



THIRD EYE



SEVENTH ISSUE

PUBLICATION OF THE 'ENGLISH FORUM'

THIRD EYE

Seventh Issue

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Ms. N.V. Rajapillai

Publication of the English Forum

For Contacts :

S. Jeyasankar
Dept. of Fine Arts
Faculty of Arts & Culture.
Eastern University
Vantharumoolai,
Chenkalady.
Sri Lanka.

e.mail sjeyasankar@yahoo.com.

The Development of the divine in man would be called the **THIRD EYE** or the Eyes of Topas, mano - vritti, Thapasi is from the root 'Tap' is Sanskrit, meaning 'to burn'. This has a dual role. Turned inwards the burning is an internal process of cleansing Samskara or purification. The five door of perception are under the perfect control of the mind (manas) to such a cleanser. His inner faculty of thought is the best fields for the cultivation of true literary crop. Such products can stand timelessly.

CHALLENGES AND IMPORTANCE OF IDENTIFYING AND ESTABLISHING A TRADITION FOR WRITING IN ENGLISH BY THE THAMILS OF SRI LANKA.

S. Jeyasankar

Identifying the creative writings in English by the Thamils, and establishing it as a tradition is a scholarly work but a neglected part in the history of the literary tradition of the Thamils in Sri Lanka.

When I think about creative writing in English as a tradition, it is an irony that a society with popularly known silver - tongued orators in English had not thought about or were not aware about a creative tradition as a resistance against colonial systems as in India or in African countries because we had limited experiences in the national liberation struggle against colonialism and can identify its impact on our political and intellectual tradition right from independence.

After independence, politicians and intellectuals representing the community took the language issue as a medium to gain power to rule their people in place of the colonisers. Decolonizing the minds of the people was not their concern. The unchanged existence of the colonial education system will reveal this matter very clearly.

Thomas Macaulay's "Minute on Indian Education" portrays the colonial construct. It says, "It is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be the interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals, and in intellect"

The above statement is also appropriate to the elite of the Sri Lankan Tamil community. At the same time we can identify the efforts of movements like National Youth Congress to awaken national consciousness among the Tamil community throughout history. Even though it was not very strong, and faced difficulties in Sri Lankan politics and had limitations to meet the challenges of the contemporary world, it nevertheless had the power to resist colonialism.

Prime Minister Ms Sirimavo Bandaranayaka's conversation with the former commonwealth Secretary - General, Mr. Sridath Ramphal will reveal the truth that from the time of independence we haven't had a proper language policy to meet our future as an independent nation.

Sridath Ramphal, "Shortly after I become Secretary - General of the Commonwealth in 1975. I met Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranayaka in Colombo and we talked of ways in which the Commonwealth Secretariat could help Sri Lanka. Her response was immediate and specific: "Send us people to train our teachers to teach English as a foreign language". My amazement must have showed, for the Prime Minister went on to explain that the policies of her husband put in place twenty years earlier to promote Sinhala as the official language had succeeded so well that in the process Sri Lanka, so long the pearl of the English speaking world in Asia - had in fact lost English, even as a second Language save for the most educated Sri Lankans. Her concern was development, Farmers in the field, she told me, could not read the instructions on bags of imported fertiliser and manufacturers in the global market were not likely to print them in Sinhala. Sri Lanka was losing its access to the world language of English. We did respond. I believe that today, English is doing better as the second language in Sri Lanka"

Colonially constructed state and education system will not deliver goods in favour of the natives' aspirations. So, the reasons behind the difficulty in identifying creative writing in English as a tradition is crystal clear.

Even though there are writings in English From C.V. Vellupillai, poet Tambimuttu. Alagu Subramaniam, S.J.K. Crowther, T. Ramanathan, Raja Proctor, Heather Loyala, Saraswathi Roackwood, Guy Amirthanayagam, T. Somasundaram, V. Ariyanayagam, Jeyanathan, Thurairajah, A. Shivanandhan, Jean Arasanayagam T. Arasanayagam, Shyam Selvadurai, Bamini Slevadurai Valan, Indran Amirthanayagam, Rohini Hensman, E.C.T. Candappa, A. Shanthan, Parvathi Arasanayagam, S. Pathmanathan, S. Thillainathan. Pon

Ganeshan and several others, they weren't continued and constructed as a tradition. But intellectuals **are regularly** presenting academic papers in **English**, because of the requirements of the Universities to publish articles in international journals for which they gain points in the academic system. But they don't seem to concentrate or involve themselves in creative writing because they are not awarded points for such works.

The reason behind it is very simple. There is no space for creativity in the education system. This is the politics of the colonial education system. "**Masks of Conquest**" a book by Gauri Visvanathan' is about the origin and ideology of English studies in India, wherein she argues that English Literature was introduced as a subject in India even before it became a subject in England.

This was because it was belived that Indians who learnt English Literature would be convinced that Europeans possessed a humanisitic and Christian tradition of literature that was far superior to anything which existed in the Indian Languages. In other words, the study of literature created an ideal colonial subject who would accept and appreciate the British "**Civilising**" mission. It is under this colonial mesmerism that we are functioning.

Education is one of the most powerful media of colonialism and neocolonialism. A powerful weapon of social control. Although Sri Lanka has been independent for fifty years, the values and patterns of British colonial education continues to persist.

Education in Gramsci's terms, is "**dominant by consent**". "This domination by consent is achieved through what is taught to the colonised, how it is taught and the emplacement of the educated subject as a part of the continuing imperial apparatus -a knowledge of English literature, for instance, was required for entry into the civil service and the legal profession. Education is thus a conquest of another kind of territory - it is the foundation of the colonialist power and consolidates this power through legal and administrative apparatus" Now it has shifted from literature to business, English for Business purposes and it has lead to the slogan "**without English there is no future**".

So the process of identifying and establishing a tradition for creative writing in English among the Tamils of Sri Lanka is a part of the decolonization of Thamilian minds. As Mulk Raj Anand said, "No apology is necessary to bring truthful to the echoes of one's mother tongue and the imaginative communication for those vibrations which are in the nerves of the people not born of English mothers."⁵

In Thamil there is a myth called "**Heaven of Thirisangu**" or "**World of Thirisangu**" It is a world in space between earth and heaven. Thrisangu wants to go to heaven but heaven rejects him and he doesn't want to return to the earth. So he is in a world of his own between earth and heaven. The life in this world had constructed a state of mind which will not accept the native order and can not achieve the order acceptable to the colonial standand. This is the world of imitation, constructed by the colonial rule and its education system which leads to form of fear in the minds and functions as a mental block to in creative activities. I have had discussions with people are well-versed in English literature who had attempted creative ariting in English and were involved in creative writing in Thamil but had given up creative writing in English after a few attempts because of this fear and lack of recognition.

But A.J. Canagaratha said "One of the reasons may be that apart from lack of encouragement and outlets for production, the standard English taught in school aits emphasis on grammar and British models may have inhibited creativity. I remember Alagu subramaniam telling me when I asked him why the language in some of his stories sounded artificial and stilted, that the English man thought that the 'native' could write only "**Babu English**" (an insulting reference to the English of the Indian 'native') they had to prove they could write English the way English man wrote it".

The view of Mulk Raj Anand is different.

"I began writing earlier than he (Tambimuttu) and in prose. My novels are about the poor and disinherited of Asia. Naturally I was abused and misunderstood, except in the third world, and the world of the poor of

Europe. But the Literati thought that I was a communist stooge. I am saying this because one, important lapse on Tamibis part was not to remember he came from the disinherited society."

Ngugi wrote in his book 'Decolonizing the Mind.' "In my view language was the most important vehicle through which that power fascinated and held the soul prisoner. The bullet was the means of the physical subjugation. Language was the means of the spiritual subjugation."

So if we want to live in a world of creation with creative imagination, we have to identify and establish a tradition determined by our socio-cultural context which will erase our fear and break our mental block and bring forth people with creative imagination to face the challenges of neo-colonialism.

The socio-political history of the Thamils of Sri Lanka and the history of the literart tradition in English reveals that importance is given to English as a medium of instruction in business and not as a medium of creative expression. But the generation of the last decades of the 20th century had different opinions. They too are the products of the mother tongue but the experience of the liberation struggle and the diaspora of the Thamils have opened - up new frontiers and new thinking.

The thinking of the importance of creative imagination is the major factor in the current intellectual and creative traditions of the Thamils of Sri Lanka. They are willing to express their feelings, experiences and thinking in a creative way. They express their creativity in their new world as originals or as transcreations or as translations. The Thamils in exile express their creative imagination not only in their own language but also in the languages of their adopted countries. They are also actively involved in translating original works from the languages of their adopted countries into their mother tongue.

It is a shell shock for the conventional intellectual community because most of the people engaged in this process are not familiar with English and do not have a University background. The interesting thing is the part played by the Universities in the North and East in this process which is questionable and always criticised by the intellectual community outside the Universities.

The emergence of the "Third Eye" a little magazine in English first published in 1993 to bring out original works, critical works, translations and transcreations from Thamils writings and the reproductions of the works of pioneers and the thinking of creative tradition in English is a part of the above process and is not the contribution of the English medium educated. Prof. Sures Canagarajah's writing on theatre will clarify this situation.

In an article titled "Experiment and controversy in the Jaffna English Theatre" which appeared in the "Third Eye" he says, "The English theatre scene has taken an experimental turn in the past couple of years. A series of plays staged here (James Thuder's *Ostrich*, and Jamal Banoura's "Accused" staged on 30th August 1991; Abjit Sicar's *Child's play* staged on 19th July 1991 and 30th August 1991; Bernard B. Dardee's "The cillage" staged on 02 and 15th February 1992 and on 10th June 1993; Alagu Subramaniam's short story "Professional Mourners" adopted by A.J. Canagaratna "Wake up my beloved" staged in February 1993 and on 10 June 1993) have been quite controversion in their reception".

"Though all this is repulsive for many brought up in the classical tradition, most of the school students and University producers involved are fortunately influenced by the vibrant Thamils theatrical tradition. The Thamils theatre is also primarily a school level or educational theatre. The younger generation is then now able to connect the Thamils and English theatrical traditions. It is true that hitherto, the Thamils theatre borrowed Ibsen, Chekov and Beckett through English. But now the tables are turned: The English theatre is borrowing local themes, indigenous music, acting and directorial skills from the Thamils tradition, promising interesting new departures for the Jaffna English theatrical scene"¹⁰

Contrary to this, most of the Thamils who were the doyen of the English literature do not know or have the least familiarity with Thamils Language, literature and their experiences are limited to the four walls of their gardens. But this is different from those who are writing in French, German, Norwegian, etc. They have direct experience in the liberation struggle and are not from the elite. So their perspectives and purposes are different. This is strange but true, in a sence a revolution in a society dominated by conservative ideas.

After we started to publish "The Third Eye", our search for original manuscripts, translations, transcreations and rare publications of the pioneers began. In this search we faced strange experiences. We have collected manuscripts from writers who are adamant to write again. The root cause is frustration. Now "The Third Eye" has given a momentum to the process of identifying and establishing a tradition for creative writing in English, by the Tamils of Sri Lanka.

The emergence of the 'English Forum' with the support and guidance of Prof. S. Canaganayagam, Prof. Suresh Canagarajah, Mr. A.J. Canagaratna, Mr. S. Rajasingam and the involvement of Mr. T. Somasundaram gave the moral boost at the initiation and the development of the process of identifying and establishing a tradition for the writing in English by the Tamils of Sri Lanka.

The current intellectual traditions of the Tamils of Sri Lanka are not one dimensional determined by the English tradition as in the earlier period; it is multi dimensional and is di-

rectly open to various intellectual traditions of the word. The liberation struggle and the writings of expatriate Tamils have given an additional impetus to this new dimension. The Tamils of Sri Lanka now have access to the world through various channels and are in a position to select material in consonance with their accepted views. This is the major change of perspective in the intellectual traditions of the Tamil community.

In this background, identifying and establishing a tradition for creative writing in English parallel to the other traditions will create a different perception among the international community as opposed to the world constructed by the mass media in this information age.

I will conclude my presentation with a quotation from Mahadma Gandhi, "I do not want to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my houses as freely as possible. But refuse to live in another people's houses as interloper, a begger or as a slave.

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Duplicated White Swaggerer Visit - I

S. Jeyasankar

Savagely and Treacherously
Were defeated our ancestors
Robbing us in new ways
From generation to generation
However
Got themselves thrust into us
Like gentlemen and Dukes
Sapping us of our selves
Seasoned us into their serviles
Left us, the white swaggerers

Then,
In black skin came the new ones
As the duplicated white swaggerers
Inviting,
Come my dear sons
We can become new coolies to them
For they do many things
Sending satellites, firing missiles
So come become attendants
on the white swaggerers
When they tour our country
Can become nurses
Who can attend on them
When they fall ill

Come my sons
We can become commodities importable
So saying came the new ones
Wellgroomed superfluous
And having true friendship with power
Came the new ones in black akin
As duplicated white swaggerers
Came the new ones in black skin.

TRANSLATED BY

T. KIRUPAKARAN

Silver Flowers

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

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

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

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

Song in Tamil

By : **Mr. M. Ponambalam**

Translated By : **S.M. Felix**

Song from the Drama "Story of the refugees"

(Production of the Uduvil Girls' College - 1993)

Script **M. Nilanthan**

Direction : **S. Jeyasankar**

Strenuous Statue

By : **Amarathas**

We are in search of
The statue!
Facing anguish
We sob
We sculpt it separately
We can pastle,
Our values on it.
It may shine,
It may be magnificent,

It may be a modern,
It may be huge.
We need it,
For the esteemable living
It may get alive,
It may have our blood,
It may dry our soul.
It will be
It may cramp the blood.
It will drink,
Myself to live

Translated By : **P. Ganeshan**

**Apocalypse and the Mythopoeic
Imagination A note on Jeyamohan's
Vishnupuram**

A.J. Canagaratna

As far as I can remember, my first introduction to Jeyamohan as a writer was a story of his which appeared in a Tamil magazine published from India. That was some years back and I have forgotten both the title of the story and the name of the magazine. Some readers here tried to give it a political reading which appeared strained to me. All that I can recall is that it appeared to me a compelling study in the psychology of monomaniacal obsession and I was impressed by this successful indigenisation of the Gothic Mode.

When his collection of short stories - Thisaikalin Naduvil - came my way, I felt I was in the presence of someone who had the potential to become a major writer. The same feeling I had when I first read Puthumaipithan's collection of stories, 'Kanjani'. When a friend offered to borrow Vishnupuram from the public Library for me, I was at first reluctant to accept the offer not only because of its bulk (768 pages) but also because I had been told that it had run into heavy critical flak in India. In fact another friend of mine who had been present at the book release in India, told me that though a few speakers had referred to the novel in favourable terms, the majority had spoken of it disparagingly and dismissed it as just another 'Isthalapuram'. He also added he had been told that the author was an ex - RSS member and the novel a literary expression of the Hindutva ideology.

