

VIPULANANDA



A LITERARY BIOGRAPHY

by

K. KANAPATHIPILLAI

— 1990 —

OTHER WORKS

By

K. KANAPATHIPILLAI

- ★ SON OF MAN
- ★ THIS BAFFLING EXISTENCE
- ★ CREATIVITY
- ★ JUST SO ESSAYS
- ★ ANIMAL BEHAVIOUR -
ANIMAL MIND - MIND OF MAN
- ★ OUR NEED IS HUMANITY
OUR NEED IS SUBLIMITY
- ★ கற்பின் கொழுந்து : கிரேக்க மரபு நாடகம்.
- ★ பொருளாதாரப் புவிமியல் - தமிழாக்கம்.
- ★ யடவேலை - பை கொட
- ★ VIPULANANDA

VIPULANANDA

A LITERARY BIOGRAPHY

by

K. KANAPATHIPILLAI

B. A., F. R. G. S., Dip. Geo. (Lond.)

— 1990 —

ST. JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC PRESS,
BATTICALOA.

— 000 —

VIPULANANDA

a
Literary Biography
and
APPRECIATION

Here in this booklet,

More an excerpt than a book, there lurk all the poetic embellishments :-

- beauty of diction,
- the swing and the lilt and the cadence,
- the sublimity, the strength, and the elegance,
- the nobility of form,
- the melody, the harmony, and the simplicity,
- the measure, the rhythm, and the balance,
- the thought force, and thought content, and imagery, and vision, and all and sundry artifacts that one may care to cull, and perceive, and enjoy, and appreciate in any supreme work of literary art.

The 'Yaāl Nōol' with its, admirable prefatorial piece, is, at one and the same time, history, poetry, revelation. It has a distinctive quality, beauty and form of its own. It reveals the heart throb of a distinct cultural group that lived some two thousand years before.

It mirrors not only its feelings and passions and aspirations, but also its intellectual attainments, and splendour.

In short, it tells the divine tale of a people in noble verse and Mathematical formulae. Hence it is bound to endure for ever and ever.

Read it and enjoy its lofty theme. The mathematics of it need not worry you. Hence don't be annoyed by it.

52, Nalliah Road,
Batticaloa.

K. Kanapathipillai.

(1)

THE ENVIRONMENT

I HAVE in mind a seaboard — not an imaginary one — as solid and as hard as a vast slab of granite; and as crisp, crunching, and sinking as a mica sand strewn sea-beach. Why has Nature created and fashioned this coastline of marsh and sandbanks, dunes and headlands, jutting out, here and there, at random, into the sea; and Mangrove swamps and Typha quagmires? And why has the Master Designer put into it a couple or more races of mankind with mercurial temperaments and messy ways? Nature must have been in a crazy mood when she helped shore up this marsh and lagoon, and these 'kalappuwas' and 'liwayas'. The motive so sinister!

And why put the woolly racks on the sky, the curling surf on the bays: so frothy and so spumy?: puking and squirting, and spitting and frothing and lashing on the exposed, naked rocks and bluffs and headlands with such terrific force and terrifying roar; and the **breath of life** so haphazardly blown into the hellbent men and women? In their unending stress and effort — their elan: style of life — they struggle to eke a mean, low, wretched existence, picking their grub and 'poochies' and worms from the mud and the ooze and the clay and the sand — an altogether forlorn milieu.

There is a folk song redolent of their yearning and craving. And thus it runs :-

பள்ளிச்சி பள்ளன் எங்கடி போனான் ?
 பள்ளம் பார்த்துப் பயிரேற்றப் போனான்.
 முள்ளிப் பூப்போல முப்பட்டுச் சால்வையும்
 மூலை சாய்ந்த கடகமுங் கொண்டு,
 தள்ளித் தள்ளியே சாய்ந்த நடைகளும்
 சாடையும் பல கேலியும் பேசி, —
 கொட்டப் போனான் குழலுதப் போனான்
 கோழிக் கூட்டுக்கு மண்வைக்கப் போனான்
 வட்டுக்காய் போல முட்டை வயிறனை
 வாவடா வென்று கூப்பிடப் போனான். —
 காலத்தாலே பாலுங் கறந்து
 கமுகம் பூப்போல் அரிசியும் குத்தி
 காலத்தாலே காய்ச்சிய பால்க் கஞ்சி
 காலாலே ஏற்றிப் போனான் காண்,
 ஆண்டே!

Note 'the fierce unpadded existence' of the rural folk.

The entire dune often narrow, more often sprawling and wide, is covered with crawling, sneaking human forms — more shadows than forms — no better than the shore crabs and the sand-hoppers and peewits that abound — Tamils and Muslims, and Sinhalese and the remnants of Portuguese navigators and traders — the Farangies —, all shaken up by the same emotions and feelings and passions that have been ennobling, more often depressing humanity : whatever its colour, whatever its form and tempo on all the sea-beaches of the world. The Eastern seaboard is, in a manner, a microcosm of the whole world — mixed emotions spilling over as on the Miami beach.

There is a peculiar psychology of the dune that governs and predominates. And one has to live and see and read into the vibrant atmosphere; and the question poses: Why this stupid drive? Why this senseless struggle? Why this stress? Why and wherefore this strain? this

stupid rivalry? Why all this wailing, and weeping, whimpering and war whoop? Why this gnashing of teeth, this hitting of lips; why this angry frown and the rage and the growl? The terror that lurks in, and has furrowed every lineament of these peoples — the blackguards and rogues that have in all certainty deceived themselves? They have hoodwinked themselves. They have been misled into the deepest depths of error and horror. The stark mad communalists that they are: they are sunk in 'primitive error' — terrible and horrendous in form and in deed Teeth and claws, reeking red!

Aren't we aware of this tremendous truth? There is a poetic realism in the life and ways of these people. Can we see it? Can we grasp it? Grip it by its slimy tail? Hope we can. We look into that grand phenomenon of nature: the evolution of the human mind: though eely and slippery; the reward will be truly rewarding. And, so, why don't we probe the problem in all true earnest? Circumspectly! Why have we failed to work our ways into the workings of its inmost recesses? This is the native attitude. —

அவன்: கண்டலடிக்க் கரிமுகச் செத்தல்
 பெண்டுகளுக்காகாது.

அவள்: ஆண்டு கார்த்திகைக்கு சுட்ட பலகாரம்
 ஆண்டகைக்கு ஆகாது.

Note the instinctive rivalry bred in the home.

Here the seasons come, and go. The rain comes often in torrential downpours; the drought comes: often and often parched-lipped and dried-throated; the squall and whirl and cyclone: all come galore never in an orderly way — the sun and the shower, the shine and the shimmer and the dew! — they all come helter skelter! Like unto the weather, man has been born and bred in slime and mud and mire: his senses so dull, his sensations and feelings and passions so voluptuous, so rich in satanic greed and calibanistic propensities: so flimsy so marasmic.

so masochistic in feeling, flimsy in form; so fickle in thought: more a reed than a deep-rooted 'palu' tree.

Here, in this swampy, slimy, sandy paradise has the 'Maker of all' created man: brought him into existence: man and woman: 'he for God, and she for God in him.'

Here has man come: fashioned and created an ambience of his own. He has been brought to enjoy life: given all the pleasures that nature could assemble and give. But yet he erred, he fell, and she too. And what a fall was there my countrymen! Down, down, down he fell; he descended into the deepest depth of perdition: into Titanic glooms! He was despondent, and she was steeped in despair. Perdition was so very near. So it would seem. A poetic figure! Endless fall! — Satanic and cruel and crucial; and its final crunch, so bitter, so painful: brim-full of heart-rending pangs and anguish: soul-tearing longings and cravings and agonizing trends. **An altogether mythical concept.**

Here I resort to Conrad's portrayal of man's — every-man's — inevitable fall. 'For suffering is the lot of man but not invincible failure or worthless despair which is without end — suffering the mark of manhood, which bears within its pain a hope of felicity: endless joy. Like a jewel set in iron.'

Yes, sure and certain, there is bound to be 'a hope of felicity.' — An allegory!

What is this dog doing here? it may be asked of me. The answer is ready at hand. 'I belong to this soil: I've been born here, bred here: Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.' And 'this heart, all evil shed away,

A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts' that the soil has
given:
'Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day'
dreamt on the tank ridge of 'Sandhan Kerney.'
'And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness, In
hearts at peace, under' an 'East Coast' heaven. —

Pardon me: Have I mangled the poet sufficiently?
It is not my intention to do so. Far from it.

I have lived here for some years — long, long years:
four score and more. That's the claim: I am a son of
the soil: a justifiable claim: I belong to here: my
home, my fatherland. For generations we have been here.

So, why not grant me the liberty to comment on
things and events, essentially my own? Deny me not at
least that happiness, that pleasure, that joy, that freedom
to call it: 'This is my own, my native land.' I have
begotten my psychological conceptions of it; my relation-
ships: tightknit; closely bonded. I am of this soil: though
it may be muddy and miry, boggy and swampy: more
often sand! sand! sand! interminable sand. I have borne
ample testimony to my native, inherent trends: my prone-
ness to hug to the clod that bore me and fed me and
nourished me. You might say it is too mean a self-drafted
testament: a blowing of one's own trumpet. Let them say,
what they say. I am what essentially I am. I am a son
of the soil: true to the marrow. So is Vip-. The mud
stinks in my blood: in his too. We have been tillers of
the soil for centuries: Adham Kakka, Punchi appu, Kanda
Podi. Greed and love of pelf cannot sunder us: though
guns may come and rocket-launchers may boom — we shall
go on for ever and sing the merry rhyme: 'Men may
come and men may go, but we go on for ever.' The
words may vanish, yet the immortal rhythm that resides in
the heart shall persist. I love to share and eat my bolus
of Karavahu rice with them all.

THE CHALLENGE

AND NOW SHOULDN'T I, AND HAVEN'T I
the inalienable right to probe into the psychology, the
tragedy and humour of a people with whom Vip- has had
an intimate connection: with whom I have lived and
moved and had my being? Haven't I and Vip- eaten
with them, enjoyed with them, suffered with them, shared

with them their feelings, their passions, their thoughts; walked their ways, swum their seas, forded their rivers, mudded their paddy fields, sowed the swamp rice, sat in their watch huts, scared and shooed away the teals and parakeets, harvested their corn? I am as much and as plain a mud lark as they are. I am one of their kind; one of their race. I have fished with the Sinhala and Muslim fishermen during the cuttle fish season; boarded and sailed their frail fishing (barks) boats: my body redolent of the fish of the broad BAY, and of the mud of the sprawling mud flats, sand bars and sand spits that skirted the BAY, the lagoons, the 'Kalappuvas' and 'upparus' and 'liwayas'. I am flesh of the flesh, bone of the bone, blood of the blood — to wit flesh and blood — with every one of them.

ஏழை என்பது அடிமை என்பது
எவருமில்லை சாதியில்,
இழிவு கொண்ட மாந்தர் என்போர் —
(இங்கு எவரும்) இல்லையே.' —

I have inherited the same virtues, the same sins of the flesh as they. I have inhering in me both heaven and hell.

And, so, I have a bounden duty to think deeply of the several problems that have chosen to bristle; to sprout, to grow and flourish in this benighted shore. I am qualified to be a son of the soil, a brother among brothers, a youth belonging to the family hearth and home: good enough to stretch out both his arms and warm them in the fire, and share with them the masculinity of a robust, healthy and vigorous life with a sane, even-handed outlook and sense of justice.

They have lived together: Kariapper, Punchisingho, and Outschoorn and Kanthapodi. 'They have no proud dreams and no proud vain lusts. Often and often 'they are all downright funk and precaution.' — most of the time; their entire life — span was a blue funk. Yet, what a hilarious, laughter — provoking, joy — inspiring experience

of ancient times. The question is simple: the answer so very complicated and brimming over with conflicts and heartburns. Is it a symbolic faith that you want to be governed by, or a realistic faith? Think it over, and decide. Is it fiction or reality that you are chasing after? Are you prone to be governed by the philosophy of SYMBOLISM or the philosophy of REALISM? A dreamer or an awakened being?

Have we a clear, definite VISION of life: of the art of living? The other day while I was taking a stroll in the lawn of the Pillayar Temple in my home Town, my eyes alighted on a tiny hole in the ground about four m.m in diameter out of which there emerged a black ant about three m.m long and a m.m in thickness. It brought out of the hole a tiny pellet of earth no less than a m.m in diameter. It rushed out with the pellet, deposited it a couple or two c.m away from the hole, and rushed back into the hole. This very same work of digging a hole was being repeated by some four or five ants. I watched them at work. It was going on with clock-work regularity. No variation was noted in their activity. Repeat, repeat, repeat.

This was the conclusion I came to. They, whatever we might say, have a design, a purpose and a clearly defined vision. Call their behaviour by whatever name: Regimen inborn, inherent tendency, instinct impulsion etc.; the truth emerges: they have a VISION much more definite than we have.

Aren't we the descendants of the hardy settlers and tillers of the soil and the Thimilars and Mukkuwas who came here some five hundred years ago, found a virgin soil, cleared the jungle, tilled the soil and sowed and later harvested the paddy, the maize and the kurakkan. And haven't we the blood of the grand old, hardy men and women coursing in our veins, and pulsating in our arteries?

And shan't we raise up that noble pile — the symbolic edifice of: 'Law, order, Duty and restraint, Obedience and Discipline' to enable it to regain its ancient glory, its solidarity? Solidity of purpose? Hush! Why still 'talk over the waste of the ultimate slime; for, a new word runs between, whispering: Isn't there a need for such a unity? — a oneness: a whole?

'Your good is mine, my strength is yours.'

Don't I wake to greet you of a morning with an ever-lasting smile wreathing my lips; and a wide, wideawake bond of love, of friendship of fraternity and good-will to hold you in my embrace of cordiality? in my hug of compassion and love.

Shouldn't we see that our 'House stand together and the pillars do not fall?'

These are the dykes; there are the ridges our fore-fathers raised.

We have to heap up more earth like the ants and make them solider and reinforce them, firmer than ever before. It has been said of yore:

‘வரப்புயர நீர் உயரும்
நீர் உயர நெல் உயரும்
நெல் உயர குடி உயரும்
குடி உயரக் கேர்ன் உயர்வான்

Prosper you can; prosper you will!
And you must! —

Don't these lines bespeak the peace, the happiness and the harmony that shall prevail? Let us be free of the fear of the now, and the fear of the hereafter. We need bold thoughts to meet the world's thoughts. And, let us not be mealy-mouthed: We shall be outspoken and truthful. — firm of tongue, firm of mind, firm of heart.

(2)

THE PORTRAIT

Here is my candid opinion of THE PORTRAIT. I disclaim my portraiture of Vipulananda. In the first place it is far too inadequate. It is horrid. But yet, I don't have the courage, the strength of character to disclaim it; to disown it. I can't afford to dismiss it as utter rot. Heart of hearts, I feel, it is far too precious, far too valuable to be dispensed with; to be brushed aside as pure and simple bunkum. None so far has attempted it. Mine is truly a sordid attempt, and I couldn't have helped it. I am alone in the field; forlorn and almost forsaken. I flap my wings in vain it would seem, and, the air that I have displaced might fan you and make you feel, and think seriously of the hard task I have had on my hands. Now then I have done with it. Take it, or leave it.

I HAVE before me three photographs of Vipulananda. One of them was that of Vipulananda when he returned to Ceylon after he had been called to the Ramakrishna order of Monks. The other, taken much later, somewhere in 1950, when he was fully matured as a scholar; and the third of Myl — when he was recruited as a volunteer soldier of the Ceylon Light Infantry during the Great War of 1914 — 1918.

I examined them with great interest, with my weather eye open for feature lines that might tell a tale of the inner man, and help to paint a truer and completer portrait of the man. I was disastrously disappointed in my study of lineaments and feature lines. All the three photographs fell far short of my expectations. They failed to tell a tale of the real man in him.

I have seen him as young, and youthful Myl — Pundit Mylvagananar, Bachelor of Science of the University of London. My mother paid him a social call then, and had formed a genuine opinion of him. She said that he was a : நிறையப் படித்த பண்டிதர். My father held the opinion : கல்விமான்: பழுத்த தலை. And Sri La Sri P. Vythilinga Desigar and Kunchithamby Vadhyaar : his teachers : both acclaimed with one accord — ‘**he is a great son of the soil**: a truly rounded education he has acquired.’ His village folk : his kith and kin, his friends and admirers, one and all, without any exception, have said: Here, at last, is a **scholar of great eminence**. Rev. Fr. Bonnel had a penetrating insight into his capabilities and his erudition. I, in my own childish fancy, considered him an impossible adamant : far too hard to penetrate and go the whole hog unravelling the mystery : the what, the why and the wherefore of Vipulananda : the mystic and befuddling phenomenon. His personality was ensnaring and tantalizing, confusing and confounding. He cannot be fully perceived at one single sweep of one’s eyes. He is the most elusive, delusive and unaccommodating personality: personage. Our several judgements and estimates of him are piecemeal : a multicoloured, multifaceted, Florentine floral design. They are like unto the conclusions arrived at by the blind men who made their own opinions of the shape and form of the elephant. None of us has a completer and fuller judgement. He was richer by far than what we thought him to be. And most of us are that. Even an estimate of our own self falls far short of what it, in reality, is. **A diviner and sublimer dust inheres in all.** The extra ‘something more’ that we missed was the true MAN. Now, after nearly sixty years the task has devolved

upon me of casting his form and substance in the most adequate mould, and animating it with a breath. Can I do it? He is rind, pulp and core compounded. His rind is his outward; his feature lines, his veneer and lineaments. His core is his inward. His flesh and blood and tendons and ligaments, his pulp. What vast dimensions! What vast regions to explore. I beget the noble feelings of Hernando Cortes who climbing to the top of a mountain in Darien — Panama — saw the vast expanse of the Pacific stretching before him in a never-ending turquoise blue.

No one who has seen Vip — once, can forget his form. It is so clear, so definite, so very clearly defined.

The portrait — you can paint it. There he sits before you. You can see his form silhouetted against a mirror : dark, definitive and distinct. He reminds you of the solidity, the firmness, and adamant of a formless form — the lingam — that massive form that impinges irresistibly and forcibly on your perception. Substance, he has, but his form eludes. It is even illusory. It is massive ; it is stupendous. It is solid, symbolic of a clearly defined character. The bulk bluffs you.

And now the question is this : Is the portrait painter equal to the task? Let me catch Vip — in his home — his living room, his bed room and his library — all rolled into one. That is : SHIVAPURI — the home that he built and that he loved and called his home ; sweet home — his only possession on earth, his paradisaal retreat whither he repaired and found a haven: calm and peaceful and tranquil, in times of stress and strain.

Shivapuri still stands at Kalladi-Uppodai : a plain, square, low building, square-built, simple in structure, divested of any architectural pretensions. There is an eight foot wide verandah running round an interior courtyard about twenty feet square, adorned with a purple Nymphaea (செங்கழுநீர்) pond that has an arbour of Passifloras permanently redolent with a bewitching, embalming, sweet

odour. At the four corners of the courtyard were 'pandals' of enchanting Jasmynes and Queen of the Night. The verandah on the south has been enclosed and built in so as to form two rectangular cubicles each barely sixty square feet in area: the eastern one forming his store room. The one on the west was his study, his bed room and his library. It was a miniature library stocked with Tamil, English and Sanskrit classics, and some rare works in Science: mostly the treatises of Einstein, Max Planck, Alexander, Rhadhakrishnan, Das Gupta, Max Muller, Radhakrishna Iyer, Mahatma Gandhi, Vivekananda, Aldous Huxley, Christopher Isherwood and several other modern authors — belles lettres.

Vip — chose to read there; he chose to write there. There he could contemplate, and in his idle moments dream his dreams of a liberal and perfectly liberated, free society of casteless, creedless, 'raceless' human beings: plain as a pikestaff. He was somewhat the frequenter of Shivapuri and his cubicle: his tower of silence — rather his niche of tranquillity — where he read and thought and wrote and composed his masterpiece: The Prefatory Song-paeen - of his YĀL NŌŌL. From this retreat he burnt the midnight oil, and outwatched the heavenly orbs that night after night rose, sailed and set. From this cubicle of silence he could afford to dismiss any one — especially the unwanted, tormenting visitor who comes with ensnaring and worldly problems. He could do it with a plump — No.

Here he was secure from the annoyances of his relations, his countrymen and his friends. Here, he was plunged in idleness and liberty. He sought liberation here; for they were the certitudes of happiness. Here, he could obtain idleness, liberty and peace in abundance. His total concern was freedom from taunts and impediments and constraints of any sort: social, and political. And no one dare interrupt him in his cogitations and contemplations and triumphs — his literary triumphs and achievements.

