CHAPTER VII

Summation

Fulness to such a burden is
That go on Pilgrimage;
Here little, and hereafter bliss,
Is best from age to age.

- John Bunyan PP 301

Piling His own bone on bone
Using flesh and blood as mortar
Built He the walls of Salvation
And set His seal so clear.

-H. A. Krishna Pillai Ira. Ya Cuvi. 37

Human confrontation with God enlightens the soul into an insight that penetrates the repose and tantalizes the tranquility which the human person has so far delighted in. The human person thus finds himself/herself in bondage that he/she wants to flee from his/her predicament, fights for freedom and thirsts for peace. The quest for “the peace that passeth all understanding” propels the human person to prepare for the pilgrimage of the soul towards the assured haven of eternal glory.

John Bunyan, the forerunner of the English novel, and Henry Alfred Krishna Pillai, the Tamil epic poet, are two great souls who had the agony and ecstasy of the experience of an intrareligious and interreligious conversion respectively. Their spiritual metamorphosis inspired them to transform their experiences into immortal works of art that have become, in literary history, classic examples of allegorically fictionalized autobiographies.

John Bunyan, whose “imaginative writing has been ranked with that of Dante and Milton,” was a transformed soul whose breath of life was his pilgrimage to Heaven and his heart’s desire was to be a pilgrim and make other souls purposeful pilgrims (Fant and Pinson
309). Bunyan had no ambition for fame or fortune behind his writings. Unlike in the case of Krishna Pillai, it was neither talent nor erudition that made Bunyan a great writer, but his unquenchable desire to gain fellow souls succour and salvation.

The present study has highlighted through a comparative analysis of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and H. A. Krishna Pillai's *Irātcarīya Yāṭṭirikam* the similarities and differences between the two works of art chiefly relating to the uniquely underlying process of transcreation, the varying theological and ecclesiastical dimensions of sin and its inevitable consequent suffering, the prime need for divine succour and God's intervention in liberating the human soul, what is generally termed in the religious parlance as "salvation," together with the para and metalinguistic features that have gone into the making of both the works of art.

This comparative study has also focused on the thematological aspects of both the works even as it seeks to analyze the underlying structural patterns and stylistic features of the two texts. Although the two works are of different genres -- *The Pilgrim's Progress* in prose and *Irātcarīya Yāṭṭirikam* in poetry -- the study has clearly demonstrated how the thematic unity has been achieved through Krishna Pillai's adaptation of the main storyline with the same characters and the same events in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* for re-creating *Irātcarīya Yāṭṭirikam* in Tamil.

Reception studies have gained ground in the wake of the dissemination of the theory of "influence" in comparative studies. Krishna Pillai's *Irātcarīya Yāṭṭirikam* stands as a classic instance of adaptation of an immortal English classic created in an altogether different socio-cultural milieu. Since the adaptation did not violate the indigenous creative custom and principle of art and its own poetics its reception was at once overwhelmingly spontaneous and marvellous.
But then adaptation to be a perfect safeguard for reception must also ensure thematological unity and thematological acceptance in the new socio-cultural atmosphere. This is what precisely Krishna Pillai has achieved.

How the two texts compare in topographical terms is shown in relevant sections of this dissertation. Krishna Pillai’s poetic power enables him to tower over John Bunyan where portrayal of nature is concerned. It is with Wordsworthian skill and susceptibility that Krishna Pillai presents the panoramic view of a scene with its picturesque details of the flora and fauna in their idyllic settings. Unlike his puritanically prosaic model in the English writer, Krishna Pillai at times forgets the religious purport and pilgrimage of the protagonist and goes into poetic raptures in the typically Tamil literary tradition thereby creating an indigenous ambience, which enables his readers to enjoy their foreign matter in a native manner.

