

LANKAN THAMIL CULTURE

K. S. Sivakumaran

LANKAN THAMIL CULTURE

**REVIEWS OF A FEW SELECTED ARTICLES AND
BOOKS IN THAMIL**

K S SIVAKUMARAN

M A English - University of Madras

The Author's Books in English

1. Tamil Writing in Sri Lanka - 1974
2. Aspects of Culture in Sri Lanka - 1992
3. K S Sivakumaran on Films Seen - 2017
4. Lankan Tamil Culture - 2018

Reprinted as a combined book with additional notes:

5. Sri Lankan Tamil Literature and Culture - 2018 Part 1
6. Aspects of Culture in Sri Lanka - 2018 Part 2

K S Sivakumaran (born on October 01, 1936) has a General B A Degree from the University of Peradeniya and an English (Special) Master's Degree from the University of Madras.

Presently he works as a columnist for Lankan English and Tamil Newspapers on Literature and Films.

He had worked for the The Island and Daily News, Virakesari and Navamani and also for the Sri Lankan Broadcasting Corporation.

He is a writer and critic and was acknowledged as the Best English Columnist for the year 2012 by the Press Institute and College of Journalism and as an outstanding Film Critic by the OCIC.

He has written more than 30 books in Tamil mainly on Literary Criticism and Reviews of Books.

He writes short stories and poems besides translating articles.

LANKAN THAMIL CULTURE

REVIEWS OF A FEW SELECTED ARTICLES AND
BOOKS IN THAMIL

K S SIVAKUMARAN
M A English - University of Madras



S. Godage & Brothers (Pvt) Ltd.

LANKAN THAMIL
CULTURE

REVIEWS OF A FEW SELECTED ARTICLES AND
BOOKS IN THAMIL

K. S. SIVAKUMARAN
Author

First Print : 2018

Lankan Thamil Culture

© K. S. Sivakumaran

ISBN 978-955-30-9256-4

Page Setting by:

Thamali Rupasinghe

Published by:

S. Godage & Brothers (Pvt) Ltd.

661, 665, 675, P. de S. Kularatne Mawatha, Colombo 10, Sri Lanka.

Printed by:

Chathura Printers

69, Kumaradasa Place, Wellampitiya, Sri Lanka

20955/5398/250

PREFACE

This book is a collection of newspaper articles I wrote on Lankan Tamil Culture over the years. They are printed as they were published then. Please note the year and the source of publication. Therefore, the articles remain not updated. However, a wide range of valuable information could be collected by researchers on Lankan Tamil Culture. Since there is a dearth of knowledge on Tamil Culture and literature made available for non-Tamil readers, this and my other books in English can serve as source books.

There are many more articles that should be gathered for future publications.

I have been covering the Tamil Cultural Scene since the late 1950s.

Please bear with me if any inconsistencies in presentation are found because of printer's devil in newspaper articles that were published at that time.

Thank you
K S Sivakumaran
21 Murugan Place,
Off Havelock Road,
Colombo 06.

Tel. (94 -11) 2587 617 . 007 039 2234 , 077 881 3467
e-mail - sivakumaranks121@gmail.com
August 2018.

PREFACE

The book is a collection of newspaper articles I wrote on Indian Thought Culture over the years. They are printed as they were published. Please note the year and the source of publication. However, the original information could be collected by researchers on Indian Thought Culture. There is a dearth of knowledge on Indian Culture and history made available for non-Indian readers, this book will help in English on some of these books.

I have written some articles that should be gathered for future publications.

I have been covering the Indian Cultural Scene since the late 1950s.

There has been a lot of my involvement in providing the Indian people of the world in my paper articles that were published at that time.

Thank you
K. S. Narayan
11, Morgan Lane
601, Riverside Road
Chennai - 600 017

ISBN 978-81-7629-134-1
www.aavanaham.org
2019

CONTENTS

01. The early Lankan Novel in Tamil
02. The life and works of Swami Vipulananthar
03. The Philosophical Background of Yaalpaanam (Jaffna) Culture
04. Hinduism and Lankan practice
05. A Hindu Encyclopaedia
06. An Insight into the Yaalpaanam (Jaffna) mind.
07. The State and Tamil culture
08. Which Tamil?
09. What is Arabu Tamil?
10. A Bibliography of Tamil Press
11. Searching the past for a better future
12. Santhan's Travelogue
13. On Saivaism
14. Portrait of a Plantation Writer
15. Subramania Bharathi - seen by Lankan writers
16. Note on Vesak in Tamil
17. Valvettiturai seafarers sail for U.S.
18. Intellectual Interpretation by a Marxist Writer in Tamil
19. Tamil and Soviet Literature

20. Rituals and the links between Tamils and the Japanese.
21. In Search of Cultural Identity
22. Lovable Academic
23. A.M.A. Azeez as a Scholar in Tamil
24. Tribute to a Savant
25. Remembering S. Rajaratnam of 'Hindu Board' fame
26. Lankan Tamil Music
27. Martin Wickramasinghe's writing in Tamil
28. A Lankan Canadian's Perspective
29. The story of Ealanadu and an enterprising Editor
30. Tamil books in Sinhala

LANKAN THAMIL CULTURE

01. THE EARLY LANKAN NOVEL IN THAMIL

(Daily News - March 31, 2004)

The books in Thamil record a bibliography and commentary on the development of novel writing in Thamil by Lankan writers. They were written by writers who are also considered "critics". One was a poet of some distinction and a satirist and a versatile performing artiste. He was the late S.M. Selvarasan born in the village of Sillayoor in Yaalapanam. He was well known as Sillayoor Selvarajan. He wrote poetry under the name "Thaan Thontri Kavirayar" and had many nom de plumes. He excelled in the art of reciting poetry in public performances and brought in a new style of presentation. He was an excellent broadcaster, television compere, actor, singer, lyricist, radio playwright, advertising copy editor, and newspaperman, among many other preoccupations.

A man of all seasons the late Sillayoor Selvarajan was one of the colourful personalities that the Thamil community in Lanka had in the world of the arts. Two of his international acclaim was his performance in Bhopal in India in an international gathering of poets and an award he received from Japan. May I humbly state that on my suggestion, Yasmine Gooneratne invited him to write in English a note on the early Thamil novels in Sri Lanka for the Part I of Ceylonese Writing published in the now defunct periodical Community edited by C.R. Hensman. Also in this

issue was an article by the late S. Vithiananthan on early Lankan Tamil Literature.

In Part 2, a critique on a Lankan Tamil novel titled "Thentralum Puyalum" (Gentle Breeze and the Storm) written by the late Islamic writer Subair (nom de plume: Ilankeeran) was included. That review was written by K.S.Sivakumaran. Film was another medium that Sillayoor Selvarajan used. "Aadare Kathawa" was a Sinhala film of ethnic love in which Selvarajan and his family played the leading roles. He was married twice and his second wife was Kamalini Selvarajan, well-known TV personality in Tamil. Tissa Abeysekera, bilingual (Sinhala and English) writer and critic of distinction, filmmaker and screenwriter made a docu shortfilm titled "Kamam" (Agriculture) in Tamil with Silayoor Selvarajan and Kamalini in the 1970s.

Sillayoor Selvarajan also published a few more books in Tamil and one of which was his poetic rendition of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. His erstwhile companion was another fine short story writer and "critic" in Tamil, M.D. Rasadurai from Oor Kaavat Turai (Kayts) in Yaalapanam, well known as Kavaloor Rasdurai (more about him later). During the late 1950s both, Sillayoor and Kavaloor (the names of their respective villages before their actual names) worked for the former Shell Company. One of the fine editors in English and Sinhala, Lakshman Ratnapala was also working for that company then. (I worked with Lakshman in the news room of the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation in the 1970s) "Eelathu Tamil Naaval Valarchi" (The Growth of the Tamil Novel in Sri Lanka) written by Silayoor Selvarajan was published in 1967.

The writer traces the novel writing in the country in Tamil between 1891 and 1962. He compiles researched

information and comments and also significant excerpts from such novels. This was a grand task, which the academics could not do at that time. In his introduction, the writer humbly states that his attempt was only a guide. Kamalini Selvarajan's father, a great Tamil scholar, the late Pulolyoor M. Kanapathipillai gives valuable information on Tamil studies in his foreword to Sillayoor's book. Sillayoor Selvarajan considered that "Ooson Palanin Kathai" (1891) was the first Tamil novel in Sri Lanka. But this was disputed by S.M.Kamaldeen and it is now considered that the first novel was "Asambe Kathai". Selvarajan also mentioned that the first woman novelist in Tamil in Sri Lanka was S. Sellammal (1924). This was also subject to change later. The novels of the 1930s were romantic, meaning aesthetic, imaginative, individual morality, adventurism and typical, says the writer. He also qualifies that from the 1940s, the motif changes. Commenting on the novels of "Kasin", the writer says that developing a nucleus of a short story "Kasin" develops into a novel portraying rural middle class characters in a humorous way. Talking about the Late "Ilankeeran's (a Muslim born in Yaalpanam) novels, Sillayoor says the village poor in Yaalpanam are the characters in his novel of social realism.

One of the remarkable writers in Tamil was S. Ponnuthurai. He was not properly analyzed nor given due recognition by partisan "critics" and yet with his shortcomings, he was a terrible experimenter. Commenting on S. Ponnuthurai's "Thee" (Fire), Selvarajan attributes the novel to a bold exposition of sexuality with its thematic content of self-pity. Sillayoor claimed that poetry was his best medium to convey his message. I liked particularly his poems on his friend and mentor the late A.N. Kanthasamy,

a poem titled "Siluvaiyil Araiyaunda Mulu Nila" (The Full Moon Nailed on the Cross) and a beautiful poem of images on travelling in Yaal Devi (an express train that was running between Colombo and Yaalpanam) long before the tragic political consequences.

LANKAN THAMIL NOVELS (1885 - 1977)

The second book on the subject is by academic N. Subramaniam titled "Eelathil Thamil Naaval Ilakiyam" (Thamil Novel in Sri Lanka). This was published in 1978. As a history of the growth of novel writing in the island with its critical notes, this book was certainly an updated and better version than on Sillayoor Selvarajan's pioneer work described above. The late scholar S. Vithiananthan in his foreword to the book writes thus: "The Thamil novel in Sri Lanka has a history of nearly 100 years and more than 400 novels had been written.

Booklets, articles, informative pieces, bibliographies, reviews, critiques and the like on the subject have appeared before spasmodically, but a whole book had not been written before. In that respect N. Subramaniam's book is the first of its kind from historical perspective." (Please remember that this foreword was written 28 years ago.)

How does N. Subramaniam fit in as historiographer? The author explains himself: The history of Sri Lankan Thamil Novel is classified under five heads. The context in late 19th century for this genre of fiction in Sri Lanka is first explained.

The first chapter reviews the first attempts in novel writing. The second deals with social reforms oriented novels in the first part of the 20th century. This is followed

in the next chapter with a coverage of the next 25 years under the title the "Urge to Write". The fourth chapter covers the next 15 years under the title "The Age of Social Criticism". The period 1973 - 1978 is covered under the title, "Towards Regionalistic Novels."

The concluding chapter is filled with a bibliography of Lankan Tamil Novels, information on significant research, references and an index.

"As a doctoral thesis N. Subramaniam's book, as academic A. Shanmugadas says, is a painstaking effort in gathering information and marshalling them in an appropriate manner. The author in fact considers about 450 novels. This is indeed a stupendous task.

As the publisher, writer K. Sockalingam (Chokkan) says this study is truly a research work.

The author begins with the first novel. "Asanbae Udaya Kathai" (1885) written by Siddi Lebbe (Sri Lankan government had issued a stamp in his memory) and ends with Puthiya Bhoomi" (1977).

The first novel in Tamil ever to be written was by a Tamilnadu writer, Vedanayagam Pillai who wrote "Prathaba Mudaliyar Charithram" (1879).

The second was by a Sri Lankan in 1885.

These novels had an epic like quality.

And the beginning of the 20th century saw Lankans using the country's locale to depict their stories.

The first novel to be written in this manner was "Vijaya Seelam" (1916).

The first novel depicting the social problems of Lankan Tamilians was in fact by a woman writer, Mangala Nayagi.

Her novel in 1916 was titled "Norungunda Iruthayam" (A Broken Heart).

I remember reading editor A. Sivanesachelvan of Lankan Tamil Daily, "Thinakural", discovering this novel and introducing it in a booklet.

N. Subramaniam informs that until the end of the 1930s, nearly 50 novels had been written. While at the beginning contemporary social problems were discussed in Lankan Tamil Novels, later mystery novels came into the scene.

The experimental novels came to be written in the 1960s. "Mathapoo" (1961) - Fire - works, "Thee" (also in 1961) - "Fire" were outstanding novels contend the author. Social problems in a historical perspective were written in mid 1960s by the Progressive writer, S. Ganeshalingan, who wrote contemporary historical novels depicting the "caste" problems among the northern Sri Lankans. His novels "Neenda Payanam" (1965) - The Long Journey, "Sadangu" (1966) - Rituals, "Por Kolam" (1969) were a few of his early works. According to N. Subramaniam, who is undoubtedly knowledgeable on Lankan Tamil Novels, among the best fiction written up to the publication of his book, the following were significant: The novels by S. Ganeshalingan (Neenda Payanam - The Long Journey, Sevvanam - The Red Sky, Sadangu - The Rituals, Por Kolam - The Garb to War), S. Ponnuthurai (Sadanugu - The Rituals), J. Benedict Balan (Sonthakaran - The Owner), A. Balamanotharan (Nila Kili - a parrot of the soil) Arul Subramaniam (Avarhalukku Vayathu Vanthuviddathu - They Have Come of Age), Sengai Aaliyaan (Kaataru - The Jungle Stream).

I agree, and should hasten to add that there are more significant novels covering the last few decades of Lankan

society and history. One commendable feature of Lankan Tamil writers is that most of them are realistic and depict society in a meaningful way. In fact they are social critics. One novelist who couldn't find a place in Subramaniam's book was the late K. Daniel, whose works came to be written later.

READERS' REACTION

I wish to thank the following for their kind comments and critical responses to this column. I am elated, educated and thankful for taking their time to write to me; Please keep in touch with this column. Responses by critical readers are always welcome. Dileep Chandralal, Arjuna Hulugalle, Tissa Jayathilake, M.K. Muruganandan, D.B.S.Jeyaraj. Wimal Dissanayake, Jean Arasanayagam, K.Ganesh, Dharshani Jayasinghe, V.N.Giritharan, Pon Kulendran. A Muthulingam, Prashanthi Segar, Doris Homan, Arul, Greg Hounshell, Jegatheeswari Nagendran, Charles Perera, Christine and David, A. Santhan, S.M. Hanifa, P. Thambirajah, Dan Peck and Vasant Pullenayagam.

02. THE LIFE AND WORKS OF SWAMI VIPULANANDAR

(Daily Mirror - April 14, 1977)

Swami Vipulanandar was the first Professor in Tamil, University of the Sri Lanka. From 1943 until his demise in July 1947 he held this post. But prior to that i.e. way back in 1931 he was invited to the Chair of Tamil at the Raja Sri Annamalai Chettiar University at Chithamparam in South India, which he accepted. Swami Vipulanandar

was a Ceylonese, born in Karaithivu in the eastern province and he is one of the two acknowledged Tamil scholars unreservedly accepted by the South Indian Old Guards. The other is Srila Sri Arumuga Navalar.

