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VIKRAMA CHOLAN ULAA

by **OTTAKKUTHAR**
(12th century)

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Introduction by
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PREFACE by George Hart

The *Vikkiramacōlaṅ Ulā* is extraordinarily rich in language, symbolism, and texture. It connects the king, his procession, his elephant, his entourage, and the women who see him in a vast and varied canvas where many things happen at once. As we read it, we become part of a happening, and are drawn from one end of this great vision to the other, slowly forgetting ourselves and, like the king's women, finding ourselves overwhelmed by his glory and splendor. Oṭṭakkūttan's achievement is to have created an extraordinarily compelling work out of a simple and rather unimaginative template. This translation makes this wonderful poem available in a form that all can enjoy. Gita has added an informative introduction about the king, the poet, and the poem. The present work grew out of work done by Kausalya Hart and Gita Pai, who read Oṭṭakkūttan's *Vikkiramacōlaṅ Ulā* together for research purposes. This translation is meant to make available to the general public a work that has long been admired by students of Tamil literature. Footnotes and diacritical marks have been avoided (except in the introduction), as they often confuse everyone but scholars. And for clarity, occasional additions have been made here and there. The result is a fine translation that can be enjoyed by the Tamil public in general.

INTRODUCTION by Gita Pai

The *Vikkiramacōlaṅ Ulā* is a panegyric poem relating the military valor and sexual magnetism of a prominent king of the Chola dynasty, which ruled for four centuries (849-1279 CE) over much of southern India, Sri Lanka and parts of Southeast Asia. The Chola sovereigns were one of the longest-lived imperial lineages in the history of south Asia. They are known for their efficient administrative system, which combined a vigorous central control with a very large measure of local autonomy.¹ The great temples of Tañjāvūr, Gangaikondacōlapuram, Dārācuram and Tribhuvani as well as the smaller temples in other parts of Tamilnadu, attest to the grandeur and majestic excellence of Chola temple architecture and stone sculpture. As patrons of the arts, the Chola monarchs liberally commissioned other fine arts such as painting, music, poetry, drama, dance and bronze cast sculpture. The Chola dynasty was the dominant culture, artistic, religious and political force in south India from the 9th to the 13th centuries.

The references to the Chola dynasty are ancient. Northern inscriptions of the Mauryan emperor Ashoka refer to the Cholas, and Sangam literature produced roughly around 300 BCE to 300 CE detail the dominance of three dynasties over the areas of modern day Tamilnadu and Kerala: The Pandyas were based in Madurai to the south, the Cholas in Uṛaiyūr (modern Tiruccirāppalli) and the Cheras west of the Cholas in Karur and Kerala in the west.² The frequent

¹ Stein, Burton. "The Segmentary State in South Indian History" in *Realm and Region in India*, Robert Fox, editor, Duke University Press, 1977, p. 3-51.

² Heitzman, James. *Gifts of Power: Lordship in an Early Indian State*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 2.

attacks of the Pallavas, Cheras, and the Pandyas diminished the Chola power and it was not until the 8th century CE that their glory began to shine when the Pallavas' power declined.

Vikrama Chola's rule dates from 1118 although his father Kulōttuṅga lived for four more years. The seventeen years of his reign are considered a period of relative peace.³ He is known for regaining the Chola control over the Vengi, an area of constant dispute between the Cholas and Western Chālukyas, and for taking control of a portion of Gangavādi. He made extensive additions to the temple at Cidambaram, a temple of particular attachment for the Chola monarchs, as well as to the shrine of Ranganātha at Śrīrangam.

Vikkīramacōlaṅ Ulā falls in the category of the literary genre called *ulā*. *Ulā* means "procession" from the root *ulavu*, to move. As a genre, the poem is the description of the king's procession in the street. Its nascent origins appear in the grammar *Tolkāppiyam* (2-5 century CE?), where it is said to be appropriate for a person to make his appearance in a city in a procession.⁴ Subsequently, the idea of a procession was incorporated into three Tamil epics. In *Peruṅkatai* of the 7th century, a chieftain at the time of his coronation and later during his marriage proceeds in the street for the very purpose of being seen⁵ and this kindles feelings of love in the women who rush to see him.⁶ In *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* by Tiruttakkattēvar around the 10th century, a small section in fourteen stanzas describes how the women fall in love and lose their chastity when they behold the king Cīvakaṅ in procession as he returns from a victorious battle.⁷ And in Kampaṅ's *Rāmāyaṇa* of the 12th century, women swoon as they see king Rāma when he comes on the street in a procession.⁸ In all these epics, the procession is a standard feature but is not elaborated in great detail nor is it the primary subject of the literary work.

What was once a brief and recurrent pattern in these earlier works evolved through the centuries to appear as a *prabandham* or separate minor literary genre. The *ulā* is defined purely in terms of its subject matter and not in formal terms, i.e. meter, number of stanzas, etc.⁹ The general content of the *ulā* literature is the symbolic moment in the life of the king or deity. He emerges from his palace or shrine in order to parade through the streets before his subjects or worshippers after a coronation, marriage, or battle while being elevated on a palanquin, chariot, horse or elephant. The procession lasts from one to seven days. Women of seven age groups see the hero, desire him sexually and in their fascination grow thin and pale, lose their beauty, become confused,

³ Nilakanta Sastri, K. A. *A History of South India from Prehistoric Times to the Fall of Vijayanagar* (3rd edition), London: Oxford University Press, 1966, p. 193.

⁴ *Kalaikkalañciyam*. (Tamil Encyclopedia), first edition, volume 2, Madras: Association of Tamil Development, 1955, p. 344.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 345.

⁶ This same theme is found in Kalidasa's *Raghuvamśa*, a Sanskrit poem written during the 4th century C.E. In the seventh book of this work, the ladies of the city crowd to see prince Aja as he passes by from the *svayamvara* where the princess Indumatī has chosen him as her husband.

⁷ *Ibid*.

⁸ *Ibid*.

⁹ Cutler, Norman. *Songs of Experience: The Poetics of Tamil Devotion*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982, p. 81.

and drop their bracelets. In the process, their mental chastity is destroyed and they desperately long for eye contact with their hero, at least the smallest of glimpses through the corner of his eye!

The *ulā* genre has two parts. In the first section are details of the hero's genealogy, glorious victories, bathing with sandalwood, going in processional grandeur on his vehicle, and escorts. The traditional requirements include the royal hero's description and ten parts must be acknowledged: the king's country, his capital city, his city of birth, his mountain, his river, his name, his mode of transportation, his army, his drum, and his garland.¹⁰ In the second section, the poet's attention shifts from the hero to the feelings and actions of the women in the hero's kingdom whose hearts were captivated. While the king is specifically mentioned by name, the women remain nameless, a long-established practice seen in the *akam* (romantic) and *puṭam* (heroic) poetry of the Tamil Sangam literature belonging to the first three centuries of the Common Era. The emotional responses of the love stricken women in the seven age groups are recounted. The women belong to a conventional division: *pētai* (5-7 years of age), *petumpai* (8-11 years), *maṅkai* (12-13 years), *maṅantai* (14-19 years), *arivai* (19-25 years), *terivai* (26-31 years) and *pēriḷampeṇ* (31-40 years).¹¹ An important aspect of the *ulā* is the one-sided nature of the love, as the king never reciprocates the undying love the women have for him.

