

A TRIBUTE TO A GREAT SOUL

M. RAJARAJA VARMA RAJA, M. A., B. L.

A TRIBUTE TO A GREAT SOUL

BEING

A PEN PICTURE OF

Professor A. R. Rajaraja Varma, M. A.

BY

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Printed at
THE REDDIAR PRESS,
TRIVANDRUM.
1935.

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[Price As. 12.

"Bathed in the rays of the great
setting flame
Hesperus with the host of
Heaven came.
And lo! creation widened in
man's view."

FOREWORD

JUST a word *in limine*. Those who expect a biography in the following pages will feel chagrined. I have shown the trick of putting an elephant in a nutshell. You may admire it or treat it as child's play. I have recorded microscopically my impressions and admiration of a great cousin based on life-long companionship. You may agree or disagree. I leave it there. There may arise a Roseberry to waft the fragrance of the hero's imagery or a Morley to analyse the psychology of his subtle intellect. I hold no brief for either. My object is to pay my tribute, and in these days of depression, I have done it as economically as I could. I owe a word of thanks to Mr. K. P. P. Tampi, B. A., Journalist, for getting it through the press and correcting the

proofs. Notwithstanding strict scrutiny, some unwelcome stowaways of the printer's errors have hidden themselves under the hulk. They jar on the harmony of the reader's taste like split pebbles in our home-made rice meal. But for some unforeseen complications in the printing house, the book could have come out months ago.

Trivandrum, }
25th April 1935. }

THE AUTHOR.

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PROF. A. R. RAJARAJA VARMA

I

A lad in his teens came to see my father one morning several decades ago at Mavelikkara. He fondly called him 'Kochappan' and kept him by his side. That was my first meeting with my father's eldest, and destined to be, the greatest nephew. His blabbering voice and shortness of expression gave the lie to his precocious intelligence and keen poetic vision. Having not passed the stage of *Unanayanam* then, he was called 'Thampan' in ordinary parlance, in contra-distinction to 'Thampuran'—a designation applied to those who had passed the spiritual majority. He watched me and my comrades reading our

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early Sanskrit lessons under the *asan* and was quick enough to find out the flaw in our instruction. He had by then made himself master of the Sanskrit *kavyas* and had even begun to compose. Thus began an intimate companionship which lasted till his last moments.

Being the sole issue of my father's eldest sister, his father, Patiala Namburi, took special pains to nurse him up a wise man. But, for some years, the child would not utter even a word. His inarticulate and stammering tongue and his naughty temperament frightened the father so much that he took the boy to the *Panachikkat* (പനച്ചിക്കട) Goddess Saraswathi to undergo a course of penance and take mesmerised ghee. Real faith effected instant cure and the boy began to speak, thus gladdening the hearts of the parents. He had still a lump in the throat or a halt in the tongue which he retained all his life. But his intelligence began to shine, as a cut diamond reflects all the hues when light passes through it. His passage through the *asan* course in *Amaram*, *Sidharupam*, *Sriramodantam*.

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and other *kavyas* was an easy walk. He surpassed his comrades in quickness of grasp, but his retentiveness was poor.

It was about this time that Kerala Varma, the ValiaKoilThampuram, who under the severe displeasure of the then Sovereign, had been confined in the Alleppey Palace as a state prisoner, got the concession to stay under parole in his family house at Haripad. What was a calamity to his uncle turned out a blessing to young Kochappan. He had then gone through the early *kavyas*. The Valia Koil Thampuram utilised his enforced leisure in teaching his younger brother, cousins and nephews, *Vyakarana* (Grammar) and *Sahitya* (Literature). Naturally, he engaged only the advanced students, and our Kochappan came under the lot, although he was the youngest of them. His classmates were Ravi Varma, the youngest brother of the Valia Koil Thampuram, Kerala Varma, a collateral cousin from the Chempramadom branch of the family, Narayana Sastri, son of the family *karyasthan*, Kochunarayanan, son of the *asan* himself and others. Of all his mates, young

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Kochappan began to show such sparkling intelligence as to attract the special attention of his uncle and preceptor. Ravi Varma had also intelligence; but it was perverted, and his brother often chided him for his mischievous and vexatious propensities. Soon his young *sishya* shone among his pupils. The natural affection which Kerala Varma had for his youngest brother was eclipsed by the favour he began to show to his collateral nephew Kochappan, and thus he became his devoted and most favourite pupil.



II

UNDER the guidance of the distinguished teacher, young Kochappan expanded his vision and sharpened his intellect. His analytic mind found its congenial ground in Panini's grammar. The combination of the analytic and synthetic methods in the Panini's *Vyakarana* and the condensation of the principles in aphorisms or *sutras* gave the real key to his future life. His firm grasp of the basic principles made him so indifferent to the details as almost to need a constant reference to books for the latter. He never attempted to commit anything to memory by repetition as ordinary students did. The Panini *sutras* he could not repeat like his mates, but he was always sure that such and such inflectional changes alone would be grammatical and he was invariably correct, although he could not quote his authority from memory. This weakness he retained

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to the last. In composition the most appropriate words flowed through him as if by instinct without any effort of reference and they arranged themselves in melodious harmony. He never ransacked his brains for the proper expressions of his ideas. The expressions naturally followed them in quick succession as from an illimitable store-house. He was like a power-house from which issued all the illuminations, but within which was not stored any light. He was the seed which brought forth the tree of knowledge.

During his tutelage, he stood many difficult tests of his erudite uncle. In composing verses on *samasyas* (prescribed stanzas), *padam vaippu*, that is composing on the number of cowries placed in order indicating the letters of the alphabet which should form the basis of the verse. in *aksharaslokam* i.e., the recitation of verses commencing with the catch letter of the verse recited by the opponent and similar intellectual feats, young Kochappan stood always first. He did so not because of his extraordinary retentiveness, but because of his instantaneous creative faculty.

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In the recension of verses, when he could not remember an old verse, he improvised a new one on the instant so as to delude his adversary.

In such an atmosphere surcharged with intellectuality, he mastered the greatest and most perfect Aryan tongue, Sanskrit, and dived deep into its philology. The scientific outlook which the deep study of that classical language created cannot be exaggerated. It struck its deep root in him and displayed itself in all his later labours. It gave him sanity of expression, serenity of temper and soundness of judgment. Even the most recondite and hidden meanings in high literature were plain to him, and more, he was able to explain them in the most terse and simple style.

A boy still in his teens, he bore a pleasant face. I have never met him morose or peevish. He had a smile for all. He never quarrelled with his mates. He played with them abundantly and never fell out with them, although the cracks among them jeered him for his want of adeptness. At foot ball, at

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marble, at running or at fencing he was a backbencher; but in intellectual games like the chess or the cards, he stood above all. He was ever merry and appreciated beauty both in nature and art. His partiality for the fair sex was inborn. He cut many jokes but hit none to the core. His arrows had no venom. He was indulgent to a fault and never uttered an unparliamentary word even in utmost vexation. His beardless face looked young and feminine. Even in his manhood, he had but sparse hairs on his chin. His voice was soft and haltering. Never on any occasion did he toe the line but stood aloof shy and indifferent. He found his boon companion in Ithambar, a collateral uncle only slightly younger to him, whose tastes were not of a litterateur but of an artist and mechanic. They found a common bond of union in their soft temper.



III

SUCH was the boy whom Kerala Varma, the Valia Koil Thampuran, brought with him to the capital town, Trivandrum, on the accession of H. H. Visakom Thirunal Maha Raja, one of whose first bold and benevolent acts was to restore the domestic happiness of his eldest niece, Her Highness Lakshmi Bhai, the late talented Senior Rani, by reuniting her with her no less reputed scholar-consort and removing his ban of banishment. English education had not then much penetrated into aristocratic families. Some pioneers however had ventured into that field, like the Kunjaru Raja of the Mavelikara family, Kunjunni Koil Thampuran, the younger brother of the Valia Koil Thampuran and a few others. The Valia Koil Thampuran himself gained a knowledge of the language only by private tuition. But the noble men mentioned above had the boldness

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to undergo training in public schools, the former completing his education in the Presidency School of Madras of the renowned educationist Powell, and the latter in H. H. The Maha-Raja's College, Trivandrum, under Mr. John Ross. During the reign of the Maha Raja Aiyilliam Thirunal, H. H. conceived the idea of initiating his kinsfolk into the mysteries of English education, and with this object, commanded the opening of a special English School at Mavelikara in 1872, and that gave an impetus to the scions of the aristocratic families to enrol themselves as students. One of the early students who took advantage of it was the younger brother of the Valia Koil Thampuran, who after some years of study there, passed on to the College at Trivandrum.

The Valia Koil Thampuran brought his young nephew to Trivandrum first with the the object of giving him English education, the elements of which he had imparted to him at home along with his Sanskrit course. He was accordingly admitted into the Preparatory School attached to H. H. the Maha Raja's

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College. Young Kochappan had by that time grown up to legal majority. The late beginning he made in his English course was a handicap in the matter of acquiring the proper pronunciation and spelling of the Tuetonic tongue. His deep knowledge of the great Aryan classic, Sanskrit, made it very easy for the young pupil to master the grammar and construction of the foreign language so much that he skipped from class to class swiftly getting double promotions. But spelling and pronunciation remained a bug-bear. He was accustomed only to the phonetic method in Sanskrit. The accentual and almost erratic variations of English pronunciation eluded him. This weakness he had even in his advanced years. His letters and diaries are faulty in spelling and he was an ardent supporter of the phonetic system. Truly, he learned English through Sanskrit, so that his composition lacked up-to-date English idioms. His fluency was in ideas and imagination, not in expression or style. This was due to his late commencement of the study of the foreign language, the spirit of which had

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little in common with the classical tongue of which he was master and on which foundation he had built his English superstructure.

He studied in the Preparatory School only for a short while. His sharp intelligence, his surpassing mastery of Sanskrit, and his unrivalled poetical talent attracted the attention of the ruling Sovereign, H. H. Visakom Thirunal, than whom no ^{greater} scholar King ruled over Travancore in recent years and whose reputation as Prince and Patron of Letters was world-wide. His court was the refuge for scholars, pandits, artists and statesmen of the first water. His fame had spread far and wide as an administrator even before he came to the throne. To a Sovereign of such brilliance, the little star that was rising in his presence could not escape notice. H.H. detected in the young boy wonderful talents which promised fair for the future. He commanded young Kochappan to continue his English education in company with H. H.'s son, Sri Narayanan Tampi, in the Palace School after he matriculated. This gave him a double advantage in so far as he was able to go on

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with his F. A. course without interruption, even during the one year of *dzeeksha* consequent on the death of his mother.

