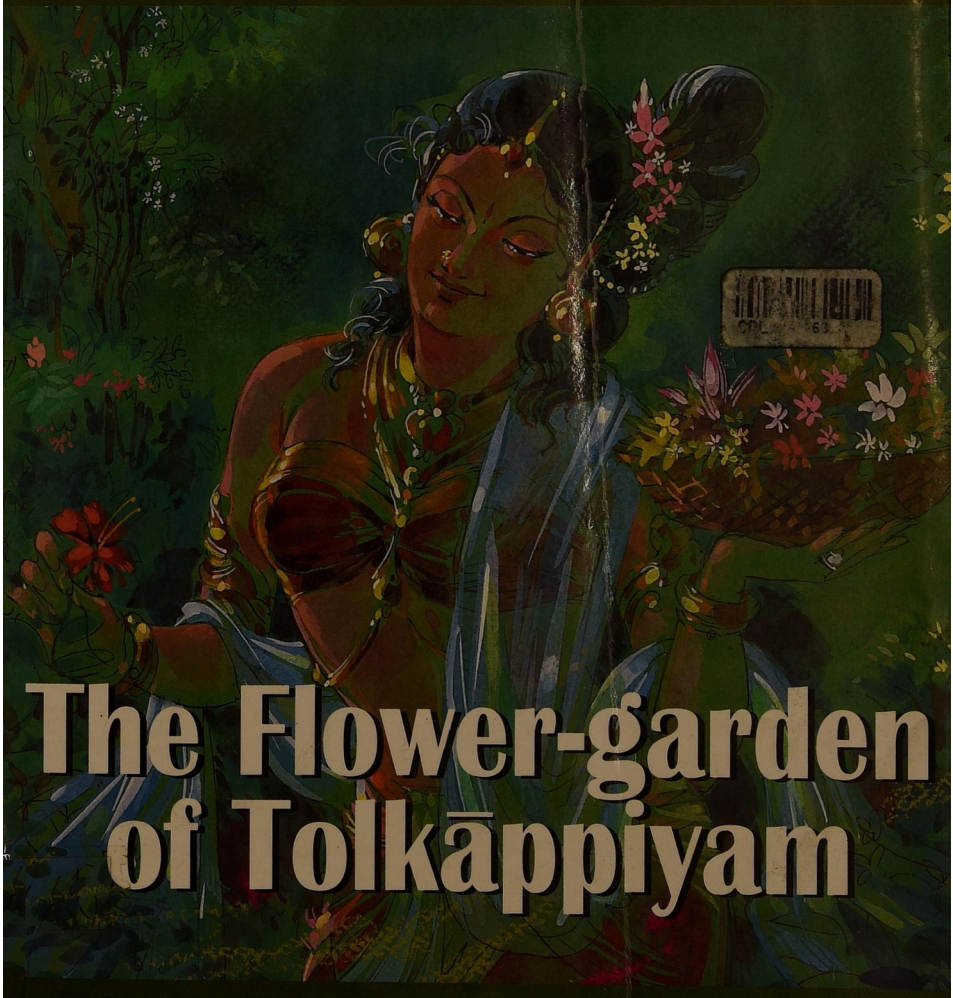
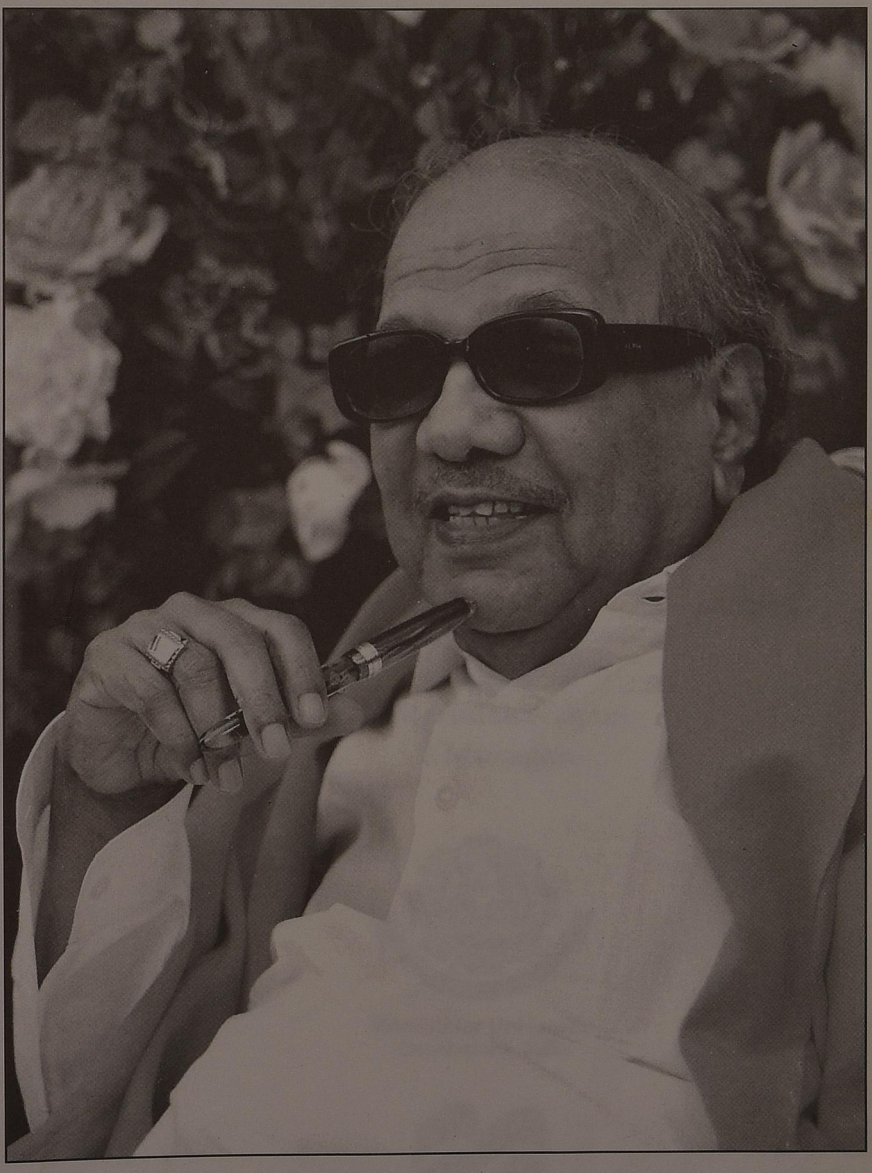
Kalaignar in English Translation



The Flower-garden of Tolkāppiyam

CPL 63

BHARATHIAR UNIVERSITY



Dr Kalaignar M. Karunanidhi

Kalaignar in English Translation

The Flower-garden of Tolkāppiyam

Translated by
G. Thiruvasagam

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

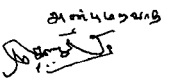
May you thunder, O Conch!
That the never diminishing Tamil
Is our life-breath and our prosperity.

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 that 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 *Iraṇiyan allatu Iṇaiyaṟṟa Viraṉ*, 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

Tolkāppiyam is the earliest extant work in Tamiḻ. That it does not begin with an invocation to God is one of its unique characteristics. It has a prologue heralding the text composed by Paṇampāraṇār, Tolkāppiyar's contemporary and learning-mate. A look at this prologue would make us hold our heads high, involuntarily, outlining as it does the boundaries of the ancient Tamiḻ country, in which *Tolkāppiyam*, the momentous grammar of the glorious Tamiḻ language, was composed:

In the virtuous Tamiḻ- speaking land
That extends from
Vēṅkaṭam in the north
And Kumari in the south,
He has treated units of sound and word
And semantic content as well,
Rooted as he remained
In traditions of common speech and literary idiom;
Conversant he was with his predecessors' works
That were in vogue and use on the soil
Which marked the cultivated idiom of the Tamiḻ language;
He examined them in order
And has made a well-wrought work;
He presented this classic
In the assembly of Nilantarutiruviṉ Pāṇṭiyaṉ
Where at the head was Ataṅkōṭṭācāṉ

Endowed with a tongue of virtuous words
And in the wisdom of the four vedas rooted;
He expounded in terms irreproachable
The structure unambiguous of the language,
And thereby,
The sage of the man that he was
And of renown exceeding marked,
Established in the sea-girt world
His name Tolkāppiyaṉ
Versed in the treatise *Aintiram.*

As we read this prologue - that indicates that the Tamiḻ land of that day extended from Vēṅkaṭam in the north to Kumari in the south, and that records for posterity that *Tolkāppiyam,* the grammar of 'letters, words and meaning', composed by Tolkāppiyar well-versed in the treatise *Aintiram,* was presented in the court of Nilantaru Tiruvil Pāṇṭiyaṉ before the learned presided over by Ataṅkōṭṭācāṉ - we experience the relish of jackfruit.

I mentioned in the preface to my commentary on the complete text of *Tirukkuṟaḷ* that I had ventured to cover the Himalayas with a shawl..

And now, I desired to enter into the flower-garden of *Tolkāppiyam,* go around in it with diligence and care and make a selection of a hundred blossoms and make them the object of my enjoyment. This I did with extreme hesitation as does a damsel entering a flower garden and plucking as many flowers as her tresses would hold even though she desired to pluck all the flowers in the garden and deck her head with them.

Even though I wrote commentaries on all the 1330 couplets, I chose to write my verbal portraits on about 400 couplets only. In a similar way, I look at selecting from the garden of *Tolkāppiyam* some of the richly grown blossoms and present them here.

The readers might ask, "Are you going to give us what you have relished for yourself?" But this is the country where even God is said to have accepted the used flower gift of Nācciyār. The readers may therefore bear with my act, for, after all, my medium is only paper unlike the case of Nācciyār.

During the medieval period, thanks to the great resurgence of interest in literature, the ancient Tamiḻ works began to be read by people. Scholars like Iḷampūraṇar, Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar, Cēṉāvaraiyar, Kallāṭar and others not only preserved the *Tolkāppiyam* text but wrote commentaries on it as well. The lamp lit by them burnt brightly. But today, even though people at large evince interest in

Tolkāppiyam, Caṅkam works, *Cilappatikāram, Maṇimēkalai, Tirukkuṛaḷ*, etc. the fact remains that *Tolkāppiyam* has not received due attention from the Tamiḻ people.

Dr Tamiḻaṇṇal, a respected Tamiḻ scholar, has expressed this concern in his foreword to S.V. Subramanian's prose paraphrase of *Tolkāppiyam*. The latter was a professor of Tamiḻ, Kerala University, whose services to Tamiḻ need to be commended. His linguistic studies, following in the footsteps of the eminent Tamiḻ scholar V. I. Subramanian, deserve a significant mention.

Aided by this work and other commentaries of scholars, research findings and scholarly articles available, I entered into the garden of *Tolkāppiyam* with confidence.

The section on Letters of the Alphabet *(Eḻuttatikāram)*, in *Tolkāppiyam* is like jackfruit with a rugged, thorny outer surface, but will not prick and cause bruises.

The formation of words requires letters too; phonemes alone will not do. The string of words goes into the making of *Poruḷatikāram*, the grammar of meaning.

For one to enjoy the pulp-like *Poruḷatikāram*, one needs to go through *Eḻuttatikāram* which can be described as the protective outer cover of *Poruḷatikāram*.

Once we succeed in going past these two components of letters and words and the meanings they carry, there is the delicious pulp called grammar soaked in literature.

S.V. Subramanian contends that Tolkāppiyar has brought in 'Letter' and 'Word' as an aid to treating 'Meaning and the Grammar of Literature'. This section titled *Poruḷatikāram* gives a synthetic account of the process of evolution, the classification of living things, the modes of living of the humans, their life at home *(Akam)* and their societal life *(Puṛam)*, the attributes and characteristics of men and women, things to be eschewed, etc. Broadly speaking, *Tolkāppiyam* is a study of the development of the human species.

Looked at from the present-day perceptions of social order, it is possible to assume that the pre-*Caṅkam* Tamiḻ life had been dotted by things regressive. Questions of acceptability of such a life may also arise. Even though this ancient culture contains elements of living modes, the rights and liberties of men and women, etc., that need to be corrected and bettered, what wrong does it entail for one to seek to learn about the bases of a culture that existed several thousand years ago, just as one evinces scholarly interest in archaeological studies?

We build dams across rivers, we erect temples. Even though these structures, being built in tune with the modern technology, impress us with their stately appearance, can they make the Big Temple built by Raja Raja Cōḻaṉ at Tanjavur about a thousand years ago and the Kallaṇai (dam built of stone) constructed by Karikāl Cōḻaṉ obsolescent?

Urged by such a line of thinking, I invite you to enter into the flower garden of *Tolkāppiyam*.

Observes Ilakkuvanar, one of the fighters for the cause of Tamiḻ and a professor of Tamiḻ, in his *Tolkāppiyam* studies:

> Among the extant works of ancient Tamiḻ, *Tolkāppiyam* alone is of aid to us in studying the ancient Tamiḻ life in its varied manifestations. But it is being learned only by the students of Tamiḻ for purposes of examination. Although it is a work of grammar, it is not like the grammatical texts in other languages. It embodies in itself current advances in linguistics and literary research being pursued with scholarly interest today in the West, as also studies in biology, psychology and in the art of living.
>
> ... Therefore, let us study the grammars of letters, words, literature and life through Tolkāppiyar and establish the greatness of the Tamiḻ land.

Next to Ilakkuvanar, the scholar who impressed me by his scholarship in Tamiḻ is V. Sp. Manickam, who describes *Tolkāppiyam* as the soul of Tamiḻ life.

Scholars are of the opinion that neither in the Indian languages nor in the other languages of the world had there witnessed a work like *Tolkāppiyam* during that era. There might have been books in these languages, but not one of the magnitude of *Tolkāppiyam*.

We can describe *Tolkāppiyam*, that predates all extant works in Tamiḻ, as one like sugar cane that needs to be bitten and relished, and as a heap of honeyed fruits that lies handy for us to use and be benefitted from.

Bowing my head in the direction where lie Pēraṟiñar Aṇṇā and the revolutionary poet Pāratitācaṉ in eternal sleep who encouraged me in my endeavours to acquire scholarship in Tamiḻ;

Expressing my gratitude to the Tamiḻ scholar M. Varadarajan who inspirited me by his kindly words that after Nalaṅkiḷḷi and Neṭuṅkiḷḷi it is I who reign over the land and the letters;

And remembering my Tamiḻ teachers Mahavidwan Dhandapani Desikar, Muttukiruṭṭiṇa Nāṭṭar, Dr S. Ilakkuvanar and Rajagopal Piḷḷai,

I make bold to approach the *Eḻuttu* (the letters of the alphabet) first. I invite you to join me graciously to relish the fragrance of the blossoms of *Col* (words and their organization) and *Poruḷ* (the grammar of literature and life).

Sincerely,
(M. Karunanidhi)

September 1, 2002

Verses of Tolkāppiyam Explicated and /or Illustrated

Blossom (Malar)	*Section (Atikāram)*	*Chapter (Iyal)*	*Verse No. (Nūṛpā)*
1.	*Eḻuttu*(Letters)	*Nūl Marapu* (Conventions of Phonology and Orthography)	1,2
2.	*Eḻuttu*	*Nūl Marapu*	8,9
3.	*Eḻuttu*	*Nūl Marapu*	18
4.	*Eḻuttu*	*Nūl Marapu*	3, 4, 7, 11
5.	*Eḻuttu*	*Nūl Marapu*	19, 20, 21
6.	*Eḻuttu*	*Piṛappu Iyal* (Production of Speech Sounds)	1
7.	*Eḻuttu*	*Puṇar Iyal* (Morphophonemic Coalescence)	38.
8.	*Eḻuttu*	*Uyir Mayaṅku Iyal* (Vowel Coalescence)	69
9.	*Eḻuttu*	*Tokai Marapu* (Coalescence and Compounding)	13

10.	*Eḻuttu*	*Piṟappu Iyal* (Production of Speech Sounds)	19
11.	*Col*(Words)	*Kiḷavi Ākkam* (Morphemes and their Organization)	27
12.	*Col*	*Kiḷavi Ākkam*	62
13.	*Col*	*Kiḷavi Ākkam*	35
14.	*Col*	*Vēṟṟumai Mayaṅku Iyal* (Interchange of Case Morphemes)	11
15.	*Col*	*Kiḷavi Ākkam*	12
16.	*Col*	*Peyar Iyal* (Nouns)	10, 40
17.	*Col*	*Viṇai Iyal* (Verbs)	44
18.	*Poruḷ* (Literary Materials)	*Akattiṇai Iyal* (Akam Love)	4, 5
19.	*Poruḷ*	*Akattiṇai Iyal*	6,7,8,9,10,12
20.	*Poruḷ*	*Akattiṇai Iyal*	18,19,21,22,24
21.	*Poruḷ*	*Akattiṇai Iyal*	20,26,27,28,29
22.	*Poruḷ*	*Akattiṇai Iyal*	34
23.	*Poruḷ*	*Akattiṇai Iyal*	35
24.			
25.	*Poruḷ*	*Akattiṇai Iyal*	36
26.	*Poruḷ*	*Akattiṇai Iyal*	39
27.	*Poruḷ*	*Akattiṇai Iyal*	40
28.	*Poruḷ*	*Akattiṇai Iyal*	41
29.	*Poruḷ*	*Akattiṇai Iyal*	48
30.	*Poruḷ*	*Akattiṇai Iyal*	50
31.	*Poruḷ*	*Akattiṇai Iyal*	51
32.	*Poruḷ*	*Puṟattiṇai Iyal* (Puṟam Life)	2,3
33.	*Poruḷ*	*Puṟattiṇai Iyal*	5
34.	*Poruḷ*	*Puṟattiṇai Iyal*	7,8
35.	*Poruḷ*	*Puṟattiṇai Iyal*	13
36.	*Poruḷ*	*Puṟattiṇai Iyal*	15,16,19
37.	*Poruḷ*	*Puṟattiṇai Iyal*	20
38.	*Poruḷ*	*Puṟattiṇai Iyal*	21
39.	*Poruḷ*	*Puṟattiṇai Iyal*	24
40.	*Poruḷ*	*Kaḷavu Iyal* (Clandestine Love Career)	1
41.	*Poruḷ*	*Kaḷavu Iyal*	4
42.	*Poruḷ*	*Kaḷavu Iyal*	5,6,7,8

43.	*Poruḷ*	*Kaḷavu Iyal*	9
44.	*Poruḷ*	*Kaḷavu Iyal*	11
45.	*Poruḷ*	*Kaḷavu Iyal*	22
46.	*Poruḷ*	*Kaḷavu Iyal*	44, 45
47.	*Poruḷ*	*Kaṟpu Iyal* (Wedded Love Career)	1,2,3
48.	*Poruḷ*	*Kaḷavu Iyal*	48,49
		Kaṟpu Iyal	4
49.	*Poruḷ*	*Kaṟpu Iyal*	5
50.	*Poruḷ*	*Kaṟpu Iyal*	5
51.	*Poruḷ*	*Kaṟpu Iyal*	5
52.	*Poruḷ*	*Kaṟpu Iyal*	6
53.	*Poruḷ*	*Kaṟpu Iyal*	50
54.	*Poruḷ*	*Kaṟpu Iyal*	45
55.	*Poruḷ*	*Kaṟpu Iyal*	34,35
56.	*Poruḷ*	*Kaṟpu Iyal*	53
57.	*Poruḷ*	*Kaṟpu Iyal*	51
58.	*Poruḷ*	*Poruḷ Iyal* (Residual Aspects)	2
59.	*Poruḷ*	*Poruḷ Iyal*	9,10
60.	*Poruḷ*	*Poruḷ Iyal*	15
61.	*Poruḷ*	*Poruḷ Iyal*	16
62.	*Poruḷ*	*Poruḷ Iyal*	23
63.	*Poruḷ*	*Poruḷ Iyal*	25
64.	*Poruḷ*	*Poruḷ Iyal*	29
65.	*Poruḷ*	*Poruḷ Iyal*	31
66.	*Poruḷ*	*Poruḷ Iyal*	33
67.	*Poruḷ*	*Poruḷ Iyal*	35,36,37
68.	*Poruḷ*	*Poruḷ Iyal*	51
69.	*Poruḷ*	*Poruḷ Iyal*	53
70.	*Poruḷ*	*Meyppāṭṭu Iyal* (Manifest Emotions)	3
71.	*Poruḷ*	*Meyppāṭṭu Iyal*	1
72.	*Poruḷ*	*Meyppāṭṭu Iyal*	4
73.	*Poruḷ*	*Meyppāṭṭu Iyal*	5
74.	*Poruḷ*	*Meyppāṭṭu Iyal*	6
75.	*Poruḷ*	*Meyppāṭṭu Iyal*	7
76.	*Poruḷ*	*Meyppāṭṭu Iyal*	8
77.	*Poruḷ*	*Meyppāṭṭu Iyal*	9
78.	*Poruḷ*	*Meyppāṭṭu Iyal*	10

79.	*Poruḷ*	*Meyppāṭṭu Iyal*	11
80.	*Poruḷ*	*Meyppāṭṭu Iyal*	13
81.	*Poruḷ*	*Meyppāṭṭu Iyal*	14
82.	*Poruḷ*	*Meyppāṭṭu Iyal*	15
83.	*Poruḷ*	*Meyppāṭṭu Iyal*	16
84.	*Poruḷ*	*Meyppāṭṭu Iyal*	17
85.	*Poruḷ*	*Meyppāṭṭu Iyal*	18
86.	*Poruḷ*	*Uvamai Iyal* (Modes of Comparison)	1, 2
87.	*Poruḷ*	*Uvamai Iyal*	3
88.	*Poruḷ*	*Uvamai Iyal*	4
89.	*Poruḷ*	*Uvamai Iyal*	5
90.	*Poruḷ*	*Uvamai Iyal*	8
91.	*Poruḷ*	*Uvamai Iyal*	9
92.	*Poruḷ*	*Marapu Iyal* (Conventions in Literature vis-a-vis the features of the Physical World)	6
93.	*Poruḷ*	*Marapu Iyal*	27,28,29,30,31,32
94.	*Poruḷ*	*Marapu Iyal*	48
95.	*Poruḷ*	*Marapu Iyal*	35,36,47
96.	*Poruḷ*	*Marapu Iyal*	91
97.	*Poruḷ*	*Marapu Iyal*	92
98.	*Poruḷ*	*Marapu Iyal*	93,95,97,98
99.	*Poruḷ*	*Marapu Iyal*	109
100.	*Poruḷ*	*Marapu Iyal*	111

Transliteration Key

Vowels

Short

அ	a
இ	i
உ	u
எ	e
ஒ	o
ஐ	ai
ஔ	au

Long

ஆ	ā
ஈ	ī
ஊ	ū
ஏ	ē
ஓ	ō

Consonants

Hard

க்	k
ச்	c
ட்	ṭ
த்	t
ப்	p
ற்	ṟ

Soft

ங்	ṅ
ஞ்	ñ
ண்	ṇ
ந்	n
ம்	m
ன்	ṉ

Medial

ய்	y
ர்	r
ல்	l
வ்	v
ழ்	ḻ
ள்	ḷ

Āytam

ஃ	ḵ

Blossom 1

Letters of the Alphabet

Tolkāppiyar, our fatherly author of Tamiḻ grammar, wrote down the title 'The Letters of the Alphabet', and remained engrossed in deep thoughts. The great treasure of the grammar of Tamiḻ language and literature started taking shape in his dreams.

Even as his eyelids remained closed, the white of the eyeballs was sending out streaks of lustre through the corners of the eye just as rice peeps out of the grain that remained soaked in rain waters for long.

Before ploughing the stylus through the palm leaves, there was his mind ploughing deep within.

Are not letters essential for one to make a book, just as one needs the chisel for carving out a statue and the brush for painting?

Because sounds lie at the base of language and because the chapter on hand is titled 'Chapter on Letters' *(Eḻuttatikāram)*, the first verse begins with the letters of the Tamiḻ alphabet. Perhaps following in the line of Tolkāppiyar, our sage poet Tiruvaḷḷuvar too begins his *Tirukkuṟaḷ* with the line " 'a' stands at the head of all letters."

As we examine the sprawling corpus of words in Tamiḻ, we find that they all are made up of thirty phonemes, which constitute the orthographic tradition in Tamiḻ beginning in the period before Tolkāppiyar. As such, it is the letters that come marching aloud in the vision of Tolkāppiyar.

All the primary letters of the alphabet prostrated before him and stood in a row in order:

a, ā, i, ī, u, ū, e, ē, ai, o, ō, au formed the head of the row.

They were followed by *k, ṅ, c, ñ, ṭ, ṇ, t, n, p, m, y, r, l, v, ḷ, ḻ, ṟ, ṉ.*

At that juncture, a shade appeared near the wall which was followed by yet another shade. Since the sounds raised by these two shades were low, Tolkāppiyar realized the difference and opened his eyes wide. One of the shades identified itself as *ikaram.* Another shade introduced itself as *ukaram.* Tolkāppiyar looked at them and pronounced strictly that they would be a part of the secondary letters taking the names *kuṟṟiyalikaram* and *kuṟṟiyalukaram.* They could not be placed among the first thirty primary letters.

At that time, the figure of a new letter clenching a stick (*āytam*) appeared and roared, "Do you agree to put me among these thirty?"

Tolkāppiyar retorted promptly, "What, do you threaten me? Just because you appear with a weapon, do you think I will shiver with fear and allot a place for you in the first row?"

Realizing Tolkāppiyar's wrath, the '*āytam*' letter said meekly, and with all humility, "Sir! Kindly put me in any place as you wish. Even if I don't get placed in the front row, I will offer my assistance whenever a need arises."

Tolkāppiyar smiled in jest after writing the first verse and said, "You are offering assistance! Quite funny."

The *āytam* letter said ecstatically, "See how talented I am! You have given me a chance in your very first verse."

Tolkāppiyar read his verse again:

Thirty are the phonemes
From /a/ through /ṉ/;
Excluding the three, the secondary ones,
So has it been handed down.

(*Eḻuttatikāram* : *Nūl Marapu,* verse 1)

He was surprised to note that the *āytam* letter has found a place in the word *muppaḵtu* (thirty) of his first verse.

The thirty letters of the Tamiḻ alphabet thus begin with 'a' and end with 'ṉ':

* * *

The secondary phonemes are
The shortened /i/ (*kuṟṟiyalikaram*), the shortened /u/ (*kuṟṟiyalukaram*),
And the three-dotted *āytam* [ஃ],
Which too partake of a phoneme's nature.

(*Nūl Marapu*, verse 2)

Blossom 2

Vowels and Consonants

The teacher asked the students in the classroom, "How would you remember the vowels in Tamil?"

"Sir, shall I answer?" said student Maṇivācakaṉ.

The teacher nodded 'yes'.

"I would remember the twelve-handed Murukaṉ to give me the cue", pat came the reply.

"Oh, good! You evoke spirituality", smiled the teacher.

"Sir, *kuṟiñci* flowers blossom once in twelve years. That would remind me of the twelve vowel letters", was the reply of Pūṅkoṭi, a girl student.

The teacher took turns to question a farmer's son, "O boy! What would you do to remember the vowels?"

"Sir, the month of *Thai* ushers in the *Poṅkal* festival which is marked by new clothes, cleaning houses, worshipping paddy and decorating bullocks. After celebrating the festival this year we would have to wait for twelve long months for its recurrence. In the same manner, the twelve vowels would be etched on my mind."

The teacher posed his next question, "Okay, how would you remember the consonants?"

"The eighteen sacred steps of Lord Sabarimalai Ayyappa shrine would remind me of the eighteen consonants, sir", was the reply of student Maṇivācakaṉ.

Pūṅkoṭi got up to speak wisely, "The great Cēra king Ceṅkuṭṭuvaṉ vanquished the Aryan kings Kaṉaka Vicayar at Kuyilāluvam to get the stone for carving Kaṇṇaki's statue. He made them carry the stones on their heads. At that juncture, an elated Ceṅkuṭṭuvaṉ roared, 'The war between gods and demons lasted for eighteen years. The great *Rāmāyaṇa* war spanned out for eighteen months. The *Mahābārata* war went on for eighteen days, whereas Cēraṉ Ceṅkuṭṭuvaṉ's war against the Himalayan kingdom finished within eighteen *nāḻikai* (one *nāḻikai* = 24 minutes).'

Since I remember this inspirational speech, the fact that consonants are eighteen would remain deeply embedded in my mind."

The teacher patted Pūṅkoṭi proudly and concluded, "Though based on spirituality and rationality, which are poles apart, your answers are appropriate."

The teacher conveyed his greetings to the students.

* * *

The twelve phonemes (from /a/ through /au/)
Are known to be vowels,
So has it been laid down.

(*Eḻuttatikāram* : *Nūl Marapu*, verse 8)

The eighteen phonemes (from /k/ through /ṉ/)
Are called consonants,
Thus goes the usage codified.

(*Nūl Marapu*, verse 9)

Blossom 3

Consonant-vowels

I was enjoying the pleasant caressing of breeze, sitting on the beach.

The darkness of night was slowly swallowing the dusk, when a friend said, "Oh! The lights are already on," forcing me to wake up from the trance.

Sitting near Gandhiji's statue, I turned towards the northern direction to look at Aṇṇā's statue and my mind raced back in memory lane.

The electrical poles erected near Aṇṇā's statue were spilling light over me. My poetic elegy on the All India Radio on the eve of Aṇṇā's demise rushed back to my memory. Or rather, I am sorry; when did I forget it for me to remember it?

We looked up to you as our shade of life,
but you went in search of solace in the land off the sea.
Is this fair?
Establishing your supremacy among the
pearls underneath sea,
You sleep peacefully on the beach!

Your tongue had mothered
Many a speech sweet like nākaswaram's strain;
Why is it tied up now?

You wished to possess a heart
which could weather any shock.

But can my frail heart
bear your loss added!
.....
.....
I know, it is conspiracy of Nature,
Aṇṇā .... you!
Till the time I join you in
the abode you repose in,
kindly lend me your mighty heart, Aṇṇā!
I swear to present it at your lotus feet
When I join you, Aṇṇā.

Beads of tears swept my cheeks even when I was reciting the verse. On observing my melancholy, my friends tried to divert my attention by broaching sundry stories. At last, they came to square one.

A friend noted, "Just observe the peach of a gift Tamiḻ has presented us. Aṇṇā with 'a' as the first letter in his name was our leader. Now it is Kalaiñar Karunanidhi with 'ka' as the first letter in his name.

I intervened, "Sir, I am just the consonant /k/. It becomes the consonant-vowel 'ka' only when it combines with the vowel /a/ that begins Aṇṇā's name.

* * *

A consonant-vowel is said
With vowel following the consonant.

(*Eḻuttatikāram* : *Nūl Marapu*, verse 18)

Blossom 4

Medicine, Tablet

In a classical dusky scenario enacted in the West, the Golden Apollo was being slowly swallowed by darkness of night. Consequently, the crescent moon resembled the part of a broken coconut in Lord Ganesha's temple. In that hamlet's temple-tank even the croaking of toads sounded distant and low.

Two men -- both middle-aged with torn, black hat, gaping khaki shirt and folded dirty dhoti-- were lurking in the bushes near the hutments. Both of them were holding shining knives. The hamlet was predominant with hutments, the sole bungalow standing apart being the only exception. The two shady characters were prowling near that bungalow.

In that hamlet, predominantly inhabited by poor masses, thieves were probably eyeing that lone bungalow. Both of them kept gesticulating to each other. At last one of them gathered courage to peer inside the house through the balcony. Nothing seemed obvious in the house dimly illuminated by a lantern. Though the eyes failed him, his ears came to his rescue.

The distinct mumbling sound *a-i-u-e-o* emanated from a young female. The man on the balcony opined, "Seems a pregnant woman is in travail."

Both of them listened intently even as the grumbling stretched on. It was followed by an elderly woman's voice, "One *māttirai*! One *māttirai*!* The startled thieves remarked, "Seems the midwife is asking the woman to have a tablet."

Even when the thieves were lisping, the young woman's grumbling hit their ears: *ā-ī-ū-ē-ai-ō-au.* "Now two *māttirai* for this". Prescribed the elderly woman.

*The word *māttirai* representing a unit of time in the pronunciation of sounds is homonymous with the word 'tablet' in English.

"Ay, the pain hasn't subsided in one tablet; the midwife has prescribed two", concluded the two lurking men and decided to abandon their nefarious mission in order to leave the pregnant woman alone.

"Look here, girl! The five sounds *a, i, u, e* and o take one *māttirai* each, while the seven sounds *ā, ī, ū, ē, ai, ō* and *au* are elongated taking two *māttirai* each. In the same manner, consonant sounds take half a *māttirai* each."

"Madam! You have clearly explained the classes of letters. But I have a doubt."

"Okay girl! What is your doubt?"

"You spoke about one *māttirai*, two *māttirai* and half a *māttirai*. What are they?"

"Well, the winking of eyes or the snapping of fingers forms one unit of time called *māttirai*. Do you understand it now?"

"I understand, madam. The units of sound (*māttirai*) in *Tolkāppiyam* have evoked sympathy among the thieves as they mistook them for the grumbling of a pregnant woman and left the place."

"Is it so? How do you know?"

"Madam, your vision is a bit low; but I saw them in the balcony and overheard their conversation."

"Look, girl! Tamil grammar has come to our rescue. Medicine could be consumed in tablet form but Tolkāppiyar has described the duration of sounds in terms of *māttirai*.

Let me elucidate further:

The five among the thirty –
/a/, /i/, /u/, /e/ and /o/ –
Are known to be short vowels
Articulated by single phonic measures (*māttirai*)
So do the learned hold.
(*Eḻuttatikāram, Nūl Marapu*, verse 3)

The seven among the thirty –
/ā/, /ī/, /ū/, /ē/, /ai/ and /au/ –
Are known to be long vowels
Taking two such phonic measures,
Thus has the authority ruled.
(*Eḻuttatikāram, Nūl Marapu*, verse 4)

Half a phonic measure do consonants mark,
Thus goes the norm by usage set.

(*Eḻuttatikāram, Nūl Marapu,* verse 11)

As discerning minds have seen it right,
A wink of the eyes or a snap of the fingers
Does constitute a phonic measure (*māttirai*).

