thamizhanban is going to expatiate on the "Nose."
Though the nose, between the eyes,
Wears glasses the twin eyes require,
They are not called after the nose.
They are called only after the eyes.
Thus does his 'broad' mind concede!
Oh! How did they the nose represent?
Let him beat his drums for a war of words!
Valluvar has also described the nose as the
One that made *anichamalar* wither.
Without the nose, no life is possible.
If my friend adduces this as a reason,
For a verdict in his favour,
I shall breathe through my mouth!
Without 'obstructing' the friend who comes to speak on the "Nose"
Let us consider the movement of his poem and appreciate!'

Next comes poet Ponnivalavan, with a majestic vein.
He comes to speak on the "Ear."
Citing the *kural* which assigns the highest
Prominence among all riches to the 'ear,'
He would a winning prize for himself ask.
True indeed it is in a debate!
But only when the mouth utters that the ear is enriched.
So saying, escape I shall!

Let him proceed with his debate,
And let us to his delectable Tamil listen in delight.
(Poet Ponnivalavan finishes his poetic presentation on the "Ear.")

President Kalaignar's concluding address:

In the land where poets are bestowed with silken shawls,
Our debators, weaving a beautiful silken fabric,
On the five senses, have bestowed it on me.
We heard poems opposed to each other.
If the moon and the Ganges,
Ensconced on Shiva's matted hair quarrelled,
It would be a headache for Shiva.
But under my presidentship,
It is a poetic tussle, a battle on the field,
A quarrel in Tamil so sweet.
He who said the 'Body' is great,
Cannot without the mouth exist.
He who said the mouth is great,
Won't like to be deaf.
He who swears by the beauty of the 'eye,'
Won't make bold to shorten a beautiful nose.
He who said the nose is beautiful,
Would he, without eyes, knock against something?
Only those who possessed all these,
Did come to the stage to present their poems.
So is this then a vain tussle? No!
A wordy quarrel in Tamil harmonious,
That which so sharpens the intellect.
If this happens over all the land,
Poetry will flourish. Newness will occur.
Tamil will attain a new life.
With this devoted service, please continue,
Until the nose stops breathing,
Serve the call of Tamil threefold.

Even after you are gone, let your fame protect Tamil.
All that your eyes enclose, make them poetry,
Make rousing poetry. To bring it to fruition
Your duty thus begins.
Listening to that which is good
Or announcing what is good,
Let you voice forth the welfare of Tamils.
When you utter something, say it well.
If the body exists not for what I have described,
Then it is not a body true, but only a false one it is.

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*The Islamia College at Vaniambadi organized on 24-03-1968 a poetic symposium on the "Five Senses." Here is Kalaignar's Presidential Address in verse, delivered on the occasion.

13 The New Path*

Minister for Agriculture, who has endeavoured
To bring credit to the Government of Tamil Nadu!
Poets who have come to demonstrate
The greatness of agriculture!
Happy is Mother Earth who sees her goodly children
Grow rich seeds of grains,
And deems them good produces.
Seeing the excellent seeds that Thanjai grows,
Mother Earth is happy they on the wet lands grow.

** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** **

As the world does prosper by the sky,
Are not rains to be looked upon as ambrosia?
Rain it is that grows what is fit for humans
To eat, and to let the food be eaten,
It also serves as drink.
By its failure to shower seasonally,

It is rain that harms life, and it also lets
Lives to live by showering when we need.
Without water, no worldly life there is,
And without rain, no righteous conduct there is.
Those that realized this, dug rivers,
And by that, food did they find.
How many rivers on this earth?
Plenteous paddy they did cause to grow.
And silken green they spread on earth.
And poverty destroyed.
To rivers that enrich.
Our gratitude let us express.
The mainstay for the people of the world
Are those that till the soil.
Even in toil, farming is the foremost,
So uttered Valluvar the great!
On muddy earth does a ploughman's life blossom,
And so a king thus he is.
On his head he carries a bundle of saplings,
And a hero he ever is.
A stack of hay he has at his field,
And a painter he is.
For he makes a scenic picture of all the paddy fields.
A god the ploughman is,
For he protects life!
He threshes paddy at the threshing field and toils.
Let us keep him before us as God and worship him.
You have struggled from the day the earth was born,
To contribute to welfare,
Your cherished labour you offer to the country.
Till your strength does last,
Toil you do on the field.
By methods old you measure your yield,
But realize only a pittance it is,

And your lips you pout in disappointment.
The causes for this condition we have thought over,
And paved the way for a prosperous progress.
The ways we have found are:
To hold on to bookish knowledge alone is not disirable,
Nor is it good to end up with poetic symposiums alone.
Wake up, without being struck at home,
You of Tamil Land! Rise!
A day of freedom it is!
You toil ever in the woods and fields,
With sheep and bullocks.
If you the old methods change and grow paddy,
Ways there are to gain benefits aplenty.
The state of dark ignorance
That for you alone remains,
Like the dawn of morn disappear it will.
Invite you I do not
To cultivate the land like Nandhan,
Within one whole night.
Nor to be shouted at by the landlord,
Sitting under the thorny tree.
Tied to your cattle that drops manure,
Pailing potfuls of water till your back breaks,
And drudging with bullocks which go round and round when pricked,
To these traditional ways to carry on farming;
We have added scientific methods,
To speed up agricultural growth!
In foreign countries,
The educated sow the seeds, let them grow,
And plough with scientific implements.
But here the educated are reluctant,
To cultivate the land!
They rush, falling on each other, in search of jobs.
Is any other job superior to the job of

Providing food by ploughing?
So the educated should worship the ploughman.
Let us encourage those who are backward
To seek self-sufficiency in food.
Our government stands first
To let that condition be reached.
Produce more from the land, we say,
But people produce more members in the family!
Instead of securing pearls as precious gems,
Trinkets and jewel boxes, without limit,
You produce more of paddy and millet,
Red millet and sugar cane,
Blackgram and dhall, sesame and horse gram.
This to drive home a poetic symposium is held.
Come, have some farmer friends
Their verses to present. I welcome them.
One called Karumbaayiram comes up,
To present his verses on *Aaduthurai-27*.
Let us enjoy, listening to him.
Forty-seven years ago,
There was only the Government of the Whites that ruled.
But twenty years later,
It is the Government of Anna.
For the woods to be fragrant,
For fame and glory to last,
For the land to work each day,
Let homes be filled with
Aaduthurai-27!

(Poet Karumbaayiram finishes his poetic presentation on *Aaduthurai-27*.)

President Kalaignar:

In spite of being born in Aaduthurai,
This *Aaduthurai-27*,
Owing to our fascination for English,

Has become *ADT-27.*
Similarly,
The paddy grain, *IR-8,*
Will beat any other grain in plenteous production.
Here comes up Kannimai
To present verses on *IR-8,*
In double quick time befitting the name!

(Poet Kannimai finishes the poetic presentation on *IR-8*)

President Kalaignar:

Next comes up another poet,
Nanchappa by name!
To present his verses on *maize.*
Let us to his sweet verses now listen!

(Poet Nanchappa finishes his poetic presentation on the *maize*.)

President Kalaignar:

Next comes up Radhakrishnan,
To present his verses on *red millet.*

(Poet Radhakrishnan finishes his poetic presentation on *red millet*.)

President Kalaignar:

Next comes up Chellapandian of Thamaraikkulam,
To present his verses on *methods of producing ragi.*

(Poet Chellapandian finishes his poetic presentation on *ragi*.)

President Kalaignar:
Next comes up Thamizharasu,
To present his verses on *transplanted corn.*

President Kalaignar's concluding address:

Minister for Agriculture!
Seasoned agriculturists!
Esteemed farmers from Tamil land bounteous!
You heard six poets on producing plenteously.
I also presented verses

On behalf of the Government.
On this, the 15th of August, the day of our freedom,
Do not light-hearted be!
The Agriculture Department
Of the the Government of Tamil Nadu
Will act with speed
To increase production.
The new Government
Will sanction loans quickly,
Fertilizers will be supplied,
For the wetlands of Thanjai on concessional rates,
Dry lands will be from tax exempted,
To make farmers smile.
We plan to do many more things
With your precious cooperation.
An intense desire there should be
In the hearts of landlords,
To help the toiler.
Apart from hard work,
The desire to work together
For increasing food production
Should come forth.
Under the noble leadership of Gandhi,
We drove the foreigner away!
No foreigners now there are amongst us.
For us to roam about as aliens is bad!
There are smart hoarders.
Killers of many lives.
Men skilled in smuggling.
Men stopping supply of paddy –
Worse than animals these are.
Let farmers their "freedom" get today from these.
For this alone, a new path let us find,
And let us this challenge announce!

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The aim of Anna's Governemnt is
To produce aplenty.
Thus this promise for sure
Offer we shall!
Goodbye!
May you prosper!

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*Kalaignar's Presidential Address at a poetic symposium on Agriculture titled "The New Path" held at Kumbakonan on 13-08-1968.

14 Water Family*

My respects to all of you at this gathering!

To the poets who have come to present their verses,
To the founder of Kandar College,
My respects!
To the Professors, and to the students,
My respects!
This institution of Kandar,
Offered enlightenment for inner purity.
Water from the Kaviri,
Contributed to our outer purity.
In the fitness of things it is,
To call them both "munificent showers!"
And ever to celebrate them as such.
Where there is compassion,
There is generosity.
The Kaviri banks conduce to compassion,

Generosity and a life harmonious.
Here are the distinguished poets
To present their verses on the "Water Family."

Deeming me a free poet,
And kindred to the "Water Family,"
I am made to stand before poets,
Who write as rules of prosody dictate.
From clouds flow the rains,
And from rains flow the rivers,
From the rivers come tanks and wells.
For all these the seas are the cause.
If it is described that an old man's cough is thunder,
If the light of his bulging eyes in fatigue is lightning,
If the saliva he dribbles is rain,
We won't accept such sickly rain.
I shall an example cite for the youths to like.
The stars in the sky are beauteous women,
Their collective speech is the rumbling of thunder,
Their flashing eyes are streaks of lightning,
The fragrant waters they sprinkle
On the loved one, the round moon, is the rain!
The example appropriate to warriors bold is:
Two bold hearts confronting each other,
Is the crash of thunder!
The spear of warriors clashing is lightning in the sky,
The blood the warriors shed is rain,
The sky is largely the battlefield!
We have had enough of rains,
Let us now go to the sea.
When the sea is thought of,
The Vaishnavaites think only of Vishnu,
Lying supine on the sea.
The Saivaites with sacred ashes smeared,
Think only of the story of Shiva swallowing poison,

And we think only of the history of Poompuhar.
Even the fighting forces could not destroy it.
And it was laid waste by the sea.
When all is said and done,
The sea bestows many benefits.
It offers pearls white as a damsel's teeth,
It offers the beauteous sight of the blue waves
Billowing up to clasp the young moon.
It offers to poets the gift of the picture of lovers
In embrace in the beach, sandy and soft.
If offers the sight of many anchored ships
By the side of the seashore dark.
Fame the sea did gain
Taming King Canute's pride.
The sea was cherished,
Because Mahatma Gandhi took salt from it.
The sea paved the way of Vasco Da Gama's
Ships to arrive.

It let Tamils to venture out on the seas,
To become part of hallowed history.
And an example of vastness,
It was the silent, tossing sea.
And for a while, it spelt doom,
Wreaking havoc upon the world.
Then it became motionless like an ascetic,
Free from anger, with the waves becoming calm.
Sea! Can your fame and name be described?
So let us cross the seas,
And reach the rivers.
Coming amidst rains and hills,
And through the woods,
The rivers manifested as the Kaviri, Pennai, Vaigai and Kollidam.
Heartily blessing thus the rivers,

Let us to the wells go.
I am a frog in the well in the City of Poesy.
In touch with the land's welfare I am.
Of poetry I do not know!
If the long rivers, tanks and ponds go dry,
For a glass of water, we soon dig
Spring wells, sand-wells, deep-wells,
And wells on riverbeds.
The oceans of the world are vast.
Rains to society are beneficial.
Rivers are in the world well-known.
Let us say known in many ways are the wells.

The world's ambrosial mouths are water-tanks.
For all these, the cluster of clouds should shower.
Only then would the seas be full.
Full would be the rivers and wells and water-tanks.
The morning flowers would shed their dews,
The palm tree spaths their dizzy juice would ooze,
The banana trees would shed their milk,
The tears the poor shed
Would become spears and swords!
Now let us go to the topic, *Sweat*.
From the sweat of oysters pearls are born.
A statue from the sculptor's sweat is born.
The peasant's sweat drives hunger away.
The sweat of the strong is fragrant water.
The sweat of the weak is blood.
The sweat shed at a forge,
By fire absorbed it is.
When poets there are here to describe all these,
Good is it that I should go on with my verses thus
So here I end, wishing you well indeed!

First comes up Murugu Sundaram,
To present his verses sweet on the *Ocean*.
(Murugu Sundaram finishes his poetic presentation on the *Ocean*.)

President Kalaignar:
Now comes up Natarajan to present his verses on *Rain*.
(Poet T.K. Natarajan finishes his poetic presentation on *Rain.)*

President Kalaignar:
Our dear friend, Thamizhandban will present his verses on the *River*.
Poet Thamizhanban finishes his poetic presentation on the *River*)

Now Ramarasan comes up to present his verses on the *Well*. Enjoy them!
(Poet Ramarasan finishes his poetic presentation on the *Well.)*

President Kalaignar:
Next, Abdur Rehman comes up to present his verses on the *Tank*.
We are always fascinated by tanks. Let us sit on the
Banks of the tank, and relax!
(Poet Abdur Rehman finishes his poetic presentation on the *Tank*.)

President Kalaignar:
Kandhaswamy now comes to present his verses on *Tears,*
With a sad countenance!
Let us ask him what his cares are.
If possible let us alleviate them!
(Poet Kandhandaswamy finishes his poetic presentation on *Tears*.)
To reveal the pearl white drops of sweat, comes up Ponnivalavan,
Dark as the pupil of the eye, to present his verses on *Sweat*.
(Poet Ponnivalavan finishes his poetic presentation on *Sweat*.)

President Kalaignar's concluding speech:
As the Minister for Agriculture,
I rushed to Velur,
To be aware of the benefits
The title, "Water-Family" would offer.
The poets have presented verses under various titles.
Without being partial. I shall say one thing.
From the sea the rivers should flow,

And from rivers, the wells and tanks,
Should with water be filled full.
The "Water-Family" should become less by one,
And another should go.
Sweat should become less by the increase of comforts
To those who labour.
Tears should go.
As all should be ever joyous, tears should go.
Goodbye!
May you prosper!

*This is the poetic Presidential Address delivered by Kalaignar, at a symposium on "Water Family," conducted by Kandar College, Velur, on 28-09-1968.

15 Bharathidasan*

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Where threshing of paddy so profuse was impossible to be done by bullocks,
And so it was done by elephants!
The fish-flag that ruled is there.
A tall and towering temple for Meenakshi there is.
Thirunelveli , Salem, Kutralam, and Coimbatore,
These are in Tamil Nadu.
Vexed with life there,
You have to this land come over,
And work very hard here.
Though in Matunga you live,
On Tamil Nadu are all your thoughts.
I shall in secrecy tell you this:
We are to a principle unique attached.
We think of India for national integration,
And of Tamil Nadu for our rights,
And so let us endeavour to derive many benefits.
With this introduction thus,
Let me my speech begin.
Only yesterday did Ranga say
That he took great pains
To invite me over here.
Thus I am here on the stage,
At this poetic symposium!
Respected Bombay citizens,
Who love Tamil sweet!
You have a great hall built
In the name of leonine Bharati!
Poets who have come to present your verses splendid,
At this hall named after Bharati!
Bharati is as a grand poet known.
He is the poet foremost,
The poet foremost for newness.
And the country's poet of freedom he is.
A turban splendid he wore

And sported a mustache twirled,
Sharply pointing upwards.
He is Bharathiyar whose radiant look
Put to flight enemies.
Do you his ire note when he said:
"You ignorant folks!
You do seek a thousand gods!"
Even before we achieved our freedom,
This lion victorious thus did prophesy:
"Let us sing and dance in delight,
Joyous freedom we have obtained."
His disciple bold, and an adept at words,
Spontaneously sang at Bharati's command:
"The Mother Supreme! Marvellous Power Creative!
Manifests all you survey! Dear brother!
The Seven Seas are the palette of all her splendid hues!"
Thus this poet, Bharati's approbations earned!
He is Kanakasuppurathinam.
His long name he succinctly shortened to
"Bharathidasan," the "Disciple of Bharati."
And armed himself he did
Tamil to protect.
His bearing was erect and his eyebrows were closely knit.
He had a stentorian voice.
His moustache was well tended.
In the art of composing verses,
An alchemist's magic Bharati wove;
Poetry sweet did Bharathidasan master.
To the slopes of the Sanjeevi Hills he takes us,
And makes us listen to a dialogue sweet as this.
She: To you I shall a thousand kisses give!"
He: "Do a kiss in advance give!"
A proposition sweet isn't it?
The poet is used to it, isn't he?

To set right the ridges of the paddy fields,
To regulate the streams from rivers flowing full,
And to ever plough the fields to reap the grains,
And the wished for benefits to gain,
Whose shoulders indeed are those which laboured in full?
A question is this? Or a volcano erupting?
Are not these lines enough for the world to shower praises on him,
And call him a "Poet Revolutionary"?

"If a nation does exist for the comfort of a
Single individual, better it is to put an end to it."
The song of a man complete is this not?
One who is with this song annoyed,
Is a half-man, an incomplete man,
And a man inadequate!
"The world, in a dark room it is,
For, there are those who are still to caste attached."

"And some there are who do grab
All that they can lay their hands on."
All the superstitious customs thus
Upside down he does change.
Amidst commotions and disturbances,
Amidst protests and processions,
Won't this Puducherry cuckoo
Exhort the world to live in peace?
"We shall make a brave new world,
And uproot the one on bitter wars bent."
Thus this pacifist poet does invite the world.
Fair is it not to let the world prosper in peace?
Fair is it to let the world decline
In religious differences?"
Melting like wax on fire,
What thought did Gandhi in agony utter?

In feelings intense did Bharathidasan ask.
"A coward is he who tells lies,
And an old rat he is who robs another's land;
He who wishes the world's people,
To live in peace is a learned man!
He is a poet of thought,
A poet of our times,
A poet of all times.
What a wonder it is,
The verses in Tamil he composed,
They did like a stream flow.
"Like the face of the lady of the house,
That brightened at the coming of guests,
The jasmine bloomed!
To smile at familiar and unfamiliar ones
Was its wonted habit. "
Listen to another one—
In beautiful language Bharathidasan does sing:
"A beauteous one does
With her well-worn feet dance,
And in the sky does float her lotus hands!
Fresh sugar cane she is.
The fingers that gesture,
The beautiful stalks of coral-red blooms they are."
Here is another one:
"Though no block in the throat there was,
He his throat did clear.
She by his side lay, calling, 'Love!'
Would he be asleep?
"Sit by me," he said!"
This the poet's banter was,
And so special to him!
And an appeal so special to his poetry!

Am I to suggest one or two examples only,
From this poet great?

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Each example surpasses the other.
Pages many he filled like these!
The 'Family Lamp' he lit,
In the dark-house.
"Pandyan's Gift," Beauty's Smile, "The Kiss Unexpected,"
He composed, and then hurried to join his mentor, Bharati.
What do you think these two poets
Spoke to each other in the world of death?
"Our people say, we don't live in Tamil Nadu today.
Are we to believe this?"
"When we say this is the Land of Tamil rich,
Honey sweet does pour into our ears,"
To bring out in action the meaning'
Of this thoughtful poem,
I waited with a pained heart.
Dear brother! Do you a wonder see?
Anna it was who named the Land of our Fathers,
Tamil Nadu! We do live there indeed!
Is that true?" In great joy,
Bharathidasan came offering
His respects to Bharati and said:
"The succulent pulp of mellowed fruits,
The sweet juice of sugar cane ripe,
The honey sweet of cool flowers,
The sweet surfeit of cane sugar syrup,
The shower of milk from yielding cows,
The cool water of tender coconuts –
Sweet indeed they are. But behold!
Tamil it is that is dear as my life!

