An Unending Ascent

Poems by Kulothunganan
AN UNENDING ASCENT

Kulothungan
[V.C. Kulandaiswamy]

Translated From Tamil by
V.Murugan

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

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

Kulothungan
Foreword

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

The second factor is that intimate combination of scientific and humanist impulses. While they are never mutually exclusive, each tends to have a distinctive frame of reference, and ways of seeing. The scientist in the poet seeks a progression logical, structured; the poet in the scientist ensures that the progression blossoms as calculus. They work
together in the moment of perception; they share. It is this conjunction and amalgamation of two impulses that gives Kulothungan’s work its special quality, which in turn accounts for the distinctive contribution it must make to contemporary Tamil literature. There are few scientist poets and when they are a central part of the scene, we have reason to celebrate. As Dr Murugan notes in his perceptive Preface, Kulothungan’s ‘thematic concerns take us through the ever expanding realms of scientific creativity and the inexhaustible and superior potency and richness of the human world.’

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

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

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

Kulothungan is a rationalist but one nurtured and therefore shaped by the Indian tradition, and that tradition has always stressed the spiritual; elevate spirit above form and substance. While he uses the language of religion/theology, the measure, the
calibrations of judgment return to both the goodness and the evil in man. Each is equally motivating but it is a mark of both a civilized and civil society that the former is nurtured to keep the latter in check. So we are told that the morality by which we ought to live and regulate our contact with others must come from within.

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

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

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

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

Science ought to be its handmaid. If it is not, the failure is Man's. And the challenge is central especially for the subcontinent whose contribution to the world on the one hand, has been among the most fertilising and instructive while suffering on the other, the mismanagement of both people and purpose.
Meditation is a great Indian tradition and yet for the fulfillment of its purpose there has to be appropriate action. Time past is time present and time present is time future. This progression rests on the sequence of certainties.

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

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

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

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

What provides the continuing reassurance in the face of failure and misdirection is the faith in the reasonable perfectibility of man. Failures merely strengthen the resolve to try again, better-equipped, more certain, as Kulothungan asserts with a degree of triumph:
Give us wings  
Do not say; 'There's no more room in the  
sky';  
We'll soar up the heights  
Till we find space.  

(An Appeal by the Young)

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

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

(An Appeal by the Young)

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Director, The Centre for the Arts  
National University of Singapore
PREFACE

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

He refuses to be tied down to stereotypes embedded in psychology and biography, issues and problems relating to the institutional life of the land such as Freudianism and socialist realism, collective aberrations such as linguistic purism and cultural antiquity. Kulothungan's thematic concerns take us through the ever expanding realms of scientific creativity and the
inexhaustible and superior potency and riches of the human world. His poem ‘Earth Itself is Paradise’ unlocks the infinite earthly possibilities:

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

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

(Tr. by the poet)

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

The Coleridgean “willing suspension of disbelief” as a measure of aesthetic reality Kulothungan rejects outright. For him, poetry does not please or just instruct, nor is it the Horatian credo of the coalescence of entertainment and edification. It is an emotional catalyst for action, the action of the human mind as well as the human muscle. For him, it must lead to action: “must lead to a thousand deeds”, and the value of poetic truth lies in its ability to see man reborn into an era of scientific advancement tempered by norms of humanism. His poems represent a single-minded translation of this conviction into art. So much so that, in the whole body of
his poetry running into six volumes of poems, we come across hardly one poem that provides for ‘play’, amusement, pleasurable distraction. Kulothungan does not also fall into the trap of propagandism or didacticism.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(Sacred Ash and Burnt Dust)

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

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

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

(The Inner Sanctuary)

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

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

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

(Let's Honour Diversity)

Kulothunganan holds firmly the view that a community flourishes or withers by the leadership it is able
to create. He looks with contempt at leaders who feel insecure and threatened by the rise of their own followers. Condemning them, he says:

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

(Why Expect Gratitude?)

