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TAMILS: ANCIENT AND MODERN

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By

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சென்னை
M. N. Gnanapavan



A TAMIL LEADER

DEDICATED

To

~ *Appar, Sampanther, Sundarar* ~

~ *Three Ancient Tamil Titans* ~

and

To

C. _____, S. _____, T. _____

~ *Three Modern Tamil Trumpets* ~

PREFACE

All but two of these articles appeared in the Morning Star of Jaffna. They are now reprinted at the request of friends.

R. R. C-T.

*Colombo,
July 22, 1960.*

TAMILS: ANCIENT AND MODERN

I

IT has become our plain duty to educate ourselves. This is the first step of a people's progress—a knowledge of themselves.

Dr. Johnson once went on a boating pleasure trip on the river Thames. A young lad rowed him up the river. "My lad", Dr. Johnson said to the young sculler, "what would you give to know about the Argonauts?" "Sir," he replied, "I would give all I have."

What would you, Reader, give to know the truth about the Tamils? No less a personage than Wordsworth (poet of heart's desire) has said: "To make the gift of life more valuable and the men more worthy of that gift." This is the ultimate object of all national thinking and practice.

Let me begin with an act of confession which is also an act of contrition. Until shortly ago, in my innermost soul I felt sad that I had been born a Tamil. Among the high seats of civilization, I used to say to myself, why has a place been given to me far, far down below? Could I not have been born in Persia, flower-fragrant Persia! Or in any of those lands of romance and glamour where the people are lean

and wiry, and fiery, as their own desert winds and steeds—Iran, Iraq, Egypt, Arabia: the very sounds so satisfying! Or in that glorious land which produced Plato and his House of Ideas! Or even in that fog-laden land where a man once stood upon a pile of burning faggots and cried out in a loud voice: "we shall this day light a candle..... as shall never be put out"! Or in France—land of intellect—where Voltaire wrote, and Flaubert, and Proust, and a girl of nineteen is now writing, whose books turn old men's bones into water!

This sort of itemisation can go on and on. What glorious bodies the white people have—whether children of Cnut or of Kashmir! Eyes of what blue! And skins so bright and full of light. My own Principal of St. John's (Jacob Thompson)—what a Roman face he had!

As for myself, my skin has been rubbed in with charcoal! (This imagery is not mine. It was given me by a Tamil lady: கடவுள் உடம்பு பெல்லாம் கரியைப் பூசினிட்டார்.)

Who did it? Was it Ormusd? Or was it Ahriman? Not all the waters of the world could un-carnadine Lady Macbeth's white

hand. Not all the gingly oil and *Sandanam* in the plains of Jaffna can enwhiten my dark Dravidian skin!

My Father once told me the story of a missionary who roundly berated a catechist (seventy years of age) for being seen near that part of the missionary's house where lived his wife and daughters. My Father seemed to think it an act of unbenevolence not to have accepted the simple old gentleman's explanation that it was done in error of the geography of the house. But I was not so sure. The one was the scion (not only of Zion) but also of Aristotle, Plato, the Twelve Tables, Magna Carta, Martin Luther, Cromwell, Milton, Jefferson, Lincoln, Robespierre and—Queen Victoria. The other—I have seen my own people in the tea lands upcountry, swathed in blankets, toiling in other people's

fields all day, all the week, all the year. What is a slave but a person without a claim to a life of his own?

One cannot be a true scholar of history without a knowledge of philology, archaeology and allied themes. Scholars of this attainment we have had among our peoples. As for me, I have no Scholarship of that order. But I have read largely in the writings of acknowledged masters, and I have conversed much with those who have made a life study of the true story of the Tamil people. There is no doubt that the Tamils are a very ancient people, entitled in their own right to high precedence in the annals of civilization. This theme will be developed, with as much accuracy as lies in my power, in subsequent contributions. And in doing so I shall seek the assistance of learned friends.

II

WHAT are the physical limits of Tamil Civilization?

Suppose these two great peoples—the Americans and the Russians—instead of being engaged in a perpetual wrestle—agreed to the appointment of a Commission to partition this Earth, not into battle regions nor into atomic power blocs, but simply in terms of human civilization—how much of this Earth would be allotted to Tamil Civilization?

To answer this question one has to ask another question. What are the recognised Civilizations of mankind?

Fundamentally there are only four: Christian Civilization, Semitic Civilization, Mongol Civilization, Indian Civilization.

By Christian Civilization I mean all that way of life which exists from Canada to Constantinople. I have called it "Christian" because, from the days of the Byzantine Empire at any rate, Christian thought and light have infused all that part of the Earth. A simple illustration is—that many brilliant young men of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge master the literatures of Greece and Rome and then go on to

become Christian Bishops and Archbishops.

Semitic Civilization—both the mother and the daughter of Christian civilization—has its well-settled metes and bounds. Included in it would be Moghul Civilization which may now in peace be passed on to Pakistan.

As to the great Civilization of China and the Far East, it has its fixed geographical home.

The proposition I propose to prove is that at one time *the whole of Indian Civilization was "Dravidian"*—and that at that time "Dravidian" and "Tamilian" were identical. Today, of course, the whole of the region known as *South India* is Dravidian in civilization. But I am also able to speak of an earlier time, when it can be stated with accuracy that *the whole of India*, from Baluchistan to Ilankai, was definitely and wholly Dravidian land.

Can these terms "Dravidian" and "Tamilian" be equated? A brilliant Tamil scholar of our day to whom I referred this point writes: "Pre-500 B.C. probably 'Dravidian' and 'Tamilian' were identical". He has written with the utmost regard to truth. But it is not improbable that even as long ago as 3000 B.C. "Dravidian" and "Tamilian" and "Indian Civilization" and "Tamil Civilization" were equivalent terms. The phonetic pronation—Dravida—Dramida—Dramila—Damila—is there. Bending words prone-wards towards a desired sound-

shape is not always a safe criterion; but I have as my authorities for the above proposition the Encyclopaedia Britannica and Bishop Caldwell's "Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Languages"—2nd edition. Young Reader, if you are a true lover of knowledge, select your special subject and delve deep into it; but let the E.B. be a constant companion of your leisure time. I trust the learned Editor will permit me to make these occasional excursions from the set theme. My purpose in these articles is to help create a generation of learned Tamils. Learning often seeps in sideways. When Archbishop Temple was an undergraduate at Oxford he made a very true remark. He was returning to his rooms with a friend after a learned lecture. "It is not the notes we take at the lecture which matter", he said, "but the talks we have between this lecture and the next".

It can be proved by research and by citation of authorities (an accepted approach in jurisprudence and legal discipline) that at a time when Europe and America were in barbaric darkness India was civilized; that this civilization was essentially Tamil; that it has survived later incursions of horse-riding, beef-eating and soma-saturated peoples. These matters will be probed and developed as we proceed. For the present, let it suffice to say that a study of archaeology and history seems to show that the two oldest civilizations of the world are Chinese and Tamil.

DOCTOR Gordon Childe is Professor of Prehistoric Archaeology in the University of Edinburgh, or he was when he wrote in 1928 a book called "The Most Ancient East". The subtitle of the book is of interest. Professor Childe called it: "The Oriental Prelude to European Prehistory". Note the words—Prelude in the East not to European History but to European Prehistory.

In the Preface to his book—which every earnest student of Tamil Civilization should read—Professor Childe says: "In no branch of archaeological science is discovery proceeding at such a breathless pace or leading to such revolutionary results. The disinterment of the forgotten Indus civilization, the opening of the Royal Tombs at Ur, have effected a radical and dramatic enlargement of historical horizons". Let the Reader note the Tamil word "Ur" in the above passage and remember that the Indus Civilization was none other than Tamil Civilization at its zenith.

Dr. Childe says (Chapter 1): "Barely a thousand years ago Scotland and the rest of Northern Europe were still sunk in the night of illiteracy and barbarism. A thousand years earlier and history's light shines upon our dark continent merely from a few points on the shores of the Mediterranean ... But one thread is clearly discernible turning through the dark and tangled tale of these Prehistoric Europeans: the Westward spread, adoption, and transformation of the inventions of the

orient ... I need only instance the opening up of a new chapter in Egypt's remotest past at Badari, or the dazzling revelation of the brilliance of Sumerian civilization at the end of the fourth millennium B.C. or again the dramatic entry of India on to the stage of Oriental history with the excavation of Harappa and Mohenjo Daro".

It will be seen that Dr. Childe places the zenith of Sumerian and Egyptian civilization in the same period of 4000 B.C. Then he goes on to say (p. 7): "The date just mentioned implies a flourishing and advanced culture a thousand years before the written record begins". And at page 20 he says: "Having thus mapped out the historical world as it looked about 3000 B.C., it remains to mention one region which could already boast a civilization fully equal to that of Egypt or Sumer. That region is the Indus Valley". Then at p. 203: "Indeed the Indus Civilization is already old when we meet it. At the one site, Mohenjo Daro, no less than ten superimposed cities have been identified ... The high antiquity of the Indus Civilization is derived from vast cities with regular streets, houses and temples. But not only is the civilization thoroughly urban, its authors have dwelt in towns so long that they have devised amenities, such as drains and baths, the necessity of which was recognized only in relatively modern times".

Dr. Childe is but one authority on this subject. I shall quote from others in subsequent contributions.

I AM aware that famous men have written in high terms of Tamil Civilization, not the least of them Dr. Schweitzer, almost the Michael Angelo of our age. I shall quote, at the proper point in this narrative, Dr. Schweitzer's encomium of the *Kural*, the typical Tamil book, just as the *Republic* is the typical Greek book and the *Institutes* the typical Roman book, the *Book of Job* the typical book of the Jews, *Candide* that of the French and the *Pilgrim's Progress* (though I would myself vote for the *Areopagitica*) that of the English.

However, in the present narrative of the story of the Tamil people, I have decided to make my citations not from persons of general, polymathic fame but rather from the considered conclusions of specialists in pure learning, especially of those appointed to the Chairs of famous universities, for two reasons: (1) these are unprejudiced and dispassionate scholars, who write in the spirit of science and not of advocacy; (2) they know that they write not only for themselves but under the aegis of, and in the name of, the great centres of learning they represent.

I was glad to read that Dr. A. C. Bouquet of Cambridge University will soon be in South India, for he is, after Dr. Childe of Edinburgh University, my next authority. I trust that Jaffna and Batticaloa and Trincomalee will make the fullest use of this true scholar while he is in our physical neighbourhood.

Dr. Bouquet was, in 1941, Lecturer on the History and Com-

parative Study of Religions in the University of Cambridge. He took a first class honours degree at Cambridge and was in 1947 Upton Lecturer at Oxford on the History of Religion.

Culture, Religion and Civilization are three intermixable terms—a proposition with which I fear some whom I respect and admire most in Jaffna will not agree. But I have on my side no less a person than T. S. Eliot, a poor poet but a very great thinker and scholar. Mr. Eliot says:—

"... no culture can appear or develop except in relation to a religion ... There is an aspect in which we can see a religion as the *whole way of life of a people*, from birth to the grave, from morning to night and even in sleep, and that way of life is also its culture ... Behaviour is also belief. We may go further and ask whether what we call the culture, and what we call the religion, of a people are not different aspects of the same thing: the culture being, essentially, the incarnation (so to speak) of the religion of a people"—Notes towards the Definition of Culture by T. S. Eliot, Faber and Faber, 1948.

Any one who wishes to acquire "the habit of examining evidence" should read Mr. Eliot's book. Dr. Bouquet is thus an incomparable authority on the civilization of a religious people like the Tamils. As space is up, citations from Dr. Bouquet will be made in my next contribution.

DR. Bouquet makes plain what some of us already know. Egyptology has many adherents. Dravidology calls for savants in far larger numbers than heretofore.

Of one failing in particular we Tamils must make admission. Possibly because for ages we have been kept out of our due share of world recognition, we are sometimes inclined to indulge in fancy, even phantasy, in regard to our past. For instance, the following has been solemnly set down in one of our classics in its account of the first Tamil Academy :

Patrons : 89 Pandya Kings
 President : Agastyar
 Vice-Presidents : Gods Siva and Subrahmanya!
 Membership : 544 poets
 Works approved : 4449
 Period : 4440 years

Based on truth, our past is valiant enough. Let truth survive.

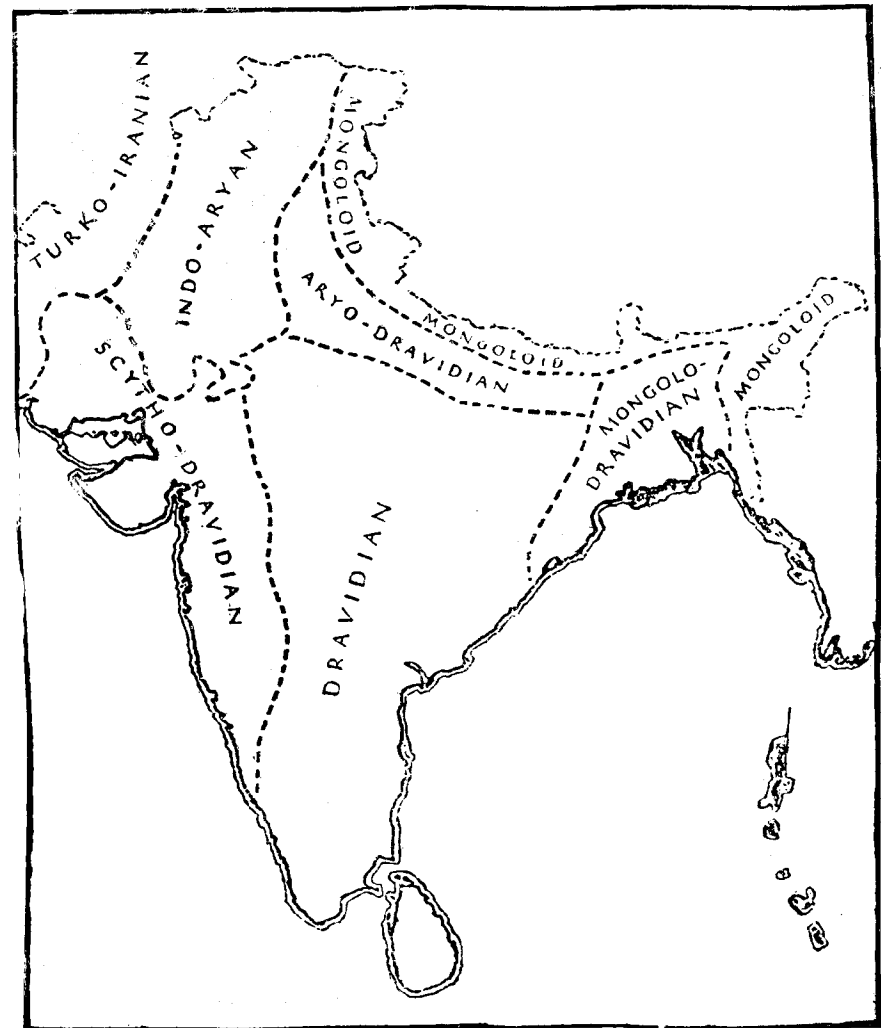
Dravidology must be served, first and chiefly, by Dravidians. I am sure that, in the progress of things to come, many of our intellectual Tamil young men will scorn the prospect of clerical posts at the desk's dead wood. History and Science will call to them. Study — research — knowledge — wisdom. These shall be their goals. Emerson says : "Water dissolves wood ; air dissolves water ; electric fire dissolves air ; but the intellect

dissolves all in its resistless menstruum".

I have thought it necessary to make these prefatory remarks because it is apparent from Dr. Bouquet's book that the need for further research in Dravidology is paramount. But from what is already known and established, Dr. Bouquet is in a position to say : "In the Indus Valley there are signs of a much mixed population at a very early date. It may be supposed that at some remote period *Southern India was continuous with Ceylon*. The North-Western gate of entry has provided India with all her most momentous immigrations. From the North-West came (1) the Dravidians, *somewhere before 2000 B.C.*, (2) successive waves of Nordics (so-called Aryans), (3) Mongols, (4) Scythians, (5) Moslem Arabs. The Dravidians were dark-white.... They seem to have established a great civilization in the Indus Valley at a date between 3250 and 2750 B.C., and to have spread southward as far as the extremity of *what is now the island of Ceylon*" : A. C. Bouquet : *Comparative Religion* : Pelican Publication : p. 120.

At page 117, Dr. Bouquet has published, under the authority of his own great name and prestige, the map which appears on the next page.

Gaze well on this map. It is an important title-deed for us, Tamils of Ceylon.



DRAVID INDIA

(Dr. A. C. Bouquet: *Comparative Religion*, page 117.)

VI

FIVE contributions have been made upon this theme, and, from a perusal of what has so far been said, what is the resultant finding? (I use the language of the Courts.) In the language of the Courts, evidence has been “put in”; the evidence can be increased many fold, but there is now ‘enough material’ for a verdict from an impartial tribunal. The quality of the evidence is of the best. It is the evidence of “experts”, who are defined in our Evidence Act as persons “specially skilled” in a particular field of science or art or law. The Courts are bound to deliver a verdict in terms of the evidence, if that evidence provides proof. “A fact is said to be proved when, after considering the matters before it, the court either believes it to exist or considers its existence *so probable* that a prudent man ought, under the circumstances of the particular case, to act upon the supposition that it exists.”—Ceylon Evidence Act, No. 14 of 1895, Section 3.

What then emerges as of the nature of a *judicial* finding?—

- 1 That Ceylon Tamils are an integral part of that compartment of human civilization known as Dravid-India;
- 2 That the major part of all India (inclusive of Ceylon) is Dravidian in structure and civilization;
- 3 That it is false to say that Tamils are “foreigners” in Ceylon.

It may even be said, without dispragement of the facts of

History, that Ceylon (in the sense of civilization-territory) belongs to the Tamils; but it is no purpose of this series of articles to rouse racial animosity. It suffices to say, with moderation, that Ceylon is our home. Here we belong. Here we stay.

Plato said “When there is only private feeling, *but no feeling in common*, a state is disorganized.” No Society can exist except upon the basis of a common consciousness. Let the Tamils know, and remember, and never yield, the basic facts of their civilization. We are a people who belong to a culture which arose and flourished *in this part of the world* from time immemorial.

Let us always be glad—it is the mark of a civilised people—to recognise the rights, even the gloriousness, of other people’s cultures and civilizations. Thus shall the Earth de-centralise herself into multiple territories of diverse civilizations, each separate civilization magnificent in its own separate territory, glorying therein, but wholly self-contained and self-contented, indifferent to power, indifferent to acquisition of the other’s territory. Thus shall all the world have peace amongst men of good-will; and war be destroyed.