So when I was finally persuaded to read it, I came to it not with an open but a heavily biased mind. But to my pleasant surprise, my impressions on a first reading were entirely favourable to the novel which has been described by a hostile critic as a gigantic hoax.

This brief note makes no claim to be a comprehensive treatment of the novel; a fuller discussion would involve several re-readings. As I have read it only once, my note is based, at best, on a partial reading. Therefore I would like to stress the tentativeness of my views; a re-reading may lead me to alter them.

In his preface and Acknowledgement, Jeyamohan implies that the novel is the outcome of a personal spiritual quest. There are several characters in the novel who symbolise this quest but the author admits somewhat uneasily that, contrary to his intentions, the novel strikes an atheistic note, this is not the first time in the history of literature that a literary creation intended by its creator to be an image of Pillaiyar turns out to be a monkey's instead. In fact modern Western literary theory's favourite pastime is to hunt for such contradictions embedded in a text and then go on to elaborate an alternative text - authored by the theorist according to his / her whims and fancies.

Vishnupuram seems to me to be a hybrid, blending both the qualities of an epic and the realism, irony and psychological probing of character we associate with the novel. The cutting from one scene and character to another recalls the cinematic mode.

Though there are references to actual historical events (like the polemical debates between the adherents of different religious faiths and the Moghul invasions) it would be misleading to think of it as a historical novel.

In my view, the novel seeks to explore the nature of the mythopoeic imagination and its complex relation to reality; all the other themes, including the theme of personal spiritual quest, can be subsumed under this.

The charge that the novel is an expression, in literary terms, of the hindutva ideology seems to me absurd; the Moghul invaders who destroyed temples are actively sided and abetted by a section of the Brahmins and other castes who have old scores to settle. Established religions - both Brahminism and Buddhism are exposed for what they are ideological cloaks to cover exploitative social relations and big leaf to the naked will to lower.

The rarefied philosophical debates are ironically juxtaposed to a scene where the Brahmins are virtually depicted as beasts gorging themselves and demanding more food. The last of the line of the Brahmins exercising religious authority is a sub-human freak.

The Buddhists are not treated so harshly but once they gain full control of the city, supported by the merchant class, their earlier idealism and passion for social justice are swallowed up in the course of the practical exercise of power which seems to flow from guards armed with spears the disillusionment this leads to is expressed through the reflections of a sensitive foreign monk. The Pandyan King is portrayed as a decrepit lecher and the Alvares fare no better.

In fact a strong case can be made out for the view that the novel is in fact, a deconstruction of religious ideology and the formation of local cults based on caste and the process of euhemerism.

The persons who are shown in a comparatively favourable light are the spiritual 'free-lancers' so to say; the Siddhar and the loners who seek spiritual salvation outside the religious Establishment. But even they too confess to a sense of emptiness at the end of the spiritual quest.

Apocalypse is a recurrent theme in different civilizations the belief that when the image of Vishnu turns, it signifies the end of an era (not all accept that it is a Vishnu image; some clans think of it as their culture hero) should be viewed as a symbolic expression in mythological terms of cataclysmic geological changes. That such changes have occurred is a scientifically established fact. Therefore one need not think the violent upheavals in nature depicted at the end are incredible.

The novel runs the whole gamut of Tantric practices, tribal rituals involving group sex at one end and highly abstract philosophical speculation at the other. I am reminded of remark about Donne that he could be so metaphysical because he could be so physical as he pleased.

Sappire

(In memoiry of Richard de Zoysa)

This country's bright future
lies in her diamonds they tell me.
Morning, and I'm dragged
to the jeweller's window
I stare at them through glass.
In our country you can get
s sapphire for a snip . . . they said
'It would keep you healthy',
someone says to me:
turning away from their brotherhood
'What about a moonstone
whose colour comes from the touch of light?'

Nights later, watching the moon,
Colombo's jewels come to mind,
flirting with my eyes,

jewelled crossed on the necks of the rich.
I remember them in the palms of my hands;
candle's eye, then in an instant
blood on my hands,
a moment, an intake of breath accuses me
as the tide ebbs under the masked moon
its shroud drawn over the world.
Yet, surely, the finest sappire of all
is the loadstones of truth?

Tonight, the wild moon
rises to the full
in its warm oven,
melting the ice - moths of the night.

Menna Elfyn

Background note.

While I was staying in Colombo a hotel driver insisted on taking me to stores selling gem stones.

The Worship Scar

By : S. Vilvaratnam

After my friend
Introduced his father,
casually
I asked about the scar.
"This the tholukai - scar"
The Periyavar said
Stroking his forehead,
His eyes lighting up.
I bit my tongue
Grieved
By my ignorance.
Alling for Allah
He had bowed low
Till his native soil
Scarred
His bowed forehead
Whence sprang my impudence
That dared chase them away
From the soil of their birth
Like striking
Their worship - scarred forehead
with a hammer?
How thus could I
Injure myself?
Their worship - scar
Seared
My guilt - stricken conscience scar.
Like the third eye

They grilled and drilled
My battle - field scars too.
When, oh when will my scar
Disappear?
When, oh when will my crime
of violating the soil's beauty
Etched on their foreheads
Be expiated?
When from exile
They return home
and full - throatedly
Calling for Allah
They renew their worship worship - scars
And stroke their foreheads
The tears dammed up
For years and years
Will burst the eye - dykes.
Only at the moment
I immerse myself
In that cleansing cataract
Will my blemish
Recorded by history
Be washed clean.
That moment only
Will consummate
My liberation.
Friend,
Allah have I entreated
To hasten
that sweet, soothing moment
of reconciliation.

Source : Forehead Soil (1st ed. 2000)
(Translated by A. J. Canagaratna)

BEGGARS

M. Saravanapava Iyer
E.L.T.C.
University of Jaffna

Lord 'Farmer', I'm hungry ;
'beggar don't shout I'm angry'
Lord 'Rich man' give me some money ;
'Poor man I have no single penny'

Lord 'Judge', give me judgement ;
'you are not an actual rich man'

Lord 'Priest', where is the God?
'you can't see him, he is great
Lord 'Teacher', teach my son ;
'he is not a clever one'.
Lord 'Lowyer'. represent my case ;
'that depends on monetary base',

Lord 'Banker', give me a loan ;
'you have failed to see me alone'
Iya 'Professor'. give me knowledge ;
'you are only a "sub - standard" image

Born to labour Golden Ear - rings

C.V. Velupillai

The grandcles and cousins are famed for their banter in the tea plantations. It is a special art put to great advantage in the discussion of family matters.

Uncle Palany, noted as he is in this respect meets Arjunan on an evening and broaches the subject in the usual manner.

"Do I hear that you are planning to invite me to a feast? It is a long time since I have had one at your house."

Arjunan knows too well that Uncle Palany never indulges in light talk. He is in a difficulty, but Uncle Palany comes to his aid.

"In these modern days people forget a lot of things. They have to be reminded of their duties and obligations. Why don't you bore your little girl's ears? It is time."

"Ah! Yes, uncle, yes. The girl is well past six. It has to be done immediately after pay day."

"That won't do. Consult the pandaram and then fix up the proper time."

That night after dinner Arjunan and Panjali talk it over. As it is the first function to be celebrated in the family, Panjali wishes it to be grand but Arjunan wants it to be modest. A compromise is arrived at and three hundred rupees is budgeted. Part of this money has, of course, to be borrowed from the head kangany.

The pandaram names the 16th November as the auspicious day. In the meanwhile Arjunan uses the old and the new forms invitations. To the relation and friends on the estate he sends out a cousin to keep betel and arecanut, the traditional invitation by betel. To those in distant places he sends out printed cards.

Well in advance of the ceremony there is spring cleaning. The walls are polished with white clay, and intricate patterns of kolam in dull and yellow are drawn on the walls. A small pandal of green branches and ferns is erected in front of the line

room. Full grown banana trees complete with bunches flank the four corners and mango festoons are hung right round. A small dais of mud is built in the centre for the ceremony.

On the day of the function the dhoby gives the finishing touches with his multi-coloured cloth decorations. He spreads mathu, white linen to seat the guests. The goldsmith and the barber also come for the occasion.

The drummers, the band of nagasuram, the oorum players and the baja party with their tabla and harmonium take up positions on one side of the pandal. Close behind the dais stand well-burnished brightly-lit lamps. Brass trays loaded with betel, arecanuts, plantain and small vessels filled with sandal paste and vermilion are assembled close to the lamps. Arjunan his brother-in-law, Nadesan and their brothers receive the guests at the entrance.

Every family brings three measures of rice, vegetables and new cloth for the girl. This gift is known as seer. Someone write down the names of the donors so that Arjunan can return the gifts on a grander scale when the occasion arises.

Now the ceremony draws near. The men get together and poke fun at the little girl. The boy cousins giggle in the corners. Uncle Palany takes control of the situation and directs operations. The women folk respect Uncle Palany, for has he not done a hundred marriages in his lifetime? Above all, he has the last word on the traditional customs and ceremonies.

Now he directs the drummers to play the auspicious measure known as the 'molokku'. The drums and orrum raise a deafening pitch. The little girl, Janakee, is out by her father to the dais. Panjali whispers a word of caution "Lightly, please," and then she rubs her eyes.

"Don't bother, child. Your little girl is not made of candy. she might melt, eh? Now, no. Don't keep rubbing your eyes." He turns to the men: "Look here, maternal Uncle, Nadesan, don't behave like a bridegroom. Seat the girl on the dais. Apply holy ash and then turn to the east and do your job Ai! pandaram get your job ready."

With professional skill and a flourish the pandaram arranges the betel leaf, arecanut, plantains, camphor and joss sticks at the base of the lamps. He then breaks the coconuts and lights the camphor on the tray with the holy ash. He offers the lights in dedication to the ringing of bells. At this stage Uncle Palany gives the signal to maternal uncle Nadesan. Arjunan and his first cousin playfully hold Janakee. Nadesan in a split second pricks the ears with a set of specially made earrings, and the goldsmith who stands at hand completes the job.

The little girl cries out "Aiyo, Amma!"

"You little imp! Don't cry Aiyo" shouts Uncle Palany. "You drummers and nagasuram men, why are you looking on?"

Suddenly there is a rent and clamour of music. It drowns the child wailing. The cousins clap their hands and pour out a peal of laughter. Panjaly with a tear in her eye and a smile on her lips takes little Janakee into the room.

"Arjunan, get the food ready," hints Uncle Palany

Mats are spread out along the wall in the Verandah and men go in and out of the room clearing their throats, probably after a 'peg'

Again Uncle Palany's stentorian voice is heard.

"Men from the house of the sammanthi and pangali. (brothers-in-law and first cousins) take your places. Do not wait for ceremony this is your house."

According to order of relationship they sit down. A man goes spreading the plantain leaf, another man with a tray of curries starts serving fast followed by the rice. And the feast goes on for over an hour.

The pandaram, goldsmith, dhoby and barber get their share in cash and kind.

After dinner the men re-assemble in the pandal to collect donations known as 'moi' Uncle Palany initiated the moi contributions. The sammanthi and the pangali donate at least Rs. 51 or Rs 21 each.

Uncle Palany announces it in a sing song style so that everyone hears it. If the traditional order is not strictly followed, there would be a loud protest by the injured party.

"Did you see those elders? Well, I am not a big man. I suppose Uncle Palany did not notice it."

"My dear thambi" says Uncle Palany with irresistible charm, I am watching your interest very carefully. It is a small slip at a little girl's function. Please do not take it to heart. After all, it is our business- yours and mine."

Uncle Palany then proceeds to rectify the error in ringing voice "moi- Rs.11 by pangali Ramiah, Pangali Ramiah!"

The donations come in according to order of relationship. The names of the donors are written down as usual. Uncle Palany supervises the entire proceedings. The betel-tray goes round several times.

It is well after midnight when the guests disperse.

The Yellow Dolls

Shanmugam Sivalingam

*Oh, Destiny,
How deep you are
And how dark you are;*

*The jiggling yellow toys
Sprawling in the wilderness
of their ignorance and snobbishness
I spurn these academic parrots
Who tie a dragonfly to the star*

*and the star to their very nose
I see them vanishing one after the other
Against your deep fathom
And distant dark horizons*

*I am not awaiting the dawn
But I face you
Oh, darkness,
Face to face
Before I fall
To off the yellow dolls
Before they fall.*

The Release

S. Pathmanathan

I returned
after a six - month exile
to find
to my surprise
my house standing.
The roof intact
with the exception
of some stolen items
our belongings safe.

Thank god
No one stepped
on booby traps!

I look around
I miss something :
Yes, the jubilant welcome
by Blackie
My eyes scan
the deserted homesteads
and the shrubs
that day
and the following days,
Disappointed.
My mind darts back
to the cold October evening
when I left
my hearth and home
with the young and old

you stood sentinel over
the house I abandoned !
From the sanctuary
I paid fleeting visits.
seeing me
you leaped up in joy
licked me
snatched from my hands
the goodies I had brought !
Running round and round
you communicated to me
the pangs of separation.
The third time

you followed me
defiantly
steeling my heart
I chased you
pelting stones
Today
memories haunting me
I gave and gave
at the stray dogs
that shun human beings
conditioned by the shelling
and firing
heard in the wilderness

You are not there !
But
your memory haunts me
whenever I think
how you perished
defending
the house I abandoned
I feel the pangs of guilt
I am ashamed
of my cowardice
my pettiness
As I take stock of
the damaged houses
the lost possessions
the missing members
and
the displaced persons
my balance sheet shows
a big deb (i)t.
Bankrupt
I could ask you for
A write - off !

But
you're not there.
Only your memory
haunts me still !

Translated by the author from the Tamil Original
Thoondi - (1997)

Re - evaluating Mark Master

Colonialism and Nationalism are the key factors of the context in which our Modernism has been shaped. This might be the major reason for the fact that when western painters tried to transcend the boundaries of their traditions, our painters searched for the roots of modernism within their own traditions, and this made our response differ from that of the west. For most of our early modernists who were suffering from the colonial hang-over, modern painting became a stylistic venture rather than a social phenomenon. Therefore the Avant - garde tendency which was the basic character of western modernism, is lacking in our early modern painters. One can identify two key trends in our so - called modern paintings. One is the formalistic approach based on western high modern art and they tried to localise it with traditional forms. Here traditional forms or pictorial elements are used only for their formal or pictorial quality rather than their innate meaning. Therefore tradition for them is not living but something which is museumized. The other trend is socialistic in nature. Here they try to localize the modern pictorial idiom by handling native social issues like famine, peasant life and war, in content. These approaches were the attempts by the early modernists to contextualize modernism in their own soil. But in both cases pictorial idiom was highly loaded with the nationalist sentiments, both by the viewer and the painter.

Mark Master who passed away recently at the age of 67 is a typical example of our modernists and he represents the dilemmas of a painter of this age. But there is no one like Mark, who got recognition and fame in our society in the field of plastic arts. His name almost became synonymous with the modern style of painting in Jaffna. His greater contribution is that he popularized the modern style of painting among the educated middle class to whom painting means calendar art or academism or photographic realism or a classroom lesson. This he achieved through the encouragement which he had given to his contemporaries and young enthusiastic students, and his continuous struggle to imbibe and evolve a personal modern pictorial idiom.