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

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

You turn to cultivable soil, mother
Only when we plough and furrow your golden face
That spreads and covers a vast expanse;
You transform yourself
Into a fertile wetland
Only when we drench you
So much that you shiver
You keep your springs concealed
Reveal them only when we dig you up;
You hoard beyond our reach
The energy bearing coal
And ornamental gold
And make them accessible only to
Those who cut deep into your body.
(Mother, I Have a Doubt)

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

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

Again,

No misconception in the vision of our forebears
Who worshipped womanhood as Shakthi (Energy);
Theistic though the approach is
It commends itself to reason too.
Lord Shiva had the rational mind
To share one half of Himself
With Shakthi, His spouse
And derive therefrom enormous might;
Could there be a word from the bardic world
More in praise of the worth of women?

(Feminism of Lord Shiva)

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

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

(Frailty is Strength)

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

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

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

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

(Distant Relatives; Tr. by the poet)

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

It is the mind’s inner vision.

Formless but penetrating
That can be pervasive and perceiving;
The Almighty then is the mind
Which we have come to know for certain
Thro’ quests extensive and strenuous;
It conceives and contains within
The earth and the waters
The heavens and the cosmos
The celestials and the demons
And all things divine.

(The Foot and the Crown)

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

(An Unending Ascent)

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

(Divine Discontent)

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

In short, in Kulothungan's poetic realm, man occupies the exact centre of a universe which has no
meaning except for him. If Kulothungan’s man believes in God, he has no hesitation in imagining Him constituted as he himself is, or as his fellow men are formed.

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

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

DR V. MURUGAN
Kulothungan

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

Later, he moved to positions in academic administration as Vice-Chancellor, Madurai Kamaraj University (1978-79); Anna University (1981-90) and Indira Gandhi National Open University (1990-94). He is a Fellow of the Institution of Engineers, the Indian National Academy of Sciences and the Indian National Academy of Engineering. He was honoured as one of the ‘eminent engineering personalities of India’ by the Institution of Engineers, India (1991); was
Institution of Engineers, India (1991); was given the ‘Pranavananda Award’ by the UGC (1990) for outstanding services to education. He has been conferred D.Litt/D.Sc., (Honoris Causa) by six universities.

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

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

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

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

Dr V. Murugan a Reader at the Presidency College, Chennai is presently a UGC Research Awardee working on evaluation of the Tamil Lexicon and other bilingual dictionaries in Tamil. He holds a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature and a Post-graduate Diploma in Applied Linguistics. He has 30 years of teaching experience at tertiary level. He has been guiding research at doctoral level. He has specialized in Translation, lexicography and English Language Teaching. He is a practising translator and the winner of the Best Translator of the Year Award, twice. He has six books of translation from Tamil to English to his credit including ‘Kalittokai’ a Sangam classic, Selected Poems of Bharathidasan and the Pre-Sangam Tamil Grammar ‘Tolkappiyam’ (circa 11th century B.C). He has also been the editor of several books, which include the Dictionary of Tamil Literary and Critical Terms and the Encyclopaedia of Tamil Literature – Vol. I, published by the Institute of Asian Studies, Chennai.
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Sacred Ash and Burnt Dust

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

A luscious woman who stands
Surpassing all creations of art
Attracting a million eyes —
The honey in her charming lips
Is but a spit when parted
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The sceptre of a sovereign
Who reigns over the world —
Is it anything but a stick
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The cobra, divine
When on Shiva’s neck
Is but a venomous snake
When crawling on the ground.
The ash is sacred
On a saint's frame
But is dust from a blaze
While lying on the ground.

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

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

And yet

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

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

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

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

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

It is lush green fields all around
But amidst that I see an arid waste.
The celestials may manifest right in front
But a spectre of void spreads before my eyes.
Beyond all that's accessed and achieved
There remains something my heart yearns for:
Is it in the realm of solitude
That one identifies as asset
That far outstrips all one's possessions?
We Stood up when You
Dictated

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

We fell out with men
You found hostile to your mores
Your minds' intent
Defined our deeds done in awe
With no drift therein
Our thoughts we pledged to you
Taking for our part only deeds as you decreed
Adulation and unquestioning obeisance
You held to be codes for us to follow
Which we embraced without demur
You commended them to be our guide
And we took them in all humility.

