CONCLUSION

We have already arrived at the finding that plot by itself is not the predominant element in Putumaipttan's stories and whatever skeletal plot we find in them only subserves the elucidation of character or theme. 1 A further scrutiny reveals that technically speaking not all of his stories are short stories proper. In fact some seventeen 2 of them belong to the genre of sketches. The principle of selection and organization in a sketch is characterization, a principle which may or may not involve a theme, and the primary difference between a short story and a sketch is that the short story does use plot and thus may explore its theme more fully. 3

2. PaIvaannam Pil lái, Pūcanikkay Ampi, Koṭukkāppulimaram, Civacitampara cēvakam, Puratcimanappānmai, moksam, Nyāyam, Karucitaivu, Tirukkural cēta tirukkuṭtu, Teru Viḷakku, Kavanatam Kāmanum, Kaṭṭilai viṭṭirankata katal, Itu meśin yukam, Vētālam Conna katal, Tirukkural Kumārēca Pil lái, Pūtyakantapurāpan'.
Two out of these seventeen sketches are parodies.  

'Eppōtam Muṭivile Inpam' is the result of the author's experiment in the field of allegories and the rabbit and the dog featuring in it represent the brahmins and Harijans respectively. That the writer is an adept at creating symbolic stories is proved by the stories 'Vētālām conna katai' and 'manakkukai oviyankal'.

We may attribute three distinct achievements to Putumapittan in the field of fiction; the subtle evocation of mood and atmosphere; the sardonic humour that runs as an under-current in most of his stories, and lastly his inimitable style.

Though it is a common feature to classify stories as social, historical, or mythological etc. on the basis of their general theme, it would in fact be more scientific to describe them as stories of plot, of character or atmosphere according to their predominant trait. Plot is not Putumapittan's forte. It is true that he has created some fine characterizations but his contemporaries like Ku. Pa. Rajagopalan, Pichamoorthy, B.S. Ramiah and others

4. Kaṭṭilai Vittirankata katai, 'Putiya Kantapurānam'
have rivalled him in this sphere. What really marks him off from the rest is his flair for creation of atmosphere or what is known as 'nastroenie' in Russian. Many of his stories, which are rich in atmospheric quality prove beyond doubt that he is as good as those western writers like Edgar Allen Poe, Faulkner and Chekhov who are acclaimed as masters in the skilful art of atmosphere - building. This is achieved by means of his extraordinary power of description, the tonal structure and the brilliant evocation of moods such as pensive, gay, sombre, tragic or horror, in his characters.

As for Putumaipttan's sense of wit and humour we may observe that short-story writers who possess this gift are rare in Tamil and Putumaipttan is one among the exceptional few. But his humour often carries with it a cynicism that is born of a man who feels ignignant at the existing social set up and who subconsciously despairs over his inability to alter the order of things. If we just try to read the author in his lines that describe humorously his characters, we won't fail to come into

5. Pramma Rakṣas, Kalikōil, Cevvay toṣam, Payam, Kolaikaran kai - atmosphere of horror Mahamacanam, Cellammal, Ninavuppāṭi - Pensive and tragic atmosphere.
touch with the current of sympathy pulsating under the description. A scratch under the short skit 'Kuppanin Kanavu' which is humorously told on the surface would lay bare the author's heart throbbing with compassion. Even while we laugh and enjoy at the marathon efforts of Murukatacar the protagonist of the narrative 'Oru nal Kalintatu' to earn a pittance of fifty paise or Mr. V.P. of the story 'Nicamum Ninaippum' mortgaging his dignity and self-respect to the unscrupulous book-sellers all for catering to his belly, we feel our hearts ache at the abject living conditions' of these artists. Thus we see a generous heart of the author mellowed with sympathy and kindness for the underdogs and the under-privileged of the society like Rickshaw pullers and authors hiding beneath the wit and humour bubbling in his sketches.

In certain stories like 'Tirukkural Geyta tirukkuttu' and 'Kopalayyanar manaivi' humour is seen bursting into fun and frolic. The first one is a comedy that speaks about the absurd adventure of a C.I.D.Inspector who misinterpreting a word 'Tuppakki' occurring in a Tirukkural Stanza follows the track of a supposed criminal only to fall upon a group of students inside a college compound. The second story tells humorously how
an Ayyankār surrenders to the domination of his wife, an illiterate shepherd girl.

'Putiya Kantapurānām' with an ordinary clerk from Thirunelveli as its hero parodies the epic style of writing, while the sketch 'Tirukkural Kumāreca Pillai is a satirical dig at the Pandits who make literary discourses in high flown pedantic style. Similarly a generous dose of humour mixed with satire is sprinkled in the narrative 'Katavulum kantaçamippillayum'.

