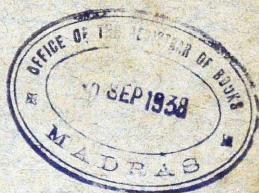


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ANNAMALAINAGAR

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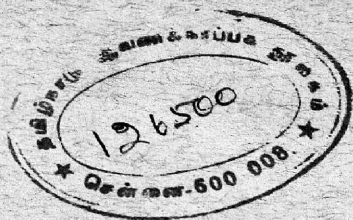


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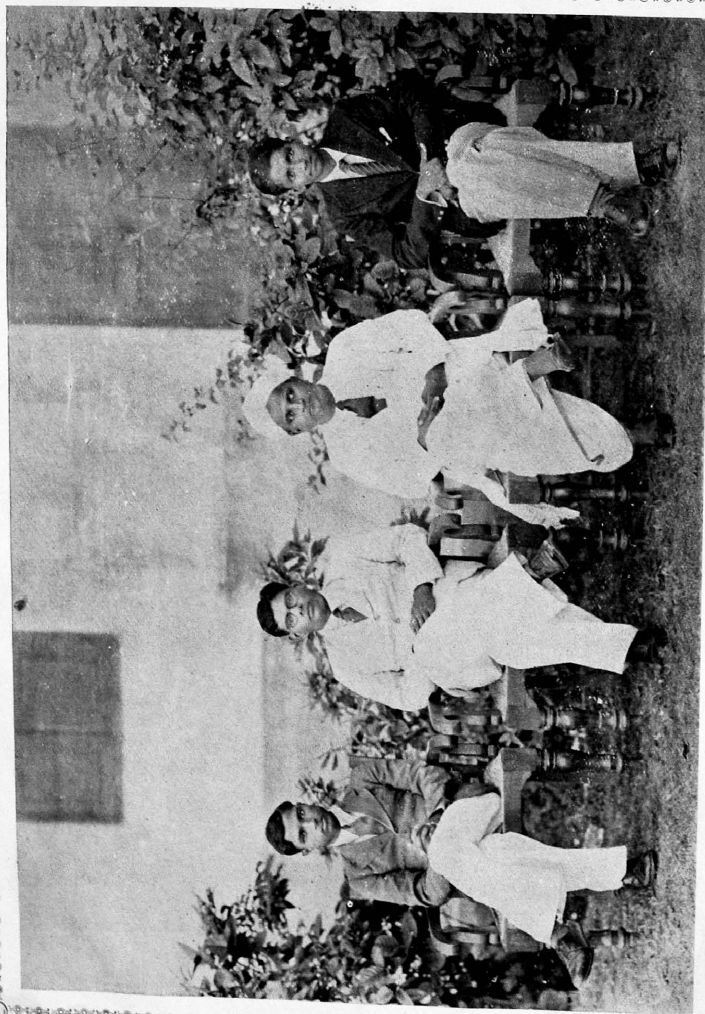
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Editorial Note

IT makes us happy to begin this number with an offer of congratulations. We are glad in the first place to felicitate our Vice-Chancellor on the Degree of Doctor of Laws, which one more Indian University—the University of Allahabad, this time—has conferred on him. Then we offer our congratulations to our old contributor, Mr. V. Krishnamurti, B.A. (Hons.) on the prize of a hundred rupees that he won at an All-India Competition for a five-act-play in English. We thank him for giving it to us for publication in the Miscellany. We wish him many more triumphs of the kind.

Our readers, we trust, will be glad to be informed that every issue of our Miscellany from the present one on, will contain an Old Boys' Page. The activities of our Old Boys enlist our keen interest; their success always does the heart of their Alma Mater much good. We shall gladly publish all information about them, as we get it.

The Old and the New

A Drama in five Acts

BY

V. KRISHNAMURTI

THIS drama was written during the months of March and April in the year 1936 when the writer was studying in the Fourth Year Honours class in the Annamalai University. It is a prize-winning entry in the under-graduates' section of a literary competition held by the Indian Village-Welfare Association, London, as propaganda against child marriage in India.

It is here published with
their kind permission,
for the ready granting of which the
writer thanks
them very
much.

The Old and the New

Act I, Scene I

(Sitaramier, a middle-aged Brahmin, the Karnam of his village, is sitting on a mat spread on the floor in the hall of his house. He is about thirty-six, handsome, not very tall, nor very lean. He is dressed in a Salem gold-lace-bordered dhoti, and a half-sleeved shirt. Beside him are a number of leather-bound account books. He sits cross-legged before a small writing desk on which there are ink pots, blotters and other writing materials. A few feet away from him sits an old man, his uncle Nanu Iyer, hoary with sacred ash and thoroughly worthy of reverence. He wears his dhoti in the orthodox Brahmin fashion, and has no shirt on, but wears an angavastram instead. Neither has cropped his head and both have tufts in the true Indian fashion.)

The white walls of the hall are adorned with a few pictures, all of the Hindu gods and goddesses. A doorway, visible in the left-hand corner, leads to the kitchen the doors of which are half closed.)

SITARAMIER:—That is all right, uncle. But I say I've got no idea of marrying Sundari now. She is but twelve.

NANU IYER:—Pray hear me fully, Sitarama, and then speak. Why do you interrupt me in the middle?

SITARAMIER:—Well. I'll keep mum. Come along. Bomb away, uncle.

NANU IYER:—Sitarama, pay heed to my words. I am your senior in age and it behoves you to do as I bid you. I knew you were a lazy fellow. But I never expected so much of inaction. Fancy you, having a girl aged twelve

and not hunting after bridegrooms! And then nonchalantly you say, "she is but twelve," as if that didn't matter.

SITARAMIER :—You call twelve a marriageable age, do you?

NANU IYER :—Oh! You don't! Your ancestors didn't think as you do and presumably they were fools. So the world has at last come to see a wise fellow in you. But irony apart, Sitarama, I tell you what, seriously. It behoves you to follow in the footsteps of your forefathers. They enjoin pre-puberty marriage. Why? Because the Sastras advocate it. Look here! Here is a line from our sacred books :

स्त्रीणां उपनयनस्थाने विवाहं मनुब्रवीत्

(Strinam upanayanasthane vivaham manurabravit).

When the question arose whether women should not have upanayanam or initiation in the scriptures, Manu said "for women, marriage takes the place of upanayanam." Now when do we perform upanayanam for boys? Of course, in their seventh year. And so is it not axiomatic that we've to perform marriage for girls even when they are seven? That is Manu's injunction. We may not go against it. We are not the persons to judge its propriety. "'Tis not for us to reason why" but to do and die as our law-givers bid. You are a well-read fellow; you ought to know all this. Early marriage is a thing which we must and shall follow—in spite of—in spite of—what-do-you-call—im—Haribilas Sarada?—in spite of a wilderness of Saradas. What do you say?

SITARAMIER :—You told me not to interrupt you in the middle. Finish your speech, uncle.

NANU IYER :—Yes. Yes. I know you are apprehensive of the evils arising from early marriage. I heard you talking about it the other day. Take it from me, my dear sir, no

evil results from early marriage. I was married early. Why, your father was. No evil has come to us; at least so far as I could see. Probably wise men like you find some. Contrariwise, a lot of evils arise from post-puberty marriage. Apart from the sin of keeping unmarried women in a household, it isn't safe—prudent, I mean;—do you see?—prudent—to do so. Maybe there's no harm in European countries, in cold countries, and maybe, they don't mind even if there is. It is different in the tropics. What you call science tells you that desire being strong there and very easily roused, it will gratify itself somehow if you don't provide the lawful means of its gratification. Guard, Sitarama! Guard the only treasure we have. Guard it jealously. What use is it to open the door to the robber and then cry out: "oh! my daughter! oh! my ducats?" I've done.

SITARAMIER :—(*With a sigh of relief*) Have you? Pray let me have an equally patient hearing. You say that the Sastras enjoin child marriage. I'm sure they do not. Even if they did, I would only say with Mr. Bumble the beadle, "then the law is an ass." It is not binding on us to follow a set of rules framed for a community removed several thousands of years from us. Show they are suitable to our society and I shall implicitly follow them. Now that they are not, do let Reason reign supreme and the Sastras be blowed!

NANU IYER :—(*closing his ears with his hands*) O! that I should have lived to hear these words! (*turning in a mien of earnest appeal and with a perfect tragedy air to Sitaramier*) Sitarama! Sitarama! For God's sake, don't blaspheme against the sastras. Your English, your Simla, your Assembly, your Sarada may all be mighty big. But you and I are not exactly the persons entitled to pass a verdict on the sastras. Pray let not my ears be treated again to this music about the sastras.

SITARAMIER:—Very well, I'll not hurt you any more that way, but hurt you I must, standing out for my point. The very sastras you quote for condemning post-puberty marriage, I can invoke in support of it and I shall do so here and now.

NANU IYER.—I see; you can quote scripture for your purpose.

SITARAMIER:—I see your implication. But just for disappointing you, if only for that, I propose not to resent it. Devil or no devil, I shall never pervert a text, as many whom I know are intent on doing. Well; here's for you

सोमः प्रथमो विविदे गन्धर्वं विविद उत्तरः ।

तृतीयो अग्निष्टे पतिस्तुरीयस्ते मनुष्यजाः ॥

सोमोऽददद्गन्धर्वाय गन्धर्वोऽददद्गन्धये ।

रयिं च पुत्रांश्चादादग्निर्मह्यमथो इमाम् ॥

Understanding this after one of your own Sastrins a girl is under the protection of the moon-god during childhood (and he gives her innocence and loveliness.) During girlhood, before she has attained puberty, the Gandarvas guard her. (They give her womanly beauty.) Then for three years after her attaining puberty, Agni the god of fire guards her (and he inspires in her the fire of love.) *And then she is given over into the possession of man.* Mind that, uncle; with apologies to yourself, is it not "axiomatic" that a girl is given to a man at least three years after her maturity. Axiomatic—is that the word? I thank you for teaching me that (*Nanu Iyer heaves a deep sigh.*)

SITARAMIER:—Let that pass. You cited your own and my father's instances to prove early marriage harmless or even desirable. I don't propose to go into that question; I don't, for obvious reasons. You know the circumstances of my father's pre-mature death cry out, yes, cry out against early marriage.

There is nothing a hundredth so disgusting—excuse me the strong language—as to see one's seniors seek to make the worse reason appear the better. Well, putting me on this question you have most uncharitably obliged me to pry, as it were, into my own father's nudity. I'm not quite myself. I shall collect myself and meet your next point.....

.....You said that the chastity of our women would be gone, if child marriage were not practised, or some such thing, didn't you? This is the greatest bogey I've ever heard of. If you are earnest in putting it forward, I should say it is the most atrocious proposition ever made in recent history. You make out woman (your helpmate) a beast, ever to be guarded with jealous care, and suggest—without a moment's suspicion that you offer her the grossest insult under the sun—that the moment you wink in your watch, she will go astray and will become as impure in her flesh as you are in your heart, your heart with its unholy suspicions. But surely you couldn't mean that. When the worst product of your child marriage—your virgin widow, keeps unsullied her chastity, to the end of her life, a life made wretched by your customs, which enjoin early marriage and prohibit widow remarriage, when even she who is as much in the tropics as your young woman, can overcome the baneful warmth of the tropical sun, it is patent that your fears are mere bogeys created by a fancy as fertile as diseased. It is a schoolboy's howler not worth a moment's consideration, even on the floor of a debating society.

NANU IYER :—'Tis come to that! oh! talk reason, my dear fellow; don't bluff. I bring you here, the consent of a millionaire, nay, a multi-millionaire, the Zamindar, to make your daughter his daughter-in-law. A man who is the lord of not less than five hundred square miles of land, and a clean couple of lakhs annually, consents to

do you that honour and you, instead of thanking me, you unroll your reasons before me, do you?

SITARAMA IYER:—Hear me fully, uncle. A bit more of patience would do you no harm, I suppose. My dear uncle, personally I've had enough of this early marriage. I want to have no more of it. You talk of horoscopes and their agreement. When I married Laxmi to Appasami what did they point at? At least you said that she would be rolling in wealth and such things. What is the good of having married her to a young boy? He turns out after all to be good-for-nothing and his father is living in voluntary exile, afraid as he is of his creditors, and I've to support the whole family meanwhile. He is now twenty or so and pursues only the most unprofitable cottage industry of propagating the species. He has had three children to his credit and is expectant of another in a week. Mind! Four confinements for the mother not past seventeen years. In spite of all your astrology, she is rolling only on the hard ground or on the sick bed for a change. That is that.

NANU IYER:—I didn't expect so much bad reasoning from you, Sitarama. Do you mean to say that the Zamin-dar's credit would go phut as did Appasami's father's and do you mean to say that you would have to support his son and all that? ha! ha! ha! Sitarama, very good, very good.

SITARAMA IYER:—I don't mean that. But I do mean that your horoscopy has not helped Laxmi to a soft bed or good cheer and that, as far as your horoscopy goes, the Zamindar's son may go phut as much as anybody else's. And then, I ask you about the person of the proposed bridegroom. Here is a portrait of him; bandy legged—crook shanked—a coal-black complexion—a horrible countenance—with a squint eye to boot. I really wonder at your ability in choosing this Flibbertigibbert—this

hobgoblin from the matrimonial market—for my Sundari. I don't discuss your heart in this matter. One is free to have one's own opinion about that. But I'm tempted even to examine your phrenological development.

(Nanu Iyer who has made up his mind to carry his point at all cost, and who has patiently listened to the former homily on virgin widows and things, is not now game for this second sermon. He becomes very angry. He thunders his reply first, but later realising that more can be achieved by peaceful means than otherwise, grows calmer and calmer and is quite calm as he comes to the end of the speech.)

NANU IYER:—You fool, do you know to whom you are talking? I'm a real Dikshitar. I've performed three yagas. Don't have an inflated estimate of yourself. Don't think you could defy me simply because you've had a bit of education on foreign lines. Transgress the sastras and be damned! What care I? *(growing calmer)* My dear Sir Wisdom, if you do not like the Zamindar's son, why not choose some other fellow? It will become you if you accept the bridegroom I bring; but as you would not, I give in, and no bones broken. *(But Nanu's restiveness here makes it plain to Sitaramier that Nanu really won't care to bring other candidates)* Why not choose some one else? I shall even pocket my pride and bring you other candidates. *(Nanu Iyer is now calmness itself)* Be it to whomever it pleases you, only do have Sundari married this year. I'm not without reasons for this request. That fellow's bill—the devil take it—becomes law next month and you could not marry her for two years more. What do you say? I expect an affirmative answer.

SITARAMA IYER:—I'm sorry, uncle, to disappoint you. But my mind is unchangeable. Shall we adjourn for a cup of coffee?

NANU IYER :—Coffee be blowed ! What is your idea, sir ?
Are you going to become a sinner or do you think yourself powerful enough to defy the Government ?

SITARAMA IYER :—Not at all, uncle. I shall not violate this new law ; that's flat. As for my becoming a sinner, my vedic citation is enough to show which of the two now in the room is nearer the precipice.

NANU IYER :—(*Rising in uncontrollable rage*) Is that it ? Apostate ! Infidel ! Dastard ! What did you say ? And this after what I preached to you ! What difference is there between you and that other fellow who clamours for admitting *Panchamas* into our temples ? Your lineage has been a noble one, and you are a blot sufficiently large upon its escutcheon. I tell you, you learned fool, from the moment you harbour unholy thoughts you are damned—you are—(*not able to speak, chokes with anger*).

SITARAMA IYER :—(*not able to brook all this*) Look here, old one ; shut up. I gave the respect due to you, and you presume too much. I shall put up with nothing further from you. You may take your leave. I'm master in this house, and I mean to be that to some purpose.

NANU IYER :—(*practically dancing in rage and shaking his fist at Sitarama Iyer.*) You cur ! you think you have that power. See ! If I do not make you suffer for this, call me a shoemaker, barber, cur, anything.....

(EXIT)

(*Within*) Indian Express Sa...r.

(*A newspaper is thrown in, Sitarama Iyer picks it up, goes to the easy chair at the corner, lounges on it and begins to read his paper. After a few minutes, through the doorway which leads to the kitchen, Seshi, Sitarama Iyer's mother, enters. She is dressed in a pure-white saree, her clean shaven head covered with it as is the custom of South Indian Brahmin widows. She is aged about fifty.*)

SESHI:—(*Wondering*) I say, Sitarama, where is Nanu?
I heard his voice just now.

SITARAMA IYER:—(*Sullenly*) He is gone.

SESHI:—Gone! Didn't you invite him to dinner?

SITARAMA IYER:—Yes, I did.

SESHI:—What is the matter, Sitarama? Why these curt answers?. Just now I heard loud voices. Were you quarrelling?

SITARAMA IYER:—(*puting down his paper and facing his mother resignedly*) Yes. The old fool mentioned a wonderful suitor for Sundari. Whoever wanted him to? I of course, refused to think of her marriage now.

SESHI:—(*wonderstruck*) Pray, why?

SITARAMIER:—She is but twelve. Where is the hurry for her marriage now?

SESHI:—I am surprised at you, Sitarama. Hitherto I thought you had some regard for me. Now I have found you out. You have never listened to my words since turning to man's estate. It would not be so, I know it would not be, if your father lived. What is a widow not widowed of?

SITARAMA IYER:—What logic, mamma? Whoever said I have no regard for you?

SESHI:—Then why do you persist in your impious determination? I am old. I may die any day, and shouldn't I see and fondle Sundari's children before I die? But who was the suitor Nanu proposed?

SITARAMIER:—That old Zamindar's scarecrow of a son.

SESHI:—(*gaping for wonder*) The Zamindar's son, and you refused him! Had you your senses about you when you did that?

SITARAMIER:—Pray, mamma, do talk sense if you don't mind.

SESHI:—Is it come to that?—

(While Seshi is talking, Sitaramier's wife, Nagammal enters with a brass pot of water on her hip. She is of medium height; she has dark eyes and dark eyebrows. Her hair which is gathered in a knot is also dark. She has a very simple dress on, and wears a pair of diamond ear-rings, a few pairs of bangles and neckchains. In spite of her middle age, she is a beauty and even in his perturbed condition of mind, Sitaramier can't help an admiring glance at her. She goes in through the door into the kitchen conscious and proud of her lord's unabating regard for her, puts down her water-pot, returns and stands in the doorway. Meanwhile Seshi continues).

SESHI:—When I was young, in those days people dared not insult their parents. Nowadays people say "ma! you are a fool; and pa! you are a rogue"; and naturally you ask me not to talk nonsense. Well, that is my fate. But no matter. My object is your and your children's welfare. Go, conciliate Nanu and have for your son-in-law the Zamindar's son. If you let this opportunity slip, maybe it cannot be had again. I've had my say. Take it and prosper or reject it and go to the dogs. Nagam! *(addressing her daughter-in-law)* look to the house, I am going to the river.

(EXIT)

(Nagammal advances from her position, comes very near to Sitaramier and essays to speak. Sitaramier though conscious of her approach seizes his newspaper and pretends reading it. But Nagammal speaks all the same).

NAGAM:—My dear! What earthly reasons had you for refusing the offer? You know that it is a rare chance. Put down that paper and answer me, will you?

(She snatches the paper with one hand, while the other rests on Sitaramier's shoulder.)

SITARAMIER :—Sorry, my dear. I've got my own principles and reasons for my actions, and I do not particularly care to have them questioned.

NAGAM :—Your fiddlesticks for your actions ! And to bring them in when your daughter's prosperity is concerned ! The Zamindar offering to make your girl his daughter, and you, a paltry village accountant refusing ! My ! Are you having your reason about you, my dear ?

SITARAMIER :—(half in earnest and half in loving playfulness) Would you mind leaving me in peace ? Cease your babble or I'll break your little finger. Spare your breath and off with you.

NAGAM :—Peace indeed ! Do you hope for that after what you've done ? I tell you, my dear sir, you shall not have it. I'll plague you so. "I'll do, I'll do, I'll do". But my dear, I know you couldn't have meant your refusal seriously. Don't you think of settling the match now ?

SITARAMIER :—I do not and will not. (sitting up, and seriously) I am in no mood to crack or receive jokes. I know the evils of early marriage and girl maternity. It's enough Laxmi has been victimised to them. I shall not allow anyone to advise me on that point. As for the present suitor, I shall never mention Sundari and that sot in one breath. I know the manners of the father and the morals of the son over there. A petty village accountant as I am, I reckon myself superior everyway to that one over there, who became zamindar yesterday, for want of a better in the family. I shall not think of marriage for Sundari for years to come ; and of marriage for Sundari with that brute of a Zamindar's son, at any time of my life.

NAGAM :—(*serious in an instant and contrite*) My dear, I never knew you were so serious about this. I have never seen you so much in earnest. Do you think I shall endeavour to argue you out of your dearly held principles, to ask you to disavow them? Do you think I shall cross you in anything? What is good for you is good for me. If you think Sundari had best marry only when she is of age, why, I think so too. Whoever may cross you in this or anything else, I shall be with and for you.

(*Nagammal shines in the splendour of virtue and Sitaramier's countenance brightens up in conscious happiness. He gets up and strokes her head. . . . a knock is heard at the door. . . .* **EXIT** *Nagammal.*)

SITARAMIER :—Who is there? Come in, please.

(*A young man of eighteen or nineteen enters. He is very handsome and is dressed handsomely. He has a grace of bearing which is native to him, not affected. His face is almost without a flaw, a face positively beautiful. His head is cropped, and his hair black and wavy.*)

THE YOUNG MAN :—Good morning, sir. I trust you know me.

SITARAMIER :— Good morning. Pray seat yourself (*draws a chair for him*), you must excuse, the discourtesy of this non-recognition; I am agitated; but you are always welcome, you know, Mr. Chandrasekaran?

CHANDRASEKARAN :—Yes, I hope you will excuse my intrusion.

SITARAMIER :—Oh, nothing. May I know the cause of this visit?

CHANDRA :—Certainly. You see there was some proposal, about your daughter marrying the Zamindar's son I should like to know how you consider it.

SITARAMIER :—(*turning grave if not exactly angry*) But how does that interest you? Did your master send you to know that?

CHANDRA :—Certainly not. I come here on my own account. I would request you not to consent to the match if you have not already consented; or if you have, to recall the consent and, . . . and to excuse this meddling on my part.

SITARAMIER :—(*Pleased but not relaxing visibly*) Thanks. But I should like to know what makes you say this.

CHANDRA :—I shall give you my reasons. Firstly, your daughter is too young for marriage; but that is your business. Secondly the Zamindar has a motive behind his keenness on this marriage. His son gets his dead aunt's money when he marries and the Zamindar who, after seventeen years of administration or maladministration of the Zamin, is now hard up for money, is anxious to effect this marriage in order to get that money; and, for aught we know, your girl will to the gutter as soon as his purpose is served. Besides, in marrying the Zamindar's son, your daughter will marry the worst sot and rake hereabouts. I have done.

SITARAMIER :—But why is he so particular about my girl? A Zamindar can secure any girl in the country for the wishing; can't he?

CHANDRA :—'M. Don't you know he has approached all the others of your sect in this part of the country and has been repulsed? Marriage outside your community will disqualify his son for his aunt's legacy; he hopes with this Nanu Iyer's intercession to secure your girl for his son?

SITARAMIER :—Nanu Iyer? What about him? You mean the Zamindar has set him going on this business?

CHANDRA :—(*Graver than before and in a lower tone*) Well He has done more than that. He has bought him off!!

SITARAMIER :—(*rising involuntarily*) What? What did you say? Bought him off?

CHANDRA :—Bought him off.

SITARAMIER :—You mean what you say?

CHANDRA :—I mean that Nanu Iyer has entered into a nefarious contract with the Zamindar to get his son your daughter Sundari and in return for that office of kindness to be paid Rs. 2000/- by the Zamindar. Nanu Iyer has got already—he got it half an hour ago—Rs. 1000/- as earnest. I mean lastly that you stand in peril of sacrificing your girl to a sot and Nanu Iyer, in that event, stands the chance of a thousand rupee more. Are you answered?

SITARAMIER :—(*standing aghast a minute and then recovering*) He shall not. If there is breath in my body, he shall not. Neither the Zamindar's boy shall have my girl nor Nanu Iyer the balance of Rs. 1000/-.

CHANDRA :—But Nanu Iyer will try to get your girl married by any means fair or foul, and backed by the money and power of the Zamindar he will be formidable. We had rather be careful. I shall send you news off and on from the enemy's front. Good-bye. I've to hurry back to the Zamindar's. Of course you breathe no word to any one about my visit, would you?