The main contribution of Swami Vipulanandar to Tamil studies was his painstaking research study of a classical musical instrument called Yaal something akin to Lyre. His remarkable work Yaal Nool was formally published in 1947, in Kumbakonam, South India.

Swami Vipulanandar was a prolific writer and wrote for many years in English and Tamil. He edited an English journal called PRABUDDHA BHARATA published by the Ramakrishna Mission of India, from Calcutta. In his capacity as the editor he wrote a number of thought - provoking leaders and articles. He also wrote in the Tamil journals RAMAKRISHNA VIJAYAM and VIVEKANANDAN. In fact he wrote to almost all the serious journals in Tamil during the thirties and forties.

Research students say that there must be 200 to 300 articles written by him.

Swami Vipulanandar was also in his own right a traditional critic. One of our modern critics described him aptly: "He endeavoured to marry modern concept with Hindu view of the art".

Some of Swami Vipulanandar's critical articles are found in Ilakkiya Katuraigal currently the text for Advanced Level Tamil Literature paper. A complete collection of Vipulanandar's works, both prose and poetry is a desideratum. It may be a worthwhile idea for some one to bring out even a collection of letters of Swami Vipulanandar.

He wrote to many. One such letter is included in a

book edited by Mr. Ambikalpahan. The book entitled VIPULANANTHAR ULLAM, meaning the Mind of Vipulanandar is a useful collection. Apart from the letter mentioned there are 11 short essays in this collection. They truly speak the mind of Swami Vipulanandar. One such essay is entitled "Why a University for Jaffna?" The author of this edition Mr. S. Ambikaipahan who is himself a scholar and a student of Swami Vipulanandar had translated into English this essay on the Jaffna University written by the Swami in 1921. I quote some excerpts from this translation published in the HINDU ORGAN of 09.01.1970.

"Colombo and Jaffna abound in many secondary schools. It is therefore the opinion of some that it is one of those places that most deserved to enjoy the full benefits of a University. It is the desire of all interested in education that in spite of the establishment of the University in the Dumbara Valley educational activity in these two cities should flourish without any hindrance. A seat of learning is a place where the truly learned gather. It is not a mere concentration of imposing buildings. Even if the place where the learned and the wise are gathered is a forest, that place becomes an apt temple for the goddess of learning.

The Upanishads which expound the highest truth are also called Aranayakas because they are the utterances of great sages who lived in the forest or Aranyakas and carried on the research into verities of life. Let the University be established anywhere. Our conviction is that Jaffna where have lived in the past great poets and scholars should continue to make rapid strides in the field of education. Jaffna should abound in scholars in Tamil, Sanskrit and western sciences. Our youngsters possessed as they are of such keen intelligence should bloom into distinguished philosophers,

scientists and scholars in Sanskrit and Tamil. They should bring out books which would earn world recognition.

Those who have not given sufficient thoughts to our views may consider them fantastic. Such people are ignorant of the past history of Jaffna. Did not the Tamil Sangam which was founded in ancient times at Nallur by Sinhai Arya Chakravartis and which functioned as a University bringing out such original and standard works as the Tamil epic Raghuvamsa, treatises on medicine and astrology like Pararajasekeram and Segarajasekeram? Did not the Vaddukoddai seminary by the American Missionaries serve as a pointer to the Indian Universities? Later, were there not in Jaffna Sanskrit scholars like Gnanapragasa Munivar and Vaithiyanatha Munivar? Did not the seminary produce Mathematicians, Philosophers and Louisianians with international reputation?

So you would see that Vipulanandar had a far steadiness confirmed by the establishment of the Jaffna Campus.

A photograph of Swami Vipulanandar, biographical notes on him, two appraisals - one in verse - of the scholar and a foreword are also included. A word about the editor S. Ambikaipahan who is a retired Principal of Jaffna Vaidishvara Vidyalaya. He has earlier brought out a book on Yoga Swamigal, a mystic from Jaffna and also a booklet on Sir P.Ramanathan as a Vedantist.

03. THE PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND OF YAALPAANAM (JAFFNA) CULTURE.

(The Island - November 14, 2011)

For the first time an orderly - conducted workshop or rather a session of reviews by many hands on an important book in Tamil was held at Saraswathi Hall in Colombo in that language on the Poya day in October last.

The book was titled "Yaalpaana Kalasarathin Thathuva Pinnani" meaning "The Philosophical Background of the Culture of Jaffna" and authored by Dr. V. Ramakrishnan. The writer was formerly a professor of philosophy in the University of Peradeniya and other places both here and in India.

This book is not a fully - fledged researched book but merely a text of a memorial lecture delivered by the author on the late professor of Jaffna University, Dr. Selvanayagam. The author throws a lot of ideas in his lecture so that interested people could be stimulated to offer criticisms and endorsements of his premises. The primary concept of the author is that Jaffna culture is based on love as promulgated in the Saiva Siddhanta, an important constituent of Hinduism. "Anbae Sivam" (Love is Lord Siva) is one of the maxims of Saiva Siddantha. Dr. Ramakrishnan also alludes to the late Yoga Swami of Jaffna. (Ellam Mudintha Kathai - It's a Foregone Story - and Summa Irupathae Suham - Just being idle is Comfort - are two of the aphorisms of Yoga Swami).

This forum was organized by The Hindu Maa Mantram activated by well known Lawyer Kanthiah Neelakantan. Most of the reviewers were from the legal profession. Some of them were academics, journalists and socially involved

participants. The panel included the following speakers and participants:

Chairman and moderator was Justice C.V. Wigneswaran, who also made a welcoming speech with clarity and precision.

The book was reviewed from different angles by Prof.K.Sivathamby (Sociology), Prof.S.Santhirasegeram (Education), Colombo University - Law Faculty Senior Lecturer V.T. Tamilmaran (Human Rights and Law), President's Councillor Kanag - Iswaran (Thesawalamai), Women's Educational Research Centre Director Dr. Selvy Thiruchandran (Women's Rights), Thinakural Editor - in - Chief A. Sivanesachelvan (Retracing Old Manuscripts) and lawyer Mahesan Kanapathy. Peradeniya University professor A. Sivarajah who was to look at the book from a political angle did not turn up.

Most analysts confined themselves to their specialized subjects and that was exemplary. The views expressed by the speakers on relevant and controversial issues might not have been readily accepted by the audience of twenty present as a whole because there were traditionalists and new thinkers among them. However, Sivathamby, Santhirasegeram, Tamilmaran and Kanag - Iswaran articulated their ideas well in a broad sweep of contemporary thinking. The same could be said of feminist Selvi Thiruchandran's presentation though it was underpinned with a little sarcasm - mainly on how women are treated by a male dominated society. Sivanesachelvan and Thillai Nadarajah could have organized their thoughts in a pointed manner. However they described the practical difficulties in researching on such subjects as going back to the roots of the Jaffna culture. In fact it was the main point stressed by almost all speakers.

Among the others who expressed their views were: Colombo Hindu College deputy principal, T. Rajaratnam, lawyers, K.Sivanathan, A.R.Surendran, former editor in chief of Thinakaran and the President of the Colombo Thamil Sangam R. Sivagurunathan, young thinker publisher and printer G.Kumaran and K.S.Sivakumaran.

The author, Prof. V. Ramakrishnan agreed to rewrite the book in a readable form incorporating the different views expressed in the seminar as his booklet was only a talk prepared on fragmented memories. He also said that as a refugee he had had not the necessary facilities to continue his research.

Reiterating his premise that the traditional Jaffna culture was based on love as spelt out in Saiva Siddhanta philosophy, but materialism has eroded the roots of such culture. But the critics did not necessarily agree on Remakrishnan's views although they agreed that he has given enough threads to work on some of his valuable points. That indeed was his expectation, the learned professor said at the end. Educational aspirations and the Thesavalamai of the peninsular Thamils were the key points of discussion.

Ironically, Dr. Ramakrishnan was a card-carrying member of the Ceylon Communist Party based in Trincomalee before he took the line of "loving the humankind" transcending all barriers. He was born in Malaysia and had most of his living in Peradeniya, Trincomalee, Batticaloa, and also Banares and Chennai in India - he has taught at these places.

May I add that to understand the energetic, enterprising, hard working and exceptionally education- orientated Jaffna people, one must read the findings of scholars like Sivathamby and Ramakrishnan and other researchers. But unfortunately

their books are only in Thamil. They should write their books in English in the first instance and then translate at least in Sinhala, the language of the majority in this country. Much of the calamities that the Thamil people are undergoing in Sri Lanka can be productively told to the magnanimous and friendly Sinhala people and get their assistance in solving our problems if only the Thamil and Muslims communicate in Sinhala, even if the Sinhalese people do not want to learn the Thamil language. It is a pity an admirable community such as the Sinhala people do not want to learn Thamil, the language of their brethren, but would seek to learn Russian, Chinese, French, German, Japanese and Arabic.

I was an invitee at the above "workshop" found that valuable and interpretative knowledge could be gathered in similar seminars in a sober, intellectual atmosphere. Meeting the minds of the Sinhala intellectuals in such group ethnic seminars (trilingual) would be more rewarding than shedding blood.

04. HINDUISM AND LANKAN PRACTICE

[The Island - October 25, 1989]

Siva Yogamirtham : Ambrosial Siva Yoga by Ratna Ma Navaratnam. Published by Kasi Navaratnam, 341, Columbuturai Road, Jaffna (1988).

This book in English by one of the foremost scholars in Hinduism and Thamil in this country, is an excellent introduction to an important aspect of Hinduism. This columnist would rather invite the attention of our readers to a foreword written to this book by Swami Prematmananda of the Ramakrishna Mission, than to try to introduce it himself.

Excerpts : Siva Yogamirtham by Ratna Ma Navaratnam points to a redirection of our attitudes and ways of life by rediscovering the secret of unalloyed happiness in a synthesis of harmonic yogic union. The author has traced from the Vedic texts, the Agamas, Upanishads, Saiva Thirumurais and the Siddha Guru Paramparai the ideals and spiritual practices of Anma - Yagjna. The sacrifice of lower self indispensable to realise the higher self and total self - giving is equally essential for the greater happiness of the collective whole....

The author has taken pains to prove beyond doubt and reason, that all anubhuthi - realised mahatmas and sat gurus are our source of power and peace behind us, and the future before us.

In this more than 250 pages book, neatly printed in good paper, the author, who also held highest positions in the Education Department, explains that:

The guru paramparai in Sri Lanka embracing the enlightened tradition of Saiva agamas and the Upanishads, emerged with a new Saivite configuration under the support of Arulvallal (Giver of grace divine) Adi Kadai Nathan popularly known as **Kadayitswami**. The advent of this illumined Siva Yogi had a profound impact on people of north Ceylon in the later half of the last century and he was followed by Nalluran Chellappa Swami and Sivayogaswami of Columbuturai.

However, after the powerful radiations released by these three outstanding yogagurus in Yalpanam, there arises a heart cry.

Ratna Ma Navaratnam asks : Why the present generation has not covered their highly potent spiritual energies into achievements and the book is an indirect answer to her own question.

The book carries extensive quotes, translations and a few photographs. Sivaya Subramuniaswami of Kauai Aaddeenam of Kappa, Hawaii, USA has also hailed this book.

A new approach to Tiuvacagam. New Frontiers in East - West Philosophies of Education. The Vision of Siva in Periya Puranam and a few other books stand to her credit.

05. A HINDU ENCYCLOPAEDIA

(The Island - September, 05, 1990)

An almost impossible task of compiling and editing single-handedly a part of an ambitious encyclopaedia in Tamil for the first time had been creditably achieved. The task is noteworthy because the project has materialised within a comparatively short time.

Initiated by the Sri Lanka High Commissioner in Malaysia, Mr. Chelliah Rajadurai, in his capacity as the then Minister of Hindu Culture and Thamil Affairs, and adequately followed up by the present State Minister, Mr.P.P. Devaraj, the formidable task has been pursued amidst troubles, and turbulence, lack of facilities and source materials and the editor's own sudden ill-health.

The credit therefore goes to the compiler and editor Prof. P. Poologasingam, an indefatigable Thamil scholar, whose research work on 19th century Lankan contribution towards Thamil culture and the arts is credited to be authentic and painstakingly undertaken.

Prof. Poologasingam presently teaches Thamil at the University of Peradeniya. He is equally at ease with

contemporary Tamil literature. He specialised in Tamil at the University of Peradeniya and obtained his doctorate from the University of Oxford.

The task of compiling this encyclopaedia was first given to the late Thenpulooyoor M. Kanapathipillai, a great scholar and researcher. But he couldn't wait to complete as he passed away suddenly. The project was abandoned till 1988, when Prof. Poologasingam was requested to complete it.

Thus the first volume of the Hindu Encyclopaedia includes entries under the first four letters of the Tamil alphabet. It is published by the Department of Hindu Religious and Tamil Cultural Affairs.

The volume was officially released on August 12 in Colombo.

There are 670 entries in this volume: Deities, Temples, Festivals, Fasts, Places, Great Men. These subjects are the general categories under which these entries are made. The compiler has acknowledged staff who helped him in this compilation, particularly the services of S.Thevanayagam, a research officer of the department. There is also a potted history of Hinduism in Sri Lanka given in the foreword.

Although Hinduism is pre-historic, historical evidence of the existence of Hinduism in this country show that it has been practised even before the 3rd century B.C. All those who can read Tamil can benefit by possessing this invaluable volume, which is priced cheap at Rs. 250 per copy. Such a useful encyclopaedia on Hinduism in Tamil is not available even in Tamilnadu. As is customary, it is the Sri Lankan Tamils who set the path in critical studies for the rest to follow.

06. AN INSIGHT INTO THE YAALPAANAM (JAFFNA) MIND

(The Island - January, 05, 1986)

THEN POZHUTHU - A collection of interviews with Tamil artistes and writers, by Pon. Poologasingham and Kanaga Sukumar. Cover design by V.Kanagalingam and Ramani. 180 pages. Published by S. Sivagnanasundaram, Siritharan Press, 550, K.K.S. Rd., Jaffna. (1985). Price Rs. 21/-.

An academic and a contemporary intellectual in the Tamil community here, Prof. Karthigesu Sivathamby in an in-depth analysis of the Jaffna mind as seen from the interviews contained in this books has this to say in his foreword.

"In Jaffna, arts are roughly practised or performed in three social levels - arts as a ritual, as an expression of Thamilian culture and tradition (Bharatha Natyam) and as an expression of social democratic process (Writing and Drama). While classical embellishments fade away in drama, they are vigorously emphasised in other performing arts. In Jaffna there is a synthesis of feudal setup and middle class set up derived from colonialism. Unlike in Europe, here the rise of middle class was not a result of the disintegration of the feudal system. The synthesis of tradition and modernity is an important factor in making some changes in the practise of arts. Some arts came into the purview of those with social power. But some forms of art like the Nadaswaram continue to be a religious and ritual art form."

"In such a social exchange some art forms are performed by women of the middle class. Classical music

and dance came into such governance. Since a totally industrialized social change did not take place, tradition and novelty synthesized with each other both tastefully and crudely. This social mixture can be seen in our arts too." (Free rendition in English by this reviewer).