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

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

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

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

A query we have,
Coming from a mind
Submissive in trepidation
And yet drawing courage from reasoning
That learning has bestowed on us:
"Long before the dawn of history
You made your appearance on the scene
In absolute faith that
We have no greater boon to seek
We accepted your lead
Continued to follow your path
Stood by you all along
And obeyed your commands -
Ultimately, of what avail
Are all these to us?"
Sultriness

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

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

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

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

They call it day time
But no light from the sun
No noise there of things moving
It is all a hush everywhere.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Luscious dishes do not nurture humanity 
Residence in palace does not constitute 'living'
Honour is not what is protected by dress
Man is the blossom of unfettered spirit.

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

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

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

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

They’re not an illiterate mass,
They’re not ignorant of proprieties
They’re not unprivileged ones
Nor are they strangers to high positions
And no class whatsoever an exception here.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It's not my own option
That I came into being
Now that I am born
Life in its entirety
Is not under my charge
Days move on inexorably
And death at an unknown moment
Is inevitable.

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

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

* * * * *

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

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

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

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

Affection is a world unto itself
Where reason does not reign;
Love is a bond and
Friendship does not ever
Reckon with the pros and cons.
Transcending the visible and
Surpassing the discernible
There exists beyond all
A sanctum sanctorum
The innermost recess of privacy
Where the mind conceives.
Horizon of Darkness

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

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

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

Are the states before and after
The beginning and end on this earth
Doors ever closed on us?
Should they remain mysteries unrevealed
To the light of our mind and might of our muscle?

Is it the truth manifest, when we contemplate
That humanity lives in darkness?
Is there no way
That humanity can move ahead
Transcending the boundaries of
The endless chain of entry and exit?

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

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

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

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

The world is but a devotee of beauty
The delightful experiences
That we derive from this
Expansive planet are unending.
Abundant are the objects that throng
Fascinating me, their praise to sing
Yet there's one loftier than the ones around
That beckons the attention of my bardic mind.

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

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

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

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

It is true that all your supports
That stood close to your mind and soul
Have fallen to the ground
Do you not see all the trees
On the banks of a river
Getting uprooted in raging floods?

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

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

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

Those that have marched ahead
In the path of achievement
Will never have their
Aspiration for ascent quenched.
Mother, I Have a Doubt

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

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

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

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

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

Endowed with relentless resolve
Nothing is hard to achieve.

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

An endless endeavour shall
End in a conquest.

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

What the mind resolves
Life will sure achieve.

A celestial being is he
Who discerns the potential
Of the mind, that can soar
Past the heaven and earth.
And where really is a God
Surpassing human mind?
An Unending Ascent

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

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

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

Light there is,
We will go questing in every direction;
Fortitude is the stuff we're made of
Even the mountains we'll smash
If they be obstacles on our way.
Wind there is
Our horse for the journey,
We shall mount and fly in gallops
Break all the fetters that constrain
Our mind endowed with wings.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It’s an enemy of one’s desire for excellence,
It’s a killer that agonises the victim
Keeping him in perpetual torment.
Aren't there saintly souls around
That could rise up in righteous fury
And pronounce a curse and banish
This pestilence called 'poverty'?

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

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

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

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

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

O bards who run after mirage
Who stand lost in the splendour of the rainbow!
O men of towering charge in education
Are you drawn to hunt after delusions?
Should your body and soul feed on dreams?