SITARAMIER :—Certainly not. But may I know to what kindness of disposition on your part I owe this visit and this intercession?

CHANDRA :—(*visibly angry*) Sir, I understand your implication. I understand your irony. I come here not to get any "consideration" from you for my information and warning. I don't sell information. I was interested

as all honest human beings ought to be, in your girl; in one of God's best creatures. I was not interested in you. If you don't want my intercession excuse my officiousness and let me go. I wish you joy of your suspicions.

SITARAMIER :—(*hurt and repentant*) Oh no! Excuse me. my suspicions. I am now convinced of your disinterested interest in our welfare—in my girl's well-being. I shall be guided entirely by you in this matter. Though I can't make, and you don't expect, any recompense, yet the joy of having done good to an innocent girl and earning her lasting gratitude will soon be yours.

CHANDRA :—(*pleased*) Very well. Good-bye.....(**EXIT**)
(*A servant enters bearing a letter*).

SERVANT :—A letter from your aunt. She sent me here to you.

SITARAMIER :—What is the news from my aunt in the town?

SERVANT :—Your daughter has the pains. Your aunt wanted me to get you over there at once. I've brought the bullock-cart.

Act II, Scene I

(*Mr. Sitaramier is sitting on a cane arm-chair in the front verandah of a blue coloured house in the taluq town, whither he has been drawn for the expected confinement of his daughter Laxmi. In the centre of the wall is the doorway, on either side of which is a window. The windows are closed while the door is half closed. Sitaramier sits in his chair shuffling his feet and fidgeting. After a few minutes, his son-in-law, Appasami, a young fair-looking man of twenty, enters, carrying a small hand bag. He is dressed in a white dhoti, full-sleeved shirt and an Angavastram.*)

SITARAMIER:—Oh, you've come so soon! Did you see my letter?

APPASAMI:—What letter? I didn't get any. But then 'tis five days since I left Kumbakonam.

SITARAMIER:—Five days!

APPASAMI:—The old fellow, my boss, (my boss, you know for the past six months,) says to me one fine morning, "my dear sir, you know we've fallen on evil days and cannot afford a typewriter"—he means of course a typist—"so awfully sorry that we do not require your services any more." So I packed off, went to our village straight-way and am here now. How is Laxmi? All right, I hope?

SITARAMIER:—All right? Well, not exactly. She has been in tortures for three days. As relief is not yet in sight, the lady doctor (God bless her goodness!) thinks that surgical aid will be necessary. She is even now in there. What with Calcium-deficiency, Anaemia and all that, I don't know how Laxmi is to get over this, her fourth confinement. I want to save Sundari at least from this. But God disposes what we propose.

(*Opening the door hurriedly, a nurse enters.*)

NURSE:—Would you just run over to the Hospital and ask Miss Bennet to come over. The doctor wants her assistance (*Sitaramier and Appasami both start to go*).

NURSE: One of you must remain here.

(*Sitaramier goes out—Appasami seats himself on his chair and speaks to himself in a broken manner*)

And now once again no job! Wife confined or about to be.....operation.....My God! and to outtop everything pa-in-law supporting a bally lot of us.

Act II, Scene II

(*The lady doctor's drawing room. The room is neatly though not richly furnished. The lady doctor's brother, Chandrashekar in a cane arm-chair. His serge coat is thrown over the back of another cane chair. He is turning over the pages of some periodical. After a few minutes the lady doctor enters, a handsome young woman of twenty-two or thereabouts, briefbag and twisted up stethoscope in hand. She is dressed in a sari with a tiny gold lace border, and white jacket; she has a pair of high-heeled shoes on. Though genuine in her thoughts, she walks, speaks, and acts with an affected grace prevalent among Eastern women mimicking western ways. She places her bag and stethoscope on a table in the corner and collapses into a chair nearby.*)

CHANDRA:—Why are you so late, Kamala? I've been waiting for you for heaven knows how many ages.

KAMALA:—Sorry, brother. The D. M. O. was on a surprise visit this morning. Moreover, I had to do an operation; but besides, you said you could snatch a few hours from your Zamindar's service only this afternoon—whoever expected you in the morning here?

CHANDRA:—The Zamindar's affairs are at sixes and sevens. I hadn't much to do, and thought I might go about

holiday-making as well ante-meridian as post. But you mentioned an operation. Who was the victim—I mean, of course, the patient.

KAMALA :—Some village accountant's daughter. Her father brought her over here for confinement, to be within the reach of medical aid. He lives at the corner of Big Street, in that blue house.

CHANDRA :—Was the operation a success?

KAMALA :—Yes it was.

CHANDRA :—But the patient? I know in some cases the operation is a success, only the patient dies.

KAMALA :—You are not at all over-sympathetic towards medicos, Chandra. But in this case the patient is all right. Only it took a blessed long time for her to gain consciousness. The child however was dead.

CHANDRA :—Did I not say something like that? And you say, I am not sympathetic.

KAMALA :—But how could I help that? The child had died even in the womb and when got out, was blue all over. Imagine, it is her fourth child and she only seventeen or so; nothing strange, you see, in the child being that.

CHANDRA :—Fourth child! Nothing strange either in the mother being all that. Baby-marriage and child maternity be blest!

KAMALA :—Just so. It seems this puny girl has been bringing forth her brats one every year, with the regularity of a machine gun, ever since she was fourteen. They say she was married at twelve and had an abortion at thirteen! Now she is a physical wreck.....What about the mission you were on, the other day—your delicate and dangerous mission? You convinced the father of the girl? He feels he had as well expose his girl on a mountain-top as give her to the Zamindar's

whelp? And then (this is more important to me) have you gone about it without letting your boss know it? Don't purchase trouble by openly thwarting the Zamin-dar's designs.

CHANDRA:—O! Don't worry. No necessity to convince the old chap, the girl's father. He had realised all that even before I went in. He had refused his consent to the match. He is now in a rage against the old pandar of a Nanu.

KAMALA:—Oh! he was so wise? I'm glad he is not going to sacrifice his daughter.

CHANDRA:—Sacrifice! that's just the word for it. Very probably he won't. But still we must wait and see. The Iyer may change his mind or the forces about him may be too much for him.

KAMALA:—Thank God, even for the faint prospect. This early marriage is eating through our nation as a canker. The girl I operated on to-day was on the brink of death and she is one of the glorious products of your early marriage. It has thoroughly sapped her vitality. For if, just when the body is developing, one imposes on her the cares of a family by tying her to a husband and soon after that to a few babies, what development could you expect and what conservation of vitality? How could her children be strong? And then how could our nation be strong and sturdy if our country is filled with Laxmis, who produce weaklings at their fourteenth or fifteenth year and who themselves are periodical occupants of the sick-bed too?

CHANDRA:—You talk only of the physical side of the evil, sister. What about our intellect? It's nipped in the bud. When a boy enters college he is invariably married. As says our Mahatma "only in Hindu society do studies and marriage go thus hand in hand"

When the young fellow leaves college, he has got a brace of children. At once he has got to look out for employment because he has to feed a lot of mouths. Then good-bye to the things of the mind and to original thinking...why, thinking of any kind whatsoever. Sister, my heart seems near bursting; "the pity, oh the pity of it!" Our slavery stifles our intellect; our slavery in the land of our own birth. Our institutions, our blessed institutions complete the process. Sister, whenever I hear these shameless old fellows about us talk with pride of the greatness of our ancestors, whenever they say that all the triumphs of Modern Science were achieved long ago by our forefathers, I feel like hiding my head in shame. I find it a job to have an escape from myself. These the sons of Panini and Sankara! And many of them incapable of thirty-five per cent in Elementary Mathematics or Intermediate Physics!! Look at that, and look at their pride of ancestry.

But My! How on earth came we to talk like this? I suppose we aren't now in the Assembly orating on Mr. Sarada's side.

(A servant enters and brings a note to Chandra, who opens it and reads it)

CHANDRA:—(to his sister) Didn't you say that the father of the girl whom you attended to to-day was a village accountant. It is the same person as the father of the girl I told you of. He wants to see me. I too want to see him. I've news to impart to him.

KAMALA:—Is he the same one as that girl's father? Now I quite understand his wisdom in his refusing to celebrate a second baby-wedding in his house. If, after seeing the piteous plight of his first daughter, he married his second daughter at the age of twelve, well, he should indeed be an idiot bi-distilled and sterilised.

Act II, Scene III

(The verandah of the blue house afore-mentioned. Sitaramier is seated on a cane chair. Opposite him seated is Mr. Chandrasekaran.)

CHANDRA :—So you've got a town house !

SITARAMIER :—Well, not exactly. This is my aunt's house. I brought my daughter here for confinement.

CHANDRA :—Oh ! My sister told me the child was dead, I'm sorry.

SITARAMIER :—That was inevitable. This is her fourth confinement and she is barely seventeen. What better could you expect ? It pains me very much to see girls suffer like this. I pray to God to spare my second daughter at least all this. Well. What is the news at the Zamindar's ?

CHANDRA :—The Zamindar is proceeding rather rapidly. He is determined on having your girl. But he is impolitic in having chosen a lunatic for his accomplice.

SITARAMIER :—A lunatic ! whom do you mean ?

CHANDRA :—Why ? That same Nanu Iyer.

SITARAMIER :—Nanu Iyer, a lunatic ! Never ! I admit him a villain, but a lunatic, never.

CHANDRA :—By lunatic I mean to say that he is rather queer. For example the other day, the Zamindar called me once or twice during their conversation. As soon as he saw me this Nanu began to fidget about in his chair. He stared at me till I was annoyed and then leaving me at that, stared at a portrait of the old Zamindar, intently as if he saw it for the first time in his life. And then the Zamindar asked him some question and he absent-mindedly replied, "it is extraordinary." Then suddenly remembering himself, answered

him relevantly. His action was so reasonless, you see; I think his mind wandering; I think it is.

SITARAMIER:—I don't know that. But what plot have they hatched?

CHANDRA:—This Nanu Iyer has sounded your mother, it seems, and she is worried over your 'unorthodox' views. Nanu proposes to play on her orthodoxy and carry his point. His plan is this. He is going to Tanjore to-morrow after seeing your mother and arranging matters with her. From there he will wire to you to say that your brother-in-law is in his death-bed. Thus does he remove you and Mrs. Sitaramier from off the scene of action. Your mother, as she would be instructed, brings your daughter to the temple where the girl is kidnapped and borne to the Zamindar's house. There she will be secretly married to her thrice worthy bridegroom elect. So better go home to-day and bring Sundari over here and guard her well for some days to come. You will be acting none too soon. I thought you were in your village. I was first waiting for my sister to come home that I might go thither to tell you all this. Good luck that you are here. We have saved precious time.

SITARAMIER:—(*Aghast and silent. Then recovering after some time and rising as if to shout 'Eureka!'*)

No. That won't do. I want to teach the blackguards a lesson. I assure you I shall arrest every man-Jack of them for kidnapping. I shall go to my village to-day and as soon as the telegram comes, I start. Only not for Tanjore but for the police-station here. What! Does the fellow think that a Zamindar could do *anything*? Well, I will show him his proper place in the scheme of things. I'll give them the long rope. Nanu shall have free talk with my mother. My mother shall take Sundari to the temple. The Zamindar by all

means shall kidnap her. Only when he reaches his house shall there be an inspector of police with a brace of constables and bracelets, to boot, to receive the Zamindar. What! Kidnapping! In the twentieth century! We are in Chicago, are we?

Act II, Scene IV

(Sitaramier's hall. The surroundings are the same as in Act I, Scene I, except for the account books and the writing desk, which are not there now. Nanu Iyer in the easy-chair, only not lounging. Seshi Patti is seated on the floor a few feet away from him.)

SESHI:—So you mean to say that it is not really too late to bring round the Zamindar; I feared Sitaraman would have gone so far as to show a rough front even to him.

NANU IYER:—It isn't too late. Everything could yet be done. Not only that, it must be, it shall be.

SESHI:—But why *must*?

NANU:—You ask me that? Well, it must be. Your blessed son doesn't know what he talks about. He talks of the evils of early marriage and wants all that to pass muster with me. He is too far gone in perversity—unamenable to argument; quite. These fellows must be dealt with fittingly. There is only one way and I'll follow it, to foil him, and save the family, your family, from disgrace. Nay, I shall yet save your soul from damnation. I shall yet enable you not to look on while this unholy thing goes on. But you must help me in the matter. I don't know if you will; I don't think that you will.

SESHI:—Why? What makes you doubt I shall help you? If anything lies in my power, I shall certainly use it to further the interests of Sundari—the poor little thing.

NANU:—Well then, if you would be amenable, I should bring the Zamindar round and have Sundari married. I shall act on your behalf. The 17th instant is the last auspicious day this season. To-day is the 15th and we've barely two days. But I shall work wonders—work wonders if you co-operate. My part in the matter is out of doubt difficult, but I shall play it. Only you must play yours and it is more than a question if you will.

SESHI:—What do you mean, Nanu? I've told you I will. I shall do anything for Sundari. Tell me what's to do and think it is done.

NANU:—Very well, then. Sitaraman will be conveyed to a distant place. By what means, you needn't know. With Sitaraman goes Nagam. Do you see? I shall see to all that. And then comes your part. Nothing difficult, of course; only you must consent.

SESHI:—You see, I've consented already. Why this hesitation to tell me what I must do? Why this persistent doubt about my doing it?

NANU:—That is all right, sister—listen to this. You go to-morrow evening to the temple at the end of New Street. At dusk—do you see? Sundari accompanies you, do you follow? Thrice you go round the shrine as usual—do you see? In the third round, in the narrow space, between the back of the shrine and the outer wall, in that ill-lit narrow space, you feign that your attention is arrested by something and that you lose sight of the girl. The Zamindar's men who will be ready will do all that is needed and the wedding will take place the day after to-morrow.

(Silence follows, Seshi is taken off her feet at this suggestion. But Nanu perseveres.)

Why do you keep mum? You aren't agreeable. I knew you wouldn't be. Where's the promised co-operation?

SESHI:—(*Faintly*) How can the wedding take place in the absence of dear Sitaraman? How will the mother of the girl feel if she is not by, to give away her daughter? Things have never been done like that in the family.

NANU:—Have things been done in the family as your blessed son would have them done? Are post-puberty marriages usual in the family? What talk you of feeling and all that in this dire emergency?

SESHI:—(*Half conquered but still holding out*). But how can I consent to my son's absence and my daughter-in-law's from their own child's wedding?

NANU:—Son and daughter-in-law be deuced! The rascal is intent on desecrating the family by keeping a young woman unmarried in it. The hussy gives her silent consent to her husband's proposal; and you grow sentimental over their absence from the wedding. I knew it would all be like this. Go to the devil, all of you. The next *Shraddh* to be performed for your deceased husband will be a waste. The manes shall not accept the oblations. By all means have your son and daughter-in-law present at the post-puberty wedding of your grand-daughter. Be present at it yourself. As for myself, I shall go the way all right-thinking people go—my shadow shall never more darken these walls.

SESHI:—(*Sobbing*) Why speak like that? I don't know what we sinners are heading to! Why should I live after him—after your brother-in-law? If only he were alive now! Do you think things would take this course if he were? But as long as I live, I shall try to avert this disaster.

NANU:—(*Perceiving his advantage and pleased*) Do, sister, do. It's certainly a base trick. But no help for it, you see. Either we play it or be damned for ever. Think of

the scandal here and the damnation hereafter, if Sundari becomes a woman before she is married.

(Seshi goes inside, unable to bear even the mention of this contingency. Nanu sits tight in his chair and all but evidently chuckles at the triumph he is scoring.)

Act II, Scene V

(Sitaramier's hall again. Sitaramier in the easy-chair and his wife standing nearby.)

SITARAMIER:—So, there is your emblem of orthodoxy, your Nanu Iyer. "Nanu Iyer is really in the right". Isn't he? He will do only as the Sastras enjoin. So axiomatically, I suppose, the Sastras enjoin the taking of commission for settling matches. "Nanu Iyer is really in the right". Didn't you say that, dear?

NAGAM:—It's all very well for you to joke. But whoever thought your uncle was such a villain? The triumph however is rather on my side in that he is your uncle, not mine.

SITARAMIER:—*(Striking her in mock anger on the cheek.)* Orthodoxy! It's the worst garb hypocrisy has donned in these degenerate days. O! the things that are done in the name of orthodoxy! Dear, if I were not disposed to be merry at the certain prospect I have of foiling these fellows, I should go near weeping at the behaviour of these Martexts and the plight they have reduced our ancient sages and seers to. Never did those noble souls so fall on evil days before, as they have done now. Self-seeking, the worst forms of commercialism, tricks that Clive would have himself blushed to adopt, are the order of the day and Manu and Yagnavalkya are made to countenance them. It surely spells national disaster—nay—racial extinction—when a sastra is twisted into approving an organised

brothel and orange robes protect a self seeker in his 'sanatanist' campaign against the spirit of Vasista and Vamadeva. It cries to God for vengeance. I personally am determined to resist this evil with might and main. But who—O, the Telegraph man! Well, the game begins.

(A telegraph messenger enters and delivers a telegraph. Sitaramier coolly signs the delivery-slip and opens and reads the telegram.)

'Brother-in-law is dangerous. Start immediately.'

Dharmambal.

Nagam, dear, your brother is dangerous; that is, dangerously ill, of course. His wife has sent the telegram. I am mortally anxious. If you have tears prepare to shed them now—at least some now, reserving the balance for the actual occasion.

(Nagamma smiles)

Weep, hussy. What do you mean by laughing?

(With that he bursts into loud laughter himself. His wife promptly joins in it. They laugh themselves actually into some tears. Sitaramier is the first to recover seriousness.)

Well now, pack a few things. Let us pack off to the town. I shall leave you with Laxmi and go about my business, as I have already told you, and leave the neighbourhood under the impression that I have gone to Tanjore. The night that is luckily approaching will aid our honest designs. O! to think how honesty sometimes has to seek the aid of darkness to conceal its purposes!

Act III, Scene I

A large room in a fairly large house, a furlong removed from the village of Desamangalam. In the centre of the room, a dust-covered old cot with a dirty quilt spread on it. On it sits a very ugly-looking young fellow of nineteen or so, large-headed, small-eyed, of lumbering make and heavy countenance. His right eye is closed; his nose inordinately red. He has evidently just risen from a long afternoon sleep; for he is particularly heavy-looking even for his dull and heavy countenance. By his side on the quilt sits a bulky dark-complexioned and not over pretty woman of may be twenty. Her dirty dress, dishevelled appearance and trick of grinning argue her of low origin and lower breeding. Before them on a stool is a large tray containing two cans of tinned food and an opened bottle of wine, with a wine glass by. The young man, who is no other than the Zamindar's son munches and the woman hands him the edibles.

THE WOMAN:—Here's a delicious bit, dear. Try it.

Z'S SON:—How delicious! What is it, please?

WOMAN:—Spencer's Sausages.

Z'S SON:—'M. Don't they contain meat?

WOMAN:—Yes, dear.

Z'S SON:—I am a brahmin and mustn't touch meat, you know.

WOMAN:—(*Caressing him*) Mustn't touch meat, of course, but can eat it. Why meat alone? All food must be untouched by hand.

(*Takes a bit between her fingers to the young man's mouth. He eats it and returns the caress. Loud laughter on both sides.*)

Z'S SON:—How delicious! Why not take some?

WOMAN:—No, please. It makes me uncomfortable.

Z'S SON:—What a pity! Pass the cup. (*She pours a cup of wine and raises it to his lips. He empties the cup and sits up refreshed. A sudden shade of anxiety on the woman's countenance.*)

Z'S SON:—What's the matter? You look suddenly sad.

WOMAN:—Nothing. But we shall be shortly sundered.

Z'S SON:—Sundered! Your meaning?

WOMAN:—Why, you are going to marry, aren't you?

Z'S SON:—Yes! I am. But what of that?

WOMAN:—What of that? This of that. You will caress your Sundari, your glorious village accountant's girl and eat sausages off *her* hand and drink wine off *her* chalice and I shall live the rest of my life but on the memory of this hour.

Z'S SON:—He! He! He! Silly little duck! What an idea! I may marry a thousand Sundaris but I will never desert you. How will life be possible.....li...f...e p...o...s...s...i...b...l (*Falls asleep.*)

(*Enter an old man of sixty or thereabouts dressed like a young gallant and his mouth red with tobacco juice.*)

OLD MAN:—He has gone to sleep again?

WOMAN:—'M, Uncle. He was sent to sleep.

OLD MAN:—Well done. What does he say?

WOMAN:—You see he *says* nothing. He snores.

OLD MAN:—You naughty little creature; well then, what *did* he say?

WOMAN:—He said he was to marry one Sundari, the wedding to come off early to-morrow morning. The kidnapping is to be done early tonight. The marriage is intended, says he, solely for securing the aunt's money. Once secured, it shall be ours, swears he.

(*The old man looks gratified.*)

OLD MAN :—Swears, do you say? How can he do otherwise? Swearing or no swearing, the money is yours; I've seen to it.

WOMAN :—(*Hanging fondly on his shoulder*) Have you? What have you done? (*Strokes the old man's face*)

OLD MAN :—I have got his signature affixed to blank paper and with that we can convey all the cash to his credit to ourselves. His design of kidnapping the village accountant's girl is another source of wealth to us. I'm determined to use my knowledge of it to blackmail both father and son.

WOMAN :—Uncle, Uncle, you are a trump.

(*Hugs him. Z's son stirs in his sleep. The old man gets up noiselessly and leaves*)

Act III, Scene II

(*The Parlour of the Lady Doctor, Kamala's house. She in one chair and Chandrasekaran in another.*)

CHANDRA :—You've really missed a very good spectacle, sister. It was so fine—the sight of the Zamindar being cross-examined. It was the first day, I had ever been in a court of law, and I assure you it was a splendid sight.

KAMALA :—I'm sorry I missed it. But at least I may hear you report it. May I?

CHANDRA :—Oh! Certainly. There was a lean, long-backed stiff-necked man with a thick horn-rimmed pair of specs, sitting on a dais behind a bar at the upper end of the court. He gave orders that the case be opened and began dozing off in right earnest. But the Prosecuting Inspector's way of opening the case roused him from his slumber. Ah! What that man said and did! He opened his mouth and showed a large cavity—that

was perhaps his way of opening a case. He thundered, he volleyed, he plunged, he reared, and shook his fist, gnashed his teeth and stamped his feet. These police fellows!

The Inspector opened his case and brought forward his charge of kidnapping against the Zamindar and six others. Then were the prosecution witnesses examined. P. W.-I. that is Sitaramier, told the court that I had supplied him with the information necessary for bringing the prisoners at the bar to book. As soon as the Zamindar heard it, he growled at me and said, "Did you? I here and now give you the sack."

KAMALA:—What did you say to that?

CHANDRA:—I told him nothing. I couldn't of course, it was the court, you see. Only I was saying to myself that I had kicked off the job already. After the cross-examination of the witnesses, the Prisoners were addressed. The Zamindar pleaded not guilty and said that the whole thing was the 'culmination of malignant attempts to blackmail him' and all that sort of stuff. Then he was cross-examined. He told the court that he was the zamindar since the death of his cousin and his children in the Veeranatheri floods of 1913, that he had five hundred square miles of cultivable land and said a thousand odds and ends relevant and otherwise, and could be silenced from time to time only by the Court's frown. His design was to establish an *alibi*. But he couldn't, having been caught in the very act by the police. Sitaramier's adroitness had done for him. Sitaramier is his daughter's father, you know.

KAMALA:—Let alone your admiration for the father's daughter; proceed with the case.

CHANDRA:—Indeed it's irrelevant and not admissible in evidence. I'll proceed with the case. The assessors gave

a verdict of 'guilty'. But the *magistrate reserved his judgement.

KAMALA:—So that is all? After all he was not sentenced?

CHANDRA:—But I assure you he will be; nothing short of four years R. I. of course; and for that Nanu, at least one year. As for the others, they might be let off with a fine or a few months. That is all. But the matter has made much noise. There were those newspaper chaps, you know, a bally lot of them. You would have seen it all in yesterday's paper if you hadn't that case in that blessed village. There was a round of photographs, the Zamindar's, Sitaramier's, and mine to boot, that were published. O, Lord! How were we two 'lionised' there. They did it well, these newspaper chaps.

(Enter Sitaramier and another)

SITARAMIER:—Oh! They are a regular nuisance. Whatever *your* complaint about them, the Zamindar's son, poor fellow, has nothing to thank them for.

CHANDRA AND KAMALA:—(*together*) Why, what's the matter? And who is this? Why does he look scared like this?

