

# **An Unending Ascent**



*Poems by*  
**Kulothungan**



# **AN UNENDING ASCENT**

**Kulothungan**

[ V.C. Kulandaiswamy ]

Translated From Tamil by  
**V.Murugan**

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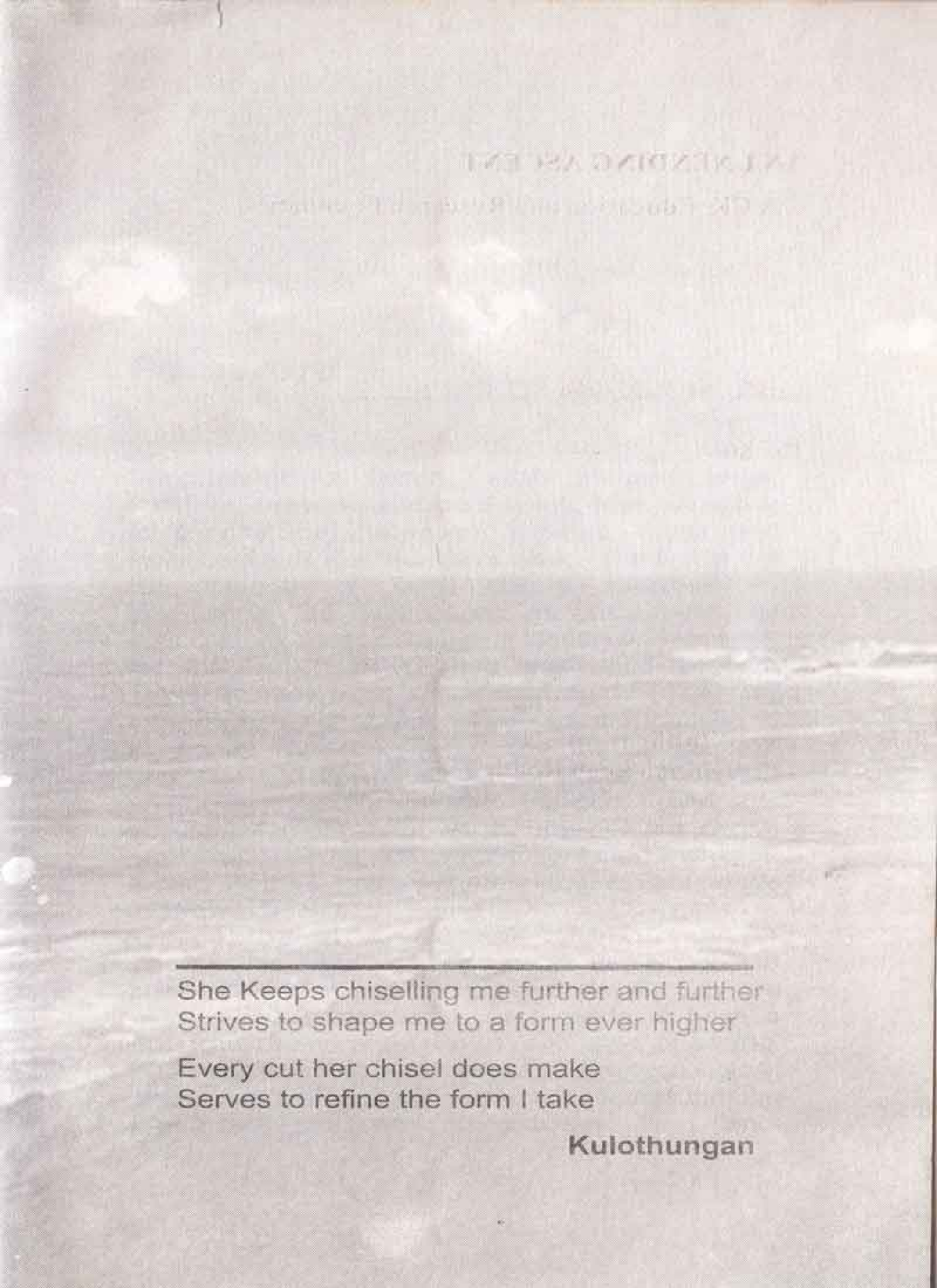
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She Keeps chiselling me further and further  
Strives to shape me to a form ever higher

Every cut her chisel does make  
Serves to refine the form I take

**Kulothungan**







## Foreword

---

Two interactive factors, each normally large, insistent, separate and dominating, fuse unusually to provide the inspiration, impetus, reach and significance of Kulothungan's work. The first is the full richness of Tamil culture absorbed as inheritance, as perception, as instrument, as commitment; a way of being, of identity and location, for individual, society and the world beyond. Together, they map, shape theme and subject as they engage sensibility. Moreover, the tradition of its poetry joins the public and the private, the universal and the personal. Spacious, deep and energetic, Tamil literary tradition, and its accumulation of master-works, provides a nurturing ample enough for the word-adventuring individual talent. Fortune favours the brave; and faint hearts indifferent poetry.

The second factor is that intimate combination of scientific and humanist impulses. While they are never mutually exclusive, each tends to have a distinctive frame of reference, and ways of seeing. The scientist in the poet seeks a progression logical, structured; the poet in the scientist ensures that the progression blossoms as calculus. They work



together in the moment of perception; they share. It is this conjunction and amalgamation of two impulses that gives Kulothungan's work its special quality, which in turn accounts for the distinctive contribution it must make to contemporary Tamil literature. There are few scientist poets and when they are a central part of the scene, we have reason to celebrate. As Dr Murugan notes in his perceptive Preface, Kulothungan's 'thematic concerns take us through the ever expanding realms of scientific creativity and the inexhaustible and superior potency and richness of the human world.'

Like all poets of power and significance, Kulothungan is deeply rooted in the Tamil world, inheriting its past, helping to make the present and the dreams of its future.

I beckon to you dear Tamil Land....  
The ones that will serve well  
The land and the language, are  
Those grown tall to reach the sky....  
(Queries New: the Questioners too)

Tamil civilisation has a fullness and power that makes it universal. To be universal is the most important of contexts, means and capacity to provide both commentary and assessment of all that is central in human experience and achievement. Like all great cultures, Tamil is both historic and contemporary, both Kulothungan and his work are proof.

Kulothungan is a rationalist but one nurtured and therefore shaped by the Indian tradition, and that tradition has always stressed the spiritual; elevate spirit above form and substance. While he uses the language of religion/theology, the measure, the



calibrations of judgment return to both the goodness and the evil in man. Each is equally motivating but it is a mark of both a civilized and civil society that the former is nurtured to keep the latter in check. So we are told that the morality by which we ought to live and regulate our contact with others must come from within.

.... there is  
No heaven in the universe  
The abode of Gods  
After all our own mind.  
(We are the Makers of God too)

It is there in the crucible of self that pride action originates and is sustained.

As a scientist Kulothungan is fully aware of how the proper management of talent and resources leads to the continuing evolution of man and woman. Civilisation and progress is the enlargement of all that is noble and liberating.

Nothing on Earth appeals to me  
As much as the advance of mankind  
We are on a unique journey of ascent  
We are like the legendary Vamana  
We would soar up and move past  
The abode of the celestials.  
(Human Progress my Pursuit)

Science ought to be its handmaiden. If it is not, the failure is Man's. And the challenge is central especially for the subcontinent whose contribution to the world on the one hand, has been among the most fertilising and instructive while suffering on the other, the mismanagement of both people and purpose.



Meditation is a great Indian tradition and yet for the fulfillment of its purpose there has to be appropriate action. Time past is time present and time present is time future. This progression rests on the sequence of certainties.

To take our ease  
To turn for a study of the self  
To gaze at and ponder over the destination  
Which our race of men has journeyed to  
From its days in the antique past, ...  
(Where are we Heading to?)

Progress that rests on the positives of culture, science and environment, is perhaps the best example of evolution, an evolution that goes beyond genetics, the physical, into the totality of individual and environment, which become functions and revelations of each other.

If generation after generation  
Marks phases of development  
Where lies the journey's end?  
What really is the nature of the bond  
Between the mind and the mortal frame?  
(Horizon of Darkness)

Man contemplates, analyses, seeks out his impulses, those that construct and those that undermine. We should privilege the obvious and equally diffuse the obviously destructive but the ideal is never assured, its purity and generosity is not talismanic.

What provides the continuing reassurance in the face of failure and misdirection is the faith in the reasonable perfectibility of man. Failures merely strengthen the resolve to try again, better-equipped, more certain, as Kulothungan asserts with a degree of triumph:



Give us wings  
Do not say; 'There's no more room in the  
sky';  
We'll soar up the heights  
Till we find space.

(An Appeal by the Young)

Translations lead a curious kind of double life. Those who know Tamil will not be reading this volume and the present writer regrets that he is not among them. However careful the act of translation, the poetry finds it hard not to be victim. The prose gets through and in the case of Kulothungan, the aggregate of ideas or themes, the balance of his vision that includes such a strong plea on behalf of the feminine embodied in women, both a living presence and a principle, tell us that here is a mind, a poet, a state of feeling, a state of being that must stretch his language to the point where the notes it sings arrest and instruct. They make life; they celebrate life; they take us through the sacred fire. And they ask:

Show us the direction of the destination  
Be not worried that the path is full of stones  
and thorns  
We will cross the woods  
Swim the river and climb the mountain.

(An Appeal by the Young)

Edwin Thumboo  
Emeritus Professor,  
Dept of Eng Lang and Lit;  
Director, The Centre for the Arts  
National University of Singapore



## **PREFACE**

---

Poet Kulothungan's creativity stands apart from that of his contemporaries. He has been charting a course of thinking and imaginative expression that remains radically different from the ruling practice of his fellow poets. While he shares some of the prevailing socio-cultural realities, concerns and predicaments with the other practitioners of the day, there lies a whole world in Kulothungan that is unique to himself, a world that is perhaps inaccessible to others. That his poetry is not subjected to serious academic criticism is largely due to the conscious and deliberate choice the poet has made of his materials for poetry and the mode of his structuring these materials, both of which are not delicacies either to the imaginative writers or to the common run of the poetry-reading public in Tamil. Perhaps, the observation of William Wordsworth that a writer, insofar as he is original and creative, has to create a taste himself by which he is to be enjoyed, is true of Kulothungan also.

He refuses to be tied down to stereotypes embedded in psychology and biography, issues and problems relating to the institutional life of the land such as Freudianism and socialist realism, collective aberrations such as linguistic purism and cultural antiquity. Kulothungan's thematic concerns take us through the ever expanding realms of scientific creativity and the



inexhaustible and superior potency and riches of the human world. His poem 'Earth Itself is Paradise' unlocks the infinite earthly possibilities :

For the mind engrossed in the mission on hand  
Earth itself is paradise enough  
No Heaven can match that bliss  
Immortality I will strive and seek; but  
Freedom from birth I shall never ever ask.

There is infinite joy in the wonders of the world  
I sing in praise of the kingdom of man  
My heart is lost in the dreams of the earth;  
Should salvation come to me on a platter  
And abundance of bliss unfold  
Should the gates of Heaven open apart  
I shall still be lost in the dreams of the earth.

(Tr. by the poet)

Obviously, his poetic vision encompasses the new opportunities opened out by science and technology, the breakdown of the traditional barriers of language, nationality and culture, the growing irrelevance of proliferating "isms", the failure of religion and faith in God to strike at the roots of human misery, and the horrors of social stratification and stagnation.

The Coleridgean "willing suspension of disbelief" as a measure of aesthetic reality Kulothungan rejects outright. For him, poetry does not please or just instruct, nor is it the Horatian credo of the coalescence of entertainment and edification. It is an emotional catalyst for action, the action of the human mind as well as the human muscle. For him, it must lead to action : "must lead to a thousand deeds", and the value of poetic truth lies in its ability to see man reborn into an era of scientific advancement tempered by norms of humanism. His poems represent a single-minded translation of this conviction into art. So much so that, in the whole body of



his poetry running into six volumes of poems, we come across hardly one poem that provides for 'play', amusement, pleasurable distraction. Kulothungan does not also fall into the trap of propagandism or didacticism.

His focus is on endeavour, continuous striving and endless march of ascent. The end and aim of humanity is divinity on earth and the establishment of heaven in this world itself.

