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TAMIL CULTURE

A Quarterly Review dedicated to the study of Tamiliana

THE TEACHING OF TAMIL

The Editor 9

A STUDY OF KABILAR, THE SANGAM POET

C. Jesudason 18

TAMIL LOAN WORDS IN GREEK

F. Legrand 36

TRANSLATIONS FROM TAYUMANAVAR

Donald Kanagaratnam 46

SOMASUNTHERA PULAVAR OF NAVALIYUR, JAFFNA

K. S. Arulnandhy 47

THE TRAGEDY OF AHALYA

E. T. Rajeswari 61

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XAVIER S. THANI NAYAGAM

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TAMIL CULTURE

CONTENTS FOR 1953

Volume II No. 1.

January

| | | |
|---|--------------------------------|----|
| READER'S FORUM | | 4 |
| RENDER UNTO TAMIL THE THINGS THAT ARE TAMIL | The Editor | 7 |
| QUOTABLE QUOTES | | 14 |
| MOHENJO-DARO | Sir Mortimer Wheeler | 17 |
| THE TAMIL SCRIPT REFORM | T. P. Minakshi Sundaram | 28 |
| THE EVOLUTION OF THE TAMIL SCRIPT | V. I. Subramoniam | 36 |
| THE GENIUS OF TAMIL MUSIC | A. A. Varagunapandian | 42 |
| THE FIRST TRAGEDY IN KAMBAN | E. T. Rajeswari | 50 |
| BARATHI AT THE CROSSROADS | F. Morais | 69 |
| A NATURALIST'S SIMILES IN CANKAM LITERATURE | P. Lourduswamy | 79 |
| LINGUISTIC EVIDENCE FOR THE COMMON ORIGIN OF THE DRAVIDIANS AND INDO-EUROPEANS | Nallur Swami S. Gnana Prakasar | 88 |

Volume II. No. 2.

April

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----|
| TAMILIANA — NEWS AND NOTES | | 113 |
| THE SONG WORLD IN TAMIL — A GLIMPSE | T. K. Chidambaranatha Mudaliar | 119 |
| NEW ASPECTS OF THE DRAVIDIAN PROBLEM | Christoph Von Furer-Haimendorf | 127 |
| KORAVAI | M. D. Raghavan | 136 |

| | | |
|---|----------------------------|-----|
| BHARATA NATYAM, THE SOUTH INDIAN CLASSICAL DANCE | Rukmini Devi | 137 |
| THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF TIRUVALLUVAR | D. I. Jesudoss | 142 |
| THE CULT OF MARIAMMAN <i>or</i> THE GODDESS OF RAIN | M. Arokiaswami | 153 |
| TRENDS IN MODERN TAMIL PROSE | SM. L. Lakshmanan Chettiar | 158 |
| THE TAMILS SAID IT ALL WITH FLOWERS | Xavier S. Thani Nayagam | 164 |
| TRINCOMALIE BRONZES | W. Balendra | 176 |
| TAMILIANA — NEWS AND NOTES | | 199 |

Volume II Nos. 3 & 4.

September

| | | |
|--|----------------------------|-----|
| STATESMEN AND SCHOLARSHIP | The Editor | 221 |
| TAMIL CATHOLIC LITERATURE IN CEYLON | Rt. Rev. Dr. Edmund Peiris | 229 |
| WHEN THE DRAVIDIAN SOUTH LED INDIA | P. J. Thomas | 245 |
| THIRUVALLUVAR'S CHOICE — FORM AND THEME | B. Natarajan | 255 |
| SOCIAL ETHICS IN THE TIRUKKURAL | H. A. Popley | 261 |
| QUOTABLE QUOTES ON THE TIRUKKURAL | | 276 |
| VERIETIES OF TIRUVACAGAM | G. Vanmikanathan | 283 |
| SOURCES FOR THE STUDY OF THE HISTORY OF JAFFNA | S. Gnana Prakasar | 303 |
| TAMIL ARCHITECTURE — ITS DEVELOPMENT | V. Kandaswamy Mudaliyar | 317 |
| EDUCATION IN THE ANCIENT TAMIL COUNTRIES | K. P. Ratnam | 324 |
| THE PROBLEM OF DRAVIDIAN ORIGINS | M. Arokiaswami | 334 |
| THE ANTIQUITY OF TAMIL AND TOLKAPPIYAM | S. Arumugha Mudaliyar | 340 |
| TAMILIANA — NEWS AND NOTES | | 362 |

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Readers' Forum

VATICAN CITY MAIL

I read with very great interest and profit the September issue (Vol. II. Nos. 3-4) of "*Tamil Culture*." It may interest you to know when my elder brother, the late N. M. Roche-Victoria, and I were students at St. Benedict's College, Colombo, we travelled with Sir Ponnambala Arunachalam and family from Colombo to Tuticorin — about the year 1892. I was then thirteen years old. Though it is now more than sixty years, the impression made on me by that perfect gentleman has never been effaced. If I remember right, he told me that he was going as a pilgrim to visit the Hindu shrines in South India.

Inscrutable are the ways of God. When you asked permission three years ago to start a paper in English I never thought, for that matter you never suspected, that eventually it would be "*Tamil Culture*," unique of its kind in India or Ceylon. You may rejoice and thank God "*Tamil Culture*" has come to stay. The contributors to your learned periodical are not insular in their outlook. They cater to every kind of taste. God bless them.

The gentleman who has sent you a cheque for Rs. 100/- as annual gift subscription for twenty persons deserves hearty congratulations. Let us hope some more gentlemen will take the cue from this anonymous benefactor.

Ever yours

✠ TIBURTIUS

Francis Tiburtius Roche S.J.

(First Bishop of Tuticorin)

Founder - Patron of 'Tamil Culture'

5, Borgo Santo Spirito,
November 9, 1953.

PRAGUE MAIL

In *Tamil Culture*, Vol. I. No. 2 Mr. C. R. Myleru has published an interesting article on some Dravidian loan-words in English. I should like to add a few notes here about four Dravidian loans in Czech. If it is true that the word 'tukiyyim' in I Kings X, 72,

and II, Chronicles IX, 21 is derived from Dravidian / Tamil தேரகை Malayalam Tōka / "tail of a peacock," "peacock"*, then the Czech Páv "Peafowl" is originally Dravidian :

Greek tavōs > taōs > Lat. Pávō > Czech Páv "peafowl"
Páv "peafowl" is originally Dravidian :

Tam. அரிசி > Greek óryza > Lat. oryza > It. riso >
> Fr. riz >
Czech. ryze "rice" ;

Tm. பிப்பிலி > Greek péperi > Lat. piper > Sl.* Pbpbrb >
Old Czech pper > Czech pepr "pepper" ;

Tam. இஞ்சிவேர் > Greek ziggíberos / pron. zingiberos / > Lat.
zingiber > It. zenzovero > Czech zázvor "ginger" / cf. Rus-
sian imbir and German Ingwer/.

Besides these words which are now used like native Czech words quite organically and commonly, there exist a number of words, taken directly or indirectly into Czech in times quite recent,

e.g. kuli < Tam. கூலி, betel < Tam. வெற்றிலை, korund < Tam.
குந்தம்.

Thus we see that also the Czech word-treasure, indirectly of course, through Greek and Latin, has been enriched by Dravidian.

KAMIL ZVELEBIL

Dept. of Dravidology,
Oriental Institute,
Prague, Czechoslovakia.

WASHINGTON MAIL

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If the publication is not available, we should appreciate a reply to that effect. We shall be most grateful for such cooperation as you can give.

Sincerely yours,

The Library of Congress,
Washington 25, D. C.
December 8, 1953,

(Sd.) FRANCES F. PAGE
for Alton H. Keller
Chief, Exchange and Gift Division,

TAMIL CULTURE

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ROME MAIL

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Egregio Signore,

la mia attenzione è stata attirata dal nome del Suo periodico e sono disposto a far conoscerne meglio l'attività in Italia, rivolgendomi sia agli ambienti universitari e intellettuali, sia a quelli ancor più vasti delle categorie professionali e dell'opinione pubblica, mercè pure i giornali ai quali collaboro.

Ciò premesso, Le propongo di spedirmi regolarmente il sommario di ogni numero della Sua pubblicazione oppure, se lo ritiene più utile, il periodico stesso per mia documentazione. In questo modo potrei soddisfare subito eventuali richieste di dettagli sui vari articoli, e di abbonamenti.

Spero che la mia iniziativa sarà accolta con favore, tanto più che è conosciuta e apprezzata dal Centro Internazionale per la Comparazione a Sintesi (ROMA, Chiostro dei Genevesi - 12, via Anicia), il quale riunisce personalita appartenenti alla più elevata cultura italiana.

Voglia gradire i miei più distinti saluti.

L. E. CHECCHI

Roma,
22, Via Cardinale De Luca,
Telef. 360. 465.

PARIS MAIL

Monsieur,

J'ai bien reçu votre aimable lettre et les numéros de *Tamil Culture* qu'elle m'annonçait. Je vous en remercie très vivement. Votre revue m'intéresse beaucoup et, puisque vous voulez bien me faire l'honneur de me demander un article pour elle, je serai heureux de vous en envoyer un dès que ce sera possible.

JEAN FILLIOZAT

Collège De France,
Paris.
Chaire,
De Langues et Littératures De L'inde.

SINGAPORE MAIL

வெல்க தமிழ்

சிங்கப்பூர்

ககஅச புரட்டாசி உய்

6-10-53

தி. கோபாலகிருட்டினன்,

சா. சு. மேற்பார்வை

49, மார்க்கெட்டு ஸ்திரீட்டு,

சிங்கப்பூர் — 1.

“நுங்கள் மாட்டு யான் விடுக்கும் பிறிதொரு வேண்டுகோள் ஒன்றும் உளது. அதனைச் சற்றே செவி மடுப்பீர். தமிழ்ப் பண்பு (*Tamil Culture*) என்ற பெயராலே தாங்கள் காலாண்டு இதழ் ஒன்று நடாத்தி வருகின்றீர்கள். இற்றை நாள் வரை யாரும் ஆராய்ச்சி நடத்தாத பகுதிகளாய் தமிழர் நாகரிகமும், திராவிட மொழியினமும், திராவிடக் கலைகளும் அவ்வரங்கில் இதழிலே முதலிடம் பெற்றுத் திகழுதல் கண்டு கரையிலாக் களிப் பெய்தும் பல்லோருள் யானும் ஒருவன். ஆயினும் அவ்விதழிலே வரும் கருத்துக்களைத்தையும் ஆங்கிலமறியாத தமிழனும் கற்றுத் தெளிதல் வேண்டும். ஆதலின் இவ்விதழின் தமிழ்ப் பதிப்பும் ஆங்கிலப் பதிப்புடன் வெளியிடுவிராயின் முன்னைத் தமிழர் நாகரிகத்தையும் இமயத்தின் எல்லைகண்ட எந்தமிழன் மாண்பினையும் பண்டைத் தமிழகத்தின் மிகுந்த வளத்தையும் செழித்த வாணிபத்தையும் இற்றைத் தமிழர்க்கு எடுத்துக் காட்டல் எளிதாகுமன்றோ? இஃது ஆங்கிலத்தில் மட்டும் அச்சிடப்பெறின் ஆங்கிலம் பயின்றார்க்கேயன்றி ஏனையோர்க்குப் புலனாகாதன்றோ? அதுபற்றியேதான் யானும் எந்தமிழிலேயும் இவ்வரிய இதழினை வெளியிடுங்கள் என நுங்களை மன்றாடிக் கேட்கின்றேன்.

தி. கோபாலகிருட்டினன்,

சிங்கப்பூர்.

COLOMBO MAIL

CLASSICAL TAMIL — A SUBJECT FOR STUDY IN SCHOOLS
AND UNIVERSITIES AND FOR PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS

Sir,

In your last issue, on page 220, Mr. V. K. Sivapragasam, in his concluding paragraph, observes as follows:—

“The University of London has not approved Tamil as a Classical Language for purposes of examination. It is unfortunate that the scholars and well-wishers of Tamil do not take interest in this important problem.”

2. The matter was taken up by me in 1936 with the Director of Education, The Ceylon University Council, The London University and the Civil Service Commission, London, whose replies are appended for the information of your readers. The Ceylon University or the London University has not yet given classical Tamil an equal place with such classical languages such as Latin, Sanscrit, Pali, Hebrew etc. It is the grouping up of subjects for university education which determines the growth or the suppression of the culture of a people. The grouping up of subjects in these two Universities is different from the Indian Universities. Wherever the Tamils live or where a University serves the Tamil people, the Tamil will must count and prevail, and the Universities must provide what the Tamil people need or want. Tamilians had not much control or influence in the rule making powers of these Universities, and it rested with the non-Tamilians who are ignorant of Classical Tamil. This accounts for the nonrecognition of Classical Tamil as a subject for study in these Universities.

3. Tamil occupies a unique place among the languages of the world. It is one of the oldest languages, more ancient than Latin, Sanscrit or Pali. It is also a living modern language of no mean order. It has sufficient Classics for the young and the old. The past generation of Tamils has prescribed 18 books for the young which should be studied before one takes up to higher Classics. Rt. Rev. R. Caldwell, D.D., L.L.D, considered that Classical Tamil, Poetry or prose, considerably differed from the colloquial Tamil and from the every day speech of the Tamils and cannot be easily understood. I have therefore suggested to the authorities to divide Tamil into “Classical Tamil” and “Modern Tamil” in view of the extent and the vast period involved and to give the “Classical Tamil” an equal place with Latin, Sanscrit, Pali etc, and to permit students to offer both ‘Classical Tamil’ and ‘Modern Tamil’ as separate subjects at the same examination. I also suggested that the Classical Tamil shall be studied progressively

from the lower forms as in the case of Latin or Sanscrit or following the system that prevailed under our Gurukula system of education. Neglect of one's own Classics and studying other Classics will not be fruitful. It is therefore necessary that provision must be made to enable one to study his own Classics and other Classics, also the Modern Tamil, at one and the same time. It is now hoped that the scholars and the Parliamentarians will take up this matter further.