His intimate association with the Court gave him opportunities for mingling with what was best in the land. He expanded his knowledge of Sanskrit literature and grammar by discussions with eminent Pandits who adorned the Court as well as with those who came from abroad for the *Dasara*, the Royal Birthday and other national festivals in the hope of gaining distinction. Elathur Ramaswami Sastrigal, a past master of *Sahitya* and *Vyakarana*, Pandithar Ramaswami Sastrigal of equal fame, Subba Dikshitar, the greatest Grammarian and Vedantist of the time, Nanu Sastrigal of *Tarka* fame, Krishna Sastrigal deep in the knowledge of *Sekharam*, Kadukkan Aiyengar Sastrigal, *Visishta Advaitin* and Grammarian, Ganapathi Sastrigal, the youngest of the lot, who had just joined them from his Tinnevely home after higher studies, and a host of other *savants* were in the Court with whom our young Kochappan had almost daily discourse. His uncle whom he attended on daily,

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did not fail to imbibe new lessons into him. This life among the academy of *savants* and specialists tuned the tastes of the neophyte to a high pitch and melodious poetry flowed from his pen in season and out. He studied English poems or arithmetical calculations or the geography of continents by rendering them into verses. Dry facts are easy of remembrance in versified mnemonics and he took to it as a pleasure.

His verses soon found access to the Sovereign. H. H. admired their simplicity and diction. He composed poems on festive occasions and the one he composed for H. H.'s *Thulapurushadaxnom* brought him the Royal present of a pair of diamond ear-rings. The gems were specially selected by H. H. during his North India tour and he set much value by them. H. H. gave them to Kochappan with the injunction that he should wear them always as they would bring luck to him. He also won H. H.'s prize for a competitive Sanskrit essay.

But he was not destined to enjoy the Royal favour long. Before the year was out,

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at the close of 1060 M. E., H. H. Visakom Thirunal Maha Raja passed away after a very short but brilliant reign of five years—a period of renaissance in every department of life, when throughout the length and breadth of the State there ran in the hearts of the subjects a feeling of disciplinary control and of sincerity and truthfulness of transactions the absence of which had demoralised society erstwhile. By the death of his Royal Patron, Kochappan was cut adrift from his prospective ambitions.



IV

NO sooner had Mr. A. Sri Narayanan Tampi, the only son of his late Royal Patron, gone to Madras to continue his studies in the Presidency College, than young Kochappan joined H. H. the Maha Raja's College, Trivandrum, in the F. A. Class. His collegiate life was one continued success, except that he failed once in his optional subject for the B. A. Degree. That was a time when the scions of aristocratic families thought it rather degrading to attend public educational institutions along with the ordinary folk and reserved seats were provided in the classes for such rare members as happened to attend them. Before him, only two such members had the chance of attending the College; one, his own uncle Mr. Rajaraja Varma alias Kunjunni Koil Thampuran, the younger brother of the Valia Koil Thampuran,

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and another, a member of the Ennacad family. First Principal, Mr. John Ross and next Dr. Robert Harvey, respected this convention and provided separate seats for the aristocrats. Kochappan, now called A. R. Rajaraja Varma, was first to break the rule and began to sit along with his classmates on the bench and thus show to the people that there is no aristocracy in education but merit. However, the distance between high birth and low cannot be wiped off so quick, and there was always a reserve consequent on traditional respect for the blue blood. This did not prevent cutting several friendships among the co-students and many of them lived long to enjoy the fruits of such early *comraderie*. Early companionship ripened into intimacy and soon the Moovidathumadom, the residence of A. R. Rajaraja Varma within the Fort, became a rendezvous for the meeting of friends, comrades and class-mates.

One of the earliest companions was N. Subramonia Iyer. His intelligence attracted the attention of Maha Raja Sri Visakhram Thirunal and he was chosen for a studentship

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in the Madras Medical College in view to provide a Brahmin doctor for the Palace. He passed the M. B. & C. M. only after the death of his Royal patron, but was fortunate to serve H. H. at his death-bed. He was appointed in the Medical Department by his successor, H. H. Srimulam Thirunal Maha Raja, and subsequently organised the Sanitary Department. Later on, he passed into the Revenue line and retired as Senior Dewan Peishkar.

Another associate was Kerala Varma Tampan, known as B. A. Tampan, who also held Government service and retired as Manager to the Chief Engineer.

K. Narayanan Pandala (now Rao Bahadur), Kerala Varma Mapila Thirumulpad and several others were constant visitors to the Moovidathumadam.

At the beginning, a cousin from Chempore Kottaram, Kerala Varma, and his uncle, Rajaraja Varma, alone were studying in the College with A. R. R. V. Later on, members from the Kilimanur family and three members from the Mavelikara family (Udaya Varma, Rajaraja Varma and Ravi Varma) joined.

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Thus there was a fairly good number of students from the aristocratic families.

A. R. R. V. had the distinction of having taken the degree (B. A.) first among the aristocratic members, his uncle having failed in the examination and discontinued his studies. In view of this distinction, he was presented with a gold bangle by H. H. the Maha Raja Sri Mulam Thirunal. His extraordinary intelligence made him indifferent to his text books, but for which he would not have failed once and would have passed with high distinctions. His poetic talent found its play even in his answer books where he translated everything in poetry to the admiration of his examiners. His failure once elicited from him a Sanskrit dirge of beauty and pathos (*Bhanga Vilapa*).

After taking the B. A. Degree, he did not leave his student's life, but worked up and took an easy pass as first in the M. A. Examination in Sanskrit gaining all the medals. Prof. Sheshagiri Sastriar, his examiner, was so eulogistic of the candidate's proficiency in the language that he passed encomiums on his

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translation of Milton's passages in Sanskrit verse and kept it as a model answer book in the University records.

From his student days, A. R. R. V. kept his literary enterprise and was composing stray pieces in Sanskrit to the delectation of his comrades and his *Guru*. He gathered round him an academy of wit and wisdom in the Moovidathumadom. Although chemistry was his special subject for the B. A., he did not much cultivate it later. He was like his Professor, Mr. H. N. Read, more a litterateur than a technicalist. He read up and grasped the principles of the *shat-darsanams* i. e. the principal branches of learning in Sanskrit. Pandits, Sastries, men of wit and wisdom frequented him. Every evening there were informal discussions on learned topics, besides much play and fun. He had little taste for music. He thought that was a defect. *Sahityam* and *Sangeetham* were traditionally the breasts of Goddess Saraswathi. That he was able to enjoy only one of them was felt by him keenly. So he tried his hand at the Veena under the great musicians Kalyana Krishnan

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and Ramachandran, two brother Brahmin *Vynikans* of renown from Palghat, who had settled down as the tutors and dependants of Her Highness Lakshmi Bhai Senior Rani, than whom no enlightened lady ever had adorned the Royal House.

It was under the liberal patronage of this distinguished Royal Lady that all the members of the aristocratic families were supported and encouraged to continue their higher education in the Capital. It is to her special benevolence that A. R. R. V. and the three members from her own original family of Mavelikara (uncle U. V., cousin R. V. and myself) rose in life. She was not blessed with children, and so she treated us like her own children and guided us through life with unstinting love, with the help of her illustrious husband, Kerala Varma, Valia Koil Tampuran. The material affection she had for us continued up to her last and the disciplinary control she exercised over us was unlimited. Her erudition was supreme, especially in music. Every art found a patron in her, music, painting, dancing, letters and needle work. Many

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experts came from abroad for her appreciation and patronage. Her recommendation carried weight with the Sovereign. Her magnanimity was beyond bounds no less than her dignity. I cannot remember her except in humble gratitude.



V

THE life at the Moovidathumadom in those palmy days of the sixties was one of real intellectual treat. There was an academic atmosphere of emulation and refinement there. Today, it was the gathering of Pandits, experts in the various branches of learning, discussing a naughty point in *Vyakarana* or expounding a difficult verse in *Naishadha* or controverting a theory advanced in *alankara* (Rhetoric) or composing a *samasya*. Tomorrow, the musicians giving selections of music or playing on the Veena or the Fiddle. The next day some wit cracking his jokes and giving comic exposition of some story. I cannot forget how Munshi Rama Kurup—a great humourist of his time—gave us side-splitting laughter by his most comic operas and stories. His very expressions gave us mirth and

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delight. Old friends like T. Ramaswami Aiyar, and Surya Aiyar, entertained us with many anecdotes of olden days, traditions, precedents, etc. Young comrades like R. Mahadeva Aiyer, P. Ramaswami Aiyer, A. Krishna Rao, C. S. Padmanabha Pillai, P. K. Parameswaran Pillai, T. C. Narayana Pillai, Kunjukrishna Menon and very many more, enlightened us on current events, played with us games in cards and chess and accompanied us in excursions. K. Krishnan Pandala, P. Govindan Tampi, K. Narayanan Pandala and others read and stayed with us. Our evening parties were so crowded and gay that they attracted the attention of even the Sovereign, who nicknamed it the '*Kadaprom company*'.

The disciplinary effect of our daily tasks and routine was incalculable. Those were days when the College started work at 9 A. M. instead of an hour later as now, and punctuality was reckoned as a virtue and late coming was subject to fines. Obligated, therefore, to wake up early morning to prepare the lessons for the day and to take a hasty breakfast, there were but a couple of hours after morning

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ablutions and prayers. The slow moving bullock coach required not less than half an hour to take us to the College. Dr. Robert Harvey, with his Puritanic rigidity, expected all students to be in the class-room as soon as the second bell went. He will survey from his room the whole length of the veranda and, should a late comer happen to meet his eye, he will be given a black mark in his fate-book. Should any Professor or Lecturer absent himself, the Principal himself will go and engage the class. Those were days of real teaching when the Professor worked whole-time and did not lecture away for three or four periods as now, leaving the real work to the assistants and tutors. They did both Tutorial and Professorial work without grumbling. The students were many, going up even to a hundred in a class; yet the method of teaching was such as each received special attention. Each Professor kept a mark-book in which he confidentially noted the progress of each student and, when the time came for a parting certificate, that book gave the guide. A black mark in that fate-book, as it was nick-named,

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was dreaded by all. Turbulent spirits there were, of course, even then, and many a joke was sprung upon the Professors by them. The more prudish the Professor was, the more was he teased. Prof. M. Labouchardiere, I remember, grew pale once under the ignominy caused by the unruly conduct of his class. But, after all, he loved them, and they loved him, and so, the whole affair ended amicably.

