



Third Eye



CONTENTS

The Eye of Knowledge -----	A.Sabaratnam
On the Publication of the Third Eye	Dr. Robert G.Porter
Thoughts on a full moon day	S.Pathmanathan
The Art of Mark	Dr.Robert G.Porter
ARV Vaccination	Kugathasan
	(translated by Luxmi)
Love Duet (Tamil Folk Song)	Tr. by J.Raj
Tamil Poet's Manifesto	Jeyashankar
Black-visaged Death	Karunakaran
The Little Magazine- An Overview	N.V.Rajapillai
Kemathi's 'Trial' was no ordeal	
A Dirge for your village and mine	Akilan
The Literature of Lankan Tamils in Exile	Suresh Canagarajah



THE EYE OF KNOWLEDGE

Many religious traditions that speak of mental training, mind control, yoga have something to say of the Third Eye. It is also referred to as Jnana Sakshu or the Gnostic Eye.

A man is born with two eyes. His knowledge of the empirical world increases day by day through his observation. Thus develop the sciences and the arts. But a select few have trained their mental faculties to such sharpness that they are able to see much deeper than the best intellect. This development is metaphorically referred to as the opening of the Third Eye or Eye of Knowledge.

Traditional psychology will not accept this possibility. It will say this special power is the manifestation of the animal instinct of knowing in all living beings.

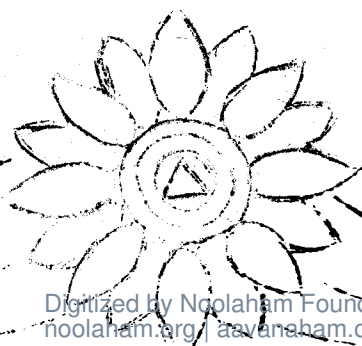
But recent experimental psychology gives room for the study of the effects of yoga, concentration and meditation on the mental states of man. Medical men prescribe these to help their patients to free themselves from stress, depression and pressure.

Some trained scientists do not rule out the possibility of gaining deeper insights and higher knowledge through these methods. They tend to explain the sudden flowering of the dormant powers of a poet, a painter or a sculptor as due to the opening of the Third Eye, Nana-k-kan or JnanaSakshu.

In the Indian Vedic tradition, Kavi is the word that refers to a poet as well as a deva (from the root 'div', to shine); the poet shines, his intellect is lighted by the Sun, the greatest kavi, the seer of the world. Hence a kavi is a poet who sees comprehensively, who penetrates deeply and sheds light on things for the others to see equally well.

Sri Aurobindo draws from Greek and Indian traditions to enhance his idea of poetry. P.Kailasapathy (who was the Vice-Principal of the Thirunelvely Training College) accounts for the difference in the vision, expression and understanding of literature from the Vedic Mantra, sutrams of Tolkappiyam, Sangam works, the epics of Kampan, down to the prabandhas of the last few centuries by the stand taken by the poet, the various steps of the ladder of buddhi-vritti (Development of the Intellect) and finally to the opening of the inner eyes.

--- A. Sabaratnam



Dr. Robert G. Porter

Congratulations to the editors and to Dr. A.S. Canagarajah, whose hand is seen in both the criticism and the translation of poetry as well as in his own English poetry, in this first issue of the Third Eye, put out by the English Forum at the University of Jaffna under the direction of S. Jeyashankar and N.V. Rajapillai! It is a good strategy to include a prize-winning story --T. Ramanathan's "The Biggest Census in the World"--- but I was disturbed by the sometimes careless printing of the text, even though the editors had made a number of pen corrections. Not all the mysteries got solved! For the rest, the roneoed printing of the texts is much better.

The poem "Portrait of a Militant" works best when we come to the two ten-year-olds. I'd prefer to see the situation speak for itself, not preceded, that, is, by the summary of the situation. Is it an editorial or a poem? The short story "Veeri" seems rather gung-ho, lacking the subtlety of "Biggest Census." "My Heart Leaps Up" takes a line from a famous Wordsworth poem, but the poem at hand doesn't seem to really allude to Wordsworth's poem at all. The "dear mother on the moon" is a line that wears its heart on its sleeve; the little girl's calves make a better, concrete image, but the conclusion of the poem, by the poet, S. Pathmaathan, seems to me rather gratuitous when I think of the audience for the Third Eye.

S. Villaratnam's "Lament for a Rudely Plucked Sunflower" sustains itself fairly well, although I get confused about the type of flower as the poem progresses: i.e., "Why did you sunder/Our umbilical cord's lotus." And I don't quite understand the reference of the pronoun "it" in the lines:

Till I gather up
The scattered fragments
Of my self
And let it twine, creeper like, etc.

Vivek's poem, "Are my Coconut Trees Still Standing or...?" is one of the best. I like the way he appropriates the breeze and the wind-- "My breeze wafts--Does my wind/Wander in search of me?" --as well as his fields and his trees. But "Fruit" does not seem to work well in the English translation. I wish I could appreciate the original. I am not sure how to take the plucking of this fruit as it is expressed in English.

The suggestion at the end of "Communion" is nicely suggestive! The form of the dramatic monologue works very nicely. But in "Exiled Days" we have another allusion, as in "My Heart Leaps Up," that does not seem warranted to me. The association of Good Friday with the main body of the poem, and enclosing the poem as it does, is not clear to me, despite

From these brief and maybe too critical reflections it is but a short hop to the review of the "Poetry Reading." I can appreciate Mr. S. Rajasingam's frustration after having listened^{ed} to a great deal of recited poetry in the Jaffna schools. I'm only sorry that I did not know about the reading, as I should like to have heard it myself. A good friend of mine, a poet-in-residence at Oregon State University, anthologized just such a collection of third-world poetry, Roger Weaver. Of course "Miss-Pushpa" had to come off well! But when I finished reading the review I was still uncertain as to the "Key issues facing the would-be reader-performer of poetry."