Mark Master's popularity had emerged with the changing scenario in the political, social and cultural life of Tamils in the eighties and the growing consciousness of Tamil identity and nationhood. This created an air of search and curiosity for the 'new' in all the creative fields, specially in literature, drama and painting. Some cultural activists and

youngsters found Mark Master's calibre and his style of painting more contemporary than others and consonant with the prevailing temperament and social need.

His style, as I said earlier, shows both the directions. His earlier works are more formalistic in nature and a mixture of style ranging from Picasso to George Keyt and Jamini Roy to Satish Gujaral. Here he had used traditional subjects as an idea rather than a content, without their deeper meaning, and understanding. This can be well illustrated through his works like, 'Nataraja' Raga Maliga or Jesus Christ. As a contrast to this is his later works depicting the besieged life of Jaffna, instead of creating a visual experience of war in painting, he is illustrating the events frame by frame in his cerebral style. The above observations show the irony that search for the 'new' become a search for style in contemporary Jaffna painting. And it is interesting to note that most of our viewers' reactions are also either to the style or the theme than the expressive visual quality or the complete experience of painting. It can be argued that instead of establishing good taste and socially valid modernity, he popularized the 'modern style' as against the popular visual culture of Jaffna.

As a student of the social history of art one may intend to question the validity of our present art history of Jaffna, which is nothing but a clutch of art teachers, sign board painters, cartoonists, illustrators, painters and artisans. Questions like what is the true nature of painting? What does painting mean to Jaffna society? What is modernism in painting? What is modernism in Jaffna's visual culture? and what are the contributions of Mark Master in the field of painting will only help us to contextualize or re - contextualize Mark and his painting within the true nature of art history. Understanding his aesthetics and his career as a painter and a teacher beyond the popular beliefs and myth of individual style, within the historical context may drive us towards a contemporary valuable meaning of art.

There is no doubt that he is one of the few who worked and searched for the possibilities of painting beyond the limits of a classroom space and the popular visual space of Jaffna. He will be remembered for the encouragement which he had given to the younger generation, and painted what he felt correct without any sort of compromise.

T. Sanathanan
Lecturer,
Dept. of Fine Arts,
University of Jaffna.

Patriotism

Henry Victor

Blare, I will to my people, the Cherie Blair episode
knowing too well
knowing all too well - forgive my skepticism
That you can never straighten the old dog's tail
And its useless trumpeting into the ears
of those pretending to be deaf and dumb

Hundred times Blair can be the Prime Minister
Hundred times his wife can be pregnant
Hundred times Cherie Blair can hop into the train
Hundred times she can admit her ticket less ride
Hundred times Arthur Harriot can fearlessly fine

Oh sorry
Mr Harriot . . . fearlessly . . . that's irrelevant
yes, in a country that is free
There, good Arthrus simply do their job
Fear, or no fear never enters their head

Blare, I will to my people, the Cherie Blair episode
knowing too well that our notion of patriotism
Is all too crooked

Therefore, I salute with people so simple
Blair's patriotism that refuses to stretch enough
To accomodate Blair's pregnant wife
Cherie Blair's patriotism that rejects without regret
Dependence on her husband's premiership

I solemnly salute with people so simply
Mrs Blair's patriotism that does not shy to pay a fine
without unnecessarily disclosing her social identity

I very solemnly salute with people so simply
Arthru's true patriotism
of performing the duty,
Writing tickets without looking at faces

Blare, I will to my people the cherie Blair entity
knowing too well such will remain a rarity
In a country that which matters is authority

NAGA THEVI

By : V. Paranthaman

(A Poem written soon after he trip to Naina Theevu)

Blue - ringed sea waves
Tipped with white foam
Crawl like little babies
From the Northern coast,
Reach their destination
To rest and break
At the feet of Naga Thevi

Navy personnel in their blue suits
Moving like the busy ants
Cheeking in the people - spelled
By a Magic Grace
The Goddess - Naga Thevi
Sitting under the well - spreaded
Five hoods of the giant cobra
The five forked red tongues
Emit poison
To destroy all Evil.

Cobra - Golden in colour - red tongues protruding,
Curls its long black dotted tail
Forming a pedestal for the 'Mother';
To sit, to sleep and to stand on it,

To dance with the round Globe,
When it dances round the hot sun.
Boats full of people
Chanting 'Bajans'
'Nerthy' in their mind,
A baby to be born
A dreadful disease to be cured
A boy detained to be freed
Full of hopes, full of sorrows
Marks of bliss, marks of fear

Faces of joys and elegant smiles,
Walking and running,
Dancing and singing,
Elders fumbling with their sticks,
Babies sucking their rubber nipples,
Adults stumbling with their heavy luggage,

Entering the kovil - vibrated and echoed with
Ohm Sakthi - Ohm Sakthi,
Tears streaming down their cheeks
They pray
'Suck out the Poison of Evil from our 'race'
'Bring peace to our war - brimmed space'

"She gives us her joy
our grief shemay destroy
Till our grief she is fled and gone
She doth sit by us and mourn"

Analogies and Allegories

A.T. Canagaratna

Book Review

Noyil Iruththal By : Mr. M. Ponnambalam

The scope of Mrs. Ponnambalam's faction 'Noyil Iruththal' (literally, being In Disease) is ambitious. In his prefatory note, he explicitly states that the motif of his hospitalization at the Myliddy T.B. Sanatorium in 1984 and as a polyneuritis patient at the General Hospital, Jaffna, in 1987 - just at the time war broke out between the IPKF and the Tiger militants - is meant to symbolize the travails of an embryonic nation struggling to be born. When I ask myself - after re - reading the novel - whether the author has succeeded in transmuting his disease into symbol of a nation's trauma and travail, I'm afraid my candid answer will have to be 'not quite'.

At the level of broad analogy, he does succeed, with some stretching of the imagination, in suggesting some parallels - particularly in part 2 - between his diseased condition and the nations. By the way, what exactly is, according to Mrs. Po. the nature of the disease afflicting the budding nation? Is it lack of freedom? others might diagnose it differently. But the comparisons run on parallel tracks, as it were. The author's intention would have been fully realised only if it had been an allegory, like the plague by Albert Camus: in its "teasing relationship between documentary realism and symbol. The Plague, was perceived as an allegorical account of the condition of France under German occupation, and of the need for resistance." (Christopher Bulter) Analogy keeps the things compared quite distinct whereas allegory fuses them so that the work can be read at two or more levels. Allegory is not merely a literary device or technique: its fundamental origins are religious and its origins very ancient. It appears to be a mode of expression, a way of feeling and thinking about things and seeing them so natural to the human mind that it is universal. Much myth, for example, is a form of allegory and is an attempt to explain universal facts and forces - (see the Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory. New Edition, by J. A. Cuddon) The setting of the first part of the novel is the Myliddy T.B. Sanatorium; this extends to 178 pages. Part I alternates between philosophical disquisitions and sharply observed thumbnail sketches of some of the

inmates and the hospital staff. This part might tax the patience of some readers but they should keep in mind that it is not only 'We' who read a text but also that a text simultaneously 'reads' us in the sense of revealing our shortcomings and blind shots, both as readers and human beings.

Compared to part 2, the tempo of Part I is more leisurely. The author narrator's physical condition is not as bad as in Part 2 and hence the flow of his thoughts is directed into spiritual channels. While I find I am unable to agree with him in toto, I can understand that his upbringing, particularly his mother's influence, has pre - disposed him towards a kind of mystical spirituality which Western Rationalism might deem obscurantist.

While I am not prepared to dismiss religious experience out of hand (who, after reading William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* can do so?), I remain an agnostic influenced by rational modes of thought.

The author defines his terms in such a way that outward - looking and inward - looking are polarised, thus making mutually exclusive aspects which are actually dialectually complementary; the former is depreciated while the latter is valorized. Marx and Marxism are categorised (and damned) as outward - looking much play is made with the phrase about religion being 'the opium the people'. What most people, and surprisingly even Mrs. Po. have forgotten is that in the same passage Marx goes on to refer to religion as being 'the heart of a heartless world'. In fact R.H. Tawney referred to Marx as 'the last of the Schoolmen'. Others too have remarked on the fact that Marx in his savage denunciation of capitalism sounds like an old Testament prophet and that he is squarely in the Jewish messianic tradition.

What perhaps made Marx consciously espouse atheism was the undeniable historical fact that in his time established religion was propping up an iniquitous social order and was justifying the status quo by trying to make out that it was ordained thus by Providence. Later developments especially the rise of Liberation Theology, show that some kind of rapprochement between Marxism and Christianity is possible (though it has not been sanctioned by the Vatican Establishment).

Apart from general philosophical reflections, the author also digresses to touch upon Aldous Huxley's *The Doors of Perception* but I wonder whether a mystic's vision can be treated on the same level as a drug - trip, however mind - bending it may be. It's news to me that Sartre too had experimented with drugs and found the experience disgusting. The author makes a reference to a King Sankili, who reigned during the Dutch period, killing thousands of depressed cast people who had converted to Christianity. Perhaps the reference is to Sankili who reigned during the Portuguese period and was responsible for the massacre of the Martyrs of Mannar.

After reading Alexander Werth's graphic *The Battle of Stalingrad*, I got the impression that it was the heroism displayed by the Russians that turned the tide during the 2nd World War, despite the military assistance promised by Britain and America not materialising. Werth was the *London Times*' Foreign Correspondent resident in Moscow and can hardly be accused of Bolshevik sympathies.

Mrs. Po. who evidently believes that "more things are wrought by prayer than are dreamt of in your philosophy, Horatio will have no track with such mundane explanations and reveals (page 172) that it was really Sri Aurobindo's 'Psychic Bombardment' which stopped Hitler in his tracks just two days before the state he had stipulated for his entry into Buckingham Palace. If Aurobindo had not taken a hand, England would have been grovelling at Hitler's feet, according to Mrs. Po. He means this seriously and is not pulling our legs.

The orthodox view is that Hitler was a megalomaniac and, in his paranoid state, preferred to be guided by his astrologers rather than his generals. Knowing Hitler's penchant for astrologers' guidance, the Allies too set up an astrologers 'think-tank' to divine Hitler's moves. Thus, at best, it's half-truth to say that World War 2 was fought by astrologers, not armies. Guided (or rather misguided, as later events were to prove) by his astrologers he chose to invade Russia, disregarding his general's advice this was to prove fatal for his plans to conquer the world. The combination of General Winter and the heroism of the Red Army and the Russian people shattered all his diabolical plans. I don't want to dwell too long on these differing interpretations as ultimately, one's ideology will shape one's interpretation; after all, 'facts' don't carry their interpretation on their faces. Moreover, what counts as a 'fact' is also ideologically determined.

If part I begins with the patient - narrator gazing into space, Part 2 opens tersely, in an elliptical style; Jaffna Hospital, Ward 18. He lies there on a bed ranged alongside the wall in that Ward. This part is faster-paced and the description of the polyneuritic patient's condition and the IPKF's shelling and military advance very effectively evokes the hectic atmosphere prevailing then. This part climaxes in a life-and-death race between the civilians (including Mrs. Po.) in the bus and the boat and an IPKF helicopter which, even as it gives chase, continues to strafe then. It's a very dramatic, effective ending to a serious-minded faction well worth reading, despite my cavils.

How many thousand years of binding is this?

Being unable to unbind

By charms of any kind

'Woman'

Feet planted in reveries

Prepared for creation

Losing and losing the mind

But in human procreation

The design of 'woman' being

Beautiful

Patient

The great flood of sacrifice

The very 'God' itself and

Still more and more

Left to wander in the space

Whilst thought of as woman

Construed as demon too

when untied and untied

Arrays in new charms

How many years long binding is this

Dissolved in the flow of time

And soaked and soaked

in the chromosomes.

First let's come down

From the expanses of imagination

To step on the ground

Starting from our genes

14-07-1997

Vasuki. J

Translated By : T. Kirupakaran

Cricket A war - Game

By : L. A. Leon

Cricket it's said is a gentlemen's game;
 So, I think that it was but is no more;
 It's a war - game. on Lankan political field - where
 Democracy, bemused, driven into the valley of
 death;
 Rights denied. Light imprisoned.
 Cricket - fever has touched the brains - durgged
 The young and the old forgetful of issues at hand
 sit glued to the lighted screen with Ha's! and Oh's!
 The concerned ne'er concerned concerned the na-
 tion driven to a stand still;
 But keep the puppets strung performing as they

will'd

And warm in comfort, chanting charms to sooth
 the nation's conscience
 With cards outspread on the cricket field.
 No battle at the front is held higher than any
 matches in a series;
 Lives lost are only second to the wickets that fall;
 Any battle won or lost ne'er pressurizes the hearts,
 Play of ball or bat can cause heigh or low even
 coma state.
 The ones perched at the helm, see cricket an apt
 magic wheel
 To navigate the nation couped in recial and reli-
 gious zeal,
 Through shoals and rocks - damages minimized,
 To win political success and personal embellish-
 ments.

Cleared Area or the Sanctuary of Soldiers

Chatturukondan
 The sanctuary of binds
 Both from within and beyond frontiers
 Lies naped and destroyed
 As a symbol of state's affairs
 Haunted by flying bullets
 That in the ears.

The blue waving cloth of lake
 The eye - soothing green gloom
 of bondering mangrove bushes
 on top of them bloom
 White lotus buds of storks

flutter their wings and scater away
 A bloom of lotus in the air
 The water crows gliding in the air fly astray
 The migratory binds
 Making seasonal visits
 Alighting to ease their wings
 Directionless fly as if lost their way

On the sandly expanse
 Denuded of palmyrah palms and mangroves
 Uprooted callously
 Creepers of banked - wire grow
 And green hills of gunnied sand rise
 Behind which eerieness dwele
 Where holding their lives insecure
 People move about in fear.

S. Jeyasankar

Translated By : T. Kirupakaran

The Terrorist

Valan

As I entered the Ninth Ward of the Jaffna hospital, my eyes ran over the numbered beds in search of a special patient. My worried look must have disturbed the Nurse on duty and she asked me, 'Who is the patient?'

I replied, I am looking for a prisoner, may be he is in a room apart?'

'No'. she said, 'he is over there in the last bed thirty one. What a pity even in a hospital, people have to be kept chained like animals in a zoo. It disturbs the whole atmosphere of a hospital. It disturbs me, doesn't he look a good boy, but there is no one to talk to him. Only I understand a little bit his Sinhalese, otherwise he has only his guard'.

I approached the very corner of the ward which was a bit dark, and the window pane above his head broken. He was chained to the hospital bed with silver chains. Though the chains were new and shinning it crucified him to the bed all right. As I approached the bed I noticed that he was in pain, and in a low moan, calling for the policeman who was on duty. I asked "friend what is the problem?" 'Where is the policeman on duty?' I asked the patient next to him. He said that the man must have gone down for his tea.