"Now all Tamils hold Tamil dear as their life
And endeavour to spread it in all directions.
Master esteemed! Dead we are not.
We do in our motherland live!
"True indeed it is as you said."
Bharati his disciple embraced,
And heartily smiled.
And together they sang:
"Trumpet, O Sea shell!
Our life, our wealth
Ever splendorous Tamil is!"
Thus joining together we shall sing,
And famed Tamil land establish,
And foul religious dissensions eradicate;
Hold we shall festivals grand,
In memory of Bharati and his disciple.
And to their great thoughts lend our ears.

First, a poet does come up
To present his verses on Bharathidasan's poetic 'Simile.'
This friend is an individual unique,
And an easy target for my jokes.
He is on his maiden visit to Bombay.
For the first time yesterday he got into a plane.
As he climbed hesitantly,
I told him to wear the seat-belt.
The air-hostess, splitting her sides with laughter,
Hastened to tighten his seat-belt!
The old adage, "Like a villager seeing an elephant,"
After seeing this gentleman, should be changed to:
'Like a villager seeing Bombay!"
As soon as he arrived, wide open mouthed,
Skyscrapers, and the airport he gaped at.
Because of that, a costly item he lost!

In all innocence, my friend will present his verses,
On the beauty of Bharathidasan's poetic 'Simile.'
Let us now listen to his flowing style!
(Poet Anandhan finishes his poetic presentation on Bharathidasan's poetic 'Simile.')

President Kalaignar:

Next Sundaram comes up to present his verses on "Pleasure" in Bharathidasan's poetry.
Though in politics he sits in opposion,
He is a poet-dreamer.
He wears simple clothes.
Commands a simple style.
He has a new vision.
Come! Make your presentation on 'Pleasure.'

President Kalaignar:

Next comes up Sa. Ganesan, A true Tamil and Tamil's dour defender,
And a lover of freedom.
He will now present his verses on Bharathidasan's conception of "Womanhood."
(Poet Sa. Ganesan finishes his poetic presentation on "Bharathidasan's conception of Womanhood."

President Kalaignar:

Next comes up Abdur Rehman,
His words explode like a loaded gun.
If Bharati's disciple is Bharathidasan,
The disciple's disciple is Abdur Rehman,
An adept in composing verses –
He presents his verses on "Sweetness" in Bharathidasan's poetry.
(Abdur Rehman finishes his poetic presentation on "Sweetness," in Bharathidasan's poetry.)

President Kalaignar:

** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** **

Now I invite my friend, Muthuswamy, to present his verses in beautiful Tamil, on Bharathidasan's poetic "Revolution".

(Minister M. Muthuswamy finishes his poetic presentation on Bharathidasan's poetic "Revolution."

President Kalaignar's concluding address:

To buy a picture, can one his eyes sell?
Asked Bharati's disciple.
He said: "Women are a bunch of sweet guava fruits."
"Even horses in a solitary stable secured
Have the right to neigh."
"At home, should a woman be shy and timid?
Thus did he ask.
In life, natural it is to fall in love,
But can it be caught on a cot?"
"There should be a way for love,
Without leading to pregnancy.
What harm is there in this?"
He asked.
Do you know when?
On behalf of the Government,
Only now preach do we
About family planning.
Our great poet spoke of this,
Thirty years ago, expressing very forward views.
In pestilence, poverty, debt and natural calamities,
Should one bring forth children?
Thus asking, womanhood he respected.
He exhorted humanity that was trampled upon:
"Do not sell yourselves."
"My enemies, even if they offered crores,
Touch them I will not."
Thus with his vibrant voice he challenged.
He stood like the radiant ray of the sun,
Amidst crass darkness around.

A series of brilliant verses he made,
And as an heir to Bharati, he became Bharathidasan,.
To be leaders, to be poets,
To be distinguished geniuses,
Only the coming generation will be fit.
Turn wheresover we may,
We see only the successors of Bharati and Bharathidasan!
Poets in numbers large,
Praises do offer to Bharati and Bharathidasan.
If an election it were to be,
They would their votes offer to them,
With a singular devotion.
Would these two poets come,
Our poetic kingdom to rule over?
Why should they ever come again to rule?
Even now, our hearts they do rule!
May they live long!
May their fame flourish!
Goodbye!

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*A poetic symposium on "Bharathidasan" was held at the Bombay Bharati Hall, on 08-12-1986 at which Kalaignar delivered this Presidential Address.

16 Do Give Your Heart to Me, Anna!*

Softer than the petals of blooming blossoms,
Is his pure and loving heart!
A mother's affectionate heart it is.
The Tamil his soft lips speak
Surpasses the sweetness of mango, jackfruit and banana,
The triple fruits so called.
If an ill should happen to Mother Tamil,
Spear and sword his soft eyes become.
His flower soft feet, even if tired they be,
His arduous journey will not cease.

His soft hands do clasp his brothers and the Party,
And the same hand his enemies forgive,
Making them hang their heads in shame,
Like paddy plants that droop with leaden grains.
To let the flower of democracy bloom so profuse,
And the fragrance of equal social justice suffuse,
As a crown of flowers loved he is,
And as a pinnacle of glory looked upon!
Amid the pile of felicitous greetings,
That come pouring in,
I shall forever flutter like a singing bee.
Tamil youths in myriad numbers sing:
"For the sake of you, I shall my life give up."
That song's supreme hero is he!

Hear O hear
Of my singing in praise of this hero's fame!
Among youths he did spread
An immense love for Tamil,
As their dear life's being.

Hear O hear
Of my singing in praise of his greatness!
With the salve of love he relieved the pain of wound
Which words sharp as a spear did deep inflict,
And fondly ministered the medicine of kindness.

Hear O hear
Of his asking his brothers thus!
Where are your sword-like hands, long and strong?
Where is your chest so handsome looking?
Where, where are those shoulders, big and brave?
That never did retreat before any in the battlefield?

Hear O hear
Of the beloved of bold Chenni!
Thus asking: "Has no one the merit to sing

Of Kanchee's defeat of Kalinga?"
To illumine her, a damsel in deep love engulfed.
Jayamkondar sang the song of *Kalingaththuparani,*
A song of fierce battle on the field,
A celebrant song on Kalinga war,
A song in praise of courage immense.
Borne aloft on wings of poesy that praises,
I sang a song on Anna of Kancheepuram.
But now a song of sorrow I sing.
Like the purport of a poem,
Like the sweetness of sugar cane,
Like the radiant rays of the sun,
Like the flower in the bower,
Like the chill of the moon,
Like the richness of the soil,
Like the babble of the brooks,
Like the lilting lisp of speech,
Like the song that suffuses,
The wind that wanders,
Like the foam of the sea that frets,
In the waves that swell,
The fame of Anna, poesy's heroic son,
Was by poets of excellence sung.
Mother Earth a flood of tears shed, alas!
A flood of tears! A flood of tears!
An immense flood of tears she shed!

If a few in 1938
The seeds of a language revolution sowed
In Tamil Nadu, it was our brother,
The incomparable Anna of Kancheepuram,
The lieutenant of the hero of Erode,
Who entered the battlefield.
In jail he languished for six months,
And offering Tamil as the sustaining strength,

Became Anna of three letters.
In 1952, I said in Chennai,
Do you remember?
A specialty there is in three letters.
A fragrance there is in Tamil threefold,
The Three Kings, the Three Flags,
The Three Fruits,
The Three Drums the Tamils beat,
Life (வாழ்வு) the Tamils lived is three-lettered,
Love (அன்பு), the basis of that life is three-lettered,
The intellect (அறிவு) that stands by love is three-lettered,
Friendship (நேசம்) among intellectuals is three-lettered,
Fierce heroism (வீரம்) cherished by lovers is three-lettered,
The battlefield (களம்) that contributes to heroism is three-lettered,
The victory (வெற்றி) won at the battlefield is three-lettered,
The one who impels us towards that victory,
Anna (அண்ணா), the lover of peace, is three-lettered.
To let you be aware of this, I did to this allude.
Tamil in all directions resounds,
And his eloquence echoes everywhere.
Busy as a bee, he goes around,
And does from many a platform speeches make,
Seeking schemes of welfare,
For the poor and the needy.

If Anna writes, all the homes and journals,
And the length and breadth of Tamil Nadu,
Newness thus they breathe!
"Hey! Brother! Your pen do take.
Do not your knife sharpen, but your brains."
A trove of splendid thoughts he is!
And a storehouse of pleasing ideas!
"A corpse that hangs from down the branch of a tree!"

"A spear that pierces the supurous wound!"
Sentences as these can we ever forget?
"The jobless in the streets,
Dangerous thoughts in the hearts of the jobless,"
"O King! A sign of the times it is!"
Who else can handle such a style as this?
An intellectual style indeed it is!
"High rose Thiruchengodu,
And low sank Thirupparankundram,"
An apt editorial caption is this not,
Never to be by Tamil Nadu forgotten?
"If vanquished is this force, which one will win?
"Those that brothers have, won't be of battle afraid?"
Though *Manonmaniam* is a text of verses incomparable,
The name of Anna it is that has etched in our hearts a indelible place.
"The scent of jasmine, sweeter it wafts
From the garden of a foe!"
Oh! What a handsome way of inculcating the culture of politics!
"Forget and forgive we shall!"
The grace of bearing the opponents' tirade thus,
Whoever did teach you this?
Anna it was who said: "It would be good
To conduct politics on the basis of a pleasing culture,
Just as a picture is drawn on a wall as the basis."
If a few opposed this and in anger jumped about,
Anna had a way of smiling it off!
As the same mother could not to all brothers give birth,
Anna called everyone his brother.
Showering the sweetest love on them,
He hugged them with the softest affection.
He was once in a debate involved
With stalwart speaker, Sethupillai,
And Somasundara Bharathi.
On the principle that the Justice Party

Should not be a party to the rich.
He brought it down to the common man,
From out of its entrenchment deep.
By a resolution at the Salem Conference,
He exhorted members to throw away
The empty British titles of honour.
The unprincipled members,
Like the blind stunned,
Could not oppose Anna's militant stand.
A bold resolution Anna moved,
Changing Justice Party's name to *Dravida Kazhagam!*
When Gandhi forced the British to quit,
Through non-violent means,
Periyar called the day the British left
A day of sorrow.
Repudiating that, a battle Anna began!
That day indeed was a happy and sweet day!
Indians, reduced to skin and bones, rose,
Breaking slavedom's bonds,
By Gandhi's grace!
"The drums taps of freedom we shall loudly beat,"
Declared Anna even then.
From that day,
In the relationship between Periyar and Anna,
A crack began to show up,
And that crack, as a parting grew in 1949.
Like a full moon coming out from the dark clouds,
The D.M.K. saw the light of day!
As Anna could not associate himself
With the Party's leader, he walked out,
With a majority of followers behind him.
What our brother unperturbed said that day
Sounds as though it was a thought uttered yesterday!
"No leader there is for the D.M.K.

The leader's chair will remain vacant!
Someone someday will come and occupy it.
Wait I shall till then."
Like a blooming garden,
Shedding the morning dews,
Tears the gathered throng did shed.
"Deep as tears! Dear land's apple of the eye!"
Calling them thus, he formed a devoted array,
Drops of blood to shed.
Has anyone heard of this? Said of this
About the story of a Movement of 18 years,
That leaped out like a leopard from its lair,
To rule the world?
Two years aren't yet gone,
Since Anna assumed office.
Great deeds many he did.
Measures he took to better the life of the peasants,
Who tilled the soil.
The famed President of the Republic,
Inaugurating the World Tamil Conference,
Said: "So unparalleled and glorious a spectacle,
I haven't ever seen in my life,"
And thus did spread Anna's fame far and wide!
Brammanandha Reddy of Andhra,
Praised him as a Gandhian true.
"Hardly within a year, your efforts your intensified,
To see the successful prohibition of liquor,
While in many other states this was given the go by!"
President Giri said: "You alone are a true Gandhian disciple!"
Scholars of many lands encomiums
On him showered then.
What did South Indian scholars famed
Say of Anna?
"Versatile scholar of Tamil classical."

Said Maraimalai Adigal of Pallavaram.
Enthralled by Anna's sweet Tamil,
A thousand praises he did offer.
Bharathi Pandian of Pasumalai,
Known as an impeccable orator over all the land,
Dwelt on Anna's fame and said:
"Anna was a sterling leader come to save the Tamil land from the wicked!"
Mother Tamil is as young today,
As she was two thousand years ago.
Though she yielded authors of a thousand tomes,
She, our Muse of Arts, for all eternity to live,
Fostered Valluvar as her chiefest son.
    Only lotus is the flower of flowers,
    Only Karikalan is the king of kings,
    Only *Thirukkural* is the book of books.
A moral work so admired Thiruvalluvar gave,
And elated was all humanity!
Like a hidden poisonous tree that quietly grows,
On the fringes of mountains tall,
In the life of cultured Tamils,
Alas! Cowardly thoughts crept in!
The *Kural* resounded in the land of the Tamils,
Free from thoughts of castes,
But in the middle came castes innumerable!
Temples there were that breathed enlightened learning,
But then there came temples,
With a thousand gods entrenched!
The Tamils, sans the love of their tongue,
Cared they not whether Tamil lived or died.
In the great land where moral code alone flourished,
Alien principles were fostered and wrongs were heaped.
The heart of the Tamils changed,
Like parched fields that lacked rains,

Jealousy, desire, anger and harsh words –
Nothing is gained without these, thought a few Tamils!
The world was not for the poor.
So the land of the Tamils a lot of wealth gathered.
But now, ignorance and sorrow rule the roost.
Saddened was Mother Tamil –
A sad song she sang,
And fiercely danced in wrath intense.
She ran hither and thither,
And found no way out.
Leaving the earthly world,
The author of the *Kural* now sojourns in a world of fame,
As a matchless monarch of the poetic realm!
There she went and said:
"Dear son! I shall a request make to you."
"What is it?" he asked.
"Born again you should be in the Tamil land,
Where grows gold aplenty," she said.
"To dig for gold?" he asked.
"To make the hearts of the Tamils
Golden all their lives," she said.
"What happened today?" he asked.
"Tamil, lofty as the hills, in danger it is,
And poor as I am, I have no place to stay," she said.
"A king should his sceptre raise with a seeming severity,
But gently let it down he should," you had said.
She also told the story of the small-minded,
Strutting about, talking big and telling tall tales!
The tearful eyes he wiped,
And sweet tongued Valluvar asked:
"Where should I be born, mother?"
Her son who his respects paid to her, she embraced,
And clasped him with her arms,
Like a peasant overjoyed at heart.

That the ploughed fields would not go dry,
Without saplings hereafter!
She said in joy so great:
"Candy sweet! Caramel honeyed! *Thirukkural*!
The starving stomach to feed with gruel,
In Kanchee you be born.
As a genius great,
As a welcome breeze,
From Mount Pothigai,
Wafting a fragrance fresh of Tamil awareness,
As a song's purport deep,
As the beginning of Tamil's timeless past,
Our brother thus was born,
Like the rising sun in the horizon -
Fostered by him as his brother young,
Come here I have,
With the Tamil imbibed from him,
To sing in praise of him.
This indeed is the truth.
Looked upon he was,
As a leader, as a philosophical genius,
As an actor, as a playwright *par excellence*,
As a master of diction, as a writer delightful,
Aa a man of culture, as a cherished individual,
As the State's Chief Minister, as a person mother-like,
As the guardian of a sweet tongue,
And as a respected politician.
Those who have not time to mention all these separately.
Call him by the word - "Anna," (brother),
Bound by love at heart.
He to be thus called,
His mother had named him Anna.
For the mothers' community to admire,
There is a statue for Avvaiyar,

For Kannagi, the virtuous,
For Bharati, the stout-hearted,
For Bharathidasan who ever held his head high,
For Veeramamunivar, for Pope, Caldwell,
For Kamban, for V.O.C. the Tamil dauntless,
Who had the courage to steer a ship,
For Thiruvalluvar for spreading Tamil,
In all directions.
As Anna caused the erection of those statues ten,
A statue for Anna was installed in Chennai.
To let the world know of his love for Tamil.
Pointing with his index finger he stood,
And that we took as a command from Anna.
Alas! Only now do we know that he indicated
By his single finger, only for a year he would live!
Our dear Anna! Master of our hearts!
You declared dauntless brothers you had.
Leaving us thus, why did you a long journey start?
We grew up by the warmth of your lustrous eyes!
Why did you transform our eyes into tearful pools?
Under your ministering care, cool we stood.
But have you gone to seek protection under the ocean's earth?
Just is it?
All the pearls beneath the sea are not pearls.
Saying you are alone the good pearl,
You have gone to sleep on the seashore?
You showered music sweet,
And you have now gone mute.
In the world of writing,
Your fingers moved and wonders made.
Why have you your fingers folded up?
Seen have I the appeal of your closed eyes,
In deep thought absorbed.
What cruelty is this, the sands of earth,

Have barred your being seen with our eyes?
An end you saw to this suffering,
But subjecting us to suffer you left.
You said, one should have a heart,
That should ever bear anything.
What heart have we to bear this?
Anna! Enough sea breeze you have enjoyed.
Our dear Anna! Do rise and come!
You cannot come! You cannot come!
Well do we the scheme of Nature know!
Till I come seeking where you are,
As a loan do give your heart to me, Anna!
When to you I come,
Fetch it on hand I shall,
And place it at your feet so soft.

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*Arignar Anna passed away on 03-02-1969. On 09-02-1969, Kalaignar M. Karunanidhi broadcast this tearful poetic tribute, from the Chennai studios of the All India Radio.

17 The Paari Festival*

The Chief of the Kunrakkudi Mutt,

A devotee of Shiva and Parvathy,
Is pleased to be here at this Festival.
Minister Madhavan has a great share in this!
For after the conclusion of this Festival,
He proposes to take me to Sivaganga.
My good wishes to him,
And to Minister Anbil too my greetings.
To friend Thennarasu also my greetings.
Kunrakkudi Adigal is a Tamil ascetic confirmed.
But unable I am to accept this.
Whatever else he has renounced,
He has not renounced Tamil!
Your Holiness!
My salutations do please accept.
I composed these verses for the poetic symposium
While at Madurai, without even having my forty winks!

The poetic community that is assembled here,
Appears to me to be the Madurai Tamil Sangam
That is present here!
To all of you my respects!
To demonstrate his love for such a one as me,
This great savant and saint
Has invited me over to the Parambu Hills,
Where flies aloft the flag of his Monastery.
The rains have showered a great beauty upon this Hill.
But it was King Paari
Who made this Hill so famed.
He was so munificent as to offer his chariot.
To the creeping jasmine plant.

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To King Paari, poet Kapilan,
Famed the world over,
Was friend dear as life!
Paari, the munificent,
Fathered two daughters,
Twins of incomparable beauty and intellect.
Many kings sought their hands as suitors,
But all were rejected.
The Parambu Hills they did invade,
But were defeated.
The Three kings so famed,
An onslaught waged,
Surmounting the obstacle of the Parambu Hills,
And killing King Paari.
But the belle they fought for could not be got!
Thanks to the efforts of Kapilan,
To King Kaari,
The daughters of Paari became wives!
The great and noble poet Kapilan,

His gratitude to Paari returned,
His friend and hero of Tamil.
The ripe friendship of Kapilan and Paari,
Is it not an example
That inculcates noble thoughts,
In those who have this story heard?
When Tamil tradition encouraged
Nine ways of giving,
Like gifts of food, gold and chariots,
The greatness of Paari gifting three hundred
Villages to poets is like the delightful
Southern breeze that softly blows!
Enough it is not to merely praise
The munificence of givers.
The heart also should be true.
A lame excuse it is to say,
Only when heaps of riches are gathered,
Can they be given to the poor
Who come in numbers large.
To give two boiled roots to the poor,
Is a big gift indeed!
As improper it is to beg,
The government was pleased to open beggars' homes,
And they taught some industrial job to do.
If Paari gave his chariot to the creeping jasmine plant,
Your giving some buttermilk to a poor boy,
Will make you earn half the fame of Paari,
In munificent giving.
To let the Paari Festival shine,
In all its glory, the poets at this symposium
Will project all the excellences of Tamil beautiful.
Mother Tamil's ancientness, easiness,
Beauteousness, divineness, and newness,
In song they be celebrated.

Poet Ilancheran comes up to present his verses on the 'Ancientness of Tamil'

(Poet Ilancheran of Kovai finishes his poetic presentation on the 'Ancientness of Tamil.')

President Kalaignar:

Now, poet Jawaharlal comes up to present his verses on the "Easiness of Tamil."