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

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

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

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

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

- The one who toils ceaselessly
With no repose, no respite
To the limits he could
To create wealth.
His wife, his children and
He himself have no access
To incentives and allowances
By orders of the Government
And privileges flowing therefrom;
To the boons of learning and knowledge
To the relish of the lores of literature
And to the fruits many a sphere of progress yields.
A citizen loyal, patient and
Acquiescing in his vocation ordained
Much like a fabricated machine.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

When the toiling poor rise up in fury
We are sure to witness again
Shiva’s Rudra Thandavam
The dance of righteous indignation.
Nothing Pollutes like Poverty

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

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

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

You repeat the findings of research that
Fertilizers have spoilt the fields;
But have you a remedy to heal
The misery of the famished soul
Writhing without even a morsel of gruel?
'Pesticides pollute soil and water' 
So run your declarations; 
Of what avail are such rhetorics? 
What have you to offer the millions 
That suffer from unmitigated hunger?

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

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

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

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

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

The bees are wont to rise up in ire 
And sting us sharp like a scorpion; 
We seek to alleviate the pain.
And still take honey from the beehive,  
We do not annihilate the swarm of bees.

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

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

There can be no growth in wealth  
If there is no change in the environment;  
Let's open the gateway  
For the protection of earth and sky  
And walk through it  
Towards progress and prosperity.
We Exist but Do Not Live

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

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

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

We have done everything
We possess near nothing –
We the poor:
We just exist but do not live.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* * * * * * * *

The dawn of science is the pride of our mind,  
Technology its offshoot has conferred  
The boon of a thousand arts and skills  
To help us cross woods, hills and oceans  
And triumph over the vast physical world;
We did found at the same time
Colossal walls across the mind
Marking a decline of the human kind.

*   *   *   *   *   *   *

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

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

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

*   *   *   *   *

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

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

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

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

And today
The policemen were again here;
It is clear this time
They have come for us;
'Well, let's go' we said and
Readied ourselves forthwith;
We know not
What awaits us tomorrow.
Not a Fall in Isolation

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

There unfolded a sight most puzzling –
The nation that stood like a stately mountain
Grew enfeebled and dismembered too
Lost its stature and leadership
Like huge clouds getting dissipated
By the stormy winds.
I know not the genesis
Wherein was set off this collapse
That occurred as if in a flash
Looking mysterious and delusive.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Or is it the passion for liberty,
Ingrained in man, a trait
Superior to his body, mind and soul
That became more assertive
And looked for more free expression?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Among the refugees are womenfolk
With delicate children nestling on their shoulders,
The tears flowing down their spear shaped eyes
Do reflect the burning of all virtues into ashes.
They're like deer ever on their feet
Fleeing desperately from huntsmen's hounds;
It is alternating between life and death
Everyday; every night
Keeping their body and soul ever trembling.

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

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

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

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

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

You revel in pride and vanity,
Surrounded as you are
By enthusiasts crossing not
The line of blind adherence,
By the affluent spurred on
By nothing beyond self-interest,
And by other people of their like
Feasting you on flattery.

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

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

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

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

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

A desire intense fills my heart
To catch up with the world
That races ahead for a feel –
Of the truth that unfolds in diverse fields
Of the novelties that blossom in the world of thought
Of the hues of the blossoming
Of the visionary land that humans yearned for long
And to revel in the grandeur of the dawn
Of all these before my eyes.

I've no time left
For discussions with you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Never has the earth been a witness
To two men alike one to one in all features
Albeit millions peopling the world.
Since the days extending from primeval past
The rhythm of flow of waters in a river
The ebbs and flows of ocean waves
Will never be the same today
As they had been yesterday
Or as they would be tomorrow.

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

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

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

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

One is sure to achieve  
Whatever one aims at  
Thro’ untiring perseverance  
Knowledge of the path  
And vision of the destination.
To stand up firm and strive
Is the mark of humanity;
Success is what results, when
Energy in its entirety converges;
Where endeavour is the currency
No one need be poor.

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

Decline and fall never visit those
Who devise the right strategies
And unswervingly strive
Along the path chosen;
This for sure is the law of life
And never shall it fail.
You obstruct those that strive to succeed
But acclaim those that achieved success
- If recognition is not there for those on the march
- The rule is absolute:
- There shall be no future to hope for
You obstruct those that strive to succeed
But acclaim those that achieved success.

