

GEMS
FROM
THE TREASURE HOUSE
OF
TAMIL LITERATURE



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INTRODUCTION

This small book offers certain extracts from the literature of the Tamil language. Tamil is one of the two mother languages of India. Telugu, Kanarese, Malayalam and Tulu were born from Tamil. Tulu has no script. The other languages developed and grew to maturity under the wings of Tamil. Now they have married into the Sanskrit family and have adopted the grammar and traditions of that language.

The earliest extant work in Tamil belongs, at a conservative estimate, to the second or third century B. C. This is a work of grammar and is called the "Tolkappiam", meaning the ancient work. It is well known that grammar is evolved from the literature of the language. This grammar of the Tamil language is a fully rounded one in three major sections of 9 subdivisions each, dealing with (a) the Script, (orthography) (b) the words (Etymology), and (c) the Subject - Matter of literature. The third section is acknowledged by all scholars to be an unique one.

Very early the Tamils developed the passion for classification. Poetry was divided into two main groups; "internal" (agam), dealing with love, and "external" (puram), dealing with the praise of kings. A further division was made according to the region of the Tamil Land to which the poem referred or was most appropriate. Conventionally there were five regions (tinai): the hills (kurinji), the dry lands (palai), the jungle and woodland (mullai), the cultivated plains (marudam), and the coast (neydal). Each was connected with some special aspect of love or war; thus the hills were the scene of poems on pre-nuptial love and cattle-raiding; the dry lands, of the long separation of lovers, and of the laying waste of the countryside; the jungle, of the brief parting of lovers, and of raiding expeditions; the valleys, of post-nuptial love or the wiles of courtezans, and of siege;

and the seacoast, of the parting of fishermen's wives from their lords, and of pitched battle. To each region were attributed its own appropriate flowers, animals and people. Every work of note of the Tamil Classics was classified in one or all of the five sections, and in one of the two major groups. This classification is unique to the Tamil literature.

Though we have not received today any work of literature before the date of this grammar, we can presume that there must have been a vast literature of very high merit. The grammar itself contains numerous extracts from the literature of the period preceding its compilation and even this all too insufficient material confirms our presumption of the vastness and the greatness of the literature of the pre-Tolkappiam period.

The history of the Tamil literature after Tolkappiam cannot even very briefly - even in no more than a catalogue of works - be contained in anything less than a hundred pages. It is not, therefore, proposed to attempt any history of the Tamil literature since our object is to give the reader as many samples as possible from the literature itself and leave him to visualise for himself the merits of the full works from the merits of the samples before him.

A very brief survey, however, of the Tamil literature will not be out of place. Before we do so, we would like the reader to understand two things about the history of the Tamil literature. The first is that in practically no case of any work has it been possible to definitely fix its date. Research scholars have sometimes narrowed down the gap of their guesses to one century, but oftentimes their guesses are separated by several centuries. One thing is certain. The best literature was created between the first century B. C. and the 6th century A. D. The second peculiarity is this. We do not know the names of the writers. We have names, it is true. But they are not the ones by which the parents of the writers christened them. Such names were, probably, given by their contemporaries or their posterity. For instance, Tiruvalluvar means the saintly man of the caste of Valluvas. Parimelalagar, the name of a famous commentator means the handsome man on the horse. Nakkirar, the name of the author of an Idyll called Tirumurugattruppadaï means the capable caligraphist. These

names remind us of the names given by the Red Indians and Zulus to their heroes and chieftains and sometimes to visiting European personages. This peculiarity of the names of ancient Tamil authors is one more obstacle to fixing the date of any of the works since more than one person of such cognomen are not unknown in the field of ancient Tamil literature.

Another chief obstacle is that years were not stated in eras and not even by the year in the reign of a king. Moreover several kings of the same name had ruled in different periods. Therefore attempts to fix dates from the mention of the king's name and title are also not successful.

The Tamil kings particularly, the Chola, Pandya and Chera dynasties were the greatest patrons of Tamil literature. Academies of literature zealously fostered and controlled the quality of literature. Their formal approval or rejection made or marred the fortunes of the authors of those times. It has been traditionally handed down that there were three academies down the course of centuries till the end of the 1st or 2nd century A. D. The works of the first and second academies are not available to-day though Tolkappiam, the grammar is acknowledged as the only available work of the second academy. The third academy must have approved and given its blessings to a very large volume of literature, but much of it appears to have perished. At some date either immediately after the third academy or long thereafter the patrons of literature seem to have been seized with a fear for the safety of the rest of the literature. They, therefore, ordered their collection and compilation. These collections have come down to us in almost unmutilated form.

They are (1) the Collection of Eight Anthologies (2) the Ten Idylls, (3) the 18 Minor Works, and (4) the Five Great Epics. We may roughly presume that this order also stands for the chronological sequence of these works. It should be mentioned here that out of the five great epics, we have received only three of them intact. The two others are mere names to us except for a poem or two or a line or two ascribed to be fragments from those epics.

The first two collections - the Eight Anthologies and the Ten Idylls - are secular in their subject matter and deal about the land, its people, their songs and dances, their loves and wars,

their joys and sorrows and never or rarely speak about their Gods on cults and religions. The 18 Minor Works disclose a sharp change in the choice of subjects. They are didactic and are concerned with the ethics of the lives of the people. They diffuse a pessimistic aura of sin and the fruits of sin. The Tamils and their interpreters have changed from life and world affirmation to life and world denial. This is, probably, no doubt, due to the impact of Aryan culture and religion, particularly the Jain and Buddhist faiths.

Of the available epics, only one, the Silappathikaram, is more or less secular though streaked with veins of religious thought and teachings. The other two, Manimekalai, and Jeevachinthamani are denominational and religious in their themes.

The literature from the 6th century onwards discloses the obsession of the people with religious thoughts and controversies. But these centuries have given us some of the greatest devotional poetical works of the world so much so that the Tamil language has been called the language of devotional literature. This period ends roughly about the 11th or 12th century and like the last flame of a dying lamp this period gave towards its end a work which has never ceased to rule the hearts of all the Tamil people to this day. This is the Ramayana in Tamil by Kamban. It is no doubt based on the original work in Sanskrit by Valmiki and is a translation in many parts. But it is much more than that. It is an original creation out of the treasure house of the culture of the Tamil people and the collective tradition of Tamil literature. Kamban, the author, did not hesitate to change settings and incidents and metamorphose secondary characters in the original into distinctive personalities so much so that some of them differ as much from the original as chalk from cheese. Kamban has delved into the great works of the Alvars, the Vaishnava Saints, the author of Silappathikaram, of Tiruvalluvar and with the treasures he extracted from them, he has fashioned a new Jewel of literature with his own creative genius. After Kamban, that is after the 12th century A. D., the dark ages of the literature of the Tamils covered the country like a pall till the 20th century when Bharati rose to herald the Renaissance of Tamil literature.

A NOTE ON THE ANCIENT CLASSICS

THE ETTUTOGAI (Eight Anthologies)

It comprises : Narrinai, Kuruntogai, Aingurunuru, Padirrupattu, Paripadal, Kalittogai, Neduntogai and Purananooru.

The Narrinai contains 401 stanzas, each ranging from nine to twelve lines. In it we find the hands of 175 poets. The verses deal with the five Tinais. Its general theme is love and its compilation was at the instance of a Pandyan king, Pannadutanda Pandiyan Maran Valudi.