SITARAMIER:—He has reason to. He is waiting on the zamindar, you know.

CHANDRA:—What do you mean?

SITARAMIER:—I mean that you are the zamindar, thanks to the newspaper chaps. Their report and the pictures published have called forth a statement from Swami Paramananda who is back in this country from San Fransisco; and he has made a representation to the court that he could prove that the zamindar lied in his throat when he alleged that the Late Zamindar's children were killed in the floods of 1913, and that for aught

* By 'magistrate' the District Judge is meant in these pages.

he knows the Late Zamindar's son and the present Zamindar's secretary might be one and the same person. He offers to bear out his statement in the court at a trial extraordinary which the Magistrate has called for, for this purpose. The magistrate has sent you two a summons.

(Chandra and Kamala stand mute and motionless. The court messenger respectfully presents a summons to each. That makes them conscious of the present. They sign the summons, take the duplicate, and dismiss the messenger with a rich present.)

SITARAMIER:—What need for looking amazed like this? This is the world. But for these strange mutations of fortune, it would not be it. It would be the abode of gods, not men.

One discovery I have made and it is needful I mention it here. You called Nanu a lunatic because he stared at your father's—your father's picture and at you. You remember, you observed, that the zamindar (now in jail) had the picture removed and hid that very afternoon. It but turns out that Brownlow was perplexed between young Oliver and the lady's picture on the mantelpiece.

Act IV, Scene I

(The magistrate's court. A dirty hall at one end of which is a dais. The magistrate is seated on it; over his head is an old-fashioned punkah plying. The dirty court hall is crowded and the provincial lawyers fill all the seats round the long table in front of the dais. An awful silence prevails.)

MAGISTRATE:—Are the parties ready? Gentlemen, it's a strange cause, this. So strange, that if it did not actually go on before our eyes you and I should be disposed to call it a romance—a farce got up by some Village Welfare Association for the purposes of mass education and propaganda. Are the parties ready?

COURT CLERK:—Yes, your honour. The Zamindar has been brought from jail and the Zamindar's son from a brothel. Here are the brother and sister alleged to be the children of the late Zamindar. The Swami has sent a telegram to say that he will be at the court by twelve.

MAGISTRATE:—Let the Zamindar and his son step forth.

(The Zamindar comes forward. His son does not. On being asked who among the crowd he is, the court clerk shows the ugly-looking scapegrace we've seen.)

MAGISTRATE:—Is this the Zamindar's son? Has he been bred to any trade?

ZAMINDAR:—*(Indignant)* The aristocracy in no country is bred to a trade; in our country it never is nor shall be.

MAGISTRATE:—Right. The aristocracy in our country shall either be robbers enjoying what is not theirs, or mendicants begging for what they recognise as others; but the day of reckoning is coming.

C. CLERK:—Swamiji is come, your honour.

MAGISTRATE:—O, let him enter. Let the court-crier go through the formality of calling him thrice.

(*Swami Paramananda of the Ramakrishna Mission enters—a tall gaunt figure, six foot-three. All in the court rise except the magistrate who makes just a motion to rise. Swamiji is first sworn and then offered a seat and is allowed to speak sitting. Swamiji runs his eyes round the court and recognises Chandra though not Kamala. A shade of pity and melancholy passes over his countenance at their sight. When he sees the Zamindar there, likewise a shade of involuntary anger passes over his weather-beaten face.*)

PROSECUTING INSPECTOR:—Does Swamiji recognise anybody here?

SWAMIJI:—Yes, some, especially, this one here (*pointing to Chandra*) and the other one there (*pointing to the Zamindar.*)

PROS. INS.:—Swamiji alleges that Mr. Chandrasekaran is the late Zamindar's son. What's Swamiji's proof?

SWAMIJI:—Let me speak to the present Zamindar, in the hearing of all.

MAGISTRATE:—Let the Zamindar step forward.

(*The Zamindar steps forward. His face is sullen. He growls at Swamiji but doesn't show any sign of sorrow or hopelessness.*)

SWAMIJI:—Devaraja Rajanga Bhupati! (for that is your name, and I quite well remember it) tell the court if you know me and when you came to know me.

(*Devaraja Rajanga Bhupati stands silent and sullen.*)

MAGISTRATE:—Do you hear, Zamindar? Answer Swamiji's question without delay.

ZAMINDAR:—I don't know him. I never saw him before this.

SWAMIJI :—Let him say if he remembers the 13th of October 1913, his visit to the Mission House in Brodies Road, Mylapore and his hurried interview with me.

(The Zamindar makes no answer.)

MAGISTRATE :—If you don't answer questions put to you, you shall be punished for contempt of court.

ZAMINDAR :—I don't remember this man at all or any interview with him.

SWAMIJI :—He evidently lies. Neither force nor persuasion can wring any confession from him. I shall relate what happened. On the 9th of October 1913 I was at Chidambaram doing flood relief work. On the night of the 10th I heard of some people stranded on a block in the midst of a roaring torrent; I hurried to the spot. I found the block was part of the Vishnu temple at Vadarangam, borne down by the floods of the Coleroon and deposited on a sand dune amidst the waters. I rowed with difficulty in a country raft to the place and found seated on the block three helpless souls—two sobbing children and a tall sturdy fellow who had risked his life for them, and was then their sole hope. The fellow said that he had been borne down the current when he leapt into it to save the children of the Zamindar of Desamangalam, who with the rest of his family and household had found a watery grave. The fellow's name was Mannaran.

(The Zamindar casts an angry glance at Swamiji.)

PROS. INS. :—I beg the court to make a note of the Zamindar's gesture.

MAGISTRATE :—Right you are. It's done. Will Swamiji kindly go on?

SWAMIJI :—I put the man and the children on the country raft and rowed safely over to the north bank and landed

at Vallampadugai. The next morning Mannaran who was grief-stricken at the loss of his own wife and children, took his leave of me to avail himself of the charity measures taken by the late Dewan Bahadur Ramaswami Chettiar,—brother of the present Rajah of Chettinad—and left the children in my care. On the 11th I suddenly got orders from the Mission calling me to Madras. On the 12th I was at Madras. I was ordered to San Francisco and was to proceed expeditiously to Bombay *en route* to America. On the next morning, that is, the 13th October, this Devarajan presented himself before me and represented himself with tears in his eyes as the cousin of the deceased Zamindar and as the sole survivor—but for the two children in my charge—of the Zamindar's family. Mannaran was with him to bear out the statement. Devarajan begged that the children be given to him. Going to America, and busy packing my things, I confess, I was glad of the riddance and after a short consultation with Swami Atmananda, then my boss, gave over charge of the children. But I took a letter from this Devarajan purporting to be a receipt for what he got from me and insisted on taking a photograph of him along with the children, aware that such a thing would be necessary for a future identification of the persons.

MAGISTRATE:—Swamiji has got them now? Could Swamiji produce those things?

C. CLERK:—Swamiji has filed them, your honour, the first thing he did on entering.

MAGISTRATE:—Let me see them.

(The court clerk presents a sheaf of papers to the Magistrate. The Magistrate studies the photograph and reads the receipt through.)

O, this is attested!

SWAMIJI:—Yes. I had Mannaran and Swami Atmananda attest it.

(At the mention of Mannaran, the Zamindar's glance at Swamiji is fierce. The Pros. Ins. draws the court's attention to that.)

MAGISTRATE:—Is Mannaran here? Could he be produced?

(A man steps, bows as low as the earth and speaks amidst sobs. Here the counsel for the accused who is accustomed to the ways of the High Court, enters a protest against anybody speaking at any time. But the court silences him and he has to remember he is in the moffusil.)

THE MAN:—Mannaran is not here. Neither is he on this earth. This great soul (*pointing to the Zamindar*) did him to death and bought me, the sinner that I am, off with a thousand rupees. I am Mannaran's own brother and have sinfully kept the secret of his murder all the time.

MAGISTRATE:—It's worse and worse.

PROS. INSP.:—The fierce glances now explain themselves, your honour.

MAGISTRATE:—They do. But will Swamiji go on?

ZAMINDAR:—I have a word to say to the court. There is a villainous conspiracy against me. This rascal tells this lie about the alleged Mannaran just to blackmail me, to wring as much as he can from me. He takes advantage of the tissue of falsehoods that "orange widow" (*pointing to Swamiji*) has told.

(The Magistrate and the elderly among the lawyers close their ears against this blasphemous reference to Swamiji. The younger lawyers are unable to repress loud laughter.)

MAGISTRATE:—Will Swamiji now go on?

SWAMIJI:—I left for America; I came back but a week ago. To be precise, I returned to Madras last Thursday. I read the report of the kidnapping case in the Papers, and promptly wired to the court.

COUNSEL FOR THE ACCUSED :—Why didn't you expose the Zamindar earlier? Why didn't you write or cable from America?

SWAMIJI :—I had no news there of the Desamangalam Zamindari. And then I was too busy with Mission work all the time to look for news about our own country.

PROS. INS.—Swamiji's silence in America on this subject decides nothing. Even granting he knew that the late Zamindar's children were kept unjustly out of the Zamindari, his silence till now, can't be pleaded in palliation of the Zamindar's crime.

MAGISTRATE :—It can't be. But let the children of the late Zamindar step forth. (*Kamala and Chandra step forward*) What proof is there to show that these are the late Zamindar's children?

SWAMIJI :—Mannaran could vouch for it if he were alive; but he is not.

MANNARAN'S BROTHER :—I can and do hereby vouch for it. My brother who had risked his own life for these children was not amenable to this devil's (*pointing to the Zamindar*) suggestion that they should be kept out of the Zamindari. I was; so he killed him and bribed me. But truth is truth and though I blush at what I have done, I don't hesitate now to tell the truth.

SITARAMIER :—Your honour, there is also a piece of evidence independently of this. Here is a portrait of the old Zamindar. Chandrasekaran is its exact copy. The court may satisfy itself. Besides, there is the photograph of the children taken by Swamiji. That could be compared with the living originals.

(*They all study the portrait and the photographs and acclaim with one voice that Chandra is the old Zamindar's child.*)

MAGISTRATE:—I am convinced of the numerous crimes of the accused. I am convinced that Chandrasekaran is the son of the late Zamindar. I am however unable to deliver judgment in the cause. It is of such gravity and involves persons in such high rank that only the High Court in Sessions has competence to pronounce on it. Therefore, I commit the cause to the High Court and transfer all the connected papers thither. But before dispersing the court, however I cannot forbear referring respectfully to the disinterested labours of His Holiness Swami Paramanandaji in this cause which are second only to his labours in building a temple in San Fransisco and establishing in its sanctum our Eternal Aum. But what is our competence to appreciate the work either of the holy Ramakrishna Mission or of its noblest member whom we have had the privilege to have for a few hours here?

Act V, Scene I

(*Sitaramier's hall, unchanged for all the four years that have elapsed since the events of the last scene. Chandra, now Zamindar, by the decision of the High Court, sits in the easy-chair and Sundari in an arm-chair at a couple of yards from him. Chandra sits doing nothing. Sundari makes a feint of reading. Only a feint as shown by the frequent glances she steals at the handsome young Zamindar.*)

CHANDRA:—Are you very intent on reading? You read as if you had an examination to-morrow? What is it that you read?

SUNDARI:—Why do you want to know?

CHANDRA:—Because I see no reason why I should not.

SUNDARI:—I shan't tell you.

CHANDRA:—Then I shall directly go and see.

SUNDARI:—Do.

CHANDRA:—Why are you so perverse?

SUNDARI:—Why *you* so inquisitive?

CHANDRA:—Because you are so secretive. (*Rises and goes and stands behind Sundari's chair*) O, Lady Clare and Lord Ronald? Tennyson, isn't it?

SUNDARI:—Lord! How learned you are!

CHANDRA:—(*Striking her on the cheek with his forefinger*). Not quite so much as somebody else. But why do you read this of all his pieces?

SUNDARI:—Just because why should I not; just because it becomes me and the occasion.

CHANDRA:—Your meaning?

SUNDARI:—Divine it.

CHANDRA:—I can't, I shan't, you riddling little rogue.

SUNDARI:—King Cophetua never called the beggar maid a rogue.

CHANDRA:—O, there you are! I see. King Cophetua and Lord Ronald.

SUNDARI:—(*Interrupting him*) and the Zamindar of Desamangalam.

CHANDRA:—Well, I shan't have it all alluded to even in jest.

SUNDARI:—Er....; I shan't have it all kept out of mention even in earnest.

CHANDRA:—You are cross.

SUNDARI:—Thank God, not the Crucifix. (*Chandra stoops to kiss her.*) Not yet, tho' you have stooped to conquer.

SITARAMIER:—(*entering*) That's it. Well said, my girl. Not yet. But not very far, either, from it. I am just now from Sundara Sastri's. He fixes the day after tomorrow for your (*addressing Sundari*) wedding and your (*addressing Chandra*) kissing.

(*Seshi and Nagam enter and Seshi hears her son and speaks.*)

SESHI:—Is it the day after to-morrow? Is it so soon? But there is nothing done in the house against the celebration. Could you cope with it, Nagam?

NAGAM:—With it and with more than it. What could be difficult when the Zamindar himself is the bridegroom?

SESHI:—As for that, I was ever sure of it. When was I not? When did I not tell you it would be so?

SITARAMIER :—(*to himself*—) You always said so ; you said so most vehemently that evening four years ago at the temple when you actually aided the Zamindar to kidnap my girl. You !

CHANDRA :—It's time I left. I must myself make some preparations, you know.

SITARAMIER :—Before we all came in, it was never time you had left. Now it is. We popped in improperly, didn't we ? You needn't go. We shall make ourselves scarce.

CHANDRA :—No stopping ; much to do. (*Takes leave of all except Sundari by word of mouth, and of her by a speechless ocular message. The rest return into the house.*)

“ A Man, a Maid and a Green Flag ”

BY T. N. VISWANATHAN, B.A. B.L.

PAUL growled, Kittu snorted and Ramesh raised his eyebrows, though these acts did nothing to alleviate their perplexity. Their dissatisfaction was excusable; it was quite strange, their first experience; and coming from such a simple soul as the S. M., it had stunned them.

He had always been so sympathetic—that University men should be so hard-pressed as to accept the posts of Relieving Clerks on quite scandalising terms was his perpetual regret. Always gentle, he taught them their work with infinite tact and motherliness. Such had been his sympathy, that the trio were already forgetting their first sense of injury, which oppressed them so persistently during the early days of their probation.

Then, all of a sudden, the S. M. had manifested this inexplicable harshness. He flashed a glittering eye and told the trio individually and collectively about the shabbiness of their work. More than that, he was very bitter.

“ Maybe, you chaps possess degrees. But remember, the railway is paying no unemployment pension. You will get your pay for honest, steady work; otherwise you have the ‘ way out ’. Nobody compels you to work, if you feel so superior to the job.” He said all that, even much more.

Their first sense of shock over, the trio had met and discussed this metamorphosis. No amount of discussion, no amount of suggestions and hypothesis took them anywhere near light. At last, Paul, the practical one, burst out:

“ Well, chaps, we can only wait and see. No use breaking our heads over this sudden lunacy. After all,

there may not be any reason for this change. What with the heat and work, the chap might have gone off his beans."

Resourceful and practical Paul certainly was; but in this one instance, he was admittedly wrong. He overlooked the possibility of a remote cause. Not that we are out, in this short narrative, to discuss the infinite subtleties of the theory of causation; but in this, as in many other instances, there was a cause—only it was removed miles and miles away from the ultimate effect.

And that cause was a man, a maid and a green flag.

The man, at the beginning of this narrative, was lounging idly in a third class compartment of a moving train. The train was one of those slow-moving local trains and even its monotonous rattling did not disturb the thinker. Yes—the man, apparently the very picture of luxurious indolence, was thinking intently. And the furrows on his forehead made no secret of the tenor of his thoughts. They were hard, bitter thoughts. What else could they be, when all his talents and ambitions had only attained this ultimate fruition—his accepting a Relieving Clerk's post on a disreputable salary.

Only four years back, everything was different. Life seemed then a nest of pleasant possibilities and he was fast heading towards its threshold. He was then, as now, gracefully built and enjoyed the many pleasures of the student, as a matter of course. He was 'Sam' to his few intimates, while the less fortunate called him Mr. Swaminathan. As the sports-captain his records were still unparalleled, while he won for his college three years in succession the inter-collegiate trophy for elocution. Rather a rare combination! As he sauntered through the college corridor with unaffected dignity, the juveniles gathered in groups at a distance and looked at his towering personality

with reverential awe. So consistent had been his popularity, that when at the end of his academic life, he was awarded the Best Boy's Prize, there was neither surprise at nor discussion about it. Rather it was considered a belated recognition, and Sam left college *en route* to the Land of Promise.

It was a slow but steady disillusionment and Sam found this Land of Promise only a mirage. No doubt, there were various calls for energetic, enterprising, and qualified men both from Government and outside departments. A large number of these advertisements eliminated him and his clan, the Brahmins. In response to the other and noncommunal advertisements, Sam sent his applications assiduously. Very often, soon after sending his application, Sam found his prospective employers no more in need of energetic, enterprising men. Now and then, a stray reply came in answer to his application. But these Fords and Rothschilds wanted respectable sums of what they termed 'cash securities'. It was a disheartening affair from the beginning, but Sam patiently persisted for four years.

At home, where he was worshipped as a God, his people advised him to appear for the I. C. S., and similar competitive examinations. But Sam contemptuously waved aside such proposals. He knew his limitations; competitive examination needed men of greater ability and integrity—that was his constant reply. Countless fathers with handsome daughters and much money prowled about this Apollo, but Apollo's reply was as bitter as it was emphatic. "A chap with no independent income ought not to get married," was his impatient retort. Gradually, his kith and kin realised that this God of theirs had gone out of their reach. Four years passed like that, four long disillusioning years.

Then came this call for Relieving Clerks from the Railway Company. The prospective employees were to be paid Rs. 10/- per mensem during their probationary period extending over six months, to be confirmed subsequently

on a fixed salary of Rs. 25/- per mensem. It was a bold challenge to the Universities, but days were hard and even a bolder advertisement would not have shocked Sam in his present mood. Half humourously, half seriously, he sent his application to the Secretary, Staff Selection Board. With unusual alacrity, he got his reply. Afterwards, he passed through an interview, a medical board, and was declared selected. The announcement made him dizzy. It was his first reward! At home, there was a storm. His usually mild father bubbled with righteous indignation. It was scandalous! a graduate accepting a job on such despicable salary. But Sam was equally indignant. He had patiently waited; he would rather die than continue this parasitical existence. If all his physical and intellectual accomplishments could get him only this, he meant to give it an honest trial. Absolutely no use fretting. He meant to stick to his guns even if that meant all the dishonour in the world. Again the parents bitterly realised that Sam could no more be spanked into obedience. And here at least, they argued bitterly, the child had not been the father of man. After that, Sam finished an uneventful probation in his town station. That probation ended and he was now going on his first outdoor work to some unknown wayside station.

The train stopped, a porter called the name of the station in a sing-song voice and Sam came out of his reverie with a start. So this was the End! A lonesome wayside station with a solitary tin shed smote his vision as much by its abrupt arrival as by its solitariness. Just outside the platform, he could discern the small house of the S. M. peeping out of a ruined fence. But for these two small huts, all was blank desolation. Even Nature had not been kind to this locality. Sam's heart sank into his stomach. His eyes wandered again to find a biped in green turban at the other end of the platform. It must be his immediate boss, the green turban was unmistakable.

Shading his eyes, Sam eagerly took stock of his immediate superior, slowly moving towards him. When he was near enough, Sam mustered all his geniality, and did the S. M. a good morning. But the S. M. too much divorced from civilization these years was more matter-of-fact.

"Ticket, please," he muttered the railway slogan.

Patting him on the back, Sam produced his pass.

"Well, Sir, as I am travelling on duty, the authorities have exempted me from the usual fare. I am your new assistant," he explained.

At this information, the S. M. tried to put some authority in his tone, but miserably failed. He found this new assistant too masterful and overpowering and wished to be miles and miles away from him.

"So, that is that. Welcome. Where do you intend staying?" the S. M. tried to be genial.

"Don't know anything about this place. I am afraid I have to trouble you to find me some hotel," Sam replied politely.

The S. M. gasped: "Do you think you are in the city of Madras. There is no hotel for miles and miles around and the village is at least three miles from here. Usually, my assistants stay with me during their residence here as paying guests. I have no objection to entertain you; and if you have none, we can take that as settled" suggested the S. M. and looked hopefully at the face of his apprentice.

"Quite a ripping suggestion", Sam assented cheerfully. "I suppose I shall be permitted to take the boys under my charge", he added.

"Lord bless the Railway! How do you know my boys?" the S. M. made poor concealment of his surprise.

"Pure guess. From your appearance, I guessed that you must have at least one lad of school-going age. Of course it might be a girl. But in all cases of prognostication, we soothsayers allow a small percentage for the chance", Sam explained.

After this, they got on admirably. In his loneliness Sam learned to love the young urchins, Sinu and Pattu, those were the names of the S. M's progeny. The S. M. watched with a parent's delight his young ones brightening up considerably under the able chaperoning of Sam. As days moved by, Sam took entire charge of the Station work and allowed the S. M. a longer margin of hours to stay at home. All that was of course strictly unofficial. During these days, Sam conceived a greater and greater attachment for devouring work because that kept him from depressing thoughts of the home and the blighted future. Days, weeks and months passed like that.

One sunny morning, "the 7-30" was due in a few minutes and Sam came out of his room to send off the train. As the train stopped almost the first thing to greet his vision was a radiantly beautiful girl coming out of a second class compartment. Sam gazed at her in frank surprise for a few seconds, but soon rushed away to hide his ill-clad self from her perception. But at the gate, she accosted him and asked him the nearest route to Pannai House. She was overflowing with conversation and told him that the Pannai Iyer was her uncle and that she was paying him a surprise visit. She was from "Queen Mary's", out for "my Xmas holidays, you know." She ended abruptly with a request for a conveyance.

Sam was frankly nonplussed at the request. She would not get any carriage, even if she waited for years. If only she could wait for a few hours he would send word to her uncle to send his carriage. That would no doubt spoil the surprise element in the visit. Still there was no way out of the difficulty. He was genuinely apologetic,

Though quite disconcerted, the girl continued to smile.

"Not that I very much mind the walk but there is none for company. It is as you say three miles off and the porter cannot be expected to be a conversationalist," she complained.

Sam did not hesitate much after that.

"If you don't mind it, I can follow you to the village. I have my colleague to look after the Station work during my absence. Excuse me a few minutes and I will come back with my coat on." He vanished into the room, afraid of a sporting refusal of his offer.

So they trotted along side by side leaving the S. M. staring glassily after them. Whether it was her unconventionality or whether it was her silent sympathy, Sam told her all about himself. She gently rebuked what she termed the unenterprising side of his nature. With his record and ability, he ought to have attempted some of these competitive examinations. Such was her frank sympathy that Sam began to doubt the wisdom of his past obstinacy for the first time.....

At the entrance to the village, he offered to go back and she did not press him to stay. While she had gone only a few yards, she turned and called him back.

"Say, what a shabby man you are! You have not collected my ticket and mind you it is a second class ticket at that. What will they think of your slovenliness at the Head Office," she laughed and handed over the ticket to him. With well-feigned regret, Sam took the ticket and went back his way.

Afterwards they met often and fell desperately in love with each other. Silently, they endured this first experience, this pleasing pain and not a word was spoken.....

The holidays were over and the maid made unwilling preparations to leave the village. Sam watched her arrangements with dull despair; of course, he had nothing of life's pleasures to offer to her and he meant to fight his battle singly. On the day of her departure, she came early enough to the station to have a last long chat with him. She was mistaken. Conversation languished after a few formal greetings and both of them sitting side by side silently trembled at the prospects beyond. The morrow meant the commencement of the old routine to Sam, while to the girl the College gaieties seemed contemptibly puerile after this awakening. At last, the train steamed into the platform and Sam rushed to finish his work, so that he might spend the last minutes with the girl. When he returned, she was comfortably seated in a compartment and was looking out for him. She acknowledged his return with a wan smile. He entered the compartment and took his seat opposite to her. Suddenly he leaned out of the window and waved the green flag in his hand. The train whistled, started with a jerk and moved out of the station.

The maid watched all this procedure with puzzled interest. When the train was fairly out of the station, Sam answered the unasked question.

"I am going to resign my job, because—because, I am going to marry you. After our honeymoon, with your sympathetic assistance I am going to renew my attack in fresh fields and pastures new", he talked breathlessly.

