Chapter IV

The Liberated Women

Introduction

The third chapter presented the argument that in the conflict between the young and the old, Shelley and Bharatidasan stand firm on their atheistic rationalism and do not take side with either. Shelley supported Beatrice in her anti-patriarchal and anti-Papal stand. Bharatidasan upheld the cause of Iraniyan, who attempted to check his son, a believer and the spread of religion which was a threat to rationalism in the Dravidian soil.

The present chapter tries to focus on the poets as radicals who have created atheistic rational women as against conventional women. The poets highlight them as fighting not only for the liberation of their sex but also for the whole oppressed humanity. Atheistic rational women are shown as models and a guidance for generations of women to come.

The world witnesses today the emergence of many movements in support of women’s liberation. Though the
movements function under different labels, their ideologies are similar. They desire that women should be treated on par with men in all walks of life. The World Women Conference held in Beijing in 1995 is an evidence for women's upward march to promote sex equality and social dignity. It is a surprising turning point that the women of different nations, breaking all their social, political and religious boundaries came close together in Beijing; shared their problems; and determined to fight out the injustice done to their sex down the ages.

The Treatment of Women down the Ages: Religion

Christianity preaches that woman is the flesh of man's flesh and the bone of his bones; and it maintains that man and his wife are not two but one. Hinduism claims that Lord Shiva himself has given a half of Him to Uma Devi and he has been praised as 'Ardhanari'. But, in truth, what Christianity and Hinduism have preached is not practised. Woman has been treated either as subordinate or slave to man.

Social Conventions

Besides religions, social conventions were responsible for the oppression of women. Man was given
ower to lord over his wife and children as patriarch. Society vested him with economic powers to run the family. Politically, woman had no voting rights. Socially, she had no right to choose her life partner but had to accept the bridegroom of her parent's choice. Education was denied to her. She was assigned certain roles to play in the family. First she has to satisfy the physical needs of her husband. She had to produce children and should be the custodian of their moral beings. Whereas her husband had a such responsible role except that of a bread-winner. The wife who suffered for the family earned no appreciation or her service. She had to spend her life in anguish and ain till her death. Both the English and the Tamil women received similar treatment in the hands of men. The only difference between the English and the Tamil women was that the English women of Shelley's period were denied higher education. Even that too was partially rectified by Mary Wollstonecraft who started a College for women. In Tamilnadu, giving education to women was considered a 'sin' for ages and even after Independence in 1947.

The Role of the Intellectuals

Even the intellectuals like Plato had no regard for women. They believed that woman was meant for man's
pleasure and procreation. Rousseau who uttered the logans: "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity", seems to have had in mind only man's liberty, equality and fraternity, and not woman's. In his La Fémme, Rousseau bluntly says that "woman was made to give pleasure and to be subservient to man)."¹ Paul Foot, in his Red Shelley describes mainly the state of women in England and elsewhere in hristendom.

Women were not entitled to any independence. They did not have the vote. Their main job in life was to please their men folk. If men folk were not pleased, they took drastic measures. Wife-beating was not only permitted; it was not regarded by tasteful philosopher like Rousseau as a duty.²

aradoxically motherhood is glorified; womanhood is condemned. Women are elevated as saints and goddesses and re worshipped, but are treated with contempt at home and in society.

he Emergence of Radicals: the English Radicals

Such atrocities against women were not allowed to continue. Radicals rose against fanatical men and raised their voices in support of women's liberation. William lake was the first radical visionary in England who in his he Sisters of Albion expressed his concern for women's reedom. Mary Wolstonecraft tried to inspire the working
women to resist man's ill-treatment of women. Her *The Vindication on the Rights of Women* was the first of its kind which advocated the liberation of the middle class working women. It is described by the conventionalists as the book which attempted "to subvert the institution of marriage and the chastity of the female".³ Godwin's *Political Justice* was yet another book that shook the established institutions like the church and the state. He wanted the intellectuals of his time to discuss the issues raised by the book before entering into actions. His view that the institution of marriage was a fraud, shocked England. And his suggestion that young men and women should meet many times before getting into matrimonial alliance shocked the parents. *The Rights of Man* by Tom Paine and James Lawrence's *The Nairs of Kerala* were some of the significant books which influenced the radicals.

**The Tamil Radical Intellectuals**

In Tamil Nadu, Mayuram Vedanayagam Pillai, Vadalur Saint Ramalingam and Thiru. Vi.Ka. were the pioneers of women's liberation. *Perumal and penning perumai* highlight the many good roles that women play at home and in society. There was an awakening in the family and society that men began to think about the greatness of women. Namakkal poet Ramalingam Pillai in his *malarum*
malaiyum wrote: "To be born as a woman / One should do
great tapas (penance)." 

Subramaniya Bharati desired the evolution of woman
into 'New Woman'. His putumai penn created a new awakening
in favour of women. Bharati forcefully appealed to men not
to treat them as subordinates or slaves; instead, he
created new women who sing that they have come to the world
to do everything like men and desire to prove that they are
second to none. It kindled fire in the hearts of thousands
of women in Tamilnadu who had believed that their age-old
style of living was predestined. Bharati in "putumai penn"
sings:

To treat man and woman as equal
The world would grow up in knowledge
The woman with good virtues' stand
Is like mother Sivasakthi.
Coyness and fear need only to dogs
Wisdom, good virtues courage and freedom
Are the features of a woman of good family tradition.

Listen to the words of women goddess.

Periyar Ramasamy took up the issues of women
seriously and steered his disciples to shoulder women's
cause by revolting against conventions. He desired that
women should be brave and bold, rational and atheistic and
should enjoy all benefits like men. Shelley and
Bharatidasan, following the footsteps of the radicals of
their time created 'Liberated Women' as antithesis to the conventional women in order to bring social equality in the family as well as society. These 'Liberated Women' not only fight for the emancipation of their sect but also for the whole of oppressed humanity.

Shelley: the Rational Woman

Ianthe in Queen Mab is the first young rational woman of Shelley's creation. She boldly resists the 'icy chains of custom' and convention. She is awarded the boon to foresee a bright future. She is taught to preach the world to wait for the happy future which is sure to come. Helen is another young woman who breaks the convention by living under free union with her lover Lionel, a revolutionary. A child is born to them. Lionel's premature death leaves Helen a widow. She lives with the fond memories of him. Her free union does not affect her social standing. Lionel leaves by a will his property to her. Further Lionel's mother till her death treats her affectionately. Helen is a silent revolutionary who participates with Lionel in his struggle for establishing a new society. Cythna, the protagonist of The Revolt of Islam, is a revolutionary young woman who leaves home alone as a brave woman in order to remove Othman, the tyrant, from power and establish a new government caring for
equality and the well-being of the people. She appeals to the people to reject monarchy and religion and practise free union. She advises parents to take a mild attitude towards children, and the people to preserve social equality and human dignity. Asia in Prometheus Unbound is a rational domestic woman. She patiently resists oppression. Her life itself is a message to the people. Her encounter with Demogorgan, the Supreme God, with her appeal to dethrone Jupiter is a good example for all men and women who expect changes through peaceful means. Asia is a good 'satyagrahi' like her husband Prometheus in her bid to usher in a new social order.