(*Eḻuttatikāram, Nūl Marapu,* verse 7)

Blossom 5

Ethnic Unity

It was a glorious hall, adorned with the portraits of illustrious Tamiḻ kings, renowned poets and filled with audience eager to taste the manna of Tamiḻ discourse. Vaḷavaṉ, a Tamiḻ scholar and an intellectual with a broad forehead, penetrating eyes, slightly grey sprouting beard and blessed with ideas like an ever-flowing river, was lecturing on the title 'Race' (*iṉam*)*.

The origin of various races in the world, the way they prospered, and the interaction and conflict between them were detailed with precision and historical evidences along with the researchers' unambiguous views. Vaḷavaṉ's discourse proved to be a feast as well as a medicine for the audience. "Now let me explain the rise and fall of our Tamiḻ race", announced Vaḷavaṉ after stealing a glance at the audience who were unconsciously drooping their heads like a bunch of lotus flowers in stooping posture due to the weight of their own petals.

Vaḷavaṉ spoke, "The Tamiḻians are one race, but Tamiḻ itself constitutes three races. The speakers of the language form one race. How then is their language divided into three races?

Yes, gentlemen, what this humble man of yours states is an irrefutable truth! In our Tamiḻ language the consonants could be divided into three races (categories):

k, c, ṯ, t, p, ṟ	—>	are *valliṉam* (hard consonants)
ṅ, ñ, ṉ, n, m, ṉ	—>	are *melliṉam* (soft consonants)
y, r, l, v, ḻ, ḷ	—>	are *iṭaiyiṉam* (medial consonants)

*The Tamiḻ word *iṉam*, among others, means race, and a section or class of something. Here, the author plays pun on the meanings of this word.

Thus our Tamiḻ consonants are divided into three classes. That is why I said, The Tamiḻians are one race, while the Tamiḻ language is of three races."

After hearing this, a group of youth who were yet to be fully initiated into Tamiḻ grammar stood up agitatedly and raised war-cries.

"What is this , sir? Wouldn't our Tamiḻ language's fame get tarnished if her letters stand apart in three groups?"

An unperturbed Vaḷavaṉ came forward to allay their doubts in a balanced manner:

"Young men of valour! That you are apparently agitated with fears about the slight of the language makes me thrilled. But then, a five-footer like me would feel elated like a six-footer if you channelize your energy to oppose men smearing our Tamiḻ language. You see, unlike the Tamiḻ race, the Tamiḻ language in her own characteristic style unites *valliṉam, melliṉam* and *iṭaiyiṉam* in itself and stands lofty."

"How? How?" enquired the youth.

"Brothers! Sisters! In Tamiḻ, /t/ is *valliṉam*, /m/ is *melliṉam* and /ḻ/ *iṭaiyiṉam*. In this way, our classical Tamiḻ language unites three diverse races of consonant letters to make a harmonious whole. But then, the practitioners of the Tamiḻ language are split into various groups and stand apart. Do think about this. When *valliṉam, melliṉam* and *iṭaiyiṉam* blend together and make a lustrous entity called Tamiḻ, is this correct on the part of the Tamiḻians to be divided into so many groups?"

The gathering dispersed and the youth took leave of each other after discussing among themselves, this nagging question: "When the word Tamiḻ is formed by the blending of letters from three different classes, should the Tamiḻ race stand divided?" There was only a deep sigh.

* * *

/k/, /c/, /ṭ/, /t/, /p/ and /ṟ/ are called hard consonants.

/ṅ/, /ñ/, /ṇ/, /n/, /m/ and /ṉ/ are called soft consonants.

/y/, /r/, /ḷ/, /v/, /ḻ/ and /ḷ/ are called medial consonants.

(*Eḻuttatikāram*: *Nūl Marapu*, verses 19, 20 and 21)

Blossom 6

Production of Speech Sounds - How Admirable!

This is an imaginary scene depicting Paṇampāraṇār credited with composing the prologue to *Tolkāppiyam*, the great work composed by Tolkāppiyar to preserve the glorious culture of the Tamiḻs. Tolkāppiyar's work had been presented in the court of the Pāṇṭiya king before the learned bards headed by Ataṅkōṭṭācāṉ.

Even when he was strolling leisurely, the debate in sweet Tamiḻ, which sounded melodious like the music of the *veena* blended with the sea wind, hit his ears. Paṇampāraṇār turned back and stared intently. A few poets, five or six seated in the hall near the beach, were engrossed in a discussion. Upon seeing him, they stood up in obeisance and welcomed him.

"What is the discussion about? Is there any debate?" Enquiring thus, Paṇampāraṇār sat among them in the hall.

A poet replied, "There is no debate as such. We were just talking about the doubt arising from the *Eḻuttatikāram* section of Tolkāppiyar's *Tolkāppiyam*, presented recently in the royal court."

"What is that doubt?" questioned Paṇampāraṇār.

"In the section describing the articulation of the sounds of letters under the title 'Production of Speech Sounds', Tolkāppiyar has stated scientifically that each class of letters possesses specific characteristics", a poet said at the outset.

A smiling Paṇampāraṇār replied, "Quite correct. In language, sounds appeared first and the corresponding letters followed only later.

Description of the speech organs for the production of these individual sounds has a scientific basis for sure. This holds true while pronouncing the Tamiḻ words *vā* and *pō*. The word *vā* is pronounced as the upper teeth ridge comes into contact with the folded lower lip, while the word *pō* is pronounced with the airstream forced out between the lower and upper lips closing and opening. This is what Tolkāppiyar refers to as airstream originating right from the navel, getting upwardly mobile to reach the head, neck and chest, and passing through teeth, lips, tongue, nose and hard palate. On the whole, airstream passes through eight human organs to produce relevant sounds. Among them, the twelve vowel sounds come from the pharynx: *a* and *ā* are articulated by opening the mouth. The five vowel sounds *u, ū, o, ō,* and *au* are said with lips rounded. The tongue touches the lower palate to produce *k* and *ṅ*. Some people don't differentiate between *l* and *ḷ* and pronounce *kulam*, wrongly as *kuḷam*, and *kaḷam* as *kalam* which strike a jarring note. That is why Tolkāppiyar tells us to pronounce *l* with the tongue touching the hard palate and *ḷ* with the tongue stroking the palate. Such systematic articulation through organs of speech either touching each other or gently stroking each other sounds sweet to the ear. If wrongly pronounced, as *kol* for *koḷ* or *moli* for *moḷi*, it will feel like the strike of thunder, won't it?"

Paṇampāraṇār's explanation evoked a vociferous laugh among the poets.

One poet intervened, "Respected sir, all the linguists have formulated such detailed phonetic explanations for their languages, especially the Sanskrit scholars, which Tolkāppiyar too refers to in the lines:

The phonic measure of each distinctive sound (*māttirai*)
Even as it is so shaped within
Is examined and shown in terms unimpeachable
In the scriptured treatises of the brahmins (*Antaṇar*)."

On hearing this, Paṇampāraṇār got agitated and retorted, "No sir, no! It is wrong. *Antaṇar* does not refer to the Aryans; nor *marai* points to their vedas. Among the Tamiḻians, the intellectuals are referred to as *Antaṇar* while their great works are held as works of scripture. Therefore, kindly don't give credit to somebody else for the work of our scholars. It is wrong, a sin even, to forget our unique achievements ourselves, and to stand by others who gloss over such achievements."

Thus saying, Paṇampāraṇār left the hall leaving an atmosphere of silence behind.

* * *

The egressive airstream originating at the lungs,
Inflated by the action of the diaphragm,
Abides and is reinforced at the larynx and the buccal cavity,
Reaches the teeth, lips, tongue, nose and palate,
Gets duly modified within these eight organs
And comes out in forms distinctive;
Thus are the phonemes all produced -
Which a discerning mind can mark.

(*Eḻuttatikāram : Piṟappiyal,* verse 1)

Blossom 7

Intrusive Consonant

She was an exquisite beauty, full moon of the month of *Cittirai*. Her curvaceous form could break even the celibacy vows of Lord Siva. She was a blossom by age but her body was not past a bud.

She stood before a cascade and her eyes lusted upon the well-built figure of a handsome male bathing nude. Unaware of her presence, he bathed nude in the cascade which changed her flustering to a flare-up of passion.

Without bothering about her neat dress, she pounced upon the bathing man to his dismay. "My dear, why are you quivering?" The cheeky girl enquired and made her mark upon his lips.

Pushing her away, he gathered sense to wrap up the towel lying on the bank. "What did you do?" He enquired angrily.

"What wrong did I do? I was just practising the lesson learnt from the teacher!"

"Look, girl! I might be your teacher; but I am not the poet Utāraṉ of *Pilkaṉīyam*, nor are you Amutavalli whom Utāraṉ taught."

"My Lord! Our names might have changed, but who would prevent us from playing the roles of Amutavalli and Utāraṉ?"

She spoke thus and embraced him again.

"Fie upon you! Leave me! Is this the way a student behaves with a teacher? Are you not ashamed?"

"That I possess in abundance - but then Cupid's arrow burns me like fire."

"Get away! Don't speak irrationally!"

"Well, you only taught...?"

"What did I teach? Speak up."

" 'If a word ends with a vowel to be followed by another word beginning with a vowel, *uṭampaṭumei* (intrusive consonant) would ensue; that form would not be disapproved by anybody but rather accepted'. This is what you taught with the example *mā + ilai --> māvilai*. Just have a look at us. Aren't we a fine example of this phenomenon? When grammar endorses coalescing of *uyir* (vowels), why cannot it be extended to our bodies?"

"You stupid girl! Are you trying to put into practice the lesson taught? I spoke of the grammar of letters but you extend it to my neck."

"Don't worry, dear! I have learned my lessons in the right sense. Was there anything wrong in my understanding of *Tolkāppiyam*?"

"It was impeccable, but is this the place to practise it?"

"Oh! Pardon me. If place is what bothers you, there is a hall nearby.

She dragged him and he followed her to the hall.

* * *

Where the preceding word's final
And the succeeding word's beginning
Are both vowels,
The intervention of an intrusive consonant [/y/, /v/]
Is not forbidden.

(*Eḻuttatikāram : Puṇariyal*, verse 38)

Blossom 8

Honour

Explaining grammar is not my sole objective in this work. It is an attempt at aiding learners of *Tolkāppiyam* to retain in mind the significant aspects of grammatical norms and principles. As a part of this, I seek to explain here *cāriyai* (empty morph) which unfolds in the form of a scene.

Wordbooks define *aṅkatam* as chest, ornament worn on the shoulder, rebuke, snake, falsehood, elephant's food, etc.

In the same manner, *māṉam* means self-respect, haughtiness, pain, guilt, love, affection and chastity.

The grammatical term *cāriyai* is not only a word of the closed system but also a kind of dance of the *puṟam* mode.

āṭūu denotes a male and *makaṭūu* denotes a female.

Bearing these in mind, it would be useful as well as amusing to read this 'blossom'.

Now, Nallatampi and Nallataṅkai - brother and sister - were taking leave of their parents for staging a dance performance.

A learned Tamiḻ teacher - Cellaiyā, marked with a confused mind, met the siblings on the way. On encountering their parents, the teacher once again enquired, "Where are your children off to?", completely forgetting his meeting with the children earlier.

"Isn't today *āṭipperukku*? The rivers would flow to their fill marking the greatness of the regime. In such a joyous function, which men and women enjoy to the hilt, my son and daughter are going to enjoy themselves by entertaining the people through a dance", was the explanation offered to the teacher.

"What role are the brother and sister going to play in that dance?"

"Nallatampi would don the role of Kōvalaṉ, while his sister pairs opposite to him as Kōvalaṉ's mistress Mātavi."

"Brother and sister playing the characters of Kōvalaṉ and Mātavi?" exclaimed Cellaiyā, the scholar. After a momentary pondering, he commented laughingly, "*māṉamillaī*" meaning 'dishonourable'.

It was enough to provoke the parents, "Teacher! How dare you say such a defaming and offending word to us!". The agitated parents lost no time to arm themselves with a sickle and a log.

It sent shivers down the spine of the teacher who muttered, "Why such agitation? Now, what offensive thing did I utter?"

"Then what? You enquired about my children and dismissed them as shameless! How can I tolerate this?"

"Well, I am just returning from the school after teaching *Tolkāppiyam* to children. Since my mind was still preoccupied with what I taught in the classroom, I stammered something. In retrospect, there is nothing wrong with my remark."

"What? Is there nothing wrong?"

"Kindly bear with me! Let me offer my explanation first. In *Tolkāppiyam*'s *Eḻuttatikāram* there is a verse on *cāriyai*:

For the intervening empty morpheme iṉ to occur
After the two preceding terms *āṭūu* and *makaṭūu*
[Besides the hard consonant augmentation]
Is no failing in use.

Cāriyai doesn't mean dance alone; it also refers to morphemes of closed word class. The relevant verse states clearly that in '*āṭūu*' and '*makaṭūu*' which refer to man and woman respectively, not only hard consonants but even if *cāriyai* occurs, it is not wrong.

'*āṭūu*' and '*makaṭūu*', that is, brother and sister playing the roles of Kōvalaṉ and Mātavi respectively is not erroneous. This is what I wished to state. *Māṉam* means wrong, *māṉam illai* means that it is not wrong."

The parents sighed with relief and looked at the teacher, "Sir, though brother and sister are paired opposite to each other, it is after all a form of art. Therefore, it is not a sin. Didn't you get a simpler word to express the same opinion? Why did you perplex us by uttering the seemingly offending word '*māṉam illai*'?"

"That is what I am reiterating: in between '*āṭūu*' and '*makaṭūu*', not only hard consonants but even if *cāriyai* appears, it is not a mistake. Since I was engrossed in

what I taught in the classroom, I uttered the word *māṉam illai* in that sense. This is the cause of all the misunderstanding. My apologies."

Thus pleasing the parents, the teacher took their leave, with the satisfaction that he was able to throw light on a verse of *Tolkāppiyam.*

* * *

For the intervening empty morpheme *iṉ* to occur
After the two preceding terms *āṭūu* and *makaṭūu*
[Besides the hard consonant augmentation]
Is no failing in use.

(*Eḻuttatikāram* : *Uyir Mayaṅkiyal,* verse 69)

Blossom 9

Cōḻaṉ

Ten years ago, an old woman was seen staggering with a stick on the bank of the Koḷḷiṭam river, being unable to walk with an upright gait due to scorching heat. A cowherd youth sitting under a tree took pity upon the ageing woman and approached her with some fruits. The youth held her famished hands and enquired, "Grandmother! Where are you going in this hot sun? You are hardly able to walk. Here, have these fruits." He offered the blackberries to her. The old woman scrutinized the fruits carefully and remarked rather mockingly, "Are these fruits hot or cold?"

"The aged don't lose their sense of humour, do they? I am no Lord Murukaṉ. First, have these fruits!"

The old woman tasted the fruits, touched the shoulders of the youth affectionately and questioned, "Son! Why are you rearing cows at this age instead of going to school?".

"Well! I am studying. I do this work only during holidays."

"Is there nobody at home?"

"My father is afflicted with tuberculosis. When I go to school, my mother rears the cows and milks them to make our both ends meet."

"It is quite pathetic! How do you concentrate upon your education, amid such gruelling poverty? What are you studying and what do you want to become?"

"I am studying Tamiḻ. My ambition is to work as a Tamiḻ teacher!"

"Is it so? Quite good! Is your Tamiḻ teacher tutoring you in literature?"

"Oh yes! He is teaching *Tirukkuṟaḷ, Tolkāppiyam* and all."

"In that case, I know a little of literature, as I happen to be a retired Tamiḻ teacher. I would ask you a question. Would you answer?"

"Please do ask, grandmother. I will answer!"

"Suppose I say that Cōḻaṉ would come (*varum*) to take me, is Cōḻaṉ here human or non-human class?"

"Grandmother, if Cōḻaṉ referred to by you happens to be your son or grandson, it is human! In case Cōḻaṉ points to the bus, it is non-human class."

"Son, how do you say so? What is its grammatical explanation?"

"Grandmother, look! *Tolkāppiyam's Eḻuttatikāram* is crystal clear in this regard:

There is non-change coalescence too
Where
Nouns that designate
Both the human and non-human generic classes
Are the preceding words.

The noun that takes both human and non-human classes is called a common noun. That is how my explanation holds good. The human masculine Cōḻaṉ normally becomes non-human."

"Dear grandson! You are more talented than Lord Murukaṉ himself who proved his mettle before Avvai, in those days. While he demonstrated his Tamiḻ proficiency only with regard to a fruit, you have revealed your talent in age-old Tamiḻ grammar. May you flourish in your life! May you flourish in your life!"

The Cōḻan came (*vantuviṭṭāṉ*) during the shower of greetings. No, no, it came (vantuviṭṭatu). The old lady planted a kiss upon the forehead of the youth and boarded the bus with his assistance.

* * *

There is non-change coalescence too
Where
Nouns that designate
Both the human and non-human generic classes
Are the preceding words.

(*Eḻuttatikāram : Tokaimarapu,* verse 13)

Blossom 10

Alliance of Letters

I have entered the garden of *Tolkāppiyam* with a resolve that there be no politics in this literary study. I am all enjoying the flowers in the garden of this treatise.

But then, inevitably, in the natural course of writing, a few illustrations are drawn in from the world of politics in general rather than party politics.

In the second world war, the nations owing allegiance to America were pitted against Hitler-led Germany and its friendly countries. That the Axis countries and the Allied countries each were dependent upon the dominant partners which possessed enormous power at their disposal is an irrefutable fact. History could neither forget nor deny it.

The situation is related to the bygone era of the second world war.

In the modern age, though not at the level of nations, the political parties in a country invariably form alliances with like-minded parties to capture power or to elect the President.

Though the major parties possess the resources to face the electorate on their own, since there is nothing wrong in adding strength to their alliance, they take *precautions to forge alliances* with various small organizations. Therefore, political fronts consisting of various parties emerge.

Minor parties sans individuality find themselves compelled to join such fronts.

That the three letters, *kuṟṟiyalikaram, kuṟṟiyalukaram* and *āytam,* are in a similar condition is true.

Caught in a piquant situation, wherein they are dependent upon and possess no individuality, the three letters - *kuṟṟiyalikaram /i/, kuṟṟiyalukaram* /u/, *āytam /ḵ/* take the origin of letters upon which they are dependent as their own origin, thereby functioning as secondary letters.

* * *

The three secondary phonemes
[Shortened /i/, shortened /u/ and /ḵ/]
Discerned to be dependent and sans distinctiveness,
Have for their places of articulation
The organs of their respective primary phonemes;
And yet speaking relatively,
They are marked by natures of their own.

(*Eḻuttatikāram : Piṟappiyal*, verse 19)

Blossom 11

Grammatical Renunciation

It was a mutt looking like a palace, adorned with a front hall that resembled Hari engrossed in deep sleep over the mythical *athiseshan* snake. A young ascetic was sitting on the veranda of that mutt looking forward to the arrival of somebody.

Not just that. His ears were keenly expecting the unlocking sound from the adjacent prayer room, while the eyes kept a vigil on the door of the room.

The door did not open. But then the Tamiḻ teacher, teaching literature to the chief priest of the mutt, appeared well before the expected time. With the sacred Vaishnavite religious mark on his forehead and a book in his hand, the teacher came near the young monk.

"What Ciṉṉaccāmi (junior monk), how are you?" asked the teacher.

"Teacher, sir! I am the junior pontiff of this mutt. You are referring to me as if I were Kiḻappaḻuvūr Ciṉṉaccāmi who self-immolated."

"Pardon me. He was but a lion-hearted Tamiḻ."

"Since I am keeping guard here, am I then an ugly Tamiḻiaṉ?"

"Okay, leave it. The nocturnal chic would have come. Have they fled off?"

"You, teacher! How come you ask of such things without any inhibition?"

"Why should I be afraid? Are the pontiffs devoted to God in deep sleep after exhaustion, or are they taking a rest? Is this an unbroken meditation? That is what I am asking."

"That does not allow you to raise questions breaking the rules of grammar!"

"It is a long time since some monks have forgotten and abandoned the norms of ascetic life. Well then, junior monk! Pray, which grammatical rule have I broken?"

"You used the plural verb while referring to one nocturnal chic, and in the same vein you referred to the single pontiff in the room using a plural suffix. According to your statement, how many pontiffs are there in the room? How many nocturnal chics? One pontiff and many nocturnal chics? Or, one nocturnal chic and many pontiffs?"

"Junior pontiff, don't be confused! My question was based on a sound grammatical principle. The plural suffix is used for referring to a single man or woman. Singulars being referred to by plural suffixes are used as honorifics. It is indeed based on established grammatical rules which Tolkāppiyar calls admissible deviations."

"Is that so!" exclaimed the junior monk with a gaping mouth, just as the door of the room opened. The colourful damsel released from the bedroom staggered her way out through the backdoor of the mutt. The teacher caught hold of the junior monk and recited the relevant verse from *Tolkāppiyam*:

Plural suffix to a noun denoting human species singular
And plural suffix to a noun denoting non-human species singular
Are part of worldly usage in honour clothed,
Not permitted they are by norms of grammar though.

(*Collatikāram*: *Kiḷaviyākkam*, verse 27)

Blossom 12

Word-picture

The lover urged his beloved, "My dear, you have received coveted awards in the art of painting. Why don't you draw us in an embracing posture and putit in a place not frequented by others, so that both of us can attain ecstasy by viewing it?"

"I will certainly draw such a picture. You are a sculptor. Kindly chisel a statue depicting the posture you mentioned."

"Painting first; statue next."

The lady gracefully obliged her lover. Later, she led him to the retiring room and showed him the painting.

It was a poetic depiction of a lover embracing his love. The tight hug revealed only one of her breasts. Of the two eyes, one of the eyes was concealed by the cheek of the lover which was brushing against her cheek. Her unbridled locks were spread all over the shoulders of the lover like the jasmine creeper, which brought only one of his shoulders to the fore. The painting showed her other shoulder being hugged tightly by his hands.

"You have painted by adhering to the grammatical norms", was the crisp reaction of the lover. He further elucidated, "Of the two eyes, only one eye is visible in the painting. In the same manner, the painting doesn't unravel two bosoms; only one of them is visible. You have represented your shoulders also in a similar way. I am able to view only one eye, one shoulder, one breast, instead of two eyes, two shoulders and two breasts. In a nutshell, the painting is a true reflection of *Tolkāppiyam's* grammatical norm."

"What does *Tolkāppiyam* prescribe?"

"Let me throw light upon that. Though eye, shoulder and bosom signify plurality, they need not be referred to as two eyes, two shoulders, two bosoms. They, or for that matter other words like them, can be stated in singular which would very well imply their plurality. If the context demands, they could be presented in plural form as well."

"Is that so? Is my painting a telltale example of this grammatical norm? Kindly recite the relevant verse."

"Yes! I will recite it verbatim. What I am going to say is related to words, while your painting is its pictorial representation."

Limbs in pairs
Such as eye, shoulder and breast
Need no plural suffix
Unless they are followed by plural verbs.

(*Collatikāram* : *Kiḷaviyākkam*, verse 62)

Blossom 13

Commercial Competency

He was clad in a pure hand-woven dhoti, with a customary towel on the shoulder. He was immune to sweat and shiver. Beside him were his middle-aged wife in Ciṉṉāḷappaṭṭi sari, and their darling daughter Kaṇṇaki with a few books in her hands, a girl pursuing her education in a college. This compact family entered the busy Gokhale Bookshop after visiting some other bookshops on the street. Incidentally, the name of the owner of the shop was also Gokhale.

He gave an appearance of a staunch nationalist.

His son Aruṇaṉ with a silk shirt and a costly watch was frequently combing his curly hair with his hands.

He was also assisting his father actively in his business. But then, ever since Kaṇṇaki entered the shop, he paid hardly any attention to the business.

His father Gokhale seized the initiative from him and enquired Kaṇṇaki's father enthusiastically, "Which book do you want?"

"Do you have Nehru's *Glimpses of the World History?*" Gokhale pondered for a few minutes by stroking his hair and replied:

"We have Gandhi's *My Experiments with Truth.*"

Kaṇṇaki's father responded, "I have that. Therefore, I don't need it!

It is okay. What about Aṇṇā's *Iru Paramparaikaḷ?*"

Gokhale went back to stroking his hair.

"The latest edition has arrived. Aṇṇā's *Veḷḷai Māḷikaiyil.* Would you need it? We have that book."

"So you don't possess *Iru Paramparaikaḷ* ? Doesn't matter'. *Veḷḷai Mālikaiyil* referred to by you is available in our own Kaṇṇaki library."

"Well, so you own a library? Do you have at least a thousand books?" Aruṇaṉ posed the question to Kaṇṇaki and ogled her. She couldn't bear it. She turned the other way round and searched for books!

At that juncture, Aruṇaṉ's father determined to clinch the business deal, briefed Kaṇṇaki's parents, " *Tirukkuṟaḷ* commentaries are available!"

"Kindly get us Pulavar Kuḷantai's *Rāvaṇa Kāviyam,* if at all you possess it!"

"Well, *Rāmāyaṇam* is available, which is widely read by everybody!"

Kaṇṇaki intervened, "Not that. Do you have Pāratitācaṉ's *Pāṇṭiyaṉ Paricu?*"

As if waiting for this opportune moment, Aruṇaṉ replied wearing a flustered face, "We have *Etirpārāta Muttam* (Unexpected Kiss). Do you need it?". He looked at Kaṇṇaki and winked.

Kaṇṇaki retorted sternly, "I have *Tamiḻacciyiṉ Katti* (Tamiḻ Woman's Knife)" and after a pause, she said, "Even that is authored by Pāratitācaṉ." Her eyes spit fire. Aruṇaṉ was subdued.

Her irritated father questioned the shop owner, "Well, you have been mentioning about some other books instead of the ones asked for! What joke is this?" Proprietor Gokhale smiled and clarified it, "Sir, this is the advice of *Tolkāppiyam.*

A businessman should follow only that. One should never say 'No' to a customer; instead, whatever is available in the shop should be made known. Then only would business prosper. This is what he says."

Kaṇṇaki's mother who remained tightlipped so far, enquired, "Well then! Do you at least have *Tolkāppiyam* commentary?"

Pat came the reply from Proprietor Gokhale, "The cheap edition of *Mahābāratam* is available."

* * *

If one has to say
'It is but unavailable'
When a certain commodity is asked for,
One must do so
By pointing to something else that is available.

(*Collatikāram* : *Kiḷaviyākkam*, verse 35)

Blossom 14

My Son?

The cart-driver holding on the Mayilai bullocks and saying "We've arrived at Karuṇaiyāṉanta Press", Kaliyaperumāḷ leaning comfortably in the cart, alighted with a bag in his hands.

As soon as Kaliyaperumāḷ entered the room of the manager in the frontier of the printing press, he was greeted by the saluting manager with the chants of "Welcome! Welcome!" and was offered a chair.

Kaliyaperumāḷ extricated five or six big papers from his bag and said, "An auspicious event is slated to take place in our house. That is why I have come here."

"I am very happy. Seems like son's marriage. You are here for printing invitation. Went through the news!"

"Yes, the marriage was fixed in a hurry. One thousand invitations must be printed. Groom's name - Bride's name and other details are there in these papers! You yourself can make necessary corrections."

The manager scanned through the papers handed to him and remarked, "Okay! Though it is a self-respect marriage, the Ayyar who wrote this seems to have smeared customary turmeric powder on it and noted down the auspicious time for marriage along with astrological details as in the conventional marriage."

"Is that so? Has he written the auspicious time? The Ayyar has shown his true colours! It is okay. Though the Ayyar has set an auspicious time for the marriage, it would be conducted on line with the principles of Periyār. Therefore, let the title of the invitation be 'Wedding Celebration Invitation'."

"If it is a self-respect marriage, then why are you sticking to auspicious date and stars?"

"Don't you know? On certain occasions, vedic rituals would be insisted upon by bridegroom's side, whereas, at times, bride's side would take turns to sticking to them. Here, for the sake of the bride's family - the astrological details. And in accordance with our wish, self-respect marriage."

The manager smiled and scrutinized the marriage invitation given to him by Kaliyaperumāḷ for printing. "Is everything okay? Do you know as to why I am asking this? You possess proficiency in Tamiḻ with a knack of rectifying even minor mistakes! That is why we prefer this press!"

"Everything is correct except for one mistake!"

"What is it?"

"Not exactly a big mistake. While writing bridegroom's name, you have mentioned it as 'my son' (*eṉatu makaṉ*)."

"Yes, the bridegroom is my son..."

"Sir, that is exactly the mistake."

"What are you saying, Meyyappaṉ? He is my son, otherwise, who else is he?"

"That is not correct."

"You give back that paper! What blabbering is this?"

Kaliyaperumāḷ snatched the paper from the hands of Meyyappaṉ. Just then, Meyyappaṉ caught hold of his hand and pleaded:

"My apologies. You only commended my Tamiḻ proficiency, then how come you get agitated?"

"Okay; What do you want to say? Speak out!"

"The sixth case marker *atu* in *eṉatu makaṉ* is wrong. We must use the fourth case marker *ku* and write *eṉakku makaṉ*."

"I hardly know anything about case markers and distinctions of human and non-human classes. Because you say this, it must be correct."

"I don't say that! *Tolkāppiyam* states so!"

"Whosoever might say so, there is no denying the fact that he is my son! Kindly finish the invitation printing work soon. And here is your advance amount. Now, let me take your leave."

* * *

Where the succeeding word
Is the human generic class [kinship denoting] noun,
The sixth case declension *atu* of the preceding word
Gets dropped,
And the fourth case morpheme *ku* takes its place.

(*Collatikāram: Vēṟṟumai Mayaṅkiyal, verse 11*)

Blossom 15

The Dream of a Eunuch

In the prebifurcated North Arcot District, all the bisexuals from various parts of the country converged for the annual *Kūvōkam* festival commemorating the sacrifice of Aravāṉ. In the festival marked by gaiety, eunuchs, dressed in colourful makeups and dresses, performed the traditional *kummi* dance in various groups, much to the amusement of gasping youngsters and oldies alike.

The mythology goes that Aravāṉ was sacrificed at the commencement of the *Mahābāratha* war, and the bisexuals mourned his death with the beating of breasts and the rituals of removing their sacred thread and the *sindhur* mark on the forehead.

The festival characterized by joyous revelry came to an end as if the end of a storm and the bisexuals all exhausted retired to their restrooms to sleep. A bisexual named Rātā, who was in deep sleep marked by high decibel snoring, had a dream. The eunuch bore the name 'Rātā' - common to both male and female persons.

The scene in the dream figured Lord Kaṇṇaṉ and the five Pāṇṭavas with their consort Pāñcāli. As per the condition, the Pāṇṭavas had to live incognito in which they had to be in disguise so that nobody could identify them. Otherwise, they would not regain the countries lost to Turiyōtaṉa by Tarumaṉ in gambling. Therefore, each of the Pāṇṭavas was studiedly sporting the guise by which to hide from public gaze. Among them, Arjuṉaṉ, who was under the cloak of a bisexual, met Lord Kaṇṇaṉ, separately. Yes, all this happened in eunuch Rātā's dream!

"Kaṇṇa! I have a doubt!"

"What is it Arjuṇā? Do come out with it!"

"Am I a male or a female now?"

"Why do you have such a grammatical confusion, all of a sudden?"

"Would I be called he or she?"

"Hold on! Let me refer to *Tolkāppiyam* !"

Thus saying Kaṇṇaṉ stretched his hands towards the opposite direction and from nowhere *Tolkāppiyam's* palm leaf manuscript came into his hands.

Arjuṇaṉ, who was in the guise of a eunuch posed a question to Kaṇṇaṉ:

"What is this Kaṇṇa? How come *Tolkāppiyam* exists in this age?"

"O the holder of the bow! In the make-believe world of dreams, everything is possible."

So saying, Kaṇṇaṉ referred to *Tolkāppiyam.*

"Look! *Tolkāppiyam* has an answer to your question!"

"What is the answer? Am I a male or a female?"

"None of the two. Eunuch is the answer."

"But then, I am a man."

"Arjuṇā, *Tolkāppiyam* prescribes that a eunuch deprived of manliness should not be represented by the musculine gender. That is, in expressions like 'eunuch came, went, spoke, etc., only feminine gender should be used, using the proform 'she'."

"What is the verse on that?"

"Here! Listen to me as I read!

Words denoting
Hermaphroditic ones of effete musculinity
Will not be words with masculine gender endings."

With disappointment writ large on his face, Arjuṇaṉ beseeched: "Kaṇṇa! Everything is okay. As per *Tolkāppiyam,* anybody sans manliness should be referred to by feminine gender. But then, in my case, I haven't lost my manliness to become a bisexual like milk spoilt. I am under the guise of a eunuch only to fulfil the condition imposed by gambling."

"Therefore, you suppose, you are qualified to be addressed as a man, using the musculine suffix; if that be so, you would be easily identified! Therefore, forbear to

be referred to in feminine terms meant for the eunuch."

"Great Lord! At least in my case it is an ephemeral phase. But then, how would thousands of eunuchs sans manliness tolerate being referred to in feminine terms?"

"Arjuṉā! Why do you consider feminine gender as degrading? Poor thing, you don't like women - but Pāñcāli, Alli, Pavaḷakkoṭi, Cupattirai..., the long list of your wives, which certainly doesn't end with them, all belong to feminine gender!"

An embarrassed and shy Arjuṉaṉ bent his head. Kaṇṇaṉ was quick to retort,

"Well then! *Tolkāppiyam*'s grammar suits you ninety out of a hundred per cent."

A startled bisexual Rātā woke up and her mixed dream dissipated.

* * *

Words denoting
Hermaphroditic ones of effete musculinity
Will not be words with masculine gender endings.

(*Collatikāram* : *Kiḷaviyākkam*, verse 12)

Blossom 16

Female Son

Perched beside the greenish bushes of the garden, Marakatam and Taṅkam were discussing sweet nothings. "You, Taṅkam, do you know the scoop! It is widely believed that our Aṉṉam is mentally disturbed, of late."

"Why? Is there any heartbreak due to love failure? As far as I know, she has not fallen for anybody and none is in love with her, either."

"I also suspected on the same lines and paid her a visit yesterday."

"You saw her in person? How is she? Is she blabbering anything?"

"Yes. I saw her in person! She was in the midst of a junk of books!"

"Junk of books? Or useless books?

"Aṉṉam is never known to have even touched them! She completely abhors such books and for that matter, even odd perverted stories published in weeklies. She discards them, even if they are offered by somebody."