"You seemed to have deliberated over all possible pros and cons." That was all the girl could say.

"Frankly not. In fact I decided everything only during the last few minutes. That is why I could not even take leave of my colleague," Sam replied with genuine regret.

The girl was silent for a few seconds. Suddenly her eyes lighted up with a roguish smile,

"Say, you have brought that flag with you. How can your S. M. give the send-off to the other trains coming his way."

Sam really seemed to have thought out everything because he replied almost immediately.

"Well, the Station Master has got yards and yards of his green turban cloth and he can make a flag out of it. As for this flag I have decided to keep this as a memento of our first meeting during our lives. Afterwards, it would be kept in the family as an heirloom and whenever our grand-children look at it, they will think and talk with pleasure of our first meeting and marriage."

"So you are already in the third generation. You seem to be pretty imaginative for a starved ticket collector", was the girl's reply. At which, they both burst out into a hearty laughter.

Not many days after, the Agent at the Head Quarters received a personal letter addressed in a neat but unfamiliar scrawl. It was an invitation from a Mr. Swaminathan, an Ex-Relieving Clerk of the Railway to his marriage. But it was the postscript which at first puzzled but subsequently threw the Agent into a fit of hearty laughter. It read: "While unceremoniously quitting your employment, I have through sheer inadvertence brought with me a green-coloured flag, property of the railway. Subsequently I have decided to keep it as a memento and under the circumstances myself and Mrs. will consider it our wedding present from you."


The Agent laughed long and loud, to the puzzled amazement of his subordinates in the office outside. Then he sent for his Secretary, Staff Selection Board, and warned him to consider twice before appointing university-trained men to petty posts in the future. He was rather severe and the aggrieved Secretary gave vent to his spleen by

transmitting messages to the heads of various departments not to be too indulgent to menials, simply because they happen to be university men. Quite suddenly, all over the country where the Railway penetrated, unfortunate university men found their immediate superiors unduly severe towards them for no apparent reason.

Paul still maintained, that the S. M. was off his head, while his faithful friends doubted for the first time his practical wisdom. It is indeed unfortunate, that Paul like many others similarly situated overlooked the possibilities of a remote cause. Not that it was his fault. It was all happening miles and miles away in a lonely wayside station.

The truth is that it was all, as I said even at the beginning, due to a man, a maid, and a green flag. Wasn't it?

A Hike to the Nallamalais

HE word N-a-l-l-a-m-a-l-a-i-s may appear bizarre to some readers; but to the people of the neighbouring district of Kurnool in Deccan it conjures up visions of sylvan grandeur which are unforgettable. The Nallamalai forest, it is believed, was that puranic 'Dandakaranya' of 'Ramayana'.

As the train slowly winds its way up the ghats from Nandyal, a splendid panorama of hills and dales clothed in green verdure rises before you and arrests your attention. The sight is, indeed, a grand feast to the eye. It is one vast expanse of foliage relieved here and there by metalled roads laid by the Forest Department. In the stillness of the journey the sweet notes of wild birds cause pleasant surprise. The train plods along its zig-zag way all through until you find yourself sharply awakened by a cluster of rude huts with splinters of bamboos projecting in all ways on top of them. This is a small station, and this is the destination. The 'Chelama' station reminds you of underground stations generally described in English Journals and newspapers. It is a small, quiet-looking station with a handful of people on the platform. The station master with a grisly beard which has not known the razor for over six months, the emaciated porter with a pot-belly due not to sumptuous eating but to enlarged spleen, the hungry-looking forester with his green turban and a few sickly-looking stragglers are the only people who constitute humanity here. By an unsophisticated traveller from the Fifth avenue, America, these would be deemed fit to be by the side of the anthropoid ape with the ticket "Next in evolution" as said old S. V. V. once. The travellers' bungalow built by the benign Government is the only thing *à la mode* in the place and the unpaid coolie takes your kit to this place and lodges you in the right western style.

Just within a measurable and unimportant distance there is a babel of sounds ; and you strain your ears but everything is unintelligible and clumsy. It is from a group of huts called ' Gudems ' occupied by the ' Chenchus '. The Chenchus are the forest tribe living on the Nallamalais (the black hills, if you please) and though of medium size, generally strong and robust. The hut is so low that no one can stand erect inside it. They, therefore, bend and sit crouching one against another. The Chenchu is almost naked but for a small piece of cloth in the region of his loins. The most biting cold does not affect him. He keeps a small fire throughout the night and sleeps round it with his wife and children on the ground. If our Mahatma has reduced sartorial requisites and personal comforts to the minimum, I must say that the Chenchu for one has clean beaten him.

The tongue employed by the Chenchus is Telugu ; but it is Telugu with a broad hyphen between each letter of the word that he utters. You will, therefore, understand them easily, the second day of your sojourn amidst them. If you are a Tamilian you will require an interpreter of course.

The Chenchu is a nice fellow with no pre-conceived notions on anything and so feels honestly pleased to see you and sees you straight in your face. You are to him a celestial being and he does not enter into any talk with you.

His services are generally utilised by the Forest Department. Instead of the "herd instinct" the Chenchu has the forest instinct. He is an adept in collecting forest produce such as roots, leaves and nuts and knows every nook and corner of the jungle. The collection of honey is his big concern, and no one may collect it except the Chenchu. The honeycombs are found at the edges of deep crags and extracting honey from such places is a matter of as grave a danger to an outsider as the samphire-gatherer's ;

but to a Chenchu it is a matter of routine. Just to reclaim and civilise these Chenchus, schools are started and teachers are paid extra salaries to work in such forbidding surroundings. Civilisation spreads, you know.

Ahobilam is a great place of pilgrimage in the Nallamalais, and tradition has it that god Narasimha married a Chenchu girl. If god Narasimha loved an ugly-looking Chenchu damsel, I am sure a number of gods of the Hindu Pantheon would have taken a fancy for many of our pretty flappers in cities. Does this give a possible proof of the dictum that Man is Divine? Well, be it so, if you like.

The Chenchu is a good shikari, and he takes you safely on in spite of cheetahs, tigers, sambors, and other wild beasts of the forest which come across your path in their unwary moments.

The tall teak trees which rise like sky-scrapers look majestic and cast their long shadows on the hill sides. The bracing evening breeze, the confusing clatter of rustling leaves punctuated here and there with the grunt of the wild boar or the chirrups of a family of monkeys, the wood apple and the wild nut that a kindly wind wafts in your path to tempt you, if you don't keep wary, on unbeaten tracks, the salt-licks where an unwary deer corrects its digestion, the gurgling mountain brook where the thirsty tiger and the ferocious cheetah come in the small hours of the evening, send a thrill and a joy into you, and you feel constrained to look back many a time, into the region of pure poetry before the destination is reached.

With the dusk you return home—the snug-looking T. B.—after a wearisome trudging along the unfrequented paths to find your cup of tea doubly flavoured.

In the morning you prepare your kit for the homeward journey and meet once again the same poor grisly-bearded Station Master.

As the train steams into the platform, you feel you are back again into civilization, routine and prose.

My companion Mr. K.—is a fine shot and bagged—would you believe it?—a tiger, two cheetahs and a boar and I—what do you think I accomplished?—well, a duck. That's bathos, don't you think? But that's also the result of your blessed civilisation.

R. NAGPURI,
III B.Sc.

Marry and Love or Love and Marry—a debate

A thousand distractions: mother ill, father out on one of his long absences and little brothers and sisters infernally noisy, fighting and disturbing. No preparation possible for the examination. And it comes off next month. To crown all, there, there my foolish weak-hearted acceptance of an invitation to speak in a debate. The debate was coming off in an hour and I was none the wiser for the fortnight's notice I had had of it. To think of my crass stupidity in agreeing to oppose, to be the principal opposer, in a debate on these terms!

"This house considers Marrying first and Loving afterwards the most natural and the most helpful process in the building up of domestic happiness", well, that was to be debated. But there being only sixty minutes between the debate and me, I wisely ruled regrets out of my programme and resolved to trust to the inspiration of the moment.

B, the opener, spoke fluently, learnedly and even eloquently and swayed his audience to Marriage first and Love later. But out of the good he intended for himself came the evil he dreaded; his own speech was the defeat of his side. He exhorted his audience not to be carried away by Shakespeare and those poetry-chaps, and *that* gave me my chance; it threw open the floodgates of my elequence. I immediately fastened on Shakespeare's treatment of Love.

I rose, (*loud cheers*). I began, "Ladies and Gentlemen" B sprang to his feet and shouted "Order, order, Address the Chair". I made a fresh start; "Mr. Chairman, I am going to request the patience of these Ladies, and Gentlemen, (we have ladies, you know, in the

University, quite a bevy) to a very brief statement of what Shakespeare says on this subject. It is not in *my* way to speak long or inflict boredom. (I significantly stressed *my*). Now what does Shakespeare say of Love?

"Shakespeare would have us—I mean, Sir, us young men and women—love one another at first sight if we should at all love truly. You may call it romance. Commercial men might even call it moonshine. But I tell these people Shakespeare calls that alone true love. What, Sir, does even jesting Gratiano say?

My eyes, my lord, can look as swift as yours :
You saw the mistress, I beheld the maid ;
You loved, I loved—for intermission
No more pertains to me, my Lord, than to you.

"If Gratiano you account a mere clown, what does his principal himself do? He goes to Belmont, to see Portia's old father, sees *her* casually and turns back to Venice with a heart laden with a rich treasure of what he calls a speechless ocular message from Portia. Others elsewhere all over Shakespeare's Europe do again this very thing. Antony goes to Egypt and gives up the chances of an empire and succumbs to the charms of Cleopatra's "infinite variety." Ferdinand and Miranda are bewitched at each other's sight—I mean, their first sight—in Act I, Scene 2. Florizel and Perdita win each other at but a look, thanks to Florizel's erring (Sir, I mean, wandering) falcon. And so do the hundred other lovers in Shakespeare. Why, what does Orlando say? He confesses himself but a quintain at sight of his heavenly Rosalind. Poor Phoebe who mistakes Ganymede for a man would appear to think herself foolish to love at first sight and quotes the authority of Marlowe in palliation of her own alleged guilt.

Dead shepherd, now I find thy saw of might,
Who ever loved that loved not at first sight?

"Why, erstwhile wicked Oliver and whilom love-despising Celia see each other, love each other, speak to each other

"and in these degrees make a pair of stairs to marriage which they will climb incontinent." Clubs, I have it, Sir, on Rosalind's authority, cannot part them.

"Sir, have I not said sufficient to convince these cultured folk that Love precedes Marriage? Man and woman seem to love directly they see, and marry after they love. That is Shakespeare's analysis.

"A later poet, one belonging almost to our own times, has endorsed Shakespeare. Does not Tennyson apologise for saying that love sprang *gradually* into existence between Edith and Leolin? Tennyson knows, as did Shakespeare and Marlowe, that people *fall* in love and do not *drift* to it; for, says he apologetically, Leolin and Edith loved each other fast though their love was the ripening of an earlier feeling that was other than love.

"How should love,
Whom the cross-lightnings of four chance-met eyes,
Flash into fiery life from nothing, follow
Such dear familiarities of dawn?"

"Tennyson's apology avails not only his own Edith and Leolin, Sir, but Shakespeare's Imogen and Posthumus. These two couples are exceptions to *love at first sight* and prove, if ever exceptions did, the rule of *love at first sight*.

"Men and women fall in love. Let me assure these people, Sir, that this love is no slough. It has, I mean, a bottom. I should say a rock-bottom. In Shakespeare, at any rate, those that love at first sight love till the last sight of each other, as their love has a bottom, the bottom of esteem. Rosalind is infinitely superior in mental perfection to Orlando, but she is sure that Orlando is her perfect man; and to Orlando reciprocally she is "heavenly Rosalind". Exactly similar is the mutual attitude of Portia and Bassanio, of the Prince of Naples and the banished Duke's daughter, of the Bohemian King's son and the shepherd's alleged girl. Where esteem is not, true love

is not too. Between poor Desdemona and the Moor love ended in a tragedy *because, because*, mark, love was *not* between the one of them and the other, bottomed on esteem. Desdemona of course conceived a holy passion for Othello on the ground that he had been the hero * of * a hundred fights. There of course, I say, was esteem. That esteem made her cry to Amelia that her lord had not killed her, that she died, herself. Othello on the other hand, as he confessed at the Venitian Senate, loved Desdemona *not because he esteemed her but because SHE loved him*. As the basis was flimsy, events proved the superstructure flimsier. If but the Moor had respected and therefore loved old Brabantio's daughter, not a whole wilderness of Iagos could have safely approached him with the suggestion that Desdemona was false to him. Significantly enough, while the Orlandos, the Bassanios, the Ferdinands, the Florizels, and the Antonys frequently dilate on the perfections of their ladies, Othello speaks of Desdemona (with fondness indeed but) with patronage in his fondness, as an elderly man would talk of a lisping child—as one would pet a parrot or a lark. I trust, Sir, that I have proved my theme that in the world as in Shakespeare, not only Love precedes Marriage, but that Love preceded by esteem is the sure basis of happy marital union.

“That is why Shakespeare the Seer, makes his Berown declare that love is blind, in the sense that, where others see no greatness, it sees; that whereas, others see with their physical eyes, love sees with the mental. Why, Shakespeare makes the eye the seat of love.

“Dickens may make fun of Shakespeare, Sir, and say that the course of true love was never a railway—meaning, as Shakespeare put it, that it never ran smooth. But Shakespeare is right. True love based on esteem and conceived at first sight was never allowed by interfering man to run its natural course. Wherever there have been


a Margery and a Trafford there have been also a Grand-Dudgeon—Mr. Pope and a Mr. Magnet as a mote in the eye, a fly in the ointment; yes, the one thing not wanted. To-day, Sir, the opposite side supports Mr. Pope and Mr. Magnet and oppose Margery and Trafford,—and need I add, Shakespeare and H. G. Wells? Shakespeare and seers like him have always enjoined on us non-interference with love caught at first sight and constructed on regard. Erring man scarcely realises his limitations and opposes Shakespeare, opposes common-sense, opposes Nature, opposes King Dushyantha and his sylvan sweetheart and says 'You shall marry as I direct; later you shall love, if you can; and go to the dogs, if you must'.

"Sir, I have only to remind the house that in all the Shakespearian plays ending happily love at first sight has had its natural way, while in all his love-tragedies the progress of this love has been arrested by the unholy hands of evil-intentioned Iagos, and Iachimos.

ANON.

Prema

I

 WITH a whistle and a jerk the train left the little platform. A few sleepy faces were thrust out to enquire the name of the Station. To all whom he could answer, Karunakaran volunteered the reply that it was Vijayamangalam—throwing his head up and laying perhaps an unnecessary stress upon the syllable 'ja'—fully conscious of the fact that if they were not the natives of that village, he was proud to be one. In fact, he was the only passenger to get into the train at that station. He was all in a flutter and bustled about in the compartment; for had he not determined to enjoy himself thoroughly that day and the one following?

Karunakaran was the only son of a poor widow at Vijayamangalam. He had studied up to the Fourth Form in a High School at Erode and then had had to discontinue his studies owing to poverty. Brought up far from dissipation and deceit and of good personality, Karunakaran had the pleasant rustic air about him. He worked hard in his little farm and earned a little. Though nearing twenty-four, he had never travelled by rail. His great ambition in life was to see the metropolis. By dint of hard work and occasional acts of self-denial, he managed to save some hundred and fifty rupees just now. His ambition to see Madras increased day by day. He resolved to spend the next 'Deepavali' at Madras and buy as many fancy articles as caught his imagination. At last, the eve of Deepavali is come and we see him in the train (for the first time in his life, if you please,) steaming away at 18.2 miles per hour towards Madras—his thoughts flying at the rate of 'plus infinity' miles per second towards one knows not what. All his luggage was a suit-case in which he had ordered,—

ordered, yes, that's the word—his mother to place a hundred rupees and a change of clothing. The purse in his breast pocket contained some Fifteen Rupees. The rest of his hard-earned wealth he had generously given to his mother asking her to be merry while he was away.

He was determined to enjoy the journey to, and his stay at, Madras thoroughly. His face was radiant with happiness; he got down at every station like a school-boy, getting into the compartment only when the train moved. But he got tired of this before he reached Salem and settled in his seat and settled to talking. Occasionally his glances were directed to the bunk where his suit-case was placed. However, during his very first journey by rail Karunakaran grew tired of it. It was too monotonous and too jerky to be lovable. And his eagerness to reach Madras and to enjoy the unknown pleasures awaiting him there certainly did not promote his patience with the slowness of the train.

It was about nine o'clock when he reached Jalarpet. He had to wait here for about half an hour. He grew impatient and, calling out to the guard who happened to pass by his compartment, said aloud, "Will the train ever move, sir?—Or has it fallen asleep?" The passengers in his compartment laughed. The Guard also laughed good-humouredly and gave a suitable reply. Some two fashionable ladies strolling along the platform—one of them quite young and, rather charming, thought our hero—turned and laughed too. Karunakaran was wafted up to the Seventh Heaven of bliss at having made the two beautiful ladies—'and such beautiful ones,' thought he—laugh. He just gazed at them till they were out of sight, thinking that the younger of the two was just heavenly, and then settled again in his berth to meditate upon the beauties he would meet at the metropolis the following morning.

II

When the train reached the Madras Central early on the following morning Karunakaran, fully conscious that a whole day lay before him just to be enjoyed and that a hundred and ten or so rupees jingled in his pocket to make the enjoyment perfect, got down from the train. The first item on his long programme was a visit to the beach; for, besides having never travelled in a train before, he had never also seen the sea. After having gazed at the 'deep and dark blue ocean' to his heart's content, he loafed away his time till about 4 o'clock in the afternoon among the many grand shops and grand buildings. All at once he reminded himself of the much-talked-of Moor Market. At once he started for that place.

Staring at the various interesting shops, he at last came to a stop in front of a low kind of platform on which were spread different kinds of toys; not that he wanted to purchase any of them, but that a beautiful young lady was standing near the next stall trying a gold ring on her finger. The price was settled and—guess her confusion when, on applying her hand to the small bag she carried she found that she was *minus* her bag! Karunakaran observed her confusion and, begging her pardon, offered to pay the price himself.

The young lady was apparently embarrassed and looking up quickly, she beamed on him a perplexed smile. He thought she looked more beautiful now in that confused state than ever.

"But my dear Mr.—er—"

"Karunakaran" he put in promptly.

"My dear Mr. Karunakaran, I never accept anything from strangers," she remonstrated. "Please excuse me."

"Please don't consider me a stranger" he said gaily.

"But I never borrow," she pleaded.

"Ah, that makes matters very simple. Please don't worry yourself about returning the trifle," he said benignly.

"But my dear Mr. Karunakaran——".

"But my dear young lady", interrupted he, "Do allow me to pay for it." And with that, he took out his purse a little ostentatiously and, paying the price of the ring, he gently thrust the ring into her hand. A gentle smile dimpled her pretty cheeks amidst her confusion which was only too apparent. She understood that he was fresh from the country and a stranger to the viles and deceits of the city.

He took her to the various shops and begged her to buy anything she pleased. With a patronizing smile and resignedly she did as he requested her. Once while he was enquiring the price of a pearl brooch she went swiftly to the end of the verandah—apparently to have a breath of free air. Karunakaran, on turning round, saw her returning and also caught sight of a dark, sturdy fellow gliding away from the place where she had been standing. When the shopping was over, he offered to carry the little things he had bought for her and they passed out into the street. By now he had learnt that her name was Premalata.

"How expensive I have been to you!" she exclaimed involuntarily.

"Oh! Not at all. I've a hundred rupees more in there", he said tapping the little suit-case. "Please be easy on that score; — and, shall we enjoy a cup of coffee?" he asked her suddenly entering a restaurant.

"Oh, no, thank you. I would rather swallow a bit of soda just now," she said and stopped at the entrance.

Karunakaran could not enjoy the coffee without her and soon left the restaurant. On coming out he found Premalata in talk with the same sturdy man a bit heatedly.

On seeing Karunakaran she left the fellow and joined Karunakaran with a clumsy excuse.

"Who is that ugly fellow? and what does he want with you?" he asked her with a slight frown.

"Oh, he is a poor man, it seems; he begged me for alms when we were in the market and has followed me here", she said carelessly.

"A thief's post would have suited him better than a beggar's—judging from his limbs" he said.

"Certainly", rejoined Premalata dreamily.

They talked on pleasantly on the road to Park Town—she telling him about herself and he explaining to her his object in going to Madras. She had an aged mother at home and a brother employed 'somewhere' she said. She was not happy at home, it appeared, her loving mother placing a strict restraint on her going out of the house, except occasionally of an evening. "So, that accounts for her being so free with me, an apparent stranger", thought he.

She said that it was time for her to go home, for her mother would be anxious about her. But he detained her by the hand gently and remonstrated.

"Please, Premalata, let us go into the Park and enjoy the evening there; it is not even five-thirty, you see", he pleaded a little more ardently than he need have done.

In fact, Premalata was half-willing to comply. After a slight remonstrance she consented to go with him to the Park.

On one of the benches that were placed under the green bowers covered by sweet-smelling creepers, sat the two hand in hand and talked on, and the golden hours fled unnoticed. Karunakaran was fresh from the country and was ready to welcome any adventure or romance that

fell in his way; and Prema, the first girl he had met in Madras, was of such rare beauty that to look at her was to love her. Left to himself, he would have sat there and talked with her for years—ages. Prema too, judging by her countenance, was enjoying the tête-à-tête as much as he. His innocence and simplicity combined with his fresh, youthful, country appearance was perhaps, too great a temptation for the city girl to resist.

III

“How late it is!” she cried starting up, as the clock in the Central Station chimed forth seven o’clock.

In fact they realized only then that it was dark. The golden hours had fled unnoticed. Prema was very uneasy about her mother who, she said, would be very anxious about her, and begged him to allow her to go home.

“Prema, will you not please grant me one favour? We have spent the evening most joyfully. Will you not make the joy perfect by accompanying me to the theatre? Please do”, he pleaded.

She looked startled at the mention of the theatre and cried vehemently, “Oh, no, no. I will not come to the theatre. I”—she cooled down a bit, searching for a suitable excuse. “Er.—It is too late, Mr. Karunakaran and—er—I’ve been already more expensive to you than I ought”, she blurted forth.

“Oh, bother your expenses! Why should you revert to that, Prema? It ought not to be an excuse, you know. Well, Prema” he continued, his tone tender and pleading. “Won’t you, please, grant this one request of mine—perhaps the last one that I shall ever make to you?”

She was very much agitated. He saw clearly that something troubled her.

"Tell me what is it that troubles you—that prevents your going with me to the theatre?" he asked tenderly. "Not the anxiety of your mother, I suppose? You are not a child, you know, to be lost in the streets—and your mother ought to know that", he added gaily.

"Oh, no—not that. Nothing is the matter with me."—She made an effort to regain self-possession. "I shall go with you. Please excuse me, Karuna," she pleaded with more composure.

"Ah, that is a good girl,—just like you" he said and hailed a taxi.

They reached the Globe in a short time and he went into the crowds to book the tickets, leaving her at a distance from the people. When he returned he saw Prema talking with the black fellow of the evening vehemently—apparently declining to undertake something which he pressed her to do. When he saw Karunakaran returning, he left her hurriedly.

"Do you know him?" he asked her quickly and a bit curtly.

"No.....er—yes. We met him in the afternoon, you know," she faltered.

"I don't mean that. Is he your friend?.....Is he a relative of yours? Is he—well,—er—Are you married?" His tone was one of suppressed pain and terror.

She blushed vividly. "No", she said simply.

He took both her hands in his and looked ardently into her eyes. "I beg your pardon, Prema, dear,—a thousand pardons. You must have understood my feelings when I saw him with you for the third time—and I knew so little of him and of you, you see", he pleaded and would have kissed her hands had they not been in front of the crowded theatre. But no need for that. She looked up at him

timidly and encountered his tender look. And surely, if love ever sat in eyes, it sat now in his. She turned away her head swiftly.

"Oh, please don't look at me like that. I am unworthy of it," she cried impulsively, and recollecting herself, she added more calmly, "Let us go in."

He grasped her hand eagerly and led her in. It is impossible to say which he enjoyed more—the play or her presence. But, to this day he does not know what was the story that was on the boards that night.

Towards the end of the play, her uneasiness became visible and her hand, held prisoner in his, was restless. His occasional glances—how sweet, she alone knew—only tended to increase her confusion. At last the play was over, and they came out—a happy pair. He was about to conduct her along the road when she stopped suddenly, shook his hand lovingly and in a firm voice said, "Stop, please, we part here. Please allow me to go home alone. I can very well go home without an escort."

