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THIRD EYE



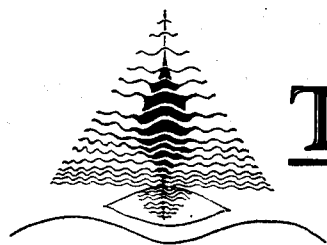
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K. GANESH

PUBLICATION OF THE 'ENGLISH FORUM'



THIRD EYE

Eighth Issue

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K.GANESH A PIONEER IN SRILANKAN THAMIL LITERATURE

Born in Ampitiya Kandy on 2.3.1920, K.Ganesh who is a pioneer progressive writer and eighty two years in age now, had started his early studies in Kandy St.Anthony's College and then in Madurai Tamil Sangam and Raja College of Oriental Studies Thiruvaiyar.

More than the college education he was very much interested to move about with the left movement activists and study their life and started to write.

In his teen age itself somewhere in 1932. He took active part in the formation of an Indian Progressive Writers Union and in the publication of "Lokasakthi", a progressive magazine.

After returning to Sri Lanka in the early forties. He joined hands with Martin Wickramasinghe, Ediriweera Sarathchandra and other pioneers to form an All Island Writers' Association.

In a worldwide poetry competition he was awarded a prize by the then Emperor of Japan Hon.Hirohito.

Basically a poet and a translator, Mr. K.Ganesh has also written short stories.. His short stories first appeared in the 'MANIKODI' a turning point magazine of the modern Tamil literature.

It was a pride to have written in the 'MANIKODI' and only 'ILANKAYARKON', a pioneer of the Sri Lankan Tamil short story, has written stories in this magazine from Ceylon.

Mr. K. Ganesh has written only six short stories and has contributed a lot in the form of essays and poems.

In the mid forties (1946 – 1948) Mr.K. Ganesh and Mr. K. Ramathan, another active member of the communist party jointly published a magazine named 'BHARATHI' which is the first progressive magazine in Tamil in Sri Lanka. Bharathi came to an end with only six (6) issues in the 2 years of its literary life.

Proficient both in English and Tamil, K. Ganesh has rendered valuable service by translating a number of books into Tamil.

His first work of translation was MULK RAJ ANAND'S "UNTOUCHABLES" in 1947 followed by K.A.Abbas' "HO CHI MIN" "LUHZUI" and so on. He has translated more than 22 books. His work of translation has been honored by the Sahitya Academy and his Literary activities have been recognized by awards titled ILAKIYA CHEMMAL, KALABOOSHANAM, etc.

A humanist and a lover of books Mr.K.Ganesh lives in Talatu Oya, a few miles away from Kandy.
By – Theliwathai Joseph

WORKS PUBLISHED

Translation into Tamil :-

- | | | |
|----------------------|---|---|
| 1. UNTOUCHABLE | - | Mulkraj Anand 1947, 1970 (Puthumai Pathipaham, Karaikudi, Madras India) |
| 2. SAFFRON BLOSSOMS | - | K.A.Abbas 1956, 1963 (Inba Nilayam, Madras-India) |
| 3. AJANTHA | - | K.A.Abbas 1964 (Kuyilan Padhippaham, Madras India) |
| 4. PRISON DIARY | - | Ho Chi Minh – 1973, 1985 (New Century Book House, Madras India) |
| 5. THE SONG | - | Azerbaijanian Writer Altai Mahamedov 1974 (Self Sri Lanka) |
| 6. CALL TO ARMS | - | Lu Xun 1981 (Puthumai Publishers, Madras India) |
| 7. BULGARIAN POEMS | - | Hsto Botev, Ivan Vazov, Geo Milev, Vapstarov, Penyo etc.
(New Century Book Shop, Madras India) |
| 8. HAPPY CHILDREN | - | Jushi 1986 (Foreign Language publishing house, Beijing, China) |
| 9. WANDERINGS | - | Lu Xun 1986 (New Century Book Shop, Madras India) |
| 10. HUNGARIAN POEMS | - | Sandor Petofi's Poems 1998 (Chennai Book House, Madras India) |
| 11. POEMS OF PARPARA | - | Russian Poet 1989 (Writers Cooperative Publishers, Colombo, Sri Lanka) |
| 12. SOVIET POEMS | - | Kubrianov's Poems 1989
(Writers Cooperative Publishers, Colombo, Sri Lanka) |

13. ERHAI'S WEDDING - Jou Shu Li 1990 (Chennai Book House, Madras India)
14. CRESCENT MOON - Lao She 1990 (Chennai Book House, Madras, India)
15. MY DUTIES TODAY - Yang Ya Liang Ti 1990
(Foreign Languages Publishing House, Beijing, China)
16. PLEASURE IN ONES' WORK - Yang Yi 1990 (Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, China)
17. SHIHAN AND THE SNAIL - Chines Folk Story 1991 (Dolphine Books, Beijing, China)
18. BAMBOO VALLE - Vietnamese Short Stories 1992 (South Asian Books, Madras, India) 1992.
19. BODY AND SOUL & BITTER SPRINGS - Zhang Xiang Liang (South Asian Books, Madras, India) 1992.
20. UKRANIAN / POEMS - Poems of National Poet Taras Shevchenko 1993
(New Century Book House, Madras India)
21. POEMS OF IVAN FANKO 1994 - (Elavlsagan Publishers, Madras, India)
22. COMPLTE SHORT STORIES OF LUXUN 1995 (South Asian Books, Madras, India and National Art and Literary Association, Sri Lanka)

IN PREPARATION :

1. ASHOKAMALA AND OTHER POEMS (Kurunji Pathippaham, Colombo, Sri lanka)

EMPLOYMENT / MEMBERSHIP

Former (Jt. Editor)	:-	"Bharathi" – Journal of Progressive Writing 1946.
Assistant Editor	:-	"Virakesari" – Tamil Daily & Weekly 1946
News Editor	:-	"Suthanthiran" Tamil Daily, Colombo 1950.
Life Member	:-	Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka South Indian Journalist Federation 1954.
Member	:-	"Sahithya" Tamil Council Cultural Ministry 1975 Peoples Council 1971
Correspondent	:-	United Press of India 1949.
Special Correspondent	:-	"Nava India" Daily, Coimbatore, India
Columnist	:-	"Virakesari", "Thinakaran", "Elanadu" weeklies

AWARDS

Sahitiya Award – Title of "Ilakiya Chemmal" (Literary Virtuoso) Ministry of Culture, 1991
 Best Tamil translation for Vietnam Short Stories by the Independent Literary Festival 1992.
 Best Tamil translation for Poems of Ukrainian Poet Taras Shevchenko by the Independent Literary Festival 1993.
 By the Colombo Faculty of Science, University Students' Union on the "Towards Spring Festival" for voicing the aspiration of the upcountry Literary media, 1994
 Sahitiya Award – "Kalabushan" Ministry of Culture 1995

MASTER VALLUVAN, THE LONG – MISUNDERSTOOD TAMIL MENTOR

BY T. WIGNESAN

"The Kural owes much of its popularity to its exquisite poetic form. A kural is a couplet containing a complete and striking idea expressed in a refined and intricate meter. No translation can convey an idea of its charming effect. [...] the brevity rendered necessary by the form [composed in the Venpa metre] gives an oracular effect to the utterances of the great Tamil 'Master of the Sentences. They are the choicest of moral epigrams. [...] Tiruvalluvar is generally very simple, and his commentators very profound."

Rev. G.U. Pope, Former Fellow of Madras University.

[Pardon these futile measly words from your great Potiya height: they can hardly belittle your true worth]

Under what leaky hutment roof by stamped – mud floors
Trembling clair – oscuro straw-wick kuttuvilakku
On the stark anvil of crisp phrase and sparse syntax
By the raging nama-nir rhyming brine
At Mayilapur's S. Thome Sandy doors
While peacocks danced to your innate pulsating chimes
have you chipped away at uncut gems

Those the Yavanas brought with the monsoons
or such as your sea-daring captain friend Elela-Cinkan's
Even those the Christian missionaries preached
In daredevil enticement
After St. Thomas fell to a vel stuck in his bosom
Or of
Those like you who were stamped underfoot

Caste in cast-iron strictures
Priest only to the proclaimed paraiyar drumbeaters
The warp and woof of intricately woven venpa verse
Elevating your weaving clan to fresh artistic heights

YET

In the humbled ways of your birth
on whose steps have you pitched your ears
whose wisdom have you had to pilfer
filter
whose ways have you had to ape
whose mere thoughts have you then had to correct
ennoble
and remold into inextinguishable lines

Or had you tread the ahimsa path of gentle-foot Janis
Treading gently the earth for fear of loping boot pains

SEVEN STARK WO

Seven alliterative blockbuster words struck so
they rhymed initially in juxta-positioning lineal parallels
pausing but in the fourth
to resume breath in the fifth
Leaving the interstitial morphemes in resonating ellipses
The economy of your parsing has wreaked havoc down the ages
in all trans-explicatory tongues

Tough –minded men come from afar
with other gods to serve
and sacrifices to make in the name of their Lords
bent your versification to limp rhyme
and left meaning a hung pursuit
in the hand of plagiarists professors preachers
who
not knowing nor divining the reason for your craftsman's
concatenation of weighted phonemes
advanced theories for your elastic pregnant mind
strung myriads of pages in exegeses
(much perhaps to your amusement now)

of manner of securing friendships
of the obtention and dispensation of education
of the seductions in the dainty maiden's coyness
Nor of your infinite wisdom of the times
Nor of your observation of the passing of life about you
Nor alas of your inveterate nay obsessive need to pontificate
In what is evident to the even half-baked

PERHAPS

What mattered was to get the lesson through
even one in ten was well worth the while
If remembered by the unfortunate by birth
Who never traversed the threshold of class and caste
who never even buckled exceeding numbers on their toes

To you the ten - by - tens by one - hundred - and - thirty
perhaps you planned a flouilege
In old age
by weeding out for posterity's privileged classes
the few quoted over and over
katka kasatara karka karrapin
nitka atakut taka

vilampu suttapun aratu arate
navinal sutta watu

and you might never have thought
the mighty today are like those trodden poor of your day
who
at least were shackled to ignorance by force by godly fear
a racially discriminating Overlord

now the privileged in blindness give you lip service
and a lot of money
hoping by this gesture to earn your merit
not earn YOU merit
and the society's accolade

You remain abused still
by the undistinguishing crowd
who upon the mention of your name

rise to feel proud
of what then
than
in their shored up selves
of belonging in
the self same pigment and tongue

none of your real worth passes into them
nor the reason for your epigrammatic lines

Pray
should I then beg forgiveness for this affront

Some apart

much remains redundant
obvious
inapt by way of pointing to fresher vistas
and these that follow the rarity of your verse
imbibe noting else from this age's handy cornucopia
of instant wisdom

Your lines served an eminent purpose in your time

now we bed our minds down by encyclopedic libraries
we live on another planet
Your chain ganged lines served to teach the meek
the lame of mind
the dislocated of your time

Yes some still wallow in the same myth

today
not from want of will
but from the fear of rebirth
imprisoned in conditioned belief

and the rise of Dravidian identity
only deferring to the feigned purity of Aryansing blood.
reverts to the same mythic belief
some kind of imagined power of breed

History is in the past

It cannot help the present to liberate itself
If one has not understood the difference
If one has not disowned and let fall meaningless myths

If you dear Valluvan lived these times

Would you not have disowned you own lines

well perhaps some or more
not all finding their way into a florilege of your choice

for you know how love in the third part changed with mourns
changing with the times
so has the art of governance
and the unconscionable ways and practices of the artha classes
other precautions more pressing than mere friendship
would have compelled you to jettison many a couplet

Who knows even your first ten would have found their way

into a bin
ethical lines of advice
would turn sour in today's ear

Nor child would heed to the letter your admonitions of behaviour
Nor no wife take place in the humiliating role of kitchen helper
No king will base his reign on your strict plans of concern for etiquette
No youth seek virtue in the puritanical preachment of bygone observances

One singular contention

No peasant revolution
No women's liberation
No religious reformation

grace your pages
the establishment the status quo the traditional hierarchy the Almighty
All find mindful foundation
in your ardent didacticism
and extend license to those who cry sacrilege
in the coming dismantling of the clans of castial power

Is poetry only meant for teaching what is time honored
what is authorized
what seeks not to rock the ship of state

Helas! My universally renowned peerless ancestor!
I'd like to think
You'd be the first to have recognized the always changing world
The first to have accepted the parting of ways
For your intelligence your foresight and hindsight
Your immensely powerful quill
would have sought other remedies
other means to convince
a wayward world
a world far too gone and worldly wise
to hatch the nuances of your admonishing word
all afresh

*N'empeche your name is a comet
hurtling down the ages*

GOODBYE SWEET HEART

Pon. Ganesh

Where do you want to take
All my sad notes
When every eye of heart's fountain
Dried up in this waste land
When my last word too
Defeated to the last straw

Farewell. oh my sweet thought
The thought where I gently float
Let me remain here itself
With my bruised wounds
Being all my dreams shattered to ground

Oh my sweet thoughts,
Flow not again out of my deep sea
As rising waves
Throw not my messages in vain
Again and again.

I am thrown lying
In my silence. are all my dreams buried
I am lying thrown in my street
Like an empty mutilated tin
Exhausted all of its contains

Farewell. oh. my sweet thought
The thought where I gently float
The death is certain
Yes, honey. its for me too
Yet I see not yours in any of my scripts
Even I myself request.

Farewell. oh. my sweet thought
Oh my sweet heart. farewell to thee
Is the love narrowed only to a fire
Whenever I like to light
Whenever you like to put it out

THE LIBRARY

By: George Rajeevan Francis

The God of the ancient Egyptians – Ra
Vanished behind the library
Leaving forth his straddling rays
The instruments of his pleasure
To paint the sky with celestial lights
A cyclorama of curlish red.
As if to hint with an eternal eye
At man's fury against his own.

An empty shell she stands before me
A lost grail to knowledge and learning
A cradle built for the civilized man
To revel in joy and wonder.
Built to behold the wisdom of man,
A witness to his ingenuity.
All she saw was the human beast
Who raped her in his jealousy
Burnt , bombed , pillaged and abandoned
Condemned to remain alone – with
Naught to shield her naked wounds
Nor heal her shattered soul.

As I keep watching
I think to myself
How many battles has this structure seen
How many men have died at its feet
And there lain till they rejoined our mother
For once it stood on a raging battle
Where man killed man, for what? – who knows!
And yet it beckons me to see
The destruction of its majesty.

The domes are crushed and walls mosaic
With molten balls of metal.
The stately statue of Goddess Sarasvathi
Nothing more than a piteous wreck.
Dark and black she reminds one still
Of that horrific night.
When a nation lost a treasure untold
To appease an insane whim.

Yet even through her ruinous state
Her forgotten beauty lingers – for
An idle mind has power enough
To deem her in her glory.
Brilliantly white , noble and tall
Reminiscent of Taj Mahal's beauty
With gardens enclosing and birds chirping
People in harmony came
To learn great things and dream new dreams
Beneath her tender lights.

Now she is silent
And as the panoramic scene – begins to yield
To the all devouring curtain of night
She seems to whisper in words ethereal
A message for all to hear,
Man – it was you who created me
A repository for your wisdom
Yet ignorance proved more powerful still
For its fire consumed your learning.
And know you my proud and mighty gods
The day may soon appear – when
This my sad and lonely world
Truly becomes your own
Desolate. Dark and Deary.

THE JOURNEY

Thirukkivil Kaviyugan

Still visible that landscape
With its birds, leaves and flowers
In my memory.

The picture of flamingoes, standing
With their long-legs pillared
On the grassy meadow just in far off
Distance.
That I had enjoyed in a moving bus
Still visible in my mind.

Along the way, the time shed its leaves
My least happiness and my childhood
That melted and gone away it tears,
Would too collide a bit with this large tract
of land, I'm afraid.

Having jumped out of the running bus,
Not caring for ups and down
I fell and my body full of sand:
All my journey to ride.
Had, alas, ended in a full stop.

Taking a seat nowadays in a moving bus
and sitting as if a trunk of body motionless
A, moving as if not knowing the movement

Or else, at times when I looked up
the surface of the water
Boiling with golden dots
In the hot sun.
A poem incomplete, often visits me
and vanishes, pricking my heart.
What else
All had gone
Yes, all my journeys, going with my father
Who held the steering wheel.
Wheezing and wheezing in agony
I pretended that I myself
Driving the bus, touching my father's shoulder
Yet all had gone.

What else?
I attempt to lose myself
Holding the widow pane of the bus
and showing to my daughter and as well to my son
after a couple of two years
The picture of flamingoes and trees
and telling,
'see how beautiful, they are moving'

Yet, the landscape still visible
in my mind and my father
holding the steering wheel
with the agony of wheezing ...

oh, Almighty
this is my humble prayer
Let at least a flamingo or a swan or
Even a buffalo make their appearance
without fail.
whenever I travel along this grassy meadow.

Translated by: Pon. Ganesh.

INFINITE JUSTICE

BY: S. Jeyasankar

In every sky there's full moon reign
To hide in fear there's no country foreign

The millennium and the new year
Ushered in, rejoiced and did not yet wear
The prophecy of Nostradamus did ghost
- like appear
The major powers attempts to make it truer.

For the people, in the name of people
Under the names of states and institutions
Attempts of power of freakish men-
Of swollen nerves and numbed muscles.

What name bear will the wisdom and prowess?
That fail to make untrue the prophecy
That revives shape and grimly shines
By sending chill through people's spines

Will the wisdom of thousand years
Perish in the face of this utter nonsense?
If it does perish are we all still
People primitive and inhumane.

Let swollen nerves their swelling dispel
Numbed muscles their numbness dispel
The angry passion its arrogance dispel.

In the heart, let kindness blossom
In the head, let wisdom glow
And with the lives on the earth let human live
- too

.Translated into English by T. Kirupakaran

**NAVEENA PASMASURAN
OR
THE ASHEN TOUCH**

**Original script: M. Nilanthan. (1993)
Re-created and Directed by S. Jeyasankar (2000)
Translated into English: By T. Kirupakaran.**

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

We are people who were forced to live amidst bombing and with bombs during the latter two decades of the 20th century.

We would like to speak about the nuclear bomb which at any time anywhere in a split moment can come as a disaster or write out the end of this world by the gigantic mushrooming of its deadly smokes.

Man's power hunger is now stealing away his right of determining the fate of the world. It is absurd to construe that the world has been created for mankind only. Conversely it is a beautiful home for all living beings.

Having stuffed the lap of the earth with nuclear bombs fit to burn this beautiful earth several times to ashes, the super power pretend to be the protectors of people.

In the latter part of the 20th century, coming up to the threshold of Eelam the nuclear bombs wait in a ready state in the subcontinents too.

The awareness about the efforts made to annihilate the entire earth becomes the beginning to face them.

The drama "Naveena Pasmasaran" does that artistically.

"Naveena Pasmasaran" tries to speak to the audience through the traditional creative features in a flexible manner so as to communicate with all people in whichever space of performance available.

