ON TAMIL POEMS AND POETS

Essays and Speeches

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PREFACE

It gives me immense pleasure to see in print the present volume comprising of some of my research papers and lectures on various topics pertaining to the cultural heritage of the Tamil speaking community.

I started writing in English language about Tamil related subjects from the year 1977 and this effort continued fastly up to the publication of the first volume of my autobiography in Tamil in 1992. The popularity of the four volumes of my autobiography among the Tamil readers inspired me to write more and more in Tamil than in English language. Anyhow, few interesting articles have been written by me in English even from 1992 to 2005 which include a lengthy report prepared by me on behalf of the Government of Tamilnadu for the recognition of Tamil as a classical language and some other topics connected with early Christianity in the Indian soil. I had the rare opportunity to deliver few special speeches in English on Tamil related topics in various countries before the non-Tamil audience interested in Tamil studies.

The present volume is a modest collection of some of my articles written at various intervals and the speeches delivered in different occasions. Although there are some repetitions, which are inevitable in such a volume, the entire book covers a wide range of subjects pertaining to Tamilology. Few of the essays have been written by me before I founded the Institute of Asian Studies in 1982. Even though I thought of updating them, I could not do it because of my tight preoccupation with other matters of academic interest. Consequently, they are published here without any revision. In the absence of adequate reference material on Tamil studies in the international languages, I am sure this handy volume will provide rich data on Tamil culture to international scholarship.

I extend my sincere thanks to all those who helped me some way or other in my earnest efforts to understand and interpret the great heritage of the Tamils and to promote advanced research in Tamilology through the Institute of Asian Studies. I owe my heartfelt thanks to Dr. V. Murugan, Dr. T. Wignesan and Dr. Basil Davis who edited few of my articles.

My sincere thanks are also due to my wife Mrs. Indra Samuel, who monitored the preparation of the typesetting, my daughter J. Sheba Samuel who designed the nice wrapper and Ms. Divya who composed the text of this volume. I thank the Student Offset Printers for the neat execution of the printing work.

Chennai
2- 4- 2007.

G. John Samuel.

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CAṅKAM LITERATURE

1. TAMIL AS A CLASSICAL LANGUAGE

Tamil language in the Indian context

Tamil has a very unique place among the classical languages of the world. It has a history of more than two thousand years of consummate literary expression, and is the sole preserver of the Dravidian heritage of old literature, a massive corpus of poetry written in this language being traced to pre-Christian era. It has a continuing, vibrantly alive existence, growth and development through centuries down to the present, witnessing diversity and ramifications through space and time. It has tributaries of languages growing from, meeting and mingling all along its course by virtue of its seminal position as a major language of the Dravidian family of languages. Also, it had been flowing parallel to the streams of Northern tongues, chiefly Sanskrit, right from the pre-Christian days of the Indian cultural evolution, maintaining healthy affinities with those tongues, and yet preserving its uniqueness and identity as the expressive medium of a cultural community.

Again, Tamil as also the other Dravidian languages, is seen by Caldwell to display deep-rooted analogies with features of Indo- European languages like Iranian. Thomas Burrow lists the affinities between the Dravidian and the Finnish, while G.S. Balint refers to the resemblances of the former with the Hungarian; and H.B. Hubber and Susumo Ohno speak of certain areas of correspondences between Tamil-Korean and Tamil-Japanese respectively. Tamil language is spoken by more than 60 million people in South India in the State of Tamilnadu, in large parts of Sri Lanka, and in Tamil overseas communities in Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, Burma, the islands of Mauritius, Trinidad and Fiji. In Sri Lanka and Singapore it has the status of an official language. It is significant to mention here that Tamil and Sanskrit have been the subjects of research at the international level by many of the academicians and research centers all over the world.

Tamil has a rich legacy of literary, grammatical, art and cultural traditions which date back to many centuries before the Christian era. Proto-Tamils or Proto-Dravidians could perhaps trace their proto-history back to third millennium

B.C. when the three ancient civilizations of the world flourished in Egypt, Sumer and Indus Valley as contemporary civilizations in close contact with one another. At the same time, after an unbroken literary records lasting for more than 2000 years, Tamil is perhaps the sole survivor amongst the spoken languages of the world today. As a maritime people, Tamils have been carriers of their culture and civilization to distant parts of the world and traces of Tamil culture are found not only in Burma, Ceylon and South East Asia and Far East but also in Africa, Europe and the Americas.

Tamil is the foremost representative of the Dravidian family of languages which are more than twenty five in number scattered all over India and having links with various language families of the world. When the lexical items of all the Dravidian languages are reconstructed to their proto-form, they come identical or closer to their equivalents in ancient Tamil Literature. This clearly shows that the ancient Tamil can adequately represent all the Dravidian languages and in this respect it resembles Sanskrit which is a perfect representative of the Indo-Aryan languages.

Attempts in standardizing Tamil language and the theories that underlie the literary compositions of Tamil started more than two thousand years back and this is obvious from the well codified rules prescribed in *Tolkāppiyam* for poetical conventions, distribution of phonemes, linguistic usages and for the Tamilization of borrowed words or elements. The standardized conventions and usages belong to the category of classical Tamil known by the phrase *Centamiḻ* (the refined Tamil) which is akin to the world or name Sanskrit which means the refined medium. This clearly shows that the native scholars over 2000 years back evolved a clear conception about what we mean by the term classical today and they made all efforts to develop their mother tongue as a classical language. According to Guilbert Slater, Tamil language attained this status before it developed its contact with the Greeks. According to Winslow, this standard Tamil is more refined than the Greek, more elegant than Latin and more powerful than English and German. To the great French Indologist, Pierre Mile, the poems of the classical Tamil challenge comparison to the finer lyrics of the Greek language and they deserve to be placed among the best literary creations of the world.

Delayed start and discoveries

Among the two major cultures of India, represented linguistically by the two classical languages, Sanskrit and Tamil, the Indo-Aryan Sanskrit has been exhaustively studied during the past two centuries-because of the keen interest evinced by the philologists and the Indologists both of the West and East. Owing to this continuous academic pursuit, Sanskrit has been recognized in course of time as one of the classical languages of the world along with Greek and Latin. But, the part played by the other classical language Tamil and the culture of the Tamils in the development and interaction of the great cultures of India, has not been made a subject of serious studies on scientific lines. Consequently, international scholarship has not taken adequate interest initially in that sector of Indology namely Tamilology.

Tamil Studies or Dravidian Studies were neglected by foreign scholars due to two reasons as pointed out by the eminent French Indologist Prof. Filliozat. Although the earlier European Missionaries started their works of proselytism in the Tamil speaking part of this country and did good amount of pioneering studies in Tamil by way of compiling dictionaries and preparing grammatical works, their activities were centered around Calcutta by the eighteenth century and they had generally little scope for close cultural or academic interaction with the South. Secondly, some of the early Indologists failed to realize the contributions of Tamil to the evolution of the composite culture of India.

Even in the earlier stages Walter Elliot, Ellis, Gover, Winslow, Caldwell, Pope and Vinson voiced their complaints in their day concerning the neglect of Dravidian culture in general and Tamil culture in particular. G.U. Pope wrote in 1810 about the British neglect of Tamil literature thus: "Although the very ancient copious and refined Tamil language is inferior to none, it is regarded by most people as the vernacular of a people living somewhere in a remote district of Great Britain's imperial possessions. Neither does our Indian Government nor do our universities fully recognize the value of Tamil literature and so those who spend their lives in the study of the great South Indian classics must resemble man seeking for pearls under water".

But, the above situation changed gradually since the end of last century and a number of circumstances, national and international, have contributed to an awareness of the importance of Tamil studies in Indological studies and in South Asian as well as South East Asian Studies. Both as a geographically widespread Indian language, and as the language of groups of ethnic and sociological interest, Tamil came to be studied in the USA and Tamil language found a place in the teaching programmes especially of the Universities of Pennsylvania, Chicago and Kansas state, and in the rotating summer school. The development of the South Asian Programmes in Universities assumed new proportions and co-ordinated the research of several scholars in different branches of Tamilology by the incorporation of the American Institute of Indian Studies. This Institute has supported financially a number of scholars including R.E. Frykenberg, Burton Stein and Eugine F. Irschick to work on various aspects of Tamilology.

In addition to Oxford, Cambridge, Leyden and Uppsala, the Sudasien Institute in Heidelberg has a multidisciplinary programme which includes various aspects of Tamil Studies and the teaching of Tamil at different levels. The University of Bonn, and the University of Stockholm also introduced Tamil. The works of the Leningrad and Moscow scholars, together with the pupils of Dr.Arno Lehman made the Eastern Europe conspicuous among areas which contribute to Tamil Studies. Other countries like Australia, Canada, South America, Israel, Italy, Japan and the Philippines also developed active interest in Tamilology. The creation of the Department of Indian Studies in the University of Malaya with its South Asian orientation, its emphasis on Tamil Studies and its schedule of publications is a turning point in the history of Tamil Studies.

The international scholarship as well as the leading Indologists of our country realized the indispensability of Tamil Studies for a complete and integral understanding of Indian culture as a whole. The scholars unanimously expressed the view that mere study of Sanskrit alone is not enough for a complete grasp of the composite culture of India in its full perspective and that any study on Indian culture will be complete only if it takes into account the rich cultural heritage represented by Tamil which is the chief among the Dravidian languages. Suniti Kumar Chatterji, the well known authority on Indian linguistics once remarked thus: "In the present day texture of Indian culture and religion, the warp appears

to be Dravidian and the weft Aryan". He has clearly accentuated the view that the contribution of Dravidians to the composite culture of India is not less than 50%.

During the past five decades or more and since the discovery of the Indus Valley Civilization followed by the excavations at Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro, the considerable and significant contributions which the Tamils or Dravidian speaking peoples have made to the totality of the Indian culture is gradually better understood. Prof. R. D. Banerji, who discovered the Mohenjo-Daro site wrote "it has been established that a wonderful Pre-Aryan civilization existed in the Indus Valley many centuries before the period of the Aryan intrusions.... who were apparently the Dravidians or Proto-Dravidians later represented by the various communities in South India speaking dialects of the Dravidian languages".

It is proved beyond doubt that the Tamils have developed very effective system of grammar for their language over 2000 years back which is in no way inferior to any other classical languages of the world. Tamil language has retained its uniqueness and identity; it has borrowed some Sanskrit words but all of them have been nativised or Tamilized. It has also supplied large number of lexical items to North Indian languages and they have been listed by T. Burrow under the caption Dravidian borrowings in Sanskrit. The highly schematically phonemic system of Tamil is a strong indication that the early Tamil grammarians had a clear grasp of the principles which now form the basis of modern linguistics. Daniel Jones in his book *The Phoneme* wrote: "Tamil is a language which illustrates particularly well the grouping secular quite distinctive sound into single phoneme". C.R. Sankaran, a Sanskrit scholar himself, after studying the chapter on phonology in the two millennium old Tamil grammar *Tolkāppiyam* wrote "such an emphasis on the pattern inherent in the sounds of the language of study, and the attempt to establish, on the basis of their occurrence and distribution, the types of sounds which must have been significant in distinguishing the meaning of words is not met with, even in the Astadyayi of Panini". This can be mentioned as a very significant contribution of the ancient Tamil grammatical tradition to linguistics.

Tamil as a classical language

Tamil studies have gained momentum throughout the world in the past few decades and Tamil is recognized as one of the classical languages of the world by the leading international scholars, who have contributed a great deal for the promotion of academic research on various aspects of Indian culture. While speaking about the rich corpus of Sangam classics which flourished in Tamilnadu 2000 years back, Kamil V. Zvelebil says "those 26350 lines of poetry promote Tamil to the rank of one of the great classical languages of the world-though the world at large only just about begins to realize it". According to him it is only the Tamil culture that has produced- uniquely so in India- an independent, indigenous literary theory of a very high standard, including metrics and prosody, poetics and rhetoric. Although these works flourished simultaneously with the rich Sanskrit classics they are unique in their way unaffected by the influence of Sanskrit. In the word of A.K. Ramanujam (in Language and Modernization p.31) "In most Indian Languages, the technical gobbledygook is Sanskrit; in Tamil, the gobbledygook is ultra Tamil". The Oxford Companion to English Language (1992) accepts the antiquity of Tamil and it describes Tamil as a "Dravidian language comparable to Sanskrit in its antiquity and textual traditions". (p.1021)

Tamil literature is the only Indian literature which is both classical and modern; while it shares antiquity with many of the early Sanskrit works and is a classical, in the best sense of the word, it continues to be vigorously living modern writings of our days. In the words of A.K. Ramanujam (The Interior Landscape) "Tamil, one of the two classical languages of India, is the only language of contemporary India which recognizably continues with a classical past". Dr. Kamil Zvelebil gives three reasons for the classical nature of the early Tamil poems popularly known as Sangam literature. "First of all, the so-called Sangam poetry is regarded by the Tamils themselves, by the professional historiographers and critics, as well as by intellectual readers, as classical in the same sense in which we regard some parts of our national literatures as classical. Second, it has been, a finite," frozen" corpus, a body of texts which had not been expanded since it ceased to be part of a live oral tradition. Since those times, it has become a part of the classical heritage as it were. Third, it is the expression of a linguistic, prosodic and stylistic perfection; it is a finished, consummate and inimitable literary expression of an entire culture, and of the best in that culture;

in this sense, it is truly a classical product, a classical literature. (Zvelebil, The Smile of Murugan p.50)

Tamil has had a perennial existence, growth and development, from an antique past to centuries down to the present, meeting and mingling all along its course by virtue of its unique place as a major tongue of the Dravidian family of languages. Again, Tamil, as also the other Dravidian languages, display deep-seated analogies with features of Indo-European languages as well as Eastern languages. It is the most prominent language in the Dravidian family of languages which consist of more than 25 languages few of them like Brahui and Malto spoken in Baluchisthan and other North Indian regions too. It fits into all the definitions given to a great classical heritage by its antiquity, well formulated theory of poetical composition, its objectivity, harmony and its adherence to clearly codified rules of verbal art. It is the representative of a great culture, a great linguistic tradition, the roots of which can be traced to almost all the classical languages of the world. It has produced wonderful works of valour, eroticism and noble ethics; great masterpieces and wonderful corpus of compositions which are based on general human nature and which speak about humanity in general transcending geographical, regional and religious barriers. It has a wonderful corpus of devotional poetry which has left indelible impact on almost all the regional languages of this country.

Recognition of early Tamil as a classical language

Inspite of all its global recognition and merits, its antiquity and greatness, it is still considered in its native country as a regional language and it is grouped under the MIL (Modern Indian Languages). No Indian language except Sanskrit is as antique as Tamil. But, it is still given the status of a modern Indian language by the Government of India. The constitution of India makes it a fundamental duty of every Indian citizen "to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture". While the contributions of Tamil to Indian culture are so enormous and immense, it failed to get the recognition it deserves. In the Daker University in Senegal, Tamil, Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit are taught as Classical languages in the Department of classical languages. But, in our Universities, Tamil was excluded in this list for a long time and the other languages namely Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit are accepted as classical languages. One hundred

years back, a great savant of Tamil namely V.G. Suryanarayana Sastriar made clarion call to recognize Tamil as a classical language. This call echoed and re-echoed in the hearts of many sons of this soil at that time. Now, this genuine claim gained a good momentum not only among the Tamils but all lovers of this great culture of our nation and the lovers of this culture spread all over the world.

Each linguistic community possessing rich legacy of literary heritage earmarks a particular period in their social and literary milieu as classical age. According to some scholars the period covering B.C. 500 and 323 in the classical age of Greece. The period from B.C. 500 to A.D. 1110 is considered as the classical age in Sanskrit.

As far as Tamil is concerned, the period from Sangam age to 6th c.A.D. can be termed as classical age since this age witnessed unique literary and linguistic achievements. These contributions are the typical representatives of the Dravidian heritage which forms an integral part of the composite cultural heritage of India. It is clearly stated by most of the leading scholars of Indology that any study on the cultural heritage of India will be incomplete if it fails to take into account the rich cultural achievements of the Dravidians. International scholarship has now accepted Tamil as one of the classical languages of the world. The Universities of Tamilnadu have now come forward to declare old Tamil as a classical language along with Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian. As mentioned earlier, the Daker University of Senegal has already included Tamil in their list of classical languages. In the list of classical languages, the Government of India has included Sanskrit, Arabic, and Persian. It is only appropriate that the Government of India includes old Tamil (upto 6- c.A.D.) in the list of classical languages along with Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian and give due importance for the promotion of studies on this ancient language and culture in a wider national and international perspective.

2. LITERARY THEORIES OF TAMIL HEROIC POETRY

Literary theories

Literary theory, as said by Rene wellek, is soley concerned with the principles of literature and is not concerned with any particular work or with its value judgment. Though its main purpose is to explain the theories governing literary compositions, it would inevitably include the aspects of literary criticism also. So, it is obvious that literary theory is a system of principles, a theory of values which will necessarily draw on the criticism of concrete works of art and will constantly invoke the assistance of literary history. Since literary works are deeply rooted in and conditioned by the cultural background of a particular social set-up, a proper analysis of the social milieu also is highly essential for a genuine assessment and evaluation of the theories that underlie the composition of a particular work of art. Literature is a social phenomenon and hence literary conventions and theories are moulded and shaped according to the nature of the social milieu. When a particular society is highly conservative and strictly authoritarian, we get literature conforming to rigid conventions and rules. When the society is preoccupied with revolutions and revolutionary ardour, it will pave the way for the flourishing of romantic and revolutionary literary works which challenge literary conservatism and scholasticism.

The social milieu

Caṅkam poetry is the product of a class society in which the division of labour has paved the way for the emergence of minstrels, bards and poets as separate classes isolated from the other working communities. The economic conditions and the nature of their vocation forced the minstrels and poets to depend upon the aristocracy, under whose patronage, they happened to meet the financial requirements for their existence. So, they had to cultivate their art in such a manner as to please the whims and fancies of the ruling class, the political tendencies of the age and the literary tastes of the aristocracy whose ideals and aspirations were shaped and conditioned by the social and political milieu of that age. Since *Caṅkam* poems were cultivated under such a patronized system they happened to be bardic in character and courtly in nature.

Whether the theme is erotic or heroic, *Caṅkam* poetry deals with an aristocratic society – a society dominated by warlike chiefs. If the heroic poems of *Caṅkam* literature show us the physical prowess of some persons, the erotic poems which are called by the term *akam* portray similar persons engaged in amorous activities. Such a class distinction and glorification of the aristocracy are discernible in the words of Tolkāppiyar who asserts that slaves, servants, errand men, etc. are not entitled to be portrayed as heroes in poems treating of the five fold divisions of mutual love. As suggested by the Chadwicks, "the merchant, the farmer and the artisan who occupied only a lower place in the social hierarchy are practically ignored" (65), in the Tamil heroic poems also. The peasant hero of the folk tales never appears in these poems. The scene is also normally laid in a king's court, except when the action takes place in the battlefield or other places of adventure. Besides, the term *cāṉṟor ceyyūḷ* attributed to *Caṅkam* poetry by the commentators means "poetry of the noble ones", and this clearly shows the sophisticated nature of the *Caṅkam* poems. Hence we can safely conclude that these poems are solely aristocratic in nature and classical in character, and they entirely differ from the folk poems of the common man both in spirit and temper.

Political background

The political background of the Tamil heroic age or the age of *Caṅkam* poetry was marked by the ascendancy of an "energetic military caste, which, torn by internecine conflicts of succession and inheritance, breaks loose from its tribal into a career of violent, self-assertive individualism" (Kailasapathy 73). So, with a few exceptions, the bulk of the extant heroic poetry in Tamil, as expressed by K. Kailasapathy "portray this age of transition – the dying of old communities and the emergence of new princes and kingdoms"(74). This complex and confused political picture is genuinely presented in the poems of *Puṟanāṉūṟu*. On the one side the tribles, struggle for their existence and on the other side there is the evolution and establishment of new monarchies. Hence, the prominent mood of the day was one of coquets and plunder. So, these poems glorify plunder and raids as against the ethical literature of the gnomic age.

Classical poetry

Since *Caṅkam* poems were cultivated under a patronized system, they are highly conventional and governed by well-codified principles of literature in subject matter and poetic manner as well. Hence, they stand as the finest examples of classical poetry both in theme and manner of expression. To quote M. Manuel, "The excessive pre-occupation with form and technique, the extravagant respect paid to authority of literary precedent, the extreme concern for conformity... the neat analysis of the formal aspects, the use of poetic diction, the use of elaborate system of poetic conventions-these and many other characteristics of *Caṅkam* poetry compel us to describe it as classicist in spirit and temper"(63).

Puṟanānūṟu (PN)

Excluding the invocation and the two poems (267 & 268) which are lost, 397 poems are now available in the anthology of PN among which 138 poems glorify 43 kings belonging to the three dynasties, 141 poems praise 48 chieftains who ruled over the small principalities of the Tamil land and 11 poems celebrate some unknown heroes. Commenting on the last category, K. Kailasapathy observes: "It is tempting to conjecture that they are the more primitive type of heroic songs which draw their heroes from any class and express communal interest as of family, locality, clan or tribe"(23). Undoubtedly, these poems are not only the primitive types but also the finest specimens of heroic literature. They glorify only the martial heroism of unspecified heroes who genuinely express the spirit of the age whereas other poems of PN are frequently tinged with small amount of gnomic content. The length of the poems in PN varies from three lines to forty lines and the poetic content of these poems, as we have observed earlier, conforms to certain literary conventions that prevailed in the land from which they emerged. The poems of PN deal not only "with the various aspects of war then practised, but also with the phenomenal victory of human life, with the greatness of men who came to be sung by poets and also with the evanescence of life, inspiring man to do great acts and to make himself eternal in the memory of men during the short span of his life"(T.P. Meenakshisundaran 4). Hence we can call the whole poems of PN literature of action. With this background, which is vital for a proper understanding of these poems, let us see

in the following pages some of the basic literary theories governing the composition of the songs of PN with special reference to the first fifty poems.

Pragmatic theory

'The mimetic orientation-the explanation of art as essentially an imitation of aspects of the universe-was probably the most primitive aesthetic theory'. But this is not applicable to PN which has transcended this stage and reached the stage where pragmatic theory started stamping its footprints. The pragmatic theory, as expressed by the Latin writer Horace, - the poets' aim is either to profit or to please or to blend in one the delightful and the useful- seems to be the basic theory of PN. Hence, apart from pleasing the aristocracy, the poet instructs them to undertake raids and plunder frequently. So the instructive motive embedded in these poems is the revelation of the moral codes which are peculiar to the heroic milieu.

Heroic poetry

Since most of the poems of PN reflect the destruction of tribal families and the evolution of new monarchs - a social milieu conceived by scholars as the background of the heroic age – many scholars have hailed PN as heroic poetry. K. Kailasapathy in his dissertation *Tamil Heroic Poetry* opines that the Homeric poetry and *Tamil* poetry reflect the conditions of the so-called heroic age. Before him, scholars like G.U. pope (1885), S. Krishnawami Aiyangar, N.K. Sidhanta and S. Vaiyapuri Pillai also have come to similar conclusions. Among them, S.Vaiyapuri Pillai (1952) has emphasized the relevance of Chadwick's 'Heroic Age' for the interpretation of the early Tamil minstrelsy, and ventured the opinion that some at least of the earliest poems might be taken to reflect the spirit of the heroic age. J.R. Marr (1958) has also suggested that the Tamil bardic poetry has some features in common with other heroic poetry (472).

Undoubtedly, PN, like other heroic poems, depicts the "struggle fought in innumerable raids and battles amidst the smoke of burning cities and the groans of homeless captives" (Kailasapathy 78). As suggested by the Chadwicks, "to gain personal glory seems to be the goal of he heroes" ambition. Some of the wars and quarrels depicted in PN arise partly from personal wrongs and insults,

others partly from the desire of acquiring plunder and trophies"(94). Yet, we cannot say definitely that the whole of the poems of PN reflect the conditions of the so-called heroic age as postulated by the Chatwicks, since many of the poems present the picture of well established monarchies and speak of the necessities of constructing water tanks, increasing production and the fixation of moderate taxation. Besides, many of the characteristic features as postulated by the Chadwicks for gnomic poetry also permeate into the poems of PN. The predominance of scholar poets (*pulavar*) apart from minstrels and bards - another salient feature of the gnomic poetry - is also very apparent in the poems of PN. So it is obvious that though the heroic spirit is effectively embodied in some, especially in a category which we have discussed earlier, part of the poems in PN, represent a transitional stage, i.e., the transition of heroic content to gnomic content. So, the whole anthology of PN seems to be an intermingling of heroic as well as post-heroic poems both in structure and content.

Greek and Hebrew heroic poems differ from the poems of PN in several ways. Whereas we have in the Greek and Hebrew sources common heroic protagonists like Achilles and Moses, Tamil poems present no clue to the evolution of such common heroic figures. Besides, the art of developing heroic stories in the form of long narratives with profound pan-human vision is also entirely lacking in the poems of PN. The poets of PN are more conscious only of giving realistic backgrounds and projecting particular martial activities than of providing epic materials and supernatural events.

Theory of oral transmission

Some scholars have expressed the view that the poems of PN are purely oral and that they had been transmitted for a long time through oral tradition before they attained their present written form. To support their arguments, they bring out the recurrent images, poetic diction, epithets, the common style and some other salient features of oral poetry obviously seen in PN. K. Kailasapathy argues that since the writing system is not mentioned in the context of making poems and only the mouth and ear are referred to as the medium of transmission, the poems of PN might certainly have been transmitted through oral tradition. He shows some of the contradictions and irrelevancies between the colophon and the contents of some of the poems of PN, which, according to him, happened as a

result of the straining efforts of the colophon writers to attach some historical significance to these poems. No doubt, the colophon which suggests the theme, poetic situations, the name of the poet and the hero, were written in a later time – probably after the composition of *Puṟappoṟ Veṇpāmālai*. The imagination of the colophon writers has also played a vital role in some of the colophon. Yet this cannot be generalized with regard to the whole anthology since in many poems the poetic content and the colophon go hand in hand without contradiction, providing authentic historical materials. From the poetic content of these few poems, we are able to come to the conclusion that at least a few of the poems of PN are highly subjective in nature-that is, those composed on a particular event. Such occasional poems have only temporal value and they are bound with a particular event and time and are also sincerely recorded by the colophon writers. So the theory regarding 'the straining efforts of the colophon writers to attach historical significance to the poems of PN has to be established in relation to the individual poems where the poetic content contradicts the colophon and should not be generalized with reference to the whole anthology of PN.

Regarding the writing system, there is no evidence to say that these poems were transmitted through oral tradition due to the absence of script. It was a custom in the *Caṅkam* age to adorn the hero stones with some script though we are not able to identify the form of those scripts. We may here recall the statement of George Luzerne Hart that "probably in the second or third century B.C., the Brahmi syllabary was introduced into Tamilnad. A few centuries after this, practical writing system was adopted for Tamil, and there arose a class of people called *pulavans*, who wrote poems. Unlike the oral bards, these men were drawn almost exclusively from the higher classes. But like the first literate poets in many other cultures, they looked for the subject matter and techniques of their poems to the oral poetry around them. In fact many of their poems are actually put into the mouths of the low caste oral bards. But this should not obscure, the fact that their poems, some of which are collected in the Sangam anthologies are polished productions of essentially literate men, far more sophisticated in grammar and diction than their oral models could have been". Commenting upon Kailasapathy's theory of oral transmission, Hart says, "I feel that his argument fails because he neglects to take into account the complex and sophisticated nature of the poems" (327). The themes coming under certain formulae pattern, poetic diction, common style, recurrent images, stereotyped phrases and other

conventions, as pointed out by K. Kailasapathy, need not be the results of oral transmission. It is a known fact that literatures that emerge under patronized systems or classical modes of composition unmistakably bear all the characteristics cited above.

Besides, most of the poems of PN are panegyrics sung by individual poets to celebrate the particular victory a hero won in a battle, and such poems have only an occasional and temporal value. There is no need for such poems to be recited by the wandering minstrels after a long period of time when the political situation underwent drastic changes. So it is difficult to say that all the poems of PN belong to the tradition of oral poetry. Yet, we cannot deny completely the possibility that some of the poems of general nature were transmitted through oral tradition. Most of the poems of PN might have been composed and recited in the court or battlefield by the scholar poets, and the kings or the poets who composed them might have preserved these poems since they either praise their clan or kingdom or help to stimulate heroic spirit among warriors.

Recitation

In PN, we have multifarious references to various types of minstrels such as *pāṇaṉ*, *poruṉaṉ*, *akavaṉ makaḷ*, etc. whose main vocation seemed to be reciting songs to the accompaniment of some musical instruments. We are not able to know clearly whether they recited the same songs on the theme of *puṟam* which is available to us or some other poems which belong to the oral tradition. Some scholars are of the opinion that they might have recited the same songs of the heroic content of the *Caṅkam* corpus which were composed by the scholar poets. But there is no concrete evidence for this in the *Caṅkam* texts. Anyhow, there are possibilities to form a hypothesis that the songs of PN might have been recited before the patrons either in their courts or in their encampments and this is apparent from the frequent apostrophes that the poets of PN use in their poems. It is significant to note here that the colophon writers of *Patiṟṟuppattu* have noted the tune of the poems though they are not recorded in the colophons of PN. So we can conclude that the extant poems of PN are meant for recitation and might have been recited in the courts or in the battlefields either by the poets or by professional rhapsodists.

Literary content and conventions

As stated already, the poems of PN are classical in nature since they conform to certain literary conventions. These conventions are hailed as "a means of circumventing technical shortcomings of the artistic medium on the one hand and on the other of imposing order, pattern and form on the chaos that is in real life"(Manuel 65). Literary convention is generally in the nature of an agreement between writer and reader that certain themes will be represented in certain ways. Though very cleverly organized, the literary conventions of *puṟam* are very simple since the life of the *Caṅkam* society is also devoid of much conflict and complexity. These literary conventions are preserved in *Tolkāppiyam* which is considered to be an anterior work to PN. The conventions regarding theme and poetic situations were assigned to the poems of PN by the colophon writers who seem to follow *Puṟapporuḷ Veṇpā Mālai* more closely than *Tolkāppiyam*. Even if we neglect the colophon, we can see some conventions regarding theme and form which underlie the composition of the poems of PN. Commenting upon the inconsistencies and irrelevancies between the colophon and the poetic content, K. Kailasapathy observes: "The assigning of a poem to this or that theme falling under certain poetic situations appears to be schematic and strained"(6). Yet, when we look into the poem, it becomes obvious that most of them are composed on the basis of certain restricted themes, like other bardic poems of the world. For example, "almost all the poems on *aṟṟuppaṭai* pattern are in accordance with the exposition of Tolkāppiyar regarding such songs with the exception of a few deviations"(Varadarajan 51). While speaking about the conventions of literature, Tolkāppiyar says

மரபுநிலை திரிதல் செய்யுட் கில்லை
மரபுவழிப் பட்ட சொல்லினான. (மரபியல் 645)

Yet, while analyzing PN, it seems that the poets do not blindly follow literary traditions like the neo-classicists. Instead, they make sundry inventions and innovations without utterly rejecting conventions. Though bound by certain conventions, the poets of PN have got more freedom to express their own aspirations and sentiments than the objective poets who compose poems on the theme of *akam* which strictly conform to the poetic conventions of the *Caṅkam* age. As far as the poetic conventions of PN are concerned, we can say that they

are so moulded as to serve as an effective medium to display the individual talent of the poet.

Subjective nature

Since the poems of PN were cultivated under a patronized system, they bear so many similar lines of thoughts, techniques and style. Hence the statement of T.P.M. "*Caṅkam* poetry is unique as group poetry *par excellence*. It has a personality of its own representing the group mind and group personality of the *Caṅkam* age"(5). By "group poetry" he does not mean that all the poems are objective in nature. Objective poems or the poems in the *akam* theme are generally not the outpourings of the poet's own emotions or thoughts; on the other hand, the poet loses his identity, projects himself into the mind of the speaker-for instance the hero or the heroine or companion, reveals the speakers mind at a dramatic moment of his life. According to T.P.M., the poems of PN are subjective and this is obvious from his statement that "*puṟam* or the poetry of the phenomenon shows the experience of the varying individuals in this world, an experience which can be often dated as belonging to historical persons". He again says, "This, however, is not to mean that this poetry is not universal; only it raises itself to that universal level by emphasizing the phenomenon". That is why he calls *akam* poetry as poetry of the '*noumenon*' and *puṟam* poetry as poetry of '*phenomenon*'.

It seems misleading to conceive all the poems of PN as the direct revelation of the experiences of individual poets and call them subjective poetry in which the poets' own emotions are spontaneously expressed. It is true that some poems of PN are the result of the spontaneous overflowing of the poets' own feelings and experiences which were evoked by certain events rooted in history. Yet, there are a number of poems (for example – the poem by Kavaṟpeṇṭu) which are purely objective in which the poet creates some imaginary situations and characters and speaks through them hiding his own personality. There are numerous examples of such kinds of objective poems. In the poem that follows 248, we can see the personality of some imaginary characters which are created with a good amount of *negative capalbility*. In these poems we are able to hear only the voice of the characters and not the voice of their creators. In such

poems the colophon writers have also marked only the names of the poets and not the proper names of the heroes.

It is again misleading to call all the poems of PN objective poetry. While writing about *puṟam* kinds of poems, Xavier, S. Thaninayagam observes: "Unlike the Romantic poets, these early bards never gave expression to their own feelings"(174). Following him, K.Kailasapathy opines that the "bard of the heroic age was no individualist; his professional tradition forbade it". As far as the poems of PN are concerned, his argument is weak as well since most of the poems that follow certain formulae and conventions, are inspired by certain historical events and are direct expressions of the poets' own feelings and experience which are strictly bound with a particular time, place, event and audience as we have suggested elsewhere. Imposing the Western method of classifying the nature of poems as subjective or objective (on the basis of the poets' expression of emotion) on PN, and coming to hasty generalizations prove to be a futile effort since the poems of PN are neither completely subjective nor objective but an intermingling of the two. That is why they are termed *puṟam* on the basis of the poetic content and not on the manner of the poets' expression of emotions.

Theme

Concerning the material dealt with in their poems, the poets of PN generally chose either historical or pre-historical or imaginary events. Such an attitude is also discernible in the Teutonic, British and Irish heroic poems. The second poem in PN associates its hero with the Bharata war, a so-called pre-historic event while most of the genealogical accounts of the heroes and warriors are linked with imaginary events. The descriptions of the battles seem to be the exaggerated facts of certain historical events. So, it is obvious that the poets of PN are not very particular in reporting the events that occur on their own doorsteps but make it their chief business to record faithfully what they have lived, seen, thought, felt and known for themselves. They are poets and not historians and hence they have blended facts with fiction in an artistic way and created beautiful pieces which haunt our aesthetic sensibility even today. Restricting their area of narration only to heroic and related themes, they have

done the maximum in innovation which in some way or other helps enhance the glory of the protagonists.

The world of the poets

The minstrels and poets of PN occupied an honored place in the courts of kings and their vocation was deemed divine and exalted. The manner in which they were patronized by the kings is obvious from the frequent references to '*paṇkaṭaṉ*' which means 'the duty towards the minstrels'. The high status enjoyed by the poets and the intimate ties that existed between the patrons and the poets have been emphasized in almost all the heroic literatures of the world. It is often stressed in the Caṅkam poems that the words of the poet are high and lofty, the tongue of the poet never lies, the poet is well informed (PN 53), his intellect is spotless (PN 126), he knows the minds of men (Poru 57), his words are truthful and he is endowed with ancient wisdom (PN49). The Tamil heroic milieu attributed a kind of divinity to poetry and poets and it is significant to recall here the statement of the Greek philosopher Plato according to whom poets are possessed by divine madness. K. Kailasapathy opines that "the dual role of a woman as a diviner and a poetess is demonstrated beyond doubt in the poem in which she is mentioned as *akavaṉ maka*/ in *Caṅkam* texts. The word *pulavar* indicates the fact that the ideas of wisdom, knowledge and learning were considered inherent in the person of the poet". It is significant to note that almost all the critics and theorists of the ancient world have associated poetic composition with some superhuman powers and attributed some kind of divinity to it. Such an opinion has been expressed by Tolkāppiyar also when he speaks of original compositions (*Mutalnūl*).

Apart from divinity, poets have always been associated with profound learning and wisdom, which was originally largely religious in character and connected with the cult of *Murukaṉ*. In all instances the *pulavars* are not associated with music or dance and are highly respected for their wisdom. There are references even to the existence of the schools of poets.

It seems that the power and position of the *pulavar* (or poets) as seen in PN were posterior to that of bards. Regarding this, K. Kailasapathy observes, "when the position of such 'wise ones' was well established, they seem to have

taken over the functions and encroached on the domain of professional minstrels and bards. With the rise of merchant class, the pulavar has become dominant and during the predominance of their period, we get gnomic and didactic works in Tamil" (122).

Since poets were given a lofty position in the social hierarchy, the personality and the moral conduct of the poets were viewed along with their compositions. The profound respect and reverence they claimed in the court of their patrons is obvious from the statement:

புலவர் பாடும் புகழுடையோர் விசும்பின்
வலவனேவா வானவூர்தி யெய்துப. (புறம் 27)

Their awareness of their own greatness gave them a sense of dignity and supremacy. In fact, this prevented them even from receiving rewards which were given without respect to their dignity.

Poets and patron

Whatever the case may be, the poet had to depend entirely upon his patron since minstrely had become his main occupation. This dependence is described through various images in the corpus taken for elucidation. Among them, the 'bird' image and the 'river' image arrest our imaginative faculty and bring before our mind's eye a clear picture of the life led by the poets of PN. PN 42 describes their life in the following images:

மலையி னிழிந்து மாக்கட னோக்கி
நிலவரை யிழிதரும் பல்யாறு போலப்
புலவ ரெல்லா நின் னோக்கினரே.

The comparison of the poets with the river that flows from the mountain through the valley and mingles finally in the ocean clearly depicts their state of dependence on the patrons who are the only source of their earthly prosperities. PN 47 gives a picture of the life led by the poets by associating them with birds that goes after the trees laden with fruits:

வள்ளியோர்ப் படர்ந்து புள்ளிற் போகி
நெடிய வென்னாது சுரம்பல கடந்து
வடியா நாவின் வல்லாங்கு பாடிப்
பெற்றது மகிழ்ந்து சுற்ற மருத்தி
ஓம்பா துண்டு கூம்பாது வீசி
வரிசைக்கு வருந்துமிப் பரிசில் வாழ்க்கை.

Their frequent participation in the court feast is described in PN 14 as

புலவு நாற்றத்த பைந்தடி
பூநாற் றத்த புகை கொளீஇ யூன்றுவை
கறிசோ றுண்டு வருந்து தொழி லல்லது
பிறிது தொழிலறியா.

From such kinds of frequent references to the poet's participation in the court feast, we are able to know much about the close ties that existed between the poet and the patron, the position that the poet occupied and the cordial reception that he received at the court of his patron.

The poets took much strain to maintain close ties with the patrons and tried their best to avoid misunderstanding and conflict. Whenever some misunderstandings arise, they immediately found means for reconciliation and if no reconciliation was made, they simply quit the court and sought the acquaintance of another king. The mutual regard cherished by the bards and princes developed in a few cases to deep and lasting friendship.

The social role of poets

The poets of PN served as an integral part of the king's court and played a vital role in government matters too. Like the Greek bards of the Heroic Age, who stopped fights and brought reconciliation between enemy kings, the poets of PN also tried to avoid war when they found it uncongenial either to their patrons or to their family or clan. They gave counsel but the risk of making decision was left to the kings or chieftains. It has been observed by the Chadwicks that the bards and poets in the Heroic Age were the counterparts of modern mass media (665). The whole of their intellect and creative ability had been utilized to justify and idealize the deeds of their patrons before the subjects, to kindle heroic

sentiments among the warriors and to give some counsel to their patrons. One important aspect of the propagandistic nature of the poems of PN appears to be the idealization of the brutal and gruesome consequences of the exploits of the princess and kings.

With the help of arresting images and fine similes they tried their best to present an impressive image of their patrons before the subjects. In PN 35 the poet tried to convince the people that the king was not responsible for the havoc wrought by the fury of nature. They frequently compare the kings or chieftains with Gods, the highest form of encomium which is in some ways responsible for the development of the concept of divine royalty in the later ages. Such poems in *pūvainilai* clearly emphasize the notion that the king is above men and equal to Godhead and thus they try to attribute some divine qualities to the earthly heroes. Most of the songs in PN are panegyric in nature where the poets sing encomium in praise of the valour, charity, magnanimity and the ruling capacity of their patrons and justify their deeds as just and genuine being undertaken for the welfare of the subjects. The classical dictum that the end of poetry must be to instruct by pleasing seems to be the basic theory of PN; but the instruction is oriented towards a sophisticated aristocracy in a polished way and not towards the common man toiling in the lap of nature in his attempt to subdue and transform reality.

Conception of literary art

Theory of inspiration

Heroic poetry generally represents primarily the entertainment of court circles in the days of military kingship. Owing to the ascendancy of learned poets in the age of PN, pragmatic theory also permeates the Tamil heroic poems to a considerable degree. In this age (i.e. the political and social milieu as represented by PN), poetry is generally conceived as something divine and it is in some way or other identified with prophecy. The frequent epithet *mutuvāy* which is attributed to bards is associated with divination. Elsewhere in *Caṅkam* texts it is used as an epithet for persons or creatures i.e. *pāṇaṉ*, *palli* and *vēlaṉ* supposed to know the past and future and associated with divination. Besides the phrase "*ceṟutta ceyyuḷ ceycennā*" which is used elsewhere clearly illustrates the fact that poetry is a conscious art which demands scholarship and is meant for recitation. This association of divination and prophecy with a touch of scholarship, as

emphasized in the above phrase, held enough sanction that the poems were considered sacred. Such notions, we have already noted, were also prevalent in the heroic poems of other nations. This is obvious from Mrs. Chadwick's comment that "Everywhere the gift of poetry is inseparable from divine inspiration. Everywhere this inspiration carries with it knowledge - whether of past, in the form of history and genealogy". Though there is no evidence for this in the corpus taken for study (i.e. 1-50), several other poems of PN express this belief in various ways. In one poem, Kapilar (as seen in the colophon) is seen admonishing prince Iruṅkōvēḷ for being disrespectful to his words. From this poem, we are able to know that the poet himself is conscious of this power. Thus it is clear that though inspiration is not clearly suggested as the source of poetry, the poets of PN believed that poetry is born out of some divine inspiration and in association with divination, prophecy and a touch of scholarship.

Purpose of poetry

To justify the deeds of the princes to their subjects, to kindle the heroic sentiments of the princes and warriors which helped them expand territories, to sing encomiums about the kings and chieftains thus establishing a proper place and position in society and the court seem to be the main purpose of these poets and their poems. Apart from this, many poems give counsel and instruction to the ruling class in political, social and domestic affairs. Yet we cannot come across such generalized moral instruction as we see in the Tamil gnomic and didactic poems which came to exist posterior to the heroic corpus. Talking about the moralizations in P.N. K. Kailasapathy rightly observes "There is no reasons to suppose that these bards, who also sang several hortatory poems, should have indulged in moralizations... what the pathos the bards create in the course of their narratives serve as an effective foil to the heightening of the bravery and glory of the heroes and as such should be considered as an artistic necessity. There are few poems among our sources with a gnomic content, purporting to instruct the kings on questions of morality and ethics. They show both the gradual encroachment of Jainism, Buddhism (PN 18) and Brahminism into the Tamil country and the changes in Tamil society itself" (80). The convention of the later days that poetry should deal with the four aspects of life viz. *aṟam*, *poruḷ*, *iṉpam*, and *viṭu* was not prevalent in *Caṅkam* works (Varadarajan 63).

As already stated, the instruction in the corpus taken for analysis is mainly oriented towards the ruling class. In PN 5, the poet urges the king to protect the subjects like a mother since it is the greatest strength and the mightiest security for him. In the same poem, he urges him to destroy his enemies and give the wealth obtained by looting to the bards. The gnomic content in PN 18 "உண்டி கொடுத்தோர் உயிர் கொடுத்தோரே" (those who give food give life) seems to be a generalized statement which may be due to the encroachment of Buddhism, since such an aphorism forms the basic preaching of the Buddhist epic *Maṇimēkalai*. In the same poem, the poet urges the king to store water in reservoirs and increase cultivation since this alone will earn a permanent name for him. In PN 29, the poet appeal to the king to lead a happy life surrounded by minstrels and embraced by beautiful maidens and reminds him of the mortal duration of humanity in this mutable, mundane world. This poem echoes a genuine materialistic tone to which most of the heroic poems of the world give much emphasis. Thus it is obvious that Tamil heroic poetry had its own moral values which are completely materialistic and entirely different from the moral codes that are embedded in the later gnomic works. It will prove a futile effort to read those generalized morals into PN, which in fact only developed in its advanced stage.

Poetic techniques

Poetic techniques of a literary composition can be either formal techniques or thematic techniques. While the formal techniques facilitate a poet in creating a well organized artistic texture, the thematic techniques help him portray the theme or the poetic content in a very effective manner. The poems of PN have their own peculiar characteristic features in regard to both types of techniques, and some of them share in this respect the salient features of the heroic poems of other parts of the world. The success of the poet lies in the powerful and skilful way he handles these techniques to enhance and ennoble the poetic content and form and makes the composition a great one both in matter and in manner.

Court feasting

The description of court feasting is one of the most important techniques that give grandeur to heroic poetry. It also enables the poet to heighten the valorous and magnanimous nature of the hero whose glory forms the poetic content of the heroic poems. In PN we have numerous descriptions of court feasting which are so described as to project the cardinal virtues of the heroes. Such court feastings play an integral role in Homeric poems also. "When the weary traveler arrives, he is greeted cordially by the master of the house, or a son, courteously relieved of his weapons, given a bath and change of clothing and regaled with the best the house affords in the way of food and drink. Only when his hunger is satisfied is he asked who he is" (A Companion to Homer 442). In the corpus taken for analysis there are nearly four descriptions (PN 2, 10, 14, 34) of court feasting – one dealing with the feast arranged by a king to the warriors who participated in the great Bharata war (PN 2) – a pre-historical event and others dealing with royal feasts arranged in the courts of kings.

Catalogue

The poets of heroic age generally arrange events, things, names, etc. in a catalogue form and intertwine them within the frame of heroic poems. Such types of antique catalogues are considered to be the earliest informative elements of heroic poetry. The catalogues will always be proportionate to the length of the poems. In the long Homeric epics and the Tamil Idyll *Kuṟiñcipāṭṭu*, we have specimens of long catalogues, where as the catalogues in PN are always short. Such catalogues are also ideally suited to gnomic literature where human conduct, beliefs and deeds are neatly listed and are either prescribed or proscribed. Whereas the catalogues of the heroic poems present a list of things associated with military activities, the catalogues of gnomic literature give a list of human conduct and ethical aphorisms. The short catalogues in PN comprise lists of things necessary for the smooth running of the poems and they are handled in a way that enhances the greatness of the king to be glorified. In PN 4, the weapons and other war materials are arranged in a catalogue form applying proper similes. PN 10 presents the cardinal virtues of the king whereas in PN 24, we have a catalogue of the deeds of the people in the fertile land of the enemies before it has been devastated and turned into a sterile desert by the hero.

Genealogies

Employing royal genealogies is also a common technique in the poetical compositions of the heroic age especially in the poems of PN. In most cases the genealogies are presented in a catalogue form. The purpose with which the poets of PN handle this technique is to bring in focus the glories of the heroes, and hence all the genealogical accounts and the deeds of predecessors are made subservient to the fame of the heroes. Genealogies of families, especially royal families, are one of the most widespread forms of antiquarian learning. As suggested by the Chadwicks, "They are derived from genuine tradition for a number of generations; but the beginnings are supplied by speculation either from gods or from mythical sources"(270). Greek antiquarian poets of the eighth and following centuries were largely occupied with genealogical lore though such materials are not very extensive in Greek epics (270). Most genealogies in Greek epics are short, usually going back to about three generations. Beyond three or four generations, they tend to merge into myths in the case of most heroes (Kailasapathy 129).

Like the Greek genealogies, the genealogies of PN are always very short. When the origin of a particular family is not clear, the poet traces it to god *Māyōn̲*, the creator of the cosmos. Most of the genealogies in PN are followed by an apostrophe to the patrons. Poems 3 and 17 of PN glorify the predecessors through apostrophizing the patrons. In PN 37, the genealogical list is presented in the form of a catalogue. In the same poem, the poet traces the genealogy of the patron to the mythical king *Cipi*. In another poem it is traced to the mythical king who shot down the three flying walls of the giants. Most of the genealogies occur in the beginning of the poem, and the king to be glorified is mentioned only after presenting the genealogical materials. Thus the presentation of genealogy serves as an effective technique to heighten the virtues of the heroes.

Epic smile

The extended similes commonly used in epic or heroic poetry to give the subject described a spaciousness suited to its grandeur are generally called epic similes. Such similes are always long and descriptive bearing allusion-like episodes which are organically linked with the main theme in such a way as to

explain, illustrate and enhance the poetic content. Epic similes are very effectively treated in the Western epics and heroic lores. In the poems of PN also the poets apply this simile as a powerful technique to enhance and ennoble the heroes' glory. For example, in PN 2, the poet, while blessing the king for a long and stable life like the mountains of the Himalaya and *Potiya*, gives a lively description of these mountains. The poet pictures deer with their young sleeping without fear in the light of the sacred fire lit by sages to offer their vesper worship suggesting, in an allegorical way, the peaceful life led by the people under the rule of his patron. Such similes are recurrent in PN and in all places they are handled in an allegorical way so as to add additional luster to the qualities of the patrons.

Allusions

Allusions generally represent the intricate interweaving of the poet's reading and experiences into his own composition. They are therefore not only a source of interest in the writer, but may also prove to be essential to a complete understanding of the work. The poets of PN use the technique of alluding to mythical accounts to enhance the glory of the hero in an indirect way. Most of the allusions function as episodes while some others stand merely as references. Mostly, the mythical accounts are associated with the genealogical materials so as to keep the events which revolve around the protagonist very realistic. There is only one exception to this in PN 2 where an event associated with the great Bharata war is directly linked with the hero. Linking thus an event associated with mythology with the hero and claiming it as a great deed performed by him may lead to questioning the historical validity of PN. Like most other poems of PN, the proper name of the hero is not mentioned in the above poem and this allows the colophon writer to give an attribution '*peruñcōṟu*'. Since the hero is referred to as Vāṉavarampaṉ(one of the attributions of the Cēra kings) in the text, the colophon writer has recorded the name *Utiyaṉ Cēralātaṉ*. The mythological nature of poems like this leads us to view them as having somewhat a permanent value. These poems might have passed along the stream of time through oral transmission.

The story describing one of the predecessors who gave his flesh to drive away the sufferings of a dove is alluded to in PN 37, 3 and 43. An allusion to the

festival performed by Neṭiyōṉ is made in a poem (PN 9) which, according to the colophon, celebrates *Mutukuṭumipperuvaḻuti,* a Pandya king. A reference to an unknown predecessor is made in PN 39 with the purpose of glorifying another king who is identified as *Kuḷamuṟṟattuttuñtciya Kiḷḷivalavaṉ* by the colophon writers. It is significant to state that, like all other techniques mentioned in the foregoing pages, this technique is also handled with the object of giving a Promethean stature to the hero's fame.

The supernatural

Though the pan-human vision of moulding supernatural events and actions is lacking in PN, there are some speculations along that line. Such speculations are associated with religious faiths, examples being: the conception of Netherland, the world of gods, the three worlds, etc. Yet, supernatural events are made subservient to human action and are not allowed to dominate the indomitable courage of human characters. Whenever these events are brought to the foreground in PN, it is done with the object of heightening the human element by contrast. The heroes are quite free to lead a valorous and happy life without the intervention of supernatural events and miracles of gods. Gods are also introduced for comparation and in such instances the human heroes are not portrayed as inferior to Godhead.

Theory of style

The corpus taken for elucidation gives no clue that reveals much about the theory of poetic style held by the poets of PN. Yet, the words of the poets are described as high and lofty and they are deemed as mellifluous (*Patiṟṟuppattu 15)* and truthful (PN 221). So, it is obvious that the theory of style held by the poets of PN is not different from the classical conception regarding poetic language. The language of PN is certainly not the 'language of common men in a state of vivid sensation' as conceived by the Romantic poet Wordsworth, but a sophisticated and ornamental language which is obtained by the conscious labour of the poet. How the poets of PN glorified poetic diction is obvious from the abundance of static epithets, a common phenomenon which is also discernible in Greek heroic songs. Yet, clarity, lucidity, conciseness and preciseness are seen as the qualities of good style. PN is loaded with figures of speech, static epithets and

picturesque descriptions which give some grandeur to the poems, and unmistakably it can be described as grand style. The *antāti* type of versification is also aimed for in PN 2. In PN 16 while describing the battle, the poet uses non-finite verbs for each action, finally ending with an apostrophe which lengthens the sentence and makes the language very ornamental, a style aptly suited to heroic poetry. In certain instances, the poet takes shelter in word play which is obvious here:

கோதை மார்பிற் கோதை யானும்
கோதையைப் புணர்ந்தோர் கோதையானும்
மாக்கழி மலர்ந்த நெய்தலானும்
கள் நா றும்மே.

Prosody

Bardic art is generally conceived as the metrical expression of the imagination of a group through the medium of individuals. But the available corpus gives no room to conceive them as the expression of the imagination of a group although the aspirations and ideals of a particular cultural community are powerfully expressed in them. Mostly, the poems of PN use *akaval* metre which is a kind of blank verse interspersed with alliterations and rhymes. In the words of M. Varadarajan, "This meter is a simple but wonderful instrument which causes no impediment to the freedom of expression of the poet. It has been found appropriate and natural medium for the expression of the valuable experience of the poets"(48).

Formulae

Most of the songs of PN fall under certain general and common patterns which have been described as 'Formulae' by scholars like the Chadwicks. Such kinds of 'formulae' are obvious in the court poetry that was cultivated under patronized systems. Yet, the general patterns of the poems of PN are not very rigid but flexible, changing according to the theme and manner of narration. So, the theory that underlies the form and content of the poems of PN is organic to a certain extent. Commenting upon the commonness in pattern and style, K. Kailasapathy observes: 'Everything seems to come from the same workshop'.

This seems to be an oversimplified statement when we look into the complex and varied nature of the poems of PN.

The length of time covered by the action in the poems of PN is primarily short as in other heroic poems. Like other ancient literatures of the world, detailed descriptions of places – specified and familiar places – seem not to occur in the poems of PN which mark the early stage of the extant literary history of the Tamils. The concentration of interest upon individuals, the aristocratic milieu, the presence of both historical and mythological elements – are a few of the salient features of these songs.

The poems of PN can be divided into several parts on the basis of the variety of descriptions in them. The number of descriptions varies from one to five in the poems taken for analysis. PN 11 gives only the description of the rewards that the bards received. On the other hand, PN 2 presents the hero's valour, the fertility of his country, his charitable attitude and his relatives and it ends with an encomium and blessing to the king. Other poems give an account of the king's predecessors and fertility of his country through apostrophe which is followed by the poet's account of the purpose of his visit and an encomium to the king. Still others start with the description of the battle, and the prizes the bards obtained. So, it is obvious that each poem differs from the other although they are bound by certain commonness. All this clearly reveals the fact that the poet is not rigid in adhering to tradition regarding the structure of his poems and that he has made use of the poetic conventions in a critical and creative way.

Other techniques

Burning buildings and devastated cities are the recurrent images used for the purpose of enhancing the heroic sentiment. Emphasizing shame and blame is another technique leading the protagonists to a practical course of action to settle conflict and restore order (Kailasapathy 22). Apart from these, some other descriptive techniques are also handled in a powerful way to give artistic portrayal. While describing the expanse of the protagonist's territory, the poet (PN 2) says that the sun appears in his Eastern Sea and bathes in his Western sea in twilight. Description using contrast between opposite things or events seems to be another technique which is obvious in PN 2. While speaking about the

firmness of the king's friends and relatives, the poet says that milk may taste bitter, the sun may darken the world, the ideals of the four Vedas may turn topsy-turvy, but the stability of his friends and relatives could not be shattered. Depicting an event or quality by contrast reaches its pinnacle in PN 8 where the poet contrasts the king's fame with the moon and emphasizes his superiority.

Apart from praising kings or chieftains for their valour and the fertility of their countries some poems celebrate them as the husbands of chaste wives. Here, we may recall, that Caṅkam society represents a transitional stage from polygamy to monogamy. Monogamy is emphasized on the part of women and polygamy is allowed on the part of men.

The poets create numerous new situations opening the way for powerful expressions. When the glory of two persons or two things is to be described, they begin with some kind of dramatic introduction such as, இவரேன்குவை and make the narrated events follow this key phrase or word. Such kinds of techniques are repeatedly used in PN 40 and 46 with slight variations where நீயே, யாமே and இவரே serve as key words of narration. This appears to be a very frequent technique which is obvious in other poems as well. In certain cases (PN 22), the poet enhances the valour of the hero indirectly, picturing for us the luxurious life and the fertility of the enemies' land before it has been devastated by the hero. In other poems (PN 25), the poet brings to light the valour of the hero by creating in our mind's eye the horrible scene of battle, where the enemies' lands are devastated by fire, and the sufferings imposed on women who lost their husbands. In poems that conform to the theme of *ārruppaṭai* (PN 32), the poet creates a situation as if addressing the glories of his protagonist to the bards. In some other poems (PN 33), the poet simultaneously shows the battles and the court feasts comparing them in number. These narrative patterns avoid monotony and provide us with variety. The individual creative ability of each poet is echoed in these poems and they do not seem to be coming from the 'same workshop' as observed by K. Kailasapathy.

Similes

The use of effective similes appears to be the main technique of the bards. The boundless magnanimity of the king is referred to in a number of ways, of

which.the most telling and the most common is its comparison with the rain. The valour of the king is frequently compared with the sun and his magnanimity with the moon. The similes are not conceived as decorative ornaments but functional units and they are handled in an organic way so as to illustrate and ennoble the subject matter. In order to give a Promethean stature to a king, the poet (PN 2) compares him with the five primordial elements. By comparing earth, sky, air, fire and water with the king's patience, wisdom, strength, destructive power and mercy, the poet draws a harmony between nature, the macrocosm and man, the microcosm. Such comparisons are highly frequent throughout the (PN 20) poems of PN. To enhance the ferocious nature of the battle, one poet compares the king with Yama who mercilessly snatches away the souls of human beings (PN 3).

Arranging the things to be compared in a catalogue and portraying them through proper images, in particular comparison, seems to be a recurrent technique. This technique is very powerfully handled in PN 4, in which lively comparisons are made between the sword and the twilight sky, the broken ankle rings of the hero and the horns of oxen, the amour hit by arrows and the target, the war horses and the tiger, the elephant and the soul-eating Yama, the king amidst the battle and the sun amidst the ocean. The moon and the sun are the most recurring images which are used in comparison with the king's umbrella, his magnanimous nature and his strength. The sea is also a recurrent image which is compared mostly with the army. Abstract similes also penetrate into the poems of PN (31). In PN 31 the poet says that the Cēra and Pāṇḍya kings are behind the Cōḻa king like wealth and happiness standing behind righteousness.

Apostrophe

Most of the poems of PN are composed in a rhetorical form, the poet or the narrator addressing directly either a king or a bard. In certain instances, these poems are addressed to the gate-keeper, the warriors and the enemy kings. In this sense, the first person narration, which is handled in *akam* poems, is preserved in *puṟam* also. The difference is that the poets of *akam* poems speak through conventional, imaginary characters hiding their personality, whereas the poets of PN speak directly in most of the poems revealing their personality. In *akam* poetry, love scenes and the persons speaking in such scenes are listed and restricted, whereas in PN it is not so. This gives much greater freedom to the

poets of PN, than that possessed by poets composing poems on *akam* themes. Like the *akam* poems, most of the poems of PN never apostrophize the person spoken to by proper name. The frequent apostrophe in these poems gives a rhetorical form and value to them. Such a pattern is obvious in almost all the court poems of the world. In some poems there is only one apostrophe and in others it goes upto three. The poet links several events with each apostrophe. For example in PN 3, there are three apostrophes with which the narration of the hero's glorious predecessors, the chastity of his wife, and his own valorous nature are associated respectively. In certain poems (PN 2), the fertility of the country is linked with the apostrophe whereas in others (PN 16) the description of battles is associated with it.

Theory of imagination

Since the way of life of the people was simple, the poetic conventions and the poetic range are also very simple. Hence, no insipid and inane flights of imagination as experienced by the *prabhanta* poets were experienced by the poets of PN. They did not conceive imagination as a 'divine activity' and 'absolute power' as it was celebrated by the Romantic poets. To them, imagination is a creative force and a synthesizing power which helps to make fine images, arresting similes and fine narrative techniques.

Poetic situations and themes

The colophon writers have arranged the poems according to poetic situation (*tiṇai*) and themes (*tuṟai*) mostly following *Puṟapporuḷ Veṇpāmālai*, a posterior work to PN. They have also recorded the name of the kings glorified and the poets who have composed the poems. Although they are relevant with respect to certain poems, in most cases, there remain multifarious inconsistencies between the actual text and the colophon. Anyhow, the colophon writers have tried to arrange the poems on the basis of their theme as prescribed in *Puṟapporuḷ Veṇpāmālai*. It has suggested that this type of thematic arrangement of poems is also to be found in early Welsh Heroic poetry, where the narrative materials are grouped according to theme, rather than according to period and cycle. According to the colophons, the first 50 songs of PN were sung about 24 kings by 28 poets. But the poems give no clear clue to this. The colophon writers have included the

first 50 poems (excluding the invocation) under four poetic situations namely *pāṭāṇ*, potuviyal, *vañci* and *vākai*, and under 11 poetic themes (*turai*) suggesting 7 alternative themes as well. Since most of the poetic themes and situations of PN conform to the dicta suggested by *Purapporuḷ Veṇpāmālai*, we can rightly say that the colophons must have been written after the composition of *Purapporuḷ Veṇpāmālai*. In spite of their inconsistencies, the colophons help much to a better understanding of these poems.

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3. TAMIL HEROIC POEMS – A SHORT ANALYSIS

I have already discussed at length most of the fundamental theories that govern the composition of the poems of PN with their social and political milieu in the previous chapter pertaining to the first fifty poems. One must be aware of the fact that artistic objects are indeed complex, integrated wholes which secure their aesthetic effect primarily as a consequence of their being such wholes. Though the anthology of PN comprises nearly four hundred scattered pieces, it forms an organic whole since the social milieu; the texture and the thematic treatment of these poems are almost identical, with the exception of a few deviations. As far as literary theories are concerned, the whole of the poems of a particular poetic content belonging to a particular social milieu and expressing a particular spirit as that of PN must be viewed as an organic whole and not through isolated parts. Making a dichotomy in an organic whole and evaluating it by select passages will succeed like the pedant in Heracles, who, when he offered his house for sale, carried a brick in his pocket as a specimen. So, the task of evolving the literary theories of PN by making dissections from the whole edifice may be convenient for writing some research papers, but will not give a complete and organic perspective. It is proper here to recall the words of Wordsworth who once remarked "We murder to dissect". For the sake of convenience, such an unfruitful attempt has also been made in this chapter. Yet, the serious limitations of such an analysis going in for have been rectified by a complete and organic perspective of the whole anthology though much concentration has been on the twenty-five poems taken for study.

Nature of the corpus

With the literary theories that underlie the composition of the poems of PN dealt with in the previous chapter, here certain peculiar features not discussed earlier are taken up focusing attention on the 25 poems (300-325). These twenty-five poems are very significant since they bear some of the typical features which are peculiar to heroic literature. These poems have been pointed out by K. Kailasapathy as the most primitive type of heroic songs which draw their heroes from any class and express communal interest as of family, locality clan or tribe (23). As observed in the previous essay, these poems can be deemed not only as the primitive type of Tamil heroic poems, but also as the finest specimens of the

same genre. Yet, we cannot say that these poems glorifying unspecified heroes were composed without class consciousness, since like other poems of PN the heroes of the above corpus were also drawn from the so-called aristocracy which is the militant class of the Tamil heroic milieu, with the only difference that the material conditions reflected in these poems seem to be in an under developed stage when we compare them with the other poems of the same anthology. These help us decide that they are anterior to the other poems which are tinged with some gnomic content and which portray a materially developed society. The colophon writers have not recorded the names of the heroes and like most other poems, the texts also provide no clue for finding out the proper names of the heroes with the one exception in poem 315 which is attributed to Atiyamāṉ.

According to the colophon writers, these poems were written by 21 poets and they fall under two poetic situations (*tumpai and vākai*) and 8 poetic themes, and in most cases their classifications seem to be very irrelevant when we compare them with the texts. The authorship of one poem (PN 323) is not recorded and only a few lines of poems 306, 317 and 323 are available. Most of the poems which fall under this corpus are composed in the manner in which the *akam* poems are composed and, hence, they stand as the finest specimen of heroic poetry which is highly objective in nature having permanent value and international features. We hear the voices of multifarious unspecified characters such as bards, foster mothers and warriors, and in some places the lyrical tone of the poet also finds its spontaneous expression. Most of the events portrayed in this corpus are not bound with historical events even without the intrusion of topical allusions. Almost all the poetic situations and events seem to be imaginary, but the presentation is very dramatic with simple backgrounds and sundry silent characters among whom the poet speaks through a particular character and expresses the heroic sentiments in a grand manner peculiar to heroic literatures. Some poems are hortatory in nature while some others are either panegyric or satiric which in some way or other, directly or indirectly, help to stimulate genuine heroic spirit among warriors. Though the commentators have taken straining efforts to attach some historical importance to these imaginary events, the texts remain free giving no place for such subjective projections.

Heroic milieu

The heroic milieu presented in these poems is mainly aristocratic in character and hence we hear little of the lower rank of society. The heroes are represented uniformly as wise, far-sighted, prudent and practical. The Chadwicks have noted that in certain communities a number of military women, know as *polenitsy* are portrayed as if enthusing the warriors for undertaking military exploits, and in certain cases they themselves are occupied in military pursuits (79). The present corpus from PN also provides ample evidences for the same type of heroism exemplified by imaginary women characters namely mūtiṉ makaḷir though they are not portrayed as directly participating in the warfare. They indirectly help to create a heroic atmosphere by their brave deeds. Two such poems are attributed to Poṉmuṭiyār by the colophon writers, and these poems are composed as if a brave mother nurtured in the heroic soil is narrating the heroic deeds of her son. Like other heroic poems of the world, social standards or moral judgments are also very rarely expressed in this corpus. The heroes are in general portrayed without supernatural or superhuman attributes. So, unlike the Greek heroic poems, the heroes depicted in this corpus gain no advantage in the battle either by supernatural means or by subterfuge. Very frequently, the scene of these poems is laid in a prince's tent, and tent life is presented to us under its manifold aspects. The heroic life of the warriors is portrayed as if sustained chiefly by raids and plunder. Since these poems are generally free from national consciousness and national prejudices, they attain to some extent international currency. The outstanding feature of this corpus is a pronounced individual interest, both as shown by the poet or narrator and as attributed to characters themselves. As suggested by the Chadwicks, the poems of this corpus also, like other heroic poems of the world, "tend to become a literature concerned with the exploits, adventures, and experiences of members of princely class, both men and women, including perhaps their noble followers"(727). Heroic princes and chieftains are presented as generous patrons of minstrels, partly in order to get their own fame celebrated and partly to stimulate the heroic spirit among the warriors which was highly demanded by that social set-up.

Individualism

The cult of the individual which emerged in the heroic age forms the basis for all the poems of PN. Such an emphasis upon heroic individualism and the glorification of the martial victories of individuals raise these poems to the level of 'literature of action'. Yet, the individualism as exemplified in these poems entirely differs from the bourgeois individualism which arose in the later centuries with the advent of technological civilization. Whereas the basic cause of bourgeois individualism is the urban civilization and the ascendancy of the educated middle class in the social stratum, the major factor for the emergence of heroic individualism is the peculiar attitude of the heroic milieu such as expanding one's possessions by means of war. The social attitude of this heroic individual is one of conformism with the society or the tribe to which he belongs, and with the active collaboration of its healthy members he aims to subdue and subjugate the enemy forces and external reality through martial heroism. The bourgeois individual as depicted in Romantic literatures is an isolated member who confronts with his social set-up and external reality and fights a lonely battle not through his physical strength and prowess but through mental and intellectual faculties and activities. Hence the stress on moral heroism and mental agony in the later bourgeois arts.

The main object of the poets of this corpus is to create ideal heroic individuals and enthuse the warriors to prepare themselves for the cause of displaying their physical strength and follow the paths of these imaginary heroes who are their idealized models. The heroic individuals of these poems are idealized and their roles exaggerated by magnifying their social standing, explaining the accessories of their heroic life and portraying effectively the scenes and backgrounds in which they are put up as actively engaged in martial enterprises illustrating the social standards which they exhibit.

In PN 301, the hero's prowess is heightened by contrasting him with the warriors of the enemy's tent who hide themselves in the camp on hearing his name. Such a pattern is closely followed in PN 304, where the enemy kings are portrayed as if shivering out of fear on hearing the news about the hero's invasion on their lands. In PN 307 the martial deeds of a valorous hero who died in a battle inspire the king who also follows the same example set by that warrior and dies

in the battle. Thus the chief attitude of the poet seems to be heightening the martial deeds of individual warriors without specifying their proper names.

Idealism and the hero concept

The delineation of characters who personify the cherished ideals of the community or the clan to which they belong has always been a distinguishing feature of these poems though such ideals are temporal and ephemeral in nature and were shaped by and rooted in the heroic milieu that gave birth to these poems. This clearly brings us to the social role of these poets who were fully aware of their own responsibilities towards the aristocracy and who had their fingers on the pulse of the military class of the heroic milieu.

The heroism embodied in almost all places is martial in nature and as already noted it is an idealized mark of the adventurous spirit of the royal circle. This gives a progressive outlook to these poems when we study them in relation to their social backgrounds. In this respect, these poems can be hailed as poetry of action since they have the social purpose of stimulating men to act and to subduing their enemy forces through their martial achievements.

The ideals exemplified by these heroes and their creators are devoid of transcendental speculations and are no abstractions of the desirable. The ideals of the heroic age are firmly rooted in the actual state of their soil and they never lead the aristocracy to indulge in idle daydreams. On the other hand, they help to bring about practical transformations of life. These ideals are capable of inspiring and transforming, since they coincide with the vital interests of the aristocracy who accept them as the embodiment of their heartfelt hopes and aspirations. For personifying such heroic ideals, the poets of this corpus adopt certain powerful techniques. In one poem (PN 310), the poet tries to heighten the heroic quality of the hero by contrasting the martial achievements of his maturity with the childish deeds of his infancy, whereas in another poem (PN 311) the hero's deeds are contrasted with his previous magnanimous activities with the object of exaggerating his valorous nature. Another poem (PN 312) portrays how an ideal heroic individual grows from infancy to maturity utilizing the external sources and opportunities provided by his social set-up. This corpus presents the ideal life of the hero with his martial adventure and heroic spirit. Owing to such an

emphasis only on a particular aspect related to the heroic life, the poets never portray life in all its complexity and diversity. Unlike modern literary art, they select either the positive or negative phenomenon but here again the choice depends not on the poets' individual style and selection of subject matter but on certain codes which were accepted in the court and highly respected by the aristocrats. These poems never portray man in conflict with the inner world but only with external world.

The fear of raising one's voice in praise of the heroic qualities of life is not seen in these poems. The literary theories of these poets are also based only on the objective reality and not on a profound understanding of the objective laws. The heroes are also portrayed as shaped by circumstances and conscious education in warfare which is obvious from a poem atributed to Ponmuṭiyār. This poem clearly brings to light how a man attains gradually a true heroic personality in his maturity with help of the training and other heroic accessories. It presents the four duties ascribed to various people for the full growth of a heroic individual. Thus the duty of an ideal mother is to give birth and foster the child, the father to make him a warrior, the blacksmith to provide him with weapons and the king to feed him with the martial codes of an ideal hero. Thus the hero is fostered by the heroic accessories and his duty is to kill the elephants and win numerous battles.

Throughout this corpus, heroic characters are portrayed as inspiring examples. They are depicted as if putting their whole heart and soul into their activities with no thought for themselves. As a result, throughout PN we have only ideal heroes who set ideal examples for the warriors. Like Hellenic art, the poems of PN depict man most forcefully exaggerating his beauty, perfection, strength, courage and virtues. So we have no example of the strong oppressing the weak. What we see in these poems is only the conflict between mighty opposites.

Unspecified heroes

As already stated, the corpus taken for study presents multifarious unspecified heroes with the exception of one instance. These heroes were created from the accumulated experience of the lives of the poets which were interpreted

in the light of their ideal of man and according to the poetic conventions and the moral and martial codes of their social milieu. Since they are idealized types born out of the poet's imagination, the poets of this corpus, in order to invest them with timeless value have not assigned proper names. The Chadwicks have also noted the existence of heroic poems with unspecified heroes throughout the world. From the poems of PN, we have numerous examples for the custom of composing both personal and occasional poetry and poetry of timeless nature with unspecified heroes. Such types of poems with unspecified heroes are very popular in the oral tradition also and such songs in other parts of the world seem to be recited in peasant circles. But, such poems of this corpus do not deal with the folks but with the aristocracy, which is the militant class of the Tamil heroic milieu. In such poems, the literary personae are referred to as *talaivaṉ*, *maṉaiyāḷ*, *pāṇaṉ*, *tāy* etc., like the characters of *akam* poems. *Kāḷai* (302, 303), *entai* (307), *eṉṉai* (309), *makaṉ* (310), *peruviṟal* (313), *vāṇutal kaṇavaṉ* (314), *iṟaivaṉ* (316), *vēntu* (318), *ciṟūr maṉṉaṉ* (319), *neṭuntakai* (320, 322, 324) *kuricil* (321), *vēlaṉ* (322), *vēlōṉ* (323) are the epithets used for addressing the unspecified heroes.

