THIRUKKURAL

ITS CENTRAL THOUGHT

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Foreword

THIRUKKURAL - ITS CENTRAL THOUGHT is an effort to place before the English readers at least the salient features of this famous work which has taken its place among the world classics today.

This was undertaken at the instance of some friends who were interested in acquainting themselves atleast with the most essential points elaborately detailed in my Tamil ''திருக்குறள் - புத்தாய்வு'' but could not delve into this rather voluminous book. I remembered too the late Scholar Mr. Appadurai who was always encouraging me to write in English the results of this, what I do not hesitate to call ''new research'' on this great Classic.

I hope this work will help interested English readers to know the main points of the thought of Thiruvalluvar.

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THIRUKKURALL

ITS CENTRAL THOUGHT

Thirukkural is usually considered a *book of universal religion.* This is because, unlike other Tamil classics, this work invokes, in the beginning, God in general under the name இறைவன் (Iraivan). The title of the first chapter is கடவுள் வாழ்த்து (Kadavull Vazhthu). It is not known for certain whether this title was given by the author or by commentators. We note that practically all Tamil literary works invoke, before commencing, Shiva, Muruga, Ganapathi or any deity to which the author is specially attached.

By 'Universal religion' is usually meant morality to be observed by all mankind. This seems to be indicated by the author himself when in the first part he treats about the requisites demanded by morality. It is specially mentioned with emphasis in the fourth chapter of book, the last of the four chapters which are considered as Payiram (பாயிரம்). Why four chapters as Payiram may be understood when we go into who this *God* is who is invoked. (See the section : God in Thirukkurall).

The book is also said to deal with the morality characteristic of people who are called Sanror (சான்றோர்). This seems to be Indicated by the author himself when, in more than one chapter he explicitly mentions *Sanror* or Sanravar (another form of Sanror). Equivalently he speaks of Sanror when he demands perfect behaviour as in Chapters on Love (Ch.8), gratitude (Ch.11) impartial conduct (Ch.12) self control (Ch.13), forbearance (Ch.16) fear of evil (Ch.21), doing good even to enemies (Ch 32) renunciation (Ch.35), realisation of Truth (Ch.36), rooting out covetousness (Ch.37) etc ,

That the author intended to treat not of morality in general but of morality in its perfection seems fairly well evidenced in Chapter 99, entitled Sanranmai (சான்றாண்மை) The particle (ஆண்மை) is obviously meant to convey the idea of a certain *heroicity* needed to practise the kind of morality he wants to expose in his treatise. The word Salbu (சால்பு) used in the said Chapter 99, would imply that சான்றாண்மை and சால்பு are the same. Perfection or perfect goodness, as authors translate the title, further raises the question: perfection in what? or under which particular aspect? In what does perfect goodncss consist? etc., These questions can be answered when we discover the real meaning of Sanru (சான்று) from which the words சான்றோர், சான்றவர், சான்றாண்மை are formed.

What is meant by 'Sanru'? The word 'சான்று' is usually used now to denote a certain fulness of good qualities. Hence the word சான்றோர் would mean people full of good qualities. This however, does not seem to be the real meaning of the word, from what the great poetess Avvaiyar says. She says that Chola Nadu is noted for rice, (சோழநாடு சோறுடைத்து) Pandia Nadu noted for pearls (பாண்டியநாடு முத்துடைத்து) and Chera Nadu known for elephants (சோழ நாடு வேழ முடைத்து), Thondai Nadu noted for Sanror, (தொண்டை நாடு சான்றோருடைத்து).(This *nadu* was where the disciple Thomes laboured a great deal)

If by 'Sanror' is meant people with good qualities, it would mean that there were no people with good qualities (which include knowledge, high education etc) in those three Tamil countries and that only in Thondai Nadu there were such people. This can by no means be accepted.

In the Sangham age (i.e first centuries of the Christian era and before it) there were two rival groups called the 'anthanar' (அந்தணர்) and Sanror (சான்றோர்). From evidences given in the ancient Sangham literature (Purananuru - புறநானூறு for instance) it is clear that these groups were in conflict on the ground of principles-No one can say that there were no people of good qualities among அந்தணர். The phrase ஆன்றவிந்தடங்கிய கொள்கைச் சான்

ഗ്രന്ഥം clearly points to a group differing from others in principles fundamentally.

Now one of the accepted meanings of the word 'Sanru' is 'proof' *especially proof produced by a witness.* Then Sanror would mean 'those who witness' or witnesses'.

I feel that a clue from the New Testament seems to solve the problem. We read in Luke Ch. 24, 44-49 as follows :

"These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled."

"Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. *You are witnesses* of these things. And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high".

Then in the Acts of Apostles, in the very first chapter 3-8.

"To them he presented himself alive after his passion by many *proofs*, appearing to them during forty days, and speaking of the kingdom of God. And while staying with them he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me, for John baptized with water, but before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy spirit. So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be *my witnesses* in Jeruselem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth".

The disciples well understood that their mission was to be witnesses to Christ, his teachings, sufferings, death and Resurrection. In the very first address which the chief of the disciples (apostles), Peter gave the people he said : ''Brethren.....This Jesus God raised up and of that *we all are witnesses*'' (Act 2 : 32)

In the second address which the same Peter gave the people, he said :

''Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him (lame man) walk? The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. *To this we are witnesses.* (acts 3, 12-15)

Not only Peter, but the other opostles did the same : ''And with great power the apostles gave their *testimony* to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. (Acb 4,33)

Note the word ''testimony'' in this text is but another word for 'witnessing'.

Again, to those who persecuted them (viz. the Jewish priests) the apostles said : We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised Jesus whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And *we are witnesses to these things* and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.'' (acts. 5, 29-32)

In another talk Peter gave to people we find him saying : ''You know fhe word which he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), the word

vhich was proclaimed throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism which John preached : how he went bout doing good, healing all that were oppressed by the levil: for God was with him. And *we are witnesses* to all that ıe did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree;but God raised ıim on the third day and made him manifest; not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God *as witnesses*, who ıte and drank with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that he s the one ordained by God to be judge of the living and the lead. To him all the prophets bear *witness* that every one who ıelieves in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." Acts-10, 36-43)

The last verse of this passage would imply that just as he Prophets bore witness to God and his messages in the)ld Testament, so too were the apostles in the New estament bearing witness to God on earth who had come in lesh and blood viz. to Christ.

It is more than clear therefore that the disciples of Christ were to be witnesses to Him. The first witnesses were he disciples or apostles themselves. But obviously the vitnessing was not to cease with their death. For it was to ontinue till the end of time. They were in fact commissi- ıed to do the witnessing, going into all the world and reaching to all creation (Mark 16, 15)and promised that he vould be with them always to the close of the age (Matt. 28, 0). Surely this can not be understood unless the ommission meant the perpetuating of the mission by the onstitution of other disciples. Among these disciples are o be counted not only those who officially succeeded the postles, but all those who believed in the preaching of the postles. In the great prayer which Christ made to his ather at the last supper, we see Him praying not only for his isciples, but also for those who believed in Him through the vord of apostles, that they may all be one (see Jo 17,20). he apostles, therefore, understood that not only they, but ll those who believed in Christ should feel themselves under

an obligation to bear witness in their turn to their Lord and master ie to Christ. In fact all those who believed in Christ not excluding those considered as slaves in the Roman empire understood this duty and wonderfully bore witness to the Lord wherever they were. Thus we find slaves in the palace of the Roman emperor bringing faith to some of those who lived in the palace.

This sort of witnessing took place, in fact, in many places in the length and breadth of the Roman empire of the first centuries. Thus we see ordinary believers bringing others to the feet of Christ by the witness of their good and holy life as well as by word where chances occurred. There is nothing to be surprised in this, since knowing Christ truly would by itself compel the person to make him known-as was, for example, the case of the woman of Samaria who as soon as she found out who Jesus really was, forgot the purpose she had come to the well for, left the pot there and ran to the village and though she had been a person of ill repute had the courage to invite people to go and see Him ! (See 4 Ch of John). So did others who had received favours from Him who e.gr were healed of their illnesses. A certain moral and spiritual power is needed to do this. That is why in the biblical texts above quoted we note ''Power from on high'' and 'witnessing' being linked.

With this background we have to conclude that சான்றாண்மை which is translated by authors as perfect goodness (or similarly), has to be really ''witnessing power'' or 'Power in witnessing'. Whether this translation is correct, can be seen from what is said in this whole book.

The above background also leads us to consider that the morality dealt with in this classic is one that is based on *God* as shown in Thirukkural and is linked closely with சான்றாண்மை.

This morality (அறம்) moral behaviour (ஒழுக்கம்) is not possible without devine help ie without அருள் or grace.

The last chapter of the first part which is entitled ஊழ் is usually linked with the cycle of rebirths. But it really means the providence of God.

The grace which is described as 'the truest wealth' (செல்வத்துட்செல்வம்)can be obtained by listening (or hearing) which is also described as 'a wealth amidst all kinds of wealth' (செல்வத்துட் செல்வம், செல்வத்துள் எல்லாம் தலை).

The second part of this classic is entitled (பொருள்) which word is usually understood as wealth. But the author is careful to distinguish பொருள் from அருள் by his distinction of அருட்பொருள் and பொருட் பொருள்.

The third part is entitled இன்பம். But இன்பம் can mean sexual pleasure (சிற்றின்பம்) or spiritual (divine) happiness (பேரின்பம்) This part obviously deals with பேரின்பம்.

Keeping these points before us we will divide this book into the following sections :

1. God in Thirukkural (Section I)

2. The Five pillars of witnessing power (சான்றாண்மை) Section 2

   a. Love அன்பு
   b. Repentance நாண்
   c. Reconciliation ஒப்புரவு
   d. Forgiveness கண்ணோட்டம்
   e. Announcing or witnessing வாய்மை

3. Arutporul (அருட்பொருள்) Porutporul (பொட்பொருள்) ie grace that is divine wealth and that which is mere (worldly) wealth. This will be section-3

4. Perinbam (பேரின்பம்) i e., Divine Happiness or *God the Bride groom*. Section-4 At the end there will be a note : On ஊழ் (fate) and Rebirth.

We see these four sections will reveal the four grea objectives traditionally maintained in Literature viz. அறம் பொருள், இன்பம், வீடு.

We see however in this classic only 3 parts: அறம் பொருள், இன்பம். There is no section for வீடு which mean the final goal of human life. But we will show that it is show in the very first chapter of the book and at length in th III Part.

Section — I

God in Thirukkural

Does Thirukkural teach about God? It does, indeed explicitly, and in its very first chapter. But does the author speak of God in this first chapter merely to invoke His aid on the book he was going to compose, as is usually the case with the authors of Tamil literary compositions? This does not seem to be so, as we will be able to demonstrate in due course. It is not merely as an 'invocation to God' that the author speaks of Him in that first chapter. In fact there is no 'Invocation' at all! A study of the ideas proposed therein will show that the author is speaking of God in that chapter as the very basis of all that he was going to say, as the indispensable *foundation of the 'morality' he was going to expose.* At the same time he speaks of Him as the one who alone can free man from his misery, *and give him lasting happiness.* In other words, the whole work would be left without any support or meaning if God is not understood as the beginning of human existence, of man's life on earth, the *norm* by which he has to regulate this life and finally the goal which he has to reach in order to gain true and lasting happiness beyond this earthly existence.

1. God the beginning of all.

''அகர முதல எழுத்தெல்லாம் ஆதி
பகவன் முதற்றே உலகு''.

The key word in this couplet is 'முதற்றே' It has been translated ''*is first through.....*'' ''for its first'', ''leads and lords.....''.

The word 'first' in the various translations may easily suggest either First in a series; or the first one to act; or the beginning.

It may also signify, in a philosophical sense, the first cause of all things which exist, i.e, whithout whom nothing exists. This first cause can also be named 'the root cause' or the fundamental cause. It can also be called 'the supreme cause'.

When we analyse the word we see that the word 'first' implies to a great extent the meaning contained in all the above.

God is the *first in the series* of the things which we call the world, but He is not just one of them. He is the first but also above all the rest in the series. He is supreme in fact.

He is the 'beginning' of all things, as, e.g, the spring is the beginning of the river. But the water in the spring and that in the river is the very same substance. They both differ only in degree and intensity. God and the rest of the world are not the same in substance; they differ from each other in an infinite way. He is the creator, they are mere creatures: they just do not exist without Him.

The word 'beginning' in this context will mean: by the initial action of God, without which nothing else exists or acts. In the same sense God is the first cause of all things. This would mean that He is not only a 'maker' of objects from material which already exists, but also the 'creator' of the very materials. He is not like a carpenter who makes a chair or table out of wood, etc; but He infinitely surpasses him inasmuch as He creates not only the marerials needed to make objects, but creates even the agents themselves. The carpenter in the example converts the wood, etc. into a chair or table. God creates everything, including the agents. If He is not a 'creator' but only a 'maker' He would in no way surpass any ordinary human or animal agent.

It is fairly clear from this explanation that in certain cases things are not dependent on the agent. In the example of the carpenter and the wood, the latter in no way *depends* on the carpenter for its existence. It is already there and the carpenter merely handles it and gives it, we may say, a 'modality'.

In the other case, viz of God 'creating'. we see that everything - the material as well as the agent - *depend and* that *totally* on his action.

Now, which of these *two* cases does the word 'முதற்றே' in the first couplet refer to? Is it of non-dependence? Obviously of total dependence. If the world was *not dependent* on God, the author need not have spoken of Him and that in the very first couplet. He could have easily ignored Him But the remaining couplets of this first chapter emphatically assert that unless man lives in total dependence on God, his life's goal would never be achieved.

The meaning, therefore, which we give to the word 'முதற்றே' is confirmed by the doctrine in the following couplets, as we shall see shortly.

ஆதிபகவன் — Adi - Bhagavan.

One of the names used for God, in Indian literature, is 'பகவான்' Bhagavan which word means : the one who is adorable. Whether the word 'பகவன்' in this composite name 'ஆதிபகவன்' has the above meaning or not, is not clear. The Tamil writers and commentators seem to think that it is a word of Tamil origin and would mean : the one who *dispenses to creatures according to their varying needs.* This is the opinion of the Tamil Scholar, Mr. Devaneyan. He would be 'dispensing' various gifts, natural as well as spiritual, in order to help creatures, especially men to attain the goal for which He created them.

Why Adi-bhagavan?

According to the opinion of a recent authoritative commentator of Thirukkural, Mr. K. Appathurai, the word *Adi*

(ஆதி) would refer to God as the *first guru* (Teacher) of the world. He would be a Teacher who would be God as well.

The author of Thirukkural seems to feel the need of making his readers realise that the real Teacher who can communicate true and lasting knowledge-a knowledge that can lead men to happiness—can be only God. Now God cannot reach men, remaining as God, at an infinite distance from them. For God is infinitely far away from man, if he does not in some manner descend to the level of man, viz. if he does not show himself also as a man! Only then he can teach him efficaciously! All other 'gurus' (Teachers) are nowhere when compared to this First Teacher of man! That is why the author mentions Him as the Teacher in the very first couplet-as much as to say: it is not so much I that am going to teach, but God Himself who is the Real Teacher of man, who can enter into his very heart and there deposit the knowledge that is worthwhile — the knowledge that alone can finally lead to true happiness.

The explanations of the following couplets will confirm this point further.

2. *God, the Goal of Man's Life.*

In the very second couplet the author says that knowledge of God without worship of Him is useless. It is by adoring His feet, i.e, it is by humbling one's self (adoring the feet is an Indian way of saying this) before Him who is pure, infinite knowledge that one can acquire true knowledge.

This 'adoring the feet' the third couplet goes on to say, is totally different from what a disciple ordinarily does if he wants to acquire knowledge. He usually sits at the feet of a human 'guru' and takes lessons from him. The teacher in this case is extraneous to the pupil. However efficacious the teaching of the master, he is still outside the disciple. Not so God, the First Supreme Guru of the world. He has

the power to enter into the very heart of man. He can live in it! This probably is the meaning of the words: மலர் மிசை ஏகினான். Perhaps the word ஏகினான் signifies 'hovers'. The Spirit of God may be said to 'hover' on the human heart, breathing life into it. The word மலர் may signify the 'heart' as in the phrases இதயமலர், இதயக்கமலம். The word மலர் and கமலம் seem to metaphorically signify the heart. At the same time, the author seems to say that though this divine master 'hovers' on the heart of man, man has to worship His feet. Only then he will have a life that is lasting. A wonderful thought! God is riding, as it were, on the human heart. but man has to keep himself close to His feet! Only those who do this will reach the goal of life, which is lasting happiness.

But, what about the toils of life at present? What about the worries of life which press us on all sides? The author seems to say that the root cause of the sorrows of life is undue desire to have and to enjoy the pleasures of this life. God who has no such desires of having or of not having (வேண்டுதல் வேண்டாமை இலான்) since He is the fulness of all perfection, is not, and cannot be, subject to any unhappiness. And if man takes refuge at the feet of such a perfect Being, he too will become, gradually of course, like God who is self-sufficient. Therefore he will have no fear of any evil (இடும்பை) from any side, ''யாண்டும் இடும்பை இல''

Similarly, there is no way of overcoming the many cares and worries of life unless one attaches one's self to the feet of one who is perfection itself and has no equal- தனக்குவமை இல்லாதான்.

There are indeed many almost insurmountable obstacles to reaching the goal for which man was created. He has to pass through so many of them. They are like a sea which is not easy to swim across. If one is to succeed in this effort he has to attach himself to the feet of one who is the very sea of righteousness (அறவாழி) who is a very sea also of goodness, graciousness and beauty (அம் + தண் + அ ர் =

அத்தலை) Unless man does this, i. e. finds his refuge or rest in that sea of righteousness and goodness which is God, he will not be able to swim across the other sealike obstacles in life which is sin, wickedness, unrighteousness, etc.

It may be noted that தாள்சேர்தல் or அடிசேர்தல் can mean also 'find one's rest' at the feet of God. which is an Indian way of saying : 'hold on to the feet of the one who will give you rest, peace and happiness'

That this rest is final and lasting, completely satisfying to the "restless" and "unhappy" man, is conveyed by the words நீடு வாழ்வார், which are twice mentioned in this chapter. That this happiness is absolutely 'stable' seem to be further emphasised by the word நிலம் in the phrase 'நிலமிசை'. The word நிலம் could convey the idea of something which stands (நில்) which is stable and lasting. This is indeed the final goal of man's life—lasting happiness!

The phrase பிற ஆழி-பிறவாழி is sometimes interpreted as the endless sea of birth, the Interminable cycle of births which it is not easy to get over. This interpretation does not seem to fit into the grammar or the whole doctrine of Thirukkural.

Thirukkural, it is seen, rejects the theory of re-birth with its endless cycles,

But the objectors may insist that the author definitely refers to the cycle or births when he speaks of பிறவிப் பெருங்கடல் in the last couplet of the first chapter. That phrase could not mean, they will say, anything else but a 'sea of births' etc., an interminable cycle of births.' But the phrase பிறவிப் பெருங்கடல் can mean not only a 'sea of births', but 'the great sea that is human birth' —meaning the line of innumerable births which have taken place, and which will take place in the world till the end of time. But in the context, the couplet speaks of 'swimming the sea that is human births'. This could mean the enormous difficulties

connected with birth, the trials and sorrows of life, as the couplets 4, 7 & 8 already mention. Birth is the beginning of these difficulties, as every one easily experiences. These can be overcome, says the author, only by going to God's feet. This repeated reference to God's feet and man's adhering to those feet is a very concrete and emphatic way of saying : ''man must aim at reaching God. That is the goal of his life''.

But the author says in couplet No. 5, that man must ''on the king's (இறைவன்) true praise *delight to dwell*'' (Pope) ; ''delight in the true praise of God'' (Drew); ''hail the Glory of God'' (S. Bharathi). The phrase is புகழ் புரிதல். The verb புரி can mean : *do, desire, meditate upon, give, proclaim*, be *intent upon*.

The idea implied can be elaborated as follows :

Man was created in order to share in the very happiness of God. The greatest obstacle for man to arrive at this sublime destiny, is his own salfishness, by which he is all the time impelled to seek his own self, his own pleasure, his own esteem and glory. It is 'pride' in its various manifestations. This is what he must conquer-his self. How can he do that? By acknowledging the infinite and true excellence of God, by praising it, by declaring it, meditating upon it, by being intent upon procuring it in oneself as well as in others. He can procure it by not only himself realising the immense and true excellence of God, but also making others realise it and thus ''do the glory of God'' or ''give God the glory that is due to Him.'' This is the meaning, obviously of the words இறைவன் புகழ் புரிதல். It is பொருள் சேர் புகழ் because all other glory or praise which men seek so selfishly is not genuine; it is false, it is without a base. It is without 'substance'! whereas God's glory is absolutely true and substantial. Thiruk-kural, it is seen, rejects the theory of re-birth with its endless cycle.

3. *God and Morality*

What is morality? Is it something based on a sort of general consensus of men by which some acts are considered licit and some illicit? Or is it founded on something far higher than man and his understanding? In other words: Is God the foundation of morality? If so, in what sense, What does Thirukkural say?

Thirukkural says clearly in the very first chapter on God, that two kinds of deeds which lead one to darkness இருள்சேர் இருவினை will not have any hold on those who 'delight in the praise of God'-(Drew); who 'hail the Glory of God'-(S. Bharati). That phrase இருள் சேர் could also mean இருள்சேர்ந்த, இருள்சேர்கின்ற, இருள் சேரும் i.e. 'darksome'. It can therefore mean 'deeds springing from darkness and leading to darkness.

Those who delight to dwell on the praise of God, who hail the Glory of God, who live, as it were, by the Glory of God will not be touched by these two kinds of deeds.

But the phrase புகழ்புரி could also mean (as we already said)' to do the Glory of God or to reflect the glory of God! to reflect a certain godliness in ones life, etc.

This 'reflecting godliness or godlikeness' in one's life and doings is precisely what we call a virtuous life or moral life, morality. Morality, therefore, is equivalent to practising godliness in deeds : it means delighting in the Glory of God or in his praise. It means acknowledging God for all that He is, His greatness, His goodness, His lovability and esteeming it above all and praising Him for it. The Glory of God, after all is His infinite greatness or excellence, His goodness and all His perfections. We praise God duly not so much by the words of our mouth, (in song etc.) but rather by the uprightness of our deeds. God is goodness itself, perfection itself. There can be nothing of evil or imperfection in Him. And so a man who must glorify God cannot do so truly unless his very needs praise Him and declare His perfections.

Briefly, therefore, morality is glorifying God: Immorality (evil deeds) is not glorifying God. The origin and foundation, therefore, is God always. It is on this basis, as is fairly obvious ,that the author builds this great classic, Thirukkural and its moral teaching. It is not some doubtful basis such as a sort of universal consensus, or a certain propriety or social convention.

Since morality is concieved in this way it is not surprising that Thirukkural says that it should be observed as more valuable than life itself (couplet 131).

Now, the author says two kinds of deeds (இருவினை) are darksome or lead one to darkness. What are these? The common interpretation is that they are good deeds and evil deeds. This is said according to a certain philosophical system by which all deeds carry with them a certain undesirable evil effect and that an absolute freedom from desire which impels one to act is the way to bliss! It is easy to see how evil deeds are darksome and lead one to darkness-a spiritual darkness-which is only another way of saying unhappiness. For happiness is light and joy, while unhappiness is darkness and sorrow.

But, how can good deeds also be considered 'darksome'or ''leading to darkness''!The author himself has said that good deeds must be performed even if there is no reward for them in the next world, even if there is no next world. (Couplet 222). He also says that before death comes on, good deeds should be vigorously practised (Couplet 335). In other words good acts are desirable in themselves and not merely for the reward which they may bring with them. It is not good deeds therefore which the author has in mind in this couplet of இருவினை. What then?

Note how the author in this chapter speaks about 'birth' itself as a sea; not only because there are innumerable births (i.e., persons born) but also the sorrows and evils which each birth brings with it are many; so many,

that only one who holds on to the feet of God can get over them. He seems to hint in this couplet that it is not only the evil deeds which each one personally commits that are darksome, but also some evil deed connected with human birth which brings with it the many sorrows and worries of life. The sad effects of this birth-evil, as we may call it, are also darksome : they can be made lightsome only by glorifying God, as already explained. It was by pride that man in the beginning (in Christian thought) refused to give the glory to God which is His due. Hence the author of Thirukkural defines sin or an evil deed as essentially pride. (தீவினை என்னும் செருக்கு) See couplet No. 201. This original refusal by man is one of those evils which is affecting the entire human race. This seems to be the second of the இருவினை spoken of in this couplet.

Thus we see that morality is based on God and is influenced by some original evil deed, in as much as man finds himself personally weak to resist all evil inclinations and thus falls a prey to them. But both one's personal weakness, as well as the root from which this weakness is derived, will be cured by glorifying God.

We see in this first chapter that God is called ஆதி பகவன், வாலறிவன், மலர்மிசை ஏகினான், வேண்டுதல் வேண்டாமை இலான், இறைவன், ஐந்தவித்தான், தனக்கு வமையில்லாதான், அறவாழி அந்தணன் and எண் குணத்தான், The name that yet needs an interpretation is ஐந்தவித்தான். About this, in the following article.

ஐந்தவித்தான்

Note : This article is meant to give just a glimpse into the material provided by Pulavar M. Deivanayagam in his research work "ஐந்தவித்தான் யார்?" Those who wish to have a fuller view will have to take up a study of the book itself. May this brief expose serve as an incentive!

Here is the couplet in question :

பொறிவாயில் ஐந்தவித்தான்
பொய்நீர் ஒழுக்க
நெறிநின்றார் நீடுவாழ் வார் (6)

It means in substance that those will have long life or eternal life who observe the way of morality—free of error or lie-given by the ஐந்தவித்தான். (The word பொறிவாயில் will be interpreted later). This word ஐந்தவித்தான் is usually interpreted to mean the one who has scorched, or scotched, or singed the five senses; or who has perfect control or dominion over them; or who has brought them into absolute submission.

This is how the word is translated into English, by scholars

G. *U. Pope* : ''Who quenched lusts that from the sense - gates proceed''

Rev. Drew : Who has destroyed the five desires or the senses''

F. W. Ellis ''Who is of sensual organs void''

Suddananda Bharati : Who has the senses singed away''

It is seen that all, except Ellis, give the same interpretation for the word அவித்தான், Avi in the phrase ஐந்தவித்தான் is ''quench lust'', ''destroy'', singe away.''

Ellis, obviously, sees that this interpretation does not fit, when we speak of God. In the words of a Tamil scholar Thiruvachakamani (Thirukkural translation, pp. 282-283).

''The word ஐந்தவித்தான் is intriguing and rather jarring, not to say inappropriate, if literally interpreted, as some commentators and translators have done, with reference to God the Almighty.

"If applied to Mahavira or Lord Buddha or to Jesus Christ, its literal meaning, namely one who has scorched or scotched one's five senses, might hold good. But used with reference to God the Supreme, it will be absurd, nay blasphemous."

It is quitc 'absurd, nay blasphemous" therefore, to speak of God as the one who "quenched lusts that from the sense gates proceed" (Pope) or who has "destroyed the five desires of the senses" (Drew) or "who has the senses singed away"(S. Bharati) or "scotched or scorched his five senses, or "who has complete dominion over his five senses." All this does not fit in with the nature of God who has no 'body' or the senses of the body-who is a pure spiri. How then does Thiruvalluvar speak of God as ஐந்தவித்தான்? The meaning of the word ஐந்து is quite clear—it means the five senses and is used as a sort of figure for the whole body.

What is meant, then, by the word அவித்தான்?

The root of the word is அவி (avi) which, as verb, is loosely interpreted by scholars to mean "to exercise complete and absolute control" over the senses. But from a study of the use of this word by the author of Thirukkural himself, it is clear that it cannot mean that.

The reasons are as follows :

(1) The author uses a different word to signify "control" of senses. It is அடக்கல்.

ஒருமையுள் ஆமைபோல்
ஐந்தடக்கல் ஆற்றின்
எழுமையும் ஏமாப் புடைத்து. (126)

A similar word is அடல்.

அடல்வேண்டும் ஐந்தன்
புலத்தை விடல்வேண்டும்
வேண்டிய எல்லாம் ஒருங்கு. (343)

To express the idea of complete contrcl over the senses the author seems to use yet another word, viz. காத்தல்.

உரன் என்னும் தோட்டியான்
ஓர் ஐந்தும் காப்பான்
வரன்என்னும் வைப்பிற்கோர் வித்து. (24)

The author, a master of words, could not have used one word for another, and therefore the word which he uses viz. அவி should have a different meaning.

(2) The word avi (அவி) is used as a noun by the author himself to mean the ghee which is poured in sacrifice.

அவிசொரிந்து ஆயிரம்
வேட்டலின் ஒன்றன்
உயிர்செகுத் துண்ணாமை நன்று. (259)

The word can simply mean a sacrificial gift. Combined with உணவு i.e. அவியுணவு, it would mean 'sacrificial' food. This also is used by the author.

செவியுணவிற் கேள்வி
யுடையார் அவியுணவின்
ஆன்றாரோடு ஒப்பர் நிலத்து. (413)

As a verb it is used by the author to mean 'dying away,' in the active sense.

செவியிற் சுவையுணரா
வாயுணர்வின் மாக்கள்
அவியினும் வாழினும் என். (420)

Also it used to mean destroy, remove :

செவிச்சொல்லும் சேர்ந்த
நகையும் அவித்தொழுகல்
ஆன்ற பெரியார் அகத்து. (694)

It is obviously in this sense that the author uses the word அவி in the word which we are studying ஐந்தவித் தான். Hence those who translate the word to mean 'scotched or scorched or singed or destroyed' seem definite'y to be nearer to its true meaning.

Now 'destroying or scotching, etc., has to be understood aright. It is not a mere act of destruction that it is intended to convey.

The word அவி seems to be used only with a 'sacrificial' connotation. It can therefore mean only 'to destroy in sacrifice or to offer in sacrifice or to die in sacrifice'. The phrase, then, ஐந்தவித்தான் can only mean: "The one who destroyed or scotched or offered in sacrifice his five senses, i.e., his body."

Now, to whom could this description really apply in the full sense? There is only one person in history who said he came to this world to offer his body—his life—in sacrifice and did it as he desired. Here are the testimonies.

Jesus said of himself : "I came not to be served but to serve and to give my life a ransom for many. (cf.Matt. 20:28.)

And he said that it was a voluntary sacrifice, not something which was inflicted upon him by his enemies—a thing he could not escape; and more over he was going to take back his life (in his resurrection after his death) by his own power.

He said : I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me.I lay it down of my own free will and, as it is in my power to lay it down, so it is in my power to take it up again'." (Jn. 10:18). What he said was fulfilled when he offered himself to be captured by his enemies—from whom he could have easily escaped, as he did on more than one occasion.

All this is well conveyed in the phrase ஐந்தவித்தான், which means not "one who was killed in sacrifice by someone else" but rather "one who gave his body in sacrifice."

This obviously does not appiy to anyone else except to Jesus Christ, as his life history shows.

This is confirmed by what the author says a little later, using the same phrase ஐந்தவித்தான்.

ஐந்தவித்தான் ஆற்றல் அகல்விசும்பு ளார்கோமான்
இந்திரனே சாலுங் கரி,

It means : To the power of the one who sacrificed his body, the chief of heavenly beings is witness.

The word *Indiran* இந்திரன் has all along been interpreted to mean Indira, the king of the gods.

To this it may be objected as follows:

It is accepted even by all those who give the above interpretation that the author of Thirukkural wanted his work to be absolutely a non—denominational one, i. e,, a book teaching morality common for all mankind. It is usually called a book of 'world religion' or common religion, etc. In fact scholars say that we can see that the author, against all usual procedures of Tamil writers,ancient as well as modern, commences his work by just invoking God, not mentioning any particular deity. (This is not however our opinion. Our growing conviction is that the author is invoking the Triune God of the Christians, as we shall show in due course.) It would therefore be extremely strange that he should mention this god Indra alone! And the connection in which he mentions him makes it actually ridiculous. For he makes him *witness* to the power of the one who, according to the *former* interpretation, had perfect control over his five senses. The whole story of *Indra* is that he fell under a curse, because he could not control

his lust. How could Indra therefore be a witness to the power of one who had complete dominion over his senses and their lust! Moreover, the *new* interpretation is not a question of controlling one's senses, but of sacrificing one's body!

What then is the answer? The clue is given by the new interpretation given to the word ஐந்தவித்தான் and the new meaning given to the word *Indiran* (இந்திரன்) itself. The word need not necessarily mean the particular god; it can simply mean a heavenly being or at the most 'chief of heavenly beings'' *In this sense the couplet would mean : To the *power* of the one who sacrificed his body, the king or chief of the heavenly beings is a witness''.

In the couplet of chapter I where the phrase ஐந்தவித் தான் occurs the author says :

Those will have long or eternal life who stand by the way of morality—free of error or lie—given by the one who sacrificed his body, on the பொறி''.

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* It may be worth while to note here, that according to legends (which need not be considered as necessarily baseless, it was the archangel Michael whom the Bible calls as 'one of Chief Princes' (cfr. Dan. 10, 13) who came to roll back tne stone and sat on it, and spoke to the women as the Gospei accounts narrate.

As a recent writer says : "Michael, whose name is in itself a challenge against all the insane disloyalties of the creation, did appropriately, indicate the emptiness of the tomb (where Christ had been buried) as the utter fatuity of going against God.''

The name 'Michael' is a name of challenge, because it means who can like Ged? And this challenging cry was raised by the angel who bears this name when some of the angels had the audacity to indulge in 'insane disloyalty' to the Creator and imagine that they need not acknowledge the absolute supremacy of God above all creation. All this has reference (mysterious !) to a 'battle' in heaven itself ! Read Revel. 12. 7-8 and Luke 10. 18.

The word பொறி has been interpreted to mean the instrument of sensation, பொறிவாயில் would then mean "through the intruments" of sense.

The meaning might fit in the word அவி is interpreted to mean control, dominate, destroy ....etc. It could then mean the one who controls or destroys the five perceptions or desires arising "through the instruments of sense". But since we say that the word அவி could not have that meaning and, more than that, this whole idea of controlling or destroying senses is absolutely improper to God, there has to be another meaning to the word பொறி. It can simply mean 'the instrument' and the particle வாயில் could easily mean "on or over", The whole phrase could mean "on the instrument". If we take ஐந்தவித்தான் to mean the one who sacrificed his body, we can easily understand what the words "on the instrument" can imply. We know on what instrument (of torture) Jesus sacrificed his body; it is the cross.

The whole couplet therefore clearly speaks of God who sacrificed his body on the cross, and adds that unless one stood by the true way which he showed, one cannot have real life. After speaking thus in the fist chapter, the author feels the need of completing the idea. Sacrifice or death on an instrument of torture is no sign of power! And God is all powerful. How or when does He show that power? The author speaks of this the second time he mentions the same ஐந்தவித்தான். Indeed, he seems to say, the one who sacificed his body on the cross had power which is witnessed even by the chief of heavenly beings, not to speak of earthly witnesses! This seems,obviously, to refer to the appearance of heavenly messengers who are said to have come down to announce the coming back to life of Jesus after death : viz. his resurrection.

This "witness" by heavenly messengers was considered so very striking and important that all the four narrators of the story of Jesus' life mention it.

Here they are :

1. "After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene came with the other Mary to inspect the tomb. Suddenly there was a mighty earthquake, as the *angel of the Lord descended from heaven*. He came to the stone, rolled it back and sat on it. In appearance he resembled a flash of *lightning while his garments were dazzling as snow*. The guards grew paralysed with fear of him and fell down like dead men. Then the *angel spoke*, addressing the women : "Do not be frightened. I know you are looking for Jesus the crucified, but he is not here. He has been raised exactly as he promised. Come and see the place where he was laid. Then go quickly and tell his disciples : 'He has been raised from the dead and now goes ahead of you to Galilee, where you will see him'. That is the message I have for you."

— (*Mat* :. 28.1-7)

2. "Mean while, Mary stood weeping beside the tomb. Even as she wept, she stooped to peer inside and there she saw *two angels in dazzling robes*. One was seated at the head and the other at the foot of the place where Jesus' body had lain."

— (*John* 20. 11-12)

3. "When the sabbath was over. Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought perfumed oils with which they intended to go and anoint Jesus. Very early just after sunrise, on the first day of the week they came to the tomb. They were saying to one another : "who will roll back the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" When they looked, they found that the stone had been rolled back (It was a huge one). On entering the tomb they saw a *young man* sitting at the right, *dressed in a white robe*. This frightened them thoroughly, but he feassured them : "You need not be amazed! You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, the one who was crucified. He has been raised up; he is not here. See the place

where they laid him. Go now and tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you to Galilee, where you will see him just as he told you'. (Mark, 16 1-7)

4. "On the first day of the week, at dawn, the women came to the tomb bringing the spices they had prepared. They found the stone rolled back from the tomb; but when they entered the tomb they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were still at a loss over what to think of this, *two men in dazzling garments* stood beside them. Terrified, the women bowed to the ground. The men said to them : "Why do you search for the Living One among the dead? He is not here; he has been raised up. Remember what he said to you while he was still in Galilee — that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified and on the third day rise again". (Luke, 24. 1-7).

Note. — In the first two narratives there are explicit references to *angels*; in the other two, the reference is to a young man, and two men in dazzling garments. This slight discrepancy need not create any difficulty regarding the truth of the appearance of angels. The angel or angels may have appeared in a human form and the two narrators describe just as they saw; while the other two narrators identify the apparitions. There is obviously no substantial discrepancy in the narrations. We may therefore boldly assert that the word இந்திரன் refers to the apparitions of those angelic heavenly beings.

It is therefore sufficiently clear that the word ஐந்த வித்தான் can refer to none but Jesus Christ.

An objection may here be raised. If the author had wanted to speak of Jesus Christ, why could he not have done so? What was the need for him to speak in this rather hidden or puzzling manner? The answer could be the following:

(a) He may have feared that if he spoke openly of Jesus and his doctrine, the work might not survive the opposition which it was clearly seen to be having every where,even at the time he was writing. There are sufficient historical evidences to show that the way of life shown by Jesus did not have a smooth time in the past everywhere. We know how powerful certain sections of people were in those days with kings and princes, how anxious they were to dominate among people and would not tolerate anything but their own philosophy and way of life. And so the author may have thought it better not to make his work too openly Christian !

(b) It may not have been unusual in those days for masters to write 'instructions' in such a way as to be intelligible only to those who were 'initiated'.

(c) The author may have also intended to write in such a way as to induce everyone to take and read. If it had been too openly 'Christian' there would be some prejudice. He may have intended to give just the most essential elements of the Christian way of life and a great deal of general morality. And that is what the work appears to be. I hope to show in due course that Thirukkural has indeed the most essential points of the Christian doctrine and way of life.

Perhaps the day may yet come when we may be able to know exactly the real reason.

God the ஐந்தவித்தான் நீத்தார்

In the first chapter the author invokes God —as the author of the world, as the one who lives in the hearts of men, one who is supremely just, one who has no equal, etc. He speaks of him also, as already explained, as the one who sacrificed his body, i-e. as the ஐந்தவித்தான்.

In the third chapter he again speaks of God as the one who sacrificed his body—using the same name ஐந்தவித்தான். This third chapter is however entitled நீத்தார் பெருமை (i.e. The Glory or Greatness of Those who "*renounced*".) The same name is used in the first couplet and the whole seems to speak of நீத்தார்.

What did the author mean by this word நீத்தார்?

It is usually interpreted to mean 'those who renounce'. Renounce what? Renounce, they say, earthly pleasures, married life, etc. Hence this word, according to interpreters, would mean 'Rishis' or 'Sadhus'.

To this interpretation one may object thus :

(1) The first 4 chapters of திருக்குறள் are considered by all as the general introduction to the whole book. Why should the author speak of 'those whe renounce' in the very introduction?

(2) Thirukkural is doubtless a book on அறம் (Aram) which is either இல்லறம் (family life) or துறவறம் (life of renunciation). The author speaks of இல்லறம் as the அறம்.

அறன் எனப்பட்டதே இல்வாழ்க்கை* he says. And as soon as the introduction is over, in the 5th chapter, he begins to deal with இல்லறம். What then was the significance of speaking of துறவறம் in the introduction?

(3) We have already shown that the name ஐந்தவித்தான் can refer only to God, though in human existence, with a body.

If நீத்தார் should mean only men of renunciation, why should this same name ஐந்தவித்தான் appear in this chapter? The conclusion can only be that somehow நீத்தார் and ஐந்தவித்தான் are one and the same person.

In that case the ஐந்தவித்தான் can truly be 'one who renounced'. Renounced what? Not only earthly pleasures, married life and all that goes with it; more than that, renounced the actual exercise of the rights and privileges which are his as God !

Here is what the Bible says about this very "renunciation !" (1) "Though he was God he did not demand and cling to his rights as God. But laid aside his mighty power and glory, taking the disguise of a slave and becoming like men."

The w ole life of Jesus is just this.....Utter renunciation and humiliation.

The author says also why this renunciation took place. He says ஒழக்கத்து நீத்தார் which means 'renounced on account of ஒழுக்கம் i.e. morality' It would mean that the renunciation took place so that he may appear on earth and establish morality, which had certainly suffered much

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* One reason why he says so; according to certain interpreters, is the fact that even துறவறம் cannot exist unless there is இல்லறம் in which all men are born to life!

(1) Translation : 'The Greatest is love' Philip-2:6-7.

on account of men's sins, etc. This was really the greatness of the நீத்தார்.

In the next couplet he adds another reason for the greatness of நீத்தார். He says : If you want to know the glory of நீத்தார் think of all those who have died in the world. What does this exactly mean? Interpreters explain it thus : Just as you cannot count the number of people who have died in the world, so also we cannot estimate the greatness of the நீத்தார். This interpretation, however, does not seem so very convincing. It seems rather to mean something like this : Think of the millions who have died in the world. None of them have come back to life. The நீத்தார் alone has done that. And that is his glory, in a word!

This interpretation is confirmed by the couplet in this chapter in which he definitely speaks of the power of the resurrection shown by the ஐந்தவித்தான் (see explanation above).

But the word நீத்தார் as applied to ஐந்தவித்தான் could also mean "renouncing earthly pleasures, married life, etc."

The third couplet in this chapter speaks of நீத்தார் as the one "who put on அறம்;" "ஈண்டு அறம் பூண்டார்."

This may be easily interpreted to mean that the ஐந்த வித்தான் put on துறவறம் viz., that he appeared as a man of utter renunciation. But we may say that the ஐந்த வித்தான் நீத்தார் was a personification not only of துறவறம் but also of இல்லறம், in as much as he lived all the virtues of both these 'Arams' அறங்கள் without however experiencing the pleasures of இல்லறம் He is thus an example to every one, be he a man of இல்லறம் or a man of துறவறம். There is no unlimited enjoyment of senses, even in இல்லறம் one has to rule and guide one's senses; only then he will have sway over this world and its ways. This idea is conveyed by the following couplet :

சுவைஒளி ஊறுஓசை நாற்றமென்று ஐந்தின்
வகைதெரிவான் கட்டே உலகு.

Even in இல்லறம் one has to keep his senses under perfect control, guarding them so that they may not lead astray—as it can easily happen! Only then, his earthly life will become the seed of a life which is called the வரன் i.e., the bridegroom.

உரன்என்னும் தோட்டியான் ஓரைந்தும் காப்பான்
வரன்என்னும் வைப்பிற்கோர் வித்து.

The author seems to hint already in the introduction that the object of his work is to help man not to set his life's goal on the pleasure which can be derived from senses especially in married life! Understand and realise, he seems to say, that your married life இல்லறம், or for that matter even your life of renunciation, is not everything. But the man of இல்லறம் as well as the one of துறவறம் have finally to reach an intimacy far greater than the one enjoyed here on earth, be it the bodily and sensual intimacy between the married, or even the spiritual intimacy with God in a life of renunciation. The union to be aimed at with all one's strength is that union with God (ஐந்தவித்தான் நீத்தார்) in which God himself becomes the bridegroom of the human scul. It is on this that the third part of Thirukkural viz., இன்பத்துப் பால் speaks. It is not, as is usually interpreted, about the sensual, carnal, physical delights of an ordinary lover and the beloved, that this part deals with. The நீத்தார் enlightens us on both these aspects life here and life here-after, and life in இல்லறம் as well as life in துறவறம். Hence it is he speaks of him as இருமை வகை தெரிந்து ஈண்டறம் பூண்டார்.

The word, therefore, 'நீத்தார்' could not denote, துறவி in this chapter, but God himself in human form as ஐந்தவித்தான் and நீத்தார்.

வான்

Immediately after the first chapter which is acknowledged by all to be an invocation of God identified as explained earlier with ஐந்தவித்தான்-the author has a chapter on what is called the வான் சிறப்பு the beauty or greatness or splendour of வான்.

The word வான் has all along been commonly interpreted to mean rain. In fact the ordinary word for rain, i.e. மழை is twice mentioned in this chapter.

At the first sight it would seem that the author was indeed speaking about the necessity of rain for man's life on earth. Man's hunger will not be quenched, he seems to say, farmers will not work in their fields, even grass will not grow, the sea with its immense expanse of water will itself gradually lose something of its quality, there will be no worship of the gods, generous charity will disappear, no one will do penance any longer, why even morality will disappear!

At the first sight surely is 'rain' and its importance that the author is dealing with.

But when we delve deeper, a truth far different from the 'apparent' sense comes to light.

a) First, one feels like asking : was it so very necessary for a great teachar like Valluvar to devote a whole chapter and that immediately after the invocation of God, in the very general introduction to the whole book just to tell us how useful is rain! What is it that the author tells us here which even an ordinary man does not know! What

would have been the 'loss' if he had omitted this chapter altogether or had placed it somewhere else, in quite a secondary place?

The author seems to say that if there is no rain, there will be no worship of God-there will be neither gift-giving nor penitence தவம் ! He adds at the end of the chapter, as a sort of crowning thought that without water (rain) even morality will not stand, no matter what sort of persons we are dealing with!..... Could such a trend of thought be really that of Valluvar? Would he have considered rain as so absolutely indispensable that nonesoever could practise moraliy, or worship God when it fails.

In chapter 14 of this work (on morality) this very same author says, in the very first couplet: Since morality or uprightness gives special excellence, It has to ba cultivated even more than life, i.e even at the cost of life! How then could the same author be of the opinion that morality will not be possible, not only when life is at stake but when rain fails! It looks so ridiculous!

b) But there is a much greater reason to say that the author is not dealing here with rain at all, but with something absolutey quite different from it, but whose 'earthly image' could well be considered this rain!

The rain therefore, வான் is definitely not the earthly rain, water, but one that has its origin in heaven itself, i.e. rather one that has its origin in God himself, as we shall explain later.

It may here be noted that some interpreters have remarked that the word ஒழுக்கு in the last couplet of Chapter II-(the one which speaks apparently about the indispensable necessity of rain for morality)-means *dripping* ''Unless there is rain, there is no dripping''

This interpretation is obviously rather childish. Was it necessary for a man like Valluvar to tell us that there can

be no 'dripping' if there is no rain or water? And what would be the import of that idea for life and morality?..... we are still in the introduction to the whole book.....Moreover the author uses elsewhere the word ஒழுக்கு exactly in the sense of ஒழுக்கம் i.e, morality.

What then is really the import of the word ஒழுக்கு in this chapter?

Many interpreters. seeing it is ridiculous to restrict the meani. g of வான் to mean only rain, suggest that it can also mean the grace and power of God which because of its abundance, is symbolised by rain. The phrases அருள் மாரி, அருள் மழை are quite common. Some suggest that it means rather this grace power of God, than the ordinary rain.

But it seems more accurate to say that the author intended to speak only about God's grace, using earthly words like 'rain' etc, In fact the author uses not only the word வான் or மழை but also விண், புயல், விசும்பு, எழிலி, வானம் which in the mind of the author were suited to convey the idea which he desired to convey with as much force as possible.

The very fact that the author used different words to express the reality means that it is not merely மழை (rain) that he has in mind.

1. The first couplet says; By the continuance (நின்று) of வான் the world is kept in movement or life and therefore it may itself be understood to be the life giving ambrosia அமிழ்தம்!

வான்நின்று உலகம் வழங்கி வருதலால்
தான்அமிழ்தம் என்றுணரற் பாற்று. (11)

What is it that keeps the world and all living beings in it, in life and movement? Only rain? Is rain worthy of the name of அமிழ்தம் that is life giving ambrosia? Life

giving is something which belongs to God's power-grace, is it not?

2. In the 3rd couplet the author says ; If விண் fails, a great hunger will take hold of every one in this big world with its immense expanse of water, and this hunger will torment it from within! The author speaks of the immense expanse of water existing in the world but it does not help to quench the hunger of man if வான் fails! We may think that he is speaking of the immense expanse of sea water which is unsuited for use. What use? For drinking. But the author speaks of *hunger*. And he also says that this hunger will torment him from within. This 'from within' could not mean merely 'from inside the body.' If it was only that, there was no need for anybody to tell us that! Was it a great discovery on the part of the author that if there is no water or rain a great thirst (or even hunger) will be experienced inside the body!

There is, then, obviously a hunger (and thirst) of a more 'interior' nature? It is surely that thirst and hunger of the human soul which torments far more than that of the body! And this is not quenched by any one or anything but by the one who created man! And who or what is that? It is obviously God's power and grace. Therefore the word விண் in this couplet obviously means that Grace and power. It could mean heavenly source.''

3. In the 2nd couplet the author says how this tormenting hunger is satiated? It is by the rain (மழை) which is God's grace itself becoming the food of the hungry soul. The couplet says that this (மழை) *supplies material* useful as food to those who need it; but more than that itself becomes that food!

No doubt, the ordinary rain helps food stuffs grow and also itself becomes part of our food, but in keeping with the rest of the chapter, this is verified in the fullest measure only in the prime source of all good, as well as of all food which is the Grace-power of God. It not only

supplies all that is needed for man's sustenance but itself becomes our spiritual food. How is this last varified? Is the writer perhaps hinting that it is by this grace-power of God, that God himself becomes ஐந்தவித்தான் and the prime source of all that is good to us?

But more than that, the ஐந்தவித்தான் himself becomes our heavenly food, by the very fact of his becoming அவித்தான், Most probably there is a hint here to God as ஐந்தவித்தான் becoming a sacrifice for us, as well as sacrificial food. Sacrifice and Sacrificial food could not be separated. The word அவித்தான் itself suggests அவியுணவு He is there fore அவித்தான் as well as அவியுணவு.

4. In the 4th couplet the author says that labourers will not labour, if the abundance of வாரி which is புயல் diminishes.

ஏரின் உழாஅர் உழவர் புயல்என்னும்
வாரி வளங்குன்றிக் கால் (14)

The word ஏர் as some interpreters say can mean any labour, not necessarily ploughing.

The word உழவர் and உழா அர் is taken usually to mean ''to plough''. It can mean, in general, labourers. The word உழவர் is derived from உழப்பு or உழத்தல் which means ''to work hard''.

This general meaning of ''strenuous labour'' seems more suited to the context where there is mentioned not 'rain' மழை in general but ''புயல் என்னும் வாரி;' that is the வாரி which is புயல், a strange identification indeed!

The word புயல் doubtless means a ''strong wind'' and வாரி can mean either வெள்ளம் (abundance of water) or வருவாய் (that is that which comes, viz into action or arrives to benefit us!) How then could one speak of புயல் என்னும் வாரி, that is, ''the strong wind that is the flood'' or the ''strong wind which comes to benefit man''.....What

could be the ''strong wind'' that is at the same time a flood? that is a flood of grace, let us say? It has to be necessarily something connected with God. He alone could be the source of a grace-Power! Flood is abundance and is therefore power!

Now, how are we to understand the ''Strong Wind'' which is this God-Grace-Power? There is only one possibility of explanation. Who or which religion or philosophy speaks of God as a mighty wind? Only Christians. They speak of some power which proceeds from on high (Luke 24:49)-which is equal to God and is one with God. He or It is called Pneuma in greek language in which the New Testament was originally written. This word means exactly Wind. In Latin it is translated as Spiritus from where the English word Spirit is derived. The Tamil for this is ஆவி. Perhaps this word does not convey forcefully the original meaning, but it is used in any case in the same meaning as the original pneuma. This wind is also said to have come into the world, and when it came, it came as a mighty wind (Act. 2:2)

The Phrase புயல் என்னும் வாரி can very well indicate this mighty wind which is the Power-Grace from heaven. This would be in consonance with the author's thoughts in chapter I and chapter III in which he speaks of God and of ஐந்தவித்தான் who also are not two, but one!—And now with this wind which or who is also one with God, we arrive logically at the concept of God who according to the Christian Faith is Triune that is God who is one and three at the same time.

This concept is a bit hidden in the other couplets of this chapter II, while it is fairly clear in this one.