"Let it be so. Though men and women feign to dislike them, they never miss any opportunity to read them, unnoticed by others. Okay, Marakatam! Aṉṉam always remains engrossed in literature. What has happened to her now?"

"That is why she is afflicted with literature craze."

"You are also a connoisseur of literature."

"Not to such an extent as to confuse myself and others too."

"Please tell me, what is the matter?"

"A bisexual deprived of manliness should not be referred to using musculine verbal suffixes; we should, according to norms of grammar, use feminine suffixes."

"That is correct! So what? What does Aṉṉam say?"

"She says the term female son (*peṇ makaṉ*) could be used."

"How could it be? Female son? Are you referring to a eunuch?"

"No, no! Seems, it was in vogue to call the girls in pre-pubescent stage by the term female son. That is why Aṉṉam says 'female son came' (with feminine verbal suffix) could very well be used."

"Okay, okay. There is no denying the fact that she has gone bonkers! She is fantasizing quite interestingly. Lunatic, lunatic! She is no doubt a lunatic!"

"Who is mad? You Taṅkam? Marakatam! It is not my own concept!"

A shouting Aṉṉam made her appearance with *Tolkāppiyam* in her hand. She opened the relevant page and said sarcastically, "Here, open your eyes properly and read this:

The nominal terms *ellārum* and *ellīrum*
And the term *makaṉ* that follows *peṇ*
Are of the same kind too,
[They mark distinctions of gender within the human-class],
So do the learned say.

Again,

The aberrant feminine gender designation *peṇmakaṉ*
Takes the verb concord
In the manner of a feminine gender denoting term.

Do you know what this verse in *Collatikāram* means?

To put it in a nutshell:

The expression female son, which is a breach of gender, would take feminine gender—'the girl came'(with the feminine verbal suffix)."

Aṉṉam elucidated further: "Terms like 'everybody'. 'all persons' and female son are human class words. In the past, it was in vogue to call girls in pre-pubescent phase by the term female son."

Taṅkam and Marakatam were completely astonished and listened to Aṉṉam without blinking their eyelids.

"Here is the *Tolkāppiyam* verse. Read it as well as its commentary first and decide as to whether Aṉṉam is really mad." Thus thundered Aṉṉam and made her exit.

The nominal terms *ellārum* and *ellīrum*
And the term *makaṉ* that follows *peṇ*
Are of the same kind too,

[They mark distinctions of gender within the human-class],
So do the learned say.

(*Collatikāram* : *Peyariyal,* verse 10)

The aberrant feminine gender designation *peṇmakaṉ*
Takes the verb concord
In the manner of a feminine gender denoting term.

(*Collatikāram* : *Peyariyal,* verse 40)

Blossom 17

Finished Cooking; I have Come

He had invited friends to a feast. Two of the friends arrived even before midnoon. His wife feigned anger, "What dear! You have invited your friends without intimating to me in advance."

"I bought murrel fish. I would be only too happy to share them with my friends. Since you would also like the gesture, I invited those two friends. Hurry up! Look after the cooking."

The mistress of the house was activated immediately. She cleaned the rice, put it in boiling water, lighted the stove, chopped the fish into equal pieces, and after mixing the requisite amount of spice, salt, and tamarind, put them one after another into the boiling curry. She kept herself focused upon the food being prepared on both the stoves.

It is indeed a joyful thing for her to serve food to the guests and sit eating with them.

The husband, seated on the veranda of the house, repeatedly asked his wife, "Is the food ready? Why is it taking so long? Why is it taking so long?"

She didn't relish his loud reminders.

The *Tirukkuṛaḷ* verse on hospitality,

The *anicham* flower withers away when smelt;

The guests would turn sullen when looked at with a frown.

kept ringing as a caution in her heart. Just as she was rushing through with cooking, she heard her husband's harsh query, "At what time would you finish cooking? At what time would it be served? At what time would we be eating it?"

The lady wearing a smile on her face placed the plantain leaves on the floor and said, "Let me state the present time and future time in past tense -- here, I finished cooking. I am right here for serving. You three could come and start eating." One of the friends was all praise for her:

"Looks the mistress of the house has a sound mastery over grammar also, as she reigns like a queen!"

"Well, I am no queen - I am an ordinary woman discharging my household duties and of course with some knowledge of literature. That is all."

Her proud and loving husband enquired, "Isn't this *Tolkāppiyam?* You can as well recite the entire verse."

"Let the feast be over, then recitation can follow."

After finishing the feast, she didn't forget to serve the delicacy of *Tolkāppiyam*.

To attribute the action of a verb to the past
While it bears on the present and future
Is to suggest exigency,
So do the literate hold.

(*Collatikāram*: *Viṉaiiyal*, verse 44)

Note: An event that links the present and the future times can be expressed in the form of past tense.

Blossom 18

Mutal Poruḷ

Darwin's theory has succeeded in scientifically explaining the human being's evolution from the monkey. Among this teeming sea of humanity, growing in their multitudes, owing to diversification development and witnessed in this world, somewhere around five thousand years ago, the Tamiḻ race was gradually preparing itself for a systematic form of life.

Leading an unorganized life is poles apart from leading a planned course of living. In order to formulate such a structured life, communication tools are mandatory. Among these communication tools, language has stood the test of time and stands as numero uno.

The races emerging from various parts of the world had been using their languages, but the Tamiḻ race has had the distinction of standardizing its language and developing literature and grammar at a very early stage. The historically renowned Tamiḻ race is credited with providing sheen and glitter to their language two thousand years ago, though the development process itself started some three thousand years earlier.

Tolkāppiyam's *Poruḷatikāram* section, the grammar of literature and life, is a perfect telltale example of that feat. Though the modes of living and patterns of behaviour mentioned in *Tolkāppiyam* were very much in practice much before the *Tolkāppiyam*'s era, we can always recollect with pride that the arduous task of piecing them together and presenting them in the form of a poetic garland was effortlessly accomplished by Tolkāppiyar.

It may be debatable as to how many of the principles, beliefs and practices of

that era are relevant to the contemporary milieu. But there is no denying the fact that we would be woefully missing the mirrors of the past in the absence of landmark books like *Tolkāppiyam.*

In this context and background, let's enjoy a few of the blossoms from the *Poruḷatikāram* section of *Tolkāppiyam.*

Of the three components of structure and content in literature, *mutal poruḷ, karupporuḷ* and *uripporuḷ, mutal poruḷ* has been divided into two, viz., land and time.

Mutaṟporuḷ is
Aspects of land and time,
So do men of discernment find.

(*Poruḷatikāram*: *Akattiṇai iyal*, verse 4)

The land has been classified into pastoral tract (*mullai*), hilly tract (*kuṟiñci*), agricultural tract (*marutam*) and maritime tract (*neytal*). Each one of them has been assigned a presiding deity. And these deities supposedly protected and blessed the respective divisions of the Tamiḻ land. Here is the *Tolkāppiyam* verse:

The forest tract which Māyōṉ* tends,
The hilly tract which Cēyōṉ* tends
The fertile cultivable tract which Vēntaṉ* tends
And the littoral tract which Varuṇaṉ* tends
Are known to be
Mullai, kuṟiñci, marutam and *neytal* respectively.

(*Poruḷatikāram* : *Akattiṇai iyal*, verse 5)

*Gods equated with Tirumāl, Murukaṉ, Intiraṉ and Varuṇaṉ respectively by the commentators.

Blossom 19

Land and Time

Given that the types and modes of love behaviour of the hero and the heroine and the attendant situations and sub-situations as prescribed in *Tolkāppiyam* are being discussed in the succeeding chapters, it is necessary to briefly introduce them here.

Pastoral tract (*mullai*): Season--rainy season; time of the day -- evening.

Hilly tract (kuṟiñci): Season--winter; time of the day - midnight

Agricultural tract (*marutam*): Season--all seasons; time of the day - dawn

Maritime land (*neytal*): Season--all seasons; time of the day - sunset.

The desert tract, not included among the four above, has the hot summer season and the midday hour for its season and hour of the day.

The rainy season and evening
Are assigned to the forest tract.
The learned find
The cold season and midnight hour
Assigned to the hilly tract.

(*Poruḷatikāram*: *Akattiṇai iyal,* verse 6)

The early dewy season
Does also go with the hilly tract,
So has it been said.

(*Poruḷatikāram*: *Akattiṇai iyal*, verse7)

The wee hours just before daybreak
Are assigned to the cultivable tract.
The day's close before sunset
Belongs to the littoral tract.

(*Poruḷatikāram* : *Akattiṇai iyal,* verse 8)

As we see it,
The hot season and midday hour
Go with the centrally placed [arid] tract.

(*Poruḷatikāram* : *Akattiṇai iyal,* verse 9)

The last dewy season
Is also held to be proper to the arid tract.

(*Poruḷatikāram* : *Akattiṇai iyal,* verse 10)

After having described all these, Tolkāppiyar shows that it is inevitable that the nature of love behaviour may change, and not the nature of land and its characteristics.

That
Aspects of love behaviour
Assigned to a given tract
Do get mixed with those of another tract
Is no deviation unacceptable;
Yet,
No commingling is permitted among the tracts themselves,
So goes the norm by men of discernment.

(*Poruḷatikāram* : *Akattiṇai iyal* , verse 12)

Blossom 20

Leadership Traits

Having discussed the features of land and time and the modes of love behaviour, it is now necessary to explain the distinctive regional features of the five tracts of land (*karupporuḷ*).

The deity worshipped, food for the stomach, animals, trees, plants, creepers, birds, leather instruments, occupation, the lyre and other string instruments and things of these sorts would come under *karupporuḷ*. Place, water, flower, etc., would also come under *karupporuḷ*.

God, food, animal, tree,
Bird, drum, occupation and the lute
And such of these
Constitute the distinctive physical features of the given tract of land.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Akattiṇai iyal*, verse 18)

Though, in this list of *karupporuḷ*, flowers and birds are allotted to specific divisions of land, they might be shown to belong to other divisions of land.

Where the flora and fauna occur
Not marked proper to the land and season in question though,
They be deemed
Characteristic of that land and that season.

(*Poruḷathikāram : Akattiṇai iyal*, verses 19)

Just as *mullai* land is inhabited by shepherds and hunters, the other types of land also have farmers, etc. engaged in occupations characteristic of those geographical divisions:

Cowherds and huntsmen
Designate region-specific persons of the masculine gender;
There are other names of principal characters such as these two
Drawn that they are on the region's occupation.

We find on reflection that
Inhabitants of other regions too
Have their names derived from the mores of their region
And from the occupation of that region.

(*Poruḷatikāram* : *Akattiṇai iyal* , verses 21, 22)

Such representation of *kaikkiḷai* and *peruntiṇai*
Does mark men of other menial occupations too.

(*Poruḷatikāram* : *Akattiṇai iyal* , verse 24)

Tolkāppiyar does not go by the social status, and assigns the position of the hero and heroine even to those folks engaged in lowly occupations.

There are, however, some scholars amongst us who tend to misinterpret *ēval marapu* (menial work) as that of ordering others.

Blossom 21

Land and People: A Study in Excellence

We get to know that Tolkāppiyar designates land by the term world, which points to his universal perspective to human existence, though it conspicuously lacked individual features related to the Tamiḻ race.

In spite of specific characteristics and vocations allotted to each type of land, there are overlappings with regard to certain features. But in general, the characteristics pertain to the type of land mentioned.

Each type of land has people bearing two categories of names, viz., conventional names and occupation-related names:

The persons that people a tract of land
Have names specific to that region;
These names fall into two categories:
Names in tune with the mores of the region
And names derived from occupations of that region.

(*Poruḷatikāram* : *Akattiṇai iyal*, verse 20)

Pursuit of learning
And ambassadorial mission
Are proper to men of superior social classes.

(*Poruḷatikāram* : *Akattiṇai iyal*, verse 26)

In both these activities, men of excellence and character took the responsibility.

Tolkāppiyar says that it is the prerogative of the king to either go on war himself, or entrust the responsibility to his commanders.

Going on war himself against his enemy
And entrusting the job
To those associated with him
Are given to the king.

(*Poruḷatikāram* : *Akattiṇai iyal*, verse 27)

The implication is that the duties of governance, fighting, learning and ambassadorship were assigned to men of character, intelligence and valour. Further, in all types of land, there were people who excelled in the performance of specific tasks and duties.

Conduct of prayers and festivities
For those of abiding note other than the humans (i.e. deities);
Restoration of righteousness where it turns deviant
In all regions extending through the forest tract;
And to make riches through virtue abroad -
Are occasions too
For the hero to remain parted from the heroine.

(*Poruḷatikāram* : *Akattiṇai iyal*, verse 28)

Therefore, the performance of duties proper to a given type of land goes to the nobility, the inhabitants of the land, men from lower strata and workers.

The conduct of prayers and festivities
Stands enjoined on the inhabitants of the four regions.

(*Poruḷatikāram* : *Akattiṇai iyal*, verse 29)

A few commentators misread 'the four types of people' as 'four castes of people.'

That the classification of men meant for the management of the given type of land was misinterpreted as a classification on the basis of caste is but the product of perverted thinking.

Blossom 22

Reward for Objection

The Tamil professor made an announcement in the classroom of the college: "Students, I announce a competition to commemorate the birth anniversary of the Tamil scholar Thiru V. Ka. The best among you who scene scripts a characterizing a man and a woman in a beautiful manner, in sweet, charming Tamil by conforming to the established rules of old Tamil tradition and history would bag a prize of literature books worth rupees five thousand. Well then! You can as well start now and read out your work to me before the end of this class".

The students welcomed this announcement and raced against each other to write the script in order to bag the prize.

"There is yet another condition for winning the competition! You should finish it first, and further your work should be prize-worthy."

Within an hour of the announcement, Mukilan finished his work and he approached the professor with the papers. He said, "Sir, I have finished writing."

"Is that so! I am quite happy! Why don't you read it aloud to others?"

Student Mukilan started rushing through with his presentation:

The lover sits by his beloved wearing a sad countenance.

She enquires, "Why are you sorrow-worn? Why does your face look withered?"

"Sulking", is the crisp reply.

"Sulking? What does it mean...?"

"O my goodness! You don't know what sulking means! Among the verses in *Iṉpattuppāl* section of *Tirukkuṟaḷ*, those under "sulking" are the best. The man and woman have a feigned quarrel against each other, which ultimately gets resolved leading to ecstasy."

"In the first place, why should they sulk and then settle down to reconciliation?"

"Sulking is entering into a quarrel with the sole aim of getting reconciled."

"Okay then, what are you waiting for? Start the quarrel."

"I am going to break a piece of news, most disliked by you."

"What is it?"

"The dawn tomorrow would see me sailing to Rome."

"Oh, no. Don't tell me you are off to a foreign land once again."

"Yes, we need to carry the pearls of Tamiḻ Nāṭu for sale in Rome."

"Alas! Was I born to be tossed like a catamaran by the ebb and tide of the sea waves? No, I am determined to stop your voyage."

"No obstacles please! Let there be no embers in your eyes! If I sell pearls overseas, gold coins would pile like a flood unshuttered. So dear lady, let me take leave of you."

"When I, like the lamp of the house, wait for you here with my fingers crossed, you tear apart the tumultuous sea to go for trading. I would have breathed my last by the time you returned."

"Come on! Look here! You are soon going to break into pearls of laughter, which certainly doesn't grow in the shell. Oh chaste Tamiḻ, which abide in my heart! You are going to accompany me to Rome. Is that okay?"

After hearing this sweet news she planted some mighty kisses and embraced her lord.

Everybody in the classroom appreciated Mukilaṉ with a thunderous applause.

The Tamiḻ professor said, "What students? Shall we confer the first prize on Mukilaṉ? But one thing. This script doesn't completely belong to Mukilaṉ.

It reads like part of a dialogue in the play *Pūmpukār!*

Student Mullaikkoṭi intervened: "Professor sir! Friend Mukilaṉ's work doesn't conform to the norms of ancient Tamiḻ literature and culture. Nor is it completely like the dialogue in *Pūmpukār*."

"What is your objection? If you could reflect what is in my mind, you will get the prize."

"Sir, last week while teaching *Tolkāppiyam*, you explained the *Akattiṇai iyal*

verse 34 as meaning that the ancient Tamiḻ culture did not permit men taking their wives with them during voyages to foreign lands. And what Mukilaṉ has written runs contrary to this practice."

"Yes Mullaikkoṭi! You have said exactly what I thought. Dear Mukilaṉ, your script is excellent! The pen-portrait you have done remains a feast for the eyes! But then, the award should rightly go to the objection raised by Mullaikkoṭi!

Once again, the students expressed their happiness by their clapping of hands.

* * *

The hero does not take the heroine with him
While he undertakes a voyage on the seas.

(*Poruḷatikāram* : *Akattiṇai iyal,* verse 34).

Blossom 23

Women and Palm Leaves

Mukilaṉ approached Mullaikkoṭi, when she was coming from the classroom with hands full of the books, received as a prize.

"I am so happy! Congratulations on your winning the prize!" Mukilaṉ said with a smile on his face but he made no attempt to hide his anger.

"Mukilaṉ! Help me with these books. I am unable to carry them."

"Oh! Do you take me for an aide?" So saying, Mukilaṉ took the bundle of books she received as a prize.

"What Mullai? What sort of a *feminist* are you? You were advocating male chauvinism!"

"What, me advocating male chauvinism?"

"Exactly! Didn't you argue in favour of *Tolkāppiyam* prohibiting women from accompanying men on voyage?"

"Who said that it was *Tolkāppiyam's* idea? In the ancient era, such a practice was in vogue. Tolkāppiyar merely reflected it, without concealing anything."

"I didn't want to subscribe to that retrogressive principle, which is why I didn't mention it. But you managed to receive appreciation by holding up views against your own gender. A worst form of female subjugation! Is this how *Tolkāppiyam* depicts women?"

"These historical facts, lifestyle of people of the yesteryears, their beliefs and their activities based on these beliefs - everything is represented without any concealment by literature. Do you know something, Mukil? The Tolkāppiyar, who refers to the prohibition of women from undertaking voyages, has also spoken about an advantage conferred on women in those days."

"What was that Mullai?"

"In order to win his beloved by any means, the hero used to ride on a horse made of palmya leaves in the ancient days."

"Quite correct! The practice of riding on palmyra horses involved men sitting on horses made of palmyra leaves, going down the street of the town of the heroine and persuading the elders of the town to get him the heroine. The dried leaves of the palmyra would cause bruises all over his body.

In order to save women from experiencing such an excruciating pain, women were prevented from undergoing this process in those days!"

"To realize our love we men underwent *maṭalēṟutal*, but you women--to achieve the objective of your love..."

"We need not undergo the practice of *maṭalēṟutal* ; instead a mere *maṭal* (letter) would do the trick."

"Is that so? Is that so easy? Shall I give it a try?"

"I am sure you mean our marriage invitation!" a blushing Mullaikkoṭi started leaving, taking the books back and holding them tight to her bosom.

"Wish I had been those books!" Though Mukilaṉ didn't exactly utter these words, his mischievous glance looked like saying so.

* * *

No strand of Akam love behaviour
Does enjoin on the heroine
To ride on the horse of palmyra stems
As it goes contrary to the norms of feminine propriety.

(*Poruḷatikāram* : *Akattiṇai iyal*, verse 35).

Blossom 24

A Simple Point in the Middle

It is a common trait among scholars - of the past as well as the present -- who have penned commentaries on the old Tamil words and phrases to overlook the comprehension potential of the readers.

Instead of providing simple explanations, they prefer to tread on rough terrain, by being pedantic like classical musicians, who flaunt all the finer nuances of music in a concert, to be appreciated by only a hundred people among multitudes of laymen.

To be precise, how many presons know as to what exactly *tiṇai* means?

Tiṇai is the term related to aspects of behaviour, land division and classes of beings. While *uyartiṇai* refers to human beings, *akṟiṇai* denotes things non-human.

Akattiṇai signifies the love career of the hero and the heroine through the phases of union, separation, patient waiting, sulking, etc., and deals with the pre-marital and marital relations of these two, with *akam*, the heart, standing at the base. There is also the unrequited love and abnormal sexual passion.

Aintiṇai is the fivefold love career of the hero and the heroine -- *kuṟiñci* (the union of the lovers), *pālai* (separation), *marutam* (feigned love quarrels), *mullai* (patient waiting of the heroine), and *neytal* (the lamentation in separation).

Even as union, separation, etc., may occur in all classes of land, we need to look at *tiṇai* as a place or land of occurrence of an event of love.

Puṟattiṇai is the parallel, the counterpoint of *Akattiṇai*. While *Akam* is the intimacy of love behaviour and conjugal life between a man and a woman, *Puṟam* signifies aspects of life in the society at large such as war, governance, learning, friendship, etc. The *Puṟam* events, like the *Akam* ones, are both land-specific and universal.

This simple explanation would be useful in understanding the issues of *akam* and *puṟam* life in their complexities - the breeze, the storm, the tremors of the earth in the life of men and women.

Blossom 25

That is like a Mother!

Love is a ticklish phenomenon which binds the lovers together but prohibits union and attainment of ecstasy. A girl entangled in love is sleeping beside her mother. Her mother's hand, like a creeper swept by the breeze, is moving around her body, making the girl realize that she is still wide awake.

It is the winter season, specific to the *mullai* land. The time of the day is midnight. The prayer song sung to appease the presiding deity Kaṇṇaṉ, echoing itself in the hills and trees of the forest, hits the ears of the mother and the daughter, though the actual song ended long before.

All of a sudden, the girl wakes up and sits. The mother without revealing that she is awake turns to the other side. The daughter prays, "Kaṇṇa! Thanks for your mercy! Just as I wished, he has agreed to forget me. On my part, I will not think of him either."

A satisfied mother goes to sleep with happiness thinking that the *mullai* deity Kaṇṇaṉ has changed the minds of the lovers.

Realizing that her strategy has succeeded, the girl pretends to sleep for some time, only to nimble-footedly walk her way to the handsome man hiding behind the tree outside. She touches his shoulders and both of them set out on the journey.

The cock which heralds the breaking of day seems to tell tales of elopement of the lover and his condescending lady, without parents' knowledge, making a startled mother wake up, and realize the disaster. The friend of the girl, who abets the elopement, joins the mother in her grief.

My finely-jewelled girl—nourished by me since infancy, through breast-feeding and intake of jackfruit, banana, mango, and millet mixed with honey—remained under my shadow till attaining puberty, but eloped with an abject novice like cotton popping out of its seed flying away. Friend, shouldn't we consult the auguries and omens for the wellbeing of the one who left me (though I protected her like a couch shell) and the one who led her away from me? Shouldn't we seek divine soothsaying? Shouldn't we take vows to the *mullai's* presiding deity Kaṇṇaṉ? Wonder what might happen to them on the way! Wonder what might be their condition right now! Wonder what sort of problems might await them in the future!

Thus, instead of getting furious with the eloped lovers, the kind-hearted mother is murmuring her concern that they should not be haunted by any evil, whomso-ever she has gone with:

As the heroine goes on elopement with the hero,
The utterances appropriate to her mother are:
She would pour out her anguished concern
To the confidante and to those who had seen the lovers on the way;
She would speak
Referring to predictions unsought and divinations and prognostications,
Weighing the good and the bad that might befall the lovers,
Expressing apprehensions about the path they trod
And about the help that might come their way,
Reflecting on the past, the now and the future of her daughter.

(*Poruḷatikāram* : *Akattiṇai iyal,* verse 36).

Blossom 26

Great is the Aid of the Confidante

Poruḷatikāram codifies the responsibilities of the heroine's confidante, when the hero prepares himself to take leave of the heroine. "How is it fair on your part to start off for attaining either a personal or social goal leaving your lady alone? Just as fish cannot live without water, it is illogical to think that she would live without you. You better take her also with you", requests the confidante.

In the meantime, she tries to console and get ready the heroine, who sheds tears for departing from her near and dear relatives. But, all of a sudden the friend has a doubt.

Even though he seems to love her truly, on that eventful day, in the garden of the Kaṇṇaṉ temple he fetched a seemingly inaccessible fruit for another damsel and smiled meaningfully at her, directing an equally mischievous question, "I have got that fruit. Would I get these fruits?" Shouldn't she recognize his true colours from his appearance of being an embodiment of truth and falsehood? Thus ponders the friend. But there comes a change of heart.

While thinking about the lover and the heroine's mother, the friend is reminded of the Kaṇṇaṉ temple incident. But she has to focus upon the plight of a disconsolate, grief-stricken, pining heroine. She tries to cheer her lady up with the pep talk of her lover, but then that attempt proves futile. As she retorts,

"Shall I get roasted in the embers of loneliness like a *pacalai* (also meaning pale yellow spot supposed to appear on the body of a woman due to lovesickness) creeper?" She seems to be under the embers even while asking. The friend comes forward to console and encourage the lady to accompany her lover. The friend's deeds of thoughtful intercession between the hero and the heroine and her words of reasoning with the heroine's foster mother are worth admiration:

Perceived rightly,
The contexts that mark the utterances of the confidante
Who abides in heart-like intimacy with the heroine are:
Bringing home to the hero
The distress and despondency
That might befall the heroine
Were he to go leaving her languishing at home;
Entreating the hero to take to elopement with the heroine;
Leaving the heroine in his hands
As he consents to elopement;
Reflecting on the distress of her kin
As the heroine leaves them on elopement;
Bringing home to the hero the delusive nature of his conduct;
Consoling the heroine's mother
Who stays distressed at her daughter's elopement;
Uttering words of comfort to the heroine
Who remains distraught in solitude
By recalling the hero's words of assurance;
And such situations as these.

(*Poruḷatikāram* : *Akattiṇai iyal,* verse 39).

Blossom 27

Joy in Adversity

The hero elopes with the heroine, bound by the spell of love. Their journey extends from the sylvan tract through the arid wastes. This is a scene from *Kalittokai*, seen in the backdrop of *Tolkāppiyam.*

In the early morning, being parted from the mother, she accompanies her lover by holding his hand. She comes across deer and rabbit frolicking among *koṉṟai, kāyā* and *kuruntam* trees. Blossoms of *mullai, kullai* and *paṭavam* are spreading fragrance all around. The peasants rush to sow common millets like *cāmai* and *varaku.* She beholds all the scenes while continuing the journey.

Since the dawn replaces early morning darkness, they can no longer remain hidden from others. The twinkling stars scattered profusely on the sky gravitate us to see them. Even among those innumerable stars, don't we view the moon first? This most beautiful damsel is that moon! She is like a statue in beauty! She moves like an exquisite art! When she goes along with her lover equally matching in charm and valour, nobody could miss an opportunity to admire that perfect pair.

When they travel a long distance in the desert land, they are trailed by the foster mother, anxious to trace them. In that land, where are seen emaciated elephants and wolves moving around and parched ponds and wells, the foster mother travels listening to the music of the *paṟai* (a percussion instrument) and the *yāḻ* (a stringed musical instrument) even while she eagerly enquires about her daughter and her lover.

"Mother, why are you treading the fearsome path looking for them? We saw both of them. 'Our village is nearby, you can take a sojourn in our place'. As we

said thus, they stayed with us for a while and resumed their journey towards a far-off village." Though the news conveyed by the residents of that hamlet tastes like honey, her daughter's separation stings her like a scorpion.

"Mother, we could appreciate your position. Being a mother, you are delighted to hear about their wellbeing; so it is only fitting on your part to facilitate their marriage and thereby be more happy". Thus saying they try to restrain the mother:

The patterns of utterance
Enjoined on those
Who meet on the way
The lovers in elopement are:
Warning the hero and heroine on elopement
Against the perilous nature of their journey
At such a time and along such a tract
As would be wrought with fright;
Telling them through words of kindness and concern
To stay in the village nearby
Since their destination stands removed afar;
Exhorting the couple united in love
Through words of compassion
Against the course of deed they took to;
Forbidding the foster-mother to pursue the lovers
As she has set out in search of them;
Guiding the foster-mother's pursuit of the lovers;
Speaking of the long distance the lovers traversed,
And speaking of the return of the lovers,
So goes the norm of utterance types in *Akam* poetry.

(*Poruḷatikāram* : *Akattiṇai iyal*, verse 40).

"Is it a far-off place? Doesn't matter. I will retrieve my daughter by treading the turbulent path, however difficult the journey might be". The mother vows and starts off.

Isn't it a mother's heart? It would naturally be tumultuous. Though she has learnt of her daughter's wellbeing, she desires that the girl should stay in her parental protection. Otherwise, the efforts to nourish her so long would vanish into the thin air. So saying, the frustrated mother runs towards the direction where

the lovers are supposed to have gone.

The sun is scorching. On the way, she is encountered by some sage men treading the desert path. She discloses her predicament to them. "Have you seen my daughter along with a broad-shouldered man?" so saying she trembles in anxiety.

"We did see them, mother. The flag of love flies aloft in their hearts. Don't think of cutting it off, mother."

"What are you saying? When her own mother and me, her foster-mother, are grieving thus, is it proper for you to support the girl who has gone away to our grief?"

"Mother, listen! Though sweet-smelling sandal sprouts and grows in the mountain, it doesn't belong to the mountain. It is meant for applying on the body. Being born in water, can the pearl remain wedded to the water? It will add to the beauty of the one who wears it. The music emanating from the *yāḻ* gives pleasure not to the *yāḻ* but to the auditors or the one who plays it. Mother, your daughter is like sandal born from the mountain, pearl born from the sea, music from the *yāḻ*. Therefore, it is best for her to be with her loved man." Here is that *Kalittokai* poem:

Not unseen by us they were,
We did see them tread this torrid path;
You seem to be the mother of that maid
Decked in grace with resplendent ornaments,
Who this desert path braved
With a youth of quintessential bearing.

On reflection we see that
Your daughter is to you
What the fragrant sandal mixed with myriad things
Is to the mountain where it's born;
It's beneficial to those only who apply it on them.

On pondering it we find that
Your daughter is to you
What the choice white pearl is to the ocean
Where it's born;
It serves those only who wear it on them.

Weighing it right we find that

Your daughter is to you
What the enchanting melody,
The seven strings in unison issue,
Is to the *yāḻ* where it's conceived;
It's beneficial to the songsters only.

The lover and his love after surmounting the difficult problems settle down in life. Realizing that they were leading a virtuous life, the foster-mother abandoned her search. It is natural that she would visit them, stay with them and attain heartfelt pleasure. Such would be the collective essence of *Tolkāppiyam Poruḷatikāram* and *Kalittokai*.

Blossom 28

The Call of Duty and the Predicament of the Hero

There might be many reasons for men to leave women. Separation means unbearable anxiety for women. The man takes much pains to console his woman and take leave of her. Separation is inevitable for men. They must go to train in warfare or to acquire knowledge for enriching their minds. If trained in these skills, separation happens on account of protection of the state leaving behind the object of one's love.

The woman doesn't take the parting for good, though her loneliness is rather short. Since both of them live so intimately as not to let a thread to pass through their embrace, she regards each day of separation as a sword chopping her heart.

Even though he parts only to learn Tamil literature and grammar and receive training in warfare after explaining the benefits of his activities to the home and the country, she bids adieu only after shedding copious tears, waterfall like.

If the hero happens to be a king bound by the responsibilities of the state such as aiding a friendly ruler, or if he goes on an ambassadorial mission, he has to be valorous or wise as the occasion demands.

He measures his own strength, his army's strength, and ally's strength, while the superiority of his foe in foot-soldiers,cavalry, and elephant force also does not escape his thoughts. In spite of all these reflections flashing across his mind, and in spite of his resolution to encounter the odds and triumph over them, he marches ahead only after seeking farewell from his darling. Since it involves the responsibility of protecting the country, the lady bids farewell wishing him victory, though her eyes shed tears like the Ganga and the Cauvery.

In the warfield, caught like a tiger in the midst of elephants, he comes unscathed due to strength of determination.

The war still persists, and the hero demonstrates that he is second to none. Then, at night, in the war-camp, his fair lady disturbs him in the dream. Since even the act of pining for her in dreams would dampen his heroic vigour, he avoids it.

The war ends, with the hoisting of the flag of victory. He hastens the chariot driver. "The sweet lady of mine would be waiting; her passionate kisses would heal my injuries. Go fast", he says. "Horses, may God bless you to run like a storm and convey me to my wife", he requests from the core of his heart.

On the way, occasionally, on encountering a prostitute he makes merry. Since this news would reach the ears of his love waiting at home, it would lead to sulking.

He should resolve that sulking also and row the boat of marital life in the river of happiness. The poetic hero has many such responsibilities and duties, and predicaments as well:

As he intends going after mind's enrichment and physical prowess
And the rewards attendant therein;
As he dilates to the heroine
Upon the abiding note such quests yield,
And upon the ignominy keeping off these quests would result in;
As he responds to the calling of being a royal emissary;
As he takes to aiding an ally in need;
As he sets out to take on hostile foemen
Who pride over their might, the might of their allies and the difficulty of invading their forts
And over the secured unapproachability of their fortresses;
And as he remains in a war-camp away from his love;
As he,
Returning after the task accomplished,

Addresses his charioteer urging him to make it swift;
As he parts from his love
For purpose of security and protection of the state;
And,
As he importunes her
After his return from prostitutes
And seeks resolution of her sulking.

(*Poruḷatikāram* : *Akattiṇai iyal,* verse 41)

Blossom 29

A Virtuous Woman's Lamentation

Tolkāppiyam unfolds the rose of a poetic device called 'implied simile'. The reason why it is called a rose is that it is a rose among thorns and is a literature of a grammatical concept.

To draw parallels between two things is known as a simile. The implied simile suggests things rather than explicitly compares them.

A *Marutakkali* poem provides a fine illustration of this mode of simile where it looks like providing a relish of a spectacle in nature that forms part of a village:

O the lord of the virtuous land with fountains abounding,
Where
The beetle drones about the blue water-lily,
Which the vendors plucked
From the fields of copious waters
And are carrying to town;
Once in town,
The beetle moves off

To feast on the fragrant juice
From the temples of the elephant grand and stately;
Come the hour of the eve,
It seeks its craving appeased
By feeding on the scented jasmine opening up
On the honey-smelling tresses of women,
Who hold their loved ones in embrace,
So fast with their plump forearms
As to leave their men bruised by their bracelets;
The pain of hunger gone
The beetle goes oblivious
Taking off its mind for ever
From the blossoms of the pond
Which it feasted on ere in passion.