"Ah, we shall see about that, young lady," he said smiling, and catching hold of her hand gently, he said, "You can go home alone, can you? Very courteous of me it would be if I let you do so! What can you possibly mean?" He stepped forward; but she would not move a step.

"You should not go with me," she said resolutely.

"But I will," he said laughingly,—and checking himself quickly he added in a more tender tone, "Are you poor, Prema?"

"Very," she replied—determined to stop him there by all possible means.

"Oh, only that! Please don't think that I am so rich as I appear to be. I am as poor as you—perhaps poorer. Come on, Prema. It is late."

"It would not be safe for you to accompany me," she whispered, her voice tender and confused.

"The greater reason why you should not go alone" he rejoined.

"But my dear Karuna, you don't understand me——"

"But Prema dear, I understand you perfectly well. I will accompany you. That is settled. Please don't deprive me of the only service that I am yet able to do for you, dear," he said gently, and went forward.

She yielded in despair, lifted her eyes to heaven for a moment and then catching hold of his protecting hand, walked swiftly with him.

He led the way and she followed him mechanically. He did not care where he went so long as her hand was in his and so long as they were in the neighbourhood of the Globe and to the west of it. She had told him while they were in the market that her house was to the west of the Globe. All the houses and shops, grand only a few hours before, now looked gloomy and silent as the grave. An archway stood looming in front of them right across the street, its dark recesses awful to see; and on perceiving it Prema's agitation reached its maximum.

She stopped him forcibly. She was clinging to his arm.

"Thank you very much, Karuna. Now we are nearing my home and you may go away. I can go alone," she said, her voice and eyes most earnest in supplication.

"I will see you home, my dear girl, do you understand?" he laughed, "and perhaps, will have a private talk with your mother; who knows?" he added.

She looked alarmed; but he drew her gently along with him and went on. They were right under the archway when things happened quickly. From behind the

massive structure, from that gloomy recess, emerged the black sturdy fellow with a heavy club raised over his head. Karunakaran was struck dumb and did not even have the presence of mind to avoid the terrific blow that was aimed at his head. In fact, had the club descended on his head, it would have made short work of him. But Prema, her face livid and hands upraised and clasped in agony, bounded forward with a cry between the man and Karunakaran. The blow partly fell on her uplifted arms and then struck Karunakaran's head with the remaining force. He fell to the ground stunned.

"What Prema, you here!" muttered the black fellow with a curse, grinding his teeth fiercely.

IV

When Karunakaran came to consciousness he saw Prema in tears, sobbing over Karunakaran and fanning his face with the end of her sari.

He started up, asking anxiously, "Prema,—your arms?"

"Oh, they are all right. Do you feel quite well?"

"It was not a light blow, you know," he confessed. "But for you I should be dead by now." And, after a short pause he asked quickly, "Is he not your brother?"

Blood rushed to her pallid cheeks and dyed them red.

"Yes," she admitted, her tone as full of shame as agony. "It was he who asked me to direct you to this place when I told him—when he found out that you had money. But he didn't expect me to accompany you."

"Is it your prof—er—does he live by this?" he asked her. His tone was not at all harsh.

"Yes." She dared not look up. "I direct rich people whom I can influence to come this way. But to-day I— I—" She could not proceed and burst into tears.

He took both her hands in his and stroked her hair fondly.

"Yes. To-day you—well, you were anxious about your victim and didn't want to lead him into danger in spite of his persistence to be led into it, and saved him from being—murdered."

She hung her head and did not reply. There was a pause.

"The story about your mother and poverty—"

"—was a fable," she put in promptly covering her face with her hands to hide its shame, and burst into fresh tears.

There was another awkward pause.

"What did your brother say when he found you with me?"

"Oh, he spoke such blasphemy and said that he would have nothing to do with me hereafter." Her head nestled into her hands the closer and her sobs became louder and more rapid. "I haven't got a home in this wide world now," she sobbed.

Karunakaran took a step forward and releasing her face from the hands, caught them in his and spoke tenderly.

"Prema, I am not very rich and am not very fashionable. But I have enough to support a family and have learnt in this one day what it is to love; and am pretty certain that I know how to cherish a loving wife. Would you like a quiet little farm in the country—far from this bustling vile city?" he asked her gently.

She looked up at him from amidst her sobs and tears—her face aglow with joy.

"—and a pretty little stream running near it," he continued. "And would you like to live there peacefully—as my wife?"

Her sweet little upturned face told him all. She could not speak for tears. She hid her face in the arm that sheltered her and gently wept out her emotion. He needed no assurance in words and was gently stroking her soft, abundant hair, till she subsided a little.

Still sobbing, she looked up at him a bit doubtfully and began, "But your mother—".

"Oh, don't you worry yourself about her, my love. She will be only too glad to receive a daughter—and, SUCH a daughter," he added, imprinting passionately but gently on her fair forehead his first—. But what is that to you?

Then, glancing at his watch he said, "It is only 10-40, my dearest, and if we hurry up we may yet catch the 11-15 passenger train."

She did not object to it now and leaning on his strong arm she walked briskly along. They were just in time to catch the train and settled themselves comfortably in a second class compartment. The various exciting adventures he had experienced during the day made him tired and he felt very sleepy. He placed his head on Prema's lap, asked her to wake him up as soon as they reached Erode and fell asleep at once.

The last thing he remembered of her was that she was bending over him lovingly, her soft fingers going through his scanty hair.

V

The train had stopped with a jerk and that woke him. He thought he half heard in his sleep the name Erode being called out.

"What, Prema, have we reached Erode so soon?" he asked sleepily.

He heard people laughing and got up with a start and rubbed his eyes. It was a fine morning.

"The poor boy has been dreaming, perhaps", observed one.

Karunakaran stared around him in perfect amazement, being unable to believe that all that he had experienced—nay, seen—was a mere dream. He had fallen asleep at Jalarpet after having seen the ladies there, and he woke up only now,—at Basin Bridge. His hand automatically went to his breast pocket. His purse was there safe and sound. His eyes naturally sought his suit-case. But that was gone. He started up calling aloud in distress, "My suit-case!—where is my suit-case?"

An old man sitting in front of him answered, "Is it yours? Some short, dark man who got down at Arkonam took it with him. We thought it was his."—And with that, a fresh outburst of laughter from the lookers-on. Karunakaran was well-nigh mad—with what? He knew and, of course, we.


He got down at Madras Central, very low in spirits and walked away dejectedly. With the paltry sum of fifteen rupees what could he do? Outside the station he caught sight of a Board hanging from one of the lamp-posts with the picture of a poor mother and daughter sitting sorrowfully ('like me!' he thought) in front of a chirk and it was written under the picture, "Buy Khaddar for this Deepavali and gladden the hearts of these poor things." Karunakaran determined to buy Khaddar and nothing else for this Deepavali and, in fact, this really gladdened his heart.

Between ourselves (but I am no Beau Tibbs, mind you!) I may tell the readers a secret, of which Karunakaran does not know anything. His mother, a discreet soul, (thank Heaven!) knowing her son's carelessness and having heard

much about the deceit of the city to which he was going had placed the hundred rupees not in his suit-case as he had ordered her to do, but in the last of the pile of pots in her little house, amidst the cholam which the pot contained ; so that Karunakaran lost nothing but the old suit-case and some tattered clothes. But he will know that only when he returns home.

M. A. THANGARAJ,
IV Hons.

The Proposed Indian Federation

O begin at the beginning, the Simon Commission was appointed by Parliament and came here to have a knowledge of the conditions of the land under the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms. The commission was asked to make recommendations regarding a further advance of the Indian Constitution towards responsible government. The commission in its report favoured the creation of an All-India Federation, though it was of opinion that this ideal was only a remote speculation.

Now, the second reel. The Round Table Conference—heated discussions alternating with cool drinks. The delegates of the Indian Princes and of British India and of all the three political parties in England unanimously carried a resolution favouring the immediate establishment of an All-India Federation. The resolution got the ready ear of the Indian Princes. Besides many were impressed with the new idea of Federation, notable among them being the leading politicians of the Liberal Party both in India and in Britain. It was of course then thought that the federation that was to be given to us would be a typical one. Yes. The prospect was very bright. But the reality? Let us see. There are certain functions of Government which, in a federation, are and ought to be exclusively within the powers of the Federal Government. *The first and foremost of these is foreign affairs.* Again, closely connected with this is the question of the control of the land, naval and air forces; *for the responsibility and power of controlling the military forces of a nation must rest entirely with the federal government.* If these two functions are not given to the federal ministers, of what earthly use is Federation? But in the Federation proposed for us, the power of controlling these two functions though admittedly of vital importance to the country, is not to rest in the hands of the federal ministers!

For, see here. In the federal legislature, about one hundred and fifty seats are to be occupied by the nominees of the autocratic princes of the states who, by treaty or tradition or both have to, salam, the Paramount Power. It may be good for the states to come in contact with the comparatively free and free minded British Indian delegates. But the Federation in the meantime will work evil. These States Delegates, again, *nominated* by the Princes, are not likely to prove the Apostles of Freedom and the standard-bearers of Independent India.

And it is as true that the good work of the elected members coming from the provinces will be hindered by these nominees of the Princes as it is true that the states themselves will have no improvement under this federation. Do we not even to-day observe the reactionary views of the States Representatives in the present Central Assembly. Lord Lothian himself mentions this drawback in the proposed Federation. Then there is another consideration. The members of the Federation to be, will not be elected by the direct method of franchise. They will be elected from among the members of the Provincial Legislatures. The Federal Legislature then is not to be directly responsible to the people, but to the various provincial legislatures that send them up. And if some of these Legislatures happen to be by the strange working of Fortune or the stranger perversity of Man, dominated by Cabals, the centre will be infected and evil will radiate all round.

The important reason for the British Government to push through the federal scheme so rapidly and force it on us, is that England wants to have a quiet time of it in India. Parliament thinks that with the inauguration of the Federal constitution, they can solve the difficult problem of Indian unrest. If once the Indian problem is brought to a settlement England hopes to be in a position to tackle important world problems *with the sure help of India*. This may be

the British aspiration and dream. But political India emphasises in unmistakable terms the now well-known truth that the proposed Federation is not precisely the means to achieve that state of things. If we accept the present Federal idea, say they, then good-bye to all dreams of Swaraj.

E. K. RAJAGOPALAN

[Any one on the other side? If any, welcome. Ed.]

* அன்பும் மகவும்

(A. C.)

(தரவுகொச்சகக் கலிப்பா)

ஏனென்னைப் பிடித்திழுத் திறுகவுர மனைக்கின்றாய்?
ஏனென்னைப் பரிந்தனைத்தே ஏக்கழுத்தம் கொள்ளுகிராய்?
நான்விரும்புஞ் சில்காலே நான்விரும்பப் படவேண்டும்;
நானுன்பால் 'விட்டி.' டென நவின்றிடவும் விடுத்திலையேல்
நான் மிகவும் வெகுண்டிட நீ யாவாய்தான் காரணமே!

(ஆசிரியத்தாழிசை)

என்றே யிப்படி யினையதோர் குழவி
யன்பின் நீட்டிய கரத்தெதிர் மறுத்தே
அன்றொரு நாட்செய் அழுகையைக் கேட்டேன்.

(ஆசிரியத்துறை)

கருணைக் கடவுள்! கழிபே ரருளே!
அருள்க பொறுத்தே யரசே!
அருள்க பொறுத்தே அறிந்தேன், நுமவே
கரமவை, யானம் மகவு.

*Translated from Francis Thompson's
Love and the child

'Why do you so clasp me,
And draw me to your knee?
Forsooth, you do but chafe me,
I pray you let me be:
I will but be loved now and then
When it liketh me!'

So I heard a young child,
A thwart child, a young child
Rebellious against love's arms,
Make its peevish cry.

To the tender God I turn:—
'Pardon, Love Most High!
For I think those arms were even Thine,
And that child even I!'

ஒற்றுமை.

(A. C.)

“ஒன்றுபட்டால் உண்டு வாழ்வே, நம்மில் ஒற்றுமை நீங்கிடில் அனைவர்க்குந் தாழ்வே”, என முழங்கினார் கவிஞர் சுப்ரமணிய பாரதியார். இறக்குந் தறுவாயில் இருந்த ஒரு முதியவர் தம் பிள்ளைகளை அழைத்து விறகை ஒன்றொன்றாகக் கொடுத்தும் கட்டாகக் கொடுத்தும் ஒடிக்குமாறு பணித்தார் என்றும், ஒன்றை ஒடித்த பிள்ளைகள் கட்டை முறிக்கக் கூடாத காரணத்தை வைத்து அவர்தமக்கு ஒற்றுமை யுபதேசம் செய்தார் தந்தையார் என்றுஞ் சொல்லப்படுகிற கதை நம்முட் பலர் அறிந்ததே. வள்ளுவப் பெரியாரும் ஒற்றுமையின் அருமையை ஓர் உதாரண முகத்தான் விளக்கியுள்ளார். ஒரு பெரிய வண்டி இருக்கிறது. அது வலிமை மிக்கதே. எனினும் மயிற்றோகையை நிரம்ப நிரம்ப, வாரி வாரிப் போட்டுக்கொண்டே இருந்தால், அவ்வண்டியும் தாங்காது அச்ச ஒடியும். தோகையோ மிகவும் நொய்மையானது. வண்டியின் அச்சோ பருத்து வலிமையுடையதாய் உள்ளது. எனினும், மேலும் மேலும் திரண்டு கூடித் தோகைகள் வருவதால், அச்ச இற்றுப் போகிறது. அதைப் போலவே எத்துணை எளியராயினும் நமது பகைவர் சேர்ந்து சேர்ந்து கூட்டமாக வருவாரேயாயின், நமது வலிமை பெரிதாயினும் பயனின்றிப் போம். நாமே ஒற்றுமை மிக்குப் பலரையும் நம்மோடு சேர்த்துக்கொள்வோமாயின் வரும் பயன் மிகப்பெரிதன்றோ? இவற்றையெல்லாம் உணர்த்த எடுத்துக் கொண்ட வள்ளுவர் பெருந்தகை வழங்கியருளிய மொழி இது:—“பிவி பெய் சாகாடும் அச்சிறும்; அப்பண்டம் சால மிகுத்துப் பெயின்.”

நம் சுற்றத்தாரே யன்றி நமது ஏவல் செய்வோர்தாமும் நம்மோடு இயைந்தவராய் இருத்தல் வேண்டும். நாமொன்று கருத, நம் வேலைக்காரர் பிறிதொன்று நினைத்துச் செய்து

நமக்கு எள்ளல் வாங்கித் தருவாராயின், அவ் வேலைக்காரரால் நமக்கு உதவியுண்டாவதற்கு மாறாகப் பல சங்கடங்கள் வந்து சேரும். சங்கடங்கள் ஏற்படின் கவலையுண்டாவது நிச்சயம். கவலை ஏற்பட்டாலோ கருமயிர் நரைத்தல் ஒரு தலை. எனவே, நல்ல வேலையாட்கள்—நம்மோடு ஒற்றுமைப்பட்ட வேலையாட்கள்—இல்லையேல், நாம் விரைவில் மூப்பு உற்றவர் போன்று தோன்றுவோம். இதன் உண்மை பழந் தமிழ்ப் பாடல் ஒன்றுலும் அறியப்படுகிறது. முன்னூளில் பிசிராந்தையார் என ஒரு புலவர் இருந்தார். அவருக்கு வயது பல ஆகியும் நரை தோன்றவில்லை. சில புலவர் அவரை ஒரு நாள் அதற்குக் காரணம் கேட்டனர். அவர் சொல்லிய காரணங்களுள் ஒன்று “யான் கண்டனையர் என் இனையரும்” என்பது. அதன் கருத்து “நான் நினைக்கிறபடியே நினைத்து என்னுடைய ஏவல் செய்வோரும் என்னோடு இயைந்து செயல்களைப் புரிகின்றனர். என் இல்லத்தில் சண்டைத் தொல்லைகள் இல்லை,” என்பதாகும்.

இனி, குடும்பத்தாரிடையே பூசலுங் கலாமும் வினையக் கூடிய சமயங்களில் சில புலவர்கள் ஒற்றுமையுபதேசம் புரிந்து, தடுத்துள்ளனர் என அறிகின்றோம். நலங்கிள்ளி என்னும் சோழனும் நெடுங்கிள்ளி என்னும் சோழனும் தாயத்தார்கள். அவருள் நலங்கிள்ளி மிக்க வீரம் வாய்ந்தவன். சேர பாண்டிய அரசரை வென்று அவர் தம் வஞ்சி யென்னும் ஊரையும் மதுரை யென்னும் ஊரையும் புலவர்க்கு வழங்கத்தக்க ஆற்றலுடையவன். அவன் ஒருநாள் உறையூரை முற்றுகையிட்டான். உள்ளே பங்காளியாகிய நெடுங்கிள்ளி இருந்தான். பார்த்தார் ஒரு புலவர். அழகிது என நினைத்தார். நலங்கிள்ளியிடம் கூறினார் “ஒன்று பட்டால் வாழ்வுண்டு; இன்றேல் இருவர்க்கும் தாழ்வே” என்று. அக்கருத்துப் பொதிந்த பாடல் புறநானூற்றில் காணப்படுகிறது. அதன் போக்கு இது:—“அரசே! நீ பொர நினைக்கும் அரசன் சேரனும் அல்லன்; பாண்டியனும் அல்லன்; சோழனே யாவன். நீயும் சோழன், அவனும்

சோழன். நீயும் ஆத்திமாலை சூடியிருக்கிறாய். அவனும் ஆத்தி மாலை சூடியிருக்கிறான். அது ஒன்றே நீங்கள் இருவீரும் ஒரு குடிப்பிறந்தீர் என்பதைக் காட்டுமே! நம்மிருவருள் எவர் தோற்றாலும் தோற்பது உம்குடியன்றோ? அவ்வசை வரலாமா? நீங்கள் இருவீரும் வெற்றிகொள்ள முடியாது என்பது வெளிப் படை. உங்குடிக்கு வரும் பழியை நீக்க வேண்டுமானால் இம் மாறுபாட்டை உடனே தவிர்க்க வேண்டாவோ? நீவிர் பொரு விரானால் உம்பகைவரெல்லாம் உடம்பு பூரித்து உவகை யெய்து வர். அவர் உவகை நுமது இனிவரல் அன்றோ? நீர் போர் குறி த்து நிற்பது நும் குடிக்கு எற்றதன்று.” நலங்கிள்ளி குடிக்கு வடு உண்டாகும் என்று கேட்டவுடனே போர்க்கோலம் நீத் தான். நெடுங்கிள்ளியும் புலவர் மொழியைக்கேட்டு இகலை விட் டான். இங்ஙனம் ஒற்றுமைப் படுத்திய புலவரது பெயரை நாம் அறிய வேண்டாமோ? வேண்டினும் அவர் பெயரை அறி யோம்; ஊரை அறிவோம். அவ்வூர்ப் பெயராலே அவர் இற்றை நாள் வரை அறியப்படுகிறார். அவரை மறவாது இருப்போமாக! கோலூர் கிழார் வாழ்க! கோலூர் கிழார் வாழ்க, வாழ்கவே!!

இன்னொரு புலவர் ஒரு பாண்டியனுக்கும் ஒரு சோழனுக் கும் ஓர் அறவுரை பகர்ந்துள்ளார். அவர் காவிரிப்பூம்பட்டினத் துக் காரிக் கண்ணனார் எனப்படுவர். * அப்பாண்டியனையும் அச் ட்சோழனையும் ஒருநாள் ஒருசேரக்கண்ட அப்புலவர்க்கு உண்டான மகிழ்ச்சிக்கு எல்லை யில்லை. பாடத் தொடங்கி விட் டார் உடனே. பால் நிறக்கடவுளும் நீலநிறக் கடவுளும் உடன் இருப்பதுபோல் உள்ளது நீவிர் இருவீரும் இனிது இயைந்திருப் பது. அண்ணனும் தம்பியுமாகிய பலராமனும் கண்ணபிரானும் ஒருங்கு இருப்பதுபோன்று உளது உமது தோற்றம். இதனி னுஞ் சிறந்த காட்சி பிறிது ஒன்று உண்டோ? நீங்கள் இரு வீரும் ஒருவீர் ஒருவீர்க்கு உதவி புரிவீராகுக! நீவிர் இங் னனே ஒன்றுபட்டிருப்பின் கடல் சூழ்ந்த பேருலகு நும் கை

* வெள்ளியம்பலத்தத் தஞ்சிய பெருவருதி.

† குரூப்பள்ளித்தஞ்சிய பெருந்திருமாவளவன்.

யகப்படுவது மெய்யாகும்மே. இப்படி நீவிர் அன்பினால் இயைந்துள்ளதைக் காணும் சிலர் பொறுமைகொண்டு, நல்லன சொல்லுவார்போல் சில சொல் சொல்லி நும்மைப் பிரிக்கப் பார்ப்பர். நான் வேண்டுவதெல்லாம் இன்றுபோலவே என்றும் இருங்கள் என்பது. இருப்பிராயின், வெற்றியெல்லாம் நும் இருவர்க்கே யாம்; நங்கள் கொடிகளே பிறநாடுகள் எங்கும் துலங்கும். பிரியன்மின், பிரியன்மின்.

மற்றுமோர் புலவர் சினந்த தந்தையை எதிர்த்த மக்களோடு ஒன்றுபடுத்தி வைத்தார் என்றும் அறிகின்றோம். அப் புலவர் பெயர் எயிற்றியனார்; ஊர் புல்லாற்றார். கோப்பெருஞ்சோழன் என்னும் அரசன் உறையூரை ஆண்டுவரும் நாளில், ஒரு நாள் அவனுடைய புதல்வரிருவர் அவனோடு மாறு கொண்டனர். எதிர்த்து நின்ற அவரோடு பொரக்கருதி எழுந்தான் சோழமன்னன். அருகேயிருந்த பைந்தமிழ்ப்புலவர் ஓர் உரை சொல்லலுற்றார். “விறல்கெழுவேந்தே!” என்று அவர் விளித்தவுடனே செவியாய்த்து நின்றான் நிருபன். புலவர் தொடங்கினார் தமது பொருளுரையை. அதன் சாரம் வருமாறு:— “பற்பல அமருள் வென்று மேம்பட்ட வேந்தே! இப்பொழுது உன்னோடு எதிர்த்து வந்து நிற்போர் உன் பகைஞரல்லரே! நீயும் அவர்க்குப் பகைஞன் அல்லே, பகைஞரைக் கொல்லும் களிற்றையுடைய தலைவ! நீ புகழை இவ்வுலகில் எய்தி, உயர்ந்த உலகை அடைந்த பிறகு உன்புதல்வர்க்குத் தானே உன் அரசு உரித்தாகும்? இதனை நீயே அறிவையே!”