The college continued to work till 4 P.M. with an hour's interval between 1-2 P. M. Getting home after six hours hard work, a bath and a light lunch were most welcome. The evening gathering was then a real relaxation and enjoyment. At dusk, a walk round the four principal streets of the Fort and round the Padmatheertham tank in which several friends bore company had a most refreshing effect. More refreshing was the daily evening interview with uncle Kerala Varma, Valia Koil Tampuran, when he talked freely on many important matters and when he made us read his compositions with his most valuable comments. Most of his important works, "*Visakha Vijayam*", "*Mayura Sandesan*,"

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“*Anyapadesa Satakam*” &c. were read by us as they were being composed and the fitness of the verses tested day by day. I remember occasions when A. R. R. V. suggested modifications and his uncle adopted them as more elegant. Occasions were also not rare when the uncle cleared some of his doubts from his nephew. The want of reserve and the free discussions afforded ample opportunity for mutual improvement and admiration.

A. R. R. V. took upon himself the task of educating his associates. M. U. V., myself and M. R. V. sat under his feet and studied *Sahitya* and *Vyakarana*. Although we had elementary training in Sanskrit *Kavyas* under the *Asan*, we had not gained any grounding in that classical language until A. R. R. V. taught us. He never assumed the role of a preceptor. He read along with his students like a friend and thereby gave light and leading. He was a man of few words; he always hit the nail on the head. He was an apt example of ^{an} old maxim “गुरोस्तु मौनं व्याख्यानं शिष्यास्तु च्छन्नसंशयाः” the silence of the Guru was the best exposition to his *Sishyas* (students). Many of the verses

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of *Naishadha*, which were hard nuts to crack even for the learned Sastries, became clear as daylight with a couple of sentences of explanation by A. R. R. V. His subtle powers of analysis were so keen as to disentangle even the hardest knot. An hour or two after supper at 8 P. M. occupied him with this instruction until bed time.

This routine of life had an indelible effect on all. It is to this and none else that myself and several of my companions achieved success in future life. The Olympian visions created then, made several of us to sing our songs in due course and give sustenance to a cultural development akin to nothing before or after that period. Often have we read of the cultural value of the University life in European countries. It would be a revelation to know that the same, if not a nobler, atmosphere can be created at home with eminent men like A. R. R. V. and his uncle.

VI

THE march of the aristocracy in the public service is rather a dark picture to draw. Time was when the members of high families were the real leaders of the people. Since the advent of the Dalhousian policy of subjugation imported into the State by Sir T. Madhava Rao educated in that school, the emasculation of the landed gentry and chieftains became the accepted political expedient to consolidate the powers of the central authority. In the name of law and order and in the guise of uplifting the proletariat, land-lords were deprived of the power of eviction of tenants, ecclesiastical revenue was amalgamated with State finance and the influence of the local chieftains and *Kara Pramanies* was curbed and trampled upon. The result of that policy was to estrange the commonality from the aristocracy and to make the latter

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mere figureheads receiving the formal obeisance of the former. This position of ineptitude to which the nobility was reduced made it inert and lazy, and gradually it receded to the back ground, so much so that, within a short time of a generation, the members of the noble families were regarded as unfit for any service, much less for leadership in any movement of public utility. They enjoyed traditional family incomes, either from properties or pensions, and had a dignity in special or ceremonial matters. Most of the *jenmies* were under the leading strings of their managers or favourites who gathered round them and, like the mistletoe, ate away their vitality. This life of idleness with a secure income gave birth to a sense of false dignity which looked upon public service as servitude, quite inconsistent with high birth and position. Attendance in public schools was anathema.

This rustication of the higher strata of society, gave the opportunity to the middle classes and they swamped the services and stole a march upon the coveted fields of useful

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endeavour. It was a herculean task to stem the tide of the bourgeois and to pioneer the task of saddling the stream of lethargy into which the aristocracy had fallen. A. R. R. V. had the boldness to break through the custom by getting into the public service, and gaining distinction in due course. His educational bent led him to accept the post of the Inspector of the Sanskrit *Pathasala* (since developed into a College), which had been started not long ago under the able guidance of his great uncle by the Government. His intimate knowledge of that classical tongue and the keen intelligence which he brought to bear upon it in the light of his western education soon gave a new orientation to the organisation of that institution on sound modern lines and initiated a movement to raise itself to the status of a college of which he became Principal in four years. Without sacrificing the essentials of scholarship in that ancient classic, he gradually introduced that new spirit of research which was quite foreign to the old-world Pandits. Dilettantism was tabooed; dialectics of unfruitful character were banned; and real

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intelligent criticism was encouraged. He gave the lead to an intelligent study of the Hindu astronomy *Jyothisha*, which he studied himself and wrote a book, "*Jyothishaparakasa*," for the use of his class. The study of grammar, (*Vyakarana*) rhetoric (*Alankara*) and *Mimamsa*, was transformed into new courses so as to create real *Vidwans* of students rather than quixotic disputationists. The notes he gave to his classes later on served as the basis for his later works on Malayalam grammar (*Kerala Panineeyam*) and rhetoric. He set the example of real debate in a *Sahitya Samaja* he started in the institution and also sowed the seed of histrionic culture thereby encouraging the enacting of Sanskrit dramas. He composed a Drama, "*Gairvani Vijayam*," for being staged by the students. His success in remodelling the *Patasala* by leading it off from the worn out old groove and giving it a new lease of life was appreciated both by his employers and the public. His talents were more widely known and the Government gave him a wider field of activity and usefulness.

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Before taking him to the next chapter of his official life, it would be well to pause a while and examine the strong and weak points which decided his future career. It is also opportune to turn the search-light on his domestic entanglements which checked his freedom of activities.



VII

IF A. R. R. V. was supreme in anything, it was in his acute analysis of matters presented to him and his keen aptitude to sift the important from the unimportant elements. He weeded the chaff from the corn soon. But this quick insight into the kernel of truth made him indifferent to details. He did not care how a thing was done so long as he achieved the result. This is probably a defect of all great minds. They neglect the formalities in favour of the aim. There arose consequently an impression that he lacked disciplinary control which is an essential qualification for organised executive administration. Professor H.N. Reed, his Physical Science preceptor in H.H. the Maha Raja's College, was accused of the same defect before, causing his deprivation of the Principalship and resulting

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in his premature retirement. The accusers however forget that, after all, discipline is only a means to an end, and that there are better and more humane methods to ensure success. A. R. R. V., like his teacher, gained the result by freely moving with his subordinates and students as a comrade with no pretence to superiority in talents or powers. That engendered love, and his superior wisdom reverence. His affection for his staff and students was so sincere and genuine that he blinked at their minor faults or irregularities as trifles. He never moved as an officer among them in and out of the classes. He was a ready source of help to all at all times. His wide knowledge was ever at their disposal. Nay, he even took pleasure in imparting it unsolicited. He talked and laughed and cut jokes with them as one among themselves. He never went out of temper nor uttered a harsh word, not even to his servants. No wonder then that he became a pet, nay, an idol to all who worked under him. None crossed his will. Obedience came to him through love.

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Dr. A. C. Mitchell, who wielded the education sceptre then, was a perfect contrast to him. Like a true Scotchman, he kept authority with a mailed fist and lived within barbed wire fencing. To him discipline was efficiency and whoever was incapable of giving a cold shoulder to those who approached him was reckoned as weak, inefficient and incapable of control. It is no wonder then that he looked upon A. R. R. V. as too weak an officer to conduct efficient business. This opposition of the educational head was a handicap to the elevation of A. R. R. V. He lost the chance of becoming an Inspector of Schools which place became vacant on the promotion of Mr. P. Aiyappan Pillai as Educational Secretary. Ordinarily, such loss of opportunity would have either whetted a retributive spirit or cooled the enthusiasm of the victim. But A. R. R. V. was cheerful as ever and this discomfiture only impelled him all the more to cultivate his latent talents. This was indeed his most creative period. Besides the manual of astronomy—*Jyothishaparakasa* — already mentioned, he wrote a Sanskrit prose version

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of Shakespeare's *Othello*, *Uddalacharitam*, and began his classic *Mahakavya—Angala Samrajyam*—a poem on the model of Kalidasa's *Raghuvamsa*, dealing with the history of British rule in India. The idea suggested itself to him to bring out the work in commemoration of the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria's reign in 1897 (1072 M. E.).

In the beginning, A. R. R. V. had not much love lost for his mother-tongue, Malayalam. He thought it a poor language incapable of rising to any pitch of perfection or conveying the rhetorical beauties of a classical language. He found his mistake soon. The classics of Ezhuthachan, Nambyar and Punom, the *githas*, *attakathas* and *champus*, and the poems of the Niranom Kavies impressed him as gems of poetry. The strenuous endeavour of his great uncle, Kerala Varma Valia Koil Tampuran, with the indefatigable support of his Royal Patron, H. H. Maharaja Visakam Thirunal, developed Malayalam—particularly its prose literature—to a respectable place among the South Indian vernaculars. The formation of a Book Committee, the encour-

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agement given to Vernacular education by both Maharajas Aiyilliam and Visakam, helped to raise the tone and level of Malayalam. The books issued by Kerala Varma, as President of the Book Committee, standardised vernacular prose on modern lines and enabled it to be a vehicle of even the most recondite ideas, eastern and western. To those who take note of the progress of the tongue from that period cannot but be struck by the rapid strides it has since taken by translations, adaptations, original compositions, journalism, literary societies and several other means. This renaissance stirred an amount of patriotism which caught A. R. R. V. also, so much so that before long he pleaded hard for the recognition of Malayalam by the Madras University and its inclusion as a special subject for advanced degrees. The translation of *Sakunthala* by his uncle ushered in an era of Malayalam dramas which for a time eclipsed the original '*Kathakali*'.

It would be out of place in this sketch to trace the gradual development of Malayalam or to digress on the influence brought to bear

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upon it by Kandathil Varghese Mapilla and his satallites of poets and authors, by the Kodungalloor Thampurans, Venmani and Naduvom Namburipads, Oravankara (Raja) other Brahmins, Princes, Menons, Mannadiars, Pillais and Nairs and a host of others. Sufficient to say, that our hero caught the spirit of the time and began to turn his attention no less to Malayalam than to his favourite classic, Sanskrit. It is well that he did so. For, his fame now rests upon the solid work he did for Malayalam, as will be seen from the sequel.



