

Gleanings
OF
TAMIL CULTURE

A. M. PARAMASIVANANDAM

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GLEANINGS OF TAMIL CULTURE

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PREFACE

This book is a collection of eleven lectures delivered by me on various occasions and I hope that the topics dealing with the social condition and literary traditions of Tamil Nad, will be of great interest and use to all lovers of Tamil. If only Tamil scholars come forward to get their writings translated into English, the great and distinct Tamil civilization and the rich treasures of Tamil literature will come to be far more widely appreciated than it is to-day. It is this idea that gave an incentive to me to bring out this volume.

The first four lectures delivered at different places are reproduced here in extenso. The last seven lectures were delivered under the auspices of the Tiruvalluvar Kazhagam, Madurai at the instance of Tamil lovers and scholars like Sri K. Palaniappan, Sri T. Sundaram and Sri. T. Manickavasagam Chettiar, Sri. N. R. Raghunathachari, Professor of Zoology, Thiagarajar College, Madurai, wrote-out an English synopsis of these lectures for the Indian Express which published them in full. Sri. Raghunathachari and the Editor of

the Indian Express have thus placed me under a debt of gratitude to them.

I also acknowledge with thanks the great assistance rendered by Sri. A. Subbian, Assistant Professor of English, Pachaiyappa's College, Madras and Sri. V. Uppili, Lecturer in English, Thiagarajar College, Madurai.

Madurai }
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A. M. Paramasivanandam

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* A chapter of the thesis submitted for M. Litt.
Degree of the Madras University

DEDICATION

To World Peace and its Promoters.

DEVELOPMENT OF LITERATURE IN TAMIL

All literature answers to something in life, some habitual form of expression. The stage imitates life, calling in the services of the eye and the ear; there is the narrative of the teller of tales or the minstrel; the song, the letter, the talk—all forms of human expression and communication have their antitypes in literature. The only thing necessary is that the thing or the thought should be vividly apprehended, enjoyed, felt to be beautiful, felt in the blood and felt along the heart and expressed with a certain gusto. We must remember that the nomenclature of literature, the attempt to classify the forms of literary expression, is a confusing and a bewildering thing unless it is used merely for convenience. The essence of it is that it is a large force flowing in any channel that it can, and the classification of art is a mere classification of channels. What lies behind all art is the principle of wonder and beauty; it may be the sense of fitness, of strangeness, of completeness, of effective effort.

In poetry which is a form of art the essence is throughout the same; it is personal sensation,

personal impression, evoked by something strange or beautiful or interesting. Poetry demands a certain sacredness and solemnity of mood. The poet is emotional in a reverential way; he is thrilled, he loves, he worships, he sorrows; but it is all essentially grave, because he wishes to recognise the sublime and uplifted elements of life; he wishes to free himself from all discordant, absurd, undignified contrasts.

Tamil literature dates far back to 3000 years and it has been the mirror of the Tamil civilization, culture and way of life. Those foreign scholars whose services to Tamil are remarkable have understood the greatness of its literature. Caldwell, Pope and Beschi have paid great tributes to the ancient literature. It is up to us to remind ourselves that we belong to a noble and rich tradition and continue it in all possible ways. It is the literature of a country that reflects the civilization of the people; and when all things change and die a gradual death, the literature remains and stands the test of time.

Spenser has said in his 'Ruins of Times' the same fact :

“For deeds do die for ever nobly done
And thoughts of men do as themselves decay
But wise words, taught in numbers for to run

Rewarded by the Muses, live for ay
We may with storming showers be washed
[away
No better - breathing winds with harmful blast
Nor age, nor envy may them ever waste.”

Comparing the other arts with literature, Sir John Courthope said, “Poetry, working through languages, can free itself as painting and sculpture cannot, from the limitations of time and space, and can represent in words, what music cannot, a series of connected action”. He proceeds to say that poetry as a form of art helps the human mind to ennoble itself, enrich itself, widen itself and sets the mind to think of things that we heeded not. It chastens and subdues our passions and enables us to hear the still sad music of humanity. We are transported to a region, far away from the mundane world, with its sick hurry and divided aims.

It is not the personal aspect alone that poetry deals with; it deals with the harmony that exists between the personal and global aspects of life. To quote John Courthope “In every genuinely inspired poetical conception there are two elements of life, one universal, the other individual. The universal element is the idea of the subject, whatever it may be, as it exists in an undeveloped

Development of Literature

state in the human mind, the individual element is the particular form of character which is impressed upon the subject by the creative genius of the poet.”

Literature is intimately connected with the life of the people “The abiding life of Poetry must be looked for, far beneath the surface of society; it should be the aim of the poet first to divine the true character of his age, as distinct from the shows and illusions of things and then to discover which of the great moulds of Poetry corresponds most closely with the nature of thought. Therefore Poetry, like politics, is an outward mode of expressing the acting principles of social life.”

“Just as in human beings it is the complete union of soul and body which contributes to the harmonious life of each person, so in poetry the beauty and propriety of the imaginative form will proceed from the organic unity of the imaginative conception.”

Turning our attention to the growth of Tamil literature which is the subject of my talk this evening, the most ancient Tamil literature available to us is the great work called ‘*Tholkappiam*’. Most of the Tamil scholars consider it only as a great book of grammar. But it is

proper to value it as an ancient literary piece also. Akasthiar, the master of Tolkappiar who wrote *Tholkappiam* has said that grammar would not have come to life if literature had not existed before. With the development of literature, the established usages, conventions and rules grew. Those rules formed the grammar at a later stage. It is evident that before *Tholkappiam* there had been several masterpieces of literature.

Tholkappiam belonged to the middle Sangam age—roughly three thousand years ago. In the history of the world, these three thousand years mark a very small period in the historical time-scale. However we are able to trace the continuity and growth of Tamil literature from the date of *Tholkappiam*.

There are two broad divisions in Tamil literature - one called *Agam* pertaining to love, marriage, and domestic life; the other called *Puram* pertaining to wars, expeditions, the State and the Country. In ancient Tamil literature we find many masterpieces belonging to the first division.

After the age of *Tholkappiam* there came a collection of poems called *Pattuppattu*, *Ettuttokai* and *Pathinen Kil Kannkku*. Scholars are of the opinion that much of the valuable literature was destroyed by a deluge that happened before the date of the

third Sangam. The country that extended beyond the Cape Comorin was swallowed by the ravaging sea and the Tamil country was limited to a narrower compass. The loss was a great and irreparable one. The only middle Sangam work that escaped the deluge was *Tholkappiam*.

Most of the literature which developed after this age is now extant and it flourished under the patronage of great Kings and lovers of Tamil. Many of the ancient Tamil Kings were poets themselves.

Of the two collections of poems belonging to the Sangam Age, '*Pattuppattu** contains ten poems as the name itself denotes. They are long poems glorifying the heroic deeds and noble qualities of certain kings. One of the ten poems describes the capital of Chola Nad, which was washed away by the sea, namely Kaverippoompattinam. The great cities Kancheepuram and Madurai are also mentioned. The seasons namely *Kar* (Rainy season) and *Vaadai* (Cold season) are described. These poems clearly reflect the life of all the people of Tamil Nad in all its various aspects.

Next comes *Ettuthokai** — poetical collection of eight books as the name suggests. Each

* See Appendix.

collection contains a number of verses—these poems were written by several scholars. Most of them deal with love, marriage and domestic harmony. The Tamil poets in some of the poems emphasised the superiority of things spiritual over the material. They sang of the glories of love and the sanctity of marriage. They were far above the considerations of caste, creed, colour or complexion. They always thought of the one world and the shape of things to come. There are some references in some of these collections about 'Nandas' & 'Mouriyars' of Northern kingdom of the fourth century B. C.

Of the eighteen *Kilkanakku*, the one which is of paramount importance is *Thirukkural*. It is a work which the world will not willingly let die. It is an Ethical code containing 1330 couplets, each inculcating a profound truth. They are universal truths—true to all nations, all times, all passions and policies.

The author of this great work is Thiruvalluvar whose parentage is not known. His real name is not known. There is another work called '*Naladiar*' a book containing stanzas of four lines each. These stanzas instruct man of his duties, right behaviour, right conduct, right associations and right dealings with others. These two books '*Kural*' and '*Naladiar*' written by individual

authors saw the light of day towards the close of the last Sangam Age.

During the same period or a little later, an entirely new type of literature developed. The Epic became the most fascinating branch of literature.

The first ancient epic that we have in Tamil literature is '*Silappathikaram*'. It is a story pertaining to a merchant of the ancient Chola capital, *Pukar*, otherwise known as *Kavirippumpattinam*. The three ancient kings of Tamil Nad, Chola, Pandya and Chera, their glorious reigns and the greatness of their governments are spoken of vividly in the memorable epic. It is an epic massive in detail, gripping in its story, and ennobling in its ideal. The characters belong to all orders of society from the king to the dancing girl. It is at once an epic, heroic poetry and poetic drama.

This work '*Silappathikoram*' thus became the nucleus for the other epics which followed. Next in order of importance came the great work called '*Manimekalai*'. Both of them are called 'Twin Epics'. There are many differences between these two epics - in thought, in conception, in treatment, in the underlying

philosophy. Sathanar, the author of *Manimekalai* - some scholars believe, was responsible to create a certain cleavage between the religions prevailing in those days in Tamil Nad. He was a Buddhist. He in his book *Manimekalai*, stressed the greatness of his own religion - Buddhism.

Manimekalai glorifies the greatness of Buddhism at the expense of other religions while *Silappathikaram* is far above such considerations. This is a serious flaw that we find in the great work.

After the second century A. D., at the end of the Sangam age when Buddhism and Jainism of north began to spread fast in the country, Tamil literature suffered a set-back and nothing is known of the development of its literature in the succeeding generations i. e., from third century to sixth century A. D.