The Kuruntogai literally means a collection of short poems. In this work is brought together a number of verses attributed to as many as 205 poets. This collection contains 402 stanzas in the ahaval metre, each stanza ranging from four to eight lines. As in the Narrinai the theme of the work is love and falling under one or other of the five tinaiis. Its compilation was effected under the patronage of the chieftains of Puri (identified with North Malabar) by name Purikko.

The Aingurunuru means literally the short five hundred. It contains 500 ahaval verses and the whole book can be conveniently divided into five parts, each part consisting of 100 stanzas. Each verse contains three to six lines. Every part again deals with one of the five tinaiis. The name of the compiler is known as Kudalur Kizhar.

The Padirrupattu (the Ten Tens) is an anthology of enormous importance. Here we are introduced to a number of kings of the Cera dynasty, with a splendid record of their deeds and achievements thus enabling us to get at a true picture of the political conditions of Tamil Land about two thousand years ago. Of the ten parts into which the whole work is divided, the first and the last are not available to us.

The Paripadal (literally stanzas of strophic metre) is according to tradition a compilation of the first Academy as well as the third Academy. If both are different works, the first Sangam

work is lost. The Paripadal of the third Academy is said to consist of seventy stanzas attributed as usual to several poets. It is unfortunate that as many as forty-six verses of this important work are lost.

The Kalittogai, otherwise known as Kurunkalittogai or simply Kali is yet another important work of this category. It contains one hundred and fifty stanzas in the Kali metre dealing with the first five tinai. Its theme is love but it also contains a number of moral maxims. Incidentally it furnishes us with some peculiar marriage customs current in those ancient days. We have no prima facie evidence as to the name of the compiler and the patron at whose instance the work was compiled. But it is generally believed that Nallanduvanar, was the compiler.

The Neduntogai, otherwise known as Ahappattu and popularly known as Ahananuru or simple Aham is an anthology of great importance and value to a student of ancient Tamil culture. It contains 401 stanzas in the ahaval metre and its general theme is love. The length of the stanzas varies from thirteen to thirtyseven lines. As many as 145 names of poets are given in this collection whose compiler was Uruttirasarman, the son of Uppurikudi Kizhar of Madurai. It was accomplished under the distinguished auspices of the Pandyan king Ukkirapperuvaludi.

The Purananuru, otherwise known as Purappattu or simply Puram is a valuable anthology of 400 stanzas in ahaval form. It is the counterpart of the preceding work, the Ahananuru, and deals with aspects of ancient Tamil culture and forms a good record of the Tamil civilization in ancient times. It deals with war and matters of State. The anthology contains odes ranging from the epoch of the First Sangam to that of Post-Sangam and the events it treats of are ancient and invaluable to an antiquarian.

THE PATTUPATTU

It is a collection of ten idylls. An idyll is a short poem descriptive of some picturesque scene or incident, chiefly in pastoral life. It is not known by whom and when, these poems written at different times were brought together. The poems are by various authors.

Five of them belong to a peculiar class called Arruppadai. An arruppadai is a poem in which a bard or minstrel is recommended to go to a patron to solicit help from him. It is addressed to another seeker for favours by one who has already benefitted munificently at the hands of the patron. Only one of them differs from the others, viz., Tirumuruarruppadai, which directs devotees not to a patron but to a God.

Tamil genius never paid much attention to the time element, and so historical and other documents from which we could gain an idea of ancient Tamil life are very much wanting. There are six sources of information for the re-construction of the life of the people of those times : Tamil literary works, commentaries, accounts of foreigners, Ceylon records, inscriptions, and references in Sanskrit literature. Of these the most important are the Tamil poems of the period. Literature embalms the culture, the ideas and the ideals of the people of the age in which it is produced, and it is in its literary works that the springs of thought and actions of a period stand revealed. So, apart from the literary interest of these poems, they are a mine of information for reconstructing the life of the Tamils centuries ago.

THE EIGHTEEN MINOR WORKS

The next collection of the Sangam works comes under the general heading - the Padinen-Kilkanakku, the eighteen poems dealing primarily with morals (Tamil: aram, Sans: dharma).

They are :—

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Naladiyar | 10. Thinai-malai-nuthaimbathu |
| 2. Nanmani-Kadikai | 11. Kainnilai, Innilai. |
| 3. Kar-narppathu | 12. Tirukkural |
| 4. Kalavali-narppathu | 13. Thiri-Kadukam. |
| 5. Iniathu-narppathu | 14. Acarak-kovai |
| 6. Inna-narppathu | 15. Palamoli |
| 7. Ain-thinai-Aimbathu | 16. Siru-pancha-mulam |
| 8. Ain-thinai-Elupathu | 17. Muthu-moli-kanchi |
| 9. Thinai-moli-Aimbathu | 18. Elathi |

The term kil-kanakku implies that there was a classification like mel-kanakku. The works that contain less than fifty stanzas composed in different metres, generally come under the kill kanakku. But if the venba metre is pressed into service the

poem can be of any length and can still find a place in kil-kanakku. The mel-kanakku ranges from 50 to 500 stanzas and is in ahaval, kalippa, and paripadal metres. The Ettuttogai and the Pattuppattu come under the category of mel-kanakku.

The Naladiyar and the Thirukkural which come under the category of kil-kanakku deal with the three purusharthas or objects of life, dharma or righteous living, (aram), artha or wealth or secular life (porul) and kama or love (inbam). The remaining sixteen deal both with aham and puram, the object aimed at being practice of dharma or morals.

The Tirukkural (popularly known as the Muppai) is the famous work of the celebrated Tiruvalluvar who lived in the first century before the Christian era. The poem is in the form of the couplets and deals with the three aims of human life-aram, porul, and inbam. It consists of 133 chapters, each containing ten kural-venbas. Each couplet is a gem by itself and conveys lofty thoughts couched in terse language.

A brief analysis of this universal code of morals is given below.

No. of Chapters	Subject	
Book I 34 Chapters	20	The Ideal Householder —Domestic virtue based on Affection.
	14	The Ideal Ascetic —Ascetic or Higher virtue based on Grace.
Book II 70 Chapters	25	The Ideal Sovereign —Royalty
	10	The Ideal Statesman Ministers of State.
	22	The Ideal State —The Essentials of a State.
	13	The Ideal Citizen —Morality, Affirmative and Negative.
Book III 25 Chapters	25	The Ideal Lover —Furtive love ending in wedded love.

These are the seven ideals presented by this Prince of Moralists. Rendered into almost every important European Language - English, French, German and Latin - the Kural presents an ideal monarchy portrayed by this Citizen of the World within the limits of practicality and at the same time out-doing the Republic of Plato and the Oceana of Harrington. Almost free from the influx of Sanskrit words, the Kural shows the richness and power of the Tamil tongue.

The Naladiyar comes nearer the Kural than the others in this collection in point of subject-matter including the division of the subjects. It also deals with the three pursuits of human life. It contains forty chapters, each consisting of ten stanzas. This anthology, the composition of which can be attributed to different hands, owes its compilation to one Padumanar.

THE EPIC OR POST-SANGAM LITERATURE

The chief of them are five, often referred to as Ain-perum-kappiyam - the Five Major Epics. They are the Silappadikaram the Manimekalai, the Jivaka Chintamani, the Valayapati and the Kundalakesi. A pleasing fancy has been coined from their names in which the works are conceived to be five principal ornaments on the form of Tamil-anangu the Tamil Muse - the works symbolising the twinkling anklet, the gem-studded waist-girdle the gem on the chaplet, the bangles, and the ear-pendants respectively.

The last two works are entirely lost to us. We give only a brief sketch of the other three works.