Rational Women in Bharatidasan

In Bharatidasan, the readers come across many rational women. Each woman plays a specific role. Vanji, the protagonist of cañcīvi paravatattin cūrāl is the first rational woman that Bharatidasan has created. She rejects religion as a stumbling block to women's pursuit for a new social status. Amuthavalli, in purātτikkavī opposes varnashrama dharma; she marries Utharan, a poet belonging to the lower class of society, against her father's desire. n viṟattāi, Vijaya the Queen disguised as an old man, rives out the usurper in a single combat and regains the tate for her son, Sudarshan. She helps him to declare the
state a 'Republic' and believes as Sudarman does, that citizens will get all the good things only in a Republic and not in a monarchy. Annam, the heir to Pandiyan's throne in pantiyan pariva fights against the convention of royal succession and declares that she is ready to marry any person who retrieves Pandiya's casket. As she has expected, her lover Velan, an ordinary citizen brings the casket and she marries him. Readers feel that there is no rationality in her declaration to marry any person who comes with the casket. But she should be appreciated for her intelligence and for her strong faith in the power and the talent of her lover. She proves herself a shrewd and rational woman. Poongkothai in etirparata muttam is a romantic young woman who breaks the convention by leaving home in search of her lover Ponmudi to North India where the lovers are unfortunately killed by a blood thirsty North Indian. Minnoli, the daughter of a flower-woman in katalem kumulikal refuses to reciprocate the love of Vaiyathiral, the prince of Thiral Nadu. She desires that Alagan, the horseman of the prince, should go on horseback as the prince does and the women who make the Queen swing should also swing like the queen. She desires that all the people of the country like the royal family should get delicious food. Subbamma in tamilaccivin katti kills Sudarisan, the subedar, who rapes her. She proves herself
brave and bold. She earns the most respectable title 'acci' from De Singh, the ruler of Senji when Subbama holds her breath, and dies of asphyxiation before facing a trial. Muthammai in *etu palpóppu* marries three times much against the social convention which does not approve of widow's remarriage. Angamuthu marries her first but he dies soon. Thangamuthu weds her and a child is born to them. But he too dies after a year. Muthammai accepts the love of a widower and marries him.

Most of the young widows are rational women in Bharatidasan's writings. They question the veracity of the convention for using one yardstick to woman and another to man. The young widows find fault with the practice which permits even an old widower to marry whereas a young widow is denied remarriage. Komalavalli in *vántóppil manam* bemoans that when she was young, a rich man married her. Following his death she has to remain a widow till her death. Sornam, in *kátar kurraválikal* is prevented from loving Sundaram. It is said that Sornam was married in her infancy and had lost her boy-husband. Velan's lover in *katalai títta kattupṟatu* is scolded and cursed by her parents and brother for falling in love with a man even after becoming a widow.

Some of the conventional parents are seen accepting
and appreciating their daughter’s choosing their helper mates. In _perumār_ the parents are happy over the daughter’s choice of her future husband. The parents in _makalē valka_ approve of their daughter’s selecting her future husband. First the parents want to know about the birth, parentage and caste of the bridegroom but the daughter mildly replies to the parents that he belongs to human caste and is not a monkey. In _mata tirumana_ the mother of a young girl curses the convention which accepts matchless marriage. Verkanni in _eluciyurra penkal_ drives Ponnur Panditan away threatening him with a knife when he attempts to seduce her. For the first time, Bharatidasan has created a young woman who chased a stupid scholar out who underestimates a woman’s chastity.

A study on Bharatidasan’s women would be incomplete if Nakaimuthu and Thagam are left out. _kutumpa vilakkul_ shines forth brightly because of these two women characters: Nakaimuthu, the daughter-in-law, and Thangam, the mother-in-law. In most of the families, in India, it is acknowledged, that there is no love lost between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law. Thangam and Nakaimuthu are the exceptions. Both love each other. Mother-in-law listens to the views of the daughter-in-law as an affectionate as well as a responsible woman. When
Nakaimuthu tells her mother-in-law that she should be permitted to set up a separate family. Thangam readily agrees to it. Thangam further accepts Nakaimuthu's view that lavish spending on marriage should be avoided. Thangam stands apart as a great lady who breaks the convention and paves a new road to peaceful domestic life. She welcomes the birth of a female child in the family. Infanticide of the female child prevails in certain sections of the Tamil society even today. Thangam appeals to the womenfolk to spend their leisure in social service.

Shelley and Bharatidasan are not satisfied merely with creating rational women as an antithesis to conventional women. But they are keen on highlighting the merits of the rational women over the traditional women. Shelley selected Rosalind and Helen - Rosalind the conventional woman, and Helen the rational woman; and Bharatidasan chose Thangam and the heroine (without name) of irunța vītu. Thangam represents rational women and the unnamed heroine stands for the illiterate woman.

Merits of Rational Women over Conventional Women: Rosalind and Helen - A study

Rosalind and Helen are friends who when they meet each other after a few years have become widows. They
inquire about each other's life till then. Rosalind narrates her tragic story. She says that she loved a young man and went up to the altar for marriage, but it was broken when her father revealed that Rosalind's lover was her half-brother. The brother died of shock at the altar and she married another man at the same altar. She thought that her life would be happy. But she found soon that her husband was a religious fanatic and lover of gold. She was loyal to him; bore children and did all her domestic duties without fail as a devoted wife. But her greedy husband insulted and ill-treated her. Even his death did not give her relief. Her wicked husband, in his will branded her 'immoral' and separated the children from her. He furnished the reasons as follows:

She is adulterous, and doth hold
In secret that the Christian creed
Is false, and therefore is much need
That I should have a care to save
My children from eternal fire.22

Rosalind tells Helen that the children are now with her. But she has to bear the insult of her husband till her death.

Helen has a different story to tell. She says that she had free union with Lionel, a revolutionary. She lived with him happily. A son was born to them. But Lionel died
of poor health (caused by his imprisonment for radical views). It was a great shock to her. She thought that she had lost everything in life. But it was not so.

That Lionel great wealth had left
By will to me, and that of all
The ready lies of law bereft
My child and me, might well befall. 23

Now, Helen says that she lives with the fond memories of Lionel.

Rosalind married a man and it was a conventional marriage. Helen lived with her lover Lionel under free union. Rosalind suffered following the ill-treatment of her conventional and fanatical husband whereas Helen enjoyed life with her non-conventional lover. The relationship between Rosalind and her fanatic husband was impaired by the suspicion of Rosalind's husband that Rosalind was incestuous. Her incest was an accident. She did not know that her lover was her half-brother. But Rosalind was insulted, ill-treated and branded by her husband as 'immoral'. And in public she was put to shame. She was punished for no fault or sin of hers. If she had married her half-brother, she would have led a happy life. Since religion and convention regarded such a love as a sin, "she went forth from the same church door / To another husband's bed". 24 And her life became a hell. Further,
Christian convention treats incestuous love as a sin. It is evident that religious fanaticism and stiff social conventions have spoiled the happy life of Rosalind. Helen broke the convention and incurred the displeasure of the conventionalists but she lived happily and even after the death of Lionel she led a happy life with the sweet memories of him.

Thangam and the Heroine of irunta vitu—A Study

Thangam, the protagonist of kutumpa vilakku is an anti-conventional lady. She is a woman of common sense and rational thinking whereas the heroine of irunta vitu is just the opposite of Thangam; she is illiterate and stupid. When Thangam runs her family well; moves with her neighbours in a friendly way and approaches the issues of the young women sensibly, the heroine of irunta vitu behaves stupidly even with the members of her family. She does not treat her husband properly and does not take care of her children and even fails in hospitality when her brother visits her house. If she had been educated, she would have been refined and led a decent life.

A rational woman is eager to learn and acquire knowledge and share knowledge with others. She leads a happy and friendly life with her neighbours whereas a
conventional woman like the heroine of 'irunta vilu' never bothers about the usefulness of education. She, like the woman of the past, wishes to be ignorant and leads a blind life.

An Analysis - The Poets' Approach to Rational Women

The poets are different in highlighting the merits of the rational women over the conventional women. When Shelley recommends free union, as the yardstick to measure the merit of rational life, Bharatidasan has used education as the yardstick for the same purpose. The difference in their approach is quite reasonable. When Indian women live as illiterate and ignorant, Bharatidasan cannot think about 'free union' or 'free' love which he considers immoral, and the acts of uncivilized society.

Cythna and Vanji: An Intensive Study

Shelley and Bharatidasan have created their women protagonists with great care. As in Shakespeare's comedies, there are only heroines not heroes in all the major works of Shelley and Baratidasan. The women characters are made exclusively to represent the voice of the poets. They are revolutionaries in nature; independent in thinking and skilful and talented in executing their thoughts into action. They are educated, rational
and atheistic; and they are crusaders who suffer for the cause of women as well as the oppressed humanity. They never hesitate to sacrifice their life for the principles they hold.

Cythna and Vanji: As Educated and Knowledgeable Women

Education opens the gates of light. The rational women who walk on the path of light would be more radiant and confident in all their efforts to change the world into a rational one.

Cythna is an educated young woman, growing amid the beauties of nature. Being a student of history, she is devoted to freedom and love. She comes fresh from the University and she knows about the politics of the world as well as their merits and demerits.

Vanji has no formal education. Being a girl belonging to the hunters' clan she could not get primary education. But she is rich in common sense and can interpret the events and incidents which happen around her. Vanji's interpretation of two incidents in cañeivi parvatattin cūral - one about the stand taken by the western world on the racial issue and the British view of political independence to India, and the other about the ignorant Indians and the exploitation of the Indian mass by
the religious exponents show that Vanji, though not literate, is rich in common sense.

**Cythna and Vanji: As Brave and Bold**

Cythna bidding good bye to Laon leaves alone boldly for the golden city to start her struggle against Othman, the tyrant. She tells her friend Laon: "Laon, I am not weak" and she continues:

And though my cheek might become pale the while,  
With thee, if thou desirest, will I seek  
Though their array of banded slaves to wreak  
Rain upon the tyrants, I have thought  
It was more hard to turn my unpractised cheek  
To scorn and shame, and this beloved spot  
And thee, O dearest friend, to leave and murmur not.

Cythna faces a major set-back in her onward march to achieve the desired goal. She is taken captive by the soldiers of Othman and is put in a cave prison, where no one dares to enter except an eagle. Unless Cythna is brave, she cannot stay in such a place under such a frightful atmosphere. She says:

"he [Othman] laid me in a cave  
Above the waters, by that chasm of sea,  
A fountain round and vast, in which the wave  
Imprisoned, boiled and leaped perpetually  
Down which, one movement resting, he did flee,  
Winning the adverse depth; that spacious cell  
Like an hulaithric temple wide and high,  
Whose aëry dome is inaccessible,  
Was pierced with one round cleft through which the  
sun beams fell."
Cynthia is raped in the cave-prison by Othman. He believes that a raping would tame a woman’s spirit. The king does not understand that she is a rational woman of strong heart who could bear any insult inflicted on her sex by uncivilized men. Earthquake rocks the prison-cave and it is pulled down. She is rescued by a ship which is bound for the golden city. According to her early plan, the golden city is the centre for her struggle for human freedom. She is never afraid of men. When Laon has fallen in the midst of enemy-soldiers, she plunges into the battle-field on her Tartar horse with a shout "Mount with me, Laon"!28 and rescues him from danger. It shows her bravery and tells that she is a born-adventurer who is ready to face any challenge on earth. The initial victory of the revolutionary army brings joy in her heart, but in the second battle, she loses all her forces. Even then she is courageous and remarks "All is not lost".29 The bloody war affects the country. People suffer from poverty, hunger, disease and death. Religious men exploit the situation and blame that rebel-army is responsible for the sorry plight of the country. They demand human sacrifice particularly the sacrifice of Cynthia and Laon, to assuage the anger of the Gods.
Cythna is not afraid of execution. When the tyrant breaks his promise and demands that Cythna must die with Laon on the pyre, to everybody's surprise, she springs from her gigantic steed,

Who, like a shade
Chased by the winds, those vacant street among
Fled timeless, as the brazen rain she flung
Upon his neck, and kissed his mooned brow.
A piteous sight, that one so fair and young,
The clasp of such a fearful death should woo
With smiles of tender joy as beamed from Cythna now. 30

The whole life of Cythna has been a challenge and a sacrifice. She faces innumerable sufferings for the sake of her principles. One may wonder whether such boldness and bravery is possible for a woman. Joan of Arc had power, boldness and bravery. But she admitted that the power of God worked in her. It is Shelley who believes that the power of Joan of Arc can be found in a rational woman even without the help of a supernatural agency.