Kulothungan's poetry heralds a new genre in the history of modern Tamil literature – the poetry of Ideas, which is defined by and structured through analytical thinking. Given the fact that the poet is a scientist by profession, a scientific visionary by temperament and rationalist by conviction, his poems embody "perfect statements" as U.R.Anantha Murthy characterizes them, issuing as they are from an unmistakable ratiocinative conception and perspective. It is a 'new genre', in so far as each poem of his, every one of his poems, is a structured whole of an intellectual vision, a scientifically wrought formulaic conception of an *individual mind*, unlike the ethical poetry of the old that draws on the norms and truths of the universal human wisdom and experience. The ideas and thoughts are recreated into artistic feelings and emotions by the power of the poet. Verbal embellishments and rhetorical flourishes are a scarce commodity in Kulothungan. His poems seem to exemplify the normative pronouncement of *Tolkappiyam*, the outstanding masterpiece of linguistics and poetics in Tamil, that every word is a sense signifier (எல்லாச் சொல்லும் பொருள் குறித்தனவே). Whenever the modes of similitude and other rhetorical devices are brought in, they, directly and fully, partake of the thematic universe of the given poem. The ideas are so consciously strung together that each poem represents the chemical fusion of art and science. Several of the poems reveal an accomplished and ripe aesthetic exuberance, where the idea and the image, the tenor and the vehicle, are so



deftly juxtaposed that they look inseparable like Juno's swans. A few examples will suffice to demonstrate this power of the poet :

The environment in which one lives and the persons and precepts that one associates oneself with, enormously influence the power and prestige that one enjoys. Referring to this, Kulothungan says :

Fallen on the ground  
Flowers become refuse  
Fallen from the clouds  
Rains become part of mire.

A luscious woman who stands  
Surpassing all creations of art  
Attracting a million eyes –  
The honey in her charming lips  
Is but a spit when parted  
From her mouth.

The sceptre of a sovereign  
Who reigns over the world –  
Is it anything but a stick  
When not wielded by him?

The cobra divine  
When on Shiva's neck  
Is but a venomous snake  
When crawling on the ground.

The ash is sacred  
On a saint's frame  
But is dust from a blaze  
While lying on the ground.

Consumed though in fire  
The wick in a lamp is considered godly.  
The worth of an object  
Is as great as its affiliation



The status of one's habitat  
Could be the step for one's ascent.

(Sacred Ash and Burnt Dust)

Running through and pervading his writings, as the nervous system in a human body, is the focus on human effort and acclaim of human mind. In a reference to their potential, he says :

An endeavour is a fertile farm  
That will yield  
All that the heart strives for;  
Learning is a fountain  
Whence wisdom springs  
As one listens and learns.

The mind is a mine  
A wonder of wonders  
Where live the divine  
As well as the devil;  
It is an omnipotence  
That transcends and  
Surpasses human genius.

(The Inner Sanctuary)

In his spirited defence of pluralism as the natural attribute of a rich and healthy society, he declares :

Humanity is not cast in one mould;  
Were flowers to have colours alike  
Could nature be a source of charm?  
Whence comes beauty and joy  
Where everything remains the same?

Family of stars blossoms the sky  
Humanity flowers on the earth;  
Thousand names there are for a path  
Difference is one thing: division another.

(Let's Honour Diversity)

Kulothungan holds firmly the view that a community flourishes or withers by the leadership it is able



to create. He looks with contempt at leaders who feel insecure and threatened by the rise of their own followers. Condemning them, he says:

The ocean deep senses no peril  
At its waves soar high.  
Mother earth fears no threat  
At the lofty summit of the hills.  
My heart fumes like blazing fire  
At the spectacle of men called leaders  
Fearing the rise of their own followers.

(Why Expect Gratitude?)

The abiding claim for Kulothungan as a poet consists in his outstanding ability to transmute his predominantly ratiocinative concerns into aesthetic materials. It is not merely that what are temporal and particular he metamorphoses into universal and general. In him we find, as we do in the Elizabethan lyricists and the metaphysical poets of the English tradition, and the Akam poetry of the ancient Sangam literature in Tamil, the rare poetic gift of what T.S.Eliot calls the "unification of sensibility". The thoughts and ideas of V.C.Kulandai Swamy the scientist-visionary are, as referred to earlier, transformed into emotions and feelings by his poet-incarnate Kulothungan. An example:

O Mother Nature !  
Is it your inherent character or your principle  
That you yield your fruits  
Only when we struggle and strive  
Toil endlessly and  
Put you too to affliction?

You turn to cultivable soil, mother  
Only when we plough and furrow your golden face  
That spreads and covers a vast expanse;  
You transform yourself  
Into a fertile wetland  
Only when we drench you  
So much that you shiver



You keep your springs concealed  
Reveal them only when we dig you up;  
You hoard beyond our reach  
The energy bearing coal  
And ornamental gold  
And make them accessible only to  
Those who cut deep into your body.

(Mother, I Have a Doubt)

His poems show Kulothungan drawing, almost obsessively, on the institutional life of the contemporary society. They throw copious light, as no poems by his contemporaries in Tamil do, on the intellectual milieu of the day, on the immense human possibilities unravelled by science and technology and on the life-and-death need for harmonizing the environmental purity and the material compulsions of a developing society. And his treatment of womanhood in general and the Indian women in particular manifests in some of the finest poetry of Kulothungan, besides the refreshingly new and original insights he throws on feminism, and on women who keep bearing the 'Cross':

They are not the same in the limbs  
Nor do they stand equal in their sinews  
The functions that devolve on them  
As ordained by nature  
Are again not the same –  
Men and Women: they are  
Two halves of a perfect whole  
One is no replica of the other.

(Original Not a Copy)

Again,

No misconception in the vision of our forebears  
Who worshipped womanhood as Shakthi (Energy);  
Theistic though the approach is  
It commends itself to reason too.



Lord Shiva had the rational mind  
*To share one half of Himself*  
With Shakthi, His spouse  
And derive therefrom enormous might;  
Could there be a word from the bardic world  
More in praise of the worth of women ?

(Feminism of Lord Shiva)

In the English literary tradition, it is John Milton who holds womanhood as the origin and source of man's becoming, going as he does much beyond the biblical conception of a "helpmeet". John Donne brings in the immortal image of the pair of compasses, where woman, the fixed needle, provides the existential stability to her male partner. D.H.Lawrence, a true inheritor of that tradition in the twentieth century, cries his heart out: "It is hopeless for me to try to do anything in the world without a woman at the back of me". For him, "Every man, every great man who achieves anything in life, is founded in a woman". There are in him the recurrent images of woman being the root of the tree of life, the axle of the wheel, and one bank of the river. And in Kulothungan, this womanhood flowers into the very stuff of his creative fire :

The prowess of our frame  
Is not the measure of human might  
It springs from the delicacy of the frail beings,  
The truly mighty that they are  
As are the blossom, the bud and the shoot;  
This frailty is mightier than the mighty.

(Frailty is Strength)

It is not a romantic conception clothed in captivating phraseology. If the human spirit has the potential to triumph over its predicaments and tribulations, its very being is woman : "She is the ever-burning lamp of my heart", "All my faculties find their source in you", "It is you who keep the fire of my life kindled", "you are the womb of my ambitions and aspirations". Indeed, Kulothungan stands far ahead of the avant-garde feminist



theorists when he proclaims the centrality of woman in the created universe.

All said, the overriding thematic burden of Kulothungan's poetry is his rooted conviction that man is the measure of all things, including gods. For him, as for his Sangam bardic fraternity, man is so supreme a reality that Nature is no more than a living companion.

My Soul does not remain confined  
to the bounds of my physique alone  
it is in communion with the earth,  
The mountains, the cool waters of the sea,  
the vast blue sky, the orbiting satellites  
and the numerous stars.

It pervades the entire universe  
and experiences its resonance too  
Neither the sun, nor the moon  
nor the stars are strangers to me.  
They all belong to my habitat  
and are my distant relatives.

(Distant Relatives; Tr. by the poet)

It is not that the cosmos is subsumed into the breadth of the human soul, but that the human soul has the potency to measure up to the circumambient universe. Man is both the maker and the made, the tenor and the vehicle, as the poet proclaims in a rare visionary mode : *Kaaviyam yaam: kavium yaame* (I am the poet and the poem as well). In such a conception, he stands in significant relationship with the classical writers the world over, whose claim for greatness lies in the celebration of the amplitude and majesty of the human spirit : It is the mind's inner vision.

Formless but penetrating  
That can be pervasive and perceiving;  
The Almighty then is the mind  
Which we have come to know for certain  
Thro' quests extensive and strenuous;  
It conceives and contains within



The earth and the waters  
The heavens and the cosmos  
The celestials and the demons  
And all things divine.

(The Foot and the Crown)

Aren't the sky and the ocean turbulent  
The ones in attendance  
Paying homage to our mind's might?

(An Unending Ascent)

You wish to take the earth and  
Mould it to suit your own design,  
You aspire to measure the sky's dimensions  
Holding its expanse on your palm,  
You find no contentment whatsoever  
With things that fall within your bounds.

(Divine Discontent)

True, the poet is painfully aware of the misfortunes and calamities which tend to weaken the confidence of man in himself. There are things ignoble, miserable, pathetic and farcical that keep straining man's existential journey; despair and despondency keep haunting the human will. But Kulothungan, fired by a vigorous sense of optimism, firmly believes that human spirit has the power to triumph over the outward universe; that, however much things around us turn damnable, vile and awry, man has, nevertheless, splendours and beauties of his own; that love and honour and glory are not words but realities of the human spirit. The Kulothungan, who bemoans the dwindled minds and hearts of his fellow men, does not fail to wonder, as do Shakespeare's Miranda: "Oh brave new world that has such creatures in it!" and his Hamlet, "What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty!" This sense of wonder, ecstasy and pride at the dauntless, invincible and undying spirit of man runs through the whole of the poetic corpus of Kulothungan.

In short, in Kulothungan's poetic realm, man occupies the exact centre of a universe which has no



meaning except for him. If Kulothungan's man believes in God, he has no hesitation in imagining Him constituted as he himself is, or as his fellow men are formed.

Such is the stuff the poetry of Kulothungan is made of.

I am profoundly grateful to 'Dr V.C. Kulandai Swamy Education and Research Foundation' for giving me the opportunity to render these poems into English, and to Dr Edwin Thumboo, Professor, National University of Singapore, whose erudite foreword has certainly enhanced the value of this translation. The text of this translation represents in effect a shared responsibility in so far as Dr V.C. Kulandai Swamy, the poet-thinker and academic visionary, went through the whole of the translation done by me with the eye of a 'workshop critic', shaping and reshaping it for fidelity to the original. While his opinions and suggestions have invested this rendering with incisiveness and validity, the failings, whatever, are my own. Many of them, indeed, are intrinsic to the discipline of translation itself, which is a conjuror's sophistry in compromises, adaptations and manipulations.

DR V. MURUGAN



## **Kulothungan**

---

Prof.V.C.Kulandai Swamy (Kulothungan) is an eminent technologist, a man of letters and educationist known for his contributions to Hydrology, Literature and Education. Born in a remote village Vangalampalayam in Tamil Nadu, he took his Ph.D. from the University of Illinois, U.S.A. Beginning as a member of the faculty of Technical Education, he has been a teacher and a researcher of international standing in Hydrology. A model developed by him for runoff studies is known as Kulandaiswamy Model, widely quoted in hydrologic literature.

Later, he moved to positions in academic administration as Vice-Chancellor, Madurai Kamaraj University (1978-79); Anna University (1981-90) and Indira Gandhi National Open University (1990-94). He is a Fellow of the Institution of Engineers, the Indian National Academy of Sciences and the Indian National Academy of Engineering. He was honoured as one of the 'eminent engineering personalities of India' by the Institution of Engineers, India (1991); was



Institution of Engineers, India (1991); was given the 'Pranavananda Award' by the UGC (1990) for outstanding services to education. He has been conferred D.Litt/ D.Sc., (Honoris Causa) by six universities.

Prof. Swamy is a well-known writer and poet in Tamil. The University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka, which conferred on him D.Litt., (Honoris Causa) states in the citation that:

Dr.Kulandai Swamy belongs to the rare band of scientists who are able to synthesize the scientific and literary cultures.

In the foreword to a collection of his poems translated into English under the title 'Earth is Paradise Enough', Prof.U.R.Anantha Murthy, then President, Sahitya Akademi of India, states that Kulandai Swamy's poem, ...persuades, but it does not declaim. It is meditative but not rhetorical. Its linguistic structure is not elusively suggestive; but it is made up of perfect statements. Yet these statements are not abstract philosophy but poetry because what the poet says becomes memorable speech...'