His thoughts were often and often deep and ponderable and ponderous and resounded and reverberated like the

crack of a thunder clap, and they were designed, as it were, to completely floor you in your effort to spar his powerful punches. His arguments volleyed and thundered; every thrust told, and every point scored off. And what he dealt by way of argument was up to the knock. He was at the same time capable of making an elegant speech: soft, gentle, dripping honey-sweet. [வடிப்பிடமான பேச்சு]

Like unto a collosus he took a firm stance in his library: one foot rooted in the ancient classics, and the other sunk in the lore of the modern mathematicians, scientists and philosophers. His romanticism had a special smatter of its own. It was sound, sane and bright, tainted by a 'bakti' mode which he had begotten by dint of his constant contact with the classics. He was a scientist; his taste was that of an artist. Being seldom sunk in religious orthodoxy he held his own special and liberal views on men and matters and the ways of man-on life and its scarifying problems. Lost in his traditional tumble-down piddling notions of caste and creed and narrow orthodoxy, he often times found it mighty difficult to extricate himself from the thorns and hooks and prickles of entangled thinking. Yet having extricated himself from every one of the ensnaring circumstances, he was, sort of, qualifying himself to be a horse for a single harness; and so he had chalked out his own path and pursued his own course.

While he was in his little cubicle in SHIVAPURI he had to wage a constant war against two evil forces: mere pedantry and panditry on the one hand and stark ignorance and superstition on the other. He was between the devil and the deep sea. He was as it were placed between the philosopher and the theologian who were engaged in a disputation: Does God exist? 'The theologian said: 'the philosopher resembled a blind man in a dark room, looking for a black cat which wasn't there.'

The philosopher replied: 'That may be, but a theologian would have found it.' One wastes time seeking for answers for such silly questions. Vip — was harassed often and often by such silly interrogatories.

Vip—was par excellence a thinker and a scholar and a poet of rare attainments; and best of all a practical social reformer and mathematician. His entire life between his twentieth year and 55th year—35 years in all—was huddled with active thinking, and disciplined acting. He pursued every little fact about his environment, examined every turning point in his intellectual career most assiduously and meticulously. The mango and margosa trees merited his attention, and so did every motif of the Yāl-NŌOL. He was thus a man of his words and a man of deeds, which ranged from cooking food, planning lessons, delivering lectures to learned audiences, composing poems, thinking mathematically on the music of the Yāl, and writing. Managing and running schools and orphanages were only his step out activities. He lived in contemplation most of the time; he lived in his manifold deeds. The structure and form and the use of the Yāl occupied a good portion of the tether end of his life. His forbears were lords of the soil; and it was his wonted boast that digging and delving the soil was the noblest of professions. He was invariably full of noble thoughts and superabundance of feelings: more creative than otherwise. He used to say with pride சோழவழநாடு சோறுடைத்து-உழுதுண்டு வாழ்வதற்கு ஒப்பில்லை.

His mother was a devotee of Goddess Patini; his father had in him the making of a martinet. And the young gargantua was shaped and moulded by him. He had the burning desire to make of Myl—a scholar of rare excellence. And, so, he had plans to give his son the best of education available in normal circumstances in those distant days: the penultimate lap of the nineteenth century, and when H. C. Wells was struggling to obtain a London B. Sc. Degree, he secured one with great ease.

He had an amiable vanity for he was fully aware of the depth of the knowledge, that he bore. And, if at all he might be said to have erred, it was certainly not his fault but the fault of the great regard he cherished for learning. What did matter for him above all things was learning. He was educated in a fitting manner as it suited

his natural trends, inclinations and quality. In other words he was a born scholar: not a made one; and he sublimed a poet.

He spent the early years of his boyhood getting his lessons in the Wesleyan Mission English School at Kalmunai — his native town; and he had his secondary education attending the foremost Jesuit College in Batticaloa — St. Michael's College under the distinguished tutelage and wise guidance of Rev. Fr. Ferdinand Bonnel. — His sense of justice was estimable, but his humanity is more worthy. Later in his educational career, when he was attending the Teacher's course at the Normal Teachers' Training College and Technological Institute he had the opportunity of meeting Dr. Joseph. The Doctor inspired Vip—, and he admired his deep and original knowledge of mathematics and mathematical thinking. In Colombo, in the midst of some of the best teachers of science Myl—was in his elements; and imbibed of the right attitude to events: that of the acquisition of the scientific attitude towards life and its manysided problems. He was a generous, thinker, liberal in his attitudes. He had an inveterate hatred for fanatical and partisan and lopsided thinking. Few would have been his match in politeness, prudence and in wisdom. Even such a smashing debater and critic as Mr. A. Thavarajah found in him a formidable opponent. There were occasions when the masterly Shavian that Thava. was, floundered before him and was floored. It was no fall: only a friendly flout.

He was general manager of schools. This voluntary task never disturbed his leisurely ways, and seemed to have flattered his love for power—his Nietzschean urges. He was reasonably just and mild, more often moderate in every one of his dealings. He had, of course, his censures—mostly apparent—for some have dubbed him anti—this anti—that. Thus, he is said to have earned the acrimony of the other managers of schools. But he was never anti—christian, though he was bitterly opposed to proselytisation for he was of the opinion it ate into the vitals of the nation, and destroyed the national native spirit.

Besides his library—his living cubicle—he sought intellectual enjoyment and tussle in the company of the senators of the Colombo, Madras and Annamalai Universities, the scholars of the Madurai Tamil sangham, and of the Arya Dravida Basha Sangam of Jaffna. His accredited admirers were such eminent scholars as Dr. U. V. Swaminatha Iyer, V. P. Subramanya Mudaliyar, C. Rajagopalachariar, Dr. I. Jennings, Venkataswami Nadar, Pandithamani Kathiresan Chettiyar, S. Natesan, Pulavarmani E. Periyathambipillai, S. Ambalavaner, V. Nalliah, E. Rasiah, Dr. Sabapathy and several others. He had many admirers, friends and co-workers: well-wishers galore.

Books were his dearest companions that helped him to while away his lonely, weary moments. It was, as aforementioned, a small, but compact and precious collection of rare classics, histories, belles lettres, scientific treatises, mathematical works and philosophical works. They were well chosen, well preserved; and there they stood before him, in a neat, natty array: heroes all in their several fields—friends, well-trying, and guides, faithful and dependable. They cheer you, they comfort you in hours of despondency, of degradation, of loneliness and of sorrow; closely bonded friends, guides and companions. They can never fail you, they can seldom forsake you in your hours of need. They are your boon companions. And you cling to them, and they cling to you through thick and thin. They help ‘incarnate your thoughts.’

Voracious, wise, eclectic reader that he was, he had developed a discreet taste, wide and universal: expansive, somewhat desultory. He was never a slavish adherent to the opinions of others. Even if he borrowed the ideas of others he made them, he moulded them into his own. He had his own style—his characteristic mould. He reincarnated them. He wrote in a special style; he spoke in a richer, more luscious tone. His speech, his spoken word, his writing: all had a new mode; he gave them a new dress: all his own. Like Montaigne he tasted the pleasures of literature, and never glutted a wholesome

appetite.’ When he read he read avidly and took the matter in big bites, and masticated and gulped it down. And all these he did as his mood led him. He was guided by his feelings and propensities like unto a fawn, untethered and left free to roam and browse as his senses and taste led him. In consequence he had developed a wholesome taste and a keen appetite. He read such books as pleased his humour. He read with great ease; he read, he contemplated, he mulled over, he discussed, he held discourses, he commented—in short he appreciated. He read and enjoyed reading the great masters of art. He went on endlessly discoursing, clarifying knotty issues, disentangling problems and dismissing illogicalities; thus he sorted out the rational cores of the problems. He meditated and contemplated until the thought content had taken a native trend, and become an intuition. Then, in the final analysis, the clarified ideas, like clarified butter, became his own. And he stamped it with the imprint of originality; and perhaps he felt: this is my own, my native thought.

His criticisms, his interpretations, his comments, his commentaries, his exegeses were marked by a special stamp of subtle humour—நோக்கரிய நோக்கு—நுணுக்கரிய நுண்ணுணர்வு. Once commenting on the meaning of:—சங்கநிதி பதுமநிதி—he made his own comments perfectly original. This is what he said to Sri Rajaiyanar—a Tamil Pundit of rare merit and abstruse erudition. Vip—posed this question to Navaneetha Krishna Baratiyar; by way of elucidation of the meaning.

How many ‘கோடீஸ்’ poles, has a conch shell?

It has two poles: இரு கோடிகள்.

Now, how many poles or points has a conventional lotus flower?

Pause! Pause! Five angular protuberances: the petals.

How many poles?

Five. ஐந்து கோடிகள்.

So, is the meaning clear ?

Yes.

How ?

இரு கோடிகள் = சங்க நிதி

ஐந்து கோடிகள் = பதும நிதி

It is a mathematical conception : a pictorial representation. Some averred he was, when discoursing, far too domineering and schoolmasterly in his attitude.

Far from it. He was to all his students and listeners very, very sympathetic.

He had and he owed a special tender regard for learning. He never did study to earn money, to swell his purse to serve as an emblem of power. Queen Money had very little charm for him. There were times when stark penury stared him in the face. He hadn't sufficient means to run the 'ashrama' and 'Home' the following day. Yet he was in spirit and outlook, a millionaire. He thought big, he talked big, he contemplated suffused in a noble mood, when there weren't a few 'fanams' to buy a bottle of kerosene for his table lamp. And yet he felt a prince among men. He was constantly gay, brimming over and bursting out with uproarious laughter—never so grave, never so serious minded, neither was he flippant and flimflam, and frivolous. In consequence he had no defeats in life's encounters, for he seldom or never figured them out. And seldom was he dominated, snared, enslaved and heavily trammelled by the printed pages. He read books that served as his guide : both in health and sickness. He faced both penury and malicious visitations in a mood of equanimity. He was to all intents and purposes, even-minded.

The 'Anklet Episode' was constantly on his tongue. And from the moment he took up the theme and started reading it and contemplating upon it, armed with a tuning fork and Mr. S. Ambalavaner in constant attendance, he

sat and measured the mystical mathematical properties of the ancient YĀL. He was something, and he made something of everything he chanced upon.

The LAWS of Nature are yet profound and ponderable and ought to have an inestimable reputation. We have to obey them, every one of them—their anarchy and anarchical ways shall cease to be. The laws of the Prince are no less respectable. They are man-made. Yet they have their value ; their worth. They have been tried and tested, and, in the long run, found to be correct and useful, and faithful.

The 'Anklet Episode' was his classic : the theme of his research on the music of the Tamils of some two thousand years ago. A noble array of poets was mustered upon his shelves. He studied them ; he quoted from every one of the ancient Tamil classics—the 'Pathu Pattu', the 'Eddu Thokai', the Pathinen ki:l kanakku' with the greatest ease and facility. Among the moderns Subramanya Barathi occupied his total attention. Shelly and Keats and Rupert Brooke were his never-failing companions. Mathew Arnold's 'Sorab and Rustom', his 'The Forsaken Mermaid' and Tennyson's 'Ulysses'—held him in thrall. Milton's 'Paradise Lost' and Shakespeare's masterpieces became the themes of his 'Mathanga Chōōla Mani'—a work on the artistry of the Drama : the Tragedy and the Comedy : the first of its kind on 'A CRITICAL STUDY OF SHAKESPEARE'S DRAMATIC ART.'

His YĀL NŌŌL beguiled his tranquillity. It is to be frank, 'a conundrum of' literature : being neither a poem nor a research work on ancient Tamil Music and on the YĀL. It was to say the least a pilaff that suited his varied expansive taste : encompassing in its character. It has science in it ; it has art in it. It stirs, it informs, it excites. It is a discerning and informing piece of art. He sees, he creates ; he reincarnates. He is comprehensive and multifaceted. His interests are a multiteity. It informs

you, it impels you to dig and delve and go in quest of precious facts. Its preface piece is epic poetry of a very high order. It possesses the sterling qualities of 'Paradise Lost' — the Miltonic Grand style. The YĀL NOŌL Preface is poetical in form and attains a very high epic style. It is the outcome of clear intuition and candour. It is the expression of a deep impression. The main body of the book is a mathematical riddle and it makes a genuine attempt to probe into the technicalities of the structural form and function of the YĀL.

It would seem Vip — studied so that he may make a book. The YĀL - NOŌL was a by-product. It came his way. He read, he studied, he thought, he contemplated and then he put pen to paper, he scratched, and with some scratches of his pen he produced the marvel of a PREFACE — படுகம். He read and he wrote; he wrote and he read as his mood led him. He found himself with his theme. The Muse took the pen out of his hand and wrote for him. It might be said without exaggeration that as he wrote the inspiration was on him for his vision was as sharp and clear as that of an eagle winging into the ethereal blue — the height so high, the vision so clear.

The 'prefatorial piece' reveals a master craftsman, alone and unmatched in literature — in modern Tamil poetry. It might be said of him as of Montaigne: He 'spoke to paper as to the first man he met.' He had acquired an offhand art of writing. He put down his thoughts and promptings as they came, and as he chanced upon them, as they occurred to him. They just flapped their wings and came and soared and he had them at one swoop in his grasp. Once he had put them on paper he never corrected them. You could hear the scratching of his pen, and as if the paper would have said; 'Gently! gently! Master.' I feel it all; I know it: the vehemence and weight of your heavy musings'. If at all he attempted to correct what once he had penned, he merely scored; he altered to diversify it: to improve on it. He never effaced it. That was his way.

He composed every sentence with punctilious care. Every line of verse he composed held his full attention, in thrall. He composed in perfect faith. It was no shilly - shally work. It was in true faith a complete task — a triumph — the Muse being the task - master. He grew in spirit and dimensions, and his art grew, and the 'Preface' turned out to be a perfection in art — the art of a prude: a form of self expression.

When we read it, we cannot fail to discover in it, a singular familiarity which we would never have had with any other writer. He had made the YĀL, brought it back to life, made it speak; and the YĀL had made him. It was his creation. He had breathed a fresh breath into it: an elan: mysterious vital principle — elan vital. It had become an object of beauty; and none who has a sense of poetic taste can deny it. The preface — படுகம் — let alone the mathematical tables: so very ponderous and awe inspiring — was consubstantial to its author. It is admittedly a many-sided masterpiece of art. It is no common place criticism to say: 'he was all too conscious of the nobility of his art' when he composed the Prefatorial piece. This is the consensus of candid opinions.

His Life: A piece of art: noble, complete, and unstinted. He lived the life of a prince. Not a spendthrift: not too niggardly, not too stingy, not too miserly. He earned big, he spent big. He had everything gargantuan about him. Born in big times, he grew up a bigwig, amidst big surroundings, he had a big look, he thought big as if on a mountain; he felt big, and in consequence he earned a big name. Yet, he was artless, naive, unimposing, unostentatious — naivety was in his nature. Simple: was the word. Never did he obtrude in any circumstance. He sat at the last: but he was brought to the front and turned into a V. I. P.

In demeanour, in candour, he was a prince: a Roman senator. He dressed well draped in an imposing rich and pretentious toga; he preferred to wear a pair of patent

leather brown shoes. He had a selective, fastidious taste; had an eclectic appetite for the classical style of John Milton, Ilankoadigal, and the eminent Tamil commentators — Senavarayar, Ilampooranar and others.

It has been said: 'It is a rarer thing to discover a man than a continent.' It was true of Vip — What lurked in the inner depth of a man: what yearnings what longings, what urges, what cravings: it was far too hard to find. He was inaccessible to even a keen student of human nature. In this respect he was an egoist — a being with the self concealed in the deepest depth of its being. He wished to live his life to the fullest. He craved to have all the privileges that life was capable of providing. He had a mastery over self-knowledge. These are my needs; these are not — that was his way. Yet he was sympathetic and kindly towards the world of men — men of deeper urges, promptings, impulsions and craving: prud homme: good man and true. He claimed to know for certain whence he came, whither he was bound, what he ought to do, what he owed to himself, and what he owed to the others. Most men seldom have such clear notions of themselves and of the others: their multifarious outward facets, the inward multitude of phases of their personality. In other words: the what of them, the wherefore of them and their whereabouts — all were concealed.

Having a foreknowledge of himself he was quite certain of what he should do, his concern in human life, what his achievements ought to be, what his ends ought to be and what the means. His entire life was a big task: a noble one at that. He had come into the world to unravel the mystical significance of the YĀL, of the musical fugues of the ancient Tamil people who lived some two thousand years ago. The Anklet Episode had the secret of it hidden in twenty-five lines of the Arangetu Kathai. Very few, and in fact, no commentators had heretofore commented on the true significance, the meaning of the theme.

He did investigate; he did research on the abstruse theme, and he had achieved his goal almost free of any doubts and void of ambiguities and affectations. He is deemed, by some experts, to have hit the true mark.

Besides his true scientific attitude of mind, he was an introvert. He plunged into himself. He had an inward; he had an inner vision. His virtues, his vices, his merits and shortcomings were there before him in a crystal clear ethos: in his mind's eye. He knew that what he was doing was right was worthwhile one's search. He eschewed the wrong, though he had his share of both like unto any other human being placed in similar circumstances.

He was essentially human: muscles, tendons, nerves, bones, feelings: basic and otherwise, thoughts and notions — perceptions of a sort, understanding and what not! Thought was his preponderant quality. He knew how to relate and correlate events; to put a thought upon a thought. His inward was preponderant, being immensely bigger than his outward. He was orderly in his ways, and he paid much attention to the propriety of dress; for the attire bespoke the man. It revealed his inner self. So he dressed to suit the occasion.

We are bound to pierce below his surface and look for the true man of letters and poet in him. We have to 'anatomize his body and spirit'. 'Tomorrow he will peradventure be other than what he is today.'

He was religiously inclined: his mother being steeped in the cult of Goddess Patini even to superstition. Silapathikaram: the Anklet Episode, was his gospel of the sakti cult. I am myself no cultist of any sort; but, being a Nature worshipper I esteem his bakti — devotion in respect of Pattini — a Sakti cult.

Vip had a unique intellect — the product of a unique education, which his father had planned for him. His education was a gift. It came his way — he didn't earn it. He was lusty, healthy and blithe and cheerful,

but for a constitutional ill-health: high blood pressure and the consequent paralytic stroke that struck him like unto a thunder clap at the age of fifty five, and completely floored him. And thus he met his end. Often and often he was jovial; often times he was moody, and melancholy, and in a depressed condition of mind. Until the very close of his life his mental health was perfect and in full trim — he was smart and alert. He could cast up a full twelve months' accounts of a school and hostel and orphanage in a single night, assisted by his able lieutenants Mr. V. Murugupillai and Manikkam. Seeni Master (Swami Natarajananda) was always with him, and succeeded him as the General Manager of Schools. Rev. Fr. Bonnel was par excellence his spiritual mentor. His Head Masters and school masters formed a formidable array of willing and devoted workers. All of them in one accord laboured hard, in the field of education as planned, motivated and conducted by the Ramakrishna Mission. On festive and state occasions, like for instance the visit of his Excellency the Governor of Ceylon, he carried himself with due dignity and decorum and conducted himself, and spoke with measured accent and articulated solemnity and gravity like a prince — much more dignified than a minister of state. By and large he was a collosus, and he strode, as it were, the earth like a collosus. On such occasions he was a Triton among the minnows — நெத்தெலிப் பாட்டத்தில் சுருவினைப்போல — பெருநடை. When he was in full kit: in his toga and Roman foot-wear he resembled Vallabai Patel, the iron man of India. In form and expression his semblance was that of Hon. Sir Srinivasa Sastri. In his school administration and discipline he was no more no less than Hon. Sir C. P. Ramasamy Iyer. In philosophical disquisitions and discourses he was an equal to Sir S. Radhakrishnan; in astuteness and logical thinking he was C. Rajagopalachariyar himself; in his profound and thorough knowledge of the ancient Tamil Sangam works he came very near to Doctor U. V. Swaminatha Iyer, in poetic talent and artistry and Roman dignity and virtue he was master of himself. There was none to equal him. His mathematical knowledge and stored

up information came up to the upper limits of Radhakrishna Iyer and his admired mentor and text book writer Gowri Sankardi.

In normal life, placed in normal circumstances, he was as meek, humble and simple as a child. Some misguided parents who had spoilt children — mostly impossibles — had a mistaken notion that he could work wonders; work miracles by transforming, nay transmuting and transfiguring their spoilt, sophisticated 'cases' into normal intelligent beings. Even Brahma the creative spirit couldn't have cracked such hard nuts. How can a lesser being perform such a herculean task? Can Vip-bring about a complete metamorphosis? Only creative Nature is capable of performing and bringing about such a change: working such a mirabile dictu-wonder of wonders.

He was frank and open and outspoken in the matter of expression of opinions. As he advanced in years, past his fortieth year, his candour bloomed forth: his virtue: his strong point was his imponderable silence and calmness: his Nestorian qualities. In debates and disquisitions he never lost his balance of judgement even when placed in the most turbulent and eruptive of circumstances. He was as calm and contained as a graven image — not a lineament bespoke any emotional change in his smooth carven form. Should he chance to fight a duel or engage in a joust of argumentation he held to his own point, maintained it, and might be said to have stuck to his gun tenaciously. His mood, often complacent and kindly and full of pity, flowed through his eyes in the same way as a kindly feeling flows through the tail of a dog.

