Chapter II

Social Issues
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'The Thina Thanthi' is a newspaper which synthesises all those features which could give it a unique identity. A magazine should not merely be a carrier of news, it should incorporate all that is required to give it a cultural uniqueness. That is why Aditanar was particular about what the inputs should be. Besides identifying its salient features, he also evolved a technology on how they should be projected.¹

It is on the richness of the varied fare that the charisma of a daily depends. The features on view should not only hold the readers' attention, they should also make them yearn for more. Unlike weeklies and periodicals which specialise in fiction and other entertaining tit bits,² 'The Thina Thanthi' carries features on events, societal concerns, political scenarios, films, art, music, sports, religion and economics on a daily basis, with special features, 'The Thina Thanthi' takes its readers into confidence. Besides reserving columns for

jokes (pictorial), cartoons, pin ups, reviews, astrological predictions and reader's views, 'The Thina Thanthi' issues special supplements during Deepavali, Pongal and New Year. Periodical supplements dealing with Friday Features, Commerce, Films and other matters of public interest are the special features of 'The Thina Thanthi'.

The main aim of 'The Thina Thanthi' has always been to cater to the needs of society. Even though it is essentially a news carrier, it has also reserved columns for articles, political reviews and such other items of public interest in its magazine section. There are also special features concerning societal concerns and the latest in medicine. It accommodates astrological forecasts, short stories, interviews and political debates in its columns.

In dealing with societal concerns, 'The Thina Thanthi' keeps its readers fully informed on all aspects. Even the special supplements issued by the paper are packed with comprehensive reports. This is a novelty ushered in by Aditanar in the Fourth Estate.

Cartoons, Caricatures

'The Thina Thanthi' has from the beginning featured cartoons and caricatures in its layout. Subramania Bharathi was the first to feature cartoons and caricatures (Criticising / parodying) that were a reflection on the Imperial Rule. After Bharati's 'INDIA', 'The Thina Thanthi' was the only daily which published cartoons and caricatures laced with humour, capable of conveying the right message to its readers on the political developments of the day. It is not surprising that these cartoons, pictorial depictions of political events were very popular from the earliest issues of 'The Thina Thanthi'. Aditanar was, himself an artist of high merit. Even as a school boy, he had won prize for a cartoon he had sent to an English newspaper. So Aditanar took a special interest in the cartoons to be published in 'The Thina Thanthi'. He insisted on naturalness, non-offensive humour, static animation rather than verbal, larger than life depictions for the right effect, clarity and effective conveyance of the intended message. The cartoon on the first page is a daily feature of 'The Thina Thanthi'. Illustrative photographs that accompany news items is a feature of 'The

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7. Ibid., p.47.
Thina Thanthi'. The use of colour transparencies are an added attraction these days.\(^9\)

Some of these pictorial representations have been of great educative value. Through these pictures, 'The Thina Thanthi' has acquainted a large number of men and women with things they have never known before. The issue dated 16.3.1977, carried a cartoon that taught its readers the procedural norms to be followed by the voter at the polling booth.\(^{10}\)

Repetitive seasonal happenings such as the New Year, Deepavalli and Pongal find pictorial representation in The Thina Thanthi's cartoons. The birth of the New Year as a baby and the end of the year gone by as a very old man have been regular features of The Thina Thanthi’s January first Pictorials.\(^{11}\)

The cartoon depicting the rising spiral of prices features a bewildered woman staring at a soaring bird.\(^{12}\) There is an ironical

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slant to the same theme in another cartoon featuring the Prime Minister making a speech about the need to bring down prices.\textsuperscript{13}

When the price of gold reached astronomical heights in 1978 and 1979, 'The Thina Thanthi' published a cartoon on the lines of the fable “The Fox and the Grapes”. A young woman was depicted as the fox yearning for the unreachable gold in the form of grapes.\textsuperscript{14}

‘The Thina Thanthi’ has also published cartoons depicting opportunistic electoral alliances, instances of retirement from politics in the wake of defeat at the hustings (Indira Gandhi 1977) and political exile (Moraji Desai 1979) and other hilarious turn around in electoral politics.\textsuperscript{15}

There is a certain consistency in regard to the depiction of political events in The Thina Thanthi's cartoons.\textsuperscript{16} Political rivals contesting elections are always depicted as pugilists or runners on the track. Those who retire from active politics after an electoral debacle are represented as sanyasins, recluses who seek to isolate themselves.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 30 August 1979, p.1.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 3 August 1979, p.1.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 16 March 1977, p.1.
Instances of shock, assault and mass protests have their cartoonistic equivalents in 'The Thina Thanthi'. While violence is depicted symbolically by the raised hand holding a club, offers of friendship have always been represented by the spread palm of an outstretched hand.\textsuperscript{17}

There have also been instances of non-imagistic cartoons in ‘The Thina Thanthi’. The ironic depiction of President Sanjeeva Reddy offering to scale down his emoluments is devoid of pictorial representation.

Every cartoon published in ‘the Thina Thanthi’ has a caption on top and an explanatory note below. As the main characters represented in the cartoon are also named, the message of the cartoon reaches even the least informed reader.\textsuperscript{18}

On many occasion ‘The Thina Thanthi’ has made use of film songs and popular proverbs to explain the import of the cartoon. When Morarji Desai expressed a desire to re-enter active politics, the cartoon representing his intention, carried a popular couplet from a film song and a famous old Tamil saying as explanatory adjuncts.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 24 August 1977, p.1.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 28 August 1979, p.1.
‘The Thina Thanthi’ is the first paper to have won a vast readership on the strength of its cartoon. A special feature of ‘The Thina Thanthi’ cartoon is the repetitive use of the same symbolic character to represent a certain political party. This enables the average reader to spot the character and identify it straightaway as if he were reading the latest chapter of a serialised novel. Gentle irony, mild satire and good humoured banter were characteristics of these cartoons. No paper, anywhere in the world has made the cartoon a daily feature.19

The Entertainment content of ‘Thina Thanthi’

The special feature of ‘The Thina Thanthi’ as a medium of communication is the regularity with which non news items finds a place in its columns. Whatever is of interest, whatever is relevant, whatever is utilitarian could be seen in the columns of ‘The Thina Thanthi’ irrespective of their news value. It could be said that the popularity of the organ and its mass readership could be attributed to its projection of non-news items in its columns.20


It is common knowledge that Magazines that entertain rather than inform, gain easy acceptance in Tamil Nadu. Even when such publications proliferate, their support base stays intact. This is because each magazine specialises in offering a specific line of entertainment and has its own clientele.21

From the very beginning ‘The Thina Thanthi’ has tried to incorporate non-news features of common interest with its coverage of news. That is why even those who buy other newspapers for news, also pick up a copy of ‘The Thina Thanthi’ every morning for the added spice it offers in the form of non-news inputs all of which relax the spirit and extend the range of vision. Though such recreational features might soothe the mind and provide relief from care, it cannot be said that they possess an educative value. On the other hand, only when one reads the news about political, social and economic affairs could there be some enlightenment and self awareness.22 This helps in identifying oneself with a cause and contributing to its success. By and large womenfolk prefer recreational inputs to news everywhere. In


villages this attitude is shared by both men and women mainly because they are denied opportunities to interact with others.23

Those that are not inclined to take advantage of the indirect benefits that accrue when one reads the news, tend to lose interest quickly and give up the reading habit. In order to persuade such people to become regular readers of newspapers, it would be necessary to lace news items with a fair sprinkling of recreational inputs. Such bits of entertainment always succeed in their objective. They provide relief, recreation and entertainment. For this reason, ‘The Thina Thanthi’ has made it policy to include a variety of recreational items in its columns on a regular basis. The intention is to retain the regular reader’s interest and convert a casual reader into a regular client.24

Among the regular features of ‘The Thina Thanthi’ are ‘Andi Pandaram’ and ‘Chanakya’s Truisms’ both illustrated as two jokes.25 Every Sunday, there is a special section for women, in which there are short stories and informative articles. There is also a

Question Answer piece on Astrology. While serials appear on Sundays and Mondays, each Friday has a feature on Astral Predictions. Except on Saturdays and Wednesdays, 'The Thina Thanthi' carries several recreational, entertaining inputs. Special supplements are issued on Sundays and Fridays.

A specific, distinct design is perceptible in the layout of entertaining, recreational and informative features as 'The Thina Thanthi' courts the regular and casual readers. Because of this innovative approach, this paper has earned the respect and good will of its readers.