Yours faithfully

(Sd.) (K. M. CHELLAPPAH).

Puttur,

Jaffna. 5—10—'53

REPLIES REFERRED TO ABOVE

1. *Director of Education, Ceylon.*

By letter No. E (E) 21/36 of 6—2—'37.

"The introduction of Classical Tamil as a special branch of study into the school curriculums and the Matriculation and equivalent examinations is considered unsuitable owing to the nature of the subject... This is in accordance with the views of the Principal, University College, and the Board of Moderators."

2. *The Ceylon University Council —*

Letter dated 18—11—'36.

"The Ceylon University Council, at a meeting held on 11—11—'36, agreed to recommend that the London University authorities be requested to consider the possibility of admitting Classical Tamil as an alternative to Latin or Greek (Classical languages) for the Intermediate examination in Arts. The Council further recommended that, if Classical Tamil and Tamil (distinct from Classical Tamil) are admitted as two different subjects in the scheme of subjects, no student shall be permitted to offer both the subjects at the same time."

3. *The London University.*

No. 1295. 2 / 29—1—'37.

"The whole question of Singalese and Tamil is being considered by a Special Committee before whom your observations will be laid shortly."

TAMIL CULTURE

(WAR INTERVENED)

No. J. R. /O. W. 1295 of

17—7—'52.

“I very much regret that no reply appears to have reached you but I write to say that it was left that no action could be taken in the matter.”

4. *The Civil Service Commission.*

Letter dated 25—1—'37

“I am directed by the Civil Service Commissioners to say that the choice of subjects which may be offered by candidates at open competitive examinations held under the enclosed regulations is already large and the Commissioners have come to the conclusion that it is undesirable to add to the number.”

TAMIL CULTURE

A Quarterly Review dedicated to the study of Tamiliana

The Teaching of Tamil

THE EDITOR

○ F THE many recommendations made by the Indian Secondary Education Commission in its recent report, there are some that deserve the attention of not only professional teachers and educationists but also of all those generally interested in the development of our national languages. If Tamil is to become an effective medium of modern thought and an apt instrument for citizenship in a democracy, the teaching of Tamil in our Schools and Colleges, and the training of teachers of Tamil should receive particular attention. "There is no enthusiasm, no creative urge to initiate an educational renaissance" says the report of the Commission, and if this lack of enthusiasm and creativity be true of teachers in general, it is not in any way less true of lecturers and teachers of Tamil.

This state of inertia is partly due to the sense of frustration that prevails among lecturers and teachers because of the poor terms and conditions of service, but it is also due to the low standards and inadequate training of language teachers. With the change over to the mother-tongue medium, one would think it necessary that the teacher of Tamil be well-equipped, well-read, urbane and polished as the teacher of Latin or Greek, or even the teacher of English was believed to be in the colonial period. One would expect that the era is over when the Tamil pundit provided a good deal of mirth and laughter at his own expense, possibly because of his stilted, artificial style, his crude manners, his blissful ignorance of the ways of the modern world and the English

language and his reaction to progress unauthenticated by tradition. One would expect too that the period is past when he used to be a secluded figure in the staff-room and on the campus, rather a museum-piece out of the past than an educationist engrossed in the problems of the present. One has a right to expect that he is now able to use modern methods of teaching and can make a public address or engage in conversation without frequent appeals to authority supported by hackneyed quotations. One has a right to expect all this and more but the Report of the Secondary Education Commission does not find enough justification to sketch an optimistic portrait of the language teacher. It says very cryptically "Any teacher, however poorly qualified, has been considered good enough to teach the mother tongue". And later, "If well-qualified and well-trained teachers can take up the teaching of the mother-tongue in this progressive spirit, it may well raise the whole level and quality of education."

It is difficult to understand why in Ceylon the teaching of Tamil in the higher forms of certain secondary schools is entrusted to persons who have had no training, and who have no higher qualification than a pass in Tamil in the S. S. C. examination. While trained graduates are sought for other subjects, the heads of schools seem to feel that Tamil may be taught anyhow by anyone.

Not only are the qualifications and the training of teachers so unsatisfactory that the hope of a brilliant Tamil Renaissance is denied to this generation, but the tools too with which the teachers have to work, namely, text-books and books of general reading, are poor and insufficient for educational adventure. When dealing with text-books, with books of general reading and with library books, the Commission has pointed out the need for a scientific approach to their compilation and production. "The bulk of the evidence that was tendered, particularly by teachers in schools and colleges, indicated that there was a great de-

terioration in the standard of text-books at present prescribed to students. We have referred elsewhere to the great paucity of books of reference in the regional languages for school libraries. We feel that unless active attempts are made to bring out a number of such publications as well as books in the regional languages and in the official language of the union, the all round development of the pupil will be seriously handicapped. Teachers also should have more books available to them in the languages so that they may with profit refer to them and keep their knowledge up-to-date. We may, in passing, make a reference here to the associated problem of the production of suitable books for children and adolescents. At present there is a great paucity of such books in practically all Indian languages and unless the Centre and the State Governments take well thought-out measures to encourage the production of suitable books for *general reading* the objective in view cannot be realized — books suitable not only from the point of view of contents but also of *printing, binding and illustrations*. This may be done by giving financial assistance to qualified and well established organizations engaged in the production of such books, by offering prizes to the best books published and by arranging translations of good children's books available in English or published in various regional languages.

We recommend that in regard to other languages also, whether the mother-tongue or regional language, there is need for a reorientation of the methods adopted in teaching the language. To try to cram into the young pupil, a number of abstract terms and definitions of grammar and syntax, long before the student has learnt to read fluently simple prose, is to create in the young mind an aversion for language classes. A contributory factor is the dearth of simple and entertaining reading matter in the language capable of creating in the pupil a desire and an eagerness to peruse such books. With the emphasis now placed rightly on the mother-tongue or regional language, we hope that (a) teachers of languages will be given training in the methods to be

adopted in such teaching, and (b) that every encouragement will be given to well qualified persons to produce books in prose and poetry suited to the different stages of education of school children.

We are greatly dissatisfied with the present standard of production of school books and consider it essential that this should be radically improved. Most of the books submitted and prescribed are poor specimens in every way — the paper is usually bad, the printing is unsatisfactory, the illustrations are poor and there are numerous printing mistakes. If such books are placed in the hands of students, it is idle to expect that they would acquire any love for books or feel interest in them or experience the joy that comes from handling an attractively produced publication.”⁽¹⁾

It has been estimated in English-speaking countries that to equip a student for post--school reading of newspapers and books and for intelligent citizenship in a democracy, it would be necessary for the student to have read a total of some five million words during his school career from ten to fifteen years. Thus will he become familiar with the twenty to thirty thousand words which adult reading requires. A total reading of five million words may appear a great quantity, but if the average English book for boys and girls consists of thirty thousand words, all that is required is the reading of some one hundred and seventy-five books⁽²⁾. The best students in some of the Indian and Cylon schools do more than this required reading in English. Assuming that an equal number of words read would also be necessary for the student who is educated through the Tamil medium (there is no apparent reason why the same amount of reading practice would not be necessary), and supposing that the Tamil books are on an average of ten thousand words each

¹ Report of the Secondary Education Commission, 1953, pp. 114, 70, 96.

² A. F. WATTS, *The language and mental development of children*, p. 106, London, 1950.

(and generally they are slender), it would be necessary for the student to read some five hundred books during his school life. If allowances are made for the reading practice that he will obtain from the Tamil textbooks and newspapers which may total a million words during his course of studies, we shall yet have to provide him with the four-hundred books of general interest, viz : travel, fiction, romance, history, popular science, adventure, biography and religion which will give him the four million words of reading.

It is with the greatest amount of good will that one would be able to draw up a list of a hundred such books in Tamil. As for books of the "Robinson Crusoe", "Books of insects" or "Voyages of the Discovery", "A journey to the Moon" type they are, alas, too few. Some of these juveniles have been translated into Tamil, but often the translator summarises the story and restricts the vocabulary to such an extent by a stilted and artificial style that the educational value of the originals is lessened. Further, a large number of original works with a familiar background of life and interest, is necessary for the systematization of experience and for the quickening and enlarging of children's sympathies. Such original works are required not only in prose but also in poetry. The influence of good poetry on the development of language and feeling is so great that there should be a reasonable output of poetry centering around schoolboy interests and within the range of his aesthetic life. But what is actually now given the student of Tamil is a great deal of gnomonic verse and recondite classical poetry better suited for adults and specialists in the history of literature.

To the student who reads English, comics and thrillers fulfil at least this purpose of providing an interest in reading. In Tamil these means of creating interest are generally wanting, and it might not be altogether a bad thing that they are wanting. In vain do we turn to our daily newspapers in Tamil for help. They do not provide that variety of interest and that wealth of ideas which we wish to present to the

pupil. Nor are they noted for precision, accuracy and restraint. One can seldom rely on the foreign news carried by Tamil dailies. One prefers to have them direct from the English newspapers without the intervention of translators that ignore the shades and nuances of the original English words. A study of Reuter messages and their translations in Tamil will show that the translations are more general, more vague and more exaggerated. Further the Tamil newspapers carry only about half the reading matter that English newspapers carry. Journalism in Tamil has yet a long way to go before it can serve the finer needs of language development of the school going population.

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It is unfortunate that the emphasis so far has been just on technical terms and text-books to the exclusion of linguistic power. It may be that even a teacher of science knows all the technical terms in Tamil and has the necessary text-books, but he may be so poorly equipped in verbal expression that his lessons have no great interest or value. Similarly, it would be possible to teach all the terms necessary to Government officials and yet obtain the most bewildering results in official language. What matters is not the number of words a person knows but word power. There is a marked difference between the person who says "He is not sure of the place to which he will be going last," and the person who says "He is not sure of his ultimate destination." The greater number of words used is not evidence of greater linguistic power.

It would be unjustifiable for Principals of schools to send as teachers of the mother-tongue medium, men who have not given proof of their knowledge of the language and literature of the mother-tongue. Since the mother-tongue is taught through every subject taught through its medium, it will be incumbent also on Science teachers to be able to use Tamil as a flexible, free and easy medium of expression. And such a free and easy use of language on the part of teachers of

Science is even more necessary in the lower forms than in the upper forms.

What has been said about English in England is applicable to the mother-tongue in any country. The Hadow Report, for instance, says, "English should not be treated as a isolated subject confined to certain definite periods assigned to it in the time-table. In every branch of the curriculum pupils should be trained to express their ideas either orally or in writing, in accurate and appropriate language. It will be therefore be advisable to exercise a careful supervision over the use of English in every subject." And George Sampson in his usual vigorous manner says that the mother-tongue is a condition of existence rather than a subject of instruction⁽³⁾.

A course of instruction in the mother tongue to qualified English trained teachers is one means of over-coming the dearth in Ceylon of teachers capable of the Tamil medium. But the dearth of text-books as well as of supplementary and general reading material is not so easily met. The obvious solution would be to organise schools of translators under the auspices and direction of the University or of the training Colleges. This was what the Arabs and Europeans of the Middle Ages did to enrich themselves with Greek thought, and the Chinese and the Japanese did to enrich themselves with Indian thought. But in order to write or translate school books, a great amount of research concerning vocabulary and word frequency has to precede their writing. Tamil text-books now in use have paid little attention to the progressive linguistic development of the pupil. And Tamil translations of English originals used in the sixth standard of some of the Ceylon schools may well be prescribed for a class taught at University level. The translators have given full play to their knowledge of classical Tamil and used classical and obsolete linguistic forms and structures without any regard

³ See RYBURN, *The teaching of the mother-tongue*, p. 5, Madras, 1950.

whatsoever to the linguistic equipment of a sixth standard pupil. The result is that the Tamil translation is far more complicated than the original. The study of a text book on history becomes more a struggle with language than a reader which professedly teaches language. Neither have Text-Book Committees been a great help in approving and grading books submitted to them. "It was brought to our notice in this connection", says the Report, "that the commercial side of the production of text-books has also adversely affected their proper selection. The practice in some States is to prescribe only one text-book in each subject for each class. In view of the very large number of pupils studying in these forms, the approval of a book by the Committee meant large profits to the publishers and the financial stakes involved sometimes resulted in undue influences being brought to bear on the members of the Committees. Evidence tendered left no doubt that such influences did interfere with the proper selection of text-books. As a result of this, text-books were often prescribed which were too difficult or too easy for the class concerned or were defective in language and in the manner of presentation and sometimes abounded in factual mistakes." (p. 97)

The compilation of word-frequency lists, both specific (say for subjects like Physics, History, Geography) and general like the lists Thorndike and Dewey have worked out for English are the basis on which instruction through the mother-tongue should be progressively promoted.

As for original works, the Secondary Commission has made recommendations which, if put into practice, will certainly result in more creative works both in prose and in poetry. Not the least important of these recommendations is the granting of suitable honoraria to authors and royalties to publishers whose books are taken over by the Department of Education, and the appointing of Committees of experts who will be impartial in their judgement of books to be approved for use in schools.

The Teaching of Tamil in Colleges and Schools has been too long subject to the malady of mediocrity. Our best men should be recruited as Tamil lecturers and teachers; they should be given the most attractive terms of service and trained along the lines of the most recent research in language teaching. It is then that Tamil will become a condition of existence.