Two poetry readings stand out in my mind -- both by the poet himself-- one in the 1950's, where Brother Antoninus (formerly William Everson) gave an electrifying rendition of his work (grouped earlier with the San Francisco Beats, he is not really one of them). He had a wiry, sinewy voice that seemed to forge the poems, as he spoke them, out of tough metal. The other reading was only last year, while I was at home in the States for a short time-- a younger poet, an academic also, and head of a Master's of Arts program, Garrett Kioru Hongo

Hongo has some lovely and naturalistic poetry about Hawaii and Southern California, but as a reader he was a failure. In a modern, acoustically inadequate lecture hall, but with a microphone, Hongo spoke too rapidly slurred many words, and dropped the volume of his voice beyond audibility. Without a script, as I was, the evening was a total loss. Whether reading one's own poems or those of another poet, the reader has to feel the poem first; this made Brother Antoninus's fine reading of his excellent work masterful. Charles Laughton too was a masterful reader of the poetry and prose of world literature.

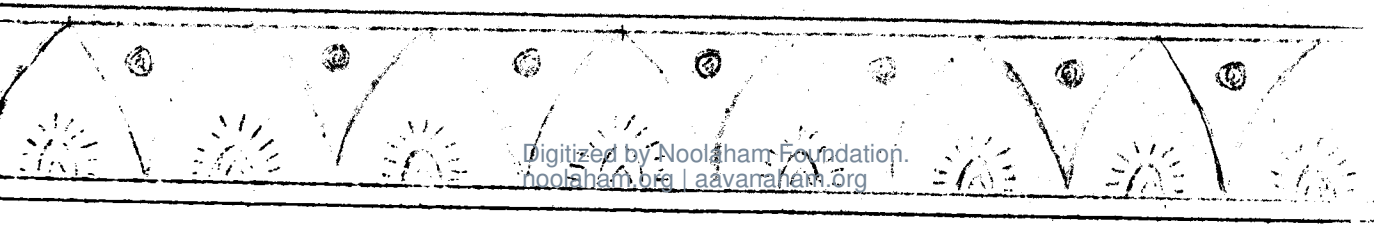
I liked the review of the "Three One-Act Plays" and would agree with the author about the overworking of gesture and movement, which seems to be the "in" thing around here. The analysis of the Jaffna English Theatre is also welcome, as a sort of manifesto? The author of "More Than Mere Aids" makes a good point--the play, the characters, must be ingested by the actors before they can adequately act out the parts. The filling of the stage with movement and pantomime, etc., are very stimulating (as it is in Broadway musicals), and this is done to perfection in Peter Weiss's works ("Marat-de Sade," "Vietnam Discourse," and "Song of the Lusi-tanian Bogey"). And in such plays each actor must often be prepared to change his role like lightning--as in "Song," where the actors are now Western colonialists, now down-trodden Africans, now African militants. But here too the actor has to identify completely with each role he has to play!

I have left the critique of the Penguin New Writing in Sri Lanka until last, as it is a much bigger chunk and represents a very important

view point, namely that of the contemporary Jaffna Tamil. The criticism of the selection of Tamil writing is quite valid. But I doubt the importance of the market or the reaction of the state to a different selection. They may well have influenced Goonetilleke's decisions, but like any anthologist, he does have to be wary (and may well be wary) of what can be perceived as propaganda. One of two poems or stories come close. For all the emotional involvement of the author in the world, such writing does not usually last.

South Africa presents a rather unique phenomenon, in that a lot of good literature has come from the extended conflict between the races, despite the expectation that a lot of it might be propaganda. This good literature has come from both whites and blacks, particularly from those who see the problem from more sides than one. Both Alan Paton, and Nadine Gordimer have a wide readership, but so do poets like Dennis Brutus. And some of the literature of the former German Democratic Republic (East Germany), that could be published in the Republic, maintains a remarkable distance from the directly involved emotions and the contradiction of both approval and of extreme disappointment--a combination that makes Christa Wolf's writing so fascinating and unique.

The use of the word "valorization" in the context of the review puzzles me --is it jargon from another discipline or what? I particularly liked Dr. Canagarajah's closing sentence, which certainly is true, that "he (Goonetilleke) will be surprised to find that similar sources of domination (like the colonial) still exert their hegemony through more subtle channels to continue to inhibit and suffocate our writers."



THOUGHTS ON A FULL MOON DAY

(Composed and read on the end of the departure of the IPKF)

The fullmoon pours milk
And a hundred thousand thoughts
surge in my mind's sea.

Once upon a time
Like this,
The gentle breeze
used to lull the cocount palms
bathed in moonlight
the melody from the Nageswaram
would waft on the silent air
the sky would spread
a blue canopy
under which
we would walk
on the wet sand
holding hands
the stars/would draw designs
and from within the thatched hut
the annavi's song
to the accompanying throb
of the udukku
would rend the midnight hours

The full moon pours milk
There has been no rain
for three months
And as the sun
scorches the crops
and the tree-tops
One's neck pains
looking up in vain

"Need hands to dig-
dig for water"
we appealed.
Some young men responded
they came armed
"We won't rest
without striking water"

The neighbours came
with crowbars and pickaxes
still others
sent lunch packets

"Who else could be so lavish?"
we thought
and decorated
our streets
with thoranams;
we garlanded them
and received them
to the sound of drums!
Having received/the celestial beings/
we took them round
in motorcades
we were in a trance
for over a month!

