

Chapter Four

Nationalist Magazines and the consolidation of the Upper-caste public Sphere: The Case of Chintamani, Jaganmohni and Kalki

Most of my sisters do not recognize the importance of reading. They spend their time with novels in hand. I would not say that all novels are bad and that we should abandon novel reading altogether. But most contemporary novels are vulgar. It **is** preferable to read material which stimulates our intelligence....If my sisters want to learn about world events, they should do so through magazines. It is only because they have never so far ventured to read magazines that they have remained ignorant about important political developments. ... Magazines are as vital for women as they are for men. (Puduvai K.Arasambal, "Patirikaiyal Adaiyum Payan", Chintamani December 1924: 49)

Chintamani Serving the Nation

It is our great good fortune, declares Puduvai Arasambal, that we now have a magazine for women; we should welcome Chintamani into our homes each month like we would a child and encourage our friends to do the same (Chintamani December 1924:49-50). As a reader, Arasambal is euphoric that a Tamil woman should have started a magazine and praises the editor, Sister Balammal, for her initiative. Magazines, she argues, have the potential to politicize and educate the woman reader and, for this reason, are better than novels.

Chintamani, which first appeared in August 1924, was one among many women's magazines in Tamil such as Pandit Visalakshi Ammal's Hitakarini (1909) and Revu Thayaramma's Penn Kalvi (1912) which appeared in the early part of the twentieth century. The

emergence of these magazines at this particular historical moment, the phenomenon of the woman editor and publisher and the creation of a new constituency of women readers are partly related to the Social Reform movement which lent them a new legitimacy and partly, to a new nationalist awakening which often expressed itself as a love for Tamil as against English, the foreign Other.

In many ways, the Social Reform movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was at the heart of the nationalist position on the "women's question". With this movement emerged the figure of the "decent middle-class, educated yet traditional woman", a figure who conformed to the nationalist project of fashioning a modern Indian culture that was nevertheless not western. This project was aided by Social Reform's foregrounding of education and book culture as the sites of women's emancipation. Such an agenda did not radically displace Indian women from "tradition" as configured within nationalism. However, as Partha Chatterjee points out, there was initial resistance to women's education due both to the fear of proselytization and the exposure of women to Western culture (1993). After the introduction of vernacular education and the development of an educative literature in the vernacular, reading and formal education among middle-class Indian women gained acceptance. In the context of Bengal, Chatterjee argues, formal education became a requirement for the new bhadramahila (a term signifying the respectable middle-class woman from a "good" family) once it became possible for a woman to acquire

certain bourgeois virtues and cultural refinements differed modern education without running the risk of becoming a memsaheb.

The nationalist intelligentsia made it their task to create a modern language and literature suitable for a widening readership that would include newly educated women. As Susie Tharu points out, the colonial government too made efforts to develop vernacular literatures ("The Arrangement of an Alliance", 1991); This proceeded along three lines. Firstly, translations from English and European languages on the one hand, and from classical Indian languages on the other, were encouraged. Secondly, Indians were urged to create original literary works in indigenous languages; novels addressing women were specifically welcomed. Thirdly, and perhaps most significantly, a classical Indian literary tradition was invented in place of literary traditions and practices considered as affronts to middle-class respectability and morality. This last process resulted in the cultural homogenization of the Indian middle-class.

Sumanta Banerjee argues that the appeal of popular genres of nineteenth century Bengal, composed and performed mainly by women of the lower castes and classes, cut across all economic divisions in Bengali society (1989). This street culture of songs, dances, doggerel and theatre performances brought into Calcutta by immigrant Bengali villagers represented an idiom partially shared by all Bengali women. However, with the social reform movement's foregrounding of formal education and book culture as the sites of women's emancipation, popular street culture was effectively displaced from Bengali middle-

class society. Under colonial influence, the bhadralok or the Bengali middle-class, began to frown on street culture as low and obscene, as exposing women to wantonness and vulgarity, as representing their 'natural' tendency towards depravity. Educated Bengali men attempted to wean their wives and daughters away from popular culture practiced in public spaces - the street, the market place, fairs and festivals. From the late eighteenth to the end of the nineteenth century, both missionary and administrative literature is full of horrified descriptions of the so-called abandonment which characterized women's popular culture. Banerjee points out that influenced by Victorian interpretations of Hindu religious mythology, some of the bhadralok turned to Christianity, while almost all of them disowned those forms of popular culture that made fun of the Hindu divinities.

Vital to the self-definition of the Indian middle-class, then, was the coming into being of the educated, "cultured" middle-class woman. Banerjee points out that from the end of the nineteenth century, the "emancipated" women of the Bengali middle-class who allied themselves with educated men, replaced older forms of women's popular culture with their "cultivated" writings", especially in women's magazines. The bhadramahila was obliged to practise a certain refinement, to cultivate tastes that appealed to their husbands. However, proficiency in the new literary forms was not the only requirement for entry into the world of the bhadramahila. A woman hoping to enter this world was expected to be totally home-bound and dependent on the male head of the family.

Her literary activities were confined within the parameters of a strictly defined domestic role. In contrast to this, the economic self-reliance and a certain non-conformity to the morals of bhadralok society allowed the Vaishnavaites women of the market place a greater mobility, which predictably enough came in for a great deal of censure. As Banerjee argues, they became targets of attack because they represented a literary as well as social tradition that was threatening to the founding principles of bhadralok society. Vaishnavaites women were gradually but firmly eliminated from the secluded world of the andarmahal to which the women of rich and middle-class families were seen as belonging. The rise of a bhadralok literary culture along with a certain construction of **middle-classness** thus tied in with the notion of a segregated domestic space over which the newly emancipated bhadramahila, a woman with the leisure to read and write, seemingly reigned. The street performer, the courtesan and the devadasi who made a living outside the domestic space suddenly found themselves recast as "loose women" or as prostitutes. In occupying a space outside of the domestic, they were literally in a no-woman's land, for they were not **"emancipated"** in the sense that their middle-class sisters were, nor did they function as figures of Tradition and Culture, living as they did outside of patriarchal, familial norms.