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MANAGER, *TAMIL CULTURE*

A Study of Kabilar, the Sangam Poet

C. JESUDASON, M. A.

KABILAR THE MAN

WE KNOW little of the Sangam poets. Distance has dwarfed their personalities. Their histories have become clouded with myth, with legends of gods and goddesses ; even the semblance of truth is not left to them. Had the Sangam poets been subjective, had they been free to reveal their intimate feelings, we would have understood something of the human element lying behind their purely literary greatness. But those were days of kings and chieftains who patronized the men of letters ; the poets were bound by obligations to them. To cramp their literary scope further, appeared a whole series of literary conventions and regulations. There was a set code of rules for Aham or love-poetry, and another for Puram or non-love poetry ; for, the ancients had drawn a line between love and all that is not related to love. In days when war was an exciting daily problem, no wonder a young man could divide his life broadly into love and war. Hence these two aspects of human life were accepted, and developed on strictly separate lines by the bards whose duty it was to sing of life.

Aham poetry, or Sangam love-poetry, gives practically no clues to the personalities of the poets. When they were so much preoccupied with imaginary romances of passionate young people, and forcing them into the convention of the day, what room could there be for self-revelation ? So, natu-

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rally for a study of Kabilar the Man, we have to go elsewhere. Puram poems found in Puranānūru and Padirrupattu help us better.

Internal evidence in Puranānūru, shows that Kabilar was a Brahmin by birth. He says of himself, "I, a Brahmin and a poet". We may take that as the final word, in deciding, as a matter of curiosity, his caste. There is nothing to prove the myth that Kabilar was one of the twelve children born of a Brahmin father and a Pulaya mother.

There is evidence that Kabilar was held in reverence and affection by his contemporaries. Contemporary references to him are uniformly respectful.

*"Renowned Kabilar, in wisdom great
Of silver tongue, creating verse
Surcharged with truth"*, says one poet (*Puram* ; 53).

"Kabilar, whose voice is truth", says another.
(*Puram* ; 174).

Kabilar is the Sangam poet to whose greatness we can find the greatest number of tributes in Sangam literature. He must have been a poet really worthy of love.

We need to study Kabilar's *Puram* poems closely, and take their revelations at their face-value. Kabilar shows close acquaintance with several of the great chieftains and kings of Tamilnad. Of these, he pays glowing tributes to Cheraman Selvakkadungo Vazhi Adan, the king of Chera land, and to two chieftains, lesser men in rank, but equally great in renown — Kāri, and the immortal Pāri whose name cannot be separated from Kabilar's. We find Kabilar boldly flinging a reproach on another chieftain, Irungo Vēl, who he believed, had slighted him. Beautiful is the story that all these poems have to tell, and, although we do not have them in the exact sequence of their creation, we may use our discretion in arranging them before we elicit from them the life-story of this great and revered poet,

We have no positive means of deciding whether his acquaintance with Kāri was early or late in Kabilar's life, but the fact is that after his contact with Pāri, almost everything that he wrote in *Puram* is coloured by that sublime friendship. Since this colouring is absent in his praises of Kāri, we might deduce that at any rate Kabilar met Kāri first, before his friendship with Pāri began. In one little poem, we find a half-reproachful advice to Kāri,

"To know one's deserts is the task"

Regard not poets with an equal eye" (Puram : 121)

Evidently Kari has treated him, not slightingly, but not quite according to his deserts. Perhaps he made no difference in the favours he bestowed on Kabilar and the other poets who came to his court. Considering how highly Kabilar came to be regarded in his day, it is not likely that Kāri, being man of sense, should not have given Kabilar that distinction which was his due, had Kabilar been introduced to him as a full-blown poet. Perhaps Kabilar, conscious of his own potential powers, and not being yet given full recognition, resented being treated as one of the many. So we may ascribe Kabilar's first intimacy with Kāri, if not to the poet's extreme youth, at least to the beginning of his poetic career. The above-quoted reproach to Kāri we find, is not justified by any real want of discretion on the part of that generous patron of letters, for in another poem we find the poet bursting into rhapsodies over the generosity of the chieftain. Obviously, by this time the poet and his patron have come to a better understanding :

"Kāri, thy land

Belongs to Brahmāns feeding sacred fires :

. thy wealth

Is theirs who come to thee with plea for alms ;

. Except thy Queen,

Nothing is thine, O noble one !"

(Puram : 122)

There is a poem addressed to Pēhan, a Tamil chieftain, for which by no means can we fix the period of its creation, since it is an isolated instance of his acquaintance with him. It only shows Kabilar exercising his moral authority as a poet, as one of the unacknowledged legislators of the world, and in this office he is not alone, for we find several poets addressing Pēhan on the same subject and in the same time. The point is that Pēhan had neglected his wife for some temporary fancy, and the queen was pining for him. We find a group of poets sympathising with and championing the queen's cause, and fearlessly pointing out to a powerful chieftain the wrong he was doing. The other poets of that group are Paranar, Arisilkilar and Perun-kunrurkilar and by reason of this proof we may safely assume Kabilar to be their contemporary. What we are surprised at is the fact that continued dependence on a patron's favours should not have weakened the morale of the poets, and that they should keep their claim to their sovereign throne all the while that they were no more than mendicants in their society. Fortunately this claim was recognised and honoured by the Tamil Kings.

Now comes the story of Kabilar's friendship with Pāri. It is an idyl of friendship. Kabilar never found his tongue untied so much as when speaking of his beloved patron. They were not as patron and devotee, but as bosom friends. Kabilar is eloquently lyrical in his praises of Pāri, and they are not hypocritical effusions, for Kabilar's voice can be nothing but truth. He stops at nothing in his praises.

*“Pāri, Pāri, praise the Silver-tongued ;
Yet 'tis not only he,
But rains we have, to bring prosperity,”*

(Puram : 143)

cries the poet, as though it is difficult for him to see that there could be any benefactor in the world other than Pāri.

“Pāri Vel, more yielding-soft than water,”

(Puram : 143)

he says, mentioning his friend's gentle manners to his dependents, the poets.

Pāri's mountain is Kabilar's delight. Its mountain-springs he compares to stars. He never tires of singing of its beauties. The glory of Pāri's name in Sangam literature, is transferred to his mountain, to its mountain springs, to the flowers that bloom in their cool waters.

And Kabilar was no time-server. Pāri's glory fascinated the poets, but, it would seem, not the thriving kings of his day. Perhaps they were jealous of his name. Perhaps they simply coveted his prosperous territory. Anyway they did not shrink from laying siege to his dominions. The three kings of Tamilnād took part in the siege, which shows that Pāri must have been pretty strong. Kabilar might have seen that his friend was doomed, but he did not change sides. He shouted a challenge down at the besiegers. He told them, if they really wanted Pāri's country, they should come, not as warriors, but as minstrels, when he

“ would give them land and hill together ! ”

The result of the battle was what might have been expected. Pāri was killed ; and with him set the sun of Kabilar's happiness. Kabilar would gladly have died with him, but the unfortunate chieftain had two unmarried daughters, whom he could entrust safely to no one but his friend. Pāri, with forethought, charged Kabilar not to commit suicide.

We find the bereaved poet, with an aching heart, taking with him the luckless daughters of Pāri, away from the paternal roof, from the mountain where “ the squeezed out honey comb oozes with honey,” which no longer affords them shelter. The Sangam anthologies bear evidence to their being no ordinary girls, but gifted with literary aptitude. Their lamentations over their father are part of Sangam literature. It is no wonder, living as they did with a father who was himself a passionate lover of letters, and under the

eye of a poet who was a king in the realm of poetry ! However, literary talent did not preclude them from the rights of woman-hood, and Kabilar knew that his duty was to hand them over to suitable husbands. It is pathetic to watch the unworldly-minded poet going husband-hunting for his young charges among the men of the world. Kabilar would not give the noble girls to any but of noble blood, and those who were of high social status evidently did not want the fatherless and helpless girls who had nothing to back them except the sounding name of Pāri. They refused, one after the other and Kabilar seems to have been irritated with one of them. That was Irungo-Vel who probably turned them from his door. The chieftain must have been particularly impolite, and the poet turned his anger on him.

“*I go,*” he said, “*My lord, forgive
The foolish pride of mine, in that these
Are mighty Pāri’s daughters.*” (*Puram* : 201). And then like a prophet roused to utter a curse, he reminds Irungo of an ancestor of his who lost lands and living because he had the insolence to insult the poet Kalātalayār.

The failure to find suitable husbands for the girls, seems to have dejected Kabilar to the extent of leaving his wards under the care of Brahmins, (see colophons to *Puram* : 113, 200, 201 etc.), and seeking the patronage of Selvakadungo Vāzhi Adan. Now it is not possible for us to believe that this Chera prince belonged to the powerful trio that besieged the unfortunate Pāri. The first of Kabilar’s *Padirrupattu* poems, addressed to this prince, is full of tender references to Pāri, and shows the poet proudly soliciting Chēramān’s patronage :

“*I come not begging alms of thee, because
My generous patron Pāri, for that land left
From which there can be no return.*”

(*Padirrupattu* : 61)

All of Kabilar’s *Padirrupattu* poems are full of the praises of Cheraman Selvakadungo Vazhi Adan’s military prowess,

and his generosity. The same prince, it is to be remembered, is honoured by Kabilar in *Puranānūrū*. This is how Kabilar addresses the Sun :

“*Swift sphere, how dost resemble him,
King Cheraladan of victorious troops!*”

(*Puram* : 8).

In the same poem, he gives a list of things which the Sun will do and Cheraman Selvakadungo will not.

“*Thou hast a limit ; thou turnest thy back ;
Thou shiftest position ; hidest behind the hill!*”

Another poem was written in reply to Vāzhi Ādan’s remark that Kabilar’s hands were very soft. They are soft, answers the poet, because,

“*They know no other labour, save to feed
On savoury rice with fragrant meat.*”

(*Puram* : 14)

Then, says the poet, the monarch’s hands are hard, because they have been employed in hard work, in managing the horses in war, and in giving gifts to the poor ! Is that not a great compliment ?

But there is no evidence of this newly formed bond continuing. Kabilar was not the man to forget old loyalties. *Puram* 236 says briefly that Kabilar fasted to death. The Tirukōvalūr inscriptions say that he gave away Pāri’s daughter to the chieftain Malayan, and finally joined his friend by leaping into the flames. Anyway it seems likely that the poet did commit suicide after all, having first provided for his wards.

KABILAR’S LOVE POETRY

We have seen Kabilar’s *Puram* poems in the study of his life ; and they are so intimately bound with his life, that despite their subjection to convention, it is not worth while considering them as effusions of art. But when we come to

Aham or love-poetry, we find the exercise of 'art for art's sake'. They seem to have been pretty deeply sophisticated our forefathers of about thousand and five hundred years ago. They had made quite a separate study of love, drawn rules and regulations for it, and compiled them into a grammar book! So it was, that Tolkāppiyar the wise old grammarian, prescribes exactly the kind of treatment that should be accorded by the poets to every kind of love.

The clandestine love of young lovers, thought those bards, found its most exciting setting in mountain scenery. The lover climbing the beaten tracks up the rocks, braving the elephants, avoiding the snakes and tigers, all for meeting his beloved, made matter for stories of adventure. The mountainous region, in the language of those poets, is called the Kurinji. The sandy waste or Palai was considered a fit background for the unwilling parting of the lover from his beloved, and for the elopement of bold young lovers. Marutham, the land of plenty, watered by rivers, where man finds leisure to spend over and above the time he needs for cultivation, and where luxury is within reach, is the setting for unfaithful lovers. Of course, it is the 'hero' who is unfaithful. There are five such groups into which the land is divided by Sangam convention, and each has a characteristic part to play in the bond between young lovers.

Kabilar chooses Kurinji for elaboration. He is considered the prince of Kurinji literature. The authorship of *Kurinjikkali* is ascribed to Kabilar mainly for this reason. Kabilar wrote his *Kurunji-pāttu* so the colophon says, to instruct an Arya prince in the strange complexities of ancient Tamil poetic convention.

Kurinji-pāttu must be briefly glanced at, because it really reveals something of Kurinji convention. The poem is said to be the words of the heroine's maid to her mother, the heroine's attendant. Mind, the story is said to be a pure fiction of the clever girl's brain made up to smooth mismanaged matters.

Her lady is involved in a love affair, and being probably a mountain chieftain's daughter, is perplexed because her parents are likely to give her away to her lover. Now it is desirable to disclose the love-affair and get the wedding over. The maid, who is in the know of things, is the person to break the news. She dares not speak to her lady's mother, so she speaks to her own mother, who has great influence in the household. This is the gist of her pretty story :

The heroine and her attendant are out in the cornfields, scaring the birds away. They bathe in the springs, and deck themselves with all the wildflowers they can reach. There comes to the spot a young hunter, who is also fantastically dressed and looks interesting. The girls however, are too shy to speak to him. But fate throws the heroine into the hero's arms, in the shape of a stray elephant who comes there trumpeting and frightens the girls. The tusker is driven from the spot by an arrow from the bold young man. Now the hero and heroine feel themselves united by providence and plight troth. So under the circumstances, the maid pleads that the best thing would be to see the two wedded.

Kurinji-pāttu is pretty and youthful enough, but it must not be given undue praise. It has few of Kabilar's usual outbursts of brilliance and it has one defect not elsewhere found in him, that is, the lengthy catalogue of flowers. But it does show the general characteristics of *Kurinji* — the wild romance, the mountain scenery and the adventurous spirit. The lady's maid, we must say, plays a very active part in Kabilar's love-stories, and is more ingenious and attractive than her meek mistress who is only a bundle of nerves.

Kabilar's real achievement is in the field of imagery, rather than dramatic representations from life. Of course, even in these little tit-bits from the drama of life, he keeps his head above water, and does not muddle things. In this chapter we shall consider his purely dramatic approach to love, reserving his wonderful imagery for a chapter by itself.