The interviewers Pon. Poologasingham and Kanaga Sukumar belong to the younger generation. Their interviews were previously published in "Sirithiran".

These two enterprising young men, show both strengths and weaknesses in framing their questions.

Most questions are directed in gathering biographical information from the artistes and writers. But there are also probing questions and answers. Two of the writers are from the hill country while two others are from Batticaloa currently teaching in the Jaffna University.

Being interested in writing I naturally found the interviews with the writers most interesting. Some of the ladies however seem to be thinking in terms of art for arts sake and purity in art. Of the 19 interviews I found that the discussion with M. A. Nuhman most palatable.

In a review like this it is impossible to even summarize the views of the interviewers and it would be appropriate if some notes about them are given here for the benefit of non-Thamil speaking readers.

N.K.Pathmanathan foremost exponent of Nadaswaram instrumental music, performed in concerts in Tamilnadu, Singapore, Malaysia, London, Paris.

Matale Somu, is a young writer from the hill country. He is a short story writer and playwright for the radio, translated Andare's tales into Thamil.

Sivagnanasunderam - author of few novels and short

story anthologies has written books on health. Presently professor in Medicine, University of Jaffna. Rajaji of India christened him with the nom-de- plume "Nandhi"

K.Balendra, an engineer attached to the Urban Development Authority is presently abroad. He is a stage actor and producer of plays-mainly Tamil versions of, reputed western plays.

Mrs. Jegathambikai Krishnanandasivam teaches vocal music at Ramanathan College of Music affiliated to University of Jaffna.

Miss. Shantha Ponnuthurai - teaches Bharatha Natyam at Ramanathan College of Fine Arts.

A. Francis - Jenam - a fine stage actor and dancer. Winner of president Award for acting talents.

R. Sadanakrishnan - an exponent of music on Mirudangam. Works as an Inspector of Tele-Communications.

Miss. Dhanadevi Suppiah - foremost Violin player attached to Ramanathan College of Fine Arts. Qualified in India and performed there.

Kulanthai Shanmugalingam - a brilliant actor and producer of plays, has played a role in locally produced Tamil film "Ponmani". A diploma holder in Dramatics from Colombo University, trained artiste.

M.K.Kanesapillai - leading "Thavil" player. He has performed abroad. Frank Baberich of Hawaii University studies playing this instrument under him.

Mrs. Anandarani Balendra - screen, stage and radio actress. Also a dancer. Wife of K.Balendra noted above. Excelled in playing roles adapted from Foreign plays.

Miss. Malini Srinivasan - an exponent of Veena instrumental music. Qualified in Vocal and Veena music in India. Presently attached to Ramanathan College of Fine Arts. Performed abroad.

M.A.Nuhman - hails from Kalmunai. Attached to University of Jaffna. A fine poet and author of few anthologies. Also practises literary criticism.

A. Mark - teaches in Kokuvil Hindu College. A Diploma holder in Aesthetics. A remarkable artist from the Tamil community.

Dr. T. Gangadaran - a physician. Fine flutist.

Late C.V.Velupillai readers in English knew him very well. Author of many books in English and Tamil, Ex-MP, and Trade Unionist from the Hill-country.

Dr. C.Mounaguru - teaches at the University of Jaffna. Hails from Batticaloa. Excellent exponent of "Nattu Koothu" (folkplays). Acted, danced and produced such plays. Practises literary criticism. Also writes poetry.

Sivagnanasunderam - editor and publisher of "Sirithiran" - a humorous magazine in Tamil. One of the best cartoonists in Tamil. Went to Bombay to study architecture but turned as a cartoonist. Drawn cartoons in "Blitz". Personal friend of K.A. Abbas. Worked as a cartoonist for local national newspapers in Tamil and also for "Trine". Edits his popular journal since 1962. He has also published a few works of other writers.

Pon. Poologasingham - a graduate in Law, Public Administration, Foreign Affairs and presently follows classes for Attorney-at-Law. He has written a number of articles to journals and newspapers on a variety of subjects.

Dr. Kanaga Sukumar - passed out as one of the first batch students in medicine from University of Jaffna. Presently attached to the base hospital at Pt. Pedro. Also works as a lecturer for A.M.P. students. Author of a book in Tamil called "Family First Aid". He has written profusely in local journals on medicine, art and literature.

07. THE STATE AND THAMIL CULTURE

(The Island - July 09, 2005)

It's a sad story that the State's Department of Culture, which is supposed to look after the development of not only the Sinhala culture but also other minority cultures did not have funds to present trophies and certificates to the winners of the recently conducted National Tamil Drama Festival. Let me digress a little.

When the cultures of the Thamilians and the Muslims were looked after by politicians of the respective communities in the capacity of ministers or deputy ministers, there was some kind of development. But today in the name of National Integration, there is a partisan preoccupation with the predominant culture. Hence this lopsidedness.

This is partly due to the Sinhala only known staffers in the Department who do not seem to understand the good intentions of those at the top who are trying to at least show a semblance of accommodating the "other".

I have had bitter experience earlier in communicating with the staff even when they have asked me to serve them in some specific assignments. You cannot blame them because they are the product of a climate influenced by sections of the Sinhala media and the textbooks prescribed for children

where anything other than Sinhala is treated as alien. This is a reality.

Whatever peace process is pursued, nothing is going to happen materially, so long as the attitudes of the major communities towards each other change in understanding the "other". Some of the radical "patriots" of motherland are doing a lot of damage not only to the young people in this country, but also to the country at large.

If not checked and amends made as early as possible, all of us are going to be perished and lose our country. This may sound very pessimistic, but the reality slaps us very visibly.

Let's come back to the National Thamil Drama Festival - 2005 Award Presentation Ceremony held at the John de Silva Memorial Theatre on August 27, 2005. This function was organized by the Department of Cultural Affairs and National Drama Panel of the Arts Council of Sri Lanka.

I did not know how many members were there in the panel, but for certain I knew there were only three Thamil speaking people knowledgeable in theatre and Drama. They were Kalaichelvan (a Muslim theatre-person of vast experience and dedication), Anthony Jeeva (an enterprising dramatist and literati) and Thangavelayutham (I do not know much about him, but he seemed to be an enthusiastic worker).

Thanks to them they revived Theatrical activities in Thamil after half a century or so. I salute them for remembering the past contributors to indigenous drama in Thamil, even though the list was not exhaustive. Those forgotten players and new finds were recognized at the festival.

You might ask from where the Department got the

money spent on the plaques. Well a connoisseur and a philanthropist who belong to the Memon community came to the rescue spending Rs.40,000 from his own pocket.

While Thamilian businessmen do not seem to care fostering Lankan Tamil arts and Literature, it is Al Haj Hashim Omar, (who is very fluent in Tamil) who liberally spends promoting the Tamil writers and artistes. Most others will spend lavishly in getting down third rate movie stars, singers and poets and speakers from Tamilnadu, as if we don't have talented people amongst us. It is a pity.

There is now a new Minister - Mr Mahinda Yapa Abeywardhana. He was present at the function and assured development of Tamil culture in this country. Two other ministers were invited to show their patronage, but they didn't come. They were Minister Douglas Devananda and Minister Ferial Ashroff. Mr. Devananda was represented by his consultant attorney Ms.Velayutham.

Another notable absentee was Henry Jayasena (an adorable dramatist/actor in both Sinhala and English theatre and Sinhala films and presently a columnist in English). Even if they were not present, the show went on with the dedicated contribution by attorney Douglas Siriwardhana, Chairman of the National Drama Panel. I know personally that Douglas Siriwardhana (a successful dramatist) is genuinely interested in promoting communal harmony.

The president of the Arts Council is Mr. Charles Dayananda. Mr. E.M.Abhayaratne, we learnt is the Director of Cultural Affairs. I was happy to see him at the entrance of the auditorium adoring a Kunkumam and Sandana Pottu in his forehead, smiling and munching some Katkandu (Candy). At once I felt that I won't be treated as an "alien" at least by him.

There were cultural interludes of dancing - first by Sinhala girls dancing to Sanskrit slogans in dedication to Goddess Saraswathi. There was movement but not suitable to the context in the lines. Then students of Vasugi gave some colourful oriental dances which were very appreciable.

The announcers in Sinhala and Thamil introduced the items fairly well. I have seen the Sinhala announcer in Sinhala telefilms, but could not remember his name. He was highly professional. The Thamil announcer, Dharshani, comes over the air over the SLBC and appears in the Eye Channel programme. She was alright. The translator of Sinhala speeches messed up the statements and names.

Even against odds, the programme was successful and the credit goes particularly to Kalaichelvan, Anthony Jeeva and Thangavelayutham for making "Thamil" also felt amidst "National" culture.

Because of this event, I missed out on "Konjum Salankai", the debut dance of two sisters on stage. Aaranya and Maithreyi, daughters of Manoranjan Rajasingham and Shanthi Sachithanandam (two well known politicized activists). These young girls were students of Sivakumari Gnanedran. The recital took place on August 27, 2005 at the Bishops College auditorium.

Frankly, I do not know whether the National Film Corporation comes under the aegies of the Media Ministry or Cultural Ministry. However, there was an official (Hilmy Mohammed) from the Media Ministry speaking on censorship at the monthly talks on Cinema organized by the Thamil unit of the NFC. Mr. Thevathasan functions there without any infrastructure facilities provided, but he is in the Board of Directors.

Even here it is the sad affairs that are discouraging. Anything Tamil seems to be an unwelcome presence. Despite good intentions by the former minister, JVP's Vijith Heral (in spite of JVP's spiting hatred towards the Thamilians of this country) and the Chairman's genuine concern over the task ahead, Tamil activities are minimal.

Thevathasan is trying his best to keep it going. He has produced a 16 page magazine called "Thirai Thoothu" (Screen Messenger). The cover picture shows Sumitra feeding Lester with a piece of cake probably on his birthday and smaller pictures of foreign and local movie stars.

The two local players are Uthayakumar and Helen Kumari. Inside middle pages are colour photos of films. There are many advertisements and a few notes and short articles on subjects related to films. The publication is priced at Rs.15.

Marxists on Marxists

N.K. Raghunathan, a Lankan writer in Tamil now lives in Canada. He has written a fiction with some realistic anecdotes titled "Panancholai Eluchi" (The Rising of a Palmyrah Orchard). Raghunathan was considered a Marxist writer when he was here. But critics of Marxist persuasions of varying shades discussed this book rather critically.

I was surprised because usually critical assessments of Marxist writers were not forthcoming earlier. The event took place at the WERC Auditorium on August 28, sponsored by writer Neervai Ponnaiyan, himself a Marxist writer. M.M. Sameem (a history specialist and educationist) chaired the discussion.

He seems to be still resting on orthodox Marxist canons of criticism. But Thayaparan, who appreciates leftist

ideals but asserted that he was not a Marxist and Jeyaratnam (a former SLAS officer) and Siva Subramaniam editor of *Thinakaran* seemed to have come out of the box and were very critical of the book, even though they welcomed the publication. I enjoyed the session as I felt that a second look is now being undertaken on the so-called progressive literature.

08. WHICH THAMIL ?

[The Island - February, 09, 1986]

To many Sri Lankans, including a fair number of Tamil speaking people, the existence of a distinct Lankan Tamil Literature is new knowledge. With the 50s a conscious effort was made by the Tamil intellectuals, academics, writers and journalists to write about local situations, people and life using the Tamil language as used in Sri Lanka. The contemporary writing and performing arts of the Tamil-speaking people in this country therefore are truly Sri Lankan.

One aspect that distinguishes Lankan Tamil writing from the writing of other countries is the usage of the Tamil language as she is spoken and understood in Tamil-speaking areas in this country.

A young academic, S. Vanniyakulam has done research on the colloquial usage of Tamil in Lankan fiction in Tamil and obtained a masters degree from the University of Jaffna. His thesis has now appeared in book form. This book therefore is a very useful compendium for the students of Tamil literature and also an informative essay on the gradual development of a Lankan consciousness among Tamil writers in this country. As the breakdown of the book under

four main areas will show, the main theme of elucidating the different forms of speech in various parts of the country is pronounced. Literature and Language, Lankan Fiction and application of Spoken Language, Regional Colloquialism in Fiction. This book is also a guide for writers in Tamil as to how colloquialism can be handled creatively in fiction and how incongruity can be avoided.

Tamil fiction (both novels and short stories) written in this country between 1950 and 1979 is subject to study in this work in relation to the language used. This is the first time such a study had been undertaken on linguistics and scientific lines. Also as Prof. A. Shanmugasdas says in the foreword, this book also serve as a course material documenting the controversy two decades ago over tradition versus modernity. The old school of academics and Tamil pundits who were unfamiliar with the development of modern linguistics challenged not only the use of spoken language in modern literature but also vehemently condemned contemporary writing like novel, short story, modern poetry, drama and literary criticism influenced by western methods of practical criticism and approaches to literature. Perhaps they wanted only older forms of epic poetry to be treated as literature.

The writer Vanniyakulam though not a student of linguistics, has at least classified the kind of spoken language in local Tamil fiction and thus given an opportunity for the linguists to evolve a linguistic concept from what he has attempted to do. In that sense he deserves to be congratulated.

He is himself a short story writer and a reviewer of the arts. Presently he works in the department of agriculture.

The influence of Sinhala in the speech pattern of those who speak Thamil in Batticaloa, hill-country and in Muslim areas is illustrated in this book. The dialects used in Jaffna, Batticaloa, hill country, southern province, Mannar, Mullaitivu and Colombo are discussed.

The author also points out that not many Lankan fiction writers have successfully made good use of spoken language in their works. There is also an interesting observation made by the author about why the locally made film "Ponmani" (directed by Dharmasena Pathiraja from a novel by Kavaloor Rajadurai) could not gain wider screening, cinegoers accustomed to films produced in Thamilnadu could not readily understand and appreciate the pure Jaffna dialect used in the film, whereas two other local Thamil films using hill-country Thamil, which has closer affinity with the Indian Thamil, has been received well by the audiences.

This book is the eighth in the series published by the Muthamli Veliyeetu Kazhagam and the publishers deserve wider notice in view of the fact that research-oriented studies on Lankan Thamil Literature are also published by them.

09. WHAT IS ARABU THAMIL ?

(Lakbima - October, 14, 2012)

As we all know, there are different kinds of dialects in some languages. Even in English, there are different kinds of English and there are Literatures in English apart from English, American, Canadian, Australian Literature. So it is in Thamil Language and Literature. There are Indian, European, Canadian, Sri Lankan, Malaysian, Singaporean and Australian Thamil Literature.

Not Publicized

When it comes to language there are Senthamil, Koduntthamil, Semmoliththamil and so on. But there had been what was known as Arabu Thamil, which was not very well publicized.

Last week, a book in Thamil titled **Arabuth Thamil Engal Anbuth Thamil** was launched at Zahira College, Maradana. The book is an elaborate version of a previously published work. The author was a distinguished Muslim intellectual from Yaalpaanam - the late A.M.A. Azeez, a former Ceylon Civil Service officer and a Senator and above all, an educationist heading the leading Muslim Boys' School in Colombo. S.H.M. Jameel and M. Ali Azeez are the editors and Dr. A.M.A. Azeez Mantram has published this book through Kumaran Book House. This book was first published in 1973.