The bhadramahila was also constructed in opposition to the figure of the Bad Modern Western woman, the mamsaheb. Chatterjee points out that much of the literature on women in the nineteenth century concerns the threatened westernization of Bengali women:

To ridicule the idea of a Bengali woman trying to imitate the ways of a memsahab . . . was a sure recipe calculated to evoke raucous laughter and moral condemnation in both male and female audiences. It was, of course, a criticism of manners, of new items of clothing such as the blouse, the petticoat, and shoes . . . of the use of Western cosmetics and jewellery, of the reading of novels, of needlework (considered a useless and expensive pastime), of riding in open carriages. What made the ridicule stronger was the constant suggestion that the Westernized woman was fond of useless luxury and cared little for the well-being of the home.

(Chatterjee 1993, 122)

Chatterjee has argued with reference to Bengal that the new literature which included textbooks, periodicals as well as creative works, was shaped by the nationalist desire to make it accessible to women who were proficient only in their mother-tongue (1993: 128). The formal education of Bengali women, Chatterjee points out, became possible and acceptable only with the development of educative material in Bengali. While English education would have made her into that figure of ridicule, the memsahab. formal education in Bengali meant that she could retain her respectability. Her reading and education were therefore both shaped by the demands of nationalism.

The effects of the Social Reform movement in terms of the construction of the middle-class woman and the formation of a literary middle-class culture were not restricted to Bengal alone. Susie Tharu and K.Lalita describe the furore that followed when a learned courtesan, Bangalore Nagaratnanuna, reprinted in 1910 the eighteenth century Telugu poet Muddupalani's work Eadhika Santwanam ("Appeasing Radha") (Tharu and Lalita: 1991).

Muddupalani's work, which describes the heroine Radhika's frank sensuality, was ultimately banned by a British government convinced that the book would corrupt its Indian subjects. The ban order was removed only in 1947. In Madras Presidency, the Social Reform movement took the more specific form of the Theosophy movement, launched by Annie Besant in 1906. Besant combined the agendas of swarai. spiritual renaissance and social reform in the interests of Indian women. This movement soon became the rallying point for upper-caste, middle-class Tamil women. Raising the marriageable age for women, women's education, voting rights and the passing of the Devadasi bill to end **"prostitution"** were some of the important demands raised by the theosophists who included **Rukmini** Devi Arundale and Dr.Muthulakshmi Reddy. While the former was responsible for the transformation of the devadasi dance form of sadir into the **Brahminised** version of bharatanatyam, the latter fought for the passing of the Devadasi **bill**.¹ It is against this canvas of social reform, then, that one must read magazines like Chintamani.

Describing the mandate of Chintamani for instance, Sister **Balammal** says that it would deal with "women's education, progress of students, the condition of workers, hygiene, law... the puranas and so on" (August 1924: 3). It is the subject of women's education which Chintamani deals with most **frequently**, and the magazine as a whole produces itself as educative. In an article titled **"Penn Kalvi"** ("Women's Education"), the publisher (it is **not** very clear who this is), writes:

Though the Congress talks of education, participation of women in Khadi weaving and in the freedom

movement, though it has over one crore rupees as funds, it hasn't paid serious attention to women's education and employment. Despite thousands of party meetings and debates on these issues, has the Congress really given thought to women's education? How much has been allocated in the yearly budget for women who form over half the electorate? Have those who are arguing for communal representation paid attention to women who form fifty percent of our population?
Chintamani. December 1924: 35)

We must also keep in mind the fact that the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries also saw the rise of the early women's movement and the formation of several independent women's organizations. For instance, Pandita Ramabai started the Sharada Sadan in Pune in 1892 to provide employment and education for women; in Maharashtra, Ramabai Ranade started the Hindu Ladies Social and Literary Club in 1902 and the Seva Sadan in 1909, and so on. Most of the branches of Annie **Besant's** Women's India Association (started in 1917) were in Madras Presidency. The National Council of Women in India was initiated in 1925, and in 1926, the Women's India Association brought together various women's groups in the country at a convention and many of them united under the banner of the All India Women's Conference. Vir Bharat Talwar has pointed to the centrality of issue of women's education for the women's movement at the time, especially in the Hindi provinces.² He has argued that this concern is reflected in the women's journals in Hindi (such as Stree Darpan which emerged between 1910 and 1920 (1989: 220)). Talwar contends that educated men were often dissatisfied with their uneducated wives and that their humiliation of the latter led women to identify the lack of education as a major reason for their oppression

(1989: 220). The kind of education that women ought to be given, whether one suited to domestic affairs or one suited to the social and political world, the "public" sphere, was a major point of debate. As the epigraph to this chapter tells us however, Chintaroani was deeply concerned with the issue of political education for women.

If the Social Reform movement and the women's movement, both of which emerged alongside the nationalist movement, are two different, yet inter-related canvases against which one can read magazines such as Chintamani and Jaganmohini. a specifically nationalist imagination and recovery of Tamil language and culture, and a consequent isolation of English as the foreign Other energized them.³ As we shall see, especially with regard to **Kalki** R.Krishnamurthy, the nationalist Tamil idiom was never constructed in opposition to Hindi or Sanskrit. In fact, it was opposed to the claim for a "pure" Tamil (a Tamil rid of all Sanskrit words) made, for instance, by a group of **Saiva-Vellalas** in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (see Chapter Five). As Sumathi **Ramaswamy** has argued, the nationalist attempt was to develop a living modern Tamil, suitable for science, administration, government and education, a Tamil rid of all arcane terms (whether Sanskritic or high literary Tamil), a Tamil which was simple and accessible (1992: 228). Given their lack of access to Sanskrit, the language of the Shastras and the Vedas, and to English, the language of modernity and hence, once again, the language of upper-caste men, it appears that women such as **Vai.Mu** Kodainayaki **Ammal** and Sister **Balammal** found it easier to relate to this particular project of nationalizing Tamil. The

periodical was an extremely potent means of fashioning a modern Tamil.