Silappadikaram: Ilango-adigal is the celebrated author of the Silappadikaram. He was the second son of king Ceralatan reigning in the city of Vanji, the capital of the then Ceranadu and the younger brother of the famous king Ceran Senguttuvan. On this account, he was called Ilango or the younger prince and he was known as Ilango-adigal after his renunciation of royalty and assumption of holy orders.

The story of this Epic, according to its payiram (prefatory verses) preaches Dharma wreaking vengeance on those who failed in their kingly duties; sings the praises of the highly virtuous wife; and underlines the recoil of one's actions.

The story is simple and is related in the extract from this work reproduced elsewhere.

Barring the legendary portions of the twin epics, the Silappadikaram and the Manimekalai are the unfailing sources of information for writing the history of the ancient Tamil-land.

The Manimekalai is a sequel to Silappadikaram, and takes up the story from the death of Kannaki. The scheme as well as the plan of the story are simple.

While the story of the Silappadikaram, is of much varied interest and is presented vividly like a dramatic representation, the story of the Manimekalai is narrowed down to the aimless adventures of a Buddhist Bhikshuni (nun), sectarian in outlook.

Its author is Sittalai Sattanar known also as Kulavanikan Sattanar. Apart from its great literary value to students of Tamil literature, it is an invaluable source of information to the historical students as it contains a wealth of details regarding the political, social, and religious conditions and institutions prevalent about the beginning of the Christian era, when, it is generally accepted, this work was composed. That a mass of useful material lies buried in its pages is accepted even by acute critics.

Jivaka-Chintamani: The author of this work is Thirutthakka-Thevar. He was born at Mailapur, and was a Jain. His fame rests on Jivaka-Chintamani, which, though based on a Sanskrit original, contains an expression of Jain doctrines and beliefs. Its other title, Mudi-porul-thodar-nilai-seyyul, suggests that it treats of the fourfold objects of life and aim of a literary work, viz., virtue, wealth, pleasure and bliss. It is the story of Jivaka from his birth to the attainment of bliss. It is in 13 books or Ilambakams and contains 3145 stanzas. It is noted for its chaste diction and sublime poetry, rich in religious sentiment, full of reflections and remarks on the grounds of human action, and replete with information about the condition of the arts and customs of social life at the period of its composition. It will, therefore, interest the scholar, the poet, and the antiquary; and there is a tradition current that Kamban's Ramayanam owes much of its excellence and many of its beauties to this memorable epic.

A NOTE ON TOLKAPPIYAM

Tolkappiyam, the life-work of its author, is in three parts and counts 1,612 sutras. It is the oldest extant Tamil grammar, the name signifying 'ancient book' or the preserver of ancient institutions. It was preceded by centuries of literary culture, for it lays down rules for different kinds of poetical compositions, deduced from examples furnished by the best authors whose works had been in existence.

It treats clearly and systematically of only one of the time-honoured divisions of Tamil, viz., Iyal or Natural Tamil. The three parts of it are Eluthu (Orthography), Sol (Etymology) and Porul (Matter), each with nine sections.

When the Eluttadikaram and the Solladikaram are interesting from both linguistic and philological points of view, the Poruladikaram is most valuable as it gives us a glimpse of the political, social and religious life of the people during the period when Tolkappiyar lived.

It is the only work from which we can have a gleaning of the ancient Tamilar's manners and customs.

- (a) Eluthu: The first part deals with Letters, i.e., Orthography.
- (b) Sol: The second part on words is masterly in treatment. In this the author has attempted at finding the root meanings of words. It is a peculiarity - a peculiarity which will show the critical culture of the Tamilar-that the gender classification is based on the signification of words.
- (c) Porul: The third part, Poruladikaram is valuable as it gives us a glimpse of the political, social and religious life of the people during the period when Tolkappiyar lived.

"Porul" (Subject matter of poetry) is divided into Aham inner) and Puram (outer). Of these Aham, the Subjective deals

with love; and Puram, the Objective, relates to all other things - life in general, and especially war and the affairs of State.

(i) Aham. Love is true or natural, when mutual affection draws the parties together, and untrue or unnatural when it is one-sided (Kaikilai) or ill-assorted and morganatic or forced (perum thinai), separation (pirithal), patience in separation (iruthal), hewailing (irangal), and sulking or going into a pet (udal), and these are made to fit in with the five-fold physiological divisions (tinai). Love, again, is wedded (karpu), or furtive (kalavu); and furtive love leads to wedlock or the grave, for the rejected lovers cannot bear life without love. Marriage was solemnised by the parents on the self-choice of the lovers, and marital rites came into vogue when aliens proved untrue in their courtship. This is a bare outline of Aham.

(ii) Puram, whose subject is war and State, consists of seven divisions, the first five of which correspond to the five-fold division of true love, and the last two correspond to kaikilai and perumthinai.

Cattle-raiding is the beginning of warfare. It leads to systematic invasions of the raiders' territories. Then comes the siege, upon which the war proper begins. The war ends in victory to one party or the other, and the victor and the vanquished are counselled respectively to be sober, without being intoxicated with success, and to be calm and resigned, without being over-powered by grief. The loyal subjects of the victor pay him their joyful tribute of laudatory odes or encomia.

GEMS FROM THE TREASURE HOUSE OF TAMIL LITERATURE

PARIPADAL

(An Extract)

PRAYER

WE pray Thee not for gold
 The gold that gives us wealth ;
 We pray Thee not for wealth
 The wealth that gives us pleasure ;
 We pray Thee not for pleasure
 The pleasures we enjoy ;
 We pray and pray Thy Grace
 The Grace that comes of love ;
 We pray Thee for the love
 The all embracing love ;
 The love that comes of Righteousness ;
 We pray The Grace to lead us all
 In the path of Righteousness.
 Oh God of Kadamba wreath !

This prayer is taken from Paripadal one of the Sangam anthologies. Only 24 poems out of a reputed 70 have come down to us. They are in the form of prayers and praises to Lord Vishnu, Maruga and River Vaiyai on the banks of which the 3rd Tamil Academy stood and flourished. These poems were set to music and sung in public gatherings and private worshipping places even two thousand five hundred years ago. The contents of the prayer may sound a note of caution to the materialistic attitude of the modern world. The superiority of the eternal to the evanescent is well impressed. Logical arrangement indicates the noble culture.

PATIRRUPPATTU

(An Extract)

THE KING

FAR and wide thy fame prevails ;
As man you gather to share with men
All that sustains and gives us pleasure ;
In short, you live for all the world.
We who get our humble doles,
Hoarding not, do share with all.
As the ruler, so the subjects.

This passage is from Paditru Pattu, a work ascribed to the second century B. C. By the very name, it is a work of 10 poems of 10 stanzas each. We have today only 8 of these. Each poem is addressed to a Chera King. In one sense this is a unique work in so far as it is a collection relating to the rulers of one of the 3 Tamil Kingdoms. Moreover, it contains the largest historical reference available about these rulers.

A country becomes happy in proportion to the number of noble men who lead selfless life. Here, the poet praises the King for his selfless quality which, by ethical force, reflects even on those who are prone to be selfish.

NARRINAI

(An Extract)

HEAD AND HEART

LONELY lives my lady,
Dark shines her back
With long and lovely lock ;
Her cooling gaze did bind
My heart with her heart ;
Back sends my heart
To cheer the pining soul ;
So I turn to home
Wishing wings to fly.
“Haste Not” cries the head
“To take a task and leave
Unfulfilled is base,
Foolish and unwise”.
What about my body
In this mighty fight?
Is it to decay ?
Like a old old rope
The strands of which are worn out,
Held in tug by elephants
Of bright and mighty tusks,
Standing front to front.

