

# SHRINGARA ...wherever the heart

wanders, there it encounters its mysteries....



## Invocation

*palum telitenum pakum paruppum ivai ; nalum kalantunakku nan taruven*

*kolancey tunkakarimukattu tumanaye; ni y enakku cankattamil*

*munrunta..*

*(Auvaiyar, 12th CE)*

..... this prayer invokes *GANESHA*, the elephant headed god, whose beautifully decorated trunk removes all obstacles. Poetess *Auvaiyar* offers him his favorite dishes: milk, honey, raw sugar and rice. In return, she requests poetry in the language *TAMIL*: not only in words, but also in music and dance. This *THREE-FOLD MUTTAMIL* goes back some 2000 years: wandering bards performed in royal courts and academies of experts - competing for the golden lotus of poetic excellence.

## Poems

Short poems from *KURUNTOKAI* (100-250CE) will take us through the *INTERIOR LANDSCAPE* of *LOVE*, set in the countryside of Taminadu, South India. Flowers, birds, hills and rivers speak of infatuation, betrayal, longing and passion of human lovers: 'what she said', 'what he said', 'what her friend said' is all that matters.

*Nilattinum perite vaninum uyarntanru*

*nirinum aralavinre - caral*

*karunkol kurincippukkontu*

*perunten ilaikkeum natanotu natpe.*

(K.3)

**what she said.....**

*Bigger than the earth and higher than the sky....*

*more difficult to measure than the deep ocean*

*is my LOVE..... for the hero who lives on the mountain slopes*

*where bees draw abundant honey from Kurinci- flowers of black stem.*

This love imagery spread all over India as *SHRINGARA* in poetry, music and painting. Today, it continues in lyrical Dance from temples and courts in Tamilnadu. There, lovers changed place from a human to a divine plane: the *varnam „Mohamana“* (Ponniah: 1887-1945 CE) stages *Shakti* in her infatuation with *Shiva* as *Shri Tyagaraja* of Tiruvarur.

*Mohamana en mitil ni... inta velaiyil „..... Intoxicating love .....for you... in this moment....“.* The earth, wind and flowers help her to outline the grandeur of her love.

*Ellai kalíya mullai malara  
katircínantanínta kaiyaru malaiyum  
íravarampaka nintínamayín  
evankol.....valí toli kankulvellam katalinum períte.*

*(K.387)*

**what she said.....**

*The sun has set, jasmin flowers bloom  
the evening breaks through the rays of dwindling light;  
even....if i swam to the border of the night....  
whatfor...my friend ?....  
the DARKNESS swells higher than the sea.....*

Falling in love is no guarantee for its return...*Mohamana* opened with the euphoric dream of a love-to-come-true, set in the major ascending scale of the melody *Bhairavi* . BUT... Shri Tyagaraja does not answer her pleas: he turns away from her glance, her touch, her flowergarland and the delicious milk she has prepared with so much loving care.

*motí ceyyalamo en caamí metta... :"*indifference..... you could not be so, isn't it?,  
after all..... you are my truly beloved...!"

The melody of *Bhairavi* now enters into the darkness of its melancholic descending scale.

*urunkeni y unturait tokka*

*paciyarre pacalai...*

*kataralar...*

*totuvuli totuvuli ninki...*

*vituvuli vituvuli parattalane...*

*(K.399)*

**what she said....**

*Just like green moss covering the water in our well*

*my PALLOR.....*

*at the touch ... of my lover ...goes ...*

*at his withdrawal....re-appears....*

The Interior Landscape of *SHRINGARA* maps five situations where lovers meet, wait, quarrel, separate or elope. The Tamil countryside accomodates all: while lovers meet in secret in the jungle, their waiting is set in the agricultural pasture land, the towns evoke unfaithfulness, jealousy and suffering, while the sea sets the terms of painful separation; when love finds no way to public acceptance it turns away and the lovers elope into the dry, deserted wilderness.

Four out of Five landscapes speak of solitude, only ONE of happy union. Does this mean that passion grows... in absence....?

*yarum illai tane kalvan...  
atanatu poyppin... yan evan ceyko  
tinaitalanna cirupacunkal olukunir aral parkekum  
kurukum untu tan... mananta nanre*

*(K.25)*

**what she said.....**

*Nobody was there....*

*but he.... the THIEF....*

*if he lies about that...*

*then ..what shall i do....?*

*Only a heron stood by,*

*on thin legs, yellow like millet,*

*spying for prey in the running water -*

*on that day..... when he made me HIS very own.*

Anxiety is part of LOVE... how well do we know the 'other'?

Many poems speak about this state of mind, and continue to do so in lyrical, solo dance.

## **SONG**

The composition „*Saramaina matalento....*” ‘Why to speak so charmingly...’ by Svati Tirunal (1813-1846 CE) in *melody Behag* , and rhythm cycle *Mishra Chapu*, presses the question and finds the answer in the metaphysics of divine *play „LILA”* where Krishna the lover turns into Lord Vishnu, resting on the primordial waters.

*Yayum nayum yar akíyaro  
entaíyum nuntayum emmuraíke kelír  
yanum níyum evalí y arítum  
cempulap peyanír pola  
anputaí nencam tankalantanave.*

*(K.40)*

**what he said...**

*My mother and your mother... who are they to each other ?*

*my father and your father... how are they related ?*

*ME and YOU.... how did we ever meet ?*

*yet.... like red soil and pouring rain....*

*our loving hearts merged into ONE !*

The BOND of Love is mysterious, it lies hidden in time and waits for the right moment to forge its truth. Lover and beloved ...pouring rain and red soil ....will naturally find each other. So do the god *Shiva Tyagaraja* and his other half *Shakti*.... says *Bhaíravi VARNAM*:

*contamutan ennai kutína vintaíyái ninaínte títam ....vatí manam natí*

*.... umaítetí uravata míkavum...* 'as your very own you embraced me, thinking of that joy daily.... my heart quivers, searching for you everywhere.... as we are in a perennial tie.

Their relationship is beyond time, emerging as an eternal dualis: *ARDHANARISVARA*...*The Lord whose left half is Female.*

**DANCE**

*„Mohamana...”* will take its poetic time of 30 minutes to come to this ultimate realisation.

## *Credits:*

**Concept and copyright:** Saskia Kersenboom

**Translations** from Tamil and Telugu into English - Saskia Kersenboom

**Miniatures:** 'Miniatures from the East', 1960, Lubor Hajek, Werner Forman, London: Artia

**Mural:** Tiruvaiyaru temple, Tamilnadu, photograph: Thomas Voorter

**Music:** *nattuvangam* (cymbals): Shri K. Ramaiah; *vocal:* Shri M.S. Ramadass, (*javali:* Saskia Kersenboom); *mridangam* (drum): Shri G. Ekambaram; *venu* (flute): Shri K. Rajah; *tanpura* (drone): Shri G. Munnusvami

**Choreography:** Shri K. Ganesha Pillai ( abstract dance), Smt. T. Balasaraswati (mime); training: Smt. Nandini Ramani

**Dance:** *Javali:* Saskia Kersenboom

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## *Information:*

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