What is perhaps most striking about the early twentieth century is that it marked the emergence of the woman editor who had learnt to effectively market her magazine. We have, for instance, Sister Balammal declaring:

When I spoke of my plans to start a magazine, many friends warned me that it would be very difficult to finance it and find subscribers. They told me that those who wrote for magazines often demanded a very high salary. ... I believed however that if the editor showed a sense of social responsibility, the subscribers would respond favorably by patronising the magazine. I refused to be afraid. (Chintamani September 1924: 53)

If Sister Balammal "refused to be afraid" and took up the difficult and demanding task of editing a magazine in what was a male-dominated and patriarchal set up, Vai.Mu.Kodainayaki Ammal, the Brahmin editor and publisher of another women's magazine Jaganmo-hinj was even more remarkable for the shrewd marketing strategies she employed. What is interesting however is the terms within which the agency of both editors is framed. Chintamani's front cover declares it to be a "high class Tamil monthly for women" with an additional note that it is "devoted mainly to the cause of Indian women" (August 1924). It is this argument that the magazine would serve the cause of Indian women and, by extension, the nation, which Sister Balammal repeatedly stresses in the editorial of the first issue:

Magazines in vernacular languages are a means by which we can progress as a nation and educate our people. ... I started this magazine keeping in

mind the welfare of my Tamil sisters.... Every minute hundreds of Tamil magazines are being published. All of them are highly critical of the faults of other magazines and make claim that the world is going to benefit greatly from them. Woman that I am, I dare neither to praise myself nor make such tall claims. My magazine is devoted to serving society.... I request students, respected elders and men to subscribe to Chintamani and help women's uplift.
(Chintamani August 1924: 3-4)

The respect she reserves for "elders", the humility with which she addresses her readers, her appeal to men to subscribe to the magazine in order to help women's uplift clearly mark the limits of her agency as an upper-caste woman. In an essay addressed to the readers of Chintamani. "Enadu Patirikai Abhimanigaluku" ("For my readers"), she thanks them for their support and patronage and seeks the blessings of elders:

I offer my greetings to those readers who have written letters supporting, praising and blessing Chintamani. I also thank the editors of other magazines for their support... Many have written saying that they have sent in their money orders as subscription... Many elders have favorably reviewed Chintamani. I can only accept this as an order to serve the nation all through my life. I will not consider these as words of praise. I expect the blessings of bharatmata. my elders and all the educated women readers of this magazine.
(Chintamani September 1924: 53-54)

The inside page of every front cover declares that **Balammal** is the "daughter of Late Dr.A.R Vaidyanatha Sastriar". Tracing her lineage to her father is one way of acknowledging her place in a patriarchal society. Balammal also indicates to her readers that she is a deeply religious Brahmin. In every issue, the reader is presented with "Subodha Rama **Saritam**" in Sanskrit, composed and

annotated by Balammal. This clearly signifies her upper-caste status, another strategy by which she gains acceptance among what was, presumably, a largely upper-caste audience.

Jaganmohini; The Commercial Novel-Magazine

Vai.Mu. Kodainayaki Ammal, the editor and publisher of another women's magazine **Jaganmohini** which first appeared in December 1922 a few months before **Chintamani**, seems far more comfortable with the commercial nature of the magazine industry. The cover describes Vai.Mu as the "author and proprietress" of Jaganmohini. Vai.Mu bought the Jaganmohini Press from Vaduvur Doraiswamy Iyengar and ran it for over two decades. Located at Car Street in Tiruvelikeni, a historic part of Madras, the Jaganmohini Press was used to print not just the journal of the same name but also over a hundred of **Vai.Mu's** novels. The magazine itself is described on the cover as a madantha novel sanjigai. a monthly novel magazine. Most issues contained serial novels, especially detective stories, written by Vai.Mu herself. Others contained a few stray news articles on the Congress and on the Hindi issue, espousing the nationalist cause. We will soon see how writers and editors like Vai.Mu and Balammal were part of a growing Congress nationalism. There were also issues devoted to stories by other popular women writers of that time such as, for instance, "Gugapriyai". Occasionally, reviews of Tamil talkies also appeared. Vai.Mu herself appears to have been widely read and as we have already seen, she was also very Prolific. As was the case with **Kalki**, another magazine which appeared some two decades later, Jaganmohini was heavily

dependent on the novel form for its appeal. In fact, the two genres, magazine and novel, were interlinked, each being used to popularize the other. The magazine was much cheaper than the novel. A year's subscription to Jaganmohini cost only one rupee and eighty annas and each issue cost three annas, whereas those of Vai.Mu's novels which were published separately cost around two rupees. **Vai.Mu** advertised and marketed her magazine as well as her novels and solicited the patronage of her readers with remarkable elan and directness. In a move to ensure that readers of her magazine would also read her novels, she published full-page advertisements in the former for the latter. The January 1937 issue for instance carries the following editorial:

Readers have requested that I bring out a small novel costing four annas every month. It is my pleasure to do so. The first such novel, which has just been published, is called Anbin Shikaram. Readers may acquire their copy by paying the necessary amount through postal or money orders.
(Jaganmohini, January 1937, editorial)

What Vai.Mu sought to ensure then was the creation of a regular readership both for her magazine as well as for her **novels**.

Unlike Chintamani. Jaganmohini produced itself as a commercial magazine meant to entertain rather than educate. In this sense, it is perhaps the forerunner of contemporary popular Tamil magazines. Vai.Mu appears much more at ease with the economics of **magazine** publishing than Sister **Balammal** does. Unlike the latter, she does not waste time on elaborate and decorous ethical justifications for the starting of her magazine. On the con-

trary, she is unembarrassed about asking for subscriptions to the magazine and employs various interesting advertising techniques to sell it. The issue preceding the tenth anniversary issue enacts a little scene on the cover:

Jaganmohini: Dear mothers and fathers! I will soon be ten. What present are you going to gift me? I grow thanks to your patronage.
The People: Darling child! Jaganmohini! O Bright and Intelligent One! Your clear and readable style has given us much joy. Here is your gift - we give to you not only our own subscriptions but also those of our friends.
(Mohini extends her hands, receives the gift and greets them)
(October and November, 1932)

The narrative is accompanied by the picture of a little girl dressed in the traditional long skirt (the "pavadai") with her hands outstretched surrounded by people who are giving her money. As part of the tenth anniversary celebrations, the same issue announces a four-point scheme. According to this, Vai.Mu's novels would be offered at a discount price to six early subscribers; an entire year's magazine would be given free to those who found five other subscribers; Vai.Mu's novels Ivabharathi and Sarasaranjan would be given free to those who found three subscribers, and those who paid the life subscription of twenty five rupees would get free copies of all her novels to be published in future. Jaganmohini also carried advertisements for many products ranging from the familiar **Amrutanjan** balm to other magazines to talkies. The issues provided details about advertisement tariffs as well. The magazine was sold through agents all over Tamilnadu, at Bombay, Rangoon, Kuala Lumpur and Colombo.