It is evident that Tamil Nad was under the rule of foreign kings and Tamil literature was not only hindered in its progress but also took a different turn altogether. We are not able to account for the vast changes that we find in the poems that followed this dark period of nearly four centuries (3rd to 6th). In the 7th century A.D. religious hymns and songs formed the bulk of

Tamil literature. The Saivite Saints and Vishnavite Alvars were the leaders who were responsible for the great change in the field of Tamil Literature.

When the outlook and content changes and when the saints took up the vocation of justifying the ways of God to men, the style also changed. The structure of poetry changed. Alliterations and words set to music, resonant with religious fervour were employed to elevate the soul from its ordinary pitch to a soaring height. These devotional songs sung in the greater glory of God found a permanent place in Tamil Literature of middle ages.

In addition to these religious hymns, stories depicting the deeds and graceful actions of Hindu Gods and Goddesses were written in verse. The great King Anabayan who was taking a keen interest in a Jain work '*Chintamani*' was advised to stop his pursuit by Poet Sekkizhar and instead given the great book called *Periapuranam* the monumental work describing the life of great Nayanmars and the earthly actions of Lord Siva the God of Saivaitees.

Next in chronology appears the greatest Tamil epic called *Kamba Ramayanam*. It is a translation of the *Ramayana* of Valmiki. The noble hero, of the epic Rama is a Vishnavite. The antagonist of the hero, Ravana is a Saivite.

Conflicts were too many between these two opposing personages: yet virtue wins in the end. The only fault that we can find in the Ramayana is that it contains in itself an element of conflict between two religious creeds. Many scholars are not in favour of this idea. But we can see even now in Tamilnad that some of the Veera Saivites are not willing to touch the *Ramayana*. Some of the staunch Vaishnavites hate Periapuranam or anything smacking of saivism. But both are invaluable in Tamil language. If we project our sympathetic imagination and consider the personages in the Ramayana as representatives of absolute principles or virtues, then the epic is freed from the apparent fault that we attribute to it. However as a piece of art, it is the masterly creation of a master mind. The whole epic is inwardly conceived.

In the middle ages after the 10th and 11th centuries, apart from poetry the form of Prose also developed. Inscriptions belong to the later Chola period. These inscriptions reveal the great reigns of the Chola Kings, their charity, patronage, and their heroism, valour and most of all their love of Tamil. These inscriptions are chiefly found in stone slabs in ancient Temples. They clearly show the fame of the king in exquisite prose. Then we come to know the purpose, the person to whom it was dedicated etc., in the latter half of the bulk. We are grateful to the Indian

Government which bestows attention to these ancient works and tries to preserve all of them.

After that period, commentaries were written to the great works in Tamil like Kural, Pattuppattu, Silappathikaram, Tholkappiam etc. Thus grew the form of prose in Tamil literature. Prose commentaries, those written by Nachinarkiniyar, Parimelalagar and Sivagnanamunivar of later age are of great importance. They are delightful and instructive.

Many translations were made during this period in Tamil before the Moslem conquest of Tamil Nad. But they have not found a permanent place in Tamil literature. They are known to only very few dim and dusty scholars. Like the Ramayana which was translated into Tamil, another great epic the Mahabaratha was also translated. But this Mahabaratha was translated by Perundevanar four centuries before Kamban brought out his translation of the Ramayana. The other translations like Tiruvilayadal Puranam and other Thala puranams did not capture the imagination of the people precisely because of their mythological and myth-making aspects.

The rise of *Prapandhams* marks a definite phase in the development of Tamil literature. They are poems written in praise of God as the first cause and essence of all things in the world.

The divisions of these Prapandhams are named as Kovai, Ula, Andahdi, Kalambagam; Thoodhu, Parani etc. They all belong to a much later period. The only Ula composed by Serman called Adi Ula belongs to the early period of the 9th century. These types of poems are worthy of mention for their depth of thought and felicity of expression.

Coming to the recent developments in Tamil literature, we have to bear in mind the changes that came upon the life of the people, their civilization and modes of life. The impact of other civilizations on Indian culture and thought, was largely responsible for the rise of certain types of literature in our country. Foreign words were used in abundance in Tamil. The impact of Mohammadanism and Christainity gave rise to many works in Tamil. Mohammadan scholars and Christian missionaries played a prominent part in enriching the language as literature of Tamil Nad. Seethakathai a patron and also one of those eminent muslim scholars dedicated himself to the betterment of Tamil literature. Pope became a Tamilian by conversion and plodded a weary way to enrich the language. The Tamil speaking population is indebted to them for ever for their service. Pope's rendering of grammar in a simplified form and his translations of Kural, Naladiyar and Tiruvachakam are marvellous pieces of achievement. The Italian born Beski came to Tamil Nad rechristened himself Veeramamunivar,

studied the language with assiduous industry and ardent love and gave valuable works which were the result of his scholastic pursuits. Chaldwell's "Comparative Philology of the Dravidian languages" is a work which is very important both for scholars and students.

The Saivate and Vishnava saints of the last two or three centuries did their best to the development of Tamil literature. Of the ever so many poems, the songs of Thayumanavar are worthy of special consideration. They are religious songs, highly devotional, capable of evoking in us feelings to which we have hitherto been strangers and elevate us to a solemn and sacred mood of contemplation.

The last great poet that this country saw before its independence was Bharathi. He was a poet, philosopher, mystic and social reformer. He was the one who had the integral vision of India. He was the poet who created a Renaissance in Tamil poetry. His poems compare favourably with any of those in Tamil literature for the intensity of thought and force of expression. His patriotic songs have a powerful appeal to all thinking souls. His philosophical poems like the 'Kuyil' teach us of more things than are dreamt of in our philosophy. His range has been the widest and his expression the simplest. He was one who

understood the dignity of man as man, song of the toils and labours of the workers and felt the glory of India in every vein of his body. Tamil Nad will cherish the memory of the sweet bard and continue to sing his songs for edification and delight. Of the innovations of Bharathi, the introduction of the blank verse in Tamil poetry is very important. The imagery, the diction, the comprehensive vision of Bharathi find adequate expression in his poems.

There are some English echoes in his poems which arrest the attention of the reader. For example, he says that the sweet strains of music of the Kuyil, (a kind of Skylark) set him to think of things which he has not thought of before.

Wordsworth sang :-

“One impulse from the vernal wood
Can teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good
Than all the sages can.”

In the same poem, Bharathi speaks of the pearls in the bowels of the oyster and the red lotus in the dirty pond. Here we find an echo of Gray's lines,

“Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear”

Life has become complex in our times and 'we are measuring our lives with coffee spoons'. 'The poetry in us is slowly dying and we are faced with many trials and problems which we are not able to solve. We have become more prosaic in our attitude. The novels and the cinema come to our rescue with all their benefactions and evils. The present generation has not seen a poet of a high order in Tamil Nad.

THE HISTORICAL EVIDENCES OF THE FIVE GREAT "ATRUPPADAIS" IN TAMIL

By studying history we acquaint ourselves with the age-long civilizations. With the evolution of time many of them have paled into insignificance except the Roman and the Tamil civilizations which adorn the pages of history even to this day. The Dravidian civilization occupies a predominant place and the volumes of ancient Tamil literature bear testimony to the greatness of the civilization in South India during the glorious reign of the Tamil kings belonging to the popular dynasties of the Cholas, the Cheras and the Pandyas. From a study of ancient Tamil literature we come to know about the political and social conditions of the Tamilians. During the time of the Cheras, Cholas and the Pandyas, the empire extended up to the Himalayas and they had sway over the whole of India. Some of their adventurous and chivalrous deeds were immortalised in the lapidary inscriptions with royal emblems on mountain-peaks.

It could be historically traced that the Tamilians during the initial stages of their deve-

lopment had commercial transactions with great trading centres like Greece, Italy, Rome, China and Java. The Greek words 'auroza', 'tuki' etc., borrowed from Tamil assert the commercial relationship between the two countries. It is regrettable to note a fall in the glory of the Tamil civilization probably due to the absence of the propagators of this age-long civilisation. Even though some pieces of their literature have been destroyed by deluge and fire yet from the remains we could gather many details regarding the Tamilians and their culture.

In the history of South India we are familiar with three Sangams and the most conspicuous of them flourished in Madura. The Sangam comprised forty nine poets, the leader of whom was Nakkirar. This Sangam produced works of great literary value and they are classified as 'Pattu pattu' (Ten idyllic songs), Ettu Thogai (Eight collections), 'Pathinen-kil-kanakku' (18 minor poem) and two great epics 'Silappathikaram' and 'Manimekalai'. were perhaps produced all the fag end of the Sanagam Age or soon after. The literary activity in South India was so great during that period that it came to be characterised as the Sangam age. But I am for the moment concerning myself only with the five idyllic songs taken from Pattu Pattu. These five songs from one group termed

‘Atruppadais’. ‘Aru’ means ‘way’ and ‘Padutthu’ means ‘to guide’ and thus in this collection of songs, the bard who obtained gifts from the king advised his fellow bards who met him accidentally on his way home, to benefit by the king’s hospitality. The first song in this collection seems to have been the work of Nakkirar—the erudite scholar and leader of the Third Sangam, wherein he describes the greatness of God Muruga as his true devotee. Incidentally Nakkirar enlightens us on the method of worship in those days. God Muruga is characterised the Lord of Kurinji (mountainous regions) one of the four regions of the Tamil Nad as depicted in ‘Tholkappiam’, the other regions being ‘Mullai’, ‘Murudam’ and ‘Neydal’.

