

MUSIC, SONG LYRICS, PHILOSOPHY AND HUMAN VALUES: EXPLORING POET KANNADASAN'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE TAMIL COMMUNITY WORLDWIDE

Dr. Sony Jalarajan Raj,

Lecturer in Journalism /Media,
School of Arts and Social Sciences,
MONASH University.

Dr. Balakrishnan Muniapan,

Senior Lecturer in Human Resource Management,
School of Business and Design,
Swinburne University of Technology, Malaysia.

ABSTRACT

For thousands of years music and songs have played an important role in the Tamil community. Tamil song lyrics are mostly written for cinemas, and research reveals that Tamil cinemas in the twentieth century have formed a major part of mass communication and have also served as mass-entertainment to people mainly due to the stories and song lyrics. Among the great lyric writers of Tamil songs from 1944 to 1981 was the legendary Poet Kannadasan (1927 – 1981) who was also known as Kavi Arasu or king of poets. However Poet Kannadasan's contributions are yet to be highlighted sufficiently in media literatures. Therefore the objective of this paper is to explore Poet Kannadasan's contribution in teaching philosophy and human values through his songs which are relevant to the Tamil community even today. This paper is considered to be the first to explore Poet Kannadasan's philosophy and human values in an academic journal of the English language although several articles have been written in the Tamil language. In presenting this paper, hermeneutics (a qualitative research methodology) which includes content (song) analysis is used by the authors. The authors hope that this paper will provide the framework for studying Poet Kannadasan's song lyrics in many areas apart from philosophy and human values. This paper is expected to contribute and enrich the English language literatures on Poet Kannadasan's contributions in the Indian context.

Keywords: Song, Lyrics, Communicative, Philosophical Personal.

INTRODUCTION:

Music can be defined as “the art of expression in sound, in melody, in harmony, including both composition and execution...not mere noise” (*Chambers 20th Century Dictionary*, p. 869). In music, a song is a composition that contains vocal parts (lyrics) that are performed (sung), commonly accompanied by musical instruments. Hence a song is a piece of music for accompanied or unaccompanied voice or voices or, the act or art of singing (Peake, 1980). For Adorno, music was linked to the cognitive habits, modes of consciousness and historical developments (Adorno, 1973:15). In 2008, Nature published a series of essays on music positing that music is cross-cultural and universal, yet striving to explore the power of music upon the world (*Editorial*, 2008). The early decades of 1900s mainly consisted of oral societies and their history is not written but spoken and it is kept in the form of poetry, songs, proverbs, stories and various rituals. Their historical and cultural information is passed on from one generation to another through some of these means and through personal influences between people which proved to be more effective (Lazarsfeld, P.E et al; 1949) rather than mass campaigns. Songs hence played a major role in influencing the public, educating and eliciting them.

For thousands of years, music and songs have played important roles in the lives of the people of the Tamil (Indian) community worldwide. Tamil music and song lyrics are mostly written for cinemas and research reveals that Tamil cinemas in the twentieth century have formed a major part of mass communication and have also served as mass-entertainment to the Tamil community (Ceyalacumi, C.E; p.33). Moreover, music and song lyrics have also been essential ingredients for the commercial success of Tamil films. Even today the fate of Tamil movies relies on the strength of its music and songs. Therefore the Tamil song lyrics act as strong instruments to develop and transform people by providing informative songs incorporated with interesting storylines and messages to people.

In the history of Tamil cinema, even though there have been many great lyric writers, the legendary Poet Kannadasan (1927 –1981)- “Kavi Arasu” or “King of poets”, is considered by the Tamil community worldwide as the greatest of all. He has made great impact on the lives of the Tamils worldwide through his several thousand songs for the Tamil films especially in the sixties and seventies. Poet Kannadasan contributed extensively to the development of the Tamil community worldwide with powerful messages through his songs which encompass all aspects of human life such as philosophy and human values. For most Tamil film fans, Poet Kannadasan has been not just the soul but also the brain behind some of the most beautiful lyrics ever penned in the history of Tamil music. However in the media literatures his contributions are insufficiently highlighted especially in the English language. Therefore the objective of this paper is to provide and highlight Poet Kannadasan’s role in teaching philosophy and human values through his songs which are still relevant to the Tamil community even today.