A unique intelligence needs be shaped by a unique education. And a unique idea occurred to Headman Samithamby, his father; and he sought to provide the right type of education to his energetic and intelligent Gargantua with his limited resources. He sought for the right type of teachers among the available wisecres

Pornocrateses, of his days, first in his native village, then in his native town — Kalmunai — then in his provincial capital, Batticaloa ; and then in Jaffna and Colombo. Even South India was not too far to explore. Men with a sound knowledge of Tamil Literature and Grammar, Mathematics and Science : Kunchithamby Vāthiyar, Vythilinga Desigar, Rev. Fr. Bonnel, Dr. Joseph offered the much-needed aid, and wise direction and governance. 'We have yet to travel a long way on the road to the proper study of mankind. 'The proper study of mankind is man.' These ideas occurred to the father of Myl — And there was bred in the son an innate love of liberty — of liberal thinking. His contacts — even his boyhood contacts — were the wise men and men of prudence of the community. He had an idea of a well organized community, that ought to grow up in a liberal ethos void of all social : caste, religious and racial barriers and hindrances, and handicaps. The Tamil Pundits and scholars were sadly lacking in the liberal type of Education, being caste ridden, creed oriented, and narrowly prejudiced and superstitious. In a special sense they are fundamentalists. Hard-boiled orthodoxy governed and guided all their actions, all their behaviour patterns. All virtues — but not elastic enough to suit the times. The thought occurred to Vip—in the form of a question : what, in fact, is a human conclave or community that sprouted, took firm root in a rural mores ? Here was a notion that fully beguiled his attention, and occupied a cherished spot in the focus of his attention. His sympathies grew, his outlook widened, became expansive, embraced the entire human race : not narrow sectarianism, and moribund racial and caste and religious concerns and interests. He had love and sympathy and a deep concern for each and every member of the human family.

His habits were mostly benign, and productive of the good and useful — They were highly productive of good ends and were as such highly pragmatic. He seldom stunted the pleasures of either mind or body. He smoked cigarettes once in a blue moon. He chewed betel and nuts when he was in an enjoyable jovial and leisurely mood. He found

unending satisfaction in being free and idly lolling or roving. When he chewed betel and nuts he eschewed tobacco. Experience, he valued above all. He borrowed knowledge just as a miser borrowed money and dispensed it in a niggardly way. An avowed classisist, and a sworn lover of the classics both of ancient Greece and of Tamil Nadu, he was never the adviser of hack literature : the chap-books and ballads. He disavowed all bad literature. He had an affected, full-toned, guttural South Indian intonation in his manner of speaking. But scholarly tall talk was his natural tone : deep-chested, guttural, and throaty, and affected : it tended to be grave like the gurgle and babble of a swiftly flowing, and tumbling highland spring. He was a keen lover of a reputable diction carefully chosen and husbanded. The right word in the right place : the one word for the one idea. He was master of a chic prose style : terse yet floristic and adequately embellished, with a sweet cadence : a lilt and a gentle motion. And phrases and clauses came piling in an unending train, rippling, roaring and booming like an ocean breaker crashing against perpendicular coastal cliffs.

Being a respecter of reputable traditions he was a believer in dignity, pomp, genuinely deserving, well-merited fanfare and ceremonial events and rituals. Impartial in his judgements, fair in his conclusions he disapproved of whatever went against the traditional ways of a people : especially extraneous pressurising customs, manners and beliefs. He was at the same time very tolerant of new notions and welcomed new ideas and progressive thought contents. He loved to read and discuss G. B. Shaw's plays and prefaces : 'Heartbreak House', 'Back to Methusella', 'Saint Joan', Aldous Huxley's 'Ends and Means' and Bertrand Russell's 'Philosophy of Mathematic's'. He relished the views expressed by Shaw in his : 'The Black Girl who went in search of God'. At the same time he read Alexander, and approved of the physical culture — 'My System' — of Muller. Thus he gave the highest respect to the learned whether they be of the East or of the West. He abhorred Oriental hypocrisy and cruelty and the far too flippant and frivolous ways of the Occident. He paid

the highest regard to Dr. Ivor Jennings and his views, and pays regard to his ability to administer and manage universities.

Perfect in friendships, he had his friends well-trying, and he clung to them tenaciously. He chose them circum-spectly; and having chosen them he reposed immense faith in their sincerity and candour, and went with them through thick and thin. He was very loyal to the ruling group — the state — to the point of abject adherence to its policy, but he was no chauvinist: cringing abjectly to it and adoring it. He acquired and kept friends, like a true lover his beloved partner, forgetting all flaws, and pardoning all sins of commission and of omission. Wherever necessary — as in the cases of Arumuganavalar and Pandithamani Kathiresan Chettiyar — he never stinted to pay glorious tributes to their profound learning. He adored to a point of high adulation Sethupathy Manner — a prince of high ranking generosity and patronage. His opinion of Raja Annamalai Chettiyar is all praise — just and reasonable. He was perhaps one of the few topping philanthropists of very high esteem: an eminent lover of university Education and of Carnatic Music. Vip—'s admirers and colleagues and co-workers in the cause of liberal learning and education and erudition were far too varied and too many to mention. He forgave, overlooked the ignorance and inefficiency of the raw, fresh abecedarians — beginners — in their studies with far too much charity and generosity. He forgave their faults and forgot their flaws not seven times, but seventy seven times or even more. He was a sworn companion, and a friend in need — let alone being a mentor — to every one of his pupils! Thomis, Majeed, Dickie, Galagoda, Rosairo, Thajudeen, Rajagopal, Sundaramoorthy and others. They helped form his grand cosmopolitan crowd — his closely bonded family — democratically organized.

He was no mean lover of spirituality. His esteem and regard for Sithanai kutty of his native village — he hails from nowhere —, for Yoga Swamigal of Jaffna, for Thiruvannamalai Adigal, — Ramana —, his mentor and guru Sri Ramakrishna was limitless. He cherished a very high

regard for every one them. Vivekananda, he considered the greatest social reformer, patriot and savant of the nineteenth century like Ekhart and Swedenburg — western sadhus of a very high order — mystics par excellence. Brother Lawrence was his example of a loving and sincere devotee. Friar Damien and St. Francis: true lovers of mankind. These including Sakiamuni were the knowing, illumined or Bodhi type of souls. He admired Kabir and Tagore.

Apt as he was in his illustrations, citations, and quotable quotes; he cited the verse: தவளமால்வரை... etc.' in his lecture on his pilgrimage to Mt. Kailash and commenting on it, he brought before the eyes of his devotees an ineffable, ineffaceable picture of Mt. Kailash. The audience shed tears of joy as though they were transported to the Himalayas and were assembled in the wide icy cold corridors: the terrace that ran round the foot of Mt. Kailash — that stood symbolizing the permanency of the 'cosmic soul'. He was swift and subtle and cutting and witty in his repartees. Even learned pundits quaked to stand before him and face him in a debate or in maintaining an argument. His humour served 'to lit up the dull corner of an argument.'

Should you chance to travel by train between Ceylon and Madras in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s you would have met an ochre-robed Sadhu frequently on the move. That was Vip—. And when he travelled he had his wits sharpened, his sense of humour sobered, his ways cut and dried: fixed habits, fixed conversation, selected words and close-fisted spending. In his own, his native land, he was a familiar, singular personage — much respected, deeply honoured, almost to the point of adoration. He differed from everyone of his countrymen — especially the village folk. They lionized him and he spurned them not and rated them innocent by reason of their ignorance: their commonplace, self-regarding, self-serving ways, their undiminishing lethargy, their squalor and their sordid demeanours. He cherished a special and sympathetic and kind-hearted regard for his countrymen, though he had an

abhorrence for their crude, uncultured, peculiar ways and the low, mean way by which they addressed each other with a characteristic drawl in their intonation, often ending in a throaty 'ka'. He deplored their dull stay-at-home habits, their absence of a clear vision in life: mostly lethargic and unenterprising and dry-as-dust dull conversation, exclusively bald, narrowly provincial, 'garbage' diction. The drawl in their tone was suggestive of a lack of vision in their attitudes and a staking pessimism in their lack of aspirations, and in the frequent use of obscene words: far too racy bordering on bawdiness. In their heated discussions there prevailed a smattering of bawdy-house indecency. Hearing it, even a Sir John Falstaff or a Long John Silver would have blanched and shuddered, and gone out of their breath. His village folk were deprived of outer contacts, continental touches, and model stylistic behaviour. Whatever contacts they have had with the north were mean and dirty: devious; all dupery and dud. They were far too snared and duped. They felt like fish out of water when they sojourned in foreign lands or when they got out of their rural surroundings. They suffered from an inferiority feeling. Theirs is the story of the country mouse that took an abode in the town, and in consequence suffered untold hardships.

When they happen to prolong their stay in the midst of the town rabble they get heavily shotten with the burden of chance visitors in the town. They were the parasitising casual visitors — the sponging and sucking horde — the 'வந்தான் வரத்தான்'.

He was very squeamish as regards the selection of the right kind of food. His food changed with the sky overhead. In Bengal the main dish was sweet curd, mashed potato, 'chappathi' and leafy vegetables. In Tamil Nadu he had a varied diet of beans, 'subje', curd, toasted bread, rice, 'payasam' and a variety of fruits. In Ceylon he enjoyed the delicious buffalo-milk curd, samba rice, tube beans, sambar, dhosai, Idli. He had an eglatarian taste that varied between the bitter-sweet of 'திராய்' and the

aquechychy mash sweet of kolicoot bananas. Despite the immense care he took in the selection of his diet, he suffered occasionally from constipation and he had to resort to the use of an enema syringe to have an easy and smooth motion of his bowels. His weak point was his tummy; his strong point was his brain. He shuttlecocked between the two and his cravings, feelings and thoughts helped to prop up his poetic talent. He was a man of varied tastes, varied activities that kept him busy as a bee by day and by night.

In writing this account, what have I done? I have just followed his example. I hold the pen and I follow it. And it goes and moves and scribbles and scratches the paper like a broody hen just let out to pick the grains of maize. My mood is on me. It dictates, and I write. These are but mere rambling, desultory thoughts that come my way as my fancy leads me, and takes me.

It was said of Vip—that when he travelled, things came his way, thoughts came his way, episodes came his way. He encountered adventures; inspiration dawned on him. He was enthralled and ensnared by it. And he took his pen and he wrote motivated by the deep-seated promptings of his inner self. His subconscious self led him, guided him; and he went on scratching and scribbling criss-cross. All was in a mess; but he could decipher it even at a distant future occasion. They were his mental traces — his engrams — that guided him to compose the picturesque many-sided masterpiece: the Prefatorial Piece: பாயிரம் of the YAL-NOOL.

Once in the 1930 — that is how it is recorded in my memory — it was a full moon night when Vip—in the company of Pulavarmani E. Periyathambipillai, Messrs S. Ambalavaner, V. Nalliah, Pandit S. Poopalapillai and the writer hired a boat and went sailing on the bosom of the Batticaloa Lagoon somewhere half way between the Elephant Rock and the Dutch Fort. The moon was half way up in the sky, the stars were eclipsed. The moon beams were so very powerful that even the Sirius on the

Orion could not be easily visible. A thin haze hung on the distant Bay, and we could see it palpably moving, gliding over the Dutch Bar almost imperceptibly and insensibly. A gentle night breeze wafted it into the lagoon as we went sailing in the direction of the Mamanga Pillayar Temple — ஜங்கரன் கோவில்.

Perfect silence prevailed. **The motif and the mood** was this :

ஆரூயன் வெள்ளி அருகளவு போகும்டும்,
காத்திருந்தேன் என்று எந்தன் கதவு நிலை
சாட்சி சொல்லும் — Folk song.

The barking of dogs, the lowing of calves, the tinkling of the bells on the necks of the calves, even the human voices, and gentle serenades of Portuguese lovers had died down. A solemn silence held sway. The boat cast anchor. And we all listened intently. There came surfacing from the oozy depth of the lagoon some musical notes, not unlike the notes that issue, thrummed on a Japanese Mandolin. The Sadhu poet listened in rapt attention. The idea of composing a 'prefatory piece' for the proposed YĀL research paper came to him irresistibly ; and it was insistent. In fact the opening lines : நீல வானிலே, நிலவு வீசவே! issued from his vibrant lips — thick, full up and voluptuous. The idea in its incipience came to Vip —. And the YĀL NŪŌL was born.

He culled the inspirations one after one. The ideas came crowding. Vellaivaranar came into the scene. Vip-collected the facts, collated the thoughts ; but he didn't care to sort them out. Otherwise why should he put so much dull, drab, abstruse mathematical thinking into the otherwise inspiring theme of the Mermaids — the seven musical notes commencing with கைக்கிளை. Vip — was a born voyager ; and when he sojourned he never posed in his research thesis : never paused to ask the why and whither he was bound. He strayed from poetic form into a complicated intriguing mathematical inquiry, and sub-consciously entered the world of the physical properties of the vibrant notes born of the strings of the YĀL. It

would seem he got lost in a maze of equations and problems : tones and tonic effects — tonic sol-fa. Vip-had begotten an untiring, admirable, persistent attitude of mind constantly on the alert, somewhat sceptical and critical.

He granted every man the right to hold his own opinion. So he wouldn't brook any act of violence on whatever pretence — such acts of violence as disturbing, subverting and disrupting a person's religious faith. He put it down as the greatest crime ever wrought by man on man. In a world where one is certain of one thing, and that is the uncertainty whereby events change and change and constantly change, why worry about dogmas, doctrines and āgamic codes? Take them as they come your way, disengage yourself from them should you tire of them and not need them and their service. That is the best policy. You seek, and you shall find it. 'Truth and falsehood,' says Montaigne, 'have the same visage, the same port, taste, proceedings. We behold them with the same eye.'

The world appears uncertain ; it appears illusory. Man is a botched, bungled and parti-coloured piece of art. We make the world good ; we make it bad just as we desire to : dappled grey, hectic red or gloomy and dusky. We view it as though we do so through a kaleidoscope, and we get variegated pictures of it.

The world — the physical set up — is, in its essence, matter, which is indifferent and neutral. Not that life is good or bad, but there dwell good and bad in life, just as we make them. All troubles emanate from the human brain. They enter the world by way of the brain of man. They can be converted into blessings should we so desire. The world is ours ; our own : we make it or mar it. We create it after our heart's desire. And these words from Macbeth are significant. 'There is nothing good or bad but thinking makes it so. If you have lived a single day you have lived through all days ; and you have lived through eternity.' In a single moment there resides eternity. Life is, as it were, a dream, and we have to live through it. The world is in a sense our fantasy : 'māya.'

There is no finality in existence. All things change. There is no end to change. Permanency is no other than change. In change there dwells permanency. Permanency is an illusion. It is illusory ; it deludes. It is the mind of man that does so. Nature is changing. Even the so called LAWS of NATURE change. All things are caught in the whirligig of time. Nature doth devour all as time marches on. All things are born in time ; all things are devoured by time. This is symbolized by KĀLI. — a metaphoric representation of Time. Kāli is symbolic of a permanency in change — incessant change.

Hence : Live rationally, understandingly, impartially, meaningfully. It may be arduous to live neutrally ; unbiased ; yet you have to live with great ardour and zest. Time and space — Time runs fast : whither ? We know not ; and the 'wrath of God hangs over our heads.' Change ! Change ! Don't we ascribe our ills to the Divinity ? Can we discern the forces of nature ? Being entangled in them, how can we ? Can we perceive the purpose of the Divine (Nature) ? When the epidemic is upon a people we see in it **the wrath of the Divinity** : an unfair judgement.

Art itself is creation. It plays the second fiddle to Nature : to the eternal change in the universe.

With the tuning fork Vip-sat and measured the change. He felt deeply that he had a personal obligation to the Prince and to the Society to which he belonged. While he worshipped at the altar of Art he never flouted the achievements of Science.

He had his greatest regard for Albert Einstein and Max Planck — the Quantum Theory of the latter and the Relativity Theory of the former. He esteemed them the greatest of Modern Seers — Rishis unsurpassed, and unsurpassable.

Pleasure is mankind's chief concern. It is the hedonist doctrine. And today it holds good in all walks of life especially in the western world. Vip — says : Yes

to this philosophical approach to life. Seek your legitimate share of pleasurable feeling in life's passage through the world. You find your share of it in both the Sciences and the Arts.

He laughed uproariously a good part of his life ; and that blatantly in the company of his boon companions : Mr. E. Rasiah, V. Nalliah, S. Ambalavaner, Dr. Sabapathy, District Judge Vythilingam. When he had matter for laughter he laughed and shared the laughter with his friends and visitors. He wasn't niggardly in this regard. When weighed down and depressed in spirit even on very sad occasions such as the passing away of his beloved nephew — O. Kulandavadi. He remained perfectly silent, bore the cross all by himself, and shed not a tear.

His unshakeable faith was that if a man were to be wise he must be full of joy. He loved the age of the prime of life, of youthfulness and delight. He was a fully matured man at the age of forty : matured, prudent and brim-full of youthful wisdom. Forty was the age when in normal circumstances maturity commenced, and it went on mellowing till one reached the ripe age of four score years and a little more. In other words wisdom and prudence dawned at the age of forty, and ripened into a fully mellowed 'sweetness and light' at eighty. He disdained the truth about death. The notion of death irked him. He shuddered to know about the inevitable natural change ; and once it came nigh he was fully prepared to face it with fortitude and composure.

He might have been influenced by the view that death was a light infliction, though at a distance it appeared to be formidable. The thing is this. One has to learn to die in a state of perfect peace and tranquillity. And once one has fully comprehended this view of death one need not be a slave of death. Says Montaigne : 'We care so much for life that we continue to care for death.' It annoys us, it frightens us. We have to dismiss it with : Let Death be. Leave it alone. Don't annoy Death, even if Death annoys you. That is a wise saying. It is the doctor

and the curate that make Death appear far more formidable and terrible. Vip — would have loved to confront Death when he was enjoying his most marvellous literary piece, and in the vigour of life.

His STYLE : His poetry is typically classical. He clung to the grand style of Milton and that of Elanogadical. His prose was far too heavy with lengthy, long — winded meandering periods. His vocabulary, his diction — both poetic and prose — was far too cumbersome, heavily laden with a classical trend. When he commenced his YAL PREFACE he adopted a pictorial, highly embellished and ornate style. The diction was flowery with colour effects. His description of the ‘morning in paradise,’ in no wise, fell short of the ornate, highly ebellished grand style of Milton’s, ‘Morning in Paradise. Put the two pieces: the original and the translation side by side, and a true connoisseur would have found it difficult to distinguish the one from the other. The semblance would certainly have beleaguered him, perplexed him and won his admiration, awe and adulation. Vip — brought the prose of the great Tamil commentators to life. He dressed his prose with its queer garment : namely, rich, noble diction.

He spoke as if he was in the presence of a Prince, — right before the Royal Throne commencing : மாட்சிமை தங்கிய மகா சேதுபதி மன்னரவர்களே ! It was a soldier-like marching prose, measured and distinctly timed. Every period told bearing every argument to its rightful place and to the precise point. It was Julius Caesar’s prose — pithy, mellifluous, sinuous, winding, cutting and chic : far too elegant at times, flowing like a mountain torrent : gurgling and murmuring, at times like a woodland brook. When he argued, his words flowed free, loosely strung and bold as a chain of pearls. His was not a pulpit oration, it was not pedantical ; it was not frair-like ; it was not lawyer-like. It had a martial ring : commanding, arresting, demanding on the attention of the hearers.

He seldom used lecture notes when he lectured to the university students. Such lectures were more or less

artfully rigged up in printed-matter form. But yet he spoke the word ; and the word did tell. Each word was enthroned in its rightful place. He was none of your harlequins or top-box haranguers or fracas rousers.

When he put pen to paper he picked and he chose his words : the right word to convey the exact idea. He found neither monsters nor witches in the world — no chimeras, no sphinx, no Hipsibas no cantrips He found Nature smiling, laughing, placid, uproarious, and thundering hoarse in all its fury. He found Nature decked, bejewelled, with stars and clothed in all the rainbow colours. Such descriptions as are given by varakavi Barathi in his ‘பாஞ்சாலி சபதம்’ filled him with joy unending and ineffable.

Here are the lines :-

‘பார்! சுடர்ப் பரிதியைச் சூழவே படர்முகில்
எத்தனை தீப்பட் டெரிவன! ஓகோ!
என்னட யிந்த வன்னத் தியல்புகள்!
எத்தனை வடிவம்! எத்தனை கலவை!
தியின் சூழம்புகள்! — செழும் பொன் காய்ச்சி
விட்ட வோடைகள்! — வெம்மை தோன்றாமு
எரிந்திடுந் தங்கத் தீவுகள்! — பாரட !
நீலப் பொய்கைகள்! — அடடா, நீல
வண்ண மொன்றி லெத்தனை வகையன!
எத்தனை செம்மை! பசுமையும் கருமையும்
எத்தனை! — கரிய பெரும்பெரும் பூதம்!
நீலப் பொய்கையில் மிதந்திடும் தங்கத்
தோணிகள் சுடரொளிப் பொற்கரையிட்ட
கருஞ் சிகரங்கள்! காணடி, ஆங்கு
தங்கத் திமிங்கிலம் தாம் பல மிதக்கும்
இருட் கடல்! ஆஹா! எங்கு நோக்கிடினும்
ஒளித்திரள்! ஒளித்திரள்! வண்ணக் களஞ்சியம்!