(Poet Jawaharlal finishes his poetic presentation on the 'Easiness of Tamil.')

President Kalaignar:

Poet Muthu Sambandan (he has a double name in one!) comes up to present his verses on the "Beauteousness of Tamil."

(Poet Muthu Sambandam finishes his poetic presentation on the 'Beauteousess of Tamil.')

President Kalaignar:

Poet Ayyakkannu comes up to present his verses on the "Powerfulness of Tamil."

(Poet Ayyakkannu finishes his poetic presentation on the 'Powerfulness of Tamil.')

President Kalaignar:

Next comes up Singara Vadivelu to present his verses on the "Divineness of Tamil."

(Poet Singara Vadivelu finishes his poetic presentation on the 'Divineness of Tamil.')

President Kalaignar:

Next comes up Mudiarasan, (a name of royalty in the days of democracy!), to present his verses on the "Newness of Tamil."

(Poet Mudiarasan finishes his poetic presentation on the 'Newness of Tamil.')

President Kalaignar's concluding address:

All that I have said in my introduction,
Please deem them as having been said
By me again in conclusion!
To the world at large, explain we shall
About the ancientness of Tamil.

In all we shall the knowledge of Tamil inculcate,
Through its easiness of usage.
Preserve we shall the richness of Tamil.
Proclaim we shall:
"Tamil sweet is the spear to our enemies."
More than finding divineness in Tamil,
We shall declare,
Finding divineness in the smile
Of a poor Tamil in the greater.
If Tamil the medium of instruction becomes,
By learning Tamil then,
We too can journey to the moon,
And newness bring about.
Goodbye! May you prosper!

*This is Kalaignar's Presidential Address, delivered on the occasion of the Paari Festival held at the Parambu Hills on 05-05-1970.

18 Calculation - I*

Citizens of Salem who have gathered here
To listen to fragrant Tamil!
Poets splendid coming in the tradition
Of the spontaneous poets, Bharati and Bharathidasan!
My friend, Ganapathy, ever busily serving
The cause of Tamil,
Emboldened was he to make public
My ability to make verses.
Premises none there were,
In the days Kamban and Ottakkuththan,
For all and sundry to go about as poets.
As I am the Chief Minister,
None is critical of my verses.
To that extent, an advantage it is to me!
Tactfully I was told to be here on time,
And avoid any smart explanations.
This poetic symposium is on "Calculation."
Poets! In the past, only mathematics

Occupied a pre-eminent place in studies .
And so was the mathematics teacher considered a person learned.
Mathematics is of many kinds.
So also are those who calculate.
The capitalist who profits from the sweat of those who toil
Calculates in expectation of money.
A friend who wants a return for his friendship
Calculates expecting a position.
The housewife who ticks off in black in the kitchen
Calculates the tally for milk and curd.
What the parents do as homework
To save their children from punishment at school,
Is arithmetic calculation.
Canvassing for votes from the village folk
Is calculating in expectation of votes.
At the shandy for cattle and goats,
Their sale is calculated and accounted for.
But don't ever calculate the number of glasses of drinks you take!
What the folks of Chettinad calculate is interest for money lent,
A treasure in Tamil sweet is *Pathinenkeezhkkanakku*.
What the accountant writes is also calculation.
The bridegroom's design for marrying a bride
It also calculation!
Under this category of calculation:
Adding twenty to eighteen is mental calculation.
Twenty running away with eighteen is love calculation,
To limit family to two children only is family calculation,
To vie in this with Kuchelan is a very sorry calculation.
Hitler committed suicide,
As wrong he was in calculation.
The deer's calculations
Are erased by the lion, as wrong calculation!
Thus is the the world!
Our body of eight spans

Bound it is by countless nerves,
And so we move!
Though the tongue is aptly the only one that sweetly speaks,
Our smartness it is that makes us
Go about speaking with a double-tongue.
Why should God alone carry
So many hands as a big weight,
When He has given us only two?
How fortunate!
If only man were created with as many hands,
One hand of his will print counterfeit notes,
Another will adulterate things,
One hand will pull per force a maiden,
Another will point at and betray.
One hand will commit robbery,
Another will wield a knife,
And yet another hand will be emboldened to cut the threat.
Today, all these happen as isolated incidents.
The police too are able to control the crimes.
Otherwise –
Various kinds of hands would grow and stretch,
And havoc thus would wreak!
To let man live by frugal calculations,
It was said that even if something
Was to be thrown into the river,
It should be done with a fair measure of calculation!
Nothing there is without calculation.
To enable us to declare proudly,
Man had set foot on the moon,
How many crores were spent in careful calculations!
Even if a small error in scientific calculation had taken place,
Would man have set foot on the moon and safely returned?
Shattered to pieces he would have been!

Even if a woman says that her husband on her
Countless kisses planted, even for that,
There should be a calculation!
So nothing there is sans calculation!
Even if I go on reciting my verses
Without calculating time,
The poets who have come here
To present their verses on "Calculation"
Would be angry with me beyond calculation!
Therefore, I do call them now.
First topic is, "Multiplication."
When winds multiply, they become storms,.
When saplings multiply, they become grains of paddy.
When juices multiply, they become sweet surfeit,
When rains multiply, they become floods.

Now comes Murugusundaram from Salem.
The City of Salem is famed for so many attributes!
Salem, a big city now it is, because of the Steel Factory.
Servarayan mountain fruits and delicious mangoes abound.
Can these my poetry match? asks Murugusundaram,
And he comes up to present verses sweet on "Multiplication".

(Poet Murugusundaram finishes his poetic presentation on " Multiplication.")

President Kalaignar:

Next the topic, "Subtraction."
Without wasting time,
I now call upon Thamizhannal
To present his delectable verses on "Subtraction."

(Poet Thamizhannal finishes his poetic presentation on "Subtraction.")

Next the topic, "Division."
Abdur Rehman, an expert in wordplay,

Now comes up to present his verses on "Division."

(Poet Abdur Rehman finishes his poetic presentation on "Division.")

Next the topic is "Addition."
To present his verses on "Addition,"
Comes up the prodigal son, the Prince of poets,
Kannadasan! Come, the garden's cuckoo!
To engulf me in joy!

(Poet Kannadasan finishes his poetic presentation on "Addition.")

President Kalaignar's concluding speech:

The titles, "Additiion," "Subtraction,"
"Division" and "Multiplication,"
These to the poets we gave!
To the question which is foremost
Among these topics,
I shall a *kural* metamorphose,
And a new verdict give!
The *Kural* goes thus!
"If what the world holds in scorn is scotched,
No need then there is to tonsure the hair or lengthen it."
If "Division" and "Multiplication" are redundant,
"Addition" and "Subtraction" then will go."
My voice thus this verdict delivers!
Goodbye!
I wish you well!

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*Under the auspices of the Salem Tamil Sangam, a poetic symposium under the title 'Calculation' was held on 02-08-1970, at which Kalaignar delivered this Presidential Address.

19 The Democracy that Nehru Found*

Golden-hearted Navalar Nedunchezhian!

Hon'ble ministers!

Poets who have come to present verses in pristine Tamil!

Elder citizens!

To all of you my respects!

Offering obeisance to our brother, Anna,

Who sleeps at the seashore of the Bay of Bengal,

My Presidential Address I begin.

** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** **

A fighting and principled hero Nehru was.
He snatched the flag of the Whites,
Who our freedom robbed,
And our flag of freedom hoisted instead.
He was the lion-hearted who ever served,
Following Gandhi's path.
Receiving all the blows the British inflicted,
Their repressive measures he withstood.
He was the one who sacrificed a promising life of youth,
And spent it in the darkness of a prison.
Mightily angry though he often was,
He lit the fire of freedom!
Though very rich, he did for the poor care,
And flourished as a paragon of qualities great.
The speed of service to a spinning top is compared.
But the Pandit's service was faster than the speed of a top.
His speech roared and thundered.
His writing would resound with a youthful vibrancy.
His culture, plentily sweet it was.
Explosive in action he was.
Adamant by nature he was.
Freedom's flag high he held.
All that was against justice he opposed.
When enemies did the boundary cross,
Highly disturbed the people were,
He assuaged the hearts agitated,
And assured all would be well and safe,
As he would take care.
He did the child ask:
"When courage and purity of the heart there is,
Suffering any will there be?"
These tiny tots replied:
"Uncle Nehru! Only joy will occur!"
Thus did Nehru become "Uncle Nehru!"

His own views he had on God and religion.
However, he did ably rule without offending others' feelings.
He did not want any religious ceremonies to be
Observed after his death. Thus he led the world,
With the example of a Will at the right time written.
Deeming non-alignment a principle valid,
He adopted the same in the manner of Poongunranar.
"Every town our home, every one our kin."
The vagaries of time make some
The uncrowned king of a jungle order!
By popular choice, some will sit in the tower of fame!
But by this way, did not Nehru the world leader become!
A splendid fruition he is, eye-catching as the Marina,
A pearl cherished, silk longed for, Big Temple of Thanjavur so famed,
The Kaviri cool, The silken fabric of Kanchee,
Pandya of dauntless shoulders.
Though Anna from him differed in thought,
Tears profuse he shed, having heard that Nehru died,
While in prison Anna was.
Let us adore beloved Nehru,
From the Land that decency in politics observed.
Forces come, leaping forward,
Enmity comes to cut asunder and take,
Fire comes raging,
The Chinese deceit comes unashamedly.
Thus some in scorn did come.
But he as a lodestar came
To rip and pluck away enmity.
Now in sleep eternal he is,
In eternal sleep Nehru is.

** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** **

To symbolize King Ashoka's righteous ways,
He let doves fly in the sky for world peace,

Our lot to transform,
The Poet of Pudhuvai, Bharathidasan, sang thus:
"Follow virtue as the chiefest principle,
Help to establish equal justice,
Wealth should be for all in a democracy,
Thus drums do beat."
Nehru too did swear by democracy.
But forget let us not how some did try
To establish the rule of an individual!
Nehru, the hero of great traits,
Tried to shatter the power of money.
But time, enough it wasn't for him,
And Time too was impatient!
If my poem still does extend,
Time won't allow it.
And the poets too won't permit it.
I finish therefore and call upon the first poet,
To sweetly present his verses on 'Women's Rights.'
I call upon a male poet, Sundaram!
(Poet S.T. Sundaram finishes his poetic presentation on "Women's Rights

President Kalaignar:

Next comes up poet Koththamangalam Subbu,
Asking for the "Right of Speech."
So he asks for himself the right to speak!
Some do ask for the right of calling names.
But afraid I am, it will kill the life of Tamil culture.
Time does fly!
If the right of speech I do not grant,
My mistake it shall be!
So before his threatening me for such a right,
I shall call upon him to make his presentation.

(Poet Koththamangalam Subbu finishes his poetic presentation on the "Right of Speech")

President Kalaignar:
Next, he who is of my position unaware,
Asks me for the "Freedom of Writing!"
He doesn't of the story know of how
I had to sacrifice my own freedom of writing,
As banned were quite a number of my works!
But still he does ask for freedom of writing from me,
Because I am in a position of granting freedom of writing.
Now I call upon Murugu Sundaram,
To make his sweet poetic presentation on "Freedom of Writing!"
(Poet Murugu Sundaram finishes his poetic presentation on "Freedom of Writing")

President Kalaignar:
Now Abdur Rehman comes.
An excellent diction he has,
And a freely flowing poetic style.
His intentions are impeccable,
And his intellect is keen.
He asks for the "Right of Voting!"
After his receiving it from me,
Ask him I won't to vote only for me.
For that won't be exercising the right to vote!
Come friend!
The right of voting given it is to you.
And the expenses for your passage.
And for the poem you are going to present.
But do not ask for any money for your vote!
(Poet Abdur Rehman finishes his poetic presentation on the "Right of Voting")

President Kalaignar:
A mistake it won't be to call this poet a king,
A powerful voice reverberating like a drum.
A facile poetic style he commands.
Though nice friends we were,

To my humble self he came, with matchless love,
When a high office in the government I held.
Soon after his arrival, he asks for "Right to Property"
Sorry I am for his heart troubled.
But then, there is justice in his demand for such a right.
Ten or more children has he!
So the right to property I do to him give.
So come! Do please come!
(Poet Kannadasan makes a poetic presentation on the "Right to Property")

President Kalaignar's concluding address:

At this poetic symposium,
We had given the poets the 'rights' they sought.
Feeling the pulse of the land,
To defend and protect the proper rights,
We will a friendly hand extend,
And our voice we will raise for the rights.
Proclaiming thus, disperse we will,
Adoring Nehru, the Man complete!
Forever may he live!

---

*At a poetic symposium on "The Democracy that Nehru Found,' conducted in Chennai on 14-11-1970, Kalaignar M. Karunanidhi delivered this Presidential Address.

20 The Fountain of Imagination*

In the city of Orlando, on a lake so unique,

I saw a fountain, many coloured and beautiful.
How could I the splendour of the dancing lake describe!
To the swaying beat of the lustrous lamps she danced,
So smoothly, so synchronously!
In a spectacle there, the milky white balls of ice
Seemed to roll on the greeny lawn.
Even while seeing it, the scene did suddenly change!
Like "Apollo" that zoomed from here,
The water's arms the darkness pierced,
And shot up across the sky.
The yellow- rayed light aglow,
As from a goldsmith's forge,
Whirred and rose,

Like an arrow twanged from a taut bow,
Like blood gushing forth from a life,
Killed and sacrificed at the sanctorum of Gods,
Swished and streaked the red colour.
Like the women of our towns singing hymns,
And placing pumpkin blooms,
On decorative designs before their homes,
In the beautiful month of *Margazhi,*
I saw a scene the eyes could not contain!
How lucky! I had the occasion to enjoy this, all alone!
Indeed, I escaped! If only the lady by my side had stood,
Counting all the colours of the fountain,
She would have asked the very next day,
For a saree in each of those splendid hues!

*Accepting an invitation from the American Government, Kalaignar toured the United States in 1971. Witnessing a beautiful fountain, on the Lake of Orlando, this is the poem he wrote spontaneously.

21 The Silver Jubilee*

All those who are gathered here!
Poets of beautiful Tamil!
Navalar Nedunchezhian!
Ministers! And kind-hearted Ma. Po. Si
Of vast erudition in *Silappadigaram, the Story of the Anklet,*
I present unto you my humble greetings!
My countrymen!
You have accepted me as your servant devoted.
I shall serve you without failing in my words.
Thus declaring, respect I offer to you!
With a beautiful coiffure on her tresses,
With flowers adorned,
And with fish-like eyes beneath,
An Indian woman and lady young!
And a Mother of Resurgence!
You show on a picture, with dots embellished,
The writing, "Freedom's Silver Jubilee it is!"
The warriors bold who sped like racing horses

And jumped into the fire of sacrifice,
In the dauntless Tamil land,
Beyond the Vindhyas.
I greet and obeisance pay to them!
The lamp that has been burning
For twenty-five years, we have seen,
With blood as oil that lamp was lit,
By our forebears.
Before them we shall stand,
And obeisance pay to them!
In the beautiful garden,
Where sings a clutch of cuckoos,
Can we hear the big owls' hootings harsh?
The woods where the gazelles frolic,
The bower where the peacocks dance,
Can they the stately halls for monkeys become?
A house built with the Southern Wind breezing in,
Can we let fire sweep through it?
Our land, our people, our rule,
Even if some small defects there are,
Our land, our people, our rule,
The leonine heroes and the cherished women
Would defend and protect.
Thus we shall in glorious Tamil,
The world enlighten.
As it was not possible to invite all,
Friends of the A.I.R. an invitation extended
To a select few for making verses.
As, indeed, this was music sweet to my ears,
Avoiding all the din and bustle,
I eagerly rushed over here to listen
To the harmonious sounds of poets.

To sing of Bharati, another Bharati has come.
In Suddhanandha Bharati's new poem,

We shall listen to Subramania Bharati's sweet Tamil poem.
Though an ascetic he is, having renounced everything.
He hasn't given up love –
Love for Tamil –
Forgotten he hasn't the mother tongue.
Scintillate he won't, if he doesn't of Bharati sing.
Therefore he sings of Bharati now!
(Suddhanandha Bharathiyar makes a poetic presentation on Bharathiyar)

Our great V.O.C.,
The Swadeshi Steamship Company,
Founded in Thuthukkudi,
Navingating a ship, he put fear into the British.
A pauper he became,
And the oilpress he pulled
At the Coimbatore jail, for defending his principles.
Though we did his statue erect in Chennai,
His fame to propagate,
Madam Indira Gandhi, the Indian Prime Minister,
Was pleased to unveil another statue at Thuthukkudi,
Our Department of Posts also thought
Of releasing a memorial stamp
To symbolize his great fame.
Our friend Sundaram, who went to jail,
Like selfless V.O.C.,
Has come to present a poem in Tamil splendid.
(Poet Sundaram finishes his poetic presentation on V.O.C.)

An honest man of heroic action, V.V.S. Aiyar,
Died in a whirlpool caught.
Who is the virtuous one who has come.
To bring alive this freedom fighter?
She is the able Soundara Kailasam.
Like an Avvai today,
She composes verses in Tamil, like her.

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To us she has kindly sent her poem through her daughter,
Whom I request to present her poem now.
(Thirumathi Soundara Kailasam's daughter finishes her poetic presentation on her behalf)
An incomparable freedom fighter
Is Subramania Siva.
Those who ruled us,
Frightened they were by his leonine voice.
To break the shackles of his motherland,
He walked on foot, despite his affliction,
All over the land,
And added fame to the Tiruchy jail, by his imprisonment.
He is like a bright sun come to dispel darkness.
Who is the one that is so fit as to celebrate him in song?
Food without salt is tasteless.
Without Kothamangalam Subbu,
Can a poetic symposium be of any interest?
A delectable poet is my friend,
Who makes sweet verses!
The Tamils will be happy to listen to him.
With such eagerness come he has
To present his verses on Siva.
Come upon the stage and present your verses,
Adding interest to the symposium.
(Kothamangalam Subbu finishes his poetic presentation on Subramania Siva.)

Nothing wrong there is in being so devoted.
It is not a sin either.
But if devotion intense to the extreme goes,
Fraught it is with many dangerous results.
Emboldened was a youth,
Who sought the help of a foreign power
To drive away imperialism from India.

Until then he thought his soul
Would not rest in peace.
And that was Chenbaga Raman.
From Nanchil he hailed,
And came from a distinguished old family
And elder guide he was to Bose too,
And tried he to enlist the help of the German forces.
In great glory he died in a foreign land,
But wished his ashes after cremation be sprinkled
Over Tamil Nadu.
To sing of the honour of this brave Tamil hero
Comes an old friend and a man of culture,
Vanambadi from the sylvan banks of the Kaviri,
To present the treat of a poem
(Poet Vanambadi finishes his poetic presentation on Chenbaga Raman Pillai.)

Violence and terrorism –
Right paths these are not.
Non-violence is the right path
That Gandhi and Anna established.
But some declared that it wasn't wrong
To adopt improper means.
To remove foreign rule,
And cut asunder the bonds of slavery,
Arose Vanchinathan like a storm,
In the belief that such means weren't wrong!
Mr Ash was in Nellai,
As a representative of the British Government.
As planned, Vanchinathan and his men,
Surrounded the train at Maniyachi Railway Station,
Vanchi shot the White man,
In honour bound Vanchi killed himself.
In great sorrow was his family.

Poet Arunachalam here does come,
To narrate how Vanchee too protected our freedom.
We shall now hear him recite his poem.
(K.C.S. Arunachalam finishes his poetic presentation on Vanchinathan.)

Without minding the dear ones of his family,
He deemed it his duty to defend the honour
Of his motherland.
In the struggle for freedom,
With a heart so brave he stood,
As a vanguard leading a procession huge.
As a warrior bold, he did not let go the National Flag,
Despite being beaten down by the powers that be.
Right there his life he gave up,
Defending the flag he held.
This immortal Kumaran,
The one who defended the flag,
Was a lodestar in the firmament of selfless service.
Let us listen to Chidambaram Ragunathan,
Revealing the glory of Thirupur Kumaran.
(Poet Chidambaram Ragunathan finishes his poetic presentation on Thirupur Kumaran.)
We have the names of seven thus described.
Are these alone the ones who did glorious freedom witness?
Like the cupola on a tower,
Like a glowing lamp on a hill,
How many there are who have not great fame gained?
Like the main root that underneath the earth is hidden,
How many there are who have not thus been noticed?
Men there are like Varadharajulu,
Periyar Ee.Ve.Ra., Thiru Vi.Ka and Jeeva,
Who paved the way for the love of freedom,
Are these to be only relegated as anonymous?
Tirelessly try if we do,

Won't there be as many selfless names?
To sing freely of the fame of these
Comes Kannadasan,
My friend unique, the lover of Tamil,
Who composes felicitous verses in Tamil beautiful.
A bird of freedom! A dulcet cuckoo!
Let us to his soft-toned verses listen.
Come! Come! Do thus your verses offer!
(Poet Kannadasan finishes his poetic presentation on "Freedom Fighters Anonymous.")