The description of the lives led by the sages is appreciable. Forbearance and simplicity seem to have been their important characteristics. They wore the dresses made of barks. Since they fasted on almost all the days’ their bodies became mere skeletons. They were detached in their attitude, never swayed by passions of love and hatred and even the learned scholars were not able to read their minds. We are able to know about the times in which the sages lived and about the high learning and spiritual qualities of these sages. They offered prayers to God Muruga to ensure the prosperity of the world. The poet refers to the

four stages of man's life—the first being that of 'Brahmacharya'. During this period every individual was supposed to be guided by a learned 'guru' till his fortyeighth year. Sacrifice of animals was common during the time of Nakkirar. Consequently too much emphasis was being laid on the Yagas though Saint Thiruvalluvar was of strong opinion that a vegetarian who believes in non-violence is better than one who performs Yagas. In those days feasts and festivals were in vogue, goats being killed during the time of feasts. After the feast, the common people used to gather and dance to propitiate Lord Muruga. This kind of dance came to be known as 'Veriyadal' when the dancer drank 'Teral', wore flowers and resembled God Muruga. 'Silappathikaram' bears evidence to the prevalence of such dances in that age. In those days the use of camphor during Puja celebrations both in the temples and in the houses, unlike the modern days, was not prevalent. Instead they used benzoin. The poet further points out that the holy place Thirupparangunram is situated by the side of the flourishing trade-centre the city of Madurai. He describes the natural resources of the land and refers to the amalgamator of the Vedic and Tamil customs especially with reference to the puja celebrations.

The next idyllic song composed by the poet *Mudathamakkanniar*, elaborately describes the

kingdom of *Cholan Karikalan*. His capital was *Kaveripumpattinam* on the sea shore (near *Mayavaram*, Tanjore District.) A great monarch as he was, his empire extended up to the Himalayas. His sovereignty was accepted by many of the Northern rulers, in cognizance of which they paid tributes. His administration was very mild and he was enthusiastic about the development of the Tamil literature. All facilities including deforesting, were provided for the people coming from distant places to settle in his land. He took measures for improving water supplies from the river *Kaveri*. By fostering trade and agriculture he improved the economic condition of his empire. He was a great warrior and his martial abilities facilitated his easy victory over the combined armies of nine kings at the battle of '*Venni*'. The two literary pieces *Porunarruppadaï* and *Pattinappalai* pay glowing tributes to his glorious reign, vividly describing his great achievements. The first piece was sung by '*Mudathamakkanniar*' and the other by *Uruthirankkannanar*.

The poem *Porunarruppadaï* describes the pathetic condition of the bards who were intellectually great but financially impoverished. But the kings greatly interested in the development of culture, improved the condition of these bards who wore tattered clothes, by their benevolent

patronage. Their life was miserable. The kitchen did not enjoy the warmth of the fire and the walls were full of insects. They had insufficient light and the lamps were filled with dust. They ate a poor meal as it consisted of merely greens without salt. But to all outward appearances they led a happy, cheerful and contented life. The Royal patronage never gave them any opportunity to brood over their miserable life. The poem describes vividly how these bards were treated by the kings and what rewards they had from them.

These bards on their entry into the king's palace were received by the kings themselves and great honours were bestowed on them. They were presented with lace-bordered clothes and were allowed to stay in the rest houses. It appears that these bards stayed in the rest house for over many days and any bard's desire to leave the rest house would give displeasure to the king. Cholan Kari-kalan was one such king. Thus the learned bards who might have entered the king's palaces as poor wandering minstrels would have become princes as a result of the kindness shown towards them by these monarchs. The gifts given by one king would enable them to live happily during their life time and there was no necessity for such bards to receive gifts from another. The bards were given rich food and it consisted of boiled rice, meat and

flesh as well as juice of various fruits. In short, the way in which these bards were entertained resembles the modern western customs and manners. They were given fine clothes as transparent as the sea-foam and this testifies to the development of the textiles during the period. Some of the kings sacrificed their own comforts for the sake of the bards. It is said that one of the kings actually found a bard sleeping in the cosy couch — "Murasu Kattil" — and stood by his side fanning the bard until the latter woke up. The poem also narrates how the kings bade farewell to the bards. It is true that the kings were reluctant but ultimately due to earnest request they might have condescended half-heartedly to permit the bards to leave the palace. The bard was sent in a chariot driven by four horses and the king as a mark of respect followed him for a short distance. This could be characterised as one of the traditional customs of the Tamilians, and even to this day this custom is adhered to by the Tamilians who are always courteous and generous towards their guests.

The poem lays great stress on the extent of the empire of king Karikalan whose sway extended not only over the whole of South India but also over North India where many of the kings paid allegiance to him, recognising his supremacy. He was respected and honoured like Seran

Senkuttuvan, a Chera king who went up to the sacred mount Himalayas to carve a stone image of Kannaki. Karikala Cholan gained an easy victory over the Chera and the Pandiya kings and the great valour exhibited by Karikalan is depicted in lucid style in this poem. Subsequently he gained further victories and thus succeeded in establishing his hegemony over the neighbouring states. His administration was admirable and his administration of justice was tempered by equity even in his early years. He was the posthumous son of Elenjet Cheni. He resembled God Muruga in form and in qualities. Many of his enemies who harmed him in his early days, later became conscious of his valour and began to honour and respect him.

The poem in the end describes the ceaseless, flowing streams of the river Kaveri which made the land more fertile and almost all the ancient poets sang in praise of it. The well-organised city of Pugar, the capital of Karikalan was situated at the mouth of the river. The two great epics of Tamil literature deal with the lives of the great personalities who flourished in that city.

The third poem in this collection is called ‘Sirupanarruppadai’ written by Nallur Nathattanar and this poem was dedicated to Nalliyakkodan of Oymanadu. This poem glorifies the reign of three

great monarchs who contributed a great deal towards the development of Tamilnad, as well as the three important capitals. Apart from them the poet portrays the lives and doings of seven 'vallals' called 'Kadai Elu Vallals' (the last seven benefactors). These Vallals were the true adherents of the Hindu Philosophy which teaches fellow-feeling towards all lives—plants, animals and human beings. According to this philosophy there is life in everything and the modern science has clearly proved that even the plants possess life. One of the Vallals by name Pari left his golden chariot to be a support to a kind of creeper called *mullai* which he found on his way and returned home by walk with the utmost satisfaction. The sacrifice he made had been recorded by the Saint Sundarar in the hymns of Thevaram. Another of the Vallals by name Pagan saw on a fine winter morning a peacock spreading its coloured wings and dancing. But he was under the delusion that the peacock was in need of protection against the cold weather of the winter season. So he covered the peacock with the golden shawl which was a royal gift. Still another of the Vallals, Athigaman, knowing fully well that he would live for centuries by eating a particular fruit gave it away at the risk of his life to a poetess, believing that the long life of the poetess, when compared to his, would be more beneficial

to the whole universe. There were other of the Vallals like Kari, Ori, Elini, Nalli who made similar sacrifices and performed various deeds of charity. However this poet emphatically asserts that Nalliyakkodan was greater than all the Vallals who lived before him. The bard who obtained help from this hero directed another bard to proceed to the capital of Oymanadu.

Oymanadu was a small territory around the modern town *Tindivanam*. The capital was at *Kidankil* and though it appears a small village now, it might have been the capital at the time of the hero. We find even to this day the ruins of the many destroyed fortresses by the side of the village. *Velur* and *Amur* were two of the important villages ruled by the hero of the poem and as such we can imagine that his empire should have extended upto modern *Conjeevaram*. The poet mentions a shrine of *God Muruga* in the village of *Velur*. This *Velur* is modern *Ilaiyanarvelur* five miles south of *Walajabad* near *Conjeevaram* where we find a shrine of Lord *Muruga*. This village is about forty miles from the capital. Quite in accordance with the details given in the poem, the village *Amur* (now known as *Chittamur*) is between the capital and *Velur*.

The king *Nalliyakkodan* was a god-fearing man and he was a true devotee of *Muruga* who helped

him in times of war and danger. He belonged to a tribe called 'Oviyarkudi'. The bard describes the way that would lead to the capital which could be reached by passing through Velur first and then Amur. In these two villages the travellers could get sufficient food and shelter for any number of days. In the village of Amur the brahmins and Vellalas were introduced to the guests and especially the vellala women folk would be very kind towards the unknown guests and would provide the latter with delicious rice. The capital city has been well described by the bard who points out that in the capital town there were feasts and festivals every day and the royal palace was located in the centre of the town, where the king lived in peace and comfort. King *Nalliyakkodan* has been characterised as a typical example of an ideal ruler of Tamil nad. He was always charitable towards those who helped him. He always associated himself with learned scholars and cultured personages. He treated all people alike and put on an ever smiling face towards his guests. Popular as he was, he gave a patient hearing to what the people complained. His generosity was so great that he was always kind towards the fallen foe. He was a great military strategist and in all his campaigns he was crowned with glory and there was no instance of his withdrawal. He was a great man of letters; as such he judged literary men and honoured them and gave them munificent

gifts. Consequently the bard stated that any scholar who entered the palace of a Tamil king returned greatly enriched, with elephants and gold.

The fourth song glorifies the reign of *Thondaiman Ilanthirayan* who ruled *Thondaimandalam* having *Conjeevaram* as his capital. In this poem also we find preference being given to the treatment accorded to the bards by the king. *Ilanthirayan* might have been the grand son of *Karikalan* and the poet who composed this *idyll* on *Ilanthirayan* also paid a tribute to *Karikalan* in his poem called *Pattinappalai*. *Ilanthirayan* was born to a *Chola monarch* by a *Nage princess* of a foreign land. The boy *Ilanthirayan* on his way to his father's house was ship-wrecked and by swimming he reached the shore. There he founded a kingdom called *Thondaimandalam* to the north of the *Chola territory*. This fourth song *Perumpanarruppadai* was written in praise of him by a learned poet named *Uruthirankannanar* of *Kadiyalur*. In this poem we get a clear and vivid account of the lives and customs of the people in the region of *Tamil nad*. It is really pleasing to note the treatment accorded to the guests.

The poet narrates how kindly he was received and treated at various places. At one place he was served boiled rice with dried meat in teak leaves.

At another place he was supplied with red rice cultivated on elevated grounds manured with the meat of a 'double-edged' lizard. This was followed by the delicious drinks prepared from paddy. The inhabitants of the forest regions provided the guests with curd and good milk at nights. At some other place the minstrels were furnished with excellent rice accompanied by the curry made out of the cocks and chickens. Subsequently they were served with juice made out of sugar cane. The brahmins in the villages gave them many kinds of fine dishes with doll, ghee and pickles. Even the robbers on the way served them with cold rice along with bacon. A study of the way in which the various sects received the guests showed their generosity. The brahmins were not secluded and they received the guests without any distinction. On their way to the capital there is a Vishnu temple near Conjee, outside the city and this place is called 'Thiruvehga' by commentators. Here the minstrels used to stay for some time before they could proceed to the city proper.

