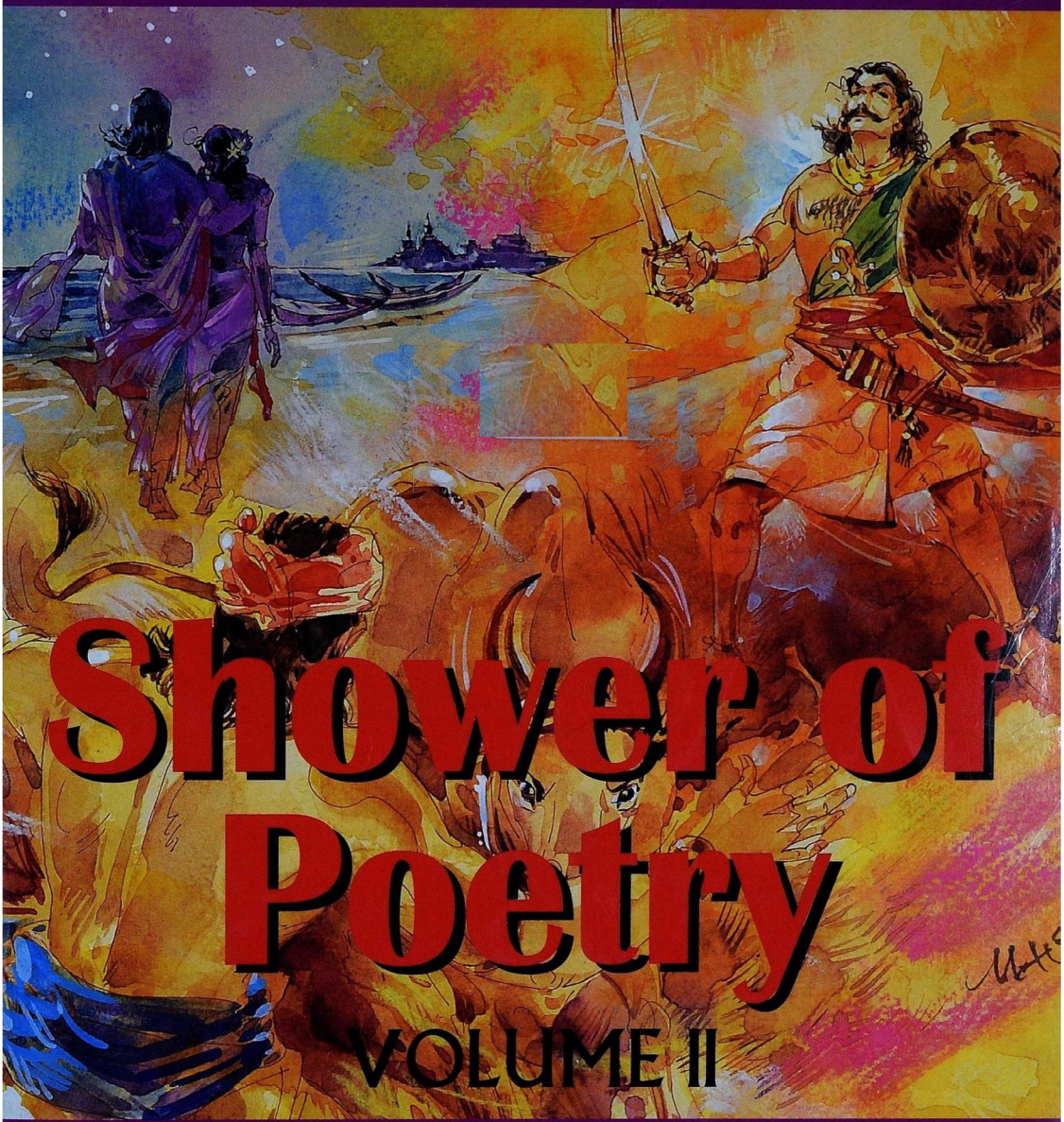
Kalaignar in English Translation



Shower of Poetry

VOLUME II

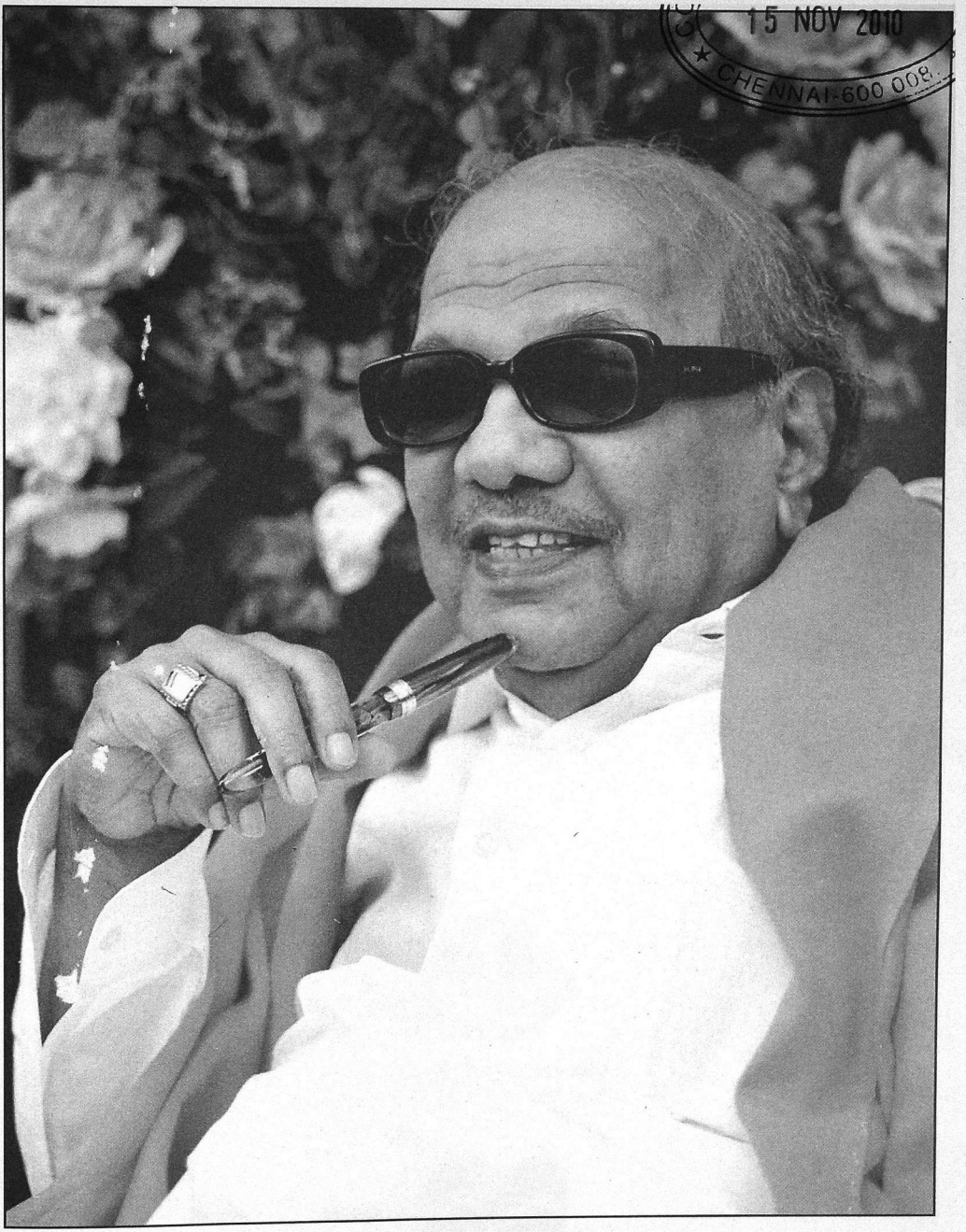
BHARATHIAR UNIVERSITY

Kalaignar M Karunanidhi is essentially a poet, and even his prose writings have a heavy preponderance of poetic diction and poetic deviances. His intrinsic passion for poetic expression transcends his apparent limitations on technique, and the resultant poetic style has become a defining characteristic of all that he has written, both prose and poetry.

Kalaignar's is poetic prose or prose poetry, which is poetic insofar as it is infused with imagery of an original kind, and expresses things in adequate language, matching language to the thought and the mood. His poems, in particular, demonstrate his uncommon ability to strike at the right word and the right image by which to evoke his thoughts.

Most of his poems touch and disturb the mind of the learner or the reader, born as they are out of the disturbance the poet feels at the innermost depths of his heart over the external happenings, which range from the significant socio-political events of the day through concerns about the Tamil language and the Tamil culture to things romantic at one end and rational at the other.

Kalaignar's poetic expression is natural and spontaneous. It is not interesting thoughts dressed up in flowery language, nor is it a mental exercise of a laboured kind, metrically structured. He neatly fits into the Keatsian conception of poetry coming naturally as leaves to a tree, surprising by fine excess, and not by singularity.



Dr Kalaignar M. Karunanidhi

Kalaignar in English Translation

Shower of Poetry
Volume II

Translated by

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Edited by

P. Marudanayagam

V. Murugan



Bharathiar University
Coimbatore, India



MACMILLAN



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M. Karunanidhi
Chief Minister

Secretariat
Chennai - 600 009
Date: 12.05.2009

Foreword

I am extremely happy to know that Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, has taken the initiative to bring out a selection of my writings in English.

Bharatidasan, a formidable revolutionary poet, instilled in the Tamils an intense love for Tamil in such exhortations as

May you thunder, O Conch!
That the never diminishing Tamil
Is our life-breath and our prosperity.

Periyar E.V. Ramasamy and Perarignar Anna devoted their entire lives to promote among the Tamils an awareness of the dignity of their race. Following in their footsteps, from my childhood to this day I have immersed myself in the task of writing in order to keep the Tamil youth ever vigilant because of my desire that the Tamil land and the Tamil society should progress rising to the level of the rest of mankind. With this end in view, my writings have taken numerous forms such as poetry, drama, fiction, essay, epistle and travelogue.

Many have admiringly observed and continue to observe that my literary output has also contributed to the onward march of the Tamils in several spheres. In such a context, let me unreservedly and to my heart's content praise Bharathiar University, especially its Vice Chancellor, Dr G. Thiruvasagam, for his efforts to publish the most significant of those writings in English.

My thoughts have always centred round the idea that the Tamils should awaken and that the Tamil land should achieve worldwide progress. May these translations effectively serve that cause dear to my heart!

To
Dr G. Thiruvasagam
Vice Chancellor
Bharathiar University
Coimbatore

(M. Karunanidhi)

Vice Chancellor's Note

There is a close parallel between the nationalist Tamil poet Subramania Bharathi (after whom this University is named) and Kalaignar M. Karunanidhi in that both of them have a deep-rooted conviction in art being an agent of social transformation and the writings of both seek to release people from the shackles of slavery and show them the way of dignity and self-respect.

Bharathiar firmly believed that at the root of all social problems lay the evil of the caste system. All his life, he stressed that there were only two castes – the righteous and the unrighteous, the former superior and the latter inferior. A standing example of the might of the pen over the sword, Bharathiar's writings played a very significant role not only in gaining freedom for India from foreign yoke but also in unfettering his countrymen from the utterly dehumanizing beliefs and practices of the Indian society.

Kalaignar, remaining in the forefront of the fight against social inequality in all its forms, is a writer with ingrained social consciousness and has fathered numerous social reforms as the head of the government and as the leader of a political party, thanks to which people from the sections of the society once looked down as being incapable of thought and knowledge are today intellectuals, professionals and leaders of men.

A grand fusion of Periyar, Anna and Bharathiar, Kalaignar stands as a towering personality. Kalaignar now at 86, age has not withered his intellect nor has time made his writings stale.

Determined to secure a presence for Tamil literature and culture on the global scene, this University has already translated Bharathi's poems into English and conferred the"Bharathi Tamil Chemmal"award on Kalaignar in 2007, the University's Silver Jubilee year. The present endeavour, translation of Kalaignar's works into English, is a major step towards realizing this goal.

G. Thiruvasagam

Prologue

Kalaignar M. Karunanidhi's literary works in English translation should constitute a gift of the Tamil language to world literature.

In so far as Kalaignar is both a visionary writer and an active practitioner of his vision, he is a phenomenon unto himself, standing a rung or two above his fellow artists of all genres.

Kalaignar's significance in the history of Tamil literature primarily lies in his restoration and renewal of the pristine glory of Tamil, the language that is the mother of the Dravidian family of languages and that is one of the primary classical languages of the world.

Kalaignar's creativity began to manifest in his concern for the ethnic identity of the Tamils and the aesthetic exuberance of the Tamil language, and today it has matured into a seminal contribution to world literature.

Looked at the need for winning international recognition for Tamil literature, especially in the context of the other pan-Indian language, Sanskrit, enjoying worldwide attention and study, the present translations of Kalaignar's selected works into English are an attempt in the right direction.

Such of these translations are also a need of the hour for the Tamil language to demonstrate its capacity for indestructibility and rejuvenation, at this hour of the prognosticatory threat of the social scientists that globalization would in its wake see the languages of ethnic communities either wear off or die out.

Kavipperarasu Vairamuthu

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Introduction

Kalaignar M. Karunanidhi, born in 1924 in a hamlet of Thanjavur in the southern part of India, has eminently succeeded in making spectacular contributions both as a statesman and as a man of letters. His has been a full life providing ample space for diplomacy, social reformation and creative writing. Neither a philosopher nor a full-fledged academic living in an ivory tower, he has the courage and the wisdom to think and to act remarkably. A prolific writer endowed with unusual powers of observation and meditation, he has been ceaselessly adorning his beloved Mother Tamil with a steady stream of writings, leaving no genre untouched. It may be poetry or prose, song or verse, essay or story, play or fiction, social novel or historical novel, creative writing or criticism, memoir or autobiography, script for a film or a play, broadcast or speech – he can handle it with astonishing ease. What he has written till today may run to more than fifty volumes of 300 to 400 pages each.

What Karunanidhi states in the first volume of his autobiography about the year in which he was born is a telling comment on the ethos of the times as well as on the political, social and cultural forces that moulded his world-view. That was a year which witnessed momentous events. Lenin, the supreme architect of the communist revolution in Russia, died and Stalin came to power. Trotsky's advocacy of violent worldwide revolution was abandoned in favour of Stalin's plan for *"socialism in one country"* and the communist leaders decided to adapt the movement to the differing situations in various countries. Turkey became a republic under the presidentship of Kemal Ataturk during whose fifteen-year reign, the country's political and economic structure as well as its religious and social bases was totally transformed. Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, written during his incarceration in Bavaria, preaching anti-semitism, power worship and disdain for morality and outlining his strategy for world domination later became the bible of

the Nazi party. Since all the empires had been weakened by the first world war, many colonies boldly rose in revolt against them.

When Nazism, Fascism and Communism were becoming prominent in the West, Gandhian ideology started taking shape in India. It was in 1924 that Gandhiji, released from prison, became the President of the Indian National Congress and Jawaharlal Nehru was elected its General Secretary. India had awakened from its deep slumber and Gandhiji's appearance on the political scene electrified the Indian masses. The Belgaum Congress meet had the party's future course of action mapped out. Though most of the Indian political leaders were unanimous in their view that the British should be driven away from the country, they were hopelessly divided with regard to the strategies to be developed for dealing with the foreign power. The labour unions in the country were gradually becoming stronger and stronger. The feudal lords and zamindars were waging a losing battle against the tillers of the soil. If in the south seeds were sown for organized fights for social justice, in the north there appeared signs of disruption of communal harmony.

It was in 1924 that Periyar E.V. Ramasami planned an epic battle against the evil of untouchability that later earned him the title of Vaikkam Hero. Besides laying a firm foundation for the labour movement in Tamilnadu, Thiru. Vi. Kalyanasundara Mudaliyar became a fierce fighter for the country's freedom. Finally, Karunanidhi significantly adds that it was the year in which "the revolutionary of revolutionaries, who dispelled the thousand-year-old darkness of the Tamil land," Arignar Anna, was a high school student equipping himself for the historic role he was going to play.

In this chronicle he is able to identify, of course with the benefit of hindsight, the intellectuals and men of action who later became his models as well as those against whom he had to define himself. Though all those personalities, movements, parties and ideologies might have attracted his attention at an impressionable age, he was going to choose Periyar and not Gandhiji, Arignar Anna and not Jawaharlal Nehru, the party wedded to Dravidian ideals and not the Congress, Periyar's Marxism and not Nehruvian socialism, and Tamilnadu and not India. To him, as to his guides and companions in the Dravidian Movement, the social and cultural emancipation of the Dravidians was of greater importance than even the political freedom of the country.

Even as a fourteen-year-old adolescent, Karunanidhi was captivated by the self-respect movement of Periyar E.V. Ramasami, whose fiery speeches and writings exerted an irresistible influence on several thousands of young men and women of Tamilnadu during the early decades of the twentieth century. To the politically,

socially, economically and culturally oppressed of the Tamil land, Periyar appeared as a new messiah who could save them from the atrocities perpetrated against them in the name of religion. His words and deeds, ideas and activities, principles and practices took the southern part of India by storm as he travelled the length and breadth of it tirelessly, asking the Dravidians to become aware of their racial identity and to boldly fight for their release from the shackles of slavery, superstition and inferiority complex which, in his view, had been the handiwork of an alien race. The young Karunanidhi was one of his prize catches.

If Periyar's thoughts made an indelible impression on him, Arignar Anna's powerful oratory became a perennial source of inspiration. He thoroughly soaked himself in Anna's speeches and writings, committed numerous admirable utterances of his to memory and revelled in quoting them as often as possible. When it came to his own speeches, he didn't slavishly imitate Anna but scrupulously developed a distinct style of his own. If Anna's ornate and colourful prose is almost verse and if every paragraph of his can be turned into a *viruttappā* by a few slight modifications, Karunanidhi's prose is punchy, heavily ironic and full of witticisms. If every sentence in the former's speech, having a lyrical charm of its own, is a case of "linked sweetness long drawn out," every sentence in the latter's speech moves fast and quickly reaches its carefully planned climax. If Anna's mastery of Tamil prose is almost unsurpassed, every speech of Karunanidhi is a sparkling performance. One would be reminded of the comparison Dryden draws between Demosthenes and Cicero:

> One warms you by degrees; the other sets you on
> fire all at once and never intermits his heat. ...
> One persuades, the other commands.

Of all the modern poets, it was Bharatidasan, the organ voice of the Dravidian movement, who won his heart by a poetry that galvanized the Tamils into action. He can use Bharatidasan's similes, phrases, lines and whole poems to dramatic effect in his own speeches and dialogues for films. Inspired by Bharatidasan's play *Iraṇiyaṉ allatu Iṇaiyaṟṟa Vīraṉ*, he reconstructed the myths relating to Ravana, Vali, Hiranya and Indrajit. The Dravidian stance on many more legends, myths, literary representations and historical personages was later exquisitely articulated by Karunanidhi in different genres and modes.

Kalaignar's lack of college education or of classroom learning of ancient Tamil writings never stood in the way of his becoming an accomplished writer and competing with the university wits of his time. Energetic and strenuous self-schooling more than made up for it. Plunging into studies of classical and modern Tamil works, he got as much out of them as any contemporary Tamil scholar

could. He took to *Tolkāppiyam, Tirukkuṟaḷ, Eṭṭuttokai, Pattuppāṭṭu, Cilappatikāram, Maṇimēkalai, Kaliṅkattupparaṇi* and Sundaraṉār's *Maṉōṉmaṇiyam* just as fish take to water, and a sound knowledge of these stood him in good stead by shaping his vision of life and having quite an impact on the texture of his prose and poetry. Besides writing learned expositions of some of these texts, he could provide new renderings of many of these into lucid modern Tamil so that they could easily reach the masses. Because of his re-presentations of *Tirukkuṟaḷ* in more than one form, Tiruvalluvar became a household name in Tamilnadu.

There is no simple yardstick with which the performance of any writer can be assessed. It has to vary from group to group if not from individual to individual for there are writers and writers. Their missions vary; their methods differ. Gandhiji was a prolific writer but would never claim the title of an artist. Among those that have produced many works of lasting value, there have been political revolutionaries such as Lenin, Trotsky and Mao Tse-Tung, political theorists such as Hobbes, Thomas Paine and Karl Marx, statesmen such as Abraham Lincoln, Winston Churchill and Malraux, philosophers such as Voltaire, Bertrand Russell and Sartre, activists such as Mahatma Gandhi, Periyar E.V. Ramasami and Martin Luther King and scientists such as Charles Darwin, Julian Huxley and Einstein. The writings of these can't be measured against those of creative artists such as Flaubert, Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot, who firmly believed that artistry was of primary importance and that their loyalty to language came before everything else.