Ainkurunuru is a collection of five-hundred short poems as the name itself suggests, and one hundred of these were composed by Kabilar. Their brevity makes them sometimes all the more telling. Tamil, with its wonderful monosyllables, is one of the most concise of languages. The *Tirukkural* is an example of the condensation of thought that is possible in Tamil. *Ainkurunuru* is an example of the condensation of feeling, of experience, that the great poets could manage.

The following is one of Kabilar's *Ainkurunuru* :

*“Hail, lady hear ! sweeter than the milk
With honey in our land, the muddied drops
The deer had left beneath
The scrubs in his dry desert land.”*

The heroine has come as a guest to the paternal roof. Her husband is in no easy circumstances, and her former attendant, the playmate of her childhood, anxiously enquires after her welfare. The above is the young wife's reply. What pride of wifeness it shows in her !

In yet another, we find the heroine pining for her absent lover. Her parents note her pallor, and are worried about her ill-health, ignorant of its true cause. As common in those days, they enquire of astrologers and men who profess to deal with spirits. They are told that the girl is afflicted by the spirit of Muruga. To appease the troublesome spirit, the devotee of Muruga makes his weird dance, in the sight of the household. But it matters little to the heroine, whereas to her attendant, it affords laughter and an opportunity of delicately breaking the truth to the elders in the house. So, that clever girl in the hearing of her mother, asks her young mistress, amidst a ripple of girlish laughter :

*“He sings of Muruga ; and is that then
Thy lover's name ?”*

If the girl's mother were a woman of the least delicate perception, she would at once have scented the hint,

In one of these poems, an isolated instance of its kind in Kabilar's poetry, we find bitter irony. The injured woman speaks of the faithless husband thus :

*"In this hilly land,
The wild-boar with his crescent horn doth guard
His fine-striped young, whose dam the tiger killed ;
But he forsakes, with me, his golden son !"*

In yet another, there is a cunning little attendant for the heroine. The heroine's movements have awakened suspicion, and she is being watched. The lover, who has not yet dared to make the formal proposal to her parents, comes stealing about the house. The attendant speaks to the lady of the house in a voice loud enough for him to hear. This is what the girl says : "My lady fears to go in the dark. She fears the hooting of the owls. And you say you saw her steal out at night ! Surely that was a hallucination of your brain !" We can imagine the reaction of those words on the three listeners specially on the lover, who would infer that, if he wanted to see his lady, he must first get her hand in marriage.

There is ample variety of mood and situation. The heroine speaks in confidence to her attendant ; the maïd works out little ruses ; the mother whose daughter has eloped, mourns that her daughter should have had so little confidence in her. All these are subjected to Sangam convention, but they are dramatically treated, with a brilliant imagination, and a diction of rare sweetness. Diction, of course, cannot be described, nor can it be translated. But the sensitive modulations and the gentle rhythm of Kabilar's style in general, are their best in the poem beginning "Yārum illai, tānē kalvan." The following is a feeble translation of the poem :

*"None else was there, but only he, the thief ;
Should he be false, what should I do ?
And when we met, there was in our sight,
Only the stork, with leg as thin as a wisp of straw,
That into the gliding water peered for prey."*

The same qualities can be found in Kabilar's poems of the other anthologies of Sangam love-poetry. It would only be tedious to go through the same process. The difference is mostly in length and in corresponding elaboration of the central idea. It only remains for us to consider the beauty of the imagery in Kabilar's poetry.

IMAGERY IN KABILAR

Imagery is not everything in poetry ; it is only incidental to poetry, as the flashing spray is to the momentous strength of the ocean. The workings of the mighty spirit within are given expression to in colourful and living pictures and by their vitality and beauty we may more or less assess the power of the driving force.

Sangam poetry is not epic poetry, nor did our ancient poets spend time over the drama, though they sometimes passed over dramatic situations in life ; even in the sphere of the lyric, they did not excel. Those poets seem to have been too self-controlled, too conservative and conventional, to have let themselves go in the ebullitions of the lyric. Their greatness lies in the wonderful pen-pictures they have produced. Sometimes indeed, like Scott, they get themselves to describe a forest from one end to the other, till we are tired and surfeited with the details. Sometimes like Wordsworth, they suddenly find themselves awake to the meaning and the beauty of some particular image, and then the glory of it fills the record of their inspired vision. At other times, not rare in Sangam literature, we find their similes revealing entirely new worlds of profound thought and beauty, for which we are at a loss to find a parallel in another language.

Kabilar, one of the major poets of the Sangam age, displays these qualities in his verse. In surfeit of detail, however, he indulges but once in *Kurinji-pāttu* where a whole catalogue of mountain-flowers is unfolded. Like every cata-

logue, it would have made dreary reading, but the swift strong lilt of the metre carries it lightly through. It may be dismissed however as an isolated instance of weakness, it being not at all like Kabilar to waste words. We have only to consider Kabilar's descriptive gift and his similes.

Like his contemporary poets, Kabilar is daring in his use of imagery, and at the same time faithful to observation. The grotesque conceits which disfigure the pages of later Tamil literature, are absent from Sangam literature. Perhaps the immense discipline involved in the enforcement of convention is responsible for the strict purity of Sangam diction. Imagination is strong, but not out of control. The most audacious step the poet's fancy can take, is perhaps this :

"The wild boar flees splashing around gold and gems"
(Puram : 202).

*"The elephant
Sacred of the mighty tiger, makes furious charge
Upon the black-stemmed vengai tree, and thus
Abates its wrath."*

(Narrinai : 217)

or this :

*"The wine delicious, in the mountain-spring
Among the rocks with pepper strewn, is brewed
By the tout-stemmed mango's fruit delicious, dropped
With honeycombs bee-haunted, and the fruit,
Fragrant, of jack, loosening its seeds"*

(Kurinjippattu)

The Sangam poets do not generally, love ugly conceits. They love truth better, and I shall quote here some of Kabilar's simple, faithful observations of nature, to show how lovely truth can be :

*"The crocodile dozes in the woodland stream,
So strewn with yower-petals shaken down,
That its own hue is lost"*

(Aham : 136)

*“ There was in our sight
Only the stork, with leg as thin as a wisp of straw,
That into the gliding water peered for prey.”*

(Kuruntohai : 25)

*“ The young one of the monkey, in the Sun
Rolls to and fro the peafowl’s egg, laid
Neglected on the rocks.”*

(Kuruntohai : 38)

*“ The swing’s long rope
That scarred the bending bough”*

(Narrinai : 222)

*“ The tiger lies in wait
Under the jack-tree’s shadows thick, wherein
Its fruit hangs, for the toddling offspring that
In deep dense glades she-elephants brought forth.”*

(Aham : 161)

*“ The tusker huge
Trumpets, because the mist comes to conceal
His slumbering mate upon the mountain side.”*

(Narrinai : 222)

Kabilar’s mind teems with images of the mountainous country. Tradition and *Puranānūru* bear evidence to his beautiful attachment to Pāri, generous patron of poets. Pāri’s hill, it seems, was very fertile.

*“ Think you but lightly of great Pāri’s hill ?
Four gifts, it gives without man’s sweated toil ;
First, golden paddy with skim blades yields its grain ;
Second, the sweet-fleshed jack-fruit ripens there ;
Thirdly, potatoes sweet send down fat roots :
Fourthly, the honeycomb, o’erspread with blue,
Drips honey on the hill !*

(Puram : 109)

The thought of Pāri, indeed, colours his *puram* poems. Else, why should he compare the looks of a mountain-beauty, to ‘cool springs of Pāri’s hills?’ Also it looks as though

it is from Pāri's mountainside that Kabilar cultivated his taste for the jack-fruit. The mention of the jack-fruit runs through his poems, and it is only saved from being a sickly obsession by the ever-renewing zest which he can bring to the image. No two sunsets are alike in nature ; and often as the images of the jackfruit may occur in Kabilar, no two images are exactly alike. Speaking of Pāri's hill, he says,

*“ There from the fresh wound in the jack's ripe fruit
The breezes scatter honey ”*

(*Padirrupattu* : 61)

Describing a woodsman's home, he sees

*“ The yard where from the fruitful jack depends
Huge fruit on every bough ”*

(*Narrinaï* : 320)

Bounteous Nature is complete only with the jack.

“ The little stone

*Sped from the woodsman's catapult, shot
Like an arrow, scattering vengai flowers, spills
The honey from the comb, and then it rests
Within the jack's sweet fruit ”*

(*Aham* : 292)

But wherever, and whenever he mentions the jack, it is always with a gusto, as though he has just tasted,

*“ Honey that oozes in the pulp
of the sweet-fruited jack ”*

(*Aham* : 182)

Even dismissing Kabilar's close acquaintance with Pāri's beloved hill, there is reason for Kabilar sticking to the details of the greenwood. Nature is glorious in all her aspects. But Kabilar studied the mountains. For this, Sangam convention is somewhat responsible. The mountains were the conventional setting for the romantic meeting of young lovers. The theme appealed to Kabilar. Kabilar barely touches on the other aspects of love, as though they do not suit his taste. Separation, lovers' tiffs, jealousy, and unfaithfulness, are

comparatively unlovely themes. Kabilar leaves them to other poets. It is Kurinji, that is young love, that he loves to treat, and he is at home with passionate young lovers in sylvan surroundings. This is the land that Kabilar loved to picture.

*“ The wind that tears among the swaying grove,
Of hollowed bamboos, makes flute-music wild
The sweeping cataract makes humming sounds,
The deer’s cry is a sounding-pipe ; a harp
The bee, that haunts the flowery mountainside ;
And drunk with such sweet music, the monkeys gaze
At the peacock, dancing near the bamboo-clumps
Like a dancer on the stage : Such is his land ”*
(Aham : 82)

In passing, we might observe that this passage strikes us with its resemblance to a familiar passage in *Kambaramayanam* — the description of Marutham. Perhaps Kambar drew his inspiration from his predecessor.

Kabilar, master of description, is also master of simile and metaphorical language ; His similes startle us by their acute observation of truth, and by their colourfulness. See these :

“ Her eardrops glancing like a lightning-streak ”
(Aham : 158)

*“ The Vengai shakes its blossoms down, as sparks
Of fire that in the smithy fly ”*
(Narrinai : 13)

*“ There in the Vengai tree with bloom ablaze
The long-plumed peacock like a damsel sits,
That gathers flowers ”*
(Ainkuru nuru : 297)

*“ Feeble her life : but O her love is great
As the mighty jack fruit whose support
Is but a slender bough ”*
(Kuruntohai : 18)

*“ At that her eyes were filled with tears, like cups
Of hyacinths that opened in the pool,
Bee-haunted, their many petals now disturbed
And filled with chilly raindrops ”*

(*Kuruntohai*: 291)

Perhaps never were similes more astounding than those in the following poem ;

*“ The Hero from the land, where hanging roots
Of trees pour white among the rocks, like fall
Of cataracts down mountainsides, has sent
His message from his guiltless heart ; and we
Maiden, receive it as the fire the oil
That feeds it ”*

(*Kuruntohai*: 106)

This can how the heroine receives a love-message from her young hero. One needs to pause and observe the beauty of the similes. All the strict conventions of Sangam literature have not annihilated the play of the imagination, they have only purged it of falseness, and taught it to select all familiar images, the sparks in the smithy, the oil leaping to the fire the girl gathering flowers—every object of daily observation, provided it is true. It brings us near to Shakespeare, the poet who would not blush to write such a homely simile as “dry as the remainder biscuit after a voyage.”

Like every born poet, Kabilar employs metaphor ; or to speak more exactly, breaks out into metaphorical language. The lover begs permission to be absent for a few days, the heroine's attendant, acting as spokeswoman, answers bitterly,

*“ The cranes in groups upon the white sand-dune
The northwinds blow : O go thou not, to where
In the rocky country, the humming stream does sweep
Rich jewels in its course down mountainsides ”*

(*Ainkuru nuru* : 233)

Is not the suggestion obvious ?

In another poem, whose kind is rare in Kabilar's poetry, a woman reproaches an unfaithful lover :

*“The cranes in groups upon the white sand—dune
Ranged like the armies of the king, peer down
For luscious, fathead fish, within the cold
And mighty streams in your domains !”*

(*Narrinai* : 291)

But the peak of Kabilar's achievement in metaphor is in *Ahananuru* 42. Like all the very greatest poetry, it is untranslatable. The surge of feeling and the loveliness of the monosyllables, cannot be recaptured in another language. But first giving the context of the image, I proceed with a feeble translation, the best within my reach.

The lover has long been absent. The heroine and her attendant have been pining. But the maid who is on the watch, spies him one day, returning to her lady's house ; she is beside herself with joy as she runs to her lady with the news. Let us see how she describes her state of mind :

*“Within my soul was showered all the joy,
Of folks, one happy morning, when the rain
In torrents filled the tanks that erewhile lay
Dry, hot, with rising banks, that even the birds
Forsook, when drought prolonged itself, the while
The land lay famished, and idle lay the plough”*

(*Aham* : 42)

Sons of the soil in the Deccan, whose hope of the harvest is in the clouds, will realize best the force of that image.

Kabilar's imagery is the wealth of his poetry. His pictures are no mere idle ornaments, which can be put on and off at will. They are like flowers, which rich and lovely, and whose sustenance is drawn from the roots of their life deep in mother earth, and they have another quality — they are immortal. Have they not survived the wreck of nearly thousand and five hundred years, and are they not still fresh and youthful ?

Tamil Loan Words in Greek

F. LEGRAND

WHEN READING Greek classical authors, as well as the Bible in the Greek text, I have been surprised many times by a number of words that look more or less like Tamil, or, to be more precise, seem to be of Dravidian origin. In several instances, the similitude is so striking, since the meaning for the word is absolutely the same in both languages.