One day,
The devas became asuras
and started pestering us
those who asked for a homeland
found their homes in shambles
the transformed gods
had to be appeased
with fowl and goats
ornaments and houses
wine and women

Not water
but tears welled up
The youth were hunted
for trying to dig
an unlawful well!
Around the world they went
to give authenticity
to a pack of lies

The asuras were incited

"From under the Murunga
worship the crescent"
Alas
What we saw was the fourth (day) crescent
We cried, we wailed

Then, one day the cyclone
uprooted the murunga
and the asuras vanished!

Undaunted
the youngesers started
all over again.

The blasting of rocks,
some complained,
disturbed their sleep!

They conferred:

"By-passing us,
a venture unheard of!
cannot permit such nonsense!"

"Block the river;
the well will run dry!"

the parched crops
the scorched groves
the broken palms
the cracked temples
and the ruined homes!
what if the palmyrah

is blasted?

This is not the time
to moan or mourn!
the full moon pours milk!

Let the palmyrah
sprout again
impetuous and grow erect as ever,
never bending its knee
in the face of oppression

Let the throb of the annavi's udukku
rend the late night air!
let the melody of the flute
pour nectar into our ears!

At last we can walk, burying our feet,
once again, on the wet sand
The full moon pours milk!

S.PATHMANATHAN

(Translated by the author)

Notes

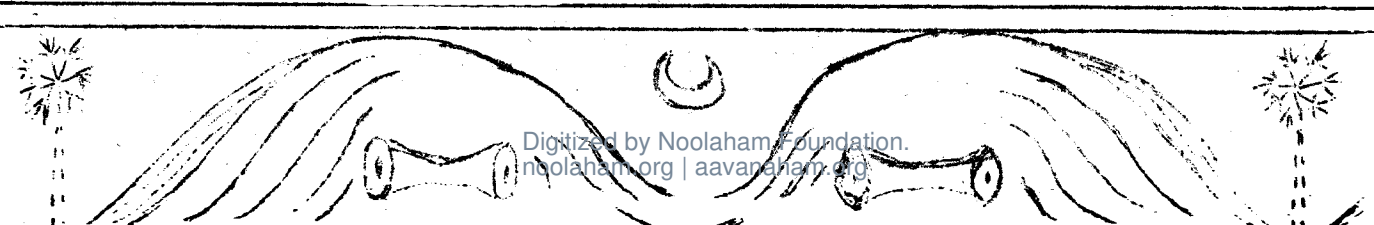
annavi - the producer - director in folk drama

Udukku - a two - faced small drum used both in - ritual and folk drama

devas - gods in Hindu mythology

asuras - the demons

crescent - the Hindus consider it auspicious to worship the crescent on the
third day after new moon. But to look at the same on the fourth day
could bring misfortune



THE ART OF A. MARK

In a recent Newsweek magazine there is short item about one Paul Rebhan who hung his own painting in the Museum of Modern Art in New York, without anyone's having noticed the intrusion until 48 hours later. Rebhan said he enjoyed watching a German couple standing before it for 15 minutes and "talking about the significance of things..."

This couple could be any of us, when confronted with the wonderfully and mind-bogglingly diverse world of contemporary art during the course of this entire twentieth century. Particularly so in the Jaffna Peninsula of Sri Lanka, where the general conception of art must be the **after** entirely forms--images of the gods or the temple sculptures of the gods. Contemporary art forms must seem like a "Bohemian village" to them, as the German saying goes--a place of convoluted and obscure passage ways, where only the indigenous resident can find his way.

It is refreshing to see an art exhibition--works of A. Mark at Stanley College, the weekend of June 25/26-- that follows the artist's progress over a lifetime of artistic development, without overwhelming the viewer with all the diversity of which the artist is capable. In other words, this retrospective was the best-presented art exhibition I have seen in Jaffna. And it tops most of the exhibitions I have seen in Colombo, particularly those at the gallery at the swank Oberoi Hotel, which, beside works by Senanayake^{Laki} and a few other finer artists, puts on display a great deal of bad work for the benefit foreign tourists, I would suppose.

I wish those tourists and other art lovers could have **been here.** Mr. Jeyashankar of the English Forum at the University of Jaffna and lecturer in drama, with the amateur painter Vasuki, who studied under Mark, are to be congratulated on mounting the fine exhibition and on providing an opportunity for visitors to join in discussion. The numbers present at the discussion I attended are encouraging. It speaks for a thirst for the painting arts that is seldom assuaged in Jaffna. Going round the hall, the visitor could admire the darker, almost smokey self-portraits from the Fifties, and compare them with the more colorful watercolor work of 1994. The earlier portraits, in their dark colors, call to mind early Picasso or the finely felt work of David Paynter. There is also the beautifully executed ink-line style--five strokes produce a self-portrait! and on the sensuous background of raspberry-colored paper. In other recent work, the fireworks of a magazine page are cleverly employed to create an aureole around the painter's head, as well as to suggest the hair on his chest.