Enriched

S.H.M. Jameel, a former Secretary to the Muslim Cultural Affairs Ministry and a scholar in both Thamil and English, apart from a publisher of books and an educationist, has written a 20 page introduction to the book.

If readers in Thamil do not know anything about who A.M.A. Azeez was or his works, please read S.H.M. Jameel's introduction. Present day young people are seldom avid readers - be it in English or even in their own languages.

As to the question of what is Arabu Thamil, one has to know the origin, growth and the decline in the use of this type of language where the sounds of words in Arabic missing in chaste Thamil were introduced in certain format so that the

Thamil language becomes enriched in terms of sound and phonetics, just as Sanskrit sounds had been assimilated into the Thamil language.

It is difficult for me to explain in English what is meant by Arabu (Meaning Arabic) Thamil. The kind of words and sounds have some commonalities with the Swahili language says Dr.A.M.A.Azeez. What little I can do is to bring to the notice of the readers that such a book is available for further research.

10. A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THAMIL PRESS

(The Island - May II, 1986)

Do we know that in Sri Lanka more than 375 newspaper journals and periodicals have been published over the years, in Thamil beginning with 1841? The first journal published in that year, "**Udaya Tharaki**" is still in print in Jaffna. This along with "**Sathiya Veda Pathukavaean**" "**Muslim Nesan**" "**Islam Mithiran**" and "**Indu Saadanam**" were **religion-oriented journals. Two of these continue to be published. But the first Thamil newspaper was "Dina Tapal"** edited by K.A. Meera Mohideen. The date of publication however is not known. At present there are seven dailies published in Thamil (Virakesari, Thinakaran, Dinapathi, Mithiran, Eelanadu, Eelamurasu and Udhayan).

All this information is presented in a bibliography entitled "Ilankayil Thamil Pathirihaiikal, Sanchihaikal" compiled by Kopay Sivam (P. Sivnanda Sarma) Sivan temple, Avarangal, Puttur, priced Rs.7.50. This booklet is updated till 1984.

The editors of the two Thamil dailies "**Virakesari**" and

"Thinakaren" respectively Messrs A. Sivanesaselvan and R. Sivagurunathan had done research on the Tamil press in Sri Lanka. Their work is of academic interest. But this booklet is compiled in such a way that an average reader can gather information of the name of the journal, name of the publisher/editor, address and year of publication at a glance.

As Prof. A. Sanmugadas has correctly said in his foreword to this book, we are living in an era where even libraries are burnt. So in such a situation, one would not know what books and magazines and newspapers have been published in this country unless some kind of document is made available to this effect. In that sense, the Tamil reader should be thankful to this bibliographer for his spade work, everyone interested in Tamil studies will find this book very useful.

The same author Kopay Sivam has collected ten of his radio talks on 'Saiva Solemn thoughts' broadcast on the Tamil service of the SLBC under the same title. It is published by Thiruneri Kalagam, Kilinochchi and priced at Rs.4/-. These short pieces explain to the layman the fundamental reasons behind religious observations. Blind observations without understanding the purpose and meaning of such rituals is the practice of many devotees. If only they could realize that the idea underlying these practices has some parallels in modern psychological formulas rediscovered by the western mind analysts, their worship would be more meaningful.

Prayers and meditation in the dawn amidst the sweet sounds of bird song give one for instance the right frame of mind to reflect on the past errors and reassure oneself to think positively and pursue the right ways.

Chanting of mantras and singing of devotional songs

and bhajans help to orchestrate vibrations which in turn convert the mind to concentrate and enjoy peace of mind and reach an exalted feeling.

In this strain, Kopay Sivam explains the basics for religious practices, in this book.

Apart from these two books mentioned here, he has also brought out two collections of stories and a volume of new poetry, co-authored with his sister Chowmini. Kopay Sivam works as a draughtsman in the Irrigation Department.

11. SEARCHING THE PAST FOR A BETTER FUTURE

(Sunday Island - March 02, 1986)

Kadduraik Kovai by N. Manicka Idaikkadar, Sivarasa Veethi, Thirunelveli, Jaffna (1986). Price Rs.10/-

By design or not some of the top government officials in the post-colonial and the late 50's happened to be Jaffna Tamils and deservedly they enjoyed the confidence of all communities in this country. One of them was N. Manicka Idaikkadar. He is now retired from the old Ceylon Civil Service.

Mr. N.M. Idaikkadar residing presently in Colombo is a consulting statistician of FAO. He earned a couple of Masters degrees from Cambridge and London and had served in several stations in the island as a civil servant and also worked in several stations in the island as a civil servant and also worked in several countries in Africa and South-East Asia. Besides knowing the languages of our

country he has learnt the Malay language too. In fact the Malaysian Government has published an article written (1964) by him in Malay language on Hinduism in a volume on Malaysian culture. The same Government also published a book on mathematics for Malaysian schools in 1965. This particular book was co-authored by him with another brilliant Jaffna man (now in Australia) Prof. C.J. Eliezer. In 1979 a U.K. Publisher brought out Mr. Idaikkadar's "Agricultural Statistics" - a handbook for developing countries. Mr. Idaikkadar incidentally is an uncle and later father-in-law of the late Prof. K. Kailasapathy. So much as an introduction to the author.

The author's series of articles in Tamil on men and matter published in the Jaffna regional daily "Eelanadu" are now collected in a little book. There are 25 brief impressionistic pieces in this collection. Most of them are related to the author's own experiences and attempt to stress the basic values in life. The articles are basically addressed to the young people of Jaffna. The character traits of the Jaffna man of a bygone era and his attitudes come out clearly in these well-intentioned articles. But that tradition of exemplary life seems to have been usurped now by anarchists, ill-digested ideologists, and insensitive brutal and selfish unrealists.

So one doubts whether the younger generation of Jaffna will read this little book of advice and pragmatic suggestions.

Nevertheless it would be myopic to categorise all the youth in the Jaffna peninsula as violators of peace depending on the bullet alone as sanity still seems to prevail at least in some quarters infantile adventurism is only fractional.

The author gives a kind of pep talk on many matters in his articles. How to live successfully and make progress

is the main themes of his essays. He considers the late Sir Oliver Goonetillake as a great and successful man. The South Indian film magnate the late A.V.Meiapappa Chettiar as an example of a person of simple living. Likewise his observations on several VIPs in and outside the country as examples of virtuous and successful people are mainly correct.

All articles included in this book are written in simple language though the style is slightly stilted in some places. The writer has used these articles to also introduce himself to the younger generation who seems to be ignorant of the immediate past. In that sense the book gives biographical information on many people including himself. Mr Idaikkadar should write similar articles in English so that many could benefit from his experience.

12. SANTHAN'S TRAVELOGUE

(Sunday Island - May 11, 1986)

Author of six collection of short stories and a novel in Tamil, A. Santhan made a four week cultural tour of the Soviet Union in 1984 sponsored by the friendship societies of Sri Lanka and the Soviet Union. His impressions of Moscow and Leningrad were published in the Jaffna Tamil daily Eelamurasu. These articles are now collected in a book form.

Shanathan's creative ability has helped him to write this book in an interesting way, but it lacks freshness because the adulations Santhan makes of the Soviet Union are all familiar to most readers. For instance, he speaks about the cleanliness of the roads, the cities, how the people are

happy etc., which have been published already through the Soviet Media.

The book is divided into 17 small chapters. The main things he says in each of these chapters is as follows:

Flight by Aeroflot IL 62 to Moscow gives information about Soviet population. 270 million. More than 100 ethnic groups. One of them is Aluth who comprise only 600 in numbers 15 republics. In each republic several autonomous states and regions each has its own constitution etc. The time difference between Sri Lanka and Moscow is one and a half hours.

Vehicles in Moscow use the right hand side. Left hand driving. The metropolis is about 30 k.m. away from the Air port. Tries to converse in Russian with the guide.

Lots of trees on the sideways. No shops anywhere. Restaurants boutiques only at specific places. Broad pavements.

Travel by under ground metro rail, which covers 185 k.m. 115 Stations. 60 lakhs of passengers travel daily. Speed 90 k.m.

Visit to Red Square.

Visit to Lumumba University - meets, Sri Lankans (Thamils Sinhalese) and other Asians. Meets a Russian Tamil scholar - Vitali Furnika. Learns that church going is allowed in Russia.

Writers are honoured in the Soviet Union. Entertainment in Moscow.

Radio interview.

Travels to Leningrad. Leningrad the second biggest metropolis in the Soviet Union. The sun rises and sets in the

north. Many institutions of historical importance are found here. It is really a big city of many islands linked by bridges.

Visit to the big cathedral of St. Isacc which took 40 years to build.

Visit to another place of architectural interest - Petrovaretz. Meets a Sri Lanka Shantha who is doing research for seven years on Sinhala folk music. Meets students in Leningrad University. There is a special department for South Asian Studies, where Thamil is also studied.

Visits Arts Square, Museum and other places of interest.

Visits palace square - art gallery. From Leningrad returns to Moscow by Train and leaves for Colombo.

Santhan's book is informative, but it doesn't have the critical approach to writing.

This is understandable because the author made his trip on a good will mission.

13. ON SAIVAISM

(The Island - May 03, 1987)

"INTHUP PANPADU- SILA SINTHANAIKAL"
(Some Thoughts on Hindu Culture) by Prof. K.
Kailasanatha Kurukkal, published by Thamiliyal,
Madras.

Lady Leelawathi was an English woman married to the late Sir Ponnabalam Ramanathan, a former Sri Lankan politician and scholar respected nationwide.

Prof. K. Kailasanatha Kurukkal is the Head of the Hindu Civilization Faculty of the University of Jaffna. The Lady Leelawathi Memorial lecture delivered by Kurukkal is now published in book form. Author of two books in Tamil on Sanskrit and its History of Literature, and another on Rituals in Saiva temples, the learned professor is a university teacher for the past 39 years, both in Peradeniya and Jaffna.

Explaining the philosophy behind the Hindu religion, the author says that it includes all religious thoughts and cultural aspects of these religions. According to him Saivism is another name for Hinduism, although originally it had no name. Hinduism has no origin and there is no end, he postulates. The religion is spread beyond India and it has a number of varied literatures.

Since the author himself is a Brahmin and a scholar in Sanskrit his views on the subject are uncritically acclaimed. However, his thesis, will no doubt be critically examined by scholars and elucidated to the uninitiated, as time rolls by.

And for the present it is a very authentic book on Hindu culture.

SAIVA VIRATHANGAL - ORU ARIMUGAM (Saiva Fasts : an Introduction by P. Sivananda Sarma (Kopay Sivam), published by Vel Alagan Pathipakam, Kandy Road, Palai (1987).

This book is a brief introduction to the fasts observed by Saivaites. Saivism is that branch of Hinduism practised in Southern India, Tamil speaking areas in Sri Lanka and other countries.

There are nearly 70 fasts, the Hindus are expected to observe. There are fasts for the week, for the fortnight, for

the month and for the year. The author lists these fasts and explains, their significance briefly. The fasts are in honour of gods Vinayaga (Ganesh), Siva, Shakthi, Subramanya (Murugan or Skanda), Bhairava and Veera Bhadra.

Skanda Shasdi (6 days), Navarathri (9 days), Thiruvembavai (10 days), Kedara Gowri and Vinayaga Shasdi (21 days each) are the fasts with longer duration. Such information is explained by the author. This book is rather sketehy but could be of use in gathering information.

Nalluran Thiruvadiyai Nambu (Have Faith in the God of Nallur - a collection of verses compiled by S.K. Yoganathan (Vannai Kavignan), published by Durga Publishers, 91/14 Karaikaddu Road., Vannai North West, Jaffna.

This slim volume contains 20 verses by relatively new writers. All their verses are on the God enshrined at the famous Kandasamy temple in Nallur, Jaffna.

Nallur temple is not only a religious place but also a cultural and archetypal symbol of the people of Jaffna. Kanda or Muruga worshipped in the temple has a spear which is reckoned to be a symbol of enlightenment and knowledge.

The compiler expresses hope that belief in Nallur Kandan will help and reassure the people of Jaffna, that the agony and anguish they are undergoing at present will soon be over.

The verses included are in the traditional mould and are religious in tone.

14. PORTRAIT OF A PLANTATION WRITER

(The Island - April 12, 1987)

C.V. Sila Chinthanaigal

(Some thoughts on C.V. Velupillai) by Saral Nadan, published by Hill Country Publishing House, 57 Mahinda Place, Colombo 6 (1986) Price 17/50 - 12.04.1987

This is a book in Tamil introducing the life and works of the late C.V. Velupillai. He was a writer in English and Tamil. He edited a periodical called "Maveli". A trade unionist and a former Member of Parliament, C.V. Velupillai was widely known as a writer. He was a humanist. He loved hill country folklore and songs. He was the first to spotlight the plight of the estate people in his writings in English. He died in 1984.

Saral Nadan is an important hill country writer. For the last two decades he has been writing stories, poems, articles and criticism. He is also interested in linguistics. He works as a Tea Factory Manager. This is his first book to be published.

Saral Nadan has done an excellent job in compiling the essential facts on the respected late writer and also critically examines his works briefly. As such this little book is an essential source material for research on C.V. Velupillai and his works.

Cannapan Velsingam Velupillai was in the field of writing for nearly half a century. He lived for 70 years. First he wrote in English and later in Tamil. "C.V." was a contemporary of people like George Keyt, J. Vijayatunga, Harrison Pieris, Annette Swan, Walter Talagodapitiya and

others who wrote poetry in English. All his poems were originally written in English. His other works were also written in English and later translated into Tamil. His last novel was called "Ini Padamadden" and it was written in English too, under the title, "The Holocaust - A story of the 1981 Ethnic Violence" This novel is in some respects autobiographical.

C.V.'s works include "Vismajani" - Wayfarer". "In Ceylon's Tea Gardens", "The Bordeland", "Born to Labour", all in English and "Muthatt Padi", "Kathal Chitram", "Theyilai Thottathilae", "Veedattravan", "Ini Padamaddan" and "Malai Nattar Padallal in Tamil.

The works of Rabindranath Tagore and George Keyt were strong influences on C.V.'s, the initial stages of his writing. His writing not available in book form include "Valvattra Valvu", "Ellaipuram", "Parvathi", "Namathu Kattai", and "Manitha Pindam".

C.V. Velupillai was married to a Sinhalese lady. She and their daughter live in Colombo.

Saral Nadan has done a useful work in introducing a very important Lankan Writer to the younger generation.

15. SUBRAMANIA BHARATHI

seen by Lankan writer

(*Sunday Island - March 24, 1985*)

Bharathi - Panmuha Parvai : a collection of essays on Tamil poet Bharathi. Published by National Art & Literature Association and printed at Sri Kantha Press 213 KKS Road. Jaffna (1984) Rs.30/-

"Sinhala Theevinukor Paalam Amaipom" is a line in a poem called "Bharatha Desam" by one of the national poets of India, C. Subramania Bharathi (1882 - 1921) who wrote in Tamil and English. It means, "Let's have a bridge to the Sinhaladipa". A translation of the poem is published on this page. Taken out of context, the line quoted above had often been misquoted by the ignorant, particularly by the self-appointed censors and debarred from being broadcast over the SLBC some years ago. Contrary to being anything "militaristic", the poet only wants a cultural bridge between our two countries (India and Sri Lanka) and thereby foster the oneness of the Indian sub-continent culturally. Even the most vociferous chauvinists among us cannot deny the fact that all of us (Sinhalese, Tamils and to some extent Muslims) are Indian by origin.