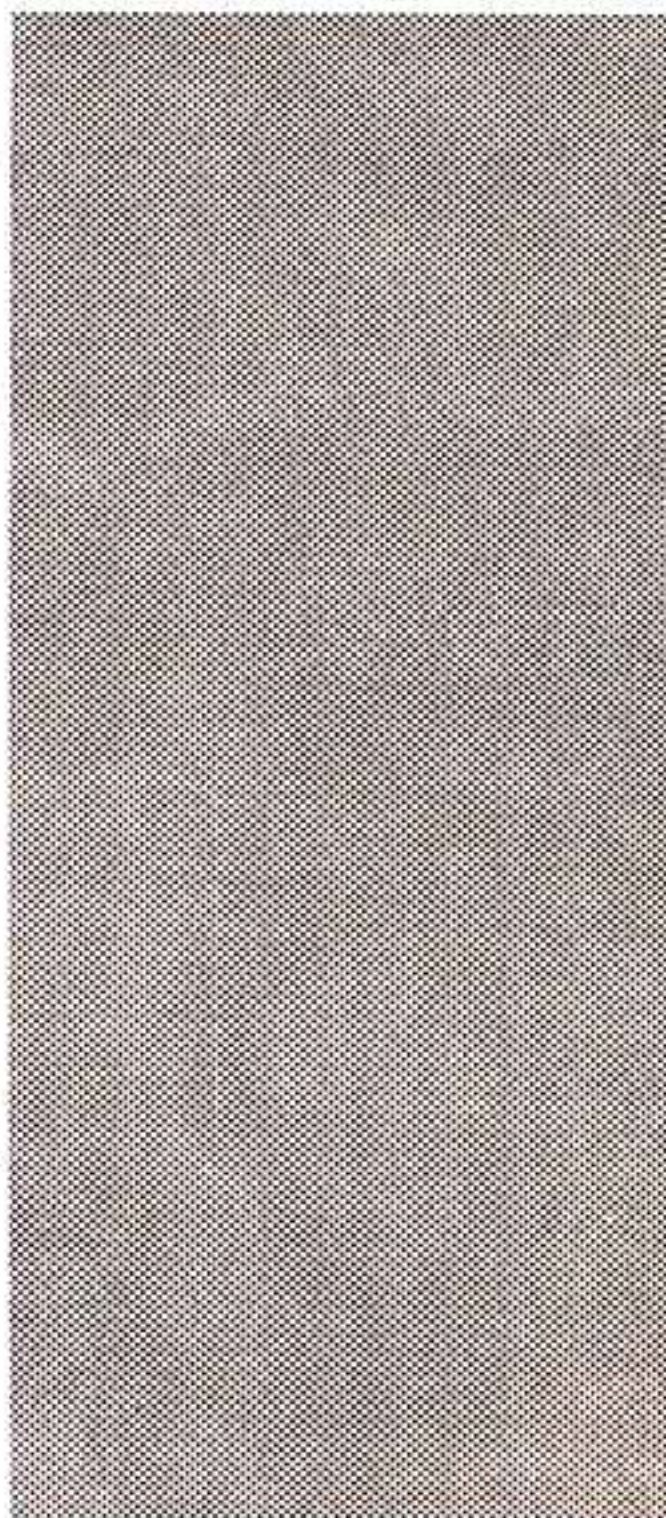
He has published six volumes of poetry and a number of books and articles in Tamil. He was the recipient of the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award for 1988. The Commonwealth of Learning described him as a great Commonwealth educationist and made him an Honorary Fellow of the Commonwealth of Learning (1999). He was conferred the national honours of Padma Shri (1992) and Padma Bhushan (2002) by the President of India.



## V Murugan

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Dr V. Murugan a Reader at the Presidency College, Chennai is presently a UGC Research Awardee working on evaluation of the **Tamil Lexicon** and other bilingual dictionaries in Tamil. He holds a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature and a Post-graduate Diploma in Applied Linguistics. He has 30 years of teaching experience at tertiary level. He has been guiding research at doctoral level. He has specialized in Translation, lexicography and English Language Teaching. He is a practising translator and the winner of the Best Translator of the Year Award, twice. He has six books of translation from Tamil to English to his credit including '*Kalittokai*' a Sangam classic, *Selected Poems of Bharathidasan* and the Pre-Sangam Tamil Grammar '*Tolkappiyam*' (circa II century B.C). He has also been the editor of several books, which include the *Dictionary of Tamil Literary and Critical Terms* and the *Encyclopaedia of Tamil Literature* – Vol. 1, published by the Institute of Asian Studies, Chennai.





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## **Sacred Ash and Burnt Dust**

---

Fallen on the ground  
Flowers become refuse  
Fallen from the clouds  
Rains become part of mire.

A luscious woman who stands  
Surpassing all creations of art  
Attracting a million eyes –  
The honey in her charming lips  
Is but a spit when parted  
From her mouth.

The sceptre of a sovereign  
Who reigns over the world –  
Is it anything but a stick  
When not wielded by him ?

The cobra, divine  
When on Shiva's neck  
Is but a venomous snake  
When crawling on the ground.

The ash is sacred  
On a saint's frame  
But is dust from a blaze  
While lying on the ground.

Consumed though in fire  
The wick in a lamp wears godliness;  
The worth of an object  
Is as great as its affiliation  
The status of one's habitat  
Could be the step for one's ascent.



## **The Statue Made of Time**

---

True it is that the human body  
With its beautiful form  
Is made of flesh, blood and nerves.

And yet

The cultured living of the humans  
Is not in anything material,  
It's made from an abstraction  
- Pervasive and transcendental,  
- Sans the beginning and the end  
- Perennially on the move in its own path  
- Never halting for a moment.

But yet real and permanent  
It's the image exquisite  
Chiselled, my dear friend,  
Out of the eternal wonder called 'Time'.

## **Solitude**

---

It's people, people all around  
So dense is the crowd  
Even a sesame seed would bounce back;  
Though in their midst I am  
It's loneliness that stays close.

Kinsmen do stand around  
Encircled I am by towering confidants  
And yet deep in my heart  
It's solitariness that engulfs my being.

Flood of festivities around  
Revelry of dance and drama,  
Lustre of angelic smiles,  
I do sing and dance with them  
And yet what nestles around is loneliness.

It is lush green fields all around  
But amidst that I see an arid waste.  
The celestials may manifest right in front  
But a spectre of void spreads before my eyes.



Beyond all that's accessed and achieved  
There remains something my heart yearns for :  
Is it in the realm of solitude  
That one identifies as asset  
That far outstrips all one's possessions ?

## **We Stood up when You Dictated**

---

Honourable heads of religions!  
We stood up  
When you dictated us to do so  
We knelt down  
When you charged us to offer worship  
We believed  
What all on this ancient earth  
We're told to believe  
We stretched our hands of prayer  
Towards whatever was pointed to.

We fell out with men  
You found hostile to your mores  
Your minds' intent  
Defined our deeds done in awe  
With no drift therein  
Our thoughts we pledged to you  
Taking for our part only deeds as you decreed  
Adulation and unquestioning obeisance  
You held to be codes for us to follow



Which we embraced without demur  
You commended them to be our guide  
And we took them in all humility.

'Keep off the alien faiths in contempt'  
Was your edict prescribed  
And scorn we poured on them too  
You ruled it to be a deed of honour  
To destroy other faiths  
And there we extended our support.

We entered thereupon  
Into feuds, feuds and feuds in sacrificial fervour  
In the guise of undoing religions of pretence  
Which ended in the massacre of our own kin  
Hills of corpses there were around  
And we stood with blood dripping all over.  
Having this blood soaked in,  
The earth turned red  
And the sky above too this complexion reflected.

Wounded feelings,  
Bloody conflicts unending,  
Humanity turned into shreds  
One taking on the other,  
Hatred fiendish that ensured  
Spreading its roots deep and wide –  
It's the spectacle that unfolded therein.

Witness we were to the tragedy  
Of humanity torn into fragments  
All in the name of religion and God.

A query we have,  
Coming from a mind  
Submissive in trepidation  
And yet drawing courage from reasoning  
That learning has bestowed on us:

"Long before the dawn of history  
You made your appearance on the scene  
In absolute faith that  
We have no greater boon to seek  
We accepted your lead  
Continued to follow your path  
Stood by you all along  
And obeyed your commands -  
Ultimately, of what avail  
Are all these to us ?"



## **Sultriness**

---

No fresh air around  
Is there a well-spring of  
Sultriness here ?

The heaviness increases  
The body aches all over  
The discomfort grows as though  
I were bound by a long rope  
Which is being tightened.

The pangs afflict me  
As if I were weighed down  
By a block of stone within.

The cause of it is not discernible  
But there stands firm a heavy load  
Pressing hard my heart.

They call it day time  
But no light from the sun

No noise there of things moving  
It is all a hush everywhere.

No bud unfolds: no bees around  
In search of petals unfolded  
No greenish hue; no freshness  
In the plants in pots.

I looked around room after room  
To discern the cause of this oppressive state

The rooms are all crammed  
And the doorways closed  
Blocking all fresh air and light.

These damned folks  
Have closed all the windows too  
Now, how shall one keep alive ?

O messengers of purity  
Who claim to guard against  
Pollution from external world !

I have a word for you:  
In a sealed state  
With darkness all around  
There can exist no purity  
No ladder; no device  
For ascent in life.

Can a community prosper  
Cuddling together in  
A cloistered world of exclusion  
And darkness ?



## **Rights Are Unsinkable**

---

A law of the world it is  
And a lesson from mankind's history  
That the race that stands up for its rights  
Shall never ever go down.

There is no such thing  
As prerequisite for self-governance  
Aspiration to achieve it is all that matters.

One may swear by the concept of nation  
One may affirm in the name of government  
One may stand by the norms of bounds  
Which the elected legislators prescribe  
But there's no power around  
Over and above the demands  
A race after patient endurance  
Rise in fury and proclaim.

Luscious dishes do not nurture humanity  
Residence in palace does not constitute 'living'

Honour is not what is protected by dress  
Man is the blossom of unfettered spirit.

Worth-cherishing are the fruits of unity  
That humanity is one family is also a fact  
But no life is worth living  
If one were to accede to  
Even a shade of another's authority.



## **A Heaven in the Mind**

---

He walks reeling down the road,  
Keeps tottering and tumbling  
Opens his mouth only to utter offensive words  
And enters into needless squabbles.

Palm's wine or an arrack blend  
Holds this tippler under its sway;  
These are surely the sort of things  
Men of virtuous bearing disapprove of  
A puzzle that humans fondly cultivate  
What has been universally disapproved!

These addicts mad after drinks and drugs  
A thousand things they booze  
A thousand things they consume  
A thousand things they puff on  
With a thousand things they inject into themselves.

They're not an illiterate mass,  
They 're not ignorant of proprieties  
They're not unprivileged ones

Nor are they strangers to high positions  
And no class whatsoever an exception here.

Drink thrives in houses of religion  
Mansions of the rulers are its favoured resort  
Has a hold pervasive in the haunts of the poor  
Assembly of artists too are dens of drunken revelry.

Helpless are the injunctions of the state  
Norms of religion and ethics stand ineffective  
Success eludes all the regulatory programmes and  
Revolutions have not reformed them either.

Why should men run after a pleasure  
That strikes at the sanity of the mind ?  
Why should they seek an intoxication  
That unfailingly stupefies all the senses ?  
Why this craving for a world of delusion ?

Is there an invisible world  
At the abyss of the human mind  
Where exists a fount of indulgence ?  
Are men in eternal search of this pleasure  
Voyaging by the vessel of inebriation ?



## **Am I a Doll ?**

---

They call him the loving God  
Whoever is He ?  
Did He bring me on this earth  
Taking my consent therein ?

Is this paining hunger of my own asking ?  
Why should I be made to endure  
The burden called stomach ?  
Had I even a trace of choice in this plight ?  
Infancy and youth  
Adulthood and old age –  
Have they come on my asking ?

I suffer from and revel in  
A million emotions  
Amongst them all  
Is there one that I created  
On my own choice ?

It's not my own option  
That I came into being

Now that I am born  
Life in its entirety  
Is not under my charge  
Days move on inexorably  
And death at an unknown moment  
Is inevitable.

If it be so  
Am I a grand doll  
For nature to play with ?  
Should we tolerate this  
Demeaning state of existence ?



## **Where are We Heading to ?**

---

To take our ease,  
To turn for a study of the self  
To gaze at and ponder the destination  
Which our race of men has journeyed to  
From its days in the antique past,  
And to reflect on the path to take  
And the place that this path may lead to –  
We allow ourselves no time  
We stop not for a moment  
And we keep racing along  
As if determined  
That the journey alone is all that matters.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Wherever are we heading to  
Whichever is our destination set  
Have we the target well-defined,  
For our journey of this hour ?

Are we on a journey  
With no knowledge of the destination  
With no understanding of the motivation  
Letting ourselves dragged along  
And being blind to what drags us along  
Like a trifle caught in a jungle stream,  
With no discernment of the quest taken on ?  
No trace of pointers there seems to be  
For the mind's burden to lessen  
And the mystery to unravel  
Even if I search thro' the expanse above  
That stretches beyond one's dream and fancy  
And even if I move my gaze farther than  
The orbits of the sun, planets and stars countless,  
The burden of scepticism remains persistent.