Then the poet gives a graphic description of the capital. There were huge and beautiful gardens full of flowers and fruits and monkeys used to gather in those gardens. There were broad streets which made the city appear very beautiful. The numberless chariots passing to and fro made ruts on the streets. There was a

huge fortress around the city to safeguard it. The bazaar-streets were very much attractive. Many houses were constructed to provide facilities for the visitors to stay. In the town the people of diverse religions gathered together and changed their views by indulging in free discussions. Many of the poets and warriors were at the gateway of the palace to receive gifts and presents for their intrinsic talents as well as for their meritorious services.

It was the same author who composed the poem *Pattinappalai* wherein he has described the beauties of *Kaveripumpattinam*, the capital of *Karikalan*. This poem narrates the importance of the city, its construction, its economic conditions and its customs. The ruler of *Conjee* received the bards cordially, afforded them food and shelter. At the time of departure the bards were allowed to go in beautifully decorated chariots and were given huge lumps of gold. From a study of this poem, we come to know about the capital of *Thondainad* which is glorified even to this day because of its past greatness. Such literary evidences regarding *Conjeevaram* synchronised with the writings of the *Chinese travellers* like *Hieun-Tsang* who visited the land after three centuries.

The fifth and the last poem of our discussion is *Malaipadukadam*. '*Kadam*' means sound and naturally the poem deals with the description of

the echo of the mountains. Such mountain-regions were ruled by a king known in his history as *Nannan* with his capital at *Chenkaima*. This is the longest poem as it consists of 583 lines and it is also known as ‘*Koothar Atruppadais*’. The capital *Chenkaima* was in the midst of mountainous regions and hence the passage to it was rather difficult. The minstrels had to cross the river *Cheygar* to go to the capital. This capital was situated to the west of *Thiruvannamalai* and on the border of Salem district. *Chenkaima* is *Chengam* of North Arcot district and there is no gainsaying the fact that this was the capital of the *Nannans*.

In this poem we can gain sufficient information about the art of music as well as the musical instruments of that age. In those days the dancers and bards had fine ‘*yaz*’ in their hands. Modern musical instruments may have been constructed on the models described in this poem. The tediousness of the journey was to a great extent eased by the musical sounds produced from these instruments. Just as a river flowing from the mountains to the sea, carries with it precious things, the dancer returns from the royal palace with precious wealth. We find also mention being made about the general characteristics of the hero of the poem. He was adorned with gold ornaments and flower garlands. The women

of his family maintained high ideals of chastity. He desired to become a great warrior and his participation in the wars was only to safeguard the interests of others. Being a man of letters he encouraged the poets, minstrels and dancers. We also understand that the people clung to the habit of looking for auspicious moments before going on errands.

The royal capital was one of grandeur and there gathered numerous poets, poetesses, minstrels and dancers who exhibited their talents to the king. Many of the relatives of the king also visited the royal capital and participated in the discussion on important topics of varied interest. The poet also brings further the theory that the earth, water, fire and air have come from vacuum '*Agayam*' and this theory has been ratified by the modern scientists. The poet describes the nature of the agricultural sources of the land revenue.

As usual the strangers were treated hospitably by the ruler and were provided with various kinds of food which consisted of rice, meat, juices etc. They were also given fruits of the mountainous regions. The guests who mainly consisted of the dancers were so pleased with the Royal palace for days together.

Then the poet explains the journey to the Royal palace. There were many difficulties to be

faced on the way, consequently people could travel only in groups. In these mountainous regions there were elephants and snakes and hence the pathway was very dangerous. On the way they had to cross a mountain called Naviram which was subject to continual, heavy rainfall. Hence people were advised to safeguard their own musical instruments lest they should be damaged. At nights they had to take shelter amidst rocks to be free from danger. At times they played on the musical instruments, hearing the sound of which the hill tribes surrounded the travellers and gave them food. As the poet laid much stress on the description of the echo of the mountains the poem was designated as 'Malai-padu kadam.' Mention is also made about the worship of stone images-*Nadukal*. Heroes of the Tamilnad came to be deified and their images were worshipped by the people. In the mountain regions the people were provided with fire during the nights when the people would not be in a position to bear the cold. Passing the mountains they had to cross the river Cheyyar before they could enter the gate of the capital. In the capital there were many public places where the dancers and minstrels were permitted to take shelter during the period of their stay at the capital. The author gives a list of the various kinds of food including meat, fish, fruits etc., to the guests.

Nannan paid much attention to the treatment accorded to the guests of the capital. The dancer was crowned with a golden lotus flower and was awarded valuable prizes.

It appears that the musical instruments were made of leather and consequently became useless if they were allowed to become wet. The mountain tribes made use of fire to keep themselves warm during rainy seasons. The author of the poem, Perumkunroor-kilar describes the river Cheyyar and he belonging to the mountain tribes explains impressively the interior parts of the mountain regions and the lives led by the people in those regions.

So far the subject matter of the five songs has been reviewed. These are the five great Atruppadais in Tamil which belong to the Sangam age, i. e. the second century A. D. The literature of this age, unlike the later literary works is fortunately free from exaggeration and thus furnish facts for historical research. Let us now make a study of the general characteristics of the Tamilian civilization and its various aspects. As I have already mentioned the distinctive features of the civilization of the Tamils of the early centuries of the Christian era are well analysed in these poems. The condition of the richer few was better than the poorer many. In fact the poor had hardly

a meal a day as contrasted with the rich who enjoyed all the amenities of life. The poor had practically no good clothes and were always to be found in rags. The rich wore gorgeous garments as fine as the waves. Such disparity is deplorable.

The Aryans entered the Tamilnad before the Sangam age and we notice the presence of some of the Aryan customs in the land e.g. the recitation of Vedas and the performance of the Yagas by the brahmins. The religion of the Aryans led to the worship of Gods like Varuna and Indra in the Tamilnad. Though we find the prevalence of the sacrifice of goats especially by the savage people yet in the celebration of 'Veriyadal' of Lord Muruga, rice took the place of animal's flesh as offerings to God.

The development of music and dance was an important feature in the Tamilian civilization. In those days there were a number of musicians. The male artiste was known as *Paanan* and the female artiste as *Paadini* and the able dancers were known as *Kuthars* and *Viralies*. We have observed in the last idyll *Malaipadukadam* mention being made of the high class music among the mountain-regions and it is said that even robbers when they came across such musicians honoured them and guided them safely to their respective places of destination. The greatness and glory of the music and

the musicians of the Tamilnad is further exemplified by another brilliant work of Tamil literature—Silappathikaram.

The food taken in those ancient days was very rich and the rice was as bright as the morning star (Jupiter). Vessels made of gold were used for taking food and the guests were served in golden vessels. There are many such facts that bear testimony to the high standard of living among the rich people and their epicurean tastes.

We have seen how in these poems much emphasis has been laid on the treatment accorded to the minstrels by the kings. Some of them who were mere wanderers were dejected with life. But the king recognised their artistic talents and hence gave them rich presents, so as to enable them to live a peaceful and happy life.

As the main source of the Royal income was the land, the kings evinced great interest in the development of agriculture. The land was very fertile and its yield was good and consequently the people in those days had never faced any food problem as we do today. Rice was produced in such abundant quantities that even the villagers were very hospitable towards the guests known or unknown. The administration of the Tamil kings is really commendable. Many of them were honest, simple, charitable and at the same time

god-fearing. Misrule among the Tamil kings was as rare as the blue moon. Mention might here be made about Karikalan and Ilantirayan as good administrators. We can emphatically say that to the Tamil kings the administration of justice was so important that they would sacrifice their own lives or their kith and kin to stick to the ideal of justice and equity.

The Tamil kings extended their own empires and thereby their prestige extended far and wide. This reveals to us the military genius and war-like qualities of the ancient Tamil kings. We have already observed how the Cholas marched up to the Himalayas with glory. During the regime of these Tamil kings the country was safe and free from any external danger. The robbers in the forests protected the travellers the moment they learnt that the latter were the subjects of the king of their country.

Apart from the vast extent of the territory over which the Tamil kings ruled they had their sway over other countries north of Vengadam (Tirupathi Hills) which is proved by the fact that their Palaces were visited periodically by the rulers of those countries to pay their homage. It is said that in those days many chiefs wandered in the streets of Conjeevaram with the object of paying homage to the emperor.

The greatness of the Tamilian civilization is chiefly due to the importance it attaches to the reception given to the guests and the way in which they were given send-off. It was (as it is even now) considered to be the main duty of the house holder to receive the guests hospitably and this aspect of the house hold life has been emphasised by Thiruvalluvar in his famous Kural. In the Tamilnad there were many saints who practised fasting. Religion played an important role in the Tamilian civilization. Pujas were performed in the temples. Women who were chaste and warriors who won laurels during the times of war were deified after their death. Stone images were carved in their memory. This ceremony is called '*Kalnadutal*' in Tamil.

The greatness of the Tamilian civilization has become now a history of the past. There were great poets, musicians and dancers as well as able Kings in the Tamilnad of the past. Now we have to rest contented with the literary works which remind us of this golden age. A study of the ancient literature of the Tamils will be a source of inspiration to the modern generation entrusted with the task of improving the social, economic and political conditions of Mother India.

SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF TAMILNAD IN THE MIDDLE AGES.

(AS DEPICTED IN TEVARAM HYMNS)



SOCIAL CONDITIONS

There is much in common between the past and the present, so far as social conditions are concerned. But the people of the seventh century A. D. were more spiritual in their outlook as contrasted with the people of the modern days who generally attach more importance to wordly matters. "The world is too much with us." But this does not mean that the people of that century were not materially advanced. The three Saiva saints have clearly depicted the various aspects of the social life of those days. As pictured by these saints, the land was divided into four natural regions and the people led a life characteristic of their region. The Saiva Tamil saints travelled over the different parts of Tamilnad and Saint *Appar* went as far as Mount Himalayas. The three seers have portrayed the life and habits of the people in the various regions.