**NAVEENA PASMASURAN
OR
THE ASHEN TOUCH**

Long live!
Oh! The lamp of light !
Of the gate way of faith
Oh! The lamp of light
Of the inmost shrine
Oh! The source of beauty!
That glows everywhere,
Oh! The goal of life!
That pleasure seeks.
Oh! The source of you, the source of me!
The source of sweetness
Long live thee!

INTRODUCTION:

Let the fire flare up
We pour out meat into it.
Let the fire flare up
We give offering to it.

The fire of virtue, wisdom and life
Fire of penance and sacrifice
Fire of wrath, hostility and Treachery
We worship all the above
We protect and govern them
Oh fire you are our bosom friend
We praise you
Like you, let our lives give out heat and light
Of hundred years.
Oh fire!
Like you, let our souls give out luster
Oh fire!
Like you, let our wisdom radiate.
Oh sun god! Oh fire we praise you
Oh! Sun god! We glorify you.
Good is your light. Good is your work and good are you.
(The chanting of ho! ho! rises high up in the air. At the center stage stand pasmasuran' on one foot in penanceful deep concentration).

(Humanitarians) :-

Ho! ho !
Oh! the peacefulness of the mountains, the loneliness of the rivers!
(Group of Scientists)
Ho! Alfa
Ho! Beta
Ho! Gama
Ho! Neutron ...
Ho!

(Humanitarians) :-

Ho!
Oh! the wind, the sound
Ho! ocean of antiquity
Oh! Fire, the symbol of justice

(Scientists) :-

Ho! Uranium
Ho! Plutonium
Ho! Deuterium
Ho! ho! ... ho!

(All of a sudden characters run about in excitement. Some run towards the audience and others towards other directions)

(Humanitarians) :-

1. Pamasuran is doing penance
2. Pamasuran is doing severe penance
3. He is lying on hedges.
4. He is standing on one foot with the arms stretched out.
5. He is staring at the sun with his naked eyes.
6. By the power of his penance the world of indra has lost its pomp.
7. Devas in fear have hidden in dark dungeons.
8. He has chained the wind.
9. The guards of the eight directions have surrendered to him.
10. The queen of the oceans was incarcerated.
11. The stars have lost their sight by the power of his penance.
12. The sons of the mountains have lost themselves to him.

Danger danger
Oh! people of the earth Danger
(ho ho ho)
from Albert Einstein to president Roosevelt.

Sir,

According to some recent work the element uranium could be turned into a new and very important source of energy. I can also predict that it is probable in the immediate future. By this we can produce vast amount of power and large quantities of radium like elements. I would also like to bring to your attention that if such a bomb is dropped on a port it might very well destroy the whole port together with some of the surrounding territory.

Danger oh people of the earth danger

(Ho ho ho)

(one character imitates the announcement at a rocket base).

Ready Steady

Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, three, two, one, zero.

(noise like a bomb blast as if a rocket is launched is heard.

God shiva appears).

(Scientists) :-

Eureka Eureka Eureka

God shiva :-

I'm so pleased with your power of penance.

God shiva :-

What boon do you want

What boon do you want

Tell me! It shall be given

Tell me! It shall be given.

(pamasuran) :-

Came you for me my lord

To give me a boon?

Came you for me my lord

Pleased by my penance.

To give me a boon.

Came you for me my lord

Bless me with a boon my lord - oh lord

Bless me with one my lord

To swoop the world and keep in my hand

Bless me with a boon my lord

Bless me with one my lord.

God S :-

What boon do you want

Ask, it shall be given

(Song :- scientists) :-

I should walk on the moon my lord - I should

Walk on the moon my lord

Stamping my footprints on the face of the moon my lord.

Should walk on the moon my lord - I should

Walk on the moon my lord
We want aeroplanes which can fly

Faster than the wind -2
Give me planets
With eyes to
Spy the earth
From the space above
By hovering in the sky.
Give me missiles which can fly from
Continent to continent
Carrying atomic bombs
On their noses' end.

God S:-

Confuse not me by asking for too many a boon.
Ask for one and only one.
The one that amounts to be the mother of all

Pasma :-

All that I touch should become ashes my lord.
I want that ashen touch my lord.

Song :-

Here comes the king Pamasuran
Here comes the one blessed with the boon.
Pamasuran is our great king
He did great penance and got many boons
In arrogance he changed the boon to curse
And did perish in the end.

Scientist the greatest scholar
Through penance got the boon of nuclear power
The nuclear power of science is creative
But in the war it's immensely destructive.

Here comes the king Pamasuran
Here comes the one blessed with the boon.

Pamasuran is our great king
He did great penance and got many boons
In arrogance he changed the boons into curse
And did perish in the end.

With one big bang
Came the holocaust
Babes and birds
Wailed and wept.

Pasma :-

Got the boon to raze the world
I'm the king of kings unrivalled
Is there anyone to challenge me?
(no, no, no never)
I'm the leader blessed ever to be.
(yes, yes, yes, for ever)

Pas :- come! all of you to my side!

All :- coming my lord! coming my lord! surrendered my lord! surrendered

Pas :- Hereafter there will be no darkness in the world..

All :- why? My lord?

Pas :- Here, get this, electricity!

All :- Ah! electricity! electricity! electricity! no more darkness! no more darkness

Pas :- Whose footprint is that which is on the surface of the moon?

All :- (whisper) whose? Whose?

One of then :- mm..... yours? My lord.

All :- yes my lord, it's yours my lord.

Pas :- Ha! The hero of heroes I am!
The almighty king!
The all powerful scientist! I am.

All :- (chant) : NA.....SA.....SA.....SA.....
Essence of nasty war.. war.. war.. war..

Pass :- I am the one who got the boon of "Ashen touch"

Scientists 1 : I know all the secrets of the nuclear power.

Sc. 2 : I know how to create a world without human beings.

Person 1 :- Only buildings will remain.

Person 2 :- Trees, bushes, creepers, grass, animals human beings everything will perish.

Sc.3 :- Within a moment within a moment.

Se. 4 :- One and only one bomb would do.

Person. 3 :- Our sun will be dead.

Person 4 :- Darkness of death will shroud and devour us all.

Person 5 :- All our stars will fall down burnt

Person 6 :- All our river will be poisoned.

Person 7 :- Our seas will freeze to immobility.

Pass : Smoke will rise up like a giant mushroom
Under which will exist my rule.

(song) The hero of heroes I am
The almighty king
The all powerful scientist I am

Pass : Go! Proclaim it to the whole world

All :- Done my lord! (characters run aimlessly to various directions and return) what is to be proclaimed my lord?

Pasma :- Mightiest the most fortunate
Mightiest the most fortunate
The fittest survive
The non - fits perish
Mightiest the most fortunate
(other characters begin chanting the lines)
Mightiest the most fortunate
Mightiest the most fortunate
He who owns the nuclear power
Rules the world for ever.
E equals mc2..... E equals mc2 ...

Pas :- The hero of heroes I am
The almighty King
The all powerful scientist you are? (all)

Pasma :- Hey! go and tell this to the moon.
No one shall hide the sun without asking me.

All :- Let it be so my Lord

- Pass** :- No more Solar eclipse till I order
All :- Let it be So my Lord
Pasma :- who is there? summon river, "Ganga" to the Earth.
One man :- Suppose she denies
Pasma :- send the missiles.
Another man :- My lord! Ganga is worn on the top knot of the head of Lord Shiva.
Pasma :- If so, summon God Shiva.
Another man :- Lord! is he not the one who blessed you with the boon?
Pasma :- That's past. Now I have the charm of the atomic bomb.
- Song** :- In my hand is the magic wand
Wonders many I will do
None can hold me in the world
(Ho.. Ho.... chanting rises up)
I am the king of wars
And the king of wars I am.
- Pasma** :- I am death personified
I'm determined to annihilate the world ($E=MC^2$, $E=MC^2$)
- Hum 2** :- The utmost reliance on nuclear weapons, sprouts from the disbelief in culture, politic and technico-economic power.
- Hum 1** :- When the power-hungry politicians and the intellectuals are mixed together in the flask of Government, like a giant mushroom smoke will rise up and beneath which will deposit the ashes.
- Hum 3** :- Hereafter stop glossing the craze for power in the name of protection and in the name of honoring women.
- Hum 1** :- No matter what we gain, the protection of this earth depends on the complete eradication of the nuclear weapons which can cause irreparable destruction to the earth.
- Pass (Song)** :- In my hand is the magic wand
Wonders many I will do
None can hold me in the world
(Ho.. Ho.... chanting rises up)
I am the king of wars
And the king of wars I am.
- Pass** :- He who owns the nuclear power
Rules the whole world for ever.
 E equals mc^2 E equals mc^2
 E equals mc^2 E equals mc^2
- Mightiest the most fortunate
Mightiest the most fortunate
He who owns the atomic power
Rules the whole world for ever.
- Pasma** :- There is atomic bomb in my possession.
Summon God Shiva.
- Gods** :- I'm here Pamasura. I am present everywhere at any time.
- Pas** :- Come near me. Let me test the boon first on you.
- God S** :- Wait Pamasura..... wait` Don't make the boon a curse.
Don't be in a hurry
Don't become arrogant.

Pasma :- Nay, I take it to my advantage.
E equals mc2.... E equals mc2.
(Pamasuran leaps at God Shiva, god Shiva runs away. The chase continues Chanting of the lines is heard in the background.)

All :- Hiroshima Nagasaki
Nagasaki Hiroshima
Acid Rain Acid Rain
Acid Rain Acid Rain
Hiroshima Nagasaki
Nagasaki Hiroshima
Nuclear leak of Chernobyl
Atomic disaster in North Carolina
Even in the space the menace spreads
Subcontinents too face the threats.
All over the space the missiles hover
Impact of radioactivity the world over
Hiroshima Nagasaki....
Nagasaki Hiroshima.....
Hiroshima....Nagasaki.....
Hiroshima.... Nagasaki.....
Black Rain... Black Rain....
Black Rain... Black Rain....

God S :- Kali Yugam .. Kali Yugam ...
The time when boons become curse...
The time when boons become curse....
World full of vices

All :- Hiroshima Nagasaki....
Nagasaki Hiroshima ...
Acid rain acid rain
Acid rain acid rain...

(an abrupt silence. The noise of a bomber is heard, the characters of God Shiva and Pamasuran retire at the back-center of the stage.)

Humanitarian :-

(reads a letter) On the 16th of July 1945 atomic age began in the peaceful; desert of "Alomogardo" in New Mexico.

Got the boon to raze the world
I'm the King of Kings unrivalled
Is there anyone to challenge me?
(no, no, no.....never...)
I'm the leader blessed ever to be.
(yes, yes, yes....)

Humanitarians :-

Within only three weeks of the 1st nuclear disaster an atom bomb was dropped on Hiroshima.

Got the boon to raze the world
I am the king of kings unrivalled

(Imitates the telephone conversation)

Tibbets :-

Commander-in-chief of Enola Gay B-29, Colonel Tibbets speaking.
"Little Boy" was released from the bomber.
(In the background unfolds the scenes of the bomb blast)

Lewis-the Co-pilot :
Look there! Look there!
I can taste the nuclear fission
It tastes like lead

Tibbets :- Oh! God! oh God! what have we done!

Humanitarians :-

One man : On 6th August 1945 Hiroshima died.
Another man : After three days on 9th of August 1945 Nagasaki too died.
(Imitates a telephone conversation)

L :- Hullo! Lesly Grove speaking
O :- Hullo! Oppenheimer here.
L :- Doctor! I am very proud of you and all of your people.
O :- Well, technically sweet production is ours.
It went alright?
L :- Apparently. The explosion went with a tremendous bang.
O :- Right, are they all reasonably satisfied?
L :- Mm. highly satisfied.

With one big bang
Came the holocaust
Babes and birds
Wailed and wept

Press reporter :- Your Excellency President Harry Truman did you sleep well last night after you had successfully accomplished the nuclear explosion?

Truman :- Yes, I slept soundly than ever before because our effort was successful. Now we are the most powerful in the world.

Pass :- The hero of heroes I am
The almighty King.
The all powerful scientist you are? (all)
(The remarks of an on-looker of his experience during the atomic bomb blast at Hiroshima)

Reporter :- His name is Mexico Jamaka., a living evidence of the holocaust by the atomic explosion of Hiroshima.
Where were you at the time of the explosion?

Mexico Jamaica :- I was standing only half a mile away from the place of the explosion.

R :- What happened to you?

M :- I saw another Sun in the sky. It was a very strong light, a flash. I put my arms over my face unconsciously and almost instantly I felt my face was inflating. I thought I was directly hit by the bomb and was dying.

(Theme song) With One big bang
Came the holocaust
Babes and birds
Wailed and wept

R :- What happened after that?

M :- When I was rescued my hair was found burned . My face -was inflated like a balloon. Although my mother didn't say anything I knew it very well. I wondered why my shirt had been burnt and hanging around my arms. I soon realized that they are the pieces of my skin. It was a hell.

(Theme song)

With One big bang
Came the holocaust
Babes and birds
Wailed and wept

Pas :- I am a lover of peace. I am deadly against terrorism. For bouquets and white pigeons I have atomic weapons as emblems of peace.

All :- Alas (All fall down on the ground. Again Pasmasaran starts to chase after God Shiva)
Kali Yugam.... Kali Yugam....
Time that boons become curse...

One person :- Your honour Dr. Einstein, can you possibly foretell what will happen if the third world war breaks out?

Einstein :- I'm sorry. I can't say anything about the third world war. But I can say something about the fourth world war.

One man :-

MM ... You are unable to say anything about third world war because it's much complicated. But, how could it be possible to say about the fourth world war...
er ... which is even more complicated than the former?

Eienstien :-

You didn't understand. I can say about the fourth world war definitely and deliberately. That is to say that there will be no war as such, because the third world war will destroy all lives on the earth. Not only human lives but also the-tendest flowers will be destroyed. Everything that breathes on the earth will perish.

Humanitarians :-

It's you who announced the destructive power of atom.
It's you who explained about it's destruction
It's you who bear the great graceful face of double-faced wisdom

Narrator :- The News.
We report and we decide.

The hero of heroes I am
The almighty King
The all powerful scientist I am.
In my hand is the magic wand
Wonders many I will do
None can hold me in the world

Narrator :-

In addition to the charges of having connection with the communists in the past for delaying or identifying the agents from the Soviet Union and opposing the production of hydrogen bomb, Dr. Oppenheimer has been dismissed also from his office of the director of the Atomic Energy Commission.

To erect monuments in memory
To raise protests
Or to wake up the awareness.

आस्था में आए

मूर्ति प्रगल्भता में, जगत्

Let a new world blossom up

Let another world burgeon.

The survival of the Earth is

At the mercy of a few buttons.

The fate of this world is

In the hands of a few frenzied men.

Let the fire flare up

We invoke benevolence in it

We invoke freedom in it

For the Earth and Sky to

Flourish and prosper!

(Song) :-

March forward will we

March forward will we

Getting rid of nuclear arms

March forward will we

Devoid of power hunger

March forward will we

For all lives to live in peace

March forward will we

For the whole world to flourish

March forward will we.

Too much of learning of Sinful purpose has made the brain confused

Nuclear weapon of ruinous nature has doomed the world to its end

Devoid of knowledge we are all animals in the world

Those animals all laugh at us who is to be blamed

Dingiri dingale meenadshi dingiri dingale

See the madness of this world my dear dillale

END.

Note :-

God Shiva :- *The supreme God of Hindu Trinity of deities.*

Pasmasitran :- *The demon king who got the boon of "ashen touch" from God Shiva.*

Devas :- *Elevated celestial beings of good.*

Indran :- *King of Devas.*

Aunty, the mooning moon

M.I.M. Rauff

It is the day prior to the full moon, with the moon that has not grown into its full stature for the night. The moon shines, leaning along the line of tropic of cancer. No stars seen too, caring for. The star on pole is about to be appeared. It is long time before the brightening star disappeared on the phases and the sky is deprived of stars that make conjuring magic lights of green, blue, grey and yellow in colours, one after the other. The sky seems to be meant only for the moon that comes floating slowly.

Aunty was caught in – between the moon and the spreader branches of drum – stick tree. It is the season next after the winter, after experiencing hearty perspiration of the dog – days. The drum – stick tree with its dot – like leaves upon which the shining dew – drops landed from the moon light. Drum – sticks hanging from above, like numerous small creatures without legs, are dancing with the summer's wind. Aunty's body is fully covered with shades of the branches and leave shot down from the tree. Her body has become roused with a feeling that worm – like tender drum – sticks crawling all over her body. She lay with all her limbs, touching every inch of the ground, face looked upward with eyes, Chandamama is on his wings. Chandamama is swimming brightly locating himself in to the darkness of the eyes. Aunty is full of pleasure aesthetically, recalling the days gone by, being stirred up with the crawling worms. She saddened emerging with the thought for a moment that the whole universe is diffused with the sweet thoughts brimful of heart. She lies with her head on the ground, looking upward steadfastly..

"Chandamama, Chandamama... where are you going..?"

"Going to collect sand"

"Sand... what for"

"to build houses"

"Houses... what for...?"

"Houses... for giving births to children"

"Children... what for ...?"

"To play jumping into pot of oil"

The days of childhood, singing and looking at the full moon, flashed back into Aunty's mind. Things that are simply ignored of what they were doing at an age, have crowded her mind inspired her that everything was meaningful. Aunty has become joyful of her childhood memories.

The little rabbit in the palm of chandamama that seems to be made of white wool, is now ready to jump out, raising its head, looking northward. Having joyfully thought of taking the rabbit into her hands, aunty felt herself as if flying beyond and beyond, taking the rabbit and embracing it, she on her upward position. looking up above. Her mind was like a pot, brimful of water, descending down. She stood spell – bound.

Aunty had given birth to a child of chandamama at a younger age. Having adamant of eating the prepared morsel of food at mother's hand, aunty reminded of her mother's nipple of the breast, is started lamenting for the night made of then moon light. Grandma had caught the moon and given to aunty. Grandma was always keeping a faded piece of mirror on her betel place in order to look her face at it and remove the betel stains. Aunty has had meals looking at this palm – sized piece of mirror. Aunty knows now that chandamama is holding the baby. Hare having collected sand and built a house chandamama is now holding the hare – baby just above aunty and just above her face.

There were several others at home to take aunty in hands and play. When the mammary glands ripen with milk, full to the brim and feeling in a torment of pain, mother took aunty, hugged and breast – fed relieving of such pain heartily. The relief of pain reflects on her mother's face as that of this luminous moon.

Aunty used to call Wappa, wappa with her lisping lips and her father immediately took aunty on to his bicycle with an affectionate smile, grandma, having witnessed that aunty was mischievous, had thrust her with her small motor which grandma used for pounding betel and arecanuts. Aunty had also been provided with a piece arecanut for her to put into the motor and play. Grandpa's bleached beard is like that of the hare-baby Chandamama is holding. Aunty once enjoyed a shy of pleasure when she thrust her face and hands into the white beard of grandpa. The smell of the arecanut's neem in the beard of grandpa is still afresh in aunty's mind.

