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INDIAN GENRE FICTION

Pasts and Future Histories

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LITERARY AND POPULAR FICTION IN LATE COLONIAL TAMIL NADU

Preetha Mani

The literary and the popular

An unprecedented distinction between literary and popular writing emerged in debates published in *Manikkoṭi* and *Ānanta Vikaṭaṇ*, two well-known Tamil magazines that were launched in the 1930s. Through short stories and critical essays, the writers who contributed to these magazines attempted to create new lenses through which to view the purpose of literature in society. *Manikkoṭi* writers championed 'high-quality' literary writing (*taramāṇa ilakkiyam*), which they considered necessary for examining everyday reality and creating social change. Conversely, *Vikaṭaṇ* writers – particularly writer and editor R. Krishnamūorthy 'Kalki' – promoted 'comedic writing' (*nakai-ccuvai ilakkiyam* or *hāsiya ilakkiyam*) as the most appropriate medium for addressing Tamil readers' contemporary needs. These differing viewpoints created a steadfast divide between high modernist and entertainment-oriented literature in the late colonial literary sphere that continues to impact writing trends in Tamil Nadu to this day.

The *Manikkoṭi-Vikaṭaṇ* literary debates took shape in the context of significant developments in the Indian independence movement as well as a moment of heightened contention over regional language and caste politics. Gandhi's Salt March (1930) had incited unprecedented nationalist fervour in a young generation of Tamil writers, but his retraction of satyagraha in 1933 left many of them disillusioned and in search of political alternatives. The Pure Tamil Movement (*Taṇi Tamil Iyakkam*) and the Self-Respect Movement (*Cuya Mariyātai Iyakkam*) – which had already gained traction in the Tamil-speaking region in the 1920s – advanced staunchly anti-nationalist positions in

opposition to Gandhi and the growing influence of the Indian National Congress (INC). These movements pitted Dravidian ethnicity against the dominance of Brahminism and North Indian Sanskrit culture, which they regarded as foreign and imperialistic.¹ When the INC came to power in the Madras presidency in 1937, its pro-Hindi position further incited Dravidian activists, who advocated for a pure Tamil language and culture unadulterated by Sanskrit and English influences. Unsettled by such political divisiveness, *Manikkoti* and *Vikatan* writers – most of whom were Brahmins – turned to literature as a means for cultivating new forms of Tamil community on the basis of shared humanistic values.

This essay explores critical writings and short stories from *Manikkoti* and *Ananta Vikatan* to illustrate how Tamil writers created new genres of 'literary' and 'popular' modern fiction during the 1930s. Scholarship on Indian modernism has outlined its chronological development in relation to international modernist movements, social changes wrought by colonialism and nationalism and other pan-Indian literary trends such as realism and progressivism. Recently, Supriya Chaudhuri has marked 1922 – when the first Bauhaus exhibition was held in Calcutta – as a formative moment for Indian modernism. She argues that the inclusion of Bengali artists' works in the exhibit, and not the Bauhaus paintings themselves, 'initiate a modernist idiom', which 'must be seen as a radical liberation of narrative art from naturalistic representation' in the Indian context.² Similarly, Vinay Dharwardker has described 1922 to 1945 as a modernist phase of 'nationalism and experimentation', during which Indian writers – most of whom were familiar with European modernist trends – explored urban-rural relations and the place of the individual in the future nation.³ While Chaudhuri and Dharwardker note that 'local and communitarian' aesthetic and socio-political concerns fundamentally shaped modernist trends in various Indian languages, they sideline these concerns to present a more general 'panoramic survey' of Indian modernism.⁴ The *Manikkoti-Vikatan* debates demonstrate, however, that extremely localised, intimate conversations profoundly influenced the trajectory of Tamil modernism. The literary/popular distinction that these debates established situates Tamil modernism at a tangent to Chaudhuri's and Dharwardker's characterisations of late colonial Indian modernism as preoccupied with anticolonialism and nation building. The politics of modernism in Tamil Nadu centered instead on inculcating readers with new aesthetic sensibilities that were aimed at diffusing regional contentions regarding linguistic and caste affiliations.