Personality of the poet

K. Kailasapathy argues that the bard of the heroic age was no individualist; and his professional tradition forbade it. Some scholars have opined that the poetry of PN has a group personality expressing a group mind and hence the poet has no personality of his own. Undoubtedly, all classical poems express group personality and group mind through individual poets who echo the group voice hiding their own personalities. As already discussed in the previous chapter, PN is an intermingling of subjective and objective poems. Hence, we have sundry examples of both lyrical expressions of art emotions throughout this anthology. When the poet speaks through characters, it is difficult to know the personality of the poet since the personality of the character dominates. As far as this corpus is concerned, most of the poems are composed in the manner in which the *akam* poems are composed and hence it is very difficult to see the personality of the poet as it is seen in subjective poems. For example in PN 301, 303, 304 and 305, we hear the voice of the warriors, in 306 and 319 we hear the voice of some imaginary women characters, in 308 and 316, 320, 321 a minstrel is speaking, and in 310 and 312 voice of a mother is echoed.

As far as these objective poems are concerned, the progress of the artist is "a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality". In the words of T.S Eliot, "it is in this depersonalization that art may be said to approach the conditions of science"(296). The poet actually converts his ordinary personal emotions into art emotions and speaks through various characters; for example the bards, foster mother, warriors and so on. Hence, the definition "poetry is not a turning loose of emotions, but an escape from emotions; it is not the expression of personality but an escape from personality"(300). This does not mean that the poet has no personality in the outer world, since "only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from things".

Poetic illusion and reality

Most of the panorama and events presented in these poems are fictional and not historical facts; they are poetic illusions and not actual reality. Hence, they have to be viewed as imaginary events rooted in reality and conditioned by the spirit of the age. The success of the poet lies in creating an illusion as if the events they create were real and historical incidents bound with time and space. It is the duty of the readers to analyze them as fictional events and characters expressing the ideals of their creators. Such a fundamental fact that underlies the creative works in general has not been felt profoundly by the colophon writers and commentators. Hence their straining efforts to identify the characters with historical figures and to attach some historical importance to the fictional events narrated in PN. For example, the commentator in PN 302 tries his best to explain the events narrated in the poem as the direct experience of the poet by relating it with the life of the poet. Wherever the poet speaks through the mouth of a foster mother in this corpus, the colophon writers have recorded the name *Poṉmuṭiyār* and the commentators explain such poems as the personal experience of the above poetess. Such an uncritical effort is seen in PN 321 also. Anyhow these imaginative events are not created out of vacuum. We must know the fact that even when the artist creates heaven and hell, he merely transforms the experience of his own life into art form by giving colour and light. Hence, we can say that they are the artistic and idealized form of the transformed reality.

Authorship

Like all other heroic poems of the world, the authorship of the poems of PN might also have been attributed ones, done at a later time. It is a known fact that for most of the antiquarian literature, the authorship is not known and is for the most part anonymous. The names of the authors of PN might have been recorded by the colophon writers who have recorded the poetic situations, themes and the names of the heroes probably after the composition of *Puṟapporuḷ Veṇpāmālai*.

Collective singing

The antique types of poems are generally meant for collective recitation. There are evidences in our corpus for such poems which are meant for collective singing. In such poems, which are meant for group recitation, we have frequent use of the first person plural pronoun *yām,* whereas in poems intended for individual recitation, the first person singular is used as the starting point of an expression. PN 316 is a standing example of group recitation. This clearly illustrates the fact that such kinds of poems might have been recited by groups of bards either in the courts or in battlefields. So it is obvious, at least with regard to this poem, that the poet who composed might have been a different person from the bards who recited them. It is also obvious that the vocation of the poet is mere composition of heroic poems, whereas it is the professional minstrels who recite them to the accompaniment of musical instruments either in the court or in the camps. Such types of poetry, intended for collective singing, have been noticed in the heroic literatures of the other parts of the world by the Chadwicks, but for them "for collective or choral singing we have not found much evidence which can be called satisfactory"(875). Yet, such kinds of poems cannot be called the poetry belonging to oral tradition, since there is no rigid formula which is characteristic of oral poetry.

Organic form

Though these poems are governed by certain conventions, the poets did not follow them blindly but handled them creatively, and hence we have diverse kinds of poems with sundry inventions and innovations though the thematic

treatment is more or less the same. So each poem differs from the other in the manner of narration and in the formal structure. It seems that these poets were aware of the fact that literary form is not a vessel that will remain unchanged in shape no matter what it may be filled with. Despite this, it is a growing organism and as reality changes so does the form of its artistic reflection. Hence there is every reason to believe that the fundamental theory of these early poems is organic. This is purely against the mechanical conception of art as conceived by the later poets of the feudal set-up who wrote in the neo-classical pattern and style. The structure of the poems taken for study is not rigid but very flexible and it changes according to the theme and manner of narration. The lines of the poems also very from 6 to 18. When detailed nature descriptions penetrate into the text, the structure of the poem is also lengthened for a complete artistic portrayal. So in all these poems, the form and content grow organically as the leaves of a tree and hence it is very difficult to make a dichotomy between form and content. The poetic content always decides the structure and the structure of the poem has no isolated existence apart from its content. Hence, there is no possibility for literary form to run contrary to the poetic content. Such an organic conception of art can thrive in a society which is in the transitional stage, whereas mechanical conception can exist in a well settled but stagnated feudal set-up. The way of life, the literary composition and all other cultural activities of the Caṅkam society represent a transitional stage in its multifarious facets and hence their conception of art also accepts this healthy phenomenon. Yet, their organic concept of art differs from that of the later organicists in many respects.

Purpose of poetry

The belief in art for art's sake arises wherever the artist is out of harmony with his social environment. In PN, the artists and their characters seem as if living in conformity with the social environment and hence there is no possibility of the existence of such a dogma, which has been described as objective theory by M. H. Abrams. The poet of PN is fully aware of his social responsibility and he plays the role of an active participant in social matters. The purpose of his composition seems to be kindling the heroic sentiments of the warriors and thus preserving the heroic atmosphere in the land in which he lives. The instructing value is predominant but as far as this corpus is concerned, there is no direct preaching and instruction but these aspects are presented through concrete living

examples. Consequently, it is obvious that the theory that is predominant in these poems is a pragmatic one.

A magnificently classical Indian world view recognizes four goals for human existence and the theme of poetry. According to this conception poetry must enable man to seek the four goals especially the final one which is called *mōksha* or the heavenly life. Such types of speculations are not obvious in PN, especially in this corpus. PN has its own conception of the other world which is called by the term *mēlōr ulaku*, which shares with many of the conception related with the world of the heroes of the Greek, Germanic and the Sanskrit heroic age, and for attaining such a world the exercise of mere martial heroism is enough. Abhinava Gupta and other Sanskrit theorists have hailed beauty as the soul of poetry. But to the poets of this corpus, whatever is mighty is beauty, and that will be the proper subject for poetry.

Poet

The role of the poet differs according to the social environment. Hence, the conception of an ideal poet differs from age to age. The poems of PN breathe the collective life of the aristocrats through individual poets, either directly or through the characters created by the poet. So, as pointed out by Christopher Caudwell, "The poet has a 'patriarchal' or 'idyllic' relation to the class of whom he is the spokesman of his time. It imposes upon him the obligation to speak the language of his paymasters or co-poets"(108). No doubt, the poets of this corpus bear testimony to the sincere performance of such a role.

The Sanskrit tradition generally hails the poet as a seer, a preacher, one who often sees Darsa̲na (vision) and a mouth of revelation. Such kinds of transcendental speculations are not discernible and are not even possible in the material outlook of the ancient Tamil thought. In PN, the poet does not function as a passive spectator or one who always waits for *Darsa̲na*, but an active member of a living society who functions like the modern mass media in political and social affairs. The poets never assume the role of rebel or prophet or exile but live amidst the court circle, serve for the cause of strengthening their patron's hand and make the warriors stronger than ever which the heroic circle of those days demanded. Vedic tradition hails God as poet (Krishnachaitanya 6). Though

such a viewed has been accepted by Tolkāppiyar the poems of the present corpus give no clue to such speculations.

Aesthetic experience

According to the Sanskrit tradition, the chief goal of poetry is to provide aesthetic experience, which has been described as a state of transcendental joy, or a state of self-fulfillment. Such an idealistic conception of art does not fit well to the poems of PN which are composed with the motivation of stimulating the warriors to fight the enemy force by presenting idealized, concrete examples. The object of these poems is not to render transcendental joy, but to kindle one particular aspect of human emotion, namely, the heroic sentiment. For attaining this end, most of the poets of this corpus have not expressed individual, gross emotions directly but converted them into art emotions and this attitude redeems the poems from the limitations of time and space and gives them permanent and universal appeal. Hence, to these poets as to modern Marxist writers, aesthetic experience is a material pleasure, art is a material phenomenon and its enjoyment is obviously an experience of this world.

Theory of style

If the poet is an author who has to acquire his living on his own, then he will have to take into account the taste of his own age. If it is an active and enthusiastic age, he will to some extent be in sympathy with its taste. As already explained, the main vocations of the poets of PN seem to be the composition of heroic songs through which they seek the means for their living. Since their age is an enthusiastic one, they have some genuine sympathy with it and hence there is no confrontation between the poet and his age. Consequently, their poetic expressions also reflect genuinely the tastes and conventions of the aristocratic court circle. As already explained in the previous chapter, the language of this corpus too is certainly not the "language of common men in a state of vivid sensation" as conceived by the Romantic poet Wordsworth, but a sophisticated and ornamental language which is the outcome of the conscious labor of the poet. It is loaded with figures of speech, sensuous epithets, and picturesque descriptions which give some grandeur to it.

Images

Images are the mental impressions created by words in such a way that we can perceive without actually experiencing them. They add sensuousness to language and serve as a link between the imagination of the poet and the imagination of the reader. Since images are conditioned by the general tastes and conventions of the social background, they also differ from age to age. Heroic literature has its own images which may differ from modern images in multifarious facets. Most of the images of this corpus are drawn from nature and things associated with ancient warfare. The camps with thorny fences, forests, elephants, horses, stars, sun, rain, oxen, deer, drums, squirrels, spear, cobra, white clothes, wild cats, carts that carry salt, lotus made of gold, etc. are the images which occur frequently throughout this corpus. Apart from this, there are a few lengthy images which bring to our mind's eye a word picture of the tent life, the devastated land of the enemies, the fertile territory of the hero, some court feastings and the hunting scenes of village boys.

Figures of speech

Craftsmanship is a vital part of classical art. The modest craftsmanship that these poets attempted makes the form more communicative, more stable and more balanced. Their craftsmanship is nothing but conscious effort to shape the raw materials in order to produce the desired effect. They grasp a piece of external reality, color it with effective tone and make it distil a new emotional attitude so as to evoke the heroic sentiments of the aristocracy. They are completely against the decorative use of similes and epic similes. Their similes are functional in character and they are organically linked with the poetic content so as to enhance, ennoble and enlighten the subject matter. The valorous hero is in many instances compared with elephant and boat, the *ūkam* flowers with squirrels, the dying neglected warrior with an ox left to die by the salt merchants, the tent of the hero with the dwelling place of cobra and the eyes of the wild cats with the eyes of the hunting boys.

Love of nature

Some scholars have expressed amazement at the fact that none of the works of art of primitive man hitherto discovered expresses love for nature and delight in its beauty. Beautiful personifications of Nature could not arise until there was love for nature, until man had overcome his fears of nature, and by his labour produced a "human feeling for nature, the human sense of nature, and therefore also the natural sense of man"(Karl Marx 123). Ancient Tamils have developed an intense human feeling for nature and hence they are remarkably noted for their love of nature. Though their love of nature finds powerful expression in the *akam* poems, it permeates into this heroic corpus to a considerable extent. Most of the natural descriptions occur in the poems which are composed in *ārruppaṭai* pattern. The tendency to spiritualize nature never occurs in this corpus. Poem 319 gives a beautiful description of a chieftain's land, whereas PN 320 approaches the natural objects with a touch of human feeling associated with some kind of organic vision in which we see a hunter's wife allowing the wild rooster to eat the corn with the fear that her attempt to chase it might have disturbed the happy union of two doting deer's.

Colophon and text

The colophon writers have tried their best to explain the fictional events as events having authentic historical validity. They have suggested the theme *pārppaṉavākai* to poem 305, which according to *Puṟapporuḷ Veṇpāmālai*, is intended to glorify the deeds of a man who has accepted ascetic life. But this text is a bitter satire on a chieftain who gave up fighting as a result of the visit of a thin Brahmin messenger. The theme *pāṇpāṭṭu* ascribed to poem 311 is also very irrelevant when we undertake a close reading of the text. The theme *mūtiṉmullai*, as suggested by the colophon writers to PN 312, is also very irrelevant to the text. In PN 316, the hero after drinking to full throat, blesses the toddy as "கள்ளின் வாழ்த்தி கள்ளின் வாழ்த்தி" to which the commentator writes that he is blessing a place named "கள்ளில்" and the colophon writers have suggested the name "கள்ளிற் கடையத்தன் வெண்ணாகனார்" as its author. The text gives no room to interpret the phrase "கள்ளின்"as the name of a place. PN 320 is in the form of *ārruppāṭai* pattern. But the colophon writers have suggested *vākai* as its poetic situation and *vallāṇmullai* as its theme, which is inconsistent with the text. Such problems

regarding the colophon have to be reviewed seriously and properly since such an inquiry may shed new lights on any future analysis on PN.

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4. LITERARY THRORIES IN AKAM POETRY

Akam poems

Though the word *akam* is generally used in the sense 'inner aspects of human experience', as a poetic idiom, it refers only to the idealized experience of love between a man and a woman, just out of adolescence, which are treated in a certain corpus of conventional erotic poems of Tamil literature that flourished roughly about 1800 years ago, and are bound by some restricted rules of composition. These poems mainly portray the sexual union making other aspects related with it to precede it or attend on it. The theme and conventions of these Tamil love poems as described by the traditional commentators are a poetic amalgamation partaking of the best, and the desirables and the accidentals.

The social milieu

Since literature is a social phenomenon, *akam* poems must be viewed as a part of the superstructure of the ancient Tamil society. They present the ideals of the aristocracy in matters of conjugal and amorous activities. Being the products of the artistic intelligentsia of the so-called *Caṅkam* society, *akam* poems constitute a vital sphere of that society's intellectual and aesthetic life. Consequently, the conventions, trends and theories of *akam* poems are conditioned, shaped and determined by the ideals and ideological climate of the aristocratic class of the *Caṅkam* age which fostered them.

Like the ancient Tamil heroic poetry, these 'erotic' poems are also the products of the same class society in which the division of labour had paved the way for the emergence of minstrels, bards and poets as separate classes isolated from the other working communities. The economic conditions and the nature of their vocation forced the minstrels and poets, who form the artistic intelligentsia of the ancient Tamil society, to depend on the aristocracy, under whose patronage, they happened to meet the financial requirements for their existence. So, they had to cultivate their poems in such a manner as to please the whims and fancies of the ruling class, the political tendencies of the age and in conformity with the ideals and ideological backgrounds of the aristocracy. Since *akam* poems were cultivated under such a patronage system, they happened to be bardic in

nature and courtly in character. While the heroic poems of the same age were mostly recited during wartime or in royal ceremonies, the *akam* poems were sung in normal hours or in the happiest moments when the patrons or the aristocratic audience were in need of some entertainment. In ancient Tamil heroic poems, the poet assumes the role of an instructor in political matters and a stimulator of heroic sentiments, whereas in *akam* poems he plays the part of an entertainer who pleases his audience by portraying the idealized picture of their class in conformity with their aristocratic conventions.

Audience and characters

Since *akam* poetry was cultivated in an aristocratic circle, it deviates from the poetry of the folk tradition in many respects, viz. in its well planned conventions, sophisticated nature, ornamental use of language and in treating particular idealized aspects of love. Yet, there are evidences to say that most of the themes and technicalities of these classical poems are drawn from folk poems in various ways. Unlike folk poems, *Caṅkam* poems are the polished productions of scholarly minds and they were composed in a specific period in which the learned scholar poets named *pulavans* emerged to the highest stratum of the hierarchy of the artistic intelligentsia, replacing gradually the position enjoyed by professional minstrels and rhapsodists. Consequently, the minstrels and rhapsodists in later days only recite with the accompaniment of musical instrument the songs composed by the *pulavans*. Hence we can infer that *akam* poems passed from the bards to the poets who had developed them with the help of the folk songs of the common people. It is probable to say that the poets might have derived most of the conventions of *akam* poems from *kūttu*, a type of dance enactment that prevailed in ancient Tamilnadu.

Mostly, like the *puṟam* type of heroic poems, the *akam* poems also deal with an aristocratic milieu – a society dominated by warlike chiefs. If the heroic poems of *Caṅkam* literature show us the physical prowess of some persons, the erotic poems which are called by the name *akam* portray similar persons engaged in amorous activities. Such a class consciousness is discernible in the words of Tolkāppiyar who asserts that slaves, servants, errand men, etc. are not entitled to be portrayed as heroes in poems treating of the fivefold division of mutual love. While dealing with the poetic conventions, he again and again reiterates that

akam poems are the poems of the nobility. The ancient Tamil grammatical works and the *Caṅkam* corpus describe social hierarchies such as the aristocrats, the people of the soil, the servants and errand men. Among them, *akam* poems glorify mainly the aristocrats. In these poems, people belonging to other classes are treated along with subsidiary things which form only the backdrop. Some poems of *Kolittokai*, which are of a later origin, deal with the love of the servants, but the treatment is purely satiric and devoid of any genuine sympathy. As suggested by the Chadwicks elsewhere, "the merchant, the farmer and artisan who occupied only a lower place in the social hierarchy are practically ignored" (65) in the *akam* poems also. The peasant hero of folk-tradition never appears as a protagonist in any of these poems. Besides, the attribution *cāṉrōr ceyyuḷ* assigned to *Caṅkam* poetry by the commentator's illustrates the sophisticated and aristocratic nature of these poems.

Classical poetry

The conventions of *akam* poems are typical of baric tradition and show a high degree of formalization in content and expression. They are governed by well-codified principles of subject matter and poetic manner as well. Hence, they can be called classical poetry in the strictest sense of the term. Like other classical love poems of the world, the tendency to select and emphasize a few features is noticeable in the treatment of the human characters of the *akam* poems. This according to Parthasarathi, is in line with the well-known device of the "school of classical poets", who aim at heightening the pitch by a few broad suggestions, without building up pictures of much detail. The classical nature of these poems has been described by one critic thus: "The excessive pre-occupation with form and technique, the extravagant respect paid to authority of literary precedent, the extreme concern for conformity,... the neat analysis of the formal elements of poetry and the strong insistence on the formal aspects, the use of poetic diction, the use of elaborate system of poetic conventions – these and many other characteristics of *Caṅkam* poetry compel us to describe it as classicist in spirit and temper" (Manuel 63). Yet, whether they were composed on the basis of certain conventions or compiled by the anthologists in conformity with the conventions that existed in their contemporary literary milieu is a disputing point. Anyhow, there are strong evidences to prove that both the poets and the compilers were highly conscious of the literary conventions of their age.

Anyhow, the *akam* conventions are not converted into rules to hamper the creative ability of the artists. *Tolkāppiyam* which is considered to be the earliest bardic handbook preserves most of the conventions of *akam* poems. Yet, the existing *akam* poems differ from the dicta of Tolkāppiyar in many respects. The third book of *Tolkāppiyam* which deals with the literary conventions, etc. may have been written in a later time when new metres like veṇpā, etc.were introduced into Tamil literature. Regarding this, T.P. Meenakshisundaran has recently expressed his opinion that the *Caṅkam* corpus and *Tolkāppiyam* represent two different schools of poetry. This has to be studied properly.

Akam and puṟam

The literary compositions of the ancient Tamil classical tradition fall under two broad categories, namely *puṟam* (the heroic) and *akam* (the erotic). While the former deals with heroic and related activities, the latter completely treats of love sentiments and events related to it. It is obvious that this classification is made on the basis of the thematic content rather than on any other factors. According to some scholars, what differentiates the *akam* poem from its *puṟam* counterpart is the technique of not mentioning the proper names of characters. But this sounds weak as well since most of the puṟam poems are also devoid of proper names. The love poems of Nakkaṇṇaiyār etc. are included in the *puṟam* corpus not because they mention the proper names of the heroes but because in such poems the erotic sentiments are made subservient on the heroic spirit. Hence we can safely conclude that the ancient Tamils have classified their poems as *akam* and *puṟam* purely on the basis of poetic content rather than on any formal devices.

Akam poems differ from the *puṟam* in multifarious ways such as in the selection of event, the handling of convention, the process of composition etc. While most of the *puṟam* poems deal with individual experiences, the *akam* poems portray the fundamental aspects of human love which transcend the barries of time, space and religion. While the experiences of the *puṟam* poets cannot be shared by all, the fundamental sentiments portrayed in *akam* can be shared by all. Since the poems of *puṟam* are embedded in individual experiences and topical allusions, a better understanding of them is possible only if the biographical elements, social and literary milieu of them are brought to bear on

such compositions. But the biographical elements have no bearing on the composition of *akam* poems and hence a reasonable grasp of the literary convention is enough for a better understanding and appreciation of *akam* poems. Most of the poems of *puṟam* category portray the seamy as well as the rosy side of life whereas those of the *akam* concerate mainly on the rosy side. According to the *akam* tradition, all the painful events and mental agony portrayed in *pālai, neytal* and *mullai* must have a happy ending. In *akam* poetry, love episodes, and the persons speaking in such episodes, the narrative course, etc and are listed and they are restricted, whereas in the tradition of *puṟam* they are not so. While the poets of *akam* type of compositions speak through conventional, imaginary characters hiding their personality, the poets of *puṟam* poems speak directly in most of the poems revealing their personality. Consequently, all the poems of *akam* group fall under the category of objective or impersonal poems, whereas both subjective and objective poems are possible in the *puṟam* corpus. All the poems of *akam* tradition can be called representational poems whereas those in the corpus of *puṟam* are an intermingling of both representational and expressive poems. Owing to the universal nature of *akam* poems, T.P. Meenakshisundaran calls them the poetry of *noumenon* while he names *puṟam* poems the poetry of *phenomenon*.

The process of composition

The process of composition of *akam* poetry is entirely different from that of the modern lyrics and other kinds of occasional poems. The subjective feelings, personal experiences, longings, frustrations and aspirations of the poet never find explicit expression in these poems even though they may be responsible for the poetic urge in a man. This tendency was in harmony with the spirit of the heroic age also. As pointed out by K. Kailasapathy the "bard of the heroic age was no individualist; his professional tradition forbade it". Being a member of an economically dependent-class which depends on the ruling class for its existence, the classical poet, like the modern poets, cannot give explicit expression to his individual feelings and libertarian sentiments. Like other classical artists, his duty is to prepare a luxurious art for his aristocratic patron according to his whims and fancy. The classical poet is a collective member, a representative of the court circle and his attitude is one of conformism with the accepted conventions and norms; whereas, the poet of the modern technological

civilization is mostly an individual who writes not for the ruling class but for the people at large. Consequently, the freedom of the classical poet is more restricted than the modern poet who writes for a huge audience. The classical poet can display his individual talent only in conformity with conventions. Hence his compositions also echo a group voice. That is why T.P. Meenakshisundaran has explained *Caṅkam* poetry as group poetry *par excellence* which has a group personality of its own, representing the group mind and group personality of the *Caṅkam* age.

To become a classical poet in conformity with existing conventions and classical modes of composition, the poet must first objectify his emotions. He creates event and episodes in conformity with his own literary tradition. For giving artistic expression to that particular love emotion, he selects suitable backgrounds, time, and other subsidiary things provided by his literary milieu, and makes them subservient to those emotions which he wants to express. In his poems, all the gross emotions are converted into art emotions. The physical emotions shake off their sordid attributes when they are converted into art emotions; they are freed from the limitations of time and space and are universalized. This creative process has its tremendous effects upon the audience also. The art emotions cease to be a part of the direct physical experience of the spectator, raise him above the petty, mundane experiences of the self, refine his sensibility and sublimate his consciousness. Hence, the aesthetic experience of the audience who relish this kind of *akam* poems will be not the experience of personal emotion, but the experience of universalized or liberated emotions. The characters and events created in this process also will become types and not individuals. The same creative process can be seen in almost all the classical poets. Owing to such creative process, objectivity and impersonality in representation become the cardinal principles of *akam* poems.

One recent critic has observed: "The *Caṅkam* poets have certainly revealed their individual personality, while they are fond of traditional line" (Thamizhannal 8). The phrase "individual personality" is a completely misleading one. The individual talent may be revealed in classical poems, but the personality or the autobiographical events of the poet have no place in the *akam* poems because the emotion is objectified in them. As asserted by T.S. Eliot, in these *akam* poems also, the poet has no personality but only a medium. In these

poems "poetic composition became a kind of distillation of the raw material, and in the process of distillation, the poet effaced not only him-self from the poem, but also everything else that would make it local, temporal and particular. From this we are able to know that the *Caṅkam* poets of the *akam* tradition regarded poetry as a timeless pattern of meaning to be regarded ideally" (Manuel 68). It is due to these reasons, we call them representation poetry rather than expressive art. They represent mainly an idealized picture of life of the aristocrats of the *Caṅkam* age. Like most other classical love poems of the world, the *akam* poems also express group personality and group mind thought individual poets who echo the group voice hiding their own personality. As far as these objective poems are concerned, the progress of the artist is "a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality". It is in this depersonalization that art may be said to approach the conditions of science. In all instances, the poet is filling another body. This enables him to create diverse characters with a variety of dispositions. The deep perception, artistic insight, conscious labour and negative capability of the poet enable him to project himself into a set of character of diverse natures and dispositions, vitalized by his own energy, but endowed with the will and character of their own. The emotions being common, the ideals being general and the experience being collective, the *akam* poems attain a more enduring value than ordinary subjective poems. Consequently, all the experiences expressed in *akam* poems must be viewed as the experiences of the characters and not of the poet. For this God-like creativity, the poet deserves the name 'maker' and 'creator' who create an imaginative world, in conformity with his ideal conceptions, as an alternative to the real world. It is generally accepted that poetry of the high order springs either from absolute self-surrender, or from absolute individualism. If the romantic and post-romantic poems of the modern age can be described as the powerful lyrics born out of absolute individualism the *akam* poems can be deemed as the best objective poems born out of absolute self-surrender.

Non-naming

Another technique used by the *akam* poets, to make their poems more objective and impersonal, is the non-naming of the characters. Tolkāppiyar prescribes that persons figuring in the different forms of love poetry in a *akattiṇai* have always to remain unnamed. Lienhard notes that this precept is marked in the

love poems of Sanskrit and Prakrit also. Real names of persons are never used in the pastoral and Petrarchan love poetry of the Western tradition and the *song of songs* of the Hebraic tradition too. M.B. Emeneau, who studied the folk-love poems of the Todas, has clearly emphasized the fact that the non-naming has been a typical feature of the oral poems with erotic content. This technique helps create typical characters and to portray general and the universal aspects of love sentiments. As pointed out by V.Sp. Manickam, the 'non-naming' principle of *akam* poetry is a glorious device for inducing the poets to register their own peculiar experiences too in the field of amorous career, without fear of censure and a sense of shyness, for the benefit of humanity.

Dramatic monologues

Since the emotions are expressed through characters, an *akam* poem is called a dramatic monologue in which a character appears on the stage at a particular moment and narrates the events that revolve around the main personae. According to T.P. Meenakshisundaran, "Every one of these verses stands by itself as a perfectly chiseled gem of the most beautiful pattern. They are all dramatic monologues, though no drama has come down to us from that age. They give the essence of a poetic mood involved in a dramatic situation, given expression to any one character". Undoubtedly, these poems can be described as dramatic monologues since there are characterization and monologue. But if we identify them with the western dramatic monologue, especially with the English genre, then, surely it will be misleading. *Akam* poems differ vastly from Browning's dramatic monologues in spirit and execution, as they are set in conventional situations and in conventional diction. Unlike Browning, the *akam* poet consciously avoids the proper names of the hero, heroine and topical allusions which may particularize the emotion. Hence it is better to call it by the traditional name *akam* poetry than to give any other new name.

Idealized love

The events portrayed in these poems are poetic illusions and not actual reality. Hence, they have to be viewed as imaginary events rooted in reality and conditioned by the spirit of the age. Anyhow, these imaginative events are not created out of vacuum. We must know the fact that even when the artist creates

heaven and hell, he merely transforms the experience of his own social reality into an art form by giving color and light. Hence, we can say that these poems are the artistic and idealized form of transformed reality. If they were completely realistic, they would certainly allow themes like death, frustration, divorce, mental agony resulting out of doubt, mourning etc. But there is no betrayal of love in *akam*, no divorce and no self sacrifice which are inevitable events of the course of love in real life. In *akam*, the death of lovers, or any other characters and the consequent lament over the loss should on no account be treated. These poems may be the result of the 'poets or aristocrats' attempts to visualize an ideal life in the midst of sordid reality. Like any other classical poems, what the *akam* poems represent is mainly a society's idealized picture of itself. Hence, the realism exhibited in *akam* poems can be described as idealized realism.

The classical world generally considers love as a sacred union bestowed upon humanity by some superhuman celestial power and the union of lovers by fate is both a reincarnation of their life together. This notion may also be a basic factor for the emergence of love poems in abundance in the ancient societies. The Greeks also have some transcendental view about this union. Plato held that in the beginning man and woman were an inseparable entity and that being divided by the wrath of gods into two, they are longing for union again.

The theory that lovers should join in marriage is a common one to both the ancient Tamil and Sanskrit love poems. Owing to this theory, the literary genre tragedy failed to prosper in these literatures (G. Sundara-moorthy 26).

Conventions and background

To represent love situations and to concretize them, the poets of *akattiṇai* have chosen natural objects as background and they are portrayed as if in harmony with the love episodes treated in the poems. Hence, objects of nature form an integral part of *akam* poems. Yet, flora and fauna function in an ancillary way and they are used to illustrate, illuminate, interpret and enhance the human drama. As such, nature is not treated as the mainstay in these poems. Flowers like *kuṟiñci*, *neytal*, etc. are handled as archetypes or literary symbols to denote certain aspects of love sentiments. The length of description of the natural objects depends on the length of the poem. The more the lines of an *akam* poem the

greater will be the scope for natural or historical description. Nature is deliberately endowed with human qualities and the poets draw harmony and contrast between man, the microcosm and nature, the macrocosm by linking human behavior with the spontaneous activities of nature. For example, seashore has been chosen to portray the melancholic sentiment and the elements of seashore imagery are invoked to portray pathetic feeling whenever it occurs in the course of love relations. The rhythmic, lapping waves, the mist, the sand dunes, the groves, the crabs, the birds and all elements of coastal imagery are considered to be conductive to the portrayal of melancholy in the *akam* tradition. Yet, nature is treated only as a sympathetic background and not raised to the level of pantheistic worship. The concept of God in nature was developed only in a later period and is discernible in *Paripāṭal*. As pointed out by Xavier S. Thaninayagam "the landscape of Tamil poetry is both real and synthetic, real in the *puṟam* poems but mostly synthetic in the *akam* poems". In these *akam* poems, the poem is made into an imaginary stage; the place, season, natural objects constitute the backdrop; human life is presented as the drama and the monologue of the characters constitutes the theme of the poem. These poems resemble natural tapestry, in which the geographical and climatic changes are portrayed as a suitable setting against which the amorous and valorous activities of man are depicted in an impressive manner. A general adherence to these literary conventions was highly necessary for the poet. Yet, he has always the freedom to mix up the flora and fauna of one particular *tiṇai* with those of another, or make other deviations provided they give better poetic effect.

Comparative perspective

Recent studies in comparative literature have unmistakably proved the fact that literary compositions are not merely a national phenomenon but an international one even though they are clouded with local colour and provincial features. It has been convincingly shown that *akam* type of poems is not an indigenous possession of a particualr cultural community but a possession of the classical age of the whole world. We are able to come across such types of objective love poems in almost all the classical literatures of the world. S. Vaiyapuri Piḷḷai has clearly noted that such types of poems are found in ancient Sanskrit literature. Following him, Siegfried Lienhard and George Luzerne Hart have studied the similarities between *akam* poems and the *muktaka* poetry of the

northern tradition. Both *akam* and *muktaka* poems have the same subject in common with erotic themes; both avoid individual names; both have brevity of form and various landscapes as background; both have selected stereotypical characters; the theme of separation dominates in both these traditions. They have got some similarity with the Idylls of Theorcritus and the ancient pastoral poems of the Hellenic world. All the *akam* situations have well-known parallels with the classical poems of Hellenic, Italian and French literary works. In almost all the cases these impersonal love poems were recited with the accompaniment of stringed musical instruments. Greek odes with the strophe, anti-strophe and epode pattern challenge some comparison with the *kali* type of verses at the structural level. To the Sanskrit and Tamil love poems, Hart has suggested a common origin, i.e. the literature of the Deccan megalithic culture (158). Scholars have suggested some similarities between the Greek unities and the conventions in *Caṅkam* poetry regarding the treatment of action, time and place.

Akam and oral tradition

The poems of the *akam* corpus, like the nature poetry of the Romantics, are the polished products of a refined literary culture, far removed from both the rough simplicity of folk poetry and the realistic depiction of the seamy side of rustic life which differentiates the poetry of the true countrymen. Yet, like all other ancient aristocratic poems, most of the conventions and themes of *akam* poetry may have been derived from the folk tradition even though they are highly idealized in the later ages. Jaganatha Parthasarathi opines that these "poems arose as a part of an oral tradition of dance and song and they have distilled for us the love and tears and the glory and heroism of the community of those ancient days" (17). Hart observes that "like all other writers, the authors of this poetry have modeled their compositions on the oral poems being composed by low caste performers all around them"(148). He opines that the natural poetry of the bards should have been converted into the form of conventional poetry by the scholar poets *pulavans*, with the introduction of Brahmi syllabary (342).

Anyhow, these poems differ from the folk poems in their rigid conventions, in portraying an aristocratic society, in giving no place to other aspects of love which are inevitable in real life such as dejection, divorce, etc. Another salient point is that these poems are the compositions of professional

artists. In folk literature it is very difficult to see professional poets and bards as a separate class. Most of the techniques of folk literature or the oral poems such as repetitive passages, formula's pattern, etc. are not found in *akam* poems with the only exception of poems in *kali* metre which belong to a later date.

Characterization

Since the *akam* poets possess a considerable amount of negative capability, they are able to create some unspecified characters who function as types in the human drama of love. They normally introduce three characters (i.e. hero, heroine and her friend) in a poem and make one character speak about the particular love experience or event. In some instances, depending upon specific situations, they change the characters also. Since narrative-pattern is not frequently handled by poets, they do not give much physical description of the personae. Most of the descriptions of characters are not presented directly, but given in an indirect way, that is through the description of the natural background of their region and the contrast and parallel between them and their environment. Each character functions as an archetype speaking in a culturally archetypal pattern of love. Even though the characters do not come through full existence like the epic personae, they have at least a particular episodic moment when they speak and in such a short existence they attract us as flesh and blood characters throbbing with life. Nowhere in the anthology have the poets tried to project their personality on their characters and hence the stereotyped characters linger long in our memory as living persons. The poets have attained remarkable success in delineating especially the female characters like *tōḻi* and the heroine and their psychic attitudes. The intimacy between them is so great that they often mention the lover as "our lover" and the love between the heroine and the hero as "our love". Their use of plural possessive pronoun indicates that the girls are bound together by fate as the lovers. Though the hero's feelings are also considered in the poems, poets take more into account the heroine's sufferings as they are undoubtedly greater and more attractive to the subject of poetry.

Colophon

The colophons appended at the end of these poems describe the theme and poetic situations and they may have been added by the anthologists. Hence,

they assign different situations to the same poem. The procedure of marking the poems by their *tiṇai* affiliation such as *kuṟiñci*, *mullai* etc. is not followed in *Naṟṟiṇai* and *Kuṟuntokai*. Only the poems of *Akanāṉūṟu* have *tiṇai* affiliations explained at the end of the work. There is thus no uniform adherence to the *tiṇai* classification by the colophon writers of the poems. In explaining the love situations and in indicating the character speaking in particular situations, the colophon writers are not very precise. This leads to much confusion in identifying the themes with the help of colophon. Much confusion is discernible in assigning the speech of the heroine and her maid. In spite of all these limitations, they serve as a key to open the precious treasures of these poems.

Lyric

Some scholars call these poems either lyrics or dramatic lyrics. They can be called lyrics since they are the simple, sensuous, and passionate outcries of the human heart and were once recited by the minstrels with the accompaniment of stringed instruments. The form 'lyric' is understood in the modern Western world as subjective poems and in this sense *akam* poetry cannot be called a lyrical poetry since there is no place for personal experience in them. Some scholars think that these poems formed the scripts for performances by dance troupes. This explains the specialized nature of the 'poetic diction' and the fixed situations dealt with in these poems (Parthasarati 44).

Organic unity

Structurally, these poems are governed by organic unity which is a salient feature of the ancient Tamil court poems. Stable and balanced form and harmonious relationship between the part and the whole are themselves the important aspects of these poems. Tolkāppiyar's conception of *vaṇappu* and his explanation regarding the constituent parts of poetry clearly illustrate the theoretical basis of the organic conception of literary art as conceived by the ancient Tamils. This organic unity gives architectonic beauty to all these poems. Speaking about the architectonic beauty of the *akam* corpus, T.P. Meenakshisundaran observes "These remind us of the towering *gopuram* of Tanjore, expressing the aspiring spiritual height of the Cōḻa age, though it is not the handiwork of anyone sculptor but the work of a group of artists, each giving

expression in rock to a vision of his own". In these poems poetic imagination functions as a creative force and a synthesizing power which helps to make fine images, arresting similes and fine narrative techniques. Supernatural events play only a minor role and are made subservient to human action.

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5. THE NATURE OF EROTIC POETRY AS REVEALED IN NEṬUNALVĀṬAI

Neṭunalvāṭai, which is traditionally attributed to Nakkirar stands high among the ten idylls of the *Caṅkam* anthology for its grandeur of theme, for the powerful way in which it depicts the diverse moods and attitudes of the main personae, and for its deep perception of the flora and fauna, as well as for logical and skilful form of narration, for its subtle artistic embllishments and neat characterization. This poem, with its diverse images and silently moving natural tapestries, reminds us of a small but marvellous *Gopura* decked with a number of variegated carvings, the total design forming an organic whole to which each part makes its own contribution. It exemplifies the creative genius of the early classical minds, which aimed not at expressing their own personality but at creating a pattern of meaning which should be significant to all times. This wonderful piece of art with its 188 lines introduced a new kind of poem to the Tamils by making an artistic fusion of the best elements of the ancient erotic and heroic traditions of the Tamils. Its newness and the perceptible deviation from the traditional form which characterizes it have been a source of confusion to traditional scholiasts and commentators; who have expressed a number of contradictory opinions about its nature, without coming to any generally acceptable conclusion.

Akam poetry

The traditional commentator Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar has endeavoured to prove that *Neṭunalvāṭai* belongs to the heroic corpus: he puts it in the category of *vākai*, *kūtirpācaṟai* as its theme: Some other scholars who share the same notion have included it under *vañcittiṇai* and *koṟṟavai nilai*[1]. Traditionally, its subject-matter was held to be *vāṭaippācaṟai*, a heroic theme suggested in *puṟapporuḷ veṇpāmālai*. That is why a veṇpā from *puṟapporuḷ veṇpāmālai* illustrating that theme is appended at the end of *Neṭunalvāṭai*. Some others have suggested both vākai as well as pālai as its theme, suggesting the possibility of interpreting it as belonging both to the heroic and erotic traditions[2]. Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar quotes the ancient classical dictum asserted by Tolkāppiyar that the poetic personae in *akam* poems should not be mentioned by their proper names and concludes that since the *neem*, which is a totemic symbol of the Pandya dynasty is referred to in the

concluding passage of *Neṭunalvāṭai*, the poem should definitely be classed under the *puṟam* category. M. Varadarajan also asserts that, were it not for the reference to the neem, then this idyll would form an excellent example of an *akam* poems dealing with the universal theme of love.

The argument regarding the *neem* symbol seems weak when we consider the context in which it is mentioned in the poem. In the first place, it is not the proper name of the hero to rank this poem as *puṟam*; in the second, the poem does not show the *neem* as worn by the hero, but only as tied to the lance of one of the warriors who is showing the wounded warriors to the king. This does not give sufficient evidence to say that the *neem* is used to indicate the Pandya dynasty. As far as this episode of the camp life is concerned, the *neem* may have been used as a ritual item to exorcise the ghosts or evil spirits that haunt the camp where wounded soldiers are lying. It certainly does not furnish good ground for including this poem under the category of *puṟam*.

Classifying the poems as *akam* and *puṟam* on the basis of the mentioning of proper names does not hold good as far as the *Caṅkam* anthology is concerned since most of the poems belonging to *puṟam*, are devoid of the mentioning of proper names. When we look into *Neṭunalvāṭai* as a whole, the love element far out weighs the heroic element introduced in a small episode about the camp life. The main aim of the poet seems to be to give a very beautiful and lively picture of an ideal heroine who is tormented both by the absence of her lord as well as by the cruel visit of the winter season. That is why, the first part, running to 168 lines depicts the heroine in an ideal pastoral atmosphere. After the intervention of the narrator in line 168, the poet treats the camp life in 20 lines which forms an isolated episode in this long love poem. Even here, the hero is not portrayed as being engaged in any martial activity but depicted as a magnanimous and friendly leader who is generous and amiable towards his warriors. The episode of the camp life, and in particular the absence of any sign for an apparent end to the campaign, serve to heighten the pathetic sentiment of the heroine, who has no possibility to see the hero in the near future and to emphasize the vain wish of her companion who explicitly reveals her anxiety for the return of the hero.

This design leads us to doubt the traditional statement that this poem was composed to commemorate the heroic qualities of Talaiyāṉaṅkāṉattuc ceruveṉra

Neṭuñceḻiyaṉ, more especially as the corpus provides no convincing evidence for that. It hardly seems likely that the Pandya king would have allowed the poet to compose a long poem describing his wife, her domestic life, her chamber, her attitude, and her mental agony due to his absence etc. and recite it in his court before his counsellors and others. We do better, therefore, to regard this poem as an example of *akam* poetry, dealing with imaginary situations and typical characters like other *akam* poems, than as one having any historical authenticity.

Mullai theme

If we wish to include this *akam* poem in any particular traditional poetic category, it is best to include it under *mullai* rather than *pālai*. As in many other *mullai* poems, the jungle tract forms a part of the panorama, and it is treated as a landscape against which to portray the wifely endurance and patient waiting of the heroine. The central theme treated in *mullai* is the stoic endurance of the pangs of separation by the heroine when her wedded lord has to leave her for his pursuits, and the consoling words of her chaperons. *Neṭunalvāṭai* with the background of the cruelest visit of the North wind portrays such a situation.

Introducing the description of the hero's camp life into the design of *mullai* poetry is not a novel technique in the *Caṅkam* anthology. A number of stray verses as well as *mullaippāṭṭu*, one among the ten idylls, bear witness to this. The stray verses in the anthology present only a few references whereas *Neṭunalvāṭai,* being a long poem, treats it in a detailed way in some twenty lines. This technique of introducing a heroic scene at the end of the *akam* poem may have been done by the poet to provide a contrast to the main theme of the first part, as suggested above, and at the same time to present aspects of both *akam* and *puṟam* in a single poem. Certainly, it does not seem justified to call *Neṭunalvāṭai* a *puṟam* poem simply on the ground that the poet has introduced a description of camp life running to 20 lines in a long poem of 188 lines.

Theory of akam poetry in neṭunalvāṭai

While we look into the whole poem, we are able to see the conscious efforts taken by the poet to make it a fine piece of the *akam* class poetry. Firstly, like other *akam* poems, he has treated the human drama in its setting of time and space and with a rich use of imagery. The accompaniments of *tiṇai* poems such as

its flora and fauna, its people, high as well as low, it's appointed deity and other items are portrayed in a very beautiful manner. The tendency to select and emphasize a few features is also noticeable in the treatment of human characters which is in line with the well-known device of the 'School of Classical Poets', who aimed at heightening the pitch by a few broad suggestions without building up pictures of much detail. In this poem also the accompaniments are used to bring about a background in tune with the human situation – a literary device labeled as "pathetic fallacy" by Ruskin. Secondly, his theory of composition is in conformity with the definition given by T.S. Eliot to objective poetry, that "poetry is not the expression of emotion but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality but an escape from emotions. Consequently, he is not expressing his emotions directly but through an imaginary character. Even though the individual talent of the poet is powerfully displayed throughout poem, the poet has no personality but only a medium. All his personal emotions are converted into art emotions and with a good amount of negative capability and empathy he is speaking through a female character who is a well wisher of the heroine. In this respect, the poem resembles a dramatic monologue in which the narrator appears on the stage at a particular moment and narrates the events that revolve around the hero and heroine. Unlike the dramatic monologues of Browning, the poet is very careful to avoid the proper names of the hero and heroine, as well as topical allusions which may particularize the emotion. As in other *akam* poems, the poet of *Neṭunalvāṭai* is dealing not with individual feelings that are restricted to the characters he portrays, but with those that, being an aspect of human nature, are common to all mankind.

The "non-naming" of *akam* poetry is described as an excellent device for inducing the poet to register his own personal experience in the field of love, without fear of censure or a sense of shyness[5]. As far as the poets objectivity is concerned, "the physical emotions shake off their sordid attributes when they are converted into artistic emotions; they are freed from the limitations of time, and space and are universalized. Consequently, they cease to be a part of the direct physical experience of the spectator, raise him above the petty mundane experiences of the self, refine his sensibility and sublimate his consciousness[6]. Hence, the characters also are seen not as individuals bound by space and time, but as types expressing general aspects of human nature and of human beings in love. This, again emphasize the fact that the poem is devoid of subjective

elements and conforms to the tradition of *akam* poetry. This quality of converting personal emotion into art emotion, together with the taking of general human nature as the right and proper theme for the poet to handle, these are salient features of ancient Tamil love poetry, shared in by *Neṭunalvāṭai* and giving to that poetry a universal appeal. Due to these reasons a recent critic has observed that "the love theme of *aintiṇai* is morally good, universally acceptable, humanly possible and poetically fit for imagination"[7]. In this respect, *Neṭunalvāṭai* belongs to the great corpus of ancient classical erotic poems of the world which include the beautiful love poems of the Grecian world, the *song of songs* of the Hebraic world, the pastoral poems of the Latin literatures and the *Muktaka* poems of the Sanskrit tradition.

On the basis of the treatment of theme another scholar has recently grouped *akam* poems under three categories, namely

1. Poems dealing purely with *akam* themes;
2. *akam* poems in which historical and mythological details are introduced in the form of descriptions or similes; and
3. *akam* poems which seem to eulogize certain kings and chieftains, as in *puṟam* poems in which the details about those kings and chieftains are linked in a purposive manner with their *akam* themes.

Thus, the first step in *akam* poetry is to sing pure *akam* themes, the second is to introduce *puṟam* materials into *akam*, and the third is to compose a poem quite like an *akam* poems but suggesting the *puṟam* mattar by implication[8]. *Mulliappāṭṭu* and *Neṭunalvāṭai* may be included in the last category.

Neṭunalvāṭai and the Pastoral tradition

Neṭunalvāṭai can be compared with the ancient pastoral poems of Greek and Latin literatures, which ordinarily describe a picturesque rural scene of gentle beauty and innocent tranquility and narrate a story of some simple sort of happiness. It also resembles the ancient Idylls of the western tradition dealing with domestic life, in which description of beautiful rural scenery is often the essential element. Yet, while we compare in general the *mullai* poems with the

western pastoral, the differences between the two for us seem more marked than what they have in common. The unsophisticated spontaneity which Virgil attributes to his shepherds passing their days in endless song in the grasses of the Roman Champagne is not seen in the shepherds of *Neṭunalvāṭai*, who are portrayed with sorrow laden heart caused by the ferocious onset of winter. The detailed picture of the Shepherds' life given in Theocrats' world is absent in *Neṭunalvāṭai*. Yet, like the western pastoral songs, *Neṭunalvāṭai* also is the product of a refined literary culture, far removed from both the rough simplicity of folk poetry and from the realistic portrayal of the grimmer side of rustic life which distinguishes the poetry of true countrymen. The difference between the western and oriental tradition arises from the difference in their conception of the pastoral. To the westerner, pastoral is an ideal landscape, a utopia and a dream world, to which he longs to escape from the cares and tribulations of life. To the Tamils, it is a real background against which to portray the wedded loyalty of womanhood; for him, even its flowers are a symbol of chastity.

Poem on the North wind

Neṭunalvāṭai can also be interpreted as a poem glorifying the amiable as well as awful nature of the North wind. Caṅkam poems are generally named either on the basis of theme, or form, or length, or meter. But the present poem is named after the North wind, with two beautiful attributions 'long' and 'good'; 'long' is taken to refer to the heroine, who is unable to tolerate the absence of her husband, 'good' to the hero, who is engaged in martial activities. If this is so, the poet's aim may have been to compose a new kind of poem on the north wind, showing simultaneously its impact on people of different moods and temper and portraying the psychological response of the hero and heroine towards it. This is suggested by his glorification of the wind as *Vaṭantaittaṃvaḻi*. If this is indeed the aim of the poet, then, *Neṭunalvāṭai* may be regarded as an attempt to create a new type of literature with the materials provided by the traditional form of *akam* poetry. In this sense, the poem challenges comparison with Shelley's *Ode to the west wind*, even though the structure and tempo of the two poems differ vastly. Nakkīrar's poem is an objective one, whereas Shelley's work is a purely subjective poem where the poet projects his ego on the wind and sees the wind as he likes. Where Shelley invokes God or the unseen power in the west wind, describes its destructive and creative strength and recalls its effect on earth, sea and sky, Nakkīrar is content to present its impact on the pastoral landscape, the

dwelling places of the herdsmen, the rich people of the city, the aristocrats in the in the palace, the hero and the soldiers who are in the camp. Shelley's poem is designed as a moving lyrical prayer addressed to the west wind. *Neṭunalvāṭai,* also, is designed like a prayer but the prayer is made by the narrator and not the poet. Yet, the prayer is addressed not to a specific person or God. Though Naccinārkkiniyar states that the prayer is addressed to *Korravai*, the poem itself gives no clue for this. Hence, the phrase "*iṉṉemuṭikatil amma*"can be taken as the wish of the narrator, rather than a prayer addressed to a particular God or Goddess.

Parallels and Contrasts

On the basis of thematic content, *Neṭunalvāṭai* can be divided into four major sections. The first section portrays the effect of the north wind
on the simple herdsmen living in the lap of nature; the second section describes its impact on the rich men and women of the city; the third section depicts its effect on the aristocrats of the palace, especially on the heroine; and the final section, its effect on the warlike heroes, in the camp. All four sections serve as parallels to each other and the contrast between them enhances the effective portrayal of each part and gives a coherent design to the whole poem. With the landscape of each section as the background against which his characters move, and with the north wind as an ever present force, the poet is able to draw fine paradoxes both on the physical and psychological levels. This subtle artistic skill gives an architectonic beauty to the whole poem. When we look at the poem as a whole, it becomes clear that all the above four sections help in one way or another to highlight the mental agony of the heroine. Each of the four sections functions as a separate episode, complete in itself, yet the impression that they are inseparable parts of a whole is achieved by organically linking them with the central theme; it is this which makes the poem such an excellent one in texture. The poet has a painter's eye for details and picturesque effect. But we are never given description for description's sake. External details are used to enhance the main theme and to give an architectonic effect to the poem. Like a good painter, the poet first gives a word picture of the dark clouds covering the sky and giving torrential rain. Step by step, he brings the reader through the pastoral region to the city, showing a number of natural scenes on the way. He then portrays the life of the rich people in the winter season. Through the massive buildings of the city he lures the mind of the reader to the palace itself, to the chamber of the heroine,

to her bed and finally to the camp of the hero. Such a portrayal of the whole of life in a particular season may be seen in the Western Idylls, also.

Apart form the parallels and contrasts which he draws between the four sections, the poet follow the same technique with in each section. Thus, in the first section, we have the parallel scenes of the sufferings of the animals and the herdsmen who tend them, and the contrast between the lethargic crane and the flowers that shine like gold. The second section, portraying the life of the rich people, is a parallel to the first section which depicts the simple life of the herdsmen. The licentious drunkards who roam aimlessly in the street is a complete contrast to the herdsmen who sit in the rain without finding proper shelter. In the second section itself, as a contrast to the drunkards, the poet introduces the maidens of the city who with the help of the fragrance of the blooming flowers realize the visit of evening and offer their vesper worship to it. The images of the doting pigeons, reluctant to separate from each other, is a striking contrast to the lonely heroine who is shedding tears for the absence of her Lord. In the third section the description of the grandeur and glory of the luxurious palace contrasts with that of the heroine sleeping on her bed devoid of all natural and artificial ornaments and lying like a *puṉaiyā ōviyam*. All the images and episodes are moving very slowly and gradually disappear from our eyes like the scenes of a silent drama. They give good amount of scenic effect and artistic beauty to the whole poem.

In addition to contrasts on a physical level, contrasts are also introduced on a psychological level. Thus the flower in the first section heightens the suffering of the herdsmen, whereas it delights the maidens of the second section. In each of the four sections the poet introduces the image of light, each time in a different way. In the first section the herdsmen are carrying the burning firewood to drive away the bitter chill; the second section presents iron lamps used to offer vesper worship; the third section introduces beautiful Grecian lamps which burn straightly to remove the darkness; the last section portrays a lamp leaning southwards and burning luminously. The heroine's lamp is burning straightly but her mind is leaning towards her lord who is in the camp. In contrast to this, the hero's lamp is leaning southward, probably the direction where the heroine is staying, but his mind is straight and firm on his duty. Though contrasts of this kind abound in the *Caṅkam* corpus, the author used them in a functional way to

illustrate, ennoble and enhance the main theme of *Neṭunalvāṭai*. Due to this kind of skilful craftsmanship, George L. Hart has differentiated modern and classical Tamil poems as "Modern poetry is poetry of declamation which sounds wonderful when read from a platform but ancient poems can be enjoyed by a reader who likes to pore over every line to discover suggested meaning".[9]

Characterization

With the help of a number of contrasts and arresting images the poet aims at certain level of characterization. With a touch of humanitarian spirit he presents people from the various strata of his contemporary society. First, he shows the herdsmen who belong to a socially and economically backward class, then the rich city dwellers, and finally the war like aristocracy. Since this is an aristocratic literature, it portrays the hero and the heroine as ideal examples and uses the activities of the other two classes as background for their effective portrayal. Yet, what appeals to us is the sympathetic portrayal of the herdsmen and other classes into this aristocratic literature. Wherever he has an opportunity, the poet glorifies, the artisans, their creative power and the craftsmanship of other artists. Thus we have an elaborate description of such man-made wonders as the Grecian lamps, the beautiful palace, the decorated cot, the luxurious chamber and its beautiful carvings. Yet, in the midst of all such descriptions the hero and heroine stand as unique persons who are the idealized models of the aristocracy. Since the course of events is developed through narrative and not by means of dialogues, the poet had to depend for his characterization upon images as well as upon the portrayal of the activities of the characters. Most of the images used to highlight the character of the heroine are static, whereas those which attend the hero are dynamic. To heighten the pathetic feelings of the heroine, the poet first shows her simple and modest stature in the midst of manifold luxurious images derived both from natural and artificial sources. To emphasize her pathetic feeling, he shows us a painting in which the moon sits with his beautiful wife *Urōkaṉi* and depicts the heroine as sighing and shedding tears, contrasting her present loneliness with the conjugal bliss that *Urōkaṉi* enjoys with her husband.

In contrast to her modesty and femininity stands the character of the hero, who never bothers about the winter season and visits the camp of the wounded warriors. Even though his lamp is leaning southwards due to the blow of the

North wind, the hero is firm in his obligation. The horse which follows him sprinkle mud on him, but he never cares about that. Placing his hand on the shoulder of one of his warriors as an expression of his cordial and courteous mind he visits the wounded warriors in the midnight. Through onomatopoeia, the poet makes us hear the sound of rain drops falling on his umbrella. The poem which is thus developed through contrast and parallelism also ends with an oxymoron as

"சிலரோடு திரிதரும் வேந்தன்
பலரொடு முரணிய பாசறைத் தொழிலே"

Images and style

Since the climate in which the events are set is a slow moving one, the poet also uses either static or slow-moving images. Consequently, the pace of the poem also is slow moving, like the gait of a bride treading in silent wearing a number of beautiful ornaments which add additional charm to her inherent beauty. The shivering herdsmen with bending poles, the freezing monkeys, the falling birds, the waiting cranes, the iron lamps, the pigeons with red legs, etc. are some of the images which bring before our minds eye the winter season in the pastoral background. All the images are used in a functional way and hence they form an integral part of the poem. Phrases like துவலை கற்ப, மெத்தென் சாயல், புனையா ஓவியம், etc. are highly emotive and they powerfully appeal to the sense of the readers. It is due to such qualities that Prof P. Sundaram pillai, the author of *Manōnmaṇiyam* once said: "I would request the reader to study it in the original and to say whether the author does not deserve to be placed among the very best of the poets of any country"[10].

The theory that underlies the composition of this poem also is organic and not mechanical. Consequently, the structure and poetic content grow spontaneously like the leaves of a tree. The structure is decided by the content and the content has no isolated existence apart from its structure. Hence, there is no possibility for literary form to run contrary to the content. Both grow organically, each enhancing the other.

Speaking about the purpose of *akam* poems, Sp.Manickam observes that "The motive for creating a special literature with love as its sole theme by the

Tamil genius is to educate both sexes in the art of love". But my opinion is entirely different. One of the functions of art, at least in a heroic age, seems to be the production of luxury goods for a ruling class. If we view this poem in sociological perspective, it becomes clear that the poet is preparing an article of luxury, in response to the capricious demand of his patron and in accordance with his patron's cherished ideals and taste. Like other poems of its kind, this poem too reflects an idealized picture of the aristocrats of the *Caṅkam* age. But the poet also holds up a mirror to his patron by showing him how he should behave, he makes it by that much more likely that is how he will behave. And this is what the poet of *Neṭunalvāṭai* has done; by presenting such lively ideal characters, he not only pleases but instructs the ruling class in matters of their moral and social activities.

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6. THEORY OF DEVOTIONAL POETRY AS REVEALED IN PARIPĀṬAL

Nature of the corpus

The purpose of this study is to explicate the theories of devotional poetry that underlie the devotional songs of *Paripāṭal*. This study is mainly based on the two verses of *Paripāṭal*, viz., 17 and 18, which glorify Lord Murukan.

The extant poems of *Paripāṭal* resemble the ancient Greek odes of the post-heroic age both in spirit and temper. Like the ancient Greek odes, the songs of *Paripāṭal* are also formal, ceremonious, and complexly organized lyric poetry, usually of considerable length. They are effective vehicles for public utterances on various states, religious and social functions. That all these poems are meant for recitation in the courts of feudal lords, chieftains and in royal or religious or aristocratic ceremonies is supported by a number of internal evidences which explicitly speak about the recitation of such poems by professional minstrels, and the patronage system which fosters these songs. The poverty – ridden state of the poet, and his economic dependence on the royal *Pāṇṭya* king who patronized him are well portrayed in *Paripāṭal* ten, where the poet is pictured as a beggar stretching his arms before the king for alms:

இலம்படு புலவர் ஏற்றகை ஞெமரப்
பொலஞ்சொரி வழுதியிற் புனலிறை பரப்பி (10.126-127)

The next poem speaks about the recitation of such long poems with *marutappaṇ* by a minstrel with the accompaniment of a stringed musical instrument during the bathing festivities of Vaiyai. The musical quality of *Paripāṭal* is described in this corpus as "இன்னியல் மாண்தேர்ச்சி பாடல்" (11:137)

Though tradition holds that there existed 70 songs of this genre, only 22 are now available and these extant songs also have undergone many changes in the course of time. From an ancient prologue which commemorates the commentary of Parimēlaḻakar, we are able to know that a poetess named Kanti, who lived before Naccinārkkiniyar has interpolated many lines and words in *Paripāṭal* . It also speaks about the various readings of

Paripāṭal caused by the scribes, interpolators and recitators. From this prologue we are able to know that Parimēlaḻakar has corrected the existing poems. Like other ancient Tamil classical texts, the exact date of composition of this anthology is also not known clearly. Astronomers have tried their best to fix its date with the help of some of the astronomical hints referred to in this text regarding the period in which there was a heavy rain in the mountain of *Caiyam*. Regarding this, P.T. Seenivasa Iyengar says, "It has proved a failure because the information in the text is not enough for calculating the date without adventitious, unwarranted assumptions and the information supplied by the annotator has made confusion worst confounded"(584).

Anyhow, some of the internal references and the general nature of the entire text help us come to the conclusion that at least the poems on Vaiyai in *Paripāṭal* might have been composed in the post-heroic period and before the emergence of pure gnomic literature. Hence, unlike the Tamil gnomic poems, the songs of *Paripāṭal* on Vaiyai glorify licentious life and carry no crusade against drinking and prostitution. Unlike the gnomic works of Buddhism and Jainism, the poems of *Paripāṭal* glorify sensuous life as against ascetic life. Yet, in their blending of *purāṇic* allusions and philosophical speculation, they differ from the *Caṅkam* anthologies in multifarious ways. Some poems narrate the story of the birth of Muruga as narrated in Vālmiki's Rāmāyana and the Bhāratam of Viyāsar. Some present the five *avatars* of Vishnu also. This leads us to think that the poems on *Vaiyai* which have got some secular interest and the poems on the two presiding deities' viz., Murukaṉ and Tirumāl, might have been composed at different periods. There are many possibilities to conclude that the devotional poems on Murukaṉ and Tirumāl were composed after the gnomic works (i.e. after 6th century A.D.)

The social milieu

The social milieu which produced the songs of *Paripāṭal* is entirely different from that which produced the heroic songs of the *Caṅkam* anthology. *Paripāṭal* is the product of a well settled feudal set-up where the merchant class and the feudal landlords occupy the higher stratum of the Tamil society. It represents a melting point of the secular monarchy into a theoretical set-up where secular laws and moral codes came to be identified with religious laws and

dogmas. Being a cultivated society with considerable material advancements, it turns its attention from martial activities such as plunder, looting and raids to philosophical speculations and supernatural visions on the religious side and indulgence in sensual matters on the earthly life. Thus the whole anthology portrays the two aspects of life led by the same society-the material and the spiritual as embedded in the poem on *Vaiyai* and the poems on the two presiding deities *Murukaṉ* and *Tirumāl* respectively. Hence, the old classification of *akam* and *puṟam* underwent tremendous change and the secular interest of *puṟam* is gradually replaced by the theological and metaphysical interests of the religious creeds.

Development

The secular hero of the heroic literature is replaced by the transcendental as well as immanent Godhead. The martial activities tinged with realistic panorama as portrayed in heroic literature are replaced by heroic activities woven with supernatural background. The human hero presented in the poems on *Vaiyai* is not portrayed as a Promethean figure like the hero of the heroic literature, but as a pigmy, and a butt of ridicule. This anthology has started neglecting gradually the human interest and has shown keen interest in superhuman heroes and events. The synthesizing function which the poetic imagination did in the heroic poems yields place to pan-human vision. The hortatory nature of the heroic literature has been replaced by another type of hortatory nature which stimulates people to become pious and religious rather than to be brave and free. If the heroic poems of the ancient Tamils can be described as literature of action, *Paripāṭal* can be deemed as literature of entertainment and religious fervor. The heroic literature has got its own social function of making people more active, and brave, which in some way or other helped them fight the enemy force and expand their territories which the heroic age generally needs. The social function of *Paripāṭal* is to please the audience as well as to arouse some religious awe which a theocratical society (where religious laws and secular laws are identical) generally demands.

Onwards march

Thus *Paripāṭal* represents a turning point in the onward march of Tamil literature i.e. from the earthly to the spiritual, the secular to the religious. In heroic literature, under a monarchical set-up, the poet sings of the patron for material prosperity. In *Paripāṭal*, in a theocratic set-up, the poet prays to the God who is an exaggerated and idealized replica of the king, to give the so-called idealistic alms such as Divine love, grace, etc. As far as the poems on *Murukaṉ* and *Tirumāl* are concerned, the role of the poet is transmuted from one who composes encomiums on earthly hero into one who composes devotional lyrics. In the heroic literature the aristocracy is at the top of the social stratum whereas in these poems, it is under the protection of an ideal superhuman power, who is God.

The two poems taken for study (17 and 18) which celebrate Lord Murukaṉ and his hilly abode at Tirupparaṅkuṉram belong to the tradition of devotional poetry, and they are designed more or less like the panegyric poems of heroic literature. But, the secular content of the heroic poems is here replaced by religious thoughts. According to the colophon, they are composed by two poets namely Nallaḷiciyār and Kuṉrampūtaṉār who have contributed poems only to this anthology. Though these poems are a harmonious blending of devotional fervor, heroic temper, the elements of *akam* poems and natural poetry, the devotional spirit is the driving force and in this central thread all the episodes related to the above sentiments are organically interlinked. Since Paraṅkuṉru attained the status of a celestial abode after A.D.650 these poems may also have been composed in a later period. It is also probable to consider these two poems as posterior to the gnomic poems since the devotional spirit pervades the Tamil literary arena only after the gnomic works.

The social background

It has been generally argued by the formalists that history of poetry is the history of the development of verbally formulated devices. But we must be aware of the fact that poetry changes its means of expression, not for formal changes, but to find a perceptible, precise expression of new realities. According to sociological critics, the structure in poetry reflects structure as found in our real

environment. The changing aspects of literary theory and of critical concepts represent a coming to terms on the part of theorists and critics with changing political ideas. It is for this reason that Marx has expressed the view that "It is social being that determines the consciousness of the people". Hence, literature, which is a superstructure of society, must be viewed as working parts of the culture, forms that people find necessary because of the conditions in which they live their lives.

If we view from this angle the developments and changes that took place in Tamil literature, we can clearly notice that its thematic content, technicalities, structure and other verbal devices were conditioned by the milieu and mentality of the society which determined its literary trends. The heroic age fostered one kind of literature which was highly needed for such a vigorous and active social set-up. When monarchies were established and private property developed, the social milieu shaped another type of secular gnomic literature, mostly composed in the *veṇpā* meter which was essentially needed for the political and social purposes of that age. When the society became theocratic, the secular interest had been replaced by theological interest and hence devotional literature started making its appearance on the literary arena. The poems taken for elucidation represent in multifarious facets the starting point of the evolution of devotional literature. The poet, in order to express his devotional sentiment, is prepared to take neither the *akaval* nor the *veṇpā* metre like his predecessors. Instead of inventing a new one, he simply revives an old literary medium *paripāṭal,* which has been suggested by Tolkāppiyar as a suitable vehicle for composing poems on *akam* themes. This poetic medium with its medley of various metres helps convey his religious experience which is somewhat different from the devotional sentiments of the later devotional poets. This composite metrical form provides a suitable medium for presenting a variety of episodes belonging to heroic, devotional and amorous spheres. When pure devotional poetry evolved to its full form, the poets have also started handling *viruttam* instead of *paripāṭal.*

Patronage system

The secular courts of the kings served as the only patronage system in the heroic age, whereas, in the theocratic society, temples also came to be regarded as patrons of art and poetry. While most of the secular literatures were cultivated in

the courts, the devotional poems were fostered by the temples which were under the patronage of the ruling chieftains or feudal lords. The poems fostered by these religious institutions were so designed as to embody the ideals and aspirations of these religious sects and to attract the attention of the people who accepted the dogmas and doctrines of such religions. Hence, we can say that the devotional poems have also been composed by individuals who composed poems under the capricious demands of patrons of art and religion. Yet, like other feudal arts, these poems are not individualistic but collective. They breathe the collective life of the temple. The poet also lives with his audience in one simultaneous public world of emotion. So, it remains social and public but its sphere is restricted to its own religious sect.

Devotional tradition

As already observed, devotional literature can successfully thrive in a theocretical society where secular laws and moral codes are identified as divine laws. Such a social condition can exist mostly in a well settled society which has transcended its tribal stage and has established kingdoms and stable governments though there are some exceptions in the case of old Hebraic culture. Being cultivated under patronage systems, the ancient Tamil devotional poems also bear some of the characteristic features of classical literature both in temper and spirit. Since they flourished posterior to heroic literature, they adopt most of the techniques and tendencies of heroic literature. Thus, they have attributed heroic and amorous activities to their Godhead also. If the heroic literature helped indirectly to expand private property, the gnomic and devotional literature helped in some way or other to safeguard private property.

Literature of movement

These poems can be called sectarian literature or literature of movement since they are bigotedly devoted to the interests of a sect and motivated to spread its ideals and ideological ends. Hence, they have got some propagandist value too. Their purpose is to convey effectively the ideals of their own denomination and thus to make their religious sect stronger than before. Hence, they try to adopt some of the elements of folk literature as well as the elements of *akam* tradition which were highly prevalent among the Tamil people. Poem 17 begins

with the description of the worship performed by *vēlaṉ*, the priest of Lord Murukaṉ before his temple at *Paraṅkuṉṟu*. This description reminds us more or less of the scenes of veṟiyāṭal narrated in the poems on *kuṟiñci* theme in *akam* poems. The same poem brings before our mind's eye the sulking scene of a wife waging a domestic quarrel with her husband who returns home after his licentious entanglement with a prostitute. This poem is adorned with beautiful, picturesque description of nature which is a revelation of God's glory on earth. All these episodes provide some variety and they are so textured as to enhance the devotional sentiment which is the key tone as well as the be-all and end-all of this poem. From this we are able to infer that the poet's aim is to provide a composite literary form combining almost all the elements of the poetical traditions that existed on that soil.

Two traditions

When we analyze the later devotional literature of the world, we can clearly trace the existence of two traditions, namely

1. The affective tradition, and
2. The theological tradition.

Among these, the poems belonging to the former tradition are composed in such a way as to attract the emotional faculty of the auditors. Consequently, they are endowed with the elements of folk literature, the simple religious experience of the modest human soul, the soul stirring sensuous diction, rhythm and musical qualities. But the poems of the theological tradition are embellished with word play, deep allegorical meanings and much metaphysical speculations which may attract only the aristocrats as well as the elites. The *tōttira nūṟkaḷ* of the Tamil devotional tradition can be included under the former category, whereas the *cāttira nūṟkaḷ* can be classified with the latter group. Yet, with regard to the above two devotional poems of *Paripāṭal*, it is very difficult to include them under either of the above two broad classes because these two traditions are intermingled in them. In this respect, *Paripāṭal* represents the ancient type of devotional poems which belongs to an earlier stage where the above two categories have not developed into separate ramifications.

Evolutionary literature

No literature is built upon a vacuum. Hence, no poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists since all poetry and art gradually evolve from the old native tradition. So the success of the artist lies not in inheriting the tradition or imitating it, but in the process of assimilating it, obtaining it by hard labour and by handling it in a creative way. When the poet inherits or imitates the tradition, he cannot create anything new but when he assimilates it, he can innovate something new in the lines of the old tradition. If we analyse the poems of this corpus in relation to its antecedent poems, it becomes obvious that the poets of *Paripāṭal* are traditional in the sense that they have assimilated the traditions of their predecessors into their own, and reshaped them according to the nature of their social milieu and religious ideals. Hence, they are able to mould a new form of literature with the help of the traditional materials, techniques and conventions. By blending the vital aspects of the literary traditions of their predecessors and by connecting them with the devotional sentiment, they are able to produce a new type of devotional poetry which provides us with variety and satisfies our aesthetic tastes in multifarious ways. Hence, even from a single song, we are able to experience a variety of feelings and enjoy multifarious sentiments and scenes. In poem 17, the poet first brings before the audience the temple of Murukaṉ at *Tiruppaṟaṅkuṉṟam* and enables them to see the worship performed by the priest *vēlaṉ*: in the second section he feasts their sense of hearing by providing various music tuned by both artificial instruments and by natural objects: the third section brings some amorous episodes; the fourth enables them to visualize some supernatural events through their conceptual faculty; the fifth introduces the sulking scene which normally occurs in the *marutam* poems of the *akam* poetry; the sixth division gives a beautiful image of water falling from the mountain like garland and in the last section we feel as if participating in a collective prayer performed by the narrator not for his own sake but for the sake of his sect. The same pattern is handled with some slight deviations in the next poem also.

Music and lyrical quality

Since devotional poems are meant for recitation, music has become an integral part of the Tamil devotional tradition. Such an emphasis on music has led in the later day poets to identify God with music. Ascribing the names of tunes to poems is a unique trait of Tamil devotional poems. This is abundantly seen in the hymns of *Āḻwārs* and *Nāyaṉmārs*. Such an attitude is discernible in the poems of *Paripāṭal* too. According to the colophon, Nallaccutanār has set the musical notes to these two poems and the tunes are named *nōtiṟam* and *kāntāram* respectively. It is curious to recall that all the poems of *Paripāṭal* are arranged on the basis of tunes by the compilers.

With regard to their musical quality, we can group the songs of *Paripāṭal* under the category of lyrical poetry. Yet we cannot say that they are completely the spontaneous expressions of the poet's own thoughts and sentiments, as lyric poetry is now understood in the Western countries. Though it seems at the outset that the poet expresses his own emotions and experiences, the poems are designed in such a way that the whole audience of his religious sect can share the emotions and experiences. The emotions being common, the ideals being general and the experience being collective, the poems attain more perennial value than ordinary, secular, subjective poems. Though the emotions and experiences are expressed through individual poets, the singers as well as their audience may feel that they reveal the sentiments to which every bosom returns an echo and abounds in images which find a mirror in every mind. The audience may feel that the aspirations, ideals and experiences of their own heart find artistic expression in these poems. Unlike the romantic, subjective poems or some of the poems of *Puṟanāṉūṟu*, the experiences and emotions embedded in these poems can be shared by a larger audience. Unlike the secular subjective poems, the poet of this corpus does not speak about himself or for himself but has designed his poems in such a manner that the members of his religion speak about their gods or to their gods through these poems. So we can aptly say that though it is revealed through one individual, whose is a representative of that sect, it is not the voice of the individual but the voice of a group.