The following extracts are good illustrations for the cynical content of his humour:

1. Yaman pattiyal tayarittu vittu Dr. Visvanata Pillai Alakianampiāpuram kiramattil kuti ērinār.
   (Nācakārakkumpal)

2. I.P.yil Fey atippatarku tanippirivu illai enpatai terintu kontum Ėttuppillai kuta Vettiyan peccai āmotikkirar (Cevvaytoṣam)

3. Janankal partacaratiyai nampilarkal;
   Pakkattu vattara katavulkalai nampilarkal;
   Kataciyil ippolutu kālkalalaye nampa ārampittu viṭṭarakal (Paṭapaṭappu)

4. Store-manager Kannappa nainār rakattai ērnta pērvali. Tanatu istsa teivattukku tan ruci pārtuttān camarpippār
   (Tunpakkeṇi)
Thirdly, the poetic qualities of the author's style such as its imagery, anthropomorphism, and also its ironical and cynical import have been fully discussed in the chapter on style. Putumaipttan's individuality of style expresses itself in the cynical content, the complexity of construction that is a part and parcel of the inner man, and in its peculiar magnetic appeal.

In the final round of the assessment of the writer's art, I would rate the following ten stories as true representatives of his genius. Extraordinary vividness and a feeling of intimacy characterise all these stories.

For the excellence of the theme

'Arum Iravu'—Along with another story 'Capa Vimocanam' it is a master specimen of the writer's versatility and genius in reinforcing legendary tales with fresh and original themes. An entirely new conception of Māṇikka-vācakar is projected in this story. The saintly minister himself realises that as it is treason to misappropriate Government Fund, he rightly deserves punishment and his troubled conscience won't get pacified unless and until he gets his due. Is there any surprise at all that the
minister gets pained and perplexed instead of rejoicing over his freedom when God interferes and secures his release in such a circumstances? To put it plainly, Māṇikkavaścākara doesn't approve of God's interference in mundane affairs and violating man's code of justice. This is the theme of the story.

Capa Vimōcanam: The legendary story of Ahaiya is viewed from a new angle. Eventhough the lady gets Vimōcanam or liberty and is forgiven both by her husband and son for her past sins, her guilty conscience pesters her so much that she yearns to be turned into a stone once again! Once a social stigma attaches to a sensitive woman, it is well nigh impossible for her to retrieve her conscience from a feeling of guilt and inferiority, is the thematic message of the story.

Poykkutirai: The social story is a picture of felicitous conjugal harmony between a young middle class couple who are devoted to each other. It is fabricated around the theme that women are instinctively more conscious than men of disparities among friends in social and economic status. The story's chief merit lies in its simplicity, naturalness and the excellence of its theme.

ii. As a specimen of the eeric

Gevvaytosam - This tale remains a memento of the author's extraordinary skill in blending the supernatural and creating progressive suspense. Mystery and
horror are evoked by ingenious description.

iii. **Evocation of moods**

*Irantu Ulakankal* - A story devoid of any serious plot, it has its main focus on the incompatibility of taste and temperament of a college science teacher with those of his spouse. Its chief appeal lies in the creation of a melancholy and pathetic mood which like an aroma infiltrates into the tonal texture of the story.

iv. **Action Story**

*Nācakārakkumpal*. Though a regional story by its location, it is really a representation of the universal in terms of the particular by showing some essential features of our countrymen through the peephole of a southern village. **An interesting feature of modern fiction, this is known as the microcosmic method.** A good plot powerful characterization, and sparkling dialogues enrich the story. The real function of dialogues in a story - that of propagating the action and pushing its momentum - is fulfilled in this interesting story.

v. **Character-Studies**

*Nicanum Nanaippum*. By presenting writers as the protagonists of some stories like 'Nicanum Nanaippum', the author invites our attention to the low status of genuine
and talented writers who live on the threshold of poverty and are used as mere pawns in the money-minting game of the unscrupulous publishers. The stark reality of the story invariably makes us wonder whether the experiences of the protagonist are not those of Putumaipittan himself. So much vividness and intimacy characterize the portrait of Mr. V.P, the central character of the story.

An Cinkam — It is memorable for the superb characterization of Rukmini and Cima. While Rukmini is drawn as the epitome of all that are innocently virtuous in a woman, Cima is shown as a kind-hearted but a cowardly young man.

vi. Creation of Atmosphere

Cellammal and Mahamacanam. Both resemble one-act plays and are pictorial in their construction with the evocation of their gloomy atmosphere largely depending upon their visual effects. A close-up shot on the characters at the moment of their dying revealed in a cold, reportorial tone conveys a sense of startling reality to the reader. These two stories can be said to have broken new ground in the field of realism.

In summing up, we may say that Putumaipittan's stories eschew the dramatic and deal with only ordinary
people leading ordinary lives. Twists and surprises which are held as unique features in the stories of certain anecdote writers like O’Henry and Somerset Maugham are generally conspicuous by their absence in the stories of Putumaipittan. The author rarely dabbles in the throbbing sensational issues of life i.e.: the events happening in the lives of his characters are rarely dramatic or sensational. The critic Mr. David Daiches in speaking about the short-stories of Katherine Mansfield says that the author expresses a personal sense of truth embodies in a personal vision of an aspect of human behaviour. Can we be wrong if we attribute the same quality to the stories of Putumaipittan?

6. Narriman Hormasji - 'Katherine Mansfield'
   - An appraisal, p.88
   Collins, St.James Place, London: