# TRANSLATION OF SIX SHORT STORIES FROM TAMIL DALIT WRITERS INTO ENGLISH 

Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University In Partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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## CERTIFICATE

CERTIFIED that this dissertation entitled Translation of Six Short Stories from Tamil Dalit Writers into English submitted by Mr. S. Gopalakrishnan, Centre of Linguistics and English, School of Language, Literature \& Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy, is an original work and has not been submitted so far, in part or full, for any other degree or diploma of any University. This may therefore be placed before the Examiners for evaluation for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy.

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New Delhi

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## INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

The Untouchables, the children of Ghettos were exploited and isolated in social, economic. cultural and religious terms for centuries. From the age of Vedas, the Untouchables have been denied their right to social equality. The Hindu religious sanction justified the injustices perpetrated on the untouchables by the touchables. The reality of their existence made them accept the inequality passively. Gaining any kind of political power became a near impossibility because of their complete economic dependence on the rest of the Society. Since the untouchables were relegated to Menial tasks, their life became very miserable and they were reduced to mere slaves, and the caste system stigmatized them as outcastes.

Though there were many instances where untouchables protested against touchables, it was the Britishers who protested mildly against the practices of untouchability and the exploitation of the untouchables and relieved their connection by employing them in Government services. Then the real protest against the exploitation of untouchables and the practices of untouchability came with the rise of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, who was the first real spokesman of Dalits. The liberation movement became more vocal. assertive and effective during the struggle for Indian Independence. After the independence untouchability was legally abolished under Article 17 of the Constitution of India, which says "'untouchability" is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. The enforcement of any disability arising
out of 'untouchability' shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law".' Besides this, the Constitutions has provided certain educational facilities under Article $15(4)^{2}$ and reservations in the employment under articles $16(4)^{3}$ and $335 .^{4}$ These special provisions helped the untouchables to come out of their stigmatized occupations and this little improvement in the living conditions of the untouchables gave life for the movements for the emancipation of the untouchables.

At this juncture, the scattered untouchables who had never raised their voices together, organized themselves to fight against the practice of untouchability. Different sub-castes of the untouchables needed a common name to be addressed and identify themselves as a homogeneous group. Thus came the name Dalit which was chosen by themselves unlike the other names which were given by others viz., 'Harijan' by Gandhi and Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes by the Constitution of India.

In the past also they tried to identify themselves as a homogeneous group but their efforts only isolated them to regional pockets - names like Adi-Dravida, Adi-Andhras. Adi-Kannadigas and etc. But the term 'Dalit'

1 Basu, Durga Das, Introduction to the Constitution of India. New Delhi, Prentice Hall. 1995, p. 93.

Ibid., p. 91.
3 Ibid., p. 92.
4 Ibid., p. 381.
identifies all those people who were exploited from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, from Kutch to the far east states as a homogenous group.

The term 'Dalit' is derived from the Sanskrit root 'dal' which means burst, split, broken or torn asunder, downtrodden, scathed, crushed, destroyed. But the term 'Dalit' has been defined in the manifesto of the Dalit Panther Movement of the Indian State of Maharashtra, published in Bombay in 1973. Responding to the question "who is a Dalit?" This manifesto says "members of scheduled castes and tribes, neo-Buddhists, the working people, the landless and poor peasants, women and all those who are being exploited politically, economically and in the name of religion". ${ }^{5}$

Society and literature are closely related. Literature is one of the media that can bring about change. It is literature which spreads the values of life. Literature can create a revolution along with the necessary philosophy and a plan of action and a group to implement them. It is this role of literature which gave birth to the Dalit writings. Dalit Literature is not simply literature. It is associated with a movement to bring about change. It represents the hopes and aspirations of a new society and new people.

Since untouchability is a pan-Indian problem, conscious intellectuals from the depressed section of the country started taking up the pen as the

5 Massey, James. Downtrodden. Geneva: WCC Publications. 1997. p.1.
weapon to counter the problem. Many people had dealt with the theme of untouchability in the past. Some of the notable works by non-dalit writers are Kumaran Asan’s Duravastha (1923), Mulk Raj Anand's Untouchable (1935), Thakazhi Siva Sankara Pillai's Scavenger's Son (1947) which provide an interesting case study in this line. But for the first time in the history of Indian literature a group of writers from a non-elite group was formed and created an impact in the 1960 s.

It was only in 1969 that the Marathi press recognized the new school of literature with the publication of the editorial in the 1969 Diwali issue of Marathwada published from Aurangabad. The lead editorial presented the issue as "A Discussion: The Literature of the Dalit consciousness, direction and inspiration". The issue carried articles by many notable dalit writers like Baburao Bagul, Daya Pawar, Janardan Waghmare, Keshav Meshram, Shankarrao Kharat, Shinde and others along with the works of some well known writers in the Marathi mainstream literary field.

Eleanor Zelliot says - Dalit literature or, in Marathi, Dalit Sahitya, as a school, a self conscious movement, is a product of the 1960 s, individual writers from among the untouchables appear in the fourteenth century and again in the Mahar movement which began in the late nineteenth century. ${ }^{\text {nt }}$ For them she says, - In the long history of Marathi literature before 1960 s, only one school of acknowledged writers included

[^0]members of the lower-castes that of the Bhakti (devotional religion) Saintpoets. ${ }^{{ }^{7}}$ Bhakti movements throughout India were anti-orthodoxy and based on the experience of God rather than on traditional piety or formal rituals. The radical stance and the inclusiveness of Bhakti movements were largely confined to the religious ground and very little action for social equality came from it.

Dalit literary writings increased in the sixties. A journal called Asmitadarsh was founded by Professor Gangadhar Pantawane. Following the Marathwada issue in 1969, many individual volumes of poetry began to arrive.

The objective of the Dalit Movement was, obviously to liberate the historically known untouchable classes from the most oppressive practice of untouchability observed unscrupulously by the touchables, and to bring the former on a par with socio-cultural level of the privileged classes, so that they could be brought into the national mainstream. Thus the basic idea involved in the process was of reconstruction of the society on the basis of new values.

Baburao Bagul, a Marathi poet writes that "Dalit Sahitya is not a literature which spreads hatred. Dalit sahitya first promotes man's greatness and man's freedom and for that reason it is an historic necessity". ${ }^{8}$ The

7 Ibid.. p. 269.
8 Quoted in Zelliot, Eleanor, p.278,
purpose of Dalit literature is to present the world of the lowly in all its harshness in order to make the middle class understand. Dalit literature is imbued with humanism and it aspires to universal brotherhood and the betterment of humanity at large. This necessity has created a literature with new values. It endeavours for a new social order of life based on liberty. equality, justice and brotherhood in the world. Dalit literature is humanitarian in style and form. Human values occupy the place of prominence.

A well known Dalit intellectual Kshirsagar says, "Dalit literature is a factual projection of grievances, discriminations and exploitations on the ground of their ascribed low caste status and untouchability. It is, of course not to cherish those memories, but to disclose those horrible conditions which have de-humanised and degraded them."9

## Tamil Dalit Movement

Today Dalit literature is attracting attention and popularity in Tamil Nadu after having created a storm in Maharashtra and Karnataka. Similarities and dissimilarities are inevitable in the comparison of literature of different places and periods. Though there are similarities between the literature of above mentioned states, there are some differences too. As Raj Gowthaman says, "The rise of Dalit writings in other states are confined

9 Kshirsagar R.K., "Dalit Literature: The Process of Social Change", paper presented in the First All India Dalit Writers Conference at Hyderabad in 1987.
within a religion, or a caste or within literature, whereas Dalit writing in Tamil is an outcome of sixty years of struggle for social equality waged by "Periyar" E.V. Ramasamy Naicker and the spread of Dravidian thought. which gave a conducive atmosphere for the rise of Dalit writing in Tamil Nadu. ${ }^{10}$ Unlike the rise of Marathi Dalit writing which was confined within literature that too dominated by Mahars, the rise of Dalit writing in Tamil is not confined within literature but goes hand in hand with the socioeconomic struggle, caste violence and political revolt.

Dalit writings in Tamil made its appearance in the early 90s and more or less coincided with the birth centenary celebration of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. Though the Dalit writings in Marathi made its appearance in the late 60s Tamil Nadu had to wait till the 1990s for Dalits to write about themselves. K. Daniel, well known novelist who wrote Panjamar (1979) is considered the forerunner of Dalit writings. Raj Gowthaman says "though Daniel's Panchamar does not employ a Dalit discourse or language, it may be said to qualify as proto-Dalit literature, for it deals with Dalit struggle for the very first time in Tamil. ${ }^{* 11}$

[^1]After Daniel's Panchamar, it was Poomani's Piragu which heralded the arrival of Dalit writings in Tamil. Piragu depicts the life of the cobblers and it portrays the militancy of the Dalit youth, which is a significant aspect of this novel. Vizhi Pa. Idhayavendhan's collection of short stories, Nandanar Theru, portrays the life of the Dalits. His collection of stories shows his inclination towards left cultural politics. The Dalit women writer Sivakami, who came out with her Pazhayana Kazhithalum showed the way for women writers from the Dalit community. Sivakami's Pazhayana Kazhithalum deals with Dalit masses and their leaders, and the process of reform and modernization at work among them. This novel reflects a certain trend in contemporary Dalit politics.

The well received Dalit autobiography, Bama's Karukku(1994) the first dalit testimonial narrative in Tamil. In karukku(1994) Bama describes her village, her childhood, her world of labour, her education at different institutions, the prevalence of untouchability in the Catholic church and its nunneries. J. Marks mentions in his foreword to Karukku that 'At the first sight it reads like a history of a village. From another angle it reads like an autobiography. From yet another angle, it reads like a brilliant novel'. ${ }^{12}$ M.S.S. Pandian in his article ‘On a dalit woman’s testimony' says the narration of the childhood event, which occupies considerable space in Karukku "is a telling instance of how Bama's text, instead of privileging her
12. Bama, Karukku, Samudaya Sindhanai Seyal Aaaivu Mayyam,
Madurai: 1994 .
own voice, functions as a site for the criss-crossing of multiple voices from within her community. ${ }^{-12}$ - The book is an unabashed expression of Dalit language", says Raj Gowthaman. ${ }^{14}$

Another remarkable piece of Dalit writing, is "Bali", a short story by Devibharati who is also a notable Dalit poet. 'Bali’ with its narration. discourse and counter aesthetics has become one of the noteworthy pieces of Dalit writings.

Some attempts have been made in poetry and drama as well with K.A. Gunasekaran's Bali Adugal has emerged as a major Dalit play.

Raj Gowthaman, a Dalit critic exploring into the Tamil classical literature, has come out with untold tales of other truths. In his Dalit Paarvaivil Tamil Panpaadu (Tamil Culture from a Dalit perspective) (1994), he has interpreted the Sangam literature from Dalit point of view. His book Aram/Adhikaaram(1997). is an interpretation of the theme of love and morality in Tamil literature as seen from below. It is an attempt to interpret Tamil literature using the post modernist approach. In this attempt he has given up the established modernist approach.

13 Pandian, M.S.S., "On a Dalit Woman’s Testimonial". Seminar, New Delhi. November. 1998.

14 Gowthaman, Raj. Contemporary Dalit Literature in Tamil: A Comment", Indian Literature, New Delhi: Sahitya Academy. 1994, p. 185.

Now in Tamil Nadu. Dalit Tamil writing have appeared in all literary generes-novel, short story, poetry, autobiography and drama. A considerable number of Dalits from the Christian community are raising their voices against the practice of untouchability in Christianity. Among those Bama. Maarkku, and Vidivelli are prominent. Others like Sivakami. Poomani, Vizhi.pa. Idhayavendhan are notable non-Christian Dalit writers. Some non-Dalit writers who contribute to the Dalit writings are Pazha Malai, Ingulab, pa. Seyaprakasam, A. Marx and others. Their writings are shaking the foundations of the Tamil literary establishment mainly through their realistic portrayal of caste politics.

Like the other resistance literatures such as that of women. and Blacks, Dalit literature in Tamil Nadu also has risen to expose the reality portrayed in the mainstream literature written by non-Dalits. The Dalit in non-Dalit literature is a sinner, a criminal, uncouth, and immoral he is against progress. Dalits and Dalit literature cannot accept this reality of mainstream writers as the reality of the Dalits. In order to prove it as fake and misguiding, Dalit literature deconstructs this reality as porrayed in the mainstream literature. Since it cannot express its liberation politics in an established way of writing, its very language is different from the established one. It breaks all the established manners of expression. Thus it differs in the form and context from the mainstream writings. This deliberate violation of the established manner has given a shock to the
mainstream writers and they are reluctant to accept this new school of literature.

In his article 'Navina Tamil Ilakkiyam' (Modern Tamil Literature) Sirpi Balasubramanian, a notable Tamil literary figure says that Literature is not just recording the voices of a particular community. Moreover it should have the conventions of the literary tradition. That literature without having these could be addressed in some way other than the canonical. ${ }^{15}$

At this juncture, when the mainstream literary figures are reluctant to accept the rise of the new school of literature in Tamil, a prestigious magazine India Today has accepted its place in the Tamil literary world by devoting a special section to Dalit writers and Dalit literature in its Annual literary issue, 1995. In the editor's preface Aroon Purie, the editor has noted how in the first half of the century the impact of the Dravidian movement was powerful and how the identity of Tamil and Tamil culture has become more powerful than ever in the second half. "This issue has recorded its impact with a separate section for Dravidian literature in which M. Karunanidhi, President, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam has also contributed with a short story. Since the Dravidian movement has failed to achieve its goal completely. Dalit literature with its protest voice has come to occupy the next phase and also started attracting the attention. It seems

[^2]it has created a important dimension in Tamil literature. Realizing its importance, this issue has come out with a special section for Dalit writings. ${ }^{\text {" }}{ }^{16}$

Since 1995, when India Today published and recognized the new school of literature in Tamil, the flow of Dalit writings in Tamil has been increasing. In this context I have translated six short stories of Dalit writers in Tamil into English. All these stories are from that issue of India Today. The reason behind this work is to widen the readership to understand the problems of Dalits, which is a pan-Indian problem.