Strange are the ironies of history. The day may come—those watchful of trends can see it come—when there will be far greater recognition than there is today of the language rights of human beings. T. S. Eliot says:—“For the transmission of a culture *and for its maintenance*, there is no safeguard more reliable

than a language....*If it is no longer cultivated, the people to whom it belongs will tend to lose their racial character.*” I would go further. Not only must the language be cultivated. It must also be *respected*. The day may come when “Hindi only” and “Sinhalese only” will go the way of *Der Tag* and *Deutschland Uber Alles*. On that day let us remember that our Sinhalese co-Ceylonse brothers deserve well of us, even though their politicians are trying to destroy us under the stupid notion that they are a sort of superior “Aryan” people while we are “*only* Dravidians.”—I will not use the other phrase now sometimes uttered even in Ceylonese radio programmes.*

The Sinhalese are essentially our own people. Sinhalese language, Sinhalese laws, Sinhalese kingship, Sinhalese art, Sinhalese attire, Sinhalese sculpture, the famed Sinhalese irrigation engineering—these are all substantially, essentially and

fundamentally Dravidian: I refrain from the word Tamil. The Buddha himself came from a Dravidian part of India—see Dr. Bouquet’s map on page seven. Undoubtedly, in his teaching, The Buddha broke sharply away from the Nordic concepts of war, liquor and territorial adventure: ideals which have brought the great European civilization to the dust.

When his time comes, the Tamil must uphold an ideal of life very different from what prevails today in Ceylon. Ours must be that way of life and thought and action which is shown again and again in the Tamil Classics:—a love of nature, sensuous and mystical; a love of music and devotion; and, above all, a love of fellow-humanity. It was a *Tamil Poet* who wrote two-thousand years ago:

“யாதூ ழுரே யாவருங் கேளிர்.”
All the world is my home: all men my brothers. This transcends Terence.

* Written in 1957.

VII

WHAT manner of persons were the ancient Tamils? If it be true (the reader will recall the high academic authorities cited in previous contributions) that the Dravidians were the very first progenitors of Indian Civilization, then surely it must follow, as surely as Hesperus (the *Morning Star*) follows the goodly company of the night stars—Orion and Hercules and both the Bears with their keeper—that all, or most, of the lauded achievements of the Indian mind are *Dravidian* and not, as supposed, Aryan. We all

believe in the spirit of Truth. Milton used a fine phrase when he called Truth “the justice of knowledge.” You will remember his famous sentence: “Truth is properly no more than contemplation; and her utmost efficiency is but teaching.” Well, then, the truth is that India’s contribution to human thought is wholly *contradictory* of the Aryan way of life. The Aryan is an extrovert. He is talkative; he is hot tempered; he is aggressive minded. Mr. Nehru is a typical Aryan. (And many sober thinkers sadly believe

that, if he persists in some of his present policies, he may well go down in history as the great disrupter of India.) What were the typical Aryan symbols of the ancient days? They were the flying horseman and the speeding one man chariot. What are the typical Aryan symbols of today? They are the jet plane and the hydrogen bomb. How then can it be said that from minds made of such components could have come the noble and typically Indian message of non violence, the sweet creed of cow protection, the divine philosophy that all human beings are brothers? Could the Hitlerian mentality ever rise to such heights? The Vedas are undoubtedly in Sanskrit. The language may be of the Germanic group, but whence the insights handed down from generation to generation? The answer is that at least three thousand years before the Aryans came to India, another people, with a very different concept of life, lived and flourished mightily in the Indian land, and they spread their civilization all the way from Sumeria to Sumatra. This very different concept of life of this very different people has found utterance in a *Tamil* book. Dr. Schweitzer says: "With sure strokes the *Kural* draws the ideal of simple ethical humanity. On the most varied questions concerning the conduct of man to himself and to the world its utterances are characterised by nobility and good sense. *There hardly exists in the literature of the world a collection of maxims in which we find so much lofty wisdom*". Indian thought and its Development p. 203: 1951. In this book, Dr. Schweitzer makes

it clear that Aryan thought and Indian thought are at opposite poles.

I return to the question propounded. What manner of persons were these ancestors of ours? They were, in the first place, a highly intellectual people. In Dr. Radhakrishnan's remarkable book *East and the West* (1955: p. 132) there appears a short statement of India's intellectual achievements. After reciting the inventions of ancient India in the fields of mathematics, astronomy, medicine, grammar and philology, Radhakrishnan quotes Dr. A. L. Kroeber, who says: "This high development of so abstruse and self conscious an activity as philology at so early a time (between 600—100 B.C.) remains perpetually astonishing. *It suggests the existence of a vast historic lacuna in our knowledge of more ancient India—a great realm which we can hope to see in part explored by archaeology alone*": *Configurations of Cultural Growth*, p. 219: 1944.

In the unfolding of this more ancient India, archaeology has played a certain part since 1923. Much more remains to be done. I prophesy that research scholars of the Tamil University of Ceylon will be mainly concerned to demonstrate to the world, after scientific and scrupulous study, the precise contribution of Dravidian Man to that thing we speak of as Civilization. The vast historic lacuna of which Dr. Kroeber speaks will be filled.

May my words come true.

THE Tamil Race owes everlasting gratitude to a great Englishman, Dr. Gilbert Slater, formerly of the University of Madras. Many Englishmen have in their time come to India. Of these, the vast majority were content to be immersed in the day's common round, to earn their daily bread and drink their daily gin and tonic. After many years of "the lazy, hot ease" of the Indian scene, they returned to strange-named English suburbs, deposed, defeated, disenchanted, dyspeptic, wounded, bored.

A few exceptions there have been, however, who looked on India as foster-mother and, grateful for all the hospitality received and security bestowed, made endeavour of some small return. Conspicuous among these—sons of light—was Dr. Slater.

In his preface to his book on "the Dravidian Element in Indian Culture" (Ernest Benn: 1924.) Dr. Slater says: "During my residence in South India (1915-1922) the question of the origin of Dravidian civilization and of the extent of the Dravidian contribution to the totality of Indian culture was constantly in my mind". As Professor of a great Indian University, Dr. Slater had wide opportunity for unhurried study and research; and the validity of his conclusions has received astonishing support in the discovery of the lost cities of the Indus Valley and in the excavations now being made at Bahrein under the auspices of the University of Denmark.

Having cited the evidence, Dr. Slater reaches these main conclusions :

1. That there was in India, at the time of the Aryan invasion, a Dravidian civilization of a more elaborate and developed character than the civilization, *if civilization it can be called*, of the Aryans. (In an earlier page, Dr. Slater describes the Aryans as "relatively barbaric invaders".)

2. That in so far as this Dravidian civilization was derived from outside sources its origin is to be traced to Egypt and Mesopotamia, linked up with India by sea commerce.

3. That Dravidian civilization resembled that of Egypt and Mesopotamia. (High praise indeed.)

4. That the Dravidians were early navigators and their earliest boats were copied from Egyptian models: (pages 80 and 81 of the book referred to).

At page 81 of the same book Dr. Slater quotes Professor Elliot Smith who writes:—"I have examined two skulls from Adichanallur. One was *quite indistinguishable from the early Egyptian type*. The other, though not so typical, comes well within the range of variation of that type."

Let the truth prevail. In his foreword to Dr. Slater's book, Dr. H. J. Fleure, D. Sc., Professor of Geography and Anthropology at the University College of Wales, writes: "The notion of a barbarous India on which Aryan civilization descended has been fairly widespread, and the number of books which tell us of South Indian Civilisation is not as large as one might wish." Even Dr.

Rabindranath Tagore has fallen into the error mentioned by Dr. Fleure.

I trust the day is not far distant when a paperback edition of Dr. Slater's book will be available, in English and in Tamil.

How is it that the very stuff and essence of the *Dravidian* ideas of life are to be found in a *Sanskrit mould* in the sacred books of India? The reader will remember that I asked this question in a previous contribution. A conclusive answer is given by Dr. Slater.

Dr. Slater points to the difficulty of mastering the Dravidian languages. "Some dim and uncertain light upon the sort of mentality that characterised the ancient Dravidians is supplied by the existing languages. The Tamil language, being the purest, is the one we turn to. As it is known to us it is the product of a very long period of an elaborate civilizationThe Tamil language is extraordinary in its subtlety and sense of logic.... The subtlety of the Dravidian mind is illustrated by the manner in which a negative form of the verb is obtained.... e.g. *cey* is *do*, *cey-girr-en* (present) I do; *cey-d-en* I did; *cey-v-en*, I shall do; *ceyy-en* (an extra *y* for euphony) is I shall not do. This, while both ingenious and logical, does not exhaust all the grades of negative meaning which may be required.... Similarly with regard to interrogative sentences. The system of interrogatives in the Tamil language is as perfect as could be formed by the human mind". pp. 30 et seq. Then Dr. Slater comes to grips with the

question posed. "Indian culture, with its special characteristic of systematic and subtle philosophical thought, *must have come from a people capable of originating and developing it*. The capacity would naturally be exhibited also in the evolution of language, and the purest Dravidian language does exhibit it in the highest degree—in a higher degree than any other Indian language....The Dravidian languages being extremely difficult, however, any small body of Aryan invaders establishing themselves as a ruling caste in a district populated by Dravidians, while they have become merged in the native population, their Sanscritic language would become the language of the district....The facts with regard to the distribution of languages are quite in harmony with the conclusions indicated by the ethnological evidence that *the Dravidian element preponderates over all the other elements in the racial make-up of the people of India*. It is also to be noted that the phonetic system of Sanscrit itself is intermediate between that of Tamil and other Dravidian languages on the one hand and that of other Indo-Germanic languages on the other. *This indicates that even when the Rig-Veda took the form in which it has come down to us a considerable part of the Sanscrit-speaking population was of Dravidian race*": pp. 17 et seq.

Dr. Slater moved up and down among the Tamil people during his seven years sojourn in South India. His estimate of Tamils, ancient and modern, their qualities and capacities will be discussed in the next contribution.

IX

THE Tamil People of Ceylon are at present under world survey. From many parts of the world, persons interested in the scope and scheme of human events, the bird watchers of history, have turned their gaze on the North and East of Ceylon, for in these regions is being enacted once again the old, old story, yet forever new—how goes it with a people in sudden confrontation with their Destiny? A writer in a local paper has written strongly and pungently of a recent visit to Jaffna. I recall that the President of Jaffna College had occasion some time ago to speak out his mind about us. In the course of the next few years, many more will take a look at us. A time comes when a people are compelled to "look within". It will be my duty, later on in this series, to assist in this essential task of self-survey.

Let me continue with my narration of the Tamil story as derived from competent sources. I promised the Reader that I will summarise for him Dr. Slater's opinion of the Tamil—ancient and modern.

Dr. Slater draws many correct conclusions, as I believe, about the Tamil mind from his study of the Tamil language. A feature of the Tamil language to which he refers is its extra-ordinary richness in honorifics. "This feature in particular we may attribute to the social organisation of Tamil times, its monarchs, ceremonial courts and priestly caste. Tamil versification is based on quantity, like Greek and Latin; it employs rhyme, but at the begin-

nings, not the endings, of verses; and alliteration, but within the verse, and not as a link between verses. Tamil music is based upon quartertones, i. e., *there are twenty-eight divisions of the octave instead of seven*. Indian culture, with its special characteristic of systematic and subtle philosophical thought, must have come from a people capable of originating and developing it. That capacity would naturally be exhibited also in the evolution of language, and the purest Dravidian language does exhibit it in the highest degree—in a higher degree than any other Indian language". —"The Dravidian Element in Indian Culture", p. 33.

At page 70 of the same book Dr. Slater says: "The very character of the Tamil language, the perfection with which it has been developed into an organ for precise and subtle thought, combined with the fact that it represents a much earlier stage in the evolution of inflexional language than any Indo-Germanic tongue suggests the priority of the Dravidians in attaining settled order and regular Government."

Dr. Slater relates that a trained philologist, who made a study of Tamil borrowings from Sanskrit and Sanskrit borrowings from Tamil, found that words relating to the cultivation of flowers and the making of garlands belong to the Tamil group.

From flowers (பூ) to religion (பூசை) is a natural transition to the Tamil mind. Dr. Slater is most impressed by the Tamil contribution to the higher and

finer and subtler essences of religious thought. It is a topic upon which a whole book may be written. Very different from the crude conceptions of the Aryan Nomad, Tamil thought grew and developed and passed on to conceptions both fascinating and terrible—Krishna (Tamil in colour) the fascinating fascinator, Kali the terrible one; Siva, tirelessly dancing. It is the Tamil who devised religion as a psychological need. How much of the most modern psychoanalytic thought is employed and implied in the esoterics of the linga and the naman: both essentially Tamil emblems.

And, then—what of the famed Tamil love of Temples? Many a Tamil would be gloriously glad to spend his days of retirement in the precincts of a temple. Dr. Slater says: “In the way of Hindu temples there is nothing in North India equal to the sumptuous greatness and elaboration of the great shrines of the South.... In such a temple as that of Menakshi and Siva in Madura one can only dream of having revisited some great shrine of Isis and Osiris in Egypt, or of Marduk in Babylon.”

Dr. Slater reminds us that both Sankarachariya, the great apostle of the Saivites, and Ramanuja, the great apostle of the Vaishnavites, were Dravidians. Indeed, the greatest doctrine of all time, that not only are all the deities, of whatever origin or sex, only different names and varying conceptions of the one and only God, but that all matter and all living creatures are nothing but illusory forms of the one and ultimate Reality—this is the theme of *Tamil* thought from the earliest times.

This is the principal Tamil contribution to human thought.

Turning now to Dr. Slater's estimate of the *modern* Tamil, we find him asking this most pertinent question: “What special part has that corner of India in which Dravidian speech persists to play in the future history of India and of the world?” By way of answer, Dr. Slater draws attention to a very curious fact. He says: “We are struck by a curious contradiction. Dravida is at once the part of India where the most ancient culture still survives, and the part which is closest in touch with the twentieth century.... The refashioning of Indian philosophy to suit the West was carried out on the banks of the Adyar; an ex-schoolmaster of Madras is the brilliantly eloquent representative of India in London and Geneva.* In capacity for working the machinery of government the Tamil is supreme. Modern trade unionism took its rise neither in Bombay nor Calcutta but in Madras. The Co-operative Movement also began in Madras. In everything that relates to the status, education and activities of women, Dravida is far in advance of the rest of India.”

Dr. Slater reminds us of the remarkable fact that English is almost South India's native tongue. This may in part be due to the mastery of language which comes easily to the South Indian, but it is mainly due, in my belief, to the fact of a *very ancient Christian tradition in South India*. The most eloquent exponent of spoken English of our

*The Hon. Mr. Srinivasa Sastri of Madras. It is said that the Parliament of England adjourned so that members could hear Mr. Sastri deliver an address in English.

time was a South Indian Brahmin. His teacher of English was a Protestant Christian Tamil of Jaffna.** If we Tamils are lovers of England's language and literature, it is not for reasons of snobbery. We have no desire to become black Englishmen. But no man

steeped in the annals of great English writing will brook tyranny.

**Mr. James Hensman of Jaffna was Mr. Srinivasa Sastri's teacher of English. I remember that when Mr. Sastri came to Ceylon, his first act of piety was to pay a visit to his teacher, then living in retirement in Jaffna.

X

DR. Slater (may his tribe increase) reminded us, the Reader will remember, of the similarity, even affinity, between the ancient Tamil and Egyptian Civilizations. Let me, therefore, quote a pen picture of ancient Egyptian culture by a very great Dravidian of our time, Dr. Radhakrishnan. It is in effect a restatement of ideas and ideals which had their beginnings in the first home of human civilization and from thence travelled East and West. Says Dr. Radhakrishnan: “Plato records in the *Timaeus* that the Egyptians looked upon the Greeks as children. Plato idealised the stability of the Egyptian culture. The Pyramids are a mighty architectural effort of the human race. The temples of Egypt still stand as a witness to their belief in God. The worship has continued for over thirty-five centuries. The feeling that prompts the worship is still there. The Egyptian of 5000 years ago had exalted conceptions of ethical behaviour. At the point of death their average gentleman wished it to be known that he had been virtuous i.e. *compassionate*. In their confessions they claimed again and again they had been good neighbours. In words as sublime as those of any religion, the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* describes the quality of

virtue: “I have never caused any one to weep. I have never spoken with a haughty voice. I have never made any one afraid. I have never been deaf to words of justice and truth.” An exalted ideal of ethical behaviour guided those early men of conscience: Radhakrishnan (1955) *East and West*, 47.

Are not these Tamil ideals too? Is not the *Kopuram* the agnate of the Pyramid?

Scholars have divided the cultures of the world into Primary and Secondary. The Egyptian, the Babylonian, the Chinese and the Dravidian are the first cultures. A long way after them came the cultures based on Graeco-Jewish foundations.

In this book*—I ask every young man prone to the intellectual life to read it—it is a remarkably brilliant survey of the whole human intellectual achievement—Dr. Radhakrishnan gives us this description of ancient Tamil Civilization which he is pleased to call the Indus Civilization:—“The archaeological discoveries of Harappa and Mohenjo Daro have made it clear that there was a highly developed civilization about 3000 B.C. in the Indus Valley. This civilization exerted a great

*Radhakrishnan, *East and West*.

influence on the later religious life of India Mohenjo Daro was at its best between 3500—2250 B.C. It was laid out with straight roads running east and west, north and south, thirty-three feet wide, with side streets of half that width. The buildings were made of burnt brick set in mud mortar. Some of them were several storeys high. They had baths with drainage systems and in addition there were public bath-houses. The drain pipes were of pottery joined together. Their love of beauty is evident from the amulets made of clay or steatite rock, beautifully glazed. They knew how to use metals. They knew how to make alloys. They knew weights and measures. They knew the use of cotton..... Obviously many of the features of modern Hinduism are derived from very early (i.e. Tamil) sources. Among the relics of a religious character are figures of a male god who is the prototype of the historic Siva. The god who is three-faced is seated on a low Indian throne, in a typical attitude of meditation or yoga with legs bent double beneath him, heel to heel with toes turned downwards and hands extended above the knees. This figure of Siva, the great yogi, has been there for five or six millennia dominating the spiritual landscape of India." *East and West*. pp. 18, 19, 20.

It would thus seem that yoga, that typical Indian product now

being hawked throughout the modern world, is essentially a Tamil way of peace-of-body-and-mind.

Dr. Radhakrishnan's name is a sufficient vouch for the authenticity of his statements. But Dr. Radhakrishnan gives us supporting citations which are of profound interest. He cites Sir John Marshall who states that "there is enough evidence to show the presence in India of a highly developed culture that must have had a long antecedent history on the soil of India, taking us back to an age that can only be dimly surmised": *Mohenjo Daro and the Indus Civilization* (1931) Vol. I p. 106. Next Dr. Radhakrishnan cites Professor Childe: "India confronts Egypt and Babylonia by the third millennium B.C. with a civilization of her own, the peer of the rest. It has endured. It forms the basis of modern Indian culture". *New Light on the Most Ancient East* (1934) p. 220. And finally Dr. Radhakrishnan cites Dr. Hall who says, in the Annual Bibliography of Indian Archaeology, Vol. VII, p. 174: "There is little doubt that India must have been one of the earliest centres of human civilization and it seems natural to suppose that the strange un-Semitic, un-Aryan people who came from the East to civilize the West were of Indian origin, especially when we see with our eyes how very Indian the Sumerians were in type".