Wherever the poet uses the first person singular pronoun nāṉ, it does not denote the poet's own ego but the ego of his group. It is significant to note

that the two poems taken for elucidation are meant for group recitation. This is obvious from the frequent use of the first person plural pronoun form yām. Besides, the poets of this corpus do not follow either the lyrical way of expression or the dramatic way of developing the action through dialogues or the epic pattern of narration, but combine all the above three modes which can be called a mixed narration. Owing to the above discussed factors, the critics of devotional poetry generally hail such poem as occupying an intermediate position between subjective and objective poems. This pattern gives some artistic freedom to the poet as well as provides the audience with variety. In this respect, these longer poems operate in a way more closely analogous to stories in that they contain elements of narratives, characterization, theme and so on.

Prayer poems

These two poems can be described as prayer poems also since, after apostrophizing God, the poets conclude their poems with moving prayers. In poem 17, the poet prays to God to offer him peaceful life for a long time and in the next poem, he prays to God to permit him to live with his kith and kin at *Tiruppara<u>n</u>kun<u>r</u>am* under His sacred feet, and before His sanctum sanctorum. Normally, when the devotee prays to the gods, he reinforces his appeal by reminding them of previous occasions when he or some others received their help or earned their gratitude. This is a common and recurrent phenomenon which can be discernible in ordinary prayers and in prayer poems. Such an attitude is obviously seen throughout the devotional poems of Tamil literature. This technique, even though not very obvious in these two poems, is handled in the other devotional songs of *Paripāṭal*. Here such a reminder is replaced by the intertwining of various episodes of other kinds which also fulfil more or less the same purpose. Professor George Thomson, who has dealt with this aspect of primitive poetry in his monumental work **The Prehistoric Agean** has traced its origin to ritual formula and to primitive magic where people enact in fantasy the fulfilment of the desired reality.

Theory of poetry

The poets of this corpus have referred to poetry as *pāṭal* and they have deemed it as a divine thing. It is obvious from poem 17 where the poet says

பாடல் சான்று பல்புகழ் முற்றிய
கூடலோடு பரங்குன்றிடை (20 – 22)

They consider that any place can be immortalized by means of poems and such repeatedly expressed notions are one of the factors that are responsible for the emergence of multifarious *stalapurāṇās* in the later ages. Lines like

நைவளம் பூத்த நரம்பியைசீர்ப பொய்வளம்
பூத்தன பாணா நின்பாட்டு

clearly bring us to see that poetry is always recited with appropriate musical notes and with the accompaniment of musical instruments.

Literature generally helps mould or realign the personality of the audience by widening and by sorting their experience. But devotional literature functions in a different way. It provides some kind of escapist mentality to the reader. It persuades the audience to shed the worldly cares and seek the sacred feet of their gods. By giving a beautiful description of *Paraṅkuṉṟu*, the poets of this corpus beg God to enable their kith and kin to live throughout their life in His celestial abode shedding away the worldly worries and the 'still sad music of humanity'. This is the aspiration of these poets and they enthuse their audience also to tread on the same path. Hence the purpose of poetry as described by the Indian theorists as reaching the final goal *viṭu* or liberation can be taken as the goal of these devotional poems also. Their social function is to please the followers of their own sect, to infuse the cherished ideals of the poets to others and to arouse religious awe which a theocretical society generally demands.

The poet

As already observed, these poems may have been composed by scholar poets and recited by professional rhapsodists in religious festivals or in some important functions. The poetic process is inconceivable without taking into account the poet's concern for the end result, for which he creates, and what cause he serves. The problem of th poet's ideal is in essence the problem of his place in society and his intimate ties with the people. The wandering minstrels

who once occupied an important place in the literary arena were replaced by scholar poets. Consequently, the role of the wandering minstrel degenerated to the level of a go-between who is often sent as messenger either to a prostitute or to the heroine who quarrels with the hero over his licentious life. From poem 18, we are able to know that these minstrels used to sing about the glories of their paymasters before their quarreling wives in order to pacify them. The sixth poem of *Paripāṭal* speaks of the poet as "மாசில் பனுவற் புலவர்" which can be interpreted either as 'a poet who is well versed in books of blameless character' or 'one who can compose poems of spotless virtue. The epithet "மாசில் பனுவல்" itself explains the sophisticated nature of the books a poet is expected to learn or compose. In the same poem, the tongue of the poet is described as 'புலநா' which literally means 'scholarly tongue'. This emphasizes that scholarship and a thorough knowledge of poetic conventions are highly essential things for a good poem.

In primitive poetry there is no clear line between prophecy and poetry and in some instances, the poet himself assumes the role of a prophet. But in this corpus, the poet does not hold himself as the mouth of revelation but as a devotee who prays to God not only for himself but also for his own religious sect. The sixth poem of *Paripāṭal* describes the vocation of the poet as composing panegyrics, which is obvious from the phrase *pukaḻpāṭal*. Such poems are meant for recitation and hence they are described as "நாவாற் புனைந்த நன்கவிதை". The epithet *punaital* denotes the act of composition. This clearly shows that poetry is considered to be a decorative art which is implied from the verbal base *puṉai* which either means 'adorn' or 'portray something with the help of profound imagination'. It is again very significant to note that the word *kavitai* is used in the above poem to denote poetry. Yet, we have no evidence to know whether the poet has differentiated poetry (*kavitai*) from mere verse (*ceyyuḷ*)

The audience

Any change in a literary composition is effectuated, determined and conditioned by the changes that occur in the aesthetic sensibility and appreciation of the audience. The corpus gives no clue by which to know about the ideal audience as conceived by the poets of *Paripāṭal*. Yet, from the nature of these compositions and the social milieu, we are able to infer that, unlike the audience of heroic poems, the audience of *Paripāṭal* relish religious hymns which are

recited with devotional fervor and which provide some escapist motif. Hence, all the events and episodes of these poems are moulded in a manner as to revolve around a superhuman hero. When the people lose their faith on earthly heroes, and realize their limitations, they, out of their conceptual power, create superhuman, divine heroes like Murukaṉ, who are but the idealized and magnified form of the heroes of the heroic literature. It is worth recollecting here the statement of Maxim Gorky that "God has been raised high above human life, because man's and woman's finest qualities and desires found no place in the realities of life, which was the scene of an arduous struggle for a bare subsistence".

Aesthetic experience

The aesthetic experience provided by the devotional literature is described as a state of bliss–a state of self-realization or self-fulfillment. Though this corpus provides no such episodes or events to experience self-realization, it gives self-fulfillment and some spiritual uplift to its audience. To a certain extent, the poet also objectifies his emotions. This attitude gives an enduring value to the poems.

Verbal techniques

Style

The relation between language and literature is a dialectical one. Hence, style also will vary according to poetic content as well as to its purpose. If the poetic content is lofty, then the poet also handles grand style or figurative language. Since poetic language organizes and tightens the resources of everyday language, it differs from the language of the common man. Like the style of all other courtly poems, the style of this corpus can also be described as figurative style. This figurative language represents a primary human mode of dealing with the world. It is highly appealing since "in each of us there is a touch of the poet, a touch which makes its inevitable presence felt in the widespread use of figurative expression in every language, as well as in every language user, no matter what the context or how varied the purpose"(A Poetics for Psychology, 46). For giving expressive power to their figurative language the poets of this corpus use poetic diction, apply alliterations (*moṉai*) and other techniques. Like the splendid and luxurious courts of the feudal patrons and the pompous and pageant temples, the

language of this corpus also is decked with exuberant, decorative, verbal ornaments.

Oxymoron

Oxymoron is a unique form of figurative language in which normally opposed terms or events are used to express a single idea. The poets of this corpus have used oxymoron at the verbal as well as thematic levels. Apart from placing just opposing words like அடி, மேல்; கீழோர், மேலோர்; மெய்வளம், பொய்வளம் with rhythmic effect, poem 17 contrasts natural sounds of the hill with the tunes of the musical instruments. The musical effect of this passage is further heightened by the repeated use of the phrase *orutiṟam* for ten times which serves a refrain. At the hills of *Tiruppararikunṟam*, the minstrels make melodious tunes with the help of their harp. As against this artificial tune, the bees of the forest raise a humming sound. When the musicians blow their flute, the *tumpi* sends another tune against that. When the trumpets make their sound in the temple, the waterfalls make another sound akin to that. When the dancing women dance at the temple the creepers also dance in the forest. This technique helps to give a very lively description of the celestial abode, which is the major purpose of these devotional poems.

Throughout this corpus the poet perceives things with the eyes of a painter and thinks about them in terms of images. With his powerful imaginative faculty, he attributes to the natural objects and to the central forces of nature human qualities, feelings and even intentions. For powerful portrayal, he uses the technique of employing catalogues also. The catalogues of gnomic literature generally present list of human conduct, beliefs and deeds, whereas, this corpus presents a list of events that occur in the worship, the various sounds raised in the temple, and a number of natural objects that also participate in the worship. Even in such catalogues, the use of phrases with rhythmic effect such as ஆர்ததும்பு, சூர்ததும்பு, கார்ததும்பு, ஏர்ததும்பு gives additional charm to the musical quality of the poems.

Most of the picturesque descriptions and episodes introduced by these poets are handled with appropriate changes by other poets also. The music and movement of the natural objects narrated in poem 17 reminds us of the songs of

kāṉalvari in *Cilappatikāram*, the first Tamil epic, where the poet describes the natural objects in the very same manner as "பூவார் சோலை மயிலால"etc. The description of

கோதையர் கூந்தல் குஞ்சியிற்
சேர்ந்தவிழ் இதழ்

remainds us of Iḷaṅkō's description of the nuptial chamber scene as "தாரும் மாலையும் முயங்கின". In poem 18, the poet portrays a woman quarrelling with her husband for comparing her gait with a peacock. This episode finds full expression in *Kamparāmāyaṇam* in a poem which begins with "ஒதிமம் ஒதுங்கக் கண்ட உத்தமன்". In all such instances, the picturesque description of the hill in marked with suitable metaphors which are handled in a functional as well as in a decorative way.

The structure

Apart from all these verbal techniques, the poets of this corpus are very conscious of giving an artistic structure to their poems. With their subtle craftsmanship they have worked out the beginning and end in a very systematic and beautiful way. Most of the poems on *Vaiyai* theme generally start with the description of rain and end with the reconciliation between the quarreling prostitutes. Similarly, the poems on *Cevvēḷ* begin either with the heroic deeds of the hero or with the worship performed to Him by his priest and end with a very moving prayer. This gives a sense of wholeness and completeness to these poems both at the formal and thematic levels.

EPIC POETRY

7. EPIC POEMS IN TAMIL: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Till the end of the 19th century, Indology was wrongly identified with Sanskritology and the study of Indian culture was interpreted as the study of the culture and civilization of North India alone. It is regrettable that the study of South India was almost neglected by the Indologists for quite a long time. Now, scholars have started realizing the indispensability of research into South Indian culture for a better understanding of Indian culture as a whole. From the period of William Campbell, Western scholars have started evincing keen interest in the analysis of Dravidian languages. The study of Dravidian languages gained considerable momentum with the publication of the epoch-making book on South Indian Family of Languages by Dr Robert Caldwell in 1856.

William Campbell and Caldwell convincingly argue that the languages spoken in South India form a distinctive group of languages completely different from the Indo-Aryan family of languages spoken in North India. In the course of time, the linguists, who engaged themselves in the Dravidian studies, came to the conclusion that the Dravidian languages are spoken not only in South India but also in most northern parts of Indian peninsula such as Baluchistan, etc. The identification of Brahui, Kurukh and Malto (which are spoken in North India) as the Dravidian languages has given a new dimension to the study of the Dravidian languages. The Dravidian family of languages can be broadly brought under three major heads on the basis of their geographical distribution such as South Dravidian, Central Dravidian and North Dravidian.

Tamil is considered to be the most important language in the South Dravidian sub-group. This language is classical as well as modern since it has got a very rich legacy of literature and other documents which date back from the pre-Christian era to the present century. The written literature of Tamil starts with the *Caṅkam* age which is considered to be the Golden Age of Tamil literary activities. Although this prestigious language is endowed with rich cultural legacy from the pre-historic period, it is sad that there is lack of proper chronological data to compile a systematic history of Tamil literature basing on objective chronological data to compile a systematic and an authentic history of Tamil literature. Consequently, to write a systematic history of Tamil literature

basing on objective chronological data seems to be absolutely impossible. Anyhow, on the basis of the social growth as well as ideological developments in the Tamil milieu, one can look at the history of Tamil literature under the following different heads. **1. Heroic Age, 2. The Gnomic Age 3. The Devotional Age, 4. The Neo-classical age** and **5. The Romantic Age.**

The so-called *Caṅkam* corpus available to us can be brought under the heroic age although the extant works available to us in this corpus are a happy commingling of both heroic and post-heroic literary works. The heroic literature forms the superstructure of a heroic age – an age which represents the struggle between the tribals for their existence and the gradual evolution of monarchal set-up, with the emergence of three crowned monarchs, namely the Cōḻa, the Cēra and the Pāṇṭiya.

The literary output of the Tamil heroic corpus falls into two broad thematic groups, namely the *akam* literature, which deals with the pre-marital and post-marital man-woman relationship, and the *puṟam* literature, which centers on the martial activities of the royal aristocracy.

The *Caṅkam* period has also produced a very sophisticated and objective grammatical treatise namely *Tolkāppiyam* which deals with the phonetic, phonemic, lexical and semantic components of the Tamil language as well as the rhetoric and poetical conventions of its literary works.

The poems which belong to the heroic age comprise mainly of short lyrical pieces and dramatic monologues. The *puṟam* poems which deal with the martial heroism of the ancient warriors can be called subjective poems in which the poet expresses his sentiments directly and in a spontaneous way. The *akam* poems are examples of objective poems where the poets create types converting their gross emotions into art emotions and speak through a conventional set of stereotyped characters hiding their real personality. Therefore, Tamil literature has not produced either epic poems or dramatic poems in the heroic age although there are certain myths that centred around some warriors which can form the basic plots for epic poems. The heroic age or the so-called *Caṅkam* age extends roughly upto A.D. 200.

The period extending A.D.200 to A.D.700 is tentatively labeled as Gnomic age or ethical age, because this age is marked by the predominance of ethical theme influenced mainly by either Buddhism or Jainism or Ājīvakam. The ethical codes of this age mostly challenged the social values of the heroic age. The ethical literature is mainly the product of a society which has seen significant developments in its material conditions.

The devotional age in Tamil literature starts from the 7th century A.D. with the dominance of the Pallava rule in Tamilnadu. This age is marked in fact by a kind of revolt against Jainism and Buddhism by the Tamil Saivite saints called Nāyanmārs and the Vaiṣṇavite saints popularly known by the term Āḻvārs. There was a great ideological tug-of-war between the Hindu devotional movement popularly known as the Bhakti cult on the one side and the heterodox religions on the other side. Although this age has brought out a lot of literary works with various themes belonging to various genres, the dominating spirit of this age was one of devotional sentiment and hence we shall call this age by the nomenclature 'the devotional age'.

After the 13th century, with the fall of the great Cōla empire, there was total political disintegration throughout Tamilnadu, which was subsequently ruled by small kings and petty chieftains. The courts of these royal rulers and feudal lords became the most powerful patronage systems of art and literature in Tamilnadu. The temples also continued to be one of the potential patronage systems of arts and literature which cultivated mainly literary works with devotional undertones. The feudal courts as well as the temples of this age patronized mainly formalistic literature which gave more importance to formal structure, stereotyped patterns and fixed thematic treatment. Consequently, this age can be labelled as the neo-classical age in the history of Tamil literature. This trend continued upto the end of 19th century.

With the introduction of urbanization and advanced technology by the European rulers there had been drastic changes in the milieu and mentality of Tamilnadu. A number of urban centers and industries emerged giving place to the rise of an English educated middle class intelligentsia to the highest stratum of the social hierarchy in Tamilnadu.

The introduction of printing press had brought in tremendous changes in the creative activities. Literature, which was considered to be a luxurious product, became a commodity and the feudal patrons had been replaced by the newly emerged publishers and printers. The laying of railway line shattered the self-sufficient village economy and Tamilnadu became a part of the world market and Tamil literature became an integral part of world literature.

In this capitalistic social set-up, one can witness the emergence of romantic literature in Tamilnadu which was highly influenced by the romantic literary works of England and America. The romantic tendencies continued upto the 20th century and now we have the modern literature influenced mainly by a number of trends that emerged throughout the world such as socialist realism, surrealism, existentialism, Freudian psychoanalysis, and so on. This is a very oversimplified and short sketch of the growth of literature in Tamilnadu.

As far as literary genres are concerned, Tamil literature saw the epic, dramatic and lyrical modes of expression form its very inception. Yet, the dominating forms of literature available in the heroic age are mainly lyrical poetry and dramatic monologues. We have no dramatic poetry or epic poems in the strict sense of the term in the *Caṅkam* age. Drama in Tamilnadu is a kind of enactment accompanied by dance and dialogue popularly known as *kūttu.* Epic as a separate literary genre evolved in Tamil only after the heroic age and it flourished continuously upto the present century.

Since epic is a literary genre, many Tamil scholars raised the question whether a particular phase in the history of Tamil Literature can be labeled as 'epic age'. Prof.S.Vaiyapuri Pillai, one of the leading scholars of Tamil literature and history, puts forward the idea that the period from 750 to 1300 can be called epic age. He calls this period epic age because the Tamil Muse produced excellent epic poems with both secular and religious themes between 750 and 1300. The epic as a form of literature was mainly cultivated by the heterodoxies who comprise mainly the Jains and Buddhists. Although we have some reference to the episodes pertaining to the great orthodox Hindu epics such as *Rāmāyana* and *Mahābharata* in the *Caṅkam* period, they are not available in full form. Consequently, we are not able to know more about the attempts made by the

orthodox Hindus in the creation of epic poetry in the earlier stages. The allusions to some of the incidents related to the above two Hindu epics found scattered in the *Caṅkam* poetry also differ from the North Indian sources. Therefore, it is obvious that these two epic stories might have gained momentum in the folk tradition as well as in the classical tradition although they are not available in the form of full epic poems.

When we compare the heroic age of Tamilnadu with similar milieus in other parts of the world, we are able to see that the Tamil heroic age is dominated more by short lyrical poems than by lengthy narrative works. A highly sophisticated mythological cycle as well as the evolution of a national cultural hero in a larger magnitude is not seen abundantly in the Tamil heroic corpus. This may be one of the reasons for the dearth of epic poetry with a long story in the early Tamil literature. Anyhow there is a reference to an epic on the war between a Cēra king namely Peruñcēral Irumpoṟai and Atiyamāṉ Neṭumāṉañci under the title *Takaṭūr Yāttirai*. But unformunately this work is available to us only in fragments. When we study the available verses of this work from the linguistic point of view, it raises some doubt about its periodicity. From the stylistic point of view, this work appears as a comparatively later creation.

It is very unfortunate that we are not able to get any epic poem during the heroic age of Tamilnadu. But at the same time, there is no necessity that there should be long narrative poems in all heroic ages. The Chadwicks and C.M.Bowra, who have done intensive research on heroic literature, have clearly shown that there are some societies where there are only short lyrics and very short narrative poems in the heroic age. Whereas we have long epics in north Indian heroic age, we are able to get only lyrics and short dramatic monologues in the Tamil heroic age.

As far as Tamil literature is concerned, epic as a literary form is available in its full magnitude and length in the first two epics namely *Cilappatikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai*. It is worth mentioning that these two epics have been composed by a Jain author and a Buddhist poet respectively. It is appropriate to call these two epics literary epics or epics of growth.

The traditional Tamil scholars think that *Cilappatikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai* deal with historical events that happened around the 2nd century A.D. But Prof.S.Vaiyapuri Pillai and others have convincingly demonstrated that these two epics are based on imaginative stories that were popularly in vogue among the common people. *Cilappatikāram* deals with a domestic story with a very interesting political and cultural panorama. This epic is completely in contradiction with the rules enunciated for epic poetry by *Taṇṭi Alaṅkāram,* and other *pāṭṭiyal* works. According to *Taṇṭi, Alaṅkāram* both Sanskrit and Tamil versions, the epic should deal with the achievements and military exploits of an archer of the first order who should be a peerless protagonist. But the earliest two epics available in Tamil deal with stories that center on two women characters. It is very interesting to note that these two epics belong to the gnomic age where moral and ethical values became the center of literary works. Consequently, the martial heroism of heroic epic literature is replaced in them by moral heroism. The peerless hero of classical heroic epic is replaced here by two women characters namely Kaṇṇaki and Maṇimēkalai respectively. These two characters are not drawn from the military class of the kshatriyas of the then society, but from the vaisha, who are the business community of this particular ethos.

Kōvalaṉ and Utayakumaraṉ cannot be treated as protagonists of these epics in the classical sense of the term. They are only subordinate characters to the heroines. The heroine of *Cilappatikāram* is portrayed as a domestic girl of the Cōḻa country, who burns the entire city of Maturai by her chastity, with a view to proving the innocence of her husband Kōvalaṉ, who was accused as a thief and killed by the orders of the king.

In *Maṇimēkalai*, the heroine is depicted as a beautiful girl born to Kōvalaṉ and Mātavi, and she is raised from the level of lay woman into a matured Buddhist nun. Her heroism is not martial heroism; it is a kind of moral heroism namely serving the poor and the needy and helping the destitute in the midst of the sordid, mortal and cruel existence in the mundane world. Since Buddhism and Jainism preached non-violence, the tone of these two epics also changed from the depiction of military exploits to the portrayal of moral ethics.

From the point of view of epic structure, we are able to see in these two epics a lot of deviations from the norms prescribed for classical epics. According to Indian tradition, the epic story should start with the birth of the hero and all the subsequent events should be narrated in a chronological sequence. The *Rāmāyana, Mahābhārata* and all other Hindu epics more or less strictly follow this dictum. This pattern of narration is described as the chronological narration. Contrary to this, most of the western epics start the story in the middle and narrate the antecedent events by flashback. This technique is labeled as *in medias res* by the famous Latin critic Horace. It is surprising to see that *Cilappatikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai* adopt the technique of starting the story in a particular event and narrating the previous events through some flashback technique. Since *Cilappatikāram* deals with the events that occur in a domestic life, the story starts with a marriage scene, which appears like the opening scene of a Shakespearean drama where the characters are introduced with a lot of irony and images. Since *Maṇimēkalai* deals with a religious story, the epic starts with the background of a monastery and the celebration of the festival for the Buddhist deity Indira. When we analyse these two epics from the point of view of thematic treatment as well as structure, we tend to think that they follow the ancient theories of epic poems postulated by western scholars.

It is curious to note that these two epics have been composed in a period when there was a lot of contact between the Romans and the Tamils as well as Greeks and the Tamils. The authors of these two epics might have been guided by the earliest epic theories which had become popular in Tamilnadu owing to contacts with the Greeks and the Romans.

Prof. S.Vaiyapuri Pillai has clearly demonstrated that the story of *Cilappatikāram* is not historical but purely fictional. The earliest glossarial commentary, namely *Arumpata urai* calls this epic *katai* which means story. This is a proof that the events portrayed in *Cilappatikāram* are not historical but purely fictional. In *Narṟiṇai*, one of the eight anthologies of *Caṅkam* literature, there is a depiction of a woman namely *Tirumā Uṉṉi* , who lost one of her breasts and stood under a *vēṅkai* tree. This story has been quoted as a simile vis-à-vis the bereavement of a lady love. Therefore, it is clear that the ancient Tamil people

were familiar with the story of a woman, who out of her distress, loses one of her breasts and becomes a deity of the folks. This story might have formed the basis for *Cilappatikāram* where Kaṇṇaki burns the city of Maturai by throwing away one of her breasts and is deifed under a *vēṅkai* tree in the Cēra Kingdom.

In *Caṅkam* literature, especially in *Puṟanāṉūṟu*, there is a reference to Kaṇṇaki, wife of a Tamil chieftain namely Pēkaṉ. Her husband Pēkaṉ has got some illicit connection with a courtesan, and Kaṇṇaki is portrayed as weeping over the separation of her lover. This story resembles the episode of the first canto of *Cilappatikāram* where Kōvalaṉ deserts Kaṇṇaki and lives with Mātavi. Here Pēkaṉ reminds us of Kōvalaṉ and his concubine Nallūr Parattai reminds us of Mātavi.

There is another ancient poem which is presented as an illustration of a particular sutra in *Yāpparuṅkalam*. Here, the poet narrates the lamentation of a women whose husband has been murdered. This reminds us of the event narrated in the second canto of *Cilappatikāram* namely *Maturaik Kāṇṭam*, where Kaṇṇaki is portrayed as weeping over the dead body of her husband.

All these events, familiar to the Tamil people, might have been clubbed together in the form of a story with a sequence. This story should have been very popular among the folks and might have been handled by Iḷaṅkō in his fossilized version namely *Cilappatikāram*. In addition to this, Iḷaṅkōvaṭikaḷ has added the characters of Ceṅkuṭṭivaṉ and other kings with a view to giving a concrete shape to his vision of an integrated Tamilnadu, the cult of *pattiṉi* and the concept of Tamil nationalism. The events in their entirety narrated in *Cilappatikāram* are a kind of mythicisation of the material available in folk tradition as well as some of the information derived from ancient history.

In the recent years a number of scholars have attempted to derive historical information from this epic and this kind of demythicisation has proved to be a futile attempt. Since the epic *Cilappatikāram* centers upon a woman character namely Kaṇṇaki who was very popular in Tamilnadu, the Buddhist author Cāttanār also attempted an epic with a female character namely Maṇimēkalai. Here Cāttanār derived some of the material from *Cilappatikāram*,

especially the event about the birth of Maṇimēkalai to Kōvalaṉ and Mātavi and the story of the Goddess Maṇimēkala.

By this attempt, Cāttaṉār was able to establish a close link between the story of his epic and *Cilappatikāram*. Consequently, the traditional Tamil scholars describe these two epics as twin epics, which is totally a misconception. The stories of these two epics differ in their theme as well as in structure although there is some continuity in their sequence. Therefore, we may call the story of *Maṇimēkalai* a sequel to the story of *Cilappatikāram*.

Dr U.V.Swaminatha Iyer, the editor of *Maṇimēkalai*, and others have argued that the story of *Maṇimēkalai* is completely an indigenous one, a story that originated from the Tamil milieu. But Dr Shu Hikosaka, a Japanese Tamil scholar, has clearly demonstrated that the story of *Maṇimēkalai* is modelled on a very popular Mahayana text namely *Gandavyha sutra*.

According to the native theory, an epic should deal with *Aṟam* (righteousness), *poruḷ* (material prosperity), *iṉpam* (conjugal happiness) and *viṭu* (liberation). The epic which deals with the above four goals of life can be called a major epic. Scholars who analyse Tamil epics from this perspective show that *Cilappatikāram* deals with the first three goals of life and *Maṇimēkalai* deals with liberation and hence these two works form one epic although they have been composed by two different authors under two different captions. But this argument seems to be quite farfetched. It is worth mentioning that the earliest epics available in Tamil were cultivated in the Gnomic age, an age in which the vaishyas occupied the highest position in social strata of Tamilnadu. Hence we call these two epics *vaishya literature*.

In some way or other, one can see a kind of struggle, a tug-of-war between kshatriyas and vaishyas depicted in these two great epics. It was a society in which great urban cities like *Kāvērippaṭṭiṉam* and Maturai evolved as potential centers of trade and that the vaishya community became very rich and affluent and they actively engaged in circumnavigation and inland trade. Consequently, the wealth of the country was with the vaishyas although the political power was with the kshatriyas. It was at the time when the kashtriyas and vaishyas joined hands to build up urban areas and patronized heterodox

religions like Buddhism, Jainism and Ājīvakam. Although they joined hands in their enterprises, there were frequent internal conflicts between them which are obvious from these two epics.

The marriage of Kōvalan and Kaṇṇaki is portrayed more or less like the marriage of the royal aristocracy. The white umbrella, which was an insignia of the royal aristocracy, is raised during the marriage of Kōvalan and Kaṇṇaki. Kaṇṇaki, the daughter of an affluent merchant, avenge the Pāṇṭiya ruler for having been responsible for the death of her husband . She burns the city of Maturai and the king of the Cēra country constructs a temple for this vaishya woman. All the members of the ruling aristocracy including king Gajabāhu from Sri Lanka are depicted as worshipping at the sanctum sanctorum of this powerful goddess while she appears in the sky and grants boons to these kings. Even in *Maṇimēkalai* the royal aristocracy is depicted with a satirical undertone. Utayakumaran, the prince of the Cōḻa country, is portrayed as following the Buddhist nun Maṇimēkalai with full of infatuation. He is murdered by Kāñcanan. The queen is portrayed as malevolent in her attempt to send a brutal man to molest Maṇimēkalai. Thus, throughout these two epics one can find a kind of conflict and struggle between the two groups, the kshatriyas and vaishyas.

The Tamil word *kāppiyam* (epic poetry) is a derivative of the Sanskrit world *kāvya,* which is used to refer to almost all poetical creations in general. But at the same time the Tamilised word *kāppiyam* is used in a specific sense to denote long narrative poems, especially epic poetry. Even though there is the Tamil phrase *toṭarnilaic cēyyuḷ* in existence, it is not used frequently and so it has not gained currency in the literary arena. Although the word *kāppiyam* and *kāvya,*, is used to refer to epics in general, we have other forms of expressions like *itikācam purāṇam* to denote long narrative poems of similar kinds. *Kāppiyam* is differentiated from *itikācam* and the latter refers only to the primitive epics or primary epics such as *Rāmāyana* and *Mahābhārata.* In Tamil, we have a rich legacy of *purānic* literature which are mainly Tamil renderings of Sanskrit works. Most of the *purāṇas* speak about the life and miracles of celestial beings as well as the interaction between celestial beings and human beings. At the same time the Tamil language has produced a large number of *purāṇas* which glorify temples. Even though they are called *purāṇam*, they have many of the qualifies of the epics and hence it is very difficult to make a distinction between a

kāppiyam, itikācam and *purāṇam*. It is significant to note that most of the temple *purānās* are indigenous and original deeply rooted in the Tamil religious milieu. Although the traditional *purāṇas* resemble the epic poems in their structure, the conflicts that find an integral part of the epic plot would be mostly absent in them. But there are some *purāṇas* in which these conflicts are developed very successfully and they can be better included under epic poems.

For the first time in Tamil literature, we come across the significant phrase *pañca kāppiyam* mentioned in a later minor literary work called *Tamil viṭu tūtu*. Corresponding to the term, the commentator of *Naṉṉūl*, Mayilai Nātar has coined the phrase a *aimperuṅ kāppiyam.* Another minor literary work viz., *Tiruttanikai Ulā* enumerates the five epics. According to this work *Cilappatikāram, Maṇmekalai, Cintāmaṇi, Vaḷaiyāpati* and *Kuṇṭalakēci* are the five major epics.It is very interesting to note that great epics like *Kampa Ramāyanam, Periyapurāṇam* and *Kanta Purāṇam* are not included in this category. The list given by the above work includes only the epics of the heterodoxies: three epiçs composed by Jain authors and two by Buddhist authors. Consequently, we may conclude that the term *aimperuṅ kāppiyam* is an analogical creation of the *pañca kāvya* tradition of Sanskrit, and it excludes the Hindu epics. Therefore, this category seems to be a meaningless one. On this basis there is another school which listed five epics under the title *aiñciṟu kāppiyam* which literally means five minor epics. Here again the titles include five works; some are almost extinct and some are partly available. They all belong to the heterodixes. They are *Cūḷāmani, Utayaṇaṉ Katai, Nīlakēci, Yacōtara Kāviyam* and *Nākakumāra Kāviyam*. Anyhow, it is obvious that dividing the epics into five major epics and five minor epics seems to be a classification made by the Jains and Buddhists and they are not based on any objective analysis.

The Tamil epics can be grouped under various heads on the basis of their thematic content as well as formal structure. From the thematic point of view one can make the classification as follows: 1. Buddhist epics, 2. Jain epics, 3. Saivite epics, 4. Vaishnavite epics, 5. Islam epics, 6. Christian epics, and 7. Secular epics.

On the basis of their structure, Tamil epics may be classified under the following heads: 1. Kāppiyam, 2. itikācam, 3. purāṇam 4. sthalapurāṇam 5. ballads, and 6. short narrative poems.

Epic is considered to be a part of the superstructure of a feudal society dealing with the ideology of the ruling class, depicting its protagonist in conformity with its contemporary social set-up. The theme of epic varies from age to age even though it reflects the ideological background of a feudal society. As far as Tamil literature is concerned, the contribution of the heterodoxies to the epic genre is immense. As already discussed, the first Tamil epic, *Cilappatikāram*, was composed by a Jain author even though it is not a Jain work. Another work, *Maṇimēkalai*, was composed by a Buddhist and this work is mainly intended to propagate Buddhism among the lay men.

There is a marked difference between the depiction of protagonists in the epics of the heterodoxies and that of the orthodox Hindu poets. The focus of the Jains and the Buddhists is always on personal discipline as the way to salvation. Consequently, the heroes are portrayed as warriors who fight against evil forces. Buddhism and Jainism always adopt warrior style of epithets in describing their spiritual leaders. Their epic protagonists are mostly human characters who rise to the level of divine beings by their fight against evil forces and their mental struggle in achieving self-discipline. But the protagonists of orthodox Hindu epics are mainly gods or divine beings who take *avatars* to destroy evil.

Following the two earlier heterodox epics, another significant work available to us, is *Peruṅkatai*, an epic poem adopted from North Indian sources by an author of the Koṅku region named Koṅkuvēḷir. This Jain work speaks about the military exploits and martial achievements of its hero Utayaṇaṉ. The original story was written in the Paisasa language and the Tamil epic seems to be a verse rendering of its Sanskrit version.

The heterodox authors have composed a number of epic poems which end with the name *kēci* such as *Nila Kēci*, *Añcaṇa Kēci*, *Kāla Kēci and Piṅkala Kēci*. Although these epic poems are not available in full form, the fragmentary pieces quoted by various Tamil commentators enable one to conclude that they are based upon either Buddhist logic or Jain logic. The epic *Kuṇṭala Kēci* is a

Buddhist work whereas *NilaKēci*, *Añcana Keci*, *Kāla Kēci and Piṅkala Kēci* seem to be Jain works. From the commentary of *Nilakēci* we come across one interesting Buddhist epic, namely *Pimpisāra Katai*. This seems to be a Tamil version of the story related to the Mauryan king Bindusara (300-273 B.C.). Therefore, it is obvious that this epic also derived its theme from North Indian sources. *Cūḷāmaṇi* seems to be another interesting Jain epic which is not available in full form. But from the extant portions it looks like a beautiful piece of Tamil Poetry.

Vaḷaiyāpati seems to be a significant contribution by the Jains as does *Kuṇṭalakēci*. The story of *Vaḷaiyāpati* also presents Jain characters drawn from the vaishya community. Although this epic is not available in full form, its story is available from a number of scattered commentaries. Some of its scattered verses have been included in the anthology called *Puṟattiraṭṭu*. The commentary of *Yāpparuṅkalam* speaks about another epic entitled *Purāṇa Cākaram*. Since it is an extinct work, we are not able to know about its story or the particular religious sect to which it belongs. As its title is based on the name of the Sanskrit epic *Kadasari Sagaram*, Prof. S. Vaiyāpuri Piḷḷai concludes that this work might have been composed after the 12th century.

One can see a close alliance between the kshatriyas and the merchant class in patronising the heterodox religions. On the contray, the class constituency reflected by the orthodox Hindu Bhakti saints is indicative of the brahmin peasant alliance. The merchants had a natural ally with the warrior class and this was responsible for the creation of a few urban centres in Tamilnadu. This alliance finds an artistic expression in the great Jain epic *Cīvaka Cintāmaṇi*, which was composed in a social milieu, where the heterodoxies started witnessing a thorough defeat in the hands of the Bhakti movement. This epic was composed by Tiruttakkatēvar and its age is fixed at 9th c.A.D. It tells the story of Cīvakaṉ, who marries eight women and embraces asceticism at the end of his life. On ideological backgrounds this epic differs from the orthodox Hindu epic poems. In the Bhakti cult, passion is the tie between the individual and the divine, whereas in *Cīvaka Cintāmaṇi*. passion is a poisonous destructive force that only obstructs the individual's path to perfection. In the end Cīvakaṉ's last battle against the pollutions of the karmas is symbolically placed in a battlefield and his

war is against the senses. This story indicates Prakritic origin. It is probably based on the earlier Prakrit versions of the Jīrandhara story.

It seems probable that this epic was composed as a response to a challenge that came from the Bhakti savants. The Bhakti saints had, by the 9th century, quite successfully sent the Jains into retreat. The Jains must have felt the need for creative response to this challenge. As the Bhakti saints promulgated their passionate love and devotion to the deity, it appeared that Tiruttakkatēvar was led to seek a striking and creative answer in literature to this challenge. In doing so he went back to the *akam* tradition which Bhakti had drawn upon and composed an epic which could match the songs and stories of gods of the Hindus.

Before *Cintāmaṇi*, *akaval* was considered to be the apt medium for epic poetry in Tamil. It was *Cintāmaṇi* that showed *viruttam* as the suitable metre for this genre. This is a crucial turning point in the history of Tamil prosody. Following this example, the later poets composed wonderful epics in *viruttam* metre, the superb example being the *Rāmāyaṇam* by Kampar.

When the Bhakti cult emerged as a major driving force in Tamilnadu, a number of epics had been composed basing either on Saivite themes or on Vaishnavite themes. In this line one can see the attempts of the Tamil poets to make use of themes pertaining to *Mahābharata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*. There is a reference to an epic called *Pārata Veṇpā* by Peruntēvaṉār which seems to be a Tamil rendering of the Sanskrit Bharata story in the *veṇpā* metre. But unfortunately, this work is not available in full form. When the conflict between the Bhakti movement and the heterodoxies got sharpened, attempts had been made to compose popular epics on Hindu ideologies. In this line, a very lengthy Saivite epic was composed during the period of the later Cōḻa's under the title *Periya Purāṇam*.

According to tradition, this indigenous work was composed just to divert the attention of the Cōḻa king Aṉapāyaṉ, who wasted his time in reading the Jain epic *Cintāmaṇi*. This is a work based on indigenous myths and historical events. The basic source material for this epic is a small work named *Tiruttoṇṭar Tokai* composed by Cuntarar, one of the important Nāyaṉmārs of the 9th century. This was expanded into a comparatively bigger work under the title *Tiruttoṇṭar Tiru*

Antāti by Nampiyāntṉṭār Nampi. This was further elaborated in the form of an epic by Cēkkiḻār, a minister of the king Aṉapāya Cōḻa.

This epic deals with the life stories of 63 devotees of Lord Siva. It deviates from the general epic pattern of Indian epics in that it consists of 63 different stories made up in the form of a single epic. The author has carefully chosen the title *Purāṇam* (which means traditional account) instead of epic. But critics express the opinion that the epic starts with the story of Cuntarar and ends with the episode of Cuntarar going to Kailasa mountain with Cēra king. Therefore, Cuntarar may be deemed as the protagonist of the epic and the stories of the other 62 Nāyaṉmārs can be taken as episodes which are organically linked with the main story. But anyhow, this justification seems to be a farfetched one when we analyse this work from the point of view of its structure. We can better describe this work as a new type of composition with 63 different stories and with a single theme.

The most outstanding creation of the Tamil genius in the genre of epic poetry is *Kampa Rāmāyaṇam*, *a magnum opus* by Kampaṉ, a poet of the twelfth century A.D., who lived in Tēraḻuntūr in the Cōḻa country. The Tamil epic Muse reached its peak in this wonderful creation. It is a very successful Tamil rendering of the story of *Rāmāyaṇam* presented in such a way as to give powerful expression to the milieu and mentality of the medieval Tamil society.

In his book *From Virgil* to *Milton*, C.M. Bowra observes that "literary epic, if we judge by its best examples, flourishes not in the heyday of a nation or of a cause but in its last days or in its aftermath". We should remember that the *Aeneid*, which glorifies the Roman people and exalts Augustus, came into being in the 'heyday' of Rome, not in its "last days". We cannot relate the *Divine Comedy* also to the last days or the aftermath of a nation or a cause. So it is clear that a great literary epic may mark the transition to a great age.

It was just before the time when Kampaṉ composed his epic that Rājarāja became the mighty monarch of the Cōḻa kingdom, for it was under his rule that the Tamil people were for the first time united in a single state. Just as Kampaṉ wrote an epic in about 42,000 lines, Rājarāja the Great, built the largest and tallest of all the Indian temples at Tanjore, with a fourteen storey *vimāṉam* which

rises to a height of 190 feet and is crowned by a massive dome consisting of a single block of stone. The spirit of the age manifested itself not only in mammath and majestic temples but also in the innumerable minute sculptures with which they were decorated.

The story of Rāma is as old as this land and it has been growing from time immemorial. The earliest version of this story is found in Dasaratha Jātaka which narrates the banishment of a good prince by an unwilling father. This depicts Dasaratha full of parental love, the stoic Rāma, the scheming stepmother and the ardently brotherly Bharata. Sita is depicted as the sister of Rāma who marries her after twelve years of his exile life in the forest. Although there is no mention about the abduction of Sita, this forms part of another Jātaka preserved in Chinese.

Although the earlier northern traditions about Rāma portray him as an archer of the first order, it was perhaps in Tamil land that Rāma evolved into an incarnate, an *avātar*. Even in the *Caṅkam* age, the Tamils seem to have regarded Rāma as divine. The beautiful devotional songs of the Āḻvārs portray Rāma as a God in the form of mortal human being. All these traditions helped Kampaṉ in this depiction of a very attractive protagonist with extraordinary powers of a celestial being and some of the frailties of a mortal human being.

Kampaṉ has completely nativised the story that his Kōcalam is only a poetic transfiguration of his homeland; it was like the Kāviri region, a land of fertile farms. Kōcalam is an inland territory but Kampaṉ endows it with a sea-coast since his homeland has a maritime tract.

Kampaṉ's religious beliefs enable him to create an epic hero *par excellence*, a living embodiment of universal love, a leader who would bind together all people irrespective of caste, clan or creed. In the successful creation of a peerless hero, Iḷaṅkō's characterization of Kaṇṇaki must also have been an object lesson to Kampaṉ. Iḷaṅko has shown that a flawless character can be the protagonist of an epic. Kaṇṇaki emerges not only as a suffering saint but also as a righteous revolutionary whose militant action destroys an unjust social order. And in the process the perfect heroine attains divinity. In all these aspects Iḷaṅko has a lesson for Kampan in the creation of his hero.

The epic conflict has been very powerfully designed in Kampaṉ's *Rāmāyaṇa*. The conflict between the primitive heroism as embodied in the characterization of Rāvaṇa and the ethical heroism as represented in the portrayal of Rāma has been worked out objectively and developed very artistically. The fall of Rāvaṇa symbolizes the end of a social order which know no pity. This epoch-making triumph is achieved by the unity of all national groups forged by Rāma on the basis of equality and mutual respect and affection. Its upshot is the establishment of Ramarājya over the entire country in the extension of the Kōcalam utopia into a nationwide one.

During the same period, attempts had been made to compose epic poems again in the *veṇpā* metre following the steps of *Pārataveṇpā*, an extinct epic. The best example of such an effort is *Naḷaveṇpā*, a beautiful epic on the life of Naḷaṉ, the king of Niṭata country, by Pukaḻēnti. This epic was developed from one of the branch stories of *Mahābhārata*. The same story was composed in the form of an epic in the later days by Ativīrarāma Pāṇṭiya under the title *Naiṭatam*.

During the devotional period, especially in the age of the later Cōḻas, attempts had been made to compose an epic poem on the great Cōḻa monarch, Rājarāja, under the title Sri Rājarāja Vijayam. According to *Cācaṉat Tamiḻkavi Caritam* (47-48), this was composed by one Nārāyaṇaṉ Paṭṭātittaṉ. This work might have dealt with the great achievements of Rājarāja I, with details about his military exploits, charity, benevolence etc. In the same age (i.e. 11th c.A.D.), an epic poem was composed on Viracōḻa Aṉukkan, who was one of the sons of Rājēndra. This extinct work was composed by Pūṅkōyil Nampi and it was named *Vīraṉukka Vijayam*.

By the end of 11th c., another secular epic was composed on Kulōtuṅka Cōḻa under the title *Kulōttuṅka Cōḻa Caritai* by Kavi Kumuta Cantira Paṇṭitaṉ Tiru. Nārāyaṇa Paṭṭar. The information about this epic is furnished by the inscription engraved in the 27th regal year of Kulōttuṅkaṉ.

From the inscriptions of the 12th c. we are able to infer that a Tamil version of *Pāratam* also was composed in this century by Arunilai Vicākaṉ. (MER 1905 No: 482). This is different from the *Pāratam* composed by

Peruntēvaṉār in *veṇpā* metre. In the course of time, Villiputtūrār has rendered *Pāratam* into Tamil which is popularly known as *Villipāratam*.

The stories in the Sanskrit *purāṇas* witnessed more reception in Tamilnadu after the later Cōḻas than in the previous ages. One such story is the life of Ariccantira, a king whose loyalty, righteousness and virtues have been tested by the celestials. The story of this protagonist, who is comparable to the Job of the *Old Testament*, has become the theme of a number o f Tamil literary works. An epic on this attractive character was composed in 1524 in the *viruttam* metre by Nallūr Vīrai Ācukavirāyar.

In the same period a Jain epic on Rāma was composed and this is not available to us. The Jain poets evinced keen interest in composing epics on Tīrttaṅkaras, and one such work was *Cāntipurāṇam* composed in the 15th c.A.D. Only nine verses of this epic are available in the anthology *Puṟattiraṭṭu*. Another Jain epic poem namely *Nārata Caritai* was also composed during this period. Only 8 poems from this work are available in *Puṟattiraṭṭu*.

It was a little earlier, probably during the 13th c.A.D., that Perumparrappuliyūr Nampi composed his *Tiruvālavāyuṭaiyār Purāṇam*. This work deals with the 63 sacred plays of Lord Siva and the entire setting is laid in and around Maturai. There are references to epics such as *Piṙkala Caritai* and *Vāmaṉa Caritai* which are unfortunately not available to us.

Among the later Tamil epics, Saivite works such as *Kantapurāṇam* by Kacciyappar and *Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟ Purāṇam* by Parancōti are worth mentioning. Kacciyappar's *Kantapurāṇam* deals with legends pertaining to Lord Murukan, whereas the other work speaks about the sacred plays of Lord Siva following the poem composed by Nampi.

In later days, especially after the 17th century, Tamil poets showed keen interest more in composing *pirapantam* type of minor literary compositions, such as *ulā*, *kōvai*, etc, than in long epic poems. In the Tamil folk tradition, the Tamil Muse has witnessed the composition of a large number of long narrative poems based on historical, purāṇic and secular themes. *Tēciṙkarācaṉ Katai*, *Alliyaracāṇi*

Mālai, Kōvilaṉ Katai are a few among them. Although they are ballads, they have many of the qualities of epic poems.

When the Islam and Christian religions entered into Tamil soil, many attempts have been made by native and foreign scholars to compose poems with a view to propagating their ideals through the epic genre. The Muslims have composed a number of epics and long narrative poems in Tamil. Among them *Cīṟāppurāṇam* is considered to be the most significant contribution. It is a long epic poem in Tamil that deals with the history of Prophet Mohammad who gave concrete shape to the Islam faith in the 7th c.A.D. This work was composed in the 17th century under the patronage system with a lofty purpose in the mind of the poet as well as his patron to render into Tamil with the native background the life of the Prophet. It is designed in such a way as to conform to the traditional Indian epic structure. Since this epic is governed by well-codified principles of subject matter and poetic manner, it stands out as a fine example of classical poetry both in temper and spirit.

The Tamil Christian poets have also enriched Tamil literature by their beautiful epic poems. Among them, *Tēmpāvaṇi* and *Iraṭcaṇya Yāttirīkam* are worth mentioning. Beschi's *Tēmpāvaṇi* is supposed to be the best epic from a foreign scholar-poet. It consists of 3615 verses. In this epic, the Catholic concepts and Biblical faith are nativised so as to attract the people who are nurtured by Indian literary and religious traditions. With the exception of a few deviations, this epic closely adheres to the Indian epic tradition both in structure and narration. The author seems to prefer the chronological order of narration, a traditional narrative technique of Indian epics. Yet, the epic conflict which ennobles the structure and content of great epics is not artistically worked out by Beschi. The protagonist of the epic, Joseph, the foster father of Jesus, is allowed to tread on a smooth path where there are only few intrusions of evil forces such as the plot of the Herod to kill the infant Jesus and the mental conflicts of the epic hero in the last phase of his life. He over-comes these machinations and conflicts by fleeing to Egypt and by constant meditation.

The next important Christian epic is *Iraṭcaṇya Yāttirīkam* by H.A. Krishna Pillai which is modelled on the *Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan. Krishna Pillai's long cherished ambition was to compose a Tamil Christian epic

which the world would not willingly let die. He was fortunately able to devote himself to this great task for a period of 14 years towards the end of his life. His extensive study of the Tamil classics, his rare poetic gifts and his mature Christian experience enabled him to compose this work. He once said: "I have poured my life into that book, My heart's deepest is in it".

Krishna Pillai was attracted by the work of Bunyan because the whole story of the Christian and his march to the promised Land overcoming several weaknesses and much travail and obstruction caused by doubt, despondency and worldly attachments, presented a similarity to his own life and mental struggle. The chief merit of this work is its poetry and the easy but excellent Tamil poetic diction, the beauty and simplicity of which can be enjoyed by all lovers of Tamil. Hence he has been called "the Christian Kampan".

With the introduction of advanced technology, urban civilization, and printing press, there came drastic changes in the literary production in Tamilnadu. The old patronage system of art and literature completely declined. Literature became a commodity and there was the emergence of a reading public in the place of a listerning audience who listened patiently to the epic poems when they were recited by the professional singers. Consequently, verse was replaced by prose and epic poem was replaced by novel literature which was described as 'epic poem in prose'.

But even in the 20th century some attempts have been made to revive epic poems. In the place of long epics many poets have experimented with short narrative poems on popular themes. During this period a notable epic was composed on *Vaḷḷalār*. A few epics have been composed on Mahatma Gandhi such as *Utayam*, *Gandhi Yukam* and *Gandhi Purāṇam*. These attempts can be brought under the category of secular epics.

Subramania Bharati, the leading 20th century revolutionary poet, experimented with long narrative poems and epic fragments very successfully such as *Pāñcāli Capatam* and *Kuyirpāttu*. Bharati's attempt has marked a new turning point in the art of composing short narrative poems which have at least some of the qualities of the traditional epic poems. His successors have also started treading on the same path which Bharati showed. The scope of Tamil

narrative poem was further extended by his disciple Bharatitācaṉ who has composed poems by drawing on ancient and medieval sources and by going in for imaginary stories of his own. While he and his followers use this medium for the propagation of their social and political ideals, Kavimaṇi and his successors have used it for illustration of the noble values of the hoary past. Kavimaṇi brought out a short epic on the Buddha under the title *Āciya Jōti* following *The Light of Asia* by Edwin Arnold. The poets of the New Poetry Movement have experimented with new contents and forms in short narrative poems which have paved the way for the emergence of poems with psychological as well as socialist content. Poets who follow the ideals of Bharatitācaṉ have converted classical antagonists into protagonists in their modern compositions which are in the form of short epics.

The modern narrative poets who compose short epics in the name of narrative poems have expanded the scope of poetical compositions by introducing a variety of themes and techniques. Although they look like abbreviated forms of Tamil traditional epics, we cannot call them epic poems in the classical sense of the term. As mentioned earlier, epic is the product and a natural poetic medium of a feudal society with the background of an agrarian civilisation and it is out of place in the modern era of advanced technology.

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8. THE EARLIEST TAMIL EPICS OF THE HETERODOXIES

The so-called post-*Caṅkam* age, popularly known as *Caṅkam Maruviya Kālam*, marks an important phase in the annals of Tamil language, literature and culture. A period roughly covering the span of time between the 3rd c. A. D. and the 8th c. A. D. (which includes the reign of the Kalappira and Pallava rulers), the post-*Caṅkam* age witnessed a social milieu which was significantly different from that of the *Caṅkam* age.

The *Caṅkam* literature depicts a transitional age, the transition of the Tamil society from a heroic milieu to a post- heroic period. Consequently, the corpus of *Caṅkam* anthology speaks on one side of the frequent internecine wars waged by the tribals for the expansion of their territories and on the other side of the gradual evolution of the three monarchies, namely the Cōḷas, the Pāṇṭiyas and the Cēras. The political background of the age of *Caṅkam* poetry was marked by the ascendancy of an "energetic military caste, which, torn by internecine conflicts of succession and inheritance, breaks loose from its tribal into a career of violent, self-assertive individualism"(Kailasapathy 74). So, with a few exceptions, the bulk of the *Caṅkam* poetry portrays the dying of old communities and the emergence of new princes and kingdom. This complex political picture with the tribals struggling for their existence and with the evolution and establishment of new monarchies is presented in the extant *Caṅkam* literature. Hence, the prominent mood of the day was one of conquest and plunder. So the *Caṅkam* poems, especially those belonging to the heroic corpus, glorify plunder and raids as against the ethical literature of the post- *Caṅkam* age or the Gnomic age.

Being the product of a heroic milieu, *Caṅkam* poems glorify mainly the war-like aristocracy or the kshathriyas. The merchant, the farmer and the artisan who occupied only a lower place in the social hierarchy in the Tamil heroic milieu are practically ignored in the *Caṅkam* poems. Like other heroic poems of the world, *Caṅkam* poems "tend to become a literature concerned with the exploits, adventures, and experiences of members of princely class both men and women, including perhaps their noble followers (Chadwick and Nora Chadwick 727). Heroic princes and chieftains are presented in this poetic corpus as generous patrons of minstrels, who celebrated the fame of these patrons and

stimulated the heroic spirit among the warriors. The above activities of the minstrels were highly demanded by the political and social atmosphere of the heroic age.

The political and social ideals of the *Caṅkam* society underwent drastic change during the Post-*caṅkam* age or the Gnomic period. With the establishment of monarchies and the accumulation of private property, care was bestowed mainly on administration and on the enhancement of the material resources of the state. Trade and agriculture became the two important activities which fostered the growth of the society. Trade was expanded within the various territories as well as in the foreign countries. Commerical contact with Rome, Greece as well as various neighbouring Asian countries prospered during this time although this started in the *Caṅkam* age. As a result, a new class namely the vaishyas comprising tradesmen and circumnavigators gradually started occupying the highest strata of the social hierarchy. Consequently, the kshatriya protagonist of the *Caṅkam* age was gradually replaced by the vaishya protagonist in the literary compositions of the Tamils during this period. With the accumulation of considerable material prosperity, merchants were considered on a par with the ruling aristocracy in social status and they were termed *mannar pinnōr* which means the backbone of (or the next one to) the rulers. Of course, the kings enjoyed political supremacy as administrators; but the wealth of the land was mainly with newly emerged vaishyas. It is curious to note that the white umbrella, the royal insignia of the state, was taken in procession in the marriage of Kōvalan, the merchant-protagonist of the epic *Cilappatikāram*. Great poets of repute such as Cāttanār, the author of *Maṇimēkalai*, started emerging from this business community. We should keep in mind that the term Iḷaṅko, the name of the author of *Cilappatikāram*, is one of the honours conferred on business men by the ruling aristocracy. We have in this age the vaishya-centred literature as against the kshatriya-centred literature of the *Caṅkam* age.

The life style of the vaishyas is significantly different from that of the war-like aristocracy. As against war, the newly emerged vaishyas supported non-violence and other ethical codes based on this. Consequently, they gave more importance to moral values and ethical behaviour than to activities associated with heroism. As against the martial heroism of the *Caṅkam* age, they introduced moral heroism in literature, especially in the above two Tamil epics. In *Caṅkam*

literature, a *cāṉrōṉ* means mainly a warrior. Here, the same lexical item is used to refer only to a superman endowed with love, charity, magnanimity, truth fulness etc. The war-like aristocracy and the priestly brahmins were vigorously criticised in the vaishya literature on moral and ethical grounds. The tradesmen started encouraging the heterodox religions such as Buddhism, Jainism and Ajivaka which gave more importance to non-violence, and moral behaviour than any other religious groups.

The evolution of cities and urban culture normally needs the alliance of the merchant and the ruling class. This alliance is reflected in the literary works of the post- *Caṅkam* age. This worked out well through Buddhism and Jainism, which were patronised mainly by the merchant class. These two religions serve as the philosophical adjuncts to the formation of the first historical urban centred societies in India. In Northern India and in the Deccan they provided a strong adjunct to the evolution of urbanism. Likewise, in Tamilnadu, the Buddhists and Jains appear in conjunction with the rise and expansion of city life (Rayon 49). Although this alliance between the merchant and the ruling class was strong, there were lots of conflicts and tensions in this relationship. Such internal contradictions are well expressed in *Cilappatikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai*.

The surplus wealth earned through trade was one of the important factors in the emergence of a leisurely class within the vaishya community. The typical nature of this leisurely class with their lascivious life with courtesans is represented in Kōvalaṉ's relationship with Mātavi in *Cilappatikāram*. As against the heroic works, which glorify warriors and portray them as protagonists in epic, this age has depicted women strong in moral heroism as the main characters of epic poetry. It is in such a social milieu that the two epics *Cilappatikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai* were composed. These two epics are in a way a revolt of the vaishyas against the royal aristocracy and their way of life. Kaṇṇaki's revenge on the king, the deification of Kaṇṇaki by the royal aristocracy, and the slaying of Utayakumaraṉ on account of his infatuation bear witness to this.

The stories of the two epics

Cilappatikāram narrates the tragic story of Kaṇṇaki and Kōvalaṉ, its chief characters. Kōvalaṉ, the son of an affluent merchant of Pūmpukār, the capital of

the Cōḻa kingdom, weds Kaṇṇaki, the daughter of another rich merchant of the same city. He sees the dance debut of Mātavi, a courtesan of the city, and falls in love with her. He deserts Kaṇṇaki, lives with Mātavi and loses all his wealth in his lascivious life. Owing to a misunderstanding in the singing of some love poems with the accompaniment lute, he leaves her, goes to Kaṇṇaki and repents of his illegitimate contact with Mātavi. Both Kaṇṇaki and Kōvalaṉ, accompanied by a Jain nun Kavunti, go to Maturai, the capital of the Pāṇṭiya kingdom with a view to selling the anklet of Kaṇṇaki and starting a new life there. He shows the anklet to the goldsmith of the palace who had stolen the anklet of the queen. He informs the king that the anklet of the queen is with Kōvalaṉ. Kōvalaṉ is killed by the orders of the king.

Kaṇṇaki argues with the king and proves the innocence of her husband. The king realising the grave mistake dies on the spot. The enraged Kaṇṇaki burns the city of Maturai and goes to the Cēra Kingdom. She goes to Heaven in a celestial chariot with her husband. The Cēra king, who vanquished the North Indian kings, brings a stone for the statue of Kaṇṇaki on their heads from the Himalayas and constructs a temple for her. Kaṇṇaki appears from the heavens and grants boons.

The epic *Maṇimēkalai* deals with the story of Maṇimēkalai , the daughter of Kōvalaṉ and Mātavi. After the death of Kōvalaṉ, Mātavi enters a Buddhist monastery along with her daughter Maṇimēkalai. Utayakumāraṉ, the Coḻa prince, tries in vain to win her hand. She is taken to an island named Maṇipallavam where she realises her previous birth before a sacred seat consecrated for the Buddha. She gets the magic begging bowl called *amutacurapi* through which she feeds the hungry and the destitute. She learns the story of Aputtiraṉ, an embodiment of dhana, from Tivatilakai, a deity of the island. She meets the Buddhist monk Aṟavaṇa Aṭikaḷ and learns Buddhist philosophy and ethics from him. She goes to Kāñci and encounters the votaries of various religious groups; she gets initiation from Aṟavaṇa Aṭikaḷ and does penance with a view to attain Nirvāṇa.

The stories – their historicity

The traditional Tamil scholars, who are very fond of visualising a golden age in the remote past, still believe that the above two epics narrate historical events that happened in the aftermath of the *Caṅkam* period, probably around the 2nd c. A. D. Regarding the structure of *Cilappatikāram*, one can see the influence of the pattern of the *akam* poems of *Caṅkam* literature. *Akam* poems, especially the poems under the *marutam* theme, deal with a love triangle represented by the hero, heroine and harlot. The story of *Cilappatikāram* seems to be an expanded form of this love triangle. Here, the hero is replaced by Kōvalaṉ, the heroine by Kaṇṇaki and the harlot by the courtesan Mātavi. The hero leaves the heroine and lives with the courtesan and comes to the heroine again. This forms the plot of *Pukārk Kāṇṭam*, the first book of *Cilappatikāram*. The hero's journey to Maturai and the subsequent tragic events are extensions of the traditional triangle plot. Consequently, one can see that the basic motif of the story of *Cilappatikāram* is modelled on the traditional structure of the *Caṅkam* poems.

S. Vaiyāpuri Piḷḷai argues convincingly that the story of *Cilappatikāram* was widely known to the Tamils in various forms before its fossilized version was made by Iḷaṅkō in the form of the present epic. Before Vaiyāpuri Piḷḷai, Naccinārkkiniyār, one of the commentators of *Tolkāppiyam*, cites this epic as an example of *toṉmai*, which means an ancient story or myth with prose passages interspersed. *Arumpata urai*, the oldest glossarorial commentary of *Cilappatikāram,* describes this epic as a *Kātai* which means a fictional account.

There is one Kaṇṇaki, the wife of a chieftain named Pēkaṉ, referred to in *Caṅkam* literature (*Puṟanāṉuṟu* 144). Pēkaṉ neglects wife and lives with a prostitute called Nallūr Parattai. As a result, Kaṇṇaki remains in a state of dejection and sorrowing. Pēkaṉ reminds us of Kōvalaṉ, and Nallūr Parattai of Mātavi.

Another form of Kaṇṇaki story is revealed in the ancient myth of *Tirumā Uṇṇi*, whose story is referred to in *Narriṇai* 216. Having lost one of her breasts she stands under a tree. In the *Vañcikkāṇṭam* of *Cilappatikāram*, Kaṇṇaki stands under a *vēṅkai* tree with one breast. All these fragmentary incidents might have been blended together at a certain period; it should have become a wholesome

story and would have been in vogue for quite sometime in the form of a ballad. It is significant to note that there are many popular folk versions of the story of Kōvalaṉ and Kaṇṇaki, some of which are very old. Perhaps some of the folk versions are older than the present epic. Scholars like M. Shanmugam Pillai see the model of *terukkūttu*, a folk dramatic form, in this story, especially in its fossilized form *Cilappatikāram*.

Gananath Obeyeskare in this book *The Cult of the Goddess Pattiṉi* argues that the dramatic enactment of the death and resurrection theme as presented in the story of *Cilappatikāram* is not found anywhere in Hindu ritual, though the theme of the wife resurrecting her husband is found in myth, especially in the well-known myth of Sāvitri. To him, this central ritual drama is unique in South Asian ritual and was probably confined to the heterodox religions of Southern India rather than to Brahmanism, popular Hinduism, or Dravidian folk religion. He concluded that the *pattiṉi* cult diffused to Kerala and other parts of South India from West Asia. His hypothesis originates from the assumption that the ancient *pattiṉi* shrine was constructed in Musiris which was a meeting place of circumnavigators from various parts of South Asian countries and Alexandria, and that *Vañci*, the setting for the third section of *Cilappatikāram* was near Musiris. He feels that the cults of the various mother goddesses and the dead God might have been brought here by the Alexandrian and West Asian merchants (532).

But his argument is not convincing because he fails to explain the exact form and pattern of the same cult prevalant in West Asia. Moreover, he fails to take into account the various native folk myths which deal with the theme of dead God and His resurrection. It is no doubt that the Kaṇṇaki myth is a developed form of the ancient Tirumā Uṇṇi myth of Tamilnadu. The *orumulai kuṟaitta Tirumāvuṇṇi* (i.e. Tirumāuuṇṇi who threw away one of her breasts) of the ancient Tamil tradition has been referred to as *Oṟṟai Mulaicci* (lady with one breast) by the pilgrims of the *pattiṉi* temple at Koṭuṅkaḷūr.

It is beyond doubt that the story of *Cilappatikāram* has been adopted from an oral tale that was sung by the low castes. Its story is typicallyTamil, especially the unjust widowing of Kaṇṇaki and the subsequent power of her chastity. In this respect, it reveals the spirit of a number of Tamil oral ballads.

The heterodox religions such as Buddhism, Jainism and Ajivakam, which showed keen interest in the spoken idiom of the common man and his folk tradition, might have adopted this cult, and this can be viewed as an aspect of indigenisation of these non-Dravidian religions. It is significant that these religions have assimilated into their own a number of local cults of South India in addition to the *pattiṉi* cult.

There is a pronounced difference between the epics of the heterodoxies and those of the orthodox Hindus in the portrayal of the epic protagonists and the main characters. The Buddhists and Jains consider personal discipline as the way to salvation. What these two religions bring to this land is in essence the groundwork for a new moral order. Consequently, the Buddhists and the Jains show more interest in portraying ordinary human beings rising to the level of celestial beings and godhead by their moral and ethical behaviour. On the contrary, the protagonists of orthodox Hindu epics are mostly incarnations of divinities who take avatars to destroy evil forces. In this respect the epics of Buddhism and Jainism come closer to the Tamil folk literature in the creation of human characters. We can say that at least *Cilappatikāram* is based upon the rituals associated with the folk worship of virgin goddess. This ritual is closely related to the *naṭukal* (hero-stone), which is erected to celebrate the memory of human beings who exhibit martial heroism and die for their clan or territories in the battle.

While *Cilappatikāram* shows a keen interest in retelling a native myth pertaining to Kaṇṇaki, *Maṇimēkalai* which is a sequel to *Cilappatikāram*, narrates the story of Maṇimēkalai, the daughter of Kōvalaṉ and Mātavi. It is not significant that her mother Mātavi describes Maṇimēkalai as the daughter of the great *pattiṉi* Kaṇṇaki. This shows the active interest shown by the Buddhist author in the pattini cult established by Iḷaṅkō as well as his plan to connect his story with the story of *Cilappatikāram*. It is also significant to note that the Kaṇṇaki story is closely connected with Buddhism in its Sri Lankan versions.

The story of *Maṇimēkalai* is developed from the three episodes in *Cilappatikāram* which speak about the birth, the naming and the renunciation of Maṇimēkalai. The Maṇimēkala deity referred to in *Cilappatikāram* as well as in *Jātaka* stories is brought into this epic as an important character.

Cāttaṉār has chosen a very complex plot for his epic and developed it in such a way as to make it a powerful tool for the propagation of Buddhism. In this respect, the viewpoint of Cāttaṉār differs from that of Iḷaṅkō. Iḷaṅkō seems to be highly tolerant of all religions. In the midst of the objective portrayals of a number of religious sects, Iḷaṅkō establishes a new religion namely the *pattiṉi* cult, or the cult of chaste women in which Kaṇṇaki is the presiding deity.

But Cāttaṉār's attitude towards other religions is markedly different from that of Iḷaṅkō. Cāttaṉār criticises Jainism as well as brahminical religions with force and vehemence. At the same time, Cāttaṉār emphasizes the need for acquiring knowledge of other religious creeds for a better understanding of Buddhism.

It is generally believed by Tamil scholars that the plot of Cāttaṉār's epic is purely indigenous and hence nobody ventured to trace its origin. Taking into account the complex structure and varied techniques of this epic plot, which is a little unfamiliar to the Tamils, Shu Hikosaka, a Japanese scholar, convincingly argues that the epic *Maṇimēkalai* is modelled on an important Mahayana text namely *Gaṇḍavyuha sūtra* composed in Sanskrit(60). This Sanskrit text, like *Maṇimēkalai*, speaks about the renunciation of its protagonist Sudhanakumara, a man from the business community, who undertakes a spiritual journey guided by the two Bodhisatvas, namely Manjusri and Samandhapadra. *Maṇimēkalai* narrates the renunciation of Maṇimēkalai, the daughter of a tradesman Kōvalaṉ, guided by the two Bodhisatvas, Āputtiraṉ who is a replica of Samandhapadra, an embodiment of dhana paramita, and Aṟavaṇa Aṭikaḷ, a replica of Manjusri who is a symbol of wisdom. Like Sudhanakumara, Maṇimēkalai also embraces a life of renunciation. It is significant to recall here that the old title of this epic is *Maṇimēkalai Tuṟavu* (the renunciation of *Maṇimēkalai*), and this title establishes the thematic similarities between these stories. Cāttaṉār being an accomplished artist draws profusely from Tamil cultural tradition, myths and episodes and handles them creatively in *Maṇimēkalai* with a view to propagating Buddhism powerfully among the Tamil laymen.

The message of the two epics

The 'messages' of these two epics have been interpreted in various ways. The prologue of *Cilappatikāram* says that this epic purports to exemplify the following three ideals:

1. Dharma will take vengence on the unrighteous and unjust ruler (*Patikam 55*)
2. A chaste woman is praised by great men (*Patikam 56*)
3. Nobody can escape the fruits of his previous deeds of *karma* (*Patikam 57*)

Many scholars do not accept these three as the only ideals for which the epic *Cilappatikāram* was composed. These ideals are presented only in the prologue of this epic and this is considered to be a later addition. There is every reason to take the final message given by Kaṇṇaki after she attains the divine form as constituting the ideals of this epic since they form part of the text of the epic. These are ethical codes general in nature and they mainly belong to the heterodox religions which insist upon non-violence and moral behavior. If so, the whole epic appears to be a purposely designed and artistically realised ethical work assimilating into its theme and structure many of the elements of the folk traditions of the Tamils.

Scholars like T.P. Meenakshisundaran read a social message in this epic-a warning given by this epic to the contemporary Tamil society. According to him, this epic is a social tragedy rather than a personal one. It represents the fall of a society which made a dichotomy between family life and art - chastity and art – a society which set into contrast family women who are custodians of charity and love, and the public women, the custodians of art leaving thereby no room for such men as Kōvalaṉ aspiring for both art and love. In the words of K.V. Zvelebil " this interpretation finds support in the fact that Kaṇṇaki and Mātavi are set into significant contrast – Kaṇṇaki is unripe, naive, unsophisticated, reticent; she is an illustration of *maṭamai,* simplicity, she is lively, but not charming; after her unfolding and transformation, she becomes an emobodiment of *maṟakkarpu*, stern, heroic chastity'. In contrast, Mātavi speaks a lot, knows how to read, to write, is literate and cultured, she sings, dances, plays on musical instruments, she is charming, sophisticated, witty, gay even brilliant. The burning of Maturai is,

according to this view of the epic is the symbol of the downfall of the society which splits womanhood" (182).

Another important message at the heart of this epic is the concept of Tamil nationalism which is obvious from the total design of this epic. For the artistic representation of this new message the cult of *pattiṉi* helps the poet considerably. The *pattiṉi* is portrayed as the new deity of the new religion 'Tamil Nationalism'. In the whole history of Tamil literature, it is only the author of this epic who has brought in the concept of Tamil nationalism in a very powerful way and given expression to it in the form of a well-designed epic.

Although some of the Tamil poets of the *Caṅkam* period have expressed their longing to visualise a unified and an integrated Tamilnadu, the *Caṅkam* poems present the Tamil Country mainly as a fragmented land ruled by a number of kings and tribal chieftains. Avvaiyār, one of the poetesses, expresses her desire for a unified Tamil land in one of her poems, when she happened to see the three crowned kings of the Tamilnadu seated together at a particular place. Similarly, when a Pāṇṭiya king and a Cōḻa king were together as friends, Kārikkaṇṇaṉār, a poet of the *Caṅkam* anthology, blessed them to be together without listening to the evil words of the wicked people who tried to separate them. But to bring home this ideal compulsively, Iḷaṅkōvaṭikaḷ has composed an epic with three books which are named after the three capitals of the reigning Tamil kings. He glorifies the three kings and their countries in impressively balanced terms. He makes the heroine Kaṇṇaki born at Pūmpukār, the Cōḻa capital, come to Maturai of the Pāṇṭiya, and sees her deified at the capital of the Cēra king. Thus Kaṇṇaki serves as the connecting link and through her epic journey the three kingdoms come linked together and unified in the vision of the poet. In the words of Kamil V. Zvelebil, "*The Lay of the Anklet*" is the first consciously national work of Tamil Literature. It transcends the barriers of different "landscapes" since it deals with all of them; it ignores tribal and clannish divisions and loyalties: Iḷaṅkōvaṭikaḷ has purposely set the stage for the tale in all three Tamil kingdoms, enshrining in his poem the whole of Tamil India. (176)

For the artistic representation of this ideal, Iḷaṅkōvaṭikaḷ depicts Ceṅkuṭṭuvaṉ, the Cēra king of the last book *Vañcikkaṇṭām* as the culture hero of Tamil nationalism. Although moral heroism is depicted through Kaṇṇaki, the

embodiment of the *Pattiṉi* cult, martial heroism is presented through Ceṅkuṭṭuvaṉ the hero of Tamil culture. Thus the Jain ideal of moral heroism and the ideals of Tamil heroic age namely martial heroism, are presented very effectively in the epic of Tamil nationalism. Ceṅkuṭṭuvaṉ, the symbol of Tamil martial heroism, embraces the *pattiṉi* cult and establised it in the Tamil country. Before the establishment of the *pattiṉi* cult, a consolidation of the so-called Tamil nationalism is made through his Himalayan conquest.