5. In the 6th couplet of this chapter, the author speaks of விசும்பு and says that unless something descends from there, not even a blade of grass would grow. This word விசும்பு is not exactly 'rain' but rather 'heaven' or God's abode. Again we are obliged to conclude that there

is here no question of tha ordinary rain but of some divine heavenly dew! Some heavenly Power-Grace-without which not even life in its most elementary form would subsist, let alone life in the highest from which is life given to man in order to share in the happiness which is God's by nature, life divine!

6. In the 7th couplet the author says that unless the cloud condenses and yields what it has within, even the great sea would lose something of its quality!

We have been trying to show that it is not a question of ordinary rain (in this chapter) which falls from the condensing of an ordinary cloud-but something of a heavenly divine cloud which by condensing-that is by a benign action,* makes descend on earth floods of his grace and power. It is noteworthy that tha Bible, when it speaks of the action of God-wind-spirit uses the word 'pours.'

It clearly refers to what is said in this couplet. The sea can merely mean, ''even men who seem great, like the sea!'' The earth with all its greatness still needs the benign action of the heavenly cloud which is God's grace and power. It needs the pouring down in abundance of the grace whose prime source He is. But it may be objected that interpreters give the word கடிந்து not the meaning of 'condensing' but 'shine as lightning', Even in this meaning the couplet conveys quite an appropriate concept.

Lightning implies fire, and a fire with great power. We know how powerful a lightning can be. We know how a lightning or fire can destroy what it meets.

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* We may consider God's action earth (on men) as one that is full of anger, on account of men's sinful ways. Anger is a fire which tends to destroy! Condensing in this connection could mean 'Co olingdown'. God's anger cooling down, is just a way of saying his goodness and benign action on the world, inspite of man's un worthiness.

We can easily understand how this heavenly cloud, God's power and Grace can show itself in order to destroy what is not good enough to receive that grace-power; to destroy 'sin' which is the chief obstacle for the action of God's power in the human soul. This divine power from the heavenly cloud does this destruction. That is why the Bible says that the ஐந்தவித்தான் will wash men clean of their sins, with fire and spirit (Matt. 3:11 etc). Note here that the washing is done with "fire and wind"! Note also that when the "strong wind" came on earth, there appeared what seemed tongues of fire! (Act 2:3)

It is clear from what has been said above that this chapter "வான்" is dealing not about the ordinary rain, but of the torrent of heavenly grace and power which is one with God.

The first three chapters, therefore, are obviously dealing about God, the source of all things God power and grace personified, and God in the form of ஐந்தவித்தான்.

GOD-TRINITY

We have seen how the auther of Thirukkural speaks of God identifying him with ஐந்தவித்தான், and நீத்தார் speaks also of வான் who or which seems also identified with God. He deals with these in the introduction பாயிரம் to his work and immediately after the introduction, when he commences the book proper, in the very first couplet speaks of, what he terms இயல்புடைய மூவர். Who these மூவர் (= Triad) are has been one of the most controverted points in Tamil Literature.

A variety of interpretations has been advanced. A good many *groups of three* have been suggested. They are :

1) துறந்தார், துவ்வாதவர், இறந்தார் (mentioned in the couplet immediately following.

2) உறவினர், நண்பர் ஏழைகள் (Relatives, friends the poor)

3) தாய், தந்தை, மனைவி (father, mother, wife)

4) பெற்றோர், மனைவி, மக்கள் (Parents, wife, children)

5) அந்தணர், அரசர், வணிகர் (the Brahmins, the kings, the merchants)

6) சேரர், சோழர், பாண்டியர், (the Cheras, Cholas and Pandias)

7) அறவோர், ஒழுக்கத்து நீத்தார், அந்தணர் (the righteous, those who have renounced, Brahmins)

From the very diversity of interpretations given, it is obvious that the phrase இயல்புடைய மூவர் has proved quite a puzzle to scholars. About this a renowned Tam Scholar of recent times, Thiru. Vi. ka. has said this:

"There is something puzzling here. It is regarding the word மூவர் (trinity). Many opinions have been expressed about it, (Scholars should try to discover the truth. Many possible interpretations occured to my mind, but none appealed to me."

"It seem difficult indeed grasp the mind of the auther. One is unable to see whom he had in mind when he speaks of this trinity. I have often pondered on this. Many possible interpretations occured to my mind, but none appealed to me."

"One can see from the interpretaions of earlier commentators, that they were indeed puzzled by the word."

A scholar of no mean standing like Thiru. Vi. Ka. feels that the interpretations given so far (listed above) are not satisfactory, and that a fresh attempt should be made

to discover the truth about the identity of the trinity (மூவர்) Let us try.

The couplet in question runs as follows:

இல்வாழ்வான் என்பான்
இயல்புடைய மூவர்க்கும்
நல்லாற்றின் நின்ற துணை.

There are four elements in this couplet:

இல்வாழ்வான் என்பான், இயல்புடைய மூவர், நல்லாறு and துணை. If we are to understand the meaning of the "இயல்புடைய மூவர்", we have to discover the meaning of these four elements.

இல்வாழ்வான் என்பான்

This phrase literally means 'one who lives in the home' It is easily taken to mean 'one who lives the family life'. It is practically equivalent to 'husband'. It implies obviously marriage and இல்லறம் i.e. a married life as different from துறவறம், which is a life of renunciation and unmarried state of life. The English translations have 'householder', meaning more or less head of a family. The phrase இல்வாழ்வு or இல்வாழ்க்கை is taken usually as equivalent to இல்லறம் and இல்வாழ்வான் as one who is following இல்லறம். These connotations are certainly correct: but the question can be asked: is it all that the word இல்வாழ்வான் or இல்வாழ்க்கை implies? Could there be some higher meaning also contained in it? The answer seems to be yes. Let me try an explanation.

It is generally accepted that Thirukkural deals with the fourfold object of life on earth—viz அறம், பொருள், இன்பம் and வீடு. This *four*-fold element is explicitly mentioned in the famous திருவள்ளுவமாலை which is a garland of praise for this book containing 56 verses by the greatest Tamil scholars of the Sangham age, i.e. early Christian era. The number four is explicitly mentioned at least in six of the verses of this famous 'garland'. Three verses explicitly

mention வீடு as one of the objects explained in this book. *One* verse says fhat the book treats of *all* the objects of knowledge.

எல்லாப் பொருளும் இதன்பால் உள: இதன்பால்
இல்லாத எப்பொருளும் இல்லையால்-

Twelve verses in this garland however speak of the *three-fold* object (முப்பால்).

Two of these verses say that though it is முப்பால், it contains the four-fold object of life.

''முப்பாலின் நாற்பால் பொழிந்தவர்''-(19)
ஒருவர் இரு குறளே முப்பாலின் ஓதும்
தருமம் முதல் நான்கும் சாலும்-(44)

It is thus fairly clear that, though scholars and commentators usually speak of the three-fold object: of this book, actually it treats of the four-fold object of life's goal. It is also to be noted that whenever these four objects are mentioned by name as அறம், பொருள், இன்பம், வீடு, வீடு always comes as the *final* object. Hence it is that we have to say that the III part of Thirukkural, which (as we have tried to show elsewhere) aims at guiding man to God, coincides with this final object வீடு.

We can say. therefore, that the object the author had in mind in composing this book was definitely to lead man step by step to his final home வீடு. In this connection, it must be noted that there are not wanting commentators of Thirukkural who consider the introductory four chapters (பாயிரம்) as the part that defines the fourth object viz. வீடு.* In fact an analysis of the very first chapter will demonstrate this. The couplets specially which speak of worshipping and reaching God's feet, and of the lasting life,- what else could they refer to except the goal of man's life which is called வீடு.

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* பாயிரமே.....நாலாவது பாலாகிய வீட்டுப்பால் கூறும் பகுதியாகவும்... (கா. அப்பாதுரை)

It is therefore reasonable to suppose that the author after completing the introduction, the chief object of which was to turn man's mind to the ultimate realities of life, should commence the proper treatise with a reference to what he had spoken of in the introduction viz. to வீடு. All the authors usually link up the introduction with their treatise and vice versa. With this as the background let us try to find the full meaning of the first words of the regular treatise, viz. of இல்வாழ்வான்.

These words could simply mean *one who would live in the home* : referring the home வீடு, the final object of man's life referred to in the introduction. The meaning is perhaps brought out by the full phrase ; இல்வாழ்வான் என்பான்.

This word என்பான் added to the main phrase seems to aim at conveying something like ''one who would aim at living in the home'' described above, or better, ''one who would wish to make himself worthy of life in the home above mentioned''.

The author does not seem immediately to rush to an exposition of what married or family life இல்லறம் *is*. He would rather first propose the ideal of இல்லறம், expose what *it is meant to be*. The word என்பான் could imply ''if married life இல்லறம் is to be what it is meant or expected to be : if one desires to achieve its ideal ....

இல்வாழ்வான் என்பான்* therefore, directly would refer to the final ''home'' இல் of man which is the home of God himself. Obliquely however, it would refer to the 'home' which man seeks to establish on earth, viz. the family home which is established by marriage and இல்லறம். The whole idea contained seems to be : *If the home and family is to be a miniature or imitation of the home which is God's* home.....''!

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* We know that இல் = வீடு. இல்லம்.

The author seems to lay the proper foundations for இல்லறம் which he was going to expose in this first section of his work. He sees that it is possible for most human beings to take marriage and family life as something linked with the body and sexual pleasure involved in marriage. He would wish to put man and woman entering on this life on their guard against this false conception. He would do more, he would propose the highest possible ideal for this family life, would take God Himself as the ideal. He would see in God Himself the prototype of what a family on earth should be. He would consider God Himself as a 'family *and His 'home' (வீடு, இல்) as the ideal for the family and home to be established by marriage and இல்லறம். In this context the next words may be explained.

இயல்புடைய மூவர்

The word which is puzzling in this phrase is இயல்பு. What does it really mean? It is usually translated as 'nature' or 'natural state of things or beings'. If we give it this usual meaning, the phrase இயல்புடைய மூவர் could mean: ''the three beings or persons who have nature''. This does not seem to make much sense. All things, all beings have some nature or other: the nature of inanimate things, living things such as plants, animals, man etc.

Could there be some word or phrase understood before இயல்புடைய? If any word is to be understood, it has to be one which has gone before or one perhaps suggested obviously by the context and sense. The phrase which has gone before this இயல்புடைய is இல்வாழ்வான் என்பான். Could perhaps the word இல்வாழ்வான் be understood before இயல்புடைய? Let us see. If it is underetood it would run something like this:

இல்வாழ்வான் என்பான் (அந்த இல்வாழ்வான்) இயல்புடைய மூவர்க்கும்----துணை.

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* How can God be considered as family? I shall attempt to give an explanation in due course.

Its meaning in the whole context as explained above would be something like this.

The man who would establish a 'home' (i.e.a human family) on earth, having as pattern the ''home'' of God. Himself such a one is called to be an *associate* of the Three (Persons) who have that Home as their very nature or essence, who have in themselves whatever that final Home stands for, who, in fact, are the very Home for man—the final place of rest for weary and restless man. It may be remembered that home spells rest and joy. And so, when we speak of God as the Home, we mean that He is the final rest and happines for man who is compelled now, by sin and misery, to lead a weary and restless life on earth. In the context which has been explained, this meaning seems appropriate and satisfying. Man is called to be an associate of God for something noble, a co-operator in something which is proper to the three: to establish a family on earth similar, in a way, to *the family which He Himself is.*

The point to be now clarified here is-*how can God be considered as a family.* The word 'family' immediately brings to our mind a *man and woman married, and children* (if there be any) *living together.* This is not a wrong picture but it is not a complete one. It should be borne in mind first that sex alone does not constitute a family. For instance, among animals, though there may be a union of male and female, there is clearly no family life. Even among human beings not every man and woman who come together can be said to lead a family life. Rightly we speak of a ''family *life*''. It is a life having its own per fection and dignity. So many families, we see, seem to have rather a family 'death'—for among them mutual love and appreciation is dead: e sense of dignity and esteem is dead. How could there be real life then! Hence it is not a union of sexes alone, nor even their living, *materially* together in the same place, that constitutes a family. It is only understanding and love, a union of minds and hearts which maks a family. Only then there is life. For to

human beings endowed with intelligence and will, mind to know and hearts to love, *life* is mutual understanding and intimate love. Only that is worthy of being called 'life', 'family life'.

Now such a life is in the greatest plenitude in God. In fact God is *life itself*: i.e. He is the fulness of being, of knowledge and love. In him this being, knowledge and love are not *accidental acquisitions* as in human beings. By 'accidental' I mean that it is something which was not there at one time and *came upon* *later. Man does not exist always. He comes into existence at a certain time. He has no knowledge as to when he is born, but acquires it later. Nor does he know what love is until he acquires it by knowledge and effort.

In God there is no such thing as acquiring. He is always perfect—perfection itself: perfect knowledge and perfect love or happiness. All this is natural to Him. They are not things acquired. They are said to be selfsubsistent in Him. The word 'subsistent' suggests a *person* who is living by himself. In fact God is not a solitary being. He is Three: Perfcet Being, Perfect knowledge Perfect love. These are *Three* in Him, but all the three are self-subsistent knowing one another perfectly and loving one another infinitely. Since all this pertains to God who is infinitely above our human understanding, we cannot possibly fathom the truth about Him. Suffice it for the present to say that God is not a solitary being, but a divine Family of Three. Remove from this concept of 'family' all thought of sex-, for God is above all sex-, remove all imperfections of the body and the limitations of the human mind and heart, you will have some idea of what God *as family* is.

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* The words "accident, accidental" derived from Latin, mean precisely this something which came upon after-wards, which was not there first, something which was added later, etc.

It is on this Divine Family as its pattern that the human family is to be built. This is, it would seem, what the author of Tirukkural is trying to say in this couplet What he says seems to be confirmed by what he says a little later in this same chapter.

இயல்பினான் இல்வாழ்க்கை வாழ்பவன்
என்பான், முயல்வாருள் எல்லாம் தலை.

In the light of all that has been said above this couplet would mean something like this :

The one who is by nature as a family is the first among all those who would undertake to live a family life. The reference seems obviously to be to God who, as explained above, by his very nature is not a solitary being, living, as it were, a lonely life, without any companionship or friendship or love. We have to say truly that God by his very nature is a 'family', and cannot but be a family in the most sublime sense of the word. This statement may involve a certain un-understandable idea, but not an unreasonable one, for God is un-understandable Himself. But if we consider seriously what has been explained above, the idea will not only be not unreasonable but supremely reasoneble.

A simple statement may also be considered. We often say that one thing is a 'house' and quite another 'home' House suggests a material building, whereas 'home' brings out the atmosphere and love and intimacy among those who live in that material building.

We may therefore reasonably conclude that the author here (i.e. in the couplet இயல்பினான்.....) seems to assert that God is the first family and all the rest who aim at living or trying to live (முயல்வாருள்) are only secondary. He is the first and chief, the supreme pattern and head of all those who would wish to try to live a family life on earth. A sentence in the Bible seems to imply this idea. It is from the Letter of St. Paul to the Christians of Ephesus.

Here it is: in different modern translations which help to grasp its full significance for our purpose. (Ref Eph, 3: 14—15)—

(a) "I pray, kneeling before the Father *from whom every family, whether spiritual or natural takes its name*"

(Jerusalem Bible Translation).

(b) "I kneel before the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name.". (New American Bible and The New English Bible)

(c) "I kneel before the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name and nature".

(Moffatt Translation)

(d) "I fall on my knees before the Father from whom all fatherhood, earthly or heavenly derives its name".

(J. B. Philips)

(e) I fall on my knees before the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth receives its true name".

(To—day's English Version)

(f) "I bow my knees before the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named".

(Revised Standard Version)

From these texts we have the idea we are proposing viz. that the human family "takes its name" "derives its name and nature" "receives its true name" from the Father in heaven. However, this does not seem to prove that God is a family by himself. No doubt the idea is not explicitly expressed, but equivalently mentioned. How is this so? Note that the human family is consistently said

to be derived ''from the Father''. Note also how one of the quotations says that all ''fatherhood'' is derived from Him Note that this word Father or Fatherhood implicitly points 'the Son or sonship'. Note too, how ''motherhood'' in God is simply unintelligible. For God's Fatherhood contains in itself all the perfection of the motherhood God being neither male nor female, since sex is not a perfection compatible with the Infinite Nature of God. Among human beings, Motherhood is considered complementary, but both male and female are by nature necessary for the generation of children. This is obviously not in line with the infinite perfection of God. And so the 'fatherhood' of God is by its nature almighty not in need of another agent to beget a son. Hence it is that he is called 'Almighty' and has a son who has no equal among beings.

There is another important idea emerging from the above quotations. They lead us to consider another very important point. They all speak not simply of family (human) but family ''whether spiritual or natural''; family ''in heaven and on earth''; family ''earthly or heavenly''. The above words 'spiritual' 'in heaven' or 'heavenly' obviously do not seem to refer the family which is God himself. No doubt that family is spiritual in heaven and heavenly. 'But the text seems to say something more. It seems to refer to a special idea, viz. that the word 'family' need not be necessarily understood in the most ordinary sense, involving a man and a woman united in wedlock perhaps having children. That may be called a natural earthly family. But there can be, and are also families which may be termed 'spiritual and heavenly'. The ordinary, natural family itself can become 'spiritual and heavenly' as the sexual aspect of marriage diminishes and the spiritual union of love increases. But there can also be other 'spirtual' familes where men or women, unmarried, live in common, united in nothing but by the charity of Christ, in great intimacy with the object of serving others and attaining more fully divine perfection. I do not mean that all such communities attain to the sublime ideal, but that is the significance and ideal.

Is all this contained in the couplet which we are commenting on? Not directly, certainly but it seems to have been written with all this in mind, so that the human family be it in wedlock, or out of it, is a reflection of the divine Family which is God Himself.

Perhaps more research may bring out other even deeper meanings contained in the couplets commented on here.

It seems.then, that we may logically conclude that the மூவர் in question are none else than God as the அகரம் of all things; God as the ஐந்தவித்தான் நீத்தார். God as வான்-about all whom the introduction speaks and which we have tried to expose in the previous paragraphs.

Section—2

The Five Pillars Of Witnessing Power

As remarked earlier, Sanranmai (சான்றாண்மை) can be translated either as witnessing Power or Power in witnessing. The 99th Chapter of Thirukkurall deals with this power. In one of the couplets these 5 pillars are mentioned. Before deaiing with the pillars in particular we should know what this power is in general. This point is elucidated in the said chapter in 9 couplets (ie excluding the one in which the pillars are enumerated). Couplet-981.

கடன் என்ப நல்லவை எல்லாம் கடனறிந்து
சான்றாண்மை மேற் கொள்பவர்க்கு.

Taking சான்றாண்மை to mean not only perfect goodness ingeneral as usually translated), but the goodness that is this witnessing power, as above explained, this couplet means that to those who launch on witnessing ministry, everything good will be a duty.

One is usually not obliged to do everything that is good. One is indeed strictly obliged never to do any evil. Doing good always pertains to a perfect state of goodness. Now the witnessing power pertains also to a state of perfect goodness. Shuddananda Bharati translates : கடன் என்ப நல்லவை எல்லாம் as all goodness in duty to.....'')

Therefore those who undertake the duty of witnessing (to God or Christ as the Biblical quotations given above

show) will consider everything that is good as something by all means to be done, using the power which they have in witnessing. Couplet : 982

குணநலம் சான்றோர் நலனே பிற நலம்
எந்நலத்துள்ள தூவும் அன்று.

Perfect goodness or goodness fully worth the name is only what the witnesses (as above explained) exhibit. Goodness shown by others can not equal that shown in the witnessing power.

C.983 enumerates the five pillars(to be dealt with later) C.984

கொல்லா நலத்தது நோன்மை பிறர் தீமை
சொல்லா நலத்தது சால்பு.

Not to kill any animal (be it for the pleasure of eating flesh or in Sacrifice to deity) is something good, a deed of renunciation or penance: but it is a far greater deed of goodness, indeed it is perfect goodness not to speak evil of others. In fact, one who speaks evil of others, has really no right to undertake the ministry of this witnessing. To such persons God would say:

"What right have you to recite
my statutes (ie law and its prescriptions.....
You give your mouth free rein
for evil and your tongue frames
deceit: you sit and speak
against your own brother...."
(Psalm 50, 16 & 19-20)

Reciting or speaking about God's law is the same as 'witnessing' here described.

ஆற்றுவார் ஆற்றல் பணிதல் அது சான்றோர்
மாற்றாரை மாற்றும் படை.

The strength of those who have the capacity to achieve is in their humbling themselves. This 'humbling' is a weapon in the hands of 'witnesses' to transform even enemies. This was the weapon in the hands of the one who came to give witness to God's powerful action in the world viz. to the sending of His son to suffer and die and thus enter into the glory of the Resurrection from which springs all spiritual power needed for witnessing. This was to be therefore the weapon too in the hands of those who are to witness to the Resurrection of Christ. In the world 'humbling' oneself is considered as weakness and lack of power, but in the actions and teachings of Christ it is the source of all spiritual and moral power.

When God decided to bring about salvation to mankind the main weapon he used was his own 'humbling' himself as we read in the Bible. Phil 1,5-8. It was a 'humbling' that only God could do.

The சான்றோர் ie the witnesses have to realise this secret of their true 'power' and train themselves to such a rather difficult, attitude.

சால்பிற்குக் கட்டளை யாதெனில் தோல்வி
தலையல்லார் கண்ணனும் கொளல்

The touch stone of perfect goodness so needed for perfect witnessing is getting defeated even at the hands of small and weaker men.

No where and in the case of no other person was this goodness shown better than in the life of Jesus Christ.

Instances of this are shown most pointedly when He hands himself over to his enemies to be maltreated and killed, when he could have easily rendered them absolutely incapable. Read John. 18, 4-8:

That was when a crowd came to capture him, He could have so easily defeated them all, but wishes

instead to get defeated himself. This attitude is required of witnesses, for it is not always that they win: at times even at the hands of the poor and lowly they may have to admit defeat.

இன்னா செய்தார்க்கும் இனியவே செய்யாக்கால்
என்ன பயத்ததோ சால்பு.

There is no meaning in talking of perfect goodness, if one (who is supposed to be perfect) does not do good even to those who do evil to you.

The 'witnesses' have often to face such situation. Ingratitude for instance is often the only return for having witnessed-even efficiently often not mere ingratitude in mind and heart, but also in action. One is not and can not be a real witness unless unless he has the spiritual strength to return good for evil, as the explicit teaching of Christ directs:

See Matt. 5,44 & 39

He not only taught about loving enemies, he showed it in action when he prayed for those who were crucifying him, after having ill treated him to the maximum.

See Luke. 23, 34

இன்மை ஒருவர்க்கு இளிவன்று சால்பென்னும்
திண்மை உண்டாகப் பெறின்.

Money is power, they say. It is certainly a false maxim of the world. The true power is in the mind and heart. If there is such a power (moral and spiritual) being poor is no disgrace. On the contrary poverty itself becomes a power. Such was the power of persons like St. Francis of Assisi. But if Jesus Christ had not given the example first, there would have been no Francis of Assisi! The whole life of Christ was one of poverty indeed. In a world where there has been always, is and will continue to be so much of poverty nothing will move people as a life of atleast comparative poverty. Wielding power which is derived (unfortunately!) from wealth can only excite anger and

revolution. Hence following the example of Christ those who are called to be 'witnesses' are to live with the bare necessities of life!

This does not mean utter destitution and misery. A reasonable satisfying ordinary human needs would not make the ministry of witnessing worthless.

ஊழிபெயரினும் தாம் பெயரார் சான்றாண்மைக்கு
ஆழி எனப் படுவார்

The one who possesses this witnessing power (as expressed in the foregoing couplets) in full measure would never change from their purpose, even if the whole world should change. No amount of problems of life will influence them. Even persecution and death will not. Proof of this is the fact that millions of such witnesses (Christians in other words) have even laid down their very lives rather than withdraw from the purpose. They have used their witnessing power even to the extent of dying for the objective. They witnessed to Christ, as Christ himself witnessed to the Father even to the extent of sacrificing his life for mankind.

சான்றவர் சான்றாண்மை குன்றின் இருநிலந்தான்
தாங்காது மன்னோ பொறை.

Should 'witness' lack in their power of witnessing, the earth would sink under its burden, the burdan not so much of the material earth and stone-but the burden of moral and spiritual corruption viz the burden of sin and crime. For lack of true witnesses to God sin goes on increasing in the world. moral corruption goes up by leaps and bounds and there will come a moment when the whole humanity would be crushed under the intolerable weight! the weight of sin which is infinitely greater than any other weight It was to alleviate the world of sin that Christ became as it were "sin for us" (see 2 cor. 5,21) ie became a victim of propitiation for sin - the sin of the

world. The real meaning of Christ carrying the cross and falling beneath it is this, that the world may not be totally crushed under its own sins, Christ was crushed under the cross-in reparation!

The witnessing Power as described in this chapter implies-

(a) not only doing one's strict duty but all that is good

(b) never speaking ill of thers

(c) getting defeated willingly (for a nobler motive) when one can easily defeat

(d) humbling oneself to the maximum extent

(e) doing good even to those who do evil to you

(f) bearing poverty and misery

(g) being unflinching in one's endeavour

LOVE (அன்பு)

This is given as the first in the list of the five Pillars. What exactly is the love meant here? Love that has to be considered as a pillar which supports the witnessing power?

Four kinds (or aspects) of love may be considered: love between parents and children, love between brothers and sisters: love between friends.

Very similar to the love between husband and wife is or should be the love between those who are preparing to get married (between lovers as they are called) since their's is the initial stage of love in marriage. But often it is but lust (called love!) either because it is badly motivated or concentrated on self in an ordinate way. There is also the case of lovers pretending to love without any intention to get married. They 'love' for the selfish advantages to be derived, perhaps, from each other, without any spirit of sacrifice which is essential even at the initial stage.

It is obvious that love could not be the same between these groups of persons.

Which of these four 'loves' does Thirukkurall describe in this chapter on Love? (Ch 8). Let us study the couplets.

அன்பிற்கும் உண்டோ அடைக்குந்தாழ் ஆர்வலர்
புண்கணீர் பூசல் தரும்.

Is there a bolt which can keep love bolted, as it were in oneself? Even the 'poor' tears will reveal it (when Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus, his friend, people remerked;

"See how he loved him" (John 11.36) was it love as between friends?

This couplet says that love is the fruit of goodness and goodness is by its very nature diffusive of itself. A really good person will not keep his 'goodness: to himself. He will tend to share it with others. In comparably more so with the Goodness that is God. God is not only 'good' but goodness itself, goodness in its infinite fulness. How can such goodness keep to itself. It (ie God) must needs go as it were out of itself. This going out of itself is called 'creating' and that which is created 'shares' from the Essential goodness which is God. It 'shares' and therefore it must of necessity be imperfect, limited. This is the reason why the creature can show itself defective! This explains why the first man disobeyed Gods command and committed an act which is called sin.

Keeping to the couplet it is clear that it is *in the nature of love* (fruit of goodness) *to manifest it* in some way be it by a sign like the poor tears shed.

Unless there is such a goodness out of which true love flows, one cannot be a genuine witness. For it will lack the power; for love is power ½ power to go out of oneself and one's selfishness and do all the good possible to others, espcially those who are either materially morally or spirtually in need. Witnessing is a love to be a *pillar* supporting the witnessing ministry.

2. *Two* are the essential characteristics of such a love: (1) It considers even the *loveless* as belonging to ie. those who have it consider it theit duty to love even those who have no love at all.

அன்பிலார் எல்லாம் தமக்குரியர்.....

means that.

If even loveless persons have to be loved, one can not understand how Parimalazhagar's comment that the

''householder must bear love towards pepple related to him like his wife and children''! This is making love a matter of family and relatives. Love by its nature is a universal force. This is inferred also from the chapter on விருந்தோம்பல், where விருந்து (Virundhu) does not mean banquet nor relatives or friends invited for the same, but unrelated strangers! Even these, in other words, any human being is to be loved.

2. it considers itself as bound to give itself totally ie those who have true love will give themselves totally, even to the extent of sacrificing their own *bones* It is a most emphatic way of saying total self-giving not reserving to oneself even the bones which support the body. One may sacrifice oneself to a certain extent if the love is limited. True love would not to be satisfied with some sacrifice, but will go all out. This is the meaning of the second part of the couplet.

''அன்புடையார் என்பும் உரியர் பிறர்க்கு.....''

Such was the love shown by Jesus Christ who, as it were, defined love when he said, ''Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.'' He not only gave the definition but proved it by his own total sacrifice of himself.

Now the *witnesses* to Christ are called to be ready even to such a sacrifice, as thousands of Christians have been. Such persons are called 'martyrs' which greek word means ''Witness'' — Witnesses even unto death. In this sense love is indeed a pillar supporting the witness.

3. The third couplet on love is :

அன்போடியைந்த வழக்கென்ப, ஆருயிர்க்கு
என்போடியைந்த தொடர்பு

Taking ஆருயிர் to mean 'the soul' and என்பு to mean 'the body' we can paraphrase it thus the relationship

between the soul and the body is one of love. What would it mean? That the body and soul are united in love? This could not be, because, if we take the body to mean the senses and the lower appetites in man; and the soul to to mean the moral and spiritual ie., the higher nature in him, we know by experience that there is a perpetual conflict between. As the Bible says man cannot understand his own actions. He does not do what he wants to do, but what he hates to do and this occurs so often. This shows that there is some evil power in him which impels him to do so. The desire to do good is there, bus not the power.'' (Rom. 7,15-17). or we can translate (as Thiruvachalamani does) ''The nexus befurixt the soul and body is to make the human soul unite with love''. What would this mean? That the soul and body are so united that the soul making use of the senses and faculties in the right way may achieve love. What kind of love?

The first section (இல்லறம்) of the first part of Thirukkurall (அறத்துப்பால்) is clearly about family life (இல் வாழ்க்கை). After speaking in general about married life (ie about the householder (husband and head of family) the author specially speaks about the worth of a wife. The next chapter is about children. Immediately after this he deals about love. The context itself seems to indicate that the love spoken of here is, in the first place, is that which should exist in the family ie between husband and wife, between parents and children as well as between the children themselves. We see that three aspects or kinds of love are already mentioned in this chapter.

(About friendship the author speaks at length in chapters 79,80,81,82 and 83. What about love between God and man? Is it possible? If God loves man, man would naturally be expected to love him in return. This love will be explained in course of the explanation of these pillars on which Love is supported).

Now about the love between husband and wife which provides as it were, the model. Love between husband and wife can only exist if there is a genuine understanding of each other, a spirit of give and take or better a spirit of sacrifice which means showing consideration, affection and attachment even when it costs. In that sense no real love is possible without the spirit of sacrifice. God himself manifested love only through his sacrifice of himself. The second couplet of this chapter speaks of such a love-as will be shown more elaborately in course of the explanation of chapter on ஒப்புரவு. Does Thirukkurall speak of love between husband and wife? It is not, evident. But when we read about the என்போடியைந்த தொடர்பு one is strongly tempted to take the word என்பு to mean the 'bone' and see if the Biblical narration of the creation of the woman could give us a clue to understand what kind of love should exist between the husband and wife.

This is all the more important in these days when, on the one hand the woman is considered as a mere tool of pleasure for the male and on the other the woman is fighting for the restitution of her rightful privileges as woman.

Here is the Biblical narrative about the first marriage after creation of the world ie about the first husband and wife.

Then the Lord God said "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him ..... So the Lord god caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh; and the rib which the Lord god had taken from the man, he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said; This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh: She shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleares to his wife, and they become one flesh" (gen. 2, 18 & 21-24)

The manner in which the woman was made out of the rib of the first man sounds rather funny at first sight. What does this all mean? It doubtless is one of those very impressive word pictures for which the hebrew language is famous. Being bone of one's bones and flesh of one's flesh is a very emphatic way of signifying oneness. That the man is and should be close to the heart of the wife and vice versa is what is signified by the bone (rib) being taken out of man to form the women. As the ribs, as it were, enclose and protect the heart, so the husband must cherish love and protect his wife and as the wife is as it were, part of the husband she must acknowledge this closeness and unity and love him truly. When Thirukkurall says ''அன்போடியைந்த ''and'' என்போடியைந்த'' it is difficult not to link the word with the formation of the woman from the man, in the way that the Bible narrates. In a word, love should be the dominating factor in the life of the family between husband and wife in the first place, whom the children are to see as their parents and imitate. This love will only be possible when there is a spirit of secrifice and one wishes to serve the other not minding the cost it may mean. Such love with sacrifice is possible only when the woman (the wife) is corsidered as a *helper fit for* the man (as the Bible says). This would imply that she should not be considered as an inferior but equal in human dignity, though man and woman could not have the very same function and duties-since by their natural propensities and characteristics the male and the female have to differ from each other. If there is true love, this equality in the midst of differences is not impossible.

4. The next couplet speaks of love of *friendship* which is described in great detail in other chapters later on.

It says that love begets ardent desire (for the loved one) and this desire begete friendship is an excellence rarely achieved.

"There is nothing so precious as a faithful friend says the Bible, and no scales can measure his excellence". (Sirach 6,15)

Now true friendship either finds equals or makes equals. It is characteristic of friendship that it can exist only between two persons who are more or less equal in age, education, avocation, inclinations, capacities etc. There can be no friendship, strictly speaking between an old man and a young person or between husband and wife, or between brothers and sisters. There can be and should be love between these, but this love has its own characteristics. Love between husband and wife is not the same as that between parents and children etc.

Similarly, there can be no real friendship between a highly educated or qualified person and an ignoramus. There can be a certain consideration and love but of a different type. Love between brothere and sisters could not be same as that between two friends, the former is based on blood relationship while the latter is based on moral or spiritual relationship among equals as said above. Moral and spiritual relationship can be found also among non equals but it will be love of condescension or consideration as eg. when a rich man loves a poor man.

The Bible says that God loved the world (see John 3,16) ane Christ calls his disciples not servants but friends (See John 15. 14-15). Is there then an equality between God and man? In the nature of things there could certainly be no equality. But, as remarked above, friendship finds equals or makes equals. Finding equals among purely human beings, who are by nature equals in not an impossibility. But God is infinitely above man. Since christ is holy God, how then can there be friendship between them, as Christ assets? We can surely understand consideration and condescension on the part of God towards man. God being love, by his very nature and essence (See I John 4.16) and love (as said in the first couplet of this chapter)

is goodness which naturally tends to diffuse itself and share its goodness with others it is rothing strange that God should love his creatures especially rational ones (men) who can also respond to his love. But he willed that this love should not be mere condescension; he willed that man should come as close to Him as it is possible for a creature. And so he makes them as equal to Him as it is possible for a simple creature to be. There can be no question of absolute equality between God and man. And therefore a certain 'friendship' has been made possible through Jesus Christ who as God and man at the same time has in a way lessened the distanee between divinity and humanity to the extent possible by the nature of things. It is thus we have become friends of God. This friendship between God and man was hinted already at the beginning of creation when God is said to have walked with man in the cool of the day (See Gen 3,8) This versicle *implies* that it was a sort of daily occurrence for Him to walk in the garden, obviously not alone but in company with the first man and woman. Note however that this is just a hebrew word picture to say that there was intimacy and friendship. Only friends walk in that fashion. We see God explicitly calling Abraham his friend (See Is 41.8) The closeness of God with his people, Israel is a proof of this intimacy and friendship. Their whole history bears testimony to this.

It is only when there exists such love of friendship between God and man, one can wield power in witnessing. In this sense also love is a pillar which supports witnessing.

5. The next couplet tells of the great effect, in fact the greatest of true love under any of its aspects, as described above. True love brings about true happiness on earth.

அன்புற்றமர்ந்த வழக் கென்ப வையகத்து
இன்புற்றார் எய்தும் சிறப்பு

The excellence of those who live in happiness in the world is derived from the fact that one conceives love and fosters it (The phrase அன்புற்று (from அன்பு and உறுதல்) should mean conceiving and அமர்தல் can mean be seated or be steady).

True happiness can come not by stray acts of love (as e gr.helping one occasionally) but by having one's heart steadily disposed to love, even when one is not performing some external act to manifest. For love essentially consists in the disposition. This is the import of what St. Paul says in 1 cor 13,1-7.

Patience, kindness, humility, *avoidance* of jealousy, of boasting, of arrogance, of rudeness, of irritability, of resentfulness, rejoicing not in the wrong but in the right - all these qualifites mentioned in the text quoted imply a disposition of mind and heart - a disposition that is fortered and maintained. Only when this is done there can be genunine happiness in life. Impatience, Pride, Jealously, Boasting, Arrogance etc., may help to satisfy one's ego, but can not bring about happiness. The ego is in direct opposition to love, since love is essentially (as we have seen) outgoing, giving oneself to others.

The true happiness spoken of in this couplet, as வையகத்து, in the world doubtless includes happiness in the hereafter-மறுமை where it is infinitely more sublimated and divinized. In fact it will be a share in the bliss proper to God Himself.

The sixth couplet of this chapter says that love is aligned with and promotes not only morality, but also the opposite of the same ie for immorality. For no one acts without love for something which is really good in itself or at least appears as good to him at the time of acting. Our nature has been so created that we cannot want something which is evil, knowing fully that it will do harm to him. For no one desires to harm himself knowingly by his own

actions. The good alone is the object of our will, good either really so or atleast apparently good. So when a person does an evil action or crime like murder, thieving or unchastity, he does so for love of self alone not caring for anything else. At that moment he sees the action as something good satisfying one'self, and so he rushes into the act. There is certainly a kind of illusion at the moment, but unless he saw the action as good to himself he would never commit the deed. *Seeing good* in the action, even a wrong action is the same as loving it.

7. The seventh couplet says that lovelessness hurts morality as the (heat of the) sun burns up a boneless little animal like an ant or worm. It means that true love is essential for morality. For as said in the previous couplet, no one acts without a motive of love. Strong love is therefore needed to perform deeds of goodness. Doing good implies a strong good character. A person without character can not perform deeds of merit and value, like those demanded by morality.

8. The next couplet says that life without love in one's heart is as difficult as a dried tree sprouting in a cruel desert land. That is, it is impossible. It is love that gives life to what one is and does. It is love that inspires good deeds, makes them grow and prosper.

9. The 9th couplet says that the external limbs possessed by a person are worthless if the interior organ viz. the heart is lacking. The heart is the interior limb or organ which manifests love and it is love that goes into action to do good.

10. Summarising the previous couplets the last in this chapter says that life is built upon love : and those who do not have this love are like bodies have no flesh but only the skeleton covered by skin.

The whole chapter may be summarised as follows : Love can not be locked within itself, it must needs go out and share its goodness with others.

Love goes to the succour of the loveless considering that it has duty towards them. it does not hesitate to give itself totally for the welfare of others.

Love is a relationship of goodness towards groups like husband and wife etc.

Love begets an ardent desire for the loved one; true happiness is possible only when one conceives love and maintains it steady; If love is not directed in the right way, it will be responsible even for criminal acts.

Love is essential for moral deeds; a loveless life is as good as a dead tree,

Without love (heart) the other limbs are useless;

In a word, the whole life of man is to be built on genuine love.

It is easy now to see why Thirukkurall considers Love as the pillar supportnig witnessing power. Without such a power that is love no one can be true witness, as explained earlier.

At the same time, the author would intend all men to possess the love that is here described, though the 'witnesses' should outshine in it.

The Second Pillar நாண்

THIS IS GENERALLY TRANSLATED AS A SENSE OF SHAME

1. The first couplet is

கருமத்தால் நாவைதல் நாவைத்திருநுதல்
நல்லவர் நாவைப் பிற

Thiruvachakamani translates (in paraphrase) as follows : To feel ashamed of graceless deed is real நாண் (the shame or the shyness or) the modesty of the bright-browed housewife, is different.

The translation is specially appropriate in that it speaks of being ashamed of *graceless dzeds.*

What is a graceless deed? In order to understand it correctly we have to know what exactly is meant by the word 'grace'. This word is so often used, as in the phrase 'grace-time', graceful and gracefulness, days of grace, good grace, bad grace etc.,

In these phrases some sort favour or special favour or lack of it is understood. Its real meaning however is far different as will be shown in another article, the one on அருட்பொருள். Here it suffices to say that grace implies being in the favour of the divinity, in fact a divine quality. A graceless deed would then mean a deed that makes you lose this divine quality. This loss is incurred by a deed that is contrary to divine favour and makes him lose the friendship of God, as explained in the article on அன்பு (the first pillar supporting witnessing power). It is inconcei-

vable that a person who has lost the favour of divinity and incurred a state of unfriendliness with God could be a witness to His goodness and love as already explained. That is why நாண் is considered as a pillar supporting witnessing power.

At this juncture one may be compelled to raise a question. Why is it necessary to link grace with God? Why can't we limit its use to describing, purely human relationships?

If the Author's mind had been to write his book as a manual for purely human relationships, or if he had not cared to mention God as the author of moral and spiritual order; if he had not presented God as the goal of man's life on earth. If he had not meant this moral and spiritual order as means to attain his final goal which is reaching the feet of God - then we could ignore the whole idea of 'grace' and allied concepts. But we know that the author has not ignored God or the moral and spiritual order. And so we have to link, particularly the concept of grace, with God as its author. Using it purely in relation to human beings would mean reducing 'grace' to a purely figurative sense as we see in the phrases above quoted. Keeping all this in mind we are obliged to understand the phrase 'greceless deeds' as deeds which bring about a *loss of the favour and friendship of the Divinity*. For such deeds ie. when one is tempted to do such deeds (evil deeds) one should train himself to experience a sense of shame. It is good to remember that nature (God) has endowed rational beings with this sense of shame as a possible safeguard against doing shameful deeds! Surely evil deeds, especially when they are externally perceivable should make one be ashamed of doing such deeds and prevent one from prepetrating them. But if before perpetrating such a deed one did feel any sense of shame, at least after, should not one experience this sense?

Now experiencing a sense of shame for the evil done is something, but will it be enough to do just that? Has the

evil doer nothing more to do for instance if he has spoken evil or done some evil to a neighbour? Is it enough just to feel ashamed of it in his heart? No, in such a case, when evil has been perpetrated externally by word or deed, he has to do something more. He has to ask pardon of the one who has beed, he has to do something more. He has to ask pardon of the one who has been hurt or harmed by his word or deed. And in some cases as for instance when one's good name has been ruined,or damage has been done to some one's property, (by stealing or in some other way) reparation has to be made for restoration of the good name ruined or for property damaged or deprived of. This is in case the evil perpetrated was by word or deed. What about faults committed by thought alone? No external damage was done to any one, but evil thoughts can not but do harm to oneself. Since this harm is not immediately visible or perceivable one may not think it worth giving one's attention. He may not feel ashamed of it at all, nor may he worry about it, though his conscience may prick him about it. He may ignore the prick and go on doing wrong deeds again and again. This repeated wrong doing may gradually harden his conscience and a day will come when he may feel nothing at all. What then, is to be said about such internal evil acts ie *thoughts* of evil. Now it must be realised that all acts whether external or internal are committed in defiance of one's conscience which is really the voice of God, placed there by God himself. If one admits that one is a creature ie created by the all powerful God, them he is obliged to obey his voice ie obey his own conscience, Disobedience or defiance of that voice can not, but be an offence. If disobedience to one's parents is an offence against them how much more will disobediance to God's voice be an offence? Another name for 'offence is *sin*. What is to be done if an offence is committed, whether the offence is an external act (by word or deed) or simply an internal one as by mere thought? How can thinking of evil (for instance, of committing an impure act, a forbidden sexual deed etc. not be something wrong, an offence or sin against God?

That is why the author of Thirukkurall has a whole chapter on ''Dread of evil deeds'' (தீவினையச்சம்) And in chapter 29, in couplet 282 it is said that even a covetous thought is sin. What is said here of covetousness has obviously to be applied to anyother vice. An so, whether one sins by word or deed (by an external act) or purely by thought (an internal act of mind and heart), one has to repair for the same. How is this reparation done? First by begging pardon from God, and secondly from any person who has been hurt by one's deed. This begging pardon is necessary not only because it is an offence, but also because otherwise one can get easily accustomed to it, and, as mentioned above, make his conscience harden. This begging pardon, especially from another person when the offence is against another can well serve as a good deterrent and prevent repeated offences. For who would like to be asking pardon all the time from another person like himself? One may not find it very trying to ask pardon from God, but asking pardon from another person can be very trying and hard. Being ashamed means first of all feeling a certain sense of shame at having done something dishonourable or unworthy of a rational being. But it also *implies feeling sorry for the offence and a resolve not to do the dēed again. This sorrow and resolve are called repentance for sin.* It is only when there is an offence or sin against God there is a loss of the favour and friendship of God. This loss is in other words losing the grace of God. This is the gracelessness about which this couplet 1011, ie the first of chapter on நாண் refers to. The translation of கருமத்தால் as 'by a graceles deed' is therefore excellent and most appropriate, in the sense explained above.

2. The Second couplet says that while all living things have in common food, clothing and begetting (progeny) rational men alone possess as their specific feature the said sense of shame-understood as explained in detail above (while dealing with the first couplet of this

chapter). It will be a specific feature only if the shame is understood, as given in the conclusion, as *repentance* in the full sense of the word. It would not be such If there were only a certain vague sense of shame. If a man is to be really a man, worthy of his rational [nature he has to experience this shame in all its comprehensive meaning as shown above.

One would cease to be rational if he does not reason out properly on what he chooses to do, and does not reflect on what he has done and seek the remedy for it. He would then be not very much above an irrational animal!

நாணுடைமை மாந்தர் சிறப்பு

Has therefore to be understood as in the above explanation.

3. The third couplet adds to the second the thought that it (shame) is not only a specific trait of rational beings but is also demanded by the great good that is சால்பு. In other words if one to possess perfect goodness he has to possess this நாண். If it is lacking the witnesses will only strutting about, perhaps speaking a lot, but they will not be able to produce any fruit, unless they have this நாண் as their chief ornament and speak by its power. This is the import of the 4th couplet.

Couplets 4 & 5 In the fourth couplet is a very significant aspect of this நாண். We spoke about one's experience of shame (of guilt) when one commits a sin or evil deed. This couplet goes a step higher and says that one experiences this sense of shame not only for sins comitted by oneself but even for those committed by oneself but even for those committed by others. One may with some reflection and thought, be able to experience this shame for one's own sins. Even this can not be said to be quite common and frequent. For we see so many evil man going about quit unconcerned about what they

have done-at times even after committing quite grivious crimes. When it is so, how can we reasonably expect one who is a sinner himself be concerned about others? Will not those others tell him : Friend, set your home right first? Indeed, what is intended is not that one who is not that one who is a sinner, should, while yet remaining in that graceless state, be merely concerned also about others graceless deeds! What is intended is that if he is to be a witness, he has *first* to reform himself, regain the lost grace, and strengthen himself in that state. Only such witnesses will be considered as a sort of repositary of the (perfect) goodness that is நாண். This is the meaning of :

"பிறர்பழியும் தம்பழியும் நாணுவார் நாணுக்கு
உறைபதி என்னும் உலகு

Couplets 6 & 7 Men of high character will make நாண் (sense of sin and shame) their protection and see to it that the world with its allurements does not ruin their goodness. Indeed this sense of sin and fear of the same is a great protection against temptations to sin. As said above the fear that one may have to ask pardon from those who have been offended by one's wrongful word or deed can be a good protective against such temptations. And the fear of offending God and incurring his displeasure whether by thought, word or deed can serve as a good protective also if one cultivates a sense of honour, decency and goodness, If one considers God not only as his breator, but more as his great benefactor and lover, how will he have the will to deliberately greive him by sin? He will take all measures to cultivate a certain refinement of character* and thus see to the maximum extent possible that sin does not hurt his heart. Not only thought or desire of sin, but deeds as well. It would be a ridiculous mentality to thing that it would be enough to avoid evil thoughts. For as long as evil thoughts are admitted evil words and deeds cannot be avoided. Thought is first step to any deed!

Only persons of such mind and heart, of such refined character can really be witnesses.

Such refined characters will rather die of shame than live a shame less life.

8. If a person perpetrates without any sense of shame, what others are ashamed of, them morality itself will be ashamed of such a person! It is just an expressure way of putting it.

9. A life without any right principle to go by (or if a person has a principle but does not live up to it) will be naturally one without any sense of sin. If this state continues he will have to bid goodbye to all that is good.

10. The movement of a person without this sense can be compared to the movement of figures in a puppet show. There is no life there. So too a person who appears to live is really as in a puppet show if he is devoid of all sense of sin and shame. His life is no life at all!

The word மேலாயவர் would rather mean such men of refined mind and behaviour.

From all that is said in this chapter, we can easily see how this நாண் in all its comprehensive sense supports the power of witnessing.

3. ஒப்புரவு

This title has been interpreted in a veriety of ways.

Thiruvachakamani translates as 'Realising one's duty to Society'.

The Tamil Scholars interpret it as variously as follows''.

a) Realise oneself the way or manner of the world and act.

b) Helping others (economically) according to one's resources;

c) Bringing up those related to one, reach the good state in life enjoyed by themselves;

d) Helping when problems arise to those of the same caste and to the countrymen;

e) The haves giving help to the have nots and bring about a certain balance or equality (சமன்) in the life of people

f) Each one knowing his limits and ordering his life accordingly;

h) Living according to the way of world;

i) Using every means in favour of others and even people of other countries.

One can see that scholars have not been able to detect what exactly the title of this chapter refers to.

Let us try to see what it is really. It seems to me that the second couplet of this chapter (22) can help us to discover it. It is translated thus by Thiruvachakamani:

''All wealth that has been gathered thro' the arduous pains of one Is only meant for helping one's own worthy fellowmen.

The words 'one's own' do not seem to be intended in the original which says : ''the worthy ones''.

The couplet is :

தாளாற்றித் தந்த பொருளெல்லாம் தக்கார்க்கு
வேளாண்மை செய்தற்பொருட்டு.

Keeping in mind that this ஒப்புரவு has been given as one of the pillars of the power of witnessing, let us investingate the couplet. The questions to be raised are :

(a) What or who is the subject of தாளாற்றித் தந்த? In other words who is the one who has gathered thro arduous pains?

(b) What is the object of the same தாளாற்றித்தந்த to whom the பொருள் has been given?

(c) What is the wealth (பொருள்) here intended? Is it marial wealth (பொருட்பொருள்) or spiritual wealth (அருட்பொருள்)?

(d) Who are the people responsible for the வேளாண்மை செய்தல்?

(e) What is this வேளாண்மை செய்தல்? since the same phraesology occurs in couplet 81 dealing with விருந்தோம்பல்?

(f) And who are the worthy to whom this வேளாண்மை is to be done?

(g) And what exactly is the meaning of தாளாற்றி?

(a) Who or what is the subject of தாளாற்றித்தந்த?

Is it man? The answer to this will depend on the answer to the question what meant by பொருள் in this couplet. If it is அருட்பொருள் that is meant, then man can not be the subject. For man commits so often graceles deeds, as we have seen in the chapter on நாண். Such graceless man can not be responsible for அருட்பொருள் (as we will expose in detail when dealing with அருட்பொருள் If it is not man, it must be only God or one who is man and God at the same. And that is exactly our thesis. That is what those who are witnessing are expected to witness to and proclaim. The Bible speaks of this அருட்பொருள் in following instances :

1 Pet 1,1-4
2 Peter 1,3-4
John 1.12-13
Rom 3,23-25
5,1-2
5,5
5,7-9
5,10-11

—Being born a new to a living hope to an imperishable inheritance kept in heaven;

— Being enabled to obtain what pertains to life and godliness;

— Being called to God's own glory and excellence;

— Being enabled to escape from wordly corruption;

— Becoming pertakers of the divine nature;

— Receiving power to become children of God, by being born truly of God;

— Being justified or made acceptable to the Divinity by the gift of grace through the redemption wrought by Christ;

— Having God's love poured into us by the Holy Spirit, even though we had lost the original friendship and become enemies of God.

— Being washed clean by the blood of Jesus;

— Being recociled to God through Jesus;

All this is the அருட்பொருள் (as will be explained in its place)

It is now clear that the subject of தாளாற்றித்தந்த (gathered or given thro' arduous pains) is Christ God and man.

Now who are object? ie to whom or for whom was the அருட்பொருள் given?

Eph. 2,4-10

2 Cor 5,18-20

Eph 4,7 & 11-12

From there passages, it is obvious that the அருட் பொருள் was meant for all mankind and those who were to take the wealth that is அருள் (grace) to all mankind were the apostles of bhrint and those who succeeded them as well those who were called by them to be helpers in this ministry. The apostles were those ''who were sent'', the prophets were these who spoke for God (that is what the word prophet means), evangelists were annoouncers of the 'good news' of God coming to the world and of all that he did and suffered for menkind's salvation, as well as the victory over sin and death (His Rosurrection): pastors were those who fed spiritually the flock (ie those who believed) and Thachers were those who did the exposing of what Christ spoke. This is the ministry entrusted to them. The அருட்பொருள் was to pass to all menkind through their labours. We know now who are the people responsible for the வேளாண்மை செய்தல். This phrase means ''make liberally available the அருட் பொருள் to all those who showed themselves ready and fit to receive. These are the தக்கார். The word வேளாண்மை is an agricultural term. It implies cultivation, sowing, tending ahd finally harvesting. In God's spiritual field all this ie. Sowing etc. is in charge of the aportles etc as said above. This idea is conveyed I Cor 2.9: ''We are God's fellow worlers: you are God's field''.