"Like a garden beautiful you are!
To enrich your life in this world.
How many well-wishers their blood did shed
At your roots!
Like a flowery pond you are,
Where blooms the lotus! When you were born,
How many of the brothers so pure hearted,
Were in this world buried,
Unhonoured and unsung!"
Thinking deeply of these momorable lines
Of the revolutionary poet, Bharathidasan,
And seeing a successful fruition
Of the Nation's Sliver Jubilee of Independence,
I look forward to the happy ushering in
Of the incomparable Diamond Jubilee.
My felicitations, my respect and thanks,
Grow may they in leaps and bounds!

---

*All India Radio, Chennai, organized a poetic symposium on 10-08-1922, at the Rajaji Hall, to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of India's Independence. At the function, Kalaignar introduced the participating poets, through verse. Here are some parts of the presentation. The poetic symposium was organized under Kalaignar's presidentship, and a number of senior poets made their presentations under his presidentship. This significance apart, the poems presented revealed what deep love and respect Kalaignar had for these poets.

22 Thanthai Periyaar*

Greetings to you
Hon'ble ministers and friends from the districts!
Poets of the Tamil land splendid, and
Beloved elders of Salem –
Please accept my heartfelt greetings.
My faithful and hardworking farmer friend,
Though he knew how busy I am,
Took the liberty of placing before me a command,
As a request, that I should participate
In a symposium poetic.
It was a time when those climbing into the boat,
To hang on to power,
Declared they would topple the boat!
And traitors there were who declared
They would break the boat into smithereens!
Other worthless ones said
They would turn themselves into swords,

To stab from behind!
Engaged I was in deep thought
To defeat their collective conspiracy.
From morning till midnight,
I had eight hectic engagements in Coimbatore!
Will my imagination rise to the occasion after that?
But still like a creeper swaying in the wind,
I bend and swing before my friend's command
To compose verses!
Because I write verses, I think of Ganapathy
Who was instrumental in letting me be the president
Of this poetic symposium!
Thinking of R.V. Ganapathy, I inaugurate
This beautiful symposium.
Let us first of all pay obeisance to the Swami
Who let us live and flourish in the world –
Obeisance pay to Ramasaamy,
To Periyaar Ramasaamy let us first pay obeisance.
Great folks! Come to participate in
And witness this poetic symposium!
Was it not Periyaar who awakened Tamil feelings
That lay dormant like Lord Vishnu of Srirangam,
And let them resound loud and clear in all directions,
And brave deeds many executed?
Street theatres, dramatic shows, music performances,
Cinema halls for silver screens – Once all these were
By a particular group dominated.
Changing all that, a separate arena for Tamil
He founded. Appropriate is it not
That his glory in song be hailed at a poetic symposium?
That was why poet Bharathidasan sang of Periyaar thus:
"Like sheaves of paddy to the ploughman,
Like milk to the children young,
Like curd to the hungry ones,

Like a mother to the poor,
Like dear life to all born,
In the Tamil land splendid he was!"
"Should hay he stuffed into a house built new?
Possible it is to make a haystack
Without building a house," he said!
Was he a non-believer? No! No!
He was Nature's son, and a son of the soil!

"A harbinger of the greatness of future Tamil Nadu,"
Wrote that amazing Brahman, Va. Ra.,
In a beautiful essay.
Like the gleam unique that comes from burnished gold,
Like the red horizon that fades,
When the radiant sun appears.
Periyaar in anger rose.
The robust ones in love of the new,
Firmly stood in myriad numbers,
Their dear blood pledging: "If a limb of ours is defective
To save our land, we consent to its removal."
But we hesitate to remove social ills,
Caused by distinctions of castes and creeds.
Right is this?" Periyaar asked.
It so happened contemptible jackals howled,
Hearing the roar of that lion, Periyaar!
He wore a beard like Tagore,
His vision was sharp like a tiger,
His frame was tall like a hill,
His eyes were white like a shell,
His pupils were dark like a black bee,
And bright they glowed till the end!
Even a top that spins comes to its rest.
But rest none had he even at the ripe old age.
Like a volcano, like a burning fire,
Like a bolt of thunder that makes opposition shiver,

Like a bright and burning brand of light immense,
That reflects the feelings of the Race,
Like a fell sword that cut asunder all the ills,
Like an Ingersol who denied God,
Like Jesus and Socrates who ever did preach,
Like firm-hearted Voltaire who always questioned,
Periyaar too lived.
Today he has fallen into the lap of death.
When Gandhi advocated prohibition,
Periyaar cut down coconut trees in numbers large,
Whom did we the "Hero of Vaikkam" call?
It was he, the striped tiger, who scotched untouchability,
And earned renown and thus earned from the people,
The title, "Vaikkom Hero."
As an impeccable son of the Congress,
As the leader of the Khadi Movement,
He, as the dutiful warrior, followed the path of Gandhi;
Because of dissension within the Party,
He walked out from the Conference at Kancheepuram.
V.V.S. Aiyar was a confirmed patriot.
But at the Gurukula School in Seranmadevi,
He adopted invidious rules, according to each community.
Would Periyaar's heart tolerate this?
He challenged and history made.
The result was, he became
The father of the Self-Respect Movement,
And protector of the Tamil community,
Thus earning the name Periyaar,
And the follower of a new path!
He endeavoured through the Justice Party,
To serve the needs of the Backward community.

The party was under the grip of the Rajahs
Of Panagal and Pithapuram.
Periyaar, with Anna's help,

Succeeded in bringing it to the people at large.
Like the garland in the hands of the monkey,
The Tamils were in the hands of the Hindi zealots.
Wasn't it Periyaar who fearlessly snapped
The net of the intrigue?
Is there any place that he hadn't walked on?
Even agnostics who ran miles away from him,
Enthralled by his speech they would be,
As though lovely songs in Tamil they had heard.
Sanity would overwhelm,
Clear speeches would dawn,
Ability would shine,
Arrogance would disappear,
And slavedom would go,
All by respected Periyaar's speech.
Followers in the Party would be very pleased,
The bad would be shocked,
As though an atom bomb exploded.
Even as a student in Thiruvarur, in 1938,
His leadership I accepted,
And I attached myself to him.
Later, when I was attacked in Pudhuvai,
He ministered medicines to me with his own hands!
When schooled I was in political principles,
At the *Kudiyarasu* Office, I never thought
I would become the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu,
Or pay my last respects, with State Honours,
To the Father who brought me up.
Those that did divisions of caste create,
Stunned they were as though they had
A crash of thunder heard.
God, religion, and superstition –
All in one as subtly knit,
See, they flee in lightning speed!

The ignorant old world –
So adored and admired,
See, they disintegrate by the Erode Quake!
Ee. Ve. Ra is the storm that shakes
The country's Aryan base!
Even if his beard white just did sway,
Even if his subtle glance just did signal,
The ones in black shirt donned,
Would sure as swords
Injustice cut asunder and come back!"
While I was groomed in Erode,
I wrote this poem!
I think today –
Though Periyaar did not die young,
And passed away in the ripe old age,
If Taj Mahal suddenly sank,
Consolation would we seek
That it was constructed long ago?
If the Thanjavur Temple tower leaned,
Would it be possible to support it
In the thought it was too old?
Periyaar was as imposing as the Thanjavur Tower –
And he made history like the Taj Mahal –
"Forever live he would!"
Thus his memory commemorating,
I call upon the poets of Tamil rich,
To sing their celebrant songs
On immortal Periyaar!

---

*Under the auspices of the Tamil Sangam, a poetic symposium on Thanthai Periyaar was held, at the Nehru Auditorium in Salem, on 11-01-1971, at which Kalaignar delivered this Presidential Address.

23 The Poems of *Akam* (Love) Mode*

Lovers of Tamil who are gathered here,

Dauntless young men who hold honour dear,
Distinguished poet Kannadasan,
My respects deep go unto all of you.
My fond greetings to you, students of medicine,
Who feel the pulse and minister medicine,
To cure the maladies,
You indeed have a keen sense of hygiene!
These students pressed me to preside over a symposium
On "Poems of *Akam* (love) life"

I was in the midst of a thousand burning problems then.
In these days, a festival conducted for Tamil
By students is a big wonder, indeed.
If students of medicine conduct festivals
For Tamil, we should with our head bowed,
Offer our respects to them,
And our obeisance pay to them with hands scooped!

Without indulging in acts of indiscipline,
Without participating in disruptive deeds,
Without showing wanton behaviour to women,
You derive the best from education,
And endeavour for the growth of Tamil.
Hail to you!
A student I too was –
And I behaved in such a way
As not to bring dishonour to my parents.
Passionate love I had for Tamil!
Serving the cause of Tamil,
Was sweet as sugar cane to me
Long ago in Tiruvarur,
I founded a unique Association of Tamil Nadu Students,
Here are the words of fond felicitations,
By poet Bharathidasan,
"In Tiruvarur where cuckoos in cool woods coo,
See the founding of an Association of Tamil Nadu Students.
See its prospering strongly and soundly.
See its serving as a salve for the awakening of the people.
See the bold young men of Tiruvarur,
Sufferers in sickness they are not,
See them with shoulders strong.
See this leonine Tamil lot
Searching for enmity to be torn to pieces!"
This resounding call of the revolutionary poet

Is heard in the poetical works of love and war.
It is the loud call of fresh new Tamil!
The ebullient youths' call unique!
I think of that day,
And with joy my thoughts are filled.
Won't this day too be like that day?
Won't the beloved students open their eyes and see?
Won't they join as a single force to protect the Tamil cherished?
Thus to my aching heart,
This celebration is a salve so befitting!
Tamils in the days of yore,
Divided Tamil literature into
Literature of love life
And literature of heroic action.
"This World" *(ikam)* and "the Other World" *(param)*
Are not in Tamil used.
And they do not to Tamil belong.
"The inner world of love" *(akam),* and
"The outer world of action" *(puram)*
Are usages in Tamil.
The Tamils' ability to have divided
Their literature into various categories,
Is unique and incomparable,
And this is not found in any other literature.
From unrequited love, to begin with,
To 'clandestine love' finally,
Seven categories are codified,
As *Tholkappiam* will reveal!
I was once arguing with respected Anbazhagan,
As to which is superior - *Akam or Puram?*
Anna intervened and elucidated!
"That which is shared is *Puram,*
That which cannot be shared is *Akam,* he said!
Anna's explanation indeed will serve to

Illumine the whole of the literature of love.

Though literature of love,
And that of heroic action are only two,
Note, the literature of rightful conduct
Is inevitably associated with these –
The valiant warrior does come,
With wounds by the spear pierced.
His loved one ministers medicine
With her eyes that pierce!
Even if they are closely together,
Like fishes under the water,
If there is a call for battle,
Quickly climb to the banks will they.
Even in passionate dalliance they be,
If any harm to their land is done,
The dauntless race will rise in arms.
Those that hold in scorn the goodly race,
And speak with the tongue in the cheek,
Let them heed to the challenging call of mothers,
And listen to the songs of war of the Tamils.
In the Literature of love,
Heroes and heroines there are,
Foster-mothers and friends,
Mothers and towns, moon and southern breeze
And companions for heroines.
There are poets acclaimed
To present these sweet verses of beautiful Tamil.
Let us listen to the song on the hero,
From the literature of love.
To change her fateful path of life,
The heroine will on an embassage
Send her dear companion.
The foster mother will also a party be.

The beloved hero like the breeze will come.
And under the warm moon,
She will wait to receive him -
The friend never plays false
In the song of love career.
But in the song of heroic action,
The friend is treacherous.
Love does not hide itself from public ridicule.

** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** **

Finding ways to love,
Creating opportunities for fulfilling duty,
Presenting dignity
And leading life by disciplined conduct bound -
These are what are inculcated
In the literature of *Akam* love.
In today's life too it is so,
To live with a planned family!
But thinking of the literature of love,
You should not create six or seven
Additions in the family!
This will land you only in distress.
I declare thus from my awareness
And from my understanding.
These I have from experience learnt.
Do grasp the import deeply!

---

*Students of the Medical Colleges in Chennai conducted a poetic symposium, on "the Poems of Akam (Love) Mode"at a festival of Tamil Threefold, on 13-07-1974, Here is Kalaignar's Presidential Address delivered on the occasion.

24 Pour Plenteously O Sky!*

Pour plenteously O sky!

Quench the fiery jungle of drought
With the copious tears you shed!
Your scintillating laughter and thunderous oration,
Where are they?
Do you know, dear Tamil Nadu mine,
Despairs for long without a bath
Under your waters sweet?
Our pining to put an end to,
Pour plenteously, O sky!
The valourous race of the Tamils
Deem their honour great!
Imputing guilt to them,

Some at the Centre,
The scurrilous knife they throw at them,
Power to usurp.
To put their thinking straight,
O sky! Down you pour aplenty!
Your kindred, the Hindus, Muslims
And the Christians here entreat.
Like Tamil foremost, you should pour down thrice!
The good beckon you, but the bad think,
Mercy you should not show!
To cool their hot hearts, extend your watery arms!
Pour plenteously, O sky!
And let the Tamil realm prosper!

---

*When the weather belied Tamil Nadu, and drought loomed large, Kalaignar wrote this poem in *Murasoli,* on 23-03-1975.

25 The Feast of *Silappadhikaaram**

Our Navalar Nedunchezhian, an epitome of Tamil beautiful,
Our beloved Professor Anbazhagan, a treasure-house of thought,
Dear Minister Sadiqe Basha of Mannai,
And others, following the path of Anna,
My respects deep to all of you!
To the erudite scholar, Ma.Po. Sivagnanam,
Of *Silappadhikaaram* fame,
And goodly old Tamil scholar, Gnana Ganesan,
My obeisance I pay.
To all those who have eagerly responded to our call
To serve the cause of reclaiming and renewing
The decayed Poompukar,
Respects from my humble self.
To the poetic hearts who have come
To offer the feast of *Silappadhikaaram,*
My loving greetings!

Tamil splendid! Ambrosia!
Wafting flowery fragrance! Honey sweet!
You have come, like a mother,
To overmaster me!
You have come, like a brother,
To let me attain maturity!
Offering obeisance at the soft feet
Of Anna of Kanchee,
This poetic symposium I inaugurate.
Kaviri, the belle beautiful,
From down the scenie hills of Coorg
Did come dancing!
You come and bless
The Tamils' lives and Tamil land's prosperity.
To lay his claims on the maid who came to dance,
The man from Karnataka came and stopped her.
She did the stop overstep, and entered the Kallanai dam
And leapt to Thanjai to protect her purity.
Hearing the soft maid Kaviri's 'plaint,
The Chola king let the billows of Poompukar,
Serve as her manful guardian.
The glory of Tamil land's woman it is,
To enrich the house they had entered after marriage,
Without forgetting their home they were born.
Thus as the Kaviri entered this ancient city,
Kavirippoompattinam it became!
Thus declare I shall.
The sword and sheath of Karikalan Thirumavalavan,
His affectionate friendship symbolized.
And the sword from the sheath drawn
Was for conquering sinister enmity!
He made Uraiyoor the first capital of his kingdom.
Then another town he did as a second capital adopt.
The result of this attachment was

The birth of young and beautiful Poompukar
That now does welcome us!
Celebrated in *Pattinappaalai,*
As a harbour town this did flourish!
A coastal township here there was,
And a place it was of excellent valour.
Young men from other towns went about here,
Keen to embrace lovely damsels!
A daily market there was,
And to it, foreigners their daily visits made.
A street for royalty and streets for
Plying ceremonial chariots were there.
A street for tradesmen and also another
For honest farmer were there.
Streets there were for doctors, astrologers, minstrels, and dancers,
And there were streets for horses and elephants.
A coastal town, Chithirappakkam,
Later became the celebrated and scenic coastal city,
Pattinappakkam, in those days.
Debating halls that celebrated Cholan's
Victories in the North, pandals of pearls,
Grand ceremonial entrances,
Stone monuments that established Tamils'
Victories in the world of the hoary past,
Fortress walls, dancing halls that attracted
The artistically inclined,
Giant structures, known as *kottams*, named after
Murugan, Thirumal, the Jaina and the Buddha,
Monumental buildings where Tamil threefold resounded,
Gatherings everyday for
The season's celebration in the month of Chittirai,
Ceremonial facades in the name of Ilango,
Depicting all these scenes were there!
All the memorable ethos of history, custom and culture,

Of Poompuhar.
Though all these time and tide had destroyed,
The story of the anklet,
That Cheran Ilango bestowed,
Became the everlasting treasure-house,
And eternal light of glory!
Awakened by that light,
And by the unforgettable love of Tamil,
Was born the new Pukar,
The rising new Pukar,
Engendered by the fragrant blood
And valorous breath of Tamil.
How could I my gratitude express
To Kannagi, the lamp that brightened the house,
To Madhavi, the queen of womanhood,
To Karikalcholan, the adamantine shouldered,
To Ilango, the supreme poet's beautiful story of the anklets,
To Tamil!
And to my parents,
Who brought me forth,
To let me give a beautiful shape to Puhar!
Silappadhikaaram it was that did
Many ideas inculcate, including
The principle of self-rule.
It taught us to face death happily,
And to accept renunciation with courage!
Because of Tamil,
Traitors did prosper.
And rose up in life,
And killed our history!
The dulcet anklets,
Like a lamp from a tower,
Did reveal our history to some extent.
Silappadhikaaram was the epic

That did in song celebrate the fitting glory
Of the Three Great Kings.
And thus a rousing epic
From Saint Ilango rose.
Eight incomparable poets here there are
To serve a delectable feast from that epic.
They would, sans rivalry, sing of the "Eight Sentiments:"
"Laughter," "Tears," "Dishonour," "Wonder," "Fear,"
"Valour," "Anger" and "Joy."
To enlarge delectably on these "Eight Sentiments,"
We welcome these eight poets to the city of the Cholas,
That is symbolized by,
The Silken Flag,
The Ceremonial Umbrella,
The Garland of Pearls,
And peopled by the epic characters,
Madhavi, Kannagi, Kovalan her husband.
And the famed Pandya King Nedunchezhian,
Who put an end to himself
For his falsely sentencing Kovalan,
Accused as a thief.
Wonder, laughter, tears, anger,
Valour, dishonour, fear, joy
Are the eight sentiments.
It was the ancient poet Tholkaappiyar,
Who codified the eight sentiments,
From out of so many human experiences.
There are poets here and danceuse too,
To bring out these qualities.
It was Tholkaappiyar,
Who assigned to "joy" the final place,
Among the "Eight Sentiments."
But today, let us happily begin
Our poetic symposium with "joy,"

And conclude with "valour" at the end.
First comes up poet Vairamuthu,
To present his verses on "Joy"
In *Silappadhikaaram.*
(Poet Vairamuthu concludes his poetic presentation on "Joy.")
See! After joy do tears come!
Poet Ilanthevan now comes up to present
His verses on "Tears" in *Silappadhikaaram.*
He is big in appearance, but young of age!
(Poet Ilanthevan finishes his poetic presentation on "Tears.")

Next the hard-hearted poet Kannappan,
Comes smiling like those who smile at sorrow!
Not like Kovalan does he come,
Not with the anklet does he from Madurai come,
But to show laughter in the *Story of the Anklet,*
Does he to the Poompukar poetic symposium come!
(Poet Kannappan finishes his poetic presentation on "Laughter.")
Next:
There are those who are very angry with
Those who laugh meaninglessly.
In Chidambaram, Nataraja carries his
Raised leg, poised evenly.
T.K. Natarajan does straight from the
Tamil grove come, carrying his verses.
You do your poetic presentation on
"Anger" make without being angry!
(Poet T.K. Natarajan makes his poetic presentation on "Anger!")
Next:
One fears to see those in anger.
To remove anger by a person appropriate,
Invited have we poet Thamizhanban.
A splendid Tamil! You handle words
Without fear of the assembly,

Do shower your sweet verses!
(Poet Thamizhanban finishes his poetic presentation on "Fear.")