Ceṅkuṭṭuvaṉ starts his journey towards the Himalayas with a view to bringing the stone for erecting Kaṇṇaki's statue and defeating the North Indian king Vijaya and Kaṉaka, who were said to have ridiculed the Tamil kings and slighted their heroism. Ceṅkuṭṭuvaṉ is depicted as achieving victory over them and bringing a stone for Kaṇṇaki. He is, for the poet, a protagonist who views Tamilnadu and Tamil culture as an organic whole. Although this is his ideal, it gets enfeebled when the other two Tamil kings Cōḻa and Pāṇṭiya ridicule the Himalayan campaign of the Cēra king. Thus the ideal vision of the culture hero and the real nature of the Tamil psyche find a good conflict in this epic. Anyhow, *Cilappatikāram* can be described as the "first consciously designed national work of Tamil literature, the literary evidence of the fact that the Tamils had by that time attained nationhood"(172).

Cilappatikāram can also be deemed as an epic of the cult of Goddess *Pattiṉi*. The story of Kaṇṇaki is known even today in ballad form as *Kōvalaṉ katai* and in purāṇic form as *Kaṇṇaki Purāṇam*. The cult of *Pattiṉi* is also alive in a few places in Kerala and Sri Lanka as a minor cult connected with fertility rites and marriages. Twelve or fifteen hundred years ago, the cult of *Pattiṉi* must have been a very popular one and widely spread throughout today's Tamilnadu, Kerala and Sri Lanka.

As mentioned earlier, the Pattini cult belongs commonly to the three heterodox religions namely Buddhism, Jainism and Ajivakam. The above religions might have derived it from the Dravidian folk tradition when they started their work of proselytisation among the people of this area. The *pattiṉi* portrayed here is entirely different from the goddesses depicted in the traditional Hinduism and brahmanical cults. The above heterodox religion, mainly Buddhism, emerged as a revolt against Vedic Brahmanism. Consequently,

preaching its doctrine through the language of the common man and making use of the local culture and myths for religious purposes became its salient characteristic's from its very inception. The heterodox religions gave importance to indigenisation and the absorption of the *pattiṉi* cult into Buddhism and Jainism can be deemed as a result of their attempts towards nativisation. Thus *Pattiṉi* cult has become very popular in Jainism and Buddhism in Kerala, Tamilnadu and Sri Lanka. *Cilappatikāram* views the *pattiṉi* cult from the Jain point of view whereas *Maṇimēkalai* and the Sinhala myths approach it from the Buddhist perspective.

Gajabāhu and Ceṅkuṭṭuvaṉ

The *pattiṉi* cult came to be closely related to Buddhism in Sri Lanka only after the fifth centuy A.D. as there is no reference to it either in *Dipavamsa* or *Mahāvamsa*. In *Rajavaliya* there is reference to Gajabāhu visiting the Cōḻa country, defeating the Cōḻa king and bringing to Sri Lanka the anklet of *pattiṉi*. This tradition is entirely different from the one portrayed in *Cilappatikāram*. In all the Sri Lankan myths, Gajabāhu is portrayed as a typical Sinhala culture hero, who was the originator of various rituals and religious customs and institutions of the Sinhalas. If there was any historicity in the Gajabāhu tradition, they have been completely transformed into myth-making process. This is applicable to the Tamil portrayal of Ceṅkuṭṭuvaṉ as the culture hero in *Cilappatikāram*. The historicity of Ceṅkuṭṭuvaṉ has been already questioned by many a native scholar.

Cilappatikāram states that Gajabāhu introduced the pattini cult to Sri Lanka with the support of the Cēra king Ceṅkuṭṭuvaṉ. The Sinhala Gajabāhu myth does not agree with this. But the Sinhala ritual sources say (the text of *madu upala*) that it was introduced by Sēramāṉ Rāju – which literally means 'king of Cēra'. But this Sēramāṉ Rāju is not a historical king since he is portrayed as a mythical figure in various rituals. According to Gananath Obeyesekara, Sēramāṉ Rāju has nothing to do with the Cēraṉ Ceṅkuṭṭuvaṉ of the Tamil sources.

The conquest of Ceṅkuṭṭuvaṉ of the North Indian kings as described in *Cilappatikāram* appears as a myth when we see this conquest from the point of view of the geography of India. The route of the Cēra army to Himalaya is portrayed in a very confused and sketchy way in *Cilappatikāram* in the typical way the myth makers usually do. Both Ceṅkuṭṭuvaṉ and Gajabāhu appear as

culture heroes of Tamilnadu and Sri Lanka respectively. One can see some similarities between the Ceṅkuṭṭuvaṉ myth of *Cilappatikāram* and the Gajabāhu myth of Sri Lanka.

Ceṅkuṭṭuvaṉ defeated the North Indian kings and built a temple for *pattiṉi*. Gajabāhu defeated the Cōḻa king, brought the anklet of the *pattiṉi* and built a temple for her at Navagamuva (Obeyesekare 377). Both the heroes are depicted as extending state patronage to this cult. The above myths infom us that a goddess cult that existed at the popular level was later given state patronage and recognition by these culture heroes. The Gajabāhu and Ceṅkuṭṭuvaṉ myths are charters that express these socio-historical events and give them public validation and legitimacy. In both these myths there is clear mythicization process of historical material transforming into myth. It is impossible to abstract the historical material unless concrete and valid evidences from non-mythical sources are available. It is obvious that in the above two myths historical persons have been chosen as heroes for myths and a number of mythical events are woven around these two historical persons.

It is interesting to note that considerable amount of demythicization took place in Tamilnadu with regard to *Cilappatikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai*. This trend is enormously seen in the beginning of the twentieth century and this can be deemed as a part of the revival of classicism. Although *pattini* cult lost its independent existence and was assimilated into various sakti cults of brahmanic Hinduism, modern critics of *Cilappatikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai* have demythicised the events portrayed in these two epics. Thus to these modern scholars, these two epics are history and a number of books treating the early history of the Tamils have been written based on the mythical events of these two epics. V. Kanakasabhai's book Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago is a typical example of this. These attempts of demythicization have to be viewed in the context of the language and cultural nationalism of contemporary Tamil politics. This provides a new charter for political and social action for South Indian nationalists to enhance their self-esteem and to "over compensate" those who have felt systematically neglected by the brahmanic North. This type of demythicization tries to deny or minimise the influence of Sanskrit on South Indian culture and affirms the antiquity and glory of South India's civilization (Obeyesekare 379).

Although the *pattiṉi* cult is portrayed in *Cilappatikāram* with a Jain background, it is associated with Buddhism and to a lesser extent with Ajivakam. The parents of Kōvalaṉ, the protagonist of *Cilappatikāram*, are depicted as belonging to Buddhism; the parents of the Pattiṉi are referred to as Ajivakas. Mātavi is portrayed as embracing Buddhism after the death of Kōvalaṉ. The author of *Maṇimēkalai* depicts Kaṇṇaki as a Buddhist deity. In this epic, Maṇimēkalai is described as the daughter of the great Pattiṉi although she is really the daughter of Mātavi. Maṇimēkalai visits the temple in vañci where the image of Pattiṉi and her husband are installed. The goddess Pattiṉi tells Maṇimēkalai that she and her husband are in the Heaven now but will one day be reborn on earth "when the Maghada country of unfailing rain, in the bright city of Kapila, there should appear Buddha of limitless perfection". She also expresses her regret for her cruel act of burning the city of Maturai.

It is clear that the main characters of the *pattiṉi* story belong to the merchant class and they are the true followers of the heterodox religions. This new community significantly forms a higher stratum in the hierarchy of the then social reality. It is curious to mention that the merchant classes of South India opted for the heterodox religions that provided better legitimation of their life style than orthodox brahmanism. It should be noted that Kōvalaṉ's family were sea traders and had Maṇimēkala, the goddess of the sea, as their patron deity.

Maṇimēkalai and the concept of Tamil Buddhism

If we call *Cilappatikāram* the first epic of Tamil nationalism and a work which establishes a new religion, namely *pattiṉi* cult with a Jain tiṅge, we can describe *Maṇimēkalai* as the first Indian epic written in Tamil which marks a significant phase in the history of Buddhism by establishing a new sect, namely 'Tamil Buddhism'. A better understanding of Cāttaṉār's concept of Tamil Buddhism can be possible only if we understand the various techniques used in this epic to nativise Buddhist themes and rituals. While Iḷaṅkōvaṭikaḷ took a native cult and developed it as a theme of an epic from the Jain point of view, Cāttaṉār used the structure of a Mahayana Buddhist text, namely *Gandavyuha Sūtra* and interpreted it from the point of view of indigenous Tamil culture absorbing into it the elements of the pattini cult and the various episodes provided by *Cilappatikāram* regarding Maṇimēkalai, the daughter of Kōvalaṉ and Kaṇṇaki.

Due to his very successful attempt at nativising Buddhist concepts and his eclectic way of blending together the doctrine of various sects of Buddhism, scholars are not able to ascribe this epic to any particular sect.

Scholars who studied *Maṇimēkalai* in the earlier stages expressed the opinion that *Maṇimēkalai* belongs to the Theravada sect keeping in mind the worship of the sacred seat of the Buddha, the reference to *Camaṉōḷi* mountain as well as the close contact that existed between the monks of Tamilnadu and Sri Lanka in the earlier phase. But one can come across an episode in *Maṇimēkalai* in which Caṉamittiraṉ, a minister of Puṉṉiyaracaṉ, the king of Java Island, ridicules the Theravada concept of self-emancipation.

The epic *Maṇimēkalai* portrays Āputtiraṉ and Aṟavaṇa Aṭikal as Bodhisatvas-a concept very popular in the Mahayana tradition. In addition to the doctrines of Mahayana and Theravada in general one can come across the doctrines of the sub-sects like the Yogachara, and the Sauthrantika in this epic. The abundance of female deities in *Maṇimēkalai* such as the Goddess Maṇimēkala, Campāpati, Tivatilakai, etc, shows the influence of Tantric school. Moreover, a close study reveals that there is a deep impact of Mantrayana Buddhism on *Maṇimēkalai*.

Cāttaṉār blends together the doctrines of various sects with a number of popular beliefs and myths and tries to build up a new school namely 'Tamil Buddhism'. This was possible for him because in Tamilnadu, especially in Kāñcipuram there was a healthy tendency of Buddhist laymen and monks of various sects living together forgetting their sectarian differences. The travel report of Yuan Chwang, a Chinese pilgrim of the 7th century A.D. gives an indirect hint about this trend. Consequently, Cāttaṉār's new attempt should have been received by the various sects of Buddhist monks and laymen of Tamilnadu. In this respect the epic *Maṇimēkalai* stands as a unique contribution of Tamilnadu to Buddhism. For a better understanding of *Maṇimēkalai*, one should have a sound knowledge not only of Buddhism but also of Tamil culture because this epic is a harmonious blending of the two.

Cilappatikāram and *Maṇimēkalai* serve as valuable cultural documents of ancient Tamil society. Although they speak about many Tamil kings and

chieftains, one need not take them as historical persons and events. Historical events and persons, as mentioned earlier, are completely mythicised in these two epics. Consequently, it is natural that they contradict with the real historical information collected from non-mythical sources. The prologues give the impression that the authors of the two epics are contemporaries, which is unsustainable. It is obvious that there is a vast gap between the social milieus depicted in them. It is frequently mentioned that the above two epics are twin epics. This is also a misconception. We can call *Maṇimēkalai* only a sequel to *Cilappatikāram* since there is some link between the two epics at the story level.

The Age of the two epics

While fixing the age of *Cilappatikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai* traditional scholars rely mainly on the reference to Gajabāhu, the Ceylonese king, as well as the identification of Ceṅkuttuvaṉ with the hero of the fourth decade of *Patiṟṟuppattu*, one of the *Caṅkam* anthologies. We have already mentioned that lot of myths have been interwoven around the historical name Gajabāhu and his so-called visit to the Cēra kingdom is one among the various myths emanated in Tamilnadu. As the prologue of the epic, probably a later interpolation claims that Cāttaṉār and Iḷaṅkō are contemporaries, most of the traditional scholars are of the opinion that these two epics belonged to the 2nd century A.D. The entire argument of these scholars is nothing but an attempt to demythicize the events portrayed in these epics and their prologues. We should keep in mind that the name Gajabāhu is not the proper name of a particular king – it is used as a generic name to indicate several rulers of a particular dynasty in Ceylon and that this name means 'one with the arms of elephant' indicating the extra-ordinary physical prowess.

M. Raghava Iyengar argues that Ceṅkuṭṭuvaṉ of the third book of *Cilappatikāram* is a historical king; but he fixes his age at 500 A.D. instead of 2nd c.A.D. basing on the astronomical references made in *Cilappatikāram* regarding the burning of Maturai. S.D. Swamikaṇṇu Piḷḷai expresses the opinion that this type of astronomical conditions might have been possible in the 7th c.A.D. Therefore he fixes the age of this epic at 7th .c.A.D. S. Vaiyāpuri Piḷḷai on the basis of various historical and other reliable data argues that *Cilappatikāram* belongs to A.D. 750 His argument seems very convincing.

There must have at least one hundred years of time gap between the compositions of *Cilappatikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai*. Hieun Tsang, who visited Kāñcipuram in the early part of the 7th century A.D. made no mention about this epic in his detailed report on the conditions of Buddhism in Tamilnadu. There is a view that Āticinēntiraṉ mentioned by Cāttaṉār, while speaking about the instruments of knowledge, may refer to Jinendrabuddhi., (A.D.850) a commentator of *Pramāṇa Samuccaya* by Vasubanthu.

During the 8th c. A.D. Sailendra dynasty was in power in the Java Island and they patronised Mahayana Buddhism. Cāttaṉār's description of Buddhism in Java clearly reveals that Mahayana Buddhism was enjoying hegemony in this island country.

Esoteric Buddhism or Tantric Buddhism had flourished in South India, including the Tamil country, after the middle of the 7th c. A.D. In *Maṇimēkalai* elements of Esoteric Buddhism are seen here and there as in the introduction of many female deities. One can see the influence of the Manjusri cult in the portrayal of Aṟavaṇa Aṭikaḷ. This cult was popular in South India after the 8th century A.D.

A close reading of the entire text of the epic *Maṇimēkalai* makes one feel that Buddhism in Tamilnadu went through a period of crisis during the time of Cāttaṉār. There are many reasons to believe that Cāttaṉār would have composed the epic *Maṇimēkalai* after A.D. 850 as an attempt to revive Buddhism.

From the point of view of epic structure, *Cilappatikāram* can be deemed as a better work of literary art than *Maṇimēkalai*. Since *Maṇimēkalai* is aimed at narrating Buddhist myths, ethics and moral codes to the laymen it looks more like a religion oriented text than a great work of literary art. The too much intrusion of confused supernatural events, the complex structure, the frequent use of flashback techniques, the retelling of events related to the previous births of characters etc., make it difficult for the ordinary reader to understand the text easily. At the same time a Buddhist layman with a good knowledge of similar Buddhist texts may easily comprehend the story.

It is significant to note that *Maṇimēkalai* is the first philosophical epic in Tamil in which Buddhist philosophy and logic are converted into beautiful Tamil poetry. Consequently, one can notice the sincere attempt of Cāttaṉār to experiment with coining new words, new situations and creating new myths to narrate artistically the Buddhist concepts and doctrines. Cāttaṉār's attempt at indigenisation in this epic makes for a very rewarding and fruitful study.

Cilappatikāram is a very carefully designed epic in three cantos. Both *Maṇimēkalai* and *Cilappatikāram* have thirty chapters each. Both are composed in *āciriyappā* metre. It is interesting to note that these epics differ from the Indian epic tradition in many ways.

Indian epics follow the chronological order of narration; i.e. telling the story from the birth of the hero to his end. This is against the Western tradition of plunging into the middle and narrating the antecedent events through flashback. This type of narration is termed *Inmediasres* by the Latin critic Horace. It is very significant to note that *Cilappatikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai* start their stories not from the birth of their protagonists but from a particular event in their life.

Since *Cilappatikāram* narrates a domestic story, it starts with the marriage of Kōvalaṉ and Kaṇṇaki. Being a religious epic, *Maṇimēkalai* starts with the solemn background of the festival of Indra. The introductory portions of both the epics function like the opening scenes of Shakespeare's plays or the Chorus in Greek tragedies in which the author through various techniques throws hints on the vicissitudes of the main characters. The poets of these two epics might have learnt this technique from the Yavana sailors, merchants and soldiers who lived in groups in Tamilnadu.

According to the classical Indian tradition, the protagonist of an epic should be a peerless hero, an incomparable archer of the first order, who, through the display of physical strength and martial heroism, restores peace and order in the midst of chaos and confusion. But very strangely, these two epics centre around two heroines. We cannot call Kōvalaṉ and Utayakumāraṉ protagonists in the strict classical sense of the term. Instead of martial heroism these two heroines exhibit moral heroism. This is a very significant turning point in the history of Indian epic poetry. While epics of the brahmanical Hinduism, or those

of the kshatriya heroic traditions were composed on kings and princes, the heterodox religious traditions created epics with ordinary citizens and common men as their main characters. *Cilappatikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai* belong to this traditions. That is why T.P. Meenakshisundarn calls *Cilappatikāram* a kuṭimakkaḷ *kāppiyam* which means 'epic of the common man'. Although Kōvalaṉ and Kaṇṇaki are not common subjects they do not belong to the ruling aristocracy either; they belong to the newly emerged vaishya community.

In both the epics the authors have developed the epic plots through epic journey which helps reveal the mental development of the heroines. Yet, the epic journey is more clearly portrayed in *Cilappatikāram* than in *Maṇimēkalai*. In *Cilappatikāram* Kaṇṇaki travels from Pukār to Maturai which is portrayed as a longer journey than that of Ceṅkuṭṭuvaṉ from Vañci to the Himalayas. In her journey, Kaṇṇaki is accompanied by Kōvalaṉ, her husband, and Kavunti, a Jain nun who is a typical example of teacher character in Indian epic tradition. Iḷaṅkō very beautifully portrays the mental development of Kaṇṇaki through this journey.

The author of *Cilappatikāram* has come extraordinarily talented in the depiction of his characters, especially of his main characters Kaṇṇaki, Mātavi and Kōvalaṉ. In *Cilappatikāram* Mātavi appears to be an embodiment of sensual pleasures whereas she ends with the denial of pleasures. In *Maturaikkāṇṭam* there is the intrusion of ego in the portrayal of *Kaṇṇaki* and finally she ends with the denial of ego. Kōvalaṉ takes life as a pleasure, whereas Kaṇṇaki takes it as a penance and they represent two layers of culture at that stage. As tragic characters Kovalaṉ evokes pity and Kaṇṇaki terror. If Kōvalaṉ stands for man's helplessness Kaṇṇaki becomes the cosmic power. Both Kaṇṇaki and Mātavi are cheated by their husband as well as fate; one becomes an avenging goddess of fury and the other, a holy nun (K. Chellappan 80, 131).

Maṇimēkalai undertakes similar journey to the island Maṇipallavam, Kāñci, Vañci and Java. She has four teacher characters; two are celestials namely the Goddess *Maṇimēkala* and Tivatilakai; the two teachers drawn from the class of human beings are Āputtiraṉ and Aṟavana Aṭikal.The two human teachers dominate the epic to much that sometimes we doubt whether the chief character

in this epic is *Maṇimēkalai* or Aṟavana Aṭikal. Hence we can describe *Maṇimēkalai* as a different kind of epic – an epic with three main characters.

Although *Cilappatikāram* is endowed with an organic structure, its total design is spoiled by the intrusion of the *karma* theory of the Jaina religion. The parts of the work that describe the tragedy of Kōvalaṉ's death and Kaṇṇaki's rage are, at their best, sublime. But the effect is spoiled time and again when Iḷaṅkō attributes their fate to actions in former births and then has Kaṇṇaki bodily ascend to Heaven where she rejoins her husband. Regarding this,G.L. Hart says that "the *Karma* was not a native Tamil notion and that it must have been missing in the original version of the poem. I cannot help feeling that Iḷaṅkō's version is probably inferior to the oral version that he copied". (341)

While the epic *Maṇimēkalai* serves as a good document of the religious milieu of Cāttaṉār's period, *Cilappatikāram* serves as an authentic document of the cultural milieu of Tamilnadu during the period of Iḷaṅkō. Here is God's plenty, a cultural milieu with people and culture belonging to various strata of Tamil society-the rich folk heritage of the fishing community, the hunters, the people of the hilly tract, men of the pastoral region and agricultural plains, the leading business community, the ruling aristocracy and the brahmins proficient in the Vedas.

Cilappatikāram is considered a *nāṭakāppiyam*, a dramatic epic because of its dramatic excellence. It is an epic of *Muttamiḻ*, the threefold Tamil namely *Iyal-poetry*, *Icai*-music, and *Nāṭakam*-drama. The first edition of *Cilappatikāram* was brought out in the year 1892 with *Arumpatavurai* (an explanatory note on the rare and difficult phrases and words) and with the commentary of Aṭiyārkkunallār. The editor U.V. Swaminatha Aiyar has also added his own interpretations and editorial notes. The first edition of *Maṇimēkalai* was brought out by U.V. Swaminatha Aiyar in 1898. *Cilappatikāram* was translated into English, French, Russian and Czech whereas *Maṇimēkalai* was translated into English, Japanese, and Hindi.

Cilappatikāram and *Maṇimēkalai* are the authentic source materials for any study on the cultural heritage of the Tamils. When the Tamil nationalistic spirit swept over Tamilnadu, scholars, poets, politicians and social historians

started studying and undertaking intensive research on these epics with a view to establishing the superiority of Tamil culture over the Aryan culture. A number of poems have been composed on the various episodes of these two epics. A large number of monographs have been written on them. This revival of interest started with the poet of the Tamil renaissance, namely Subramanya Bharati who paid glowing tributes to *Cilappatikāram*. Bharatidasan composed a long narrative poem on *Cilappatikāram* story. A few dramatic pieces have also been written on the Kaṇṇaki story. Similarly, Muṭiyaracaṉ, a modern poet has composed a long narrative poem modelled on *Maṇimēkalai*. Bharatidasan has composed *Maṇimēkala Veṇpā* and a few dramatic works have been composed on Āputtiraṉ, one of the main characters of the epic *Maṇimēkalai*.

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9. LITERARY THEORIES OF A MUSLIM TAMIL EPIC

Social background

Cīṟāpurāṇam is a long narrative poem in Tamil which deals with the life story of Prophet Mohamad who gave a concrete shape to Islam in the 7th century A.D. But the social milieu of the above said Tamil poem on Mohamad is the conservative feudal set-up of the 17th century Tamilnadu which fostered only neo-classical literatures like the *prabhanta* types which strictly conform to certain stereo-typed patterns and formulae. Most of the poems of this age were cultivated under a patronized system and hence they happened to be courtly in nature and aristocratic in character. It was in such a social milieu which was congenial only to the growth of *prabhanta* types of encomiums on patrons and gods that the Muslim Tamil poet *Umaṟu* ventured on the task of rendering the noble life style of Prophet Mohamad in epic form. It has been aptly suggested by some scholars, that the first intention of our poet is to render the biograhical materials about Prophet Mohamad not in epic structure but in the *piḷḷaittamiḻ*, a traditional neo-classical panegyric poetic from which was popular in the feudal courts as well as in temples. That is why the poet does not adhere closely to the traditional invocation of the Tamil epics and follows the invocations of the *prabhanta* poems (Paramacivaṉ 61). Such a dilmmea in the poet's mind whether to conform to the epic structure or to the neo-classical *prabhanta* pattern existed even when the poem was under composition and this is discernible throughout this puranic type of epic.

Classical poetry

Cīṟāpurāṇam was composed under a patronized system like other neo-classical poems with a lofty purpose in the mind of the poet as well as his patron. It is designed so as to conform to the traditional Indian epic structure though the poetic content has forced the poet to undertake some alterations in the epic design. Since this epic is governed by well-codified principles of subject matter and poetic manner, it stands as a fine example of classical poetry both in temper and spirit. Yet, since the conventions are handled creatively with needful

modifications so as to suit the poetic content, we can say that the theory that underlies the composition of the above epic is organic and not mechanical.

Epic design

In epic poetry, unlike lyric poetry and drama, the poet partly speaks in his own person, as narrator, and partly makes his characters speak in direct discourse (mixed narrative). That is why Jakobson declares that "the lyric is the first person singular,, present tense, while the epic is third person, past tense" (Wellek and Warren 228). Umaṟu also designs his epic in the above narrative pattern, and narrates in his own person, as narrator allowing the characters to speak in certain places. This gives certain dramatic grandeur to his epic. But the dramatic elements have not been allowed to dominate over the narrative method as it does in *Cilappatikāram*. The main theme of his epic is the individual not as opposed to society but who incarnated in this world to wipe out the tears of the suffering multitude. So it is obvious that *Cīṟāpurāṇam* is not merely a hero story but an edifying tale which is informed by ethical seriousness and philosophical contemplation.

Though the poet concentrates on a story that happened in the Middle East 14 centuries ago, the panorama presented by him is not Arabia but entirely the landscape of his own Tamil land as well as the idealized Tamil panorama as gleaned from the traditional epics of the Tamils. Leon Trotsky's statement that "Even when the artist creates heaven and hell, he merely transforms the experiences of his own life into his phantasmagorias, almost to the point of his land lady's unpaid bill"(370), aptly suits Umuṟu's depiction of the Arabian lands too. Besides, he lived in a society where, owing to the natural resources and the skills of the people, the economy was the Arabian lands too. Besides, he lived in a society, where thriving trade was expanding and the country was becoming increasingly wealthy. This aspect of his contemporary social reality so fired his imagination that he envisioned a collective utopia of affluent, cultured and educated people in his ideal Macca where the prophet was born. The ideal land which he thus envisioned finds powerful description in the first two cantos that follow the invocation. His utopia stands in close approximation with Kampaṉ"s ideal land-Kosala - in many respects. These two cantos are closely in conformity

with the traditional Tamil epics from *Cintāmaṇi* onwards which introduced the descriptions of the country and capital of epic heroes as integral parts of epic plot.

Beginning

Like other Indian epic poets, Umaṟu also prefers the chronological narration for the Western inmediasres. This helps the poet develop his plot artistically and narrate his hero's life powerfully from his birth to a mature stage which he attains in the end. Yet he has not covered the whole life story of Mohamad. He is not a historian but an artist and hence he has made selections in the biographical materials. Most of the events which are not in harmony with his epic design are completely left out. Though poetic justice is aimed for with the defeat of the antagonistic forces, the epic ends abruptly. The poet's aim is to instruct the readers by pleasing. The propagandistic motive of his own religious ideals is fulfilled in presenting the most glorious events of his ideal divine hero in the epic structure. The whole poem tries to bring home to man his frailties, and persuades him to tread the path of love, virtue and piety. The poet has not even neglected the war episodes that occurred in Mohamad's life and treats them elaborately. This shows that he formally respects the epic convention of celebrating martial heroism along with moral heroism.

Epic conflict and heroism

Conflict between just opposed ideals or mighty opposites seems to be a vital part of traditional epic plot. Generally, the conflict will be between two opposite forces which are represented through the delineation of a protagonist and antagonist. In the heroic epics, such conflicts will always occur between two kinds of martial heroism. In Rāmāyaṇa, we have the conflict between two mighty opposites-on the one side the ethical heroism as represented by Rāma and on the other side the primitive heroism as shown by Rāvaṇa-which are two opposite forms of martial heroism. When the epic content underwent a change in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, where the poet has to glorify moral heroism, Milton simply replaces ethical heroism by Christian heroism (which is self-sacrifice and perseverance). He designs his epic plot so as to present the conflict between pagan heroism vs Christian heroism.

The epic conflict which ennobles the structure and content of the epic poetry has not been worked out artistically and organically by the later Tamil epic poet Beschi, who has rendered the life story of the great saint, Joseph, in his epic poem *Tēmpāvaṇi*. That is why the structure of *Tēmpāvaṇi* happens to be very loose lacking in the unity of tone.

Unlike Joseph's life sketch, the real life story of Mohamad presents most of the salient features of an epic hero who is bound to show martial heroism and moral heroism. This gives grandeur to the present epic both in form and theme. The primitive heroism and the pagan heroism are portrayed through Apūjakal, the antagonist who, like Satan, with his cold, cunning and villainous heart schemes treacherous plots against the hero and fights and dies as a valorous mighty hero like Rāvaṇa. The protagonist Mohamad also presents the dual role of Christ and Rāma in embodying moral and martial heroisms.

According to *Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram*, the hero of an epic should be unrivalled and peerless. The hero of *Cir̲āpurāṇam* is a good example of this classical dictum. He is at the head of a conquering army which is at the same time an army of God, fighting God's battle while performing His work both in Heaven and on earth. The fall of his enemies Apūjakal, his son and others symbolises the end of a social order which knows no pity. Its upshot is the establishment of the Kingdom of God which is actually the extension of his utopia as described in the first two cantos. By making virtue thrive and vice perish in the end and developing the epic conflict in an artistic way, the poet successfully achieves an organic form and epic grandeur.

Umaṟu has tried his best to bring the biographical materials into the traditional epic structure. His conscious and untiring attempt with regard to this is obvious from his painstaking efforts to introduce almost all the traditional epic techniques into his narrative poem. Following the Tamil epic tradition, he has divided his epic poem into few books (3 books) and contos (47 paṭalam), introduced the invocation, described the country and capital, intertwined some episodes with the main plot, made use of the supernatural, introduced the bathing festival which has been emphasized as an integral part by the epic theorist Taṇṭi, (though this is not very relevant to *Cir̲āpurāṇam*) and presented the responses of women of various stages to the charm of the hero who comes in procession (he

makes Fatima's husband come in procession). Yet he could not prove himself to be a great epic poet since in the continuous struggle between the religious biographer and the true artist in him, the former triumphs over the latter. Umaṟu has to convince the Muslim religious world and fulfill his lofty ambition of presenting genuinely the life story of Prophet Mohamad. As a result, he has to sacrifice artistic unity which results in the intrusion of sundry episodes such as the description of Fatima's marriage etc. They are not very vital for the development of the epic plot though very significant to his religious purpose. Such a kind of narration and the introduction of multifarious episodes reduce the epic to the level of a biography in verse. So, we can call it not a literary epic but a biographical epic in which the real biographical materials of a great prophet are rendered in epic form.

Yet, Umaṟu tries his best to remain an objective poet *parexcellence* by hiding his own personality and transmuting the personal emotions into art emotions. In places where the poet has to heighten the valorous nature of the antagonist, he has introduced the epic voice and through it advises the audience or readers that the heroism exhibited by the enemy is a destructive force which is completely opposed to the heroism of the protagonist.

Purpose of poetry

The chief purpose of court poetry that emerged under feudal set-up is to entertain the aristocratic audience. So didactic purpose occupies only a minor place. The above said aim of the secular court poetry entirely differs from that of the religious poems that also flourished under certain patronized system of the same age. The purpose of the devotional poet is not to please his patron but to communicate his religious experience to the common man so as to enable him to lead an austere life which he considers as an ideal one. So didacticism naturally predominates the pleasing purpose. Apart form its didactic purpose, *Ciṟāpurāṇam* is so moulded as to serve as a beautiful panegyric poem which glorifies a divine hero and for this motivation the poet assumes the role of a devotional hymnist in many instances. We have multifarious encomiums through out *Ciṟāpurāṇam* where the poet, instead of projecting his own ego and subjective feelings, simply turns his personal emotions into art emotions and expresses them through certain characters hiding his own personality and aiming for a certain level of objectivity.

These meritorious efforts of the poet deserve our appreciation. For glorifying the hero and for giving a Promethean stature to him, Umaṟu adopts almost all the techniques of heroic poems such as the presentation of catalogues and genealogical lore which we shall discuss in the forthcoming pages.

Genealogy

The poets of heroic poems generally present the genealogical lists of their patrons so as to highlight their glory. This trend permeates into gnomic and devotional literatures as well. So the presentation of genealogical list becomes a widespread technique even in the narration of the life sketches of saints and other great men. In the Bible, we have a list of the predecessors of Christ which finally claims that Christ is the son of David. *Rāmāyaṇa* of Indian tradition also presents various genealogical accounts which are closely followed in *Ciṟāppurāṇam* also. Unlike the short panegyrics like *Puṟanāṉūṟu*, the genealogical accounts are arranged in catalogue forms which are loaded with mythical and supernatural accounts that give a sense of remoteness to the poem. In the third canto entitled "*Talaimuṟaippaṭalam*", the poet traces the predecessors of the protagonists to Adam and Eve. Other genealogical lists which the poet handles are very short and they occur mostly in places where the poet has to introduce some characters. In all the genealogical lists, the glories of the predecessors are made subservient to the indomitable personalities of the epic characters.

Catalogue

Another technique adopted by Umaṟu to give grandeur to his epic is the presentation of catalogues. Catalogues serve as the earliest forms of informative materials in primitive and heroic poems. Umaṟu has used catalogues in the descriptive passages of the first two cantos.

Supernatural

Since *Ciṟāppurāṇam* is a biographical epic dealing with the miracles of a divine hero, the introduction of supernatural has become very vital in the religious as well as in literary points of view. The hero himself is a messenger of God who is fully aware of the divinity in him though he is reluctant to declare it

openly. He is portrayed throughout the epic like Christ of the Gospels and *Rāma* of *Kamparāmāyaṇam* in whose personalities both humanity and divinity are blended. Yet, unlike *Rāma*, Mohamad is fully aware of the presence of divinity in him. Such a divine hero performs sundry miracles and maintains constant contact with celestial beings like Japuṟayil. The moon descends from the sky and rocks the cradle in Mohamad's infancy, angels come from heaven and give him the title Napi, a giant snake worships him uttering human language, a river protects him and his colleagues from the thieves, heavenly maidens dote him, a *lacertaiquana* speaks with him, he calls the moon and moon comes round him, the camel, deer, tree and the wolf speak with him, he feeds eighty people with three plates of food and calls the rain. These are some of the supernatural events that are made integral parts of the epic plot. Unlike Caṅkam poetry, supernatural events are allowed to dominate over human characters but at the same time they are made subservient to the glories of the protagonist. They help in some way or other to enhance the transcendental glories of the hero who controls them and guides them in the proper way.

Episodes

Another technique displayed by our poet is the introduction of numerous episodes which also helps to heighten the hero's fame. The structural unity in epic can be attained only by a careful selection of incidents. According to Aristotole, proper selection of incidents and building up with them a single action is essential for a plot in which the structure of incidents will have an organic unity. For this, all episodes must be shown as in perspective so that the mind can grasp the whole and see it as one. But the poet of this epic has not achieved such a unity of tone completely owing to the introduction of sundry episodes which are not in harmony with the main plot. Yet, though the unity of action is lacking, the presentation of multifarious episodes provides us with variety and creates a religious atmosphere which is against one of the purposes of this epic. The episode of *Kakupu* is well designed and it reminds us of the *Vāli* episode of Kampaṉ though the characterization of *Vāli* and *Kakupu* vastly differ in many respects.

Theory of Style

A style must be individual because it is the expression of an individual mode of feeling (Murry 4). It is again a quality of language which communicates precisely emotions or thoughts, or a system of emotions or thoughts, peculiar to the author (65). Where thought predominates, there the expression will be in prose; where emotion predominates it will be in poetry. Since style is organic, it is impossible to consider it apart from the whole system of perceptions and feelings. Since *Ciṟāppurāṇam* is an epic which flourished in the feudal set up, it shares some of the common trends of the feudal art which are by nature very ornamental and highly decorative. So the language of *Ciṟāppurāṇam* is a sophisticated and ornamental one which is obtained by the conscious labour of the poet. To *Umaṟu* poetry itself is a conscious art which is obvious from his description of poetry as "வடிவுறுங் கவிதையின்" (மதியையழைப்பித்த படலம் 59). Poetry for him is an art decked with figures of speech and he himself describes this as "சாலமிக்க கவிதைத்திறம்" (தீனிலைக்கண்ட படலம் 86). Yet, clarity, lucidity, conciseness and preciseness are also deemed as qualities of good style. Since the poet has to bring the Arabic names and concepts into Tamil verse he has encountered with some new problems and experiences. He transcends all such handicaps by his creative ability and the artistic way of handling the rhythm, etc (Meenakshisundaran 3). He gives more importance to his religious traditions and tries to preserve the Arabic religious terms without much modifications. So in his epic, we can find not only the mingling of the two cultural streams but also the blending of two languages without much clash.

Imagery

Like metre, imagery is one component structure of a poem and a part of the syntactic or stylistic stratum. Hence, it must be studied, not in isolation from the other strata but as an element in the totality, the integrity of the literary work (Wellek and Warren 211). As suggested by Coleridge, "images, however beautiful, however faithfully copied from nature, and as accurately represented in words, do not by themselves characterize the poet. They become proof of the original genius only so far as they are modified by predominant passion".

Cirāppurāṇam is embellished with arresting images which are organically linked with the epic structure. Sun, moon and rain are the most recurrent images among which the rain image serves as a symbol for Mohamad, the protagonist of the epic (Gani 66). It is a common symbol of the Tamil literary tradition where rain is always associated with great men and their generous deeds. In some places, moon is also used as an image to represent the beginning of an event or action, and setting sun to signify the closing or end of an event.

Similes

Like other neo-classical literary works, the language of *Cirāppurāṇam* is decked with numerous figures of speech among which similes attract our attention much. Nature similes are more common throughout *Cirāppurāṇam*. The similes are used not merely as a decorative ornament but handled in an organic way so as to illustrate and ennoble the subject matter. For describing the flow of the river, the poet has used various similes among which the most significant are the comparison of the river with prostitutes and merchants. The walls of the cities are compared with lotus, the king's white umbrella with moon, dimonds with stars, the eyes of the maidens with fish, the king with rising sun and the warriors with elephants.

Imagination

Unlike *Caṅkam* poems, imagination is conceived in this epic as a vital force for creating supernatural events. In some places the poet experiences some inane flights of imagination like the *prabhanta* poets. Yet in many instances, imagination is conceived as a creative force and a synthesizing power which helps make fine images, arresting similes and fine narrative techniques. It has contributed much to the depiction of an ideal utopia in the opening cantos as well as in the canto *Matiṉam pukka paṭalam*.

Dream

Treatment of dream seems to be a frequent technique which again is made an integral part of the epic plot. In *Cirāppurāṇam* there are nearly seven dream episodes most of which are linked with the main women characters such as

Aminā, the mother of Mohamad, Alimā, the foster mother and Katijā, the wife of Mohamad. This apart, Mohamad also dreams and his dream is so designed as to develop the epic action artistically. All the dreams are so handled as to enhance, ennoble and interpret the main events and actions of the epic. One of Katijā's premarital dreams is treated in a symbolic way. In her dream the moon descends from heaven and sits happily on her lap, which indirectly signifies her oncoming marriage with Mohamad. The Heaven and earth meet and mingle in almost all the dreams and the dream episodes create a new world peopled by both human beings and celestial beings.

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RELIGIOUS LITERATURE

10. ON THE BEGINNING OF BUDDHISM – AN OBSERVATION

At the outset it must be said that the research paper entitled *On the Beginning of Buddhism* by Dr Peter Schalk is a very subjective one written with a view to refute a conclusion arrived at on the basis of concrete evidences about the existence of Buddhism in ancient Tamilnadu. The author has taken much effort to prove his baseless theory that the Buddhism came to Tamilnadu only after 4th century A.D., and with this pre-conceived notion he tries to give different interpretations in his own way of the solid evidences which testify to the existence of Buddhism in Tamilnadu in the pre-Aśokan or Aśokan period. For his far-fetched interpretations, he claims that he has the support and approval of Dr A. Veluppillai, a great Tamil scholar from Jaffna, who has explicitly expressed the view that Buddhism existed in Tamilnadu during the period of Asoka and has written so in one of his well-researched Tamil books, namely *Tamiḻ Ilakkiyattil Kālamum Karuttum* (13). The generalizations made by Dr Peter Schalk in this paper are not based on an objective analysis of the available data. Instead, the available materials are interpreted in such a way as to support the preconceived notions of the author.

The author who wants to establish the concept of Tamil Buddhism and to differentiate it from Buddhism in Tamilnadu confuses himself and concludes that "we shall speak about Tamil Buddhism and about Buddhism in Tamiḻakam. To us it is the same". 'It is to be noted that the author who frequently speaks about 'Tamil Buddhism' is not able to define in it clear terms. If Tamil Buddhism and Buddhism in Tamilnadu are one and the same, there is no need to speak about Tamil Buddhism as a new concept in religion. He can better speak about Buddhism in Tamiḻakam that removes all ambiguities involved.

While defining Tamiḻakam, he says that Tamiḻakam refers to the unified whole the Cōḻa, Cēra and Pāṇṭiya kingdoms inclusive of their annexed territories like Iḻaccōḻamaṇṭalam, and at times non-annexed Tamil parts of Īḻam. This is absolutely a misconception since the term Tamiḻakam is never used to include the non-annexed Tamil parts of Īḻam.

He writes that "the *Caṅkam* period is an imagined period and that we should abandon the term *Caṅkam* period and instead write and speak about pre-Pallava time". We, the Tamil scholars, wonder why Dr Peter is so much upset about the normally used and generally accepted term *Caṅkam* period. He fears that the term *Caṅkam* which is believed to be a derivation of the Pāli term *Saṅgha* may relate this age to Buddhism. The Tamil scholarship has accepted this term as a synonym of *Kūṭal* and it has been used generation after generation to refer to the corpus of the earliest well codified Tamil literature that flourished till the 2nd century A.D. There is no necessity to abandon this accepted nomenclature just because this scholar from Sweden finds some connections between *Caṅkam* and Buddhism which he is reluctant to accept. Tamil scholarship is not going to gain anything by abandoning the term *Caṅkam* period and by using the term *pre-Pallava time* in its place. Moreover, it is not clear which term he suggests to differentiate the *Kalabra* period from the *Caṅkam* age. Abandoning the terms *Caṅkam* age and *Kalabra* age and using the term *pre-Pallava* period in their place will lead to a lot of inaccuracies in our studies of Tamil language, literature and culture.

The second part of the paper is the outcome of his futile and fragile attempt to disprove the interpretation of the Tamil term potiyil given by the Japanese scholar Dr Shu Hikosaka. Dr Shu Hikosaka has made it clear that the word *potiyil* is not the combination of *potu+il* (*potu* means 'common' and *il* means 'house' or 'place'). His argument is based on the following two criteria – one on the meaning of the term *potiyil* used in the *Caṅkam* corpus and the two Tamil epics, namely *Cilappatikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai:* the other on the etymology of the word *potiyil.*

Let us first look into the semantic aspect of the term *potiyil* in the earlier Tamil classics. In *Caṅkam* literature there are two different terms, namely *potiyil* and *potuvil*. The word *potuvil* is a combination of *potu+il* and it is used to refer to common place (*Puṟam 89*). But the word *potiyil* is different from *potuvil* both in its etymology and meaning.

In *Caṅkam* literature and the earlier Tamil epics the term *potiyil* is used to refer *to*

1. *potiyil* mountain
2. A pillared temple in ruined condition and
3. The Buddhist temples.

The term *potiyil cannot* be a common place because of the following reasons:

1. The mountain of *potiyil* cannot be a common place since throughout the *Caṅkam* literature it is described as an awful mountain where even goblins are very much frightened to go near. This steep mountain peak is 6800 ft. high from the sea level and a common place in its peak is impossible. There is no reference in the *Caṅkam* corpus to any common place or hall on the *Potiyil* mountain.

2. Regarding the other usage, it is made clear that *potiyil* is a ruined temple with pillars (eg. *Akam* 167, 307, 373, 377, *Puṟam* 52, 375, 390 etc). The pillar in this temple is mentioned as *kantu*, and *Paṭṭiṉappālai* one of the *Caṅkam* works, describe this temple as *kantuṭaippotiyil*.

3. The term *potiyil* refers mainly to the sanctum sanctorum, and the common hall in its front is referred to as *maṉṟam* which is a synonym for *potuvil* and not *potiyil*. *Cilappatikāram* and *Maturaikkānci* clearly differentiate *potiyil* and the common place as *maṉṟappotiyil*. Here *potiyil* is the temple and *maṉṟam* is its front yard. This clearly shows that common place or common hall is entirely different from *potiyil* and that the word *maṉṟam* could not be a synonym of *potiyil*.

4. In the Buddhist epic *Maṇimēkalai*, *potiyil* is used to refer to Buddhist temple (XV, II – 79 – 86, II 55 – 59 and XXI, II 5 - 9). In this epic, the term *potiyil* is used to indicate the Buddhist temple at Kāvirippūmpaṭṭiṉam. This clearly shows the close connection between *potiyil* and Buddhism.

5. As already mentioned, *Caṅkam* literature describes *potiyil* as temple having pillars (*kantu*). In *Maṇimēkalai*, the Buddhist temple *potiyil* is described in the same manner as *kantu*. A painting of a Buddhist deity is seen in one of its pillars and it is termed *kantiṟpāvai* (the deity in the pillar). This epic describes the above deity as *potiyilporuntiya teyvam nīyō* (Are you the deity enshrined at *potiyil*).On this basis, and keeping in mind the connection between Buddhist and *potiyil*

mountain (reference made to the pilgrimage of Kāyacaṇṭikai, a Buddhist woman in *Maṇimēkalai* to *potiyil* mountain etc.), Dr Hikosaka argues that *potiyil* may be the corrupt form of *Bōdhi+il> Pōti+il>poti+il>potiyil* which means the house of the Bodhi ot Buddha. This term is an analogical creation formed on the basis of the term *kōvil* or *kōvil (kō+il)*, which refers to Hindu temples. Dr Hikosaka is able to see close connection between *potiyil* mountain and the *potalaka* mountain referred to in Yuan Chwang's travel report.

Maṇimēkalai speaks about the pilgrimage of the Buddhist people to *potiyil* mountain. The second century Mahayana work *Gandayuga sūtra* speaks about *potiyil* (potalaka) as one of the Buddhist centres in South India. It is worth mentioning that there is a tradition to call all the mountains in South sacred to Buddhists as *potiyil* mountain. Consequently, the hills of Aramboly, which is identified with the pass mentioned in *Puṟam* 175 by which the Mauryas crossed and reached *Potiyil*, is also called *Potiyil* mountain even now. These evidences unmistakably prove the connections between *potiyil* and Buddhism.

From the etymological point of view, Dr Hikosaka refutes the opinions of traditional Tamil scholars like Dr U.V.Swaminatha Iyer who interpret this term as *potu+il>potiyil*. This is wrong since *pot+il* will become *potuvil* and not *potiyil*. Moreover, *potuvil* refers to common place and *potiyil* never denotes common place in the earliest Tamil literature.

But now, Dr Peter Schalk seeks to argue that *potiyil* has nothing to do with Buddhism and it is nothing but *potu+il* which means common place. For establishing this, he has come with a new morphophonemic rule suggested by Dr Rajam. His happiness knows no bounds (which is obvious from the way of his narration) when he comes across Dr Rajam's book, *A reference Grammar of Classical Tamil Poetry* (1992) which, I think, is written with a view to explaining to the non-Tamil students the morphophonemic changes, especially the internal sandhi, that take place in the earliest Tamil works.

Dr Peter's prologue to his argument is amazing, and he begins with an epic style as if he is going to fight with a Goliath without understanding that his fight is merely a quixotic one with windmills and shadows. Let us read his fascinating prologue:

> There is a group of scholars in present Tamilnadu who dream about a glorious past that was a Buddhist past. They try to construct a pre-Asoka Buddhism in Tamilnadu. That becomes equal to make the origin of Tamil history a Buddhist origin.

We cannot understand why this scholar is worried about the attempts made to reconstruct a true and objective history Buddhism in Tamilnadu. He describes this attempt as a dream. He is anxious that the history of Tamilnadu should not have a Buddhist origin. A true researcher need not worry whether the history of a particular linguistic community has a Buddhist origin or a Jain origin or a Hindu origin. It is not the duty of the researcher to inaugurate a particular origin which is not in the basic data. The pursuit of a genuine academician should be pursuit of truth. Now, let us come to Dr Rajam's explanation of the morphophonemic changes in certain Tamil words.

Dr Rajam in her (not 'his' as Dr Peter mentioned) book gives the following examples.

mutu+i+y+ōḷ = mutiyōḷ
ci̲ru+i+y+ilai = ci̲ṟiyilai
paru+i+y+arai = pariyarai
peru+i+y+atu = periyatu

In fact it should be

mutu+ōḷ =*mūttōḷ* (elder by woman)
ci̲ru+ilai = *ci̲rrilai* (small leaf)
paru+arai = *parārai* (stout stem)
peru+atu = *periyatu* (big one)

But there are alternant forms like

mutiyōḷ
ci̲ṟiyilai
pariyarai, and
periyatu

which exist in the *Caṅkam* corpus. Now Dr Rajam wants to explain to her foreign students the formation of these alternant forms. The traditional explanation given to native students is as follows:

mutiya + avaḷ = mutiyavaḷ = mutiyōḷ
ciṟiya + ilai = ciṟiyailai = ciṟiyilai
pariya + arai = pariyaarai = pariyarai
periya + atu = periyaatu = periyatu

Dr Rajam wants to explain this change in the form of a rule for the easy comprehension of her students. Hence, a linguistic rule is framed. We should keep in mind that linguistic rules are not legal constitutions but justifications for the existing forms of the lexical items. Languages are created not by our academicians who frame rules but by the common man. Now, let us come to Dr Rajam's rule.

Dr Rajam's rule is explained by Dr Peter as follows. The adjective stem with two open syllables with a short vowel being followed by a suffix or a nominal, the final vowel in the stem gets deleted. The consonant preceding the stem-final vowel is doubled and hardened, or the vowel *i* is inserted between the stem and the item following it.

Accordingly, the following changes are expected to take place:

mutu + i + y + ōḷ = mutiyōḷ
ciṟu + i + y + ilai = ciṟiyilai
paru + i + y + aria = pariyarai
peru + i + y + atu = periyatu

This rule looks like a magic or a circus in letters as it fails to explain the reasons for the dropping of *'u'* and the intrusion of *'i'*.

Anyhow, this helps Dr Rajam to explain some of the morphophonemic changes in the classical Tamil words. The main aim of the above illustration is to explain the formation of the allomorphs of certain morphemes. There are changes that take place in the alternant forms or the allomorphs of a particular morpheme.

We should look carefully into the words selected and given as examples by Dr Rajam. In all the above four items, the rule explains the morphophonemic changes that are responsible for the formation of allomorphs of certain morphemes. Consequently, by this change, we are able to get the following allomorphs:

mutu *muti* (old)
ciṟu *ciṟi* (small)
peru *peri* (big)

In all these instances even though there is a formal change in the lexical items or in the shape of words, the meaning or the semantic content remains the same. In modern Tamil we have developed more allomorphs for the above items as follows.

mutu > *muti* > *mutiya*
ciṟu > *ciri* > *ciṟiya*
paru > *pari* > *pariya*
peru > *peri* > *periya*

We should keep in mind that Dr Rajam is a Tamil scholar and so she has not committed the mistake of giving *potiyil* as an example as Dr Peter did. Owing to lack of understanding of the Tamil language, literature and culture, Dr Peter has gone astray by mechanically trying to fit his *potiyil* under Dr Rajam's rule.

Let us see how he tries to fit in vain his *potiyil* under the above explanation.

potu = *common*
poti = *covering something*

For example

potu + *aṟai* = *common room*
poti + *aṟai* = *concelated (fully) room*
potu + *iṭam* = *common place*
poti + *iṭam* = *concealed place*

As such, it is obvious that *poti* cannot be an alternant for *potu* in Tamil. There is no instance for the occurrence of *potu* as an allomorph of *poti* in the Tamil language. Therefore, the entire argument of Dr Peter to explain *potiyil* as an alternant form of *potuvil* proves to be a futile attempt.

Even if Dr Rajam were born in the time of the compilation of the *Tamil Lexicon*, as satirically described by Dr Peter, her rule would not help the compilers of the *Tamil Lexicon* to derive *potiyil* from *potuvil*. I conclude this note with the statement of Dr Peter: "We shall make reality an ultimate test of an interpretation and not an interpretation an ultimate reality", and "As historians we should not spread fictions about a historical period".

11. ON THE TAMIL DEITY MURUKAN

Hon'ble Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, Hon'ble Minister for Trade and Commerce, Hon'ble Minister of Sri Lanka, Hon'ble Indian Ambassador of Mauritius, The Chairman of Mahatma Gandhi Institute, The Chairman of the Organizing Committee of the Second International Conference on Murukan Worship and Study, the members and office-bearers, ladies and gentlemen.

It gives me immense pleasure to stand before you in this august function which aims at inaugurating the Second International conference on Lord Murukan in this beautiful, serene and lovely country Mauritius, a country which is going to receive in abundance the blessings of Lord Murukan, a metaphor of valour, piety, youthful vigour, beauty and above all a powerful unifying symbol of the Tamil community scattered all over the world. The traces for the origin of this powerful cult or faith are discernible in the Indus Valley Civilization, a great culture of the Dravidian ethnic group, which flourished 6000 years back and which has been invaded and perished by the nomads who are believed to be the Aryans who pushed the Dravidians from North to far more Southern parts of the Indian peninsula.

The earliest extant Tamil literature, popularly known as *Caṅkam* literature, describes Lord Murukan as the God of the hilly tribes known as the people of *Kuṟinci* and this is expressed in *Tolkāppiyam* as சேயோன் மேய மைவரை உலகம். This simple worship of the Tamil hilly tribes gradually started spreading in the length and breadth of Tamilnadu and thus a regional worship has become a Tamil national cult by about the second or third century A.D. when the six abodes of Lord Murukan have been defined and enumerated and temples have been built for him in conformity with the codes specified in the Agama. The *Kurinci* Murukan was the beloved bridegroom of the beautiful damsel of the hilly tribe namely Vaḷḷi and he was described as the son of the mother Goddess Koṟṟavai or Kāḷi which is obvious from the Tamil attributions கொற்றவைச் சிறுவ and பழையோள் குழவி in ancient Tamil classics. He has no father or a brother as long as he was restricted in the Tamil soil only to the Kuṟiñci land. His arch enemy was Cūr, a destructive power which has grown up in due course in the mythology to a gigantic proportion to become Cūṟapatman portrayed in a larger

scale as a cosmic antagonist, an embodiment of cosmic evil in Murukan literature. The original Kuṟiñci Murukan belongs to the little tradition and he was worshipped with the frenzied dance of his priest Vēlaṉ with a lance in hand and he is appeared with the sacrifice of animals in his *Veriyāṭṭukkaṭam*.

The other form of Murukan worship with a Sanskritised tinge became popular in the urban areas of Tamilnadu and this belongs to a bigger tradition interwoven with lot of mythical and philosophical backgrounds where this culture hero is depicted as the husband of two women, Vaḷḷi and Teyvayāṉai, a north Indian deity.

The fascinating deity of Murukan, the God of war, is the God of Tamil language also and his association with Tamil language, literature and culture has been depicted powerfully by various bards of the corpus of Tamil *Murukaṉ literature*. In fact, Murukan is a metaphor for the Tamil community and an unifying symbol of the Tamil population spread all over the world; He is a part of the superstructure of the Tamil ethos and his life story is nothing but the history of the Tamil society itself. Consequently, any research in depth on Murukan will lead to an intensive study of Tamil society itself. Murukan's whole mythology can be divided into two broad categories on the basis of its theme namely the *Akam* and *Puṟam* by which the ancient Tamil literary tradition is divided. The entire Vaḷḷi episode is completely in harmony with the *Akam* tradition whereas Murukaṉ's confrontation with Cūraṉ confines to the *Puṟam* tradition. Consequently, any study on Murukaṉ will be nothing but the study of the Tamil ethos and the deity Murukaṉ is a crystallized form of the ideals of the Tamil community who accepted him as their culture hero from time immemorial.

The regional Murukaṉ worship spread into the urban areas in the period of *Paripāṭal* and *Tirumurukāṟṟuppaṭai* and in course of time it has become a Tamil national worship. With the growing interaction of the Tamil community with the North Indian society there was a happy commingling of the cult of Skanda, Kartikeya and even the Greek Dionysus with the Tamil Murukaṉ cult and thus it has grown to the level of a faith which has a wider Indian national perspective, and became a pan Indian worship. Now, it has become an international cult, thanks to the migration of the Tamil people to various countries coupled with the efforts of globalization which has converted the entire universe

into a small global village with the advent of the greatest developments in the field of information technology.

But , for the past 6000 years, from the faint origin of this cult in the Indus valley civilization to its tremendous growth in our era of computer technology, no attempts have been made to pool together all Murukan scholars and devotees in one place and to promote the *Kaumara studies* at the international level. When my student and friend Mr. Patrick Harrigan, from the United States of America, our late Prof. M. Shanmugam Pillai of the Institute of Asian Studies and myself sat and discussed about this mission continuously days and months together, we were thrilled to learn that we were entering into a magnificent project on a fascinating deity and his complex cult. Our loud thinking blossomed full into a fragrant flower when we organized the First International Seminar Conference on Murukan Skanda in Chennai where more than 150 delegates representing 25 countries of the five continents of the world gathered in the campus of the Institute of Asian Studies accepting my invitation for a healthy discussion and dialogue on all aspects of this fascinating deity.

It was indeed a thrilling experience to see together the devotees and the scholars belonging to various ethnic groups and various countries gathered together in our campus and discussed on all aspects of this Tamil deity in an enchanting location conducive for academic research. At the concluding day, the devotees and scholars gathered together with a sense of universal fraternity and overwhelmingly voted for the creation of an International Centre for the Study of Murukan Skanda, a centre which is organizing the present conference seminar and going to organize all the future conferences.

It was the wish of our late Hon'ble Thondaman, the Minister of Sri Lanka, to have the Second Conference in Columboo; but his unfortunate demise and the political situations in Sri Lanka compelled us to explore another venue to host this mega event. I am happy that his grand son Hon'ble Arumugam Thondaman is in Mauritius with us today to see the hosting of the Second Conference in Mauritius and I am sure that with his co-operation we wil host one of our future conferences in Sri Lanka in due course.

When I visited Reunion and Mauritius last February, I was able to meet a number of enthusiastic Tamil youths of this land who are very proud of their hoary cultural past showing keen interest in hosting the Second Conference at Mauritius. I am grateful to all of them including my respected friends Mr. Maga Ramasamy, Mr. Vijeyan Morghan, Mr. Kesavan Sornam and others for their active interest and Dr. Nilamegame of Reunion who was instrumental for having organized this conference in Mauritius, a land where we se the presence of lord Murukan in all her wonderful high heavens, the deep valleys, the fascinating woods, the ever green sugarcane fields and the rippling waves of the attractive and enchanting ocean. We are sure that this conference will be organized in all the 44 countries in due course where the Tamil community lives in abundance and this will be a powerful and potential tool in bringing together the scattered Tamil Diaspora and to promote solidarity among them.

The main message of the Murukan faith or Murukan cult is still relevant to the modern age of science and technology, an age which is witnessing innumerable achievements in the fled of information technology. The *Curasamhara,* which is a very significant episode of the Murukan mythology, is still relevant today. Cūran, the metaphor of cosmic chaos, is not only slained by the protagonist Murukan but also converted into a rooster which has become an object of worship to the devotees along with Lord Murukan himself. Any power in nature cannot be destroyed but can be sublimated into another power. Here, the destructive power of Cūran is sublimated into an amiable force by the Lord and thus the evil force, after sublimation, has also become an object of worship in the form of a rooster, the presence of which can be seen in the flag of this deity. This may be treated as a good message of the entire corpus of Murukan literature for which a powerful artistic form was given by the Tamil poet Kacciyappar, the author of *Kantapurāṇam*, a story that blossomed in the Tamil ethos. In this sense the God of war has become a God of peace, God of protection, and God of love and compassion, a symbol of universe peace. The fight or conflict here is between good and evil in which the evil is converted into an amiable creative power.

May this Second Conference help us to revive and strengthen our social and ethnic identity which need not embrace narrow minded parochialism, but can be broader in its outlook! Secular countries like India and Mauritius are

characterized by their complex and variety of ethnic groups. Unity in diversity is the strength of our countries. By establishing our own identity namely the Tamil identity, we can also learn how to value and respect the cultural identities of the other communities. Respect on one's own community and identification of one's own ethnic origin will help to respect the ethnic identities of others. This attitude will help us to build up a stronger India or a stronger Mauritius. It should not pave the way for cultural dichotomy but should show the way to promote cultural harmony and solidarity and in this respect conferences of this kind will help to strengthen the unity in our countries.

12. HISTORY OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY IN INDIA PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES

Falsification in history

There is a strong tendency among the historians of Tamilnadu to label a certain phase in the political history from the so-called *Caṅkam* age to the Pallava period – roughly between the 2nd cent AD to the 6th cent AD as the 'Dark Age'. The main reason for this tendency is that historical materials about the ruling class are not abundantly available and also this period has produced neither great classics like the *Caṅkam* corpus nor epic poetry of greater magnitude like the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Kampaṉ. It was also a very unfortunate period for the Hindu historians since the doctrines and dogmas of Vedic traditions were challenged and questioned and that the roots of the orthodox Hindu Brahminism were thoroughly shaken by the heterodox Buddhists, Jains and Ājivakās. Our research on this area provided different data quite contrary to what our erstwhile traditional scholars presented. We concluded that an age that produced the greatest universal bard of the Tamil ethos - namely Tiruvaḷḷuvar – and the finest and the most refined epic poems like *Cilappatikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai* and a hoard of major and minor epics cannot be a dark age in the Tamil social milieu. In fact it was a golden age for the heterodox religions of Jainism, Buddhism and Ājivakam.

The social milieu was conducive for the growth of great classics, rich ethical corpora and a splendid heritage of epic poetry in the background of thriving trade with foreign countries and the hegemony of the most affluent Vaishya Community in the economic structure of this part of India. The wealth of the country was in the hands of the trading Vaishya community, which occupied the highest stratum in the social hierarchy although the political power was with the ruling Kshatriyas, who were not as affluent and powerful as the Vaishyas. We are able to get adequate data for the simultaneous existence of Early Christianity along with the heterodoxies and the followers of Vedic religion. We have also come to appreciate the deep impact the Christianity has exerted on the secular ethical works of high quality, viz. *Tirukkuṟaḷ* and *Nālaṭiyār*, and the epic of great literary and cultural significance, namely *Cilappatikāram*.

But local traditional historians, especially those with strong Saivite or Vaishnavite affiliations, ignore all these facts. These historians who deliberately portray a gloomy picture of this phase aim to show that the period after the 6th cent AD was a golden age for them mainly because the Saivite and Vaishnavite literary and religious activities started from this period. We have not had many academicians to question this trend for quite a long time and this was mainly due to the non-availability of good Buddhist scholars and the rarity of Jain and Christian academicians with a Tamil background. But within a short period such false trends have been repeatedly checked by the Institute of Asian Studies, which has opened up new vistas in international Tamil scholarship.

The period from the advent of St. Thomas to the arrival of Vasco da Gama, an age covering roughly 1500 years in the history of India, has been made out to be a 'Dark Age' for the Christians. It is common phenomenon in the history of humankind that minority cultures and religions have been exploited and often wholly destroyed by the so-called major cultures or religions in seeking their own interests. Clearly, a cultural imperialism appears to have darkened the history of Christianity in India. What should have been characterized as a golden age came instead to be labeled as a 'Dark Age.' If we are prepared to work hard in this direction, it is not very difficult to restructure the religious history of Early Christianity in these 1500 years and prove that this was indeed a golden age of Christianity in India.

Distoration of historical data

The concept of the so-called Dark Age in the history of Tamilnadu is one among the various examples illustrating how the history of the other religions was distorted and jeopardized by the traditional historians who wrote the history of this land mainly from the point of view Hinduism. The fact that most of the fanatic religious leaders of this age were engaged in destroying their opponents is revealed in many instances in early Tamil literature. Such malignant atrocities on the part of the savants of Saivism and Vaishnavism against their heterodox counterparts are obvious: the act of murdering eight thousand Jains at the gallows in continuation of the visit of Ñānacampantar to Madurai, and the act of Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār looting the Buddhist Temple at Nākappaṭṭiṉam. Even the very beautiful Tamil word *Potiyil* used frequently by the ancient Tamil Buddhists to refer to their Viharas has been misinterpreted in such a way as to lose its

Buddhist connotation and has come to mean 'common place'. These types of distortions and reinterpretations have been carried out by the so-called eminent scholars such as U.V. Swaminatha Iyer, to name just one. The major efforts of such erstwhile scholars were to establish the view – clearly a distorted one, as subsequent research has shown – that Indian culture was Hindu culture and that the other religious, linguistic or cultural communities have nothing to contribute to the evolution of the composite culture of India.

Moreover, we have no history proper in the classical or medieval period and for historical data we depend mainly on literature, which presents the historical elements in the form of myths and without any chronological details. Such materials could not be called historical data and they were not provided by the professional historians but by our poets who were only amateurs as far as history as an academic discipline is concerned. Consequently, we are forced to demythologize them with a view to restructuring the true historical data. We should do this objectively without making a place for the projection of harmful subjectivism in all our research. All doubtful mythological materials, especially the myths contrary to the Vedic traditions, have to be studied objectively and this will help in some way or other to know the strong impact of Early Christian thought on Indian heritage.

Heritage of early Christianity in India

Potential materials and rich data for the existence of Early Christianity are present in abundance in Kerala whereas they are not available in large numbers in the other parts of the Indian Peninsula. Basing on this tangible data, we cannot simply conclude that Early Christianity was present only in Kerala and it failed to spread in other parts of India. The missionary works of St. Thomas in the North Indian regions under the patronage of the King Gondopharus and the missionary works of St. Thomas in Tamilnadu strongly suggest the presence of Early Christianity in other parts of India, including the North and the South. We have detailed information about the prevalence of subsequent sects of Christianity that came from Syria, China and other parts of the world including the existence of Nestorian Churches. The report of the Venetian traveler Marco Polo by the end of 12^{th} cent AD is a strong proof for the prevalence of Early Christianity in the Tamil speaking areas of South India.

The effective presence of Early Christianity on the Indian soil and its powerful impact on other contemporary religions are obvious from the evolution of the Mahayana Buddhism which has absorbed into it in its own way many of the Christian concepts in different terminologies such as the Bodhisatva and the Maitreya Buddha. Mahayana Buddhism is in a way a new religion grown under the influence of Early Christianity with its roots on Theravadha Buddhism. The impact of Early Christianity on Saivism and Vaishnavism is discernible in the introduction of the concept of Trinity in its core structure of the theological tradition and in the handling of the marriage metaphor in the devotional poems which are a significant component of its affective tradition. There are many views about the relationship between Early Christianity on the one hand and Saivism and Vaishnavism on the other. Some scholars hold the view that Saivism and Vaishnavism were influenced by Early Christianity whereas the other group is of the opinion that these two religions are full offshoots of Early Christianity. There is yet another group, which holds that these two orthodox religions arose as a counterpart to distort and repress Early Christianity by the so-called higher castes of that time. This view seems to be very reasonable as there are concrete data in these two religions to support this claim. At any rate, this is an important area of study that needs closer and deeper scrutiny.

A wider perspective

Christianity in early India is not an isolated phenomenon. On the one hand it is a significant part of Early Christianity in Asia; on the other hand it is an integral component of the early Indian ethos, a significant part of the then social milieu of this land. It has become part and parcel of the superstructure of ancient Indian society. Consequently, a holistic approach in the study of Indian religions and culture is essential for a good grasp of Early Christianity as a whole on the Indian soil. Without interdisciplinary study all our understanding of Early Christianity in India will be partial and fragmentary.

Two components of Indian religions

Since Early Christianity existed on the Indian soil amidst a number of heterodox and orthodox religions, there are possibilities for frequent interactions and mutual borrowings between them. Therefore, Early Christianity on the Indian soil has also to be studied in comparison with the contemporary religious schools

of the then Indian society. Indian religions usually speak of two components in their religious structures namely the Parapakkam (the other side) and the Cupakkam (the side of one's own religion). The traditional religious scholarship was of the view that a deeper knowledge of the *Parapakkam* will help for a better understanding of the *Cupakkam*. The basic view of the Indian religious thought is well revealed in the Tamil Buddhist epic *Maṇimēkalai* and the Saivite philosophical treatise *Civañāna Cittiyār* which deal elaborately with these two traditions. This was one of the very healthy religious trends prevalent in ancient India. Consequently, a scholar of religion has a very broad knowledge about the other schools of thinking. This enabled them to view religious concepts with a broader comparative perspective. This is one of the basic reasons for close influences and deep mutual impacts on the various religious thoughts and concepts of ancient India. To understand this trend of earlier religions, the scholar of religion, especially the scholar who aims to undertake academic research on Early Christianity, should have a deep knowledge not only about the religions of ancient India but also the religious doctrines and dogmas prevalent in other parts of the world.

An interdisciplinary and holistic approach is highly indispensable for the study of Early Christianity in India because Christianity had its amazing spread in India in a mixed social milieu and environment with cultural diversity, ethnic variety and pluralism. A thorough grasp of the basic functions of the priestly tradition centered on rituals, the tradition of art, poetry, liturgy, etc., is highly essential for a sound knowledge of the historical evolution of a particular religious tradition. Deep knowledge about the oral traditions with all their multifarious dimensions including folk tales, folk arts, folk songs, folk etymology, etc., is essential since they form a significant component of the rich religious tradition. The part played by them in the evolution of a particular religion and its history is indeed immense. A scholar of Early Christianity in India should have a sound knowledge of all the above aspects, which will help him or her to identify and differentiate Early Christian traditions from other local religious concepts.

A highly powerful missionary religion, Early Christianity in India, had a very wide spread with he evangelical works of men and women who laboured for the expansion of the Kingdom of God with missionary zeal. Consequently, Early

Christian ideas and doctrines have percolated into every nook and corner of this land which is noted for its linguistic pluralism, cultural variety, ethnic diversity and religious multiplicity. The scholar who intends to restructure the history of this magnificent religion has to traverse into these areas of the past with the help of his authentic data and analytical mind. He or she has to escape spiritually and psychologically from his contemporary society and to penetrate into bygone middle age or classical age with a deep sense of empathy. This exercise will help him or her to grasp the vital part of Early Christianity that has dissolved into the native soil by the process of assimilation or nativization.

Nativization

The process of nativization is a significant component of a close and deep cultural or religious interaction. Whenever the cultural or religious traditions of a particular linguistic community is borrowed by another group they undergo a lot of changes to adapt to the socio-cultural background of the borrower or the recipient group, resulting in a high level of cultural and religious assimilation. Christianity is one of the very important evangelical religions and contextualization was given due importance by its missionaries, starting from St. Thomas. Local cultures were given prominence in proselytism by the early apostles including St. Paul. When Early Christianity came into contact with new ethnic or linguistic communities it resulted in the blossoming of nativized Christianity, adopting diverse socio-cultural backgrounds and got new attributions such as Indian Christianity, Asian Christianity, Europeanized Christianity, etc. Indian society is noted for its strong tendency towards nativization. It is significant to note that the earliest Tamil grammatical treatise – namely *Tolkāppiyam* – composed 2000 years ago, has codified rules for nativizing the borrowed words in the recipient Tamil language as:

வடசொற் கிளவி வடவெழுத்து ஓரீஇ
எழுத்தொடு புணர்ந்த சொல்லாகும்மே

Nativization is discernible in all aspects of a religion such as lexical items, myths, rituals, way of worship, art traditions, mythology, liturgy, etc. This aspect of Early Christianity has to be taken into serious scrutiny while compiling its history in the Indian context.

Religion and language

The impact a foreign religion exerts on a recipient language is really astonishing. New vocabularies, new technical terms, new structures and stylistic features will emerge owing to the interaction with a new religion. Large number of words from Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, Syriac, etc., entered into the Indian languages in the guise of loan words and they have been nativized in the different native languages of both the Indo-Aryan and the Dravidian groups. New expressions, images, symbols, tales, etc., have penetrated into the Indian languages and they have added new dimensions to our linguistic heritage. Similarly words of Indian languages entered into donor languages and made them more fertile than ever.

Linguistic studies in the context of bi-lingual and multilingual interferences coupled with comparative studies in this direction, especially from the point of view of religious influences, will bring to light lot of hidden realities. Such studies will help us to understand the depth of the Early Christian impact on the then cultural, political and social milieu of this ancient land of wisdom and spirituality.

Traditions of art and architecture

All Indian arts – both fine arts and performing arts – belonging to the classical and folk traditions should be analyzed from the point of view of early Christian impact. The historical, descriptive and comparative studies of art traditions – especially the tradition of iconography, sculpture and painting help us not only to understand the basic theories that underlie their creations but also to study the impact of the other religions on them. The historical and regional developments in them can be studied in comparison with the development of similar traditions in the neighbouring countries. This will enable us to differentiate the local indigenous traditions from the early Christian traditions. This will also help us to understand the impact of various religious traditions on our heritage of art and architecture. Such an elaborate study will enable us to have a proper and objective assessment of the early Christian impact on our heritage of art and architecture. This will lead us to have a realistic evaluation of what Early Christianity has contributed to our art heritage. This can be explained with the help of numerous illustrations from the traditions of Indian art. One

example is the Buddha and Jesus with a lamb in their hands as portrayed in ancient paintings and carvings. The encounter of Jesus and the Buddha with the Samaritan woman and the Chandala woman (woman of the untouchable caste) respectively near a well can cited as another example. We can go on multiplying illustrations of a similar kind in the Christian and early Indian traditions.