Just note the jovial joust — the loudly blatant embroilment of colours. There was no one who enjoyed, experienced and appreciated the riot of colours so thoroughly as Vip —. We are richer each one of us than we think — And Vip — is no exception.

Vip-'s literary baggage, both poetry and prose was far too sophisticated ; the stuff in it far too heavy ; and when he wrote it, it was mostly in crumbs it was tasty and appetising. They fell, as it were, from his table by the wayside. Like the seeds sown by the sower. Some fell by the wayside, and the birds of the air came and picked them and ate them ; some fell on stony ground and were lost, some fell among tares, burrs and brambles, and they sprouted and grew and the weeds grew much faster and smothered them ; only a few that fell on fertile ground, sprouted and grew and flourished and gave a good return.

This parable applies to Vip-'s literary baggage. Those of his light articles, that were picked up by the way-side papers, chap-books and magazines and periodicals, were published as newspaper and magazine articles. Mr. N. Nadarajah had made a collection and list of them and published it in the form of a brochure. It is of immense documentary value. Vip-'s editorials in the 'Prabudha Barata' are mostly philosophical and topical disquisitions and cogitations. But, although most of them had had such an impact on the general public, the learned and scholarly crowd held a special regard for his Shakespeare Criticism — his 'Mathanga Choola Mani, YĀL — NŌŌL, his Arumuganavalar Eulogy, his ஆங்கிலவாணி — Paradise Lost, Tennyson's 'Ulysses, Tagore's Poems. Among these the eminent many-sided masterpiece — 'the YĀL NOOL Preface' — tops the list as a work of rare literary excellence, that would vie for establishing his eminence as the author of an epic piece, par excellence. His embellishment of style was the supremest in the 'YĀL Preface.' Yet his literary baggage was far too heavy to bite, to chew, to masticate and digest. In his 'நீரமகளிர்' it would seem he picked up pearls from Mathew Arnold's 'Forsaken Merman,' Milton's 'Paradise Lost' and Tennyson's 'Ulysses, and assembled them so as to form a pearl-embellished pendant.

(3)

VIPULANANDA ON LIVING POETRY

Then Vipulananda spoke. His theme was 'living poetry' — உயிருள்ள பாடல். It was a discourse on poetry that inspires — that awakens the spirit in man : that awakens the slumbering soul : that imbues the soul into the fleshly form, gives it a name and a form : makes matter live. For he who has no poetry in him is cold and wooden, his feelings and warmth would have been extinguished and buried in ashes. Such as he 'is fit for treason, stratagem and even murder'.

Vipulananda's was an endeavour and an effort to live through living poetry to revitalize himself, to externalize himself. And he did do it. His audience and he himself were one single closely bonded whole : and the **WHOLE** was a living entity — an event. It was a discourse on the discovery of the spirit, — the energy, the 'elan vital' that resided in the written word. **At the beginning was the word,** and the spirit was imbued in it : in every aspect of it. It was the infinite breath — the **breath that breathed the living breath.**

Vipulananda spoke and his discourse was the motive force in supreme poetry: its moving effects. It is intended to please, to instruct and to exalt. Vip-knew this, and used to lay stress on these functions. He didn't go far; he didn't go deep into any of the sangham classic forms: the 'Pattu Pattu' the 'Eddu Thohai' and 'Pathin en ki:l Kanakku'.

He eschewed the so called, conventional 'CLASSICS'. He had chosen as the basic theme — the principal topic — a simple naive piece from Subramanya Barathi. It commenced with the awakening, stirring words: 'திக்குத் தெரியாத காட்டில் உன்னைத் தேடித் தேடி இளைத்தேனே'. The theme was 'kannan en kathalan.' Kannan, by the way, is the 'Peter Pan' in Tamil poetic literature. Like Puck in 'Midsummer Night's Dream, he plays his pranks on all and sundry. Vipulananda commenced rendering the verses in their correct cadence. His voice was vibrant, full-bass: deep-chested, It was not affected, not forced, not artificial. It was in perfect ease; it was artless; in a condition of naivety like unto the babbling and murmur of a mountain stream. Everyone listened. The entire audience like one single mass of paddy plants swayed and surged, now breathed deep, now almost breathless: not a squeak, not a whisper, not a whinny not a whimper, not a garment rustled, not a comment travelled from lip to lip. All listened in rapt attention, wrapped in perfect silence. A pin could have been heard dropped in the pauses.

He claimed each slave of sound, at a whiffle, as when Solomon willed: All sorts of sounds, meanings, word pictures, vibrant notes, movements, surges and gurgles came crowding in riotous swarms. All came flying, and like Abt Vogler he built a noble pile, a palace straight: a forest deep and dank and dark and dismal: a demon and a desire to lust; ugliness and turpitude and then the sacred Name — a sound flung and a fury that destroyed the evil — turned it into airy nothing. It was the all-powerful spell: அண்ணா! The Divine Name.

Thus flowed the chant of the heart-stirring, soul-inspiring, inspiriting paean. It came melting as it were one's feelings, it flowed a brimming-over stream. The audience was caught in the whirl and hurled to left and right. It was altogether a 'fluviatile' appreciation of a literary master-piece — modern, simple, rural, heart-touching, inspiring, animating, reactivating: it was, all in all, a Pandean pipe. He recited it; he paused; he rendered it meaningful: commented aptly on the theme: the sound effect, the pictorial effect, the elaboration of the notion: the thought content: the sublimity of the total edifice of thought. It was like Abt Vogler's 'Musical Tower'. It soared, it rose, and towered and reared its form into the dome of the sky like a monumental polyalthea. Its towers were star-crowned and star-adorned. A mighty effect, a Gargantuan endeavour, an enduring attempt: a formidable mental and emotional exercise: so full of meaning, so full of suggestion, so full of feeling it was. It touched every one of your passionate urges, your power of vision, your sharp sense of hearing, your scent, your sense of warmth and your sense of cold, your ability to relate and correlate all your medley of senses: your feelings. Even your instincts and deep seated ancient impulses your crowd of intuitions had to be harnessed and employed to the fullest possible extent if you are to enjoy and appreciate the master-piece of art that the poem, in truth, is.

திக்குத் தெரியாத காட்டில்! — what an assemblage of harsh sounds: a forest of sounds fit to suggest the impenetrable and tangled and ensnaring form of the forest: as dark as pitch and as viscous as tar. Should you enter it you are likely to be lost in its labyrinthine ways. It is in short an 'அடவி.' The harsh sounds come galore. Note: உன்னைத் தேடித் தேடி இளைத்தேனே! The 'th' sounds thick and viscous and like a darkling gloom wrap you, appearing to dissolve in shreds and tangles like the evening gloom. You are caught in it, almost submerged in it. — 'I am in darkness, enshrouded in the thick of the gloom. I know not where to go. I go in search of you.'

Cardinal Newman's : 'Lead Kindly Light' assimilates this idea.

Help me ; guide me in order that I may take at least one step in the right direction. I am in dire need of your guidance in this hour of gathering darkness. I am confused ; I am confounded. I **crave your indulgence!** I **crave your pardon!** Do kindly lead me! Send me one single ray of light! One glint of the ray of hope! One beam that would serve to guide me and put me on the correct path.

மிக்க நலமுடைய மரங்கள் — பல
விந்தைச் சுவைகள் தரும் கனிகள் — எந்தப்
பக்கத்தையும் மறைக்கும் வரைகள் — அங்கு
பாடி நகர்ந்து வரும் நதிகள்.

The long vowel sound 'பாடி' and the rustle in 'நகர்ந்து' carry a deal of suggestion, that of the gently, gurgling flow of a babbling stream, tumbling over stones and pebbles, and flowing through gullies and gulches. There is a lot of controversial interpretation of the line : 'நெஞ்சில் கனல் மணக்கும் பூக்கள்'—flowers that kindle the flame of sweet odour in the core of the heart. It is more a feeling than a mere odour. It moves the heart ; it stirs it ; stimulates it ; animates it ; activates it, enlivens it. It tunes it, thrums every string in its configuration, and raises it to sublime heights — beyond measure.

Again there are **soft words** and **hard words** : words evoking gentle feelings, words provoking rage and anger, and revulsion. Do take into account this line : 'ஆசை பெற விழிக்கும் மாள்கள்' The gentle wistful, passionate call of the deer : so full of charm ; so gentle. And this line that follows is uproarious and disturbing : 'அஞ்சல் குரல் பழகும் புலிகள்' Tigers that growl in rage and repeat the growl as if learning to growl.

Then in alternate order come the soft, sweet call of the birds : the ribbon-like form of the serpent.

'நெசக கவிதை சொல்லும் பறவை — அங்கு
நீண்டே படுத்திருக்கும் பாடி —

The harsh sounds, the soft sounds, and the frightful head to tail sinuous curl and stretch of the snake : what a crowding! what a fracas of sounds and sights! The long 'ஏ' in 'நீண்டே' awakens a feeling of terror and disgust in our hearts. And here we beget a feeling of hope and despondency inextricably intertwined — at one moment the feelings are in a condition of flood, at the next in a condition of ebb. Big and small creatures help form Nature's wealth of living forms. Big and small creatures live and move cheek by jowl : The roaring lion, the terrifying elephants and the 'creepy crawly, slimy frog' and snake **move and live and have their being.** A sigh of relief : Nature is not always gory in teeth and claws. The frog dodges the heavy thumping thud of the feet of the elephant. 'Every word employed by the poet to express his thoughts and ideas **'has the stamp of immortality.'** Howsoever small a creature might be, it has a special niche on the earth — its favourite habitation and home. The poet has found himself with the theme.

தன்னிச்சை கொண்டலையும் சிங்கம் — அதன்
சத்தத்தினால் கலங்கும் யானை — அதன்
முன்னின்றோடு மிளமாங்கள் — இவை
முட்டாதயல் பதுங்குந் தவளை.

The theme is steeped in the glamour and colour and sound ; the grandeur, the ugliness and depravity alike of a Divine Romance.

'How can I, O Lord, survive this ordeal? My limbs tremble and quake through deep anguish!

My eyes grow dim. Dejection in its cruellest form overtakes me : mentally and spiritually I am wholly undone!

There! There! There comes before me a horrible form : a veddha : gruesome, fearful, terrible and terrifying.

And the poet goes on thus :—

கால் கை சோர்ந்து விழலானேன் — ஒரு
வேல்கைக் கொண்டு கொலைவேடன் — உள்ளம்
வெட்கம் கொண்டொழிய விழித்தான் —

The marauder veddah made shamefaced advances. Wasn't it disgraceful conduct on the part of a male ?

'O Ye, maiden so lovely, so graceful
I've fallen in love with you,
I am almost infatuated.
I feel like embracing you.
Why then shrink in maiden coyness ?
I shall fetch for you chunks of meat so juicy,
cooked in gravy,
I shall bring you the choicest of fruits, squelchy
and juicy ;
Your beauty intoxicates like sweet toddy matured
and fermented.
We shall eat ; we shall drink !
We shall make merry !
Now what do you say ?
Hot, hot words ! Scorching ! Scalding ! She did
gather courage. She said :
'Hope rose ! I clasped both palms in prayerful
supplication ; and said :

அண்ணா ! உனதடியில் விழுவேன் — எனை
அஞ்சக் கொடுமை சொல வேண்டா — பிறன்
கண்ணாலஞ் செய்துவிட்ட பெண்ணை — உன்றன்
கண்ணாற் பார்த்திடவும் தகுமோ ? —

What a heart-melting appeal ! What grand suppli-
cation !

So touching ! So full of idealistic utterances !
'I've already been in love's grasp.'
'Another man has me in thrall ;
'How dare you think of me as your lady love ?
Is it fair, Noble sir ?'

The veddah nature comes uppermost, and finds
expression in these cruel words : as hot as a red-hot rod
of steel pushed into the ear. —

'ஏடி, சாத்திரங்கள் வேண்டேன் — நின்
தின்பம் வேண்டுமடி, கனியே ! — நல்ல
மொந்தைப் பழைய கள்ளைப் போலே !'

Your beauty has enraptured me. I've been intoxicated
with it as if drunk in fully matured toddy. Impetuosity has
gone up my head. I am mad !'

Hearing these words, bashful and utter rot, she
shouted : 'O ! my Lord ! Kanna !' ; and she fell unconscious
and lay prostrate on the ground.' Not much time elapsed.
Moments slipped off. She regained consciousness ; and
opened her eyes. The veddah man had vanished ; she said :
'I see Thee before me rearing thy form like a mountain
pine. The nucleus of thy knowledge I cherish in the sacred
precincts of my heart. It was a flash thought : 'நோக்கரிய
நோக்கு'. A conquest of the SOUL by the Paramatman. It
is the greater, sublimer awakening process. 'I have been
enthralled !' Sublimity doth lift us near the greatmindedness
of God. We go solid for the sublime.

Thus continued Vipulananda — his discourse on
living poetry. கண்ணு வேடன் எங்கு போனான் — மணி
வண்ணா ! எனதபயக் குரலில் — எனை வாழ்விக்க வந்த அருள்
வாழி ! A perfect Conquest of a perfection in the 'being
process'. The philosophy in it is essentially vedic — the
fusion of the lifeforces : the 'elan-vital'. The living forces —
the conscious efforts coalesce and get bonded in spiritual
harmony : sublime existence.

Well, philosophy apart ; the art and the genre in
the march of events, the poetic techniques that the poet
has employed : the form, the contents, the motion, the verve,
the motif, and the rest of events : the surge and the swell
of emotions are all suggestive of a mighty ocean breaker,
that having had its momentum in its incipient form, in
the ocean's bosom, gathers momentum, goes on and on,

gathering force, gaining form, growing formidable, and on reaching the rocky cliff on the shoreline bursts and breaks into foam and froth and spray. And what an expression of nature's forces: the gathering momentum in wind and water! This was the 'form' that the poem had taken ranted as it was by Vipulananda.

And Vipulananda gave due and just expression to all the hidden forms and latent potentials and possibilities that were contained in the poem — an artifice of innate forces. Here was a true **representation** of poetic rendering and poetic appreciation. — **the receptive life-force meeting the creative life-force**, and eventually coalescing into a single whole: 'poornam' — a **perfection in existence**.

Let me introduce and resort to Abt Vogler's metaphor once again.

Each one of the keys in the receptive and creative modes — motifs — 'was zealous to hasten the work, to heighten their master his praise.'

'Their movement, their functions, their behaviours were so marvellous, that while one key buried his brow with a blind plunge down to hell, another key burrowed awhile and built on the very basic **foundation of things**. (moola prakrti) Again they came into sight, having laid the foundation so very firm and solidary in nature's will — externalization.

The appreciatory effort, nay endeavour — முயற்சி — is an edifice founded on an adamant that shall not crumble and go into flames. It is solid for all Nature.

It would seem 'Another key, so very obedient to the will of the musician, another, yet another, go and raise the rampired walls of gold, as transparent as glass' —

'Each key was eager to do its duty and die and give its place to the rest. Each note runs; performs its task like a runner in the race, and having lit the flame, gave room to the others to do the same.' —

In the case of Vipulananda: winning an appreciatory sense: serene and blessed, is a Gargantuan task. It has to be wooed and won. It is the task of the lover. In the end it is a triumph and a success, unalloyed.

(4)

VIPULANANDA HIS MIND and ART

Elsewhere I have said this: In every creative process there are two involvements: an **upsurge and a design**. And behind every form is the upsurge, and configuration that constitutes the design: And the motive force or urge is the craving to be. It is no other than the intent to be — **the will to be**. The maker or designer of a thing has, as the first product in the process of making, the fundamental task of '**seeing it**.' — that is to say having an overall or total view of it: a true vision of it. He has to view it in and out, from all angles of vision; investigate the external form; the lights and shadows; penetrate it, have a glimpse of its inner structure, its inherent content, its potentialities; see it in the light, see it in the shade; watch it by night, watch it by day; touch it, feel it, hear it, taste it, smell it: in short get an insight into its form and structure, its geniality and its genetic qualities. He has to make a dent in its outer form, a stir in its inner person. He has to grip it, crush it, dismantle it, and having dislocated it, broken it, turned it into pulp, he has to redesign it, restructure it after his own heart, his own

sweet will; his heartiest feeling. He is bound to give it a form and a name.

Herein resides the art — creative in its trend —, and here it has begotten a new form: the artefact.

Vipulananda's opening lines of the YĀL - NŌŌL : 'தண்ணளி செங்கோலாய்' etc. — I am not bothered about the technicalities involved in the making of the YĀL, the number of strings it had, the manner in which the musical notes were produced — I have fallen in love with every one of them; I have been ensnared and entranced by the poetical preface that adorns the 'YĀL NŌŌL'. I have, I repeat, fallen in love with it; become ecstatic and infatuated, and beguiled and cannot proceed any further: I have been intoxicated and impelled to beget the feeling of John Keats after he had been inveighed, enticed and entranced by the song of the nightingale:

'Was it a vision or a waking dream?
Fled is the music!
Do I wake or sleep?'

Please desist from asking me what the YĀL NŌŌL is. Why it was written; its purpose. These interrogatories do not concern me. I do not read poetry for profit. I read poetry for poetry's sake; for its didactic design; the joy it gives. And I care not to ask: How much is it worth? It is a stupid question to ask. Art does not go crying, hawking its wares in the streets: 'Art for sale; buy it; dirt cheap': It is not a commodity to be bartered. No further arguments please; simply because I am incapable of finding answers to such inept questions.

What a miracle is Shakespeare's 'Othello'? And, what a marvel of a universe resides in Shelley's 'Ode on the Grecian urn'! Every piece of Art, every creation, everything felt, thought out, made, moulded into shape and given a form and assigned a name, has a 'soul' in it — a creative spirit lurks in it. But yet one quaint charac-

teristic of art is this: that having, created 'a thing of beauty', the artist annihilates himself. For having imparted all that he was, all that he is, to his object of art, he has ceased to be. He lives in his creation which resides in eternity.

It would seem I am harping on the same string. What else can I harp on? I have only one single unique string that has filled me with hope and bliss.

Let me hie back to the lines from Vipulananda's 'YĀL NŌŌL'.

'பொன்னின் கபாடபுரத்துறைவோம்; மா வலிநீர் தன்னிற் படிந்து சமனொளியைக் கும்பிடுவோம்; ஆடுவோம், பாடுவோம், ஆராத காதலினால் வாடுவோம், பின்னர் மகிழ்வோம், நகைபுரிவோம், அச்சமுறுவோம், அடையாதார் தங்களை யாம் இச்சையறவே இழிந்துரைக்கும் நீர் மையேம் — உருத்தெழுந்து கோபிப்போம், உண்மை உரைப்போம், அருத்தியொடு வீரம் அறைவோம் வியப்புறுவோம், திங்கள் நிறை நாளிற் சேர்வோ மிந் நீர் நிலையை, கங்குல் கழியுமுன்னே கார் படிந்த மைக் கடலைச் சென்று யாம் சேர்வோம்.'
ஓம் — ஓம் — ஓம்! கடலினோசை!

Here I am reminded of an occasion when Vipulananda was taking a class in English Literature and dealing with the poem: **THE FORSAKEN MERMAN**. by Mathew Arnold. Vipulananda went into ecstasies over it, endeavouring to bring out the exciting yet silent pathos that suffused the poem. —

'Call her once before you go, Call once yet
In a voice that she will know, "Margaret!
Margaret!" — அவலம்! இரங்கல்!
Children's voices, wild with pain, Surely she will
come again
Call her once and come away,
This way, this way.

“Mother dear, we cannot stay.”
 The wild white horses foam and fret,
Margaret! Margaret! — Regret! The pitiful call —
 ‘Mother dear, we cannot stay.
 ‘Margaret! Margaret!’ is suffused and clammy
 with regretful pathos.

And reciting every stanza in his deep-chested, full-throated, gurgling voice, Vipulananda did draw the hearers, every one of them, into the waves into which he had plunged. Tears would well in the eyes of the hearers, as he went on rendering pathetically in a tone of commiseration:

‘Margaret hist!
 Come quick, we are here.’

But hope seldom springs eternal in the human breast. Despondency sets in. The Merman and his children are broken-hearted; and the repeated warning comes more and more insistently: — the burden of a sad song.