This latter technique is a trump card in the exhibition. Mark says that it is a love of humanity that underlies the inspiration for his paintings. He also says that the painter sees differently: "I ingest the phenomena I observe and create them afresh through my experience. ~~one~~ can see this even in these "photo-montage" paintings, where color magazine pages have been taken not only as background for human figures, but as integrated parts of these figures. They seem to be truly autochthonous--like mythological characters growing out of their surrounding landscapes. This is far more than a Mona Lisa on the vague northern Italian background; it is a real cooperation of art and nature--or of art and industrial landscape, as in several of these works, like the lady with the blue face above a dam, the glacial green water of the river below enhancing the humanity of this face by the color alone. Another figure of a woman with a mountain background gives the woman a classic look, like Greek sculpture--a myth arising from the rock, the sea, and the swirls of color.

There are many other fine paintings too. The "starved" tiger--done in elongated, bouncing lines, something like what seems to be cave paintings of cows and a cowherd. Or there is a traditional-style painting of a woman's head at rest on the well-articulated feet of Jesus. Or grouping of Tiger girls, in camouflage-- all in forest camouflage colors--girls as well as the background--and each head natural, from the hairdo to the expression.

There are excellent ink drawings too, some in a rounded line that expresses volume and movement at the same time; others with a myriad of cross-hatched lines that give the illusion of detail, like a fine woodchopper among the palmyrahs. The roundedness of the former works expresses the suffering of the Jaffna refugee in both shape and distorted facial arrangement. I think of the earlier, very effective work of the Berlin artist of the downtrodden Kathe Kollwitz, or her contemporary Ernst Barlach, who was considered degenerate by the Nazis and whose work was either destroyed or sold off to foreign collectors.

"Art is a free, an autonomous activity," states Mark. And it is encouraging to see the individuality of his work, unaffected by political expediency. The sort of art that Hitler fostered or that the German Democratic Republic fostered can remind us of the danger to art or the artist that too tight political control can breed. We are fortunate that this situation does not obtain in Jaffna, where Mark can develop and do as well or better than his colleagues in the south of this country, and where he and other artists must use readily available materials, like magazine pictures, because canvas, for example, is not allowed through the Army lines.

There are a number of evocative works using Biblical themes, or the image of Ghandi, etc., but one rather playful item will bring this brief review to a close: that is a combination of the story of the Garden of Eden with a rather Indian style and humor. Here there are at least five apples being offered to both Adam and Eve, by a number of snakes ~~within~~⁸ around their bodies, in a kind of Carnatic dance of temptation. The apples can scarcely be distinguished from the breasts of Eve, a sly comment on the self-consciousness of sex that Adam and Eve's first sin was supposed to have generated.

Dr. Robert G. Porter

28th June, 1994.

A.R.V - Vaccination

I do not know much about dogs. Since I have hardly had any association with any dog I am not very familiar with the canine temperament. I have always treated them with due respect. I have never hunted for a stone when I see a dog. I go my own way making enough room for it to go its own way. But there are some dogs which, like some people, find great pleasure in involving even those minding their own business in a brawl. I wisely keep my distance when I see such trouble-some creatures.

I still remember the day when, as a child, I had written 10 sentences about a dog, drawing a picture which some what resembled a dog. I had longed to own a puppy then, and after persistent pestering I was given one. I fed it with milkpowder whenever I felt like it and in a week its tummy bloated and it died. We had not considered taking another puppy after that. It took me a week to get over the grief caused by the death of my beloved pet, and as an effort to compensate for the loss, I was given a toy puppy. I kept milk for it the first night. My grandma managed to convince me that the puppy would drink the milk only after I go to sleep. The next morning the milk was gone. My family was rather amazed. This continued for a few days, but the mystery was soon unravelled. It was not a mystery actually. The black pussy next door was the culprit. As the dog I had was a puppy and it stayed with me for only a week before it died and also because I was only a little boy, I have not been able to develop proper understanding of dogs. The only other incident which brought me into direct contact with a dog gave me a very good opinion of dogs. I discovered that in addition to being a grateful animal, a dog had a magnanimous nature such as forgiving those who stepped on its tail by mistake. Such goodness can no longer be found in human beings now a days. This might be attributed to the exploitation of such magnanimity by those who had intentionally committed a sin.

The dog that created in me, a good impression of its brotherhood was the one which lived in the opposite house. But it is very unfortunate that it was the same dog that altered my good pinion of dogs. I realize now that one should not judge a character by a single incident or experience.

Though this happened long ago, I remember it very vividly even now. One night I had to go to the opposite house and as I entered the house I stepped on the tail of the dog by mistake. It leapt with a threatening growl, but fortunately, did not bite. After frightening me for a moment it wagged its tail. The fact that the dog wagged its tail to me, a total stranger, still puzzles me. There was no reason at all for it to express its gratitude to a stranger who had trodden its tail. Digitized by Noolaham Foundation
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org when ever I went to the house the dog wagged its tail though it was sometimes only half hearted. But I

respectfully kept my distance. I was greatly impressed by the dog's goodness. From then onwards I refrained from calling a person a dog, as I thought I would be committing an injustice to dogs by doing so. On the other hand, I have felt it apt to compare some dogs to human beings.

But the day came which forced me to change my favourable opinion of dogs. It was last Thursday. I happened to see by chance stray dogs being taken away to be killed. These poor, miserable creatures were dumped into a cage specially made for this purpose. It was certainly a pathetic sight. I was surprised the dogs did not fight inside the cage. I stood along with the other jobless onlookers gathered to witness this episode. There was a debate as to which was the best method to kill dogs painlessly. One argued that the cage of dogs would be immersed in the sea for some time to kill them all within minutes, while the other expressed his view that the best was to poison them which would kill them without any pain. But all of them agreed on one point, that the tails of the dogs would be chopped off and the executors would be paid per tail. Then the necessity for having to kill stray dogs was emphasized by discussing at length how the persons bitten by a rabid dog died as there were no ARVs at the hospital. It was generally felt among the people gathered there that it was the worst kind of death. There was no doubt that the dogs were going to be killed. It really did not matter how they were killed for once they are killed they would not remember the suffering they had undergone while dying. The stray dogs were certainly a nuisance, but I felt at that time that killing these dogs was a sin.