Comparative religion

Comparative religion, comparative literature and comparative linguistics are the three new fields of academic studies which came into existence owing to the penetration of modern scientific studies on our traditional approaches to subjects related to humanities. These three new academic disciplines have contributed a great deal for our better understanding of the achievements of mankind in literary expressions, linguistic experiments and experimentation in the spiritual spheres. They also throw adequate light on the accidental similarities and cognates and help us to know about the similar and dissimilar trends in language, literature and religion. The reconstruction methodology followed in these disciplines helps us to restructure the similar concepts that have a genetic relationship to a proto-form and to study its reflexes and variations giving objective justifications to them. By applying these methodologies in our study of Early Christianity in the Indian soil, we will have the full-fledged and clear view of Early Christianity in our native soil as well as its contribution to the local religions of India and Indian culture. This will also help us to identify the general and typical patterns in various religions as well as the changes that took place in them owing to frequent interactions with other cultures and the mutual influences between them. Comparative study of various themes such as the theme of suffering, etc., under the discipline of thematology will help to identify and establish the uniqueness of Christianity in India. Various motives such as the quest motive, etc., and concepts associated with Messianic figures are subjects for deep perusal. Comparative study of devotional literature in the local languages both belonging to affective tradition and theological tradition should be made subject to deep study since they provide lot of information about the historical growth of Early Christianity in the Indian Soil.

Numismatics and place name studies

The study of place names popularly known as *toponomy* will reveal a lot of historical truths and hidden facts regarding various cultures. The historical changes in the external structure and semantic content of place names speak volumes about the local events and facts. Similarly, the study of the various coins of different ages gives us fresh information not only about the dynasties but also about the milieu and mentality of the local people. For example, Dr. Basil Davis has demonstrated the existence of a community of the early Christian trader in ancient Tamilnadu who have expressed their indignation at the Roman rulers for having persecuted the early Christians (especially during the reigns of Nero and Domitian). They did this by slashing the figure of the Roman kings carved on the Roman coins. Such slashed coins have been unearthed in various parts of Tamilnadu. The coins of Gondoborus, the North Indian King, who extended patronage to St. Thomas according to the *Acts of Thomas*, prove beyond doubt that he was a historical person as against the previous notion that he was a mythological figure.

Similarly the study of place names will definitely provide information about the religious activities of the early Christian missionaries. The missionaries interacted with the common people, and the place names which are part of the memory of the people, will have lot of things to say about Early Christianity. Excavations in the selected archaeological sites including underwater archaeology may also yield very good results in this area.

External history

The study of external history is more important than that of local history, which is often distorted, destroyed or mythicized. We have a lot of information in the early documents of other countries that testifies clearly to the presence of Early Christianity in various parts of India. The travel reports of foreign missionaries, early merchants and other travelers provide ample materials about Early Christianity. Such reports are rich from the 1st cent AD to the advent of the Venetian traveler Marco Polo in the 12th cent AD, who visited Santhome and reported the pilgrimages of the people to the grave of St. Thomas. The information available in the records of all ancient languages including Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Coptic, etc., should be properly collected and systematically

studied. This can be a major project that has to be executed with the collaboration of experts in these languages.

Travel routes

A systematic study of the travel routes of the early missionaries, both by sea and land, and the important seaports of the early periods will yield good results in the task of restructuring the early history of Christianity in India. The travel routes of the traders, especially the time of their travel, which depends upon the climatic conditions, and the change of seasons in the early period, etc., need a closer scrutiny.

A project of such a larger magnitude and wider scope will enable us to reconstruct not only the hidden history of Early Christianity extending about 1500 years but also to restructure the history of early Indian Society in its entirety. This is to be executed by a team of academicians and theologians endowed with a broad academic perspective, collective spirit and a sense of deep commitment and dedication. May our Lord bestow adequate strength and courage to our scholars to undertake such a daring effort trusting in the guidance of providence!

13. CONTRIBUTIONS OF CHRISTIANITY TO DRAVIDIAN LITERATURE

The term 'Christianity' denotes not merely the largest religion of Asia that centers on Jesus Christ with its deep roots in the *Old Testament* of the Hebraic tradition. It also includes the rich corpus of Christ centered literatures of the world, including the synoptic Gospels and other parts of the *New Testament* with its Hellenic tinge, dogmas and doctrines related to the Churches of the East and the West and other related institutions as well as the contributions of Christian missionaries who left indelible impact on the native traditions of various countries where their foot prints are imprinted.

The history of Christianity in India, especially in the Dravidian India, can be brought under two different phases namely the earlier phase and the later phase. The earlier phase starting from 52 AD, the year of the advent of the apostle St. Thomas to South India to the visit of the Portuguese sailor Vasco da Gama in 1498, was a period dominated by the ideologies and dogmas of the eastern Churches. The later phase which covers a period from 16th century onwards is noted for the impact of the west oriented Churches of the Portuguese and other European and American missions.

The most predominant and unique contribution of Christianity to Dravidian literature in the present context or the later phase is the powerful handling of the anglicized form of a very hoary term 'Dravidian' with a new meaning to refer to a significant component of the Indian ethos namely the Dravidian ethos or the Dravidian heritage. It is true that the word Dravidian is a corrupt form of the word 'Tamil' and it has been used extensively by the North Indian writers including the reputed Kumarila Bhatta to refer to the Tamil language, one of the unique tongues of South India with a rich classical past and a vibrant living tradition throbbing with life. The semantic content of this lexical item with a specified meaning has been expanded to a great extent and used as a technical term by Bishop Robert Caldwell, the Christian missionary, to refer to one of the greatest families of Indian languages predominantly in vogue in South India and the linguistic group that speaks these languages. The Dravidians developed their literatures and cultures in a unique way characteristic of the Dravidian heritage which is opposed to the heritage of the other three linguistic

groups of India namely the Indo-Aryan, the Sino-Tibetan and the Munda family of languages.

The handling of this term with an expanded semantic content, the identification of the Dravidian family of languages, Dravidian literatures and cultures as distinct from the other linguistic groups in India, is indeed an epoch-making contribution of the group of Christian scholars which includes not only the Christian Missionaries like Robert Caldwell but also the civil servants like F.W. Ellis, C.P. Brown and academicians like M.B. Emeneau, Thomas Burrow and a number of other scholars of Indology. The above discovery of Bishop Dr. Caldwell inaugurated a new chapter in the understanding of Indian culture; it has changed the earlier identification of Indology with Sanskritology and this paved the way for systematic research at the international level both by native and foreign scholars on the unique and matchless contributions of the Dravidian culture to the composite culture of India.

It was established clearly that the Dravidian heritage comprises of a unique linguistic expression, a unique thematic content, a unique way of thinking, a unique culture shared by the speakers of more than 25 languages comprising of 29% of the entire Indian population. This has drastically changed the age old conception that the major languages of South India namely Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam are derivatives of Sanskrit- their literary genres are borrowed from North Indian models and their thematic contents are nothing but pale imitations of Sanskrit or Prakrit themes. This inspired serious scholars of Indology and the sons of this soil to take intensive efforts to establish the Dravidian identity and to prove the supremacy of the Dravidian heritage and the cultural and the artistic achievements of the Dravidian people in the building up of the pan-Indian heritage. At this stage, Father Heroes concluded with objective evidences that the great civilizations of the Harappa and Mohenjadora belonged to the Dravidian. This has naturally boosted up the newly evolved national pride of the Dravidians. All these ultimately developed the concept of Dravidian consciousness and this has exerted deep impact not only on the literature of the South but also on the political milieu of the Southern states for which resistant to Sanskrit and ultimately the anti-Hindi movements are concrete visible examples. The impact of this Dravidian awareness or Dravidian sensibility on the political climate of Tamilnadu is obvious from the emergence of various political parties

with the new Dravidian label. In a way, it has become an anti-Brahministic movement and Brahminism is simply identified with the Sanskrit North.

Although early Christianity was one of the potential driving forces of the Dravidian India from 1st C. to 15th C. AD, its contribution to Dravidian literature is not very tangible on the structural or surface level. Anyhow, this phase of Christianity was responsible for the emergence of Mahayana Buddhism and the literatures of this sect of Buddhism reflect the deep impact of early Christianity. With the exception of the great Tamil Buddhist epic *Maṇimēkalai* and a few other fragmented pieces, the rich corpus of literature of this sect in South India has been destroyed and so we could not know much about the impact of early Christianity on them. But, early Christianity of the east is still continuing in Kerala as a vibrant and living force especially in the Syrian Christian and Nestorian traditions. Its influence is still a driving power in the cultural heritage of the people of Kerala and a number of folk songs pertaining to St. Thomas such as *Mārkkam Kaḷipāṭṭu* etc. are considered to be potential contributions of early Christianity to the Malayalam folk traditions.

As far as Tamil literature is concerned, the impact of early Christianity is discernible in the corpus of the ethical literature, especially in *Tirukkuṟaḷ* and this has been pointed out initially by Dr. G.U. Pope, one of the earliest translators of this wisdom literature into English language. Dr. G.U. Pope was able to listen to the echo of the Sermon on the Mount in the sacred couplets of the Tamil poet Tiruvaḷḷuvar. The meaning of the Tamil word *aṉpu,* which is mainly used to denote the love between man and women and subsequently the relationship among kinsmen, is expanded by Tiruvaḷḷuvar to a very large proportion to include the Christian concept of universal love revealed in the teachings of Jesus Christ as well as in the second epistle of St. Paul written to the Corinthians. One can even notice the influence of Christianity in the concept of *Cāṉrōṉ,* the superman in the couplets of *Tirukkuṟaḷ.*

Saivism and Vaishnavism, the two important orthodox religions of the Dravidian South are described as heresies of early Christianity. One can see lot of similarities between these two religions and Christianity, especially in the corpus of their devotional poetry. The bridal mysticism commonly known as marriage metaphor as presented in the devotional poems of the Nāyaṉmār movement and

Āḻvār movement bears close resemblance to the treatment of divine love in terms of human love as presented in the *New Testament* and the *Old Testament* of the Christian and Hebraic traditions where God is portrayed as a bridegroom. The *Songs of Solomon*, the book of Isaiah, the synoptic Gospels of the *New Testament* and the rich corpus of the later tradition of Christian devotional literatures provide ample material on this aspect of mysticism. The South Indian or the Dravidian tradition of marriage metaphor in devotional poetry seems to be an extension of the same convention which is very vibrant in the Biblical portions starting from the *Song of Songs* to the *Book of Revelation* in the *New Testament* as well as in the affective and theological traditions of the Christian devotional literature.

Another contribution of early Christianity to the Dravidian devotional literature seems to be the concept of Trinity which entered into Saivism after 4th C. AD. There is yet another aspect of Dravidian devotional poetry termed as *Caṟputtira mārkkam,* literally means worshipping God as Father, seems to be the continuation of the Christian tradition where the relationship between God and devotee is portrayed as the relationship between the father and the son. In the four Gospels of the New Testament, the Almighty God is referred to as Father and it is very much surprising to note that He was affectionately called as Abba, an Aramaic term (equivalent to the Dravidian word Appā) by Jesus Christ in about more than 150 places. Ñānacampantar is noted to be the most important hymnist of the Saivite cannonical texts who calls the Almighty Siva as Appā (father) and assumes himself as his son.

Coming to the later phase of Christianity it is curious to mention that the Christian missionaries are largely responsible for inaugurating what we call 'Modernism' in the Indian society and this was expanded to a very huge proportion subsequently by the British imperialists who introduced the western type of education. One of the major contributions of Christianity at this juncture to Dravidian literature was the translation of the *Holy Bible* into indigenous languages. This laid a strong foundation for a renaissance in Dravidian languages and literatures and elevated them to international heights. This Herculian task gained good momentum with the arrival of the Christian missionaries of the Protestant sect, especially with the advent of the Lutherans, after the 17th C.AD. The first Indian language into which the Bible was translated was the Tamil

language of the Dravidian family. This attempt was inaugurated by Ziegenbalg, the first Lutheran missionary from Germany, who established the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tranquebar in Tamilnadu by the beginning of the 18th C. AD. It was followed by Fabricius and others who translated the Bible into Telugu and other Dravidian languages.

The Bible translation was a significant contribution to Dravidian literature in manifold facets. Firstly, it introduced to our native readers a rich heritage of Hebraic and Greek literature contained in the Old and *New Testaments* of the Bible. It has made fertile the Dravidian languages and literatures by introducing new concepts, new idioms, terminologies, contexts, techniques, expressions, metaphors, images and even syntactic constructions and quickened the emergence of a vibrant prose literature. It has supplied new techniques, new modes of expressions, symbols and images to our creative writers and widened their faculty of imagination. It was largely responsible for the evolution of indigenous literatures with Christian themes in all the Dravidian languages. The Christian missionaries including Joseph Beschi showed the way for the creation of indigenous Christian literature by composing the great Christian epic poetry in Tamil namely *Tēmpāvaṇi* and a number of poems that conform to the minor literary genres.

The Christian missionaries introduced the liturgical tradition of worshipping with melodious songs and they themselves rendered a number of German and English hymns in the indigenous Dravidian languages. This has ultimately inspired large number of native Dravidian poets who composed multifarious hymns and lyrics with native tunes mainly in the form of *Kīrttaṉai*. Thus arose a major corpus of indigenous devotional literatures in native Christianity parallel to the existing devotional poetry of the Bhakti movement of the orthodox Hinduism. The number of Christian works in Tamil excluding the lyrics alone is estimated to 2000 and we shall expect more than 6000 such works in all the Dravidian languages.

Christian themes have immensely attracted the poets of the Dravidian languages in addition to the personality of Jesus Christ. The theme of the Magdaline Mary and the parable of the Good Samaritan of the New Testament have fascinated most of our poets. The Malayalam poet Vallathol Narayana

Menon has composed a beautiful narrative poem based on the theme of Magdaline Mary. Like his other Dravidian counterparts, the Tamil Poet SDS. Yogi has composed an attractive narrative poem in Tamil on the same theme.

We have variety of new poems in all our Dravidian languages on all aspects of Jesus Christ starting from his very infancy to crucifixion and resurrection. John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and the *Holy War* as well as John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* are some of the Christian classics that inspired the imagination of our Dravidian Poets and many number of translations, adaptations and transcreations of these works have appeared in the Dravidian languages. The *Iraṭcaṇya Yāttirikam* composed in Tamil by H.A. Krishna Pillai is a master piece in moving mellifluous and rhythmic Tamil verse about the story of salvation or the pilgrimage of human soul following John Bunyan's popular prose work namely the *Pilgrim's Progress*.

The translation of the Bible, especially the books that deal with the *Song of Solomon*, the *Psalms* and others helped to promote comparative studies in our literatures. *The Holy Bible*, which was a source inspiration to the literatures of the whole of Europe, has now become a great source of inspiration to the poets of Dravidian languages and the new poetry movement or *verse libre* in our languages bear ample testimony to its impact both in structure and content.

In 1848 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels in their *Manifesto of the Communist Party* demonstrated in clear terms the evolution of a World literature as a sequel to the evolution of World Market ignoring provincial narrow-mindedness and national one-sidedness. This was indeed an amplification of the similar concept suggested earlier by the German Poet Goethe which was later termed as *Viswa Sahityam* by Rabindranath Tagore in 1920. Before these concepts of world literature and globalization of provincial or national literatures came into existence, the Christian missionaries and civil servants ventured into the task of raising Dravidian literatures to the status of global literatures by introducing them to all the European languages through their translations. This was done without the help of native speakers, who, at this stage, never realized the importance of promoting their heritage at the international level. This was one of the very unique and significant contributions of Christianity to our literary heritage. When similar services were rendered to Sanskrit by the civil servants

like Sir. William Jones, Colebrook and others through the Asiatic Society at Calcutta, this great service was rendered to the Dravidian literatures largely by our Christian missionaries like G.U. Pope and others. This has subsequently created a very healthy situation in which the Dravidian languages and literatures have been made subjects for serious academic research at the international level by the Universities of Europe and the United States of America.

The Christian missionaries have made invariable contributions to the study of Tamil , Malayalam, Kannada and Telugu by preparing basic reference works such as dictionaries, grammar books etc., The yeomen services rendered by Joseph Beschi, Winslow, Kittel, Gundert, C.P. Brown, Arden, William Carey and others in this direction is worth mentioning. This has ultimately enthused international scholars like Thomas Burrow, M.B. Emeneau, Kamil V. Zvelebil, R. E. Asher, David Shulman and a hoard of foreign scholars to undertake more and more intensive studies on the rich cultural heritage of the Dravidian people and to promote Dravidology at the international level.

Preservation and conservation of the documentary heritage of the Dravidian community is one of the significant contributions of Christianity. The efforts of Meckenzie and others in the preservation of Dravidian literatures available in fragile palm-leaf manuscripts and to protect the traditional knowledge from destruction is worth mentioning. They could preserve from disintegration a number of literary works of the Dravidian languages and they made them accessible to scholars and the public. Charles Gover and others engaged themselves in collecting and preserving the fast vanishing oral traditions which form a significant component of the Dravidian heritage. Many Christian missionaries worked among the Dravidian tribes and helped to promote academic research on their life style. Large number of works have been undertaken on the oral traditions of the Todas, Kotas, Badagas, Irulas of the blue mountain and the other hilly tribes of the Dravidian India.

The contributions of C.P. Brown, Campbell, F.W. Ellis, Robert Caldwell, Gundar and Kittel for the promotion Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam and Kannada opened a new chapter in the academic research on these languages and their literatures in a more systematic and objective way both at the national and international levels. These contributions through academic studies, translations,

compilation of dictionaries, anthologies, catalogues etc., have laid strong foundation for promoting studies on Dravidian languages and literatures on firm footing and this has ultimately enthused scholars to open departments and chairs for the study of these languages and literatures in the Universities of Europe, USSR, USA and Asia along with the faculties of Asian languages or Oriental languages or Indian languages. Robert Caldwell's comparative grammar of the Dravidian languages not only encouraged comparative study in Dravidian languages comparing them with the age old language families of Europe and Asia; it was instrumental in promoting comparative studies in literature and culture comparing them with the literary and cultural heritage of Asia chiefly of Japan and Korea and to trace out Dravidian influence in the literary and cultural heritage of the Altaic, Uralian, Elamite and Celtic languages. The Dravidian-Mediterranean contacts and other similarities between the Dravidian heritage and those of the other linguistic communities of the globe will be *fresh woods and pastures anew* for the new generation of scholars who wish to tread on this path with good hope and confidence.

Following the footsteps of the Christian scholars from other countries, the native Christians also have contributed a great deal for the growth of Dravidian languages, literatures, art, religion etc., they are so numerous that it is very difficult even to make a list of such contributors and their rich contributions. The churches, theological centers and other institutions of the Christians including the organizations like the CLS, (Christian Literature Society) the ELS (Evangelical Literature Society) etc., have rendered good services for the promotion of Dravidian literatures, especially the Dravidian Christian literature, which is a significant component of the superstructure of the Dravidian social milieu.

14. THE EVOLUTION OF TAMIL CHRISTIAN POETRY

The European scholars were largely responsible for heralding the renaissance in later Tamil devotional literature. Apart from their manifold contributions in other fields of Tamilology, they have composed devotional Christian poems in Tamil which stimulated interest among the native poets too. An apparently conflicting environment thus ensued contributed to the growth of multifarious devotional poems in Tamil. The contribution of European scholars to Tamil devotional poetry is not very significant when we look into the nature of the poems composed by them. Yet, it is historically significant insofar as it marks the beginning of the emergence of Tamil Christian hymns and lyrics with native spirit and temper.

Among the European Tamil poets, the names of the missionaries such as Robert de Nobili, Beschi, Ziegenbalg, Ellis, Rhenius, G.U. Pope and Robert Caldwell are worth-mentioning. It is said that Robert de Nobili has composed three poetical works in Tamil, namely *On the suffering of our Lord, Apology of the True Religion and Eternal Life*. Apart from these, he has composed a number of Christian hymns in Tamil which are not available to us. Charles E. Gover says, "Robert de Nobili had set an example many years before in poems which were then highly esteemed" (quoted in K. Mīṉātcicuntaram, 1974: 317).

Ziegenbalg

The untiring efforts by missionaries like Ziegenbalg to translate into Tamil the German hymns, used in liturgies, are worth-mentioning. In 1713, Ziegenbalg compiled the *Book of Hymns Set to Malabaric Music* which was greatly responsible for the growth of native Christian lyrics (*Ibid.* 318). Christian faith began to find indigenous expression in this book. The hymn book of Ziegenbalg is supposed to be the first work of its kind printed in Tamil. It had a collection of 48 verses. Ziegenbalg is said to be the first to introduce singing in the Tamil Church. His translation of 48 hymns appeared in print in 1713 and this was soon enlarged by his successors to 307 hymns. Ziegenbalg was followed by

his successors such as B. Schultze, C.F. Pressier and T. Walker who have made significant contributions to Tamil Christian literature.

Ziegenbalg's meritorious achievements had a considerable reception among the native congregation and this enthused other missionaries to venture on composing more hymns in Tamil. E.Webb of the American Mission, recognizing the desirability of using hymns in Indian metres in public worship, edited *Christian Lyrics* in 1859 and had it published through the Christian Vernacular Education Society for India. Following this, books like *Church Lyrics, Donnavur Tamil Lyrics, Pukaḻmālai, Ashram Hymnal* and others came to be printed subsequently.

Ellis

A pioneering European scholar, Ellis, had also composed a few poems in Tamil on Christian faith. His poems were written in *Koccakak Kalippā* metre. This was first printed by Appāvu Piḷḷai on which A. Muttucuvāmi Piḷḷai wrote a commentary. Rhenius has written a few hymns in Tamil but he followed the western metrical pattern. Apart from the multifarious short hymns, Caldwell has composed a book of beautiful hymns under the title *Naṟkaruṇai Tiyāṉamālai*. The short lyrics composed by Robert Caldwell are found in Rev. E. Webb's *Christian Lyrics for Public and Social Worship*. Webb has included the songs of Vētanāyaka Sāstri in this anthology. Writing about Beschi's poems, Caldwell says, "The post of honour...is to be assigned to two contemporary poets, one of native, the other a foreigner. The second of these whose poems occupy still a high place in literature was the celebrated Beschi, not a Tamilian, like every other Tamil poet (Vētanāyaka Sāstri), but an Italian... who acquired such a mastery over Tamil especially over its classical dialect and no other European seems ever to have acquired over that of any other Indian language"(R. Caldwell, 1982: 38, 239). Another important European Tamil poet, Philip Fabricius (1742-1791) has enriched the Christian hymnody with his creative ability and beautiful images. His lyrics are highly esteemed by the Tamil Christian congregation.

Joseph C. Beschi

The greatest among the European Tamil poets is the Catholic missionary Beschi, who called himself Vīramāmuṉivar. Among his poetical compositions,

Tēmpāvaṇi, Tirukkāvalūr Kalampakam, Aṭaikkalamālai, Annai Aḷuṅkal Antāti and *Kittēriyammāḷ Ammāṉai* are worth-mentioning. The first of these is a long narrative poem modelled on the Indian epic pattern, whereas the other poems conform to the rigid neo-classical *pirapantam* forms.

Beschi's *Tēmpāvaṇi* is considered to be the best epic from a foreign scholar-poet. It consists of 3615 verses. In this epic, the Catholic concepts and Biblical faiths are nativized so as to appeal to a people who are nurtured by Indian literary and religious traditions. Save for a few deviations, this epic closely adheres to the Indian epic tradition both in structure and narrative techniques. The author seems to prefer chronological order of narration, a native traditional mode, to the Western *inmediasres*, and the traditional Indian epic features such as the description of river, capital city, etc., are closely followed. Yet the epic conflict which ennobles the structure and content of great classical epics is not artistically worked out by Beschi. The protagonist of the epic, Joseph, is allowed to tread on a smooth path where there are only a few intrusions of evil forces such as the plot of Herod to kill the infant Jesus and the mental conflict of the epic hero in the last phase of his life. He overcomes these machinations and conflicts by fleeing to Egypt and by constant meditations.

Joseph cannot be taken as a protagonist in the strictest traditional sense of the term, since he neither fights the villain (since he has no external villain as such) nor achieves any glorious martial ends like the traditional epic heroes. The epic heroism embedded in this epic is a peculiar one like that of the Christian heroism as shown in Milton's *Paradise Lost* – i.e. to serve men in God's name and to serve God himself amidst numerous difficulties, to cultivate a firm and contented mind and to lead an austere life which is helpful to mankind and pleasing to the Creator. Though the author has the epic structure in mind, in content, *Tēmpāvaṇi* appears to be a mere biographical narration. So it can be regarded as an epic with a difference, i.e. a biographical epic in which the biography of Joseph is rendered in epic form, style and setting.

Notwithstandling, *Tēmpāvaṇi* stands as a supreme masterpiece among Beschi's poems. Caldwell says, "...his (Beschi) poems in the classical dialect, especially his great poem, the *Tēmpāvaṇi*, a long and highly wrought religious epic in the style of the *Cintāmaṇi* are so excellent from the point of view of

Hindu ideas of excellence; that is, they are so elaborately correct, so highly ornamented, so invariably harmonious - that I have no doubt, he may fairly claim to be placed by the votes of impartial native critics themselves in the very first rank of the Tamil poets of the second class..."(*Ibid.* 238).

It is obvious that Beschi has drunk deep in the fountains of Tamil calssics; he has assimilated the thoughts, descriptions and narrative techniques of Tamil epics such as *Cilappatikāram, Cīvakacintāmaṇi* and *Kamparāmāyaṇam*. He was also highly influenced by the Tamil ethical works like *Tirukkuṛaḷ* and *Nālaṭiyār*. He has blended the lofty Tamil ethical codes with the ideals of Christianity. Apart from these native formative influences, Xavier S. Thaninayakam traces the impact of Dante, Virgil and Tasso in *Tēmpāvaṇi* and concludes that Beschi's epic is a lake where the streams of Eastern and Western literary traditions meet and mingle happily. This epic is divided into three books each comprising twelve chapters. The explanatory notes along with such divisions into books and chapters might have been introduced in a later stage by some scholars (Ñāṉappirakācam, 1960:7).

Joseph occupies only a very minor place in the Gospels. He is remembered there only because he happened to be the foster-father of Jesus. After the widely spread belief about the virgin birth of Jesus came to be accepted as an accredited dogma in the Roman Catholic Church, an interest in Joseph was aroused in the Catholic world. Such a deep interest of the Catholics in Joseph might have impelled Beschi to compose a narrative poem with Joseph as its protagonist.

Beschi has included nearly 105 Biblical references in his epic. On many occasions, he has deviated from the Biblical accounts and made necessary modifications so as to suit the cultural background of the Tamils. He has even nativized the *Old Testament* account about the battle between Joshua and the Five Kings. His description of Italy is a description of idealized Tamiḻnāṭu as found expression in the major Tamil epics. He has introduced into *Tēmpāvaṇi*. "thoughts and figures from Latin, Italian and Portuguese poetry. Some of his passages follow very closely the thoughts of Tasso, Dante and Virgil" (Somalay, 1976: 62). In the words of G.U. Pope, "It (*Tēmpāvaṇi*) was intended to serve as a summary of the Gospel history, and is full of legends. In style, it is thoroughly

Tamil. The student will find some fine passages; but as a whole it is monotonous"(1981:V).

Other works of Beschi

As stated already Beschi has composed a number of Christian lyrics in Tamil, apart from *Tēmpāvaṇi*. In these, he has adopted the rhythmic song pattern of Aruṇakirināṭar, which were very popular in his time. In such forms, he has infused Christian faith and its ideals. Probably he intended the converted native Christians to sing them as widely as the Hindus sang their *vaṇṇams* (K. Miṉāṭcicuntaram, 1974; 319). His short hymns celebrate the four female saints of the Roman Catholic faith namely St. Mary Magdalena, St. Cecily, St. Barbara and St. Kittēri. He has successfully experimented with the poetic form of *antāti* in his famous poem *Aṉṉai Aḻuṙkal Antāti* which expresses the lamentations of St. Mary on the crucifixion of her son Jesus.

His poem entitled *Aṭaikkalamālai* is written in the *kaliveṇpā* metre which is best suited for the traditional kind of ulā poems. "Until quite recently, this lyric was sung by Christians during funeral processions around Trichinopoly. This lyric was afterwards found at the end of prayer books. Native Hindus sang their lyrics of this kind during processions of a joyous nature and not during funeral procession"(*Ibid.* 320).

Beschi's *Tirukkāvalūr Kalampakam* also strictly follows the traditional neo-classical *pirapantam* form *kalampakam*. Another poem, *Kittēriyammāḷ Ammāṉai* also conforms to the traditional *ammāṉai* form, but is narrates the Western story of the miraculous deeds of the Catholic saint Kittēri along with her life. The original story is altered to suit his own ends. The language is simple, marked by common, everyday words and the style of the poem is also simple and rhythmic. Apart from these religious poems, two other medical books in Tamil verse are also attributed to Beschi, namely *Vaittiya Nāca Kāṇṭam* and *Raṇa Vākaṭam* which were edited by Pālūr Nārāyaṇacuvāmi Nāṭār and Veṅkaṭācala Piḷḷai.

Responses from native poets

No European missionary had been interested in spreading the secular literature of the West among the Tamils during the initial phase of their contact with Tamil land. The sole aim of the missionaries was to expand kingdoms for their Saviour and so they made painstaking efforts to introduce the Gospel, the messages of the *Bible*, the dogmas and the doctrines of Christianity to the Tamils by nativizing them. Consequently, no one was interested in teaching either the plays of Shakespeare or the poems of the Western Romantic poets. It is obvious that neither Shakespeare nor the Romantic poets have shown much interest in Christianity as a religion. So it is probable that their works were not very enthusiastically received by the orthodox Christian missionaries. Regarding the English Romantic poets many of them were anti-Christians and so the missionaries might have considered it a heresy to teach the literary works of the Romantics which in some way or other eulogize the pagan belief. So the missionaries with their puritanical approach to religion have not shown keen interest in the secualr literatures of their lands. As a result, the impact of Western secular literature on Tamil culture was very little in the earlier phase. It was only after the introduction of the Western type of education in a later period that the Tamils were able to know much about the secular Western literatures.

Despite all their uninterestedness in secular literature, the Western scholars have shown keen interest in introducing the Western devotional poetry to the Tamils, especially to the Tamil Christians. Scholars like Fabricius and Ziegenbalg started translating the Western hymns used in the liturgies of the German Churches into Tamil. Subsequently, John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *The Holy War* were translated into Tamil. Many Tamil versions of the works of John Bunyan came to be printed within a short period. Yet, the Western hymns which were translated and sung in the liturgies of the Tamil churches could not attract the Tamils due largely to their sickly translation, unfamiliar images and rhymes. They could not cater to the aesthetic needs of the newly converted Christians who were nurtured in the soul-stirring lyrics of the Āḻvārs and Nāyaṉmārs. As a result, the newly converted native Christians, imbibing the Western religious concepts, began to compose lyrics in the native style and melody for their worship and this paved the way for the emergence of indigenous Christian literatures. After this, sundry native Christian poets came

into the literary arena and beautiful poems blending Eastern form and Western content began to dominate the Tamil literary scene. Apart from native poets, European missionaries have also contributed their share to such a new literary movement.

Native Christian poems before Sāstiri

As mentioned earlier, the earliest kind of Tamil poetry that emerged out of the cultural fusion of the East and the West is the Tamil Christian poetry. Efforts in this direction were initiated by the Western scholars who translated into Tamil the Western hymns and lyrics. Following them, indigenous Tamil poets, who were the converts, started composing poems imbibing Christian faith and doctrines. Most of the poems written by the native Christian poets in the initial phase seem to be pale imitations of the neo-classical *pirapantam* models with Christian content. Yet, the later Christian poets are not very rigid in following the neo-classical tradition. They have handled the neo-classical forms creatively with appropriate modifications. The first significant native Christian poet in this new discipline is Vētanāyaka Sāstiri (1774-1864).

Before Vētanāyaka Sāstiri, there were only a few native Christian poets who ventured on composing Christian devotional poems in the native metres and literary forms. The oldest Tamil Catholic poem thus came is said to be *Caṇṭiyōku Mēyar Ammāṉai* composed in 1647 in Ceylon by a Brahmin convert, the learned Pedro (D. Rajarigam, 1958: 20). This poem celebrates the famous shrine of St. James the Great at Kilali, Ceylon. This book is said to have been in manuscript until 1894 when it was printed. In the Portuguese period another poetical treatise conforming strictly to the *paḷḷu* form named *Ñāṉapaḷḷu* (sacred song) came to be published. The date of composition of this book might have been around 1644-1650. The name of its author is not known. "This work is considered by the Tamil Catholics the earliest specimen of Tamil Catholic dramatic poetry"(*Ibid*).

Before Vētanāyaka Sāstiri came to the Tamil Christian literary scene, Fr. Jarome Gonsalves, a Koṅkani Brahmin of Goa has written a number of Tamil Catholic poems and prose works. Some of his important works are, 1. *Kirustiyāṉi Ālayam*, 2. Tēvar *Aruḷvēta Purāṇam* (1725), 3. *Cattiya Vētāṭaṉa Cañcīpam*, 4. *Cuvicēcaka Viritturai*, 5. *Viyākulap Piracaṅkam* (1730), 6. *Ñāṉa uṇarcci* (1739)

and 7. *Cukīrtta Tarppaṇam*. During this time Johann Arndt's heart-melting devotional hymns were translated into Tamil by Benjamin Schultz and this book had exercised a deep influence on the Tamil Christian classics of the native Christian poets.

Vētanāyaka Sāstiri

Vētanāyaka Sāstiri is said to be the harbinger of the resurrection of Tamil Christian literatures. "A literary resurrection such as his suggests a parallel to 20th century revival of Kierkegard"(*Ibid*). Vētanāyaka Sāstiri was the eldest son of Tēvacakāyam, a Dominican catechist, and Ñāṉappū. From his childhood, he was brought up by Christian Frederic Schwartz, a Lutheran missionary at Tañcāvūr along with Sarfoji, the Prince of Tañcāvūr. From the year 1786 and 1792, he studied Christian theology under the guidance of Rev. Schwartz and Dr. John at Tañcāvūr and Tranquebar respectively. In 1794, he was appointed as Headmaster in a primary school at Tañcāvūr and served in that capacity for a few years. The early demise if his wife in 1796 whom he was married in 1795, the sudden death of his devoted guru, Rev. Schwartz in 1798 and unfortunate death of his father in 1799, threw him out of balance and the deep-seated dejection and mental agony caused by these pathetic events find powerful expression in his devotional lyric *Jepamālai*.

During his ninety years of life, this illustrious Protestant Christian poet has written more than 120 books both in verse and prose. From one of his works entitled *Tarumanūṟṟerivu*, we learn that he has composed nearly one hundred poetical works between the years 1790-1854. His famous dramatic poetry *Pettalakērikuṟavañci* was published in 1800. The Tañcāvūr Church honoured him in 1808 with title *Vētacirōmaṇi Makāñāṉa Kaviccakkravartti*. He was again conferred with the title *Cuvicēṭakak Kavirāyar* in the same year when he recited his *Ñāṉa Noṇṭināṭakam* before the congregation of the Tranquebar Church. In 1809 he was invited by the Vēppēri Church (Madras) and presented with a costly palanquin for rhapsodizing his melodious devotional lyrics in the presence of Rev. Peazold. In the same year, he composed the poem *Cennappaṭṭaṇappiravēcam* or *Paṭṭiṉam Noṇṭi* under the pseudonym Vāmaṉ who is the narrator of this new kind of narrative poetry. His *Pēriṉpakkātal* (Divine

Love) and *Sāśtirakkummi* were written in 1813 and 1814 respectively. In 1815, he was honoured by Rev. Christian Phole with the title *Vēta Sāstiriyār*.

When there was a small internal struggle in the Tañcāvūr Church on caste grounds, Rev. L.P. Hawbroe, a missionary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, expelled Vētanāyaka Sāstiri from the Church along with some other members and stopped the monthly remuneration which the Church had paid him for reciting the Gospel tidings through devotional songs. On hearing his financial bankruptcy and helpless condition, his friend Sarfoji, the then king of Tañcāvūr cordially welcomed him, patronized him and appointed him as his court poet with a fixed monthly salary. Yet, in due course, a small misunderstanding which arose on religious grounds separated the two loving hearts. Sāstiri's heart-rending elegy sung on the death of Sarfoji speaks of their abiding comradeship and recollects his blissful, happy acquaintance with the magnanimous king.

Vētanāyaka Sāstiri was very firm in his religious principles and led the life of a great mystic. In moments of adversity, he had to sell many of his valuable works for small amount of money. Some of his works were published by the S.P.C.K. Tract Society and a few others were printed by the Christian Literature Society, Madras.

Sāstiri had acquaintance with Bishop Robert Caldwell from the year 1841. Dr.G.U. Pope, who started working as a missionary of the Wesley Mission from 1837, was fully aware of the creative genius of Sāstiri and compared him even with Homer, the great epic poet of ancient Greece. Yet, owing to some internal feuds in the Church, Dr.G.U. Pope had placed an order that Sāstiri should not be permitted to recite his hymns and lyrics in the Church and asked him to remove the self-encomiums from his poetical compositions. He even terminated his sons and daughters from their services in the Mission, Yet, the two scholars were reconciled after G.U. Pope was transferred to Nilgris in 1858.

Western impact on Sāstiri

Though born in the Tamil soil and nurtured by the Tamil grammatical and literary traditions, Vētanāyaka Sāstiri was highly influenced by the Western thoughts, and in him, we see an artistic blending of Western content and Tamil

literary forms. His theological pursuits under Dr. John of Tranquebar and Rev. Schwartz were greatly responsible for such a deep impact of western thought on him. The Western hymnody, the religious poems of Christian mystics like John Bunyan and epic poets like Milton might have exerted a deep influence on him since there are numerous internal evidences for such an impact on his poems. Besides, he lived in a period when the Romantic movement was in full swing in the European literatures. Though there are no external and direct evidences to say that he came into close contact with the literary works of the European Romantic poets, a close reading of his works reveals that most of his literary theories are akin to the literary theories expounded and propagated by the great Romantic of Europe, especially the English Romantics. In the rejection of rigid grammatical rules and forms, acceptance of organic form and simple language of the common man as the medium of poetry, in accepting the Romantic theory regarding the genesis of poetry and in his quest for lyrical expression, he resembles very closely the English Romantic poets. Yet he is not completely against conventional literary forms, nor is he a blind follower of tradition. His individuality and success lie in handling the traditional materials and forms in a creative manner. The following are some of his important compositions.

Ñāṉa ulā

This long penegyric poem was composed in 1802 A.D. According to the Tamil *pāṭṭiyal* works, the literary gene *ulā* should speak of a hero coming in procession and the impact of the hero's charm on the girls of different age groups, adopting the *kali* verse of the *veṇpā* type. Generally, in such literary works, the special traits of the girls of the seven stages will be described along with the narration of the birth of the hero, his greatness and so forth. Though named *ulā*, this Christian devotional poem neither conforms to the accredited rules of the *ulā* poems, prescribed in the *pāṭṭiyal* works nor to the general pattern of the *ulā* poems that appeared till then. Yet like other *ulā* poems, this literary composition also glorifies the transcendental traits of a magnanimous hero, Christ, the only begotten son of God and so this can be included in *pāṭāṇṭiṇai*, the poetic situation of panegyric poems. Sāstiri has avoided the descriptions of the responses of the seven stages of the girls and has gone in for the beauty of the hero in this solemn and serious poem. Again, like the other poems on this genre, *Ñāṉa ulā* is not a narrative poem with singleness of aim, irrespective of its

multiplicity of episodes, but a devotional lyric in which the first portion is a eulogy on the supremacy of the Divinity and the final part a moving prayer in which the poet with all his modesty and humility begs for divine mercy.

A *veṇpā* under the title *kāppu* forms the prologue of the poem which is followed by the invocation to the celestial being in which the author invokes the Omnipresent Lord in 96 lines alluding to a number of Biblical stories both from the *Old Testament* and the *New Testament* seeking the Divine grace for poetic inspiration.

This long poem (1356 lines) is divided into twenty-five divisions and subtitles are also assigned to them. The divinity of Christ, the ten constituents of His kingdom, His physical stature and so on is narrated elaborately. The whole poem bears testimony to the author's mastery and profound scholarship in Christian theology. The Vedantic and the Saivite mystic traditions have also nourished his imaginative potentiality.

Under the passage entitled *Various Names of Christ*, the divinely intoxicated poet gives the various attributes of Christ which are listed in the form of a catalogue. The Biblical expressions and the Sanskrit philosophical terminology are excessively blended and the Western and Eastern literary and religious traditions go together in these passages. He tries to compare Christ with nearly twenty Biblical characters like Adam, Noah, Samson, etc. and after revealing the contrast between the persons compared, he comes to the conclusion that Christ could not be compared with any being in heaven or on earth.

His *Creation, Preservation and Destruction* presents a brief account of the Biblical story about the creation of Eden, Adam and Eve and the birth, crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. The Divine justice of the Father and the boundless mercy of the son form the subject matter of the verses under the subtitle *Kirupaippiravākam*. The passage under *On Prayer* is highly lyrical in nature where the poet begs God to redeem him from sin and bestow upon him eternal bliss. Wherever the neo-classical rules of the *ulā* pattern prescribed in the *pāṭṭiyal* works are an obstacle to his creative genius, he transcends the limitations by his power of imagination and innovative spirit.

Ñāṉattaccaṉ Nāṭakam

A variety of poems by Vētanāyaka Sāstiri on various topics such as creation, Noah's ark, the ark of God, the brass serpent, etc, are compiled together under the title *Ñāṉattaccaṉ Nāṭakam* which means the drama of or on the wise carpenter. The title may be misleading since nothing is dramatized in these poems. Though given under one general heading, there is no thematic unity among these poems since their subject matters are independent with no unifying thread. All the seven long poems rendered under the caption *Ñāṉattaccaṉ Nāṭakam* are meant for public recitation and hence there is one refrain in each poem. The first section of the first poem *Creation* (*Ciruṣṭippu*) gives a brief account of the Biblical legend about the creation of the world in six days. The metrical pattern changes in the second section where human body created by God, the wise Carpenter, is compared to a house. Following the *Genesis* tradition of the *Old Testament* the author narrates how man is created out of dust and how the life is breathed into his nostrils by God (Gen.2:7). The metre, refrain and the subject matter undergo some change in the next section where the poet draws some parallels between man the microcosm and nature the macrocosm, and between man and a tree which are parts of the cosmos. After giving an elaborate physiological description of human body, the poet once again recollects with a deep sense of gratitude the boundless mercy of God, who had created for man the world and all the earthly prosperities in the garden of Eden along with a beautiful maiden Eve.

The poetic materials of the second poem under the title *Noah's Ark* are rendered under three heads, *Kapparramiḻ* (Boat Song) I, II and III. The first portion is a narrative poem in the grand epic style in which the author narrates the causes and consequences of the great deluge in the days of Noah, which form the subject matter of about four chapters in the *Genesis* (Chapters 6,7,8 and 9) of the *Old Testament*. The chorus which is repeatedly used in mariners' songs of the Tamil folk tradition forms the refrain of this poem and it provides us with a maritime background. It is not the high evocative passages and sublime poetical lines of these poems that captivate our hearts, but the encyclopaedic catalogue of various objects and places listed in these poems and the erudition and versatility of the author that deserve our appreciation. When the earth is filled with violence and filth, God tells Noah that he is goind to bring a flood of waters upon the earth

to destroy "all flesh" and orders him to make an ark of gopher wood in hundred cubits (*mulam*) length, fifty cubits breadth and thirty cubits height. As ordered by God, Noah brings into the ark every living thing, two of every sort (male and female) and keeps them along with his wife, three sons and their wives. This narration is followed by the presentation of a long catalogue of various animals, birds, flies, bees, grains, household articles, etc. Following the *Genesis*, the poet gives a beautiful description of the rain and tempest that raged continuously for forty days and forty nights. Waters increased and bore up the ark and the ark sailed upon the waters. This account is followed by another catalogue of various cities of the five continents through which the ark sailed.

The second portion of this poem is in the first person narration comprising a tedious repetition of some of the events narrated in the first portion. God causes a wind to pass over the earth and the fury of the floods gets contained. The rain decreases and after the end of hundred and fifty days, the ark rests upon the mountains of Ararat. According to God's command, Noah brings forth with him every living thing in the land. God says unto him that he will never destroy the living things by flood any more and that he is going to set his bow in the cloud as a token of a convenant between him and the earth. In the last section, the author narrates the foregoing events where at the end of forty days, Noah sent forth a raven, which moved to and fro, until the waters abated. He also sent a dove to see if the waters dried out but the dove returned to the ark. After seven days, he again sent forth the dove which returned with an olive leaf in its mouth indicating the abatement of the floods.

The third portion, The *Ark of God*, presents two important episodes namely the narrator making two tables of stone and an ark as commanded by God in the Sinai hills. Among these, the first episode is developed from the *Exodus* (Ch.34:1) of the *Old Testament*. According to this, when Moses came from the Sinai hills with the ten commandments inscribed on the tables of stone, he saw the Israelites worshipping a calf made of gold and dancing before its altar. His anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands and broke them. God again ordered Moses to bring two tables of stone to write the commandments thereon.

The second episode deals with the making of the ark which is sourced out of the 30th chapter of the *Exodus* and this passage closely follows the Biblical verses. In the next portion, the thematic treatment changes from the religious to the secular. The cruelty of caste distinction that has impeded the growth of mankind is blitterly and poignantly indicted. The author as an egalitarian stands for universal brotherhood and on the basis of the Christian theology that lies behind the Biblical myth about the creation of the world, he holds that all the people, irrespective of their caste distinctions are the descendants of the same parents, Adam and Eve, and hence there is no caste distinction before the face of God. He reminds us of Christ who was born in a simple manger and has chosen the down-trodden as his disciples.

The chapter *Āṉantakkaḷippu* (eternal bliss) is didactic in tone where the poet advises people to go in for a righteous life. Each line of the passage reads like an aphorism. After describing the supremacy of virtuous life, the author comes to the conclusion that *The Lord's Prayer* is the only way of redemption.

In the last chapter *Veṇkala Carppam* (brass serpent) the author, like Milton, gives various legends associated with the serpent from the Hebraic and Indian mythological traditions and asks the serpent to dance in joy praising the glory of Christ.

The serpent tempting Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:1-6), Moses making a serpent in brases (*Ibid* 1:6-9), the Divine curse imposed on the snake (*Ibid* 3:14-15), the rod of Moses turning into serpent (*Ibid* 21:6-9), the comparison of the serpent alluded to in *Luke* (10:19) and *Mark* (16:18) and the serpents referred to in St. Matthew (10-16) form the basic materials. The serpent is again identified with evil things in general and Satan in particular. Some of the Hindu legends which attach positive value to it such as the serpent in the head of Lord Sivaṉ, etc. are alluded to and ridiculed.

Ñāṉa Antāti (1769)

Antāti is a kind of poem composed in *antāti* metre in which the last letter, syllable or foot of the last line of one stanza is the first letter, syllable or foot of the succeeding stanza and the sequence is being kept on between the last and the

first stanzas of the poem as well. Vētanāyaka Sāstiri's *Ñāṉa Antāti* strictly conforms to the rules of *kalitturai antāti*. Like other *antāti* poems, this also praises the glory of God and this eulogy is in the form of bridal mysticism, a literary technique frequent in Tamil, in which the Divine love is treated in terms of love human. Yet, the source of inspiration for this poem is the Song of Songs by Solomon of the *Old Testament* and not the soul-stirring lyrics of the Tamil *Bhakti* tradition.

In this poem, human soul is personified as a bride, *Ñāṉamutalvi* (the first wise mother) and the God as bridegroom, *Ñāṉamaṇavāḷaṉ* (the wise bridegroom). This concept is very common to the Western and Eastern devotional literary traditions, since there are a number of references in the *New Testament* where Christ is personified as a bridegroom and the Seven Churches as bride. The *Song of Solomon* is also interpreted as Divine love treated in terms of love human. In Tamil literature, we see ample examples of bridal mysticism in the hymns of Āṇṭāḷ, Māṇikkavācakar, and the Āḻvārs.

In the beginning, the poet invokes the divine spirit for his composition of *Ñāṉa Antāti*, just as He inspired David and Solomon to compose their devotional songs. The passages that follow are lyrical in which the exact date of composition of this work (1796), the name of the poet's father etc. are given. Then the poet introduces the bride. In spite of her luxurious dress and decoration she is presented with faded cheeks and languished heart since the pangs of separation from her beloved Lord torment her. The description of her sigh, fainting, etc. are narrated in the traditional style. Yet, they throb with a new life revealing the originality of the creator who has handled the traditional materials artistically and creatively. These passages are highly rhythmical, going with picturesque images and personifications running through. She recollects her past blissful life with her bridegroom and contrasts her present worry-laden life and asks her friends whether they saw her Lord.

Following this, the bride, like a true mystic, portrays an abstract image of God in spontaneous expression of the feelings of a divinely intoxicated poetic mind. Like a Unitarian, the author identifies the Trinity as one entity. When her maids ask her how she lost such a glorious groom, she again, reminisces her noble lord, his boundless love to the thief, Mary Magdalena, the doubting

Thomas and his triumph over death, and seeks the advice of her maids in finding a way to meet and mingle with him in one soul. She sends messengers either to bring him directly or to receive consoling words from him.

As soon as her maids return with some consoling words, the Lord himself appears and embraces the bride. He, like a romantic over, begins to describe the beauty of the bride and compares her forehead with the moon, eyebrows with bows, nect with "the tower of David built for an armoury, whereon hand a thousand buckles, all shields of mighty men" (*Song of Solomon* 4:4). In the end the bride prays to God to give shelter to her. The Tamil Literary form, metrical pattern and the Biblical subject (*Song of Solomon*) are harmoniously blended and this artistic blending of the religious and literary traditions of the West and the East takes the work to an eminent position in the galaxy of Tamil devotional poetry.

Nāṉa noṇṭnāṭakam (1800)

It occupies a cardinal position among the works of Vētanāyaka Cāstiri. This poem also conforms to the general pattern of *nōṇṭināṭakam*, a stereotyped neo-classical drama in verse form usually composed in *cintu* type of verse. This conventional form began to thrive from the seventeenth century under the patronage of the chieftains who ruled small territories of Tamiḻnāṭu. The theme, form and poetic idioms used in this genre are stereotypical and hackneyed. Generally, the tragic life of a notorious thief who indulges in theft and licentious life and loses one of his legs and arms in his attempt to steal horses from the chieftains, his redemption from sin by the advice of some ascetic and his miraculous regaining of the lost limbs etc. form the subject matter of such poems.

Vētanāyaka Cāstiri has chosen this native form to preach Christian theology since the Christian doctrines about repentance and salvation are akin to those generally expressed in this literary genre. He has made this an allegorical piece by linking the past events with contemporary setting and identifying the hero of his poem with the fallen human race. This poem is modelled on *Citakkāti Noṇṭināṭakam*, a Muslim literature of the above kind. Though the background of the first portion of the poem appears to have been taken from the present, the hero of the poem is not a historical personage rooted in a particular time and

space, but a universal symbol representative of the human race, appears on the stage with martial array to narrate the prosperity he has attained through adversity.

He narrates his past, his voluptuous life and lists the names of his relatives. Yet in another place, he says that he is a descendant of Cain, who killed his brother Abel and thus committed murder for the first time in the history of mankind. He is a descendant of Jacob who treacherously deceived his father, and of Samson who became a strumpet's fool. He is frank in revealing his split personality. He has three wives, Viliyalaki, Uṭalalaki and Ponnalaki, who are the very personifications of lust and greediness. He and his wives ridicule the Evangelist who shows him the path of righteousness.

The lame man stops his narration and through flashback technique his old story is presented. He identifies himself with Adam and begins to narrate the Biblical account of the creation and the fall of man. He dances happily when he hears that the son of Man has prepared to offer himself as ransom for the sin of Adam. But divine justice wins over divine mercy and his feet and hands are fractured and he is driven away from the garden of Eden. When he goes to the Sinai hills, he is provided with a wooden leg which is a symbol of the prophecy of the *Old Testament*. In this moment of adversity the anticipated Great Man (Christ) comes; the lame man repents and regains his lost limbs.

The first portion of this dramatic poetry has a contemporary background, while the second portion with the story about the creation, the sin of Cain, Jacob, Samson etc., and with the references to Sinai hills, the advent of the Messiah etc. takes us to a remote past and makes us feel that the theme of this work is not temporal and immediate but universal. Though lacking in unity, this is a new kind of literature handling the Christian content in native form and is a happy outcome of the meeting of the East and the West.

Āraṇātintam (1821) is a compilation of Christian rhapsodies in various metres composed by Vētanāyaka Sāstiri which is meant for recitation. An allegorical poem, it deals with the mutual love of Christ (personified as a bridegroom) and Zion (personified as a damsel). After glorifying the lovers, the author gives a pen-picture of the Great Counsel of the Trinity in which the Father,

after narrating the creation of Adam and Eve and the sin committed by them, declares that grace cannot be extended towards man without the divine justice being meted out and hence man who offended the mercy of God is destined to death, and must die unless someone can be found to answer for his offence and undergo his punishment. The Son of God offers himself as ransom for man; the Father is happy and pronounces the exaltation of Messiah above all names in heaven and earth.

It is obvious that Vētanāyaka Sāstiri is largely influenced by Milton's *Paradise Lost* (Book III) and the *Bible* in presenting the Great Counsel. The passage that follows the Great Counsel presents Christ as a valorous hero taking vows against the evil spirit., declaring that he well suppress his egotistic temper and throw the evil into hell. In the next section the infant Christ is portrayed as lying in a manger. The dramatic tempo and high seriousness of the antecedent episode loses its tenacity in the next section which treats of the pure, sensuous, youthful and passionate love of Messiah for Zion.

The love theme which begins in the garden of Eden and lingers on into the *Revelation* is expressed in a romantic and radiant language adhering to the verses of the *Song of Solomon*. According to Christianity there can be no dividing line between love divine and love human and because of this fact the marriage bond became in both the *Old Testament* and the *New Testament* the symbol of divine love. That is why the evangelical prophet Isaiah did not hesitate to say, "As a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee; and as the bridegroom rejoiced over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee"(*Isaiah* 62:5)

The author who is influenced by the Christian tradition of bridal mysticism presents the divine love in terms of love human and makes Jesus speak like Keats who says "I could die for you. My creed is love and you are its only tenet" (Letters to Fanny Brawne - Oct. 13, 1819). But, when Zion asserts her superiority over him by saying that she is a royal descendant of Solomon and hence she would not marry a man from Galilee, the frustrated lover gets angry and narrates in beautiful verse the abominations of Jerusalem that is expressed in *Ezekiel* 16.

He says when her Hittite mother and Amorite father cast her out in the open field at the time of her birth, it was he who concealed her nudity by spreading his skirt over her. When she was polluted in her own blood, he washed her with ornaments and put bracelets upon her hands. He gives a beautiful description of the physical charms of Zion and calls her the gold of Ophir.

The next section presents Zion in her apartment suffering a sleepless night out of the agony caused by the separation of her lord. When her lord stretches his finger through the key hole of the door, she tries to open the door but her lord disappears. She begins to search for him with a languished heart and longs for a reunion with him till at last she meets and mingles with the son of David in the city of Jerusalem.

The final section is a slight digression though it is in tune with the main theme to a lesser degree than it could be. It presents Christ's parable of the maidens at the Wedding (*Matthew* 25: 1-3) which was very dear to the early Church and has become a favorite theme of the mystery plays for its loveliness, its pathos and its drama. All the ten maidens of this parable welcome the bridegroom. While the wise ones in their foresight are not deceived by apparent delay or by the routine march of days and are ready with their lamps filled with oil, the foolish just feel asleep without making due preparation. Those without lamps are left in darkness and when they finally reach the hall, the door is shut. According to the interpreters of the *Bible*, the oil stands for faith in Christ – a faith fed by prayer and confirmed obedient life while the oil less lamp stands for "Ecclesiasticism without righteousness, morality without goodliness, and enthusiasm without perseverance".

Sāstiri's *Araṇātintam* is couched in rhythmic language and it belongs to the finest poetry. Yet, there is an unmistakable counterpoint of deep pathos that throbs and vibrates throughout this poem. The lovers stand on the threshold of ecstacy, eager and impatient to enter into the consummation of their love; but there is something elusive and evanescent about love which keeps them poised in tiptoe in an anguish of expectancy and a torment of unfulfilled passion. There is something frustrating about their love for each other brought about by intense agony of separation which is akin to the Biblical portrayal of God's love, a

suffering love, a love that knows the pathos of unfulfilled possibilities since men rebel and sin against God, separating themselved from His love.

Pettalakēṅkuṟavañci (1800)

Vētanāyaka Sāstiri seems to have been working at some sort of synthesis between the Eastern and the Western literary and religious traditions and his famous work *Pettalakēṅkuṟavañci* which is modelled on *Kuṟṟālakkuṟavañci* bears witness to this. *Pettalakēṅkuṟavañci* is a long poem bearing the characteristics of a folk dance infused with dramatic elements. It is meant for reciting in the Church during festival occasions. Though this poem appears at the outset as a pale imitation of *Kuṟṟālakkuṟavañci*, in fact it is not so. The author of this poetical composition has his rootedness in Christian theology marked by ability to draw striking parallels between the biblical events and characters and some of the important events that play a predominant role in the Tamil *kuṟavañci* works. The artistic blending of these distinct, though not incongruous traditions makes this poem a wonderful piece among the Tamil Christian literature.

This is an allegorical poem as referred to in its prologue. Yet the author has not succeeded in his attempt to make this an impressive allegorical piece since the deep and surface meanings are almost blurred in places where the poet indentifies some of the personae of *kuṟavañci* poems such as *kaṭṭiyaṅkāraṉ* with John the Baptist, *tēvamōkiṉi* with the Church or the daughter of Zion, *ciṅki* or the woman soothsayer with the Biblical prophets, *ciṅkaṉ* or the hunter with the presbyter, the Moon with earthly activities, Breeze with earthly troubles that distort spiritual growth, birds with the human souls, Net and Hook with the verses of the *Bible* and Maṉmataṉ or Cupid with Old Adam.

The poem with its seventy-two sections in various metres such as *akaval*, *kalitturai*, *cintu*, etc. deals with various things such as divine love, the aspirations of the soul to attain an eternal life and the noble vocation of the presbyters directing human souls towards the path of virtue. The background is partially Hebraic and partially South Indian whereas the theme and allusions are completely Biblical. The Prologue throws some light on the biography of the author, the date of composition of this poem, as also the milieu of his age that has exerted a profound influence on his poetic personality. The procession of Christ

with the preaching of John the Baptist in ringing tone, the maidens of Zion admiring Christ, the Biblical persons following Jesus, and the infatuation of *tēvamōkiṉi* with Christ are described in the traditional way like other *kuṟavañci* works. While describing the physical charms of *tēvamōkiṉi*, the poet goes in for liberal use of images from the *Song of Songs*.

The passage on the advent of the woman soothsayer from the hills with her picturesque description of various mountains referred to in the *Bible*, the Jordan river, the country of Galilee, the city of Nazareth and Bethlahem with its natural background etc. are fine poetic pieces of exquisite beauty and they once again remind us of the *Bible* and the teaching of Jesus, constantly pointing to Nature as a revelation of God. Such natural scenes open our eyes to the glory of God in earth and heaven. The episode of the hunter is a faint parallel to the previous episode and this functions as a sub-plot. In this passage, the male counterpart of the foreteller, a hunter, makes his appearance with his companion and speaks of his ability in hunting. Here we have a catalogue of the names of various birds and nations.

In the final section, the long separated foreteller and her husband meet and there is a humorous exchange of lively conversation between the two. They both, after a light quarrel, come to reconcilitation and offer their silent prayers to God and "sings the praises of the Greatest force in the world that builds the universe, draws individuals together in fruitful union and gives the touch divine to all existence."

It is significant to remember that Vētanāyaka Sāstiri lived in a transitional era in the history of Tamil literature when the neo-classical *pirapantam* types of feudal literature and its trends began to crumble as a result of the introduction of technological civilization, the fall of feudal setup, the slow emergence of capitalism, and the gradual introduction of Western civilization and Western type education. Though he partially belongs to the neo-classical tradition, we see in his works the gradual meeting away of the rigid neo-classical rules, and his works in several ways anticipate and foreshadow the later Romantic movement spearheaded by Bhārati and others.

After Sāstiri

There is a tendency among the native Christian poets to preserve their own native literary forms though they did not hesitate to fill them with Christian content. This reveals that though they were prepared to accept the religious doctrines and dogmas of Christianity, they were not prepared to uncreatively subscribe to the Western tradition. They took painstaking efforts to keep the uniqueness and individuality of their indigenous literary tradition. So without surrendering themselves completely to the impact of Christianity, they sought a kind of reconciliation between the East and the West. This is obvious from their attempt to synthesize the East and the West. This is obvious from their attempt to synthesize the Eastern literary forms and Western religious content and also from their nativization of Christian thoughts.

Another native Christian poet who composed luminous volumes of poems under Western influence is Vētanāyakam Piḷḷai (1826-1889) popularly known as Māyūram Vētanāyakam Piḷḷai. He is one of the chief protagonists of Tamil renaissance witnessed under the impact brought in by the study of Western classics and the revival of traditional native works. Vētanāyakam Piḷḷai's role in Tamil renaissance is significant insofar as he introduced the Western literary form, novel, into Tamil. His prose fiction *Piratāpa Mutaliyār Carittiram* and *Cukuṇa Cuntari* mark a turning point in the history of Tamil literature. In the introduction of his first novel, the author says that since he has a taste for idealization, he has built the story in an ideal way. The characters and actions are built in such a way as to please and instruct the audience. Regarding moralizaion, he says that he agrees with Samuel Johnson who in his *Preface to Shakespeare* emphasizes that the end of any literary work must be to please as well as to edify. The hero and heroine of Vētanāyakam Piḷḷai are taken from the aristocratic milieu. The author says that his characters are the exemplifications of the ethical codes he has propagated in his poetical compositions. It is said that the prose of Vētanāyakam Piḷḷai is modelled on that of the Victorian writers (K.K. Piḷḷai, 1957:169).

Though he is known as the first Tamil novelist his name is glorified in the Tamil Christian world as a famous Catholic poet. His is not a fanatic religious outlook but egalitarian and humanitarian and he viewed all religions as diverse

ways to reach the same divinity. This may be due to the impact of the religious renaissance, the revival of the old religious doctrines by the revivalists like Vivekananda, and his friendship with various Hindu scholars such as Makāvittuvān Mīṉāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai and others who have emphasized a cosmopolitan outlook in religious faiths.

Vētanāyakam Piḷḷai studied Sanskrit and French under Tiyākappiḷḷai, a great Tamil scholar. His acquaintance with Mīṉāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai inspired him to compose beautiful devotional lyrics. His friendship with Cuppiramaṇiya Tēcikar of Tiruvāvaṭuturai Mutt, C.V. Tāmōtaram Piḷḷai, Āṟumuka Nāvalar and others contributed much to the growth of his creative abilities.

Among his poetical compositions, *Nīticūl* (1859) is a fine didactic piece. This work closely follows the ethics of ancient Tamil literature and embraces the teachings of the *Bible*. According to Mīṉāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai , 'it has no parallel in the wisdom it contains'. His book *Peṇmatimālai* codifies the duties an ideal woman has to perform in her domestic life. *Tiruvaru! Mālai*, *Tēvamātā Antāti*, *Tiruvaru! Antāti*, *Periyanāyakiyaman Patikam* etc. are his classics in which native literary forms and Christian content are blended skillfully. His *Carva Camaya Camaracakkīrttaṉai* and Cattiya *Vētakkīrttaṉai* follow the Tamil *kirttaṉai* form though they are filled with Christian as well as native ideals.

H.A. Kiruṣṇa Piḷḷai (1827-1900)

Another significant Christian poet who composed hymns and narrative poems under the impact of Western religious and literary thoughts is Henry Alfred Kiruṣṇa Piḷḷai. He was born at Karaiyiruppu, a small village in the district of Tirunelvēli in the southeast corner of India. He was appointed in 1853 in a school at Cāyarpuram run by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. He was an orthodox Hindu by birth and was later converted to Christianity. He got baptism in April 1858 in the S.P.G. Church at Mylapore and was given the Christian name Henry Alfred. He worked as a Tamil teacher in the Presidency College, and edited *Tiṉavarttamāṉi*, a Tamil journal, with Dr. Percivial. He also worked at C.M. College, Tirunelveli and Maharajah's College, Trivandrum. He had acquaintances with P. Suntaram Pillai, the author of the Tamil verse drama *Maṉōṉmaṇiyam*.

The influence exercised by John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* on H.A. Kiruṣṇa Piḷḷai is remarkable even though he was not well versed in English. The first Tamil version of *The Pilgrim's Progress* under the title *Mōṭcappirayāṇam* came to be published in 1793 and the credit for introducing it to the Tamil readers goes to the SPCK Society. This book saw the light of the day some 34 years before the birth of H.A. Kiruṣṇa Piḷḷai. Since it has received considerable appreciation from the Tamil Christians a number of Tamil versions appeared subsequently.

Among the Tamil versions of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the rendering by Rev. Samuel Paul (1844-1900) which came out in 1882 was well received among the native Christian congregation. This allegorical piece of Bunyan has transcended most of those barriers of race and culture which would limit the communicative power of a classic. Its popularity is seen in the fact that it has been translated into no fewer than one hundred and eight different languages and dialects. The simple and sensous language of the Tamil version is salted with proverbs and vigorous provincial turns of phrases and the translator has rendered it in lucid and simple language following the original faithfully and with necessary footnotes and explanations.

One Taṉakkōṭi lent H.A. Kiruṣṇa Piḷḷai the Tamil translation of the *Bible* which drew him gradually under its deep influence. It was at this time that he got the opportunity of reading the Tamil version of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. It stirred the mind of this gifted poet and inspired him to compose a Tamil poem following Bunyan's model. As A.J. Appacami says, "It was Kiruṣṇa Piḷḷai's long cherished ambition to write a Tamil Christian classic which the world would not willingly let die. He was fortunately able to devote himself to this great task for a period of fourteen years towards the end of his life. His extensive study of the Tamil classics, his rare poetic gifts and his mature Christian experience enabled him to write the great book *Iraṭcaṇiya Yāttirikam*"(1960: 41).

It was Kiruṣṇa Piḷḷai's intention to publish this work on his own but Rev. T. Walker persuaded him to offer it to the Christian Literature Society in Madras and arranged with John Murdoch, the secretary of that Society to publish it. This book was published in 1894, six years before Kiruṣṇa Piḷḷai's death.

Kiruṣṇa Piḷḷai does not blindly follow the original English version, but has made changes in such a way as to suit the cultural needs and aesthetic sensibilities of the Tamils. The synthesizing of the Western and Eastern traditions is artistically achieved in this composition. This book contains portions that are not in the original. In the second book entitled *Kumāra Paruvam* there is a whole chapter of about five hundred verses on the life of Jesus Christ narrated in a string of magnificent stanzas. This is completely absent in the English original.

Kiruṣṇa Piḷḷai was attracted by the work of Bunyan because the whole story of the Christian and his march to the promised land overcoming several weaknesses both intrinsic and external caused by doubt, despondency and worldly attachments presented a parallel to his own life and mental struggle (A.V. Subramanya Aiyar, 1970: 76). The chief merit of this work is its poetic exuberance. He is called the Christian Kampaṉ.

Kiruṣṇa Piḷḷai is also indebted greatly to the Tamil hymnal literature and he has imbibed its spirit and language admirably. Some of his hymns are also found in *Iraṭcaṇiya Maṉōkaram* which was published in 1899. This book closely follows the *Tēvāram* style. Another work of his entitled *Iraṭcaṇiya Kuṟaḷ* is a rendering of the Christian religious thoughts in beautiful Tamil verse. In one of his lyrics, he compares Jesus with the sun shining brilliantly. He is a gem of beauty, a radiant pearl and a lamp that burns steadily. He is a ruby that glows. In the characteristic oriental fashion, the poet seeks to show what Christ means to him. To him, the joy of the First Easter was like the gaiety of a field bursting with flowers of various colours. It was like the song of birds waking up the Lord gently from his sleep. It was like the joy which fills the world when the sun appears in its splendour at early dawn.

In *Iraṭcaṇiya Maṉōkaram*, he speaks of the Christian Church as the bride longing for a vision of Christ. To quote A.J. Appācāmi "Kiruṣṇa Piḷḷai has no grounding in Christian theology such as is given in a theological college. When so much was being written in English on Christian apologetics, it was unfortunate that Kiruṣṇa Piḷḷai with his massive learning in Tamil, had not even a working knowledge of the English language" (1960: 68). It is thus obvious that the

Western impact on him is only in an indirect way, through translations and catechism.

Antōṇikuṭṭi Aṇṇāviyār

Antōṇikuṭṭi Aṇṇāviyār composed poems in Tamil in the earlier phase, before the advent of secular Romantic literature. He was a Catholic poet from Tūttukkuṭi. His lyrics are printed under the title *Kiristava Caṙkīṯam* which shows a strong influence of the Christian thoughts and dogmas. The influence of the native lyrics is also obvious in these poems.

Kūḷaṅkaittampirāṇ

He was born in Kāñcipuram and he studied Dutch and Portuguese at Jaffna. He was converted to Christianity in the later days of his life. Among his works *Nellaikkalai Veṇpā* , *Kūḷaṙkaiyār Vaṇṇam* and *Yōcēppup Purāṇam* are worth-mentioning. The last of these is an epic on Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus. It consists of 21 cantos and 1203 *viruttams*. The whole book is not available to us now. He died in 1765. He has brought in Western thoughts profusely in his epic on Joseph. The Western influence on the first three works is not obvious even though he knew Dutch and Portuguese before he composed those poems.

Muttucāmi Piḷḷai

He worked as a supervisor in the Madras College and hence he is called College Muttucāmi Piḷḷai. He taught Tamil to General Macmillan and Babington. He was well-versed in Telugu, Sanskrit and English. He has written many prose works on Christianity and his book *Vēta Vikaṛpatikkāram* is famous among them.

Inpakavirayār

He was born at Maṇappāṭu and his original name was Xavier. He lived in Ceylon for a short time. He has composed many beautiful lyrics in Tamil with Christian content.

Cavarāyalu Nāyakar (1829-1911)

A leading Christian poet, he studied Tamil under Mīṉāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai who taught the Christian Tamil epic *Tēmpāvaṇi* to him. His *Tamiḻ Mālai* is a panegyric poem in praise of his devoted guru. Though he has infused the Christian ideals, he strictly followed the neo-classical literary forms. *Tēva Aṉṉaiyiṉmītu Pēriṉpa Catakam, Pēriṉpa Antāti, Tivviya Māṉmiyam, Cepamālai, Mātā Māṉmiyam, Tiru Navacatakam* etc. are some of his important works. He has also composed a series of lyrics under the title *Tēva Tōttira Caṅkīṭak Kīrttaṉam.*

Paṇṭita Cavarirāyar

Apart from embodying Christian content in the conventional *pirapantam* forms, some native poets have revived the folk metres and infused them with Christian content. Among them Paṇṭita Cavarirāyar occupies a significant place. He was born in 1859 at Vaṭakkaṉkuḷam in Tirunelvēli district. In collaboration with J.S. Irāmaṉāta Piḷḷai, he has composed *Pāratavamca Viḷakkam* in 1889. He has written a verse drama called *Sri Patārtta Vilācam*. His *Paṉmaṇittiraṭṭu, Cattiyavati Tālāṭṭu, Pāṅkimār Tālāṭṭu, Oṭappāṭṭu, Kapparpāṭṭu*, etc. are the off springs of his interest in the revival of folk metres. He worked as a Professor in St. Xavier's College, Pāḷayaṅkoṭṭai for a few years.

Other Christian poets

The impact of Western thoughts on the secular Tamil literature before 1900 was not very significant. Secular poems with native themes were also not much pronounced in the early stages of Western contact. As pointed out by John Murdoch in 1862, "One of the greatest wants in Tamil is a supply of interesting general literature of a wholesome character... With the masses, it is still the mythological period. They will require appropriate intellectual pabulum"(1868:1). This may be due to the reason that even the Western scholars were not much interested in introducing their secular literatures in the Indian soil. The work of the Christian missionaries brought in only the religious revival among the native people. Thus the scene of the nineteenth century was once again a period of conflicts between various religious movements, with

Christianity on the one side and Hinduism on the other. The conflict between these mighty opposites is breathed in through the veins of the nineteenth century Tamil literature. As a result, the folk metres and forms were revived and filled with religious content. The Western thoughts began to exert its influence through the native Christian literatures which creatively interacted with the Hindu literatures of a similar kind. Given below are some of the important native Christian poetical compositions.