‘Come away, away children,
 Come children, come down.
 The soft tide that rolls seaward.
Faithless was she,
And alone dwell for ever,
The kings of the sea. —
 ‘But children, at midnight
 When soft winds blow
 When clear falls the moonlight;
 When spring tides are low
 When sweet airs come seaward
 From heaths starr’d with broom,
 And high rocks throw mildly
 On the blanch’d sands of gloom:
 Up the still, glistening beeches
 Up the creeks we will hie
 O’er banks of bright sea-weed
 The ebb-tide leaves dry.
 We will gaze, from the sand-hills

At the white sleeping town
 At the church on the hillside —
 And then come back down singing, ‘There dwells
 a loved one. But cruel is she.
She left lonely for ever
The kings of the sea.’ — very sad!

At the end of the rendering of the poem and the explanation, what a calamitous overcrowding and mustering of feelings! Sad, disappointing, heart-rending and pathetic! Richly imbuing one with feelings: sorrowful and gloomy! Can there be deeper depths of true sorrow, pity and anguish than those brought out, cast forth as it were, in the shape of the rolling breakers? An expanse of pathos!

‘The wild white horses that foam and fret,
Margaret! Margaret!’

The last two words have become the burden of the song, and the vibrant ‘r’s’ are imbued with sorrow and evoke a feeling of commiseration. The sound fills our hearts with gloom — dark, plutonic.

It took over two hours for Vipulananda to give a full exposition and rendering of the great poem. Perhaps he must have been induced to compose his prefatory piece on ‘நீரரசுகளிர’ after he had read and appreciated this poem. Vipulananda’s experience evoked a rare counter or assimilatory feeling and a sense of poetic appreciation in his audience. All of them were one with him.

AND NOW TO Subramanya Barati and the new movement, and his poems that were intended to stir the feelings of the Freedom Fighters. They flowed in such an unending stream from his facile pen. Here was a new theme with a new, quaint genre that brought about an unexpected turn in the flow of the poetic theme that was engendered in Tamil Nadu and was the vogue in the 1920’s: not petty, but merely provokingly revolutionary. While one may be prompted by a desire to win one’s political freedom one need not employ violence of any sort. Win

your freedom by reasonable means: lawful means: fair means — not foul means, employing violent methods. 'Sat — yagraha' was the word coined by Mahatma Gandhi. 'Love of truth' should be one's guiding principle, to win freedom by moving along the right path; the just path. In this fight there shall not be even a shred of ill-will. The goal shall be reached only by way of a reasonable understanding — a perfect circumspect, — of all surrounding circumstances: **mutual and loving kindness divested of any form of hatred whatever — void of ill will.** Here, at long last, was a noble aim, a sublime goal to seek. Should you fight a losing battle you are sure and certain that the total outcome will be an unalloyed gain. There shall be employed no swords, no guns, no armaments of any sort. The spirit of the fight, the motive force shall be good will, perfect understanding, the noble sentiment of: 'love thy neighbour as thyself' mode.

Three thousand years and even more of lucid, unhampered, unfettered, unregimented vedic thinking has given birth to this grand and noble thought of 'Satyagraha.' You fight not a people, not a nation, not a kingdom, not another state, but you fight for the maintenance of a noble cause: a great cause and a right and grand one to wit. Said the great Mahatma in 1928: 'He who would in his own person test the fact of God's presence can do so by a living faith. And since faith itself cannot be proved by extraneous evidence, the safest course is to believe in the moral government of the world; and therefore in **the supremacy of the moral law, the law of truth and love.**' And elsewhere on another occasion what the Mahatma has said has become the cardinal theme in all human thinking. Only he among men had the qualification and the temerity and sincerity to make such a profound pronouncement.

— 'There is an indefinable, mysterious power that pervades everything. I feel it though I do not see it. It is this unseen power which makes itself felt and yet defies all proof, because it is so unlike all that I perceive through my senses. **It transcends the senses.**' —

Here is a method that does not promote or propagate killing. It gives life. Varakavi Barathi and those of his school of thinking including Vipulananda had to fight for, and maintain in their mental make up a living, a vital principle; and that was to free mankind of the shackles imposed on man by the imported, portable and extraneous thoughts and ways of life. Man had been reduced to a stooge and sycophant. Vipulananda's and Barathi's were moral and didactic causes. They have appended them a moral strength and stamina: a supreme purpose.

In the West, in the years that followed the Great World War of 1914 — 1918, a much more treacherous and revulsive change came in the genre, the manner, the tone of the writings of both these verse writers. And of Flaubert's 'Madame Bouvary,' the celebrated literary critic Sainte-Beuve had written thus: 'We find ourselves dealing with a man of a new and different generation..... The ideal has ceased, the lyric vein is dried up; the new men are cured of lyricism and the ideal: a severe and pitiless truth has made its entry as the last word of experience, even into Art itself. The characters of the new literature are science and a spirit of observation, maturity, force, a touch of hardness.' —

Even more revolutionary changes have taken place in the lyricism of Tamil Nadu. Subramaniya Barathi was in the forefront of the new movement, and there followed other minor guys of much less poetical talent. Their output was mostly of the hack type: sans inspiration, sans form, sans motif, sans thought content. Then came a change in the traditional themes: அறம், பொருள், இன்பம், வீடு — moral — theme — appreciation of life — bliss: a quadruple aim.

It was a change that swerved and slanted in the direction of 'realism' and 'surrealism'. The material adorned movement themes, the realities of life, and urges engendered by such realities in the mind of man found a prominent place. The Gandhian perceptions of non-violence — a yet to be attained reality (யதார்த்தம்), passive resistance

and satyagraha captured the imagination and guided the actions, behaviours, the art of thinking, the pattern of feeling of poets and writers.

Thus writes Namakkal Ramalingampillai -

கத்தியின்றி ரத்தமின்றி
யுத்த மொன்று வருகுது
சத்தியத்தின் நித்தியத்தை
நம்பும் யாரும் சேருவீர்.
யானையில்லை குதிரையில்லை
கொல்லும் ஆசை இல்லையே
எதிரியென்று யாரும் இல்லை
எற்றும் ஆசை இல்லைதான் -

And here is another genre:

‘தமிழுக்கும் அமுதென்று பெயர்
அந்தத் தமிழ் இன்பத் தமிழ்
எங்கள் உயிருக்கு நேர்.....’ — பாரதிதாசன் -

Such verses have a lovely veneer of their own, though some of them lack in depth of thought.

Howsoever appealing and simple in construction these modern verses may be, they are lacking in the classical verve of the grand style of a Milton or a Vipulananda. Modern verse forms have a shattered fringe and a dismembered, disjointed, crumpled configuration. Vipulananda is perhaps the last of the great grand stylists. Here are some instances from his translations of Shakespeare's plays.

‘மென் விரல் மேலொரு வியன்பும் பட்டுடை
பட்டுடை செய்தவம் யான் செய்திலனே’

— Romeo & Juliet.

‘அஞ்சினார்க்குச் சதமரணம் அஞ்சாத நெஞ்சத்
தாடவனுக் கொருமரணம் அவனி மிசைப் பிறந்தோர்
துஞ்சுவரென்றறிந் திருந்தும் சாதலுக்கு நடுங்குந்
துன்மதிமுடரைக் கண்டாற் புன்னகை செய்பவன் யான்.
இன்னலும் யானும்பிறந்த தொருதினத்தி லறிவாய்
இளஞ்சிங்கக் குருளைகள் யாம் யான் மூத்தோ னெனது
பின்வருவ தின்னலெனப் பகைமன்ன ரறிவார்
பேதுறல் பெண்ணணங்கேயான் போய்வருதல் வேண்டும்’.

— Julius Caesar.

Another mode -

தாழ்ந்து மென்மொழி உரைத்திடேல் தரணியிற் பணிந்து
வீழ்ந்து நைபவர் பொய்யுரைக் கிரங்கிய வீணர்
கூழ்ந்து செய்தன துடைத்துப்பின் சோர்வினை யடைவார்
ஆழ்ந்து செய்வன செய்யும் யான் அவர் நெறியனை
யேன் - [சீசர்]

அண்ண னீர்மையேன் பிழைசெயேன் அணுவளவேனும்
நண்ணு நீதியிற் பிரிந்திடேன் நாயெனக் கதறிக்
கண்ணி னீர்மிக நிலத்தினிற் புரள்வதாற் கருதும்
எண்ண முற்றுறு மென்னநீ யெண்ணுவ திழிவே —

From: ‘Romeo and Juliet’ -

சுசீலை சாளரவாயிலில் தோன்றுகிறுள் -

Romeo: நெஞ்சே! பொறுபொறு; நீள்குணதிசையில்
அஞ்செஞ்சோதி யலர் கதிர் பரப்பிப்
பேரொளி யொன்றுதன் னீர்மையி னெழுந்தது;
அதுவே,

ஆரெழிற் பரிதி பேரோ சுசீலை
இகனிறை மதிதரு மின்னலை யொழிக்கப்
பகலவன் வந்த பான்மையை யுணர்ந்தேன்!
வாராய் நிறையெழில் வயங்கிய சுடரே!
நேரா ரியல்பினெ னெஞ்சினை வாட்டிய
விண்மதி நின்னெழில் விளங்கக் கண்டு
தன்னொளி மழுங்கித் தாழ்ந்து நின்றனனல்.
நீயே,

இந்துவை வென்ற சுந்தர வதனச்
செந்திரு வாயினை சிறைசெயுங் கன்னி
மாடத் திருத்தல் மரபோ உரையாய்?
காதன் மடந்தாய்! ஆ! என்னன்பே!
சிறியேனுள நிறை கழிபெருங் காதலை
அறியாய் ஐயோ! பொறு பொறு மனனே!
அணியெழிற் பாலை மணியிதழ் விரித்து
மொழிசொல முன்னியும் மொழியா தமர்ந்தனள்
வாக்கெழு மாற்றம் வழங்கில ளெனினும்
நோக்கெழு மாற்றம் நோக்கா லுணர்ந்தனள்.
பேதையேற் கன்று அம்மாதர் கண்ணோக்கம்
விண்மீனொளியென மெல்லொளி பரப்பும்
நோக்கினை மருவினர் ஆக்கம் எய்தினரே.

செம்மலர் முகத்திற் சேர்ந்தன மெல்விரல்
மெல்விரன் மேலதோர் வியன்பும் பட்டுடை
பட்டுடை செய்தவம் யான் செய்திலனே!

The translation is in no way inferior to the original. The poetic mode of this piece of translation is superbly classy and characteristically classical.

Note the soft sounds in:

இந்துவை வென்ற சுந்தர வதனச்
செந்திரு வாயினை சிறை செய்யுங்கன்னி
மாடத்திருத்தல் மரபோ உரையாய்?

The harsh 'த்' - and 'ர' are suggestive of a heartless stance:

மாடத்திருத்தல் மரபோ உரையாய்.

இரக்கத்தின் மாண்பினை எடுத்துக் கூறும் இவ்வரிகள் எத்துணைத் திறத்தினவாய் அமைக்கப் பெற்றுள்ளன. சிந்தனைக் குகந்த நடையும் யாப்பும் இப்பாவில் இணை பிரியாது மருவிக் காட்சியளிக்கின்றன!

— வன் பொறை மருவா மரபினதாகி
வானின் நிழியும் மழைத்துளி போலக்
கொடுப் போ ரெடுப்போ ரெனுமிரு வோரையும்
அடுத்துக் காப்ப தன்புசாரிரக்கம்
வலிதிலும் வலிதிது மணிமுடி சூடி
யுலகு புரக்கு முரவோற் குரைப்பின்
இல கொளி முடியினு மிரக்கம் பெரிதே
அங்கையிற் பொருந்தி யச்சம் விளைக்குஞ்
செங்கோல் புறத்தது சிந்தைய திரக்கம்,
மன்னவர் மனமெனு மணியணி பீடத்
தரசவீற் றிருக்கு முரைசா லன்பு
தேவ தேவன் றிருக் குணத் தொன்றே
நீதியொ டன்பு நிலைபெறி னீதி
ஆதியங் கடவு ளருளென நிலவும்
இறைபே ரருளிங் கெமக் கிலையாயின்
நெறிநின் றியாரோ நீடுவாழ் வெய்துநர்
அருளினை விழைந்தே மருட்செயல் புரிதன்
மரபே யாக மதித்தலங் கடனே' -

— Merchant of Venice —

Vipulananda's poetic appreciations were marvellous criticisms and learned discourses. Take for instance the theme: Subramanya Barati's verses and songs.

While Vipulananda set great store by poetic convention and prosodic conformity. Barati was guided by sights, sounds and spontaneity of inspiration and naivety of poetic art.

Poetry flowed out of Barathi's pen like unto water that gushed and spouted out of a gigantic gutter gargoyle or a sluice gate when the reservoir was full to the brim. For Vipulananda poetry was a carefully wrought out artifact: something resembling a Persian rug, or a Grecian Urn. And, to the same degree that Shakespeare differed from John Milton in the production of poetry so did Barathi differ from Vipulananda in their respective poetic endeavours and productions. Vipulananda's stylistic device which he has employed in both his prose and verse writings, be they never so genuinely spontaneous and natural (இயல்) are ornate, heavy, at times artificially embellished, and annoying like the goings of a heavily loaded bullock cart on a bumpy road. Yet most of his inspired productions are not lacking in precision, elegance and a rare literary flavour. Such features as his spoken words, his intonations, his deeply encoded stresses, his mellifluous tone, tempo and rhythm have imparted to some of his poetic compositions the richness of colour, tone, sound and diction that characterise them. Note for instance the structure, tempo and form of his: 'நல்லை நாவலன்' 'வெள்ளை நிற மல்லிகை யோ?'; 'மணி மலர்' Eulogy. His Tagore translations are heavily ornate: பூஞ்சோலைக் காவலன். THE GARDENER - R. Tagore

— மாலை வந்திறுத்தது மெய்யே
வேலைப் பகலவன் மறைந்தனன்
பகற்பொழுதகன்ற தாயினு
மயலூர் மேயினர் சிலரென் பால்வரு வாரெனக்
காலொலி யரவம் கேட்டிருக்கின்றனன்
கோட்டமி னெஞ்சினர்
இளமை சான்ற விருவர் மனமலைவுற்

றொருமைப் படுங்கா லுரை சொல நாணி.....
அவர் நிறை கண்ணின ரெனைப் பார்த்திருப்பின்
அவர் வாயுரையே யென்னுரையாக
அவர் வயினிறைந்த காதலை யுணர்ந்தி
யின்னிசைச் செய்யுள் செய்பவனானே.

Here is a Western bride in an Eastern garb. This translation is an endeavour; and in it Vipulananda did task his life to compose a single superb work of art. He did task his life to uproot the venomous weed of ignorance that had run to seed in the garden of his community. We can trace the 'history of human dust' in the life led by Vipulananda. Dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return. This most succinctly sums up the material aspect of the life of man — 'everyman'. There is nothing great in such an event: dust becoming dust. But the history of man is otherwise: When the dust gets awakened, gets stirred, gets animated, and makes efforts, acts in a superior way, overcomes obstacles of cruel encumbrances, circumstances, and surmounting all material circumambient elements most of them of a paltry, piddling kind, the dust **triumphs**. The **spirit triumphs over the flesh**, and begets an object of art, an artistic creation that shall endure through eternity — an object of beauty. What if the flesh sickens, becomes feeble and squeezes life out of it?: **the Spirit triumphs**. The will to triumph must be couched under a different denomination. It is '**creativity**'. Vipulananda, it would seem, did endeavour to task his life, to compose a great work of art — an ultimate good — that would endure through the centuries. And so long as the recognition for art endures, so long shall the YAL - NOOL பாயிரம் — prefatory piece — endure.

It is immortal!

It is eternal!

It was said of one of the great Huxleys that when he was on his death bed, feeling for the last time Death squeezing Life out of him, he had asked his partner in life to fetch a full-blown rose flower and hold it before

his eyes, his line of vision. And so she did. And he, replete with ardour, gazed on it, and went on gazing upon it. And apparently wearied and exhausted and grown faint still holding it, she put this question to him: Is it enough?

'Never! Never!' was the answer. And his life departed unwillingly. The spirit of poetic art is immortal and eternal; and the thirst for it is unquenchable.

It was so with Vipulananda. Caught in the tight grip of a paralytic stroke his gaze was full and suggestive of an eternal poetic mood. And to MOTHER NATURE Vip-might have said ere he closed his eyes: 'Ah, still delay, thou art so fair!'

பாவலர் போற்றும் ஞானதே சிகரைப்
 பணிந்தவ ராணையின் வண்ணம்
 பூவலர் கொன்றை புனைந்தவர் புகழைப்
 புலமிகு மறிவர் கூட்டுண்ணக்
 காவலர் வியப்ப உரைத்திடல் கேட்டுக்
 கருணைகூர் தேசிகர் இவர்க்கு
 நாவல ரெனும் பேர் தகுமென அளித்தார்
 ஞாலத்தார் தகுந் தகும் என்ன.

(5)

APPRECIATIONS

நல்லைநாவலன் தில்லை யாத்திரை

பேராசிரியன் விபுலாநந்தன்
 ஆசு கவியாக அளித்தது

தொல்லியல் வழுவாச் சைவநூற் புலவர்
 தூநெறித் தமிழுரை யாளர்
 நல்லியற் புலவர் இசைதரும் புலவர்
 நாடக நவீற்றிய புலவர்
 சொல்லியற் ரெகைநூல் வானநூல் தருக்கம்
 தோமறு கணிதநூல் முதலாம்
 பல்கலைப் புலவர்க்கு உறைவிடமாகிப்
 பரந்திசை யெய்தி யாழ்ப் பாணம்.

அத்திறமாய தில்லையம் பதியில்
 ஆகம அளவையாற் சமைந்த
 வித்தகக் கோயிற் கோபுரங் கண்டார்
 விழிகணீர் பெருக மெய்ம் மறந்தரர்
 பத்தர் சீர் பரவும் நல்லைநா வலனார்
 பாரினிற் பன்முறை விழுந்தார்
 அத்தரே யென்றார் அம்மையே யென்றார்
 ஆடினார் பாடினார் அன்பால்.

Here is a four-lined verse, each line being enriched by seven, that is, four plus three feet. This is perhaps the most popular form of poetic composition used at the present time: the 'ahavalpa' being the most difficult to compose. Most of the ancient Tamil poetic compositions — so far as I know: Pathu Pattu, Eddu Thohai etc. — are mostly blank verses of the Miltonic type employed in the 'Paradise Lost'. I am no versifier; but my ear is sharp, and can measure the tones and the sounds characteristic of ancient classic Tamil poetry. I have very little regard for what passes muster as verses in these chaotic times. They are mostly crude compositions. The prose-like modern forms have very little to do with true poetic composition. Vip's poetic compositions have a typical classic format. They are slick and elegant and articulate.

Here we have an extract from the 'Anklet Episode' dealing with Ancient Tamil Music.

70 - ஈரேழ் தொடுத்த செம்முறைக் கேள்வியின்
 ஓரேழ் பாலை நிறுத்தல் வேண்டி,
 வன்மையிற் கிடந்த தார பாகமும்
 மென்னையிற் கிடந்த குரலின் பாகமும்
 மெய்க்கிளை நரம்பிற் கைக்கிளை கொள்ளக்
 கைக்கிளை யொழிந்த பாதமும் பொற்புடைத்
 தளராத் தாரம் விளரிக் கீத்துக்
 கிளைவழிப் பட்டனன்; அங்கே, கிளையும்
 தன்கிளை யழிவுகண்டு, அவள் வயிற் சேர,
 ஏனை மகளிரும் கிளைவழிச் சேர,
 மேலது உழையினி, கீழ்து கைக்கிளை,
 வம்புறு மரபிற் செம்பாலையாயது

இறுதி யாதியாக, ஆங்கவை
 பெறுமுறை வந்த பெற்றி நீங்காது
 படுமலை செவ்வழி பகரும் பாலையென,
 குரல் குரலாகத் தந்திறமை திரிந்த பின்
 முன்னதன் வகையே முறைமையிற் திரிந்தாங்கு
 இளிமுதலாகிய ஏர்படு கிழமையும்
 கோடி விளரிமேற் செம்பாலையென,
 நீடிக் கிடந்த கேள்விக் கிடக்கையின்
 இணை நரம்புடையன அணைவுறக் கொண்டாங்கு,
 யாழ்மேற் பாலை இடமுறை மெலிய,
 குழல்மேற் கோடி வலமுறை வலிய,
 வலிவும் மெலிவும் சமனுமெல்லாம்
 94 - பொலியக் கோத்த புலமையோன்.

These 25 lines from 'Arankētu Kāthai' are certainly the most difficult to grasp because of the highly technical nature of Tamil Music that was in vogue in Tamil Nadu some 2000 years ago. Even the most erudite musicians of the present time have failed to unravel the mystery underlying and embellishing the 'five great palais'. Vip — has, assisted by his mathematical acumen, helped to read deep into these lines. His 'YĀL-NŌŪL' has helped make an inroad into an area of knowledge where even the great commentators have thought it prudent not to venture into in details. It was forbidden ground up to his time (1943) when Vip-ventured into this province, and attempted to find the meaning for the Seven Great Palai' fugues பாலைப் பண். It would seem that Vip. has helped to unravel a great mystery which only the author of the Anklet Episode would have performed.