XI

MUCH has been said of the true functions of Poetry. The best description of Poetry is that Poetry is what the Poets write. I propose, as part of the narrative in which I am engaged, to give the Reader, as concisely as the limits of space require, a contrast between the poetic approach in the West and in the East.

Homer, of course, was the greatest Greek Poet. He shed the sunlight of his poetic mind upon his people and his land. The Reader will remember Homer's treatment of Helen of Greece. How easy it would have been to have poured out vials of venom upon that human creature. The phrases almost leap to the lips: scarlet harlot; wanton and willing woman; she who broke the stable lock of noble wedlock; she who surrendered shapely limbs to that most awful occupation—adultery, forgetting that woman's high calling, like that of condensed milk, is to remain unadulterated. And now (uplifting the voice in rhetorical righteousness) because of her a thousand ships were launched; and there were tears and blood around and beneath the topless towers of Ilium.

But see how in actual fact the great Greek poet treats the lady. All that war and dust are over. The heroic dead are dead. Helen has returned, not a scratch on her feel-of-primrose skin. Telemachus, the son of the "wise but unlucky" Ulysses, is on a search for his father. He comes to the palace of Menelaus, deep in the hills. And here—what do we find? Not Sita forced to prove her chastity while hidden from the roving eyes of

Rama, but—let Homer himself take up the tale. (I shall summarise the grand words). It is evening. The Prince has bathed in his polished bath. The maids have rubbed him with oil and dressed him in warm tunics. He is seated on a high chair at the side of Menelaus. His hands are washed from water in a golden ewer. Platters filled with various food and gold cups are put upon the table. Their conversation is regal with quiet dignity. Their thoughts naturally turn to those who "died long ago on the broad plain of Troy". Tears pour down the cheeks of Telemachus in grief for his father. And now Homer's *ipsissima verba*: "Helen with her ladies came down from her lofty perfumed room. Adreste drew up for her a comfortable chair. Alcippe brought a rug of the softest wool. Phylo carried her silver work-basket. Helen sat down on the chair, which had a stool below it for her feet, and proceeded at once to find out from her husband what was going on". Menelaus on trial!

She looks at the new-come young man. She cannot take her eyes off him. She says: "Surely this must be King Odysseus's son Telemachus who was a new-born babe when you Achaeans boldly declared war and took the field for my sake". Bold Greek lady reminding her husband of his arduous in the field and of hers in the chamber with King Priam's son!

Just as the Greek poet brings out in his intense poetic way one aspect of the Aryan mentality, so do the poets of the Tamils bring to play the darting splendour of their equally poetic minds on descriptions of the ancient Tamil way of

life. It is the function of the poet everywhere to hold the mirror up to life.

Here I must record a great service to his people done by a *Tamil of Jaffna*. The story is typical; and it links up the Tamil man, modern, with the Tamil man, ancient; and therefore deserves to be told.

Some years ago, at the University of Cambridge, two persons met, both scholars, one an Englishman and the other a Tamil. The Englishman was once the Governor of Ceylon. The Tamil was Vice-Principal of a great College in Jaffna. Said Lord Chalmers to Mr. J. V. Chelliah: I am told you Tamils have an ancient literature worthy of the best. Is any translation available? And thus came into being "*Ten Tamil Idylls translated into English verse by J. V. Chelliah, M.A.*" The story of the birth of the book is also typical of the Tamil man's determination never to give in. The work had been done—long hours at the

table and under the lamp. *This fund* of Tamil energy is always available, the Tamil man's resources within his own inner fire; and it is a reservoir of unlimited supply. But to get *written* matter turned into *printed* matter requires a fund of another kind. And *that* source of supply is for the average Tamil most limited. Annamalai University was approached. Their funds were restricted by rules of limitation. Then the war intervened. Publication in Madras was attempted. The Madras Government refused to supply the paper to print a book by a Ceylon author! Did the Ceylon author give up or give in? Not he. The book *has* come out; and it is available to all the world because it is in English.

In subsequent contributions, the Reader will learn of objective and truthful statements of the ancient Tamil way of life as found in the works of ancient Tamil poets. And he may, at his leisure, and in his mind's eye, compare and contrast East and West.

XII

A GREAT but little known book of our time has been written by Lord Morley of England, a greater intellectual than even Lord Russell. Lord Russell has indulged in speculations in regions of intellectual luxury; but Lord Morley has written of those very matters which concern human beings in their business of human living. Lord Morley has called his book "Politics and History"—two themes which must engage any people who wish to live the examined life. In the course of great writing suffused with reason and passion, Lord Morley asks this question: What is a nation? On this theme there is by him a masterly range of discussion. I will quote a part of a sentence. "It is that which awakens the noblest feelings and impulses in men's breasts; it is the hearth at which the soul of a people is kindled and kept alive".

Our Mahatma Gandhi, with the instinct of genius, brings home the inwardness of the English thinker's line of thought by pointing out that a people cannot be civilised *except in ways essentially their own*. The Mahatma has said:—"Nothing can be further from my thought than that we should become exclusive or erect barriers. But I do respectfully contend that an appreciation of other cultures can fitly *follow, never precede*, an appreciation and assimilation of our own. Indian culture is Indian. It is essentially Eastern".

In the course of recent re-reading (you will remember Anatole France's 'at my age, Monsieur, one reads no more, one reads over again') I picked up my copy of Giovanni Papini's

Un Uomo Finito, and read this word-picture of an Italian family. "One memory lives more vividly in my heart than any other. It is that of damp Sunday evenings in November or December at my grand-father's when a tureen containing mulled wine that was flanked by a platter of roast chestnuts stood in the centre of the table beneath a big oil lamp, *and the whole family—uncles, aunts and innumerable cousins of both sexes—sat around the board with red faces*".

In a recent issue of the American magazine 'Time' there is a coloured photograph of a Japanese family. The father, the mother, the son, the grand-children and the daughter-in-law are together in one room. *They are bathing together in the nude*.

What is the point I am seeking to make?

It is that each people must develop and express its nationality in its own way. In the Italian family scene there is the expression of intense *attachment*. In the Japanese picture you have the expression of an equally intense *detachment*. A people cannot live except they live intensely. If you are inclined to decry the Japanese conception of living, remember this: the finest display of personal courage and valour in any war, ancient or modern, was by young Japanese air pilots—the Kamikazi. A people are civilised only in so far as they cease to be machines.

Thanks to Vice-Principal Chelliah's great work, we modern Tamils are able to gain an authentic picture of the Tamil way of life as it was lived at least a 1500 years

ago. It is enough to quote without comment and let the Reader judge for himself.

Here is a picture of the ancient Tamil city of Kaveripattinam, a famous city of ancient times, now located as lost in the sea sands south of Madras.

First and foremost is the King—Karikalan the Great—a Caesar of his times. Undoubtedly the Poet who wrote of the King and of his people was a contemporary who saw the King in his palace, and knew his exploits, and roamed about the city by day and by night, and saw with his own eyes what he later recollected in tranquillity.

This description of the Tamil King in war is reminiscent of Hector :—

“Like the tiger’s cub whose claws are sharp,
That grows imprisoned in a cage
The Chola King grows proud and hard
Confined in fetters by his foes: . . .
The King doth scale his foemen’s walls,
Unsheathes his sword, regains his crown,
Before him fall his valiant foes
And kites in the wide sky circling fly.
His drums’ sides look like demon’s eyes
And roaring shakes the great wide camp,
He routs his foes at the first onset
In the battle-field”.

(Translation of *Pattinapalai* in iambic verse by Vice-Principal J. V. Chelliah of Jaffna).

And now let me quote a brief passage (the whole poem makes thrilling reading) describing the same king after war’s flags have been furled and he is back in his own city busy in the arts of peace :

“Where forests were, now hamlets rise,
He deepens tanks, makes rich the land,
Expands Urunthai where are seen
High mansions, makes secure its shrines,
And people, builds gates small and large.
He is entrenched secure
Within strong walls where
Lakshmi sits”

“He deepens tanks, makes rich the land”. This line has a significance of its own in the context of Ceylonese civilization.

And finally, for this issue, something reminiscent of Julius Caesar in Egypt :—

“The crimson paste rubbed on his chest
Is now worn off by frolics wild
Of his gold-bangled children dear,
And by the full breasts of his wives,
Who are with well-wrought jewels decked”.

The ancient Tamil ideal of the ideal man was evidently akin to the ancient Roman ideal—the ideal of the complete man, the round man, sound in body, mind and soul.

OF the true features of human civilization there has been continuous discussion by learned persons. I recall reading years ago a book called “Civilization : Its Cause and Cure” by Edward Carpenter, friend of our own Sir P o n n a m b a l a m Arunachalam. Mr. Carpenter condemned the artificial living of what he called “policemanised nations”—stuffed lives lived behind stiff shirts. Then he drew this eloquent picture of what he called true democracy :—

“The true Democracy has yet to come Man has sounded the depths of alienation from his own divine spirit, he has drunk the dregs of the cup of suffering, he has literally descended into Hell Man has to undo the wrappings and the mummydom of centuries Possibly some day we shall build great temples, beautiful on every height, or by the shores of the rivers and the lakes, which will be the storehouses of all precious and lovely things. There men, women, and children will come to share in the great and wonderful common life, the gardens around will be sacred to the unharmed and welcome animals : there all store and all facilities of books and music and art for every one, there a meeting place for social life and intercourse, there dances and games and feasts”.

It is astonishing to find this very ideal of living, set forth by an Englishman 50 years ago as something to be desired, in actual attainment some 2000, 3000 or even 4 or 5 thousand years ago by the ancient Tamils!

I resume my citations from Principal Chelliah’s translation of

Pattinapalai. Mr. Carpenter speaks of the temple as the centre of the people’s life for “dances and games and feasts”. The ancient Tamil ideal was even higher :—

“There is the flag at the temple’s gate
With blossoms decked, and sacred held
To perfect, glorious God, adored
By all; again, a banner waves
As white as flowers of shapely canes
That grow along the river wild
Which in its course brings pearly sands.
This flag is fixed on curved bars
Attached to poles that are well greased
With soft and molten wax : it stands
O’er baskets locked, with various kinds
Of tasty victuals filled, on which
White rice is as oblation strewn.
Where disputations sound are held
By scholars ripe who speak with power
As masters skilled in various lore,
Another imposing flag is hung”.

So the Tamil ideal of the Tamil Temple was not so much as a centre of dancing and games but rather as a centre of *food*, eventually distributed to the poor, and of *learning* dispensed by “masters skilled in various lore.”

What of the people who lived in that ancient Tamil city?

“In cloud topped, lofty, storeyed halls
Around which there are pials built

Are numerous courts and doors,
 both large
 And small, and spacious cloisters
 reached
 By ladders long with close-set
 steps.
 In them do gather women fair
 Whose feet are pink, whose thighs,
 close set
 Adorned are they with gauds of
 gold.
 Arrayed are they like peacocks gay,
 Their eyes are deer-like, and their
 speech,
 Like the parrot's prattle; these
 enjoy
 The breeze that through the win-
 dows blows".

The sinews of a people are its
 merchants. What of the ancient
 Tamil merchants?

"Where merchants live the fish
 are safe

In the sea, and the cattle in the
 land;
 Quite free and happy are their lives
 Amidst their multiplying kin. . . .
 They do their duties by the gods,
 Oblations offer, tend with care
 Fine bulls and cows, exalt the
 priests
 That teach the Vedas four; they
 give
 Their guests food cooked and un-
 cooked too.
 Unstintingly they dispense alms,
 And live a life of gracious love.
 For others' goods they have
 The same regard as for their own.
 In trade
 "They set a fair price on all things,
 Their ancient wealth was thus
 acquired
 As those who are united close
 By various cultures high, at times

Together come to ancient shrines,
 So people speaking diverse tongues
 That come from great and foreign
 homes
 Mix free in friendly terms with
 those
 Who occupy this glorious town".

The ancient Tamil merchants,
 while mindful of wealth, were not
 unmindful of the culture which
 comes from mingling with cultured
 persons of other lands.

And now, finally, a pen-picture
 of the ancient Tamil city at night.
 Every city is at its best at night.
 (Do you remember this description
 of ancient Rome by night? "By
 night, he who looked out from the
 Alban hills over the Campagna
 received the impression that all
 Rome stood in a sea of fire".) Here
 is Kaveripattinam by night two
 thousand years ago :—

"The ancient glories of the port
 So blest with never failing flowers,
 Are rare, and match the pride of
 heaven."

In night's last watch, when eyes are
 tired,
 The boatmen in their prow-bent
 crafts

Note well the lights that still burn
 bright

In storeys high
 Here under stores of grain do sleep
 Grown calves fed sleek with yellow
 rice.

Rich coconut and plantain trees
 With bunches, fruitful areca palms
 Sweet mangoes, bunchy palmyras,
 And rooty *sempu*, saffron sweet,
 And tender ginger : these abound.
 The sheds where bullocks feed
 Have yards containing cooling
 tanks.

The cuckoos with their great black
 mates

From shrubby groves do fly away
 To shun the smoke of oblation's fire
 That hermits bright with matted
 locks

Do light in demon-guarded shrines.
 Reclining on the shining sands
 That scented with sweet-smelling
 blooms

By great Kaveri brought along,
 The good king's servants take their
 rest

And guard his goods in store-rooms
 built

On spacious streets that skirt the
 sea.

In storeys high where artless dames
 At night enjoy their mates' embrace

Discarding silks for raiment white.
 Their hips are broad, their dress is
 soft ;

Fair are their skins red-coral like.
 They wear the garlands of their
 mates,

While men, the garlands of their
 wives.

And wine they shun for sweeter
 drinks.

Asleep they all are now who heard
 The lyrics sung, enjoyed the plays,
 And felt the joys of the moon-lit
 night".

Ancient Rome by the Tiber and
 ancient Kaveripattinam by the
 Kaveri may well have been con-
 temporaries in time.

XIV

THESE days one reads from
 time to time despairing letters
 to the press by Tamils deploring
 our present state. It is but natural
 that it should be so. Criminally-
 minded persons are in positions of
 power.* But let us take courage.
 Remember what the historian said
 of the early Romans : "a people
 endowed with a sense of order and
 discipline, strictly legal and end-
 lessly tenacious, welded by consti-
 tutional conflict and educated by
 civic action".

These occasional articles of mine
 have grown to be a counterpart of
 the ancient epistles—epistles by a
 Tamil of 1896 to the Tamils of
 1958. When I began writing these
 letters to my people I was totally
 ignorant of the story of the Tamils.
 And yet it was told to me that I
 should write. And how remarkably
 I have been helped! As each point
 in the narrative was reached, the

books necessary for the next wave
 of thought have been providen-
 tially placed in my hands. I meet
 a friend. "I am reading your
 articles". Then he mentions the
 name of a book I should read.
 Such is my ignorance that I have
 not even heard of that book. A
 few days later I meet another
 friend. Has he a copy of the book
 mentioned by the other friend?
 He has, and it is quickly made
 available to me. In this manner,
 a way has been shown.

Not long ago I met a group of
 young men at Batticaloa. I had
 been asked to read Professor Nila-
 kanta Sastri's book on the History
 of South India. I inquired if any
 of them had a copy of the book.
 Sure enough one of them had the
 book. Off on his bicycle and back
 with the book.

* Written in 1958.

It is a book every Tamil should read. While maintaining first-class academic standards, it satisfies the critical reader that here is true history by a historically trained mind.

Professor Nilakanta Sastri M.A., is Professor of Indology in the University of Mysore. He relates the story of South India from pre-historic times to the fall of Vijayanagaram. His book is up-to-date. It was published in 1955 by the Oxford University Press.

After a survey of the sources in Chapter I, to which I shall later revert, Professor Nilakanta Sastri describes, in Chapter II of his book, the Tamil Land—its shape, its size and its physical features. The coloured map opposite page 34 of the book is illuminating to eye and mind. Says Professor Sastri: "Our concern is primarily with the land lying to the South of the Vindhya We have a mountain wall buttressed by several forest-clad spurs From the Southern slopes of the Satpuras the Tapti flows parallel to the Narmada to the West and the Mahanadi to the Bay of Bengal in the East. This double wall effectively divides the Peninsula South from the plains of North India": page 34.

The rivers of South India are a typical part of our landscape and symbolic of our civilization. "The three great rivers of the plateau proper are the Godavari, the Krishna and the Kaveri The Godavari is surpassed in India only by the Ganges and the Indus for its sanctity, the picturesque scenery of its course and its utility to man The Kaveri, known as the Southern Ganges, has a

course of 475 miles and is equally famous Tamil literature cherishes many traditions of its origin and is replete with expressions of pious and fervent admiration for the life-giving properties of its water passing over less important rivers, we may note that the *Tambraparni* forms a life line for agriculture in the Tinnevely district. At its mouth in the *Gulf of Mannar* are the famous pearl fisheries often described by travellers from other countries".—pages 41, 43, 44. [Tambraparni—the Gulf of Mannar—students of Ceylon's history, please note.]

"This is the real old India of the South, the land where all the great historical kingdoms of South India, fixed their capitals, the land of unnumbered temples, of indigenous arts and of almost pre-historic industries. *Here artificial irrigation was practised from remote antiquity*, and the irrigation system of the fertile river belt between Karur and Tanjore must be almost as old as agriculture itself." page 48. [Students of Ceylon's irrigation system, please note.]

"Located half way on the maritime routes from the Mediterranean and Africa to China, Peninsular India developed and maintained a fairly brisk maritime trade with the nations on either side, and had a large share in the colonization of the Eastern lands across the Bay of Bengal. And its rulers are known to have devoted particular care to the maintenance of a *strong navy*. The mariners of the Chola country came to be looked upon as authorities on sailing conditions in the Indian Ocean and were cited by the Arab geographers of the Middle Ages".—page 35. [Lovers Trincomalie, please note.]

The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea—the date of which Professor Sastri fixes as between A.D. 75 and A.D. 130—contains an account of the conditions of maritime trade in South India. If South Indian maritime prowess became noteworthy as far back as A.D. 100,

how much earlier must have been its rise and development?

In subsequent articles, I shall make ample citation from Professor Sastri's valuable book, for the time has come when we must pass on from ancient Tamil Land to mediaeval Tamil Land and thence to modern times.

XV

JAMES Bryant Conant, the great American thinker, has described Education as a training for citizenship. This is especially so in our modern world of "intolerance and narrow nationalism", to use the words of the President of India.* Professor Albert Einstein, the greatest single benefactor in his time to the most advanced of all the sciences, was driven out of his homeland because his parents were members of a minority community. Professor Eliezer has left Ceylon.** Remember, these things are happening not in the 12th but in the middle of the 20th century.

The answer is not to be found in despair, nor in bluff nor bluster, but in quiet confidence and knowledge.