Karunanidhi is almost equally split between his responsibilities to art and politics. He may be in or out of power; he may be the Chief Minister of Tamilnadu or the Leader of the Opposition but his creative vigour shows no signs of abating. The older he grows, the more voluminous the literary output happens to be. For the life, career and achievement of Karunanidhi, we can find three amazingly close parallels in contemporary world histoy: Arthur Koestler, Pablo Neruda and Wole Soyinka. Koestler, who, interestingly begins his autobiography with an account of what happened in different parts of the world on his birthday, was a communist when he was in his twenties, left the party during the Stalin purge trials, became an influential spokesman of the non-communist left and is now remembered for his writings characterized by an impressive journalistic style and a sense of commitment. Neruda earned a name as a poet, diplomat and communist leader, received the Nobel Prize for literature while serving as ambassador to France and is known for his highly personal poetry in the collection *Twenty Love Poems and One Song of Despair* and for his writings that glorify his home country's landscape and condemn the exploitation of the Red Indians. Soyinka, a Nigerian

revolutionary, playwright, poet and novelist, has won international acclaim for his writings which combine Western and Yoruba traditions.

Karunanidhi's writings, dashed off in the white heat of inspiration in the midst of a hectic schedule, are in Tamil, at once a classical and modern language that has, because of several centuries of constant use, become a supple medium of prose and verse. They have to be made available in English if the world at large, especially the West, has to recognize their power and glory.

Prof. P. Marudanayagam

Preface

I must confess, at the very outset, how keenly I enjoyed translating the selected verses from Kalaignar's *Sangath Thamizh!* (included in the present volume) I see this as a wonderful and much wished for opportunity to compensate for what I missed as a youth at school and college, in disciplining myself in the study of classics like *Puranaanuuru!* These classics, as academic prescriptions, were in those days, I believe, thrust down our unwilling throats. The language was totally new, (like Old and Middle English for the English language student), the words quite unfamiliar, the form and style forbidding, the music of verse rough and rugged, and the prosody, difficult. More often than not, the teacher also seemed to be talking over our heads. Even if inspired they were, there was not the slightest temptation in us to turn to the classics! When in later life, I became a professional academic in English, the need for returning to the study of these great works did not arise! And when Kalaignar wrote in the brief introduction to *Puranaanuurruth Thay (The Mother in Puranaanuuru),* in his *Kavithai Mazhai,* that "like the dauntless warriors who put to flight the Aryans of the North, on the banks of the fiercely flowing Ganges, the style of *Puranaanuuru* is as equally tough," it was with great relief I received it!

But when I began translating into English these verses of Kalaignar, in his modern presentation, all my reluctance and resistance melted, and with great delight I began to read them in *Sangath Thamizh* , for I found in them a music new from a classic mould!

Each poem, as it were, was an absorbing and aesthetic narrative, as musically presented, and as sensuously written. The manners and morals of the Tamils of the timeless past are so endearingly and admiringly presented that we are gripped by the power and vitality of ancient Tamils' life and culture, and are tempted to read each poem at one sitting, without laying the book aside. Throughout his renditions, Kalaignar has made the original classic so pleasant and agreeable, so readable and likable, so picturesque and pictorial, so enjoyable, that he seems to

bring his rich and varied experiences as a story maker (for the cinema) to the fore! Each poem is a vast canvas of many-splendoured colours and scenes that carry us away, in a willing suspension of disbelief, to a world of another order which overawes us, as though we were watching a movie in cinemascope! Each poem lends itself to a cinematic presentation, with the valorous Tamil hero and the belle of a beautiful heroine, in the backdrop of the famous five scenic and natural divisions of Tamil land and soil, and all the corollary of the machinery of Nature with them.

I dare say, a stunning blockbuster of an action movie could be produced on the basis of such poems as 'Karikaalan of the Kaviri Country,' 'The Brother for the Head did Ask!,' 'The Queen on the Cot of a Soft Bed and the King in a Cold Army Camp,' 'The Soldier of Honour,' and 'Injustice She Avenged and Enmity She Ended,' to cite a few examples.

Once again, as in *Kavithai Mazhai,* Kalaignar's astounding mastery of the range of Tamil vocabulary enables him to find the right word for the right moment. The edges of tough, old and obsolete words are softened and smoothened and the resultant lyrical felicitousness, sensuousness and melody of language are veritably Kalaignar's own! He takes the reader along with him and makes him experience the highs and lows of the poem, like the one who wrote it, that is, Kalaignar himself. So the final impression of the reader is that he has a fulfilling experience of reading *Sangath Thamizh,* by virtue of his identity with and sympathy for the poet and the poetic subject.

We cannot but be struck with wonder at the way Kalaignar titles the poems. Interestingly, he does not go beyond three or four words at the most, in most of the titles, and these carefully chosen words are marked by utter simplicity and brevity of usage that is so native to the Tamil language itself. The most wonderful quality of Tamil, (as scholars often point out), is its simplicity and vitality of expression, which has made her live this long, while many other classical languages are dead and gone! Kalaignar masterfully exploits this unique trait of Tamil here in titling the poems. In the title itself, as one can see, the poem is not only already written, but it also sums up, most succinctly, as to what the poem is about. If you ask the translators about this aspect, they will tell you what a challenge it has been for them to distil the essential meaning of the titles, and appropriately and harmoniously transfer the same to their translations. Needless to say, Kalaignar is at this best here, and it is also no exaggeration to say Kalaignar and Tamil are inseparably wedded. Here are some very striking examples which may be phonetically examined!

1. *Valavan Eevaa Vaana Uurthi !* (The labiodental fricatives and the long vowels in smooth and easy interplay!)	:	*The Aerial Vehicle that Valavan the Skilled did not Steer*
2. *Sumanthaval Sumantha Soogam !* (A pregnant title, with the alveolar fricatives in a fine assonance)	:	*The Sorrow by the Mother Borne*
3. *Kaaviri Naadan Karikaalan !* (A fine alliterative arrangement of the velar plosives)	:	*Karikaalan of the Kaviri Country*
4. *Maanam Kaattha Maravan !* (A fine play of the bilabial nasal consonants)	:	*The Soldier of Honour*
5. *Thunai Ninraal Thozhi !* (A fine handling of dental fricatives)	:	*The Friend who Stood by as a Support*
6. *Oru Thaayin Thaalaattu !* (Dental fricatives at play)	:	*A Mother's Lullaby*
7. *Thalai Keettaan Thambi !* (An effective play of the dental fricatives	:	*The Brother for the Head did Ask!*
8. *Pazhi Theerthu Pagai Mudithal !* (Bilabial plosives aptly falling into place!)	:	*Injustice She Avenged and Enmity She Ended!*
9. *Murasu Kattilil Moosikiiranaar* (Transposition of consonants giving rise to a subtle chiasmus-like effect!)	:	*Moosikiiranaar on the Cot for Ceremonial Drums*

If giving pleasure is the object of poetry, then Kalaignar gives it in ample measure. Pleasure in the new poetics of music, pleasure in word painting (like the Pre-Raphaelites), pleasure in the romantic transport to a timeless order of the past, to recapture all the splendour and pomp, all the chivalry and generosity, all the great valour of the Tamils of yore, all the triumphs and tragedies of Tamil life, all the love, compassion, loyalty (unto death) and diehard devotion to truth, as evidenced in Tamil culture, which Kalaignar avidly presents, like the Arthurian Romances of Tennyson.

In all the poems of *Sangath Thamizh* , Kalaignar gives highly imaginative and enriching touches of his own, departing from the original. This bold liberty and innovation make *Sangath Thamizh* uniquely Kalaignar's own. This work is not a humdrum and journeyman extension of the original, but a vitally interesting, absorbing and infectious narration, full with all the spice of life, real or imagined.

We thus stand between that rough diamond – the classic *Puranaanuuru* on the one hand, and the well-chiselled and polished modern work, *Sangath Thamizh* on the other, eying and cherishing both, as zealous lovers of either. When we do so, we see how the classic mould is metamorphosed into a marvel of poetic music new in the alembic of Kalaignar's rich imagination.

However, it should be said in fine, translating Kalaignar's works is no cakewalk! There is a German saying that goes like this: "God gave the squirrels nuts, but the squirrels have to crack them!" Kalaignar's poetry is a tough nut to crack! His heightened perception of Tamil culture, his grand poetic eloquence, his melodramatic dialogues, his salacious depiction of the Tamil hero *(thalaivan)* and the Tamil heroine *(thalaivi)* in close embrace, his predilection to spin imaginative stories from history and legend – these tease the translator out of thought, if he is not sufficiently prepared and equipped, to anticipate and appreciate the strategies of Kalaignar. Oftentimes, the translator is the mountain that goes to Mohammad, namely, Kalaignar the poet here!

R. Ganapathy
Professor of English (Rtd)
Annamalai University

A Guide to the Pronunciation of Vowels

அ	a	ஆ	aa
இ	i	ஈ	ii
உ	u	ஊ	uu
எ	e	ஏ	ee
ஒ	o	ஓ	oo

1 Every Town Our Home; Everyone Our Kin!

Having heard that the great savant
Kathiresan Chettiar was born in Ramanathapuram,
Before its division into three districts,
I was delighted to visit Makipaalanpatti.
The great scholar, Manickanar, told me,
The place referred to as Puunkundram
In the classic *Puranaanuuru* was Makipaalanpatti,
And I was overwhelmed with joy.

I was taken to a mountain-cave,
Where Kaniyan Puunkundran

Had engraved a poem which I saw!
Was it engraved by this poet of yore?
Or was the poem, known the world over,
Engraved by someone else?
The act of whomsoever it was,
The declaration:
"Every town our home, everyone our kin,"
Was by a Tamil of olden times,
Who had laid bare the fullness of his heart,
To reveal that all the world,
Surrounded by oceans vast,
Is our home everywhere,
And that inseparable as the eye and light,
All are our kin,
Is one that is new and revolutionary,
That dispels sinister darkness,
And destroys invidious distinctions!

When we hear that Kaniyan, the poet of Puunkunram,
Becoming one with Tamil sweet,
Offered to the whole world
This poetic gift of a universal poem,
My whole being is thrilled!

Poets in those days offered beautiful songs of praise,
At the courts of kings who ruled the world,
And received handsome gifts, like elephants,
A retinue of warriors, plenty of gold,
And vast tracts of land.
Even in those days, poets there were,
As in the present day,
Who praised the rich for their own ends.
Disturbed by these, Kaniyan Puunkundran,
Was disinclined to shower songs of praise

Upon kings and munificent men.
Even when requested to do so,
He tactfully made reply and declined.

He said: "Of the land and the kings who rule the land,
And of the warrior's bold, ye sing! Proper indeed it is!
Good indeed it also is
That a lot of literature there is,
Which sings of love and legends of those,
Who bravely fought at the battlefield!
So I follow a path of my own,
Singing of how every town is our home,
And everyone is our kin."

Even in a love poem from *Narrinai,*
The insightful poet Puunkundran writes:
"When stripping the bark of a tree for medicine,
Should you the tree uproot?"
Thus asking, he aptly exhorts the world
That all that is useful should be protected.
The principle, "the world is one,"
And the philosophy, "mankind too is one"
Are established in a highly poetic way,
By Puunkundran, the Tamil,
Hailing from an ancient family of the timeless past!

Witnessing those hapless ones,
Wilting in the belief that all is caused
By the laws of Fate,
This poet of Tamil splendid tells them
That good and evil happen only by our deeds,
And not by any other cause!

Is that all?
Sorrows quickly follow,
And they disappear too.
This is because of what we do,
Says the poet so appropriately!
New it is not for lives to be born on earth,
And for them to die too.
Lofty it is not for men firm-minded
To look upon life for its pleasure alone,
And they should not hate life if sorrow comes.
Like a raft that is tossed about on a river,
Life's journey also proceeds in the world!
Follow the vision of the wise!
Let not the head be bowed before the rich,
And let not the humble in scorn be held.
Thus the principle of World Unity and One Society,
Nature of Life, Lofty Actions -
Deeming life's sorrows and joy
As one and the same,
Not to be subservient to the rich and the powerful,
And not to hold in contempt the hapless and the humble,
Are the thoughts exalted from a lofty mind that we see in this poem.

Like flood that gushes forth,
Let these thoughts spread throughout the world.
But one observation:
For the world to be united by all the regions,
For mankind to be knit as one by human love,
Are these noble thoughts declared by the poet.
But even he, as a poet did live,
With the name of his place, Puunkunram, after his name,
And he was known as Kaniyan Puunkundran.

When we contemplate on this carefully,
Is it not true that even this man of eminence,
Was bound by the love of his land!

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*Every town our home, everyone our kin!
Good and evil none does bring,
Pain and relief from within spring,
And death to us is no new thing.
We did not rejoice at life as sweet,
Nor in anger we were with life annoyed.
The wise we know viewed our life cherished,
As charting ever its chosen course,
Like a raft rolling down a river's roaring waters
And crashing upon craggy rocks,
As rains lashed and lightning lit the sky.
So we marvel not at the glory of the great,
Nor ever the humble in contempt hold.

(Puranaanuuru: Verse 192
Poet: Kaniyan Puunkundran

2 The Soldier of Honour!

Like the 'sensitive deer' that dies when even its single hair is lost,

As *Kural* points out, are those who give up their life when honour is lost.

The life of a warrior of the Sangam Age
Is a true example of the utterance of *Kural*.

This lion-hearted warrior is so proud
That even to kiss his crawling child,

He would want it lifted above the head,
So as to kiss it without bending!

Even to kiss his firm bosomed queenly consort,
He would clasp her to his chest,
Without bending, without looking down on the floor,
And looking straight ahead, a kiss he would plant
On the forehead of the queenly maiden of moon-like face.

When he lay in bed,
Bend he would not like a question mark.

Like an arrow held in the bow,
He would stretch his legs and sleep.

Those who came to bless him
Would look at him open-mouthed,
And with their fingers on the nose exclaim!
Is he one with an unbending backbone?
Is his heart a wild field unreceptive to the meaning of a respectful bow?

A warrior incomparable, he came in the tradition of Irumporai.
A Cheran he was, with sturdy legs, like a strong club in wood.
That was why the throne he ascended,
With the beautiful Tamil name, Cheramaan Kanaikkaal Irumporai.

The capital of his realm was the harbour of Thondi,
Which the Greeks called 'Dandis!'

Defeating king Muuvan, he broke his chin, removed his teeth,
And fixed them on the big lock of his fortress door.

In happiness keen, the poet Poikaiyaar,
Sang in praise of him in *Kalavali Naarpathu* (*Forty Stanzas on the Ways of War*)!

Unity among the Tamils was very rare. It came once in a blue moon!
Therefore, the Tamils became historical references to their
Internecine battles of disunity.
The Tamils, to demonstrate their skill in sword-play, divided their clan!
Cholan Chenganaan, like a tiger he was.
He won victories everywhere, and flew aloft the Tiger Flag!

The Chera king, on hearing this, rose up in arms!
The vast force of chariots, horses, and foot soldiers,
His command heard, and followed him.

"Would my valour diminish? Will the triumphs of the Chola king
Last against my mighty shoulders? In a mighty roar,
Kanaikkaal Irumporai rose like lightning splitting the dark clouds.

The elephants' foreheads clashed!
The axle of the kings' chariots broke into a thousand shivers!

The horses' flat hooves, like dead fishes floating in the water,
Pashed the bloody mire.

Some of the foot-soldiers, bearing swords, were wounded in the back.
Stung by shame, they fell, and breathed their last!
The firm cry of war, the flowing blood, and the final journey,
Everywhere, the battlefield was full of these.

The two in close combat were, but none could predict
Who would win on the battlefield! The sword the Cholan swirled,
And like lightning cut a thousand heads of the warriors.
The Cheran's sword wielding, caused the earth to be a reddened sky!
The principle that if one his eyelids winked at the throw of a javelin,
Was a coward, was what both had held close to their hearts.

But Cheramaan, caught was he, like an elephant in the mire!
He showed all his prowess, but stood defeated by the Chozhan!

At the Battle of Thiruppoorppuram,
The Cheran of sinewed shoulders was vanquished.

Alas! After his defeat, the Chola king imprisoned him at Kudavaayirkkoottam.
Without dying at the battlefield, by his drawn sword,
Imprisonment he had to face, and disturbed at heart was he.

One day, when his tongue was parched dry by thirst,
He called the guard, and asked him to quickly bring water in a vessel.

Because it came late, his heart was on fire!
That his family fame of the past was trampled upon deeply disturbed him.

A page he wrote and departed,
Exhorting future Thamizhagam to sing it!

"When a child was still-born, or born as a bundle of flesh,
Or dead in old age, or by disease,
Or dead in war, without a warrior's honour, without the wound of war,
Customary it was to wipe out the dishonour, by the sword cleaving the body.
Only after its becoming one with the famed heavenly life

Would the body be interred.
Leonine Tamil's tradition of honour it was.
I who did from the cultured tradition come,
With a wounded heart and in prison,
I had to wait like a dog, even for water.
Even if offered I were water fragrant,
Live I would not without honour.
Therefore, Mother Tamil!
To preserve mine honour
Fall on your lap I do. Bear me, please!"

Thus a poem brief he wrote,
And like a lion, established the fame of Chera kings!
How one lived or died will be evident by one's offspring.
Accordingly, I extend to you a poem on life,
That Cheramaan Kanaikkaal Irumporai wrote.
Please read it! Agitated emotionally you will be!

(*Puranaanuuru:* Verse: 74. Poet: Cheramaan Kanaikkaal Irumporai)

3 The Friend Who Stood by as a Support!

A tender plant, a sapling isn't it!

A path is a way, isn't it!
A hero and a heroine are companions, aren't they!
As old Tamil works customarily describe.

Whenever the hero courts the heroine secretly,
Their bosom friends offer proper hints to let their love flourish.
Such a literature that depicts this the Tamils have.
Even the gray-haired relish this with such delight!

In a fine poetical work in Tamil, called *Ainkurunuuru,*
Poets describe those by love entwined,
As fine flowers that flourished
In the maritime, agricultural, mountain, pastoral and desert lands.

A poet called Oorampookiaar offers a crisp and fresh song
Of the agricultural land. The great Kapilar,
Describing the cooing love of nightingales in the mountain land
As love undimishing, offers it to the world as a feast!

Another great poet, Peeyanaar, describes lovers dear as life,
Dancing joyously in the pastoral land,
Where live the cowherds,
And mentions this as a proof of the glory of Tamils.

A poet like Ammuuvanaar, from the sea-land,
Lapped by the waves,
Draws a poetic picture of lovers,
Learning the art of love!

A poet called Oothalaandhaiyaar
Says that even in the desert land,
Birds sing of love,
And feelingly refers to their pangs of parting!

Human beings with six senses do live on the five kinds of land.
Those that creep, walk, and fly, with no sense of discrimination,
Woods, streams, beautiful flowers, the mountain ranges,
And the stretch of sea, lulled by the waves –
Intently the poets had looked at the ways of life of these species,
And offered beautiful poems in Tamil!
These are elixerine streams of rich poems on Akam life.
Amidst these, we shall first drink deep delight from one of them!
On the agricultural land,
Beside the shore of roaring seas,
A belle beautiful, leaning on a mound of sand,
Was looking at the resplendent beauty of the rising sun!

From amidst the *punnai* trees with lovely flowers.
As a doctor came he, to cure her of her malady!

Jumping up she said: "you have come, doctor?"
Do a medicine give to me," and on his shoulders she leaned.

"We are both struck indeed by this malady,
That in the morn begins and lasts till even time.
So we shall minister medicine to each other," said he,
And embraced the maid, a statue in gold!
On the broad bed of the shore,
They fell, rolled, rose up and in joy were they!

"Your eyes are wet, darling! Is it because of the sand from the sea?"
Speaking endearingly to her, he came near to blow his breath on her eyes.
She stopped him and said: "You do your breath blow on my eyes. Thank you!
But for many days, into your ears I had dinned!
Because you did not listen, my eyes do stream with tears profuse, do know !
"Illicit love should end, chaste love should follow.
To make you happy, our marriage should soon be joyously celebrated;
You with soft lips intoxicating! O precious gem! My beautiful gazelle!
Isn't this your eager wish? He asked.

Her cheeks reddening like saffron,
She shook her head and said, "Yes!"
She drew a fine design on the sand with her toe,
And her heart full of joy!

Patting her beautiful back which swelled like the veena's pot,
He said; "Darling! Do not feel sad! The moon that sails the sky as witness,
I declare, soon your hands I shall clasp and marry you.
Desist from being sad! Only a few days in the middle!
We two, far removed from the painful sorrows of the world, shall mix in joy!
Life is like walking steady on tight rope, with a jackfruit on the head!
Good is it to boil like a pot of boiling rice,
Or a boat, floating and tossing, on the calm waves? In peace you be!
You, beauteous as art! My girdle adorned! Darling of my eyes!
To be man and wife, let us wait for a while.
Till then the limits of love let us explore,
And know how deep that sea is," he said.