When I returned home I found the dog from the opposite house lying by my gate on the road. It was rather surprising, for it had never done this before. Seeing it sleeping peacefully, the plight of the stray dogs flashed across my mind. The dog slept on, totally ignorant of its possible fate. I grabbed the opportunity to return the good turn, (I wanted to warn it). I called it once. It woke up, gave me a cold stare and went back to sleep. I called it again. This time it wagged its tail and this encouraged me. It never occurred to me that the dog could have wagged its tail to drive away a fly. I bent down to pat it.... before I could touch it, it bit my hand and leg and ran off. I was stunned for a moment. It could not have realized that my intention was good and this is perhaps why the expression 'foolish dog' came into usage. I thanked my stars that no one had seen me get bitten, for I would have become the joke of the town for having given my hand voluntarily to be bitten. I slightly twisted the story and reported that the dog had suddenly leapt up and bit my hand and leg. The fact that the dog had never bitten anybody before and the information that the dog had not been its proper self, that it had appeared to be a bit moody for the past few days made me fear that the dog could be rabid. There was no A.R.V at the hospital and the new stock was due only when the ship brought it. This would not be a problem if the dog was

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.

not rabid. But if in case the dog died in a few days I too would follow suit soon after. I know I have to die one day and I am not afraid of dying. But the dreadful death of a person bitten by a rabid dog caused me considerable anxiety. My family had no other option but to pray for the long life of the dog as the dog's death was as good as mine. The first thing I did each morning was to check whether the dog was alive. The dog seemed quite calm and relaxed, but each moment was nightmarish to me. I often dreamt that I was dead, but somehow, I woke up alive. That which made my plight worse was the herbal decoction that was forced upon me to counteract the effect of the rabies virus. The stuff tasted so foul that I preferred death to drinking it.

On the fourth day it was decided that the dog should be tested for rabies. The dog lay fast asleep. Many people closed upon it with sticks and some one poured water on it. The dog leapt up, and seeing several people around with sticks dashed off towards the road. Before one could realize what was happening it was hit by a passing vehicle and died instantly.

Now what is to become of me? Am I to comfort myself with the thought that the dog had not died of rabies, or, while others await the ship to bring letters and kerosine am I to wait for 'Kumana' to see whether it brings Anti-Rabies Vaccination?

Tamil Folk Song

Love Duet

Male: While the neighbourhood is slumbering
Your unsuspecting kith and kin snoring away
In the guise of a cobra
At dead of night I'll sneak in.

Female: If you slither in cobra-like at midnight
I'll turn into a sparrow
And whirr high into the sky.

Male: Changed into a hawk
Down I shall swoop
As you flit in the sky
And clutch you in my talons.

Female: I shall plunge into the earth
To sprout up as a blade of grass.

Male: Changed into Indra's cow,
Chew you up I shall
As you shoot up through the fissured earth.

Female: If you are the cow
I shall be the tinkling bells round your neck,
I shall be the arali shrub
At the foot of the banyan tree.

Male: While the banyan tree is lulled
And the chirping beetle drowzes,
Cradled in thy soft lap I'll lie,
How blessed I shall be !

Female: I'll be the fig tree
Laden with fruit
I'll be your pearl necklace
As, quivering with desire, you approach

Translated by J. Raj

Tr.'s note: This folk song from Tamilnadu was a popular film hit some years ago.

A Tamil Poet's Manifesto

O Mahanama !
O bhikkus who beat the drums of war
In the name of the Compassionate Buddha !
I am a Tamil poet
In a land
In the grip
Of war-mongering Boddhisatvas.
O Mahanama !
O you who thundered 'War' or 'Peace'
Against an unarmed community
Against a community
Chauvinism was decimating !
Reality slapped me hard
In the face.
'Be a human being,
Be a poet of mankind,
Make humane-ness your theme'
It commanded.
Force charged my lines
My words which were petal-like, like leaves of grass
Became metallic and explosive
Force charged my lines
Like my people's cry for freedom
Though your murderous hands
Throttled their throat
And you bashed and battered them.
We know well
Your ears
Which were stopped
To the voice of peace
Now hear the blasts of bombs.
Hence our words became bullets.
We know well
You can smell
The scent of Death
In your compounds.
O you who sow Death
In our compounds
Know that Grief
Has made heroes of us
Know that I come before you
As a poet
Of a community
Ready for both war and peace

Black-visaged Death
 Which has made
 The certain future
 And nightmares
 Its own
 Prowls round my village, my streets.
 The roar of green-coloured vehicles.
 Is its smile,
 A smile more mind-shattering
 Than the howl of dogs
 Than the crowing of the midnight-cock.
 Death comes riding in these vehicles
 With a drunkard's song
 Sung in an alien tongue.
 It comes ensconced
 In the gun-point
 In the hearts
 Of these devils.
 Birds, the moon, the meadow
 All are struck blind
 While Death
 Gobbles up their beauty and grace.
 Death which snaps the bones
 And chews the eyes
 Batters the back of my head
 Again and again.
 When my brain haemorrhages.
 It rejoices.
 Its clamour
 Is hypersonic.

Karunakaran

(Translated by A.J.C.)