1. **Arc. Antōṇiyār Ammāṉai** S. Jakarāv Mutali, 1878.
2. **Arc. Antōṇiyār Catkuru Caṅkāra Mālai**. Cuvāmikkaṇṇu Pulavar, 1909.
3. **Arc. Istākiyār Nāṭakam**. Mā. Je. Ñāṉappirakācam Piḷḷai.
4. **Aṟuvaṭaittirunāḷ Kummi** S. Pavul Aiyar, 1893.
5. **Ātmārtta Mālai**. A. Bloom Strand Aiyar.
6. **Āti Nantavaṉappiraḷayam** (compendium of Milton's **Paradise Lost**). A. Vētakkaṇ. 1862.
7. **Āti Nantavaṉa Mīṭci**. A. Vētakkaṇ. 1868.
8. **Āraṇātintam**. Vētanāyaka Sāstiri.
9. **Ārōkkiya Māta Māṇikkamālai**. Ponnucāmip Piḷḷai 1909.
10. **Ārōkkiya Mātāviṉ Tōttirappaṉuval**. Kuḷantai-vēlup Piḷḷai 1910.
11. **Ārōkkiya Mātāviṉ Pēril Tacamaṇi Mālai**. Ce.Yēcutikcūris.
12. **Immāṉuvēl Kalampakam** (poems on Christ), J.P. Manuel. 1864.
13. **Immāṉuvēl Piḷḷaittamiḻ** (on the childhood of Christ) J.P. Manuel. 1864.
14. **Immāṉuvēl Mālaiyum Japa Viruttappāvum.** Cuvāmi Aṭiyāṉ.
15. **Iyēcu Nāyakar Tiruccatakam** (one hundred stanzas on Christ). A.R. Arnold, 1850.
16. **Iyēcuviṉ Pēril Paṭaṅkaḷ** (on the birth of Christ). Vētanāyaka Sāstiri. 1852.
17. **Iraṭcaṇiyak Kuṟaḷ.** H.A. Kiruṣṇa Piḷḷai.
18. **Iraṭcaṇiya Camaya Nirṇayam.** H. A. Kiruṣṇa Piḷḷai, 1898.
19. **Iraṭcaṇya Maṉōkaram.** H.A. Kiruṣṇa Piḷḷai, 1978.
20. **Iraṭcaṇiya Yāttirikam** .H.A. Kiruṣṇa Piḷḷai, 1894.
21. **Uttarika Mātāviṉ Patikam** (ten stanzas in honour of the virgin). Antōṇi Cūcai,1863.
22. **Uyirtta Carittiram.** Vētanāyaka Sāstiri.
23. **Estar Aracāṉi Mālai.** 1900
24. **Ēcunātar Piḷḷaittamḻ. I** Cāmināṭappiḷḷai.
25. **Kiṟistayāṉam. John Palmer**. 1865

26. **Kiristavattiruvācakam.** Pirāncis Piḷḷai.
27. **Kiristunātar Piḷḷaittamil.** Pirāncis Piḷḷai.
28. **Kiruttuvat Tamiḻkkīrttaṉai.** Raṭṉanātar. 1894.
29. **Cankīta Varaṇam** (lyrics). 1852
30. **Cattiya Vētākamakkīrttaṉai** (poems on the Old and New *Testaments*). Cañcī Tāmas.1858.
31. **Caraṇ Pāmālai**. A. Ñāṉappirakācam.
32. **Cāstirak Kummi**. Vētanāyaka Sāstiri.
33. **Cintukkavi Mālai** (Poetical Garland), 1852.
34. **Ciṟuvaṉ Maḻalai Vilācam** (The Prodigal Son). P. Āṟumukam Piḷḷai, Madras, 1864.
35. **Ñāṉakkummi 4 Paṅku**. Vētanāyaka Sāstiri.
36. **Ñāṉa Camuttiram**. T.M. Ñāṉappirakāca Nātar. 1868.
37. **Ñāṉa Cavuntariyammāḷ Nāṭaka Alaṅkāram**. Antōṇi Muttu. 1909.
38. **Ñāṉat Taccaṉ Nāṭakam**, Vētanāyaka Sāstiri.
39. **Ñāṉat Tārāṭṭu**. Vētanāyaka Sāstiri.
40. **Ñāṉattiruppukaḻ**. M.S. Iyākappiḷḷai, 1891.
41. **Ñāṉa Noṇṭi**. Vētanāyaka Sāstiri.
42. **Ñāṉamālai**. 1873.
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MODERN LITERATURE

15. NARRATIVE POEMS IN MODERN TAMIL

The literary milieu

The advent of technological civilization and the western type of education during the nineteenth century and after has changed the literary milieu in Tamil and paved the way for the emergence of new types of literary compositions. With the increasing pace of urbanization, capitalist modes became domineering, which affected literature also. The ancient patronage system which had played a vital role in the nature and function of art crumbled under its impact. While the poets of the yesteryears had their poetic themes shaped accounting to the tastes and fancies of their patrons, the modern poet composes poems for the reading generality who are mostly the English-educated, middle class men and women. With the introduction of the printing press and the capitalist modes of production, "the intellectual creations of individual nations become common poetry. National one-sided ness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and out of the numerous national and local literatures arises a world literature"(Marx and Engels, 1962: 38).

In such an environment a large reading public of a changed perception and attitude has come into being. The poet, imbued with a new sensibility and rooted in a new environment, naturally writes for the commonality of the reading public and not for a particular aristocratic patron. The modern poet has at his disposal more freedom of choice than his predecessors and hence his poetical works are marked by a spirit of confrontism as against the classical attitude of conformism. Consequently, individualism – a revolt against conventional rules and conservative attitudes – has become the characteristic trend of the twentieth century literature. There have been experimentations with new forms, metres, techniques and themes, with the result that Tamil poetry has witnessed liberation from the cramping atmosphere of the feudal courts and temples. The birth of this renaissance marked as it is by newer and newer ways of perception and representation in art has ultimately rendered literature a social phenomenon. The transcendental, superhuman and idealized heroes created by and for an aristocratic society have been replaced in modern Tamil poetry by the common man.

The present day reader who reads stories and poems in his study room differs largely from the reader of the yesteryears who enjoyed the literary compositions recited in his presence by professional minstrels or rhapsodists. To amuse and to educate the story-loving new audience, modern poets, like their epic predecessors, have evolved a new type of narrative art by bringing about an amalgamation of the chosen aspects of the existing literary kinds like epic, drama, novel, short story and the folk forms like the ballad. The epic poems of the classical age having outlived their utility in this largely mechanized social setup, the present day poet has started composing epic fragments and goes in for adaptations from the remaking of the classical and medieval themes. Each of these poems is a distinct entity, with no common conventions governing them. This chapter attempts to make a survey of the narrative poems of the twentieth century and to formulate the theories that govern and inform their structure.

Narrative poetry is generally defined as one that narrates a story. In a narrative poem, the poet or one of the characters in it assumes the role of a narrator. Epic, ballad and romance are considered to be the traditional forms of narrative poetry. The ancient narrative poems had their origin in the chanting of hymns or mythic songs in rituals. Vestiges of this earlier connection can be seen in their verse medium and the pervasiveness of the rhyme and music.

The pattern and purpose of narrative poems change according to the nature of the given social reality. The narrative poems of the twentieth century differ from their classical counterparts, which were primarily meant for recitation. With the arrival of Romanticism and its keen interest in the revival of folk tradition, a new life to narrative poems was given throughout the European nations in the beginning of the nineteenth century. The European Romantic poets composed a number of short narrative poems taking their plots either from the classical poems or from the ballads of the folk tradition. The old plots and backgrounds were brought in to bear on contemporary events and sensibilities.

With the introduction of the western secular narrative poems of this kind in the schools and colleges of India, the English educated Indians found themselves under its tremendous impact, and were ultimately stimulated to compose narrative poems in their native languages drawing on the classical and medieval works for their plots. The currents of renaissance spirit which

emphasized utilitarianism have also encouraged the revival of classicism and this was congenial for the growth of narrative poems of new content but with a classical background. The first narrative poem thus appeared in the Tamil language is Subramanya Bharati's *Pāñcāli Capatam* (Pāñcāli's Vow), an epic fragment published in 1912. This epic form is entirely new to Tamil literature even though such forms are largely found in the European tradition.

Following the model of Bharati, a number of artistically realized narrative poems with varied form and content appeared in the Tamil literary arena. Most of them thus arose were objective in nature, enabling the poets to express themselves with complete detachment and to explore their own resources and powers more fully.

Since the twentieth century is an age of skepticism where traditional notions and ideals remain terribly shattered, the epic also is replaced by such narrative poems which implicitly or explicitly reveal the ideals and aspirations of their contemporary social reality. The ideals exemplified in the characters of the twentieth century Tamil narratives are meant to inspire and transform, since they harmonize with the vital interests of the people and come to embody their hopes and aspirations.

Trends in modern narrative poetry

In his introduction to *Pāñcāli Capatam*, Bharati, for the first time in Tamil literature, has insisted on the need for composing a kind of popular narrative poem in 'simple vocabulary, clear and lucid style, the rhythms which are very easily comprehensible, the tune (*meṭṭu*) that the populaces highly relish'. Thus, the language of the common man became in his works the language of poetry. Till then, it was not the language of high class literature (T.P. Mīṉāṭcicuntaraṉ, 1973: 314). Bharati's attempt has marked a turning point in the art of composing narrative poems. His successors also have started treading the line which Bharati shaped. Bharati's theory of the language of the common man, revival of classical themes, revolt against neo-classical poetic diction and rules, social purpose of poetry and above all his theme of artistic composition have brought about a significant change in the creative activities of the Tamils and heralded a new epoch in the history of Tamil poetry. All such trends spearheaded

by Bharati are also discernible in the narrative poems of his successors who have experimented with new forms, techniques and metres. In *Pāñcāli Capatam*, a new content was brought in which reflects the progressive ideals which the poet wanted to inject into the contemporary society. Patriotism came to be the alpha and omega in Bharati's poem even though the plot is derived from the epic poem *Mahābhāratam* of Viyācar.

Bharati's *Pāñcāli Capatam* is an allegorical epic fragment which albeit implicitly narrates his contemporary social and political crises placing them in the ancient mythological background. The characterization of Pāñcāli in *Bhāratam* attracted the attention of Bharati who sung about women's liberation and patriotic sentiments as if divinely inspired. The story of Pāñcāli who symbolized the revolt against the aristocratic convictions of her age suited the purpose of Bharati who stood against the British imperialism which, according to him, had oppressed the Indians, degenerated their past glory and undermined their traditional values. Bharati, in his preface to his work says that he has merely translated the pupular story of Viyācar though he has made some changes in the characterization. He asserts that this narrative poem was inspired by his Mother Goddess Parācakti whose mission is to give a new life to the Tamils. He also advocates equality of sexes through Vīṭṭumaṉ, one of the characters, who says that in antique past, probably in the classical society, men and women were considered equal. Gone are those days and in the present degenerated social setup, men have come to play so domineering a role that they can even sell their wives or give them to others as gift. To Bharati, Pāñcāli is nothing but Mother India in chains. Thus the old story is used by Bharati as an appropriate tool by which to propagate his political and social ideals. This new theme marks liberation from the sensual court poems of his neo-classical predecessors. In *Kuyilpāṭṭu* he has used the elements of narrative poetry for pure aesthetic purpose.

The scope of narrative poetry was further extended by his disciple Pāratitācaṉ who has composed poems taking his plots from ancient and medieval sources and creating imaginary situations of his own. While he and his followers use this medium for the propagation of their social and political ideals, Kavimaṇi Tēcika Vināyakam Piḷḷai and his successors have used it towards recreating the cultural values of the hoary post. The poets of the New Poetry movement have experimented with new content and form which paved the way for the emergence

of poems with psychological and socialist content. Apart from reviving ancient plots for modern purposes, poets like Cōmacuntara Pārati (S.S. Pārati) have handled ancient forms and metres in modern stories. Poets who follow the ideals of Pāratitācaṉ have converted antagonists of classical poems into protagonists in their compositions.

The romantic school

Poets like Pārati, Pāratitācaṉ, Kavimaṇi and their successors who followed their examples are called Romantic poets, since they share most of the aspects of Romanticism. They were inspired not only by the spirit of humanism and humanitarianism which were the products of renaissance, but also by the spirit of equality, liberty and fraternity which were the ideals of the French revolution. Marxism and other socialist ideologies also permeate their thinking. The Renaissance spirit has induced them to revive classical themes and folk elements and to interpret ancient myths and themes to suit their ends. A new desire for liberty and a sense of revolt against authority, which are apparent in the works of English Romantics, stirred them. This concept of individual freedom led women to demand equal rights with men which are another aspect of the Romantic poems of the English and Indian literatures. Owing to the spread of renaissance spirit, conservativeness, dogmatism and narrow-minded parochialism which characterized the neoclassical works in Tamil yielded place to cosmopolitanism, rationalism and universal outlook in the poetical compositions of the Tamil Romantics.

Though there are certain common features among the narrative poems of this group, each poet differs in his own way and hence we are able to trace the existence of three schools namely the school of Bharati, the school of Pāratitācaṉ and that of Kavimaṇi within the Romantic school. In the compositions of the followers of Bharati much emphasis is laid on patriotism, the glory of India, national integration, libertarian sentiments, traditional ideals of India and international affairs. Poets like S.D.S. Yōki, P. Tūraṉ, Kalaivāṇaṉ and such others follow this mode of composition. During 1947-1965, Pāratitācaṉ had been a mighty voice in Tamil narrative poetry. Though he revolted against the conventional poetic diction and decorum, he emphasized the importance of metre and prosody. In his opinion, prosodic rules and grammatical codes must be

remade and adapted to suit the spirit of the age and the contemporary poetic content. His views were shared by his poetic successors in their narrative poems. Paratitacan's constant themes in his narrative poems are love, emancipation of women, Tamil, Tamilians, family life and democracy which give man his rightful place in the society. His inspiration here may also be traced to Bharati, but Pāratitācaṉ goes beyond his mentor in his intensity of feelings, in the breadth of his vision and in the range and extent of his poetry and in his chosen thematic canvas.

Revenge theme was also introduced by Pāratitācaṉ in *Tamiḻacciyiṉ Katti* which was followed by poets influenced by socialist ideals such as Cirpi Pālacuppiramaṇiaṉ and Nā. Kāmarācaṉ in **Cikaraṅka**ḷ *Poṭiyākum* and *Makākāviyam* respectively. Social satire also was handled by Pāratitācaṉ in *Iruṇṭavīṭu* and *Akattiyaṉ Viṭṭa Putukkaraṭi*. Even though his narratives were written with a social and political message, he never made artistic integrity subservient to propagandist motives.

Kavimaṇi has experimented with the verse translation of Buddhist stories related with the birth and preaching's of the Buddha from English sources. Glorification of traditional values, the serene life of the Indians, etc. are some of the thematic trends discernible from his *Āciya Jōti*. He has used narrative poem for satirical portrayal with an eye on social edification in *Marumakka*ḷ *Vaḻi Māṉmiyam*. His mild but the serious way of handling the narrative devices was followed by poets like Nāmakkal Irāmaliṅkam Piḷḷai. T. Perumāḷ and others.

Romantic revolt

While conformism is the salient feature of the classical poet, the modern poet's confrontism is recognized as the typical Romantic attitude. This confrontism has taken various forms in the narrative poems of the Tamil Romantics. In the lyrics, the poet assumes the role of a rebel whereas in the narrative poems such libertarian sentiments are expressed by their characters. Thus Bharati's Pāñcāli appears as a revolutionary woman raising her clarion voice against the accredited convictions of her social setup. This theme was artistically realized by Pāratitācaṉ also who has created a number of characters who confront the existing social reality in multifarious ways. In *Puraṭcikkavi*, his

poet-hero assumes the role of a rebel; in *Tamiḻacciyiṉ Katti* Cuppammā emerges as a revolutionary woman. He has made Kaṇṇaki and Maṇimekalai revolutionary characters. Like Byron and Shelley, Pāratitācaṉ and Pulavar Kuḻantai have converted classical antagonists into modern protagonists. Kavimaṇi's heroine in *Marumakka! Vaḻi Māṉmiyam* and the heroines of short narrative poems composed by Ciṟpi and Nā. Kāmarācaṉ are essentially good and revolutionary.

Pāratitācaṉ has successfully experimented with the theme of love in narrative poetry by creating concrete living characters. In his narrative, love is portrayed as a binding force which brings people together irrespective of their social status, caste distinction and economic conditions. His lovers are not speculative and pessimistic types who find solace only in romantic dreams and go about aimlessly with a worry-laden heart out of the frustrations they meet in their love affairs. On the other hand, they are active and healthy members of a living society. They are ready to renounce all prosperity and to face any adversities for the sake of their love. They fight boldly for the fulfillment of their aspirations till the end. In most of his poems they emerge victorious over the degenerated convictions of the social reality which stand in their way. They are love's pilgrims and if they happen to die for the sake of their ideals they die as love's martyrs. Pāratitācaṉ's war cry for the emancipation of women has left an indelible impression in his narrative poems such as *Cañcīvi Parvatattiṉ Cāral, Kuṭumpa Viḷakku, Kaṇṇaki Puraṭcik Kāppiyam, Maṇimēkalai Veṇpā, Tamiḻacciyiṉ Katti* and *Vīrattāy*. Such themes are increasingly handled by the followers of Pāratitācaṉ who have created love situations out of their own imagination and from the classical plots as well. Most of the Tamil narrative poems hitherto appeared in Tamil glorify ideal erotic themes and handle them in a pleasing manner. M. Aṇṇāmalai's *Tāmaraikkumari, Varṟiya Ciṟu Ōṭai*, Kaṇṇatācaṉ's *Māṅkaṉi, Kōcalaikkumari* by Tamiḻ Oḷi, *Pūṅkōtai* by Kalaikkūttaṉ, *Pūmaḻai* by Kāvirināṭaṉ, *Putuvāḻvu* by Iṉpavāṇaṉ, etc. are some of the narratives poems with love themes. Even though the treatment, techniques and the purpose differ, all of them have had affinities with the love poems of Pāratitācaṉ which have provided considerable stimulus to the later poets.

The Gandhian school

Since most of the poets who got their inspiration from the Romantics are the supporters of the ideals of Gandhi, it may look rather uncritical to discuss certain poets under this head. Yet, such a classification is salutary and inevitable since some poets derived their inspiration mainly from the life and ideals of Gandhi. Unlike the Romantic school and the Free Verse movement, the poets belonging to this school functioned as a moderating force conforming to the traditional forms and themes with slight alterations so as to suit the contemporary social milieu. With regard to their attitude to literature, their outlook is classical in nature and formalistic in character. Thus a voluminous epic on Gandhi was written in *viruttam* metre adhering to the classical epic pattern in this century. Kalaivāṇaṉ is a poet of the Gandhian age, and among his works *Utayam* ranks the best, which sings in the epic style the glory of Mother India, the Queen being disgraced and refused a seat in the assembly of nations by England and her greatness being restored by the efforts of Mahatma Gandhi. Though difficult to call it a narrative poem, *Kāntiyukam* by S.D. Suntaram has some elements of narrative poetry. The poet who is nurtured in the Gandhian ideals has made the poem a beautiful eulogy on Gandhi. In some places, he has made Gandhi speak, introducing thereby the technique of mixed narration. It is significant to mention that C.S. Cellappā, a poet of the Free Verse movement also has composed a narrative poem on Gandhi in free verse under the title *Nī Iṉṟu Iruntāl*.

The psychological school

As already mentioned, the length of the traditional epic was adapted to short narrative poems such as short epics and epic fragments by the Tamil Romantic poets. Now, the Free Verse movement has further shortened its length. The narrative poems which are the offspring of this movement can be divided into two categories, namely the progressive and reactionary poems on the basis of their ideological content.

It is obvious that N. Piccamūrtti, the harbinger of this school of New Poetry, and his followers were influenced by Freudian psycho-analysis, existentialism and surrealism. Literary compositions which were made a social phenomenon by Bharati were made a suitable medium to depict inner psychic

problems such as sex, frustration, death-wish, etc. by the poets who belonged to the *Maṇikkoṭi* and *Eḻuttu* circles. Following T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound they introduced sundry new techniques in Tamil narrative poetry. Thus in structure and content Tamil narrative poetry underwent drastic changes. Most of their compositions were the revelations of frustrated minds, and their disillusionments and sense of alienation are held to be due to the fact that "man's life is governed by laws outside his will". Most of their narrative poems are pictures drawn by persons who have shed their illusions and who are not happy with the reality which confront them. It is a known fact that most of the narrative poems that emerged in Indian languages after the independence were often "a sort of self-abuse, stimulated by the feeling of defeat and consciousness of loss of stature due to the disillusionments the people met after the dawn of Independence" (G. John Samuel, 1978: 63). Since most of the poets of this movement belonged to the suppressed middle class, they could not but look on with dismay the world around them.

C. Maṇi in his narrative poem *Narakam*, which was influenced by T.S. Eliot, portrays how traditional values and long cherished ideals of the past have been degenerated in the modern *cash-nex* society into a state of hell. To T.S. Eliot, modern society is a waste-land whereas to C. Maṇi, it is a hell. In C. Maṇi's poem sex has lost its sanctity and significance. Like T.S. Eliot, who brought in sundry passages from western literatures, C. Maṇi also has quoted profusely from Tamil classics such as **Cilappatikāram, Periyapurāṇam** and **Kamparāmāyaṇam** which serve as effective parodies and help the poet expose the moral degradation of the present social setup through parallelism and contrast. C.S. Cellappā's narrative poem on Gandhi also has a pessimistic content in which the poet laments the days and events that have gone away with the assassination of Gandhi. N. Piccamūrtti's *Aṉaṅkaṉ Piṟappu* deals with some problems associated with sex with the help of the mythical accounts that revolve around Kāmaṉ, the god of love. Thus, Tamil narrative poems which embodied individualism and libertarian sentiments in the Romantic period have become a voice of frustration and pessimism in the hands of the New Poets who are influenced largely by surrealism and existentialism.

Socialist theme

Though Bharati whole-heartedly welcomed the socialist ideals, it was in the narrative poems of Pāratitācaṉ that such ideals came to be represented in a significant way. Consequently, the sufferings and predicaments of the destitute and conomically backward communities became the theme of many Tamil narratives. The lyrics and short narratives composed by Jīvā, Paṭṭukkōṭṭai Kaliyāṇacuntaram, K.C.S. Aruṇācalam, C. Rakunātaṉ and Tamiḻ Oḷi have contributed much to the growth of the theme of socialist ideals in Tamil poetry. Most of the short narrative pieces composed by the poets of the *Vāṉampāṭi* circle were inspired by a vision of the new world and the future development of mankind. They give expression to this not only by creating myths, but by analysing and crystallizing present-day reality in the process of constant development, by the analysis and criticism of the living contemporary characters. In this group Mīrā, Nā. Kāmarācaṉ, Ciṟpi and Iṉkulāp are some of the narrative poets worth-mentioning. Most of them have modelled their narrative poems not on epics but on the contemporary short stories. They glorify organic form and revolt against the conventional metres and themes. Utilizing the healthier elements of the classical literatures they have made sundry innovations and converted Tamil poetry once again into a social phenomenon. Mīrā's poem *Kaṉavukaḷ + Karpaṉaikaḷ = Kākitaṅkaḷ* is hailed as a masterpiece among the progressive works. This poem satirizes the modern social setup where owing to its degenerated customs and narrow-minded convictions, true lovers could not meet and mingle in one soul, as a result of which love withers in its bud, getting defeated in its helpless battle against the social customs. In spite of its profuse images associated with Soviet Russia, it ends with a pessimistic tone which is completely alien to socialist realism.

Nā. Kāmarācaṉ calls himself a true socialist poet. His first anthology *Kaṟuppumalarkaḷ* introduces some short narratives with progressive ideals. Among them, *Vayalveḻippāṭṭu* is a fine piece, like a short story turning on a single theme. In this poem, he makes Bharati and Lenin meet and exchange their social ideals. He declares that all his efforts in poetry have the underlying object of giving an international status to Tamil poetry. *Kiṟukkacciyiṉ Viṟakukaḷ* and *Lampāṭi* are his two recent narrative poems blending humour, humanity, tenderness and pathos in their texture. His short epic *Makākāviyam* which was

published in 1978 depicts the pathetic life of its heroine, a prostitute, who takes revenge on the malicious landowners responsible for her physical and mental tortures. Cirpi's *Cikaraṅkaḷ Poṭiyākum* also deals with a theme akin to Nā. Kāmarācaṉ's *Makākāviyam*.

Revival of classicism

One of the main trends of the eastern and western Romanticism is turning towards the ancient or medieval literary works and deriving themes and plots from them and rendering those old themes in a new form bringing them to bear on the contemporary social problems, ideals and aspirations. As already shown, Bharati has resurrected the episode of Pāñcāli's Vow form *Mahābhāratam* in a new way giving expression to the milieu and mentality of his own age. Following the example set by Bharati, Pāratitācaṉ has treated the plot of *Cilappatikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai* in his narratives namely *Kaṇṇaki Puraṭcikkāppiyam* and *Maṇimēkalai Veṇpā*. In the former poem, he has differed from the original in about fifteen instances and in the latter he has deviated from the original in ten places (Tamilavaṉ, 1971:63).

The story of Kaṇṇatācaṉ's *Māṅkaṉi* is developed from the allusion to Mōkūr war found in *Cilappatikāram*. The love episode, the war background and the chief characters are developed by the poet in his own way with the sole aim of producing a beautiful piece of art. The poet has given much importance to plot, dramatic effect and rhythm. The beauty of its sensuous images and the flow of diction vastly overshadow the unnaturalness of the events and descriptions. Even the renaissance interest in the quibbling of words has been done in a very beautiful manner in *Māṅkaṉi*. By handling modern dramatic techniques in the final passage, the poet enhances the dramatic tempo of narration in a wonderful way. Kaṇṇatācaṉ has derived the story of *Āṭṭaṉatti Ātimanti* from *Akanānūru* 76, 135 and 222 and developed it in the form of a narrative poem with the object of bringing alive the glory and grandeur of the ancient Tamils. He has created Nalliyakkōṭaṉ as a villain and Maruti as the first love of the hero. This, according to the author, was done with the chief aim of giving an artistic texture to his narrative poem.

Cālai Iḷantiraiyaṉ's *Cilampiṉ Ciṟunakai* revolves round the goldsmith of *Cilappatikāram* and P. Kōvintaṉ's *Koṭai Maṉṉar Paṉuval* celebrates the patrons of the ancient Tamil poets interpreting their biographical sketches according to the contemporary sensibility. The new interest in *Cilappatikāram* has made Tamiḻ Oḷi compose a narrative poem with the story of *Cilappatikāram*, under the title *Vitiyō Viṇaiyō*. Ponnaracaṉ's *Pulavar Neñcam* deals with the life of an ancient Tamil poet named Peruñcittiraṉār deriving the materials from the *Caṅkam* poems. In this line comes R.Irākava Aiyaṅkār who has developed the story of the chieftain Pāri in an imaginative way with the help of some of the references made to this chieftain and by the conclusions of his own researches (*Pārikātai*).

Medieval themes

Medievalism is considered to be another salient feature of the Tamil literary works of the twentieth century. Discontented with the depiction of Kumpakaṇaṉ in *Kamparāmāyaṇam*, Cālai Iḷantiraiyaṉ has portrayed him as an embodiment of the principle of the ideal love of the Tamils in his narrative poem *Koṭṭiyum Āmpalum Neytalum Pōlavē* (1968). That Kumpakaṇaṉ fought and died only as an obligation to Irāvaṇaṉ (*cencōṟṟukkaṭaṉ*) is replaced by his brotherly affection as the vital cause of his partipation and heroic death in the battle.

S.D.S. Yōki has taken the episode of Akalikai from *Kampa-rāmāyaṇam* and portrayed her as a chaste woman, blameless both in body and mind. Kaviñar Kō's *Cōḻa Makākāviyum* deals with the medieval lore about the love story of Ampikāpati and Amarāvati. He has deviated from the medieval tradition and portrays Ampikāpati, the protagonist, as a materialist nurtured in the *lōkāyata* doctrines and brings in anti-brahminical revolt as the background of his narrative poem. Amarāvati is depicted as the daughter of Kulōttuṅkaṉ III and the consequences of this tragic love episode is made the cause of the shattering away of the Cōḻa dynasty. The same plot has fascinated Kumāracāmi who has written *Ampikāpati* but handled the plot in a different way.

Historical narratives

The Tamil poets and novelists are fascinated by the medieval and later historical plots which provide them with ample materials. Interpreting such

historical materials to modern situations can be described as another aspect of medievalism. The historical materials relating to the victory of the Cōḻa king Vīrarācēntiraṉ over Kaṭāram have been treated in the backdrop of an absorbing Malaysian landscape by Kāraikkiḻār in his short epic *Alaiyōcai* which imitates most of the elements of traditional epic poems. Kaṇṇatācaṉ's *Kiḻavaṉ Cētupati* and Pāratitācaṉ's *Tamiḻacciyiṉ Katti* revolve around some later historical facts. The plots, love episodes, the texture and background are imaginatively recreated so as to please the story-loving middle class audience who look for thrill and romance. Kaṇṇatācaṉ has introduced the love episode of Cinnammāḷ and brought it as the vital cause of her brave fight, which is his own innovation. These two revolutionary women characters, Cinnammāḷ and Cuppammā received much recognition and appreciation in the Tamil soil where feminism came to be hailed as a popular theme. Jekavīra Pāṇṭiyaṉār's *Vīrapāṇṭiyam* also deals with the later historical events about Kaṭṭappommaṉ's revolt against British imperialism.

Sanskrit origin

Materialism which is one aspect of renaissance forced the Tamil narrative poets to derive plots from Sanskrit and western sources and to handle them in such a manner as to suit the taste of their own social milieu. In this line came two short narratives with secular interests: *Maccakanti* by K.M. Sheriff (1963) and *Kōcalaikkumari* (1966) by Tamiḻ Oḷi. The purpose of the former is to please the audience by providing a story with a beautiful romantic background. It deals with the love affair of Bīsmar's father with an ordinary woman living on the banks of the Ganges, and the devoted life of Bīsmar, the protagonist, who has renounced his royal life to honour the word which he gave to a fisher man who is the father of his father's mistress. *Kōcalaikkumari* narrates the life story of Asvakōṣ, a famous Sanskrit dramatist of the fifth century A.D. and his love affair with a Greek lady. By creating Asvakōṣ as an ardent Buddhist hero, the poet gives free play to his revolt against brahmin domination. According to this narrative, Asvakōṣ learned the art of drama from the Greeks who had learned it from the Tamils.

Translations

Some of the western narrative poems were also translated into Tamil verse in the twentieth century. Among them, Cuttāṉanta Pārati's Tamil version of Dante's *Divine Comedy* and the Tamil version of Milton's *Paradise Lost* (Book I) by Veḷḷakkāl Cuppiramaṇiya Mutaliyār are worth-mentioning. Aḷa. Vaḷḷiyappa has translated *Aesop's Fables* into simple verse under the title *Icāp Kataippāṭalkaḷ*. Maykovsky's long narrative poem on Lenin was translated into Tamil by C. Rakunātaṉ under the title *Leṉiṉ Kavitāñcali*. Ha. Ki. Vālam's version of the Sanskrit *Mōkaṇa Līlai* celebrates in Tamil verse the miracles and the romantic escapades of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Religious narratives

Indian renaissance is often described as a revival of human values which the Buddha preached. The chief mission of the Buddha was to redeem the masses who were forced to undergo suffering and humiliation at the hands of the chosen people of Hindu gods. This ideal is embedded in almost all the stories of Buddhism. To give concrete form to the human values, the twentieth century poets of India revived a number of Buddhist stories both from the original texts and from *The Gospel of Buddha* by Dr. Paul Carus. Consequently, Buddhist stories have contributed much to the growth of the tradition of poetry of the common man in Indian literatures. The Malayalam poet Kumaran Asan who fought for the emancipation of the down-trodden *eḻava* community has handled Buddhist plots in his narrative poems *Chandāla Bhikshuki* and Karuṇā.

Kavimaṇi, who was deeply influenced by the ideals of the Buddha has translated Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia* into absorbing Tamil verse under the title *Āciya Jōti*. Even though it is a translated work, it has got a number of native qualities by which to call it an original creation. The birth of the Buddha, the episode of Devadatta, the miracles of the Buddha and so on are narrated in a very beautiful way. The story of Upagupta and Vāsavadatta has attracted Kampatācaṉ who has rendered it in the form of a narrative piece in Tamil verse. Following Kampatācaṉ and influenced by *The Gospal of Buddha* by Dr. Paul Carus, a Hindi story entitled *Milan Mukurt* (1943) and by the Malayalam poem of Kumaran Asan entitled *Karuṇā*, T.Perumāḷ, a disciple of Kavimaṇi, has rendered this story

in Tamil verse under the title *Vācavatattai*. Even though the action is not developed through dialogue, it has got a number of dramatic elements which led the author to call this poem *nāṭakaccanta kāppiyam*. Vācavatattai's meeting with Upagupta, the dream episode and the catastrophe are narrated in a very touching manner. Kaṇṇatācaṉ's *Māṙkaṇi* and *Āṭṭaṉatti* have also drawn on Buddhism even though their plots are not derived from Buddhist lore. In *Māṙkaṇi* the poet makes Ponnaraci join the Buddhist monastery whereas in *Āṭṭaṉatti* the disillusioned Maruti becomes a Buddhist nun. The hero of *Kōcalaikkumari* is also a Buddhist who revolts against the orthodox convictions of the brahmins.

The story of Mary Magdalena and her attachment to Jesus Christ has become a popular theme in modern Indian poems from the beginning of this century. Without any religious bias most of the narrative poets of major Indian languages have handled this theme. In 1921, a beautiful poem based on the Biblical account of the episode of Mary Magdalena was written by the Malayalam poet Vallathol, whose Malayalam version was translated into English by Erik de Mauny. Another Malayalam poet Changampuzha has written a narrative poem on Mary Magdalena of the *New Testament* under the title *Maktala Mōkiṉi* which was however not completed. It is obvious that Subramanya Bharati also was highly fascinated by this theme. Though he has not composed a long narrative poem like his Malayalam counterparts, he has glorified the affection that Mary Magdalena had for Christ in his poem entitled *Yēcukkiristu*. In this poem, he has interpreted Mary Magdalena as a symbol of love. Bharati's disciple S.D.S. Yōki has composed a beautiful poem on the above theme under the title *Mēri Maktalēṉā* which was published in 1945. How far he was influenced by the West in the choice of the subject is not known clearly. Yet the influence of the West in the romantic treatment of the subject is obvious from his work. To make it a fine narrative piece he has deviated from the Biblical source in many places and portrays her as attaining salvation through repentance.

Among the narrative poems that deal with Saivite themes, *Pāṇṭimātēvi* by Aru. Cōmacuntaraṉ is worth-mentioning. This poem with its traditional epic pattern narrates the religious conflicts between the Savities and the Jain zealots in the period of Ñāṉacampantar. Though the plot is taken from *Periyapurāṇam* the author deviates from the original in order to give it an epic structure. Consequently, apart from lengthening the story by the addition of sundry

episodes, he has created characters like Pārttipaṉ, Utayaṇaṉ, Pukaḻaṉ, etc. in his own way. The imprisonments of the Pāṇṭiya queen, the Saivite army liberating her, etc. are not seen in the original. In the portrayal of the religious discourse between the Savities and Jain people, the author has shown matured artistic skill.

Contemporary themes

Tamil narrative poems with contemporary themes and backgrounds can be divided under four heads, namely narratives with 1.Social theme, 2.Moral theme, 3.Political theme, and 4.Love theme. Most of the poems available to us under the last category deal with various aspects of the erotic sentiments and the domestic problems that arise from it. Kalaikkūttaṉ's *Pūṅkōtai*, Kāvirināṭaṉ's *Pūmaḻai*, Makākavi's *Caṭaṅku*, E.S. Muttucāmi's *Kātalkāviyam*, M. Aṇṇāmalai's *Tāmaraikkumari* and *Varṟiya Ciṟu Oṭai*, Ponnaṭiyān's *Ōr Itayattiṉ Ēkkam*, Mīrā's *Kaṉavukaḷ + Karpaṉaikaḷ = Kākitaṅkaḷ*, Aṟivumati's *Eṉ Priya Vacantamē* and *Vērkaḻaittēṭi*, Iṉpavāṇaṉ's *Putuvāḻvu* and many of Pāratitācaṉ's narratives can be included under this category. *Pōrkkaḻattil Pāratam* by Caitai Ōṭaiyāṉ, *Kāntiyukam* by S.D. Suntaram, *Aṇṇā Kāviyam* by Āṉantam, *Kalaiñar Kāppiyam* by Aṇṇātācaṉ and *Pāratacakti Makākāviyam* by Cuttāṉanta Pārati, etc. can be included under the class of political narratives. Pāratitācaṉ's *Kuṭumpa Viḷakku* blends moral, social and love themes in a very beautiful manner. *Avaḷum Avaṉum* by Nāmakkal Irāmaliṅkam Piḷḷai also lays much emphasis on moral problems. Kavimaṇi's *Marumakkaḷ Vaḻi Māṉmiyam*, most of the narratives of Pāratitācaṉ, Nā. Kāmarācaṉ's narrative poems, C.S. Cellappā's *Ni Iṉru Iruntāl*, Ciṟpi's *Carppa Yākam*, Celvakaṇapati's *Nḷḷaḷkaḷai Nōkkiya Pōrāṭṭaṅkaḷ*, Poṟkō's *Kōtaivaḻavaṉ*, etc. deal with social problems.

Structure

Since the thematic content and ideological background of each poem differ from that of the other, the structure also differs accordingly. Consequently, it is not possible to see that a common structure informs all the narrative poems. The narrative poets have made use of the patterns of existing literary genres such as epic fragment, ballad, novel, short story and biography. Yet, they are not rigid in using any particular form and hence only the elements of the above patterns are discernible in their works. Unlike their neo-classical predecessors, the

narrative poets of this century are aware of the changing nature of the reality and the organic conception of art. Consequently, their theory regarding the structure of verbal arts is organic and not mechanical. They are aware of the fact that literary form is not a vessel that will remain unchanged in shape no matter what it may be filled with. As such, the structure of the poems taken for study is not rigid but flexible and it changes according to the theme and manner of narration. In most of the poems the form and content grow organically like the leaves of a tree and hence it is very difficult to make a dichotomy of form and content. The poetic content decides the structure and the structure has no isolated existence apart from its content.

Epic pattern

Since modern narrative poetry is in essence a continuation of the epic poetry, it has assimilated most of the elements of epic poetry into its own. Apart from this, some poets have consciously adapted the design of epics to the stories, ideals and backgrounds on hand. They called such poems epics. Pulavar Kulantai in his *Irāvaṇakāviyam* has handled the epic structure since his purpose seems to be composing a lofty epic poem like *Irāmāyaṇam* having Rāvaṇa as its protagonist as against Rāma, the protagonist of *Irāmāyaṇam*. Muṭiyaracaṉ's *Pūṅkoṭi* imitates the epic design of *Maṇimēkalai*. He has used *akaval* metre and like Cāttaṉār he has divided his epic into 13 *kātais* (chapters). The religious background of *Maṇimēkalai* is replaced by a secular background and the religious fervour by linguistic sentiments. While *Maṇimēkalai's* mission is the propagation of the Buddhist ideals, the mission of Pūṅkoṭi is the spreading of Tamil language and culture. The supernatural elements of *Maṇimēkalai* are completed removed in this epic which consists of 5243 lines. Yet, when we look into the text closely, the interpretation of the traditional events looks far-fetched and the style seems monotonous. *Vīrapāṇṭiyam* by Jekavīra Pāṇṭiyaṉ, *Cōḷa Makākāviyam* by Kaviñar Kō, *Kōcalaikkumari* by Tamiḻ Oḷi, etc. try to imitate the epic form. Yet, in them more importance is given to the plot and artistic completeness than to the epic structure. *Alaiyōcai* gives the poetic materials in epic structure with invocation to Tamil, etc. *Pāṇṭimātēvi* also is modelled on epic pattern. Following *Cilappatikāram*, the author gives the name *kāṇṭam* to its four divisions and *kātai* to the chapters. Caitai Ōṭaiyāṉ's *Pōrkkaḷattil Pāratam* also imitates the epic conventions in a creative way and narrates the Indo-Pakistan war of 1966. He

calls his narrative poem Varalārrucciṟu *Kāviyam*. Though called epics, *Kalaiñar Kāppiyam* and *Aṇṇā Kāviyam* are modelled on biographies rather than on epic even though the authors have brought in a number of epic techniques.

Apart from adhering to epic design, some poets have handled the important elements of epic poetry as integral parts of their narrative poems. Thus, *Poṉṉaṭiyāṉ* has given in his love poem a catalogue of the names of various places from which the participants of the wedding ceremony came. Celvakaṇapati in his narrative poem brings in a catalogue of the names of various Tamil medicines. Kaṇṇatācaṉ in his *Āṭṭaṉatti* has named the chapters *paṭalam* following *Kamparāmāyaṇam*.

Calling the narrative poems epics has been a frequent practice among their creators. Consequently, the names such as *kāviyam*, *kaṇṭakāviyam*, *orupāttira viruppukkāviyam*, *vacaṉakāviyam*, *kuṟuṅkāppiyam*, *nāṭakaccanta kāppiyam*, etc. can be seen in the Tamil narrative poems of the twentieth century. Some poets have gone to the extent of calling even panegyric poems *kāppiyam*. Thus, Aru.Cōmacuntaraṉ has given the title *Aṭikaḷār Kāppiyam* to one of his panegyric poems on Kuṉṟakkuṭi Aṭikaḷ. From this we are able to know that the word *kāviyam* has become an omnibus term which includes lyric as well as narrative poetry in the twentieth century Tamil literature. Apart from the name *kāviyam*, some have used *kavitaik kuṟuṅkatai* and *kuṟuṅkataikkavitai* to indicate narrative poems.

Epic fragments have been called *kaṇṭakāviyam* by the critics of Hindi literature. This has developed into a powerful literary kind throughout the world especially from the beginning of the nineteenth century. In Indian literatures this genre was greatly popularized by the Romantic poets who have handled it with allegorical overtones. They generally derive a particular episode or an event from an epic or balld, give it colour and light and present it with a new life and artistic form. Kumaran Asan's *Chintavistayaya Sita* and Pārati's *Pāñcāli Capatam*. etc. are some of the earlier experiments made in the twentieth century in South Indian literatures. Following Pārati's example, S.D.S. Yōki has made use of the episode of Akalikai and developed it as a separate poem. Cālai Iḷantiraiyaṉ's *Cilampiṉ Ciṟunakai* and *Koṭṭiyum Āmpalum Neytalum Pōlavē*, etc. can be taken as epic fragments. While the former deals at length with the episode of the goldsmith in

Cilappatikāram, the latter deals with the episode of Kumpakaṇaṉ in *Kamparāmāyaṇam*. Tamiḻ Oḷi's *Vitiyō Viṇaiyō* is an epic fragment developed from the *kāṉalvari* of *Cilappatikāram*.

Folk tradition

Some of the narrative poems owe their origin either to ballad or to other folk songs. Like other poetical compositions of this century, narrative poetry has also inherited most of the aspects of the folk songs. It has been a common practice through the ages to adapt the folk forms, metres and style whenever the poet wants to communicate with the common man through his compositions. To the poets of this century, poetry is a means of communication and hence the revival of folk elements has become an inevitable need of the day. Like the medieval devotional poets, the twentieth century narrative poets also have adopted the unconventionality, flexible metres and the simple and sensuous language of the folk poetry in their narrative poems. Elements of folk stories also have entered into the compositions of the Tamil narrative poets. Bharati's *Kuyil Pāṭṭu*, Curatā's *Vaṉṉiyaviraṉ* and Muṭiyaracaṉ's *Cutamati* bear witness to this. Most of the narrative poems of Pāratitācaṉ, have assimilated the elements of folk poems. In *Tamiḻacciyiṉ Katti*, he has introduced various folk metres. The impact of folk songs can be seen in Kaṇṇatācaṉ's *Māṅkaṉi* also. N. Piccamūrtti has adopted the folk stories and practices connected with Kāmaṉ festival and interpreted them in a philosophical way to contrast the sexual instinct of the primitive society with the so-called civilized and the sophisticated modern society.

Dramatic form

Narrative poems can attain dramatic grandeur if the action is developed through dialogue. Mīra's *Kaṉavuka!* + *Karpaṉaika!* = *Kākitaṅka!* is developed like a dramatic monologue in which the hero, who is the narrator, starts with narrating his previous longings and frustrations through flashback technique. T. Perumāḷ's *Vācavatattai* is characterized by dramatic structure. Dramatic elements are powerfully handled in *Tamiḻacciyiṉ Katti* and *Niḻalkaḷai Nōkkiya Pōrāṭṭaṅka!*. Even though the action is not developed through dialogue, Pāratitācaṉ has developed the story of *Kaṭaṟmēṟkumiḻika!* in a dramatic pattern. He has divided

this poem into 38 scenes and in each scene he has noted the time, place and characters.

Fictional narratives

Since novel has been the popular genre of the twentieth century, most of the narrative poets have modelled their poems on novels. Among them *Avaḷum Avaṉum* by Nāmakkal Irāmaliṅkam Piḷḷai and *Kuṭumpa Viḷakku* by Pāratitācaṉ are worth-mentioning. Both the poems read like novels in verse. Pāratitācaṉ's *Etirpārāta Muttam* has the panorama of a prose fiction. Like most of the earlier novels, the above poem deals with the domestic life of a middle class family.

As already observed, the length of Tamil narrative poems was further shortened by the poets of the Free Verse movement who have modelled their poems mainly on short stories. They have taken their characters from the middle class as well as from the proletariat. Nā. Kāmarācan's *Vayalveḻippāṭṭu, Kiṟukkacciyiṉ Viṟakukaḷ* and *Makākāviyam* can be included under this category. His *Ūmaiccataṅkai* follows the narrative pattern of a beautiful short story. Among the narratives that are designed in the pattern of short stories, Cirpi's *Cikaraṅkaḷ Poṭiyākum* can be deemed as a masterpiece impressing us with absolutely clear outline, well proportioned and full enough for the purpose, yet without the slightest suggestion of crowding.

Narration and characterization

When we analyse the narrative poems of Tamil from the point of view of the expression of emotion by the poet, they appear to be representational arts rather than expressive poems. The narrator of the story also has to be taken as a character and not as the poet. If the narrator is identified with a particular author, then the whole poem ceases to be objective and becomes a lyrical one. Being objective poems, they are composed in the manner in which the *akam* poems are composed and hence it is difficult to see the personality of the poet as it is seen in subjective poems.

In all the narrative poems in Tamil, the poet partly speaks in his own, as narrator, and partly makes his characters speak in direct discourse, which has

been described as mixed narration. Almost all the narrative poets have designed their poems in the above pattern. This gives a dramatic grandeur to their poems. The Tamil narrative poets of the twentieth century do hardly have the empathy and the profound negative capability of the *Caṅkam* poets and the epic poets like Iḷaṅkō and Kampaṉ. It is because most of the Tamil narrative poets are at their best in subjective poems and when they turn to narrative poems they could not achieve full objectivity. Hence, their aspirations and ideals are projected on their characters which cause the dwindling of their characters into certain stereo-typed portrayals. The subjective feelings of the poets, their aspiration and ideals are projected very powerfully in their characters and hence they could not but reflect their egotistic temper and seem to be case in the mould of their makers. Consequently, the characters of the Romantic poets are revolutionary types; those of the poets of the psychological school are by and large pessimistic and that of the socialist realists are the fighters against the ruling class. Yet, some of the characters linger long in our memory and they seem more appealing than the flesh-and-blood men.

Nature and function

From the scattered references to the art of composition found in these poems, we are able to know something about the theory of narrative poetry as conceived by the Tamil narrative poets. Yet, being nurtured in multifarious ideological backgrounds, each poet differs from the other in various respects. Being a Romantic, Pāratitācaṉ speaks about his conception of the genesis of poetry in *Kuṭumpa Viḷakku*:

Uḷḷattil kavitai vaittē
Uyiriṉāl eḻuppiṉā!
(The poetry in her heart she tuned by her soul)

It is significant to note that all the Tamil Romantics like their western and eastern counterparts, have suggested mind as the origin of poetry and the seat of poetic genius. With a classical bent of mind Kaviñar Kō in his *Cōḻa Makākāviyam* observes that true poetry is shaped by the harmonious intermingling of profound scholarship and deep thinking. Mīrā compares the birth of poetry to the birth of a child.

Regarding form, almost all the Tamil narrative poems come in conformity with the organic conception of poetic form. This has been made telling by Cuttāṉanta Pārati who says that "Poetry sprouts from the inner soul. It must come organically from the mind like flowers and fruits of a tree". Like the western Romantic poets who generally hail the poet as superior to Godhead, Tamiḻ Oḷi in *Kōcalaikkumari* says

> "*Kaṭavuḷiṉum periyavaṉē*
> *Kaviñaṉ...*"
> (The poet is he who is superior to God)

Celvakaṇapati in his poem has compared the making of a poem to the torrential rain and the imaginative flight of the poet's mind to the flight of free birds, which can be considered the best and proper Romantic images. I.Cu. Muttucāmi, in a typical Romantic way speaks of poetry as a product of inspiration and declares that he had not spent any time giving artistic shape to his poem through making and remaking. Nurtured in the socialist doctrine, Nā. Kāmarācaṉ declares in his *Makākāviyam* that there are poets who sing of their own dejections and frustration in Tamiḻnāṭu; but what the social realism needs is artists who paint the handicapped, who glorify the dumb and who sing of the tears of the blind. He openly calls himself the poet of the poor. His statement can be taken as an authentic voice of an ideal poet with a progressive mind.

Theories governing the nature and purpose of poetry tend to fall into one or the other of two wide classes: the hedonistic and the didactic. The purpose of most of the Tamil narrative poems is neither completely hedonistic nor didactic but a curious blending of the two. Hence they purport to teach as well as please the readers. In most cases, the purpose seems to be the presentation of some ideal characters whose personalities are a harmonious admixture and a happy commingling of the domestic, erotic, humane and moral ideals of the educated middle class. Almost all the narrative poets have realized the social function of poetry and the social role of the poet. With a firm conviction in the edifying nature of poetry Nāmakkal V. Irāmaliṅkam Piḷḷai in his poem *Avaṭum Avaṇum* discusses at length the purpose of poetry:

> Poetry must help root out lethargy, kindle the intellect, make the mind firm, arouse the pathetic and joyful emotions, give lessons about god and evil, bring the non-existing things before our minds as real things and teach the essentials for the betterment of the human lot. It must be made of sweet words and must stay in the mind for ever. Poetry springs from imagination and its aim should be to provide instruction to humanity. If there is no imagination but only technical devices, then that poetry may look like mere mathematics.

Irāmaliṅkam Piḷḷai here lays equal emphasis on imaginative nature, the edifying function and the pleasing character of poetry.

In most cases the moral note presents itself in Tamil narrative poems through the presentation of ideal characters and events. Such poems strengthen and nourish the faculty of imagination which is the real seat of moral nature in man, replenishing it with pictures of ever new delight. The didactic purpose embodied in Tamil narrative poems can be viewed under four heads viz. political, religious, moral and cultural. Most of the poems of Pāratitācaṉ are composed with a view to exemplifying his own social and political ideals. *Kuṟiñcittiṭṭu, Tamiḻacciyiṉ Katti, Kaṭaṟmēṟkumiḻkaḷ, Akattiyaṉ Viṭṭa Putukkaraṭi*, etc. are some of the examples of his characteristic mode of didacticism. He describes the contemporary society bringing in a romantic background in *Kuṟiñcittiṭṭu*. The readers are brought to the realities of the present day in the description of Madras city and the Brahmins living there who are lured to a remote past. Pāratitācan's *Kātalā Kaṭamaiyā* and Curatā's *Vaṉṉiya Vīraṉ* aim at inculcating moral lessons in the readers. In most of the narrative poems of this century, glorification of Tamil language and linguistic sentiments could be seen along with the portrayal of society and things related to it dealt within a broader perspective.

With the exception of Kaṇṇatācaṉ almost all the narrative poets have handled the old plots by which to communicate their own ideals. In the preface of *Itayam Icaikkiṟatu*, Poṉṉaṭiyāṉ says that he has written this poem to bring home his desire that the future generation must encourage intercaste marriage. In the same poem, he exhorts the Tamils to realize that they are the children of one mother and must join with the world in the onward march to a bright future.

Pāratitācaṉ's *Iruṇṭa Vīṭu* as attested by the author himself was composed with the purpose of emphasizing the need for education. Cālai Iḷantiraiyaṉ in his preface to his poem on Kumpakaṛṇaṉ says that the purpose of his composition is to emphasize the importance of love to mankind. Murukaiyaṉ in his long poem entitled *Neṭumpakal* says that the object of his poetry is to reveal the secrets and the mysteries of the world to man. Pāratitācaṉ's *Kuṭumpa Viḷakku* is interspersed with domestic, moral and political ideals. The duty of the Tamils to the betterment of their language, culture and the mother land, the importance of education for a happy domestic life, the need for family planning and so on are strongly emphasized throughout this poem. Nā. Kāmarācaṉ in his introduction to *Makākāviyam* declares that his aim is to blend aesthetic beauty with lofty social ideals. The narrative poems on Aṇṇātturai and Karuṇāniti and Kaṇṇatācaṉ's *Kaḷaka Makākāviyam* deal with political matters with an underlying moral tone. From this we are able to see that almost all the narrative poems of modern Tamil are designed with the lofty purpose of instructing their readers and that their creators are fully aware of their obligations to the society, to their fellow beings.

Some of the narrative poems are marked by an escapist tendency though there manifests in them a coalescence of instruction and pleasing. Most of the narrative poems of Kaṇṇatācaṉ can be grouped under this category. Though he has suggested some extra-literary motive behind the composition of *Kiḻavaṉ Cētupati* and *Āṭṭaṉatti*, no specific ideological purpose underlies the composition of *Malarkaḷ* and *Māṙkāni*. In these poems, he gives much importance to story, dramatic events, picturesque passages, lovely images, soul-stirring rhythm and elegant language. Curatā's *Paṭṭattaraci* also attracts the aesthetic sensibilities of the readers by providing picturesque scenes, and fulfils its hedonistic purpose in a powerful way. These poems can be described as 'pure' poems.

Techniques

Poetic techniques of a literary composition can be either formal or thematic. While formal techniques facilitate the creation of a well organized artistic texture, the thematic techniques help him to portray the theme or the poetic content investing it with a particular conceptual deviance. The Tamil narrative poets have experimented with a number of techniques both at the structural and thematic levels with a view to achieving aesthetic wholesomeness.

Satire has been used as a powerful device to educate and please the readers. By creating odd situations and characters the poet provokes his readers to boisterous laughter at the follies and foibles of his characters. Though satire has not been developed as a full literary mode, its elements can be seen in Bharati's *Pāñcāli Capatam*, Pāratitācaṉ's *Cañcīvi Parvatattiṉ Cāral*, Makākavi's *Kantappa Catakam* and N.Piccamūrtti's *Kātaliṉ Iravu*. All such poems deal with problems relating to moral, domestic, religious and political matters. Ciṟpi's *Cākkaṭaikaṭumtāṉ Iṉṉum Varṟiṭavillai* is a beautiful satire modelled on the structure of a short story. By bringing in simultaneously the bright and the seamy sides of Calcutta, the poet, with a genuine sympathy for the destitutes and the poor, satirizes the modern social setup and the snobbish, unfeeling city dwellers who never even respond to the tolling of a death knell.

Satire was cultivated as a separate literary kind in *Marumakkaḷ Vaḻi Māṉmiyam* which was written with the appearent aim of reforming a particular community. According to the convention of *marumakkaḷ vaḻi*, the traditional property of a man should go to the children of his sisters even though they could not ask for partition of the property till the death of its owner. Generally a *kāraṇavaṉ* (the head of a family) was tormented both by his own children and by the children of his sisters. Owing to lack of interest, private property was deteriorating and the families were afflicted by poverty. Owing to the practice of polygamy, the condition of womanhood was much worse in the veḷḷāḷa community of Nāñcilnāṭu. In order to redeem the people of this community from the cruel hands of this convention and to highlight the untold torture the veḷḷāḷa community was experiencing in their daily life, Kavimaṇi has composed this beautiful satire. In this, as pointed out by S. Vaiyāpuri Piḷḷai, Kavimaṇi has unleashed his Juvenalian satirical fury on the practices and conventions of this community. The whole story is narrated by the *kāraṇavaṉ's* fifth wife who had lost her husband in her salad days when she was 'cold in blood and green in judgment'. This powerful satirical piece, which was composed in 1918, brought out a good response from the people of that community, as a result of which a Bill was passed in 1926 in the Assembly to abolish the above practice. After Kavimaṇi's work the only satire available to us in the narrative pattern is Pāratitācaṉ's *Iruṇṭa Vitu* which emphasizes the need for education for a good and peaceful family life.

Stream-of-consciousness technique has been used to represent the random and apparently illogical flow of impressions passing through the minds of the characters or the narrator. This helps to bring inner thoughts and feelings to the foreground of attention. This technique has been used in C. Maṇi's *Narakam*, C.S. Cellappā's *Nī Inru Iruntāl* and Murukaiyaṉ's *Neṭumpakal*. In all these poems a number of abstract and incongruous images join together forming wonderful surrealist pictures. In addition to these, the above poets have followed the technique of quoting passages from the classical and modern works to portray the spiritual degradation or progress of the modern society. C.S. Cellappā says that he has handled this technique after the manner of T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland*. The same technique has been used by C. Maṇi in *Narakam* to show the gap between the spiritual level at which man should live and the actual level in which he lives. Handling allegorical and symbolic modes has become a frequent practice with the Romantic poets of the eastern and western languages. Bharati has experimented with symbolic representations in *Akkiṉikkuñcu* and *Kuyil Pāṭṭu*. In the latter poem he is using kuyil as a symbol of beauty. Beauty is the purest incarnation of the Absolute, easily captivating our hearts and transporting us to divine heights. As far as the Tamil narrative poems are concerned, *Tūciyiṉ Tāṇṭavam* (1977) by Kṛṣṇa Sriṉivās can be considered an artistically realized symbolic narrative poem. This poem was written first in English and was translated into nearly fifty languages of the world. (Kṛṣṇa Sriṉivās, 1977:3). In this poem dust is shown as a symbol of the destructive side of scientific advancements. The whole poem contrasts the spiritual life of ancient India with the modern materialist way of life and focuses on India's glory amidst the nations which have attained marvelous developments in the sphere of science. The author expresses his hope that India will control the dance of the dust and provide a new tranquility to the whole world.

In many narratives, contrast and parallelism serve as an effective technique for a powerful portrayal of characters and events. They are handled in an artistic way in Kāvirināṭaṉ's *Pūmaḷai* which creates parallel characters such as Akilā and Añcalai; Celvaṉ and Cuntaram, the parents of Cuntaram and the rich land owner and contrasts them. In Niḷaḷkalai *Nōkkiya Pōrāṭṭaṅkaḷ* Celvakanapati has portrayed the mob psychology of the contemporary society in the background of a still remote past. In the typical Eliotian manner he concludes his poem with

three beautiful images in which the peasants sow the seeds on rocks, the painter paints on water, and the people struggle with shadows, suggesting in an allegorical way the utterly fruitless endeavors of the multitude. Such a technique was handled by M. Annamalai in his narrative poem *Varriya Ciṟuōṭai* in which flower, water and wind are used as symbols for his characters. In handling images and rhetorical devices the narrative poets of the twentieth century have surpassed their predecessors in various respects. Most of the similes used by Pāratitācaṉ in his *Kuṭumpa Viḷakku* and *Iruṇṭa Vīṭu* are highly satirical and provoke the readers to boisterous laughter. He has a painter's eye for drawing fine natural tapestries with the help of arresting and sensuous words. Mīrā and Kāmarācaṉ's frequent comparison of women with paddy field, their forehead with scythe, etc. have cultural and social undertones. Ciṟpi has used the image of broken glasses for the well water. To depict the raping scene of his heroine, he uses the image of a tiger devouring a deer. Nā. Kāmarācaṉ introduces another technique in his *Makākāviyam*: he intervenes in the beginning of each chapter and describes at length the mood in which he was when a particular chapter was being written. S.S.Pārati differs from all the narrative poets of the twentieth century in using the ancient pattern for a story placed in a nineteenth century background. Like the ancient commentators, he explains the theme and the poetic situations, and writes a colophon that the poem was addressed to a lady companion by the heroine. It blends the *akam* techniques with epic structure and tries to produce an art preserving old conventions.

As regards metre, Tamil narrative poems can be included under two broad heads, namely poems composed in traditional metres and those in free verse. Among the traditional metres *akaval*, *veṇpā* (*pakṟoṭaiveṇpā*, *kaliveṇpā*), varieties of *viruttam* such as *aṟucīr viruttam*, *eṇcīr viruttam* and folk metres such as *teṉpāṅku*, *kiḻikkaṇṇi*, etc. are frequently used.

Style

Poetry is much more compressed and intense than prose, and so it demands a highly imaginative use of language if the feelings aroused in the reader are to go with the original emotions by which the given poem was composed. Tamil narrative poets have aimed in general at an achieved rhetorical strength by handling figures of speech both in the ornamental and functional

ways. What earlier poets did by the more analytical process of simile and metaphor, most modern poets have done by what looks like an illogical process but is really a correct way of saying what strikes them (C.M. Bowra, 1967: 7). Since the aim and ideological background of each poet (at least each school) differ from that of the other, it is difficult to generalize the nature of their style. Some poets like S.S. Pārati have tried to recapture the classical style. These poets are suspected either of distorting their experiences through an inappropriate idiom or of being mere imitators of great masters. On the other hand, there are some modern poets who have used the language of common man in a state of vivid sensation.

Generally speaking, the modern narrative poets have expanded the scope of poetical composition by introducing variety of themes and techniques. By insisting on organic form they have aimed at harmony between their theme and treatment. Some poems are an attempt to reveal the truth of life as the poet sees it. Some others are concerned with emotions and motives that the poet and every man have in common. As a part of the superstructure of society, the Tamil narrative poem, like other poetical compositions, is changing and growing according to the nature of social reality. Following is a listing of the select narrative poems in Tamil:

Title	**Author**	**Year**
Pāñcali Capatam	Bharati	1912
Marumakkaḷ Vaḻi Māṉmiyam	Tēcika Vināyakam Piḷḷai	1918
Cañcīvi Parvatattiṉ Cāral	Pāratitācaṉ	1930
Puraṭcikkavi	Pāratitācaṉ	1937
Etirpārāta Muttam	Pāratitācaṉ	1938
Āciya Jōti	Tēcika Vināyakam Piḷḷai	1941
Iruṇṭa Vīṭu	Pāratitācaṉ	1944
Kātal Niṉaivu	Pāratitācaṉ	1944
Kātal Piṟanta Katai	Tēcika Vināyakam Piḷḷai	1947
Maṅkalakkuṟicci Poṅkal Nikaḻcci	S.S. Pārati	1947
Mullaikkāṭu	Pāratitācaṉ	1948

Kātalā Kaṭamaiyā	Pāratitācaṉ	1948
Tāmaraikkumari	M. Aṇṇāmalai	1948
Varriya Ciṟu Ōṭai	M. Aṇṇāmalai	1948
Tamiḻacciyiṉ Katti	Pāratitācaṉ	1949
Māṅkani	Kaṇṇatācaṉ	1954
Kaṭaṟmēṟ Kumiḻikaḷ	Pāratitācaṉ	1955
Akattiyaṉ Viṭṭa Putukkaraṭi	Pāratitācaṉ	1955
Amiḻtu Etu	Pāratitācaṉ	1955
Kuṟiñcittiṭṭu	Pāratitācaṉ	1959
Kuṭumpa Viḷakku	Pāratitācaṉ	1960
Kaṇṇaki Puraṭcikkāppiyam	Pāratitācaṉ	1962
Maṇimēkalai Veṇpā	Pāratitācaṉ	1962
Avaḷum Avaṉum	Nāmakkal Vē. Irāmaliṅkam Piḷḷai	1964
Kōcalaikkumari	Tamiḻ Oḷi	1966
Pūkkāṭu	Ānantaṉ	1966
Vācavatattai	T. Perumāḷ	1969
Ōr Itayattiṉ Ēkkam	Ponnaṭiyāṉ	1969
Kaṭai Tiṟappu	Murukacuntaram	1969
Pōrkkaḷattil Pāratam	Caitai Ōṭaiyāṉ	1969
Mōkaṉa Līlai	Ha. Ki. Vālam	1969
Pūṅkoṭi	Muṭiyaracaṉ	1969
Kuyiliṉ Curuti	N. Piccamūrtti	1970
Karuppu Malarkaḷ	Nā. Kāmarācaṉ	1971
Kāntiyukam	S.D. Cuntaram	1971
Kalaiñar Kāppiyam	Aṇṇātācaṉ	1971
Kātal Kāviyam	I.Cu. Muttucāmi	1971
Kāviri	Centamiḻkkiḻāṉ	1973
Kaṉavukaḷ+Karpaṉaikaḷ=Kākitaṅkaḷ	Mīrā	1974
Nī Iṉṟu Iruntāl	C.S. Cellappā	1974
Aṇṇā Kāviyam	Ānantam	1974
Pāṇṭimātēvi	Aru. Cōmacuntaram	1974
Iraṇṭu Kāviyaṅkaḷ	Makākavi	1974
Alaiyōcai	Kāraikkiḻār	1975
Cōḻa Makākāviyam	Kaviñar Kō	1975
Carppa Yākam	Ciṟpi	1976

Pūṅkōtai	Kalaikkūttaṉ	1976
Pūmaḷai	Kāvirināṭaṉ	1976
Tājmakālum Roṭṭittuṇṭum	Nā. Kāmarācaṉ	1977
Putu Vāḻvu	Iṉpavāṇaṉ	1977
Pulavar Neñcam	Ponnaracaṉ	1977
Niḻalkalai Nōkkiya Pōrāṭṭaṅkaḷ	Celvakaṇapati	1978
Makākāviyam	Nā. Kāmarācaṉ	1978
Kōtai Vaḷavaṉ	Poṟkō	1978
Ñāpaka Vīṭiyilē	Aṟivumati	1978
Vērkaḷaittēṭi	Aṟivumati	1978

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16. SOCIALIST REALISM AND MODERN TAMIL POETRY

Impact of the October revolution

One of the most important literary trends that exerted an indelible influence on modern Tamil writings is the one that originated in Russia during the Socialist Revolution. During the freedom struggle, Indian writers and freedom fighters looked on Marxist epistemology as a potential aid in their fight against political and social discriminations. Tamil poets also began to glorify Marx, Lenin and the Russian revolution which put an end to the tyrannical rule of the Tzarist government. The first Tamil poet who sang in full-throated ease on the glorious Russian revolution and gave glowing tributes to the socialist ideals is the first Romantic poet Bharati. His poem *Putiya Ruṣiyā* glorifies the great October Revolution which was spearheaded by Lenin.

Though Bharati disapproves of the violent means that characterized the Russian revolution, he wished for such a social change in his own country also. He identifies *Kaliyukam* with his contemporary social milieu that had been emerging as a result of the advent of the Europeans, and *Kirutayukam* with the socialist pattern of life. His poem *Pārata Camutāyam Vāḻkavē* is filled with the ideologies similar to those that formed the background of the October Revolution.

His poem *Putiya Ruṣiyā* which was inspired by the October Revolution is a beautiful piece among his creations. The lovely and apt images, the soul-stirring melody, the intensity of feeling, the revolutionary ardour and above all the profundity of thought – all these factors make the poem a wonderful piece of the twentieth century Tamil literature. As he has no materialistic outlook on society and its development, he hails the mercy of his Mother Goddess Kāḷi as the main cause behind this great Revolution.

Putiya Ruṣiyā sounds like a war poem, which narrates the horrible scenes and artrocities of war where the evil forces are defeated and smashed to the ground. He identifies the Tzar with the traditional antagonist of Indian myths, Iraṇiyaṉ, and calls him a great sinner. In his reign evils grew like snakes of Hell. The poet depicts through apt images the untold sufferings the righteous faced

during the reign of the Tzar. The fall of the Tzar is compared to the fall of the Himalayas. His supporters are associated with the followers of that *asura* hero Iraṇiyaṉ and they fell like woods at the ferocious onset of tempest.

In *Pārata Camutāyam Vāḻkavē*, Bharati dreams of a socialist order and says that if a man happens to starve in this world, we must be prepared to destroy the entire universe. In his prose works also we see his genuine interest in socialist society and Soviet Russia.

Such an enthusiasm in bringing about a social change in India like that of the Soviet Russia is seen in the poetical compositions of other Tamil Romantic poets such as Pāratitācaṉ and Kavimaṇi Tēcika Vināyakam Piḷḷai also. A still more clear vision of Marxist epistemology and a deeper perception of the economic problems of society are discernible in the literary works of the later writers. After Bharati several books in Tamil on Soviet literature, Marxian thoughts, life sketches of leaders like Lenin, etc. came to Tamil land. Bharati's contemporary Tiru.Vi. Kaliyāṇacuntaram, a famous orator, journalist and a prose writer of Tamil also was highly influenced by Marxism. His poem *Poruḷum Aruḷum allatu Mārksiyamum Kāntiyamum* introduces Marxist epistemology in a powerful way through Tamil verse and differentiates the materialistic outlook of Marx from the idealistic outlook of Gandhi.

Although Marx and Lenin were known to the Tamil land before independence, it was really after 1947 that their influence was more marked and wide-spread. As far as Tamil literature is concerned, the first and prominent poet who came directly under the influence of Marxist thought is Paṭṭukkōṭṭai Kaliyāṇacuntaram (1930-1959). He hailed from the working class and became a great proletarian poet. Nurtured in the folk literary traditions of Tamiḻnāṭu, he has composed luminous lyrics glorifying the proletariat and emphasizing the importance of a thorough change in the social setup. He was highly influenced by the ideological background of the October Revolution and his poems are characterized by progressive, revolutionary thoughts. He has composed more than 200 poems.

Modern Tamil poetry influenced by Socialist Realism began to portray common man as the chief protagonist. Modern Tamil poets influenced by this

trend steer clear of obscurity and complex images unlike the poets of the surrealist group. They try to portray the external reality or what is called humanized reality. Socialist realism may be said to have come to India along with the revolutionary philosophy of Marxism, but in the early years of our freedom movement, social realism was also a weapon for the defense, and the propagation of the nationalist aspirations. Tagore and Premchand encouraged the Progressive Writer's movement which concretized the need for Indian writers adopting the concept and methodology of social realism. Socialist realism which gained initial momentum during the thirties reacted with particular moral vigour and indignation to the great famine of Bengal. Since then, this trend has become one of the deeply rooted literary conventions in India and some of the significant writings in several Indian languages are being informed by this.

The Progressive Writer's Association of India was formed in 1936. From thenceforth, historical materialism and socialist realism were employed to interpret Indian literature. The critics and creative writers influenced by this trend added the following dimensions to Indian literature and literary criticism.

1. Reevaluation of classical literary theories in the light of new socio-economic and historical researches,
2. Judging the author's life and his work as mutually and dialectically influencing,
3. Studying the process of literary creation: the motivation behind a particular image pattern in poetry, the architectonics of a novel or the development of climax in a play.
4. Adapting the language used by the writer as the product of a class situation its proper utilization in achieving the desired effect and goal, and
5. Critically examining its influence on and its utility to the masses.

Literary criticism based on Marxist thought is also on the increase in Tamiḻnāṭu. Journals like *Tāmarai, Ārāycci,* etc favour Marxist criticism. *Vayal* and *Maṉitaṉ* are some of the other important periodical of the above kind. Marxist critics analyse a given literary work by its class content and class motivation. Any writing that fails to suit the class war formula is rejected as reactionary, escapist and anti-social writing. The leading Marxist critics in Tamil

literature are Jīvāṉantam, T.M.C. Rakunātaṉ, N. Vāṉamāmalai, K.Civattampi and K. Kailācapati. Among them K. Kailācapati is very prominent. A number of articles written by him were published in book forms and they enthused other critics also to interpret Tamil literature in the Marxian perspective. N. Vāṉamāmalai has analysed the folk literature of the Tamils in the same perspective and his books and articles on Tamil folk literature are a significant contribution to this line.

The new poets in Tamil influenced by Marxian thoughts are described as progressive by N. Vāṉamāmalai. He hails Mira's *Kaṉavuka!* + *Karpaṉaika!* = *Kākitaṅka!* as a masterpiece among the progressive works. Among this group of poets, the name of Parināmaṉ, a communist poet, is worth-mentioning. His attack is mainly on the capitalist society which has transformed all social bonds into materialistic relations. T.K. Civacaṅkaraṉ wrote poems under the influence of Marxist ideals, which appeared in the journal *Kirāma Ūḻiyaṉ* in May 1947. Nā. Kāmarācaṉ and Iṉkulāp are the other leading Tamil poets of this class.

Progressive poems influenced by socialist realism were fostered by the journal *Tāmarai* then edited by the communist leader P. Jīvāṉantam. This journal continuing the tradition encourages criticism of Tamil poems in Marxian perspective. The *Vāṉampāṭi* group of poets were also influenced by socialist realism. Poets belonging to this group such as Akkiṉi Puttiraṉ and Kōvēntaṉ have translated sundery western poems marked by realistic content. Many adaptations of Russian poems appeared in *Tāmarai*. The *Vāṉampāṭi* group in its poetic manifesto has asserted that their approach to literature and literary composition is completely sociological. They have introduced Soviet literature into Tamil with the firm conviction that the introduction of foreign literature will develop our literary taste. Puviyaracu, Kaṅkaikoṇṭāṉ, Ciṟpi,Tamiḻnāṭaṉ, Ñāṉi, Pa. Jeyappirakācam, Pirapañcaṉ, Pālā and Kō. Rājārām are some of the important poets of this group.

Socialist realism

Socialist realism is a very recent phenomenon in art and it has just half a century history. But it has made a deep impact on the progressive section of thinkers throughout the world influencing not only creative writers who are

committed to Marxian ideology but the writers of progressive democratic trend as well.

As the name implies, socialist realism is closely connected with realism in general. Realism in art is closely connected with society. The primary aim of a realist is not merely a faithfully portrayal of human relations but also comprehension of the essence of the problems that arise in the social life of man. It is not a mere photographic copy of human society. It is something more than that. Cognition of human environment is as old as the appearance of the first man on the earth. However the contradictions which arose after the formation of class-society made the artists think deeply about the social problems. Of all the socio-economic structures, bourgeois society brought the contradictions to the forefront more glaringly. The most violent eruption of class contradictions at the dawn of bourgeois society cleared the way for the emergence of realism as a method in art. Great realists like Dickens, George Eliot, and so on depicted the destructive nature of capitalism and the struggle among the different classes of their contemporary societies. This realism developed side by side with the historical development of the society and the writers found the social situation highly oppressive for the existence of the individuals. The individuals felt the urge either to escape from the nauseating social relations or to indict them. This took the form of critical realism in the international literary scene. Merciless criticism of the bourgeois evils came into prominence in the works of writers like Balzac, Tolstoy and Turgenev.

The present century has witnessed the growth of proletarian upsurge, and Russia saw the victory of the working class in founding a new government based on Marxian ideology. The establishment of working class rule ushered in the era of socialism in the international scene. Simultaneously, a fresh thinking in the cultural field originated. It is now generally called socialist realism, which briefly speaking, reflects the experiences of the socialist society.