Chandamama himself has a hare-baby to enjoy touching gently like that of the grandpa's bleached beard. Seinumbu and Sinnavan have three cubs of cats, rightly duplicating the very appearance of Sinnvan. The three cubs with grey curly hair and penetrating sharp eyes roaming about the street and dusting the whole vicinity. They visit aunty's drum-stick tree daily in search of squirrels, dragan - flies and butterflies.

Aunty had been a baby for all at home. Now Chandamama has a baby-hare and Seinumbu and Sinnavan have three children. Aunty wanted to cry aloud when she thinks of it. The moon has become dominant all over the sky, like the flower of luminous light blushed with loveliness. The earth is left behind peacefully with the summer's wind that stopped blowing, the moisture - laden weather, the gently dewy drops shivering pervade wet on land and aunty is in her upward position lying with her wit's end to recover from stilled look. Aunty's fingers on her forehead feel chill of the dew drops that fell upon her eye brows. The air is damp chilly. All of a sudden, aunty stirred up to her sense herself. The reddish milky way suddenly became pale and it was slowly milk whitened.

Heard the chirping sound of the field bird's right over the horizon in the east. Aunty gave her ears eagerly towards east, in a distance of few away from chandamama, the field birds in a semi-circle rounded up him, shrilling and vanished. The rapid movements of their wings in an orderly manner. The moon gleamed within the clouds that came around and aunty becomes lonely again in the darkness.

A great stillness is moistening everything, pervading the universe. A state of quietness in the night without anything, neither of chandamama, nor of baby-hare. The loneliness that creeps into the feeling of a sort of novelty which freezes both body and mind. Heard a child's heart's cry in a faint tone of aunty's inner breath. An identical sign of longing sexual desire for all living beings which she feels as if raising it from all over her limbs, she herself became the little child crying and as the one akin to the voice. It is today, for all her 40 years of life, she feels for such a longing desire. The regulated tone, out of a moaning pain just prior to the state of screaming. It was doubtful for her judge whether it comes from a far off distance or is it heard close by.

Suddenly the gently light begins to appear on the carpet of the sky. Enjoyed looking at the clouds which's are moving swiftly from place to the other. In the over-flowing of light, there are volumes of smoke that awaits any time to show the tongue of wildfire. The yellowish deposits gather from the bottom of volumes of smoke. The light's brim slowly expands, pervading all over the scene. Chandamama claps his hands and laughs when the dark clouds move away all of a sudden. The baby - hare looked at aunty and smiled.

Several feet away from aunty at the drum - stick tree, cats lie in wait for making sex. The lustful male-cat on its wing is ready to charge the opposite. The cat has various streaks in scarlet and white color. Often he looks at the girl - cat stretching his tongue and licking his lips in a torment of desire. In a fraction of a second, he boughed upon the girl - cat and held her neck with his mouth tightly. Strong touch of teeth cautiously not intending to inflict even a scratch but forceful grasp. After several attempts in vain struggling to refuse to submit, the she - cat is withdrawing her hind legs, lay flattened finding no other alternative. She made a low manful sound. The male-cat, raising his tail relieved of its grasp, urinated in the dried sand and it is heard clearly to aunty.

Again something like the crying sound was heard deep into aunty's heart. The she - cat surrendered, submitting herself with no attempt to withdraw. The male - cat started licking the private part of the she - cat. Then a sudden bouch and touch of teeth on the neck. A pinpoint grasp.

A delightness, longing for the pain of teeth. An ecstasy, on acceptance of pain. The girl - cat totally surrendered herself to the male partner. Then a plaintative moanful sound. Aunty in a torment of lustful desire felt as if she herself conceives and losing her virginity. She arched and heaved and lay still.

Aunty's mind flashed back. The black one had been lying with her six kittens near the sack of tobacco bundle, which were kept safe, fearing the forth - coming heavy rainy season. The kittens at the tender age with eyes not completely opened to see the world, were making every effort groping down and crawling all over the body of the mother-cat, in search of the nipple of the breast and aunty took it for a sort of offensive to the sight. Aunty, out of the hateful feeling, chased the mother - cat with the broom - stick, when the cat was trying to change its place, taking the kids in her mouth in fear of male - cat, The male - cat had killed some of the kittens, when the mother-cat was away and aunty was purposely inactive.

One day evening, aunty was sleeping in the hall after a shower of rain. To her utter astonishment, she had looked at the little kittens with beautiful and lovely patches on their bodies, playing and jumping carefree, over the tobacco sacks, The little one with its soft fur of skin. Anyone who noticed these kids would not hesitate to take them in their arms, hug and kiss them. Such lovely kittens. These were the kittens which were left behind escaping several traps of death. Aunty wondered. Alas, were these the very kids which irritated aunty for its hateful sight with their dreadful odour? Yes of course the loveliness that emerged out of ugliness.

The kittens had then started sleeping next to aunty during chilly days of winter that started after the rainy season that had been ceased. kittens always got around aunty even after they stopped breast feeding. Aunty enjoyed looking at kittens, giving morsel of food to them on a plate. Wagging their little tails on their own they roamed about and it was a wonderful sight to feast eyes. Aunty enjoyed the consoling spell of their company.

When Sinnavan had asked for the kitten, the one with the soft black skin to keep it as a pet, aunty could not say no. She, thereafter often inquired the children of Sinnavan about the black kitten. Children who visited her for catching squirrel in the yard.

The she - cat with its yellowish skin, was lying in front of the male - cat in a distance at hand. The male-cat in a scarlet color with an ear halfly torn. The light doomed with smoky dim. The Woven shades of drum - sticks started to fade away, a state of having been all lost in diminishing light. The male - cat buried sand, bouncing with his legs. The sound heard, casting out sand particles.

A crying started to perceive, out of aunty's mind. She cried, she felt herself as if the crying sound akin to her and as if she herself crying. The wonderfulness everlasting, consequent to the experience of hatred. The luster, emerging out of some unwillingness. A meta - humaness made up of filthiness. Everything became very clear to aunty. The drum - stick tree stood ahead, shooting woven shades in a phillotaxy. Tender shootings of drum - stick, one, ten, hundred, alas several hundreds in numbers were dancing like small crawling creatures above aunty's head. She longed for millions and millions of these works to creep all over her body.

Small worms started to appear something like eggs found in pollen. Thanking of worms, aunty got irritated and begun hating. The norms started to grow longer, eating blades of leaves and got collected on the bottom branch of drum-stick tree. Aunty avoided coming to the vicinity in fear of caterpillars. Sinnavan's children used to pick up caterpillars that were hanging from above, with sharpened thin sticks. Aunty, having very fond of these children had prevented them from doing so, with threatening, She had asked Sinnavan to burn those caterpillars with cadjans when he had visited her in search of his cat-cubs, his children. Aunty felt vomiting when she smelt -the bad odour.

At an upward glance, the drum-stick tree meant a lot of things to aunty, she once amazed how courage and bold she was. she was all alone lay under the drum-stick tree at the dead of night.

One day Sinnavan came entering the compound in search of his children. Aunty had a hook, ready to pick some drum-sticks to prepare curry with a favorable dried fish. When Sinnavan wanted to return home, not seeing his children, aunty had asked him to pick some drum-sticks offering the hook. Inhaling the last butt of beedi, Sinnavan had raised the hook and shook the tree with it. Drum-sticks had fallen. No sooner had she started, taking the drum-sticks in hand than she screamed in fear looking at caterpillars. Sinnavan acted rapidly. He immediately ran to the well and collected tender banana leaves. He made her to sit, stretching her knees, Some inches away from the knee-cap, he had noticed something like a fine filament densely stood erected, He had squeezed the banana leaves into his palm and stroked her knee several times.

Aunty's left leg. Lively and unskinny, untouched by any ray of light. On stretching the leg, the knee-cap seemed to be engraved into the shining fleshy part of her leg. Beautiful soft skin with brightening dots in the color of orange, more beautifying. A reddish swelling in a size of one rupee coin was seen on the fleshy part above aunty's knee. He stroked on it applying with his saliva smelt with beedi smoke. Oh, what a relief of heart had it been. She relaxed, she enjoyed sensing pleasant smell of temple flowers bloomed, setting apart the smell of beedi, burnt in the air. Aunty had become a serpent on the temple tree. Aunty had the sensation of the touch emerged out of extreme urge instigated by thousands of caterpillars crawling all over her body.

She was at her wit's end when she had recovered from her senses. Sinnavan gave some drum-sticks to her. Aunty felt a shy of pleasure crowding her mind with thoughts that were understandable only by her. A great relief had surged through her.

She felt like a queen that all limbs of her body touched not even by the king, stirred up. She stood exposing of her womanhood and attracting Sinnavan of his thin moustache on lips and of his projecting handsome chest bones.

She inclined to sense that the life itself is like a pleasant dream at dawn. She winked taking tile floating moon into her eye-lids. Within a second, she fell into the consciousness sensing clearly the essence of life lie beyond millions and millions of age of the universe. She got fascinated with contentment totally disregarding the pain, her body experienced by the extreme fondling caress.

The time was sliding down. The hare-child which Chandamama wanted to jump with, was not to be seen. The hare - kid was seen like a hill at horizon. The uncle-moon who deliver light of water freely, has a scar on his face. Like an appearance of a charming face with scars attacked by small fox.

Seven nymphs at the eastern horizon, started to wink their eyes when the moon lowered. It is so after a long time since the scattered woven shades of leaves, which had covered aunty's body, were displacing, stars started to bloom at the disappearing moon. In a few minutes of time, the morning star would peep up shining, following which, the sound of ATHAN would she listen.

Aunty did not like to remain lying at the tree any more. With the mind loaded heavily, she had pulled the sheet and tightly covered herself. Hearing the stirrings of aunty, the she-cat got up and relieved of her morning laziness. Aunty at once, wanted to see Sinnavan's children and inquire how Sinnavan is. She has got an urge as if flying with fluttering butterflies high and high above.

Translated by: Pon Ganesh

MOTHER

by M. Pushparajan

It was raining outside.

What is the connection between rain and sad memories? Does the sun's heat express the minds? I do not know ... but the minds sadness easily blends with rainy weather...

"Only sad memories remain after coming here."

Even that TV program had brought to the surface his submerged grief.

"Surprise, surprise" was a programme which brought together, without their knowing it, relatives who hadn't met for several years. Since today was parents' day, the programme which had been telecast, had brought parents and their children together in face to face encounters.

How many tears were shed! What turbulent emotions!

Now even the objects in his room seemed to melt in grief...

In a corner of the framed picture opposite stood two coconut trees against a background of massed black clouds pierced by the orange rays of the setting sun. by its side stood a picture of the Mater Dolorosa, her heart, pierced by seven swords, dripping blood.

A heart, filled with dolor, Dolorous mothers.

In that programme, it was Clara who had to bear the burden of the greatest grief. For thirty years she had been separated from her son. When she described her son, her eyes filled with tears and her lips trembled, manifesting the turbulence of her grief. When he came in front of her accompanied by her daughter-in-law, grand-sons and grand-daughter even in her feeble state she rose tottering, opening wide her arms to embrace them.

That was a sight which made tears well up in his eyes and sigh deeply.

"How is it that they can live without seeing their mothers?
Wouldn't they have met each other if not for this programme ...?"

He looked at the picture of his mother on the table.

After the mass on New Year's day everywhere people were wearing new clothes. In the streets, blanketed by a slight dew, and strewn with exploded fire – crackers, youngsters could be seen lighting bundles of fire – crackers, one after the other; the smell of exploded fire – crackers in the wind.

The new clothes making a crackling sound, the men would go, accompanied by their wives and children to visit mother. It was only after that they would visit their relatives. This was the unwritten law for the entire village on New Year's Day. There were exceptions to this rule too, with some families being divided. On this day, those who had married against their parent's wishes, were reunited with their parents too.

Even after he had married, he was in the habit of going to his mother's house daily. If for two days running, he didn't visit his mother, she would be upset. Thinking he had fallen ill, the very next day she would come to his house.

A mother's love was universal, something which transcended race, country and frontiers. Circumstances had flung each one to different parts of the world.

Several writers were blessed because they had made it their wont to bury in their hearts the griefs of several mothers.

"How many children are looked after by a mother! But all those children are unable to look after and maintain a mother."

He couldn't remember where he had come across this quotation. But he remembered being struck by lightning as it were when he had read it.

The three hopper chatties were arranged in a semi circle. On the right were three pots with wide mouths containing different kinds of batter. There was a small pot containing coconut milk on the left. There was a chulaku on top of a kadakam in the middle. There was a small adukkupetti to hold the money collected. This was Ritamma's hopper shop.

From early in the morning she would bake hoppers in the unswept compound of the house littered with fallen poovarsu leaves and arrange them in the chulku or place them in the ola backsets of those who had come to buy hoppers.

The fire and the heat together with the smoke emitted by the coconut husks made her fair complexioned face redder, they made her eyes sting and sweat run down her body. She would frequently wipe the sweat from her face with the fold of her saree. Sometimes she would be breast feeding his four year old sister lying on her lap.

On the days when sales were slack he would have to arrange the hoppers in the chulakhu and take them to the sea-shore for sale and then go to school: there were days on which he was punished for being late to school.

When he returned home at noon from school, his mother would be sleeping on the floor or the hall without even a pillow for her head. Her head would be resting on her folded hand ... her dishevelled hair partly covering her face.

The fowls would have scattered the scraped coconut which had been stuffed into a vessel after the milk had been squeezed out the scraped coconut shells would be lying in heaps. And water split everywhere.

There was no need to go into the kitchen. Scratching his head he would start walking towards his junior Perriyamma's house.

Before sunset, she would start pounding the rice. He would be seated on the steps memorizing the arithmetic tables. As the mortar, a sibilant sound issued from her. Even as he memorized the tables he would note how he pounded rice without spilling out of the mortar, gradually up with the pestle, her shrunken stomach shrunk still more.

It was of his regular duties in the evening to collect the money due from those who had bought hoppers in the morning on credit. "Tomorrow" was the general reply he used to receive. They did not perhaps realize that the purchase of some items needed for the night meal depended on the recovery of this credit.

It seemed to him that the dogs in the houses where he went to collect the money waited for him to appear to start barking. Was it hostility arising from a past birth? While going to mass early in the morning he was more frightened of the dogs sleeping on the roads than the darkness. They began to growl as if they had been waiting to hear his footsteps. Some came towards him, barking and he would cry out 'Aiyo! Amma!': this had happened several times. He would avoid going alone down that street; he would wait for others who were going for mass and, without their knowledge, join them in going to church. Frequently, he would look back.

Whenever he refused to go to houses where there were dogs, his mother would say "for your sake, I am eating fire but you are reluctant to do such a small thing."

Before she could break a poovarasu stick, he would fly from the house. Generally the night meal was ready very late: when it was ready, sometimes the neighborhood would be slumbering. On moonlit nights the village would be bustling and out-of-doors. He would be studying seated in front of the lamp. His younger brother would be sleeping, with his head lying on his open school books. When his younger brother was waken up to have his night meal, he would stare and fall asleep in front of his tin plate: he would have to be beaten into taking his meal.

The sound of flour being kneaded and beaten into shape in the Chula and the sound of coconuts being broken and arranged could be heard as he lay down. When, at midnight he was awakened by the sound of those setting out to sea calling out to one another, he could hear the sound of coconuts being scraped.

Hoppers had to be supplied, for sale, to the teashop some distance away from their house. As soon as the Angelus bell rang, he had to arrange the hoppers in pairs in the basket and take them. His mother would escort him as it was dark. The street lights mingled with the darkness to make the street appear twilit. Those who were setting out to sea carried long wooden poles and nets on their shoulders. The sight of people moving about abated his fear somewhat. His mother would stop some distance away from the shop lit brightly by petromax lamps: he would head alone towards the shop.

In the evenings when he collected the unsold hoppers and was returning home he would feel troubled, thinking about his mother. But the unsold hoppers quite often served as their night meal.

He gazed once again at his mother's picture: she was seated in a chair beside a flower vase, her hands on her thighs, lips pressed firmly together to overcome her camera shyness. This picture had been specially taken to be sent to him after he had come to London.

"Mother does not know how to appear natural. It was her nature to ensure that others did not find fault with her. When her mother died it was she who insisted that the body be draped beautifully in a saree so that there would be no detractors."

Achchi was dressed beautifully and her body placed in a coffin decorated with tussels. The hands and feet were covered with white socks. The hands, enclosed in socks, were on her chest, a rosary, studded with sapphires, between her intertwined fingers. Two big lit candles were placed on either side of the head. His mother stood crying amidst the candles, driving away the flies trying to settle on the face.

In the pandal set up in the outer compound, grown-up men were singing opparis while on the verandah archis from the neighborhood were listening - some of them in the pose of the recumbent Buddha - and talking among themselves.

It was his mother who was most affected by achchi's death. It was with achchi's help that on several nights they had their night meal.

"Don't injure the bellies of the young ones" he could still hear achchi's admonishing voice. Achchi dealt in dried fish: one of the curing sheds on the seashore belonged to achchi.

After achchi's death, they used to go always to junior periamma's house for their lunch.

Now his mother began to suddenly break into sobs. On the days she wanted to go to the church of Our Lady of Miracles, she would be always crying. He could not fathom whether she was reciting her prayers or talking with our mother while crying.

He would look at the lit melting candles in front of the statues. He was very fond of moulding the slightly warm melted wax. As he went round collecting the melted wax he could see tears in the eyes of the praying mothers, seated here and there.

He had received knocks on the head from his mother, for getting up like this and walking around in the church.

One night while she was in the kitchen, she had called him.

"If I die you must see to it that like Achchi I go in splendour" she said.

Achchi's coffin is placed in the horse-drawn hearse. Heading the procession are three small boys dressed in alter-servers' clothes. The boy in the middle carries a long cross. The boy by his side carries a small bell in his hand, which he rings from time to time. In the middle of the two rows of mourners is the church sacristan reciting prayers. Behind the horse-drawn hearse are the children and the grand-children.

The body was laid to rest in a new tomb in the graveyard. Most of the tombs stand proudly, bearing statues; some are mere bare structures; some tombs are in ruins. In the middle are mounds of earth covered with patti flowers and shrubs, obliterating all traces of those buried there.

He looks again at his mother's picture. The smile behind the pursed lips seem to be mocking him now...

He had flopped onto his bed and lay there for a long time, tears wetting his ears.

Only after the alms-giving had the news of his mother's death reached him. He had been having a bath then, after returning from work. The sound of someone knocking at the door.

"Who is it?"

"It's me, Finish your bath and come quick."

It was Thasan's voice. When I came out of the bathroom, in a daze, Thasan patted me on the shoulder and embraced me. I understood then.

"This happens to everyone."

"When did it happen?"

"I don't know. They had told someone who was going to Colombo. They had told my wife... dry yourself."

He had gone into the room, dried his hair and lay down on the bed.

"Your mother has oral cancer, it seems. Here there is always fighting and shelling. No medicines are available. They have told us to take her to Colombo. With the help of the Red Cross, she has been taken to Pt. Pedro and from there they have taken her by ship to Colombo. Your periyamma's daughter has accompanied her."