The word தாளாற்றி (arduous pain) is obviously all the humiliations and suffering which God the son Jesus went through.

The import of the couplet is now clear. The purpose of all the *grace* and merits which God gathered by his sufferings (in and through Christ) is that they may be by the witnesses distributed generously and earnestly to all those who believe.

Thus this ஒப்புரவு which can be now identified which the Reconciliation spoken of in the above texts is a strong pillar supporting the witnessing power.

Why did God undertake all these humiliations and sufferings for man? The reason can only be the immense and incomprehensible love of God for man.

LOVE OF GOD FOR MAN

The love of God for man—love to the extent of sacrificing his life for him –is something unique to the Christian faith. Other religious and philosophies speak indeed of God's mercy, his infinite nature, his immensity, his supremacy in everything even of goodness: but never of love, especially love unto sacrifice, as the God of Christian Faith has done.

அன்பே சிவம் says the Saivite Philosophy. But this love is not seen as proved by a sacrifice similar to that which Christ made.

In the midst of so many problems, trials, diseases and sufferings of every sort man was crying out to the Divinity: They say that God is anandam (or happiness)? How is it you are keeping your happiness to yourself and do not care for us lost in this most unhappy condition of life? Have you no heart? and so on. God answers: Yes, I feel indeed your misery. I feel immensely for your suffering?

I have therefore decided to come in your midst and suffer all that you suffer and more. Remaining in my divine glory, suffering can not approach me. So I shall, by my power, which can do all things, hide my glory for fime and come as a poor man, remain in your midst for a time and take upon mysef the sufferings under which you are being crushed. I shall lay done my very life after suffering tortures which on one, neither God nor man, has ever suffered. This will be to make you realise that I really love you, though you may not immediately uuderstand it all''-

This is the story of Jesus Christ, whom Christians believe as God and man at the same time.

But one may say if God truly loves us, he has power to remove suffering altogether. Why does He not do so? Here we are beginning to question the very wisdom of God. One can only, say, as St. Angurtine said long ago, God preferred to draw good out of evil, rather than prevent evil altogether. A more cogent reason, perhaps, is that love can be proved only when the loved one isin need. Hence the proverb: A friend in need is friend indeed. The need may be great or small involving pain or not, only when the one comes to the rescue in such a need can friendship be really proved. We know there is friendship and friendship: there is e.gr. the interested or seif seeking friendship. This is no friendship at all but selflshness!

We said earlier that the love which God wanted to manifest towards man, was that of friendship. If so, when was man in need more than when he lost the very friendship of God by his own misdeed? When a similar thing happens among men, ie, when one of the friends ceases to respond to love, the friendship is usually broken or certain by becomes absolutely cold or a mere formality. It was not so with God. When man ceased to appreciate God's love and did something not in line with God's intention, God did not abandon him once for all. He permitted him

to taste the consequences of his foolishness of the sin he had committed in defiance. When mankind fell, as it were, into an abyss of sin wickedness, lust, immorality (See Rom 1 Chapter), God came to the world to rescue mankind in such a dire need, the greatest need of man being the state of friendsnip with God. the state of grace, the rising from disgrace into which he had fallen.

It is towards this that the Love of God for man is, at were, impalling.

Here are some of the Biblical testimonies.

a) See Jo 3,16

We see here God's love for the world of man sweetly compelling him to send his son that they may have eternal life.

b) See Rom 5,6-8 & 10

Note the appointed time-when humanity was powerless - Christ proves his love for us even we swere God' enemies.

c) See Rom 8, 33

God did not spare his own son and so he will not spare any grace and help to save us from sin!

d) See Eph. 2, 4-5

God's great love for us brings about all good to us.

This love for man is not something vague-a love for the crowd, it is personal and particular for each one according to his need. ''He loved *me* and gave himself for me'', says-St. Paul, Placed as he was in peculiar difficult circumstances, (See Gal 2,20).

Love of man for God and others.

Now this great love of God for us, calls for a response adequate to God's greatness and goodness.

To make man understand that it is not left to him to love God or not, God does not he sitate to give him a command already long ago in the old Testament.

See Dent : 6,4-5

It is repeated. Deunt 10, 12-13

When God comes to the world, this great command-ment is reiterated, with a second added to it.

See Mark. 12, 28-31

About the 'second' we shall see a little later. Note how strongly our love for God is worded. There is to be a whole mind and heart love for Him. No reservations of any sort - reserving something for creature comforts or creature attachments in preference to God who alone deserves all our love.

Here is some more biblical teaching regarding about the same. In these taxts we can easily note how love for God can not be separated from love for others-the neigh-bours - ie for other human beings, whoever they are, even enemies!

John 15, 9-14q

See how God's love is 'be responded-by obeying the Commandments (The Ten) and espcially the Commandment to love one another. He calls this latter, his *new* command-ment, (since it was unknown before!)

See John 13,34

This love for God linked with love of all others, is to be so deep that it can not be easily lost-

See Rom 8,35—3

God's earnest desire is that we should love Him.

See Eph. 1,4

See the immensity of God's and Christ's love for us, and its effect in us. See 1 John 3,1

Eph 3,17-19

Eph 5,1-2

Love is a sort of triangle God's love for us on one side, our Love for God on the other, and as result of this our love for one another. If God loves us all as his loved children, then we are all brothers and sisters bound to show brotherly or sisterly love for one another. This is most emphatically taught in the Bible:

See 1 John 3,11, 14

" 4,7-12

" 4, 16&19

" 4, 20-21

The 'new' Commandment includes loving our very enemies-Christ himself did this especially when be prayed for his murderers!

Love of enemies is taught and commanded:

See Matt 5, 44-45

This love should be so intense that one is prepared to give his very life for love of God, and even for love of another

See I Joh 3,16

ஒப்புரவு therefore includes all that has been given above.

The central thought is that man the sinner should get reconciled to God, after repenting (நாண்) and regain அருட் பொருள் (which will be explained later in detail). This reconciliation with God implies also reconciliation with God implies also reconciliation with men, in care there be any enemity. But it is not enough to have *no* enemity. That would be quite negative. There should be positive love! With this in mind we can justify the interpretation given for this ஒப்புரவு as 'realising one's duty to society'- helping others, helping the have nots etc. (See the first lines undet this chapter on ஒப்புரவு). Duty to society can not but include duty to members of the Society. But these duties are under-stood by interpreters by themselves (some sort of rational obligations) *independent of God and his love for all*. We have seen by the composition of the very second couplet of fhis chapter that this independence can not bring cut the great richness of what is said there.

Only when we keep all this in mind we can understand the full import of the first and the third couplets.

The first couplet that one can not adequately make a return in return for the benefit received. What return can one (the world) make to the clouds for the rain fhey shower gratuitously. The love and the grace showered by God on mankind is so immeuse that man could not possibly make an adequate return for it.

(1) கைம்மாறு வேண்டா கடப்பாடு மாரிமாட்டு
எண்ணாற்றும் கொல்லோ உலகு

This is the couplet. The word கடப்பாடு may be interpreted as கடமை or obligation. Then tae question will arise. Is God obliged to do anything when men is concerned? Certainly not. Then why does He show so much concern and love for him? As already explained Love or goodnees by nature tends to give itself to others. If ordinary

goodness does so, how ean infinite goodness which is God, as it were, close itself within itself? Moreover it is man who finally needs this outpouring on the part of his divine benefactor. For otherwise he will be left with nothing to make him truly and for ever happy!

And what about the love which man is commanded to show towards God? It is surely not God who is in need of it, since he is infinitely self-sufficient, but by loving God it is man who bene fits since he turns his mind and heart in the right direction to keep himself in peace and happiness.

(3) புத்தேள் உலகத்தும் ஈண்டும் பெறலரிதே
ஒப்புரவின் நல்ல பிற

Such a divine wealth be love of God, love of man for God and love of men among themselves is something that can not be obtained either in this world or in the world of the gods! The couplet 101 seems to say the same thing. Substituting 'God' as subject before செய்யாமற் செய்த உதவி we get ''For the great help or good (grace & love) which God bertowed neither this world nor the next can adequately pay in return. That is to say there is no greater good than this. Indeed what is greater than the wonderful Love of God for man and of man (in his misery) for God and the love that should reign between mortals. For this love of man for God and that among men is so difficult for practice that when it exists it is the greatest good that we can poseess and enjoy. In fact why is man so peaceless and wretched in his own mind and heart? It is because he does not truly Love God. If he does, that love itself will be one's peace and happiness. As for men, why is there enemity, wars, misery, poverty and so great suffering among men? Because they do not really love one another. At the bottom of all the trouble in the world is this lack of good will, love and peace among them.

(4) It is only when fulfils one's duty of love of God and of others can be truly said to be living the life worthy of man. The others are as good as dead.

This is what the 4th couplet means to say.

ஒத்ததுஅறிவான் உயிர்வாழ்வான் மற்றையான்
செத்தாருள் வைக்கப்படும்.

The word ஒத்தது can be interpreted as the thing that can be reconciled with one's being or nature. The three loves above elaborated are in perfect consonance with human nature, since it has been so created and dignified with a share in the life of God.

5. The words ''உலகவாம் பேரறிவாளன் திரு'' in this Couplet, are translated by Thiruvachakamani as follows:

''the wealth of the one of supreme wisdom loving all mankind''. They are apt in the context. The 'three' loves are indeed a wealth beyond compare. This wealth is compared to a tank in a village ''with water brainful'',from which the village takes for their use as much as they want and whenever they want. One can indeed love God and others as much as they have good will and intention. God loves man beyond their deserts and expects men to imitate Him in generosity and goodness.

6. If the spiritual wealth implied in the above three loves, gets into the hands of a good person, he will be like a fruitful tree ''which bides within the heart of village, serving all men free'' (Th.Vac.Mani) The above mentioned man of spiritual wealth will not heep it to himself,but with their spiritual fruits will serve all men free. That is exactly what 'witnesses' are expected to do. This is how ஒப்புரவு becomes the pillar of witnessing power.

7. The same idea as in the above couplet is more or less repeated with a certain emphasis in this couplet.

மருந்தாகித்தப்பா மரத்தற்றால் செல்வம்
பெருந்தகையான் கண்படின்

The same tree is taken, but not as fruit bearing, but one that is wholly, leaves, flowers, fruit etc. medicinal. As such a tree gives itself as a remedy for various illnesses, so too the one is whose hands this spiritual wealth is placed. He will be, so, says the couplet, if he is a man of noble ideals. The 'witnesses' are called to be such trees in a world that is discased on account of sin. They are expected to provide the remedy by every action of theirs. They are to be wholly dedicated to their remedial ministry. They will be so, if they have understood what a wealth is that threefold 'Love' which they are expected to practice sincerely and intensely. Their witnessing will lose all its power if this threefold love does not shine through their whole life, and it they have not the noble ideal of bringing that same love to others. This witnessing is to be a sort of overflowing from their own store, as it were ie, from what they have realised of that love in their own life.

8. இடனில் பருவத்தும் ஒப்புரவிற்கு ஒல்கார்
கடன் அறி காட்சியவர்

The men (witnesses) who have a clear vision of their duty will not lost heart and back out when the occassion does not seem to be propitius. As St. Paul says, they will be "urgent in season and out of season" (2 Tim 4,2) in bringing about the reconciliation, as explained earlier.

9. Witnesses (as explained) may have excellent qualities alright, but if they cease doing their duty as witnesses (ie. if they cease the ministry of reconciliation) their good qualities become worthless. All their spiritual wealth will turn into a terrible spiritual poverty.

நயனுடையான் நல்கூர்ந்தான் ஆதல் செயும்நீர
செய்யாது அமைகலாஆறு

10. ஒப்புரவினால் வரும் கேடெனின் அஃதொருவன்
வித்துகோள் தக்கது உடைத்து

Should the witnessing minister fear some loss as a result of his work, he should not only not run away from it; he should be prepared to welcome it and sustain it. even by selling himself, if need be, ie. at any cost :

All these requisities make one truly a witness. while supporting the witnessing power.

The Fourth Pillar
கண்ணோட்டம்

Thiruvachakamani translates this as "Favouring Grace". What is to be understood by this phrase? A grace that favours-whom or what?

The question can be answered only in the context of the pillars among which this 'favouring grace' is one. If the witnessing power is to be supported by this favouring grace, the witnessing person himself has to be supported by the same grace. How is this to be understood? I feel it can only be in this way. The third pillar was reconciliation as explained above in detail. The last Couplet of that chaptet on ஒப்புரவு (or reconciliation) said that the witness should not run away from his witnessing work, if there should arise obstacles or loss. What could be such obstacles or loss?

One could be that those to whom one is bearing witness are not responsive. At times they may even oppose, insult contradict or even set up others against and persecute.

This has actually happened to many a witness in the history of the witnessing ministry in the world - all down the centuries.

What should the witness do when such circumstances arise? All that he could and should do is to respond to every unpleasant circumstance with grace with favouring grace. In practice this amounts to what is usually termed 'forgive'. This spirit of forgiveness is so essential to

witnessing, that without it the witnessing would lose its power. So this கண்ணோட்டம் can only mean grace which favours one who offends you which in other words is called forgiving spirit or forgiveness.

But the question which must be asked immediately is; Is this forgiveness to be practised only by those who are called to be witnesses? It could not be, for though they are obliged to it in a special way because of the special sort of ministry they have taken up all men are obliged to practise it. For there is scarcely one who is not in need of forgiveness in this erring world, so full of wrongs done to one another. When, however a fault is committed against another, this latter may insist upon justice being rendered and so for giveness may even be refused. But, adapting the words of Shakespeare, "If justice be one's plea, one has to consider this, that *in the course of justice, none of us should see salvation.* We pray for mercy from God for our sins and that same prayer teaches us all to render deeds of mercy.....This mercy is mightiest in the mightiest : it becomes the throned monarch better than his crown". (Merchant of venice, Trial scene.

These words of the great poet seem so apt here, since this கண்ணோட்டம் and its aspects are discussed in the பொருட்பால் in connection with kings and the exercise of their power. Speaking of this power the poet, in the same context, says that "mercy is above the sceptred sway. It is enthroned in the heart or kings. It is an altribute to God himself, and earthly power shows likest God's when mercy seasons justice". This seasoning is exactly what is here called the 'favouring grace'.

The sinner may not really deserve grace or pardon, and justice may demand that he be punished in proption to his sin. But mercy intervenes and favours with grace and pardon: in other words, imparts forgiveness.

Even if, in this chapter, the author had in mind only kings and the readiness for forgiveness which they are

expected to show, it is certain that he had in mind not only kings (and not only witnesses) but the whole mankind in relation to one another. But above all the author should have had in mind the mercy and pardon which God himself shows towards all. For, in the last analysis sin is something which offends God, though it may also offend another human person. The one who has first to pardon in mercy is God himself. And man should imitate his God and learn to forgive others. It is in this sense we pray asking God "to forgive our sins as we forgive those who sin against us" as we are taught by christ. (Matt. 6 : 12) This prayer implies more than it appears to convey. It seems that we are asking God to do *as* we do! As though God is to learn from our example! It is just the other way. God forgives our sins, and so we have to forgive others' offences. But this prayer actually means "Lord we have already forgiven others' offences and so please forgive our offences!"

The Poet said that earthly power shows itself most like God's when mercy is seasoned by justice. As one of the prayers composed by the Church says, God's almighty power is shown in forgiving rather than in punishing: in mercy rather than in justice. With this background let us see what the first couplet says :

It says that the world continues in existence by the incomparable beauty of favouring grace (or forgiving spirit)

The question that rises immediately is : By whose forgiving spirit? Man's or God's? It can evidently be by the forgiving spirit of the one under whose power the world exists. It certainly cannot be that the world exists under the power of human beings, for the simple reason that they are not able to rule themselves. as even the whole set up of the world to-day most emphatically tells us. It is unthinkable that one who can not exercise control over himself can control the universe and keep it in existence continusly. It can, therefore, only be that the forgiveness

or the favouring grace spoken of here is that of God, the supreme Ruler and whose power as remarked earlier is most seen in his forgiving spirit.

Can this be said to be incomparable beauty? The word காரிகை has been taken to mean beauty. It can mean that. (The usual meaning given viz பெண் does not seem to be suitable here.) It can be indeed. The forgiving spirit even in an ordinary person is somethlng noble, something to be appreciated and praised. It is something which bespeaks of the moral beauty of a person. Doubtless no physical beauty can be thought of here). Will any one deny the exquisite beauty, nobility and goodness of spirit in that glorious act which Christ did from the cross, asking the Father to forgive those who had so illtreated and killed him! This is the கழிபெருங் காரிகை meant here.

It is this spirit of forgivingness, this favouring grace on the part the Creator God that is responsible for the world with all sin and crime not to go to its destruction. God's forgiving nature is seen again and again all over the Bible, though here and there, very rarely immediate punishment was meted out to criminal behaviour. But these are few and far between and only when the sinners were not prepared to repent, as e. gr. the inhabitants of Sodom. The forgiving occasions are far more numerous as any one who reads the Bible can easily see for himself.

To start with, the sin of the first parents of the world was not dealth with, so to say, capital punishment! Some temporal penalties were all that were inflicted upon them.

Similarly the murder by Cain of his brother.

The many murmurings and incrimininating actions of the people of Israel were not punished so severely, while Comforting occasions were provided at the same time.

In general, we can say, that whenever there was even a little feeling of repntance, forgiveness was there. The book

of Jonah means to bring out the truth that God is more ready to forgive than man. Note the verses 4,2-4. The word 'repent' used in the verse 2 only means God's feeling pity not 'sorry' as man should when he has does worry. Similar words occur so often in the biblical writings.

If God were to punish man for his sin, there and then and immediately how many would survive? This is espee cially so when crime seems to be thriving on all fronts in the life situation of world to-day?..... .....

2. கண்ணோட்டத் துள்ளது உலகியல் அஃதிலார் உண்மை நிலக்குப் பொறை

The primary cause of the world's continued existence is God's favouring grace and forgiveness. There is also a secondary cause. If God forgives (and indeed so easily) and man does not, what will happen to the world. There will be loss and less of peace and happiness. For any unforgiving person becomes an enemy to another, and thus rivalries are created not only between person, but also, little by little, between nations, between castes and creeds, between languages and groups! Such a situation can and does lead, easily, to wars, atleast cold. There is a never ending race for armaments, for wealth which is needed to satisfy the unforgiving persons or nations or groups! Thus a most unhappy situation is created in which violence, terrorism, immorality and all their offspring thrive gloriously. So the உலகியல் ie the life of the world of man suffers.

Every singleman, family or nation is expected to be an asset for the world's peace and happiness. But will this unforgiving spirit man only becomes an unpleasant burden to it. The earth is obliged, as it were to bear such misfits on its bosom. It is a great misfortune!

3. Forgiveness or forgiving spirit depends on mercy, as said above. We speak of 'a merciful look' or a pitiful eye. What is the use of the eye, says next the

author, if it does look pitifuliy or if there is never a merciful iook?

கண் என்னாம் கண்ணோட்டம் இல்லாத கண்

4. & 5. He says next: The eye that is never known for its merciful look is as good as not adorning the face. Does it adorn really? No, the author seems to say, it is just there! For the adornment of the eye is its merciful look. If it is wanting it will be but a sore. An eye sore?

6. A person possessed with the eye that has the capacity or quality to look with mercy, and not exercise any mercy is not fit to be called 'human'. Such people should rather be said to belong to the vegetable creation.

7. Those who can not turn an eye of mercy, are as good as blind? Those who have real human eyes will not be lacking in mercy.

8. Those who can show mercy without, at the same time, any prejudice to justice can well have the world at their feet.

9. Even in the case of persons who deserve to be punished and brought to sense, the better thing certainly is to forgive them and by merciful dealing bring them to sense.

10. People who would wish to be known for cultured eminence, would not hesitate to consume poison and yet stay alive. So efficacious is this quality of mercy ''is not strained, which drops as the gentle rain from heaven,.....which is twice blest, it blesses him that gives and him that takes; it is mightiest in the mightiest.....as the Poet said,

In this chapter the author seems obviously, as remarked in the beginning of the explanation of this chapter, to discuss about the spirit of pardon and forgivenes which should shine not only in the 'witnesses' but in all men.

Thirukkural is a book which seems to deal not only the doctrine which pertains to சான்றோர் or witnesses, but to all men as well.

In other words, it is a book of universal morality, but with particular instruction to சான்றோர் or witnesses as described earlier. It is morality required in family life, social and civil life as well as in strictly religious life. Man is not to be dichotomised, but considered in his totality. He can not be purely a family man, or social man or religious : Hence this mingling of various principles.

The Fifth Pillar - வாய்மை

This title is usually translated as Truth or Truthfulness. But that it means somthing quite different from Truth or Truthfulness is shown by what is said in the first and last couplets of this chapter.

The first couplet is obviously meant to define what வாய்மை is. If the author had not meant a definition there was no sense is saying வாய்மை எனப்படுவது யாதெனில் which means'' What is meant by வாய்மை''

The opposite of வாய்மை is usually said to be மெய்ம்மை which can be translated as truthfulness. The word மெய் can mean simply the truth as opposed to falsehood. It is to be noted that the author does not use the word மெய்ம்மை at all while he is using பொய்ம்மை. He uses, however, மெய் in the last couplet and says.

''Among the things that we found to be true or to be truths, we have not discovered a good greater than வாய்மை. He does not say a truth greater than வாய்மை. ''He therefore speaks of something *extremely good* in this chapter. In other words, he is not speaking here about telling the truth. Telling the truth is not something that the author of this book can be said to have discovered. Nor can it be said to be extremely good, though it can be said as something good. What then is he saying? Let, us see the definition given by the author himself. To speak of or announcing or proclaiming something which is absolutely free of anything evil-this is வாய்மை. ''he says.

Now, what is that which is absolutely from evil? It has to be something to do with God or something divine,

which alone is absolutely free from evil. If வாய்மை is one of the pillars of witnessing, this absolute freedom from evil can only be the object of witnessing or that which is witnessed to. It is he to whom the witness is born viz. God or Christ as the one revealing God. Thus we see that வாய்மை actually means *witnessing to God.* Telling the truth is the basic duty of any human being; there is nothing extraordinary about it and there was no need for an great author like Thiruvalluvar to define it for us nor speak about the obligation to speak the truth!.....

2. பொய்ம்மையும் வாய்மை இடத்த புரை தீர்த்த
நன்மை பயக்கும் எனின்

This couplet seems to assert that there are times when telling a lie can result in something good. This assertion seems most unlike the doctrine for which the author of Thirukkural stands. It would contradict for instance couplet 34, which says that the whole essense of morality is keeping one's mind (and heart) free from any stain or blot. If the author was asserting here that telling a lie is nothing wrong, if it results in something good it would mean that it does not matter if one stains his soul, provided some good ensues. This could not have been the mind of the author of Thirukkural. If this true of untruth-fulness, why can't it be true of any other vicious act? Then the philosophy of those who say: ''Let us not be afraid of doing wrong, provided some good comes out of it,'' In other words the saying that the end justifies the means would be true! This can not be. What then did the author intend in this couplet?

If we understand பொய்ம்மை as lying, one can lie by word or deed.

When an untruth is uttered, one lies by word. When a person does not show himself as he is or shows himself as he is not one lies by deed. When a person does not reveal his identity, he is also lying by deed. There was a time when the 'witnesses' of whom we are now speaking,

had to hide their identity for a time, as it happened in the case of the early martyrs of the christian faith those who hide themselves in certain hiding places such as what are called the catecombs ie underground cemeteries as we are found even now in Rome and other places particularly in Italy. This not revealing identity was not a lie. For when they were discovered and accuse before the Rome civil authorities they unhesitatingly acknowledged for what they were ie. that they were Christians.

Something similar may have happened in our country at the time of the work of one of the Twelve aportles of Christ, Thomas, who certainly came to the country as the first chief witness for Christ. There were those who would not accept his witnessing but also those who became his followers and co-witnesses. In fact they were persecuted, and as Christ himself had warned (See Matt. 10, 23) them, they would have fled from one place to another thus hiding themselves for a time. It was only for a time, for when they were discovered and captured, they (atleast as a whole) never hesitated to reveal their identity. This kind of hiding identity is not lying but an act of prudence, but a prudence which did not hesitate to reveal the identity when occasion demanded as when they were hauled up before judges, as foretold by Christ himself (See Matt 10, 16-20.)

Something of this kind of hiding identity seems to have occurred in the composition of this classic, Thirukkurall. Here we can only rely on what is traditionally being said about this famous book and its, official acknowledgement (அரங்கேற்றம்) by Scholars, during the period of the renowned Tamil Sangham of Madurai.

The Sangham literature reveals sufficienty openly the rivalry that existed between the Anthanar (அந்தணர்) and Sanror (சான்றோர்) The சான்றோர் are termed as ஆன்றவிந் தடங்கிய கொள்கைச்சான்றோர் They were distinguished from

helps us to understand that சான்றோர் does not denote in general good or learned people, but persons who were different from others by their principles of life or tenets held. The author of Thirakkural seems obviously to belong to the சான்றோர் group. That explains why his work is all about the சான்றோர் their principles and duties.

In the state of rivalry between the two groups the author may have felt inadvisable to say everything too openly. Under the guise of writing a book on general morality he seems to have inserted at least some of the main principles or the main tenets held by the சான்றோர் and that too not too openly. That explains why he does not give a regulr treatise on the God whom the சான்றோர் believed, on the principles of their life, on grace for instance, and on witnessing power as explained in this section. And in the Third part the literary tradition of Tamil writing seems to have aided his treatise on the most important aspect of the life of சான்றோர் namely the manner of union with God, its various stages etc.

In the first two parts, particularly we see the author not saying the truth too openly (in that sense hiding a little) about what he had in mind to speak. This I should think, is what he means by the word பொய்ம்மை. Even such a mode of action is not against the truth, since it was done in order to do some great good viz. announcing God who is absolutely free of evil. I feel this is the only reasonable way of understanding aright the couplet in question viz. the second.

3. The third and the fourth couplets obviously pertain to the general morality obligatory to all human beings. Following his plan the author inserts judiciously certain ordinary moral principles in his treatise which is as all scholars admit is a treatise on சான்றோர் ஒழுக்கம் ie Life of witnesses. It is easily seen in the II part of the book in which most of the chapters are on principles of moral,

social and civil life. The third couplet here says that one should not tell a lie when his conscience warns him of the truth in the matter. And, says the couplet, if one defies his conscience it will prick and 'burn' him.

4. The fourth couplet says that if a person keeps himself off from lying even in his heart, he will abide in the hearts of all men (One may avoid lying in word. but interiorly lies to himself as for e.gr. by convincing himself of something which he knows to be false, but for personal comfort, perhaps, thinks it to be true. This is selfdeception which is not rare among men).

5. If one does the witnessing with all one's heart, he becomes a greater person than one who performs acts of self-renunciation and gives generously of his goods. For the one who does acts of renunciation or penance mostly benefits himself and only indirectly, others. Indirectly, because such acts have a salutary influence over others who may also be prevailed upon to undertake similar good deeds. But all that is not to be compared with the whole hearted 'witnessing' since it is announcing God, his love for man etc., And the thought of God excels all other considerations or actions. This is what the 5th couplet says.

6. The sixth says that there is nothing more praiseworthy than truthfulness. Without intending it, one will obtain by it all that is of moral value or it will obtain for one the fulness of morality.

This seems rather a great exaggeration. For one can be truthful but can for example be revengeful or inclined to some evil. Truthfuluess in not the only virtue to be aimed at. The word மெய்யாகை in the context seems to mean here witnessing perfectly, without any damage to the Truth contained in this witnessing ministry : without minimising any point in the same. A complete witnessing means a complete observance of all that is good. as has been explained in this commentary on the Pillars of

witnessing. Only that will help acquiring perfection. And perfection or perfect goodness can not exist if some virtue is lacking.

7. பொய்யாமை பொய்யாமை ஆற்றின் அறம்பிற
செய்யாமை செய்யாமை நன்று

Taking பொய்யாமை to mean as in the previous couplet ie perfect witnessing. This couplet can be interpreted thus: பொய்யாமை பொய்யாமை a double negative would mean not failing in witnessing : and செய்யாமை செய்யாமை would mean செய்தல் or doing. If witnessing is done perfectly even if you fail in other matters you are doing the right thing. This means that since witnessing brings about all that is meant by morality there would be no need for anythingelse. Witnessing comprises all that is virtuous. If நன்று is taken to mean 'not wrong', we can put the whole idea thus : If thers is perfect witnessing, it would not be wrong if one does not aim at other virtues. It is a way of saying there is no need to worry about other virtues. For wit nessing is சான்றாண்மை ie perfect goodness. It would not be perfect goodness if some virtue were lacking; So let one's witnessing be perfect and not lack any of its aspects. Or let it be supported by the ;pillars abova described.

8. Bodily cleanliness is brought about by water (washing), the purity of soul, by witnessing. There is no goodness unless there is this perfect goodness viz witnessing.

Any light is not (the full) light. Only witnessing is real light. For witnessing concerns God ''who is light and in him is no darkness'' (1 John 1,5) He (Christ) said ''I am the light of the words''

That this வாய்மை is not mere truthfulness may be also proved from what the author says in Chapters 96 and 103 on குடிமை and குடிசெயல்வகை where the word குடிமை would seem to mean one who is born in a family of

witnesses. For in these chapters are used the words நாண், வாய்மை, சால்பு, நாண்உடைமை, நல்லாண்மை (almost equal to சான்றாண்மை) and thoughts very much allied to them. There is the வாய்மைக்குடி which can only mean born in a witnessing family. It could not merely mean a truthful family.

10. This couplet was taken together with the first couplet already explained.

These are the five pillars of the witnessing power, the last one being witnessing itself.

NOTE: It cannot but be noted that the author mentions these 5 pillars under சான்றாண்மை ie. Perfect goodness. He deals with this perfect goodness in the section named பொருட்பால் which is usually translated as Treatise on wealth meaning by this word the material wealth needed for social & civic life of people. The topics in this section which forms the II Part of the work, comprise the ruler of a government, the qualities he is expected to posses the organisation he has to be responsible for, qualities of a good government etc.

It is in this II part that சான்றாண்மை is dealt with. But the pillars of this சான்றாண்மை are placed in various sections of tne book.

Love is treated in the section on இல்லறம் or Family not because it is needed only in family life but because it is the basic requisite for a good family life. It is in such a family that those who embrace a life of renunciation (துறவறம்) are born. If the basic requisite of love is lacking there can be no real life of renunciation. Moreover it is a basic requisite for any kind of human life on earth- social, civil etc.

நான் (Repentance) is situated in the II part ie பொருட்பால் For it is the quality which is needed to keep together family life, life or renunciation, as well as social

and civil life. It has to shine out especially in society which has the vast majority of persons.

ஒப்புரவு is placed in the section on family life. For it is another basic requisite for all life on earth. கண்ணோட்டம் (forgiveness) is also placed in பொருட்பால் for the reason above mentioned. வாய்மை is placed in the section on the life of renunciation, because the witnessing ministry is particularly to be exercised by such persons - particularly not exclusively.

Section-3

The Arutporul (அருட்பொருள்)

The wealth that is Arul (grace)

The author of Thirukkural, we said earlier, for reasons already explained, did not think it wise to compose his work as essentially and typically a religious book. He locates, religion or this life of சான்றோர் (which is his immediate object) under the guise and in the context of a book on general moral principles - principles which would apply to all, but in a most particular way to the "witnesses."

Thus it came about that composing the II Part, on wealth by which word he means the economical aspect of man's life, he thought of dealing also with spiritual wealth or, so to say, the divine economy. As social economy deals with material wealth, so the divine economy would deal with spiritual wealth which is the grace of God. Thus he does not hesitate to distinguish அருட்பொருள் (spiritual wealth-grace) from பொருட் பொருள் (material wealth) See குறள் 914. About பொருட்பொருள் he deals in the II Part under its various aspects. We do not go into it, since it does not really pertain to the subject chosen here, which is to point out the essential thoughts of Thirukkurall. It is however most interesting that there is a chapter (the 76th) in this II part which is entitled (according to Interpreters in general) as "ways of producing wealth". where the wealth intended by the author seems to be the spiritual rather than material - as we will try to show in due course.

We shall now treat about அருட்பொருள். The main concepts about this are given. I feel in chapters 25 and76.

Chapter 25 அருளுடைமை is usually translated as 'Possesson of compassion'. (Thus, for instance, Thiruvachakkmani) And ithis compassion is ordinarily understand as one that is to be shown to all living beings such as animals etc. (Thus Parimelazhagar etc) Can this concept be the true one? Let us try to study the above two Chapters.

The basic meaning of அருள் seems to be given in couplet 757 where it is said that அருள் is begotten by அன்பு ie. Love is the mother அருள்! What does this mean? If arul (அருள்) means compassion, as understood here, it can mean that compassion flows from love. love being understood as exposed in the article on love as the pillar of witnessing power. Compassion cannot but arise in the heart of a person who considers loveless persons as belonging particularly one's own ie. Particularly deserving one's consideration.

But is that all that this couplet (757) says? The same couplet seems to give the clue to identify its full meaning. When it says ''அன்பின் குழவி பொருள் என்னும் செல்வச் செவிலியால் உண்டு''. This means that அருள் itself flows from பொருள் which is equated to a loving nurse or mother.

What is meant by பொருள் here, is, I think, what has been given under தாளாற்றித்தந்தபொருள் in the Chapter on ஒப்புரவு. If love is understood as explained under அன்பு in the chapter on அன்புடைமை and பொருள் is understood as under ஒப்புரவு it then becomes clear that அருள் flows from the love of God for man, and from what God suffered for man. Briefly it is the relationship நட்பு (friendship) between God and man which was lost by the இருள்சேர் இருவினை (as explained under the Couplet 5 of Chapter I) and regained by the ''arduous pain'' (தாளாற்றித்தந்த) by the ஐந்தவித்தான் about whom mention is made in the I Chapter and III Chapter of Thirukkurall. Explanation has

been given under the Chapter "God in Thirukkurall" This love of God acts as atmost loving mother, even as God describes himself.

See. Is. 49, 14-15
Is. 66, 13

It is such love that begets grace - which is compassion but far more than mere compassion. It is the tremendous gift of friendship to which God calls poor creature-man. This state of friendship is what is called அருள். This friendship is begotten too out of compassion of God towards poor human creature.

Now we take up the Chapter 25 and look into the various statements made about அருள். These explanations will confirm what is asserted above.

1. The first couplet of this Chapter 25, calls அருள் as the "wealth of wealth" ie. the greatest wealth there is. The same predicate is given to செவிச் செல்வம் which can mean 'wealth by hearing' or the "wealth that is hearing". This could not be ordinary hearing but one that brings great wealth ie. great spiritual wealth. For mere hearing of anything cannot be "செல்வத்துட்செல்வம்" ie. the greatest wealth. The couplet seems to emphasise it most strongly saying: அச்செல்வம் செல்வத்துள் எல்லாம் தலை which means it is at the head or beginning of all wealth. Such a wealth by hearing is spoken of in the Bible. Rom. 10, 13-14, and 17

Faith therefore is the chief and beginning of all spiritual wealth. And it comes by hearing and accepting. Hearing in this context means "so hearing as to accept the truth". This faith is in the word of God, in his revelation of himself. This revelation of himself is essentially his *Love*. Accepting God's love, therefore, is wealth of wealth ie. the greatest spiritual wealth. That spiritual wealth is referred to in this first couplet of the 25th Chapter ie. in couplet 241 is clear from the same couplet

when it says that பொருட்செல்வம் பூரியார் கண்ணும்உள ie, material wealth can exist even with people who are low in character, or with people who do not possess any grace (as understood here) The same concept seems to be repeated in couplet 755 which says that one should reject wealth which does not take its origin from grace and love. The wealth which does not arise from grace and love, what is it but material wealth?

So, the greatest wealth which one can aim at and seek to possess is the spiritual wealth of grace and love. Here Grace is friendship of God, and Love is accepting the love of God for man and responding to that love. This is the real wealth which is worth possessing.

2. The next couplet says that one should in the right way search for this Grace and use it in his life. for nothing else will serve as such a friend and help since it originates from the friendship of God himself!

3. The third couplet of this Chapter 25, says that the world of darkness and pain is not for those whose heart is filled with grace. What else is the world of darkness, misery or pain but what is usually called 'hell !'

It Arul (அருள்) is understood as mere compassion or pity for all living being including animals, how can we understand or admit that all those who do not show such pity for animals, as for example, those who kill animals (and perhaps eat their flesh) will be condemned to such a world of misery. Lack of compassion is not the only crime deserving of hell. Whereas lack of friendship of God (lacking grace in that sense) is enough sin to deserve hell. In fact hell is to be understood mainly as a state of friendlessness, ie. a state of enemity with God. What more hell can a man want than not enjoying the infinite love of God for him!

4 and 5.

மன்னுயிர் ஓம்பி அருள்ஆள்வார்க்கு இல்லை என்ப
தன்னுயிர் அஞ்சும் வினை

மன்னுயிர் is understood as life that is permanent it can mean only life with God. For that alone is permanent. If ஓம்புதல் is taken to mean 'preserve at any cost,' even at the cost of life, if need be, மன்னுயிர் 'ஓம்பி would mean aim to possess at any cost the life that alone lasts. Grace and friendship of God is meant precisely to help one to aim such a life. If one is earnest about it and fosters such a grace and friendship with God, he need not worry about any evil, including the greatest evil which is sin.

The fifth couplet adds the thought that people in such a frame of mind ie. in love and friendship of God are proofs of the above ie. that evil will not touch them or that they need not dread it!

6. People who do evil and live in that state will be termed as people who have abandoned the only wealth that matters ie. as people who are graceless!

7 and 8. A worldly and enjoyable (in pejorative sense) life is not for those who have no material wealth, where as life hereafter is not for those who do not possess grace or friendship of God. (From this Couplet too we can conclude that the author is dealing in this Chapter about spiritual wealth) The next couplet implies the same concept. It says that wealth-less people may yet proper and come up one day. But grace-less people will never proper!

9. To say that morality can be observed by a grace-less person is the same as saying that one who has no clear idea of anything can realise the ultimate Reality (மெய்ப் பொருள்) It means that moral actions performed in a grace-less state or in a state of enemity with God will lead one nowhere. They are worthless.

10. Consider yourself, says this last couplet in this chapter, in front of a strong person. How will you feel?

You may feel quite helpless. Think of it when you are face with a weaker person, viz. realise how the weaker man will feel helpless.

What does this couplet want to canvey? Grace and friendship of God is strength of soul. When you are face with a person who is extremely strong with this divine strength, you should feel how weak you are before him and become earnest about acquiring such divine strength. Suppose you are strong with this divine strength and are faced with one who does not seem to have such a strength

what should you do? Feel elated? No, you should realise that though you have the strength of grace of the moment, you may easily lose it by some misdeed and become spiritually weak. So, be aware always or your fragile nature and be on your guard. As St. Paul says, 'He who stands, beware lest he should fall!"

This seems to be the import of this couplet.

What has been said in this chapter is supplemented in chapter 16 entitled பொருள் செயல் வகை meaning the manner of acquiring or even increasing the wealth meaning spiritual wealth as the couplet in this chapter indicate.

There is no 'wealth' similar to the wealth which turns an unrespected person into a respected one.

பொருளல்லவரைப் பொருளாகச் செய்யும்
பொருளல்லது இல்லை பொருள்

The word பொருள் in this couplet is used in a double sense viz wealth and respect. One can easily run away with the idea that the author is here speaking of the great respect which wealth is often supposed to beget. But obviously it can not mean that, as it appears from some of the couplets which follow.

2. The second couplet indeed speaks of a respect brought about by possession of wealth. In the context it

does not seem as a statement which the author has made his own, but that is how the world esteems!

3. The very next couplet confirms the author's thought. Thiruvachakamani translates it thus ;

"The light unfailing called the wealth will go piercing thro' The lands thought of by its owner and drive their darkness too.

Can (material) wealth deserve the name "light unfailing"? Is it or can it be really called 'light' at all? If there is anything which really darkens one's mind and heart, it is this material wealth. For wealth makes a man easily lose his head, close his eyes to reality, seek undeserving glory from others, gather a gang of sycophants around, believe in empty praise and flattery, and in many cases even lose his own self his soul. Hence it was that christ said that is profits a man nothing even if he makes his own the world and loses his own soul in the process. (See mart. 16,26)

How then can such a wealth be termed light. Nor is it 'unfailing' for it induces man to fail even in his basic obligations. Moreover it is not lasting, it fails man so often. Just when he puts in it his life and security, he departs from life and the whole matter becomes a total failure. The பொருள் therefore here cannot mean material wealth. It can only mean the wealth that in அருள் அருட்பொருள் (as already explained) This spiritual wealth enables one to be respected (as said in the first couplet) and can become light unfailing only if one forsters it. loves it and is anxious about possessing it. Whereas, material wealth, the more one is worried about it the less is it satisfying or lasting!

It (this spiritual wealth) can go anywhere (or taken anywhere to any country) and remove the spiritual darkness of people there. (Perhaps there is a veiled

reference to Thomas. Disciple of Christ coming to this far country and help removing the spiritual darkness)

4 and 5. One more characteristic of this பொருள், is given in the 4th Couplet.

அறன் ஈனும் இன்பமும் ஈனும் திறனறிந்து
தீதின்றி வந்த பொருள்

The (spiritual) wealth may be gathered in the right way, without having recourse to any unlawful methods, knowing the weakness of such unlawful wealth and knowing also the power of spiritual wealth acquired in the spiritual and lawful means, only such wealth will beget moral actions and lead to happiness.

How is this spiritual wealth acquired? The next couplet ie. the 5th points to the two essential mmeans-They are grace and love ie. actions or deeds proceeding from a sense of friendship of God and love (of God and others) which is the prime source of all good. (of explanation of C. 755)

6. உறுபொருளும் உலகுபொருளும் தன் ஒன்னார்த்
தெறுபொருளும் வேந்தன்பொருள்.

This couplet refers obviously to the material wealth which can be acquired by the state or Government. It is derived from the available natural resources of the state or from taxes laid on people. In case of Kings who invade other countries (as it was in those times) wealth can also be derived from the levies imposed on enemies).

The Seventh Couplet has already been explained.

8. One who would execute some project and has enough means in his hand can be likened to a man who is stationed on a hill and from there is looking at a battle in which elephants are engaged or a fight among the tuskers.

It is to say that such a person need not have any fear or need not fear (if he is a king) that he will have to face a warring king.

Spiritually it can mean that one who is possessed of spiritual wealth in abandance need not fear from any spiritual enemies. (For there are such spiritual enemies such as one's evil mind, bad desires etc. as well as the external enemy called the evil spirit)

9. Acquire wealth which will cut through the haughtiness of the enemies : there is no sword sharper than this wealth. This is certainly not true of material wealth. It is the power of the grace and friendship which has the strength to destroy any (spiritual enemy).

செய்கபொருளைச் செறுநர் செருக்கறுக்கும்
எஃதனிற் கூரியது இல்

10. ஒண்பொருள் காழ்ப்ப இயந்தியார்க்கு எண்பொருள்
ஏனை இரண்டும் ஒருங்கு

The ஒண்பொருள் here mentioned meaning lightsome wealth cannot be applied to material wealth, for the reason already explained under the 3rd couplet. It refers therefore to the spiritual wealth which is essentially light and lightsome. Those who acquire this lightsome wealth will have easily attained அறனும் இன்பமும் (See C-754) ie morality and the happiness it gives. After all, the object of this book is to lead men to moral living and the happiness which it alone can give.

A QUESTION

We have been dealing with அருள், What is to be said about the same word being used in the very next Chapter (26) entitled புலால் மறுத்தல் ie. avoidance of flesh

eating? If *arul* is interpreted us 'compassion to all living beings' how can we reconcile killing of animals and eating their flesh with அருள் as explained here in the above article on அருள் as grace etc.

1. The first couplet in Chapter 26 raises the question how can அருள் wield sway in one who eats flesh to get fat himself?

2. The second Couplet says that just as those who do not know how to govern or use material wealth are likely to lose it, so too those who consume flesh cannot hope to have அருள் dominating their life. (If அருள் is taken as compassion, it will mean that one cannot speak of compassion when he is in the habit of killing and eating animals!)

The fourth Couplet in this Chapter (ie C. 254) seems to say that ''Not killing is grace, and killing is lack of grace and eating the flesh is but disgrace'' (See translation of Thiruvachakamani) So eating flesh is against grace!

How then are the flesh consumers to obtain grace friendship as explained !

The clue seems to be given in couplet 259 which is :

அவி சொரிந்து ஆயிரம் வேட்டலின் ஒன்றன்
உயிர் செகுத்து உண்ணாமை நன்று.

The above mentioned Translator says : Not killing an animal and not eating its meat is ''far better than a thousand *fire-fec sarifices*''.

If the author of Thirukkural had in mind only the non-eating of animal's flesh, what would be the import of mentioning fire-fed sacrifices? Obviously he was opposed to sacrifices as understood in those days - in which animals were burnt and sacrificed. The sacrificed animal was usually eaten, to signify that the one who offered the sacrifice was becoming one with the Divinity to whom alone sacrifices was made. Now that, seems to say the

author, all these sacrifices have been abolished and have become useless, because God himself became a sacrifice (ஐந்தவித்தான்) and therefore let us put a stop to all these, ie. stop the sacrifices and the eating thereof.

This chapter is placed in the section on துறவறம் ie life of renunciation. The author is obviously thinking also that a life of renunciation should be notable by its abstinence from flesh eating. It may be noted that a great number of witnesses (Christians) have been and are yet observing this obstinence. But it may not be possible in every country. What for instance, can those living in the very cold regions of the earth do without meat - where, often, nothing else is available? Though such an abstinence is most praiseworthy and recommended for those who intend living a life of renunciation, it can not be absolutely imposed in the whole universe. And there would be no meaning in saying that meat-eaters have little hope of salvation. In any case there is no meaning in offering animal sacrifices when the greatest and most efficacious sacrifice for the sins of all mankind has already taken place.

As mentioned above the அந்தணர் were controverting with the சான்றோர் that such sacrifices were still required, and so the author (on behalf of himself and of the சான்றோர்) asserts that they were no longer needed.

THIRUKKURAL AND REBIRTH

It is usually held by Tamil Scholars that Thirukkurall upholds the doctrine about the cycle of births and rebirths.

They seem to base this doctrine practically on a few words life பிறவி, பிறப்பு and எழுபிறப்பு. The Phrase பிறவிக்கடல் in the very first Chapter of the book seems to give them a definite argument for this theory, which seems to have been postulated with a view to explain (rather

explain away !) the reason for suffering and evil in the words.

Why should a person who seems to be a good one, now, suffer? Probably he was evil in a previous life. Why should a man who perhaps is not so good enjoy the good things of this life? Perhaps he did good in his previous life! To confirm, as it were, this purely imaginative explanation, now and then (though very rarely!) there appear persons who say (pretend!) thay they remember what happened to them in a life before the one they are in at present.

This is a mere theory with which Thirukkural has nothing to do.

THE HERE AND HEREAFTER

1. More than once the author of this book speaks of இம்மை and மறுமை either the very words or concepts corresponding to these words. The whole thought of Thirukkurall is apposed to the idea of a Rebirth. We can certainly conclude a priori that the author of this work could not have thought of it.

2. In the very first Chapter the author says again and again about attainment of the feet of God - which is another way of saying "reaching the goal of life with the Divinity". After reaching the goal what is the need of being reborn? To emphasise that reaching the feet of God is not just for a time he repeats" நீடுவாழ்வார் "which in the context can only mean lasting, permanent life"

3. In the 4th Chapter treating on the need of morality or moral deeds, he says "Do not postpone doing good, because when the day ruin comes, the only help you will have are your good deeds "(C.36) The same thought in expressed in C.38 where the day of ruin is called" வீழ்நாள்.

In Couplet 223, it is said that those whose hearts are devoid of grace are bound to go to a world of misery. This words of misery cannot, by any snatch of imagination be taken to meen 'rebirths'.

Briefly the whole thought is that after one's death there is either a life of happiness with Godor a life of unhappiness and misery. This state cannot admit of any rebirth'. What, then, do the words பிறப்பு, பிறவி, எழு பிறப்பு convey? From a study of the whole context in which these words are used it is fairly clear that they are used in the sense of 'generation' பிறவிப் பெருங்கடல் would then mean the innumerable generation which have passed by.

(A full commentary on this subject may be found in my திருக்குறள் புத்தாய்வு)

Thirukkural and Fate.

There is a Chapter ஊழ் (38th) which is usually translated as Destiny with the meaning of Fate. That this could not have been the mind of the author can be shown by two couplet which seem to be apparently contradictory, but which are true.

These Couplets are

1. ஊழிற் பெருவலி யாவுள மற்றொன்று
சூழினும் தான்முந் துறும்

This couplet seems to say thet it is utterly useless to make efforts at anything. There is no power stronger than ஊழ் or Destiny(Fate)

The other Couplet is:

ஊழையும் உப்பக்கம் காண்பர் உலைவின்றித்
தாழாது உஞற்றுபவர்

This means that even fate can be defeated if there is persevering effort at something to be achieved.

The word ஊழ் here is not to be understood as fate but some power which rules and guides individuals.

This thought is clealy expressed in the couplet (under the same ஊழ்)

வகுத்தான் வகுத்த வகையல்லால் கோடி
தொகுத்தார்க்கும் துய்த்தல் அரிது

The word வகுத்தான் definitely denotes some intelligence being. Who could it be? Man? No, since man has not that intelligence or power to provide or distribute his largess for all human beings. It can only be the supreme intelligence who can do it. So, one has to acknowledge this Supreme Intelligence, put himself under his authority and guidance and not blindly believe in some blind power ruling over him, nor emagine that he can do everything for himself.

Section—4

God, "The Bridegroom"

(வரன் என்னும் வைப்பிற்கோர் வித்து)

There is an extraordinary aspect of God which the author of Thirukkural seems to have considered as integral to the morality he was exposing.

This aspect seems to be exposed fairly at length in the third part of his book usually called the 'இன்பத்துப்பால்', at times called 'காமத்துப்பால்'. There is a controversy as to which of these two names is the genuine one and proper. It is not diffcult to see that the titles do carry with them different connotations. While the word காமம் means lust or lustful love, இன்பம் can mean also a moral or spiritual ove or rather the happiness that is derived from that love.

If the former name is what the III part really is about then there could be some justification for what Mr. Drew, a translator in English of this great classic, says about it. He says that it (the third part) could not be translated into any European language without exposing the translator to infamy. This is indeed a strong statement. But is it really the case? This needs deeper study.

(a) The author uses the word காமம் for the first time in his work in couplet 360, in the chapter on the 'Realisation of Truth'. The way he uses it there is very significant. He speaks of *three* factors which cause all the 'pain' in the world. The word used is நோய். This can also be 'sorrow' as Pope's translation has it in couplet just before

this, viz 359. It could also be 'evil' as Drew's translatian has it. We could say the word நோய் can convey all the three ideas at the same time. Doing evil causes sorrow or pain even bodily pain at times. The author is teaching a way to conquer this, and among the three factors he mentions also காமம். He says that their very names should become extinct, if pain is to be removed. If their very names are destroyed, then will perish also the evils which flow from them.

So, then, the very word காமம் should be made exinct, if man is to be happy. If this is the attitude of the author, how could he have dealt at length on காமம் (lust) in the III part under consideration, the translation of which could expose one to infamy? The conclusion, then, is that it is not pure lust காமம் which is being treated there. The very title, therefore, of the III part, காமத்துப்பால் seems out of place!

(b) Taking the title of the III part to be இன்பத்துப் பால், what kind of இன்பம் does the writer have in his mind? இன்பம் can be *twofold* bodily and spiritual, material and moral, the earthly and the heavenly, human and divine. Which is the one here? The author himself seems to answer.

Quite early in his work he says: Those who desire the higher pleasures (of heaven) will not act unjustly, through desire of the trifling joy (in this life)-Drew's Translation.

சிற்றின்பம் வெஃகி அறன்அல்ல செய்யாரே
மற்றின்பம் வேண்டு பவர்.

Even in இன்பம் the anothor distinguishes the *trifling* (earthly) இன்பம் (சிற்றின்பம்) and the higher (heavenly) இன்பம் (பேரின்பம்). Man must seek the latter and not be, as it were, misled by the former. In the mind of the author, the goal of life is not the earthly happiness, but the heavenly; he must so live as to gain it. Onceagain

the author gives primacy to the heavenly and not to the earthly pleasures. How then could he have composed a whole treatise (250 couplets) all about the earthly, trifling, fleeting happiness which is காமம், or சிற்றின்பம்.