SONG AND ITS LYRICS; COMMUNICATIVE AND PHILOSOPHICAL PERSONAL:

In the early stages of human life, music and songs were probably used more for communication than for pleasure: drums, horns and bells, even the human voice; pitched to carry many miles (Lynne, 2010, par.3). Some researchers believe that early forms of human languages were developed from communication through music, and certainly music continues to fulfill many functions in different cultures today (*ibid*, par.5). Communication through music is verbal communication since songs are made up of well-chosen words or lyrics (Stargazer, L; 2008). Associating thoughts and ideas with music, it has been effectively used as propaganda (Wells, K.A; 2004). Despite the fact that Music evokes different feelings among audience, they are identifiable because it is part of their culture and even a fragment of it will arouse the established meaning (Perris, A; 1985, p.6). The idea of mass culture, of mass audience, who consume commodities of a cultural industry (Scott, D.B, 2000:1), seems to be well fitted with the analysis of songs. Music plays a fundamental role in the functioning and evolution of the mind, consciousness, and cultures which made scientists studying evolution of language to the conclusion that language and music were one for the primitive men (Perlovsky, L; 2010).

The development of song as mass communication was not a spontaneous phenomenon. Indian culture is inextricably linked with music and other related arts that songs naturally became part and parcel of day-to-day life. "Life is not what it used to be thirty years ago and one of the factors that has changed life is, film music" (Chandavarkar, B; 1976). He suggested that in India music is conceived as human voice and so, film

music took the shape of songs to a greater extent. 'Indianess' is deeply enrooted in folk music and it has been used for moral, religious and political purposes (Kumar, K.J; 2000). In Tamil Nadu too, songs emerged from much known and famous traditional art form 'Therukoothu', which brought together prose, music and drama. Prior to that, ballads were very popular there, and they helped to proliferate this art form to more corners. These art forms definitely influenced films, which gradually took songs as an important component in films. With the advent of films in India, other media like television or radio which were not popular became more successful. More than entertainment, within a short period, it leapfrogged into a perfect tool for moral and social communication. The term 'popular music' is best used to connote to music which is closely allied, to evolution, marketing, and distribution with the mass media which is produced and disseminated it on a mass basis. (Manuel, P; 1988). In India, as film music being massively disseminated, popular music turned to be film songs.

Most often songs are considered as mere entertainment stuff, but when looked intensely, one can realize the potential implication and connotation of the lyrics (Furmanek, O; 2006). Music and song lyrics played, and to an extent are playing, a crucial role in the society as a traditional way of communication (Ojha, J.M:p.78). Human beings (and animals) have long back realized the influence of music in triggering individual and group behaviour and to create social cohesion as well as conflict (Brown, Steven and Ulrik Volgsten; 2006:p.13). Even now film music is the most sold and exported in the country. The main peculiarity of old film songs is that it used verses of famous poets and writers, hence it created values, morals, ethics, ideals and good citizenry. This explains the popularity of songs and how it traversed to attain the status of crucial conductor in the communication of complex social phenomena (Forman, F; 2002). Often music announces one meaning while intentionally or inadvertently evokes a different response. Music is one of the most expressionistic forms of media known to society. As a result, music influences every aspect of society –with each generation forming a radically different opinion.

“...music, the organization of noise . . . reflects the manufacture of society; it constitutes the audible waveband of the vibrations and signs that make up society. An instrument of understanding, it prompts us to decipher a sound form of knowledge.” (Attali, 1985)

Marshall McLuhan uses the phrase “the medium is the message” as a means of explaining how the distribution of a message can often be more important than content of the message itself (1964, p.40). But in this particular situation, channels of communication lose significance once they reach the receivers. The decoding of messages undergoes in their minds and the effect differs according to different perceptions of receivers (Hall, S; 1980). Since it is an intimate communication, most often barriers and interruptions are resolutely avoided by the receivers. The context and the content of the music both come into play. Although music semiotics initially focused on the content of the music many scholars have tried to analyze the contextual elements too (Brackett, D; 2000, Stefani, G; 1987, Middleton, R; 1990). However, the effect of songs and its lyrics will differ from one individual to other, depending upon their respective perceptions accorded with their cultural norms (Inskip, C et al; 2008). According to Individual difference theory, different personality variables produce different reactions to the same stimuli, which lead to selective exposure and selective perception. The process can be linked to the cognitive dissonance theory. The theory asserts that since people normally like to evade dissonance in their belief system, they often try to reduce this dissonance by aligning their belief system with the information available.