His wife's letter made him tremble. In the days when, while going to work, he talked to his pariyakka on the phone, his mother came on the line one day... her voice completely changed... the words indistant and quavering.

"Thamby"

"Amma – what's happened to your voice?"

"They used current on the koduppu... son, when I talk I feel pain." Her crying could be clearly heard over the phone.

"Amma". His voice quavered and he couldn't speak a word.

"Son, why are you crying?"

The tears on his lips tasted saltish.

"Thamby".

"Mm..."

"We are planning to go home. If by chance, something happens to your mother, you'll come, won't you?"

"Mmmm..." he said in a faint voice. After that he couldn't hear anything said over the phone.

It wasn't even one year since he had come to the U.K. The thought of the huge sum he had run up as a debt to get here frightened him; on the other hand, there were rumours that all the refugees would be expelled. In his anxiety to settle the debt, the moment he finished one job he took the 'tube', when that job was over he took the 'bus', frantically scurrying from one job to the other...

"What, have you gone to sleep? Come along, come along."

There was a bottle of whisky in Thasan's room.

He staggered into the room and fell on the bed. He felt as if he should cry out aloud "Amma, Amma". There were people in the adjoining rooms. Soundlessly, he wept for amma.

Two months later he received his wife's letter.

"To the last your mother kept on asking whether you would come."

Tears welled up in his eyes; he couldn't read further.

"Till your mother was buried, there was no bombing or shelling by the Armed Forces that itself was a great thing. They buried your mother in your father's tomb. The funeral house proceeding have been photo-

graphed. When the pictures are developed, I'll send them.

He immediately wrote a letter asking her not to send the photos.

"Even after thirty years, the son was able to meet his mother Clara."

Outside there was no blowing. Whenever the rain-drops struck them, the wet leaves drooped and rose again.

Translated by A.J.Canagaratna.

SNAKES

By: Amritha A.M.

It appeared to me that Sasi's house is situated somewhere on a desertlike sandy stretch where, in the mid-night, cool wind blows and in the days, rays of hope from the Sun reflect on the clouds and touch the Earth. The cool wind of the calm fullmoon gently touched my body and reinforced that idea. A brinjal garden, tractor - garrage, paddy-store, mango trees, coconut palms, arecanut palms, a kennel for dogs and a flower garden lined the white, sandy court - yard of his huge house. On the white sand, long black snakes were chasing after small black rats. When the wind blew heavily the snakes and the rats dissolved into the air. When the wind blew heavily the snakes and the rats dissolved into the air. When the leaves reappeared the chase continued. Again and again the chase got continuing. Both before and after the chases, when the rats multiplied in number, the snakes in turn multiplied too. The chases became struggle of life. The fittest lived either by surviving the struggle or by turning the back to it. Then, becoming everything, the supportive and the accustomed-to-bear-all-burdens nature triumphantly selected the snake-rat chases. The rats too kept on running, putting the burden on the wind and the moon. The snake-and-the ladder game kept continuing. The rats, in their life-struggle got bitter by the snakes, climbed a span up and slid a cubit down. The firm-minded rats too, continued in their efforts to escape the odd. The life-shadow was dissolving away on the platforms of dark expanse. While my glance was still deepening on the white-sand-modern-art court-yard I began to realize one aspects of life.

Black is sorrow, hatred. It is in some kind of Dracula nights, the nights haunted with the howling of jackals that come piercing the mid-night, that this black, cloud-like darkness begins to shroud the moon and create fear about the mid-night. I look at the moon-light and try to discern whether the object in the moon is an old woman or a hare. The hare fails. Today the sea will flow overwhelmingly and the fishermen will keep their boats and canoes a bit away from the shore. The sea, wearing a sari with golden border, a 'pottu' of moon-size on the fore head and silver flowers on the flowing hair will appear like a 'sumangali'.

Both the sea and the moon are women, then, why does the sea roar that much? Contemplating on this I looked at the wrist. It was five minuets past ten o'clock. Sasi came and sat on a chair beside me. "Sasi, if both the sea and the moon are females why then only the sea is turbulent on full moon days?" I asked. "The linear pull attracts each other, it seems" he said. It is on a fullmoon day that the snake would start to devour the moon-woman and eject venom. Thinking, that this is one such fullmoon day and likening the turbulence of the sea to the wailing of the sea-woman by beating the breast and the stomach, I looked at Sasi. It is customary that the nightmares about snakes originate during night hours.

At that juncture, I saw the boy from the neighbouring house came running along the foot path that linked the two plots calling "Sasi, Sasi". "What happened?" asked Sasi slightly perturbed. "Something must have stung amma, she's groaning out of pain" replied the boy. At once Sasi and I dashed to amma's house. There, she looks healthier than we expected. Usually, I would go through Amma's plot to get to Sasi's house. That is a short cut too. Whenever I went there she would greet me with a blooming face. Though she is not a relation to me I usually called her amma. I look at amma's face, the severity of pain began to show in her face.

"Amma, what happened? I asked "I lay down here to sleep and felt as though something stinging me. It's

paining, but it will be all right," said amma. "Let me see the spot" I tried to have a close look at it. There were two pin prick-like marks. I immediately understood what might have happened. At once I beckoned to amma's son to take her to the adjacent room, disclosing the fact that she has been bitten by a snake, telling her other son that the snake is somewhere around here and asking him to search for it and kill it or catch it alive, failing that, at least to find out its-species, I rushed with Sasi to Kovindan annan's house to fetch an auto.

You might know Kovindan annan. He is the one who rushed those twelve victims, to hospital, few of them with brain dashed out and limbs severed, of the brutal shelling last month in the neighbouring village, making three trips without charging even a single cent and saved the life of ten of them. Last week it was the same Kovindan annan who took to hospital as asthmatic Muslim women who came to Kanesh "parisariyar"² for treatment, saved her life and provided her meals without accepting a single cent. One day in the midnight when the case of taking a pregnant woman to hospital was abandoned by others for fear of the pile of sand sags barbedwire fence he was the one who, braving the odd, took her to hospital for her maiden delivery and saved both hers and the baby's life by threatening the lazy and undutiful nurses that their names would be published in the daily for neglect of duty. All this he did without accepting even a single cent. It is certain that he would have saved several; campus students by taking them to hospital in the night. Kovindan annan is really the James Bond of that area. As we all knew snake-mongoose fight would often take place in the forest. It is the mongoose, though received several bites from snakes, that would defeat and kill the snake in the end. Then the mongoose would run in search of a medicinal herb, an antidote for snake venom to eat it and save his life. Finally, the mongoose would identify the herb by seeing humanism in the root and courage in the boughs. I hope Kovindan annan also must be knowing about this life-saving tree.

Calling "annan", "annan" I patted on the gate of Kovindan annan. Shouting in reply, annan comes out. He studies my face through a shocktinged smile. No sooner I told him the matter that the auto pulled at amma's house with a lantern.

I went near amma and called her out. "mm" she replied in a low voice. Her eyes were rolled up. The head wobbled when I held it and fell aside. I guess it is the work of cobra or 'karuvalalai' that belongs to family Elaphidae. "Have you found out the snake?" I, asked "no" came the answer. I closely examined the mat amma slept on. It struck me that something was under the mat. "Sasi, come here, I'll lift the mat quietly you give a blow on its head O.K.". Sasi got ready and I lifted the mat. The beautiful black snake that bit amma was peacefully sleeping, coiled, on the spot where exactly amma's head was. The snake had spoon-shaped head and a body of shining black skin like that of 'sungan'⁴ fish with workings in ash black lines on it. It is 'Kandan Karuvalalai' unmistakably. It's zoological name is 'Bangarus Ceylonensis'. Sasi and I had sweet relationships with venomous snakes like these. We have caught and collected a number of venomous snakes for our department museum. Sasi landed a heavy blow on the snake's head, put it into a tissue bag and took it to the auto.

Amma, Sasi, snake, Kovindan annan and I sped to hospital in the auto, On our way past Krishnan Kovil, white-sand triple junction and the University Campus, an anthill began to loom out among the pile of sandbags and barbed-wire fences. It was partly sympathetic and partly ridiculous to think about the anthill. what a pity. the whit-ants make the cells and snakes occupy them. White ants are creature of social life. Picking granules of sand little by little by their tiny mouth, ejecting saliva drop by drop and rolling the sand into tiny clods of mud they make these wonderful structures to establish the kingdom of their own.

While they run their kingdoms happily with their wives and children the anthills will be encroached and the ants will be ousted. It seemed that all the anthills found along the winding road would have been formed in the same way. Now, there was not a single sign of life on the road except for us and the noise of cicadas in the background. As soon as we reached hospital, if we told the doctor that Common krait had bitten her, he would administer one vial of anti-venom serum mixed with ten milliliters of saline or ten vials of distilled water into amma's body by injection and soon she come back to life. For this to happen we should get to hospital quickly. But we cannot. Instead of hundred meters we will have to detour one and a half kilometers down the rough and dusty by-route full of craters and mounds and stones. One will have to take 10 minutes instead of 10 seconds to get to the place. It so happened one day that when a victim of snake-bite and those who accompanied him came to the village where the 'Coconut Research Center' is, and waited in front of the anthill they were all killed by that venom which came dashing with a great noise like a fire-bowl

from the nearby anthill. Likewise, on another occasion a woman of full pregnancy who was wriggling out of pain in a bullock-cart in front of such an anthill was stung dead and safe deliver followed.

The same thing happened to snake-bite victims on their way to hospital on bullock-carts from 'paduvan Karai' villages, west to the Base Hospital which is seventeen kms South to my campus. In the end, they all died pathetically, either with their heart or the nervous system affected due to snake-bite.

How many of us in the world know about the anthills of King Cobras looked after by the King? What is there in this world that is more brutal than this? Who said there are no King Cobras in this country? Protection was not given to four families of venomous snakes under the act number 49 of 1993. But the king cobras were empowered by the act of 1982 to become kings and Gods.

They become Kings and gods by governing and by giving and taking the lives of people at the desired time. King Cobras are worshiped too. Snakes are nocturnal creature. Forming into small groups, they would impose unofficial curfews on their own during the night. If we happened to go near the anthill they would bite for sure.

Now our auto stops in front of the piles of sand bags round the anthill. Stepping down from the auto with a lantern, I walk up to the outer circle of sand-bag piles. Putting out the head-light Kovindan annan follows me driving the auto very slowly. But one should not do like this. First, someone should get to the spot with lantern, explain the matter, prove his identity and finally convince them. But it is an exception with Kovindan annan if the matter cries haste. That is personality. It was terrifying to get nearer and nearer the anthill.

Halting the auto, Kovindan annan came to me, got the lantern from me and called out in a different language. Despite the repeated calls not a single snake came out sometimes the snakes might have thought it was the mongoose that called them. Because they could easily sense the differences between mongoose and non-mongoose. "We must take amma to hospital without any delay" I hastened Kovindan annan. I have studied that there are four families of venomous snakes in this country and collected specimens of them for our department museum. It was at the famous Medical College in the capital that I knew all about these snakes in detail. One day I cut off the head of the caste-snake that bit amma once boiled it in the solution of potassium hydroxide and pulled out its fangs. It looked like a boomerang made of fishbone. Cobra's is a bit longer but for vipers it is more curved than that of others. How many beautiful snakes in how many different colours. Indeed, snakes have numerous weapons, some spherical, some long and some others curved in shape to attack their enemies. There are small snakes in red colour with black stripes, there are sand-coloured ones, curved, coiled end eel-tailed with spots like that of a leopard. There are those that have triangular head and yellow skin on the side with working of irregular squares tinted in black and white. What about the sand-coloured ones with spoon-shaped head; their shining black skin, like that of 'sungan fish' will have light black stripes. There is another kind which is camouflaged with green colour tinged with light yellow and having humped nose. One cannot say that kind from the branch or the leaves of a tree. Of all the exotic things I saw, so far, the one that I like most is the dilated hoods of a snake. How true is the saying that one requires million eyes to see the gracefulness of cobra dancing with its dilated hood. The zoological name in Latin is *Naja naja naja*; perhaps may be the abbreviation of na-ga-ra-ja. Cobra is the only snake that shines in the show business without any loss.

Hissing violently, throwing fiery glance and looking here and there, flinging the forked tongue out, like the dough for rotti pressed against the rotti plate by a bottle it would dilate its hood and dance. It would curve the body, bend backward, rise up a bit and dance. The dilated hood of it would look like the shoe-cactus minus prickles. we wear a pair of black glasses at the front but a cobra does it the other way. It wears them at the back. The central part of the hood would be neither flat nor spherical but a little elongated and would look as though fastened with a slender black belt from top to down. From the edge to the center black rhombus-shaped scaled with red center would cover the hood on all four sides in three columns. The fire-bowl eyes would look both straight in front and side-ways at the same time. Scales like that of a crocodile would cover the upper surface of the nose on the upper jaw between the two eyes. When a cobra flung its forked tongue out and opened its mouth wider it would remind us of a baby with tender red lips. Below the tongue would open a cavity into the throat and two others on either side of the forked tongue. The upper jaw would hide within it the pair of fangs. A cobra opening its mouth is really beautiful to see. What is beauty? Is it the colour? The combination of colours? or the symmetry? There in danger too in beauty and beauty too in danger.

Snakes don't bit people purposely and end their lives. Instead they give life to them. Even now it is the snakes that human families at Alikambe, Thampane and at other places. If snakes don't dance on the streets just think how many families will be on the streets. It is the snakes that destroy the evil insects, farmer-hostile rodents and various other pests and maintain balance in the ecosystem. If we trample on them while walking or move our legs or toes while sleeping, out of fear, they will lunge, plunge the fangs deep into the flesh, hook into it and then inject venom into us as an act of defense. In our country there are only four families of snakes which causes death. It is not true that snake-bites are incurable. Wrong first aids and lack of knowledge about the treatments for snake-bites are the main causes for deaths. It is in Sri Lanka that the death rate of snake-bite is the highest. Two deaths per day. Only two? What a comparison. It is we who should be careful about the snakes. Snakes don't only look graceful by their shapes or dilated hoods.

Had Bharathi lived today he would have sung as follows:

A snake in khaki hue
 Another in deep blue
 One in dark green
 One with stripes on the skin
 In the thicket one
 An in the busy city another
 Whatever the colour they bear
 At biting they are same everywhere
 Their fangs do deadly venom bred
 And end the lives of people indeed.

Now, there comes toward us, a snake in green with limbs, crawling through the hole of sand bags and dilating its great hoods of hat. at that moment, in the last minute brightness of the dying flame of the lantern as though blown off by a sudden gust of wind, foaming at the mouth, eyes rolling up, the body turning bluish and the chest heaving amma drew her last breath. the snake that bit amma in the full moon light lay peacefully in the tissue bag. One of the snakes that killed amma began to speak now.

Translated by: T. Kirupakaran

Literary Review Quiet epiphanies

INDRAN AMIRTHANAYAGAM responds to a translated collection of short stories and poems from Sri Lanka.

THIS book, Lutesong and Lament, has fermented in the mind of this reader; become potent, made me drunk.

As I leaf through and through these pages, I search for a missing link, the answer to a riddle that is the Tamil diaspora. I think of that old phrase, the great chain of being. What binds the poets and writers of Jaffna, Oslo, Toronto, Chennai? Who are these Tamilians drafting deft, understated sketches in poetry and prose of a strife that has pulled the chain around and around the globe? I recall in an early poem describing the "boys" as creeping by night through the silent lanes of Jaffna to board the first craft of the young wood called Eelam. I note at least one writer in these pages, who conversed with that same sabre-toothed beast, broke bread on the young wood, and then moved from safe house to safe house with eyes in the back of his head trained to spot and avoid tigers.

I have observed the Sri Lankan scene from a middle distance, eventually giving up my passport and espousing fully my now American identity. Yet, this lute song and lament transport me towards Elephant Pass and the mysteries beyond. I see them from the starting gun in Colombo where I was born and began to run. I gaze at them from the hybrid and thriving melting pots of London and New York where the attempts to lose oneself and forget island battles can succeed at least for a time.

Yet, I have now come back from these travels to take up residence in Chennai, an hour away from Colombo by plane. What, and for whom, are these laments? For killing the Buddha in "Murder" by M.A. Nuhman

(trans. S. Pathmanathan):

Last night

I dreamt

Buddha was shot dead

by the police,

guardians of the law.

For Christ crucified among palmyrahs and sea crows in "Exile Days" by P. Akilan (trans. S. Canagarajah)

Good Friday

The day they crucified you.

A hot wind

blew between shore and sea

One or two sea crows

flew in the immaculate sky.

The wind grating the palmyrah trees

whipped up inexpressible horror

That was the last day in our village...

And what of the lute songs? There is lyricism in Serendip, "Faster, my dear carter, faster/, let's head for the new town / Before night falls / Faster, my dear, faster," writes Nilaavanan (trans. A J. Canagaratna).

There's a wonderful panoply of voices here; and although I turn naturally to poetry and unnaturally away from prose, I find a number of stories that deserve to be praised. Praise not for startling imagery or an arresting prose style, but rather for understatement and concurrent achievement of small and quiet epiphanies. I think especially of A. Muttulingam's "Butterflies" (trans. S. Rajasingam). And I wonder if the chaste reserve I have noticed in the stories comes from the same sober Tamil personality that must have been startled by the appearances of guerrillas in palmyrah groves not to mention soldiers in helicopter gunship and armoured convoys.

"Butterflies" relates the story of a lepidopterist who has sought a visa to enter the United States. The first time he applies saying that he wants to look at butterflies. Ten years later he tries again, saying he hopes to visit a nephew. Koneswaran had forgotten that there is a computer in the American Embassy.

The information he had given in his first application was safely stored in it. The computer, like an astrologer, compares the information given in the second application with that of the first and finds they do not match.

Koneswaran is timid, a character familiar to sleepy Southern towns, perhaps a cousin of some resident of Malgudi. And he is patient. Finally, after 20 years, he visits a consul again and this time receives a visa and sets off to study the monarch butterfly during its annual migration through the U.S.

Koneswaran is drawn from life. He is a professor of mathematics. He has a job. Lepidoptery is his passion, the hobby that leads him out of class in the middle of the day in front of bemused students while chasing a rare butterfly that happened to fly in and out of the window. Koneswaran is also married but rather unaware of his wife's needs and wishes. The butterfly dominates. Yet she appears to understand - or rather, accept - her husband's whims. Eventually, Koneswaran goes to a sanctuary south of San Francisco where he sees the red and black-winged monarch butterflies hanging thickly on the branches. For the first time in his life, he will not take a specimen. He has reached a kind of nirvana and is walking, he believes, in holy

land. He meditates on these butterflies who do not require visas for their migration. One butterfly even kisses his left eyebrow.

Koneswaran returns to the car and falls asleep and goes "to that land where no visa is required." Sentiment and sentimentalism. Beauty and mawkishness. Fine lines separate them. Muttulingam stays safely on the side of sentiment and beauty. The same can be said for most of this rich collection. In some cases, the sentiment is harsh and difficult the reading. I think of Sivaramani, who committed suicide in 1991, and wrote in "Humiliation" (trans. Chelva Kanaganayakam):

Behind the bars

of your laws

I cannot be held;

from your muddy

permanence

I am a stone

reclaimed.