(c) In couplet 39, the author says ; only that happiness (இன்பம்) is genuine and true, which comes from அறம். In couplet 34 he says that all that is அறம் is to be found in one's purity of mind and heart. How could he then lay such a strong emphasis on காமம் which destroys this purity?

(d) The word காமம் has been used by the author 38 times, in the III part alone. In all these cases, does the author always refer to the lust of the flesh? This is a point to be looked into. The word காமம் has not only that meaning. It can also mean ardent love (conjugal or spiritual), strong attraction (as in the state before marriage); a burning desire, deep pleasure with which some thing is desired, a certain anxiety caused by this desire, affection or strong feeling. A study of the context in which the word is used in the above 38 couplets, may show that it is not necessarily or exclusively lust that is conveyed by that word, but often any ardent desire or attraction or the pleasure experienced thereby. This meaning may not appear at first sight as we read on, but can be understood when we have studied the real purpose for which the author composed this III part.

What is the real purpose? From what has been said above it is sufficiently obvious that it could not have been merely exposing the art or grammar of carnal, earthly, sensual pleasure between a man and woman-the lover and the beloved! This is something most of mankind is conversant with. The need for an elaborate exposition of what is well known and daily experienced by men and women is not easily felt. Did the author then have in mind an ulterior motive in composing this treatise? Did he perhaps

use this human experience of earthly and carnal pleasure as a stepping stone for leading these very humans to higher realms of thougt-to a knowledge desire and experience of a far higher pleasure viz. that which far surpasses the earthly and carnal?

This is what we have to find out. This can be discovered first of all from a study of the ancient authoritative scholars and grammarians of Tamil literature.

Here are the main points which would emerge from such a study :

(1) A very special feature of Tamil literature, - one enjoyed perhaps by the literature of no western language- is that it is built on an unusual division of subjects according to the interests which should concern man's life on earth. They are mainly four :

(a) *Aram* (அறம்) which treats of the moral aspect of man's life-and is usually translated virtue.

(b) *Porul* (பொருள்)which in translated as wealth i.e., those things which pertain to the material well being of man. Under this head are treated the art of government, the personnel which go to make up the government, the manner of producing and using wealth etc.

(c) *Inbam* (இன்பம்) Pleasure, which is normally said to treat of the 'excitement' of 'love' between human lovers; of the pleasure and pain experienced by them before marriage, as well as after.

(d) A fourth aspect is often given: viz *veedu*, (வீடு) Home. This word is understood as denoting the final lasting *home* which man has to reach after the experiences of this earthly life.

Thus we have அறம், பொருள், இன்பம், வீடு.

These are named in Sanskrit Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha, The first two mean practically the same as அறம் and பொருள் respectively, The third-Kama-definitely denotes the lust or pleasure experienced by the flesh or body. It may be called *'love'* but only as equivalent to carnal love or attraction or lust.

Moksha, the fourth, would mean 'liberation' from the cycle of births and from the unhappiness caused by them.

Now, *two* points have to be noted regarding the division of subjects used by the Thirukkural,

One : instead of four it uses only three.

It looks as though it does not believe in a final 'home'-goal of life-வீடு. Explanations below will answer this.

Another point to be noted is that while the Sanskrit style used *Kama* (as the third division), Thirukkural and other Tamil writers use the word இன்பம். The reason for this is to be investigated. For if இன்பம் meant earthly love, and it formed the last part of the book, it would mean practically that earthly love is the goal of life From this it will also be seen why the term காமத்துப்பால் used by some scholars is not appropriate for the third part of Thirukkural and that இன்பத்துப்பால் is the correct one,

We shall now continue our investigation. A second important characteristic of Tamil literature is that the classical writters were not satisfied with elaborating 'love' as lust. The ancient Tamil Grammarians and scholars especially the more classical ones are explicit on this point.

இறையனார் அகப்பொருள் விளக்கம் for instance, commenting a verse of தொல்காப்பியம் which speaks of the ten excellencies* which should shine out between lovers, if genuine love is to be realised, says : This lover not of this world : he is one devised by scholars.'' (-31)

* பிறப்பே, குடிமை, ஆண்மை.....தொல்காப். iii, 1219.

In other words it is a *device* by scholars to teach some truth which is not easily perceptible to human beings who are too earthly minded and carnal. It is a device by which the authors hope to lead such people step by step to realities of far greater worth. This step by step journey is well described in another ancient authoritative work- இறையனார் களவியல் உரை. Here is the substance of his exposition :

A foolish person is trying to drink muddy water. A sensible man passing by tells him : What are you doing? What do you mean by drinking this muddy water? Look, there is some clear water! And he points to a mirage near by! The foolish individual stops drinking the muddy water. The other takes him actually to a good spring and lets him drink to his heart's content.

Showing the mirage was meant perhaps to attract his attention immediately to something better. It is probably a way of saying that a person who is immersed in lustful pleasures does not easily lift up his head to notice higher realities. His eyes are earthward all the time, Such a person needs some attraction to turn his mind elsewhere in the right direction. Clear water in a pond or spring may not be easily visible at once; whereas a mirage can be from even a distance.

The teacher and guide here desires to turn lustful man's attention elsewhere, in a direction where he can find, not the muddy water of carnal love. which is neither pure nor healthy, but a love which is infinitely superior-one that is not earthly, oue that is absolutely pure and healthy with a health which this world knows not.

The lustful, carnal, earthly bent man, who knows and experiences little more than the pleasures of the body, cannot easily understand that kind of superior love! And so the guide speaks an earthly language at first, in order to attract his attention.

"You are so earnest and anxious, he seems to say, to experience and enjoy this '*love*' of which you are speaking- this இன்பம்! this pleasure derived from what people call காதல், You are so taken up by this human love காதல்! Do you know there is a love (காதல்) far greater and more enjoyable than this? Will you not be interested in it?"

When the foolish lustful person hears that, he begins to listen.

"A love greater than this human love! I would certainly want it! "—he replies, and adds "But how can I obtain it?"

Be it noted that this 'greater and more enjoyable love' at the moment may appear to the earth - bound foolish person as something like a mirage! But if he places himself under the right guide he will find it—just as the sensible person above mentioned. Though, to start with, he showed a mirage, he finally led him to good water. The 'greater and more enjoyable love' is for the moment 'a mirage' in that it is not something which can be grasped at once: but it will become the immense reality if a proper attitude is taken and the right effort is made.

What could be this effort? It was the question the seeker of that greater love asked of his guide. The guide answers It is not somethtng which can be acquired by one's own effort, or strength: or by one's beauty or wealth. It can be achiexed only by தவம் i.e. by penance or ascetical practices

Hearing this the earthly inclined person responds : I shall do that penance and obtain that great boon. And he does undertake these ascetical practices in his eagerness to obtain the great goal,

But the guide now wishes to lead him further on. Seeing his eagerness to obtain the good, he wishes to take full advantage. He slowly enlightens his mind. He helps

him to realise that the great goal is immensely beyond what ascetical practices (தவம்) can by themselves achieve; that the 'good' which ascetical practices can achieve is nothing compared with the good which the great goal is going to be.

'Poor man, the guide tells him, do you think that (தவம்) can beget the love and happiness which is said to be greater and more enjoyable than the earthly love? Do you think that you can attain your final goal (வீடு) and the happiness it gives (வீடுபேற்றின்பம்)?''

The guide, then, begins to expose the excellence and the altogether inestimable quality that is the happiness of வீடு — a happiness which this earth knows not, which is altogether God-like, divine and heavenly—spiritual and lasting! He will tell his disciple that it is something which knows no birth, illness, old age or death, misery or care. It would carry with it all the perfections of whatever beautiful or valuable things are found in the world. It is not something which comes from without, but one that is made to spring up as a fountain from within the heart. It will grow eventually into something which may be called the flood of supernal happiness— பேரின்ப வெள்ளத்தது. The disciple is now more attuned to this spiritual and greater 'love or happiness'. He continues to perform the ascetical practices, redoubles them, and at the same time becomes imbibed with a wisdom which comes from above. In due course, he reaches this final stage—the home வீடு of perfect happiness.

We see thus that the ancient scholars and writers had, in exposing what apparently sounded lustful love, a far greater object than what is usually understood by the moderns. It was nothing more than a device to lead the earth-bound, carnal-minded, lust-seeking mortals gradually to a love and happiness which is infinitely different from the love between human lovers, as heaven is different from earth, as God is different from man, as the supreme spirit is different from ordinary earthly matter.

The question may now arise : If this is so, has Tamil literature used this wonderful device very much?

At first sight it may appear not. But there have not been lacking literary compositions bessed on such a device. The திருக்கோவை for instance is an excellent example. This work in the guise of dealings between two human lovers actually deals about God as the bridegroom and the soul as the bride.

Many writers like Manicka Vasakar, Nammalwar, Thayumanavar have largely used the phraseology of human love in order to expose the beauties of divine love.

But a certain earth-bound trend of later times, and a certain undue estimation of Sanskrit literature as the highest human achievement far superior too to Tamil literature — may have contributed to bringing down in estimation the great teaching of the ancient scholars. So that we reach a time when Love becomes exclusively Kama (காமம்), and what was obviously இன்பத்துப்பால் becomes காமத்துப்பால்!

The author of Thirukkural seems to have vigorously re-asserted the beauty and opportuness of the 'device' (above described) and made full use of it in his work.

This brings us to the question whether the III Part of Thirukkural is really a treatise on lustful love or spiritual love. Here are some testimonials to show that it is the latter and not the former that the author is here concerned with.

Vatsyayana's Kana Sutras are a well known Sanskrit treatise on sex and sexual love. Referring to this famous work, the renowned Tamil schoiar Meenakshi Sundaram says; "Like Vatsyayana's Kama Sutras his (Thiruvalluvar's Thirukkural does not attempt an objective and scientific analysis of sex topics. Thiruvalluvar on the other hand gives us a poetic picture of ideal love-the Beloved and

the Lord bocoming one in thought, feeling and action in true advaitic relationship'' (Pageant of Tamil literature).

This opinion is shared by many, even modern scholars.

The perfect union, therefore, of man and God, and the happiness which that union brings about — is the snbject matter of this III Part of Thirukkural. It obviously treats of the final goal of man's life. In other words, it treats of what the Grammar of Tamil literatuie would call - வீடு, We see thus that the III aspect (இன்பம்) and the fourth (வீடு) coincide. Hence it is there in no special treatise on வீடு in Thirukkural. Hence it is that the author calls God வரன், already in his Introduction to the book (couplet 24). He says, in that couplet, that those who guard the five (senses) by the ''hook of firmness'' (S. Bharati Translation) will be the seed ef that ''treasure of bliss (வைப்பு) that is the Bridegroom,''

உரன்என்னும் தோட்டியான் ஓரைந்தும் காப்பான்
வரன்என்னும் வைப்புக்கோர் வித்து.

The word வரன் is easly understood as bridegroom. It may be said to be derived from பரம்; which becomes பரன் and fiually வரன். Even so it would denote the bliss which is *supreme*, viz God. It is quite possible that the author of Thirukkural had in mind the treatise he was going to compose in the III part, proposing God as the Bridegroom and the soul as the Bride and thus early in the introduction wanted to say that is would be the supreme object of the morality he was treating in his book.

The author also seems to hint in the introduction that the Bridegroom, God, is precisely the நீத்தார்—about which we shall see in a later article on *Neethar*.

Now comes the rather difficult problem of interpretation of the 250 couplets of the III Part of Thirukkural. Would they allow of such a high spiritual interpretation, sexy and crude as most of them sound? This is a very

pertinent question. Only when we have answered it, the idea of God as the bridegroom can be accepted.

Before we take up the 25 chapters one by one. we could have just a glimpse of the truth of the matter, viz. that this III Part really is a mysterious and mystic exposition on love, between God and man as lovers, by examining a couple of couplets which obviously seem to refer not to two human ordinary lovers, but to lovers one of whom does not seem to be of this earth.

The couplet is No 1126.

கண்ணுள்ளின் போகார் இமைப்பின் பருவரார்
நுண்ணியர்எங் காத லவர்

This is translated thus :

My loved one's *subtle form*
departs not from my eyes :
I wink them not, lest I should.
pain him where he lies
(G. U. Pope)

My lover would not depart from mine eyes: even if I wink, he would not suffer (from pain): he is so *ethereal*. (Rev. Drew).

It seems fairly clear that the author is here describing with what kind of a *lover* he is dealing with. He says that one (he or she) is of 'a subtle form' and 'ethereal' in nature. Could such a description fit in with a human lover? How could any human, lover, he or she, be considered subtle in form and ethereal? This is worth pondering on.

Is it a 'he' or a 'she' who is described in that couplet?

We said above that the whole presentation was a device to lead carnal-minded mortals to spiritual union with the

supreme spirit, God. We said that the author had to use facts about human lovers to lead them higher. Now the question is asked:among human lovers who is the one who starts this drama of love? Is it the man or the woman?

Normally it is considered abnormal or even disgraceful for a woman to make the advance in this matter of love. It is she who by her beauty and attractiveness draws the man to herself. Keeping this human feature in mind, the author seems to present God as the most attractive woman. That is why he starts the whole treatise thus:

> Goddess? or peafowl rare?
> .....Is she a maid of human kind? (pope)
> Is this jewelled female a celestial,
> a choice peahen or a human being?
> My mind is perplexed (Drew).

There is a profound reason for thus representing God as a most attrctive and beautiful woman. For among human lovers, though it may be normal for a man to make the first advances, it need not necessarily be so. It is possible at times for the woman to make the first advance. But in this encounter of God and man, unless God, as the 'prime mover of everything, makes the first advance man has no way of achieving anything. And so it is only appropriate that God is at first represented as a most beautiful woman, attracting man to himself making the first advance.

From the above quoted couplet therefore we can gather that the author has in mind not two ordinary human lovers but one of whom is 'subtle' in form and ethereal in nature. Who is more subtle in form than God? He is the 'invisible' and beyond human sensible touch, unlike any human lover. Therefore we have to conclude that the III Part of Thirukkural actually deals with God as the first 'subtle', invisible, supreme lover of man.

Let it be noted here that though in the first section of this third part (களவியல்) God is presented as 'woman beautiful', in the second section (கற்பியல்) he is presented as man, as bridegroom. Once man has made the first advance, and marriage takes place, the question does not arise as to who is to make the first advance. Both, husband and wife, are in great intimacy always. Something similar happens between God and the soul. Once the latter responds to the initial advance of God and begins to love Him, mutual intimacy comes in. As the response grows, at the appropriate time a sort of spiritual marriage takes place between God and the soul. God then shows Himself as bridegroom—partly because his initial action has now achieved its purpose; and partly bacause God is *now* attracted towards the soul which he Himself has endowed with spiritual beauty—by His grace, favours and blessings.

Hence the appellation : God, the Bridegroom! which we gave to this article. The truth of all this, however, will become more evident when we take up the interpretation of the 250 couplets!

Thirukkural

III Part

இன்பத்துப்பால்

TREATISE ON LOVE

Important Note :

The explanation of the 'Couplets' which follows is to be read with a copy in hand of 'Thirukkural' Translations in English by Rev. G. U. Pope, Rev. Drew, and Shuddhananda Bharati.

We now come to the 'mystic' interpretation of the III Part of Thirukkural.

This III Part consists of 25 chapters, from 109 to 133. It has, as it were. 25 themes purporting to expose the mystic encounter between God and the human soul.

CHAPTER 109

It is entitled தகையணங்குறுத்தல் which means an expatiation on the pain caused by the beauty and the fitness of the Beloved. The Beloved here is God. presented, as we said above, as a most beautiful young woman. By his splendour and beauty God begins attracting the creature, man, to himself. How does this actually happen? No one at any time has a chance in this world to see God. He is absolutely invisible and seems so infinitely far away! How then does he begin attracting man to himself! In the case of human lovers sometime, somewhere the young man has a chance to see, and be attracted to a young woman They can both agree even to meet each other as often as they want, though this is done usually stealthily in the

beginning. But there is no such possibility where God is concerned. What, then, do we mean when we say that God begins by His great beauty to attract to himself, man his beloved creature?

Indeed God does not show himself or his beauty in any visible or tangible manner in this world. But he has made enough provision for his beauty to be 'perceived' by man's mind, through the immense variety of creatures which he has created. The sun, the moon, the planets, and their movements according to certain fixed laws : the innumerable stars in the sky eternally twinkling the creator's might; the immense space, an infinitesimal part of which only now man is trying to pass through; the beauty that are the immense expanses of the oceans and seas : the mountains, hills and dales, the luxuriant vegetation on them : the rivers and lakes; the infinite variety and beauty of flower and fruit : the great number of species of animals, the action of air, water and light; the many beautiful things which man himself is able to produce: all these and more do they not reflect, be it in an infinitely faint manner, the beauty and glory of the creator-God? The beauty of the woman herself (the handsomeness of man too) which shows itself in a never ending variety in the millions of human faces, does it not reflect too something of the beauty of God? Every cause produces an effect similar to itself : it reproduces in it something of itself, of its beauty, goodness, excellence, etc. If so, should we not say that the first cause of all things, God, would produce in the things he has made something of his own beauty?..... We see in a child something of the parent: something of the artist in the masterpiece produced by him: something of the intelligence of the master-mind in the book or other work he produces—and so on. How then could we fail to see something of the beauty and greatness of God in the entire Universe which He has fashioned! The crux of the question is that man more, often than not, has not the eyes of his mind sufficiently clear to perceive the truth of the matter. So often men are inclined to think of this world as though it came into existence by some chance!.....

Man's ignorance can be so great and perverted! About this the Biblical Book of Wisdom says this :

"For all men were by nature foolish,
who were in ignorance of God
And who from the good things seen did
not succeed in knowing him who is,
and from studying the works did not
discern the artisan.
But either fire, or wind, or the swift air,
or the circuit of the stars, of the mighty water,
or the luminaries of heaven,
the governors of the world,
they considered gods.

Now if out of joy in their beauty they
thought them gods,
let them know how far more excellent
is the Lord than these;
for the original Source of beauty
fashioned them.

Or if they were struck by their might and energy,
let them from these things realize how
much more powerful is He who
made them.

For from the greatness and the beauty of
created things
their original Author, by analogy, is seen.

But yet, for these the blame is less;
For they indeed have gone astray perhaps,
though they seek God and wish to find him.

For they search busily among the works,
but are distracted by what they see,
because the thing seen are fair.

But again, not even these are pardonable,

For they so far succeeded in knowledge
that they could speculate about the world,
how did they not more quickly find its Lord?

(Wisdom : ch. 13, 1 to 9)

Another passage of the Bible has this :
The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against the irreligious and perverse spirit of man who, in this perversity of theirs, hinder the truth.

In fact whatever can be known about God is clear to them; He himself made it so.

Since the creation of the world, invisible realities, God's eternal power and divinity, have become visible, recognised through the things He has made. Therefore these man are inexcusable.

They certainly had knowledge of God, yet they did not glorify him as God or give him thanks; they stultified themselves through speculating to no purpose, and their senseless hearts were darkened.

They claimed to be wise, but turned into fools instead; they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images representing mortal man, birds, beasts, and snakes.

(Romans, 18 to 23.)

These passages tell us that in reality man was so taken up by the beauty of these things that "out of joy in their beauty they thought them gods," instead of rising from the creatures to an understanding of "how far more excellent is the Lord than these; for the *original Source of beauty fashioned them*" (Wisdom, 13. 3.) This could be the bewilderment about which the very first couplet of chapter 109 speaks, couplet 1081 which says :

Goddess? or peafowl rare?
She whose ears rich jewels wear,

Is she a maid of human kind?
All widered is my mind! -(Pope)

Is this jewelled female a celestial,
a choice peahen or a human being?
My mind is perplexed. -(Drew)

Lo, is it angel, a fair peacock or a
jewelled beauty — her sight shocks
my mind! -(S. Bharati)

This is precisely the bewilderment, perplexity and shock of which the above passage of the Book of Wisdom speaks.

Fire or wind, stars or the mighty water, the luminaries of heaven, men considered gods; struck by their beauty or might, they took them for the very God who made them. They had no reason to do so. They should have had enough of understanding to perceive but the beauty of God in them; which beauty; like a beautiful young woman, was sweetly drawing every man to himself !..... There was no reason to be perplexed ! Even if for a moment such a perplexity should show itself, soon it should give place to clarity, by which men should be able to see God hiding in the universe and its objects, reflecting in varying degrees his beauty !

All this seems to be the import of the couplet under consideration, viz 1081.

Couplet 1082.

In order to clear the perplexity in the confused mind of man, God has to do something more. Man is too dull in his mind to realise the beauty of God in the beauty of the creatures around him. Unless God pursues him with his own light, man will ever remain in darkness. And so He fixes his divine eye on him. It is He who looks first on his creature, so that blinded as men are, they may be enabled to look upon him and gaze on his beauty. When

God does that, it is not possible for the creature not to turn its mind's eye towards that divine gaze. The look of God is powerful enough to effect a 'conversion' (a turning) to Himself. And so poor, piteous, little creature that man is, he meets his creator's eye. This 'eye' is nothing but the light and grace which comes from God to enlighten man and make him turn to Him and obtain his love. When he thus turns to God, he finds his 'look' irresistible — as irresistible as an army in battle array. Indeed what power could there be to resist the loving advance of God towards his poor creature, in order to give it his love and make it happy?

This is the purport of the versicle which runs as follows: This female beauty returning my looks is like a celestial maiden coming with an army to contend against me (Couplet 1082).

This irresistible force of the "divine look" full of grace and love, seems further expatiated in the following two couplets—1083 and 1084,

In 1083 the author says that the 'power' of that "divine look" is so great that it can be compared to the mythic God of death called Yama—in the sense that as this God comes to take away one's life, so the divine look seems to appear as one taking away the life of the looker on. He wants to say that it is so terrible and powerful. When the God of death comes, one may imagine a sort of 'fight' with him not to surrender But the fight is with one who has no attractiveness or beauty. It is an awful sort of fight! But here there is a 'fight' too, but with one whose beauty, goodness and lovabillity are without parallel; and it is a 'fight' of a different sort. It is a fight which has a sweet encounter in it, one which God himself, as it were initiates in order to posses the creature He has created.

The translation of this couplet by S. Bharati calls the eyes "battling eyes" and "winsome eyes that fight with me". The eye of God, which is all power, love and grace and the eye of the human-which is all weakness, lust and disgrace—battle with each other, as it were; but the victory is finally God's—for God is love, power and grace without equal and, though man may resist it for a time, the victory is finally God's.

The same idea is contin ed in the next couplet(1084) which says:

These eyes that seem to kill those who look at them are as it were in hostilities with this feminine simplicity.

—(Drew).

The beauty and appearance of the woman is such that it may well be said to drink the very life of those who look at her! The beauty of God is more so, in a sense. But the author puts to himself a question : But how it is that a woman, who by nature is gracious and shy, could look in such a way as to take the very life of the lover whose eyes meet hers? This is just a reflection made by the author in order to say how immensely lovable gracious and attractive is the 'look' of God, though to those who reject his loving advance the very same look becomes one of anger which may finally become his ruin! What else can happen when God's love is rejected! What else is the so called 'hell' but a state where there is no love either on the part of God or on the part of man. Love rejected could be nothing but a ruin to him who rejects it. This we see even in human affairs A mother's love rejected by the child becomes a curse. A friend's love rejected becomes a source of misery to the one who rejects it! How much more would the love of an infinitely lovable God be the ruin of those who reject it, especially when that love is offered to creatures who are absolutely unworthy of it nor have any right to it!

The apparently opposite characteristics are here described in this couplet (1084) to warn the reader that it is dangerous to reject God's condescending love!

Couplet 1085

Having spoken of the apparently opposite characteristics of the 'look' of God, the author goes further and says that actually there are three apparently opposed characteristics in that 'look'. They are : The look (of the god of death) which is mortal and is capable of killing; the look which is gracious and full of love; and the look of the fawn whose look is usually shy (கூற்றமோ, கண்ணோ, பிணையோ).

The first two aspects have been explained above the third, viz the shyness of the divine look, needs some explanation. How can God's look be considered shy? This shyness, obviously, is not exactly that of a young woman lover, but a kind of 'respect' and 'caution' with which God advances towards his creature to obtain its love. He does not, in other words, impose Himself on any one. He does not and cannot force himself on any one-not only beause He made man a rational creature with a free will, but also because love by its nature is somthing which cannot be obtained by exerting force or power.

But the question may arise ; why is God so desirous to obtain his creature's love? How is he in need of it? Is He not all sufficient in himself?

Doubtless, it is not because God is in need of any creature or its love that He, as it were, runs after it, like the 'Hound of Heaven' in the expressive phrase of the famous poet, Francis Thompson. He pursues his poor creature, not because He is in need of it. but because it is in need of Him. But without realising its own need, it blindly tries to run away from Him. It does not realise how much in need of love it is! For it is love and love alone which can truly satisfy man - love that has its origin

in God, that flows from Him to satisfy the thirst of the human heart. God is Himself this love. In rejecting love, the creature is rejecting God. This is what Thompson says in his beautiful words, addressing the creature :

"Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest,
I am He whom thou seekest.
Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest me"

And this love which God offers is altogether gratuitous. unmerited; and it is on His initiative that it becomes a reality.

This is what God speaks to man in the words of Thompson ;

"Strange, piteous, futile thing,
Wherefore should any set thee love apart?
Seeing none but I makes much of naught."

And human love needs human meriting :
How hast thou merited—

—Alack, thou knowest not
How little worthy of love thou art!

Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee
Save Me, save only Me!

The mystery of God's love for this 'strange, piteous futile thing' which is man, is something which will always be beyond human comprehension. Yet it is something which he should try to understand and realise in his life. This very 'device' which we at the moment are trying to comment on, is meant precisely to help us on to the achieving of this goal.

Couplet 1086.

In the previous couplet the author had spoken of the *trible* characteristic of God's '*look*'. In this, he desires to say that though the 'Look' has an aspect of shyness it still

has the power of making the soul which meets it *tremble*. Indeed the 'look of God' just as it can manifest indescribable benevolence and goodness, it can also show power and instil a certain fear in the one who meets that look. The look of God is after all his benign consideration for man his creature. This look is not, and should not always be, a sort of powerless feeble and dull one. It should at times show itself full of fire and inspire a certain fear. For after all such a fear is good for the wayward, foolish creature that is man. Such a fear can be (as the Bible says) the beginning of wisdom-wisdom which will help the creature to realise the truth and not run away after the fleeting beauty or pleasure which the world around can offer it. Just as an erring child is not corrected by kindnness alone so is man not corrected from his erring ways by the look of goodness and love alone. At times a certain severity is needed to bring way ward and foolish people to sense. So too God does exercise a certain severity in dealing with his creatures and in bringing them to his love. It is this severity of the divine look that this couplet 1086 speaks of. It is expressed in a rather unusual way.

If the eyes are to be used for a *full* vision, the eye brows which are by nature a bit curved ought to remain in this natural positio . If they close themselves (and thus loose their curveness!) the full vision will not be had. If they do not close themselves fully but only slightly, there will be vision, but partial Now a full vision such as exercised by a feminine beauty could cause a fright to the one who meets the gaze, because it could be piercing, challenging and fiery. The couplet says that if the brows of the lover (woman) are less curved (i. e, more straight) the eyes will not look with full gaze and fire, and therefore they will not create the fright !

The word கொடும் in the கொடும் புருவம் need not necessarily meen 'cruel' as mostly understood by commentators, but rather 'curved'. But for reason above described they could be figuratively called 'cruel' because by being fully curved the full vision is exercised and that

inspires a certain fright ! In this sense the translations should be read :

If cruel eye-brows bow
unbent, would veil those glances now :
The shafts that wound this trembling heart
Her eyes no more would dart. -(Pope).

Her eyes will cause me) no trembling sorrow, if they are properly hidden by her cruel arched eye-brows -(Drew).

Applying all this now to God's 'look' we have to say this. God's look is both inviting and frightening.

It is inviting because it is full of benign love and kindness, attracting poor man to Himself and to His love and happiness : it is also frightening, because it is full of power and energy; it says silently that if the creature (man) does not respond to the invitation, it will have to suffer and that terribly! This at first could be very forbidding to man who is so earthly minded, carnal and unconcerned about heavenly and divine realities. The soul therefore, desires that the look of God at the beginning especially, be not so 'frightening' it would be enough if He looks on his creature not with the full 'fire' of his eyes, but, as it were, half closed. ''Let him look, on me with a certain consideration for my weakness,'' the soul seems to say. This seems to be the import of the versicle 1086.

This couplet seems to portray with a very vivid image, the ''jealousy'' of a lover.

The image is the comparison of the cloth that covers the youthful breasts of the belove, to the cloth that covers the eyes of the raging elephant. None but the driver (mahout, as he is called) can touch that cloth. It may be because the elephant easily understands his familiar touch. So too none can touch the cloth on the breasts—which is as good as touching the breasts themselves-except her lover.

Because such an act implies an intimacy and love (which is really lust, or carnal pleasure!) which none else but the lover can claim. This 'image' is used, obviously, to convey as vividly as possible, the 'exclusiveness' of intimacy between lovers. This exclusiveness may also be called the 'jealousy' of lovers. This jealousy is not that irrational and unjustifiable envy which may crop up between people, but a justifiable attitude between persons who are either already 'committed' to each other or are preparing to become so. If this is justifiable between human lovers how much more will it be when one of the lovers is God himself!.

(a) For among human lovers, it may be quite possible for them to 'merit' the love, either by reason of beauty or goodness or other human qualities. As Francis Thompson the poet says, human love needs human meriting'.

But when it is a question of lovers one of whom is God himself there can be no question of 'meriting' at all, on the part of man. As the same poet (Thompson) puts it, addressing man :

'How hast thou merited—
of all man's clotted clay the dingiest clot?
Alack, thou knowest not
How little worthy of any love thou art?'

Indeed, of all God's creatures man seems to be the 'meanest,' in as much as he is the only one who does not respond to God's advances of love! Man is said, figuratively, to have been made of clay, clotted as it were; and so he may well be called the 'dingiest clot! Man does not merit God's love; but God merits, and that infinitely, all the love of his creatures. For being infinite goodness, beauty and loveliness, he deserves all love. He is the only Being that so deserves. Divine love therefore needs human meriting. If as the poet says: human love needs human

meriting, we may say, Divine love needs divine meriting! i.e., man to merit in a divine way!

(b) In the case of human lovers there can be good reason at times for one of them to be jealous (i.e. exclusive) For love by its nature is jealous and cannot be shared with all and sundry. As soon as love and affection, especially when it is carnal, is begun to be shown to all and sundry, it looses all its force and beauty: it looses its savour and delicacy! Quite different will it be when it is spiritual and divine; for it can be, and indeed should be, shared with all; for spiritual love, by its nature is unlimited, universal as the Supreme Spirit (God) itself! It has a power and force, a strength and greatness which naturally extends itself to all besides. For love by its very nature is diffusive and expansive. It cannot, as it were, be bottled up in itself! Carnal love, by its nature, is limited and unexpansive, as flesh itself is. For a 'body' is circumscribed within definite limits and can never become as it were universal! And so if one of the lovers begins to share his or her love with any one outside. it must loose its strength and delicacy. And so lovers could have good reason to become 'jealous'!

But God has a reason to be truly 'jealous'; for he alone is worthy of all love, and that above all, more than all lovable things on earth. He has a right to be thus 'exclusive' for he alone is Supremely lovable; and what is supremely lovable has to be loved exclusively. And so, one cannot give a place in one's heart, on a par with God! This is explicitly taught by the Thirukkural in couplet 1123, and the following.

(c) Man has not enough power or perfection to share his love with all and sundry; because he is absolutely limited. But God's infinite perfections do not forbid his sharing his love with innumerable beings outside, created by Him. He can manifest eqally infinite love and concern to every single creature of his; far his 'heart' is infinite!

Once again there seems to be a reference to the fear and awe inspired by the 'fire' of the eyes of the young feminine beauty. This time the 'eye' is not mentioned directly, but the brow! It is probably a figurative way of describing. The commentators speak not of the brow only,but rather of the 'lightsome brow',i.e.,brow which is lit up by the fire in the eye. The words in this couplet seem to be spoken by a valiant warrior. He says: 'of my valour in the battle field my enemies have probably known something by hear say! So famous has it been! And yet before the fire of the eyes of this beauty, all my battle-field valour seems to stage a complete break down!' The idea has been expressed in a different way in this same chapter. What could have been the exact purpose of this versicle? Probably this:

The two main divisions of the subject matter for literary treatment in Tamil have been described as அகம் (Agam) and புறம் (Puram). The former treats on 'love', which may be considered as achievement in one's personal and private life: a life of the mind and heart; a life of love, be it in the sense of காதல் i.e. carnal love, or be it spiritual. The latter may be described as achievement in pnblic life, in the life of the country etc. This is specially வீரம் i.e. valour in battles conquests in the life of the country. The former may be considered as a sort of conquest in private life; in love, in personal intimacy. The author depicts in this couplet a warror of extraordinary valour finding himself unable to resist the power of a woman's eyes-a woman's love. Does he want to say that all the external achievements are nothing when compared to the achievement in this field of intimate love and pleasure? Could he be saying this in relation to the odinary carnal love and intimacy? Or does he hint at the irresistible power which is love and intimacy with God and the 'fire' communicated by his 'look' of grace, of love, of power of intimacy, of attraction,of acertain salutary fear!

1089.

Once again the author returns to the 'shyness, the kindliness' of the same 'look'! It is so kindly, so lovely, so inviting, he says, that 'she' does not really need any external ornaments at all! 'She' is beautiful and attractive even without them. In this versicle the author seems to hint at a 'beauty' which is in no need of any ornaments. What is this beauty? Is it man's, or is it God's? We know by experience that among human lovers, the woman cannot do without such ornaments, however beautiful she may be naturally! It may be that in the beginning the lover is satisfied with the natural beauty of his beloved! But soon he wants her to be decked with all the possible ornaments. Failing this, we see that the so called 'love' steadily diminishes. This has to be so since that love is carnal and founded on the external appearance of the body. if one is able, gradually at least, to transform what was originally carnal into a spiritual 'love' then, the need for ornaments may not be so deeply felt. For the love is no longer lust but one based on the internal beauty of the soul.

But all this will not be fully verified, until we come to a purely spiritual love, as the one we are trying to learn in this study-between lovers one of whom is God himself. God is in no need absolutely of any external ornaments: He is his own beauty. He is self attractive, infinitely beautiful in himself, and therefore can attract the soul by his own beauty and grace!..... The author seems to refer more to God's love in this couplet, than to human love!

1090

In this couplet the author seems to refer to the *pleasurē* which this 'look' (which he has been commenting so much in the above couplets) actually gives. In order to bring home his thought he compares the pleasure which wine gives, and that which the above 'look' gives. He says that wine does not give any pleasure unless it is drunk: it gives no pleasure if one just looks at it! But love, he says,

gives pleasure and joy when it is still in the stage only of 'looks'. The meeting of the eyes does certainly gives pleasure, though it is far from perfect and complete.

But this pleasure and joy 'of the look' is more fully verified in the case of God's look than in that of a woman's! For, however much be the pleasure experienced by that look, no lover is satisfied with it. He or she thirsts to pass from look to touch. For being 'carnal' love, only 'touch' will satisfy, But it is different in the case of God's love. It being a totally spiritual love, there is absolutely no need, nor possibility of any physical contact, A 'look' of the mind and heart is enough to give satisfaction. This satisfaction is, of course, only initial during this earthly life, and will be final, perfect and totally satisfying in the next. In that life, which we call heaven, we will have a vision of God, a vision which will, as it were penetrate the very essence and perfection of God : when, as it is usually said, we will see God face to face, as He is.

Thus, again we see that the love of which the author is speaking here is more the divine love rather than human love.

CHAPTER 110

It is entitled குறிப்பறிதல் which means a recognition of signs usually manifested between lovers.

A great deal has been said in the previous chapter on the 'look' of love; on eyes and their 'action' on the lover. Their apparently opposed aspects have been described. Now in this chapter instruction is given as to how these 'opposed' aspects are to be *discerned and understood*.

1091

This couplet speaks of one of these 'opposed' aspects; viz, how the look of the lover is at the same time a cause of pain as well as a remedy for the pain.

The 'look' of the beauty in question at times, causes pain; but soon may bring comfort too. There is a look which may excite in the heart a feeling of longing and love. This may cause grief and pain. There is also a 'look' which by its softness and pitiful desire to possess the beloved may bring comfort and consolation; and this is a remedy !

Such a situation is not absent when one of the lovers is God himself. His 'look', i.e. his attitude towards the human lover, may be one of reproach or even anger. This could come about when the human lover does not seem to appreciate or desire the inestimable beauty that is God; or even if there is a certain appreciation or desire, it may be quite feeble, not adequate enough, considering that the infinite beauty of God deserves equally infinite appreciation and desire. God is not given the place which He alone deserves, viz. If any other thing or person is given almost an equal place in one's heart, God, then, becomes a

secondary consideration. And this is an insult to Him. God cannot occupy a second place in man's heart. So, if man does not give God the place He deserves, we may say that there will be a reproach or an 'angry look' from God. This causes pain indeed to the lover.

But when the fickle-minded, un-understanding human lover realises his mistake, and begins to see the place which God really deserves in his heart, his mercy and pardon for the mistake committed become a comfort and a remedy. The same 'grace' of God thus causes pain and brings relief. As the Bible says : He is the one who wounds and He is the one who heals !

1092

This couplet seems to say something more about the 'pleasure and joy' caused by the look — already spoken of in the previous couplet. The look need not even be 'full' and 'deliberate' ; it may just be : what one might call a 'furtive glance'. The pleasure and joy, however, which even such a glance brings to the lover is "more than half of lover's supreme delight" as Pope's translation has it. The word சிறுநோக்கம் is beautifully translated by the same Pope as the furtive glance "that gleams one instant bright". The word காமத்தில் need not necessarily refer to sexual pleasure; it could mean the great eagerness with which love's joy is sought.

Applying this to God, we see that even the slightest advance of God towards the soul, to make it happy, to give it His love, renders it blessed and happy. It is almost a foretaste of the eternal and perfect bliss which will be 'love's supreme delight', after this earthly life! God sees us in this life as it were behind a curtain, and we see Him too in the same way. Yet even this is a happiness not of this earth! It is already heavenly. But when eternity dawns upon man, he will see God as He Is. In this life God has, as it were, a furtive glance, that may at times gleam "one instant bright." But even that is more than half of love's

supreme delight which is awaiting us on the other side of life!

The couplet seems to aim at telling earthly-minded man this: If you are so overjoyed at the sight of your earthly lover, and imagine for the moment that there can be no greater joy than that—what should you think of the joy which God can give you by his full 'vison'? Aim at it even in this life; even here it can give a real foretaste of the infinitely perfect happiness!

1093

The previous couplet spoke of the comfort and joy that the *look* of God brought to the lover. In this, somthing more is said about the same 'look'.

The look of the lover is said to be with the head 'drooping' (Pope's Tr.) and 'stooping' (Drew Tr.). This drooping or stooping seems to convey the idea of a certain 'beseeching'. The lover, indeed, who is anxious to possess the beloved does not consider it demeaning to look in such a way that it appears to be 'beseeching'. Love by its very nature is such that it considers nothing too much, provided it enters a heart and sets up its abode therein for ever. In this sense love may be said to stoop to conquer! ... If this is so between human lovers, what shall we say of the divine Lover and supreme God! None understands the depths of love in its perfection as God who is Love in essence does. He alone understands its infinite beauty, because He is the infinite personification of Love itself. If a human lover does not consider it demeaning even to 'stoop' in order that his love may conquer, how much more may we say so about God! In fact, however much a human lover may stoop, his or her stooping or beseeching will necessarily be a limited thing. For man is after all a limited being and what he does can only be limited and finite; whereas God, being of infinite perfection and goodness, can stoop in an infinite and unlimited way. Herein, in fact, shines God's unutterable goodness. This 'stooping' therefore is not in

any way dishonourable to the Supreme Lover; rather it bespeaks his Infinite condescension to his creatures!

In the foregoing couplets much has been said about the 'look' and the 'eye'. It is not without a special reason and meaning. For as Shakespeare says :

"For where is any author in the world
Teaches such beauty as a woman's eye"

(Love's Labour Lost—4)

For

"Love looks not with the eyes but with the mind,'

(A Mids. Night's Dream—1)

If woman's eye is of such beauty, and she is capable of looking with her mind more than with her eye - what shall we say of the infinite beauty of an infinite Lover, whose mind is infinite as well!

If a woman's eye is of such beauty and can teach better than any author in the world: and if the woman's love looks not with the eyes, but rather with mind, what shall we say of the beauty that is the Infinite Eye which is God; whose love looks, not with physical eyes (which are an imperfection to the Supreme Spirit) but with the irresistible power of an infinite mind and heart !

Another idea expressed in this couplet is that such a 'beseeching look' (and the love it means to convey) is like water which feeds the tender plant. As water poured to make a tender plant grow, so is this 'beseeching look' to make love grow between the lovers.

This is more so in the case of the 'beseeching look' which God himself bestows on his creature, man, whom he has called to be his 'beloved'. His look means 'attractive love', and this attracting action tends to make love toward God grow and attain perfection. God's look of love makes man come nearer to him, feel more attracted to him; and this increases love in man. This mutual love grows

and becomes perfected. God's Love is always perfect but, as offered to man and accepted by him, it does not become perfect at once, it needs gradual growth and only at the very end becomes perfect.

1094

The idea conveyed by this couplet seems to be a fairly common experience of lovers. When eyes of lovers meet, it is not usually a fixed gaze at each other. They play a sort of hide and seek, especially in the beginning. When *he* looks, *she* will cast her eyes on the ground; when he does not look, she will look at him and smile to herself! The reason for this is a certain shyness but also a certain initial impar - fection of love. These looks are actually meant to help the growth of love, as explained in the previous versicle. And so they must needs be imperfect in the beginning. Perfect looking into each other would mean perfect love for each other, a certain complete intimacy which cannot be realised at the very beginning.

How is all this verified in the case of God the Lover? Does God (the woman - beauty!) also look at the ground when I (man) look at Him;? ....

If God were to look at his creature with the fullest power of the eye of His mind, there would be nothing which the creature would miss! It would derive from that 'look' all that it needs to would make it perfectly happy. For that look of God's Mind is light, love and strength. Where there is such a light, love and power, there can be nothing wanting there: there would be perfect happiness. But God does not bestow such a full 'look' at the very beginning of this love-drama. It would be too much for the poor creature: it would not be able to grasp it. nor stand it: just as the child just born would not be able to stand solid food: just as a tender plant will not be able to stand the full blaze of the mid-summer sunlight!

And so God 'looks' at his creature in measured degrees. He shows his light and love not in the fullest measure, at the very beginning. He, as it were, looks at the ground, as though he is not altogether involved in this mystic drama! as though his love for the creature is limited! and not, as it truly is, infinite! This he does also for another reason. If man were to experience the fulness of God's love right from the very beginning, there would be no great merit on the part of man. Because it would not be something gained by its efforts. Though God's Love is not something which can be gained by one's own efforts, it is something which can be gained, increased and perfected by a sincere effort made by way of co-operation with God's Grace and gratuitous love!

So when I (the soul) look at Him in order to catch and enjoy a glimpse of His beauty and love, He does not immediately return that look in all its fulness; He, as it were, looks at the ground, i.e. turns aside, in order to make the soul look for Him more earnestly and more perseveringly. For love that is gained with no real effort or pain is bound to be shallow. For it is a sort of law of love that it should thrive in pain and suffering. It is ordinary experience that we love someone more if we have suffered for him much. Suffering is also a proof of genuine and deep love. It is in this sense that the love of God for man, as manifested through the sufferings of His Son Jesus Christ, is to be understood.

There is one more aspect of this 'look' of love on the part of God the Lover. The 'look' is always accompanied by a smile, which may be timid in the beginning, but which will become in due course a warm and full-hearted one.

The 'look' of God is no less accompanied with His 'smild'. If the timid smile of a woman can immerse the beloved in deep joy, what shall we say of the 'smile of God' which He bestows on his poor creature! At the beginning

that smile may be timid, i.e. not altogether full and perfect; it may cause just an initial and imperfect joy and satisfaction, but as the soul goes on responding to it by its own understanding and appreciative co-operation, it will become full, perfect and completely beautifying.

1095.

This couplet is a further comment on the 'look' about which the previous one spoke. What the author desires to add about the 'look' seems to be contained in the words ஒரு கண் சிறக்கணித்தாள் போல.....

The exact meaning of these words seems to be what is put in Tamil as கடைக்கண் நோக்கினால் போல, as some commentators have it. The English words "with a half-closed eye" do not seem to convey the idea fully. The timid look described in the previous versicle would not be much different from the look with a half-closed eye! The phrase (in Tamil) கடைக்கண் நோக்கு would mean something like "look with the last edge of the eye ....". It is a way of saying: "show the least of your kindness". "There is no need to look on me with all the light and love of your eye : it is enough to throw a bit of that light from the edge as it were, of your eye! It would be enough to make me happy!" This seems to be the thought behind the phrase. In other words it is enough for God to show the least condescension towards his creature : there will be hope and joy born in the heart. The smile, which was described above, would then be born of this condescension of God.

This verse, therefore, seems to allude to the infinite condescension of God in making the first advance to attract the creature to Himself. This obviously is more true of God than of an ordinary woman-lover. For an ordinary woman-beauty however great her beauty, is after all the equal of man. There can, then, be no question of a real condescension on her part. Only in a very limited degree may it be applied to her since she may straightaway reject

the advances of the lover, if she feels like it. God, on the other hand, will not and does not reject the first steps of his creature in this journey of a love-drama. His is infinite goodness. He knows, too, that were it not for his condescension, the creature has nowhere to turn, in order to attain his happiness! Infinite goodness goes all out to fill the creature with happiness, and does not reject anyone who approaches Him with a good will!

1096

Till now the 'eye' and its 'look' was the subject of discourse. Now we pass on to the mouth, i.e. the words spoken between lovers. This couplet says :

Though they (i.e. the lovers) may speak harshly, as if they were strangers, the words of the friendly are soon understood. In fact, one of the 'features' of the dealings between lovers is exchange, at times, of words which may not be altogether friendly. They may even appear harsh : or they may be words as between two strangers. Such a behaviour is however, not permitted to develop into indifference or unfriendliness. By experience it is known that such a behaviour may even help growth in love. In any case, since they are words between lovers, they are understood; if, that is to say, they are genuinely in love.

Now, how does this apply to lovers one of whom is God Himself? How do God and the human lover speak words between themselves?

First, how or when does God speak to his beloved? What we said above about the look of the eye applies to the word of the mouth here. The look of the eye is but the look of the mind's eye. The word too, is that of the mind of God. The word of God's mind is his thought. When He inspires thoughts in our mind, He certainly speaks. Thoughts are the words of the mind or heart. All good thoughts, all thoughts of love, especially of pure, spiritual love, are from God, the supreme source of pure love When

God "speaks such thoughts", the human lover can respond with his thoughts of love, too.

Now, it can happen that at times God and the human lover speak harshly to each other as though they were strangers! That is to say, thought of God for His human lover may appear strange and harsh, because the ways of God are usually not the ways of man: for mysterious and beyond comprehension should naturally be the thoughts of God. And so man might consider it to be strange and harsh. Not always does God's thought for his creature bring joy and pleasure : it may at times bring pain and sorrow; such a pain may even be needed in order to *wean* the earth-bound creature from these earthly realities to tend more whole-heartedly towards heavenly realities. Nothing helps man to wean himself from such crumbs of earthly satisfaction as do disappointment, disillusionment, dissatisfaction and the pain caused by all this! It is God's way of drawing man to Himself! In such moments the poor, weak, love less soul may well imagine that his Lover-God is harsh to him : that God is permitting His beloved to suffer pain unnecessarily! This is a situation which may be hard to understand, but one that needs to understood. For it implies a most characteristic law of love; viz. that only through pain and suffering strong love may be born and perfected.

Now, the word - thought of the human lover may also be strange and harsh towards God. In fact, the thought of the human lover towards the divine lover is far more harsh and strange than vice versa. For the thought of God is born in infinite wisdom; while man's thought is born in ignorance. Unable to follow God's trend of thought, man sees God's behaviour of love towards him as harsh and strange. There is nothing surprising about this: for man is capable only of so much.

But the couplet goes on to say that being thought-words of the friendly, they are soon understood. On the

side of the Divine Lover there is no such thing as "being soon understood". They are never but perfectly understood. We may say, however that God's patient love is not easily exhausted; it waits till the creature realises its mistake and strange behaviouf and corrects itself. It may take time but the Divine Lover always understands even the worst blunders and foibles of the human lover!

As for the human lover, he may not immediately understand God's behaviour, his thought-words, but since God waits patiently, gradually the human lover falls in line with God's mysterious ways of dealing with his creatures and understands his love—even though it may be show in harsh and, strange ways!

1097

This couplet does not seem to say anything very different from what has been said in the previous one. It combines not only the 'word' but also the 'look'-a sort of summary of what has gone before in the various couplets.

1098

Nothing very special or different from all that has gone before, seems to be said in this couplet. Once more there is a reference to the bewitching soft smile-and that is the special beauty or splendour of the 'pitying maid'. In the case of human lovers, the maid may or may not be 'pitying', For she may well harden her heart and reject the advances of the lover. But God is alway 'pitying', He never rejects the advance of the poor creature. The human lover does not lose all if 'she' rejects his advances! whereas he does lose everything if the Divine Lover rejects him However miserable or poor, feeble or unworthy the desire of the creature to attain the love of the Divine Lover, he is never rejected. This is indeed a most comforting thought in this whole drama of love!

1099

All that has been said is, as it were, enumerated in what sounds a principle of 'love making'. This couplet says in effect something like this : It is normal for lovers to look at each other as with an indifferent look! This is sufficiently clear from all that has been said.

1100.

Once again a reference is made to the eye and its look: the eye of the mind and the look of that mind. The eyes of lovers must be able to grasp the looks of each other. If this is achieved, there is no need, says the couplet, for the words of the mouth. However much we may emphasise the utter inadequacy of spoken words between lovers, we know that they are not altogether unnecessary. Words are at times found quite necessary to foster the love just born, etc. But when we speak of God the Lover, we see the utter uselessness of the words of the mouth. For He does not need them; nor is He satisfied even with the most beautiful ones. He looks for the words of the heart and, only when they proceed from the depth of that heart, is He satisfied!

CHAPTER 111

THE JOY OF THE UNION

The word புணர்ச்சி may easily mean the bodily union (intercourse) of man and woman. But it can also mean simply 'union', Since we are just at the initial stage of the 'love drama' — at quite a distance from the stage of marriage, (treatise on which is to start only from chapter 116)—we could not think of a union of bodies already at this early stage. It can, therefore, refer only to an initial union of hearts - an interior experience of joy at the prospects of final union in marriage.

1101

All tha pleasure that can be derived from the five senses can be experienced in the woman-that is what this couplet says. In this what does the author wish to say? Is it his mind to invite the reader to an experience of such a pleasure in the woman? It does not seem so : he seems to say rather :

"That is what the earth-bound, sensual sex-ridden, carnal man feels and says ; I would rather call your attention to a woman who can supply you all the pleasures which the senses can, and more, and give you perfect satisfaction. You know by experience that even though the woman provides a great deal of pleasure to the senses it does not altogether satisfy you, for you are not mere 'senses'. You are far more than that. Beyond the senses you have the spirit; that spirit which is a particle of God You have been created to be more like God than anything which this world has. The human body, with its senses and the pleasure derived from their use, is something: it is not

everything. A woman and the pleasure she can give is something: but she is not everything. She cannot satisfy your spirit, your deeper inner longings. You have not been created for a woman; you have been created for God, and unless your heart rests in Him, it will be restless! And so, seek the joy and happiness which that other 'woman' of infinite bea ty can give you and is longing to give you! Do not, as it were, find your final resting place in the fleeting pleasure which the senses-the body of a woman can provide. You know that you cannot always enjoy this pleasure with a woman : it is a pleasure of a few moments! when these moments have passed you feel dissatisfied! you would want a pleasure and joy which does not cease. But you cannot have it with any woman-unless it be that 'woman'—God! You cannot enjoy union with a woman all the time! Not even animals do that! By its very nature it is limited and fleeting. Only what God can give is unlimited and lasting. Don't be, therefore, deceived by a sort of intensity which bodily pleasure can exhibit. Look for something higher, nobler, more spiritual, less bodily! You may not feel its intensity as you may in the case of bodily pleasure; but for all that, that is the more genuine one! Search for it, aim at it with all your haart!''

This seems to be the thought containd in that apparently sex-ridden couplet!

1102.

The previous couplet said that all tne pleasure derived from the five senses could be experienced in the woman. But this pleasure is *not always* experienced : nor can it be, as was explained above. By its very nature sensual pleasure cannot be something continuous or lasting. When that pleasure is intercepted, there is pain!