This new realism is not a sudden development. It has a close affinity with realism, and actually the progressive aspects of realism and critical realism have been absorded into the mainstream of this new artistic methodology. A socialist realist, like a realist, tries to take cognizance of the society around him, but in doing so, he looks at the society from the viewpoint of labour, the greatest

discovery of human society. Labour is the basis of the new culture and socialist realism has acquired certain new traits which are clearly defined in *A Dictionary of Philosophy:* "The chief ideological and aesthetic principles of socialist realism are as follows: devotion to communist ideology, service to people and partisanship, close bonds with the working people's struggle, socialist humanism and internationalism, historical optimism, reflection of formalism and subjectivism and of naturalist primitiveness". These basic tenets of socialist realism have been formulated, bearing in mind the experiences of different nations which have taken to the path of socialism. The literatures of all these countries reflect the basic features of socialist realism outlined above. It combines in general the characteristic traits of realism with the construction of socialism or the tendency towards the formation of the socialistic society. This is the result of the development of the international working class movement and that of the communist ideology, especially, Marxism.

The growth of proletarian consciousness in the West has given rise to working class literature in different countries during the latter half of the nineteenth century. This has made it possible for writers like Maxim Gorky to portray fully a worker-hero in his novel *The Mother*. When Gorky wrote this novel, Russia was in turmoil. A new society was taking shape under the guidance of Lenin. The October Revolution changed the entire face of the most backward nation. After 1917 a new life began and the people took up the task of building a socialist state. The literature of Soviet Russia reflected different revolutionary trends. For about ten long years a keen ideological struggle went on in the country towards defining the artistic method to be used in the new literature. After much discussion and argument around the year 1932, the term socialist realism was introduced and accepted in the Writer's Conference of the Soviet Union. Even though Maxim Gorky was usually considered to be the founder of this new school of art, different writers took active part in formulating and practising this theory. Gradually other European socialist countries emulated the example set by Soviet Russia. The new method became popular and powerful and it has now become an international force in the field of art.

Modern Tamil literature in general is influenced very much by the western theories. It does not mean that all the western theories have been forcibly transplanted and thrust on the modern Tamil literature. When the social

development in Tamiḻnāṭu passes through stages parallel to that of the West, some of the theories in practice in the West find a natural place in Tamil literature. This applies to socialist realism also. Three major factors in the development of modern Tamil society have contributed significantly to the development of socialist realism in Tamil fiction: the growth of the working class, the birth of the communist movement and the formation of the *Kalai Ilakkiyap Perumaṉṟam*. The communist movement which began by nineteen twenties made its powerful impact on all aspects of the modern Tamil society. Abstaining from work and other forms of trade union struggles have increased in number from 1920 onwards, pointing to the growth of the proletarian consciousness. The proletarian ideology, Marxism, began to spread in Tamiḻnāṭu among the politicians of different views. When national liberation movement was gathering momentum, the participants of the movement took keen interest in Marxism. For example Rājāji wrote a book on socialism and E.V. Rāmacāmi Nāyakkar wrote articles on Marxism. When the communist movement in Tamiḻnāṭu was allowed to function freely after 1940, a large number of young men found themselves attracted towards it. The pioneering work done by Jīvāṉantam , Pālataṇṭāyutam and others created the necessary atmosphere for absorbing working class consciousness in the field of literature. To infuse the leftist trend into literature and to give a new orientation to cultural problems, *Kalai Illakkiyap Perumaṉṟam* (Forum of Art and Literature) was started around 1956. This forum has brought in its fold writers of great talent who have struck a new path in the cultural field. This environment was favorable to the appearance of the socialist literatures in Tamil.

The exact date of birth of the first socialist realist novel was 1954. *Pañcum Paciyum* by Rakunātaṉ started the new trend in Tamil novel. Imbued with revolutionary enthusiasm, Rakunātaṉ strives to portray the attempt made by a section of the working class to fight for their rights. Vaṭivēlu Mutaliyār, a weaver, exposes the evils in the contemporary social system and makes his fellow workers think in terms of trade union and collective struggle. The characters are well-formed in the sense that they are all social types. Rakunātaṉ's approach to the characters and the problems analysed in the novel is based on dialectical and historical materialism. That the proletarian struggle will conquer the entire world is the message of the novel. The novel is full of proletarian humanism and the

writer is forthright in pointing out that the capitalist class is the main cause of the difficulties of the working masses.

This new way of looking at the society developed further after the sixties. A host of young writers, well-nourished in Marxian ideology appeared on the literary scene and their creations have strengthened the new realism. Cinnappa Pārati's *Tākam, Caṙkam*, D. Celvarāj's *Malarum Carukum, Tēṉīr,* Ponnīlaṉ's *Karical, Koḷḷaikkāraka!, Putiyamoṭṭukka!* and Aṟantai Nārāyaṇaṉ's *Jakkā* are some of the works in which the influence of socialist realism over the modern literature is clearly pronounced.

In all these works working class life is portrayed with an achieved sense of commitment to Marxian ideology, and a clear-cut working class bias can be seen in them. For example, in *Tākam* Cinnappa Pārati portrays the struggle of working peasants. In *Malarum Carukum* the social change that takes place in villages and the possible victory of the new forces are powerfully represented. The entire novel *Tēṉīr* is about the miserable life of the plantation workers in tea estates. Rukmani, the heroine of the novel, leads an agitation against the estate owners and the novel ends with a note of optimism that the future belongs to the workers. In Ponnīlaṉ's *Karical* the acuteness of class struggle in a remote village in Tirunelvēli district is portrayed. The landlord Cakkaraicāmi dominates the entire village. He swallows up the other petty property owners and he is merciless towards the poor, ignorant workers. Kaṇṇappaṉ, a humble school teacher, unites the working force of the village and makes Vīraiyaṉ, a worker-peasant, lead the struggle. Though the outcome of the struggle is bloody and tragic, the peasant organization spreads from Perumāḷpuram, the scene of action of the story, to other villages.

The novels written by the committed writers of Tamiḻnāṭu at the present phase portray the proletarian life and the yearning of the workers to better their lot. Hence in these novels the main objective of the struggle is demand for higher wages and basic facilities of life. In *Pañcam Paciyam* the main demand is to get yarn at reduced rates. In *Tēṉīr* the struggle centres around the fulfillment of the demands for better life.

From this follows another major trait of the socialist realist fiction in Tamil. In all these works there is a revolutionary thirst for changing the world for the benefit of the workers. In the changed world, the novelists say, the old forces will definitely disappear. For example, the entire novel *Malarum Carukum* is about the changes in the relationship of the workers and small property holders in the villages of Tamiḻnāṭu. Towards the end of the novel the writer symbolically portrays the death of the old man, and his infant grandson struggling to get away from the hold of the dead grandfather. This indicates the birth of a new society and decay of the existing order. All the committed writers are chiefly concerned with social changes because they look at their society dialectically. The social order never remains static and change in society takes place through class struggle. *Tēṉīr* portrays such a class struggle. At the same time these novelists describe the false notions of social change and criticize them so. This is done in Ponnīlaṉ's *Putiyamoṭṭukkaḷ*. The broad social change since the period of the freedom struggle of India to modern times is described. The novelist points out at the latter half of the novel that dialectical change in society is an evolutionary necessity.

Socialist realism is closely connected with revolutionary humanism. The concept of showing sympathy towards working class and trying to work for their welfare is the major thrust of this humanism. In *Jākka,* the heroine is an extra actress. She, with comrade Jeyarāmaṉ wants to change the conditions of the extra actors and actresses. Her sympathy for the fellow workers and her adherence to certain values even in the face of adverse conditions show this aspect of humanism. This kind of humanism can be seen in most of the writers of this camp.

Partisanship is another cardinal principle of socialist realism. In a class society a writer has to take a definite stand. He has to express the views of a particular class. If a writer says that he is neutral, then it means that either he is cheating himself or closing his eyes to realities. There is no such thing as pure art. Art is essentially rooted in society. Hence an artist must hold a particular point of view to a particular problem in society. It is a natural outcome. In socialist realism it is accepted as a principle and the artists join hands with the working class which forms the majority of the society. Writers like Celvarāj, Ponnīlaṉ and Cinnappa Pārati take this ideological stand in their works. When Celvarāj views

realism as dialectically scientific he has in mind this question of partisanship in literature.

Writers like Rakunātan, Celvarāj and Ponnīlan are committed in their worldly outlook. They have strengthened socialist realism in modern Tamil fiction. But the spread of Marxian ideology, the growth of left literature and other social movements connected with it have influenced a large number of humanitarian writers into coming near to socialist realism. Writers who are critical realists or who have exhibited certain critical realistic tendency have taken the cause of the workers and tried to portray their life. The novels of these writers speak on behalf of the working class of Tamilnāṭu. For example, M.V. Veṅkaṭrām's *Vēḷvittī* is about the life of the weavers of Kumpakkōṇam. He is critical of the conditions in the contemporary Tamil society. In a majority of the works of Vintan, a critical realist, a sympathetic attitude towards working class could be seen permeating through. In one of his stories Vintan makes a clear distinction between a rich man and a platform dweller. He satirizes the propertied classes. In his famous novel *Pālum Pāvaiyum* he explains how the property ownership spoils the life of Akalya. She is seducted by Intiran because of his high social status. Cu. Camuttiram, another humanitarian writer, describes the cruel exploitation of the working people of a particular caste by the rich men of the same community. In *Oru Kōṭṭukku Veḷiyē* he portrays the difficulties of a poor Nāṭār family and he exposes the class character of the rich Nāṭārs of the same village. In *Cōrruppaṭṭāṭam* the same theme is handled consummately from the viewpoint of the heroine Cuntari. The sympathy of the writer is with the downtrodden and he is highly critical of the rich men of his own community. Though the humanism of this writer makes him occasionally think in terms of violent struggle and revolution, he seems to be obsessed with the life of the unorganized poor people of both villages and cities of Tamilnāṭu. He seeks to find in his novels solutions for social problems through individual struggles. The heroine *of Oru Kōṭṭukku Veḷiyē* fights single handedly against the rich men of her own village.

Another novelist who is outside the committed camp is Rājam Kṛṣṇan. She has turned a critical realist in the later phase of her literary career and now her works border on socialist art. She looks at the social discriminations from the angle of womenfolk. Though her chief concern is the rights of women, her

outlook on life has broadened and she portrays working class life. In her fiction she describes mainly the difficulties of working women. In her *Annaiyar Pūmi* she compares the position of women in Soviet social system because it gives women complete freedom which is lacking in Indian social structure. She speaks of finding a solution to the exploitation of the working women.

In her novel *Alaivāyk Karaiyil* the struggle of the working fishermen against the exploitation of the Church is portrayed. Young people rise in revolt against the Church. After great sacrifices, the young men come out successful in their struggle against the mechanization of the fishing industry. In *Kūṭṭuk Kuñcukaḷ* she pleads for fight against child labour in the match factories of Tamiḻnāṭu. In another novel *Karippu Maṇikaḷ* she portrays the exploitation of the poor working women in the salt pans of Tuticorin. In *Cērril Maṉitarkaḷ* the life of the working peasants and the demoralized condition of the peasant organizations are critically portrayed. In all her works, she reveals her deep sympathy for the working people and the commonfolk.

Socialist realism is a new, expanding ideological canvas in modern art. One major trend in international socialist literature is the description of the experience gained in the process of socialist construction. This kind of exposure is possible only in the socialist countries. In countries like India, where class struggle is taking place in a peculiar Indian way, socialist realism exists side by side with other trends in art. In modern Tamil literature, various subjective trends coexist with socialist realism. Hence the writers are influenced by the other trends also. This is more so in the case of the non-committed writers. However, writers like Rājam Kṛṣṇaṉ, Camuttiram and Intirā Pārttacārati describe the life of the working people. In Tamil short story and New Poetry, this is a well-pronounced trend. Writers who are not committed to communist ideology also take a pro-working class stand. Their creative works can be broadly classified under the category of the socialist art. It refers to any work with clear-cut humanist leanings towards the working class. This kind of literature is then in plenty in modern Tamil. The socialist art is a fertile ground for the growth of socialist realism. It actually occupies a mid-position between critical realism and socialist realism. It may even be termed as a transitional stage.

The socialist realist literature in Tamiḻnāṭu is chiefly concerned with two important problems. In a developing country like India, the cultural scene is highly complex. At the same time social change is rapidly taking place in Tamiḻnāṭu. The committed artists in their works describe social change and they criticize very sharply the obsolete traditions of our country. While criticizing the tradition and customs they expose the contemporary evils and point out clearly that the future belongs to the working class. In this sense they become internationalists also. The second aspect is that in a developing country like India betterment of life itself is a great achievement. The fight for the basic necessities of life is itself a great struggle. Working class in India has led heroic struggles so far and has achieved a measure of success. This is the result of the organized struggle of the Indian working class. This aspect is well-reflected in the works of Rakunātaṉ, Celvarāj, Ponnīlaṉ and others. Socialist realism in modern Tamil literature is becoming a well-entrenched trend.

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COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

17. AREA OF COMPARISON IN TAMIL LITERATURE

Comparative Literature is the outcome of a deep penetration of scientific outlook or objective perspective into the study of literature, which is a vital part of the superstructure of society. In a way, it is a revolt against the parochial and narrow-minded approach about the study of literature, art and society that existed upto the modern era of industrial revolution and liberal democracy. Comparative literature has been defined by Henry H.H. Remak as "...the study of literature beyond the confines of a particular country, and the study of the relationships between literature on the one hand and other areas of knowledge and belief, such as the arts, philosophy, history, the social sciences, religion, on the other."

Comparative Literature has grown now into a well respected academic discipline thanks to the untiring attempts of comparatists of Germany, France and the U.S. and in course of time by the scholars of other countries especially the scholars of Asia and those in the other parts of the world. Although confined to oral tradition and oral literature in the early stages, comparative literature started embracing literary works of all periods irrespective of their ages and genres in due course.

Although classical grammarians and literary personages of Tamil nadu frequently made comparisons between the various aspects of literary theories and conventions of Sanskrit and Tamil, comparative literature as an academic discipline started gaining momentum in Tamilnadu only in the later periods. Its early roots are traceable to the *Critical Study of Kamparāmāyaṇam* by V.V.S. Aiyar who made sporadic comparisons of the Tamil epic with a few European epics like *Iliad, Odyssey, Paradise Lost,* etc. Following him, a band of scholars with good background in the theories and practice of comparative literature entered this arena and contributed a great deal to this academic discipline based on their studies of Tamil literature.

India provides ample scope for comparative study because of its linguistic pluralism, cultural variety and ethnic diversity. Being a linguistic region, India is endowed with multifarious literary works which form the basis for all kinds of experimentation in this field of academic pursuit.

A cursory glance at the studies that appeared in this direction shows unmistakably that three kinds of approaches namely, analogy, influence studies and studies about genetic relationship are predominantly prevalent in comparative literature in Tamilnadu.

The scope for studies based on influence is abundant in the later period, particularly in relation to European and American literatures, and in the present century, to Asian literary forms like Haiku, and those from other developed and developing countries. In the earlier period, the study of influence was confined mainly to literary works of Indo-Aryan languages like Sanskrit, Prakrit and Pali, and in due course it is extended to other North Indian literary works and works belonging to other Dravidian languages.

The studies on analogy have been undertaken convincingly by the Tamil comparatists like S. Ramakrishnan, A.A. Manavalan, and others who have studied the epic genre, especially that of the greatest Tamil epic *Kamparāmāyaṇam* with Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Scholars like Chellappan and V. Sachithanandan based their studies on certain themes and perspectives perceived among two writers born in different countries or belonging to different social milieu.

The study of family resemblance or genetic relationship is a major trend in comparative literature, and this was encouraged by the recent studies in linguistics on the various families of languages especially the studies of Sir William Jones pertaining to the Indo-Aryan, and Bishop Caldwell about the Dravidian family of languages. The recognition of a certain family likeness among the works of a specific age in different tongues has inspired many comparative literary studies. Consequently, the study of family likeness among the romantic literature of the western countries has been undertaken by comparatists like Paul Van Tiegham and Lilian R. Furst. K.Kailasapathy's *Tamil heroic poetry*, K.D. Thirunavukkarasu's book on *Tirukkuṟaḷ*, an ethic literature and G. John Samuel's *The Harp and the Veena* study the family resemblances that existed amidst the heroic, didactic and romantic literatures of the Tamil language.

The present chapter aims to point out the various areas of comparison in Tamil literature which naturally fall under the topic, namely, the study of genetic relationship or family resemblance among the literature of various societies or linguistic communities. The areas of comparison which I am referring to will help to reconstruct the history of Tamil literature based on the growth of ideas or themes rather than on the existing chronological hints taken from myths which are nothing but attempts of demythicising the semi historical facts as derived from literary works.

On the basis of the sociology of literature and the history of ideas, Tamil literature can be broadly brought under the following five headings which serve as five potential areas for comparative studies. They are :

1. Heroic Literature
2. Didactic Literature
3. Devotional Literature
4. Neo-classical Literature and
5. Romantic Literature

These areas follow one another as a process of natural evolution of the Tamil psyche even though they do not form watertight compartments. Although there are many overlapping in these thematic divisions, the dominating tone remains the same.

I. Heroic literature

Literature is a social product and it is the vital part of the superstructure of a living society. Consequently, it is conditioned by the social structure which in turn is determined by the modes of production prevailing in that particular social milieu. Heroic literature is generally conceived as a part of the superstructure of a heroic milieu, a society in transition between the tribal structure and the evolution of established kingdoms. Heroic literature portrays internecine wars between the tribes and thereafter a gradual evolution of monarchic pattern of society. *Caṅkam* literature can be termed as heroic literature since it portrays of society marked by internecine wars between the tribes on the one hand and the evolution of the three great monarchs namely the Cēra, Cōḻa and the Pāṇṭiya on the other. Yet, we

cannot call the entire *Caṅkam* classics as heroic literature, since part of the extant works belong to the post-heroic age. Unlike the other heroic literary works, the *Caṅkam* corpus comprises of lyrics and dramatic monologues, and not lengthy narrative poems like the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Unlike in the other heroic literature, we are not able to come across a common cultural hero who would represent the aspirations and ideals of his contemporary ethos.

Anyhow, the entire Tamil heroic corpus is centred on a war-like aristocracy, a society dominated by heroes and their military expeditions. Part of the corpus belongs to the bardic tradition which had been polished by the poets who succeeded the oral bards. The heroes were motivated by certain ideals like *nāṇ* (shame), *paḻi* (blame), and *pukaḻ* (fame) which can be seen in all heroic literature. Religion plays only an insignificant role and the Gods are not portrayed as transcendental beings, but immanent spirit like creatures who can be appeased and used for the benefit of human beings. The only exception to this trend is the Hebraic tradition where the God is at the centre of the heroic age, and is described as the Lord of hosts. Poets and bards are held in high esteem as they are an integral part of the heroic milieu. They are endowed with prophetic powers and blessed with divine nature and divine inspiration. Tribal values such as apportioning, etc., are well respected and they speak about tribal life and tribal virtues in a very detailed manner.

The Tamil heroic corpus speaks about various types of wandering minstrels such as *pāṇaṉ, viṟali, akavaṉ, porunaṉ*-all reciting the heroic songs to the accompaniment of musical instruments and enacting the significant events of heroism. These bards are endowed with divine powers. The poets serve as the mass media of the contemporary society and they justify all the gruesome deeds of the aristocracy before the audience with a view to presenting an ideal picture of their patron before the subjects. Thus they serve as a potential link between the rulers and the ruled. The God of apportioning is referred to as *Pālvarait teyvam* in *Caṅkam* literature and this deity plays a significant role in *akam* poems too. The *akam* poems of this age speak about the male-female relationship of the heroic society in an objective manner. They are purely objective in the sense that the poets suppress their personality, convert all their gross emotions into that of art emotions and speak through stereotyped characters. Since this literature is centred on the Kshatriya, the royal aristocracy it can be called Kshatriya literature

too. Although ethics entered into *Caṅkam* society due to the penetration of the ethical codes of the heterodox religions such as Buddhism, Jainism and Ajivakam, the tone of these corpus is heroic in nature and courtly in character. They depict a materialistic society reveling in hedonistic pleasures of life. Almost all of the motifs, trends and themes of heroic literatures can be seen in the *Caṅkam* classics and they form a potential area for comparative study.

Description of court feasting, insertion of catalogues of various objects within the framework of a poem, elegies on the death of the heroes, the description of mythological worlds in which the heroes enter after their demise etc. are some of the components of all heroic literatures and a large number of such motifs and themes are discernible in the Tamil *Caṅkam* literature too. Elements of oral poetry, especially the formulaic patterns and refrains of heroic oral literature, are also seen in the *Caṅkam* corpus. Religion plays only a minor role and the Tamil heroic literature is not endowed with highly developed mythologies that the Greek, the Latin and North Indian poets possessed. In short they have a large number of unique characteristics born out of their native milieu while sharing multifarious themes and motifs with the other heroic literature of the world most of which are available in the form of long narrative poems.

Dr.K. Kailasapathy's book on **Tamil heroic poetry** is an epoch-making contribution to the study of the genetic relationship that exists among the heroic poems of the Tamil and Greek languages. The works by N.K. Siddhantha, C.M. Bowra, and the *Growth of Literature* by the Chadwicks add new dimensions to our knowledge about heroic poetry. Although a few works have already appeared, there is space to accommodate more and more studies of this nature. For example, the study of heroic poetry in Asian languages remains an unexplored area for academic pursuit still. One can undertake studies of the *Kojiki* and *Manyoshu* of ancient Japan with the *Puṟam* and *Akam* traditions of Tamilnadu. The heroic literatures in the Chinese and Korean have not yet been subjected to serious scrutiny and so their relationship with ancient Tamil heroic poetry may form a significant theme for a comparative study.

II. Ethical literature

The dawn of the corpus of ethical literature in Tamil coincides with the emergence of sea ports and port cities like Pukār, and Korkai and the trading community namely the Vaishya to the highest stratum of Tamil society. Inland and overseas trade flourished at this time and the affluent merchant community extended patronage to the heterodox religions such as Buddhism and Jainism which were against violence and martial heroism of the heroic age. Although the political power was with the ruling aristocracy, the wealth of the country was with the affluent merchants. Although the collaboration of the ruling aristocracy with the merchant community resulted in the building up of urban capitals and port cities, the challenge of the business community for the establishment of its social hegemony and identity was obvious from the heterodox epics like *Cilappatikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai* which were nothing but artistic expressions of the social and political conflicts between the royal aristocracy and the newly emerged Vaishyas.

The prominent mood of this age was highly reflective and its ideals were completely opposed to the heroic codes of the previous age. All the ideals of heroic age were challenged by the ethical corpus. Polygamy, which was allowed at least on the part of men, was ridiculed and martial heroism had become an object for mockery; raids and lootings justified in the heroic literature were identified with theft. The private property developed considerably and the ethical codes of this age were aimed at protecting the private property. Ethical and moral codes had enumerated at length in the literature of this age which normally followed the heroic milieu. Whether the literature was completely ethical in theme, or epic in structure, the predominant tone was completely didactic. Even in the epics of this age martial heroism was replaced by moral heroism; the peerless protagonist of the heroic age was replaced by the women characters and wherever martial heroism was dealt with, it served merely as a poetic convention without any significant function. The heroic poet has been a bard who by his songs inspires the war-like aristocracy and induced them to exhibit all their might and physical strength in the battle; the poet of the ethical age evolved as a moral teacher, and contrary to his heroic counterpart, he sometimes assumed the role of a prophet imparting knowledge about what to do and what to avoid. The encroachment of heterodox religions could be seen completely in the ethos of the

Tamil land and, the superstructure of the Tamil Society of this age was filled with maxims, aphorisms and pithy statements about moral codes.

The corpus of ethical poetry was so rich that we have the anthology of eighteen works namely *patiṉeṇ kīḻkaṇakku*. Although there were a few love poems, the main thematic content of this anthology was didacticism. The evolution of the God of ethics, *Aṟakkaṭavuḷ*, was also discernible in the Tamil ethical corpus which provided a lot of scope to study them with the ethical works of other Asian and European languages.

The culmination of this ethical literature in Tamil was the birth of the famous work *Tirukkuṟaḷ* which is described as the scriptural text of the Tamil community. This is not a work that appeared all on a sudden in the Tamil society in a dramatic way. The gradual evolution of the tradition of ethics could be traceable to the four native and indigenous priestly classes of the Tamil society namely the *pāṇaṉ, paṟaiyaṉ, tuṭiyaṉ* and *kaṭampaṉ* whose presence could be seen in the heroic literature. They were considered to be the mouth of revelation, endowed with certain prophetic powers, which is obvious from the attribution *mutuvāy* (ancient wisdom) to them and the lizard. The evolution of the next band of ethical preachers was obvious from the emergence of a few classes of men namely *tiṟavōr* (the prophet), *aṟivar* (the seer), *aṟavōr* (the ethical men) and *Kaṇiyaṉ* (the astrologer). Their ethics were in oral tradition and the body of such ethics is referred to as *Aṟam* in the *Caṅkam* period.

Since such didactic literature is centred on wise men, it is known as wisdom literature too. The emergence of such wise men and prophets can be seen in the Old Testament of the Bible and other ethical works of the Greek and Roman societies.

Tirukkuṟaḷ combines all the ethical codes native to Tamil soil and presents all in the form of a very crisp and highly formalized ethical piece of wonderful literature composed in the short *kuṟaḷ veṇpā* couplet. All the ethics of *Tirukkuṟaḷ* are opposed to the so-called Sanskritic codes of *manudharma* or *varnasrama dharma* which speaks to different ethics to different varnas. To *Tirukkuṟaḷ* there is no *varna* or division among human beings, and all men and women are equal in birth though not equal in merit.

The ideal man of *Vaḷḷuvar* is Cānrōṉ, a term used to refer to the warlike aristocracy in Tamil *Caṅkam* literature. But *Vaḷḷuvar* radically changed the original heroic concept of the Tamil Cānrōṉ by attributing five ethical codes to him, namely *aṉpu* (love), *vāymai* (truth), *oppuravu* (generosity), nāṇ (shame) and Kaṇṇōṭṭam (balanced view). The Cānrōṉ of Vaḷḷuvar should have all these basic characteristics. This type of idealized superman can be seen in all ethical literature, for example the Sapience of the Roman Stoicism, the Bodhisattuva of the Mahayana tradition, the Sthita Pragna of *Bhagavad Gīta* etc. *Tiruvaḷḷuvar* was trying to develop a systematic philosophy of life basing all ethics on Cānrōṉ. Consequently, Cānrōṉ is the centre of the Tamil ethical corpus; he is the touchstone for the Tamil ethical codes. Whatever is acceptable to Cānrōṉ is considered to be ethics and whatever is unaccepted by him is contrary to ethics. Ethical literature is a potential area for comparative study and it is the product of a well developed society with tremendous growth of private property and other forms of material prosperity.

III. Devotional literature

Another area of comparative study is the devotional literature which is generally the product of a theoretical society centred around God. Devotional literature normally follows the didactic age although devotional sentiments and expressions can be seen in all ages. In Tamilnadu it starts approximately by 6th century A.D. with the upsurage of the Bhakti movement spearheaded by the Saivite devotional hymnists namely the Nāyaṉmārs and the Vaishnavite singers namely the Ālwars. Tamilnadu is considered to be the birth place of this devotional movement and this wave swept all other parts of India like a wild tempest in due course. Consequently, the Bhakti literature could be hailed as one of the significant contributions of Tamilnadu to the composite culture and literature of India. The devotional literature belong to the family of literature the relationship of which can be seen not only in other Indian languages, but also in other languages of Asia and Europe as well. It was the product of a time when the affluent temples started emerging as potential patronage systems of art and literature akin to the royal courts. All ethical codes of the previous age had been converted in this period into the word of God who is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient. Even the earthly kings were identified in this age as the visible

representatives of the invisible Godhead. The devotional corpus is more rich generally in the orthodox religions than the heterodox religions which give less importance to Godhead.

The devotional sentiments are expressed through multifarious genres namely hymns, lyrics and epics and sometimes through dramatic monologues too. The material provided by this corpus will help not only comparative literature but also allied academic disciplines such as comparative religion and comparative mythology. There is good co-ordination between the priestly tradition, the poets and other artistes including sculptors and architects in the evolution of devotional literature. Some of the devotional poems provide even iconographic and sculptural details and the longer devotional epic poems like *Kamparāmāyaṇam* and *Periyapurāṇam* can be compared even with the contemporary temples like the Big temple of Tanjore, etc.

Certain themes can be compared at a wider level, such as the bridal mysticism which has been powerfully handled by the devotional hymnists all over the world. Marriage has been a powerful metaphor in all the devotional literary works of the world. The Lord is generally the bridegroom and the soul the bride mostly in the religions which have patriarchal leanings. It is sometimes the other way round in other religions which have strong matriarchal links. In the Christian tradition Christ is the bridegroom and the congregation or the church is the bride. Bridal mysticism is one of the most potential areas for comparative study in devotional literature. It finds powerful expression both in the *Old Testament* especially in the Book of Isaiah and the *Songs of Solomon*, and in the *New Testament* in the portrayal of Christ as the bridegroom. The *Krishna-Gopika* relationship is a significant component of this metaphor in the Indian devotional tradition. This metaphor was very powerfully handled in the devotional poems of the Tamil Bhakti movement. The songs of *Aṇṭāḷ, Māṇikkavācakar*, and *Campantar* are rich with this metaphor where the transcendental union between the human soul and the oversoul is described in terms of sensual human love. Later Tamil devotional poets have expanded the scope of the above theme by personifying the Lord to lady love, friend and even the errand man.

Another potential theme is the sonship of God which is obvious in the portrayal of *Murukaṉ* of the Tamil tradition, the *Ganapathy* and Lord *Aiyappaṉ*

of the Indian tradition, the Dionyses of the Greek tradition and Jesus Christ of the Christian tradition. The metaphor of child is displayed abundantly in the Indian as well as European devotional traditions. The tradition of sonship is one of the universal motifs for comparative study in the religious literature.

The devotional poetry is neither completely subjective nor completely objective, but a combination of the two. The poet or devotee is not an individual but the representative of a particular creed or denomination, and at least these experiences are shared by the group. There are prayer songs, songs of benediction or panegyric poems which provide ample material for comparative study.

Unlike the heroic literature, the devotional literature is oriented towards the common man and hence one can see the revival of folk tradition in them. The devotional literature generally comprise of two traditions, namely the affective tradition and the theological tradition. The Tamil *Tōttira nūṟkaḷ* belong to the former tradition, whereas the *Cāttira nūṟkaḷ* belong to the latter tradition. The Bhakti literature can be viewed as literature of movement, and they display contrasting universal metaphors like light vs. darkness, etc. to explain their mystical connotations. Nature is treated in the Indian devotional tradition as the visible body of the invisible God and an object of worship whereas in the christian tradition it is always depicted as an object which will declare the glory of God. The American transcendentalists view nature as the revelation of the other Me and this is acceptable to the European Romantics too. The Hellenic tradition is rich with nature worship which is quite contrary to the Christian tradition which has led the European Romantics to neglect christianity and embrace pantheistic worship. The songs of St. Ambrose, St Augustin and St. Jerome can be compared to Indian devotional poems. These poems are a potential source for comparative studies.

IV. Neo-classical literature

Another area of comparison is the neo-classical literature, which succeeds mostly in the realm of the devotional literature in chronology. This kind of literature is part of the superstructure of a feudal social set up which is dominated by petty chieftains and kings and their courts. This is largely a luxurious product addressed to a leisurely class. This type of literature gives more importance to

external forms rather than to thematic content. Most of them are faint imitations of their respective classical models. The small *pirapantams* in Tamil are a typical representatives in Tamil of this trend which continued upto the 18th century A.D., patronized mainly by Zamindars of Tamilnadu. Since these literary works show interest in imitating classical models they are described as psudo classical literature.

The neo-classical literatures vary from country to country depending upon the nature of their feudal background and courtly traditions. In Tamilnadu it was an ornamental and luxurious exuberance with verbal embellishment, marked by excessive portrayal of sex which sometimes degenerates into pornography. Such neo-classical trends in Tamil literature have been ridiculed by the succeeding Romantic writers. Subramania Bharati's *Cinnaccaṅkaraṉ katai* contains a lengthy satire on the court poets of the Zamindar of Kauṇṭanūr, a typical representative of neo-classical tradition in Tamil.

V. Romantic literature

The Industrial Revolution, American War of Independence, French Revolution and the English revolts against the abuses of the crown were some of the important events that shook the foundations of the traditional western civilization that brought about drastic changes in the milieu and mentality of the western nations. They introduced new ideas, techniques, and manners of thought which are reflected in the literature and philosophy of the western countries of the 19th century. They shattered the feudal set-up and the patronage system in art and poetry, and paved the way for the emergence of a new middle-class to the highest level of the social stratum. The old feudal system and its social convictions were sharply challenged by this new class.

The Romantic literature rose against the relics of feudal system as well as the orthodox social institutions and conventions which were fostered by the feudal set-up; it revolted against the patronage systems, the neo-classical mode of composition, and the tendency to imitate classical models. Romanticism is thus the artistic expression of the ideologies, social outlook and aesthetic sensibility of the new class which attained a domineering place in the 19th century Europe.

The advent of the westerners, the introduction of technical civilization and the western type of education in India changed the social milieu of the traditional Indian soil and caused the emergence of a new English-educated middle class to the highest level of the social stratum. The freedom struggle, the newly-introduced technological civilization and printing press challenged the old feudal order, agrarian civilization and their patronage systems of art and literature. New writers, who came from this English-educated middle class, had drunk deep the libertarian sentiments embodied in the western romantic literature, and started composing poems. All the neo-classical trends and theories became alien to this new school of writers. This new school was given a fillip by Tagore, and this spirit spread throughout the major languages of India in the beginning of the twentieth century.

As far as English Romanticism was concerned, the major poetry of this movement was all written under the influence of the new secular, liberal conception of man and his destiny that had sprung from the French Revolution and the French 19th century thought that had preceded it. We can describe romantic poetry as the product of political and social revolutions. Most of the poetry of this period was written by persons of the middle class, who directly or indirectly participated in the revolutions. As pointed out by W.H. Auden, most of the English Romantics were members of the middle or upper middle class; most of them had classical education and they spent some of their time at school and university in the study of Latin and Greek.

If we account for the birth of Romanticism in the Marxian perspective, we can explain it as the artistic manifestation of the bourgeois revolution against the feudal set-up as well as against the social ties and institutions of its own class. As seen previously, most of the poets of this movement came from the bourgeois class and hence all the ideals, aspirations, ideological backgrounds and libertarian sentiments of the 19th century bourgeoisie, which centred around the cult of individualism, found powerful expression in their creative works too.

The social commitment and partisanship of the Romantics were responsible for one kind of poems, whereas their aloofness and detachment from their social reality produced another kind of literary works. Some critics have

named the former trend positive Romanticism and the latter negative Romanticism.

The Russian writer Maxim Gorky sees two sharply contrasting tendencies, namely, active Romanticism and passive Romanticism. This active aspect of Romanticism which is discernible in the poems of the later English Romantics such as Shelley, Byron and others and in most of the Indian Romantics, have been deemed as an artistic manifestation of the bourgeois in alliance with the common man to overthrow feudal restrictions.

The leading poets of English Romanticism can be brought under two phases. The first phase includes Robert Southey, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Sir Walter Scott. They constitute the Lake School of poets. The second phase of Romanticism includes three famous poets. Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley and John Keats.

The Spirit and trend of the European Romanticism, especially the English Romanticism of the 19th century, prevailed with some variations in the major languages of India in the final decades of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century when the waves of Renaissance, the new spirit kindled by it and the new literary theories expounded by the literary heads of England, America, France and Russia lashed on India's shores and awakened her from her age-long slumber. India with her rich legacy of literature and a long and fertile literary tradition responded positively to the influence of the West on her which provoked in her a new religious, social and literary awakening. She inherited and assimilated the alien literary traditions and gave a new orientation to her native literary theories and creative activity. Due to the reconciliation of these two traditions, a kind of Romantic movement, which brought about drastic changes in the old literary trends of the European literature, began to pervade in the Indian literature also. As a result, the imaginative apprehension of experience, the primacy of feeling, the cult of the individual, the new attitude to nature, the exploration of the unconscious, the fascination of the supernatural, the revolt against the conventional poetic diction and accredited literary conventions, the greater freedom of expressions etc.- some of the aspects of European Romanticism – began to manifest in the poetical compositions of the romantic movement of India.

In 1848 Marx and Engels wrote in their *Manifesto of the Communist Party* that with the development of capitalism "The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and out of the numerous national and local literatures there arise a world literature." Indian-Tamil Romanticism is the product of a newly introduced technological civilization and that of a newly established capitalist set-up. Hence, reducing national one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness, it echoes most of the trends of the common literature namely, the Romantic literature of the world, a trend which was inevitable in the above social milieu.

The advent of the Europeans quickened the Romantic spirit in three ways. Firstly, the Europeans introduced the technological civilization which led to the urbanization of the Indian social life to a great extent. This has shaken the age-old agrarian culture to its foundations, its patronage systems and courtly conventions, which have fostered a kind of neo-classical literature in Tamil. Till the beginning of the 19th century, as far as Tamil literary arena was concerned, we can come across two kinds of patronage systems, namely the temples and the secular courts of the feudal patrons who have cultivated devotional and secular literatures respectively. In these patronage systems, there were certain aristocratic, courtly and religious literary conventions which the poet was expected to adhere to fully. Being a member of an economically dependent class, which had to depend either on the temples or the feudal lords for its existence, the professional Tamil poet had no artistic freedom. His duty was one of conformism, as his main vocation was to please the whims and fancies of the ruling class or the authorities of the temples or the patrons of a particular religious sect. Their potential compositions, like the static conventions of the patronage system, were also very formalistic. Thus arose 96 types of stereotyped poetic forms in Tamil literature called *Pirapantam*. With the ready-made form at his hands, the poet's duty was to infuse the form with certain conventional content either erotic or devotional. Thus a dichotomy of form and content, a mechanical conception of art, had existed in the feudal set-up. The poet's role was to please his aristocratic audience by his diction, ornamental usage of language, artificial techniques, intellectual and scholastic bombast. His duty was to prepare a luxurious art, in harmony with the luxurious life of his paymaster under his capricious demand. The introduction of a life style as dictated by technological innovations and

advancement had shattered the feudal social structure and caused the emergence of a new class comprising of the small factory owners. The English-educated gentry and members of the middle class were well-informed in the refinements of western civilization.

Secondly, the English education enabled this new class to study western literature which were imbued with libertarian sentiments and the freedom of the individual. It produced a reading public which comprised of the members of the newly emerged middle class. Most of the Romantic poets and writers hailed from this English educated middle class.

Thirdly, the introduction of the printing press made the members of the artistic intelligentsia to be an economically independent class depending on their own creative ability for their existence. Consequently, the age old patron was replaced by the publisher and the aristocratic audience by a large reading public. There was no need for the poet to be in conformity either with the conventions of the court or the whims and fancies of the ruling class. He wrote for his middle class audience nurtured on the secular literature of the western world. Hence, he assumed the role of a creator, a rebel and a prophet, and almost all the romantic poets assumed these three roles.

The European influence was very effective in India mainly through the British, who were the pioneers of a new technological and industrial civilization. Their advent was the main cause for the growth of numerous reform movements in religion and society which the Tamil romantic poet *Bharati* glorified in his poem *Vēls Iḷavaracarukku Vāḻuttu* (Felicitation to the Prince of Wales). The typical declamation of Rousseau, "Cast your eyes over every nation of the world, preserve every volume of its history, amid all these strange and cruel forms of worship, in this amazing variety of manners and customs, you will everywhere find the same (basic) ideas of good and evil" has attracted *Bharati* who frequently reiterates the same idea in his prose and poetical works. The Indian cultural renaissance came into being under the leadership of Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833) who made the first organized efforts to adapt Hinduism to the new situation. He was the harbinger of the social movements like feminism which influenced the three major Romantic poets of Tamil Nadu namely *Bharati, Bharati Dasan* and *Kavimaṇi*.

The influence exerted by Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelly, Keats, Byron and Blake on the Tamil romantic poets is worth mentioning. It is a known fact that Keats, Byron, Wordsworth and Walt Whitman have exercised a deep impact on *Bharati*, and this has been discussed at length by *V. Sachithanandan* in his books *Western Impact on Bharati* as well as *Whitman and Bharati*. The ideals and trends of the English romantic movement influenced *Bharati* and *Kumaran Asan* indirectly through Bengali literature also, since, they came in close contact with the literary tendencies initiated and developed by *Bankim Chandra, Madhusoodan Dutt* and *Rabindranath Tagore* under western influence. The other Tamil romantic poet *Kavimaṇi* was an ardent admirer of William Blake. He has translated some of he poems of Blake into Tamil. The name of the French romantic poet Victor Hugo also was very popular among the Tamil romantic poets.

Tamil Romanticism of the 20th century is a gradual evolution from the native tradition and this was quickened by the introduction of the technological civilization of the west and the English and American romantic literature. The important aspects of Romanticism such as the cult of ideal womanhood, childhood and nature are not alien to Tamil literature. Though influenced by the poets of the English Romantic movement, the Tamil romantics did not depend completely upon the English romantics for these aspects of Romanticism. Like Shelley's Beatrice and Cythna, the ancient Tamil literature has witnessed some revolutionary women prototypes such as *Kaṇṇaki* and *Pañcāli* in her major epics (even though their modern interpretation by the romantic poets is different.) Besides, the movement for the liberation of women is not a new one to the Tamil romantics who lived in a period when feminism was in full swing. All these backgrounds paved the way for the emergence of some ideal and revolutionary female characters in the poetical compositions of the major romantic poets in Tamil. All these characters and themes have been interpreted by the Tamil romantic poets in such a way as to cater to the needs of their social milieu.

From the heroic poetry to the romantic literature we cover a period of around two thousand years in the history of Tamil literature and this reveals the ideological growth of the Tamil psyche from a vibrant age of martial heroism to an age full of assertion of individualism and liberal democracy through an age of

ethics and an age of devotional sentimentality. This journey of the Tamil mind through the ages paved the way for the flourishing of five major areas for comparative study which can be compared with their counterparts in other parts of the world.

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18. THEORY OF IMAGINATION IN SHELLEY AND BHARATI

Another important aspect which distinguishes the Romantic poets from their classical predecessors is the excessive importance they attach to their concept of creative imagination. To the classical mind poetry is a mimetic art, an imitation of the external reality, whereas, to the Romantics it is a creative art, an art of creating a new heaven and a new earth. This emphasis on creation compels the Romantics to consider imagination as the *alpha and omega* of poetical composition and a divine power which enables them to look into the heart of things. This strong faith in creative imagination has been given theoretical declamations by almost all the Romantic poets of the world. The belief in the creative imagination also was a part of the contemporary belief in the exalted nature of the individual self.

Imagination and neo-classical poetry

In order to understand properly the emphasis given to creative imagination by the English Romantic poets of the 19th century, it is necessary to examine the views expressed by the 18th century critical scholarship about the theory of imagination. In the eighteenth century court poetry, imagination was not a cardinal tenet in poetical composition. The 18th century scholars approved of fancy, provided that it was controlled by what they call "judgement" and they admired the apt use of images, by which they meant little more than visual impressions and metaphors. According to them the poet was more an interpreter than a creator. They considered imagination as the secondary quality of the poet, whose principal task had been to arrange the materials received through sense impressions. Contrary to this, the Romantics hailed imagination as a fundamental one, without which poetry is impossible for them.[1] M.H. Abrams in his penetrating study *The Mirror and the Lamp* shows that in traditional criticism from Plato until the 18th century the mind of the poet had been a mirror, a reflector of external objects, whereas for the Romantics it became a lamp, a radiant projector. Abrams rightly regards this shift from a mimetic to an expressive conception as a decisive break in the continuity of critical theory.

Imagination and Tamil neo-classical poetry

The same condition can be seen in the Tamil neo-classical tradition with slight deviations. In the 18th century secular and devotional court poems of Tamil Nadu, creative imagination was not considered to be a vital part of creative activity. They gave much importance to convention and formal integrity than to imagination. Yet, unlike the English counterparts, their poetic vision embodied the super- natural or mythical worlds. A Tamil poet namely Tirucci<u>rr</u>ampalakkavirāyar speaks of his flight to an imaginary world.[2] There is another poet Ka<u>r</u>pa<u>n</u>aikka<u>l</u>añciyam Civappirakācar, who is known for his great imaginative resourcefulness and skill in linguistic manipulations. To all these poets, imagination was not a creative power but a matter of skill and they were respected for their unearthly images and figurative language. Consequently, they have converted classical functional elements such as metaphor, simile etc., into decorative elements. Even though *A<u>r</u>uvakai Ilakka<u>n</u>am*, a grammatical treatise of the 19th century, speaks at length about imagination, it is the Tamil Romantics, especially Bharati, who have given much emphasis on creative imagination and functional images. As rightly pointed out by A.V. Subramania Aiyar it was Bharati who has introduced "fervid and romantic imagination, which Tamil literature had not known earlier".[3] In this respect too, Bharati has heralded a new epoch in Tamil literature.

Imagination and the English romantics

None of the English Romantic poets equaled either Blake's exuberance or Wordsworth's sobriety in the theory and practice of imagination. Blake's explanation of imagination are highly mystical and charmingly eloquent. To him imagination was the very source of spiritual energy, he could not but believe that it was divine, and that when he exercised it, he in some way partook of the activity of God. Blake said "This world of imagination is the world of Eternity, it is the divine bosom into which we shall go after death and the vegetated body. This world of imagination is infinite and Eternal, whereas the world of Generation, or vegetation, is finite and Temporal".[4] For him any act of creation performed by the imagination is divine and that in the imagination man's spiritual nature is fully and finally realized. Blake could confidently say "One power alone makes a poet: Imagination, The Divine Vision"[5] because for him the imagination

creates reality, and this reality is the divine activity of the self in its unimpeded energy.

Coleridge, the greatest of the English Romantic critics, has articulated most completely the Romantic theory of imagination – the theory of imagination as the creative faculty, the faculty by which man brings something new into world, something which was never there before. The creative imagination, Coleridge said, " is essentially vital.... It is the mind that creates value and meaning".[6] He could say " The primary imagination I hold to be the living power and Prime Agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal creation in the infinite I am".[7] Coldridge has differentiated fancy and imagination as "Fancy is an associative process; the imagination is a creative one". According to him, the artistic imagination creates a new world; one like the every-day world of perception, but recognized and raised to a higher level of universality.

Like Coleridge, Wordsworth also considers imagination a creative faculty. Imagination recreates experience through its power of "Conferring, abstracting and modifying". According to him, one can commune with the invisible world through imagination.

The Romantics believed with Wordsworth that imagination is the only faculty which can enable us to see into the life and heart of things. Each poet was confident not only that the imagination was his most precious possession but that it was somehow concerned with a supernatural order. Never before had quite such a claim been made, and from it Romantic poetry derives much that is magical in it.[8] According to Romantic conception the focal point within the individual is his imagination, his power to perceive and recreate the world according to his own, inner vision.

Imagination and Tamil poetics

In Tamil classical poetics imagination is not dealt with separately as a vital part of poetical composition. It was *Aṟuvakai Ilakkaṇam*, a later grammatical treatise, that speaks elaborately about poetic imagination. It is because, unlike Western poetics, Indian poetics generally analyses poetry from

the point of view of the experience of the readers. Western poetics on the other hand views poetry largely as the expression of the poet's mind. Consequently, they deal at length with imagination which is a very basic and fundamental criterion in the composition of poetry.

Yet, as suggested earlier, the creative imagination came to be considered a divine power and basic element of literary composition only after the end of the 19th century in Indian Literature. It is because the expressive theory in art took a concrete shape only during this period, when poets from the newly sprouted English-educated middle class, who based their social ideals and literary theories on the cult of individual, began to compose poems. From this era onwards imagination occupied an important place in the world of literary creation. The Indian Romantic poets, like their European counterparts, began to glorify creative imagination. Yet, it was Bharati, who has given a more systematic and concrete theoretical basis to it than his native counterparts. In his theory of imagination, Bharati shares many similar ideas with Blake, Shelley, Keats and Coleridge.

Shelley and imagination

In his critical manifesto, *A Defence of Poetry*. Shelley defines imagination as a principle of synthesis as against reason which is principle of analysis. He explains imagination " as mind acting upon thought so as to colour them with its own light, and composing from them, as from elements, other thoughts, each containing within itself the principle of its own integrity".[9] Whereas reason respects differences, imagination respects the similitudes of things. Coleridge has called imagination the agent of reason. But, to Shelley, "Reason is to imagination as the instrument to the agent, as the body to the spirit, as the shadow to the substance".[10] According to Shelley poetry is the expression of imagination and the poet is a seer, gifted with a peculiar insight into the nature of reality. Shelley relates imagination with moral nature as is evident from his famous statement that 'the great instrument of moral good is imagination'. According to him imagination is Love 'drawing to the vast sea of beauty', 'a going out of our own nature' and 'an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person' not our own; 'an enlarger of the heart and purifier of the will'.[11] Although Shelley's predecessors and contemporaries did

customarily assign to the imagination the power to identify oneself with others, Shelley obviously did not, but made it an aspect of love.

Bharati and imagination

Even though Bharati has not written a separate book like Shelley to explain his literary theories, the scattered references made of imagination in his poems and prose works point to his conception of poetic imagination. Like Shelley, Bharati has not explicitly related imagination to moral power. His concept of imagination is more influenced by Sri Aurobindo, Keats and Coleridge than by Shelley. According to Sri Aurobindo, there are two kinds of imagination, the objective imagination which visualizes strongly the outward aspects of life and things; the subjective imagination which visualizes strongly the mental and emotional impressions.[12] Bharati has accepted both the subjective and objective imagination of Sri Aurabindo. Like the English Romantic poets, Bharati also finds imagination a divine power. He believes that the creative imagination can lift the poet to divine heights in the inspired moments and during composition.

Bharati has translated into Tamil a poem written by Johnscar entitled *The Town Let's Pretend* under the Tamil title *Karpaṉaiyūr* (Imaginary Town). In its preface he has said that the 'Imaginary City' is nothing but the recollection of the bliss of childhood. Here, he has used the word *Karpaṉai* (Imagination) to indicate the creative power which recollects the past events and which do not exist now. In this poem he describes *Karpaṉai nāṭu* as a dreamy land which is suggested by the phrase *Coppaṉa nāṭu*. This implies that the past events which the creative imagination recollects may be an event of dream which never existed. From this it is obvious that according to Bharati imagination may be the recollection of past events which existed, or the power of creating new events or episodes which never existed.

Imagination and dream

Notwithstanding the demonstrable similarities between Bharati and his English predecessors as regards the role of imagination, Bharati has a mystical background concerning the concept of imagination. This mystical aspect of

imagination has compelled him to relate it to dreams and supernatural powers. Like Bharati, almost all the English Romantic poets have linked imagination and dream and supernatural, divine powers. This attitude of relating imagination and dream is a peculiar Romantic tendency which we cannot frequently come across in classical literatures. To the classic mind, a poet is largely an inspired being, but no dreamer. If the Muses appeared to Hesiod in a dream, they only warned him of his mission to write poetry in waking hours. Yet Longinus, the Platonist may have well seen that the ecstasy of the poet is nearly akin to the dream.[13] But, the Romantics find an organic connectedness between poetry and dream.

Shelley's long poems such as *Alastor* and *Epipsychidion* are a passionate dream, a straining after impossibilities, a record of fond conjectures, a confused embodying of vague abstractions.[14] Shelley has portrayed the hero of his *Alastor* as a Romantic poet, a typical dreamer. Whereas Bharati explains the functions of imagination in *Kuyirpāṭṭu*, Shelley presents it through his poet-hero of *Alastor*. This poem portrays a youth of uncorrupted feelings and adventurous spirit led forth by an imagination inflamed and purified through familiarity with all that is excellent, and majestic, to the contemplation of the universe. In short, this poem is a dream-like allegory of the fate of the poet in this world. The poet-hero's infancy was nurtured by everything that was bright and lovely, in nature and in human thought. The same pattern is seen Keats' *Endymion* too. The hero of Keats' *Endymion*, like the hero of *Alastor*, goes on phantasmagoric travels. Like the hero of *Alastor, Endymion's* love-sick hero's wanderings in search of the moon-goddess is palpably the wanderings of the soul in search of the ideal and the metamorphosis of the Indian maiden into the Goddess signifies that the road to this ideal lies through surrender to beauty in the particular.[15] The structure of this poem seems almost identical with the structure of Bharati's *Kuyirpāṭṭu*. Though the purpose of the above two English poems is not to explain the functions of creative imagination, they, in some way or other, relate imagination to dream.

While speaking about the poet-hero of *Alastor* Shelley says,

"By solemn vision, and bright silver dream
His fancy was nurtured . . . . . ."[16]

Again,

" The spirit of sweet human love has sent
A vision to the sleep of him who spurned
Her choicest gifts.....".[17]

Shelley speaks about the 'dream of poets' again in *The Revolt of Islam*.[18] It is significant to note that Shelley was frequently haunted by dreams of the above kinds. In December 1817, he wrote a letter to Marlow in which he has said "..... I find the very blades of grass and the boughs of distant trees present themselves to me with microscopic distinctness. Towards evening I sink into a state of lethargy and inanimation, and often remain for hours on the sofa between sleep, and waking, a prey to the most painful irritability of thought".[19] In another letter written to Leigh Hunt, Shelley says "Those writings which I have hitherto published, have been little else than visions which impersonate my own apprehensions of the beautiful and the just".[20] In another instance he defines poetry as,

"A power which comes and goes like dream
And which none can ever trace".[21]

Keats compares imagination to Adam's dream. He writes, "The imagination may be compared to Adam's dream - he awoke and found it truth'.[22] Like Shelley and Keats, Coleridge also was fascinated by dreams and the unconscious mind and would readily have admitted that the raw materials of poetry may come from this other world within ourselves. The German Romantics also have insisted on the close kinship between imagination and dream. But, the difference between English and German Romanticism lies in the fact that whereas the German Romantics tended to gaze exclusively into the transcendental regions of their longings, the English endeavoured above all to come to terms with reality. Imagination, far from being an escape into illusion won for them a path of access to the means of ordering the chaos facing them.[23]

Like the Romantics, the psycho-analytical critics have also drawn parallels between dream and poetry. According to C.G. Jung, "A great work of art is like a dream; for all its apparent obviousness it does not explain, and is never unequivocal. A dream never says: 'You aught', or 'This is the truth'. It presents

an image in much the same way as nature allows a plant to grow and we must draw our own conclusions.[24] Almost all the major Romantic poems are in conformity with the Jungian elucidation. There are again the Marxist critics who have demonstrated the close relationship between dream and poetry. Christopher Caudwell says "Just as poetry can be equated with dream, poetic technique is similar to dream technique. Poetry is a kind of inverted dream".[25] Yet, the Marxist will not accept the view that poetry originates in an unconscious state like dream. They differentiate dream and art thus: "In dream the affective organization is unconscious and therefore personal and art, in which the affective organization is conscious and therefore social".[26]

Bharati

Like Shelley and other Romantic poets, Bharati also has associated dream with imagination and poetry. Chellammal Bharati has said that Bharati was haunted by day-dreams from his very early school days.[27] One of his contemporary poets says that Bharati lived a major part of his life in day-dreams.[28] S. Vijaya Bharati informs us that "Bharati could not concentrate on his studies. Even when he was seven or eight years old he had dreams of an enchanting nature and started writing poems of love and romance".[29] In *Pāñcāli Capatam* Bharati prays to his mother goddess to take him into visions of fantasy.[30]

In his poem entitled *Cantirikai*, (The moon) Bharti compared his vision of the moon with that of an English poet, and expresses his inner experience. The moon created in Bharati's heart a divine dream forcing him to cast aside all other thoughts. In one of his later poems entitled *Veṇṇilavē* Bharti draws a parallel between his experience of the beauty of moonlight and the passage of time. The above mentioned poem describe the disappearance of reality and the birth of a new dream world. In his *Kaṇṇaṉ Pāṭṭu*, Bharati himself says, "I lost myself day-dreaming in a rhythm and harmony of forgetfulness".[31] Speaking about Bharati's day-dreaming S. Vijaya Bharati observes "Continuous and deep thinking of any kind of experience when one is in a conscious state, results in dreams. In the same way, poetry is in the dream of the poet which emerges in a state of forgetfulness. While one's mind is at rest in one's sleep, the poet rests his mind even in waking."[32]

Some of the longer works of Bharati such as *Ñāṉaratam* and *Kuyiṟpāṭṭu* are designed in the pattern of dreams. *Ñāṉaratam*, which means the car of wisdom or creative imagination, is an allegorical dream phantasy. The soul of the poet or his inner personality, accompanied by his mind, treated as a sense organ, soars up in a dream into illusory worlds such as *Upasāntilōkam*, *Kāntarvalōkam*, *Cattiyalōkam* and *Tarmalōkam* in succession and describes its experience most graphically. It is a most powerful piece of modern Tamil writing, unrivalled in its simplicity of style, lucidity of expression, moving power of language, which often rises to poetical height and the profoundity of thought. The imagination of the writer in this work is cosmic in its range and strength.[33] The dream pattern of imagination is seen at the concluding part of *Ñānaratam*, where the poet describes his liberation from the unconscious state, as "My eyes have become faint. I was unconscious for sometime. Afterwards I regain my senses. I opened my eyes and found myself in the upstairs of my house at *Vīrarākava* Mutlali street, Triplicane, surrounded by newspapers and writing materials". After contrasting his visionary experience with the earthly reality, the poet says that this earth is a dungeon where tortoises and wolves alone can live. This is a hell. We should not even look on the faces of men who never loath this earth.[34]

Bharati's *Kuyiṟpāṭṭu* also is a dream phantasy in an allegorical vein, where the imagination of the poet soars to a lofty height. In this poem, Bharati's sensory experience leads him to a deeper, intenser experience of inner harmony. The visible world disappears, and the poet is now in the depth of a poetic dream. The vision which has overpowered him in his state of forgetfulness, expresses itself throughout in the poem. *Uḻikkūttu*, where the ultimate dissolution of the universe is pictured with the Mother alone remaining finally in a state of macabre dance shows not only the cosmic vision of the poet, but also the splendour of his imagination.

In a poem entitled *Piḷḷaikkātal* Bharati speaks about two kinds of dreams namely *Naṉaviṭaittōynta Kaṉavu* (day-dream) and *Tuyiliṭaittōynta Kaṉavu* (ordinary dream). His concept of day-dream is nothing but creative imagination of the visionary kind. According to him, in day-dreaming, the poet is physically in an awakened state. But, his mind, which is in an unconscious state, brings some new events, episodes and scenes before him. This state of mind as

explained by Bharati is quite equivalent to the Waking dream of Keats and Wordswoth's *recollected* in *tranquility*. To Bharati imagination takes its birth neither completely in an unconscious state of mind nor completely in a conscious state but in a state of mind which is a fusion of the above two kinds. This state is known as *Sushupti*.

In his sonnet *Cantitikai*, Bharati calls imagination *Teyvīkakaṉavu* 'divine dream'. Elsewhere he has called it *Naṉaviṭaittōynta Kaṉavu* 'dream immersed in rality',[35] *Pakaṟ kaṉavu* 'day-dream' and *Neṭṭaikkaṉavu* 'long dream'.[36] In a story entitled *Vēppamaram* (The Neem Tree) which was written on 21-6-1919, Bharati explains how visions come to him in a half-conscious state. Unable to explain the visit of the vision objectively, he simply quotes two lines from Shakespeare's Hamlet (Tamil version), where Hamlet speaks to his friend Hoatio on seeing the ghost of his father as,

> "There are more things in Heaven and earth,
> Horatio,
> Than are dreamt of in your philosophy".[37]

This clearly shows that Bharati also has accepted the involvement of some mysterious power in the workings of imagination and during the composition of poetry. This belief in the involvement of some divine operation in the creative process has compelled Blake to describe imagination as "Divine activity" and Wordsworth as "Absolute Power".

Imagination and inspiration

"Inspiration', 'Intuition' and 'Insight' are the three conceptually pregnant terms frequently used by the Romantic poets all over the world to denote the source of their imagination. Almost all the Romantic poets have given an equal place to inspiration and imagination. Without inspiration, imagination and composition are impossible. The theory of inspiration is not a new thing unique to the Romantic works alone, since we can easily trace its origin to primitive ritual and poetry. Yet, this concept was given a new dimension, a mystical background by the Romantics in a later period.

Inspiration, the traditional name for the unconscious factor in creation, is classically associated in the Western tradition with the Muses, the daughters of Memory, and in Christian thought with Holy Spirit. When a poet is inspired, he is more at home than other men in this sub-conscious world of fancy. He is exceptionally prone to physical dissociation. And through this process, as suggested by David Craig, his inner conflicts- the contradictions in his relationship to society- are discharged, relieved.[38] Inspiration and possession are the same thing. In the primitive society mental disorders involving loss of consciousness and convulsions were attributed to possession by a god or animal or ancestral spirit. This idea emanates from the ecstasy of the mimetic dance, in which the performers lose consciousness of their identity as they impersonate the totemic animal, the symbol of the heightened common ego evoked by the dance.[39]

The Romantic period witnessed a renewed interest in inspirational literature. All these tendencies favoured the revival of Platonism since Plato found poet as being possessed by some kind of divine inspiration. The Romantics mainly relied on inspiration for their act of composition. They have called inspiration by different names such as 'a fine frenzy' and 'divine madness'. When they return to their normal self with the passing away of 'frenzy', they cannot recount the manner in which the poem came to be, nor can they see the full implication and significance of what they have made.[40] For Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats and Shelley poetry was in a sense a religion; they were like mystics waiting for the godhead to speak. When this afflatus failed Coledridge wrote no more poetry and Wordsworth no more good poetry. Shelley and Keats did not live to see the day when they would have to ask, in earnest "Whither is fled the visionary gleam?"[41] Coleridge was subject to fits of inspiration of this kind. Alchohol, opium, and other narcotic dull the conscious mind, the over-critical 'censor', and release the activity of the sub-conscious. Coleridge and De Quincey made a more grandiose claim that through opium, a whole new world of experience was opened up for literary treatment. It is significant to recall that at the end of his life Bharati was a victim of drug addiction and he believed that he could forget the unpleasant real world by resorting to drug and can commune with the ultimate reality. But, in the light of modern clinical reports it appears that the unusual elements in the work of such poets had their roots in their neurotic psyches and not in the specific effect of the drug.

Shelley, like other Romantics, has expressed his strong faith in inspiration. He has called inspiration "invisible influence". In his *A Defence of Poetry,* Shelley says,

> ".... The mind in creation is as a fading coal,
> which some invisible influence, like an
> inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness".[42]

This power arises from within and Shelley has compared it to the colour of a flower which fades and changes as it is developed. According to Shelley,

> " the conscious portions of our natures are unprophetic either of its approach or its departure. Could this influence be durable in its original purity and force, it is impossible to predict the greatness of the results; but when composition begins, inspiration is already on the decline, and the most glorious poetry that has even been communicated to the world is probably a feeble shadow of the original conceptions of the poet". [43]

Even though Bharati has not given a systematic theoretical form to poetic inspiration his frequent references to it clearly point to the fact that he strongly believed in the power of poetic inspiration. He has called poetic inspiration *Kavitaiveṟi* (poetic frenzy)[44] and *Kōlaveṟi* (beautiful frenzy).[45] When he is caught by it, the external world gradually disappears from his eye as in *Kuyiṟpāṭṭu*. In moments of inspiration, Bharati used to speak with the ocean and other natural objects and a number of such events have been recorded by his biographer Yatukiriyammāḷ.[46] One critic has said that "people call Bharati inspired without adequately judging of his intimations".[47] But, it looks a very strange statement since Bharati's poems reveal how he yearns for inspiration by praying to his Godess to give visions and inspiration. Undoubtedly, he can be seen as the most inspired of the Tamil poets. With a view to achieving divine inspiration Bharati longs for solitude. He once asked his friend that " a hall of solitude (*ēkantakūṭam*) is greatly needed for me to escape form the wicked men of this world.[48] How he reacts in inspired moments is very beautifully explained by Va. Ramaswamy, one of his biographers.[49] A. V. Subramania Aiyer is perfectly right when he says that Bharati gave much importance to inspiration

and showed keen interest in revealing whatever he got in moments of inspiration. Consequently, he has not given any systematic theory or coherent system of philosophy.[50] This is true of all the Romantic poets of the world.

Imagination and empathy

According to the Romantics, poetry is not merely a professional art but a way of living. They try their best to bring about a fusion of their being and knowing. This attitude has been termed as *empathy* by Keats. With their power of perception, the power of looking into the heart of things, the Romantics identify themselves with animate beings and inanimate objects. They have the great capacity for identifying themselves with other people, for pulling themselves into other people's positions, for seeing into the heart of a problem. This has been powerfully expressed by Bharati, who has said that all who write poetry cannot be poets. The true poet is one who has absorbed in himself the stars of the sky, solitude, tranquility and in the conversation of many, and become one with nature.[51]

Bharati prays to *Cakti* to keep him always in a yogic state, endowed with the power of identifying himself with the natural objects, and the power of vision, which would take him to the truth by which is informed the non-human world. The same attitude can be seen in Shelley also. Like Bharati, Shelley wants to be one with earth and ocean. Like Bharati who longs to identify himself with Kuyil in *Kuyirpāṭṭu*, Shelley wants to be one with the West Wind in his *Ode to the West Wind*. Like them, in *The Ode to a Nightingale*, Keats seeks to find a oneness of spirit between him and the bird. They believe that this merging will help them to look into the heart of things which they want to portray.

Functions of subjective imagination

As pointed out earlier, Bharati has accepted the subjective imagination of Sri Aurobindo. Even though the concept of subjective imagination was emphasized by Shelley, it was Bharati who has given a more detailed description of it in *Kuyirpāṭṭu* than his English counterpart.

As Bharati sees it in *Kuyiṟpāṭṭu*, the poet is caught by poetic inspiration before he enters into the imaginative world. When the effects of inspiration increases, the real world gradually disappears and there come into being dream-like events and scenes. Bharati puts it thus:

> "When poetic frenzy soars up to its heights the
> Reality disappears. And in the dream that comes to
> Poets in daytime, I visualize all those events".

This view has been shared by almost all the Romantic poets of the world. Again, when the poet enters into the dreamy or a half conscious state the blue ocean and the rays of the morning sun look like blue diamond and fire; he sees the waves singing the Vedas and embracing the shores of the ocean; he listens in the mango grove to the melodious voice of the Kyuil singing in sweet tone the chorus of love, which spreads all over the grove like lightening. Inspired by the song and the beauty of the green grove , the poet's mind longs to mingle with the Kuyil in one soul. Like Keats, who tries to fly with the Nightingale, Bharati also desires to fly with the Kuyil. He even likes to die in the happiest moment when he listens to its melodious song.

Imagination and description

In *Kuyiṟpāṭṭu* Bharati ridicules the poets who digress their narration by bringing in unnecessary events and descriptions to bear upon their visions. Bharati has clearly differentiated imagination and descriptive power, in *Pāñcāli Capatam* too. Whatever vision that comes to the poets in inspired moments is termed by Bharati as 'imagination'. But, in 'description' according to Bharati, the poet focuses his ego on the natural objects in his conscious state and describes or exaggerates them as he likes. He has called the former *Kaṟpaṉai* and named the latter *Viḷakkam.*

In *Kuyiṟpāṭṭu,* when the poet is cut away from his vision, he falls down with a screaming sound and on waking up he finds himself surrounded by old mats, pen, paper etc., Only then he realizes that all the events he saw in his vision are kindled by unconscious state of mind caused by the beauty of evening. Thus, the beauty of nature is hailed as a stimulant to the imaginative flight of the poet to

some supernatural world. Like Bharati, Keats comes down to reality from his nightmare in his poem *Ode to a Nightingale as*,

"Adieu! Adieu! Thy plaintive anthem fades
Was it a vision, or a waking dream? 52
Fled is that music; - Do I wake or sleep?"

When Bharati comes to reality from his vision all the implements for giving verbal shape to his nightmare such as pen, paper, etc., are already present before him. The experience of Bharati is akin to Shelley's experience of giving shape to the forms that appear before him when he is under the spell of poetic inspiration.

According to Bharati, the duty of the poet is to give expression to his visions and not to interpret them. That is why in the concluding lines of *Kuyirpāṭṭu* Bharati requests the Tamil scholars to interpret the true meaning of his vision.

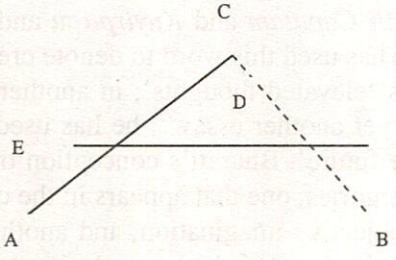
The unconscious imagination

Bharati has used the word *Karpaṉai* in various meanings. In his poems such as *Karpaṉaiyūr*, *Pāñcāli Capatam* and *Kuyirpāṭṭu* and in prose works like *Kiccaṭi* and *Vēppamaram* he has used this word to denote creative imagination. In one of his essays,[53] it means 'elevated thoughts'; in another essay[54] it goes with 'distorting the truth' and in yet another essay[55] he has used it to mean 'rational approach' and 'vision of the future'. Bharati's conception of imagination can be seen as falling under two categories, one that appears in the conscious state which is akin to Sri Aurobindo's objective imagination, and another, that comes in the unconscious or semi-unconscious state which stands in close approximation to Sri Aurobindo's subjective imagination. Bharati has used the world *karpaṉai* to denote mostly the former type and phrases like *Naṉaviṭaittōynta Kaṉavu*, *Neṭṭaikkaṉavu*, *Pakaṟkaṉavu* to denote the latter. In some instances, as in *Kuyirpāṭṭu*, the word *Karpaṉai* is used to denote the latter category too.

C.G. Jung, the psycho-analyst, has named the above two categories 'conscious imagination' and 'unconscious imagination' respectively.[56] Bharati, instead of calling the latter unconscious imagination, has related it with dream or vision. In most of his poems, that were born of such an imagination, there is a

clear and definite pattern. Such poems begin mostly with an initial situation which depicts the dreaming of the poet. In his dream, the poet encounters various events and episodes, and in the concluding part he returns to the real world. In all such poems or prose poems, either the beautiful twilight evenings or the stars and moon of the blue sky are depicted as kindling the poetic mind of Bharati. Like most of the Western Romantic poets, Bharati has expressed his fascination to evening or night in such poems. Like Bharati, almost all the Romantic poets of the world have shown keen enthusiasm for such kinds of visionary imagination. The German Romantics with the help of this imagination have created a number of visionary worlds which are divorced from reality. But, the English and Tamil poems of the above kind are tempered by realism and hence they are not completely divorced from reality. They present only an idealized and mystified form of actual reality.

The above mentioned dream pattern can be seen in Bharati's *Kuyirpāṭṭu, Ñāṉaratam* and *Vēppamaram*. Shelley's *Alastor* and *'Queen Mab and Keats' Ode to a Nightingale* and *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*,
etc., are more or less designed in this pattern. The pattern of Bharati's poems can be explained as follows:



A. The poet before entering into the dream or vision
E. The Real World
D. The Ideal World that appears in the dream
C. The Ultimate Reality or Truth
B. The poet after getting liberated from the dream.

After the dram there will be a metamorphosis in the mind of the poet which is akin to Wordsworth's

'A timely utterance gave that thought relief
And I am strong" [57]

Consequently, he poet is shown in this diagram as if returning to another point quite different from the one where he starts.

Bharati has described the above kind of typical Romantic visions as *Uḷḷakkāṭcikaḷ* 'inner scenes'. According to psycho-analysts, such visions come from the unconscious which can be called the 'Night side of life' or; 'Nocturnal side'. Since they present some unfamiliar materials they evoke a pre-human of super-human world. While Freud considers them the outcome of the repressed urges of the individual, C. G. Jung describes them as primordial experiences and hence the outcome of the collective unconsciousness. Such visions cannot be fathomed, and therefore require mythological imagery to give them concrete form.[58] It is significant to note that Bharati has abundantly used mythological images to give concrete forms to his visions.

According to Jung, good poetry is the revelation of the collective unconscious. Every period has its bias, its particular prejudice and its psychic ailment. An epoch is like an individual. It has its own limitations of conscious outlook, and therefore requires a compensatory adjustment. This is effected by the collective unconscious, in that a poet, a seer, or a leader allows himself to be guided by the unexpressed desire of his times and shows the way, by word or deed, to the attainment of that which everyone blindly cares. Again, as he finds it, art is a kind of innate drive that seizes a human being and makes him its instrument. The artist is not a person endowed with free will who seeks his own ends, but one who allows art to realize its purpose through him. As a human being he may have moods and a will and personal aims, but as an artist he is 'man' in a higher sense- he is 'collective man'-one who carries and shapes the unconscious, psychic life of mankind.[59] It is very significant to note that Shelley and Bharati have used the harp and veena respectively as proper symbols for the

poet with a view to emphasizing the passivity of their minds in composing the visionary poems.

When the poet is caught by such unconscious or semi-conscious vision, his conscious self and ego will become powerless. Hume has shown that the stronger the imagination the weaker will be the reason.[60] Bharati has clearly emphasized in *Kuyiṟpāṭṭu* that he was completely freed from the mundane world and the power of his conscious self when he was under the spell of poetic inspiration and vision. The same thing is reiterated by the close friends of Bharati such as Va. Ramaswamy and Maṇṭaiyam Srinivācāc cāriyār.