'And the attendents are also gone for tea?' 'their duty is over we will have to wait for night duty attendents.'

I looked around for the bedpan, found it in a corner and offered. He looked relived after a few minutes.

'Thanks'. He said 'Where is that good for nothing policeman?. he is supposed to look after my needs; after chaining me hand and legs he disappears for hours. He thinks I will break loose and disappear from the hospital bed'

The Nurse was there to take the temperature. 'That person who is supposed to be on guard doesn't look very duty conscious, he disappears for hours and this poor boy can't communicate with these patients, he only smiles. If the guard wants to gallivant around why can't he unchain him for an hour or two, he is going to get bed sores at this rate being stretched out of hours on bed.

That was the pathetic condition in which I found Siri. The nurse commented, 'Whenever I see him I think of the last King of Kandy.'

'Where ever did you see him, I mean the King?' I asked with a sence of humor.

'Me? from the old history text books which have his picture, the image of the last King of Kandy, Kannapan, Kirthi Siri Rajasighe as he was portrayed by the artists with the beard always made a strong impression on me.

'Why you are right, the semblance is very remarkable.' I added.

Somasiri was fair complexed with a short beard he had begun growing in the Jaffna prisons. He was a Kandyan Sinhalese soldier, who was stationed in one of the town barracks. My thoughts were racing back to May this year when he came knocking and injuring with another about a parcel or a bundle left near door on the roadside. They suspected it to be detonating device. It was part of the daily routine. After the early morning drill and tea, the soldiers would go around the streets of the town along the main roads as a group with their captain and with the help of a rake trying to detect any hidden bobby traps or pressure mines, mostly Johnny mines local hand made ones the local resistance planted along the roadside. Rarely they would discover an over head claymore mine. Very rarely And they would have received prior information about it. A poor man who must have slept the previous night on my door step had abandoned his bundle of old clothes on the grass and had disappeared soon after curfew hours at 4.30 a.m. In fact my impression of him was that of a happy young soldier, proudly out to perform his duties towards his motherland. From the few words I had with him on and off on different occasions, he was a happy soldier for the few months. he had no cares in the world except his old mother and two sisters who would be able to manage with the money he sent home. He had acquired none of the bad habits that some of his soldier companions had learnt after coming to Jaffna. His mother wrote every week advised him to be a good Buddhist boy and observe the sil on poya days : So he wrote back once a month specially when the pay was dispatched. The Jaffna area was pretty dry and warm and flat but the winds made it bearable and paper kites of varying sizes and colours delighted him like a child. He liked the open blue skies and as he dreamt at night of his village the terraced paddy plants on the hill sides; his soul was in delight inside and out. On special days the white domed dagaba of his village and the moon over the tree in his village temple would appear in his early morning dreams. He did n't know the people nor their language, but he smiled at friendly faces specially when they were children. He would stop and try to speak to them in the few

words he gathered from constant talking and listening to children. The dreams he had he was being transmuted into an Arahāt, practising Maitreya in his land of occupation. The Jaffna dogs and cats were better, they could be seen around his camp. He could talk to them in Sinhalese, and they responded even the stray goats and the cattle some of them definitely in the alien ranks because they were eating up the army posters and specially the green blue portions of the, presidents election posters. He had grown up practising these acts of pinkama from his child hood.

He told the animals, 'Please don't become like the tigers or lions. Any being can easily turn into a brute in a war area and in this atmosphere of violence. You can easily get brutalized, you begin to react like a best without even realising.

That is what happened to Siri when he had a sudden burst of anger and the Kandyan, he thought of it as Royal blood boiling in his veins. For some days the friction had developed between his officer and himself. Infact his dreams were different now. Now he saw the Bhakirava Kantha and the barrels containing the prisoners ready to be rolled down the mountain side. Only he was not sure whether he was inside the barrel or out. Like a wounded buffalo he had lain low silently bearing it all up and on that fateful day when provoked beyond limits he had pulled the trigger and his officer lay in a pool of blood. He was arrested for manslaughter. He was in prison, in an alien soil, an alien culture, with criminals who spoke an alien tongue. He was never repentent, he said that he had never intended to kill, but the man deserved it. 'That dark skinned low caste may be a rodiya, had called him names, he always did that. The uniform and the strips don't entitle them for Kingship.'

He was lying down on the urine smelling corner of the cell which was crowded. Some other prisoners were out their bath or haircut. 'Why doesn't he come out?' I asked. 'He is on strike he refuses to get up.'

The superintendent ordered four co-prisoners to lift him up. That is how they bathed him and fed him whenever he refused to get up. For him it was a psychic state which he threatened to enter whenever things got too difficult to manage. There would be unpleasantness with the jailors or other Sinhala prisoners. Then he, Somasiri would enter the foetal psychic stage curl himself up in the foetal position and refuse to budge. There he would be back in his village meeting his mother in the drowsy sleepy state, and he would renew himself in that cocoon stage and slowly recover over the week. And would beam like a happy child.

His people were poor and so his uncle hired a lawyer from Colombo, a Tamil who got, in contact with a Jaffna Tamil lawyer who promised to look into the case but never really tried, because there was no money flowing in. Somasiri after seven months of waiting entered a prolonged foetal stage and refused to talk. So the Officers had to call in the ambulance and shift him to the Jaffna hospital. Now Somasiri was determined to renew his phychic tactics of the foetus unless shifted to Colombo, where he had a better chance to see his mother and sisters, they would not have afforded the means to come and see him in Jaffna. So at last he succeeded in convincing the new prison superintendent, that if he wanted no more headaches he had better air lift him to Colombo.

That is why we could not meet him either in prison or at the hospital. A week later I was meeting the prisoners in the Jaffna jail. I asked them. 'Where is Somasiri?' they replied that he had been shifted to Colombo by air. And there had been high drama at the airport. How do you know? they had a good laugh and pointed out to two new prisoners. The two had been caught trafficking with drugs within the air port premises. They were stretcher bearers in the air port. When the turn came for Somasiri to be carried into the plane, they searched for his number and found it odd that he was not one of the numerous casualties of the present war operation. There were many wounded soldiers lying huddled up around the airfield. The Kilinochi operation was on and hundreds of wounded Sinhalese soliers were being air lifted to Colombo. Anyway they lifted him up and one of them asked where was his number. The other said 'He is not one of the wounded solidiers.'

'It is a mistake that he is here, may be, he is one of the terrorists. picked up by the army rescue team of medics.'

'Are you sure?'

Why where is the Army badge?'

The word had a magical effect, They both threw the stretcher on the floor and spat on him shouting "Terrorist" There was panic in the crowd. An Army officer nearby rushed and asked Where? There were only shouts, and near pandemonium, "**TERRORIST TERRORIST**, where? WHERE?

Soma Siri's muscles were loosening and anger flashed from his eyes, he slowly got up from his stretcher stood like a king. 'Who is the terrorist? His voice became solemn, "I or these two. I am a Sri Lankan Soldier SLR 512. Arrest them they are the real terrorists, they are trafficking in forbidden narcotic drugs. They are the enemies of our Nation. He faced the officer saluted him and walked slowly towards the plane.

SEENATHU KAVITHAIKAL

(Poems from China)

By : V. Suntharesan

Seenthu Kavithaikal has been published by Vekal, a literary association at Vadapalany, Chennai. A brief note appearing on last page of book indicates that the source of the translated poems in this book is the magazine - chinese literature. It occurs to me that the absence of foreword or any relevant information is a great "betrayal" inflicted upon this work. It is further disappointing that no mention has been made in the book about V. Suntharesan, the translator or K. Kailasanathan, the artist, who has illustrated the poems.

I learn that V. Suntharesan is an Instructor in English at the University of Jaffna. Mr. K. Kailasanathan is one of the remarkable Tamil artists in Sri Lanka. The blend of the modern trend and the occasional traditional style reflected in this illustrations appearing in book bring out his skill as an artist.

In the recent past quite a few collection of poems have been translated. These works include poems of Chairman Mao, Ho Chi Minh, Palestinians etc, and the translators are K. Ganesh, S. Yogaratnam, Nuhuman and Sivasekaram. In this context it's pertinent to analyze the poems by V. Suntharesan. Except for Oru Varam a translation by Murugaiyan, most of the translated poems by the writers portray the people's thirst for freedom and their freedom struggle.

But the poems translated by Suntharesan depict very elegantly the landscape of the chinese villages and exquisitely instill in the readers' mind the feeling of the melancholic experience of the people of villages in their day - to day life, their delights and romanticism and the lively world of birds and animals.

While the poems embrace various subjects, they intensely manifest humanity by conveying the theme of compassion toward all living creatures. In this sense the poems translated by Suntharesan are unique.

In the poem titled Meadow after Rain, we come across a passenger in a train admiring the beauty of the dawn. The poem is plain in form but rather appealing to the mind.

In the Memory of the Maple Tree, the grievance of the poet following the felling of a maple tree is expressed and the description is so powerful that it causes the grivances to penetrate into the readers as well.

A Yellow Sparrow in the Jungle Felds speaks about a sparrow freed by a youth from the trap laid by a hunter.

The poet imaginatively describes that the bird is descending in its course in the air to convey its gratitude to the youth.

The revelation of the insatiable romantic feeling in Meeting makes it one of the best poems I have read with pleasurable appreciation, recently.

A critic once remarked that "The part left out in translation is the essence of the poem". As far as Seenarhu Kavithaikal is concerned, though these poems have been translated originally from Chinese into English and then from English into Tamil, these stictures don't apply to Suntharesan translation because they successfully communicate the underlying experience to the reader.

The poet V. Suntharesan and artist K. Kailasanathan deserve our gratitude and appreciation.

Mr. M. Ponnampalam
(Mu Po)

Bubble like

T. Kirupakaran

A choking store room
Dark and dusty
Filled with columns
of files and papers
Yellowed with time
And moth - eaten
My hands at random
Picks up one of them
which crumbles to dust
With one soft touch
yet my eyes screwed
In the diffused sun light
Read the contents one by one
The name of an infant
The parents of it's birth
The place and the date
On which it came to earth
My memory at once shifted
Four and forty years back

and flashed the scene
On the mind's silver screen
My mother pale and sick
with two other women
Sits with the infant
Lying in her lap
It's soft limbs unmoving
The tiny eyes not blinking
The women's faces show
That the babe is fast sinking

And then the evening came
On the fourth day of it's birth
Men and women spilled in
To mourn the infant's death

This is how I lost my sister
So cute, fair and beautiful
I longed and waited for the day
To cuddle her fondly and to play
Often when I think of this loss
It fills my heart with grief
And bathes the eyes in tears.

ARRIVAL OF THE BIRD WITH

A WORD OF GRIEF

Kallooran

Out of the black water
And from the waking of the gently
Thought about her,
A lonely bird came and rest
Upon the branch of my bones.

She did not utter a single word
And so did I, too.

It was so after a long time
Her arrival.

The bird
Pecking and pecking with its tiny beak
In search of something
On my branch sitting
My heart so brimful of tears, flows out
I have closed my eyes
I have closed my eyes
For a sigh
For a sightful of relief

The waves that are thorwn against
with words and words
Return to the same sport
Hitting their heads again and again
To the shore
Only to find their way home
Being disappointed.

Translation by the author.

(It is the translation of a poem contained in the book of poems namely "The space in a space within Velikkul Veli")

SPUME

By : V. Paranthaman

In his message to Spume a collection of 28 poems by V. Paranthaman, an ELTC staffer, the Chancellor has categorized him a blooming poet along with Mr. M. Saravanapava Iyer of the same department.

The Eelam war seems to have had two opposite effects on these two poets. Saravanapava Iyer withdraws inward and discovers the child in him; through the universal eye of the child he has brought out two collections of poems for children "butterfly" and "Reminiscence". In the Vice Chancellor's own words they are a good feast to readers and nourish their joyous feeling"

The other has chosen the outward path. In his 'introduction' Mr. S. Pathmanathan has rightly pointed out that 'no creative writer can be blind to the plight and predicament of nation stunned by violence. Though Paranthaman is a beginner his poetry has the "freshness of a child's face".

The poet's mental lens has a limited span, it moves between two bridges in the Jaffna Town: the Pannai Palam and the Navatkuli Palam and the Small Island that lies in between with ponds, lagoon, paddy fields, streets and the inescapable sentry points. There is poignant point which is at the core of the poet's experience because it is a common occurrence.

Eg. Where Angel fear to tread - p.19

One of those dusky evenings
My daughter and I
Went hiking
Along the dark highway
A gun - shot
Whistled through the air.
Everything stood still

The inevitable round - up follows and the child asks "Appa did you bring your I.C.? Will he sent us? My daughter is just four"

Some of his poems start off with romantic impressions but abruptly end with a violent image

like in the "Ode to the Northern Sea, and "Strange displacement".

Pure Land is in the romantic tradition as it describes the Small Island - Eluvaitheevu", never crushed by the hands of war.

No bullet wounds
No cannon booms
No shells
No blood stains.

But "till the wound is red" is a realistic poem, simple and straightforward. The poet is like the Hovercraft, one of his poems.

Her body
Under the cold green lagoon
She is looking for her morning bite

Suddenly she withdraws her long neck
Into the water
She reappears
A small fish in her mouth!

In some of those poems the poet dives into own collective (psyche of Jaffna) subconscious: Waiting is a poem which begins with sunset and ends on a note of surprise.

But the dark old woman
Is still
Waiting
For her son's return.

That is the Jaffna version of the Deirdre of Sorrows of the Irish Mythe. She is worn out through too much of suffering. There is another woman worn out though the frustration of waiting at deserted sentry point near Navakuli. The lonely Sinhala military policewoman who is engrossed in embroidering a red rose on a white handkerchief.

"Laughed charmingly at me
A gorgeous Sinhala rose in the fertile Tamil's soil"

Red, the colour of blood, predominates many poems whether it is sky, the land, water or the long drawn - out violence.

"THESATHTHIN PAADAL ITHU"

"Were we born to weep,
Grow up, drenched in our tears
Knowing full well the Gods are dumb"

Amutha, in her loneliness, would often sing song in a plaintive voice. I had heard it earlier but had not paid any attention to it then. Today, I heard it again, for the eighth time since my coming here, two months ago. This time, the melancholy notes moved me, wrenched me, wrenched my heartstring as it were, shook me to the core as it had never been before. Something within me urged me to go to her, question her the reasons for her sorrow. I drew near, stood in front of her, coughed slightly to her attention.

"Well Rajan, aren't you going out for your meals today", she asked in a matter of fact way and buried her face in her handkerchief. Thus, it absorbed her tears. But I wondered if that small handkerchief could ever wipe out all the misery that was apparent on her face!

I was in a quandary. How was I to get her story? Wouldn't I be trespassing on her privacy? Wouldn't I make her more miserable and how was I going to comfort her then?

I knew the havoc sorrow caused, but wasn't it also true that the mere sharing of one's grief lessened the other's unhappiness? I was determined to coax her and draw out her story.