Next Abdur Rehman comes,
To see us, the reigning Tamil race, realize
That if fear came, dishonour would follow.
What he presents in verse is on "dishonour."
But that is a shower sweet in Tamil!
(Poet Abdur Rehman finishes his poetic presentation on "Dishonour!")

Next:
If dishonour comes, it is the great trait
Of Tamils to die.
But poet Kuruvikkarambai Shanmugam wonders
That many live even after dishonour.
Shanmugam is the pearl of a small town.
He steeps Tamil Nadu in wonder!
(Poet Kuruvikkarambai Shanmugam finishes his poetic presentation on "Wonder!")

Next:
To sing of "Valour!"
There are poets
Who show courage in action
From the great city where Valavan the Chola ruled.
Let us listen to Ponni Valavan's poetic presentation on "Valour."
(Poet Ponnivalavan finishes his poetic presentation on "Valour!")

President Kalaignar's concluding address:
From morning till the end of this poetic symposium,
Listening to Tamil sweet,
I am like a bee, drunk deep in honeyed pollen.
I have passed some time in joy and peace.
Drunk in the honey of Tamil.
Nurtured by great kings and good poets,
Able will I be the concluding address to present?
Those that to Poompukar come!

And those that have fresh feelings imbibed,
Before I bid good bye
See the full moon of the *Chithirai* month,
Your children, pure as gold,
Kiss them at the beach!
But do not ask whether this is only to them.
That is a matter between an eligible
Young man and his girl!
Do behold the Poompukar moon!
Do also note, it is like the golden umbrella
Of the kings who ruled the Tamil world.
In your minds do cherish
The literature of the anklet.
Stand as you do besides the tossing sea,
Wish well the government
That follows the path of Anna!
Fare you well!

---

*It was on the 25th of April 1975 that the Second Anniversary of the creation of the new Poompuhar, from the old and historical Poompukar was celebrated. Under the Presidentship of Kalaignar, poets like Abdur Rehman, Vairamuthu, Thamizhanban, Ponnivalavan, Natarajan, Kannappan, Ilamthevan and Shanmugam, participated in a symposium, on the "Feast of *Silappadhikaaram*," and made poetic presentations on eight topics. On that occasion, Kalaignar read out this poem as his Presidential Address.

26 In the Path of Anna*

O Tamil! Honey! Fruit golden! Ambrosia!
Love! Art so beauteous! Beauty! Intellect!
Thought lustrous! Grove! Fame! Bejeweled gold!
Wealth! Beautiful form! Cool moon! Shady tree!
Cool shade! Mother!
Clasping your feet,
The Presidential poem I have come to deliver.
Ever to toil in the path of Anna,
And let the journey proceed,
Loudly sing and dearly guard the Party,
Proclaim loud your cry,
That should reach the sky!
Alas! The scene of the young Party,
Parting from the mother unit,
Is like the cow parting from the calf!
A spear that could a hill pierce,

Was aimed to pierce the heart.
Our brother who from us never parted,
Left us that day, never to return, alas!
It is seven or eight years since.
Our king of principles, a powerful style and pleasing diction had.
And demonstrated it in his new style of Tamil.
Detractors he did corner in debates.
Even within the time of his inhaling snuff,
He would with his smile conquer his opponents,
And the dirty-minded he drove away.
Mother Tamil he glorified,
And with his pen, the fate of the Tamils he changed.
He made the ever weeping ones to smile,
By his benevolent rule.
Tamil sounded beautiful
In his speeches from pubic addresses.
When the scheming ones attempted to defeat Tamil,
He became the main strength in the crusade for Tamil!
Of those afraid of the battle he knew,
And cultured was he to pay tributes
To those who mocked at him.
The rulers' fierce language fanaticism he destroyed.
And angry he was that other languages
Discounted Tamil. Sanskrit had invaded
With many unpronounceable words,
At the expense of Tamil.
Many pure Tamil words he introduced
As acceptable current usages.
I would call Anna a gentleman,
For he had many lovable friends!
I would call Anna an ascetic,
For his mouth (by his chewing betel and nuts),
The colour red displayed!
I would call Anna a god,

For the treacherous ones worship him,
Offering him praises, as though in a censor of fragrant incense!
I would call Anna a Krishna,
For even a female demon fed him milk!
He made our heart his seat of affection.
The ignorant ones opposed him in the beginning,
Without properly understanding him.
Only later did they clearly know him
As the Karl Marx of the South,
Come to preach equal justice for all.
He stood for a life based on reason,
And showed that the stories of mythology were false.
He was the receptacle of knowledge,
By Periyar to us bestowed.

** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** **

Human kind is one and so is God.
Accepting this is true agnosticism!
To be true to one another is atheism.
Declare firmly I would,
God to us is one
Whom we see
In the smile of the poor!
"This as a principle establish," he exhorted,
And hoist the flag of reason, he encouraged.
With examples from daily usage of Tamil,
Did he not demonstrate that the Party
Is the true Communist?
Was not the good path shown by him,
The only path to eradicate poverty?
Was not what he uttered the new law
To enlarge our rights and establish Truth?
Was not his speech the resonant call
For the progress of the land,

And the growth of Tamil pure?
Was he not ever our leader unparalleled?
Those who are orthodox choose Wednesday
Of all the days of the week,
As auspicious.
Of all the days Anna lived,
Which day could I select for me
To contemplate on?
Could I think of the day he called his brother
Navalar Nedunchezhian to assume leadership?
Or the day he called at the residence of Professor Anbazhagan
To think of ways to settle problems
That remained unsettled?
Or the day we went with him to meet Periyar.
From whom we parted reluctantly,
Eighteen years ago?
Or the day at the beach,
When he made me wear a ring,
Saying, "even if by many arrows you are stung,
This ring save you it will?"
Whatever was our thought,
Consoled we were by Anna,
The figure so exalted.

** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** **

We toil following your path,
Defeating opposition to pieces,
We march, carrying the lamp you bestowed.
The Tamils help kindle the lamps,
Without its being snuffed out by rains torrential.
Without its flame being shaken by the strong winds.
We protect the lamp, enclosing it with our palm.
A gift do grant to us, Anna!
Praying intensely, I do ask.

All our achievements that happen
One after another, to help the poor so low,
When once you see,
Disappear will all my worries!
Moon! So full and cool!
Without fail, please do come.
This gift if you thus give,
The whole of Tamil land
Will dance in joy,
And all our cares will go,
As though immortality we have gained.

Kalaignar's concluding speech:
Today no concluding speech there is.
"Long live Anna" is the opening
And the conclusion as well!
So let us all say:
"Long live Anna!"
Goodbye!

---

*Kalaignar delivered this Presidential Address, at a symposium on Anna, held in Kalaivanar Arangam, Chennai, on 15-09-1975.

27 Today is Your Birthday*

Today is your birthday,

Ever a special day!
Leader great!
Today is your birthday.
For the paragon of principles,
Festivities everywhere!
Born at Virudhunagar,
As a hero you grew up.
As a leader famed,
History you created!
Sacrifices you made,
And with a smile you bore
The trials and tribulations of life in prison.
Though a thousand differences there were between us,
Your enduring services, can they ever be forgotten?

Figure exalted!
Come to waft the fragrant fame of Tamil Nadu!
Symbol of public service sweet!
Though coloured black,
Ideas fair at heart you had, to serve for ever!
In *kadhar* dressed you were,
And your arms did huddle round the poor
That cried for help.
Of political parties a harsh critic you were,
But when harm was done to leaders of other parties,
Agitated you would be.
Tears you shed at Periyar's grave,
And so you did when Anna and Rajaji passed away.
When my mother I lost
Like near and dear ones
My grief you shared.
Noble son! My tears for you did flow profuse!
An individual's life was not yours at all,
And wellknown was your celebrated self-respect!
High your flag did fly,
From Kanyakumari to the Himalayas,
And the fame of beautiful Tamil Nadu you spread.
Our brother Anna, a man of cultured breeding,
Called you a 'gracious one!'
And the 'pride of Tamils!'
And lovingly embraced you.
Calling you 'Black Gandhi,'
Did not our Nation worship you?
In the evening of your life,
A lot of love you showered on me!
You did your life establish as an exempler for every one!
Today is your birthday,
Ever a special day!

---

*On Kamarajar's birthday, 15-07-1976, Kalaignar penned this poetic tribute.

28 Social Outlook*

Poets of rich imagination,

Who have come here!
Elders, ever in love with Tamil,
Who are present here!
My respects to you!
Lovers of poetry,
Who have hastened to be here,
To taste sweet poesy,
A hearty welcome to you!
We are the ones who never forget
The kindly Vasan!
Those of immortal fame,
Excellent aren't their deeds?
Vasan's great heart all do love!
For free he is of hurting words of pride.
Never in arrogance does he raise his head!
And never does it before the undeserving bend!

** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** **

Tamil, sweet as sugar cane juice,
Nurtured it was in many ways.
The *Vikatan,* so full of pleasing novelty,
Fine humour, essays, and stories,
By whom was it all fostered?
He is not with us today.
But what he established still exists.
So let us receive it with eyefuls of joy!

** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** **

Ananda Vikatan, it is said to be fifty years old.
Even here, a correction is needed.
That it is fifty-two years old is alone true!
In reducing the age, what is the advantage,
I would like to ask *Vikatan.*
Is it for seeking opportunities
In the film world still?
Only when age advances is there a hard polish.
Colourful characters bring out great thoughts –
The chill moon, the radiant sun and stars,
Don't they for millions of years exist?
Like them *Vikatan* should also prosper for years!
Precious and glorious jewel!
You present ideas and make people laugh!
Full of poise and grace, your readers you entertain!
Carried away by your charm,
Women are not captivated by *Kanchee silk.*
After their recitals, expert musicians
Browse only through *Vikatan*
For a critique of their performance!
Scholars would feel proud,
Only when appreciations are offered by *Vikatan.*
Even cartoons in the pages of *Vikatan*

Are brought to life by Mali transformed!
The stories of Kalki by their rich and sweet diction,
Attract our thoughts!
Though there were differences in policies,
It was *Vikatan* which in action showed
That culture was required in narration.
Sometimes, there were some drawbacks too.
Vikatan did not support the slogan:
"Tamil Nadu for Tamils only!"
Instead, it said: "Rat holes for rats only!"
Though it conducted crossword puzzles,
Based on reason, from very old times,
It also featured astrological predictions
Bound by old orthodoxy.
That was why, as said by *Vikatan,*
Tamil land is still a rathole in backwardness!
But whatever it is, casteism and violence,
Eradicated they should be by all means,
As there is a huge loss of life by these.

** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** **

A steady anchor is Balasubramanian, the editor.
He kindly invited me to be the President
Of the *Vikatan* Golden Jubilee celebrations,
To let it be celebrated on a grand scale.
I am amazed at his culture that is so free
From favour or prejudice.
I shall praise him as a beckoning light,
And adore him in amazement!

** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** **

Don't be shocked!
Ananda Vikatan was the progenitor
Of a hundred magazines!
Because they were from heartburns free,

They secured the wherewithall,
To run journals of their own, independently.

** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** **

Never was *Ananda Vikatan* weighed and sent,
To old newspaper wallahs!
For it was bound and preserved,
And the question of its being weighed,
In pounds or kilos never arose!
When *Ananda Vikatan* is found in the hands of women
It is their "beloved one!"
With no heart to part from it,
They will keep it next to their silk sarees!
To men, *Vikatan* is a beautiful maid!
They will be carried away by its 'jacket!'
On this day of celebrations,
Vikatan is a bridegroom.
All the ceremonial fun goes with it,
And so don't be upset!
Vikatan is a doctor.
When it is nearby,
The patients take big comfort!
Vikatan is an inveterate wanderer!
In all the trains and buses,
Vikatan will be found!
Vikatan is a madcap! Reason?
Wherever it is found,
At least ten people there are to go after it!
Ten people here too!
To present verses on Tamil sweet.
And ten people around me there are!
You may hold like that!
Am I not also a madcap
Because I am mad after Tamil?

Even if born a dog,
I shall wag my tail only before Tamil lovers.
Even if I loaf about like a mad dog,
Only "Tamil" "Tamil" will I bark!
O Tamil sweet! Till my last breath
My native land I shall serve ever dutifully,
When the cause of nectarine Tamil is to be served,
One should have a social outlook sharp!
Hence *Vikatan* in eagerness has invited me!

** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** **

'Society' is a sin, a sorry word.
Putting all the blame on it,
Thousands upon thousands of injustice
Rogues perpetrate!
And these orphaned youngsters,
Learn law in atrocious schools!
Laws learnt do not the purpose serve,
And soon they become the cause of destruction.
"Are these not violent means?" if someone asked,
"What other means did society teach?"
This question is quickly raised!

Pity society, in a sorry state it is!
A thief who handles a jemmy,
And a cut-purse youth with scissors,
When trapped and caught, exclaims:
"Oh! God! What could we do?
Thieves we are only because of a blind society,"
Thus they cry out!
Pity society! In a sorry state it is!
Trusting demi-gods,
The sorcerer does make sacrifices
Of children before these gods.
Greatly agitated when we at the great sinner shout,

He also confesses:
"What could I do? This wicked society
Has made me thus!"
Pity society! In a sorry state it is!
Every robber who burgles idols old,
Mutilates them, and sells them
In international markets,
Frankly says,
He came to this dastardly job,
Driven by social ills.
Pity society! In a sorry state it is!
The "lady" with the red lamp says,
As no green signal was to her shown,
For an honest life, she chose the red light after her heart.
"Shame upon you," if someone says,
"Shame upon this society" she spits back!
Pity society! In a sorry state it is!
When all is said and done,
Truth indeed does clearly illumine,
That without establishing a forward-looking
Social vision at the base,
If a huge superstructure is built,
For economic equality for everyone,
And imposing domes of international politics
Are raised over it, they will only fall to pieces.
Indeed, of this problem aware,
Does *Vikatan* provide us a "Social Outlook."
Human kind, soft as the blooming flowers,
Has raised around it a sacred fence.
And that has become "Society!"
Man did not originate first on earth.
Worms, insects, fishes, monkeys, animals and birds,
Were the first to come.
Do you now know the meaning of previous births?

All the talk about next birth
And the births after,
Are what changing Man is going to assume,
After millions upon millions of years.
On earth originated mankind!
I shall for certain declare
There was only one kind then.
Finding fire, checking the speed of waters,
And after the assumption of family responsibilities,
Was society born!
Society thus born enlarged and spread,
And became a vast society,
With divisive tendencies!
"All lives born are equal, but when deeds differ,
Disagreement occurs," as the *Kural* says.
Groups came into being.
The narrow-minded intervened,
And created castes,
Contrary to the just paths of life.
The loving hearts were defeated,
And wickedness spread.

The result of that?
In the darkness of ignorance, man ate man.
But today, amidst scientific enlightenment,
Man kills man and lives!
Society is a beautiful arrangement,
And the individual should his contribution make.
Only little drops of water make a big ocean.
But it is not good that every drop should turn into poison.
Taking those drops of poison as liquor,
Man drinks it like honey, till daybreak.
There are laws of prohibition.
Even against making illicit liquor, there are laws!

Adulteration these days has as a profession become.
Clay particles are with grains mixed,
And those who have made this an art,
No sense of balance have.
Gaining huge profits the country's integrity they sell,
And business integrity too they sell.
If asked: "Can you this heinous crime commit,"
That one's welfare destroys,
And to the country bring disrepute?
The answer is:
"What am I to do?
This is a social problem!"
Pity society! In a sorry state it is!
Goats, bullocks, pigs and asses,
Go rubbing against our dresses, -
They also go round the temples.
If the "Harijans," the children of God,
Touch us, it is a big religious crime.
"Is this evil right?" If asked,
They will say it is a law
That is there in society from the very beginning.
Pity society! In a sorry state it is!
A society it is on which our attention should bestowed!
I don't believe in the story of Shiva
Opening His Frontal Eye!
But still, to put an end to all social evils,
I wish the story should occur.
We shall our frontal eye open!
To let the country prosper,
To end all ills,
Let us bestow all our keen attention
Upon society.
Poets! You at the peak of imagination,
Raising your voice in unison,

Protect our rights!
Cherish human relationships,
Make people speak the truth,
And help wicked hearts
A clear perspective attain!

Ananda Vikatan celebrated its Golden Jubilee on 07-11-1980, when a poetic symposium was held at which Kalaignar as President presented this poem.

29 Some Countries there are!

Some countries there are!

Where.....
From local self-governments to parliaments,
Democracy is never born!
Nipped in the bud will it be!
And there are people to feel happy about it!
If by any chance it survives,
It will be liquidated,
At the toddling stage itself!
To let democracy's excellence become dust into dust,
Or to nullify it,
These people will pray and plead for divine grace!
The change of government there,
Takes place in half a second!

Adorned are the rulers' chests
With bullets strung as beautiful garlands!
Others' chests are with an armour pressed hard!
It is doubtful whether they will get up at all, when fallen!
Only guns serve to support and strengthen
These dictatorial camps, and to finish the "job!"
Only swords conduct ceremonial successions to the throne!
And coronations are celebrated
With pails and pails of blood
That wash the ceremonial halls!
Some countries there are!
Where, democracy is never born!
Those beneath the ceremonial canopy of power
Will be embowled to adorn as garlands
The next sacrificial ram!
Those who praise and support,
Their bones will be broken!
The sceptre fair,
This alone it is, they will declare!
He who holds that sceptred pole,
When will he burn like a stack of hay?
Who can ever tell!
If monarchy is the principle that is to be beaten to its end
Monarchies are still on the way out.
But still not yet!
Some countries there are,
Where,
Democracy is never born!
The sensual pleasures of dictatorial rule,
Drunken orgies unlimited,
Of autocratic powers on beds of self-satisfaction!
Amidst this song and dance,
If some grumble, prison it is for them!
If they ask 'why,' outlawed they will be!

It is like a banana tree!
Its own saplings will bring it down!
One is at a loss to know
Why the tree of democracy
Never grows in that soil!
Why so?
The trunk of the tree has been cut down,
And the central root has been pulled up!
On the borders of India,
Two nations sprouted!
The rule is nurtured there
Only on the bloody soil.
When Mujibur Rahman's life ended,
Our eyes shed tears of blood!
But a day dawned,
And Bangladesh was born!
Happy was the world!
Mujibur Rehman was praised
As the Father of the Nation!
But the head of this golden-hearted friend,
Down it rolled like a ball,
And people danced in joy!
And yet another playful sport
In the arena of Bangladesh was this!
The head of Ziaur Rehman.
Caught and smashed it was
In a net of intrigues!
Dictatorship:
It is a banana tree –
Its own offshoot will topple it!
There was a trace of democracy
In Bangladesh.
Efforts are afoot to stop it,
And spread the red-carpet,

For military rule!
Some countries there are,
Where democracy is never born!
If by any chance it survives.
It will be liquidated
At the toddling stage itself.
This alone is the sad news today
From Bangladesh!

01-06-1981

30 Dear Friend of Mine! Why Did You Part from Me?*

Dear friend of mine!
By your spring-time poems,
My heart's delight you did give!
Why did you your heart-beat stop?
Like the Southern Wind you breezed,
And you were also the one who my heart did singe!
Even then did your friendship flourish like the '*andril*' birds.
And it wasn't a lamp to be put out ever!
Dear Kannadasan! My friend!

All my thoughts you made sweet!
A bower of flowers poetic you were!
Time, the earthquake, has razed you to the ground!
As a child you would readily jump
To the hands that stretched out to fondle you.
So did you to the lap of the maid of cemetery jump,
To drink the milk of eternal peace?
A cuckoo you were who sang the Party's song in delight.
Earlier, weaned away you were by drugs that intoxicate.
The attacking arrows, however many you sent,
My heart as your mother did bear!
As you called me names in Tamil.
I accepted them as sweetened food.
Tamil poet sweet! Why did you part in separation?
Oh! In that vernal field,
Saplings of love we planted!
Deeming our friendship eternal,
A million dreams we dreamed!
Someone for the harvest came,
And you alone reaped and took away!
A fickle mind you had,
But fame eternal was yours!
This miracle to bring about,
Loving Mother Tamil did by you stand!
My friend!
Loving companion!
Lullabies innumerable you sang,
But lulled to sleep you were my Mother Nature!
You who received acclaims so many,
Like do you only the adulation of Mother Nature as sweet?
You forgot me! You forgot us!
But forget we could not,
As you did all our hearts suffuse!