This passage from Narrinai, one of the eight anthologies of the Sangam classics, narrates the disturbed mental condition of a young man who has left his home for foreign lands in search of wealth. On the emotional side, his heart drives him back to his home to be of comfort to his wife pining after him. On the intellectual side his head warns him of his duty and the silliness of leaving a task unfulfilled. He is at a fix. The simile of the old rope between two elephants is very apt and beautiful.

KALITTOGAI

(An Extract)

HILL AND THE SANDAL (WOOD)

EXCEPT to those who smear them,
Of what avail is the fragrant Sandal to the Hills,
Though they had their birth in hills.
Think well,
Your daughter is of equal use to you.

Except to those who wear them
Of what avail is the precious white pearls to the water ?
Though the water gave them birth.
Consider well,
Your daughter is of equal use to you.

Except to those who hear them
Of what avail is the sweet tune of seven strings to harp
Though the harp gave them birth.
Ponder well, Your daughter will be of equal use to you
Do not be distressed on account of this lady of countless
[virtue.
She has simply preferred her lord and has followed him
This is the true path of virtue in this life and for the
[next too.

This passage is from Kalittogai - one of the Eight Anthologies of the Sangam age.

In a desert track a fond mother going in search of her missing daughter meets some religious men and enquires whether they met her daughter going with another woman's son. The religious men realising the anxiety of the mother reply comfortingly. That reply is the content of the passage.

The author of the piece is known as Perunkadunkone.

PURANANOORU

(An Extract)

INCREASE THE RESSERVOIRS

THOU Mighty Ruler, listen to my song,
Who gives to frames of men the food
They need, these give them life ;
For food sustains the mortal frame,
But food is earth with water blent ;
So those who join the water to the earth
Build up the body, and supply its life,
Men in less happy lands sow seed, and watch to
[skies for rain

Life has been divided in Tamil poetry into two spheres - the inner life and the outer life, the subjective and the objective, the female and the male, the life of love and the life of strife. Broadly speaking, all the classical Tamil works have been and can be classified into one or the other of these two groups.

Two major anthologies have specifically been named as Purananooru, 400 poems dealing with objective motifs, and Ahananuru, 400 poems treating of subjective emotions. This passage is from Purananooru.

THIS DAY TOO

She heard the war-drums with delight and despair ;
The spear she gave in his hands, clad him in clean clothes
The straggling hair she oiled and combed,
The mother with no more than one son,
Turned him battlewards and bade him go.

This is another passage from the same collection - Purananooru, - where a heroic mother is beautifully portrayed. She had already lost her husband and her brother in the battle that was raging outside her town-gates. She has left to her a son not older than a boy. Yet she sends him to the war.

AHANANOORU

(An Extract)

(She came at his bidding)

Her face an index of unbearable turmoil within,
Heedless to his call, forlorn, softly and slowly
Her shapely feet dragged forward leaving scratches on the ground.
Thus she came near (him), her closely set teeth showing
Through a smile that budded on her lips, albeit barren was her
heart.

(He saw her and thought)

Even before she has learnt what I intend to do, my dame,
Has thought to obstruct my embarking on this venture.
Withered trees in the sun-scorched desert ;
Berries marble-like strewn thereon ;
Huge crops of rocks shaped like slabs ;
Paths with serried rows of sharpened flint-heads
Awaiting to slash the toes ;
These She seems to recall to mind and would fain ask,
' What has become of that soothing assurance of yours
When you said (long ago) "That would not be right",
If now you intend to traverse the desert
Devoid of any good.'

*

*

*

Thinking thus, like a speechless portrait
She conveyed her message by her mobile face.
And with chilling tears held back by the brimming eye-lashes,
She burried her nose in the chaplet of flowers
On the head of the son she hugged at her breast

And sighed.

Forthwith the flowers, plucked that very morning
Faded like a gem suddenly
Shorn of its lustre.

*

*

*

(He is won)

This I saw and forsook my journey,
If this be her state when I am still here,
She would certainly not survive my departure.

This extract is from Ahananooru, dealing with love themes.

A householder has fallen on evil days and had no further wealth to discharge his prime duty of giving hospitality to the guests who come to his house. He decided therefore to go to other countries and gather wealth by merchandise. He has a young wife with a little son. He calls his wife to tell her of his project. She is actually conscious of their plight and also knows that duty alone compels her husband to part from her. Her heart sinks with dread when she thinks of the cruel desert through which his route lies to other countries. She cannot openly try to stop him. But her heart would not allow her to let him go. Thus torn between her sense of duty and her deep love She comes at his bidding.

NEDUNAL VADAI

(Brief Extracts From Pattupattu By V. Chelliah in English ; General Publishers Ltd., Colombo)

When clouds to season true do circle hills
To the right and pour down copious showers new,
The earth is cold, and herdsmen that do dread
The rain and wield their cruel wands, their herd
Of mated sheep and cattle scatter wide
To graze on unknown pasture ground. Distressed,
These lonely feel in leaving wonted fields.
Long-petalled kanthal buds disfigured are
By the fall of rains. All people suffer much
From cold that bites their bodies, and they warm
Their hands before the fire, and shivering much
Apply the heat to warm their cheeks. The beasts
Forget to graze; the monkey shivering sits;
The birds that perch on trees drop down from them.
The cows now rudely spurn from them their young.
The midnight chill is like the cold on hills.....

* * *

As day, like night, is dark, the domestic dove
Whose feet are red does not dare stir abroad
In search of food with its dear loving mate,
But on the cornice stands, on one leg now,
And now on the other helpless.....

* * *

Fair dancing girls to keep their songs in tune
With small and dark-stamned yals on which they play
Warm the sweet-toned strings made useless by the cold
By rubbing them upon their swelling breasts.
The women mourn the absence of their mates.
Abundant rains thus bring in the season cold.....

.....
In an inner room attractive to the sight
Which bears a name that means a womb, there burns
A lamp with a statue of artistic work
Whose hands support a vessel full of oil
By Yav'nas made. The thick wick brightly burns

With high red-coloured flame. From time to time
 It's trimmed to rid the halls of wide-spread gloom.
 This is a stately mansion which no male
 Except the king could enter, girt by walls
 As high as hill-tops; flags wave everywhere
 Of the colours of the rainbow seen on hills.
 The long wall washed with lime like silver shines.
 The strong and rounded pillars are as dark
 As sapphire blue and shine like burnished brass.
 On it is wrought a vine with many blooms.

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There is a forty years' old rounded bed
 Constructed with smooth-chiselled tusks that once
 Belonged to tuskers huge with mighty legs
 Resembling drums and shapely foreheads grey,
 Renowned in war, which were in battle killed.
 This bed is decked with leaves that experts carved
 With chisels sharp. This wide imposing bed
 On strong legs stands made up of rounded knobs
 Well-joined, resembling breasts of pregnant dames.
 Between, the spaces have the garlic shape.
 Around the bed are pearls on fine threads strung
 That look like lattice-work. To fill the space
 Between, the frames are bound with coloured tapes
 With tiger stripes, and many-coloured hair
 Is spread on them. Above these, boards are set
 Portraying scenes such as the hunt of a lion.
 Again, above this mullai buds that grow
 In forests wide and other blooms are strewn.
 On this a mattress made of pure white down
 Of mated swan is placed, and pillows too.
 Above all this a sheet washed white and starched
 Is spread with gay flower petals o'er it strewn.