I have watched Vip-sitting at his writing desk hours at a time, sunk, as it were, in the enigma that enshrouded the — 'Dance Recital' — of the 'Arankētu Kāthai. And still I feel diffident that even if I amass all the technical knowledge that our musicians possess in Tamil Music I would have failed to comprehend what Vip. has set forth in the tables of numbers that fill a good part of his 'YĀL-NŌŪL.'

Despite the fact we are most likely to fail to comprehend what he has set forth by way of an expository explanation, the palm goes to Vip—for his having helped and attempted to give us an idea of the manner in which the 'Senkōtu Yāl' had been handled by the ancient Tamil Nādu musicians who lived prior to the second century A. D. Vip-is confident that the Sakōda Yāl and the Senkōtu Yāl can be redesigned, reconstructed and that the Seven Great Palai Fugues, பாலைப் பண், motifs, can be re-produced re-patterned on them with sufficient accuracy. In such an event we would be placed in the fortunate circumstance to listen to the very same fugues that were produced when Mādhavi, the star dance expert, danced before the connoisseurs and courtiers and courtesans of the court of the Pandiyan King.

In this respect Vip-'s achievements are inestimable. The 'YĀL NŌŪL', despite its technical character, would certainly be adjudged a Musical research document of no less significance than the archeological discoveries of Sir John Marshal, of Mohenjadarō — Harappa fame. To re-structure the ancient yāl that was in vogue some 1800 years ago is undoubtedly a great achievement: partly a pose, partly, nay greatly, a reality. Besides the introductory 'poetical preface' to this great research work is truly a highly embellished, and heavily ornate poetical piece. Every single line in this preface — பாயிரம் — is redolent of a civilization that would, and could never perish or go Lethwards into the limbo of oblivion. It has the vigour, the form, the literary, and poetic embellishments, slick and elegance and other aesthetic characteristics that would outlive a thousand years, if not more. It is not a dry, dull, odourless immortelle but a Blue Nymphaea freshly blown — product of a comprehensive culture; definitive and articulate and authoritative. It is above all didactic: intended to teach. To produce such a great masterpiece, Vip-had to pull himself out of a stinking slough — the social order prevalent on the Eastern Seaboard of Sri Lanka into which he was born and bred and by which he was nourished.

It was the product of his sole endeavour. That is why I have called it: 'partly a pose.' To start with, he belonged to a herd with a definite 'ethos'. But as he matured, his individuality and identity gave him a special form and a name. Thus he outgrew his herd trends.

The 'Yāl Preface' is an undying contribution to the lore on ancient Tamil music. It has intrinsic in it remarkable powers of endurance which time shall not wither and place shall never bury in its womb. It has that special quality to inspire generations to come and reanimate and revitalize ages that otherwise would tend to fade into dismal forgetfulness. It has found a niche in the hearts of men, for the introductory lyric that adorns it is much more immortal than the mathematically sound fugue table that fills several pages in the YĀL-NŌŌL.

Just note the simple, inartistic artless format of :-

— நீல வானிலே நிலவுவீசவே!
மாலைவேளையே மதியோடாடுவோம்! —

These lines are as naive, as simple in form as Aerial's song in The 'TEMPEST' and Milton's 'Evening' in Paradise. Note these noble lines:

'Now came still Evening on, and Twilight grey
Had in her sober livery all things clad;
Silence accompanied; For beast and bird,
They to their grassy couch, these to their nests
Were slunk, all but the wakeful nightingale;
She all night long her amorous descant sung:
Silence was pleased. Now glowed the firmament
With living sapphires; Hesperus, that led
The starry host, rode brightest, till the Moon,
Rising in clouded majesty, at length
Apparent queen, unveiled her peerless light,
And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw ;..... —

Can't you capture the likeness that lingers in these lines and that of the opening lines of the Preface to the

YĀL NOOL? You have to, do so, by all means, should you endeavour to enjoy the beauty that resides in them. Your effort will reward you, and you would have learnt to appreciate true poetic beauty.

And as long as the mind survives on the face of the earth, so long shall such lines endure and be permanently etched in the mind of man in all climes.

FROM: YĀL - NŌŌL - PREFACE APPRECIATION

ஐங்கரன் கோயில் அமிர்தகழிக் கணித்தாய்ப்
பொங்கு கடலினுட் புகும்நீர் நிலையொன்று.
நீர் நிலையினுள்ளே நிகழ்ந்த அதிசயத்தைப்
பாரறியக் கூறும் பனுவ விதுவாகும்.

The estuarine scenery has been depicted in the best manner possible.

There in that golden land of Mattakalappu Township, in close proximity to the Ainkaran Temple, occurred this miracle. Note the loveliness that resides in the two quatrains that follow: his consummate artistry: his sinuous lines running like breakers up the creeks and kalappuwas and liwayas; his ardent spirit, his longing for the coastline scenery. All these would have helped to formulate his philosophy of inner peace and joy. Please take note of his masterly handling of words and alliterations and rhythm. It is a glorious lyrical passage. Note the smooth gentle cadence —

மாசகன்ற மணிவிசும்பில் வயங்குகின்ற மதியம்
மலர்க்கிரண ஒளிபரப்ப வளருமிள வேனில்
வீசுதென்ற லொடுங்குடி விளையாடல் கண்டு
விண்ணகத்தார் மண்ணகத்தில் விளைவு கொளும் யாமம்.
அஞ்சிறைப் புள்ளொலியும் ஆன்கன்றின் கழுத்தில்
அணிமணியின் இன்னொலியும் அடங்கிய பின் நகராள்
பஞ்சியைந்த அணைசேரும் இடையாமப் பொருதிற்
பாணொடுந் தோணிமிசைப் படர்ந்தனனொர் புலவன்;

Spring has come and permeates the expansive, clear,
blue heavens ;

The moon shines in all her splendour.

The westerly zephyr dances hand in hand with 'the
calm and spangled sky..... And

The little boat floated on the bosom of the lagoon,
Even the Dewas would have longed to quit their
ethereal home and be on the earth.

Then come the swish of the wings of the birds,
the tinkling of the bells slung round the necks
of the calves.

It is almost midnight..... sleep prevailed ; and all
that mighty heart is asleep.

The little boat floated on the bosom of the lagoon—
In it were the poet and his bard.

The atmosphere, the tone, the motive and the
theme so grand — the little boat was driven.

'Startled by his own thoughts the poet drank deep
of the enchanting peace and perfect calm.' The poet in
Vip. conjures up marvellous pictures — mermaids and sea-
forms.

தேனிலவு மலர்ப் பொழிலிற் சிறைவண்டு துயிலச்
செழுந்தரங்கத் தீம்புனலுள் நந்தினங்கள் துயில
மீனவன் செலவின்றி வெண்ணிலவிறறுயில
விளங்கு மட்டு நீர் நிலையுள் எழுந்த தொரு நாதம் —
A shower of beauty !—

நில வானி லே
நிலவு வீச வே
மலை வேளை யே
மலைவு தீரு வோம்
சால நாடி யே
சலதி நீரு னே
பாலை பாடி யே
பலரொ டாடு வோம்.

நிலவு வீசவே மலைவு தீரு வோம்
சலதி நீரு னே பலரொ டாடு வோம் —

Repeat, repeat and be entranced.

என்ன எழுந்த அந்த இன்னி சைத் தீம் பாடலினைக்
கன்ன வெனக் கேட்டுக் களித்த புலவனுந்தன்
அன்பன் முக நோக்கி ஆகா இவ்வற்புதத்தை
என்னென்றுரைப்பேன் இசை நூற் பொருளுணர்ந்
தேன்.....

Note the picture conjured up.

என்ற பொழுதில் எழுவர் மடநல்லார்
நீருளிருந் தெழுந்து நின்றார் அரமகளிர்
ஆதலினால் மூப்பறியார் அந்தீங் குழலொலியும்
ஓதிய யாழின் ஒலியு மென மொழிவார்
Their Form — Clearly depicted
பைம் புனலின் மேற்படர்ந்த பாசினிகர் கூந்தலார்
அம்பொன்னின் மேனி அரையின் கீழ் மீன் வம்
செங்கமலம் போற்கரங்கள், திங்கள் மதி முகத்)
பொங்கிய புன்முறுவல் பூத்தார் புலமையார் (ழவர்)
பொன்னின் கபாட புரத்துறைவோம் ; மாவர்
தன்னிற் படிந்து சமனொளியைக் கும்பிடுவோர்
Their motive — Emotion astir—Seven e-moti
ஆடுவோம் பாடுவோம் ஆராத காதலினால்
வாடுவோம் பின்னர் மகிழ்வோம் நகை புரிவோம்
அச்ச முறுவோம் அடையாதார் தங்களை யாம்
இச்சை யறவே இழிந்துரைக்கும் நீர் மையேம்
உருத் தெழுந்து கோபிப்போம் உண்மை யுரைப்போம்
அருத்தியொடு வீரம் அறைவோம் வியப்புறுவோம்.
திங்கள் நிறைநாளிற் சேர்வோமிந் நீர் நிலையைக்
கங்குல் கழியுமுன்னே கார்படிந்த மைக் கடலைச்
சென்று யாஞ் சேர்வோம். எம் செய் கையிது வென்றார்
வந்த இசையின் வரன்முறையும் ஈங்கிதுவே. —

Here the poet sees the mermaids play their twang-
ling harps, and comb their green hair. Here has life a
dream quality. Here we have a fine riot of colour and
form — rich in colour, richer by far in form.

Note the enchanting effect produced by these words
ending in 'ஓம்' —

ஆடுவோம், பாடுவோம்
காதலினால் வாடுவோம்
பின்னர் மகிழ்வோம்
நகை புரிவோம்
அச்ச முறுவோம்
இழிந்துரைக்கும் நீர்மையேம்
கோபிப் போம்
வீரம் அறைவோம்
வியப்புறுவோம்
சேர்வோம் —

போக்கி-எங்கும் போகப்பண்ணி; பரப்பியென்றபடி.
கொண்டு-காமக்குறிப்பினால் உட்கொண்டு. கிழமை-உரிமை.

And note this from Vip —

கல்வியோ கரையற்றது: கற்பவரோ சில்வாழ்நாட்
பல்பிணிச் சிற்றறிவின் மாந்தர்; ஆதலின் கற்கப்படு நூல்கள்
இவையெனவும், அவற்றைக் கற்குமாறு இதுவெனவும், கற்றதனால்
எய்தும் பயன் இதுவெனவும் வல்லார் வாய்க் கேட்டுணர்ந்து
கற்றற்குரிய காலத்திற் கற்கப்படுபவற்றைக் கற்று நெறிநின்று
நலனெய்தும் மாந்தரே வாழ்க்கைப் பயனை அடைந்தோராவார்.'—

Here is a period, a rhetorical exposition on the ends and means of the learning process. It is one single sentence — unbroken, uninterrupted; the thought content a single stream of ideas tightly and neatly linked so as to convey a complete thought — a perfect well-ordered notion: void of frayed edges or bursting seams. It assimilates an ocean wave which having had its origin in the middle of the ocean moves on and on, gathers momentum, and in the end bursts, as it were, on the shingly beach with added force. It is a periodic sentence, for the subject matter comes only at the end of the sentence — நலன் எய்தும் மாந்தரே வாழ்க்கைப் பயனை அடைந்தோர். Nature of knowledge: nature of the all too brief a span of human life. Hence time is valuable. The greatest works, among literary baggage, that contain the greatest treasures have to be chosen for the purpose of study: for acquiring a knowledge of the opinions held by the literati: the most apt place and time and device for acquiring knowledge: the wealth that knowledge is likely to bring in the end — these the seeker after truth shall take into account before commencing his investigations as regards his true life's concern. What a compacted period!

It may be asked: what are the desiderata in prose writing? A prose writer will have to 'discover the right word, the right touch and the right key, the right theme; the right treatment. The word must be precise: that is to say, there must be the proper adjustment of the word to

What a galaxy of sounds that resound with a determination to act in various ways awakening the emotions: a resolve to sing and dance, to wilt and wither, to enjoy, to laugh, to be affrighted, to be abhorrent, to be enraged, to be heroic, to wonder and to be awed! Vip- is no shattering critic, no iconoclast. What a haunt of stir and stress, of exhilaration and ebullience is his brood of dust? He felt ill-at-ease among his prosy village folk. No wonder he sought the company of the learned and the erudite. He believed more in producing light than in heat. He was all out to preserve, not to destroy.

Vip's prose is redolent of the prose style of the eminent Tamil literary commentators such as Nachchinar-kiniyar, Senavarayar, Adiyarku Nallar, Ilampooranar and others. Here is an example from Adiyarkunallar:

'மண்ணைத் தொலைத்த புகழினையுடையான், பண்ணைத் தொலைத்த மொழியின ராகிய மற்போலு முகத்தினையுடைய மடவார்தம் காதலால் உலகிற் கண்டேத்தப்படும் செவ்வே ளென்று அவனிசையைத் தமதாயத்தின் கட் பாராட்டிப் பரப்பிக் காமக்குறிப்பினால் உட்கொண்டு ஏத்துதற்குரியான்; அவன் யாரெனின், கோவலனென்று பெயர் கூறப்படுவா னென்க.'

'மண் டேய்த்த' என்றார், புகழ் வளரப்பூமி சிறுகலான்; மண் இடத்திற் சிறிது என்றார் வள்ளுவனாரும். புகழினான், எழுவாய். பண்டேய்த்த — பண்ணைக் கெடுத்த. செவ்வேளென்றார், வேள் இரு வராகவில். முருகவேளைச் செவ்வேளென்றது 'ஞாயிறு கடற் கண்டாங்கு' என்பதனால்.

its meaning. 'The one word for the one meaning; You have to select the right word amidst a multitude of words' — thus says Gustave Flaubert : —

'You will have to use terms that might just do. **The problem of style was there** — the unique word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, essay, or song absolutely proper to the single mental presentation or vision within.' The right symbol: the right sign, 'It is impossible to detach the form from the idea.' They are coterminous: one in extent: space, time and meaning — like unto the body and the mind: the inner cosmos and the outer cosmos.'

Says Schiller — 'The artist may be known rather by what he omits.' Words come crowding in swarms, and you have to pick and choose the right word for the right notion or idea. Eliminate the unsuitable words, and at the end will remain the right words.

Here is another instance of the eclectic, meticulous, elegant, slick, narrative prose style of Vip —

— இற்றைக்கு ஆயிரத் தெண்ணூறு ஆண்டுகளின் முன்னே, சோழ மன்னரது இராஜதானியாகிய காவிரிப்பூம் பட்டினத்திலே நடந்த ஒரு நிகழ்ச்சியை மனக் கண்ணினூற் காண்போமாக. இராஜ சபையிலே ஒரு நாடக அரங்கம் அமைக்கப்பட்டிருக்கிறது. குழல் வாசிப்போரும் தண்ணுமை யெனப் படும் மத்தளம் வாசிப்போரும் ஆடலாசிரியனும், இசையாசிரியனும், கவிஞனும் தத்தமக்குரிய இடங்களிலிருந்து கலைத் தொழிலியற்றப் பன்னீராண்டுப் பிராயத்தினளாகிய மாதவியென்னும் நாடக மகள் அரங்கிற் புகுந்து ஆடுகின்றாள்.

இவ்வாடலின் பயனாகக் கோவலன் என்னும் வணிகன் மாதவிமேற் காதல் கொண்டு தன் பொருளினையிழந்ததும், கற்புக் கரசியாகிய தன் மனைவி கண்ணகியோடு மதுரை மாநகர் புகுந்ததும், பொற் கொல்லனால் வஞ்சிக்கப்பட்டு அரசனையால் உயிர் துறந்ததும், ஒரு முலையிழந்த திரு மாபத்தினியாகிய கண்ணகியின் கட்டளைப்படி, தீக்கடவுள் மதுரை மாநகரையெரித்ததும், சேரன் செங்குட்டுவன் கண்ணகியாருக்கு கோயிலெடுத்ததும் பிறவும் சிலப்பதி

காரம் என்னும் பெருங் காப்பியத்தினுள்ளே இளங்கோவடிகளால் அழகாகக் கூறப்பட்டிருக்கின்றன. —

Here we have two distinct paragraphs: two distinct sentences; their form is a perfection in sentence formation; their words and phrases have been carefully stringed. The poise and balance of the period have been wrought out marvellously. And here we have precision — சுருங்கச்சொல்லல் —, word economy, no idle unwanted flourish of any sort, no ornate embellishments. But slic they are; they are elegant; they are chic, they are apt. They look as though they have been two distinct formulae in mathematics: sound and theme and thought content so accurately balanced.

Please do note this again:

— அரங்கேற்று காதையினுள்ளே அடிகள் சொல்லினூற் புனைந்த சித்திரத்தினே அக்காலத்திலிருந்த திறமை வாய்ந்த ஓவியனொருவன் அமராவதியிலே கல்வினூற் புனைந்திருக்கின்றான். அவ்வோவியத்திலே சகோடயாமுருவத்தை நாம் இன்றுங் காணலாம். அதனைப் பார்க்கும் போதெல்லாம், 'ஐயோ! இக்கருவி இன்று மொரு முறை பேசாதோ?' என நாம் நினைத்து மனம் வருந்துகிறோம். முத்தமிழ்ப் புலமை நிரம்பிய அடிகள் அரங்கேற்று காதையினுள்ளே இருபத்தைந்து வரிகளிலே சகோடயாழினைப் பேசவிக்கும் முறையைச் சொல்லுகிறார்.' —

Fastidious is the selection of his appropriate and rich words. — the diction is simple though ornate. These forms and sounds are worth noting. They impart the apt charm and the appropriate tone and mood to this extract. Here is his high-ranking artistry.

காதையினுள்ளே!
அமராவதியிலே
அவ்வோவியத்திலே
அரங்கேற்று காதையினுள்ளே.

The long 'ஏ's' do add a special vowel tone to the whole extract. Then come the soft 'ன்'s' and 'ல்'s'.

— சொல்லினுற் புனைந்து
கல்லினுற் புனைந்திருக்கின்றான்.
அதனைப் பார்க்கும் போதெல்லாம் —

And this too can be noted as regards 'form'. Two long simple sentence-paragraphs followed by a paragraph enriched with short sentences. This form not only gives the reader sufficient breathing space to regain his lost breath but it also provides him with an opportunity to assemble and collate his thoughts and to compare notes. Vip-does not make any effort to shut out the words of Sanskrit origin just as Marai Malai Adigal does. Marai Malai Adigal is a confirmed purist. He eschews all expressions of ariyan origin. Not so Vip-. Note the spontaneous use of such words as:

இராஜதானி இராஜசபை;

and beautiful gems of Tamil words used in a natural way. தண்ணுமை, இசை, பன்னீராண்டு பிராயத்தினள், அரங்கிற் புகுந்து, வஞ்சிக்கப்பட்டு, அரசன் ஆணை, திருமாபத்தினி, புனைந்த சித்திரம், ஓவியனொருவன், சகோடயாழினை.

Here is an extract from Marai Malai Adigal. Compare them.

'இனி, ஓர் அணுவாகிய உயிரை நாற் பொருட்டிரட்சியில் நிற்கும் மக்கள் காண வல்லுனரல்லர்; என்றாலும், விண்ணின் கட்பொன்னெயில் வட்டத்து எழுந்தருளியிருக்கும் அருகக் கடவுளே அதனைக் காண மாட்டான். இவ்வுயிர்கள் தத்தம் வினைகளுக்கு ஈடாகப் பல்வேறுருக்கள் எடுத்துத் தோன்றிய பின் எல்லாரானும் காணப்படா நிற்பர். (திருவாசகம்-விரிவுரை P. 228.)

Dr. U. V. Saminaitaiyer is not a purist. Note the flow of his simple narrative prose.

சோழ வளநாட்டிற் காவிரிநதி கடலோடு கலக்கும் சங்கமுக மென்னுந்துறையை யுடையதும் சோழர்களுடைய பழைய இராசதானியாகவுள்ளதும் பெரியோர்களாற் சிறப்பித்துப் பாராட்டிப் புகழ்ப்படுவதுமாகிய காவிரிப்பூம் பட்டினத்தில், இப்பர் கவிப்பர் பெருங்குடியரென்னும் மூவகை வணிகருட் பெருங்குடியர் குலத்தில் உதித்தோனாகிய மாசாத்துவானென்

பான்.....முதலியவற்றைச் செய்து இவ்வறத்தை ஒழுங்காக நடத்தி வருவாராயினர். The Iyer's prose is natural, lucid, supple and its periodicity is remarkable.