---

*On 17-10-1981, when Kaviarasu Kannadasan passed away, Kalaignar wrote this tribute.

31 Gallows*

Brothers of mine, dearer than my life!

Though Anna is not physically present with us,
He leads and guides our path, becoming one with us in spirit.
Paying obeisance thus to him,
This long journey,
From Madurai to Thiruchengodu,
We jealously launched upon,
For a distance of two hundred kilometers, and for eight days,
Demanding justice.
Not today, not yesterday, but for over sixty years,
Justice we had demanded,
In the political, social and economic fields.
Our great Movement, to last for years and years to come,
We had always been conducting such long journeys,
Amidst bitter opposition!
In our history, this is one,
That is great and unforgettable!
"As the world shrinks, the forces increase,
As the forces decrease, the world enlarges,"

In such an amazement behold thus!
Like the spreading rays of the rising sun,
Bound by love, our battalion,
Far and wide extends,
In the capital city of Pandyas!
Even the blind won't say, "This is a crowd so small!"
The great mass of Tamils gathered
Is a dauntless crowd of the Tamils –
Though as one at heart united,
In body, many they are."
So said a noble poet.
And that is this crowd!
Ideals alone are its goal!
Dejection can our land undergo?
Thus, here a mobile rationalists' fortress there is!
The loving ones,
Elders, mothers, brothers,
Young boys and girls,
And lisping babes –
In the love that those showered,
Gone are all the distress!
Flown is even pain intense!
Mothers, sisters, elder and younger,
Did these to me offer praise?
Brothers dear! You they did felicitate!
All the colourful ceremonies they observed for your welfare,
Are not these for the intense zeal
Of the family by ideals as one united?
What keen love! What deep attachment!
On earth, such a loving family of purest gold,
Where does one find?
Found only here it is. That is why our hard journey.
Like candy it is to us!
To let virtuous conduct flourish,

And injustice end,
Millions who wish to serve the cause
Have in a procession gathered!
Oh! Is this the turbulence of the tossing seas?
Or is this the Kaviri that has her inroads made,
Through the Vaigai river?
"Dear ones of mine! May you live long who thus walk!"
So saying and looking at you as dear ones of mine,
When my tongue does praise,
My heart is overjoyed in full!
Right here! Amid the twin coloured flags,
The crescent flags of Muslims,
Have as a confluence mingled!
The fanfare of good wishes,
Has given us a strength renewed!
The scenes of welcome all the way,
The heart received,
With everlasting enthusiasm and unfading thoughts!
For justice alone our arms will be raised and swayed,
Said the men and women who stood arrayed.
On either side of the road.
They conquered us with love,
And adored us in affection.
Food on the way, and meals under the pandal,
Were arranged for millions!
Lion-like they walked.
Sans any fatigue on the way!
Singing and dancing and drumming
Served as salve to ease fatigue!
The Kaviri traverses on the fertile region
But on arid land do you walk
In the scorching sun, on the hot roads,

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Not for just a day or two,
But for eight long days!
And for two hundred kilometers!
Two lakhs of dear ones!
Imbibing the courage of Periyar,
And the kindness of Anna,
We walked!
To all those who their heartfelt blessings gave,
We shall our praises offer, and respects pay!
Demand justice we shall!
And we shall walk!
Our destination, Thiruchendur,
Is it a place aglow with lustrous lamps?
Or it is a garden beauteous?
Physical fatigue made us sit down and speak!
But our brethren's mental strength
Increased manifold our resolve!
Reaching the shores of Thiruchendur
Does not our journey end.
A continuous journey it is!
Even if troubles come in tons,
We shall in contempt ignore them!
Even if our feet are blistered,
Even if wild rivers cross our path,
Even if difficult trials comfront us,
Even if the gallows welcome us,
We shall all these meet,
Following Anna's path in peace,
And stopping the raging storm that blows,
ith a smile that beams!

---

*10-05-1982

To enable people to see these 'kinky-brained' few who cross our path, and those lion-hearted idealists who oppose them, this poem, "Gallows" is written.

32 You do Praises Shower on Me, the Humblest Self!*

The fifty-seventh birthday it is today –

Birthday of the slave of your love and affection!
The wise say a lion's vision it is
To look back on the path travelled,

And to swerve not from the path followed.
Though a lion I am not,
Considering the path traversed,
Continue I shall to serve the Tamil community!
Born I was at Kolili,
And sweet Tamil Thirukuvalai would ever speak!
During my tender age I grew up there,
And I learnt sweet and sensuous Tamil in Tiruvarur!
The education desired I gained at the Erode school,
And inculcated idealism I was in at Kancheepuram,
Famed for its temple cars!
With the Tamil force that marched forward,
Ever to oppose the Hindi imposition,
A youth brigade I formed even then,
And thus one with the Party's Movement I became!
Right from that day till now,
The gracious kindness of respected Periyar,
The heartfelt affections of Anna I enjoyed!
What more do I need except those for you!

When I on the rails lay,
When I in solitary confinement languished,
Anna saw me and shed tears.
Fragrant water his tears were that he showered on me
My lassitude to mitigate!
When twenty, and in Pondy I was,
Periyar my injured leg with medicines massaged.
It was a nectarine salve that soothed my heart!
Anjukam and Muthuvelan, my parents,
Waited for me to sing for them!
And give them joy!
But he!
Squarely caught was he in the vortex of
Acrimonious politics!

Idealism is not the one that is easily achieved,
And plucked like jasmine!
Nor is it like mangoes and coconuts,
To be climbed up and plucked from above!
Swimming against the current it is,
Like planting a flag-pole on the top of a volcano!
The interim rule that comes
Is one that relieves the stress of the march!
Not a shaded shelter it is by nature provided.
The ambitious march should proceed apace!
Though those in dire need
Act like near and dear ones
And seek for positions desired,
And sell themselves,

Like the arrows of bows we shall be,
And like the tip of a spear we shall live,
Thus when the throng, firm it is in its words,
And shine like letters on stone engraved,
What cares have I?
The Party is our goal cherished!
The horse may the rider topple,
And dig a deep pit beneath, it is said.
Here, making us horses, those who ride on us,
May dig a pit underneath!
So also the story of the ladder being kicked off
On reaching the top!
So too the story of gratitude being killed!
All the pains I bore in the sole thought of you!
Dear brother! Apple of my eyes!
Good wishes you offer me!
Respect I do pay to you!
The praises you give are not for the crown!
Whether a crown there is or not!

With the culture of wishing well,
Endowed you are dear brother!
You do praises shower on me.
The humblest self that toils for you!
You make me glow indeed!
Dear brother! Poor and humble you are!
Though worn-out I become,
Let me down you will not!
Without deserting you, I shall ever toil for you only.
This my firm resolve I shall take,
Dear brother!
On this, my birthday!

---

*Kalaignar wrote this poem on 03-06-1982, his 58th birthday.

33 As Your Shadow We Move about!*

Our Life!

Our Heart!
Crown of our racial pride!
Symbol of our renaissance!
Grove beautiful from where do flower lofty thoughts!
Heartbeat of dear brothers steely-hearted!
Your seventy-fifth year of birth this is –
Why did you at sixty cease?
Elder brother!
Your oratory in beautiful Tamil
Did surpass the flow of fountains!
Your shower of English diction
Was your ability's emblem colourful!
Your writings you did heap like chunks of candy!

And we as ants did taste them.
Your seventy-fifth year of birth this is –
Why did you at sixty cease?
Elder brother!
Magnetic were your eyes!
Serene was your speech!
Valorous were your deeds!
Wise were your ways!
Kindness was your brother born!
Compassion was its closest kin!
Your heart would anything bear!
A treasure in a trove you were for Tamils!
Your seventy-fifth year of birth this is –
Why did you at sixty cease?
Elder brother!

Even before your coming,
The Tamils a history had.
But only after you came,
The Tamils of their history had a clear view!
Literature there was for Tamils!
But only after your advent,
Alive your made it,
For the world to know of it!
A culture of their own the Tamils had!
But time was when ignorant of it they were.
Leader! Because you came,
The Tamil, a Tamil became!
Your seventy-fifth year of birth this is –
Why did you at sixty cease?
Periyar's lieutenant you were!
The ills that strange men
In many ways sowed
Declare them you did as poison accumulated!

Scholar you were!
Teacher of knowledge you were!
Following the path of equal justice for all,
You exhorted, evil it was to encourage casteism
That distinguished between the poor and the rich!
Your seventy-fifth year of birth this is –
Why did you at sixty cease?
No reply there is to this question raised!
The pain of our heart,
Alleviated it is not even now –
But ever with us you are,
And in that thought thus,
As your shadow we move about!

*On September 15, 1983, the seventy-fifth birthday of Anna, Kalaignar wrote this poem.

34 Enmity Conquer We Shall!

Dear brother!

Our elder born!
In pouring rains,
In streaking lightning,
In crashing thunder,
In fierce storm,
With a little lamp held in your hand,
The journey you began with a smile!
On what path?
On a steep rock!
On a path full of stones!
To let the lamp glow,
You gave it to our hands. Yes!

Without a delay in continuing the walk,
Amidst oppositions,
In the hope we would place the burning lamp
On the peak of our cherished goal,
You handed it over to your brothers young!
Shielding it from the winds that were keen to put it out,
We marched on the victory path!
In the light of the lamp,
Beholding your benign face, Anna!
Enmity conquer we shall .
This we shall as today's vow thus take!

15-09-1987

35 At Anna Salai, on the Day of M.G.R's Death*

Dear brothers!

Those that let this happen,
Though they happily smile and stand by,
That brother young
Did not stab me on the back,
But only on the chest.

Pleased therefore I am!
May you prosper ever!
Affectionately,
M. Karunanidhi

*27-12-1987
When Kalaignar's statue on Anna Salai was damaged on the day of M.G.R's death, Kalaignar wrote this.

36 Mutability!

Dear brother!

Wake up I did after sleep.
The dawn peeped in
Before sunrise!
Every day in the morning,
I had the habit of walking!
Before I rose up for that,
Thoughts in peace,
Like a new-born babe,
Kicked its feet about!
The lisp of my thoughts,
I do an epistle make,
In Poetry New!

"Mutability" is the title of this New Poem!
O Mutability! Everchanging thoughts you churn,
In so many hearts!
Yes indeed! Ideals imbedded deep in the heart,
Are made mutable by you!

Human beings
Though they know,

Your life is brief,
For the sake of your dizzy raptures,
Play fast they do!
Mutability…
What and which are mutable?
'Life is mutable' says man.
But not his own finding this is.
The choice of pain, the tearful eyes reveal,
Pelf and wealth that ever do fleet,
Mutable, he calls them.
But in passion intense,
He is keen to deeply drink
The pleasure immense!
Just for that, sell himself he will.
That is why the great poet Bharathidasan,
In words that singe,
Declared: "Do not sell thyself!"
O Mutability!
In the name of power and money.
A big gap there exists,
Between permanence and transience!
The human mercenaries forget this,
In their own selfishness!
Money may go, but one's own goodness should not!
The crowning power may go, but one's self respect should not!
Body and soul may go, but honour and fame should not!
These certainly should not go at all!
Those who for mutability do not care,
And hold their chest erect,
Are those who live forever in history!
But there are some men passé,
Who deem mutability permanent,
And fall upon the shadow to clasp it;
Not intent upon the heroic history they will gain after death,

To mutability they hold on!
And try to walk erect.
But unable to do so, they stoop and fail!
The pleasure of power and pelf that change,
Are like letters in water writ!
But those men who deem this their fate,
And trip and fall are men of chaff!
The mutable: A water bubble!
That to a few, an emblem of royal power is!
The Permanent:
    Sacrifice,
    Firm resolve
    Hard work
    Honour
    Reverence, and
    Esteem.
Even if fall they do,
These alone are their symbols of triumph!

22-11-1990

cf. 'The Umbrella of Power and the Umbrella of Victory'. *Shower of Poetry,* Vol. III

37 This I Dedicate

Fostered as a child by the love and kindness of my mother, Anjukam,
Drawn delightfully to the philosophy of Periyar, when young,
Nurtured to maturity by Anna's love,
Gathering a force against Hindi, in youthful zeal,
Drawn by idealism I came to *Murasoli*!
O Tamil! *The Triple Dimensions of Life!*
Through the *Kural* you gave
You hugged me close and guarded me,
Never letting me stray away even for a while.
The dountless *Murasoli's Golden Jubilee Souvenir*
On your behalf I dedicate
To all our ebullient brothers,
To my dear mother and father,
To Periyar and Anna,
Who in my heart ever do live,
And to all those learned and wise.

10-08-1992

38 Like a Speeding Spear

What really is *keraseva?*

Is it service to God,
Or that which sows the seeds of dissension?
And another woman to assist this?

If born was Rama in the *Dhredha Yuga,*
The *Dhuvabara Yuga* also had come and gone.
If this is the *Kali Yuga* that is happening,
Two lakhs of years have come and gone!

Before so many lakhs of years,
Who did ever the birth place of Rama find, or discover it?
Declaring only now that this is that place,
Just is it to demolish the historical symbol of the Muslims?

All would agree to have a temple built
For Rama in Ayodhya without a let.
But to remove Babar Masjid for that,
Agree we shall not!

Securing permission only for doing *karaseva,*
The hard-hearted clan of *Kalingars*
Now try to destroy a very ancient mosque,
And build there a temple of Rama.

All the leaders of the nation,
Knowing this as a wicked scheme,
And pained at heart, refuse to accept this....

To support *karaseva,*
A Dravidian Power so called,
Came out from behind the scene,
And this scene we saw!

Some thick-skinned Tamils,
Loathe to losing the spoils of office,
They abjectly begged and got,
Bark aloud in support of the fanatic lot.
This is thus the way of their explanation!

The Hindus and the Muslims,
Live as kith and kin in Tamil Nadu.
Let us rise declaring,
There is no place for the treacherous lot of AIADMK,
To enter through bylanes
And sneak into birds' nests, like snakes.
This is the land nurtured by the revolutionary called Periyar.
This is the plant manured and matured by Anna.
Taking us to be weak,
The frauds may not emboldened be to act against us,
But don't ever forget , there are traitors!

A band of ebullient youths you are!
As speeding spears and fierce swords you be,
And be ready to ever start at the flick of the thumb!

05-12-1992

39 Rationalist Paandyan

Our dear Pandyan!

Did your body alone appear handsome like your name Soundaram?
Your heart too was beautiful!
And a roaring tiger you were –
The majesticity of Panneerselvam,
Was what the Pandyans of Pattiveeranpatti specially had.
Thus had brother Azhagiri often said of them.
And I was also one of those who had the pleasure of seeing this
From close proximity.
Anbil, Nagoor Hanifa and I had enjoyed
Your delectable hospitality, at Pattiveeranpatti.
Happy we were to share rationalistic thoughts with you then.
You took us the next day to the garden, near the mountain,
And showed and explained to us,
About cardamom, vegetables and flowers grown there.
That still lingers in our memory!
P.T. Rajan of so deep a religious devotion,

And a non-believer like Sundara Pandyan,
Like ghee in butter hidden,
United in heart and soul they were in such a cultured manner!
At a meeting of Dravidian youths,
Organized in Tiruvarur,
You delivered a speech worth its weight in gold.
You declared that whatever Periyar said in the name of the Self-Respect Movement, You would accept it as a command.
The Platinum Jubilee Conference,
Held in the ancient City of Madurai,
At a place named after you as Pandyan Nagar,
Was an event organized by the D.M.K.
That stands as a testimony to look back in retrospect at the D.M.K.,
As a memorable movement in history!
When a grand bridge at a cost of eighty lakh rupees
Was specially built at Seranmadevi, your constituency,
When you were Leader of the Assembly,
I named it after Sundara Pandyan, a master of rich Tamil!
The sycophant lot who turned principles
To subserve the needs of those in power,
And offered obeisance as slaves to the Party,
Many a time you whipped with your powerful words!
Those invoking the sacred name of God,
And simulating that it is a part of an evolutionary growth,
The portrait of the rationalist captain unveil,
Who lived like a lion, O what a befitting "appropriateness" this is!

At the Self-Respect Conference,
Organized by Periyar at Chengleput in 1928,
The singular resolution that women too should have
Equal rights to property was approved under your Presidentship,
Keeping that in mind, as an Act we regularized it,
During the D.M.K. rule.
Not only the Nadar community,
But the entire land did support and praise you!

Only when castes are eradicated,
Will society progress, said Valluvar's *Kural*.
Never forgetting this for a second you lived,
O Personality pleasant! Lion dauntless! May you forever live!

1993

40 No Day there is That May be his Birthday Called

Lord of the heart he is,
Of the Tamil land on the southern tip.
Our brother dear,
Is the lord of the Earth of the Golden Age!
By his pleasing diction and pleasant writing,
He had surpassed sweet sugar cane,
And the blooming blossoms' beauty!
He was the noble-hearted,

Who with the melody of his enduring heart,
Had subdued the hissing cobras,
Which bared their fangs of thoughts futile.
On our bother will be showered
Everlasting censure.
In humility, like a tortoise he was,
Like a dumb creature, he would in patience wait,
But if any harm to the Tamils happened,
As a raging fire he would rise!
Like a hatching hen, he took care of all of us.
The way we guide our forces today,
Was indeed what he taught us.
His lips, red like coral, cast pearl-like words!
His eyes, sans anger, beams of light like diamond, they were!
No day there is that may be his birthday called.
The days that see the renaissance of Tamil elixerine,
Are his birthday anniversaries indeed!

15-09-1994

41 Do Not Your Onward March Give up!

Let the dogs ever bark!

But do not your onward march give up!
No need there is to be in fear and seek a sheltering corner.
Not after plunder we are,
But only to stop it we march on!
To propagate the principles, to reach the goal,
To fly the flag on the victory peak, we march on!
Pure-hearted!
The seeds of poison by enemies sown,
Will soon as thorns grow.
To stop them harming the followers' feet,

Pick up and break the thorns and throw them away!
Do not in trepidation be if a wild river your path does cross.
Judging how your forebears crossed it,
Make a bridge or by your sinews swim,
And the banks you reach, without stopping your journey.
One from the pack of howling jackals may turn left,
And another to the right!
Why bother whether they turn left or right!
See they do not harass you!
Animals and wild snakes may lurk in the bush
Only to ward the dangers off, you do a weapon require.
The mounting chaff of human enmity to put an end
Carry you do the sword of goodness and the armour of love.
When you eagerly climb the snowy peaks,
Handy it is to wear footwear, free from inner hassles.
Never will they slip you up!
Your journey is for removing mean thought of years,
And the authoritarian yoke.
Forgetting this, do not as orphans leave the Tamils.
Singing eulogies and showering adulations,
Tempting you with positions high,
And showing you abject obedience,
Enemies will as friends appear.
Without falling into that abyss,
Do guard yourself and the Tamil community!
Loudly sing in praise of Periyar!
Dance in joy, trumpeting Anna's glory!
You could the difficult journey continue sans tiresomeness.
Even the little ant will mock at the lazy!
Conquor by the call of duty and happy decorum!
Let the Party's journey progress bound by discipline.
Swear, sans a rest, you will ever serve!
Dear brothers! Like the rains do shower,
And the Tamil land enrich!

Though you may the white ants and the rats feed on the way,
Be on guard and protect the written pages!
The Party is the plant of million years.
Watch out! A deceitful few there are
Who will offer sweet poison to uproot it!
For the sake of principles that have with our body and soul become one,
Let us a victory procession take out!