This is the power, the privilege, the pride

And rich morality of those who write,

That hearts may be their highway.

I promised the Reader a short survey of the sources of South Indian history as given by Professor Nilakanta Sastri. Let me quote from him:—"Among classical writers, the first direct notice of South India occurs in Megasthenes who gives a quaint account of the Pandyan Kingdom . . . Trade bet-

ween South India and Egypt was carried on in the Hellenistic period and continued more actively under the Roman Empire. Strabo records the increase in the knowledge of India among the Romans of his day and the success of the expedition under Gallus, sent by Augustus (B.C. 25), to secure for the Empire the command of Aden and the Red Sea route to India which was becoming increasingly popular among the merchants of the Empire . . . While Pliny the Elder (C.A.D. 75) and Ptolemy (A.D. 130) derived their information from other writers, the author of the *Periplus* (C.A.D. 100) certainly visited many of the ports of western India and had a direct knowledge of the conditions of trade that prevailed there . . . The most notable name after Ptolemy is that of the Byzantine monk Cosmas (C.A.D. 550) called Indikopleustes, "the man who sailed to India" . . . Inter-course between China and South India by sea as early as the second

*These words were used by the President of India when he visited Ceylon in 1959.

**Professor Eliezer is a renowned mathematician of Cambridge University. He threw up his appointment in the University of Ceylon at Peradeniya and left Ceylon in 1959. He is a Tamil. He is today the Head of the University of Malaya.

century B.C. is attested to by the record of a Chinese embassy to Kanchi (Houang-tche). Entries in the Chinese annals of the third, fourth and fifth centuries A.D. show clearly that *the Hindu Kingdoms of Indo-China were in active touch with South India on the one side and China on the other*. Many Buddhist monks went from South India and Ceylon to China by sea and settled there. The celebrated Yuan Chwang travelled extensively in India. He spent a number of months in the states of South India, (A.D. 641-2) and has left behind interesting observations on the religious and social conditions that prevailed in these lands in his day . . . There are records in the Chinese annals of embassies exchanged between China and the Pallava court of Kanchi in the eighth century and the Chola court in the eleventh. A fair amount of trade was carried on between China and South India. Chinese junks visited South Indian waters freely. *The great Mongol Emperor Kublai Khan sent a number of embassies to South Indian States*. In the first quarter of the fifteenth century A.D. no fewer than seven embassies to the Chinese court reached South India.

“Arab travellers and geographers begin to be a valuable source from the ninth century A.D. Ibn Khurdadbeh (A.D. 844), Abu Zaid Hassan (916 A.D.), Suleiman (A.D. 851) Ibn al-Fakih, Ibn Said (1214, A.D.) and most important of all Ibn Batuta (C.A.D. 1350). By profession a doctor of the Muhammadan law and traditions he was a keen observer of men and affairs. A good part of his work is devoted to an account of his travels in South

India, and contains much accurate information.

“With Marco Polo begins a new epoch in the direct contacts between Europe and the East. He only passed through some parts of South India on his way to Persia, but the amount of information he was able to collect is indeed surprising. *The commerce of South India he found stretching like an immense chain from the territories of Kublai Khan to the shores of the Persian Gulf and of the Red Sea . . .*

“The rise of Vijayanagaram in the fourteenth century and of the Portuguese power in the East attracted many foreigners to India, and as a consequence foreign evidence on South India increases vastly in volume. Nicola Conti (A.D. 1420) the Italian, Athanasius Nikitin (A.D. 1470) the Russian, Duarte Barbosa (A.D. 1500) the Portuguese, Jan Van Linschoten (A.D. 1583) the Dutchman, William Methwold (A.D. 1618) the Englishman—their writings are all sources of South Indian history.” (Nilakanta Sastri : pages 26—33.)

The other usual sources of history—incriptions, excavations, coins, copper plate grants and writings—all are patiently waiting for the man of truth, research and meditated thought.

“For too long”, said the great historian of India, Dr. Vincent Smith, “attention has been concentrated on the North. It is time that due regard should be paid to the non-Aryan element”. The systematic study of the pre-history of South India has yet to be undertaken. It is a task I dedicate to the Tamil University of tomorrow.

XVI

MAXIM Gorky, the great Russian author, once said that you can know a people only through their literature. Gorky has a permanent place in the literature of the world. Some of his short stories are (in Blake’s famous phrase) gateways to the soul, as intense in their appeal as a sonnet by Shakespeare or Milton or Wordsworth.

I propose to devote a place in these contributions to the literature of the Tamils. But let us first understand what is meant by the literature of a people.

Cardinal Newman, addressing the students of the Catholic University of Dublin, said: “Like music it (the literature of England) has seized upon the public mind. It is no longer a mere letter, printed in books and shut up in libraries, but it is a living voice, which has gone forth in its expressions and its sentiments into the world of men, which daily thrills upon our ears and syllables our thoughts, which speaks to us through our correspondents and dictates when we put pen to paper. Whether we will or no, it has become a portion of the vernacular tongue, the household words, of which perhaps we little guess the origin, and the very idioms of our familiar conversation. So tyrannous is the literature of a nation. We cannot destroy or reverse it. We cannot make it over again. It is a great work of man.”

This is what is meant by the literature of a people. It is a living voice which can affect men to tears.

Many years ago, I was at Mayavati, at the foot of the Hima-

layas, in the company of a group of monks of the Ramakrishna Order. One evening, there was a chanting of verses from the Ramayana. The voice and manner of the cantor reminded me of what I had read of the ancient *aidoi*, the first custodians of the poems of Homer. As the musical recitation proceeded, and the story developed in its drama and pathos, the monk seated beside me was in uncontrollable tears.....

I am reminded of the literature of another very great people, the Jews, and of a passage of it which was a favourite one in our home in our early days. “And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. And he also had made savoury meat, and brought it unto his father, and said unto his father, Let my father arise, and eat of his son’s venison. And Isaac his father said unto him, Who art thou? And he said, I am thy son, thy firstborn Esau. And Isaac trembled very exceedingly and said, Who? Where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it to me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, *Bless me, even me also, O my father.*”

When children are gathered together at night and their father’s voice trembles as he tells the story, and there are tears in their eyes—that is the literature of a people.

Some years ago, when I was on a month's visit to Madura, I inquired whether there was in that famed city any counterpart of the ancient Tamil Sangam. I was taken to a small modern building in obvious dilapidation, as it seemed to me, and I came away very disappointed.

Professor Nilakanta Sastri divides the literature of the Tamils into four periods (exclusive of the period of modern Tamil literature). These four periods are:—

- I. The Age of the Sangam: (from B. C. to 300 A.D.);
- II. The Age of the Kural and of the Hindu Religious revival: (500-850 A.D.);
- III. The Golden Age of Tamil Literature & Culture: (850—1200 A.D.);
- IV. The Age of Tamil Philosophical and critical literature: (1200—1650 A.D.).

I shall summarise what the Tamil Savant has to say of each of these periods.

“The first well-lighted epoch in the history of the Tamil land is that reflected in the Sangam literature—the earliest stratum of Tamil literature now available. This is found grouped in nine more or less schematic anthologies consisting of 2,279 poems of lengths varying from four or five lines to over eight hundred by 473 poets (including some women)

besides 102 anonymous pieces..... Doubtless what has survived is only a part of the much vaster literature of these remote times..... In the poems of the Sangam anthologies, the Tamil language has reached maturity and begun to serve as a powerful and elegant medium of literary expression... It also reflects the existence of a fairly elaborate code of conventions governing the portrayal of social life in literature. This must clearly have been the result of a long course of development spread over some generations” (pp. 110—112).

In the ancient poems of the Tamils will be found what must always be the speciality of Tamil literature: its conception of Love. The Tamils had a simple and natural conception of the meeting and mating of male and female, “based on the differences in their respective manifestations of love, possibly due ultimately to differences in the physical conditions of the different parts of the country..... The land was fertile and there was plenty of grain, meat and fish; the Chera country was noted for its buffaloes, jakfruit, pepper and turmeric. Many rural activities like the cultivation of *ragi* and sugar-cane and the harvesting and drying of grain are described in the Sangam poems in a vivid and realistic manner”. Sastri: p. 125.

Professor Sastri dates the *Tolkappiyam*, the great Tamil grammar, as of the Sangam age.

“It was the day of Gandhi's assassination; but on Calvary the sightseers were more interested in the contents of their picnic baskets.”

This is the first sentence of a famous novel by that famous writer and thinker, Mr. Aldous Huxley.

Only a fortnight ago, we in Ceylon came face to face with an event of equal tragedy. While in the act of prayerful reverence to a member of his chosen religion the Prime Minister of Ceylon was done to death.* The whole country became convulsed with pity for that fragile, bullet-ridden, fallen figure.

But already the people are going back to the eternal theme of their bread basket. Let us pause, especially the Tamils of Ceylon, to reflect for a few moments.

Every one in Ceylon is now convinced that the assailant was *not a Tamil*. But, for a few ugly hours, the tongue of rumour ran in that way. The late Prime Minister himself by words most unwittingly uttered gave the whole country the impression that the assailant was “a foolish man in the robes of a monk”. Had it indeed been a foolish Tamil, driven insane by the memory of a brother burnt alive or a sister raped, who had perpetuated such a senseless prank as the killing of a human being, the blood that would have been shed throughout Ceylon is beyond contemplation.

This, then, is the first lesson of this catastrophe. If suffering is to be the lot of our race, so be it.

Many a Tamil in Ceylon today has already accepted suffering, for himself and for his family, as a crown to be worn. Just as a teacher gives the hardest problems to his best pupil, so only those are made to suffer who are worthy of it.

The next lesson has already been given to us in plain words by the Prime Minister of Malaya. *You cannot mix politics and religion*. Which-ever sort of man comes to power—be he Sinhalese or Burgher or Muslim—let him remember that the acid secretions of religion must never be permitted to corrode the machinery of Government. With many of the utterances of the late Prime Minister I was in disagreement, but never so profoundly as with the statement that for the office of Inspector-General of Police he needed a *Sinhalese and a Buddhist*. A man of the mental status of Bandaranaike, a student of the theory and practice and philosophy of politics—how did he come to make such a colossally stupid statement? I had intended after he had given up this ugly game of politics and gone back to his beloved books, to meet him and ask him many a pertinent question. Alas, it is not to be.

The answer may well be that even the ablest man can be perverted by zeal for the religion of his choice.

What is the remedy?

I was amused to read the recent remarks of a former Minister of Justice. This gentleman proposes

*Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, Prime Minister of Ceylon, was assassinated September 25, 1959. He was a friend and College mate of the writer.

an elaborate procedure by which (according to him) it would be possible "to decide who the good and bad Bhikkus are"! This proposal is as futile as some of his other proposals in the past. Or, perhaps, what the legal luminary intends is that there should be legislation to control the activities of members of the clergy who are known to be boon companions of upperclass Colombo ladies!

Such fantastic divagations apart, the true remedy is that every person who aspires to be a Ceylonese leader should take to heart the lessons of the life and death of Mr. Bandaranaike.

From all this horror, the Tamils have an especial lesson to learn. Our leaders too have the temptation of making a public parade of such a personal thing as religion—for political purposes. As a member of the Tamil University Movement, it has been said to me many a time: you are seeking to pass from Buddhist hegemony to Hindu hegemony. But this I know. The suffering which has come to us, and which awaits us, will make of us a purged and purified people.

And it is of the genius of Hinduism that, while it accepts and tolerates, it never absorbs.

Christian and Jain, Muslim and Buddhist, they have all come to India, all have been made

welcome, all are fellow occupants of the many mansions of God.

Whether the late Mr. Bandaranaike was a Bodhisatva and a reincarnation of Sri Sangabo I cannot say. But I can say that he was the most gifted Ceylonese of our time and generation. Speaking now for him who can no longer speak for himself, I say to the men in power today:—

"If government were a matter of will upon any side, yours, without question, ought to be superior. But government and legislation are matters of reason and judgment and not of inclination; and what sort of reason is that in which the determination precedes the discussion, in which one set of men deliberate and another decide? Authoritative instructions, mandates which one is bound blindly and implicitly to obey though contrary to the clearest convictions of one's judgment and conscience—these are things utterly unknown to the laws of this land, and which arise from a fundamental mistake of the whole order and tenor of our constitution."

These are the words not of Mr. Bandaranaike but of Burke. But Mr. Bandaranaike too had the eloquence to utter such words—not, indeed, the latter-day Bandaranaike, the harassed, embarrassed, bewildered politician—but Bandaranaike in the clean glory of his young manhood, the student orator of long ago.

IN his Azad Lecture delivered early this year, Mr. J. Nehru, speaking on "India, Today and Tomorrow," spoke bucketsful on Sanskrit (undoubtedly a great language) but *not one single word* about Sanskrit's older and nobler sister, Tamil. The phrase "fissiparous tendencies" is often on Mr. Nehru's lips. When will he remember that he is Premier of all India and not of North India alone?

The reader will remember that Professor Sastri dates the *Tolkappiyam* as of the Sangam age. I have been at pains to learn what other nation in the whole world can claim to have produced a competent and comprehensive *grammar* so far back in time. Remember, a grammar is, in many aspects, the acme of mental achievement. A people live by their language and the language never becomes the permanent measure of their mind until the grammarian has played upon it the magic of his observant intellect. What a climb from the initial grunts and jerks of human sound to such a treatise as *Tolkappiyam*!

The Greeks and the Romans had their early minuscules of grammar—Ennius (B.C. 239—169), Herodian (A.D. 2nd century)—but the Tamils can claim, by virtue of *Tolkappiyam*, to be the progenitors of this profound achievement of the human mind.

I have already given the Reader a brief account of Professor Sastri's discussion of Tamil Literature of the Sangam Age. Here is what he has to say of the second great period of Tamil Literature—the age of the *Kural* and of the Hindu

Religious Revival:— "The widespread Hindu religious revival for which many Saiva *Nayanars* and Vaishnava *alvars* worked together furnished a powerful stimulus to the growth of a popular devotional literature. It was of great importance alike for its volume and for its influence on the life of the people. Groups of devotees moved from place to place singing hymns they composed in the course of these pilgrimages. The result was the use of simple diction and catchy tunes..." (p. 351).

The principal poets of this period were Karaikkal Ammai, Aiyadigal Kadanarkon, Appar, Gnanasambandar, Tirumalar, Sundaramurti (also known as *tambiram tolan*), Manikkavasagar, Tirumalisai, Tirumangai, Periyalvar, Andal, Kulasekhara, Nammalvar. Of the last-named, Professor Sastri says:—"Nammalvar was a yogi and his Tiruvaymoli is replete with his mystical experiences. Not only as philosopher and mystic, but even as a pure literary artist, Nammalvar takes a very high rank." (p. 355).

Professor Sastri calls the *Silappadikaram* "an unsurpassed gem."

Of the next age of Tamil Literature (850-1200) Professor Sastri says: "The age of the imperial Cholas was the golden age of Tamil culture. The Prabandha form became dominant and the systematic treatment of Saiva siddhanta in philosophical treatises began. Great Siva temples were built anew and celebrated in hymns. The hagiology of Saivism was standardised in a great *Purana* by Sekkalar." (p. 357).

This, of course, was the age of the great Kamban.

I recall with great pleasure a discourse on Kamban's *Ramayana* by Dr. Krishnan* at Navalar Hall, Colombo a short time ago. Professor Sastri endorses all that Dr. Krishnan told us on that memorable day. "This poem is the greatest epic in Tamil literature, and though the author states that he follows in the wake of Valmiki, still his work is no translation or even adaptation of the Sanskrit original. Kamban imparts into his narration the colour of his own time and place. Rama himself is as much master of the Tamil idiom as of Sanskrit. The *Ramavataram* attained great popularity, and there was a family of hereditary expounders of the *Kambaramayanam* in Hassan in Mysore State at the end of the fourteenth century." (p. 360).

Dr. Krishnan when he lectured to us at Navalar Hall was at pains to demonstrate to us the aspects in which Kamban's *Ramayana* was superior to its Sanskrit counterpart.

Of the fourth great period of ancient Tamil Literature (1200-1650) Professor Sastri says: "Though the Emperors of Vijayanagar and most of their feudatories were Telugus with a decided preference for Sanskrit and Telugu, there is no reason to think that there was any set-back in Tamil literary work, and the Pandyas bestowed particular attention to the cultivation of Tamil." (p. 365).

This was the age of the fourteen Saiva-siddhanta-sastras: Meykandar, Arunandi, Tattuvayar, Arunakirinathan, Sivaprakasara, Kamalai Gnanaprakasara are some of the outstanding names.

In secular literature the outstanding name is that of Villiputturar (c. 1400) who wrote *Bharatam*, "the entire story of the Great Bharata War in 4,350 well-tuned verses."

I will conclude, as I began, with a reference once again to our own special aspect of the Tamil intellect, its capacity for producing great grammars and lexicons.

After *Tolkappiyam*, the Tamils produced a series of grammars and lexicons from about 850 A.D. Professor Sastri says: "In the field of Tamil grammar, the *Yapparungalakkarigai* and the *Yapparungalakkorikai*, two authoritative works on prosody were composed by Amitasagara at the close of the tenth century. Both the works have lucid commentaries.... The *Yapparungalam* is unique in its range and offers an exhaustive treatment of the metres in Tamil.... King Virajendra's work written in *Kalitturai* metre attempts a *synthesis between the Tamil and Sanskrit systems of grammar* and comprises all the five sections of a complete treatise. The work is full of interest for a student of the history of grammatical theory in Tamil. The *Pandiyalangaram* treats mainly of figures of speech. The *Neminadam* is a short treatise treating of the orthographs and parts of speech of the Tamil language. Another work on prosody was *Vaccanandimalai*. By its simplicity and terseness the *Nannul* has practically displaced all other books as the beginner's handbook of Tamil grammar. In lexicography the large lexicon called *Pingalam* belongs to this period."

*Dr. K. Krishnan, F.R.S., Director of the National Physics Laboratory of India.

In the next period (1200—1650), the Tamils produced *Nambi Ahapporul*, *Cidambarapattiyal* (1508) *Navanitappattiyal* and numerous other grammatical works not the cast of which was *Kutti-Tolkappiyam* as it is, like the *Tolkappiyam*, a complete exposition of the entire range of Tamil grammar.

Let the Tamil be proud that his ancestors had the courage and the capacity for high achievement in this most difficult branch of human learning.

What said Browning of his grammarian?

"What's time? Leave Now for dogs and apes.

XIX

THE President of America has visited India*. I have a feeling that in the innermost recesses of his mind his desire was not so much for a semi-summit talk with Mr. Nehru as to see the Taj Mahal.

Many years ago, when I was a child, my parents went from Indore to Agra to see the Taj Mahal. When they came back and told me, I wept that they had not taken me with them. My mother placed her hand on my head and said: You too will see it someday. Some years later, when I was at St. John's College, our teacher asked me in class if I had seen the Taj Mahal. Promptly I said: I have not, but my father has seen the Taj Mahal. This spontaneous and truthful remark raised a loud laugh in the class—I still wonder why.