The February 1937 issue, for instance, provides a list of such agents and their addresses and informs readers that Jaganmohini is also available at magazine shops, the Swadesamitran book shop in Madras and at railway stations (February 1937: 21). Jaganmohini also targeted the Tamil diaspora overseas. In a special notice to overseas subscribers, Vai.Mu writes:

You are all aware that Jaganmohini is the only Tamil magazine that does not charge higher rates for overseas subscribers. This despite the higher postal rates we have to pay. We wish that all Tamilians, irrespective of where they are residing, should pay the same amount to read Jaganmohini. (January 1936: inside front cover)

The upper-caste Tamil novel and journal were co-existing and overlapping areas of ideological production. Both were addressed to the same constituency of readers, which, in the wake of nationalism and its stress on vernacular education for women, was increasingly becoming female. Jaganmohini was only one of many instances where the overlap between novel and magazine becomes obvious. It is in the magazine Kalki however that we have the best known example. Even though Kalki was not a women's magazine, like Jaganmohini it appears to have had a large female readership. In the section that follows, we will consider some reasons as to why this might have been so.

Kalki; Historical Fiction and Nationalism

In September [of 1921], the Mahatma toured South India to campaign for the eradication of the evils of drinking and untouchability, to popularize khadi, and raise funds for the constructive programmes of the Congress. When he came to Tiruchi, Krishnamurthy had his first darshan of him, an

enthraling experience. At a massive meeting addressed by the Mahatma, he had the rare privilege of singing Bharati songs and of handing over to the Mahatma money he had collected from the audience. Gandhi patted him on his back with the words, "accha desh sevak"!
(Sunda: 1993, 24)

The "accha desh sevak" or the "good servant of the **nation**" of Gandhi's description was none other than the Tamil writer and **magazine** editor R.Krishnamurthy or "**Kalki**" as he was popularly known. Both as a political activist and, perhaps more significantly for our analyses here, as a writer of "historical" and "social" novels serialized in the still extant Tamil magazine bearing his pen-name, Kalki participated in what was largely an upper-caste, elite project, the project of nationalism. To say that Kalki was a symbol of moral purity and goodness, a symbol of "**decent**" middle-class values and a figure of respectability for the Brahmin middle-class in **Tamilnadu** is no exaggeration. Given that he was iconised as a "good servant of the nation" by none other than Gandhi and encouraged by the politically influential **C.Rajagopalachari** (Rajaji) of the **Tamilnadu** Congress who went on to become the Chief Minister of Madras Presidency, this was only to be expected. During a writing career that spanned the thirties to the early fifties, **Kalki's** writings became part of the Tamil literary canon. No other figure signals quite so effectively the consolidation of an upper-caste nationalist public sphere to the same extent that Kalki does. His life-history then acquires special importance.

Kalki: Writing and Political Career

Much of what we know about the life of Kalki comes from M.R.M. Sundaram or "Sunda"'s 900 page biography in Tamil Ponniyan pudalvar (Son of Ponni) published in 1976 and its abbreviated English version Kalki; A Life Sketch which appeared in 1993. This biography had earlier appeared in serialised form in the magazine Kalki over 99 weekly installments.

Kalki was born into a Brahmin family on the 9th of September, 1899 at Putthamangalam, a small village in Thanjavur where the river Ponni (or Kaveri) flows. After **Kalki's** father **Ramaswamy** Ayyar who was the village karnam passed away, Kalki was adopted and groomed by an elderly next-door neighbour, **Ayyaswamy** Ayyar, who ran a primary school in the village. When Kalki was still a boy, he had been initiated along with his brothers into the traditional **Brahminic** rites (Sunda: 1993, 18). Forced to discontinue their secondary education because of financial problems, Kalki and his brother began to give performances of hari katha kalakshepam. a semi-dramatic narration of bhakthi stories. Sunda traces the birth of patriotism in Kalki to the time when Ayyaswamy Ayyar brought him a booklet from Mayuram containing the Tamil poet Subramania **Bharati's** early national songs:

When Krishnamurthy read the poems and then sang them aloud, a new and strange feeling, the spirit of patriotism, surged in his heart and created a revolution in his mind. The refrain of one of the poems, "Let us worship our motherland with the mantra, Vande **Mataram**" became the "mantra" of his life from that very day, urging him to dedicate his task of liberating the Mother from the shackles of slavery.

(Sunda **1993**: 21-21).

Eventually, Kalki joined the National College High School in Tiruchirapalli where he was given a scholarship and free boarding and lodging. These were formative years for Kalki, partly because of the number of books and journals relating to nationalism and social reform which he suddenly found access to, **and** partly because Tiruchirapalli was very active in the Congress-led freedom movement. When Gandhi launched his non-cooperation movement in **1921**, Kalki left school to propagate Gandhi's ideals, his chakra-spinning and Khadi-weaving. It was during this phase that Gandhi met Kalki at a public meeting in Tiruchi and praised him for his patriotism. Following an impassioned pro-nationalist speech which he delivered at Karur, he was arrested, charged with sedition and sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for a year. While in prison, he wrote his first novel Vimala which later appeared in the magazine Swatantram edited by Va Ra. Soon after his release in 1923, Kalki joined the Congress office of Tiruchi as a **clerk-cum-propagandist**. At the Tiruchi office Kalki met Rajaji for the first time. The latter was then the General Secretary of the All India Congress organization. Rajaji praised Kalki for a pamphlet he had written and issued on behalf of the Congress office.

Kalki's writing career officially began when he joined the nationalist Tamil **tri-weekly** Navasakthi edited by Thiru.Vi.Ka. His translation of Gandhi's autobiography was serialised in this journal and later published as a book titled Satya Sodanai. Kalki **left** Navasakthi in 1928 with the intention of joining film producer S.S **Vasan's** Ananda Vikatan. However, he did not join it

at once because he got an invitation from Rajaji to be an inmate of the Gandhi Ashram at Tiruchengodu in **Salem** district. **Kalki** took up the invitation and moved with his wife to the ashram from where he began to write for Ananda Vikatan. He also assisted **Rajaji** in editing Vimochanam, a monthly magazine in Tamil devoted to prohibition started in August 1929. In connection with the Salt Satyagraha of 1930, Kalki published four propaganda pamphlets which were then distributed throughout **Tamilnadu**. Along with his associates, he picketed several educational institutions. Some time later he was arrested and sentenced to a prison term of six months. On his release, he rejoined the Tiruchengodu Ashram. In 1931, Vasana persuaded Kalki to edit Ananda Vikatan. A short while later, Ananda Vikatan became a weekly and soon it was the largest circulating Tamil magazine (Sunda 1993: 31). The magazine, which was (and still is) well known for its humour, had as part of its staff writers like **"Tumilan", "Devan", "Bharatan", "Nadodi", "Kadir" and "Savi"**. Kalki proved to be all that Vasana had expected him to be. As a writer, he had a wonderful feel for his largely upper-caste and middle-class readership and skillfully wove a moral purpose into all his writings including his fiction, thus winning over an audience which up until that point had viewed the novel with suspicion. As a dynamic editor who had an instinct for spotting talent and encouraging new writers, he was almost single-handedly responsible for the remarkable growth in the readership of Ananda Vikatan. As Sunda tells us, Vasana in turn was a generous employer, rewarding Kalki with a fourfold **increase** in salary over a period of eight years and providing him with a staff car and