But she:
Thrilled by her beloved's loving caress,
And her entire body in passion hot,
"Most handsome of all men! Let it be after your heart," she said,
And her all to him she gave!

Smoothening her wavy tresses, he said:
My being's joy! Fruit succulent! Nectar sweet!
See there! A hall dark there is that invites us!
My heart! Do come! Lusty joy we shall share!

Though for a moment frightened she was,
She held on firmly to his shoulders stout!
Before they entered the hall which in utter darkness was,
Inappropriately, alas! A voice stopped them!
Like a hen that guards her young from the hawk,
Came thus her friend! "Do not touch that belle beautiful!"
She said and stood in front!

His eyes spoke! "Why do you stop in vain,
The bee that goes to drink honey?"
"This sin is a wicked one," he said!

You have shoulders high as a hill!
You have the might to conquer the foe!
I do not a blemish find in your love!
Accept my blessings which I bestow with all my heart!
But still, a tradition the Tamils have;
Seeing you have forgotten it, I have come to remind!
Without establishing a domestic life of virtue, after marriage,
The parents who begot this girl won't for long let you in love indulge
On the seashore, or inside a hall, secretly!
The town's leader you are not -
I shall a sad news tell you, and you do listen!

At Thondithurai, haven't you seen the sight of a crane,
Waiting to seize upon a fat fish,

The fishermen have caught from the sea,
After a great effort, toil and risk to their lives?
Similarly,
This beloved daughter, beautiful like a doll,
If you make delay in marrying her,
Leading men of older age,
Like the crane, have come forward to marry her!
If inclined you are to wait in vain,
Like the parrot waiting for the ripening pods of the cotton tree,
You may put off the wedding day for many days to come!
If not, right today, fix the date for marrying this girl, soft as jasmine.

When the friend told him thus, shocked did he become.
He said: "Difficulty any is there for wearing this pearl from the deep seas?
Friend! May you ever, ever prosper!
I have no thought hereafter to observe the auspicious hour and time!
I shan't let the fish be a prey to an old bird!
Let the wedding be arranged right tomorrow!
Amazed at the ability of a very true friend,
Who the truth did tell discreetly, explaining by examples,
Poet Ammuuvanaar offers thus this poem rich!

(Source: *Ainkurunuuru:* Poem 180. Poet: Ammuuvanaar)

4 The Sorrow by the Mother Borne!

Only a hut it was!

Spears and swords sharp
Were lined up on one side –
To capture the world,
And conquer enmity.
They would gleam and shine,
Like armour wrought.
No beauty there is in a tiger's den –
This is nothing new!
Fear, trepidation and defeat –
They would not show up here,
This seat of honour –

The warrior's mansion!
Holding a bowl of cooked rice,
With sugar cane candy,
An old gray-haired woman,
Stood at the threshold,
To feed an infant's toothless mouth,
With a handful of cooked rice.
Ran a warrior towards her.
"Grand Mother!
News for you," he said.
"Like a young girl at play,
A heavy breath you breathe,
Young fellow! Manly are you?
Let there be some gap between breaths,
And afterwards you can begin to speak,"
Said that Tamil granny, for her banter known!
This is no time for play, granny –
Your usual jokes you stop.
Your son was killed at the battlefield," he said.
The granny wilted and straightened herself for once!
"While playing at dice, the pieces are usually cut –
So also in the battlefield.
Say whether the wound was on the chest, or on the back?"
"On the back," he said.
Shattered was she. Broken was her heart.
She took out a sword,
And hastened to where the drum beats were heard,
"I fed a coward with my milk.
Is he a coward fallen on his chest!
A battle warrior!
Long ago, my immortal husband bared his chest,
And he fell challenging a speeding spear.
Was he born to him?
Alas! Where is honour gone?

He fell like a crumbling wall.
Bravery echoes from the lofty peaks of the Himalayas –
Here, music vibrates from the veena's strings,
And that too as 'honour,' 'honour' sound it will!
Eating shark and drinking mead,
Did you hail from a cowardly clan?
Blemish you have heaped
On the bold warriors of the Tamil race.
I fed you with my breasts,
I reared you, my son –
Where are those shoulders stout and strong?
Didn't you itch for a battle?
Alas! A coward you are,
Who could not stand the spear.
The milk of courage I gave you,
Answer do make to it!
Thus she, the woman who neared eighty cried.
To the field she went,
And turned over the Tamil warriors dauntless.
There, blood did run like a river in spate,
For guarding the goodly land of the Tamils.
With a heavy breath,
She walked amid the heap of the dead!
Happier was her son's birth
Than when she married.
There he lay dead,
With a spear piercing his chest!
She saw this. Her heart was pleased!
"Perturbed I won't be by any scene!
My son as a warrior died."
I was about to pluck away my breasts that fed him.
Oh! Where is that wicked one who told me a blatant lie?
A sword here is! I shall now seek his tongue.

(Source: *Puranaanuuru* 278)

5 Neither Paddy nor Water a Life-giving Force!

An assembly of poets distinguished,
Gathered on a day at the Royal Hall of the king!
Debates on many subjects did arise and conclude,
And Tamil beautiful gave rise to pleasure great.
A question rare was raised this time at the assembly.
What is there that is equal to life cherished?
And to that of the fleshly body of bones?
The gathering of poets incomparable,
Shot questions one after another,
And thoughts crossed and clashed at the assembly.
Water and grains of paddy let life flourish.
They help the bodies of many to grow,
And save tottering lives from fall!

They alone are the life-blood of kings who rule the land.
A few of the scholars thus on the greatness of water and paddy dwelt.
Moosikiiran, a poet of repute, royal patronage enjoyed.
He did a pure and perfect thought announce!
Dear and distinguished poets who make delightful creations in Tamil!
For reaping a golden harvest rich, from paddy fields well-watered,
By the sweat of the farmer's brow,
And for cooking rice white in boiling water,
Both paddy and water are indeed required,
And no change there is in this!
For your thought, an argument, before you I place!
Without fear or favour, in fairness judge!
When a king who rules the land falls a victim to wicked deeds,
And viscious actions,
And is placed in such a state as to lack water and paddy,
And the world and its towns in sufferance,
And his sceptre in disrepute, encouraging cruelty,
What is body? Where is life?
Both do from each other depart, and only the corpse does remain!
Therefore:
The greatness of the rule over the people,
Is the one that enlivens their lives. It is also the life of earth on which they live!
Though the king has forces wielding spears and arrows,
Should he not with watchful awareness quickly act?
Is not a clear and commanding ability required,
To valiantly drive away the enemies from alien lands,
And make his rule a glorious one?
If an attitude of lethargy there is,
Where then are the grains of paddy and water?
If a wise rule alone becomes the life-blood of the land,
Know ye! The fertility of the earth,
Plenty of water, and other enrichment
Will greatly follow.

After hearing the speech of poet Moosikiiranaar,
All the other poets as dust did deem their arguments
And their defeat accepted!
Like letters engraved on stone,
This song of life was born!
Flourish ever it would as a song ever new!

(*Puranaanuuru:* Poem 186. Poet: Moosikiiranaar)

6 She her Town's Fame Revealed!

Viiraampattinam is a town well known, near Pudhuvai.

The learned referred to it as a place from where
Hailed the great scholar, Viiraiveliyanaar.
A poet called Thithanaar, who wrote sweet verses on love, was his son.
Veliyanaar who fathered an able son,
Also presents a novel scene in a poem on life.
The greatness of a virtuous maid from the hunter's tribe,
He reveals in a glorious epic!

On hearing that the king's commander had returned home,
Gaining great victories in the battlefield,
And winning accolades many,
A wandering minstrel went to him,
Singing songs of praise upon him.
Viiraiveliyanaar sings of the commander's loving heart
And his magnificent munificence, in beautiful Tamil.

Giving away the trophies won from the conquered land,
And the prizes of honour his king had bestowed,
Red did become his two hands!
Such a warrior bold was he who would lavish gifts
With a loving heart. Happily telling this to the minstrel,
Veeraiveliyanaar also sings of the cultured qualities
Of the town's beautiful maiden. Do listen!

As creepers knitting themselves spread far and wide,
Without the need of a pandal,
Under the cool shade of the dense jackfruit tree,
Fast asleep was a hunter,
With a lax hold on the spear.
Eyes darting like small, swift fishes, his sweet-lipped wife,
Came out from her dwelling, and closely looked at the pandal,
Wishing to lie by his side, in the place of the spear.
Like a soft flower, she wanted to sit noiselessly
By the side of her tired husband,
And watch his handsome frame to her heart's content.
Lest she should disturb his sleep,
She planned a little later,
To turn her shapely bosom on his firm shoulders,
And plant a kiss on his moustached lips.
Running her fingers through her wavy and dark tresses long,
She stood and waited at a distance,
As she thought, any disturbance to his tired limbs,
As he had hunted an elephant, would be to his health detrimental.
Once he woke up, she would with him in dalliance be
Till the time of seven in the morn.
Her breasts heaved and fell in passion intense.
Emboldened, if she went near and fell on him,
The blame of her disturbing his sleep would deeply agitate her heart!

Therefore,
She decided to lay quietly by his side,

And lovingly caress his face with her slender fingers.
Calling him "darling", when he woke up and rolled over on his sides.
She would give him a loving kiss.
Towards the hunter asleep,
She walked, treading on the dried up leaves,
Exposing her beautiful and fragrant navel!

Just then,
Very near to the hunter who lay asleep,
In the shade of the jackfruit tree,
She beheld a male and a female deer,
In the height of extreme pleasure, as they in union were.
Lost was this queen of home
This beautiful Nature's scene beholding!

Immediately,
A fear did flash within her.
Hesitant she was to take a step further!
Even if the soft sounds of her tread,
On the dried up jackfruit leaves,
Did this young hunter wake up,
Fast asleep as he is, forgetful of the world,
The sight of his rising noisily
Would end the joy of the male and female deers' dalliance.
Even if they flee for their life, at the nick of time, sadly separated,
Or if the hunter his spear at them threw,
They in the midst of their intense love making,
Would have to die.
Thus was she much saddened!
"The proper way to stop these two evils,
Is to stand there hidden," she thought,
And so, she like a statue stood still!
Witnessing this,
The soft southern breeze
Sweetly blew in appreciation!

In a small town of a vast land,
Lived this maiden supreme,
Showing the grace of caring for the deers' feelings;
Would there be any who would deny gifting
To a human being like the minstrel?
It was to demonstrate the culture of the town thus
Did Viiraiveliyanaar tell the minstrel,
To go to the victorious commander,
To receive from him the gift of prizes many.
And the minstrel to him hastened,
Heaping thanks profuse to Viiraiveliyanaar!

(*Puranaanuuru*: Poem 320
Poet: Viiraiveliyanaar)

7 The Ravings of a Public Woman!

From the branches of tall mango trees,

Standing on the ridges of paddy fields,

Mango fruits of sweetness surfeit,
And big as the breasts of beautiful belles,

Fall ripe into the streams by the paddy fields,
Where fishes frisk and frolic about.

With their mouths wide open,
When these mangoes fall into their mouths on their own,

It is but natural for the fishes,
To swallow them with keen delight!

Similarly,
Vaanan, the chief of the town,
Struck by love, and vexed at heart,

To me he came, and my favour sought!
And stood before me, entreating in emotions deep!

When a mango on its own does fall into the mouth of a fish,
Will it leave it alone?

A robust youth he was, and on my lap he fell!
And this is also the same story, my friend!

What next then?
Did I call him my kin?

Or ask him for the favour of
Gifts and presents?

Or cast my tempting glance,
And trap him by subtle deceit?

Did I my shapely beauty to him show,
And him by magical means attract?

Or did I throw a smile at him to let this 'saint' fall?
Do ask Vaanan's wife,
Who calls me bad names,
And scandalizes me,

As to who like a beggar
Did cringe before me,

Saying "Let us sing and in great joy be!"
What did Vaanan who came to me,
With a vexed heart, say to me?

"The maid who should be to the cot drawn,
Ever by the child's cradle she is!

Starved for pleasure for long,
I have made bold to come to you,

To drink it deep from you!
Embrace me and the covering cloth on your bosom remove,
And from the heat of love do free me," he said.
Consent I did,

As a bulging pouch of gold on me he emptied!
"Though a public woman I am,
Love you I do, and so you will my quality know!
First, let your thirst be quenched," said I!
Like a hungry child that hastens to eat,
But topples the dish, passionately he did on me jump!
Though I was by fear shaken, bold was I,
As the art I knew! And so in the contest on bed,
To him equal I stood!

By many endearing names he called me,
And shared pleasure for many days!
Possibly because he was satiated,
Or because his wife was in search of him,
Vaanan in his chariot drove away, and never returned!

He not only gave me riches,
But stood by me,
Driving away the ignominious name of a "public woman!"
As time rolls by, enjoy the scenes—
The tongue will roll like a swirling sword!

All the good words from this man came
Only at the time of making love on bed!

Later on, he said, he would come back,
On Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.
Thus he would dates fix one after another.
But disappear he would on Saturday.
My friend! There is no point in blaming him,
And getting angry with him!

That hard-hearted woman, his wife, who publicly disgraces me,
Ties him down with her tears profuse, it is said!

If one stands before a mirror, and shakes the limbs violently,
The image on the mirror too will shake the limbs in the same way!

Similarly,
She is the dame who shakes before the mirror!
And he is the doll that reflects all the motions!

What is the use in waiting for him?
I am the blooming jasmine!

Some new bee will certainly come,
To seek honey from the petals!
I dreamt as though I was changing
Into a woman so pure!

But Vaanan blessed me:
"As a public woman live ever you will"
That man useless, let him live long!
Thus a woman of easy love,
Unburdens her heart,
And raves before her dear friend.
A poet called Aalankudi Vankanaar,
Offers this poem of the Sangam Age!

(*Kurunthokai*: Verse 6
Poet: Aalankudi Vankanaar)

8 Pisiraandhaiyaar—1

The people of Pandiya kingdom, under the fish flag flying high,

Many a victory had won at the battlefield.
But deep at heart a regret they had, and that was this:
Pandiyan Arivudai Nambi of sharp moustache,
Many taxes exacted from the people, without augmenting the country's wealth.
Keen were they to straighten the bent sceptre of the king.

Many came with palm-leaf messages long, but with no avail!
Delighting in the company of dancers and singers at the Royal Hall,
Enjoying a quarrel feigned and play of love with his queen,
And tasting pleasure to his heart's content on the softest bed,
Were the ways to rule the country, he thought!

Four or five people, joining hands with the government officers,
Ruined him step by step!

Whatever the king said, they quickly responded, saying "yes,"
And praising and flattering him, they made him freely enjoy himself in the mire
Of joys sensual, and snared him into a rule full of difficulties!

Some of his kith and kin seized upon the opportunity,

And adopted their subtle tricks and perpetrated beyond measure
The crime of deceiving the people of the land!

The wise feared that the scenic Pandiya country
Would become a scorched earth,
By the acts of these selfish people.

The stark darkness to dispel by the rise of the radiant sun in the morn,
They stood before a poet to entreat him to do his part.

He was born in a small village called Pisir, and Aandhai was his name!
In the glorious pages of history, known is he as Pisiraandhaiyaar,
Who lived as an exemplar of friendship!

Even without knowing Koopperum Cholan personally,
On hearing of his fame immense, he his friend became!

Confident he would be able to change the sad and sorry plight of the people
Of the native Pandiya country, he boldly went to meet the Land's ruler!

The great king, Nambi, heard of Pisiraandhaiyaar's arrival.
If the poet's mind was upset, he feared he would be greatly affected.
The culture of honouring Tamil as he did not lack,
He accorded him a reception proper and obeisance paid to him.

"Though happy I am for the honour you do to Tamil rich,
King! Fair is it you should change the sceptre benevolent into a sceptre cruel?

Those who are with you, saying your kith and kin they are,
Singe the goodly folks of the land, like brands!

Letting the king while away his time in pleasure every day,
Members of the government make politics their own and play their game!

King! Identify them you should,
And above all, your own ruin you should arrest!

To save ever the goodly name of our country from ruin,
Come have I to give you some advice. Accept it will you?

Some hide the ills, singing your praise opportunely,
And receive enough rewards from the king!

But I have come to argue with you and set your rule right!
Do not with me be angry," said the poet!
"Poet famed! Even the stone melts by your songs in Tamil!
Ever surrounded I am by those who cannot be by any advice reformed.
Always saying 'yes,' their character they have lost!

Full of wisdom you are, and you have come,
For protecting the welfare of this Pandiya land of Tamil rich!

What is the use of my being called Aruvudai Nambi: "Nambi, the Wise?"
It behoves the king indeed to acquire, save, protect and distribute wealth.

Forgetting this, powerless I am thus
And deceived I remain!"

The king asked: "What should I do? Please tell me.
I shall your advice cherish, with the deepest respect."

"Dear king! Please listen! Even in a small piece of land,
Harvesting with care will a rich yield find.
Even after feeding the elephants, mouthful after mouthful,
Enough there will remain to last for many days to come.
Instead, if you let the elephant graze the field,
Its mouth will feed on the paddy, and much will be lost.
The whole field will be trampled under its feet and destroyed!
If this principle is true for the elephant that does food consume,
Won't this be true to the reign of a king too?

Will the fish live ever on the ground,
If you order that these be taken out of water,

The ministers and others of the government, unable to stop this,
Will remain helpless, like dolls!

Thus dear king! Weak you have become in your judgment!
If this is continued, an extended story it will become,
To the utter deterioration of this ancient and acclaimed land of Sangam Tamil!

If vexing the people and exacting taxes alone from them is the ruler's aim,
The country, without contributing to the welfare of anyone,
Will become a mound of earth, like a paddy field

Trampled upon by an elephant mad! Please know this!"
The poet thus did advise.

"Unlike the prize-seeking poets who sing pleasing songs of praise,
And further drive me into seeking pleasure,
By your healthy poetic verses you have converted me.

From today, reformed I am
Because of your sacred feet which have trod my palace!"

The king thus confessed, and the poet thus conquered!

(*Puranaanuuru*: Poem 184
Poet: Pisiraandhaiyaar)

9 Pisiraandhaiyaar-2

Whether it was said in Tamil,

Or the one who said it was the noble Pisiraandhaiyaar,
The word of honour given by the king,
That hereafter blemishless his rule would be,

He kept, and let his fame flourish
Over all the world.

A glorious light perspicacious and Tamil rich was Pisiraandhai,
And he served as an illumining light to Arivudai Nambi.

The love he had for Koopperum Chozhan, the Chozha king,
Couched in words it cannot be.

Chozhan's ability to compose verses, his culture of revering the learned,
His munificence celebrated the world over,

His guardianship of the country like eyelids that protect the eyes,
His noble heart that surpassed the cool moon—

These qualities that Koopperum Chozhan imbibed,
Greatly attracted the poet's cool heart.

In a deeply wooded grove in his native place, Pisir, the noble visioned poet,
Was resting one day, and ruminating over many matters.

When he saw a male swan spreading its wings,
And flying across the sky,

He wished to compose a song on his dearest friend, Chozhan,
Centering upon the male- swan.

With the imagination gushing forth,
The poet a beautiful poem wrote in Tamil sweet!

He invoked the bird, revealing his disturbed heart,
And hiding the mental storm in his heart

That he hadn't still met Koopperum Chozhan,
He sang of his fame immense!

The pearls, without being strung together, do not a garland make!
But without seeing each other, the poet and the king,
As a garland of friendship flourished,
And Tamil as pearls and Tamil feelings as threads became!

The love and munificence of Chozhan of sinewed shoulders,
The song's central theme it became!

"O male swan! O male swan!
You do from far away Kanyakumari come,

Flying high in the sky, with a fish caught between the beak, and journeying
To the North of snow filled mountains; may your journey succeed!

Dear swan mine!
On your way is the capital of Chozhan who does the enemies conquer!

The city of Uraiyuur to my dear Koopperum Chozhan belongs as capital!
The king rules over excellently, according to the principle: 'The wealth of the plough never fails.'

From the South is he whose left hand
Isn't aware of what the right gives!

If you go with your she-swan,
On the way, the glow of love in Chozhan's eyes you will see!

If someone stops you midway, do not with your companion come back.
To the hearing of God-like Chozhan,

Shout loud before the sentinels of Uraiyuur,
And announce you belong to Pisir,

Where lives the poet, Pisiraandhaiyaar.
The king himself will rush and receive you,

And gift precious ornaments and rare gems to the she-swan!
This is because such a friendship deep he has for me.

Even honey satiates, but this, the friendship between us two,
Never does satiate!"