Annaachi is a story of a dalit youth, whose assertiveness against caste practices and discriminations brings bitterness among the higher caste people especially the landlords as well as the elders of the Dalit community too. Ammaasi stands as a inspiration for the youths in the village. In two

16 See Preface in India Today. Annual Literary Issue. Chennai, 1995.
incidents in the story, the problem arises only when Ammaasi acts against the will of high caste landlords. This story deals about the collectivity of the Dalit community. Bama through this story has exposed the presence of casteism encountered in the institution of labour. Towards the end of the story Bama has proved that she is not unconscious that even among the Dalits those even slightly higher in the hierarchical caste system considers the lower ones to be inferior to them. At the same time it also examines the changing attitude of the younger generation and how they reject the practices of their elders. Most importantly the subservient attitude towards the caste people.

When we look at the structure, Bama has intentionally violated the literary conventions. The very language differs from the established one. She has verbalised the incidents as it is the reality. Annachi also gets the form of folk literature where the collectivity of the Dalit as 'we' figures significantly.

Annaachi is a story of exploited and struggling Dalit community. The title itself signifies both the presence of oppression and the struggle against it. Thus it connects the present with the future.

Pallatheru begins with a description of the chakli street as "chakli street appeared like an isolated island." The very first sentence has contained the essence of the story of a segregated community. It is a story
of an uncared and exploited community, not only by the upper castes but also by the Dalits themselves.

Idhayavendhan begins with the issue of discriminations among the Dalits but slowly turns the main focus to the oppression of Dalits in general and the chakliars in particular by the land owning upper castes. Like Bama, Idhayavendhan also emphasize the assertion of the younger generation by rejecting the subservient attitude of their elders. Dalits are subjected to great many miseries to suffer. Every Dalit is in search of some remedy, which would end his or her sufferings. Some discover the remedies to end this man made misery. In the case of Mani, Perumal and others in the pallatheru choose retaliation as the remedy to counter. Idhayavendhan uses the literary medium as a weapon to expose the deeply rooted inner agony of the Dalits.

Chasing Thass from the Pallatheru by Perumal and Mani is obviously an answer for Sharan Kumar Limbale's poem in which final lines says:

My friends,
My rights are rising like the sun
Will you deny this sunrise?

Idhayavendhan did not go unaware of the discriminations among the Dalits too. As Imayam in his Koveru Kazhuthaigal(1994) deals with the practice of untouchability among the Dalits, Idhayavendhan too deals with it but he did not give much importance to the practice of untouchability
among the Dalits. In Pallatheru he has given a good picture of the agonies which, dalits in India suffer. He has also portrayed the violence perpetrated on Dalit women's chastity and also the precarious state of Dalit women's moral existence.
'Kadaisi Kaadu' written by Sivakami is all about the life of tribals. The story begins with a girl entering the forest to study the isolated and uncared living conditions of the tribals. The author narrates the beauty of the forest. She has portrayed the tribal's struggle for even hand to mouth survival, their rich culture and all the spheres of their life. Sivakami is an Indian Administrative Service Officer and one of the forerunners of Dalit writings in Tamil. Being a woman she has not failed to highlight the male dominated society's attitude towards women. As a woman she talks for societally denigrated categories who have been silenced for years. The author's voice here is both individual and collective, personal and political. The author has powerfully captured the life of the tribals which is uncared for by the Government as well as by others. The word 'Adivasi' used by the author implies the subtle meaning of unimproved conditions/status of the tribal life. She deals with the exploitation of tribals by the coffee estate owners, government forest officials, and the money-lenders. At the end of the story the author announces that with hand to mouth survival, full time work and wearing goggles with rubber band and with a torn T-shirt with Rajini's picture printed on it. civilization has come to Kadaisi Kaadu. The author's sarcastic words emphasizes the callous administration of the

Government too. The story is written in an indirect, almost surrealistic style.

The fourth story Poolum Iravum is about the life of Kesavan, the florist. Like Mulk Raj Anand's Untouchable, this story also portrays a day's life of Kesavan. Imayam has captured even a minute details involves in the life of Kesavan enhances the liveliness of the story. The author has described Kesavan's life at home and his life at the street selling flowers vividly. The clear picture of the life conditions of the poor and the problems of poor has been revealed through Kesavan's character. It is a story of the people who are placed in the fringes of the society.

The caste violence, which has become a regular features in Tamil Nadu has got verbal shape in Ravi Kumar's 'Unmai Aridhal'. The writer has adopted a technique of recorded statements of the victims in the caste violence in a short story style: unlike the other stories this has captured the brutal attack on Dalit's by the caste Hindus. The very vital issue in the story is the selective physical elimination of dalit youths. The caste-power nexus also has been exposed through the death of Shanmugam who was gunned down by the police on suspicion of being a rioter. The caste-power nexus ${ }_{1}$ was widely criticized in Tamil Nadu during the caste conflict in the early 90 s . It was said that a particular caste with the help of police raided the villages mostly dominated by Dalits, and killed many innocent Dalits including women and children. The story has not only exposed the brutal murder of Dalits by the caste Hindus but also the prevailing practice of
untouchability in Tamil Nadu. The story conveys the message that Dalits are oppressed not only by the caste Hindus but also by the Government machinery. The oppression by Government mechanism reminds me of Ravi Kumar who in his KanKaanippin Arasival (1995) says that -Today Dalits have to fight not only with the caste Hindus but also with the Government Machinery for the rights. Ambedkar said if any one wants to stand with Dalits, first they should criticize the Hindu religion. But we can say like this 'if any one comes forward to support Dalits first they should fight against the police'."

Through the story Ravi Kumar who is a known Dalit intellectual and the editor of 'Dalit' magazine has done justice to the war that he has waged, and he has exposed not only the sufferings of the Dalits but also the enemies of Dalits. This story could be called docu-fiction as it adopts the style of both fiction and documentation.

The last story Thazhumbu written by Cho. Dharman is about a liquor brewer, police atrocities and corruption. The man stops brewing after the policemen asked hịm to send his wife with the Head Constable for a night. He starts working in the quarry and lives happily for some time, but one day he is taken into custody by the police. With no option his wife starts to brew liquor. The story talks about the independence of Dalit woman and incidents of violence against women in general and dalit women in particular. The police force, which is supposed to protect the subject, turns
to destroy the subject- this has been portrayed vividly. It also shows the increasing corruption in the police department. The other important theme the author highlights in the story is the self-reliance and independence of Dalit women. It also shows that the dalit women possess an indomitable spirit, bold and enterprising. fearless and undaunted. Thazhumbu signifies the stigma attached to the occupation one does, it cannot be erased out easily even one decides to abandon the occupation.

Language is an important medium for identity formation of an individual or a group. It has been a major vehicle for the oppression of Dalit groups since ideas were allowed to flow only from the higher castes to Dalits is the language of the upper castes. In twentieth century, education and literature have played an important part in giving expression to a separate Dalit identity and consciousness. In this context, it is important to remember that the Dalit resurgence must still relate itself to the reality of Indian society and political ethos.

The task of translating the six texts from Tamil is undertaken in order to transmit the narratives to a readership presumed to be unfamiliar with the source language, a readership which does not belong to the Tamil cultural domain. Moreover English is still the only language, which manages to cross regional borders and barriers of languages in India. Regional Indian literatures, moreover, do not command the kind of prestige given to English literature. Therefore translating Tamil short stories will help to create greater understanding, empathy and solidarity amongst Dalit groups and their sympathizers in different regions. It will also serve to attract elite attention so important for policy change. Fiction can attract where serious discourse may fail. So, these stories have their added significance in widening the audience for the Dalit experience in India.

## PROBLEMS OF TRANSLATION

## PROBLEMS OF TRANSLATION

Translation is transference of a source language text into a target language text. Catford defines translation as " the replacement of textual material in one language(SL) by equivalent textual material in another language(TL). ${ }^{{ }^{1}}$ Where as Nida \& Taber state that "translation consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, First in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style." Translation has been defined variously. For some it is an ant and for some it is science but it means much more. - Translation involves the rendering of a source language(SL) text into the target language(TL) so as to ensure that the surface meaning of the two will be preserved as closely as possible but not so closely that the TL structures will be seriously distorted. ${ }^{\text {³ }}$ Says susan Bassnet. By translating a text we are creating a text in a different milieu for a different readership.

The area, which is gaining attention amongst the translators and several theories of translation, is the problems of translation. This is the only area, which bridges the gap between the theorists and the real

1 Catford, J.C., A Linguistic Theon of Translation. London: Oxford University Press, 1965.

2 Nida, Eugene, A.. \& Taber, Charles, R., The Theory and Practice of Translation, Leiden: Brill, 1974.

3 Bassnett-McGuire, Susan.. Translation Studies. London: Routledge. 1988.

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$0,31,3^{7} x:(p ; 795)^{21}$
Nq
practitioners of translation. The problems of translators are numerous and varied. The problems differ from language to language, text to text and they also vary depending on the method of translation one uses.

One of the most important problems of translation theory is the problem of translatability. Every language consists of three important elements -- its phonological system, it's grammatical structure and its vocabulary or stock of words. As far as phonological system and grammatical structure are concerned the translator will not have many problems but the vocabulary or stock of words would create problems in finding the equivalent words in the target language. This is true because the history of languages shows that only when certain phenomena appear in society does language finds words to express them. The problem of translatability arises when we don't get exact equivalent words in the target language, then we have to look for near equivalent but at the same time we have to maintain the cultural grain of the source language too.

The central problem of translation theory is the problem of finding "equivalence" or "correspondence" between the texts of the source language and the target language. Since each language is an independent system seeking the "equivalence" implies that there must be something common with other languages. Language operates on two levels i.e., on the plane of expression and the plane of content. Utterances in two languages vary on the plane of expression but they are the same on the plane of meaning.

While discussing, the problem of equivalence Nida distinguishes between two types of correspondence, which he terms, "formal equivalence" and "dynamic equivalence" ${ }^{+}$Formal equivalence refers to the quality of a translation in which the format features of the source language text have been mechanically reproduced in the target language text. Dynamic equivalence refers to the "quality of a translation in which the message of the original text has been transported into the receptor language that the response of the receptor is essentially like that of the original receptors. Frequently the form of the original text is changed but as long as the change follows the rule of back transformation in the source language, of contextual consistency in the transfer, and of transformation in the receptor language, the message is preserved and the translation is faithful" ${ }^{5}$.

The question of equivalence depends on the cultural inclusivity/exclusivity. Cultural inclusivity/exclusivity attains a crucial dimension when English is chosen as the target language. If the original transit texts were to be translated into any other Indian language, finding parallel cultural elements in the target language would not be difficult because different languages and different regions in India finds some commonality in social practices and linguistic expressions. A number of

4 Nida. Eugene A.R.. Taber. Charles R., The Theorv and Practice of Translation. Brill. Leiden. 1974.

5 Ibid.
problems are thus peculiar to translation of Indian language texts into English.

## Retention Of Culture and Specific Terms

At no situation has any attempt been made to distort over the stituation of the original for the sake of easy readability. Otherwise it would have distorted the stories. especially the cultural elements. Adding explanatory clauses has also been avoided to a large extent to prevent the stories from reading like paraphrased texts. The decision to retain certain words in the original was taken due to the absence of equivalent cultural settings in the target language; i.e., English. In such cases it is necessary to highlight the socio-economic and cultural differences. Out of six stories chosen for translation four revolve around rural background. Since the target language lacks similar socio-economic and cultural context, it is necessary to retain some of the original terms in order to prevent the appropriation of the source text by the target language culture. When the original terms are used for the first time, they are given in italics and thereafter they are treated like any other words. To avoid ambiguity, the meanings of these words are footnoted in the target language. At other times, to preserve the smooth flow of words, some uses of original terms have been avoided and the attempt has been to explain a few words and idioms within the text.

Language never operates in a detached manner, it is largely determined by social configuration. Even in the use of a particular linguistic code, various registers are adopted to match the context. The backdrops of the stories are rural and semi-urban and also the authors of the story selected come from different parts of Tamil Nadu. Thus the stories operate in different registers in Tamil.

Bama's "Annaachi". is set in a village. The whole story has been communicated in the "informal" colloquial register. The whole story unfolds in the village settings. To maintain the socio-economic and cultural grain, some indicators have to be retained in original. The original Coozhu has been retained to indicate the economic condition of the people and it fits in appropriately in the rural backdrop of the story. There are three other options available to represent the word coozhu: (a) using the equivalent word in the target language which would be porridge, (b) explain it as well boiled semi-solid substance made out of flours such as ragi, corn, or (c) call it porridge like preparation from the flour of certain grains (such as ragi, corn). The first option has been ruled out in order to avoid the distortion of rural setting of the story as well as to maintain the socio-economic conditions of the people. Porridge is a common food for all irrespective of class in the western world. So there may be a possible distortion in its reception. The second option is an awkward explanation and the third option also has been ruled out to avoid the story from reading like a paraphrased text but this has been retained as a footnote.

In the same story, the original have been maintained once again in other than the kinship terms and traditional names and caste names which , will be discussed later in this Chapter. The term "Mayiru Thayiru" has been retained in its original form. The options available for the translator are: (a) literal translation of the term "Mayiru Thayiru" which means, "hair curd", (b) the second option is to omit the word: or (c) to retain the original. The option for literal translation has been ruled out because it would not make any sense in the target language. The second option has also been ruled out since the term "Mayiru Thayiru" gives myriad meanings to the context. So the third option has been chosen to retain the original. The original "Mayiru Thayiru" does mean "Hair Curd" but the literal translation does not convey anything. The hidden meaning is very important to the context, and hence the original has been retained. The word mayiru (hair) has been used in a derogatory way and thayiru (curd) is just for rhyming. The derogatory meaning of hair in the context poses the protest of the former untouchable caste people (Dalits) against the caste Hindus. It is not simply protest but it also shows the rising assertion of Dalits. So it become important to maintain the original to uphold the purpose of the text.