Vanji cannot be equated with Cythna for bravery and boldness but Vanji's boldness cannot be under-estimated. When Kuppan, her lover, prevents her from trying to adventure as they may have to face wild animals and reptiles on the way to the top of the Sanjivi hills, she firmly says that she will go alone to the top of the mountain; search out the miraculous herbs and test the
truth of their power. Else, she says that she will throw herself from the mountain and die:

I’ll climb up the Canjeevi Hill
Alone and learn the secrets of the herbs!
If my search for them fails
I know how to kill myself
Falling down from the top of the hill!
O feathered peacock!
All the other girls of this village
Are blessed with a life of joy
Having attained as their lords
Those who fulfil their wishes!
Tell my lord who hisses like a serpent
That I proceed to the Canjeevi Hills
Searching for the herbs,!

Analysis

Cythna’s voluntary death is criticised as a cowardly act and her indulgence in free union is considered unwarranted in a revolutionary woman. Vanji’s threat to commit suicide shows only her firmness in her effort to know the truth about the herbs. The power, the force, and the vigour of Cythna are unquestionably true. Vanji is a Cythna in miniature. Both Shelley and Bharatidasan have used ‘Suicide’ or voluntary death as one of the weapons to convert the world to their rational principle.

Cythna and Vanji as Rational Women

Among the rational women Shelley and Bharatidasan present, Cythna and Vanji stand apart as atheistic rational
new women. It does not mean that the other rational women found in their other works are believers of God. Of all the women, the poets have created, Cythna and Vanji are made to propagate their atheistic principles, and to view all the human issues from the rational point of view. Some of the most important social issues taken up by them with an atheistic missionary zeal are:

1. the abolition of human slavery; 2. the equality of sex; 3. the mild approach of the parents towards their children; 4. the abolition of conventional marriage as an Institution; 5. the rejection of religion; and 6. the establishment of human brotherhood.

The Abolition of Slavery: Cythna

Cythna supports abolition of slavery. She handles the issue in a different way. She, instead of making a speech herself on the evils of slavery, allows a slave to speak out the agony that they experience. One of the slaves, carried along with the ship-load of slaves to the Golden city tells painfully:

---Yes, we are wretched slaves,
Who from their wonted loves and native land
Are rift, and bear O'er the dividing waves,
The unregarded pray of calm and happy graves.
Cythna desires that the slaves should join her and fight for their liberation and should not foolishly dream that somebody from the society would emerge and fight for their liberty and equality.

The Abolition of Slavery: Vanji

Vanji could not tolerate racial and colour discrimination. They are marks of slavery. All Europeans except the French practise colour discrimination. The Frenchman stands in the place of a slave and tries to express to the fellow Europeans the feelings of the slaves.

Our French brothers
\[\text{would never entertain such discrimination!}\]
\[\text{Nor would they allow}\]
\[\text{Their old renown to degrade!}\]
\[\text{I don’t like discrimination!}\]
\[\text{Fee on it! ao! ao! ao!}\]
\[\text{No room has France}\]
\[\text{For those who discrimination!}\]  

Shelley’s and Bharatidasan’s approach to slavery is similar in nature. The protagonists identify themselves with the members of the society and listen to the views of the slaves or the views of men who hate slavery. Cythna, like the other members of the ship, listens to the views of the slaves regarding the evils of slavery. Similarly Vanji listens to the Frenchman who scolds an Italian for ill-
treat the blacks.

2. **Equality of Sex: Cythna**

Equality of sex is another important issue that draws Cythna's attention. Man and woman are born free and equal but society treats women as inferior to man. Religion calls man patriarch, the head of the family. The state bestows on him economic power to run the family. Custom insists that wife and children should obey the father and follow his instructions. Most men, instead of treating the wives and children well, treat them badly and even cruelly. Cythna asks whether women and their children should accept such life. She asks further whether women are born slaves. She demands women's equality and makes her appeal to the public.

Can man be free if woman be a slave?
Chain one who lives, and breathes this boundless air,
The corruption of a closed grave
Can they whose mates are beasts, condemned to bear
Scorn, heavier far than toil or anguish, dare
To trample their oppressors in their home
Among their babes, thou knowest a curse would wear
The shape of woman - hoary crime would come
Behind, and Fraud rebuild religion's tottering dome; 34

Free love attracts Cythna's attention. She firmly believes that sex equality could be achieved only when free love is accepted and practised.
Equality of Sex: Vanji

Vanji is keen on men-women equality. She retorts to Kuppan, her lover, when he scolds her to keep quite like a woman. She retorts:

Do you deny freedom of speech to woman?  
Do you consider woman kind  
Worse than the need?  
Until women are in bondage,  
Freedom of this great land  
Spoken high is nothing more  
Than the hare’s horns!  
So long as you consider  
Women as more deaf mutes,  
The fate of men, too  
Would be that of the turtle.  
If you render woman senseless  
The standard of the green crops (the children)  
Grown in that land too would remain the same!  
Speak not this would ill of  
These noble lone of Bharath  
Who bring disgrace to women -  
Women as charming as paintings?  

Both Cythna and Vanji advocate sex-equality. But Cythna feels that sex equality could be achieved only through free love or free union whereas Vanji believes that it could be done only through freedom of speech. The difference in their attitude is not surprising. The British women, during Shelley’s time, had already been given education. Even higher education of women was encouraged. Mary Astell had run a College for women. There was freedom of speech for women. But in India, even
primary education was denied to female children. Parents, particularly mothers prevented daughters from pursuing education, as a Tamil proverb says, "Why education for woman who is to work in the hearth?" Women were prevented to speak both in the public places and in their own houses as free as men. So, Vanji's emphasis on freedom of speech is reasonable.

3. The Attitude of the Parents towards Children

Cynthia's and Vanji's care for children are quite evident. The children are the joy of the family, the hope and the haven of the parents. When they grow under the love, affection, care and guidance of the parents they will prove themselves a realization of the parents' dreams.

Cynthia's approach towards children is interesting. Parents', in the name of convention thrust hard and fast rules upon children. As a result, children repulse and sometimes they revolt against parents. Cynthia wants parents to have mild attitudes towards children. She says:

``But children near their parents tremble now,
Because they must obey - one rules another,
And as one power rules both high and low,
So man is made the captive of his brother,
And Hate is throned on high with Fear her mother,
Above the Highest - and those fountain - calls,```
Whence love yet flowed when faith had choked all
other,
Are darkened - woman as the bond - slave dwells
Of man, a slave; and life is poised in its wells.36

Vanji summarily speaks in support of the children. She
opines that the children will be senseless if the mothers
are made senseless things by men.