And here is a highly embellished ornate style from R. P. Sethupillai -

ஓசைக்கும் ஒலிக்குமுள்ள வேறுபாட்டை நுணுக்கமாக உணர்ந்தவர் தமிழர். எங்கும் நிறைந்த பரம்பொருளாகிய இறைவனை 'ஓசை ஒளியெலாமானும் நீயே; உலகுக்கு ஒரு வனாய் நின்றாய் நீயே,' என்று பாடிய திருப்பாட்டில் ஓசை வேறு ஒலி வேறு என்பது நன்கு காட்டப்படுகின்றது. தமிழுக்கே சிறப்பாக உரிய ஒலிகளும் அவற்றைக் குறிக்கும் எழுத்துக்களும் தமிழகத்தின் தனிப் பெருஞ் செல்வம்.'

Every one of these prose forms belongs to a class by itself. It is either narrative or descriptive or emotive. Commentaries are explanatory, logically composed criticisms of rare excellence, and are noted for their clarity of expression, and richness of thought patterns. This remark once made in defence of the long-winded archaic form of speech of Desmond Mac Carthy applies aptly to Vip-'s prose form. This is what Mac Carthy has said: 'Once, when a friend objected to his love of archaic forms of speech, he stammered out that for his part he wrote for 'antiquity'. He could not bring himself to write a tame sentence; he could never resist a fine old word. He delighted in the vigour and quaintness of seventeenth century English, and his mastery lay in using it to record homely intimate experience.'

With Vip- all this is true. He loved a lofty fanciful way of treating lofty events. He preferred the old word because of its solidity: its definitive thought content. It is articulate. He eschewed the newly introduced, newly coined dull as ditch water expressions and words. He chose to employ the old forms such as: போலே, முன்னே, பட்டினத்திலே; கண்ணினுற் காண்போம்-

These imperfect verbal forms were his chosen- எச்சவினை —

காதல் கொண்டு
தன்பொருளினே யிழந்தது—
மதுரை மாநகர் புகுந்ததும்
உயிர் துறந்ததும்
மதுரை மாநகரை எரித்ததும்
கோயிலெடுத்ததும் பிறவும்.

Here is an artistic way of piling up incomplete verb forms: verbal nouns. It has a charm of its own. அம் and உம் are musical so far as the cadence they produce is concerned.

Note: காணலாம்
பார்க்கும் போதெல்லாம்
அரங்கம் -

There is much dull. in it; much electric.

What poetic appreciation is —:
What poetic criticism is —.

I do not approve of arriving at the loveliness and charm of a beautiful flower by tearing it into its parts: calyx, petals, filaments, anthers, style, stigma etc. It is the work of the systematic botanist: a floral morphologist. An artist has to learn to see a 'thing whole' and appreciate the form, colour and pattern, the order of its arrangement and the wholeness and fullness and the 'something more'—the shower of shimmering beauty that in its totality resides in it.

A poem has to be appreciated as a whole: the beauty of thought content, the beauty of form, the beauty of colour, the sweetness of odour; the lilt, the cadence; the decorative ornamentations that embellish it and make it rich in thought, rich in emotion, rich in feeling, rich in its entrancing beauty, rich in its cerebral qualities and thought content.

There is something enigmatic, something that befuddles the connoisseur of art as he attempts to enjoy the entrancing beauty of the Preface of the YĀL-NŌŌL, and wade through the deeply ponderable ponderosity of the

mathematical calculations — the brave horde of numbers: the formidable array. When you prance through it as you would when you ride along a rugged road, you get the shock of your life.

The poet is a product of his ethos, his environmental MILIEU, his physical and social relations, his outlook on life, his inward intuitions, his outward expressions — his perceptions, his feelings, his impulses, his thoughts, his ideas, his urges, his aspirations, the goal that he seeks, the joy that beguiles him. The poet is, in reality, a thing fed and nourished wholly by his several environmental factors: his ethos.

Let us take a plant and a poet. They are both natural objects: the one no less animated than the other. And we are prone to ask the question: are they basically the same? Isn't there a fundamental similarity between the two entities? And at the same time, isn't there a fundamental difference subsisting and subsuming the two distinct events in Nature? Both the plant and the poet are truly of a piece. Both have growth and development. They manifest a definite biological goal to seek. What recks them both is the **problem of survival**. Both occupy a definite niche in Nature's pattern of existence; a clearly defined dimension. Looking at them, at first sight, you are able to recognise them as different, distinct entities.

Both take in water, air, nutriment of a sort; they exchange gases, they select their own characteristic needs; they consume them, assimilate them, build them into their own peculiar configuration. Each has its own inward, its own speciality: its outward: an **inner cosmos**, and an **outer cosmos**. The poet appears to us to be much more than a plant. In making this lopsided judgement we are prejudiced; we are partial, we are in a partisan spirit. One is vegetative, the other animate. The poet differs from the plant considerably, at least in one salient respect. Each one of them exists in its own right. But yet the plant is not that near to perfection, to completion that the poet is. The poet has emotive trends: he feels, he is prone to

become passionate. He can think; he can shape his ideas, beget thought patterns; he can create strange, quaint, newer and newer ideas. He has patterned thinking. He has all these and much more. Like his cave-dwelling ancestors he is capable of **creating thoughts and making forms**. In **brief he thinks**, he abstracts, he feels passionately; his experiences are richer by far, richer than ever before. He is an individual; he has a definite identity. He has come closer and closer to the creative **elan**: the '**elan, vital**': the creative 'life-force'. In course of time as he mellows into fruitfulness he would vie with the **sublime power that be**. He is the creator of ART: of art forms that have a survival value. And being a creator and having been sublimed, he is at the same time an art critic. In the absence of the critical skill how can he hope and aspire to be a poet? The poet has to learn, to surrender the divine variety — the art forms — to the divine unity. This is what the poet sees:

'All things by immortal power
Near or far
Hiddenly
To each other linked are.
That thou canst not stir a flower without trembling of a star.'

Both the plant and the poet are biologically viable things. They have come to live; they aspire to survive. Why? They strive to become individuals; and the poet's striving potent is much more, infinitely more than the plant's. Both are the products of the ethos to which they belong; from which they have drawn sustenance: physical, mental and vital.

Now let us be more concerned with the poet. The poet belongs to his parents. He has his past in him; the past of his ancestors clings to him. He is the child of his community, his village, his township, his country, his race, his nation, the entire world community. He has been chipped and chiselled and shaped and moulded by his inward cosmos and his outward cosmos: his inward aura

of forces and his outward aura of forces — to wit his inner self: his speciality, nay his personality.

The poet's art is intrinsically his own, and it belongs to his community, his race, his people, and his social group. In fact it belongs to the world of connoisseurs — those who are capable of tasting it selectively, and enjoying it critically. His art consists of **natural products: his creations**: rich in form, ornate and embellished, perfectly rigged, and in no less perfect trim. It is the property of the **world community of the appraisers of art**. The proof of the pudding is in the eating.

His art is the product of his natural environment. It would seem that the poet is, to all intents and purposes, a purveyor of thoughts, feelings, pugnacity and wit, and of beauty and truth. The commodity of the trade is a very, very valuable product. He has dreams to sell, and he rigs them up into words, and signs, and they are ready for sale. Should you crave to have them, you can buy them. You can make them your own. Then **you would have grown richer by far**.

A plant is a perfection in form and configuration, and definitive in its own right. So is a poet. Their goals and aspirations, deeply inherent, belong to different dimensions. The plant has to live, to propagate the species, and prolong the process of living, adapting itself to the several changing environmental circumstances. It has habits and ways of immense survival value. In other words **it has to continue to be**. To beget a definite form, to function in a definite way. Contained in a mustard seed is a mustard plant, not a tomato. Why? கட்டு மட்டாள கட்டுக் கோட்டி!

The poet has 'something more'. He aspires to be of a higher '**motif**.' He is artistic in temperament. He makes: he creates '**something more**' — a something, much in excess of what he discovers in nature. He helps barber and trim and prune his own individual, characteristic MILIEU — his thing of beauty — a joy for ever. There is certainly a greater sensibility, a greater awareness in the

poet than in the plant; and it might, in course of time, due to a planned course of action, mental effort and unceasing exercise of the senses and feelings, attain the status of a feeling of grandeur and sublimity — this is the **subliming process** - blessing - that a true poet goes through.

There were occasions when Vip—having been sublimed rose far above the status of a scholar. He rose to the enviable height of an epic poet — a classicist. But he never did wrench himself away from Nature and commit at any stage an act of violence. He was true to nature. His sensibilities are a patent of gentility; his thoughts and ideas, though much more severely patented, help form the imperishable riches of the world's assemblage of literati. They seldom or never perish. They live.

Vip—'s poetical compositions are his creations: they belong to an age; they even might go far, far into many more ages yet to come. They bear the ineffaceable stamp of permanency. With respect to the speciality or personality of a poet this is what Scott James has said and it merits our close scrutiny and study:

'So in the last resort when we know all that we can about the milieu, about the race, about the family, about heredity, there will still remain an elusive quality which is individual, distinctive, an element which the critic must track to its source in the only place where it can be found — **in the author's personality.**'

In Vip—'s personality [we have a personage, all of whose parts live, moving consciously towards a higher end — a divine calm. He has a mind of his own which reveals itself only in flashes; and which dwells undiscovered within him. It is his hidden splendour — his 'Self'. It is the 'wisdom and spirit of the universe.'

In the Tamil Literary world Vip— is an important junction. In him we discover two trends. Like Janus he has two faces: the classic trend of the sangam period, and the modern trend represented by Subramanya Barathi. He

combines both these trends in his 'YĀL NŌŌL Preface,' and in his 'Mathanga Choolamani.' In the 'YĀL NŌŌL Preface' he combines both lyrical beauty and classical conformity. And these two are so beautifully blended that so far as thought content is concerned a blessing and a tranquillity seem abroad.

'The night seemed fanned
by an immortal wing'

— J. Masfield.

The 'Preface' has passion; it is steeped in peace. In it romanticism meets and blends with realism. And having composed an immortal lyric Vip— felt himself in clover: passionate, vigorous, yet brim-full of a sublime calm.

The great mystic Boehme has classified men under three categories: the rind—men, the pulp—men and the core—kernelmen. Some live on the surface of things, at the instinctive level. Some have got to the pulp: the practical men; some others are at the core or kernel: the central life within. There are very few kernel men. Most men are the practical men of the world. They are of the world, and in the world. They are the so-called business men of the world. The core—men have a mystical apprehension. Theirs is the 'spirit-life.' The mystics belong to this group. Going on Boehme's basis of the division of men into the three categories, let us attempt to discover the 'Self' of Vip. Should you attempt to do so, you will have to have the true earnest of a genuine seeker after TRUTH. Like unto a Chinese nature painter you will have to watch the yew tree, for instance, by day and by night; in all the seasons. And then like the artist you would have got at different flashes of his many-faced personality.

You will have to watch him steeped in his various moods: his instinctive mood, his intellectual or rational mood and his mystic and transfiguring mood. Of course you will have to pry into his several moods like unto a Boswell into his mentor, Dr. Johnson. You have to have the patience and prudence and interest of the Chinese

artist, who with great effort, begets his artistry. When his artistry gets awakened and rekindled his talent is at its highest. Then he loses himself in his theme. He looks into the life of things: into the spirit of his theme; and then he is one with it.

Hence watch him in all his moods: his instinctive moods, his intellectual moods, his transfiguration and his transports. Vip- was most of the time in his intellectual mood. His transfigurations came out in flashes on rare occasions. In his YĀL-PREFACE we get a glimpse of his transfigured self. In his mathematical reasoning he is at the height of his intellectual mood. In the kitchen when he supervises and assists the cook in preparing the 'curries' and 'payasam,' in seasoning the food and adding the last pinch of salt and mustard and onions and condiments he is steeped in his instinctive mood.

While occupied in his educational activities: conducting lessons, lecturing at seminars he was shuttlecocking as it were, between the instinctive and intellectual moods. His mystic mood transfixes him and inspires him, and on such occasions he gets transfigured and transported.

He represents both the last sunset splendour of the sangam era and the peep of dawn of the Subramaniya Barati era. In the YĀL PREFACE 'the old enchantment lingers in the honey heart of earth' and he is able to discover the secret of the 'starry dynasties at night.' A mystic apprehends spirit-life. He is thrilled with life hidden from the light of day. There is 'a blind dense with revelation,' brim-full of a sublime calm.

(6)

VIPULANANDA HIS EDUCATIONAL METHOD: INSPIRATION, ALSO COLD PLACID CALCULATION

In his ardour to teach he swung between two extremes: movement and rest. He was at times as vibrant with a dynamic energy like electricity, and more often as adamant and static as the massive, awe inspiring Mt. Kailash.

On one occasion after he had returned to Shivapuri from his sojourn among the Himalayas and his pilgrimage to Mt. Kailash in Tibet, Vipulananda delivered a talk, shared his feelings and his ecstatic mood with his friends and devotees and admirers in Batticaloa, gathered in a vast concourse at the Anaipanthi Vivekananda Hall. And Vipulananda went into ecstasies when he rendered, rather chanted, this hymn. He 'unbars his mortal house.'

He enters into a state of rapt vision —

பவளமால் வரையில் பனிபடர்ந்தனையதோர்
படரொளி திருநீறும்
குவளை மாமலர்க் கண்ணியும் கொன்றையும்
துன்று பொற் குழல் திருச்சடையும்
திவள மானிகை சூழ்தரு தில்லையுள் திரு நடம் புரிகின்ற
தவள வண்ணனை நினைதொறும் என்மனம்
தழல் மெழுகொக்கின்றதே!

When he drew nigh the end of the song he was, as it were, lost in an ocean of, shall we say, ecstatic feelings, vibrant with joy indescribable. His external bodily expressions were those of a person fully transfixed, and mentally transported and transfigured. His eyeballs rolled, bulged and were lost under the beetling brows. Often his eyes were tightly shut as in deep slumber. Certainly he must have got the image of the whole of Mt. Kailash into his self, and his thoughts and feelings must have been stupendous and have gone to roost in his inner being — vast, expansive, eminently divine, and resplendent with ecstasy.

Well, this was the sort of religious feeling that he dwelt on, more than once, when his theme was poetical, literary or educational. The audience in its entirety was emotion-bound — emotion-tainted — and being fully ecstatic, swayed from side to side, and more often was stock still and was carried on the crest of an emotive force. It was a positive and apposite stance which genuine ecstasy brought upon them. It will have to be noted that Vipulananda, often and often, 'went into religion and out of religion, into society and out of society, not from the motives which impel men in general but to feel what is all like.'
—M. Arnold.

Isn't religion a matter of deep experience?
Not a mere garb to don? 'It is neither a theology nor a theosophy. It is more than all this. It is a discipline, a law, a yoke, a 'yoga', an indissoluble engagement.'
—Joubert. A wholeness: a poornam

It is self-imposed discipline: not a mere insignia; an external symbol: neither superimposed by authority nor even by sovereign power. One is free to choose, to decide what one wants to be.

It is an unbridled urge, a longing, a craving to cherish a perfection in thinking in one's breast; an unceasing desire 'to touch the stars, to

possess the infinite. Divine moments, hours of ecstasy when thought flies from world to world, penetrates the great enigma, breathes with a respiration, large, tranquil, and profound from that of the ocean and hovers serene and boundless like the blue heavens.' — Joubert.

This is the sort of religion that his pupils imbibed, nay bibbed from Vipulananda, and, which his vast audiences now and again experienced and enjoyed.

**AND HERE IS ANOTHER
INSTANCE
OF
VIPULANANDA ENTHRALLING**

THE HEARTS of his hearers. University Hindu Students' Movement in Batticaloa headed by Dr. A. Kandiah and Prof. C. Sundaralingam.

It was altogether a learned gathering, far too august, erudite, grand, much more pretentious and ostentatious than it ought to have been. Vipulananda was on the dais. Prof. C. Sundaralingam was then a force among the University undergraduates. He too was on the dais. Dr. A. Kandiah, professor of the Chemistry Department, presided.

Ostensibly an irresolvable question cropped up. It was this: which of the paths, the one chalked out by 'Siddandha' or the one indicated by 'vedanta' is the greater? nobler? sublimer?

A very knotty point! A lot of wrangling, very little sense. A lot of steam emanated — mere scorching, scaryfying, scalding effusion: all; of no effect: not productive of results: not satisfying. There seemed to be no way out of the tangle: no solution: no palpable answer. Prof. Sundaralingam with his mathematical acumen and Dr. Kandiah with his doctorate in Chemistry must, in all probability, have seen stars. For here is a different and quaint area brimming with the experience of thinking minds

belonging to several centuries gone by. Only a Sankarachariya would have resolved the issue.

The youth were boisterous, clamorous. Why then have we this conflict in Hinduism? Is it not an irresolvable knotty question? An enigmatic poser? The personal and the impersonal aspect of the Divine Theme are involved in it. Jesus, gave the answer once. It was this: 'I and my Father are one.' But none took him seriously then, and none takes him into account even now, at this distance of time. They say: He is very, very impractical. He has not fully understood the ways of the world. An easy and comfortable tenor to adopt when one is dabbling in all sorts of messy ways of living and thinking.

When you can't follow his tenets such as: Go, sell all that thou hast, give it to the poor; follow me and be a beggar; kill not; love thy enemy as thyself etc. You can't be a professing Christian. You are not prepared to follow him. We, in a large way, want to saddle ourselves with name and fame, wealth and pelf, power and glory and so many other encumbering attachments: all burdens unbearable. Vipulananda used to say: We are all 'குங்குமம் சுமந்த கழுதைகள்'. We are all donkeys carrying each a pack of 'kum-kum': Cosmetic rouge, which is of very little use to the animal — the beast of burden.

Vipulananda used another very popular proverb.

'கூரை ஏறி கோழி பிடியாதவர்
வானம் ஏறி வைகுந்தம் போனாராம்'

He who is incapable of climbing over to a roof to catch a rooster, can he dare to make an attempt to climb up into Vykuntham?

This is what most of our preachers of religious doctrines are attempting to do. So Vipulananda asserted: The doctrines and dogmas are all rungs in the ladder to divine experience. Should you feel like omitting one rung and getting on to the other, you can try it. Should you succeed in your endeavour, so much the better. That is

all. Surely you can't afford to knock down the rungs by which you have scaled the ladder. Be it as it may, adopt whichever way that appeals to you. Be it the Hindu way, be it the Buddhist way, be it the zen way, be it the way of the Christ, be it the path pointed out to you by Nabi Mohammed. Every one of them has a deep-based bedrock of pure knowledge — experiential understanding and pure unsullied feeling. If you happen to be an outward looker, hankering after offices, rituals and exigeses — சடங்குகள் — symbolism in religious thinking — should externals satisfy you, then adopt the sidhantic way of discipline. If you are prone to be an inward looker, plunge into your self, adopt the vedic and sufistic way of finding peace, solace, and an inward satisfaction. — a clearer, nearer and surer way to spiritual bliss and mental harmony. The former path is more circuitous than the latter. The former dissipates mental energy, the latter conserves spiritual energy — mainly psychic and consolidated energy — intuitional peace: inner harmony.

Vipulananda's purpose in inspiring his pupils to adopting a religious way of life was to liberate them from the crippling stranglehold of cast-iron, steely cold, bleached-bone orthodoxy. It would seem that the majority of the students who were from the North — Jaffna — and who participated in the great conference were religiously orthodox, hide-bound Saivites. There was nothing wrong in that way of life provided it was not slim in its morality and serve as a mere surface veneer. You can't say one thing, profess one discipline, but act in just the opposite way ethically. You can't profess to be an adherent to 'ahimsa' — கொல்லாமை — and wring your neighbour's neck or put a bullet into him for any reason whatsoever. The conference was apparently satisfied to the last man. How deep-seated and genuine was the satisfaction, it was very difficult even to surmise. In the wake of it came the horrendous holocausts, shootings, murders and pillory ridicules. The conflict was **seemingly dissolved**, the obstructing issue annulled. And 'shanti' — peace-reigned supreme.

Bakti — characteristic of natural religion — is great, warm and pragmatically satisfying, edifying and soul-appeasing. But 'bakti' must be intrinsic, genuine, natural and should help one to lead an ORDERLY, disciplined, prudent life: not harming oneself, not harming one's neighbours; having regard to oneself, having regard to one's neighbour's rights, his belongings, his feelings, his opinions, his way of thinking. Know ye this, that your neighbour also has the right to have feelings, sensations, sufferings and sorrows; hopes and aspirations. He alos ran.

For most men religion is one thing and life another. Never were they one: they were like Wemmick in 'Great Expectations': two persons in one. At the office a business, so and so, harsh and stern, and at home a softer person of a kindly temperament. It was in most cases a split existence: a Dr. Jekyll and a Mr. Hyde existence. A man will daub himself with holy ash and sandal wood paste; he would be clad in ochre loin cloth, display a shock of matted hair, and be adorned in a 'rudraksha mālā', a silver or golden shiva linga emblem etc. This he would be at one instant, but at the very next he would most unconscionably, without the slightest compunction, rob a cooperative store, plunder an opulent, affluent person, or even send a lethal weapon into the heart of his neighbour. Vipulananda's Saivism or for the matter of that of any-ism is a ceaseless profession of the great fundamental ethics at the base of all religions. It is the 'மேன்மை கொள் சைவ நீதி' - அன்பு மாரக்கம் — the way of love adumbrated by Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount. Man today has been driven from 'bakti' to a life of violence. It is a shift from a life of devotion to a life of destruction. Man's mind has been fooling him and cheating him all the time.