Is this mere coincidence? Greek itself has no connection whatever with the Dravidian languages: it is of Indo-European origin, having many affinities with Sanskrit and Latin, and other cognate languages; but practically nothing is known concerning their association with the agglutinative languages. Scholars like Albright, Cohen and Cuny have begun the work on the relationship that exists between various languages which they group together under the term "Nostratic" the common ancestor of Indo-European and Semite-Hamitic languages. The existence of certain language families, such as the Semitic-Egyptian group, are at present generally admitted. In the past ten years, two monographs have been published in this field, under the auspices of the French Groupe linguistique d'études chamite-semitiques (GLECS).¹ However, I am not aware of any scientific and thorough investigation having been done up to now concerning the relationship between Greek and the Dravidian languages. To my knowledge, only Autran has given some indications in this field

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¹ A Cuny: *Recherches sur le vocalisme, le consonantisme et la formation des racines en "nostratique"*. Paris, 1943.

A. Cuny: *Invitation à l'étude comparative des langues indo-européennes et des langues chamito-semitiques*. Bordeaux, 1946.

of work. It is my intention here to show that there is some definite relationship between Greek and Tamil, though at first sight they seem to be languages so different in structure and lexicon.

How is it, then, that many words of Dravidian origin can be found in Greece, so far off from India? We know, through the works of Warmington, McCrindle, Cunningham and others, that the Romans and the Greeks had commercial relations with India about the beginning of the Christian era.² The commerce was so intense that even a temple was erected at Muziris in honour of Augustus, the Emperor of Rome, for the benefit of those Romans and Greeks who were coming to South India. But Greeks, Syrians, Jews and Arabians did most of the trading.

Now, among the products that were exported from India in those days, it is natural to find that imported articles which had not been known previously in Rome or Greece, should be known in Rome and Greece by the same word attached to them as in their place of origin. This is the reason why many of these words found their way into the Greek language. One such word is அரிசி *arisi*, rice, the staple food of South India, as it is of China, Indo-China and other Far-Eastern countries. This word has found its way to Greece, where it is called ορυζα *oryza*. Everybody acknowledges the oriental origin of the word. From this word have come also the Latin *oriza*, the French *riz*, the English, *rice*, the Italian *rizo*, the Spanish *arrez*. Though it is sometimes traced to Old Persian, there is no doubt about its ultimate Dravidian origin. The word is found without any change in the old Sangam poems : for instance, in Pattinappalai, reference is made to

வாலரிசிப் பலி சிதறி (v. 165)

“the white rice that is strewn as a sacrifice.”

To my knowledge, nothing similar is found in sanskrit, where the word for rice is शालि *sāli*, or व्रीहि *vrihi*.

² Warmington : The Commerce between the Roman Empire and India, p. 38.

Another article that was imported was pepper (*πίπερι* *piperi* in Greek, *piper* in Latin). The name comes from the Tamil *பிப்பலி*. This spice, according to the *Periplus*,³ was exported in vast quantities from Muziris and Nelcynda, the two ports of Malabar and Travancore. *பிப்பலி*, *pippali*, means properly the long pepper, which was used chiefly in medicine ; but the word transplanted to far off countries, became the only word to designate all kinds of pepper. Latin authors especially make frequent references to pepper. Thus Horace, with much solemn pleasantry, is apprehensive of his book being taken away to wrap up frankincense, spices and pepper, like impertinent writings which only deserve such a thing :

Deferar in vicum vendentem thus et odores

*Et piper et quidquid chartis amicitur ineptis.*⁴

And in his *Satires*, he refers to “white pepper finely mixed with black salt :

*Primus et invenior piper album cum sale n̄gro.*⁵

The trade was very profitable, and in Pliny's time the black pepper was priced at four denarii a pound, the white seven, and the long fifteen.⁶

Ginger was also imported from India, and with it its name in Greek *zingiberi*, in Latin *gingiber*, coming naturally from the Tamil *இஞ்சிவேர்* *i.e.* the root of the green ginger. Dioscurides speaks of it as a good digestive,⁷ and the recipes of Apicius indicate its frequent use as a food.⁸

μαλαβαθρον *malabathron*, in Latin *malabathrum*, is the cinnamon-leaf, coming from the mountains (*மலை*) of Malabar.

³ *Periplus of the Erythr. Sea* : 49, 56.

⁴ *Ep. II. 1.* 269-70.

⁵ *Satires, II. 4.* 74.

⁶ Pliny, XII. 26-8. Cf. Warmington, *op. c.*, p. 1813.

⁷ *Dios. II.* 160.

⁸ *Apicius, I.* 13.

Sandal-wood is also native to South India, and grows spontaneously in the forests of Coimbatore and Mysore. It was exported at a very early period. Some would even trace its exportation to the Hebrews and would see its name in the almug trees of the Old Testament.⁹ However, this is rather doubtful. The word *valgum* found in Malabar for sandal, comes from the sanskrit *valgu*, in which we may find some resemblance to almug of the Hebrew.¹⁰ But the real word for sandal-wood is given in the Greek as *σαγταλον santalon*. This is the same root as the Tamil word சாந்து, from which is derived the sanskrit *chandana*. சாந்து is an old Tamil word referred to in Pattupattu, for instance in Tirumurugattupadai:

நறு சாந்து அணிந்த கேழ்கிளர் மார்பின் (v. 193.)

¹⁰ “whose chest was adorned with fragrant sandal paste of bright colour.”

Some of the preceding words have already been noticed by several authors, and their Indian origin is generally acknowledged. But there are many other words, which cannot have found their way into Greek or Latin through commercial intercourse only. Some other reason must be found, which we shall discuss later on.

One of the most striking words of the kind is *παλαι*, *palai*. It is the same as the Tamil பழைய, old. The original word is *palai*, with the adjective form *palaios*, the feminine form *palaiia*. Pronounced in the modern Greek fashion, which probably is much the same as in olden days this last feminine form *palaiia* is the same as the Tamil பழைய, the *ழ* being pronounced nearly as *l* in many places of South India. In Kanarese, the *ழ* is already changed into *l*; this word becomes *hale*, by changing the *ப* into *ha*, -a frequent linguistic mutation. The word பழைய cannot have its origin in Sanskrit. It is already found in many passages of the Sangam authors. Thus we have reference to பழ சோறு, old cooked rice, in

⁹ II Chron. IX, 10; II, 8. I Kings, X, 11.

¹⁰ Cf. Warmington, op. c., p. 215.

Perumpanattuppadaï (v. 224) ; பழ மொழி, old word, proverb, is the title of one of the 18 கீழ்க்கணக்கு நூல்கள். In Silappadigaram, we find பழங் கடன், a debt contracted long ago (XII, 7) ; and பழம் பிறப்பு, old birth (IX, 56), with reference to a previous life according to the doctrine of metempsychosis.

This word cannot have found its way to Greece through the commercial intercourse at the beginning of the Christian era. The word was already known to Hesiod ; and Homer refers to the kings young and old, *νεοὶ ἠδὲ παλαιοί*, *neoi ede palaioi*.¹¹ It is likely to be of Dravidian origin only. Thus it is interesting to trace many words of our modern Indo-European languages to a source that has not been recognized up to now. Such words as : palaeography, palaeology, palaeontography, etc., where the word *palae* is introduced, as far as this part of the word is concerned, have to be traced ultimately to the Dravidian languages.

Another interesting word is the word for water, நீர். This root is found in all the Dravidian languages : in Kanarese, *niru* ; in Malayalam, *niru* ; in Telugu, *nellu*, etc. Now, this word is not directly found in ancient Greek, the classical form for water being *ὕδωρ hydor*, from which are derived many of our English words : hydrography, hydrotherapey, hydraulic, etc. But in modern Greek, the usual word for water is *νερο*. *νερο nero* is not of foreign origin as such ; the languages that could have influenced modern Greek in this matter do not include this word in their vocabulary (in Turkish, water is *su* ; in Slav, *voda*, coming from the same root as *hydor*, of Indo-European origin). So, the word comes probably from some old dialect that continued to live in a few words throughout the centuries. And in fact, though we do not find the word in this form in old classical Greek, we find several words derived from it, even as early as Homer. *Nereus*, *Νηρεὺς* is spoken of already in Hesiod's Theogony.


¹¹ Odyssey, I. 395.

He was the god of the sea, and son of Poseidon, the god of the Ocean. His daughters, the *Nereids*, nymphs of the sea, are already referred to in the Iliad of Homer :

πασαί οσαι κατα βενθος αλος Νηρηιδες ησαν

pasai osai kata benthos alos Nereides esan.

“such as were all the Nereids in the bottom of the sea.” (XVIII, 88.) The word is certainly of Dravidian origin, being employed in the old Tamil Classics : in Silappadigaram, X, 79 : நீர் நாய் ; 90 : எறிநீரடைகரை etc.

The word for great, பெரிய, *peria*, can perhaps also be found in the Greek language. There are many words beginning by *περ*, *περι*, *per*, *peri*, in the Greek and Latin languages. Now *περι*, *peri* means sometimes around ; but at times, in composite words especially, it means also above something. Thus we have *περι-αγαπω*, *peri-agapo*, meaning : to love above all things, a great love. This preposition must have had the same origin as the Dravidian *per*, பெர். This word has been read by Father H. Heras in the Proto-Dravidian sign  of Mohenjo-Daro, so similar to the Sumerian sign pronounced *gal*, having the same meaning of great.¹² I would go even further, and say that the Sumerian word *gal* itself, comes from the same root as பெர். *g* through *h* comes from *p*, as we have seen before for the word *palai* ; and *l* and *r* are a very common mutation. Thus *per* can have become *gal*, which is, I think, at the origin of *μεγαλος*, *μεγαλα*, *mégalos*, *megala*, forms of *μεγας*, *megas*, meaning also great in Greek. The word is found already as such in Homer, indicating a high antiquity.¹³

Even the word *τυραννος* *tyrannes* seems to come from the Dravidian. திறம் in Tamil means *force, ability* ; திற

¹² Cf. Heras : “The Origin of the Sumerian Script,” Journal of the University of Bombay, VII, p. 15.

¹³ Cf. Odyssey : IX, 513 ; XVIII, 4 ; 382, etc.

வான், a strong man. This applies very well to the tyrannes or absolute master, all powerful, who usurps all power in a State or City. The great word is already noticed in the Homeric Hymns,¹⁴ dating probably from the 8th century B. C. From the Tamil is derived திறை, a tribute paid to a king : திறை கொடுக்கிறது, to pay a tribute.

Another word with very striking similitudes in both languages is παθος, *pathos*, meaning suffering, what affects the body or the soul. It has many derivatives in all the European languages, ex. in English : pathos, pathetic, pathology, etc. This word is nearly the same as the Tamil படுகிறது which means also : to suffer, to endure.

The root of அறுக்கிறது is found also in αρω, *aroō*, to cultivate, to plough. This too is an old word, found in the Odyssey and in Hesiod's works, and from it are derived αρουρα, *aroura*, ploughed land, and αροτρον, *arotron* the plough, and all cognate words : αρτηρ, *aroter*, field-worker, αροτος, *arotes*, field-work, all words already found in Hesiod and Homer.

παγος, *pagos*, the same as the Latin *pāgus*, a region part of a country, comes from the root *pag*, which is found in Tamil in words like பங்கு, பகுதி, பகிர், etc., indicating a portion or division of something.

θεω, *theō*, comes from the same root as ஒடுகிறது, and has the same meaning : to run. The same root is found in θυελλα, *thuella* a storm, and even a derivative is found in θυμος, *thymes* soul, spirit, the root of all similar words being θυ, *thy*. All these words are found in the oldest extant literature of both languages.

Perhaps it will look rather bold to advance the word γυνη, *gunē*, meaning woman, female, as of Dravidian origin too. This word has been introduced into English in words

¹⁴ Edit. A. Gemoll : 7, 5. Cf. also Pindar, Pyth. II, 159, etc.

such as : gynaeceum, gynaecology, gynarchy, etc. Now the γ , g , in modern Greek is pronounced somewhat like h . We have here the same process as in Kanarese : the h has come from an original p . So it is not difficult after all to trace

$\gamma\upsilon\nu\eta$, *gunê* to the kanarese *hennu*, and from it to the Tamil பெண், having the same significance woman, female. The Tamil word is found without any modification in the old Sangam works, such as Silappadigaram, VII, 13. 4.

In Maduraikkanji we have :

பெண் மகிழ்வு வற்ற பிணை நோக்கு மகளிர் (v. 555.).

“the young ladies with deer-like eyes and full of joy.”

And earlier, the word is found in Tholkappiam : ¹⁵

பெண்மை, indicating the feminine gender.

ஆண்மை, the masculine gender.

The Greek form is also very old, being found in the Iliad and Odyssey, ex. :

Ὡς δε γυνη κλαίησι φίλον ποσιν ἄμφι πεσοῦσα

Os de gune klaiesi philon posin amphipesousa.

“As a woman wails falling at the feet of her beloved” (who is dead).¹⁶

The counterpart of this word is $\alpha\nu\eta\rho$ *anêr*, man, male, and from it comes also $\alpha\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\omicron\varsigma$, *anthropos*, which have given us such English words as : anthropology, androgyn, etc. *Anthropos* means also *man*, *human being*, by composition to the gods. Both these words have the same root : *ân*. They cannot come, as some say, from the Sanskrit *nar*, which has sometimes also the meaning of man. But in Tamil, the word is found with its full meaning : ஆண், meaning male, as well

¹⁵ Solladigaram, 4.