While bringing the blue water lily flowers for sale from a field filled with an abundance of water, the bees also accompany, swarming around the flowers. These bees happen to taste the juice of the rutting elephant on the way. The bees, indulging in drinking the fluid during the day resort to enjoying *mullai* flowers at night. Later, without even thinking about any other flower, they tend to forget their abode, which is a beautiful pond filled with water.

Since blue water lily flowers, bees, elephant's juice, *mullai* flower and pond filled with flowers are there to see, this would seem like a verbal portrait of bees and flowers.

But in the context of the heroine's separation from the hero, there are subtle parallels between the hero and the bees, prostitutes and the rutting elephant's fluid, concubines and the *mullai* blossoms, and the pond and the home where the heroine suffers in loneliness.

There is no explicit comparison of such things by the heroine. It is the evocation of this spectacle in nature by which the heroine bares out her hurt.

And the following *Tolkāppiyam* verse provides the grammar of the *Kali* poem above:

The suggestive simile is one
Where
The tenor comes revealing
As it draws implicitly on the vehicle described.

(*Poruḷatikāram* : *Akattiṇai iyal*, verse 48).

Blossom 30

The Heroine of the Agricultural Tract

There is the fourfold division of land, along with a fifth, viz., the arid tract, a forced addition though it seems. Each type of land has a specified presiding deity right from the era of *Tolkāppiyam*. The agricultural land's presiding deity ,Vēntaṉ, that was in vogue from the days of Tolkāppiyar was incidentally transformed into *Indiraṉ* after a few hundred years, owing to the onslaught of other cultures.

Be that as it may, the *kaikkiḷai* (unrequited love) theme of *Akam* love, though unknown today for its grammatical significance, makes its presence felt in day-to-day life. That has been picturised as a dramatic scene here:

The inhabitants of the agricultural tract celebrate the festival of *Indiraṉ*. Decked in lotus and water lily flowers, people gather under the shade of the groves of *kāñci, marutam* and *vañci* trees, play *marutam* melody on their *marutam* lutes, take bath in the freshets and enjoy themselves. A drama stage comes into existence and *the Cākuntalam* play is enacted.

Lo and behold! King Dushyandhan and the sage's daughter *Cakuntalai* meet by a wild stream in the forest.

"Cakuntala, this memorable meeting is the foundation of our immortal love."

"You are the king, here in the forest for hunting.

You took me for a deer and hunted me. How could an ascetic's hut bank upon palace's word of treating this meeting as love's base?"

"I have encountered a number of animals while hunting. But I feel that you and the love induced by you have become a fetter to me. Now I won't move even a foot towards the palace."

"No. Don't relinquish your duties towards the country. And don't wash your hands off this forest flower either."

"You are certainly not an emerald flower; instead, you are the flower of my life. Yes, you are the essence of my life!"

"Hope you won't forget me!"

"Forget? How can I forget this embodiment of beauty? Here, have my signet ring as a symbol of my love unforgettable."

Dushyandhan puts his signet ring on *Cakuntalai's* finger and kisses.

(During the break, they both come to the dressing room for change of make-up).

The artiste playing Dushyandhan approaches the actress taking *Cakuntalai's* role and speaks to her, "What Tāmarai! I planted a sizzling kiss on your fingers, while putting on the ring. How did it taste?" he bared his teeth and smiled.

"In the drama only, I was Cakuntalai! You were Dushyandhan!"

"Why can't we remain so in real life?"

"Kindly watch your manners. What is your age? And what is mine?"

"I am a well-built young man and you are a bud today! But the bud would soon become a flower, dear girl, provided you fall for a man like me."

"Don't nurse unrealistic dreams. Go away."

"The next scene in the play would be my forgetting you."

"That scene appears, only after the signet ring is lost."

"Before the ring gets lost, what about embracing you and planting a kiss?"

"Let that ring be lost right now."

So saying, she throws away the signet ring in the dressing room itself. She walks off in a huff and disrobes her ascetic guise, even while going outside."

"Oh girl! The signet ring should be swallowed by the fish. Isn't that the real story of the play?"

"Before that, you might gobble me!"

"I am the tank most suitable for a lotus like you to float on."

He grabs her and pulls her towards him. But in a defiant fury, she pushes him aside and makes good her escape. Dushyandhan of the drama stands stupefied relishing even her anger.

This one-sided love is what is called *kaikkiḷai.*

* * *

The defining features of unrequited love conduct (*kaikkiḷai*) are:

One falls in for a lass
With the passion of sex unformed yet
And yet,
One turns incurably afflicted;
One enters into conversation with that lass
Which alternates between praise and dispraise;
No reciprocity on her part marked though,
One persists indulgently in one's address.

(*Poruḷatikāram* : *Akattiṇai iyal,* verse 50).

Blossom 31
Peruntiṇai

Maṭalēṟutal, the public practice of men riding on the horse made of dried palmyra leaves that cause bruises all over the body with blood oozing, by which to compel the parents of the girl to give her in marriage to him; Men and women in the evening of their life, being filled with abnormal desire to enjoy union, which assails them like a poniard;

The extreme of carnal desire remaining unbridled like a truant child, in spite of all attempts to restrain it; and

The violent pursuit of passion that surges up like a turbulent sea -

All these four are acts of *peruntiṇai* (abnormal sexual passion) and they are not totally alien to those of *kaikkiḷai.*

The practice of riding on the palmyra horse is not confined to the front of the house of the hero. In fact, the man comes to the street and all through the village. This act would persist until the parents of the heroine consent to hand the girl to him. Where it does not happen, the man would threaten to give up his life.

Once the man and woman are sapped of youth, they should contemplate activities to be undertaken for the welfare of the society and the future generation. They should continue their service to humanity by realizing that sex is not an end in itself, taking the cue from the placement of the section on sexual love in *Tirukkuṟaḷ* where Tiruvaḷḷuvar implies that sex must end at a point in life, and should not persist as an end in life.

Owing to unbridled sexual desire and by giving vent to their carnal cravings, certain folks plunge into socially ostracized activities like murder and rape. They push themselves into these socially degrading deeds, without fully realizing their enormity.

The concept of *peruntiṇai* then is an invaluable treasure in so far as it serves as a warning against such deeds.

Tolkāppiyar has chosen to treat this concept as a thing to be excluded.

* * *

The four defining features of abnormal sexual passion (*peruntiṇai*) are:
Taking to riding of the horse made of palmyra stems;
Man and woman past their youth drawn to each other;
The passion of lust growing uncontained and out of proportion;
And excessive lust seeking gratification through forced union.

(*Poruḷatikāram* : *Akattiṇai iyal,* verse 51).

Blossom 32

Warriors who Protected Honour and Valour

The *Puṟattiṇai* chapter in *Tolkāppiyam* speaks of seven thematic situations (*tiṇais*) of *Puṟam* corresponding to the seven *Akam* situations. They are

1. *Veṭci* (counterpart of *kuṟiñci*) is the seizure of the cattle of an enemy king in secret by the vassals or officers of his rival (and taking the animals under the latter's protection), an act provoking war in ancient times. The counter-attack in the form of fighting and recovery of the seized cattle by the enemy king's men is also part of this *tiṇai*.
2. *Vañci* (counterpart of *mullai*) is the march of one king with his forces against another, causing fear to the subjects of the kingdoms; it is motivated by the ambition of seizing territory through conquest.
3. *Uḻiñai* (counterpart of *marutam*) is the siege by an attacking king of a fort, along with its defence by the king remaining within.
4. *Tumpai* (counterpart of *neytal*) is the heroic attack of the invading king met with equally heroic resistance in battle by the defending king. The focus here is on deeds of exceptional valour and heroism in battle performed by

warriors of either side in an attack; the *tumpai* situation can occur with other situations involving fighting. e.g. *veṭcippuṟattumpai*, dealing with exploits of bravery in cattle seizure preliminary to war.

5. *Vākai* (counterpart of *pālai*) is the excellence achieved by different social orders as well as sages and ascetics-in-penance, performing their functions by themselves and in complementation or confrontation with others.
6. *Kāñci* (counterpart of *peruntiṇai*) treats of the instability of human life, youth, wealth, etc.
7. *Pāṭāṇ* (counterpart of *kaikkiḷai*) speaks the praises of a male patron (*āṇ*) by a suppliant poet seeking the former's benefaction.

Veṭci is
Men at the border-posts,
Charged by their ruler,
Capturing the cows of the hostile king by stealth
And keeping them right under guard.
(*Poruḷatikāram : Puṟattiṇai iyal*, verse 2)

Coming to *veṭci* situation, there are fourteen types of activities (called sub-situations (*tuṟais*)) attendant on it. These activities in their order of occurrence are enumerated in *Tolkāppiyam* as under:

The fourteen substrands of the *veṭci* theme are:
The clamour
That marks the army's movement to lift the foeman's cows;
The utterances of townsfolk around
Coming for good omens for the marching men;
The men's march
Being unknown to the foeman's spies
That infiltrate into their midst;
The marching men's spying
Unnoticed by the foeman;
Lying in wait for the moment opportune to lift the cows
Encircling the foemen's positions spied right;
Slaying of foemen that offer resistance;
Capturing the cows therein;
Putting to rout the foemen in pursuit;
Being back home

With no affliction to the cattle captured;
Home that they are
To witness cheer and accolade;
Securing the herds of cows at home;
The cows captured being shared;
Revelry marking the victorious seizure of cows
And gifting away of cows to others too.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Puṟattiṇai iyal,* verse 3)

What is important here is not the victory or the defeat of one king or the other, but the acts of prowess and courage and honour displayed by the warriors of both sides. Here is a poetic illustration of Tolkāppiyar's exposition in a *Puṟanāṉūṟu* poem (269) by Avvaiyār:

> Wearing a garland of wild jasmine full of seeds and a few blossoms and buds as sharp-tipped as a *kuyil's* beak resplendently bedecking our thick black hair, you drank once, and again, of liquor as amber as a tiger's eyes poured out in a new cup, and then because a *tuṭi* drummer wearing a chaplet of dried leaves and drumming the call to battle on his drum had come, you refused to praise and accept the filtered, intoxicating toddy they then offered you, but instead took up this sword, they say, into your powerful hand and with it, after tracking bowmen who had seized the many long lines of cattle in combat where the warriors wore fragrant basil, you cut down those enemies while the red vultures screeched, sailing on their curving wings!

Blossom 33

He Who has Turned a Hero-stone

The wars waged by the ancient Tamils to either capture the cows or to retrieve the cows were fought with codes of conduct. From which direction is he throwing the spear or for that matter, from which direction is he shooting the arrows? In the event of the warrors confronting each other in the warfield, what was the method employed to distinguish between our men and the enemy?

Wearing of palmyra, morgosa and mountain ebony,
The [totemic] flowers of towering note,
That mark identity and distinctiveness
Among soldiers who make the massive armies
Which the great monarchs of burning hostility commanded.

To distinguish between the enemy and one's own soldiers, during face-to-face confrontation, the soldiers were made to wear the garlands of male palmyra tree, neem tree and common mountain ebony tree.

* * *

Rout of foemen in a fierce battle;
Recovery of the cows captured;

Singing the praises of the monarch of lasting note;
The warrior taking lofty vows
On account of his exceeding prowess in war;
Apart from these
Which the *karantai* theme characterizes,
The others proper to *veṭci* are:
The twofold *piḷḷainilai* of
Resisting the vanguard of the opposing army
And being felled by the enemy's sword;
The people rejoicing at the valour of the warrior
Who withstood the strike of the enemy's sword,
To the accompaniment of drum-beat,
And bestowing the land on him;
The choice of the proper stone
For erecting the memorial of the fallen warrior;
Commencing the sculpturing of the dead warrior's image;
Giving the stone a ceremonial bathing;
Erecting the stone thus sculptured;
Bestowing honours right in accord with tradition;
And praise and worship extended to the stone.

(*Poruḷatikāram* : *Puṟattiṇai iyal,* verse 5)

What follows is an imaginative illustration of this *Tolkāppiyam* exposition:

They made the enemy run for cover showing their back. The cows captured by the *veṭci* soliders were retrieved. They trumpeted and hailed their king for his deft strategy which fed valour and strength, culminating in a glorious victory.

The *veṭci* soldiers boasted that cows captured by them could not be retrieved, just as milk - the food from the udder of cows - cannot be restored to the cows.

But our king shattered all the tall claims of these warriors. Thus they hailed their king and sang hosannas about him. In the meantime, the prince in the prime of his youth thundered, "O king, issue your command! In order to sing accolades of our victory not merely confining to retrieval of the cows but for the act of capturing the entire lot of enemy's land, issue command unto me. I would shatter the strong fort of the enemy and ruin the front ranks of the army, which guard that land. I will make the enemy subservient to us, through the might of my sword. I salute and await your orders, with a vow to accomplish this task. You nourished

me affectionately during my childhood days. Now, I am a grown-up man, how can you be afraid of issuing orders?" He spoke in a voice, which sounded like an explosion.

"I am proud of parenting a brave son. My arms swell up in excitement, to see you stand seeking permission, with a sword in your hand. My heart quivers in excitement. Yes, proceed towards the fort. Annihilate all the wings of foe's army, be it the front rank, cavalry, infantry or the elephant wing. You have obtained the permission, dear prince. March on!"

After getting the king's permission, the elite wing of the army raised the war cry "Victory is ours" and marched forward to the beating of the drums.

The doors of the fort got shattered! The flag pole fell down! With nobody left to save the country, the nation of *veṭci* men became a virtual hunted ground for the *karantai* warriors. "We are unparalleled" was the song on the lips of the *karantai* soldiers.

The prince raised the sword, which fetched victory to him and his army and entered the fort riding his horse. At the time of entry, a spear flying from nowhere pierced through his chest.

He held the fatal spear and breathed his last, but not before accounting for ten to twenty heads of the enemy soldiers.

"Dear son! You declined the golden crown and rather chose the aura of fame through bravery," a visibly perturbed king kissed his forehead. The soldiers, unable to celebrate their victory fully, erected a hero-stone for the immortal prince in tune with the practice of raising hero-stones in memory of the warriors dying undaunted in the field of battle.

Blossom 34

Outsmarting the Smartest

Even while ruling over the entire land, people would go for reigning supreme over the water. After possessing the land and the water, they would like to venture for the sky and capture that also. The bees swarming around over the honeycomb would fly up and above and think the land and the sky are well within their reach. It is no wonder then that a chieftain no longer remains content with being under the overlordship of a king. Further, the coveted fame of possessor of many a fortress also gets satiating. When the land comes, he retorts, "You alone? Let the sea also assemble here to obey my orders!' If that improbable also happens, then he desires for the eastern sky of the morning and of the western sky of the dusk to extend a red carpet welcome to him!

Tolkāppiyam's vañcittiṇai focuses upon such persons of overvaulting ambitions. Further, to extend the boundaries of their kingdoms, they desire large tracts of land and consequently invade the neighbouring countries. It then also happens that the invaded stand up in prowess and humble the aggressor.

It (*veṭci*) is
The vanquishing of a king
Marked by uncontained hunger for other's soil,
By another king
Through a frightful display of prowess.

(*Poruḷatikāram* : *Puṟattiṇai iyal*, verse 7)

The columns of opposing soldiers appear like the winged ants from grooves to make one wonder: Is the country too small for the army? Or is the army too large for the country? They march on as if they are unbridled horses, and with eyes burning like tigers'. "Let fire engulf the way we pass through! Let it spread in all directions! And let it reduce the flower garden-like fields to ashes."

They say, "Our king has earned undeclining fame by his valour". They praise the king of their country for his chivalry of liberally donating the prize articles in the form of battle-arms. The soldiers compose songs and sing them to the accompaniment of stringed instruments. "Victory greets our king in all the places, whereas other kings are doomed to destruction." They would even say it was their king who added lustrous embellishment to the word 'victory' itself. So go their unabashed hyperboles of flatteries.

Like the mighty dam, which stops the overflowing waters of a river threatening to breech the banks, due to unabated rain marking the peak of the rainy season, there is also the one who singlehandedly defends his land against the aggression of the seemingly never-ending columns of invading army, out to conquer the land. He shatters their overvaulting avarice and leaves them dejected. The conqueror is at the same time not bloated over the ruin of the vanquished. He believes in the cultured doctrine of civility that it is always better to regard victory and defeat in the same manner. Therefore, he provides aid and food to those injured in the war. He exempts the vanquished from paying tribute and stands with no desire to seek vengeance. He remains tall as an epitome of marvellous fame.

The greedy king, who sought to invade, beats a hasty retreat to his country by declaring that he doesn't need an enlarged kingdom, instead whatever he is left with is good enough.

* * *

The *vañci puṟam* theme
Ramifies into thirteen substrands of worthy note:
The clamour that marks the army's march;
Setting the foemen's land on fire;
The radiant glory that attends the feats of prowess;
The acts of liberality extended by the monarch;
The acts of valour
With which the enemy is charged at close quarters
And is sent to his doom;
The boast of the warriors
As recipients of the ruler's gifts and honours;

The dauntless daring of foemen as if they were a trifle;
Holding in single-handedly
The advance of the hostile forces
As does a rocky dam
That contains surging floods;
The king gives a grand feast
To his warriors on the eve of battle;
The pervasive radiant note of fame
That attends the victorious king;
The decline and debility
That go with the vanquished;
The inexhaustible prowess of the king in war
And the great prosperity that it brings
Praised in the pestle song;
And the king tending and embracing his warriors
Wounded through acts of valour in battle.

(*Poruḷatikāram* : *Puṟattiṇai iyal,* verse 8)

Blossom 35

That Golden Era

In the Hindu temples, the presiding deity has two statues - *mūlavar*, the stone statue fixed inside sanctum sanctorum and *uṟcavar*, the statue made of five types of metals. Of them, *mūlavar* is worshipped in the place of its location, whereas *uṟcavar* is taken in procession outside the temple, as the representative of *mūlavar* during festivals.

This practice is seen observed in all the temples of Tamiḻnāṭu. But the exceptions are the six temples at Tiruvārūr and the adjoining Tirukkuvaḷai, Tirukkōpuravāsal, Tirumaṟaikkāṭu, Tirunākai and Tiruvāymūr, where the *mūlavar* and *uṟcavar* statues are not made of stone and metal respectively, and they look alike. The same *Tiyākarāja* statue is fixed in the sanctum sanctorum and taken in procession also. It is also used in chariot processions. In these shrines, the procession deity has a more pronounced honour of worship.

The devotees and priests carry the statue on their shoulders every year on auspicious days to mark the advent of the festival. They place it on a chariot and celebrate festivals drawing the chariots. At the culmination of the festivals, the statue is reinstated inside the temple.

In the *uḻiñai* situation of *puṟam* poetry, *Tolkāppiyam Poruḷatikāram* speaks of a similar honour accorded by kings to their victorious swords.

The *uḻiñai puṟam* situation deals with the siege of an enemy fort by a king and the defence of the fort by the king remaining within. The siege is resorted to when the authority of the attacking king is defied by the other.

Both the kings at the start of the war place their swords under the decorated canopy at an auspicious hour and take them in procession.

The soldiers defending the fort from inside and the ones attacking it from outside wage a fierce war against each other, either standing on or climbing over the ladders made of wooden planks which are placed on the fort walls.

The spectacle of the soldiers inside and outside the fort fighting each other and retreating resembles the joining and moving away of the parasitic plant in the moat around the fort wall due to the strong winds or the vibration caused by the deed of war.

The battle extends to many parts of the town too.

Not completely relying upon the soldiers from both the sides and in order to demonstrate the steely resolve of their hearts, the warring kings fight on the wall of the fort themselves, without ever worrying about their lives.

After all, the garland of victory is meant for only one of them! Before the defeat could stare large on his face, a king saves his dignity by embracing death.

The purificatory ceremonies are performed for the sword of the victor king, as it is deemed to be responsible for his triumph.

It was the ethos of those days to hold aloft the white canopy over the sword and thereby pay obeisance to the sword, which sealed victory in the war by being the deity in the santorum and the procession deity. Yes, it was the era which recognized and honoured valour. In spite of being an era of wars, it certainly was the golden epoch hailing the greatness of the Tamil race, in that the victor king was being honoured with coronation in the name of the deceased king. Is not this a mark of magnanimity of our ancestors? Look at the *Tolkāppiyam* verse:

Uḻiñai marks twelve other substrands too:
Sending of the royal parasol and sword at an auspicious hour
Preceding the siege of the foe intended;
The raging fight of the soldiers
As they stand on ladders fitted to the fort;
The fierce, resolute battle
Intended to end the siege outside the fortress;
The mighty defence offered by the besieged within;
Breach of the defence by the besieging men;
Action in the moat of the fortress;
Carrying the battle thereon

Into the town of the besieged;
Triumphant scaling of the fort within;
The ceremonial bath of the victorious king
And his taking the crown of the vanquished;
The ceremonial bath of the sword of the victor;
And the absolute surrender of the vanquished.

(*Poruḷatikāram* : *Puṟattiṇai iyal,* verse 13)

Blossom 36

Persistence in War like an Unyielding Buffalo

The spectacle of the *tumpai puram* situation of a king taking on the enemy king of undaunted prowess and determination and putting him to rout is one of the finest examples of ancient Tamils' valour capable of moving even the stony hearts.

In the battle arena, where the two kings cross swords, the enemy soldiers, afraid of going near a fighter, aim spears and bows at him from a safe distance.

The warrior, carrying a sword and a shield, fights with all his might. His sword chops off many a number of enemies, but gets blunted after brushing against a stone. His shield also develops chinks and he offers his body as a shield to take on the innumerable spears and arrows shot at him. Alas! In the end, a sword shining like lightning powers its way towards him and in the same lightning speed rips apart his head from the body. But the severed parts of his

body do not fall on the ground immediately; instead, his head, body, legs and hands keep moving and quivering.

* * *

It is in particular
The theme of undoing the might of an invading monarch
Burning with an overweening pride in his prowess.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Puṟattiṇai iyal*, verse 15)

The life of the warrior in action departing,
With his body having been pierced thick and fast
By the rain of arrows and spears of foemen,
There is the wondrous spectacle of the man in two pieces -
The body standing erect without falling on the ground
In the manner of the leech cut into parts staying alive.

(*Poruḷatikāram* : *Puṟattiṇai iyal*, verse 16)

Men on foot, elephants and cavalry march on to the field, sending shivers down the spine of the enemy. The drums are played on both the sides to herald the start of the war. One of them sounds like the thunder of the summer season, while the other sounds like the storm, crossing through the sea, causing a great upheaval.

The swords blaze through the warfield; the spears are launched from the mighty hands. The arrows, ripping through the air, pierce the stomach of a few lethargic men, announcing that a timid person has no place in the field of war. A few exceptional instances surface in which cowards, whose bodies shiver like strings of a musical instrument, running through in fear are identified and sidelined.

A soldier fighting at a distance witnesses his king, dear to him like his own life, hemmed in by enemy soldiers and commanders like columns of fish. "What, is my king in danger?" he reacts with blood-shot eyes and with hands clutching on to his weapon, he pounces there, much like an injured tiger or rather like a stamped snake.

On both the sides, soldiers form protective rings around their kings and safeguard them. The army commander moves around the columns of his army. In the event of any unexpected setback, he remains unfazed quite like a buffalo, only to single-handedly take on the might of the formidable army of the foe. The buffalo can bear anything. It is given such an honour in *puṟam* literature.

The enemy king is seen fighting a surging elephant and ultimately getting

killed by being trampled by it.

In the end, when both the kings perish in the war, one of the soldiers rises up in rage on seeing the death of his king. He wrecks vengeance upon the enemy rank by killing a number of soldiers.

In a precarious condition, wherein it could not be categorically established as to who finally won, this verse stands out eulogizing an individual soldier who beheads innumerable enemy soldiers to get even for his king's death. Look at the following *Tolkāppiyam* verse:

The theme of *tumpai*
Ramifies into twelve substrands:
The three columns of infantry, elephantry and cavalry
That strike terror among the foemen;
The deed of mettle by a warrior
That leaves his charge aside
And puts the enemy soldiers to rout
Who come to surround his king
As he keeps daring them with his spear;
The chiefs of the two contending monarchs
Falling to death in personal combat
Besides their prop for their rulers in action;
The daring of an army chief
That comes up braving the odds like a buffalo
To stand at the head of the rear of his army
As it tends to retreat in disarray;
The grit of a warrior in action
Though he stands disarmed of his weapons;
The death of the warriors
That braved the charging elephants;
The clamour of singing and dancing
Of the warriors of the victorious king
Who felled his enemy king to death along with his elephant;
The annihilation of the two contending monarchs
Along with their kindred folk in deed
In their bloody conflict with swords;

The famed act of a warrior
Who finds his king felled in action
And rises in ire uncontained to fight the foe
And the feat exceptional of the warrior
That sends columns of enemy's army into disarray
And goes about waving his brilliant winning sword.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Puṟattiṇai iyal,* verse 19)

Blossom 37

The Concept of Victory

We can achieve victory by either vying with others or by striving on our own. *Vākai* does not refer only to the victory achieved in war. In fact, it is the attaining of a lofty goal in life through virtuous means.

Tolkāppiyam, Poruḷatikāram explains the classifications of *vākai* as well as its defining traits and its grammar.

That verse in question begins thus, "The sixfold occupations of the brahmins." After reading it, one might feel like wondering, "What exactly is this Brahmin occupation? How on earth did brahmins appear in *Tolkāppiyam*?"

They had indeed arrived but their arrival was portended in *Collatikāram* itself. Somehow, the Tamiḻs had lost sight of the fact that the sound of the bell would signal the advent of the elephant.

In the cultivated fields weeds grow along with crop unannounced. *Tolkāppiyam* touches upon that in the verse below:

Vaṭacol comprises words (borrowed from Sanskrit)
That steer clear of the system of sounds in Sanskrit
And that come to be adapted to the native form and sound.

(*Collatikāram*: *Ecca iyal*, verse 5)

How many years ago was the door kept open for this phenomenon?

Researchers fix *Tolkāppiyam* to the seventh century B.C. That is, approximately 2500 years ago, Sanskrit smelt the favoured environment and the way was paved for the entry of the Aryans into the Tamiḻ land.

This verse in *vākaittiṇai* attests to their entrenchment.

The seven modes of vocations
Which the theme of *vākai* celebrates are:
The sixfold occupations of the brahmins
[Learning, instruction, performing sacrifices,
Making others perform sacrifices,
Munificence and being beneficiaries of munificence];
The fivefold occupations of the kings
[Learning, performing sacrifices, munificence,
Protecting the country and administering justice];
The sixfold occupations of the other [tradesmen and cultivating] classes
[Learning, farming, trading, rearing cattle,
Forms of worship and acts of liberality];
The calling of sages and astrologers -
The flawless reading of planetary movements
In relation to their effects on the past, present and future –
The eightfold functions of ascetics
[Bathing, lying on the bare ground,
Wearing leather covering, consecrated fire worship,
Keeping away from habitations of people,
Keeping undressed hair,
Eating forest produce and worshipping god];
The demarcated skills of excellence of the warrior class;
And the myriad callings other than the above
[Such as music, drama and singing].

(*Poruḷatikāram* : *Puṟattiṇai iyal,* verse 20)

The expression "so said the poets," clearly indicates the Aryan arrival, either during Tolkāppiyar's time, or even earlier. They had stamped their hold on our land and people, along with their codes of living which were alien to the Tamiḻ mores.

According to Tolkāppiyar, Brahmins had six duties - to chant *mantras* , make others chant *mantras* , conduct *homams*, make others conduct *homams*, to give and to accept gifts. The king's five cardinal duties were - to chant *mantras*, to conduct *homams*, to give gifts, to offer army's support to allies, and to protect the subjects. The traders and peasants had six duties - to chant *mantras*, to conduct *homams*, to give gifts, to cultivate, to trade and to maintain the livestock. To calculate and monitor the events of the three times, namely, the past, the present, and the future, was the duty of persons endowed with wisdom. The recluse had the duties of upholding eight types of discipline. While being aware of these duties, the army leaders' duty was to accomplish victory, not only through the might of sword or arms, but also through the means of these duties. Such a victory was supposed to be more enduring.

Though many of these duties underlined could uplift one's stature of life, the two duties of conducting *homams*, and making others follow the practice of conducting *homams* provided opportunities for the Brahmins and such people to resort to discrimination which was completely alien to the Tamiḻ land.

Vēṭṭal means to conduct *homams*, while *vēṭpittal* is to make others conduct *homams*.

The practice of offering sacrifice and conducting *homams* crept into the Tamiḻ land through the wiles of the Brahmins.

It took roots and branched out among the Tamiḻs thanks to the cleverness of the brahmins. Victory could be amassed through bravery which required waging wars and perseverance. Real victory in life and happiness could be achieved by getting involved in various virtuous deeds, even cutting across national boundaries. What then was the necessity for these unavailing practices of conducting *homams* and offering sacrifices? There would have been reservations and protests. But would the priestly class allow this to be given up?

If the subtle manipulation combined with versatile abilities worked, it was natural that even an emperor would be hypnotized in the meandering smoke of camphor.

Therefore, conducting *homams* and the practice of making others conduct *homams* started slowly but gained momentum of a forest flood and breached the banks.

Those who wielded arms like spear, sword, lance and trident and rode on horses and those who sang of the power of love and the breathlike passion for the motherland had to stoop before the fire pit of the *homam*, prostrate and remain in an hunched posture to drink the urine of cow, in keeping with the practice of conducting *homams*.

Even that great Cēraṉ Ceṅkuṭṭuvaṉ of *Cilappatikāram* who successfully led the Himalayan campaign and brought the stone for carving the statue of Kaṇṇaki on the heads of the northern kings Kaṉakaṉ and Vicayaṉ had to fall in line.

That renowned warrior was beaten squarely by the vedic rites and rituals.

The invasion followed by the bringing of stone for the Kaṇṇaki statue was over. Kaṉaka-Vicayar were also imprisoned. At that juncture, a person of the Aryan priestly class, Māṭala Maṟaiyōṉ, met the king and offered advice, which bore fruit. The kings of northern origin were set free. In keeping with the advice of the priest, the king made preparations for a *homam*. That work was entrusted to the army chief Villavaṉkōtai:

You, master of wisdom, listen to my words:
Vedic sacrifices prescribed for kings
You need to perform with priestly cooperation:
This will surely lead you to salvation,
That would gladden heavenly beings.
If you postpone it for tomorrow, who knows
For certain his last day? Supppose...."

Māṭalaṉ prayed for long life to the king,
His consort, and the brave king kneeling
Before him; he did sow thoughts of higher being
In the mind of Kuṭṭuvaṉ, the *Cēra* king.
The sowing resulted in abundant harvest;
The valiant king, eager to enjoy the best,
Engaged priests, who had studied the *vedas*,
And had all doubts cleared by their *gurus*,
To perform the sacrificial rites to conform
To the wise Māṭalaṉ's prescription.

He released the Aryan kings from prison,
And lodged them in Velavikkō mansion
Outside the city walls, and surrounded
By shady groves; he announced their freedom
To go home, after the sacrifices were concluded.
He instructed Villavaṉkōtai to show due courtesy to them.

In his elucidation of *Tolkāppiyam,* Nāvalar Cōmacuntara Pāratiyār categorically rejects the presence of caste-based classification of *Akattiṇai iyal* and *Puṟattiṇai iyal.*

The great scholar Veḷḷaivāraṇar subscribes to this view in his *Tolkāppiyam* studies and says: "The four types of caste observed in books of northern origin were unheard of among the ancient Tamiḻ people." This was his categorical averment. He adds, "The practice of classifying people on the basis of caste was never prevalent in the ancient Tamiḻ country. The categorization was only on the basis of the geographical regions they inhabited." Though these two learned academics claim so, it cannot be denied that the custom of classifying people on the basis of caste sneaked in either overtly or covertly and got established firmly.

In came castes to begin *homams* and sacrifices heralding the advent of the Brahmins in *vākaittiṇai* itself.

If one were to put it with a tinge of sadness, it would be rather more appropriate to describe *vākaittiṇai* as the '*tiṇai* of the Aryan advent'.

Blossom 38

The Light amidst the Darkness

Even as the Aryan culture had come to entrench itself on the Tamiḻ soil as a tiny wart on a lovely face though refusing to go off except through a surgery, the *Puṟam* theme of *vākai* reflects an admirable dimension of the native cultural mores of the ancient Tamiḻs.

Be it winter or summer, in war-camps there are the warriors and their generals closeted together working out the strategies of war and remaining ever alert for eventualities of martial campaigns.

The peasants who provide for others' sustenance through their labour get into joyous rapture on witnessing bumper crops.

The enemy routed by acts of valour, the king in ecstasy joins his soldiers in their *kuravai* dance.

Female dancers present a feast of dance by teaming up with the soldiers.

The great heroes, who offered to sacrifice their lives on the warfield where occasion warranted, are seen inundated in the shower of adulation.

The men of humanitarian propensities demonstrate their love even to their enemies.

The good samaritans teeming with virtues get recognition, as they are felicitated by the king in his court.

Those who claim to lead a fruitful life do so within the prescribed framework of discipline and stand out as the exemplars.

Departing from the way of reforming wrong-doers through punishments, they derive pleasure in reforming them by pardon.

They experience happiness by acts of munificence.

The renunciation is not just giving up the conjugal life of the householder. There are rulers of land renouncing their all and merging into the sea of humanity.

Here is that *vākaittiṇai* verse:

Eighteen are the ramifications
That the *vākai* theme marks:
Staying at the warcamp
In the cold season and the hot season
In fond devotion to the deed on hand;
The winning feats in the battlefield of warriors on chariots
Beside the attainments of ploughmen on the cornfield;
The circular *kuravai* dance in front of his chariot
Danced by his warriors
As their monarch stands victorious over his chariot-borne foemen;
The circular *kuravai* dance in the rear of his chariot
Danced by the kindred folk
As their monarch stands victorious over his chariot-borne foemen;
The deed of the spear that holds off massive charges;
The prowess of men that holds in mighty strikes;
The manly fortitude that disregards the burden of this unavailing existence;
The warrior offering his crowning life to fire
In fulfilment of his vow to the exalted
Putting the hostile foemen to shame thereat;
Extending hands of friendship to the enemy;
The eminence that attends possession of bulls and cows
By which to efface the evil of indigence;
The glory of abdicating the throne to take to renunciation;

The eight qualities that mark a courtier
[Nobility of birth, learning, virtuous conduct,
Truthfulness, purity, equity
And absence of envy and greed];
Such modes of conduct as enjoined by sage works;
Unceasing acts of liberality that entail lasting renown;
Bearing no malice towards men that do evil unto one;
Being endowed with the wealth of the spirit;
Mercy and compassion as marks the detached mind;
And being freed of the fetters of want.