(*Puranaanuuru*: Poem 67
Poet: Pisiraandhaiyaar)

10 Pisiraandhaiyaar-3

Whether on the advice of Aandhaiyaar, Annachevalaar went or not
To where the Chozha king was,

With the fullness of heart he had etched
The excellence of his dearest friend.

The poet happily read out the poem
To his beloved wife!

"The imaginative poem on Annachevalaar is very fine indeed,"
Said his wife, and began to serve food to him and the grandchildren.

"See the sight of two rows of jasmine flowers here,"
Exclaiming thus, he smiled and raised his brows! "Where?" asked his wife!

"Your smile, white as the spathes, and the whiteness of raw rice
You served I referred to as jasmine," he said!

"Speak carefully. The grandchildren are nearby, she said.
These beautiful children of our son have not come of age yet,
To follow this language!"

"The son and his wife have gone to the field.
They will take time to come back. So do not fear!"

"They would come now", she warned!
Do not endearment show!

The poet shut his mouth. The rice she served
Chocked his throat and in discomfort he was!

With her hand on his chest, she messaged.
To embrace her he did try, but away she slipped.

Like a bell ringing clear, the loving old man,
Laughed in happiness great!

The grandson and granddaughter,
Sweetly lisped and laughed, clapping their tiny hands!

The unbridled happiness suddenly stopped!
And a bitter news was heard!

Opposing Koopperum Chozhan, the king of Uraiyuur,
His sons, whom he held dear as life, waged a war against him!
The Chozha king, skilled in writing verses in Tamil,
Was in deep sorrow engulfed because of his sons.

Finding no way out, the king soft-hearted,
Took out his victory sword and rose to fight at the battlefield.

Poet Pisiraandhaiyaar, on hearing of the strange
News of a battle between father and sons,

Deeply disturbed in thought, he cried his happiness was in the open lost,
And started for the Chozha land!
The Tamil race greatly valued honour. Their life they would give up,
If they had to bow their heads in dishonour!

Sailing beyond the stormy seas, and spreading fame,
They traded in scented wood, pepper and pearl!

Geniuses of literature, goodly poets of excellence,
Worshippers of Nature and builders of beautiful Halls they were!

The greatness of their race they established in writing,
And ruled the land without failing in justice.

From time immemorial in the measureless past,
The Tamils alone were the most ancient citizens!

All is right indeed! But one thing! Caught in the storm of internal enmity,
It was the Tamil race that fell into the depth of destructive enmity!

Thinking thus, as Pisiraandhaiyaar walked,
He tried on the way to ascertain facts about the Chozha struggle.

On hearing that wise men of the place had gathered
In the Community Hall, established by Koopperum Chozhan,

With great haste and his heart in agitation,
He went there to know whether the smoke of battle had subsided.

Great poets like Pothiyaar, Boothanaakanaar,
Natthaththanaar and Pullaarruur Eyirriyanaar

Rushed out of the Hall and embraced
Pisiraandhaiyaar, warmly welcoming him.

Agitated in body and soul have I come here!
What happened to the battle between the lion and its cubs?
A difficulty arose, but this noble son,
Had stopped it at lightning speed!

Can the hen be by the chicks trampled down?
By asking thus in poesy sweet,

He mollified Koopperum Chozhan, and caused the battle to be stopped.
The one who made this possible was Pullaarruur Eyirriyanaar.

He was to Pisiraandhaiyaar introduced by Poththiyaar!
Pisiraandhaiyaar was overjoyed!

Later, amidst a gathering of poets excellent,
Many poems, revealing ideas rich were recited!

A poet asked Pisiraandhaiyaar: "Poet respected!
Even after sixty, your hair is utterly black! How is this?" he asked.

I shall the reason explain, friend!
My wife does the home illumine!

My son, who does the yield increase in the field,
Is a robust young man and a principled one who doesn't bend his knees!
He has only two children, bright and beautiful,
Who lisp in Tamil!

Those who serve me are full of love at heart,
And do what I think within!

My country's people are impeccably ruled,
And so the sceptre is beyond even the slightest reproach!

At the small village called Pisir, where my humble self is born,
Is full of the wise and the learned!

All these excellences I enjoy in one,
And so, no occasion there is for my hair to become pearly white!

This is the blessing I have for my life without care!
But the news did come then to break the poet's heart!

The Chozha king who ruled the land, like the radiant sun
That rises from the East, was brokenhearted.

Because of the opposition of his sons. He had gone to the North
To give up his life, 'facing the North!'
The poet read this as a palm leaf message,
Which came like a piercing knife!

"I shall to my house repair,
And taking leave, shall return.

An exemplar of friendship ours was,
And so death shall not part us!"

"Tell Chozhan who has 'gone to face the North,'
I shall soon return, by his side to be!"

Thus saying, with tears brimming in his eyes,
He in trepidation journeyed to the Pandiya country,

To take leave of his loving wife,
His children and grandchildren!

(*Puranaanuuru:* Poem 191. Poet: Pisiraandhaiyaar)

11 Pisiraandhaiyaar-4

Those who wish to give up their life,

'Face the North' and die by fasting!

This, in olden times, was called *vadakkirutthal: 'Facing the North.'*
The literary history of the Tamils describes it as a custom.

Chilled was the heart of Senthamizh Chozhan,
By the war his sons waged.

The king decided to give up his life, *'Facing the North.'*
The sufferings of his heart to end he selected this as the only way.

On hearing this, some poets who lived in the Tamil land,
Declaring that their life is not so precious as nectar, went and sat with him.

The life of the king began to slowly wane,
And his body languished.

"O King of kings! You said the great Pisiraanthaiyaar, poet of Tamil sweet,
Had deep love for you, even without seeing you.

Your life is going to end. Why hasn't he still come?" some asked.
"He said he would his life give up, remaining by your side, and left."

"Aren't his words true?"
Mocking voices thus were heard.

Angry the king was with those who their doubts raised,
About his friend's wisdom even at the place of death.

"When a king sits in pomp with his sceptre benevolent.
'The halo of a thousand suns on his face I see,'

'May his rule grow from strength to strength like the deep roots of a tree.'
Tributes and praises like milk and honey would be showered on him by them.

But if the storm of misfortune overtook him,
They would with a spear strike his heart and flee!

Deeming these men wicked, mean, and sinister in pride,
Their friendship could be with scorn rejected as dust unto dust.

Even a broken earthen pot would be useful! But the friendship
Of the subtle-natured, like a jackal, would a big harm cause, I declare!
When the heart thus a mine of selfishness became,
The friendship of many would be like water flowing down the depths!

But the friendship of Aandhaiyaar who is like gold dug up from the place, Pisir,
A small village of spoken Tamil, in the Pandya country,

Is not one that its appearance makes when fortune smiles,
But one of pure friendship that sans hesitation rushes to help in misfortune!

Ye the wise! Know this!" The king thus answered,
And gave up his ghost a day after!

Though belatedly came Pisiraandhaiyaar,
Sitting by the side of the king, he *'faced the North,'* and his life gave up.

A poet called Kannakanaar makes a tearful poem from this event,
And offers it as a garland to be hung round those memorial stones!

"Gold and pearls, corals and gems,
Though they grow far from each other,

When as a glittering garland they are strung,
Become close they do to each other.

Like that, the Chozha king of Uraiyuur,
And the great poet, Pisiraandhaiyar from the Pandiya country,

Like pure gold, like pearl,
Though are born separately at great distances to each other,

After their becoming a garland, so near to each other they are,
And they, as an everlasting light of friendship, and as a memorial stone, remain!

The wise will always be by the side of the wise.
Historically, those who lack wisdom like dry leaves they fall!"

The poetic page that Kannakanaar wrote
Is not for the Chozha king and poet Pisiraandhaiyaar alone,

But for all those who seek a friendship of pure mind.
It is a cup of honey sweet and nectar insatiable!

(*Puranaanuuru*: Poem 218. Poet: Kannakanaar)

12 A Mother's Lullaby

Gone was her husband to conquer the enemies in battle.

Thinking of her husband's dour courage,

Engaged all the day she was in finishing her family duties.
Before going to sleep for sometime, she called her son and said:

"Darling! Here is milk for you, exceedingly sweet,
Come here to drink it!"

"Come I won't," he said, and ran out,
Round and round to play in the moonlight,
With the boy in the house opposite!

"Greatly angry, threaten him I would with a stick.
You won't come? I shall be right there!"

So saying, I shall follow him, but won't beat him.
But in fear my son would shake, and hide himself!

"You who are even of a stick so afraid,
What would you tomorrow do,

To confront the spear at the battlefield, my son?"
Dragging him into the house and pinching his cheeks with love,
And on his lips, red as cherry,

I would quietly empty the bowl of milk and honey,
For him to gain strength!

And that fine Tamil child, sans demur,
Would drink it complete out of fear.

Lean like a crescent, the child was, and becoming a full moon,
He grew up tall like a hill!

My beloved to the battlefield went,
Giving me a child to be rocked in the cradle.

Befitting the culture of the Tamil land,
He took a spear on his brawny chest and died.

I too bravely bore the brunt, determined to preserve
The country's honour the world admired.

My son I brought up as one from a family noble.
Kissing him on the forehead and putting a sacred dot on it,

And smoothening his tufted head, the sword to him I gave
And said: "Go, and in triumph return.

Defeat enemies' forces which my husband killed,
And make them flee.
Let your victory flag fly aloft,
And let our drums loudly beat in the enemies' fortresses."

Sweet news one after another came that with his fell sword,
With honour he fought in the battlefield, dispatching many in the enemy ranks.

So with eagerness uncontrollable,
I did to the battlefield go to witness this!

There was no doubt, victory was ours,
But there my son was not seen!

In the battlefield that wreaked of blood,
Sprouting young heads, like flowers there,

Were the fallen warriors like toppled boats, and arms and legs cut asunder.
Like functionless oars they were, and amidst the heap of corpses I passed.

My dear son! Deeply anxious I am.
Live do you as a corpse of the battlefield?

Did you run away, showing your back
To the enemies, and so were killed?

Thus I in great agitation asked.
A voice, lifting my drooping head said:

"As a soldier thus I do live, mother!"
Haste I did in the direction from where the voice came.

"Son dauntless!Where are you?" I asked.
"Here!" he said, and I found him!

"Son dearest!" I said and him embraced.
The shield he fought with, on the ground it was.

My cherished son, bearing an arrow on the chest, lay!
"Sure victory it was, mother," he said!

I on his forehead kissed, and said:
"Come you are in the direct line of your father,

Who with honour fought and died in the battlefield.
May you live long!"

"An arrow has pierced your chest.
The pain you can't bear my son!" I wept.

"Is that true, mother? Until you saw and described it,
Feel it I did not," he said.

On my lap he died and left,
Leaving me living!

Is he my son who did with the children of the town play,
And wouldn't adamantly come home to eat,
Running away in fear from the stick I held?

Bearing an arrow on his chest,
He stood determined to give up his life for redeeming the motherland!

"My life! My son! May you live long!
My benedictions on you thus I bestow!"

(*Puranaanuuru*: Poem 310
Poet: Ponmudiyaar)

13 The Aerial Vehicle that Valavan the Skilled did not Steer!

Because of scientific advance, the aeroplane was born.

Today, scientists give rise to wonders amazing!

The ancient times were not times of ignorance really.
Even in those days, the planets were examined,
Their orbits were charted, and weather changes calculated.

Time was measured and announced
By the departure of the twinkling stars from their position.

Our ancient astronomical works recorded unerringly,
Even the time of the eclipses of the sun and the moon!
And not an easy thing to do this is!

Enlightened we lived, but suddenly into darkness fell!
But enriching Western science to the limit of the sky did reach!

The moon that waxed and waned we called a god,
And the sun that did its daily duty we called a Lord.

In futile thought we lay supine and rested, and laid waste
The new astronomical knowledge that our forebears codified,
And lost we were in foolish stories!

When I wished to delight in literary pleasure in Tamil,
I chanced upon a beautiful *Sangam* poem.

It is knowledge that cheers our heart! I write about it,
And happily invite you to share the joy I have experienced.

Do come to witness Tamil land's ancient glory!
Poet Muthukannan Saathanaar of Uraiyuur
Sings of the fame of Chozhan Nalankilli.

Waxing and waning, birth and death,
The order of the world it is.

It is the greatness of a king who rules the earth,
To gift munificently to the needy who seek succour.

He said: "Utter golden words amidst this praise,
And let help gush forth like a flowing stream."

Also, in this world, countless are those who lived and died,
Over the years in the past!

Though the petals rich of the blossoms in the dust are many,
Easy it is to see their beauty without distinction.

What appears right to me I shall declare.
Among many who are in this world born,
Only a few are true poets, fit to be praised in song.

While the rest, like the lotus-leaf, are devoid of beauty!
Thus did this poet with a simile relates
The petal's beauty and the leaves' futility.

The poet who adores the glory of a king,
Demonstrates the height of the glory he attains, in verse!

That is, for those who did an opportunity get,
To fly in an aerial vehicle, sans *valavan*, the skilled,
The height of life's glory is as high as the sky!

In this poem on *puram* life, with a gem-like brilliance,
The words, "Without *valavan*, the skilled," occur.

Can we not hold that an aerial vehicle steered by a *valavan* skilled,
Was also there in those days!
As keen we were right early to secure scientific knowledge,
Possible it was for a *valavan* skilled to have had steered an aerial vehicle!

As old-fashioned thoughts engaged us in the middle,
Ruined was our land, as the need for reason was dispensed with!

Through the adoration by the poet Saathanaar,
Of the Chozha king, was my attention drawn to it.

Reading and examining it, you also your opinion express.
That is the reason why I wrote this.

If mistaken I am, please correct me!
I shall the correction accept!

(*Puranaanuuru:* Poem 27. Poet: Uraiyuur Muthukannan Saathanaar)

14 The Beautiful Maiden the Foster Mother did Seek!

Like the blanched moon that vainly sheds her beams on a desert land dry,

Am I thus to waste my beauty young!

My dearest one! The spear you throw does rumble the sky!
Lift your eyes and look at me, and do my condition see!

I stand with my eyes full of tears –
'Tis said, even the devil does pity a damsel!

What reply have you to give me? Sugar cane sweet was I
Then to you, but now, bitter I taste – tell me why!

Her fish-shaped eyes entreating,
His feet she caught, and bitterly wept.

Clasping the lithesome lass and lifting her,
Her stomach soft he lightly caressed, and said:

Be not disturbed, my girl innocent! Belle beauteous!
Dear as life! From you away I can't be even for a second!

Like a bolt from the blue your parents made a noise,
And on our relationship a ban imposed!

Tender and pure one! Hesitate I do,
Not knowing what to do, baffled I am!

The girl listened and with passion embraced him,
And asked: "Darling mine! Why should we my parents ask hereafter?

Caught I am in a prison, and so I shall with joy
Fly with you on this desert land," she said!

As soon as the youth robust said, "Tomorrow we go,"
She put her arms round his shoulders and started.

On hearing the news, the parents felt as though on fire they stood!
To seek the belle beautiful, the foster mother started out!

The sylvan land and hilly tracts,
And the desert land full of difficulties on the way,

She thought that the girl with brows like a bow,
And the youth with sinewed strength,
Might have crossed the land.
So with concern she did haste.

There were on the way men of truth,
Carrying pots hanging from bars poised on their shoulders.

Mendicants they were, ever thinking of God!
The foster mother stopped them on the way, and said:

"Wise men following the righteous path!
Our dear daughter did you see

Hurrying along on this desert red hot,
With a youth robust?

They followed life joyously, loving in secret.
But now emboldened are they to taste worldly life.

Generous hearted and goodly men!
Tell me whether you had met them on the way."

To her who asked in such eagerness keen, they said:
"Your daughter we did find indeed!
Great indeed it is that this lotus-like girl
Had joined this fighting Tamil warrior bold!

Surprising it is, without blessing them with all your heart,
Over the hills and mountains you had wandered!

Listen! Though sandalwood amidst the hills is born,
Only to those who wear it its fragrance wafts!

Though it does ever to the mountains belong,
Lady! Priceless its fragrance is!

Though the pearl is born in the sea,
Its glow is seen only on the one who wears it!

If it does only to the deep sea belong,
What fame is there for the pearl and the sea!

Though from the harp is music born,
When the harp is played, joy great does overflow!

If only to the harp does music belong,
What benefit does the harp receive!
If the girl does only to the parents belong,
Know this, as a woman aware!

Like sandalwood that doesn't a fragrance waft,
Like a pearl that isn't worn!

Like a harp that isn't played,
Should your daughter too be like them!

Therefore, to let a woman chaste live
With her beloved, who in thought is one with her,

Do from the heart your blessings bestow,
And return home right now!"

Listening to the wayfarer's words of truth,
Clear was the mother's heart!

May the beautiful girl's chosen life,
Flower like a beautiful bower! She blessed her thus.

The goodly men traversing the desert land she thanked,
And her obeisance paid to them and left.
See this being offered by a poet called Perunkadunko,
In Tamil sweet, in *Palaikkali,* in a manner so admirable!

(*Kalitthokai: Paalaikkali*: Poem 8. Poet: Perunkadunko)

15 The Poet Who His Fiery Reply Spat!

The chieftain called Veel Aai Andiran,

Wore a moustache that looked like a sword's sheath.
He had as his capital Aaikudi in the Pothigai region.
To those who met him at battle,
A tiger he was to rout them to nothing!

Though poets like Uraiyuur Eenicherry Mudamoosiyaar,
Kuttuvan Kiiranaar, Thuraiyuur Oodaikkizhaar,
Paranar, Kaarikkannanaar, Umattuur Kizhaar
Makanaar Parankorranaar, as a community of poets,
Had praised and admired his fame,

The great poet, Uraiyuur Eeniccherry Mudamoosiyaar,
Alone was with him, and knew his soul

And was aware of his generous munificence,
And of his happy gifting away every day.
This poet was also the one who wrote about him,
In a song on exterior *puram* life, as a crowning glory to Tamil.

Let us hear him sing beautifully of a rare event,
Pertaining to the fertile richness of Aai Andiran's hills.
At a common place by the mountains,
Minstrels had hung a drum.
A monkey mistook it for a jackfruit and tapped it!
A swan that lived from up a branch,
In fright flew away, loudly fluttering its wings
Towards the Podhigai hills, enveloped by smoky clouds.
Only belles with pearly teeth would go there for dancing,
But no invading forces of an enemy land,
Would go anywhere near Andiran's hills, ruled by him!

A warrior bold he was, who opposed the Kongars,
And their enmity ended, driving them to the shores of Kudamalai!

From the song Eeniccheriyaar composed,
We of the land's beauty come to know,
And of how the enemies suffered in defeat!
When the defeated Kongars ran and hid themselves in the Western Ghats,
A large number of spears remained,
Equal to the number of elephants Andiran gifted away!

Tamil savant Eeniccheriyaar asks: "King! Will your country's elephants calve
Ten elephants at a time? Lost in surprise that so many elephants
Remained to be gifted, he wrote praising Aai Andiran,
And describing in poetry the fertility of the land!
One day, the poet went to the woods to know of its richness!
All the way through, he could not believe his eyes!
Crowds of elephants, big and small,
Under the shade of big trees, in hundreds stood!
Right there, inspired, a fine poem he composed!

Only those who sing songs of praise on Aai Andiran,
Elephants in hundreds receive.
Perhaps, even these woods also, learning to compose poetry,
Sought Andiran and received elephants as prizes from him,
And gathered them under the trees' cool shades!
Poetic beauty and the beauty of Tamil splendid are sweet indeed!
And the poetic finesse of the praise for Aai Andiran
Is a new fragrance of poetic delight for us!
When the icy Himalayas stand in the North, if Aaikudi Mountain,
Rich with fruits, does not stand in the South,
Then the bottom will become the top,
And the vast world will be toppled and destroyed.
If thus does Mudamoosiyaar sing of Aai Andiran's lofty munificence,
This great poet then is like a bee drunk in deep delight!
As a munificent donor of donors did Aai Andiran shine,
And was like rain that showered from the sky.
A dirty-minded few to bring him down from the height of fame
To the depth of dishonour, declared that he gave away expecting returns,
For gaining favours in the next birth, on a selfish basis.
And thus motives imputed to his generous trait!
On hearing this, Mudamoosiyaar became angry
And said it was bad to find mean motives.
In a poem he declared with finality
That Aai Andiran was no mean merchant
Who thought anything done in this birth,
Would fetch advantages in the next birth!

Because of dislike, don't ever think of stinging Aai Andiran, like a scorpion. He does not have even an iota of mean thought
To sell his immense riches and snatch salvation in the next birth.

Our king is no cheat who gifts away
Sterling gold and ornaments, gems and elephants,
As prizes to poets and to those who need help.