Man has Forever;
Back to his book then;
Deeper drooped his head:—
Now, master, take a little rest—
not he!
Back to his studies,
Fierce as a dragon
He (soul-hydroptic with a sacred
thirst)
Sucked at the flagon.
Was it not great?
Did not he magnify the mind?
That low man seeks a little thing
to do.
Sees it and does it:
This high man, with a great
thing to pursue
Dies ere he knows it."

My mother's words came true many, many years later in strange and unexpected circumstances. Never shall I forget the sight of what Tagore has called "a tear-drop of love". I saw it by all four lights: noonday light, twilight, full-moon light (most luckily it was the night of the full moon) and early dawn light. Only the imagery of the great Poet W. B. Yeats can give the reader a faint notion of what my eyes beheld.

The Taj Mahal by noonday light:—

"...on the dove-grey edge of
the sea
A pearl pale high-born lady,
who rode
On a horse with bridle of
findrinny.

*1960.

Down to her feet white vesture
flowed,
Of many a figured embroidery;
And it was bound with a pearl-
pale shell
That waved like the summer
streams,
As her soft bosom rose and fell.”

The Taj Mahal by twilight:—

“A lady with soft eyes like
funeral tapers,
And face that seemed wrought
out of half-lit vapours,
And a sad mouth, that fear
made tremulous
As any ruddy moth, looked
down on me.”

The Taj Mahal by full moon
light:—

“The night has fallen; not a
sound
In the forbidden sacred grove
Unless a petal hit the ground,
Nor any human sight within
it
But the crushed grass where I
have lain;
And the moon is wilder every
minute”.

The Taj Mahal at early
dawn:—

“A dome made out of endless
carven jags,
Where shadowy face glowed
into shadowy face,
Looked down on me....and the
leisured gaze
Was loaded with the memory
of days
Buried and mighty. Then
through the great door
The dawn came in, and glimmer-
ed on the floor
With a pale light....

High frail cloudlets, fed with
a green light,
Like drifts of leaves, immovable
and bright,
Hung in the passionate dawn”.

And yet, judge of my amazement
when I read the following in
Aldous Huxley's diary of his
journey to India:—

“The Taj was a disappointment
....Its elegance is at the best of a
very dry and negative kind....

The Hindu architects produced
buildings incomparably more rich
and interesting as works of art.
*I have not visited Southern India,
where, it is said, the finest speci-
mens of Hindu architecture are to
be found.* But I have seen enough
of the art in Rajputana to convince
me of its enormous superiority to
any work of the Mohammedans.
The temples at Chittoor, for ex-
ample, are specimens of true classi-
cism. They are the products of a
prodigious, an almost excessive,
fancy, held in check and directed
by the most judicious intelligence.
Their elegance is an opulent and
subtle elegance, full of unexpected
felicities.” (Jesting Pilate, p. 61).

My own memories of the Taj
Mahal still linger. But it is most
satisfying to know that Dravidian
and Hindu architecture have won
the unstinted praise of one of the
most intelligent, versatile and
cultured men living today.

I do not wish this article to
become a sort of autobiography,
for I know to what extent our
Jaffna man resents what he may
regard as self-puffing; but I cannot
refrain from saying that another
cherished memory is a month spent
at Madura, with daily visits to the
great Temple, and the opportunity

taken to visit most of the Temples
of South India. The marvellous
sight of the long inner corridor
of the Rameswaram Temple was
ruly a soul-lifting experience.

And who can forget the ancient
and historic Temple at Trincoma-
lee? The latest style of architecte-
ture in the modern West is to
incorporate the building into the
landscape, make it part of the sea
and the sky. This is precisely
what has been achieved at Trinco-
malee. The Temple stands upon
the side of a rock; but the rock and
the structure upon it are so merged
and inmixed with the far-flung
waters below and the sapphire
dome overhead that the whole
becomes one vast human achieve-
ment grander in scope and design
than St. Paul's of London, than
St. Peter's of Rome and even,
perhaps, the Taj. As I stood in
the centre of this grand human-
divine edifice one morning with
other members of the Tamil Uni-
versity Movement, I saw in my
mind's eye a long procession of
neatly attired graduates in long
gowns marching up the hill on
Convocation Day.

Let me conclude with the follow-
ing note on Kandyan Architecture
by Mr. J. P. Lewis, M.A., C.M.G.,

at one time Government Agent
of the Central Province of Ceylon.
The Civil Servant of those days did
not spend his evenings at clubs
and dance halls but in his study:—

“The architecture which it
most (Kandyan architecture) re-
sembles would appear to be that
of the temples of Mudbidri in
Kanara or the Tuluva country on
the Malabar coast, and it is perhaps
significant that the religion of the
people of this country is Jainism.
The religions of the Buddhists and
the Jains were so similar to one
another, both in their origin and
their development and doctrines,
that their architecture must also
at one time have been nearly the
same. A strong presumption that
the architecture of the two sects
was similar arises from the fact
of their sculptures being so nearly
identical that it is not always easy
to distinguish what belongs to the
one and what to the other”.

For this opinion Mr. Lewis
relies on “History of Indian and
Eastern Architecture” by James
Fergusson, pp. 207—208. Fer-
gusson has also said that “this
style of architecture is not known
to exist anywhere else in India
proper, but recurs with all its
peculiarities in Nepal.”

THE reader may have passed off as of slight moment the story which recently appeared in the *Morning Star* of the Sinhalese merchant who closed up a prosperous business in a foreign land and came to Ceylon "because in Ceylon we are in the majority;"—but when I read that story I was deeply concerned.

The majority mentality is a universal phenomenon of human nature. Whenever a man is in a position to do so, be he white or brown, he tends to use his boot. Walter Bagehot was a great scholar and a man of liberal ideals, but he wrote in a letter to a friend: "I think M. Bonaparte is entitled to great praise. He has very good heels to his boots, and the French just want treading down, and nothing else—calm, cruel, business like oppression, to take the dogmatic conceit out of their heads." James Boswell was, on the whole, a genuine and good natured man, but when in 1807 the slave trade was abolished by enactment of law he wrote: "to abolish a status which in all ages God has sanctioned and man has continued would not only be robbery to an innumerable class of our fellow-subjects but it would be an extreme cruelty to the African Savages, a portion of whom it saves from massacre, or intolerable bondage in their own country, and introduces into a much happier state of life."

Not many months ago a Ceylon Minister of State paid a visit to Batticaloa. He fell into affable conversation with a public servant. "How are the Tamils and Muslims getting on in Batticaloa?" he

inquired, and added with a gay laugh (the Minister was noted for a gay life) "divide and rule, my boy, divide and rule". "Sir", said the public servant, "I am a Tamil", and this topic of conversation was quickly dropped.

It is not always a case of gaiety. In the *Ceylon Observer* of December 28, 1959, the Reader will find in large type: "Jaffna Mail Train Derailed: thirty passengers injured, one seriously; Sabotage, says C.G.R. Boss". In the *Times of Ceylon* of January 10, 1960, the Reader will find in large type: "New Attempt to Derail Jaffna Mail."

The framers of the world's great Constitutions have always been concerned with this sombre topic of majority mentality; but, alas, the framers of Ceylon's Constitution, if Constitution it can be called for it never received the mandate of a duly constituted Constituent Assembly, seem to have set about their solemn task with the irresponsible gaiety of the Minister of State who went to Batticaloa.

Students of this subject—how to prevent man from crushing his fellowman—will find all aspects fully discussed and documented in a book issued by the Oxford University Press: "Majority Rule and Minority Rights". If the Reader can get the book let him read it. Here are some extracts:—

1. "There are things no government may do, rights no government may impair, powers no government may exercise", p. 5.

2. "All, too, will bear in mind this sacred principle, that, though

the will of the majority is to prevail, that will to be rightful must be reasonable, that the minority possess their equal rights which equal law must protect, and to violate would be oppression."—Jefferson's first Inaugural Address.

3. "The fear of the tyranny of the majority has haunted many of the most distinguished American Statesmen and jurists since the days of the founding of the Republic. It persists today, after a century and a half of experience. It was first formulated, in elaborate and coherent fashion, by John Adams in his famous Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America, (1786). The people, Adams urges, are not to be trusted, nor are their representatives, without an adequate system of checks and balances. 'If it is meant by the people a representative assembly, they are not the best keepers of the people's liberties or their own if you give them all the power. They would invade the liberties of the people, at least the majority of them would invade the liberties of the minority, sooner and oftener than any absolute monarch'".—p. 10.

4. "We propose to bow before the idol of universal suffrage. That extreme democratic principle, when applied to the legislative and executive departments of Government, has been regarded with terror by the wise men of every age, because in every European Republic, ancient and modern in which it has been tried, it has terminated disastrously, and been productive of corruption, injustice, violence and tyranny".—*Chancellor Kent*.

Chancellor Kent speaks of the experience of European Republics. If he only knew the inner nature of Asian man!

The solution for the achievement of this fundamental right in the composition of collective humanity is carefully discussed in the book from which I have made my citations. Only one aspect I will mention. Jefferson wrote to a friend in 1813: "We may consider each generation as a distinct nation". In other words, the Constitution should be reviewable and renewable from time to time. Why should the minority peoples of 1960 and 1980 suffer for the blunders of 1930 and 1940?

I would conclude with this passage from one of the great thinkers of our time, Dean Inge of England:—

"It is specially necessary to emphasise that the Greek State was a moral association, which avowedly existed to further 'a good life' among its members. It is bound together by laws, or rather by 'the Law'. But 'the Law' is not the changing expression of the wishes or the wisdom of the citizens; it is something essentially unchanging, absolute in its sanctions and sacred in its origin. Not that they supposed it to have been written on tables of stone by the finger of God, like the Jewish Law, or dictated like the Koran. The laws of the State were, as they knew, human enactments; but behind the laws was the Law, which was the arbiter in the breast of every educated and high-minded citizen".—*Outspoken Essays*, p. 79.

MINORITY peoples have always been with us. The earliest, I suppose, were the slaves whom the Greeks and the Romans kept in their homes, what time they themselves, bathed and perfumed, had grand and long "talks" in the market places. ("Sir, we had a good talk," said Doctor Johnson years later.)

Then there were those poor creatures, carried away from the open spaces and clean airs of their own homelands, to become known in other lands as niggers and Jim Crows.

Some time ago, I read of a little Negro boy, some fifteen years of age, who seeing a white lady made an involuntary whistle of sheer joy at such a lovely sight. Her husband noticed it. That night, in the middle hours, he was pulled out of bed, all confused and sleepy, taken to a lonely garage, thrashed with iron chains and his poor, mangled body thrown into the river. Many a night I have been unable to sleep thinking of that child.

Then there is the story of little Anne Frank, thirteen years of age, who suffered and died only because she was born a Jewish girl. Her Diary is one of the poignant books of our time.

Minorities have been defined as "groups held together by ties of common descent, language or religious faith and feeling themselves different in these respects from the majority of the inhabitants of a given political entity." The writer goes on to say: "On this consciousness of difference the minorities base certain political

claims, either for equality with the majority, or for special treatment based upon the recognition of these differences, or for autonomy or, in the most extreme cases, separation. In most cases minorities feel grieved by occupying an underprivileged position."

Until the 19th century, minorities hardly played any decisive role in national or international politics. Many religious minorities came into being in the Middle Ages. But in those ages states tended to emphasise their homogeneity. Any one belonging to a different religious persuasion was dubbed a "heretic". Especially after the Reformation, religious minorities were often treated with great severity. It is not generally known that Martin Luther played an indirect part in the story of Ceylon. Because his action sliced away a good proportion of Catholic souls in Europe, there was a rush to make up the numerical loss by the acquisition of souls in Asia; —and Portugal played her part therein.

It was Oliver Cromwell who first intervened on behalf of a religious minority. He intervened in 1655 with France on behalf of the Protestant Vaudois.* John Morley, writing of this humane step, said: "Never was the great conception of a powerful state having duties along with interests more magnanimously realised." After Oliver Cromwell's magnanimous example the rights of religious minorities were sought to be safeguarded in a number of international treaties: Treaty

*The Reader will recall Milton's famous sonnet.

of Utrecht (1713), Treaty of Oliva (1660), Treaty of Nimwegen (1678).

The first thinker and philosopher to make a critical study of minority problems was Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803). I will quote from the Encyclopaedia Britannica (from whose pages most of the information in this contribution has been taken) the following account of Herder:—

"This German philosopher and critic of civilization emphasised the importance of the mother tongue for the cultural life and growth of the individual and his education. Under his influence many of the smaller nationalities in central and eastern Europe found their interest in their own languages and folklore rekindled, and began to feel conscious of their position as linguistic and ethnic minorities in the Austrian, Russian and Turkish Empires. They began to demand the recognition of their languages in the public administration of their countries; their intellectuals began to elaborate a literature in the native vernacular, and the spread of education carried this insistence upon language and nationality to ever wider circles....The 19th century, the age of nationalism, became thus more and more the century of national minority problems. Race, religion, and language began to play their roles as characteristics of the national minorities."

From the beginning of the 19th century till World War I minority problems were the constant concern of the internationalists of those days. A typical territory where minority problems abounded was the Hapsburg

Empire which, in the language of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, "became in the later half of the 19th century the classical land of minority problems and the laboratory for attempts at their solution." On December, 21, 1867 Austria enacted a Constitutional Law. Article 19 provided for the equality of the different nationalities ("all nationalities in the state have equal rights") and proclaimed that every nationality had an inviolable right to preserve and promote its national character and language. Austria recognised in its fundamental laws the equality of all usually spoken languages in education, in the administration and in public life.

World War I will be remembered for the principle of national self-determination and the liberation of minorities. Herbert Asquith, a great gentleman of England, declared: "We are fighting that small nationalities are not to be crushed in defiance of international good faith, by the arbitrary will of a strong and overmastering power". Woodrow Wilson, a great gentleman of America, declared: "All well defined national aspirations shall be accorded the utmost satisfaction." Of President Wilson's well-known 14 points, point 9 demanded "a readjustment of the frontiers of Italy along clearly recognised lines of nationality"; point 10 that "the peoples of Austria-Hungary should be accorded the freest opportunity of autonomous development"; point 11 "the adjustment of Balkan relations along historically established lines of nationality"; point 12 "an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development for the minorities in Turkey".

For the first time in the history of the world it was both recognised and conceded that minorities of race, religion or language deserve and require protection under an effective system of international law. Not only were minority treaties concluded with a number

of newly formed and enlarged states, but similar provisions were inserted in the peace treaties with certain defeated states. Finally, some new states, at the time of their admission to the League of Nations, accepted in solemn declarations the principles of the minority treaties.

XXII

RECENTLY I was asked by a friend whether I was not happy at the results of the elections held in March.* I said: Not happy but *proud*. Joy, happiness, mirth, merriment were wiped out of the lives of all of us, Ceylon Tamils, on the 4th February, 1948.

I happen to know that almost the first question asked by the late Mr. D. S. Senanayake when he became the first Prime Minister of Ceylon was: What shall we do with the Tamils?

I also know that on this question Mr. Senanayake consulted a local legal eagle. And the answer was: he who holds Trincomalee holds Ceylon. At that point we Ceylon Tamils became the orphan children of Mother Lanka. Those noble words written by an English poet who loved our country,

“When the races all have blended

And the voice of strife is dumb;” became falsified.

I have in my possession a book of press cuttings of events in Ceylon since “freedom”. I showed this book to a European visitor because he was a lover of human brotherhood. After keeping it with him

for a week he returned it to me with a sad face. He said nothing. But I remembered my Wordsworth.

“Far and wide the clouds were touched,

And in their silent faces could be read

Unutterable sadness.”

I have changed one word in what Wordsworth wrote.

Many journalists have come from abroad to evaluate the recent Parliamentary Elections in Ceylon. The amazing thing is that in all their judgments and summations they unanimously avoid one word, and that word, the word “Tamil”. I know why. These young men come out East primarily to have a good time. They are shrewd, even cunning. Very quickly they size up the situation as it exists in Ceylon today. And they play up to it. How boresome and bothersome to trek all the way to the upcountry plantations and talk to the European planters there! How tiresome to go to the home of a frail old man who speaks only in whispers, and sit down to a session of quiet discussion with him! No

*March, 1960.

girls there! How much simpler, and sweeter, to tread velvet carpets in marble halls, sip champagne, and turn up the skirts of a colourful cutie or two.

In a leading American journal, I read last week this summation under the heading *Elections in Asia*:

“*Ceylon*: There was no lack of parties (23) and no lack of issues (everything from Trotskyism to vegetarianism) in Ceylon’s elections to replace the caretaker government that has ruled the Island since Prime Minister Bandaranaike was assassinated by a monk. But neither was there any sign of a stable regime to govern Ceylon. Moderate and rightwing parties swept the field but no single party had won a majority of the 151 elective seats in the country’s Parliament.”

One asks oneself: Is this all that can be said of the true significance of the recent voting?

I have seen it said that the Suez Canal flowed through the drawing room of Lady Anthony Eden at No. 10, Downing Street, London, because a current word at Christ Church College, Oxford, for Asiatics is the word “wog.” In the phraseology of Christ Church College, Oxford, Abdul Gamel Nasser was a “wog.” And so the Canal overflowed from Egypt to England,—and Sir Anthony disappeared from the face of the public world. But I suppose he is remembered at Christ Church College, Oxford?

I sometimes wonder if these journalistic gentlemen who come to us from over the seas do not (in their hearts though not on their lips and artificial grins) think of us

Ceylonese only as “wogs.” Ceylon is a small country. Ceylonese affairs are small affairs. And Mr. Nehru has said that the secret of longevity is to ignore small matters.

I will ask a few simple questions.

How many of the happy-go-cocky young men who have come to Ceylon on behalf of the world press have read “Emergency ’58”? It is one of the truthful books of our time. It does not tell all; but what it says is enough. And it comes from the pen of a Sinhalese journalist of great repute. How many of these jolly journalistic tars whose only reminiscences of Ceylon when they leave our shores will be that of the jolly tarts of Colombo 7 have asked themselves whether Ceylon is a land of *one* nation or are there in Ceylon two nations or it may be three? Have they asked themselves whether the population statistics of Ceylon are correct? In what other part of the world has the population of a people increased by *thirty-three per cent* in a few years after the Department of Census became a “free” department? Are there or are there not analogies between what is happening in Ceylon and events in other parts of the world?* If the Dalai Lama is an “august refugee” (in the fine phrase of Mr. Nehru) what is Mr. Chelvanayakam? And what Mr. Chelvanayakam’s brother, the Tamil estate cooly Kuppasamy? Are there or are there not in Ceylon at least two million people (subject to statistical review by some impartial international commission: there may be two million Tamils in Ceylon or more, but the proportion of Tamils to the whole population of Ceylon is certainly not as meagre as is sought

*Written before July 20, 1960.

to be made out in the official figures) I say, are there not in Ceylon at least two million people in a state of complete *apartheid*? Are these two million human beings undergoing processes of *extinction* by steady, planned, concerted, political, executive and bureaucratic action? When Mr. Dudley Senanayake issues a public statement over Sharpeville is he not being as clever (or as comic) as, when Rev. Geoffrey Fisher cites Matthew Chapter 19 verse twenty four?