CASTE SYSTEM

The caste system was in existence in that period as it does today. "As long as caste in

India does exist, Hindus will hardly intermarry or have any social intercourse with outsiders and if Hindus migrated to other regions on earth, Indian caste would become a world problem" said Mr. V. Ketker. Thus the caste system is a great hindrance to the social development. But in the early period, i. e., in the Sangam age society was classified on the basis of profession. Even though the caste system existed at the time of the Saiva saints, yet it was not of great significance. Saint *Sambandar* and *Sundarar* belonged to the Brahmin community and Appar to the Velala community. Saint Sambandar has said that the Brahmins recited the Vedas and exhibited a great deal of piety and devotion. According to Saint Sambandar certain villages were solely inhabited by certain communities. Some villages were mostly inhabited by the Brahmins. In certain inscriptions references have been made to the villages granted to the Brahmins by the later Colas. Such villages came to be known as 'Bramadeyams'. Economically, these Brahmin villages were very well off as they were generally free from all contributions to the State which other ordinary villages were obliged to make. We can say that the Bramadeyams would have been in existence even during the time of Saint Sambandar. In one of his hymns the saint has said how Chidambaram came to be inhabited mostly by the Brahmins. Similarly a place called Akkur was

inhabited by the charitable and philanthropic Velalas. The Velalas are the great agricultural caste of the Tamil country and they are strongly represented in every Tamil district. The word Velalan is derived from 'Velanmai' meaning cultivation, tillage. Sundarar in Tirumurukanpundi has said that there were many hunters who were highway robbers. His money and belongings were stolen away by them. In his 'patikam' there, he mentioned the atrocities of the hunters. There he called the hunters as Vatuka vetuvar. Vatukar is a tribe of people who came from the north and during the time of Sundarar they were uncivilised and indulged in highway robbery. It is recorded in the Gazetteer of Malabar that in Palghat and the adjoining part of Walluvanad such foreigners, probably from the north known as Vadugans had settled and lived in groups. In the forest regions there used to live the hunters whose only means of livelihood was robbery. Such robbers or hunters had a monopoly of the forest regions and the villages therein. The ladies of the hunters' family used to safeguard the grains in the fields before they were ready for harvest such as *tinai*, by being seated on an elevated platform built for that purpose and by making a peculiar kind of noise to scare the birds away.

Saint Sambandar explained how the shepherd in the mullai region used to return home in the

evenings with his cows and calves. He further said in two of his hymns sung at *Paluvur* village in Tanjore district that the Malayali Brahmins used to worship Lord Siva in the region. But it is not clear whether any such kind of Nambudiri Brahmins had settled there during the time of the saints. Saint Appar has narrated how every individual belonged to a particular '*kulam*' and the people born of a high caste were greatly revered and respected. He was of opinion that an individual of a lower caste might attain the merits and privileges of higher caste by chanting the *Panchakshara Mantra*. *Kannappar* and *Yapzpanar*, though of low birth, were respected and held in high esteem because of the devotional and dedicated life.

However, the caste system did not hamper the progress of religion. Saint Appar has emphatically asserted that there should be no distinction of caste, creed or nationality in the worship of Lord Siva. He has also advised the high-class people not to gloat over their superiority in society, but to worship God along with the common people to attain salvation. Mr. C. V. *Narayana Iyer* has translated the few lines in the hymns of saint Appar referring to this idea. Saint Sambandar also contended that every individual who worshipped *Lord Siva* would attain salvation irrespective of the caste he belonged to.

Periyapuram makes references to the *Adiyars* and *Nayanars* who had no belief in the caste system. Saint Sambandar, though a high caste saint travelled with Yazpanar - a low born saint and worshipped God along with him. In the temples when Saint Sambandar used to sing, Yazpanar used to play on his instrument, 'Yaz'. On one occasion at *Tarmapuram*, *Yazpanar* was about to break his instrument as he was unable to accompany him on the 'yaz'; Sambandar intervened at the critical moment and the yaz was not broken. Saint Sambandar lived closely with a Velala Saint Appar and both dined and lodged together.

Saint Appar was a Velala. He had many followers and one among them was Apputi, a high souled Brahmin saint. Apputi had so much of reverence and respect for Saint Appar that he named everything in his possession and every one of his sons Thirunavukkarasu. He regarded Saint Appar as superhuman being. On one occasion he had the fortune of receiving the saint in his house and paying him homage. He served him even after seeing his son dead and requested Saint Appar to excuse him for the delay in his attendance and service. Because of this noble and worthy deed Apputi came to be raised to the position of a saint and his name found a place in the list of saints enumerated by Saint Sundarar. Saint Appar

also made mention about Apputi in his hymns at Tiruppazanam. Thus it is evident that Saint Apputi was above all caste distinctions and though a Brahmin by birth regarded Saint Appar otherwise known as Tirunavukkarasu a Vellala as his divine master.

Saint Appar himself was a staunch advocate of the abolition of caste system. He said that God will find a place only in the hearts of such men who are above caste distinctions. He has further said that he would respect those who worship Lord Siva though they might belong to the low caste. Those who were not the devotees of Siva never received his respect although they might happen to be high, rich and influential. An Ammattiyar Saint by name Chiruttondar dined with a Brava and offered a feast by sacrificing the life of his own son in order to satisfy him with a dish of human flesh. Saint Sundarar married two wives both of whom belonged not to his community. Thus it is evident that the existence of the caste system did not stand in the way of the progress of the religious-minded.

HOSPITALITY

The three Saiva Saints advocated that alms-giving should be the duty of every human-being. Tiruvalluvar in his Kural explained the significance and sanctity of helping the poor.

A Sangam Tamil poet Chittalaichattanan in his Buddhist work Manimekalai emphasised this virtue. Of the three Tevaram saints Sambandar extolled the giving of alms at Akkur, a village in Tanjore district. He eulogised the philanthropy and hospitality of many of the Velalas. The Velalas were prompt in such helpful deeds. Saint Sambandar has pointed out how the benefactors never used harsh words towards the needy even though the adverse circumstances reached their climax. Saint Appar in his Tevaram has said how blessed are all those who gave alms, creating hell for the misers. Saint Sundarar condemned himself for not being very generous and hospitable. He has further advised the people to be charitable and to help the poor as life is short. According to Periyapuram Saint Sundarar on one occasion brought paddy to his home and instructed his wife to distribute the same to the poor people without storing it. Thus the above illustrations clearly indicate the charitable and self sacrificing nature of the ancient Tamilians.

THE RICH AND THE POOR

Alms-giving was praised so much because poverty in the country was so acute. The poor people were suppressed by the rich, who occupied a higher status in the social ladder. The Tamil Saint Appar might have suffered under the clutches

of the rich and thence-forward he expressed his contempt for the rich people and remarked that the merciless rich people had no place in the kingdom of God. He has emphatically asserted that he would rather face starvation and suffering than to approach the rich for their help. Saint Sambandar expressed his wish to attain salvation before he was dragged to the position of approaching the rich for some help who would postpone the time for the alms. Saint Appar also asserted that an individual would be insignificant on the face of earth if he had no wealth for his own and none would hear his words and respect him. Saint Sambandar has explained how some people are having the wealth without using it for their own happiness and for that of others. He said that they would be losers in the true sense of the word for they gain nothing from that either for themselves or for others. Thus it is seen that the rich and the poor lived side by side. But the world, in the words of a Sangam poet exists because of the presence of generous and benevolent people even though there might be certain hard hearted and miserly men.

Saint Sundarar in his Tevaram explained how the bare necessities of life like food and clothing could be obtained by constant prayer to God and as such there was no necessity for man to be avaricious and greedy. *Tiruvalluvar* in great

anguish said that if it was the will of God that certain people should remain in abject poverty and had to beg for their livelihood, then God can as well perish. Thus *Valluvar* made it clear that the existing social inequalities are man-made and not God made. *Kamban* has developed this idea in describing the kingdoms of *Kosala* where he said that every individual possessed sufficient wealth and as such there existed neither a class of beggars nor a class of benefactors.

THE PLACE OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY

In the society of those days women played an important part. Many of them were educated. Women generally went to the temples with their husbands to offer prayer to God. They were charitable. They were kind towards their guests who visited their houses. They used to play various games with the balls. They enjoyed bathing in springs and tanks amidst the din of 'kambalai' noise. The women while playing games used to sing melodious songs on Lord Siva. They used to lay their children in decorated cradles and sing melodious songs which pleased the Gods of heaven. In the history of those early days we have numerous instances to show how women who were separated from their husbands used to send messengers to them. Saint Sambandar had utilised this method to send

messages to Lord Siva Himself. The ladies adorned themselves with beautiful dresses, jewels and flowers. They wore ankles, patakams, mekalai, pattam and kinnari. Saint Appar when describing Lord Siva has mentioned the jewels used by the Lord himself. Saint Sundarar in a hymn at Nakaippattinam prayed to Lord Siva to provide him with jewels like pearl garlands, garlands made of precious stones, Kasturi, santu and fine silks. He further referred to *Kambu* and *Netiram* and these words according to Pinkalam, the ancient Tamil dictionary, refer to some kind of silk cloth. But Mr. Somasundaram Chettiar in his notes on these lines of Saint Sundarar misinterpreted these words as referring to spectacles. But this view cannot be accepted because spectacles were not in vogue in those days.

The ladies had their freedom to select their husbands. *Paravaiyar* selected her husband Sundarar of her own accord. The ladies suffering from unbearable pangs of separation used to derive satisfaction by drawing circle with eyes closed to know when their husbands would return.