other perquisites. Kalki gradually became entrenched in an informal literary circle created by T.K.Chidambaranatha Mudaliar or "Rasikamani" TKC. To this circle flocked Rajaji's eldest son, Krishnaswamy, the Assistant Editor of The Hindu and R.V Sastry, otherwise known as "**Harijan** Sastry" for having edited The Hariian on behalf of Gandhi for a while (Sunda: 1993, 35). The patronage of this particular group as well as of that of the influential literary critic Professor Vaiyapuri Pillai who wrote the forewords to his novels played a crucial role in the canonizing of Kalki. In his foreword to Parthiban Kanavu (The **Dream** of Parthiban), **Kalki's** first historical novel, Vaiyapuri Pillai writes:

Readers of this novel will easily recognize the skill and the varied capabilities of the author. The author's Tamil style deserves special mention. Only those words which are linked to high ideals are used by him. He doesn't go searching closely for pure Tamil words; neither does he avoid the use of North Indian words. His style is lucid and reader-friendly. It inspires emotions and is apt for both character and situation. He stands at the forefront of the dialogue-writers of today. (Foreword to Parthiban Kanavu 1985: viii)

The style of **Kalki's** editorials, fiction as well as non-fiction, as his admirers repeatedly stressed, was accessible to the ordinary reader. Sunda praises the "racy, idiomatic, impressive and elegant" style of his prose and the "strict purity" of his writings (1993: 124 & 53). Moreover, as A.R Venkatachalapathy has pointed out, the Tamil novel which had till then been critiqued by middle-class intellectuals for being mindless adaptations of the works of western novelists such as Reynolds and for being

vulgar, attained a new respectability in the hands of Kalki (1997: 65). If Kalki's Brahmin, middle-class background had already won him some measure of acceptance, his connections with the Congress leader Rajaji, with influential literary critics and with the other elite of Madras, notably with Sadasivam and his wife, the famous classical singer M.S Subbulakshmi meant that he was accepted wholeheartedly into the Brahmin heartland of the city. Incidentally, his connection with Sadasivam and M.S Subbulakshmi as strengthened with the marriages of **Kalki's** daughter Anandi with **Sadasivam's** nephew and his son Rajendran with **Sadasivam's** daughter.

Kalki left Ananda Vikatan in January 1941 following certain differences with Vasam. Beginning with **Rajaji's ministry** in October 1939, all the seven provincial Congress governments had resigned in protest against Britain's involvement of India in the Second World War without consulting Indian leaders. Gandhi launched his satyagraha and people were requested not to cooperate with the British in their war efforts. When Vinoba Bhave and Jawaharlal Nehru were arrested for performing satyagraha, Kalki responded by writing an impassioned editorial condemning these arrests. In a formal note to Kalki, Vasam asked him to refrain from printing articles which were likely to provoke official action against Ananda Vikatan (Sunda: 1993, 37-38). Ignoring the note, Kalki wrote another special article on the arrest of Rajaji in December 1940. He sought Gandhi's permission to offer satyagraha and when he received a favorable reply he applied to Vasam for leave. Vasam was not happy with his request however and Kalki was forced to resign. Sunda tells us that later in his life

Vasan "very much regretted his selfish and unpatriotic attitude leading to the loss of an efficient editor and gave public expression to it again and again" (1993: 38-39). It was at this point that Kalki was approached by Sadasivam with the offer of managerial and financial help in launching a new magazine. The magazine had to wait however for Kalki to finish his third prison term of three months following his satyagraha on the 21st of January, 1941, in Mayuram where he delivered a brief anti-war effort speech to a crowd. The capital for the new magazine which was named "Kalki" after its editor who had become something of a cult figure by then, was provided by the singer M.S Subbulakshmi who was also a film actress. Launched as a fortnightly in August 1941, the magazine became a weekly in April 1944. This 55 page magazine was printed at the Kalki Press, Madras. Within 12 years of its inception, its circulation shot up from 20,000 copies to 70,000 copies (Sunda: 1993, 41). When one compares these figures with those of the popular Jaganmohini which sold only 10,000 copies per issue (A.R Venkatachalapathy: 1997, 63), one begins to have some idea about the scale of Kalki's popularity . There were many reasons for this popularity. Firstly, Kalki offered a better mix of articles than Jaganmohini did. In this sense, it is closer generically to the contemporary magazine. Its issues typically contained short stories, cartoons and humorous pieces apart from its highlight, **Kalki's** novel in serial form. It was also a better produced magazine than Jaganmohini and used more illustrations, both in colour as well as in black and white, to accompany its serial fiction and short stories. More importantly however, Kalki was perceived as someone who not only wrote

interestingly and lucidly but also with middle-class decorum. Between six and ten pages of magazine space in most issues were devoted to his novels. Even though each serial was a structural unit in itself, it created a curiosity in the reader as to what the next serial would contain. This meant that **Kalki** always had a given number of regular readers.