The first important *ulā* appeared in the 9th century when Cēramāṇ Perumāḷ's chief achievement was his innovation of the *ulā* as a distinctive literary form,¹² which he diverted and elaborated for a religious purpose. In his poem *Āti Ulā*, Śiva while on Mount Kailāsa and upon the request of his devotees goes around in procession, royally adorned. The women in Kailāsa are all eyes to take in his royal splendor and as he passes in state, girls and women of different ages react differently. Their reaction is the subject matter of *Āti Ulā*. These women's infatuations with the divine hero suggest the devotee's ardent and devotional feelings for the supreme deity.

Such is not the case with royal *ulās*, where the procession of a regal figure speaks of "the symbolic quality of south Indian kingship: the king is there in order to be perceived, and to perceive himself, in highly formalized and emotionally powerful ways."¹³ Poetry has been widely recognized as a power to confer immortality of kings and Oṭṭakkūttar, the court poet popularly known by the epithets of *Kaviccakkaravartti* or Emperor of Poets, *Kavirākṣasan* or Giant Poet, *Varakavi* or Divinely Gifted Poet, was commissioned by Vikrama Cōḷa (1118-1135), his son Kulōttuṅga Cōḷa (1133-1150), and his grandson Raja Raja Cōḷa (1146-1173) for this very purpose.

Oṭṭakkūttar was born in a poor Ceṅkuntar (weaver) family in Malari, a village in the Chola country. He sought service under Caṅkaraṇ, who was the chieftain of Pudukkottai as well as the father of Caṭaiyaṇ, the patron of the celebrated poet laureate Kampan. Oṭṭakkūttar had other patrons like Gāṅgēya whom he praised in *Nālāyirakkōvai* and Soman of Tribhuvani.¹⁴ When he achieved fame, he was invited to the imperial Chola court and was entertained there as *Kaviccakkaravartti*

¹⁰ *Kalaikkaḷaṅciyam*, p. 344.

¹¹ Zvelebil, Kamil V. *Tamil Literature*, Wiesbaden, Germany: Otto Harrassowitz, 1974, p. 197.

¹² Jesudasan, C. and Hephzibah Jesudan. *History of Tamil Literature* (Heritage of India series), Calcutta: Y.M.C.A. Publishing House, 1961, p. 92.

¹³ Shulman, David. *The King and the Clown in South Indian Myth and Poetry*, Princeton University Press, 1985, p. 312.

¹⁴ Nilakanta Sastri, p. 377.

(Emperor of Poets) by the three successive monarchs beginning with Vikrama Cōla. Erudite in Tamil and Sanskrit, he wrote what is widely considered to be the best of this type of poetry called *Muvar Ulā*, a collection of three *ulās* in honor of these three monarchs. Although the *ulā* genre continued during the Vijayanagara period (1200 to 1650) as a minor literary form and later during the Nāyaka¹⁵ and Maratha periods (1650-1800), the *Muvar Ulā* is believed to be the finest and the most popular.¹⁶ In addition to the three *ulās*, he composed a *paraṇi*¹⁷ on the Kaliṅga war of Vikrama Cōla titled *Kaliṅgattu-p-paraṇi*, and a *piḷaitami*¹⁸ on Kulōttuṅga Cōla II, Vikrama Cōla's son titled *Kulōttuṅga-Cōlan Piḷai-t-tami*, which is the oldest extant poem in this genre.¹⁹ He is credited with developing the *piḷaitami* into a definite literary form.²⁰ Oṭṭakkuttar also wrote *Takka-yāka-p-paraṇi* which describes the battle between Śiva's general and his father-in-law, as well as other poems titled *Arumpaittoḷḷāyairam*, *Kāṅkeyaṅ Nālāyirak Kōvai* (which is not extant) and perhaps *Īṭṭiyehupatu*. According to historian K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, the village of Kūttanūr located on the banks of the Aricil River in the Tañjāvūr district “keeps the poet's memory alive,” and has a Sarasvatī temple with a record from the 12th century that mentions the installation of the image of the goddess by Kavipperumāḷ, also known as Ōvātakūttar, the grandson of Oṭṭakkūttar.²¹

Vikkiramacōlan Ulā is a lengthy poem written in the *kaliveṅpā* meter consisting of 342 *kaṅṅis* (couplets), or 684 lines.

Kaṅṅis 1 to 112 form the first section of the poem where primary emphasis is placed on the king:

Kaṅṅis 1 to 14 describe the accomplishments of the mythological and legendary ancestors of the king to establish the greatness of the hero's illustrious dynasty, their military conquests, and other achievements. Given that royal *ulās* represent the king's duty to present himself to his subjects outside the walls of his palace, it is not surprising that *Vikkiramacōlan Ula* begins with this genealogy in the first fourteen couplets.

Kaṅṅis 15 to 23 trace the genealogy up to the king's father.

Kaṅṅis 24 to 27 relay the achievements of the hero's father.

In *Kaṅṅis* 28 to 35 the hero is praised. Filled with formulaic royal titles, the epithets are panegyric and hyperbolic as the purpose is to introduce the hero and to glorify this perfect and powerful king.

¹⁵ According to Narayana Rao, Velcheru, David Shulman, and Sanjay Subramaniam (*Symbols of Substance: Court and State in Nāyaka Period Tamilnadu*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998) the Nāyaka public *svari*, in which the king would show himself to his people through a procession, is the direct descendant of the Chola period royal *ula* processions” (p. 60).

¹⁶ Meenakshisundaran. P. *A History of Tamil Literature*, Hyderabad: Marathi Sahitya Parishad, 1965, p.143.

¹⁷ *Paraṇi* is a minor literary form consisting of a war poem that celebrates the victory of a killer of seven hundred elephants (Jesudasan 1961, p. 186).

¹⁸ *Piḷaitami* is a “genre of Tamil devotional poetry to an extraordinary deity or person addressed in the form of a child” Richman, Paula. *Extraordinary Child: Poems from a South Indian Devotional Genre*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997, p. ix.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 35.

²⁰ Jesudasan, p. 192.

²¹ Nilakanta Sastri, p. 377.

Kaṇṇis 36 to 52 describe the hero's bedroom, his bath, prayers, dress and his queen.

Kaṇṇis 53 to 64 give a vivid account of the gallant deeds of the royal elephant that carries the king. This elephant is compared to Indra's heavenly elephant called *Airavata*.

Kaṇṇis 65 to 90 elaborately describe the procession and its participants as well as their exploits. The king's generals, council of ministers, chieftains, commanders-in-chief, soldiers, priests, treasurer, and elephant trainer who accompany the mighty king are mentioned

Kaṇṇis 91 to 112 evoke the *ulā* moving along the street where beautifully bejeweled women wearing effulgent ornaments live. While complimenting the king in this way, these women become thin and they try desperately to prevent their bracelets from falling by folding their hands in worship.

Kaṇṇis 113 to 342 constitute the second section of the poem called *peṇ ēḥu nilai* where the activities of the women, who become lovesick at the sight of the hero, are described. The origin of *ēḥu paruva makaḥir* (division of womanhood in seven stages) is unknown and was not present in Sangam poetry:

Kaṇṇis 113 to 133 describe the reactions of an innocent girl in the *pētai* stage, ages 5 to 7.

Kaṇṇis 134 to 162 depict the reactions of a young girl in the *petumpai* stage, ages 8 to 11.

Kaṇṇis 163 to 192 illustrate the reactions of an adolescent girl in the *maṅkai* stage ages, 12 to 13.

Kaṇṇis 193 to 227 show the reactions of a nubile girl in the *maṭantai* stage ages, 14 to 19.