Sure we're home to the truth that  
The body and soul of our species are  
Perennially on the path of upward evolution;  
But what it holds in store at the end  
We are yet to realize  
The hour of dawn of this revelation  
Has been all along my concern.



## **The Inner Sanctuary**

---

An endeavour is a fertile farm  
That will yield  
All that the heart strives for;  
Learning is a fountain  
Whence wisdom springs  
As one listens and learns.

The mind is a mine  
A wonder of wonders  
Where lives the divine  
As well as the devil;  
It is an omnipotence  
That transcends and  
Surpasses human genius.

Affection is a world unto itself  
Where reason does not reign;  
Love is a bond and  
Friendship does not ever  
Reckon with the pros and cons.

Transcending the visible and  
Surpassing the discernible  
There exists beyond all  
A sanctum sanctorum  
The innermost recess of privacy  
Where the mind conceives.



## **Horizon of Darkness**

---

If it's mere entry and exit on this planet,  
What import does human life carry ?  
Is it just a repetitive cycle in motion ?  
Is it a journey on the ascent  
Whatever is the measure of life on the earth ?

If generation after generation  
Marks phases of development  
Where lies the journey's end ?  
What really is the nature of the bond  
Between the mind and the mortal frame ?

If striving and succeeding is all that counts  
Where exactly lies the crown of the spire ?  
Are we all pilgrims in a quest  
That has seen no fruits as yet ?

Are the states before and after  
The beginning and end on this earth  
Doors ever closed on us ?

Should they remain mysteries unrevealed  
To the light of our mind and might of our muscle ?

Is it the truth manifest, when we contemplate  
That humanity lives in darkness ?

Is there no way  
That humanity can move ahead  
Transcending the boundaries of  
The endless chain of entry and exit ?

A thousand queries there are  
That the human mind raises  
And to answer them all  
Who else there is  
But the human mind itself ?



## **Quest for Realms Uncharted**

---

A million verses we've on hand  
That sing of the sun's splendour  
Countless indeed are the strains  
On the beauties of the moon's orb.

Myriad are the classics known  
That emanated from the passion of love  
Feats of prowess and might  
Have nourished a million rhymes.

It is but natural  
That poets are overwhelmed by floral lustre  
That captivates a million eyes  
And holds a million minds spellbound.

The world is but a devotee of beauty  
The delightful experiences  
That we derive from this  
Expansive planet are unending.

Abundant are the objects that throng  
Fascinating me, their praise to sing  
Yet there's one loftier than the ones around  
That beckons the attention of my bardic mind.

It's a vision distinctive and divine  
The strands it's made of are different  
My poetic soul seeks after  
Something that is more celestial  
That I could sing with absolute devotion  
It is envisioned, but undefined yet.



## **The Thirst Unquenched**

---

O heart !  
Should you keep on lamenting  
The burden of our myriad duties ?  
Who will carry the charges our own ?  
Let's bear our burden ourselves.

Be it men taking to the woods  
Wearing ochre-coloured garments  
And carrying the ascetic's pitcher  
They too have the bonds of their spirit  
Sitting fast on their shoulders.

You wear marks of stress  
And wail over it morn and eve  
It is what life's charge has cast on you.  
Isn't it as ordained in its birth  
That sugarcane suffers crushing in a mill ?

It is true that all your supports  
That stood close to your mind and soul

Have fallen to the ground  
Do you not see all the trees  
On the banks of a river  
Getting uprooted in raging floods ?

There is no further relative  
For the one who has adopted  
The world as one's family  
There exists no boundary  
On any side for the one  
Devoted to the community.

Cast in the heat of fire,  
Gold turns refined and pure  
Another object in the same fire  
Gets turned into mere ashes.

Those that have emerged triumphant  
From the blaze of life's vicissitudes  
Will never accept a defeat enroute.

Those that have marched ahead  
In the path of achievement  
Will never have their  
Aspiration for ascent quenched.

## **Mother, I Have a Doubt**

---

O Mother Nature !  
Is it your inherent character or your principle  
That you yield your fruits  
Only when we struggle and strive  
Toil endlessly and  
Put you too to affliction ?

You turn to cultivable soil, mother  
Only when we plough and furrow your golden face  
That spreads and covers a vast expanse;  
You transform yourself  
Into a fertile wetland  
Only when we drench you  
So much as to make you shiver.

You keep your springs concealed  
Reveal them only when we dig you up;  
You hoard beyond our reach  
The energy bearing coal  
And ornamental gold



And make them accessible only to  
Those who cut deep into your body.

You have this world composed of atoms,  
But do they come around  
For the eyes to see and hands to hold ?  
You have imbued the atom  
With energy immeasurable  
But you bring this home  
Only to the hands that break the atom ?  
O Mother !  
Is it your inherent character or principle ?

O Mother Nature !  
Is it your inherent character or principle  
That you yield your fruits  
Only when we struggle and strive  
Toil endlessly and put you too to affliction ?

## **Beyond Human Mind ...?**

Endowed with relentless resolve  
Nothing is hard to achieve.

For those that stand up to act  
The Himalayas are no impediment.

An endless endeavour shall  
End in a conquest.

If it is defeat today  
It is sure triumph next day.

What the mind resolves  
Life will sure achieve.

A celestial being is he  
Who discerns the potential  
Of the mind, that can soar  
Past the heaven and earth.

And where really is a God  
Surpassing human mind.?



## **An Unending Ascent**

---

A reasoning and rational mind is our guide;  
We'll take nothing whatever for truth  
Unless measured by reason  
No matter even if held ordained by God  
In His earlier incarnation on earth.

That there exists a task beyond human might  
Is an assertion we'll never ever acknowledge.

We shall dive deep into life in all its aspects  
And destroy if any the founts of misery.  
Perceived with discerning eyes  
It's all springs of joy everywhere.

Light there is,  
We will go questing in every direction;  
Fortitude is the stuff we're made of  
Even the mountains we'll smash  
If they be obstacles on our way.

Wind there is  
Our horse for the journey,  
We shall mount and fly in gallops  
Break all the fetters that constrain  
Our mind endowed with wings.

Vision unclouded is our virtue and  
There shall blossom a renaissance  
We've our hearts blessed with love  
The fragrance of life in its fullness unfolds  
Let's go singing the bliss and ecstasy of life,  
And let's proclaim by beat of the drum  
That life on earth is an ocean of bliss.

Aren't the sky and the ocean turbulent  
The ones in attendance  
Paying homage to our mind's might ?  
Never will we stand keeping our heads low,  
Never will we bow our heads in submission;  
We'll raze to the ground everything  
That brings blemish to humanity at large.

In no sphere of human pursuit  
Is there the distinction of high and low.  
We have discovered the path to the world  
That is free from the darkness of suffering  
Let's march ahead undaunted  
In the path of continuous progress.  
A journey unending is human life.

## **The Triumph of Poverty**

An ailment that poverty is  
Afflicting none else but the humans;  
A disease it is in life  
More cruel than the cruellest.

Pitiable ones are the poor  
They neither live nor die;  
Poverty is but the incarnation  
Of torture immutable.

Destitution hounds humanity  
Persistently as its shadow  
Since man's advent on this planet.

It's a termite  
That gnaws at one's honour and dignity  
That eats into one's body, soul and  
The courage and conviction to seek greatness.

It's an enemy of one's desire for excellence,  
It's a killer that agonises the victim  
Keeping him in perpetual torment.



Aren't there saintly souls around  
That could rise up in righteous fury  
And pronounce a curse and banish  
This pestilence called 'poverty' ?

It keeps afflicting one and all –  
The scholar and the poet,  
Those that guard the path of virtue,  
Those that stand firm in uprightness,  
And those of towering genius  
Held in awe and worship.

No manifest sign there witnesses  
For this oppressive evil to perish,  
Which on the contrary keeps thriving,  
Reducing humanity to heaps of debris  
A humanity that could soar to heights unmatched.

Of what avail are the arts and sciences a thousand  
That our ingenuity has endowed us with,  
If the wants of our ancient life in the forests  
Were to afflict us still ?

Of what avail are the cultural modes  
That we established in stages  
Thro' centuries of effort,  
Were we not to break any ground yet  
To get this plague eradicated from earth ?

Of what avail are all our studies  
In spheres of religion, philosophy and science  
Profound and penetrating though they are ?  
Of what avail are the tools in varieties we  
Innovated ?

O bards who run after mirage  
Who stand lost in the splendour of the rainbow!

O men of towering charge in education  
Are you drawn to hunt after delusions ?  
Should your body and soul feed on dreams ?

Of what avail is that art  
That turns oblivious to life on earth ?  
Millions and millions of people  
Withering away in the pain of indigence  
And perishing in hunger and thirst,  
Of what avail are all the studies  
That stand removed from life's miseries ?

## **Have I an Answer to my Child ?**

---

My own hunger I can bear with  
I can suffer the sight of my hungry mate  
I can endure the pain of my parents  
But alas! I can't stand  
My child writhing in pangs of hunger.

A violent windstorm is no threat to my nerve  
I can brush away the sun's fiery scorch  
I can wither the shiver of the chilling cold  
But alas ! How do I bear  
My tender child suffer these severities ?

Some do theorize that  
'Abundance of wealth on one side  
And acute deprivation on the other  
Living side by side is part of life'.  
I do hear this philosophy  
But what do I tell my famished child ?



## **The Rudra Thandavam**

---

The rag of an attire about his waist  
Crimped up to the upper thigh  
And tucked in securely behind,  
The turban to ward off the sun's scorch  
The shoes worn out and ruptured,  
The parched, withering frame  
Much like the leather of his shoes,  
The shoulders weighed down by the plough  
The hands holding the rope tied to the oxen  
Which are his companions thro' thick and thin –  
There goes the farmer to transform  
The woods and mounds and plains  
Into cultivable fields.

- The one who toils ceaselessly  
With no repose, no respite  
To the limits he could  
To create wealth.

His wife, his children and  
He himself have no access  
To incentives and allowances  
By orders of the Government  
And privileges flowing therefrom;  
To the boons of learning and knowledge  
To the relish of the lores of literature  
And to the fruits many a sphere of progress yields.  
A citizen loyal, patient and  
Acquiescing in his vocation ordained  
Much like a fabricated machine.

He keeps for long  
A joint family with hunger  
Accepting poverty  
As though it is his shade.

Even if his burdens aggravate  
He bears up with calm fortitude.  
Endowed he is with a braced heart  
His physique is a grazing field  
For cold and heat;  
He remains inseparable from his work  
He labours hard as usual  
Whether it be poverty or prosperity.

The needs of your physical comfort  
The demands of your relatives,  
Cooling devices that  
Far surpass the fans  
And resources inexhaustible  
And the prop and patronage of folks  
Who could provide at a moment's call  
For feasting rich and revelry too –  
You have all this to the brim.

And yet you get into  
Such a fuss and go enraged too

About the trifles of  
Your want and inadequacy;  
But your thoughts never turn to the hapless ones  
Who brought you food, dwelling and clothes  
And who live in shelters of mud and mire;  
You keep off your eyes and hearts  
From the sights of their pain and misery.

Ours is a culture with ingrained gratitude;  
No one is more unkindly than those  
That trample on this trait.  
Will the world tolerate your attitude ?  
Were the tolerant ones to rise up in fury  
What'd become of your parades of word and deed ?

Were the whirling waves to cross the bounds  
Would the plains and hills survive ?

The elephant albeit its huge frame  
Obeys the mahout's steering;  
But the moment it rebels seething in rage  
Would the goad ever contain it ?

What could an umbrella do  
When a storm bursts and pours in torrents ?

When the toiling poor rise up in fury  
We are sure to witness again  
Shiva's Rudra Thandavam  
The dance of righteous indignation.



## **Nothing Pollutes like Poverty**

O self-proclaimed zealots  
Of environment protection!  
Do pause awhile  
And heed my word before you proceed:

You own mansions for your residence  
Live secured against any pollution  
And sermonize like the affluent Western crowd  
That could even journey among the planets.

None of us stand lagging behind  
In preserving the purity of mother nature  
And yet, things are to be prioritized  
After assessing the pressing demands.

You repeat the findings of research that  
Fertilizers have spoilt the fields;  
But have you a remedy to heal  
The misery of the famished soul  
Writhing without even a morsel of gruel ?

'Pesticides pollute soil and water'  
So run your declarations;  
Of what avail are such rhetorics ?  
What have you to offer the millions  
That suffer from unmitigated hunger ?

