CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMING-UP
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Notwithstanding such similarities and parallels between Lawrence and the Akam poets, there are many distinct features in each, which are equally significant.

There is first the question of space and time which separate Lawrence and the Akam poets. The Akam poetry is primarily a classical poetry, a complete and consummate "poetry of the beginning, while Lawrence's art belongs to "the immediate present, a product of the twentieth century. There are the two distinct social structures to which they belong, the two distinct cultures, the two distinct geographical spaces all of which have contributed towards the distinctness of the thematic as well as the formal structures of their respective artforms. The Akam poets have sung for a people who lived around the dawn of the Christian era, who who lived in complete harmony with nature and who had an elemental structuring of their psychic make-up. Lawrence is essentially a twentieth century phenomenon, though he has revolted against most of its value-systems and attitudes. It is the economic and the technological civilization of his own day that has contributed to his thematic resourcefulness, both positively and negatively. He has written for a people, most of whom are wedded to 'modernism,' and the organized religious orders, both in thought and feeling.
While the Akam poets seem to have enjoyed social appro-
bation and respectability, Lawrence had to stand not
only unloving fellow-practitioners and unsympathetic
critics, but also a generality of reading public that
was by and large indifferent to and even suspicious of
his literary motives, at least during the formative
phases of his career.

In their conceptions of art and life too, we come
across certain basic divergences. The Akam poets seem
to have had an abiding faith in the inviolability of
literary conventions, whereas Lawrence has transcended
and even refused to go by the established formal and
thematic conventions. In a letter to J.B. Pinker, he
writes: "Tell Arnold Bennet that all rules of construction
hold good only for novels which are copies of other
novels. A book which is not a copy of other books has
its own construction." ¹ There is the eternal conjugal
fidelity of the Akam heroine for the hero, which contrasts
strikingly with the 'soul-adventures' of Ursula in
The Rainbow, Gudrun in Women in Love, Constance in Lady
Chatterley's Lover and so on. This can be explained through
the fact that while the Akam poetry depicts an ideality
modified love, Lawrence frequently brings in the
negatives of life and contrasts them with the positives.

¹. LH, p. 295
Thus it is through Gudrun and Ursula in *Women in Love* that Lawrence contrasts death-in-life with life-in-death. While Constance's life with Clifford chatterley is soul-killing, her experience with Mellors is one of refinement. In the same way, Lawrence introduces willed, spiritual and intellectual women such as Gertude Morel in *Sons and Lovers* and Hermione Roddice in *Women in Love*, purely sensual women like Clara (*Sons and Lovers*), and sensual 'beasts' like Bertha Coutts (*Lady Chatterley's Lover*), and men who have primary faith in mechanistic perfection like Gerald (*Women in Love*) and Clifford Chatterley in order to tell us how not to structure our life. Such a portrayal is necessary because his purpose in writing is to make us turn away from our uncreative modes of living. "I want folk to alter and have more sense," he wrote once.

The purpose of art, for Lawrence, is to reveal "the changing rainbow of our living relationships." In his novels and short stories, he brings in as many thematic situations as possible, and explores the various modes of living. The Akam poetry, bound by literary conventions as it is, does not have much scope for thematic variations. The Akam poet takes the given stereotype of the poetic content and plays immense variations in matters of linguistic and conceptual deviances. The same kind of emotional behaviour with the same background of nature has
been treated by different poets, and what distinguishes the portrayal of one from that of another is their device of foregrounding. They have made distinct uses of the mutarpornul and karuppornul in their poems. Here is a poem that depicts a heroine who suffers in the absence of her lover:

My lover has gone to the wasteland,
where an old male chameleon,
with a back like a saw,
gives omens to people along the way.  

How will the pathetic town ever know the grief I bear,  
with all my strength destroyed?  

The same situation is portrayed in another poem, but it provides a distinct aesthetic experience by virtue of its use of nature-imagery in a distinct way:

Our man is crossing the wasteland with its parched earth and kallu bushes.
where the shining neem fruit in a parrot's curved beak appears like a golden jewel held in the tips of strong fingernails, as it is strung on a new necklace thread,  
Will he not think of us, my friend?  

The emotional behaviour of the lovers in Lawrence has a two dimensional setting: one is the world of nature, and the

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3. Ibid., p.
other the economic, industrial society. Lawrence so makes out that those who enact their emotional drama in harmony with the life of nature are the real men and women, while those who live with the industrial society as the background are doomed to failure. In the Akam world the setting is unidimensional. The lovers live their emotional life with the image of nature constantly permeating their body and soul. Hence, unlike in Lawrence, there is no dissonance in their life, no 'death' to them. Again, in both literatures, there is the archetypal problem of mind versus body, intellect versus emotion, upper consciousness versus lower consciousness. In the Akam poetry, this conflict is always resolved in terms of more life, more delight in living. Lawrence's characters too move towards the resolution of this conflict, but the process of this resolution is frequently complex. Death and degeneration go hand in hand with life and vitality. Some characters resolve it successfully, while others get dissolved in the process. Again, there is in Lawrence a gradual evolution of characters, but the Akam poems present their characters in a state of achieved perfection and consummation. This is because each poem in the Akam corpus is an entity in itself, depicting the characters in a particular mood.