Kaṇṇis 228 to 262 portray the reactions of a maiden in the *arivai* stage, ages 20 to 25.

Kaṇṇis 263 to 305 display the reactions of a woman in the *terivai* stage ages, 26 to 31.

Kaṇṇis 306 to 342 present the reactions of a mature woman in the *pēriḷampeṇ* stage, ages 32 to 40.

Vikrama Cholan Ulaa

Whether the poet describes the king as he begins his procession, or the king carried in parade by his elephant, or the feelings of women as they see the king, this poem is written as if its author were painting a picture. To convey this sense, we use the present tense in our translation even though the text sometimes uses the past tense. The poem begins with an extended description of the lineage of Vikrama Chola, after which it describes that king parading through the city, the elephant Airavata that carries him, the beauty of the women (in seven categories determined by their age) who see the king and his elephant and the feelings of those women about the king and his elephant.

King Vikrama Chola's lineage

Vishnu the divine one, dark as cloud
is the beloved of beautiful Lakshmi
who stays on a lovely lotus.
He is the first one of the
lineage of Vikrama Chola.

Brahma with four heads
the ancient one, the creator of the world
came forth from Vishnu's navel.
He belongs to the lineage of Vikrama Chola.

Brahma's beloved son king Kasiban,
king Marisi the great, faultless one and
the Sun who rides on a chariot
with matchless wheels to lighten the world,
belong to the lineage of Vikrama Chola.

The heroic king Manu put his son
under his magnificent chariot and rode over him
to give justice to the grieving cow.
He belongs to the lineage of king Vikrama Chola.

The victorious king Manthaathaa
nourished with water from a flourishing pond
the murderous tiger and the grass-eating deer.
He belongs to the lineage of Vikrama Chola.

A Chola king rode alone
on a high chariot in the wide sky
the abode of gods.
He belongs to the lineage of Vikrama Chola.

The Chola king Bhupathi
flourished and protected the world.
He belong to the lineage of Vikrama Chola.

The Chola king Killivalavan brought
Manu's precious law for a sacrifice
and argued with Yama to establish justice.
He belongs to the lineage of Vikrama Chola.

The protector of the earth, Suraguru ,
fought with Yama and drove him into hiding,
after he made pots for the elders to escape.
He belongs to the lineage of Vikrama Chola.

A Chola king conquered the hanging walls
of the enemies in the sky and became famous as
'thungeyil erinda cholan'
He belongs to the lineage of Vikrama Chola.

The king Samharshana Chakravarthy
connected the abundant water
of western ocean to the eastern ocean.
He belongs to the lineage of Vikrama Chola.

The famous Nedungillivalavan,
went beneath the earth to the world of the Nagas
and married a daughter of their family.
He belongs to the lineage of Vikrama Chola.

The chola king Sibi happily climbed on the scale
in front of all the people of the earth
to protect a small dove from an eagle.
He belongs to the lineage of Vikrama Chola.

The chola king Chivuhan cut through
the high peaks of the tall Kudagu hills
to bring down the water
of the Kaveri river with rolling waves.
He belongs to the lineage of Vikrama Chola.

Karikalan, the monarch, planted the tiger banner
on the tops of hills
where the beautiful, clear waterfalls descend,
and he constructed a bank for the Kaveri river.

He belongs to the lineage of Vikrama Chola.

The Chola king Kochengan heard
the wonderful poems of
the poet Poykaiyaar of Chera land,
and cut the chains of the Chera king Irumborai
the bow-bannered one,
and released him from the prison.
He belongs to the lineage of Vikrama Chola.

The victorious king, protector of the earth
Vijayalaya Cholan received ninety-three wounds
on his body, in the battlefield.
He belongs to this lineage of Vikrama Chola.

The protector of the land, the first Parandaha Chola
lovingly decorated with gold
the divine pavilion in Thillai
where faultless three eyed Siva, sweet as honey dances.
He belongs to the lineage of Vikrama Chola.

The emperor, the first Rajaraja Chola
for the sake of his messenger,
crossed eighteen forest one day
and took over the Malainaadu.
He belongs to the lineage of Vikrama Chola.

The king Rajendra Chola, generous as Karpaga tree
that gives whatever one wants,
went with his army, conquered
and ruled and protected the land,
where Ganges flows and Kadaram.
He belongs to the lineage of Vikrama Chola

The king Rajaraja Chola, the incomparable warrior
conquered his strong enemies in Vangam
and invaded the city of Kalyani three times.
He belongs to the lineage of Vikrama Chola.

The king Rajadhiraja Chola
with his one elephant in a fierce war,
conquered his enemies in the city of Koppam
and took over their thousand elephants.
He belongs to the lineage of Vikrama Chola

The king Rajamahendra Chola
made a snake bed studded with glorious jewels
for Vishnu, praised by ancient divine Vedas,
in Srirangam in the south, surrounded by waves.
He belongs to the lineage of Vikrama Chola

The king Virarajendra Chola,
killed countless shining, rutting elephants
in the city of Kudala Sangamam and
he was praised by poets in a great Parani poem.
He belongs to the lineage of Vikrama Chola

All other kings who ruled after
and protected the whole earth
belong to the lineage of Vikrama Chola (1-46)

The valor of the Kulothunga Chola, father of the king Abhayan.

The first Kulothunga Chola
conquered the Pandya king with his fish banner
and the Chera king with his bow banner.
He defeated his enemy kings in Kanthalurchalai,
two times and took over the lands of Konganam
and Karnataka.
Defeating warriors on the battlefield,
he subdued the valor of the Marata kings.
His rule spread until the northern lands.
He removed and crushed poverty and reduced taxes.
His wheel of dharma encircled
the world surrounded by the ocean.
He, the king Abhaya Chola decorated
with his shining Athi garland
gave grace to his land.
Such is the glory of the father of Vikrama Chola.

The glory of the king Vikrama Chola

The king Vikrama Chola was born to glorify the earth.
He wears a Thumbai flower garland.
His three drums roar always like the clouds.
He is crowned to guard the three mighty worlds,
heaven, earth and the underworld.
His unequalled scepter rules the world in all directions.

His eminent royal canopy encloses all the eight directions
 guarded by the eight divine elephants.
 Other kings remove their shining crowns
 decorated with garlands
 before him and bow to him.
 His perfect rule covers the seven earths,
 and the seven vast oceans
 making them belong only to his kingdom.

The lovely goddess of earth decorated
 with mekalai on her waist, lives on his shoulders.
 His queen , praised as the most beautiful one
 on all the seven earths,
 who comes from a famous lineage,
 stays embracing the king's chest.
 The goddess of wealth who lives on a lotus
 rests on his long eyes.
 Such is the glory of the king Vikrama Chola. (47-70)

The king Vikrama Chola wakes up with his queen

One day,
 the king's feet are decorated with pearls,
 given by the southern kings as tribute.
 His body is fragrant with sandal paste
 that comes from the hills of the Southern kings.
 The breeze from the Southern land touches his feet.
 Women who could wage war
 with their swordlike eyes praise him.

He is under a canopy decorated with pearls.
 He rests on a bed
 where the moon throws his bright rays .
 Her shoulders are decorated with garlands.
 Her long eyes are black with kohl.
 She is lovely as a joyful swan
 with large eyes and breasts.
 He wakes up sweetly from his bed,
 with his queen lovely as a goddess
 decorated with flowers on her hair. (72-80)

The preparations of the king Vikrama Chola for the Ulaa

He bathes in the holy water of the Kaveri river.