The lady parted from her lord now wears,
 On the fair, round-breasted bosom on which hung
 A pearl-strung necklace once, the marriage tie alone.
 Her locks uncombed lie on her forehead fair.
 Her small-holed ears that bear the pendant marks

Hang slightly down as she has put away
 Her long and shining ear-rings. On her wrists
 That were adorned with bangles, she now wears
 Two bracelets made of right-whorled chank, and twines
 Around her hand a simple string. She wears
 A red ring round her crimson finger shaped
 Like the fish's mouth. Her rounded hips that once
 Were draped with lovely raiments are now clothed
 With a faded garment made of shiny threads.
 She looks like a picture drawn without the paint.
 Soft maids complexioned like the mango shoot,
 Whose skins have patches wide of beauty spots,
 Whose soft round shoulders are like bamboo smooth,
 Whose breasts that look like lotus buds are bound
 With ribbons tight, whose waists are round and slight,
 Now chafe their mistress' feet. Attendants too
 Pink-faced, with iron-grey tresses, fine and soft,
 Good words of comfort to their mistress speak,
 And tell her things that are untrue and true
 Consoling her. They give assurance firm
 Her dear spouse will with speed return from war.
 Strong round-shaped tent-poles that resemble much
 Young milkless breasts, and overlaid with paste
 Are to the bed-posts joined. And on the tent
 O'erspread with wax is painted well the sky
 With the radiant moon that differs from the sun
 That moves among bright groups of stars, such as
 The strong-horned Ram. The wife notes Rohini
 That constant is found always with the moon,
 And envies much her bliss, and deeply sighs.
 She wipes away with finger red her tears
 That gath'ring in her eyes drop from her lids.
 Her maid prays: "Mother, grant him victory great,
 And end the war, and thus remove the thoughts
 That greatly pain the loving, lonely wife."

This extract is from Nedunalvadai, one of the Ten Idylls of Pattuppattu. Nedunalvadai literally means Good Long North Wind. North Wind here by metonymy stands for the Cold Season. The poem describes the cold season in country and town.

It is called "long", because the season seems long to the wife who is eagerly awaiting the arrival of her absent husband.

The wife of a warrior, probably the queen of the Pandyan king, lies in her beautiful palace in a bed of exquisite workmanship, bewailing the absence of her lord who is away in the battlefield. She has put away her splendid ornaments and dress. Her attendants try to console her by saying that her husband will return soon. They pray to the war-goddess that her husband might return soon after conquering his enemies.

The author is the famous poet, Nakkirar. He is also called Kirar (learned poet) and Nakkirar. (good kirar.)

THE KURAL
(An Extract)
LOVE (To All Beings)

1. Is there a bolt that can avail to shut up love?
The trickling tears of loving eyes would tell it out
2. The loveless to themselves belong alone:
The loving men are others' to the very bone.
3. Of precious Soul with body's flesh and bone
The Union yields one fruit, the life of love alone.
4. Love maketh the heart tender towards all,
And tenderness yieldeth that priceless treasure called
friendship.
5. Sweetness on earth and rarest bliss above,
These are the fruits of tranquil life of love.
6. The unwise say love avails with the virtuous alone;
Against evil too, the same is the resource.
7. Even as the Sun scarches the boneless worm
So does virtue the loveless one.
8. Life without love in its heart
Is like the withered tree in the desert sands putting
forth a sprout.
9. Of what avail is a lovely outside,
If love, the souls' ornament, hath no place in the heart?
10. Bodies of loveless men are bony framework clad
with skin,
Then is the body seat of life, when love resides within.

The Kural is a collection of 1330 maxims in distich form, composed by the weaver Tiruvalluvar. Kural means short strophe. Tiruvalluvar is really not a name but a title borne by the religious teachers who work among the lower castes in the South of India. We know nothing certain about the life of Tiruvalluvar. Like the Buddha and the Baghavat Gita, the Kural desires inner-freedom from the world and a mind free from hatred. Like them, it stands for the commandment not to kill and not to damage. It has appropriated all the valuable ethical results of the thought of world and life negation. In addition to this ethic of inwardness, there appears in Kural the living ethic of love.

SILAPPTHIKARAM

(An Extract from "THE WONDER THAT WAS INDIA")

by A. L. Basham, B.A., Ph.D., F.R.A.S.

(with acknowledgements)

We give an outline of the story, with a translation, considerably abridged, of its climax, which has a grimly baroque force and splendour, unparalleled elsewhere in Indian literature. It is imbued with both the ferocity of the early Tamils and their stern respect for justice, and incidentally, throws much light on the character of early Tamil kingship.

Kovalan, the son of a wealthy merchant of the city of Pugar or Kavirippattinam, married Kannagi, the lovely daughter of another merchant. For some time they lived together happily, until, at a festival at the royal court, Kovalan met the dancer Madavi, and fell in love with her. He bought her favours and in his infatuation forgot Kannagi and his home. Gradually he spent all his wealth on the dancer, even to kannagi's jewels. At last he was penniless, and returned repentantly to his uncomplaining wife. Their only fortune was a precious pair of anklets, which she gave to him willingly. With these as their capital they decided to go to the great city of Madurai, where Kovalan hoped to recoup his fortunes by trade.

On their arrival at Madurai they found shelter in a cottage, and Kovalan went to the market, to sell one of Kannagi's anklets. But the queen of Nedunjeliyan, king of the Pandyas, had just been robbed of a similar anklet by a wicked court jeweller. The jeweller happened to see Kovalan with Kannagi's anklet, and immediately siezed it and informed the king. Guards were sent to apprehend Kovalan, who was cut down immeditely, without trial. When the news was brought to Kannagi she fainted away; but she quickly recovered and, with her eyes ablaze with anger she went out into the town, carrying the remaining anklet in her hand as proof of her husband's innocence.

"Chaste women of Madurai, listen to me!

Today my sorrows cannot be matched.

Things which should never have happened have befallen me.

How can I bear this injustice?".....

“All the folk of the rich city of Madurai
 Saw her, and were moved by her grief and affliction.
 In wonder and sorrow they cried:
 ‘Wrong that cannot be undone has been done to this
 lady.’

“‘Our kings’s straight sceptre is bent’.
 What can this mean?
 Lost is the glory of the King over Kings,
 The Lord of the Umbrella and Spear!.....

“‘A new and a mighty goddess
 has come before us,
 In her hand a golden anklet !
 What can this mean?’

“ Thus, raising loud accusing voices,
 the people of Madurai befriended and comforted her
 and ’mong the tumultuous throng
 some showed her, her husband’s body.

“She, the golden vine, beheld him,
 but her he could not see.....

“Then the red-rayed sun folded his fiery arms
 and hid behind the great mountain,
 and the wide world
 was veiled in darkness

“In the brief twilight
 Kannagi cried aloud
 and the whole city
 echoed her wailing.

“In the mornig she had taken the wreath from his neck
 and decked her hair with its flowers ;
 in the evening she saw him lying
 in a pool of his own blood.

“But he saw not the agony of her grief
 as she mourned in sorrow and wrath.....

“Are there women here? Are there women
 who could bear such wrong
 done to their wedded lords ?
 Are there women here? Are there such women?