In Sivakami's "Kadaisi Kaadu" the translator has retained in original terms in five to six places. All the words, which have been retained here in the text, are major socio-economic indices. "Kadaisi Kaadu" is a story about the life of the tribal people. The text has imbibed each and every aspect of the tribal life. To preserve the chastity of the text it has become
inevitable for the translator to retain some important socio-economic indices in the translation.

For example, the word "Thuvial" has been retained in original while the other option available is "Chutney". The other option was rejected because in Tamil, 'Chutney' is different from 'Thuvial' though the ingredients are more or less the same. 'Chutney' is liquid and seasoned and with mustard in oil whereas 'thuvial' is a semi-solid strong relish prepared by adding a paste of chilli to coconut, ginger, curry leaf or to similar things. The original has been retained not just to indicate the nature of the dish but an index of Tamil culture. 'Thuvial' is a staple dish for the poor and also it is the most desirable dish along with rice while travelling. Hence all things considered, the original term is retained.
"Kandhu vattikkaran" has been also retained because of its importance. To replace this phrase in the target language, the translator has options like money lender or banker. Though the terms money lender and banker are the equivalent in the target language, the real meaning of 'Kandhu Vattikkaran' is different. 'Kandhuvatti' is unique because it is a system in which the interest for a loan is deducted from the principal at the time of lending at exorbitant rate. There are many examples where people have become bankrupt after borrowing loan from the "kandhuvattikkaran". Usually 'kandhu vattikkarans' are compared to leaches because like leaches they suck money. The deteriorated living conditions of the tribals in the text
is an important aspect of the story. The 'kandhuvattikarran' plays a major role in the degeneration of the tribals standard of living. Thus to retain the original becomes inevitable.

Another word 'valavu' has been retained to emphasize the aloofness. though we have 'cul de sac" which would be a near equivalence to 'valavu'. 'Valavu' unlike 'cul de sac' which is a blind alley is a cluster of houses inside a compound, with one entry, usually detached and secluded. The author has used the word 'valavu' to emphasize the detachment and pathetic condition. So, retaining the original would emphasize the regretable and secluded state of the people and also serve the purpose of the translator.

Cultural and economic motifs in the narrative gain further emphasis in the frequent use of agrarian and domestic references both as objects and metaphors. Terms like 'muram', 'padi', and 'ulakkai' are examples of the frequent use of agrarian objects. The author, being a woman, has connected the agrarian background to the women's domain. 'Muram', 'Padi', and ‘Ulakkai’ means wide winnowing pan, a measure and a long round ended heavy wooden pestle respectively. Translated terms would not be appropriate and also it would read like a paraphrased text. Taking all these into account, the translator has retained the original.

In Ravi Kumar's 'Unmai Aridhal' the original 'Sandhai' has been retained because the equivalent 'Fair' would distort the context. 'Sandhai' would be held on a particular day usually in the outskirts of a town and
people from nearby villages would come to buy and sell things which ranges from grocery to cow. The concept of 'fair' in the target language means exhibition and sometimes, entertainment. So 'fair' would distort the context and may misguide the reader sometime. To avoid the distortion of the text, retaining the original is unavoidable.

In Idhaya Vendhan's Pallatheru a word 'Nattamai' has been retained because there is no equivalent word in the target language. 'Nattamai` refers the headman of the village, usually the elder person of the village which is absent in the social context of the target language.

## Kinship Terms

"In all societies people are bound together in groups by various kinds of bonds. The most universal and the most basic of these bonds is that which is based on reproduction, are inherent human drive, and is called kinship": And the network of this familial relationships is an essential feature of Indian society. This is indicated by a number of kinship terms that exist in our vocabulary. But we do not find one-to-one correspondence between the kinship terms of any two languages. Some of the kinship terms of a language may not have equivalents in another language. Sometimes a single term of a language may have many equivalents in another language.

[^3]"We observe that every language has a set of kinship terms that are ambiguous. But this set differs from language to language. Because of this, a term which is ambiguous in one language may not have an equivalent which is also ambiguous in another language. ${ }^{\text {" }}$ Because of all these differences problems arises in translation. For instance, in Tamil, an individual's relationship with his/her mother's brother, his/her father/elder brother, with his/her father's younger brother, his/her mother's sister's husband and father's sister's husband is specified by different kinship terms. In the English context, however all these relations would be commonly addressed as uncle. Moreover, the use of kinship terms differs from one caste group to another. The term 'uncle' has three equivalents in Tamil: Periyappa (father's elder brother or mother's elder sister's husband), Chittappa/Chinnaiah (father's younger or mother's younger sister's husband) and mama (mother's brother, fathet's sister's husband, husband's father or wife's father). Because of this ambiguity in the target language, the translator has retained the kinship terms as it is in the source language.

Another ambiguous word is 'brother-in-law'. In the source language the ambiguous kinship term is 'matchan' which refers to the son of the mother's brother, son of father's sister and also sometimes outside the family relationships are forged as a symbol of intimacy. This term is common among close friends. So to avoid the ambiguity and to highlight the

7 Lakshmi, H., Problems of Translation, Hyderabad: Booklink Corporation, 1993, p. 117.
close-knit feature of community living, again the word is retained in the in the original.

In Ravi Kumar's 'Unmai Aridhal' the original word 'murai penn' has been retained. There is no equivalent term in the target language for the term ‘Murai Penn’ which means a girl on whom a boy has a customary claim to marry. This term does not have even a near equivalent in the target language. This term is ultimately important because it shows the Tamil Society is an endogamous society. Terms like 'Murai Penn' are very few unique cultural indicators, which are to be retained in original.

## Terms and Degrees of Respect

Unlike the target language i.e. English, the source language has honorific pronouns. Honorific pronouns occur in the second and third person. In the case of second person, there are two grades of honour. Though there are two grades of honour in Tamil, the term differs from place to place according to the dialects. It can be taken as binary (form). The word 'Neengal' (plural) is formal and polite and it can also be addressed to elders (singular) with respect. The word 'nee' is informal and used in the singular.

In the case of third person pronoun there are three classes in the singular depending upon the speaker's attitude to and social relationship with the person addressed: (a) Avargal (singular also plural) very polite,
first degree respect; (b) ‘Avan’ (masculine)/‘Aval’ (feminine) (singular) informal, third degree respect: (c) sometimes it is rare and mostly in rural area to address a person of equal age but opposite sex as 'Adhu'. It is also used to refer to the husband by the wife in rural places.

The form of the honorific should be noted: 'neengal' (you + respect) and 'avargal' (he or she with first degree respect). Since there are noequivalents in the target language. English, these honorific produce problems in the translation of Tamil text into English. To avoid the loss of meaning and ambiguity the translator has to build in a lot of redundancy in translation.

## Structural Differences

Sometimes the structural differences between the source language and target language also bring problems. For instance the word order in Tamil is different from that of English. While it is predominandy SVO in English but it is SOV in Tamil. Unlike English, Tamil is flexible in the word order. Take the following example:

I saw her
(a) Naan Avanai Paarthen
I he saw
(b) Avanai Naan Parthen he I saw (Bama's ‘Annachi')

Though this difference between two language does not raise problems here, it does create problems which cannot be solved easily when differences like modification arise. The problem, which arises in the premodification in Tamil, can be seen in the following instance:

Hey you, I asked your street Muthukaruppan to a person to water the crop. It is almost time, but no one is to be seen around.
(Bama's 'Annaachi')
Yelai unga theru muthukarruppankita thanni paaichurathukku Hey you, your street to Muthukaruppan water (the crop) oru aala paarthu anuppa chonnen. Neramaatchu. Innum one person to look send I asked Almost time. Still oru payalaying kaanum one person even not seen

This kind of problem is common for all translators. It arises because of the structural difference between the source language and target language. This kind of problem was already noted by Nida: "Moreover, it is essential that he (translator) be fully acquainted with the meanings of Syntactic structures: it is in this particular area that translators often show their great weakness. Though they may understand quite well the meaning of individual words and phrases, they are often woefully lacking in fundamental appreciation of the meaning of construction. ${ }^{\text {n* }}$

8 Nida. E.A., Towards a Science of Translation. Leiden: Brill. 1964, p. 241 .

## Other Issues

Retaining all the titles in the original as the discourses have a powerful bearing on the narratives has reinforced the contextual grain. Titles of all the six stories have imbibed the essence of the whole narrative. Changing the titles would have done serious damage to the cultural resonance and context of the narratives.

All the stories have been set up in the caste-ridden socio-economic domain. All the stories question the existing patterns of society. This protest that comes through in many ways upholds the ongoing assertion of Dalits. To do justice to the writer it is necessary to strictly adhere to the debate format in the story. The arguments and counter-arguments between the Dalits and caste Hindus in the texts adopt the colloquial and the local dialects.

This problematic informal colloquial language of the stories has made the task of translation more onerous. Mostly the narratives adopt the local dialects in the oral register. Thus it poses great problems with sentence structures in the translation.

The stories selected for translation emphasizes not only the hegemony operating on the basis of caste hierarchy but also on the basis of gender hierarchy. The women are supposed to be the upholders of moral values in most cultures of India. Because of the imbibed gender disparity, Women are
subjected to ill treatment in many ways, and they are looked at as pleasure giving objects. Violence against women ranges from use of vulgar language against them, physical assault to sexual violence.

The incidence of violence against women in the stories can be treated in two planes: (I) sexual abuse against the Dalit women by the Dalit men. and (ii) sexual oppression of Dalit women by the caste Hindu males. In the first place Dalit males treat their women as their slaves; like other males, they also abuse women sexually. The psychology of the Dalit men are set as they undergo such discrimination and servility, they resort to retaliate for their anguish against the female members of their own family.

In Bama's Annachi the protagonist refers a woman as 'Oomai Chirukki' which is an abuse addressed to a woman who mostly keeps mum. But the word is mostly used as a derogatory term. The translator has chosen 'dumb whore' to replace the word 'Oomai chirukki'. The phrase 'dumb whore' has been chosen to emphasize the female suppression and the position assigned to them in the society. When Dalit men themselves suppress their female partners it would be unimaginable to think of upper caste males attitudes towards the Dalit women.

A Dalit woman's struggle begins from her house where she has to contend with the oppression of her husband and the other male family members. When a Dalit woman with full confidence ventures outside the family to work, again she is abused and reduced to a mere sexual object by
the upper caste males especially in the rural areas. - Dalit women face social oppression. hierarchical relationship and its impact every day, every hour and every minute ${ }^{n 4}$ says Margaret Kalaiselvi. Dalit women works out of the family sphere amidst the constant threat of sexual harassment just to strengthen the political and economic position of their families. Dalit women work to create Dalit female spheres of influence authority and power which is different from women of upper castes.

In Vizhi. Pa. Idhayavendan's Pallatheru and Cho. Dharman's Thazhumbu, as discussed above, Dalit women arè merely treated as sexual objects. The incidents of violence against women are frequent. In Pallatheru, Natarasan asks his wife Kamala, who has come late after waiting for the moneylender at his place, "Whom did you go to till now?" and again in Cho. Dharman’s Thazhumbu, two policemen asks veluchamy to send his wife with the head constable for a night, so that he can continue his liquor brewing business. These are the places where a translator has to be alert to maintain the cultural moments as well as the context. In both places the translator has opted to retain the same meaning by word to word' translation and the derogatory terms are translated into the target language with the equivalent words.

[^4]In some places literal translation has been followed to highlight some very important issues. For instance in Sivakami's Kadaisi Kaadu, when all people including women also asks themselves that can a girl go alone to the forest? Has she run away to the forest or what? Translation of this colloquial sentence literacy is to highlight the society, which separated the work and home into two discrete spheres. It has been observed clearly in all the stories that the public sphere of political and economic discourse is reserved as a "Male domain` leaving the private domestic sphere of family a female domain. Gender roles are tied to the dichotomous construction of two basic societal institutions: males work and women take care of family.

To expose the exploitation of women physically as well as sexually, in certain places the translator has chosen more powerful words and in some places, to retain the contextual and cultural nuances, 'word to word' translation has been adopted and mostly the derogatory terms used in the original are replaced, with the equivalent words in the target language.

## Translating Dalit Tamil

Literature is a powerful mechanism to mould the ethos and values of dominant class. It is a part of the whole ideological mechanism of the dominant class. So ideas always flows from the dominant class to the subordinate class. Ngugi says "Language, and language, has dual character.
it is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture". ${ }^{10}$ Since communication is the major device to mould the ethos and values, certain values of the dominant culture arise again and again to emerge as a popular value of the society. This happens because of the access to the knowledge related fields by the dominant class. Language as a carrier of culture carries the culture of the dominant. In this process the culture of subordinate class are subsumed by the dominant culture ad the subordinate categories are kept under the power of dominant class. Language has been used as instrument and object of power.

The subordinate people are those who are discriminated against on the basis of race, caste and gender. The language and knowledge of the subordinate people are subjugated for centuries. Foucault identifies two kinds of subjugated knowledges -- one 'buried and disguised', and the other 'disqualified and marginalized'. The language and the knowledge of marginalized, the subordinate class especially the Dalits in the Indian context and women in the universal contexts had been disqualified and marginalized. Dalits and women have rejected the dominant culture and knowledge where they are mere objects. Now, Dalits and women produce their own culture, history literature where they are the agents and actors.

[^5]Dalits, women and other marginalized people construct their own spheres. -Social construction may reflect the *interrelation and interpenetration of structure of thought and human agency interacting within complete economic and political fields. On the one hand, they reflect the ways in which people are defined, apprehended and acted upon by others and, on the other, they define themselves" says George Bond and Angela Gilliam. ${ }^{11}$

Reclaiming the subjugated and marginalised knowledge, dalits and women rejects the imposed established tradition. The elements of resistance are prominent in the writings of Dalits, women and marginalized people. To resist the established thoughts and writings, Dalits, women and marginalized people. To resist the established thoughts and writings, dalits, women and marginalized people choose the narrative style which differs from the established language. These writings do not follow the literary conventions. All six stories chosen for translation set a new style which is different from the established literary conventions. In the writings of these oppressed people, the protagonists are Dalits and women. The language they adopt in their writings do not differ from the spoken language. Translating the colloquial language is extremely difficult.