Even though Krishna Pillai faithfully follows the Bunyanian storyline, the whole epic, unlike in Bunyan, deals with the major biblical accounts: the creation story, the Fall of Man, the Decalogue, the life of Christ, the Beatitudes, Christ’s miracles and parables and homiletic passages. But, while Bunyan dwells more on the Calvinistic dogmas of “predestination and election,” Krishna Pillai is carried away by the Christian eschatology and simple evangelistic faith which evidently necessitated the creation of a few more characters which in no way hampers the evolution of the work. The spiritual transformation that occurred in the lives of the two writers and their regenerative experiences in the light of the great transformative experiences is something similar to the experiences the prominent personages have passed down the centuries. In the case of Bunyan and Krishna Pillai conversion, from the theological point of view, is an outcome of divine intervention and not a sudden eruption of an individual’s suppressed complexes.
The aforementioned argument establishes the socio-cultural and religio-spiritual impact on Krishna Pillai in the re-creation of Bunyan’s masterpiece in Tamil. Perhaps, from a comparative point of view, the most bewildering question in the imitative creation of a work of art is absolute fidelity to the original both in form and content or genre, theme and subject — matter. Instances of imitative creation being practised by the artists like Krishna Pillai through a change or transfer of the genre or form as available in the original have been very few in the history of world literature. Thus, for instance, while Pope has rendered Homer in the poetic form the Tamil poet Kavimani’s rendering of Edwin Arnold’s *The Light of Asia* and Edward Fitzgerald’s *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam are all in poetic form as found in the original.

What more, even the stupendous achievement by Kampan in his Tamil rendering of Valmiki’s *Ramayana* stands as an example of generic fidelity in imitative creativity. So is the case with Villiputturar’s Tamil rendering of Vyasa’s *Mahabharata* in Sanskrit. Thus in all instances of re-creation or imitative creation through adaptation there has been an almost near perfect fidelity to the original especially in re-making form and theme.

The question as to whether in secondary creations fidelity should have primacy over creativity or creativity should have primacy over fidelity has been discussed and debated in the field of comparative studies. It has been pointed out that there has to be fidelity in form and genre to the original and there could be creativity in content where there is no violation of thematic unity. Perhaps the only instance of a prose narrative being rendered into an exciting poetic epic narrative is Krishna Pillai’s rendering of John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* as *Irañcapiya Yāttirikam* into Tamil.

The reason is not far to seek. When the author took upon himself the onerous task of enriching his honeyed Tamil with the addition of a *bhakti* literature with a religio-theologico —
spiritual propensity, the targeted audience, to start with, as the poet himself confesses, was the highly challenging assemblage of fellow poets and deeply versed erudite scholastic pundits with a through mastery of Sanskrit and Tamil art and literature.

Besides, Krishna Pillai both instinctively and through the rich inheritance of a great poetic tradition, was himself a great poet in the making. The poetic medium was therefore to Krishna Pillai an inescapable natural and spontaneous choice. With all his exuberance of style, economy of expression, structural architectonics, rhetorical elegance and prosodic potency, Krishna Pillai, the new poet, was well poised for the imitative adaptation of Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress in an exalted poetic form.

The choice of the epic medium, although it involved a deliberate change of the original genre, is thus unavoidable because that is exactly where the poetic strength of the potential remaker lay. And that is also the medium through which Krishna Pillai could very well confront and challenge his fellow poets of the other faiths and emphatically assert with all the impinching energy of the poetic machine, the basic theological and philosophical tenets of his new-found faith. Moreover, purely from the point of view of Tamil literary history, Krishna Pillai was attempting the re-creation in verse form because at that time for any communicative expression verse form was the literary order of the day. True indeed there were a few literary commentaries in prose form which were far more complex and complicated than the verse form which obviously did not contain the salient dynamic and graceful features of the mellifluous rhythmic prose that was to develop in Tamil long after the creation of Irakaniya Yattirikam although the first fictionalized prose narrative, Mayuram Vetanayakam Pillai’s Pratapa Muttalhyar Caritiram, appeared as early as 1879.
The question of fidelity to the generic original does not, therefore, bear any artistic significance in comparative study. Instead, what one ought to bear in mind in such comparative studies is the inescapable contemporary physical reality and the traditionally bound literary practice which apparently asserted a far greater influence on the artist than the fidelity to the originality of form. At the same time one should not lose sight of the fact that Krishna Pillai was also under tremendous literary pressure in offering an immortal Protestant Tamil epic crowning the mother goddess of Tamil.

