

limited sphere. The units thus composed competed with one another. There was thus recognition of the principle of property and competition as among the groups formed on the basis of relationship. No one was compelled by law to remain within the fold. He could rebel and get away from his relatives. But so long as he remained within it, he was entitled to be looked after. For a man with a larger earning capacity to leave the fold, with the selfish object of excluding his relatives from sharing in the fruits of his toil, was considered a shameful sin against the culture of the land. There was thus a semi-coercive basis for the system. The modern conception of communism is a state-wide and state-enforced system to which serious objections are raised by individualists. The modern conception of individualist society, too, is based on a state-enforced freedom of the individual and a ruthless state-wide application of the principle of competition. The சுற்றந்தழால் idea is a very old compromise between the two systems. The problems are millenniums old, and the varying solutions too are of like age. If evils can be pointed out against a system of family dependence, so also can serious objections be pointed out against the communist or socialist order. Even as adherents of the latter admit the defects, but plead that we must choose the lesser of two evils and suggest various remedies and adjustments to mitigate the defects, so also can the சுற்றந்தழால் plan of life be defended, and mitigated in respect of defects. Perhaps the necessary adjustments are easier in this case. The world seems to be coming back in a curious way to old ideas. சுற்றம் need not necessarily though it generally does, mean relatives. It is inclusive of others received as dependants on the same terms. The word literally means "those that surround."

சுற்றந்தழால் is not nepotism, i.e., forcing one's relatives on the State. It is sharing one's own lawful possessions with

Fortune will desert him who does not love and trust his diligent and efficient agent :

வினைக்கண் வினையுடையான் கேண்மை வேருக
நினைப்பானை நீங்கும் திரு.

If the king unceasingly looks after the upright conduct of his executive, the State will not go wrong:

நாடோறு நாடுக மன்னன் வினைசெய்வான்
கோடாமை கோடாது உலகு.

LOOKING AFTER THE TRIBE

Chapter 53

This is a chapter on the policy of holding together one's relatives.

The Tamil classics lay great stress on the duty of conserving the affection of relatives. It is deemed a moral obligation to keep them well-fed and clothed out of one's wealth, - a system that the Indian social reformers of the nineteenth century thought was responsible for blocking the progress of the country.

Individualism with competition as the socio-economic basis of life was neither rejected nor entirely accepted in Indian culture. The man and all his relatives formed a unit, and all such units together formed society. The members of a unit shared among themselves equally. Each was expected to toil also under the chief's instructions and moral influence, up to the measure of his capacity. He had the right to be maintained in equal status with everyone else in that group independently of the measure of his ability to contribute to its wealth. There was thus 'communism' within this

Do what they want, but before taking them back into confidence test them :

உழைப்பிரிந்து காரணத்தின் வந்தாணை வேந்தன்
இழைத்து இருந்து எண்ணிக் கொளல்.

A shrewd piece of advice !

VIGILANCE

Chapter 54

The neglectfulness that is apt to arise out of the intoxication of achievement is more harmful than even inordinate anger :

இறந்த வெகுளியின் தீதே சிறந்த
உவகை மகிழ்ச்சியின் சோர்வு.

*

Those who are not vigilant can never attain greatness. This applies to all the orders of life and all codes accept this conclusion :

பொச்சாப்பார்க்கு இல்லை புகழ்மை அதுஉலகத்து
எப்பால் நூலோர்க்கும் துணிவு.

*

To the languid and neglectful, wealth can give no benefit, even as fortifications cannot give security to cowards :

அச்ச முடையார்க்கு அரண்இல்லை ஆங்குஇல்லை
பொச்சாப் புடையார்க்கு நன்கு.

•

There is nothing so good as vigilance in dealing with everyone and at all times without any lapse :

இழுக்காமை யார்மாட்டும் என்றும் வழுக்காமை
வாயின் அதுஒப்பது இல்.

them, and not defrauding the State in the interest of one's relatives, which is nepotism. The latter is, alas, that which prevails in countries prematurely forced from the சுற்றந்தழால் culture into individualist civilisation by adventitious circumstances. The instinct and moral compulsion of helping one's relatives are there, being an inheritance of the old culture, but find outlet in a wrong channel.

The distribution of the benefits of wealth among relatives and other dependants is not merely laid down as a moral virtue, but is justified as a plan of life with an aim. It secures happiness for society by the intrinsic joy of social intercourse and by mutual support against common dangers. Go to the crow and learn, thou selfish man, says the poet:

The crow does not hide it when it finds something to pick and eat, but calls its fellows and then starts eating. Prosperity comes only to men who develop this disposition

காக்கை கரவா கரைந்து உண்ணும் ஆக்கமும்
அன்ன நீரார்க்கே உள.

*

Those relatives that go away for some reason will come back as soon as you have discovered in yourself the cause of their desertion and the defect is removed:

தமராகித் தன்துறந்தார் சுற்றம் அமரமைக்
காரணம் இன்றி வரும்.

So if relations desert you, you should not blame or hate them, but examine yourself and take steps to remove the cause.

*

If any go away but come back not for affection but for a known object of their own, do not on that ground summarily reject them.