VIII

‘**M**ARRIAGES are made in Heaven,’ so goes the proverb. When, as at present, the sacramental sacredness of the union is neutralised by the contractual solution, this old saying may pass for an old world fatalism. But it turns out to be true in the end, and so it was with A. R. R. V. Even as an under-graduate he was marked by H. H. the Maha Raja Visakom Thirunal as an eligible candidate to wed one of his daughters. That was not to be, due mainly to H. H’s. premature demise. Really, A. R. R. V.’s affections had turned otherwise. The close acquaintance he had with the late artist Ravi Varma’s eldest daughter during her frequent stay at the capital naturally gained a place in his heart. But she was married by her father’s nephew and the companion of Prince Martanda Varma, although her mother’s eldest sister, Her Highness the Senior Rani, was in favour of A. R. R. V.’s choice. It was then the karana-

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van of his tarwad, the Valia Koil Tampuran's elder brother, a reputed ayurvedic physician and scholar, required him to marry his third daughter, and this marriage took place soon after he graduated. Thus he entered the *grahasthasrama* after he had become a ripe scholar. This lady*—Swathi Thirunal Amma Thampuran—born in the Mavelikara aristocratic family, was bound to keep to the conventions then in force and was not allowed to travel out freely with her husband, except with all the paraphernalia of attendants and guardsmen under Royal commands. This was a handicap which the free spirit of A. R. R. V. did not bargain for. He could not stand such a restraint long. Nor could he break through the established custom without incurring the displeasure of the Sovereign, as the Mavelikara family was so closely related to the Royal House. The field of his official duties was in the capital; his domestic affections attracted him to Mavelikara. He was thus between the two horns of a dilemma which did not admit of easy or quick solution. To extricate himself

* This lady passed away very recently on 21-12-1934.

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from the perplexing situation, he tried all means of negotiation. He approached both the Sovereign, H. H. Srimulam Thirunal and H.H. the Senior Rani for permission to allow his wife to come and stay with him at the capital. He bought a compound and built a mansion on it to accommodate her and provided it with all convenience. After strenuous endeavour, in which he had the loving help of his uncle, the Valia Koil Tampuran, he succeeded in the end in persuading the Sovereign to agree.

This episode in his life was responsible for his somewhat broader outlook in regard to social conventions. Even before, he abhorred the social purdah system of the aristocratic families and had pleaded for more liberal and freer contact between the different sections of the nobility. He hated their clannishness and wished for solidarity. His advanced views did not carry weight then, the society being too conservative for such a change. Recent events, however, have justified his foresight and a stronger coalition is being cemented. He adopted 'समबुद्धिर्विशिष्यते' as his cardinal maxim and acted up to it.

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His domestic happiness was blessed with several children, the eldest of whom, Bhagirthi Amma Thampuram, was born in the year he was appointed Inspector of the Sanskrit Pata-sala in 1065 M. E. She inherited the bright qualities of her father and is a blooming poetess and authoress. She was followed by his eldest son Raghava Varma, Raja B. A. (Hons) who has taken the Honors in English Language and occupies the chair of an Assistant Professor in the College at Trivandrum. His second son, a very promising boy, alas! passed away as a brilliant student fortunately only after his father's death. He lost another child and his only direct uncle died in 1082 M. E. These domestic calamities and the poor recognition he received in his official career made him somewhat despondent. But his natural optimism rose above his temporary mood and broadened his poetic vision. He drowned his sorrow in elegiac verses and enlivened his drooping spirit by seeking a larger company of friends in the Union Club of which he became a regular member.

IX

THE love for the Vernacular kindled in A. R. R. V. some time ago soon began to show signs of activity. The shocks of sorrow and disappointment served as symptoms of his intellectual upheaval. The first point which attracted his attention was the absence of a systematic grammar to test the correctness of expressions in Malayalam and develop it on scientific lines. The eminent services of the Christian missionaries did not fail to penetrate the linguistic field and their labours had brought forth elementary grammars of Malayalam. The first place has to be given to the Revd. Gundert whose strenuous study of the Malabar tongue for over quarter of a century had given a Dictionary and a Grammar. The former is still the standard lexicon of the language. The grammar he compiled and published by the Revd. Garthwaite held the field

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for long and was the only authorised text-book on the subject. The works of the Reverends Peet and Mathan and the later works of Pachu Moothathu and Kovunni Nedungadi kept the background, the Christian works being dominated by Gundert and the Hindu works being castigated as influenced by the preconceived idea of Sanskrit pre-eminence. *Lilathilakom*, an earlier work—why on earth this name was given for a grammatical work none can tell—had then been slumbering in some old archives. Such was the position when A. R. R. V. turned his attention to the study of the Malayalam tongue on scientific lines. He soon discovered its Dravidian origin with his critical eye. His analytic mind found the flaws in the previous works and he compiled his '*Kerala Panineeyam*' more or less on the model of Panini, with whom he was familiar and whose method he had admired from boyhood. Essentially a man of few words, he conceived the rules in the form of aphorisms, but fortunately avoided much of the mnemonic abbreviations of Panini which made his grammar difficult of comprehension to the

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uninitiated. The *Kerala Panineeyam* was the *magnum opus* of A. R. R. V. and gave him the right place among Malayalam savants. The publication of this grand work naturally gave rise to a storm of criticism, particularly from quarters where the predominance of Sanskrit was the accepted canon of faith. Mr. Seshagiri Prabhu voiced this opposition. But *Kerala Panineeyam* weathered this storm and still stands as the unquestioned authority in the field. However, the critical study of the book laid bare some of its shortcomings which forced the author to revise it entirely. In his second edition of the work, he improved upon the method of treatment by adopting the historical, instead of the inductive, method and changing the cryptic *Sutras* (aphorisms) into fuller verses with elaborate examples. He dived deep into the sister Dravidian languages besides the mother-tongue, Tamil, and made a thorough philological study to establish the Dravidian origin of Malayalam. His learned introduction to the revised edition of his work is a masterpiece of erudition and hard research.

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Another work he brought out at this period was the translation of Kalidasa's *Meghaduta*. That also gave rise to a controversy which reached its climax later on. The alliteration of the second letter in a stanza is an accepted convention in Malayalam poetry, copied from her Tamil parent. Whatever significance it may have in Tamil Padals (songs), A. R. R. V. definitely maintained that it serves no useful adornment in Sanskrit metres, especially the long *sragdhara* and other metres, where it is drowned in the length of the line. This mania for second letter alliteration, he maintained, had wrought much havoc in modern literature in so far as the sense was sacrificed to the form. In his translation of *Meghaduta*, therefore, he innovated from this time-honored convention and wrote in blank verse. His own uncle and preceptor was a strong antagonist to this theory. He even went to the length of alliterating not only the consonant but even the vowel sound. The poets of the time were thus divided into two camps, those who sided with Kerala Varma and those who followed A. R. R. V. and the

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bitter controversy which followed gave rise even to misunderstandings. Of this, later on. Sufficient to say, that the advent of A. R. R. V. into the Malayalam *Kalari* awakened it from the stupor it had lain long and served as nectar to the moribund language.

The outstanding and strenuous labours he did for the Vernacular made a strong impression on the Government of the day, and they promoted him as the Superintendent of Vernacular Studies in H. H. the Maha Raja's College, a post created for him, in response to the greater importance attached to the Vernaculars by the Madras University.



X

THE elevation to a larger field of activity afforded better opportunity for A. R. R. V. to exercise his genius and invest his talents on fruitful soil. Vernacular in collegiate parlance includes not only the current Indian Vernaculars, but also the classic Sanskrit. Vernacular is thus synonymous with second language. As Superintendent of Vernacular Studies, therefore, he had the control of the teaching of all second languages with the exception of European tongues like French, Greek and Latin. He was thus really a Professor of the second languages and deserved an equal status and position to the other Professors. But no. The European Principals would never concede this equality. Thus A. R. R. V. had a hard struggle to fight, and it must be said to his credit that he sustained it successfully not only against his

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colleagues in the College but also with the University.

The step-motherly treatment which the University bestowed upon the Indian languages was the first cause which seconded the Vernaculars. The indifferent attention paid to this branch of study by students from the commencement of their English education culminated in colossal ignorance of the mother tongue in their collegiate course. The special class of teachers employed—designated Munshies & Pandits—scarcely realised their responsibility and moved in the time-honored groove of instruction with little eye to utility or improvement. The keen vision of A. R. R. V. spotted the evil, and no sooner he took charge of his new post than he set out to eradicate it.

Sanskrit inherited a traditional prestige recognised all over the world. She required only a patting on the back to rouse her up to her own. Not so with Tamil and Malayalam. Tamil languished not because of her want of literary wealth, but because of the ignorance of those who traded with it. She had how-

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ever the backing of the whole of South India. Her sister—or more properly her daughter—Malayalam, had none of these advantages. Her sphere of influence was limited; she had not much inheritance or dowry; what she had was neglected or wasted among the rural folk; she had but few supporters and those few contented themselves with occasional exhibition of their superiority in translating Sanskrit or English works or composing some stray original piece. The older authors appeared in frivolous faulty editions and in bad get up not worth even a few pies. To raise her from this slough of misery and present her to the public in her natural decency was, therefore, the first and important task which devolved on A. R. R. V.

A revision of staff and the appointment of competent men was the first step in this direction. The method of instruction was next improved so as to encourage critical study of works. A Malayalam debating society was organised in the teeth of opposition to serve as a plat-form to discuss literary and linguistic subjects and

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infuse a taste for wider vernacular reading. Encouragement was given for the publication of good vernacular books by patronising the Bhashabhivardhini Publishing House (B. V.) under the enterprising management of K. Raman Menon, who threw up his Sirkar service in favour of being a publisher. The selection of good text-books from among reputed authors was insisted on by timely advice to the University Board of Studies and by himself taking up the selection of books by the Text Book Committee. Translation of standard works like Kalidasa's '*Kumara Sambhava*' & '*Sakuntalam*', some of Bhasa's works, the composition of original works like *Bhasha Bhushana* & *Vritta Manjari* and the revised improved edition of *Kerala Panineeyam* followed soon. The compilation of '*Manideepika*' to impart a knowledge of Sanskrit necessary for the study of classic Manipravalam works and his annotations on *Nalacharitham Attakatha* called '*Kantara-tharakom*' were undertaken. By these and a thousand other ways he laboured for the uplift of the Vernacular, and he was rewarded

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by the enthusiasm of his students and the general renaissance of vernacular literature. His revered preceptor and uncle, Kerala Varma Valia Koil Tampuran, who had pioneered this new era long, gave his learned and enthusiastic nephew a helping hand at every turn with advice and contributions, notwithstanding his old age and physical debility. Never did A. R. R. V. take any step without consulting him; and no work came out unless it passed muster under the critical eye of his uncle. In this atmosphere of revivalism and enthusiasm, he dragged his old uncle from his well-earned rest to preside over the first annual meeting of the College Society in which he himself delivered a learned lecture on 'Kerala Astronomy'.