"Amutha, why do you, like a nightingale, sing this sad song over and over in your loneliness?" I asked her, face averted, not having the courage to look her in the face.

"Why do you ask. Rajan?", she sighed. "There is joy when you share glad tidings, why bother others with my sorrow and make them sad?" She tried to avoid further talk.

I explained to her that many would willingly share another's happiness but only a few would their sorrow. That is why sorrow is a tyrant. Nevertheless, it can be overcome. I begged her to let me share her grief. She agreed, reluctantly.

"This is my fate why should I trouble others with my unhappiness and make them sad?"

"If our sorrows are due to our fate how do we overcome it?" I asked her

There was silence. I waited. Sensing she couldn't dodge me further, she began to unfold her tragic tale.

"It was a very dark and bitterly cold night. like hundreds of others, we were at Kilali waiting to be ferried across the lagoon and to safety, so we thought then. It was a new experience fraught with danger.

"My youngest sister pleaded with mother to return home. Just then we heard someone ordering us to move forward. The crowd surged. We waded into the sea, the water reaching up to our waists, towards a hut where a solitary petromx was burning. The night sky was studded with innumerable stars, twinkling and lighting up the sky as though intent on a body count of those crossing the lagoon.

"Leaving our eldest sister and brother-in-law behind, six of us got into a boat. The boat sliced its way through the water churning it. We were completely drenched and the bitter cold benumbed us, fear of the dark and the unknown possessed us. Each of us was conscious of the gory incident that befell the passengers of the motor launch 'KUMUDINI' off Nainativu, a few years back. Our destination was Pooneryn, When we moored at Nallur, a solitary safety lamp that stood like a lighthouse welcomed us. We were revived and happy. But that happiness was short-lived for right across the lagoon, in front of us a bloody drama was being enacted. Army helicopters crisscrossed the sky strafing indiscriminately at the people below while Kfir bombers rained bombs from the sky. it was another nightmare. Many were killed and wounded. When day broke news of the tragedy leaked. We learnt that our eldest sister was rolling on the ground and screaming holding on to the trunkless head of her husband.

"Days passed. Each wretched day brought more sorrow. Sometimes a letter would come from home, which for the time being, at least lightened our days.

"To make matters worse, we were with malaria. It drained us of our health and left us weakend.

"Meanwhile learning that Jaffna was returning to normalcy under army occupation, many began to trek home. Kanagamma Acca and family too, returned, taking the ashes of their dead son to perform the anthiashtty there As we were talking to Gowri Acca, we received a letter from our cousin, Parameshwary.

"Parameshwary informed us that our eldest sister who had been taken in for questioning by the secuity forcees had not returned. A cousin's son, Selvarajah, a teacher, who had gone in search of her, had also not returned. Both were missing. Unable to continue reading further, we rolled on the ground, weeping.

"Within a month of our brother-in-law's death, my sister and my cousin were missing- vanished into thin air. As days passed, the number of missing persons increased. The list seemed endless.

"We were in Puthukudiyiruppu cremating the dismembered pieces of our youngest sister, Bhuvana, when we had news about the exhumation of the decomposed body of Krishanthi in Cheemmany. Bhuvana and nine other children died when Kfir bombers bombed the school where they were studying. Of those who were injured and admitted to the local hospital, three more died. So many innocent lives lost, for what?

"Be it in Jaffna or the Vanni, there were lot of unwanted deaths. Life was cheap indeed. how long would this carnage go on? Isn't there anyone to save us, Rajan?"

Amutha looked up at Rajan for a moment with tearful eyes, directed her attention elsewhere and contionued.

"After Bhuvana's death, we left Puthukudiyirupu and came to Mankulam. We were in a refugee camp for two months. Jegan, our eldest sister's only chlid, was with us. He was my mother's pet and kept us, sane. But he, too fell ill" "He was warded at the local hospital where he heavily dosed with chloroquine and premaquine, to no avail. He started vomiting blood and died soon after"

"Jegan's death broke my mother's spirit. She raved and ranted in her sleep, had hallucinations, told us she had seen our brother-in-law that he had spoken to her..... She said she had also dreamt of our eldest sister, had seen her scarred body.....

"Amma, we have lost everything. How long are we going to live in refugee camps? I am tired of all this. Let me sell this chain of mine and with the proceeds put up a koddil and

"Amutha, my child, what are you talking? You have only this chain left. Don't

"Amma, I am tired of camp life. During these last six months we have spent a lot of money on drugs and funerals. When life itself has lost its meaning what is this chain? Let me at least find a job"

"They killed your father at Nagarkovil, your brother-in-law in Kilali not satisfied with those they have now killed your sister. Who are they going to devor next? Who knows

"Despite my mother's grumbling, I sold my chain, erected a 'koddil' found a job and was beginning to start a new life when

"The Government launched "Operation Jayasikiru" intent on opening main highway to the North. At the height of this operation, we came under incessant bombing, shelling and artillery fire. One fateful night, mother who had gone out never returned. We were inside the house, huddled together in fear, when a shell fell nearby and exploded throwing dust, earth and sharpnel all around. When the firing ceased, we called out for mother. There was no reply . We went out, lantern in hand and looked for her, and found pieces of her body littered all over the place. With her death, all our hopes were lost.

"Three precious lives lost unnecessarily and we three girls orphaned. Today is the 60th day of my mother's death, the day we lost the hope and fount of our lives. Whenever I think of what had happened to us, I cannot but help sing this song. I like it very much it consoles and comforts me. But today, I cannot even sing properly, Rajan"

She wept aloud, head on the table, her entire frame convulsing.

Rajan who was trying to find words to comfort her, found himself weeping why was he weeping?

Amutha did not understand the reason for Rajan's grief. He, he was crying for the death of his brothers in a school in Nagarkovil. Their bodies were blown to smithereens.

"I, too, lost my brothers in Nagarkovil. Like you I too had to collect their dismembered bodies, piece by piece.....?"

When she heard this, Amutha lifted her head and looked at Rajan.

Like milk spilling over from pongal pots, tears flowed from their eyes, like streams unchecked.

"Were we born to weep....."

That strain again! Is it real or a figment of a diseased mind? No, no, it is real. It is the song of this land, our land.!

Translated By : S. Rajasingam

from the original 'Thesaththin Paadal Ithu'
(This is the song of the nation) by Valavai
Valavan, Sunday Thinakkural,
25th April, 1999.

We are going to sing happily, together today
We are going to sing happily

Like the women of those yester years
Are you going to live a crippled life
Have a look at the women of today
Do have a look at the women on the top
Out of the hearth today how many such women
you see

Is cooking only meant for women folk?
Is sitting by the hearth their work?
If you know about cooking it is a real tactful job
So understand we the cooks can do any job under
the sun

If practised we can do any work, all of us
If practised we can do any work.

Giving birth to children is the most difficult job you
know
So we the child bearers can do any job under the
sun

On this earth of beauty and richness, know very
well
no one is a slave to the other
By nature women and men
Differ but in constituent
hey you woman brave a bit
The earth will never let you down

Song Written and composed By :

**Group of Culture Activists Suriya
Women Development Centre,
Batticaloa.**

Translated By : T. Kirupakaran

Con. from . 21

Shoe flower!
Why can't you produce fruits?

Naga Thevi is his best poem where the ancient mother who sits on a cobra pedestal attracts pilgrims: Sinhala and Tamil pilgrims. It is an ancient shrine dating from the prehistoric period.

The poet drives us to our ancient roots so that she can suck out the poison of evil from our soil to bring peace.

She gives us her joy
Our grief she may destroy

The rhyming couplets of the strict alternative rhyme scheme as Mrs. Amirthanjali Sivabalan has pointed out in her foreword and the tendency of poems like Electricity to sound like a limerick prevents them from developing poetic form.

We hope that this collection from the North will create the necessary ripples in the still Ocean waters of our compassionate Isle because as Mr. S. Pathmanathan says "Unfortunately very little is written in English here".

Rev. Fr. E. Jeyaceelan

Lecturer,
Department of Linguistics and English,
University of Jaffna,
Jaffna.

A Solider and his Questions

Voice faltered
Due to trembling
The solider clad in khaki
was rummaging in me.

That I took up the world
And filled my pockets with it
was the fear within him.

With fiery eyes
He riddled my whole body
A child ran through me.

He looked at my NIC
Turned it over
Looked again, frowned and asked
'What's your name'.

Shame indeed
That I lost my freedom
To one who cannot read.
From top to bottom
His hands crawled.

With the hands
That cannot draw a world map even
All over me
He was exploring.
A pain
As if cutting me
with a blunt knife
Laying me face down
Till I survive these check - points.

By : Arafath

Translated By : T. Kirupakaran

TALES TALL AND TRUE

By : R. Murugaiyan

The day before yesterday we managed
to make up some stories
during the false dawn or thereabouts.
After a hearty meal followed by a nap
we sprang out of bed and got busy
Spreading out these tales fanciful.
We blew up forty - fold
the life of our rulers and powers - that - were,
the lore full of burps and hang - overs
and invented Heaven - Paradise.
knowing at first - hand
the heat and misery of the seafarers
clad in rags, their eyes welling with tears
grappling with hunger and pain,
we blew up their plight
fifty - fold
and constructed Hell
a fit abode for these dammed souls
'Let there be gods' we said
'and devils, demons, ghosts along with spirits,
dragons, serpents, giants and dinosaurs,
Yakkas, Nagas, Angels and what - not'
And there they were all there
Lined up with their retinues
arranged neatly in rows and columns
housed in their abodes appropriate
in well - planned hierarchy
with their respective designations
and lists of duties
Heroes, Heroines and villains,
Quarrels, contradictions, fires and fears,
combats, battles, invasions and defeats,
intrigues, conflicts, talks and pacts
all these prepared with meticulous care.
We conducted wars, defeated the foes
and got defeated (just for a change).
We became adept at devising arms
reasonably deadly, with magical powers
as horrendous as we could imagine
We could salvage some of our lost territories
and emerge victorious too
(usually towards the end.)
All these we included in our tales tall
the tales we had concocted
the day before yesterday.

The priest, our revered Guru,
piously recorded these tales
and began to worship the Book
page by page ;
He lit the Holy Lamp

and kindled the cinders in the incense - holder,
with eyes closed in solemn ceremony
chanting mystic syllables in rhythm devotional.

The Priest made some emendations
to the Book, now grown Big
Added some metaphysics here and there
He touched up the Book
polished it,
embellished and decorated it;
He succeeded in bringing out a version
rhetorically rich and fascinating
edited, revised and enlarged.
He inserted some clauses
(favourable, naturally, to those at the summit)

The revered Guru began to deliver
Lectures and discourses
with musical accompaniment, if necessary
He wrote gigantic commentaries,
interpretations and explications
These were what happened yesterday.

Today, the Guru approached us
and claims that the very tales
we ourselves had woven
in yester years
sanctioned by divine Authority
'Ethical and evangelical considerations'
the Master declares
'make strict and exact adherence imperative'
He is unsparing in his efforts
to place such matters
before the Supreme and / or the Apex Court (s)

The Master is also resolute
About floating gigantic projects
to reproduce and publish
encyclopaedic volumes and volumes
of interpretative theses
and treatises.

He - the Priest, the Guru, the Master
is vociferous, insistent, loud and firm
He sounds so confident and impressive
followers gather around him.
May his tribe increase!
His herd is so vast
their clamour shatters
our poor, fragile ear - drums.

The Tales we made up of yore
slowly we have come to accept
as True
in their modified version

(Transcreated by the author from the Tamil Original)

TO THOSE WHO DID NOT RETURN

K. Sivapalan
Trincomalee.

The mournful funeral march plays
for the soldier who was lucky
to have returned in one piece
In Uniform and Boots and Buttons
with a golden sheen.

In another village mother and the widow
or is she not still one?
mourn with pain in mind
of their son and husband who
is missing for so long.

Was he captured and tortured?
Or was he maimed or done away with
will he return in one piece one day
Even in tattered clothes.

For whose benefit or for what are they
Losing their lives for?
When lives of the poor are in tatters
War mongers thrive and live in
Luxury and with power
When the poor and the unfortunate
Mourn forever.

REMINISCENCE

(Children's Poems)

By : M. Saravanapava lyer

Lyn Ludowyk quoting Ian Jack defined poetry's essential quality as "the glass seems empty because it is full of water". This is the first sensation one gets when one reads poetry that comes out of Jaffna. Either the only half of the Peninsula that is left for a pretence of normalcy has stifled all lyrical poetic sounds or it is immersed in a demented forgetfulness and pushed back into the uterus and childhood memories. It is in this context that Saravanapava lyer's (30) beautiful poems for children make exciting reading.

Kurumpeettiter is such a poem which drives us back to the unalloyed memories of a Jaffna child. The Jaffna home garden has enough kurumpas fallen, but it becomes precious in the child's eye.

This is only one of the crystals in the limpid fountain of Saravanapava lyer's poems which ooze with the very dhvani of Jaffna's war torn essence. The Female pup (16) is full of this war time ethos.

"No water no food, lot of pain
Survival was the greatest gain
I am in the municipal cart,
Reminds me all "disappeared charts"

The bird imagery :selfish master's beautiful jail" in Parrot in a cage (17) and

"Visiting birds were all my friends,
Wings of eagles made little fright
Springs of snakes, difficult to fight"

in Lonely squirrel. In billy goat (20) man was leading with innocent heart "ends with in the name of God, he was hacked. The Bullock cart (9) screeching its usual voice, always makes that painful noise" is the correct words in the correct place.

"Bombers pierced through the air,
Bullock carts made immediate cover.
Suffering pathful bullock cart,
Jaffna people never forget"

is full of the Jaffna's wartime pathos. The words loaded with the correct resonance, a mixture of joy as in the Umbrella (100) and the January pongal (8), Happiness (14) and Marbles (17).

Balloon Face (19) reminds us of the "Human Race different colours fix different faces. Air escaped from those Lords? All are equal in the yards.

The final two poems The Oil Press (29) and Water (30) with its Jaffna agrochemical pollution seals our fate as Schindler's List.

Rev. Fr. Je. Jeyaceelan
Lecturer,
Department of Linguistics and English
University of Jaffna,
Jaffna.

LIFE

Vairamuthu Suntharesan
E.L.T.C.
University of Jaffna.

Bearing our own little hut
We move on.
with our delicate frail body
We move on
no secret !
We seek refuge
In this fragile shell,
Whenever threats are posed
To our life.

We eat and we sleep
Lindowed we are
with our senses
Evident are the feelers
On our heads.

At moments of crisis
neither do we spring
Nor flee.
only retreating into the shell
Conceal ourselves.

May be our huts get smashed
Our flesh crushed,
With no warning.
Yet devoid of sinister motive
Is our life
We do not cling
On to the foot
And suck thy blood
As leeches do.
nor does the caterpillar's poisonous fur
Grow in our frame.

Even in death,
We leave our flesh and blood
A feast for birds.

The Casket I Brought

Pon. Ganesh

As I promised
There were lot of things
In abundance
to bring for you in the lovely
Casket of my soul.