He wears on his hands as an amulet a bracelet
made of tender shoots of arugu grass
given by priests.

Shiva is the three eyed one.
the divine shining light
with black neck, red color body.
He is the origin of the Vedas.
The king of the silver mountains
He wears crescent moon on his Jata.
He is sweet as fruit.
and gives his grace to all his devotees.
The king worships him.

The king orders his servants to bring him
suitable and splendid ornaments

The beautiful goddesses who stay with the king Vikrama Chola

The goddess of the Arts, Saraswathi
who has a beautiful face like lotus,
swarming with bees, stays with him.
His ears are decorated fish shaped ear rings.

The goddess of earth, Bhudevi with round breasts
stays on his arms decorated with
keyuram ornaments studded with bright jewels.

The goddess of fame
whose undiminished glory spreads everywhere
stays on his hand adorned
with bracelets studded with diamonds.

The goddess of wealth, Lakshmi,
who was born in the milky ocean
embracing him stays on his chest
ornamented with lovely, shining diamonds

The goddess of victory, Durga
giving endless success,
stays on his waist together
with its heroic sword.

He wears on his radiant body shining ornaments

such that there is nothing that could add to his splendor.
 He is as magnificent as the god of love was
 when he bent his bow
 to disturb the meditation of the three-eyed Siva.
 Kama, the king of Spring
 saw that the king was even more handsome than he
 lowered his head decorated with garlands
 before him. (81-100)

The Royal Elephant of Vikrama Chola

The rutting elephant, ornamented
 and trumpeting always at the auspicious time,
 moves from his place
 and stands outside the palace.

Hearing the sound of the thunder
 he grows angry thinking it his enemy.
 But then he touches the sky with his trunk
 and realizes that the thunder does not possess
 jewels and tusks and a curving trunk,
 and he is appeased.

He is like Yama's thunderbolt.
 Angry, he can stand alone against
 the king's enemies with only his tusks as weapons.
 He can crush and destroy
 all the peaks of the mountains with his tusks.
 Such is the strength of the royal elephant
 with killing tusks, incomparable in his rutting.
 Such is the anger of the king's murderous elephant.

His ichor flows everywhere.
 He does not bear any other rutting elephants in the world
 but protects all of his own clan.

Able to fight even with the elephants of the eight directions,
 he protects the king Ahalangan who with his two arms
 rules the whole earth in victory.

If he grows despondent when he thinks
 his king does not possess the whole earth,
 he goes to fight the eight elephants of space
 and then, seeing their backs,

and realizing that they are retreating,
he is pleased because he knows his king
will protect them also.

When his king opposes his enemies
of other countries who come to fight,
he kills them and feeds their lives to Yama.
Such is the strength of Airavata, the elephant of the king. (101- 128)

The king goes on his procession

The king climbs on the back of his elephant
stepping on the female elephant for support.
He is shaded with a beautiful royal umbrella of victory
and cooled by two thick fans that gives fresh cooling air.
With the victorious sound of the conches,
the bracelets of the women rattle.

The musical drums play.
The soldiers with swords march surrounding him.
Heroic kings approach him with respect.
His victorious murderous tiger banner is raised.
Such is the procession of Vikrama Chola. (129- 135)

The Escort of the king Vikrama Chola

Thondaiman, the chieftain
fought and defeated the kings of Southern lands,
Malava country, Singala country, Konganam
and other famous kings.
When he conquered the mountain lands of kings,
a poet praised him in a Parani poem.
He escorts the king in procession.

Puhalmunaiyarkon is a famous minister
who advises the king Anahan in his assembly
where many kings bow
to the king's feet decorated with sounding anklets.
The minister has the honor of giving
a fragrant thumbai flower garland
and clothes for the king to go to the war.
He escorts the king in procession.

The chieftain Cholakon, accompanies the chola king,

when the king arched his eyebrows in anger,
 bent his bow, fought and defeated the Kangar,
 the Maratar, the Kalingar, the Kongar
 and the warriors of Kudagu country.
 Cholakon who bent his bow
 and fought with the enemies
 escorts the king in procession.

The soldiers carry swords, and armors
 in their long arms,
 protect the king and escort him in procession. CHECK

The king's relatives, and his wise ministers
 all escort him.

Thirumaraiyon Kannan from the city of Kanchi,
 surrounded with forts and groves of trees so tall
 that they tear the clouds in the sky.
 He escorts the king.

Varisilaikaivaanan opposed his enemies in a terrible war
 and gave their bodies to ghosts.
 The horrible Yama took many lives in that war.
 He made their beautiful wives take off their earriangs.
 He escorts the king in procession.

Kalingarkon raised his heroic banner, CHECK
 fought with the countries of Vengai, Vilinam,
 Kollam, Konam, Viraadam and Ottam
 where he made his enemy kings flee.
 He escorts the king.

Kadavan the king of Senji
 that has thick impregnable forts
 covered with pure golden walls.
 His happy elephants are tied to a post
 to show that there are no enemy kings for him.
 He escorts the king.

The king of Venadu
 removed from the earth
 the terrible famine that destroys the world
 and made his people happy.
 He escorts the king.

Anandapaalan protects the land
 from Kanyakumari to the Ganges river
 gave abundant gifts to poets and all.
 He escorts the king.

The king Vattan fought with his enemy kings
 in a tremendous war and destroyed
 the three walls of the city of Vadamannai
 with his strong elephants.
 He escorts the king.

The warrior and ruler of Sethithirunadu
 fought, destroyed
 the strong forts of the Karunadu.
 In the battlefield the corpses stood up and danced.
 He escorts the king.

Karanaikaavalan tied herioc anklets on his feet,
 and fought the enemies.
 He bound their hair and imprisoned them.
 He escorts the king

Adihan destroyed the army of the Vadakangai country
 where his chased his strong enemies
 to flee from the battlefield.
 He escorts the king.

Kudainulamban, with a sword, and a rutting elephant,
 set out beneath his royal umbrella,
 seized the fishermen's land of Kottaru
 and the country of Kollam.
 He escorts the king.

Tihathan with his elephants that have strong trunks
 destroyed the Kongu country and its mighty fort
 and crushed the peaks of Kudagu mountain.
 He escorts the king.

The chieftains of the countries
 of Vallam, Kosalam, Maagadam, Maalavam,
 Keralam, Pandiya country and Pallava country,
 and other kings, fought in victorious wars,
 and the members of the royal assembly

all surround the king from front and rear,
 as they escort his procession.
 Such is the escort of the king Vikrama Chola. (136 - 180)

The beauty of the gathering of women

The women whose shining bracelets are even brighter
 than gleaming diamonds, gather on the streets.

They are as lovely as Krishna's women once were
 in glorious Dvaraka city
 when Narada, the great ascetic, entered.

The place resembles a beautiful land
 ruled and protected by lovely, wide-hipped,
 dolls like women,
 wearing mekalai ornaments.

They are like the ranks of Kama, the god of Love
 and enemy of rishis who could not even think of
 coming near women.

They are like a flock of wild swans
 wandering on the sand hills of the seashore
 where Thaalai flowers bloom.

They shine like bolts of bright lightning in the clouds.
 They glisten like the pleasant spray
 of the water of breaking waves.
 They are like lovely peacocks
 gathering on every hill.

Their moonlike foreheads are beaded with sweat.
 Their eyes and thoughts wander everywhere
 as they come and fill the street.

The jewels on the ornaments in their hair glow.
 The lines of diamonds studding
 their other ornaments sparkle.