Thus within a short time after the translation of his services to H. H. the Maha Raja's College, he established his name as the recognised authority and leader of vernacular literature and language in the Presidency, second only to his old learned uncle. Then arose an unfortunate episode, which I shall relate in the next section.

XI

THE controversy about the second letter alliteration has been referred to in a previous section. This seed grew into a tree in later years. Meanwhile, arose another criticism about the translation of *Sakuntalam* by the Valia Koil Thampuran. It was said, and truly, that his translation, issued several decades ago, abounded in Sanskrit expressions and even inflexions foreign to Malayalam, requiring revision. Opinion in this matter was not undivided. One school maintained that they added to the dignity and style of the translation and it was argued that as the verses had become familiar and current, they should not be revised; the other school held that the real object of the translation was frustrated by its difficulty of comprehension and that that defect should be removed. A. R. R. V. sided with the latter school and induced his uncle

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to agree to a revision. The uncle entrusted the work to his nephew and he did it to the best of his ability. Some mischief-makers, however, approached the uncle by the back door and made him believe that the nephew thoroughly disapproved of the translation and made radical changes of his own. The uncle was made to believe this false accusation and the accusers sought confirmation for it in the nephew's undertaking a separate translation in Malayalam of the same drama. This pricked the uncle to the quick. He thought that his nephew competed with him. Their feelings were thus estranged and the uncle published his own revised edition of his '*Manipravala Sakuntalam*'. To tell the truth, there was no comparison between this revised edition and its original; it was labour lost, as his original verses were on the lips of all. Really the nephew undertook his translation not in competition with his uncle, but at the earnest request of his students. The student population naturally preferred his translation to that of his uncle.

This unkind attitude of his revered precep-

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or and uncle weighed much on A. R. R. V. He tried every possible means to remove this mis-impression and apologised for any unconscious mistake he may have committed. The indulgent uncle saw through the whole game of the backbiters, and it did not take long for him to excuse his nephew and take him again into confidence. Thus this unhappy episode ended. The proverb that 'Blood is thicker than water' was well proved in this case.

It was not long ago that another incident occurred clearly establishing the sincere loyalty of the nephew to the uncle. The T. V. Mahasabha had invited the Valia Koil Thampuram to preside over one of its annual gatherings. Although he had agreed to do so, he could not attend owing to some indisposition and deputed his nephew to preside in his stead and read his presidential address. By the time he arrived at the hall, another had already taken the chair and the Secretary could not help seconding him. This was taken as a slight to his great uncle and for ever after he boycotted that Sabha, although personally he had nothing against it.

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Again, when he published his revised and improved edition of '*Kerala Panineeyam*' he dedicated it to his uncle in most touching lines as follows :—

“तस्यैतस्य समन्ततोऽपि हरितां कूरुक्कपस्याम्बुधेः
कल्लेलेषु कुतूहलाकुलतया निष्णातवद्विश्चिरम् ।
श्रीमद्विर्मगिनीसुतप्रणयिभिर्वीचीषु सञ्चारितः
सोऽयं किञ्चिदुपाहरामि भवतां सांयात्रयात्रार्जिनम् ॥
यद्बालं कथितैरहो नु खलु भो ! सूत्राणि संसीव्यता-
रीतिं केरलवैखरीयसमुदाचारोचितां गृह्णता ।
शब्दानामनुशिष्टिरापदशिखं संवर्भितेऽयं मया
बद्धा केरलवर्भणौव गुरुणेत्यादीयतनादरात् ॥

नवीकृतं केरलपाणिनीयं
निवापनिर्णेजननीरजस्के ।
निवेदयेऽत्रैव गुरोः पदाब्जे
निवारिताश्रप्रसरोऽद्य यत्नात् । ”

The unfortunate incident which is alluded to in the last stanza will be referred to later on.

XII

THE work of A. R. R. V. as Superintendent of Vernacular Studies in the College soon began to bear fruit. Students gathered round him to get the new revelation which secured an honorable place for Malayalam in an English College and a recognition by the University unprecedented in the annals of its history. He enlisted the sympathy of reputed scholars like the late Kunji Kuttan Thampuran of Kodungalloor, who had already gained the honored names of सरसद्वैतकविः and *Kerala Vyasan*, Prince Appan Thampuran of Cochin and others. Malayalam works on Rhetoric, Composition, Metre followed in quick succession, based mostly on his College lecture notes and meant primarily for the use of the students, but having a permanent value in the advancement of the language. He got Kunji Kuttan Raja down to preside over the

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College Association anniversary as a State Guest.

While engaged in this arduous task of the elevation of the Vernaculars, he did not neglect the cultivation of his hobbies. One such was '*Jyotisha*' (astronomy and astrology). His touch with the subject began with his connection with the Sanskrit Patasala. Karamana Padmanabha (*alias* Pappukutti) Sastrigal, one of the teachers of the staff was an adept in this branch of learning and was even helping the Government astrologer in the compilation of the annual almanac. He helped A. R. R.V. in his study of the subject. Nothing which A. R. R. V. touched failed to receive a transformation. He began to search for the rationale of the several formula from western Mathematics and reformed the treatment of the subject in his *Jyotisha Prakasa*, allusion to which has already been made before. At first a disbeliever in astrological fatalism (*Prasnamarga*), he was gradually initiated into its mysteries. His awakening consciousness of the influence of the planetary spheres on human destiny was sharpened by a Brah-

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min astrologer, Kattuchathan Ramachandra Aiyar, who came to Trivandrum for Royal recognition, after having gained the knowledge of that secret science from some rare manuscripts he got from the Tanjore library and other sources. He knew also palmistry. By certain mathematical calculations, he achieved wonderfully accurate results and A. R. R. V. got initiation from him. Ever since, he became an ardent believer in astrology and even gave lectures on the subject.

Cycling was a hobby with him for some time; but he soon left it as not quite congenial. Tennis attracted him much. He was a poor but persistent player in the Union Club. Billiards he played and scored well. He was a regular member of the Club and thus he came in touch with most of the public men of the time. He moved with them freely and his gentlemanly and genial behaviour and unquestioned erudition secured universal respect and love.

Although his constant concern was with the elevation of the Vernacular, his perennial love for Sanskrit did not wane. He admired

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Panini much, but thought he could be simplified and made more accessible to ordinary students by changing the method of treatment and avoiding the dryness of Bhattoji Deekshitar. He took great pains to critically study all the authoritative Sanskrit grammars and produced his *Laghu Panineeyam*, the first part dealing with the '*Loukika*' and the second with the *Vyadika* grammar. It received much appreciation from the greatest Sanskrit scholars, as some of the opinions recorded in the Preface show. Thuravur Narayana Sas-trigal, one of his first classmates in the study of Sanskrit and who became an expert in *Vyakarana* (grammar), rendered him substantial help in this work. I have seen them sitting up late in the nights discussing important points.



XIII

THE wail of the Vernacular was heard; the strong advocacy of A. R. R. V. bore fruit; and the University recognised the Vernacular as an optional branch for the Graduate course. This was certainly an achievement. While Tamil had the strong backing of the Southern Presidency except Malabar, poor Malayalam had little chance and her cry would not have been heard but for the persistent endeavour of A. R. R. V. He had to make a promise that he will see that suitable books will be forthcoming in Malayalam for the higher collegiate course. It was on this assurance that the University agreed to treat Malayalam on the same plane as Tamil and cognate vernaculars.

The elevation of the vernaculars to the position of an optional branch like Mathematics, physical and natural sciences, raised also

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the status of A. R. R. V. to that of a Professor. It was a bold act of H. H.'s Government when Dewan Rajagopalachari ruled that Professors, both Indian and European, should get the same salary and scale and that their seniority will be determined by the date of their appointment to that grade. This ruling gave A. R. R. V. seniority over some European Professors. This was resented for a time by them. But the Government stood firm and all protests ended in smoke.

The higher status and position gained for the Vernacular Branch facilitated the strengthening and consolidation of its staff. Only the Pass Course was recognised first, although A. R. R. V. would have liked the starting of the Honors Course as well. The work and lectures were however based on the latter plane and the assistants were trained for it. Thuravur Narayana Sastrigal, P. K. Narayana Pillai, Attur Krishna Pisharadi, Nandiyar Veetil Parameswaran Pillai, C. N. Anantaramayya Sastri, Krishnaswami Aiyar, all men of real worth and enthusiasm afforded substantial help to the Professor in making the

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Vernacular Branch effective and attractive. That Branch had all the paraphernalia of Professor, Assistants, Pandits, Tutors, and all. They all worked as in a family of which A. R. R. V. was the *Karanavan* and the leading star. His genius and constructive optimism gave life to the whole Branch so as to attract brilliant students. His work '*Sahitya Sahyom*'—a learned treatise on Malayalam rhetoric and composition—was no more than the compilation of his class lectures. From this an estimate could be formed of the high tone of his teaching. Had he lived long enough, he would have beat the other Branches in the Honors Course.

His great uncle had passed the age for usefully presiding over the Book Committee which he had guided from its inception for over thirty years. The work naturally devolved upon his equally great nephew. The selection of Vernacular text-books was an important function of this body and was a source of much patronage. By wielding this instrument A. R. R. V. literally encouraged authors and publishers to bring out books in

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profusion. Many of them were, no doubt, trash; but there was set up a movement which has grown with years. Vernacular books came in hundreds, and in all manner of subjects, translations, adaptations and originals, prose, poetry and science. The first flush of enthusiasm is inseparable from a certain amount of indiscrimination and, unless carefully guided, is bound to result in deterioration. A. R. R. V. in starting the engine of Vernacular publications failed to provide adequate checks and balances to regulate its speed and mark the result. This defect told, in as much as quality was sacrificed to quantity. The market was swamped with all manner of publications and the idea gained ground that any one can become an author. In the absence of right criticism, this mania for multiplication caught the Malayalam literary world. It spins fast still and it is time to cry halt.

One of the chief drawbacks attributed to Malayalam as a fit vehicle for higher courses of studies is the want of standard scientific works on modern branches of knowledge. This was a real defect and still continues

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to be so. The want of a recognised code of suitable technical words is a handicap which has still to be overcome. A. R. R. V. set to work out a programme for the compilation of a technological dictionary, but he failed to carry it to fruition. Opinion was divided as to the advisability of borrowing foreign terminology or coining new words from equivalent Sanskrit roots. Difference also arose as to whether a dictionary should precede or follow the use of technical words. Wedged in between these opposing controversies, the work ceased to make progress. It is unfortunate that, even for such fundamental and vital matters, there is no recognised authority or *Parishad* to arrive at a solution. The obvious result is that instead of sterling coin we have all manner of forged currency going round. Unless there is standardisation, our credit is bound to be at a discount and the poverty of our literature will continue. A. R. R. V. stressed this point in one of his long and learned presidential lectures to the College Association.