11 Bond. George, \& Gilliam, Angela, ed., Social Construction of the Past: Representation as Power, London, Routledge, 1994, p.5.

Languages are tied up with emotions expressed or implied. Mostly. emotional values are often difficult to translate. The translation of curses and oaths also creates difficulties. In all the stories one can observe the frequent use of derogatory terms, curses and sometimes oaths. Though the spirit of curses are same their meaning differ from one language to another. While translating, the feelings behind the curses are taken for consideration. The use of emotional expressions such as curses, oaths and foul words are the cultural elements of the down trodden people mainly dalits and women because these expressions are the forms of resistance. To preserve the tone of resistance it is necessary to retain the original in case equivalent forms are not found in the target language.

In some places the deliberate use of a few terms by the author are retained in the original to preserve the cultural grain as well as the author's intention.: Terms like 'Ayya' and 'Annaachi' in Bama's Annaachi, 'Mela theru', 'pallatheru', natamai etc., in pallatheru and many more terms have been retained because the above mentioned terms are contextually very important. Moreover these terms shows the rural backdrop where hierarchical caste system operates effectively.

## TRANSLATED STORIES

## ANNACHI

-Oh him! he* seems a very mischievous fellow. While his father and mother are meek and docile, how is this donkey, born to them, so good for nothing" said Maadathi with anger as well as weariness. Interrupting Maadathi, Muthuratnam added, "yes...all the children of that house are like that only. At least the others can be contained by us, but this fellow ... yeah, this Ammasi, we cannot put him either this side or the other, he is very haughty."
"Who?...you are talking about Irullayi's grandson, aren't you?" said Thaayamma who was sitting next to them and grinding the Bengal gram, "Ah! he's broken her heart."

Ammaasi would be twenty years old. As the women at the street said, he was a different kind of a person. The elders of the village disliked him intensely but the young people adored him.

Ammaasi was good looking, the right size for his age and with his black moustache and all. Good physique, and when he smiles his teeth flash brightly like the carp fish frolicking in the sunlit water. Wonder what he uses to brush his teeth. Though he speaks mockingly he has always spoken with justice. He seems unconcerned but he is aware of everything.

[^6]I have always wondered that even these villagers who know him well speak badly about him all the time. Even now I feel what he has done is just. After all, I met him personally and asked him everything.

I saw him when I was going to the Vellankatti Lake to relieve myself. We talked then. When I asked him what had happened he burst out laughing. Amidst, his laughter he narrated what had happened.
"Hey matchan,' you tell me what is wrong in it? Yesterday I came back home early after the work at Parasuramar's field. After drinking the coozhu² I decided to go to Nettiakallu and took the bus. ${ }^{-}$
-For what work did you go to Nettiakallu?" I asked him.
-Matchan, that henpecked shopkeeper told me that there was work digging a well and I went to ask about it. It was really difficult getting into the bus at our bus stand, it was so crowded."
"Did you pick up a fight when you boarded the bus?"

- Matchan you are always like this, you keep saying something or the other without listening fully. Hear the full story without interrupting."

1 A kinship term for wife's brother or sister's also used as an endearment among close friends.
2 Porridge like preparation from the flour certain grams (such as ragi corn).

Knowing his character I said without haste, "Ok. Tell me won't interrupt you." I looked at him eager to know what he would say.
-I managed to fight my way through that rush and get a seat. That Chandrasekar also boarded the bus. Which Chandrasekar do you think? That $\mathrm{Naicker}^{3}$ for whom my father is a farm labourer. Seeing me He asked, "Hey you...Aren't you Maadasamy's son?"
"Yes, I am Maadasamy's very own son" I replied and kept sitting.
"Hey you...don't you recognise me?" He asked me with a smile.
"Why not? I know You very well... You are Chandrasekar aren't you?" Having said that I lit a beedi.
-You know me and you are still sitting? Get up...I will sit down. And He came towards my seat.

Without getting up from the seat, I told Him respectfully, "I've got this seat after being crushed in the crowd. I will get down nearby at Nettiakallu. I'll sit till there. When I get down You can please sit."
"Hey you...isn't it this nearby Nettiakallu? Get up...move...let me sit, how can you sit so disrespectfully while Ayya ${ }^{4}$ is standing" He said

3 A Caste name.

4 Father or grand father but also meet to refer to male of upper caste.
with an evasive smile. In reply I too said with a smile *Ayya? right now my ayya is ploughing Your field. Since when did You become my ayya? Whatever You say there will be no talk of getting up earlier."

Looking at the mischief and the laughter in
Ammaasi's face I could not control my laughter, "So you didn't get up till the end? I asked." Am I the person to get up? If He had stopped there it would have been ok. Do you know what He said then?
-You are arguing with the landlord who feeds you. you don't have even a little bit of the respect and loyalty of your father's. On even hearing that the Naicker is coming the entire Pallu and Parai ${ }^{5}$ caste stand with humility. What would this little fellow know'- when He spoke like this I got really angry but I controlled my anger and said, "If I say I won't get up, I won't. If You talk any more You will lose your respect".
"When the bus reached Nettiyakallu I got down. He kept on grumbling. I did not utter a single word after that. That's what happened Matchan. Here our people pick and chew on me."
"How come everyone in the village came to know it so quickly?". I asked.

[^7]"Don't ask about this idiocy. The very evening Chandrasekar told my ayyan about it and asked Him to reprove me...The way my ayyan shouted at me, now everyone in the street knows."
"Our village women can never keep quiet. They are dumb whores. Whatever be the reason, when a landlord is standing, can a paraiyan sit. Why is he so full of hot air? he is an insolent fellow. his end is nearing."Ammasi laughed when I said it.
-This is tolerable matchan. Do you know what that old man Paniyara Muthu said? 'Landlords are like our Gods. Can we survive without them? They are all foolish meanspirited boys. They say that tongue of licking dog never rises but this dog is trying to leap and bite. If the landlords wish they can knock out all his teeth." "When the old man was scolding I could only laugh. Seeing me laughing he scolded me more." Ammasi laughed. I also kept laughing as I returned.

Within a week of this talk about Ammaasi subsiding in the street, people started talking about his behaviour once again. But he went about his chores as if nothing had happened. I called him and asked, "Hey, what did you do this time?"

Ammaasi replied sarcastically to my enquiry "Matchan, tonight there will be a panchayat in which a big murderer will be sentenced to death."

[^8]"They are going to interrogate me only. Make sure you come, ok..." said Ammaasi.
"What are you accused of now? Tell me, let me, let us hear." said I.
"That is matchan, two days back, chinnaiah ${ }^{6}$ Muthukaruppan asked me to go to Jayasankar Naicker's field to water the crop."
"Yeah, I remember. I saw you dressed in white and carrying the shovel. The way you were dressed I thought you were going to have the handle for the shovel remade. ${ }^{-}$
"I don't need this sarcasm Matchan. Why shouldn't we wear good clothes and go for work. That day I gave one rupee to get my dress pressed by Muthu Irulan."
"Oh yes...The shirt wasn't creased at all, I noticed. Tell me the matter."
"I went to Jayasankar's field ...He was standing beside the pumpset. When I stood near Him with the shovel. He Himself started the talk. He started to irritate me in His slanderous way."

[^9]"Hey you, I asked your street Muthukaruppan for a person to water the crop. It is almost time, but no one is to be seen around."
"Muthukaruppan chinnaiah gave me the job, that's why I have come."
"you don't look like a person who has come to work. you look as if you are going to office some where. you are a troublesome guy. Didn't he get any other person that he asked you to come?"
-What's the matter now? You want Your crop to be watered. What's Your problem how I dress?"
'hey you do you know the time now? Look at him as if he is going on a tour somewhere.'
"Annachi, You are the one with a wrist watch, I don't have one, Annachi. You have to tell me the time Annachi I have to buy one soon Annachi, when I have bought one and tied it around my wrist, I will tell You the time. Annachi."

When I saw Ammaasi's face while he was talking like that I could not control and burst into laughter. When I laughed loudly, he said, "listen to the rest of the story. Matchan", he said.
"When I called Him Annachi you should have seen how He made faces. He got angry and continued to speak with anger."
"Hey you, what? Annachi... every time calling me Annachi, who is Annachi? And Annachi for whom? What, a Parai mother fucker is calling me Annachi?"

-     - Don't talk without restraint, if I too talk You lose Your respect, if You don't want me, tell me to leave mayiru. ${ }^{7}$ Mind the way you speak. I left the place immediately I didn't know what story he made up in the village and now these people have called for the panchayat."
"you have called a landlord mayiru thayiru then you have to pay for it."
"you are so innocent. do you they have called me to enquire about this? The big crime that I have committed was that I had called Him Annachi, that's why the panchayat."

In the night as Ammaasi had said, the panchayat was called. Naatamai ${ }^{8}$ asked Ammaasi "Hey what is our caste and our mudalali's ${ }^{\text { }}$ caste? Whom did you call Annachi. Ammaasi replied "We are Paraiyar He is Naicker, I was the one who called Him Annaachi... To interrogate this there is a meeting", scratched his head as he replied.

7 A derogatory word for hair.
8 Village head.
9 Proprietor, owner.

On hearing Ammaasi's reply all youths burst with laughter.

Controlling his resentment Naatamai said, "Why should we beat about the bush. Tell us in less than no time why did you call Mudalali as Annachi."

Ammasi also replied at once. "He is elder to me, that's why I called Him Annachi, if He had been younger to me I would have called Him Thambi. " ${ }^{11}$

The youths again laughed loudly on hearing this.
"This fellow will not cede easily, look at his reply. He is a very smart fellow," said chinna Naatamai. ${ }^{11}$ Then Naatamai talked in a serious tone "Hey, nobody had called you to have fun; until this day have we pallu, parai ever addressed Naicker's with any kinship? You were yesterday, you are doing too much. Whatever you say, it was wrong that you called Him Annachi."

Immediately Ammasi also replied in a serious tone "There is nothing wrong in what I said. Did I ask for their daughter's hand by calling them Mama, Matchan you are making it an issue for calling Him Annachi with respect. Last week when I called Irullappan, the sweeper as Annachi, you

[^10]all said chi...he is calling a koraboy ${ }^{12}$ as Annachi and jeered at me. Now you people are asking the opposite, How can you call Naicker as Annachi. Like Poovathi kelavi ${ }^{13}$ says ${ }^{-}$What difference is there between first one and the last of donkey dung: both are dung.' All' human beings are humans," said Ammaasi and left in a huff for his house.

12 Boy of sweeper caste.
13 Old woman.

## PALLATHERU

Chakli Street appeared like an isolated island. Life here belonged to humanity that had been chewed up and spat out by the society. Each one had to eke out a hand to mouth existence uncared for.

Chakli Street was at the northern border of the town, down in the lowland. Thus, it came to be called 'Pallatheru'.' There is also a slum inside the town, which is now called the big colony. Though there are paraiyars and chakliyars' even in the big colony, the paraiyars there can't be equated with the chakiliyars here. Why, even the chakliyars of the big colony and chakliyars here cannot identify with each other easily.

You could not ask for any help or favour on the basis of caste affinity. The chakliyars in the town existed like slaves to the parayars in the town. While chakliyars down here were like slaves to the chakliyars in the town. Such a three tier hierarchy existed. Though all of them were listed as depressed castes in the Thasildar's office, yet due to the sub-castes within them, each was oppressed by the other.

[^11]The chakliyars of the Pallatheru were not so different. It is just that people had started differentiating between each other on the basis of occupations. The chakliyars over there mainly carried out occupations like carrying heavy loads, pulling rickshaws, selling fruits, running petty shops and beating drums for funerals and auspicious occasions. A few worked at Government Office as well.

The huts of the chakliyars were located in the Nandanar Street. They did more or less the same kind of work but in addition their speciality was stitching shoes.

The people even looked good. Despite their poverty their inability to send their children to school or light their stoves for a little food, they yearned to dress glamorously. Though urban life style consists of some small comforts, it kindled some vain desires alongside. Since social acceptance was necessary for non-discrimination even this life induced a certain depression in their minds.

There was no conducive atmosphere for the Pallatheru and Nandanar Street people to have a harmonious relationship. When they met face to face their faces would splutter like mustard thrown into heated oil. There would be anger. Sarcasm would drip in their speech. Urban culture had brought them up to that. There could not be any exchange of brides, if one wanted to marry from the other. eloping from the house was the only way. If not. it would end up in killings.

Thus because of having become a desolate island, the people seemed to be without any identity on fixed address and appeared to be clinging on to the edges of the town like orphans. 'What kind of cursed life have we been were born into' the Nattamai ${ }^{3}$ would lament quite frequently.

His lament was meaningless. Mostly Pallatheru people worked in the municipality as scavengers. Carrying the human excretion, cleaning the drainage system. Till now there is no record of anyone getting a job because of education, though some do continue studying.

It is the occupation, which has divided people within the same caste. Since they could not go hand in hand with one another as equal human beings, they were subjected to oppression by the townsfolk.

Just above the Pallatheru ran a National highway, which was interrupted by a railway gate. All the hulla baloo of the town was over just within two kilometers of that. After that were completely unpopulated barren lands. Of few petty shops and small hotels are located along the shining metal road.

Also Mariamman temple, Perumal temple, Easwaran temple, houses. schools, jewellery shop, vegetable shop, textile shop...were spread all over. Opposite Pallatheru in the western side in that Viratikuppam area, some lads

3 Villagehead usually elder person of the village.
brewed country liquor. It was said that a political party or a fan club was backing them.