The attitude of Cythma and Vanji to the treatment of
the children by the parents is alike in spirit. Both of
them desire that children should be brought up in a free
and happy atmosphere. It is said that Shelley expresses
his dislike of his father through Cythma.

4. Abolition of Marriage

Marriage has been accepted as an institution,
legalised by the State and sanctified by religion. It is
treated as an unbreakable social contract that man and his
wife should preserve till death.

Marriage: Conventional Attitudes

The early Greeks like Socrates and Plato believed
that marriage had "no other end than to produce children in
the families for the State".37 Aristotle realised that
"Man does not unite with a woman solely for procreation,
but also for seeking what is indispensable to exist".38
Plutarch, five centuries later praised marriage for love in
the highest terms: "The physical union with one's wife is a source of friendship; it is like sharing a great mystery together". St. Paul had written that "marriage is a great mystery". Hinduism sees the marriage between man and woman in the concept of "Siva-Sakthi" as inseparable and cosmic in nature.

As years passed by, man dominated woman. Woman was made his slave. Unable to bear the atrocities of men, "the highest ranked ladies of Poitou and of France" left home and sought refuge in the women's convent founded by Robert d'Arbrissel in 1101 at Fontenurnault against the gross tyranny of feudal and Catholic marriages. The women of lower birth were deserted by their cruel husbands, and forced them to indulge in prostitution. Their life ended in shame and death.

Cythna's Rejection of Marriage in Support of Free Love

Shelley's Cythna is the first woman who not only touches the inner hearts of the millions of male dominated women in Europe but also finds that conventional marriage conducted by the State, religion and parents is responsible for women's sufferings and sorrows. She advocates free love in the place of marriage as the only remedy for the suffering women of the world.
Cythna rejects marriage as "common bondage". She wants that the common bondage should be broken to enjoy love under lawless union. She believes that lawless love brings solace to the sorrowing generations of men and women. She says:

:- man and woman,
Their common bondage burst, may freely borrow,
From lawless love a solace for their sorrow. 42

and girl brought up in the same house or between the children of the same father or mother as free and lawless. She claims that such love is natural and spontaneous and should not be considered incestuous. She argues:

And such is nature's law divine, that those
Who grow together cannot choose but love.
If faith or custom do not interpose,
Or common slavery mar what are nightmare
All gentlest thoughts. 43

Woman has many advantages from free love. Women need not be subservient to man. She could live with any man of her choice as long as love exists between them. If she or he or both find that there is no love lost between them, they are free to part as friends. The question of divorce does not arise. Neither prostitution nor chastity affects her social standing. Because both prostitution and
chastity are out of place in the domain of free sex.

Vanji’s Views on Marriage

Vanji speaks nothing about the concept of marriage and free love in cañcīvi parvatattattī gāral. But she believes in marriage as an institution. She loves Kuppan her lover whole-heartedly but she desires that both should be approved as husband and wife by the society. It is well expressed by Vanji when Kuppan refused to take her to the Sanjivi mountain as he promised. She says:

All the other girls of this village
Are blessed with a life of joy
Having attained as their lords
Those who fulfil their wishes.44

Vanji believes in the marital life, but she does not think of free love or incestuous love. She desires freedom in love. Kuppan is her own choice.

Cythna and Vanji on Marriage — an Analysis

Both Cythna and Vanji are anti-conventional, but they take different stand in the matter of marriage as an institution. Cythna condemns marriage as an agreement for woman’s slavery and advocates free love as a tool to break the conventional shackles and to set woman free to live with man as equal and free. Vanji accepts marriage free from religious convention which permits superstition to
blind the reasons of men. She never thinks of free love as the remedy for the ills of the traditional marriage. The difference in their views on marriage is reasonable. Cythna has in her mind the Christian-sponsored European marriage laws which are liberal to men but strict to women. They are partial in nature. Cythna finds marriage as the symbol of women's slavery whereas Vanji regards marriage as acceptable.

5. Rejection of Religion: Cythna and Vanji

The nineteenth century England and the second decade of twentieth century India witnessed atheistic women coming out openly and raising anti-religious slogans. The faith in religion, gods and priests is seen slowly decreasing, and rationalism is found spreading. Cythna and Vanji are the first atheistic rational women in English and Tamil literature. Mary Wollstonecraft the rational feminist, revolted against oppressive conventions, particularly against marriage, but never did she go into the premise of religion as boldly as Shelley. Mary Astell, the feminist and polemist elaborated rational thoughts in her A Serious Proposal to the Ladies part-II (1697). And in her Some Reflections on Marriage she presented the institution of marriage "as potentially the most tyrannical of
relationships and advised that women should not enter into them lightly. The preface added in 1706 asked: “If all are born free, how is it that women are born slaves?” It is she never questioned the existence of God nor attacked religion, as Shelley does. Similarly in Tamil Literature Nārāti projected “putumai pen” as a rational woman who ejected conventions and superstitions, but not God. It is Shelley and Bharatidasan who for the first time in their respective countries created atheistic rational women’s “New woman” – as the model for the future generation of men who would inspire the people to form an atheistic rational society.

ythna

Of all the atheistic women that Shelley has created, ythna is the first woman who attacks God and religion so scathingly, brutally and openly. She could be described as the human equivalent to Queen Mab. While rejecting the concept of God she says:

Men say that they themselves have heard and seen
Or known from others who have known such things,
A shade, a Form, which Earth and Heaven between
Wields an invisible rod.

ythna is confident that the concept of God would disappear in the free State. She calls “The Almighty God” as
"Almighty Fear" who would not find a place when a rational society emerges. She tells:

Almighty Fear
The fiend-God, when our charmed name he hear,
Shall fade like shadow from his thousand names,
While truth with Joy enthroned o'er his last Empire reigns! 48

Cythna tries to establish that there is no God and remarks that men created God as they imagined and they called him by different names. Each man claims that the God whom he believes in is the true God and all other Gods are false. The Priests drag the non-believers to pyre for torture and death. About the quarrel over God she tells:

And Oromaze, Joshua and Mahomet,
Moses and Buddh, Zerdust and
Brahm and Foe,
A tumult of strange names, which never met
Before, as watch words of a single woe,
Arose; each raging votary 'gan to throw
Aloft his armed hands, and each did howl
'Our God alone is God'. 49

She attacks priests who engineer torturing the non-believers of God.

'T was an Iberian Priest from who it came,
A zealous man, who led the legioned west,
With words which faith and pride had steeped in flame,
To quell the unbelievers; a dire guest
Even to the friends was he, for in his breast
Did hate and guile lie watchful, intertwined,  
Twin serpents in one deep and winding nest,  
He loathed all faith beside his own, and pined  
To wreak his fear of Heaven in vengeance on mankind.  