Subramania Bharathi was a Brahmin by birth but a rebel against orthodoxy and superstitious beliefs. He was a humanist and a patriot, a freedom fighter and an editor of a Tamil journal criticizing the British Raj during the Indian independence movement. He was not merely a committed poet inescapably absorbing the contradictions of his times and in his own self in the formative stages of his career, but also a pace-setter for modern poetry in Tamil. This is not the place for a comprehensive assessment or for that matter even an "introduction" about Bharathi, as he was popularly called: but attention should be drawn to some studies of his works and about him in various Indian languages and particularly in Tamil during the centenary of his birth (1982).

The late K. Kailasapathy from our country, an eminent Tamil intellectual was foremost amongst them. Under his patronage a symposium was initiated in Jaffna, but before

it could end, he died in late 1982. A set of 10 papers were read at the symposium organized by (Deshiya Kalai Ilakiya Peravai) (Assembly of National Art & Literature). These papers are gathered together in the book dedicated to the deceased professor, Kailas.

The critics who attended this symposium included some of the emerging dons from the University of Jaffna and a few others. The accent or basic approach seems to be Marxian, with particular emphasis on Maoistic and post-Maoistic thought. Nevertheless the studies remain academic and throw much light on the subject from scientific angles.

R. Murugaiyan, in his paper entitled "Bharathi and Signs of his Changing Times", introduces the subject. Bharathi viewed the changes in the physical world and social behaviour from a dialectical point of view. He was against poverty and caste differences and called for the emancipation of women. Everything was subject to change was the basic concept of Bharathi says Murugaiyan. The author is a poet, Critic and Dramatist.

"Bharathi and the National Movement" by K. Senthivel shows Bharathi as a progressive poet in some respects, if one takes into consideration, the time in which he wrote. He was a Nationalist who wanted unity between the Hindus and the Muslims. As a fighter for the independence of India, he did not advocate moderation but vehemently opposed terrorism.

The author is a forceful speaker and a member of a Left Party in Jaffna.

Bharathi's thoughts on economics is explained by A. Jeyaratam. He says that Bharathi did not accept the idea that means of production should be commonly owned but suggested that they should be entrusted with a Dharmakartha.

The author is a deputy director of Planning and a CAS Official.

M.Chitraleka in her essay on "Bharathi and Women" underlines the fact that Bharathi always advocated emancipation of the women and upliftment of the oppressed and the underdogs. The author is a lecturer in Tamil at the University of Jaffna and a co-author of a book on contemporary Sri Lankan Tamil literature.

"Bharathi and Political Literature" is the subject of the essay by N. Ravindran. He says that Bharathi was the classic pioneer of political literature in Tamil. The author is a teacher by profession.

"Bharathi and Classes" by M. Sinnathamby is self-explanatory. He says that Bharathi always sang for the upliftment of the oppressed classes. The author is engaged in teaching and a co-author of a book on economics.

Dr.C. Maunaguru in his essay "Bharathi and the Arts" explains how the poet viewed the Arts. The poet believed that the arts should not only entertain but also activate people to strive for the better. The author lectures on Fine Arts at the University, of Jaffna. He is a performing artiste of folk drama and a co-author. Thinking on Education by Siva Rajendran gives an almost comprehensive account on the subject. The author is a final year student at the University of Jaffna.

M.A. Nuhman in his essay on "Bharathi and Modernism" come to the conclusion that the poet had radical and modernistic views on social, political, economic and cultural spheres and that the Thamilians enter into the Modern Age through Bharathi. He served as a great modern thinker and creative artist during the transition from old to

the new. In that he was a Yuga Purusha. The author lectures in Linguistics in Jaffna University. He has edited a now defunct quarterly on Poetry and published a few books by others. He is also an author of a number of books, four of them collections of his own poems. He is a poet and critic.

Finally, S. Thillainathan in his essay on "Bharathi and Sri Lanka" gives a lot of valuable information of the influence of Bharathi on local Tamil writers. The author is a senior lecturer in Tamil at Peradeniya University. He had worked as a journalist at Lake House in the 60's is an author of a book and has written and produced two notable plays in Tamil.

Former Peradeniya University don Prof S. Sivasegaram presently attached to the Imperial College in London, has written a foreword to this book. The publishers of "Thayakam", a literary monthly from Jaffna K. Thanikasalam and S. Devarajah explain how the book came to be published.

As the title indicates, the book is an assemblage of essays written and read from various angles on an important modern writer of India. The book is ideal for all higher form students.

16. A NOTE ON VESAK IN THAMIL

[The Island - May 25, 1986]

Vesak Malar (Vesak Bloom) Tamil Vesak Number. Published by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs (1986). Edited by K.G. Amaradasa. Cover Picture : S.D.T.Jayasuriya.

This year's edition comes as usual with informative articles on Buddhism. Most of the articles have been originally written in other languages and the editor himself has translated all of them into Tamil. Mr. Amaradasa is one of the respected Sinhala writers among Tamil readers in this country. He writes in Tamil language.

Apart from the "Mawatha" magazine K.G. Amaradasa is the only other individual in the Sinhala speaking world to have at least introduced to the Sinhala readers what is happening in the Tamil literary scene. It is disheartening to note, however, that readers in Sinhala have almost a closed window towards the Tamil cultural scene.

We are not suggesting that by familiarising with Tamil artistic activities alone, the widening gap between the ethnic groups in the country can be filled. But such familiarization can help to understand each other better. We say this, as we find that the writers and artists in all communities, while being proud of their own intrinsic culture, are also humanistic and catholic in their attitudes. So a healthy relationship can be built again by the people at large. Thus ignoring the narrow minded elements among us.

This annual has the following articles within its covers:

May all Religions flourish (Minister of Cultural Affairs), Our Buddhist Heritage (Dr. Ananda W.P. Guruge). Buddhham Saranam Gachchami - The Best Way to Honour. The Buddha (Rev. Pandit Weligama Nanaratna Maha Thera). A Few Facts About Buddhism (Ralph Buultjens) Rebirth According To Buddhism (P.M. Wijekoon), Buddhism and Health (Rev. Madihe Pannasiha Maha Nayake Thera). Vesak Full Moon - The most attractive the story of Bhikkuni (Zeno Isigami) Buddhism in Sri Lanka - A Historical Sketch-(Prof. Nandasena Mudiyanse). Buddhism in Tamilnandu-

A note (Dr. R.K.Azagesan), The Hindu Heritage of the Cultural Triangle - A Short Note (Dr. James T. Rutnam)

There is also an article originally written in Tamil by T.Kanagaratnam, who is a qualified translator of Sinhala works into Tamil and vice versa. He has translated Sinhala short stories into Tamil and Tamil stories into Sinhala.

This volume is neatly produced and deserves attention.

17. VALVETTITURAI SEAFARERS SAIL FOR U.S.

(The Island - February 24, 1985)

"Veaddi" clad Thamilians from Sri Lanka set sail on January, 27, 1937 on a locally built sailing boat, "Annapoorani" belonging to an American, to cross the Atlantic and reached New York 18 months later. They were received with astonishment and with a certain degree of amusement at the famous harbour by the city folks of New York. And the **Boston Globe** accredited them as the first unofficial ambassadors of Sri Lanka.

This sailing boat left Colombo harbour and took a circuitous route via the Maldives, Aden, Sudan, Suez Canal, Ismelaia, Cairo, Port Said, Haifa, Beirut, Crete, Gibraltar, Canary Islands, and Bermuda before reaching New York.

Who else could undertake this adventurous journey besides the legendary VVT (Valvettiturai) people? From Valvettiturai to the United States is a long way navigational exercise indeed. VVT is synonymous with anything under the sun on the ocean. Needless to expand. True, most activities have both the good and the bad sides, but let's focus for the moment on the plus points only.

A Well-known Tamil journalist (presently of the editorial staff of Tamil daily Eelanadu - regional paper published in Jaffna), E.K. Rjagopal, also from VVT has written a booklet in a characteristically fresh style in Tamil journalism, retelling the heroic adventures of VVT seafarers.

With an unusually elongated title "*Valvetti Thurayil Irunthu America Varai Kappal Oattiya Thamizarkal*" (Thamilians who sailed from VVT to US), this book is a reproduction of a series of articles Rajagopal wrote in his paper. I believe that this is the first book by him, but his writing is very familiar with the local readers of the Tamil Press. Under different pseudonyms and in his own name he has contributed a number of useful columns on literature and the arts. He has earlier worked for the Thinkaran and stayed in London for sometime.

Published by "Kalai Ilakiya Pathrikai Nanbarkal (whose live wire is the enterprising Tamil journalist S. Thiruchelvam, editor of Eela Murasu, the new Jaffna based regional paper), this booklet has encouraging forewords also by S. Sabaratnam and P.S. Perumal, senior editors of Eelanadu.

The book is dedicated to late Capt. C. Mohandas, who met his death in an accident late last year. The latter was an upcoming Shipping magnate in the North. He had had shares with the Baltic Lines of Singapore and it was one of the ships, Vila 6 belonging to the company that sank four miles off from Colombo recently bringing Bombay onions to Sri Lanka. He was also the owner of Isabella, a new ship. Capt. Mohanadas has had training in marine engineering locally and abroad. He had worked as Third Officer for Kuwait Shipping Co. and lately as Harbour Capt. for the Lanka Cement Ltd.

A few more gleanings from Rajagopal's informative presentation.

For more than 700 years the navigators from VVT have been in the field. Indian monarchs, the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British have recognized the capabilities of these legendary heroes. Before World War I, sailing ships have left for India, Burma, Bangladesh and Malaysia to bring shipments of food.

There were almost 60 sailing ships plying between Sri Lanka and foreign harbours. All ships built in VVT has been registered with the Lloyds in London. VVT has been noted as a special harbour and a shipbuilding place in the book "Bay of Bengal Pilot". Copies of this book are available in the Ports Authority office and the Customs. A VVT ship magnate bought a sinking ship "Atlantic Key", off Trinco. This happened a 100 years ago.

How did the name "Valvetti" came to be known? Rajagopal explains : Velvet brought from other lands were stored in Valvettiturai and re-exported to Rome, Greece and Egypt. Valvetti is a corrupt usage for velvet.

An American, Wilson Albert Robinson bought "Annappoorani", the sailing vessel from Nagappa Chettiar of Devakottai in S. India. It was this sailing vessel which made a historic journey to the States from our own Colombo harbour.

E.K. Rjagopal's book is informative reading.

18. INTELLECTUAL INTERPRETATION BY A MARXIST WRITER IN THAMIL

(*The Island* - February 17, 2010)

S.Ganeshalingan, a Lankan Thamilian writer now living in Chennai writes review of books for *The Hindu*. He is one of the Lankan pioneer writers to depict Lankan social life from a Marxist point of view in his fiction and essays. He was a successful magazine editor of (now defunct) *Kumaran*. His son G. Kumaran who lives in Colombo, is now engaged in publishing quality books in Thamil.

Why do I write about him now? The reason is that I came across his book *Alahiy lum Aramum* (Aesthetics and Morality) a fascinating collection that pleased me intellectually.

There is a problem here. How do I translate *Aram* into English? I have another word called "Morality."

But according to a Thamil dictionary, it gives many meanings: religion, knowledge, reward for virtue, austerity, good conduct, penance, justice, conjugal virtue, renunciation, goodness, chastity, charity.

There are 24 excellent short essays in the book. The author poses such questions.

Is it virtuous to depict aesthetically, a horror event or a pitiable incident, and thereby turn it into a profit earning saleable product in the open market?

Can one stop Death and War?

Can the national minorities gain equal status even after the nation had been liberated?

What is fundamental in Greek Tragedies?

What are the reasons for adversary relationship in conjugal life?

The limits of lying

Music and the Brain

Women in Television

The History of Siththars (knowledge realized philosophers)

He answers these posers in a lucid manner. His clear thinking is reflected in his writing that is easily understood even by an average reader.

The crux of the first essay is this: In the present Majoritarian Democracy, National Minorities cannot obtain all the rights. Ganeshalingan says: "The growth of printing mechanism united the people of those who speak their mother tongue. Capitalism led to calling people speaking alien languages as strangers (May I add "Pariahs"?) Benedict Anderson holds this view". The writer quotes Stalin as a definition of the term "Nationality". He says further: "In the name of "Democracy" everyone is equal before the Law. But in practice the language, nationality, religion, cultural rights etcetera may be considered as secondary. Or even denied these rights. Can the expatriate Thamilians from Lanka gain their rights in those countries where they live now?" S G calls this kind of situation as "Bourgeois Democracy". He believes that only under Socialism as prescribed by Lenin can one unite all nationalities under one umbrella as a Nation.

Well and good. But from my point of view what prevents such broad outlook is the intrinsic psyche amongst

all of us in the name of culture and religion that are toned down to "majoritarianism and minoritarianism". That is why I support the view of President Rajapaksa's pronouncement, at least as an idea, that there are "no minorities in the Island Sri Lanka". I earnestly hope that he would keep the chauvinists among us at bay.

Next we shall see what Ganeshalingan says about war and death:

Writing about Law, Religion and War, the writer says that death and war are inevitable, but they could be delayed. He says medicine could prolong the life of a person only to some extent. Likewise conciliatory negotiations can temporarily postpone war. In other words Death and War are inevitable is his truism.

Let us move on to S G's interpretation of what he considers as Aestheticism. When one looks deeply into today's arts and literatures one finds that the quality of "goodness" is not applicable in aesthetic rendition. He says that in Europe particularly in Britain, the German Philosopher T. Adorno's (1903 - 1969) conception of aestheticism has gained ground. They stressed on innate sensibility, truth, justice and freedom as essential ingredients of aestheticism.

Some of the other titles of S G's essays are : Sickness and Prevention, Marathi writer Kandekhar's novels, Let's learn Marxism, Women in Television, K Daniel's novel Kaanal, Aarumuga Naavalar and Casteism, Wedding Greetings, Statue of Valluvar in the ocean in Kumari Munai (Cape Comorin), The "Saraswathi" period in the history of Tamil Literature, Sathiyamangalam Nagarasan and Eastern Marxism, Indian Medicine and Homeopathy, Globalization

and One God, Inside and Outside, A new look at Tholkaapiyar, History of Indian Religious Conversion and Thamilmadu, Thamilmadu's "Siththars", Stars in the Sky and Humans on Earth, Research methods of the Arts and Literature.

I am sure discerning readers would like to read this book for whatever its worth.

19. THAMIL AND SOVIET LITERATURE

(*The Sunday Leader* - June 29, 1997)

In the second issue of *Soviet Literature* in 1987, Sergei Strokan wrote an article titled "Thamil literature and its interaction with the Russian classics and Soviet literature". That was 10 years ago. He informed that: "*Thirukural*, *Silapadikaram* and classical poetry from ancient anthologies have been published repeatedly in Russian translation. It is noteworthy that one of the founders of Thamil prose writing was an Italian missionary of the 16th century Konstantius Beschi, while following its distinctive course. Thamil literature at various stages of its formation and growth, turned to the experience of Russian and Soviet classical literature. The sphere of interaction between the Russian and Thamil literatures was widened, which resulted in the appearance of new, brilliant works of Thamil writers highly proficient in the art of realistic writing. Among Thamil writers in the 1940s, 1950s, Maxim Gorky was the most popular Soviet writer....."