Inskip, C., Macfarlane, A. & Rafferty, P (2008, p.477) proposed that a user centered model would more accurately reflect the process of meaning-making when choosing music on behalf of others, as meanings shared by user and owner will be used to determine the relevance of music choices. These can be incorporated into established communications models (Shannon, C. and Weaver, W; 1949) in order to explain the communication process that is taking place when listening to music. The flow of information in the form of songs can also be described as a one-way process (from Transmitter or producer to Receiver or listener).

To this present period, people tend to respect Poet Kannadasan for his unsurpassed talent and social responsibility. Illiterate people rely on such songs and its lyrics to understand the philosophy and ideology of a society, and give greater importance and reliance to it. They interpret the fate, fortune and destiny of human life praising truth as good and wisdom as noble. Film directors too gave emphasis to lyrics as it was the primary link between the audience and the film. When these meaningful lyrics combine with music

acting, it became appealing and even memorable. Such songs cut across the geographic, demographic and cultural barriers to give both connotative and denotative meaning across centuries. Nevertheless, such morally good lyrics in film songs began to be played in all political meetings, weddings, festivals and in government functions. More than being entertainment stuff, it was a corrective force and a torch light through which the public were driven towards the right path with the lessons of truth, wisdom, hard work and love (Wright, c, 2008:p.240).

Music serves either as a means of distraction from daily qualms or as an entertainment. Although the mass media (cinema, radio, television) has changed popular tastes music and songs continue to remain Indian in character and temperament (Pesch, n.d). The role of music in the form of cinema songs is very popular in Indian society all over the world. In the Indian context, besides ancient literatures and poems, songs that reflect human values have been written to convey numerous lessons to Indian communities around the world. For instance, The *Bhagavad-Gita* which was spoken by Sri Krishna to Arjuna more than 5000 years ago in Kurukshetra, India, is also in the form of a song (geetam).

The songs are constantly sung as a reminder and applied to modern lifestyles of Indians to this day. Such is the might of these lyrics. Today, lyrics are mostly written for cinemas in India and in the Indian context, research reveals that cinemas in the twentieth century have formed a major part of mass communication and have also served as mass-entertainment to people of different socio-economic status (Bhawani, 1994). Together with the lyrics and movies, the Indian cinema industry especially Tamil, Telugu and Hindi film industries have created many politicians. A few Tamil film stalwarts who have turned leading politicians are CN Annadurai, M.G. Ramachandran (MGR), M. Karunanidhi and J. Jayalalitha, Telugu movie-politician NT Rama Rao and Hindi stars such as Amitabh Bachan, Rajesh Khanna, Shatrughan Sinha, Dharmendra, Vinod Khanna and Govinda.

Many of the cinema lyrics are written specially for actors to capture and retain the audience and their interests throughout the movie which lasts three hours. The song-writers are like novelists or poets who want the audience to think, react or be affected, in some way. The writers impart to the audience through the movie stars 'the message' which they intend to say through their songs. These lyrics are much beyond the purpose of only providing simple entertainment. The intangible meaning that it carries in the lyrics relates to every aspect of human life that is meant to teach, encourage, motivate, remind, inform, influence, inspire and develop people. Essentially, these songs serve a social function to strengthen the circle of society. Some songs try to impart to individuals the roles and responsibilities to the society and nation. In addition, a number of lyrics in songs also give an inspiration for life.

Philosophy is the study of general and fundamental problems concerning matters such as existence, knowledge, values, reason, mind, and language (Grayling, 1998). The word "philosophy" comes from the Greek word *philosophia*, which literally means "love of wisdom" (ibid). Despite teaching philosophy and human values which are very crucial for today's society, songs also provide powerful messages to motivate one's life and fight against any obstacles that stop the progress (Muniapan, et al, 2006; Muniapan and Dass, 2008). Chatterjee, Satischandra; Datta, Dhirendramohan (1984) states that,

Indian thinkers viewed philosophy as a practical necessity that needed to be cultivated in order to understand how life can best be led. It became a custom for Indian writers to explain at the beginning of philosophical works how it served human ends.

Human values on the other hand are an integral part of every culture. Values tell people what is good, beneficial, important, useful, beautiful, desirable, constructive, etc. Over time, they have become the roots of traditions that groups of people find important in their day to day lives. Both these factors (philosophy and value) find profound space in Indian music, particular in Kannadasan's sacred works.