Their pearl-garlanded breasts are full,
 pressing against each other,
 as sweet as jars of nectar.

They come, their heads bowed,
 their glances cruel as poison.
 Their mouths prattle like parrots,
 and their sharp teeth torment the men who see them.
 Such is the beauty of women who come to see the king. (181-200)

The music and dance of the women

As lovely as divine nymphs,
 they come moist with sweat and gather
 on the lower balcony of the palace as high as a mountain.

With their lovely fingers,
 some play the veena, or the lute, or the flute
 or the drum bound with leather.
 Others' feet dance to the rhythm of music.

As they come and gather on the white marble balcony
 of the palace so tall it is covered with clouds
 they resemble divine women,
 for when they dance,
 their collyriumed eyes do not blink,
 their flower-like feet do not touch the earth,
 their lovely cool fragrant garlands do not wither.

With their beauty, the way they shine,
 their feelings, and their words,
 they are like heavenly women.
 They come crowding the balcony,
 where the beautiful moonlight never fails to fall.
 And they approach the king on the street and praise him. (201-212)

The women see king Vikrama Chola and praise him

They say,
 "The strength and excellence of his arms have no comparison.
 Not even the earth created by Brahma
 could measure his shoulders.

"Look, he is the lord of the earth.
 How is it his chest is so humble
 that the lovely Laksmi could reside on it?
 He could not be the god Murugan
 because he has only two hands.

He is surely the king of spring.”
 And as they say these things,
 they grow thin from desire.

“The king will do whatever we want.
 His eyes are like the ocean of compassion.
 Even if someone says
 that the ancient lineage of Manu is eminent
 because of this great king,
 it is still not enough to describe
 the glory of Vikrama Chola.”

Their breasts covered
 with pollen from their garlands
 become golden and pale.
 They clasp their hands together
 to keep their bracelets
 from growing loose and falling. (213-224)

The beauty of the pethai, the innocent one

She is like a crescent moon
 born and raised on the earth.
 She is like a soft, sprouting shoot
 that has yet to flower.
 She is like a peacock
 with lovely new feathers,
 not yet fully grown.
 She is sweet like a stalk of sugarcane
 grown for the sole purpose
 of defeating Kama the god of love,
 who was once conquered and burnt by Siva.

She sings sweetly
 like a fledgling cuckoo bird.
 When she walks she moves
 like the young of a wild swan.
 She prattles like a newly born parrot.

She is decorated with ornaments
 elegantly like a branch where corals grow.
 Her large eyes do not know to cheat.
 She is innocent
 and still does not understand much.

She is so young
that she has never been separated from her mothers.
Such is the innocent one, the pethai.

How the pethai plays

Her dolls, deer, peacocks, green parrots,
Puvai birds and swan follow her with love.
She takes the Ammanai toy
decorated with pearls from Pukar city ruled by the king
where the Kaveri river flows.
And she takes rice that looks
like the cool pearls from Korkai city ruled by the Chola king,
and she takes anything else she needs to learn to cook.
All the girls wearing golden bracelets
follow her to the street and play.
Such is the way the innocent one plays.

At that time....

The three drums in the procession
of the Chola king Uthungathungan
who destroyed the famine that came in Adi yuga
sound like the roaring clouds.
Her mothers come and bow to the procession.
She bows as her mothers do
and repeats what they say.

The glory of the king in the eyes of the pethai

She praises him as her mothers do:

“The brightness of the crown of the Chola king,
handsome as the god Murugan,
defeats the radiance of the sun,
source of his lineage, and of the moon.”

“The flowerlike glance of the goddess Laksmi,
whose lovely form rests joyfully on her lotus,
cannot be compared to the compassionate glance of the king
that melts the hearts of his people.”

“The light of the divine moon
that falls on the earth

is not equal to the glow
of the smile that blossoms
in the king's mouth red as coral."

"The world that he protects
is not as wide as his beautiful eyebrows."

"The beauty and the brightness of the lotus flower
cannot be compared to the king's face
decorated with a tilakam."

"When his large, exquisite arms
are extended, they will not
fit into all the eight directions."

"His fame is so wide
that even his large chest
could not contain it all."

"No flower can be compared
to his faultless flower-like hands.
And no flower has a form lovely enough
to be compared to his eyes.
There is truly no flower
as beautiful as his handsome body.
Such is the radiance of the king in the eyes of the pethai."

The desire of the pethai for the king's garland

Her eyes and mind are attracted to the garland
of Kaluneer flowers worn by the king.
Full of love in her heart she says, "Oh, my mothers! come!
Get me the king's beautiful garland and give it to me."
The mothers reply, "You are sweet as nectar,
do not be afraid of the king, our lord.
Can we go and tell him to give us his exquisite garland?
It is not easy –it is very hard."

Because she is a little girl
whose sweet words are like honey,
hearing her mothers, she sheds tears
and they flow down her chest.

That day there is planted in her mind a seed

of love for the king which will increase,
as it would in the hearts of the other women.

She forgot completely how she wanted to feed
the play rice of sand to her young friends. (224 - 268.)

The beauty of the pethumbai

Giving her childlike speech to the parrot
she stole the sweet music of the excellent flute.
Giving her bright smile to the blooming mullai flower,
she took a smile bright as white pearls.
Leaving her innocent, childish glance with the deer that she
had raised, she took instead a killing glance
so her eyes resembled spears.

Letting the Madhavi creeper
have the lustre of her body,
she assumed the thin form of lightning in the sky.

She gave up her dolls and left them
with the thriving Kuravam trees
whose fragrant flowers are doll-like,
and she shone as she carried
the green parrot and the Manina bird.

Leaving her lovely innocent walk with the wild swan,
she began to sway like a young female elephant.

The crown of her hair is decorated
with a shining golden ornament
inlaid with strings of corals and pearls.

Her mouth is so red
that it makes even the heroic Murugan fall in love with her.
And the eyes of the god of love grow red in envy
because she has taken on his work.

Her full breasts are like the buds of the Kongu tree.
The loveliness of her neck out does
the marvel of the blooming Kamuku tree.

The dream of the pethumbai

Her friends and mothers do not wake her up.
 She gets up herself and walks slowly to her mothers
 and says,
 “Mothers, I saw a dream and I am happy.
 A soft vine with many growing leaves
 mounted a branch of a strong tree
 with rich golden coconuts on its crown.
 That soft vine stayed there emitting its fragrance
 as bees swarmed around it.
 That is the dream I saw and I am happy.”

The mothers say, “Come, come,
 you are as innocent as a parrot, give us a kiss, a kiss.”
 They embrace her and shower her with love
 and bless her, saying
 “Your breasts are growing like buds.
 You look like an Apsaras!
 You will embrace the large arms of the Chola king
 and marry him soon.”

At that time....

Abhayan, Ahalangan,
 the king comes there
 on his rutting elephant, tall as a mountain
 and tied with a rope on his neck.

The pethumbai comes out to see the king

She runs to the buzzing street with her friends.
 She stands on the balcony where the clouds roar.
 She is as brilliant as gold
 and her eyes are like lovely fish.
 She comes out and stands
 like lightning filled with every possible beauty.

The glory of the king Vikrama Chola in the eyes of the pethumbai

To plant his tiger banner
 that takes away the lives of enemy kings in the war,
 the king Vikrama Chola, the warrior
 scooped up a mountain with his Chendu weapon
 in his strong hands.
 Such is the heroism of the king.

When the earth goddess fell and cried,
 suffering from the unceasing troubles of famine,
 he removed her grief
 and embraced her with his arms.
 Such is the marvel of his arms.