கேட்டும் அரசன் ஓர் அடி எடுத்து வைப்பதுபோல் தோன்றிற்று புலவருக்கு. “இன்னும் கேட்பாயாக, இசையில் விருப்பமுடையோய்! பெரிதும் கேட்பாயாக, புகழில் இச்சையுடையோய்!!” என்றனபோன்ற மொழிகளைச் சமயமறிந்து சொல்லி, அவர் மேலுஞ் சொல்லலுற்றார்:—“புதல்வர் ஆலோசனையின்றி அறிவுகுன்றி எதிர்ப்பட்டுள்ளவர் தோற்றுப் போனால், உன் செல்வத்தைப் பின்னர் அவருக்கு அல்லாமல் வேறு எவருக்குக் கொடுக்கப்போகிறாய்? போரினை விரும்பு

கின்ற செல்வ! ஒரு கால் நீ அவர்க்குத் தோற்றால் உன் பகைவரெல்லாம் உன்னை இகழ்ந்து மகிழ்வர். உலகில் பழியையே வைத்துச் செல்ல வேண்டியிருக்கும். உன் ஆற்றலில் ஐயமுள்ளோன் என்பதன்று. அவ் ஆற்றலை இவரிடம் காட்டவேண்டா என்பதே எனது வேண்டுகோள். உன்னுடைய வீரம் உன்னை விட்டு இப்பொழுது நீங்கியிருக்கட்டும். உன்னுடைய ஊக்கம் பிறவற்றில் செல்லட்டும். நல்வினைகள் பல செய்வாயாக! அரசே வாழிய.” நயம்பட உரைக்கப்பட்ட இவ்வுரையையும் மறுத்துப் புதல்வரோடு பொருவதற்கு அரசன்மனம் இயைந்திருக்குமோ? புலவர் உரைக்குங்காலே, வேம்பும் கரும்பும் போல இடையிடையே கடுஞ்சொல்லும் புகழ்மொழியும் பெய்து உரைத்த நயம் வியக்கற்பாற்று. அழைக்கும் பொழுதே அவன் பெருமையையும், வீரத்தையும் வென்றியையும் உரைத்து அழைத்தார். இடையிடை அவன் ஆற்றலின் சிறப்பைக் குறிக்கும் சொற்களைக் கூறினார். உனக்குத் தெரியாததன்று என்று சொல்லினார். புகழ் விருப்பம்உள்ள அவன் பழி தருஞ்செயல் புரியலாகாது என்பதை வற்புறுத்தினார். புதல்வரை வெறுத்துரைப்பார் போன்று சில சொன்னார். இவையெல்லா வற்றினும் மிக்கதாக “அமரில் விருப்பமுள்ள செல்வ” என்றும் “உன் வீரம் இப்பொழுது உன்னைவிட்டு இருக்கட்டும்” என்றும் அவர் மொழிந்த மொழிகளின் சிறப்பைக்கண்டு நாம் மகிழாதிருக்க முடியாது. ஓர் அரசன் முன் நின்று “நீ உன் புதல்வர்க்குத் தோற்றால்” என்ற கூற்றைக் கூறுவது எளிதன்று. அரசன் வெகுளாதிருக்கும் பொருட்டும், வெகுண்டு புதல்வரையே அழித்துவிடாதிருக்கும் பொருட்டும், எழுச்சியைத் தவிர்க்கும் பொருட்டும் அன்றோ அத்தண்டமிழ்ப் புலவர்,

“அமர்வேஞ் செல்வ! நீ அவர்க்கு உலையின் இகழுகர் உவப்பப் பழியெஞ் சுவையே; அதனால், ஒழிகதில் அத்தை நின் மறனே.” என இருமருங்கும் சர்க்கரையைக் கூட்டி இடையே கடுக்காய்த்துளை வைத்தார்! இங்ஙனமெல்லாம் நன் மருந்துதாவல்ல நாவலர் பலர் வாழ்ந்த நாடு நம்நாடு. அவர்தம் ஊர்பேர்

உபதேசங்களை மறந்துள்ள நாம் இனியாவது விழித்துக் காண்போமாக. “ஒன்றுபட்டால் உண்டு வாழ்வே” என்பதை விளக்க இப்புவர் பெருமக்கள் துணைகொண்டு தொடங்கிய நான் இனி உங்களிடம் விடை பெறுகின்றேன். வாழ்க ஒன்றுபட்டு! வாழ்வம் ஒன்றாகவே!! வாழ்க நந்தமிழ் நாடு!!!

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பெண் தெய்வங்கள்

“ஸ்திரீ ரத்தினங்கள்!” “பேதைப் பெண்கள்!” “மருண்ட மாதர்!” என்னும் வார்த்தைச் சேர்க்கைகளையும், பெண்ணென்றால் பேயும் மனமிரங்கும் என்னும் பழமொழியையும் யார்தான் முதல் முதலில் இயற்றினார்களோ அவர்களை!..... பூசை, செய்ய.....அன்று, அன்று, அவர்களுக்கு நன்றாக பூசை கொடுக்கவேண்டும். அவர்கள் வாய்க்குச் சர்க்கரையல்ல எட்டிக்காய் தான் போடவேண்டும்! இவ்வளவு கண் மூடிகளாகவும், உலகவழக்கம் அறியாதவர்களாயும் இருந்த அந்த மகானுபாவர்கள் யாவரோ! கொஞ்சம் யோசித்துப்பார்த்தால் அவர்கள் மட்டுமல்ல சாதாரணமாக எல்லாக் கவிகளும் கற்பனாசிரியர்களும், மனிதர்களும், ஏன் நீங்களும், ஊம்..... (வெட்கமாயிருக்கிறது சொல்ல, நானுங் கூடத்தான் பெண்களைப்பற்றி இவ்வாறுதான் நினைக்கிறோம், பேசுகிறோம், எல்லாம் செய்கிறோம்.) அன்று கல்கி விகடனில் “இந்தப் பெண்கள்” என்ற கட்டுரையைப்படித்தது முதல் இந்த விஷயத்தைப் பற்றிச் சிந்தனையுண்டாயிற்று.

ஒன்று கேட்கிறேன். அதற்குப் பதில் சொல்லுங்கள் பார்க்கலாம். மனிதர்கள், ஸ்திரீகளைப்பற்றி “தெய்வங்கள், ரத்தினங்கள், கண்ணின் மணிகள்,” என்றெல்லாம் பேசுகிறார்களே, அவர்களும், ஆடவர்களைப்பற்றி இம்மாதிரியா சிந்திக்கிறார்கள்? என்றாவது, எப்பொழுதாவது ஆடவர்கள் எழுதும் கட்டுரைகளிலும், பாட்டுகளிலும், ஸ்திரீகள், மடமயில்களாகவும், கொஞ்சம் குயில்களாகவும், செஞ்சொல் அஞ்சுகங்களாகவும், இன்னும் என்னென்னமோ மாறுதல்களை யடைந்தும் விளங்குகிறார்கள். தற்காலத்தில்தான் எத்தனையோ பெண்களும் எழுதுகிறார்களே, அவர்கள் எழுதும் புஸ்தகங்களிலாகட்டும், கட்டுரைகளிலாகட்டும், மனிதர்களைப்பற்றி எவ்வாறு பேசுகிறார்கள் என்று கவனிக்கவேண்டும். பகஷிகளெல்லாம் தங்கள் உபமானத்திற்கு

எடுத்துக்கொண்டு, ஆடவர்களுக்கு விலங்கினங்களையே ஒப்பிடுவது வழக்கமாயிருக்கிறது! “காடி மாதிரியும்,” “காளை மாதிரியும்,” “எருமை போலவும்,” “நரி போன்றும்,” “நாய் போலவும்,” தான் மனிதர்கள் இருக்கிறார்களாம்!

அதிருக்கட்டும் இந்தப் பெண்ணாய்ப் பிறந்தவர்கள் வாஸ்தவமாகப் புஸ்தகத்திலிருப்பது போலிருக்கிறார்களா அல்லது வேறு எம்மாதிரி இருக்கிறார்கள் என்று கவனிப்போம். அவர்களது தர்க்க சாமர்த்தியத்தைப்பற்றி “கல்கி” அன்று எழுதியிருக்கிறார்; ஒவ்வொரு “பெண்டாட்டியின் புருஷனும்” அதன் வன்மையையும், அதன் தன்மையையும் அறிவான். வேண்டியதும் வேண்டாததும் ஆகிய “லா-பாயிண்டுகளை” எடுத்துப்பேசும் மாதிரி, காலஞ்சென்ற நார்ட்டனுக்குக் கூடத் தெரிந்திருக்காது. இந்த அட்வொகேட்டுகள் ஆர்க்யூ செய்யும் கேஸுகளுக்கு அப்பிலே கிடையாது. எடுத்த கேஸெல்லாம் ஜெயம்தான். அவர்களின் “தெய்வத்தன்மையைப்பற்றியும்,” “ரத்தினமாயிருக்கும்” நேர்மையைப்பற்றியும், அதிகம் சொல்ல வேண்டியதில்லை. தெய்வங்களுக்கு, எவ்வாறு, நிவேதனங்களையும், ஆராதனங்களையும் சரிவர, அவ்வப்போது செய்துவர வேண்டுமோ, அவ்வாறே இப்பெண் தெய்வங்களுக்கும் செய்யவேண்டியவைகளைச் செய்தலவசியம் வரம் கிடைக்கவேண்டுமானால். மற்ற தெய்வங்களாவது, மானசீக பூஜைகள் ஒப்புக்கொள்ளும்; ஆனால், நம் தேவிகள் வழிபாட்டிற்கு, அந்தந்தப் பண்டிகைகளின் போது ஆம்! இத்தேவதைகளுக்குரிய நாட்களுமுண்டு! அந்நாட்களைக்கொண்டாடாவிட்டால் தீர்த்தது காளி, அல்லது சாமுண்டிஸ்வரூபம், உங்களுக்கு தரிசனம் நிச்சயம் கிடைக்கும். கௌரி பூஜை தினம், தீபாவளி, உத்ஸவ நாட்கள், முதலிய தினங்கள், இத்தேவதைகளுக்கு ஏற்பட்டவை. அந்த நாட்களில் கொடுக்கவேண்டிய ரவிக்கை, புடவை, பணம், கச்சட்டி, பாத்திரம், அண்டா, ஜோடுதவலை முதலியன கொடுக்காவிட்டால், அவ்வளவுதான்; அவர்கள் அருள் உங்களுக்குல்ல! அவர்கள் சாபம் நிச்சயம் கிடைக்கும். “ரத்தினங்களுக்குள்ள”

கடினமும், கெட்டித்தன்மையும், இத்தெய்வங்களுக்குண்டு. ஏதாவது பூசைக்குரியவைகளைச் செய்பாமலிருங்கள், பிறகு அக்கடினத்தன்மையை அறிவீர்கள். அந்த வயிரத் தன்மையை வயிரத்தால் காதுக்குத் தோடாகவோ, முக்கிற்குப் பேசரியாகவோ கோத்தால்தான் வேல்லமுடியும் சில சமயங்களில். அவர்கள் “மருண்ட தன்மை” போ நாவல்களிலன்றி நடத்தையிலில்லை. ஏதோ பயத்தால் நடுங்கும் நங்கையை நாடி, அவனைக் காப்பாற்ற வேண்டுமென்று நீங்கள் நெடுநாள் தேடுங்கள்; அவள் எங்காவது அகப்படுகிறாளா பார்ப்போம். மற்றவர்களை மருளச் செய்வார்கள் வேண்டுமென்றால். கண்ணைத்திறந்த மாத்திரத்தில் நடுங்கச்செய்யும் தன்மை அவர்களுக்குண்டு. “பேயும் பெண்ணுக்கு இரங்கும்” என்னும் மொழியைப் பாருங்கள். பேயுங் கூடப் பெண்ணைக்கண்டால், மற்றவர்களிடம் போலல்லாமல், வேறு வழியின்றி “ஏது இது என்னைவிடப் பெரிய.....” என்று நினைத்து இரங்கவேண்டியிருக்கிறது, என்ற பொருள் தொக்கி நிற்கிறதல்லவா.

மனிதர்களுக்குள்ள எல்லா குணங்களும், தன்மைகளும், ஏன்? அவைகளைவிட அதிகமாகவும்கூட பெண்களுக்குண்டு. அது தொட்டுத்தானே, தாங்கள் மனிதர்க்குச் சரிநிகர் சமானமென்று சொல்லுகிறார்கள் அவர்கள். இந்த சமத்தன்மையையும் அறிந்து நடந்தால், நமக்குத்தான் நல்லது; அன்றி, அவர்கள் “பலமற்ற பேதைகள்” அவர்களைப்பேணிப் பாதுகாக்க வேண்டும் என்று நினைத்தால், அந்த நிலைமையை அடைந்து விடுவோமென்பது நிச்சயம்.

ஸி. ஆர். மயிலேறு, எம்.ஏ.,

அண்ணாமலைநகர்.

சாதாரண விஷயம்

நான் ஆப்ரேஷன் மேஜையின்மேல் டாக்டர் உத்தரவின் பேரில் படுத்துக்கொண்டிருந்தேன்.

“மயக்கம் கொடுத்தாலொழிய முடியாது” என்றார் டாக்டர்.

நான் திடுக்கிட்டு எழுந்து உட்கார்ந்தேன். “மயக்கமா?” அவரை நடுக்கத்துடன் கேட்டேன்.

“ஆமாம்” என்றார்.

“இல்லாவிட்டால் முடியாதா?” என்று தயவாக வினவினேன்.

“இல்லாவிட்டால் மூவாயிரம் வோல்ட் மின்சாரக் கம்பியை உடம்பில் வைக்கலாம்” என்று சொன்னார். ஆனால் அது கோபத்தினாலிருக்கலாம். அவருடன் வாதாடினால் அபாயம் என்று அறிந்தேன். மெதுவாக அவரிடம் பேச்சுக்கொடுத்துக்கொண்டே, படுத்த இடத்திலிருந்து நாற்காலி ஒன்றில் வந்து அமர்ந்தேன்.

எப்படியாவது பல்வலி தொலைந்தால்போதும் என்று ஒரு சமயம் நினைத்த நான், டாக்டர் “மயக்கம்” என்றதும் பின் வாங்கினது எனக்கே ஆச்சரியத்தை விளைவித்தது.

டாக்டர் ஸோப்கரைத்த ஜலத்தில் கைகழுவின பிறகு ஒரு குறட்டை எடுத்துக்கொண்டு என்னை அணுகினார். உற்று நோக்கினார்.

“என்ன சொல்ரீர்?” என்றார். ஏதாவது ஆயுதத்தை என் உத்திரவன்னியில் என் வாயில் பிரயோகித்துவிட்டால் என்ன செய்வது என்று முன் ஜாக்கிரதையாக வலி கண்டவன் முகத்தை வைத்துக்கொள்வதுபோல் என் முகத்தை மாற்றிக் கொண்டு “உஸ், உஸ்” என்றும்படும் சொல்லிக்கொண்டிருந்தேன்.

டாக்டர் கோபித்துக்கொண்டார்.

“ஓய் ! என்னாங்காணும் சொல்ரீர் ? எப்போ செஞ்சுக்கப் போரீர் ?” ஆயுதத்தை மேஜையின்மேல் வைத்துவிட்டு என்னை நோக்கினார்.

“எப்போ செஞ்சுக்கலாம் ? நீங்களே சொல்லுங்களேன்” என்று உளறிக்கொட்டினேன். என் மார்புமட்டும் படபட வென்று அடித்துக்கொண்டுதான் இருந்தது.

“ஏன் ? இப்பொவானாலும் எனக்கு ஆகேஷ்பணையில்லை.” மேஜையின் மேலிருந்த ஒரு பளபளப்பான ஆயுதத்தை நோக்கினார்.

“வாண்டாம். இப்போ வாண்டாம். எனக்கு இன்னிக்கி முக்கியமான வேலை யிருக்கு” என்று சொல்வதற்குள் என் உடம்பெல்லாம் ஒருதரம் வியர்த்துவிட்டது. மெதுவாகப் பக்கத் திலிருந்த பெஞ்சியில்போய் உட்கார்ந்தேன்.

“நானைக்கு முடியுமா ?” என்றார் டாக்டர்.

“நானைக்குச் சனிக்கிழமை. நாள் நன்னாயில்லை.” என்று ஒரு வைதிக ஆகேஷ்பணையைக் கொண்டுவந்தேன்.

“அப்படியானால் திங்கட்கிழமை ?”

“முடியாது.....காலையில் ராகுகாலம்.” என்று

அவர் மறுபடி கேட்பதற்குள் நானே கூறினேன் :

“செவ்வாய்க்கிழமை என் மச்சு என் வருகிறபடியால் அன்னிக்கும் முடியாது. புதன் வியாழன் கிராமத்துக்குப் போகவேண்டும்.....”

[எனக்கு மைத்துனனும் கிடையாது, போவதற்குக் கிராம மும் கிடையாது என்பதை (என் நண்பர்களுக்குமட்டும்) தெரிவித்துக்கொள்ளுகிறேன்.]

“வெள்ளிக்கிழமை.....” என்று ஆரம்பித்தேன்.

“ஓய் வியாதியஸ்தனுக்கு நாளே து, கிழமை யேது? நாளைக்கே வந்தால்தான் குணமாகும். இல்லாட்டா எல்லாப் பல்லைபும் பிடுங்கும்படியாகும்” என்றார் தைரியமாக.

நிஜமாகவே மூவாயிரம் அல்ல முப்பதினாயிரம் வோல்ட் மின்சாரக் கம்பியை உடலின்மேல் வைப்பதுபோலிருந்தது. ஒரு பல்லுக்கே இவ்வளவு பாடு படுத்தும்போது எல்லாப் பல்லுக்கும் ஆபத்துவந்தால் என்ன செய்வாரோ என்று பயந்து,

“ஸரி, நாளைக்கே ஆகட்டும்” என்று ஒப்புக்கொள்ள வேண்டியதாயிற்று.

“ஸரி, நாளைக் காலையில் தயாராக வாறும்,” என்று என்னை அனுப்பிவிட்டார்.

வெளியில் வந்தேன். எனக்குத் தெரிந்த ஒருவரைச் சந்தித்தேன்.

“ஏன் ஸார், எப்போதாவது உங்களுக்கு டாக்டர் மயக்கம் கொடுத்துப் பல்லைப்பிடுங்கியிருக்கிறாரோ?” என்று விசாரித்தேன்.

“ஆஹா.....அது ஒன்றுமில்லை” என்று சொன்னார்.

மற்றொருவரைச் சந்திக்க நேர்ந்தது. அவரையும் அப்படியே கேட்டேன். அவரும்,

“ஆஹா.....அது ஒன்றும் பிரமாதமில்லை. ரொம்ப ஸாதாரணமான விஷயம்.” என்றார்.

இது மாதிரி நான் கேட்ட ஐம்பது பேர்வழிகளும் ஒரே மாதிரியாகப் பதில் சொன்னார்கள். “மயக்கம்” என்று கூறியும் ஒருவருடைய முகத்திலும் அபாயக்குறியைக் காணோம். நானும் தைரியத்துடன் “சே, இது ஒரு ஸாதாரண விஷயந்தான்” என்ற முடிவுக்கு வந்தேன்.

மறுநாள் டாக்டரிடம் சென்றேன். என்ன நடந்தது? ஒன்றும் பிரமாதமில்லை. அதையும் இதோ சொல்லிவிடுகிறேன்.

டாக்டர் இரண்டு பேர்வழிகளுடன் காத்துக்கொண்டிருந்தார். மூவரும் கப்பற்படை வீரர்கள்போல் நீளமான வெள்ளைச் சட்டைகள் தரித்திருந்தனர். அதிர்ஷ்டவசமாக அவர்கள் கையில் துப்பாக்கி மட்டும் இல்லை. என் பாக்யம்தான் அதுவும்!

மூவரும் தைரியத்துடன் நின்றனவாண்டிருந்தனர். அதைப் போற்றத்தான் வேண்டும்.

என்னை ஒரு மேஜையின்மேல் படுக்கச்சொல்லி, இருபுறமும், அசையாமலிருக்கும்பொருட்டு, பலமாகக் கட்டிவிட்டார்கள். இது ஒன்றும் பிரமாதமில்லை.

பிறகு என்ன நடந்தது? ஒன்றுமில்லை. ஆனால் ஒரு காற்றடைத்த புட்டியும் சில ரப்பர் கருவிகளும் என் ஸமீபத்தில் வைக்கப்பட்டன. நான் கைகால்களை அசைக்க முயன்றேன். டாக்டர் “ஒன்றுமில்லை.....சற்று சும்மாயிரும்” என்று எச்சரித்தார். என் வாயிலும் மூக்கிலும் ரப்பர்க் குழாய்கள் வைக்கப்பட்டுக் காற்று அடிக்கப்பட்டது. பிறகு என்ன நடந்ததென்பது தெரியாது. ஆனால் வேறொரு உலகில் இருப்பதாகமட்டும் ஞாபகம். கவிகள் ஞாபகத்துடன் பெறும் உணர்ச்சிகளை நான் அன்று ஞாபகமன்னியில் பெற்றேன். அருமையான எண்ணங்கள் தோன்றின. அவைகள் மட்டும் நான் சுயஞாபகத்துடன் இருக்கும்போது தோன்றியிருக்குமாயின், ஒன்றல்ல, பத்து நோபல் பரிசுகளைப் பெற்றிருப்பேன்.

டாக்டர் என்னை என்ன செய்தாரோ அந்த நச்சவானுக்குத் தான் வெளிச்சம். ஆனால் கோடரி சம்மட்டி முதலியவை என் பற்களில் பிரயோகிக்கப்படுவதாக மட்டும் உணர்ந்தேன்.

சிகிதையான பிறகு என்னை அவிழ்த்துவிட்டார். மெதுவாக எழுந்து வீட்டை அடைந்தேன். என் மனைவி முறுக்கும் சீடையும் பண்ணிக்கொண்டிருந்தாள். அப்பொழுதுதான் என் ஞாபகம் எனக்கு வந்தது. “அடடா! ஒரு பல்லைமட்டும் எடுக்கும்படி கூறியிருந்தேன். பாமும் டாக்டர் எல்லாவற்றையும் பிடுங்கிவிட்டானே! மஹாபாவி!” சீடையும் முறுக்கும் மனக்

கண்ணில் அடிக்கடி தோன்றி மறைந்தன. டாக்டரை வாயரச்சுபித்தேன். சில நாட்கள் கழித்து, டாக்டர் 'பில்' அனுப்பினார். அதன் விபரம்.

			ரூ.
1.	மயக்கம் கொடுத்ததற்காக	...	10
2.	பற்களை எடுத்ததற்காக	...	32
3.	சில்லரை	...	8
			—
		ஆக	50
			—

நானும் அதற்குப் பதிலாக ஒரு 'பில்' டாக்டருக்கு அனுப்பினேன். அதன் நகல் :—

			ரூ.
1.	மன வேதனைக்காக	...	100
2.	“ மயக்கம் ஒன்றுமில்லை ” என்று பொய் சொன்னதற்காக	...	100
3.	மயக்கம் கொடுத்ததற்காக	...	100
4.	அனாவசியமாக 31 பற்களைப் பிடுங்கியதற்காக		100
5.	சீடை முறுக்கு வீணாகப்போனதற்கு		2
6.	மயக்கத்தில் தோன்றிய அரிய எண்ணங்கள், மயக்கம் தெளிந்ததும் மறைந்ததற்கு		200
			—
		ஆக	602
		தள்ளுபடி	2
			—
		பாக்கி	600
			—

இப்பொழுது இந்த 'பில்'வின் நகல் என் வக்கீலிடம் இருக்கிறது. இது மாதிரியான கேஸ்களில் இதுதான் முதல் கேஸ் என்று அவர் கூறுகிறார். இக்கேஸ் நடக்கும்போதுமட்டும் நியாயாதிபதிக்குப் பல்வலி வரட்டும். அப்புறம் எனக்குத்தான் ஜயம்.

S. திருவேங்கடாசாரி, பி. ஏ. (ஆனார்ஸ்),

பழைய மாணவன்.

“ தந்தையும் தனயனும் ”

PART I

கும்பகோணம் தாலுக்காவில் அலவந்தி என்பது ஒரு சிறிய கிராமம். அது காவேரியின் கரையில் இருக்கிறது. இரு கரைகளிலும் அநேக தென்னந்தோப்புகளும், மற்றும் அநேக மாந்தோப்புகளும், அநேக பயன்கொடுக்கக்கூடிய விருகூதங்களும், பச்சைப் பசேர் என்று கண்களைக் கவருகின்ற புல்வெளிகளும் உண்டு. மரங்களில் சதாகாலமும், ருசியான பழங்களைத் தின்றுவிட்டு, குயில், வானம்பாடி, கிளி, குருவி முதலிய பக்சிகள், தம்பதி ஸஹிதமாய்க் கூச்சலிடும் இனிமையான சப்தங்கள் ஆகாயமளவும் கேட்கும். இது நிற்க, சதாகாலமும் காவேரியில் ஸ்நானம் செய்ய ஸ்திரீ புருஷர்கள் சென்றுகொண்டிருப்பார்கள். அந்த ஊர்க் காவேரியின் ஸ்நான கட்டடத்தில், அந்த ஊர் வியாபாரங்கள், சண்டை சச்சரவுகள், புதிய கலியாண விஷயமான பேச்சுகள், மற்றுமுள்ள பலவித வம்புகள் எல்லாம், ஸ்திரீகள் அலசிப்பிய்த்து சூக்ஷ்மத்தைப் பரிசோதிப்பார்கள்.