Some of the western-born Tamil scholars did try to render the Pilgrim's Progress in Tamil. But, as they were not endowed with poetic creativity, their endeavours syphoned off into a prose narrative allegory. Even some of Krishna Pillai's contemporary poets did try to re-create The Pilgrim's Progress in verse form but the highly noble, ever lofty and effulgently exalted epic form was far beyond their reach. All that they could achieve was to render the original only in minor literary forms like Ammârsâi. Thus Krishna Pillai's conscious sacrificing of fidelity to generic originality has, from a comparative point of view, greater literary relevance and achievement.

This takes us to the concomitant question of the well balanced display of fidelity to the original in maintaining the thematological unity and an abundant overflow of creativity in logically, meaningfully and coherently attempting a Tamilized re-creation of Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. It is thus certainly not an exaggeration to say that Krishna Pillai, on the one hand, remains absolutely faithful to the original, but at the same time does not allow his ever-flowing dynamic creativity in retelling a tale in a poetic diction and form which would be most acceptable to and most welcome to Tamil population before whose discerned sense of judgement Krishna Pillai laid open his Protestant Tamil epic.
In short Krishna Pillai’s *Iraṭṭaṭṭā Yāttirikam* may be crisply described as a judicious display of equipoised fidelity and creativity in the re-creation of a great literary classic from one socio-cultural reality to another. The creative endeavour, therefore, does not suffer from any misplaced transplantation or any misidentified *bhakti* tenets or spiritual dictum that are outrightly alien to the local Tamil readers. Thus the creative exercise in literary adaptation has resulted in an absolute natural metamorphosis which indeed makes it more an original creation in Tamil than a re-creation, which indeed is the hallmark of all great literary adaptations.

While as an allegorist par excellence in fictionalised narratology Bunyan excels, Krishna Pillai excels in re-creating a simple prose narrative into an ever exalting epic form in all its noble, exalted and poetic virility. Although Krishna Pillai had Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* as the original, the poet took sufficient liberties both with form and content to make it more literarily conducive to the people of native faith. Bunyan’s scholarly exposition of the Calvinistic and puritanical exegetic interpretation of and commentary on the Bible is that which adds the much needed religio-spiritual dimension to Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*. The variegated doctrinal differences and deeply sedimented dogmatic perceptions are all very effectively and intricately interwoven into the overall aesthetic network of the structural unity of the work of art.

That which thus appears to be a simple allegorical narrative evidently unfolding a tale of a journey of the soul ultimately turns out to be a powerful scholastic exposition of contemporary theologico-philosophic trends, religio-spiritual insights and the compelling socio-cultural reality.

Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* thus becomes an ocean which encompasses the multifarious magnificence of the mighty world of the soul, the mind and the body. It is indeed
a spiritual microcosm that shows the beacon light for the eternal release from the inevitable suffering and the attainment of eternity which Bunyan’s faith taught him as salvation. Thus Christian’s journey becomes Bunyan’s journey, Christian’s suffering becomes Bunyan’s suffering, and Christian’s attainment of eternity becomes Bunyan’s attainment of eternity. As a result, a seemingly simple allegorically fictionalized prose narrative becomes an autobiographically allegorized fictional narrative which expounds in the light of Christian theology and spirituality the meaning of sin and salvation and the possibilities of liberation from sin to attain salvation.

Similarly, what Krishna Pillai’s protagonist, Āttuma Vicāri, perceives, pursues and attains is realized by Krishna Pillai himself in the newly Christianized Tamil context against the backdrop of his pre-Christian cultural reality.

Thus there is a thematological and structural unity which binds The Pilgrim’s Progress and Iraţcariya Yāttirikam as two congruous branches of the same stem. The basic Christological religio-spiritual experience of two ever thirsting souls, John Bunyan and Krishna Pillai, for salvation and mukti are of the same essence. Therefore, despite all seeming differences, including the generic realization, there is a greater degree of unity of purpose in meaningfully exploring the agony and ecstasy of the traumatic inner experience which constitutes the inescapable inner experience of the religio-spiritual faith.

Even with regard to the thematological treatment of sin and suffering and succour and salvation there is a greater degree of convergence than divergence. This certainly is not to deny the fact that Krishna Pillai, for obvious reasons, takes as much liberty as a poet. A poet of his mental make-up and his literary calibre would demand the remoulding and reshaping of the Bunyanian conceptual framework of sin and salvation into Krishna Pillai’s conceptual framework of sin and salvation. Krishna Pillai’s concept of sin and suffering is to a very large
extent coloured by the native notions of sin and suffering. Obviously, as a poet born and brought up in the native Tamil culture, Krishna Pillai’s conceptual framework has taken into account the indigenous variants. But surprisingly there is a closer similarity between the two writers in the treatment of sin as related to the original sin, the seven deadly sins, the mortal and sins. But when it comes to the treatment of the Decalogue and its violation as constituting the core of sin, Krishna Pillai goes off at a tangent and presents a detailed account of the subtle implications of the Decalogue and the need for upholding its dogmatic decree.

The difference is deeply ingrained in the psycho-religiousity of both the authors. It is reinforced by their socio-cultural and politico-philosophical realities. To Bunyan, the Lutheran-Puritan-Calvinist and anti-royalist, it is Grace and not Law which is the harbinger of salvation. Himself having not been scholastically affected by the Calvinistic and the puritanical doctrines, to Krishna Pillai the violation of the Decalogue is indeed the violation of the very purpose of God’s plan for man’s life. It is precisely this that has contributed to the very idea of the violation of the Law of God as constituting the core of sin and suffering interspersed all through Irañçariya Yāttirikam. Naturally, such a divergence in perception of sin and suffering in both Bunyan and Krishna Pillai has its respective shift in emphasis in the major thematological presentation of succour and salvation.

While in Bunyan one finds the dual vision of salvation and damnation and the Calvinistic jubilation, Krishna Pillai’s vision is more unified in perceiving the glories of heaven as the culmination of Āttuma Vicāri’s entry into the heavenly abode of his divine maker. Maybe Krishna Pillai’s inadequate theological exposure to the denominational doctrines of the Calvinists and the Puritans made him gloss over the damnation meted out to Ignorance at the culmination of The Pilgrim’s Progress. This naturally accounts for the unitary vision of Krishna Pillai. But
then one ought to remember that this unitary vision could also be due to the fact that Krishna Pillai in gradually tracing the evolutionary summit of his *Pilgrim's Progress* has all the more conscious of the Tamil epic tradition which demands the triumphantly glorious entry of the protagonist into the avowed destination of dignity and splendour. Thus, in the case of Krishna Pillai, the question of damnation does not at all arise in presenting the consummate divine experience of becoming one with the ultimate.

What is much more remarkable and that which contributes to the organic unity of both the works is that there is a judicious blend of the thematological commonness and the structural unity. Neither the working out of the major themes nor the structural devices hang lose. A taxonomy of sayings and similes used by both the authors by way of explicating the subtle shades of thematic variations clearly display the structural and semantic unities. The sayings and similes as "expositors" of the theme are as architectonically interwoven into the structural fabric of both the works as the architectural symmetry in designing a great structure. This lends a rigour, unity and coherence to the overall structural stratification at every level of the compositions. It is marvellous that, despite generic shift, excessive indigenization and the much needed textualization, both the works display an enormous degree of structural unity.

The comparison of the two texts has also highlighted the contrastive aesthetics enshrined in the two texts. Krishna Pillai's attempt is to "Tamil-textualize" Bunyan's English text. The problems faced by Krishna Pillai are relatively larger than those by Bunyan. The latter addresses his text in a rather receptive culture while Krishna Pillai had to naturalize the alien and in the process his text is more problematized in terms of poeticising the religious theme. In Tamil literary scenario the availability of masterpieces should have threatened the competence of Krishna Pillai and naturally has resulted in the challenges squarely and successfully. While
Bunyan's problems are limited to the thematic propositions, Krishna Pillai's text reveals cultural strain as well as the religious problems of spreading the gospel among the members of the other faiths. In terms of culture the indigenization of the Christian theme acquires its thematic strategies which are very demanding and exclusive to Krishna Pillai. In broad terms Krishna Pillai's attempt of handing over Bunyan to Tamil audience reveals the special problems faced by any writer in Tamil Nadu in embarking on a venture of adaptation and also reveals the individual merits of Krishna Pillai, a Christian speaking of Christianity to a Tamil audience which contains a Hindu majority, and also Krishna Pillai, a Tamil poet who structures a special kind of narrative in the context of an established Tamil poetics.

However, the nature and scope of the present comparative study has naturally given room for certain academic constraints which in a way limited the analysis from providing ample space for delving deeper into certain comparative domains that needs to be problematized for a meaningful contrastive pursuit of Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress and Krishna Pillai's Irakaraiya Yatririkam.

Thus, for instance, the artistically wonderful process of metamorphosis that Krishna Pillai has ushered in through a powerful localized delineation of the very Bunyanian conceptual framework in respect of its thematological constructs, vivid re-creation of the topographical panoramic splendour in tune with the colourful description as presented by the native poet and more than anything else a re-living of the ancient wisdom as found in the oral tradition and the underlying folk and non-folk currents and cross-currents.

Sufficient academic space from a comparative perceptual stand could not be provided for the above mentioned areas of investigation as the discussion in the present study mainly centres around exploring from a comparative angle the thematological commonness and the
structural unity that encompass the fine artistic expression of a still finer spiritual experience, a
noble aesthetic manifestation of a still nobler divine revelation. Reference here to the need for
prospective researchers’ investigations into the underlying intricate patterns is made as they
would throw better light on a comparative understanding of The Pilgrim’s Progress and
Iraçcaniya Yattirikam.

By way of final conclusion the researcher could restate that both the writers have
tuned their transformative experiences into transcreative accounts; that the deadly nature of
sin leading to suffering has been dealt with by the occidental and oriental authors in the light of
their socio-cultural contexts, dogmatic theology and doctrinal differences; that the Calvinistic
dogma gets exemplified and emended the puritan way through the Bunyanian characters and
that Krishna Pillai indigenizes the Christian theology to suit the taste of his countrymen; that the
sayings and similes embedded in the thematic strains not only facilitate the development of the
motif of sin and salvation but also serve to set off socio-cultural differences of the two writers;
that both the stories have the elements of a folk tale which fit into the Proppian framework and
that the Tamil poet has woven out of the prosaic romance of the English writer an enduring epic
to enshrine the creed of his new-found religion.

Both the texts belong to different periods, cultures and genres. It is not very important
to establish the influence of one text on the other, since both the texts have established themselves
as individual works of art. But the comparative analysis has provided more insights into both
the texts leading to the highlighting of transcultural ethos. Knowledge of Bunyan helps one
better appreciate Krishna Pillai and vice versa. After all, comparative literature’s logical extension
is Universal literature and both the texts have acquired a place for themselves as individual
texts while facilitating the process of universalization.