The fact that Kalki was perceived as a **"respectable"** writer implied that his work could be "safely" read by middle-class women who, until then had **not** been permitted to read the work of most novelists with the exception of Vai.Mu.Kodainayaki **Ammal**. This meant a **dramatic** increase in readership for the magazine. Sunda tells us that not only did Kalki scrupulously follow a code of strict self-censorship, he also conducted a campaign against **"vulgar and scurrilous writing"** through the columns of both Kalki as well as Ananda Vikatan (1993: 52). Drawing on an anecdote to illustrate his point, Sunda says that when Kalki found certain passages bordering on the vulgar in the manuscript of a short story submitted to him, he called the sub-editor and asked him to **"tear** up the dirty thing" and throw it into his waste paper basket (1993:53). Again, addressing a conference as the President of the Tamil **writers'** association in February 1954, Kalki declared that a writer who "excites carnal lust, who incites violence, who encourages egoism, who sows the poisonous seeds of hatred" will not remain popular for long; their writings "will never be recognized as literature", they would be "just trash" (Sunda: 1993, 138). Sunda also quotes from an article written by Kalki on the Library movement:

I happened to read some Tamil novels published recently. Oh, the horror of it! I felt as though I were wallowing in a filthy gutter. Even actually falling into a gutter would not have been so bad; with water and soap one could wash away the foul scum from the body. Not so easy to purify your mind soiled by such nasty printed stuff. It would take many nights of sleep to get rid of it. The hand which produces such gutter stuff should be cut off. (Kalki R.Krishnamurthy in Ananda Vikatan. 10-6-33 cited in Sunda: 1993, 52-53).

Beginning with the mid-1910s, most Tamil **magazines** such as, for instance, Ananda Bodhini and Vivekohdayam published novels in serial forms. In fact, magazines like Manamohini and Naveenagam existed solely for the purpose of publishing serialized novels. Other low priced periodicals such as the monthly Naveenaam edited by Nagai **C.Dhandapani** which first appeared in 1915 published novels in serial form. It was also the practice for periodicals devoted to fiction to offer bound volumes of an entire year's issues for sale. The growth of the Tamil novel was therefore inextricably linked with the rise of the magazine form. At the same time, the popularity of the Tamil magazine was due largely to the serialized fiction it offered readers. The novel and the magazine therefore existed in a parasitic relationship with each other.

Kalki tried his hand at two kinds of Tamil novels – the "social" novel and the "historical" novel – both of which emerged as rivals to the literature popular at that time. His predecessors Arani **Kuppuswami** Mudaliar, Vaduvur **K.Duraiswamy** lyengar and T.R Rangaraju specialized in detective stories, most of which were adaptations of and translations into Tamil from the

work of western novelists such G.W.M. Reynolds and Arthur Conan Doyle. The demand for these detective stories were so high that many publishing houses sprung up to keep pace with the growing readership. Reform Series, Viveka Chintamani Series, Hanumadwajam Series, Suguna Bodhini Series, Sri Vani Vilas Series, M.N.C Series, K.S.N Series, The Pleasure Creeper Series, Manamangalamalika Series, Janakanandhini Series, Prapanjamitran Series, Nitya Kalyani Series and Nithi **Malai** Series were among the publishing houses which produced hundreds of novels in the first three decades of the twentieth century.⁴ However, as is the case with most mass-produced "formulaic" fiction, these novels were deplored by literary critics such as V.A Gopalakrishna Iyer and **V.Muthukumaraswami** Mudaliar as lacking in taste and literary merit.⁵ **Kalki's** own work may be read as a deliberate attempt to "raise" the standards of fiction, to take the novel away from what he as well as other critics perceived as "vulgar" writing. Praising his novels for their tasteful elegance, high moral purpose and attention to detail literary critic K.V. **Rangaswamy** Iyengar says:

A critical perusal of [Parthiban **Kanavu**] made me realize that a star of the first magnitude had appeared in the firmament of historical fiction. (1951: xxi)⁶

The most famous of his social novels, **Tyaga Bhoomi** (serialized in **Ananda Vikatan** between 1938 and 1939 and then turned into a film) and **Alai Osai** (serialized in **Kalki** from March 1948 for eighteen months and published as a book in 1953) are clearly recognizable as sagas of nationalism. Kalki's historical novels, **Parthiban Kanavu** (serialized in **Kalki** in 1941 and published as a book in

1943), Sivakamiyin Sabatham (serialized in Kalki in 1944 and published as a book in 1948) and the voluminous Ponniyin Selvan (serialized in Kalki in 1950 and published in five volumes in 1959) recreate an ancient Tamil past to deal with questions of nation and nationalism in a manner that is both interesting as well as complex.

Partha Chatterjee argues that the new politics of nationalism situated the "women's question" in an "inner domain of sovereignty", "tradition" and "**national** culture", a domain that was comfortably distanced from the modern colonial state (1993: 117). He contends that by creating a home/world dichotomy wherein woman became a sign of home (and, by extension, of Indian culture), the nationalist project justified its selective appropriation of western modernity (1993:120). The new woman who emerged within nationalist discourse would be different both from the "traditional" woman as well as from the "Western" woman. Even as she was imaged as modern, she would display all the signs of national culture, thus reinforcing her essential difference from the "**Western**" woman (Chatterjee 1993, 9). Given their emphasis on a glorious South Indian past and chaste Tamil women, the serialized novels of Kalki are clearly attempts to create an Indian culture as essentially different from western culture. As I have already argued, the nationalist recovery of Tamil isolated English and not Hindi as the foreign Other. Moreover, these stories are also meant as inspirational nationalist texts.

The first two of these novels which form a trilogy are concerned with the history of the Pallavas and the last with that

of the Cholas. Though in narrative terms, Parthiban Kanavu (The Dream of Parthiban) is a sequel to Sivakamiyin Sabatham. the former, which was shorter, was serialized first, perhaps in order to gauge reader-response to historical fiction (see Appendix IV, 1 & 2). However, both novels were conceived simultaneously during Kalki's visit to the rock temples of Mahabalipuram, a short distance away from Madras city. In his introduction to Parthiban Kanavu. Kalki eulogizes the glorious Tamil past which Mahabalipuram represents:

Thousand three hundred years ago this beautiful land of Tamilnadu could boast of such highly skilled sculptors, sculptors who have created these marvelous sculptures of Mamallapuram! Tamilnadu also had kings who encouraged and patronized them. In that case, how highly developed our culture and social life must have been! Such progress and development can only be the result of centuries of effort in strengthening the arts, governance, education, and the morality of that society. (Kalki: 1957)⁷