KANNADASAN-THE POET OF THE CENTURY:

In examining the history of Tamil cinema, there is a string of poets who have contributed outstanding lyrics; the power of their words and lyrics act as a strong instrument to provide hopes in hopeless situations and also power in powerless lives. Hence, Tamil songs become important components of mass media to deliver the intended message to the audience, incorporated with the interesting storyline. Among the great lyric writers of Tamil songs from 1944 to 1981 was Poet Kannadasan (1926-81) who made a great impact on the

life of the Tamils worldwide. Starting as an atheist, Kannadasan became philosophical in later life, writing devotional and educative songs (Modern Indian literature, an anthology: p.1081). His lyrics are noted for their depth of feeling and thought conveyed in simple, yet elegant language. The lyrics written by Poet Kannadasan have contributed extensively to the development of the Tamil community worldwide through the powerful messages of his songs which encompass all aspects of human life. His passion for Tamil language and his extravagant admiration for feminine beauty made him pen some wonderful masterpieces of the century (Modern Indian literature, an anthology: p.1082). Poet Kannadasan wrote lyrics on many aspects of human life ranging from philosophy, politics, economy, society, culture, language, art, atheism, theism, poverty, art of living, art of dying, cycles of life, charity, women, gambling, drinking, prostitution, love, education, and of course on human values and many other topics of societal interest. The lyrics composed by Poet Kannadasan enthralled people from all walks of life trespassing into caste, creed or social barriers (Muniapan, et al, 2006; Muniapan and Dass, 2008). For Tamils worldwide he (Kannadasan) epitomized Tamil poetry as even illiterates who cannot read and memorize the poetry of Kamban (Kamba Ramayana) or the maxims of Thiruvalluvar (Thirukkural) can hum the compositions (paadalgal) of Poet Kannadasan (Sri Kantha, 1991; Muniapan and Dass, 2008). Sri Kantha (1991) also describes his (Poet Kannadasan) remarkable contribution to the Indian film industry as follows:

“... If only Kannadasan had been born in Europe or the USA, instead of Sirukuudalpatti village in the Ramanathapuram district of Tamil Nadu, he probably would have become a Nobel laureate in literature and received international recognition. But on the other hand, Tamils would have lost a goliard, who composed lyrics in Tamil from every sentimental moment they experience in life....”

In another song, when describing the final stage of a human life, Poet Kannadasan pondered about who will accompany us when we quit this body, through the following lines:

Veedu varai uravu.....veethi varai manavi.....kaadu varai pillai.....kadaisi varai yaaro?
(The relatives will mourn till the house; the wife mourns till the street, the son will mourn up to the cemetery, but who will mourn beyond that?)

In the above song, Poet Kannadasan philosophically tried to communicate to people about some glaring facts of life- ‘we came with nothing; we created nothing; nothing was in our possession and nothing was our creation; but still we mourn, thinking that we have lost something. How could we lose something, when we never had anything?’ This is also consistent with the essence from the *Bhagavad-Gita* as below:

That which has happened has happened well! That which happens well! That which will happen will happen well! What have you lost, that was yours? For what do you lament? What have you brought, that you can lose? What have you created, that can get spoiled? What ever you took, you took from here! What ever you give away, you give them, back here! What ever is yours today, will be some other person's tomorrow! And the day after, it will be a third person's possession. This is the eternal rule! The essence of my creation! (Quoted from <http://theholygita.blogspot.com/>)

In another lyric for the movie Pava Mannippu in 1961, Poet Kannadasan wrote:

Aadai inri piranthome - aasai inri piranthoma? Aadi mudikkaiyile alli chenror yaarumundo? (Though born without a dress, did we come without passions? when we complete the merriment can anyone carry their possessions?)

In another song, Poet Kannadasan could even describe Freudian themes in mere four lines (Sri Kantha, 1991). For example, he once wrote:

Ullam enpathu aamai... athil unmai enpathu oomai sollil varuvathu paathi - nenjilthoonki

kidappathu neethi (Mind is like a tortoise in which the truth hides in silence words can bring out only the half while justice calmly sleeps).