It is a pity that Sergei Strokan mentions only one Sri Lankan Thamil writer, K. Ganesh, in his article and only concentrates on Thamil Nadu writers for his exposition.

Independent researcher Paulinus Thambimuttu, is

a brother of poet Thambimuttu. He wrote a book called *Europe And the Dravidians*, first published in UK and later in two impressions in the early 80s.

Deputy Chairman, University Grants Commission Prof. S. Pathmanathan, in his preface to the book says: "In the present work the author attempts to adduce evidence to prove that the first neolithic farmers who came to Europe were of the same stock and spoke a similar language as the Dravidian - speaking peoples of India and Ceylon. In Southern Asia as a whole there are more than twenty languages belonging to the Dravidian family. The Dravidians have generally been identified with the people of the megalithic culture as they have been concentrated in historical times in those parts of India where megalithic monuments have been found in large numbers. Megalithic culture was a synthetic one. Anthropologists claimed that Dravidians in India were mostly of the Mediterranean physical type and it was generally believed by historians that they once had a wide distribution in Northern India".

This little book has an exhaustive bibliography and interested readers will find it revealing.

20. RITUALS AND THE LINKS BETWEEN THAMILS AND THE JAPANESE

(Sunday Leader - July 06, 1997)

Worldview And Rituals Among Japanese And Thamils is a book in English by Susumu Ohno, Arunasalam Sanmugadas and Manomani Sanmugadas. Published in 1986 by Gakushin University in Tokyo, this well researched book

is one of the most important to come out in recent times on Tamil studies. The book is dedicated to an eminent scholar in Tamil studies, Prof. M.B. Emeneau.

Susumu Ono in his preface says that his intention was to analyse the relationship of the two cultures, social rituals from both practical and linguistic angles:

"In the first paper, I discuss the concept of a three-level universe : gods, men, and the underworld - as depicted in Japanese mythology and in ancient Tamil poems. I also compare the funeral-rituals and beliefs among Japanese and Tamils which are contingent on that model of the world.

In my second paper, I describe both the Japanese New Year's celebration and the Pongal celebration among Tamils of India and Sri Lanka, drawing upon material collected in Tamil Nadu and Japan since 1980. In addition, Prof. Arunasalam Sanmugadas provides examples from Sangam anthologies (300 B.C. - 300 A.D.) and from practices among the Jaffna Tamils".

Papers 3 to 5, written by the Sanmugadas couple, deal with Tamil marriage customs, past and present. In her first paper Manomani discusses marriage among the ancient Tamils in the period leading upto 300 A.D. In the fourth paper Sanmugadas continues the discussion from 300 A.D. onwards. The final paper by Manomani takes a closer look at the present marriage system of the Jaffna Tamils.

Among eminent Dravidian scholars are Prof. Emeneau of Berkeley University in California and Prof. Kamil Zvelabil of University of Utrecht. They have advised the writers of this book. Further study on the Japanese connection of the Tamils is to follow.

Seventy eight year old Prof. Susumu Ono has published

many books. Two are on Tamils and their language : *Thamil and Japanese : A Comparative Study*, and *Sound Correspondences Between Thamil and Japanese*.

Arunasalam Sanmugadas obtained his Ph.D in linguistics from the University of Edinburgh in 1972. Presently he is the Dean of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Jaffna. He is the author of several books and academic papers. Manomani is a research assistant at Gakushin University, Tokyo. She is also author of many books and papers.

21. IN SEARCH OF CULTURAL IDENTITY

(*Sunday Times - August 12, 1984*)

In Thettathivu in Kaluwanchikudy in the Batticaloa district, a humble man in his late fifties, assisted by his wife and children, has been writing, printing and publishing books in Thamil since 1959.

By current publishing standards the 70 odd books published by his concern, Jeeva Publishers, are primitive and reminiscent of the elementary Thamil school Readers of the 40s and 50s. But the basic point is that he has been doing this as a sort of mission in popularising the neglected topics of cultural interest in the Batticaloa district, considered a backward area in academic circles.

Being a retired, trained school teacher (he has served in the Uva and the South-Dickwella) devoid of any special academic distinctions, his efforts deserve notice, for what he has produced is good use to students.

K.D.Selvarajagopal, who writes under the pseudonym

"Eelathu Pooradanar" has published seven books which include "Swami Vipulanandar's thoughts on Education", "Notes on life of Arumuga Navalar". Light of the East-Pulavarmani A. Periyathambipillai and a collection of short stories. He has also written nearly 16 books on subjects ranging from the Veddas to dialects spoken in the Batticaloa district.

Mrs. P.B. Selvarajagopal, herself a retired trained teacher, and her husband have compiled two very useful glossaries (or dictionaries). They are on the use of words, phrases and proverbs in Tamil in the East.

The factor that prompted this couple to compile these dictionaries was the disregard for such usage of language by the learned. The point of view of this crusading couple is that Batticaloa Tamil is as rich as Sangam Literature and that though the language may sound colloquial, and ungrammatical, it is really based on ancient Tamil works. For more than 30 years they have been collecting such words and usages and have now explained what they mean in the cultural context of the eastern region. "Maddakalappu Sol Nool", "Neerara Nihandu", "Maddakalappu Aharadhi" and "Maddakalappu Solvettu" are the four books in this category.

Such tasks should actually be undertaken by researchers in the universities, although some scholars have attempted to compare the Batticaloa dialect with the Jaffna dialect. But self-made scholars like Selvarajagopal, though lacking in scientific methodology, have set the pattern for others to follow.

Jeeva Publishers have brought out books on grammar, literature, art, fiction, devotional songs, children's literature, poetry, education, drama, and ancient verse forms. A few

more books are yet to be published before the author and his family left for Canada.

22. LOVABLE ACADEMIC

(Sunday Times - May 13, 1984)

Prof. S. Vithiananthan, Vice-Chancellor, University of Jaffna celebrated his 60th birthday on May 8 and the "League of Friends in Arts, Letters and Journalism" arranged a function to honour him for his laudable contributions to this country and abroad.

"Viththi", as he is popularly known taught Tamil in the University College, Colombo and later at Peradeniya and Jaffna. He is the first Vice-Chancellor of the University of Jaffna and now holds office for a second term.

Prof. Vithiananthan has been a University teacher since the late forties and most of Sri Lanka's University educated Tamil speaking people sat at his feet if they did Tamil as a subject and even members of other communities have had the benefit of his stewardship when he was warden of residential halls in the campuses.

Prof. Vithiananthan has written more than three books in Tamil. Among them are "Ilakkiva Thentral", "Thamiliyal Chinthanaikal". He has also written a number of academic papers and articles in English. One of his articles in English - "Trends in Tamil writing" appeared in "Community" edited by C.R. Hensman in the latter half of the 1960's.

His outstanding contribution is his attempt to rejuvenate Tamil folk-theatre. In a way what Prof E. Saratchandra did to Sinhala drama, Prof. Vithiananthan did to revitalise

and polish "Nattu Kooththu" (folk drama) to suit modern needs. He encouraged his students in the Peradeniya Campus to perform adapted folk plays in the traditional manner and even produced some of them, like "Karnan Por" (from Mahabharatha) and "Vaali Vadai" (from Ramayana). He has also edited folk plays and published them.

Traditional folk-artists in the Batticaloa, Mannar, Jaffna and Vavuniya districts are indebted to him for his painstaking efforts. Having been the Chairman of the Drama Panel of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, he did his best to foster interest in both traditional and modern Tamil drama.

An interesting observation one could make here, is the fact that the Sri Lankan Tamil academics are forerunners in scientific modern approaches to literature. We have had Swami Vipulanandar (first Tamil professor of the then University of Ceylon and Professor in Tamil at the Annamalai University in Tamilnadu). Prof. K.Kanapathipillal, Prof. V. Chelvanayagam, and Prof. K. Kailasapathy did a lot in their life-time and set the pattern to be followed by Tamil scholars in Tamilnadu and Malaysia. The late Fr. S. Thaninayagam was another scholar of international repute. In fact, the Tanjavoor University in Tamilnadu has appointed Prof. S. Vithiananthan as a member of the Board of Governors there recognizing Sri Lanka and the individual's mettle.

More than three volumes on Prof. Vithiananthan is being published this week to honour him. Prof. "Viththi" is a lovable person and a great scholar. We wish him well.

23. A.M.A. AZEEZ AS A SCHOLAR IN THAMIL

(The Island - March 17, 1992)

Azeezum Thamilum by A.M.Nahiya, Published by Lora Publishers, 273, Kittangi Road, Nintavur, (1991), Price. Rs.130/-

The late A.M.A.Azeez (1911 - 1973) was a multi-faceted personality. He was born a Muslim in Jaffna but served in other parts of the country as a Civil Servant of the earlier vantage and later as the Principal of Zahira College, Colombo. When there was a bicameral legislature in the then Ceylon, he also served a Senator.

This book in Thamil assesses Azeez as a lover of Thamil language. The author considers his subject as a Thamil scholar shaped by an environment. As such Azeez felt that the mother tongue of the Moors in this country is Thamil and their medium of education too was Thamil. He also wanted to give importance to the use of Arabic Thamil. The knowledge Azeez had in Thamil was impressive. He always stood for the unity between the Thamil and the Muslims. He was also a guide for further research in literary studies. He was an essayist and a travelogue writer and author of many books. Nahiya's book explores all these aspects in a meticulous fashion. It is a valuable source book in Thamil covering almost all aspects of the late A.M.A. Azeez's contribution as a scholar in Thamil Studies.

The author of this book, A.M. Nahiya is presently assistant director of the Department of Hindu Culture and Thamil Affairs. He had served as the vice-principal of Zahira College, Colombo. A product of the University of

Colombo, he had been the first Muslim to hold the position of the President of the Thamil Sangam. A researcher and literary critic, A.M. Nahiya hails from Nintavur in the Ampara district.

The importance of the book lies in the fact that it is exhaustive and critically annotated. The writer's clear thinking and method of placing facts and statements in their proper perspective earned the respect of the reader.

Prof. M.M. Uwise, another Muslim who is a scholar in Islamic and Thamil Studies has paid a high tribute to Nahiya in the foreword to the book.

This book therefore is an essential reference material not only for readers who would like to know something about Azeez, but also the whole gamut of literary, social and cultural history of the late 19th and more than half of the present century.

One wishes that this book is translated into Sinhala and English so that a greater number of people may come to know details of both Azeez and Nahiya.

24. TRIBUTE TO A SAVANT

(Daily News - July 04, 1984)

MANI VILA MALAR on Prof. S. Vithiananthan, Vice-Chancellor, University of Jaffna.

Prof. S. Vithiananthan celebrated his 60th birthday on May 8 this year and a ceremony was organized on May 12 at Veerasingham Hall, Jaffna. On this date a commemorative volume was released to honour the Vice-Chancellor.

Prof. Vithiananthan is one of the respected academic and cultural leaders of this country and greatly honoured by the Tamil-speaking people of our island. He is respected in academic circles in other countries, particularly Tamilnadu in India.

Studied articles on Prof. Vithinananthan not only represent analysis on the man and his contributions, but also records the contemporary history of Sri Lankan Tamil literature, particularly the field of drama in which lies the learned professor's creative strength.

The following, who are themselves great names in the local Tamil academic and media scenes, Prof. V.I. Subramaniam (Vice-Chancellor of the Thanjavoor University in Tamilnadu), Prof.S.V.Chittibabu (Vice Chancellor of the Annamalai University in Tamilnadu), R. Sivagurunathan (Editor in chief Thinakaran), S. Thillainathan (Senior Lecturer in Tamil, University of Peradeniya), Prof.A.Velupillai (Head of Tamil Department, University of Jaffna) Prof. K. Sivathamby (University of Jaffna), Prof. A. Shanmugas (University of Peradeniya), Prof. S. Rajaratnam (Director, University College, Batticaloa), Prof. M.M. Uwise, (Head of Islamic Tamil Literature studies, Kamaraj University, Madurai, Tamilnadu), Prof. S. Sivagnansunderam (Medical faculty, University of Jaffna), "Chokkan" (Lecturer in Tamil Kopay Training college), T. Shanmugasunderam (Principal, Mahajana College, Tellipalai) and C. Mownaguru (Lecturer, University of Jaffna)

To those who can read Tamil, this volume provides a wealth of information on the man and his works.

25. REMEMBERING S. RAJARATNAM OF "HINDU BOARD" FAME

(The Island - July 4, 1984)

A hundred years ago a great Hindu was born in Kopay in the North. July 4 his birthday, also marks the American Independence Day. S. Rajaratnam born in 1884, died on March 12, 1970. When he died 14 years ago the local legislators of all communities in Sri Lanka, including President J.R. expressed heartfelt condolences. The late S. Rajaratnam was also, a member of the Legislative Council of Ceylon during 1924 - 1931.

Politics, law and sports were his fields; but the Tamil people in this country remember him for his contribution towards education. Jaffna Hindu college is still a premier educational centre in the North. Rajaratnam was a member of the Board of Governors of the College and affiliated institutions for a long time. He was one of the educated people from the Tamil community who found the Hindu Board of Education. This Board was responsible in establishing many schools particularly in the North. Education in the right Hindu atmosphere was the style.

Saivism is an important segment in Hinduism. In the Saivaite tradition, a Saiva Paribalana Sabai was founded to administer Saivaite practices. Rajaratnam was an active member of this association as well. Saiva Training College in Thirunelvely was established largely due to Rajaratnam's untiring efforts.

Eventually Rajaratnam came to be recognized as a manager of several Hindu schools and a Training College. It is reported that 285 schools under his management were taken over by the Government in the 60's.

Rajaratnam's activities were not confined to Jaffna alone. He became an Executive Member of the Vivekananda Society and Ramakrishna Mission in Colombo.

Rajaratnam's deep love for Hinduism was understandable because he was trying to save as many Hindu students as possible from abandoning their religion for the sake of admission to schools run by Christian missionaries in the North. Thereafter he started a movement to draw Hindu children to study in schools in a religious atmosphere that was in tune with their faith and culture. Most of the schools established by him were in the villages.

Most of the teachers employed by him taught without accepting any remuneration till such time these schools were registered as government aided schools.

Rajaratnam was not merely a Hindu revivalist. He was also concerned about orphans and depressed class young ones. It is learnt that he issued a circular to 60 heads of schools under his management to "equal seat and equal meal" to all students irrespective of whatever caste they belong to. But the caste-conscious Jaffna people of earlier generations burnt some of these schools and even removed their own children from these schools and got them admitted to Christian schools.

Rajaratnam believed in the Gandhian concept of love towards all particularly towards the depressed class people.

In that sense he was truly a man of progressive ideas.

26. LANKAN THAMIL MUSIC - WHAT THE DISCS HOLD

(The Island - February 27, 1987)

A brief description of the types of songs, as described by the compilers themselves of the LP discs, issued by the Thamil Music Unit of the SLBC, Mrs. Navarajakulam Muttucumarasamy, the Unit's Controller had sought the assistance from Thamil Scholars and academics for this purpose.

The content of the discs is as follows.