Vanji as an Atheistic Rational Woman

Vanji denies the divinity of Rama and the supernatural power of Hanuman, His disciple. She aims at exposing the priestly man (Upanyasi) who fill his stomach by earning money through spreading superstitious stories among the people. She condemns such stories and the men who spread them. The reason is that the priestly men with their superstitious stories blind the reason of men and drive them to ignorance and damnation.

Vanji has broken the convention which insists that women should be the custodian of religion. She comes out as a rational atheistic woman who converts her lover to the rational path. She is satisfied that she is successful in her mission in at least changing the attitude and the way of life of her lover Kuppan.

Cythna and Vanji as Rational Women: an Analysis

Cythna and Vanji are similar in spirit in attacking religion and the priests. They condemn the priests and religious exponents as selfish men who exploit the people
for their own living. The Iberian priest desires the death of Cythna on the pyre along with Laon lest allowing irreligious Cythna might lead to the spread anti-religious propaganda.

Cythna differs from Vanji in her understanding of the concept of God and religion. When Cythna attacks all religions of the world as misleading the people to ignorance, fear and superstition, Vanji blames Hinduism in particular as the source of the spread of superstition in the name of God who does not exist at all.

Cythna and Vanji as Martyrs

Martyrs are persons who suffer and die for their beliefs and principles. Cythna is a martyr. Her struggle for equality and the liberty of humanity culminates in her death on the pyre. Though she does not succeed in her efforts to establish an atheistic rational society, she strives to establish it until her voluntary death. Her life is the symbol of struggle and sacrifice.

Vanji is not a martyr. But she has the spirit of it in her abundantly. When Kuppan refuses to take her to the top of Sanjivi hill, she tells him firmly that she would go alone to the top of the hill and search for the herbs. Failing which she asserts that she would throw herself from
the mountain and die. She is willing to sacrifice her life for the principles she holds.

Cythna and Vanji are women of commitment. Their firmness differs in degree as Cythna is a crusader directly confronting the conventional rulers, whereas Vanji criticises conventionalists. The seed of crusade is well hidden in her.

A Deeper Study - Marriage and Religion

An estimate of the characters of Cythna and Vanji reveals that they are atheistic rational women who audaciously reject male chauvinism and religion. Their advocacy of the abolition of slavery, their desire for equality of sex, their recommendations of a mild attitude among parents towards their children and their wish for the establishment of a new brotherhood whether it is regional or universal are well received even by the conventionalists. But Cythna's appeal for the abolition of marriage in support of free love and Vanji's propagation for abolition of religious marriage incurred attacks from conventionalists. Further, Cythna and Vanji's rejection of god and religion as superstitions and the priests as the exploiters who corrupt and mislead the society for their own benefits are strongly objected to by the conventionalists as blasphemous and insidious propaganda.
upon religion.

Marriage: Shelley's Views and the Conventionalists' Views

Shelley in his "Note on Queen Mab", states clearly his stand on marriage, prostitution and chastity. He claims that marriage is an anti-thesis to free love. It compels man and woman to remain husband and wife even after knowing well that there is no love lost between them. Shelley describes such marriage as "an intolerable tyranny". 51 "The narrow and unenlightened morality of Christian religion is an aggravation of these evils." 52 He declares that constancy has nothing virtuous in itself. He is convinced that the view that "wedlock is indissoluble" is unbelievable. 53

Speaking about prostitution as a social evil done by women, Shelley retorts, "Prostitution is the legitimate off-spring of marriage and its accompanying errors. It is less venial than murder." 54 Shelley feels that women indulge in prostitution for economic reason. Economic independence and free love alone will save women from entering into prostitution. He considers chastity an unnecessary imposition on women. He tells, "chastity is a monkish and evangelical superstition, a greater foe to natural temperance, even than an intellectual sensuality;
it strikes at the root of all domestic happiness, and consigns more than half of the human race to misery, that some few may monopolize according to law".55 Shelley is convinced that the abolition of marriage would result in a natural arrangement of sexual connection. Shelley implies free love by the term "a natural arrangement of sexual connection".56

The conventionalists do not admit Shelley's views on marriage, prostitution and chastity. They agree that there are certain flaws in the institutions of marriage but they feel that the institution of marriage is a haven for women and they believe that only in marriage, women find safety and happiness. Women escape from cheats and culprits who attempt to seduce them by making false promises. Women are prevented from becoming a common object of sexual pleasure to men. Marriage makes the society aware that woman is inseparable from the concept of family, society and state. She is the cosmic reality - equal and free.

Conventionalists further express that society should be well disciplined to ensure happiness. Man and woman are expected to be chaste. Chastity is imposed upon woman seriously because, of the two, she alone is the victim. So the bond of chastity would save her from male-exploiters. Conventionalists condemn prostitution as a social evil.
Sanity of society could be well preserved if woman does not indulge in prostitution. They do not totally accept Shelley's view that prostitution is done by woman because of poverty. It cannot be denied that poverty is one of the reasons for prostitution, but it is not the only reason.

Shelley's ideas on marriage and his arguments for dissolving a marriage are refuted by William Johnson Fox with two assumptions: a man will roam if not forcibly held to one spot; and secondly, a woman is inherently weak and unable to take care of herself. "Men may be often false; may often forget the vows sworn at the alter, and venture to taste, "forbidden fruits" but to make falsehood a creed, villainy a profession and injustice a moral duty, is a measure of guilt, for which language has no adequate expression". 57

He further defines the problem:

Man sighs, vows and betrays: woman believes, confides and is undone. The treasure is rifled; and the robber hastens on the high-road of pleasure to make other victims. The institution of marriage checks, though it does not eradicate this. It takes care, at least, that part of the female sex shall be, in some degree, protected from the caprice of the lords of creation. 58

It cannot be gainsaid that women suffer at the hands of wicked and cruel husbands. But "There are good marriages; there are delightful ones," 59

Rochefoucauld.
maintains. Madame du Daffand exclaims, "We still find good households among the people of lower classes, but among the people of quality, I do not know a single example of reciprocal affection nor of faithfulness." It may be inferred that Shelley's views on marriage are idly drawn. He is seen presenting the problems of married women belonging to the higher strata of society, not of the married women of the other sections of society. Shelley fails to realise that "a great marriage...dispenses with the companionship and condition of love".