His handsome, virile chest
 is never separated from the tight embrace
 of the lovely breasts of the beautiful, goldlike queen

He is like the dark, marvelous Vishnu
 with lovely hands like lotus flowers,
 feet like blossoms, divine eyes
 and a mouth sweet as fruit.

The feelings of the pethumbai upon seeing the king

The young girl cannot take her eyes away from the king.
 She cannot open her hands folded to worship him.
 She cannot know the way to bring back her mind that has gone to him.
 She is agitated with passion which gives her terrible pain.
 Her hair grows loose and her garland falls down.
 She stands alone and no one can fathom her desire.

After the kings of the Kerala and Pandya countries
 have worshiped him,
 the hero among all the Cholas,
 the king leaves that place and proceeds.

Maaran, the God of Love
 who tries to shoot his flower arrows at that girl,
 leaves the place folding his bow
 because she is not yet ready to fall in love. (269-324)

The picture of the king in the mind of the mangai

Another woman, a mangai, with dark hair
 is like a wild swan happily resting
 on a sand hill of the Ganges blooming with flowers.

When she was a pethumbai, she had know in her heart
 the love for the monarch of the Chola country,
 the king of kings, the best of his lineage and the ruler

of the Pandya and Chera countries.
Now that love grows stronger.

To calm her increasing love for him
she pictures him in her mind
all the way from his beautiful lotuslike feet
to his pure golden crown.
And then she paints his likeness with her hands.
All day she sees him in her painting
and at night she sees him in her dreams.
In her abundant love she cannot see anything else.

At that time.....

She hears that Jayathungan, the king
wearing garlands that shed pollen,
is coming on the street on his fighting elephant,

She asks her friends to bring her
all her diamonds and jewels.
She puts them on, she decorates her hair
with fragrant garlands,
and wears new golden garments.
She smears herself with sandalwood paste
and puts on her marvellous ornaments.

The beauty of the mangai

She sees in the mirror her lovely face
more beautiful than the lotus flower,
shining like a blossom.
Her spearlike eyes are like the weapons of Kama.
They move from side to side
as if they are asking for leave to go somewhere.
They reach to the end of her ears
ornamented with long shining earrings.

Her thick long dark curly hair is divided into
five parts and braided.

She wears on her round bamboolike arms
handsome golden bracelets studded with pearls.

Her large full breasts standing like mountain peaks

are smeared with fragrant sandalwood paste
that is marked by the rubbing of her garlands.

Her hips decorated
with a shining golden waistband are wide,
but her small thin waist suffers wearing it.

Seeing her own increasing beauty
that could make even the gods fall in love with her,
she is afraid and says,
“I no longer see and know the form
that I had when I was younger,
the form that the generous king saw before.
I have lost the form that I knew before
and now if he sees my face, he will not know me.
What can I do?
I will bow to the king and see what happens.”
She comes and stands among her dear friends.

The beauty of the king’s body in the eyes of the mangai. CHECK she sees all these in the king and
feels happy.

She sees the faultless one, the king,
the chief of Kumari country.
He brings glory to all his ancestors.

She sees his flowerlike hands
that protect the world with justice
are like the hands of Vishnu
who churned the ocean of milk.

She sees his feet ornamented with golden anklets
are like the feet of Vishnu,
from whose navel a lotus grows
and who with only one foot measured the whole earth.

She sees that his look is compassionate.
The goddess of wealth, Laksmi, lives on his chest.
See that his strong mountainlike shoulders
could terrify all the enemy kings.

She sees his ears, ornamented with shining makara rings,
are so lovely that people melt in joy when they see them.

She sees his eyes gaze everywhere
and enjoy the pale golden color of women.

She sees his bright beautiful red mouth
that steals away the gleam of coral.

She sees that his lovely face never loses its grace.
She sees that even as he grows older,
his body remains handsome and young always.

As she loves and desires his body, it calms her pain.
Seeing the king her joy increases
and she is like the happy ambal flower
when it sees the crescent moon and blooms in love.

As she sees the king, she is happy and her life is fulfilled.
But then the murderous elephant carrying the king leaves.

The day and night of the mangai after the king leaves

After the king has left,
her heart finds happiness only
when she sees him in the painting during the day
and when she dreams sweetly at night.

She cannot sleep,
for she feels that the elegance of his body
can never be painted fully.
In her love sickness,
she leans on her friends' arms and faints.
Such is the state of the mankai in love. (325 - 384)

The beauty of the madanthai.

Her mouth is red like all the redness
gathered together from the eyes of Kama, the god of love, CHECK
when he was burnt up by Siva and lost his form.

The corners of her eyes
are like the darkness at the end of the universe
when all the seven oceans gather together
with endless turbulence
to destroy the world.

Her rounded breasts
bound tightly with a bra
are like the messengers of cruel Yama
come to finish their job of destroying the world.

With her lovely waist,
like Maaran the god of love himself,
she could prevent the highest rishis
from achieving their goal.

Her hips have grown wide
to support her thin waist because
they are afraid her thin struggling waist
will surely break without support.

The madanthai plays ball

Talking sweetly to her friends and embracing them,
she climbs to the courtyard where moonlight falls
and says, "O you all are as lovely as flowering vines!
Let all of us join in a line, run and play ball.
The dancers will see us and be pleased.
If you win you can take my garland,
but if I win, you should get the garland of my king
and bring it to me."

As fast as lightning, she throws the ball.
Her hair falls down
and the bra binding her breasts grows loose.
She catches all the balls quickly
and throws them beautifully.?
She plays as if she is desperately
fighting to make her friends lose.
Many balls inlaid with pearls fall around her
and bounce and bounce.

She looks like the goddess Laksmi
who lives on a lotus
and emerged from the breaking waves and foam
when the milky ocean rose and grew wild.

The bangles on her arms jingle.
They seem to open their mouths and shout,
"Her palms lovely as kandal flowers

will grow red, will grow red.”

Her mekalai ornament laments softly
that her waist as thin as a vine
trembles and pains.

Her anklets feel pity for her lovely small feet,
quiver and say in a sorrowful voice,
“Why do the bees buzz so sadly?
Is it for her hands
that are raised and opened so often?
Is it for her waist that pains so?
Is it for her lotus feet that tremble?”

The madanthai asks her friends to bring the garland

That beautiful madanthai plays ball
with her friends and wins.
She says, “Our king Ahalangan shines like the sun.
Bring me the garland on his arms
fragrant with sandal paste.”

To make them hear her request,
she pulls the lovely ends of their saris,
desperate for them to go fetch the garland.

At that time ..

The king comes in procession

The royal parasol provides shade.
The white fans give a breeze.
The king rides on his elephant
surrounded by his marching soldiers.
Many conches blow.
The ornaments of women
studded with coral and pearls
shine everywhere.
Long lines of women gather on the streets
looking with their eyes as lovely as makara fish

The padalai drums and the madalai drums
are loud and sweet as they roar
on the elephant that carries them.?

The fishermen who support their poor families
with whatever small work they can get,
approach the king humbly from the side,
as he goes in procession.

The beloved king Thiyagasundaran,
the ocean of sacrifices,
rules the land from the southern city, Kanyakumari
and upto the northern cities
where the rivers Narmada, Ganges and Sindhu flow.
He is the king of lustrous Pukar
where the Kaveri flows flourishing the Chola land.
He, with his just scepter,
approaches the street in procession.

The feelings of the madanthai on seeing the king.