The women were well educated. They believed firmly in religion as evidenced by Tevaram hymns. Queen Mangayarkkarasi championed the cause of Saivism as against Jainism sponsored by the king, her husband. Saint Sambandar has admired her

in his hymns at Alavay (Madurai) and his epithets such as 'pattiyarkinra Pantimadevi', 'Civan tirunirrinai valarkkum pantanai viralal Pantimatevi' explain the eminent and respectable position occupied by her. It was Tilakavati who influenced her brother Tirunavukkarasu to embrace Saivism by completely separating himself from Jainism. Folk songs were common among the women in those early days. The themes were spiritual, describing the nature of God. The singing of such songs elevated women in their religious life. Women could sing and also play on musical instruments. Dancing and music went together on certain occasions.

CUSTOMS AND MANNERS

There are many evidences about the customs and manners of the people in those early days. In that society there existed ascetics as well as 'family-men' and these ascetics were supported by the latter. The 'family-men' also were regarded and respected if they were pure in heart and sincere devotees to Lord Siva. Saint Sundarar though living with two wives had received much respect and honour from the people. Hospitality was their household virtue. Meat eating was not condemned. The stories of Ciruttontar and Kannappar could be cited to illustrate the presence of this custom. Thus meat eating as poin-

ted out by Mr. C. V. Narayana Iyer was prevalent among some of the leaders of the South and the North. Even today some Gonda brahmins of the north are taking meat. According to the hymns of Saint Sambandar there were some meat eaters among the devotees.

Offering boiled rice to the crows was one of the religious customs. 'Pali' is the word mentioned in the hymns which means crow. Here it is used as the food given to Lord Siva. In 'Tancaivanankovai' the author explained the word Pali as the food given to crows. Even to this day this custom exists among some of the Hindu families. Mention of a particular custom is found in Sundarar's Tevaram, that the people of Tiruppun-kur offered land to God Siva for blessing them with rain and also for protecting them from floods and rain. Mortgage of property or person was known to them. There was a custom of swearing before God as a proof of one's firm determination to fulfil a purpose. Saint Sundarar at Nakaipattinam emphatically asserted that he would not allow God to move unless God granted him all that he wanted. In Tiruvrriyur, for the sake of his wife Cankili, Saint Sundarar swore before God that he would never part from her.

Though the people observed certain customs they were prepared to sacrifice them for the sake

of their high ideals. People believed that certain women remain barren due to the influence of some evil spirits. Saint Sambandar has emphatically said that by going on a pilgrimage to Tiruvenkatu and taking a bath in the three tanks there, women might be relieved from the influence of such evil spirits and they will be blessed with children. Maikantar the author of Sivanabotam was born under similar circumstances. Cremation prevailed in those days along with burial and Saint Appar narrated the actual scene of how a dead body used to be carried and finally cremated. Appar narrated that the people who gathered around the dead body would cry around and would decorate the corpse with collyrium and flowers and would carry the body to the burning ghat where the final cremation would take place.

HIGH IDEALS AND PRINCIPLES OF LIFE

The highest ideal of life in Tamilnad was that all mankind should be perfectly happy. Love and toleration were the basis of social life. Saint Tayumanavar of a later age has said that the highest service was to work for the achievement of happiness for all in the world. Tiruvalluvar in his Kural has pointed out that the learned scholars want to see that what is enjoyed by them is enjoyed by all. The three Tevaram saints expounded such a high philosophical outlook on life and

desired the happiness of all. They put into practice all their philosophic ideals.

Although these saints outwardly participated in the worldly life, they were inwardly devoted to the service of God. Saint Sambandar has said that in the midst of many a distress he would continue to be a devotee of God Siva. Saint Sundarar also has stated that he had no other help except that from Siva in all his distress and thus prayed to Him for the restoration of his eyesight.

The Tamil saints led a fearless life without expecting favour from any body. This fact has been explained very clearly by Saint Sundarar in his Vatatirumullaivayal hymns. Therein he has stated that God Siva was all his fortune, treasure and wealth and therefore there was no need for him to respect anybody or to expect favour from others and that he would lead a bold and proud life. Saint Appar never cared for the might of the monarch, who never felt proud to call himself the unredeemable slave of God Siva. He had no fear even when the huge elephant was led against him. In the face of such a danger he remained bold and calm and began to sing in praise of Lord Siva, and of his relationship with him. Saint Sambandar has asserted that he was not afraid of the 'mean-minded Jains', because he was in the hands of the Lord. The saints pleaded to the

people of Tamilnad not to commit sin if they wanted to attain salvation.

The saints have explained the virtues and vices. They advised the people to be contented with what they get. Wars and conflicts are mainly the results of the desire or avarice on the part of a country or of an individual. The desire for acquiring more and more prompts people to praise others unduly and seek their favour. The real necessities of life are only two, i.e., food and clothing. People should pray only to God to bless them with the bare necessities of life and should never flatter human beings and cringe for their favour. Saint Appar in his *Namasivayattiruppattikam* has clearly shown that he approached none even in times of difficulties but always prayed to God and uttered (*Namasivaya.*)

In Tamilnad there is a distinction between family life (*illaram*) and ascetic life (*turavaram*). The former refers to the life led in the midst of family and friends, and the latter to the life of solitude and penance. Even though there is a certain amount of sanctity in the latter kind of life, in the earlier ages, house-hold life was the usual life led by the people and it was much respected. Tiruvalluvar has explained the true traits of family life as compared with the other. The Tamil Saints upheld the life of the house holder as against the ascetic life. Saint Sundarar led a

family life. Saint Sambandar attained salvation at the time of his marriage. Saint Appar has said that an individual could attain salvation even by leading a family life. He blamed his own mind for directing him always to lead an ascetic life, and consoled himself by realising that there would be happiness in both kinds of life. Saint Sundarar in his hymns at Tirukkalumalam pointed out that some ascetics who were not true to their life wandered from place to place, calling it pilgrimage and blamed them for cleaning their bodies while harbouring all the wickedness within. He advocated the inner purity and discouraged those who had only the outward forms and symbols of asceticism. In short, the saints wanted the people to get themselves free from all vices and at the same time to make every effort to serve humanity.

These saints have regarded the birth of man as a glorious and eminent stage in the evolution of a soul and exhorted every human being to make the best use of it. Saint Appar commanded every part of the body to serve God, the only saviour of the soul. In explaining the ideals of life the saints have advocated equality of all human beings and complete extinction of all distinctions including untouchability and declared that God is in the hearts of those who do not observe any distinction of caste. Saint Ramalinkar of the last century has explained the same ideal when he said that the

soul is the innershrine of God, the body being the temple.

In the seventh century, Saivaites believed in the existence of one God only, that God being Lord Siva. Saint Appar also has expressed that the worship of Siva in the temples expanded itself into the sublime vision of seeing God in every thing in the universe, without which the religious rites such as bathing in the waters of Ganges and Kumari are of no use. Besides expressing this, he also stands as a monumental example for such a noble life as evidenced by his hymns at Tiruvaiyaru; in this hymn he has said that he had the opportunity of seeing God Siva in the form of various animals and birds.

The three Tamil saints condemned the system of worship by mere outward forms without real love in heart. They wanted people not to resort to untruthful and dubious methods to achieve material success. Though ordinary people are unaware of the wickedness of such pretending individuals, God will detect and punish them suitably. Saint Appar advised the people to worship Lord Siva with a pure heart and not to be wicked and untruthful. He further said that God would not help those who are insincere though they chant the Panchakshara—the sacred mantram of Siva. Saint Sundarar in his hymns at Tirukkalippalai praised God as the divine light ever shining in the

heart of the virtuous people. Saint Appar has explained the futility of the recital of vedas by people who are devoid of a good and pure heart. Thus the Saiva saints advocated faith in God and goodness of heart as the essentials for the attainment of salvation.

The use of harsh and virulent language reviling others, was condemned by Tiruvalluvar and others from ethical point of view and by these Saiveite saints from religious point of view. Saint Appar in his hymns at Ramasvaram wanted the people to avoid speaking harsh words. He has further said that any individual desirous of reaching the kingdom of God should not resort to the use of harsh words. Saint Sambandar went to the extent of saying that the Yema-the God of death would be afraid of approaching those who use kind words.

The Saints condemned the habit of speaking ill of others in their absence. When one does not agree with an individual one should always frankly criticise him in person and be done with it. Saint Appar has laid down this principle in a song which is autobiographical in substance. In various hymns he also criticised idleness.

The Saivaites believe in Karma theory according to which virtue breeds happiness and vice distress in the succeeding birth. Saint Sundarar

went a step further and declared that evil doers are punished even in the same birth. Saint Appar advised the people not to do harm and thus sow seeds for the sufferings of the next birth.

Most important of all, the saints have expatiated upon the importance of benevolence in life. Life is short and one should do as many charitable deeds as possible during the short span of existence. This advice has been repeatedly given by Saint Appar. Saint Sambandar has also explained the importance of such a life to attain salvation. Saint Appar emphatically asserted that God would despise those who spend their life in vain without doing a single charitable deed. Thus, one's religious life is closely associated with one's benevolent acts and religion serves to contribute to the happiness not only of individuals but also of the society.

The principles of life explained above are very essential for the achievement of happiness in general. The Tamil saints have advocated these as the basis of a true religious life. These in life will to a great extent contribute towards the happiness and contentment of mankind. The simple and devotional lives of the Tamil saints as well as their religious teachings contained in their hymns illustrate the value of these high ideals and principles.

CATTLE - THE WEALTH OF THE LAND



India, from time immemorial, has been characterised as an agricultural country. But in the modern days the interest and enthusiasm towards the development of agriculture have waned. Today the rich people try to become richer by means of trade and commerce and this feature has led to the development of a capitalistic class who pay little attention to the development of agriculture. But there is no gainsaying the fact that agriculture especially in the early days was the main source of living in India. In the post-war economic reconstruction of India, various measures have been sponsored by the leading and efficient economists of our country, concentrating on the industrial development of India. At the same time economists are not blind to the agricultural development of India.