Prayer and Worship

1. Thiruppalli eluchchi

In the Bhakti tradition of Hinduism it has been a common feature on the part of the devotees to endow the Supreme Reality with human attributes which invariably blossomed, in a series of hymns in which the deity is depicted as some one who is enshrined in the heart of the devotee.

In this instance Thiruppalli eluchchi purports to awaken the presiding deity at the Jaffna Pararajasekara Temple after the night's repose.

2. Thevaram

In Thamil literary tradition the hymns sung by the great saivite trio (Thirugnanasampantar, Tirunavukkarasar and Sundaramoorthy) are referred to as thevarams. The thevaram sung here is that in praise of the deity of the ancient Sri Lankan temple of Thirukkoneswaram (in Trincomalee

District) by Thirugnanasambantha Moorthy Nayanar.
(C7 AD)

3. Thiruvunjai (Literarily the Holy Swing)

In almost all the Hindu temples during the period of the Annual festival or on a particular day the decorated deities are placed on a swing and rocked to the tune of traditional music. The song sung while rocking the swing is referred to as the Thiruvunjai.

4. Kaththavarayan Paddu (The song of Kaththavarayan)

In the Little Tradition Kaththavarayan, is considered to be the guardian deity of the village. He is the son of Mariamman the premier folk goddess. The story of the birth and exploits of Kaththavarayan are sung to the accompaniment of udukku. The song contains a dialogue between the mother Mariamman and her son Kaththavarayan.

5. Mazhaikkaviyam

Mariamman and Kannaki (the deified chaste woman) are goddesses of fertility, whose blessings are invoked to the well being and prosperity of the village through rain. This song is sung extolling the two goddesses to the accompaniment of udukku and chilambu (anklet).

6. Yogar Swami Padal

This is a song sung in praise of the presiding deity at the famous Kandasamy temple at Nallur, Jaffna by the great seer Yogar Swami.

Work Songs

7. The Boat Song

This is sung by fisherman, and/or cargo boatmen. The travails of travelling over the surging waves, the pleasure of getting back to the land are expressed in this song.

8. Harvesting Song

This song is sung by males and females while reaping the harvest.

9. Pounding Song

This song of love and intimacy is sung by women while pounding rice with mortar and pestle. Some of these have now become a part of the Great Tradition.

Life Cycle

10. Lullaby

There is no human culture in the world which has no lullabies. These songs express and symbolise the maternal love and concern for the child. The song is sung by the mother while the child is put to sleep.

11. Saynthadamma

This song is sung by the mother or matron while rocking the child on the lap. The tempo of the song increases when the child responds to the song with beaming smiles.

12. Akkandi Song (Kathaipaddu)

From the songs sung to children we come to a song sung by children. This consists of a question to the Akkandi bird that has laid eggs (children like to play with these pearl-like white eggs) and its answer to the children. The answer depicts the motherly concern of the bird for its offspring.

13. Love song

These songs sung at folk level are meaningful in what is said in hidden terms about the time and place of tryst. The song recorded here is a duet.

14. Thirumana unjal

During Hindu weddings that are usually held in the bride's house, the couple are made to sit on a decorated swing which is rocked by close relations seated around the couple. This is a song that is sung while the swing is being rocked. This song reflects the glorious future of the wedded couple.

These songs are sung by women mostly at funerals. Such songs are also sung by women when their hearts are filled with sorrow, dismay, helplessness and solicitude.

Theatre Songs

15. Then-modi folk play

Nondi nadagam (the drama of the lame rascal) is one of the Thamil folk dramatic forms yet preserved in the Eastern parts of Sri Lanka. The drama deals with the vicissitudes of

the local rascal who loses one of his legs. The song recorded is that of the gullible chettiar (Trader) and his beautiful wife who were duped by the lovable knave. This is in the thenmodi style of folk drama.

16. Vadamodi folk play

Pre-modern Sri Lankan theatre had two major dramatic forms. Vadamodi and Thenmodi - the former with virant dancing and fast moving music and tempo, the latter more subdued; each had their variations in dress, make up, dance movements and even in theme. The songs are from Vali Vathai and Ravanesan.

17. Annavi Tradition Play

These songs are from the Annavi tradition or Koddakaik Koothu flourishing among Sri Lankan Tamils. The first song is from Poothathamby Nadagam, a theme peculiar to the north of Sri Lanka. In this song the Portuguese minister Anthirasi sings that he will take revenge on the wife of Pooththamby for insulting him. The second song is from the play Arichandran and refers to the scene in which Arichandran watchman of the crematorium, protects the vow he had taken not to tell lies. He reprimands a woman trying to burn a body stealthily without paying the cemetery dues, little realising that the woman is his wife and the dead child is his son.

18. Christian Folk Play

The folk plays popularly known as "Nattu - Koothu" among the rural population, is mainly in vogue in Northern Sri

Lanka practised almost solely by the Catholic Community.

"Enricque Emperatue" and "Mooviraasaakkal" the songs from which plays are included here, have their themes based on the Christian Stories "Emperor Henry" and the "Gifts of the Magi" . These two dramas are mostly performed in the district of Mannar in the North.

19. Kaman Koothu (Cupid's Dance)

This folk drama is prevalent among the Thamils of the plantation areas of Sri Lanka. The song recorded here is a dialogue between Kaman (Cupid - Lord of Love) and his wife Rathi.

Instruments

20. Nathaswaram

This instrument (similar to the clarinet of the Western tradition) of South Indian (Carnatic) music tradition is played now on all auspicious and ceremonial occasions. Thus its very sound is a symbol of a sense of cultural fullness.

A type of drum called "Thavil" accompanies the nathaswaram. It is one of the classical instruments of the Thamils. The song in this disc is that which is played at a wedding ceremony.

21. Paraimelam

This is the traditional drum of the Thamils now confined to playing in temples of the Little Tradition and at funerals. It is played with many drums, most of which are barrel-like and played side ways, with refrain kept on cone

shaped drums, played on the upper surface with two "S" shaped sticks.

22. Udukku

This is the "hour glass" shaped hand drum, held in one hand and played with the other. This is the instrument used vary much in the Mariamman cult.

23. Thavil Kachcheri

Thavil, is the drum accompanying nathaswaram. In the course of a nathaswaram recital, the accompanying thavil players engage in a duel which forms a climax to the entire performance. This is known as the Thavil Kachcheri.

Dance Songs

24. Dance Songs

This is a dance in circular formation played with (roughly a foot long) rods in the hands of the dancers. The rythmic movements of the dance are punctuated with the beat of the sticks. The variations in the movement, are very pleasing and attractive. This is a song sung while performing Koladdam.

25. Kummi

This is the dance of women, performed in a circle by clapping their hands and each others hands. Most of the songs are invocatory. This is one such piece.

26. Getting into Trance

There is a belief that in a state of trance, particular deity takes possession of a human being. Such a "possession" could be induced. This is such a song.

Udukku is played to the chanting of Mantras and the deity enters the person.

27. Thalakkavadi

Quite naturally such a ritualistic exercise which combines song and dance emerges into an art form by itself. Thalakkavadi (Kavadi that is danced to the beat of tala rhythmic syllables) is one such. In this the beat is crucial to the dance.

28. Kavadi

Carrying a Kavadi (a decorated wooden pole with an arch over it), carried on the shoulders with offering, mostly to the Murugan temple, commonly with a parade is a votive offering. Usually it is taken from one sacred spot to another and in such cases the Kavadi carrier dances in a trance; the song that accompanies the dance is a well known melody in Tamil.

Accompanists

N.K.Pathmanathan	-	Nathaswaram
T.V. Pichaiappah	-	Violin
Malini Srinivasan	-	Veena
Yoganayagi Thanigasalam	-	Veena
H.P. Karunaratne	-	Flute

A. Namasivayam	-	Flute
K. Ganesan	-	Thavil
K. Puniyamoorthy	-	Thavil
N.S.R.Suthaharan	-	Thavil
A. Santhanakrishnan	-	Mrudangam
P. Krubakaran	-	Mrudangam
S. Chithamparapillai	-	Udukku
K.V. Natkunam	-	Maththalam
K. Nadarajah	-	Maththalam
I. Vairavanathan	-	Tambura

The Vice Chancellor, staff and students of the University of Jaffna assisted in producing these discs.

Prof. S. Vithiananthan, Vice Chancellor, University of Jaffna, Prof. K. Sivathamby, Prof. A. Sanmugadas, Dr. E.Balasundaram and Dr. S. Mounaguru assisted in selecting the lyrics and categorising them.

27. MARTIN WICKRAMASINGHE'S WRITING IN THAMIL

(Daily News - February 10, 2016)

Celebrated literary giant in Sinhala, Martin Wickramasinghe (1891 - 1976) is fairly known to Lankan Tamil readers of quality writing via introductions, features, pictures and transactions of his works into Tamil. One of the earliest translations was in 1964 and the novel concerned was Gramap Piralvu (Gamperaliya.) The translator was the late scholar M.Muhammdu Uwise from Panadura. The

Martin Wickremasinghe Trust has brought out a second edition in late last year.

It would be interesting to note that the late Sinhala intellectual wrote this novel first in 1944. An excerpt from M W's Preface is also given in Thmail. The key points there are the locale in which the story is narrated lies 10 miles away from Gaalla (Galle) on the Matara - Gaalla road. The writer left his village Koggala by 1924. The story begins with the history of a stone slab.

Venerable Kiriwathuduwe Sri Pragnasara Thera, who was the Chairman of the Sri Lanka Sahithya Mandalaya writing in 1963, attributed this novel as the first fiction to depict the lifestyle of the Sinhala people. The changes that take place in a village in the aftermath of foreign domination are depicted in this novel. Social changes in a feudal setup, capitalistic modes, the lifestyles of the middle class and the uneducated people are depicted in this great work.

The translator opines that due to changes in the atmosphere not only the village but also the people had to undergo changes in many respects.

Heritage of Languages

The translator the late Emeritus Professor M.M.Uwise was one of the first Muslim students to do a special degree in Thamil from the University of Peradeniya. His mentor was the late Professor in Thamil at this University and later the first Vice-Chancellor of the University of Yaalpaanam (Jaffna) Emeritus professor S. Vithiyananthan. The latter writing in 1961 wrote, praises the translation as the translator was proficient in both Sinhala and Thamil and had understood the nuances of the novel and rendered it in Thamil without distorting the heritage of both languages in use.

This 228 page book is available from Martin Wickramasinghe Trust, 18/3, Kirimandal Mawatha, Nawala, Rajagiriya, and priced at Rs.300/= per copy. The book has a few appropriate illustrations and has 16 chapters.

Emeritus Professor of English Ashley Halpe has already translated Gamperaliya into English. The great maestro of the Sinhala Cinema, Dr. Lester James Pieris made an innovative film based on this novel, It's all history. Purpose here is not to comment on the original work but to introduce to readers the importance of this novel in overall Lankan Literature. That includes not only works in Sinhala but also in Thamil and English. The necessity to translate works in each of these languages into the other two languages is stressed here.

Apart from the remarkable portrayal of a Southern Village and the people involved eight decades ago, what attracted me most were the structure and the creative use of language (even if it is in Thamil) by the great Sinhala Icon of the last century.

One other translation is a collection of Martin Wickramasinghe's Selected Short Stories (Siru Kathaikal). The translator is emeritus professor Saba Jeyarasa. The publishers are the same as above. Here too illustrations are found. The book is priced at Rs.190/- per copy.

Appreciative Introduction

The English translation of the titles of the 10 Sinhala stories included are Diversion, Cemetery, Love, Bondage, Money, Mother, Eve of the New year. The Torn Coat, Woman, and Exploits of Andoaiyah. We learn that the first realistic Sinhala anthology of short stories was published in 1924. Out of the 108 stories M.W. had written, only 10 are

included in the collection in Tamil. I am not sure the former President and the present vice president of the Kolumbu Tamil Sangam has directly translated these stories from Sinhala or the English version of these stories. Nevertheless it is a laudable attempt because Prof. Saba Jeyarasa has compiled a bibliography of M W's works and written a useful and appreciative introduction of the latter for the benefit of readers in Tamil. M W's multidisciplinary facets and his imposing personality in Sinhala literature helped him to combine tradition with modernity. He was in many ways a pioneer in modern Sinhala literature.

An enthusiastic admirer of M.W. Gunarathinam of Inuvil, had initiated the translation project as he says and thanks Saba Jeyarasa and Inuvil T. Sivasubramaniam for the help rendered. He was inspired by reading the story titled "New Year" and remembered his own young village life in a note in this collection.

Prof. Saba Jeyarasa deserves thanks for his efforts to translate the stories in the collection for the benefit of readers like me who are not proficient in reading the originals in Sinhala.

Early literary ventures

Another publication in Tamil pertaining to Martin Wickramasinghe is a book published by the Cultural Affairs Department. The book is an introduction originally written in Tamil by S. Muralidharan from the hill country. We understand that he is a Deputy Director of Education attached to the Ministry of Education in Isurupaya. He writes poems and essays and his books on Puthumai Piththan and Jeyakanthan (two Tamilnadu writers) have been translated into Sinhala. He has also written a book on Pablo Neruda.

In writing the book on Martin Wickramasinghe, Muralidharan thanks Trust, the wife and children of M.W. Anthony Jeeva, Saaral Naadan, Shiela Sridharan and Jeevan. This 136 page book may be available from the Cultural Affairs Department.

The book is divided into the following heads:

M W's life, a decade of early literary ventures, three decades of the intermediary period, three decades of the concluding years, four different essays on M W's short stories, three different essays on M W's novels and a bibliography of the works of Martin Wickramasinghe. The bibliography is in English and that is helpful.

I appreciated the critical appreciation of Martin Wickramasinghe by the author. One wishes similar translations of Sinhala writers should be made available to readers in Tamil. At the same time it should not be one way street. Lankan writers in Tamil (both Thamilians and Islamites) write commendable fiction depicting the life of people in the north and the east.

28. A LANKAN CANADIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

(Tamil Weeki - August 21, 2005)

Thamils in Independent Ceylon is a book in English by Lankan born Canadian, Supiramaniam Makenthiran from 5292 Naskapi Court Mississauga, Ontario L5R 2P3, Canada. This 148 page book with photographs describes the "History of Tamil struggle in Sri Lanka" as stated in the sub-heading of the book.

The author had served in Sri Lanka and the African

continent as an accountant and retired as a World Bank Project Finance Officer. He is a graduate of the then University of Colombo and a fellow of the Chartered Association of Certified Accountants.

The blurb of the book says that "In this book, he has traced the struggle of the Thamils from the time Ceylon became independent to the present time. It starts with the non-violent Satyagraha led by the Upcountry Tamil leader Thondaman and then by the Northeast Tamil leader Chelvanayagam.

After thirty years of futile non-violent agitation, it culminates in the armed resistance by Tamil militants. "There are 21 chapters in this slim volume : Ceylon Independence, Ceylon on the eve of Colonialism, Political Developments upto Independence, Political Developments after Independence, Events leading to Tamil Ealam demand, the Father of the Tamil Nation, Vaddukoddai Resolution, Tamil Youth react to Sinhala Terror, the 1983 Genocide of Thamils by Sinhalese, Aftermath of the holocaust, The Eelam War 1, The Patriarch of Upcountry Thamils, The IPKF War, the Eelam War 2, Eelam War 3 begins, The Liberation of Mullaitivu, the Liberation of Vanni and Elephant Pass, The Hero of Tamil Liberation, The Agni Keela and Katunayaka Debacles, Leaders of Tamil Speaking people and Ceasefire.