Is my dear Tamil Nadu
A pond of water?
- Weightless corks float and are on top
- Weighty ones sink deep, beyond sight
Is my dear Tamil Nadu
A pond of water?

Is this land of fecund Tamil
A slippery sporting pole?
- They promote slipperiness by splashing water
- Prevent the ones that strive to ascend
Is the land of fecund Tamil
A slippery sporting pole?
Is advance of Tamils like chadu gudu* game?
- One endeavours, all by oneself to achieve
- And many are out to obstruct and overpower
Is advance of Tamils like chadu gudu game?

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

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

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

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

When things perishable do perish
To discard and remove is fair and proper
All things created
Have their hour of obsolescence;
The path to progress is
To wipe off the worn-out
And to turn to the shoots.
No tradition there will endure for ever
Transcending space, time and matter
A calm discernment will reveal
No scripture can stand triumphing over time.

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

* * * * * *

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

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

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

* * * * * *

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

A virgin she is
Who is like a flower in fresh bloom
That knows no withering.
Youthfulness is
What manifests
When you are in harmony
With the present.

They will never advance
Who fail to integrate
The needs of the present
With their passion for the past.
Let's Honour Diversity

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

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

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

In a world devoid of diversity
Where is the urge for ambition or action?
Those who respect differences
Are divine beings on earth.
Pluralism is the soul of Indian ethos
Hail pluralism! Hail pluralism!
A message for the human race:
Choices and chances in life are many
But humanity has
Only one substratum.
An Appeal by the Youth

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

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

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

Show us the direction of the destination
Be not worried
That the path is full of stones and thorns
We will cross the woods
Swim the river and climb the mountain.
Let us to embark on our quest
Do not waste time
Boasting about past achievements
So many worlds keep waiting still
For us to strive and discover.
The Final Homage

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

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

Devices innumerable
Of aerial communication
Made their way about with
Flowers and garlands,
Satellites man-made came down
From their heavenly orbits,
Electronic devices in plenty
Were in queues in attendance.
Is the whole universe down here!
Wondering I went about close by
A spectacle, marvellous it was
Unknown to the human sight.

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

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

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

* * * * *

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

For I stand there
Pondering upon the triumph of my race
Over distance, the unyielding obstacle
That separated us in the name of race
That fragmented us spawning;
Innumerable languages
That divided us by our complexion
That kept us apart and
Held us off from bonds of love and amity,
And that caused unspeakable hardship to
our ancestors
Who walked on foot thro' jungle tracts.

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

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

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

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

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

We've conquered the distance without
A feat commendable it is.
But have we a device on hand
By which to triumph over the distance
Between blocks of our own creation?
No remedy there's in sight
Thro' tools which our knowledge created;
It's but attainable by efforts
That blends fortitude with wisdom
That has a reach beyond senses;
Here lies the key to divinity on earth.
For an Unfettered Mind

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

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

Man stands as the one overarching force
That experiences and effects changes
In the form and the feel
In the power of the mind
In the wealth of the surroundings
And in the might to make and unmake;
He would yield to no force whatever
That seeks to fetter his thoughts.
Fated beyond redemption is
That which fails to move along the path
In tune with the call of life.
It's the inexorable law of the world.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sight of penury weighs you down
Meanness that poisons the well of life
Makes you fret and fume with rage.
You do not have the maturity
To acknowledge and bow but wail
Over situations that surpass your might.
You go in quest of a surgical means
That could yield instantaneous cure
To the million ills that ail mankind
Alas! You haven't found your limitations.

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

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

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

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

We strode over the seas
Flew into the skies and
Orbitted in space
And settled on the moon
That radiates coolness around.