AANDAVAN KATTALAI – A CONDUIT TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE:

In the world today, everywhere, the erosion of human values is discussed. Day by day, people forget the inner quality of being human and forget the happiness of other living entities. Lust, greed, anger, delusion, pride and fear have possessed people in every community of the world. Selfishness, intolerance, injustice, irresponsibility, carelessness, violent behavior and many other negative aspects of human life are seen everywhere regardless of race, religion and nationalities. Each one of us wants the world to be a better place to live in, however not many of us takes the effort to inculcate positive human values in the community and nation. Values are social norms, which are acceptable by all sections of society. It is not what an individual thinks or wants to perform. Values are the deeply held beliefs of individuals and groups what they cherish as desirable or good. Rokeach (1973, p.5) defines values as “enduring belief that is personally or socially preferable to the opposite or converse mode of conduct or a state of existence. In essence, values are our bedrock conceptions of what we want (or want to avoid). Indian philosophical studies, both in the past and in the present, have emphasized the significance of values in human life –situations. Values must have two characteristics namely acceptability and adaptability (Dash, 2005). They work in the level of body, speech and mind or actions, words and thoughts. Human values are of various types such as personal values, moral values, social values and also spiritual values.

There have been many songs in which Poet Kannadasan explored the philosophy of life and gave people the essence of Indian philosophy in form of music and song lyrics. His contribution also extends to the development of positive human values. As far as human values are concerned, Poet Kannadasan clearly highlighted six commandments for developing positive human values and harmonious human relations regardless of race, ethnicity and religion. *Aandavan kattalai* or loosely translated as supreme commandments which was composed in 1964 was themed after the teachings of Swami Vivekananda, when he realized that ordinary people were unable to read about the doctrines of Swami Vivekananda. In this song he had simplified the works of the great philosopher and spiritualist for the benefit of illiterate or semi-illiterate people in society.

The song starts with following lines: -

aaru maname aaru andha aandavan kattalai aaru; serndhu manidhan vaazhumvagaikku dheivaththin kattalai aaru (The supreme commandments are six for the development of human values and unity among the living entities)

In the second paragraph of *aandavan kattalai*, Poet Kannadasan penned the following lines: -

onre solvaar onre seivaar ullaththil ulladhu amaidhi; inbaththil thunbam thunbaththil inbam iravaan vaguththa niyadhi (Walk your talk and talk your walk and you will attain the happiness within; sorrow within happiness and happiness within sorrow are all works of divine)

Walking the talk and talking the walk is one of the key requirements for effective human relations and leadership is all about the ability to influence, inspire, motivate and stimulate people to achieve their potential (Muniapan, 2005). Leaders (political or organizational) in the community need to heed this message as they set examples for others to follow. It has some glaring similarities with the verses in *Bhagavad-Gita*, in which Sri Krishna advises Arjuna that (3:21): -

yad yad acarati sresthas tat tad evetaro janah sa yat pramanam kurute lokas tad anuvartate (Whatever action a great man (leader) performs, common men follow; and whatever standards he (leader) sets by exemplary acts, all worlds pursue).

Happiness and sorrow is the part and parcel of life as it is the work of divine forces and happens according to an individual’s karmic actions and reactions. The lines continue like this (18.54): -

brahma-bhutat prasannatma na socati na kanksati, samah sarvesu bhutesu mad-bhaktim labhate param (One who is thus transcendently situated at once realizes the supreme, he never laments nor desires to have anything; he is equally disposed to every living entity. In that state he attains pure devotional service unto me).

In the third stanza of *aandavan kattalai* song, Poet Kannadasan drew a beautiful picture on truth and dharma, which is essential for human life to be successful. -

unmaiya solli nanmaiya siedhaal ulagam unnidam mayangum; nilai uyarum podhu panivu kondaal uyirgal unnai vanangum (When you speak truthful words and do good deeds, the whole world will salute you and when you progress in life with great humility, every living entity will salute you)

All religions are rooted in truth, and honesty, justice, straightforwardness and sincerity are expressions of truth. Truth (*satyam*) and non-violence (*ahimsa*) are the highest *dharma*, the tool of father of Indian nation, Mahatma Gandhi. However, wise men of the past tell us that there is a world of a difference between "being truthful" and "speaking the truth", when the *Upanishad* says *satyam vada*, it means, "be truthful" at all times. However, this does not mean that we speak the truth; there are certain times when withholding truth is permitted. The classic *Thirukkural* written by ancient tamil poet, Thiruvalluvar explains that even falsehood is of the nature of truth if it renders good results and is devoid of fault. For instance, a doctor might not tell his patient that he will die in three days when he sees the vital signs weakening. Instead, he may encourage positive thinking; give hope, knowing that life is eternal and that to invoke fear might create depression and hopelessness in the mind of the ill person. This is termed as Wisdom (Muniapan and Dass, 2009).