In most of the countries of the west, machines are used in the fields; all items of work relating to the ploughing of the fields are done by the machines. Prior to the introduction of machinery cultivation of the fields was done with the help of the cattle. Our country can be proud of the fact that the fields are cultivated with the help of the

cattle and it stands in striking contrast to the methods in vogue in many of the western countries.

In the early history of India we note that the cattle came to be regarded as wealth by the Aryans. The Aryans when they came to India through north western passes, were in search of proper plains for their cattle to graze. Their joy knew no bounds when they happened to come across the Gangetic plains full of grass. In course of time the Aryans became aware of the use of cattle for the purpose of the cultivation of the lands. Prior to this the Aryans depended on the cattle for their daily food. Their love to the cattle was so great that in the Yajur Veda there is a reference to the prayer of the Aryans to God Almighty to save the cattle and thereby their lives. In the Vedas, the word 'Gho' is frequently used and it applies to the ox and the cow. '*Mano Ghoshu, Mano Asvashu Kirisha*' from the Yajur veda, amply bears testimony to the love which the Aryans evinced towards the cattle. They were prepared to sacrifice their own lives for the sake of the cattle.

The uses of cattle are manifold. Milk and curd are very good nourishing food for the people. Climatic conditions do not change the uses of cattle to humanity. Even the torrid zone cattle give milk and curd to people. That is the reason.

why the Aryans regarded the cattle as wealth. In the Puranic age also the Aryans had nothing but love for the cattle. One of the Puranic sutras says that the peace and prosperity of the world is closely dependent on the kind treatment accorded to the cattle. It was emphasised that if a king intended to rule his kingdom peacefully he should feed the cattle properly. The Aryans, religious as they were, recited *mantrams* before the deities and offered worship to the Gods for the fulfilment of their desires.

“*Swasti Brazabya Paripalayantha Niyayana*

Markena,

Mahe Mazeeza, Gho Bramanabha Subamasthu”

In the later Puranas similar references have been made to the love of the cattle.

Southern India was inhabited by the Dravidians even before the Aryans began to exercise their influence in Northern India. In South India, people were acquainted with the use of the cattle for the cultivation of the fields even before the Aryans made an attempt to learn this art of cultivation in the great plains of Northern India. To the South Indians especially the Tamilians, agriculture was the main source of income. Many of the agricultural products of Southern India have been taken to western countries even before the beginning of the Christian era. The term ‘Arusa’

of the Persian language which is derived from the Tamil word 'அரிசி' indicates to us that rice should have been exported to Persia from India.

In the early days, the cultivation of Tamilnad was at its high water-mark. Prior to the settlement of the Aryans, the Tamilians were familiar with the methods of cultivation of the lands with the help of the cattle and they knew also how to feed the cattle. The Tamilians many centuries before the advent of the Aryans, characterised the cattle as wealth. In the ancient literary works i. e. 'Tirukural' and 'Thevaram' references have been made to the 'cattle' as the wealth of the Tamilians. The monetary value of the cattle was even greater than the ordinary coinage to the Tamilians in the early days. The word 'Madu' is used for wealth and this term literally means 'cattle.' To the Aryans the cattle formed one of the sources of wealth but to the Tamilians the cattle was the sole wealth. In 'Tirukural' learning is characterised as the highest wealth and from it the following lines are quoted.

*"Kedil Vezhucaelvam Kalvi Oruvarku
Madalla Matrayavai",*

•கேடில் விழுச்செல்வம் கல்வி ஒருவற்கு
மாடல்ல மற்றை யவை',

The term 'Madu' is used to designate wealth. The commentator of these lines has explained

lucidly the meaning of the term 'Madu' which designates wealth. Gold and diamonds which are characterised as ordinary wealth may fade away but the value of the 'Madu' will not be such. Among the Aryans there prevailed the custom of the sacrifice of a cow during the celebration of Yagas and this convention lessens the importance of the value of the cattle as wealth to the Aryans. But the Tamilians have nothing but aversion to such a custom and a great Tamil literary poet by name Valluvar in his 'Kural' has condemned the custom of sacrificing animals during Yagas.

To the Tamilians the main source of income was agriculture. Since the development of agriculture is closely connected with the proper up-keep of the cattle, the Tamilians protected the cattle. In the Saivite literary works like 'Thevaram' and 'Thiruvasagam,' the word 'Madu' is familiarly and frequently used to designate the 'cattle' as wealth. One of the great Saiva Saints by name Appar has rightly asserted that people should not be actuated by any desire to possess worldly things. Materialistic outlook on life should be completely eradicated. This saint uses the word 'Madu' to indicate worldly riches. He says

"Mattai Thedi Mayakinil Veezhathae

மாத்டைத் தேடி மயக்கினில் விழாதே'

Manickavasagar has explained in a beautiful verse how with the appearance of Lord Siva, he (Manickavasagar) completely devoid of worldly pleasures, became a true disciple of Lord Siva. In such a narrative, Manickavasagar uses the term 'Madu' to indicate worldly riches. Another saint by name Gnanasambandar in one of his stanzas discusses about the wealth of the land and points out how far cattle could be regarded as wealth. On many occasions Saint Gnanasambandar prayed to God Almighty to give long life to the cattle. His theme in this stanza

*“Vazgha Andanar Vanavar Aninum
Vizgha Tanpunal Vendanum Ongugha”*

“வாழ்க அந்தணர் வானவர் ஆநினம்
வீழ்க தண்புனல் வேந்தனும் ஒங்குக.”

is the same as that of the Aryan Puranic stanzas which I have referred to, in the beginning. Saint Sambandar in his enthusiastic love towards the cattle classifies them on the same footing as the Devas and Anthanas. In short, in doing so, this saint attributes some divinity to the cattle. He emphasizes that South India being mostly a land of cultivation, agriculture is greatly developed and this is facilitated by the use of the cattle. Thereby the economic prosperity of the land in general began to increase.

So far I have been referring to instances from the ancient history. Even in the modern days Indians, especially the South Indians regard the cattle as wealth. Cattle is being worshipped by many of the South Indians. In South India, during the Pongal festival a separate day is set apart for the worship of the cattle. The income which every South Indian agriculturist obtains during the month of Karthigai is mainly due to the help rendered by the Sun-God and the cattle which work on the fields. As such the first produce of every year is offered to the Sun-God and the cattle. The Pongal festival is celebrated every year for two days. On the first day the Sun-God is worshipped and on the second day cattle is worshipped. The second day is commonly known as 'Gho Pooja day' or 'Mattupongal' i. e., the day of the cattle. The cow and the calf on that day will be well decorated with leaves and flowers and boiled rice will be offered to the cattle. Thus we observe how the South Indians love and praise the cattle. From time immemorial cattle is regarded as the wealth of India and no Indian should ever forget this truth. It is my earnest and humble prayer to God Almighty that He would shower his choicest blessings on the cattle.

PEEPS INTO THE PAST

PATTUPPATTU AND TAMIL GLORY

INTRODUCTION

What is sung is a poem. The song comes from the inner recesses of the hearts of great poets who always sought the welfare of humanity. Hence these poems are immortal. Pattuppattu belongs to the last Sangam age and is the noblest of Sangam Literature, sung two thousand years ago.

There are ten Idylls in Pattuppattu whose authors were Nakkirar, Mangudimarudan and others. To the great poets of the Sangam age and the post-sangam period like Kambar and Sekkilar, the entire world was one family. This is well noticed in five of the idylls which begin with the universe; one idyll sings the praise of a big city; another of a big river and a third of the mother who rocks the cradle.

Atruppadaï means guide: one who found the way (to bliss) guides others to follow. Generally these Atruppadaï are after the names of the guided. The exception to this is Murugatruppadaï of Nakkirar where the name denotes the goal which cannot be defined or described in exact

terms. Cholan Karikalan, Ilandirayan, Nalliyakodan, Nannan are the heroes of the other Atruppadais, which speak of their valour, of their benign rule, of their patronage of Arts and literature. Poets were greatly honoured by these famous rulers who kept those who approached them above want. The Atruppadais also describe the natural wealth and beauty of the country, the genial hospitality and advanced civilization of the people. They insist on people working hard to earn money and lay more emphasis on the real purpose of wealth namely to make all people happy. Ancient Tamil polity as described in Pattuppattu holds good for all times, particularly now when the goal is a sovereign democratic republic.

(7—12—58)

VAZHI KATTI

Nakkirar of the last Sangam era, the author of Murugatruppadaï (and of several other works) expounds the core of Saiva Siddhanta in his great work, namely that a true devotee of Murugan-the God of Gods-should approach the Lord in a spirit of universal happiness without a trace of anger or ego and if thus sought the Lord Himself would advance towards the devotee. Mudathamakkaninar in his Porunararruppadaï sings the praise of the Kaveri, of Karikkala Chola who ruled in Puhar, some 1800 years ago, and who was a great patron of letters. Poets sought refuge from want under Karikkala, like birds on a fruit-bearing tree. The few occasions in South Indian History when the Chola, Chera and Pandyan kings lived together in peace were periods of superb classics in Tamil. Though born of a low caste, Porunan was held in the highest esteem by all sections of people irrespective of caste or community.

Sirupanarruppadaï of Naleyakkondan sings the glory of Oïmanadu in between Thondainadu and Cholanadu, a land rich in natural resources, in its rulers and people and in its poets. Kidangil the Capital of Oïmanadu is identified with modern Tindivanam. Elnthirayan of Kanchi, the hero of

Perumbanatrappadai of Uruthiran Kanninar is the subject of much discussion even now concerning his maternal ancestry. His mother, a Naga woman, is variously said to have come from Java, from Naga Island famous for its Buddha image which takes three hours to reach by motor boat from Jaffna. The last of the Atruppadais is Malaipadukadam also known as Kutrar Arruppadai. Its author was Kunrurkizhar. This poet describes the beauty and grandeur of several places in the mountainous districts adjoining Salem. We get an insight into the past civilisation of Tamils when drinking was a habit and Tamils knew the fermentation of alcoholic drinks. The habit of following seven steps with a departing guest is perhaps the ritual of Saptapadi of our marriage custom.