Dead - tired, arriving
At the sea beach tourist Inn
I was resurrected with the shower of bath ;
At a distance, the sky was devouring
The sea,
The waves unmindful of me,
Entwining themselves in so many forms
Embroided with silver foams
on the carpet of beach
Where the small crabs, played
Throwing their tiny eyes
To and fro.

I drew a picture on the golden sand.
A squirrel, out of a branch of the tree
Sprouted, all of a sudden
With a message, which I have jot down.
In the middle of the grove,

The silver - breasted white - skinned
Nymphs, floating freely in the swimming pond
Happened to be packed, I'm afraid,
In the lovely casket, which I made
for you to bring things in.

also packed are my native
Inconveniences, experienced
At the dining table
Making my hands as forks and spoons.

Collecting such things beauties
I set off home
Along the streets burning with
Flames of dust on these dog - days
When getting up and down from the bus
At every sentry point of the
Camouflaged Forces, Alas
All these treasures were lost
Somewhere on the way
Like the beautiful white dove
Snatched away by a mid - night cat.
When returned home,
Amids the blaring and incessant noises
of the rice mills
And of the devilish heavy vehicles
Carrying bags and bags of paddy husks
I am done away with the empty casket, broken
Lying on the porch of my home,

THE FLIGHTLESS BUTTERFLY

(A Workshop Play)

THE SCRIPTWRITER'S EXPERIENCE

S.M. Felix

"The Flightless Butterfly", a production of the English Language Teaching Unit of the Eastern University of Sri Lanka, was staged at the Inter University English Drama Festivals organised by the Drama Society (DRAMSOC) of the Colombo University, on 19th August 2000, at the Bishop's College Auditorium.

The backstage story of "the Flightless Butterfly" is as interesting as the play itself. As soon as intimation was received regarding the Drama Festival, Mr. Jeyasankar, from the Department of Fine Arts, Eastern University, Sri Lanka contacted the Staff of the English Language Teaching Unit (ELTU) and the process was set on motion. If I remember it correctly, the first preparatory meeting was held under a banyan tree near the ELTU block, somewhere in April. Mr. Jayasankar (Dept. of fine Arts) Mr. Kirupakaran and Mr. Felix (both from ELTU) and a handful of students attended the meeting. A lively discussion took place which centered round a number of issues mainly war - related. Every participant, without exception, was of the opinion that the Eastern University should stage a play at the Drama Festival and that the theme should be related to the prevailing war situation, not necessarily the cause, but the effects on the long suffering people. Having decided on the theme, the meeting adjourned, agreeing to meet on a daily basis.

As decided, the group met everyday. As the discussion progressed, more students joined in and a short story in Tamil by V. Gowripalan was found to appeal to the group's expectations. The legend of the King who built the famous Kanthalai Tank forms the background to this story. The theme of the play was found to be very relevant to the contemporary society in the North and East of Sri Lanka. After elaborate discussions, the group decided on Gowripalan's short story and work commenced immediately on a scene - by - scene approach.

I was entrusted with the task of writing the script of the play. After detailed discussions, facilitated by Jayasankar, I sat down to pen the

first scene. The first scene was important. It had to set the mood of the entire play and serve as a harbinger to what was to follow. Ambi, the protagonist of the play, lives in a world of dreams and this effect had to be brought up sharply when the lines were rendered by the characters. Special attention had to be paid to the choice of diction, rhythm and rhyme to give a melodious effect which would be appropriate to take the audience into the world of Ambi. After a series of rehearsals, thanks to the absolute devotion of the participants and the able workshop facilitation of Jayasankar, the task was accomplished.

From the world of dreams in the first scene, it was decided to enter into reality - the past reality, through a flashback. The characters of father and mother dominated this scene, with Ambi playing a sort of passive role. Now events had to be built up leading to the climax. The script for the first scene was in verse form appropriate the dream world, while the second scene was written in prose form in line with reality. The over - ambitious and over - protective parents of Ambi, as depicted in the second scene, play a major role in moulding the character of Ambi. It is my experience that in a workshop play, the scriptwriter faces a Herculean task. He has to be flexible. He must accommodate the views expressed by the participants, write, re - write and re-shape the script based on the discussions and consensus. The script has to satisfy the expectations of the participants by accommodating their ideas which they might find it difficult to communicate verbally. Script writing for a workshop play is a continuous process with many try - outs until perfection is reached. In a non-workshop play the scriptwriter has his own discretion. However the advantage in workshop plays is that discussions bring out the hidden talents and the creativeness of the participants and the try-outs during the rendering of the dialogue and practice performances lead to perfection. The talents and the creativity of the participants contribute in no less term to its success.

From the family environment in the second scene, the play moves on to the third scene where Ambi is in the company of his friends. But realities being realities, Ambi cannot reconcile his own dreams with the demands of the competitive world around him. His schoolmates taunt him when he asks "silly?" questions about the

droves of butterflies going on a legendary pilgrimage to Sri Pada, a Sacred Mountain in Sri Lanka. The contribution of the student participants in the shaping of the third script was very high, as the age group of the characters of the scene was almost the same as those of the participating students. The third scene was a mixture of reality and dreams as such two styles of script writing were necessitated. The realism was brought out through the prose form dialogue, while the dream world was created through a flashback in a ballad form.

The fourth scene was equally important. Ambi reaches marriageable age, Ambi's mother rejects a proposal because in her view the girl would not make a good daughter-in-law. Ambi's mother and his neighbour Rasathi play dominant roles while Ambi plays a passive role. Rasathi is of Ambi's age. She has a soft corner for Ambi. She not only understands Ambi but also tries to bring him out of the cocoon he has built for himself. However Ambi's mother throws her out of the house, accusing her of trying to seduce Ambi. By this, doors are slammed even on caring hands that reach out to pull Ambi to safety. Of all the scenes, the fourth required great effort. The writing of the script with the main focus on arguments between the mother, who was as ever protective as before, and Rasathi, who was trying to bring the mother down to the earth, while Ambi remains a passive onlooker, was the result of much discussion in which the contribution of the students were remarkable. I had to write this scene under time duress as a copy of the script had to be sent to the Organisers of the Drama Festival. I was not satisfied with the first draft, but there was hardly anytime left before the deadline. We decided to send the script to the Organisers first, and to work on it later. The argument between mother and Rasathi in the first draft did not come out very well. When the participants tried out this scene during practice sessions, the flow became clear not only to me but also to the participating students. They recalled their own experiences to capture the mood of the mother and how a young girl like Rasathi would react to it. Based on this discussion, I re-wrote the dialogue bringing in logical continuity which eventually turned out to be an excellent piece.

The exit of Rasathi was the last straw that broke the camel's back. Ambi withdraws himself deeper into the dream world. He imagines himself to be the trusted charioteer of the legendary King who built the Kanthalai Tank and dreams of "Mullai" the beautiful wife of

the charioteer of the King. and in a hallucinatory moment starts climbing onto the bund of the famous tank, believing that his beloved is there. Dreams or on dreams, Ambi is arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act on suspicion of trying to poison the water of the Kanthalai Tank. This is a reminder of the real life in the war torn areas of Sri Lanka. The violence during arrest, the pathetic situation in which Ambi finds himself and the communication problem - all these were personal experiences of the participants of the workshop. These experiences had to be communicated to the audience through the dialogue, expressions and emotional outbursts. The first draft underwent several changes as the students rehearsed the play on the stage. Though arrested, Ambi is released to the custody of his parents on the grounds of his mental unfitness, thus the play avoids becoming polemical. The play ends with the completely disoriented Ambi, at the famous Sri Koneswara Kovil, still in his world of dreams, with the priests and the worshippers turning their backs on him.

It was a great experience working with Jayasankar and the team of University students - Harihararaj, Lalini, Rajeevani, Mythrye, Dharmandhira, Prahashini, Vijiendran and Ithayaraj. The real sense of the word "team-work" was experienced during the whole of the workshop. Jayasankar was a great communicator. Through on-stage music, stylized dance, slight but effective costume changes to convey the different characters, he was successful in conveying the theme effectively and to take the play to the realms of the dreamland in one scene and down to the earth in the next scene.

The tremendous appreciation the play received from the audience at the Drama Festival, and the subsequent reviews in "The Sunday Island" and "The Times of Ceylon", bear testimony to the success story of the workshop. "The Flightless Butterfly" by the Eastern University, finally let the audience in on the evening's entertainment" wrote Nilika de Silva in the Arts Page of "The Sunday Times" of August 27, 2000. "By the common consent of all, including the other students, the Eastern University's production of 'The Flightless Butterfly' stole the evening. It was a production that was not only very relevant in its theme but brilliantly presented with nature's beauty and an ancient legend being used to highlight the realities of contemporary life in the Eastern Province", wrote Ruana Rajapakse in "The Sunday Island" of October 22, 2000.

“THE FLIGHTLESS BUTTERFLY”

A WORK – SHOP PLAY

PARTICIPANTS

**A. RAJEEVANEE FRANCIS
A. LALLINI TISSEVERASINGHE
MYTHREYE SOMASUNDARAM
PREHASHINI JEEVARETNAM
K. HARIHARARAJ
W. DHARMENTHIRA
BRITTO ITHAYARAJ
P. VIJENDRAN**

**WORK – SHOP FACILITATION AND STAGE CREATION
S. JEYASHANKAR**

**SCRIPT
S.M. FELIX**

**ADAPTED FROM A THAMIL SHORT STORY BY
V. GOWRIPALAN.**

JULY – AUGUST 2000.

**WORK – SHOP ORGANISED BY:
ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING UNIT.
EASTERN UNIVERSITY, SRI LANKA.**

SCENE ONE

(Ambi is on the Bund. In the background is heard tank-related sounds: sounds of breaking waves on the bund: sound of a cool breeze: the “tuk, tuk” noise of woodpecker pecking a tree, etc, this goes on for a while. It is followed by a rendering of the verses from the stone inscription of the tank)

(The voice is heard from the behind the scene.)

A hoe of eight fold directions
To cut down a tree of seven span
Tapping with a foot to topple,
Yet, before it fell
A tank he built on earth,
And therein filled roaring waters,
Oh, virtuous king.

Ambi: Marvelous. Oh, the King Kulakottan, marvelous. Cutting the earth on eight directions: cutting down the trees of seven spans, tapping with a foot to topple: and yet, before it fell, you built a tank on the earth: filled, full with water. Oh, Your Majesty, how could I praise your patience?

(tuk, tuk: the sound of the woodpecker pecking the tree: sound of the horses’ hoofs in the background.)

Mullai rides the Royal Chariot – passes Ambi. Ambi, startled, turns his head towards the chariot and cries aloud.

Ambi: Stop, stop the chariot. Mullai stop. I’m Muhilvannan, your husband. Stop the Chariot. (runs behind it.)

Chariot stops. Mullai alights from it, waves her hand at Ambi.

Ambi : Ah ha! this indeed is the greatness of a wife. May you be glorified – you who in my absence is the charioteer of the King.

Mullai moves on. Ambi gives chase. Mullai runs, Ambi runs behind.

Ambi : Oh, Mullai the Princess of the Forest. Where do you run? Stay, ahead is the forest. Stop don’t run. (Mullai leaves the stage.)

Soliders : Stop, stop, Don’t run. Duwanda eppa. You’ll be shot.
(Ambi runs. Soliders give chase – catch Ambi. They struggle.)

An officer (enters) : What’s happening? Who’s he?

A solider : Sir, he has come to blast the tank with bombs. He tried to run away when he saw us. We had to give a chase before we apprehended him.

Officer : Put him in the bunkers. We’ll see later.

All exit.

SCENE TWO

Ambi's house: Amma is ironing Ambi's shirt. Father is painting Ambi's bookshelf.

Ambi: Amma, shall I iron my shirt?

Amma: What? How many times I've told you not to talk such nonsense. Do you want to burn your fingers? Do your studies, instead.

Father: Has Ambi started minding other's business? (To mother) First he asked me whether he could paint his bookshelf. I warned him to mind his own business, He doesn't learn, (to Ambi) Why don't you do your homework? Or revise your lessons?

Ambi (reads): The King Kulakotan lived during the 14th century. History records that King Kulakotan built the famous Koneswara Kovil and the tank which is presently known as the Kantale tank.

Ambi: Amma, my Sigiriya Trip? Tomorrow is the last day for giving names. All my class-mates are going.

Amma: That subject's closed

Father: What's it?

Amma: Ambi's class's going on a trip to Sigiriya.

Father: Sigiriya? You're only in year ten. You're too young to go there.

Ambi: But... Amma all my classmates are going.

Father: I don't care about your classmates. You're not going.

Ambi (reads): King Kulakottan had a trusted charioteer by the name of Muhilvannan. Muhilvannan and his beautiful wife Mullai occupy a special place in history as loyal servants of the King Kulakottan.

Ambi (to himself): How lucky, my friends, they must be getting ready by now.

Chorus in the backstage

Where're you going my friends?

Where're you going?

We're going to Sigiriya, Ambi,

We're going to Sigiriya.

Why go there my friends?

Why go there?

To see the majestic rock in its splendor, Ambi,

Majestic rock in its splendor

What else you see there my friends,

What else you see?

Damsels painted on walls, Ambi,

Damsels painted on the walls.

Have a good trip, my friends,

Have a good trip.

We pity you Ambi,

We pity you.

Mother and Father talking to each other.

Father: These days it's not safe to send children anywhere. I don't understand why schools **organize** such trips. Who'll guarantee the safety of our children? I must talk to the principal.

Mother: Talk to Ambi's class teacher too. Even sending the children to school is a risk, **leave alone** the trips. I'm on pins until Ambi returns home from school - explosions of bombs, **round-ups**....

Father: Identification parades in front of hooded men what and what responsibilities we parents have. (After a short pause) We're giving Ambi the best we can. It's been the same always. Do you remember (Ambi listens) when Ambi was seven years old?

Mother: Yes, yes. He wanted to go to the "**ther**" festival with the children of the neighbourhood. Those young boys wanted to go all by themselves. I clearly remember you refused to allow him. How he cried the whole evening! He even refused to take dinner.

Father: But, then I took him myself. I'm sure he enjoyed it. I even bought him an ice cream and a toy gun, AK 47.

Ambi : Enjoyed? Holding my father's hand, being dragged behind.
(to himself)

Chorus

Who goes with you, Ambi

Who goes with you?

That's his father

That's his father

Why hold his hand, Ambi.

Why hold his hand?

For his safety, of course,

For his safety

What see you there, Ambi

What see you there?

What shows his father?

What shows his father?

You see **ther**, Ambi

You see **ther**?

(Ambi): Father in between
Ther and me, **ther** and me

Father: (turning towards Ambi) Ambi run up to the corner shop and get me two panadol and a ginger beer. The smell of this paint causes me migraine. Take this twenty-rupee note. Two panadol - three rupees, ginger beer thirteen fifty that's sixteen fifty, the balance is (Ambi's getting ready to leave) three fifty.
Wait, Ambi change your black shirt. There're army men all over the place.

