

## *Kurunthogai* Poem 40

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### Abstract

*Kurunthogai* is a classical Tamil poetic work (a collection of poems by different authors) from the *Sangam* literature, which is more than two thousand years old. The poems belong to the *akam* (love between man and woman) category, and each poem consists of 4 to 8 lines each, except poem 307 and 391 which have 9 lines. This paper discusses the content of the poem number 40, which describes the passion men and women in deep love have for one another, and how they describe the love they have for one another. Apart from the passionate description of love between men and women, this poem subtly points out how this love transcends all barriers, using a very ordinary, day to day sight or process in nature, which is easily and always taken for granted and not even noticed.

**Keywords:** *Kurunthogai*, poem 40, Sangam literature, true love between man and woman, beyond worldly constraints.

### Introduction

The *Sangam* literature structure suggests the surviving *kurunthogai* manuscripts have 402 poems. Now we are going to study the 40<sup>th</sup> poem of *kurunthogai*. This poem has been chosen for its popularity and certain time-tested values. It still represents value of true love and also its manifestation overcoming worldly barriers. It has the quality of immortal and eternal love something akin to John Keats' poem "Ode on Grecian Urn".

### Theme

The theme of the poem is a familiar idea about love. The hero expresses his love for the heroine in a tone which doesn't appear to be earthly. Treatment of love as the subject is common but what distinguishes the poem from others is its overtone. The poem is musical, passionate and universal. The lovers are not ordinary lovers and their passion is to be measured by the intensity of the expression and its everlasting quality.

Most of the *Sangam* period literature reflects a true sense of affinity towards nature. The themes are intertwined with Nature and the images and similes are drawn from Nature to

reiterate the themes taken up by the poet. In that sense this poem excels in communicating a powerful feeling of the lover who draws parallel from Nature to convey his thought, feeling and passion.

The poem is presented in Tamil below.

குறுந்தொகை 40 Kurunthogai 40  
யாயும் ஞாயும் யார் ஆகியரோ?  
எந்தையும் துந்தையும் எம் முறைக் கேளிர்?  
யானும் நீயும் எவ் வழி அறிதும்?  
செம் புலப் பெயல் நீர் போல  
அன்புடை நெஞ்சம் தாம் கலந்தனவே.

செம்புலப்பெயனீரார் பாடல்  
குறிஞ்சி  
தலைவியைப் புணர்ந்தபின் நீங்கும் தலைவன் தலைவியைத்  
தேற்றுகிறான்.

என் தாயும் உன் தாயும் யார் யாரோ?  
என் தந்தையும் உன் தந்தையும் எந்த வகையில் உறவினர்?  
நான் உன்னையும், நீ என்னையும் எந்த வகையில் அறிவோம்.  
அப்படி இருந்தும் நம் அன்பு உள்ளங்கள் ஒன்றோடொன்று  
கலந்துவிட்டன.

செம்மையான நிலத்தில் (மணல் பாங்கோ, களர் பாங்கோ இல்லாத  
நிலத்தில்) பெய்த மழைநீர் போலக் கலந்து நிலைபெற்றுவிட்டன.  
(இனி நிலமும் நீரும் பயிரை வளர்க்கும்)

### Tenor of the Poem

The lover describes his love for his beloved and also the love that existed between his father and mother and also the love that existed between her parents. He takes the analogy further suggesting that every relationship is born out of true love in diverse situations. The lover feels that their love is not born out of any earlier familiarity, but it happened out of mutual attraction between them. Their love is characterised by no material or worldly consideration, but it is like true union that happens between rainwater and the red soil, leading to the rain water changing its colour to red. When two hearts loving one another meet and have intimate relations, their hearts lose their individual traits and become one and the same.

*Kurinchi* in Tamil denotes the geography of forest and its adjacent areas. The poet uses the comparison of what happens to rainwater which falls on the red soil to reiterate organic unity between the lovers. There is no worldly consideration in their love and the love is spontaneous, pure and natural. This kind of love in such a natural setting is typical and the lovers are guided more by nature rather than by other interests.

The lovers are prompted by nature and they submit themselves to the natural instinct of physical relationship. She sobs after the event and her lover consoles her by stating that your mother and my mother are in no way connected to each other and so also your father and my father. We were drawn to each other as strangers, but the true love enjoined us as it happens between the red soil and the rainwater. Hereafter we will be guided by nature and like plants growing after the rain we will also be blessed with progeny.

The language used in the poem is simple, optimistic and touches our heart and spirit.

The author's name was not found anywhere, not included in the lines of the poem, etc. So, the ancient compiler/s have used the symbolic word in the poem, namely, sempulapeyalnir to coin the name of the poet 'sembulapeyalniran' as the author's name. The compiler/s show their great sensitivity to poem in the compiled work Kurunthogai.

### **Short Analysis of the Poem**

The interrogative lines at the beginning of the poem suggest the universality of the experience of true passionate love. The characters depicted are representative players of the universal drama of the conflict between nature and the society. True love conquers all is the theme. The lover's intention to convey the love for his beloved in a passionate and unequivocal way is evident. It is not a transgression but a submission to the will of nature.

### **Conclusion**

Though the poem was written 2000 years ago during the *Sangam* literature, it still has the power to touch heart and spirit to appreciate and glorify true passionate love between man and woman even today.

The name of the poet is not known.

A phrase that occurs in the poem is made as the poet's name- SEMPULAP-PEYAL-NIRAR.

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