THE LITTLE MAGAZINE - AN OVERVIEW

At this juncture when we are launching this magazine 'Third Eye' it is appropriate to evaluate the need for and the necessity of such a magazine.

Is there a necessity for an English magazine in Tamil Eelam? What functions can be served by such a publication devoted to creative writing in a society that is in urgent need of socio-economic development?

Let us consider first the concept of the little magazine: it can be said it is a cultural import from the West. The rise of little magazines in the West has to be viewed against the background of the spread of mass literacy and the attendant growth of the publishing industry which produced large-circulation newspapers and magazines, with the principal aim of making big profits. The publishers used a circular argument which ran thus: we give the public what they

want; but, As Raymond Williams pointed out they forgot to add that they used all the means at their command to make the public want what they gave. In such a situation serious writers had no alternative but to embark on publishing magazines and journals which served to bring their work to the notice of the public. The circulation of these magazines and journals were necessarily comparatively limited. This tended to make the publishers and contributors to these little magazines feel that they were a civilised, embattled minority fighting against a mazz culture which threatened to lower standards and corrupt taste. This was the position of the little magazine in the West.

As one would expect, the provenance of the little magazine favoured elitism, cultural snobbery and the deadening atmosphere of a Mutual Admiration Society. While it is undeniable that the little magazine was a vehicle for the publication of the work of the high priests of Modernism, like Joyce, Eliot and Pound (which otherwise would not have been able to see the light of print at that juncture), one should also recognise that some of these writers aligned themselves with political reaction. Today, little magazines -- especially in the so-called Third World -- are, politically speaking, radical and left-of-centre.

Next, we must try to answer the question why the idea of little magazines in English is not popular in Sri Lanka. We should note that English is not a mass language here, as in the Carribean island and in many other countries where English plays a vital role. While English can be considered a popular language in the Carribean or certain parts of Africa, it is a language of the elite in Sri Lanka. Only a privileged minority, that is about 6 % use this language. Furthermore, English in Sri Lanka is learnt largely for instrumental purposes and utilitarian needs. It is not used to communicate the deeper thoughts and feelings (that is, for creative purposes) of the average person. This situation has two consequences (1) it affects the quantity and quality of creative writing in English. Only a few indulge in English imaginative writing. Also Sri Lankan English is a language without metaphor or a richly developed poetic tradition. Thus the quality of our writing also suffers. (2) since the readership is limited, the magazine cannot be marketed. Hence magazines of this nature are not commercially viable.

At present, what is the spread and status of little magazines in English in Sri Lanka? There aren't many magazines in English compared to those published in Tamil or Sinhalese. Sad to say, even these few magazines are being published only in the South; there is none from the North. The magazines that are published are Navasilu, which is the most consistent but unfortunately it is not published regularly. Channels is still in its infancy and has yet to prove it can stand the test of time. Unfortunately New Ceylon Writing, edited by Yasmine Gooneratne, which came out in the 1970s and the New Lankan Review edited by Rajiva Wijesinha seem to have ceased publication. Apart from these, there aren't any other notable magazines, to the best of my knowledge.

Next, the important question is why we should develop little magazines in English in Sri Lanka. The answer is that these little magazines help to develop the talents of creative writers. Creative writers like Devasundari Arasanayagam, J.S. Tissanayagam were introduced abroad and international readership through the Peradeniya University's student magazine Kaduva and Kelaniya University's Blink.

who felt the urge to publish had no option but to send their work to the magazines published in the South. However publication in these magazines was determined by the Colombo-centric view-point of the editors. For instance, Suresh's poem 'Portrait of a Militant' (which appears in the first issue of Third Eye), was not published in Channels perhaps because it was too closely related to the Jaffna man's point of view. They however found a personal poem 'Lavanniya's Twilight Bike-ride' harmless enough for publication in their magazine instead. It is interesting to note that the late poet Tambimuttu who edited the journal Poetry London, was the person who introduced the leading 20th century poet T.S.Eliot to the western audience. At the same time, it is ironical to note that writers like T.Ramanathan, whose prize-winning short story in the magazine Encounter is re-printed in Third Eye, didn't have any means of publishing his other work. So journals like Third Eye will help to motivate people to write in English and will serve as a vehicle to share their unique experiences with others all over the world.

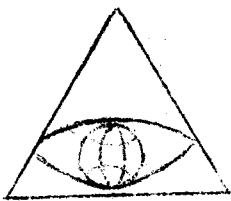
Unless reading is encouraged, writing will not take place. This phenomenon is like a vicious circle. So in order to encourage reading, it is important that magazines like these should be published which in turn will stimulate writing.

If we ask ourselves whether we need a little magazine in English here and now and answer in the affirmative, we should be quite clear in our minds about why we need it and what we are going to do with it. Internationally, and especially in the south of Sri Lanka, there is a need to understand the unique experience of the Jaffna people. Literature plays a very important role in that it helps outsiders to understand the political and cultural developments in Jaffna. As I noted earlier, a few of our writers have had some of their pieces published in the magazines published in the South. But the fact that there are no magazines in English being published in the North has had some unfortunate consequences. As Dr. Suresh Canagarajah in his article "The politics of anthologizing contemporary Tamil Literature -- A Review of Penguin New Writing in Sri Lanka" says "The unfamiliarity of the editor with the contemporary Tamil literary scene affects the collection in serious ways, failing to achieve the chronological comprehensiveness and representation of significant strands of the literary tradition." All over the world there is an awareness about the closer interaction between English and the native languages. As a result, translations are becoming important. As Arjuna Parakrama said recently in an article published in the magazine Counterpoint, "But whatever the status of English in the country, the indisputable importance of Sinhala and Tamil must necessitate the service of translations to nurture each of these literatures, not to mention knowledge bases. We should therefore be having translation projects, seminars and workshops in translating, perhaps even University-level courses in translation." Those who are proficient in English need to be aware of literary developments in the native language; it is their responsibility to communicate to the wider world the indigenous literature and cultural riches. So when we attempt to publish a little magazine in Jaffna we should see to it that it is bilingual and it has to be interested in the indigenous culture, the local

aspirations and political needs of the people¹. Here English has to serve and link up with the local situation. As Ngugi reminds us in an article in The Times Literary Supplement, it is the duty of the English-educated intelligents to develop the vernacular literary tradition and make it known to the wider literary world.