'Pollution will destroy humanity'  
You keep repeating like a parrot  
The tutored statement of the very people  
Who polluted the earth and sky.

'Toddling and tripping, crawling and climbing'  
That is the state of our progress  
Gradually we gain access to earth's resources.  
The Westerners revelling in plenty  
After fully exploiting and defiling nature  
Quote for us a different scripture.  
There is no pollution worse than poverty  
No pain greater than hunger.

What does pollution-free environment mean  
When life and death stand indistinct ?

We've on earth the hell called slums;  
Would you pay them a visit  
And seek a way for their deliverance ?  
Of what avail is your battle of words  
That could secure no tangible gain ?

When the science of the day has gifted us  
Myriad things of manifest reward  
Who stands in the way of sifting and segregating  
Those that are perceived as harmful ?

The bees are wont to rise up in ire  
And sting us sharp like a scorpion;  
We seek to alleviate the pain.

And still take honey from the beehive,  
We do not annihilate the swarm of bees.

Don't we keep clear of the rind's thorns  
And look for the luscious pulp within  
Of the ripe jack fruit at the root ?  
As novelties mark their advent around,  
Let's sift them through  
And eschew the detrimental one.

The sky and earth have all been defiled  
By the few inhabiting a fragment of this planet;  
As we strive to find our feet on the way to prosperity  
They dare to preach us on the sin of pollution.

There can be no growth in wealth  
If there is no change in the environment;  
Let's open the gateway  
For the protection of earth and sky  
And walk through it  
Towards progress and prosperity.



## **We Exist but Do Not Live**

---

We built houses and raised cities,  
We have no huts even for shelter;  
We cultivated and harvested,  
We have no gruel to live on.

Our sweat transformed woods to farms,  
We cultivated cotton for clothing;  
We do not have even rags to cover.

Till our poor physique fatigued  
And arms did ache  
We laboured hard to build schools;  
Our children have no access to learning  
Never in their lives  
Have we seen them touch a book.

We have done everything  
We possess near nothing –

We the poor:  
We just exist but do not live.

We dug the earth and brought out gold  
We fished for pearl in oceans dark and deep,  
But we've no ornaments to wear.

We're drenched in the sea of sweat  
We're scorched in sun's dazzling heat,  
But we see no trace of well-being in life.  
Swarms of bees sing above the groves of flowers  
Which our toiling hands did bring into being,  
But the relish of the zephyr eludes us ever.

We gifted the world all they live on  
Resting our worn out selves  
On the naked earth –  
We are the poor  
We exist but do not live.

Parched lips, withered face  
Eyes wet with tears and untidy hair,  
And yet we taste a trace of the bliss of living  
As streaks of lightning in a raining cloud  
When our loved ones nestle up to us in enduring  
fondness  
As our children wear winning smiles  
From their dusty beds –  
Come the moment next,  
We are again spectacles of parched frames  
And stark blinding gloom.

We aren't dead yet,  
We exist but do not live  
We the poor.

## **The Wall**

---

Let me address myself  
To you, known as walls:  
I know not  
Who brought you into being;  
You keep growing larger and larger  
Privileged you may indeed be!

My forebears erected you that day  
With stone and earth blended  
To protect the boundaries of their land

To protect us from sun's blaze, rain and snow  
To help us live with our kith and kin  
Thus saving us from lonely life.  
You provided the support for a roof  
And gave us a house to live in.

The mason and the carpenter  
And many good members of society  
Brought you thus into being.

\* \* \* \*



A structured entity that you are apart,  
Men set about raising in thousands  
Abstract walls in human minds.

There stand walls of divisions among men  
Erected by the contrivances of mean minds  
Exploiting every variation in nature  
As normal as the colour and complexion  
Which exists since the advent of man on earth.  
Religions severally lending their names  
There grow divides long and tall.

Walls there came up in the names of languages  
To divide humanity into fragments many,  
Tearing thereby our affinities to shreds.

There grow walls of discord in the name of  
Groups wielding the power of the state  
And after the whims of political parties.

Walls of discord rear their heads  
Thro' perceptions diverse in economic systems –  
Accumulation, preservation and distribution –  
Intended for human welfare though they are.

O how many are the walls in kind  
The mad ones have raised in the mind!  
Nothing positive can sprout in the heart  
Where walls and fences rule the thought.

\* \* \* \* \*

The dawn of science is the pride of our mind,  
Technology its offshoot has conferred  
The boon of a thousand arts and skills  
To help us cross woods, hills and oceans  
And triumph over the vast physical world;

We did found at the same time  
Colossal walls across the mind  
Marking a decline of the human kind.

\* \* \* \* \*

Let's honour and adore the faculties of man  
That put forth blossoms of ideas ever afresh  
Let's greet them with hands hospitable.

The ladder of advance for the humans  
Is formed of rungs of thoughts varied;  
The emergence of multiple ideas  
Plurality of beliefs and postulates  
Is, for certain, the mark of progress.

Difference in them in thousands even  
Will do us only good  
We shall welcome them  
And greet them at the portals.

\* \* \* \*

Height of folly it is  
That every tool we designed  
To subserve human pursuits  
Is allowed to become our absolute master;  
Colossal proportions has it assumed  
With devilish power and stunning swiftness;  
It threatens to break up the humanity  
Under many a guise, many a mode  
And many a form;  
And there we witness the walls multiply.  
Let's strike and demolish  
And raze them all to the ground.

We shall make on this earth  
A law inviolable:  
Nothing in the world is more sacred  
Than the life of the human species.

## **Human Rights**

---

That day  
Came the police and inquired:  
Did you come across the terrorists ?  
We replied:  
Never have we seen  
Such people around.

Again yesterday  
Came the police and inquired:  
Are there the conspirators around ?  
We responded:  
It's the truth we speak  
Even the shadow of such men  
We have not seen.

And today  
The policemen were again here;  
It is clear this time  
They have come for us;



'Well, let's go' we said and  
Readied ourselves forthwith;  
We know not  
What awaits us tomorrow.

## **Not a Fall in Isolation**

---

The rise of the Soviet Union  
The wondrous advent of Marxism  
The great epic come to life  
The Revolution that came about  
As auguring the end of all evils  
That afflicted humanity from ancient days,  
The politico-economic edifice  
Which the learned pondered day and night  
And designed to found the socialist ideology  
The philosophy discerned potent enough  
To bring the entire earth into its fold –  
It came in for acclaim with full admiration  
We sang its praise with passion and fervour.

There unfolded a sight most puzzling –  
The nation that stood like a stately mountain  
Grew enfeebled and dismembered too  
Lost its stature and leadership  
Like huge clouds getting dissipated  
By the stormy winds.

I know not the genesis  
Wherein was set off this collapse  
That occurred as if in a flash  
Looking mysterious and delusive.

Is it all an act of subversion  
Wrought by the deadly termite  
That gnawed it unknown from within ?

Is it the decline and fall  
That excesses of absolute power  
Concentrated in the hands of a few  
Inevitably bring about ?

Is it the fruit of plenitude  
That ensured food, clothing and shelter  
And banished the evil called penury,  
Whereupon the mass of people  
Grew complacent and indolent ?

Is it the end result of the sin  
Of a few privileged ones living in plenty  
Developing an insatiable desire  
For more pomp and prosperity ?

Or are the humans endowed with a natural trait  
That shuns equality and favours stratification ?

Or hasn't man attained that ripeness yet  
Wherein  
He is not fettered by self-interest  
He yields not to the lust for possession  
He keeps community's good to the fore  
He holds fast the concept of global family  
And steers his deed to that end in view ?

Or is it the passion for liberty,  
Ingrained in man, a trait



Superior to his body, mind and soul  
That became more assertive  
And looked for more free expression ?

Is it the derailment  
Of the steps for reform within –  
To remove the veils and restrictions  
And to herald an order of living  
More natural and relaxed ?

Is it longing for freedom  
Among people of  
Diverse languages and cultures kept together ?

Whatever they be  
The failure of the Soviet Union is by no means  
The fall of an individual country  
It's implications for the world at large.

It does cry for the need now  
For a scrutiny more penetrating  
Of the strengths and failings  
Of the concepts of equality and equity;  
And there needs to be a refocus  
On the part of the rationalists  
In their quest in life.

## **A New Species**

---

There's added to the earth's stock  
Yet another species, 'refugees' by denomination;  
They're the ones bearing witness  
To humanity's fall to a state wretched  
More despicable than worms in the mire.

An assorted crowd it is  
Black, white and complexions all  
It's the grim manifestation of an evil  
Perpetrated by devils sowing seeds of hatred.

No beast in the woods moves around  
Shedding tears as a refugee  
No bird moving about in the sky  
Is wandering as a refugee on earth.

Among the refugees are womenfolk  
With delicate children nestling on their shoulders,  
The tears flowing down their spear shaped eyes  
Do reflect the burning of all virtues into ashes.

They're like deer ever on their feet  
Fleeing desperately from huntsmen's hounds;  
It is alternating between life and death  
Everyday; every night  
Keeping their body and soul ever trembling.

Herein is a spectacle of wonder  
Where neighbours become aliens;  
It is an amazing feat  
That some could sow seeds of malice  
Among people living in abiding amity.

No angel has the world seen yet  
Nobler than one of the humankind;  
No worm or insect on the earth either  
More debased than the species of men.

Would the maker create a breed  
With nectar and poison for each half ?  
Do we witness only the vile acts of a few ?  
And the earth is still the abode of the righteous.



## **Why Expect Gratitude ?**

---

The ocean deep senses no peril  
At its waves soaring high  
Mother earth fears no threat  
At the lofty summit of the hills  
My heart fumes like blazing fire  
At the spectacle of men called leaders  
Fearing the rise of their own followers.

Why do you stand demanding gratitude ?  
Are all your laurels for breeding dogs ?  
Is your rise to positions to achieve this end ?  
What do you propose to do,  
What would you really do,  
Having moved on to the seat of power,  
With flags held aloft by  
Men who stoop, by men who cringe ?

You revel in pride and vanity,  
Surrounded as you are  
By enthusiasts crossing not  
The line of blind adherence,

By the affluent spurred on  
By nothing beyond self-interest,  
And by other people of their like  
Feasting you on flattery.

Is monarchy back to power in this land ?  
Highways long, bridges across canals  
Tanks that store rain water and irrigate fields  
All these are really good;  
But can they be the source of society's greatness ?  
Is it not man who is the prime force ?

No wealth around comparable to those  
With preparation for leadership in diverse spheres.  
Zeal for service to the community at large  
Learning that lights the path  
And an insight into distant future –  
They do not qualify for leadership  
Who do not possess this comprehension.

## **Future Holds No Promise**

I'm left with no time  
To fall back on the past,  
To fall for things gone  
To idolize ancient modes,  
To adulate all that lies buried  
And thereby keep basking  
In revels all the day.

That being so, Dear friends  
Keep me off and let me be all at work.

Gone are the trying days of crawling and trekking  
The hour has come when mankind  
Spreads wings and flies through the air.

A desire intense fills my heart  
To catch up with the world  
That races ahead for a feel –  
Of the truth that unfolds in diverse fields  
Of the novelties that blossom in the world of thought



Of the hues of the blossoming  
Of the visionary land that humans yearned for long  
And to revel in the grandeur of the dawn  
Of all these before my eyes.

I've no time left  
For discussions with you.

I'll strive to redeem in entirety  
The span of centuries lost in vain;  
Should we live in such ignominy  
As to beg for knowledge in science all over ?

If indigence invades the sphere of thinking  
There remains nothing worth-living.

Dwelling, clothes and tasty food  
Are no measure for the wealth of man.

A lofty intent born of a lofty mind  
Marks the measure of man's greatness.

That land shall see no progress  
Where exist men who look for  
Paltry fruits born of paltry minds.

Time waits for no one whoever  
In its course forever extending,  
Ordained as it's by law inviolable.

It's the Great Chain interminable  
Where things keep moving back and forth;  
And yet such is the order in the universe  
That nothing once extinct comes alive.

Never has the earth been a witness  
To two men alike one to one in all features  
Albeit millions peopling the world.

Since the days extending from primeval past  
The rhythm of flow of waters in a river  
The ebbs and flows of ocean waves  
Will never be the same today  
As they had been yesterday  
Or as they would be tomorrow.

The world may stand on the strength  
Of the roots that run into  
The depths of the past;  
It is in the expanse of tomorrow  
That the branches extend  
Leaves flourish and  
The pollen-bearing buds blossom.

Those who envision the needs  
For the days to come  
Will thrive and prosper;  
The future holds no great hope  
For people sans vision and mission.

## **No One Need Be Poor**

---

Tiny as an ant one may be,  
One does possess yet  
A heart of one's own;  
Trifle as a particle of dust  
One has still an image of one's own.