(*Poruḷatikāram* : *Puṟattiṇai iyal*, verse 21)

Blossom 39

Instability of Life and Things Worldly

What follows is the *Tolkāppiyam* verse detailing the situations of this poignant *kāñcittiṇai* theme, besides an illustrative verse of mine:

Peruṅkāñci that speaks of the inevitability of death;
Mutukāñci that indicates the great truths of life
Which men of sage wisdom bring home to the youth;
Maṟakkāñci that shows a warrior
Wounded in his breast in the battle
Tearing open that wound
And dying in utter disdain of life;
Pēykkāñci that refers to
The devils guarding the warrior wounded in battle
There being no kin to tend him;

Maṉṉaikkāñci that refers to mourning the death of the great one
Enumerating his deeds of virtue and valour;
Vāñciṉakkāñci that indicates swearing a vow
That one would fall into such states stated
Were one to fail to accomplish a task chosen;
Toṭākkāñci that shows a loving wife
Guarding her wounded warrior-husband on the battlefield
Against devils laying their hands on him;
Āñcikkāñci that speaks of the wife
Killing herself with the spear
That took her warrior-husband's life;
Makaṭpāṟkāñci that shows
Refusal by a chieftain of ancient lineage
To give his daughter's hand in marriage
To another king of comparable valour
That has come to take him on in a war;
The wife of the warrior killed in the battlefield
Nestling up her face and breasts against his head
And seeing her life ended;
These are the ten substrands of *kāñci* theme,
Which the authority has decreed.

The bewildering wail of the kin around the warrior
Who met with a glorious end;
The lonely cries of uncontained distress;
Mūtāṉantam, the awed expressions of tribute by onlookers,
As they find the wife ending her life
On the death of her husband in action;
Mutapālai, the bitter wail of the lonesome wife
On the death of her husband
As they traversed the killing arid wastes;
Kaiyaṟunilai, the helpless cries of anguish of the kindred folk
At the death of the ones who counted in their lives;
Taputāranilai, the piteous state of the bereaved husband;
Tāpatanilai, the misery of having been bereaved of one's loving husband;

Pālainilai, the words of resentment by the wife,
Who prepares to enter into the funeral pyre of her husband,
At those that tend to weaken her resolve;
Talaippeyalnilai, the supreme act of the mother
That went seeking death on the battlefield
On hearing that her son had a retreat in war;
And *kāṭuvāḻttu,* the glorification of the graveyard
That perpetually impresses upon the people of this wide world
The impermanence of the lives of men
And its own [graveyard's] permanence -
These ten substrands of worthy treatment including,
Kañci theme ramifies into twenty sub-situations.

(*Poruḷatikāram* : *Puṟattiṇai iyal,* verse 24)

* * *

Be it the illumination of the little oil-lamp,
I have provided the expositions of all thematic situations
Included in *Akattiṇai* and *Puṟattiṇai;*
Although elucidations detailed of all these situations
I could not give in this study,
Could I afford to leave out *Kāñcittiṇai?*
Would not *kāñci* rebuke me albeit gently?
Don't I know that honeyed heart?

I am the one
Whose time of the day is split into atoms,
One atom of which is multiplied by a hundred
And is devoted exclusively to *kāñci*
And spent in all pleasure.

The *kañci* theme unmatched
Is to make a life of eternity
By being reminded of one's instability of life
Bringing in the analogy of bubbles on water's surface,
Providing an anchor to the mind vacillating
And standing on renown hill-like.

Kāñci theme is that
What tells folks
To preserve honour
Be it at the cost of one's head.

Kāñci theme tells men
To perform deeds virtuous on the earth
Leaving not a bit of it incomplete
With the realization that
'He that lived yesterday
Does exist not today'
Even when there remains the threat
Of the power of Death around.

Even if you stand uncared for,
Spirits too will come to your aid
Hailing your efforts large

To make the Tamiḻs flourish.
Kāñci is routing the wily foe
In the manner of the Pāṇṭiya king
Who swore: "Let me not be the theme of *Māṅkuṭi Marutaṉ's* song
If I don't vanquish the foes and return!

Kāñci is
That act of the woman
Who bathes with her tears
Her dead husband wounded in war,
Prohibits others from touching her
And stabs herself
With the sword that killed her husband.

The unmatched *kāñci* is that
Where a father and mother in the evening of their life
See the suitor for their daughter driven away
With wounds on his back
Who came waging a war for her hand.

Kāñci is
Where the woman
Clasps her husband's spear-pierced body
As does a creeper over the banyan trunk.

Kāñci is
Where the wife leaps lightning-like into the flames
Detesting life beyond her husband
When he remained dead - apart
A sacrifice it is of womankind eye-like
To show that life is no sugar cane
And to hold honour dear as life.
Such is what *kāñci* is.

No more energy I am left with
To elaborate further on this *kāñci* theme;
I stop it therefore at this.

Blossom 40

The Tamiḻ Concept of Love

Look at the commentary of the passionate Tamiḻ scholar *Veḷḷaivāraṇar*

On the *Tolkāppiyam* verse on the nature of clandestine love!
We will understand
Why Tolkāppiyar refers here to the eight kinds of marriage in the Aryan land.

These kinds stand flawed,
Unacceptable to the impeccable Tamiḻ mind;
They might suit only the Aryan culture
In their entirety;

And just one or two of them correspond to the Tamiḻ ethos -
So says the learned Tamiḻ commentator.

What then are those eight kinds of marriage?
Piramam is gifting a girl of twelve
To a bachelor nearing fifty years of age;

Giving a girl in marriage to the brother-in-law by relation
With the mutual parental consent

Is what is called *piracāpattiyam;*

Āriṭam is taking a girl in marriage
Along with the gift of cattle;

Giving the girl's hand to a performer of sacrifice
Before the sacrificial fire is *teyvam;*

Gandharvam is the union of love
Between a man and a woman running into each other;

Acuram is giving the girl learned to one adept in archery
Who tames a killer bull
And who is after gifts of wealth;

Irākkatam is coercive marriage of a girl by a boy:

And *paicācam* is union with a girl
Older by age, given to sleep and drink.

Tolkāppiyar identifies these forms
As those of the Vedic Aryan culture
And rejects them subtly
And they do not go with the Tamiḻ mores,
So says our respected Tamiḻ scholar Veḷḷaivāraṇar.

Kaḷavu is theft, stealing small things;
It is quite natural that it is despised as an act of wrong kind.

But *kaḷavu* as a union of love --
Between a man and a woman
Who are united by the union of hearts
With no hurry for physical intimacy,
Who do not transgress the bounds of propriety
And who meet clandestinely
Aided by their kindly companions,
Whose bond of union courses through
Ways of virtue and love
Combined with codes of worldly needs
The bond uniting the two as one

That comes in for acclaim
In Tamiḻ
Sweet as the strain of the lute
And the deep-sea pearl --
Is no thing of a lowly worth
Even to men of lowly birth.

* * *

Here is the *Tolkāppiyam* verse:

Examined rightly,
The union of love between a man and a woman,
Which embraces the fivefold love behaviour mutually realized,
(Union, forbearance, separation, sulking and lamentation)
And which draws on the pleasures of love, life's plenty and righteousness,
Shares the nature of the love of the *gandharvas* adept at lyre play
Which is among the eight forms of marriage vogue among the vedic folk.

(*Poruḷatikāram* : *Kaḷaviyal*, verse 1)

Note: Tolkāppiyar had to make a reference to the vedic forms of marriage and contrast them with those of the Tamiḻ culture, for during his time, the vedic culture started taking roots on the Tamiḻ soil. The eight kinds of vedic marriage contrast with the three kinds treated in *Tolkāppiyam*, namely: mutual love (*aṉpiṉ aintiṇai*), one-sided love (*kaikkiḷai*) and abnormal sexual passion (*peruntiṇai*).

- Veḷḷaivāraṇar.

Blossom 41

That Angel - Who Is She?

The confidant, though mischievous, is virtuous by disposition. His affection for the hero is boundless much like the waves of the sea getting gravitated towards the shore.

At dusk, the friend saw the hero surging ahead. He called him by clapping, "Why such an undue haste as if you were heading for a feast?

I am back after seeing an angel under the waning moonlight.

She is none but a goddess; I witnessed the scene of her stepping out of the temple and standing near the entrance."

After hearing this from his friend,

The hero resolved to see her. He literally flew towards the direction pointed at by the friend, like a kite pouncing upon a parrot.

Without even an atom of doubt, she is a goddess!

Decked in the ornaments,

She appeared before him.

Finding her as an embodiment of beauty,

He surged quite close towards her, in measured steps.

Since a goddess does not speak,

There was no opportunity for him to speak out and clear his doubt.

He dared to analyze her through eyes and see whether she is a goddess.

Since a bee kept relishing the flowers

From her hair flowing down
And as only the flowers sported by the humans
Emit fragrance,
It dawned upon him that she was no goddess.

He looked at the ornaments on the body
And saw that they were all the ones made by the goldsmith of this world.

Having finished his study on half of her body,
He was in raptures understanding that she was not a goddess.
The drawings on her breasts and shoulders seen,
And the fragrance of lily flower held by her smelt,
And known for certain
That the eyes on her rounded moon-like face
Were but the human eyes all flesh and blood,
Also clearing his mind that
If she were an angel, her eyelids would not twitch like this
And seeing that she was perturbed after noticing him, a man,
It was all obvious that
She was not an angel but a pigeon
Who came searching for him.

The fact of her being a human fully dawned on him.
And the prankster pal was embarrassed and hid himself near the bush
Realizing the emerging scene of his friend and the lady united.

* * *

The swarming bees, the ornaments worn,
The ornamental lines drawn on the body,
The fading flowers, human eye, signs of disquietude
The winking of eyes and timidity
And such of these that mark the person
There manifest for the doubt to vanish.

(*Poruḷatikāram* : *Kaḷaviyal*, verse 4)

Blossom 42

Speaking through the Eyes

The confidant was hiding beside the bushes for a long time

Without causing any embarrassment to the lovers rendezvousing;

He put a stop even to his cough
That tended to come out of this throat,
For that was not the hour to do so.

He was all ears to listen to what they were speaking.
There was no sound to be heard.

"Where have they gone?
Are they present or not?"
Confusion reigned over his head.

He stretched up a little.
Both of them were seen standing like statues.

What is the need for language, when the two eyes are there?
They knew it well that

Of no avail whatever are words of mouth
Where eyes meet eyes in acquiescence true.

The love which was like a flower has now grown into a green fruit.
They knew that in keeping with the Tamiḻ ethos,
They should wait till their love turned into a ripe fruit.
That is the way of the Tamiḻs prescribed in *Tolkāppiyam.*

"The union of two hearts is not a short story.
I convey my greetings for it to become a never-ending saga;
Depart for the day and come tomorrow."
So said the genial friend.

Since it was time for the devotees to throng the temple,
They decided that the day's converse of the eyes was enough and parted.

The confidant clutched the shoulder of the hero and said,
"The woman is a beauty endowed with timidity, bashfulness and credulity."

The hero intervened and corrected the friend's note:
"The dame fell into fear as I touched her;
Bashfulness is an inborn virtue unto women,
And I don't accept ignorance in women.
If both of us were given to ignorance
Wouldn't it lead to physical relationship?

We the birds of love
Have a perfect understanding that
The clandestine career is one
Where the hearts unite
With no room for fleshly congress,
And so we parted after our hearts united into one."

After the hero finished his address
The bosom friend responded with his eyes pulled wide apart in amazement:
"You have conveyed your passion
By signs healthy
And by a language unspoken
Thereby

Fortifying male resolve and female reserve!
May each day of your rendezvous
Be as blessed as this day's!"
The confidant greeted the hero thus
In keeping with the Tamiḻ culture.

* * *

The meeting of eyes is the pointer sure
Suggesting the union of minds.

Where the glances of the eyes reciprocate,
There marks the sprouting of a love career,
So has it been said.

Nobility of bearing and fortitude
Are such stuff as marks the male [hero].

Timidity, bashfulness and credulity
Are the ruling traits in a woman [heroine].

(*Poruḷatikāram* : *Kaḷaviyal,* verses 5, 6, 7, 8)

Blossom 43

Overwhelmed by Love

He, lost in the thoughts of the beauty met by the Amman shrine,

And she, carrying the image of him in her heart's depths,
Are looking forward to meeting again
In anxious expectation penance-like.

They won't sleep, nor would they feel hungry,
Like chilli powder sprinkled over the wound
Their hearts pained,
Which they suppressed by lips held tight together.

For how many days would they keep it undisclosed
Without the knowledge of parents?

Would lightning get concealed in darkness?
Or would darkness ban lightning tearing through it?

Just as the hero has a confidant right,
The heroine also has a beautiful maid for her companion.

"He was startled as to whether you were a goddess;
You called him a thief!

With telltale evidences he came to know that you are a human lass
Daughter of the earth, flower-like beauty,
A woman filled with freshness--
All these you are though,

Like the grass bending towards the stream's course
You are inclined towards love, as if it were your very existence.

You are united as one in emotions and body."

The companions of the two pile up consolations one after another
And yet their hearts remain weighed down.
The confidante of the heroine loses on this score
While the hero's friend also doesn't meet with success.

It is not the failure in a battle fought though,
Yet they fail in the task of reducing the momentum of love.

The lady remains thinking about the hero all the time.
What was his predicament?
The hero with the body of teakwood--
He stood dispirited with emaciated form afflicted by passion's extreme.
Everything seen by the lady reminded her of him
While the man found her in everything he saw.

Not knowing what they could do,
The male friend and the maid friend invoked the omnipresent God present in each pillar and particle
To stand by them and bless them.
The answer would be "I am in the heart of the man and the heart of woman
In the form of love
Though not in the form of the God."

Lost in love they forget the deed of the day and the inclination for doing too!
Confusion, bewilderment, forgetting,
Passions' urge going to the extreme
As to drive the partners to suicide
Such is the intensity of passion *Kaḷaviyal* of *Tolkāppiyam* shows.

Such are the hurdles the lovers need to overcome;
But dispirited they are not,
And they vow to succeed
With their revolve and prowess.

* * *

The vicissitudes of mind
As marking the man and woman
In their clandestine course of love are:
Amorousness, persistent feel of one for the other,
Emaciation of the body,
Giving free vent to experiences of pleasure and pain,
Transgressing the bounds of modesty and propriety,
Every object of sight painfully reminding one
Of the features of the other,
Self-forgetfulness, stupor and death-like anxiety.

(*Poruḷatikāram* : *Kaḷaviyal*, verse 9)

Blossom 44

The Wet Firewood that Burned

"Though she is not an angel,
I would say even the angels cannot measure up to her.

Even if one were to search vigorously
And select the best among one crore women,
Searching into the present and the future,
There is nobody quite like this damsel beautiful as the moon
On the earth or in the myriad worlds *purāṇas* speak of ;
Definitely we cannot find one of her kind.

You would not deny it I am sure!
For you have seen her."
Sitting on the horse-drawn chariot stationary
He asked his confidant dear as life a thousand times.

No boredom writ on the face,
The friend acquiescent said,

"Yes, yes!"

At that time she was standing unseen behind the surrounding wall.
The hero pretending to be unaware of her presence
Described her loveliness from head to toe:
"She is the pinnacle of beauty;
When she dresses her hair in five modes –
Bundling it up,
Letting it flowing,
Or decorating it in the curled fashion–
My darting eyes
Would ask who this enchanting woman is!
Is she the angel from heaven?
Is she the one called Ramba or Ūrvaci?
Dear friend, why don't you say something to please my craving heart?
Would your life-span decrease if you do so?"

So saying
The excited hero stamped on the plank of the chariot
That spurred the scared horses to run along with the chariot
And they were about to ram against the lightning-like heroine!

He pulled her away and exclaimed
"Oh! Is that you?
I didn't know the richly-hued peahen would be here around!
O my goodness, you are spared!"
"Dear, hope you are not hurt," he asked with concern.

Taking not his hands held around her, he said,
"I have been yearning for it for a long time."
And bashfulness prevented her from responding,
"I too."

"The Cupid has struck his arrow, now I don't have any business here."
The dear friend said
And he left the place within the bating of the eyelid, in the chariot,
But not before winking at the hero

And commenting that the rendezvous was fine;
The towering trees, plants and bushes
Dropped their flowers in the wind
And did a good turn,
For they made for a fine floral bed!

Nobody was around,
Only a bit of fear remained as companion for him.

Guarded by culture native to womenfolk,
That naive full moon of a damsel was feasting upon
The external beauty of that man.

He expected her to acquiesce in his desire for sex,
As does a camphor,
Without patiently waiting for the wet wood to dry out and ready to burn.

Though she gave her consent to the union of hearts
She didn't acquiesce in bodily contact
And sit aside she did.

She then gave him an oblique look which drank his life
He understood the underlying consent.
He thought, "Why not take the fruit and relish it?
I am granted the consent
Not just for two souls to become one
But also for two bodies to unite."
He tended to cross the limits.

When she tried to stop him,
He said, "I beseech you!
We both are meeting amidst many a hurdle
Do realize, dear."

His hands moved about caressing her.
She gestured as if saying,
"Leave alone the hurdles, now take away the finger probing my waist."
She moved a little away from him.

He then made a request passionate,
"I cannot bear it any more, my young parrot!
Don't let me die."
His entreaties melting her
She threw off her bashfulness
And let him close in.
Though she initially consented to his passion's compulsion,
It turned out to be the desire of both for union.

* * *

Caressing the heroine's limbs:
Contriving feigned excuses for the same;
Getting close to her and embracing her;
Speaking of her reserve as impediment to union;
His express regret at the union delayed;
The union that ensues thereon;
The joy of union realized in haste
And his lofty vow of unbroken intimacy –
These eight situations of ruling import
Occasion utterance by the hero.

. . . .

(*Poruḷatikāram* : *Kaḷaviyal,* verse 11)

Blossom 45

Shyness or Honour?

"I am returning after seeing the lover", said the heroine.

" I understood that much after seeing your dishevelled hair",
Was the quick reply of the confidante.

"What happened to cause such things disorderly in your form, dear?
Tell me how your mind has its composure lost."

For the confidante to see
The heroine bared her shoulder.

Bloodshot marks!
Signs of scratches like the crescent moon!
Even when the bruises healed, the scars deep remained intact.

"My God! How bad!
For heaven's sake, don't think I am insulting your hero;
Does he belong to the species of animals or human beings?
You got trapped by him;
It would have been better even if he had gobbled you.
But why did you permit him to maul you in frenzy of lust?"

"You are weighed down in anguish, confidante!
My sweet kindly man he is.
He maintained his distance with me, like an ascetic.
Though we met each other daily there was no overstepping on his part.
While displaying decorum during this secret love career
One or two streaks of eccentricity did indeed sneak in;
But we never let that to lead us to fleshly affair."

"Then how come dear, your cheeks bear injury?
Bruises on the hand?
Swelling of fingers?"

Responded the heroine:
"Both of us met in the rendezvous as usual,
Which was soon followed by parting.
Since parents' approval had been obtained for marriage
Thanks to the help of a trusted friend like you,
With the happiness that
Marriage would follow soon,
I was crossing the sandy upland, and treaded the way without realizing
That the shortcut filled with *mullai* flowers was also infested with problems.

A person with a grin approached me and said,
'Have you finished the carnal affair one?
Shall we get on with the next one?'

Since he sought to tarnish the very character of clandestine love career
I had no desire to even look at that wretched man.
Therefore, I added spring to steps and yearned to cross that garden
Before he stretched his hands out to embrace me.

'Don't you worry about anything,
Nobody would find out;
Let go of shyness, woman,'
So saying he hemmed me in.

Wriggling away from his probing embrace, I said,
'Shyness is superior to very life
You, a lowly creature worse than a dog!
Be it known to you!'
'Does shyness have such a high worth?

Young lady, don't sport shyness;
Give me your virginity for me to enjoy
Giving up your bashfulness,' he said.

'You, the wolf of a man! Do understand one thing,
Shyness is superior to life and chastity is superior to shyness.
I declare right now,
I am prepared to shed my shyness.
Looking at shyness as a weakness in women
You dare to defile me crossing me on the street,
Don't you?

Here, I shed shyness to save my chastity on my own.
I swirled like a whirlwind and hurled a big stone at him.
He also didn't remain silent,
And transformed himself into a sword to subjugate me.
If I had donned the shyness,
Pondering, 'Should one assault a man?'
I would have lost my honour and chastity.

Now do you understand the reason for my injury, friend?
Shyness is superior to life
While honour is superior to shyness itself.
That honour is woman's chastity." she concluded.

The confidante stood up glad at my deed
And she took leave of me then.

* * *

As the heroine goes herself
Seeking the hero she has fallen in love with,
Or as she says such words as are freed of wilfulness and guile,
Armed she is
With the saying of the ancients that
'Bashfulness is of greater worth than life itself,
And chastity unsullied stands superior to bashfulness too' —
And things lofty such as these
Constitute the thematic modes of *Akam* love proper.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Kaḷaviyal,* verse 22)

Blossom 46
Two Interpretations : An Explanation

Kōvalaṉ the son of Mācāttuvāṉ
And Kaṇṇaki the daughter of Mānāykaṉ
Were united in wedlock
On the auspicious hour of the auspicious day,
The vedic rites being prescribed by the ripe brahmin priest
And the bridal couple circumambulating the sacrificial fire.

The auspicious time and day prescribed
Did not guard against the separation of Kōvalaṉ
From the virtuous Kaṇṇaki,
The woman on whom Kōvalaṉ on the nuptial bed showered praises like
'Gold with no blemish'
'Pearl with right-turned curls'
'Fragrance unadulterated'
'Sugar cane' and 'honey';

Nor did they protect the nuptial cord of Kaṇṇaki.
They but pierced through his wedded life like swords and spears.

Kaṇṇaki lost her husband and became a widow.
The king hurled at her the charge of being a thief's wife.

The vedic mantras recited by the brahmin priest
And the propitious time of wedding fixed on the planetary motion
Didn't protect the conjugal harmony of the couple.
The epic *Cilappatikāram* is witness to this fact.

The matchless *Tolkāppiyam,*
That is the treasure trove of the Tamiḻs
And a fine flower-garden of language and literature,
Preceded *Cilappatikāram* by a long span of time.

The culture of the Tamiḻs
Didn't see complete degeneration
In the early days of the Aryan advent.

The inroads of the alien influence nevertheless
Were marked here and there.
Why should it be denied?
Tolkāppiyar himself makes pointed references to it.

In the clandestine love career,
That precedes the wedded life of the lovers,
The hero does not eschew rendezvous with the heroine
On account of the inhospitable path of the wilderness,
The intense vigil of the heroine's kin,
The perils due to the wild animals,
Or the thought of the long travel to make.

And yet
Commentator Nacciṇārkkiṉiyar presumes that
The rendezvous used to be deferred
For reasons of time and day inauspicious (*ōrai*).

Another commentator *Iḷampūraṇar* too
Almost concurs in this regard with the former.

On the other hand,
Veḷḷaivāraṇar's *Tolkāppiyam* study
Looks at the word *ōrai*

As meaning sport and festivities.
He says
The hero takes part in the sports of the town
In the company of his close companions,
That would act as a cover
Protecting him from the scandal of the villagefolk
About his visit to the heroine's place.

And Veḷḷaivāraṇar provides us several instances,
Not just one or two,
Where *ōrai* refers to play and festivities.

Going by which
We can establish that
Tolkāppiyar uses the term *ōrai*
In the sense of play
And not auspicious hour.

Where we insist that
Veḷḷaivāraṇar is unacceptable
And that *ōrai* is observing propitious hour,
It might then mean that
Beliefs in day and time auspicious
Are an intrusion into the Tamiḻ life
As is the visitation of snakes and scorpions.

* * *

During the clandestine career
The hero does not go by
Signs of the zodiac and auspicious day
For his rendezvous with the heroine.

(*Poruḷatikāram* : *Kaḷaviyal,* verse 44)

Deterred the hero is not too
From his rendezvous with the heroine
By the hardness of the path,
The dispiritedness (born of hostile men and things around),
And by the fear of perils and obstacles to his love.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Kaḷaviyal,* verse 45)

Blossom 47

Wedded Love

The *kaṟpiyal* (wedded love career) section of *Tolkāppiyam*
Makes it clear that

The term *karaṇam* signifies marriage.

Commentator Iḷampūraṇar looks at *karaṇam*
As belonging to brahmins, kings and traders,
The reason being they are of the upper castes.

He further says,
A time there was
When *karaṇam* was practised by the Vēḷāḷars down the ladder too.

Nacciṉārkkiṉiyar too believed in
The existence of caste distinctions.

Many a scholar today
Shows with evidences
The three of the upper stratum
As meaning the three crowned monarchs
And the lower stratum their subjects.

Look at the *Tolkāppiyam* reference:

... the land of four extended boundaries,
The land abounding in cool groves
And under the reign of three monarchs of benign note.
(*Ceyyuḷiyal*, verse 75)

Just as *Kaṟpiyal* section in *Tolkāppiyam* speaks of *karaṇam* "as taking the hand of the heroine in marriage as offered by those of a worthy line," *Kaḷaviyal*, given the fact of elopement, refers to marriage as happening without the parental consent.

The wedded course is
The hero, who comes from a worthy lineage,
Taking the hand in marriage
Of the heroine
As she is offered by those of a line worthy and compatible,
With the rites and ceremonies attendant thereon.

Even as the heroine's kin do not consent to their union
There does occasion wedding solemnized
With the two taking to elopement.

The ceremonies and rites
Attendant on the three superior social classes
[kings, brahmins and traders]
Came to mark the marriage
Among those down the ladder in the course of time.
So has it been said.
(*Poruḷatikāram : Kaṟpiyal* , verses 1,2,3)

Note: What the commentator Iḷampūraṇar means when says that 'the upper three' comprises brahmins, kings and traders and the lower is the fourth caste, viz., Vēḷāḷar, is that in the ancient days marriage was common among all sections of the society and that it came to exclude the farming folks in the later days.

Impliedly, the days when marriage was common among all sections represent the period of antiquity to which caste division was unknown.

'The exclusion of Vēḷāḷar' refers to the division of society into castes when each caste came to be governed by its own codes of conduct. During this period of social segregation, the Vēḷāḷars refused to toe the line of vedic prescriptions.

From the line 'the three monarchs of benign note' (*Ceyyuḷiyal*, 75), it is clear that 'the upper three' is the trinity of ancient Tamiḻ kings, which gives us to see that the ancient Tamiḻs classified people corresponding to the fourfold division of land and not in terms of fourfold caste division. The lower section then refers to the subject people of the three monarchs.

- Veḷḷaivāraṇar

Blossom 48

The Aiyar Conceived the Marriage

The well-meaning elders of the village
Assembled at the public hall
And had a *brainstorming session:*

"I see that youth quite often
By the pond, near the river bank,
In the sandy plain where horses fall over.

The young woman keeps waiting for the youth
Without fail
Even if the scabbard fish are not to be seen in the river,
Even if the carp forget to pop up in the pond
And even if the horses fail to make their visit.

Day in, day out,
These two frequent under cover
By the hill, off the home

In the jasmine garden, in the coconut grove,
In the mango grove, in the teakwood jungle;
They walk hand in hand tiptoe like shadows
Speaking in hushed tones,
Deceiving themselves
That they do it all unknown to the village folk.

We must catch them red-handed--
The boy who comes furtively
And the maid of undefiled purity--
And put an end to their clandestine love career.
We must see them man and wife married.

The boy might desert the girl
Despite his promise to her
That he would forget her not
Even if it be death to him.

A time may come
When falsehood and deception would rule the day;
We cannot afford to lose the girl
And go about crying over it.

We must talk to them right today;
We must take the matter to their parents."

As the elders were splitting their heads thus,
The lovers made their presence right before them.

The headman stately as the temple car addressed them:
"See how worried the folks of the hamlet are!
You keep meeting in rendezvous secret
By day and by night,
Near the house, by the fence
And everywhere around.

How would you convince us
That you would not desert the girl eventually?"
Fire of rage flew from the headman's eyes.

The boy responded,
"Well said, sire!
We would remain unseparated
Even in the world after death.
Do take it from me!"

The headman said,
"The times are changing
And deceit looks raising its ugly head.
Let's summon the *Aiyar*."

The *Aiyar* appeared there forthwith
Asking about the reason for the summon.

One in the assembly wondered:
"Should we need the *Aiyar* here?
He belongs to an alien caste."

The village headman explained then:
"Dear friend!
He is not the *Aiyar* you suppose;
Be it clear in your mind,
He is the one venerable amongst us,
The one fit to sit at the head
Capable of prescribing things righteous
And prohibiting ways evil.

He has conceived of marriage
That would guard against
Falsity and deceit in love relations."

The *Aiyar*, unblemished, stood up and spoke then,
"Bring here the relations of the lovers
Including their parents."

Prompt they came.
"Do you consent to the union of these lovers?"
Aiyar asked.
They nodded their heads in approval.

"All is fine!
No need for worry!
The clandestine love career has come to an end.
Let's conduct the marriage called *karaṇam*
That would be a celebration
Of the love of these two."

* * *

In so far as
The love career of the hero and the heroine
Unfolds to be inferred in discourses private,
And in so far as
It is thrown into the subject of gossip in public,
The acts of the hero must bear the prime responsibility for it.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Kaḷaviyal,* verse 48)

The hero and the heroine
Enter into marital union
Either after their clandestine union becomes public knowledge
Or before it happens.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Kaḷaviyal,* verse 49)

Sage men there conceived solemnized wedding
When falsity and breach of trust cropped up,
So has it been said.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Kaṟpiyal,* verse 4)

Note: *Aiyar* is an indigenous Tamiḻ word meaning a respectable elderly person of superior virtue and worth. Here this term refers to one of Tamiḻ antiquity. There are misinterpretations of Aiyar as being derived from 'Aryan.' The Aiyar formulated the marriage rites to guard against love falling into deceit and falsity. This phase of marriage had been preceded by a culture when they did not visualize the need for marriage. It is obvious that the conduct of marriage should have come into existence before the days of Tolkāppiyar. The need for marriage then might have been necessitated after the advent of the alien cultures and races.

- Veḷḷaivāraṇar
The History of Tolkāppiyam.

Blossom 49

Clandestine Love Career and Wedded Course

Tolkāppiyam shows us that

Karaṇam (marriage) is
The hero taking the heroine's hand in marriage
As she is offered by those of a line worthy and compatible
With the rites and ceremonies attendant thereon.

He also shows that
It is marriage
As the lovers take to elopement
Without the heroine's parents offering her hand.

In both the events
The lovers enter into wedded course

And make a blissful living to the acclaim of the world.

The order of Tolkāppiyar's day was that
The hero stood on a higher plane
In the domestic sphere and in other realms of activity too.

Being so,
In this flower-garden of *Tolkāppiyam* that I write,
I make no attempt whatever to change that order.

Tolkāppiyar steers clear of any controversy
With regard to God or religion he believed in
And holds forth God and religion universal.

Such is the way Aiyaṉ Tiruvaḷḷuvar has chosen later,
Keeping religion and God secular.

The *Akam* lovers are seen running their household
In tune with the norms of both Tolkāppiyar and Tiruvaḷḷuvar.

The bud called clandestine love course
Blossoms into the flower called wedded course
By marriage.

Malivu the ecstasy of union of the lovers,
Pulavi the feigned reserve of the heroine,
Ūṭal the sulking of the lovers leading to sexual fulfilment,
Uṇarvu the resolution of sulking through the interceders,
And *pirivu* the separation occasioned by the parting of the hero
In quest of wealth and learning
And for acts of valour for the country's good --
Occur during the wedded course after marriage.

"O my manna pure! Honey unsatiating!
Do tell me without concealing.
During those days of our clandestine career,
When we were showering love unexhausted on each other,
Why did you try to draw my heart apart
And drown it in the flood of devotion to God?"

Queried the hero.
"It was my confidante's counsel
That we should worship and adore God
For our love to come to fruition without hassles.
But are you angry about it now?"
So saying the heroine served food on his leaf plate
And sat by him to eat together with him.

"How is it that
The food turns manna with your hand's touch?
Not just that.
The flower too acquires a new fragrance!
Are all these because of the bliss of God?"
Wondered the hero.

"It is all because my God dwells in my heart."
As she said thus,
Both of them forgot the food cooked and served on the plate,
Vied with each other
And relished the lips of each other.

Food taken
They commented:
"There is one thing that tastes sweet;
It is not the manna but the lips!"

Since it was the early days of wedded life
They made no distinction
As to whether it was morning, noon or evening
Or day or night,
And realized their dreams of passion
Which they yearned for in their clandestine course.

Realizing that
He who lives a virtuous life is known as a brahmin,
They decided by the dictates of their wisdom
And followd the path of domestic virtue.

But the dreams of their furtive career refused to die down!
They went about recalling in joy those days
When many a hurdle ran into their way
Which they overcame using many a strategy
And when their companions came to their aid unfailing.
And they glossed over things unsavoury too
When there intervened the beat of the drum called sulking.

"One day I stood waiting there for you
Till my legs threatened to break
And you did not turn up!"

The hero said in response quick:
"None too good were you too!
Another day
I waited for you sleepless through the night
And you failed to turn up!"

All these accusations mutual
Amounted at length to letters written on the air!

The interceders stepping in,
The false sullen mood
Gave way to the bliss of joy ensuing.
Should we need to tell those versed in this art
That sulking adds to the joy of union?