What is the remedy for this pain? The remedy for other diseases is always different from the cause of the disease : but for the disease caused by the 'Woman', she

herself (the cause itself) is the remedy! .... This is indeed so unusual! Yet, it is the truth. But is it really so very true as it seems? No doubt, the sensual longing does cause pain of heart; all the more so if it comes after experiencing the pleasure. But this pain is softened by the thought that it will be possible to satisfy that longing in the joy of the union of which the above couplet spoke. And the pain actually disappears at the moment of actual union.

All the same, does all this provide a remedy which will be really satisfactory and final? However much we may appreciate the 'remedy' provided by the sexual union, it is not so very satisfactory, nor much less final! Sensual pleasure, we know, never fully satisfies. The more you seek it, the more you seem to want it! Because it is so limited and partial! It satisfies only the body and the senses. It can never satisfy the 'spirit' of man. So it is in a very limited meaning that the pleasure and joy possible to be derived from the woman can be said to be a 'remedy' for the pain caused by the same!

It is only when we come to the 'infinite', i.e. God, that we can speak of a full, satisfactory and final remedy for this 'sickness of love'. For it is only He who can finally and fully satisfy man's longings!

1103.

'Vaikunta', the word(heaven) of Vishnu, is depicted as a place of indescribable delights. But this couplet says that those delights are not greater then the pleasure derived from the union(of hearts) which is described in this chapter. This union is described as the 'sleep of the lover in the arms of the beloved''. The comparison may be dismissed as a highly exaggerated expression of a person man after the pleasure derived from a woman. The thought moreover need not necessarily be considered as that of the writer. We may say that words like, ''So thinks the one who hunts after sex-pleasure'', are understood immediately

after the word உலகு. But there is no need to have recourse to all this. We may go straight to the real thought of the author and say that he says something like this :

"You, my readers, may heard of the pleasures of Vishnu's heaven, I am now going to tell you that there are delights far greater than those. It is the 'sleep' (that is,perfect rest) which the poor human spirit can have in the arms of God, if you can attain Him as your beloved. The happinesss which that rest in and union with God gives, cannot be compared with anything people know of. Aim at it, therefore, with all your heart!"

The couplet sounds as though the author was believing in the world of Vishnu and that he was only comparing the sexual pleasure with that of the heaven of Vishnu. But the whole context of the book and of this chapter makes it fairly obvious that he mentionsVishnu's heaven accidentally with a view to expose the true heaven which God, the true beloved of the soul,has prepared for those who desire union with Him. He seems to be using a known terminology in order to press his point-nothing more.

1104.

The ordinary fire burns you when approach it, the more you approath it, the more it burns.

But here the 'beloved' seems to have in her a strange fire : it burns you when you go away from it! it cools you when you approach it!

Is this really so of the human lovers? Does the lover experience any coolness in his heart when he approaches his beloved? Does he experience 'warmth' when he withdraws from her?.... The 'warmth' here is understood as a certain intensity of emotion, a fervour of love, and the pleasure derived from it. The coolness would be the opposite. Such an experience does not seem applicable to

human lovers, For the nearer one approaches the beloved, the greater the warmth experienced : the farther one goes the less the warmth. But one's love and affection can be so genuine that it can happen at times that even when the lover withdraws from the beloved the heart may be burning.

But this experience seems more evident in the case of the divine lover-God. God is spirit, and so when we (who are not pure spirits) approach Him we do not easily experience that warmth and fervour which two Human lovers-with their bodily emotions-may easily experience. For nearness of lovers causes easily an excitement and emotion which in its turn may lead to a certain warmth. This cannot happen when we approach in mind and heart. We then feel 'cold' and unaffected, as it were. For God is not so easily 'experienced'. But if we earnestly seek this experience and often ponder over it, there may be moments when, even though we may think we are far from God, our hearts may experience a great warmth. It is part of God's providence and one of the 'rules of this drama of love, that the soul should not experience easily this warmth of heart. For God and his love is not something like a woman's body, nor like anything which the world can offer. He is so infinitely above us, and the 'good' He offers so precious, that it can be truly enjoyed only after a most earnest longing and effort; and after experiencing a lot of disappointments and 'coldness' of heart. Anything that is easily gained is not much appreciated; only when we work hard for it, we enjoy its taste, as it were. Since there is no greated 'good' than God himself it has to be gained only atfer much pain and coldness of heart.

Thus it is a most peculiar characteristic of God's love that when we do earnestly try to approach Him our hearts may feel cold and indifferent, while, at times, when we think we are far away and yet earnestly long after Him, our hearts may experience great warmth and love!

1705.

No object in the world gives pleasure which is proper to it, as soon as one desires to have it. Its only when one actually gets it, possesses it, tries to enjoy it, that one derives pleasure from it. But in the case of 'lovers', the beauty of the 'beloved' gives pleasure even when the lover just desires to have it. This seems to be the thought expressed in this couplet.

Whether this is true or not of human lovers, it seems to be true of God, the 'infinite beloved'. An earnest desire to possess God by itself gives pleasure and joy. Why so? Because God is infinitely good; when our heart longs for this infinite good, the infinite good which is God, comes to possess the poor human heart. It does not happen so when we long for any earthly good. No earthly good has such a fascination for us; even when we are attracted towards it, it does not care for us. It remains indifferent. For it was not made to exert a fascination on us. We were not created for any of these earthly goods. And so they, as it were, do not care for us. Whereas we were fashioned precisely to be attracted to the infinite good i. e.,God. And God does attract us to Himself. Not because he is in need of us, but because He knows that we are in need of him and, left to ourselves, we are likely to lose Him. He cares for us, because He is the one supreme good; and as we have already pointed out elsewhere, the supreme good is by its very nature, diffusive, i e., it tends to give itself to others, especially when these others earnestly desire to possess it. Hence when we earnestly long for God, we already experience a joy and pleasure. And this goes on increasing as our desire becomes more intense.

1106.

In the trying journey of this love drama, there are ups and downs: there are periods of joy and periods of pain. At times the lover may get tempted to lose heart. There may even be a certain slackening of life. For life is never full without fullness of love. It is love which quickens life, we know.

When there is such a slackening of life what is it that will restore it? This couplet says that the 'union' in the arms of the beloved will act as a sort of ambrosia(i.e.,giver of immortality) and help to revive the drooping spirit. It will help to quicken the spirit when, at intervals, love feels dejected because this 'union' is not experienced as a continuous feature!

It is the same with 'spiritual union and embrace' of the lover with God. When there is the approach of love between God and the soul a great quickening is experienced. When, at intervals, this approach seems absent, there is a certain drooping of the spirit, Life appears lifeless! But the above spiritual embrace of God helps to revive the spirit and continue in the effort of reaching the goal.

If the 'arms' of the beloved (an ordinary woman) could be considered as ambrosia, how much more the powerful 'arms' of God and the indescribable sweetness which those arms can give when they entwine about the beloved in a spiritual embrace?

1107.

The pleasure derived from the 'union' with the beloved (woman) is here compared to something which at first sight, does not seem so appropriate. It is compared to the joy derived from a liberal distribution of one's goods to those who have not:to the joy of sharing a banquet with others. This is indeed an unusual comparison if we were to understand here only the pleasure derived from senses and sex. For the pleasure thus derived is by its very nature something which cannot be shared with others. It is a highly personal and private enjoyment. What, then, is the import of the thought expressed in this couplet?

It seems that it can be understood fully only when applied to God whose very nature is *to give*; whose love by its nature is diffusive. There may be a certain joy with the lovers giving 'themselves' (i.e.,their love) to each other.

It is nothing compared to the joy which we may say God Himself experiences in giving his grace, his goods, his love, Himself to His creature. This may often appear strange when we realise that God is self-sufficient, that his joy is infinite and cannot in any way be increased. What, then, do we mean when we say that God experiences a great joy in giving Himself to his creatures? We mean that it is characteristic of love to enjoy giving love to others. God does not acquire any new joy which He did not have before, but a sort of new feature is as it were added to it: it is not a new perfection, but a new aspect, as it were. If ordinary men rejoice in seeing others happy, are we say that God does not rejoice when he communicates his love and happiness to his own creatures whom he his made His children. It is perhaps only a poor human way of expressing. but something quite true. We may not be able to fathom this joy and pleasure of God; but this explains to a great extent the meaning of God coming to the word as man, being subject to pain and suffering-as we say about Christ. Thus can be understood the saying of the Bible: ''God so loved the world that He gave His only son for its salvation''. The pleasure of giving is verified nowhere as in God, especially if we understand God as in the Christian teaching.

1108

The meaning of this couplet seems to have been fairly well brought out by the translation of G. U. Pope. It runs:

''Sweet is the strict embrace of those
whom fond affection binds
where on dissevering breath
of discord entrance finds''.

If love is to be, what it should be, a strict embrace of hearts (more than of bodies) binding the lovers with the fondest affection, there should not exist between them even the slightest breath of discord. Both should aim at responding to each other's love with the strongest intention and attention to possess each other. It is not enough for one of them

alone to evince this strong incilnation. Both must do it. Both must exhibit full affection and love. There should not be even the slightest dissension of any sort between them. Even the slightest "dissevering breath" can ruin the fullness of love.

If it must be so between human lovers, what should it be when one of lovers God Himself? God on his side intends to possess his creature in the strictest embrace of love; he longs for the realization of the fullest love possible between himself and the human lover. There is nothing wanting on his side to make this drama of love reach its final perfect goal. It is the human lover who falls often below the mark. He may not respond with the fullest strength of his spirit. He may even easily get attached to something trifle in preference to the love which God is offering him. In such a case there will be a dissevering breath of discord between God and the soul. As long as it is there,there can be no real 'union' of hearts between them. In Christian spirituality this is termed "perfect conformity of the soul with the will of God".

1109.

The words ஊடல், உணர்தல் and புணர்தல் could be translated respectively: aversion, realisation and reunion.

The aversion is a sort of feigned indifference which lovers often assume in relation to each other, on some imaginary, usually flimsy. pretext. It is meant to make the partner *realise* that something was wanting in the love-encounter.

The *realisation* is verified when the aggrieved partner-whether the aggrievement was reasonable or not-realises that there was no great reason for the 'aversion' above described. As a result of this realisation union or reunion takes place once again.

This couplet says that these *three* are characterstics of those who are in love. The words காமம் கூடியார் could be

understood as "those who unite in lust". But they can be understood also as "those who encounter in love". The word காமம் can be interpreted as intense affection or simply 'love'. It is so understood by some commentators of Thirukkural. In fact the above described *three aspects* are not so much characterstic of lust, but rather of love. Where there is lust there can scarcely be verified aversion or realisation or union. For lust by its nature tends to be self-oriented. It tends towards self-satisfaction. There can be no enlargement of heart where there is only lust.

In fact what is so often said to be love among lovers is little more than lust. Hence it is that so often lovers who seem to be intensely in love, finally fall out miserably. An analysis will show that self was not satisfied at some stage and that led to this complete estrangement.

These above three aspects are more fully realised when God is one of the lovers.

There is first a very feigned aversion towards his creature. God always loves his creature, even when the latter does not love Him. But the love of man for his God is so poor, fickle and feeble that it needs strengthening and enrichment. Nothing is so conducive to this strengthening and enrichment as a certain pain caused by an apparent aversion of God. The creature which has tasted, in the initial stage what the love of God is, and the joy it causes in the soul, feels terribly this 'aversion'. But gradually it realises that it is for its good, that it is for the growing of love. God on his part with infinite delicacy and goodness and by His grace slowly leads the soul to such a realisation. This realisation does not easily happen, but after a certain earnest effort, during which God's grace and help will not be lacking, the soul realises the meaning of all that has been happening to her.

Note here that it is the soul which realises, not God. In the case of human lovers both may need realising in one sense or another. But in the case of God, there is no

question of God realising anything at any time. He is always in possession of the fulles knowledge of everything that can be, or has to be known.

After such a realisation there comes the 'union' which increases as the aversion and realisation go on increasing!

1110.

Knowledge is so inexhaustible that the more we learn the more we realise how little we know. Something similar happens in regard to *love*. Love is so inexhaustible too, that the more we love the more we realise how little we love.

Now is this applicable to the love between human lovers? Can we say that the love of human lovers, whoever they be, is inexhaustible? This couplet seems to say that the more the lover approaches the beloved, the more he realises how little he loves! Is this really true? It could not be true for, no creature however wonderful, beautiful, or loveable, can be worthy of such unlimited love. Only God, whose very essence is love, is worthy of such a love. In fact the more we approach God, the supreme lover, the more we see how universally loveable He is : and how little we poor feeble creatures really love Him !.....

This couplet therefore seems to refer almost clearly and exclusively to God the lover, rather than to any human lover!

CHAPTER 112

The title நலம் புனைந்துரைத்தல் may be translated as enumerating the goods of the beloved. The word புனைந் துரைத்தல் can mean also a certain exeggerated way of saying. This latter sense would certainly fit in when, as we can see for ourselves in this chapter, it is a question of the 'human lover' - the woman beauty - as understood in the first instance. One can easily see that, when it is a question of God, the beloved, there can be no exaggeration: for He surpasses all human descriptions and even exaggerations!

We see in this chapter a rather highly exaggerated description of the woman and her beauty. The parts of the body the eyes. the teeth, the waist, the face, the feet are described in a highly imaginative way. These descriptions are obviously meant to give an idea of the great beauty of the countenance, which is considered *perfect*, *lightsome*, *delicate* and *of great charm*.

1111.

The 'beloved' is compared to flower *anicham* அனிச்சம் which fades away as soon as you inhale its fragrance. It is so delicate in nature! But this couplet says that the 'beloved' is even more delicate than that flower. The 'delicacy' of beauty is here emphasised.

1112.

The lover here speaks to himself; You have seen, my soul, flowers weich many others too see! Do you think that the eyes of my beloved are like the flowers which many others also see?No,they are *unique*, and it is *I alone* who

have the happiness of looking on them! Their beauty is something meant and reserved for me. None other may even look on them, i.e., look on my beloved! We see it is rather highly exaggerated!

1113.

In this couplet, the body of the beloved is compared to a tender shoot, the teeth to pearls and the eyes to darts. The fragrance of her breath is also praised.

1114.

Once again a poetical description of the eyes of the 'beloved' is given here. If the blue lotus were to look at the eyes of the beloved, it would not have the boldness to look on, but would soon stoop and look at the ground, as it were, in shame, saying to itself: "I can never resemble those eyes of the beauty". A very emphatic way of saying "there is nothing to beat the light and beauty proceeding from those eyes!"

1115.

This time it is the 'waist' of the beloved which is praised. The slenderness of the feminine waist is one of the qualities highly praised in literature. A heavy waist in a woman is not supposed to be a thing of beauty. This slendrness of the waist is described in this couplet in a very highly exaggerated and poetic manner.

Mention has already been made of the flower called 'anicham' known for its extreme tenderness of petals. Here 'the beloved' is said to have plucked this flower together with the whole stem and worn it on her head. This, i.e, the flower with its stem, is said to be so heavy that it is in danger of weighing down the delicate waist, unable to bear its weight! If this should happen, there would be the danger of a total collapse, i.e., the beloved might have to meet death itself! Should that happen, it won't be the merry

drums which will sound, but rather the mournful ones, as is usually done at funerals! It is obviously a highly imaginative. exaggerated and poetic way of praising the 'slenderness' and delicacy of the beauty of the beloved.

1116.

Now comes the face, the countenance, for praise. The very stars of heaven are imagined to be looking at the face of the beloved and at the same time on the moon! "Beautiful and bright as the moon" is one of the images used in literature to describe the beauty of a woman. The stars are here said to be looking at the moon and at the 'beauty bright' of the beloved. They are unable to distinguish between them, i. e., they are not able to decide who or which is more lovely! They are so confused and perplexed at this that they seem almost dislodged from their abode! A highly imaginative description, once again!

1117.

The previous couplet spoke about the perplexity of the stars, as to who or which was more beautiful. This versicle seems to clear the perplexity! It is obviously the 'beloved' (the woman), because in the moon there appear imperfection; there is the wazink and waning first of all; and even in the full moon there are seen certain '*Spots*' which lessen the beauty. In other words, the face of the beloved is without spots, without any imperfection; while on the face of the moon, even of the bright full moon, there are spots!..... The stars, therefore, need not be perplexed as to who or which is more beautiful! It is certainly the feminine beauty!

1118.

Since the perplexity is now gone, the lover now, as it were, bids farewell to the moon. He says to her (the moon) I could not possibly continue to love you, because you are not able to shed light as my beloved! If you were able to

do so, then you would deserve my love! The splendour of the face is here celebrated in poetic way.

1119.

The idea expressed in this couplet seems to be similar to the one expressed in couplet 1112; but there are differences. In 1112 the terms of comparison were the eyes and flowers; here one of the terms is the moon, and the other, *the face* of the one with flower-like eyes. This latter, as we can see, is built, as it were, on what was said in 1112.

In 1112 the lover speaks to himself, here he speaks to the moon.

In the previous couplet, the lover says to the moon: If you were able to shed light as the face of my beloved, you would deserve my love! In this couplet he says to the same moon : *Even* if you were able to shed light in that fashion, you would still not be comparable to the face of my beloved! If you wish to stand comparison with my beloved, you will have to appear only to me, not, as you do, to the whole world! You will have to show your beauty exclusively to me, to be enjoyed by me alone, and by none other! Only then I could say that your face and that of my beloved are comparable!

1120.

The flower called 'anicham' அனிச்சம் and the feathers of the swan are said to be extremely soft and delicate. 'But to the feet of my beloved', says the lover, ''they are as thorns!'' It is again a poetic and exaggerated way of extolling the delicate nature of the beloved.

To summarise : two characteristics seem to be extolled in these 10 couplets, by which the true 'beloved' is to be known and esteemed.

They are : *delicate nature* and *exclusiveness*. The delicate nature is particularly referred to the eyes, and face,

and would then mean light and charm. Couplets 1111, 1113, 1115, and 1120 refer chiefly to the tender, delicate nature of the beloved.

Couplets 1112, 1114, 1119, extol the lightsome beauty of the eyes.

Couplets 1116, 1117, 1118 and 1119 extol the splendour and beauty of the face.

Couplets 1112, 1119, seem to stress the 'exclusiveness' of love.

Now the question to be asked is : whom does the author really have in mind while he makes such highly exaggerated descriptions? Is it an ordinary female beauty? Do those exquisite descriptions about the delicate nature, lightsome beauty, and exclusiveness of love fit in with an ordinary human beauty, however great? On the one hand the poetic description of the eyes, the teeth, the countenance, the face. and the feet do not seem applicable except to a human being. But what could have been the object of the author in going into such 'minute' details regarding the body? Was he intending to excite sentimental or even sensual emotions in the reader? We could not possibly imagine that such could have been his purpose, knowing, as we do, that aimed at raising the mind of his readers from the sensual to the spiritual. The alternative which is left is that all these descriptions should in some way be applicable to God, the Supreme Spiritual Beauty. What could all these minute descriptions then convey to the reader? Obviously the author could not have meant to deseribe the beauty of the eyes, or face or feet of God except in a spiritual mystical sense. God, obviously, has no physical eyes or feet to be described. But these could convey, in general, as hinted above, the delicate nature of the goodness and love of God; the light and splendour which He is ; and above all, the exclusiveness with which He is to be loved, as being the Supreme and Perfect Love, worthy alone of all the love of his creatures.

What is more delicate than the goodness and love of God for us? How tender, merciful and considerate He is towards his wayward, ungratetul and sinful creatures!

Who is more lightsome than God? Is there anything to equal His splendour? Light may mean knowledge. Is not his knowledge infinite?

And who has a greater claim to exclusive love than God? Human lovers may indeed claim exclusive love, they are right in doing so. But God is infinitely more right in claiming this exclusiveness of love. For He cannot be placed on a par with anything or anyone else. He alone deserves all our love, He alone does claim it. This is particularly evident in Christian thought, since God so loved man as to become like him in human nature and suffer for his sake to prove his love for him. None has loved man to this extent. And so none can claim love to this extent.

These *three* aspects of God's love are probably what the author desired to convey by the couplets of this chapter, or it may be just this. The author may have meant to say through these ten couplets something like this: The sex - bound lover thus exaggerates the 'goods' of his human beloved; do not be unduly carried away by all that. May I invite you to consider goods of far higher splendour and beauty?.....

In other words, the ten couplets could be considered as spoken, not by the author, but by the sex-ridden human lover! It could be a literary aud frgurative mode of conveying the thought he had in mind.

CHAPTER 113

An exposition of love's excellence

1121.

The first of these excellencies is said to be the kiss of the beloved. The kiss is almost the first external manifestation and sympol of deep love. The words எயிறூறிய நீர் has been translated as ''the dew on the teeth'' (Pope); ''the water which oozes from the teeth'' (Drew); and ''dew from the teeth'' (S. Bharati).

The previous chapter had greatly emphasised the 'delicatd nature'' of the beloved. This couplet seems to continuethe idea of 'delicateness' manifested in the kiss. The 'dew' may be considered as a symbol of delicateness and softness. The words பணிமொழி also refer to this delicateness, since they mean the soft - spoken words of love. The 'dew' may also denote the great 'delicacy' which love is. This may certainly be applied to the human 'be - loved', but it is clear that it is more applicable to God, the lover of man.

If we speak of the great delicacy and sweetness of the kiss of the humen beloved, what shall we say of the immense sweetness which the 'kiss of God' himself would give?

Now what would be kiss of God? As we said above, the kiss is the first manifestation, proof and symbol of love; we may say that the kiss of God is the first *contact of love* with the soul. What is this contact of love? It is obviously not a physical contact(as of the lips, between human lovers) but a moral and spiritual 'one. This contact is first of all through the 'beauty and language of the creatures' in the

world, as explained early in this treatise. It may be said to be a mystical contact of two spirits - the spirit of God and the spirit of man. It is not easily 'felt' as a kiss is felt, but it is there. It can be 'tasted' only as this contact grows and becomes deeper. It is not just a figure of speech: it is something more real than we can imagine, just as God is more real, so to say, than all that exists in the world. This kiss may be understood as a first approach to God, as a first experience of the infinite delicateness which is the love of God for man.

It is noteworthy that the part of the Bible called "The Song of Songs" (which is a mystic poem of love between God and mankind) opens with these words :

"Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: more delightful is your love than wine!"

The couplet we are dealing with said: "as sweet as milk and honey mixed". The biblical description says: "more delightful than wine," as much as to say: "more tasty and exhilarating than wine". The sense, however, is practically the same: the one emphasises the sweetness; the other, not only the sweetness but afso the exhilaration! In fact there is far greater exhilaration in the experience of God's love, than that of any human love; human love does not lift us up, so to say, above ourselves, which love of God does. For the former is earthly, while the latter is not of this earth. The earthly, however sweet, may not elevate or sublimate man : while that of God elevates him as far as God himself.

The "deviness" of this experience is also more applicable to God's love than to that of the human lover. Love that flows from human lovers is based on physical beauty and natural goodness: and there is a certain equality between them. They deal with each other, we may say, on an equality basis is no condescension on the part of any one.

Whereas with the love of God, there is infinite condescension on the part of God, when He approaches man in a contact of love. It has to be, God being what He is, and man being what he is. Since God is infinitely above man, unless He descends to the level of man, man cannot hope to gain His love. This descent of God to the level of man, we may say, is fully verified when (as in the Christian Teaching) God becomes man, in order to lift up man to himself. This condescension is otherwise called 'mercy'. And the quality of mercy, especially that of God. "is not strained, it droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven" (Shakespeare). In other words, the love of God is a spontaneous and willing offer proceeding from mercy. Hence this love is also called 'merciful love''.

1122.

A second excellence of this love (as said in this couplet) is that it is real *friendship*. Love is not exactly friendship. Love can between unequals and relaitives; as, for example between the mother or father and the child, between brothers and sisters, etc. Friendship, on the other hand, either finds equals, as Cicero says, or makes them equal! .....

In the case of two human lovers either there is already a certain equality in character, position, advantages, etc., or the friendship brings about such an equality.

In the case of lovers, one of whom is God Himself, there can be no equality of friendship on any score, unless God Himself establishes it, by bringing about a certain equality between Himself and man. We say 'a certain equality' because perfect and absolute equality is impossible between the Infinite Being, God, and the finite creature, man. It is only by God's condescension and 'stooping towards man, that such a friendship can be establised. Also, by enriching man with his divine qualities- as far as possible-does God bring about this friendship. For friendship cannot suffer the friend to be in an abject

condition; it will compel him to go to his help and lift him up. This is what God has actually done for man. He descended to the level of man and said to man: "I shall no longer call you servants; I shall call you friends". This 'call' is not a mere 'naming'; they are not merely named 'friends' but *made* so, by an interior transformation.

The couplet in question gives a comparison to describe the friendship between the lovers. It is like the union of body and soul, it says. What is this union like? The soul and body are so united that they form one reality. The body may be considered as moved and vivified by the soul. Both are essential for man, though both are not of the soul. excellence or pefection. True lovers may compare themselves to the body and soul, but it is a very imperfect comparison. For the two lovers are equal in every respect, except that one is male and the other female. Both are equally human beings. But each of them has something to complete the union and render it a happy one. It is not easy to say which of them acts as the body and which like the soul! We can only say that they both act in such a way as to bring about one reality, which is love and joy!

Now, if we apply all this to God and the human lover, we see that under one aspect the comparison is meaningful. We said that the soul is the principle of life in man and it is that which moves and vivifies the body. Without it man is just a mass of flesh, lifeless and dead. In the case of two human lovers we cannot clearly say which of them moves and vivifies. Perhaps in the begining we may say that the woman, by her beauty, attracts the man; this may perhaps be considered as a sort of 'movement' by the woman. But it is only in the initial stage. Soon there is inter - action between them, and at different times and situations the movement comes either from the male or from the female.

In the case of God, who is the First and Supreme mover the case is vastly different. Without his initial and continued action nothing or no one ever moves in any way. And so in this drama of love, it is He who moves first, and who conti-

hues to move always, the human lover to approach Him more and more and realise the goal of love. He is therefore as the soul is in the body. Without this soul there is no life. In fact God is the life of our life, in Him we move, have our being, and attain the goal of life. Hence it is that when He appeared as man (Jesus Christ), he said to man: I have come that you may have life and have it abundantly.

1123.

The third excellence (praised in this couplet) is the exclusiveness of love-the most telling characterstic of love. Love is either exclusive or it is simply nothing.

This is explained with a rather interesting comparison.

We know that there is an image in the pupil of our eye, The lover speakes to this image and says: 'You better depart from my eye, there is no place there for my beloved. I wish to bear in it only the image of my beloved'. What does this mean? The image in the eye may be considered as the object of one's spiritual vision. The words would then mean : I do not wish my heart to go after anyone or any thing else, except after my beloved! I wish to reserve all my love for my beloved''. This is indeed true even in the case of human lovers. They cannot look upon any and every one who may happen to pass by them. They should not retain in their heart any image except that of their beloved. Love is jealous; it will not allow indiscriminate effusiveness of love on all and sundry. ''My beloved to me, and I to him / her''. This is the principle of love-life. This is graphically and poetically expressed in this couplet. Not only the physical bodily image of another person is considered a hindrance to real, deep love: even the shadow of any image such as the one seen in the pupil of the eye. The exclusiveness in love is absolute: it does not suffer any kind of 'invasion'-an invasion of the heart, let as say - from any other, but from the beloved.

1124

While commenting on the couplet 1122 above, we said the beloved gives life to the lover, as the soul gives life to the body. This thought was implicitly contained in that couplet. Here it seems explicitly expressed.

1125.

Another excellence of love (expressed in this couplet) seem to be the fact that *Love knows no forgetfulness* : one who truly loves never forgets the beloved. The "light of the eyes of my beloved is all the time shed upon me : that light is not of a dull and non-descript type. It is so bright that it does not let me go to sleep; it comes to me through those eyes which gleam like the warrior's darts : they seem to be batling, as it were, for the complete possession of my heart. And this goes on without intermission, how can I therefore go to sleep and forget about it all"?

If such unforgefulness is a characteristic of human love, what should it be when God Himself is advancing towards his creature to possess his love? How much more would those infinitely bright lights of God shine upon the creature, and claim its undivided and continual attention? For does He not deserve all this and more?

1126.

This couplet seems to describe the excellence not only of love, but also of the lover. By describing the excellent, ethereal, subtle nature of the lover, it says that the love too should be of an ethereal and subtle nature. Sexual love however much one may extol it, is linked with the human body. Since the body is certainly not ethereal or subtle, but material and hard, the love that is linked with it cannot be considered subtle and spiritual. What is subtle and spiritual is assuredly far more excellent than what is material and sexual. All this seems to be conveyed by the words நுண்ணியர் எம் காதலவர். The reference is obvio usly to God the supreme spiritual lover of men. It is note-

worthy that the renowned commentator பரிமேலழகர் calls him காணப்படா நுண்ணியர், i.e. the invisible subtle one !

This thought is further emphasised by the other words of the couplet - கண்ணுள்ளின் போகார், and இமைப்பின் பருவரார்.

The previous couplet had spoken of the uninterrupted nature of the love for the beloved. Taking the eyes as the chief revealers of love-as is usual in the world of sexua. love - this couplet continues the thought of the previous one and says that the subtle Beloved never departs from the eyes, கண்ணுள்ளின் போகார், which really means that he never departs from the heart. A highly exaggerated note is then struck to express how highly ethereal the Beloved is. It is said that He is so subtle that my winking- at which eyelids close for an instant-does not cause Him any pain. Obviously it is not any physical pain that is referred to here. It is some mental pain or pain of heart.

Since the beloved never departs from the eyes, i.e., from the heart, she expects the lover to keep Her always in his heart, never for a moment to forget Her (as said in the previous verse). If the lover were to forget even for a moment, the Beloved would feel it. But God the 'beloved' knows how feeble in mind and heart we his creatures are. He knows that we do not have a perfect and uninterupted command over our thoughts, and therefore, there are moments we do forget him-that is we, as it were, wink, in forgetfulness or even in negligence. But the infinite Good which is God is so good to his poor creatures that He does not take it amiss, or suffer pain of heart on that account.

1127.

The couplet runs :

My love doth ever in my eyes reside;

I stain them not, fearing his form to hide (Pope).

As is seen, the thought of the previous couplet is continued further in this. The Beloved is residing all the time in the eyes i.e., in the heart. I am always looking at her with the eyes of my heart. I do not want to do anything from which may tend to conceal Him to me; which may prevent my perpetual gazing on Him. The reference is to the custom of woman using what is called அஞ்சனம் on their eye lids. This is done, it seems. for beautifying the eyes. The beloved here says, I shall not paint my eyes thus, for fear I may lose sight of my lover, be it even for a movment!

1128.

That 'the eyes' in the previous couplets really referred to the heart is made amply clear in this. It says :

As *my lover is in my heart*, *I* am afraid of eating anything hot, for I kuow it would pain him (Drew).

Again, another exaggerated way of saying that *nothing* absolutely should be done which may grieve the beloved, even in the smallest degree. Hot foot, it is said, might give discomfort to Him. Probably it is a way of saying that nothing wrong should be tolearted by lovers, for what really paints the heart is only evil, under any form, even the smallest! For it goes against all that is love and goodness.

1129 & 1130.

These couplets speak of the unfavourable comments made by people, regarding the beheviour of the lover, when two lovers are yet on the way of the realisation of their love — drama.

Unperturbed uninterrupted love is not somethieg which is achieved at the very s art of this love — drama. There cannot but be a few ups and downs, either on the part of t he lover or of the beloved.

'I will not wink, knowing that if I did my lover would hide himself', says couplet 1129. In other words : I shall aim at on uninterrupted experience of love with my 'lover', says the beloved. But the lover may appear a bit 'indifferent to her. People immediately may construe this as a describtion and say ''Her love estranged is gone!''(Pope's Tr),i.e. Her lover has become a strangar to her. But the beloved, who is always experiencing the love personally unknown or unexperiencod by the observer, asserts:No,my lover dwells ''in my heart with perpetual delight''. He is not gone out of me to dwell outside, as it were! All this may or may not happen in the case of all human lovers or, if it happens, it may not be so very pronounced!

In the case however of lovers one of whom is God, this does happen practically always, especially if a person desire vehemently to attain to the full and perfect lova for his beloved—God. This full and perfect love is not achieved easily; it is something for which one has to put up, at times, a heroic struggle. There will be moments when the Beloved—God—seems to have deserted the lover. Or it may happen that the lover gets disgusted, after a period of personal struggle, and gives it all up, At such a time their will not be wanting remarks like this: Your beloved is gone! He no longer cares for you!'' etc. They do this, not realising that genuine and deep love is achieved only after hard struggle and pain. God too does not always come with his immediate grace and help to make everything light and easy.

This sort of thing happens, especially, to people who, for instance, decide on changing their religion and accept, say, Christ and his religion. They will usually undergo an agony. At much a time we see how relatives or friends comment! Perhaps the author of Thirukkual himself had such an experience. Perhaps it is that which he has hinted in these couplets!.....More research may bring out the truth.

CHAPTER 114

When, as explained above, people make unfavourable comments, even stinging remarks, regarding the way this whole drama of love is progressing, lovers might be upset; they may even feel the biting shame of disappointment,etc. But true love must overcome all - even this 'shame' or disappointment. This chapter speaks of this aspect of the love-drama. It is entitled :

Treatise on getting over the 'Shame' of Disappointment.

1131

Extremely trying could be the disappointment and the 'shame' of disappointment or even possible failure in these love-advances which the lover makes. What is he to do when that happens? In what is he to take comfort? What could sustain him in such a way as to gain victory at the end?

This couplet says that the disappointed lover could find comfort only in what is called மடல். It is translated as the 'palmyra horse'. By riding on this palmyra horse the lover can find strength for his disappointment.

What does this riding on the palmyra horse மடலேறுதல் mean?

This refers to a very ancient - perhaps quaint - practice prevalent among people who perhaps were not greatly cultured, as some commentators remark.

The disappointed lover used to bare his body, smear ashes all over, wear a garland of the plant called எருக்கம்,

hold in his hand a picture of his beloved, fix his gaze on it and observe a sort of fast, in the sight of the people of the village to which his beloved belongs. The elders of the village see this and ask him if he is prepared for the 'test' which is usually used on such occasions, in order to prove the genuineness of his love. If he declares his readiness, they prepare the figure of a horse, out of stalks of palmyra leaves, which have sharp, saw-like edges. On this 'palmyra horse' they make the lover sit and drag him around the village. If the saw-like teeth do not hurt the rider in such a way as to make him shed drops of blood. the test is said to be successful for him. The 'beloved' is then given to him. If any blood oozes from his body due to the cut of the saw-like teeth, he is said to have failed in the test. It is possible that this curious and rather uncivilised custom was not actually in vogue in the ancient Tamil country. The author is here alluding to it in order to say how strong is love; and how the lover deems it nothing to undergo any kind of test or pain to gain his beloved.

What would this mean if we speak of God as the Supreme Lover and Beloved? It would mean that the lover must be prepared to undergo any suffering in order to make God his 'beloved'. There is, however, no question of God despising or rejecting the lover's advance and effort to obtain His love, - as it may happen in the case of human lovers. What does happen is that God does not respond *at once* and grant the enjoyment of His love immediately. He will show Himself apparently indifferent to the lover, but only 'apparently'. This is done in order that the lover may seek him with greater insistence and desire. For God is not like any human lover. His love is incomparable to anything known, and therefore it should not be bestowed, especially in its fulness. for the least desire shown by the human lover- Hence He permits the lover to suffer. When this happens, the 'comfort and strength' that He can derive could be the 'palmyra horse' of pain and shame which he has to bear. The pain itself becomes a comfort at such a time. Because the thought that one is suffering in orde

to obtain the supreme good, which is God and His love, can become indeed comforting.

The 'shame' of riding the palmyra horse could be the disgrace and humiliation which an earnest seeker of God (especially if he decides to accept Christ!) often has to pass through.

1132

The previous couplet spoke of the comfort which the lover could obtain when things do not succeed as expected.

This versicle says that in the strength of that 'comfort' the lover should not hesitate to expose his body and life to any pain, be it as terrible as the above described 'palmyra horse', not minding the shame and disgrace which it would involve.

The idea is that we should be prepared to sacirfice all-even our life-for the sake of the immense good which is God's Love.

1133

The male is usually known for his ஆண்மை, i.e. virility and manliness, which will not easily brook defeat, especially at the hands of a female known for weakness and delicate nature. But when disappointment in love occurs, however manly and virile one may consider himself, he has to set aside his virility and stoop-even to undergoing such a humiliating trial as the 'horse' in question. In other words, there is no use of boasting of one's virile nature or of its strength where love is to be attained. Love is a greater power than all. If the love to be obtained from a woman could be so strong, what should be the power of the Love of God! To gain it one should not hesitate any humiliation. For love of God is worth any humiliation, because there is nothing more precious or more glorious that.

1134

This versicle seems to combine the ideas expresed in the previous ones. It compares the disgrace and 'manliness' with a raft in the midst of a rushing stream. The raft will not be able to resist the force of the current and will be carried away. So, too, 'Love' is like a strong current. No consideration of disgrace or manliness will withstand it. They will be swept away in it. In other words, the lover will not care for the disgrace involved in riding the horse (i.e. in undergoing humiliating trials) nor will he worry about his manliness. He will willingly sacrifice it in order to obtain the *love* he is after.

If this is true of the lover hankering after the love of his beloved (woman), it is much more so when man begins seriously to seek God. All obstacles are swept away in the mighty current which is God's love. If a woman's affection and love could be compared to a strong current, far more can the love of the Supreme Lover!

1135

Pain and sorrow usually become more intense as the evening hours approach and darkness sets in. This pain may be doubly greater when it is the result of disappointment in love and is followed by a certain disgrace and discomfiture. This couplet says that "the 'beloved' instead of giving me joy and pleasure, has only brought a darkness into my life!"

Something similar would be the feeling of a person who with all his heart is seeking God, to obtain His love; but it seems to be far off. And the Supreme lover — God — does not *seem* to be quick in responding to the soul's earnest search and to bestow upon in the blessing he is seeking. On the contray, He seems to be giving it even pain of heart: instead of bringing light and comfort to his soul, He seems to bring it darkness and sorrow!

1136

The previous couplet spoke of the pain and sorrow intensified as darkness approaches. This versicle says that the pain continues even into the late hours of the night. Normally midnight brings on deep sleep, but in this case the lover keeps on thinking of his beloved and of the 'horse' he is getting ready to ride for her love's sake. It is the usual restlessness of the true lover.

It is the same of those who are deeply in love with their God, the Supreme Lover of men. They will have to rest till they attain the goal. The lover may be thinking of all that he would like to do or to suffer in order to obtain this Love! Day and night do not make any difference for those who are truly in love!

1137

The lover, we see, is making great efforts to gain the love of his beloved. But the beloved does not seem to be worried about it. *He* is ready to undergo even a trial, like the riding of the palmyra horse! But *she* never thinks of doing so!

It is known that this 'palmyra horse' is not meant for the woman; *she* is not expected to run, as it were after the lover; it is only *he* who has to do so! So, what ever happens, the woman never has recourse the 'horse and this is the special excellence of the beloved'. There is nothing greater than the *female* who possesses this excellence.

This may be true, in general, but is it true in every case? Have there been no cases of girls who have had recourse to something like the 'horse' in order to gain the lover!..... This sort of thing is probably more frequent in these days of promiscuous living and permissiveness. It may indeed have been a disgrace in the past. Can we say that it is so nowadays?

On the other hand, if we speak of God, there can be no question of His 'riding the horse' in any sense. The human lover rides the palmyra horse in order to show that he must somehow possess his beloved, because without her his life is meaningless or unhappy. God does not do so in that sense. He desiresto possess the human lover not because he is necessary for Him, but sheerly out of love for him, in order to give him real happiness! Man does not easily take to God, the Absolute, Invisible Reality, and therefore God, as it were, goes out of His way to take to man, with the sole purpose of making him truly and eternally happy with a happiness which is perfect and absolutely satisfying. The words பெண்ணின் பெருந்தக்கது இல் of this couplet are verified absolutely only in God.

1138

The previous couplet had asserted that the woman is rather strong in controlling her sex urge. Not so easily would she run after her lover. But this couplet says that there can be occasions when even *she* may externally manifest her urge as well; And when she thus loses control of herself, she fails to realise that her lover could be a person of perfect character and therefore it may be really difficult to overcome him. She may also fail to realise that by thus openly exposing her love, she may give the impression that her lover was not so truly worthy of her love! Because, by prematurely manifesting in public her sex - urge towards her lover, the latter appears as one to whom she gave herself though he may not have been so worthy after all !

There need be no such fear when it is God, the Beloved. His love needs to be manifested in public so that his creatures may be attracted to Him. It may be a disgrace if a woman's sex-urge comes out in public. It is no disgrace if God's love-urge for man comes out in public. Not only is it not a disgrace but the greatest act of love and graceful manifestation !

1139

This couplet is translated as follows by G. U. Pope :

There's no one knows my heart, so says my love,
And thus, in public ways, perturbed will rove.

These words are supposed to be said by the beloved (the woman). Whether this be true of the human beloved or not, it is most certainly true of the divine Beloved, God. A human heart, after all, can estimate the love of another human heart. But no human heart can ever fathom the depth of the love in the heart of God! God can certainly say of men that "there is no one knows my heart". Man fails, in fact, to realise and appreciate God's love. And so- It (as it were) 'in public ways, perturbed will rove, i.e. show itself in every way possible It is 'perturbed' because so many human beings just do not care for Him or His love, to the eternal damnation of themselves. We cannot easily picture God, the Supremely Unperturbable and absolutely self-sufficient Being as perturbed! But speaking in human language, we can surely say that God loves man so much that He is disturbed when man suffers some damage thereby but because man would suffer the greatest damage if he goes on refusing His (God's) love. Love is essentially that : it cannot suffer anyone to come to harm or pain.

1140.

The meaning of this couplet seems to be this: people who have not experienced tha pain which we (lovers) have experienced in this search for love,do not think it unseemly to look at us and laugh at us in our very face!

It is a way of saying emphatically that those who want to achieve true love, must be prepared for any kind of insulting comments from others.

If this is true of the drama of human lovers, it is far more so of the love-drama in which what is gained is not just ordinary human (sexual) love but the infinite divine, spiritual, supreme, Love of God!

CHAPTER 115

Biting Remarks of People

As the love—drama between two lovers progresses, there comes a stage when people come to know of the stealthy contacts between them-may be secret *rendez-vous*. and begin to make unfavourable or even biting comments about the whole affair.

This is what is called அலர் in this chapter. This could be translated as "rumour-mongering.

1141

When such rumour-mongering stars, the lovers usually become more determined than ever to achieve their goal. The 'rumours' or the stinging remarks, far from inducing them to desist from their objective, only strengthen their purpose. For love, if it is true and deep, is not discouraged or frightened by any adverse happenings. On the other hand, true love is only deepened by these. Pain suffered by the lover for the sake of the beloved cannot but strengthen the bond. Often, however, people (the rumour-mongers in this case) do not realise this truth. And that is a blessing through in disguise, to fhe lovers.

This is far more so, when we are on our journey of attaining to the love of God. It is particularly so if we speak of love as understood in christian thought. The grammar of love in Christian thought is that love is proved by suffering for the beloved, as God showed his love by suffering for him. This is the whole life of Jesus Christ. And this love, proved by suffering, is all the more strengthened and perfected by suffering.

The lover here says that the rumour mongers stooped to such behaviour not realising the beauty or goodness of his beloved. This may be true to an extent of the human beloved. But it is infinitely more true of God. For it is certainly in ignorance of God's greatness, beauty, goodness and lovability that people run down those sincerely and earnestly seeking for Him! Is it possible for anyone to know and realise God's beauty and splendour and not themselves go after Him in all earnestness,-far from discouraging or 'teasing' those who do so?

1143

What the lovers have been able to achieve till now is only a sort of close acquaintance, a familiar gaze, a pleasure of union from a distance, as it were. They have not yet come to a real embrace! At this stage already those mischievous rumours have started and insulting comments have been made. Though a real embrace and union have not yet taken place, these harsh and painful rumours give a pleasure, as though a perfect union and embrace has taken place. This thought is a sort of continuation of what was said in couplet 1141, It was said there that those humiliating rumours help only to make love stronger. Here it is said that, as a result of love becoming stronger, the pleasure derived from it also becomes greater. Though the longed-for embrace is yet to come, what the rumour-mongers do seems to make the lovers feel as though that union has already come!

1144

The same thought is further stressed in this verisicle. The stress is on this, that the rumour-mongering is not only to be tolerated, but even welcomed, in as much as it contributes to the growth of true love. Love would lose some of its power and splendour if everything went on smoothly, if the unpleasant rumour - mongering did not take place. It is therefore desirable.

If we have to say this about the perfection of human love, what should we say about the perfection of divine love? If pain and suffering is needed for the growth and perfection of true human love, it is for more so for the growth and perfectin of divine love, it is far more so for the growth and perfection of divine love. Love of God without some suffering does not have all the merit it is expected to acquire.

1145

"The more man drinks, the more he ever drunk would be:

The more my love's revealed, the sweeter 'tis'to me" (Pope).

The previous couplet spoke of the desirability of my love being made public, though it carried with it a certain 'mongering' This couplet adds that the more my love is thus revealed, i.e. made public by those rumour-mongers, the sweeter it becomes to me. The reason is the more they speak of my love, the more do I become strengthened in it, and that brings with it a certain increase of sweetness. The comparison may sound rather crude,but a good one. Love, especially strong love, inebriates the soul, i.e,makes it as it were 'drunk' in a more one enjoys it!

This is verified in a far more wonderful way when the love in question is the love of God!

1146

This couplet speaks of the rapidity with which this rumour-mongering spreads everywhere. It may well be but once that the lovers met and exchanged looks of love. That is enough for rumour-mongering tongues to wag! The example is obvious enough. When there is an eclipse (of the moon), it does not take much time for the whole world to come to know of it.

What does this imply in regard to our love for God? It may mean that it does not take much time for people to come to know a person deeply in love of God: one who is busy doing those acts which be speak this love.

1147

When rumour-mongers commence their nefarious propaganda against *her*, her mother naturally comes to know it and would have reas on enough to remonstrate with her. But this further intensifies her drive. This couplet says that if the rumour-mongering may be compared to the manure which contributes to the fertile growth of plants, the reproaches of the mother could be compared to the *water* needed for the growth of the plants. Neither the people of the village nor the relatives; nor even her own mother can do anything to quench the love that has already taken possession of the heart, Far form quenching, they even contribute to its fertile growth, preparing her to leave even her own mother to get married to her lover!

If for a human lover one is prepared to sacrifice the love of even one's mother, what shall we say about the love for God? Here the words of the Bible can be recalled. Christ says : Anyone who loves his father of mother or any relatives more than me, is not worthy of me. For God is above all, even above one's own mother. He deserves all love, above every love. If people or relatives or even parents stand against a person giving himself totally to loving God and living for Him, it should only help him to grow in it; it should help to make the love of God deeply fertile.....

1148

Another comparison is used here to say how powerfully this rumour - mongering contributes to the growth of love. You cannot extinguish fire by pouring oil into it! So too you cannot extinguish love by whatever mongering one may indulge in. One of the traits of love is that it compels one

to vindicate itself. John loves Mary. Someone makes a rather bad remark about Mary. John is not going to swallow it, even if the remark is justifiable. He will try to find a hundred explanations or justifications to vindicate his beloved. This vindicating spirit may even be intensified as more evil rumours are spread. A time may of course finally come when the lover may become disillusioned about the whole affair. For no human lover is infallible or impeccable, Even serious lapses can occur.

No such thing, however, can ever happen when the Beloved is God. And so, no one can ever monger rumours about Him. And if anyone decries the soul's earnest effort to attain to His Love, the understanding love can only treat it as one more 'goad' of love. The more one runs down the lover, the more will he find *Love* desirable.

1149.

When lovers meet, even at the very beginning of their love, the lover, especially, does not hesitate to promise solemnly to his beloved in words like these: ''I shall never abandon you. I am absolutely committed to you! Do not fear on that account''. But it may happen that he disgracefully abandons her. When that happens,how could she hold up her head in the presence of those people who were following this drama?We said above that she had no reason to be disturbed or ashamed by what those rumour-mongers were doing. But now that the lover has shamefully deserted her, there is ample reason for shame indeed!

In relation to God we often do the same - viz, we solemnly promise Him that our love for Him would never be shaken. But so often we disgracefully abandon his love, for a paltry pleasure derived from something else. That is what is called 'sin'. So often we do prefer the love of some thing or someone even to the love of the Supreme Lover. When that happens, all those who were 'mocking at the soul's devotion to God, would have indeed a double

reason to 'mock'. How terrible would that be, and how disgracefull.

1150.

This couplet could be construed thus காதலர் யாம் வேண்டும் கௌவை எடுக்கும் இவ்வூர், தாம் வேண்டின் நல்குவர். It would mean : we lovers not at all upset by the rumour-mongering which the people of this village have been indulging in. In fact, we are happy about it. We want it, because it helps our cause. How? Now that matters have reached such a stage, if the people of the village who are fully aware of the situation make up their minds to approch the parents of 'beloved' (the woman) and speak to them and petition them on our behalf, we are sure they would consent to give their daughter to the lover.

How does this apply to God the Beloved? There is no need for anyone to approach Him on behalf of any lover. (There can be no question obviously or approaching His 'mother'). He is ever desirous of giving himself to his lovers, if they but seek him earnestly. The couplet may imply the truth that while so much fuss and hub-bub is made over a young woman 'taking to' a young man, here is the Supreme Lover ever offering Himself to all men, to be possessed and enjoyed.and how few are those who care for this offer! The author may have intended in this couplet to invite all men to consider how foolish and 'small'-minded they are: how earth-bound and carnal they are, and take a bold and generous step towards the Supreme Love which is God,not minding any obstacle, any sacrifice involved,any pain to be borne.

These *seven* chapters, the first section of இன்பத்துப் பால் in this Treatise on love, constitute what is called களவியல். This word may be translated *secret relation ship* between lovers. The secret or even stealthy dealings have been specially described in the previous two

chapters-but the whole section is in relation to these *secret* dealings.

These dealings may be considered as initial efforts or a sort of preparation for the public and official relationship in marriage. Hence this section can be termed *Preparation* (for marriage), while the section which follows (from chapters 116 to 133) can be called *Union* (in marriage). It is called கற்பியல் which can be translated as a treatise on *chaste union* in marriage.

PART - II

CHAPTER 116

பிரிவாற்றாமை

The Agony Of Separation

After the many obstacles described in the previous chapters, finally the lovers are united in marriage. Before marriage there was one kind of separation: viz. a separation caused by the fact the lovers *could not come* together in close embrace of love, for marriage had not yet taken place and there were obstacles preventing or at least delaying marriage.

Now, at last, after all the obtacles were surmounted marriage takes place, But again separation also takes place. This separation, however, is of a different type. Before marriage it is a separation preventing union; after marriage it is a separation after enjoying the union necessitated by the circumstances of life and its preoccupations. However much one may desire to be with the beloved, uninterruptedly enjoying the union, necessities of life demand spearation, sometimes for short periods, sometimes for longer ones. It may be due to business, employment or other similar avocations. It may be the daily absences during the day, or it may be for days together for away from residence. It may even be a question of war in a far-off country with all the risks this will necessarily carry with it. When such a separation occurs, the beloved is left alone and that is agony enough! This agony could be so great that it may be reflected even in the body, and the body manifests certain symptoms of pain and suffering. Sad

memories may keep coming and going as each day darkness falls, the agony usually increases; there may be a great deal of expostulations with oneself! A great desire for re-union is experienced at such times.

There could also be a third kind of separation which can happen even when the lovers—husband and wife—are not separated but reside at home. This separation may be called a 'separated of mind or heart'. It is not really a separation but a sort of feigned indifference to one another: it can be also an exaggerated misunderstanding of certain actions of one or the other: usually it is misunderstanding on the part of the wife of some actions of the husband. This does not really 'decrease' in any Way the love which is there: on the contrary it only increases it, with the result that when there is final reunion, the joy becomes all the more pronouuced and perfect.

All these various situations are described in this II section of இன்பத்துப் பால் in 18 chapters.

How is all this applied when one of the lovers is God Himself? Is there, too, some sort of "marriage" between God and the soul? Is there separation? Does it cause similar situations and agonies as the ones described in these chapters? Does it finally lead to the joy described in the final chapters of this section?

A study of these 18 chapters will provide the answers to these question. But before we begin this study, chapter by chapter, the preliminary question to be answered is whether there is, or can be, such a thing as a marriage between God and the soul. The answer is Yes. How is it understood? If marriage is nothing but a union between two person:- man and woman - there can be nothing strange in our asserting a marriage between God and the soul. For there is nothing strange in God and the soul becoming united in mind and heart. Such an union will mean after all that man wills only what God wills and loves only

what God loves. It also means that man's knowledge in some mysterious way becomes similar to the knowledge which God has in Himself and of Himself. Union is verified when there is such a perfect conformity between God's will and man's will, between man's desire and God's desire, and between God's knowledge and man's knowledge.