இப்படியிருக்க அந்த ஊர் அக்ரஹாரத்தில் ஏழு தலைமுறையாக, பிரபல மிராசுதார்கள் வம்சத்தைச் சேர்ந்தவர் வாசஸ்பதி சாஸ்திரிகள். மிகவும் புத்திமான். நல்ல ஒழுக்கமும் ஆசாரமும் உடையவர். அவருக்கு ஏற்றாப்போல் அந்தப் பெரிய பண்ணையில் வேலைபார்த்து வந்தவன் ‘ கந்தன் ’. அவன் நல்ல தேகபலமும், திவ்ய சரீரமும், ஸ்வாமி பக்தியும் உடையவன். அவன் தன் எஜமானருடைய நிலத்தைச் சரியாக உழுது, விதை விதைத்து, மேற்பார்வையிட்டான். கொஞ்சமேனும் ஒன்றிலும் பற்றுதலில்லாதவன். மற்றுமுள்ள குடியானவர்களைப்போல் தன் யஜமானனை ஏமாற்றிச் சுகமாய் வாழவேண்டுமென்பதே அவன் மனதில் கிடையாது. தான் எப்போதும் எஜமானருக்குப் பணிவிடை செய்து, அதில் அவர் மனமகிழ்ந்து தனக்குச் சாப்பாட்டுக்குத் தருவதே கடவுள் இட்ட கட்டளை என்று நினை

த்துப் பூர்ணமனதோடு வேலை செய்வதால், யஜமானனும் அவன் மேல் அத்யந்த விஸ்வாசம் கொண்டார். அவனுக்கு ஏற்றுற்போல் அவன் மனைவியும், தன் வீட்டை அதிக சுத்தமாகவும், அழகாகவும், வைத்துக்கொண்டு வீட்டில் காரியமில்லாத நேரங்களில், பலவித சில்லரைக் காரியங்களைச் செய்து, அதனால் அடைந்த வருமானத்தைக்கொண்டு தன் நாயகனை மகிழ்வித்தாள். கந்தனின் குடிசை ஓர் தென்னந்தோப்பின் மத்தியில் இருந்தது. காவேரியின் கரையில் வரிசையாகவும், ஒழுங்காகவும், ஒரே உயரமாகவும், செழிப்பாய் உள்ள மட்டைகளோடும், குலுங்கக்குலுங்கக் காய்களின் பாரம் தாங்காமல் வளைந்துகொடுப்பதுபோல் தோன்றும் தென்னைகளின் அழகும், பார்ப்போரை அங்கே வசிகரப்படுத்திச் சில நிமிஷங்கள் தங்கவைத்தால், அதன் பெருமை கந்தனின் மனைவி பொன்னியையே சேரும். அவளும் தன் காரியங்கள் எல்லாம் செய்துவிட்டு, சாயங்காலம் சூரியன் மேற்குக்கடலில் விழும்போது தன் கணவனுக்கு வேண்டியவைகளைத் தயாரித்து அவனை எதிர்கொண்டு அழைப்பாள். பொன்னியின் சிஸ்ருஷைகளைக்கொண்டு தான் பகலில் செய்த வேலையின் களைப்பை ஒருவாறு கந்தன் ஆற்றிக்கொள்ளுவான்.

இப்படியாக, பூவும் மணமும்போல், கந்தனும் பொன்னியும் ஒரு கவலையின்றி வாழ்ந்துவந்தார்களேயாயினும் அவர்கள் சந்தோஷமாகக் காணப்படவில்லை. ஏனெனில் அறுபது வயதாகியும் கந்தனுக்குப் பிறகு தன்குலத்தை விருத்திசெய்ய ஓர் சந்ததியேனும் இல்லை. இருவரும் வேண்டாத தெய்வங்களை யெல்லாம் வேண்டினார்கள். “ஏன் பொன்னீ, நாம் இப்படி வாழ்க்கையில் கஷ்டங்களை அனுபவியாமல் இருக்கிற சந்தோஷமிருந்தும், நமக்கு ஒரு மகன் இல்லாதது வாசனையற்ற பூப்போல் இருக்கிறது. நாம் எவ்வளவோ கடவுளை வேண்டியும் அவருக்கு இரக்கம்வரவில்லைபோல் தோன்றுகிறது” என்றான் கந்தன். “நீங்கள் சொல்வது ஒருநாளும் நடக்காது என்பதே எனது பூர்ணமான அபிப்பிராயம். கடவுள் ஒருநாளும் இரக்கமற்றவரல்ல. நான் நேற்றிரவு நம் இருவருக்கும் ஒரு மகன் பிறந்த

தாக ஸ்வப்னம் கண்டேன். ஆ, நிச்சயம் பலிக்குமென்றே எனது மனதில் தோன்றுகிறது.” என்றாள் மனைவி. ஏழைகளின் எண்ணம் கடவுளால் பூர்த்திசெய்யப்பட்டது.

குழந்தை பிறந்து வருடங்கள் ஐந்தாயின. அவன் முதன் முதலில் தன் மழலைச்சொற்களால் மொழிந்த “அப்பா அம்மா” என்னும் வார்த்தைகளைக் கேட்டுக் கந்தனும் பொன்னியும் அடைந்த ஆனந்தத்திற்கு அளவேயில்லை. பொன்னி காவேரிக்குப் போகும்பொழுது இவனும் அவளுடன் சென்று முன்னும் பின்னும் தத்தித்தத்தி ஓடுவான். காவேரியின் கரையில் உட்கார்ந்திருக்கும்பொழுது கல்லை ஒவ்வொன்றாகப் பொறுக்கி ஆற்றில் போட்டு அவற்றிலிருந்துவரும் குமிழிகளை ஆராய்வான்.

கந்தன் சாயங்காலம் வயலில் வேலைசெய்துவிட்டுக் களைப்பாய் வீடுதேடிவரும்பொழுது, குழந்தை முருகன் ஓடோடியும் வந்து, காலைக்கட்டித் தன் மழலைச்சொற்களால் ‘அப்பா இவ்வளவு நேரம் எங்கு போயிருந்தே, அம்மா உனக்காக எல்லாம் பண்ணி ஆறிப்போரதே’ என்று சொல்லும்பொழுது அவனைக் கட்டித் தூக்கி இரு கன்னங்களிலும் முத்தம் கொடுப்பான். இப்படியாக ஐந்து வருடங்கள் சென்றன. வயது பத்தாயிற்று. கந்தனும் முருகனைத் தன்கூட அழைத்துச் சென்றான். அவன் தான் செய்யும் வேலைக்கு இடைஞ்சலாக இருந்தபோதிலும் முருகன் எதிரில் இருப்பது அவனுக்கு உற்சாகத்தை ஊட்டிற்று. முருகனும் தன்னாலியன்ற வரையில் தன் தகப்பனருக்கு உதவி செய்து வந்தான்.

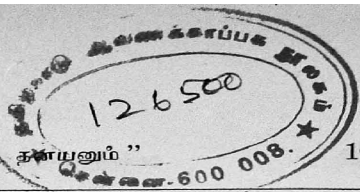
இப்படியாகத் தன் வேலையை ஒழுங்காய்ச் செய்து அதனால் ஏற்படும் பலனை அனுபவித்து நாள்தோறும் கணவன், மனைவி, பிள்ளை மூவரும் சுகமாக வாழும் காலத்தில், கந்தனுக்குச் சிறுநீர்ப்பன்மகனான ஆறுமுகம் என்பவன் அதிக கடனால் பிடிக்கப்பட்டுக், கந்தனை அண்டி வந்தான். “கந்தா, ஏதோ விதிவசத்தாலும் மதியீனத்தினாலும் நான் கடனாளியானேன். நீ ஒழுங்காக வேலை செய்வதைப் பார்த்து நானே நகைப்பதுண்டு.

“முயற்சியுடையார் இகழ்ச்சியுடையார்” என்பது உன்னால் நன்கு விளக்கப்பட்டது. என்மேல் உள்ள குற்றங்களை மன்னித்து என்னையும் உன் பிள்ளையைப்போல் பாவித்து, எனக்கு இந்தக் கஷ்டகாலத்தில் உதவிசெய்தால் உனக்குக் கடவுள் மேன்மேலும் ஐசவர்யம் கொடுப்பார் என்பதில் ஐயமில்லை. நீ கொடுக்கும் இந்தக் கடனை இன்னும் மூன்று வருஷங்களில் கண்டிப்பாய்த் தீர்த்துவிடுகிறேன். நீ இப்பொழுது கொடுக்க வில்லையேல் நமது குலத்திற்கு ஒரு அவமானமும் ஏற்படும்; நானும் ஜெயிலுக்குப்போக நேரிடும். நேரிட்டால் என் குடும்பமும் அதோகதியாகும். ஆகையால் இந்தச் சமயத்தில் உதவி செய்வாயேயானால் நீ ஒரு பெரும் குடும்பத்தைக் காப்பாற்றிய வனாவாய்: உன் குடும்பமும் நீடித்து நிற்கும்” என்று ஆறுமுகம் அழுதவண்ணமாகத் தன் கதையை விளக்கிக்காட்டினான்.

ஸ்வயமாகவே கந்தன் இளகிய மனதுடையவன். அதுவுமன்றியில் சுற்றத்தாரிடம் அன்பு உண்டு. ஆகையால் ஆறுமுகத்தின் கஷ்டத்தைத் தன் கஷ்டம்போலவே பாவித்துத் தனக்கு இருந்த பிதிரார்ஜய நிலத்தின்பேரில் ஈடாகவைத்து அவனுக்கு வேண்டிய கடனை வாங்கிக்கொடுத்தான். ஆறு வருஷத்தில் திருப்பி மீட்பதாக ஒப்பந்தம் செய்துகொண்டார்கள்.

நான்கு வருடங்கள் சென்றன. ஆறுமுகம் கடன் வாங்கு மட்டும் நெருங்கிப் பழகினானே ஒழிய, நான்கு வருஷங்கள் ஆகியும், திருப்பிக்கொடுக்க வேண்டுமென்ற முயற்சியே செய்ய வில்லை. நாட்கள் இப்படியாகச் சென்றதும் கடன்காரர்கள் கந்தனை உபத்திரவம்செய்ய வாரம்பித்தார்கள்.

“சென்ற எழுபது வருஷங்களாக நாம் சுகமாக வாழ்ந்து வந்தோம், பொன்னி, நமக்குப் பிள்ளையில்லை என்ற குறையும் கடவுளின் அருளால் ஒருவாறு தீர்ந்தது என்று சந்தோஷப்பட்டோம். இப்பொழுது ஆறுமுகத்திற்காகக் கொடுத்த பணத்தை அவன் திரும்பக்கொடுக்கவில்லை. அயோக்கியன்,



அவனைக் குற்றம்சொல்லி என்ன பிரயோஜனம்? நாம் இப்பொழுது தாமதித்தோமானால், நமக்குப் பரம்பரையாய் வந்திருந்த நிலங்களை இழக்குமாறு நேரிடும். இதுவரையிலும் நம் கண்முன்னால் பார்த்து அதிஷ்டருந்து பலனை அனுபவித்து வந்ததை, இப்பொழுது பிறரிடம் கொடுப்பதாக இருந்தால் என் மனம் துணியவில்லை. ஆனால் அந்தக் கடனை எப்படித் தீர்ப்பது என்று நான் சென்ற பதினைந்து நாட்களாக என் மண்டையை உடைத்துக்கொண்டும் எனக்கு ஒன்றும் புரியவில்லை. கடைசியாக நம் பிள்ளை முருகனை அக்கரைச் சீமைக்கு அனுப்பவேண்டுமெனத் தீர்மானித்திருக்கிறேன்.” என்று கண்ணீர் வடித்துச் சொன்னான் கந்தன்.

“நமக்குப் புத்திர சந்ததியில்லாமல் வெகுநாள் அடைந்த கஷ்டத்திற்கு அளவேயில்லை. கடைசி காலாந்தரத்தில் முருகன் இருக்கிறான் என்று ஒரு அற்ப சந்தோஷம் அடைந்தோம். அவன் முகமலர்ச்சி நம் இருவருக்கும் ஒரு புத்தியிர் கொடுத்தது. நாம் முருகனை எப்படி விடுவது?” என்றாள் பொன்னி.

கடவுளின் யத்தனம் அப்படியிருக்கும்பொழுது யாரால் தடுக்கமுடியும். வேறுவழியில்லை.

பொன்னி குதூகலமாகப் பிரயாணத்திற்கு முருகனுக்கு வேண்டிய சாமான்களைத் தயாரித்தாள். அவனுடைய ஆடைகளை வெளுப்பாகத் துவைத்து, அவனுக்கு வழிக்குவேண்டிய சாமான்களையும், தின்பண்டங்களையும் சேகரித்தாள். பொன்னிக்கு முன் இருந்ததைக்காட்டிலும் அதிக வேலையாகவேயிருந்தது. பிரயாணம் ஒரு நல்ல தினத்தில் வைக்கப்பட்டது.

போகும் முன் ஒருநாள் சாயந்திரம் கந்தன், முருகனைத் தோப்பிற்கு அழைத்துப்போய், “முருகா, இந்தத் தென்னந்தோப்பு நம் முன்னோர்களால் வளர்க்கப்பட்டு என் வசம் வந்தது. அது உனக்குச் சோவேண்டுமென்பதே என் ஆசை. ஆனால் நாம் ஒன்று நினைக்கக் கடவுள் ஒன்று நினைக்கிறார். ஆகையால் நீ அயல் நாடு சென்று பணம் சம்பாதித்து, இந்தக்

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கடனைத் தீர்த்து, நம் முன்னோர்களின் சொத்தைக் காப்பாற்றுவாய் என்பது எனது பூர்ண நம்பிக்கை. இருந்தபோதிலும் நீ அயல் நாட்டில் இருக்கும்பொழுது, உனது ஞாபகார்த்தமாக இந்தத் தென்னம்பிள்ளையை நடு. நீ இல்லாத நேரத்தில் உன்னை எப்படி வளர்த்தேனோ அப்படி அதை வளர்க்கிறேன். நீ உனது கௌரவத்தை நிலைநாட்டுவாய் !” என்று சொன்னான். அவனும் அப்படியே நட்தான். இருவரும் மௌனமாக வீடு சேர்ந்தார்கள்.

கந்தனும் பொன்னியும், முருகனை வழிகொண்டு அனுப்பினார்கள். அந்த ஊரிலுள்ள எல்லோரும் வாசலிலிருந்து வழி அனுப்பினார்கள். முருகனும் அயல்நாடு பார்க்கப்போகிறோம் என்ற சந்தோஷத்தினால் தாய் தகப்பனை விட்டுப்பிரிந்த வருத்தத்தை மறந்தான்.

குவலாலம்பூர் போய்ச் சேர்ந்தான். கொஞ்சநாள் சென்ற பிறகு, ரப்பர் தோட்டத்தில் வேலைக்கு அமர்ந்தான். தினம் இரண்டு வெள்ளி சம்பளம் கிடைத்தது. ஆள் பார்வைக்கு நன்றாகவிருந்ததோடுகூட, சுறுசுறுப்பாய் வேலை செய்ததால் எஜமானனின் பிரியத்தைச் சம்பாதித்தான். மாதம் ரூ. 150 சம்பளம் கிடைத்தது.

வாரவாரம் தாய் தகப்பனுக்குக் கடிதம் எழுதினான். அந்தக் கடிதங்களைப் பார்த்து இருவரும் சந்தோஷமடைந்தார்கள். பொன்னியும் அதைப் பக்கத்தில் உள்ளவர்களிடம் காட்டி அதைப் படிக்கச்சொல்லி அதிக சந்தோஷமடைந்தாள். முருகன் குவலாலம்பூரில் இருந்தபோது மாதம் தவறாமல் அவர்களுக்கு ரூ. 50 அனுப்பிவந்தான். குவலாலம்பூரில் சந்தோஷமாக அந்த வேலையில் அமர்ந்து இரண்டு வருஷங்களைக் கழித்தான்.

PART II

முருகன் கஷ்டப்பட்டு வேலைசெய்து தன் கடமை உணர்ந்து இருந்தபோதிலும் விதி வேறு விதமாக ஆக்ஞாபித்து இருந்

தது. விதிவழியே மதி செல்லும். அங்கு அவனுக்கு கெட்ட சினேகிதர்கள் பழக்கமாணர்கள். சிற்றின்பப்பிரியனானான். தாசியின் மாயவலையில் சிக்கினான். பணத்தை வீணிற் செலவழித்தான். தன் கடமையை மறந்தான். தகப்பனருக்கு அனுப்பி வந்த பணத்தை நிறுத்திவிட்டான். மாதங்கள் பல சென்றன. முருகனைப்பற்றிய தகவல் ஒன்றும் தெரியவில்லை. இருவரும் வருத்தமுற்றார்கள். ஆனால் கந்தன் தன் கடமையை மறக்கவில்லை. தென்னை மரத்தை நாளொரு மேனியும் பொழுதொரு வண்ணமுமாகத் தண்ணீர் ஊற்றி வளர்த்துவந்தான்.

ஒருநாள் முருகனுக்குக் கடிதம் வந்தது. “முருகனுக்கு ஆசீர்வாதம்.

இவ்வளவு நாளாகக் கடிதம் வராதது சந்தேகத்திற்கு இடம் கொடுக்கிறது. ஐந்து ஆறு மாதங்களாகப் பணம் கட்டாததால், கடன்காரர்கள் ஹிம்ஸை தாங்கவில்லை. இப்பொழுது ரூ. 200 அனுப்பினால் நாங்கள் சுகமாக இருப்போம்.”

இப்படிக்கு,

கந்தன்.

இதைப் படித்ததும் முருகனுக்கு ஆச்சரியமும் திகைப்பும் உண்டாயிற்று. இது என்ன தெய்வத்தின் பரீட்சையோ என்னவோ தெரியவில்லையே என்று ஒன்றும் தோன்றாமல் இருந்தான். பணம் மறுநாள் அனுப்பலாமென்று இருந்தான். அன்றிரவு முருகனுக்குத் தூக்கம் வரவில்லை. ஏதோ கொடிய வெட்கிக்கத் தகுந்த எண்ணங்கள் தோன்றின. ஒரு நாளுமில்லாத வெறுப்பு அவன் தகப்பனார்மேல் உண்டாயிற்று. “இந்தத் தூக்கத்தில் பணம் அனுப்பாமற்போனால் தகப்பனார் இறப்பது நிச்சயம். நாம் இங்குச் சுகமாக வாழலாம்” என்று ஒரு எண்ணம் தோன்றும். “சீ, அது பாவம்” என்று மற்றொரு எண்ணம் தோன்றும். அன்றிரவு தூக்கம் வராமல் படுக்கையில் புரண்டு புரண்டு படுத்துக்கொண்டிருந்தான். மறுநாள் காலை

யில் எதிர்பார்த்தபடி ஒரு கடிதம் வந்தது. நடுக்கத்துடன் திறந்து படித்தான்.

“கடன்காரர்கள் ‘டிக்ரி’ நிறைவேற்றிவிட்டார்கள். எப்படியாகுமோ தெரியவில்லை. மாசியம்மன்தான் காப்பாற்ற வேண்டும். கையில் காசில்லை” சுந்தன்.

பார்த்தான், மறுநாளும் பணம் அனுப்பவில்லை. அவனது நெஞ்சு கடினமாக ஆய்விட்டது. ஸ்தம்பித்து ஏதோ ஆழ்ந்த யோஜனையில் அமர்ந்தான். சாப்பிடும்பொழுது ருகியே தெரிய வில்லை. ஹோட்டல்காரன் “காப்பி நன்றாய் இருக்கிறதா” என்றான். “நன்றாய் இருக்கிறது” என்றான். “சர்க்கரை வேண்டுமோ” என்றான். ஏதோ பயித்தியம்பிடித்தவன்போல் வீடு திரும்பினான். இப்படியும் அப்படியும் நான்கு நாள் இருந்தான்; பணம் அனுப்பவில்லை.

ஒரு நாள் அவன் ஆபீஸிலிருந்து திரும்பிவரும்பொழுது ஒரு லெட்டர் காத்திருந்தது. “அப்பாவிற்கு ஜூரம் கண்டு பத்து நாளாகிறது. முதலில் “டைபாய்ட்” என்றார். பிறகு மூளையைப்பற்றி என்று டாக்டர் சொல்லுகிறார். இன்னும் இரண்டு நாளில் நம் பூர்வீக சொத்து கைப்பற்றப்படும். இந்தத் தகவல் தகப்பனாருக்குத் தெரியாது, தெரிந்தால் மரணம் நிச்சயம்.”

இப்படிக்குப் பொன்னி சொல்படி,
ராஜா.

இதைப் பார்த்ததும் ஸ்தம்பித்து அப்படியே உட்கார்ந்தான். மணி பறந்தது தெரியவில்லை. அவமானத்திற்குக் காரணம் நான்தான். இதுதான் தெய்வ சங்கல்பம் போலும் என்று எண்ணினான்.

மறுநாள் காலையில்தான் “ராஜபுதானா” என்னும் கப்பல் புறப்படும் நேரம். இரவுமுழுவதும் ஸ்தம்பித்து நாற்காலியிலேயே உட்கார்ந்தான்.

மறுநாள் காலை யில் சூரியன் தன் செங்கிரணங்களை வீசி னான். அப்பொழுதுதான் கப்பல் புறப்படும் நேரம் ஞாபகத் திற்கு வந்தது. ஓடோடியும் வந்தான். கப்பல் புறப்படப் பதி னைந்து நிமிஷங்கள் தான்! டிக்கட் கொடுக்கும்படி கெஞ்சினான். பாஸ்போர்ட் இல் லா ம ல், டிக்கட் கொடுக்க மறுத்தார்கள். மன்றாடினான்—இரட்டிப்புசார்ஜ் கொடுப்பதாகவும் சொன்னான். பிரயோஜனமில்லை.

கப்பல் நகர்ந்தது—வந்த ஆவேசத்தால் கடலில் குதித் தான்—அந்தோ கஷ்டம்! கப்பலோடு போட்டிபோட முடி யுமா? மூழ்கி மூழ்கி எழுந்தான்.

கடல் ஓரம், மாலை வேளை சுவலாலம்பூர் பிச்சில் அநேகம் பெயர்கள் சாயந்திர வேலையில் உலாவினார்கள். ஓரத்தில் ஒரு பிணம் வருவதை இளம் நங்கை ஒருத்தி கண்டாள். ஓடிப் போய் வாரி எடுத்தாள். முகத்தைத் துடைத்துப் பார்த்தாள். உயிர் இருப்பதுபோல் தோன்றிற்று. ஒரு வண்டி அமர்த்தி வீட்டிற்கு அழைத்துப்போய் ஆஸ்வாஸப்படுத்தினாள்.

இரண்டு நாள் கழிந்த பிறகு கொஞ்சம் கண்ணைத் திறந் தான். இருக்கும் இடம் தெரியவில்லை. மஹா லக்ஷ்மியை ஒத்த ஓர் யௌவன ஸ்திரீ எதிரில் இருப்பதைக் கண்டான். ‘ஐயோ! கொலைபாதகன் சண்டாளன்—என்னை யேன் காப்பாற்றினீர் கள்’ என்று கதறினான்.

அந்த யௌவன ஸ்திரீ அவனைச் சமாதானம் செய்து அவனுடைய வரலாற்றைக்கேட்டுக் கண்ணீர் வடித்தாள்.

“என்னை என் வீடு சேர்ப்பியுங்கள் அல்லது அந்த விலா ஸத்திற்கு வந்த கடிதமாவது என்னிடம் சேர்ப்பியுங்கள் உங் களுக்குக் கோடிப் புண்ணியம்” என்று வேண்டினான்.

இரண்டு தினங்கள் கழித்து எதிர்பார்த்தபடி கடிதம் வந்தது.

‘நிலம் இழந்த துக்கத்தால் தகப்பனார்
 இறந்தார்—சாகும் தருவாயில் உன்
 ஞாபகமே—நீ இப்படி மோசம் செய்
 வாய் என்று எண்ணவில்லை. உன்
 வரவை எதிர்பார்க்கும்’

பொன்னி.

உடம்பு குணமானதும், அலவந்தி வந்து சேர்ந்தான். முரு
 கன் பணம் கொடுத்து நிலத்தைத் திருப்பினான். ஆனால் அதை
 இனாமாக மாரியம்மனுக்கு கொடுத்தான். இப்பொழுது அல
 வந்தியில் பள்ளிக்கூடம் வைத்திருக்கும் சாமியார் முருகன் தான்.

எமது பொன்னி நீராட்டம்

(நேரிசை யாசிரியப்பா)

நாற்கட லுடுத்த நானிலப் பரப்பின்
பாற்கட லுதித்த பாவையின் றுணைவன்
விரும்பியே யுறையும் பெரும்பதி நூற்றெட்
டென்னு மெண்ணுடைத் தென்பரால் பெரியோர்.