14—12—58

LAND AND CITIES

The marvel of the Tamilians' conception of country and city as depicted in Pattuppattu lay not in its geographical extent or in the nature of its resources but on the measure of peace and happiness which the people in a territory and its adjoining lands enjoyed.

Land was classified and cities were built when man learnt to live in organized societies. Although South India was divided into Chola, Pandya and Chera kingdoms, sometimes with a fourth state, the patriotism of the Tamilian was at no time in the Sangam Age purely parochial. To the Sangam poets, the geographical limits and resources of a kingdom or state were only secondary to the noble ideal of peaceful coexistence which permits a free flow of merchandise and culture throughout the world, to the extent that there was no real famine anywhere eventhough a place was subject to the fury and eccentricity of the elements. That human happiness is bound intimately with the floral and faunal wealth of the country is greatly stressed in the accounts of three great cities namely Kaverippumpattinam, Kanchi and Madurai. Sangam works squarely lay the blame for failure of monsoon, and other such adverse conditions on the rulers when they swerved from the path of righteousness.

Cities were founded and civilizations thrived and still go on the banks of rivers. Great rivers like the Kaveri are never-failing sources of production. It is artificial distribution of the sources and production that causes misery and ill feeling. Chola, Pandya and Chera nadus were very glorious; there is not much reference to the last in the Pattuppattu. The civilisation of the Cholas, and Pandyas was almost identical. The lay out of Kaverippumpatinam, Kanchi and Madurai, the general administration, the laws, the taxes, the commerce and culture seem to be more or less identical. Streets were broad; customs, duties were no hindrance to import or export. People speaking different languages thrived in them. Hospitality was extravagant. Drink was common. Business centres had identification flags. Alas! there was a fly in the ointment, namely prostitution was considered a trade. Cities had big palatial residences built of brick and mortar which was processed to a fine marble like plaster for surfaces. Marshall rightly considers the Indus-valley civilisation of Mohenjo-Daro with cities well-provided with drinking water and drainage as Dravidian.

POLITY IN TAMIL NADU

The great Kural has set a code of conduct for rulers. Tamil polity of the Kural and Pattuppattu era was benevolent monarchy and both the rulers and the ruled observed the injunctions of the great seers and law-givers. Pattuppattu speaks of the popular rule of Muruga the God, and six other rulers. Brihadatta, whose mother tongue was Sanskrit learnt Kuranjippadal from Kapila and himself became the famous author of a Kurunthogai. In Pattuppattu poets sing of the glory of the reign of Karikala, his abiding interest and personal care in the welfare and progress of the people. Nalliyakkodan was later to other rulers. Elanthirayan and Nedunchezhiyan were great rulers and the later was equally a great poet. Nedunchazhiyan kept a aedulous watch over people's welfare and happiness. Several sangam verses also relate to Nannan, the hero of the closing idyll of Pattuppattu. His dynasty must have come to Senganna (North Arcot Dt.) from the West Coast. The Nannas of the West Coast who were contemporaries of the Mauryan rulers in the north during 3rd century B. C. might be the forefathers of this hero.

By and large rulers lived for the people. They were valiant heroes with courage; the vanquished

their opponents and distributed the spoils to poets who sang their glory. Though they were absolute monarchs, they indentified themselves with the people, lived amidst them and lived for them. They were advised by ministers and councils of advisers.

People had absolute faith in their rulers. Caste system was prevalent. Brahmins kept their houses neat and clean. There were feasts and festivities at which even strangers were treated like relatives. Every one worked and contributed to the country's prosperity. People followed their daily routine as enjoined in the codes.

In fine, the rulers and the ruled all toiled assiduously and harmoniously for the well being of human society at large. So magnificent is our heritage.

ANCIENT GLORY

Unnecessary controversies over the emphasis on Ahapporul or Purapporul by a few lines in Pattuppattu like those in Nedunalvadai, is sheer wastefulness, for the greatness and grandeur of the Tamil Classics lay in depicting the glorious epoch of Tamilnad when both the material and spiritual values of life were inseparably intertwined in the lives of its rulers and the people. Aham which may be defined as Platonic love concerns with Lover-heroes and heroines and their confidants who are not explicitly named. The great Karikala and Pandyan Nedunchezhiyan became illustrious because they lived by their valour not solely, on the wealth of their ancestors and they lived more for the people than for carnal pleasure; and in this they enjoyed the complete support and confidence of their lady-love. The mention of the Vel (Spear) with a garland of margosa flowers is not a controversial point of such great importance as to lose the wood in the trees. There is as much of Aham in Nedunalvadai as of Puram and the two are not incompatible.

On historical and internal evidences, the view of Sri Viyapuri Pillai that Nakkirar, the author of Murugatrappadai is not the same as the one who

wrote Nedunalvadai, because of the word 'Mar' and the title Murugatruppadaï is incorrect. There is ample evidence in Sangam Literature of invocation of God by the name of Murugan.

The Koodal in Kurinji of Kapila and Mullai-ppattu is not gandharva marriage but an ingenious way of bringing the noble hero and the equally great heroine together. The reference to elephants and Mullai in these poems is to the country and the season. Tamils had faith in omens.

Aham stresses on the importance of man earning his living and glory by his own efforts and Puram enjoins on him to share the fruits of his labour with the rest of humanity; for that is life in God which is bliss, joy and everlasting happiness.

(29—1—59)

TIME AND DURATION

Tamils nearly 2000 years ago had conception and measurement of continued existence (kaalam) and duration (Pozhudu). A fine and subtle distinction is made between time which limitless, eternal, immeasurable and continuous from the past through the present to the future and duration which can be measured in units such as vinadis or seconds, days, months and years. This is noticed particularly in the works of Pavanandiar and Tiruvalluvar. There were time-keepers in the past who would give the exact time by looking at the sky at nights or by shadows by day and by hour-glasses filled with water.

Duration was measured as seasons like winter spring, summer etc., Duration was also divided into long and short each divided into six parts. In these measurements of time and duration, the ancient Tamils realised the existence of the Eternal Being. Mangudimarudan of Madurai spoke in the sangam age that time and duration were caused by movement; the earth, the sun and the moon spin clockwise on their axes; the planets revolve round the sun clockwise and the solar system as a whole drifts about in limitless space; and everything hangs suspended in space. Motion causes air-currents, and rain which enriches the earth and

supports life on it. There is an account of the sun and the movements in Tirumurugatruppadaï.

Sirupanatruppadaï gives a graphic account of summer and the Kar or rainy season is described in Mullai as dark and beautiful and is compared Tirumal who captivates and enslaves the mind. Thus even in the seasons the ancient Tamils realised the Divine glory. The opening and closing of flowers, their insect visitors find graphic description in Mullaippattu. In Nedunalvadai, Nakkirar portrays a pen picture of winter and its effects.

Perumpanarruppadaï and Maduraikkanchi give a glorious description of dawn and its effects on flowers and animals; of the rise of the burning Orb from the eastern seas; of family women busy with household duties long before their husbands wake up; of the noon and of every being actively engaged in profitable pursuits; of the evening and its bazars; of the parting sun behind the western mountain tops; of the silhouette of twittering bird flocks flying to their nests and of the lowering herds winding slowly ever the lee. Then comes the first part of the night when men retire to take stock of their day's labour followed by the second part when they go to sleep with the satisfaction of having done a good day's job. During the mid-

night people slept soundly but the night watch would go his rounds braving the cyclone and the storm if need be. The morning twilight is heralded by the song of birds and the hum of insects.

(15—2—59)

UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD

The domain of literature transcends the limitations of time and space or nationality. Ancient Tamil literature stresses on the two important and necessary qualities of good living namely universal love or fellowship and culture. The brotherhood of the Tamilian extended far beyond the boundaries of Tamil Nad; in fact, it embraced the entire population of the globe. Love of men, love of God is the keynote of life, for life is born and sustained by love. One without the quality of love is a living corpse; to live one with the rest, to share the joy and sorrow of our fellow beings is culture. Culture is the basis of existence.

Pattuppattu reveals that where love and culture is, the rains don't fail, and the soil is productive. Universal love and culture are intertwined, inseparable. They denote the highwatermark of society. The bounty of nature is an index of the nobility of the woman. Where women are of high character and culture there the country, the hill and the dale thrive in splendour. Perumbanarrupadai opines that where people are virtuous even wild beasts cause no damage. Culture depends upon one's avocation. The culture and behaviour of the sanyasi, of the minister is dif-

ferent from that of the ordinary man. Nakkirar insists on the heart being the fountainhead of love, that love is the best and only form of approach to God; that the face, the word and the deed should be true reflections of the inner love. Man should control his senses; he must lessen his food to widen his heart. True renunciation is internal; external appearance or apparel is often deceptive. The goal of wisdom is selflessness, the conquest of anger which is the cause of bodily and mental ailments, of envy and jealousy and above all of that supreme virtue namely the love of the neighbour as one's own self. The man of happiness is not he who lives in palaces, but he who welcomes misery. Maduraikkanchi glorifies the Brahmins who in the midst of their families looked upon the entire universe as their family. Virtuous people are the pride of the country, so sings a sangam poet. Mangudimarudan is emphatic that man should not forget the past and should plan for the welfare and progress of mankind and that charity, the quality of sharing one's wealth with the rest is the height of civilization.

Tamil literature is rich in codes for the right conduct of rulers. Exile not execution is the proper punishment for the wicked ruler. Mangudimarudanar in his codes of right conduct, says that a minister should be intelligent not dull; humble

not proud; loving and affectionate to the people, must fear sin and vice. Merchants should be fair in their barter. Paanan enumerates a code of right conduct for high way robbers whose hearts also are filled with love, for as Purananooru puts it they rob Paul to pay Peter. At the top of all comes Valluvar whose clarion call to man never to blaspheme another even in thought, never to think evil, that humility is the noblest of virtues and one should behave like the balance following the middle path of charity and good conduct, has universal appeal. Like corn, man should grow in noble ways, straight in virtues and humble in wisdom.

(22—2—59)