While it is possible to unfathom an 'autobiographical feel' in many an event and character in Lawrence, the Akam poetry is quite impersonal, with the poet nowhere allowed to 'intrude'

into the poem. That is, in Lawrence the distinction between the truth of history and the truth of literature is blurred in many places, while the Akam poet is wholly concerned with the beauty and the truth of literature.

These dissimilarities are real, and no attempt is made to ignore or minimize or obliterate them. After all, the purpose of Comparative Literature is not to bring about a fusion of different national literatures, but "to study all literatures with an international perspective, with a consciousness of the unity of all literary creation and experience." In Lawrence's works and in the Akam poetry, we have two literatures of truly international perspective. Both are concerned with the emotional health and well-being of the universal man. The Akam poetry is a Tamil literature only in the sense that it was created by a people who happened to live in the Tamil country, and who happened to draw their sustenance and nourishment from the Tamil land. Their sense of gratitude to the soil is being incorporated in their imaginative output by way of references to the fertility of the land and the largeness of heart of certain munificent kings and chieftains. But they are too marginal to have any bearing on the thematic organization, just as Kamban's expression of his unfailing sense of gratitude to his patron Gajayappar does not interfere with the spontaneous
flow of his thematic material in his masterpiece Ramayana. The convention of no-naming, the non-reference to the political institutions of the age and religion, the division of human life into Akam and Puram, the insistence on the institution of marriage, among other things, are all characteristics of a universal literature, meant for universal man and woman. It is a religious literature in that it aims at creating and fostering a universal order, universal brotherhood on the basis of the shared features of humanity. And the theme of Lawrence is no less universal. It is the exclusive faith of the Western man in the power of his mind and the unwholesome consequences of such a belief that concerned the immediate attention of Lawrence. But Lawrence is an artist who transcends language, nationality and religion. "I feel no nationality, not fundamentally," he writes. Hence he has universalized this malady and has suggested a universal cure: going back and reliving the process of the pre-European consciousness; and this consciousness is in its core similar to that embodied in the Akam poetry, as has been demonstrated throughout this dissertation. As such, a comparative study of these writers is mutually illuminating. A study of Lawrence in comparison with the Akam poetry might give an increased validity and authenticity to the 'visions' of Lawrence; a study of the Akam poetry in comparison with
Lawrence, a writer who yearned for "ancient" forms of life might give a new impetus and new significance to the Akam poetry in the vastly changed context of the twentieth century. Again, the language of Lawrence, which is essentially a language of passion and intuition might prove to be a more effective medium to interpret the Akam poetry, which is essentially a literature of human passions and feelings.

One is pained to see that in spite of its universal perspective and significance, and its supreme artistic strength and vitality, the Akam poetry of the Tamils still remains comparatively obscure to the non-Tamil world. Its message needs to be transmitted to the world in the larger interests of mankind. It needs to be seen in the contexts of different literatures of the world that have comparable genres and themes. It is in such a task that the discipline of Comparative Literature would be of great significance to the Tamil studies. It is possible to compare the Akam poems with the love-lyrics of the Elizabethan England. It is even possible that they can be compared with the great individual lyricists of the age, Philip Sidney, Shakespeare and Spenser. We can compare and contrast the thematic atmosphere of this poetic genre with the world presented in Shakespeare's romantic comedies. Again, the Akam poems in general, and its Mullai division in particular, can be compared with the Idylls of
Theocritus both in form and content. Only through such studies, and not by overemphasizing their individuality and uniqueness, will we be able to get an international recognition for these poems which they richly deserve. As for Lawrence, there is ample scope for a full length comparative study of his symbolism with the concepts of ullurali and iraicci in the Akam poetry, which have been touched upon in the chapter "The Circumambient Universe." Lawrence, in his conception of male and female principles, has striking affinities with Tiruvalluvar also. The hero and the heroine of the Kāmattuppāḷ seem to exemplify Lawrence's enunciations of 'day-time self' and 'night-time self' which find expression in his Fantasia and elsewhere in his creative and critical works. Tiruvalluvar's hero is a male, true to his purposive self; he is not only a lover and a husband who gets himself 'destroyed' in the passionate flood of sex, but also one with a towering male strength and determination. His overwhelming passion for his lady does not prevent him from asserting his male self and leaving on his purely 'womanless' male quests. Such a conception of life, as has been demonstrated in the

6. Tirukkural, 1081, 1085, 1124
7. Ibid. 1088 "ṉāṭpinul nāṉārum uṭkum yen pīṭu"
8. Ibid. 1110, 1121.
9. Ibid. 1206, 1213, 1263.
chapter "Being and Knowing," is one of the seminal aspects of the thematic structure of the Laurentian oeuvre. Also, Lawrence comes nearer to Tiruvalluvar than to the Akam poets in his conception of the sexual faithfulness of the male, and that of prostitution. Again, a comparative study of Lawrence and Kannadasan, a Tamil lyricist par excellence, with particular reference to "blood-consciousness" could be richly rewarding. And the scholars of this land are culturally obliged to undertake more and more studies of such a kind.