Be it known that 'to witness all spectacle with appropriate emotions is the aim of all culture.' That was the way with Wordsworth; that was the sentiment that served as a sure guide to Vipulananda. He would wish 'not to teach lessons or impose dictates on his pupils or

even to stimulate us to noble ends; but to withdraw the thoughts for a little while from the mere machinery of life, to fix them with appropriate emotions on the spectacle of those great facts in man's existence which machinery affects on the great and universal passions of men, the most general and interesting of their occupations and the entire world of nature.' — **Walter Pater.**

Vipulananda is unique. He is of a class by himself. He sees nature full of feeling, surging with sentiment, and spilling over with excitement. He sees in the characters of Shakespeare (see his 'Mathangachoolamani') the men and women of the world. They are part and parcel of nature. They are passionate; they are bubbling over with excitement. He sees them in strange groups: Romeo and Juliet; Shylock the Jew: the lover of money, the lender of money, the king among usurers. Shylock sees moneys and no other: how money can work miracles; he hates the Christian spendthrifts. He is devoid of tender feelings. And yet he argues: Hasn't a jew the very same feelings, passions, sentiments, hopes and aspirations as a Christian? His argument holds good.

In 'Othello' Vipulananda saw a story of intrigue: the story of 'purpose, courage and valour.' In Desdemona he found 'a symbol of man's ideal, the supreme value of love.' What a world — a work-a-day world of men and events, of intrigue and diplomacy, of conspiracy and courage. In 'Julius Caesar' he sees the ideal hero of Nietzsche — a man who fought, who conquered, who crushed the enemy, who rode rough-shod over his fellow men, who was fired by the one single ambition: to conquer, to consolidate; to build up an empire, to be crowned the emperor. He was a collosus under whose legs crept petty men. All petty men have to be mean, dirty, cringing slaves — a Nietzschean doctrine.

But then 'what a fall was there my countrymen! Then you and I and everyone fell.' That was the part played by all-powerful Fate. Caesar was assassinated. The Empire collapsed like a house of cards. Only Caesarism

survived. It wreaked vengeance. And, imperial Rome fell in all her pomp and glory. That was a fall: the fall of a nation, a power of might and main — a power founded and structured on ambition floundered and perished.

Here, in the fall of Caesar, Vipulananda saw feeling mounting; inordinate desire and ambition rearing their heads like mountain pines only to be blown down by a devastating thunder storm. Why care a tinker's damn at all about this rise and fall of petty humanity? Life has certainly become a nightmarish existence should man — whoever he be — fail to see the reality, 'rtam' of existence.

In his translation of certain extracts from 'Julius Caesar' what a noble place he assigns to 'Death'!

அஞ்சினார் க்கு சதமரணம்
அஞ்சாதாரக் கொரு மரணம்.

Superb is not the word for it. Though a Sadhu by choice and profession, Vipulananda lived through all the vibrant throbs that assailed men's hearts. Every chord was struck, and every feeling was aroused even to the height of passion. The 'nine tastes' — capacity to feel — found sufficient and adequate material to cloy them. Even as a translator, Vipulananda was not merely, literally translating the thing from one tongue to another. He was much more than a translator of languages; he was a transposing instrument, transmuting emotions, feelings and passions. While engaged in this noble task of transferring emotions and ideas from language to language he was seated, as if it were, on a mighty mount of feelings — feelings rich, varied; feelings galore. But never did Vipulananda have a descent; neither did he experience a fall, like unto Caesar's, except towards the close of his life. And his life was all too brief a career; he was, then, stricken and laid low by palsy.

Seeing him suffering and lying ailing on his death bed simulating a graven image in mahogany, one would have been reminded of this immortal extract from 'Those Barren Leaves' of Aldous Huxley.

'And as the flesh sickens the spirit sickens, manifestly. Finally the flesh dies and putrefies, and the spirit presumably putrefies too; and there's an end... with all its by-products; God and justice and salvation and all the rest of them.'

Too frank, too true, and very, very brutally frank an account like that of a child. I, for one, can go on repeating these lines, for they remind me of the evanescence of man, the arrogant Ozymandias — the arrogant big-bang'.

It should be said of Vipulananda in true earnest: Effort he had; endeavour he did have, scholarship he had; ability far above the normal, he possessed: but he appeared to be lacking in one regard that was so with most scholars — he lacked in 'absolute sincerity' for he was some-what of a pedant.

His people, his henchmen, his servile followers were mostly of this class: all insincere men and women — his 'parivarams'—of petty pedants who went under the garb of 'learned pundits' and vidvans. They were, some of them, very servile and cringing in their attitudes. He was lionized far too much so that they may gain their own ends. He caught the infection from them — from those who taught in his national schools. His, so called great admirers, were hardly sincere and they — all of them lacked in frankness. Many of them were self-seekers, self-servers. His candour was to some extent smudged.

(7)

VIPULANANDA THE EDUCATIONALIST

Vipulananda's educational system was simple; yet wholesome, practical and natural. Never did he preach, for preachment was not his way. Never did he sermonize, for he never even dreamt of persuading others to his way of thinking. Never did he imitate the Public School system obtaining in Eton, Harrow, Rugby and other Public Schools. He hated cant, he abjured snobbery of any sort; he deplored pedantry; he discounted any form of formal religious education. He was not dogmatic. Dogmatizing was not his way. He had no special doctrines to inculcate like the pragmatism of William James, C. S. Peierce and John Dewey. He had a comprehensive culture.

His method of approach was perfectly liberal. Men like Dr. Arnold of Rugby insisted on a clearly defined formula for bringing up young men in a way that they might be fit to administer the colonies as the best governors, governor-generals, Marshals, civil servants in the overseas British Empire; at their best they were intended to serve as glorified civil servants and administrators in a small way. Leonard Woolf is an apt example.

Vipulananda's scheme of Education was that which Ponce de Leon adopted to instruct Gargantua; and the Guru in the Thaitthriya Upanishad adopted to teach his pupils — 'sadhakas.'

In his scheme **nothing was neglected**: nothing concealed. It was basic. It began at the beginning. Every aspect of the pupil's development — physical, mental, spiritual — was noted, improved upon, given ample opportunities to develop and attain to its fullest stature. **The body was to be strengthened, the mind was to be so cultivated as to be alert and sensitive. A fine edge was to be set upon the pupil's wit. Orderliness was the hallmark** of a good student. Good order was always maintained. The young student was to be disciplined. He was 'combed, curled, trimmed, perfumed and rigged out', for the dress proclaims the man. 'Then, after three hours of lecture, (lessons) the students went into the meadows, where they played at the ball, most gallantly exercising **their bodies**, as formerly they had done their minds. And sport was as little an infliction as study. All **their play was but in liberty**, for they left off when they pleased, and that was commonly when they did sweat over all their body, or were otherwise weary. Then were they very well **wiped and rubbed**. They shifted their shirts, and walking soberly, went to see if dinner was ready...

'Then came music; and last they **prayed unto God the Creator**, in falling down before him and strengthening their faith towards him and glorifying him for his boundless bounty.'

Thus was sketched an education which might **have befitted a great king.** — C. Whibley

Rabelais approved this system. And Vipulananda was no less an admirer of it. This was the **Ponocratic programme of education**. It was simple, yet very efficacious. It was of the liberal type, divested of all dogmatism, and doctrinal entanglements. It had a tearing down of any surviving traditional veils and sanctities: It was Naturalism in toto. No hide and seek: no sordid conventions. Vipulananda believed in the Ponocratic system of Rabelais and had ample faith in the Upanishadic system too. This is what Rabelais has said:

'Knowledge without conscience is but the ruin of the soul.' Here is a great thought that captivated the heart of the great Educationist that Vipulananda was. But despite all these good points that may be noted in his system there was patent **one glaring defect**. When the system was put into practice the flaw surfaced. And that was that he laid considerable stress on the **'pandara religious mendicant or sadhu—a begging friar. Sannithana aspect of education'** that was prevalent in Tamil Nadu in the 1920^s. Every orphan child that sought refuge in the Ramakrishna Mission Boys' Home, which made a haven of hope and an orderly ashrama for the child's evolution of its great aspirations in life, was a **'Sivanadiyar.'** He was at best a **'pandara sannithanam'**—a disciple belonging to the **'pandara sannithi'**—a hermitage. Perhaps Vipulananda got this notion from the **'pandara pillais'** or **'thambirans'** and **'pandarams'**—**'Sadhakas'**—of the Saiva Atheenams of South India. **The system in a way bred hypocrisy.**

To me—perhaps I am under a crippling prejudice against the **'pandara sannithana'** system—this notion of **'pandaram'** is **revolting and repulsive to my good sense**. This is my personal feeling. Perhaps that is the sort of system of discipline obtainable in all seminaries and novitiates: Buddhist, Christian, Saivite or for the matter of that, of any religious order. The youth—poor chaps—were caught tender, and were **botched or bungled**. It may be that many a flower has to bloom and wither before a grain is ripened. But what tremendous sacrifice at the expense of many an innocent, **free soul!** The child in some **'Homes'** was given a completely deformed, disjointed, and dislocated training, and way of life. He loses the crux of life, namely **growing up in a freer and sublimer atmosphere**. His is a cramped way of life: the child crushed so tender, and crumpled in its early childhood suffers in his own despite. He was not what mother Nature would have intended him to be.

WHEN I see a child close-cropped, a cross or **'sebamalika'** or **'rudraksha'** chain slung round his head

very early in life I beget a repulsive feeling. I am allergic to these distorted forms in nature. Distant from Nature, they are mere caricatures, especially when done on one who has no other choice than to suffer the ignominy of being a mendicant. Whatever the religious persuasions might be of a child—a child should never and can never have a religious persuasion, all his own—he shall not be deformed in any way: converted; head shaven, half-naked, an insignia, charmed thread, slung round his neck: thus being prepared to become a novice, a **'sadhaka,'** fit enough to enter a seminary or an ashrama or an **'andy-madama.'** Instances there are of youths who after two weeks of catechising, get converted, get married to a girl in the faith of the sect concerned, and pushed as it were into the turmoil of worldly life.—a crow tossed upon stormy wings. And life on earth turns out to be life in the grip of poverty; and borne on the optimism of a passion-tainted ardour to lead a sex-based life, the poor devil is doomed for life. I am prone to take the view that, any right-thinking person will not approve of this: what might be called the slaughter of the innocents and the ignorant.

Barring this abject aspect not of his general educational system but of the orphan child that came into the Sannithanam (orphanage) Vipulananda set his mind against snobbery, hypocrisy, ignorance and pedantry and strove to set free the youth from the stranglehold of an extraneous imperialist system of education that was aimed at producing third rate clerical servants, and pious hypocritical, servile tutors. It was a system of charity schools that sickens and has to be revolted against.

Vipulananda did live in thought; he did act, and he served the society into which he was born, to the best of his understanding, his ability and capacity. One great trait in his personality was that he plunged into himself, he teased out and disentangled all knotty issues and was in perfect concord with his conscience. Never did he belie himself. There were times when he felt that being hidebound by doctrines, dogmas, institutional bonds and trammels and

nodules that clouded all liberal thinking, and liberated acting, the child must be freed from extraneous credal bonds that curdle and cramp a child's intellectual growth and freedom to think liberally; and towards the tail-end of his life when the evening shadows were lengthening and barring his way for making further and sublimer progress — though they were mere shadows cast by a slowly creeping bodily ailment — he might have felt like shattering the bonds of an institutionalized, narrow, hidebound ashrama life. He had more of the robust vedantic way of thinking, though he clung to saiva sithandhism in all his ritualistic ways. His convictions were firm and unshaken as regards such thinking points as 'paramātman' — the universal soul —, sidhārthman — the individual soul —, creation, naturalism, universalism, humanism, expressionism and other similar subjects. Even though he was more prone to think of Saivism as a practical, pragmatic way of discipline he was brutally attached to, and cherished the natural trends in life and human behaviour. **The world was real and natural for him: far too real to be lost sight of.** It was the reality and the bond: the 'maya' or nature aspect of existence that can never be lost sight of, neglected or annulled or rebutted. It is the external shell — the rind — of existence, and is at best **the essence of it: the core of reality.**

At this distance of time, I now can remember the day when Vipulananda met sadhu Sithanaikutty. Sithanaikutty was a genuine 'siddha' who had made Karativu his place of residence — the only worldly attachment he is said to have had in his life time. He had no ashrama as such. He dwelt in a cadjan hut; and an elderly lady provided him with his slender needs. We were under the impression that this lady, Kāli, was his wife. His hut stood on fairly extensive premises very close to the sea beach: a bare sandy tract where, in years to come, there were planted some coconut and margosa trees. Sithanaikutty was an ebony black slouching figure, bald-pated, with piercing eyes, sharp as the sacred vel of Skanda, almost naked but for the semblance of a loin cloth and 'Kaupeenam'. He had a 'vaddukāi' paunch, resembling a water pot. He usually

carried a stick and a reed flute on which, when in a jolly, gay mood he entertained you to an eerie, strange, outlandish tune. He reminded me of the 'Pied Piper of Hamelin'.

He seldom adorned himself with the customary religious insignia of a 'nāmam' or 'holy ash' or sandal wood paste. He chewed betel and nuts, and occasionally betook himself to arrack. He addressed whomsoever he met in the direct unconventional way, calling him 'டேய்' — you fellow — rather an informal, crude, yet endearing way of address. For instance he called my father when he came home: டேய் கமிலாயா! Dei Kailaya! That was his way. Of greeting any person. It was a tender salutation.

And it so happened that he met Vipulananda one day on his wonted evening walk to the sea beach at Karativu. Accosting Vipulananda on the way this is what he — the Sadhu — is said to have said, staring at him, looking straight at him: 'And you; and you; and you! Once a Mail, now a Swami! And you are an ocean of learning. Go, go!... I know you! — டேய்! உன்னை எனக்குத் தெரியுமடா! Endearing address,

It would seem Sithanaikutty sorted out, disentangled the scholar in him; respected the scholar in him and whatever he considered the merits of sadhuhood in Vipulananda.

Long after, on a later occasion, when Vipulananda was conversing with us in Shivapuri, in his confidential and frank genre, in his quaint style of talking, this is what he remarked casually: I have come across two great men in my life in Ceylon: One is 'Yoga Swamigal of Jaffna, the other is Sidhānaikutty of Karativu. They are pure as beaten gold, and 'siddhas:' mystics — knowing men — in the true sense of the word. No pretensions, no inhibitions, no sham, no regard for status insignia of any sort, no religious garb, sans show of sanctity, sans gew-gaws of purity, sans pretended immaculacy. **They are the true children of nature who have, like unto Brother Lawrence, made their**

life, and so patterned it as to be in tone with nature. 'I have read of St. Francis, I have known Father Bonnel, I have met Ramana in India, I have heard and read a good deal about my master and mentor Sri Ramakrishna — from his direct disciples —: they are all of the genuine breed called: **Children of Nature**: Sans pretensions, sans scholarly learning, sans the taint of cant, sans any sort of organizational taint or bonds, or regimen and rigidity.'

The moment you organize a religious organization, and make an attempt to live an ostentatious, religious life of piety with an external rind pattern of behaviour which you endeavour to adhere to forcibly, it becomes regimented and at some stage or other, like unto the proverbial last straw, it tends to break the camel's back. In the midst of the city crowd — of Colombo or Madras — any confirmed Sadhu will be in danger of being misled and misdirected.

Vipulananda had a very liberal religious life code to follow with the exception of that which he copied from the Jesuit seminaries and the Saivite Atheenam's from South India. He had a definite vision of life. He was naturally drawn to them since he had come under the influence of Pu-Po-Vythilinga Desigar, Rev. Fr. Bonnel and Kunjuthamby Vathiyar of Kaluwanchykudy. The Home inmates (the orphans) of the R. K. M. Ashrama were rigged up and modelled after the 'pandara sannithanams' of the South Indian Saiva Atheenams. Nishka-gave them a fish-egg diet.

When I think of this scheme of modelling the 'Home' on the Pandara Sannithana Atheenams of South India, it would appear there is nothing far too harmful in his having adopted the way of discipline that obtained in the South Indian Saiva Atheenams. And this is my after thought; I value it. The system was quite in order in a Tropical land where a bare clean body and spotlessly clean loin cloth easily washable are all that one needed by way of clothing. The food was vegan — not too abstemious, with a dash of curd and ghee, and plenty of dhal.

Vipulananda's Saivism was broad-based on one's pristine sense of appreciation of **beauty and truth** which one imbibed while listening to and rendering and chanting the immense wealth of 'Saiva Hymns' — the பன்னிரு திருமுறைகள் — that became the literature of devotion of humanity. Rev. G. U. Pope, Rev. Caldwell, Rev. Fr. Beschi — வீரமாமுனிவர் — among the western scholars in Tamil, had a tremendous regard and worth for these hymns of the great saiva saints — நாயன்மார் நால்வர், திருமூலர், அருண கிரிநாதர் — திருவள்ளுவர் apart. They are equally great.

It is no wonder that such a genuine and great lover of Tamil Classical literature — poet, and literary critic as Vipulananda was, — should have placed such a high premium on the influence of the Saiva Sacred Hymns, on the devotional (bakti) aspect of the personality development of man. Perhaps it was more natural than any other, being chock-full of feelings of devotion — externalization of 'self.'

So, of an evening, calm and serene, it was not unusual to see the students and Vipulananda and the teachers of Shivananda assembled in an august congregation and Kulandaivel, now of Pannisai Pulavar fame and recognition and his brother Subramaniam, raising their total being in devotion, that is holy adoration, suffused in 'bakti' and singing the divine melody in the most mellifluous of tones.

The hymn was this:

‘மரசில் வீணையும்
மாலே மதியமும்
வீசு தென்றலும்
வீங்கு இள வேனிலும்
மூசு வண்டறை
பொய்கையும் போன்றதே
ஈசன் எந்தை
இணை அடி நீழலே.

— O! Lord, My Father

Thy feet are as gentle, as cool, And as comforting as
the music emanating from the flawless yāl.

As the beams of the moon that reigns supreme and peerless in the blue of the evening sky,
 As the energising South Wester that ushers the soft summer, that swelling like unto a tide in the flood, and as the lovely scenery pervading the lotus pond where the bees hum ceaselessly—
 The blessings that reside and abound at thy sacred anklet-adorned feet are immense and boundless' — shimmering cascade of beauty!

This hymn reminds one of that beautiful gem of a verse by W. B. Yeats. Vip- loves to recite it.

— 'I will arise and go now
 And go to Innisfree
 And a small cabin build there
 Of clay and wattle made
 Nine bean rows will I have there
 A hive for the honey bee
 And live alone in the beeloud glade.
 And I shall have some peace there,
 For peace comes dropping slow
 Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings
 There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow
 And evening full of the linnets wings.
 I will arise and go now, for always night and day,
 I hear lake water lapping with the sounds by the shore,
 While I stand on the roadway or on the pavement gray,
 I hear it in the deep heart's core.'

Vipulananda went into ecstasy reciting this nature poem; and when he recited it, it would seem, Nature came booming, crooning, swelling, whimpering, and cooing and roaring and vibrant: full-throated and deep-toned. That was the voice divine. And that was the call insistent, irresistible that came borne aloft on the cool evening air. And we bore it all, in all its richness of melody in our 'deep heart's core.' Vipulananda heard it, and he felt it. And of what immense educative value it was! Just feel it; weigh its worth.

—100—

Yes! It was perfect education.
 For: 'Beyond the east the sun-rise
 Beyond the west the sea,
 And east and west the wander thirst
 That would not let me be.'
 'It works in me like madness, Dear
 To bid me say good-bye
 For the seas call, the stars call
 And O! the call of the sky!'

Vipulananda rated these values and fixed them in the plastic minds of the children and many others who came under his influence: he fixed them, articulated them 'amid this dance of plastic existence.'

Vipulananda quaffed the cup of nature, and emptied it to the dregs. Wasn't he an undying influence on those who saw him, heard him, and lived with him? And shared the poetic ashrama life with him! Wasn't he an educationalist: par excellence? Who taught without formal teaching methods? A poet of supreme entrancing efficacy? And isn't education no less than the experience of entrancing beauty? Of being infinitely inspired? He was an infatuated lover of nature: multifarious and glorious, many-sided, adorned like a night with a million, million stars.

Can there be anything else more religious in its sentimental effects than his illimitable love for nature? Note these lines from his YĀL NOOL —

நீல வானிலே, நிலவு வீசவே
 மாலை வேளையே, மலைவு திருவோம்...

etc. quoted elsewhere.

— Deep blue the heavens!
 Full shines the moon!
 The evening hour is nigh,
 Free shall we be of languor —

Well, that is how divine ecstasy creeps into you, and overwhelms you. And please note this: **experience does matter in the educative process.**

—101—