By expounding the qualities of being truthful and being happy, in the fourth stanza of *aandavan kattalai*, Poet Kannadasan elucidated the threat faced by human beings who are possessed with lust and greed, the enemies of men.

aasai kobam kalavu kolbavan pesa therindha mirugam; anbu nanri karunai kondavan manidha vadivil dheivam (Men who are possessed by lust, greed and anger are animals in human form, while men with love, mercy and compassion are gods in human forms).

Lust, greed, anger, delusion, pride and fear are the six enemies of men that act as barriers to effective human relations in a society. The lessons from the the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* have provided ample evidences on how the above six enemies have destroyed people. Kautilya (Chanakya Pandit) has also mentioned about these enemies in his famous work the *Arthashastra* (Muniapan and Dass, 2009).

Similar idea can be seen in the Bible too, where Jesus Christ asserted the message on the control of anger (Matthew 5.22), "that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment". "Thou shall not kill" is also one of the Ten Commandments given to Moses, which means to inflict pain on other living entities is always wrong (*ahimsa* or non-violence). Do unto other as you would have them do unto you is a universal truth. "If a man says, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (John 4.20). Sri Krishna too asserted to Arjuna the following about anger and delusion in the *Bhagavad-Gita* (2. 63): -

krodhad bhavati sammohah sammohat smrti-vibhramah, smrti-bhramsad buddhi-naso buddhi-nasat pranasayati (From anger, delusion arises, and from delusion bewilderment of memory. When memory is bewildered, intelligence is lost, and when intelligence is lost, one falls down again into the material pool).

Anger begets eight kinds of vices - injustice, rashness, persecution, jealousy, taking possession of others' property, killing, harsh words and cruelty (Sivananda, 1997). According to the *Mahabharata*, God favors a person who does not disturb or cause painful action in the mind of any living entity and who treats everyone, as a loving father treats his children, and whose heart is pure. In the *Thirukkural*, it is also stated that the

principle of the pure in heart is never to injure others, even when they themselves have been hatefully injured and if a man inflicts sorrow on another in the morning, sorrow will come to him unbidden in the afternoon. The *Manu Samhita* says that if the diet is pure, the mind will be pure, and if the mind is pure the intellect also will be pure. The *Yajur Veda* also says not to injure the beings living on the earth, in the air and in the water. *Vedic* literatures assert and emphasize compassion as the main quality we should have toward other living entities, and charity or giving, as the main duty we need to perform in life. Compassion toward others should be balanced with devotion to the Divine. True compassion comes from the Divine and flows through us by the strength of our devotion. True compassion has no secret motive to gain, or to receive recognition as being a compassionate person. Compassion, mercy and love are the divine qualities of men, which are crucial for the development of human values for the benefits of the community and also the world (Muniapan and Dass, 2009). So within a few lines, Kannadasan has tried to reflect all the holy books and epics, yet in simple and elegant language. The best lyrics are the ones that are easy to remember and which express feelings through clear and fresh images (Leikin, M.A: p: 51), which are true for the verses of Kannadasan. The similar perception of life can be seen in another song penned by him for the movie *Paalum Palamum* in 1961, in which he beautifully illustrated human life which is uncertain as follows:

“Ponal pohattum poda - intha poomiyil nilaiyai vazhnhavar yaarada, Ponal pohattum poda Vanthathu theriyum povathu enge vaasal namakke theriyathu. Vanthavarellam thanki viddal - intha mannil namakke idamithu. Vazhkai enpathu viyaparam - varum jananam enpathu varavahum - athil maranam enpathu selavaahum” (Let the passions and bonds pass by, let then pass by. Who has lived in this earth forever? The path of our arrival to this earth is known but path of our departure and the route is unknown. If all who came to this earth opt to stay here forever, where is the space in this earth? Therefore, life is considered just like a business in which the birth is credit and death is debit).