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

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

We shall ever adore those minds
That strive and struggle to reach the peak.
Queries New : The
Questioners too

Ours is the race
That founded in the days long past
A civilization lofty enough to proclaim:
‘Every habitat is mine,
Every one is my kin’;
They’re men of such refined learning
As to embark on a quest
For perennial truth and
Permanent values;
Perceptive and penetrating
Were their faculties of thought;
They conceived of three modes of expression
Literature pure, music and drama –
And called their tongue “Threefold Tamil”;
They propounded the philosophy of Thandavam
A dance by Shiva with one foot on the floor
And the other in unique lifted position
They performed a feat wondrous –
Of making God Almighty
Himself an epitome of art.
Ours is the race of men who realized
The impossibility of gauging with tools
On one side the atom and also
The objects subtler and more elusive
And infinitely infinitesimal;
To measure on the other side
The space and the spreading expanse
That rise above the sky where
Clouds dark as Vishnu move
And the milky moon resembling
The face of a damsel traverses.
It is our forefathers who
Had the knowledge that
It is the mind alone
That can gauge the
Unbounded macro and invisible micro matter;
Endless are the glories of our ancestors
And yet I do have a word unto you
To ponder over:

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

As such there must needs be
Questions new and questioners new too,
Every passing day would witness
New exigencies arising;
Has the world seen a language and an art
That have seen the zenith of development
And reached a state of perfection?
Those that value others’ experience
Lend their ears and learn
Will themselves keep growing
It is decreed beyond omission;
Those with minds and ears closed
Are but fated to decay and decline
And nothing else spells a misfortune worse.
No state could be more debased than
That of a mind shut off from light
And wallowing in darkness.

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

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

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

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

*       *       *       *

We resolved to settle on things small
Leaving the heights for future search;
We worked on particles small as dust,
We moved further to tinier yet
And struck upon atoms more minute,
We succeeded in splitting the atoms too
Whereby unfolded parts infinitesimal
Further division we found impossible
Found it beyond our mind today.

* * * * *

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

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

* * *

Though we could not understand fully
The nature of the external world
Since we are humans, we thought
We could make sense of the human species;
We took up this quest
Holding it dear to our heart –
We studied human physiology
About flesh and blood and bones
We came clear about
And yet we stand ignorant
Of the bounds of the human mind
Which in dimensions resembles Vamana*
That can perceive things
Loftier than the sky
Larger than the cosmos
And tinier than the tiniest.

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

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

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

* An incarnation of Lord Vishnu with a form reaching out to the skies.
We Are the Makers of God too

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

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

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

There's no species known so far
That towers above the species human,
We must found a world on earth
Where men in flesh would rise to be divine.
Aren't all the accomplishments
That the earth bears witness to
From days ancient to this hour
Verily the fruits of man's endeavour?

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

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

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

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

I sifted my propensities
Philosophical and religious
I have also examined my intellectual self.
The one consuming passion
That overwhelms my being is
The advancement of
Tamil, Tamils and the Humanity.
Nothing on earth appeals to me
As much as the advance of mankind;
We are on a unique journey of ascent
We are like the legendary Vamana
We would soar up and move past
The abode of the celestials.
No Desert : No Fallow

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

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

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

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

The womenfolk then performed
A revolution that was innovative
Holding with it seeds for a new era:
They started in gradual steps
Growing plants, crops and creepers
Paving thereby the path
For humans to strike on agriculture
Open up the resources of the earth
And create riches inexhaustible.

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

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

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

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

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

Music, literature and drama bloomed
So did the crafts of varied sorts,
Men journeyed in all directions
To earn and bring wealth
And trade and commerce flourished;
Ideas new there opened up
Modes of cultural living dawned
Worthy of acclamation and praise.

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

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

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

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

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

*       *       *       *

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

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

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

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

* * * * *

The developed countries;
Aware of the potential of education
And armed swiftly with learning
Have all the riches brought to their hold;
A mere twenty per cent though in number
They consume eighty per cent of the earth's wealth;
This abundance has become
An evil by itself –
An explosive demand for things to consume
And things consumed turning into refuse –
Alas! A spectacle degrading life's worth.