That year, I met Cheran for the first time and recall going with him to a memorial service for Sivaramani. I had come back to Sri Lanka to find another talent cut down early, a common item in the island nation's letters. Two other major poets did not reach 40. One succumbed to the undertow near Mount Lavinia, the great Lakdasa Wikkramasinha. The other washed up on shore, Sri Lanka's legendary actor and one of its strongest poets. Richard de Zoysa. De Zoysa was murdered.

Wikkramasinha drowned in the 1960s. Death by water. Death by fire. Death by poison. Sri Lankan poetry and landscapes are filled with disappearances. Cheran has gone away to Canada. Some poets have insisted on braving the hardships of terrorism and war while staying at home. The lute is played and the lament sung even more fiercely by those who have gone away. Cheran writes in "Meeting and Parting":

These separate us :

Long mountain ranges,

a rainbow,

an invisible sun

endlessly falling

winter rain,

the proud light

of my dark face.

These unite us:

The heartbeat of waves,

an endless telephone wire

which falls across continents and oceans)

and,

too frightened to question the future,

a tender heart.

(trans. Lakshmi Holmstrom)

This collection, published in Canada, is the labor of Chelva Kanaganayakam who has written a perceptive introductory essay and contributed some of the translations. The translations have now traveled most of the way back and sit with me at my desk in Chennai, less than an hour by plane from Jaffna.

Lute song and Lament: Tamil Writing from Sri Lanka, edited by Chelva Kanaganayakam TSAR, p. 171, S23.95.

The writer is Consul for Public Affairs at the American Consulate General, Chennai. He is a poet who writes in English and Spanish and his latest book Ceylon R.I.P has just been published in Sri Lanka.

AYATHURAI SANTHAN: IN THEIR OWN WORLDS

(S. GODAGE AND BROTHERS).

The bilingual writer has been a rare phenomenon in Sri Lankan culture. As far as I know, there has been nobody at all who has written creatively in both Sinhala and Tamil. But even the number of people who have written with any distinction in either Sinhala and English or Tamil and English can probably be counted on the fingers of one hand.

Ayathurai Santhan is a recent newcomer to this select group. The Jaffna-based literary critic, A.J. Canagaratna says of him in the introduction he has contributed to the new collection: 'He began writing short stories in his mother tongue, Tamil, and then later transcreated them into English. Now he writes both in Tamil and in English.' Distinguishing Santhan from previous Tamil writers in English such as Alagu Subramaniam and Rajah Proctor, Canagaratna says, 'The latter were educated in the English medium during the heyday of British rule. Santhan is a product of the post - independence era when the mother tongue was the medium of education'.

Since I was myself brought up under the linguistic apartheid that has divided our two communities, I can't attempt any comparison between Santhan's writing in Tamil and in English. But his new collection shows that he's a writer who uses the genre of the short story in an individual way. Nearly all the stories are very short indeed, as will be evident from the fact that in this slim volume of 80 pages there are 24 stories. In length, these stories are comparable to the popular magazine or newspaper story, but that's all they have in common with that mode of writing. Santhan doesn't build his stories on the surprising twist as the final resolution of the plot - the stock-in-trade of the popular magazine-story writer - nor is there any element of sensationalism in his writing. Where, as in some of his stories, the ending is unexpected, it isn't because the writer has held back some secret element of the plot in order to spring it on us at the end. Instead, the effect of many of his endings is to reveal some facet of human character or behavior that we have probably not foreseen. Thus, in 'Fellow Traveler' Ragu, taking a train journey with his wife, is disturbed by the fact that the old man in the corner isn't eating breakfast, as everybody else in the compartment is doing. Ragu even puts off having his own breakfast although he is hungry. When the old man takes a parcel out of his bag, Ragu is momentarily satisfied, but it turns out to be only some betel and lime paste. But it's the concluding sentence of the story that rounds it off in a way that is unexpected. When the old man ultimately gets off the train, what Ragu feels is relief.

There's a sharper edge to the conclusion of the story titled 'The Worry'. Siva feels guilty because it's four days since he heard that Sella was in hospital and he hasn't been to see him, although he's a good man to whom Siva is much obliged. He finally makes it to the ward, carrying a kilo of grapes and a packet of biscuits, goes to bed 14, where he has been told Sella should be, but he isn't. Then he tries the other section of the ward, but Sella isn't there either. Finally the patient in the next bed tells him,

"Oh, he?...yes, he was on that bed. But he was alright and he was discharged yesterday. He has gone home." 'Alright? Gone home? What a pity!' said Siva.

As one may see from these two examples, what is characteristic of Santhan's writing is the quiet, sympathetic, but often gently ironic, contemplation of life and human behavior. The characters who are in the foreground of these stories have no major villainies or heroisms; it's their small egoisms but also the little expressions of empathy or compassion of some of them that engage his attention. Like that of Vasu paying seven rupees for the small globe he buys at a pavement stall when he could have had it for six because he is touched by the child 'who must have come straight from school to look after this shop'. But there's no over sweetening sentimentality in the story; Vasu's friend Giri who accompanies him bursts out laughing in the last line.

As is natural in the work of a Tamil writer today, several of the stories are set in contemporary war-ravaged Jaffna. Reading them, I was reminded of the title of a book that the English poet Edmund Blunden wrote about his experiences in the First World War, *Undertones of War*. In Santhan's book, too, war is present in undertones and not in fortissimos and crescendos. However, this doesn't make them any the less effective in bringing home to the reader the quality of life in a place where the risks of destruction and death are constantly present. Rather, his very indirection and his avoidance of any forcing of the emotional tone enhance the strength of these stories.

In 'The Cuckoos' House', the unnamed character, anxious about the fate of his house under the continual shelling, bursts into sobbing when the tree that had been 'a multi-storied house' for the cuckoos is being felled. In 'An Endless Journey' the lonely rider on the motor-bike, looking forward to reunion with his friends and relations, is terrified by a helicopter which he believes is closing in on him. In 'Health is a Luxury' Siva starts laughing when his friend Bala, who has been an expatriate for ten years, tells him that he shouldn't have roofed his house with asbestos because it's bad for the health. In 'Life's like that' there's a sudden wave of panic, and people start vanishing off the street and shops put up their shutters, and then by the time Mani finds a bus, the alarm is over and life starts moving again. In these stories, like all of Santhan's, the narrative makes its point without obtruding authorial judgment.

The collection could, however, have benefited from some editorial care in production. There are occasional roughnesses in the text that should have been smoothed out; the introduction in several places has 'form' for 'from' and 'from' for 'form', which seems to be the outcome of typesetting from a handwritten manuscript; and there are throughout oddities in the setting out of matter on the page. I make these points not for the sake of nitpicking, but because I think the book was worthy of more attention in production.

Regi Siriwardena

IN THEIR OWN WORLDS :

SANTHAN'S PORTRAYAL OF PEOPLE'S LIVES THROUGH FLASH FICTION

Kandiah Shriganeshan

Santhan, a Tamil writing in Tamil and English has recently published his second collection titled 'In their own worlds'. It portrays much of the problems of the contemporary Tamil society vividly. An Engineering Technician by profession and a visiting lecturer of the Jaffna Technical College, he started writing in Tamil since his school days at Manipay Hindu College. With his varied experience he was able to sketch his experience both as a Tamil and as a human being. He has published seven collections of short stories, a novel and a travelogue in Tamil and one titled 'The Sparks' in English.

A writer of the people, Santhan is well known for his brevity.

Santhan won the prestigious Sahitya Academy prize in 1975 for his short story collection in Tamil titled 'Oru Oru Oorile'. He secured many other prizes including a consolation prize for his essay on world peace in 1986. Though his Tamil stories appeared in translation (done by others) in esteemed magazines like the "Illustrated Weekly of India", it was in recent times that Santhan embarked on writing originally in English. His first collection was 'The Sparks' released in 1990. In this collection, nine out of ten stories are transcreations, according to A.J. Canagaratne and the other one is written originally in English. Some of his works appeared in local magazines and newspapers viz, 'Channels' Vol.III (Life is like that), Channels V (An Endless Journey), the Island (The Globe), the Daily news (The source and The Habitat), the 'Third Eye' 5&6 (The Cuckoo's bird and The Demeatagoda refugee and Health is a Luxury respectively).

Having been introduced to Marxism and experienced in living with Russians for sometimes in Russia, he broadened his outlook in relation to human and political affairs. He started writing about ethnic issues of Sri Lanka in a clear perspective. His knowledge of Sinhala and Russian helped him to understand human issues at different planes. This led him to look at his own community's plight with a keen insight. He was acclaimed for his foresight in relation to the ethnic issue in Sri Lanka through his Tamil short stories.

One of the very promising contemporary writers in Tamil, he also won many a favourable criticism for his writing. Suresh Canagarajah comments:

"Even very simple matter-of-fact experiences of daily life are used by Santhan as subject for his stories, and in his masterly hands these casual incidents emerge as worthwhile experience." (Saturday Review 19-02-1983).

He further illustrates that Santhan has a dramatic style and projects his experience with a sense of balance. His use of casual conversational prose and colloquial dialogue make his writing in Tamil very readable. The situations are taken from realistic settings. He always detaches himself from his writing and sketches his characters and incidents from a human rather than a Tamil point of view. His complex judgments are critical of the Tamil as well.

One of Santhan's literary mates Mr.Pon.Poologasingam comments on his writing as follows;

"No doubt, A. Santhan is one of our finest writers with a unique contribution of his both in form as well as in themes." (The Present writers, The Daily News, 150397)

Prof. K.Sivathamby has this to say in his criticism on 'The Sparks' which appeared in the 'The Third Eye'.

"Santhan is an important name in the post-1970 Sri Lankan Tamil writing with due recognition of his capabilities in neighboring Tamil Nadu."

He adds:

"These ten stories are indeed sparks of humanness that light up the rather 'gloomy' overcast background in which the characters live and move. Santhan's characteristic is the very conciseness (if not the shortness) of his short stories, which by deft handling of dramatic irony brings out in a rather telling manner the 'human situation'. (Third Eye, Volume four, Dec1996).

The writing in English enables non-Tamil readers to get a glimpse of the agonies of contemporary Tamil existence in war-torn Northern Sri Lanka. Santhan is able to depict the pathetic plight of people in the throes of war. Sivathamby goes on to say that Santhan never tries to moralize on the events described in his stories, or uphold any particular ideology. Rather than describing in a pompous style he chooses very casual narration which suits the realistic setting. It might be the result of the impact the Russian writers have had on Santhan. Or is Santhan unconsciously following the style of famous parable writers?

There is a human touch in Santhan's writing, embracing the down-trodden whether they are Tamil or Sinhalese. He is large hearted enough not to be biased against the Sinhalese in his treatment of ethnic issue. He speaks for justice. He is able to narrate incidents without being sentimental at the same time he is able to communicate the pathos of the situation. The detached mood he adopted gives enough scope for him to handle the situation / episode with a reasonable judgment.

Minerva press accepted Santhan's short stories for publication. The publisher hails 'In their own world' as an impressive collection of short stories that depicts the lives of the people living in war-torn Northern Sri Lanka. (A letter from Allison Thomas of 99.) Chelva Canaganayam, a Sri Lanka-born professor of English at Toronto University, Canada, in a letter to the writer points out that Santhan has the rare capacity to capture moments of intensity through understatement. (1997) Prof. D.C.R.A.Goonetilleke has this to say about A. Santhan when he writes about the flowering of Sri Lanka English literature:

"A Santhan has become a major writer of short stories in both Tamil & English."

He further comments on his stories in his introduction to 50 years of English literature in Sri Lanka. A Santhan's 'In their own worlds' has topicality and suspense as well as charm. He brings out tensions in Jaffna without being propagandist or judgmental. (1998).

K.Sivapalan a critic and a lawyer by profession writes about 'The Sparks' (Island 26-06-91):

"Simple events in life and predicaments of ordinary people catch his eyes and become the themes of his stories as 'The worry'"

His is a unique experience not available to many other writers in English. "Sivapalan adds that as one living in Jaffna and absorbing what happens there, he is able to portray the anguish and the anxieties of the people living there.

"In their own worlds" by A. Santhan published by S.Godage & Brothers, 675, P. De .S.Kularathne Mawatha, Colombo 10 consist of twenty-four short stories. This collection includes some new stories written in English in addition to the stories already published. The cover of this book reminds the reader's the description of a demolished statue's broken face in one of P.B Shelly's poem 'Ozymandias'.

Exploitation of the weaker members of the society by the "big people" is the theme of "The Carter" a story

found in this collection. The *mudalali*'s hold on the unfortunate woodcutter is deadly. Like mother 'courage' selling her wares to the very same soldiers who would shoot her son, Veerasamy hire the cart from the man who stole his bull!

The title story "In their own worlds" is powerfully suggestive. The earthworm which had a brief 'outing' manages to worm its way to safety and Ravi's brother-in-law returns to the haven of his own house from Vavuniya.

Although Santhan is able to portray the plight and predicament of the humans living in the North-East of Sri Lanka in a very concise form effectively "with a Joycean epiphany". A.J Canagaratne remarks in the introduction, he should become a writer like Chinua Achebe or Alex Hayley. Then only the real picture of people's life would be brought to light with historical and analytical viewpoint. Let's hope Santhan will become the offshoot of vertern writers like Alagu Subramaniam, Thambiah, and Raja Proctor perhaps excelling them in the portrayal of the typical Tamil experience.

BOOK REVIEW

Velikkul veli (A space in a space within)

Tamil and English poems by Kalllooran

Published by : VIEW-HUM

Price: Rs. 75/=

Kalllooran (the pen-name of Ponniah Ganeshan) also known as 'Pon-Ganesh' has brought forth a book of poems under the title of 'Velikkul veli' which means a space in a space 'within'. It has been published by View Hum a quarterly magazine circle only known among serious Tamil literary well-wishers.

The collection of poems contains 29 Tamil and 5 English poems. The poet declares about the point from where his poems originate that his goal is journeying beyond time and space losing all his identities. And also he says, he is only journeying with soul of his own. The poet has had close contact with JVP comrades during the year 1978 and he was greatly disappointed and dissatisfied with their activities. He symbolizes Karl Marx, Lenin and Castro only to convey that he was much interested in communist philosophy and that he lost faith in it due to chauvinistic activities of the so called comrades. So he states thus in the free-verse like prose which speaks of the point from where his poems begin.

Kalllooran says in one of his English poems,

'I am given an animal's name
In a land of people
For I am taught to see
Only my fame
In newspapers, over radio
And on television,
In kitchen
Even in toilet
I look for my name in vain'

In one of his Tamil poems, he says,

'A death is only with a few leaves of life
And a life with some dead thorns of death
Scare-crows are made alive
With my death and life
With his life and death'

(Translation)

Kalllooran in the anguished exploration of his humanness, tries to show,

Journeying beyond time and space
 Depriving of all my identities crowned
 I am out in a space within,
 All beyond the blade of a grass
 All beyond the blade of a flower.

(English poem)

in a forward written by Shanmugam Sivalingam, a well-known critic on Tamil literary works and also a poet himself, it is stated that he is of opinion that the sub-essence out of the poems of Kalloran makes little deeper as far as the Tamil poetry is concerned.

On the whole the poems of Kalloran, are so impressive to the extent that they cannot be simply set aside.
 By K.Gunarajah

Introduction in English

For: A collection of African poem

(In translation)

To :

Nelson Mandela
 The symbol of Awakened Africa.

Illuminating a poetic continent for the Tamil reader

Decolonization, apart from altering the political landscape of the latter half of the twentieth century, had profound effects in the cultural sphere too. Whole cultures, which had previously been little noticed, became more visible, ironically, the language of the former colonial masters contributed to this process of high profiling. The role of English and French in making African poet known internationally is a case in point.

Mr. S.Patmanathan's translation of poets from Africa has, in my view, helped to light up a whole poetic continent. The selection is fairly representative. The translator may have had his own reasons for giving a larger coverage to Nigeria and Senegal. All the familiar names are here: Senghor, Diop, Okara, Okigbo, Brew, Rubadiri, Clark and Soyinka and the not so familiar ones. The poet represented here handle a variety of themes and their tone ranges from the lyrical and the nostalgic to the ironic. An intriguing discovery (for me, at least) was Jagjith Singh's poem "Portrait of An Asian as An East Africa."

I hope the translator will help the monolingual Tamil Reader by providing a comprehensive over-view (both historical and critical) and notes about the chosen poets.

As an accomplished bilingual, Mr.Pathmanathan is particularly suited to this task.

01.06.2001

A.J.Canagaratna.

THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING A PARTICIPANT IN THE PRODUCTION OF THE PLAY "FLIGHTLESS BUTTERFLIES".

Antoinette Rajeevani Francis

"The Flightless Butterflies" was a drama produced by the Eastern University of Sri Lanka for the Inter-University Drama Festival held in August 2000 at the Bishops College Auditorium Colombo. Though the audience saw the finished product, they had no means of understanding the complex emotions and experiences which we, the participants, went through, in the process of the production of this drama. At the request of our Director Mr. Jeyashakar, I've tried to capture the essence of our experience and convey it in this paper, which I hope will enable those who have seen "The Flightless Butterflies" to understand and enjoy it more completely.

Miss Mythree, one of the participants and myself first went to meet Mr. S. Jayasankar at the Department of Fine Arts. It was then that he told us about the "Inter-University Drama Festival" and the importance of an original script. He suggested a Tamil script which could be translated into English which dealt with problems faced by the widows of war. I had my reservation as to whether a Tamil script could be translated into English without its losing its originality and beauty.

Our second meeting was at the English Unit where. Vijandran., Ithayaraj, Lallini, Pragasini., Mythree and myself, who were all to perform in this play met with Mr. Jayasankar, Mr. Kirupaharan, and Mr. Felix. It was Mr. Felix who suggested that instead of translating a Tamil script into English it would be better to write a script of our own. Mr. Jayasankar then suggested that we first find a theme for our drama and build our script on this. And so with this in mind we organized our subsequent meetings.

Many different ideas were put forward pertaining to the problems our area faced. The problem of war widows and children was a subject which seem to get a lot of enthusiasm. Also the concept of what this war's effects were on the current and future generation of leaders, especially as they (including us) have grown up with this war and how this could affect the future of our country. Has it bred a group of individuals who not out of selfishness but out of sheer need isolated themselves from the problems faced by their country and community, and were not jolted out of this existence unless someone very near to oneself was affected? And even then the philosophy "Life must go on" seemed at the very core of their existence. These were some of the ideas put forward by the group and discussed. I found that couldn't place myself in many of the situation discussed but the last point seemed very familiar as that was something I could relate to very easily.

As time went by these discussions were less well attended. We had a few discussion during our June vacation but even these dwindled to a stand still and for about a month we had no further contact with the other members of our group.