Thus did poet Mudamoosiyaar his fiery reply spat!
May he prosper, may he prosper ever!

(Note: Uraiyuur Eeniccherry Mudamoosiyaar wrote poems on Veel Aai Andiran in *Puranaanuuru,* bearing Nos.128, 130, 131, 132, and 134. This is written on the basis of these poems.)

16 The Fruit that Athiyamaan of Thakaduur Offered!

Athiyamaan Nedumaananchi hailed from the South.
He had a moustache like a squirrel's tail.
In the days of yore, his forebears
Did a sugar cane rare bring and cultivate it
In the Tamil soil for the first time.
And the same sweetness they did in Tamil find.
From the Athiyar clan they hailed,
And so Athiyamaan he became,
And held Thakaduur as the capital.
And in great glory ruled the Tamil town.

Strong and stout-shouldered was he,
And annulled enmity in the twinkle of an eye.
To establish his fame on earth,
He always desired to receive the wound
On his chest and fall.
Though he was called "Anchi" (one who fears),
In glory he lived, as a striped tiger bold.
Avvai, the queen of poesy,
In Tamil composed cherished eulogies on him,
And bestowed them on him to her heart's delight.
By his justness amazed she was,
Even as she praised him for his might.
'Know ye, enemies, who wish to enter into battle,
A warrior great there is who ever fills our heart!
A carpenter who makes eight chariots in a day,
Labour if he does, to make one chariot wheel in a month,
Athiyamaan's strength of body and mind,
Will equal that wheel.
Be aware, Athiyamaan a male lion is he!"
Thus did Avvai sing of him.
One day in the morning,
Warrior Athiyamaan went to the woods.
Far and wide he wandered there,
And animals hunted,
Aiming a shower of spears at them,
And soon hurried back.
On the way, surprised was he
To see a chasm amidst the mountain.
There stood a solitary and tall *nelli* tree,
Bearing the one and the only fruit,
Between the small leaves of the branches.
An ascetic wearing a turban strangely said:
"Tasty this fruit will be, and eating it
Will immortality grant. This is true!"

He plucked the fruit without delay.
Thinking the king would the fruit thus eat,
The warriors of Thakaduur
With their stout shoulders held erect,
Marched behind their leader.
On return to the palace,
Nedumaananchi invited Avvai,
The singer of Tamil splendid.
"Dear king! Know I do why I was sent for.
Do you want me to go as an emissary
To the inimical Thondaimaan?"
Asking thus, Mother Avvai said:
"Indeed, ready I am to go,"
"Before you on mission of success go,
Do taste this fruit," Athiyamaan requested,
And offered the fruit to her.
Like the lily that brightly blooms under the moon,
Avvai's face was brightly lit!
Saying it was a tasty fruit,
The poet laureate of the king's court said:
"The ascetic at the woods said,
This is a fruit so rare,
That when eaten, it would life extend."
"What is the use of my humble self
Living so long?"
Replied Athiyamaan:
"If Avvai's life grows, Tamil grows,
As long as the fame of Thakaduur lives, I shall live.
And dear Avvai! Live you will as long as Tamil lives."
If the truth was earlier uttered,
Avvai would decline eating the fruit.
Without letting him live long,
He wished the Mother of Tamil to live long,

And so did Athiyamaan of Thakaduur
To her did offer the fruit of *nelli.*
Praising Athiyamaan's love of Tamil,
Avvai offered a poem
As her grateful return to Athiyamaan!

(Source: *Puranaanuuru:* Poem 87,91. Poet: Avvaiyaar)

17 The Brother for the Head did Ask!

Famed Kongu land's bevy of beauteous belles
Who beamed a budding smile, lovely as honeyed blossoms,
Declare in Tamil, sweet as sugar cane,
That even the crumbs of food the ants gather as they go,
Are what King Kumanan, the munificent gave.

All the poets who sing in Tamil,
Come praising Kumanan's fame.
The words resound like the roaring waves of the sea,
And songs in Tamil nectarine do reverberate,
The fragrant blossoms of poesy beautiful,
Are the people's hearts that are with love suffused.

A famed poet and savant there was,
By the name of Perunchithiranaar,
Who verses made in Tamil pristine.
His wife was a woman chaste,
The purest gold burnished,
And his son, an asset splendid;
His mother felt that their all on earth
Was poverty intense.
By daily hunger, his son became quite lean.
Saddened was his wife, like a flower that fades,
And the mother prostrate fell, like a worm that rolls up.
Because of hunger, the son rolled over the pots like a cat.
To the poet who stood wringing his hands,
Came thoughts of Kumanan, the munificent,
And so did start at once.

Who would ever be a donor munificent,
After Paari and Kaari!
Kumanan did put an end to such a thought,
And like the showering rains, all the riches gave away!
"Lord of Kongu land! My petition to you!
Riches of gold need I for living.
On the way,
I went to meet Velimaan for gifts.
Alas! It was a year since he died.
His brother, Ilavelimaan refused to gift,
And gave harsh replies.
Lord of the fertile Muthiramalai!
To kill the pride of wicked Ilavelimaan,
An elephant do gift please. It shall be tied to
The sentinel post to let him bow his head."
And an elephant the king gifted.

Like Ilavelimaan, the brother of Viiravelimaan
King Kumanan too had a brother,

And he was Ilangkumanan.
"If all the poets were so freely gifted,
With precious gems and jewels, elephants and retainers,
Our country will become a mendicant's refuge.
My brother! This cannot go on!
Right now divide the property,
And give me my share!"

"Take all you need! But as my brother,
Do give me your love!"
King Kumanan wept!
The feelings of enmity his brother deeply held
Did not subside. The man with a warped vision ordered:

"Before the return of the red sun,
Leave my country and go the woods!"

The species of deer, birds, peacocks and doves
To the king showed purer love than human kind,
And pleased was the king.
No poet there is in the woods,
To offer Tamil sweet,
And this was the only vexation for him.

Because of the growing enmity rife,
The brother the sceptre captured!
Was he satisfied with that?
Wicked friends fanned deep-seated feelings of enmity.

"Patient I was till now.
My brother has decided to wage a war against me.
Offer I shall ten thousand coins of gold
To those who will fetch the head."

"Cutting off the head? What a bitter news this is!
A heart larger than the sea of stormy waves is his,
And a fountain of munificence to the poets,
Who did beauty create, is he.

Muthiramalai will melt, if the king's head is cut off,
And curdle will our blood."
So said the poets, and spat at the gold coins!

A poet called Saathanaar to the king came,
Happy was Kumanan to drink delight deep in Tamil.
"Poet great! Gone are those days!
You have come today in discomfort acute.
My head do hand over to my brother,
And the prize receive and poverty remove!"
The poet stopped the king, and from the woods departed.
"Where is the brother, ruined by others' words?"
He sharply asked?

"Tis said: He who a brother has,
Won't be of his foes afraid.
Thus your brother does live,
False you proved to him.
Promise you did ten thousand coins in gold
To those who would cut off your brother's head and bring it.
This is the sword that has his head cut off."
His brother's sword he saw,
And the blood on the sword's edges.
"O Brother! You have fallen!" He cried out!
His heart, poisonous and fierce though shattered was it,
Like a mountain exploding.
"Your brother, Kumanan, in innocence had cried,
And declared loud: 'My life, even if I have to give up,
I shall give it up for Tamil only.'

His golden words I understand, because of your sinful act.
If you rush and fall at his feet, a brother's life not only,
But also Tamil will be revived! Rid you of hesitation and do come.
Rub the sword's edge. Blood it is not, but colour in red," he said.
Will Ilangkumanan delay any more?
He fell at Kumanan's feet and his obeisance paid.

Kumanan, his brother embraced!
He who was willing to gift his head to Saathanaar,
A pardon he gifted to his brother too.
The brother to Kumanan his kingdom gave.
The elder brother, not wanting it for himself,
To Tamil he gifted it!

(*Puranaanuuru*: Poems 158,159 & 162.
Poet: Peruncithiranaar)

18 The Supreme Poet of the Parambu Hill

Born was Kapilar in the beautiful village of Thiruvaathavuur,
In the Pandiya kingdom where fluttered the Fish Flag.
Like the firm horns of a dear,
Steadfast was his friendship with King Paari,
The liberal giver like the clouds.
Hills are beautiful because of rains.
The Parambu Hill is beautiful because of Paari.
We may say that even the sweetness of the jackfruit.
Was because of his munificence.
The Munificent giver cared little for possessions.
Thus his beautiful chariot this great king gave
To support the creeping jasmine plant!
We have from stories heard that the mischief maker
Naradha went before Lord Muruga and said:

"The damsel appropriate for your love is Valli,
Shapely belle, round moon beautiful!
Fascinated, you will be by her!"
'Tis said, Lord Muruga immediately
Mounted the peacock and wandered all over,
Like a whirlwind, in search of the beautiful maid.
Here is an imaginative account for you!
Though he travelled long, the girl beautiful he did not find.
Parambu Hill he neared and asked an old woman,
Where Valli was. She said: "Go up the hill, you could see her there."
With great speed he climbed the hill, and asked again where Valli was.
The folks there said: "Come and see!"
There on the hill in profusion were the 'sweet potatoes!'
What mischief of these old dames!
Calling the edible root '*valli*,' they cheated me!
Thus deceived, Murugan flew away.
All over the hill, would honey spill
And overflow from the beehives.
The creeping *valli* roots,
Bathed in honey they would be.
Like young pigs sucking milk from their mothers' udders,
Jackfruits would the tree trunks surround.
On the untilled Paari Hill, like countless stars in the sky,
The streams would flow! Thus did Kapilar describe.
A fertile hill, a mind of resolve, and a heart for art, King Paari had,
And so a boon companion he was to Kapilar.
As though a single intellect into two was split,
Two beautiful statuesque daughters Paari had.
Many kings for her hand did sue,
As keen they were to marry her.
And in their efforts they failed.
They attacked the Parambu Hill with their forces,
But vanquished they were.
The three Great Kings, like bees breaking out from the hives,

Surrounded the Parambu Hill, to destroy Paari.
Kapilar calmly approached them and said:
"Cheras! Chozhas! Pandiyas!
You do from an ancestry of dauntless warriors hail!
In anger jumped have you in a vengeful war!
The Paari country comprising three hundred towns
Reverberate with Tamil threefold, and battle-drums beat loud,
You cannot by any means defeat Paari!
To my words pay heed.
Paari had already given away all,
To those who sought him for gifts,
Singing and dancing before him.
Do know, only the Parambu Hill, King Paari and I remain!
If a war you wage to rob the land of Paari,
By the strength of your shoulders sinewed, utterly defeated you will be!
You know the strength of swordsman, Paari!
Even if a hundred days are spent, Parambu Hill won't thus fall!
I shall tell you how you can win over my king, Paari,
Who hails from the *Evvy* dynasty.
Cease your siege, stop your plans,
Desist from attacking the fortress, and
Leaving your forces, all the three of you,
Go as prize-seekers, and sing and dance before Paari,
And gain him as a gift!"

Thus did Kapilar singly stand his ground,
And Sangam Tamil was loudly heard at the battleground!

Rejecting the goodly counsel of the poet,
And roaring loud that they had placed their best foot forward,
The Three Kings, by the sinister designs the wicked had concocted,
Killed Paari, the munificent

To let the life of famed Paari's daughters
Brightly prosper, Kapilar went about with concern deep.
Finally, the noble Kapilar,

Entrusted both the daughters of Paari
To the care of Avvaiyaar.
As his mission was accomplished,
And he could not live all alone, without Paari,
And to put an end to his sorrow,
Great Kapilar 'faced North,'
And gave up his ghost!
In the world of friendship,
The mean and the wicked,
Unaware of the meaning of friendship they are.
Does not the friendship of Kapilar and Paari,
Stand supreme in the sky resplendent,
As the memorial most imposing!

(*Puranaanuuru*: Poems 109, 110. Poet Kapilar)

19 The Home She was Born in, and the House She Went to

As though the statue of famed Kannagi was carved from the stone
King Chera from the Himalayas brought,
And another from the remnant stone was made after the hero,
His arms, legs and shoulders looked!

Her cheeks took after the choicest flowers,
Showered on the statue of this Queen of Chastity.

Insatiable cups of honey sweet they were to each other
And deep at heart were ever united by their depth of love!

The parents planned to nip their thoughts in the bud,
Before they ripened into deeper love!

They, their friends and relatives gathered.
"High up in a stately mansion our daughter is,
But, though handsome, too poor is he!

Instead of placing the beautiful lamp in the inner yard of a mansion,
Would anyone place it on a pier in a roofless house?

Strong he is like a male lion, doubtlessly,
But to bring even a slender chain braided in gold,

For our dear daughter to wear round her neck,
A confirmed destitute he is for that!

He is a warrior bold of heart, we agree.
Because of that, would anyone place a doll of wax, beside a seat of fire?

We won't let our lovely and loving daughter join and tears shed,
In a family that daily struggles for a pot of gruel!

You friend! Come here please!
The girl beautiful in the garden is!

Do go and tell her of the decision of parents and relatives."
Thus did she to her friend set out, to change the maiden's mind,

By telling her of the decision
Of her rich and proud parents!
At the cool and breezy and beauteous woods the belle sat.
To her the friend went, with her face in disappointment keen,
And the whole story told!

The heroine in anger glowered,
And hotly made a reply.

"Even if my parents sow seeds of silver,
And reap a harvest rich of gold,

After ploughing the field made wet by ceaseless rains,
With elephants tied to the plough's fat and sturdy yokes,

And me present with silver and gold,
With lofty halls and courtyards large,

With gems and precious stones embellished,
With gardens where streams swish by,
And with long stretches of land,
No use these are to me,
When I have on my own given
Myself to someone else.

Want I won't anything from the home I was born in,
And touch I won't anything from it with my hands!

Assuming I would bring him wealth immense,
He did not his shoulders lend to me either!

Even if I were to experience an unfortunate existence,
When I have to eat *red raggi* unseasoned,

With country greens boiled without salt,
On borrowed plates, on alternate days,

Without clothes for change,
And wearing sarees torn,

Our love, lost it won't be, and the place
Where my husband is, will my palace be!

So do rush and thus tell them this.
Plenty of wealth there may be at the home of my birth.

But the gruel of the house I go to
Is nectar indeed! Thus do explain, my friend!
She who lives with him whom she has as her husband chosen,
A chaste and honourable life it is for her!

So do to my parents go without delay,
And thus declare, my friend!"

"After this, what work here have I!"
Her friend exclaimed, and rushed as if winged to convey it to them.

As no fault there was in what the daughter as a reply sent,
The parents also sans objections the wedding day fixed!

Note: Dr Thamizhkudimakan, Principal of Yadhava College, Madurai, gave me this poem stating this was a poem left out in the anthologies of Saṇgam literature, and that it was handed over to him by the great Tamil scholar, Devaneyappavanar. I thank him for his suggestion that I write about it in *Sangat Thamizh.*

- *M. K.*

20 Karikaalan of the Kaviri Country

Karikaal Peruvalatthaan Thirumaavalavan,
The famed Chozha king of Puumpukaar,
Where the groves are full of blooming flowers,
And the Kaviri flows, kissed by the sea,
Was in the mother's womb, when time took a toll of his father's life!
His wicked kinsmen efforts made to rob the Chozha country!
The Chozha queen, to rear the lion-like cub, after birth,
Fled from the palace, through a passage for escape,
With the help of an old man stout-hearted.
Far removed from the villains she found a place,
And lived there for some time!
The beauteous queen brought forth a beautiful child,

A male, a blemishless babe of purest gold!
This lion-like Tamil son gleamed like a sword unsheathed!
"May he flourish by the name of Thirumaavalavan," she said,
And gave him kisses many, and embraced this glorious symbol
Of family pride, who came taking after his father.
The mother said, "Son! Certain it is, you will rule over the world!"
The hard-hearted kinsmen came to know,
That the mother in hiding had brought forth a son.
Despatching him as the only task, set for them,
They went round and round for the boy, like jackals going after rabbits!

Scenting that their great enemy was brought up
At a small village in Uraiyuur, they rushed there,
To finish Valavan, his loving mother,
And the old man who was a great help to them.
They set fire to the house!
The mother, in the recurring thought of her son
Routing the enemies with his sword,
Slept for a while. The fire the fierce enemies
Had set just then, rose to the sky!

With her eyes beautiful bulging,
And crying, 'dearest!' her hand she instantly stretched,
She reached for her child - The future son of the Tamil country -
And hastened without a second's delay,
But receiving a speeding spear
On her chest, she fell!

The generous old man, who gave shelter, let out a challenging cry:
"I wouldn't let the Chozhan fall!"
And gathered Thirumaavalavan deftly on his shoulders,
Raised the sword against the enemies, and with the child escaped!

Not knowing in what direction the old man fled,
And worried they let slip what was on hand,
The mean-minded kinsmen sent their messengers,

Over land and woods, to know where the old man was!

Though the mother was burnt like the melting of gold in fire,
This great old man, proud of his race, wished to rear the child,
As the purest paragon of the Tamils,
In spite of his advancing years,
And in firm resolve, shook his shoulders strong!

Carrying Thirumaavalavan, and wading through fire,
And killing a few detestable foes,
The old man did his duty do.
But a leg of child Valavan was slightly burnt, by a fiery spark!
As even the black sear appeared handsome to the old man,
He changed the name of the Chozha scion,
As Thirumaavalavan Karikaalan (black legged) Peruvalatthan!

Hearing that the scion and son of the kingdom
Was growing up, the treacherous kinsmen
Hiding the hate in their eyes, and speaking sweetly,
Like sages who grant prayers, they came,
And before him stood, uttering lies to their heart's content!

"A chosen leader he is! His hiding here, old man!
Like a jackal under your care, good it is not!
We speak with divine sanction. Do not fear at all! No forces are required!
Trust us in devotion deep, and send Karikaalan with us.
The day is not far away for him to rule the land!"
Thus the wicked kinsmen spoke subtly,
The sage's garb deceived even a warrior sagacious!
The old man thus did not make out
The sinister design behind the dangerous dialogue.
So Valavan he kissed and farewell bade to him!
Prostrating before the old man, in tears,
And receiving his affectionate kisses,
He followed the sages - the rogues in saffron robes!
With the drawn sword and head erect!

All along the way, stories of gods were told,
And moral sermons were delivered.
Karikaalan, the descendant of the Chozhas,
Lost himself in the utterances of the wicked-hearted,
And fell into their trap!

"Karikaal Valavan! tired we are all.
So let us sleep for a while," they said.
On a threshing ground he slept.
In a second they made him fall into a swoon,
And him they kidnapped.

When the effort of the herbs wore out,
He woke up from his slumber deep,
And looked around in surprise for the sages.
"Hey! In a prison you are! Don't breathe!
Here alone is your end!"
"And you won't the crown wear!"

Thus shouted loud the kinsmen gang,
Shedding their play-acting!
They shut the prison's doors and danced in joy!
"Go ye fools! Ye know not that even the moon,
Breaks the clouds and comes out!"
Karikaalan murmured to himself.

How the imprisoned Karikaalan broke away
And escaped from the prison,
Like floods breaking a dam,
Let us to our delight deep hear from
Kadiyaluur Uruthirangkannanaar's song of *Pattinappaalai!*
"Like a roaming tiger in the woods,
That was caught in an iron cage,
Karikaalan was caught in a prison of a fortress.
But timid like a lamb he was not!
An elephant fallen into a deep pit, with mud it fills it up with its trunk,
And fearlessly escapes and its mate seeks, to be by her side in love!"

The poet thus this scene succinctly compared
To the escape of Karikaalan from the prison!
Like a raging bull released, he raised his sword
And charged at the hardened kinsmen!

Many legends there are in *Pattinappaalai,*
About the robust young Karikaalan
The Lord of the tiger flag that fluttered in Pukaar and Uraiyuur!

The lover who took the path to the woods,
After parting from his beloved, would say:
"Worse than Karikaalan's spear it is!"
The lover who grasped the shoulder of his beloved,
In imagination rich would say: "More pleasing than Karikaalan's sceptre it is!"

Adoring and praising Karikaalan, the warrior great, the tiger young,
And the glorious son who the Tamil land ruled,
And cherishing the love for our race
Victorious let us ever be!

(Poem: *Pattinappaalai.* Poet: Kadiyaluur Uruthirankannanaar)

21 Not Here...! My Sister is Here!

A Tamil belle, smiling beautifully,
Showing her small teeth like cucumber seeds,
And with her lisping speech, sweet as honey in flowers,
On the shore of white sands played,
Closing her eyes and hiding *punnai* seeds under the sand.

One seed she forgot to take home with her.
From a sapling, it grew and flourished as a young tree.