KANNADASAN’S LYRICS- A LOCALIZED DEVCOM:

Communication is defined as a process by which we assign and convey meaning in an attempt to create shared understanding, in which your full intent is heard. In songwriting, lack of communication means that, as a writer one failed to get across the idea he/she wished to share with the audience (Oland, P.P:p.47). The general role of development communication is to create the human environment necessary for development to succeed. One of the pre-requisites of development communication is the human and localized approach to communication rather than the centralized and abstract (Narula, Uma, p.23). In this sense, Kannadasan’s lyrics perfectly serve as a platform for intimate communication. Muthaya (1982, p.) argued that people’s perception of whatever is happening around them has an important bearing on their attitude and involvement in development programmes. Development messages must have certain qualities taking into consideration the need of the public, i.e. they must be positive, progressive and practical. Harold Lasswell asserted that communication performs three functions- surveillance, correlation of components of society, and cultural transmission between generations. But such communication aimed at development should consist of planning in the social and psychological content of messages to be communicated, and an interactive group activity must be instigated in order to find positive results in development (Schramm, W; 1964). Hence barriers of communication will be limited and often leave fruits of thoughts for audience. As Schramm (1964) asserted, communication must ‘accomplish the transitions to new customs and practices’. Songs, hence, exhibit efficient and effective communication strategies for Public Communications through the popular medium of film, where illiterate populations can understand and perceive hidden messages. But it was a top to bottom communication, in which in the bottom it got shared by word of mouth signings as popular songs. The arrival of talkies in Tamilnadu was warmly welcomed by the lower sections of society, since other art forms like Carnatic music and Bharatanatyam were exclusively monopolized by Brahmins and other upper classes (Pandian, M.S.S; 1996). Hence communicating for rural folks is found effective through films and film songs. Nevertheless, music for them was synonymous with film songs, even though the Music Academy (founded in 1927) conducted concerts frequently. As ‘magic multipliers’ (Schramm, W; 1964), it proved to be a corrective force in society, by ‘trickling down the development messages’ (Rogers, E. M; 1962).

Poet Kannadasan’s songs and his messages were so powerful that the politicians in Tamil Nadu used his

songs from 1950s to late 1970s for their political purposes. In 1962, when the Ceylon (Sri Lanka) government treated the Tamils badly, Poet Kannadasan led a protest rally against the Ceylon government in Madras. When this news reached the authorities in Ceylon they banned all songs of Kannadasan over Radio-Ceylon with immediate effect, but lasting for only a week. Radio-Ceylon could not survive with this ban since that was a period when every other third song released was by Poet Kannadasan (Mahendra Raj, n.d). Songs can be considered as a musical rhetoric. Aristotle, in *Rhetoric*, discussed the means and devices an orator uses in order to achieve the intellectual and emotional affects on audience that will persuade them to accede to the orator's point of view (Cooper, L; 1932). In the same way, through songs the lyricist tries to take the audience to the world created by his imagination. The power of songs in persuading audience is identifiable, when political meetings and rallies are backgrounded with nationalistic and patriotic songs from films. Nevertheless, such morally good lyrics in film songs began to be played in all political meetings, weddings, festivals and in government functions. In ordinary, commonplace language, poet Kannadasan delivers the message of the *Bhagavad-Gita* in the movie 'Karnan'.

Maranathai ennik kalanngidum Vijaya ... Maranathin thanmai solven! Maanidar aanmaa, maranam eidhadhu... Marupadip piranthirukkum! Meniyaik kolvaai, meniyaik kolvaai...Veeratthil arumbondru, Nee vittuvittaalum avargalin meni, Vendruthaan theerum... ohrraal... ahahah... (Oh frightened (because of death) Arjuna, I shall share with you the fact of death. The human soul will never be dead...will be re-born some other time! The body you kill it... the body you kill it... In valor, will bloom a bud, though you leave them now, all their bodies, Will be conquered for sure... someday...) (translation taken from <http://www.hindudharmaforums.com/archive/index.php?t-2643.html>)

The above lines are summarized in Chapter 2 of the *Bhagavad-Gita* and continue in next lines:

Ennai arindhaai, ella vuyirum enathendrum arindhu kondaai! Kannan manadhu kalmanadhendro...Kaandeeepam nazhuva vittaai, kaandeeepam nazhuva vittaai! Mannarum naane, makkalum naane, Maram sedi kodiyyum naane...Konnavan Kannan, kolbavan Kannan...Thunindhu nil, dharumam vaazhga! (You came to know me, all these lives are mine, and you've known that too! Kannan's heart a stony heart you thought so...and the Kandeepam, you let it slip, Kandeepam you let it slip! I am the monarch, I am the subjects, and the tree, plant, and creeper am I...Who killed was Kannan, and who kills now is Kannan...So bravely stand up, long live Dharma!) (translation taken from <http://www.hindudharmaforums.com/archive/index.php?t-2643.html>)