Around early July, Mr. S. Jayasankar called us again and arranged a meeting at his home. As much time had gone and the drama festival was nearing, he had got a short story written by Mr. Gowripalan. It was the story of "AMBI" a young man who had been over protected by his parents. As a result he turns to the world of dreams for solace, being unable to face the real world. Mr. Jeyasankar asked us what we thought about this short story being turned into a drama. We felt that at times Ambi's problems were quite relevant to each of us. We however wondered whether we could be able to capture Ambi's loneliness and his helplessness and give the audience a character they could acknowledge as a part of our society and relate to themselves? One thing that struck us was that to show his parents as the sole cause of his condition would make them seem unnatural. So while showing them to be over protective we thought of showing how his own contemporaries and friends as well as society in general, affected him. We were also worried about the dialogue. Would it bring out the individual characters? Or would all the characters sound alike thus making it uninteresting and far from reality?

We had many discussions on the various aspects of the drama. We discussed different scenes possible, the various characters and their characteristics, the way different people thought placing themselves in the positions of the characters and the dialogue possible. Mr. Felix and Mr. Gowripalan wrote the dialogues individually, we were also encouraged to write. They were then compared and discussed until everyone was satisfied with the scene. This brought out many ideas and angles, which would otherwise have been

overlooked. This point was very evident once when we were discussing the characteristics of Rasathy, Mr. Jayashankar, Mr. Felix and the others talked about her as being a calm and collected person, even when Ambi's mother scolded her, but something seemed very wrong in this scene. It was Lalini who pointed out that any girl who felt she was being insulted wouldn't keep quiet even if she thought she was showing disrespect. This was a turning point in that scene and the drama. This made Rasathy's character one which any person who was trying to help another only to be rejected and abused could relate to.

During the formation of this drama we all had a lot of doubts. We just couldn't comprehend how this drama would turn out. We seemed to be doing a lot of bits and pieces of a lot of things but no one had any idea what the finished product would be. One thing that kept us going was Mr. Jeyashankar's cool confidence. He never seemed to have any doubts that we would produce a drama that was exceptional. This gave us the courage to go on even when we were very unsure of ourselves.

The process of forming the drama was unusual and new to all of us. It gave us the chance to discuss many subjects, which we had never discussed objectively. As the days went by our group formed a rapport. Which I for one had not found in the University. Characters and their characteristics, the influences of culture on our society and the influences of the war climate of our country on our daily lives were a few of the subjects we discussed. It broadened our views on these subjects and made us think on issues we usually hid even from ourselves. Mr. Jeyashankar had the ability to keep our group together and get the best out of us. Both he and Mr. Felix kept encouraging us to give the best we could. But this didn't stop us from feeling that we were not doing well what we should be doing.

One thing that was new to all of us was the dancing we had to do. I was scared stiff that I would make a mistake and upset everyone. The drama was also unusual to us as when we were not acting we were part of the chorus, which meant we were always in view of the audience. This added to the tense feeling as we couldn't go off stage at anytime. During the course of our drama Mr. Jeyashankar had it videotaped and we watched it. The drama was good, the dancing was good, the acting was good but something made us look pathetic even to our own eyes. What gave us this effect, none of us could fathom. Lalini, Pragashini, Mythree and I discussed this matter but we couldn't pinpoint what the problem was. When we talked it over the next day something made us discuss how we looked. We had been practising from morning on the day the drama was filmed and all of us were exhausted and that showed on our faces. But more than that we had all looked terrified, especially during the dancing, and were very tense. This was what had caused us to look pathetic. This was another turning point in the drama because after this we all started to consciously relax and actually enjoy ourselves during the performance. A few days before we traveled, we performed before the staff of the Arts Faculty. Performing in front of an audience helped us a lot and gave us all a lot of confidence.

The journey to Colombo itself was an experience that I think none of us would forget. We were supposed to leave at 8.00 a.m. We reached the University around 11.00 a.m and were further delayed till around 1.30 p.m due to some incomplete paper work. We reached Colombo around 8.30 p.m. After dinner we practised our lines and went to bed. The next day we had a practice at the University Guest House. Then we went for a rehearsal at Bishops College Auditorium.

Rehearsing at Bishop's College Auditorium was an experience in itself. The stage was beautiful. It was much larger than any of the stages we had practised on, so we had to reset our dancing to suit the stage. We rehearsed there for 2 hours.

The Drama Festival started at 7.00p.m. Our performance was the third that evening. Watching the first 2 performances gave us a chance to relax before the performance. We were a little tense when our drama started but we soon began to relax. It was the first bursts of laughter and applause that really gave our performance a life of its own. The knowledge that the audience understood and appreciated what we were trying to communicate, encouraged us and infused us with a vigor that made our performance that night something special. The feeling of satisfaction which we felt the night after the performance made all the hard work and the hours we put into the drama well worth the while, and it gave us a feeling of contentment which none of us will ever forget.

AN INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS TO THE "THIRD EYE" REVIEW SESSION

L.A. Leon

Whoever was responsible for the initiation of the "Third Eye" publication, I am sure have had a far-reaching vision. Mr. Jayasagar has carried this vision of the "Third Eye" from the North to the East and now it is in the hands of a few but we do hope many hands would join together to take this vision further into the future.

For the success of any literary publication there must be constant critical evaluation. A good review will advertise the quality and standard of the publication. The Fifth, Sixth and Seventh issues are the sole efforts of Mr. Jayasagar and his team. So far we have not had the chance to do a critical analysis or assessment of the Fifth and Sixth issues. Have we taken them for granted?

But as the saying goes, it is always good to know how others see us. This could be true for the "Third Eye" publication as well. Only then we will come to know our strength and weaknesses. I think it would be a good idea to provide some space for reader's views and comments in the future publication.

I think the purpose of our being here tallies with the title "Third Eye". The "Third Eye" is defined as the "Development of divine in man, or the inner burning – the internal process of cleansing to achieve divinity". This cleansing or purification and enrichment are what we are hoping to achieve for the "Third Eye" publication through this and future review sessions. It is through frank and unbiased critical review we could reach this goal.

Today, English is no more the language of the English people. It has become almost a world language. Peoples of the different parts of the world using English are much more in numbers than the English nationals. Today, other than the native English speakers, there are the Americans, Africans, Asians, the Australians and many others using English as their first or the second language. The English used by these peoples carry their feelings, thoughts and cultural stains of the users and the different creative writers have made their respective influence to their literary creations in English. Thus the African literary creations in English and the works of Ravindranath Tagore and Sarojini Naidu, in English have established pride of place in the English literature of modern times.

The printers and publishers of the capital will not bother to print or publish the creative works of the Tamils. So the "Third Eye" could be the only stage to make known the creation of the Tamils. And it should be taken as a challenge to produce works that are of very high literary level to gain recognition in the competitive world of English literature. The Tamil flavored English literary creations should transcend the regional and national barriers and reach for global recognition.

Literary creation is divine in the sense they are lasting. William Shakespeare has immortalized both his patron and sonnet in his creation.

"....."

When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st
So long as men can breath or eyes can see,
So long lives this and this gives life to thee."

The clause "Eyes Can See" is a clear indication that Shakespeare was referring to the eye of insight, eye of vision, eye of knowledge eye of understanding and refinement in another word the "Third Eye". It is among the people who have the third eye quality literary creations will bloom and thrive. In keeping with the title of our publication let us work towards the goal of perfection through the continuous process of reviewing and reviewing to make our endeavor a great success.

THEATRE AS A VEHICLE FOR CREATIVITY AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Mrs. Eloma Mutulingam.

This article titled "Theatre as a Vehicle for Creativity and Language Learning" deals with my experience in staging English dramas at various levels- Zonal, District, Provincial and National levels. I would also like to express my ideas about how theatre serves as a useful medium for creativity and language learning.

Teaching is a noble profession, as everybody knows it. It is considered a praiseworthy vocation. Teachers are respected and admired not only for setting out academic standards for their young but also moulding their personalities. Teachers have to keep abreast of the latest development in the fields of science, math, and health, especially in the subject of English. Speaking of teaching a language like English, it is a very difficult task. Students from various family backgrounds and social status enter the school. Students from urban areas, rural areas and remote villages walk into the classroom with absolute no knowledge of English, even without knowing the alphabet. Some students hate the subject as they can't master the subject as others do. The teacher has to cope up with these types of students with patience.

Sometimes with all kinds of extra work teachers do not have enough time and energy to teach. Therefore language teaching can be enriched with poems, drama, novels, songs and fiction. These can motivate students to grasp the language willingly and enthusiastically. But this methodology of teaching also has its limitations. Due to various kinds of extra curricular activities a teacher is unable to bring out the talents of most of the children effectively by classroom teaching. The modern textbooks contain beautiful, interesting dramas, lyrics and songs. Understanding poetry and appreciating it is a wonderful experience which should be exploited by the teacher. But within the classroom setting one finds it extremely difficult to spend much time and pay attention to the teaching of literature.

Students as we all know are endowed with many talents and interests. But only a few of us are aware of these qualities within them. It is only when we realize these and recognize them we could really develop them.

With life full of complexity and confusion children withdraw into a world which belongs only to them. Their leisure is stolen away by the extra classes and tuition. They lack the time to develop and refresh their talents and ability. So teachers try to find extra time to coach their students. The various competitions organized by the Ministry of Education provide an opportunity to bring out the talents and interests of the pupils.

The teachers and students struggle very hard to prove their intelligence and strength to achieve success. The special talents and abilities of children hidden within them are brought out to light. The drama and recitation competitions are a gateway to prove their abilities. Finding scripts to cater to their age and group, teaching them to create real characters are the responsibility of the teacher. Perseverance and hardworking can only pave way to achieve success. To put it in a nutshell, teachers play an important role in moulding the personality of a child.

I had my first experience in teaching English drama at St.Cecilia's College. I was under the impression that dramas should be taught and managed by skilled experienced teachers because only such teachers came to our rescue when we were trying out dramas at that time. Mr. Paiwa was one of those such persons I was fortunate enough to come across. We chose "Jumble Sale" a musical comedy. There were many songs involved and it was very interesting to watch Mr. Paiwa training the girls at school. I just watched the way how it was done. The responsibility of designing costumes fell on my shoulders. It was the first time and the designs came out very well. That experience gave me a boost and encouraged me. I even coached the students to render the dialogue effectively. Then as a next step I trained Stanley Haughton's "Dear Departed", a humorous play that won the 3rd place at the Provincial Level English day contests. At that time it was a great achievement for us. Then I trained "Little Women" and we got the 2nd place at District level. Mr. Kirupaharan from the Eastern University gave us a helping hand. They got involved in training the students for the play "Riders To The Sea" for the senior level. Our children were very lucky to be trained by a lecturer of fine arts who had tremendous experiences in teaching drama. The technique involving movements, position and expressions were highlighted. It was really a successful drama.

"Spreading the News" was another comedy drama, which I trained with the help of Mr. Naren. We won the 1st place at the District level English day competitions.

At this juncture I would like to mention that with the heavy schedule of work in school we could not spend much time in selecting students for programmes. We not only selected the best students but also trained new faces each time. More and more students got involved in our drama programmes each year.

Whenever Mr. Jayasankar came to advise us on how to produce a drama more effectively, we found him absolutely impressed and he was very happy too. He praised the students for bringing out the characters powerfully. From then onwards his advice and training continued to serve us. We are indeed very thankful to him. His precious time was often spent with our children, moulding and strengthening them. The students were encouraged and appreciated by him. It was really wonderful to know that, we had some stuff, which we could promote, to a higher level. "Spreading the News" won the 1st place at the Provincial Level for the first time and went to National Level, but unfortunately we couldn't succeed there.

Then our next drama "Chalk Circle" succeeded by winning the 3rd place at National Level. The character "Azdak" was much praised by everyone, because we were able to bring out the hidden talents of the student who performed the character of Azdak. The excellent choice of movements and stage props aided us to reach success. It was unbelievable to see our children speaking out the dialogue with correct expression and pronunciation. It was indeed a turning point in the history of English drama at St. Cecilia's.

Our Principal of St. Cecilia's, Sr. Elizabeth A.C was always by our side ready to do all the needful. The sisters of St. Joseph's Convent assisted the students to improve their pronunciation and expression. The parents always supported us in our activities. They were dumb founded seeing their children performing superbly on stage. They were over-whelmed at witnessing their children speaking and acting fluently and confidently. They supported me and encouraged me a lot. The children were ready to sacrifice their tuition classes and extra classes to come for practice regularly. Some of the parents were thankful to me for giving a chance for their children to exhibit their talents.

Our next drama "The Plough and the Stars" by Sean 'O' Casey brought fame to me and to my school. Our school from Eastern Province winning two best actress awards for a particular drama is a record in the history of English dialogue drama contests.

It was a remarkable victory for the great effort of our students and school. I wish to express my sincere thanks to our Principal for being with us throughout the trying period.

We had a rare opportunity to perform our drama to the public at the Provincial-Level competition at Trincomalee. We were astonished to see the response from the audience. We were highly appreciated and encouraged. We were proud that the message of our drama had reached the audience and the support we received from the audience was really important.

The schools which were awarded at the National levels were always recognized as the best schools for theatre dramas. It's quit true. The National awards were the only yardstick which fathomed the standards of schools. Our aim was to win the National awards to prove our students' talent and abilities. The performances at Trincomalee and the appreciation of the audience proved clearly that target to achieve National awards was on our way.

I am very grateful to the students who won the best actress awards for the first time, Miss Suganya Mutulingam and Miss Prasanna Mahendran.

I am really thankful to the Eastern University especially to Mr. Jayasangar and Mr. Felix who gave us the opportunity to perform our dramas at the World Drama Day Festival every year. I am extremely thankful to Mr. Felix for writing out interesting and meaningful scripts whenever we needed. Words cannot describe his everyday assistance.

The above valuable experiences guide me and lead me to continue my services as a teacher. The struggles, hardships and strains vanish, as we taste the fruit of success and victory. We are given the chance to strengthen our younger generation's talents and abilities and to develop new interests. These should give

a thrill to the lives of our children. We should broaden their interest and also develop new activities. Creativity and learning ability are absent in children's minds today because radio, TV and Internet are stealing away their precious leisure. It is in our hands to make them interested and involved in theatre and drama which is a tool in making the English language learning more powerful and interesting which at least would give both contentment and beauty to our lives.

According to psychologists, every child is a source of creativity. Drama provides the perfect avenue for the students to display their creativity. Costume designing, music, rendering of the dialogue, interaction between characters, stage creation, script development etc. are some of the areas where students can exercise their skills. Dramas as highlighted above meet the communicative needs of our students and stimulate their linguistic competence for spontaneous performance. It also reinforces the students' self-confidence for classroom learning activities.

A STUDENT'S EXPERIENCE IN ENGLISH DRAMA

Rajeevan Francis

Today the standards of English drama in Batticaloa has reached a point where we can state in confidence that we in Batticaloa are capable of producing plays which will equal the best in Sri Lanka. This growth in English plays is however quite recent and is due mainly to the efforts of two schools, their dedicated teachers and determined students, and also the Ministry of Education and the Department of English must be given credit for this growth.

Before the commencement of the armed struggle in 1983 there were many great performances by many artists of our community and I have also heard that English plays, and, even Shakespeare was staged in those days. However after 1983, drama and English drama in particular was confined to schools and teaching institutes, performances for the public become rare and non-existent, drama was reduced to a mere re-gurgitation of memorized lines with a few clumsy actions, and that was called drama.

It was in this kind of artistic limbo where many of us involved in the dramatic arts today grew up. We more or less accepted that there was nothing more to drama than this, and so, it was with this attitude that we faced the first English day competition held in Batticaloa. This was organized by Mr. Somanadar, the then Director for English in Batticaloa.

My school St. Michael's College partook in every junior category group event which was organized. There was a determination and a team effort among the students of our division. Yet sadly we did not even manage to obtain a 3rd place in any of these.

This experience I think was one of the most important events which laid the foundations for future successes. There were many disagreements in the judgments and many students swore never to partake in these competitions ever again and many never did. There was however another group who merely became more determined to win the next time, and it was this group which later on became one of the most important factors in the future growth of drama in our school.

In 1993, for the first time English day competitions were organized by the Ministry of Education, where schools from Batticaloa partook. We had now reached the senior category, and that year only the junior drama was produced in our school, by English teachers Mrs. K. Kanchana and Mrs. C.M. Coomarasamy who had only recently joined our school and was soon to become the driving force behind the growth of St. Michael's to its excellence in poetic drama.

This junior drama namely "The Emperors Test" was selected to partake in the Provincial Level competitions in Trincomalee. That year I partook in a few individual items, so I too accompanied this group. We stayed at St. Joseph's College, Trincomalee and it was there that we watched a performance of Julius Caesar which became the inspiration for Mrs. Coomarasamy. The next day we got the results, our school drama had won the 1st place, and I still remember that evening, during the competitions for the senior drama, she told me "Next year we are going to do Shakespeare's Julius Caesar for the poetic drama competitions".

The next year in 1994 the English day competitions were not held in Batticaloa. However Mrs. Coomarasamy true to her word began to train Julius Caesar for the school prize giving. This performance as it was our initial attempt at Shakespeare, was indeed an awkward production, as an actor in that play I remember I couldn't wait to run off the stage after speaking my lines, the costumes likewise was more akin to Tamil kings than to Roman senators, yet at that time, this drama was considered a fine production to the extent that we restaged it to be filmed and sent to Canada.

Then in 1995 again Macbeth was staged for the school prize giving. This drama was to have an effect on many people because a performer's worst nightmare came true. As the drama had been scheduled as the last event of the prize giving, by the time the play was staged the only audience remaining to watch the play was a dozen children and the teachers who trained the drama.

At around this time we were notified by the Department that the English day competitions for 1995 would be held and our teachers decided to perform Julius Caesar for the competition.

During the Divisional Level competition we competed against St. Cecilia's production of Hamlet. St. Cecilia's, since 1992 had staged a few Shakespearean plays and as they were more experienced and skilled than us and as there were only two schools participating we managed to obtain the second place and everyone commented that we were very lucky that no other schools partook in those competitions. Anyway during that period 1st and 2nd places were allowed to partake in the next level. So we again began training for the next competition, however a few changes were made, a few of our performers refused to partake in the competitions after that embarrassing defeat, our teacher Mrs. Coomarasamy and the other English teachers were however determined to see the drama through and they put new people to fill in for those characters. Another more important change was the entry of Mr. Naaren into the training of Julius Caesar. Naaren Sir who had only just recently joined St. Michael's had produced a Junior drama for that year's competition and it had won the 1st place, and he promised to help us train for the next competition. For the next three weeks we almost constantly lived with his optimism and spirit which gave us all a true interest and ambition to perform and win. We worked hard during that period, Naaren Sir was also new to this field and so he experimented with many innovative ways to bring out the best in each and every one of us. He inspired a team spirit, no character was unimportant, everyone even if that person stood on the stage for just a minute was trained with equal vigor as the other major characters, We trained in St. Michael's auditorium which was being built. At that time it was nothing more than an open concrete slab with a stage. We used to practise all day and many times we would also spend the night at school with Naaren Sir to practise. He also compelled us to do research into the drama and ancient life styles of Romans. It was indeed this training which formed the basis for our future performances.