Incestuous love, advocated by Shelley, as one of the elements of free love incurs severe criticism. Rosalind and Helen and The Revolt of Islam speak in support of incestuous love. A reference to incestuous love is found in Rosalind and Helen. Roselind tells how a brother and his sister were burnt to death by the convention-ridden society for their incestuous love. Even the child born to them was torn to pieces. Rosalind herself is prevented from marrying her lover when her father tells her that he is her brother by another woman. In the original version of The Revolt of Islam, Laon and Cythna were represented as brother and sister who indulged in sexual act, but later, because of the publishers' request, they were retold as friends brought up since youth in the same household. They
enjoy free union in the retreat after the defeat at the hands of Othman, the tyrant king. In Cenci, Cenci the father rapes his daughter Beatrice.

There are two possible arguments placed infavour of Shelley's using incest in his Rosalind and Helen, The Revolt of Islam and The Cenci. One is that Shelley, following the literary tradition which uses incest as theme in literature, handles incest in his works. The other is that incest is a social issue, which is ostracised by the state and the church as a sin. Being a social revolutionary and the propagator of free love, Shelley attempts to preach incestuous love as one type of free love. He claims that there is no sin in practising it. Conventionalists fear that incestuous relationship is bound to affect progeny. Further, medical science advises people to keep off from incestuous love. It warns that infirm and unhealthy children would be born in such relationship. Shelley is against polygamy and polyandry. Because, he is firm that men should have sexual relations with one woman at a time and vice versa. Free Love insists on strict loyalty between lovers. Shelley is against promiscuous love. He does not approve of it as free love.

Shelley's advocacy for the abolition of marriage, and for the practice of free love instead is not so far
admitted by society. A majority of the people believe that laws are necessary for the smooth running of the society, particularly in the matter of sex and relationship between man and woman. Family is a basic unit. If no system is followed, the basic structure of the civilized society would end in disaster. Under free love, woman cannot be free and independent. Primitive man, who lived in jungles, enjoyed free sex. Healthy and strong man had many women for his pleasure and enjoyment. He became a threat to any woman who desired to live with the man of her choice. She felt insecure. Beautiful women were abducted and raped. As years went by, man became civilized and felt the necessity of living together as social beings. Rules were framed and restrictions imposed. A man was allowed to live with only one woman till his death. It was considered an ideal life.

Unfortunately, man proves to be selfish. He breaks the convention for his convenience. He wants her to remain subordinate to him. There begins the sufferings of women. The institution of marriage becomes questionable.

Shelley, being an advocate of sex-equality, proposes free love in order to make woman equal to man in sexual pleasure as well as in other social activities. But his proposal for free-union does not yield the desired result.

Free love does not work out even among the members
of the Shelleyan circle. Harriet, the first wife of Shelley, refuses to exercise free love when Hogg, a friend of Shelley's, desire it. Godwin who condemns marriage as an institution of fraud expresses his satisfaction and happiness when Shelley marries Mary in a church. He wrote to a friend, "Mary has now ... acquired a station and character in society".

Free love could be looked upon as an intellectual precept like Plato's. It is difficult to practice. Shelley himself expresses his inability to exercise free love. Shelley wrote to Godwin complaining of his attitude: "a young family, innocent and benevolent and united, should not be confounded with prostitutes and seducers."

Marriage: Bharatidasan's View

Bharatidasan has, like Shelley, expressed clearly his views on marriage, prostitution, chastity, polygamy and polyandry. Bharatidasan rejects conventional marriage sanctified by religion and Aryan culture. He accepts the Tamil antiquity and rational principles of Dravidian movement led by Periyar Ramasamy for the advocacy for marriage. Bharatidasan's poem puratchi tirumana tittham deals with how a marriage should be conducted; it is the best specimen for his concept of marriage. The matrimonial
functions should begin with Dravida Nadu Anthem (a song about the antiquity of Dravida Nadu). One of the assembly should invite an elder leader to conduct the marriage and another second the proposal. Then the leader presents his opening address and then conducts the marriage. Both the bride and the bridegroom take an oath of promise to live together through joy and sufferings as husband and wife. The congregation would congratulate the couple. The leaders and the well-wishers bless them. Presentations are also offered to the couple and tampaum (betel-leaf with arecanut and lime) is served. Marriage is officially registered either before or after marriage.  

Bharatidasan’s concept of marriage does not receive criticism as it is not free union. The people who believe in God, religion and Aryan convention would show their displeasure and express their contempt only in silence. Bharatidasan in his Preface to puratic̄ tirumana tittam, claims that the marriage conducted under Dravidian Revolutionary Marriage is welcomed by the people.

Bharatidasan disapproves of prostitution. He does not want to go into the reasons for such a social evil. He feels that a woman should even die of poverty rather than sell herself. He strongly believes that women are defenders and upholders of morality. If a woman is immoral, the
society will be certainly immoral.  

Bharatidasan insists that woman should be chaste. And like his poetic mentor Subramania Bharati, he recommends chastity to both sexes. He wants that woman should preserve chastity till her death. Bharatidasan tells that the morality of the society would go so low if women disregard chastity.  

A milk woman who goes for selling buttermilk tells her suspicious husband that she goes only selling buttermilk, not her chastity. Another woman claims that a woman who has given her heart to one man would not give it on any account to another man. She affirms that it is against the virtue of chastity practised by South Indian women, particularly Tamil women. Of all, a woman firmly declares that chastity is life (to a woman); and her husband is her God. Bharatidasan gives great importance to chastity.

Bharatidasan rejects both polygamy and polyandry. He is not ready to accept pre-marital sex among lovers as true union. The Aryan tradition admits such union as 'Kantharva'. The Tamil tradition calls it 'Kalavu' (hidden life) and insists on marriage as 'a must' for getting into life as husband and wife in the society. The conventionalists appreciate Bharatidasan's stand on marriage. But these are stray and occasional references
which are shocking. His view is that a Tamil should marry only a Tamil. A young Tamil rejects the love of a Telugu girl on the ground that she is not a Tamil woman. 71 Similarly, a Tamil woman tells her lover a Tamil Muslim to renounce the Islamic culture and marry her. 72 Such views of Bharatidasan are described as "Tamil chauvinism" but it reflects his racial and cultural affinity.

Bharatidasan is anti-conventional regarding marriage. The Aryan tradition does not permit widow-remarriage. It insists that she should remain a widow till her death, even if she has lost her husband at an early age. Child marriage and matchless marriage too are legacies of the Aryan tradition. The female child is branded a widow and is kept at the corner of the house; her head is tonsured when her child-husband is no more. And in the matchless marriage, a young girl who is forced to marry a good old man is compelled to remain a widow after his death. Many more atrocities were committed against women in the name of conventional marriage. Bharatidasan opposes vehemently such inhuman practices by creating young widows as characters in his poems who either reject the convention or commit suicide to protest against tradition.
Marriage: Shelley and Bharatidasan - a Comparison

Shelley and Bharatidasan oppose conventional marriages. There is a difference in degree in their approach to it. Shelley totally rejects traditional marriage as a fraud, whereas Bharatidasan rejects marriage based on Aryan convention as superstitious. Shelley advocates free love against conventional marriage, but Bharatidasan supports freedom in love. Free love encourages free union. It is believed by Shelley that women are free and equal only in free love. But Bharatidasan's idea of freedom in love encourages both young men and women to choose their partners against conventions. There is sharp difference between free love and freedom in love. Free love ends in free union, whereas freedom in love ends in marriage.