Electronic communication is turning the world into a global village, the phrase coined by Marshal Moluhan. In our context this would mean that the Sri Lankan or rather the Jaffna Tamil variety of English needs to be in contact with and be fertilised by other varieties of English (South Sri Lankan, Indian etc.). One may well ask why Tamil culture should be preserved by a little magazine in English. While ultimately it is the people who are the guardians of a culture and ensure its continued vitality, magazines and journals too have a role to play in this process. As far as the Tamils of Eelam are concerned, magazines like Third Eye while opening up a fruitful dialogue with the local languages, especially Tamil, will in the present context also help to make our voice resound in international forums.

2- N.V.Rajapillai



Kimathi's 'Trial' Was No Ordeal

It was with some trepidation that I went to see a performance of Ngugi's The Trial of Dedan Kimathi at Kailasapathy Auditorium recently: trepidation because Ngugi's powerful play, though more or less a 'straight' one, is very demanding and because the actors' encounter with English, to the best of my knowledge, was not only brief but also not very close, to put it mildly.

The play was staged during Arts Week as part of the various competitions between students of different years (ranging from the freshers to the final year students).

Since it deals with Kenya's struggle against British imperialism, it had resonances for both actors and audience. This partly explains why the student-actors were, to my pleasant surprise, able to more than cope with the play and put it across more successfully than I had foreseen.

The play has an almost cinematic quality: the playwright himself, in his prefatory note, stresses movement, especially the movement of history; in fact, he uses the term 'movement' to refer to what are conventionally regarded as 'acts'. History and time are telescoped, as it were, in the play to suggest continuity. That's what makes me think of the play as a film script with accelerated mixes, dissolves, fade-ins and fade-outs, instead of jump-cuts.

This aspect of the play - its flowing continuity - was unfortunately lost in the production as inevitably there were time lags since they had to be segmented in such a way as to allow the different segments to be performed by students of different years, as the rules of the competition demanded.

But this inevitable loss was more than compensated for by good acting and staging on the whole.

It was a revelation (to me, at least) to see and hear students who are, as a rule, tongue-tied in English classes, articulate their lines expressively. Particularly remarkable was the first-year student, A.C.T. Croose, who played the role of the protagonist Dedan Kimathi: not only did he look the part, he was also able to convey effectively Kimathi's raw, earthy passion: his love for his native land and his hatred of the foreigner who was ravaging it. He was deservedly named the best actor, beating by a whisker, the more experienced Krishnamoorthy whose performance was very convincing but who was unfortunately let down by his makeup man who failed to make him look the part.

The girls playing the women characters too performed quite well on the whole.

A Dirge for Your Village and Mine

I do not know,
Your village
May lie on a sea-shore
Where the waves beat
Or
On the outskirts
Of a jungle.
I do not know
The birds
That perch
On the boughs
Of the big koola trees
Soaring aloft on the red-soiled paths
In spring and sing,

I do not know
The tiny flowers
That blossom
Along the streets
In the rainy season
Or the songs you sang
Beating the udukku
Or
The tanks and the lakes
Where the moon slumbers

II

This night
When even the wind wounds,
You and I
Know one thing.
Our villages
Are like the heaped-up piles of ash
- Large and small-
In a crematorium.
Human blood
Has covered our sea
Whose waves sang.
The jungles
Where trees
Rear high almost touching the sky
Resounded with wandering human voices

And human flesh
 Hanging from their boughs.
 Scraggy dogs
 Howl
 The whole night long.
 Grass has covered
 The streets
 Our forebears trod,
 You and I know these.
 We also know
 The flowers that have withered,
 The lines of abandoned songs
 And those moments
 The memory can no longer recreate



III

But
 Do you know
 That the withered flowers
 Still have roots?
 Do you know
 That the abandoned songs
 Lie steeped in
 The source of the words?
 If, like them,
 You too do not know
 That our antiquity
 Flames in silence
 In the deeps
 Of the sea
 Covered with blood,
 Know now
 That one day
 It dawned
 And the sun rose after
 'A thousand years of rest and slumber'.

AKILAN
 03/02/1993

All in all, Kimathi's 'trial' wasn't quite the ordeal I had half - feared it would be.

P.S. Some enterprising student of Drama and Theatre at the Jaffna University should now think of producing the play as one unsegmented whole, after auditioning the student actors and actresses who have already taken part or, if necessary, infusing new blood. This might prove to be a step towards building up the nucleus of a bilingual theatre group in Jaffna.