24-09-1984

42 We Shall Tear the Mask to Pieces!

Matted hair they grow,
And devotional wear they spread out.
With a strong following,
The government in power they will topple!
Even lithesome women with beautiful looks,
To their deceitful schemes easily fall a prey!
Even in the days of yore, those known as sages,
With their hair as a knot on top wound up and tied,
And living in humble dwellings,
Not fully renouncing their desires,
Were drawn to women, as a better joy than other joys,

And many a child they fathered!
The Buddha under the Bodhi tree,
And Mahaveera, Adhisankara and the *Ramayana*,
Lofty ideals though they preached,
Those describing themselves their disciples,
To violent ways did fall,
And sowed poisonous seeds of the stinking disparities of castes.
Because these increased in numbers large,
Virtuous conduct and tenets of renunciation,
Like a scorched tree tender fell, alas!
And society's progress slipped
Like spilt milk that flowed to the ground.
"Come! I shall God reveal!"
So saying their disciples to the bed invite!
Such were the confirmed ascetics,
Pious beings and religious gurus!
"Heaven to you I shall show!"
So saying these rogues will bend Cupid's bow,
And tempt women to bed with their play of love.
Taking this to be a sacred writ in religious devotion,
And deeming their sensual desires on spiritual fervour,
The bevy of beautiful women easily get deceived.
Is this a sacred writ, or an injustice?
So many supernatural players,
So many possessed dancers,
Miraculous deeds so rare did do.
Though people knew magicians in a fifty,
Performed all those in public arenas,
What crass believing fools the public are!
What middlemen are these, between God and Man?
The man who has divine grace thus received,
Why to him pay fees, make religious offerings,
And perform daily rituals?
He who has renounced all, why needs he women?

Why his body bathe in full with 'fragrant water?'
As an indication of the state of *'Nirvana'* he has reached,
Does he have to enjoy pictures of women in nudity?
Gleaming swords and jugs of liquor,
As ascetics staff and pitcher of water serve.
The body of the syberetic Guru,
Made fat by gluttonous eating is by women massaged.
Seeing these often, and not becoming wise,
What a pack of fools you remain!
An ashram to print counterfeit currencies,
And another to bury gold in deep-dug pits.
Indeed, difficult it is to reform these innocent women,
Who trust and worship these thieves so mean!
No difference there is between men and women,
Who cheat and loot a town!
A crowd there is who in celebration
Take out in procession,
Those that to house-tops set fire!
Countenancing all the dark and subtle designs,
Rationalist thought thus they kill!
Many in power, promotions to seek,
And heaps of money to gather,
The 'golden feet' of ascetics wash they do!
Innocent women sweet voiced,
Circle round peepul trees,
To offset their childlessness
And to the mutts of these ascetics go.
Raising their hands to bless and hugging their bodies,
Grant they the gift the damsels seek,
Swapping roles with the husbands!
Though a lot of news spreads daily,
Of murders and plunders,
Kidnappings and wanton rapes,
There are men to surround and safely protect

These men of matted crowns!
Even ministers are slaves to these.
If they are enconsed, unmindful of the gathering smoke of gossips,
To demonstrate the truth that there is no smoke without fire,
Let fire in all directions rage!
And the deeds of these frauds,
Hidden behind the screen of divinity,
Be by fire singed and burnt -
Celebrating the fame of the revolutionary poet,
Bharathidasan,
Researching on books, published new,
And organizing rousing receptions -
These alone won't do, my compatriots!
"Fair is it to deem these frauds who do not serve
Mystics great?" asked the poet with a fervour so intense!
"With a revolutionary heart thus,
The leonine pack of Tamils have started! See!"
Come! Proclaiming thus,
Let us rise to tear to pieces the masks
Of those priests of falsehood.

22-11-1990

43 Calculation-2*

O Tamil! Honey sweet! Fruit cherished!
Ambrosia! Grace! Art beauteous!
Beauty! Intellect glorious! Thought lustrous!
Bower beautiful! Glory great! Jewel precious!
Wealth splendid! Form beautiful! Pleasing chill!
Cool tree! Pleasant shade! Pleasure sensuous
Beneath the shade!
Mother! Your feet I clasp,
To present thus my poetic presidential address.
Poets, come to present scenic thoughts
In sensuous Tamil,
Please accept my respects.
Praise be to the sun!
The anklets' sound does ring clear!
Made sweet are our thoughts!
A thousand moons! a thousand women!
A thousand plants of paddy grains!
A thousand men!
Praise to the sun they offer!

Tamils in numbers large there are!
Thousands of songs they sing!
Praising the sun, they gather at the Pongal Festival!
Praising the sun, they dance at the Pongal Festival!
Buntings in mango leaves,
Turmeric stalks and plantain trunks,
Temple drums and traditional decorations they saw,
And in a joyous chorus shouted,
"Pongalo! Pongal!"
Though they lived in five different kinds of lands,
(Hilly land, pastoral land, seashore land, agricultural land and desert land)
They lived understanding well their culture!
Though they lived long before the timeless past,
And were the earliest family,
They had learnt to destroy jungles,
To make arable lands for them,
And dig tanks to make the soil rich!
Shoulders carrying arrows,
Valour will show,
And fields where paddy grains are seen,
Agricultural skills reveal.
New and newer words are born,
To show the richness of their language.
Apart from word and writing,
Old *Tholkappian*, the great,
A work of grammar collated
For a rich life of the Tamils.
Valluvar too to the world offered
The *Kural* in Tamil sweet.
In happiness great,
Let us to his ever true poetic utterances listen,
As though the rains that belied,
Had begun to pour again!
By the yeoman service of splendid poets,

Silappadhikaram, Valayapathi, Manimekalai,
Seevakasinthamani and *Kundalakesi,*
Mother Tamil's beauteous ornaments became.
Poets of those days with love were imprisoned
In the hearts of kings.
And did not in cruel prisons languish,
Like poets of the present day.
A musician skilled pours showers of melody,

And songs from *Ettuthogai, Patthupaattu, Kurunthogai, Aingurunooru, Aganaanooru, Puranaanooru* and *Nedunalvaadai* are sung,
And people are enthralled as though of liquor drunk!
Under the title "Calculation,"
A poetic symposium is held,
At the Pongal Festival today.
Limitless meanings there are
For the word, "Calculation,"
Depending on the context
Before and after the word.
If these are in poetry uttered,
Exceedingly sweet they are.
The day we our liberty gained,
From the clutches of the White imperialists,
Is a day of reckoning, Anna said!
Every year, when the Day of Independence followed,
He called it a day of stocktaking!
Those who should their accounts submit,
When they are for accounts asked,
It is a day of laughter,
That did the Party divide!
Even Periyar who had objected to the addition,
Of a community's nomenclature to a name,
Would have called the accountant in his store,
Kanakkupillai,

With the communal name, *Pillai,* attached!
Saying they plan only for the nation,
All the money they collect, like a circling vulture,
Is to be calculated as bribe,
And accounted as an immense profit earned!

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*15-01-1995
Kalaignar made this presidential poetic presentation at a symposium on the topic, "Calculation," during the Pongal Festival, organized by the Sun TV on its *Thamizh Maalai* Programme.

44 In Search of Human Love

Dear brother mine!

Are you of a truth aware?
The pleasure I did not find
In my mother's lap,
The pleasure I did not find
When my father bore me on his shoulders,
The pleasure I did not find
When my two sisters guided me,
As my life's breath,
The pleasure I did not find,
In the love that my beloved wife
Showered on me,
The pleasure I did not find
In my children's lilting lisp
That surpassed the *kural*,
The flute and the harp

I did in you find,
When in happiness complete
Your mouth did loudly proclaim,
"Long Live!"
And whenever I exhorted you to come,
As a command my words you took,
And carried them out in action,
And happily stood before me;
And when, even before my lips moved to say,
"To battle," you did your duty do,
And stood erect in pride.
Pleased I am from the bottom of my heart!
I am ashamed that unable I am
To be equal to your love,
And my face does droop!
Seventy-one I am today –
What joys, what pains,
In the events so mixed,
In the life of my humble self!
People know where my path lies
Though Periyar's and Anna's path it is.
Countless calumnies and condemnations,
Struggles and oppositions;
Brooking all these, proud is my heart,
And it ever does endure!
All the stones that receive the chisel's stroke,
Do not life-like statues become.
My gratitude to those who chiselled me
As a product finished and fine!
In the forge's fire intense,
All the irons the hammer strikes
Are not as swords and spears wrought!
To those who made me a sword, a spear,
Immense gratitude I owe.

When you in admiration hold my humblest self,
I am overjoyed.
But when I the wicked covenant see,
That makes a colony of a nation.
Ire intense my face does show,
And in my heart does a volcano rise,
When Hindi fanatics
Raise the bogey of a violent threat,
Social justice so called
Is the trick of an eyewash they perpetrate.
Wounded at heart, in a state of agitation I am.
By Arafat's political settlement,
Palestinians half the freedom get!
In South Africa,
Under the black rule of the Whites,
There is a (white) dawn for Blacks!
Here, Eelam alone burns!
India, from being two,
Later became three.
In the rest of the land that remains,
How many castes! How many bickerings!
If secular principles die,
Divided will be the Nation.
In the search of human love,
Losing man himself,
Confused are the political parties,
And the political scene changes.
Amidst all these,
On this, my birthday,
My brothers who are dearer than life,
Declare: "Why fear, we are here!"
With them I shall join and swear,
That I shall protect the Tamil land and the Tamil language,

Defend the rights of the people of our race,
And ever my ceaseless service do,
Following the path of Periyar and Anna!

03-06-1995

45 A Petty Village Full of Folks Illiterate!

A petty village this is, full of folks illiterate -

Only they are the majority in the panchayat!

If literates, one or two,

Stand up to oppose, disturbed,

Pushed down they will be so heartlessly!

A pack of fattened loafers are these not?

A petty village this is, full of folks illiterate -

Only they are the majority in the panchayat!

Aware that mean dogs will bark,

Pieces of bread they throw,

And gag their mouths and catch them trapped!
A "fraud" from amidst the panchayat hall
Will speak in emotion deep, and the truth suppress!
An artful trick learnt in the womb!
A petty village this is, full of folks illiterate -
Only they the majority are in the panchayat!

No constructive plans for betterment of the people there are,
Encouraging corruption alone is the fraud's occupation,
Thus to gain renown and live for himself alone!
If someone said, 'This wouldn't do,'
Flayed alive he would be!
New laws everyday -
And as ignorance still is rife,
Their boisterous frolics do go on!
A petty village this is, full of folks illiterate -
Only they the majority are in the panchayat!

The chaste Kannagi the city of Madurai did burn in wrath,
But these in a manner similar,
Will burn the newspaper, *Panchali Devi!*
A pack of fools these are,
And even if their backs are with a support straightened,
Too low they will bend!
A petty village this is, full of folks illiterate -
Only they the majority are in the panchayat!

This very village I shall serve myself on a platter,
And devour it all, whether cooked or not.
This alone my decision is!
Though that fraud says so thus,
Ever ready to support the yes-men are!
And fall prostrate they will before him!
A petty village this is, full of folks illiterate -
Only they the majority are in the panchayat!

To speak in the opposite way is his gospel, he says,

And declares that the wood of the drumstick tree
Will be useful for house-building!
If a protective wall with candlesticks is raised,
Even fire will flee in fear, he will say!
I will commit a thousand sins,
And God is on my side!
That besides, I am alone God, says he!
A petty village this is, full of folks illiterate -
Only they the majority are in the panchayat!

Time this is for the mean to pine for a pittance;
Inviting one to squarely blame,
And catching another a complaint to make
And singing in praise of the way
Just laws are turned upside down,
For putting people into prison,
These eulogize foul as fair!
How long can this last?
A petty village this is, full of folks illiterate -
Only they the majority are in the panchayat!

When all remain as mute dolls,
Raising both the right and left hands,
Won't the wicked 'fraud' in exultation gloat?
Even before the tall wall totters and falls,
The illiterate should literate become
By moral means to finish wickedness again!
A petty village this is, full of folks illiterate -
Only they the majority are in the panchayat!

46 Inauguration of the Valluvar Statue*

Tamil! A powerful tongue you are!

Tamil! A unique tongue of joy immense you are!
Tamil! A tongue sweet you are for writing!
Tamil! My body and soul you suffuse!
Tamil! I bow to you!

Elders, mothers, bold ones young,
Come have you with great love for me.
Respectful Professor Anbazhagan,
President of this gathering large,
My kindred who from foreign lands have come,

To enthuse me with your thoughts enlightened,
Distinguished gathering of ministers,
Wise ones who have come
To add grace to the assembly!
Poets! You have come as symbols of Tamil poetry,
To present your poems,
Like pearls from deep within the three seas surrounding us!
The soft breeze from the sea,
And the fresh breeze of your poems
Will quickly drive away all our sufferings,
And the glory of pristine Tamil will announce,
And change the vision blind.
The *Kural* they will adore.
And the perennial lamp they will light,
Amidst the world.
We will hold aloft the enlightening flag
Of virtue, wealth and pleasure,
And follow the path by Valluvar shown,
And put an end to the actions of those
Who try to stop it.
Intention I have none to oppose grammar
But it is the dear parrot that a quarrel picks with me.
Though song and grammar,
Do not go together
Determined that my song won't
Tamil feelings hurt,
I have boldly entered this poetic stage,
Like neem in the sugar cane press.
Let the southern breeze softly blow,
And your songs splendid blossom
As flowers in the garland of Tamil.
Sweet sugar cane you are,
But amidst you, like a lean pole I am.
If an ant can an iron pillar shake,

My humble song will conquer you.
The cuckoo in the garden will sing,
The beauteous peacock will dance,
The parrot wise will leap
And in silence sit.
The sky beautiful will sprinkle
Colours many-spelendored,
The rainbow will bend,
And the morning sun will rise.
We have come to the margin of Kumari,
Along the blue sea,
And in joy do we stop.
Here have I caused an imposing
Statue to be installed for Thiruvalluvar.
Fondly have I called upon you
To come and offer your felicitations.
Clap your hands to let the waves of the sea thus toss about,
And let your felicitations
Shake the hills around.
And loudly swear to follow
The songs of Thiruvalluvar,
As no other way there is to prosper,
Do carry the *Kural* aloft.
Pictures I drew for songs of the *Kural,*
And poetic expositions wrote,
For the whole of *Kural.*
Further and further I think,
As to know what else Valluvar had left out.
Amazed, I place my hand under the chin and ruminate.
In the feathers of the swan,
Do we ever see a hint of black?
So do we consider the *Kural* a scripture,
Blemishless and spotless.
We consider Valluvar

As the glorious light of equality,
As an incomparable philosopher and mystic,
Bringing about a social revolution,
As a splendid light of human kind,
As the pristine being who offered to the world
Sacred interpretations and a new awakening.
Valluvar bestowed the basis of love,
Adoring all lives.
The realm of politics and economics he examined,
And offered deep interpretations.
And Valluvar was he who exposed us to the culture that should rule!
The thirty eight sections on 'Virtue,'
Constitute the base for Valluvar's statue.
I have taken a *kural* for each section.
And collated it with simple explications.
He who does not follow the path of the incomparable one
Cannot his mental cares remove.
Thus shows Valluvar.
Rain alone is the nectar,
And the salve for life to live.
Thus does the *Kural* say.
Unable to control the five senses,
Intense suffering Indran experienced.
It is Valluvar's philosophy that inculcates
The awareness even into the bad to control the senses!
The principle of the *Kural* is that it shows
That the purity of heart alone is the righteous path,
And all else are the crowd's noisy protestations.
It is the *Kural* that inculcates this in us.
Domestic life by virtue governed,
Good it is when without the blame of others it exists.
Thus does sing the *Kural* indeed!

Without enslaving womankind,
Whose words bring instant rains
Let the softer sex truthfully rise.
The cherished *Kural* of Valluvar
Was composed for that –
So do we thus declare.

To be free from all ills for seven generations,
Good it is to bring up children from reproach free.
Thus utters the lofty *Kural.*
The loving ones even their bones to others give away.
The loveless ones deem everything theirs.
The path of the *Kural* thus does the trait of
The loveless expose, and adore the large-hearted.
The host does the guest feed first,
And the remnants left are for the home.
Even the seeds for the land
He does to the guest offer.
The *Kural* thus does clearly present
The generous heart of the host.
When sweet words there are,
Choosing harsh ones
Is like plucking fruits unripe,
When ripe fruits there are.
Such an example as this
Kural the world's scripture does offer.
The help rendered by those who have not received our help
Equalled it cannot be by heaven and earth.
The grammar of gratitude
Does the noble-tongued Valluvar thus dictate.
Whether one is worthy or unworthy
Can be by their offsprings known.
Contrary to this interpretation, alluding to the offsprings,
Valluvar refers only to the lofty fame,

That people attain in their lives.
Whatever be that is not guarded, guarded should be the tongue.
If not, words do bring harm.

At a meeting once, someone raised a naughty question: "Valluvar exhorted that the tongue should be guarded. This did he say to all who went about in the street?" Anna cornered him thus: "He said that only to those who had a tongue!"

Good conduct reflects good breeding.
Failure to gain good conduct lands one in a miserable life.
When these two *Kurals* are compared, the two aspects stress the ever truthful words of Valluvar.
He who doesn't another man's wife look at,
Is great. A virtue it is not, but complete moral conduct.
So said this great expert of knowledge!
A woman who dumped garbage on his head everyday.
Was in sickness laid up.
Mohamed Nabi rushed to enquire after her health.
When Jesus was crucified,
A happy face he put up.
Saint Appar stood up to continuous repression.
This is what Valluvar said:
The earth does bear with the one who digs it,
Likewise, it is great to bear with those who cause insult to us.
The poets are here to present their verses
Under eight titles.
They should be competitive in spirit,
But from envy free.
Free from envy you will be, I know.
What is envy? It is not something alien.
It begins from our heart.
And an evil force it is from within.
Before our being is destroyed by that evil,
We should destroy it without our being innocent.
If these truthful words are heeded,

Benefits many there will be!
The daylight robbers are accustomed
Only to robbing others,
What advantage is there from their keen intellect?
This is the question that Valluvar poses in the *kural.*
Better it is to die than to carry tales,
And in falsehood live.
Valluvar thus does announce:
Man he is not who speaks uselessly.
Chaff he is among men.
These are the words of Valluvar.
Those that do evil deeds come to ruin,
Like the shadow following him at all times.
What a great example!
What effect did this in the world bring about!
The good trait of helping others
Rare it is to find in this world and the world to come.
Nothing there is that is comparable to
This *Kural* sweet!
Do not give, expecting an advantage in return.
To the hungry and the poor do ever give.
It was Vallalar who said the same:
"Whenever withering plants I saw,
Saddened at heart I was."
Be born in this world to do a deed in fame.
Otherwise, better it is not be born at all.
This is the exhortation of a mentor wise.
Many such examples may be found in this world.
No worldly life there is for those who lack wealth,
And for those who lack kindness,
There cannot be the other-worldly life.
Thus does the mentor of great intellect distinguish the two worlds.
Hereafter, such a one as Valluvar cannot be found in any world!
Throwing many things into the sacrificial pit

And conducting a thousand sacrificial rituals
Is better than slaughtering a life and eating it.
This moving sermon is not for one's place alone, but for you and me,
Said this noble soul. Is not then the *Thirukkural* everlasting!
Bearing ills that happen, and not harming lives, are manifestations of penance.
Nor harming any life, and having a heart to bear anything is penance,
Aptly observed this mystic of Tamil scripture,
Who had offered a sacred scripture to the whole world!
Hiding under the guise of penance and doing harm,
Is like a hunter hiding behind a bush to catch birds.
Thus does warn Valluvar!
Those inclined to stealing,
Cannot within bounds live.
What a far-sighted utterance of *Kural* this is!
Truthful speech is that which is
Harmless speech.
Thus does clearly explain Thiruvalluvar,
The mentor great and mystic author of the *Kural.*
"Why should I my anger control?" Haughtily laughed an extremely angry fellow, and killed a child. Right at that moment came a gigantic man who asked him: "Fool! Are you come to wrestle with me? As soon as he asked that, the fool who killed the young one, said that it was culture to control anger, and he quickly ran away.
One who controls anger where he can command is the one who controls anger. Where he cannot, it is futile whether he can stop anger or no.
Thus appropriately does declare the Tamil scripture.
The way to punish those who do harm to us,
Is to put them to shame by doing good to them.
Is not our Guru a God!
Any defect there is in this song of the *Kural!*
At a gathering of the wise,
A debate arose as to which work
Of scholars assembled there was superior.
Valluvar who did not approve class distinctions,

Came there and declared that without distinction of the rich and the poor,
All sharing alike, to let everyone prosper, on the principle of equality,
Is the one who is superior among scholars.
Sharing food equally and protecting all lives,
Is the best principle by scholars laid.
To declare Valluvar's *Kural* a Tamil scripture is wrong.
A scripture is it not for the whole world!
An attachment to one thing increases attachment
To many things, and it leads to temptation.
So an ascetic cannot an ascetic be.
This is evidenced by the *kural* of Valluvar, which is as follows:
Not to be attached to anything is natural for renunciation.
Attachment leads to temptation.
The world's sky is near to him,
Who is from doubt clarified.
Isn't it true that even two thousand years ago, Valluvar had a far-sighted scientific vision to give rise to this *kural!*
I am amazed at the definition given by Valluvar for perennial wealth.
Freedom from desire is the best wealth. Nothing anywhere is equal to it.
Destiny is mightier than all else.
Even if whatever else occurs, Destiny comes first.
Thus Nature comes first to win!