The maid beautiful, pouring milk and honey at its roots, nurtured it with care.
She tended the plant as if it were her daughter lovely.

The mother looked at her beautiful daughter lovingly one day,
And said: "Daughter dear! The *punnai* tree I sacredly tended everyday,
That tall and shady tree along with you grows,
And like a younger sister it is to you!
Happy I am to tell you this."
The Tamil girl young was thrilled through and through.

She jumped in joy, and embraced the tree, and said:
"Henceforth, you alone are my sister. My mother herself told me thus,"
And she stood enthralled.

While the damsel thus in great delight stood,
Came up there a hand to shut her eyes, and surprise her.

The hero of the fecund seaside land was he,
Who her eyelids closed and her embraced!

"Dear! Have you come?" she asked.
And he said: "Felt hurt that I did not come!"
Countless kisses to her he gave,
And she, resting her bouncing breasts on him said:
"Nothing else from here, darling!
Sister mine is watching!"

He asked: "Where is she hiding?
What a surprise! When was she born?"

"Because a young *punnai* tree mother grew, she told me to deem it my sister,
As it did grow up with me!

So do not my words disregard, and me do not embrace,
Pleasingly flattering me: 'a pearl peerless you are!'
And do not kiss my cheek, deeming it a honeyed fruit,
Or do whatever else, before this *punnai* tree,
As shyness does forbid.

In search of another tree let us go,
To enjoy ourselves to our heart's content!"
The shoulders of the lion-like man she caught,
And pulled him away.
"If that's your command,
Objection none have I!"
He caught her slender waist,
And on his chest, her face he pressed!

(Narrinai: Poem 172
Poet: Unknown)

22 The Poem the Daughters of King Paari Composed

His hand did a sword hold, his heart did munificence show!

In the history of the Tamil race, known was he as Paari!
The three Tamil kings surrounded his Parambu Hills and laid siege.
Fearless, he stood and fought, never bending his knees and entreating them
To save his crown!
Many enemies might come together and defeat King Paari.
But his munificent quality none there is to surpass!
Though years many had passed,
The name of Paari is everlastingly established here!
The world knows not the names of those three kings

Who vanquished and killed Paari!
But why does the name of Paari who fought and in the battlefield died,
Live indelibly and everlastingly?
In this world, warriorhood alone does not glory bring.

As a human being live should he,
Without straying away even a little from the righteous path.
And each measured step he takes is the path for the journey
Of generations of the forebears of future successors!

A rule indispensable indeed was Paari's for the people of the Parambu Hills.
After he was killed in war, the three kings planned to take his twin daughters.
Great poet Kapilar hid them from the three kings,
And boldly came forward to offer protection to these girls, under his care.

There are those who enjoy all the comforts when their friends are in an excellent state,
But when misfortune they experience,
These run far away, and never think of it as treachery,
And they on earth as virtuous beings act.
When Kapilar was near, Paari felt as though he was under his cool shade.
When Paari was killed in battle, and his daughters were in dire straits left,
To both of them as a dependable support Kapilar did come, and away the three flew!

He left these two pearllike daughters of Paari, under the care of people compassionate.
A few days were gone. From the top of the terrace of the house where they stayed,
The beauteous daughters saw the moon, bright and full in the sky!
Though their eyes were dry because of constant weeping,
Deeply moved at heart they were,
And the perennial stream of Tamil gushed forth,
And rose as a poem:
"In the blanched moon of the month past,
When the moon rose as butter churned and in the sky roamed,
Paari, our father, with a smiling face was near to us both,

In today's moon, our father isn't there with us,
And as the three kings had conquered our Hill.
Alone we stand, having lost our father and our motherland."

On listening to the song of Paari's daughters, Kapilar was deeply moved.
He caressed their tresses affectionately, and consoled them.
He said reassuringly that on marriage, their husbands would come,
And be their guardians.
"For over a month, we are without the Parambu Hills,
And we suffer without our father. What shall we do?"
Thus did the two beautiful girls suffer intensely,
And they gave us the poem that described their sorrowful state.
Though a song sorrowful, we find a fine quality in it,
And relish sweet Tamil, don't we?

(*Puranaanuuru:* Poem 112
Poets: Paari's daughters)

23 A Poem Born in the Woods

In the Chola country was a small village, Karaviiram,

A warrior there was in that village,
Who did his battle prowess display!
His hefty shoulders hit many,
And pulverized them into grains of sand.
And so, happily admired and praised he was
As the 'hefty-shouldered Karaviiran'
By the Chola forces who held the tiger flag!

Not satisfied with winning fame by the sword,
Desirous he was to make poetry in Tamil!
He who was used to testing the sharpness of a lance
Was keen to reap rewards rich,
As a writer of verses.

Scenes of Nature lined up before him,
And eagerly awaited to be depicted in poesy!

The round moon in the sky
With wings of light embraced him,
And pestered him to write on the twinkling stars around her!
The rising sun came, a plaint to proffer,
As to why reluctance there was to describe him,
As the Flower of the East!
The mountainous hills where peacocks roamed
Which melted the silvern snow and poured as icy streams,
Rushed and surrounded him and said:
"Our beauty do drink deep!"
Playing with a ball, a levy of belles,
With smiles captivating came protesting:
"Do write about our gazelle-like eyes!"
The parrots colourful came.
Flying round him, they said:
"Do a poem write about us!"
A crowd of swans floated as a boat on the stream,
And said: "On us do sing a song in brief!"
Nature that embraced a thousand beauties,
Asked him for a song of praise, but with no avail!
Into the woods he went, and stretching his imagination,
A central theme he tried to seek.
Like mountains dark
Before him elephants stood displaying their majesty!
Hefty shouldered Karaviiran,
Would not even think of looking at them by the corner of his eyes!
A male lion, fiercely rising,
His dense mane shook and said:
"Difficulty is there to make poetry fine,
Upon my pride!"
Like a sword that rose from its sheath,
A tiger shot from its cave, and cut him short:
"To make your verses special,

Won't my anger suffice!"
This poet would not take a palm leaf to write
About all the beautiful sights that fell prostrate
Before him, entreating him to write of them,
Did in the end find a companion to a monkey,
And he said: "Certain it is my poem would forever live,
In the poetic world!" Proudly feeling thus,
He made a poem that did before him unfold!
In this world where Beauty sits in glory,
Manifesting everywhere in many a beauteous form,
How did a pair of monkeys his thought attract?
We in eager anticipation wish to know!
The sight he saw, let us also see and enjoy,
Through the poem he wrote,
And let us in amazement admire
The emotion of love he chose to poetically depict,
Through the characters' traits unique!
A pair of monkeys, a male and a female,
Sat excitedly on the branch of a tree,
Drawn together by feelings of love!
Their young one also slept in the lap of its mother!
Kissing his mate, the male jumped off to another branch!
On his way he slipped and fell to the ground with a thud!
With the child, the mother to the spot did rush,
Where the male monkey fell!
The male who fell from the branch
Crashed against a mountain crag.
His head was broken and was in the throes of death.
Agitated was the female's mind in fiery intensity.
Even in a dream, away she could not stand
Even for a second from the male.
So in tears profuse suffer she did,
And bitterly slapped her face with her hands!
What if, my child did not know the ways of living in the woods,

My kith and kin would bring it up.
So to them I shall entrust the child.
To them she rushed and told them to take care of the child.
So saying, to the young one she gave a kiss!
Later,
The female, unable to go through the painful separation,
From him who accepted her as wife and gave her a child,
Decided to join her husband.
In great hurry the peak of a hill she climbed,
And down she fell and died,
With her body shattered beyond recognition!
A condition there is when not even a trace of love
Is found among people who look exceedingly lovely!
On seeing the flow of love from the monkey species,
Utterly devoid of beauty, the poet was so deeply moved!

(Kurunthokai: Poem 69. Poet: Kadunthool Karaviiran)

24 For a Man Dwarfish, a Hunchbacked Woman there is!

A belle beautiful whose tresses reach down to the knees,
And a young man, bright as the morning sun—
Bringing them together in a knot of love,
Great poets of the world make poems on them!
A flower-soft woman of slender waist
And swan's gait,
And a robust young man, with shoulders sinewed,
And budding moustaches,
Sweetly kiss and share the joy of love!
Do see this sight, say the poets,
Letting their imagination gush forth like flood,
And showering tales of love!
She, looking like burnished gold,

And he, with a walk like a lion,
Become one by love that gushes forth.
Such a picture as this the Tamil poets
From the Sangam Age, have been painting!
A poet called Ilanaakanaar,
Contrary to all these,
Makes two figures stand before us,
Who are wholly unaware of the conception of what is beautiful!
And describes the love arising from their hearts!
Kuralan means a short man,
Koooni means a hunchbacked woman,
And *koyil* means a king's palace.
This is how they are described in Tamil!
A short man and a hunchbacked woman,
After finishing their chores at the palace,
Were coming out of the palace portals
For returning home!
On seeing the hunchback,
The short one's heart brimmed with love!
To quell this upsurge, he wished to be
By the side of the hunchback.
Could only the beautiful doves fall in love?
Do the prattling parrots alone own pleasure?
Even the owls do in dalliance engage.
In this world, species thus multiply!

So, the short one is in the hunchback's heart,
And the hunchback is in the short one's heart!
As together their thoughts are entwined,
No surprise then this is to the world!
When monkeys and zebras can make love,
Bar is there only for the short man,
And the hunchbacked woman,
To fall in love with each other?

Because his body is short,
Will empty be his heart?
Though bentbacked she is, harmful will it be,
For the heart to be full of love?

Thinking of all these perhaps,
The sweet Sangam poet,
Ilanaakanaar took out a palm leaf,
And wrote of the dialogue of love
Between the *kuuni* and the *kuralan!*

This is the dialogue!

Kuralan:

Like the shade of a tree, standing on a bank,
That bends and falls on the water,
Your body is! Do not my words disregard.
Do stop for a while!

Kuuni:

A strange cock that has a human head,
Its amazing chick you are!
Short one! You could be measured by the breadth of the palm!
To approach me, a beauty, fit are you?

Kuralan:

Bent you are like a ploughshare!,
Capable are you of looking up?
I am so charmed by that beauty blemishless!
Silent why are you? Tell me what you have in mind,
Or else, do kill me!

Kuuni:

Like a plough am I? Time has come to
Such a pass that you can mock at me!
To the height of a chessboard you are,
And you debate about my beauty!
As a male, don't you know,
A way this is not to invite a beauty for falling in love!

Because lustful you are,
You do not want to observe the time appropriate!

Kuralan:

You have a body, beautiful like a peeled crane!
If I hold you by the chest,
Your hump will prick my chest,
If I in desire passionate
Embrace you from behind,
Your bentback will tickle me!

If it is a agreeable, side by side stand we shall,
And clasp each other to our heart's content!

Kuuni:

Not knowing only half a man in size you are,
You have to me a sermon delivered!
Like creepers that wound round trees,
Many there are who are intent,
To clasp me in embrace.
Not knowing that, defects to me you impute,
And utter words unkind!
Like a tortoise standing up,
You have to the sky risen!
Oh! You walk like the God of Love!
How ridiculous this is!

Kuralan:

I won't in scorn hold you hereafter!
Mean words utter I won't –
Thus, I swear, my love!
Come into the palace. A suitable place
I have found for you to embrace.
My golden peacock! Come without hesitation!

Kuuni:

Hereafter I too won't mock at you!
Like honey and milk let us mix in the joy of love!

In the king's palace, if we embrace,
Those who see us will talk of us,
As two evil spirits rolling in passionate dalliance!
So let us to the adjacent garden go,
And there, in locked embrace let us be!

What did happen to *Kuralan* on *Kuuni's* invitation?
He ran in joy and carried her away!
In the dense grove of clustered flowers,
They tasted joy infinite!
'Shunted stature' and 'Hunched back,'
Only in the body found are they!
When two hearts in joyous union mix,
Neither 'shortness' nor 'lumpness' there is!
A great height and a long vision,
Looking up the sky there are!

(*Kalitthokai:* Poem 94. Poet Marudhan Ilanaakanaar)

25 The Queen on a Cot of Soft Bed, and the King in a Cold War Camp!

The literature that was by the wise created,

To last for thousands of years,
Evidence shows that our great Tamil race alone
Appropriately divided life into inner (*akam*) and outer (*puram*) life,
And lived accordingly from time immemorial!

Though examples many there are of this,
Poet Nakkiiran it was who strung
A poetic garland of pearls, a Tamil nectar
Called *Nedunalvaadai: (The Cold North Wind),*
Included in *Patthuppaattu (The Ten Poems)*!
It is a description of King Pandiyan Nedunchezhian's heroic deeds,
And a narration of how Queen Koopperundevi's heart

Suffered intense pangs of separation from Nedunchezhian.
This is a work that exemplies the dimensions
Of an 'inner' (*akam*), and an 'outer' (*puram*) life,
As lived in the Tamil land long ago,
Contrary to the precepts of *ikam* (this worldliness),
And *param* (the other worldliness)!

The seven kings at the battle of Thalaiyaalankaanam,
Mistaking that a lone young man was caught,
Fought with him and licked the dust!
Later Nedunchezhian a beautiful damsel met
And made her his queen.
The irksome call of duty at the battlefield
Did not give him time enough
The bliss of conjugal love to enjoy!
Even after the battle of Thalaiyaalankaanam,
He led forces and victories won.
He captured the fortress of King Veel Evvy in the Chozha kingdom.
He fought the master swordsman, Muthu Veelir,
Seized his crown and part of his kingdom.
The forces of Ceeramaan Irumporai he vanquished and imprisoned him!
Thus victories came one after another,
And he went on invading accompanied by his forces.
Paandimaadevi was agitated and tearful
That nights and days for her passed heavily.
A chillness keen with the North Wind comes.
Even if the hero does not with a dress protect himself
The heroine his body covers, and the male does her beauteous body enrobe.
Thus they conquer the wind!
But here, the situation was, the Pandiya king,
In the heat of intense anger rose and to the battlefield went.
The empty threat of the cold North Wind,
Effect none it had on the king.
But the state of the queen! Alas! Piteous it was!

Poet Nakkiiran writes thus:
"See the plight of the cocks reared at home,
Which are unable to bear the cold North Wind!
Gone are the days when the peahen and peacock,
Wandering in the wide open, searched for prey,
And happily spent their days together.
But just now, unaware of night or day,
They shift their weight from one tired leg to another in the wooden cage!
Similarly, in the killing chill, the heart overflowing with love,
The beauteous queen over the bed rolls over!"
Poet Nakkiiran depicts this in inimitable Tamil!

"High domed towers tall—
And on them the flags like a rainbow do display colours!
On pillars ornate, studded in blue,
One wonders whether these were daubed with silver as a paste of white!
Chezhian's palace was surrounded by strong walls
As though of copper they were made."
Thus Poet Nakkiiran depicted these in Tamil rich!
The queen red-lipped, who suffered
With thoughts of him she loved, lay on bed,
Which Nakkiiran delineates thus:
An elephant, with legs huge as drums,
After serving at the battlefield,
For full forty years, died there.
Its twin tusks were taken and embellished for making the cot,
And on all the four sides, it was with ball-like rotundities adorned,
Garlands of pearls and gems were from the cot suspended.
A bedspread beautifully woven showed a lion-hunt.
With it were bed and pillows of many shades,
Made from the downy feathers of swans!
But he wasn't there to embrace her!
So her pangs did increase!
Companion maids her feet softly caressed,

And cajoled her: "Lady, please sleep!"
In anger she burst out saying "Useless you are!"
As a beautiful scene in the sky,
The moon and *Rohini*
Were in close proximity seen.
Seeing that, she felt she hadn't that good fortune,
And wondered why in vain suffer she should!
With her fingers her tears she wiped,
But in deep pain she was, as her anguish she could not end!
While the queen was languishing at the palace in Madurai.
Like a creeper of honey-laden flowers awaiting the bee,
In what state was Nedunchezhian then?
Come, ye, to see this in *Nedunalvaadai!*
To Pandiyan's devotion to duty,
Love was no obstacle!
Because of his thoughts of Koopperundevi,
His aim he did not lose sight of.
The cold North Wind blew on his camp too!
But that did not let him forget the battle front,
And hasten to seek the bangled hands of his queen!
At the camp, he was moving about at midnight! Why?
To see his wife languishing on the bed? No! No!
In the bitter cold that rattles even a hill,
The king his routine duties carried out.
Surrounded by torch-bearing warriors,
He placed his right hand on the shoulder
Of a soldier strong, in a friendly way.
In the rainy night, he went round the areas,
Where many wounded warriors lay
He enquired after their health,
And thanked them, with all consideration!
Their commander's benign look
Chased away all the pain of wounds
They had suffered at the battlefield!

While the queen was disturbed
Missing her beloved,
The king on his fatigued feet,
Went round the camp, doing his duty!
If proof is required for the way
Our Tamil race alone, from time immemorial,
Masterfully lived, dividing life,
Into 'inner' and 'outer',
Oh! Oh! Won't *Nedunalvaadai* alone do?

(On the basis of *Nedunalvaadai*, a song of praise composed by the Sangam poet, Nakkiiran, on the heroic exploits of Nedunchezhian, the king of the victorious war of Thalaiyaalankaanam).

26 Injustice She Avenged and Enmity She Ended!

That was indeed the Golden Age of the Tamils,

When with the speeding spear, and the fell sword that cut asunder,
Young ones, even before the school age, fiercely rose,
Declaring: "To enmity we shall put an end"
That was the time when poets fostered the Tamil Sangam!
Warriors bold, like tigers leaping, to battle went,
And goodly women blessed and bade them well.

The winds that blew reflected the Tamil boldness!
The rising waves revealed the Tamils' lofty stature!
The scented wood wafted Tamil tongue's fragrance!
The beauteous moon amidst the clouds appeared,
And in it the poetic richness of Tamil threefold was seen.

Even emperor Asoka, renowned the world over, declared
The mighty sect of Kosars of the powerful South was not by his domain ruled!

The Kosars were powerful and bold,
And known for their honesty of telling the truth.
Stopping short of the land of Tulus, up to the Southern Sea they went.
Leaving their nomadic ways, they established themselves,
At Niyamam in the Selluur region, according to history!

Akanaanuuru gives this account.
Two lion-like Tamil warriors,
Called Anni and Mignili are introduced in an *akam* song.
Combining the names of these two Tamil warriors,
A young Tamil maiden there was, capable of vanquishing
Even robust young men, with her beautiful eyes!
Though young of age, she was one of culture and beauty!
Many had an eye on her!
A few from the Kosars' sect asked her father
For her hand. But he refused.
The beautiful belle, Annimignili,
Was like warrior Anni who died in the battlefield
So fiercely chaste!
Like warrior Mignili who vanquished Aaiyeyinan,
And Nannan's place his own made,
Resolute at heart she was!
"What did you of my daughter think?
Like sugar cane sweet she is!
I won't let her be given away to a black monkey!
Don't you know her thoughts are on Azhundhuuran
By name Thithiyan the ruler of that land?
Do not come again. Clearly know what I say,
And leave immediately!"
Even among truthful Kosars,
A few there were with a vengeful heart.
History so tells us.

A scheme they devised to capture the girl beautiful!
The fertile soil where greengram grew
Was Kosar's rightful possession in Niyamam!
The sole family wealth of Annimignili was a cow!
A few of the Kosars chased the cow away by a sinister design,
And let it graze their greengram field!
As a hungry cow it was, it gobbled up the wild growth,
Without running away from it!
The cow's belly bloated up like the paunch
Of the idle rich who rob the working poor!
If the old man's eyes are blinded,
Because she denied us the maiden,
Left alone she will be!
Then all of us can share her.
The mean-minded thus acted trickily.
They put Anni's father into the witness box,
And narrated the story of how the cow grazed the greengram bush.
Kosars of the Town Hall asked him to tell the truth!
The old man's face was like the sky filled with dark clouds.
"Who ever did see my cow grazing?
Thus ask I won't. Whoever opposed,
I would never tell a lie. From such a tradition do I come.
'Tis true my cow grazed the greengram growth."
The Court a judgment delivered.
"As he has to the guilt confessed,
Let his eyes be gouged!"
The very next second, Annimignili's father was taken away.
Alas! The two eyes of the grand old man were gouged out.
"Father dear! Your sight you have lost.
I shall avenge the wicked ones."
Thus the daughter wildly wept.

"Destroying my eyes, they have planned to rob you!
Whoever has the courage to come near

My daughter who holds the sword of chastity?"
Before the father could finish his speech,
She who stood, as though on fire, replied:
"Those who made my father, dear as life, blind,
I shall their life take. I won't eat from a salver.
I won't change my clothes.
Until I avenge myself, I shall not eat or sleep.
Enmity end I shall. I shall offer my enemies as sacrifices,
Before my father who was blinded!"