The upper castes dominated the streets adjoining the highway. Udaivars and Mudaliyars ${ }^{+}$retained most of the land across the railway gate. The lush green paddy and sugarcane grew abundantly beside the lake near Muttampalaiyam and kept adding to their wealth. Their children who are born only to enjoy themselves, whether some of them went to school or not, spend their life drinking, gossiping and picking fights. For this very purpose Chinnapayan, Mohan, Thass, Ibrahim, Selvaraj, Kumar...such macho types had nurtured their physique well and went around spoiling for a fight.

From Pallatheru no one had anything to do with the upper castes who lived near the road. No one wanted to cause any unnecessary trouble. At the end of the day's work, people came back so tired and worn out that they lacked the nerve for anything. They would go with a bottle to buy oil or a bag to buy rice. They would get tea in a jug and drink it. After drinking country liquor at Ibrahim's shop they would return silently.

On one such occasion Kathirvelu went for a drink. Ibrahim who was selling the liquor inside a thorny bush saw him.
"Hey, how much stuff do you want?"
-I want one jugful. Will you give?" he said and laughed.
-How much do you have in your hand?"

4 Land owning upper castes.
-Five rupees."
Ibrahim got up and smacked him right on his face.
"Look at his impudence, for five rupees you want one jugful?"
"Ayyayyo, ${ }^{5}$ it was just for fun. Don't mind it."
Ibrahim again jumped and kicked him.
-I have come after toiling like chappals, please, don't kick like that, my entire body is sore."

When Ibrahim was kicking him repeatedly, the others who were eating meat and botti after the drinks were laughing. He rolled Kathirvelu on the ground. The dust from his sweeping and the dirt from the drains already coated him, and the sweat caused the mud to cling to his body like a monitor lizard. He stood up and was shaking off the dirt.
> "Hey show me the money here."
> Unable to speak, he glared.
> "Hey boy, why are you staring?"
> "I don't want the stuff."
> "Why don't you want?"

-I get kicked about and yet should I drink the stuff from you? What is your age and my age, yet you raise your hand and beat me. I will go a little further and drink in our big slum."

5 An interjection expressing pain, sorrow etc.

Ibrahim's rage rose, he caught hold of his khaki shirt and shook him vigorously. The remaining one or two buttons too crumbled and fell off. He ground his teeth in anger.
"Anne ${ }^{6}$ spare me. I can't bear your beating. Take this five rupees. Give however much you want to."

The drink didn't have any effect on him. He staggered home because of the beating he had received.

The upper caste people of the town considered the people of Pallatheru to be gullible. That's why even small lads whose moustache were yet to sprout, took no note of their age and would speak without respect to elders as well as youngsters. Vaadaa, podaa and Vaadee and podee ${ }^{7}$ were common terms of address. Bad language was used by them without any embarrassment. They knew the art of administering beatings and seizing money as if they constituted a panchayat and practiced all such deceitful feats.

The Melatheru lads always stood with one another unlike the people here who could never co-operate with each other or get together for any good cause. In all foul play that they resorted to blindly, their respective

6 Elder brother, and may also refer the upper caste male irrespective of the age by the lower caste people.

7 A disrespectful term of address to summon and send away male and female respectively.
caste peoples always backed these lads. At the most, if they were taken to the police, through their political influence they would come out. That's why they had grown cheeky and had the devil-may-care attitude.

That day, the quarrels between Natarasan and his wife Kamala intensified in the street. The problem was, though it was late in the evening, she had not cooked after returning home. She returned after waiting up to seven in the evening at the money lender's place. He had promised to give her money but never turned up.
> "Whom were you with till now?"
> "I was standing at the money lender's place, he didn't turn up."
> "Standing?"
> "Then what? Was I sprawled out? Get away you drunk."

He argued, then she argued and it became a big mess. "Don't stay with me, get out." He yelled, he beat her and dragged her to the street.

Like a jobless mouth discovering chewing gum, Chinnapaiyan who was standing near a hotel on the road heard, Kamala's scream loud and clear. He ran to the spot rightaway and he gave them two slaps each.
-Saamy, judge for yourself the kids are starving here and she comes now after loitering around the town. ${ }^{-}$
"Shut up, you idiot. do you think, she is like you?"

It was a long time after his panchayat. Natarasan was groaning with pain! The kids went off to sleep holding his legs. The young guys who came to know the incident could not contain themselves. Mari, Chandran and Perumal went to the Pallar Street Nattamai and narrated the incident. Sadness choked the Natamai.

- What do you want mé to do? ${ }^{\text { }}$
-Then, how can we allow this to keep happening? ${ }^{\text { }}$
"Can we live after antagonizing these chaps?"
"But, we are not living at their mercy; we live by working hard." "It sounds good as speech."
"Then, they would keep on coming drunk and purposely beat us. How long can we tolerate it?"
"Yeah, it has become a practice."
"Nothing doing, why do they interfere in our activities? Come, let us go to the police."

The Naatamai Rangasamy in spite of his grief couldn't control his laughter. Any problem that crops up in our street was grabbed by those thugs like hot cakes. The other chakli families even if they come to know would not interfere and would turn a blind eye. The Naatamai controlling his laughter turned towards Mani.
"Why should we walk ourselves into trouble?"
"So. you want us to get beaten up by these fellows?"
"We are fifty households and yet feel orphaned like this."
-We are not orphans. Aren't we employed in the government service."
"Yes. the same government's police laughed at us, whenever we sought their help after getting beaten up.
"If we let it go, our respect and dignity would be carried off in the wind."
"Does any one in our street have any respect and dignity?"
"Naatamai, don't speak of degrading ourselves. We have got the same as the other fellows have. Because of our substandard life, you are made to speak that way. We are not the cause for all this. It is they who dominate us, they who exploit us and prosper out of it. You must know that. Don't live in ancient ways."
"Hey, what all you speak! if you had studied a little more it would be difficult to imagine what you would have become."
-O.K. Are you going to come or not? ${ }^{\text {² }}$
-Even in anger there should be some calmness."
-Why do you talk pointlessly brother." Perumal cut it short with his words. Every one turned towards him.

Mani and Perumal's voices heard near Naatamai's house, slowly began to draw crowds curious to know what was happening.
-The other day also that fellow Thass beat up our Kanchana for refusing to dance at the funeral, he kicked her and broke all the utensils in her home. Nobody questioned him. Kanchana playfully dances for fun in our street but does that mean it is her fate to go and dance at their funerals. Similarly, one day he pulled Rukmani by hand and tried to hug her. Today he will do it in the pretext of drunken state, tomorrow he will call her to sleep with him, will you defend her? If this fellow is like that, the other guy Mohan while playing cards, not capable of winning honestly, lost to Yettikkattai, but he beat him and snatched his money. On pay day that fellow Ibrahim will come with a false account and take money forcibly. ${ }^{-}$

That man Selvaraj interferes and takes the money from the compensation amount paid to the dead by the government as if he is mama or matchan of Ponnuswamy. What does it mean for it to go on like this? Have we given them a legal bond over us?"

The old Pattamal pattix nodded her head as if every question was justified. The night weighed with feelings.
"Nattamai, what do you say, are you coming?"

8 A term of address for an old woman.

He raised his bent head, -If it is to the police, I will not come."
-All right, then come to Sundaram Udaiyar's house"
"What to our councillor’s house?"
"Hmm."
-Why?"
-To exchange gifts. What type of man are you? It was his son Chinnapaiyan who beat up our Natarasan so badly. Now he cannot even more for another ten to fifteen days, do you know that?"
"Don't you know what type of a man he is?"
"He gets our vote and gets elected doesn't he?"
-If we don't vote, he threatens to beat us, if we argue, he says, he will set fire to our houses."
"OK guys. Let's go. He won't get convinced."

Some of them teamed as a small group and went to Sundaram Udaiyar's house. He was encircled by his party workers. "Annae, Chakli fellows have come ${ }^{*}$, said a voice.

When he came out he was told about his son's deeds but he talked without yielding to anything.
-If some one drunk makes a ruckus then who will stand by silently?"
"But for that, to what extent can one go?"
-Hey, what can you people do?"
-Please, don't talk that way."
"I will face anybody like police, the court or anything, do you know that?"
-Then we too know some law. Let anyone come to our Street and we'll talk."
"Are you challenging me? Get lost you dogs."

All of them returned murmuring to their street. They regretted having gone to the man for justice. In future, he might have said "had any one brought it to my notice", saying thus some justified going to that man.

It was Sunday. Some were playing Pallanguzhi near Ponnusamy's house. At the doorway of Mari's house four or five were playing cards. Since it was a holiday, people, some inside the hut and some on the thinna ${ }^{10}$, were lazily lying down. Dogs started barking. Eyes moved towards the direction of the sound.

Thass was stepping down in the Pallar Street in a totally drunken state. On his hand was a fore arm sized knife. The womenfolk stared at him, shocked. His other hand held on to his loosened lungi.
-No body can reprove him."
-Black faced dog, has given birth to this loafer. ${ }^{-}$

9 Pallankuzhi - a board with two rows each having seven hollows to be filled with five counters: the same played by two using the board.

10 Thinnai -- raised platform in front of the house.
"He should be run over by a car or truck, somewhere."

People's abuses continued. Holding on to his lungi tightly, he staggered near. Those playing cards stared at him blankly. The smoke from Mari's beedi emanated in circles. Thass tumbled down on the thinnai of Rukmani's house. "Hey, Rukmani, where are you" he shouted.

Those playing cards rose up and came over to him. He looked up at them in an inebriated state.
"Innada? what business have you got here?"
"What, innada!"

Panic stricken. Thass stood up.
"Get away quietly."
-Hey, what will you do, if you come near I'll chop you into pieces. Mind it."

All the people pulled Mari back saying "Don't get into trouble, come away?"
"Innada. staring at me? Rukmani has taken fifty rupees to sleep with me, do you know? ${ }^{\text {² }}$
"Hey. will you go away quietly or not...?"

Mani shoved him. He lifted the knife, and both clasped each other and rolled on the ground. Mani snatched the knife, and kicked him on his face. Blood gushed out and dripped down. He picked up with other hand an acid bottle used by perumal for cleaning toilet sinks and broke the end. Realizing the situation was getting out of hand, Thass took to his heels towards Melatheru.
"Run you dog, we are not the ones scared of death."

His voice rose to a high pitch. The acid which spilled out while breaking the bottle blistered his hand. The womenfolk came near and held his hand tightly with their free end of their sarees. The burning increased and the pain reached his head sharply.

## KADAISI KAADU

She entered the forest without the knowledge of the writer who described it. The forest is loneliness, the forest is independence, the forest is wind, the forest is life. The forest had formed itself in its completeness by distilling its essence into single words. The dreams of the forest had twisted in her and floated like a wave and formed, until she set off.

The preparation for setting off to the forest was tedious. An asthmatic father, no one to look after him in an orphaned home...the lies, since the intention to set off to the forest could not be revealed openly...

The exhaustion caused by the preparation of lemon rice and Thuvial ${ }^{1}$ packets made the journey look backward though the train was moving forward.

The dried fibre like grass, barren rocks, dried wood, unwilted pungent thorny flowers... where was the forest...when would be the forest...

The land expanse had become cold when she arrived at the forest. As it grew late the mist became chilly. The latter half of the night was very cold; coffee needs such climate. She could not sleep lying on the thick durrie which was spread on the iron net used to dry the coffee seeds.

[^12]The coffee estate's fence where the chow chow creepers were climbing was bent and damaged by the wild boars. Hey Narasimha, the leg of the trespassing trained horse had been cut. It is said that horses sleep while standing, but it could not even stand.

How many kinds of fences there are! Tall and thorny cactus, thorny babool trees, korandi thorns, plaited palm leaves, barbed wires...The forest had become thorns and fences. The fenced estate that she was imprisoned in was locked from outside by the plaited palm leaves fence. In addition, she latched it from the inside too. Safety, security! The dreams and the . forests were imprisoned once again.

She woke up in a hurry. She had to enter into the fenceless arena. One had to bury the face in the knotted roots. When one straightened and rose up one had to open one's eyes to the gigantic trees which were yoked like human legs. Small sparrows should scatter and fly all around. White birds like confetti. To pull out with fingers the infected barks of the trees to see the gold-studded black moths and their eggs. If possible, the slithering python in the hollows of the trees...

She opened the latch quietly. In the night when the earth failed to reflect the light of the moon, stars glowed in their full potency and chaste light. Was the angle of the eyes hundred and eighty or two hundred and ten degrees? It recorded quickly the thatched fence.

The wild ox with its full strength started to push. Unfamiliar even to the human appearance. Habituated to the fear she rushed to the door and latched it. The hut became latches...the forest too.

The story of the writer gleamed and disappeared. In that story, while the green plants burst and burnt, with sparks and smoke emitting sparks towards the sky, the Paliargal ${ }^{2}$ danced furiously to quench the yearning and frustrations of the day with their anger mounting against the money lending kandhu vattikkaran. ${ }^{3}$

She wanted to behold the adivaasis hand in hand coming together in sweat and alcohol as they danced in groups. She wanted to see them before their culture was commodified. How has the hilly bamboo, the shovel that had lost its handle becoming cymbals and the noise of empty sins come together to make fine music? The life of man become the music of life, the forests themselves becoming that life, the struggle for survival that is the music of that life...

Before the cinema and the journals could exaggerate and appropriate to bring it to the normal, one should feel the child lying in its damp state with the umbilical cord uncut. She should see nature itself as them...

[^13]How much wonder the story of the writer had kindled in her! Having read the story she was in an excited state to change it into reality.

How can a girl go alone to the forest? Has she run away to the forest or what? In this forest the coffee grows and the cardamom spreads its fragrance, the rest of it is full of dried up trees which stand like broken limbs, grass shrubs and thorny plants. What is she anxious to find here? Why does she wander here, where the Paliyars and Pulaiyars ${ }^{4}$ live by gathering gum and peeling off the barks of trees which hardly fill their stomach and hardly fetch them enough to get proper clothes to cover themselves.

Finally the villagers and the estate owners asked her all that was left out of whatever they had asked amongst themselves. The people who are habituated to the threat of forest officials of the lowest rank, the agent to whom they sell their trees, and to governmental power which in the guise of dealing out totals away everything, should be familiar with research and interest too. Everything was for sale...in one way or the other.