I wish that the writer had used sparingly some terms and not generalize as "Sinhala Terror" (because only a section of the "unenlightened Sinhala resorted to violence due to their stupidity of understanding history) and also as "genocide of Thamils by Sinhalese" (because not all Thamils were killed by all the Sinhalese).

The emotional element in his writing could have been

minimised and an impassioned approach to the muddled problem could have been appreciated by neutral observers.

The author is right in saying that "The history of Lanka has been distorted and many facts suppressed by interested parties." But he had this to say: "I have briefly touched on the history of Ceylon Tamils from the time Lanka was connected to India by land, and the Tamil Hindu King Ravana who ruled over Lanka thousands of years ago."

I leave it to the reader's understanding and interpretation of some of the statements made by the author. Here are some gleanings : "The Buddhist chronicles, Mahavamsa written in the 6th century A.D., and the later Chulavamsa, give information about Ceylon history from the 6th century B.C. Commonsense dictates that Tamils were the inhabitants of Sri Lanka (p4).

The Sinhalese were converted to Buddhism during the reign of King Devanampiyatissa. The Sinhalese are Aryans as claimed without any basis. They are a mixed ethnic group, largely Dravidians, speaking the Sinhala-language which developed later. Many south Indians who immigrated to Ceylon upto recent times were assimilated by the Sinhalese" (p7)

The following passage (p25) is subject to be reviewed dispassionately: "In pursuance of his racist policies, D.S.Senanayake launched massive colonisation of the traditional tamil homeland of the northern and eastern provinces with Sinhalese from the south.

He planted undesirable Sinhalese ex-convicts and thugs in Gal Oya, Allai, Kantalai, Pavatkulam and other places squeezing the Tamils out of their own homeland of northeast, driving them out of their villages and committing atrocities". The writer continues : If D.S.S. started Sinhala

State Terror against the Thamils in 1948, the Sinhala Mob Terrorism started in 1956". (p26) "To add to the bitterness of the Thamils, in 1958 anti-Thamil riots by Sinhalese hoodlums was organised by the racist elements with the connivance of the Bandaranaike Government all over the Sinhalese provinces." (p27)

Understandably there were bitter experiences that the nation as a whole faced during the past several decades since independence. All communities suffered due to power hungry politicians and racists in all quarters. But is there no hope after heavy losses of life, property, prestige and human values and human rights etal. This is what sane people ask.

Well, the writer Supiramanaim Makenthiran has this statement to make : "It is to be hoped that Sri Lanka will enjoy peace and prosperity and Thamils treated as equal citizens in the future. It is also to be hoped that Thamil people of the northeast and upcountry, will live happily in an autonomous set up, politically, socially, economically, culturally and linguistically. In this way, the country, which is presently divided de facto, can be reunited."

Read this book to understand things from a Thamilian perspective and then criticize and find proper solution to the nation's malady.

Lanka born Canadian in Colombo in the late 1950s, there was the defrocked Jesuit priest, who edited the "Star" tabloid for the Gunasena Group of Newspapers, who directed a short film "Little Bike Lost", while he was teaching at St. Joseph's College, Darley Road, Colombo. He was Noel Crusz.

He was a friend of Bing Crosby, the cowboy and wrote interesting articles on him. Then we have Robert Crusz, who lived in the U.K and edited a monograph on Lankan

Cinema for a prestigious and scholarly London Journal, "Framework". He is now in Colombo.

Coming from the same family of Burgher descent is the famous Rienzie Crusz, who worked as a librarian in the Central Bank in Colombo in the 1950s. He emigrated to Canada and had lived in Trinidad as well. I know only this much about him, although I have heard about him as an outstanding poet in English in Canada.

But to this date I have not read his poems. But thanks to Sam and Ameena, the duo that publishes some of the remarkable works in English by Lankan writers under their trade name Perera Hussein Publishing House. They invited me to a poetry reading by Rienzie Crusz, himself and a few friends of the couple.

One among them was a professor and there were three other youngsters, who read his poems beautifully and I understood the poems of Rienzie better by their reading. The event took place at the ICE last Saturday amidst academics and other celebrities.

The poems were taken from two volumes published by the Perera Hussein Publishing House located at 80A, Dharmapala Mawatha, Colombo 07. The anthologies are : "Singing Against the Wind" and "Elephant and Dice". It is not an exaggeration that his poems are beautiful compositions of lives and memories encountered by the poet and has an under viable depth.

The poet, Rienzie Crusz, told the audience that the Trinidad writer and Nobel Laureate, Walcott, found his poems great. It was profitable engagement even though a slight drizzle disturbed the smooth reading progression.

Thanks to Robert Crusz for introducing me to his

uncle who was engaged in a nostalgic conversation with newly discovered writer in English, Thissa Abeysekera. I exchanged a few words with him, and discovered that he seems to be annoyed with the "Thamil Problem,"

To be honest in expressing my own sentiments, there is no "Thamil Problem" in this country, but an identity crisis of accommodating the Thamils by a few unenlightened Sinhala as they want a majoritarian hegemony subjugating others under one single nation. Perhaps the respected poet, having been far away in a distant cold country like Canada, is unable to perceive what is really happening in this country.

As he perceives the other side of the picture, he might be able to voice another perspective of his feeling for the humankind.

29. THE STORY OF EELANADU AND AN ENTERPRISING EDITOR

(Daily News - October 25, 2005)

One of the pioneer provincial newspapers in contemporary times in our country was Eelanadu, now folded up. And one of its editors was K.G.Mahadeva. He is now retired and lives in Thamilnadu.

He has brought out a book in English titled "Reminiscences". Since he studied in Thamil medium, he admits he is poor in English. However, he managed to write in English the story of an important Yaalpaanam newspaper which began as a tabloid and then entered into broadsheet format.

The book is interesting even for an average reader

because it also reveals the personal adventures of an editor living dangerously in hard times.

And to a specialist readers like students of journalism, this book reveals untold stories that southern Sri Lanka was not familiar.

I wish to glean from this book at least a few pieces of information and use them as excerpts. Editors in Colombo newspapers would certainly be interested in knowing what had appended to journalists from the north in bringing out a newspaper.

Political and social scientists as well as journalists would remember that the Eelanadu office was burnt as the leading public library in Asia - the Yaalpaanam public library was burnt on June 01, 1981. It was a sad story. There is a written record of the origin, growth and destruction of the library by K.C. Kularathinam.

Excerpts from "Reminiscences" available from the author: K.G. Mahadeva, "Suprapatham", 5, 8th Cross street, Thirunagar, Karumandapam, Trichy - 620 001, Tamilnadu, India: "Started in 1959 as a weekly magazine and transformed into a bi-weekly in 1960 and daily in 1961, "Eelanadu" extended its national service in all directions.

Well organized for 33 years, "Eelanadu" wobbled after the ethnic trouble, shifted to many places, lost direction and finally stopped altogether. "In 1990 itself "Eelanadu" started straying from Chavakachcheri to Murugandi, then to Puthukudiyirrupu and was coming out from those places but could withstand only for a few years."

K.G.Mhadeva hailing from Maddakkalappu in the east joined "Eelanadu" when he was 21 years old. He became the editor of "Cheithi", a weekly tabloid published from Mahanuwara when he was 27.

He rejoined "Eelanadu" in late 1970s as its News editor. KGM continues : The East-Sri Lanka National paper corporation Chairman, K.C.Thangarajah, his brother Dr.K.C.Shanmugaratnam, and their nephew B. Sivanandan were the founders and main shareholders.

The editorial staff had K.P. Haran as Managing Editor, S.M.Gopalaratnam as news editor, Raja Ariyaratnam as the Weekly Editor. The sub editors were : T.M. Murugiah, S. Perumal, S. Sabaratnam, K. Yoganathan and K. Ganeshalingan. Another staffer was A.V. Maniccam. Later Raja Ariyaratnam became the editor of "Eelanadu" .

The layout of pages was handled by Narayanasamy. The Colombo correspondents were Pon. Balasundaram, Mahalingasivam and Gamini Navaratne. Other notable correspondents were: S. Thiruchelvam, K. Krishnarajah, K. Rasalingam, R. Sundararaja Sarma, S.R.Gnanasundaram, A.N.S. Thiruchelvam, Kandasamy, Balasingham, K. Thirulogamoorthy and S. Thillainathan. Later other sub editors were working : M. Manoharan, Peri Shanmuganathan, Selvi Gunamani, Selvi Pooranam, Parvathinathahasivam, Kanagaratnam, Natarajah and S. Ganeshanathan. E.K. Rajagopal were other colleagues."

KGM Writes : "In 1983, I was the Jaffna reporter for "Daily Mirror". I earned the friendship of Peramunathilake who started "Lanka News Agency" after having worked as News Editor of "Lankadeepa", AP correspondent Petrick Cruz and Reuters Editor Dalton de Silva. In 1982 an English weekly, "Saturday Review" was started in Jaffna.

S. Sivanayagam was the editor and A.J. Canagaratna was assisting him. S. Sivanayagam made use of my services for "Saturday Review". On July 02, 1983, the government locked the doors of "Saturday Review" and sealed it. Though

short-lived, the services of Sivanayagam made the rulers in the north and the capital think. S. Thiruchelvam who joined as official reporter of "Eelanadu" gained experience, later joined "Thinakaran" and then served the SLBC.

Then he elevated himself as editor of "Eela Murasu", which was being published for Jaffna in the 1980s. Now he is the Editor of Information Bulletin, in Canada. R. Prabakaran who had his training in "Eelanadu" and served it for a few years is now the Editor of daily "Virakesari". Many youngsters joined "Eelanadu" and they were under my direct supervision.

The list includes P. Ananthakrishnan (Ananth Palakidnar, now senior journalist with the "Daily News"), Senthilnathan and Sivaganeshan (now a senior journalist with "Thinakural"). They had acumen to gather news and pen articles.

Their skill and popularity in the field of news writing today adds honour and merit to "Eelanadu". Some who have joined "Eelanadu" is family in the middle but worked hard, are now in the pinnacle of their glory. M. Kadambanathan is editor of "Uthayan".

S.Perumal is in "Uthayan" weekly, S.K. Kasilingam is publishing books in France. S. Kuhanathan is running "Eelanadu" in France. E. Kandasamy works for a TV channel in France.

The newcomers were : A.S.Muruganandam, M. Parvathynathasivam, V.N. Balasubramaniam, Prabakaran and Benjamin Rajaratnam. The most interesting part in KGM's book is the Part 11 titled Incidents. The journalist's adventure amidst political turmoil and risky atmosphere is vividly written.

He was summoned by the late president Srimavo Bandaranaike during the regime of the late President J.R. Jayawardene for publishing an interview with her by Petrick Crusz who wrote it for the "Daily Mirror". The interviewer had sent a copy of this to "Eelanadu" as well.

I do not want to explain further because it would spoil your interest in reading how other media could misinterpret things. Political commentators in the media should read this episode in Tamil journalism. Parts III and IV touch on the author's contacts with CIPs local and abroad. The last section of the book includes excerpts of reviews in Tamil on his original book in Tamil.

It was called "Ninaivalaihal". Those who reviewed were: "Thinathanthi" newspaper in Tamilnadu, Anthony Jeeva, "Sujatha" (a Tamilnadu writer), K. Gunarasa (Chengai Aaliyan), Maana Mackeen, Devakanthan, "Ilakkiya", "Kunkumam", R.M. Nagalingam, P. Sribhavan and P.U. Lenin.

30. THAMIL BOOKS IN SINHALA

(Sunday Times)

While nearly fifty short stories from Sinhala have already been translated and published in Tamil, only less than a dozen stories by local tamil writers have seen the colour of print in Sinhala. Even a few novels by Martin Wickremasinghe, T.B. Ilangaratne and Karunasena Jayalath have appeared in translation in Tamil.

In this context it is heartening to learn that a Tamil novel entitled Mannil Theriyuthu Vanam (The sky is seen on the earth) is being translated into Sinhala. The fortunate

Thamil writer who is going to reach the Sinhala readers is S. Agasthiyar. But it must be said in fairness that some of Agasthiyar's short stories have already appeared in Sinhala.

We are also told that a short story entitled "Vatti" (Interest) is to appear in a collection of Thamil short stories to be published in Russian in the Soviet Union.

Agasthiyar incidentally celebrated his fifty first birth day in August this year. For the last twenty eight years, he has been writing in Thamil. Starting with poetry he has so far written nearly two hundred and fifty short stories, nine novellas and eight novels. He has also written about forty plays for both radio and stage. The plays include two political satires. He has also written biographical sketches of forty VIPs. Agasthiyar has also written nearly seventy short pieces, which could be best described as allegories.

Agasthiyar has also experimented in writing what he called. "Emotive metaphorical features". Besides creative writing, he has also produced nearly hundred articles - mainly literary criticism and philosophical ramblings.

The following are Agasthiyar's published works: NEE (you) - collection of seven emotive metaphorical features Irulin Ullae (within darkness) - a collection of 3 novellas. Thirumanathitkaha Oru Penn Kaththirukiral (A lass is waiting for marriage) a novel. The following are to be published shortly Oru Nootandin Iru Navalkal (Two novels of the century) a critical study, Gopurangal Sarihintrana (The Towers are falling) a novella, Erimalai (Volcano) a novel.

Agasthiyar, besides writing to almost all local news papers and journals in Thamil has also contributed to South Indian Journals like Kalaimagal, Deepam, Kannadasan, Ezhuththu and Thamarai. The last mentioned journal in fact had published Agasthiyar's photograph on its cover in 1970.

In 1968 Agasthiyar won the second prize in the short story competition of the Ceylon Tamil Writers Association while in 1964 he was awarded the first prize for his short story, in the competition conducted by the Tamil Service of the SLBC.

When the Jaffna Tamil Daily, Eelanadu, conducted a novel writing competition in 1968, Agasthiyar's novel Erikolam (Burning Planet) was awarded a special price.

Born as the third son in a family of four of Saverimuthu and Annama at Anaicottal in Jaffna, Agasthiyar married Agnes Navamani in 1955: they have for children three girls and a boy. Agasthiyar works as a storekeeper attached to the Sri Lanka Army.



LANKAN THAMIL CULTURE

K. S. Sivakumaran

K. S. Sivakumaran (82) writes in both in Tamil and English for the past 65 years. Apart from writing literary criticism and book reviews, he also writes poetry and short stories. He has produced 38 books in all. His primary concern is to target students to get familiar with literature and critical appreciation and also to inform non - Tamil readers of the Tamil culture and literature ; and at the same time inform the Tamil readers of the current Sinhala and western literary works.

He had been an English teacher and a broadcaster and tv personality. Film criticism is also his forté.

Rs. 350/= US\$ 05

ISBN 978-955-30-9256-4

S. GODAGE & BROTHERS (PVT) LTD.



No. 661, 665, 675, P. de S. Kularatne Mawatha,
Colombo 10, Sri Lanka.

Tel. : (011) 2685369, 2686925, Fax: 2674187

www.godage.com godageem@slt.lk



9 789553 092564

Designed by S. Godage & Brothers (pvt) Ltd