Mother: Go along the side of the road. Look on both sides before you cross don't stand on the road, talking to your friends.

Father: Don't go in your jeans, wear shorts. You look small in that.

Mother: Ambi looks too big for his age.

Father: He can get his I.C. only next year.

(Ambi is about to leave with an empty ginger beer bottle).

Father: You wait. The army convoy usually passes at this time. You better do your studies.
(Father leaves with the empty bottle)

(1 "Ther" – A chariot on which images of Hindu gods are placed and drawn by bullocks along streets during Kovil Festivals.)

Scene – Three

(Advanced Level class setting)

Teacher: (Continues)our next topic is the life cycle of the butterfly. We've already dealt with the classification. You should be thorough in that section.

Five marks are awarded for classification and ten marks for the life cycle. You can't afford to lose any marks on this. Now in the life cycle of the butterfly there are four stages; the egg, the caterpillar or the larva, the chrysalis or the pupa, and the adult, that is the butterfly.

If you have any questions you may ask me. Only up to this point.

Student 1: Miss, do all insects have this type of life cycle?

Teacher: No, not all.

Ambi: Miss, swarms of butterflies fly towards Kathirgamam in January every year. Is it part of their life cycle?

Student 3: They go on a pilgrimage, if you like you too can join them. (All students laugh)

Teacher: Silence. That's out of point. Nobody is going to ask this question in the exam. I have studied the question papers of the past five years. And I'm sure there'll be a question on butterflies this year.

Student 2: Ambi's always like that Miss, asking questions out of the syllabus.

Teacher: Your time is short, but the syllabus is wide. You must pick and choose what's necessary for your exam.

Student 3: (to Ambi): ask that question again. (to teacher) Miss, Ambi wants to ask a question.

Ambi: Miss, what I want to say is butterflies are beautiful...

Student 1 : Shut up, don't start your T.V. serial again. You should have studied in the Arts stream.
(to Ambi)

Student 2: Ambi wanted to join the Arts stream Miss. His father only put him here.

Teacher: That's immaterial. Now you're here, you must work hard. (to all students) Your parents want you to become doctors. It's your duty to fulfill their ambitions. How many of you will enter the university, that I have my doubts.

Student 3 : (quietly) Archimedes is going to ask an important question.
(to Ambi): Miss has not answered your Kathirgamam question, ask her. (To teacher): Miss Ambi wants to ask a question.

Teacher : Ramesh, you're spiling Ambi. Are you his mouthpiece?
(to student 3) Ambi: But, Miss, butterflies...

- Teacher: I've told you a number of times, passing the A/L is not enough. It's the aggregate marks that count. Whatever you study, you must memorise. If you don't memorise, then don't expect to enter the University.
- Student 1: (to Ambi): You and your butterflies.
(to teacher) Ignore Ambi Miss, he lives in fantasyland. (To Ambi) Because of you a lot of time has been wasted.
- Teacher: All right. One of you read these notes aloud, others take down, Do it quietly.
(Teacher hands over the note book to Ramesh and leaves)
- Ramesh: Ambi, read these notes aloud. Come to the front. (Ambi comes to the front)
Ambi, butterflies, beautiful, very beautiful, aren't they?
- Ambi: Yes Ramesh, they're beautiful,
The petal like wings, lovely hues of different shades,
So soft and smooth,
And on each of which a pattern stands.
With lovely pink and purple spots,
See how they glide,
Flapping their wings
So gently.
Like a ballet dancer
(Ambi is absorbed in his thoughts. Students mime the actions.)
- Students: Wa. wonderful, you're a philosopher, Ambi.
- Student 3: Ambi. once more.
- Ambi: (Continues)
Hundreds and hundreds of butterflies
On their way to Kathirgamam.
Their shadows like clouds
Covering the green grass below
Like the souls of the departed
Flying in the clear sky.
Oh, how I wish
I was there.
- All students: Eureka, eureka, our Archimedes has done it again (all laugh).
- Student 3: At this rate, Archemedis'll become Mendel.
- Student 1: Mendel or Mental.
- Student 2: Not only Ambi, all of us will be flying like butterflies. (Mine the action)
- Student 3: Who knows? Ambi'll become a mental doctor, one day.
- Stuent 2: To treat us. (All laugh)
- Ambi: Mahes....
- Mahes: Oh, leave us Ambi. We've better things to do than listen to your Mini Ramayana.
(They take the notebook from Ambi and leave)

Ambi: (to himself): How happy you must be
Oh, butterfly, how I remain,
So lonely, dejected,
No one to share
My feelings with...

Voice: How he remains,
So lonely, dejected,
No one to share
His feelings with

Chorus:
But the water of the lovely tank
The gentle breeze.
The butterflies
In there thousands
Drifting over the woods
So dark and deep,
The call of the birds,
The far horizon
Are all yours, Ambi.
Your world
Is your Own Ambi.

Scene – Four

(Ambi's house. "Ambi is seated, lost in his thoughts. A knock on the door is heard)

Ambi's mother : Ambi, see who's knocking on the door. I don't know what you've been doing
(from another room) from morning. Sitting there and just brooding. You've been doing this for the last four years, since you failed your A/L.

(Ambi rather reluctantly walks to the door and opens it. Rasathi comes in, holding a Weekly in her hand.)

Ambi: (forgetting himself): A....i, Mulla....i.

Rasathi: Stop this madness. Call me Rasathi. Here read this "Thinamurasu" without idling all the time.

Ambi: (takes it, then after a second thought – what's the use? Everything is over for me.

Rasathi: You're in a dull mood, Ambi. Are you're still worrying about... about that proposal? Forget that. Why do you want to take it so seriously?

Ambi: (getting lost in his thoughts)
She was so beautiful.
Smiled at me so lovingly.
Moved like a swan,
Clad in rainbow colours.
Mullai waiting ready to embrace Muhilvannan,
Beside the "Ther" on the banks of the tank
Butterflies in their thousands
Heralding the good news.
Of life so sweet

Rasathi: But, your mother didn't like her.

Ambi: Oh, how she longed to talk to me.

- Rasathi: You talked to her Ambi?
(Mother overhears the conversation as she enters)
- Mother (angrily): Talk to her, Ambi didn't go there to talk to her. We went there to see the girl. whether she would be a good daughter-in-law for me. But she wanted to talk to Ambi. What a disgrace?
We, the elders were seated talking about dowry and donation.... she wanted to take Ambi to a side and talk. Shame. Decent girls don't do that.
- Rasathi: What did Ambi do? Aunty?
- Mother: What's there for him to do? Ambi's not brought up in that manner. I told him then and there, in the presence of all: "Ambi this is not the girl for you. Let's get out from her." I left the place immediately taking Ambi with me.
- Rasathi: Ambi's very much worried aunty.
- Mother: Worried? (Noticing the weekly in Ambi's hand) You gave him that? (Getting angry) How dare you give him this and that to entice my son? I don't like the way you talk to him. Why do you want to talk to him about his marriage? You have no business with him. Girls of your age should have modesty, trying to hang on to my son.
- Rasathi (getting angry): Oh, your son is Salmon Khan, for me to go behind him. Everybody knows about your son, how crazy he is, you think he's still a baby. He's twenty-five years. You still tell him what to do, what to eat, how to dress and how to walk. You've never given him a chance to decide on anything. It's because of you he's like this. You compelled him to do Science subjects in A/L, how much he wanted to do Arts subjects. When he failed the exam, you put the blame on him. Aunty, now the world's different. Ambi belongs to this world, our world, and not your world. Remember that, oh, how I pity him.
- Mother: You needn't tell me about my son. And we don't need your pity, either (grabs the Weekly from Ambi's hands and throws it at Rasathi.)
Let this be your last visit to this house. Never step into this house again, never.
- Rasathi: (gathers the Weekly) (to herself) These people never change. Poor Ambi.
(She leaves)

Scene – Five

Ambi is on the Chariot, waiting for the king.

Mullai appears on the balcony, Ambi is excited; He waves his hand at Mullai. She waves back at him.

Ambi jumps down from the chariot.

Ambi: Oh my princess, there on the balcony,

Mullai, Mullai.

(tries to climb up the balcony, but his feet slip. Ambi tries again, searches for Mullai up in the balcony)

Ambi: Mullai, Mullai, where did you go? My angel, my princess, my goddess.
Ambi searches for Mullai, running here and there, excited. Policemen enter, catch Ambi, hold him tight and take him away.

Ambi murmurs: Mullai, Mulla... i

Scene Six

Court Scene

(Lawyers, Ambi's father, mother and others) Judge enters. Ambi is in the box.
Judge sits and others follow suit.

Court Mudaliyar: Case No: PC 1316 Kantale.
The accused is Nathan Vadivel alias Ambi.
Arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act.
(To Ambi)
Repeat what I say:
I say the truth, and nothing but the truth.

Ambi: Your Majesty, I know nothing, but Mullai.

Mudaliyar: (getting angry) Repeat only what I say.
Your majesty, sh... no, no... my Lord,
What I say is the truth
(Grabs Ambi's hand, forces him to take oath)

State council: My lord, the accused is charged under the Prevention of terrorism Act, with an attempt to poison the water in the reservoir which serves hundreds and hundreds of villagers.

Judge: Are you guilty or not guilty.

Ambi: Your Majesty, I was searching for Mullai in the balcony, when the guards brought me here.

Judge (to the lawyer): What does he say?

State council: My Lord, the behaviour of the accused has been found abnormal, this medical report (submits) supports my statement, under these circumstances, the state wishes to withdraw the case against the accused.

Judge (after reading the medical report): According to this report, the accused suffers from mental imbalance. He needs psychiatric treatment. I dismiss this case and order the accused to be released to the custody of his parents.

The court is adjourned. (Judge leaves.)

Scene Seven

(Temple setting)

Voice: Koneswaram Kovil
On the hill top
The sky above
And the sea below,
Serene atmosphere.
Images of gods
Showering Blessings
On crowds of devotees,
Chanting prayers.
Koneswaram
Koneswaram.

Ambi: Ah, ha.
 Marvelous,
 Oh, King Kullakottan
 Your service is noble.
 How this enchanting atmosphere
 Mesmerises me.
 My cuckoo bird of the garden of flowers
 Mullai,
 Where have you gone?
 Konesha Kovil
 Festivity at its peak,
 Why do you elude me,
 My Mullai?
 (Voices of women are heard)
 ah, that's the voice
 Of the angel of my heart
 It's the melody that lingers
 Long after the cuckoo bird
 And the mynah bird have sung.
 (A group of women go past Ambi)

Woman 1: hey, come quickly, the pooja's about to begin.

Ambi: Aai, Mullai.
 I'm here. Where do you go?
 (Ambi pulls the hand of a woman. She slaps him.)

Woman 1: He's mad. Why did you slap him?

Woman 2: Nonsense.

Ambi: Ai, Mullai.
 You slapped me?
 (Ambi tries to go near the woman. Guards of the temple assault Ambi.)

Ambi: (loud) Oh King
 Is this your royal justice?
 You removed my Mullai from me.
 And allowed your guards to assault me.
 Is this your justice?
 Is this your justice?
 (turning to the audience)
 Is this your justice?

End Scene.

GREEN GREEN GRASS OF HOME.

A PLAY ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE

BY: S. JEYASANKAR

TRANSLATED BY:

S.M. FELIX

ALL: We're men, (2)
With money in our hands,
Diseases in our bodies.
Sky is ours,
Earth is ours,
All living creatures – all ours.
When these thoughts vanish,
Sky opens, earth blooms, (2)
Innocent creatures –delighted,
Green, Green grass of home flourishes.

We come singing and dancing,
Dancing and singing we come.
To live in green green land,
With all living creatures,
In joy and happiness.

Rushing waters, Blowing winds,
Green lands, rich resources,
Grass and weeds, insects and worms,
Birds, beasts, men and all
To live in peaceful world,
A world to roam with desire.

MEN: Oh!....Oh!,
For us, for us
Knowledge grew,
Skills grew
Men are coming, they're coming
To rule the world
With knowledge.

MEN: For us, for us.
For me, for me.
Aha!
The whole world is for us, for us,
All living creatures for us, for us
For us, for us
All for me, for me.
For us, for us,
For me, for me.

ONE: The world belongs to me
 ALL: Aha! For us.
 ONE: All rivers belong to me
 ALL: Aha! For us.
 ONE: Flowers bloom for me.
 ALL: Yes, yes, for me.
 ONE: Mother earth showers her blessings
 ALL: For us, for us.
 MEN: Cut down, chop down,
 Pull down buildings.
 BIRD: Get scorched
 Inside woods of buildings.
 MEN: We install A.C
 We drink cold drinks.
 MEN: Chop down, cut down
 Turn and roll.
 ANIMAL: Deposit them in the bank,
 In the bank.
 MAN: That's growth,
 That's development.
 INSECT: Money is growing, is growing
 In the bank, in the bank.
 Look, earth is drying, drying
 Contamination is increasing,
 Is increasing.
 INSECT: Dangerous diseases
 Arrive like plague,
 Take us away
 In a jiffy.
 MEN: Injection we take,
 Inhale we do.
 MEN: With needles we prick,
 Through noses, we pull.
 BIRD: Oh no!
 Health is Wealth
 Maxim you not listen
 Suffer you before you heed.
 MEN: We know all that
 We can do all that.
 SONG: Shuk puk, shuk puk, shuk puk, shuk puk
 Shuk puk, shuk puk shuk puk shuk puk
 Let's build mills, let's build roads,
 Let's build dams to divert rivers.
 Shuk puk, shuk puk, shuk puk, shuk puk
 Shuk puk, shuk puk shuk puk shuk puk
 Thickets of buildings, clatter of machines,
 Annihilate life, annihilate life.

Shuk puk, shuk puk, shuk puk, shuk puk
Shuyk puk, shuk puk shuk puk shuk puk

Let's build dams to divert rivers,
Let's destroy forests to make fields.

Natural resources shall rapidly fall,
From earth shall disappear.

Shuk puk, shuk puk, shuk puk, shuk puk
Shuyk puk, shuk puk shuk puk shuk puk

Let's destroy forests to make fields
Avoid minor crops for major crops.

BIRD: Abodes of the rich, widen, widen,
Huts of poor multiply, multiply.

Shuk puk, shuk puk, shuk puk, shuk puk
Shuyk puk, shuk puk shuk puk shuk puk

MEN: Shall use manure to increase yields,
Shall use medicine to prevent desolation.

TREE: Bodies become poisonous balls,
Wilt in ailment day and night.

INSECT: Men in world ,
Minus grass and weeds, insects and worms
Birds and snakes, animals and all.

Shuk puk, shuk puk, shuk puk, shuk puk

BIRD: Counting of profit within the mind,
Poisonous ball in the body
So live men .. in ailment

GREAT MEN: Great men of men, here come we
Eliminate we the shortcomings of the poor
Produce we artificial foods
With rapidly growing animals and crops,
Serve us in our ways
Grant you loans too, on plans made.