Her mind is not on the game
that she is playing with her friends.

She cannot help as the bracelets on her arms
and the mekalai waistband around her hips
grow loose because of the love she feels.

She approaches the king and worships him.
Then, tired and weary,
she shivers, cries and feels alone.

When her eyes are not looking,
her lovely diamond-ornamented breasts
tell her hips, as the perfect garments that cover them
and the gleaming golden ornaments drop down,
“Here, you can have
my precious chain of pearls
and my pure golden silk.”
Her breasts give the ornaments and clothes to her hips
and they accept them.

Her friends approach her but she faints in their arms.
She struggles with invisible Kama
who fights her, filling her with the desire of love.

Her wise mothers shiver looking at her.

They mix sandal paste and smear it on her,
 they sprinkle rose water on her,
 they put her in the moonlight to cool her
 and fan her.
 But even though her mothers try to cool her,
 the fresh breeze that flows from the fan burns her.
 Do they leave her alone?

Her heart takes her life
 and as if it were water rushing down a valley
 it follows the generous king.
 Both her loving heart and soul
 go to the king on the noisy street
 yet somehow the innocent woman survives. (385- 454)

The beauty of the arivai

Among women she is like the nectar churned from the sea.
 Her fragrant garlands drip with honey
 and bees swarm around them.

Her hips are so ample that a chariot wheel
 would seem small in comparison—
 two hands cannot encompass them,
 covered with a silk garment and decorated
 with a golden emerald-studded kalaabaaram ornament.

The burden of her breasts makes her waist feeble.
 They are pale in color and crush each other.
 They cover her whole chest large and proud.
 They seem two pots held by a single shining vine.
 With their fullness, they attract the hearts of young men.
 With her large, lovely, unequalled breasts,
 she seems like a wild swan
 in the world surrounded with roaring oceans.

Her long, dark eyes extend to the sides of her face
 and touch her earrings.
 With their captivating lines,
 they bring pain to young men
 and make their hearts throb.
 Their beauty defeats even the loveliness
 of the kazuniir blossoms.
 They are as innocent as the eyes of a doe.

Her dark, long, thick, fragrant hair
 is smeared with oil and decorated with flowers
 and curls into little ringlets at the ends.
 Her hair seems a garden of vines
 whose tender leaves sway in the wind
 as they sprout, surrounded by lotus blossoms.
 Bees swarm around her hair
 and feast on the lotus flowers.

The arivai desires the king's garland

She has felt lonely and sad
 ever since she saw the king of the Manu dynasty—
 she had seen him one day
 when he came on a fighting elephant on the street.

Her flowerlike hands and arms
 seem not want to keep their bracelets.
 They rattle as if to say,
 “The king of glorious Tamil has captivated us.
 If he wants to come and give us his garland
 we will accept it.”

Neither of her eyes can close
 even when she wants to sleep
 and she forgets to decorate
 her bright hair with flowers.

Her breasts, warm with passion,
 do not want the golden bands to restrain them.

Her hips do not want their precious
 golden clothes that protect them.

Her heart is perplexed, and does not want
 the confusion it feels.

Her purity burns and melts
 in the heat of the love that she feels,
 pierced by the flower arrows of
 the sugarcane bow of Kama,
 the invisible god of love.

She cannot show her tender affection
to the singing Puvai birds
and the dancing peacocks.

She cannot bear the talk
of the parrots that come near her.

She avoids playing
with the chattering young swan.

She walks away and goes to the grove
where trees grow thick?
and covered with kuravam flowers
as if they were a canopy.

The arivai is jealous of the birds around her

Distressed, she says,
“You, swan, are fortunate enough
to bathe every day in the Ponni river
that belongs to the royal line of the king
whose elephants are mighty.”

She melts as she says,
“You, cranes, are blessed,
for you fly to the rich city of Pukar
where the Chola king’s fame spreads everywhere.”

She speaks incoherently and says,
“You, dark blue flock of cuckoo birds,
have glimpsed and lived
in the groves of the Chola country.”

Growing weak, she says,
“You peacocks, with your lovely tails,
you have the good fortune of walking
on the Kolli and Neri hills of the Chola king.

Confused and amazed, she says,
“You bees, you sing and circle again and again
the wonderful garland of the Chola king
made of cool blossoms.

She is amazed feeling the breeze

that comes after touching the water
of the shining waterfalls
on the hills filled with sandalwood trees
of the king of Thondi city.

The arivai sees the king in procession

The conches roar out as they precede the procession
of the generous king Ahalangan .

The modesty that has never left her
and the innocence that she has kept so carefully
abandon her as quick as lightning
because of her growing love for the king.

She comes in front of him
and her face brightens
like the lotus on seeing the bright rays of the sun.

The beautiful mekalai band
no longer fits around her hips
as they grow large from joy.

Her breasts grow so full
it seems they might crush her chest
and there is not the tiniest space between them
for they have regained the beauty that they had lost.

Her arms become round and full
recovering the beauty they had
before she ever laid eyes on the king.

She insists, "No one but me is fit
to receive the golden garland
of the king of Ponniriver
where water never fails to flow."

And she gives the king love of a kind
not given even by the breasts of the earth goddess,
or the arms of Lakshmi
who lives on a lotus flower. (455 - 524)

The beauty of the therivai

She is like the clear, sweet liquid essence of a fruit.
 She is like a golden branch whose tender shoots
 are rich with unopened buds.

She is like the full moon,
 but without its blemish.
 She is like sudden lightning in the sky
 not dispersed by a storm.

She is like a painting
 made so skillfully it seems entirely natural
 and not to belong to this world.

She is like the branch of Kalpaka tree,
 never touched by the bees that sing the seven musical note.

She is like a young peacock
 with a beautiful tail that has no dark spots.

Every day she is like wine of the palmyra
 that brings joy to everyone
 without the usual intoxication.

She is like a precious diamond
 that cannot be bought for any price.
 She is like the nectar
 that never grows bitter for those who drink it.

The therivai in her pavilion

Happily, she stays in a pavilion
 made lovely with diamonds,
 and the beautiful evening falls
 and the fresh breeze arises,
 passing through the flourishing grove.
 The shining rays of the moon drop down onto the open floor
 and dew drips from lovely crowns of the pillars
 sculptured to look like the mouths of crocodiles.

Her loving friends anoint her with sandal paste,
 and the jasmine flowers in her hair,
 buzzing with bees, spread their fragrance.
 The bard plays his perisai lute
 with the Virali dancing woman next to him.

The bard plays and Kama sends his flower arrows of love

Taking up his curved lute, the bard says,
 “Let us sing the praise of the city of Uraiyur,
 the tiger banner, the three drums, the horse,
 the valor of the king, his elephant Airavata,
 his garland, his rule, the Chola country,
 and the Kaveri river whose rolling waves
 flow through his forests.”

As the bard takes up his curved lute,
 Kama, the lord of spring, swiftly rises
 and takes his bow.

The bard strings his tantiri lute
 whose music is sweet as honey.
 And Kama uses his strength
 to pull on the strings of his bow and test them.

The bard and the dancing Virali begin to sing.
 Kama, the glorious god is aroused and empties his quiver
 as he shoots his flower arrows.

The bard’s lute plays swiftly
 many melodious songs of different styles
 and frantically
 Kama shoots his flower arrows faster and faster.

The therivai, bewildered, is enchanted by the music

Whether it is the sweet music that comes swiftly from the lute
 or the speed of the flower arrows of the king of spring,
 the terivai with a shining face falls in love,
 her mind is bewildered.