There is however a point what I wish to make, in the recent past I have trained a few drama and I have found that it is the team of performers which count the most. A trainer can do wonders with a committed team but it is almost impossible to train an uncommitted group. Therefore even though Naaren Sir was the key behind the success of this play, the commitment of that team and the team spirit behind the endeavor must be applauded.

If Naaren Sir was the key, Coomarasamy teacher was our anchor. She kept us all together, shielded us from all external worries and allowed us to concentrate solely on the performance; her untiring determination was an inspiration to us all.

Then came the District Level competition in which we were a changed group. We performed to our best and although again we obtained the second place against St. Cecilia's, we indeed felt proud of ourselves for that performance. We again resumed our training with new vigor, during the period, as one of our major weaknesses was our voice production. Naaren Sir would go down the steps of the auditorium and then listen to the drama from there. Every time we were not audible he would send a message for us to shout louder. Many of us got sore throats during those days, yet hardly anyone complained.

Then in the Provincial Level competitions much to everyone's surprise even ours, after competing against 5 schools, we won for our school and Batticaloa the first ever victory in the poetic drama competitions.

Julius Caesar was awarded the 2nd place at the National level competitions and Mas. Sanjey Rajendra received the 2nd best actor's award for his portrayal of Brutus.

The next year we produced Macbeth. This drama won through all levels with ease and was awarded the 1st place at the National Level. This was the first time that a school from the North East Province was awarded the national award for senior poetic drama.

That same year our school also produced a senior dialogue drama "Death is a Dream". This drama, based on a story by Sir Alfred Hitchcock was originally written in Tamil by Mr. Kamalanathan, a former Principal of St. Michael's around 30 years ago. This play was translated into English by Mr. Naaren. Even though this drama was not selected for the national competitions, this play was important in that it brought into the theatrical circles a new group who were to prove invaluable in the next production of our school and the subsequent formation of ALBION.

The next year we produced Hamlet. Mr. Kirubakaran Lecturer in English, Eastern University was a person who our teacher Mrs. Coomarasamy used to repeatedly approach for comments and advice. This year he actively became involved in the direction of this play. His influence had a profound effect on us all. This was the first time we worked with an experienced theatrical personality and we were all extremely impressed by his vocalization and acting skills. This inspired many of us to improve our skills. While directing he often used a quotation from Hamlet, quote:

"Put the words to the action and the action to the words" and this in effect I think summaries the basic skill of acting and it is a piece of advice I have tried to follow ever since..

Hamlet again easily won through all the levels and won the 1st place at the National Level competitions and I was awarded the best actor's award for my portrayal of Hamlet.

The following year we attempted a new competition. This was the prestigious Shakespearean competition organized by the Y.M.C.A of Colombo. We produced scenes from King Lear for the semi finals which were held at the Lionel Wendt theatre. This play was however plagued with problems, both internal and external and was produced within a very short time space. Needless to say we lost hopelessly in these competitions and unfortunately, as that was the last year we were entitled to partake as school students we never got the chance to surmount this challenge and to date no school from Batticaloa has won that prestigious award and it is still an uncrossed frontier for an aspiring school.

That year we performed King Lear for the English Day competition as well. These competitions were shrouded with controversy, and even though we qualified to partake in the Provincial Level competitions there we only obtained the 2nd place and thus disqualified from further participation in that competition. King Lear was a play which defeated us. Throughout its entire production and performance we were plagued with bad luck and bad attitudes. In Julius Caesar, Cassius states to Brutus "The fault, dear Brutus is not in the stars but in ourselves". May be this is true in that our continuous victories had filled many of us with the arrogance that we were invincible.

However it may be, even though we trained subsequent plays, King Lear was the last performance we performed for our school, in this same year Mrs. Coomarasamy retired from the teaching service and Naaren Sir left for Peradeniya to continue his studies, thus an era came to an end. The end of this story may have been inglorious if not for the work done in those four years which helped to raise the standards of drama in Batticaloa. It succeeded in raising drama from a mere sequence of line memorizing to a mature art form and our uncompromising search for better quality set the standards for future productions.

At the end of 1997, Naaren Sir and a few of us who were involved in these school productions got together with students of St. Cecilia's who like us had been active in their school productions and had left school. Together we planned and formed ALBION Performing Arts Club currently known as ALBION society for Performing Arts.

In the next few years ALBION was again to make history and set new standard for a new audience which was the public of Batticaloa.

The story of ALBION'S formation and subsequent growth is however another story for a future time.

HE RELEASE OF THIRD EYE – SEVENTH ISSUE

S.SASITHARAN

ession 3 –An Impression

The session dedicated to Alagu Subramanyam drew a crowd of enthusiasts of varying ages.

A profile on Alagu Subramanyam presented by Jayasankar was a thought provoking one for those who have a limited or no knowledge on the life and work of Alagu Subramanyam.

The Sharing of thoughts on “Flightless Butterfly” and the “Show”

These were two good and powerful sharing; one by the participant Rejeevani Francis and the other by S.M.Felix as the scriptwriter, on the above topics which provided good nourishment for the listeners.

Rejeevani Francis shared the back-stage activities which shaped the destiny of the original play, the gradual build up of self-confidence and the undying spirit of teamwork and enthusiasm. The feeling to feel drama as an integral part of enjoyment and self-expression were the highlights her sharing. She presented it in a thrilling and captivating voice.

The story of S.M .Felix made the audience to feel the other side of the play, the script writing aspects of “The Flightless Butterfly”

The two sharing enlightened the audience of the gradual evolution of the play.

The performance of “The Flightless Butterfly” breathed a new trend in drama, a trend relatively foreign to Batticaloa.

The performance starts in a world of dreams, goes through reality and ends with drama again, which incidentally is our reality of life today.

The experience of a student in English Drama by Rejeevan Francis was a good attempt to summarize the whole theatrical activities which took place in the late 90’s in Batticaloa, especially in the town schools.

I hope his balanced views would of great help to those who will trace the history of School Theater in Batticaloa in the 90’s in days to come.

The Poetry Readings:

Two readings by Delina Felix and Niroshini Sritheran adorned the 3rd session. To be honest, the voices were sweet and captivating and made the poems sound beautiful but their meaning incomprehensible to the poor bilinguals like me.

I feel that there is a growing trend among the leading schools in Batticaloa to follow the elocution mania.

There is every freedom for those who opt for it. But the ‘Third Eye’ should take meaningful steps to introduce a new trend – a trend which encourages the reader as well as the listener to enjoy the meaning of poetry by involving in it. Had the poems been presented along with their translations it could have been more useful.

The performance of ‘Robin Hood’ and the song by the YMCA English club were highly enjoyed by everyone –especially by children. Their efforts should be congratulated. Well-done children!

The play ‘Othello’ by ALBION captivated the audience but the sound system was a barrier to actor – audience interaction. I feel that a right mood be created through the ‘Third Eye’ English Forum. Therefore the teacher of English and student should be accommodated more in the future to taste the fruits of this effort.

I congratulate the minds behind this pioneering efforts and thoughts. May this beautiful beginning pave way for greater wisdom, wider experience and constructive criticism.

In the sixth issue of "Third Eye" we published an article on "One Hundred Years of solitude" (titled 'The Magic Gobbles up the Realism'). A reader has sent us the following observation made by a Turkish novelist, which might interest our readers.

Editor:

WHY I DON'T LIKE MAGIC REALISM—ORHAN PAMUK

(Turkish novelist)

.....here I should make a confession. I don't like magic realism: derived from Rabelais's demons of excess (at the end of One Hundred Years of Solitude, one of the younger members of the Buendia family carries a volume of Rabelais in hand), this vision of fabulation has over the years and in popular versions lost its demons. And now, what quite often seems to be 'imaginative', 'fantastic' and 'funny' is plain excess. This new mode of telling stories through mellowing Rabelaisian humour has become a convenient and sugary way of presenting the other, reducing its otherness to tolerable proportions, softening its edges and threat for a comfortable read giving the reader cute, lovable characters moving in situations which seem merely folkloric no matter how horrific they are. It's not coincidental that the best examples of magic realism (which is perhaps a way of communicating between cultures rather than within a culture), say '100 years' or 'Midnight's children' are read as experiences of "entire other" contexts, be it Latin America or India"

Source : Times Literary Supplement,
September 8, 1995.

Letters to the Editor

MARILYN KRYSL

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Dear S.Jayasankar,

Thank you so much for THIRD EYE. It seems to me a very good magazine, and I was happy to see the book reviews which keep me informed about new publications by Tamil writers. Also I was intrigued in this issue by the review of Marquez' One Hundred Years of Solitude. It is very thought provoking. Here Marquez is very popular, and no one much critiques magic realism. In the library world it is respected and thought of as a mode which expresses the particular imagination of people in Latin America—not just Hispanics but tribal people as well, and the offspring of intermarriage between Hispanics and tribal peoples. But this article is making me question this.

By the way, I know Raymond Williams, who is referred to in this article. He used to teach at my University in Boulder.

I also want to mention to you one novel by Marquez which I think is his best novel of all, and I like it because it is a satire and critique of Latin America dictators and their complicity with Western (especially USA) powers. Soothe book is about corruption—of the US and of Latin American governments as well. I think it is an important book, and it is also stylistically unusual. The sentences are VERY long, and keep getting longer in each chapter; so that by the time we arrive at the last chapter, that chapter is one long sentence! The book is Autumn of the Patriarch, 1975. Perhaps you have read it. Possibly the person who wrote the review knows it. If not, you might suggest it to him. But he may not want to read it—he sounds fed up with reading Marquez!

Thank you for asking me to submit some work to THIRD EYE. I'm enclosing some poems and a short story. The story is set in Sri Lanka, and is about a Tamil woman and her children. It is going to appear in Best American stories, an anthology that will be published here in October. I am happy about this, because it means that more people here will read about the war in Sri Lanka and know a little about it. Please don't feel you must publish it. You can just have it for your own enjoyment. And you can also tell me mistakes I've made about the culture—such mistakes are inevitable when a foreigner writes about a culture not her own, and there is no way around this except to try to learn to do better after the fact!

The poem "Famine Relief" comes from my working in one of Mother Teresa's hospices. The poem "water" interests me because it is ultimately about environmental crisis. Though in the poem I have written as though water is woman who is speaking to the people around her.

Then I am sending you a long poem, but you can take sections out of it and publish, if you want to, only a section or two. It addresses many issues, and includes a poem on Hedda Nussbaum which I hope you will translate for Suriya. This woman was the first battered woman who came to national attention here, at a time when domestic violence was just beginning to be recognized as a major problem. When her partner was put on trial for the death of their child whom he abused, the photograph of her bruised face was on the cover of TIME and NEWSWEEK magazines. In the poem I begin each line with the word BLACK. This is because there is a love song everyone here knows called Black is the Color of My True Love's Hair. So I am using this ironically, because the story of Hedda Nussbaum and her partner is a terrible travesty on a "love" story. The child, a girl of six, died at his hands, and Hedda probably was partly complicit in that: at least she was too weak to stop it.

My dear Jeyasankar,

Sri Ganesh posted me a copy of the 6th issue of Third Eye. I was horrified to find that you had dedicated it to me and that you will carry a special issue on me. Please don't do any such thing as people will think that I'm using my position in the Advisory Board to blow my own trumpet. Apart from that, I don't think I have done anything special to warrant a special issue, I'm writing to Suresh too to contact you and advise you not to do any such thing. There was a very big mistake in my review of Sivanandan's "When Memory Dies". Please carry the following correction in your next issue.

'The first paragraph of the review titled 'A Story of Three Generation' in the sixth issue of Third Eye (p. 21) should have read as follows:

"The title might beguile some readers who are unaware of the author's background into thinking that this is a PROUSTIAN kind of novel" Due to a typing error, the sentence read **"this is a promotion kind of novel."** The error is regretted.

Yours sincerely,
A.J.C
A.J. Canagaratna.

THE STORY OF THE REFUGEES.

BY: M. NILANTHAN.

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

BY: S.M. FELIX

INTRODUCTION.

Although beautiful, our earth is a planet with refugees. The Asian Continent is also known as the Continent of Gods as all four main religions of the world had had their origin in Asia. Although known as the Continent of Gods, Asia is one of the two continents with the largest number of refugees (the other is Africa.). The island of Sri Lanka which is in Asia is called the Princess of the Islands. Though attractive, this island has become an island with a large number of refugees.

In this island, for the Tamils who are fighting to get their motherland back, refugee life has become a part and parcel of their lives. In most cases, every Tamil has experienced at least a short period of refugee life. Thousands of Tamils are leading a displaced life in their motherland itself. Those who went to India as refugees have been detained as prisoners. In Europe these Tamils remain uninvited guests in a state of being deported any minute in a disgraceful manner.

This short play is about the millions of people who have been uprooted from their motherland and are now living as refugees in their own land or in foreign soil.

In the Eelam war, comparatively it is the Eelam war II that has produced more refugees. Tamils from the south of their homeland, having been displaced, are living in jungles. In the north, the displaced Tamils are living in refugee camps, temporary shelters or with their relatives and known people. Particularly, in the north, a considerable number from Valigamam and almost all from the whole of the islands have been displaced.

During the Eelam War II, the highest number of refugees who were displaced, were the result of "Operation Valampuri", in which military operation the Punahari road was closed. Large crowds of refugees of Valampuri, from the Islands poured suddenly on the city of Jaffna in one day. A short while later, "the Story of the Refugees" began to be created.

The play "The Story of the Refugees" was written for performance by the Uduwil Girls' College. Poet S. Vilvaratnam, who was a refugee from Valampuri was with us. He served as a model which enabled us to visualize the sorrows of the refugees. (He himself wrote the final song of the play.)+

Apart from that, when the play was being practised at Uduwil Girls' College, there were some refugees among the performers. Their experiences communicated directly, also helped us to create the play. Above all, an important point to consider here is that the initial script underwent several changes during the process of stage creation until it reached perfection.

The objective of the play is to bring about the real state of the refugees in its true form. This creation attempts to avoid as far as possible, causing damage to the real sorrow of the refugees by giving impossible promises or to express self-satisfying declarations through the characters. Due to this, the play ends in a question.

The tone of the play is the silence that is created when sadness becomes anger. Therefore it is our expectation that this silence be maintained throughout the Play, viz: when characters talk to each other, when they move, or sing, We anticipate the theme music too to be a manifestation of silence.

This play was first staged at Uduwil Girls' College in 1992. It was directed by S. Jeyasankar and the Music Direction was by K.Sathiyar.

THE STORY OF THE REFUGEES.

Cast: *A family : father, mother, daughter (a little girl)*
Three middle - aged or slightly older women called X, Y and Z.
Two couples : middle-aged or slightly older.
Couple A (Husband A wife A) : Couple B (Husband B wife B)
A single man : C
A single old woman.

(In the backstage is heard confusing riotous excited screams. The screams gradually increase in intensity. With this, the characters enter the stage with a motion of being dragged. Above the screams, a few voices are heard mildly).

- archi, our Archi's missing.
- came running with nothing but the clothes we were wearing.
- thambi, thambi.
- didn't even lock the house.
- came running, leaving behind the curry on the fire.
- didn't bring any of our things.
- amma, amma. Amma's not to be seen.

(Suddenly firing and bomb blasts are heard; characters are frightened; they fall to the ground instantly and lie flat).

- amma, amma. Amma's missing.
- archi, where are you?
- thambi, thambi.

(The characters who were under cover come out slowly)

Mother: Can't go.

Father: Can't go beyond the Main Road.

- X : Bridge's blasted.
- Y : Smoke is visible from the coast.
- Z : Oh! The village's burning.
- X : Aiyo, he went to bring our children, has not returned yet.
- Z : Our archi refused to come.
- Y : Look here; we came running with only the clothes we're wearing.
- Wife B : Is it true? You brought your chickens with you?
- Husband B : Keep quiet, it was a great miracle that we escaped. Who cared for chickens?
- C : Thambi, thambi, did you see the one who came with me? He's missing.
- Father : Can't go now, annai!
- C : Aiyo, aiyo.
- Mother : Oh God! Can't we go back to our houses?

Song : We're the ones who are cornered,
We are the ones who became the first victims
Of all broken agreements.

Having been dreamers,
Having been confused by false peace,
Having become refugees all over the world,
Being uninvited guests,
We remain disgraced as we are.

In our homes, the old are left alone,
In our homes, dogs howl.

In our homes, lights never burn,
The roads of our villages are in ruins.
Aiyo,
In the harvest time,
Our fields were lost
Aiyo,
In the time of plenty,
Our sea was lost.
Oh! Abandoned were our villages
The victims were we
We were the victims.

(The intensity of the song falls; father raises his voice gradually and rises)

Father: Relief
Re li e f
Re li e f

First stage : Dry rations.

(Other characters join in the queue to receive relief. They return to their former place, after they receive dry rations)

Second stage : Kerosene.

(Again the characters join in the queue. After receiving the relief, they return to their former place)

Third stage : Milk powder.

(Again the characters join in the queue, but this time they begin to dance with a stagger after receiving the relief)

Song Aealeo Aiilasa
Aealeo
Aealeo Aiilasa
Aealeo

Ship's coming, letter's coming	(2)
Aealeo Aiilasa Aealeo	(2)
Rice's is coming, sugar's coming	(2)
Aealeo Aiilasa Aealeo	(2)
Medicine's coming, stamp's coming	(2)
Aealeo Aiilasa Aealeo	(2)

What else has not come?
What else has not come?

(All characters sit with a stumble.)

(The music of the night or the silence of the night is announced by the sounds of insects.)

Child : Amma, I'm frightened.

Mother : Wait until it dawns.

Child : Amma, it's cold

Mother : Wait, until it dawns.

Child : Amma, I'm hungry.

Mother : Wait, until it dawns.
(silence)

Child : Amma, where's appa?

Mother : He went to bring firewood.

Child : When will he come?

Mother : After he cuts up the firewood.

Music continues : This music is the fore music of the songs that are to follow. It is the theme music of the play.

Song continues :

(During the song, two characters – father and C mime riding a bicycle.)

Song : There comes your husband.
Having readied a small cart,
Laden with bananas
Drawn by two bullocks, so red!

Interlude :

(The cyclists talk with each other in the background of the interlude.)

Father : Annai, from where?

C : Maha Vidiyalayam Refugee Camp.

Father : Where to?

C : Kombadi, to get kerosene

Father : Native place?

C : Trincomalee, and you?

Father : Islands

Interlude rises: second stanza of the song "There comes your husband"

Bony's the bullock,
Quick's the sand,
Pulls not the bullock,
So suffers your husband,
Pulling the cart.

Interlude.

(Cyclists talk to each other within the interlude.)

C : So, you stay with your relatives?

Father : Mmm... with relatives, burden on others, dead life!

C : Yes, burden.

(The cyclists mime moving the bicycles, and move away from the stage.)

(Follows the music of the dawn ... it dawns with a cough – a sickly dawn.)

Mother : In our village, we had plot of land, and we had a house on it.

X : We too had a house. Though small, it was ours.

Y : Mmm, our house in our village.

Wife A : In our village, we had a paddy field for us. Though a small field, it was our own.

Wife : In our village, we had a sea for us. Though a small sea, it was our own.

Mother : In our village, we had kiths and kins of our own. We had a life of our own. We had values.

Y is overcome with emotions, gets up, runs screaming. Other characters hold him down and console him.)

Husband A : Here, we have to begin everything from the beginning.

Wife A : We're a new caste here.

Husband : A new race.

Wife B : A new class.

Z : A new caste called refugees, a new race, a new class

Song : The first stanza of the song: "We're the ones who are cornered" is sung. It is followed by the interlude music of "There comes your husband" and the last stanza.

Song : Bony 's the bullock,
Defective's the cart
Pull not the bullocks
So suffers your husband
Pulling the cart.

(Interlude of the song tones down. Father mimes riding a bicycle, parks it onto a side, approaches wife and children.)

Father : My back's broken

Mother : Drink tea.
(Father drinks tea, child goes near)

Child : Appa, what did you bring for me?

(Father looks at the child silently)

Mild silence.

Mother : They say there's no relief this time.

Father : Not even firewood to cut.

Mother : So, what to do?

Father : We have to beg.

Mild silence

The child reads from a book.

***Aakkandi, Aakkandi**

Where did you lay your eggs?

Split the rocks, to lay the eggs

In the seven seas.

Though laid four eggs,

Hatched three eggs only.

Circled three mountains

For food for older chick

Circled seven mountains

For food for younger chick

Circled Coral Mountain

For food for the chick I saw.

Son of mysterious gypsy

Laid a snare on my way

That entangled my two legs and two wings

The tears of my eyes

And the tears of my chicks

Flowed in the canal

Whereby washed the travelers their feet,

Flowed into ginger

Enriching the roots of lime

Flowed into ladies fingers

Enriching the roots of pomegranate

Thus dried therein.

***(Aakkandi: lap wing)**

Child : Amma, my eyes are aching.
Letters are not visible.
Light, not sufficient.

Mother : Read in the available light.

Child : Amma, maths copybook is full.

Mother : Why? Where's your copy book that you bought last month?

Child : I left it at home when I came running. Didn't even bring the maths book.

Mother : Ask from the boy who sits next to you.

Child : Ask whom? I don't know anyone.

Mild silence.

Song : Silver flowers all over the sky,
No hands to gather them.
Refugee children all over the world,
No one to embrace them.

Birds chirp all over the open field,
No one to listen yearningly,
Voices of children on the way, on the streets,
No soul to feel compassion.
(Silver flowers.....)

Shoals of twirling fish in the sea,
No one to enjoy lovely sight.
Refugee children drifting in the boats,
No way to reach the coast.
(Silver flowers.....)

Supreme justice all over the world,
With sermons plenty.
Night and day alternate,
No radiance for refugee children.
(Silver flowers.....)

(The ringing of the postman's bicycle is heard. Wife A goes to one side of the stage and receives a letter.)

Old woman : Letters?
From abroad?

Wife A : Yes. From son.
(reads the letter)

Father, mother and everyone. I am well. May God give you good health. I heard from B.B.C. about the problems there. I don't know where you are. I even don't know when this letter will reach your hands.

Last month we were in an African country the name of which we do not know. Now we are in Bangkok. We do not know where the agent will take us next. Nevertheless he says he will eventually take us to Germany.

Among the agents, there is not a single good or honest one. However we have to trust them. Let god help us.

Anna phoned from Switzerland to say that your grandchild has started to talk. The child says amma in Swiss.

Last time when anna phoned me, he said the Swiss government is going to send back the Tamil refugees. He is very much worried.

Husband A : Mmm... Here we're refugees and our children are refugees in foreign land.

Old woman : Wherever we go, we're asylum seekers. Our fate!.

Wife : Grandson's started talking, it seems.

Husband : We're not lucky to listen.

Y: Our children who have to care for us in our last days, are not with us.
(Woman with a sigh. mimes chasing the dog.)

Old woman : No children even to light our pyre.

Husband : Though with children, we are lonely like the barren.

Wife : Our family's scattered.
(Old woman coughs continuously, a sickly cough.)

X and Y move towards the old woman.

Y : Archi, archi, what's happening?

Old Woman : Severe headache for the last three days. Whole body's aching.

Y : Yes, your eyes are red.
(they touch Archi)

X : Your body's burning.

Y : Contagious disease?

The child's mother drags the child away when she tries to go near the old woman.

Mother : Come here. Don't go near Archi. Archi is sick.

Father : Yes. others are also going to get it.

Husband A : Archi, didn't you take any tablets?

Old woman : Who's there to give me medicine?

Wife A : Why, can't you go to the government dispensary?

Old woman : Who's there to take me?

Father : If you neglect it like this, everybody'll get it.

Old woman : What can I do? Who's there for me?

Father : Where are your children?

Mother : May be abroad.

Husband : Who knows where they are and what they are doing.

Old woman : Children, don't leave me alone. I have no one.

(Music - Prelude to the song, or the song begins directly. The sentences that come between every two stanzas, are rendered in the background of the interlude.)

Song : Ailing mother,
So lonely,
Where are your children?
Born through mortification!

X : The queen of sorrows
The mother of young
You're left alone now.

Song : At the time of age and sickness
Engulfing you.
To whom have you come
From your native land
Leaving behind your roots!

Y : Her sons disappeared,
Her daughters kidnapped.
She became lonely with the children
Left behind as orphans.

- Song : When your house
Was burning in the moonlight,
Sans son, daughter,
You dwelled there, mother.
- Mother : She spent her long lightless nights
In the woods.
She crossed the unsafe roads,
Crossed the rivers
And crossed the mountains
To bring food
To the children under her care,
- Song : Listen!
You mother of sorrow and widow
You are barren - like
Though children you had,
Mother, mother. (Music of the song ends.)
- Old woman : Oh god, I'm left alone. If I were in my house, in my village, with my children and my people, I would not suffer as an orphan.

(At this point all the characters move onto the front stage towards the audience.)

- Mother : (Facing the audience)
Aiyo! When will the time come for us to be happy with our children in our compounds?
- Child : (Facing the mother, crying)
I want to go home! I want to go home! Go home.... go home.

(All characters face the audience and ask the audience)

- C : When will the time come for us to return to our homes?
When will the time come for our scattered families to come together?
- X : Our houses are in darkness. We must go there to light the lamps.
- Husband : Our compounds are in ruins. Venomous snakes have built their hills – venomous snakes. We must go there, sweep them clean, plaster and polish the floor anew with cow-dung and lay “Kolom designs”
- X : The sounds of bells in our kovils are no more. We must go there to continue our worship.
- C : Have you seen my thambi? If you see him, tell him that I'm here. Don't forget. Tell him without fail.
- Old woman : My children, my children, children..... children children.

Music rises and dies off.
Silence.

END .

Acknowledgement:

1. Song: “There comes your husband....” : Tamil folk song.
2. “A new caste called refugee, new race, new class”: From the poem of Ahilan.
3. Song: “Aakkandi, Aakkandi”: Tamil folk song.
4. Song: “Silver flowers....” By Poet M. Ponambalam.

A Review of "*Vilangugal thoguthi ontru allathu vilangu nadathaigal*" by

A.M.Riyas Ahamed

(Colombo: Moontravathu Manithan Publication, January 2002).

Dr. Suresh Canaharajah.

These are days when we talk of blurred genres in the world of writing. At the most basic level, the lines between fact and fiction are getting blurred. Journalists are resorting to slightly fictionalized descriptions to capture reality. For example, the New York Times has recently published (on the May 26th 2002 issue) a five page narration of what happened inside the World Trade Center from the moment the planes crashed into the building till the moment it collapsed. This is pieced together from a transcript of calls made by those working inside to their acquaintances outside. Though most of these people died in the event (only 18 people who worked in the floors above the ones hit by the planes are supposed to have escaped), and no one can vouch for the veracity of these reports, this narrative is the best account we have in order to understand what happened during those frantic last minutes in the top-most floors of the building. To take another example, in his "biography" of Ronald Regan, Edmund Morris fictionalizes his role as an acquaintance who follows Regan through the different stages of the former President's rise to power. Though we know that the author is almost half the age of Regan and couldn't have lived through Regan's whole career, some readers accept this as a useful fictional device that enables the biographer to present the subject with greater immediacy. Moreover, even serious academic authors are using fiction to capture the empirical reality they encounter in their research. Anthropologists like Dennis Tedlock have turned their field notes into novels to capture the customs and practices of non-western communities. Such narratives do a better job of capturing the culture than decontextualized information from the researcher's field report. It is in this background that I was curious to read how Riyas (a faculty member in the Sciences at Eastern University) would merge his primary area of scholarship—Zoology—with literature in his collection of short stories.

At his best, Riyas manages to fuse zoological information with the story element without sacrificing one for the other. In the title story, *Vilangu Natatthaikal*, the narrator describes two sets of events - one in the human and the other in the animal world—that ironically comment on each other. In the animal world, he observes how a new male takes over the leadership of the "troop," and how one in particular abuses its headship by brutally sexually assaulting the offspring of its new consort (the mate of the previous head). While the narrator spends time in this lonely island observing this group of monkeys as part of his research project, he also comes across a mother who has lost her husband (disappeared after being taken in for questioning by "those in uniforms"). She is now living with a boatman who helps her continue her difficult family life (especially as she has to look after the upbringing of her daughter born to her first husband). When the story ends, the abusive male monkey falls dead from the tree, presumably attacked, punished by the older monkeys for its violation of their sexual norms. Under another tree nearby, the boatman is executed by the militants, and a board hanging from his neck reads "For raping my daughter." Though we may feel that justice has been done in both the human and animal worlds, the author leaves no room for sentimentality. The story raises the question whether the cycle of new leadership (especially of males) would only continue, and lead to new forms of abuse.

Ahamed doesn't fall into the competing traps of either romanticizing the animals as better than humans or celebrating people as superior to animals in conformity to dominant humanistic ideology. Though these themes are evoked in diverse stories, in this story there is a tension in the way the world of the animals and that of human beings parallel each other. At the end, when the narrator ends the story tautly with the noise of the gunshots (of the boatman being executed by the militants), we are left with some disturbing thoughts on how we all inhabit a universe that features related forms of authority, domination, and violence.

What adds to the significance of the story is that these juxtaposed dramas are being played out in the background of the ethnic conflict so violently waged in the region. The framing device for the story is that the narrator is a final year university student who visits his native village to study the behavior of monkeys. He has to do this study as a project to complete his Bachelor's degree. As he steps into this village in a remote island, he sees the effects of the fighting between Tamil militants and the Sri Lankan army. The narrator sees abandoned houses, dilapidated bridges, and an eerie isolation that have transformed his birth place beyond recognition. He is questioned by both groups of militia as he enters into the areas controlled by them. Interestingly, we see only males in the militia he encounters. One wonders whether the

fluctuating fortunes of each group, in a battle waged in the name of freedom, is part of this cycle of dominance that both humans and animals share. When the final killing of both the male monkey and the boatman occurs on the last day of his project, when the narrator is ready to leave for his university and submit his final report, we are aware that he has learnt more than what he came for. The project constitutes an important rite of passage. As the graduate leaves into the adult world, he goes with a bitter lesson on the effects of power and violence. It would be nice if graduating from a university always provides students with such life lessons.

With such an engaging plot in the story, we hardly mind the zoological information and observation notes Ahamed throws in from his scholarly background. Though he introduces many technical terms ("male overarching," "monogamy," "baniyan troop" etc.) often glossed with the Latin and English originals in parenthesis, we are not bothered by these. Actually, the information he provides helps build the significance of the story. We begin to compare the practices of monkeys with human male/female relationships on our own. I was left wondering about our cultures of sexuality. It appears that both in the human and the animal world we socially condemn incest and sexual exploitation of children (as we see in the harsh punishment meted out to those who violate this norm); yet in both species such practices seem to occur nevertheless. Is there something deeper than our social norms that makes people still covertly experience such forms of sex (as evidenced by the heightened public awareness of child abuse and the much publicized revelations of priests abusing children in the US media these days). Thus zoology and literature come together effectively to develop a powerful vision of the world we share with other species.

If Ahamed is also interested in teaching us something about the practices of animals, he does achieve that. The zoological knowledge gets a sugar coating through literature. I certainly appreciated getting to know that people shouldn't attempt to help a fallen monkey as the suspicion whether they are a friend or foe can lead to the other monkeys attacking the intruder to death. Ahamed also challenges popular assumptions and provides the authoritative view from the scholarly world. He demystifies the common notion that monkeys never lose their grip as they leap from trees. He gives evidence from his own observation that monkeys do in fact fall and lose their life at times. I couldn't help wondering how more effective this strategy of science education is compared to that of a creative scientist like Jay Gould who is well known for popularizing scientific knowledge through his easy and colourful prose. Ahamed's strategy is more interesting as he has the talent for teaching science through stories.

Unfortunately, this tension between both fields is not preserved in many other stories. In stories like "kurankukalin rajyaththil" the story element is weak. There is no compelling plot. As I went through the zoological information patiently waiting for the plot to reach its climax, I felt cheated. The story has a tame ending. Nothing significant happens as the story ends. The thin plot appears only to be an excuse for the zoological ruminations of the author.

Similarly, the connection between the human and the animal are not always significant. The animal simply serves as a random metaphor for aspects in the human world. So in "Onaankal," the chameleon that changes color becomes a motif for the diverse militant groups who come in different uniforms while being essentially the same in their practices of force. The many other sorts of information Ahamed provides for the chameleon in the course of the story don't add much to understanding the militants. The story talks about a boy who has lost his father and older brother to the different groups of militants. Using as an excuse the invitation of the narrator to catch some live chameleons for his dissection purposes, the boy goes on to brutally kill them and rip them apart. With some restraint, the narrator implies that this is the only form of revenge the helpless and lonely boy can wreak on his killers and gain some form of catharsis. The story gains some literary value from this psychological reading.

Similarly, other stories like "Pampukal" don't deliver the thematic profundity I expected. In this story, the snakes are once again motifs for soldiers who hide inside underground mud-formed bunkers and strike with deadly force against those who intrude into their territory without proper permission. The information the author provides on the different forms of venom and the different types of treatment are not tied strictly to the plot. These reflections are occasioned by the case of a neighbor who is bitten by a snake one night. As the author attempts to take the lady to the hospital, they are stopped at an army sentry point. The delay costs the life of the mother. The author concludes that while snakes kill by striking someone, these human snakes kill by delaying the provision of treatment. I expected the climax to be more heightened and dramatic. As the narrator and a helpful cab driver (described as a "Good Samaritan") overlook some of the

accepted practices in getting permission at the sentry point (in their haste to get to the hospital), with the lack of a response from the army indicating a possible suspicion whether they are rebel militants (a case of mistaken identity exacerbated by the darkness of the night), I imagined that the snake-bite victim and the "Good Samaritan" were going to be killed by the army. This would have been a tragic case of "double trouble" or "out of the frying pan into the fire"—all of which are common occurrences in the tense environment of the occupied region. But after several paragraphs of information on snake bites, the story quickly concludes with the mother dying because the sentry keepers respond late.

It is striking that the narrator of all the stories I read appears to be a zoologist—a young scholar from the local university, who is engaged in observing animals as part of his research, while also being personally curious about their activity. This appears to be a version of the author himself. I was also surprised that nearly all the stories are written in the first person. The voice can become a problem in stories like "Krishnapillai," the story of a child-laborer in a eating house who has lost both his parents. The first person narration make the story too sentimental. Compare with this the narration of the boy in "Onaankal" who attains a tragic stature because he is seen through the eyes of someone else—the author. The author should explore other points of view to his stories. It is even possible to adopt the point of view of the animals on the human world. When I started reading the book I anticipated at least a few stories where I will see the human world though the eyes of animals—as in "Animal Farm," for example.

I was also curious why the persona narrating the story doesn't have an Islamic identity. Ahamed certainly has an ambivalent attitude toward his identity. Though the front cover of the book gives a pen name for the author, the inside pages (with publishing information in English) give his real name. Given the communal atmosphere in Eastern Sri Lanka, Ahamed could have wanted to steer clear of ethnic affiliations in his writing. He has certainly succeeded in hiding his Muslim identity and adopting a nondescript Tamil identity that doesn't intrude too much into his zoological reflections. (Perhaps in some stories the language of the narrator thinly reflects the dialect of Muslim Tamil.) But representing his Muslim identity frankly can give an additional complexity to his stories. There are stories of betrayal, manipulation, exploitation, and victimization in many experiences of the Muslim community in Eastern Sri Lanka—as they are torn between the two other locally dominant communities, the Hindus and the Buddhists. When I started reading this collection, I assumed that the experiences of an Islamic writer on the current conflicts in Sri Lanka would emerge from the stories in some form.

Despite the above limitations, this collection of stories is certainly an impressive debut. Ahamed is bold to open a genre of writing that is new and interesting. At his best, readers are not only left with a better understanding of animal behaviour, but a deeper insight into human life. To invoke a paradox, as his literary craft becomes more effective and mature, his zoology too would be communicated better to his readers. In fact, more complex plots can raise new questions for zoologists. Imagining different possibilities of behavior in the animal world can raise new questions for analysis and observation. Thus the relationship between literature and the sciences doesn't have to be one-way. While literature draws from science, it can also help further zoological inquiry by raising new questions in a more productive two-way relationship.

Footnote:

1. This transliteration is that of the author himself. The title roughly translates as: "Animals, the First Collection, or Animal Behaviour."

THE GOD WITH THE SPEAR.

By: T. Ramanathan
(Times of Ceylon Annual – 1957)

THE god with the spear, his body all fire,
Not he with five hands but his brother
Six faces smiling as one.
Where will I find him, my lover
Where will I find him, now?

In the age of unknowing, five summers bold,
When the fruit was in flower,
My innocence was sold,
In the season of unrest, I'll not leave him,
I'll not leave him for gold!

O, shy maidens whisper, words without meaning,
Their sweet lips entwining,
But my heart is aflame for his coming.
Come now my warrior, all armed for the fray,
Come with the spear of your cunning.

Subtle, the silence of speech in his eyes,
Treacherous, the pearl of his smile!
Drunk in my senses I wander,
My madness, my surrender,
Words cannot tell!

To the jewel of the evening,
To my lord and lover I write.
These words have no meaning,
And the madness is catching,
Yet my mad love-letter I write!

My family and friends, I'll forsake.
My house and my cattle,
My lands and my wealth,
My weight in gold, I'll stake
For one ravishing smile!

And now when the way-farer sings
Of Valli, the gypsy, the fame of her spouse,
The god with the spear, how he beguiled her,
My heart is aflame, little one.
My body all fire!

(From the Folk Songs of the Tamils)

Note: The god with the spear (vel) the younger son of Siva, is the God of energy, the planet Mars represented in Hindu mythology with six faces, mounted on a peacock and carrying the vel or spear. He is also the god of Kali Yuga or the modern age, the age of speed.

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