The wealth one earns  
The position one holds  
Is no measure of greatness;  
The touchstone for greatness  
The measure of merit is that  
One does not ever behave  
Unworthy of one's standing.

One is sure to achieve  
Whatever one aims at  
Thro' untiring perseverance  
Knowledge of the path  
And vision of the destination.



To stand up firm and strive  
Is the mark of humanity;  
Success is what results, when  
Energy in its entirety converges;  
Where endeavour is the currency  
No one need be poor.

Men who waste their life time  
Blaming loudly their sorrows and  
Sufferings on others  
Would hardly ever prosper.

Decline and fall never visit those  
Who devise the right strategies  
And unswervingly strive  
Along the path chosen;  
This for sure is the law of life  
And never shall it fail.

## **You Obstruct the Aspiring but Adore the Triumphant**

---

You obstruct those that strive to succeed

But acclaim those that achieved success

- If recognition is not there for those on the march
- The rule is absolute:
- There shall be no future to hope for

You obstruct those that strive to succeed

But acclaim those that achieved success.

Is my dear Tamil Nadu

A pond of water ?

- Weightless corks float and are on top
- Weighty ones sink deep, beyond sight

Is my dear Tamil Nadu

A pond of water ?

Is this land of fecund Tamil

A slippery sporting pole ?

- They promote slipperiness by splashing water

- Prevent the ones that strive to ascend

Is the land of fecund Tamil

A slippery sporting pole ?

Is advance of Tamils like chadu gudu\* game ?

- One endeavours, all by oneself to achieve
- And many are out to obstruct and overpower

Is advance of Tamils like chadu gudu game ?

---

\* A game called 'chadu gudu' in Tamil Nadu and 'kabadi' in the North in which two teams range themselves on either side of a dividing line. One player from one team holds his breath uttering the word 'chadu-gudu' crosses the dividing line and tries to touch one or more persons in the rival side and returns to his side without being caught and without giving out his breath.



## **To Be Youthful is to Be Contemporaneous**

---

We're given to adoring ancient mores of our race  
And yet we are of a mind prepared  
To live in tune with the world of today,  
To map out the path of advancement for our people  
And to embrace things new and unexploited.

Those who bear the burden of faiths and beliefs  
That inhibit progress  
Will lose their very identity and  
Miss all claims for greatness.

Things that come down long by tradition  
Do not necessarily become immortal.

When things perishable do perish  
To discard and remove is fair and proper  
All things created  
Have their hour of obsolescence;  
The path to progress is  
To wipe off the worn-out  
And to turn to the shoots.

No tradition there will endure for ever  
Transcending space, time and matter  
A calm discernment will reveal  
No scripture can stand triumphing over time.

Were God to incarnate on the earth  
He too would meet his end along with us.

\* \* \* \* \*

There's a mode of continuity in the life on earth  
The end of one and another's beginning  
Manifest in visible form  
As are the plantain tree and its shoot.

There's another mode of life's flow incessant :  
The end of one and another's beginning  
Are indistinguishable  
Like the receding and on-coming current of water  
At a point in a flowing river.

We do have in one form or the other  
Uninterrupted continuity in life  
Interminable motion and inevitable change  
Are the order of things for all.

\* \* \* \* \*

We call our language a virgin  
It is a poetic statement;  
I have a word to the learned folk  
Who keep repeating this around  
Unaware of its deep significance:

A virgin she is  
Who is like a flower in fresh bloom  
That knows no withering.

Youthfulness is  
What manifests  
When you are in harmony  
With the present.

They will never advance  
Who fail to integrate  
The needs of the present  
With their passion for the past.



## **Let's Honour Diversity**

---

Unity is not uniformity;  
Kinship is one thing  
But equity is another;  
Bond is part of society's culture  
Plurality has its roots in antiquity.

Humanity is not cast in a mould;  
Were flowers to have colours alike  
Could nature be a source of charm ?  
Whence come beauty and joy  
Where everything remains the same ?

Family of stars blossoms in the sky  
Humanity flowers on the earth;  
Thousand names there are for a path  
Difference is one thing: division another.

In a world devoid of diversity  
Where is the urge for ambition or action ?  
Those who respect differences  
Are divine beings on earth.

Pluralism is the soul of Indian ethos  
Hail pluralism ! Hail pluralism !  
A message for the human race :  
Choices and chances in life are many  
But humanity has  
Only one substratum.

## **An Appeal by the Youth**

---

Give us the wings  
Do not say: 'No more room in the sky'  
We'll soar up the heights  
Till we find space.

Give us the lamp in our hands  
Do not say: 'It's darkness all around'  
We'll walk up till we cross the murk.

Give us a raft if there is no ship  
Frighten us not with horror stories of waves;  
We'll be ashore with winds for propellant  
And hands for oar.

Show us the direction of the destination  
Be not worried  
That the path is full of stones and thorns  
We will cross the woods  
Swim the river and climb the mountain.



Let us to embark on our quest  
Do not waste time  
Boasting about past achievements  
So many worlds keep waiting still  
For us to strive and discover.

## **The Final Homage**

---

There stood the planes in a row,  
Ships, all of them were around here,  
So too were the carts in countryside  
And autos many seen on the roads.

Also marking their presence were  
In paces unhurried though  
The multitudes of seas  
And the masses of mountains  
That partitioned the earth  
Into countries and continents  
As beds in the paddy field.

Devices innumerable  
Of aerial communication  
Made their way about with  
Flowers and garlands,  
Satellites man-made came down  
From their heavenly orbits,  
Electronic devices in plenty  
Were in queues in attendance.

Is the whole universe down here !  
Wondering I went about close by  
A spectacle, marvellous it was  
Unknown to the human sight.

The mystic phenomenon called 'Time'  
That transcends human grasp  
Was also a witness to the event.

I asked Time:  
"You rule over the millions  
Of universes there around;  
Whatever are these that I witness here ?"  
And Time replied :  
"Dear friend : never do I stop moving  
But I too have come because  
The 'Distance' is dead  
The devices  
Born of the might of human genius  
Have ultimately triumphed.

The barriers of hills and oceans have disappeared  
The earth and the sky have become neighbours  
*Distance is dead*  
We're all here to pay our last homage".

\*            \*            \*            \*

Though we have hearts  
That are moved by compassion  
The death of Distance today  
Doesn't turn us down with grief.

For I stand there  
Pondering upon the triumph of my race  
Over distance, the unyielding obstacle

That separated us in the name of race  
That fragmented us spawning;  
Innumerable languages  
That divided us by our complexion  
That kept us apart and  
Held us off from bonds of love and amity,  
And that caused unspeakable hardship to  
our ancestors  
Who walked on foot thro' jungle tracts.

As I stood reflecting thus,  
Perturbed I was by doubts  
That kept rising  
Like the soaring waves of the sea.

Countless are the walls of separation  
Countless are the blocks of disunity  
Raised by the human mind  
Which through the ages  
Has enjoyed primacy on earth.

No hills there are  
Higher than the prejudices  
That nurture discord.

No waves there are  
More frightful than the ones  
That swell up because of hatred.

No distance is more fearsome  
Than the dissensions of religion and caste  
Than divisions generated by self-interest  
Than the hell on earth created by jealousy.

We've conquered the distance without  
A feat commendable it is.  
But have we a device on hand  
By which to triumph over the distance  
Between blocks of our own creation ?



No remedy there's in sight  
Thro' tools which our knowledge created;  
It's but attainable by efforts  
That blends fortitude with wisdom  
That has a reach beyond senses;  
Here lies the key to divinity on earth.

## **For an Unfettered Mind**

---

The scriptures are but beliefs,  
The rules of governance are  
Based on norms,  
The creation and distribution of  
Wealth do follow certain formulas,  
All these are man-made and  
None is infallible.

The premises, forms and formulas  
All are creatures of our mind  
And they are not our creators.

Man stands as the one overarching force  
That experiences and effects changes  
In the form and the feel  
In the power of the mind  
In the wealth of the surroundings  
And in the might to make and unmake;  
He would yield to no force whatever  
That seeks to fetter his thoughts.

Fated beyond redemption is  
That which fails to move along the path  
In tune with the call of life.  
It's the inexorable law of the world.

That one falls into decay  
That one turns obsolete  
Is but the result of a failure  
To move in harmony  
With the changing environment.

What is reckoned as truth today  
Will evolve and change,  
Those valued as virtues also  
Will submit to shift and change,  
Strategies and codes of conduct  
Will move along with time,  
Even truths of philosophy  
Recognised as great  
Will succumb to the laws of  
Change, renewal and growth.

Motion and change alone  
Are unchanging in life;  
They alone endure who move  
In harmony with law of change.

We'll never ever fetter our mind,  
We'll zealously claim our  
Right to freedom of thought  
Even before the Almighty God.

We shall strive and dedicate ourselves  
To experiencing and enjoying  
The infinite bliss  
That the rays of unattached vision  
Will unfold before us.

## **Divine Discontent**

---

O my mind!  
What are you after ?  
Seems you would be content  
With nothing whatever.

All you sought I've brought, but  
Once you relished whatever you asked for  
You wear again signs of discontent.

You do wander in the sky  
Amidst lightning and dark clouds,  
But you remain uncertain yet  
As to where your destination lies.

Sight of penury weighs you down  
Meanness that poisons the well of life  
Makes you fret and fume with rage.  
You do not have the maturity  
To acknowledge and bow but wail  
Over situations that surpass your might.



You go in quest of a surgical means  
That could yield instantaneous cure  
To the million ills that ail mankind  
Alas! You haven't found your limitations.

Numbers and letters make your army  
You reckon its might as unsurpassable,  
You wish to take the earth and  
Mould it to suit your own design,  
You aspire to measure the sky's dimensions  
Holding its expanse on your palm,  
You find no contentment whatsoever  
With things that fall within your bounds.

## **Beyond Fear and Want**

---

All of humanity is our clan  
And all the world our country.

Times were when we lived in the woods  
We combined our dreams with deeds  
Attained wings for flight in the sky  
And with pursuits forever anew  
We pierced through the vacuum  
And moved beyond in space.

We devised the science of numbers  
And forged many a tool  
We created literature  
And many other arts too  
Breaking the fetters that  
Bound us to the earth.

We strode over the seas  
Flew into the skies and  
Orbited in space

And settled on the moon  
That radiates coolness around.

We'll nurture life on this planet,  
Uproot everything that depraves human dignity  
Create an ambience for equity to flourish,  
We'll develop modes and draw up codes  
That would help us rid of  
All sorrows and sufferings on earth.

Let's attain a state free from fear  
Let's strive for a level of prosperity  
Where none will accept alms offered;  
Develop a heart that will  
Never entertain a mean thought.

We shall ever adore those minds  
That strive and struggle to reach the peak.

## Queries New : The Questioners too

---

Ours is the race  
That founded in the days long past  
A civilization lofty enough to proclaim:  
'Every habitat is mine,  
Every one is my kin':  
They're men of such refined learning  
As to embark on a quest  
For perennial truth and  
Permanent values;  
Perceptive and penetrating  
Were their faculties of thought;  
They conceived of three modes of expression  
Literature pure, music and drama –  
And called their tongue "**Threefold Tamil**";  
They propounded the philosophy of **Thandavam**  
A dance by Shiva with one foot on the floor  
And the other in unique lifted position  
They performed a feat wondrous –  
Of making God Almighty  
Himself an epitome of art.



Ours is the race of men who realized  
The impossibility of gauging with tools  
On one side the atom and also  
The objects subtler and more elusive  
And infinitely infinitesimal;  
To measure on the other side  
The space and the spreading expanse  
That rise above the sky where  
Clouds dark as Vishnu move  
And the milky moon resembling  
The face of a damsel traverses.  
It is our forefathers who  
Had the knowledge that  
It is the mind alone  
That can gauge the  
Unbounded macro and invisible micro matter;  
Endless are the glories of our ancestors  
And yet I do have a word unto you  
To ponder over:

Humanity is no witness yet  
To a race of men anywhere  
That has known everything  
That needs to be known;  
A state of infallibility hasn't been  
Attained by any people;  
Our needs and aspirations  
Keep expanding forever.

As such there must needs be  
Questions new and questioners new too,  
Every passing day would witness  
New exigencies arising;  
Has the world seen a language and an art  
That have seen the zenith of development  
And reached a state of perfection ?  
Those that value others' experience  
Lend their ears and learn

Will themselves keep growing  
It is decreed beyond omission;  
Those with minds and ears closed  
Are but fated to decay and decline  
And nothing else spells a misfortune worse.  
No state could be more debased than  
That of a mind shut off from light  
And wallowing in darkness.

This being so,  
I'm filled with alarm  
Alarm intense and disturbing.