As Professor for the Vernaculars and as a

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Member of the Text-book Committee and the Board of Studies of the University, A.R. R.V. occupied a position of vantage from which he could have prevented wild oats being sown in the Malayalam field. Authors and publishers approached him in hundreds for introductions, certificates of approbation and encouragement. His magnanimity was, however, too high to discourage them with unfavourable opinions or carping criticism, with the consequence that Vernacular literature run riot. In this respect, he was a true disciple of his great uncle, the Valia Koil Tampuran, who invariably gave a laudatory certificate to any young author who went to him with his book. I remember to have on an occasion took courage to tell the veteran scholar about his proverbial indulgence in passing encomiums upon unworthy authors and of his giving the characteristic reply that his business was to see the good even in trifles and not to discourage talent from growing. That is indulgence with a vengeance. Real criticism is still to be born in Malayalam literature.

All the same, A. R. R. V. was a keen critic

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himself. His commentaries on his uncle's '*Mayurasandesam*' and the learned disquisitive annotations on '*Nalacharitham*' and '*Ambareeshacharitham*' *Kathakalies*, the critical notes he gave to his students in his lectures, and above all, his treatise on Malayalam Rhetoric give ample of evidence of his critical faculty. It is encouraging that some of his favourite students have caught the spirit, and it is hoped that ere long a right school of criticism will organise itself. Right criticism is the bed rock on which all real progress of literature depends. That alone will control the production of a literary degri-
ingolade in Malayalam.



XIV

A. R. R. V. always kept a warm heart for the Sanskrit Patasala (since developed into a College) which he first served. His uncle was the constituted referee of the Government in all matters relating to oriental studies. He recommended the nephew for ex-officio Principalship of the Patasala with a view to its being raised in status. Government however agreed to making him only an inspecting officer. In that capacity, he liberalised the institution by a revision of the courses of studies, by adding second languages, Malayalam and English, as necessary subjects for local requirements and by introducing the study of modern history and geography. Above all, he threw open the institution to all castes by sending the Vedic Branch to a neighbouring temple, thus affording facilities for the wider spread of Sanskrit education.

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He devoted his leisure moments to translating the gems of Sanskrit literature into the Vernacular. Allusion has already been made to his translation of Kalidasa's *Meghaduta*, *Kumarasambhava* and the world-famed *Sakuntala*. This last was enacted on the stage by his admiring students and that resulted in creating a histrionic hobby in him. He had a perennial dislike for the *Kathakali*. However much he admired some of its compositions, he could not stand its monotony nor its scenic arrangements. The din of the drums, the stentorian pitch of the songs, the night-long enactment of the play, and more than all, the dumb mimicry for the dialogues produced in him a feeling of revulsion akin to condemnation. He cast it off as a dumb show (*Ooma Attam*) fit to be enjoyed by the rustic folk. No doubt, in this matter, his prejudice blinded him to the excellence of its technique and he lost sight of its artistical value. But there it was. He had neither the eye nor the ear to appreciate its worth.

On the other hand, dramatic performances attracted him as the real representation

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of actual life. He was enamoured of their scenic beauties, so much so that he organised a juvenile troupe of his children and other relations at Mavelikara and supplied the necessary funds for all equipment. His mania went so far as to act some of the parts himself. It must be said to the credit of the young members of the aristocratic family of Mavelikara that they possessed real histrionic talents added to their musical taste, which only awaited opportunity for development. For the encouragement of this talented dramatic company, A.R. R. V. arranged for an annual performance during the long college vacation and he translated *Malavikagnimitram*, *Svapnavasavadattom*, *Charudattom*, *Mrichakatikom*, all celebrated dramas from Sanskrit. Of these, *Charudattam*, though nominally adopted from Bhasa was so amplified and improved upon as to make it an original production.

It was on one such occasion when he was enjoying his leisure at home that his great uncle, who returned from his annual pilgrimage to the Vaikom shrine, was taken in his car (20th September 1914) to Trivandrum.

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A bad accident occurred hardly six miles from Mavelikara from which that veteran Prince of Letters sustained his mortal shock. His demise two days hence was a heavy and unexpected blow to his nephew. His grief was unbounded and lasted for the rest of his short life. It threw a shadow over his bright career and he never came out of it. The loss was too heavy for him to bear and he found consolation in duly performing his funeral rites and praying for the salvation of that Great Soul. The whole Malayalam public grieved with him in this irreparable loss, but took solace in having in the nephew a fit successor to his great uncle.



XV

FROM a senior Professor to acting Principal was not a long leap. On the elevation of Mr. Stephenson as Ag. Director of Public Instruction, A. R. R. V. stepped into his shoes and took charge as Principal of the premier educational institution in the State. From its inception, H. H. the Maha Raja's College had only European Principals. It was A. R. R. V. who broke the precedent. This was no doubt an achievement. The Indian Professors heaved a sigh of relief, while the European colleagues looked askance at this invasion of their prerogative. To A. R. R. V., however, they never showed a wry face both on account of his real worth and his blue blood. His behaviour towards them was also exemplary and courteous. His nature was such as not to lay much store by official superiority. He bore his responsibility coolly and without ostentation.

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It was at this time that the University recognised Malayalam as an independent branch for the B. A. course and A. R. R. V. had the satisfaction of having succeeded in his endeavour. He strained every nerve to justify the action of the University by introducing the comparative study of the Dravidian languages. He had to learn some of them himself. The teaching of the Vedas and old Sanskrit widened his philological vision and his lectures on comparative grammar were so valuable that they were attended even by the staff.

A. R. R. V. was hardly elated by the evanescent glory of the Principalship, but continued to do his duties with unassuming condescension. His innate religious consciousness was aroused by the close and critical study of the *Vedas* and *Vedangas* and his initiation into the mysteries of the Vedantic philosophy by His Holiness Sri Sankarachariar (Nrisimha Bharati Swamigal) who visited Travancore and established the Mutt at Kaladi, actuated him for deeper studies. His learned lecture on the '*Karanas*' a division of astrological time based on the

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thithies, in the *Vidwat Parishad* convened at Kaladi under the presidency of His Holiness the Acharya Swamigal himself, brought encomiums on him from all the learned folk who gathered there.

For some time now, A. R. R. V. was not in the best of health. Although there was nothing specific from which he ailed, his body began to thin and he took to diet. This in no manner abated his interest in work nor in his exercises and amusements. He however pleaded overwork for his absence from meetings and other extraneous work which pertained to his position. As an examiner of the University as well as the local public examinations he had monotonous and heavy work which he disliked but could not avoid. Very often he relieved his ennui by parties and feasts which he gave to his friends, colleagues and students. His home was always welcome to them, and that contributed in no small measure to cement their attachment. They, however, never knew how soon they have to quit their most beloved teacher and companion.

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The long-looked-for *Shashtiabdapurthi* (60th birthday) of the Rajarishi H. H. Sri Moolam Thirunal took place in 1093 M.E., in commemoration of which A. R. R. V. submitted a benedictory poem, '*Prasadamala*', in Malayalam metres based on the *Mantrams* and *Devatas* of the Veda. This peculiar composition showed his religious turn of mind and his deep knowledge of the holy scriptures of the Hindus. In connection with that high festival, he was very much in evidence in sports, meetings and lectures and other celebrations.



XVI

NONE knew that A. R. R.V. was almost at the end of his tether. Premonitions of an impending calamity were not however wanting. As usual, he started for his Mavelikara home with his family for the long vacation. He encountered a car accident near Kundara which gave him much trouble and anxiety. But he reached home safe and almost forgot the incident. He enjoyed his rest in the domestic circle busy with schemes for improving the newly organised Vernacular Branch of Studies, the usual training of his dramatic troupe and other agreeable work. The swimming baths were full of water by the monsoon rains and the early recollections of his swimming feats recurred to him. He swam for sometime and caught a cold. That soon developed into typhoid and alas ! proved fatal,

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in spite of the best medical treatment. His end was quite unexpected. On the eve of his passover, he was delighted to see the setting sun through the window of his bedroom and he admired its grandeur. His prophetic vision must have seen in that scene the symbol of the setting of his own worldly glorious career. The immortal soul passed from him quietly in slumber, happy and peaceful, free from all earthly bondage and in communion with the supreme grand Truth-*Brahmam*. The domestic folk around bewailed his parting; but he looked calm and cheerful as ever under the pall of death. The setting of that glorious sun darkened the literary world which mourned the loss in poems and obituaries. The light of learning was extinguished; the stalwart guardian of oriental culture slept in the grave; the noble champion and liberator of Malayalam was to sing no more melodies! Such was the burden of the numerous dirges that were sung all over Kerala. In the heat of sorrow, schemes were set afoot by his students, friends and admirers for commemorating him; but, unfortunately, none of them bore fruit, except

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that a portrait was hung up in the Sanskrit College, the first institution he served.

Any moralising on our fleeting emotions cannot efface the disgraceful neglect of commemorating our great men. But A.R.R. V. needed no memorial in stone or bronze or paint, as his immortal work is sufficient to keep his memory alive so long as Malayalam lives. He brought a new epoch into being. He gave an impetus to the Malayalam literary world the effects of which we witness today. Malabar is indebted to him for raising her mother tongue to the level of her sisters. His genius has standardised her grammar and corrected her style. He invited the use of Dravidian metres, which have now spread like wildfire all over. He started the Neo-Dravidian age of Malayalam and enabled her to stand on her own legs. He made her the vehicle of the most recondite ideas and thus saved her from the calumny of opinionated occidentalists. He richly earned the *nom de plume* of "*Kerala Panini*", which the public unanimously gave him. He valued it more than his M. R. A. S, or even his University Degree. With him and

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his great uncle has closed a chapter in the history of Malayalam literature, which was at once brilliant and productive. No leader has yet come forth to guide Malayalam in her future career as these two champions did.



XVII

THE personality of A. R. R. V. was not imposing. Short of stature with almost a feminine face, his features belied the genius within. His greatness was in the inner self and not in the outer shell. He cared not for pedantry. Even when holding high offices of State, he declined adopting European costume and appeared only in his long coat, turban and *mundu* (dhoti). In his characteristic witticism, he described the neck-tie as कण्ठकौपीनम् (privities for the neck). At home, he went about with only a loin cloth and seldom put on even a shirt. Dress was to him an encumbrance which prevented free motion of the limbs. At tennis, he put on a shirt, more for decency than as a necessity. His dress, though simple, did not lack *rajoguna* (beauty), and he was fond of cloths of new designs. He used no cosmetics except what is required for the *tilakom* or caste mark.