Sunda describes Kalki's Mahabalipuram experience as **"autistic"** (1993: 88). In his introduction to Sivakamiyin Sabatham Kalki writes that the characters of Aayanar, **Sivakami**, Mahendra Pallava, **Mamallan**, Parthiban, Vikiraman, Arulmozhi, Kundavi, Ponnar, **Valli**, Kannan, **Kamali**, Pulikesi and Naganandi came to him suddenly as in a vision (1955: 1-2). Kalki's historical novels are at once constructed as true to historical fact and as bearing the marks of inspired writing. Historical material on the Pallavas and the Cholas, argue critics like **Rangaswamy** Iyengar, has been skillfully woven together by Kalki with fictional events and characters. The historical **"veracity"** of the narrative is seen as

enabled by Kalki's extensive research on the Pallava and Chola Kingdoms.⁸

To any one familiar with contemporary debates on nationalism, it is obvious that Kalki's construction of the past glories of the Pallava kingdom which Mahabalipuram epitomizes, his narration of the fulfillment of **Parthiban's** dream of national unification through the expansion of the Chola kingdom, his recreation of **an** imagined golden age which one has now presumably lost are all part of a particular kind of nationalist response to colonial rule. **Shivarama** Padikkal describes this sort of response as a move to "revive the traditional culture in order to prove that India too had a great civilization, and to cull out from old histories, records and stories those elements which would aid the conception of nationhood" (1993: 224). Unlike most dominant nationalist reconstructions of India's past which tend to rely heavily on the Aryan civilization and notions of a Vedic age, Kalki's stories are centred around a geographic-linguistic region which is distinctly non-Aryan and an imagined community which is a Dravidian community. Unlike most nationalist narratives, the Self both in **Sivakamiyin Sabatham** and **Parthiban Kanavu** is Dravidian and the Other is Pulakesi, the king of the Chalukya dynasty in North India. Throughout these narratives, Pulakesi is contrasted with the Pallava king Mahendra. While Pulakesi is represented as barbaric, essentially cultureless (witness his treatment of the dancer **Sivakami** in **Sivakamiyin Sabatham**), crafty, lecherous and despotic, Mahendra is every inch the noble and benevolent king under whose rule the arts flourish and subjects live in happy harmony.

It is interesting to reflect on the fact that even as Kalki was constructing a glorious Tamil past through his fiction, the non-Brahmin movement or the Dravidian movement was involved in a very similar exercise. Another aspect that Kalki appears to share with the ideologically very different Dravidian movement ideologues is his promotion of Tamil. Not only was Kalki directly responsible for the fashioning of a new and easy colloquial Tamil prose, he conducted a campaign through the columns of Ananda Vikatan for the inclusion of more Tamil songs in music concerts which, he argued, were dominated by Sanskrit and Telugu songs. However, Kalki's love for Tamil was constructed within the terms of nationalism. Professor Vaiyapuri Pillai's comment that Kalki "doesn't go searching closely for pure Tamil words; neither does he avoid the use of North Indian words" is instructive on this count. Even while Kalki was writing at a time when the Dravidian movement was recreating an ancient Tamil culture, the latter's ideological project, its constituency and its effects were very different from Kalki's. While Kalki's writings were read largely by the nationalist upper-caste and fed into a predominantly nationalist ethos created by the Indian National Congress and a Gandhian ideology, the Dravidian movement's emphasis on a Tamil past and a Tamil culture served to promote a Dravidian sub-nationalism based on a radically different caste politics from that promoted by a Congress nationalism. One might even read Kalki's historical fiction as essentially coopting the Dravidian movement's construction of a Tamil past into the project of nationalism. Such a cooption would have been

necessitated by the threat that the powerful mapping of "Tamil" culture and "Tamil" identity onto the non-Brahmin or the "Dravidian" subject would pose to the Tamil Brahmin, disinheriting him, in a sense, from "Tamilness" itself. Describing the linguistic regionalism promoted by the Kannada novel, Shivarama Padikkal has argued:

...the most significant motivating force behind the early Kannada novels is the search for a 'Karnataka-ness', an essence belonging to all Kannadigas. As print-media came into common use, the call for the unification of Karnataka arose. In the novels we begin to find the god-like figures of the kannadamatha (the Kannada mother). In different Indian languages too the novel discusses the rise and fall of linguistic empires in pre-British days. The same process of historical change and modernization', I would like to argue, underlies both the creation of linguistic identities as well as national identity. Language-centred regionalism and the concept of a nation that transcends linguistic divisions emerge as complementary notions. This is the unique feature of Indian nationalism, which stands at the juncture of English - which provided "modern¹ knowledge - and the vernaculars - which recast this knowledge into regional forms.
(1993:226)

While Padikkal's argument about the complementary nature of language-centred regionalism and the concept of a nation certainly holds good for **Kalki's** historical fiction, it does not help us explain the manner in which the Dravidian movement harnessed a linguistic and regional identity in a move to challenge rather than reinforce hegemonic conceptions of nation and nationalism. The next chapter which deals specifically with the Dravidian **movement** and its journals will enable us to understand better the conflicting uses to which an imagined Tamil past have been put, the vastly different political matrixes it has been part of.

Notes

¹ See Srividya Natarajan, "Another Stage in the Life of the Nation: Sadir, Bharatanatyam, Feminist Theory", unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Hyderabad, 1997.

² See Vir Bharat Talwar, "Feminist Consciousness in Women's journals in Hindi, 1910-1920," Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History, ed. Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989).

³ See Sumathi Ramaswamy, "En/gendering Language: The Poetics and Politics of Tamil Identity, 1891-1970", doctoral dissertation in History submitted at the the University of California, Berkeley in 1992 for a discussion on the processes by which Tamil was sought to be "nationalized". Ramaswamy has argued that a number of nationalist Tamils, paradigmatic amongst whom was the poet Subramaniya Bharathi, belonged to a tradition of thought which sought to forge links rather than emphasise the differences of Tamil identity and culture with the larger Sanskritic, North Indian whole. However, some of the most eulogistic of songs and essays that celebrated Tamil were written by nationalist Tamils. Some of these songs were deployed by the Dravidian movement activists as well. For instance, the Dravidian movement activist and poet-laureate Bharathidasan proclaimed himself a devotee of Bharathi.

⁴ See R.Dhandayudham, A Study of the Sociological Novels in Tamil (Madras: University of Madras, 1977): 100).

⁵Ibid: 102.

K.V.Rangaswamy Iyengar, Introduction, **Sivakamiyin** Sabatham. by **Kalki** (Madras: Vanathi, 1986): xxi. (Originally written in 1951).

⁷ Kalki, Introduction, Parthiban Kanavu Madras: Bharathi Pathipagam, 1957): 3.