**Thina Thanthi’s Pictorial Tit Bits**

Among the non-news items that have found place in 'The Thina Thanthi', pictorialised tit bits stand out. No other Tamil daily features such tit bits illustrated suitably for effect. Some of the English dailies publish humour pieces obtained courtesy of other publications. In India, such establishments, supplying illustrated tit bits with the appropriate tests, do not exist, so 'The Thina Thanthi' designed its own illustrated tit bits and solved the problem by its own efforts.


In every issue of 'The Thina Thanthi' there is a serial illustrated for good measure and also a pair of illustrated tit bits, an illustrated joke and "Andipandaram Paddugiraar" (The humble ascetic sings). Added to these is the 'Chaanakyan Sol' (Wise words of Chanakya). Of the two illustrated serials, "Kanni Theevu" is in its forty first year. The other one, a series of anecdotes, changes theme once every three months.

As in the case of other sundries, in the preparation of these illustrated (picture) serials too, a certain clear cut methodology could be discerned. The distinct quality of these illustrations, which reflect the mood of the situation, is an indication of the care taken in their fabrication and should serve as a guideline for other papers desirous of emulating 'The Thina Thanthi'

Thina Thanthi's Jokes

Of the two illustrated jokes published everyday, one is the handiwork of the 'The Thina Thanthi' establishment. The other one is the contribution by one of the readers (One rare occasions the joke is the readers and the illustration Thina Thanthi's). Originally Rs. 5/- was

paid for each joke contributed by readers. Now it is Rs. 10/-. Through these jokes a healthy relationship has evolved between the reader and the paper (editor).29

In the issue dated 13.6.1997, the illustration accompanying the joke shows an actress so scantily clad it is almost outrageous. One person, shocked by such exposure is shown to ask the actress why she dresses so revealingly, and the actress replies that she could think of no better way of earning money.30

The joke published on 6.3.1998, concerns a termagant wife who dominates her husband. The woman is shown to order her husband to do all the domestic chores.31 Several jokes ridiculing the female craze for gold ornaments have appeared regularly in 'The Thina Thanthi'. In the issue dated 13th June 1998, a wife is portrayed as harassing the husband no end for more and more gold ornaments.32 Another favourite convention was to juxtapose a very fat wife and wafer-thin husband. Another common theme of these jokes id the

nature of work done by people at the office. Hilarious situations that develop when doctors confront patients are also made use of for these jokes. In the issue dated 13.2.1996, the patient’s description of his ailment to the doctor proves -- tickler. In this way a variety of jokes, touching on every aspect of common experience could be seen as The Thina Thanthi’s projection of humour. A scrutiny of The Thina Thanthi’s representation of humour would prove how clearly defined its methodology is, how different it is from jokes appearing in other journals.

The Andipandaram Sequence

Every day, ‘The Thina Thanthi’ features an illustrated piece of humour, in which a scantily clad ascetic, truly impervious to earthly vanities appears. Mouthing a truism which has satirical effect on the many shortcomings prevalent in human contact. As this takes the form of a line from a familiar movie song, the impact is instantaneous. The joke is shared even by those at whose expense it is cracked.

34. Ibid., 16 February 2000, p.4.
Mostly Andipandaaram's darts are aimed at lovers, couples and the female of the species, ridiculing their vanities, attitudes and stupidities. These mouthings cannot be classified under any genre.

The lines chosen and the diagram drawn give the impression of a mischievous prankster, passing provocative comments on women passing by. Such taunts aimed at young women are seldom seriously thought of, because they are mostly concerned with appearance, dress, place of learning, acquaintances etc. It could even be argued that the long standing practice of Eveteaching could have engendered the 'Andipandaram concepts' in 'The Thina Thanthi'. However Andipandaram does not confine himself to young unattached girls. His range includes husbands and wives, even elderly men and women. In the issue dated 20.10.2001, this prankster addresses a women with a song that reads as follows:

"Shall I stop your speech with a kiss?
or your breath with everything else?.

The point worth noting is that 'The Thina Thanthi' (and this Pandaram) would seem to have fully exploited the prevalent craze for Tamil films and film songs.
Words of Wisdom in ‘The Thina Thanthi’

This illustrated piece, a daily feature of ‘The Thina Thanthi’ has been named ‘Chanakya’s Advice’. In a trite, incisive manner several home truths are delivered through the medium of Chanakya (The original Chanakya was Chandra Gupta Maurya’s counsellor, author of the treatise Artha Sastra). Chanakya comments on the way to success unmindful of scruples and also tact. This is done with reference to clever and foolish men, the artful and the gullible.

Some of the quotes are

1. The wise man checks the length before buying a sheet (21.11.1999).  

2. The obstinate man is sure to make progress (22.2.1980).

3. The wise man will not doze off after casting the line (29.10.2001).

35. Ibid., 21 November, 1999, p.3.


37. Ibid., Nagercoil, 20 October 2001, p.3.
4. One who steals coconut leaves is sure to steal coconuts too.\textsuperscript{38}

5. The gullible looks for a good friend; the wise one prefers a good foe (10.5.1977).\textsuperscript{39}

These words of advice, routed through ‘Chanakyan’ are realistic, programtic, commonsenscial, down-to-earth and of practical value. These pieces of counselling have been drawn from ancient Chinese proverbs. They have been adapted to suit Indian and Tamil requirements.

The possibility of these pieces named Chanakyan Soll’, being misconstrued as the sayings of India’s great political ideologue cannot be denied. They seem to have been inspired by some of the metaphorical stories of ‘Panchatantra’. It must be added that the thoughts enshrined in the Panchathantra collections have been restructured to suit modern conditions before they are put across in the ‘The Thina Thanthi’. It must be remembered that there is much to be said in favour of the theory that all the Panchathantra stories were inspired by the thoughts enshrined in the Arthasastra. Whatever it is,

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 10 November, 1999, p.3.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., Madras, 11 May, 1977, p.2.
the name 'Chanakyan Soll' is most appropriate considering the content and manner of rendition.

‘Chanakyan Soll’ could have also been chosen as the title for another reason. Since this piece is an adaptation of a large number of old, wise sayings, the deployment of this ancient wisdom is not always based on a verbatim transcripts. Such of those expressions that do not serve the purpose today have been either left out or modified. It is also noticeable that certain expressions found in the old proverbs have been used to convey a totally different meaning.

For instance, in the issue dated 28.11.1999, it has been announced through Chanakya that

“The greater the ambition, the greater the effort (Should be)”.

It can be noted that an old proverb has been recast to convey another meaning.40

It could also be said that like the wise old sayings of the past, ‘The Panchantantra’ and ‘Arthasastra’, Chanakyan Sol’ serialised in ‘The Thina Thanthi’ could also be an effective influence on society.

40. Ibid., Nagercoil, 28, November 1999. p.3.
It could bring about influence on society. It could bring about new attitudes, new perspectives.

**Astrology**

Twice every week, 'The Thina Thanthi' runs a column containing notes on Astrology. Besides, it has a daily feature on the day's prospects based on 'birth stars'. It is natural for man to seek some astrological information on what the future holds for him. His yearning for better days is the main reason for scanning this column. In publishing Astral forecasts everyday, 'The Thina Thanthi' serves a dual purpose. It offers solace to men buffeted by circumstances and also nurtures faith in the omnipotence of a Superior Power, from whom all blessings come.41

Indian Astrology has been in existence for thousands of years. It is based on ancient beliefs, devotion to God, piety and literary sustenance. There are a host of readers who look for Astral predictions because they are all traditionalists men of piety and devotion. It is for this reason that newspapers and journals, the world over, set apart space for Astrology and Astrological predictions.

Even in India, most of the English dailies and almost all the Vernacular papers publish Astrological notes and weekly forecasts based on a person’s ‘birth star’ and time of birth.

Taking note of the popularity of such forecasts, ‘The Thina Thanthi’ has made ‘Astral Predications’ a bi-weekly feature. It should be noted that this organ acts in response to popular tastes by duplicating features that have a mass appeal.


Taking note of the common man’s thirst for predications concerning his future, Aditanar sought the services of an Astrologer for his weekly feature on Astral Predications. That several other papers have emulated ‘The Thina Thanthi’ in this regard, is a tribute to Aditanar’s foresight and insight vis-a-vis human aspirations.42

On every Friday, ‘The Thina Thanthi’ carries weekly Astral predications on Page-5. ‘What the stars foretell’ (Ungal Rasi Balan’) is the caption.

In order to understand the methodology of this feature on Astrology, four issues of ‘The Thina Thanthi’ were chosen at random, two of them from 1977/1978 and two for the year 2001. As these predictions were put together by masters of the art, there was a discernible system and approach in everyone of them. Two salient feature standout. 1. The content of the predications 2. The nature of the impact (the likely consequences).

1. What are predictions made on?


2. The possible fall out of Astral Influences

This could be categorised under three heads:

1. Adverse predications

Adverse forecasts are restricted to financial frustration, trade impasse and strained external relationships. In the issue dated 3.3.1978, it was predicated that those born under the influence of ‘Dhanush’ (The Bow) would earn less than fair returns for the strenuous labour put in. Such a forecast would help businessmen and investors born under ‘Dhanush’ to be extra careful during the week.43

In another issue dated 27.4.1979, people born under ‘Maharam’ were warned against some friction in lending and borrowing. In the same issue, those born under the influence of ‘Katagam’ were forewarned about problems regarding repayment of a couple of loans.44

In the issue dated 28.9.2001, it was predicated that under the influence of Mesham, there could be some marital discord and that great care should be exercised in lending and borrowing. In the same issue those who came under ‘Rasi Maharam’ were cautioned against possible discord between brothers and sisters.45

43. Thina Thanthi, Madras, 3 March 1978, p.4.
44. Thina Thanthi, Madurai, 27 April 1979, p.3.
In the issue dated 5.10.2001, it was predicted that those born under ‘Mithuna Rasi” were in for martial strife and set backs in health over the week. Such admonitions often led people to take the necessary precautions during the particular period of time.46

In the 28.9.2001 issue of the ‘The Thina Thanthi’ under the caption Ungal Rasi Balan’ (Your Astral Predications for the Week) those born under the influence of ‘Kanni’ were advised to take good care of elders and avoid both pointless travel and undesirable company. It was also indicated that availability of funds would be on a meager side.47

It could be seen from the foregoing analysis that only selective forecasts are published in regard to adverse effects.

2. Manageable fall out

While publishing predications that are not positive but not totally adverse, ‘The Thina Thanthi’ exercises moderation. In the issue dated 13.5.1983 the Astral forecast spoke of less than perfect health conditions for those under Mesham. Also there could be shortage of

46. Ibid., 5 October 2001, p. III.
47. Ibid, 28 September 2001, p. III.
funds and strained marital relationships.\textsuperscript{48} In the 5.10.2001 issue, 'Viruckikam' folk were asked to be cautious in money deals and in making acquaintances.\textsuperscript{49}

In the foregoing predications, the influence of 'Rasi' was projected on a low key because of the need to sustain hope in the readers.

3. The positive turn of fortune

If the Astral projections and the configuration of stars foretell a favourable turn of events, 'The Thina Thanthi' presents the same with exhaustive clarity. If, for instance, a person, born under a star, is in a position to receive favours from Jupiter (Guru), 'The Thina Thanthi' makes a candid, explicit projection in this regard. Those born under 'Mesham' for instance, coming under the favoured gaze of Guru would succeed in business and industry.\textsuperscript{50}

In the issue dated 28.9.2001, those born under 'Kumbam' were told that, in the week ahead, their economic well being would

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid, Madras, 13 June 1983, p. III.

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid, Nellai, 5 October 2001, p.III.

\textsuperscript{50} Thina Thanthi (Velli Malar), Madurai, 20 April 1078, p.III.
take an upward swing, that there were gains to be had from brothers and sisters and that in deals involving houses and vehicles there was scope for profit. In the same way, those born under ‘Meenam’ were also due for prosperity and advancement in many fields.51

‘Ungal Rasi Balan’ (Your Astral Predictions) has been a weekly feature in which its founder, Aditanar, evinced keen interest. It is prepared by experts in the field. At present, it a full page feature in ‘The Thina Thanthi’s’ Friday supplement, occupying all of page 3. Vidwan V. Lakshmanan, A Jothida Bushanam (Master of Astrological art) is at present the one in charge of this section.52

Question and Answers

Every Sunday, ‘The Thina Thanthi’ features a Question and Answer schedule in its columns. Comprehensive answer to Astrology-related questions are provided to readers who, along with their queries, send particulars regarding their date of birth, name and ‘birth star’. The issue dated 13.6.1986 carried a question from a reader whether his

51. Ibid., Nellai, 28 September 2001, p.III.
52. Ibid.
repeated attempts to go abroad would ever bear fruit. Within two weeks, 'The Thina Thanthi' published a reply.\footnote{Ibid., Chennai, 13 June, 1986, p.5.}

From 1975 to 1990, the Sunday edition of 'The Thina Thanthi' usually contained ten pages. On page No.5, under the caption "The Astrologer Replies", two dozen questions and the relevant answers are featured. Answers are provided for two questions from each of the 12 Rasis (Mesham, Rishabam, Mithunam, Kadakam, Simmam, Kanni, Thulah, Viruchigam, Dhanush, Makaram, Kumbam, Meenam).

The average man seeks help from the Astrologer as to when the problems he faces would disappear. These questions are generally based on the contemporary situation, the problems faced by women and such other matters. When people are in despair and faced with insurmountable problems, they invariably approach an astrologer. In this context, it could be said that solace and hope are brought through the Question / Answer Astrological feature of 'Thina Thanthi'.

The 'Astrology' column featured on Sundays and Wednesdays for the first five years in 'The Thina Thanthi' could be obtained in
Audio cassette form by those who apply for it, giving full details of name and address.54

Most of the questions relate to Trade prospects, Matrimony, Love Education and Domestic affairs. As both men and women send these questions, the answers are framed to suit male and female requirements.

Daily Forecasts

Page no.2. of 'The Thina Thanthi' carries a daily feature on astral predications involving the prospects for the day with reference to individual 'Rasis'. Like the founder Aditanar, his son Sivanthi Aditanar also evinces keen interest in keeping this column going, in deference to the wishes of several thousand Tamils, all of them eager to know what the stars foretell for the day.

In these daily predictions a reference is made both to the date as well as the day (of the week). Thereafter there is a mention of the day(of birth), the time of birth and the star under whose aegis birth occurred. And then the duration of 'Ashtami' and 'Navami' are indicated, and 'Raghukandam' and Yamakandam' are also specified for

54. Ibid., Nellai, 26 December 2001, p.2.
each day. The North/South/East/West ‘soolams’ are also set forth with reference to particular days of the week. The auspicious, fortuitous periods of the day and also the lucky number of the day area are also clearly indicated.\textsuperscript{55}

The issues dated 25.6.1999 and 15.10.2001 could be taken as illustrative of the foregoing discussion. In the first it was mentioned that ‘Navami’ would extend beyond late night upto 5.30 A.M. and there after would follow ‘Uthraadam’ and Sidhayogam’. In the same issue RaguKalam was specified as between 3 and 4.30 PM. and Yamakandam from 9 to 10.30 AM. 7 and 1 indicated as the lucky numbers.\textsuperscript{56} In the same issue prospects for the day for each Rasi were indicated.

| 1. Mesham | Lucky breaks | 7. Thulam | Gain |
| 2. Rishabham | Buoyant spirits | 8. Viruchikam | Success |
| 4. Katakam | Money inflow | 10. Maharam | Expense on auspicious event |
| 5. Simman | Fruition of one aim | 11. Kumbam | Good opportunities |

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.,

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 15 October 2001, p.2.
In addition, there was also a reference to the day being just another day, with nothing unusual about it.

In the 15.10.2001 issue of ‘The Thina Thanthi’, it was put out that on Monday, the 29th day of Puratthaasi (corresponding to 15.10.2001) Kiryadasi would extend upto 7.23 A.M. and thereafter Chathurthasi till 5.11 P.M., that ‘Uthiram’ was followed by Urastam’ and that Raghu Kalam was between 7.30 and 9 AM. and Yamakandam from 10.30 AM to 12 Noon. The ‘Soolam’ was in the easterly direction and 6 to 7 AM, 1 to 2 PM and 3 to 4 PM were propitious hours and the lucky numbers were 6 and 1. As for prospects of the day ‘Rasi’ wise, they were indicated in the following order.

1. Mesham - Chances of success are bright
2. Rishabam - Mental discomfort
3. Minthunam - Unprofitable travel
4. Kadagam - Good news
5. Simmam - Money inflow
6. Kanni - Expenses, rather huge
7. Thulaam - Setback in health
8. Viruchigam - Gain
9. Dhanusu - Propitious situation to get things done
10. Moharam - Impediments to progress

57. Ibid.,
11. Kumbam - Uncertainty of the mind
12. Meenam - Timely succour by friends

The day itself was mentioned as ordinary, usual like any other normal day.58

With Sivanthi Aditanar also following in his father’s tradition, Astrological forecasts on a daily basis continued. This became a hit with the rural folk who, evinced great interest in what the day held for them.

Early Days

In the early days of ‘The Thina Thanthi’ Aditanar ran a daily column under the caption ‘Indru Nal Eppadi’ (What are the prospects for the day?). Every day Aditanar indicated the date, day of the week, ‘Thithi’, ‘Star’, ‘Yogam’, ‘Raghu Kalam’ and ‘Yama Kandam’, ‘Soolam’, the propitious hours and the day’s lucky numbers. At present the same information is provided under the caption ‘Dinabalan’ (Daily (astrological) prospects). In the beginning this feature was not considered an integral daily flash. Unlike the present Question / Answer spread or the weekly (astrological) forecasts, this section

58. Ibid.
wasn't even accorded a permanent location. Today it occupies page 2 every day of the week and besides there is also the special feature on what the day holds for people of several Rasis. 59

The Thina Thanthi's Birthday Forecasts:

Aditanar has established a new tradition in the choice of newsworthy items. In his opinion, that which readers love to read is news. And he presented such news to his readers in a manner acceptable to them. 'The Thina Thanthi' has carried forward this principle with great success. So thoroughly did he gauge the people's mind set, he had no problem identifying their preferences. So, he introduced several astrological variants - Rasi based forecasts, daily, monthly forecasts and one about the prospects of a certain day, depending on the attributes of the day itself. 60

In Aditanar's opinion, a newspaper could attain its proper dimension only if it is multifaceted and comprehensive in a manner that appeals to every taste in a vast readership. With this in mind, he introduced the most popular Birthday Forecast Feature in 'The Thina Thanthi'. In 1984, The Indian Express conducted a survey on reader

59. Ibid., Madurai, 6 March, 1979, p.2.
60. Thina Thanthi Ponvisha Malar, p.171.
preferences, 59% of the readers’ favourite column was the one devoted to Astrological forecasts daywise and for the duration of a week.\(^{61}\)

These days, ‘The Thina Thanthi’ publishes a supplement every Sunday (Gnayuiru Malar) and, on the third page of this supplement there is a column projecting Birthday Forecasts / Prospects. A scrutiny of two such supplements (1992 / 2001) would be highly rewarding. In the ‘Birthday Forecasts’ published in their supplement, R.I. Duraimurugan, a great astrologer and numerologist computed the prospects of the week on the basis of the date of birth. This was published on Page 3 of this Sunday Supplement. The dates of birth were tabulated under 3 columns and forecasts were made with reference to the dates grouped under each column and also the lucky days (dates) of the week in question.\(^{62}\)

A further point of reference, issues dated 23.12.1992 and 4.11.2001 could be studied. Dates of birth were tabulated under 9 headings. Those in the column under heading one, 1,10,19, and 25 were birthdays of those who would do well to control their temper. Besides this, it was also indicated that the lucky days for acquiring property,


\(^{62}\) *Thina Thanthi* (Gnayiru Malar), Nellai, 24th June 2001, p. III.
travel and domestic functions could be the 13th, 14th and fifteenth.63 In the issue dated 4.11.2001, it was mentioned that those born on that day were prone to frequent bouts of mental strain and that they should exercise patience. There could be some financial strain but good news from abroad could be expected. It was also forecast that those born on that day could aspire to educational advancement. As for ‘lucky’ days, they were the 4th, 5th, 6th and 10th day of the month.64

In the same way, in the issue dated 23.12.1992, forecasts for those born on 9th, 18th and 27th were given. Those born on these days were advised to be restrained in speech and also be prepared for unforeseen expenses inspite of money flow from many directions. There were possibilities of meeting great spiritual leaders and also for extensive travel. There could be some expenses to be incurred in the purchase of lands, houses and vehicles. There was a chance of educational advancement. The lucky dates were the 12th, 14th and 15th.65

63. Ibid., 23 December 1992, p.III.
64. Ibid., 4 November 2001, p.III.
65. Ibid., 23 December 1992, p. III.
In the issue dated 4.11.2001, in the 9th column, it was predicted that those born on 9th and 18th and 27th could be recipients of help from several well wishers but unforeseen expenses might outweigh whatever money that would accrue. There could be substantial gains in lending / borrowing and in the sale and purchase of real estate, houses, vehicles and the like. Children might make expensive demands. The lucky dates were the 5th and 6th.66

Every Sunday, a large number of readers find for themselves what the prospects are for the week by checking with the weekly predictions column of ‘The Thina Thanthi’, which very clearly sets forth the weekly prospects on the basis of the date of birth. These pertain to homesteads, incomes, deals, domestic relationships, business prospects, health and lucky days of the month/week. In making such forecasts, care is taken to avoid demoralising predictions.

Prospects for the year

‘The Thina Thanthi’ also publishes predictions and forecasts for the entire year. These are classified under two heads, the positive

66. Ibid., 4 November 2001, p.III.
and the negative. Of the latter only such adverse probabilities as are connected with lending, industry, business and health are indicated.\(^{67}\)

These predictions are flashed every Sunday on page 3 of 'The Thina Thanthi'. Forecasts are made for seven days beginning with the date of issue. This procedure is followed throughout the year. A person born on one of the days of the week in question could obtain information on 'Rasi' influences over a period of seven days only.\(^{68}\)

The unpalatable, adverse possibilities are confined to minor setbacks and the positive side of predictions are given adequate prominence. Some of the negative predictions are - possibility of frequent bouts of mental depression, problems connected with lending and borrowing, repetitive imaginary fears (24.6.2001),\(^{69}\) some mishap one might come through without serious consequences and delayed marriage (16.12.2001).\(^{70}\)

Wider publicity is given to the positive aspects of astral influence. some of them are satisfactory completion of deals involving

\(^{67}\) Ibid., 24 June 2001, p.III.

\(^{68}\) Ibid., 13 January 2002, p. III.

\(^{69}\) Ibid., 24 June 2001. p. III.

\(^{70}\) Ibid., 16 December 2001, p.III.
purchase /sale of houses, assured success in intended enterprises, a sudden windfall (24.6.2001), favourable results in litigation substantial reduction in wasteful expenditure and the like.71

Aditanar, whose understanding of human psychology was perfect, published astrological predictions in a way that appealed to people, adequate exposure to the positive elements and a restrained indication of the negative as a mean of caution.

These forecasts, besides being widely welcomed have also increased the paper’s circulation substantially.

Serials

Aditanar knew that the paper’s appeal was based on the variety of fare it could provide. Particularly, women, he knew, were more interested in the recreational items than in the news coverage. Therefore, he offered a rich variety of recreational features, short stories, articles of topical interest, film news and sport coverage besides all those astrological inputs. Even the news flashed in the columns of ‘The Thina Thanthi’ had a humanitarian aspect it was always of human interest. Perhaps the most important feature that swelled the

71. Ibid., 24 June 2001, p. III.
paper's readership was the regularity with which serials were published. In every serial published, the narrative would be fast paced and the dialogues witty and pithy. Even semi-literates loved to keep pace with the serials. It became a habit even with first acquaintances to become regular readers.\textsuperscript{72}

These serials, which appear twice a week, do not impose a strain on the readers but have the charisma that sustains interest and causes the reader to wait for the next part. As the purpose of these serials is to provide relaxed entertainment, their utility ends with last line of concluding chapter. They are good fun as long as they last. For instance a serial that ran from 20.9.1977 to 12.12.1977, did not seek to provoke serious thought but aimed at entertainment, about which it had plenty to regale the readers over a period of time.\textsuperscript{73}

These serials have a special charm in that they are packed with incidents accruing on the spur of the moment and are therefore irresistible to readers who enjoy the world of make-believe. Subraja's

\textsuperscript{72} Thina Thanthi Ponvizha Malar, p.88.

\textsuperscript{73} Thina Thanthi, Madurai, 12 December 1977, p.4.
'Rahasiama' is an instance in point. It is packed with incidents bordering on the realms of impossibility.\textsuperscript{74}

These serials mostly portray patrician affairs, men of high birth, women of great charm and character, virtuous maidens in peril, upright heroes defying fate, re-union of separated lovers and, of course, a happy ending, an irresistible concoction.

As already mentioned the purpose of these serials is to provide entertainment and contentment to the mind, not provoke thought and serious debate. For example the serial “Jeya Jeya Mohan”, which ran from 18.3.1977 to 20.9.1977, had no serious central core. It was pure entertainment from beginning to end.\textsuperscript{75}

The main success, achieved by these serials, was the sense of expectation they roused as long as they ran.

\textsc{Kanni Tevu} (The story of Sindbad) has been serialised for over 42 years in ‘The Thina Thanthi’. It is one of the features that accounts for the great popularity of the paper. Aditanar, who had correctly gauged public tastes and preferences, had

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., (Kudumba Malar), Nellai, 23 September 2001. p.6.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., (Kudumba Malar), Madurai, 18 March 1977, p.II.
incorporated every element of popular appeal—jokes, pictures, visuals, short stories, cartoons and serials and scored the greatest hit, serialising the story of Zindbad over a period of 42 years, a record unmatched by any newspaper, anywhere in the world.76

The great popularity of ‘Kanni Theevu’ could be seen from the fact that several references are made to it everyday speech, in jokes, in fiction and even in films. This is a feat unsurpassed by any other serial, published in a newspaper.

‘The Thina Thanthi’ began serialising Kani Theevu in 1960 (4.8.1960)77 and, for over 42 years this serial has kept readers enthralled and asking for more. As if to cater to their never ending demands, the serial has assumed a never ending aspect, It goes on and on. It is surely a world record,78 Tamil Nadu could be proud of.

‘Leela Comics’, a journal specialising in ‘picture-stories’ has declared that though ‘Aditanar’, who started ‘Kanni Theevu’ in 1960, is no more, this picturised serial endures to this day and

promises to continue endlessly.\textsuperscript{79} In the issue of ‘Ananda Vikatan’ dated 16.12.1990, a reader had written to the editor, expressing his thanks to journal for concluding the ‘Kamal Interview’ and thereby allaying his fears that it might have gone on and on like ‘Kanni Theevu’.\textsuperscript{80}

It has become customary to wish a newly married couple a long and happy life with reference to ‘Kanni Theevu’s’ seemingly unimpeded longevity. And whatever is unattainable to get, impossible in fact is now compared to the impossibility of Kanni Theevu ever coming to an end.\textsuperscript{81}

In the Tamil Weekly ‘Rani’ there is a Question and Answer Section entitled “Anbulla Alli” (Dear Alli), Alli being the one to whom questions are addressed. In answer to a reader’s question on the possible date on which Krishna waters would reach Tamil Nadu, Alli replies that it might coincide with last, concluding part of the serial ‘Kanni Theevu’ thereby indicating the futility of waiting for it.\textsuperscript{82}

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According to a checkup of statistics made on 31.1.2000, this pictorial serial had been on view 14,090 times. If one were to pile all these issues one upon the other in a bound volume, it might reach up to the top floor of the L.I.C building on Anna Salai. This serial continues to top popular ratings generation after generation.\textsuperscript{83}

Except to state that this great serial is the handiwork of one author who has been at it for 42 years, the authority is anonymous. Based on the Arabian folklore, the piece of fiction involves a series of adventures, the protagonists hopping from island to island. It is a sequence of several experiences split into episodes. Each part of this serial extends over five or six months, but continuity is never broken in the succeeding part of the narrative.\textsuperscript{84}

In the beginning there was a gap of one day between the publication of 'Kanni Theevu' in the city (Madras) edition and the other 9 regional edition. Now it is simultaneously published in all ten editions.

\textsuperscript{83} Junior Vezhadan, Madras, 8 July 1987, p.8.

\textsuperscript{84} Interview with R. Thiruvadi (Registrar of Madras head Office) dated 13 August 2001.
Even though the author of 'Kanni Theevu' is under constant strain as a journalist, he has never expressed the wish that the serial should be concluded some day. Tirelessly at it for so long, he continues with the same enthusiasm even today. His energy and imagination are similar to Kanni Theevu itself. They are limitless.  

There have been references to 'Kanni Theevu' in Tamil Film. In the film 'Thaavani Kannavugal', Sivaji Ganesan, a retired officer in the Army, says that he had been reading Kanni Theevu even before enlistment, during service and in retirement. No greater tribute could be paid to the serial's longevity.

Also in 'Kalyana Kaalam', featuring Suhasini, the heroine is shown reading out the day's 'Kanni Theevu' episode to her grandfather.

In 'Chidambara Rahasiyam' a Visu starer, there is a sequence involving Visu, the detective and his comrades. When they ask him whether it wasn't time to make move, Visu replies that for thirty years he has been following the serial 'Kanni Theevu' and so he could come only after going through it that day.

85. Thina Thanthi Ponvizha Malar, p.358.
86. Ibid., p.359.
There was a poignancy in the cartoon depicting Zindabad paying homage to Aditanar on the occasion of his death.87

‘Kanni Theevu’, a recreational masterpiece of fiction, has set new records in mass appeal drawing praise from every segment of the reading public. Incidentally it has set a world record in popularity, extending over 42 years, a feat far beyond the capabilities of any newspaper, anywhere in the world.

**Interviews**

The interviews published in the ‘The Thina Thanthi’ are revolutionary in many ways. The paper had adopted a methodology in its choice of the person to be interviewed. Usually, he is some one of outstanding merit in a specialised field of endeavour - Art, Sport, Literature, Industry, Commerce, Politics etc.88

For a general appraisal of the norms adopted by ‘The Thina Thanthi’, the interview published in the Sunday editions of 1978 and 2001, were chosen as typically representative. This could be done from three perspective

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88. Ibid., (Gnayiru Malar), 24 June 2001, p. III.
1. The person interviewed, 2. The content of the interview, 3. The manner of its recording and representation.

1. The Subject (The person interviewed)

'The Thina Thanthi' has shown a marked preference for women as the subject of interviews. Prominent among the women interviewed are students technocrats, entrepreneurs, working women, professionals, educationists and housewives. Female artistes and sports personalities are also interviewed. Besides holding interviews with students of local colleges, those who came from abroad are also interviewed. Women who have won fame as sports persons and artists and as musicians are regularly interviewed. Beauty contest winners, women in the police force and female auto drivers are favourite subjects for interview. Established film stars, aspiring artistes, students of the film institute and those who retired from films are also frequently interviewed. In short, subjects for interviews could be classified as indicated below:

1. Those with proven skills in art, literature, sport or industry.

2. Non-resident Indians and foreign visitors to India

3. Women who have equalled men in male preserves.
4. Beauty contest winner and Beauty Parlour owners.  

The content of Interview

As for the content of these interviews answers elicited by question of a specific pattern, would determine its tone and dimension. Queries would centre around personal biodata, choice of vocation, distinctions, achievements, first experience in the chosen field, unforgettable incidents, preferences, hopes and plans for the future. In the case of film artists, questions pertaining to preferred roles, future plans and marriage prospects and the like would be in order.

In the 28.6.1978 issue of 'The Thina Thanthi' the interview with Kanchana, a Table Tennis star was published. Details of parentage, of how she became a T.T.Star, the prizes won, the most unforgettable match and particulars about brothers and sisters were obtained through specific questions.

In the issue dated 4.11.2001, an interview with princes Lalitha of the Travancore Cochin Royal House was published. This lady, Lalitha by name, had left the comforts of a palace at

89. Ibid., (Gnayiru Malar), 17 December 1978, p. III.

90. Ibid., 25 June 1973, p.3.
Thiruvanthapuram and devoted her life to the service of the tribal folk in the hilly regions of Dharmapuri district. Her main interests were health and Medicare for the tribals. In the interview, she was asked whether she would attend to delivery cases in the huts themselves and whether she had any help from others in her field of service.91

3. How the interviews are recorded

'The Thina Thanthi' has been innovative even in the format of its interviews. At the top the name of the subject is given. Underneath, a brief bio-data of the person to be interviewed is given. This was the format adopted when a Police Officer was interviewed and the details published in the issue dated 24.9,1978. From the answers elicited, all that was sought to be known about the subjects was made available.92

Every Sunday, in the 'Women's Supplement' of 'The Thina Thanthi', a short story is published. These stories have added a new dimension to the art of story telling. To what extent such brief pieces of fiction could entertain have been proved beyond doubt by 'The Thina Thanthi'.

91. Ibid., (Gnayiru Malar), 4 November 2001, pp. II & IV.

92. Ibid., (Gnayiru Malar), 24 September 1978, p.II.
A scrutiny of the basic requirements of fiction, with special reference to the short story, such as ‘theme’, ‘design’, ‘background and characterisation, enables one to assign the stories published in ‘The Thina Thanthi’ to a genre. The same formula of assessment holds good for such brief pieces of fictional writing in other journals as well.


In regard to ‘theme’ more than 50% of these stories are published in the Women’s Section on the Sunday edition, this bias is natural. Marital differences constitute 12%, single women and their problems 10%, supernatural inputs 10% and other themes 18% such is the nature of thematic distribution.

1. Problems connected with love

The impediments to the ultimate sublimation of love in marriage, such as pre-marital sex, the lover abandoning the woman he had seduced, the lady breaking it off on her own volition, parental opposition, mutual distrust and suspicion, domestic constraints and

93. Ibid., (Ganayiru Malar), Madurai, 13 April 1978, p. in.
financial imbalances are cited in these short stories repeatedly as the causative factors of broken romances.\textsuperscript{94}

2. Marital discord

Irresponsibility on the part of the husband or wife, vanity, marital infidelity and financial inadequacy are often shown as the cause of domestic discord. In the stories published in ‘The Thina Thanthi’ most problems are resolved to the satisfaction of both parties except those caused by poverty or economic imbalance.\textsuperscript{95}

3. Gender-based problems

Some of the stories published in ‘The Thina Thanthi’ deal with problems faced by young women, (particularly) young widows, female celebrates and such unattached women, sexual harassment and exploitation of such defenceless women are the themes of many stories. In a short story (Arama) published on 6.6.1978, the main theme is the peculiar problems faced by women in a sex-hungry environment, dominated by unscrupulous, lecherous men.\textsuperscript{96}

\textsuperscript{94. Ibid., Madras, 16 March 1976, p. in.}

\textsuperscript{95. Ibid., Nellai, (Gnayiru Malar), 2 December 2001, pp. in & IV.}

\textsuperscript{96. Ibid., Madras 16 June 1978, p.4.}
4. **Shockers**

These stories feature demons, devils and evil spirits, the supernatural element appealing to at least 25% of ‘The Thina Thanthi’s’ readership. As for the theme of such a story, it is chosen to suit the distinctive dialogues and description peculiar to ghost stories.97

5. **Other themes**

In these miscellaneous stories, there is a certain prominence accorded to dialogues, between lovers, young couples and between young men and women.

In some stories the chief characters, the hero and the heroine are described in detail. Certain situations and locales are also described fully. Festive occasions, wedding ceremonies, pre-marriage visits by the groom’s people, nuptials and instances of rape come under the category.98

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Characterisation

In the stories, published in 'The Thina Thanthi' there is a pattern of characterisation. Men are portrayed as lovers, husbands and fathers, while women are pictured as objects of love, wives and mothers. A variety of female characters find place in these stories. Women who marry the men they love, women who are pregnant on their weeding day, those who beget children before marriage, those who mother bastards and remain single, those that are unfaithful to their husbands and several types with different mindsets are featured in these stories. As for the male characters, some of them marry the women they love, others don't. Some have extra-marital affairs after marriage and some father children before marriage. Juvenile propensities are also depicted in these stories.

'The Thina Thanthi's' Supplement

As already indicated 'The Thina Thanthi' pays equal attention to providing its readers with news and recreation. This is done through supplements published on certain days of the week. These supplements are packed with items of popular interest and social concern.
It could be said that ‘The Thina Thanthi’ through its supplements offers a richer variety of entertainment items than the weeklies, Ananda Vikatan, Kumudam, Kalki, Kunkumam and Rani, specialising in recreational journalism. It publishes short stories, novelettes, informative articles, film reviews, interviews, jokes, humour tit bits and a host of other popular features. Through these supplements, which include solution to social problems, commercial, agricultural comments, medical hints and political reviews. Apart from supplements on Fridays and Sundays, ‘The Thina Thanthi’ issues Voluminous booklets on commerce, Industry, Trade and Agriculture.99 These supplements and periodic block busters, issued free of cost, could be classified under three categories:

1. Supplements on certain days of the week
2. Festival publications
3. Free Appendices - pull outs.

1. Day specific supplements

Except on Fridays and Sundays when special supplements are published, the days from Monday to Thursday find the paper

coming out as a newssheet (with a difference). From Friday through Sundays special supplements and weekly booklets are issued.

The Friday Booklet

This adjunct to the Friday issue of ‘The Thina Thanthi’ has been very well received by the reading public. This issue is almost entirely devoted to films and film personalities. The first page carries a photograph of a film star (actress). This is usually a pin-up and in colour. Under the caption ‘Velli Thirai’ (Silver Screen) a host of film tit bits and news items are provided. The picture on the first page has some details incorporated, name of the star, the name of the film etc. In the issue dated 28.9.2001, Velli Malar carries a full page picture of Sneha under the caption ‘Vaseekara’. Reports on location shooting together with pictures could be found in this issue. Under the caption ‘Cinema Thulligal’ (Cinema Tit bits), a large number of news bits connected with film personalities are published. This section carries news about Directors, Music Directors, Stunt Instructors Dance Masters and such of those connected with film making. There is a ten line news item on the views on music by Film Music Director Deva and his brother.

100. Thina Thanthi, (Velli Malar), Nellai, 28 October 2001, p. II
In this Friday special there is a section allotted to Voice of the Press which carries quotes and opinion published by the leading English and vernacular press of India. In one such issue dated 5.10.2001, there was a caricature ridiculing Pakistan threatening India with dire consequences. These supplements also have room for a short story. In this particular issue, there was a short story published under the caption 'Poonchilda'.

This issue also contained details about the problems faced by Indians abroad. In particular the situation in South Africa was highlighted. There was also a report on an important function as also particulars about an actress and her family. In this way 'The Thina Thanthi's' Friday supplement is a source of great entertainment in all its forms.

The Sunday Special

The Gnayiru Malar, published every Sunday is prelete with features most favoured by the readers. It has several colour displays. Among other items, it features interviews with V.I.P's, beauty tips,
short story, reviews, women's section and such other interesting items. Special mention should be made of the astrological features, prospects of the day, weekly and annual forecasts. A review of these Sunday editions in 1990, 1991 and 2001 is revelatory in many ways, particularly its gender bias, catering as it does to female preferences, 75% of its content being female-oriented.

The issue, dated 24.3.1991, is an instance in point. There were interview reports with “Badri Award winner and one with a teacher who was asked to account for the lush lengthy hair she possessed.103 Another interview with Ms. Jeyalakshmi, Principal of the Cambridge Matriculation School, Royapettah, on whether sex education was necessary was also published.104

In the Sunday issue dated 11.11.2001, there was a short story about “How to keep women (wives) in good humour”, yet another indication of ‘The Thina Thanthi’s’ bias in favour of women”.105

As for matters connected with men, only 10% of space was allotted. There was an interview with Dr. M. Murugan, a Siddha practioner on how Diabetes could be cured. Yet another interview with Santosh, a film director from Hollywood was also published. 8% of column space was allotted to films. An interview with Director ‘Sridar’, the man who revolutionised Tamil Cinema was published. Visuals, political notes and parts of a humorous serial occupied the rest of space in this issue.

**Special Publications**

‘The Thina Thanthi’ issues special publications and gives them away free on certain festive days. Besides substantial colour spread, there are stories, interviews, personal glimpses, film news and also a question / Answer feature. These ‘Malars’ chosen for review were released in 1986, 1990 and 2001.

**Deepapavali Malar**

In celebration of Deepavali, the most important festival of the Hindus, ‘The Thina Thanthi’ published a special number on that
day in attractive colour. Usually, it opens with a detailed report on how and why the festival has been celebrated for thousands of years. In the 1986 Malar, such an article was penned by Kundrakudi Adigalar, a verbatim report of the sermon he preached to his disciples on the occasion. Besides this some news about location shooting of films and reviews of films released on Deepavali Day find place in this issue. Apart from interviews with actors and actresses, messages of greetings from film artistes were also published.108

By availing themselves of the hospitality of ‘The Thina Thanthi’ columns to extend Deepavali Greetings to millions of fans, film professionals do an excellent Public Relations job. Actor Sathyaraj and actress Sukanya greeted their fans through the columns of ‘The Thina Thanthi’ in the Deepavali Issue of 1990.109

Sound advice on how one could perform the religious rites and obtain optimum blessings from god was clearly set forth by Arcot A.S. Narasimha Iyer. He clearly said that on the 28th day of Ayyappi, Vishwa Year, corresponding 14.11.2001 Wednesday, was a day blessed with ‘Suddha Yogam due to a combination of sukhla

109. Ibid., 16 November 1990, pp. I- II.
Patcham, Sathooorthi Thithi and the Swagi Star, it would be propitious for devotees to complete Ganga Snaan, wear new clothes and offer pooja between 4 and 5.30 in the morning. Another pronouncement from the seer of Kaanchi, on the spiritual implications of Gana Snaan was also published.

The practice of bursting crackers and how it all began was explained in article which claimed that crackers were burst to welcome Lord Krishna. A pictorial representation of Vishnu’s ten incarnations was provided as also an interview with Pandit Kaazhialur Narayanan was made part of the number. The identity of Narakaasuran was established as also the symbolism involved in his being the cause of the celebration of Deepavali. A message form the seer of Kaanchi completed the picture.\(^{110}\)

**Pongal Malar**

On Pongal day, the greatest festival of the Tamils, ‘The Thina Thanthi’ issues a special number. Almost all of it is projected from a filmy angle. In the first page itself, there would be a picture of a lady artiste celebrating Pongal. Why Pongal is celebrated in the

month of ‘Thye’ and how those born in this month would reap the benefits of this month’s propitious influence are also explained. The origins of this festival, the reason why gifts are distributed and also the mode of celebration are clearly depicted. A review of films released on Pongal day is also included. Other features are short stories, an actor replying to questions and greetings from V.I.P.s and others.

For the purpose of study, three Pongal Numbers released in 1986, 1990 and 2001 were chosen as samples. Generally 20% of the space is taken up by the news about the festival, 60% of it is devoted to films and the rest to short stories, interviews, question / answer features and messages.\textsuperscript{111}

An article on Pongal, its origin and mode of observance occupies centre stage. It is explained how the month of ‘Thye’ always hold promise of better things. This is the month in which flowers bloom in abundance and vegetables register remarkable increase in growth. The harvested grain is brought home and, with an improvement in finances, this is also the month of marriages.\textsuperscript{112} As this is the month when the sun begins its northward journey, it is the period

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., (Pongal Malar) 13 January 1986, pp. I-II.

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 14 January 1990, p. I
during which things begin to look up for people. This message is put across to Tamils every Pongal by The Thina Thanthi's special number. It has also a cluster of filmy titbits, reviews of Pongal releases and news about films in the making.  

In the Pongal Special Number 2001, a verbatim report of the speech, made by 'Bangaru Adigalar' on the way "The Goddess of Nature reverences Pongal", was published. There are also special articles on the rationale of Pongal observances and the use of turmeric on the occasion.

Apart from these informative articles, almost all of the remaining columns of the number were devoted to cinema and cinema news. Roughly 60% of column space was occupied by filmy information and inputs. Apart from a general survey of the tinsel world, there were comprehensive reviews of films released on Pongal day. In this issue all the eight films, released on Pongal day were reviewed, with full particulars of the cast, Director, Stunt Master, Cameraman, Music and Dance directors and all relevant particulars. A

114. Ibid., Nellai, 14 January 2002, pp. I-II.
question/ answer column, ‘Behold my Answers’ (Itho enn Pathil!) in which Vikram, a film personality responds to readers’ questions, was included.\textsuperscript{116} To a question from a reader about Vikram’s beliefs and faith, he replied that he believed in MAN. An interview with R.P. Chaudry, Satyaraj’s article on the directors he worked with and Sneha’s candid replies were also published.\textsuperscript{117}

There were also the usual features short stories, pieces of wit and humour, political sidelights and informative articles. Besides one by. Dr. Sivanthan on autonomy for states, there was also another piece on the ‘Language problem’ in the Pongal Number 1986.\textsuperscript{118}

There was no dearth of humour as well. An article titled “Come let us laugh” (Dririkalam Vaanga) by Vennira Adai Moorthy found a place in the Pongal Number. A story, ‘Rakkaayin Koil’ was also published.\textsuperscript{119} some 20\% of the space was taken up by non-film matter like stories, jokes and articles in Pongal Numbers, according to research done on ‘The Thina Thanthi’s’ festival numbers.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{116} Ibid., Nellai, 13 January 2000, pp. I-II.
\item \textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 14 January 2002, pp. I- IV.
\item \textsuperscript{118} Ibid., Madras, 14 January 1986, pp. I-II.
\item \textsuperscript{119} Ibid., p. III.
\end{itemize}
Christmas Number

In the Christmas Number, an annual feature of 'The Thina Thanthi', a colour portrait of Jesus Christ adorns the first page. The life of Christ, his teachings, the sufferings he underwent, his crucifixion and resurrection are detailed in articles. Christmas greetings from leaders and public men are also published.120 'The Thina Thanthi' Christmas Number also provides the gist of the Pope's message to Christian readers on Christmas day. In the Christmas Number 1996,121 there were reports about the special services in the churches at Madras and a message from Bishop of Madurai on the occasion. The practice of setting up miniatures of the manager in which Christ was born in Bethlehem, widely prevalent in Kerala and the adjacent Kanyakumari district, was commented upon in an article published in 1996. There were pictures and references to early Christian practices in this regard. There was also the usual Christmas message and celebration of the day by Christians who burst crackers, wear new clothes and arrange feasts.122

122. Ibid., 25 December 2000, p. I.
The Thina Thanthi’s’ free supplements

Free supplements go by several names - Appendix, Addenda, Pullout ‘The Thina Thanthi’s massive popularity could be attributed in part to the regularity with which it issues free supplements along with the daily news sheets. In the general sense, this popularity is due to Aditanar’s insistence on providing the rural, semi-urban readers with everything that appealed to them. Not only did he insist that the daily should provide its readers with items beneficial in the recreational sense, he was very firm in his view that a daily should retain a sense of social commitment. If supplements could entertain and educate, they should reach the people free of cost, said Aditanar, ignoring the financial implications.123

‘The Thina Thanthi’ issues three supplements every week on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. As the pages of ‘The Thina Thanthi’ increased along with the increase in circulation figures, so did these supplements grow with more and more features.

On Fridays the free supplements are ‘Thanga Malar’ (Golden Flower) and Velli Malar (Silver Flower). On Saturdays, they

are ‘Illaingar Malar’ (for the Youth) and Muthucharam (A chain of pearls). Every Sunday they are ‘Gnayiru Malar’ and ‘Kudumba Malar’ (for the family).

The Friday issues of Thanga Malar

This weekly supplement, issued along with Friday’s edition of ‘The Thina Thanthi’, is meant for the young and the aim is to provide them with educative entertainment and create in them, a thirst for knowledge. So this supplement also offers cash prizes for the winners of common sense and General Knowledge competitions.

Every issue of this supplement has a picture of a child on its first page. The column titled Quiz Maser contains questions and answers. There are also stories, picture stories, cross words, spot the -seven-differences - picture puzzles and other exciting items in Thanga Malar every Friday.124

A study of the Thanga Malar issues between 1999 and 2001 revealed the fact that 70% of its space was devoted to items aimed at improving general awareness among students. with 20%

reserved for recreational features and only 10% of its columns for feature news and other topical information.

The General Knowledge content of Thanga Malar

About 80% of 'Thanga Malar' is devoted to inputs that serve to widen the base of vision among children and help them improve their General Knowledge. For the past three years, in these supplements, the life history of Beschi, Pope and Caldwell are conveyed to children through Grandma Kamalam, a fictitious character. The story of the first saint is also that of the second have now been completely told.¹²⁵

In the Quiz Master section a host of information on every conceivable topic is given,¹²⁶ including details of human anatomy. The pictorial serials feature great men of the past, kings and heroes who made history. For instance this supplement has run a pictorial serial on Bahadur Shah, the Moghul Emperor.¹²⁷ On the last page of this supplement there is some vital information about places / people / events from all over the world, information that would enrich a child’s

¹²⁵. Ibid., 14 September 2001, p. 3.
¹²⁶. Ibid., 2 November 2001, p.2.
store of knowledge. For instances, in one of these issues, there is a reference to Mount Blanque, the tallest peak in Europe.128

Though 'The Thina Thanthi' releases 'Thanga Malar' mainly for the benefit of little children, the contents are so rich in information, even adults and elders read it with relish.

**Saturday's Youth Supplement (Ilaigar Malar)**

The supplement, issued along with Saturday's issue of 'Thina Thanthi', is meant for the youth. Aptly titled 'Illaignar Malar', it caters to youth in many ways. Besides providing answers to a variety of general knowledge queries, this supplement enlightens the youth on computer education, opportunities in business and industry, the latest in science and technology and job opportunities. There are interviews conducted at homes and elsewhere. There is plenty of news on academic and cultural activities on campus. Reminiscences of 'College life' authored by famous men, are also published. Appropriately, jokes suited to the youth and a few stories and fiction also find a place.129

For the sake of study, 50 issues during three years were chosen.

A general review of these supplements shows that 60% of space was assigned to improving the general knowledge of the youth, 20% for providing information on openings, including job placements, 10% for campus anecdotes and the rest for news of all kinds. All in all, these supplements could be said that these supplements help pupils and students to equip themselves with the right kind of knowledge in the field of science, technology and even in the area of placements and assignments.

General Knowledge Features

In the fifty supplements chosen for scrutiny, it was noticed that over 50% of space was allotted to General Knowledge inputs. In page 2, there was an objective type test, the readers having to chose from four alternatives given under each question. They were given the choice of selecting any 20 questions. The correct answers are given at the bottom of the page.\(^\text{130}\) Besides an insight into the extraordinary possibility of the computer, a long list of great events was given the

\(^{130}\) Ibid., 18 December 1998, p.2.
chronological order with dates. In the Science Section several rare details of Saturn and its rings were provided. In sports information, a fact file on Anil Kumble was provided. Almost every page had a bearing on the improvement of young minds.131

**Job opportunities**

On four pages ending with the penultimate (pp.20-23) information regarding job opportunities and placement is given. For instance, in one of the issues of year 2001, there was information about jobs in Parliament for graduates with shorthand, typing skills. There was also information regarding 201 vacancies in the Industrial Security Force, for Sub-Inspectors the basic educational requirements, a degree in any discipline. Another reference was to the post of Judicial officers to be filled up by recruitment from Law Graduates. A Very important piece of information viz., the last date for receipt of applications was also indicated.132 This supplement also carried an advertisement calling for post graduates to interview for appointment as Instructors in the Army.133

Campus Memories

This supplement solicits and publishes unforgettable campus experiences from former students and pupils. This section has been well received by the youthful readers of 'The Thina Thanthi', K.U. Deva, a former student from Nagai, presented an interesting report on 'Adam Teasing' in his College!. In the same way, M.K. Ayyappan of The Presidency College contributed an interesting piece on the demise of 'Ragging in College'.

The other (Sunday) features

Apart from these a wide variety of informational inputs, seasonal jokes, short stories and hints on health and medicine are also given. Some of these stories aim at helping youthful minds to see things in perspective. For instance, a short story titled, "Ohdum Nadhiyin Ohsai" (the ripple of a running stream) which appeared in one of the supplements issued in 2001 was both entertaining and educative. Some of the health hints pertaining to diabetes and suggested ways and means of preventing its onset.

136. Ibid., 23 December 2000, p.4.
In another article, a medical expert pointed out the health hazards involved in steam baths. In the section, “Voice of the youth” several and admirable views and reviews were also published.\(^{137}\)

**Muthucharam - The Saturday Supplement**

Every Saturday, this supplement with several colour spreads, is issued free along with the newspaper of the day. This supplement is intended to provide recreational reading during the weekend holidays. Invariably, the first page features a child artiste, a T.V. Artist or a budding film artiste, with several interesting details about the person. Page 2, reserved for ‘Kalai Medai’, features a well-thought out review by an expert. On page 3, there are useful reports on the latest in medicine and medication. Page 6 is set apart for spiritual thoughts and the following two pages for sport reviews and news.

The supplements published in 1998, 1999 and 2000, chosen for analysis possessed one common characteristic. They were mostly biased in favour of women. There were write ups of the news reader Lalitha and the Pop singer Britney Spears.\(^{138}\) In another issue, the

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main feature was an article on The Singapore Beauty who came to Madras". So, the female bias was unmistakable. In the Kalai Medai Section, featured in Page 2, an appreciation of people, who had won great fame in their chosen field, was published. In one of the issues, the achievements of the great singer, Bala Murali Krishna were appreciated (1998). In another issue, an appreciative article was written about a student of Dance, Sivakami by name.

Besides these enthralling features, this supplement has space for other utilitarian things. Useful medical hints are also published. Among these medical hints, published on page 3, one of the 2001 (year) supplements carried an article on the prevention of paralysis and the native medicines that could prevent and cure it. There was also another article on how deafness was caused by accumulation of dirt in the ear. How to get rid of accumulated fat was the theme of another article. In a way 'Muthucharam' plays a role in the spread of medical knowledge.

141. Ibid., 17 November 2001, p.2.
142. Ibid., 22 December 2001, p.3.
143. Ibid., 16 December 2001, p.3.
Another section of Muthucharam is allotted to Television under the caption “Television Virunthu” (Television Feast). This is confined to reviews of serials, news about forth coming serials, interesting titbits about T.V. players and even a review of English films telecast recently. In one of the issues in 1998, there was a review of the serial ‘Vazhkai’.  

In an issue of 2001, there was news of forth coming serials, Appavukaga (Madras Dhoordarshan) and ‘Pon Vilayum Boomi’ (Jeya).

There is a slot for spiritual matters in Muthucharam. In this section, familiar puranic legends, spiritual stories, prophecies, and ancient narratives find place. Kirupaanantha Variar, a great Sawant described how man could, through trials, find peace with God. Kaanchi Sankarachariar explained the need for Temples under the caption ‘Why Temple?’.

In the last two pages there are sports news, reviews and other titbits. For instance there was a report on the Pakistani Cricketer moving court for damages to the tune of 10 crores. There was also a

144. Ibid., 11 December 1998, pp.4-5.
145. Ibid., 6 October 2001, pp. 4-5.
146. Ibid., 27 October 2001, pp. 4-5.
biographic sketch of Swimmer Arun. Besides these, Muthucharam is packed with a great deal of information, data statistics and comment in regard to a variety of sports and games. As the intention is to cater to all tastes, 'The Thina Thanthi' has included sports and games in its package of entertainment.\(^{147}\)

**The Sunday Supplement Kundumba Malar**

True to its name, Kundumba Malar provides comprehensive fare for the entire family. This weekly supplement is packed with a variety of items, most desired by every member of the family. A review of such supplements, spread over a period of twelve years throws light on the fact that, as in other publications, in the family supplement too, there is a pronounced bias in favour of women. Most of the reports published are about the experiences of women at a certain stage of their lives. In order to enthuse women to share their experiences, 'The Thina Thanthi' offers prizes while soliciting articles from female readers. Those that find their way into print are really interesting experiences. In the 'Kudumba Malar' published in 1990 an article describing the love experience of a college girl under the caption 'The Lament of a Girl Student' was published and was awarded a

Besides this, M. Selvarani of Coimbatore won a cash prize of Rs. 150/- for her piece on ‘My Friend, a Victim of Teacher’, describing the marital problems of her friend.149

Another section features several General Knowledge inputs. Under the caption “How good is our General Knowledge’, a number of questions are listed and answers provided at the bottom. Most of the queries relate to history, world affairs, films and international/national awards.150

There is also a separate section for the religiously inclined. Comments and expositions relate to the God of the universe, Temples, religion, festivals, rites, conventions and observances are put out for the readers’ benefit.151 There was an article under the caption ‘Thirumal Vazhipatta Maalikuzhi”, detailing the glories of the temple together with a picture of its Raja Gopuram (Tower).152

148. Thina Thanthi (Kudamba Malar), Nellai, 20 December 1990, p.5.
149. Ibid., 4 November 2001, p.2.
151. Ibid., 23 September 2001, pp.4-5.
In the middle pages of this supplement film news takes centre stage. News on location, films in progress, films on the anvil, the pair that don the title roles and such other tit bits in brief summations of 10 or 15 lines are published. Some sensatinoal titles are also given. Some of them are ‘Nectarine Sprint’ ‘Sensatinoal debutante’, ‘To think is Ecstasy’ and the like.153

Short stories and serials are also features of Kudumba Malar. Special mention should be made of the short story “Thappaana Asaigal” (Improper Desires) and the serial “Ragasiamai” (in Secret) both published in a supplement during the year 2001. It may be noted that stories and serials are given attractive titles.154

There are also culinary hints published in the Kudumba Malar supplements. The recipe includes name of the preparation, required ingredients and the procedure.155 Recipes for ‘Sugar Beet Roti’ and ‘Carrot Paayasam’ are two of the delicacies included in Kudumba Malar’s recipe list.156

155. Ibid., 21 October 2001, p.17.
Versification on the lines of the Japanese 'Haikoo' are among the popular features of Kudamba Malar. The best poem is awarded a prize of Rs. 20/-. Some of these poems come under the title 'Manaivi (wife) 'Ambalam' (exposed) and the 'Phone'. ¹⁵⁷ There have been others with more sensational headings - 'Adah dah dah' (an exclamation of wonder), 'Keilvi' (Question) 'Manakanakku' (Mental Permutation) and the like. ¹⁵⁸

AASAI (Desire) penned by R.R. Moorthy f Kannappapuram, roughly translated, runs as follows:

'My darling, come to me as a refreshing breeze!  
Come as the rain and give me peace!  
Bring light to me, an unplanted wasteland!  
I am like eyes that have lost their lustre.  
Be my wife, I shall be loving husband.

In this way, 'The Thina Thanthi' offers everything one could ask for in a journal. By providing recreational, informative and educative features to suit every taste, this journal is serving, Tamil Nadu and its people as no other newspaper has so far. ¹⁵⁹