* * *

[Thirty-three are the contexts structured
That find the hero of ineffable note
Marking his utterances:]

When union occasions with the heroine
After they have come through the marriage solemnized,
A union freed of all reticence and reserve;

As he stays immersed in the joy of union unbounded;
As there mainfests an awesome wifely rectitude in the heroine;

As they meet the charges of household
Guided by the worthy tradition of the old;

As he weighs the days of disquiet of the furtive course
Against the abiding bliss of this wedded state;

As the confidante adores the guardian deity
That stood them in good stead in days of adversity;

As the heroine speaks now with passion's fervour
With the days of care and distress withered away;
As he wonders,
While taking food and wearing garlands,
How things taste sweet as ambrosia to him
When they pass through her hands;

As he commends to her
Courtesies due to
Sages, learned men and others of exemplary conduct;

As he addresses his heart
Reminiscing in a sorrowing mood
About those days of the clandestine course
When they had union scarce and far between;

As they revel in the bliss of wedded union
With the hardships and rigours of the clandestine course
Vanishing like letters inscribed on the air;

As he comes forth with words of reassurance
'Go not dispirited' and 'Fear not the hardship of my journey;'

As there occurs the breach of his promise thereof;

As he finds the heroine -
The one embodying fortitude and lofty bearing
And with discerning maids-in-attendance... .

(*Poruḷatikāram : Kaṟpiyal,* verse 5)

Blossom 50

The Light of Home

The home is all music;

The hearts of the inmates all are things lustrous;
Their minds are all books of knowledge;
The letters of the books are marks of joy;
The woods are a spectacle of dance.
If it is so for crows, sparrows and cows
Need we say anything about men?

The revolutionary poet Pāratitācaṉ's picture of a home it is!
And our ripe author of antiquity Tolkāppiyar
Has drawn a similar picture two thousand years ago.

The *Poruḷatikāram, Kaṟpiyal* section of *Tolkāppiyam*
Shows the two lamps at home
That like blossoms of a creeper diffuse fragrance around.

The wedded life sweet suffers no want as it were;
And yet the man tells his parrot-tongued wife,
"Don't you feel the want of a child at home?"

A pointed finger was her reply to his concern.
"Stop there! Are you threatening me?"
Said the man in mocking jest
"It has been a month since the period stopped", said she.

With a joyous roar of laughter
He took her in his clasp
Her resistance notwithstanding.

"Mind your health, my dear!
Conceived, you need to take much care,"
Cautioning her thus,
He kept moving behind her all through
From month one to the ninth month of her pregnancy
With care and concern undiminished.

He parted from her with a sigh
As the midwife came to attend to childbirth.

As he heard the words 'male child' from the labour room
He went about dancing in rapture.

Allowed to see his wife, he went in
And all her pain vanished without a trace.
The flower of that woman wore a smile
Holding the bud of the baby close to her.

He wiped the sweat on her forehead,
Saying, "You are reduced much like a twig, dear!"
She blushed for a while
And said with a streak of ridicule at the corner of her eyes:
"Reduced in just one day's pain?"

She was showered in benediction by all kindred folk,
Her parents and foster mother in particular.
All kindly people thronged to greet her.

She was bathed in oil.
There was a celebration for the child

When the martyrs who sacrificed for the freedom of the land
Were remembered with grateful admiration.
The lady was floating on the ocean of joy.

Then she heard the tidings of her man
Drawn in passion to an alien woman.

It was a blow as if by an axe;
She writhed in pain like a worm thrown into fire.

He was worried about
Her turning a tiger and a storm.
The hill-like man stood reduced in his standing.

He approached her companions
With a request to quench
The raging fire in the heart of the heroine.
The efforts of them came to no avail.

Eventually,
He went to her in the bedchamber
Held her legs in tight hold
And begged her pardon.

Could she say 'no' to him?
Or could she erase his image from her mind?
She did pardon him.

"May the one who coined the word 'pardon' live long!"
Thinking thus
The hero moved closer to her
And she moved off a little
Saying, "There is the child!"

* * *

Bearing him a son worthy of his name;

As gifts aplenty are bestowed on the sages
And worthy offerings on the celestials
At the hour of the heroine

Being given the ceremonial oil-bath
After she has borne him a son;

As he comes after acts of debauchery
And entreats the bliss of heroine's love
Holding her tender feet in his hands,
While she in a mood of variance
Stays lying despondent on the bed
With the soft pillow for her prop;

As he brings in the intercession of other women
And resolves the sulking of the heroine
When she remains hard of access
In a mode of intense variance;

. . . .

(*Poruḷatikāram : Kaṟpiyal,* verse 5)

Blossom 51

Kumaraṉ's Message

The function marking the birth of a child

Kumaraṉ and Kumari's house
Was visited by Vēlaṉ from Kōṭṭai street.
He joyfully gifted the chain made of cow's horn.

"What Vēlaṉ? Quite uncharacteristic of you to have come all alone?
Why didn't you bring your woman?" They eagerly enquired.

"We have not been on talking terms for some days.
You have often been grumbling about my being issueless.'
So saying,
She had gone to grandma's house.
Six weeks have passed since then."

To dispel the cloud of sadness from his face,
On the very next day, Kumaraṉ accompanied by *Vēlaṉ*, went to grandma's house, And spoke to his wife:
"Is it sulking or growling?
If you remain separated for being issueless,

Would you be gifted with a child?

My parents used to say that I was born ten years after their marriage.
If my parents had also remained parted in sulks for having been issueless,
How could I have been born?

Now also, there are quarrels and sulks marking our conjugal life.

I ventured to a foreign country in pursuit of wealth.
'My life would be shrouded in darkness, therefore I would also come.'
She insisted.
How can I change the convention against women taking up voyage?

With her eyes flooded with tears,
She quarrelled and remained silent for a few days.
I could not change the age-old custom of ancestors,
But I changed my plan of going on a voyage,
I travelled to the nearby capital city for training in warfare for ten days.

'You assured me that there wouldn't be any separation.
I didn't know then that you were lying.'
She fired a letter on the fifth day itself.

Then, what work could I have there?
I beat a hasty retreat midway,
To wipe off her misery caused by parting.

Compromise has never been a one way path in my house.

I had committed a big blunder when she gave birth to my son.
A fury she did become!
But on my apology she forgot what had happened.

Unlike in my case,
No male chauvinistic blunder has happened here.
Therefore you should forget the quarrel with your man.
You should extend a whole-hearted cooperation.
May you be blessed with the fruit of your thousand year crop, your married life!"

Such of these arguments and many more I presented before her.
"Nothing equals the bliss of married life.
The life of the householder is a virtue unto itself.

And a finer thing it would be were it to be freed of blame."
I also said.

"Vēlaṉ! This is for you also:
'Even if there is no child in the house,
We should toil like the child of the nation'.
You should make a vow,
And with a bright and beaming face,
Lead a life like a sword and its sheath."

Vēlaṉ and his wife expressed their gratitude to Kumaran
And said, "We shall live together ever."

* * *

As he ends the affliction of the two women
[The heroine and his concubine]
Who stand grieving at his parting;

As he stands in distress intense
Over his protracted separation from the heroine;

As he ponders taking the hard tract
Which he had gone through in the past;

As he realizes the overriding hold of love;
As he fears the heroine's affliction
When parting from her intervenes;

As he fails to keep his word to her
[As regards his promise of return in a given season
And as regards his promise of non-separation];

As he responds to the words of credulity of the confidante
Who urges him to take the heroine with him,
And who makes many a plea of this kind;

As he feels the pain of separation
While setting off to a foreign land;

As he ponders breaking his journey and returning home;
The feel of joy that attends
As he is homeward after the mission;

. . . .

(*Poruḷatikāram : Kaṟpiyal*, verse 5)

Blossom 52

A Woman's Victory

The little one was moving in the direction of his mother

After having run, played in the water and blown bubbles of foam.
The anklets he wore and his child's patter made wonderful music.

Even as he was nearing his mother,
The other woman in his father's life stopped him to embrace and kiss him.
Thinking that her son would reject the gestures and come to her,
The mother waited along.

Seeing that he didn't,
She became angry and exclaimed,
"The sprout will follow the seed."
He my man keeps saying,
"You're the elder sister
While the other women in my life are your younger sisters.
You're the genuine pearl while the others are the fake ones."
But he goes after the other pearls.

She thought that if she remained silent not protesting,
She might end up losing her relationship with her son as well.
Just at this juncture,
The son decked in ornaments came calling her 'O mother!'.
Her anger raging like a volcano subdued cool as showfall.
Spotting her husband she exclaimed, "Oh, here you are!
Hereafter the boy alone would be the ray of hope dissipating my darkness;
Today I start for my mother's house along with him.
Some men do exist, like the spots on the face of the moon,
But you are a moon all in spots!

Intiraṉ himself should take a lesson or two from you in the art of winning women.
So long I exercised restraint with the fond hope of reforming you.
You cannot bridle your habit of making merry every day.

My son who looks like the full moon is enough to provide me solace.
You spoiled the family with a mind perverse,
Your blotted life would teach you a fitting lesson before long."

Bursting out thus,
That speaking portrait was about to exit from the house
Along with the soothing breeze on her lap.

The husband cried out in pain within,
With his legs trembling
As if he were stabbed by a thousand spears and swords in the chest.
"Let the bygones be bygones!
You might leave me immediately if it were to happen again.
I don't fancy a life without you, my singing bird!
Like the singing birds let us live without any worry.
Let's lead an impeccable life which nobody can fault.
I will ever remain faithful to you hereafter."
Coming around, he fell at her feet.
"It is not enough if the people here stand witness.
Let your former concubines also see this scene", she said.

* * *

As the hero's concubine cuddles her son up in love
And lets him after play with him;

As the hero approaches her unknown from behind
When she is absorbed in play with her son
And nestles up against her
In an act of virtuous conduct
And seeks to resolve her sulking;

As she turns thereon to her son,
The source of unending joy that he is,
And holds him to reproach
Finding the adage 'like father like son' true;

As she abides in the virtue of conjugal love
When she does not go dispirited
At the unkindly act of debauchery of the hero,
And takes the word of conciliation of the men of note;

As she reveals her lofty trait of a wedded wife
When she tells him at his face
'It would look instructive (dishonourable?)
Were my younger sisters (the hero's concubines) to see it',
With the hero prostrating before her
And soliciting her pardon for his act of debauchery;

. . . .

(*Poruḷatikāram : Kaṟpiyal*, verse 6)

Blossom 53

Tour

Without being confined to the house like a cat that has littered,

Without living like a caged parrot taking the cage for the nation,
The hero and heroine would take to going out on tours at least once a year.
They followed this practice even in those days.

Taking their children along, they played in soothing ponds and beautiful parks,
Enjoying the beauty in nature.

How sweet it is to know that
The Tamiḻs lived a complete life
Even in the infancy of their history,
Which *Tolkāppiyam* shows
In its section on the wedded life!

* * *

Seeking the pleasures of life,
Such as sports in rivers and tanks
And revelry in groves,
Beyond the bounds of their home soil,
Is part of the love career of the hero and heroine.

Blossom 54

The Warrior on the Field

(*Poruḷatikāram : Kaṟpiyal,* verse 50)

When the elephants trample their way through the field
Much like the mountains rolling down,
The hero remains unperturbed and takes them head on.

He would fight to keep his country's flag aloft,
Even if he were to lose his life in the process!

The heroine had applied the *tilak* of blood on his forehead
Bidding farewell and wishing him victory.

In the thick of the battle he does not even think about her.
Only after his country's flag is unfurled on the enemy's fortress
Would the chaste warrior send the message
By the breeze blowing across the countries:
"My dear damsel! Victory is ours!"
This is yet another portrait of ancient Tamiḻ life in *Tolkāppiyam.*

* * *

No reflection of the heroine at home
Finds utterance from the hero away on his mission;
The task accomplished,
He wears her plight upon his sleeve.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Kaṟpiyal,* verse 45)

Blossom 55

Women in War

Those were the times
Womenfolk were held in regard and concern
And given due respect for their softness of disposition;
They were therefore kept off places of danger.
Their duties were restricted to work off the warfront
And to war camps.
The culture in this regard hasn't changed;
What is witnessed today is only a reformulation of things.

* * *

The union of love will be kept off
From the war-camp, the place of onerous charge.
Women assigned to duties other than love
Would be there around in war-camps.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Kaṟpiyal,* verses 34, 35)

Blossom 56

The Horse and the Bird would Stand Outsmarted!

Mission abroad accomplished,
Vēlaṉ was returning home on his fleeting horse
Eager as he was to see his beloved wife.

The tears shed by the sky would bring happiness to the peasants,
While Vēlaṉ's return alone could infuse life into his woman.

The flower doesn't wither
If the colourful beetle fails to visit to relish its honey,
While the young woman's heart might turn into a turbulent earthquake
If the horse carrying Vēlaṉ failed to be back home.
She might breathe like a storm and writhe like a worm.

The horse should understand that and gallop towards its destination
Without taking a break in between,
Without any hindrances on the way home.
Vēlaṉ spurred the horse on;
The horse sped like a bird's flight;
And it was the bird
From which he took the cue for his flight home.

When Tolkāppiyar says
The horse matched the speed of the bird,
We cannot help entertaining a doubt.

The bird flying in the sky should rapidly flutter its wing to fly fast,
And the horse has to gallop to reach home,
Both of which might take quite some time.

But Vēlaṉ's heart
Burning with passion intense for his lady
Could be home to her
The moment he thought he should be home.

* * *

No sojourn does the hero's journey across the parched tract mark
As he is homeward after his mission accomplished;
For he had at his possession
A sturdy horse swift as a bird
That abides at his service
As does his benignant heart.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Kaṟpiyal,* verse 53)

Blossom 57

What is a Fortune?

The evening of life portrayed by Tolkāppiyar

Could be compared with the perenniel river merging into the sea
Originating from the hills and flowing through the paddy fields,
It renders benefits a thousand before reaching the sea.
Since it writes its epilogue while merging into the sea,
Nobody would conclude that the story of the river is all at a close.
Even the lives of the dead continue through their progeny.
The same is applicable to the river.

Continuing to live even after death is an honour to great people.

The sun is warm at rise and goes scorching at the peak,
And before vanishing in the west,
Thanks to the comforting south wind,
Showers happiness upon the entire earth.

Likewise,
The aged who are in the last phase of their life,
Having enjoyed the felicities of conjugal life

And having reaped all that it offered,
Will have their fortune realized
As they live surrounded by pleasant children
And comfort-giving kindred folks
And live in serenity
Taking to ways of virtue.

* * *

Having relished the felicities of the passion of love,
It is for the hero and heroine in conjugal union
To savour the protective presence of their children
And seek to live on things sublime,
With virtuous kinsfolk around,
Which makes for the fruits the wedded course entailed.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Kaṟpiyal,* verse 51)

Blossom 58

Monologic Utterances

The ailment called the passion of love
Sprouts in the morning
Develops through the day
And blossoms in the evening.

Is this a disease peculiar to the lady?
Or does it afflict the man too
Who wanders like a bee in search of a flower's honey?

Let there be no argument
As to whether it is the man or the woman affected.
Whosoever it might be
Let's see what their pleadings with their heart are like:

The monologic utterances
That issue from the mindscapes
Of the hero and heroine are:

Addresses to the heart
As if it were a living body with sense organs endowed,
That manifest the eightfold emotions

[Laughter, weeping, despisedness, wonder
Fear, pride, anger and joy],
As if it breathed feelings alive and living,
And as if it offered denials and refutations --

Such addresses being informed of the passion of love,
The passion that alternates between pain and pleasure;

Apostrophes to things personified
Attributing to them deeds they cannot perform;

Taking the afflictions of the other
As if it were one's own;

Holding the mind and sense impressions apart;

And finding similitude where appropriate
Between the three human class genders
And the two non-human class genders
In relation to their attributes and actions.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Poruḷiyal,* verse 2)

Blossom 59

What did the Heart Say?

The heart comes to realize that
The corporal frame is gradually getting emaciated and life exhausted.
Many days have passed since she met her husband on the bed.

Therefore, she realizes that only a little amount of life is left in her.
With the heart being kept unaware,
She questions herself in anguish:

Whatever has happened to my body?
Whatever is the affliction to my life?
Leaving the questions at that,
She makes a resolution:
'See him I shall not!'

Even when the lonesome heroine turns dispirited
And wears withering, emaciated limbs,
She never goes out seeking the hero's union,
But abides, exclaiming
'O whatever has befallen them!'

(*Poruḷatikāram : Poruḷiyal,* verse 9)

Having resolved thus
She asks her heart:
'Is my resolution right?'

But her whining heart says 'no',
"You only pretend to be indifferent to your body and life for society's sake,
Whereas your actual desire is to meet him at this very instant."

* * *

Hero's union she does think of
At those lonesome moments
When she addresses her heart.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Poruḷiyal,* verse 10)

Blossom 60

The Greatness of Women

There is a complaint that ancient works, be it literature or *Tolkāppiyam*, the treasure-trove of grammatical theories, treat women as if they were dumb and servile beings.

Even in this era, which is known for the awakening of women, when war-cries for the rights of women are resounding from every nook and cranny, it could be observed that freedom of women remains a question mark.

We also see that among the intellectuals, there are women just as there are men. What is more, it is a proven fact that women fare better than men in school and college examinations.

Today, one can see them vying with their male counterparts in governance and administration.

In spite of making such strides, here and there women do find themselves a disadvantaged lot thanks to assertions of male superiority.

The number of women who are victims of superstitions, who fall into the pit of orthodoxy, who writhe in ignorance and who are deluded into magic and witch-craft far exceeds the menfolk of such kinds.

Be that as it may, women's progress is witnessed in fields like science, education and even in the field of defence.

Ancient works of literature and culture should not be criticized unjustly and denounced by juxtaposing the status of women of modern age and the rights

enjoyed by them with that represented in these works. Such works should be viewed only as documents from which to learn about the social conditions of an ancient past.

Such an approach should inform our study of ancient works.

A piece of literature which reflects the conditions of that age need not be considered as containing norms of behaviour applicable for today.

Instead, we should understand the basic idea the ancient works attempt to project. We should also be clear about the extent to which it should be taken and on what basis. We must see how these ideas and attitudes bear on the current realities.

If we were to undo the foundations of the past in our pursuit of newness, then in our homes the pictures of our grandparents and parents and the articles used by them along with the other traces of the yesteryears would have to be jettisoned as useless objects.

When ancient literature projects the improbable as real, it may be left aside and need not be believed in. In the modern age, the trains which are powered by electricity or for that matter aeroplanes which fly with the assistance of technology have wheels. The chariots of kings of yore had also run on wheels which might have been different in size or shape. Even today, bullock carts with wheels can be seen in small hamlets, just as we find buses and cars running on wheels.

In the same manner, though significant changes have surfaced in culture, ethos and lifestyle, the fundamentals remain unchanged.

At this juncture of this book when I have already penned sixty chapters, I must mention that there is a need for us to look back and then proceed further.

Tolkāppiyam, Poruḷiyal speaks of certain characteristics specific to women, which, if we look at objectively, deserve to be appreciated rather than condemned.

Temperance, fulness of bearing, uprightness,
Facility of the tongue, discrimination and discernment
Are traits marked in women.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Poruḷiyal*, verse 15)

Blossom 61

Without the Fox Getting Drenched...!

The smithy forging implements for war it was
Where soldiers from the army camp were at work.
There came a young maiden running, holding a letter of palmyra leaf.

A warrior-hero engaged in the work exclaimed:
"You are the woman who can bathe the fox without getting it wet!
I presumed you would come tomorrow.
But today just as I am making this sword,
You have arrived to gladden my heart.
What letter did my flower-eyed woman give?
Give it!" So saying he received the letter
Without minding the taunts and comments from those around.

The text of the letter ran:
I expected your visit during daytime yesterday and waited with hunger;
Then only I realized that all your assurances are like letters written on thin air.
I even became apprehensive of a friend's prediction that our love would fail.

Dear, if you are afraid of coming in broad daylight
You can as well come lurking in the darkness of night.

Are you afraid of the wretched moon's light?
At dusk, once the sun vanishes you can plan your visit.

Obstacles may abound in thwarting your visit.
But only you possess the medicine for my withering heart.

Even the flower I sport loses its fragrance in your absence.
Have you not learnt the art of outwitting the local guards
Who are active throughout the day?

The path you have to tread is full of stones and thorns
I do know how difficult a path it is.

Maybe it is well
That your journey is not taken keeping in mind the nature of the path.
But it will be a pleasure for me
If you were to come here to wipe the tears off my eyes.
Many a time have we planned to meet,
But on thinking we know it to be risky.
And what remains is confusion.

Even our families have become apprehensive;
As one alleviates one's hunger without waiting for one's turn,
Rushing into marriage is the only way out.

Folding the palmyra letter,
The hero gave a tender twist to the emissary's ear.
"I told you then itself that you can bathe the fox without getting it wet.
Tell your friend I shall not fail my word.
Let the month of *Thai* be born,
A way out will have been born too," he said.

The young woman responded,
"A child would also be born in the tenth mouth."
She asked further,
"What does bathing the fox without getting it wet mean?

I ask you out of ignorance. Please do let me know it."
He replied, "The fox is none but me.
You have brought the love letter from my love and showered me with happiness,
Without getting me drenched in the process."

* * *

Pointing to the perils attendant on
The hero's coming for union at inopportune time,
The hazards of the tract that he comes through,
The rigours of watch around,
Speaking of her anxiety and concern therein,
Expressing her apprehension of harm to the hero,
Changing the hour of trysting
From day to night and from night to day,
And instructing him not to come for trysting
Drawing on things righteous and evil
To bring her point home,
And things such as these [by the confidante]
Are all the ones marked with the intent
To see the hero take the heroine in marriage,
Thus has it been ruled.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Poruḷiyal,* verse 16)

Blossom 62

Do Speak, We would Listen...

Is the word *ilakkiyam* of Tamiḻ origin? Or does it belong to the Sanskrit language? This was the topic of a big debate.

This issue necessitated more or less a forum for debate. It came up in the function on *Muttamiḻ* (Threefold Tamiḻ) organised in May 1949 at Coimbatore. Pāvēntar Pāratitācaṉ presided over the function. I was also present at the function in which Aṟiñar Aṇṇā, Avvai Duraisamy Piḷḷai, the multilingual scholar Appadurai, the great critic Veḷḷaivāraṇar and many others participated.

Hardly was there any discourse on the development of Tamiḻ or the rise of the Tamiḻs.

In the huge gathering of ten thousand people, the only question that dominated the proceedings was 'Is *ilakkiyam* a Tamiḻ word or not?'

Speaking on the second day, I observed thus:

"Having mobilized ten thousand people and spent thousands of rupees to conduct this function to which renowned scholars and academics are invited, you have wasted two days' time and deliberations by focusing upon the single issue of deciding as to whether *ilakkiyam* is a Tamiḻ word or not. Instead, a group of eight or ten of these scholars could have assembled in a separate place and done this

research. One of these scholars then could have conveyed to us the result of your deliberations."

My speech created a big sensation. I referred to this *Muttamiḻ Viḻā* function to drive home the point that the debate as to whether *ilakkiyam* is derived from *ilaṭciyam* (objective) or from *ilaṅkutal* (shine forth as an example) still continues. We have such a debate in *Tolkāppiyam* also:

Usage
Being the word of the learned,
Propriety in poetry
Draws on conformity to the usage.

Iḷampūraṇar's commentary on this verse is that poetic diction should adopt the usage that comes to be the standard from the use of the learned.

Naccinārkkiniyar, on the other hand, adds the conjunctive particle *um* to *uyarntōr kiḻavi* (the usage of the learned) and says that the learned usage going in accord with the vedic usage becomes the poetic diction.

Here, the word *vaḻakku* (usage) does not refer to any case filed in a court of law! Instead, it refers to usage of words and sentences.

Iḷampūraṇar claims that only the words of learned men can become the standard of usage.

The conjunctive particle of Naccinārkkiniyar may imply that there exists *iḻintōr kiḻavi* (the diction of the lowly) too, which goes against the norm in *Tolkāppiyam Marapiyal* section that

Usage is
What is in vogue and use
Among the learned.

Quoting this in his *Tolkāppiyam* commentary, the great Tamiḻ scholar Veḷḷaivāraṇar points out that *vaḻakku* (usage) is linguistic usage, and reference to vedic usage is out of place.

Another commentator Pērāciriyar agreeing with Iḷampūraṇar says that usage is the use of language by the learned because it is from that the events of popular speech issue.

The use of the lowly, such as

eṉṉaṭā ṭapāykkirē (What man, trying to escape?)
eṉṉammā moṟaikkiṟē (You woman! Why staring at me?)

can never become norms of usage.

* * *

Usage
Being the word of the learned,
Propriety in poetry
Draws on conformity to the usage.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Poruḷiyal,* verse 23)

Blossom 63

Modesty Dear as Life

'To fear what ought to be feared is given to the wise' (*Tirukkuṟaḷ*)

A dictionary compiled by a team of scholars records 'humility' and 'reserve' as the meanings of *accam* (fear), and *nāṇam* (modesty) means fear, humility, regard, shyness, etc.

In case our action brings with it disrepute, then it is necessary that we should fear it. Throwing fear overboard under such circumstances is never acceptable. When loss of honour is imminent, fear one should.

Likewise, modesty (feminine reserve) does not mean women lowering the gaze at the sight of men.

Tolkāppiyam prescribes that in any explanation of virtue, wealth and happiness, modesty has a role to play. Since the virtue of modesty is dear to great men as if it is their very life, it should never be lost sight of.

Such great men embody inner and outer realities exemplifying the ideal that the world is what such men make of. They are not the people who merely preach munificence, virtue and bliss, but hold modesty to be a supreme virtue.

The modesty discussed here is not the one that occurs between a lover and the beloved. It is about knowing under what conditions the practice of modesty exalts that very virtue, and organize our lives accordingly.

* * *

Propriety of demeanour of the heroine
Shall be deemed indispensable
In compositions of *Akam* mode
That embody contents of a lofty nature.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Poruḷiyal,* verse 25)

Blossom 64

Where is Happiness?

Though the feeling of pleasure is common to all living beings, it is, in particular, that special feeling felt by man and woman united together.

Iḷampūraṇar elaborates on it stating that even a natural instinct like happiness requires union of hearts. He points out that, if good rapport exists, one can experience pleasure significantly even in the company of a prostitute. But in the absence of good rapport, one cannot derive joy even from his wife.

While explaining the term "all living beings," Naccinārkkiniyar makes it clear that happiness experienced by male and female in union is common to all living creatures - people, gods, demons, animals and birds.

When Naccinārkkiniyar brings in the celestials and the demons while referring to all living beings, one cannot be oblivious of the fact that the *purānas* abound in stories of male gods taking the female form and enjoying sex with the male beings.

As such, we need to steer clear of the joy of union belonging to the worlds of harlots and gods and must look at the *Tolkāppiyam* verse with reference to the human male and human female united by mutual love. This alone goes in accord with Tamil culture.

Joy is
The joy of union between the sexes
That every living being accomplishes
As it unites in passion with its loving mate.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Poruḷiyal,* verse 29)

Blossom 65

Would the Answer Emerge?

"Keeping you by me,
The fiery sun felt cool;

Parted from you
The cool moon did scorch me.

We bared out our hearts
And communicated with each other.

Without pouncing upon me, much like a tiger,
Do give a thought to my parents' concern for my state.

Our clandestine love career has been exposed.
The entire town is resounding with words of scandal about us.

I conveyed to you my willingness to elope with you.
But you insisted upon marriage to the knowledge of one and all.

Let the act of caressing cheeks and stamping on them follow later.

Tell me what your response to my concern is!
Is it elopement or immediate marriage?
Why do you enact a dumb skit?
Would your lips remain glued for ever?
Would they refuse to open even for an instant to answer my question?
Do come out with an answer, at least before my death," she said in despair.

He said, "You know how to read,
Look here, the wedding invitation on the palmyra leaf."

* * *

The heroine's mindscape encompasses:
Privileging her right of love for the hero,
Apprehension of separation by the hero,
Fear of her clandestine love career
Coming to be inferred by folks
And becoming the subject of idle talk around,
Her longed for rendezvous with the hero
Running into impediments,
Willing desire to go on elopement with the hero,
And wanting the hero to take her in marriage.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Poruḷiyal*, verse 31)

Blossom 66

Greatness and Humility

The land throbs with valour,
The eyes of women express chastity.

The shadow of the rising flag would conquer all enemies.
The anthems are pregnant with pride.

The fort of warriors is teeming with myriad talents.
The golden walls of their fort have the silvery clouds for their canopies.

The sea which kisses the walls of the fort is in penance,
The people of this land hold not life too dear.

Behold Rāvaṇā, the one with eternal fame!
The beacon light of Lanka,
The flame of self-esteem,
The leader of the great Tamil race,
For whom protecting the subjects is the norm of the reign.

A passage in *Kamparāmāyaṇam* portrays Rāvaṇaṉ's sense of honour and valour with awe-struck admiration. Before pointing it out, let us look at the pride of place given to the sulks between lovers in *Tolkāppiyam Poruḷiyal.*

Tolkāppiyam shows that however proud and manly a person might be, in the event of the feigned quarrel between husband and wife, the husband would have to stoop to pacify his wife.

The dominance of the wife
And the suppliant postures of the husband
Are seen to mark
The moments of tiffs of passion between the two.

Bearing this in mind, let us take a look at Rāvaṇa's speech demonstrating his self-esteem.

The wisemen, ripe counsellors and the learned approach Rāvaṇaṉ at his court to counsel him, "Defeat is imminent! Therefore, it is better to surrender than inviting destruction." On listening to this, Rāvaṇaṉ declares:

Even at the time of sulks in marital life, it is not my wont to yield.

Surrender is unknown to Rāvaṇaṉ. " I will not give in even in sulks with my wife in the bed-chamber, will I?

In *Teṉṉavaṉ kātai* authored by me, years ago, I noted:

"It was only in the bed-chamber before his wife where the music of Rāvaṇaṉ's harp faced defeat."

My opinion was prompted by these lines from *Tolkāppiyam.*

The dominance of the wife
And the suppliant postures of the husband
Are seen to mark
The moments of tiffs of passion between the two.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Poruḷiyal,* verse 33)

Blossom 67

The Truth Unknown to the Devotee

It was the wont of that Saiva adherent to invite a guest to a feast on all the important Saivite festivals.

That Saiva devotee didn't need the assistance of any almanac to realize that it was *Mahasivarāttiri.*

He wandered around looking for a guest to be fed on that day. His search proved futile. At last, he was heartened to see somebody slumbering in the choultry. He heaved a sigh of relief.

Overcome with joy, he approached him. He addressed that devotee of Lord Siva, who was dozing off with the ritual sacred ash sported on his forehead, chest and folded hands. "Sir, the one of ripeness!" he called a bit loudly.

"Who is that? I am lying here sapped of vitality due to hunger and fatigue. Why are you bothering me?" So saying the devotee got up.

The host replied, "I invite you not to appease your hunger. It is to cleanse myself of my sins. I invite you to a feast in my house."

"Is it so? Are you offering food? Why the invitation? I don't require one," So saying the devotee started walking with the Saivite friend.

On the way, the guest enquired, "Is it vegetarian food or non-vegetarian?"

"How come you have such a doubt? Today is the day of Lord Siva—*Sivarāttiri*. God is Love. How can you forget all these and ask me such a question?"

"It is okay! In any case it is better to clear the doubt in advance. That is exactly why I enquired."

"Okay, sir, you need not doubt at all. Dishes made of brinjal, drumstick, unripe banana and other such vegetables combined with rice of excellent quality await you. Please eat to your heart's content."

"Let it be so".

"Hara Hara Siva Siva, Sambo Mahadeva! Let me squat on the veranda. Please invite me after the food gets ready." The guest lounged on the veranda of the house muttering Siva, Siva. A few moments might have passed, when a voice assailed the ears of the guest,

Iṟaicci (meaning 'meat' among others)! *Iṟaicci!* though the explanation that followed was barely audible.

"What is this? A queer conversation is ensuing." The guest became apprehensive.

Again the word *iṟaicci* loudly uttered fell on his ears.

The guest peeped inside the house.

Again the matter related to *iṟaicci* reared its head though the context remained unclear.

It was time for food--but the persistent sound inside was, *iṟaicci, iṟaicci, iṟaicci!*

The startled guest got up abruptly.

"How dare he cheats me after inviting me for a vegetarian food;" He raged, and left the place in a huff and doubled up.

What had happened actually?

The host in his anxiety to look for a devotee as a guest left his teaching of a chapter of *Tolkāppiyam* to his son incomplete.

Then the host was engrossed in clearing the doubts of his son.

Iṟaicci is
The suggestive import
Paralleling the *Akam* thematic strand explicit.

That from *iṟaicci*
There emerges an implied subtext
Beside its evocative designation of flora and fauna
Will be obvious to men of discernment.

Designating sights of flora and fauna in nature
That are evocative of love and tenderness
Is intended to bring comfort and reassurance
To the heroine in lonesome anguish.

These are different layers of meaning of the term '*iṟaicci*' listed in the verses 35, 36, 37 in *Poruḷiyal*. The father and son were discussing them.

1. '*Iṟaicci*' refers to the suggested meaning.
2. The parallel meaning suggested is context-specific and is obvious to the learned.
3. *Iṟaicci* functions to privilege love in times of distress and it underlines forbearance.

Iṟaicci is
The suggestive import
Paralleling the *Akam* thematic strand explicit.

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There emerges an implied subtext
Beside its evocative designation of flora and fauna
Will be obvious to men of discernment.

Designating sights of flora and fauna in nature
That are evocative of love and tenderness
Is intended to bring comfort and reassurance
To the heroine in lonesome anguish.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Poruḷiyal*, verses 35, 36, 37)

Blossom 68

Semantic Shift

Our forefathers advise us to rein in anger (*ciṇam*), as anger spoils relationships, destroys unity, and mars friendship. That is why anger is vicious. It should be avoided. Anger cannot be accepted in any form. But there are instances where the word 'anger' is used in a positive sense.

For example, when an army of brave youth rises to defend the Tamil language, we go in for expressions like the one below:

Look at the upsurge of the angry tigers

That march up

Beating the drum of racial honour!

Though the emotion of anger is generally not accepted, the term attains a significant status in this context.

Pētaimai can be interpreted as ignorance. The dictionary defines *pētai* as a young woman. There are women who witness with glee the plight of a woman 'possessed' being thrashed by exorcists.

While denouncing such women as *pētai*, we are not using the term in any positive sense.

But if an old man who marries a young woman dies within six months of the wedding, we take pity on the young widow and call her a poor, unfortunate girl. When we use the word *pētai* for the young widow, the meaning changes. The word here does not denote folly but her pathetic condition as a young widow. Therefore in this context, *pētaimai* gains in stature as a special term referring to pathos.