She quit while the night was still left. Her neck had become warm as she had untied her hair-do. Having lost its twigs the silver oak swayed with a few leaves on the top which shaded the coffee. The frogs from the stream raised their voices pak...kok...pak...kok.

4 A tribe.

In the fields the plantain trees had grown tall and were bent by the weight of flowers and bunches of unripe fruits. Rose buds dark red as velvet...the fences ended...at last the forest.

The teak trees stood with their broad leaves. The grip having loosened the leaves gyred in the air, the greenish tender shoots were swaying in the rays of the sun...thorns stuck by bushel load, the decayed leaf particles flying in the air added weight to the body...it was not a forest. They called it a reserve forest. Trespassing was more than violating the forest laws. The cut down trees awaiting to be auctioned to the agents. All that seemed like huge cylindrical rollers were trees. Roots that had turned into heads of surprisingly fallen trees. Forest...Forest.

Kadaisi kaadu. That was the name for the valavu. ${ }^{5}$ Humans are always on the edge of the forest. The end of humanity is always the forest. The expectation roused by the word had subsided...when it appeared.

Muram, ${ }^{6}$ padi, ${ }^{7}$ ulakkai, ${ }^{8}$ sheep's foliage, a bathroom built with dried flat cactus leaves, a peeling wall in which earth and sand drop from both the sides. A lethargic patient with a dog as his companion, sniffling

[^14]children, flies swarming around dried gruel. A damsel with great expectations waiting for the stranger...thus waited a girl of that valavu. She climbed up and lay down on the wire net. The sticky grass on her half saree pricked her at many places. Like a doll made out of clay, the writer's kandhu vattikaran sprouted there. Since there were no descriptions of him in the story, she herself imagined his image. A marwari with a cap on his head...furious Naatukkottai chetty with a huge paunch...a whip in the hand and a turban on the head, chewing betel leaves...Oh! wouldn't the skin peel off?

When she was called to go along to the valavu in the night to see them dancing...

The light of the glow-worms wasn't sufficient. The smoke from the fire gave a long interval for the stars to twinkle. Listening to the ox's story while walking down the slope in the light of the torch, and after climbing up the rock and reaching near the arrogantly standing concerted oleander tree, fire came into sight.

The sparks did not arise furiously. A long huge log was burning very quietly like a lamp. When the faces shadowed by the edges of the headcovering worn because of the cold were examined, they revealed the corpses of old women. A deadly silence prevailed there.

She is also a woman. Why don't you talk? She had come all the way to see all of you. Do not get scared, speak without fear.

What fear do we have?
Excellent
Then, will you dance?
We don't dance
Why do you speak like this?
No pipe, no drum. Karadi paarai valavu people have all these things
O.K. at least sing some songs.

Will she give money if we sing?
O.K. it seems you all take money at $30 \%$ interest
from the money lending kandhu vattikkaaran.
We don't take money from any one.
It seems they whip you, if you fail to pay the interest.
They burst into laughter.
Tell me, don't they lash with chavukku? ${ }^{4}$
What chavukku?
Pointing out the chavukku which was hired for two
Hundred and fifty rupees from Chennai...this...this is chavukku.
Please sing...
In the nearby valavu they have a radio; if you

9 Casuarina
turn the knob the song will come immediately.

She was told that when the forest officials enquire they say they never go to the forest and they work at the coffee estate. To her they said that they go to the forest to collect gum because of low wages paid by the estate owners.

They gave her a formal statement with great reluctance that sometimes they go to work for the estate owners even at low wages for their hand to mouth existence.

They were accustomed to the kicks in the abdomen like the punches of the stunt master.

Wearing a torn T-Shirt with Rajini's picture printed on it, goggles with rubber bands, half a stomach full of food, a whole day's work...

Civilization had come to the Kadaisi Kaadu...itriyo...trio, itriyo...itri.

# POOVUM IRAVUM 

## Imayam

"One rupee! One rupee!"
"Chara Malli" ${ }^{1}$
"Five Hundred Malli. One rupee!"
"Malli"
"Malli"
-Arumbe" ${ }^{\text {² }}$

Kesavan shouted in a singsong voice. There were at least ten more flower sellers besides him shouting out the selfsame flowersellers' chant. Each was keen to have the passersby buying his flowers. The place was filled with great noise and bustle. Kesavan passed the time shouting louder than the others and rearranging the strings of flowers hanging over the edge of his basket. He had only just begun with the day's business and so called to the rushing crowd with vigour. He shouted loudly to distract them from other things, yelling poove ${ }^{j}$ all the time. It must have been around four in the evening and the rush started only after five.
"Come"

1 Jasmine blossoms strung together on a thread
2 Bud
3 Flower
"Amma, come here!"
"How many mulam. ${ }^{-1}$
"Arumbe!"
-..."
And then it started drizzling. It was not much but how could it suddenly start raining today? Both confusion and anxiety crept up Kesavan's soul. "Oh my god!" he thought, "what if it was to rain continuously?" Oh! No! He repented quickly, "sometimes even a casual utterance could come true". He had bought an extra number of flowers today. After all, it was Friday and more flowers would be sold. When the agent had called him by his name, he promised quickly, "No Annachi. No more credit after today, I promise on my one and only child". Since the day's business had started, so far, only two rolls had been sold. What could one do about that. Will the rain ever stop? It would, he reasoned. It wasn't the rainy season now.

The raindrops began to fall more quickly though they were not really heavy yet. Women ran covering their heads with the free ends of their sarees, and cursing..."Why the hell should it rain now?" Cars, motor bikes, cycles and pedestrians - all added to the deafening din. Who could spare time to buy flowers! Kesavan's head was almost wet. Cold crept up his legs. Should he take shelter in the shops opposite. "Nowadays it rains only in the town", he mumbled. He looked up at the sky and then feeling

[^15]annoyed gazed at the road to see if anyone at all was feeling unruffled. Everyone was running. Would anyone turn towards his flower shop. Weary, he leaned on the lamp post a little distance away. The lamp post was cold. He looked at his flowers. With the little raindrops glistening on them, didn't they look splendid. How did they look so fresh as never before! Lord! They invited one to look at least.
'It would be enough if at least he could recover cost price'. Kesavan looked at the basket and again at the road. The rain was turning heavy now. Not a soul remained. All possible shelters were packed tightly so that you could not stir a hand nor foot to accommodate anyone else. Only vehicles kept moving. "Who had prayed for rain, chaniyan. ${ }^{5}$ Where on earth did it come from pouring so heavily?" Like the others, he also tied two lotus leaves together on his head. So that they wouldn't come loose, he tied them with the string he used to make garlands. Like a child, then, he put out his hand to hold the drops. Will it stay on the palm! He turned his face up a little and like fine, powdered ice, the rain flew quickly to cover and cling to it... One drop on the nose, on the cheek, on his forehead, on the moustache, on the lips, the eyes... over his whole body... drop. drop. drop...

5 A term of abuse used when something or someone is considered troublesome or unwelcome.

Where could one go? Where to hide? Who would give place? All the shopfronts in the opposite row were choking with people. What a crowd! Still more people huddled under the shelter of the bus stand. He stood near a long boundary wall. What could one do? The rain on his cheeks was not salty. He sucked it...tasted it... licked his moustache with his tongue. His legs were aching. He constantly shifted from one foot to the other and clung to the lamp post. Like the others, he prayed to the sky, "Aye! Pillaiyaarappa, ${ }^{6}$ I will break a coconut next Friday."
"Why did I buy more flowers today?"
"Lakshmi had asked for rice or something."
"How could it be like this."
"The rain has to stop!"
"... ... ..."

The drizzle slowed down and people flowed back onto the road the very next moment. The flower sellers swung into action again each competing to yell louder than the other. With each passing minute their chatter became louder. Some shoved themselves in the way of the passersby, others followed them running...
"One rupee!"
"Mullai."
-Five hundred Malli."
"Malli."

6 Lord Ganesha

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    "Arumbe."
    "Malli."
    "Malli."
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People had to drag their feet awkwardly while walking like so many lame persons togethér. So much water in this rain! Men, women, cars, scooters, children were all a great whirl of motion. They resembled giant, dark shadows when seen from a distance. Kesavan held out his flowers for the women walking at the edge of the road to see, shouting...
"Malli."
"... ..."
"Aiyo! What must have happened at home?" thought Kesavan as he realized the full intensity of the cold. He had been so worried about business that all thoughts of his home had escaped from his mind. All the houses in his lane stood huddled together like so many little nests. Five ten people could not move about freely in the houses. One had to bend from the waist to enter. There were places in the ceiling which leaked mercilessly. Nothing could help to stop leaking. All four streets in the area were the same. Kamala, the sweet thing, was the one to put plates, tumblers. chembu, idly vessel, anything that would hold water, under the leaking spots. And it was she who emptied them out once they were full. She had a lot of fun doing that...found it a jolly good game. Well, during this rainy season she could play a lot. But Lakshmi always had something to scold her for, "Look, how many times, Lakshmi, do I have to tell you! Have you
ever remembered, even on a single day, to put that gunny sack outside the door without my coming and shouting at you! Are you a woman, after all. or are you not!" And if the landlady should complain about the drain near the door, or dirt, or the wet wall, anything, she was only too ready to pounce on him. She never, of course, grumbled or muttered to herself. It was always direct...strident and direct, "Even a dog or a ghost could not have borne the suffering that I have to! Two whole years, do you hear, since you got me even a new dress! Two years! Having babies is all that I am good for, I suppose!" He had really loved her at the time of their marriage. She had been good looking too and kind. But things had gone all wrong. How his world had turned upside down! Dear Lord! How she screams!

Suddenly the rain came pelting down. Some of the vendors abandoned their baskets and ran for shelter. "Should I go too", Kesavan wondered and then was annoyed with himself. He surveyed the row of shops on the opposite side of the road, overflowing with people. "Where can one go". he chided himself, "where can one take shelter."
"Adeiappa."
"... ... ..."
Kesavan had been selling flowers at this crossroads for the past four years only. The very second year of his marriage his mother Valli kicked him out asking him to take his stuff and leave. She also chided him "Why are you afraid of your wife?" Ever since he was five he had been selling
flowers at the bus stand. In these four years, at the Teppakulam bus stand junction, he had sold flowers from 3.00 in the afternoon till 8.00 at night everyday. It was the centre place of Tiruchchirapally. He had seen many people there. All the important things were located there. It was the place where many people come and go.

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"Adada! \({ }^{7}\) Four years!"
"I had been thinking of something else."
"Ucchimalai Pillaivar."
"What would happen..."
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"... ..."

Since Lakshmi quarrelled with him, he rolled bidis for two months. It was what everyone in those four Uraiyur pangali streets did. Kamala too, his baby, like other children, rolled bidis. He couldn't do it. But Lakshmi had wanted him to stop selling flowers so that she could hurt his mother Valli. She treated him like an enemy. It wasn't easy to string garlands. Could go to dig the ground. Now not only she, she doesn't allow even Kamala now to sell flowers. He doesn't ask either. Would she become the old Lakshmi if the flowers sold well and he made money? Of course, festivals, other auspicious occasions or a tour bus gave the business a little boost every now and then, but then such occasions could hardly come often enough to make the business really good.

[^16]It was not even a very respectable occupation. People laughed at him. What's more, even a short illness would eat up a week's savings. Everyone would be in a hurry only that one minute when they buy flowers. Everyone knew this. The stray cows never bend for anything but to be pregnant.
"Give it quickly,"
"Measure the mulam properly."
"Even women would measure more."
"Have your hands been struck with leprosy or something."
"You haven't got any change. I'll take it while coming back."
"Why have your flowers wilted."
"Is there no..."
"I don't like this".
"Come! give it quickly!"
"... ..."
Who knows about malligai, kanakambaram, rose, kudamalli and kadambam? Was there anyone at all who had not plaited flowers in their hair, hung it on the right breast and left and enquired, "Isn't it looking good!". How many ways, after all, are there of wearing flowers. And was there any one who had not removed the flowers carefully and worn them again the next day. But what was the use.
"She who gets the stone and she who cooks gets the empty vessel."
"It's the story of the man going to bath in dirty scum laden water."
$\qquad$
"Adadda", Kesavan feit the cold again. His feet refused to touch the wet earth and a cold chill crawled all over his body. "Should I go", he wondered looking around. But vendors were still cajoling the customers and he joined in the shouting as life surged back into his limbs.

## "Mullai"

"Five Hundred Malli"
"Malli"
"... ..."
The street lights came on. Vehicles were rushing on the road at high speed with their headlights on. The sky looked colourless. Thunder threatened. Once in a while a burst of lightening streaked through the sky. The rain fell softly in little dew drops. These were the few people moving about. There were such few women! You could hardly expect the men to buy flowers with that care and concern which women showed. He had never had such a bad day before. Oh! Why did the rain and the gloomy night torture like this? He felt so unhappy with everything... everything... Lakshmi... his agent... the pedestrians, even Tiruchy. What's there in the whole world to feel happy about. The agent would shout at him. Almost his whole basket was still with him. What would Lakshmi say! Oh! To be yelled at twice! He filled his lungs to the full and shouted.