- "Are there good men here? Are there good men
 who cherish their children
 and guard them with care?
 Are there men here? Are there such men?"
- "Is there a god here? Is there a god
 In this city of Madurai, where the sword of a king
 has slain an innocent man?
 Is there a god here? Is there a god?"
- "Lamenting thus she clasped her husband's breast,
 and it seemed that he rose to his feet and said.
 'The full-moon of your face has faded',
 and he stroked her face with his hands.
- "She fell to the ground, sobbing and crying,
 and clasped her lord's feet with her bangled hands;
 and he left behind his human form
 and went, surrounded by the gods.
- "And, as he went, he said,
 'My darling, you must stay;
 'Surely this
 was a vision,' she cried.
- "I will not join my lord
 till my great wrath is appeased!
 I will see the cruel king,
 and ask for his explanation!"
- "And she stood on her feet,
 her large eyes full of tears;
 and, wiping her eyes,
 she went to the gate of the palace.
- "I saw, alas, I saw in a dream
 the sceptre fall and the royal umbrella.
 The bell at the palace gate rang of itself,
 while the whole heaven shook in confusion!"
- "A darkness swallowed the sun,
 a rainbow glowed in the night,
 and a burning meteor
 crashed to the earth by day."

“Thus spoke the Queen,
 and took her maids and her bodyguard,
 and went to the king on the lion-throne,
 and told him her evil dream.

“Then came a cry from the gate:
 ‘Ho, Gatekeeper! Ho, Gatekeeper !!
 Ho, Gatekeeper of the king who has lost wisdom,
 whose evil heart has swerved from justice!!!

“Tell the king that a woman with an anklet,
 an anklet from a pair of tinkling anklets,
 a woman who has lost her husband,
 is waiting at the gate.”

“And the gatekeeper went to the king and said:
 ‘A woman waits at the gate.
 She is not Kotravai, goddess of victory,
 with triumphant spear in her hand.....

“‘Filled with anger, boiling with rage,
 a woman who has lost her husband,
 an anklet of gold in her hand,
 is waiting at the gate.’ ”

Kannagi was then admitted to the King’s presence.

“ ‘Cruel King, this I must say.....

“ ‘My lord Kovalan came
 to Madurai to earn wealth,
 and today you have slain him
 as he sold my anklet.’

“ ‘Lady,’ said the King,
 ‘it is kingly justice
 to put to death
 an arrant thief.’ ”

Then Kannagi showed her anklet to the King. On comparing it very carefully with the remaining anklet of the pair belonging to the Queen, he realized that Kovalan had been innocent.

“When he saw it the parasol fell from his head
 and the sceptre trembled in his hand.

“ ‘I am no King,’ he said,
 ‘who have heeded the words of the goldsmith.

“ ‘I am the thief. For the first time
 I have failed to protect my people.
 Now may I die!’

(And he fell to the ground, dead)

Then Kannagi said to the Queen :

“ ‘If I have always been true to my husband
 I will not suffer this city to flourish,
 But I will destroy it as the King is destroyed !
 Soon you will see that my words are true!’

“And with these words she left the palace,
 and cried out through the city, ‘Men and women
 of great Madurai of the four temples,
 Listen! Listen you gods in heaven !

“ ‘Listen to me, you holy sages!
 I curse the capital of the King
 who so cruelly wronged
 my beloved lord !’

“With her own hand she tore the left breast from her
 Thrice she surveyed the city of Madurai, [body.
 calling her curse in bitter agony,
 Then she flung her fair breast on the scented
 [street.....

“And the burning mouth of the Fire-god opened
 as the gods who guarded the city closed their
 [doors.....

“ ‘The high priest, the astrologer and the judges,
 the treasurer and the learned councillors,
 the palace servants and the maids,
 stood silent and still as painted pictures.

“ ‘The elephant-riders and horsemen,
 the charioteers and the foot-soldiers
 with their terrible swords, all fled from fire
 which raged at the gate of the royal...

“And the street of the sellers of grain,
 the street of the chariots, with its bright-coloured
 [garlands,
 and the four quarters of the four classes
 were filled with confusion and flamed like a forest
 [on fire.....

“ In the street of the singing girls
 Where so often the tabor had sounded
 With the sweet gentle flute and the tremulous harp.....
 the dancers, whose hairs were destroyed, cried out :

“ ‘Whence comes this woman? Whose daughter is she?
 A single woman, who has lost her husband,
 has conquered the evil King with her anklet,
 and has destroyed our city with fire !’ ”

At last the patron goddess of the city interceded with Kannagi, and she agreed to withdraw her curse, and the fire abated. Weak with loss of blood from her self-amputated breast, Kannagi struggled to a hill outside the city where, after a few days, she died, and was reunited with Kovalan in heaven. Meanwhile the news of her death spread throughout the Tamil Land. She was deified, and temples raised and festivals held in her honour, and she became the patron goddess of wifely loyalty and chastity.

SAIVITE SAINTS

Devotional Poems

No man holds sway o'er us,
Nor death nor hell fear we;
No tremblings, griefs of mind,
No pains nor cringings see.
Joy, day by day, unchanged
Is ours, for we are His,
His ever, who doth reign,
Our Sankara, in bliss.
Here to His feet we've come,
Feet as plucked flow'rets fair;
See how His ears divine
Ring and white couch-shell wear.

St. APPAR.

MY LORD'S FEET

The faultless harp, the evening moon,
The fanning breeze of Southern hills,
The splendour of the rising Spring
The pond where bees do humming swarm-
So soothing is the shelter sweet
Of God my Father's holy feet.

Though signs and symbols, temples fair,
And creeds and thousand scriptures speak
To teach His ways that you may learn,
Oh stupid men, why, why is it
Your minds to Him do scarce incline ?

The Lord abides in hearts of men
That think of Him and love and pine.
He smiles at water, flowers, shed
In worship by the false within;
Ashamed for them He laughing stands.

St. APPAR

The religious period in Tamil literature which ranges between the 6th and 12th centuries after Christ has produced many valuable poems of Devotional type with literary excellence and philosophical trend.

These passages are from St. Appar's Thevaram. In these he expresses the joy of a devotional frame of mind and regrets that many have not turned to that side. In the third piece he decries the formal worship without true love. St. Appar is one who has made experiments with religions and finally settled in Saiva Siddhanta. He lived to the ripe age of 84. He belongs to the 7th century A. D.

THE CUCKOO'S ERRAND

Cocks now crow to the morn,
While the cuckoos loudly call;
Little birds sweetly sing,
And the conch-shell sounds o'er all;
Light of stars fades away
Into common light of day;
Dawn and sun come as one,
Now to us, O God, display

In Thy love Thy twin feet,
Gracious, decked with anklets rare.
Siva, Lord, dweller in holy Perundurai fair,
Hard for all men to find,
Yet to me Thou shewedst Thy face.
Now O Lord of us all,
From Thy couch rise in Thy grace.

MANICKKAVACAGAR

PIOUS FEAR

I fear not serpents lurking smooth;
I fear no liars' feigned truth;
But when I see fools venturing
E'en to the foot of Him our King,
Our three-eyed Lord with matted hair,
Of His great godhead unaware,
Fools thinking other gods can be,
Terror such sight inspires in me.

I fear no javelin's gory blade;
Nor sidelong glance of bangled maid;
But when I see men void of grace
Drinking no sweetness from the praise
Of my unchiselled Gem, whose dance
In Tillai's hall is seen, whose glance
Melts men's whole frame in ecstasy,
Terror such sight inspires in me.

MANICKKAVACAGAR.

These two passages are from the Tiruvacagam of Manikkavacagar who along with Sambandar, Appar and Sundarar are called "THE FOUR" in Tamil-land.