TREE: Men who swallow men arrive,
Arrive those who destroy with knowledge.

MEN: Explored the deepest of the deep seas,
Split the smallest of the small atoms.

Journeyed the widest of the wide space,
Talked in the communications of the satellites.
Began to create life artificial.

ANIMAL: You may wander wherever,
You may do whatever,
How do we live here?

- BIRD: Burning winds, scorching sun.
- INSECT: Sand engulfs riverbeds.
- ANIMAL: Heavy rains, scorching sun, severe mist, floods
- ALL: Unlike in the past, why do they come in plenty,
Why do they come, why do they come?
Why do they come often?
- ANIMAL: Thundering storms, infuriated seas!
- INSECT: Admonishing earth, destructible knowledge.
- ALL: Unlike in the past, why do they come in plenty,
Why do they come, why do they come?
Why do they come often?
- MEN: We removed the head to keep on the thighs,
Removed the ears to keep on the shoulders,
Removed the mouth to keep in the bellies,
Destroyed nature to make artificiality
Sold our eyes to buy painting,
Sowed poison, reaped destruction.
- BIRDS: Animals, trees:
Men come
To live in unison with nature
To be part of nature.
Come men who love nature
Come men who understand nature
Let the angered earth cool down
Let all world prosper.
- MEN: We men come to see the new age
We cool the angered earth
We make the whole world prosper
We live as part of nature
We live in unison with nature.
Men we come to see the new age.
- ALL: All creatures to live in unison
The skies open, the earth blooms
Creatures delighted in fulfillment
Green green grass of home in perfection.
- All creatures live in joy
We come dancing
In the Green green grass of home.
We come dancing and singing.

TEARS OF THE CHILD

CHILDREN'S PLAY

BY

S. JEYASANKAR

EASTERN UNIVERSITY, SRI LANKA.

BASED ON THE PLAY

'PAALUKKU PALAHAN' BY M. SHUNMUGALINGAM

ADAPTED FROM THE ORIGINAL STORY BY ANTONIO GRAMSCI.

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

BY

S.M. FELIX

EASTERN UNIVERSITY, SRI LANKA.

TEARS OF THE CHILD

at the front stage. When the curtain rises, all the characters on stage caw thrice, followed by the cawing of a single crow, which then returns to its place. Now, the child cries, which makes Mousie excited. He runs about nervously and speaks.)

Mousie: My heavens! I've drunk the child's milk! What a dreadful thing! Where can I go for milk now? The child's is screaming. Where do I go for milk now?

(As Mousse is thinking timidly, Goatie bleats. Mousie gets encouraged and speaks delightedly.)

Mousse: Let me go to Goatie akka! Goatie akka, Goat-tie akka!

Goatie: Hi Mousie thambi! Why do you come so hurriedly?

Mousie: Could you give me some milk please akka?

Goatie: Milk? Why do you need milk now?

Mousie: I drank the milk of a sleeping child. She's awake now and crying for milk.
(The child screams. Mousie runs to the child hurriedly and returns.)

Goatie: Oh, no Mousie thambi! It's a long time since I'd a good meal of grass. I'm just existing on dry leaves and twigs. How can I give you milk?

Mousie: (thinks) What do I do for milk now?

Goatie: Thambi, you do one thing.

Mousie: What?

Goatie: You find me some green grass and I'll give you milk.

Mousie: Is it true? You'll give me milk if I give you green grass?

Goatie: Yes, certainly.

Mousie: All right. I'll return with green grass. (Runs, stops) Bye!

Goatie: Bye!

(As Mousie hurries away, Goatie speaks)
Take care thambi, take care!

(Mousie thinking): Yes, yes, let me go to Meadow amma!
(Runs) Meadow-amma, meadow-amma!

Mead: Why do you run like this? Why are you so excited? Is the Caty chasing you?

Mousie: Oh no, nothing like that! I need a favour from you now.

Mead: Oh come on! What can I do for you?

Mousie: Please, Meadow amma, could you give me some grass, please?

Mead: Grass? Don't you see my pathetic condition? I'm so dry without water. If you ask me for grass, what can I do?

Mousie: What can I do for grass now? The child may still be crying!

Mead: What? A child crying?

Mousie: Yes, I drank the milk of a sleeping child. I went to Goatie akka for some milk, and she wants green grass.

Mead: So, you can do one thing. If you give me water, I'll give you green grass.

Mousie: If I give you water, you'll give me green grass?

Mead: Why not? If not you, who'll get green grass from me?

Mousie: Promise?

Mead: Definitely, for the sake of the child.

Mousie: OK Meadow amma, so I'll find some water for you!

Mead: Good luck. Bye! (Mousie hurries away).

(Meadow amma speaks): Take care, take care!

Mousie: (pauses) Bye!
(Thinks) Where can I go for water?
(Thinks again) Ah, let me go to Pondo thattha!
(Mousie runs and jumps in front of the sleeping Pondo. Pondo wakes up with a start).

Pondo: Oh, you frightened me! Why do you jump like this?

Mousie: That's a long story. Pondo thattha!

Pondo: Without getting excited, come out with your story.

Mousie: It's a sad story thattha! I drank the milk of a sleeping child over there. The child is awake now and crying for milk. There's no milk anywhere. I went to Goatie akka for some milk. she'll give me milk if I give her water. So Pondo thattha will you please give me some water?

Pondo: Water? Where can I go for water?

Mousie: Somehow you must give me some water. Pondo thattha, please say 'yes'. Oh, please thattha!

Pondo: Don't irritate me without listening. You listen to my story first.

Mousie: All right. (Laughing teasingly) Go ahead, I'm listening.

Pondo: I'm in a broken down condition, so all the water has leaked out!
(Frogie comes leaping towards Mousie, croaking)

Mousie: What's this? Oh Frogie boy!

Frogie: Hi. Mousie! Where to? In this hot sun?

Mousie: I need water. That's why I came here
(Frogie laughs with a loud croak.)

Mousie:(angrily): Why do you laugh now?

Frogie: Water? It's funny! We ourselves are dry without water.
(A crane lands near)

Frogie: Craney akka welcome!

Mousie: You look scorched?

Craney: There's no water in any pond or pool.

Frogie: Look here. Look at my back - prickly heat everywhere - itching!

Craney: Oh, it's dam hot!
(Mousie annoyed, scratches Frogie's back and says)

Mousie: Wait a minute. Oh I forgot my mission! Pondo thattha, my sweet thattha, give me at least a little water.
(The child cries. Frogie and Craney run to her and console her).

Mousie: Pondo thattha, the child is crying.

Pondo: You do one thing. Bring a mason and mend the pond. Then I can give you water.

Mousie: (excited) OK OK. just wait! I'll bring the mason. I'll bring him now.
(Mousie attempts to run)

Pondo: No, No, don't run like that! Go slowly. Take your own time!

Mousie: Thank you, Thank you. Bye. Thank you. Bye.

Pondo: Bye!
(Mousie runs, stops and thinks).

Mousie: Now I must go to the mason. Where can I find the mason? Yeah!
(Mousie mimes a child driving a car, reverses, knocks against Goatie and brakes. Goatie shouts as if to scold Mousie.)

Mousie: Sorry akka!
(Mousie drives forward to mason who remains still. Mousie reverses, comes forward fast, brakes and horns. Mason jumps with a start).

Mason: Oh, it's you, Mousie thambi! What's the matter?

Mousie: Will you do me a favour?

Mason: What favour? What can I do for you?

Mousie: The pond needs mending. Will you mend it for me?

Mason: Mending is a simple thing. But I don't have stones, cement or timber.
That's why I'm idling.

Mousie: So what to do now?

Mason: Do one thing.

Mousie: What?

Mason: If you give me stones I'll mend the pond.

Mousie: Then I'll bring the stones.

Mason: Yes. I'll do this help for your sake, Mousie.
(Mousie runs, stops and thinks).

Mousie: Where can I go for stones now?
(Frogie, Goatie, Craney and crow - all make noises. Mousie - disturbed- shouts angrily).

Mousie: Hi you all - will you please stop shouting, Let me think!
(They all laugh loudly).

Mousie (angrily): I'm telling you!

Craney: O.K, O.K, We'll not shout! You think!

Mousie: (thinking) (Jumps in delight).
We'll go to Mountain mama. (Shouts) Mountain ma..... ma!

(Mountain mama and mami are in a deep sleep snoring. Mousie is pulled in and pushed out by the snore).

Mt. 1: I hear someone calling.

Mt. 2: Yes, I too. Just see who?

Mousie: Mountain mama.

Mt 2: Who's that?

Mousie: It's me.
 Mt 1: He says 'it's me.
 Mt. 2: Me?
 Mousie: I'm Mousie.
 Mt.1: Oh. It's you. Come come.
 Mt 1 & Mt 2: What's the matter?
 Mousie: I need some stones. I came for that!
 Mt 1 : Why do you need stones now?
 Mousie: I'm hungry.

(Mountain mama and mami laugh).

Mt. 1: You need stones for that?
 Mousie: Wait a minute. Let me finish.
 Mt. 1 & Mt 2: O.K, O.K, You go ahead.
 Mousie: I drank the milk of a child over there.
 Mt. 1: Milk is good for the body!
 Mt. 2: That's why Mousie thambi has climbed to the mountain top to play.
 Mousie: Don't crack jokes.
 Mt 1: We're cracking jokes?
 Mt 2: You're cracking jokes.
 Mousie: My God, you're confusing me.
 Mt. 1 & Mt 2: All right, all right you continue.
 Mt. 1: We'll not interrupt you.
 Mousie: I drank the milk of a sleeping child. She's awake now and crying for milk.
 (Goatie speaks)
 Goatie: Mousie thambi came to me for milk.
 Mousie: She said she would give me milk if I gave her green grass.
 Mt. 1: Then?
 (Meadow speaks. Mt. 2 leans towards the sound)
 Meadow: Mousie thambi came to me.
 Mousie: She said she would give me grass if I gave her water.
 Pondo thattha : Thambi came to me.
 Mt. 1: What did he say?
 Mousie: He would give water if the pond was mended.
 Mt. 2: Then what?
 Mousie: I approached the mason. That's why I came here for stones.

[Now the child screams. Mousie jumps about in confusion. Frogie leaps towards the child and consoles her].

Mt. 1: You see thambi. The trees all over us have been cut down for building houses and for firewood.

Mt. 2: The rains have washed away all the soil that covered us.

Mt. 1: All the stones are exposed, not a single plant can grow on us now.
Furthermore if you take the stones too, that will be the end of us.

Mousie: You need not worry. When this child grows old, she'll plant a lot of trees.
She'll be fond of you!

Mt. 2: That's our wish too. We'll give you a lot of stones.

Mt. 1: Please tell all the children to plant more trees.

Mousie: Yes, we all will plant a lot of trees.

Mt. 1: So here you take the stones!
[Mimes as if rolling down the stones]

[Frogie stays still. Goatie pushes him away with her horns].

Goatie: Jump, aside, Frogie boy!

Frogie: A narrow escape! I escaped from being crushed by the stones.

Mt. 1: Move, move, stones rolling down!

Mt. 2: Mousie thambi, is that enough?

Craney: Some more please.

Mason: Let's build the canal too..
[Mending of the pond is done under the charge of the mason. All animals mime working].

Mason: Frogie, without jumping about in the pond come and help us.

Frogie: Just coming.

Craney: Come one, Come all. Let's send the water to the meadow.

[Pondo thatha gets up, stands facing mason, and they dance. All the characters go dancing in a circle between Pondo and mason, singing the following song and they pour water on meadow].

Song: One pot of water,
One flower blooms.
Two pots of water,
Two flowers bloom.
Three pots of water,
Three flowers bloom.
Four pots of water,
Four flowers bloom.
Five pots of water,
Five flowers bloom.
Six pots of water,
Six flowers bloom.
Seven pots of water,
Seven flowers bloom.
Eight pots of water,
Eight flowers bloom.
Nine pots of water,
Nine flowers bloom.
Ten pots of water,
Ten flowers bloom.

(At the end of the last line, Pondo thatha and Mason hold Frogie boy and all others cheer and applaud and laugh).

Mousie: Goatie akka, Goatie akka, come here quickly. Feed on the grass!

(Goatie runs to Meadow, bleating - then mimes grazing)

Goatie: m, m,..... m', Mousie thambi, fetch me a bowl quickly!

I'll give enough milk for the child!

Mousie: I'm coming! Here's the bowl!

Goatie: Here you are! Take this milk to the child!

Mousie: Thanks a lot, Goatie akka!

[Mousie singing happily, takes the bowl of milk to the crying child. Others sing the chorus].

Old Rock Mountain gave some stones.

E - I - E - I - O [Chorus]

Merry masan built the pond. [Chorus]

Stout little Pondo gave some water. [Chorus]

Grassy Meadow gave some grass. [Chorus]

Graceful Goatie gave some milk. [Chorus]

Tiny Mousie fed the child. [Chorus] [Repeat]

[Mousie is feeding the child. As the child is drinking, others make the sound "GULP, GULP". Then they all cheer and make merry].

Mousie: Come, children, let's plant a lot of trees!

Child: I too have a tree to plant!

[The child goes in front with a plant, followed by Mousie. Others follow behind, mime - playing the flute and beating the drums. The child hands over the plant to Mountain mama, who plants it. Then they all come to the front stage holding a green cloth, and sing]:

Water, Water, come in plenty.

Feed us with your bounty,

Bless us with your glory.

Fill the rivers with water.

Fill the land with laughter.

[All cheer and applaud and bow to the audience]

THE END

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The Editors also welcome sponsorship for their future issues of the Third Eye.

Famine Relief

Explain, please, this wonder, this
creaturous pleasure,

this ruby of feeling
while I feed another being: tell me why

when Hasina opens her mouth,
it's as though the world in its entirety

opens, the lotus of Buddha unfolding
its jewel. Veil of skin, draped over

bone: Hasina's fourteen, so thin
she can't walk, sit up,

hold a cup. Eyes a single beam
scanning for food, even when

she's full. She's the mouth
of the soul, open

around hunger, asking
the way a baby, without guile,

is good with greediness
to know the world. To feed another being

is like eating: both of us
filling ourselves

with the certainty that there is,
in us and around us,

kindness so infinite
that we cannot be lonely. Hasina

might have been the one with the spoon,
fleshy, of substantial body,

I the skeleton - but that too would be
wrong. Under the pull of full sun

at noon, I hear the temple
gong, summoning the faithful,

and in the lull of echo,
the jangle of bells on the women's

ankles. Hasina looks up,
I lift the spoon, balancing the pans

of our scale: ours
is a life of satiety

and hunger, the haves and the have nots,
these two conditions

spread through the universe
so that we may know hunger,

so that we may learn
to feed each other. not perfection

but the lesson, enacted over
and over again: Hasina and I

by chance or quantum design,
chosen to perform this hallowed, ancient

devotion - one the Venus of Willendorf,
each of those many breasts

over flowing, the other Kali
in her starved aspect,

shrill around emptiness,
and devouring, devouring

Marilyn Krysl

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