I hear the thunderous acclaim  
Of those who rejoice over  
Blocking the passage of cool breeze  
And closing tight all windows  
Barring every ray of the sun;  
Sad and grieved I was  
Brooding over this state.

I beckon to you dear Tamil land  
Come, let's stroll out  
In the rain and raging storm  
In the light and scorching sun.  
If it is to be seeking a shelter  
We seek out a fort not a cave.  
The ones that will serve well  
The land and the language are  
Those grown tall to reach the sky;  
Pigmies may stand firm and erect  
Peak is never within their reach.

## **The Foot and the Crown**

---

We set our sights  
On the bounds of the ever expanding universe  
And we hastened in that direction  
But the edge moved farther and farther  
Receded and kept receding  
To expand further and to move away.  
We learnt it to be the law immutable  
That the boundary stood beyond our reach.  
We did get reconciled today  
We shall achieve it tomorrow.

\* \* \* \* \*

We resolved to settle on things small  
Leaving the heights for future search;  
We worked on particles small as dust,  
We moved further to tinier yet  
And struck upon atoms more minute,  
We succeeded in splitting the atoms too  
Whereby unfolded parts infinitesimal

Further division we found impossible  
Found it beyond our mind today.

\* \* \* \* \*

Shattered was the resolve to scale the peak,  
So too was the drive to fathom the depths,  
The telescope that opened up  
Spectacles beyond the skies  
That helped man to see  
What his bare sight could not  
Also had its bounds and  
Failed beyond.

Lenses that could magnify  
And bring to vision the minutest  
Also failed to help us probe further;  
We found that the largest of the large  
And the smallest of the small  
Are both beyond our reach.  
Nevertheless  
We do not have the heart  
To accept bounds for human quest.  
Human mind is a spring of hope  
A synonym for effort and endeavour;  
What we long for we shall realize  
A million tools we design and develop  
Their limits we keep in the  
Depth of our mind.

\* \* \*

Though we could not understand fully  
The nature of the external world  
Since we are humans, we thought  
We could make sense of the human species;  
We took up this quest  
Holding it dear to our heart –  
We studied human physiology



About flesh and blood and bones  
We came clear about  
And yet we stand ignorant  
Of the bounds of the human mind  
Which in dimensions resembles Vamana\*  
That can perceive things  
Loftier than the sky  
Larger than the cosmos  
And tinier than the tiniest.

We need no tools whatever  
Our vision in darkness when eyes are closed  
Extends infinitely afar;  
There is no genius in the tool  
That can bring us the wisdom  
To know the end and effect of our search.

Can the tools perceive transcending the time ?  
Can the tools discern the shape of things  
That unfold in the morrow of man's life ?  
Our mind it is  
It is the mind's inner vision  
Formless but penetrating  
That can be pervasive and perceiving.

The Almighty then is the mind  
Which we have come to know for certain  
Thro' quests extensive and strenuous;  
It conceives and contains within  
The earth and the waters  
The heavens and the cosmos  
The celestials and the demons  
And all things divine.

---

\* An incarnation of Lord Vishnu with a form reaching out to the skies.

## **We Are the Makers of God too**

---

We shall not crown ourselves  
Winning out weak enemies,  
We shall not seek preferment  
By availing ourselves of privileges.

Were it to be a journey by crawling on the belly  
We wouldn't take it even if it be to the Heaven,  
No mean worms are we  
But are birds of wisdom by birth and training.

Adhering to a path of righteousness  
Is an ordeal like bathing in the fire,  
A living rooted in virtue unswerving  
Is not the path for the weak and timorous.

There's no species known so far  
That towers above the species human,  
We must found a world on earth  
Where men in flesh would rise to be divine.

Aren't all the accomplishments  
That the earth bears witness to  
From days ancient to this hour  
Verily the fruits of man's endeavour ?

We keep searching for summits lofty  
Which seem beyond our grasp today  
There is, I divine, a whole world  
That blossoms: but transcending  
The bounds of our physical perception.

Other than this, there is  
No heaven in the universe;  
The abode of Gods is  
After all our own mind.

## **Human Progress my Pursuit**

---

Searching fully through  
My innermost being  
I have a message to convey  
Not even a trace of overstatement  
I am unfolding my whole heart.

I sifted thro' all my attachments  
I have examined all my affiliations  
I analysed the attraction of  
The entire gamut of relatives  
I have searched thro' all  
That may count as my possessions

I sifted my propensities  
Philosophical and religious  
I have also examined my intellectual self.  
The one consuming passion  
That overwhelms my being is  
The advancement of  
Tamil, Tamils and the Humanity.



Nothing on earth appeals to me  
As much as the advance of mankind;  
We are on a unique journey of ascent  
We are like the legendary Vamana  
We would soar up and move past  
The abode of the celestials.

## **No Desert : No Fallow**

---

Social justice is a sacred river  
A sanctified ambrosial fount  
That nourishes the soil all thro' its course.  
Rooted it's in the pursuit of cultivating  
And harvesting human resource in its entirety.

At the behest of mankind is this earth  
With its fields and woods  
Farms, groves and oceans;  
Each would yield us equal wealth  
Were we to exploit by ways befitting.  
There be no desert, no fallow  
Earth in its entirety shall be a farm.

## **Wealth from Nature as Bee Draws Honey**

---

Humans are an evolving species  
A refined form of life on earth.

Many were the years they spent in woods  
The womenfolk built the ladder  
For the humans to move up with time  
From their existence like animals in jungles  
Living on fruits ripe and unripe  
Moving around hunting  
Grazing sheep and tending cows  
Spreading out to plains in the countryside  
With no country to own  
And no roof over their heads  
Taking biting winds and  
Scorching sun in their stride.

The womenfolk then performed  
A revolution that was innovative  
Holding with it seeds for a new era:

They started in gradual steps  
Growing plants, crops and creepers  
Paving thereby the path  
For humans to strike on agriculture  
Open up the resources of the earth  
And create riches inexhaustible.

Mighty is the contribution of women  
Who truly ushered in human civilization  
Rooted in farming, a life-giving occupation  
The culture of the world is verily their gift.

No occupation is more basic to life  
Than cultivating the land,  
A vocation that womenfolk opened up.

It's but the duty enjoined on us  
To bring home to the male members  
The breakthrough made by women  
In the chronicle of human progress.

\* \* \* \*

Countless are the produce  
Yielded by the tillers' toil;  
Human society took many strides  
And massive assets were created.

Education witnessed a wider spread  
Arts flourished in abundant forms  
There excelled men and women  
Who probed the subtleties of life  
And delved into realms of knowledge.

Music, literature and drama bloomed  
So did the crafts of varied sorts,  
Men journeyed in all directions  
To earn and bring wealth  
And trade and commerce flourished;



Ideas new there opened up  
Modes of cultural living dawned  
Worthy of acclamation and praise.

But hunger the legacy of the past persisted  
Clothing and food still out of reach of some,  
In contrast there exist people longing for more  
Even plenty brings them no contentment  
They burn with and are burnt by  
Desire uncontained.

Resources there remain  
Inexhaustible in our planet,  
But not in a state  
Ripe and ready at hand for use.

For nature to yield her riches  
Many a change must take place  
With effort and exertion everywhere.

As men marched in the path of progress  
The industrial age dawned  
The mighty tool of science  
And the potent technology that emerged  
Helped us devise new tools on hand  
That made man behave like God Supreme  
Able to conquer the planet earth  
And the loftiest heaven above as well.

He proceeded from success to success  
Little did he realize then  
That he had a devil also lurking within.

\* \* \* \*

Years rolled on  
The quality of life marched upward

The strains of yesteryears turned extinct  
The life-span of humans increased  
Population became a formidable problem  
The primary needs swelled  
Sources of water in nature  
Do not grow with time  
Land area of the globe  
Remains constant forever  
The poor stood far removed from  
Being able to increase the yield;

The forests were wiped out  
Species of many vegetations  
Trees, plants and creepers  
Became extinct in the process  
They know no new ways of creating wealth.

There arose scarcity of food  
And of shelter and clothing too;  
With every passing day  
Massive additions there witnessed  
Of folks in penury inconceivable;  
Those living in poor countries  
Grew emaciated into skeletal frames.

Life itself, a burden for them  
To keep their breath an ordeal  
When will they ever think of environment ?  
When will their wants cease to exist ?

\* \* \* \*

The developed countries;  
Aware of the potential of education  
And armed swiftly with learning  
Have all the riches brought to their hold;  
A mere twenty per cent though in number  
They consume eighty per cent of the earth's wealth;

This abundance has become  
An evil by itself –  
An explosive demand for things to consume  
And things consumed turning into refuse –  
Alas ! A spectacle degrading life's worth.

Pollution has burnt the earth  
And its flames reaching out  
Scorched the skies above too.

\* \* \* \* \*

Nothing pollutes more than poverty  
No evil is more cruel than the meanness  
Of the affluent consuming beyond their need;  
No tyranny is more heinous than the foulness  
That the rich inflict upon the environment.

No word could describe this gross turpitude  
No man could be more degenerate than  
The one that wrongs his own species and  
Alas, no one there is in the fora of nations  
To call this baseness into question either.

\* \* \* \* \*

The poison that factories discharge  
The toxin that vehicles emit  
The refuse dumped all around  
Destroy the spread of ozone.

The nations flush with opulence  
That have this ill perpetrated  
Are the ones that go about  
Preaching the countries down the ladder  
Which set up industries for a bare living,  
To keep off from impairing the environment;

Unabashed are these nations  
Of their own patent guilt.

The earth we live on  
Is contaminated  
The atmosphere we have for our cover  
Stands steeped in pollution  
The air that props up cleanliness  
Has the mass of dirt dented in too;  
Our rivers have also turned dirty  
With the waste of a million kind let into;  
We have not spared either  
The water deep in the ground.

We strayed away from a life-style  
That was in harmony with nature  
In ventures feeding on greed;  
We walked out on safe limits  
Of nature's self-purification,  
We did take to enterprises  
Which are fountainheads of refuse;  
The earth, water and air around  
We defiled by letting chemicals  
Or poisonous waste untreated.

Engrossed in self-interest  
We displayed no societal concern.

Everything on earth has a limit,  
Nature is mighty enough to bear our burden  
But it has bounds defining that might too.

There is nothing wrong in  
Creating wealth,  
No objection there need be  
To make things fruitful for life,  
And no sin it is too  
To seek avenues of pleasure,



But we must have an insight  
Into the effects of every action,  
Impairment to environment  
Need be avoided in every case.

Science and technology holds  
Potential unbounded;  
Handled with lofty intent and deftness,  
It can conquer the breadth and depth of oceans,  
It can triumph over the mountain peaks,  
It can make winning expeditions in the skies,  
It can gain access to nature's wealth,  
It can lead into more realms of knowledge,  
Than human mind can open up;  
It can conquer the heavens too  
And set up on the earth  
A heaven of its own  
Man will then verily be God.

\* \* \* \*

Nothing extraordinary is seen in a flute  
It is but a piece of bamboo cut  
Yet it turns a fountain of melodious music  
When played by deft fingers.

Veena the famed Indian lute  
That the Goddess of learning holds  
Is but an instrument made of wood  
With rows of strings secured in order,  
Yet, when activated by an adept hand  
It turns a fecund storehouse of music  
That could ravish the human ears  
And permeate the atmosphere as well.

Resources, Mother Earth holds alike  
That manifest to the mind informed;

She would provide for all the needs  
But we haven't acquired the skills yet  
To so draw on her treasure  
As not to cause her any harm.

We must learn to draw wealth  
From mother earth  
With the same gentleness  
As the bee drawing honey  
Sits on the petal of the flower.

## **Original Not a Copy**

---

They are not the same in the limbs  
Nor do they stand equal in their sinews,  
The functions that devolve on them  
As ordained by nature  
Are again not the same –  
Men and Women: they are  
Two halves of a perfect whole,  
One is no replica of the other;  
Equality is not in the dress  
Nor is it in modes of adornment;  
The position they occupy  
Is no measure of parity  
The soul of equality is elsewhere.

We do witness an era  
When vehicles move in space  
Guided by electronic devices;  
What parity you boast of  
In women at the steering of  
An automobile on the road ?

They are level in the power of mind  
In fora of learned discourse  
They are on a par.  
In norms of leadership  
They will prove equal.  
That in love and culture,  
They rank higher  
Is no overstatement either.

The male world is not superior,  
It is not befitting for women  
To covet and copy the ways of men;  
Women are no replicas of men  
They are equal but different halves.

Is it proper to convert  
The original into a copy ?  
Women were the heralders of  
Agricultural Age –  
The first step in progress.  
They rule by love,  
They chisel the sculpture  
Called civilization.