VAISHNAVITE SAINTS

Devotional Poems

Despair not. There is yet escape from the cold clutches of Death. Ere the mists gather round your eyes, ere you feel the death-rattle, ere your kith and kin crowd round you slyly whispering and asking for your hidden treasure, ere words struggle and stick in your throat, build in your heart a temple for the Lord, and for ever worship Him. Offer at His altar your humble flowers of love and service.

PERIALVAR.

Sin not against your sacred self. Cast off your allegiance to man and no more a bond-man be. Come out of your cobwebs of useless learning and shatter the outworn creeds in which you have been suckled and cradled so long. I have known the measureless and unsearchable one, whom the sages worship in the silent shrine of their being. Come and sing with me unto His glory.

THIRUMANGAI MANNAN.

Oh, King of Kings! hear our prayers and lead us from darkness to light. In a dungeon dark, we, sons of sin and sorrowl groan and stretch our arms to you. Infinite is your compassion; for you become a prisoner in many a house of lay and bear the burden of our sins. And for our resurrection to a life eterna, you forge the very keys of heaven.

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Oft have I watched the skies to spell the mystery of the stars. What those unnumbered sprays were, I never knew But, bewitched by them, when I lay still, out of the silence of my heart there broke the ripple of a song. "The stars, glimmering through ages, are no mere sparks that dot the endless plains of the night; but flowers culled by the heavenly throng, and offered at the alter of the unknown."

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I knocked at the gates of heaven; wonder siezed the council of the Gods. And they stood musing, that a lily of the dale should long for the freedom of the stars. But I told them, it is the privilege of the earth-born to aspire unto the kingdom of heaven.

NAMMALVAR.

KAMBA RAMAYANAM

(Extracts From V. V. S. Aiyer's Studies in
Kamba Ramayana)

When Ravana finds his enemy's strength by bitter experience, he has Kumbakarna awakened from his sleep, and after feeding him with cart-loads of meat and casksful of wine asks him to march against the Vanara army. The words of Vibhishna which he had heard at the time of the war-council must be supposed to have impressed themselves upon Kumbakarna's mind and entered deeply into his soul during his hibernation, for, he addresses Ravana now in quite a different strain altogether. He speaks in this wise:

'Is war begun, and grief of Sita, chaste
Beyond compare, is it unended yet?
Is our good name that filled the earth and heaven
Become a story of the past? And day
Of our final doom foretold, has it begun
To dawn?.....
Destruction hangs o'er thee and all thy house,
Inevitable'.....

Want we for our success?
.....One final word
I'll say to thee. If thou would hear, It '11 do
Thee good. If thou would not, I fear thy fate
Is doomed. So send this damsel to her spouse.
And falling at his feet, conciliate
Thy brother and live in peace. If this thou hatest
To do, and dost decide to fight to th' end,
Battle at least with all thy forces joined,
And try to overwhelm the foe'

But all this advice is only gall and wormwood to the proud Ravana.

'Tis not to consult thee,' said he, 'that I
Did call thee here'. I bid thee go and fight
The men: Art thou a councillor sage, that thou,
Presum'st to give advice? A craven thou,
Afraid to face the foe in battle!

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Vibhishan's gone before;
Follow thou him and fall at the feet of men
And hunch-backed monkeys all.

So saying, Ravana stood up and made ready to start for the field, but Kumbakarna stopped him. And taking his mighty trident in his hand, he fell at his brother's feet and thus spoke to him :

'Forgive me, my brother, I go: but I hope not
For victory against the Men. 'Tis fate
That drives me on. This day will be my last
Upon the earth. But brother, at least when I'm
No more, release the human damsel fair.
I see no other way.'

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.....These eyes, alas, will look no more
Upon thy dear face! I take thy leave.'

He left the presence followed by the tearfilled eyes of Ravana and those about him. He then ascended his car and marched at the head of vast army. Rama saw his colossal form from far away, and, amazed, asked Vibhishana who and what he was. After saying that he was his own elder brother and that he was the terror of the gods, Vibhishana added that he had like himself advised Ravana to send back Sita, but that, though Ravana had refused to listen to his advice, he had decided to fight and perish on the field. Sugriva who was by, suggested now that they should try to separate him from Ravana and win him over to their side. Rama agreed, and as they were thinking as to who was the fit person to approach him, Vibhishana offered to go himself.

The whole of this scene between Kumbhakarna and Vibhishana is Kamban's own invention, and he has worked it up grandly. He brings out beautifully the contrast between loyalty to a losing cause and loyalty to Dharma but which is coupled with disloyalty to one's king and brother.

Vibhishana passed the pickets of the Rakshasa army and sent word to his brother that he was come to see him. Kumbakarna, while he was sorry, unknowing his purpose, that Vibhishana had left Rama's camp, was yet delighted to have the opportunity of casting a last look upon his brother, and ordered him to be brought before him. Vibhishana came in and saluted his brother by falling at his feet.

He lifted up the brother that clasped his feet,
And folding him unto his breast, he thus
Addressed him: 'I was glad to learn, my brother,
That thou hadst left our doomed camp and ta'en
Refuge with Ram. Why leav'st thou now his side,
Thou innocent, and come to us that rush
Headlong into the jaws of death? Wilt thou
Exchange thy nectar for our poison black?
Although our glory's sun is set for ever,
I thought Pulastya's race would be redeemed.

By thee, and I was glad. But thou hast dried
 My lips and broke my heart by thy return.
 Thou hast thrown thy self at their feet who are
 The props of Dharma, and they will never give
 Thee up, e'en when it means their death. Thou'rt freed
 From curse of death so long as men praise Ram,
 And thou hast 'scaped the curse of Rakshas birth:
 What further craving then does bring thee here?
 By serving th' One Supreme with all thy soul
 Thou hast the blessing gained of holy life
 And pure: wilt thou yet look on us as kin
 Who hanker after others' wives? Great Brahm
 Has blessed thee with a righteous heart, my child,
 And wisdom unsurpassed: while Rama's word
 Has given e'erlasting life. And still thou'rt here:
 I fear they have not cured the cravings low
 Of thy Rakshas birth!.....

If thou do spurn the shelter he has given
 And cast thy lot with us, pray tell me, brother,
 When all the Rakshas race is swept from off
 The face of th' earth by Rama's furious darts,
 Who will be there to offer sacrifice
 To our Manes? Go back, therefore, to Raghava
 And enter Lanka after it is purged
 Of all this sinful crew; and, crowned by Ram
 Enjoy a reign of glory unsurpassed!

Vibhishana heard to the end and told his brother the purpose of his visit in
 these words :

'The grand-souled hero who his mercy sweet
 Has showered on me unworthy, will accept
 Thy homage too, if thou wilt come to him
 And save thee from the cycle of birth and death.
 The crown that he has offered me, I'll place
 At thy feet, and serve thee as my king and lord,
 For thou art elder born.