Annimignili's challenge reached Thithiyan of Azhunduur the very next day.
Worried he was about the sorrow the maid underwent.
Impatient he was to see her.
He saw Anni standing before him in wrath intense.
"Beautiful one! Darling of my heart!
To assuage your wounded heart, neither the means,
Nor the ways I know," said he in sorrow.

"King! A force of horse riders in your fortress have you!
My beloved! You have shoulders stout as a hill!
If true it is that you love me, Annimignili called,
Start for war against the Kosars without delay!
Those perpetrators of injustice, defeated they should be.
Because you are like a mongoose that cuts snakes to bits.
I have come in search of Thithiyan of shoulders sinewed", she said

"See! The sword from the sheath I have already drawn!
My love! Do know of my challenge too!
Those who maimed your father and my father-in-law,
Only after killing them, my arms will reach for you!"
Azhundhuuraan a battle cry let out!
And the forces marched advancing.
Destroyed were the bodies of the wicked Kosars.
Like a crumbling wall they fell and died.
The challenge after his heart he fulfilled.

She on Thithiyan's shoulders leaned!
That very day their budding love did flower!
And this became thus the basis for an *akam* song.

(Source: *Akanaanuuru:* Poem 262. Poet: Paranar)

27 A Kannagi Even in Those Days!

Even before Ilango Adigal, the younger Cheran,
Wrote an epic called *Silappadhikaaram* in Tamil rich,
A story in those days did orally spread,
Like the celebrated legend of Kannagi.
Some poets wrote verses in *Sangam* Tamil,
And that is proof of this.

There was a king called Vaiyavik Koopperum Peekan,
And he was in great estimate held by the people.
A broad-shouldered king he was, and a generous one to freely gift.
He was the one who gave away a golden shawl to a peacock.

He married Kannagi and happily lived with her,
A paragon of beauty, an emblem of chastity and an epitome of honour!

But his mind behaved like a monkey
That jumped from branch to branch!
The town that became Palani in latter days,
Earlier known it was as Pothini.
Hailing from a community of hunters, he became famous,
And was celebrated as an epic hero, from among many chieftains.
And Peekan, munificent was he
A hero who never bowed before his enemies!

Like rains that plentily poured, on fertile and arid lands alike,
Generous-hearted he was to gift to all alike, without distinction.

Of him, the famed poet Paranar sang apparently adversely thus:
Because he gave away gifts so many to the haves and have-nots alike on earth,
Thoughtless his munificence was,
But in battle, he fought sagaciously estimating his enemies' might.
Thus did Paranar his fame elevate in Tamil felicitous.

Like a parrot beautiful that vanquished a vulture,
Peekan fell before a common woman of Nalluur!
Her eyes like arrows struck his heart,
And by her language sweet, he to her as a slave remained.
Bathing him in fragrant waters, she made him ever lie by her side.

Kannagi shed tears profuse, and a figure of sadness she became!
This gracious light in the palace lay uncared for, in a state of life sans lustre,
Ever weeping in the thought of him, the king.

Kapilar, as a Tamil wise, to the king an appeal made in a Sangam poem,
To let him stop embracing that low woman, and hasten to Kannagi's home!
He exhorted him to go and wipe the tears of beauteous Kannagi!

Poet Paranar said: "Cruel it is, not to show love to her."
Poet Arisil Kizhaar who came to see him for receiving gifts,
Desisted from doing so and said: "Do warm the tresses of Kannagi,
With the fragrant smoke of incense, and make her feel happy.
Her neck with garlands adorn, and joyously be one with her.
Quickly harness the horses to the chariot and hurry!"

Another great poet, Perunkunruur Kizhaar said:
"King of the hunting community!
If you come forward to remove your dear Kannagi's vexations,
And make her happy, living with her,
That is the biggest gift you will be giving me!"

By the words of these poets, Peekan his faults realized,
Got the chariot ready, and like a storm he flew to Kannagi!

Happy a new life had dawned, the flower-like belle,
Became the Southern Breeze that softly blew!

(*Puranaanuuru*: Sung respectively by Paranar, Kapilar, Paranar, Arisil Kizhaar and Perunkunruur Kizhaar. Poems: 142, 143, 144, 146 and 147.)

28 The Southern Breeze for us, a Storm for the Enemy!

The cold wind does squeeze water from the clouds,

And the mountain's thirst it quenches.

In the splendid land of Thakaduur,
King Athiyamaan Nedumaananchi rules.

At the Royal Hall, as usual, the learned and the wise,
The moustached generals and the ministers,
Sat and freely exchanged ideas,
On augumenting the wealth of the land,
Greatly pleased was Athiyamaan Nedumaananchi,
And all of them he praised. Seeing that, Avvaiyaar shed tears of joy.

Smiling at the king, a poem she made, beautiful as a jasmine garland,
And etched it as an everlasting poem on *puram* mode.
Follow the rich similes of the poem and enjoy it.
The affection, attachment and compassion Athiyamaananchi
Showed to all those around him,
And his kindness and culture, besides his simplicity,
And gentleness –
Are not these qualities appropriate to a leader!
Does not the Tamil land inherit thus this fame!
Thinking of Athiyamaan, Avvaiyaar made a delightful poem
On his pleasing qualities!
"Like eyelids that guard the eye, thou art the fortress that guards this land!
Leader great! Understanding us well thou movest with us showing simplicity!
When I think of thee, reminded I am only of an elephant!
Appropriate it is to you, that I make a comparison of its action!
At the water front, where a crowd of young boys,
Washed the trunks and bathed the elephant,
The elephant appeared as though it was a simple plaything
Of these young boys, without their fearing it!
Like its simple nature, you also move with us,
But in heat, the elephant ferociously rises.
Likewise, you do a storm become,
Fiercely attacking the enemy's forces, to destroy them!
Though you are a person simple, to the joy of our heart,
Like the elephant with the young boys at the water front,
Fiercely stand you do before the enemies,
Like the elephant that walks with thundering steps in heat!
From her experience of watching these two actions of the elephant,
She compares them with the traits of Athiyamaan.
What a beauty this lyric is!

(*Puranaanuuru*: Poem 94. Poet: Avvaiyaar)

29 Nature that Shows the Nature of a Kind

In a beautiful love-story from a seashore scene,

In the delightful *Narrinai,*

Poet Ammuuvanaar narrates how so many problems arise,
When one kind fails to properly understand another kind.

On a sandy-beach on which rising waves kept knocking,
Bringing ashore tiny shells with them,

A fruit from a jamun tree fell and rolled away.
The bees mistaking it for one of their kind,
Around the fallen fruit they did swarm. What foolishness!

A crab thinking it to be a fine fruit,
Rushed and caught the bee's foot!

The bee, in a mistaken identification of its kind,
In a dire difficulty was it caught!

Seeing the bee trapped in a state of death,
The crowding bees flew above noisily, distressed and disturbed!
The crab happily thought a jamun fruit was caught,
And unaware, it was a bee that was caught, hurried.

"I do my life lose, because I approached the jamun fruit, unaware of its kind,
And got myself into a sorry plight." Thus, alas, the bee did cry aloud.

Just then, as none there was for help,
A help, like lightning came, in the form of a crane.

The crab, fearing it would be a prey to the crane
That came like a friend of the bee,
Let go the bee's leg,
And into the hole it escaped in a trice and saved its life!

A propitiate time it was for the bee indeed!
For, if only the crane hadn't come,
The life of the bee which took the jamun fruit,
As its kind, would have lost its life!

"The friend of our kind releasing himself from the clutches of the crab,
Had returned from death. "Thus humming together,
They in a celebration indulged!

One of a race should clearly know one's kindred. Otherwise,
Vexations painful would occur, to deeply disturb the heart.

Describing movingly the pangs of separation of lovers,
Great poet Ammuuvanaar mixes this advice with a scene of Nature....

Though I experienced joy in enlarging this in my imagination,
I know not why my eyes were moist with tears!

(*Narrinai*: Poem: 35
Poet: Ammuuvanaar)

30 Jasmine in Ollaiyuur?

In the old town of Ollaiyuur, known as Pudukkottai Oliyamangalam,

A pandal of jasmine creepers crisscrossed, wafting pervading fragrance.

To a noble man called Kizhaar was born Perunchaatthan,
A warrior of immense fame.

In all the battles between the Pandyas and the Chozhas,
He gathered forces and gained victories only for the Pandyas.

He was a warrior valiant with hill-like shoulders,
And a munificent one whose hands showerered generous gifts.

The wise and the learned of good Tamil land,
For him wove garlands of praise in Tamil rich.

Two poets, Kiirathanaar of Kudavaayil,
And Thodiththalai Vizhuththandinaar, of Chozha land,
Where flew aloft the tiger flag,
Extremely glad they were that the whole land,

Praised his valour that killed enmity in a trice,
And his bounteous heart that removed poverty.

His friendship they sought and as his friend they flourished!
Though he remained with Pandyan and opposed the Chozhan,
Kiirathanaar never did fail to praise him for his good qualities!

"Even the jasmine of the enemy's garden does fragrance waft,"
Said Arignar Anna. Perhaps, this poet also was like him!

All over the land of the great Tamils news spread,
Like a spear cleaving a mountain,

That the great warrior Perunchaatthan,
Had fallen ill and was dying.

Poet Kiirathanaar by the news was shocked,
That he who was strong like a fortress fell.

Like a rising wave of the sea, he was deeply agitated!
As he went along the path to Kudavaayil.

He entered the land of Perunchaathhan.
As soon as he set foot on the territory of Ollaiyuur,
He saw fragrant jasmine creepers spreading.
What was the hurry for the creeping jasmine to flower,
When dead was Perunchatthan who did his enemies conquer,
Like striking thunder?

Turning to the flowering jasmines,
As one by a storm struck, he said:
"The warriors young will not wear you as flowers!
The bangled women also won't near you come!
Even the male and female minstrels
Who sing to receive a prize,
Won't pluck and place you on their lyres!
When the entire town is in tears,
Because of the loss of Chaatthan,
O jasmine! Without thinking even for a second,
Why did you bloom so heartlessly in Ollaiyuur?"

Because Kudavaayil Kiirathanaar did such an elegy write,
The memory of the late lamented Chaatthan, for his ability well known,
Pervaded the hearts of people. This truth thus was to everyone known.
So let us the culture of Tamils praise,
As worthy of adoration!

(*Puranaanuuru:* Poem 242. Poet: Kudavaayil Kiiraththanaar)

31 Possible is it to Forget, if a Rebirth there is?

Of the thoughts of a maiden in love,

Who believed in rebirth among people,
Poet Ammuuvanaar described in the days of yore,
And offered it like a succulent piece of mango fruit!

In a poem in the *Narrinai Naanuuru* anthology,
A chaste and beautiful maiden there is
Waiting in monumental patience for her beloved's return,
Intense feelings of love she undergoes, and weeping, profuse tears she sheds.

"The day he said he would come is gone,
The pleasure he said he would give is also gone!
Saying, 'Smooth as the bamboo my shoulders are!'
Many kisses to me he did give.
Without being aware of my longing, where did he go?

My eyes two will ever be wide open,
Looking at the way of the woods,

And waiting in agitation great!
Aware of my plight, won't he to me come,
Pleasure to give, my flower soft body embracing?

Conscious awareness is wholly gone from me,
And as evening comes, the fever of love does increase!
No purpose there is in my living without him even for a second.
A roof without walls, can it be called a house?
Bidding goodbye to the fingers,
Is there ever another way to play the *Veena?*

Twin lungs there are for breathing,
But if one is lost, no wrong there is!
If half of the heart is cut and taken away,
Natural it is for life to cease!

As one and the same heart we lived.
He is the rising sun who in the West has set.
To remove darkness, let my life be with light suffused.
Forget him I cannot,
And so I have decided to die!
A doubt before my death:
Rebirth there is, it is said. I too believe it.
What advantage is another birth to me!
To him I have surrendered myself.
That birth next and that feminine birth –
That forgets him not –
Will it occur? Thus thinking,
Suffer I do and become weak.
Afraid to die as I am, I grow lean!"
In a classic poem in *Narrinai*
Poet Ammuuvanaar thus describes a heroine's anguish.
Great joy let us derive,
Drinking delight from the poem as nectar sweet in Tamil.

(*Narrinai*: Poem 25.
Poet: Ammuuvanaar)

32 Only One-fourth of a Measure do we Eat, Only Two Pieces do we Wear!

To let young leonine Tamils to think and act well,

I shall explain in part from a book I wrote on *Sangath Tamil.*
Receptive to it you be!
O you the rich! To sleep, lulled by the soft-blowing Southern Breeze,
You live in mansions many storeyed!
Ever exploiting the sweat of the toiling masses,
Keen you are to amass wealth aplenty!
Like a vulture that preys on the dead,

Your belly you do enlarge!
Pushing the poor into abyssmal darkness,
You run after wealth, with a mind unsatiated!
You, I shall a question ask. Do a reply make!
Rubies cooked as vegetables fried,
And a garnished mixture of emeralds stewed,
Do you on a leaf consume?
Making fries of diamonds,
And a potpourri of precious gems,
Do you pound pearls and corals,
And boil them as rice to go with them,
To fill the bag of your belly?
A question with such an import,
At a meeting did Anna ask,
Before men who had amassed heaps of wealth.
Never forgetting this, we do ever ask the same!
We trumpet today that socialism should pervade and flourish.
No new fanfare this is!
Hear great savant Nakkiiran, proclaiming socialism,
In an ancient *puram* poem.
The king who longs to hold untrammelled sway
Over all the world that the clear sea surrounds,
The primitive who roams night and day sans sleep,
To hunt animals in the jungle,
As easily as pelting stones on sweet fruits –
These need only a pair of dresses,
To hide their upper and lower limbs in modesty!
And to appease their hunger,
And save them from faintness,
Some gruel, or rice boiled from cereals.
Is not this all each one needs in this world, by the sea surrounded?
After realizing the truth that only one-fourth of a measure is eaten,
And only two dresses are worn,
Is it just that many wallow in dire poverty,

And a few dance about in pomp and plenty?
While the physical and mental needs are the same,
For all born in the world,
Thoughtlessly, why should one alone gather wealth so much,
While many die in the abysmal depth of life?
To eradicate poverty the proper way is
To destroy selfish possessions by individuals, and care for many lives,
Letting them share by the principle of socialism.
The purpose of life is to ensure such an equitable distribution,
To find joy on earth!
Poet Nakkiiran gathered these thoughts and offered them,
And all the good people of this ancient earth,
Continue to offer these selfsame thoughts!
"Over the terrain amidst the sea so clear,
One alone wishes to hold untrammelled sway,
Under the canopy of one's power.
The primitive man, sleepless night and day,
In the jungle hunts.
For him, eating is a measure small,
And the wear are only two.
All the rest is the same for all.
Giving alone is the purpose of wealth.

(*Puranaanuuru*: Poem 189)

33 Moosikiiranaar on the Cot for Ceremonial Drums

The beard, like a waterfall
Of white flowered garland long!
A frame, hefty and tall,
By the habit of eating boiled millet!
Attractive eyes, sharper than
The tip of a bow!
There he comes, like Tamil nectarine,
That comes in the form of a poet great!
Moosikiiranaar he is called. Even as the Southern Wind
Comes caressing his body, Tamil's fragrance it wafts!
Cheras, Cholas and Pandiyas - the three kings famed,
A very special regard had for this prince of poetry!

Literary history has it that Tamil
Was a lofty jewel in the crown of these three kings.

It was Cheramaan Irumporai, one among the three defenders of Tamil,
Who conquered Thakaduur!

Poet Arisil Kizhaar composed eighty poems
In *Pathirruppatthu,* in praise of him.
For this act, the king was pleased to gift him all the land he ruled.
As the poet the prize declined,
He made him his minister and adviser!

The hand that held the sceptre,
Also held a writing instrument sometimes.
By the love of Tamil rich,
It did great literary works create!

Old Moosikiiranaar, like a bee that comes
To suck honey from the flower,
A great distance walked,
And the king's palace reached,
To meet the wise king,

Hearing that the king was tired and asleep,
He waited at the palace to see him.
He also felt he should have a rest.
He looked around to see
Whether a place there was for him to sleep!
He found a cot, bedecked with flowers,
And used for placing the ceremonial battle-drums!
Unaware the cot was for placing the drums,
Used in bloody wars,
The poet conveniently lay on it for sleeping!

If anyone lay on the cot,
Where the victory-drums were placed,
The kings in anger rose, deeming it a big crime,
And beheaded him. Such a time it was!

Because the warriors had removed the battle-drums,
For performing ceremonial ablutions.
The great poet was unaware of this,
And he soundly slept on the cot!

Tired after a long walk, fast asleep he was,
With beads of perspiration appearing on his body.
In complete oblivion,
He snored!

The king who slept on a bed soft as peacock feathers
From his sleep awoke!

When the great king came out,
To take a walk in the front yard,
He came near the cot for the battle drums,
And was surprised. There he saw Moosikiiranaar sleeping!

"King! May I bring the sword?"
Asked the guard who stood, bowing respectfully.

Whoever lay on the cot used for the war-drums,
Behedding him and taking his life away
Was a command that was strictly in force,
The warrior knelt.
And waited respectfully for a sign from his eyes!

The warrior thought the king's eyes would show
Fierce anger, and his language would reveal
A vexing impatience. Contrary to his thinking,
The king commanded: "Fetch a fan!"

The king who ruled the country with fame unique,
Held the fan the guard hastened to bring.
And attending upon the poet with care, fanned him!
The king did not stop fanning the poet,
Until he woke up, after his fatigue ceased.
When the poet woke up after a long time,
He jumped out of the cot!

"My King! What is this?" he asked agitatedly!
Cheran said: This is the blessing this humble one has received!

"Though of the king's command I am aware,
I lay on the cot, not knowing this was for the battle-drums,
Though a sentence there was to end a life,
Without killing me, you woke me up, sparing me from death.
O king! With your own hands you have fanned me!
What a great scene this is!"
Exclaimed thus the poet relaxed!

Cheran said: "Out of selfishness that if service to Tamil was done,
We would live as long as Tamil lives,
I did this service do to you, who came to me.
As the symbol of Tamil!"
Thus did the poet make the gift of poem -
A blend of honey and fruit juice, indeed!

(*Puranaanuuru*: Poem 50. Poet: Moosikiiranaar)

34 The Drunken Male Monkey!

By the side of a mountain stream,
A male monkey one day drank liquor and dozed off.
And this Kalpilar who happened to pass by saw!

"Did a male monkey drink?
That too illicit liquor, not permitted by the government?
Right now let it be dragged to prison!" Any such stringent law
The government had not enacted in those days, to be bent after one's heart!
Still Kapilar was eager to know from where the male monkey stole the liquor.

"Why not wake him up and ask," thought Kapilar.
But that was not possible! For that male monkey had laid himself down,
On a beautiful and soft bed of golden flowers,
Which had fallen for many days,
And slept off soundly, unaware of the world!

On the mountain, beside the babbling stream,
Kapilar saw the male and the female monkeys frolicking about,

Amidst the branches of the sandalwood tree,
And later, enjoying themselves in mating.

Right from morning, the male and the female monkeys,
Had roamed about the woods, making love to each other.
In the evening, the male left the female alone,
And went searching for a salve to ease himself from fatigue,
And stretched himself flat on his back,
On the bed of flowers collected on the mountain.
So thought Kapilar.
Because the female knew of the male's drinking habit,
She would angrily stop him from coming near her!
The male monkey, like a husband who was afraid of his wife,
Because of her frequent advice to him to follow moral ways,
And as a result, she a quarrel had with her husband,
The male monkey lay there drunk.
The poet was curious to know as to who could have distilled the ferment,
Which took effect slowly like the soft blowing southern breeze,
And deeply permeated the thought,
To make the dark skies swim round,
The watery earth to fly past, and the world to forget!
What kinds of fruit, what barks were used to cause this intoxication?
Thus did Kapilar wonder!
Because he stood long, contemplating on the monkey,
And let his heavy thoughts run, Kapilar was somewhat thirsty.
When he dipped his hands into the water to drink a handful and wet his tongue,
An answer he quickly found to the puzzlement!
Though he drank only a little from the stream,
His entire frame and fibre was invigorated with excitement,
Impelling him to reach the very doors of heavenly inebriation!
Coming round with great effort, a great poem he composed,
And added it to the anthology of *akam* poems!
That poem of nectarine sweetness,

Was about the beautiful mountain region,
Ruled by the king of a hilly kingdom,
And is in tough Tamil of the Sangam Age.
Just to let you know of its sugary sweetness,
I furnish it here, simplified:
"Great lord of the hill country,
Where there is fertile and plenteous growth,
Offering everything to various animal species,
To satisfy their hunger!
In the stream that gushes forth from the mountain,
The plump and ripe bunches of banana fruits fall and roll,
And the richly sweet juice of jackfruits, together with the bananas
Mix with the water and blend and soak,
And the sun's hot rays ferment them,
And most unexpectedly and naturally change them
Into bubbling liquor intoxicating.
A male monkey, taking it for water, drank it.
And in utter dizziness, unable to climb up the sandalwood tree,
Slept on the floor, covered with a fragrant heap of flowers!
O what a scene that was!"
Thus,
By these poetic lines, Kapilar shows the hilly land's fertile richness!
I too have presented this in the form of a story,
And have happily placed it in your hands. Enjoy it!