Queen Mab and Ñāṉaratam

As pointed out earlier, Shelley's *Queen Mob* and Bharati's *Ñaṉaratam* are in the form of the above mentioned dream pattern. V. Sachithanandan and T.M. Chidambara Ragunathan, who have compared Shelley and Bharati, have expressed the view that Bharati's poem is an adaptation of Shelley's *Queen Mab* and that the echo of Shelley is heard in every line of Bharati's *Ñāṉaratam*.[61] But, there is no intrinsic evidence to prove this statement. Besides, apart from the general structure, these two poems differ vastly both in execution and in spirit. Hence such statements have to be verified with further intensive analyses. I feel that the unquenchable desire for and conception of a cheerful golden age, which was deeply rooted in the innermost minds of the English people and the Tamils, have found their artistic expressions in *Queen Mab* and *Ñāṉaratam* respectively. When we analyse the social background of these two poems and their creators, we can clearly say that this type of similarity can occur even without mutual influence. It is better to interpret these two poems as the revelation of the collective unconscious of their social reality than to consider them escapist poems, composed as a means of escape from the "still sad music of humanity"

In *Queen Mab* the Fairy Queen takes away the soul of Ianthe on a chariot to various worlds and reveals the secrets of life. Finally, the soul returns and reunites with the body. When Ianthe opens her eyelids she finds herself on her bed. In *Ñāṉaratam*, the poet travels into various imaginary and legendary worlds on a chariot with Parvatakumari, a celestial woman, and when he wakes up, as in *Kuyiṟpāṭṭu*, he finds himself in his house at Triplicane.

Alastor, the skylark and kuyiṟpāṭṭu

Bharati's *Kuyiṟpāṭṭu* and Shelleys *Alastor* have striking similarities both in theme and form. *Alastor* may be considered an allegory of one of the most interesting situations of the human mind. It represents a youth of uncorrupted feelings and adventures led forth by an imagination, inflamed and purified through familiarity with all that is excellent and majestic, to the contemplation of the universe. He seeks in vain for a prototype of his conception. Blasted by his disappointment, he descends to an untimely grave. According to Mary Shelley, this poem was written when "the various ills of poverty and loss of friends brought home to Shelley the sad realities of life".[62]

Bharati's *Kuyiṟpāṭṭu* is also a piece of poetry like Shelley's Alastor. It was also written when Bharati was in a dejected mood at Pondicherry. He left his motherland, which he loved as a passionate lover, and entered into the French territory as a political exile. From the biographical accounts of Bharati as presented by Yatukiriyammāḷ and others, we are able to know that Bharati was also not at that time happy in his family life. It was at this time that the enthusiastic freedom fighter Bharati fell a victim to drugs and began to spend most of his time on the shores of the ocean and in the mango grove of Viḷakkeṇṇaic ceṭṭiyar at Muttiyālupēṭṭai. It was in such a background that his *Kuyiṟpāṭṭu* was composed, and published in 1912.

Even though the external structure of *Kuyiṟpāṭṭu* resembles that of *Ñānaratam* in its fertile imagination, beautiful natural tapestries, excellent imageries and supreme metaphorical expressions, it transcends *Ñānaratam* in various ways. In this beautiful Romantic flight of imagination, which is in the form of a quest pattern, the poet, in his day-dream undertakes a journey, like Dante to some unknown spiritual realm, meets his famous Absolute in the form of a beautiful damsel and returns to the real world. The *Kuyil* of this poem is something spiritual and it represents the Absolute. This bird is black like the poet's famous mother Goddess, *Kāḷi*. A. Viyaya Bharati says that the "Quest motif is the basis of *Kuyiṟpāṭṭu* and it seem to have been inspired by Keats philosophy of Beauty as expounded in *Endymion* ..... the poet's pursuit of the bird is a pursuit of Love and Beauty"[63].

The whole poem is an allegory of the soul's struggle with the passions that baffles its growth. The bull and monkey stand for the brutal and the infirm nature of the soul. The sword, which is a symbol of wisdom, helps to conquer these passions and facilitates the journey of the soul towards its ultimate goal. This poem can also be interpreted as an allegory of the soul's quest for the Absolute through beauty. In this poem, the poet worships the Absolute as the woman of his love. The *Kuyil* is a symbol of Beauty. In the words of T.P. Meenakshisundaran," Beauty is the purest incarnation of the Absolute, easily captivating our hearts and transporting us to its divine heights. This poem is a true poetry of the harmony of the Absolute, the Epic of the Soul".[64]

Bharati's appreciation of the song of the Kuyil reminds us of the tributes paid by Shelley to the melodious song of the Skylark in his poem *To a Skylark*. Both the poets have idealized their birds and attributed divine qualities to them.

The songs of Skylark and *Kuyil* are not merely earthly songs, but divine melodies which transport the listeners to celestial heights. The birds are not merely biological mechanisms but the symbols of ultimate reality and "Things more true and deep than we mortals dream"[65]. Both of them envy the happy life of their birds. Yet, Bharati's *Kuyirpāṭṭu* has more striking similarities with Keats' *Ode to a Nightingale* than Shelley's *To a Skylark*. In short, Bharati's *Kuyirpāṭṭu* is an artistic fusion of Shelley's *Alastor, To a Skylark* and Keats' *Ode to a Nightingale*. It is also a unique blend of the Dravidian, Aryan and European cultural streams [66].

Ode to the west wind and kārru

Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind* and Bharati's *Kārru* are excellent visions of the devastating as well as creative powers of nature. Yet they are not designed in the dream pattern which has been discussed in the foregoing passage. Bharati's *Kārru* reads like a short narrative poem in prose whereas Shelley's poem stands as a supreme example of his lyrical genius. Bharati's poem narrates in a very humorous way the love between two pieces of rope namely *Kantan* and *Vaḷḷi*. It reaches the climax when, one of the two ropes busts and there appears the God of wind, who teaches the amiable as well as the awful nature of the wind to the poet.

In the stray prose poems which follow the above narrative, Bharati, invokes the wind like Shelley, who calls it "Wild spirit", "Angels of rain and lightening" and "The trumpet of a prophecy". Both the poets have spiritualized the wind and attributed divine qualities to it. Whereas the wind itself is a God to Bharati to Shelley it is a power of Nature possessing God-like qualities. Yet, Bharati asserts man's superiority over the wind. To him the powers of the wind can be subdued by man and can be used for the benefit of humanity. On the other hand, Shelley sees himself as being powerless before his mighty wind, and in a tone tinged with melancholy, he prays to the wind.

"Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!" [67]

It is a striking contrast between Shelley and Bharati in their responses to the wind. Shelley's poem reveals his profound depiction mirroring his despair when he composed this poem. He had lost his children Clara and William within a year. The exhaustion and torment imposed by illness coupled with the profusely hostile criticism of journals had made him thoroughly dispirited. This poem is the outcome of the disillusionments which harrowed him.

Both the poets have longed to live in close company with the wind. It is interesting to note that wherever Shelley likes himself to be identified with the stars and wind, Bharati desires to be mingled with the sun, which is a symbol of the bright potentiality of Nature.

The powers of imagination

Comparatists of Romanticism have noted in Romantic poetry three important powers of imagination namely

1. The Essemplastic power
2. The Modifying Power and
3. The Mediating Power.[68]

All these powers can be seen at work in the poems of Shelley and Bharati.

The Essemplastic Power

The phrase "Essemplastic Power" was coined by Coleridge and used by him to mean "moulding into a unity, unifying". This unifying quality of creative imagination is called by Shelley "The power of association". He has contrasted it with reason which 'respects the differences'. Since imagination discerns "the similitude of things", Shelley has again called it "the principle of synthesis". Through its central unifying force, the imagination of the Romantic poet embraces every facet of human life shaping and transforming it into one harmonious beautiful entity. In the famous distinction between fancy and imagination Coleridge conceived the latter as the supreme integrating force, a living creative power, organic in its function, as against the lifeless mechanism of fancy which merely reassembles fixities and definitives. The eighteenth century view of poetry as judicious arrangement of ready-made images called from the memory would have been dismissed by Coleridge as the work of fancy. The task of imagination on the other hand, is a radical reshaping. Not only the Romantics but the socialist realists also have given importance to this power of imagination even though they have not used the phrase "Essemplastic Power". Gorky once wrote "To imagine, means to give shape, an image, to chaos. Imagination concludes the process of studying and selecting material, and finishes shaping it into a living – positive or negative – significant social type".[69]

The Essemplastic Power of creative imagination can be seen in the poetical works of Bharati and Shelley in places where they combine different images and bring about wonderful aesthetic effects. This act of unifying diverse things and finding a common link in them can be viewed as a typical Romantic attitude which can be seen not only in the visionary flights of the Romantics but also in their social ideals too. This has also compelled them to sing of social equality, national integration and cosmic and spiritual oneness. Plato's concept of the 'World Soul' and the Advaitic doctrines of India served as the basis for the growth of such social ideals in the Romantic poems of the West and the East respectively.

The Essemplastic Power of imagination manifests at various levels in Shelley's poems. In his nature poems such as *Ode to the West Wind* and *To a Skylark* he blends modern secular images with mythological or classical images

such as fierce Maenad and the blue Mediterranean. In *The Triumph of Life* he brings together a number of events and personalities from Socrates to Rousseau in one scene. *The Cenci, Rosalind* and *Helen,* etc. unite various places and images belonging to various times. *Prometheus Unbound* look like an art gallery where variegated images and events are presented in such a manner as to evoke a sense of remoteness.

Bharati alludes to the Essemplastic Power in his description of the classical epics:

"Mingling together wine and fire - joining
Together air and sky - The ancient
Tamil poets have composed epics of
Delicious charater".[70]

Here, different images like wine, fire, air, sky, etc. are combined together with a symbolical undertone to indicate sweetness, destructive power, life-giving force and elevated thoughts respectively. Apart from images of the above kind, images and events pertaining to the past, present and future are brought together in a beautiful way in the poem *Nāṭṭuvaṇakkam* in order to evoke a sense of nostalgia for the bygone days and to stimulate patriotic sentiments. By combining the names of the various places of India, Bharati brings before us an emotional picture of the integrated future India in which each part helps the other towards prosperity and growth of the whole nation. Thus in this poem, the snow-capped Himalayas, the western ocean, the island of Ceylon, the rivers of Bengal and so on blend together forming an aesthetically wholesome picture of future India. The association of sound and sense can be seen in the picturesque descriptions of *Pāñcāli Capatam. Kuyirpāṭṭu* presents the commingling of images pertaining to sky and other heavenly bodies. *Pāñcāli Capatam* presents a lively synthesis of earthly objects and heavenly things. Thus the red twilight sky serves as a parallel to the imaginary streams overflown with melting waters of gold, the blue pond to the blue sky, the golden boats to the twinkling stars.

The modifying power

The phrase 'Modifying Power' also was coined by Coleridge. Imagination exercises a 'modifying power' because "it is a creative force that not only unifies

but over, and above that, can transform qualitatively to shape a new compound".[71] This transfiguration is for Coleridge the vital function of the imagination, which he has characterized in the twelfth chapter of *Biographia Literaria,* in words quoted from Wordsworth as,

> "The vision and the faculty Divine
> Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth,
> A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud".[72]

Like Coleridge, Blake also has a felt conviction in the transforming power of imagination which is the basis of the 'Divine vision'. Wordsworth has in mind the modifying power of imagination when he speaks of poetry thus: "her 'poetry'duty, is to treat of things not as they are, but as they appear, not as they exist in themselves, but as they seem to exit to the senses and to the passion". He again describes it as a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect.[73] Shelley and Bharati also have strong faith on the modifying power of imagination. In *A Defence of Poetry,* Shelley speaks about this power of imagination, "Poetry turns all things to loveliness; it exalts the beauty of that which is most deformed; it marries exaltation and horror, grief and pleasure, eternity and changes;".[74]

The outcome of this power of imagination is the emergence of a number of Utopias in the Romantic writings. Whenever the poet is obsessed with the earthly reality he either idealizes it or creates another imaginary world of his own by the modifying power of imagination. Whenever Shelley finds that this earth is not a suitable place for him to live, he yearns to live in an idealized world with his Skylark, or Nightingale, or West Wind, or some classical worlds as revived by him in his poems. The same tendency can be seen in Bharati too. In one of his poems, Bharati advises his mind not to live in this earth like a pig which wallows in slush, but soar to heaven and quaff the honey from the cool moon.[75] In one of his essays, he asks "can a man live in this world where tortoises and wolves alone can live? This is a place of misery. This is a sink of iniquities and a veritable hell. One should not even look at the faces of these people who do not even hate this world.[76] This hatred has compelled Bharati to create idealized imaginary pictures of a happy future world.

The fascination of Utopias can be seen in the classical poems too. Plato's *Republic* and the Kōsala of Kampaṉ are the typical instances of the classical poets' vision of the future, ideal world. With a Utopian streak, Philip Sidney, when speaking about poetry, says "The real world is brazen; the poet offers the golden".[77] Yet, it was the Romantic poet Blake who has asserted clearly that his poetry"... is an Endeavour to Restore what the Ancients called the Golden Age". When compared with the Utopias of the Germans, those of the English tended to be a more practical kind, even though the Pantocratic schemes of Coleridge and Southey came to nothing.

Shelley aspired to create a new myth of the redemption of the earth in *Prometheus Unbound* by a free use of classical materials. Keats tries to gather experience into a coherent whole through a consistent reinterpretation of traditional images in his longer poems *Endymion* and *Hyperion*. Coleridge's dream world is characterized perhaps by opium dreams, rather than the outcome of any deliberate quest for a new cosmology. In the visionary works of his later years such as *Jerusalem* (1804), Bake attempts to give a cosmogony neither classical nor Christian but essentially original in its incorporation of Biblical, Miltonic and Celtic elements.

Shelley's utopia

Shelley has clearly expressed his idea that the superficial "familiar world" which exists in our mere random impressions is a chaos; and since the mind possesses a particle of that plastic stress which organizes the true world, it reconstitutes or "Create anew the universe, after it has been annihilated in our minds by the recurrence of impressions blunted by reiteration".[78]

Shelley's new world is not the outcome of a nostalgia for the past, like the Golden Age described by the Greek poets and widely accepted in the 18th century. But, he does borrow from two of the most famous accounts of Golden Age, *Thomson's Spring* and Milton's Eden, since his world, like theirs is a pastoral one. Shelley looks forward to controlling man's environment, by every means which the advancement of science may offer. Deserts are converted into pasture, and fragrant Zephyrs replace the storms which once deformed "the

beaming brow of heaven".[79] He revered the golden age of Athens because it had nutured democracy and personal freedom.

Even though the elements of Utopia are found scattered throughout the poems of Shelley, they find concrete expression in the four long poems namely *The Revolt of Islam, Hellas, Prometheus Unbound* and *Queen Mab*. The life principle of his Utopia is love, freedom and symbiotic relationship between men. Like Bharati, Shelley wants to bring his Utopia to this earth. When tyranny is defeated this earth appears as a paradise in *The Revolt of Islam*. He describes it,

> "... ... Ay, this is Paradise
> And not a dream, and we are all united!"[80]

In *Hellas,* the coming of a golden age is announced by the 'Chorus',

> "The World's great age begins anew
> The golden years return,
> The earth doth like a snake renew
> Her winter weeds outworn,
> Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam,
> Like wrecks of a dissolving dream".[81]

In *Prometheus Unbound*, the classical Prometheus, tied with a rock, is liberated and this heralds a new era. The impact of Christian thoughts can be seen in the depiction of the golden age in *Queen Mab*, where he says,

> "A garden shall arise, in loveliness
> Surpassing fabled Eden".[82]

The picture of the Golden age continues,

> "A brighter morn awaits the human day,
> When every transfer of earth's natural gifts
> Shall be a commerce of good words and works;
> When poverty and wealth, the thirst of fame,
> The fear of infamy, disease and woe,

War with its million horrors, and fierce hell
Shall live but in the memory of Time,
Who, like a penitent libertine, shall start,
Look back, and shudder at his younger years".[83]

In such an Utopia,

"fruits are ever ripe, flowers are ever fair,
And autumn proudly bears her matron grace,
Kindly a flush on the fair check of spring

The lion now forgets to thirst for blood;
There might you see him sporting in the sun".[84]

He praises this earth as,

"O Happy Earth! Reality of Heaven!
To which those restless souls that ceaselessly
Throng through the human universe, aspire". [85]

Bharati and the modifying powers of imagination

Bharati has in mind the modifying power of imagination when he speaks of the power of poetry as,

"Transforming stone into diamond,
Converting copper into gold, making
The grass as paddy"[86]

In *Kuyirpāṭṭu* he attributes this power of transformation to the sun when he describes its power thus:

"Causing the grass smile, making flower as a thing of wonder
Making clear the sand and causing the water smile".[87]

In another poem he speaks at length about the modifying power of imagination.

"You give life to lifeless matters
Bestow light on dim matters
Astronomy, the fall of Mohamad,
The skillful service of the small boy – whatever the thing may be
You make all of them as things of beauty
Oh poetry! The daughter of Cakti
You endow earthly life with meaning"[88]

Whereas Shelley gives all his theory of imagination through his prose works, Bharati mostly presents them through his poetical compositions. The theoretical aspect of the modifying power of poetic imagination is more clearly expressed by Bharati than his English predecessor.

Kiruta Yukam

Like other Romantic poets, Bharati also has created an Utopia with the help of his imagination. The modifying power of Bharathi's imagination and its output in the form of an ideal world are beautifully expressed in a poem from Ceylon which glorifies Bharati as,

"A smiling golden poet who converts this earthly reality
And by supreme imagination gives shape to a new
World in his poems".[89]

Bharati has given the name *Kirutayukam* to his ideal Utopia. This name has been taken from the old purāṇic tradition, which divides the duration of the existence of the world into four yugas. Bharati not only sees *Kirutayukam* as a chronological phase but gives a special background to it and portrays it as a golden age. In an essay entitled *Kataṟpālattil Varṇācirama Capai*, he says that five thousand years after *Kaliyukam* a new era, *Kirutayukam*, will appear. At that time this world will be changed.[90] In another poem entitled *Pūpēntirā Vijayam*, Bharati sees *Pūpēntira*, the disciple of Vivekananda, as the harbinger of *Kirutayukam*. It was Bharati's scheme to depict his ideal Utopia with the background of *Purāṇic* tradition, which is very familiar to the Indians, who are nurtured in the mythological backgrounds of Hinduism.

As suggested by Northrop Frye, the Utopias are the results of an analysis of the present, the society that confronts the myth maker. The Utopia is a speculative myth; it is designed to contain or provide a vision for one's social ideas, not to be a theory connecting social facts together.[91] These poets analyse the social problems emotionally and portray their idealized world picture focusing the ideals they wish to bring out.

The Marxist critics have generally attacked the utopias of the Romatic poets as a revelation of the poets' escapist motif. According to them, these utopias are nothing but the attempt of the bourgeois poet to escape from the social reality which confronts him. But it is misleading to make generalized statements like this. The Romantic poets of the active group have given their social ideals of the future society in their utopias in the same manner they are presented by the Socialist Realists. Although the Romantics bring in the mythological themes and episodes, these are primarily intended to define and inform their visions of the society. Their art consists not merely in representing the past and the present but transforming them too. Emotion and imagination may play a dominant role in their picture of the Golden Age. They may be too impractical and may have no materialistic basis. The poets who create them may not have a tested scientific outlook and objective social consciousness. Yet, we cannot disparage them on this ground and say that these poets have no social role.

As suggested by Compton-Rickett, Shelley is "little interested in the past, mindful only of the present when it jarred on his social idealism. His eyes are fixed intensely on the future. To renovate the world, to bring about Utopia, that is his constant aim and for this reason we may regard Shelley as emphatically the poet of eager, sensitive youth, not the animal youth of Byron, but the spiritual youth of a visionary and reformer".[92] Shelley's Utopia is influenced by Godwin's ideal community. Godwin's ideal community is a collection of free, equal, and like-minded persons, too reasonable to need a government, though there are common arrangements to which they all consent. No class, grade, or function distinguishes some from others. Shelley's portrayal of an ideal world comes in close conformity with Godwin's social ideals.

Whereas Shelley's Utopia is filled with secular images, Bharati's Utopia is filled with those of religion. Shelley gives no room for God and religion in his

Utopia whereas the theist Bharati presents them in abundance. In spite of such dissimilarities the striking similarity is that both Utopias present contemporary social ideals with imaginative fervour.

The background of utopias

The poets who create Utopias generally choose either puranic background, or a particular background of a historical period or their own myth about a future society. The Christians have chosen New Jerusalem as the backdrop of their myth. Romantic poets like Keats have chosen either the Hellenic or the medieval background. Shelley, although he took a classical background, has mostly created a myth of his own. As far as Indian poets are concerned, they have chosen the puranic or classical backgrounds. Gandhi has used the myth of the Kingdom of Rama. Bharati takes to the chosen myth of *Kirutayukam* and *Cattiyalōkam*. He is the first poet who has used the *Kirutayukam* myth, which was used for religious and puranic purposes for the propagation of the ideals of Freedom Struggle. Apart from this, in poems like *Kuyirpāṭṭu* he has invented his own idealized lands without borrowing myths from tradition. The Freedom Struggle appears a sign to Bharati for the end of *Kaliyukam* and the commencement of *Kirutayukam*. Apart from viewing *Kirutayukam* as a golden age Bharati has viewed it as an ideal state of mind, which is obvious from his statement that "whoever give up mischief he will achieve *Kirutayukam*".[93] Here one is reminded of Christ's teaching about the Kingdom of God.

Comparatists have shown the influence of Shelley on Bharati's Utopia as portrayed in *Pāñcāli Capatam, Kuru Kōvintar* and *Ñāṉaratam*. It is obvious that a number of similarities at the superficial level can be seen in the utopias of both the poets. In them, tyranny and arrogance are defeated and men live in peace and harmony at the end. Yet, the religiously centred utopia of Bharati and the secular utopia of Shelley differ vastly. Consequently, we cannot overrate Shelley's influence on Bharati in this regard. Despite this, the impact of Sri Aurobindo, who preaches 'eternal life' and '*Kirutayukam*', can be seen in Bharati's poems.

In Bharati's utopia men are free and they enjoy the abounding bliss of nature without restriction or inhibition. They live an eternal life, and the glory of

man is pronounced by Gods. There is no oppressor and the oppressed and people live in equality, liberty and fraternity. He finds *Kirutayukam* in the fall of the Tsarist government. It is precisely this term *Kirutayukam* used in this poem Putiya Rusia (New Russia) which enables us to consider that Bharati was one of the early imaginative writers in India who understood the historical importance of the Russian revolution of 1917. In *Vināyagar Nāṉmaṇi Mālai* (39) he shows the ways to bring about this new era, and asserts that he has dedicated his life to bring about this golden age in this world. The *Tarma rājiyam* as described in *Pāñcāli Capatam* can also be taken as a picture of Bharati's *Kirutayukam*. In his new world there is no worry, no war, no poverty and no suffering. Love is the basic emotion of *Kirutayukam* preached as a religion and a way of life. Shelley brings in the pastoral background in his golden age. As in the golden age of Isaiah in *the Bible*, in Shelley's Utopia also men and animals live together in achieved harmony. Adhering to the Tamil-Indian tradition Bharati, unlike Shelley, uses the *marutam* background in his utopia. Bharati's utopia is fragmentary, and he has not depicted it continuously in longer poems as has been done by Shellley.

The Mediating Power

The heroic age respected poets as prophets. It considered the poets as men who connect the real world and the world of celestial beings. It believed that the divine messages and apocalyptic visions may be revealed only through the poets. These beliefs linger in the Gnomic and devotional literatures too. The Christian Neo-platonists as well as Plato believed in the prophetic character of poetry and the divine inspiration of the poets. These ideals were revived throughout the world in the 19th century when the poet once again assumes the role of a prophet. But, this prophetic power is linked with creative imagination and the result is the Romantic concept of the mediating power of imagination. The function of the mediating power is to serve as a link between the known universe and the transcendental realm. The entire notion of a mediating power stems from a specifically Romantic conception of the imagination as a means of apprehending a superior reality. The belief in such a mediating power was widespread and strong among the English Romantic poets, who held that the creative imagination is closely connected with a peculiar insight into an unseen order behind visible things.[94] Shelley has this power in mind when he says in *A Defence of Poetry* that

"To be a poet is to apprehend the true and the beautiful".[95] Again and again he returns to this central theme, the value of the mediating power of the imagination, clothing it in a variety of elegant formulations. According to him "poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration; the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity costs upon the present; the words which express what they understand not, the trumpets which sing to the battle, and feel not what they inspire...".[96]

The Romantic were concerned with the things of the spirit and hoped that through imagination and inspiration they could both understand them in compelling poetry. It was this search for an unseen world that awoke the inspiration of the Romantics and made poets of them.[97] To Keats what imagination seizes as beauty must be truth. This implies that Keats also had a strong faith in this mysterious nature of poetic imagination. The German and the French Romantics also have accepted this power.[98] When we compare all the Romantic poems of the world we can see the German Romantics laying more stress on this power than their English and French counterparts.

As far as Tamil literature is concerned, Bharati's poems clearly reveal his faith in this power of imagination. All such poems which are informed by this power of imagination are in the form of quest motif and are pure or escape poems. Whenever he finds himself a fish out of water on this earth, he takes on to cosmic flights to comprehend the cosmic realities. In poems like *Veṇṇilavil* and *Cantirikai* the real world disappears and we can see the poet trying to fly to a new world. *Kuyirpāṭṭu* depicts the journey of the poet's soul to find the Absolute reality. This quest motif is seen in *Vēppamaram* and *Ñāṉaratam* too. All such poem have an allegorical dimension. This type of poem was introduced to Tamil literature by Bharati.

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19. BYRON AND BHARATIDASAN – A COMPARATIVE STUDY

English Romanticism of the 19th century was a complex movement for the liberation of human mind from the cramping atmosphere of the 18th century neo-classicism. It brought greater freedom and newer techniques in the manners of thought, perception and expression. Hence it has been described as a 'shift of consciousness' that 'cracked the backbone of European thought'. This 'shift of consciousness' has cracked the backbone of the Indian especially the Tamil literature also, and its impact was deeply felt in the end of the 19th century when the waves of renaissance struck the shores of Tamil land with all their tenacity and zest of new spirit. Such a deep impact of Romanticism on Tamil literature is apparently seen in the works of the literary heads of the early decades of the twentieth century such as Bharati, Bharati Dasan and Kavimani, who made a breakthrough in the traditional ways of thinking and expression in the pedantic style which were some of the characteristic features of their predecessors whose age can aptly be called the neo-classical period in Tamil literature. This chapter tries to explicate some of the thoughts, trends and techniques of Romanticism shared by the two Romantic poets Byron and Bharati Dasan.

Among the English Romantic poets, Byron is said to be a revolutionary; Shelly a reformer; and Keats an artist. The same can be attributed to the Tamil Romantics Bharati Dasan, Bharati and Kavimani. Byron is a child of the French Revolution whereas Bharati Dasan is a product of the Indian Freedom Struggle, Byron is regarded by Goethe "as the representative of the modern political era" and "the greatest genius of our country". "To understand, to realize what the moment in 1827 is, and what its tomorrow will be, understand and realize what Byron is". Similarly, Bharati Dasan can be hailed as a representative of the first five decades of the present century Tamilnadu who is nourished and cherished by the ideals of the Freedom Movement and the Self-Respect movement of E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker.

Revolt against neoclassicism

Though these two Romantic poets were rooted in the rich legacy of their fertile literary traditions, they revolted against the decadent classicism of their nearest predecessors who have almost forgotten the social function of poetry. Both Byron and Bharati Dasan revolted against the poetic diction of their neoclassical predecessors and experimented with many metrical forms, trying established measures of their own countries, as well as measures formerly used almost exclusively by foreign poets. Though they revolted against the decadent classicism, they had high respect for the ancient classical writers. Byron speaks of Petrarch as one who arose to raise the language of his country from her barbaric foes. He also suggests that Tully's Voice, Virgil's lay and Livy's picturesque page "will bring about the resurrection of fallen Rome". Bharati Dasan had also a deep veneration for the *Caṅkam* poets, the first Tamil epic poet Iḷaṅkō and the universal ethical bard Vaḷḷuvar who gave pride and prestige to the language and culture of the Tamils. Like Byron, Bharati Dasan also used the simple language of the common man and glorified things that were considered to be unworthy for poetic themes by their neoclassical predecessors. In this respect, Bharati Dasan praised Bharati with glowing tributes for guiding him to compose poems using the simple language of the common man. Though Bharati Dasan revolted against the poetic diction and decorum, he emphasized the importance of metre and prosody. In his opinion, prosodic rules and grammatical codes must be revived to suit the spirit of the age and poetic content. In this respect, we can call Bharati Dasan an organicist. Byron also had such a view regarding the handling of simple themes and style and this is apparent from his frequent experiment with new forms and themes. In *Don Juan*, Byron uses the whole living language as he himself knew it and spoke of it.

Byron's poetical powers were brought into action not by the refined sentiment of the Augustans, but by the wild and vaulting ideas which came from the French Revolution. The same can be said of Bharati Dasan also whose poetical powers were stimulated and strengthened by the great renaissance and reformation that took place in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Though he revolted against the 18th century neoclassicism, Byron turned towards the neoclassical poets for the public utterance. The content of the

Byronic Byron may indeed be typically romantic, but the method, or at any rate the approach, is in many ways typical Augustan rhetoric. Like him, Bharati Dasan is also fully aware of his audience though he is through and through a romantic poet who indulged in subjectivism. He is not only a nightingale singing melodious songs to cheer his own moods, but a public speaker whose utterances are expressed with the purpose of edifying the huge audience who are in his front.

Byron had a nostalgic attachment towards the literary traditions of the past. Like Bharati Dasan, he is not prepared to quarrel against the poetic conventions of his classical writers. He says

> I am fond of rhyme
> Good workmen never quarrel with their tools;
> I've got new mythological machinery.
> And very handsome supernatural scenary.

Yet, he is not prepared to follow the hackneyed themes and stereotyped literary forms. He says

> There's only one slight difference between
> Me and my epic brethren gone before . . .
> They so embellish, that 'tis quite a bore
> Their labyrinth of fable to thread through
> Whereas this story's actually true

Libertarian sentiments and social & doctrines

The English Romantic poets, who were the products of the Industrial Revolution increasingly regarded themselves as men removed from society, as individualists realizing only the instincts of their hearts and not responsible for the demands of society as an institution. This movement attacked the church, either as Puritan (Methodist) or as an open sceptic. It attacked all laws as restrictive of equality, and advanced the conception of the naturally good man, born free but everywhere in chains. Such revolt against existing systems of laws, canons, forms and traditions always appear as a revolt of the heart against reason,

a revolt of feeling and sentiments against sterile formalism and the tyranny of the past. Blake. Byron, Keats, Wordsworth and Shelly express this ideological revolution, each in their different ways, as Romantic Revolution (Christopher Caudwell 85).

The above types of revolutionary attitudes are apparent in the poetical compositions of Byron and Bharati Dasan, and they are further strengthened by the spirit of their own age. As already stated Byron and Bharati Dasan were the children of some important revolutions and wars. The American revolution slightly preceded Byron's birth in 1788, the French Revolution occurred during his early years, and the Industrial Revolution had been accelerating throughout his life. He supported the Whigs believing it to be the party of freedom and humanity. His poems projected upon the public imagination a type of hero who was the very embodiment of revolt. The Greek war of Independence began on 25th March 1821 and ended in effect six and a half years later when the British, French and Russians destroyed the Turkish and Egyptian fleets at Novarino. Byron actively participated in this war also.

As we have already seen, Bharati Dasan has involved himself in the Freedom Struggle and the Self - Respect movement launched by E.V. Ramasamy. Like the poets of the English Romantic Movement, poets like Bharati and Bharati Dasan attacked the institutionalized religion and its superstitious notions. Like Shelly and to a certain extent like Byron, Bharati Dasan bitterly attacked religious dogmas and challenged the existence of God in most of his works. He is the atheist among the grand trio of Tamil Literature, the other two being Bharati and Kavimani. In his earlier life, Bharati Dasan joined Bharati and composed poems urging the Indians to fight against the British Imperialism. His *Tēciyakītam, Katar Irāṭṭiṉappāṭṭu,* etc. are a few worth mentioning. After this period, he was highly attracted by the *Tirāviṭa Kaḻakam* and this was a turning point in his poetic career since it has shaped him into a social reformer fighting his battle against the cruelty of religion, and casteism.

Both Byron and Bharati Dasan have expressed their libertarian sentiments through certain characters. Byron's Cain' is a bitter attack on institutionalized religion. It opens with Cain's refusal to join the family workship of Jehovah. Cain can feel no gratitude to a deity who inflicted a cruel punishment on Adam and

Eve after having himself exposed them to temptation, and who extended that punishment to their stillborn and unoffending progeny. This Romantic rebel murders his brother Abel and in his rage, he proclaims his deed a sacrifice to the God who "loves blood" (III – I 310). By making Cain a humanized Lucifer – or Lucifer an apotheosized Cain – Byron establishes the defiance of God exhibited by his leading characters as the stance that is upheld by the play as a whole. Like Cain, Byron's Luficer identifies God with tyranny and obscurantism, himself with freedom and enlightenment. Bharati Dasan's *Iraniyaṉ* is a counterpart of Byron's Cain, who expresses his hatred and defiant sentiment against God, who is a symbol of institutionalized religion and tyranny. He is a traditional antagonist who is made a protagonist by the Romantic poet Bharati Dasan.

Though there are only a few characters like Cain and Lucifer in the poetical compositions of Bharati Dasan who revolts against God, there are some revolutionary characters like *Cuppammā* who revolt against tyranny. Revolt against tyranny is a recurrent theme of his poetical works and such revolutions always end with the blossoming of the democratic set-up with the only exception of *Pāṇṭiyaṉ Paricu*. In *Puraṭcik-Kavi* the lovers and the subjects revolt against the cruel king which result in the promulgation of democracy. His poems contain the theme of liberty in various fields such as love, politics, etc.

Byron had a deep nostalgic attachment towards Greece which was once the cradle of European civilization. This resulted in his participation in the war that was launched by the Greeks against the Turks. Such a nostalgic attachment took a different shape in Bharati Dasan who began to attach much devotion to the past glories of Tamilnadu. As a result he, unlike Bharati, began to take shelter in *Caṅkam* classics. The discovery of the *Caṅkam* classics in this period opened before him fresh woods and pastures new and he has developed a good taste for them. The *Tamil Purist* movement of Maṟaimalai Aṭikaḷ also attracted him very much and he became an ardent opposer of Sanskrit and its influence on his own mother tongue. He laments the cultural deterioration of the Tamils recalling at once their past glory and grandeur.

Byron is a poet of liberty. His *Don Juan* contains many ideas on the subject of liberty which developed more fully in other poems and dramas. It is, therefore, a kind of catch – all and carry – all of Byron's thought on social

doctrine. The same kind of libertarian sentiments breathes through in almost all the works of Bharati Dasan also. Like Bharati Dasan who laments the degenerated state of the Tamils, Byron laments for Greece when he compares her present state with her past glory. He dreams that the hour is near which shall give Greece back the heritage that is hers – her lost liberty.

Revolution, Byron would say, is the means by which a country might rid itself of tyrants and achieve the freedom it deserves. The idea of revolution verses tyranny was much in his mind, and the thought of the one seemed to lead to an expression of the other. To him, since Napolean grew a tyrant, he failed. The theme of the 'Prophecy' is the unification and freedom in Italy. In his poem 'Mario Faliero' – Dodge is portrayed as a tyrant. He emphasizes the idea that revolution to gain freedom is worthwhile; but when revolution is staged for personal ambition, as in the case of that fostered by Doge, it results in mere tyranny and is doomed to failure. The same conception of revolution, tyranny and liberation is visible in most of the long narratives of Bharati Dasan such as *Tamiḻacciyiṉ Katti, Pāṇṭiyaṉ Paricu* and *Puraṭcikkavi*. In all these narratives, the confict between good and evil as personified in their protagonists and antagonists is presented powerfully so as to convey effectively the hatred of the poet towards tyranny and his ideal aspiration for the blossoming of an ideal state where people live peacefully in mutual love. In all these narratives, Bharati Dasan, like Byron, attacks the faults of mankind: hypocrisy, cant, pride, vanity of glory, evils of needless warfare; and in an unusually subtle yet significant manner, returns to his consistent theme – freedom form oppression. Byron says in *Don Juan*

> I wish men to be free
> As much from mobs as kings – from you as me.

In this respect, he stands with Shelley, Leigh Hunt, Tom Moore and others as a poet of reform (Dowden 156). He ended his days striving successfully to instill that hope and love of liberty in the hearts of a suffering people. According to C.M. Bowra, there was hardly any country whose leading poets in the thirties and forties of the 19th century were not in some sense Byronic, in their rejection of established systems, their aggressive self – assertion, their love of liberty and their cult of love. The Tamil Romantics are not an exception to this

general attitude, and Bharati Dasan is undoubtedly a supreme example and a genuine representative of this common tendency.

When the French Revolution broke the equilibrium on which the civilization of the eighteenth century has rested, a new type of man came into existence, and Byron was the supreme example of it in his rejection of established ties, his cult of the self, his love of adventure, and his ironical distrust of his own emotions and beliefs. He was undoubtedly an aristocratic rebel when aristocrats were leaders of new movements and new era. The same can be said of Bharati Dasan also. The Freedom Struggle accompanied by some of the social reforms broke the equilibrium of the traditional set-p and as a result a new type of man realising fully his responsibility and his active role in society emerged and Bharati Dasan is an ideal example of such a type.

Byron had a strong faith in individual liberty and he asks his men: "Why bend to the proud, or applaud the absurd" and asks them to live like free birds. Like him, Bharati Dasan shows the downtrodden brethren the free parrot that flies freely and emphasizes the need for freedom. He exhorts them to do great sacrifices for the sake of liberty.
He sings

மடமைப் பகையும் சாகப் பின்வருமோர் – கொடிதாம்
வறுமைத் தீயும் அலறிப் புறமேக
அடிமைத் தனமே துகள் துகளாக
ஆடும் தாயவள் நாளும் வாழிய

Byron's libertarian sentiments find powerful expression in "Translation of the famous Greek War Song" in which he sings

Sons of Greek! Let us go
In arms against the foe,
Till their hated blood shall flow
In a river past our feet (5 - 10)

Helle'nes of past ages
Oh, Start again to life!
At the sound of my trumpet, breaking

You sleep, Oh, join with me!
And the seven – hill'd city seeking,
Fight, conquer, till we're free – (14 - 20)

He considers Napolean a tyrant and in "Ode o Napolean Buonaparte", he sings

Tis done – but yesterday a king!
And arm'd with kings to strive –
And now thou are a nameless thing – (1 – 3)
iII – minded man! Why scourge thy kind
(II stanza)

Like Bharati Dasan, Byron admits even violent deeds for the sake of attaing noble ends and eradicating evil forces. In "Ode to French" he says:

But let Freedom rejoice
With her heart in her voice
But her hand over the sword. (IV stanza)

In the "Song for the Luddites" he sings:
As the Liberty lads o'er the sea
Bought their freedom, and cheaply, with
Blood
So We, boys, we
Will die fighting, or live free. (I stanza)

In 'Stanzas' he sings:
When a man hath no freedom to fight
for at home,
Let him combat for that of his neighbours;
Let him think of the glories of Greece and of Rome,
And get knocked on the head for his labours. (1 - 5)

In the same poem, he further points out:

To do good to mankind is the chivalrous plan,
And is always as nobly requited;
Then battle for freedom whenever you can,

And, if not short or long'd, you'll get knighted. (5 - 9)

Such a kind of glorification of freedom and partriotic sentiments is obvious in the poetical compositions of Bharati Dasan also. With full of patriotic feelings, he sings:

தேர்நின்ற வீதிச் செயபேரிகை முழங்கிப்
போர்நின்று வீரர் பூத்த நிலம் – பார்நின்று
அடல்வளர்த்துப் பாரத நற்புத்திரன் நான் ஆக
உடல்வளர்த்த நாடென் னுயிர்.

Again,

பொங்கு தமிழுக்கு இன்னல் விளைத்தால்
சங்காரம் நிச்சயமென்று சங்கே முழங்கு

His attachment towards the Tamil language finds expression in *Tamiliyakkam*. It urges the youths to toil for the welfare of the Tamils. As suggested by one critic, "In the whole gamut of Tamil literature no poet is hailed as the revolutionary poet except Bharati Dasan. His cosmic vision embraces in its canvas humanism and extreme unconventionaliy. He is a born rebel who is opposed to the cobweb of orthodoxy and conventions. He is a revolutionary humanist whose humanism is born out of the healing touch of universal love". (Thirumavalavan 46). Catholicity of temperament, broadness of outlook and profundity of thought mark his revolutionary character. He is motivated to better the human lot by alleviating human misery to the minimum. That is the chief reason why he launches an allout attack on the superstitions that are corroding the allround progress of the society. The spirit of revolution in him drives him to attack caste distinctions, exploitations of all kinds, social, linguistic political and economic, with vehemence, vigour and vitality. Though he moves from nationalism to 'regionalism', all the same he too becomes an internationalist as a result of his cosmic consciousness.

Attitude to nature

Byron's conception of nature lacks the mystery which Wordsworth, Coleridge and Keats found in it. He says:

> My altars are the mountains and the Ocean
> Earth – air – stars – all that springs from the great whole
> Who hath produced, and will receive the soul
> (Don Juan – III – C IV - 68)

His poetry of nature is instinctive and immediate, free from theory or ulterior intention.

As far as the natural poems of Bharati Dasan are concerned, we can place him very near to Wordsworth. Unlike Byron, he draws moral lessons from nature. This is obvious from most of the poems of his masterpiece including *Aḻakiṉ Cirippu*. He stands very near to the English Romantic poets in glorifying nature as an isolated phenomenon which has no allegorical bent in interpreting or explaining human actions. Like Byron, he considers the picturesque scenes of nature as his dwelling place which keep in good stead even in moments of adversity and frustration. Byron describes an evening scene in *Don Juan* as

> It was the cooling hour, just when the rounded
> Red sun sinks down behind the azure hill,
> Which then seems as if the whole earth it bounded?

In the description of twilight scenes, Bharati Dasan transcends Byron in many respects. His painter's eye for picturesque effect, aesthetic bent of mind in choosing proper images and skilful way of treating similes and applying colour to them rank him as nature poet *par excellence*. He describes the twilight scene in a mountaneous background as

> தங்கத்தை உருக்கிவிட்ட வானோடை தன்னிலோர்
> செங்கதிர் மாணிக்கத்துச் செழும்பழம் சூழ்கும் மாலை

There is a vast difference between Byron and Wordsworth in their conceptions of nature. Wordsworth is more interested in idealizing the actual. Instead of looking for some manifestation of the ideal in the actual, Byron is quite

content with the actual and says what he thinks about it. The ideas that "Nature never did betray the heart that loved her" and that "The child is the father of the man" are firmly planted in Byron's insistence that "Nature's native scenes" are

> Loved to the last, whatever intervenes
> . . .
> He who first met the High land's swelling blue
> Will love each peak that shows a kindred hue
> Mail in each crag a friend's familiar face,
> And clasp the mountain in his Mind's embrace
> (The Island – 276 - 83)

Like Byron, Bharati Dasan is also quite content with depicting the actual and not the idealized one. This is apparent in his picturesque descriptions in *Caṟṟōṟṟivi Parvatattiṉ Cāral.* Instead of idealizing, he heightens the actual scenes by applying fine similes and colourful images. The doctrine that 'Nature never did betray the hearts that love her' is not an alien one to him. Yet he does not take refuge in philosophical speculation which is embedded in Wordsworth's famous line "The child is father of the man". Byron also accepts the view that nature is capable of alleviating grief and bitterness, and says "I have lately repealed my mind with nature".

In the poem "The Prayer to Nature", he says:

> Thy temple is the face of day;
> Earth, ocean, heaven, thy boundless throne.

In "Stanzas to Augusta" he says:

> That with all this I still can look around
> And worship Nature with a thought profound

Love theme

Bharati Dasan's constant themes are love, emancipation of women, Tamil, Tamilians, children, and democrarcy which give man his rightful place. The inspiration here also may be traced to Bharati, but Bharati Dasan goes beyond his master in his depth of force, in the breadth of his vision, in the length

of his range and in the height of his poetry (T.P.Meenakshisundaran 314). Bharati Dasan is considered as a bard of love and nature. The love theme tinged with progressive tendencies which boldly challenge the malevolent people, the bitter parents and the demons of casteism that stand in the way of the lover finds powerful expression in most of his poems. He considers love as a binding force which brings people together irrespective of their social status, caste distinction and economic conditions. His lovers are not speculative and pessimistic types who find solace only in romantic dreams and wander aimlessly with a worry laden heart out of the frustrations they meet in their love affairs. They are active and healthy members of a living society. They even dare to renounce all the earthly prosperities and to take any adversities for the sake of their love. They fight boldly for the fulfillment of their aspiration till the end. In most of his poems they embrace victory against the degenerated society which stands in their way. They are love's pilgrims and if they happened to die for the sake of their cherished ideals, they would die as love's martyrs. Poems like *Puratcikkavi, Kut umpa Vil akku*, etc. bear witness to this.

The same can be said of the Romentic poet Byron also. But the idealizing tendency which is dominant in Bharati Dasan is not very dominant in Byron. For Shelley, love is a union of souls, foreordained in some celestial scheme of predestination, and guided by the powers which move the universe. Byron sees nothing in such speculations. He is very realistic in the handling of love themes. The love of an older woman for a young man is sketched in Julia's love for Juan. Yet his haunting obsession with an ideal, first love, is presented in the love of Juan and Haidee on a Greek Island. In the poem "The Giaour", he glorifies love like our Tamil poets Bharati and Bharati Dasan. He says:

> Love indeed is light from the heaven;
> A spark from that immortal fire
> With angels shared, by Alla given,
> To lift from earth our low desire
> . . .
> A glory circling round the soul.

Unlike Bharati Dasan who always prefers sensual love, Byron in some poems gives expression to Platonic love. In the long narrative poem *Don Juan*, he says:

The noblest of love is Love Platonical. (*Don Juan*)

Like Shelley, he despises the institution of marriage as a superstitious one and he calls it "Disguise". Though he praises Platonic love in one poem, he ridicules it, and likes to insist on love's need for physical satisfaction.
He sings:

O Plato! Plato . . .
. . . You're a bore
A charlaton, a coxcomb – and have been,
At least, no better than a go-between

The still sad music of the frustrated lovers and the mental agony that prick their heart and make them express their heart-felt frustration in a touching way are revealed in his poem entitled 'To Caroline'. The hero of the poem unfolds his heart to us thus:

And yet, my girl, we weep in vain,
In vain our fates in sighs deplore;
Remembrance only can remain,
But that will make us weep the more. (17 21)

His hero speaks:

Love and hope upon earth bring no more consolation
In the grave is our hope, for in life is our fear.

This type of negative attitude is entirely absent in the poems of Bharati Dasan. His lovers are very optimistic about their future and about the fulfillment of their love. Though Byron sings of love in his poem "The First Kiss of Love" as

Some portion of paradise still is on earth
And Eden revives in the first kiss of love. (Stanza - 21)

we could not hail him as a poet *par excellence* in handling the theme of love like his Tamil counterpart Bharati Dasan.

Conception of poetry

The social and economic reconstruction, the freedom and development of the mother tongue were as much the life forces of Gandhian movement as the political freedom (T.P. Meenakshisundaran 300), and hence it is probable that the poets of this era of Freedom struggle cannot but give full expression to these ideas of their own milieu. The artists of this era were generally preoccupied with socio-political problems, bureaucratic corruption and nepotism, the reign of "act and contact" in the corridors of power, and the soul-searing poverty and sufferings of the common people. Since Bharati Dasan considers poetry as a moral instrument which has a vital role in reconstructing the degenerated social setup and edifying people, he has given full expression to his ideals in his poetical compositions. He is fully conscious of the social function of poetry. He uses poetry as an invincible weapon to shatter the crude chains of casteism and superstition. He considers his master Bharati, not merely as a poet but as a social reformer. He compares him with Lenin who liberated the people from the tyrannical reign of the Tzarists, and with Victor Hugo who composed melodious songs for the welfare of the common man in France (Bharati Dasan Kavitaikal 72). In the preface to his *Il aiñar Ilakkiyam*, he asserts that poetry is a more powerful medium than prose to convey the ideals of a poet. He advises the writers not to write when there is no inspiration (Kuyil Et u).

Byron is also aware of the social function of poetry. Besides being a political revolutionary with a passion for rigorously stable artistic form, he is, of all poets, 'a man speaking to men'. This consciousness and confidence of an audience in the tradition of Dryden and Pope – sets Byron apart 'from all the Lakers in and out of season' and from Keats. Like Bharati Dasan, Byron is a public performer, declaiming on a public platform and always aware of his audience in a way the typical Romantics seldom were. Like Bharati Dasan, he also opts for the simple language of the common man. In his poem 'Beppo' he says.

> I've half a mind to tumble down to prose
> But verse is more in fashion – so here goes.

One of the principal impulses of Romance, as attested by Northrop Frye (63) is the fulfillment of dream or the portrayal of the world we want to live in as opposed to the one we do live in. Such kinds of aspirations for creating ideal world in contrast with the real world of ours are apparent in the poetical compositions of both Byron and Bharati Dasan.

Revival of classicism

A reinterpretation of the old in terms of the new, a healthy glorification of the past, and an adaptation of the old and the new as a national culture, etc. are considered to be some of the peculiar traits of the literature of the Renaissance. Bharati has revived the story of Pāñcāli to suit his own purpose, and Bharati Dasan has resurrected the classical characters like Kannaki and Iraniyan and interpreted their role in terms of the spirit of his own age. Similarly, Byron has some fascination to the classical writers such as Catullus, Horace, Tribulus and Aeschylus. His nostalgic attachment towards the glorious past is seen in the poem entitled "To Emma" where he says:

> These times are past – our joys are gone,
> You leave me, leave this happy vale;
> These scenes I must retrace alone:
> Without thee what will they avail?

The poems entitled "Jeptha's Daughter", "Herod's Lament for Mariamme". "By the Rivers of Babylon we Sat down and Wept", "The Destruction of Senna Cherib", etc. are standing examples of the revival of classicism in Byron.

Attitude to women

Bharati Dasan's war cry for the emancipation of women has left an indelible impression in his poems. In his narrative poem entitled *Cañcīvi Parvatattiṉ Cāral*, he warns:

> பெண்ணடிமை தீருமட்டும் பேசுந்திருநாட்டு
> மண்ணடிமை தீர்ந்து வருதல் முயற்கோம்பே!
> ஊமை என்று பெண்ணை உரைக்குமட்டும் உள்ளடங்கும்
> ஆமைநிலைதான் ஆடவர்க்கு உண்டு.

According to him, unless the emancipation of women is achieved, no real freedom is possible. If women are not allowed to enjoy social equality, men can seldom do anything constructive or beneficial to the society. In his narratives entitled *Kuṭumpa Viḷakku, Kannaki Puraṭcikkāppiyam, Maṇimēkalai Veṇpa, Tamilacciyiṉ Katti, Virattāy, Cañcivi Paruvatattiṉ Cāral* etc. Bharati Dasan has given an important and elevated role to women.

Byron had no such ideal notions about womanhood. In his poem "To Woman" he sings:

> Woman that fair and fond deceiver
> How prompt are striplings to believe her" (10 - 12)
> "Woman, thy vows are traced in sand" (23)

Yet in the poem entitled "To Eliza", he says

> Eliza, what fools are the Mussulman sect,
> Who to woman deny the soul's future existence (1 - 2)

In this poem, he comes very close to Shelley, who sings of women's liberation as if divinely inspired. Yet his real evaluation of womanhood finds expression in the poem "To Anne" where he says,

Woman is made to command and deceive us.

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PALM-LEAF MANUSCRIPTS

20. PALM-LEAF MANUSCRIPTS IN TAMIL AND THEIR PRESERVATION

The present chapter is not a research article trying to give a new interpretation or to throw a new light on a particular aspect of Tamil language, literature and culture but is a reasonable defence of the necessity to protect the fragile palm-leaf manuscripts in Tamil from further disintegration and deterioration owing to human negligence and natural calamities.

The social background

The present pitiable fate of our ancient Tamil palm-leaf manuscripts is closely associated with the drastic social changes that took place in our country owing to the introduction of an advanced technology and an urban civilization. The palm-leaf manuscripts were the powerful medium for transmission of ideas and knowledge when the Indian society was based on an agrarian civilization. This pure organic product was the powerful tool for the preservation of our literary, linguistic, cultural and art heritage, and the vital part of the superstructure of this society was embedded in these fragile palm-leaves by our traditional scribes with the help of stylus. Consequently, any problem pertaining to the study of palm-leaf-manuscripts has to be analysed keeping in mind the society that handled this medium and the shift of that society to a new way of life, a new mode of thinking and functioning owing to urbanization.

With the introduction of new technology and urbanization coupled with the laying of railway lines and the advent of western type of education, Indian society underwent a lot of drastic changes. The introduction of paper and printing press has completely changed the fate of the previous mode of transmission of knowledge. Although printing press was established during the 17^{th} century, it was used mainly for the printing of religious books, especially for the printing of Christian texts and tracts, and for the printing related to administrative purposes. The custom of printing Tamil texts from palm-leaf manuscripts came into existence comparatively in a later stage. Anyhow, this attempt failed to gain adequate momentum owing to a number of factors.

Causes of negligence

1. The western type of education and the cultural imperialism advocated by Lord Macaulay and others left an indelible impression in the minds of the people that the native cultural traditions were far inferior to those of Europe. This ultimately led to total indifference to protecting from decay our cultural treasures.

2. Since the English education gave a lot of hope to get employment in government and other services, the habit of studying the traditional texts written on palm leaves started declined and these texts came to be considered as objects useless for an attractive worldly life.

3. Consequently, there was not much encouragement to the scholars who attempted to bring to print such rare texts. The financial strain faced by the earlier doyens in this field such as Dr U.V.Swaminatha Iyer and others explains this pitiable and sad plight.

4. Since the pattern of education shifted from traditional type of education to western type of education, the art of writing in palm-leaf manuscripts, as well as the efficiency of deciphering the texts written on palm leaves started vanishing.

5. Although a number of scholars, both native and foreign, encouraged the attempt of printing the Tamil texts from palm-leaf manuscripts, these efforts went on very slowly.

The knowledge about Tamil texts written in palm-leaf manuscripts also has become disconcerting during the period of Dr U.V.Swaminatha Iyer which is obvious from the fact that even the great epics like *Cilappatikāram* and *Cintāmaṇi* were completely unknown to the Tamils. The slow progress in transferring the texts from palm-leaf to paper was indeed a serious threat to the Tamil texts written in palm-leaves since a palm-leaf manuscript can exist for a maximum period of 300 to 400 years, given the climatic conditions of Tamilnadu. Unless they are copied down or printed, there is no alternative but to lose them forever.

In the earlier periods they were preserved by the professional scribes who were employed by the temples and individual patrons for copying down these books although many of them did suffer decay and death with the passage of time. These scribes had a positive contribution to make to the living continuance of Tamil literary tradition. But with the gradual vanishing of such professional tribes, the habit of reading, deciphering and copying palm-leaf manuscripts has become a very rare practice. This has inevitably led to the perishing of a number of rare Tamil texts. All these conditions existed in the earlier stage when this country was under the alien rule marked by the weakening of the traditional patronage system of art and literature and by the diminishing encouragement bestowed on the preservation of our cultural treasures by the ruling British Government, although a number of civil servants like Collin Meckenzi and a few missionaries showed keen interest. It is pitiable that there is not much improvement in the preservation and publication of palm-leaf manuscripts even after independence.

In this scientific and technological age, with its strong emphasis on mechanical – material orientation, there is a tendency to view these rare manuscripts of the past as irrelevant to the modern sensibility and assign them an exhibition value. Such an attitude towards palm-leaf manuscripts in Tamil would mean depriving posterity of a significant component of the cultural and literary heritage of the Tamils.

Present condition

Most of the palm-leaf manuscripts stored in various places are unpublished works and they have not been subjected to serious study. If we fail to preserve them there is no way of seeing how many of these manuscripts need to be made accessible to a larger reading public in print. It is also possible that the publication of these unpublished materials may modify or prove wrong the conclusions of our research arrived at on the basis of the printed texts.

A tentative survey reveals the pathetic fact that only 25 per cent of the palm-leaf manuscripts in Tamil have been published and the remaining 75 per cent are perishing in the cruel hands of time, and natural calamities. It is obvious

that the life span of the existing manuscripts is fast wearing out, and even the best of care and attention may not see them in condition after a century or two. Moreover, the vanishing of the tribe of trained and informed men who could decode and read these palm-leaf writings is indeed a severe threat to their existence.

There are not many around who offer to take systematic training in manuscriptology, nor do the academic institutions in Tamilnadu save for one or two, evince much interest in understanding the urgency of such a programme. Given the magnitude of the task, it is not possible to bring them out all in print during the course of another four or five decades. Nor is it necessary that all the versions of a particular text and those that are unworthy of pursuit should be made available in print. But all these works, irrespective of whether they are worthy of reading by the literati or not, have a context in the culture of the land and are necessarily the living records of a cultural tradition worth cherishing. Consequently, it is highly necessary to safeguard these most endangered cultural treasures either by microfilming or by preserving the original in the safest possible conditions.

The storehouses of Tamil manuscripts

The list appended to this chapter enumerates the approximate number of manuscripts stored in about sixty-seven places both in various parts of India and other countries. We are not able to get a clear picture of the Tamil palm-leaf manuscripts in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma, China, Japan and other countries. More than 20,000 uncatalogued manuscripts are expected to be with various individuals. Consequently, the number of the most endangered Tamil palm-leaf manuscripts may come around 80,000.

It is estimated that there are more than one thousand manuscripts in Paris out of which Prof.Julien Vinson has catalogued only 204, and a later catalogue lists 578 works. Major A.Krishnamurthy's detailed catalogue too lists only this number of manuscripts.

In England, we find small collections of manuscripts kept in 12 libraries; the major holdings among them are the India Office Library (34) and the British

Library (99). In Oxford, in the Bodleian Library there are 140 manuscripts. There are small collections in the Royal Asiatic Society Library, London and the Glasgow University Library.

It is stated that there are several hundred Tamil manuscripts kept without indexing in Copenhagen, Denmark. Consistent with the great interest that the Germans have been showing in Indian culture, there are good collections of Tamil manuscripts at Halle and Hamburg, Cologne in Germany. Xavier S. Thaninayagam has stated that there are good collections of Tamil manuscripts in Portugal, Spain and Italy. Major A.Krishnamurthy in 1960 and Gregory James in 1980 have expressed the view that there are many libraries in the West possessing Tamil manuscripts, and the latter writes that 88 organizations are known to possess them, and replies from 250 more are awaited. This includes a number of manuscripts available both in palm leaves and paper.

The conditions of our manuscripts

Although there are many varieties of palm trees, the leaves of three kinds of palm trees were used in India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Indonesia and Cambodia. They are the palmyra palm, talipot palm and Corpha taliera Roxb. In South India only two types, namely the palmyra palm and talipot palm, were used. The leaves of the palmyra palm are rather thick compared to those of the talipot palm and they appear to be more prone to insect attack than the leaves of the talipot palm. The fibres of talipot palm leaves do not damage easily and are more resistant to decay. The leaves are soft, light coloured when dry and flexible.

Since palm leaf is a natural product and organic in nature, it is susceptible to different types of deterioration agencies. Consequently, they need to be preserved very carefully. But unfortunately, most of the existing palm-leaf manuscripts available in the centers listed in the appendix are not preserved properly. Most of these centers have no proper facilities to give treatment to these rare manuscripts, no proper duplicating equipment and experts to decipher and edit them. Many of the Tamil palm-leaf manuscripts available in the European libraries are simply labelled as manuscripts of Malabar language and they are left uncared for although the climatic conditions help them live a little more time than in India. Most of these manuscripts kept in the centers of India have already

crossed 200 or 250 years of their existence and they are on the verge of getting decomposed and deteriorated. Unless they are protected with clear and systematic planning we will be forced to lose these cultural treasures for ever.

The projects of the Institute of Asian Studies

With a view to preserving these manuscripts from further decay, the Institute of Asian Studies is launching the following projects through its Department of Manuscriptology. If these projects are further expanded and intensified it may be possible for us to safeguard all the Tamil palm-leaf manuscripts within a reasonable span of time.

Any project which aims at preserving the rare palm-leaf manuscripts can be undertaken in the following phases, and the Institute of Asian Studies is implementing its schemes on these lines:

1. Collection
2. Conservation
3. Training programme
4. Computerising Mss data
5. Microfilming
6. Preparation of descriptive catalogues
7. Publication of manuscripts with English version

Collection

The collection of palm-leaf manuscripts is highly indispensable since there are large numbers of rare works found scattered in fragile palm leaves in the remote corners of the villages in Tamilnadu. Such manuscripts are not catalogued and they are not preserved properly. In our campaign we were able to collect more than 1500 such rare works. The task of collecting still remains a very difficult job since most of the owners, although they are completely unaware of the content of the manuscripts, refuse to part with them, thinking that it is a sacred treasure of their predecessors and that their family will be doomed or will become a victim to curse if they sell or give away these works. There are also persons who demand very high prices for even the manuscripts dealing with

necromancy and *vā am* or veterinary science. There are still people who prepare to set ablaze these rare treasures during Pongal or throw them into the river when there is a new flood. It is highly necessary to undertake intensive field survey about the availability of the manuscripts and to collect them by all means. The Government can entrust such works with the revenue officials who can collect them with the help of the local scholars in this field. The collection work has to be quickened since any delay in this effort will result in the disintegration of more and more works.

Conservation

Being organic in nature, palm-leaf is subject to different types of deterioration agencies. Climatic factors, light and insects have a very marked effect on palm leaf. In addition, constant handling and adverse storage conditions add to the forces of deterioration. Several types of defects such as stains, discolouring, damage by insects, fungal effect, splitting of the surface layer, cleavage of the surface layer, fading of writing, brittleness and weakening of the leaves are seen in our rare collections. Even though advanced types of treatment have been developed, there is no centre in Tamilnadu which takes keen interest in using these techniques for the conservation of these fast decaying palm-leaf manuscripts. As a result, these precious treasures are miserably getting perished in the hands of the horrible deteriorating agencies. Therefore, it is essential to establish conservation laboratories in all the centres where palm-leaf manuscripts are stored and to employ professional people to give good treatment to them.

Training programme

Since the habit of writing on the palm leaves and reading them has vanished owing to the changes in the mode of communication, the number of persons who can decipher the writings in palm leaves is also declining day by day. Consequently, it is highly imperative to give intensive training to scholars in various aspects of manuscriptology such as deciphering, editing, conservation and preservation, and textual criticism. This type of training programme should be an integral part of any project pertaining to palm-leaf manuscripts. Unless this training is given continuously, the future generation may be compelled to lose the opportunity of making use of these manuscripts. Every year, the Institute of Asian Studies has been organizing workshops and training programmes and

imparting training to a large number of young scholars in this discipline. This type of programmes should be organized by all the centres of Tamil palm-leaf manuscripts and if possible such programmes may form part of our regular university courses especially in the Masters degree in Tamil language and literature.

Computerizing manus data

Another important programme which the Institute is engaged in is the computerizing of the information pertaining to palm-leaf manuscripts in Tamil. This is a part of the programme of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts which is implementing this programme for the entire Indian languages. Through this programme all particulars pertaining to Tamil palm-leaf manuscripts are made accessible to scholars all over the world and Tamil texts available in palm-leaf manuscripts can be subjected to research both at the national and international levels. The format of the manus Data is given in the appendix.

Microfilming

Since printing of the entire manuscripts is not possible all at once, steps for duplicating them in a different media should be taken immediately. Microfilm and computer disks are better mediums for preservation and duplication. It is disappointing that many of the manuscript centres in Tamilnadu have not even such facilities for duplicating.

The Institute of Asian Studies plans to microfilm the entire Tamil palm-leaf manuscripts within a period of three to four years. Two table-type microfilm cameras will be taken to the places where the manuscripts are stored and they will be microfilmed on the spot. The target is to microfilm at least 20 works per day; each camera can microfilm 10 works of about 900 leaves (i.e. 1800 pages in one roll – each shot covering 3 pages). The printout of the manuscripts thus microfilmed will be transliterated into the modern script by a team of editors and they will be fed into the computer disks. The successful execution of this project will protect from decay a significant component of our cultural heritage and contribute a great deal to the enrichment of human knowledge.

Preparation of descriptive catalogues

The paucity of adequate descriptive catalogues for palm-leaf manuscripts in Tamil is another serious limitation for academic research on these cultural treasures. Such catalogues are necessary to identify the texts for publication as well as to prepare authentic editions comparing various versions of the same text available in various places and centres. There have been attempts earlier at documenting the Tamil palm-leaf manuscripts and cataloguing them. Such catalogues are available for the collections of a few centres. But all of them are inadequate and unrepresentative insofar as they contain very little information on the thematic contents of the manuscripts and their bibliographic history. Again, they do not present a total view of the manuscripts, and more importantly, of the various copies of a text and its versions which could remain scattered in different places. The Institute of Asian Studies is engaged in the preparation of an integrated descriptive catalogue of Tamil palm-leaf manuscripts in about 50 volumes each in two parts of 1200 pages covering the whole of Tamil palm-leaf manuscripts in India and abroad. The Institute has already brought out five volumes and it is now working on the subsequent volumes. The format of the catalogue prepared by the Institute is given in the appendix.

Publication of palm-leaf manuscripts with English version

These manuscript texts embody a wide variety of subject matter from poetry, grammatical treatises and commentaries to astrology, art, architecture, medicine and folklore. Among the manuscripts being preserved at present, those dealing with traditional sciences and folk literature are the largest. Of these manuscripts on traditional sciences, manuscripts on medicine constitute a larger percentage.

These medicinal manuscripts deal with various forms of folk medicine, Ayurvedic and Siddha systems of medicine and their applications to numerous diseases. Many of these manuscripts are anonymous and they are attributed to Akattiyar, the legendry father figure in Tamil literature who is believed to be the author of a Tamil grammar namely *Akattiyam* composed during the period of the second Tamil Caṅkam. A deep study these rare texts could bring out a wealth of valuable information that could also have a bearing on modern medical science.

An impressive collection of folk songs of different kinds, a large percentage of them ballads, have been recorded on palm leaves and are perishing uncared for in the homes of individuals of the respective areas who are by and large ignorant of and indifferent to the worth and cultural significance of these manuscripts. The creative spirit that pervades these songs, their melody, their simplicity of style and diction, their blending the human and the divine, history and myth, natural and supernatural, their complete identity with the soil of their birth, their representative ness of a given community and social clan, invest them with a unique charm of their own, and are verily a significant part of the cultural and literary heritage of the Tamils.

Although a considerable number of literary texts have been brought out in print, nearly three fourths of the manuscripts remain unpublished. In the nineteenth century, when printing was introduced in Tamilnadu on a wider scale, attempts were made to publish the manuscripts by scholars like Irāmānucak Kavirāyar, Āṟumuka Nāvalar, Vicākapperumāḷ Aiyar, Tāmōtaram Pil lai, Capāpati Mutaliyār, U.Vē. Cāmināta Aiyar and a few others including some Westerners. Yet this programme was implemented in a haphazard way and no systematic attempts have been made to transfer all the Tamil texts from palm-leaves to paper with a well-planned programme. It is significant to this note that even U.Vē.Cāmināta Aiyar who dedicated his life to this noble task could publish only 74 texts from palm-leaves during his life span. Although this is one of the greatest contributions, this 74 texts form only a very small portion of the big number of palm-leaf manuscripts that are dying a natural death in various places.

The Institute of Asian Studies has a very large publication programme under which many of the unpublished manuscripts are being published with English version with a view to making them accessible to a wider audience. Under this scheme, it has brought out very valuable books such as *The Dateless Muse*, *The Unsung Melodies, The Bandit Brothers, The First Freedom Fighter, Varma Cūttiram* and others which are valuable source materials for the study of the social history of the Tamils and their cultural heritage. If many academic centers and universities undertake similar programmes it is not very difficult to preserve from decay the rich cultural treasures of the Tamils which form a significant component of the composite culture of the people of Asia. The

successful execution of this programme by various centers will definitely herald a new chapter in the annals of this great culture.

Memory of India

The Institute of Asian Studies is collaborating with the *UNESCO* in its world wide project namely *The Memory of the World* which aims at preserving and conserving the rare documented heritage of the world which is on the verge of deterioration and disintegration. The Institute has digitized large number of Tamil palm-leaf manuscripts and published few rare unpublished texts with English translation. It is planning to make a film on the story of palm-leaf manuscripts with the participation of the *UNESCO*. The Institute is also working with the National Mission for Manuscripts with a view to translate into action some of its laudable objectives pertaining to the protection of our manuscript heritage.

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APPENDIX I

A tentative list of the Tamil palm-leaf manuscripts available in various places:

Sl.No.	Place	Manuscripts
1.	Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, Chennai 600 005.	15,000
2.	Institute of Asian Studies, Chennai 600 041.	1,400
3.	International Institute of Tamil Studies, Chennai 600 113.	460
4.	National Library, Kolkata	355
5.	Saraswathy Mahal Library, Tanjavur.	2,300
6.	Sānthalinga Aṭikaḷār Tamil college, perur Coimbatore District	350
7.	College of Indian Medicines, Pāl ayamkōt tai.	75

8.	Siddha Medical Research Centre, Chennai 600 029.	1,000
9.	Directorate of Indian Medicine and Homeopathy, Chennai 600 108.	900
10.	Dr U.V.S. Library, Chennai 600 091.	3,200
11.	Tamil University, Thanjavur.	5,000
12.	Kerala University Oriental Manuscripts Library	3,300
13.	St.Xavier's College, Pāl ayamkōt tai	75
14.	Adyar Library, Chennai 600 020.	1,500
15.	Cittāmūr Mutt, Cittāmūr.	190
16.	taiman tala Ātīnam, Kāñcipuram.	92
17.	Kuntar Kuntar Kalvi Nilaiyam, Ponnūr-malai, akkanpadi.	100
18.	Kaumāra Mutt, apuram.	100
19.	Mayilam Mutt.	100
20.	Pōrūr Mutt, Tiruppōrūr.	50
21.	French Institute of Indology, Puducherry.	1,200
22.	Government Museum, Erode.	113
23.	Venkateswara Oriental Research Institute Library, Tirupati	1,200
24.	Andhra University, Waltair.	200
25.	Osmania University, Hyderabad.	250
26.	Kalaimakal Kalvi Nilayam, Erode	180
27.	Calicut University, Kerala.	200
28.	Tiruppanandal Mutt, Tanjavur District	300
29.	Sankaracharaya Mutt, Kāñcipuram.	400
30.	Anamali University, Chidambaram.	300
31.	Tarumapura Ātinam, Tanjavur District	300
32.	Tiruvāavat uturai Mutt, Tanjavur District	1,265
33.	Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai 625 021.	300
34.	Madurai Tamil Sangam, Madurai 625 001.	420
35.	East India Collection of Tamil Manscripts, Mysore, Karnataka	63
36.	India Office Library London.	34
37.	Welcome Medical Research Institute, London	2
38.	British Museum, London.	99
39.	The Library of Royal Asiatic Society, London.	37
40.	The Library of the Edinburgh University, Edinburgh.	6
41.	National Library of Scotland. Edinburgh.	4

42.	Huntanian Library of Glascow University	10
43.	John Rylands Library, Manchester	11
44.	The Library of Cambridge University	20
45.	Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland.	1
46.	Bodelian University, Oxford.	16
47.	Austria	9
48.	Czech	3
49.	Federal Republic of Germany	31
50.	Finland	2
51.	Denmark	16
52.	German Democratic Republic	14
53.	Italy	26
54.	Norway	9
55.	Portugal	17
56.	Scotland	11
57.	Sweden	29
58.	Russia	4
59.	Belgium	4
60.	England	59
61.	France	63
62.	Netherland	6
63.	Poland	1
64.	Republic of Ireland	15
65.	Spain	2
66.	Switzerland	5
67.	Vatican City	2
68.	Private Collections	20,000
69.	Manuscripts available in Sri Lanka and other Asian Countries	20,000
		83,032

APPENDIX II

Format of the Descriptive Catalogue

I. MATERIAL DESCRIPTION

(i) Title
(both in Roman Script and Tamil)
(ii) Author
(iii) Whether the authorship is ascribed or real
(iv) Commentator and his date (if it contains commentary)
(v) Script
(vi) Date of composition
(vii) Whether decipherable
(viii) Total no. of leaves
(ix) No. of lines to each leaf
(x) Size of the manuscript (in cm.)
(xi) Complete/incomplete
(xii) Physical condition
(xiii) Missing leaves or portions
(beginning/end/intermittent)
(xiv) Place where preserved (Institution/Individual)
(xv) Accession no.
(xvi) If it is a copy, date of copying
(xvii) Name and nativity of the scribe/copyist
(xviii) Variant readings, if any
(xix) Medium (prose/verse/pictorial)
(xx) No. of verses/chapters/pictures

II. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL DATA

1. Whether this mss is published
If yes,
(a) Name of the editor

(b) Place of publication, Publisher and date
(c) Important editions
If no,
(a) Whether a different version of this work is published
(b) If so, whether this mss is consulted in that publication

2. Whether it exists in any other form

III. SUBJECT DESCRIPTION

(i) Subject of the text
(ii) Genre
(iii) Linguistic pecularities/style
(iv) Secular/sectarian
(v) Whether original/adaptation/translation
(vi) Historical/social/literary importance, if any
(vii) Summary/abstract of the text
(viii) Beginning (lines)
(ix) Ending (lines)
(x) Colophon
(xi) Place from where mss is collected
(xii) Name of the person from whom it is collected

IV. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, IF ANY

Contributor's Signature with date

APPENDIX III

MANUS

	TAMIL	ROMAN
Title (text/commentary)		
With alternate title if any, given in brackets		
Author and identification		
Subject		
Language		
Repository and Accession no.		
Reference in catalogue	Title of catalogue Editor/Compiler Place and Year Volume and Page	Serial No.
Script		
Material	PL HP OP CL BP MP ST	
Condition	Good Bad Damaged Brittle Worm eaten	
Folios/pages		
Size in cms.		
Lines per page	Letters per line	Total Granthas (in units of 32 letters)

Illustrated or not

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