## **A Thorn in the Heart**

---

Should you, my dear heart  
Be distressed and exhausted  
At our kin forgetting our bonds of love ?  
Should you be afflicted my dear heart  
If the unattached are not by your side ?  
Why is it my dear heart that  
We are not able to forget those  
That have chosen to forget us ?  
Why is it my dear heart  
That at the deepest of your being  
You pine for something that overwhelms you ?  
Neither worldly wisdom  
Nor the school lessons  
Could ever heal the wound that  
The bonds of affinity inflicted.  
Why is it my dear heart  
That you could not forget those  
That have chosen to forget you ?  
My dear heart, I am unable  
To stand up to your pain.

Of what avail is all your reading  
Of what avail are the gains of listening  
Of what avail are the lessons of living  
If you were to become unhinged  
Musing about those  
Who once grasped your hands in love ?

The longing grows more and more intense  
Like the aerial roots of the banyan tree;  
Has the universal belief that  
Memory fades as time invades  
Has become invalid in your case ?

You are distressed at the prospect  
That there will be none in the days ahead  
Whom you can confer with and consult;  
The memories of those dear to you  
Keep wearing you down  
Even as their parting is irrevocable.

You philosophize to me, dear heart !  
'If there be a world parched of love  
It is but an arid desert'.  
Those whose fondness and love  
You reciprocated and rejoiced in  
Choose to part from you –  
Is not the memory of them  
A thorn in the heart ?

## **An Outrage by Cowards of Men\***

---

Is it an act sinful  
To be born as women on this earth ?

Their charming countenances  
Are a gift from the heaven,  
But men there intervened  
To mask them by a veil.

As though it's an act of blemish  
For women to enjoy fully  
The faculties of sight as nature ordained,  
These men have imprisoned their bright eyes  
Behind the bars of a mesh of threads.

Much as the dark clouds  
Cover the moon  
These women with their body and face  
Fully covered by black cloaks  
Were moving like shadows;

---

\* A response by the poet to the condition of women he witnessed in the Central Asian countries [1989].

Aren't women a half of humanity  
The half of humanity's flesh and spirit ?  
Should they suffer a life shrouded in darkness ?

Would we be in the wrong  
If we were to conclude  
That the veil in effect  
Is a symbol of the decree  
That men are such lecherous species  
As not to deserve a view of  
The charming fair sex ?

Among the infinite things in Nature's wealth  
Among all that is known to us to date,  
Among the riches that human mind has created  
Nothing witnessed ever on the earth  
That is worthy of comparison with women.

Nothing superstitious inheres therein  
It's but fitting that our forefathers  
Considered women as incarnation of Shakthi.

Men are but arrows that issue  
From the power of womanhood;  
No development in store for the people  
Who seek to cripple this power.

Women are blossoms of the flesh  
And the fiery Shakthi as well;  
A fortune and a treasure-hoard  
Far above the perception of the senses.  
They're a mine of all human values  
They're the strings of the veena\*  
Wherein issue tunes in multitude;  
They're the cords that  
Activate a bow.

---

\* A stringed musical instrument



They encompass all the standards for  
human beings;  
And they stand towering above men.  
Among the boons that nature has granted  
None, greater than the feminine of the species  
That accepts motherhood  
A blessing that humanity is endowed with  
A fount of bliss that you rejoice in  
Thinking about again and again –  
Why have you masked them ?

The women may put up today with  
This outrageous act of cowards  
The worst of cowards among cowards;  
It is the height of stupidity to believe  
That they would tolerate this  
Extreme form of cruelty for ever.

The day certainly is not far off  
When women will rise up to the challenge  
Spit right upon this disgrace,  
Tear the veil into a hundred shreds  
And fling them at your faces.

## **The Naked Womanhood**

---

Women the females of the human species  
Are now a liberated lot in the West.

A new order has dawned for them:  
The fetters of the past broken  
The bonds of servitude brought to nought  
The reign of reasoning on the ascent  
And new avenues unfolding in the age of industry  
No longer is theirs a life of dependence.

They're now armed with trained talents  
They've now husbands of their choice  
Who partner their lives in a bond of love  
They are endowed with every competence  
That would keep them in parity with men.

All these notwithstanding :  
I find no change in the traditional wont  
That equates 'wine and women'  
Among common needs,

Countless are the commercial minds  
That find the fascination of the female flesh  
A choice commodity in business world.

How many are the spectacles there  
Of women abandoning modesty and  
clothes as well ?

How many are the dolls in display  
With nakedness for their charm and appeal ?

Woman's physique a medium for ad  
Her smile wearing lily's bloom,  
Her looks exposing erotic intent  
The twists and turns of her frame  
Replete with an appeal to lust;  
The expert hand of the artist  
Overdoing the ups and downs on the female frame  
Using a mode of dress here and there  
That resembles thin lines.

Images of naked womanhood  
Patterned and presented in  
A thousand ways of allurements  
Filling the covers of diverse magazines  
That make the reading for the common folk.

I witnessed the spectacle of  
Men who seem to believe  
'That trading in chastity is a sin  
But that in the charm  
Of the female flesh is proper'  
Have opened up shops on a large scale.

The culture of treating womenfolk  
As the agents meeting  
The passion of lust by men  
Is the foe of the female world.



As long as this mindset persists  
Delusive would be women's freedom  
It's all a sham, a fancy  
Fantasy and illusion, pretence and dream  
Mirage and make-believe.

The world of women should rise in protest  
Holding the banner of revolt against this evil,  
They must totally erase  
This image of baseness and perversion.

Endowed are women  
With handsomeness superior to men  
A great gift of Mother Nature.

The lure and charm of feminine beauty  
Is unblemished and absolute;  
It is a thing immaculate  
Like the strains pervasive of music  
Like the captivating charm of art.

The gracefulness inherent in female features  
Could take humanity to heights sublime.

Fatuous it's for a land to adore womanhood  
That vulgarizes female charm  
Dissects it  
Exhibits it  
Finds it a commercial commodity  
And trades in it openly for gainful intent.

Till the day  
That witnesses a change in outlook and attitude  
Of a tradition  
That holds woman to be an object of gratification,  
Gender equality is a dream  
A make-believe and mirage.



Humanity must rise up in revolt  
And take on this pernicious wont;  
The world must stand freed of this curse  
And see it erased from its face.

## **Feminism of Lord Shiva**

---

No misconception in the vision of our forebears  
Who worshipped womanhood as Shakthi \*  
Theistic though the approach is  
It commends itself to reason too.

Blooming with a smile and a soft chuckling  
Women are a mine of vivacity and vigour,  
A wonder that like a lightning in the sky  
Radiates a new surge in the human mind;  
Praise be to women; may they prosper.

Were I to describe all the splendour  
Of the earth with one single word  
I'd bring in 'Beauty' for its designation,  
And when beauty assumes a concrete form  
It would surely be a woman on earth.

Softer than the breeze are our women  
Such really is their bearing

---

\* Shakthi – Power ; Energy

As to hold in the values we seek in this life;  
Active well-springs are our women  
The deeper we delve the greater the fullness.

In the sphere of love  
In indignation at the sight of evil  
In giving their all for the weak and the destitute  
And in upgrading the honour of the lineage  
Nothing there that matches womanhood.

Lord Shiva had the rational mind  
To share one half of Himself  
With Shakthi, His spouse  
And derive therefrom enormous might;  
Could there be a word from the bardic world  
More in praise of the worth of women ?

## **Beyond the Lure of Flesh**

---

I rejoice as I keep pondering,  
The experience was all ecstasy  
No flight of fancy it is:  
A state of poornam\* that  
We two have tasted.

An epic lore is womanhood  
A fund of energy sustaining the earth  
You've helped me realize this truth  
And elevated me above the Devas\*\*.

A new world will truly dawn  
No fiction even in the least  
That the union of our hearts  
Is beyond the lure of flesh.

---

\* Poornam – From Sanskrit 'Poorna': difficult to find an equivalent: the term wholeness may approximate to it.

\*\* Devas – Heavenly beings



## **It is Womanhood All Purveying**

---

It is the womanhood with its  
Blossoming smile through the ages  
That has swayed the minds of the poets,  
That has formed the fount of every art,  
That goes deep to touch one's  
Soul itself and fascinates.

It is the treasure-hoard  
Being explored since the primeval days  
It is novelty unexhausted  
Appearing ever anew as the mind comprehends;  
It is the confluence of all things exquisite,  
A zephyr that refreshes our body and soul.

Womanhood is the spring in sand  
Whence wells up freshness perennially,  
Womanhood is the garden of flowers  
Wherein blossom a million beauties,  
Womanhood is the perfected whole  
With every part embodying

A new relish as the shells  
In the pomegranate fruit.

Though a wellspring of delight  
No mere object of enjoyment is woman,  
She's the epitome of love and  
The source of all energy on earth,  
She's the impulse behind every quest  
And endeavour to reach a higher state,  
She is the substratum for  
All things prime and essential.

## **Are our Womenfolk Sinners ?**

Are our womenfolk sinners ?  
Should their misery remain interminable ?  
Have all that become unavailing  
Though our women rose up  
Cutting across boundaries of nations  
Fired by the vehemence of fury  
And raised their voice of protest around  
So tumultuously that their lips went further red ?

Should they,  
Soft as blossoms are,  
Tender like creepers,  
Endowed with loving hearts  
Mark their existence  
As mere commodities of service ?

Should culture and religion be the shelter  
For this cruelty to thrive ?

No iniquity could be more outrageous  
Than our womenfolk, a half of humanity,



Being denied altogether  
Opportunities to flowering,  
Being seen as creatures to meet  
The sensual needs and emotions of males.  
No cruelty on earth to match this  
And no practice to mention as equal!

Adversity occasions the life of all species  
But it remains unrelenting for women  
And that too since antiquity.

The world of women seems a cursed one:  
Were the new-born to be a female  
It's a deep sigh that greets it  
In many a land on earth.  
Even the species that fly and crawl  
Are never seen to demean the fount of their birth.

The remnants there remain unerased yet  
That painted women as slaves among slaves;  
No myth of a dead past it is  
That they are  
Dolls, objects of indulgence  
And pawns in the hands of menfolk.

Not ended yet is the act demeaning  
Of converting a wedding into  
A commercial contract.

It is tale protracted and an endless spectacle  
That we do witness torture and suffering  
Sighs and sobs and scorching in fire  
All consequent on the tyranny of dowry.

Immolations in sati persist to date  
So does the flesh trade in forms varied  
Survive still as ordained by fate –  
Aren't the claims of freedom of women  
Parades of sham and guile ?



Delicate as creepers they are,  
Our womenfolk eke out their existence  
In the nadir of neglect in a remote corner  
With their faces covered, body fully swathed  
And their hearts and minds wrapped in veils;  
Should righteousness and chastity  
Enjoined as virtues of women  
Turn to be fetters made in gold ?

The womenfolk stand denied of freedom,  
They remain unaware of this denial too;  
They are deprived of all possessions  
But exist as possessions in the world.

A half of humanity is our women;  
Can the whole draw full potential  
When one half is kept crippled ?

Loving heart,  
Hands of compassion extending to all,  
Wellspring of creativity,  
Image of serenity, grace and sensuousness,  
The one non-pareil is womanhood  
Endowed with ingrained loftiness;  
Is it in order  
That this is put to endless afflictions ?

Is not your mother a woman ?  
Are not your sisters elder and younger  
And your loving daughter, too  
Of the species of women ?

Should there be impediments  
For these divine souls  
To find parity of standing with men ?

A million theories you have conceived  
A simple claim of dharma you have not conceded;

You claim that you granted  
Equality of rights and property to women.  
Is equality then  
Your right and privilege exclusive  
For you to give and for women to take ?  
Rights and equality are not commodities  
For one to gift and the other to receive.

Begging and beseeching never gets freedom,  
Petitioning does not get us privileges and rights;  
Let the womenfolk rise in revolt, stand erect  
Declare themselves equal.

Can there ever be a hierarchy  
Between the two eyes of humanity ?



## ANNEXURE

### Note

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The poems contained in this text have been selected from an anthology of Kulothungan's poems published under the title 'Kulothungan Kavithaikal'. The title of each of these poems and the serial number of the corresponding poem in the anthology are given in the following Table.

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I am well aware  
My journey is long, the path is hard  
But the goal is clear:  
I shall not keep seeking companions;  
A few would be enough, I alone am enough.

For a sacred expedition in search of truth,  
there need be no crowd, no procession;  
no flags, no slogans;  
One shall design - but many may build;  
Greatest things are often achieved by the  
fewest of minds.

But we shall invite the whole world, to share and enjoy  
what the rarest few leave for all.

Praise be for the few, the benefits for the many.

- Kulothungan