¹⁶ Odyssey : VIII, 523. Cf. also Iliad : VI, 160 ; VIII, 57, etc.

as in the Greek word. In the previous paragraph, I have already referred to this word in the *Tholkappiam*. In the Greek too, both the words are used by Homer : $\pi\alpha\tau\eta\rho\ \alpha\nu\delta\rho\omega\nu$, *patêr andron*, father of men (passim) ; $\alpha\nu\eta\rho\ \beta\alpha\sigma\iota\lambda\epsilon\upsilon\varsigma$, *basileus*, a king (passim).¹⁷

As words of relationship, we have also $\pi\alpha\iota\varsigma$, *paîs*, child, boy or girl. The same root is found in the Tamil word பையன் boy, In Kanarese, the *p* becomes *h* as usual ; but *huduga*, boy, has preserved the *d* which is found also in the Greek in the oblique cases : genitive, $\pi\alpha\iota\delta\omicron\varsigma$, *paídos* ; dative *paîdi*, from which is derived the modern form $\pi\alpha\iota\delta\iota$, *paîdi*, boy. These words too are very old in both languages. In the Iliad, we find it already :

$\pi\alpha\iota\delta\omicron\varsigma\ \delta\epsilon\mu\omicron\iota\ \lambda\upsilon\sigma\alpha\iota$
paîda d'emoi lusai

“give me back my child.” (I. 20). etc.

I shall trace one more similitude from the Greek to the Dravidian languages : that is, the word for *milk*. In Greek, it is $\gamma\alpha\lambda\alpha$, *gāla*, which has given us the English words : galaxy, galactometer. Now, with the permutation of letters shown already in $\gamma\upsilon\nu\eta$, *gunê* we find easily the corresponding kanarese word : *hālu* (the *g* Greek is the same as *h* in many words). The kanarese is derived from the Tamil பால் , having the same signification. These words are found also in the oldest extant literature of both languages : in the Greek, Homer used $\gamma\alpha\lambda\alpha$, *gāla*, in the Iliad (IV, 434) and Odyssey (IV, 88, etc.) ; in Tamil, it is found in the Sangam period, for instance in the *Perumpanatupadai* (v. 168.) :

$\text{பசுந்தினை மூரல் பாலொடும் பெறுகுவிர்}$

“you will receive fresh tinei rice with milk” ;

and in the *Tholkappiam*, Solladigaram, 211 :

பாலறி மரவி etc.

¹⁷ For *Anthropos*, cf. Iliad : V, 442 ; IX, 134 ; XVI, 263, etc.

This list of Tamil loan words is by no means exhaustive. Many others could be found if we searched for them. It would be difficult to argue that so many Dravidian words have found their way into Greek through commercial intercourse only. Words like : milk, woman, child, man, old, hand ($\chi\epsilon\iota\rho$, *cheir*= செய), etc., are of too common use in all languages to have been introduced into Greek from another foreign language. Moreover, as we have seen before, all these words are so ancient in Tamil as well as in Greek, that they seem original in both languages.

How may we account for these similarities? In my opinion, there is only one explanation. It does not come through commercial contact, but through daily contact with another population, whose language they amalgamated partly into their own. Before the invasion of Greece by the Aryans, there existed in Greece and other countries around the Mediterranean Sea, a race or several races whose language remnants still persist after so many centuries of Greek Culture. Just as we have in English many words of Celtic origin, though the English language itself is mostly of Saxon and Latin extraction, in the same manner, these old words remained in the Greek language as relics of those people who first inhabited Greece and were later subjugated by the Aryans. The Aryans — Achaeans, Dorians, and other races — imported their language, which has developed into Classical Greek, so similar in its roots and fundamental grammar to Sanskrit and Latin. Still, the conquered people could not relinquish all their traditions and languages, and it is these faint traces of their language that we have tried to find. Perhaps the Pelasgians were the people who spoke it ; perhaps it came through the Minoans or the Etruscans. At any rate, I have no doubt about their ultimate Dravidian origin. Later on, I propose to show that, even historically, this fact of a Dravidian settlement along the Mediterranean shores is becoming more and more probable and is admitted nowadays by many scholars.

Translations from Tayumanaver

My heart hath harder grown

*Even a wayside stone may sometimes soften,
 After heavy rain, but, alas ! my heart hath harder grown
 Brahma, O mighty one, has Thou no power,
 To convert this sinful soul that seeks not to atone ?
 What Thou decreest is law, why need I argue more ?
 Then, Lord, send Thy rain on my heart so hard and sore,
 That I might prepare the ground for Thy grace to grow.
 Thou art my mother, canst Thou cast away Thy naughty son,
 Who hast but Thee and Thy loving care alone ?
 If I speak not truth, O Lord, I would soon become
 Heirless of grace sunk in the depths of sins ever to groan
 In words there is no profit, teach me to sit still,
 My God, my all, my eternal light ever to do Thy will.*

Pride of Learning

*The unlearned ones, they are the really good,
 The ignorance of all my learning, my sole pride,
 My senseless actions, how well shall I describe ?
 Wisdom of God is man's concern when some affirm,
 I say good actions alone to salvation lead,
 This when some ponder deep and discern
 I would recommend to them the former creed.
 At discussions when a scholar in Sanskrit I meet,
 To him I would quote a Tamil verse or two
 When arguments with Tamil scholars ensue
 I would then with Sanskrit slogans greet.
 O Lord, who art beyond dissensions all still
 Will hypocrisy ever lead me to attain Thy will ?*

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Somasunthera Pulavar of Navaliyur, Jaffna

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THE historic peninsula of Yarlparnam (Jaffna), studded with groves of the hardy yet majestic palmyrah palm, which symbolizes the perseverance, industry, uprightness, hospitality and sturdy independence of the Tamils who inhabit it, lies in the extreme north of the still more historic island of Lanka (Ceylon) crowning her as it were. Notwithstanding its geographical and political separation from the Tamil-speaking territories of Southern India, its essential character of being an integral part of Tamilagam linguistically and culturally has not materially changed even to this day. When exactly the Tamils first came to the peninsula from their mother-land and inhabited it is obscure. But there seems to be no doubt that they had arrived in waves at different periods from very early times, sometimes as adventurous conquerors and at other times as peaceful settlers in quest of a new home, and that this periodic immigration ceased not long before the advent of the Portuguese early in the sixteenth century. However, the Tamil settlers of Yarlparnam and their descendants have throughout maintained a close contact with their mother country only about thirty miles distant across the strait that separates them. To this continuous intercourse with the main stock and to the firm foundation of Tamilian culture deeply rooted in the ancient and highly advanced Dravidian civilization has to be attributed the absence of structural or fundamental changes in the language, religion, traditions habits, and cus-

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toms, and in the unique culture comprising all these, in spite of the aggressive and alienating influence of four and a half centuries of foreign domination. No doubt, many changes, more formal than real for by far the most part, have been wrought by this foreign influence in the life of the people, but they have not, in general, penetrated deep enough to reach the foundations and strike at the roots of Tamilian culture and cause it to wither away giving rise to another, a new one, not even among those relatively few people who had changed their religion. There is yet a significant minority among the rural population in particular whose deviation if any from the characteristic Tamilian way of living and thinking, either in form or in content, is hardly discernible. Somasunthera Pulavar, who is our theme, is an exalted example of this wonderful survival of Tamilian culture through all the vicissitudes of the Tamils in their adopted home, Yarlparnam.

Somasunthera Pulavar was born on the 6th of October, 1876, in Navaliyur in the peninsula of Yarlparnam, and he passed away in his seventy-seventh year on the 10th of July, 1953. His known ancestry goes as far back as four centuries to Vanniasegara Mudaliyar, a staunch Saivite who had migrated from the Vanni District skirting Yarlparnam on the south, and settled at Navaliyur. Throughout the four centuries that followed, conformity to the ethics and practices of the orthodox Saiva Sidhanta Religion and the Tamil culture that is intertwined with it characterized the pattern of life of his ancestors. His own father, Arumaiyinar Kadirgamar, was not only ardently devoted to his ancestral religion but also well versed in the two great Tamil epics, the *Mahabaratham* of Villiputhurar and Kachiappar's *Kanthapuranam*, and in music and drama. He was thus a fortunate heir to the extremely rare combination of the three distinct privileges of superior heredity, primogeniture, and a dignified and noble home environment presided over by a religious father versed in Muthamil (Language & Literature, Music and Drama). This was not all. He also had in his mother, *Ilakkumipillai*, an embodiment of the noble qualities of piety and hospitality characteristic of the best Tamilian Saivite homes, a fitting

partner to the father in providing their first born son with an early environment and nurture that must certainly have been highly conducive and stimulating to the unfolding of his exceptional qualities, which, no doubt, he had inherited from his illustrious stock. Perhaps, it was fortunate for Tamilagam that poverty was also his lot, a condition that more or less persisted side by side with chronic physical ailments for many years. For, these that might have degraded and tarnished another man served but to sharpen his intellect and purify his life like the furnace that converts coarse ore of iron into hard shining steel. His own words portray this reaction of his in the following stanza :

இல்லாமை யால்வந்த துயரினால் மிகநொந்
 திரகத்து ணிந்துமானம்
 ஏகாது பின்றள்ள வாற்றுமை முன்றள்ள
 விடையூச லாடியாடிப்
 பல்லாயி ரந்தரங் காட்டியும் நாவினாற்
 பயிலாத மொழிபயின்றும்
 பணியாத பேரைப் பணிந்துமுன் திறவாத
 படலைபல பலதிறந்தும்
 பொல்லாத வஞ்சரைப் பாடியும் புகல்கின்ற
 பொய்மைமொழி செவிமடுத்தும்
 போற்றுமுன் பெருமைபறி போகவிட் டென்மனம்
 புண்பட்ட வாறுபோதும்
 செல்லாத செல்வமுந் திருவடிச் சேவையுஞ்
 சிறியெனுக் கருளுகண்டாய்
 தென்பொதிய மலையிலுறை கும்பமுனி மடியில்வளர்
 செந்தமிழ்க் குலதெய்வமே.

“With great pain of mind, borne of poverty, did I make bold to appeal for help ; with pride pushing me back, helplessness pushing me on, and oscillating between the two, a thousand times did I my teeth uncover, learn to use language my tongue had not learnt to speak, beseech those whom I had not beseeched, opened many a gate I had not opened, and sing in praise of wicked men and fill my ears with their false words having lost my pride even before I began to praise them ; enough that I have

suffered so much; graciously confer upon this insignificant individual, O exalted Goddess of Senthamil, who groweth on the lap of the pitcher-born Rishi

(Agasthiyar)

resident in the Pothiya Hills of the South, riches that vanish not and service unto the divine feet."

As the eldest son of the family, separated from his next younger brother by over three years, he would have become deeply introverted had it not been for his early intimate contact with children of related families of the immediate neighbourhood, a contact so natural and inevitable in the humble circumstances and surroundings of healthy rural life. This early extroversion thus imparted to his personality, essentially introverted by virtue of his position in the family, was enhanced by the advent of his next younger brother, followed by another brother and a sister, with the result that he developed a very happy combination of some of the best qualities of both the extrovert and the introvert. His introverted nature is manifest in the highly imaginative character of his literary outpourings in Tamil verse, in the remarkable absence of desire for publicity, and in the sustained and intense devotion to his favourite deity, Murugan, and to the Goddess of Tamil. His inner life, surging with poetic imagination and sanctified by religious zeal, could not be subdued in any degree in either respect even by the unfortunate physical ailment, Asthma, which afflicted him for many years to the end of his life. On the other hand, it only made him turn more and more inwards, search within and sing profusely in praise of and in appeal to Murugan, Namahal, and other Hindu Deities. The ten stanzas entitled Arulpathu and addressed to Namahal, for instance, are a clear evidence of the conflict of his spirit and flesh and the assertion of the former amidst the sufferings of the latter. The last of these stanzas is -

ஒருகோடி பெரும்பாவ முணராது புரிந்தேன்
 ஓயாத சிற்றின்பத் துழன்றுமுன்று திரிந்தேன்
 உருகோடு மெய்யன்பா லுன்பாதம் பணியா
 வுன்மத்த னெனையாளத் திருவுள்ள மிரங்கி

அருகோடி வந்தெடுத்து மடிமீதி விருத்தி
 அறிவமுக நிறையவளித் தரும்பிணிகள் மாற்றித்
 திருகோட மடிபோடத் தீயவினை யோடச்
 செய்யதமிழ்ப் பெருமாட்டி திருவருள் செய்குதியே.