Such an union of mind and heart is to be verified even between human lovers. For marriage is not merely a union of two bodies but of two personalities of two minds and hearts. It is because often marriage is understood purely as a union of two bodies that there are complete separations or dissolutions of marriages. For however much bodily union may bring an initial satisfaction (which may even seem complete)sooner or later a certain dissatisfaction creeps in. For bodily union is not perfect and fully satisfying: it is the moral or spiritual union (i.e of mind and heart) that is fully satisfying. Man was made for something far greater than the sensual or sexual union. He was made for the enjoyment of a spiritual union, imperfectly in this life and perfectly in the next, when God's spirit and man's spirit become perfectly one. This perfect union of God and the soul is often spoken of, by saints and holy persons, as the spiritual marriage, i.e. marriage of God and the soul. This marriage is not fully and completely understood or realised as long as we are in this world.

The first 'taste' of this spiritual marriage is experienced, we may say, after the initial efforts and experiences described in the previous section. களவியல், which, as was said, is a preparation for the marriage.

Now, we take it that the union between God and the soul has taken place and a spiritual wedded life between God and the the soul has begun. This wedded love, however, is not one continuous enjoyment, as we shall see in this II Section.

This chapter (116) in fact commences with the agony of separation soon after the wedding.

Couplet 1151

This couplet speaks of the leave-taking by the husband from his beloved, let us say, as mentioned above, on some business tour. The wife tells him something like this: "If you are thinking of leaving me, do not speak of it to me; speak of it to someone else. If you want to say something to me, let it be of not leaving me. It won't do to tell me: 'I shall return soon.' You may tell that to those who will be alive when you return. I will not be alive then! ..."

It is a strong way of saying: "I shall not be able to survive your departure: you won't see me alive when you return! So strong, she wishes to say, is my love for you, separation even for a short time will only bring death to me."

In spite of the exaggerated expression, the thought is certainly true, when there is strong love between lovers. Whether there is always such a strong attachment to each other is another matter.

It is, however, not impossible to find such a love, at least in some cases.

Now, how does this apply to God?

First of all it may be necessary to remind ourselves that in this II Section God is considered as the Bridegroom and the soul as the Bride. It may be remembered that in the previous section (களவியல்) God was pictured as a most attractive feminine beauty attracting humanity to Himself just as in this world of men and women it is the female beauty who attracts the male and not vice versa, as we have explained elsewhere. This initial attraction by God is absolutely necessary because otherwise the creature (man) will never attain this union with God. Once this

initial union which may be likened to marriage, takes place God has to assume the role of protector and master towards the soul, just as after marriage the husband has to be the protector of his wife and the head of the family. After marriage there is no question of who has to attract first, etc. Both have to be mutually attracted at all times. Similarly, after God has brought about the initial union with the soul, God and the soul have to continue to foster mutually the love that has been established, to go on perfecting it and making it reach the final goal which is indissoluble union in eternity.

Considering, then, God as the 'husband', the question will arise: when does God go on business or other avocation, thus separating Himself from the soul?

Obviously, the idea of comparison should not be carried too far. In the case of human lovers the separation is physical; it is a bodily separation. Such a separation is not to be thought of in the case of God and the soul. In their case the separation is purely spiritual. It means that the soul is unable to experience the 'nearness' of God. This inability is chiefly due to the fact that as long as man lives in this world, God will always 'appear' far away, because the full experience of his nearness is reserved, by its very nature, to the future life. This life is meant to be used for tending towards Him and for union with Him, whereas the next life is considered as the 'home' (வீடு) as has been explained elsewhere. There is no sense in saying that one should experience the joy proper to this 'home' before actually arriving there.

And so there is a sort of distance or separation. There are also other reasons why man experiences this spiritual separation. One such reason would be this: if man experiences continual joy of this presence, the love which is to be achieved would not grow. For it is only when such painful experiences take place that love has growth. As has been said before, love does not become perfect except

through pain, disappointment and suffering of one sort or another. Separation is one of such pains or sufferings.

There can be other reasons too. The many faults, even sins, which man may knowingly or unknowingly, out of natural weakness or out of negligence, commit, become indeed obstacles to attaining full love. These by themselves make the person feel that God is far away. For sin separates God from the soul, inasmuch as it spoils or even destroys love. The soul has to go through all-these unfortunate experiences in order to become strong in love. This strength in love is possible if the soul, realising its misery, hopefully turns to God and prays for a renewal of His love in her.

The 'separation' therefore, here mentioned is to be understood mainly as the temporary, unfortunate condition of human life on earth where nothing full or perfect or final is possible. It is a certain experience of absence of God or a certain spiritual loneliness.

But there is something very important to be remembered regarding this so-called absence or separation from God. It is not really an absence of God. For God can never be absent from his creatures. It is only a sort of experience of absence. In other words, God Himself makes the soul feel deeply His absence by making it feel some pain and inviting it to seek for His presence. It is a kind of 'hiding' on the part of God. Hence saints have prayed to God crying out to Him from the depth of their hearts.

> "Where hast Thou hidden Thyself
> And abandoned me in my groaning, O My Beloved!"

This sense of separation from God which the soul experiences may gradually grow and at times may become very sharp. If the soul continues in this search for the Beloved (God) and goes on bearing all the pain that may

intervene, sometime towards the end of this earthly life the longing for God can become so great that it may amount to a sort of 'death'! The agony of separation can become so terrible that the soul will not be able to bear it any longer. Then it is that the soul might say, in the meaning of this couplet (1151) "I shall not be able to survive your absence any longer. Do not leave me at all".

Obviously such a state may not be verified at the earlier stages, but this versicle seems to speak about it here-proposing, as it were, how intesely should be felt the absence of the Beloved!

1152

Before the marriage, even at the stage of fhe 'preparation' when there were stealthy meetings, when their eyes met and when their hearts throbbed for each other-even at that stage, it was a joy for her to have a look at the face of the lover. It was a loy of anticipated union. But now, though they have already come together and are united in marriage, looking at *his* face is becoming painful, because of the impending separation! The joy experienced before marriage seems preferable to the sorrow experienced now, though there has been union in marriage already. it is a way of saying emphatically, how great is the pain of the separation.

Applying this to God, we can say that there is great joy, even at the beginning, when the first advances are made to God for his love! Even the least act of seeking God and his inestimable love brings a great joy to the human heart. And when the appropriate moment comes, God gives His love to be specially felt and experienced. There is a sweetness in that experience which, however, passes away. God as it were, separates from His beloved, i.e. a dryness of heart and pain is felt once again. When this happens the pain felt seems doubly sharper because of the sweetness experienced earlier. Hence the soul

earnestly begs God not to leave her: as the beloved begs of her lover not to go away from her.

The soul may compare this separation to the bitterness of death, if the union has reached a certain high degree. Because, the greater the union with God, the greater would be the pain experienced if God 'appears' to have gone away from the soul. I say 'appears' because God never really goes away from a soul that seeks Him sincerely. He may, by his action, permit the soul to experience a certain pain; the pain we may call, of separation; with a view of making the love, which the soul has shown really strong and perfect. Remember the strange philosopy of love: that love thrives amidst pain!

1153

"I shall never separate from you" — this has been the off-repeated promise made by the lover to his beloved. One may expect that he realises what this promise implies. One may also expect that he realises well enough what pain such a separation, if it takes place, sholud cause his beloved. And yet, a time comes and he separates! Where have disappeared his 'realisation' and his promises? How can one truly trust such promises? .....

This is the thought expressed in this couplet. As one can see, it is a strong expressed of the grief, suffered by the beloved at the departure of her lover. It is not that she is doubting his love, but out of great sorrow she appears to speak harsh words!

Such sentiments are possible also where there is this agony of separation between God and the soul.

1154

The idea expressed in this couplet is very similar to the one expressed in the previous one.

In the circumstances described above the beloved complained: How can one really trust such promises made by the lover. This couplet adds: And if one trusts, the fault is not with the one who trusts! It is with the lover who-made the promises!

The beloved is expressing her grief in various ways. A soul that deeply feels the love of God does something similar!

1155

This versicle says: If you would save my life, prevent the departure of the one who has been set spart for me (that he may live with me and for me!): if he departs, union again may become practically impossible. The words are obviously addressed to someone. It could be to anyone around, in order to get some comfort! In Tamil literature of this type the one who is supposed to be around for the beloved (woman) languishing with love, is her girl-companion. Commentators usually take such words as addressed to her தோழி.

Who could be taking the place of this தோழி when the soul languishes for God? It could be creatures around or someone intimate from whom some comfort could be obtained by expressing its inner grief. It could be the spiritual guide mentioned early in this treatise who is supposed to be guiding the soul to the summit of love!

The soul is thus trying to find a way of comforting herself. It knows however that as long one lives on this earth this agony of separation will not be lacking, since full and final union is not for this earth but for heaven.

1156.

"If in spite of all this agony which I am undergoing for love of him-from whom I am loath to be separated even for an instant, he is so hard-hearted as to leave me and go,

then I have but to give up all hope that he would return and give himself and his love to me'' - this is the idea of this couplet.

If he is not able to realise my agony now, what hope is there that he would do so afterwards when he is away from me? One more expression - a rather desperate one - of the great love in her heart!

Such a fear may on occasion be actually verfied in the case of human lovers. It is not impossible for the lover to go after another, at the place where he has gone on his work, etc. and settle down with her there itself. It does happen like this at times. Human love is so fickle, so mean and so unsettled.

Such a thing, however, can never happen in the case of God the Supreme lover. His love for his creature is absolutely certain and steady. He never abandons his creature, unless the creature abandons Him.

1157

The pain of separation described in the previous couplets reaches a stage when it becomes public and every one around comes to know it. It is not she who speaks of it to others. The very condition of the body will reveal it, says this couplet. The great pain suffered has affected the body too; probably she is unable to eat and drink: as a result the body has become thin and emaciated: the hand wearing bracelets has become so thin that the bracelets easily slip from the wrist. Perhaps a little exaggerated! But that is the way the beloved wants to express her pain.

Whether such situations arise or not among human lovers, there have not been lacking great saints-few perhaps-who did not consider it too much to fast and practise extra-ordinary austerities-even physical - in order to gain this inestimable good which is the love of God.

1158

In all this love-drama the presence of a good girl companion (தோழி) is a great comfort. She can soothe the aching heart of her friend when she is in an agony of love. It is something indeed when everything seems so dark and dreary. It would be far worse than the separation from her lover if even this comfort of a தோழி were absent.

Something like that is true also of the love-search for God. There are bound to be moments of great mental agony, of darkness and pain. At such moments the presence of a friend-a great lover of God, a saint-could be a great comfort. A spiritual guide could also fulfil this role of friend and comforter.

1159

The idea expressed in this couplet is similar to the one expressed in couplet 1104.

Ordinary fire burns only when it is touched. The fire of kamam (or the pain caused by kama) burns when one goes away from it.

Here the word 'kamam' should be understood more as a 'burning desire' than as a lustful feeling. Lust is also likened to fire, but of far greater intensity is the desire to possess the beloved. Hence it is called a 'burning desire'. This desire and its 'burning feeling' increases rather when the lovers separate than when they are together. It is indeed something strange that when the lover and the beloved are together no great intensity of a burning desire is experienced. It is only when they separate that such intense emotions are experienced.

This experience is far more true of lovers, one of whom is God Himself. In this case there is no nearness of any sort as in the case when two lovers are bodily near to

each other. It is always an apparent 'separation.' I say 'apparent' because God is never far from any one. The nearness or distance is only according to the lover's desire of love to possess Him. If this desire is intense then God is very near, though the nearness is not felt as in the case of human lovers. If the desire is not too intense God may be said to be rather away from the soul. If there is no desire at all, then God is certainly far away. The nearness or otherwise here is to be measured according to the nearness of hearts which is the same as saying intensity of love.

Also, in our relation to God it happens that at times when we have a great and intense desire of love for Him, He 'seems' rather far from us. Because we do not always experience the (physical) emotion of love, God, too, does not by his power make the soul feel this experience. He permits it to feel, as it were, cold in relation to Him. This is only that love may become more perfected as per principle already enunciated. Love is proved and perfected in pain and suffering. And often too, when we imagine God to be far from us, our hearts may be quite close to Him and internally-without our physical set up experiencing anything-enjoy the fire of His love.

The fire of love, especially for God, burns, therefore, more than we realise when the soul and God seem apparently separated from each other and a certain spiritual coldness of heart is experienced.

1162

This chapter commenced with a strong protestation by the beloved that she would simply not be alive to receive the lover if he returned after separating from her. So strong was her love for him that her life would no longer be in her once he separated from her.

Various aspects of this agony of separation were portrayed in the subsequent versicles. After all those

protestations of love comes this couplet which says in effect: in spite of all those strong protestations, so many of those 'beloved' are still alive, even after the separation of their lovers.

What does the author want to convey by this comment, which sounds a sort of anti-climax? Probably he wishes to say: Do not be so easily misled by all these over-exaggerated expressions on human love and lovers! When compared to what the love of the divine lover (God) is, what human love can give is just trash. It is all like a big balloon which bursts at the least prick. Do not pay too much heed therefore to all this. Consider how much more worthy is God of our love. Aim at reaching that ideal. There have not been many lovers who have given their lives for the love of their beloved. There have been innumerable lovers of God, who have shed their blood for their God and his friendship in preference to all that the world could give them. This is actully a great part of the history of the Christian Church. Those who know anything particularly of the early ages of Church will know about this.

CHAPTER 117

படர் மெலிந்திரங்கல்

As the pain of 'separation' grows there is bound to be a certain reaction of the pain on the body as well. This may lead to the body becoming lean and emaciated .....This is a 'wasting away' with grief-a pining away or languishing.

This chapter may therefore be entitled: *Pining away with grief.*

1161

''I would fain hide my grief from others, but it is all the time 'furging up' like a rich spring which only swells as one goes sn drawing from it''.

When one is in pain, one usually feels a little comforted by speaking of it to others with the hope of 'sharing' his pain with others. But when one is deeply in love one does not feel bold even to manifest it to others. In any case, in such a deeply personal matter there can be no question of sharing ones pain witn others. And so the beloved has to keep it all to herself. And this only Increases the pain.

Something very similar happens also when one cultivates love for God. There is nothing more personal than one's earnest search for this love. One cannot easily speak of it to others. For one thing, there may not be many who will even appreciate it. There may be those who may even ridicule it. For few will be those whom one may call kindred souls who may understand it. But even if such

kindred souls are found, it is so very delicate to speak of one's innermost personal experience of God's love. And so it is best to keep it to one self. This naturally leads to a certain increase of pain. But this increase is all to the good. For, in its turn, it increases love, as in the principle already enunciated, Love grows amid pain. Thus it becomes like a rich spring which brings up more water as one goes on drawing from it. Pain hidden in this context is actually drawing from the rich source which is pain. For it is this pain which enriches love.

1162

The previous couplet said that it was scarcely possible for the beloved to hide her pain from others. This couplet says that she could not possibly do so. At least there is one from whom she could not hide it. It is her own lover. But as soon as this thought comes to her, she feels the *shame* of it. She probably says to herself something like this : "How could I so bluntly reveal it to him? Would it not betray a great weakness on my part? What will he think of me?" Some sort of 'shame' takes hold of her.

This may be true of human lovers. Seeking the natural satisfaction from one another is not without its 'shame.'

But no such shame need be felt when the human soul desires to tell her beloved, God, the great pain and grief she is experiencing at the separation which exists between Him and her. In fact that is the only way of attainivg it at the end. There is to be no shame here, because here it is no ordinary bodily satisfaction. It is totally a spiritual divine joy that the soul seeks, which God alone can bestow. In fact it is for this that man was created.

This couplet therefore seems to say; ordinary human lovers may experience a certain shame in revealing their need for each other. There is no need to experience this where God is concerned. Because all the glory of the

creature is to experience the need for God and seek his presence and love.

1163

The extreme *pain* of separtion and desire to be united (which is called காமம் in this couplet) and the *shame* felt in revealing it to the lover are telling upon the body and giving it great agony. In this state ''my life is, as it were, vacillating between the ends of a porter's pole (காவடி) on both ends of which are hanging heavy the above mentio ned two burdens-viz, the pain and the shame''.

As one can see, it is a further expression of the grief experienced between the soul and God, when the former is greatfy in love with God.

1164

This love-grief is compared to a veritable sea (காமக் கடல்) ''but there is no vessel by which I can cross it'' mourns the beloved. When love increases to great depths experience of grief also increases to such an extent that the soul feels it almost impossible to overcome it. Again a strong expression of grief!

1165

All the grief which is given expression to in the above couplets, is should he remembered, is not caused by some one in enemity, rather by one who is deeply in love and in intimate friendship. In fact all that grief is suffered because of the background of friendship and love. Now this couplet says ''If my lover could give me so much pain being in love with me, what would it be if he were my enemy?''

Obviously it is only a way of saying emphatically that even love can cause pain, but it is a pain that can be suffered with a certain feeling of joy, because finally it brings perfect joy and satisfaction. Whereas pain caused by hate

can never bring any joy: it can only aggravate pain and suffering.

1166

The word காமம் in this couplet should mean the *pleasure* derived from the union of the lovers. It is as greast as the sea. This only means it is immense. But when separation comes, the pain experienced is greater than the sea. It is a way of saying it is far more than the joy experienced from the union. The idea is; when there is union the pleasure is great indeed. But when there is separtion the pain felt appears far greater than the pleasure previously experienced. It 'appears' so, because we are so prone to an experience of joy, that even the slightest displeasure or pain seems an enormous burden to bear. It is partly due to the 'sting' which pain has in itself and partly to the great, weakness which we all have, viz. a weakness for the pleasurable rather than for the unpleasurable.

What is experienced in the natural human plane is experienced also in the super-natural plane, i. e. between God ard the human lover. When God makes his joy-giving presence felt we experience great joy: when that 'presence' is not felt and we think we are, as it were, separated from God the agony of that sense of separation appears far greater than the pleasure experienced earlier.

1167

This versicle is a sort of 'correction' of what was said in versicle 1164. There it was said that there was no way of swimming across the sea of காமம் i.e. this love union which appears like a veritable sea. There was no help (vessel) for attempting to 'cross' it.

In this versicle the beloved says something like this: Though I could not find a help(vessel) to swim across this sea of love, I made up my mind to attempt it, considering that the goal was worth it. I therefore venrured to do it,

but do not seem ever to reach the shore, (i.e. to reach the goal of perfect and lasting union). I seem to be swimming all alone. Even in the deep hours of the night I have to be doing this lonely swimming. It would have been something if my lover could give me, as it were, a helping hand (by making himself present, at least now and then). But he seems absolutely unmindful of my loneliness and agony, thus leaving me all alone to my fate.

Let it be noted that in the drama of human love, it is not possible for the lover to make his presence felt to his beloved, when he is far away. No human being has that power. But when we speak of God, the Lover, it is definitely possible, for Him to make His loving presence always felt by his creature. But He does not do so. Only at times He makes Himself present. This is done because an uninterrupted enjoyment of the divine presence is not of this earth: it is altogether a characteristic of a life with God, in heaven. Moreover a certain experience of this spiritual separation from God is necessary for the strengthening of true disinterested love for God. And so God often permits His poor creature to suffer bitter 'loneliness'. In those moments man may imagine that he will never reach the shore of true happiness. But in the plan of God it is when one thinks one is far from God one is very near to Him, provided one perseveringly seeks for God's love and union. An ardent desire actually means a nearness to God, though one may not 'feel it'. In fact one cannot ardently desire God's love unless He is mystically present in the soul.

1168

This couplet is a further comment on the 'loneliness' of the night. We know that 'loneliness' is most felt in the dark night hours. It is indeed dreadful to keep awake, in pain and sorrow, while others (more fortunate lovers who perhaps are together) are in full enjoyment of union. "Even animals have a perfect rest at night, but this night which gives them rest seems to give me only restlessness". That is how the beloved languishes.

Such a loneliness - aggravated at times - is the experience of all genuine lovers of God This loneliness become a very 'dark night' to them God may appear to have practically abandoned them and so the loneliness is felt all the more. The poor soul may turn to others - to other creatures but they too seem unconcerned about its woe. To its mind, the entire creation would appear happy and contented, while it alone is restless and unhappy.

This sort of experience is actually called by writers on Divine Love "The dark night of the soul".

1169

When there is experience of joy, time seems to pass too quickly: when there is sorrow, it seems never to pass. That is a common feeling and experience. This is true also in the case of lovers. When they are together the joy experienced seems all too short. When there comes the separation, the pain experienced never seems to end.....

When God makes his presence felt, the thrill and consolation seem to last but a short time. When thereafter He withdraws that 'presence', the pain seems to last for ages.

1170

This couplet is translated thus: "Could mine eyes travel like my thoughts to the aboda (of my absent lord) they would not swim in this flood of tears" (Drew).

The meaning is obviously this: "If my eyes could travel so fast as my thoughts, I could make myself present to my lover, see him face to face and experience the joy which I seek. But my eyes are not able to do so, and so they can do nothing but shed tears".

Does the author want to say that what the human lover cannot do, the lover of God can do? The human lover cannot be with his beloved when he or she wants, i.e. can-

not be physically present, but only mentally, whereas the lover of God can enjoy the presence of God which is totally spiritual and interior when he wants. It is by thought that one can be truly present to his beloved. Even in the case of human lovers it is not merely the bodily presence which brings joy, but rather the thought of the beloved. In the case of God, such a spiritual mental presence is always possible and therefore the joy can always be experienced if one's mind is properly attuned. The presence of God in the loving soul is something extremely enjoyable if one's thoughts are properly concentrated on Him. Moreover, the more one thinks of God the more God makes his presence felt. This is not possible in the case of human lovers. It is quite possible that one of them longs for the beloved with all the power of his/her spirit and the other remains cold. God immediately realises ths love of his creature: whereas the human lover cannot realise it in the same way. One may even remain indifferent while the other yearns for the partner.

The idea that seems to be emphasised in this couplet is that love primarily consists in the thought, in the heart; and this is verified more in the case of the love of God than that of human lovers.

CHAPTER 118

கண் விதுப்பழிதல்

The title can be explained as : *Grief caused by the urge to see the lover wirhout and further delay.* The previous couplet spoke of the eyes 'swimming in tears', because they are not able to travel as fast as thoughts in order to join the lover.

This chapter is an elaboration of this grief symbolised by the tears. We have seen how, from the very start of this love—drama the eyes are playing a vital role. The couplets in this chapter described repeatedly the pain caused by these eyes, though in the beginning they seemed to give great joy.

The 'beloved' as it were, speaks to the eyes: it is only a way of manifesting her reflections.

"*In the beginning* of this 'drama' you (my eyes) showed him to me, and now you are shedding bitter tears. (1171)

"*Then*, you looked at him without realising what the consequences would be and *now* you are steeped in sorrow" (1172)

"*Then* your look was so sudden, i.e. you looked at him even before realising what you were doing, and *now* you are grieving that you are not able to see him. (1173)

"As a result of this I am now left with this love-sickness of mine. I cannot even weep. My tears seem dried up! (1174), they cannot even take some rest and

sleep (1175): indeed they deserve this suffering for having brcught about this mental illness on me (1176); in those days these eyes of mine helped to foment my love for him with increasing ardour, but now let them suffer! (1177)

"What were all those protestations which he made in those days when we first met? He did protest that he would never forget me, that he would give his life for me, etc, etc. After all that what has he done? He has left me to my sorrows. And so my eyes are restless! (1178)

"Indeed my eyes are restless. They close in sleep neither before my lover returns after the long separation, nor when he is with me after his return. Before his return I am in anguish as to when he will be returning and on that account my eyes refuse to close in sleep, After his return I am afraid to lose him if he again intends to go on some work or other and that takes away sleep from my eyes. (1179)

All this anguish and pain I am not able to hide from others and that is also a cause of further pain. (1180)

As we can easily note, all this is grief expressed in a variety of ways, taking the 'eyes' as reflecting it.

Now, is this applicable to God? God's eyes, i.e. his look of mercy and love, in the beginning, does give great joy and consolation. This first experiecnce of God may be said to be symbolised by the first meeting of the looks of the lovers. But the thrill of that first look does not last always. Soon there is a certain dryness of spirit, a certain coldness of heart, a certain feeling that God is far away and thus great pain of of heart is experienced. The soul is puzzled by the thought of that initial experience of joy and the consequent experience of pain. This puzzled state of mind seems to be the purport of the varied expressions of grief portrayed in the couplets of this chapter.

CHAPTER 119

பசப்புறு பருவரல்

The Pain caused by the pallid, sickly hue of the body of the beloved

This may occur, perhaps, in some extreme cases where the beloved is pining away for her lover, and suffers therefrom extraordinary grief. It is not impossible for the spirit of a person to act on the body and cause it a certain 'reaction' It is also possible that this பசப்பு is something which may appear on the body when the full satisfacition of bodily union is desired. This is being described in a variety of ways by the couplets of this chapter.

1181

''To whom am I to reveal this my anguished state, in order to get some comfort? It is not something which I can easily speak about to others. For it bespeaks my extreme hunger for bodily union and that is somewhat shameful too. The only person to whom I can posibly refer this is my own lover, and he is far away and I had to consent to his going away from me''.

1182

This 'sickness' seems to tell me: It is your lover who created me and told me to ride over you, as it were, i.e. to spread on your body. I can scarcely answer this challenge.

1183

'My lover has left me with this ardent (sexual) desire and this pallid sickly hue caused by it: and has taken away with him the beauty of my body and the shame I am feeling.

In other words: "I am experiencing an uncontrollable sex urge (which is to my shame) ard as a result of this urge I am having this change of bodily colour. Unless he returns these will not leave me!"

To experience uncontrollable sex urge is not without a sense of shame : the beloved says that she is experiencing this shame because her lover has taken it away with him. It is only a way of saying that no sense of shame is now left in her.

Similarly the lover has taken away with him the normal colour and loveliness of the body (skin) and that is why I have this colourless, sickly body.

1184

"In the early stage, when we first met and started loving. I did experience this great longing for him, but I used to concentrate my mind on the words he spoke and boast about his great qualities. This used to quench in a way the ardour of my longing. But now, it is all useless to think of his words, or to praise his deeds; my longing for union does not find much satisfaction in it. The thirst for union is so great that even without my knowledge there comes on my person this colourlessness and sickness. I cannot explain how".

1185

"At one time my lover used to be absent from me only at a short distance. Even that I could not bear. Even on such occasions I used to get this colourlessness. How much more now that he has gone far away from me!" It is a way of saying how intense was her love for him.

1186

"As soon as the lamp is removed, darkness comes on. As soon as my lover departs from me darkness comes into my life". The sickness spoken of in this chapter is here likened to darkness which upsets one badly.

1187

"Once before I happened, on my bed, to loosen myself a little from the embrace of my lover-and that brought on this sickness.

1188

"In all this my indescribable anguish, none blames my lover; no one says,for intance, that he did wrong in leaving me to my misery. They rather mockingly remark that I am impatient and could not wait till he returned".

1189

"So, you mean that my lover is not at fault, and it is I who am at fault. If so, let me enjoy this sickness, let my body suffer this colourlessness".

It is a way of saying : how could one say that he (my lover) is good,after leaving me in this misery. The very fact that I am suffering from this body-sickness is proof that I love him intensely. No fault on my side, therefore. If there is blame, it is only on his side.

1190

"If what my lover has done (i.e. his going away from me like this) is considered alright, then there is nothing left for me but to be fully affected by this 'sickness".

It means that somehow my lover cannot be absolved altogether from the fault of having abandoned me in this state.

As can be seen easily, all these couplets portray in a highly exaggerated manner the love-sickness of the beloved. The climax as: it were, seems to be expressed in couplet 1187. It is obviously an extremely exaggerated expression. There can scarcely be cases of such intense love that the sickness mentioned should come on evan when, in bed,

there should occur a slight separation of bodies, a slight loosening of the love-embrace.

Whether such extreme experiences do take place among human lovers or not, the author here seems to aim at telling his readers that the love of God is, in itself, so great and powerful that it seems a wonder for a creature like man not to be intent every mi ute of his existence on attaining it at all costs. It seems a tragedy that he is so little affected by a loss of that love or even by a slight loss of fervour in that love; since it is that which gives us our very life and is our very happiness. If human lovers could so extol their experiences of love as is done in this chapter, how much more should a sincere seeker of God do so. But alas, man is so indifferent or even negligent! The author would wish to call him to sense, to realise how much more wonderful glorious and beatifying is this love of God, than all that a mere human lover can bestow on his beloved in this loveless world.

CHAPTER 120

தனிப்படர் மிகுதி

The Intense Pain of Loneliness

In this chapter the beloved is giving expression-and at length-to the grief experienced by her, laying special accent on the aspect of loneliness suffered in this state of separation from the beloved lover and husband.

1191

It is only when there is a response that love is enjoyable. Where there is no response there can indeed be no love at all! This response, however, is not always there, and if there is, it is not full, perfect and satisfying. When there is such perfect and full response it may be compared to a fruit which is all luscious and sweet and stoneless. It is altogether sweet and enjoyable. The stony part of a fruit is not eaten, it is thrown away usually. A perfect correspondence in love is something which is altogether sweet and enjoyable.

1192

What was said in the previous couplet is further extolled here. Love-response is here compared to the welcome rain which falls when needed. Such a rain is a real 'gift' to the farmer who lives by it. Love too is a gift by which lovers live.

The comment by M. Govindasamy in his நயவுரை is worth noting :

"If among the lovers a "love-thirst" is lacking on the part of one, there is no life there indeed. The love which the lovers give to each other is a characteristic which may be compared to வானம் i.e. the sky. From the sky drops the rain which quenches the heat. The word 'வானம்' here seems to indicate that 'love' is a grace of the Lord. When there is no வானம் or rain the lover (husband) separates from his beloved for the sake of business or other work. When it rains he returns in order to cultivate his land. It is possible that rainlessness is a cause for the lover to separate from his beloved".

It is worth noting that here the commentator calls love as 'grace' from the Lord. If human love is a grace, how much more is the love between God and man!

The author had said in the very introduction (வான் சிறப்பு) = வானின் றமையாது ஒழுக்கு.

Is he hinting here: வானின் றமையாது அன்பு?

Indeed love between God and man is impossible without grace from Him : it is a great gift of God.

1193

The meaning of this couplet seem best expressed by the translation of S Bharati. He translates it thus: "They alone can be proud of a happy life who are loved with equal intensity by their loved ones." We are dealing in this chapter with the mutual 'response' of love between lovers. If one of the lovers loves intensely, and the other does not return that love with an equal intensity, then there can be no pride செருக்கு of a happy life; it would be a shame and disgrace when there is no response or when there is only a feeble one. Indeed, however much God may love His creature-and he does love it unto folly, giving His very life in sacrifice as Christian doctrine has it. What is "the pride of living" for man, if God's infinite love is not returned? Man indeed cannot boast of anything unless God's gratuitous love is really returned?

1194

It may happen that the beloved thinks of none else than of her lover, though (as explained in the earlier chapters) he may *seem* most indifferent to her by his prolonged and cruel absence from her. And for this *chaste* love on her part she may be praised by others-by the world around her. This couplet says : "What is the use of such an esteem from others, if I do not get the response of love from my beloved."

In the same way 'others' may have a great opinion of you, praise you for this or that achievement or perfection-what is the use of all that unless you return God's love.

1195

"He who is beloved by me, what will he do to me, if I am not beloved by him?" (Drew's trans.) or better, as S. Bharati's translation has it, "If there is no responsive love, love in return, what *favour* can I get from my beloved?"

Doing favours is something which follows love, a consequence of love : "If he does not love me, what favours could I expect from him?" that is the idea. Whether this is verified in the case of human lovers or not, it is definitely so in the case of lovers one of whom is God Himself. Love calls for response in the form of love too! When man returns this love, God showers more and greater favours on him. But this showering of favours should not be understood as one continuous joy-giving benefit:at least not joy-giving in the sense in which joy is usually understood by unspiritual or less spiritual people. God's favours do not always make life on earth one continuous pleasurable and satisfying affair. In God's vocabulary joy does not necessarily mean material joy, ordinary, earthly pleasure. To Him joy is something first of all divine, spiritual, unearthly. It is nothing less than a share in His own in-

finite happiness, which He desires earnestly to give to all those who would respond to His love. A certain human or earthly joy is not excluded from this, but it is not primarily that. And so, when we speak of the favours of God, they are not to be understood as primarily salf- gratifying, earthly pleasures; they may at times assume the shape of pain-giving events which, if accepted, finally blossom into joy-giving flowers and fruit. This is in keeping with the main principle of love often repeated in this treatise, viz. that love thrives only through pain and suffering. God will not and cannot treat his favourites as mothers often treat their spoilt children, i.e. always giving what pleases or satisfies them. He does and must administer at least on occasions, some bitter pill of pain, so that one may not get attached to the pleasure which God gives, but rather to God Himself. This tends to make souls mature and not keep them for ever in a sort of spoilt childhood. It makes them also virile and noble. These pain-giving occasions which come by either God's permission or his postive will, are also *favours* in the mystic vocabulary to which we earth-bound, self-loving creatures may not easily get accustomed. All the same this is an aspect which has to be understood in this whole drama of love of which we are speaking here.

There is also another very important aspect to this. It often happens that the more you respond to God's love, the more the are favours (of this strange type i.e. pain-giving love-generating occasions or events) which God sends to his beloved. The greater the response the greater too His 'favours.' This is what we often notice in the world. Upright and holy men often suffer a lot, while the wicked often thrive! The former are those who are responding generously to God's love and the latter who are not. If this mystrelous mode of God's dealing with his children is rightly understood and appreciated, there would not arise those complaints, against his providence, mercy and love which so often do arise from human hearts, under pressure of pain and suffering. On the other hand this 'mysterious

mode' will not be intelligible nor acceptable unless the whole mystery of Christ and his suffering for man is understood. This will not be unterstood except by those who receive a special light and grace from God.

1196

The same thought as above is further illustrated with an example. The shoulder poles (காவடி) are used for illustration. One who carries these poles should have balancing weights on both ends. If not, the one who carries it will feel it most uncomfortable and burdensome. So too, love not mutually returned does cause hurt, and the hurt is felt geatly indeed.

How does this apply to God and the human soul? Does God ever fail to rerurn love for love, when the creature does everything possible to love Him? In other words, can it happen that the creature does respond to God's love and God does not acknowledge it? No, this can never happen. It is always man who fails to respond to God's love. And that is 'painful' to Him in a way that the human mind cannot comprehend. Thought God stands in no need of anyone's love, being absolutely perfect and happy in himself, still he seeks for the love of his creatures in order to make them happy. That is love's trait, to make others lovable and happy. When man does to acknowledge his creator's love-advance, God's Heart is, as it were, wounded in a mysterious way. We cannot understand how, God can suffer such a pain. But he came to this world as man and revealed to us how He can suffer for very love. What else is the life of Christ but one continual suffering of God, caused by the rejection of his love by man. What hurt his shoulders most when he carried the cross to Calvary was not so much the weight of the wood, but rather the thought that ungrateful man was irresponsive to his love. What hurts most perhaps even in human love, is precisely this unreturned love-the fact that one has to love without any response from the other.

1197

Another 'image' is borrowed from mythology, to further illustrate this one-sided torture of love unreturned. *Kaman* is here used as equivalent to the god 'cupid' in ancient mythology. He is supposed to be flinging his darts on those whose love he wants to conquer. It is here used to mean the male's desire to possess the female's love. The beloved, therefore (the female) says : This cupid aims at me alone; it is a pity that he has no eyes for my pain and pallor.'' (S. Bharati Tr.)

''While Kaman rushes straight at me alone

Is all my pain and wasting grief unknown'' (Pope's Tr.)

If we applied this thought to God who initiates this love-drama between Himself and the human soul, we shall find that (as hinted in the explanation on the previous verse) it is certainly God who 'aims' at the soul, who ''rushes straight'' at him, but seeing that the soul does not respond as expected, it is He who, as it were, goes sorrowing and suffers, ''pain and pallor'' i.e. it is He who is usually the aggrieved party, not the soul. The human 'beloved' may at times have good cause for complaint against the lover : that can never happen in the case of God, the Supreme Lover. It is always the soul which grieves Him.

1198

The idea expressed in this couplet seems to be this; the lover has gone away from the beloved : may be he is really unable to return due to pressure of work, etc. But could he not at least send her a message, to console her and assure her of his unswerving love. He does not do even that. And yet the beloved has to go on loving him. This is indeed hard and needs a great firmness of mind and heart, a great strength of will. This is what the couplet seems to say :

"There is none so firm and hard as a woman who still lives to love him who does not send her a kind message," (S. Bharati Tr.)

This thought may be considered as a sort of invitation to the human soul to stand firm in its quest for God and His Love, no matter how indifferent he may appear in his dealings with it. As has been said more than once in this treatise, God often appears quite indifferent to the suffering and pain of souls. It is not really indifference but rather a device to train the soul to aim at greater depths, to greater effort to love him. If the soul understands this device and adjusts its behaviour, it shows indeed a great firmness of love and strength of the spirit.

1199

In the previous verse the beloved was complaining that the lover did not care even to send some message.....

In this she feels consoled a little at some news of him- perhaps a letter sent.....

She says in effect: my husband does not return to me and satisfy my intense longing and desire to be in his embrace. Yet, he at least thinks of me and has sent me this message -every word of which is to me infinitely sweet!

God does not, as it were, totally forget the soul which longs for him. Though the condition of this earthly life prevents the enjoyment of the infinite sweetness of his presence or converse, his 'word' which comes to me in various forms and circumstances consoles me and gives me comfort. Even in the darkest moments, God never fails to send a ray of light and comfort to the sorely tried soul. It is the common experience of all true seekers of God, that unexpected circumstances turn up suddenly which make one feel God very near. Events or 'news' will not be altogether lacking which give such a joy, even amid trials.

As is seen, there is here mention of some message (word) sent through some messenger.

When applied to God the supreme Lover, this message and messenger are the same-i.e. Christ Himself. He is the 'Word' and he is the Supreme Messenger from God to mankind. He not only speaks the message of love, words of comfort and love : he Himself is the living Word and Message of Love. All that is meant by 'love' is personified in Him and in the sacrificial love which He revealed to the world.

1200

The beloved was a little comforted by the message from her lover. But soon she falls back into the agony of separation. No message could satisfy her heart which longs for the full embrace of love. And so she speaks to her own heart : You have been longing for the love of him who seems utterly unresponsive. Will your longing ever be fully met? Will your hungry heart be ever satisfied? Will your loving heart be ever filled with that fulness of love which you desire? It is as good as trying to fill up the sea itself! As the sea cannot be filled up by any one, so will your heart never be filled up with the love which you want.''

Obviously it is an extremely exaggerated assertion to say that her love is very great. This may rarely, if ever, be verified in the case of human lovers. When however we come to contemplate the Infinite heart of God, and the ineffable mysterious love which he longs to bestow on his creature, we note two facts:

One — that man's heart — being after all small - can be fully satisfied only by God's grace and love: it can be filled with His infinite love, if only creature desires to be truly filled with it.

The other fact is that God's infinite love for man deserves infinite love in return, but man can never give such an infinite response. In other words, God's heart is so great and his love for man so ineffable that it can never be fully satisfied. In this sense it is even more than filling up the sea!

CHAPTER 121

நினைந்தவர் புலம்பல்

This is practically a continuation of the previous chapter, since it describes the feelings of sadness experienced by the lover and beloved in their separation! The lover in the far away place where he was obliged to go and the beloved remaining at home *remember* the great pleasure experienced when they were *togeiher*. Hence the chapter may be entitled *Sad memories* of the lovers.

1201

This verse compares the pleasure thus experienced to that given by liquor (கள்) and says that the former is far sweeter than the latter. It is not difficult to admit this since love (even sexual) is more satisfying than liquor. The former is at least mingled to a certain extent with the pleasure of the mind, while liquor is purely a physical pleasure! For, the verse says, காமம் (i.e. ardent desire or love) gives pleasure even at the mere thought of the lover, while liquor gives pleasure only when drunk. This thought is similar to the one expressed in couplet 1090.

This is more so when we come to God and His love. The very thought of God and his love gives a certain delight which is not experienced in any material pleasure. What affects the spirit of man is certainly more valuable and satisfying than what touches the body. Moreover the former is more lasting than the latter.

1202

This verse practically repeats what was said above. S. Bharati translates it: "How sweet is love in every way! At the mere thought of my lady-love, all sufferings disappear."

G. U. Pope translates: "How great is love! Behold its sweetness past belief! Think on the lover and the spirit knows no grief."

There seems to be hidden in this verse the precious and most valuable thought that *love makes even suffering disappear*, as S. Bharati's translation has it. Indeed 'where there is love, there is no pain, and if there is pain, the pain itself is loved!" This is what St. Augustine, a great saint and scholar said long ago. Where there is great and ardent love, even suffering becomes tolerable nay enjoyable; if at times suffering and pain are felt a burden, love can make it gradually bearable. This is the experience of all great lovers. In fact it is a most peculiar characteristic of love - as we have been repeatedly mentioning in this treatise - even to thrive, amid suffering. It is not only an irrefutable proof of genuine love, but more: it even makes it grow and flourish. This may happen even to human lovers. As for divine lovers-God and the soul-it is a *law* that it be so, since God Himself proved His love for man through suffering and expects in return that man too prove his love for Him by the same means. Hence some sort of suffering becomes inevitable in the life of any lover! especially a lover of God.

1203

It often happens that one feels like sneezing, but finally there is no sneeze. This experience is taken as an example to illustrate the 'anxiety' which often occurs between lovers. A sneeze is taken-with what basis, is not

clear-as a sign that some one near and dear to you is thinking of you! And so, if the sneeze which seems to come, does not finally come off, it may be that the one who loves you may not be really thinking ofyou with a strong affection or love

This verse says something like this:

"A fit of sneezing threatened, but it passed away. He seemed to think of me, but do his fancies stray?" (Pope).

"Perhaps he tried to remember me, but diverted his thought!" (S. Bharati) "My beloved is about to think of me, but does not." (Drew).

A certain inconstancy in love is probably depicted here. This may easily happen between human lovers. It does happen often times even in our relation to God. We prove so often so inconstant in our love for God God, however, on his part Is ever constant in his love for man. He goes after him persistently like the 'Hound of Heaven' of the poet Francis Thompson, unless He is finally and definitively rejected by man. God's love for him is so great that he never wavers in his love for him though we so often do waver in our love for Him.

1204

The same 'anxiety, is again expressed in this verse The beloved says that she is doubtless bearing *him* in her heart, though she is not sure if he is bearing *her* in his heart!.....This sort of 'anxiety' may or may not be well founded in the case of human lovers.

As for God, there can be no doubt that He always bears in His heart his beloved creatures-specially man for whose sake He did not hesitate to become like him a man, and suffer and die for him!.....It is not, however, always the

case that man in return bears God in his heart! He is so fickle-minded, even ungrateful!.....

1205

The same 'anxiety' is again expressed in this verse. It speaks of the lover having imprisoned the beloved in his soul. Having done so he seems rather reluctant or even ashamed to be equally imprisoned into her soul. "I love him so much, but he does not care for me" that is what she wants to say.

The human soul cannot say that of God, the divine Bridegroom. It is rather God who has reason enough to say so! For God indeed loves man, even to folly, as it were but man does not care for him very much.

1206

"I recall the joy I had with him when he was here, and that is what is sustaining me in my agony now". That is the idea of this verse. Thought of the 'Union' once enjoyed can certainly lighten a little the pain of the separation. This however can only be limited in the case of human lovers, because in their case it is the nearness of bodies that is called for. In the case of divine lovers, nearness of the spirit is what predominates. It is possible here to achieve this spiritual nearness and thus experience a certain mysterious joy. The thought of having experienced this mysterious and mystical joy of the presence of God and the love that flows from it, can well be a powerful incentive to bear now the loneliness which is inevitable!

1207

The thought of the previous verse is emphasized here. "The very thought burns me, as it were: what would happen if I f o r g o t it?..... May be I would die?." Exaggerated perhaps. But it is so where the supreme lover

is concerned. Forgetting God's love is 'death' indeed: a spiritual death! The spirit of man lives or must live by the love of God. If it does not, or if it forgets Him what remains is a death of the spirit. Man then is as good as a walking corpse. For what makes man different from all other things is his capacity to love-and especially the grace which he receives to love God Himself! .... If it is not verified, he is worth nothing

1208

The beloved here tries to console herself a little. She says to herself: My beloved is all the while in my thoughts. I am thinking of him all the time. He does not consider it as unwelcome importunity and is not angered thereby. That itself is delight and joy for me, given by my beloved!'' Again a greatly exaggerated sentiment. For in the case of human lovers, one cannot even know how often the other thinks of the other. Whereas in the case of God and the human, God does know how often the soul thinks of him. And if he forgets Him, the divine lover has reason to be disappointed and even angry. On the other hand the human lover cannot know, or have experience of it, when God thinks of him. For God always thinks of, and loves, him. If the soul is 'recollected' and 'attentive' it may at least at times experience the effect of God's thought of him!..... What is expressed in this couplet is almost the opposite of what may happen in the case of human lovers. In their case, the verse says that the lover will not be angry however much she thinks of him: in the case of divine lovers God the Supreme lover is angry because the human lover does not think of Him much!.....

1209

At one time, my lover used to make strong protestations of love saying: We are one in heart! etc. But now he lives away from me. As I think of this, my life seems to

ebb away! This sentiment may in some extraordinary cases be verified. If ordinary human love can cause such an 'ebbing away' of life, what shall we say of the power of divine love! There have not been lacking souls who in their intense longing for God experienced a certain wasting of their physical frame and even of their life. But how few are these! Is there then an invitation to ordinary humans to intensify their longing for God! ''What a shame, the author seems to say, that human lovers can experience such intensity in their love, while lovers of God are so cold and negligent! ....''

1210

The moon is often taken in Tamil literature ro illusrate the beauty of a woman. This verse seems to say something like this: my lover may look at you, moon, and think of me! And so shine on and do not set. At least do me this favour. It will console me to think that my lover is thinking of me when he looks at your shining. When you set, he may forget me! ..... ''It is a highly poetical and imaginative description of the anxiety of the beloved to meet and enjoy the union with the lover.

The soul could well address the creatures around and tell them: At least when I look at you and your beauty, I am compelled to think of God my lover!*

This could be an invitation to all to look at the creatures and learn to love Him!

*Cf. Explanation in chapter 108.

CHAPTER 122

கனவு நிலை உரைத்தல்

LOVE - DREAMS

'Dreaming' is one of the characteristics of 'love' Those who love intensely dream, as it were, even in day time. This 'dreaming' is but an intense thought of, and the consequent desire for, the lover. It may also be while asleep. For what one thinks of intensely while awake usually is ''seen'' also while asleep!

1211

The dream-whether by day or by night-is here considered as 'a messenger from the lover'-since it reminds the beloved of the lover, and brings from him some message of his continued love. The beloved is here considering the messenger-dream as his most welcome-guest and is worried about entertaining him to a banquet. She says: Wherewith shall I feast the dream which has brought me dear one's message?

Obviously one could not possibly give a banquet to a dream! But if the image is transferred to the Divine lover -God-the question: wherewith shall I feast? is absolutely relevant. For the truth is that God is our guest, the guest who takes up his abode in the very centre of the human heart. This thought is quite familiar in Christian Theology. To quote just one sentence from the Bible: ''Any one who loves me, says Christ, will heed what I say; then my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him.'' (Jo. 14.23). The *We* in this sentence is the 'Father and the son', the Holy Spirit being also understood. In other words, the Triune God makes his

dwelling in the hearts of those who love him. He certainly expects a *Banquet* to be given to Him all the time. Obviously this banquet is no ordinary human delicacies, but simply *intense love* for Him. God feasts only on the love which we give Him, and on no other thing.

There is another point hidden in this thought. Giving God this banquet of intense love is no easy matter. God is not easily reached as any human lover is. Loving Him too is not easy. And if it is a question of intense love it is certainly far beyond our human capacity and strength. Unless He Himself provides this capacity and strength, we will never be able to achieve this sublime object.

The fact is that God has provided such a capacity and strength. Before expecting us to give Him a banquet of love, He himself provided us a banquet! — This banquet is nothing less than the body of Jesus Christ, offered in sacrifice. It is not any ordinary banquet, but a sacrificial one அவியுணவு as it is called, prepared by the ஐந்தவித்தான் i.e. Chirst who sacrificed His body for man. With the divine strengtn of this sacrifical banquet man has to practise that intense love for God which is the only way of entertaining this Divine guest of our hearts! There is therefore no need for the beloved to question herself as to how she may worthily entertain the Divine Guest. There is a divine provision for the same already.

1212.

"I am begging my eyes to close in sleep, so that I may dream of my lover. and tell him what I am suffering; but my eyes do not close, and so I am left to myself to suffer." This is what the beloved says in this verse. "Neither day dream nor night dream do I experience, so that I may open my heart freely and intimately to my lover."

She compares her eyes to those of the fish, which never close! Does she want to say that she is endlessly watching

tor the arrival of the lover, in order to enjoy His embrace? May be. But however vigilant and anxious one may descri-be the beloved, her vigilance and anxiety is norhing compa-red to the eternal and loving vigilance with which God fol-lows His 'beloved' creature. What is said in this verse is certainly more applicable to Him than to any human lover!

1213

A vivid thought full of affection may almost make a person beloved present! It is not a physical presence, cer-tainly, but one that brings joy and satistaction to a great extent.

This seems to be the idea expressed in this verse.

Applied to God there is no other way for the creature-man to make God present to himself except by *thinking of Him with love*. This is called meditation or contemplation. Until eternity dawns, this is the exercise of mind and heart which he has to perform to intensify his love for God.

The beloved will not be fully satisfied until the lover returns and meets her in a loving embrace. There is a mee-ting between God and the soul and that is called 'heaven' or 'beatific vision' i.e. an encounter, as it were, face to face, which will fill the soul with ineffable joy and satis-faction.

1214

The above thought is as it were continued in this. In the previous one the beloved one said that she was able to live on because of the possibility of seeing the lover in her dream-thoughts!

In this she says a little more : viz, that she is not only alive but even experiences great pleasure (சுரமம்) at it. And she adds that this happens because she is able not

only to see the lover, but 'seek and obtain him.' Love is at its best only when the loved object is obtained and possessed. This may not exactly happen always in the case of human lovers, especially if they are seperated-as it is supposed here. But in the case of God, it is by the power of thought and force of love that He is obtained and possessed and enjoyed. For love is essentially a matter of thought and heart, not a physical possession!

1215

This verse seems to say,that there is no need to exaggerate the difference in experience when awake and when in a dream. These experiences may be said to be the same as physical nearness and physical absence-as it is the case of human lovers here spoken of. The beloved here says that both the experiences are 'equally pleasant.' (Cf. Drew Trans). In fact, the love and joy experienced are not totally different. Perhaps there may be a slight difference in intensity in the case of human lovers. In the case of the Divine Love-drama, there is immense difference between the joy experienced by the nearness of God through thought and heart in this life, and that experience by the 'face to face vision,' mentioned earlier. The experience on earth is as the Bible says, ''Now on earth we see only puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we shall see to face. My knowledge (i.e. experience of God now) is partial: then (i.e. in heaven) it will be whole.'' (I cor 13.12). All the same it is the same God who is seen ''now'', and ''then'': in fact this earthly experience of God is the beginning of what is to come. In that sense they both are the same!—

1216.

Lovers would very much yearn to be in a dream world, all the time. They would wish that there were no such thing as wakefulness. But life on earth, alas, cannot avoid wakefulness. On earth there can be no such thing as a continual enjoyment between lovers, not only because

a continuous bodily union is simply impossible, but also because one has to attend to so many avocations of life

As for God and His love, as long as we are in this world a continual experience of love for God, is most extraordinary for man: it would be a great miracle indeed if it happened. It is however the normal thing. once this earthly scene disappears and heavenly-godly life dawns. In the life of eternity, the soul which has loved God with all its strength in this world would be so united with God in spirit, that the happiness would be continual and perfcet. In the face of this beatific, eternai, divine happiness, the love of union between two human lovers would simply fade away. For first of all in heaven there can be no such a thing as sexual or sensual joy.... All will be as 'spirits', participating in the supreme spiritual nature of God Himself.

1217.

"My lover is cruel indeed: He does not care for me when I am awake; then why does he torture me in my dreams?"

The beloved is not satisfied with dreaming of love and the lover: though that gives some comfort. She wants union, perfect and complete in person.....

It is easy to understand why the human beloved thinks thus. Their happiness is chiefly in the physical presence of the lover: the joy is chiefly physical and carnal.