C. RAJAN

(Excerpts from a talk delivered in Tamil at the inaugural meeting of the Tamil Writers' Cooperative)

The steady growth of creative writing produced by the Sri Lankan Tamil exiles in foreign countries is drawing the attention of many. Though several S.L. Tamils live in India, the North American continent, Southeast Asia and the Pacific Region, Tamil literature is produced largely by those living in Europe. It is interesting to ponder on the reasons for this. The first wave of emigres to Malaysia, Fiji and Singapore since colonial times were mostly "English-educated" middle class who had no desire or proficiency to contribute to Tamil literature. The more recent set of 'economic refugees' to Canada, the US and Australia also came from a similar background. On the other hand, the large wave of refugees to South India belong to the mostly uneducated poor who belong to the other end of our social spectrum. It is those who are domiciled in European cities (i.e. Norway, Sweden, Germany, France) belonging to the middle group of vernacular-educated lower middle class who are able to contribute to Tamil literature.

The question as to why these people are in exile is often raised to pass a negative judgement on this literature. Many might consider them unpatriotic or even traitorous to the community and so the literature produced by exiles also would appear, in their eyes, to be of low quality. The quality of literature would certainly be coloured by the socio-political factors but it should not be forgotten that literature could quite transcend such factors. James Joyce had distanced himself from his Irish community and their struggle for freedom. He was an exile. So was Brecht, who, during the regime of Hitler fled to (capitalistic) America instead of staying on to fight back. But their works and literary theories are warmly commended 'revolutionary' today. There are still many who are able to praise Brecht as a 'Communist'. Thus it is important that we keep aside our own political predilections when attempting to study the literature of the exiles. We must admit that some refugees indulge in this literature for ulterior motives - this literature serves the purpose of perpetuating their refugee status by publicizing their plight to the host community; but we must also admit that for still some others it may very well be that they rediscover their Tamilness or regain their humanity in the brief moments they put pen to paper.

The subject matter in this literature of SL Tamil exiles encompasses a wide range of complex psychological and cultural issues. Life amidst an unfamiliar cultural environment; the horrors of 'Apartheid', terrorism against coloured people in the land of refuge; the resulting fear, frustration, sense of insecurity, alienation; the guilt of having deserted their motherland; the feelings of solidarity with the liberation cause at home; the admiration for the economic development and individual freedom they enjoy in the West and at the same time the wish to rebel against the discriminations practised against them in those foreign land and 'democratize the West', disillusionment at having to again face the same threats of discrimination which had driven them from their own

motherland in the first place; and above all their perpetuation of their own cultural evils of dowry system and caste differences even in exile --- such conflicting inner struggles are the themes of the literature of the exiles.

Surveys of the themes of this writing have appeared in a couple of publications locally recently. I therefore like to reflect on 'forms' specifically related to the poetry written. One would wonder if this literature has managed to create a new literary trend, whether it has formed an entirely new genre of literary form. When a people of exile confront a new culture and its new literary forms and expressions, the emergence of a new genre of poetic form would be a natural outcome. Has this happened to the literature of the Tamil exiles?

We do see some signs towards the development of new stylistic features or at least a new sensibility, in the poetry of exiles. There is a new stock of imagery - much deriving from Christianity, the new topography and geography of the West and the urban hi-tech culture. There is also frequent code-switching with the European languages. Words and phrases from German, French and Norwegian are interspersed into Tamil to capture connotations and cultural meanings shared by the exiles. The syntax of some of the poems too show a difference as they use agent-deleted passives and mechanical staccato phrases to capture feelings of alienation influenced by the existential or 'absurd' in the West. The Western influence on exiles has also altered their relationships and sensibility. These changes are sure to be reflected in their writings and many changes in the language and usage are likely to take place. If we look at the man-woman relationship, it is very controlled and formal in the tradition-bound societies of the East, whereas in the Western countries it is very intimate, direct and personal. Even styles of conversation differ in these two different cultural backgrounds. Personal feelings, likes and dislikes, sexual relationships and even sex are things that could be discussed quite freely or 'directly' in the West. But these are negotiated very indirectly and circumspectly in Tamil society. Thus discourse too is affected in this poetry. Sociolinguists have defined the Western way of directness as the 'linear' style and the Eastern circumlocutory approach as the 'style of indirection'.

We can finally ask, where is this literature heading to? Although we cannot say we already have evidence of a new poetic genre in Tamil, we can say that there is at least evidence of a new sensibility that has the potential of creating changes in language, style and form. (Of course, all poems are written in conversational free verse, as in contemporary Tamil poetry).

Edward Said, Professor of Comparative Literature and an American-Palestinian, in his keynote address in the SACLALS Conference of 1991 in London declared that there can be no rigid distinction between Commonwealth literature (literature produced by those living in the Third World countries) and Anglo-American literature (literature produced by those whose mother tongue is English). While Salman Rushdie, Naipaul and Kamala Das who belong to the third world but are living in England write about life as it is in the Western society they live in, Joseph Conrad and Graham Greene found their subject matter in the Eastern

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

comprises elements of various cultures and, in today's world with its advanced telecommunication and transport technology, mingling of cultures would be quite inevitable. Post-Modernism seeks form and meaning amidst scattered, disintegrated cultures. From 1960 onwards, Lankan Tamil literature has established a nationalistic trend in subject and form. But whether the Tamil literature of the Lankan Tamils in exile is going to fall in line with the trend of post-modernism, taking a diametrically opposed development to the literature at home, and make itself an instrument for the internationalisation and cultural pluralism in Lankan Tamil literature is an open question.

--- Suresh Canagarajah

'THIRD EYE' (2ND ISSUE) 1994 JULY
ENGLISH FORUM

UNIVERSITY OF JAFFNA
Advisory Board: DR. A. S. CANAKARAJAH
A. J. CANAKARATNA

Editorial Board: S. JEYASHANKAR
N. V. RAJAPILLAI

Designed by VASUKI JEGANATHAN