*“O lovable Mother Tamil ! Millions of time have I
 gravely sinned through ignorance ; into ceaseless
 sensuous pleasure have I gone on plunging over and
 over again ; to worship thy feet with consuming true
 love have I, this senseless fool, failed ; have mercy
 on me that I may be saved and hasten unto me ; lift me
 and seat me on thy lap ; feed me with the ambrosia of
 knowledge in plenty and heal me of my immedicable
 diseases ; and on me shed thy Divine Grace that
 wickedness ; poverty and evil may all vanish.”*



Even when this supplicatory stanza, born of his biform distress, was taking shape within, he turned the searchlight of his devout intellect inwards. He was, perhaps, gasping for breath at that moment and yet his first thought was that he should pray not for relief from physical suffering but for the plenitude of knowledge, enlightenment. This characteristic he shared in common with the majority of the Muse-inspired saints of Tamilagam, of whom the two Saivite saints, Thayumanavar and Paddinathupillaiyar are illustrious examples. These saints are all remembered primarily for their intense piety and ruthless detachment from things worldly and only secondarily for their poetic genius, for they had renounced the world and had been consumed by the one desire to attain eternal bliss. Whereas, Somasunthera Pulavar lived the life of a householder, a loving partner to his equally devoted wife, a fond and understanding father, a warm and affectionate brother, a great teacher, and a friend and counsellor to one and all, who came into close contact with him, irrespective of caste, creed or status. He thus reminds us also of that saintly poet, Thiruvalluvar. His entry into matrimony, however, was not of his own seeking. Intent as he was on a life of devotion to God and dedication to Mother Tamil, wedded state seemed to him a hindrance to the pursuit of his twofold

objective. Yet, impelled by his deep-seated affection and reverence to his parents and Guru, he yielded to their wish and, in his twenty-eighth year, married a maternal first cousin, Sinnammaiyar. This Guru, known as Subramania Swami, had come about eight years earlier all the way from Bangalore to the poet's village in answer as if it were to his silent prayers for guidance and strength to pursue his cherished ideals. The extraordinary spiritual influence then exerted on him by the Swami was profound and lasting, and it was a source of great strength and inspiration ever afterwards in his pursuit of the lofty goals early engendered in his heart. He had no cause to regret his decision to surrender his bachelorhood, for he certainly led a happy life with his devoted wife in the midst of a happy family of three sons and two daughters. Further, he has thus raised a new generation of talented and cultured individuals, which has already made a mark in the field of Tamil scholarship among other things. This is no less a gift of his to the Tamil Nadu than his voluminous poetic creation, which first became manifest in his fifteenth year and, gradually gathering momentum with growing maturity, reached great heights indeed and ceased only when his frail body was no longer a fit abode for his noble and vigorous soul, longing, in accord with his belief in re-incarnation, for a fitter vehicle to continue his already far advanced journey to the ultimate goal of realization of the Supreme Bliss.

His extrovert tendencies were equally manifest in his social living and poetic utterances. In his introduction to *Namahal Puhai Malai*, that fascinating work, "resplendent with captivating melodies, novel and apt similies and metaphors, copious yet appropriate allusions to Hindu Mythology and ancient history of the Tamil land, familiar, homely and at the same time elegant words and phrases, and above all a rich and sustained variety of all these and yet other beauties exquisitely combined as can only be combined by a poet and a scholar both in one, to produce a Castalian garland of variegated stanzaic flowers," to quote our own words from the foreword, he says

வம்மின் புலவீர் ! வம்மின் புலவீர் !
 இம்மையும் மறுமையு நன்மை பயந்து
 தொன்மையும் புதுமையு மென்மையுந் தெய்வத்
 தன்மையு நிரம்பி யெழுமையுந் தொடர்ந்து
 யாழினுங் குழலினும் பாலினுந் தேனினுங்
 காணினுங் கேட்பினுங் கருதினு மினிக்கும்
 அமிழ்துறழ் தலைமைத் தமிழ்மொழி யுணர்ந்த
 மெய்நெறிப் புலவீர் வம்மினெல்லீரும்,
 அந்தமு நடுவு மாதியுந் தெரியாச்
 செந்தமிழ் செல்வியைப் போற்றுதும் யாமெலாம்.

*Come o Bards, Come ! Virtuous Bards steeped in ambrosia-impregnated, peerless Tamil that begets goodness here and hereafter, is saturated with antiquity, modernity, tenderness and divinity, follows us through the sevenfold incarnation, delights us more than the *yarl and the flute, more than milk and honey, and when seen or heard or contemplated ! Come ye all that we may sing the praises of the Goddess of Senthamil !*

* *Yarl* : a sweet and melodious stringed musical instrument of ancient origin in the Tamil land.

This, his clarion call to all virtuous bards of Tamilagam inviting them to share with him the joy of devotion to Tamil, is an unwitting revelation of his admirable social attitude, unmistakably illustrated in abundance throughout his life by his deep concern for the well being and happiness of others. While he was yet in his teens, he organised and conducted a vigorous society of young men for the purpose of promoting the study and practice of the Saiva religion, and followed it up with the publication of a paper with the same objective, which he named Saiva Paliya Sampothini. He delighted in teaching religion and Tamil, and his home was a veritable free academy where many a young man sat at his feet and drank freely of the fountain of his culture and scholarship, for he neither expected nor received any remuneration. Nay, he even acted the host not infrequently regardless of the repercussions on his meagre resources. His choice of the

teaching profession, which he adorned for forty years till he reached the age of retirement, was deliberate. With the knowledge of English he had acquired he could have secured with little or no effort at that time a far more remunerative and secure employment, but his social concern and love of children would not permit him even to think of an alternative to teaching as his life's career. Not only did he nurture with loving tenderness and rare understanding the school children entrusted to his care, but also had a special place reserved in his benign heart for all children of Tamilagam, even for those yet unborn as well. The collection of his songs for the young, சிறுவர் செந்தமிழ், recently published in book form, is an eloquent, tangible index of this. It is indeed a work of rare excellence which bespeaks his insight into the often misread young mind and his extraordinary sense of rhythm and melody. His nature and culture naturally revolted against the social evil of animal sacrifice that is yet perpetrated in the name of misconceived Saivaism by ignorant people, whose obduracy made him turn to the young mind and sow in it the seeds of reform by appealing to its emotions. The pathos of the twenty-eight rhyming couplets of the familiar Tamil dirge form, which the poet, with this end in view, has put into the mouth of a mother goat lamenting the death of her beloved, majestic son in the prime of his life, is heart-rending indeed in an unusually high degree. The words and the sentiments they express have been so very aptly chosen that their charm is unique and inimitable. If they are sung as they should be in the appropriate tune, is there a man, woman or child so hard-hearted and impervious as to resist the copious flow of tender emotions which they are bound to evoke? The essential quality of these couplets, their highly emotive quintessence, eludes intellectual grasp, and it is, for this reason, extremely difficult, nay almost impossible, to convey in another language anything but a faint approximation to the feelings which characterize them in the original. Yet a translation of eight of them is herein attempted for what it is worth.

1. ஆசை மகனேயென் அன்பான கண்மணியே
நேசத் துரையே நெடும்பயணம் போனாயோ.

O my darling son, dear pupil of my eye, my affectionate lord, gone hast thou on a long, long journey !

2. நேராத கோவிலெல்லாம் நேர்ந்து தவமிருந்தே
ஆராத காதலுடன் ஐயோநான் பெற்றெடுத்தேன்.

With unabating love, alas, did I beget thee having longed for thy advent in prayer and fasting in many a temple !

3. துள்ளு நடையழகுஞ் சோதி முகத்தழகுங்
கொள்ளுஞ் செவியழகுங் கோமளமே காண்பதெப்போ.

When, Oh, when again, will I be able, O my young beauty, to feast my eyes with the splendour of thy springy gait, the radiance of thy shining face, and the grace thy ears assume ?

- 4 யாழுங் குழலுமென மின்பக் குதலைமொழி
நாளும் பொழுதுமினி நான்கேட்ப தெந்நாளோ.

When, Oh, when, will I be able to hear, as I used to day in and day out, thy childish chatter, sweet as the yarl and the flute ?

5. கிம்புரிப் பூணணிந்து கிண்கிணிப்பொற் றூர்கூட்டி
வம்ப ரலங்கரிக்கப் பார்த்து மகிழ்ந்தேனே.

Happy was I when I saw the treacherous decorate thee with bells and festoons on thy legs.

6. வன்னப்பொற் றேரேறி மாப்பிளைபோற் சென்றாயே
இன்னும் வரக்கானேன் எங்குற்றாய் எங்குற்றாய்.

Where, Oh, where, hast thou gone ? I beheld thee go riding on a pretty golden chariot like a bridegroom, and thou hast not returned yet !

7. பெண்ணை மணந்தெனது பிள்ளைவரு வானென்றே
எண்ணி யிருந்துநா னேமாந்து போனெனெடா.

*Methought my child would wed a woman and return,
but deceived have I been, Oh my son !*

8. ஓங்கிய கத்தி விழும்போ துடல் நடுங்க
எங்கி யெனைநினைந்தென் னம்மாவோ வென்றாயோ.

*When the raised knife descended and thy body
quivered, didst thou quail and, remembering me, cry
" Oh, my mother dear" ?*

Nature also had a great fascination for our poet, but its appeal was often more subjective than objective in the sense that his perception of the beauty, majesty, dignity and grace in Nature associatively synchronized with the appreciation of like qualities in men. This again is a manifestation of the extroverted aspect of his personality, permanently disposed to assess the worth of the individual as a component of society, and take delight in recognizing virtues while condemning the opposite. In his work on Nature's Gifts to Lanka and the Beauty of the Palmyrah Palm (இலங்கை வளமும் தால விலாசமும்) he sees —

1. *the magnanimity of the Tamil King Ellalan, in the thirsty rain clouds which descend to drink of the Indian Ocean and in carded cotton ;*

எங்கிய பஞ்சினைப் போலத் — தமிழ்
எல்லாள் மன்ன னிருதயம் போல
வெங்கிய வெண்முகிற் கூட்டம் — இந்து
வெண்டிரை மேயவெ முந்திடு மன்றே

2. *the generosity of the benevolent who exact what they can from the miserly rich and distribute it among the poor, in the same clouds which drink deep of the saline ocean, and, combining and rolling, ascend ;*

ஈயாத வற்சரின் வெளவி — நல்ல
இரவலர்க் கீகின்ற புரவலர் போல
ஓயா வுவர்க்கட லள்ளி — மிக
வுண்டு திரண்டு புரண்டெழு மேகம்.

3. *the ignorance of the illiterate and the jealous, in the intense darkness of the Kaduganawa Pass, and in the dark moistureladen clouds, which, in lightening mock at the sun, and, in thunder, challenge him;*

கல்லா தவர்மனம் போல — அன்றிக்
 கடுகணைக் குவைவரு கனையிருள் போல
 அல்லா தழுக்காறு கொண்டோர் — மனம்
 ஆமென வேயிருண் டங்குகூழ் கொண்டே
 செங்கதி ரோன் துனை யொள்ளி — நின்று
 சிரிப்பது போல விடையிடை மின்னி
 அங்கவ ரோடறை கூவி — எதிர்த்
 தூர்ப்பது போல விடித்து முழங்கும்.

4. *the Grace with which Buddha, the great conqueror of all desires and hatreds, preached to the wide world the knowledge he had gained in the course of six years of meditation under the bo-tree, in the river that takes its rise in the Adam's peak ;*

அரசு நீழலிற் புத்த மாமுனி
 ஆறு வற்சரம் பெற்ற யோகினைப்
 பரவு பாரினுக் கருளு மாறுபோற்
 பாத பங்கயத் தருவி பாயுமே.

5. *the righteousness of the Sermon on the Mount of Jesus, the Enlightened One, in the river which flows from Pedrutalagala hills, having received the bounty of the great clouds ;*

ஏசு வென்றிடும் ஞான பண்டிதன்
 ஏறி மாமலைக் கூறு நீதிபோற்
 பேசு மாமுகில் சொரிய வாங்கியே
 பேது ருமலை யருவி பாயுமே.

6. *the censorial oratory of Arumuga Navalar of Nallur employed by him to propagate the knowledge of Saivaism he had imbibed from Tamil Religious Literature, in the flow of the river of the Kataragama hills ;*

உண்ட செந்தமிழ்ச் சைவ நூலமு
தோங்க நல்லைவந் தருளு நாவலன்
கண்ட னப்பிர சங்க மாமெனக்
கதிரை மாமலை யருவி காலுமே.

7. *the seven different thermal degrees of the seven hot springs of Kaniyai, situated in jungle surroundings in the outskirts of Trincomalie, in the minds of (1) the damsel separated from her lover, (2) the bard who sings in praise and receives no boon, (3) one who is insulted and threatened with harm, (4) one who regrets a wrong he had done, (5) the helpless one who is denied justice, (6) the chaste woman whose chastity has been violated, and (7) the green-eyed monster ;*

காதலனைப் பிரிந்தவளின் மனம்போல ஒன்று
கவிபாடிப் பரிசுபெறான் மறம்போல ஒன்று
தீதுபழி கேட்டவன்தன் மனம்போல ஒன்று
செய்தபிழைக் கழுங்குமவன் மனம்போல ஒன்று
நீதிபெற வேழைதுயர் மனம்போல ஒன்று
நிறைபழித்த கற்புடையாள் மனம்போல ஒன்று
காதுமழுக் காறுடையான் மனம்போல ஒன்று
கனலேறு மெழுநீர்கள் உண்டுகன்னி யாயில் ;

8. *the protection, which the crowned monarch affords his realm with drawn sword of steel, in the palmyrah palm, which, wielding the sword-like stalk of its leaf, destroys poverty and thus protects humanity:*

உருக்குவா னேந்திப் பகைசெற்றுலகினை
யோம்பு மணிமுடி மன்னவன்போற்
கருக்குவா னேந்திக் கலியை யழித்திந்தக்
காசினி யைக் காக்கும் ஞானப்பெண்ணே.

Somasunthera Pulavar's interests extended to other fields as well. Astrology, palmistry, mantric literature, medicine and culinary art also attracted him, and he made a special study of them all not because he desired to become a practitioner of any one of them but because his broad-based intellect

demanded for its food as great a variety of knowledge as he could gather. Further these branches of oriental learning, which play not a small part, though not as of yore, in the life of the Tamils, especially the Saivites, enriched his service to the society to which he belonged and contributed not a little to the happiness of its members. This was not all. He was also a dramatist who had written plays and, besides directing their production on the stage, himself acted in some of them. A religious scholar that he was, he avidly devoured books on Saiva Sidhanta Religion and Philosophy. His desire that others also should experience the happiness he thus derived had possessed him so much that, from his death-bed a week before he breathed his last, he regretfully remarked, "Who will, after I am gone, render Gnanamirtham (a Saiva Sidhanta verse work) in the form lessons in sweet and simple prose, and Perungkathai (the story of Uthaiyanan) in the form of a drama?", and added that he would be born again in Tamilagam to perform these two services.