***** **** ***** **** **** **** **** **** *** *** ****** *** **** **

Now it is going to be the vibrant voice of the poets!
Is it going to thunder, or blow like the soft southern breeze,
Or rage like a storm?
Their poetry, will it be a blend of sugar and honey,
Or a triumphant poem that defeats intense heartlessness?
(Here is Chief Minister Kalaignar's poetic introduction to Pon Selvaganapathy, as he comes up to present his verses)
Rare, rare indeed it is,
To be a human being born.
Yet rarer it is to be born without being bent, blind or deaf.

From the threefold aspects of the *Kural,*
Our poets have to present verses on four rarities.
To sing, Selvaganapathy invokes the name of Ganapathy.
Not that he does it out of devotion, but out of love.
This Ganapathy I shall call to present his verses on:
"The help rendered by those who have not received our help,
Equalled it cannot be by heaven and earth."
(Here is Chief Minister Kalaignar's poetic introduction to Kavithaipithan, as he comes up to present his verses).
Kavithaipithan
Composes verses like rain torrential,
Like the sound of crackers.
A scholar skilled and a powerful poet he is,
A passionate lover of poetry and a loyal devotee of the Party he is.
Your poem: "The ire of the great who stand on the lofty hill of goodness,
None can bear even for a second." as you present
Makes it difficult to guard oneself with a few words.
Brother, obey your Anna's words.
Sing like a bee you will, and we shall listen.

(Here is Chief Minister Kalaignar's poetic introduction to Nirmala Suresh, as she comes up to present her verses.)
Nirmala Suresh
Is womanhood's glowing ruby.
Like the lady of Moovaloor,
She adores Tamil threefold,
And stands foremost in the crusade against ignorance.
She is a scintillating poet in the women's wing of the D.M.K.
Warriors in the battlefield, difficult it is to defeat.
Difficult it is to defeat crocodiles under the waters.
On who can be rarely defeated and where,
Let this sister sing in Tamil sweet.
(Here is Chief Minister Kalaignar's introduction to Mehta, as he comes up to present his verses)

Poet Mehta is a poet delightful,
And poetry lovers flock around him!
He is going to present his verses
Which are pleasant to hear,
And in thought so pleasing.
Oh! Let us in delight listen to his poem!

(Here is Chief Minister Kalaignar's poetic introduction to Erode Thamizhanban, as he comes up to present his verses)

Thamizhanban is an exemplar of the *Kural'* s saying:
"When in suffering, do smile."
Right from the day we started out for protecting our language he is with us.
He will present his chiselled verses on:
"Those that plead poverty and remain idle,
Mother Earth will laugh at."

(This is Chief Minister Kalaignar's poetic introduction to Vairamuthu, as he comes up to present his verses)

He is a diamond found in Vadugapatti. He is a poet renowned to censure
religions, castes, and ignorant superstitions,
And history makes, and Tamil enriches.
Let us without fail listen to a good poem on
"When I look at her, she looks down,
When I do not, she looks up and smiles."

(This is Chief Minister Kalaignar's poetic introduction to Abdur Rehman, as he comes up to present his verses)

Glory be to him!
A recent Akademi Award winner!
I had declared even earlier,
That if ever I had won a prize at a competition,
And was asked what I would want,
I would say: "Give me Rehman!"
He now comes up to present his verses on:
"The warrior at the elephant throws his spear,
And plucks the one that has pierced his chest and in laughter exults".

(This is Chief Minister Kalaignar's poetic introduction to Suratha, as he comes up to present his verses)
He is a friend from within,
But a critic from without.
Right from the beginning till now,
An undiminishing friendship between us there is
This affection from youthhood was born.
Even in old age, an unfailing friendship does exist.
Verses of felicitations to me he offered,
At my wedding in Thirukkuvalai.
Deeply cherish them at heart I do.
To present a poem rare on:
"Looking at the conduct of the deceitful person
The five elements too will laugh at him inwardly."
Now dear Suratha comes!
The fame of the *Kural* never ever ceases!
So no concluding remarks there are at this poetic symposium!

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*The inauguration of an imposing Valluvar statue in Kanyakumari was celebrated on 01-01-2000. To mark the occasion, a poetic symposium was held on 31-12-1999, when Chief Minister Kalaignar delivered this presidential address.

47 The Sweet Word that doesn't Satiate

All the flowers gathered one day,
Met at a conference,
And a resolution passed:
"Poets! Do not our names cite
For a comparison!"
Looking earthward,
The bright moon,
With eyes entreating,
A request made:
"Poets! You have sung enough of me in song.
Let me in the sky be free!"
The clouds assembled,
And took out a procession
Carrying an appeal.

"Poets! For the tresses of beauteous women
Do not the cloud show as an example hereafter!"
The deer and the peacocks and several others,
A protest organized, and a demand put up:
"Poets! How long will you so happily push us into the poetic prison?"
'Thus they did hop and jump!'
All were surprised at the poets' gathering.
Why this demand? Protest? Procession?
When thus they asked,
The deer and the peacock,
The moon and the flower,
Their reply made:
"Singing in praise of us,
And showing us as examples,
Have satiated us!
The deer, honey, peacock and the cuckoo,
The sky, sea, sun's rays, and the moon,
The doves, parrots, mangoes, jackfruits and the banana fruits
The fluttering flag and the singing streams,
The scented wood, clouds, mountains and the statues —
All did a non-cooperation organize.
We asked: "You tell us the thing yourself that doesn't satiate!"
"One word there is that doesn't satiate,
And if you think of it, it is a name,
That is from sourness and bitterness free!
It is a name that is ever an exemplar!
A word that has become incomparable history!
When you say 'flower' it is one that withers!
But that name fragrance ever wafts,
Sans withering!
If you say 'moon,' wane it will as a crescent!
But do know this name is blemishless,
And casts cool beams!
'Cloud,' you will say,

But when the wind blows,
It will dissolve as rain!
But this love will rain without winds!
Do find a name
That will as pregnant thought
To your poem add fame.
That name is that we call 'Anna.'
So beautiful a name it is!"
The stream and the southern breeze,
The beautiful flowers and all the other friendly ones,
In one voice did proclaim loud,
In joy inmost!
Only those who know him not,
An introduction to Anna need!
Don't we daily see the sight of people,
Acting as though Anna they know exceedingly well,
So as to smoothly move about in society!

17-06-2001

48 Socialism Proclaimed in a *Puram* Poem

To let the the young leonine Tamils to think and act well
I shall explain in part from a book I wrote on *Sangam Tamil.*
Receptive to it you be!
O you the rich! To sleep, lulled by the soft blowing southern breeze,
You live in mansions many storeyed!
Ever exploiting the sweat of the toiling masses,
Keen you are on amassing wealth aplenty!
Like a vulture that preys on the dead,
Your belly you do enlarge!
Pushing the poor into abysmal darkness,
You run after wealth, with a mind unsatiated!
You, I shall a question ask. Do a reply make!
Rubies cooked as vegetables fried,
And a garnished mixture of emerald stewed,

Do you on a leaf consume?
Making fries of diamonds,
And a potpourri of precious gems,
Do you pound pearls and corals,
And boil them as rice to go with them,
To fill the bag of your belly?
A question with such an import,
At a meeting did Anna ask,
Before men who had amassed heaps of wealth.
Never forgetting this, we do ever ask the same!
We trumpet today that socialism should pervade and flourish.
No new fanfare this is!
Hear the great savant Nakkeeran, proclaiming socialism
In an ancient poem on life.
The king who longs to hold untrammeled sway
Over all the world that the clear sea surrounds,
The primitive who roams night and day sans sleep
To hunt animals in the jungle,
As easily as pelting stones on sweet fruits –
These need only a pair of dresses
To hide their upper and lower limbs in modesty!
And to appease their hunger,
And save them from faintness,
Some gruel, or rice boiled from cereals -
Is not this all each one needs in this world by the sea aurrounded?
After realizing the truth that only a small measure is eaten,
And only two dresses are worn,
Is it just that many wallow in dire poverty,
And a few dance about in pomp and plenty?
While the physical and mental needs are the same,
For all born in the world,
Thoughtlessly, why should one alone gather wealth so much,
While many die in the abysmal depth of life?
To eradicate poverty, the proper way is

To destroy selfish possessions by individuals, and care for many lives,
Letting them share by the principle of socialism.
The purpose of life is to ensure such an equitable distribution,
To find joy on earth!
Poet Nakkeeran gathered these thoughts, and offered them,
And all the good people of this ancient earth
Continue to offer these selfsame thoughts!
"Over the terrain amidst the sea so clear,
One alone wishes to hold untrammelled sway
Under the canopy of one's power.
The primitive man, sleepless night and day,
In the jungle hunts.
For him, eating is a measure small,
And dresses are only two.
All the rest is the same for all.
Giving alone is the purpose of wealth.

(*Puranaanooru*: Verse 189)

21-06-2001

49 Do not Drive These Women away, and Do not Their Dislike Earn!

It was 1980, I remember!

Veeramani had invited me
To the Party's Conference

At resurgent Thanjai.
A good friend of mine he is.
So I agreed to go immediately!
I was in Delhi then, on work,
But I accepted the invitation
That came suddenly.
I flew to Chennai, and without going home,
Entrained at Egmore, travelled hard,
Arrived at sun-down, and entered the pandal
Of the Rationalists' Conference.
With a loud ovation, the people welcomed me
At the largely attended Conference.
I saw a lot of women gathered there.
It was only the awakening voice of women.
That would defeat ignorance, I thought.
And so I greeted them and said:
"May a new awareness flower and flourish!"
Paying respects, four women in a row,
Came up to the stage and stood.
Veeramani, wearing black,
And holding a knife, approached me.
"Hold this knife, and cut away the *thali,*
The auspicious yellow thread of their wedded troth," he said.
With my eyes wide open in surprise, I asked: "Why this dangerous act?"
Before that, the four women held up their symbolic yellow threads,
And readily came forward to have them cut.
On seeing that, agitated at heart I was.
Down I dropped the knife, and said at the conference of Black Shirts:
"A symbolic yellow thread is not required for a self-respect marriage.
I am not in disagreement with this.
But after the thread was tied round a woman's neck,
I have no heart to cut it away."
Agreeable it will be if men too
Wear this, like women.

If women are not inclined to remove it,
Let the removing be done at home.
But to convene a conference,
And celebrate before women
The cutting away of the yellow thread,
Is a useless occupation.
Promptly I declared this should not be done,
And my protest I recorded at the Conference!
This request I do make!
Do not drive away these women
Who willingly come forward
To follow the rationalist path,
And do not their dislike earn!

22-07-2001

50 A Radiant Light of Culture

Beside the banks of the river Kaviri,
With bowers full of blooming flowers,
Kapisthalam there is,
Where was born Moopanar.
Though the name of Kapisthalam,
The famed seat of arts,
And the foundation of kindness,
And of treasures,
Cannot be separated by time,
From the man called Karuppiah,
Time so heartless and impatient,
Plucked him away unkindly, alas!
A model of friendship,

And a radiant light of culture he was.
He was one, with an excellent culture of ever helping others.
Simplicity's humble lamp he was,
And ever so generous like the *Kaviri.*
He was one far removed from politics,
With a face that was as good as his inner self.
As a friend in need he always lived,
But alas! Alive he is not today!
The great Valluvar,
Unaware whether someone praised or scorned,
Something new had said.
Yes! When judging the fame of the world,
He said: "One who was alive yesterday,
Is no more today. This indeed is the glory of the world!"
Neither imagine, nor expect did I
That the thought as expressed by Valluvar
Would occur so early in the life of a munificent friend.
How many fond happenings
In our utterly friendly life!
We two parted
Because of political differences.
When I was at Sivagangai
To address a meeting,
Some mischief monger,
A rumour set afloat from Chennai,
That I was shot at on the stage!
My affectionate friend,
Disturbed and agitated,
Over the phone did so kindly get in touch with me,
At twelve of midnight.
And only when he heard my voice,
His mind did he set at rest.
Such was the friendship great.
Is it not one that is beyond all politics and parties?

India has lost a good leader,
And I have lost a good friend.
Shedding tears thus, I sing a song of praise for him,
Who as my friend does ever live!

01-09-2001

51 Alive Will No Man be!

Can fire be by fire extinguished?

Can water be by water stopped?
Can hatred be by hatred cancelled?
Can heart be by heart transformed?
Can a wicked deed be by another wicked deed
Called terrorism removed?
Shocked I was by the event that razed in a jiffy
The structure unique and famed
Of the world's most powerful nation, America!
Like a beautiful woman's coiffure bound,
That spiralled up and up to touch the sky,
These buildings, by American engineers built –
The World Trade Centre's skyscrapers,
The beautiful capital of Washington,
The powerful New York, ever vigilant against enemies,
Pentagon, the mammoth military base,

That encloses fighter planes –
Enmity insidiously entered all over here,
Like smoke screening everything!
Terrorism thus gobbled up thousands upon thousands,
Nay! Half a million people and more!
"Because of disagreeable principles,
Enmity by a few was caused,
In the firm conviction that these could not be reformed,
Killed they were,"
Terrorism thus declared.
Gandhi's non-violent philosophy,
Then, now and ever,
Would not be prepared to accept this!
For fresh blood like a river to flow,
For thousands to fall like corpses,
For young women to lose ambitious young sons and daughters,
And suffer thus,
For those who went to their offices hale and hearty
But to die in thousands,
For men and women, attired to go to offices,
And longingly waited for at home
By wives, husbands and loving ones
With all their loving kisses gone,
Like stones shattering glass to smithereens,
Compassion, kindness, love and affection,
As though by the sea carried away –
Can tributes be paid to these terrorists' acts
That terminated so many lives thus?
Use is there any in taking up the sword
To avenge terrorism in retaliation?
Thousands of men will be killed in such an engagement.
What good is there for the world?
To all those who plan to create a base,
Dreaming "By terrorist acts, we shall find

A sweet new world,"
I shall in all kindness declare!
"In your new world,
Sweetness there may be,
But no man alive will anywhere be!"

13-01-2001

52 Indication of a Dawn!

When a man is born as a child,
Born unaware he is of which God he should worship.
Only after his birth, if his mother and father are Hindus,
A Hindu he becomes!
If both the parents are Muslims,
He declares his religion as Islam!
If Israel and Mary his parents are,
His religion he declares as Christianity!
If unknown his parents and relations are,
And reared he is by someone else,
Unmindful of religion he would grow as man.
Anxious he won't be to know who his God is!
Primitive man was like this!
As knowledge grew, a thousand castes he made,
And God was created as each one willed.
Making religion in God's name, unity he broke.

Religion thus a cause became
Not only for fights in streets and towns.
But also for the great wars of the world,
And our fame in fear does shake,
That the day of doom may spread!
The wind of powerful religious fanaticism may fan
Even a tiny spark to destroy the world.
Territorial ambition did not make enemies of
George Bush and Yasser Arafat.
Because religious hatred spread,
Mansions became mounds of men's graves.
The heap of corpses and the horrible blood baths in Gujarat
Are only because of religious fanaticism.
Fostered by narrow-mindedness, and religious differences,
That do not influence man at birth and after birth,
That grow intense during his growth and later,
High like mountains anger and hatred rise.
Terrorism dances rife, worse than animal instincts.
Is putting an end to religions the only remedy for these?
Of this, if we clearly think, a pleasing solution may emerge.
Eradicating religions that sprout and spread,
Sans fierce feelings is a step that is not possible today.
Creating harmony among existing relgions
Is the judicious way to protect humanity.
Letting human love flourish,
Sharing love and happiness amongst all,
Establishing peace,
And letting the path of virtue flourish -
An indication of a dawn indeed it is!

01-04-2002

About the Project Makers

Bharathiar University, Coimbatore – named after the nationalist Tamil poet Subramanya Bharathi, who exhorted the Tamils to identify things worthy in their language, and give them unto the world for enjoyment and edification – conceived this Project viz., *Kalaignar in English Translation* by which to make available in English the extraordinarily rich and varied literary works of Kalaignar M. Karunanidhi, who, by the sheer volume and weight of his output, makes a compulsive demand on us that he be studied and given his due.

Prof. G. Thiruvasagam, Chairman of the Project Committee and Vice Chancellor of the University. The genesis of this Project owes to his academic vision. His initiative and leadership as much as his passionate and studied interest in the excellence of Kalaignar's creativity has seen this Project through within a short span of ten months.

Kavipperarasu Vairamuthu, Vice-Chairman of the Project Committee. An intellectual poet in Tamil endowed with an astonishingly fecund poetic energy and representing a rare blend of ratiocinative powers and aesthetic sensibility, Vairamuthu has brought a sense of direction and significance to bear on the dynamics of the Project.

Dr P. Marudanayagam and Dr V. Murugan comprising the editorial team – the former a ripe Professor of English and a comparatist of towering erudition, and the latter a bilingual lexicographer and a distinguished translator with the translations of *Tolkappiyam, Kalittokai, Tirukkural* and *Narrinai,* and *Oxford English-English-Tamil Dictionary* to his credit.

Dr C. Sivashanmugam, Professor of Linguistics, **Dr R. Palanivel**, Professor of English and **Dr S. M. Ravichandran**, Professor of Tamil, Bharathiar University, the coordinators of the Project, who kept the Project on track.

The late **Dr S. Agasthialingom,** a renowned linguist and former Vice Chancellor, Tamil University, **Sirpi Balasubramanian,** a highly decorated poet in Tamil, **Prof. Tamizhachi Thangapandian**, **Poet Kayalvizhi Venkatesh** and **Dr N. Ramani**, members of the Expert Committee, whose learned counsel, suggestions and views have added to the strength and credibility of the translations as a whole.

Macmillan Publishers India Limited, who have done an excellent job through their passionate commitment to the project, their legendary technical expertise and their unfailing feel for accuracy and perfection.

And Kalaignar does not surprise us by resorting to things unworldly or irrational. There are no religio-philosophical abstractions, no escape into mythology, and no aesthetic exclusivism in Kalaignar. Thanks to his unwavering belief in the correctness of rational thinking and his scientific temperament, he, in most cases, treads the path of reason and logic.

Kalaignar is endowed with a natural gift for wit and humour, irony and sarcasm, pun and repartee, which remain the inseparable, intrinsic components of his poems, just as they are infused into his speeches and fictional and non-fictional prose. At one level, these qualities secure his poems against monotony and insipidness. At another level, they serve to mask his treatment of contemporary political issues and personalities, and thereby invest his poems with an abiding aesthetic character.

A significant mention must be made of his numerous political satires and allegories, which Kalaignar, along with his political mentor C N Annadurai, has developed into a distinct literary genre. This genre, among others, constitutes a lasting contribution of Kalaignar to Tamil literature in general and contemporary Tamil literature in particular.

Kalaignar M Karunanidhi, one among the select 'who is who' of contemporary India, is a ripe political personality of more than seven decade standing, a statesman and a proven administrator, with the rare distinction of being the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu for five terms, besides being a relentless crusader for rationalist revival and an undaunted, missionary-like fighter for social and political causes.

Notwithstanding, it is the title 'Kalaignar' meaning 'an artist par excellence' by which he is identified and characterized, so much so that it is no longer a title but a proform designation of Dr M Karunanidhi, in the same way as 'the Bard' is used to refer to Shakespeare.

For Karunanidhi, whose formal education did not extend beyond the secondary school, is a multifaceted, prolific writer with an amazingly large volume of literary output to his credit. He is a poet, a playwright, a novelist and short story writer, a letter writer, an elegist, a journalist and a columnist, a script-writer, a political satirist, an essayist, a translator, an autobiographer and a social and literary critic, besides being an extraordinarily eloquent and powerful speaker. His creative and critical works have been published in 59 volumes, memoirs and autobiography in another 8 volumes, and other writings in 115 more volumes, large and small.

What astounds one is the fact that he has been writing on all these genres contemporaneously, putting the same amount of interest and energy in each kind, that too in the midst of his most exacting administrative and political activities.

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