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

* * * * *

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

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

* * * * *

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

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

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

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

Engrossed in self-interest
We displayed no societal concern.

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

There is nothing wrong in
Creating wealth,
No objection there need be
To make things fruitful for life,
And no sin it is too
To seek avenues of pleasure,
But we must have an insight
Into the effects of every action,
Impairment to environment
Need be avoided in every case.

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

*    *    *    *    *

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

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

Resources, Mother Earth holds alike
That manifest to the mind informed;
She would provide for all the needs
But we haven't acquired the skills yet
To so draw on her treasure
As not to cause her any harm.

We must learn to draw wealth
From mother earth
With the same gentleness
As the bee drawing honey
Sits on the petal of the flower.
Original Not a Copy

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

We do witness an era
When vehicles move in space
Guided by electronic devices;
What parity you boast of
In women at the steering of
An automobile on the road?
They are level in the power of mind
In fora of learned discourse
They are on a par.
In norms of leadership
They will prove equal.
That in love and culture,
They rank higher
Is no overstatement either.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* A response by the poet to the condition of women he witnessed in the Central Asian countries [1989].
Aren’t women a half of humanity
The half of humanity’s flesh and spirit?
Should they suffer a life shrouded in darkness?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

All these notwithstanding:
I find no change in the traditional wont
That equates 'wine and women'
Among common needs,
Countless are the commercial minds
That find the fascination of the female flesh
A choice commodity in business world.

How many are the spectacles there
Of women abandoning modesty and
clothes as well?
How many are the dolls in display
With nakedness for their charm and appeal?

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

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

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

The culture of treating womenfolk
As the agents meeting
The passion of lust by men
Is the foe of the female world.
As long as this mindset persists
Delusive would be women’s freedom
It’s all a sham, a fancy
Fantasy and illusion, pretence and dream
Mirage and make-believe.

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

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

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

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

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

Till the day
That witnesses a change in outlook and attitude
Of a tradition
That holds woman to be an object of gratification,
Gender equality is a dream
A make-believe and mirage.
Humanity must rise up in revolt
And take on this pernicious wont;
The world must stand freed of this curse
And see it erased from its face.
Feminism of Lord Shiva

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* Poornam – From Sanskrit ‘Poorna’; difficult to find an equivalent: the term wholeness may approximate to it.  
** Devas – Heavenly beings
It is Womanhood All
Purveying

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

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

Womanhood is the spring in sand
Whence wells up freshness perennially,
Womanhood is the garden of flowers
Wherein blossom a million beauties,
Womanhood is the perfected whole
With every part embodying
A new relish as the shells
In the pomegranate fruit.

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

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

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

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

No iniquity could be more outrageous
Than our womenfolk, a half of humanity,
Being denied altogether
Opportunities to flowering,
Being seen as creatures to meet
The sensual needs and emotions of males.
No cruelty on earth to match this
And no practice to mention as equal!

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

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

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

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

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

Immolations in sati persist to date
So does the flesh trade in forms varied
Survive still as ordained by fate –
Aren't the claims of freedom of women
Parades of sham and guile?
Delicate as creepers they are,
Our womenfolk eke out their existence
In the nadir of neglect in a remote corner
With their faces covered, body fully swathed
And their hearts and minds wrapped in veils;
Should righteousness and chastity
Enjoined as virtues of women
Turn to be fetters made in gold?

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

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

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

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

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

A million theories you have conceived
A simple claim of dharma you have not conceded;
You claim that you granted
Equality of rights and property to women.
Is equality then
Your right and privilege exclusive
For you to give and for women to take?
Rights and equality are not commodities
For one to gift and the other to receive.

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

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

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

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

For a sacred expedition in search of truth,
there need be no crowd, no procession;
no flags, no slogans;
One shall design - but many may build;
Greatest things are often achieved by the
fewest of minds.
But we shall invite the whole world, to share and enjoy
what the rarest few leave for all.
Praise be for the few, the benefits for the many.

- Kulothungan