Shelley is criticised as toothlessly adherent to Godwin's concept of marriage as an institution of fraud. Godwin desires discussions on his idea of marriage. But Shelley is too hasty in putting Godwin's philosophy into practice by slingling mud on the established institution of marriage. It compels the conventionalist to describe him as "too young, too ignorant, too impassioned, and too vicious to understand the task of reforming the world". Bharatidasan's views are criticised but are considered as
his efforts to revive the antiquity with a rational point of view.

Shelley's Views: For and Against

Shelley opposes religious execution and condemns the priest as doing inhuman acts in the name of God and religion. It appears that Shelley himself must have witnessed religious execution in his boyhood. The Wandering Jew tells how much sympathy that Shelley has for Ahasurus who was supposed to be cursed by Christ for insulting Him on his way to Calvary. In Rosalind and Helen, the incestuous lovers are said to meet with a fatal end by the religious fanatics and are burnt to death by the insinuous inducement of the Iberian priests. The priest claims that the execution is done to assuage the anger of the Gods who devastate the country with hunger, disease and death as the country is infested with non-believers.

Shelley opposes priests and priesthood too. He blames that they are responsible for wars waged by the tyrants and the death of people in the name of God and religion. Shelley has this opinion because he had read in history that the wars of Cross claimed thousands of soldiers on the battlefield. He attacks the people who claim and boast that their Gods are true Gods and defend
them even at the cost of shedding blood.

Shelley is severely criticised by the conventionalists as outrageous. They charge that "he (Shelley) has slandered, ridiculed and blasphemed our holy religion". They further claim that "His dislike to Christianity is frantic... ridiculous; he selects Christian priests to be the organ of sentiments outrageously and pre-eminently cruel. The two characteristic principles upon which Christianity may be said to be built are repentance and faith". It is also blamed that "he (Shelley) would pull down our churches, level our establishments and burn our bible - Then we should pay no tithes, be enslaved by no superstitions, abused by no priestly artifices." Hunt on the other hand defends strongly Shelley: "Shelley is a proponent of true Christianity, and that he is a genuine follower of Christ, a stalwart defender of the rights and privileges of all men against those who would abridge the rights of the weak and the defenceless." Hunt's view on Shelley as a proponent of true Christianity would bewilder any religious man. Christianity is based mainly on the principles: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your mind... And... you shall love your neighbour as yourself." Christ interrelates love with God and man. And so Hunt's defence of Shelley is baseless.
Secondly, Shelley blames Christianity as responsible for war and bloodshed. He fails to admit the fact that Christianity was installed in Rome after persecution and bloodshed of the believers of Christ. St. Peter was nailed to the cross downward.

Religions are many times politicalised. Priests are to be blamed. Crusades were conducted in the name of Christ and safeguarding this Holy Land which resulted in bloodshed and death. Similar instances happened in other parts of the world also. In the communist Russia Christianity was blamed. Churches were converted into factories. Christians were spotted out and were severely punished.

Civilized man commits atrocities. He fails to admit that God is a concept. He tries to understand in his own way and calls God by different names. A Jew calls Him Jehovah; the Christian, the Almighty Father; and the Muslim Allah and the Hindu, Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma and like that. The atheist does not believe in God. He argues that what man cannot prove, need not be believed as true. Shelley, who registered himself in the Album as Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Atheist," did not believe in God, did not accept priesthood nor religious death as martyrdom.
Religion: Bharatidasan's Views For and Against

Bharatidasan opposes the concept of god and religion. He attacks the priests and religious exponents as opportunist.

The believers in God do not digest the false presentation of Lord Rama and the religious exponent as greedy men. But no open protests and statements were issued by the religious men. Vanji is happily welcomed by the atheistic rationalists and is glorified as the first atheistic rational woman. But, she is overshadowed by Bharati's Pudumai Pen. She is both God-fearing and rational, and has been already acknowledged as the right woman for modern India. Vanji is the off-spring of Dravidian Movement whose objective is to root out Brahminic religion, and to establish a rational Tamil society where there is no God or religion. The 'Pudumai Pen' born of the National Movement whose aim is to awaken the superstitious Indian women and make them join the national stream as equals to men and construct a New India. So, Bharatidasan's Vanji though looks feeble before Bharati's Pudumai pen, she stands as an atheistic rational woman in her own right.

Bharatidasan who turned into an atheist in his forties finds that the atheistic rational woman is the need
of his time. He believes that most of the Tamil women are uneducated, superstitious and ignorant. They should have one like Vanji as a model for their life. Bharatidasan is not condemned openly by the religionists but they express their dissent and resentment in quieter ways. But such objections did not affect Bharatidasan’s anti-god and anti-religious propaganda.

Shelley and Bharatidasan: 
Atheistic Rationalism: a Comparison

Oscillation is found in Shelley’s attitude towards religion. He attacks mercilessly god in Queen Mab and extends the same laceration against God in The Revolt of Islam but in Prometheus Unbound his stand on God is different. But Bharatidasan stands firm in his atheistic stand till his death. His slogan ‘One race, One God’ does not mean that he is mild in his approach towards God. It is his propagandistic trick to attract the public to rationalism.

The poets are similar in creating atheistic rational women as model for the women of their time as well as of all time. They undoubtedly believe that the new women modelled on Cythna and Vanji would change the fate of the world.
Summary

Shelley and Bharatidasan for the first time in the literatures of their respective countries, introduce atheistic rational women as liberated women. The poets believe that these women would break the convention which compel women to behave in a fixed way in this society as subordinates and slaves to male sex. Ianthe, Helen, Cythna and Asia in Shelley, and Vanji, Amuthavalli, Komalavalli, Muthammai and Thangam in Bharatidasan are such liberated women who fight both for their sex and for the whole of humanity. Cythna and Vanji are similar in many aspects as liberated women. They are rational, brave, bold, atheistic and sacrificial who fight for the abolition of slavery; inequality of sex rejection of conventional marriage and religion Cythna advocates free love as panacea for all women’s problems. Vanji supports freedom in love as well as women’s education as remedy to all women’s problems.

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