The woman in a jari sari came out of the sweetshop on the opposite side. She walked down the road without even bothering to save her sari from the water in the street. Her appearance soothed Kesavan. She would certainly buy flowers for at least five rupees. Where did she stand till now. She was his only regular customer appearing at seven sharp every evening. She had been buying flowers from him for a whole year now. After the very first week he had stopped trying to lure or cajole her. She was a regular. She hardly spoke. Upon coming she smiled and again while leaving she smiled as if to say "goodbye". She was the only woman who never bargained with him.
"But why is she going that way." She will come. He looked forward to seeing her. No. Even her pace was different. She was not coming back. 'She just keep going.' The woman in jari sari crossed the Maaris theatre and disappeared. She used to go up to the railway station only. She walked at a pace suited to someone older than she looked. Her smile and her luring eyes would easily make one to like her. In the light of the street lamp, her turmeric-rubbed face would shine. Everyday he resolved to talk to her but when she came his speech left him leaving his mind a little hazy. She did not talk either. Night after night, she came dressed in yellow, green...each and every colour suited her. She looked good in all of them. The powder would show. A little too much kajal in her eyes. But why did she leave today without buying any flowers. Even she was gone?
'Which man will come in this rain? Today is a bad day for her too.'
-Will it be enough to get food today?'
'Definitely she will not die today, even if she could have died yesterday. Or even if she dies tomorrow but, definitely not today.
"what heavy rain."
"......"
People pressed close to each other, crawled on the road slowly. Putting out all thoughts of the woman in the jari sari, ignoring the chilly cold, he took the strings of flowers out of his basket and started shouting again. Rain had stopped. Business could now pick up. Other flowersellers were calling out to the people noisily. They were all desperate to give away their flowers at any cost to anyone who would buy them. What a racket!
"Come"
"Arumbe"
"... ..."
Only a few minutes had passed. With noisy thuds, large hailstones began raining out of the colourless sky. It was not going to stop now. A few flowersellers packed their baskets and ran for the buses. Less and less people could be seen. If only the rain would stop! He could surely sell something. But the rain continued furiously and thunder and lightening clapped and danced to its awful rhythm. Everything had gone wrong. The agent's very first word had been 'No!' The wretched man had said,
"Kesava, why are you guys in this business, if I keep giving credit like this. pretty soon I'll be out in the street begging for my life.. Let's just make this the very last time, what do you say!?
"Everything is gone...finished...even time has passed."

## "Uc̣chimalai Pillaịare."

Suddenly from the gate of the Morris theatre eight to ten huge lights rushed at him all at once. He was at a loss and then suddenly turned to the big boundary wall.
"Splash"
Kesavan felt as if his very heart would stop beating. He even looked different, bathed head to toe in the slushy water from the road, which ran its dirty fingers down him. "Bastard." The flower basket looked black like cow dung. The malli had lost all colour. He wiped each and every string of flowers with the rag with which he used to cover his flowers...blew on them...shook the water out. "Bastards! Soiled all my flowers!" He lifted them up to the light and smelled...petrol, diesel, kerosene...- Pillayarappa" Kesavan sat and gazed at his flowers for a long time. The rain kept on. Would it ever stop? All others had left. There was hardly anyone to be seen. Once in a great while someone rushed by. Then, he picked up a string and held it to his nose and smelled it. He felt it. "Why should I alone stand here in the cold?" With one swift movement. he tipped the flowers over in the dark, dirty water. He tapped the basket to make sure it was empty. Then
he spat on it. Flowers flowed with the dirty current in rolls, balls and singly. Again he thumped the basket on the ground and turned to look at the sky. 'Tuk' and the very next second the Holy Cross College road, Uraiyur main road, the path leading to Ucchipillayar Temple. Road and all the others turned dark. As he lifted the basket off the pavement, Kesavan remembered how his agent and Lakshmi would shout. "Aiyyaio", he cried out loud and throwing the basket on the ground he chased after the floating rolls and balls of flowers. Like a man fishing, with his two hands he began hunting in the running water in the dark.
"Oh God!"
$\qquad$

## UNMAI ARIDHAL

Was it raining outside? Or does it seem so because it seems as if a heavy downpour has just ended inside. We were gazing at different corners, as it was difficult to speak facing one another. It looked as though it had been performed right in front of us just now. It tormented us that we had no strength to stop that, that we were reduced to mere spectators. No one dared to utter 'stop this' nor stretched the arms to stop the going on. Leaning, sitting upright and sometimes we even lying down listened to it. We did know to a certain extent what had taken place. It was not clear whether we were motivated by the urge to know how it had happened. We listened to that cry entirely. We listened to those voices filled with fear, anger and abuse. Those voices continued to spread like molten tar, in which I was beginning to drown.

The engulfing cigarette smoke hovering over like a blanket lessened the light making a delusionary atmosphere. I piled all the papers one on top of another in order. "See, if they are in order", I said. My aimless words floated freely in the air. After a small reverberation the silence in the room grew like hardened rock.

Thinking of playing some other song, I searched and found Bob Marley`s 'Legend`. After forwarding and adjusting to -get up...stand up". I increased the volume. Sounds of unknown drums rose breaking the
hardened silence that had settled like shells on every one. Kalyani placed the ashtray on the flying papers. Bob Marley's song also seemed romantic. Marley kept singing "Don't give up your fight" again and again.

We had also said something like this to those women the other day. 'Shouldn't give up we will try our best'. In fact, I was filled with fear then. Surrounded with burnt things, only the blackened walls stood. A tamarind tree with green leaves on the top and burnt leaves below was swaying aimlessly. A Pungent smell spread in the wind, which blew up ashes now and then. A police van stood on the other side of the road on the bund of the pond. Four to five policemen sitting in a circle were playing cards.

## Chandra (Age 27)

Chandra's house was the first house in the street. Her in-law's house was located seven to eight houses further from her house on the other side. Her mother's house was located ten to fifteen kilometres from there.
-When the problem started there in Anguchettipalayam itself, my husband said that like last time they might set houses on fire here also. So we should go to my mother's house. Only I, the wretched that I am, did not listen. If I had known it earlier that it would happen like this" - her lamenting continued...
"Some wretched people advised us to hide in the school building, no one would know, they said. My husband told me to lock him in the school along with our three daughters...leaving me outside... he should have consumed me also, that sightless god..."

Chandra's suspicion was that someone must have betrayed them. The roaming big mob stopped right in front of the school and called Chandra's husband by name to come out. The mob sprayed the petrol they brought along with them, on the school and arsoned it. Chandra's husband and her daughters were burnt alive.
"It was his chittappa who asked him to hide there; he must have told them also. They shouted come out, come out. Wretched man, if he had replied even once, the children might have survived..."

When they went and checked after the violence, Chandra's husband's charred body was found lying near the door. The children's bodies were found burnt inside the almirah on the right side, where they had hidden, holding tight to each other.

Saying "Some more tea?" Kannan poured some tea and gave it. The heat not sensed by the hands. makes the tongue beat a hasty retreat. As the reverberating voices inside the head dip into the spinal cord as agony, the body jerks. Abhi lights the next cigarette. As the glow of the fire between ash and cigarette comes and goes, it only rekindles the incidents. There is
a burning sensation at the fingertips. Nails bitten to the fingertips with blood ready to be drawn.

Ants were moving towards the fresh leftovers of the eatables. I took a matchstick and lit it. After spreading the smell of zinc the stick burnt out but the breeze shaken the smoke around it. Again, the smell of ash fills the nose.

Meenatchi (Age 21)
"He came from Madras only that morning. When he was standing in the bus stop to go to taluk office to get a certificate, those sons of bitches chopped him into pieces...When I saw the mob coming, I ran inside the Mariamman temple on the opposite side. Before he realise, they surrounded him shouting don't spare him, don't spare him." As I saw through the keyhole he fell at their feet with folded hands. Those wretched people repeatedly stabbed him in turns.

One man had cut his throat with a knife-like a goat. They severed the head and stuck it on the trishool, which was planted in front of the Mariamman temple. When we went, the police had removed the head but we could see the dried blood over the trishool. The deceased person's name was Ramesh. He was working in a private courier service in Madras. He had come to his place on receiving a letter from his parents about the

Dandora ${ }^{1}$ notice about the distribution of electoral identity cards and how it was compulsory for everyone to get their electoral identity cards. Meenatchi was his muraipen. ${ }^{\text { }}$ It was said that since he vowed that he would marry only after getting a government job, Meenatchi had been waiting for him.

## Anjalai (Age 42)

Anjalai's husband Shanmugam (age 45) had gone to the sandhai' at Puduchattiram. Since he had come by the train, he was not aware of the violence, which had taken place in the village. While he was returning he saw the smoke billowing and he ran towards the village. The policemen who had arrived just then shot at him and he was killed by the bullet. The police claimed that they shot at him on "suspicion that he was a rioter." Anjalai said that he was shot intentionally even the Panchayat president of Anguchetipalayam was said to have come along with the police and identified him. And the police refused to answer how a person running towards the village after the violence was over could be identified as a rioter.

1 Tom-tom
2 A girl on whom a boy has a customary claim to marry.
3 Fair or bazaar.

I shook the flask to check whether there was any tea left. It was empty. What we witnessed in the streets was still afresh in the mind. The wind whirling as if it was the rage of the spirits of the dead; Women mourning sitting and standing before the burnt and charred houses. Who were they moaning with? With the spirits of the dead...

- Are we sending this reports to the Human Rights Commission? ${ }^{\text { }}$
"Let us send it and see."
-Whether the Commission considers or not we will bring it out in the media and create pressure on the government through which if we could a little relief, it would give them moral strength."

Kalyani who was turning the pages asked "We have not mentioned what recommendation we are giving, without it we cannot conclude it...If we only record and report it, will it do?"
"I don't think that we can come to a conclusion...How can we give them any kind of justice, speaking which truth?" -- with fatigue, I leaned back. As we waited hoping for a bus to come, the words of Chandra from the other side of the road still reverberates.

- Ayya Maharajas put everything in the Newspaper, get medals and wear them also, get me one bottle of poison samiyala... I am standing here having lost everything... Ayya Maharajas...


## THAZHUMBU

Veluchamy turned back when he heard somebody calling him and clapping their hands to attract his attention. In the dim, yellow light of the street lamp, he could vaguely make out a couple of figures waving and coming towards him, obviously in a hurry. Standing under the light of the cornershop he strained to recognize them but managed to do so only when they came close to him. They were Urulaikudi Solaiappam and Innasi. As they came near, he carefully put down his bag containing the chisel, wedge and hammer and lifted his head to look at them.
*What is this. Annae! Though we kept calling you. you just carried on as if you did not hear...without stopping to look back even once."
"Not like earlier. Well. Once people are in demand. I supposé, everyone tend to be like that."
"Demand!...what kind of a big demand have you seen! Anyway, tell me whatever you stopped me for."

All the three stepped closer to the shop front and lit bidis. The straight-sitting kadapparai' glittered in the light thrown by passing vehicles.

[^17]-We stopped you for nothing in particular. Just wanted to tell you that the date for Pongal has been fixed in our village, so we thought we should just let you know."
-Well! If the date has been fixed you get ready to pray well and eat well...lots of mutton. I suppose... what else..."
"O! Come. Do you have to teach us to eat well, mayiru."
"Then what do you want from me?"
"We need two cans of the stuff."
"If you need the stuff, I suggest you go to the dhobi colony and ask Sevanan for two cans, or even four cans, of donkey's piss."
${ }^{-}$O! Anne. Come, take this money. If you want us to supply you the cans, we will do that too. Or if you have them we will just come and pick up the stuff."
"Who the hell has left this sack here in the middle of the road! Holding a conference, guys! Can't you see the lorry coming!"

Veluchamy got the sack with his wedge, chisel and hammer out of the way and close to him while the cleaner kept up his scolding chant.
"What do you say? Come, Anne, don't keep mum."
*Are you crazy?...It is five months since I last brewed ooral' - I now quarry stones and carry sand for a living. You fellows go around with your tongue hanging out all over the place. It is for the likes of you only that there are shops at every corner. Why don't you go there...go and drink there:"

> "It doesn't matter what we try. Nothing compares with your stuff, Anne."
-Yes! All men come and say the same thing to me. But I have decided...I'm not touching the stuff and so get out now...shoo off?"
"Anne! Will you swear on my head that you don't brew anymore."
"I swear! Even I will jump across my dhoti right here for you! It's almost five months since I have stopped brewing."
"No, don't. We will take your word for it. But what do you do for a drink then? ${ }^{-\quad}$
-Why! Will you be punished for not drinking! Is there a law against it? Or will someone force it down your throat through a

2 Predistilled arrack.
funnel if you refuse? Why do you guys go around watering at the mouth like dogs? ${ }^{\text { }}$

Veluchamy bent down, picked up his sack and balanced it on his head. One of the men held his kadapparai by force, -O.K.! Tell us what you need to brew the stuff and we will leave. Just come one day before Pongal and brew it for us. You can name your price. We will pay."
-No! Even if you were to give me mountains of money...or the sun itself was to rise in the West... I'll not light the fire for brewing again. I swear by Maari thavee ${ }^{3}$ and I won't".

Drawing away the kadapparai with a jerk he walked swiftly away. The men looked at his receding back and then withdrew. A truck, loaded mercilessly, passed with a great noise and belching of dark smoke.

In that whole area. Pandavarmangalam Veluchamy's stuff was famous. Specially during festivals like Pongal the crowd would flood him with requests and people would wait for hours for their turn.
"This is the only stuff worth drinking. Even the burp after it tastes sweet, smelling of banana, dates and babul bark. Just a little is enough to give you that light feeling of floating on air lying on a soft cotton mattress. And these other fellows! Nowadays they mix batteries, datura leaves, urea

3 Goddess of rain.
and even tranquilizers sweetening the bloody brew with sugar syrup before serving. The moment you drinks it, you feel thirsty, your eyeballs roll up and you are liable to stumble and fall even in the middle of the road. Probably wouldn't even know whether you were shitting or making water right there."
"Last year on Pongal, for a wager, he filled his stuff inside a rubber tube like the intestine of a hen and dropped it from a man's height. And all night it jumped around like a rubber ball without spilling out. That's what his stuff is like."