But God who aims at uniting Himself spiritually with the soul, why does He torture the soul, by not making his presence felt and by giving the soul the joy and the satisfaction it is thirsting for? There is a profound reason. If God were were to bestow upon the soul the happiness of union there and then, the union would not be so very deep and satisfying as it would be if it were bestowed after a period of trial and suffering. Just as a thing gained

by great effort and pain is appreciated and enjoyed more than something gained without much effort or pain, so too union with God in love and the consequent happiness will not be so appreciated and enjoyed if granted without the soul undergoing a certain period of trial and pain. The happiness of divine union is so great a good that it is worth a serious effort and even some suffering and pain. Hence it is that the soul, in its journey towards God has to go through some sort of spiritual torture! In fact the greater the ardour with which the soul seeks God's love, the greater too the torture!

1218

"In my dreams my lover seems resting on my shoulders in a close embrace, but when I awake I see him hastening into my heart!" It is a way of saying that whatever be the physical and carnal intimacy it is never lasting, unless it is deeply rooted in the heart. Even in the case of married lovers, it is the love uniting the hearts that makes marriage a sacred thing, not the physical union. It is far more so in the case of God : it has to be a spiritual union, or it is nothing.

1219

"They who have no dear ones to behold in their dreams blame him who visits me not in my waking hours" (Drew. Trans) Lovers who do know only of carnal union cannot appreciate moral and spiritual union of hearts. This is much more so in the case of God and the soul. Even dear and near friends, at times do not easily understand the beauty of a spiritual union and divine love!

1220

"The woman of this place say he has forsaken me in my wakefulness. I think they have not seen him visit me in my dreams." (Drew Trans). Visit in dreams is

love shown in a moral and spiritual way. This is not easily seen or appreciated by carnal people. It is the same with people in general who are carnal minded and therefore do not understand the spiritual nature of love especially the love for God!

CHAPTER 123

பொழுது கண்டிரங்கல்

Lamentations at eventide

As eventide comes on, and darkness with it, all pain generally increases. The same may be said to happen to overs.

And so the night is unwelcome!

1221

The beloved addresses the evening and says ; You are not மாலை (=evening) but வேலை (=spear). It is obvious that the word வேலை is used here both for the sake of rhyme as well to signify the sharp pain caused by the piercing of a spear.

A soul that seems to love God earnestly often finds itself lonely-a loneliness which increases in the night hours. We may say the night hours may signify 'dark moments of life, which are never lacking in one's earthy existence. They often become for her a very painful experience; a piercing pain they bceome for the poor soul.

1222

The eventide is again addressed thus: You sad, dark evening, is your hushand too cruel-natured like mine?

It is obviously a way of expressing in an emphatic way the bitterness experienced by the beloved, on account of the separation from her loved husband.

There can be moments in one's life when, in the higher stages of spiritual life, the soul feels the bitterness of separation from God! This may not be a frequent experience, but it does take place. In any case the soul is invited, by degrees to aim at such an experience, because it is absolutely worth-while, since God is worthy of being *longed-for* as an object of love beyond all human love!

1223

Again the darksome and pain-increasing evening is addressed. It comes to this: When my beloved husband was with me, you eventide came, as it were, "with buds of chilly dew" and "wan evening's shade" (G.U. Pope). It is a way of saying that *then* the evening did not succeed in giving the beloved pain or dejection. But "now that my lover is not with me, you, eventide, seem to be coming boldly and give me pain and worry".

Cnilly dew and evening's shade may be taken as figures of a lack of warmth and joy of light and pleasure. It is all cold and unpleasant, darksome and painful when the beloved is absent; it is the opposite when he is present. This thought is brought out making use of the cold or dewiness and darksomeness usually associated with the eventide, especially if the season is winter or rainy.

Once again the soul is expressing the immense pain she experiences without the presence of God. She likens it to the suffering of the human beloved, which is aggravated at certain times.

1224

In this verse there is probably a reference to the battlefied where the enemy is killed. The battlefield thus becomes the field of death (=கொலைக்களம்). The lover is often obliged to leave the beloved on account of war service as, in ancient times, it frequently happened. Now the beloved complains that "field of death" as it were

comes to her own place and she herself becomes a victim of this whole situation. She feels that this eventide i. a very field of death to her, as far as her love for her beloved is concerned.

As is evident, it is once again a highly exaggerated and poetic way of describing her sorrow at the separation from the beloved.

In the spiritual relation to God, souls which feel this separation so intensely are not too many, perhaps, but we cannot say that there are none. All this description is obviously meant to make ordinary humans aim high, immensely high in the realisation of the goal-so sublime, so beautiful, and so beatifying.

1225

Normally 'night' is the time of union of lovers; the 'day' is time of separation since one has to be absent on one s work scmewhere. But now that the lover is absent, evening brings only pain and suffering because there is no hope of the usual union and joy during the on-coming night. Whereas the dawn brings some relief, since the beloved resigns herself to her situation *more* during rhe day than during the night. For the day is of light and joy, while the night is of darkness and sorrow, as we have said.

The beloved therefore says here: Why this difference? Why does the night bring me pain, and why the day more relief? What harm did I do to the night that it should be so hard on me? What good did I do to the day that it should be benign to me?

Again it is a poetic way of expressing the sorrow of separation. The idea hidden is perhaps this : there are moments when the soul feels the presence of its beloved-

God-and is overjoyed by it. And there are moments when-it is all cold and dry-the soul is dejected. When this happens, the soul is apt to wonder : Why this difference? Why at such a time I felt the presence of my beloved-the Lord-and why such other time I was deprived of that joy? It is actually not the *time* as such that has to do with this spiritual experience, just as it is certainly not the day or the night that is really responsiblo for the experiences. It is rather the association of the night time with the actual bodily union that may give rise to this reflection. But where God is concerned it is solely his wise disposition of time and manner for the soul. For He alone knows when and to what extent the soul should experience the joy of His presence, and when she should not. For He is the invisible, wise director of the soul in the ways of spiritual wisdom and experience. What is therefore implied in all this Is that the soul should place inself entirely at the disposition of that invisible divine Director!.....

1226

"Previous to my husband's depature I knew not the painful nature of evening." (Drew Trans).

The idea implied in this is perhaps this: the soul does not experience any pain or suffering until God *withdraws* his *presence* from her. She may feel qnite ecstatic when that presence is there. But God sees that it is not good for the soul to experience all the time this ecstatic joy. This is not only because such an uninterrupted ecstacy is something which belongs to life hereafter, but also because the soul may easily feel tempted to get attached to the joy which God's presence brings, and not to God Himself! Does it not happen, so often, that the lovers love each other chiefly for the pleasure derivable from each other and not exactly for the person itself? This, in fact, explains why so often when the parrner who in the beginning protested eternal attachment to the other, for some flimsy reason abandons him or her at the end!

We should not become lovers merely of the gifts which come from God, but of God Himself This is not always easy to self-satisfy ing human beings, but we have to aim at such a perfection.

1227

The grief of the beloved is here likened to a flower which first buds forth, then begins to blossom and finally shows itself full blown in all its beauty It seems an usual 'simile', but there seems to be a point in it.

The beloved spends the night somehow, perhaps sweetly dreaming of the lover etc. Then the day dawns and together with it dawns (buds forth) once again the grief of separation. After the all-night dreaming this early morning's experience may not be very intense; it may therefore be likened to a budding forth. But then as the day proceeds the grief too increases and begins as it were, to blossom i. e. show itself!.....Finally as the night approaches the grief may show itself in all its 'torturing beauty.' It is 'beauty' because pining after the lover is certainly a thing of beauty-a spiritual one, if you like, but it is a beauty! It is 'torturing' because love-especially deep, genuine love-tortures!..... To one deeply in love nothing can be a greater torture than to be away from the beloved!....

Something similar does happen in our love-search for God. There is a morning there-when the soul begins to desire for God! We may say then, that love is a bud in the soul. As the brief day of earthly existence proceeds this desire grows, if the soul keeps up the search. The evening of life finally comes, when the desire becomes a very torturing thirst for God; and there is nothing more beautiful or splendid than a soul thus thirsting for God! Far more glorious is this divine thirst for God, than that of any human lover thirsting for a human beloved!

1228

There is probably a reference here to the shepherds returning home in the evening, with their sheep, blowing in the pipe some song which is perhaps a bit mournful. This sound falls in the ears of the beloved; instead of giving any joy, it gives her only grief. For it reminds her that the eventide has once again come, with all that it may bring her loving heart! The flute's sound seems to her to be a veritable fiery anguish! Aed so it is a very murderous weapon. it heralds another night of agony.

In our journey to God too there is a 'dark night' i.e. a period of great spiritual agony caused by this separation from God, by the apparent 'indifference' of the Lover towards her. This dark night of the soul may comprise of many nights and days together or at intervals. The ordinary evening which heralds the night could be considered a symbol of the above darknight of the soul. A certain sombre musical sound of the divine Lover's flute may at times fall on the soul and cause or even increase the agony of separation. But the same lover will soon change His 'ture' which may at first sound monrnful to a joyous one. The soul has to wait patiently for it and rely on the divine shepherd.

In this connection it is significant indeed that the Bible calls Christ, the incarnation of God as the "Shepherd" who feeds His sheep and even gives His life for them in order to save them from ruin and misery, from sin and death. God is said to *call* these sheep, singing to them with the flute of His divine beauty the song of his love for them The Bible calls this "*searching*" for the sheep". Here is one of the many passages in the Bible: My flock is straying this way and that, on mountains and on high hills; my flock has been scattered all over the country;no one bothers about them and no one looks for them ....I am going to look after my flock myself and keep all of it in view. As a shepherd keeps all his flock in view when he stands up in the middle of his scattered sheep, so shall I keep my sheep in

view. I shall rescue them from wherever they have been scattered during the mist and darkness.....I shall look for the lost one, bring back the stray, bandage the wounded and make the weak strong. I shall watch over the fat and healthy. I shall be a true shepherd to them." (Ezechiel 34, 6, 11, 12 and 16).

This 'call' to the sheep i.e. men going astray, if heeded, is ordinarily bound to bring a certain pain and sorrow; because once God's call to his love is accepted and followed- other things becomes bitter! The soul finds this bitterness at times unbearable, as the beloved here is described. Only in the final and perfect union with God is the sorrow and pain lifted once and for all. Till then it has to go on struggling with one's own heart, as it were, in order to attain perfect union.

1229

This verse seems to say that when the beloved undergoes the agony of separation at eventide (as described in the previous verses) it is not she alone who suffers, but the whole town or village suffers with her. This seems exaggerated, but perhaps it is meant to convey one of the following thoughts:

a) There are many in the village who are in the same situation and therefore undergo the same kind of agony. Thus the evening time casts a sad gloom all over.

b) She is so much in love and therefore so much in pain that many people in the place share in her grief; and thus the eventide becomes a cause of gloom to them also.

Perhaps the thought implied is this: that in the soul's journey to God, there may be many kindred spirits who are motivated in the same way and therefore suffer the same kind of agony. Or it may be that a particular soul is so much love for God that she has to suffer much for love is nurtured and proved only by suffering! - and there may be people who feel for her very much.

1230

"This dark evening and night with all its agony could well have taken away my very life! It has been so very severe! Yet I have survived! But now the thought keeps coming to me whether my lover really loves me! He has gone on a job to earn some wealth, and that seems to be keeping him where he has gone, without a thought for me languishing here! How long could I survive this agony! And this life of mine which did not leave my body by the tortures of the darksome night, might well leave now-since my lover seems to have forgotten me entirely and seems to be intent more on earning money than on my love!"

This seems lo be the trend of thought expressed in this verse. The phrase பொருள்மாலையாளர் world indicate that my lover has at it were, became identified with wealth (பொருள்) மாலை means இயல்பு. It can mean simply-become identified with.

It is obviously an exaggerated expression of her love for the lover. Indeed it may happen among human lovers. The divine Lover, however, would never identify Himself with anything earthly. What may be indicated here is the truth that the soul should never for a moment imagine God to be less loving towards her, even when she does not care for Him. This is an attribute of the Divine Lover, and no human lover can come anywhere near it. Infinite love is such that even where there is no love at all on the part of of creature, It goes seeking for it. However unloved, God yet loves His creature. This is something which man, the very personification cf selfishness, can never fathom!

CHAPTER 124

உறுப்பு நலன் அழிதல்

Wasting away of the bodily members

This chapter intends portraying the sad effect of the intense languishing (described in the previous chapters) on the very body of the beloved. Immense grief or pining away for a loved object can and does have a 'wasting' effect on the members of the body as well.

This 'wasting away' is described as usual in an 'exaggerated' fashion.

First the 'eyes!' They are said to be ashamed to look at fragrant flowers, at the thought of the absence far away of the lover (1231). Formerly, the flowers were considered to be ashamed to look at her, for her beauty as it were put in the shade the very beauty of the flowers. Was her beauty, then, caused by the lover's presence-a presence which gave her a fulness, one that brought out her beauty in all it splendour!

Again it is the eyes. They were discoloured and shed tears profusely and so became wan with sorrow, as if to say that the lover did not care to give her love, though she was so earnest in having it. (1232)

The arms and the shoulders come next for comment. The 'shoulders' are considered as the limbs which give special pleasure to the married couple. Note the phrases தாம் வீழ்வார் மென்தோள்..... தோட்டார் கதுப்பினாள் தோள்— அமிழ்தின் இயன்றன தோள்..... etc.

The arms are not dissociated from the shoulders. Perhaps they form one single 'limb', to produce the exquisite pleasure obtained in union of lovers-when they embrace etc. On the day of the nuptials these limbs limbs as it were, 'swell' with exuberance and pleasure. But now that the lover is away they, as it were, lie limp or withered! (1233).

Moreover the same arms have now become so thin and wasted that even the armlets seem to slip off from them. All the wonted charms were gone! (1234)

The arms thus 'wasted' with the usual beauty of bracelets all gone, do they say that the one who, by his separation from her, has caused all this is indeed a pitiless one! (1235).

'But then, almost at once, she tells herself,' How can I call him pitiless or cruel, simply because the armlets of mine are slipping off? (1236).

''Could you not, she tells hersetf, gain some glory- by telling him what I am suffering due my fading shoulders? (1237).

''In those days I could embrace him with my arms and heart! A little loosening of the embrace at that time could not be tolerated. It brought on immediately a pallid hue to the beloved! How then is he bearing this terrible separation and for so long?''-this seems to be the thought of the lover now, who is himself portrayed at this stage as greatly worried for his beloved! (1238)

This thought is continned in the following two verses. They describe, of course, exaggeratedly, the indescribable oneness exyerienced in the embrace above mentioned. it was so one that not even a breath of breeze could penetrate the embrace (1239); but now this separation has changed her whole being into a mass of pallour, i. e. misery and sorrow.

This languishing and wasting away might appear as sign of a person immensely in love. It may be. But when we come to the soul's relation to God and the love she is invited to cultivate and attain to, it seems to be just the first step in this divine journey.

The saints have so understood it. To quote one or two, (St. Bernard and St. Thomas) here is what they teach:

"The first degree of love makes the soul *languish* for God. On this the bride (i. e. the soul) says in the Bible: "i adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him that I languish with love. "(Song of songs). The soul here faints away as to sin and all things whatsoever that are not God"..... .....

"As a sick man loses the desire for, and the taste of, all food, and the colour vanishes from his face, so the soul in this degree of love loses all pleasure in earthly things, and all desire of them, and, like one in love, changes its colour that is the conditions of the past life. The soul does not fall into this langnishing state if the vehement heat descends not into it from above, which is the mystic fever. That languishing and fainting away as to all things - it is the first and earliest step to God-I have already explained, when I spoke of that annihilation to which the soul is brought when it begins to stand upon the ladder of contemplative purgation when it finds no comfort, pleasure, nor support anywhere."

('Dark Night of the Soul', St. John of the Cross)

The sickness and fainting etc. mentioned here is mostly of the 'spirit', but there can be, and is, often, a certain reaction of the spirit even over the body. Lives of holy people have amply demonstrated this.

CHAPTER 125

நெஞ்சோடு கிளத்தல்

The Soliloquy

1241

In the midst of the 'agony' above described, the beloved speaks to herself-her soul or heart, saying: ''Could you not suggest to me some remedy for this grief Incurable?'' It is merely an expression of a desperate situation!

1242.

''My lover is not concerned about me: of what use then, my heart, is your taking it seriously and suffering thereby?'' The heart it is which suffers when no love is returned. And so she tries to console it!

1243

Why are you so worried, my heart! There does not seem to be any thought on the part of my loved one to return to me and satisfy my longing! Let it be noted that this may happen sometimes in the case of human lovers. For human love is so fickle and it is not impossible that the husband who has gone on job finds another 'beloved' and adheres to her there and not return at all!

Obviously such an eventuality cannot happen in the case of the divine lover. He may delay His return i. e. delay manifesting His love to the creature and making it taste it, but will never abandon, unless the creature abandoning in love with some 'other' creature: for all creatures are

His and He loves all and invites all to enjoy intimacy with Him, having promised to 'espouse' all who accept Him and His love.

1244

The beloved is here making an impossible demand of her heart She says something like this :

"You, my heart, are all the time *going* to my lover i.e. you are all the time thinking of, and longing for, him! Why don't you take these eyes of mine with you, when you do -so? Because they are so anxious to look on him that they are torturing me and, as it were, almost eating me up."

In our spiritual journey to God the divine lover there may not often be verified such intense longing for God. But if we allow our heart to go after him, it will indeed do so with all the power of its spirit. The 'eyes' may be understood as that 'spiritual vision' which is needed for such a longing after God. it is because our physical eyes dwell too much on this world's material beauties, we do not succeed to "run" after God with all the longing of our heart, though it has been made for God and it will not rest until it rests in Him. So St. Augustine prayed:

"You have created us, O God, for yourself, and our hearts will not rest until they rest in you."

The eyes of our heart too are anxious to look on Him in his divine splendour, but we do not allow them to go their way. We have been created to have a face to face vision of God, but that will come only if we long for it, (as the beloved here does) and work for it with all the power of one's mind and heart.

1245

The beloved had said earlier (1242) to herself: "Since he is not worried about me, it is folly of me to suffer for him!" Now she corrects herself, as it were, saying : "How

can I abandon utterly him who, though I long for him, longs not for me?'' (See G.U. Pope's Tr). It would be against genuine and deep love, to give up love at the slightest set back. It is by going through many set-backs and worries that genuine love is proved. This is even more true when it is a question of attaining to divine love. It often happens that God seems indifferent to all the soul's earnest lorgings for possessing Him. The soul should not then be tempted to give up or break with him. The indifference is only apparent. It is meant do deepen the soul's longing for God, and therefore the more this apparent indifference the more also should be the soul's effort and longing to possess him.

1246

This couplet seems best translated thus: ''Your anger is false, O my heart, for when your meet your lover face to face, you rush to his embrace.'' (S. Bharati). Such a 'false anger' seems a common experience among lovers.

There is something like that even among lovers one of whom is God Himself, as explained earlier.

1247

Two conflicting feelings are spoken of in this versa-i.e. longing for the lover and a certain shame in such an experience which women usually have, An ardent desire (ஆசை) for union with the husband is often felt by the woman as something of weakness and hence a sense of shame overtakes her.

In this frame of mind she addresses herself (i. e. her heart); ''Give up either the longing or the shame. How can both go together? When there is an ardent longing for union how does a sense of shame help?''—

There can be no such sense of shame when it is question of longing for God. A strong urge for sexual pleasure

is certainly not a sign of great spiritual strength and therefore it can be something to be ashamed of. Whereas a strong desire for union with God is a proof that one has transcended material pleasures and is therefore a proof of great mental power. Moreover God is not like a woman, in that He is infinitely more excellent than her and all worldly pleasure. Union with Him is something infinitely excellent in itself and therefore worth longing for! There is then nothing to be ashamed of here; on the contrary some thing to be supremely proud of!

1248

"What a fool, you are, my soul! On the one hand you think your lover has become hard-hearted and therefore he is not likely to feel for you, return and give you the pleasure you are longing for: but on the other hand you are longing for him and are continually, at least in spirit, going after him!"

Love is foolish, it is said. It does indeed many foolish things with the hope of attaining it somehow.

Love of God, especially profound love of God, does inspire saints to do all sorts of things which the worldly ones consider as foolish. But this foolishness brings them the very wisdom God and together with it the attainment of life's goal.

1249

"Don't you realise that your beloved is within you O my soul! Then what is it that you imagine him to be far away from you!" Lovers often protest that they live *in* each other's heart. This is true of human lovers only in a limited sense. It only means that the loved one is in one's heart only by affection, fervent thoughts and ardent love. This we usually call union in spirit. There being a physical material body on either side there can be no full compenetration i.e. ona cannot be *in* the other fully and perfectly!

But if we speak of God the divine Lover, he can fully penetrate the human body as well as the spirit and take up his abode in another person. Man too, though in a limited way, can penetrate the heart of God in an imperfect way in this life and perfectly and completely in the next life It is in this sense that Christ has invited his followers to abide in him, saying : "Abide in me and I in you!" God being a pure spirit, can trully penetrate the human person and take up His abode in him.

If regarding the human lover it can be said, as in this couplet, "Why do you seek your lover, when he is in your heart?", it can be said with far greater truth : "Why do you. O man, imagine that God is far away, when He is within you!"

When suffering overtakes us we are tempted to complain: "Wny has God abandoned me? Where has He gone away!" This is really not true, for He is nearest to the soul, when He appears to be farthest It is only human ignorance and weakness, as well as lack of complete faith and confidence in God, that makes one feel this sort of absence of God. We should try to get over this lack and ever cultivate the experience of the nearness of God.

1250

"Why do you go on. my soul, worrying yourself to death about your lover who seems so indifferent to you? Even your badily members have lost something of their beauty by your worrying thus; do you want to lose more of it?"

Does the author here intend saying that a human lover, however great his or her beauty aud lovability, does not deserve so much worryiug about. After all, it is so very limited and uncertain.

Why don't you then, the author seems to say, learn to worry with all your might, about the unlimited and absolutely certain beauty which is God! It is after all not worth losing your body's vigour and beauty, on account of an ordinary human lover. It is certainly worth doing so if it is God the divine Lover! Why don't you turn your attention towards him.

CHAPTER 126

நிறையழிதல்

Reserve Lost

Between lovers there should be no reserve in their personal and intimate relations. But a certain reserve is always expected in their giving exterior or public expression to their innermost feelings and experiences.

The beloved here, does not seem to observe any reserve at all, no account of the exuberance of sentiment on the one hand, and on the other of a certain sense of keep disappointment and the consequent grief in being thus seperated from her lover.

The verses will explain how the limits of reserve are being transgressed. The word நிறை is here to be understood for வரையறை i.e. limit.

1251

In this verse காமம் i. e. the ardent desire (lust in its vehemence) is compared to an axe; and நாண் i. e. reserve or restraint or sense of shame to the bolt used to lock a door; and நிறை i. e. the observance of limits (in the giveing of expression to one's sentiments) to the door itself..... The couplet says that காமம் can become an axe breakings the bolt and lettihg the door open. In other words one should not allow காமம் to destory the reserve or restraintr or balance which should never be lacking In such delicate matters.

Is such a 'reserve' needed also in our relation to the Divige Lover? Can there be a limit to our love for God? Is

not God worthy of limitless love and therefore should not God be loved without any limits - above all things and in preference to all other loves. Christ has given the precept : You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind and heart,with all your strength!'' i.e. withour reserving something either to yourself or to another creature, however excellent it man be in itself! It is almost an axiom in spiritual life to say that the limit for the love towards God is to love Him without limit!

''Let there be a iimit to human love, therefore, the author seems to say here, and let there be *no* limit to your search and realisation of the love for your God!'' It is a warning and exhortation to sex-minded man that he will do well not be over-worried about human love: it would be infinitely better to use the natural ardour and thirst for human love to attain divine love: to transform the hu man into divine, by learning from experience to ascend to the transcendental from the ordinary, human natural love!

1252

What people call 'love' .seems not to have eyes at all. Eyes naturally close in sleep at least in the depth of the night. But my eyes do not know sleep at all and are busy even at the dead of night looking for my lover. This 'love' does not give me rest at all.

'Having no eyes' can also be taken to mean simply 'blind'. In that sense it would mean that my love is blind, irrational. It does not allow me to keep a certain 'balance' in my lifel It worries me to such an extent that I become quite senseless!

Indeed a great deal of human sensual love is senseless If one knows not how to evaluate it!

Love where God is in view can never become senseless- even if one were to go to extreme lengths. Because God

deserves all that and more. "Be sensible, the author seems to say, do not kill yourself for the sake of a little human love which finally leaves a terrible void in your heart. Aim at divine love; it is so highly reasonable, holy and worthy attainment-and so satisfying!"

1253

"I would much wish to forget this 'love', but all on a sudden it shows itself like a sneeze which comes without a warning!

Love, if it is to be true, should be reasoned, balanced, and deliberately practised! When people speak of 'love' it is mostly 'lust' given an honourable name! It is lust which erupts often into action; before one is even aware of what is going on, one falls a prey to it, and even commit serious sin!

Love for God is no sudden eruption, it is something which has to be deliberately thought out, appreciated and fostered.

In lust the senses act all on a sudden, because they are immediately moved to action, as soon as some beautiful object appears before them. In the case of God no such sudden movement is ordinarily verified, since He is invisible and beyond the comprehension of senses. He can only be perceived with the mind and loved with interior understanding.

1254.

"I tell myself I would maintain a balance in my longing for union with my lover. But I find my inner urge betrays me in public."

The difficulty in keeping the required balance in sex-urge is here expressed.

Where the Divine Lover is concerned the same difficulty is experienced in that we do not know how to maintain the proper balance in our love of creatures - wealth, friendship, comfort etc. These are not forbidden but undue attachment to them means we do not give God what is due to Him. For we cannot love anything in the world more than God - not even one's own dearest and nearest. Christ said emphatically;'' Any one who loves even his own father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me.'' For it is in the very nature of things that we should esteem and love God more than anyone or anything whatever which may attract us or towards whom we have a duty, as in the case of our parents etc.

This maintaining of balance in our love of God and love of other objects than God, in proper proportion is not an easy thing for any one.

1255.

It would indeed be பெருந்தகைமை i.e. a matter for legitimate pride if the beloved were to restrain her intense feelings towards her lover, who, apparently does not seem interested in her. But this restraint is something unknown to those who are deeply in love.

If this is true of human lovers-in whom what is called love is ordinarily little more than lust-how much more so should it be in the case of a genuine lover of God. It is not so easy to evince deep love for God; it takes a great deal of time and effort as well as the grace of God to achieve it. But as the soul grows in this love and attachment to God, it can scarcely hide it. It will impel the person to show it in diverse ways.

In the case of human lovers it will not be a matter of pride to 'run after' the lover! Whereas it is a matter for supreme pride for the soul to run after God, the Divine Lover. For the former is after all a human, not absolutely

lovable, whereas the latter is supremely lovable and worthy of such a love.

1256

In this verse thc beloved seems to accuse herself for this 'madness of love' which she is evincing in thirsting to go aftet her lover! How pitiable am I, she seems to say, and how wretched have I become on account of all this!

On the other hand it is no matter for pity if one were to turn one's whole mind and heart and thirst for God? In fact the most pitiable thing which is all the time happening in this world is the fact that so many run after the mad thing which is lust - though called with the beautiful name of love-and so few run after the only thing worth running after viz. God.

1257

This chapter speaks on the reserve that should normally exist between lovers, which should not be easily lost even when they are deeply In love. This couplet seems to be the climax in the exposition of this theme. It is saying in effect,'' Why do we go on commenting on this theme? How can there be a sense of shame when one is under the pressure of lust?'' This is true indeed. Transfer this point to the plane of divine love and we will have some thing iike this: How can there be a sense of shame or reserve or restraint when one is deeply in love for God Who alone is worthy of love beyond all measure? It seems an invitation of worldly lovers: ''You are so anxious to taste the limited love of another person like yourself. Why don't you make a serious effort to taste the love of your God, which is infinitely more than anything the world can offer?''

1258

''Are not the enticing words of my trick - abounding roguish lover the weapon that breaks away my feminine firm-

ness?'' (Drew Trans). Once again the beloved loses her reserve! She blames the lover as ''trick - abounding, roguish'' and yet is unable to resist his enticing words? That is the weakness of human love.

The love which God has mantifested to man is not such a ''trick -abounding, roguish'' one; but one which consists not merely in enticing words, but in sacrifice unto death. Note that this aspect is verified only in Christ who loved us unto sacrifice and death, and introduced into the world an unknown philosophy of love viz. that true love can be seen only where there is pain and suffering willingly borne for the beloved. God does not use mere enticing words. He offers Himself, but makes it clear that there is no greater love than that one should lay down his life for those whom he loves. And He Himself did it!

Here is a powerful invitation to sublime, true, selfless love which cannot but be sacrificial!

1259

This and the following verse seem to portray the loss of reserve at the moment when the lover finally returned The beloved said to herself, before the lover returned: ''When he returns I shall not care for him''. But what happened? When he did come back, her heart went after him in such a way that her body could not keep aloof! It too went towards him and embraced him. When my heart united itself with him, it was not possible for my body to be aloof!

Where the divine lover is concerned, there can be no question of the body being united to Him: it is the spirit and heart which can become so. At times one who is subject to troubles or worries may be tempted, saying: ''I am trying to love God, but I am obliged to go through a lot of troubles. Does God really love me? If He loves me, why does He allow me to suffer these troubles?'' And so the soul, as it were get angry with God! But soon it sees its own folly and returns to Him and ''embraces Him'' with the heart!

1260

"Is it posssible for those whose hearts melt like fat in the fire to say they can feign a strong dislike and remain so?" (Drew Tr).

A woman's heart is said to be more tender than a man's, and so it melts easily! It is therefore not possible for her to harden her heart in such a way as not to join her lover, whatever may have happened earlier!

Man's heart is usually hard, as far as God's love is concerned. It does not so easily melt at the thought of his love for him. It is chiefly to melt his heart that He came to the world as man (Jesus Christ), took upon Himself all the sufferings of man and proved his love for him. In this sense it was that He said: When I shall be lifted up (on the cross i. e. when I undergo the maximum suffering in the form of death on a gibbet) I shall draw all men to myself!" The enormous humiliation, the terrible agony and ignominious death which God (who cannot suffer) undertook upon Himself for love of mankind was meant to melt our hard, earthbound, and insensible hearts.

CHAPTER 127

அவர் வயின் விதும்பல்

This title is usually translated as "Mutual desire" But the couplets seem to continue the intense desire on the part of woman for her lover. The phrase அவர் வயின் seems to mean "towards him", i. e. towards the lover. The descriptions given in these verses are, as usual highly exaggerated, but that is supposed to be the language of lovers.

1261

"My finger has worn away by marking on the wall the days he has been absent while my eys have lost their lustre and begun to fail." (Drew).

There is perhaps a reference here to the custom of marking on the wall with the finger and counting the markings in order to know how many days the lover has been absent. Obviously it is a way of saying how terrible has been the separation-for so long!

How many would feel their separation from God in this ardent manner?.....Is this verse a mind rebuke to carnal minded man that they should also *feel intensely* their separation from God and seek union with him!

1262

Once again there is reference to the bracelets slipping from the arms of the beloved, because of the great weakening of the body. "This, she says, would happen if I were to forget my lover even for this one day!"

If the love for the human lover could so affect a person, how much more should the love for God! Does it? We

see that in most cases it does not. That is because for the most part men do not care for this Love of loves, i.e. the Love of God!

1263

In this verse there seems to be a reference to the battlefront to which the lover has gone, sacrificing even the pleasure of being together with his beloved and enjoying union with her. He has done so inspired by the glory that comes to those who go to war and return with victory. He went to the battle front taking his own bravery and not his beloved, for he could not possibly do so. "And here I am, says the beloved, worrying myself to death on this separation." Perhaps she feels she should not be so selfish, since he has gone on a glorious errand. And so she comforts herself saying : Well. I shall correct my self-pity and await his return. In fact I am keeping myself alive on this thought."

Life is also a battle : a battle with forces of evil, battle with one's own selfishness and all those pleasures, which tend to distract our minds from the one thing which is worthwhile, i.e. the love of God and the happiness which goes with it. If God often 'seems' to allow us to suffer alone, without making his presence and joy felt, it is because he desires that we should fight manfully all contrary tendencies and achieve a victory far more glorious than the one in a battle field. Victory over material or eensual pleasure means victory for the divine Lover, God!

1264

"My lover did not think of 'love' when he left me and went on his duty. Now that he has completed his work, the 'love' which seemed extinct during this period has returned. (This is the கூடிய காமம் of the couplet.) And now I am most anxiously looking for him." The words கோடு கொடேறி suggest the image of one who is

anxiously awaiting the arrival of his dear one and is said to be climbing on a tree to watch anxiously! It is only a figurative way of expressing anxiety and intense desire to see the beloved.

Is there in the world such an intense desire on the part of us men to look for God and await his spiritual arrival into one's heart?

There is in the life narrative of Jesus Christ the story of a man who was considered a great sinner who wanted one day to see Jesus, as he passed along the way. He was unusually short of stature and he thought it best to climb upon a tree that he may have a full view of Jesus. His desire was more than satisfied when Jesus came to the very tree where this man had perched, and called him to come down and said : "This day I must stay with you in your house." This led to his total conversion from his unjust and sinful ways. This incident is a sample of what happens to every one-be he a great sinner or otherwise-when he desires to meet the God who so loves him as to sacrifice himself for his sake-as Christ did.

1265

"Let me look on my lover to my full satisfaction only then the pallor which has invaded me will go."

Only *direct vision* will satisfy. It will not be enough to *hear* about him, through some messengar, perhaps.

This is infinitely more true of God. Man will never be fully satisfied and happy until he sees his God face of face. This direct and full vision, however, is reserved only to the next life if, that is, he has been yearning for Him during all his earthly life!

During our earthly life we can only haar about God, his glory, his love etc. We may *see* Him, to some extent,

with the spiritual eyes of our mind. if we are really earnest about having this interior joy. We can also *hear* him *speaking* spiritually within our hearts - if our hearts are not too material minded and are tuned to the Spirit of God. God has been speaking to mankind, though His saints and prophets from the beginning of the world, but finally He has spoken through His son, who is the Full word of God! .... ''At various times in the past and invarious different ways, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets; but in our own times, the last days, he has spoken to us through his Son, the Son that he has appointed to inherit everything and through whom he made everything there is.'' (Heb 1,1-2).

1266

''Let my love come finally; I shall drink him'' i. e. drink the nectar of his presence and touch in such a way that all the pain which I experienced till now will just vanish in a moment.''

The earthly 'lover' has after all a body-some thing material-and therefore, however great one's love and ardour one cannot *'drink him in'* fully. God however is a spirit and if one is sufficiently earnest and ardent he can really be identified with the beloved and become one with him. The spirit of God can be drunk in, indeed. Christ has indeed invited : It anv one is thirsty, let him come to me and drink!'' it is certainly no ordinary water that he is speaking about, but the water which springs up to eternal life .....about which he spoke to the sinful woman of Samaria, See Jo. 4 chapter.

1267

''When my darling lover returns what will I be doing? Will I pretend as though I am not interested in him, since he has been away for so long, as though he was not worried about me? Or will I run to embrace him with all my heart? Or will I be doing both?''

A certain puzzled state of mind is here manifested. Human affection and love is like that. At a certain moment it is as though the lover is the very life of the beloved; at another there is supreme indifference towards him. Human ignorance, fickleness and uncertainty bring about this state of mind.

But when it is a question of God the Lover, His beauty is such that the soul will be absolutely drawn to an embrace! This is so especially when the moment comes of meeting Him face to face! Indifference to Him then is impossible.

1268

"Let the king fight and gain (victories), but let me be united to my wife and feast the evening."

This couplet seems to express the desire *not* of the beloved (as all the above couplets did) but of the lover to join his wife. Hence perhaps the title of the chapter: "Mutual desire."

From all that these many couplets express one may get the idea that it is only the soul which thirsts for God and that God in no way thirsts for man! This verse seems, at least to some extent to emphasize the fact that God also desires to unite Himself to the soul-to all men who as a great community - mankind - are called to be the *wife* of God Himself. It is most astoundihg that God Himseif - in the Bible - calls his people Israel as his *wife* often a faith less one : (a) 'For now your creator will be your husband his name Yahweh Sabath; ..... Yes, like a forsaken wife, distressed in spirit, Yahweh calls you back. Does a man cast off the wife of his youth?" (Is- 54,5-6) "They will eat but never be satisfied, they will play the whore but still be sterile, because they have deserted Yahweh to glve themselves up to whoring..... My people consult their block of wood, a rod answers their questions; for a

prostituting spirit leads them astray, they renounce their God to play the whore.'' (Hosea 4,10 end 12.)

I will betroth you to myself for ever, betroth you with integrity and justice with tenderness and love; I will betroth you to myself with faithfulness, and you will come to know Yahweh.'' (Hos. 2, 19-20).

There is mention of a *banquet* in this verse. The Bible calls the eternal happiness with God in the next life as the wedding feast of the Lamb of God who took away the sin of the world. i.e. of Christ : Jesus. ''And I seemed to hear the voices of a huge crowd—, 'Alleluia! The reign of the Lord our God Almighty has begun; let us be glad and joyful and give praise to God, because this is the time for the marriage of the lamb. His bride is ready, and she has been able to dress herself in dazzling white linen, because her linen is made of the good deeds of the saints'' Rev (19, 6-8). ''One of the seven angels that had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came to speak to me, and said, 'come here and I will show you the bride the lamb has married, (Rev 21,9). There are many references like this to the wedding of God with mankind.

1269

Once again the intense pain of separation suffered by the beloved! A day's pain is felt as seven days agony. To lovers even a slight pain will be felt as felt as dreadful.

Such an experience, with reference to God is shared only by great saints who give up everything for pure love of God.

1270

This verse once again is placed on the lips of the lover. He says to himself: If due to my long separation my belovod becomes a physical and moral wreck, a broken

hearted person, what would be the use of my going to her or embracing her? Therefore let me, now at least, go the her!

God does not permit those who really long for him suffer more than what is absolutely necsssary. He won't delay a minute longer to come to them and give them the joy they have been hoping for!.....

CHAPTER 128

குறிப்பறிவுறுத்தல்

This is translated as ''*Reading the signs*'' and ''*feelings surmised*''.

The lover has now at last returned to the beloved. Whatever may have been the intense feelings before the return-she in her home and he in the separation-they do not immediately go into the 'Union' which had been so longed for all the time. The 'beloved' seems to pretend a little that she is not too anxious for immediate union and the lover too does something similar. For union without any delay whatsoever would signify a certain weaknass on their part. Indeed however much may be extolled this so called 'love', since it is es.entially 'carnal', an immediate rush to the pleasure will naturaly be bound to be considered a weakness. What is carnal and human is by no means perfect when compared with what is spiritual and divine. Hence this chapter, where a certain immediate 'preparation' would lead to an ardent desire for the same, as portrayed in the next chapter on புணர்ச்சி விதும்பல்.

1271

The woman is here portrayed as seemingly rather cold and aloof, though her lover has returned. It is only apperent. And so the husband tells her: ''You are trying to conceal your real feelings i. e. your intense desire for union. But your eyes are betraying you! They are saying something which I can well understand''!

It may happen that the soul in her journey to God, at times, becomes a bit indifferent to him, due ty certain

harsh circumstances which she has no virtue enough, nor ardour enough to bear for God's love. But God understands it.

He realises the weakness of the soul and takes pity on her and gives her the joy she seeks.

1272

"I am not surprised" says now the lover, that my beloved appears rather cold and aloof. but at the same time betrays her longing. She appears cold and aloof, because (this verse says) that is the nature of a woman who is noted for பெண்ணிறைந்த நீர்மை which is said to be பெரிது.

The creature - man - is naturally cold and aloof in his relation to God, because he naturally tends earthwards and is easily taken up by earthly realities But he has gradually to overcome this earth-bound tendency and fix his gaze on God whose ineffable beauty, splendour and love alone can quench the spiritual thirst of man.

1273

The lover continues to reflect : "There is something in the beauty (அணி) of this woman which does not appear fully but which is there like thread in a garland of gems which is visible in between the gems. What Is this 'something.' It could be nothing but the concealed anxiety and desire for union which appears not fully, but something like the thread between the gems mentioned above.

It often happens that our love for God is not too manifest nor is it always possible or desirable to manifest it. It is something with manifests itself in deeds of hidden virtue and sacrifice, and usually thrives in silence and humility. All the same, on occasions it shows itself some thing like the thread above mentioned.

1274

The same idea is expressed with an simile. ''As fragrance in the opening bud, so does the love of the beloved appear!''.

Our love for God should show itself not through loud words or other external deeds, but rather through the fragrance of a holy life-a life of virtue and sacrifice! Only such a life is genuine and reliable.

1275

''My beloved, muses the lover, imagined some fault in me-one that is really not there-and therefore has been trying to hide deliberately from me a certain 'sign'! I have been immensely grieved over this. But that which she is trying to hide from me, I know, carries with it a remedy for my grief!

''What could be this 'sign' (which she is hiding) which could well be a remedy for my grief? what else could it be but that of love which she certainly. contiunes to have for me, but which she is pretending not to have merely as a sort of protest for my long absence from her! This very 'protestation,' is it not really inspired by a deep love for me? If she really did not care for me or love me deeplyr, why should she protest in this way?''

This is the musing on the part of the lover which this couplet seems to convey.

Now, speaking of God, what really happens is the reverse. It is not the soul which hides, for NOTHING CAN BE HIDDEN TO GOD,] It is actually God who hides for a time his love for his creature. He does so chiefly to wean the soul from worldly attachments and earthly love! Thus the 'hiding' on the part of God becomes a remedy for the soul. For when God thus hides from the soul, the latter, if she is properly led and advised, tries more to go

after God since she does not easily find consolation elsewhere or the little consolation found is not even lasting! A stage comes when the soul fully realises. that nowhere can she really rest except in the love of God. A realisation of this truth is indeed is a great remedy for the spiritual ills of the soul!

1276

After a long separation the lover has finally returned. There has been the long desired union. And there was a pleasure, indeed very great, at this union. But as all this pleasure is taking place the belove! begins to be preoccupied with the thought: "I am having such a joy now but what will happen if my lover plans to leave me again on some other avocation? When this thought occurs to her she falls back into the old gloom which had tortured her earlier! So even this great pleasure becomes a grief at the end!"

This seems to be the idea implied in this verse. How does this apply to the drama of divine love?

The soul suffers a great deal, yearning for the possession of God-for love full and satisfying which he alone can give. God takes pity on the poor soul thus languishing and sends it a ray of light, a draught of spiritual joy and consolation. The soul is then immersed in a happiness which this world cannot know : but as this 'happiness' is going on, God withdraws the consolation (in order to train the soul in genuine ways of love) and now the soul is steeped in a terrible desolation. And thus the prior consolation leads to desolation! This is an 'education' which God the supreme instructor and leader of souls uses to wean us from our worldly attachments.

1277

"My lover, muses the beloved, was indeed united with me in body, but in his mind he seems separated from me.

This my bracelets seem to understand even before I do, because they seem slipping off from my arms; tney slip off becauae my arms are already getting thin, because my whole body is becoming emaciated, experiencing as it does, the impending separation of my love from me.''

As it is seen, it is obviously a highly exaggerated way of saying how badly the beloved is feeling the separation. even before the actual separatlon takes place.

It is a way of telling the materially minded person how he or she should esteem the love of God, how it should gradully learn to appreciate his love and feel deeply nis 'absence.' Though God is actually not absent from any creature, the experience of his presence is had only after earnest, perseverlng and appreciative effort to enjoy ''his presence'' which is only another way of saying ''his love''.

1278

What the belovsd feard really comes to take place. sooner than expecfed, perhaps, The lover announces his departure again, within a few days. The beloved once agaln affected with all that physical and mental grief which has been described in earlier chapters. (eg. Chapter on the pallied hue.....etc) So terrible, in other words, is the very thought of separation!

In a very few souls such an experience of desolation may be verified if they desire for God with all their heart with all the energy of their sprit! if they have absolute detachment from every earthly love! and have a heart really burning with extraordinary love for him!

1279

At the thought of the impending separation she looks at the bracelets, (notes how they are already slipping off), looks at the arms themselves (notes how slender they have

already become!) looks at her feet-hopefully that they will help her to go to her lover or even with her lover! It is obvious that this 'musing' is meant to convey the terrible fear of separation by the very thought of which she is already tortured!

In our journey to God, it may not be the body which is affected much, though in some extraordinary cases it is, but certainly the spirit, the thoughts, the feelings or desires are deeply affected. If the beloved seeks the help of her feet to go to or with her lover, how much more should we seek to journey towards God with all speed! It is not however by any physical steps that we can go to him, but with the ''steps of our mind'' i.e in our heart, our affections! our desires and longing! We do not all on a sudden arrive at Gods' love, but by degrees, by thinking of him, by trying to realise his beauty, goodness and love, by desiring to possess him, by disregarding creature-pleasures, by esteeming God above all, by earnestly desiring his presence, by longing for it ardently by hungering and thirsting for Him, by despising everything else for His sake, by suffering hardship for his love, by even giving up one's life for His love.....

1280

It is normally said that the beloved expresses her love-sickness by the very look of the eyes,(which are considered the 'windows of the soul'!) At the stage we are (in this chapter described) this love-sickness expresses through those eyes, not only the 'sickness' (which is suffering) but also a longing for the remedy. The eyes, in other words, cast not only a look of love-sickness, but a "begging look' to come and be united! The look which expresses the former is womanly enough, but this additional ''begging'' aspect, may be said to be ''womanhood's most womanly device'' as G.U. Pope puts it translating பெண்ணினால் பெண்மை உடைத்து.

The look of the soul, in its search for God's love, should be obviously understood not as a look of the physical eyes, but as that of the spirit. This 'look of the spirit' may express a certain spiritual love-sickness, but more than that, it should express the 'begging' aspect of love. In the case of human lovers this is not considered as something demeaning. But in the case of our "looking for divine love", it is eminently proper for the soul to cast always this begging look on the Eternal lover-God. This love of God is obtained, more by such a 'begging look (which is only another phrase for what is ordinarily called 'Prayer'!) than by any other means. For God's love is a supreme gift to man, and it will not be bestowed on any one unless he begs for it. No gift can be thrust on any one. It can be bestowed on those who are anxious to receive it and pray for it.

CHAPTER 129

புணர்ச்சி விதும்பல்

This title may be translated as

Urge for Union

Union at this stage is really 're-Union' after the return of the lover.

1281

Liquor is greatly loved by so many people, but it is loved because of the pleasure *it gives when actually taken.* It gives no pleasure if one just looks at it! The "wine of love" which we are here speaking about is such that it gives pleasure even if one just *thinks* of the lover or the beloved, if one even looks at him or her! But no human lover or beloved is ever satisfied with just looking on the loved object. He or she would want to enjoy the physical contact and *taste* the pleasure with the whole body, just as one tastes the liquor.

God, however, is no object to be tasted by any physical contact: He can be tasted only by our innate power to think and to love. *Thoughts of love* are what bring God to us and unite us with him. This is rather a contact of the spirit, as is obvious. Such a contact of the spirit of God with the spirit of man is far more real and *beatifying* than the contact of man with woman in their physical bodies. The former is godly and heavenly while the latter is physical and earthly, as one can easily understand. It is about this spiritual experience of the contact of God's spirit which man's, that the Bible speaks when it says : "Taste and see that the Lord is sweet."

1282

The kind of love which human lovers so extol and which is scarcely ever unmixed with lust' has to be without any sort of *separation* if it is to be really satisfying. This is so especially when காமம் (lust cum love) *abounds* enormously. When it so abounds, separation even for a short time becomes an agony.

God's love for man is infinitely more than the love of any man for woman or of any woman for man. There is not nor can be any element of 'lust' there, nor of any sort of selfishness. In the case of human lovers there is scarcely any possibility of love being utterly self-less, for man is essentially selfgiving. It can be definitely said that this self-giving love of God reached its climax in Jesus Christ who is believed to be G*od himself in flesh.* We see how he gave himself up unto death, even the most ignominious death on a cross, not for any gain to himself but out of pure love for fallen man.

When man does not realise this: when he does not, as a consequence, give himself up to God fully-when there is a lack of this abundant love-then it should become an agony! But does it? Alas, it does not in most cases because:man does not care for God or his love as he should; instead he runs after petty satisfactions and it takes a very long time-of prayer, meditation as well as a great deal of God's grace-for him to realise this in his poor earth-bound life!

Here is an invitation. From a consideration of earthly lovers' behaviour the soul is invited to soar high and earnestly strive after heavenly love!

1283

The husband leaves his beloved and goes away from her. He appears indeed so indifferent to her. Yet, she says, "my eyes will not find rest unless they see him".

In this, the husband only 'appears' indifferent. He is really not so, he has but gone on his duty. Only 'she' does not realise it, and therefore laments. In the case of God's love, the soul is so often cruelly indifferent to all His loving advances. And yet God never leaves his creature. He, as it were, pursues it as the 'Hound of Heaven!''

At times the soul which tries to love God may feel a bit desolate and imagine that her lover-God-is indifferent to her. But God is never indifferent. It may appear so. His love is always vigilant, but in order to make the soul ''run after him'' more fervently, he at times feigns indifference. The husband in the couplet is really not indifferent to his beloved, he has only gone on his duty. He does this actually out of love for her. For if he is with her all the time and never undertakes any duty, how is he to support her, feed her etc. So even the separation is out of love for her. Only she-in her abundent love-does not realise it.

1284

''When my lover is a way from me, I said to myself how wrong he was in separating from me. I even thought of showing indifference to him when he returns. But when he returned I forgot all my ''resolutions'' and went straight into his embrace.

The soul does something like this too. When God 'appears' to be far off, i e. when the soul has to go through some trial or sorrow it may happen that she gets sort of 'angry' with God. She may even think of giving up the whole idea of experiencing Him or His love. But suddenly God who always takes into consideration the weakness of souls makes his presence and love felt! And then the soul forgets all that she had been wrongly saying or doing : forgets her 'anger' and runs into his embrace of love.

1285

When I write with a pen, I do not notice the pen. My eyes are on the writing. So too when my lover is

absent I see the wrong he is doing to me, but when be returns I see only his love.

Some thing similar happens to the soul in her search and realization of God. At times God seems so very near. She then enjoys his presence and extols his goodness and love. But then soon come other moments when he 'withdraws' his presence, and then the poor soul begins to imagine that God is doing a wrong to her. This is because she is still 'raw' in her love, and is yet to realise that love is to be proved not only through pleasure and joy but alse through pain and sorrow not only in the presence of the lover but also in his absence.

1286

The same idea as above is repeated in an explicit manner, with the simile of the 'pen' removed.

1287

The beloved feigns indifference to her lover when he is away; when he returns she is simply drawn powerfully into his embrace. She can scarcely resist it. She has had this experience before. And yet when the lover goes away from her she again feigns the same indifference. What is the use of thls, asks this verse. It is like a man jumping into a stream knowing well that it will carry him away with it. The beloved knows Indeed that her feigned indifference ஊடல் will not continue when the lover returns. And yet she goes on exercising this ஊடல். It is quite useless!

Indeed it is quite useless to try to be indifferent to God the supreme lover. Far more than any powerful stream, for more than any human lover, ha can carry away the soul with himself, if the soul will but let him do so and wait for his time! I.e. wait till the soul is sufficiently prepared and ready!

1288

''Strong wine is known to have harmful effects. Yet it is loved by people;so too,you, my lover,seem to do me 'harm' in a way by your separation from me. This 'harm' is in the form of mental pain, sorrow or even agony of the heart when you are away. When you return you cause me another kind of 'harm'. It is now a sort of lack of ''shame'' (நாணின்மை) on account of which I run to your embrace, forgetting all that had happened earlier! Your 'breast' (மார்பு) exercises such a fascination to me! I don't know what device you use thus to 'steal' as it were, my heart. You become a very 'thief'! How do you this?''

God may be said to be even a greater 'thief' than all human lovers. He comes, in fact, in silence, stealthily, without noise and slowly attracts the soul to himself. This action of God can well be compared to the action of a thief.

Saints have often made this comparison. Here is a quote from on of the saints:

''why, Lord, after wounding
This heart, has thou not healed it?
And why, after stealing it
Hast thou thus abandoned it
and not carried away the stolen prey''.

The soul is here lamenting that God has wounded her heart with the darts of love. (i.e. excited a sense of pain and grief at being away from God); but has not healed the wound (i.e. has not satisfied her longing for his love); he has thus stolen her heart, so that she may not slip back into her old ways, which she would do if left to herself!

She goes on lamenting: you have 'stolen' my love ie, my heart, but why have you left it behind, still to languish

in this world of tears! Why have you not taken me away with you so that I can be with you for ever, as your own possession and your love's fond object!

1289

''KAMAM'' (காமம்) is more delicate than a flower, and few there are who experience it without ruining its delicacy''.

If the word காமம் in this verse was used in the sense of lust or sexual delight it is difficult to understand how it is more delicate than a delicate flower. For sexual pleasure or lust is material and crude. Only when love predominates in that pleasure, it can be considered, at least to some extent, delicate. But it is not many who can achieve this i.e., experience sexual delight out of love! For lust and love so closely mingle here that it is almost impossible to know where sex finishes or love starts.