Though great thy valour, thou hast not tasted joys
 Of sovereign power, but wasted all thy youth
 And manhood in unbecoming sleep. And now

Desirest thou to fight for sin, and waste
 Thy life itself? O brother, follow me:
 The time itself is ripe; and blessed by Ram
 Conquer thy sleep and gain eternal life
 And sovereignty which is thy right. Perhaps,
 Thou thinkest it disgrace to owe thy crown
 To Ram. But know that

'Tis he that in the fulness of his love
 And mercy sent me here. Do e'er the wise
 Go gathering flowers when fruits hang ripe upon
 The tree? Abandon thou therefore the camp
 Of Sin and follow me'

So saying, Vibhishana again fell at Kumbakarna's feet. The great heart of Kumbakarna was touched, but the resolution of his mind was not shaken. So, taking up his brother and embracing him once again, he thus spoke to him while tears flowed down freely from his sable cheeks:

'Can I refuse to give my life for him
 Who all these years has cherished me, and now
 Has sent me to the field to fight? Is life
 So dear, that's transient as the wavelets playing
 On the flowing stream? So if thou want'st to heal
 My sorrow, brother, tarry not, but do
 Return to Ram. By great devotion thou
 Has't got from Brahm the blessing of a heart
 That's free from thoughts of sin: The crown therefore
 Of all the worlds doth well befit thy head.
 But I'm a sinner born, and Fate is just
 That dooms me to death;—and it will crown
 My head with glory's light, my sole delight.

When kings do swerve from virtue, 'tis but right
 To chide and try to turn their hearts from sin.
 But if they would not hear, can those who have
 Their bounties tasted see their masters run
 To ruin, unmoved? No, when the enemies press,
 They'll gird their swords, and seek their fate upon
 The field before he falls foredoomed. When Ram
 Does aim his fatal darts, and Ravan falls
 Embracing the earth; surrounded by his kin

And loyal troops, shall he a brother lack
 To fall with him,—he who the worlds and gods
 Without a rival ruled? And when his arms
 That lifted sheer the rock of Shiv are tied
 With cruel cords by messengers of Death,
 Shall he with downcast eyes approach the throne
 Of Yam, his vassal e'en today, without
 A brother by his side?

And can I brook—

Ev'n I who have defeated the God of Death
 Himself—can I consent to pass my days,
 Singing with an aching heart the praise of him
 Who will have pierced my brother's mighty chest?

So tarry not, my child; and if thou have
 Regard for me, or love, return to Ram,
 Abide with him. Think not I can be turned
 From my resolve by further words. Now go;
 And when w're dead, (this is my dying prayer)
 Do soothe our Manes with Vedic rites, and save
 Us from the gates of hell. Weep not, my brother
 When time doth smile on us, all things we touch
 Are turned to gold; but when the tide has fled
 Despite our every care we rush to ruin,
 Helpless. What can I tell thee more whose eyes
 See straight and clear? So do not pity us
 Nor waste thy tears, but go from hence in peace.'

He ended, and embracing Vibhishana once again he said with tears flowing down his cheeks unchecked.

'This day doth break for ev'r the tie that bound
 Us from our childhood's days!'

Vibhishana's tongue was parched. Tears filled his eyes and his heart was big with unspeakable grief. But as Kumbakarna was firm in his resolve, he saw that he could not do anything more to change his mind, and so he fell at his feet once again and without a word turned back his step towards Rama's camp.

SAKKIYAR

No matter is whatever manner one lives, whatever garb
one wears
What matters is never to forget the Feet of Sankara of
abiding glory.
Thus concluded he, and
Holding thus, did not discard the garb he wore, but with
the aid of surging love
He stood steadfast in unforgetfulness of Siva, the
Immaculate.

SAKKIYAR was a Buddhist monk who turned a worshipper of Siva. But he did not discard the robes of his former order. He had laid down for himself a rule of worshipping Siva before he took his food for the day. He chose a shrine nearby and for flower he used to pick up a pebble and fling it at the idol.

This routine with zest he unfailingly did.

If we were to say what this act of the devotee turned to be,
[it was this—
An action born of pure and abiding love is to the Pure One
A worship of the highest order. Such is the law of the
Path of Love.

This extract is taken from Sekkilar's Lives of the Saints. This is a biography in poetry of 63 saints and apart from its value as a record of the lives of the saints it is a work of great poetical merit and through that quality alone is a source of great pleasure to all lovers of Tamil.

LATTER DAY DEVOTIONAL SONGS

DESIRES

ENDLESS are the desires;
Though the whole of earth they reign,
To seas they think extending rule;
Those who equal God of wealth
In gold and riches, roam to learn
The art of making gold and they
That lived the longest days, do seek
The aid of herbs to live for ever;
All these getting sore at heart,
Eat and drink and nothing more.
Let me rest content with what
I have got as gifts from you,
Without running hither and thither;
Oh all pervading Beatitude
Save me from the sea of passions
Grant me thought free purest stage.

This passage from the works of St. Thayumanavar may bring consoling message to the troubled minds of many modern magnates. He was finance minister of the Nayak Kingdom of Tiruchirappalli in the later part of the 16th century. He is one of the philosophers of the highest order. His poems have brought calmness to many of the disturbed minds. In his diction Sanskrit and Tamil mix in harmony like honey and milk. In his philosophy all the systems find happy golden mean.

MY APPEAL

THOSE that are Dead to Noble life,
Should get their life and live again;
High and Low should disappear,
As equals all should live in world;
One in soul the world should live,
And offer themselves at Thy feet;
I should live in changless state
One with you my God my father
This is my appeal, hear and grant.

This is a passage from the poems of St. Ramalingar who lived in the last century. Besides being a poet and philosopher our saint is a very great humanitarian who spread the cult of love to all beings. His verses are in a simple soul stirring language which finds ready response in all hearts. In the above passage he prays for the regeneration of men who have become dead to human values and envisages a society without any distinction, inequality, and differences of any kind; and further prays that all human beings should feel one in soul and conduct the affairs of the world with an harmonious freedom. Finally he prays that he should be helpful in bringing the mankind to the service of God and making the humanity reach the eternal bliss.

TO HIS CHILD

2. Go fly about and roam thou free,
A nestling flitting merrily;
And let thy heart leap at the sight
Of birds so beautiful and bright.
3. The pecking hen that clucks about,
Be friends with her, nor fall thou out;
The wary, thievish crow, by thee
Should be regarded tenderly.
4. The cow that milks abundantly,
Remember, hath been good to thee.
The dog that comes with wagging tail
Is man's good friend who will not fail.
6. Thou shouldst not tell a lie, my dear,
Nor back-bite in a listening ear;
The Lord is our true Friend, and He
Will evil suffer ne'er to thee.
7. If thou shouldst see a wicked thing,
No terror to thee let it bring.
But trample it beneath thy feet,
Spit in the devil's face, my sweet.

BHARATI.

(with acknowledgements to Mrs. Jesudasan)

A PLOT OF LAND

1. A plot of land—great Deity!
A plot of land I beg of thee;
With pillars beautiful and bright,
and rising storeys gleaming white,
Build thou for me a castle there:
May palm-trees wave their green leaves fair,
And their delicious milk supply,
While springs refreshing gurgle by.
2. Green palm-trees, these I do require,
Some ten or twelve beside me there;
And like a soft and pearly shower
Bright moonbeams send thou me, great Power!
And cause within my ears to fall
The distant cuckoo's gentle call;
Do thou send me the evening breeze,
That softy fans, my heart to please.
3. A faithful wife give thou to me,
In all my songs to mingle free;
And bring us poetry divine,
That our delights it may refine;
In that most solitary space,
Great Mother, guard us with thy grace!
And grant that by my gift of song
My sceptre over the world be strong:

BHARATI.

(with acknowledgements to Mrs. Jesudasan)

With the mounting tide of nationalism early in this century, the Tamils began to look back with pride on their past and set about freeing the present from the degradation that had set in. Bharati, the poet, was the voice of this newly-awakened national consciousness. He rescued Tamil Literature from the stagnation and brought it into the main current of national life. Tamil verse regained its vigour and naturalness and a new Tamil prose, direct, plastic and functional was born.