When Veluchamy reached the workshop of blacksmith Arumugam, the latter was busy bellowing with one hand and heating his chisel in the furious fire with the other. In the dark of the workshop, the lighted beedi between his lips glowed like a blood spot. He strained to make out Veluchamy.
"Who?...Is it Veluchamy?...Where have you been?...It's good that you have come or I would have put away the bellows with this."
"Don't ask...I was caught by two useless fellows on my way and had to wrestle to free myself for getting here."
"What did they want?"
-Thinking of old times, they just pranced around me like thirsty dogs wanting the stuff."
-You should have brought them with you...we would have treated their mouth with the hot iron rod."
-I suppose, from now onwards we will have to do that only if we are to do our work in peace. ${ }^{-}$
"Even when you shun trouble, trouble wont' shun you", Arumugam quoted, "That's your condition right now."
*Yes, Saamy. Day atter day, I have this same problem. At least four guys each day!...O.K.! Strike this quickly...Only if I leave early can I catch the bullock carts. Once they leave, it'll be difficult to catch them again to get money. Just strike the edges well, will you? For the past two days, the rocks have been really hard."

Veluchamy took the shorter route, crossed the southern market and on reaching the market found the bullock cart drivers, unskilled labourers, masons and contractors bustling all over the place. He calculated.
-Pitchaiah Thevar's cart...four loads of stone blocks and two loads of medium size gravel. For Shenbaga Vellar, three loads of gravel. two loads of stone blocks and one load of sandy gravel. $4 \times 3$ is $12: 5 \times 12$ is 60 and $60+8$ is 68 ."
"Hey! Velu. Tomorrow also the mason needs four loads of stone blocks. He had to leave so he asked me to tell you. Go early. Be careful not to be late. We don' mind even if it is a bit big. But we can't wait around. If you get late, we will take it from Muthuvel and then you shouldn't feel bad."
-You just bring the cart, dear man, and you'll find the stone waiting. There's no need to be in such haste."

He tramped his way back to the blacksmith's shop still counting the money in his hand. On his way, he bought something to eat for his wife and son.
"O! Veluchamy! Back in a flash you are!"
"What did I have to hold me. By God's grace, all the cart drivers were there together so I just took the money and returned by the shortest route."

Blacksmith Arumugam was sharpening the edge of his red-hot chisel. Striking it to get it back to its normal shape, he shoved it in a tub of water and it smoked with a "ssh". When he put the chisel in the bellows when blacksmith Govindan entered and began to fan it.
"Come, Saamy. You were nowhere to be seen..."
-Who! Veluchamy? Come...It was you who had disappeared...How is the stone business? Hope you are keeping well. ${ }^{-}$
"Yes, everything is tine. Thank you, kindly."
-We must be the only ones melting ourselves in this heat. Every Tom, Dick and Harry is minting money in some way or the other. You should not care about the idle gossips and just go back to your old work and earn well. I can really not understand why do you choose to ruin yourself like this."
"Don't you start too! All the others are saying the same thing already. I don't mind if I get only half-a-meal of rice per day but I am proud of myself."
"Who can afford such fine morals these days."
"Mama, Fan slowly. The charcoal dust is flying in my face."
"It's not that, Saamy. People think that if you brew liquor you can be asked to do anything."
"See. Velu, are all five fingers alike? Wherever a few men gather they will each have something different to say. Why do you bother about that. Let them talk. Words can hardly hurt you. Let it go in through one ear and out the other."
"Saamy, you have no idea of my problem."
"What problem, Velu? We know, of course, that if you feel bad about something you can't do that. But which other business can get you an income like that. Look at Pithu Kaat Raakan wearing rings on all five fingers. His wife goes around covered with jewels...living like a king."
-Saamy, he and his wife are fit for what they do. We cannot be shameless like that."

Veluchamy walked slowly under the load on his head and his mind went back to what had happened the other day.

He had been sitting on his cot in the courtyard in front of his house. His son was asleep on a mat nearby. A few women were working under the street lamps sticking labels on matchboxes. Veluchamy's wife Chinna Maadathi was carrying water from the street tap. That's when two cycles stopped in front of his house. Veluchamy got up and made way for both. The two riders were local policemen who visited him often. Both were adept at drinking to their eyeballs. They asked him for cigarette packs and money, which disappeared in their pockets.
"Hey! Veluchamy, there is a new head constable who will be coming soon."
"That's fine. Let him come."
"He'll need stuff."

4 Fissures (of the sole and toes).
-Well, I have stuff. He can drink to his heart's content."
"Not that stuff. He doesn't drink."
"Then what!"
"He needs woman stuff."
"... ..."
-Why have you gone quiet. Better be quick because he'll be coming soon."
"You know me well. don't you."
"Yeah! Fine. We know you very well."
"Then, what!"
"Nothing we can do. We can hardly say 'no' if the head constable asks us."
$-\ldots$...
"Listen, Veluchamy, he is new to the place. You're gonna need his favour or you can't carry on your business. It's just for one day, anyway. You can send your wife today and if he asks again we'll arrange something else."

Veluchamy broke out in a torrent of abuse which had them scurrying in no time. Chinna Madathi joined her husband in hurling indignities upon them.
-Every month without fail they get their bribes. Whenever they come they get free liquor, cigarettes and beedis! Mutton and eggs must be served
to our Lords! On top of all this, we must pay fines in courts every two months to keep their records looking good. Now! They need concubines too! You wouldn't have dared ask even if you had had any sisters at home."

Both the husband and wife did not sleep all night. With their son sleeping between them, they discussed things in and out. Early the next morning, Chinna Madaathi poured the liquor down the drains. She cleaned the earthen pots and put them away. Both of them walked to the quarry carrying kadapparai, shovels and baskets. Then they bought wedges, chisels and hammers.

The sun moved up in the sky. On the first day, his sharp chisel and hammer sent the rock chips flying again and again. Chinna Madaathi separated the sand from the gravel. His son used a small iron rod to dust the sand off the stone blocks. Bullock carts moved in and out of the large pits.

His body glistened with sweat as if with castor oil and Veluchamy wheezed as he brought the hammer down with heavy strokes. Suddenly, he looked up on hearing a loud noise. Thinking it was yet another lorry, he actually saw a police van come to a halt directly in a line above his head. For the first time, Veluchamy trembled on seeing the police. Four or five policemen came running down.
"Hey! You! Get inside the van."
"Why should I get inside the van."
"O! so we have to tell you why... or you won't get in...?"

- You, rascal! You liquor-brewing dog talking back at us. Get inside quietly."

He was held down by two cops while the other two tied his hands and beating him they threw him inside the van. Chinna Madaathi, throwing the sand in the air, screamed at them. The head constable threatened from inside.
"You dirty whore! Keep your mouth shut or I'll tear your..."

Chinna Madaathi kept her head safely low as her son passed her the earthen pots one by one. After she had all of them, she passed the wedge, the kadaparai, chisel and the sledge-hammer to him and he placed them where the pots had been sitting till then. When he came close she cleared the cobwebs from his head.
"Come, take the list. Keep it safely in your pocket. On your way, visit Krishna mama and brief him. Hire a pushcart and take mama along with you. Go straight to Thirukkoti Nadar’ shop and give him the list. Get everything and be careful while coming back. Also, on your way back. without fail, order for two anther ${ }^{5}$ good firewood. Mention your father's name and he'll understand. Tomorrow morning you go with Krishna mama and bring babul bark. We must mix the ingredients for arrack tonight itself.

5 Measure of weight (approximately 25 kg .)

Ask him to give good jaggery. Mind that you smell it before taking it. Put the bananas at the top or they'll be crushed."

Veluchamy's son tramped out after taking the list from his mother. Chinna Madaathi bent down to clean the big earthen pots. She tucked the free end of her saree in her waistband to avoid the dirt coating the pot.

## EPILOGUE

## EPILOGUE

Dalit literature is the literature of the oppressed. Untouchability has been abolished by Article 17 of the Indian Constitution but its practice has never stopped. The practice of untouchability is manifested in many forms and it has been practiced. Mostly in the rural areas of the country. The protest of the Dalits to reject the past and the religious system particularly has taken many forms. Dalit literature is also one of the ways of protest chosen by the Dalit intellectuals to fight against the practice of untouchability.
-Dalit literature or protest literature has been an effective way for dalit writers to express their dalit consciousness and show their inner feelings. Over the years, writings about the Dalits by others, especially of course their opponents have generally portrayed them as objects".' For centuries Dalits have been portrayed as criminal, uncouth sinners, and so on. But in the Dalit literature, the agents and actors are Dalits. The perspective of these intellectuals about the society is from below. These writers-interpret the reality as portrayed by the mainstream writers as fake. Dalit literature, which is born out of a social movement, strives to create a society which is based on equality.

1 Massey, James, Downtrodden, Geneva: WCC Publications. 1997. p. 43 .

Though Dalit literature emerged as a new school of thought in Marathi in the early sixties. Tamil Nadu has waited for more than 20 years for it to emerge as a new school of thought in Tamil.

There are thousands of languages being spoken in the world. It is impossible for everyone to know all languages. Translation becomes indispensable when need arises to know a language other than one's mother tongue. Through translation one shares one's culture, habits etc., with an unknown culture. Translation helps to spread and expand the paradigm of one's own culture.

In the present work six short stories of six Tamil Dalit written have been translated into English. The problems of Dalits in Tamil Nadu is not just their problem alone. It is the same problem of the Dalits elsewhere in the country. Untouchability is a pan-Indian problem. To share the problem and to expose the atrocities against Dalit by the non-Dalits one needs a language which could be understand by most of the people. Comparing to other languages (regional) particularly in Indian, English acts as lingua franca and it would serve the purpose of the writers as well as the translators. Further English is the language of empowerment and globalization and is thus the most suitable medium for Dalit writings.

No translation can be perfect, final or the best. The translation of Six short stories into English from Tamil in this dissertation. according to me are readable though this translation would be mostly appropriate for Indian
readers because they share the commonality of culture with the source language of this original work. During translation, the translator has faced many difficulties to preserve the cultural nuances of the original. This translation maintains the spirit of the Dalit consciousness without glossing over by the target language culture. This translation is an expression of my interest in propagating Dalit consciousness and I hope this work will interest others also into undertaking such ventures.

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## APPENDIX



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 எங்刀




















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 ஏதோ アரு வணையில்．．．

இெவு மிச்சாாய் இருக்கும்போதெ இாம்பகிட்டாள்．



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ரஜி円ி படம் போட்ட பळியஞூட் ரப்பர் பேண்டும் \＆रலி ங் ஆிாாチiம அறை வவத்துச் சோறும் முயுநே』


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 வார்மிக் கூ



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 タतीத்சலாய் Qெரிந்தது．அவ்் டுக்கு 9 CDL யी
 பார்த்தாக்．இட்டத்த்் வந்தவடன்



 ஆப்ப．சத்தய்் பொட்டலத்த சாக்குப் றை அழிநத ヘிடாமல் தரை






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 யவத்துக் வொாக்டா்்．
























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 2．வ்றுப் பார்த்தா．




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 ழுடியவு．．ம்．．கல்லொடப்ப எப்பிடி 历டக்கு？ஏல்ல












 फொக்து









 இப்ப வரூவார்டாா．＂
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 இப்ப வウ்றிலுவாரு．＂
＂бब்கை
＂த宀்லாா் Qெரிழ்்．＂
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 Gசர்த்தார்கள்．







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 பயமாய் Gேட் இமゥர்்லด்்
 ๑カிப்（Bப் பார்ததா்்．இட் இற்கு 6ம்் இவங் தமிம்்கு Cんoura Guraín Cais வந்து
 （L）








＂ராஸ்க்ஷல்．タต்カச்சாராயம்


## ID 





 சொब்धाார்：
＂ ஓட்．．．．．．்் இழிக்கவா？＂












 बாை











ลெவ่ச்ா
 10ாட






[^0]:    6 Zelliot. Eleanor, From Untouchable to Dalit. New Delhi: Manohar. 1996, p. 269.

[^1]:    10 Gowthaman, Raj. -Oli Vattangal Thevai illai". India Today, Annual Literary Issue, Chennai, 1995.

    11 Gowthaman, Raj, -Contemporary Dalit Literature in Tamil: A Comment". Indian Literature. New Delhi: Sahitya Academy. MayJune 1994.

[^2]:    15 Balasubramanian. Sirpi. "Navina Tamil Ilakiyam" in R. Nanjappan. ed. . Navina Tamil Illakivam, Sila Paarvaigal. Coimbatore: Vaikarai. 1997.

[^3]:    6 Madan. T.N.. and Majumdar, D.N.. An Introduction to Social Anthropology, Delhi: Mayoor Paper Backs. 1985, p. 85.

[^4]:    9 Kalaiselvi, Margaret. -The Psychology of Dalit women in Anbukarasi and Mohan Laaarbir". ed., Dalit Feminism. Dalit Resource Centre, Madurai, 1997, p. 66.

[^5]:    10 Ngugi, Wa Thiongo, Decolorizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature, London, James Currey/Heinemann, 1986. p. 13.

[^6]:    *As discussed in the Introduction, Tamil has different markers to indicate degrees of respect. An attempt has been made in this translation to preserve this linguistic trait. The upper case in the second and third person pronoun indicates deference and the lower case the lack of this marker in the Tamil story.

[^7]:    5 Ex-untouchable castes in Tamil Nadu.

[^8]:    "Let the panchayat be. Tell me what you have done."

[^9]:    6 Father's younger brother; husband of mother's younger sister may also refer to an upper caste person who is younger than the head of the family.

[^10]:    10 Younger brother. Also informal form of addressing someone younger to oneself.

    11 Vice-headman of the Village.

[^11]:    1 The street where the Pallars, an ex-untouchable caste people live and it may also refer the street located in the lowland.

    2 Ex-untouchable caste whose traditional occupation is cleaning the latrines and garbages (scavengers).

[^12]:    1 A kind of strong relish prepared by adding paste of chilli to coconut, ginger, curry leaf or to similar things.

[^13]:    2 A tribe.

    3 The person who take exorbitant rate of interest.

[^14]:    5 A cluster of houses inside a compound with one entry, usually cut off from the society.

    6 Wide mouthed winnowing pan.
    $7 \quad$ A measure
    8 A long round ended heavy wooden pestle.

[^15]:    4 The length from the elbow to the top of the middle finger

[^16]:    7 An interjection used to express one's surprise, regret etc.

[^17]:    1 A long iron bar (used for digging pits, raising heavy objects, etc.)