⁸Set in the 7th century A.D, Sivakamiyin Sabatham (The Vow of Sivakami) tells the story of the Pallava dynasty. King Mahendra Pallava who rules from the capital city of Kancheepuram patronizes artists and craftsmen. Foremost amongst these is the master sculptor Ayanar. Hundreds of stone artisans work under the guidance of Ayanar to build Mamallapuram, the dream township of King Mahendra Pallava. Ayanar's daughter Sivakami, a beautiful and talented danseuse, and Prince Narasimha Pallava fall in love. However, the king is not very happy at the thought of his son marrying a commoner and discourages them in every way he can. The wandering Buddhist monk Naganandi (also known as Nilakesi), who, it is later disclosed, is the twin brother of the rival king Pulakesi, comes to South India to watch bharatanatvam performances. He too falls in love with Sivakami and is prepared to give up his monkhood to marry her. During a secretive second siege of Kanchi by the Chalukya army, Naganandi abducts an unwilling Sivakami to Vatapi, the capital city of the Chalukya kingdom and imprisons her in a palace. Taking advantage of his temporary absence, the vicious and cruel Pulakesi blackmails Sivakami into dancing on the streets, threatening her that he would ill-treat her co-prisoners from the Pallava kingdom if she did not cooperate. Even as Sivakami dances in order to save her fellow prisoners from indignities and torture, she vows never to leave Vatapi without seeing it reduced to ashes. **Prince Narasimha** and his close friend and army chief Paranjoti go in disguise to Vatapi in an attempt to rescue her. Sivakami however refuses to escape until the fulfillment of her vow. Prince Narasimha returns to Kanchi in anger and marries the Pandian princess to fulfill a promise to his dying father. Years later, Paranjoti and the Pallava army go to war with the Chalukyas and destroy Vatapi. When Sivakami returns to Kanchi, she is shocked to find that Narasimha, now the king, is married and has two children. She dedicates herself to the service of the temple of Ekambareshwarar at Kanchi.

Parthiban Kanavu (The Dream of Parthiban) is about the vicissitudes of the rulers of the small **Chola** kingdom overshadowed by the Pallavas. The Chola king Parthiban refuses to pay tribute to the Pallava king, Narasimha. Anticipating that the Pallavas would attack his kingdom any moment, he takes his young son **Vikraman** to a cave whose walls are filled with his paintings. The paintings depict **Parthiban's** dream of Chola supremacy. Vikraman promises to fulfill this dream. The Pallavas march into the Chola kingdom as expected and in the battle that ensues the Chola army is totally routed and Parthiban fatally wounded. Before his death however, a sivanadiyar (a Shiva devotee) who has somehow strayed onto the battlefield, promises to bring up **Vikraman** and make him a brave and worthy warrior. The sivanadiyar remains true to his word. Only later does the reader learn that he is none other than the Pallava king, Narasimha. **Vikraman's** step-brother **Marappan** plots against him and succeeds in getting him arrested by the Pallavas on the charge of challenging their rule over the Chola kingdom. As he is marched to prison, the

Pallava princess Kundavi sees him. The two fall in love with each other. Soon, Vikraman is deported from the Pallava kingdom. Traveling by ship, he arrives at Shenbaga island. The people of the island elect him king. After some years, Vikraman visits the princess Kundavi disguised as a gem merchant. Realizing that Marappan has recognized him, he returns to Urayur, the capital city of the Chola kingdom. On his way home through the forests, he is attacked by four people. He is helped by a stranger, Veerasenan (once again Narasimha Pallava in disguise). Veerasenan tells him the story of **Sivakami's** vow. It is this story within the story of Parthiban Kanavu that **Kalki** expanded for his second historical novel **Sivakamiyin Sabatham**. Marappan, who is the chief of the Chola army orders that Vikraman be arrested and sent to Kanchi. On the way, he is attacked by some **Kapalis (bhaktas** of Kali who practise human sacrifice) led by Kapala Rudra Bhairavan who is none other than Naganandi. He is saved by Ponnan, a boatman loyal to him. Accompanied by Ponnan, Vikraman meets his mother **Arulmozhi** and learns that she has been rescued from Naganandi by the sivanadiyars men. He also hears that the sivanadiyar's life is under threat, that he was going to be offered as a sacrifice to Kali by Kapala Rudra Bhairavan. Vikraman saves his foster father and is sent to Urayur for an enquiry. It is then that he learns that the mysterious sivanadivar who had helped him at various points in his life was none other than his father's rival, Narasimha Pallava. The Pallava king had sacrificed his own dream of unifying all kingdoms under his rule so that he could keep his promise to a dying man. He grants freedom to the Chola kingdom, giving Vikraman the status of a king. His daughter Kundavi marries Vikraman. However, **Parthiban's** dream of an extended Chola empire remains unfulfilled. It is only three hundred years later that **Rajaraja** Chola and **Rajendra** Chola fulfill this dream. This essentially is the story of the last novel in the trilogy Ponniyin Selvan. This rather long-winded story which, in book form, ran to some 2300 pages spread over five volumes, and, in serial form lasted for a period of three and a half years, defies any neat summarizing. Prince Arulmozhi, as Rajaraja Chola was known, is the grandson of Arinjayar who becomes king after his brother Kandaradithar dies. **Kandaradithar's** son Madurantakan is just a boy at the time and is considered too young to be crowned king even when Arinjayar dies. **Arinjayar's** son (**Arulmozhi's** father) Sundara Chola therefore succeeds him as king. **Arulmozhi's** brother Aditha Karikalan becomes crown prince. Madurantakan, who is married to the daughter of Chinna Pazhu Vetarayar, the Fort's security chief, desires the crown. King Sundara Chola falls ill at a time when both his sons are away. Arulmozhi is away fighting a battle in Srilanka with the aim of bringing it under Chola rule. His sister Kundavai too is away at Pazaiyerai. A conspiracy is afoot to make Madurantakan the king. **Arulmozhi's** friend Vandiaddevan who observes these developments is requested by Kundavai to fetch Arulmozhi from Srilanka. Vandiaddevan does her **bidding**. Some time later, the crown prince Aditha Karikalan is killed by Periya Pazhu Vetarayar and Vandiaddevan falsely charged with the murder. In the meantime, conspirators from the Pandian kingdom attempt to

kill Sundara Chola and Arulmozhi. Both escape, Vandidevan is freed of all the false charges and Sundara Chola is ready to set right an injustice of the past by crowning Madurantakan king. In an act of great self-denial, Arulmozhi too actively encourages Madurantakan's case and succeeds in installing him on the throne. He then embarks on an expansionist programme which brings glory to the Chola kingdom.