There is much talk of the Rule of Law these days. International groups of jurists have proclaimed it. It has the blessing of Mr. Eisenhower. I say it in all humility but with all sincerity — for I too in my time have tried to practise the rule of law—that:—

1. Where there is one standard for one people and another for another people living in the same territory there is a violation of the rule of law;

2. Where one people are in a position to discriminate against another people in the same territory there is a violation of the rule of law;

3. Where the Courts are powerless to declare a law void as contravening the constitution of the land there is a violation of the rule of law;

4. Where the Executive is in a position to make arbitrary hole

and corner decisions against particular members of the public there is a violation of the rule of law;

5. Where one people in a territory are in a state of perpetual subordination to another people in the same territory there is a violation of the rule of law ;

6. Where one people in a territory are a perpetual minority there is a gross violation of the rule of law.

Arthur Koestler has said :—
“The ultimate criterion of the value of a functional whole is the degree of its internal harmony or integratedness, whether the functional whole is a biological species or a civilization or an individual. A whole is defined by the patterns of relations between its parts, not by the sum of its parts, and a civilization is not defined by the sum of its science, technology, art and social organisation, but by the total pattern which they form, and the degree of harmonious integration in that pattern. Conversely, a diseased state of an organism, a society or culture, is characterized by a weakening of the integrative controls, and *the tendency of its parts to behave in an independent and self-assertive manner, ignoring the superior interest of the whole, or trying to impose their own laws on it.*

The Sleepwalkers, page 617.

I tell you, who are in power, be not sleep-walkers !

XXIII

NOW that elections are to be with us once again, it is possible that the game cocks of modern Western journalism are at this moment packing their bags for a return spree to Paradise Isle, or shall we say a second safari? Should they come, (and should they be able to spare a few moments from moonlight and music), would they care to take a glance at these humble submissions by an obscure member of an obscure community in an obscure island—in other words, a “Wog” to the degree three?

These:

1. In this Island of Ceylon live a people called *Tamils*. Physically they are not an attractive people, but they claim that they are among the first founders of human civilization. If you have read the authentic books on this subject, you may be inclined to agree (once the emollient warmth of the third martini has worn off) that there *may be something* in this claim, after all.

2. Certainly the Tamils were the first civilized inhabitants of *the whole of India*, all the way from Kashmir to Kathirakamam.

3. Certainly the Tamils had a King and a Kingdom of their own, known as the Kingdom of Jaffna, when Admiral Dom Laurenco de Almeida landed at Colombo on the 15th November, 1505.

4. Certainly Tamil was an official language of Ceylon when the British took over in 1815.

5. Certainly the Tamils were in the forefront of the movement for freedom for Ceylon. The ideal and the idea of a free Ceylon

was first born in the mind of a Tamil !

6. The Tamils occupy a definite and defined territory in Ceylon, as definite and as defined as that occupied, for instance, by the Bengalis in India. As in India, so in Ceylon, different peoples with different cultures occupy different and defined territories.

7. When Ceylon was about to receive her freedom, Her Majesty's Secretary of State in London made *repeated* inquiry whether *the Tamils were agreeable* to the proposed form of freedom. He made it a condition precedent of this freedom that in the Legislature of that time there should not be *even one dissentient Tamil vote*. Mr. G. G. Ponnambalam was then out of Ceylon. Mr. D. S. Senanayake was able to persuade the remaining “Tamil” legislators to give their unanimous support to the new form of Government.

8. The drafting of Ceylon's Constitution was given to one Mr. I. (Ego) Jennings, now promoted Sir Ivor Jennings. But be it said to Sir Ivor's credit that he did not stay on to become Governor-General of Ceylon ! That feat of “British” sportsmanship was performed at a much higher stratum.

9. If you wish to contrast two documents, both of them allegedly based on the principles and assumptions of Parliamentary democracy, study the Constitutions of India and of Ceylon. But is there any time for *study* in Ceylon, where the sirens are always calling? Ulysses stopped his sailors' ears, don't forget, please.

10. When you are in the mood for study, remind yourselves that governmental action is legislative as well as executive. It may be worth the expenditure of a little of your valuable time to examine *some of the legislation of Ceylon from and after 1948*. At the current conference of Commonwealth Prime Ministers,* His Excellency the Prime Minister of Malaya was *furiously* with South Africa. The Ceylon gent was somewhat shamefaced and shy. Ask yourselves why. He was on a stunt of his own for reasons of his own.

11. Some years ago, when His Excellency the Prime Minister of India graced Ceylon with his presence, I wrote an open letter to him through the Ceylon Press. I said: "Sir, it is doubtful whether your eyes will ever scan this letter... A half dozen or so determine what the people of Ceylon shall read. Not only what they shall read, but in what dosages, and how admixed; salted, sugared, doped or diluted with water... *In Ceylon today those in power have decided to exterminate a whole people.*" I asked His Excellency to find the time to visit a place in Ceylonese territory where human beings were being subjected to "Hitlerian cruelty". It is hardly necessary to say that that letter never got printed.

12. If you want the truth, do not trouble to go to the Indian Embassy in Ceylon. That establishment is run by very superior persons who have an open contempt for the "damned Madrasi," Mr. Motilal Nehru's phrase for Sir Sadasiva Iyer.

13. If you want the truth do not trouble to speak to a species

known as the "Colombo Tamil". The other day, I was amazed to read that even when Hitler was gassing the Jews there were Jews among those shivering, screaming Jews who were ready to "make the most of the situation" by playing the stooge to the beasts who were in charge of the German concentration camps. That species of slimy serpents you will find in Ceylon too. Young men whose grandfathers lived and died in *mud huts* now sail the seas in *yachts* of their own because their fathers and their mothers have been the ever-ready humsuckers of those in power in Ceylon. When you feel like a little hilarity study the stories of some of our Ceylon knighthoods. Yachts!

14. If you want the truth go among your kind in the tea gardens.

15. The other form of governmental action is the executive process. You know, of course, that Bismarck invented and perfected what is now known as "Bismarckian bureaucracy". Ceylon's Bismarcks in Ceylon's executive services—you can get their names for the asking—have nothing to learn from the German. By steady and unrelaxing strangulation, the Tamils are being suffocated out of the public services of Ceylon, and their lands taken away.

16. To humble protests—the Tamil is by temperament a wholly *humble* man—the answer is: "You Tamils had a very good time while the British were here". Were the British our second cousins? If there is one thing the British man knows, it is how to get his money's worth. The Tamil public servant served his master well and

so he was made welcome. Today's Public Service Commission of Ceylon should surely be called the Public Dis-service Commission!

17. If the deprivation of public office were all, it would be bearable. Many of us elder Tamils are convinced that the future of our young men is not at the clerical desk's moribund wood. A lift came down in a Government Department the other day, and a Tamil clerk was *propelled out of it with a kick on his backside by a group of peons*. Poor boy, how he ran! He should have run all the way to Jaffna, bought five acres of free land and become a king in his own right.

18. Have you read a book called "Emergency '58"? Read it. Before 1958 there was 1956. There would have been a repetition in 1960 but for prompt and powerful action by a great Sinhalese.

19. Have you the time to make a tour of the so-called Colonization Schemes? They should be called "*Extermination Conspiracies*." Napoleon himself could not have laid a pincer movement with greater finesse. Study the map and you will see.

20. See this and more—in the name of the Lord Buddha!

21. Please be honest. You have come to discharge a solemn duty. Please do so with a due sense of the responsibility of your

great profession towards all fellow human beings throughout the world;—those who have already been burnt, raped, and killed and the rest of us who await with serenity whatever is ahead of us. Ceylon has a story as tragic as Sharpeville.

22. The Sinhalese are undoubtedly the larger community in Ceylon; I would even say the greater community. With a few exceptions (to be found in every race) they are a great people. Their greatness is exemplified in this, if in nothing else: despite unremitting alien pressure for two thousand years, they have managed to survive, and to save their own language and their own way of life. Equally, the Tamils deserve to continue to live in Ceylon, and to maintain *in their own part of Ceylon their own way of life*. How then shall this be done, that *both nations* may live in mutual esteem and respect?

23. Young man from the West, this is the first and only question in Ceylon today.

May I close with one earnest word. The duties of a journalist are akin to those of a judge in the field of the law. There is first the duty of finding the facts and there is next the duty of passing judgment upon the facts found. In the field of inquiry, the first requisite is industry. In the field of judgment, the first requisite is patient thought.

*Held in May, 1960.

IT is a great privilege that in this series of letters to my people, now about to be brought to a close, I am being given an opportunity to bow my head at the feet of one of the great personages of our age, the Poet Rabindranath Tagore.

How this Poet's writings came into my life, and how they have remained a permanent and life-long influence thereafter, is a story that may be told another time. It is enough to say, at this moment, that at a time of grave, personal crisis one was raised from the dead by parental love on the one side and "Gitanjali" and "Sadhana", on the other.

I have obtained from England and am reading a book on Western Man and Literature by the English author, Mr. J. B. Priestley. It is a study of all the literary influences which have made the European man of today. Mr. Priestley says that he uses the term "Western" in its old geographical and cultural sense: "Russia is included as well as America; all Asia is excluded." Mr. Priestley says that what compelled him to the writing of this book was his "conviction that *ours is an age of supreme crisis* when the most desperate decisions have to be made and some account of Western Man in terms of the literature he has created and enjoyed might help us to understand ourselves."

Strangely, and I trust this piece of self-admission will not be regarded as impertinence on my part (a frequent cry in Ceylon today is that the Tamils have become impertinent and must be taught a lesson!)* it so happened that when,

last year, I was asked to write a preface to a book of verse and prose by a venerated English *guru* of Ceylon, my own thinking was on similar lines. I then said: "A man of the West of the highest stature of mind and spirit came to the East and was entranced. The message of his love is plain writ in the pages that follow, writ with eloquence and elegance, in piety and in truth in language of surpassing beauty. *In the tasks ahead, East and West must sustain and support each other*—There is no longer room for supposed superiority or imagined inferiority. This is the call to Lanka and to the world which Walter Stanley Senior makes twenty-one years after his death."

There is no more profound exponent of the Asian mind than the Poet Tagore. In the context of affairs in Ceylon today, I propose without further comment, to reproduce portions of a lecture delivered on the 8th May, 1959, at Sri Palee, Horana, Ceylon, by Mr. Humayun Kabir, the Minister for Cultural Affairs of the Republic of India. Mr. Kabir said:—

"On this occasion I feel I could not do better than to try to refer to some aspects of the life and teachings of Tagore not as a poet nor as a literary man, nor as a musician, nor as a painter, not even as one of the foremost literary figures of the world, though he was every one of them. Perhaps as a lyric poet he has no equal in the world. Perhaps as a song writer he has no

*Frequently uttered in knowledgeable and professional Ceylon circles between March 20, 1960, and July 20, 1960.

equal in the world. Perhaps as a poet he has few equals. As a short story writer he is perhaps among the greatest that the world has known. As a musician, as a painter and he started exploring the possibilities of painting when he was well over 60—in all these different fields he has left his stamp, he has left the mark of his achievements and enriched the cultural heritage not only of India, not only of Asia, but of the entire world.

But today, Mr. Prime Minister,* I would like to speak not of any of these aspects of Tagore, but of Tagore the man who helped to shape our educational ideals; Tagore who helped to shape our economic ideals and principles and programmes; Tagore who helped us to conceive our politics in that generous and cosmopolitan and humanitarian way, which we believe is the basis of the political attitudes and political programme of our country. I, therefore, wish to speak today, Mr. Prime Minister, of Tagore, the educationist; Tagore the economic thinker; and Tagore the political philosopher.

Tagore believed that in every one of us there is the seed of divinity; in every one of us there is the potentiality of greatness, in every one of us there is the promise of great achievement. It is only because we do not pay attention to our potentialities, only because we allow our personality to be warped by considerations of lesser importance, that the human being does not flourish. Given the proper conditions every human being may not become a Socrates, may not become an Aristotle, may not become a Rabindranath Tagore, but can certainly become a useful, creative, constructive member of

the community, a citizen of whom any country could be proud.

Mr. Prime Minister, these educational ideals which Tagore preached, the ideal of harmony with nature, the ideal of harmony between the different subjects, the ideal of inner development, the personality of the child, with a proper emphasis on the emotions, on the intellect, on volition, these are now practically commonplace in the educational parlance of the world.

The very word 'civilization' shows that it has something to do with cities, and in the modern age this concentration on cities has become even greater than it was in the past. And the result is that throughout the world there has been a drift of the abler men, of the more imaginative men and women, of men and women of will and vision away from rural areas to the towns. And the consequence of that has been that village life became even more impoverished. There is today a great gap between the town and the village, and in spite of the admonitions of many great men, of Ruskin some 100 years ago, and of Tolstoy, and Mahatma Gandhi, that people should go back to the village, nobody goes back to the villages. Any bright boy, any bright girl, who gets an opportunity of coming from the village to the town likes to stay there.

Tagore realised this and Tagore said that this vicious circle can be broken not by admonition, not by speaking in lyric terms about the beauties of village life, but by transforming the villages, by changing the pattern of rural life. By

*Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike presided at this meeting.

making the villages more like towns, so that the great gap which exists today between village and town is gradually overcome. People come away from the villages because the villages do not give opportunities of education, do not give opportunities of service, do not give opportunities of self expression, do not give opportunities of the development of personality. They do not have the health services, the sanitary services, the communications and hundreds of other things which make the town such an attractive place for the young man and woman of today. And Tagore said that this can be changed only if village life is reconstructed, only if educational facilities are there, health services are there, communications are improved, water supply is provided in an adequate measure, water supply of sufficient quality and sufficient quantity. Only if there are opportunities of service, only if there is opportunity of the fullest expression of personality will men and women stay in the villages. And the programme which we have undertaken today, this community development programme which is being accepted by many other countries of the world is a direct outcome of this awareness. This programme is of special importance in all the less economically developed countries of Asia and Africa, for it is changing the pattern of rural life by bridging the gap, if not completely bridging the gap, at least minimising the gap, between rural and urban conditions.

Sir, before I conclude, I would like to refer to Tagore's contribution to our Constitution. My belief is that this is perhaps his richest and deepest contribution

to our nation and political life. Our constitution is essentially a federal constitution, a federal constitution in which the value of every community is recognised, a federal constitution in which the value of every religion is recognised, a federal constitution in which every race is honoured. Tagore, some 60 years ago, wrote that if God had so wished he could have made all Indians speak one language. Why India alone? He could have made the whole world speak one language. But the very fact that there are in the world so many different languages, the very fact that in India there are so many different languages, so many different patterns of civilization, so many different flowerings of culture, suggests that there is a divine purpose in all this diversity, there is a divine purpose in this multifariousness of life through which the individual expresses himself. Tagore said, some 60 years ago, that the unity of India has been and shall always be a unity in diversity, a unity in which every language will get its place of honour, a unity in which every group will get its place of honour, a unity in which every religion shall get its place of honour, a unity in which every race shall get its place of honour. And Tagore was right, for history also teaches us that wherever there has been this kind of diversity of peoples there has been a richer culture, and wherever there has been any attempt at regimentation, wherever there has been any attempt at effacing the peculiar personality of any group or any community within a country, the whole country has suffered. We find that, throughout the world, wherever this principle of federalism, this principle

of respect for the dignity of groups and individuals, however weak, however small and however insignificant they may be, wherever this principle has been recognised, the result has been an immense gain for all concerned. And wherever this principle has been violated, the losses have been not only of the minority—in fact, the minority have always lost less than the majority. And in the end the majority has learnt through bitter experience, through tears and toil and suffering for centuries, that it does not do to have this disregard for human personality. And that is the lesson which Tagore taught to India in recent times, and that is the lesson which we have put in our Constitution. That is the principle, the basic principle of our constitution—equal regard for all individuals, groups, communities, races, religions, equal opportunity for all; justice for all, because it is only on the basis

of justice that great countries flourish.

This was Tagore's contribution to the Indian Constitution and I believe it is Tagore's great contribution to the constitutions of all countries of the world. It is the contribution to the growth of the world outlook of the modern age, an age where great differences have divided great nations, where great and sharp conflicts which sometimes go to the bases of society, which sometimes divide people on philosophical, religious and moral bases, threaten the future of mankind. And this principle is what we call Panchasila, what we call co-operation, what we all co-existence. It is nothing but another name for this basic principle of federalism, federalism in which there is recognition of the dignity of every unit and of loyalty to a group and loyalty to the greater ideals of society."

XXV

SUCH delight as must have come to a Roman of olden time to have seen Cicero face to face, and to have heard the great orator deliver one of his set orations, was vouchsafed to the Colombo audience which listened to Dr. C. P. Ramasamy Iyer's discourse on the 22nd June, 1960, on *The Dravidian Contribution to Civilization*.

The hall was packed—by Dravidians. There were barely half a dozen members of the majority community in an audience of thousands.

Dr. C. P. Ramasamy Iyer is among the foremost Tamils of today. His range of scholarship

has received international recognition. And now, in his seventies, there is a degree of maturity and wisdom in his utterances which compel serious and respectful attention. Listening to him one was reminded of Prospero. You will remember how Prospero recounted his past to his daughter; how at one time of his life he "held the keys of office" and "set all hearts in the state to what tune pleased his Ear": and then, worldly life over, he dedicated all "to closeness and the bettering of my mind."

Dr. Ramasamy Iyer began his speech by "clearing the ground"

as he put it. He reminded us that today there is not one human being who can claim complete racial purity. Brahmin as he himself was, he was bound to concede that there was in him much admixture of varieties of blood in the course of the ages which preceded his coming into being. Dr. Ramasamy Iyer then said: If, then, there is no such being as a pure Dravidian, or a pure Aryan, or a pure Anglo-Saxon (he reminded us that a Committee of the Unesco appointed as a result of apartheid in South Africa had also come to the same inevitable conclusion) how then can I purport to speak of a Dravidian Civilization?

The answer is that a civilization is essentially something racy of a particular soil and social environment. If there is no such entity as a pure Dravidian human being there is nevertheless a defined part of the globe which is distinct Dravidian territory with a distinct Dravidian civilization. "This distinct Dravidian territory is composed of South India and Ceylon." At one stage of his speech Dr. Ramasamy Iyer described this territory as *Dravidisthan*; then he quickly withdrew that word, remembering political implications: but throughout his speech he repeatedly and consistently referred to South India and Ceylon as Dravida-land.