She feels the cool breeze from the distant hills
 and complains, “This must be the hot summer wind.”

When her friends sprinkle cold water on her lovely breasts
 so full they cannot stand the tight halter around them,
 she asks “Is this fire?”

She hears the sound of a small drum

that is beaten to guard the entire city
and she insists,
“This is the drum of Kama
whose arrows are so lethal
and it is attacking me.”

She sees the lovely moonlight
falling and bringing joy to lovers
who rest together on their beds
and exclaims, “This is the heat of the sun.”

She says, “The scepter that protects all the seven worlds
of the king of the city of Uraiyur, our monarch Ahalangan,
is a cruel scepter for some of us.”
And all night, until the dawn,
she talks incessantly, in her pain.

The feelings of the therivai when she sees the elephant in the procession.

The ornamented rutting elephant carrying the king
who rules the earth surrounded by the oceans and ancient hills
comes in procession.
When she sees it, her heart that cannot tolerate the music she hears
and cannot bear any other assault
grows calm, and she runs to the street.

She says to the elephant, “Listen, Airavata,
you bear the king who alone rules the world
that is carried by the divine rutting elephants of the sky/space?
tied to the hills of all the eight directions.

You crushed all the northern mountains
where the proud enemy king of the Kalingas ran and hid.

You walk so majestically
you resemble the Vindhya mountain
that fought and destroyed Mount Meru.

You, incomparable, were like thunder
when you crushed the snake-like enemy kings
who fought for their indestructible dynasty of the moon,
the divine Potiyam mountain
and the beautiful and ancient Kumari river.

I heard the drums at midnight
and lost my strength of will.
Now it has returned as I hear the sounds
of the garlanded drums you bear.

I heard the bells of the cattle
and it pained my ears, but now
the pain is gone as I hear your bells.

The wind of the hills made my large breasts burn
past any healing, but now they are healed
by the breeze that comes from your swaying ears.

As the drops of dew fell,
my life seemed to leave me, but now
it returns as I feel the drops of your ichor.

When I heard the roaring of the ocean
with the dark clouds moving above it,
I suffered, but now that pain is dispelled
by your incomparable trumpeting.

All through the night, I struggled with my desire
brought by the bodiless Kama, but now
that pain is gone as I see the king Anahan
riding on you.

Listen, mountain-like one!
If you save my life, all these bees that bother you
will go away and no longer swarm
about your ichor.

And if you are distressed
and wish to play and muddy the water of a pond
then please go to the pond filled
with the sharp flower arrows of Kama.

And do not try to drive away
the bees swarming around your ichor
that are darker even than the rain clouds.
Chase away instead the bees that hover
near the dangerous flower arrows of the god of love.

Do not desire the sugarcane in the marvellous hands

of the lord of the earth but take instead
the sugarcane bow in the hands of invisible Kama.

Look, you are my very life, my body, my desire.
Do not move from here, but remain here to help me.”
In this way, the terivai stands begging the elephant
not to go in the procession carrying the king. (524-610)

The beauty of the perilam pen

The perilam pen has a forehead curved like a bow.
Ready to kill young men, her round thighs are shaped
like the trunk of the strong elephant of Anahan,
the king of the city of Korkai
who has mighty arms.

Her hips resemble the hood of the dancing serpent Adisesa
who is cruel and murderous.

Her breasts bend down as if they feel guilty
to pain her thin waist which thinks they are its friends.

With her incomparable beauty,
the terivai steals away the loveliness of Laksmi,
the goddess who sits on the lotus flower.
She seems a thief who would take away even the seat
of the goddess.

She wears many garlands
and the musk of deer and pearls born in the ocean.

With her lovely friends and deer and peacocks,
she is sweet to behold as she stays in the garden.

Her friends pour strong palmyra wine
that oozed out from the top of a young tree
and fill her cup, wiping away the foam
and shooing off the bees that swarm around it.

She looks at it without desire,
and flicks away the foam with her sharp fingernails.
Then she drinks it, she leans on her friends and faints.

The dream of the perilam pen

And in her inebriation, she has a dream:
 the king Thungathungan of the Manu dynasty
 comes and makes love to her.
 Then she wakes up and the joy and desire
 that came to her when she embraced the king
 and sleep itself leave her.

She gets up and sees her image reflected in a marble wall.
 Her clothes have grown loose and slipped away
 and the only cloth on her hips is a waistband
 made of golden coins and studded with fresh coral.

Because of the lovely dream that she has seen,
 her arms have grown tender,
 the fragrant garland on her hair has withered,
 the lovely sandal paste on her breasts has come off,
 her pursed red lips have grown pale
 her dark eyes are red
 and her lovely bright forehead is beaded with sweat.
 She thought that the dream that gave her such joy was real
 and, happily, she told it to everyone.

But then she sees the king on his elephant
 and realizes that what she saw was only a dream,
 and her fragrant garland dripping with honey withers
 and the joy that filled her heart is suddenly false.

The king comes on procession

The king Jeyathungan approaches
 on a rutting elephant that inspires fear,
 shaded with a garlanded royal umbrella to protect him.

With words sweet as honey, she says,
 "I just had a dream and thought it was real
 and now I am ruined. It must have come
 from the intoxication of the wine I drank.
 Or is it that such things come to me
 because of what I did in some former birth
 and because I never did tapas to atone
 in this ancient world?"

She worships the king and her distress is

somewhat relieved,
 but still the great passion she feels for him is strong.
 In her abundant feeling for the king
 she leans on the arms of her faithful friends and faints .

Her friends praise the king

Her friends run in front of the tall elephant
 and they say to the king,

“You who have the wheel of law!
 You are the king of the cities of Vanji, Kanchi, Madurai
 and of Pukar with its wide spaces.

You are like the sun who rides on a chariot
 protecting all the seven earths
 and you attack the enemies who do not praise you.

You are like the great mount Meru
 and all the other royal dynasties are like small hills
 before you.

Tirelessly you protect everything in all the eight directions
 covering them with your royal canopy.

You are like an ocean of sacrifices.
 Your army went to the seven parts of the Kalinga country
 and conquered them all.

You are like an exquisite diamond
 on the pure golden crown of enemy kings
 who are proud in battles and who rule this round earth
 with its seven continents.

Listen, you are a friend to all,
 Your land is filled with jewels of many kinds
 and your ocean is filled with pearls.
 King of justice! your mountains are filled with diamonds
 and the Chola country you rule
 is filled with luxurious garments.
 She worshipped you and loved you
 and you possessed her.

You stole the golden hue of her breasts,

her long-established purity,
 the lovely color of her body like tender shoots,
 and you took from her the sleep she was accustomed to?
 Did you do this according to the sacred books
 that the kings of your ancient dynasty follow?

You are as generous as the clouds that give rain.
 If you give to Kama, the lord of spring, freely
 arrows from the prosperous Thondai country,
 beautiful bows from the thriving Ponni land,
 and chariots from the auspicious country of the Pandyas,
 then perhaps one day he may release her from her passion.

Kama's anger threatens the life of this wonderful terivai,
 whose eyes are like Paanal flowers.
 If she should die, then of what use in the world
 would the bell be that hangs
 from the tower of your palace?

As the women say these things, worshiping the king,
 the invisible Kama grows angry and bends his bow
 to attack them.

So the generous Chola king proceeds on his rutting elephant
 that attacks the enemy kings and destroys their valor.
 Such is the procession of the Uthungathungan,
 the Chola king. (611-681)

murrum.