The quantity of Somasunthera Pulavar's literary productions is no less impressive than its quality. Apart from over a thousand isolated verses he had composed on almost as many occasions as they arose, there are to his credit over twenty-five works in verse and a few in prose, many of which are yet in manuscript form awaiting publication. Poet he was, but he was also a man of action. He dreamt dreams and saw visions as all poets do, but, unlike those poets who, for the most part, rest content with indulging in their dreams and visions in the cloister of their own mental life, he recorded most of them for the benefit of contemporary society and posterity in elegant and captivating linguistic form, be it verse or prose. Still more impressive are his character and ideals. At the present time, when materialism and sensualism are spreading much faster than most people seem to realise, underneath a superficial layer of formal religion or displacing religion altogether, personalities such as that of Somasunthera Pulavar stand as beacons illumining forgotten ideals and guiding us towards them. The more important of his social ideals, which he diligently and sincerely pursued and were evident to all who

had the privilege of knowing him intimately were propagation of Tamilian culture and way of living, hospitality, forgiveness and tolerance. He was thus a brilliant poet, an unobtrusive social reformer, a great teacher, and an ardent devotee, all in one, whose inner beauty was magnificently reflected in his lustrous face, gracious eyes, graceful deportment, and charming speech. HE WAS GREAT.

The Tragedy of Ahalya

(*A study in Kamba Ramayanam*)

BY

E. T. RAJESWARI, M. A., L. T.

A

IN THE *Ramayana* the tragedy of Ahalya is narrated after the tragedy of Tataka. The greatness of Tataka was sufficiently brought out in the previous essay to justify the name tragedy as applied to her fall. The tragedy of Ahalya, however, may not be a correct description of the story of Ahalya ; for after her fall she is restored to her husband and lord and to a happy and righteous life. The story, has thus, to be ranked along with comedies because of this happy resolution of the tragic complications. But all the same in essence it is a tragedy, a greater tragedy than the story of Cleopatra, the restoration part of the story coming in here only as a dramatic elaboration of the conception of poetic justice. This elaboration and concrete realisation of the idea, it is true, becomes important in the story of Rama as revealing his character and from this point of view, it is the comedy that has to be emphasised. But as a poetic vision and a dramatisation of problems of life it is more revealing if it is studied as a tragedy.

The main object of our study is the characteristic feature of Kamban's art as best illustrated by his free treatment of the minor episodes of *Ramayana* especially these dealings with the lives of the women. Restricting thus our study to women characters, we pass over the story of the churning of the ocean and the penance of Bhagirata, both emphasising the inevitable nemesis that follows power intoxication and the unfailing and undreamt of victory of

spiritual effort. Kamban, however, connects the story of Tataka with that of Ahalya as revelations of Rama's character *Kai Vannam anku-K-Kanten Kal Vannam inku-K-Kanten*. "I saw there the characteristic feature of your arms I see here the characteristic feature of your feet" thus speaks Kamban's Visvamitra.

Akalikai is the Tamilised form of the word Ahalya. Halya is related to the English word ugly and means an ugly one; 'a' is the remnant of the negative particle 'ha'. Ahalya is the opposite of ugliness — the beautiful — the most beautiful woman created by Brahma. Gautama is the seer who won her. Indra, the King of the Heavens, corrupts her. Ahalya receives the curse and after enduring this punishment comes back as the purified chaste and worshipful wife. Ahalya is one of the seven chaste women of Indian tradition.

This story of Ahalya represents the ever recurring theme of many stories all the world over. It reminds us of a modern divorce suit filed by an aggrieved husband against his false wife. To emphasise the modernity of the theme, we may continue to speak in this legal jargon where Gautama will be the Petitioner, Ahalya the Respondent and Indra the Correspondent. Fortunately there is no denial of the offence but a patient and willing endurance of the punishment pronounced not by a Court but by the husband. The punishment thus endured cease to be mere enforcement of political sovereignty and social peace but rises to the level of moral expiation, mental purification and spiritual conversion. Therefore, the story ends in the reunion of the old couple.

One is naturally curious to know how this most ancient and the most modern theme — an archetype according to Jung — is handled by Kamban walking in the footsteps of his illustrious predecessor Valmiki, the Father of Indian Epics, as contrasted with the varied treatments which this story has received at the hands of other epic poets of India.

B

The story of Ahalya occupies the Forty eighth and Forty ninth chapters in Valmiki's Balakanta. After Tataka's demise, the sacrifice is duly performed by Visvamitra. The Rishi takes the princes Rama and Lakshmana through the road leading to Mithila of Janaka, probably with a view to bring about the marriage of Rama with Sita.

Visvamitra along with the princes enters the outskirts of Mithila. Rama notices an old uninhabited, but a beautiful ashrama or grave and he is naturally curious to know from his guide and philosopher why it lies so deserted. Viswamitra as a good and seasoned teacher well versed in the art of story tellings begins to narrate the story of the curse that befell Ahalya.

Here lived in olden days the great Rishi Gautama — thus narrates Visvamitra—along with his wife Ahalya. One day, Indra, the King of Heavens, mad after her beauty, coming to know of the absence of Gautama from home, entered the Ashrama in the very form of Gautama, to allay all fears of suspicion. But to Ahalya he revealed his identity and confessed his love to her. Knowing that it was the Lord of the Thousand eyes, she lost herself in the thought of being happy with the very King of the Heavens and exclaimed in joy to him "From my heart of hearts I feel I am fortunate" and Indra spent a happy time with her. While he was hurriedly making his exit, he saw entering Gautama that great fire of Tapas. Indra's face turned white with fright and the Rishi seeing the King of Heavens in the garb of a Seer understood the situation and cursed Indra to become fruitless. Then came the turn of Ahalya "You lie here for many thousands of years living on air alone without any more food, burning yourself away on a bed of ashes, invisible to all beings. You will become pure and whole when Rama, son of Dasaratha enters this cruel forest. When you welcome him, all your blots would be removed. You will then assume your old form and come back to me" — thus was pronounced the curse on Ahalya by Gautama. The last sentence reveals that the

volcano of tapas has become transferred into an ocean of mercy, and love which reminds us that in this curse he is himself laying a curse on himself of separation from her and isolation in tapas in the fond hope of living a happy life with a purified and chaste wife.

In the next chapter Visvamitra explains how aided by Devas in whose cause Indra pretended to have suffered this ignominy — for according to him his was an attempt at cursing the tapas of Gautama consuming them and the world away — he overcame his curse with the help of a scape goat of a sheep. There stops the narration and the drama of Ramayana proceeds.

At the request of Visvamitra Rama enters the Ashrama, which the prince has noticed as being desolate and where Ahalya has been burning away all these years. As soon as Rama steps in she becomes visible and the curse comes to an end. Memory returns to her and she remembers the last words of Gautama. She recognises in the prince her promised saviour and she welcomes Rama as the guest in chief showering on him all hospitality. Thus purified she is taken away by Gautama. Thus ends the story of Ahalya in Valmiki's Ramayana.

C

Valmiki is great as a story teller even in narrating this story. Here also Visvamitra shines as a great teacher giving the story only when his students are interested in asking him to explain a situation. The remarks we had made with reference to the narration of the story of Tataka are equally applicable to this narration.

In this version of the story it is the man Indra, who kindles the fire of sin in the heart of the innocent woman. But Ahalya intoxicated by the mere sight of Royalty forgets everything else. It is their misfortune that the husband comes in before Indra walks out of Ahalya's house. Perhaps the Rishi Gautama is also like others a victim to jealousy

but his indignation is a righteous one and rises thanks to his spiritual development to the impartial level of Dharma. Like Dharma after restoring the disturbed equilibrium he relents ; for he is speaking of taking back Ahalya.

Both Ahalya and Indra have erred consciously. Indra's excuse is that Gautama is upsetting the natural order of things by his excessive tapas, and that if he had not disturbed Gautama's victories towards greater and greater volcanic tapas there would have been room for nothing else in this world. The seductive act of Indra has certainly put an end to the spiritual and mental peace and equanimity of Gautama, who is made thus to realise that there is something more to be cared after in this world than himself and his tapas which under the circumstances appears more like self aggrandisement ; it rudely reminds him that there is a world with his own wife as its centre to be saved. This is indeed a sad commentary on the powers of his tapas which could not influence to any extent whatever even the most wonderful creation of Brahma — Ahalya and raise that unexcelled physical beauty with which he has been blessed to his own heights of moral beauty. The curse he utters is the creaking crash of this spiritual personality.

Ahalya as the name itself implies is the very embodiment of feminine beauty which Gautama, the supreme embodiment of tapas aspired for along with Indra the supreme embodiment of power and wealth. But mere physical beauty seems to resonate only to the specific tune of the drum of power and wealth rather than to the music of the harp of virtue, because this harp has not been set to vibrate in unison with the lyre of the feminine heart of beauty. Human greatness however is something more than mere physical beauty and the latter unaided by a moral companion for life, falls naturally as a prey to the glamour of pomp and power. But this mad race after material mirage of seeming pleasure soon becomes sick

of its own imaginary surfeit especially when it meets with an obstruction. Obstruction egged on Tataka to run the race with redoubled but diabolical vigour. Here however, thanks to the childish simplicity of Ahalya who has not known the world, it has inspired in her a repentance. Welcoming the appropriate curse and punishment, she stands converted in the end as the worthy wife of a great sage not only as a mere embodiment of physical beauty but also as a moral beauty at the very moment when the perfect Man, Rama, comes as it were to effect this final divine transformation by his very presence like gold purified and sublimated, after she had gone through the consuming fire of tapas on a bed of ashes.

D

Like all old stories this has become a parable of the triangle of forces of Beauty, Power, Tapas. Some have taken Ahalya to represent Art the Beautiful. Though it may be wedded to morality, when the union is not complete but only an outward formality, art deteriorates and is seduced in to a bedmate of all varieties of power. Is this not what happened to our arts — dancing, music and poetry all developing as temple arts? Have they not been identified with public women? What was the poetry of the Palayagars or chieftains but a poetry of debauchery? This fall is repeated often in the course of history. In the age of Alvars and Nayanmars great authors like Tiruttakka Tevar identified these arts with sexual passion speaking of the wealth and greatness of Vina or lyre as Kama or lust. After this suffering and neglect the art came thanks to these Saints to be truly wedded to morality and spirituality, by becoming one with these great ideals and values of life — not a lecture but a poetry. The modern money hunting films of blood curdling tales reveal crime in all its nakedness, apparently with the idea of scaring away their audience from such vices but ultimately end only in

popularising the crime. The filthy lucre of Indra has seduced art to its own nefarious purposes. From this must arise once again the purified art in communion with higher ideals of Gautama. The story of Ahalya, according to this kind of thought, is really esthetics, the science of beauty, giving through its parable the history of its fall and rise.

(To be continued)

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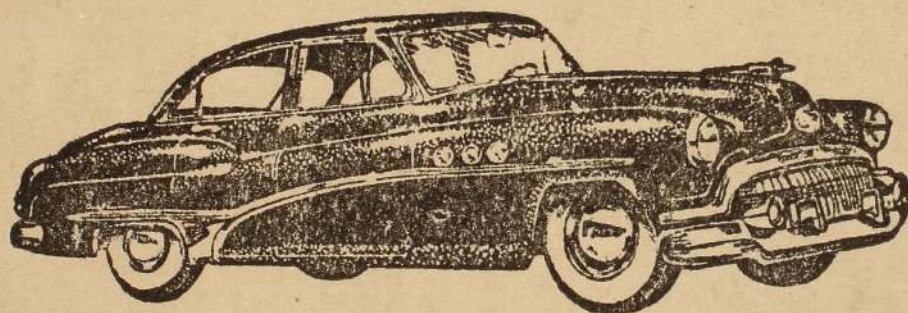


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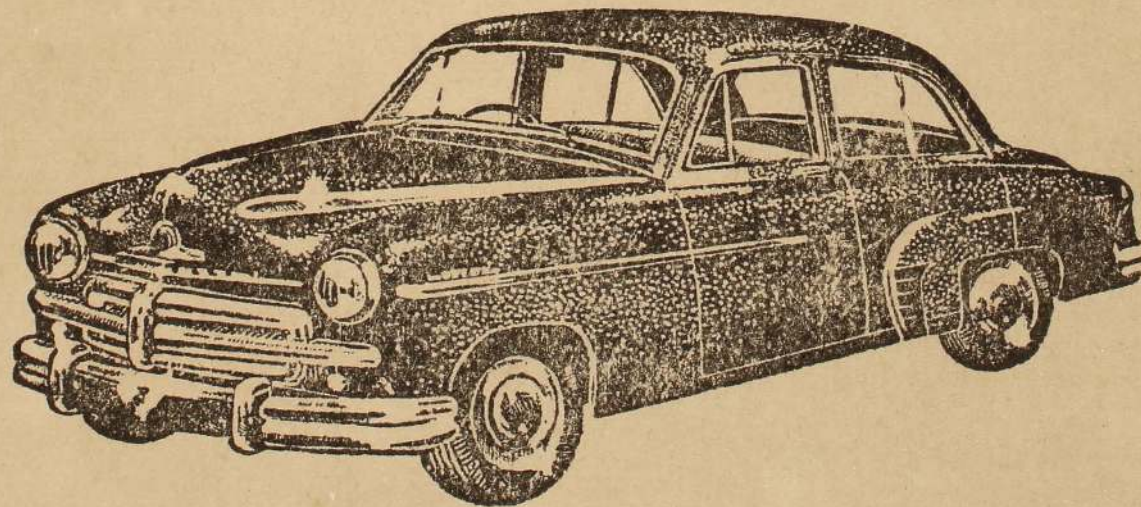
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