Dr. Ramasamy Iyer traced the derivation of the word "Dravidian" to the two Tamil words *thiru veedan*: inhabitant of the shore, whether the sea-shore or the river shore; and, later in his speech, he developed the theme that an essential aspect of the Dravidian contribution to civilization was

inter-colonisation and inter-commerce all the way from Central America past the Middle East, South India and Ceylon, on to Cambodia, Viet Nam, Java, Sumatra, Bali and then right on to New Zealand.

Dr. Ramasamy Iyer told us of his own travels in all these parts of the world; and wherever he went in these parts of the world he was amazed to be reminded of the ways and customs of his own home and his own people. In Mexico, the houses were like the houses in South India and Ceylon, and the food was the same food. In New Zealand he had been received as a guest of honour by a Maori Chieftainess. After the ceremonial meal there was a ceremonial dance in his honour. That dance was but the Kathakali and the Kandy Dance right down to the very details of the finger *mudras*. The Chieftainess then made her speech of ceremonial welcome and said that there was a tradition among her people that, centuries before, they had come from India.

As to South India and Ceylon, Dr. Ramasamy Iyer reminded us that these two areas are but one region and have been so for aeons. Ravana was the typical Dravidian figure, as Achilles was the typical Greek and Hector the typical Trojan and Aeneas the typical Roman and Rama the typical Aryan. He had been shown the place where Ravana had confined Seetha in Ceylon and even the footprint of the elephant who had stood by while she was bathing! Traditions of such ancient lineage have a definite significance in the perspective of history.

Dr. Ramasamy Iyer told us of another ancient tradition inter-connecting South India and Ceylon. King Gaja Bahu of Ceylon attended the inauguration ceremonies of the famed Madura Temple. While at Madura, one day an old lady made her way to him. Are you the king of Ceylon, she asked him. I am, the king said; and what is it that you wish from me? I am from Ceylon, she said. Will your Majesty be pleased to see that my son and I are returned to Ceylon? But how came you to be here, the king asked. I am one of the many thousands who were brought here to carry out their irrigation works, she said. The Ceylon immigrant problem in reverse!

Scholars who have made a close study of these matters—Dr. Ramasamy Iyer mentioned Waddell, Percival, Pope and others—are convinced that a common civilization co-existed in ancient time in Sumeria, Babylon, Accadia, Crete and Dravidian India. The seals found at Mohenjo Daro reveal Shiva, three-eyed and seated in the yoga lotus pose, An by name. An—An—Endavan—Andavan. The other word in the seal is Ammai—Amma, the Mother Deity, Shakthi, Parvathi.

Dr. Ramasamy Iyer expressed the hope that someday soon a modern scholar and researcher will collate all these matters of ancient and modern archaeology and give his results to a waiting world. When will the clever young men of Dravida-land cease to long to be doctors, engineers, and lawyers and be content, and proud, to devote their talents to the quiet study of their own past?

Dr. Ramasamy Iyer pointed out that the ancient books make it clear that the Dravidian civilization of South India and Ceylon (Dravidia) was largely metropolitan and intellectual. The people lived in comfortable homes. They ate and dressed well. And their leisure was spent in lectures and discussions.

What are the main contributions of the Dravidian to human civilization?

Dr. Ramasamy Iyer's answer to this question was the answer of a master of his subject.

First and foremost, it was the Dravidian who preserved Buddhism for, and spread it to, the whole world. It was a Tamil from Kanchipuram (forty miles from Madras) who travelled to North India, mastered Pali, came back to Madras, then travelled all the way to China, mastered Chinese, translated the Buddhist classics into Chinese and converted the Emperor and the Empress of China. It was another Tamil, also from Kanchipuram, who went to Korea and planted the tree of Buddhism in that ancient land. How many know that the art of printing was invented, not in China, but in Korea? How many know that the vaunted Chinese and Japanese civilizations are Korean in origin? Human history is often a curious admixture of truth and error. (Listening to Dr. Ramasamy Iyer I pondered how curious it is that the presence of the Tamils in Ceylon today is regarded as inimical to Buddhism! We Tamils saved and preserved Buddhism in India and spread its message throughout the intellectual world of that time).

The next great contribution of the Dravidian to civilization was in the field of merchandise which Dr. Ramasamy Iyer called economic enterprise. From all parts of the then world they came to Dravidia for the things they prized—pepper, ginger, cardamom, nutmeg, rice, ivory and (above all) cloth from South India, gems from Ratnapura, pearls from Man-nar. Pliny, the Roman of olden time, (100 A.D.), made a famous lament. What has become of our men, he cried, that they cannot eat honest bread and boiled meat but need must add condiments like pepper and ginger? What has become of our women that they must go about in the soft cloths of India, so soft and so fine that the shapes of their bodies can be seen!

The trade of the whole of the civilised world of those days was conducted from South India and Ceylon. When Dr. Ramasamy Iyer was head of the Government of Madras he took a special interest in matters of irrigation for irrigation is the life-soul of the South Indian people. Dr. Ramasamy Iyer found that the modern governments of India had lost the simple and effective panacea by which, in the days of the Dravidian Kings, the people were kept in food. The collection, the conservation and the distribution of water was the meticulous care and concern of ancient Dravidian statesmen. They did it by building dams at appropriate places. Dr. Ramasamy Iyer was amazed when he found that, after most careful and scientific modern investigation, the spot selected by his government for a dam across the Kaveri was the identical spot which had been selected in ancient times by Raja Rajendra Chola of South India! The rule

then was—a pond every two miles. Thus there were at least 25,000 ponds in South India; and the people tilled their fields, bathed in the water and ate their food.

Studies made in the last thirty years in the archives of the Government of Madras have revealed profoundly interesting details of the next great contribution of Dravidian Civilization—the village community life. Villages, not only individually, but often in groups, developed the village republic, self-reliant, self-sustaining, self-disciplined; each citizen respected and honoured in the plying of his own occupation: the blacksmith in his smithy, the carpenter in his shed. Then there was the village assembly, the *சுயலட்சம்*, the fore-runner of the modern Parliament. Each elder aspiring to a membership of this assembly had to make a public declaration that he had never malverted public funds. One of them, in his election speech, lamented: For these so many years I have served the state with perfection without one word of public gratitude or praise. Last year I made one mistake. It has never been forgotten. Human beings were much the same then as now!

Dr. Ramasamy Iyer next referred to the Dravidian contribution to Art, especially in the fields of architecture and sculpture. Macaulay had said in his famous minute that all the alleged wisdom of the Vedas was not worth half a page of Shakespeare! But Macaulay wrote in ignorance. The Western conception of sculpture was that of mere concrete beauty; and from it, step by step, to the abstract and the absolute: *sub*

specie aeternitatis, in the language of Spinoza. Macaulay had asked how could crude sculpture, depicting gods with four hands and six faces, be of aesthetic value? Macaulay did not know that Dravidian sculpture was an integral part of Dravidian temple architecture. The *gopuram* built skywards was emblematic and emphatic of man's aspiration. Then from the outer gate, the worshipper, through gates of narrowing and more narrowing dimensions, reached at the last and entered the narrowest gate of all, alone, face to face, with the Deity. This was in marked contrast to the Muslim and Christian ideals of congregational worship. The Dravidian believed in private and personal contact with the Deity. These many-armed and many-faced gods and goddesses were but symbols; and a sublimation of the pursuit of the infinite. Gazing at them, the worshipper saw in the four arms the symbol of the Lord of Energy and in the six faces the Lord who looks before and after, to whom past, present, and future are one.

Finally, Dr. Ramasamy Iyer mentioned the greatest Dravidian contribution of all. In the ancient

chronicles, there is mention that, at the end of the day's fierce battle, the leaders gathered together the opposing forces, who till that moment had clashed in fierce warfare, and fed them all. There may never have been in fact such a happening. It is not easy to conceive the capacity to feed half a million persons at one sitting. But the significance is not in the fact but in the tradition as being typical of the Dravidian outlook upon life. In the *Manimekalai* mention is made of a city where eighteen different schools of philosophy flourished together. That is a true picture of the Dravidian man. Hospitality, toleration, live and let live—these are, and always have been, the Dravidian watchwords.

One may conclude upon this appropriate note. Dr. Ramasamy Iyer is himself a foremost and a typical Dravidian. When high office came his way he did not disdain it. He made more than one fortune but money was never his master. His one true love, first, last, best, and all the time, has been the love of learning; and, even greater, the love of sharing it with his fellow men.

XXVI

MUCH more may be written of the Tamil: Ancient and Modern: of Tamil music, of the Tamil drama and the Tamil dance. In a recent number of *Tamil Culture* (July-September, 1959) the Reader will find a discussion on a most dramatic aspect of ancient Tamil music. It is the Tamil (so it would seem) who has correlated the

harmonies of the human mouth with the harmonies of heaven. There are twelve Tamil primary speech sounds; these correspond to the twelve Tamil primary musical sounds; these in their turn correspond to the twelve Tamil divisions of the Zodiac.

How many know that the Dravidians had at one time an

Empire of their own—and were thalassocrats in their own right!

Of these and many more matters much may be written—so much indeed, that, in the charming phrase of the well-known book; “the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.”

But enough has been said. And it is time to bring to an end.

I took a vow that if the United National Party of Ceylon is routed in the recent General Election* (the tragic and humiliating story of Parliamentary Democracy as practised in Ceylon will make curious reading one day)—I took a vow that I would go to the far South and make my humble obeisance to the Deity there. This vow will be readily and quickly paid. For I do sincerely believe that if this party of corrupt, callous, conceited, uncompassionate and murderous minded racial communalists had been given the reins of power, the total extermination and extinction of my people from every nook and corner of Ceylon would have been completely achieved in a matter of a few years, in my own life-time. But it would seem that, by the mercy of Providence, we Tamils are destined to be permitted to exist in our home, and to play our minor part in the future of Ceylon’s long and glorious story. Let us never forget that we are *only a minority people in Ceylon*. Let us not crave for the

pitfalls and perils of the majority status. May the time never come when our own Tamil leaders, drunk with sudden power, will be tempted to repeat the terrible and awful cruelties of the recent past. We have a different and a humble contribution of our own to make to the common story of our common Motherland. Let us pray for the means to do so—and for no more.

Imperialist, capitalist, communalist, tribalist, communist, racialist, religionist, propagandist;—we are not interested in any of your sort. Come one, come all. If you come to us speaking of justice and dignity, you are welcome. If, on the other hand, it is to be injustice and degradation, by whatever devious and underhand device, *you will have to reckon with us*.

It is not such an ordinary thing as discipline, which is inherent in the Tamil temperament. It is not such a simple thing as courage which every Tamil man has in abundance, and more than every Tamil man, every Tamil woman. It is just the common Tamil man, and the common Tamil woman, risen and awoken, enduring, beating, burning, murder, pillage, every variety of ruthlessness, not for their own sakes but for their children’s sake and their children’s children’s sake. It is something which cannot be given. It is something which has to be earned. It is that shining thing, the soul of a free people.

*July, 1960.

A PRAYER FOR PROTECTION

[“Thy Holy Feet, that danced in the ancient city of Thillai, dance in all living things.”

Saint Manikkavasakar (translated by Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam).]

* * * * *

Lord of the Whirling Wheel! Lord of the wheeling mazes of mighteous myriads—Dance-maker!

Maker of universe upon universe!

The flaming Stars that dance around thy Holy Feet are but dust of Thy Mouth.

* * * * *

We praise and bless Thee that Thou hast begotten us in this sweet region of Joy, Ilankai, Lanka.

Manifold and manifest are Thy mercies,

Thou player of the freedom-drum, wearing a necklace of tears for the woes of thy lovers, thy children, thy worshippers, even we.

* * * * *

Thou three-eyed Maker of the World!

This universe is but holy ash of Thy making.

Night and morn, dusk and dawn, the myriad splendours of the Sky, oh look up and see! are but dewdrops of Thee.

* * * * *

Thou Tiger burning bright!

With lips uplifted for praise we kiss thy Holy Feet uplifted in grace.

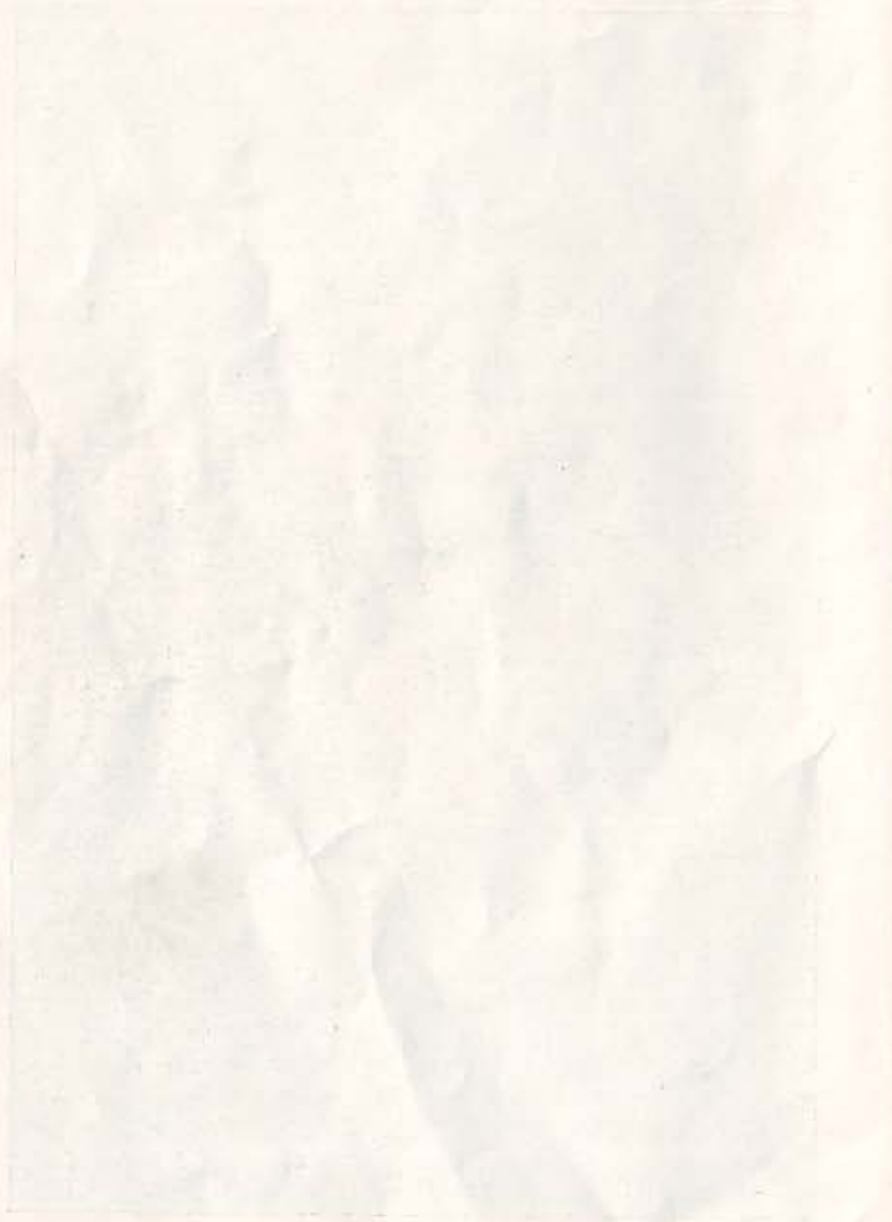
* * * * *

Lord! Protect us.

Lord! Bend thy Right Hand upon us.



A TAMIL FATHER



A TAMIL MOTHER



A TAMIL MOTHER

A P P E N D I X

Four Tributes by a Tamil

A Tribute to Ceylon *

THIS blue lotus about the white feet of Hindosthan, this
Island of Dusky Leaves—Thamraparnu, Serendib—behold our Lanka,
legend-laved Lanka, jewel of the sea.

From the first beginnings of the first footsteps of Time her name has
been upon the lips of men.

From the four corners of the world they have come, swinging censers
of teeming praise.

See, then, Colombo, our first of cities, sun burnt.

Red walls, red roofs, red gates.

See the hazy, drowsy homes of Colombo, nestling within clumps of heavy-
green leafage.

See the rust-red roads, the saffron sheen of olive-yellow flowers.

Journey now to Kandy.

The rugged, wind-lashed tops of crouching mountains; terrace upon
terrace of meekly bowing paddy-fields, gold-green; river countries
fledged with woodlands, green and yellow and brown, sweeping away;
caverns of perpetual green; the lisping sound of unregarded rivulets;
the leaping glory of savage waterfalls; strange-shaped flowers, blue
and violet, with innocent, miminy mouths.

And so Kandy, that cupped-up paradise.

A toy city of straight streets. A white city midst green hills.

That lake of Kandy, the eye of Kandy.

On misty moon-white nights, seated beside that tiny water, watching
the darting splendour of long yellow rays of light as they shiver and
yip in the ice-cold water, one dreams.....

And then Uduwattakale, half wilderness, half fairy land.

The mellow purl of distant water; dim regions of low-lidded twilight;
sudden swoops of birds ; secret places full of sweets untold, alive with
hiding things.

The beloved of lovers.

*Written in 1919.

Then Nuwara Eliya of the green lawns, our sister of sweet health.
City of Light. City of the clear air.
City of my Lady Seetha.

Then Jaffna.

Her secluded almond-coloured lanes; her countless temples with their myriad lamplights; the sinuous chant of conchshells; her jasmine-bowered homes; her hunched gateways.

Many are her allurements—our mother of the troubled brow.

The Asian noon-glory of her blue skies; the peace of her at eventide; the milk-whiteness of her moonlight nights; the lovesome beauty of numerous lotus-covered ponds, rose-pink with lotus blooms.

You gaze upon the setting sun. The leaves are hushed. The very dust of the road is bowed in silence. A great Peace comes. Out there, in the dying sky, a trooping of colours. Night places her cold hands upon the eyes of day.

And so Anurajapura, city of destiny, in her cerement of dead leaves.
The darkened trees seem heavy with the pain of faded centuries.

(ii)

A Tribute to His Father *

WHEN, at the Memorial Service, Bishop Kulendran referred to my father as “a mobile rock of Gibraltar”, I suddenly remembered that when, as a child of thirteen, I was packing my things to go to Trinity College, Kandy, all bewildered by the prospect of my first journey away from home, my father, seeing a small boy’s tearful face, came and sat on the ground with me and packed my trunk for me on bended knees with his own hands.

And, many years before that, when he himself was a boy, one day his mother’s nose ring fell into the well while she was bathing. It was a favourite jewel and she mourned its loss. But it had gone to the bottom of the deep well and there was no hope of retrieving it; and so she reconciled herself to the loss. My father heard about the loss; and, in the afternoon when the whole house was at siesta he dived into the well and brought up the jewel. “Mother”, he said to her later, “what a pity you have lost your ring.” “Never mind”, she said, “it is gone and I must learn to do without it.” Then he gave her the ring. My father took a risk with his life to see that smile on his mother’s face.

Many years later, when that mother of his had become a cripple, he took her with him to Kandy; and I remember that every evening, after the day’s work, he would go straight to his mother’s room first and be with her for at least an hour.