(*Akanaanuuru*: Poem 2.
Poet: Kapilar)

35 To the Learned in Distress, do Liberally Donate!

Like the pestle that separates chaff from rice in a mortar,
This warrior bold would cut asunder the bodies of growling enemies,
Who did not good relationship build.

Aiming his spear unerringly, this fierce and noble warrior king,
Would disembowel his dreadful enemies,
And hold them like a garland!
Pandiyan Nedunchezhian was he,
Who conquered the Aryan forces!
This king of the Chezhiyan clan,
Tamil rich in his heart enshrined,
And so an excellent erudition he imbibed!

A story too there is! Because a judgement
He delivered in haste, sans enquiry,

Kannagi cursed him as an "ignorant king!"
On hearing that justice was miscarried,
He did his life sacrifice at the altar of justice!
Pandiyan Nedunchezhian was he,
Who was celebrated by Cheran Ilango,
In the famed story of the anklet!

The Pandiya country where Chezhiyan lived,
Plenty of natural riches enjoyed!
To enrich fertility ever more increasingly,
Actions and plans during his reign he executed.

The pearls from the Southern Seas,
The beauty of the hills with sweet streams flowing,
Palatial golden halls, beautiful groves,
The paddy fields by the meandering rivers,
The grain heads undulating in the air –
These to Nedunchezhian did not give the fullest satisfaction!
Of all the riches the vast world receives,
The richness of knowledge alone is the best of all, he found,
And declared: "In the land where the ignorant live,
All the other riches are a waste indeed!"

Distinguished teachers inculcate knowledge,
To let the heart shine bright and clear,
Without getting clouded in darkness.
When they in distress are, standing by them,
Enough recompense should be given to the learned to protect them.
A poem as this, on *puram* he inscribed,
And as a garland to Mother Tamil he bestowed!
Even when great misfortune occurs, as a setback,
One should without being discouraged continue to learn,
That is why I have written
That those who seek to attain knowledge,
Should learn without dislike.
Thus saying, he answered questions raised by

His beauteous and beloved consort Koopperundevi, and enlightened her!

Further, a doubt she raised:
"Lord! Two sons of a mother -
One literate, and the other illiterate -
Aren't they both dear as her eyes?"

"Though the two are born to the same mother,
Her heart is pleased only with that son,
Who does just deeds, is able and learned,
And she deems him excellent!"

Leaning on the beautiful queen, he let his thoughts run,
And inscribed further on the palm leaf!
This condition, true it is not for the mother alone.
It applies to the king who rules the world!
The government will not seek advice,
From the eldest born who is ignorant,
But will invite only the younger one, who is superior in knowledge,
And learning, to consult on actions that will do the country good!
Among the four classes of people who live in our country,
Those of the superior class are not really superior,
And those of the lower class are not really inferior,
Though this evil came about in certain circumstances.
If one from the lower class is well-versed
In education and knowledge,
Then, the one who is deemed superior,
Will have to be below him.
After writing this, he read it out to the queen.
She was very pleased and was all praise for him!
Thus he from the Southern land, sang a song,
On the glory of knowledge, as a treasure,
In a poem on *puram* life!
(*Puranaanuuru*: Poem 183. Poet: *Aaryappadai Kadantha Neduncezhia Paandian*)

36 Poet of a New Song

The working class declares,

Loud like the roaring seas,
That those who say wealth, comfort
And all the pleasures of life to them belong
Are old bandicoots of selfishness.
Building a fighting base, eyes belching fire,
To scotch wickedness, holding flags aloft,
And beating drums of revolution,
The people struggle to establish
That all the riches to all the folks belong.
My heart is pleased to see them glower like a volcano,
And I look back at them, with a smile aglow on my lips!

Oh! Oh! I am amazed! I am thrilled!
And I pour over *Puranaanuuru* literature!
In those days of Tamil land,

To break the powerful hold of individual owners,
And to change the history of the poor,
Who in intense poverty bend so low and fall,
Feeling hopeless of their future life,
A poet with an agitated heart,
A Sangam poem offers!

He was known as Pakkudukkai Nankaniyaar,
Because he wore a dress made from a bag.
Many in praise and admiration gave him the nickname,
Pakkudukkai, as the learned observed!
Because he did not properly wear the bag,
That was a dress, he was perhaps conferred the title,
"Pakkudukkai Nankaniyaar," by onlookers!

Simplicity in dress and appearance,
Humility in life - with these,
A condition free from distinctions of 'poor' and 'rich' -
When will these flourish among the human kind!
That he sang with such concern even long ago,
Makes this poem very unique!

When he heard the sounds of wedding drums in a home,
And at another house, the taps of drums announcing death,
Heartbroken he was!

Though natural it is for human beings,
To live and die on earth,
In each of the events he saw
Two different reasons there were, he felt!

Loudly reverberated the wedding drums,
And the marriage pandal
Was full of mangoes, jackfruits and bananas.
In a procession came the bridal couple,
In a chariot beautiful.

Mounds of fleshly food were heaped,
And pots of liquor were placed
Before guests in the palatial hall.
But the crowd of the poor.
To bare skins and bones reduced,
Stood in the streets with eyes half-closed,
Languishing in dire hunger and patiently waiting
For the leftovers to be thrown at them.
This scene Pakkudukkkai Nankaniyaar sees!
With tearful eyes, he went to another place,
Having heard of a sorry event that had occurred there!
A belle beautiful, supple and soft,
Her life had ended as the only way!
Her youthful love did not fruition reach,
As the parents of the bridegroom,
The marriage stopped because of her poverty.
The guiltless girl of domestic virtue,
Fell on the lap of death!
And those are only the cries now revealed,
As thoughts revolutionary in a new light,
As a poem of *Puranaanuuru* today!
Lovers to be united in marriage on the one,
And women dying in tears profuse, on the other,
There is a happy life for one group of people only,
And sorrow trailing like a shadow for another,
Thus did the heartless humanity codify.
A great injustice is this not?
To change this, and to make all share alike the earth,
Let the desired tasks be set,
And let the good ones rise!
Thus did declare the poet!

If "good ones" we really are, let us declare, 'yes,'
Before *Nankaniyaar,* and carry out his words in action!

Let the nation and the state prosper.
Let us the evil of individual possession eradicate,
And let us a world without social inequality create!

(*Puranaanuuru*: Poem 194. Poet: Pakkudukkai Nankaniyaar)

37 No Ceremonial Gift Offer but only a Cherished Prize there is!

In embarrassment you will your face contract,

By the term, *mulai vilai!*

In the dictionary of Thamizh threefold
It meant "a ceremonial money offer,

To the bride's family,
For accepting the bride as the daughter-in-law.

In olden days, it was called *'mulai vilai,'*
But it would certainly appear vulgar to the Tamils of today.

When it is settled, the beautiful maid
Was the bride appropriate for the boy,

A purse of money was to be ceremonially presented
To the bride's family, with due love and respect!

In *Mullaikkali* from *Kalitthokai,* a father makes
A challenging announcement that he would his beautiful daughter
Give away, without duly presenting the ceremonial money!
A poet called Chozhan Nallurutthiranaar,
Describes this very interestingly.

When we read it,
It tastes sweeter than the sumptuous jackfruit!

With what feelings the robust youth
Should involved be in taming a bull,
With the fell horns that disembowel and kill,

The father of the beautiful bride does describe.
Do please listen!

If the lover, sans fear, jumps between
The bull's horns, as with the same ardour

He clasps the breasts of his beloved one,
Then I have objections none

To give away my daughter in marriage to him!
To offer ceremonial money or anything else, I do not propose,
As fit is he alone who will my daughter as a prize receive!

Seeing the twin breasts of the beloved one,
And jumping on them with joy immense,

Should be the same as seeing the twin horns,
Without being discouraged or dispirited,
And that is the outcome of valour great!

We do see this in the *Mullaikkali* song from *Kalitthokhai,*
As a proof indelibly engraved on stone!

And greatly ashamed we are
If a Tamil's firm shoulders slant
Even a little before enemies!

(*Kalitthokai – Mullaikkali:* Poem 3. Poet: Chozhan Nalluruthiranaar)

38 Is there an Eyewitness?

The pervading fragrance of jasmine flowers does come,

But the one his marriage with me confirmed doesn't come yet!

On the sands, behind the creepers, on my lap he lay.
"Don't leave me even for a second, darling" I said,
When in his embrace deep I was!

Our bodies twine were as one united in intense joy and infinite love,
He as the eyelids and I as the eyes.

There inexplicable pleasure we tasted,
And a thousand different experiences had.

Forgetting that, he now does scorch me in agony unbearable.
Fair is it, he should still test me, my friend!

False is it, our two souls became one, and so the world forgot
His promise: "My dearest life! I would marry you," false is that too?

"Friend! Is there a witness for the promise given?
Tell me," ask you!

He who embraced me, as my face I leaned on his shoulders firm,
Is alone the witness!

A stork with legs green as the millet stem stood intent
In the flowing stream, looking for a fish as prey.

Had he chanced to see us, a witness there was, otherwise,
No eyewitness there is, my friend, for this great scene of secret marriage!

Thus the pangs the heroine suffered,
In a classic *Narrinai* poem

Ammuuvanaar has offered. Deeming it nectar sweet in Tamil,
Let us drink deep delight from it!

(*Narrinai:* Poem 397.
Poet: Ammuuvanaar)

39 The *Nochi* that Flew So High!

A maid of beauteous brows like a bow there was,

And she with a warrior eloped,
Without the knowledge of parents, kith and kin.
In the bower beautiful, besides the golden lotus pond,
She was in secret love engaged!

The warrior who to the battlefield was gone,
Hadn't yet returned to see his beloved.

In tears profuse, many a fearful dream she dreamt,
And stood in mind distraught.
One was deeply moved to see her thus.

Believing that the sweet voiced girl,
Was by an evil spirit possessed,
A dance for exorcising the spirit was performed,
And God Muruga was worshipped.

The parents in their ignorance believed,
The girl was innocent,
And so a dance for exorcising the spirit was performed.

This the great poetess Kaamakkaaniyaar,
Described, composing a garland of verses.
And so she became known as Kaamakkaaniyaar,
Of the song of the dance of exorcism.

Of a robust youth who in battle died,
A song of *puram* she sang too.
A warrior, like a tiger bold,
Died in war, a lance his chest piercing.
Attired for war, wearing an armour,
And bearing a weapon under his arm,
He went wearing the symbolic *nochi* wreath.
In the tumult, rows and rows of warriors fell.
Wide-mouthed vultures flew around to devour the corpses.

As the *nochi* garland was soaked in blood,
A vulture took it for the bowel of a dead one,
And carried it high in the sky.

As this sight was seen,
It was felt that the one who fell in battle,
Had deemed life inconsequential,
And so the *nochi* garland he wore
Was in high esteem held.
Thus the poet, extolling the garland,
Thrills us through and through!
Deeply keep this in mind we shall,
And let us adore it for the world to see!

(*Puranaanuuru*: Poem 271
Poet: Veripaadiya Kaamakkaaniyaar)

40 On the Rock does Butter Melt!

"Dear, dear friend! Full of love for me!
Unaware you are for the malady I suffer from.
Laughing, you admonish and heckle me,
Though in sorrow deep I am!
Because of the maiden lithesome,
Whose teeth are bright like jasmine blooms
Disturbed and dejected I am, my friend!"
Thus he told 'Thuuyan,' his friend intimate,
Who mocked at him.
He was the warrior great,
'Vanangaamudi', (*the unbending*), by name,
Who the world startled, by his sword wielding!

"In the flowery woods where bees honey do drink,
On the boulders where the crabs unite,
Lovers kiss, changing places,

And in joy together, in a playful tiff engage,
And then in sorrow part,
Natural is this not!
After parting, they do meet again,
And sing and dance in joy!
Why then does your heart tremble,
Like an ant that suffers beside an iron forge?
His hands he held, and with tearful eyes he replied!

"Listen! Friend dear as life!
I shan't describe us as nectar and honey in one,
Because exceeding the limits will satiate even that.
I can't an example find in any tongue
For the pleasure that doesn't satiate.
Once a boy I saw climbing a tree.
Jumping off from a branch, he plucked a mango fruit,
And handed it over to me.
Why did the tree itself take it back from me?
I do long for it!"
Thuuyan, his counsel continued to offer, though he felt
It was difficult for the weeping warrior Vanangaamudi's mind to change!

"To vanish thus, she isn't a woman mythical!
Don't forget. There is no magic either!
A beautiful lamp of humanity she is! A radiant light of home she is!
And she will come in search of you!
A glorious light of womankind she is!
Though to you word was sent
That gone she is to her relative's town,
Why do you rave as though like a coin that has fallen
Deep into the ocean's depth, your young love has vanished?
An able commander you are who have the courage
To stop spears and arrows by the hand.
In the battlefield. such a commander as you,
Can you stand helpless like deadwood?

This isn't good! From worry be free!
Don't let your heart toss like a boat in the midsea!"

The words of comfort by his loving friend,
Did not quench the heat of love of Vanangaamudi,
Away as he was from his beauteous belle!
He in the fire of love began to melt!
The simmering and the suffering of his love-laden heart,
A woman poet, Velliviithiyaar expounds with an example in *Kurunthokai.*
Aware as we are of the greatness of Tamil, amazed we are!
To the friend who points out
That the girl who has left today will come back tomorrow,
And offers thus words of consolation,
Vanangaamudi, with shoulders strong as the hill, an examples cites.
Is there another example to surpass this?

"Dear friend mine who exhorts me!
If your words can prevent the melting of my heart,
Accept them I shall sans hesitation!
If they have thus the power to protect me,
Good they are, I shall say!
On a hard rock, made hot by the scorching sun,
A cripple sans hands and a dumb sans speech,
Are unable to preserve the butter that melts,
Nor are they able to shout for help,
For protecting the butter from being wasted,
Or haste or jump to take the butter and preserve it!
They just stand as sorry sights,
Merely as guards who can just see,
But not save the butter.
Like that you too offer loud and long exhortations,
To me who thus melt, lovelorn!
Aware, the heart of lovelorn Vanangaamudi,
The warrior of fame immense,
Cannot any more be troubled by words,

Like a spear being thrown at him."
Thuuyan, his friend, took leave of him.

(*Kurunthokai*: Poem 58. Poet: Velliviithiyaar)

About the Project Makers

Bharathiar University, Coimbatore – named after the nationalist Tamil poet Subramanya Bharathi, who exhorted the Tamils to identify things worthy in their language, and give them unto the world for enjoyment and edification – conceived this Project viz., *Kalaignar in English Translation* by which to make available in English the extraordinarily rich and varied literary works of Kalaignar M. Karunanidhi, who, by the sheer volume and weight of his output, makes a compulsive demand on us that he be studied and given his due.

Prof. G. Thiruvasagam, Chairman of the Project Committee and Vice Chancellor of the University. The genesis of this Project owes to his academic vision. His initiative and leadership as much as his passionate and studied interest in the excellence of Kalaignar's creativity has seen this Project through within a short span of ten months.

Kavipperarasu Vairamuthu, Vice-Chairman of the Project Committee. An intellectual poet in Tamil endowed with an astonishingly fecund poetic energy and representing a rare blend of ratiocinative powers and aesthetic sensibility, Vairamuthu has brought a sense of direction and significance to bear on the dynamics of the Project.

Dr P. Marudanayagam and Dr V. Murugan comprising the editorial team – the former a ripe Professor of English and a comparatist of towering erudition, and the latter a bilingual lexicographer and a distinguished translator with the translations of *Tolkappiyam, Kalittokai, Tirukkural* and *Narrinai,* and *Oxford English-English-Tamil Dictionary* to his credit.

Dr C. Sivashanmugam, Professor of Linguistics, **Dr R. Palanivel,** Professor of English and **Dr S. M. Ravichandran,** Professor of Tamil, Bharathiar University, the coordinators of the Project, who kept the Project on track.

The late **Dr S. Agasthialingom,** a renowned linguist and former Vice Chancellor, Tamil University, **Sirpi Balasubramanian,** a highly decorated poet in Tamil, **Prof. Tamizhachi Thangapandian, Poet Kayalvizhi Venkatesh** and **Dr N. Ramani,** members of the Expert Committee, whose learned counsel, suggestions and views have added to the strength and credibility of the translations as a whole.

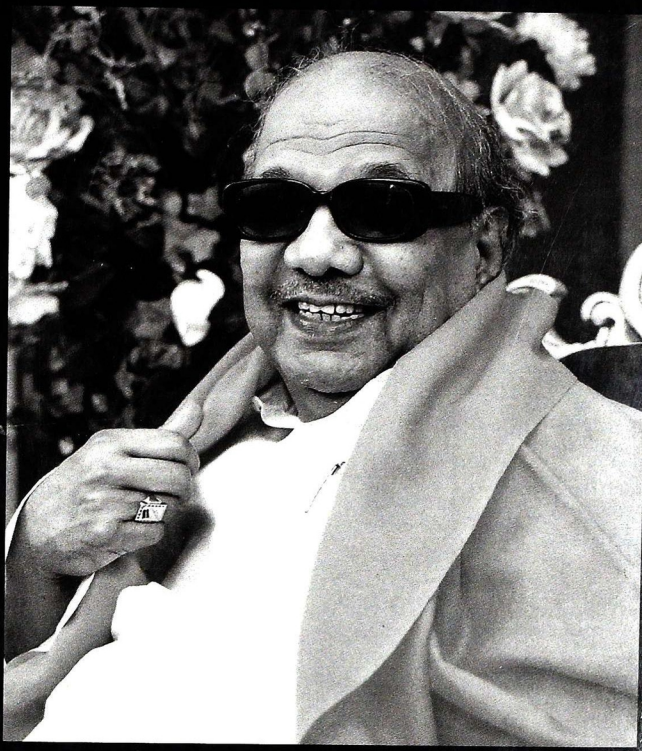
Macmillan Publishers India Limited, who have done an excellent job through their passionate commitment to the project, their legendary technical expertise and their unfailing feel for accuracy and perfection.

And Kalaignar does not surprise us by resorting to things unworldly or irrational. There are no religio-philosophical abstractions, no escape into mythology, and no aesthetic exclusivism in Kalaignar. Thanks to his unwavering belief in the correctness of rational thinking and his scientific temperament, he, in most cases, treads the path of reason and logic.

Kalaignar is endowed with a natural gift for wit and humour, irony and sarcasm, pun and repartee, which remain the inseparable, intrinsic components of his poems, just as they are infused into his speeches and fictional and non-fictional prose. At one level, these qualities secure his poems against monotony and insipidness. At another level, they serve to mask his treatment of contemporary political issues and personalities, and thereby invest his poems with an abiding aesthetic character.

A significant mention must be made of his numerous political satires and allegories, which Kalaignar, along with his political mentor C N Annadurai, has developed into a distinct literary genre. This genre, among others, constitutes a lasting contribution of Kalaignar to Tamil literature in general and contemporary Tamil literature in particular.

Kalaignar M Karunanidhi, one among the select 'who is who' of contemporary India, is a ripe political personality of more than seven decade standing, a statesman and a proven administrator, with the rare distinction of being the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu for five terms, besides being a relentless crusader for rationalist revival and an undaunted, missionary-like fighter for social and political causes.



Notwithstanding, it is the title 'Kalaignar' meaning 'an artist par excellence' by which he is identified and characterized, so much so that it is no longer a title but a proform designation of Dr M Karunanidhi, in the same way as 'the Bard' is used to refer to Shakespeare.

For Karunanidhi, whose formal education did not extend beyond the secondary school, is a multifaceted, prolific writer with an amazingly large volume of literary output to his credit. He is a poet, a playwright, a novelist and short story writer, a letter writer, an elegist, a journalist and a columnist, a script-writer, a political satirist, an essayist, a translator, an autobiographer and a social and literary critic, besides being an extraordinarily eloquent and powerful speaker. His creative and critical works have been published in 59 volumes, memoirs and autobiography in another 8 volumes, and other writings in 115 more volumes, large and small.

What astounds one is the fact that he has been writing on all these genres contemporaneously, putting the same amount of interest and energy in each kind, that too in the midst of his most exacting administrative and political activities.

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