When we call a person jealous or compare that person to Gandhari (Duriyodhana's mother in *Mahābhārata)* we are using the term *poṟāmai* (envy, jealousy) in its derogatory sense.

But when the film *Parācakti* scripted by me became a roaring success, my good friend poet Kannadasan visited me. After hugging me, he exclaimed, "Sir, I feel really jealous of you." He kissed me on the forehead. In this context the word parts with its negative sense to become something endearing and appreciative. Thus the word develops a special sense.

Poverty is not acceptable in any form. Eradicate poverty. This is the war-cry of progressive people and the vow of those in governance. Poverty no doubt is a cruel thing.

"I withered every time I chanced upon withered crops." These are the words of Vaṭalūr Vaḷḷalār Rāmaliṅka Aṭikaḷār, a saint who had a great compassion for the poor and the downtrodden. As in the case of the two words discussed above, the word *vaṟumai* (poverty) too undergoes a kind of regeneration through Vaḷḷalār comparing it to withered crops.

Anger, ignorance, jealousy, and poverty are to be avoided by us. Be that as it may, there are contexts where they have a positive worth.

The four traits of the hero and heroine--
Anger, ignorance, envy and penury --
Do occur in them
As attributes (implied) of their positive worth.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Poruḷiyal,* verse 51)

Blossom 69

Only through Mind's Perception

We talk about like-minded couple, or the son taking after the father or the daughter the mother. The comparison is called *oppu* which can only be felt intuitively. It does not lend itself to any understanding based on realities without.

Much like *oppu, uru* means a mind event caused by viewing something never seen before. This again is felt only through faculties within.

The word *veṟuppu* which commonly means hatred has another meaning listed in the dictionary, *ceṟivu*, which also means, abundance or modesty. Whatever might be the meaning, hatred could only be felt through the heart.

Chastity is also related to the heart. Chastity cannot manifest itself in a material form.

Both *ēr* (beauty) and *eḻil* (splendour) fall under the category of words which don't lend themselves to be differentiated in concrete terms.

Nāṇ bridles the feelings. *Maṭam* is a characteristic of women. *Nōy* is a medical condition. *Vēṭkai* and *nukarvu* are the urges to get the object of desire, and quite like them, love, jealousy, modesty and wisdom can only be felt. Thus they fall under the category of abstract things.

* * *

Likeness, awe and abundance,
Fidelity of the loved to the lover, growth and loveliness,
Delicacy, coyness and credulousness,
Affliction, longing and enjoyment
Are all terms of the abstract kind
Discernible to the mind's eye;
They elude definitions of a concrete nature.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Poruḷiyal,* verse 53)

Blossom 70

The Eight Emotions

Five and twenty years ago,

When Pūmpukār had been recreated
With beauty and splendour blending,
With art and artist at their best,
At a function marked by grandeur,
In the assembly of poets celebrating Tamiḻ
The lines I recited from my poem I recall
And make them a beautiful archway to
Tolkāppiyam Meyppāṭṭiyal.

The eight kinds of manifest emotions treated therein are:
Laughter, grief, disgust, wonder
Fear, pride, anger and joy.

By treading the path shown by
The father of grammar in Tamiḻ,
Let us happily relish the eight sentiments:
Laughter, grief, disgust, wonder,
Fear, pride, anger and joy.

I say
This section on sentiments does really transport us to ecstasy.

Laughter is what emerges when we obstinately work at a person given to fear. The valiant are astonished at people who are not infuriated by humiliation. Happiness and weeping are the children of the same mother.

For us to be served to the fill
These
Eight sentiments
In Tamiḻ
Like curd delicious,
We shall further see
In the 'blossoms' succeeding
The way Tolkāppiyar,
Who was hailed
By poets of threefold Tamiḻ
In the courts of
The crowned monarchs
Where fluttered
The silken banner
Aloft the royal canopy,
Looks at them.

* * *

These eight kinds of manifest emotions are
Laughter, grief, disgust, wonder
Fear, pride, anger and joy.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Meyppāṭṭiyal,* verse 3)

Blossom 71

Manifest Emotions Explained Further

Meyppāṭu is an inner feeling manifesting on one's body for others to see and hear. Watery eyes, beads of tears, bristling of hair, perspiration, shivering and other such overt signs are the *meyppāṭus* arising out of the mind's response to an external event.

Suppose a person faces a python coming to swallow him, it is natural for him to be subjected to shivering of the body, anxiety to escape and perspiration. The python here is the external event *(cuvaippaṭuporuḷ)* that causes the manifestation of the emotions *(cuvai)* on the person, whose tripidation and bewilderment are the signs *(kuṟippu)* and perspiration and shivering are the physical expressions *(viṟal)*. These things together, as they come to be known to others are described by the term *meyppāṭu*.

It has been the part of literary conventions from the ancient times to represent these sentiments arising out of our inner life and external life situations and experiences in dramatic usage and imaginative usage.

The *Tolkāppiyam* verse in this regard occurs as the first verse of the *Meyppāṭṭiyal* section:

As the literate men say,
Thirty-two are the sources
That represent spheres of human sport
Wherein are born the eight emotions
With each emotion having four sources.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Meyppāṭṭiyal,* verse 1)

There are thirty-two sources of human sport wherein are born things sixteen when classified.

Music and dance enjoyed in those days by the three crowned monarchs and the chieftains, the emotions that they experienced as they witnessed these 'sports' (*paṇṇai*), the objects of these emotions (*cuvaipaṭuporuḷ*), the inner responses they felt (*kuṟippu*) and their external manifestations (*viṟal*) - these four expand into thirty-two as is seen in the *Tolkāppiyam* verse above.

Blossom 72

Four Sources of Laughter

Ridicule

(The term *ellal* (ridicule), one of the sources of laughter, has been in vogue for a very long time.) Commentators bring in the example of a lame person while talking about the situations where ridicule is due.

(Humane considerations prohibit ridiculing others especially the handicapped. The fast spreading social awareness in the modern world rules out ridicule of a handicapped person's staggering being a source of laughter.)

However, I would like to share with you an incident I have heard of as an example of the source of laughter.

It was an incident that occurred in a city. Even as civilization has seen great advancement with the advent of industrialization and electrification, people were travelling in bullock carts and carriages driven by horses. There was a vegetable vendor who did business on the roadside. People regularly bought vegetables from him. Whenever a cart passed by, the vendor would become enraged and challenge the occupant with swear words. He would shout, "Hey, horse carriage, bullock cart, go slowly. Why on earth do you raise dust while whizzing past the road? If I get up and come there, you might have to meet with dire consequences. I would whip you severely."

Though none of the vehicle owners cared to listen to him, the vendor never stopped hurling abuses.

One fine day, the vendor shouted and threatened the driver of a horse carriage as was his wont. "Do you know what I would do? I will break your carriage to pieces. Why do you stare? Do you know what will happen if I come there?" Just as the vendor was at his abusive best, the driver stopped the carriage and dared him to come near.

The vendor was dumbstruck. The reason being his inability to do so, as he was handicapped, without legs.

This evoked laughter from all quarters.

(Ridicule suits only such particular situations. It does not suit the disabled in general, neither should it do so.)

Youth

(Since *Pāṇṭiyaṉ Neṭuñceḻiyaṉ* was young, he was mocked at by the other kings. An undaunted *Neṭuñceḻiyaṉ* rose up in arms against them. My poem below celebrates the exploits of this youth:)

The jingling anklet on the leg of this tender youth
Was replaced by a string of bells marking heroism.

The plaited lock was cut off.
He was a boy-king holding a dazzling sword.

He took off the bangles from his tender hands
And sported the bow on his shoulder.
He was still an adolescent wearing amulet.

Therefore, holding him too young,
The two crowned monarchs, Cēra and Cōḻa.
Together with the five mighty *vēḷir* chieftains challenged him for a war.

The famous army of the five chieftains paired with
The kings holding the banners sporting arrow and tiger,
The young Pāṇṭiaṉ was never perturbed
At the event of crossing swords with the alliance of the seven.

Looking at the message from the enemy,
"Better be chastised, otherwise you may have to part with very life,"
He laughed aloud and roared:
"It is not in our tradition to hide from war.

Do you think that the Pāṇṭiya kingdom is a place of recluses?
No, no, it is not so.
Our presiding deity Mother Pāṇṭi has not begotten cowards.

Oh! Countrymen! Virtuous souls! Trust me.
This young *Neṭuñceḻiyaṉ* would add to the fame of our motherland
Thus did the young king instil valour into his subjects.

The foes looked down upon the youth and mocked him.
He in turn laughed at their arrogance and it was he who had the last laugh.

Stupidity and Credulity

A person preferred a written complaint to the police station about the theft of a metal pot (*tavalai*)

The police official peered through and burst out laughing, "But then your head is very much intact."

Owing to poor knowledge, he missed the letter 'va' and has instead written *talai* in his complaint.

Just as the official explained, he also joined in the laughter, got back his petition and made the correction.

The official laughed again and enquired,

"Pray, from which well did the frog disappear?"

Again, instead of *tavalai* he had mistakenly written *tavaḻai* meaning frog.

So ignorant was he that after having made the pot a head, he now has made it a frog.

These four are then situations and objects that have the potential to provoke laughter. Here is the *Tolkāppiyam* verse:

The four sources of laughter are
Ridicule, childishness, stupidity and credulity.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Meyppāṭṭiyal,* verse 4)

Blossom 73

Four Sources of Grief

Contempt (iḷivu)

Socrates, the thinker par excellence, stands trial in the Greek court of law. The charge against him is that he instigated the youth against the state by his speeches. A group of three persons raise a furore proposing and seconding those charges in the court. These three persons–Anytus, Lichen and Meletus–level charges against Socrates which are in the nature of contempt of the great thinker.

Anytus: Seething volcano! Turbulent ocean! More terrible than all these is Socrates! ... Weapon of Wisdom! All the world would surrender to this missile, it is said!... If that weapon were to be manufactured in Greece, we would not be able to raise our heads, Meletus! What do you say, Lichen?

Lichen: I am a sculptor who carves God out of stone...! Once even this Socrates was a sculptor like me! But now he has metamorphosed into a sculptor of thoughts! It's all right! After the three of us - me who create God out of stones, Meletus the poet who with his Midas touch gives divine shapes to bundles of imagination, and a political genius like you - once we have colluded together..., Socrates is nothing more than a worthless particle upon an ocean, isn't he, Anytus...!

Meletus: Hurray, Lichen! Kudos... ! Only as long as people are like donkeys would they patiently bear the burden of falsehoods we place on their backs! Only if they are blind will they follow the way we show! We must put an end to him before he succeeds in opening the intellectual eyes of the masses who dare not

cross the line we draw...
These were the barbs directed at a peerless man of wisdom and a revolutionary thinker, which constitute an attempt at disgracing Socrates.

Deprivation/loss (iḻavu)

India's first Prime Minister, Nehru, who ruled for 17 long years, was hailed by all sections of the society - right from the common men to the elite. Here is a poem composed in the form of the grief of the rose which he sported on his coat on the death of Nehru, the light of Asia and the white dove of peace.

The nobel one! The man of principles!
Where is that Death which robbed us of you?

Today, you took me and put me near your heart.
But you have left me and gone far away. Is it fair?

You lent honey to my petals.
Don't you remember as to how I reciprocated that?

Has your heart turned into a stone,
Depriving me of my joy overflowing?

On hearing the dirge, the other flowers approached the rose.
Finding it in the flood of tears and is about to faint
Jasmine went close and asked:
"What Rose, why do you keep crying so long?
A good person lived for the nation to benefit from.
A munificent person lived to embrace us all,
Could we ever get him back? Stop your wailing.
The queen of flowers! Do smile."

Decline in stature (acaivu)

The Tamiḻ race stands tall today with pride and self-esteem thanks to the efforts of Periyār. When Periyār breathed his last, the Tamiḻs all over the world felt completely dispirited which is reflected in the following lines.

As a volcano,
As a scorching fire,
As a thunder striking terror among the foes,

As a burning torch of ethnic pride,
As a billhook felling things disgraceful,
As an Ingarsal refuting the very divinity,
As a Socrates who never minced words,
As a Voltaire in questioning things,
Did our Periyār live his life!
Behold him lying on the lap of death!
He didn't die young, a full life had he lived though
If Taj Mahal were to be engulfed by the earth,
Would we comfort ourselves saying, "Well, it was an old building?"
Would we bear if the Big Temple of Tanjavur were to fall
Saying it is an aged structure?
Like these unforgettable monuments
Periyār too has history made!

An emotion of this kind is what Tolkāppiyar calls decline (*acaivu*) that would cause grief and distress.

Poverty (vaṟumai)

Poverty had driven the *purānic* Nallataṅkāḷ and quite a number of mothers of the modern age as well to either sell the children begotten by them to eke out a living or drown them in a pond or river only to follow suit, later. The flooding tears at such spectacles of poverty constitute the sentiment of weeping.

* * *

The four inexorable sources of grief are
Contempt, deprivation, decline in stature and indigence.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Meyppāṭṭiyal*, verse 5)

Blossom 74

Four Sources of Disgust

Decrepitude/Senility (mūppu)

She bore him for ten months, and suckled him. After sending him to school, she took pride upon his growth. She became ecstatic on seeing her son in groom's apparel. Now she is gifted with grandchildren too. Sapped of vitality with hair all grey, toothless and hunchbacked, she dreamt of spending her last days under the protective and loving care of her son. Her own son now denounces her, "Why are you still alive? Do you wish to make life miserable for me? Get lost and go to an old age home." But even at this point what the mother regrets is her senility and not the behaviour of her son.

Disease (piṇi)

In his youthful days, he slogged it out and earned money in abundance; all of a sudden, he was struck with epilepsy. Each day was marked by seeking medicine and treatment. The woman who joined him as his lifemate savoured every moment of their sunny days. Once he became an invalid, she became sick of marital life. Whenever he called out to her affectionately, she retorted derisively, "What the hell do you want? Speak out." She kept scorching him. But he never reprimanded her. Instead, he was furious and would vent all his anger at the disease.

Vexation (varuttam)

Like the birds that desert the dried-up pond, selfish people leave their friends when the latter lose their wealth. Such victims direct their ire not against the former friends but at their own miseries. Is it not because misery becomes their companion that their friends left them?

Incapacitation/simplicity (meṉmai)

When the rich lead a simple life, it is valued as simplicity. If simplicity is taken to the extreme and the person takes to wearing torn and crumpled clothes, it is miserliness causing a sense of disgust to others.

* * *

The four abiding sources of disgust are
Decrepitude, sickliness, vexation and incapacitation.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Meyppāṭṭiyal*, verse 6)

Blossom 75

Four Sources of Wonder

Novelty (putumai)

Even now, mothers beseech the distant and bewitching moon through songs to come down and play with their children. The moon has never accepted their *invitation and come down.* Even though the moon hasn't descended to the earth, thanks to the marvels of science, an American astronaut, Armstrong, put his feet on the moon, hoisted his national flag and came back to the earth bringing with him stone-like things from the moon. Isn't this 'newness' a thing of wonder for us?

Hugeness (perumai)

Gandhiji who went to South Africa as an advocate stood his ground in the struggle against the racism practised there. Transcending from being the 'Saint of Wardha' he, through his intelligence, energy and selfless effort, gained in stature and esteem not only in India but also in the international arena. Through his perseverance and relentless practice of non-violence, he secured freedom for his *country, an astonishing* feat indeed, achieved through his hugeness of effort and dedication. The flag of peace hoisted by him flutters still.

Minuteness (ciṟumai)

Scholars hail *Tirukkuṟaḷ* as having drilled a hole in an atom and stuffed into it knowledge equivalent to seven seas.

Yes, an atom is that small. But bombs made of such atoms not only brought curtains upon the Second World War but also extinguished the flame of life in millions of people. The immense potential of the tiny atoms stupefies everybody, doesn't it?

Transmutation (ākkam)

The ancient people of the country remained helpless and were subjected to humiliation from all quarters. Ambedkar the great emerged as the ring of protection for them, crossing swords with the all-powerful 'Varnashra Dharma' and coming out victorious.

The spectacle of K. R. Narayanan occupying the chair of the President of India is an example of the evolutionary development of the principles of Ambedkar, the architect of the Constitution of India. Such a social transmutation achieved by Ambedkar is but a matter of wonder.

The following is the *Tolkāppiyam* verse in this regard:

> The four sources of wonder that overwhelm one's mind are
> Novelty, hugeness, minuteness and transmutation.
>
> (*Poruḷatikāram : Meyppāṭṭiyal,* verse 7)

Note: Men of wisdom are capable of comprehending the true nature of newness, hugeness, minuteness and transmutation. As such, the emotion of wonder is that of others who are witness to these four phenomena. Perhaps for this reason, Tolkāppiyar in the verse above speaks of these phenomena as overwhelming ones.

Blossom 76

Four Sources of Fear

Demoness (aṇaṅku)

A youth with the resolve to converse only in chaste Tamiḻ, adhering to the tenets of literature and grammar, confided to an elderly person of his hamlet possessing profound knowledge of Tamiḻ, that he would very soon tie the knots. The person greeted him with a heartfelt wish, "May you get an *aṇaṅku* most suited to your life!"

Incidentally, the youth had browsed the dictionary just that day and found out that *aṇaṅku* meant ghost. "Sir, why do you wish me to be tied up with a ghost?" The learned elder explained, "Don't you know that the dictionary details *aṇaṅku* as 'a woman', 'a ghost' and a 'mohini' (a devil in the guise of a beautiful woman)?" Even in this hi-tech era, there are people horrified by such things as ghost, apparition and black magic. Therefore, in *Tolkāppiyam, aṇaṅku* is shown as a being evoking fear.

Wild animals (vilaṅku)

Owing to the fear of lion, tiger, bear and other dangerous animals and being unequal to them in strength and valour, the primitive man hunted them with arrows and spears, while his modern counterpart uses bullets. Of course, they do so from a safe distance.

Thieves (kaḷvar)

Laymen as well as the learned are naturally subjected to fear on either hearing about or encountering thieves, groups of robbers or highwaymen.

Grievous Wrong (iṟai)

In this list of things evoking fear, wrong deeds of a serious nature are also included. Many commentators state that *iṟai* refers to the king. If *iṟai* is not taken in isolation and read together with the prefix as *tam iṟai* it becomes *tammiṟai*, which means 'one's wrong deeds of a grievous nature'. It is quite natural that such wrong-doers dread punishment Veḷḷaivāraṇar also points to the double entendre involved in *tam iṟai* and *tammiṟai*.

* * *

The four sources of unmitigated fear are
Demoniac beings, wild animals, thieves and depravity.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Meyppāṭṭiyal*, verse 8)

Blossom 77

Four Sources of Pride

Learning (kalvi)

There is education where one learns about the world in a book and also the other kind where the world itself is the book to be read. Anybody excelling in both these types of education will naturally stand at the peak of knowledge. Such people had excelled in the past and do so at the present time as well. When the entire world showers praise upon them, we, as do these people, are filled with a sense of pride.

Prowess (tarukaṇ)

Those with an unflinching resolve with the flame of truth burning within can stand up to any challenge without fear. They are very brave indeed. Such people find a place among men of prowess.

Fame (icaimai)

With the golden saying, "If at all you live in this world, do so with fame" as their motto, people from all walks of life yearn for recognition and fame. Fame follows only those who don't covet it.

Munificence (koṭai)

It is the Koṅku land
Where
The women wear smiles bud-like
That are sweet like mellifluous Tamiḻ
Mixed with honey bees collect from flowers,
And walk with a sense of pride
Saying, "Even the tiny particles of food
Carried by ants
Are gifts from our king
Kumaṇaṉ the munificent."

Such is the emotion of pride as arising from the feeling that Kumaṇaṉ's name is synonymous with liberality.

* * *

The four sources of rightful pride are
Learning, prowess, unsullied fame and munificence absolute.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Meyppāṭṭiyal*, verse 9)

Blossom 78

Four Sources of Anger

In a scenario where anybody wielding a stick becomes a ruler, a reign of terror is unleashed--like chopping people's heads through violence and suppression, vicious acts of severing hands and legs, refusal to even appreciate the cause of opposition and mercilessly trampling them down with spouse and children, incessant beating and acts of terrorism with the approval of the government, murder committed without anybody raising even a muffled protest or making efforts to prevent it, with the people writhing like worms in a fire, unable to bear the injustice-where people rise like tigers. This transformation is what is called anger.

* * *

The four sources of hate-born anger are
Cutting one's limbs, harming one's kin,
Inflicting pain and anguish and 'killing'.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Meyppāṭṭiyal*, verse 10)

Blossom 79

Four Sources of Happiness

Though not as mammoth as a mountain, the required yield from the paddy fields to one's heart's content, the ripeness of mind acquired through learning, the communion of the hearts of men, the villagers assembling to dance and sing together in rapture–this is happiness earned to one's own heart's fill rather than the sadistic pleasure derived from others' misery. This happiness manifests itself in all its serenity on the day of *Taip Poṅkal* which the Tamils celebrate as a day of happiness with lots of emotions. The following musical verse captures the sentiment above:

Hail *Poṅkal,* hail *Poṅkal!*
Poṅkal which exudes mirth
everywhere.

Hail *Poṅkal,* hail *Poṅkal*
Toiling gods of folks!
Tens of thousands of people you prop up.

The world has placed the crown upon your head -
Your roar of resolution can dwarf even the peaks of the Himalayas.

Let us all speak of the greatness of the peasants,
And wish them for their prosperity!

We shall shout, "Let milk *(pāl)* overflow!"
That *Pāl* is the one Vaḷḷuvar has gifted us –
The *Pāls* of *Aṟam, Poruḷ* and *Kāmam.*
What more do we need?

Let's cleanse our homes, cows, calves and get rid of dust and dirt.
This is the real Bhogi!

Let's uproot superstitious beliefs and remove their stench,
Chisel our grey cells and rational thinking and gather knowledge.
Let's twist our moustaches
And work for the empowerment of our womenfolk.

Let our women's lips wear buds of smile –
The women who love turmeric, ginger and sugar cane lofty
And lands fertile!

Bull-fight for our youth was a child's play then.
Righteousness and fair-play are essential in public life.
The joy of such a new life will cross the boundaries of the earth.
Hail *Poṅkal!*

* * *

The four sources of unmixed joy are
Riches, mind's might, sexual union and play.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Meyppāṭṭiyal,* verse 11)

Blossom 80

Fivefold Akam Love: The First Stage of Physical Manifestations

While looking at the physical manifestations proper to the fivefold *Akam* love, it seems that the *Meyppaṭṭiyal* section of *Tolkāppiyam* may have inspired and aided the great bard Kampar. While describing the scene of the first meeting between Cītā who was standing on the terrace of the palace at Mitilai and Rāmā who was ambling along the streets accompanied by the sage Viswamitra, Kampar states:

The Lord looked at her, which she also reciprocated.

I must add a further gleam to Kampar's imagination:

The Lord looked at her
Which she also reciprocated,

Which the sage, an absolute renunciate, also noticed.

Encounter belongs usually to the warfield.
But here it is the arena of love's union.

In the lanes or gardens wearing a deserted look,
The flower of a girl and the tiger of a young man run into.
They are mature enough to understand the language of the eyes.

As their four eyes exchange their glances
Beads of perspiration appear on the forehead of this woman fit for poetry.

Her head drooped weighs down by abundant shyness.
Whereas the man doesn't fail to drop his hints.

That queen of beauty grasps his intension - immediately.
How eager she is to converse with him!

Here is the picture of this encounter as it constitutes the first phase of the love career of the *Akam* hero and heroine:

The states of mind that there aptly manifest
As the hero and the heroine are drawn by passion
In their clandestine pre-marital course are:
Her receptive posture as the hero's passionate eyes fall on her,
Her forehead wearing beads of sweating,
Her coyness concealing her inward longing and delight
And her keeping off from others,
Her heart having been lost to him.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Meyppāṭṭiyal*, verse 13)

Blossom 81

Fivefold Akam Love: The Second Stage of Physical Manifestations

The physical manifestations of the first stage of *Akam* love
Consist of the dilemma as to who would initiate the act;
She wipes off the beads of sweat on the forehead,
Unties the tresses of her hair which add to the beauty of her person.
And then ties them up immediately.

Her body seems emaciated in no moment owing to the passion of love.
Pretending to have lost an ear-stud,
She walks the street and the garden under the pretext of looking for it.
She gropes for the ring on the finger and bangles on the wrist

To reassure herself that they are intact, though they remain in place.

Swayed by the strong winds of the conflict between passion and modesty,
She removes her dress and rewore it thinking it to have come off.

Thus these four are the physical manifestations of the second stage.
They are truly the beginning
Leading to the ecstasy of love union.

* * *

Her tresses flowing in loosened strands,
Dropping off an ear-ornament of hers,
Holding her ornaments fast worn in order though,
And keeping on setting her dress to order --
The second phase of the states of mind of the lovers,
As they are through clandestine love career,
Stands betrayed in the deeds of passion above.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Meyppāṭṭiyal,* verse 14)

Blossom 82

Fivefold Akam Love: The Third Stage of Physical Manifestations

As her dress gets loosened,
She goes behind the fragrant creeper by the stream
To adjust the clothes.

Be it so that he would be her husband in future,
Shyness prevents her from doing it under his gaze.

The lustrous lass stands behind the creeper
Loosens the attire all and rerobes it.
She plaits the wear under the navel

And tucks it up
Running her palm down to the hip.

Just then
A gush of strong wind snatches away her upper garment.

Crossing her elbows over the chest
And placing the fingers ten on the shoulders,
She conceals her breasts
As does one
That hides the stolen lotus buds
From the guards of the pond.

These four
Along with displaying non-existent strength,
Constitute the bodily manifestations
Of the third phase of love union.

They then leave the rendezvous
With two bodies but with hearts unseparated.

* * *

The third phase of the clandestine love manifests in:
Her seeing her hips down off from exposure as the garments slip,
Correcting the waist-ornaments thereon,
Her pretence to be unassailed by slings of passion,
And her hands rising, her pretence notwithstanding.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Meyppāṭṭiyal*, verse 15)

Blossom 83

Fivefold Akam Love: The Fourth Stage of Physical Manifestations

The sweet clandestine union having enjoyed,
The lovers part
With hearts full of love.

Another day --
The kindred folks spot them.
With an open-hearted praise of the lady,
The hero said:
"I have resolved to marry her".
But the people of the village are not amused.

Taunt and rebuke mark their words
"How dare you inform us after everything is over?"

Seeing the kinsmen in frenzy,
The lady casts off her shyness and speaks with resolve:
"After the decision of 'he for me' and 'I for him'.
Why should there be a wall in between?
Let it be shattered to pieces."

"How could she wag her tongue so
After having led a secret love course?"
They bare their fang.

Dismayed, the lady's heart is filled with woe.
She then accepts the gift of the hero as per the ancient custom.

"What is left now
Is only fixing the marriage date."
Saying so
She leaves the place
Wishing her critics well.

* * *

The heroine's ecstatic recollecting and praise
Of the hero's acts of love towards her,
Her utterances shorn of her native credulousness,
Being down with coyness at the gossip
The unkind tongues of the town indulge in about their love,
And her willing acceptance of the hero's gifts of love --
Such are the externalizations of the fourth phase
That mark the clandestine love career of the two.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Meyppāṭṭiyal,* verse 16)

Note: Once marriage is confirmed, the hero will offer a gift to the heroine which is called *kaiyuṟai.*

Blossom 84

Fivefold Akam Love: The Fifth Stage of Physical Manifestations

The clandestine course on
With the consent of the heroine,
And in tune with the convention of
The heroine's acceptance of the hero's gift of love.

She takes the gift of the hero with passion,
Hands it to her parents submissively
And looks for their consent to marriage.

"You have brought disgrace to our clan!
We have become the object of ridicule of folks around!
People laugh at us everywhere!

Having already publicized your bond of passion,
You have come now to us
Saying the marriage awaits to be performed.

Our kinsmen, the townsfolk and all know of it already!
Is it proper that
You bring it to us, your parents, so late?"

The heroine's confidante speaks
In a tone soliciting,
"O mother!
Things have gone beyond reckoning;
Pray, don't put any obstacles now!
She will keep the honour of the family unimpaired!
And will bring no disgrace to your standing!"

Speechless, the mother glances at the father.
"Like mother like daughter;
Do nod your head without any hesitation," the father retorts.

"My head has been nodding all these days," so saying she smiles.
Isn't she the old lady who years ago had that bewitching smile?
With the mother giving consent, the father follows suit.

"Now, what prevents us from caressing each other, come"
Was the invite of the hero.

"Take to your heels, it won't happen now,"
The heroine says like a gentle breeze.
"How come the shyness and reserve that have been in hiding have surfaced today?"

He was surprised.
"To refuse to frolic around is an experience sweet to me.
Whence the shyness and tenderness?"
Though refusing fleshly union,
She relished the beauty of her lover to her heart's content from where she was hiding.

Not to be outdone he tiptoed to where she was to hug her.

* * *

The fifth phase of their clandestine love career manifests in –
The heroine's consent for her clandestine course
To be revealed to her kin at home
Having weighed the consequences thereof,
Her shunning sports and such acts of pleasure
With her clandestine career revealed to kinsmen,
Her willed solitude off her lover's access
As she is subjected to rigours of watch at home,
And her feeling of ecstasy
As there occasions her meeting the hero.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Meyppāṭṭiyal,* verse 17)

Blossom 85

Fivefold Akam Love: The Sixth Stage of Physical Manifestations

The lover could draw her unto him
Like the flavour of sugar cane, juice of the fruit and a piece of magnet.
But how could she forget the memories of her lying on her mother's lap
Growing under the protective care of her parents?

That is why --
The imminent parting from parents --
She wears an anguished countenance
As she is decked in bridal wear.
Though a sea of kinsmen swarm around her,
She feels like being on an island.

And she is deeply worried over not sighting her lover even for a single moment.

She is disturbed and asks her confidante as to where he has gone?
The angst scorches her like the latent heat of the sun.
She stands helpless and in quite despondency.

When one is at the extreme of either melancholy or mirth,
One becomes helpless and confused.
This is not peculiar only to her, but natural to one and all.

* * *

The states of mind that are revealed in
The sixth phase of the clandestine course are:
The lonesome heroine turning heartsick
At her person bedecked with ornaments,
Her falling into a mood of despondency,
Her utterances of dismay and distress,
And her wearing a sense of helplessness.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Meyppāṭṭiyal*, verse 18)

Blossom 86

Know Your Simile

Four are the grounds for comparison
Between the tenor and the vehicle:
The deed done, the effect thereof
The form and the complexion.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Uvamaiyiyal,* verse 1)

A simile compares something with something else using the words *like* or *as,* for example,

a row of teeth like a string of pearls

Here 'a row of teeth' is the subject of comparison, and 'a string of pearls' is the simile or the standard of comparison.

In Sanskrit, the subject of comparison is called *uvamēyam* and the standard of comparison is known as *upamāṉam.* These terms are frequently used in the teaching of similes.

Comparisons are made between things on the basis of four common characteristics, viz., complexion, form, deed and effect. The comparison markers in Tamiḻ are *aṉṉa, āṅka, pōla,* etc. (meaning *like* or *as*)

e.g. *mayilaṉṉa cāyal* - peacock's like grace

māṉ pōlat tuḷḷināḷ - she hopped like a deer.

Tolkāppiyar in the verse quoted above speaks of the classification of similes.

This classification comprises (i) comparison of things that are accessible to the eyes, and (ii) comparison of things that are accessible to other sense organs or to the mind. We shall illustrate these classes and the grounds for comparison.

- She flew off as a sparrow (comparison based on deed)
- munificent like rain (comparison based on effect)
- neck like a conch (comparison based on form)
- gold-like complexion (comparison based on colour)

Look at the following examples:

- flute's like speech (through hearing)
- sweet like honey (through taste)
- scorching like the summer sun (through bodily feeling)
- fragrant breeze (through smell)
- O lovely moon!
  Is the joy of your sight
  Like the joy of sighting
  A potful of white rice
  While looking for
  A little gruel in hunger? (through the mind)

Apart from these that we have drawn on the first verse of *Tolkāppiyam : Uvamaiyiyal,* the second verse speaks of the mixed categories of similitude:

The grounds for comparison above
Do get intermingled too.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Uvamaiyiyal,* verse 2)

Blossom 87

The Excellence of the Simile

The excellence of the simile adds to the worth of the thing compared.

As we examine them,
The vehicles of comparison
Do stand loftier than the tenors.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Uvamaiyiyal,* verse 3)

When we say, 'the face is as beautiful as a red lotus', the thing compared is the face. The standard of comparison, the red lotus, gives here an added significance to the face.

The simile should be worthier than the thing compared.

He stood like a lion.

In this simile, we don't research as to whether the lion or the man is greater. Such an argument will only undermine the importance of the simile. However, in this case, the emphasis is on the strength and majesty of the lion. Thus the thing taken for comparison gains pre-eminence over the thing compared.

The simile becomes efficient when an attribute like "pouncing tiger" is given to a character like Paṇṭāraka Vaṉṉiyaṉ by way of comparative description.

On the other hand, in the expression 'Shivaji mountain mouse like,' the significance of the simile goes down as the person compared is of a high stature.

We have to consider this rather an exception.

Blossom 88

The Sources of Similitude

Pre-eminence, loveliness, love and might
Are the *four characteristics*
That abide *as sources of similitude.*

(*Poruḷatikāram : Uvamaiyiyal,* verse 4)

This verse shows that *though the simile* in a comparison is loftier than the subject, it has excellence, beauty, love and *valour as the sources.*

In this context, I would like to bring in a few *illustrations from the* historical novel *Rōmāpurip Pāṇṭiyaṉ* written by me.

In the beginning of the year 20 BC, one day, the city of Pūmpukār ruled by the *Cōḻa king* Karikālaṉ wore a festive look. The Cōḻa and the Paṇṭiya flags fluttered together over the palace near the Maruvūrppākkam seashore of Pūmpukār. On that day Pāṇṭiyaṉ Peruvaḻuti *and Cōḻaṉ Karikālaṉ met* and established their friendship.

On that occasion, the poet Kārikkaṇṇaṉār *sang in* praise of the two monarchs:

You are the cool-watered Cauvery's *lord, and he...*

Starting thus, it goes on;

With water and grain easily available to *everybody,*
The king reigns with a cool sceptre the Tamiḻ-flourishing *Maturai,*
Where witness sandal from mountains,
Pearl from the sea and the resounding drum.