The word காமம் in this couplet does not seem to be used in the sense of crude sexual delight, but merely for 'an ardent desire or attraction' which can be equivalently called 'love'.

If understood in this sense then காமம் can be really considered as more delicate than a flower. In whatever way one may consider, it is very doubtful whether human love, unless it imitates the pure spiritual love which is manifested by God, can be really said to be more delicate than a flower.

It is therefore possible to understand காமம் in this couplet as an ardent burning desire, as the love which comes from God towards man and which man is called to show towards him-a totally spiritual, divine love. Certainly such a love is more delicate than a flower. If this is the love in question then it is obvious that it is indeed very very few who attain it!

1290

The words of this couplet are placed on the lips of the lover. He says : "She once feigned dislike or indifference her eyes, by showing a certain anger shine in them. But when the moment came the warmth of her embrace exceeded my own".

Once again the utter futility of all feigned indifference is described here.

The warmth mentioned here may be verified in the case of human lovers. But can it happen where one of the lovers is God himself? It can, but only on the part of God. It can never happen that the embrace of love which the soul manifests, after all sorts of ups and downs in this love-journey has greater warmth than that of God himself! On the other hand it can happen that the love embrace:which God gives the soul, at the end of life-after a period of apperent indifference' which was meant to be a test of genuine love and to make the soul really mature in it, has far greater warmth than what the soul can ever evince.I

CHAPTER 130

நெஞ்சோடு புலத்தல்

Expostulation with one's own heart.

1291

The beloved (the woman) addresses her own heart and tells it : You see how the heart of my lover is keeping itself and its love for himself : it does not seem to be anxious of going out towards me! You see this. Why then are you, my heart, anxious to go after him? "He seems to keep to himself : why don't I keep to myself"-that is the idea.

Such thoughts occur only to those whose 'love' is limited and mostly introvert and self-centred. The humans are mostly of such an ego-centric love. God's love, on the other hand, is essentially out-going, wishing to communicate itself to other beings in order to make all happy and contented. Moreover God's love is creative, i.e. it does not go in search of perfect beings, but makes them perfect, provided they surrender themselves to Him.

1292

"You see clearly that your lover is not so interested in you, that he has no love for you. And yet you want to go to him hoping that he will take you to himself! How foolish of you to imagine so?"

Such thoughts can occur to one who has to deal with a human being, whose mind is so fickle that it can change over night from love to hatred! In many cases the indif-

erence which is noticed is not merely feigned, but real. The heart may have gone aften another! We often rsee such eventualities actually taking place in this world which is so unreliable. But such an eventuality can never happen with the divine lover. He may feign indifference, but never be actually indifferent, be it the case of even the worst sinner who has repeatedly rejected His love-offer. It is only when the soul finally once and for all rejects that offer that God leaves it to itself.

1293

"You, my heart, are thus running after him (the lover) and do not seem to wish to remain in me or with me! Why are you so anxious to behave thus? Is it because you think that I have been ruined and usually the ruined do not have friends?"

She considers herself as ruined because she is all the time 'shamefully' running after him. Being so anxious to have him and his love is acknowledging her weakness and poverty-and this she considers a sort of moral ruin. "Do you now feel, she tells her heart, that you will have none to love you, unless you get at your lover."

This is obviously an exaggerated way of expressing her feelings. But it is absolutely true when we come to God the Lover. Actually no one loves man as God does, since, as Christian faith has it, he did not hesitate to give his very life for his sake, and underwent such awful tortures and suffering to prove his love for him. If the soul does not attain his friendship and love, it will definitely be utter ruin to her-ruin moral, spiritual and ever-lasting! And what is so wonderful about this divine Lover is that even when all hnman lovers abandon, He does not. He seeks the friendship of the most ruined, not because they are needed for his happiness, but because He knows that it is they who need Him. He realises this in fact, more than man himself. Ignorant man often does not fully realise what is his real need and so goes headlong to ruin, holding on to some fra-

gile worthless support. God sees his igorance, pities him and loves to befriend him even uninvited! That is the characteristic of Divine love.

1294

"You my heart, first show offended pride, and then you submit i.e. join your lover. All your pretended indifference is nothing but a sham! what is the use of speaking such things to you; hereafter, I shall not."

Practically the same thought as in the previous couplets is once again repeated here.

1295

"You experience fear all the time : when the lover is absent as well as when he is present. When he is absent you fear i.e. experience sorrow for not being able to enjoy with him; when he is present you fear he may be leaving you again. Thus you cause me endless pain."

If this is so in the case of human lovers, it is far more so in the case of God the Supreme Lover. The soul experiences or at least should experience fear and sorrow when she feels God absent from her. It is indeed dreadful to be without God! If, at certain moments, the soul is given to enjoy His presence, then too the soul fears losing it either by its negligence or because God Himself in His wise providence sees the need for the soul to experience at times a sense of his absence. In any case until the day of final union comes-in heaven, after this earthly existence - the soul has always reason to fear, for it is easy to lose Him by any sin or grievous negligence. Thus the soul has all along to live in a certain filial fear. It is about this that the Bible says : The fear of God is the begining of wisdom. If such filial fear continues till the end, then it turns into consummate wisdom.

1296

Why is my heart still with me? It is as it were to eat me up or consume me whenever I ponder alone on the indifference of my lover.''

If a human lover's heart can be thus consumed, how much more should it be 'eaten up' when it ponders alone on the love of the divine Lover! It is the characteristic of lovers to sit alone and fondly ponder on their partners. This is particularly so when the lover is God Himself. For He does not show himself to the soul until after a long period of longing and contemplation on his love. The saints have shown this through the example of their lives. They have been known for 'being alone with God'-which is often done in being alone with one's : heart i.e. not permitting any human affection to enter into it. Solitude and prayer can also help a great deal towards the achievement of this goal. Many people, in fact, have chosen perfect solitudes to practise this prayer and meditation on God.

1297

''I have fallen beneath the sway of this ignoble foolish heart of mine, which will not forget him. In this state I have forgotten shame.''

This idea has been already commented upon earlier-

1298

''I may bring myself to set him (my lover) aside and not worry about him, since he does not seem interested in me : but who will be the loser? Will it be he or myself? Certainly it will be myself. And so let me fix my thoughts on him''.

What is said here may often be true indeed i.e it the woman despises her lover, it may be she who will be the

loser . But it need not necessarily be so. It may be the husband who will be the loser at least on certain occasions. Or the woman may well manage even without the help or love of the husband. For not only is woman in need of the man, but man too is in need of the woman. It is only when man or woman does not make up his or her mind to adhere closely and exclusively to the Divine Lover that the need or the love of any human being is felt. When the soul thus adheres to God, it should never think of 'despising' Him for any reason-even when He 'seems' not to care for her, on occasions; when he seems to leave her to herself in order to 'try' her more and enrich her with His grace, and deeper love. If the soul should ever be tempted to 'despis' God or set him aside for any reason, it will certainly not be God who will be the loser. For He does not need the sou for His happiness, whereas the soul needs God absolutely! It is absoutely meaningless for the soul at any time to bring itself to look upon God with any feeling of 'disgust' or 'anger' or contempt!

1299

The heart is usually said to be the instrument in the human body which is most affected by feelings-feelings of joy, of sorrow, of fear, of concern, of worry, of peace, and especially of love and of hatred. Since it is thus affected, it becomes also the instrument of 'expression' of those feelings. Above all other feelings, the heart is said to express love and the contrary. This contrary may be in mild forms as in a certain indifference, negligence, ill-feeling or in a more violent forms such as contempt or downright hatred.

There are also other feelings which the heart often experiences-such as of discouragement or despair.

In all these the heart has to maintain a perfect balance. If it experienses any of these feelings in an extreme measure there is bound to be a dangerous set-back in life. In order

to maintain this balance, the heart has to train itself properly. This it can do by learning gradually to bear adversity of any sort with a certain calm and serenity; and at the same time to bear prosperity with equanimity, not allowing oneself to be carried away or to become unduly elated by it.

The most needed training however is the former viz. to bear adversity with courage and strength. This courage and strength no doubt very much depends on God's help! But the heart itself *must be able to feel comforted and strengthened* when adverse occasions arise.

This seems to be the thought expressed in this couplet. It says: ''When evening arises, who can help if one's own heart does not?''

In the soul's search for God's love and happiness, the above thought is doubtless helpful. But man is such a helpless creature, a very personification of weakness-especially when it concerns matters of such supreme value as God and his love; that unless He himself strenghthens the heart. One feels utterly helpless. In fact this heart-strengthening would depend so much on one's trustful appeal to God in prayer. All the same one shold not despise human means of strengthening one's heart by taking appropriate counsel from experienced persons etc.

1300

This verse continues the above thought and says : If the heart itself does not come to one's rescue, how can one expect outside help?

Indeed this outside help will practically not be available in human love affairs. God's help, however, should not be underestimated even in those affairs of human love. But it would be absolutely necessary in matters of divine love. For without God's help the soul cannot reach this goal of divine Love which she is called to achieve in life, more than all other things which the world may offer.

CHAPTER 131

புலவி

This title is translated = *Pouting* (Pope) and *Bouderie* (S. Bharati) But, since புலவி and ஊடல் are the same, it seems better to translate this word as we have done till now viz.

Feigned indifference

or even

Feigned contempt

It may appear that so much talk about this feigned indifference is quite unnecessary, if not meaningless. It should have been noted that in the foregoing chapters this theme seems occupying a great part. Why is this? As if all that had been already said in those chapters were not enough there are now two chapters புலவி and புலவிநுணுக்கம் on this very same theme. It is worthwhile knowing the reason for this.

First of all is it really true that among human lovers this feigned indifference is verified to such an extent, as this part of இன்பத்துப் பால் would suppose?.....or is the writer having in mind another 'world of love affairs' where this theme may be considerd as an integral element for attaining the fulness of that love?

From all the comments which we have made so for, it should become fairly evident that the author did have in mind another world of love than the one we are familiar

with. It is the world of divine love which to some extent has an 'image'—a faint one indeed—in the world of human love affairs.

Some 'reasons' are given in this chapter to explain why such a புலவி is necessary, even in human love. As we go on I shall try to explain why it is even more necessary in divine love.

1301

Some one—it could be the woman's companion maid is telling her ''Do not worry about your husband, even when he returns. Do not run to his embrace. Be indifferent to him. He has given you so much suffering. Let him also have some!''

This can happen to human Lovers. Can it happen in the case of the divine lover too? It is possible that *'some one'* might *tempt* the soul saying : The God about whom you seem to be so worried, does not seem to have a care for you. Why should you then care for Him?

''*Let him also have some pain*''! What shall we say about this? First of all such a temptation could come from a foolish and totally ignorant mind which is in us all. It is not immpossible for a foolish man to imagine that he is going to do some wrong to God, which will make him suffer some pain. He may do this with the stupid hope of, as it were, showing his 'anger and strong disapproval of God's dealing with him, in as much as He does not give him joy and pleasure, consolation and comfort in the manner and measure of his un-understanding expectations. He may at times be so blind as not to see that no pain or sorrow can even approach God who is infinite bliss in himself. The only pain, if we can speak so, that God does experience is that caused by the rejection, on the part man, of the offer of his love and happiness. This is, however, so mysterious that our human mind cannot fathom it.

But in another sense every soul which rejects God does cause real pain and suffering to Him. This is understood only in Christian theology which speaks of a God coming to the world with the precise purpose of suffering-who unites with himself a human body and soul which are capable of suffering. In this state God is truly said to have suffered intense sorrow and pain. The words above : "Let him (God) also have some pain," are truly verified in case of Jesus Christ who is truly God and man at the same time. For that is what every one who does wrong and rejects God's offer of love actually says : Let him also have some pain for He does not allow me to go my way, enjoy life, etc. He does not come to me (like the lover in question) and give me all the joy and pleasure as I want. He keeps far away from me and I have to suffer. He does not care for me! So let him also have some suffering!" This precisely is what we call sin : rejecting God's love, preferring some other object or pleasure to God himself, and thus consenting to his mysterious pain!

In contrast to such an abominable attitude, let us see what God does, even in regard to such ungrateful, stony-hearted persons. He could say : 'Let him (the human soul) suffer for its own misdeed and for his rejection of my love. But he does not do so. He may permit pain and suffering for a period, for its own purification and then sweetly entice the recalcitrant one to himself. How infinitely different are lovers-earthly and heavenly! The earthly lover may 'enjoy' to see the beloved in pain : The heavenly one is most anxious to give the beloved soul all the happiness it seeks, provided only that the soul does not reject him.

It is only a definite and final refusal to Love-which is God Himself-which finally closes the door!

1302

Salt is good and gives taste, only when it is in measure. If it is used in undue measure, the taste will

be ruined. புலவி here spoken of is something like that. If it is indulged in with proper measure it will render re-union doubly relishable. If it is unduly prolonged it may ruin the pleasure which is derived from the re-union. It ruins in the sense that ono may become even disinclined to have the union! *Moderation* therefore, is to be maintained. This moderation may be understood not only in புலவி spoken of in the couplet but also in கலவி (Union) which comes after புலவி. Just as புலவி should not be unduly prolonged so too கலவி should not be unduly indulged in. Even though கலவி gives pleasure, a prolonged கலவி will beget but disgust, and render a human being lower than animals. In fact, it is physically not possible to indulge in கலவி without any moderation. If one does so, the pleasure that one derives from it will gradually become tasteless! And so a certain amount of feigned indifference (which may also be called self-restraint) is found to be advisable in every way. All material enjoyments are of this nature that they cannot be used without restraint. One cannot go on eating, simply because it is a pleasure. A moment comes when he will have to exercise restraint and stop eating. Not too different is sexual union too. One cannot even imagine a continued indulgence in such a pleasure, since it is after all material', 'sexual' and physical in its nature.

Only what is essentially spiritual super-sexual can be continuously indulged in. *Love* for instance in its real sense is such. It is a thing not of sex, but of the moral and spiritual order. Love particularly for God is supremely so. It is essentially of a spiritual and supra-terrestrial order It is indeed divine. In fact God is said to be love! Such a love can never be indulged in without moderation. For the measure of loving God, as the saints have pointed out, is to love him without measure. But no creature can ever succeed in loving God without measure. For it would mean that the creature has become infinite. Only an infinite being can love God infinitely. All that the creature like man can do is to endeavour loving him as much as humanly possible with the help of the grace which will always be

there. Here, then, there is no need for any feigning of indifference; there is no danger that it may beget disgust as கலவி is won't to do! The fact of the matter is that the more one tries to love God the more one obtains happiness and peace! Because this love has its origin in God who is supremely satisfying and beatifying!

The author, therefore, seems to say here : You, man, are so anxious to enjoy union with your beloved, though if enjoyed beyond a certain limit it only begets disgust. Why are you not so anxious to experience another Union- that with your God-which can never be sought enough or enjoyed enough neither in this world nor in the next, since it is essentially infinite as God himself is infinite?

1303

This verse is translated- "for men not to embrace those who have feigned dislike is like torturing those already in agony. "(Drew Tr). The lover, therefore, no matter how indifferent the beloved appears, should yet coax her to union. Not doing so will only redouble the agony. And yet such an eventuality may often happen among human lovers. It never happens with the divine Lover. For,

"He will not snap off the broken reed

nor snuff out the smouldering wick.....(Matt, 12,29). i.e. he will not add sorrow to sorrow and wound more a heart that is already wounded. He will be extremely tender, compassionate, forgiving towards all who acknowledge their misery and look to him for help and consolation, for love and salvation.

Note the above quoted words have been written about Jesus Chtist who came not to destroy but to:save!.....How different are the ways of lovers in the world and of God the Supreme Lover!

1304

"Not to be understanding enough in this matter of ஊடல், not to realise the mental state of one who is doing this i.e. feigning indifference, is like cutting off a faded creaper at its root. The same thought as in the previous couplet is here given, with a simile.

1305

S. Bharati translates this verse thus : The feigned disdain on the flower-eyed lady adds lovely grace to a good and pure lover''

The word ஏர் in this couplet is understood by commentators as அழகு and is supposed to signify இன்பம்தருதல் The word can have the meaning of அழகு but it can also simply mean நன்மை. It is translated as 'lovely grace' by G.U. Pope as well as S. Bharati. We may say that it can mean either நன்மை or அழகு both in the sense of 'lovely grace' and "joy-giving''

The couplet would therefore mean : The feigned disdain of the beloved is something good (நன்மை) is a thing of beauty அழகு; it gives 'lovely grace' to her and thus she becomes a joy-giving person''. We see that all the meanings easily fit in with the idea expressed.

How does this feigned disdain become "a good'', a thing of beauty or lovely grace or joy giving. The text itself says that it becomes so only to the good and pure lover. For a good and pure lover will not be intent all the time on deriving pleasure from his beloved ; he will be understanding and accomodate himself to her thoughts and desire. Does not the woman sometimes feel that it would be better for her not to satisfy her lover everytime and therefore abstain from union occasionally. She may see it as some thing good for her. If the husband is understanding and good, and really a pure lover, as the translation has it, this feigned disdain of the beloved becomes 'a good' also for her. If indeed he is a pure lover he would consider what

is good for her beloved as good for himself too! That is really genuine love.

It is also a 'thing of beauty' because such a disinterested and pure love is certainly a beautiful thing, something to be admired and praised. What beauty is there in a man who wants to enjoy union at any time without the least consideration for his wife-ever her physical condition and other circumstances. If such a 'love' were to exist between married lovers there should indeed be no need for all sorts of unnatural, artificial methods to prevent 'motherhood'! The woman would not be a mere instrument of pleasure : continence would be possible and the dignity of the woman would not be jeopardized, as it actually is these days when every unnatural means is being used to enjoy as much as possible from bodily union without a thought of the responsibility which is essentially attached to such a union. The ''feigned disdain'' if properly understood, becomes a great good 'not only for the respective lovers but even for the society as a whole. Such an attitude then becomes truly 'a lovely grace' and joy giving, though the joy is not necessarily physical and material.

It is joy-giving also in the sense that union after periods of such a feigned disdain' is apt to give more pleasure when union takes place, than when this happens at any time without any of this feigned disdain.

How does all this apply to the divine lover? Let it be noted at once there can be no question of any 'feigned disdain' on the part of the human lover towards God. If at all there can be something of this feigned indifference it can be only on the part of the divine lover-God. In fact he does feign this disdain often, only to lest the genuineness of the soul's love for him and help her become a mature lover. Feigned indifference among human lovers helps to make them mature lovers and not ever remain childish ones always, hankering for the pleasurable and the easy-as children always do. So too the feigned disdain on the part of God helps souls to be seasoned lovers of God not keeping them easy lovers, hankering all the time for the pleasurable,

but ready to go through even hardships by which alone one can prove one's real, solid love.

1306

The pleasure derived from கலவி (sexual union), if it is to be truly appreciated, should be moderate. If it is too much or continuous or if it is too rare, it all becomes a defect. A simile is used to illustrate this. *Kama* may be likened to a fruit. If it is to be tasty and enjoyable it should be neither too ripe nor too unripe. The idea is practically the same as the one described in the couplet 1302.

1307

The feigned dislike which has been so much spoken of in the above couplet has its advantage, indeed, but it has also its painful side. This pain comes from an anxiety whether this *dislike* would last long or otherwise. If it were to last long, the union would be delayed and that becomes a torturing thought. Therefore, the moderation spoken of above is recommended in this couplet.

1308

In the above verses it is mostly the pain suffered by the wife which is emphasised. It is as though the husband was the only one at fault! as if he was the only one who did not care for his wife!

In this couplet the other side seems to be portrayed. Is it only the wife who is affected by the separation? Is the husband not pained at all? This couplet says: "The husband is indeed as pained by the separation as the wife, but he does not consider it worthwhile emphasising it, as the wife does". His reason for doing so is that it is useless to be pained or grieved when she is not ready to understand it! "What sort of a beloved is this woman, he tells himself, who cannot understand my sorrow!"

In the soul's journey towards the divine lover's love, something similar does happen. It is often the soul which due to her ignorance and spiritual weakness, imagines that God is not pained at the 'separation' of the soul from him. This is certainly not true. God is no less pained by the souls' separation from him and the consequent pain and suffering. One is tempted wrongly to imagine that God seems to take pleasure in allowing his creatures to suffer. Nothing is farther from truth. For, as one of the great saints has remarked : "It is not the will of God that the soul should be troubled by anything or that it should be afflicted; for if men are afflicted because of the adversities of this world, that is an effect of their being weak in virtue : for the soul of a perfect man rejoices in that which gives pain to the soul of the imperfect man" What makes a person suffer, therefore, is not God, but ones own weakness in virtue and love. If there is strong love, even suffering becomes a powerful means of nourishing that love. It is an imperfect love which makes one unduly complain about suffering.

1309

The above idea is further emphasised in this couplet-using a simile. To a thirsty man water gives such a joy, but only if it is in a cool shade and is therefore cool to drink. In a hot country like ours this is easily understood. One who is thirsty does not welcome water which is hot, lying as it may often happen under the burning sun. So too even physical union of lovers is not so very pleasurable where love is lacking. It is after all genuine love which increases the pleasure. An unloving embrace is more a pain than a pleasure. This is easily understood by every one.

In the same way what is needed for a real love of God as not a great deal of 'doing' but 'doing even small things with a great deal of love, for God. God does not care for anything except for the love of our hearts. If there is only little love, though there may be a great deal of 'doing' it will not satisfy Gods' love!

1310

Even when there is feigned disdain there is a thirst for union. How or why is this? It is love that causes it. As long as there is fervent desire to love, all is well. Neither disdain feigned or even real will stand in the way of achieving the goal of love.

I say "disdain feigned or even real", because between human lovers it may be that it is usually feigned. But it can well happen that at times it is real. Human fickleness is such that such an eventuality is not impossible. But even then a *true* lover will hold on, will continue to love. If one were to give it all up at the first signs of a disdain, his or her love cannot be said to be really deep. For true and deep love will be prepared to undergo even pain and sorrow, neglect and disdain for the sake of the beloved.

This may not too often be the case among human lovers. But God's love for man is always one which is manifested even when man does not care for him and evinces real disdain for him-i.e. even when he commits sin which goes directly against his love. In fact it is scarcely possible for any human being to show feigned disdain towards God, since God reads the human heart and through and the adjunct of divine love are far different from human love.

CHAPTER 132

புலவி நுணுக்கம்

Which may be interpreted: Some *delicate points in the feigned indifferencs* (புலவி)

In this great drama of love through which the Divine lover and human lover are to be united in perfect love-this chapter on the புலவி and its delicate points form as it were, a crowning chapter. It may be called "the grammer of ஊடல்", the word meaning the apparent or feigned indifference of the lovers to each other and the perfection achieved through the same.

We may say that unless there is apparent and temporary ஊடல் or புலவி (feigned indifference) there is no perfect கூடல் or union of lovers. This is verified even among human lovers to a great extent, if, that is, their love proceeds along the right lines. Much more so is it the case between lovers one of whom is God himself, since the love to be attained in God is so perfect and above the human that there needs must be some 'trying or purifying circumstances' which must be gone through if the proposed perfection of love is to be achieved.

We can easily realise that love that is not 'tried' amid trials, difficulties, and through patient and even joyful bearing of these trials, is not, and cannot be called perfect, consummate love. A love that is gained through a cheap means i.e. without pain, sorrow or experiences of disappointment cannot but be imperfect. We have referred to this principle more than once in this treatise. We have said that the whole life of Christ, the ஐந்தவித்தான் was

exactly this:Through suffering, attain and prove love! We have therefore to look upon this 'feigned indifference' in this light, in order to understand it full significance.

We call this "*feigned indifference*" as explained in the previous chapter, it can be 'feigned' only on the part of the Divine Lover. For he can never really cease to love his beloved-the human being. If he did, he would drop into nothingness. It is actually the love and goodness of God with his almighty power that is sustaining the whole universe.

On the part of the human lover, however, the indifference, would scarcely be called 'feigned' for two reasons:

One : God exercises this feigned indifference in order to confirm, strengthen, deepen, and perfect the love the human lover is aiming to achieve towards Him. There can be no such thing possible on the part of the human lover. God's love, in itself and in its relation to man is always perfect, needing no 'corrections' from any where.

Two : The human lover can often really become indifferent and even offensive to God, by some fault committed or offence against this love or by negligence to do everything possible to achieve divine love. For in this matter of loving God, not to do the very best i.e. not to love to one's utmost, is itself a defect and imperfection.

Therefore, only in a very limited sense can this 'feigned indifference' on the part of the human lover be understood. In fact, as remarked already, nothing can be 'feigned' in the presence of God. It may be experessed this way. It may at times occur that the human lover is sincerely doing his very best to attain to the perfection of this love. But the Divine Lover may wish to lead the soul even to greater depths! He may count on the sincerity and the generosity which the soul has shown all along, and therefore bring

about circumstances which may appear almost impossible to bear. At such times the poor battered soul may, for a moment, feel as it were 'disappointed' with the Divine Lover and say to itself: Why is my Lover so very hard on me? After all I am doing everything possible to love him! Why this unexpected 'suffering' for me? Why does he treat me thus!.....I shall therefore also show myself a bit indifferent.....'' such a possibility is not impossible, because the poor human lover however sincere and earnest, is yet in ignorance as to the ways most mysterious-by which the Divine Lover leads him. For God's ways, as the Bible says, are not man's ways, and vice versa! Much less is he able to comprehend the reason why God does so! And certainly it will be impossible for him to realise the immensely enjoyable fruit which is waiting to be reached and tasted at the end!.....for, again as the Bible says:

''Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it so much as dawned on man what God has prepared for those who love him.''

This 'slackening' as we may term it, for a period at most, in the vigorous pursuit of Love, we may call a sort of 'feigned indifference' on the part of the human lover. He is not really become indifferent to this love, but due to human ignorance and weakness (which will be there till the very end of his life) just becomes a little less fervent in that great pursuit. We may now proceed to analyse the various 'delicate fruits' of such a spiritual indifference of which this chapter aims to speak.

1311

One of the most characteristic notes of this love-drama is the 'jealousy' which for any flimsy reason or even for no reason creeps in between lovers. A look at another woman is enough for the wife to begin to suspect the husband. And vice versa. And usually it is the woman who is quick to take offence. In fact, as this couplet seems to say, the wife tells her husband. ''all those who are born as woman-

kind enjoy you with their eyes" (Drew Tr) and you are nothing less than a prostitute (cf. Drew's Tr) I see you are of a wandering fickle mind: I shrink from thine embrace! (Pope's Trans)

Every day experience proves all this! But can this in any way apply to the lovers one of whom is God Himself? It can and does happen to the human lover in as much as he can and does often turn his attention to some creature-some pleasure either totally forbidden or at least unworthy of a true lover of God! He then becomes a 'spiritual prostitute', since he breaks faith with his true spouse viz., God whom alone he promised to love and serve. In fact all sin is a prostitution. The Bible often calls it so. God often speaks to his people(Israel) as adulteress, while he calls himself Israel's husband. Such a situation can arise on the part of the human lover; it can never happen on the part of God, He never breaks his faith or promise. Moreover there can be no question of His transferring his love from his wedded spouse to others! All men are called to be wedded to Him in love, though all do not accept the call.

The couplet goes on to say; Since all womankind is enjoying you with their eyes, I shall not embrace you whom I consider as a prostitute: I shall not taste what is left (எச்சில்) by them. Your breast (மார்பு) to me now is like this எச்சில். I shall not even come near you."

Love is exclusive i.e., it wants the lover to belong to the beloved alone and vice versa. It cannot tolerate even the slightest 'attention' or 'affection' to any other but to the partner. The Bible has a word to this effect: The lover (divine) says: "My beloved to me and I to her!"

. If this exclusiveness is a necessary requisite in the case of human lovers, how much more should it be where God is concerned. He is the only lover who *deserves* totally all the love of his creatures, as no human lover does. He can not therefore be satisfied with the sort of எச்சில் or remnants of love which the soul may be tempted to evince

towards Him. God cannot be satisfied with a love which is less than that shown to others. He has to be loved *above* all others-absolutely and exclusively. He cannot be worshipped, as it were, side by side, with any other creature, however excellent in itself. This does not mean that one cannot love any one else except God. It only mean that one has to love God more than anything: valuing his love more than anything else and being ready to sacrifice anything or any one rather than the love for God. Noteworthy is the admonition given by Christ : He who loves his father or mother or brothers or sisters, wife or children *more* than me is *not worthy* of me!'' It is a question of the rightful appreciation of God in preference to any other creature whatsoever.

1312

When some one *sneezes*, the bystander is expected to wish well to the sneezer and say some words like: God save you, Be well indeed etc., This is perhaps a quaint custom, but there it is! The words in this couplet may perhaps be placed equally on the lips of the beloved or of the lover. ''When I continued to feign disdain he (or she) sneezed and hoped that I would wish him or her some good wish as above. The sneezer thinks that one or the other should make some start, and it is hoped that this sneeze could well be a good start. For it is imagined that the other partner would scarcely remain indifferent even after that; he or she would immediately hasten to say some good word of well wishing and thus the silence caused by the old indifference would be broken. Thus would friendly conversation start, leading to normal conjugal life and union. As one can see it is certainly a small matter நுணுக்கம் but for lovers it can serve a good purpose. Whether actually such a trivial matter can so easily break the indifference in question and restore normal relation is another matter. It is a way of saying how delicate minded are or should be lovers.

Whether this happens or not among human lovers, we may say it definitely happens in the case of the divine lover.

The earthly lover here tries to attract attention using a device which in itself is trivial! God often tries to attract souls to Himself, using equally trivial events! This he does when the soul is indifferent to Himself, or inattentive or even dissatisfied some way.

In the case of human lovers even if there is no response to the sneeze, there can arise another small circumstance which can bring the response. For a married couple it could be one or the other who can start the process of restoration of the lost normal conjugal relations. Before marriage, we said quite in this treatise, it is the woman who first attracts attention of the man. For it is the male that is expected to run after a woman since it is a disgrace for a woman to run after a man.

In the order of divine love it must be always the divine agent who starts the process. For the human soul has no way of being attracted to the invisible beauty which is God, unless God himself by his power, grace and goodness attracts rhe soul first! And He is always waiting to use any trivial occasion to do so. If the soul is sufficiently attentive, it can easily recognise the attraction! .....

1313

The word கோடற்பூ in this verse seems obviously to indicate some very ordinary flower, grown on branches of trees. Probably they are not the kind of flowers which a young woman would use to adorn herself-they are too ordinary. They are so ordinary that no one's attention is likely to be drawn to the person wearing them. And yet, says the husband "my lady would say that I am wearing them to attract the attention of some other woman." This is meant merely to convey the idea that in the state of "indifference" in which she finds hereself now, no real reason is needed to find some fault with me and continue this terrible "indifference!",

How would all this apply to divine lover? Obviously it cannot apply to the divine Lover, God, who does not need any special reason to remain indifferent to his creatures. By nature, they cannot exercise any fascination on God. They are essentially 'strange, piteous futile things'' as the poet says. What little good or beauty they possess, it all comes to them from God. There can therefore be nothing in them which can really attract attention on the part of God. If at all God can be said to be attracted towards his creatures it will only be to enrich them with his good and give them His love!

But this ''strange piteous futile thing,'' which is the human soul, imagines that it should have a better treatment at the hands of the Divine Lover. This is due to an ununderstandable and foolish opinion which the creature has of its own excellence. It is the height, in fact, of a certain self-deception! One may try to compare onself to others and say: Such and such a one seems more favoured by God than I am! Why is this?Am I in any way inferior to them?Why does not God favour me asmuch? ''It may be like wearing just very ordinary flowers! But since she is not able to comprehend the whole matter, she begins to murmur! But, then, has not God the supreme freedom to bestow his favours on any one according to his own pleasure? The 'strange, piteous futile' man is unable to understand all this! And so he continues, as it were, to feign indifference to His love!

We see here another of those 'trivialities' நுணுக்கம் which keeps the soul from flying to the embrace of God!

1314

They words of this verse are placed on the lips of the lover (husband). His mind seems to be this: ''Our love for each other is greater than that which all other lovers may have. The wife understands this in altogether a different meaning. She rushes to the conclusion that her husband's love for others is greater than that he has for her! And so she immediately cries out: *more than which lovers?*''

In the context the word 'lover' could indicate only a woman. So she concludes that her husband is in love with some other 'beloved.' Hence her 'disdain' increases!

It is known that women are unreasonbly suspicious and rush to hasty conclusions, understanding improperly even words said with the best of intentions and good will. The husband here says only that there was no reason for this prolonged indifference since their love for each other was far deeper than any between other lovers! She just hears the words 'other lovers' and imagines that he is thinking of some other lovers.....

This is what we may call the intransigence of love. It cannot tolerate even the least comparison, or reference to other lovers!

If human love is so intransigent what should be the intransigence which the divine lover, God, can rightfully claim in relation to his creatures. For He alone has the supreme right to the full and undivided allegiance and love from his creatures. For He is their Lord and master. Without Him they are just non existent. The creature is indebted to no one else in the measure it is indebted to Him. And it belongs to Him alone; He alone has soverign dominion over all.

The soul has to realise this and should be extremely vigilant not to divide, as it were, her love with God and also with some other creatures. He is to be loved absolutely for his own sake, where as every one else and everything else can be loved only in so far as he, she or it can help her to love Him above all, without the least reserve.

Note also that God alone can love all with infinite love, for that is his nature. The soul cannot love God and others in the same way, placing God as it were on a par with something else.

It may happen that some one gets angry with God, because he sees some one else, less worthy in his estima-

tion, being loved as much as himself or even more than himself.

This attitude is absolutely foolish, since it would go against the supreme freedom and wisdom with which God loves his creatures.

There is absolutely no sense in any one showing indifference because his ideas do not tally with his!

1315

The husband tells his beloved: "I shall never part from you in this life." She understands: "then you will part from me in the next life." And so she begins to shed tears!

The idea in this verse is practically the same as in the previous one. A little word or occasion is enough to completely misunderstand the mind and heart of the lover.

This is another aspect of the same intransigence of love spoken of above, What has been said there is applicable here too.

1316

"I said to her:when I was away from you I never forgot you; I was always thinking of you." She misunderstood me once again; "why should he thus confess his remembrance of me? Probably he had first forgotten me and then began to think of me! "Once again, suspicion about the fidelity and attachment of the husband! Again the intransigence of love is repeated here!

1317

The husband now says: I sneezed, and she wtshed me as usual, "May you live long!", But soon she changes her mind and says: Is it of me you thought? Tell me of whom (which women) you were thinking when you sneezed?"

This reflection is based on a quaint belief that when we think of those whom we love, the loved one experiences suddenly a sneeze. Whether this has a basis or not, the question the wife is here asking is based on this quaint belief.

Again the 'suspicion' of love mentioned above is showing itself. What was said above of the intransigence is applicable here too.

Moreover this verse leads us to ponder over an aspect of the love which God wants to show to his creatures.

It happens that occasionally God the lover makes a sort of unexpected manifestation of his love for the soul. This can come in the form of some unexpected favour received, which only God can bring about, beyond all human calculations: or it could be a certain exhilarating experience, a certain consolation, peace which do not seem to be 'earthly' or possible to mere human effort. When such a thing occurs the soul is immensely grateful for it and appreciates it enormously. But soon fickle minded as she is and forgetful, she forgets the favours of God, and almost retracts her grateful and appreciative attitude as the wife in question does!

1318

A similar idea is described in this verse. "The husband was about to sneeze, but fear of the wife's unfavourable remark (already mentioned above) he tries to control it. The wife notices it and tells him: Are you trying to hide the fact that some other 'beloved' is now thinking of you? With that she began to cry."

It may happen that at times God does not manifest his love, by any special favour of attention to the soul. The soul then might begin to think thus: "Perhaps He cares for others and not for me!" This, of course, is a childish reflection, because God does care for all, though the gram-

mer of that care, concern and love is not easily understandable to the poor, ignorant, human mind.

1319

When thus the beloved feigns baseless disdain, the lover tries to convince her that she is unreasonable in her suspicion. He does this with great understanding, patience and with a certain humility. Even this the wife misunderstands and throws a fresh accusation at him. She says to him: Oh, this is the way you try to pacify your *other lovers* (women)! And she becomes angry again.

The lover could not imagine that even his pleas, humble as they were, would be thus misunderstood! But that is the way 'love' takes its course, especially in a woman.

Here we may consider the mysterious and altogether ineffable condescension of God towards souls. There are souls which are even more unreasonable and foolish in their relation to God. Though it is they who are at fault and wanting in genuing love for their God, they behave as though it is God who is at fault, or 'cruel' in his demands, or not loving enough! This happens, specially, when He, for reasons of wisdom which the soul is at the moment incapable of comprehending, allows souls to go through certain trials or suffering. This is the mystery of God's myserious wisdom in action on the one side, and on the other side the soul's miserable ignorance trying to resist it!.....

1320

Thus we see that whatever the husband says or does the wife finds fault with him. He therefore does not know what to say more or do. He just *gazes* at her! Even at this the wife finds fault! She tells him; What are your gazing at me for? Are you looking at me perhaps to admire my beauty? Are you comparing my beauty with that which you

found in other women? With that once more she flies into a rage!.....

This seems to be the climax, in this, 'love-contestation as we may call it. There are not wanting occasions when God 'looks' at the soul, with ineffable pity, tenderness and love. But the soul, in its ignorance is unable to understand even that look of love! This indeed is a situation most pitiable in the love-relation of the soul with God. With all that, God goes on loving the soul until she realises her ignorance and achieves union with Him. With ineffable patience and understanding God pursues the soul in order to make her realise her folly. And realise she will, when the proper moment arrives. i e., when God as it were has exhausted all his goodness and love on the poor soul! Earthly lovers fade away into insignificance when we contemplate the mysterious love of God, the heavenly lover, for the poor soul whom He does not need at all-as the earthly lover needs his beloved!

CHAPTER 133

உளடலுவகை

The Joy of the re-Union

In this chapter is described the great happiness which the lovers finally derive from their union after all the ups and downs 'in love', after the feigned (at times even real) indifferences, the suspicions etc. etc. and the agony caused by all these.

It would refer-in the spiritual and mystical realm-the final union of God and the soul-the Bride and Bridegroom-in the life of the world to come.

1321

"Although there be no fault in him, the sweetness of love hath power in me a fretful jealousy to move" (G.U. Pope Tr.) At last the beloved acknowledges the truth about her lover-i.e. that he is faultless, and all the fault was on her side alone.

Whom does this acknowledgment suit more?-the earthly lover or the heavenly one? It is possible that the earthly lover is often without fault and is unjustly treated by the beloved? But what is all the faultlessness of any human lover in the presence of the absolute holiness of God, the divine lover. The human one can, and does make mistakes by ignorance or off sight or any other cause. The divine lover can never commit the least fault in any way. Whatever he does will always he right, just, holy, and good! The poor soul (bride) does not easily understand nor appreciate this.

Why does the beloved then feign jealousy etc? The tran lation quoted above says: "the sweetness of his love has power in me to move a fretful jealousy". It looks strange that the sweetness of his love has power to move jealousy. Perhaps it is as the translation of S. Bharati has: "to bring out and enjoy this lovely grace and embrace". This seems clearer and nearer to the thought of the writer. The 'feigning' is meant only "to bring out and enjoy" all the more the "lovely grace and embrace". The feigned disdain is said to have the *power* to bring this out.

The love-embrace, after a period of apparent aloofness and indifference will usually be all the more enjoyable, because it comes, after keen disappointment and earnest longing.

If this is so among human lovers, what shall we say of the Divine Lover and his bride the soul? The apparent indifference of God towards the soul, even in its trials and sorrows, is definitely meant "to bring out and enjoy his lovely grace and embrace". It brings out his grace in as much as it helps the soul to endure something for the sake of the inestimable gift of love, which is the work of his grace-hence "lovely grace" i.e., grace which is lovable and productive of love. The increase of love finally leads to a far greater enjoyment of his mystical embrace. We can never realise enough, this side of life, that love flourishes only amid pain:and this flourishing love produces a superabundance of joy. It is in order to help the soul attain this superabundant joy that God permits the soul to suffer something and feigns indifference towards her.

1322

By the feigned disdain some little pain and disgust are indeed caused, but love which recomforts, and revives will, far from suffering a set back, only become stronger : love will not thereby fade away but bloom to life again". Because love which has stood the test of pain and suffering,

is love more worthy of the name. Love which is easy may be just little more than sentimental feeling. There is true love only where there is readiness to suffer anything for the loved one! This is the mysterious law of love which Jesus Christ has revealed through his life of humiliation and suffering for the sins of the world.

And if it is pain and suffering willingly chosen for love of the beloved it deserves all the more the name of love! For it is something if one goes through pain which one has no power to prevent. It is much, very much-and truly noble even divine! when you have the power to prevent it, but do not, because you want to suffer something for the love of your beloved one. This is exactly what Christ did. As God he could have easily prevented every form of humiliation, insult, pain shame and suffering, but far from using his divine power to do so, he deliberately choses it and puts up with it all in order to convince an unbelieving world how immense is the love which he has for mankind. Man was subject to pain and suffering caused by his sin, he could not understand why there should be this 'pain' in the world. He says: ''God is almighty, then why does he not prevent evil etc., in the world?'' God answers this question not by fleeing away from suffering, but by willingly embracing it all, and using his almighty power to draw good even out of evil! Nowhere, in fact, does the power of God manifest itself more than in this 'drawing good even out of the evil' which everyone abhors.

If human love puts on new strength after a period of feigned disdain and the pain caused by it, how much more will not divine love achieve it!

The great poet Francis Thompson has put this idea in the following expressive terms. The soul speaks to God.

"Ah, is Thy love indeed

a weed, albeit an amaranthine weed

suffering no flowers except its own to mount!

Ah! must—

Designer infinite

Ah must Thou char the wood ere thou canst limn with it

.....

Whether men's heart or life it be which yields

Thee harvest, must thy harvest fields

be dunged with rotten death!

Indeed man's heart is dunged (manured) with rotten death when it feels upon it the weight of the *drooping* and *dead objects of its earthly love* and man's life yields most harvest only then, when it has passed through ordeals that bring it well within the shadow of the cross-(a word which, since Christ bore it, has acquired the meaning of pain, sorrow, humiliation, suffering) all for the loved one.

Hence it is that God does not take away pain and suffering from the world. Hence it is that he often 'feigns indifference' and even puts to dreadful ordeals and tests, in order to make the love-which may not have been strong at the initial stages-acquired a grace, dignity and worth which it could not have otherwise.

1323

We have seen how this 'feigned indifference' which may be called also ''a *love testing*'', in the end brings with it a great blessing, though it is not palatable in the initial stage, and appears *to blight love rather than prosper it.*

In this verse the writer goes farther. He seems to say that to a true and deep lover this can well be a heavenly blessing and celestial joy. And he gives a simile. The land is there, and water is there. But unless the two unite

nothing can grow or prosper. So it is with divine love. God is in his place, and the soul is in its place. Unless they become one there is going to be no great achievement for man. For only union with God is blessing beyond measure. And for this blessing, the 'love-testing' contributes beyond all understanding of man. And so it becomes a very heaven on earth!

The point the author would like to make here is obviously that man should be ready to go through this 'testing' which can prove such a rich blessing at the end.

If it can be a blessing in disguise to human lovers, how much more should it be so to the earthly lover who has been called to achieve this tremendous goal of union with God himself!

1324

The thought expressed in this verse is not too clear. It seems to be as follows: The lovers after the first embraces, are obliged to separate. The feigned indifference goes on for longer or shorter peroids. It may prolong for very long at times. If at the appropriate moment this feigned indifference is not overcome and broken, it may break the very hearts of the lovers. Love testing above mentioned is indeed needed, but carried beyond a certain limit the testing becomes almost the death of love itself. For the human heart is not capable of bearing lack of love beyond certain limits. This is true of human lovers. This is also true of divine love. The human soul needs a certain testing in order that love may really become strong, perfect and mature, and not remain in the level of little more than childish sentiment. But if God were to subject 'poor, piteous and futile thing, that the soul is, to a testing beyond all her strength, than the testing will turn in to an instrument of destruction. It will destroy the little there is. Hence God who knows to measure everything with perfect precision knows how far the testing can go on each individual soul. He does not deal with souls as with a crowd, but as persons

fully aware that each one is in a different situation etc. He will therefore not permit the love-testing to become a breaker of the heart! ....

1325

''Even when the lover is free from any fault, there is a special charm in this feigned indifference (=love testing) implying a withdrawal from lover's arms. The reason is not difficult to see. It is because the whole process is a love-testing. And what can be more charming than 'love' even in its testing stage! All the more so, since the testing is expected to lead one to a deeper experience of this most charming thing which is love.

This is true of human lover. It is true also of divine lover. In fact this divine love-testing is even more charming. Since the good which will be derived from it will be infinitely more wonderful and delightful and beatifying than human love even in its greatest depth. This is the reason why God plans this testing, though he knows well that it can be a terrible agony for the poor soul.

1326

''To digest what has been eaten is more delightful than to eat more: likewise love is more delightful during the period of testing than the pleasure it gives on bodily union''.

The reason why love is more delightful during 'the testing' than when actually enjoying the union has been partly given in the previous verse. We may add another reason here. It is more delightful, because one becomes conscious of the fact that one is *suffering* something for love's sake! There is a charm and delight in suffering for love's sake which it is not easy to understand. It is something so noble, so divine that only those who imitate divine love and its ways can understand. This way of divine love has been clearly shown to us by God himself becoming man and

suffering for his sake. We may assert without any hesitation that though God become man (i.e. Jesus Christ) suffered immensely for man's sake, he experienced a delight in doing so, which the world can never fathom. For love is such. And love proved in suffering produces a delight which is truly not of this world. This is worth pondering very much indeed. We scarcely ever come across fully disinterested love in this world. Such a love is most evident when suffering is undergone for lover's sake. This is the kind of love God showed towards man and we are invited to show it in our life-both towards God as well as towards all men for God's sake. Only when such a love is practised, selfishness-the root of all evils-will be destroyed and this world would become a better place to live in.

1327

In this feigned indifference which the husband is manifesting, the one who acknowledges defeat is to be considered the victor! How? Feigned indifference by its nature is something which should finally lead to a sort of defeat. After all it is 'feigned' and once it is shown that it is only 'feigned' there is victory for one party and defeat for the other. In the case under consideration the husband who is said to be feigning indifference, at some time will have to show that it was all feigned. When he does that he will have to acknowledge that he was 'defeated' by his beloved with her persistent love. But this defeat is only apparent, for it implies at the same time that he never ceased loving her, though absent from her etc. She had thought that she had misplaced her love, but now he has proved that it was not true and that his love was as strong as ever. This indeed is a victory!

In the same way it is victory and defeat for her too. It was defeat in as much she seemed to have been making vain efforts all the time to get back the love of her husband; and all her efforts seemed futile. It was victory in as much as she finally obtained what she wanted. In the case of

both what appeared a defeat was really victory in the end.

1328

The pleasure of union after a certain period of 'testing' and feigned indifference is extremely enjoyable. This extreme enjoyment is hinted by the words நுதல் and உப்பு. The lovers have now come together and perhaps have enjoyed the union for quite some time. There is now a certain lessening of this pleasure, as it is found to happen to all material pleasures. And so they seem to think of the very great pleasure enjoyed after all that feigned indifference. They tell themselves: why not we again feign indifference for some time so that the pleasure after that may be indeed quite enjoyable, as it was on the former occasion.

The idea implied in this seems to be that it is worth that God feigned indifference to the soul for a time, because it helps to derive greater joy when it is over. The soul is apt to enjoy the union after the testing and the consequent pain and suffering. And so the soul is invited even to desire the period of that spiritual desolation which comes as a result of God's feigned indifference. She is invited to see how useful and fruitful after all is that 'testing' of love!

The idea is as it were continued in the next verse.

1329

In this verse the husband is represented as wishing that his beloved should feign indifference towards him and lets her do it quite seriously. "I shall plead that her indifference may be relaxed. But let her not yield easily to my plea. Let her go on strong in her indifference. Let me go on pleading too the whole night if need be."

It is obviously a very emphatic way of saying how conducive is this indifference and 'testing' to greater love and consequently greater enjoyment.

This can be taken as an invitation to the soul not to be disturbed by the suffering and desolation caused by God's epparent indifference towards her. Let her try to realise hat it has a sublime purpose behind it. Let her even plead for more 'desolation' of this sort, so that when it is over, delight may flood the soul all the more.

The great good that the soul derives from this mental agony and 'night, of the spirit' is described vividly in this verse.

1330

Thus we see that the testing and indifference finally turns into a pleasure for the lovers. The word காமம் in this verse seems to be used for an ardent desire for union. This ardent desire is fully satisfied by ஊடுதல் i.e. the feigned indifference and the testing of love. A greater joy, however, than ஊடுதல் is the reunion and loving embrace which comes after that, This extreme joy is considered rare by the author in this verse. Hence he says கூடிமுயங்கப் பெறின். This last word would mean "*if* one really attains it". Would this *if* have a meaning at all were only carnal sexual union is understood here? Is it so very rare to achieve this pleasure of carnal union? Is it not something common in the world?

Therefore, there seems to be a hint here that the author is referring here-as well as in all the verses which have gone before-to a pleasure and joy not of this earth, which it is rather rare for man to attain. What is more difficult for carnal minded man to attain, than union with God and the divine spiritual joy derived from it?

We may therefore safely conclude that this இன்பத்துப் பால் was written to inculcate பேரின்பம் divine joy rather than சிற்றின்பம் human, sex pleasure!.....

Please Correct Mistakes

Page	Line	Mistake	Correction
34	12	morally	morality
41	21	seem	seems
41	21	in deed grasp	indeed to grasp
58	13	an ordinate	an inordinate
59	7	with	is
59	29	ie	it
61	13	befurixt	betwixt
63	last but one	begete	begets
64	34	assets	asserts
65	2	tothing	nothing
67	32	have	having
69	2 & 3	நாவை	நாணு
73	20	only strutting	only be strutting
74	27	breator	creator
74	33	thing	think
77	10	marial	material
79	12	chrint	christ
79	20	Rosurrection	Resurrection
79	last line	worlers	workers
79	20	Thatchers	Teachers
81	4	for time	for a time
81	8	on	no
82	8-9	at were	as it were
83	5	he sitate	hesitate
83	7	Dent	Deut
83	8	Deunt	Deut
86	14	be love	ié.,
86	20	bertowed	bestowed

87	1	when fulfils	when one.....
87	17	brainful	brimful
88	6	one is	one in
91	33	proption	proportion
93	7	it can be in deed	(delete)
93	last line	repntance	repentance
94	4	worry	wrong
94	16	loss and less	less and less
94	29	But will	But with
97	last but one	from evil	free from evil
98	26	after ''of it''	(add) would be right
99	4	as we are	as are
99	7	accuse	accused
100	4	hell	held
107	2	atmost	a most
109	25	proper	prosper
110	1	face	faced
110	5	face	faced
111	16	is profits	it profits
113	16	இயந்தி	இயற்றி
114	26	fire fee	fire fed
115	9	ebstinence	abstinence
117	3	words	world
117	12	generation	generations
118	8	intelligence	intelligent
128	10	in no	is no
128	30	shall see	saw
128	30	later	the
142	28	belove	beloved
150	7	vison	vision
152	24	would	(delete)
153	last but one	smils	smile
157	5	behavioul	behaviour
160	7	bea ty	beauty

162	4	may heard	may have heard
166	12	are we say	are we to say
166	14	his made	has made
166	18	word	world
169	2	fulles	fullest
172	20	wazink	waxing
174	23	that aimed	that he aimed
176	3	sympol	symbol
179	12	soul	same
183	18	foot	food
183	21	paints	pains
183	25	s art	start
184	3	at on	at an
184	5-6	description	desertion
184	32	much	such
187	14	sacirfice	sacrifice
187	last line	glorious that	glorious than that
189	9	to rest	no rest
189	22	recourse the	recourse to the
191	19-20	suffers some damage thereby	does not respond to but it. He is disturbed
192	8	stars	starts
206	15	off-repeated	oft repeated
206	18	sholud	should
206	23	expressed	expression
207	21	obtalned	obtained
207	26	as long one	as long as one
212	9	furging	surging
214	20	is should	it should
219	2	and	any
229	11	geatly	greatly
241	4	simpl	simply
247	13	earthy	earthly
248	16	crilly	chilly

250	8	responsiblo	responsible
252	8	Aed	And
252	20	ture	tune
252	20	monrnful	mournful
254	13	world	would
255	15	all it	all its
256	4	limbs limbs	(delete one)
256	27	exyerienced	experienced
260	10	de deepen	to deepen
260	15	your meet	you meet
264	7	of keep	of deep
265	7	man be	may be
271	16	mind	mild
273	last but one	haar	hear
276	24	felt as felt as	(delete one)
283	15	Gods'	God's
296	13	despis	despise
296	16	sou	soul
297	21	shold	should
304	7	ever	over
313	11	quite in	quite early in