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His life was very simple, as in the case of all Malayalees. He was accommodating and was always a welcome guest. Essentially optimistic in his outlook, his conversations were interesting and profitable. His repartees were not sharp but shrewd and often-times witty. The Tamil Brahmin Pandits often softened the hard consonants in pronunciation. He once proposed a conundrum to a young Vaishnava comrade श्रीमाधवें भजत भो गरुडाधिरुदम्, and he laughed at his inability to repeat it without blundering even after several attempts. He hated vulgarity in wit or speech. He encouraged aspirants to poesy by helpful suggestions and appreciated criticism. Intelligent questions of students he invited and his eagerness to solve their difficulties was unbounded. Never was he a hard task-master. Even those who took undue advantage of his indulgence were tolerated. Ill-temper was unknown to him as sickness. He told me often that he never knew what headache was like. He was seldom bed-ridden and kept a good constitution. Toleration was part of his religion. He observed the

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acharas, but was no bigot. He was prepared to change with the times and held customs and manners more as handmaids than as essentials of religion. True religion, he thought, was in the heart and not in the form. He had faith in the Supreme Being and saw through the essence of *Tantric* rites. His initiation into the high altar of *Tantric* truths gave him wisdom and knowledge uncontaminated by communistic psychology. He realised within himself the fundamental truths of Idealism, by his study of "*Sankara Bhashya*." A philosophic eclecticism was his creed.

A loving husband, an affectionate father, an indulgent master, his domestic life was happy. In his first borne Bhagirathi Amma Tampuran, he centred his affections and she bloomed into an erudite lady. No less care did he bestow on the education of his first boy, Raghava Varma Raja, who took the B.A. (Hons.) in English Language and is now an Assistant Professor. He had not however to mourn over the loss of his second son, a more brilliant lad, as he died after

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him. But he sustained other sad losses. The calamities upset him for a while; but his inborn optimism won him over soon. He loved to be merry and whatever came in the way was given short shrift. How he solved the difficulties of separation from his domestic felicities and how he found his wife and children a new abode in the Capital and provided for their comfort have been mentioned previously. All these and much more go to prove his deep attachment and real affection.

He cared little for his money. It was happiness that he cared more, however costly it might be. Parsimony found no place in his financial vocabulary. He gave freely and fully. His benevolence was punctuated only by the limit of his resources. His affairs were in the hands of his managers and he trusted them. His business capacity was at a discount and his investments mostly unprofitable. He made money, but was not rich.

A. R. R. V. is seen at best with his students. His exposition and criticism were at once witty and suggestive. Even the

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driest bones of grammar had a new life in his hands. He criticised current opinions and manners under cover of his examples. He was really a chip of the old block of *acharyas* whose conversation and companionship were more valuable and educative than their actual instruction. He created an aureole around him emanating the rays of knowledge and culture. His casual remarks conveyed the highest truths which years of study hardly brought home. He taught in pastime more than in a regular class. He was a comrade of his disciples rather than a teacher. They were led unawares to the correct ways of thought.

Young poets and authors found in him a new force. K. C. Kesava Pillai, who rose from the ranks, was constant in his attendance on him for gathering ideas and clearing doubts; P. K. Narayana Pillai has publicly admitted his indebtedness to him; the late K. Ramakrishna Pillai, whose sharp pen cost him deportation, found his truculent style of writing from him; P. Anantan Pillai has, in his recent work on his life, acknowledged his

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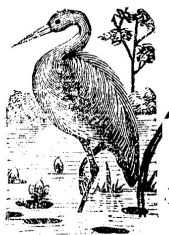
deep obligations. Many another will have the same story to tell.

There was no literary movement or organisation at his time which did not seek his help. All the literary stars, the Cranganore and Pantalām Rajas, Appan Thampuran and other Cochin Princes and all the *Kavies* (Poets) who contributed to the poetic columns of the "*Manorama*", "*Vidyavinodini*", "*Kavyamala*", "*Kavana Kommudi*", and other literary papers and journals were his students, friends or admirers. He was the centre of a literary circle, the circumference of which widened with years. He kept correspondence with them in verse and prose. Letter writing to him was, however, a task which he would gladly have deputed some one else to do to his dictation.

His command over poetry, especially in Sanskrit, was wonderful. The goddess Saraswathi was at his beck and call specially in her Sanskrit garb. He could compose at a moment's notice and that in the most appropriate diction. He once told me that he could make meaning out of the most incoherent

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combination of words. His dexterity in inlaying symbolic words in verses without jarring their fluency or the easy flow of the meaning was admirable. He made many such verses on requisition. *Chitraslokas* he had no difficulty to compose. It is a pity that his numerous stray verses have not been gathered and printed. That will make a remarkable volume. His friends would do well to collect them as well as all anecdotes connected with them.



XVIII

IT needs an intrepid captain and a powerful submarine to dive into the depths of A. R. R. V.'s literary works and gather the treasures embedded therein. I can attempt only a jolly sailing over the surface of that broad ocean through chartered channels. There remain unmapped portions for enterprising sailors to discover. It is there, in the unpublished stray compositions, in epistles, note-books or scraps of paper, journals or magazines, that we see the genius of the hero. In the published works, we witness but some of the finished products of A. R. R. V. But in his casual compositions, repartees and humourous episodes, the light of his genius sparkles. No better tribute can be paid to him by his friends, students and companions than to collect them as well as the several anecdotes treasured in the hearts of his associates and

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correspondents. Lapse of time is likely to dim the picture or at least lose its freshness. There need also be the fear of oblivion.

The works of A. R. R. V. may be broadly divided into two sections, viz., those in Sanskrit and those in Malayalam. Except some occasional lectures or theses, he did not do much in English. Another division has also to be made in dealing with his published books, namely, those dealing with literary and those with scientific subjects. I believe his first published Sanskrit work is his "*Tulabhara-prabandham*" in commemoration of H. H. Visakhom Maharaja's *Tulabhara* ceremony, which brought him the present of a pair of diamond ear-rings. That short work bespeaks of his youthful genius and the mastery he had gained over the classical tongue. There you see a rising star coming out into brilliance with the shyness of a new-comer among the big constellations which had then already reached the meridian radiating their lustre around long.

In the next work "*Vitavibhavarī*", we see a youth in the flush of classic love seeking

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the fulfilment of his cherished desires, weeping over the obstacles thrown in the way, struggling over mountainous obstructions in the heat of emotion and finally enjoying the bliss of final success. The ardent lover finds his rival in the lovely Goddess of Nature and, while he admires her beauty, often-times chides her for hard-hearted cruelty in separating him from his beloved. The poem is so realistic that one cannot believe that it is no less than an expression of his personal experience.

The wail over his failure in the B. A. examination and the elegy on the death of an infant daughter prove how early he had acquired that art of touching the chord of pathos while in the midst of jollities. That is a feat which even the immortal poet Kalidasa has not done to perfection. The *Ajapralapom* in *Rahguvamsa* and the *Rativilapom* in *Kumarasambhava* are almost the only pathetic poetry attempted by Kalidasa. Even there he cannot divest himself of erotic poetry. But A. R. R. V. is near to Bhavabhuthi in the expression of his sorrow.

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A young erudite mind playing with the toys of a classical shop is what we find in A. R. R.V's early poems, *chitraslokas*, *mudraslokas* and *ashtakoms*. They are composed in sport, as a relaxation from serious work. His *Meghopalumbham* serves as a prelude to the serious critical faculty which he developed in his later works. The first attempt at dramatic composition made in *Chaitravanī Vijayam* bespeaks his latent histrionic talent in giving body and soul to abstract ideas. It is a feat which Sri-Vedantha Desikar had shown to perfection in his dramatic composition. Had A. R. R. V. persisted in the line, he would, no doubt, have written a new *Sakuntala*, instead of a translation. The sweetness and aptness of his expressions are only eclipsed by their terseness. His partiality for Sanskrit is reflected well in that drama, while he owed his success in life to his English education. His innate shyness is however visible in it. *Uddalachiritam* is an adaptation in Sanskrit of the model set by Charles Lamb in narrating Shakespeare's dramatic tales in simple prose. A. R. R. V. had already shown as a student his adeptness in

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paraphrasing English ideas and expressions in classical phraseology. His skill in sanskritising hard-sounding Teutonic words and names is remarkable. One should read his prose version of Othello to realise how Sanskrit prose, in the hands of an expert, can transform itself into such simple diction as to surpass even a Bernard Shaw and avoid the drawling sonorous periods of Bhattabana. Who can say that Sanskrit is a dead language, when it reflects the latest ideas in modern discursive style ?.

On the top of A.R.R.V.'s Sanskrit literary works comes his epic poem "*Angala-Samrajyom*", a history of the British rule in India. In its style and diction, it equals Kalidasa's *Raghuvamsha*; in its conception and imagery it surpasses that immortal poet's *mahakavya*. How prosaic events like the formation of a trading company, the organisation of an administrative machinery, the battle and overthrow of the French etc, can transform themselves into beautiful poetry in the hands of a master poet is wonderful. The tragedy of the Black Hole and the fall of Seringapatam have come out so realistic from the pen of the

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author as to eclipse even a Kinglake's classic description. The author has cleverly inserted the pre-English history of India in his epic and summarised it cleverly. At times, the poet rises to a such high pitch of excellence, as almost to forget himself in the grandeur of his descriptions. He has introduced all the *rasas* and descriptions needed for a *mahakavya*. It ranks with any first class work of the Victorian era.

It may not be without profit to compare *Angalasamrajyom* with a contemporary epic of his great uncle viz., *Visakha-Vijayam*. Both uncle and nephew were masters of the art, but differed in standards. Although the uncle earned the *nom de plume* of *Kerala-Kalidasa*, his technique in composition was far from the model set by that great poet. He admired Sri Harsha and Murari far more than Kalidasa and copied the style of the former in preference to the latter. The resonant diction, the grand cadence, the ginging alliteration, the imposing imagery of the description, all produced an atmosphere of artificiality and a sense of mastery over the

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technicalities of the classical tongue, so as to discount the real beauty of the poem. The nephew, on the other hand, touches the heart with the simplest of words in his terse and fluent style with no pretensions to overlordship over the language, but an innate filial love to the mother. His descriptions have a realism unknown except to Vyasa, Bhasa and Kalidasa. He does not pause for any alliterative symphony nor for punctuating his expressions with high grammatic peculiarities. The words stream into his verses smooth in natural succession to his ideas and not in torrents and eddies. Calm and cool as is his nature, his words are brimful of thoughts and deep in their sense. Ostentation was no part of his character, and so it is of his poems. Sweet and soothing was his song, grand and imposing was his uncle's. The one came from the heart and other from erudition. The rose on the shrub and the rose on the canvas marks the difference between the epic of the nephew and that of his uncle. Both have undergone translation into Malayalam.