Later in Jaffna, when my friend Ebenezer Tamby Raja went to see

him one day, my father was at the wellside washing my mother’s saree.

As a boy of 18, when he first went to India, he got Rs. 99/- at the end of the month as salary and travelling expenses. He was then staying in the home of an Indian pastor. From the pastor he borrowed a rupee and forthwith sent Rs. 100/- to his father in Jaffna. For the rest of that month my father was content not to spend one penny on himself.

While his parents were alive he lived wholly for them. When my grandfather lay on his deathbed they asked him if he would like to meet his son, then far away in India. He stirred from his speechlessness and blessed my father, calling him his “Joseph”.

That blessing was wonderfully fulfilled. All the days of my father’s life were days of blessing. Service was the first motto of his life. He served his parents; he served his brothers and sisters; he served his family and he served with devotion untiring his chosen calling of teacher. To the very last of his days he loved to teach—especially the children of needy parents.

His life, he would say, fell into four periods of 20 years each. The first 20 years were years of preparation for his work in this life. The next 20 were years of service to India and to Kandy: to Indians and to Sinhalese. The next 20 were years of service to his own people, Christians and Hindus. And the last 20 were years of service to the poor and of preparation for the life to come.

* St John’s College Magazine, March 1953.

What other father gave away every inch of his property nearly 15 years before the end? By dint of thrift he and my mother had acquired three valuable properties in Jaffna—truly *thediathatem*. Gladly and graciously they gave all away to their sons many years before their deaths. You good people of Jaffna, who know the value of property, judge these two noble souls by that one act.

Many years ago, my father sent me, after a serious illness, to recuperate in India. I first went to Bangalore and then to Bombay. At Bombay, a young man asked me what I was doing in India. I said I had come to India for my health. "Then you must be the Prince of Wales," he said, smiling. I said I was not the Prince of Wales, but a Prince of Wales because my father was like a king. They say that when my father was a young man he was extremely fair of complexion and that when, on holiday from India, he went about Vaddukoddai and Uduville and Navaly with his princely moustache and his dark coat and gay coloured Kashmiri shawl and his scarlet toetipped Maharatta slippers, he looked every inch a king.

All his life he moved among men who were worthy to be kings. His contemporaries in India were men of the stature of Dr. Smith, Dr. Wilkie, Dr. King, Professor William John, Mr. Tampoe Buell, happily with us, and others. His best friends were Mr. S. M. Tamby Raja and Mr. A. E. Clough—Kings in their chosen walks of life.

My father was regal always in his approach to money. Once, when he was Head Master of the

Canadian Mission College at Indore, a stranger called on him. "Mr. Crossette," he said, "I want Rs. 3000/-." "Who are you?" my father said. "I am Israel from Madras. I have with me 300 orphan children and I need this money to take them to Madras." My father and mother were themselves in charge of a big orphanage in Indore. Their hearts were ever with children. My father looked at Mr. Israel and was satisfied. A chit from my father to an Indian merchant brought the money. It was given to Mr. Israel and repaid by telegram as soon as Mr. Israel reached Madras.

At Kandy he was with the Reverend A. G. Fraser and his brilliant band; at Jaffna the teachers of his time were Thompson, Matthews, Wilkes, Bicknell, Nevins Selvadurai Pillai, J. K. Chanmugam, J. V. Chelliah, L. P. Spencer, Hudson Paramasamy, J. N. Vethavanam, A. M. Nathaniel, W. A. Walton, S. S. Soma-sundaram, J. W. N. Hensman, A. J. R. Vethavanam, F. H. V. Gulasakaram and others of that calibre. He was the head and leader of a brilliant Johnian galaxy. He blazed the trail for the Tamil teacher of Jaffna. How low was the status of the Graduate Tamil teacher before my father came to Jaffna! By his personality and his integrity he led the way to high educational office and to leadership. Fraser who knew how to pick men, picked my father to be Ceylon's only representative at a great conference of missionary educationists in Liverpool in 1907.

So few know that my father stood first in his subject in his University in his M. A. examination. It was on the voyage out to England in 1907 that my father met a scholar

who had many talks with him on board ship and later moved for my father's election to the Fellowship of the Royal Historical Society of London.

My father never spoke of his own achievements. That heroic story of the nose ring he never mentioned to me. If he ever spoke of himself it was in terms of true humility. There was not an iota of pride in his nature. His voice was soft and equable and he was always gentle; especially so to servants and to small children. Stern in outward appearance, "a rock of Gibraltar" to his students, apparently, I know that he was truly full of love: of that love which suffereth long and is kind, which envieth not, which vaunteth not itself and is not puffed up.

Therefore God blessed him to the end. Nine months of the last year of his life were spent once again in the heart of St. John's College: as if in farewell to the school he had loved and served; and of whose modern renaissance, he, Henry Crossette, and Henry Peto were the architects.

Everyone knows how difficult it is for one working in Colombo to find time to go to Jaffna. Yet, on October the sixth, by some premonition I decided to go to my father. I was with him for six days. Once again he was his old happy self, loving to do what he always did—to attend to the comfort of others. When I said farewell I little knew that I was not to see again that grand face fraught with the inward sanctities of patience and the tranquil mind.

Never once during the 13 years of his total blindness was there even one word of complaint. கண் இழந்தவன் நாளை நீயோ?

—the words of that song would come to me whenever I sat by his side. On the very day after I had said my last farewell, my brother came all the way from Siam to be with him. Surely the blessing of God was with him that the son who is like him, and who only a few days before was in far away Siam, should be beside him and at his feet at the end. How gently and sweetly the curtains were being drawn for him!

With humility we believe the Lord himself was near at his passing over. At about two in the afternoon he took to his bed and by sunset, in peaceful sleeping, the journey across was over. God was kind to him to the very end. It rained every Sunday that November in Jaffna; but on the Sunday of his memorial service the evening was calm and gentle even as he had been; and on the day of his funeral, again a Sunday, there was a heavy shower of rain in the morning but the evening was full of the glow of sunset when we took him and gently put him beside my mother.

Often he had said that human life was like the setting of the sun. We sink to rise again. And truly it has been said of his Lord and Master that He has "turned sunset to sunrise." And so for our dear one a trumpet was blown at his graveside in token of those other wonder trumpets which awaited him over there:

Tuba mirum spargens sonum
Per sepulcra regionum
Coget omnes ante thronum.

We of his family know that at his going over my mother and others of his loved ones were waiting for him. தேவ பிதா எங்கள் மேய்ப்பன் அல்லவோ?

A Tribute to His Teacher*

MR. Asquith, Prime Minister of England, took first class classics honours from Balliol College, Oxford. And so when it became known at Trinity, Kandy, that our own teacher in English and Latin had also taken first class classics honours from Balliol, we looked forward to the experience.

And the amazing thing was our teacher's astonishing lack of ostentation. For academic achievements comparable to his among those in Ceylon we had to turn to Colonial Governors (Lord Chalmers) and Colonial Chief Secretaries (Sir Reginald Stubbs); yet here was this man come before us without a scintilla of display of his learning; all simple and child-like; and yet (as schoolboys will, for schoolboys the world over have a way of sizing up their teachers) in no time we knew we had as our teacher a master of his subject.

The first thing he did was to give the English class an essay.

"I wish to know each of you", he said in that harmonious voice, each word floating into the air, "so will you do this essay for me? Write freely and write exactly as you feel. But what you write must be your own."

Then, turning to the board, he wrote with his neat hand (neat hand, neat mind, he used to say): "Half is greater than one." Exactly what did that mean? I wondered and I pondered. (I was then not yet fifteen). At the end of the week we all turned in our exercises.

The next day he came back with the bundle and saying, "Here's the best", passed my own exercise book round the class! I was horrified for I had written—

"Half is Greater than One."

?

No more. I could not make anything of the title and so I had written nothing! Followed a discourse on the traditions of true learning. Never pretend to know what you do not know; and what you do know, know completely. (*Timeo hominem unius libri* was one of Mr. Senior's favourite sayings). Then, as to the subject of the essay, we were told all the rules of good writing: nothing too much; measure; moderation; balance, and above all proportion. "And, yet within these moulds, your writing can be as warm as you wish to make it." Milton's words—simple, sensuous—were told us. Gray was given as an example: "Gray wrote little but Gray wrote gold."

*

That the master knew what he taught, and practised what he preached, is to be seen in this book of Mr. Senior's prose and verse which two of his pupils have brought out from the Trinity College Press.** Let me give an example :

Asian Trance

"There comes to mind a moment in Ceylon, say rather an eternity, which I would not let fade.

*The Rev. W. S. Senior, M.A.

**The Call of Lanka: Ceylon in Prose and Verse: by W. S. Senior.

The day was done: the half-hour's twilight lingered.

Parted from the others I sat on a stone at the head of a long stairway leading steeply down to the Priest's Pansala, on the other side of the rock from that which we had ascended.

'Dim reliques of the sunken day' showed through the Champak-boughs, the avenue of sweet-scented Temple-trees that overhung that swift-sinking stairway, lost in the dark below.

The sounds of day, the sounds of life, were dying, had died away. A solitary barbet, the last of the forest-chorus, at unutterable distance, at the World's end, at Time's end, beat a repeated note; a note repeated in groups of three; fainter, and fainter, yet; but heard, still heard, subconsciously still heard; until all that was Europe merged into all that was Asia; all that was Asia merged into trance; into trance within trance, Nirvana."

Again and again he would tell us of the importance of the right use of the right word in the right place. A favourite illustration were these lines from Tennyson. "Come down O maid from yonder mountain HEIGHT; What pleasure lives in HEIGHT the shepherd sang, In HEIGHT and cold, the splendour of the hills."

(The reader will forgive the errors there may be in the quotation. All this was fifty years ago and I write from memory. But the lesson taught of how words may be used as jewels, remained). That he himself knew how to use words as jewels this piece will show:

Daffodil Patna

"Daffodil-time in England and how many have heard of the daffodil-orchid in its dance on the upper mid-heights of Ceylon?"

There rises on the screen of the mind a shelf of patna (mountain grassland) looking pretty sheerly down on Glenanore Tea Factory afar; and bordered above by the red-green jungle, to the high top of whose central tree a huge wanderoo-monkey once climbed to bark at us in rage; a rounded yellow shoulder a-flutter with daffodil-orchids.

Many a raid did we make upon their waving hosts; many a basketful of yellow spoil did we carry off exultant to our Haputale drawing-room, that charming room of constant sun and summer, where each foray furnished joy of hue and odour for ten unfading days.

Each delicate yellow bloom, double being rarer than single, hangs from a stem not quite so tall as a daffodil's, but tenderer. From the daffodil it differs, too, having scent, faint in the single flower, strong yet refined in the mass.

Than this flower nothing could be more lovely or unexpected, reminiscent of an English Easter, since that is its season of bloom; but adding thereto a charm subtropical, born of the hot sun on cool and breezy hills.

It is apparently confined to a zone from three to five thousand feet above the sea consorting neither with the palms and rubber of Nawalapitiya below, nor with the buttercups of the Horton Plains above, but lavishing itself on chosen spots between.

I have heard of it in one other district only, the slopes of Kehel-Pot-Dora-Wey-Gala, the inaccessible mystery mountain of the Eastern Province."

The text-book of that year was Hamlet. (I still have my copy). We were taught to study Hamlet both by eye and by ear. The texture of the writing by long gazing at it; how the words are put

together. And then the great passages were read to us. Sublime writing read out aloud by a sublime reader. We got the feel of Shakespeare all right. And then Shakespeare's mastery of phrase. By means of only four words all the vastness and darkness and emptiness and expectant hush of night: "Not a mouse stirring". Hamlet came with us even into the fives court. A ball pitched too low was missed.

"Oh that this too too solid flesh Would melt, thaw and dissolve itself."

At the end of that year's Cambridge Senior English paper, teacher and pupil chanced to meet in the College quadrangle near the breadfruit tree. "Well? And how was the paper?" "Not too good, I'm afraid, Sir". "Not a bad sign", he said, smiling, and passed on. When the results came they showed that the smiling teacher had been right, after all.

*

Some weeks ago, I was at the Rest House, Anuradhapura. A young European tourist walked up to the counter. I heard him say to the attendant at the counter: "I have two hours before lunch. Could you tell me what I should see?" The young man at the counter merely grinned. He had no answer. When I came out of my room some time later I saw the same tourist seated with two tourist young ladies in the back verandah of the Rest House. An enormous bottle of beer was between them. Beer and girls can be had by the ton anywhere, any time. But surely that was an opportunity missed to help that inquiring young man to an understanding of Ceylon?

John Still's book is indeed a masterpiece of writing; Mr. Keble's book makes fascinating arm-chair reading. But to the man who wishes to understand Ceylon with both eye and heart, this is the book. With this book in hand he can see Ceylon as a poet saw it. I think that that inquiring young tourist would have been grateful to have been shown this piece in Mr. Senior's book:

Anuradhapura, The Sedent Buddha

"Another sudden sight, of infinite impression, was the great stone Buddha seated by the way, alone among the trees.

What it was in high and far-off times, whether gilded, be-canopied, be-courted, frequented, let antiquarians say.

As I saw it, coming upon it unexpected at the turn of a narrow footpath, a few candles of recent worship still burning on the upturned sole of the crossed legs and feet, the sunlit silent forest all round, it was a shock of awe.

There it sat, MAJOR HUMANO, fair and unconventional of face, closed of eye, lost since centuries to life and longing in Nirvana.

Its grey, unchanging granite seemed to sum and symbolize the southern form of that faith whose adherents are many millions, oldest, and methinks, profoundest challenger of the risen and living Christ."

*

Mr. Senior had the prophet's vision as well as the poet's voice. Reading his poetry and his prose, in 1960, it can now be seen that he saw clearly as far back as 1910, the trend of Ceylon's future, and

he made a clarion call to Lanka to be ready. There were two of us in his time at Trinity College, Kandy—Robert E from Galle and Robert C from Jaffna. We became to him “Robert of the South” and “Robert of the North”. Sinhalese, Tamil, Burgher, Burman, African, Englishman—we were all one to him.

Tutelage

“O ISLE of pearl and palm, O sea-built plain
Supporting an unconquered mountain-heart,
Throughout thy story, lacking not in pain,
Folk after folk approach, instruct, depart.

Ages ago Vijeyo came and drave
The Veddah caveward and possessed the land,
Leaving a line of kings by Tissa’s wave
Where R’anweliseya and Abhayagiriya stand ;

Parakrama Bahu greatest, at whose word
Arose among the eastern forest trees
Beyond Minneriya and the mighty herd
High Polonnaruwa’s shrines and palaces.

Then caravels of Portugal had power
Beneath the blazon of a Cross of Awe;
Next, Holland’s citizens enjoyed their hour.
Their legacy, the lawyer and the law.

Now thou art linked with England, not unwise
Mother of mighty Daughters, free and far,

Nor wholly skill-less in perplexities.
World-knots of Truth and Justice, Peace and War.

Slow tutelage, how slow! But sure the goal;
Lanka, have patience, thou shalt win thy soul”.

Some of his poetry touches the sublime:

Pisgah

“Oft in a Mount of marvels have I trod:
The chasmed heights, the healing skirts of God;
Where hoar Himalaya wards with holy snow,
High beyond speech, the eld of Ind below:
Or where in Lanka, mile on mystic mile,
Sripada floats above a moon-bright isle,
Builds on a silver floor a shadowy cone,
Mid all the summits of the Earth alone.

How have I stood within the starry wind,
Blown from a glory all the stars behind,
Yearning; and when the heavenly whisper passed,
Yearned in a silence virginal and vast;
Knowing by token of a starward heart,
Caress of wings that out of starland start.
Yet dreamed I nought, in any mountain-trance,
Peer of yon bright authentical romance:
Ne’er strove as now the angel of my breast,
By gloom and glory of a Hope opprest”.

There are pieces in this book for recitation by the hearty-voiced schoolboy; there are other pieces full of the atmosphere of the deepest meditation, lidded with the low lights of the life of the soul. Some of this writing will pass into the permanent heritage of England in due time. But for that we must wait. England, like the rest of Europe, has suffered a shattering time from and after 1914. Cranks and crooks have held sway; radioactive yellow ashes of death have fallen upon the face of the world. But surely, some day, once again the air will be sweet and clean. We shall hear the authentic voice of England’s great literature.

The Words of a Man

“Boyhood to manhood ceded,
Western to Eastern lands;
On an exquisite island-jewel the scholar a teacher stands—
An island of forest-ruin, of forgotten monks and kings,

Where the Pilgrims’ Peak and the pathway with ‘Saadu,’ ‘Saadu,’ rings.
And many a young life listened crowd-gathered, or one by one
On the hillside bench in the moonlight when the deeds of day were done,
Heirs of an ancient lineage handsome of form and face,
Themselves in their turn to father a fairer, a finer race,
And far to the cassias golden, and the sappu’s scent at noon,
To the palms, a silver-silent sea in the tropic moon,
To the tops of the matted mountains, to the lowlands leagues away,
Were the words of a workman carried from a distant Swindon day.
And a word in the darkness uttered shall compass the world in song—
‘Mate, do that as is right, and don’t do that as is wrong’.”

A Tribute to the Poet Rabindranath Tagore*

FULL well do I recall those lampéd days
When first thou came to this our palm-fring'd isle,
And deigned to talk with clayey clods like us—
Thou Poet-King of this our hoopéd age !

That hush'd and eager hall, and those young men's
Swift faces, studying thine, as with slow step
And truly royal mien thou enter'dst in.
(So in some dew-dower'd field of opening flowers
Might waking buds perceive the Risen Sun.)

And then thou spak'st to us, as some wise King
Might speak to his young sons, and gave to us
The tale of all thy early years;—those years
Of dream, and doubt, and sad perplexment of
The mind ; and baffled hours, and sighs, and tears
Of one who's lost his way and cannot find
The roseal road—the common plight of youth.

So well do I recall thy bird-soft voice—
As sweet as flutes upon a moon-milk'd sea;
Thy eyes, so Magianwise, as if they held
Within their orbs the secret of the storm-crush'd
Wave; of circling flights of wind-brush'd birds ;
Of fruits that sway and ripen in the breeze.....
And then, when thou had'st told thy tale, and all
Our strenuous plaudits rose upon the air—
Thy face, serene, unmoved.....

O Sage, thou art the Shining Lamp of all
Our Eastern world, sent down to save us from
Our long-dead selves, our petty earth-shod ways,
Our narrow mud-sous'd minds that browse amid
The sands and stocks and stones of cabin'd thought :
Whilst lo! yon single twinkling silent star
Bewrays our godlihood.

Forgive our pausing minds that find their joys
In mean and meagre toil. We are but dust :
But apes that strive to rise above our dull
And nat'ral apishness. We strive. We fail....

Rishi, inspir'd by thee we yet shall rise
To those high peaks of life proclaim'd by thee...
And generations far shall chant the praise
Of him that led the way.

*Written in 1920

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