The poet lauds the unity and friendship between the two kings.

Just as the two kings were seated together in the court, music and dance combined to fill the city with joy and festivities.

This simile has excellence as its basis.

Here excellence is not a natural trait, but something added.

The *nalaṉ* (loveliness) mentioned in the verse refers to a natural aspect arising from a thing. It is like the water spurting naturally while a well is dug. Excellence, on the other hand, is like making a pond and digging canals from the river to facilitate flow of water into it.

The excellence is the basis for the simile of music and dance going together becoming the standard for Cōḷaṉ Karikālaṉ and Paṇṭiyaṉ Peruvaḻuti seated together in the court.

The residents of Maruvūrppākkam - traders, yavaṉars, weavers of silk, cotton and woollen clothes, goldsmiths, flower vendors, sculptors, sailors, physicians, brahmins, officials of the palace, bards, songsters - added to the beauty of the city.

Already, the Grand Arch which the king of Avanti constructed as a gift to Karikāl Cōḷaṉ, the Auditorium of Pearls, a present from the monarch of Vajra, and the Pavilion, a tribute from the ruler of Maghada added lustre to the city of Pūmpukār rendering it a picture gallery and a treasure house of sculpture.

This simile then serves as a source of loveliness.

In another chapter of the same historical novel, Ceḻiyaṉ, a character, wonders at a beautiful woman named Juno in the city of Rome:

> Oh! Seeing this Juno, I feel as if my Tāmarai has descended on the city of Rome after having flown winged angels-like by a boon from God.

This imagination flashing across the mind of Ceḻiyaṉ reflects the deep affection he has for his love residing in Tamiḻ Nāṭu. Therefore, the source of this simile is love.

In the same novel, a poem about one of the important characters, Karikāl Cōḷaṉ, written by Kaṭiyalūr Urutiraṅkaṇṇaṉār finds a mention:

The spear of Karikāl Tirumāvaḷavaṉ hurled at his foes is ferocious;

But even more horrible is the forest ventured into by the lovers.

But the shoulder of the lady seemed more comforting than Karikālaṉ's sceptre.

Here, the horrible forest functions as the simile for the ferocity of Karikālaṉ's spear. Therefore, valour is the basis for this simile.

Obviously then, a simile arises primarily on the bases of excellence, loveliness, love and might.

Blossom 89

Here is the Fifth Source

Five characteristics the sources of similitude come to
As one includes things lowly.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Uvamaiyial,* verse 5)

Apart from the four sources of simile -- excellence, beauty, love, might -- mentioned earlier, there is a fifth one too.

That is the comparison of the subject with the lowly things.

The Tamiḻ term *kiḻakkiṭu poruḷ* used in the *Tolkāppiyam* verse is a trivial thing or something degrading or lowly.

In a big village, a person was working as a washerman assisted by five donkeys. On an eventful night, one of those donkeys was found missing. He went searching for it throughout the night. At the approach of dawn, the washerman thought he heard a donkey bray from a house. "Hurray! I have traced my donkey", he exulted and entered that house. Actually, it was the singer in the house doing his early morning practice.

The singer was surprised to see this man sprint in, and enquired, "What is the matter?"

He replied, "I have lost my donkey and I am searching for it. Since your music sounded like my donkey's voice I rushed in here."

"Now get lost! Stop barking like a dog and get out!" he shouted in rage.

The tempers became frayed which ended up in a big ruckus.

A person from a nearby house approached them and asked, "What men, why are you howling like foxes?"

Now, both these men joined together to take up cudgels against the third person. Fortunately, a grammar teacher who happened to pass by pacified them and explained:

> Making similes using the donkey, dog and fox is an instance of the fifth basis of simile referred to in the *Uvamaiyiyal*. This is done to make clear the inferiority of a particular thing. It is natural to expose its characteristics through such similes. Hence these are called trivial things.

Though they could not comprehend what he was stating, they could grasp that he was pacifying them through some good advice. They stopped shouting and the quarrel ended.

Thus we see that the sources of a simile come to five when a thing of lowly signification is added.

Blossom 90

The Crow and the Peacock

The vehicle and the tenor in similitude
Must be in accord with norms of propriety.
(*Poruḷatikāram : Uvamaiyiyal,* verse 8)

The simile and the thing which is compared must be comparable enough to make the listeners happy and accept them.

For example, in the expression *tuṭi iṭai* (slender waist) *tuṭi* means a small drum. It describes the slender waist placed in between the broad chest above and the broad lower abdomen below being compared to the drum *tuṭi*. Since the upper and lower parts of the body remain broad and the middle part of the body thin, the simile of *tuṭi iṭai* stands appropriate and pleasing.

Since the shape is broad at the top and the bottom and slender at the middle, can we bring in a grindstone for the simile? No, such a simile is not acceptable.

That is why this verse states that whether in the case of the simile or the thing which is compared to, they should be acceptable as well as comparable.

The commentator Pēraciriyar states that while the comparison of tresses to the feathers of a peacock is acceptable, its comparison with the feathers of a crow would jar.

The national Tamil poet Bharati sings, "Hey, Lord Krishna, I can see your pleasant dark colour on the wings of the crow!" The colour black or the crow's feather is not used for a simile here but we witness it being presented in a positive light.

The expression, "cascading tresses" should not be interpreted as representing grey hair. It must be understood that it represents only thick and long hair.

In the phrase, "eyes-like black beetle", we don't get apprehensive that the eyes might have legs like the beetle's or that they fly. It would only demean the importance of the simile.

One cannot use a simile indiscriminately.

This opinion of Veḷḷaivāraṇar is worth remembering.

Blossom 91

Metaphor or Simile?

Where the tenor is made the vehicle

[And the vehicle the tenor],
It is the mode of comparison proper
Insofar as the vehicle-turned tenor
Abides as one of a loftier note.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Uvamaiyiyal*, verse 9)

It is clear from this verse that even though the subject of comparison is represented in the form of a simile, the simile stands out unambiguously, given the fact that the simile-turned subject is shown as one of heightened estimation.

Pērāciriyar, a commentator, quotes the following *Ciṟupāṇāṟṟuppaṭai* lines and explains it thus:

The solid bud
Lovely face-like,
Resembling the maturing breast
Breaking open,
There unfolds
The divine lotus.

Here the breast and the face are similes and the bud and the flower the subjects. Because the breast and the face are shown to be loftier, they are the standards of comparison.

Turned into metaphors, they are 'the bud of the breast' and 'the lotus of the face'. Given the fact that the simile stands on a higher pedestal in relation to the subject, there is no obscurity with regard to the subject and the simile. Pērāciriyar's explanation runs along these lines.

Later rhetoricians term 'the lotus of the face' a metaphor and classify it as a separate figure of speech. Veḷḷaivāraṇar, basing himself on the commentaries of Iḷampūraṇar and Pērāciriyar, looks at it as a variety of the simile.

Blossom 92

The Explanation of Veḷḷaivāraṇar

Veḷḷaivāraṇar observes:

Conventions regarding the organization of morphemes and prosody apart, conventions vis-a-vis the male and female species and the offspring of human and non-human classes, conventions on the fourfold social classes of the human world, conventions on grass and trees, conventions as regards the features of the physical world and literary conventions - all these come under 'Conventions'.

I shall discuss Veḷḷaivāraṇar's views on the social classes later in this essay.

A look at Tolkāppiyar's description of male and female species and the offspring of the human and non-human classes shows that they have gone through extensive changes in worldly usage.

Kuṭṭi is the offspring designation of

Mangoose, wild cat, rat and three-striped squirrel.

(*Marapiyal*, verse 6)

This verse states that the young ones of mangoose, wild cat, rat and squirrel are called by the name *kuṭṭi*. But in usage today, there are no such designations as *kīrikkuṭṭi* or *aṇilkuṭṭi*; instead, they are called *kīrippiḷḷai*, *aṇilkuñcu*, etc. The young of cat alone is called *pūṉaikkuṭṭi*. This changed usage applies to other designations in *Tolkāppiyam* like *narippiḷḷai*, *paṉṟippiḷḷai*, etc. which the commentators too have pointed out.

Wherever due, Veḷḷaivāraṇar does not fail to deny the existence of caste system in those days. He shows in his scholarly and objective study *Literary History of Tolkāppiyat Tamiḻ* that the social castes was a much later development in Tamiḻnāṭu. He observes:

Tolkāppiyam Marapiyal verses 71-85 that deal with four castes are the interpolations of a later period.

Tolkāppiyar classifies people in terms of the landscape divisions, and not on the basis of their colour (*varṇam*) anywhere in his treatment of the living modes of people in the earlier sections. The *Marapiyal* section deals with only the conventions vogue in his day relating to male-female distinction and young ones (vide verses 1-70 and 86-90). Verses 71-85 on castes represent a break in this order being added later.

Where Tolkāppiyar classifies people in terms of their *Akam* love conduct and in terms of their *Puṟam* conduct in *vākaittiṇai*, the classifications are based on division of land and types of occupation, and he does not designate them by caste as *Vēḷāḷar* or *Vaiciyar*. And the term *vaicikaṉ* does not occur anywhere in *Caṅkam* literature. Given that Tolkāppiyar does not speak of four castes, it is incorrect to say that he has referred to kings and traders as the intermediate class (*iṭaiyiru vakaiyōr*). Besides, the interpretation (of verses 77 and 82) that the other two castes have no martial traits runs counter to the life portrayed in *Caṅkam* works. Tolkāppiyar does not mention *vēḷāṉ* (peasant) people as a caste. Such of these references in *Tolkāppiyam* are proper to *Akam* and *Puṟam* themes and do not fit into the section on conventions.

Therefore, it is to be clearly understood that these verses 71-85 must have been included in the text only after the caste system took roots on the Tamiḻ soil at a much later period; that they have been wrongly put into *Tolkāppiyam* when alien rulers like Kaḷappirar held sway in Tamiḻnāṭu trampling down the native Tamiḻ consciousness and the Tamiḻ mores; and that commentators like Iḷampūraṇar and Pērāciriyar misinterpreted *Tolkāppiyam* caught helplessly as they were in the milieu of their days when the northern fourfold caste system nurtured by Sanskrit writers like Manu slowly entered into the social fabric of Tamiḻnāṭu.

(Veḷḷaivāraṇar, *Tolkāppiyat Tamiḻ Ilakkiya Varalāṟu : Marapiyal Viḷakkam*
(The Literary History of Tolkāppiyat Tamiḻ: Conventions of Poetry)

Blossom 93

Science that had Developed Then

Tolkāppiyam embodies, both suggestively and explicitly, qualities and characteristics of things, modes of living of the ancient days and basic structures of phenomena which are relevant to the present time. Even though some of them may not bear on modern customs and the new world thinking, they, nevertheless, remain valuable treasure troves of history left by the ancient Tamiḻs. The following verse represents the acme of ancient Tamiḻs' scientific knowledge base:

Single-sense organisms have the sense of touch;
Two-sense organisms are endowed with touch and taste;
Touch, taste and smell go with three-sense organisms;
Four-sense organisms have sight added to the three;
Five-sense organisms are gifted with hearing in addition;
Mind's faculty is the sixth sense known,
Thus goes the classification by discerning men.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Marapiyal,* verse 27)

That is, beings with one sense feel through the body. Two-sense beings use body and mouth. Three-sense beings have the faculties of body, mouth and nose. Four-sense beings employ body, mouth, nose and eye. Five-sense beings enjoy the

faculties of body, mouth, nose, eye and ear. Six-sense beings have the gift of mind in addition to the five above. Thus all living things on the earth have been classified into six categories.

This classification apart, Tolkāppiyar identifies the beings that are endowed with each of these six classes of faculties. That the ancient Tamiḻs have written the grammar of life on the earth on scientific basis just amazes us.

The division of living things into six categories on the basis of the five senses and the sense organs has been done in terms of their hierarchy of intelligence and power - which demonstrates the scientific knowledge and scientific perception of phenomena of the ancient Tamiḻs. This knowledge and perception constitute the core of the grammar of life propounded in *Tolkāppiyam.*

Look at the following verses:

The grass and tree are single-sense organisms;
Other species of the flora there are too
That are limited to this faculty.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Marapiyal,* verse 28)

The snail and shell-fish are two-sense organisms;
Others of their species there are too.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Marapiyal,* verse 29)

These verses show that grass and tree are one-sense beings using the faculty of the body. Be it noted that Tolkāppiyar states that there are other species too that are one-sense organisms. Such of these instances show *Tolkāppiyam* to be a treasure-house of scientific knowledge and information.

Look at the following verses where *Tolkāppiyam* gives examples of the beings that are endowed with two, three, four and five faculties.

The snail and shell-fish are two-sense organisms;
Others of their species there are too.

The termite and ant are three-sense organisms;
There are others of their kind confined to these faculties.

The crabs and beetles are four-sense organisms;
Others of their species there are too.

The beasts and men sans discrimination
Are creatures with five senses;
There are co-sharers among their species too.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Marapiyal,* verses 29, 30, 31, 32)

Human beings have six senses. If some people are deficient in one or two of these or if they do not use them properly, *Tolkāppiyam* is in no way responsible for it.

Blossom 94

It Was in Vogue

The comic script that follows explains that many a word found in the dictionary is not in use today, and a few of them have completely disappeared. Look at the verse below:

Mōttai, takar, utaḷ and *appar*

Designate the male sheep.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Marapiyal,* verse 48)

In Aṇṇā's play *Nīti Tēvaṉ Mayakkam,* Rāvaṇaṉ files a case against Kampar. He takes umbrage at Kampar describing him as "a merciless demon" in his version of *Rāmāyaṇa* and he himself argues his case before the judge.

"I didn't even touch Cīta, and safeguarded her in the garden of Ashoka. Juxtapose my chivalry with Intira's who raped Akalya, Cantiraṉ who raped his teacher's wife, Lakcumaṇaṉ who chopped off the nose and breast of Cūrpaṇakai, Lord Civa who misbehaved with the wives of the sages in Tārukāvaṉam and Rāma, who assailed Vāli hidden from a vantage point. How could I be termed merciless?" This is Rāvaṇaṉ's defence.

The judge, out of his inability to pass a judgement against the gods, faints.

In the same manner, here comes another piece of imagination. Appar, Campantar, Cuntarar and Māṇikkavācakar were the four renowned Caiva devotees. They were also great poets in Tamiḻ.

Among them, Tirunāvukkaracar who was known as Appar brings a case before the judge. His contention is that his name included under non-human beings (*aḵṟiṇai*) in *Marapiyal* of *Tolkāppiyam* must be deleted.

The judge observes, "It doesn't seem that Tolkāppiyar included your name wantonly to denigrate your reputation, since Tolkāppiyar lived in an era much before that of yours. How could he contemplate maligning your name as you live in a later period?

Appar replies,

"I accept your explanation regarding difference in the era. Therefore, I do not indict Tolkāppiyar personally. It would be enough if my name be deleted."

The judge passes the judgement ordering that the name of Appar be deleted.

Therefore, the term *appar* grouped with *mōttai, takar, uṭal* ceased to be there in the list.

Thus was the word *appar* that meant a he-goat made to disappear from the list.

The account above is only an imaginary, humorous anecdote.

Pērāciriyar, the commentator, points out that the convention of using the word *appar* for a he-goat fell out of use in later years.

Blossom 95

The Cultural Programme and the Gift of Kaḷiṟu

The male of the elephant is *kaḷiṟu.*
Kaḷiṟu denoting the male pig
Is not disallowed too.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Marapiyal,* verses 35, 36)

Kalai is the male of the deer too;
Kalai is also the male of the langur (*mucu*).

(*Poruḷatikāram : Marapiyal,* verse 47)

Narrated below is a humorous incident by which to remember *kaḷiṟu, kēḷal, kalai* and *mucu* used in the verses.

The king returns home after victory in a war. The soldiers are indulging in fun and frolic. The court jesters are singing the victory song and dancing with the soldiers inebriated with toddy. After some time, they stop singing and one of the

court jesters says to his counterpart, "Sir, Court Jester, you can make use of your good offices to arrange a cultural programme by beautiful damsels."

"Not a big deal at all. I will arrange it, right now."

The other court jester replies and leaves the place. He returns then parading a black langur by holding the rope tied to its neck. The jester thrusts a stick into monkey's hand and gestures it to dance. The soldiers burst into peals of laughter, whereas the other court jester enquires in rage, "What is this, sir? Is this a beautiful woman? Do you call this a cultural programme?"

The court jester who has arranged the monkey dance replies,

"As per the rules prescribed in *Tolkāppiyam*, *kalai* means *mucu*. Kindly refer to the dictionary, where you will find the meaning of *mucu* to be a black langur. Leave that alone. I promptly arranged the cultural programme heeding to your request . Now, why don't you give me a reward?"

"What reward do you want?"

"Recommend to the king, I may be given a *kaḷiṟu* (male elephant) as a reward."

Why recommendation to the king? I will myself give you a *kaḷiṟu* as a reward. Please wait a moment, here, I will come."

He reappears after some time, dragging a male pig along with him.

"Dear jester, here is the *kaḷiṟu* which you asked for as a reward. In the very same *Tolkāppiyam* which you cited as a reference, a male pig, along with a male elephant, is referred to as a *kaḷiṟu*. Here, do accept your beautiful *kaḷiṟu*," he says.

This triggers an infectious roar of laughter among the soldiers. The cultural programme and the reward of *kaḷiṟu* have made them laugh to such an extent that their ribs have started aching. It turns out to be a perfect revelry on victory in the war.

The meaning of the verses is:

1. The male elephant is known as *kaḷiṟu*.
   The male pig is also known as *kaḷiṟu*.
2. *Kalai* is the apt word for deer,
   Which designates *mucu* the black langur too.

Blossom 96

The Five Elements

A structured blend of
Earth, fire, water, air and space
As the world is,
The use words are made of
Must be undistorted,
Undeviating from the norms
That go with the classifications of
The human -- non-human generic distinction,
And the five genders thereof.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Marapiyal*, verse 91)

By way of interpreting this verse, Iḷampūraṇar observes that the world is composed of the five elements, viz., earth, fire, water, air and space. He then goes on to explain the two words in the verse *kalattal* and *mayakkam*. The former is a mix, as of pearl, coral, sapphire and ruby. The latter signifies the one like the melted blend of gold, silver and copper.

The world, therefore, exists at two levels - one as a mixture, and the other as an undifferentiated one made up of the five elements, which the compound term in the verse *kalanta mayakkam* signifies. Thus goes the explanation of the commentator.

Now, what does the expression in Tamiḻ *kiṇaṟu veṭṭap pūtam puṟappaṭṭatu* (the elements surfaced as the well was dug) mean?

As one digs up the well, the 'earth' piles up - one element.

The 'air' shut up in the earth comes out - second element

The 'water' gushes forth - third element

The 'sky' is reflected in the water - fourth element

The sun's 'fire' purifies the water - fifth element.

Thus remains the world as the structured fusion of the elements. The phenomena of the world must therefore be denoted without deviation from the norms of usage, and in terms of the human--non-human generic distinction and the five genders informing them.

Violation of the norms of usage would result in distortion and variation of meanings of words. The things of the world must be represented without deviation from the established conventions and in accord with human--non-human classification and gender distinction. Thus goes the import of the *Tolkāppiyam* verse.

Pērāciriyar's explanation is that the five elements remain individual entities and at the same time they remain fused with the things of the world.

Blossom 97

Those Who Realize will Know, Those Who Know will Realize

Compositions admit of
No violation of the conventions in vogue;
Use of diction tested through tradition
Should inform the usage therein.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Marapiyal,* verse 92)

This verse emphasizes that words not breaching the established conventions must go into the making of a verse.

I am not adept in the grammar of poetry. I brought out, sixty years ago, a book of verses titled "It is No Poetry", wherein I have openly admitted my verses being metreless.

I have presided at many poetic meets of eminent poets through years. And this is what I wrote as my presidential address in the poetic meet, on the theme 'Freedom Fighters' broadcast on the All India Radio, Tiruchi, in the year 1967.

He in prison lived, and pulled the oilpress,
To drive away the Whites who ruled the land.
Many were killed before the prime of their lives.
He fought like a sword drawn from out of the sheath,
With no care for his life.
Of his glory to hear,
We are all arrayed here today.

But to describe the greatness of all those
Who have their lives laid down for freedom,
I have neither the poetic ability acquired,
Nor the art of poetry learnt.

Though my verses might poetic metre lack,
Guided as I was by the sole principle
That our land, language, honour and feelings
Should not go undefended,
I make poetic lines of my feelings,
That from my heart do gush forth,
To let those treacherous ones,
The turncoats of principles, gain awareness
I shall say this.

Freedom was gained,
By the loss of so many lives, by the loss of so much blood!
After great loss and labour on earth,
Freedom, like purest gold, was earned.

Can we throw it away?
Good is it to hand over this rose beautiful,
To a monkey wild?
Our freedom let us zealously guard,
Let us add glory to those freedom fighters.

This is the age of new poetry, an age when novelties like haiku are being composed.

To put it in other words, it is the age when words and sentences are juggled or lines broken and they are paraded as rhythmic poetry.

I do not claim that I am the one versed in prosody, and yet my verse portraits are no eyeless needles. I have the sense of pride to proclaim that my poems have remained the magnetic particles drawing even eyeless needles unto their fold. Here are a few examples:

The world to be one with all lands united,
Mankind to be knit as one by human love–
Are the noble thoughts articulated by the poet.

But even he, he as a poet did live
With his place name, Pūṅkuṉṟam, after his name.
And he was known as Kaṇiyaṉ Pūṅkuṉṟaṉār.

When we contemplate this carefully
Doesn't it strike as true
That even this man of eminence
Was bound by the love of his land?

Another poem:

He was the lion of a Tamiḻ with self-respect
Who wouldn't bend
Even to kiss his toddling child;
Instead he would get the child lifted over his head
And go about fondling it.

He was not used to looking down to the ground,
And he would plant a kiss
On the forehead of his love of moon-like face
With the face straight up.

He wouldn't bend like a question mark on the bed
But would lie down erect like an arrow with legs stretched out.

Is he one with a backbone unbending?
Is his heart a field
Where the crop of obeisance never grows?
Amazed thus were many
With gaping mouths and fingers on the nose.

Yet another poem:

There came a woman
Swinging like a jewelled chariot,
Walking on the verdant grass
Where the eggs of snow were being hatched.

She was an adept in the flow of fruit-like Tamiḻ words;
She was the elder sister of Kākkaippaṭiṉi Poṉmuṭiyār;
She sang the praises of
Atiyamāṉ Neṭumāṉañci and the munificent Pāri,
Cēramāṉ Māveṇkōvaṉ,
Kānappēr tanta Vaḻuti
And the Cōḻa king Perunaṟkiḷḷi,
Thereby adding many a jewel to Tamiḻ,
She is Avvai, the light of wisdom!
Another instance:

> Honour! That's the lullaby my son listened to;
> Death! That's the sport he played;
> I taught him the art of using lances
> Even as he was a suckling;
>
> He turned a worthy son to his father
> As aerial roots to a banyan tree;
>
> He rose against the foes in rage,
> The foes with stunted minds like the goat's tail,
> Who dared to usurp our throne,
> He flayed them and saw them routed
> And he gave his life in the deed.

He is now the ruler of fame winning.
Look not at my eyes raining tears!
Look at my heart in joy immersed!

One more of my poems:

Such a joy she did not experience on her marriage;
Son's birth too did not give her as much happiness.

Look! there he lies dead
With a spear piercing his chest!
She saw this and her heart leapt in joy.

O, I was about to pluck away my breasts that fed him
O, where is that wicked man who told me a blatant lie
(That he died with a spear on his back)?
Here is the sword! Where is the tongue of that man?

I keep dedicating at the feet of Mother Tamiḻ such of these poetic portraits that are a blend of the sound of the sword's sway and the music of the harp, and that have infused my fellow Tamiḻs with a new vigour and a sense of amazement.

I might have strayed away from the established conventions of versification. But my mind has all along remained undistracted, The readers who have had a feel of the import of the blossoms of *Tolkāppiyam* presented so far by me would understand this truth. And those who have understood this will feel it in their heart of hearts.

Blossom 98

Primary and Secondary Works

Usage is
What is in vogue and use
Among the literate
From whom issue
The events of popular speech.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Marapiyal* , verse 93)

Primary or original works
Are those compositions
By men of sage wisdom
Whose consummate faculties stand unsullied
By the mire of turpitude.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Marapiyal,* verse 95)

Secondary works comprise four modes.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Marapiyal,* verse 97)

These four modes are:

Summarization, elaboration,
Synthesis of summarization and elaboration
And translation in conformity with the tradition of the receptor tongue.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Marapiyal,* verse 98)

The explanations of these four verses are as follows:

(1) Given the fact that the events of popular speech draw on the use of language by the literate, what is called linguistic usage is the usage of the literate. This apart, this usage defines and informs the worldly usage, poetic usage and the normal, grammatical usage. Following the literate usage and simplifying the poetic usage and the worldly usage for the people at large to access it will go a long way in the development and protection of the language.

(2) The present work gave me the opportunity to engage myself in the protection and preservation of the Tamiḻ language.

(3) When it comes to the meaning of verse 95 given above, a misinterpretation will give room for assumptions and questions like

- *Tolkāppiyam* is the primary work.
- It was composed by a person of consummate wisdom.
- He was also the one of unblemished mind.
- Will Tolkāppiyar go to describe himself in such terms?

Primary works are those that precede and that form the basis or the source of secondary works.

Dr Ilakkuvanar in his *Study of Tolkāppiyam* observes as follows:

> It is said that *Tolkāppiyam* is the earliest extant work in Tamiḻ. No other work predating *Tolkāppiyam* has come to us. It does not mean that no work was written before *Tolkāppiyam*. *Tolkāppiyam* is a work of grammar. In any language, literature precedes grammar. Tamiḻ is no exception to this. Here too grammatical works came to be written only after the advent of literary works. *Tolkāppiyam* was written after not only works of literature but also grammatical treatises, which is attested to by *Tolkāppiyam* itself. Therefore, *Tolkāppiyam* must be seen as the earliest extant work and not the first, primary work.

Even before we arrive at an answer to the question of whether *Tolkāppiyam* is the

primary text, there have come up false mythic accounts like,

Akattiyar was the teacher of Tolkāppiyar.

Akattiyar was the one who wrote the first book in Tamiḻ.

Pāṇiṉi had written a grammatical text in Sanskrit before Tolkāppiyar.

Tolkāppiyar was the son of the Aryan sage Camatakkiṉi.

Camatakkiṉi was the father of Paracurāmaṉ.

Paracurāmaṉ and Rāmaṉ were contemporaries.

Akattiyar belonged to the period of Rāmaṉ.

Tolkāppiyar too belonged to the same period.

What is strange here is that Rāmā's age is fixed before 2000 BC. Pāṇiṉi's period was 350 BC. Had Tolkāppiyar lived after Pāṇiṉi, Paṉampāraṉār in his prologue to *Tolkāppiyam* might not have described Tolkāppiyar as the one versed in *Aintiram*. He would have called him versed in Pāṇiṉi's treatise. As such, it is obvious that *Tolkāppiyam* preceded Pāṇiṉi's work.

Now, let's come to the *Tolkāppiyam* verse referred to above. It does not speak of whether *Tolkāppiyam* is a primary text or not. On the other hand, it discusses the nature of secondary works. A secondary work implies that there must be a primary work. The verse in question just outlines the what and how of a primary work.

But some of our scholar-commentators tend to give the impression that the author of a primary work is God.

Not just that. Shouldn't we realize the wily misdirection behind such assertions like *Akattiyam* is the primary work of the ancient era, and *Tolkāppiyam* is based on this work.

As I have shown earlier, we must ignore such things as to whether *Tolkāppiyam* is a primary work and whether the primary work was authored by God. And we must treat this and the following verses in *Tolkāppiyam* as describing primary and secondary works.

The verse

viṉaiyiṉ nīṅki viḷaṅkiya aṟiviṉ
muṉaivaṉ kaṇṭatu mutal nūlākum

must read as

viḷaṅkiya aṟiviṉ muṉaivaṉ kaṇṭatu
viṉaiyiṉ nīṅki mutal nūlākum

which means that men of consummate wisdom write what are called primary works, works that are faultless and that precede secondary works.

Verses 3 and 4 speak of the four kinds of secondary works: synthesis, elaboration, both synthesis and elaboration, and translation.

Blossom 99

The Lamp on the Hill

If we were to establish a garden, we should decide which trees and flowers should adorn it, think of and implement the amenities needed for the comfort of those who come for a stroll and also carefully avoid things which should not find a place in the garden.

Since the establishment of a garden can have parallels with the making of a book, a verse in *Tolkāppiyam* throws light on the defects to be avoided in a book. Traffic rules prescribe whether we should keep to the right or the left though it differs from country to country. Although this is an important issue, even more important is the fact that without obtaining the permission or observing the signal one should not cross the road.

In the same manner, though a swimming pool is essential in a park, one should not dig a deep well in another corner of the park. The reason is that children who come to the park, accompanied by their parents, should not fall into the well by accident.

A few would come to the garden holding a book with the intention of reading it there. For their sake, bright lamps should burn in a few places. In the same way, lamps should not be there in places where men and women can relax enjoying privacy which is necessary after a day's work. If light is required there it should be dim.

Though the toilet is essential to answer the call of nature, it should not be constructed in the centre of the park.

Such dos and don'ts are in order in a book too, which the following verse lists:

A study sharp-eyed
Points to defects that stain a composition:
Tautology, inconsistency, understatement,
Overstatement, verbiage, obscurity,
Cacophony, contemptible things in unworthy diction,
Persisting in one's own pet ideas,
Incomprehensibility of varied sorts
And failings that issue from these.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Marapiyal,* verse 109)

Tautology is saying the same thing again which is unnecessary. Inconsistency is saying things which are contradictory to one another. Understatement refers to making something seem less important or less impressive than it really is. Overstatement is its opposite. Verbiage is the use of too many words or of more difficult words than needed to express an idea. Obscurity is being difficult to understand. Cacophony is a mixture of loud unpleasant sounds. Such of these defects will not add to the worth of a book.

A book free from these shortcomings will be like the bright lamp on a hillock enlightening minds. Now what are the features of excellence of a composition?

Brevity and perspicuousness,
Pleasing, worthy diction,
Pleasing sounds,
Depth of thought and ideas,
Right organization,
Acceptability in a large measure,
Sublimity
And coherence.

(Naṉṉūl)

Blossom 100

The Hundredth Blossom

The previous chapter looked at the defects of a composition as listed in *Tolkāppiyam*. This verse speaks of thirty-two devices in a composition by which to achieve structural unity, coherence, critical validity and acceptability. It could also be viewed as a collection of norms and conventions informing scholarly writing. This verse constitutes the hundredth flower of my 'Garden of *Tolkāppiyam*'.

The devices in a composition [*utti*]
That go in tune with the norms of thematic unity expand into:
Stating one's theme before dealing with it in detail;
Placing the chapters in a logical, meaningful order;
Summarizing, detailed exposition of what has been briefly stated;
Conforming to the norms or conclusions of the earlier authorities;
Exegesis being added by way of exposition of a proposition;
Expressing what has not been treated earlier in the general statement;
Complementing what has been said in the general statement;
Going backwards over the sequentially presented material
To illuminate the earlier portion and to realize the unity;

Application of a rule relating to one thing
To other things of a similar character;
Statement of absolute certainty of a proposition
That is marked by plurality of meaning;
Taking one's own view of the perspective of the text;
Not deviating from the order that inheres in the text;
Acquiescence in the conclusions drawn by others;
Presenting what has not been there earlier in the text;
Anticipating things to be treated later in the text;
Mention at the commencement
Of what needs to be stated frequently
In the course of the text;
Drawing attention to a subject
That has already been explained;
Constant use of one's own technical terminology;
Showing that a convention bearing on a proposition
Extends to cover others also;
Assertion of an idea by personal authority
Rather than by any objective illustrations;
Choosing the best among the possibilities;
Yet another proposition that emerges
In the course of treatment of a proposition;
Establishing one's own view
By refuting the opposing views of others;
Bringing in the views of others;
Going with the views of others one is unaware of;
Things new being interspersed
In the treatment of a proposition;
Norms and conventions being formulated for posterity;
Stating a fact in such a way
As to imply other things not shown explicitly;
Bringing a term from the preceding or following verse
To bear on that in between;
Making a statement

Pregnant with two interpretive possibilities;
Pondering a meaning
More appropriate than the one on hand;
Such are the devices
And others apropos thereto too
As must go inhering in the text of composition,
Brevity and perspicuity marking them all –
So do the literate men speak
Of the defining features of a composition.

(*Poruḷatikāram : Marapiyal,* verse 111)

Tolkāppiyam predates both Pāṇiṇi and Kaudilyar. Having enjoyed myself in the literary and linguistic riches of this great work, I did invite you to go into this richly endowed garden of flowers.

Because it is against the Tamiḻ culture to send back the visiting guests empty-handed, I have generously placed on your nectarous hands a hundred blossoms.

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.

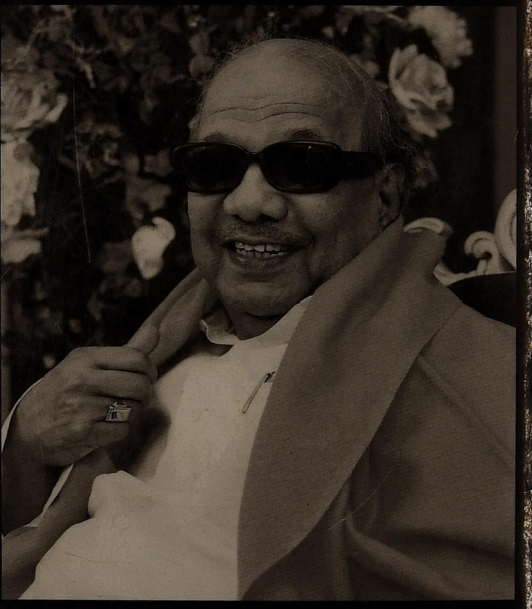
Dr P. Marudanayagam and Dr V. Murugan comprising the editorial team - the former a ripe Professor of English and a comparatist of towering erudition, and the latter a bilingual lexicographer and a distinguished translator with the translations of *Tolkappiyam, Kalithokai, Tirukkural* and *Narrinai, and 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.

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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