அப்பதிகளிலே யளிக்குல நெருங்கி
எழில்மிகப் பெற்ற பொழில்சூழ் நாங்கூர்
எண்ணில் பெரும்புகழ் வண்புரு டோத்தமன்
மலரடி நாளும் மகிழ்வுடன் வணங்கும்
இயல்புடை மனத்தனும் இராசகோபாலப்
பெயரிய பெரியோன் பெருஞ்செய லொன்றினைச்
சாற்றுவ னடியேன் போற்றிக்கேண்மின் ;

பாரினர் போற்றும் வேரிகொ ளாங்கன்
மெச்சும் பெரும்புகழ் நச்சர வணையில்
இனிது துயில்கொளும் புனிதநன் நகராம்
திருமக ணிலவுந் திருவிந்த னூரில் ;
போதனா முறைபெறற் பொருட்டுறை வோனென்
தமையனெடு பயிலுந் தன்மையனாய், நீர்
பாலோடு கலந்த பான்மையே போல
வைத்தநே யத்தொடு வைகிய நாளில்,

பொன்னித் துறையில் நன்னீராட
உன்னிய மனத்தொடிக் கன்னியின் மூன்றாம்
நன்னாட் காலை ஞாயிறு தோன்றுமுன்
இன்னுயிர்த் துணைவனா மிந்நண் பனும்வர
யானும் எம்முனும் யாற்றைக் குறுகினம்.

காவிரி நீரிற் களிப்புடன் மூழ்கித்
 துள்ளியே செல்லும் வெள்ளநீ ரதனிற்
 குள்ளக் குளிரக் குடைந்து துளைந்தே
 ஆடுங் காலையென் அண்ணன் அரைமேல்
 வீக்கிய ஆடை வெவ்வொலித் திரையால்
 ஆலைப்புண் டனிழ்தந் தப்புட னோடி
 மறைந்தது கண்டு மனமிக நொந்திற்
 நண்ப னுடன்வர நாடிச் செல்கையில் ;
 பொன்னி யெனும்பேர் நன்னீர் மங்கையின்
 உந்தியை நிகர்க்குமுயிருண் சுழியில்
 தனியே வீழ்ந்து தவித்தன னண்ணன்.

அன்னது கண்டவெம் மன்புடை நேயன்
 ‘ஐயோ இழந்தேன் ஆருயிரன்பனை
 என்ன செய்குவேன்’ என்றென் றலறி
 ‘என்னுயிர் போயினு மின்னுயிர் நண்பனை
 இனிதே காப்பன்’ என்றே யோடித்
 தாமத மின்றியே தண்புனற் குதிக்கச்
 சேய்மையி னின்ற சிறியேன் கண்டேன்.

எம்முனோற் குற்ற வின்னலொன் றினையே
 கருது முளத்தனாய்க் கண்கலங் கிடவே
 ஓடியே வந்தந் நீடிய சுழியில்
 யானும் வீழ்ந்து யாற்றுட னேகினேன்.

‘இப்பெரு நீரால் ஈர்க்கப் பட்டுச்
 சோதர ரிருவரும் சாதலையடைய
 எந்தையும் யாயும் ஈண்டிய சுற்றமும்
 ஏங்கித் தவிக்கவெத் தீங்கிழைத் தனரோ’
 என்னவே பலவும் எண்ணிச் செல்குவேன்.

இங்கென் னிலைமை இவ்வாறுகப்
 புனலிற் புகுந்த புண்ணிய புருடன்

யாங்கணுந் துருவி பேங்கி யலைந்து,
பாரினை யொருகாற் பாயலாய்ச் சுருட்டி-
ஆர்க்கி புகுந்தோன் பேருடலதனைக்

கூருகிர் கொண்டு கூறு படுத்திக்
கோட்டிடைப் புவியைக் கொண்டெழுந் துவந்த
விண்டுவே போல விடாது முயன்றென்
அண்ணலா ருயிரை யப்புறப் படுத்த
எண்ணிய சிந்தையொ டெதிரந்த கூற்றுவனை
வெந்நிட் டோட விரைவிற் றுரத்தித்
திண்ணிய புயத்தில் அண்ணனை யேந்தித்
துள்ளிப் பாய்ந்தனன் தூநீர்க் கரைமேல்.

நல்வினை வயத்தால் நானுமக் கரைக்கே
அலையினு லொதுங்கி யலைப்புண் டடைந்தே
அண்ணுந்து நோக்க அண்ணனு, மவன்புறம்
தழுவியே கண்ணீர் தரையிடைச் சோரத்
தாயென நின்ற தனிப்பெரு வள்ளலும்
கண்டேன் காண்டலுங் களித்ததென் கண்ணே.

இங்ஙன மாகவெம் மிருவரா ருயிரையும்
இன்பமாய்க் காத்த அன்புடை வள்ளலின்
இன்னருட் டிறத்தினை யுன்னுந் தோறும்
நன்றி யறிவுடை நாயினைப்போல
உள்ளங் குழைய வுகுத்தகண் ணீரொடு
பாவலர் போற்றும் பண்புடைத் தமிழால்
தொகுத்தவித் தொடையலைச் சூட்டியே
வாழ்த்துவன் பெரிதும் வாழிவா ழியவே.

P. B. S. RAMANUJACHARI,

II Vidwan.

நான் கண்ட காட்சி

“அல்லும் பகலும் அயர்ந்த தூக்கம் ; தூக்கம் மேற் கொண்டு ஆக்கம் விட்டான்” என்ற சொற்றொடர் சுடச்சுட என் காதில் விழவே, துயில் நீங்கி, ஆ! முருகா! என்றேன். முருகன் விரைவாக அழைக்கவே, கண்ணைத் துடைத்துக் கொண்டு சுறுசுறுப்பாக அவன்பின் நடந்து சென்றேன்.

ஒரு சிறிய மலையினைச் சேய்மையிற் கண்ணுற்றேன். நீல வானில் ஒரு முழு வெண்டிங்கள் முகிழ்த்துத் தோன்றக் கண்டேன் ; கண்டு கழிபேருவகை எய்தினேன் ; எய்தி எல்லையிலா இன்பமும் ஈறிலா இறும்பு துங் கொண்டேன். நண்ப! ஈதென்னை! இத்தண்ணொளி பரப்பும் வெண்ணிலா கண்ணொளி மழுங்கவன்றே வீசுகின்றது, நின்னாலன்றோ ஈது காணும் பெரும் பேறு பெற்றேன். யான் நின் மாட்டுச் செயவல்ல கைமாறுதான் யாதோ! என்று கூறிக்கொண்டு இருவரும் மலைச் சாரலின் அண்மையில் ஒரு புன்னகைப் பூஞ்சோலையினுடே சென்றோம். யாவருமறியதில்லா மேவரும் உலகமே யோ! இயற்கை அன்னையின் எழில் நலம் ஈண்டு இருந்தவாறுதான் என்னே! என்ற அளவில், ‘உதோ காண் நண்ப’ என முறுவலித்தான் முருகன். அழகுசால் வான் வெளியிற் கண்ட நிலா நீல மேகத்தினிடையே நீந்தி மறைந்தது. எனினும் யாண்டும் ஒளிமயமாயன்றே யிருக்கின்றது என்று நீடு நினைந்தவனாய் மலையினை நோக்கினேன்.

மலையின் உச்சியில் மற்றொரு வால் வெண்ணிலவு கால் கொண்டு பொலிவதுபோல் ஒரு மங்கையின் மாசற்ற முகம் எழிலொழுகப் பொலிந்து திகழ்வதைக் கண்டேன். என்னை! ஒரு மங்கையின் மதிமுகத்தைக் கண்டன்றே திங்களும் நாண் மீக்கொண்டு கார் மேகத்திடையே காந்து ஒழிந்தது. அச்சிரிளம் பெண்ணருகில் ஒரு குறு முனிவரன்றே அமர்ந்து அருந்தவம் செய்கின்றார். அம்மதி முகத்தின் மாட்சிமிக்க ஒளி

யானது தூய பசும் பொற்குடத்திலிருந்து நறுஞ்சுவை மிக்க வெண்பாலைத் தமிழ் வழங்கும் நிலவுலகிற்குச் சொரிவது போலன்றோ இருக்கின்றது. எண்ணிலா மக்கள், இனிமை திகழ்தரும் அப்பாலை வாரி அள்ளிப் பருகுதற்கு ஆவல் மீதுரப் பெற்றன்றே நிற்கின்றனர். நிற்கின்றதைக் கண்ட யானும் அக்கொழுஞ்சுவை கெழுமிய செழுந்தமிழ்ப் பாலைப் பருகுவான் விரைந்தேன். அக்காலை யான் அடைந்த ஆரா இன்பமும் பேரா உவகையும் இத்தன்மைத்து என எடுத்துரைக்கும் தகவுடைத்தோ கூறுமின்கள்!

மா, பலா, தென்னை, கழுகு, கோங்கு, பாதிரி, முல்லை, மருதம், நெய்தல், சண்பகம், வேங்கை, சந்தனம் முதலாய் செடிகொடி மாங்களடர்ந்த பூஞ்சோலையில் தீந்தமிழ்த் தென்றல் மணமிசை பூந்தேன் கமழக் குணமிக வீசியது; ஆய்தமிழ் கலந்த தூய நல்லாறுகளில் மேய நன்னீர் சேய புலங்களிற் சென்று நேயமுடன் பாய்ந்தது; பேடையுடன் கூடிய தீங்குயில்கள் பூங்கொம்பர்களில் பாங்குறப்பாடின; கார்கண்டு ஓசை மிக்க மயில்கள் தோகை விரித்தாடின; வண்டினங்கள் செந்தாமரை மலர்ப்பைந்தாதுகளிலுள்ள தீந்தேன் மாந்திக் களித்து முன்றன; கள்ளமில் பள்ளிச்சிறுர்கள்போல் புள்ளிமான்கள் துள்ளிக் குதித்து விளையாடின; வீணு கானம் போன்ற இனிய கானக ஒலி நனி எழுந்து வந்தது; கீழ்பால் அந்தி நந்திய செக்கர் வானம் அழகுறத் தோன்றியது; தண்டமிழ்க் கதிர்வன் தன் ஒண்டிறற் கதிர்கள் எண்டிசையும் பாக்கத் தோன்றினான்; நினைப்பிற்கும் எட்டாத நீள்பெருங் கருங் கடலில் நீல மலைகள்போல சீல மிக்க அலைகள் கோலமாக எழுந்து வந்தன; செந்நெல் விளையும் 'பச்சைப்பசேல்' என மிளிரும் பைங்கூழ் நிறைந்த வயற்பாப்பினில் உழவர்கள் எழுப்பும் ஒலி யாண்டும் பார்த்தது; நட்புடன் கூடிய புட்கள் பெப்புடன் காலைத் துயில் எழுந்து பழுமாம் தேறிப்பறந்து சென்றன; இவையிற்றிலெல்லாம் இரண்டறக் கலந்து ஒன்றிக் கொஞ்சிக் குலாவி விளையாடிய மொழி அமிழ்தினுமினிய தமிழ் மொழியே யன்றோ! என் அருமைத்

தமிழே! நின்னை மலைதனில் முளைத்த அமிழ்த சஞ்சீவி என்று சொல்லுவேனோ? அல்லது அலைகடலிற் பிறந்த அமிழ்தமே என்பேனோ? மற்று யாதென்று சொல்லுவேன்! யாங்ஙனம் புகழ்வேன்! ஆ! யான் உயிர்ப்பதுந் தமிழே யன்றோ! எவ் வுயிருந் தமிழன்றோ! யாண்டும் தமிழ் மணம்; மணங் கமழக் கண்டேன்; கண்டேன் கண்டேன் தமிழ்நாடு திகழ்வதையுங் கண்டேன்.

‘ஒரு அழகிய வில் வீரன் அம்புங்கையுமாகக் களிறு ஒன்றைத் தொடர்வதைக் காண்’ என்றான் முருகன். பூங்கொடி போல்வாள் ஒருத்தி அக்களிறு தன்னை நோக்கி வருவதைக் கண்டு ‘ஐயகோ’ என்று ஆவிதுடித்து அலமருகின்றாள். கொடியெனத் தளர்ந்த கொம்பனானைக்கண்ட அக்காளை கடிதோடிச்சென்று கட்டியணைத்து நொடிப்பொழுதில் காத்தருளி னான். ஆருயிர் காத்த அவ்விளவல் உயிர் வாழ்க்கைக்கு அம் மங்கையே அருமருந்தாய் அமைந்தாள். பாசமெனும் நேசத் தாற் பிணிபட்ட அவ்விருவரும் காதற்களவொழுக்கம்விட்டுத் தொல்லறமாய இல்லறமே நல்லறம் என்று ட் கொண்டு சென்றனர்.

முரசு முழங்கக் கேட்டேன்; இருபெரும் வேந்தர்கள் தம் மில் இகல்கொண்டு அறப்போர் தொடுக்க, ஒருவர் வாகைமலை சூடி மிளிர்ந்தனர். வெற்றிமாலை சூடிய வீரமன்னன் குடிமக்கள் புடைசூழச் சென்று அரியணையேறி இரவலர்கட்குப் பரிசில் கொடுத்து மந்திரநூல் வல்லார்வாய்த் தந்திரச் சொற்கேட்டு, ஆறிலொரு கடமைபெற்றுக் கண்ணிமைபோல் குடிமக்களைப் பாதுகாத்துச் செங்கோல் ஓச்சுகிறான். யான் கண்ட இவையிற்றை யெல்லாம் புலவர் அழகிதாகச் சித்திரித்துப் பாடுகிறார். புரவலனும் புலவரைப் போற்றிப் புலமை நலமிக்க இனிய பாடல்களைக்கேட்டு அகமிக மகிழ்ந்து அளப்பருஞ் செல்வத்தை அள்ளி வீசுகிறான். இயற்கையோடியைந்த இறை இன்பத்தைக்கண்டு நுய்த்த புலவர்கள் தம் நலமிக்க பாடல்களை செந்தமிழ்ச் செல்வர்களும் பைந்தமிழ்ப் பாலர்களும் தீந்தமிழ்ப் பாவையர்களும்

உள்ளங் குளிர்தர உடல் பூரிப்புறப் பாடிக்களிக்கின்றனர். அறம் பொருளின்பம் வீடு இந்நான்குமே மக்கட்கு உறுதிப் பொருளாமென அறுதியிட்டுக் கூறுகின்றனர்.

நீதிவ்வாறிருக்க, ஓர் அழகிய மாதா, கலைசோரத் தலைவிரி கோலமாக எங்களைக் கடந்து மலையை நோக்கிச் சென்றாள். தாயே! என்னை இவ்வித அலங்கோலம், என்றேன். அன்புடன் வினவும் அருந்தமிழ்ச் செல்வ! நீ ஏன் அவையிற்றைக் கேட்கிறாய்? எனக் கூறிவிட்டு, யான் பலப்பல ஆயிரக் கணக்கான ஆண்டுகட்குமுன் இப்பொதிய மலையின்கண்ணே பிறந்தேன்; செந்தமிழ்ப் பாண்டியன் பேணிவளர்த்த சங்கம் ஏறித் தனி அரசு செலுத்தினேன்; இற்றைக்கு ஐயாயிரம் ஆண்டுகட்குமுன் தமிழகம் முழுவதூடும் ஒளிவிசத் திகழ்ந்து நின்றேன். இதுபோத்து காலம் மாறிவிட்டது. என் அழகிய கலையும் அணிகலமும் அலங்கோலமாயின, என்று கூறியவளவில், அதென்ன மூட்டை முடிச்சு என்றேன்.

முற்காலத்திய காவலர்களும் பாவலர்களும் அன்புடன் அளித்த அணிகலங்களாய அகம், புறம், தொல்காப்பியம், பதிற்றுப்பத்து, பத்துப்பாட்டு, திருக்குறள், சிலப்பதிகாரம், சிந்தாமணி, மணிமேகலை, தேவாரம், திருவாசகம், திருக்கோவையார், பெரிய புராணம் முதலியவைகளும் பிற்காலத்திலளிக்கப்பட்ட இராமாயணம், தல புராணங்கள் ஆதியாக அந்தாதி, கலம்பகம், சீட்டுக்கவி, தெம்மாங்கு, நொண்டிச்சிந்து, சினிமாப் பாட்டுக்கள் ஈறாக உள்ளவைகளை வைத்துக்கொண்டிருக்கின்றேன். இவ்வளவு அரும்பெறல் மணியே அனைய பொருள்களிருந்தும் என்னை உண்மையுடன் பேணுவாரைக் காண்கிலேன். ஒருவன் good-bye, Thank you Mother என்றான். அதைக்கேட்ட மற்றொருவன் 'பஹுத் அச்சாஹே' என்றான். எனவே பிறந்த இடம் நோக்கிச் செல்கின்றேன் என்று கண்ணீர்விட்டுக் கதறி அழுதாள். அந்தோ! இதைக்கேட்டு என் மனம் பொறுக்கவில்லை. அம்ம! நீ திரும்பிச் செல்லலுமாமோ! என் ஆருயிர்த் தமிழ்

முன்னையே! நின் சீருஞ்சிறப்பும் நிலைகுலையக்கண்டு இனியும் தூங்குவேனோ! மாட்டேன், தூங்கவே மாட்டேன் என்று உறுதி கூறினேன்.

தண்டமிழ்க் கதிரவன் மறைந்தான்; வெங்கதிரோன் நங் கூரம் பாய்ச்சினான்; சேரர்கள் சேயராயினர்; ஒரு வயிற்றினிற் பிறந்த பலர் பிரிந்து பிரிந்து நின்றனர்; எங்கள் இடம் சாலவுங் குறுகி வந்தது; நின்றோம், நிற்கிறோம், நிற்போம் இனியும், என்பதற்குப் போதிய அறிகுறிகள் சிறிதும் காணப்படவில்லை. உணர்ச்சி ததும்ப ஆர்வமுடன் வீசும் தமிழ்த்தென்றல் குறைந்தது. கருங்கடல்தாவிய மேற்றிசைக்காற்று வீறிட்டெழுந்து வந்து நந்தம் தென்றலை அழுக்கியது; அம்மட்டோ! வடக்கணிருந்து ஒரு வாடைக்காற்றும் ஆரம்பமாவதைக் கண்டேன்; சூழ்ச்சி மிகுதா வீசும் அவ்வாடையை எங்களால் தாங்கமுடிய வில்லை. சில முண்டர்கள் இவ்வாடை நம்மை நலியவில்லை என நெளித்துக் கொடுத்து எருமை மறமேபோலப்பொறுமை அதிகமென்று தங்கள் சிறுமையைக் காட்டினார்கள். அழகிய நச்சுப் பாம்பினைக் கண்டு, இது பாம்பு அன்று கயிறே என்று பிடிக்கப் போகும் பேதையர்களை என்னென்று சொல்வது? பண்டைத் தமிழரசியின் வாழ்வை நோக்கி மகிழ்ந்த யான் தாழ்வை நோக்கித் தளர்ந்தேன். சந்திரனை இராகு விழுங்குவதுபோல அன்னை முகத்தின் ஒளி சூடுறு பாண்டிலிற் சுருங்கிய கதிர்த்தாய் மங்கியது. அவ்வாடையினால் தமிழ்க்கலை 'விர்விர்' என்றிழுக்கப் பட்டது. அன்னையின் நிலை கண்டலறித் துடித்தேன்; மீசை துடிதுடித்தது, செந்நீர் சிறிக்கொதித்தது; ஆண்மை ஒங்கியது, அச்சம் அகன்றது; அன்பு கனிந்தது; அருள் பரந்தது.

ஆ! அன்னை இப்பொழுது என் கண்முன் காணவில்லையே! என்று அன்னாய்! அன்னாய்! ஈங்கெமை நீங்கி யாங்குச் சென்றனையோவென ஆவலோடு இங்குமங்கும் இரு கையாலும்

துழாவி நீரில் நீந்துபவன்போல் தத்தளித்தேன். முருக! அன்னை யாண்டுச் சென்றாள், என அவன் பக்கம் திரும்பினேன்.

‘மணி 8. காப்பி ஆறுகின்றது. பரிட்சையாம், இன்னும் தூக்கம்’ என்ற குரல்கள் வந்து என்னை அதட்டியது ‘ஆ-என்று எழுந்தேன் நான் கண்ட காட்சி கனவோ—நனவோ’ என்று பாடிய வண்ணம்

A. சண்முகவேலு,

வித்வான் IV.

Our Old Boys

Mr. V. Krishnamurti, B.A. (Hons.), had a rather short and sudden passage from boyhood to man's estate. As late as March 1937, we saw him in his pliable home-washed dhoti, listening to lectures in Room No. 12. As early as October that year, we saw him in a pair of trousers stiff with laundry-starch, and orating to *his* students in Room No. 10. But what can a distinguished Honours Degree in English *not* do?

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Mr. K. Rangaswami, B.A. (Hons.), is now on our staff. He came last October from Madura, whither he had gone to teach Mathematics in the college named after the town. His home-coming (isn't that the expression?) did our hearts good and we congratulated our Mathematics students. A bird, we are glad to report, flew but the other day from the Mathematics part of the University to the Miscellany part of it and whispered in the Editor's ear that the congratulation was well deserved.

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Mr. S. Sriraman, M.A., M.Sc., is, though still under thirty, among the oldest of our Old Boys. He came to us with the University. A student of the III Class in 1929, a B. A. in 1931, an M. A. in 1933, he threw off, amidst his duties in the lecture-hall and in the laboratory, a thesis, the other day, and won an M. Sc. Degree in Physics. He has been with us all the time and will be always—the home-sick Old Boy.

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Mr. P. S. Varadachari, M.A., M.Sc., is an older O. B. even than Mr. Sriraman. For he was handed down to us by the Sri Minakshi College in 1929 as a student of the III Class. He has since strictly kept pace with Mr. Sriraman; and indeed, in the matter of taking the M. Sc. Degree, stole a march on him. He now stands six feet on bare ground—adding very nearly one foot to the stature he had

as a freshman in the Sri Minakshi College in 1927. Will he just try growing a little on the X-axis? We submit it to him that it's time he did.

* * *

Mr. K. Rangaswami, B.A., teaches Botany here. In 1934, when he had just passed the Intermediate, he was near becoming an Oriental pundit, in obedience to orders from above. But he evidently preferred an open-air life among plants to a life of suffocation among old tomes: a life of encroachment on University verandahs to one of confinement in libraries. We trust he is happy in his choice.

* * *

Mr. R. Vasudevan,—Vasu, for short, among friends—is teaching Zoology here. The batch—the 1936 batch—that gave Mr. Rangaswami to the Botany Department gave also Mr. Vasudevan to the Zoology Dep.....But what are we talking of? Zoology is not yet a Department with us.

* * *

Mr. A. Chidambaranathan Chettiar, M.A., our Lecturer in Tamil, is an ex-member of the Editorial Board. When he was on the Board, he was a student. On taking the M. A. Degree, he took up work in the Palghat College. Perhaps his sense of the incongruity in his teaching Tamil in Malayalam-land or his love of home, or both, soon led him back hither. He is as welcome to us as are his contributions to the Miscellany.

* * *

Mr. L. P. K. R. Ramanathan Chettiar, one of our Vidwans, is in the Research Section of our Department of Tamil. Belonging to the community of many initials—the Nagarattar community—doesn't he work for the pure love of the mother tongue? Not for pelf, they.

* * *

Mr. S. R. Krishnamurti who joined our Samskrit Staff last year is a Siromani in a plurality of Sastras. All honour to Seruvamani that gave us this Siromani.

* * *

Messrs. K. S. Narayanaswami and T. K. Rangachari are pundits in our Music Section. They both belong to the first batch of our Sangita Bhushanams. They joined the staff, both in the same year. Do they not work in perfect harmony—these two men of music? We trust they do.

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We shall speak to our readers more of our Old Boys, and of more Old Boys, in the issues to come. But will the Old Boys speak of themselves to us before we speak of them to our readers—will they, kindly?

Our Exchange List

- The Madras Christian College Magazine.
A Government College Miscellany, Mangalore.
The Kumbakonam College Magazine.
The Magazine, St. Thomas' College, Trichur.
St. Joseph's College Magazine, Trichinopoly.
The Madras Law College Magazine.
The National College Magazine, Trichinopoly.
Hindu College Magazine, Masulipatam.
The Hindu Theological High School Magazine, Madras.
Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society, Bangalore.
K. R. High School Magazine, Muttra-Vasart.
The Zamorin's College Magazine, Calicut.
The Government Brennen College Magazine, Tellicherry.
The Hindustan Review.
The Jaffna College Miscellany.
"The Old College".
The Holkar College Magazine.
Journal of the Malta University Literary Society.



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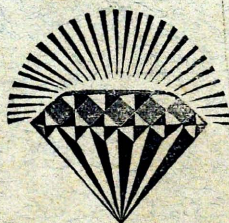
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