Punniyam idhuvendru ulagam sonnaal...Andhap punniyam, Kannanukke!...Potruvaar potralum, thootruvaar thootralum, Pogattum Kannanukke!...Kannane kaattinaan, Kannane thaakkinaan,Kannane kolai seigindraan!...Kaandeeepam ezhuga, nin kaivanmai ezhuga,Ik kalamelaam sivakka, vaazhga!... (punniyam is this one, if the world says so...That puNNiyam to Kannan only!...The praise of those who praise you, and the blame of those who blame you, Let all that to Kannan only!...Kannan only showed the way, Kannan only assaulted them, Kannan only murders them now!...Let the Kandeepam rise to, let your strength of hands rise to, And redden all this battlefield, hail you!)

The meaning of the music is successfully transmitted to the audience through means of agreed cultural codes – whether these are major/minor for happy/sad or consonance/dissonance as light/shade, as well as style topics, tonal design, leitmotiv, timbre and musical and filmic form (Neumeyer, D. and Buhler, J; 2001). The main element of song semiotics is the content or the lyrics of the music, but it is necessary to analyze the contextual elements of songs in a particular movie. The main process of any communication is the encoding and decoding of messages (in the case of music cultural messages), which would lead to the audience influencing the message as well as determining its meaning. The meaning of lyrics more or less depends on how the audience decodes it; precisely, the meaning is something socially constructed. The receivers, taking into consideration their social environment and cultural implications, decide whether to take it for granted or

reject it. Perhaps the most widely accepted theory on audience reception is Denis McQuail's Uses and Gratifications model. As user and gratification theory asserts, it is upon the user's interest that the lyrics are being used and interpreted (McQuail, D., Blumler, J. G., & Brown, J; 1972, p.140). It then acts as a magic multiplier (Wilbur Schramm; 1964), which reaches maximum number of audience. Receivers feel a sense of participation (audience can sing with it, quote the lyrics, study it), thereby making it a democratic way of communication.

CONCLUSION:

Tamil film songs have gone along way from the meaningful and thought provoking lyrics to the hollow gimmicks of words. Lyrics of songs in Tamil films today range from being conventionally poetic, conversational, funny and nostalgic to politically incorrect at times (Srinivasan, M; 2005:par.5). Veteran Tamil poet-lyricist Vairamuthu observed that "there was a time when the lyrics touched the heart. Now, it is increasingly about making listeners tap their feet," (2005, quoted in The Hindu, 01July2005). Even though songs and their lyrics have been analyzed, not too often, by many researchers, the role of a poet like Kannadasan, who elucidated the public through his songs at a time when television or any other new media were least popular, is unexplored by the communication field of study. People at a time depended heavily on such film songs to know the philosophy of life and many of these lyrics have turned to be sacred sayings, which are inherited from generation to generations. It was a form of development communication, aimed at the public, to realize the value for life, love and humbleness. In a nutshell, the songs written by the poet Kannadasan inspire all folks of life. The lessons in philosophy and human values from poet Kannadasan's songs will continue to be relevant not only in this 21st century but also for many centuries to come. It is a pity that many of poet Kannadasan's songs have yet been translated into other languages (even in other Indian languages) apart Tamil (Sri Kantha, 1991).

This study has tried to evaluate only the general implication and communication strategies of Kannadasan through his lyrics. But it opens huge vistas of research possibilities to analyze each and every song penned by him, juxtaposing it with the major theories of development communication and audience perception. The present study is relevant because in the wake of information clutter and overload, it is so amazing to study the impact of songs at a period when films were the only links between the public and mediated entertainment. It surpassed the entertainment boundary and began to take the role of a teacher who teaches not only values of good living but also a great vision towards life. The contemporary songs are inspired from the works of such legends, who built great philosophies with words. Poet Kannadasan produced approximately 5000 movie song lyrics; however, in this article the songs related to the theme on human values have been selected and analyzed. This paper will also provide groundwork for further studies and research of poet Kannadasan's songs in English language.

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