Of Sanskrit scientific works of A. R. R. V.

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the *Jyotisha Prakasa* and the thesis on *Karana* and *Thithi* reflect his facility to digest ancient Sastraic lore and transform it to modern conditions of experimental scientific standards. The science of astronomy made great advances since the advent of the telescope and other observatory instruments of delicacy and accuracy. Although Hindu astronomers of old had long calculated on celestial movements and established formulæ, they have become antiquated by the gradual evolution of the universe, and unless corrected from time to time by continued observations, are bound to result in inaccurate conclusions. The main object of A. R. R. V. was to inject this new solution into the veins of the old Hindu astronomers. His study of astrology also was calculated to achieve that end.

This spirit of modernisation permeated his master piece of Sanskrit Grammar, viz., *Laghu-panineeyam* and *Manideepika*. The comparative method he adopted in this work and the new orientation he gave to the study of the great Panini established his fame as one of the profoundest grammarians of his time. The

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new mould into which he cast the Panini sutras and his illuminating explanations and examples, have thrown the classic *Siddanta Kaumudi* of Bhattoji into the shade. The thoroughness with which he has examined all the authoritative works on sanskrit grammar and digested and improved upon them by even adding new technical terms has the high praise of savants all the world over. He must be regarded as Panini re-incarnate.

Turning now to the field of A. R. R. V's Malayalam literary enterprise, the first point we note is the inferiority in the quality of the productions in comparison with his Sanskrit masterpieces. The language does ~~not~~ not flow with that dignified ease which is evident even in his casual Sanskrit verses. He appears to have not caught the spirit of the tongue and the subtle literary cunning which makes a Kunjan or a Thunjan so charming and entertaining. Unlike the classical tongue, the Dravidian language has a twang which is difficult of attuning to harmony except in the hands of experts. Devoid of high inflections or highsounding compounds, there is always a

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tendency for Malayalam poetry to dissolve itself into common-place prose, especially when cast on its native metres. Sanskrit metres can give it form, but no soul. Many a linguist has found Malayalam the most difficult tongue to master. Why? Because of its extreme flexibility as well as its peculiarity of intonation and significant suppression of expression. Hence Malayalam poetry to be good should catch her spirit by telling epigrammatical *mantras* compelling her to stop and turn back upon the author. A living language subject to the changes of modality of the environment, she needs a strong and insistent wooer to wed her charms to him. A. R. R. V. had long ago won the love of a classical bride; the Dravidian beauty naturally therefore looked askance at him.

His first dalliance with her was his translation of Kalidasa's *Meghaduta*. It was received with mixed feelings by the Malayalam literary world. He wanted to establish that the want of the second letter alliteration in the stanzas did not qualify either the beauty or dignity of vernacular versification, but on

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the other hand, gave real freedom to the author to bring out the sense better. This was resented in some quarters and gave rise to undignified controversy. Although as a translation it truly reflected the original, the work was really amateurish.

The next attempt at translation, *Kumara-sambhavam*, showed an improvement. Some verses have come out really beautiful. But there is difference of opinion regarding the general style. There is a feeling of tameness in the moulding, a want of dignity with ease, characteristics which do not show a master hand at work. His uncle the Valia Koil Thampuran was a past master in Malayalam poetry, who could take his rank along with Punom, Unnayi, and other classic poets. The nephew did not approach him. Nor did he gain an equal place with the lesser luminaries like Erayimman Tampi, the Kodungallur Thampurans, Venmani and Naduvom Namburis. No doubt, the classic poets dabbled in *manipravalam* i.e. a mixture of Malayalam with Sanskrit, in which the latter preponderated. But in their alchemy the mixture com-

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bined chemically so as to become indistinguishable. A. R. R. V. wanted to turn a new leaf by diverting Malayalam from her alliance with alien Sanskrit and reattach her to her original *tarawad*. In other words, his endeavour was to make her don her own garb and not plume herself on borrowed feathers. It was indeed a praiseworthy attempt. But it took time to succeed.

Not content with the *Kavyas* of Kalidasa, A. R. R. V. tried his hand at his dramas. First he translated *Sakuntala*, and later on *Malavikagnimitra*. In both, he succeeded better than with his poems. His *Malayala Sakuntala* in some respects excelled his uncle's *Manipravala Sakuntala*. But the latter had long ago taken the field and gained such wide currency as to be on the lips of the Kerala public. This, in a manner, set back the popularity of *Malayala Sankuntala*, although it caught the spirit of the original in simpler language appreciated by the masses. *Malavika* however remains uncontested.

He also translated Bhasa's *Swapnavasavadatta* and *Charudattom*. The latter is

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not really a translation, but an original composition, taking Bhasa's and Sudraka's works as bases. No small endeavour is bestowed in making a compromise between the two great authors.

The only original poems written by A.R.R.V. if I remember aright, are his *Malayavilasom*, a description of the Sahyadri Range which keeps Travancore separate from the Tamil Nad and *Prasadamala*. His comparison of the hill tops to a saw splitting the horizon in twain is only one instance of the originality and beauty of his conception. It is indeed a great pity that he did not write more original poems.

Only a passing reference is necessary to his essays and lectures in Malayalam. To a master of composition, they are but a sport to please the public. While in the presentation of arguments and the logical soundness of ideas they compare well with his uncle's prose, he lacks the dignity of diction. There is an inherent want of coherence and a looseness of style which he could have avoided, had he paid as much attention to them as to grammatical correctness or clearness of expressions.

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He considered passive voice alien to the spirit of Malayalam and was dead against unhappy compounds of Sanskrit and Malayalam words. Certainly, compounds like “പട്ടുക്കുളച്ചുലകുണ സംഹതി” are both uncouth and ungrammatical.

It was by his scientific works in Malayalam that A. R. R. V. made his mark and earned the honorary designation of '*Kerala Panini*'. Mention has already been made of his great work, *Kerala Panineeyam*, which not only standardised Malayalam grammar, but revolutionised its setting by tracing the language to its Dravidian origin. By adopting the historical method, he established once for all its affinity to the Dravidian group of tongues and gained it an independence which it had long lost. His introduction is a highly learned dissertation on the origin and history of the language and a close philological argumentative study worthy to be ranked with the *Mahabhashya* of Patanjali. Kerala and her language earned a place in the family of Dravidian vernaculars by his exposition. He proved that Malayalam has kept her store of Dravidian roots uncontaminated, while

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Tamil, the classic tongue of that group, has lost or modified them. He opened the door for the patriotic Malayalee to witness the beauty as well as the vigour of ancient Malayalam by quoting innumerable examples from old literature. He created a liking for adopting native metres, which combine both quantity and music. In the revised edition of his work, he avoided the difficulty of *Sutras*, which he had first adopted in admiration of Panini and substituted *Karikas* in versified form easily studied and remembered. In the guise of writing a grammar, he really raised the status of Malayalam and his motherland in the eyes of the contemporary world. His unselfish services for his mother-tongue have earned him renown.

No less remarkable are his supplementary treatises, *Bhasha Bhushanom*, a work on rhetoric, *Sahitya Sahyom*, a work on composition, *Vrittamanjari*, a work on metres. All are meant to give body and soul to the language which he had rescued by manumission from the bondage of Sanskrit.

His commentaries on his uncle's *Mayura-*

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sandesom and the two old *Kathakalies*, *Nalacharitham* and *Ambarishacharitham*, are examples of his powers of exposition and criticism, which he had amply showed from his professorial chair.

We have now made a jolly cruise over the broad waters of A.R.R.V's. genius and touched the several scheduled ports and enjoyed their landscape. It now remains for us to calculate the profit and loss of the voyage. In other words, we have to answer the question, what did A. R. R. V. contribute to the literary world? It has to be clearly borne in mind that generally genius is not measured in quantity but in quality. It is the vivifying influence which it imparts around, the awakening which rouses the torpidity of the times, the diversion of energies into new channels, in short, the Renaissance which it inaugurates, that commands respect and admiration. Although in volume A. R. R. V's contribution to Vernacular literature was not inconsiderable, his influence on the mother-tongue was so potent as to start a new epoch in its history. The characteristics of this Renaissance are the

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turn given to the language from its mediaevalism to modernisation, the standardisation of its grammar and composition, the adoption of the critical method and the birth of the blank verse by redeeming native Dravidian metres.

The development of Malayalam prose literature was, no doubt, inaugurated by Kerala Varma Valia Koil Thampuran and was supported by later writers like Appu Nedungadi, C.V. Raman Pillay, O. Chandu Menon, C. Achutha-Menon and others. But still it laboured under Sanskrit influence and was thought at one time incapable of carrying occidental ideas or expressing modern scientific conceptions. It was A. R. R. V. who gave the lie to this delusion and discovered the potentiality of the language to adapt itself to the modern materialist age of science. He had indeed prepared the ground for the compilation of a scientific and technological dictionary, which alas! his premature demise prevented him from bringing into fruition. Still he sowed the seed of lexicography which is slowly bearing fruit.

Notwithstanding all the criticisms on his grammar, none can deny that his conclusions

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have stood the test of time and has given the language a solid foundation to work upon. A progressive language like Malayalam is sure to outlive any grammatical restraints; but that is a work of time and any future grammarian has *no lens volens* to be guided by the fundamental principles enunciated and established by A. R. R. V.

Before his time, the critical study of Malayalam works was almost unknown. Commentaries there were in former days; but they were mostly of Sanskrit works and only expository. He introduced a system of original research which he gained from the learned *Bhashyas* in Sanskrit and the critical annotations of western works. This opened a new field in Malayalam literature which is bound to ennoble and give it ample room for expansion. It was once thought that there was little to study in Malayalam; but now that idea has changed.

The blank verse has become so popular as almost to eclipse Sanskrit metres. All poets of the front rank now prefer to write in Dravidian metres. New rhymes are being invented

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and foreign sonnet and stanzas are initiated. The craze for this new variety has unfortunately in very many instances degenerated into the prosaic.

It is to the author of this New Age that we pay our humble homage and to his immortal fame that we sing our song. May Malayalam grow from more to more with his blessing !