The national-modern dialectic

Geeta Kapur's 1991 theorisation of Indian modernism, still the most widely accepted model in contemporary scholarship, informs Chaudhuri's and Dharwardker's nod to the role of local social landscapes in the development of Indian modernisms.⁵ Responding in the early 1990s to scholarly representations of Third World modernism as peripheral to European modernism, Kapur argued that the discourse of modernism in India is marked by a dialectic between the national and the modern. In her view, the national, represented in art through references to local landscapes and 'folk' (indigenous, tribal, or village) issues and motifs, draws from and celebrates Indian 'tradition'. The modern, which references Euro-American modernist trends, stands, in contrast, for an international style that is transnational and universal in scope. Constantly shifting between the two, Kapur's understanding of Indian modernism manifests as a paradoxical 'double-take', which sometimes 'serves to make indigenous issues and motifs progressive' and other times 'seems to subvert . . . nationalism'.⁶

Seemingly at odds, the national and the modern converge, according to Kapur, 'on the question of self-determination'.⁷ Indian modernist works imagine the subject through an intricate confluence of references to Indian tradition and international style, through which they 'answer an emergent [postcolonial] society's need for renewed self-description and radical assessment'.⁸ The contradictory ways in which these convergences manifest – for example, by anachronistically positioning an 'indigenous preindustrial realm' as a contemporary possibility – integrate the specific social and economic circumstances of the Indian context with the globally recognisable 'rebel figure', the privileged subject of international modernism.⁹ In doing so, Indian modernism offers, in Kapur's view, a structurally distinct counter-practice to the elitism of Anglo-European modernism.

Kapur valorises the national – as opposed to the local or regional – because she wishes to challenge the centre-periphery model of international modernism, which subordinates regional aesthetic criteria to Western artistic ideals. She contends that 'from the point of view of cultural resistance to global pressures . . . the discourse of national culture is preferable to that of regional culture for the reason that nationalism is not a *devolving* concept – though indeed it can be a bigoted one'. Unlike regions, nations 'cannot easily be swallowed whole, only tribe by tribe – which leaves the question begging how nations themselves swallow their own peoples tribe by tribe'.¹⁰ Thus, while Kapur acknowledges the drawbacks of nationalism as well as

the persistent presence of the region in Indian modernist practices, she situates local 'folk' issues and motifs under the broad category of 'Indian tradition', which presents a complex whole that counters international style. Chaudhuri and Dharwadker similarly conceive of Indian modernism as national style, which they view as taking shape under uniquely Indian social and historical conditions and as a critique of colonial domination.

Like the Bengali, Hindi, Marathi, and Indian-English modernists that Kapur, Chaudhuri, and Dharwadker all describe, *Maṇikkoṭi* and *Ānanta Vikaṭaṇ* writers were also driven by the question of self-determination. Yet, their writings did not focus on drawing connections between selfhood and nationhood – the primary relationship undergirding Indian modernism in Kapur's national-modern framework. Rather than developing national style, these writers used representations of the maverick individual to consider the relationship between 'literary' and 'popular' Tamil fiction. Through their depictions of individual desire and will, *Maṇikkoṭi* and *Ānanta Vikaṭaṇ* writers explored how fiction and criticism might align readers with their respective literary worldviews. At issue in their disagreement over the literary and the popular was the possibility of wielding literature to construct new types of Tamil readers and communities. In the highly-charged political atmosphere of late colonial Tamil Nadu, their modernist experiments must be understood, I believe, as a response to regional caste and linguistic dissension – rather than as focused on developing and advancing pan-Indian nationalism per se.

The emergence of *Ānanta Vikaṭaṇ* and *Maṇikkoṭi*

By the 1920s, Pure Tamil and Self-Respect Movement activists had effectively tapped into the power of journals to build new constituencies around their Dravidianist agendas. Maraimalai Adigal, Saivite reformer and leader of the Pure Tamil Movement, worked closely with the South India Saiva Siddhanta Works Publishing Society (established in 1920) and wrote prolifically in recently established Saiva Siddhanta magazines of the period to propagate his vision of Tamil language, history, and culture.¹¹ Similarly, Periyar ran several Dravidian magazines connected with the Self-Respect Movement as well as the Justice Party, which he led from 1938 to 1944. He also wrote about the importance of establishing Dravidian magazines to counter Brahmin hegemony of the Tamil press, supporting all non-Brahmin magazines that emerged during the 1930s and 1940s – even those not affiliated with his movement.¹² According to Periyar, Brahmin publishers, magazines,

and newspapers ignored non-Brahmin concerns and skewed the reading public towards Hinduism and Brahmin patriarchy and politics. Creating a Dravidian-run press was necessary, he believed, for cultivating and politicising a counter non-Brahmin identity. As greater alliances developed between Pure Tamil activists and Self-Respecters in the 1930s – especially regarding language politics – Saivite and Self-Respect journals combined their efforts to promote essays on their shared anti-Hindi and anti-Brahmin viewpoints and to support each other's cultural and political activities.¹³

Ānanta Vikaṭaṇ and *Maṇikkoṭi* emerged in this atmosphere of shifting power dynamics within the Tamil publishing sphere towards non-Brahmin social and political interests. When S.S. Vasana bought *Ānanta Vikaṭaṇ* in 1928, it was a fairly new and rather unsuccessful magazine that featured comedic writings about mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationships, minors visiting courtesans and devadasis, domestic mishaps in Brahmin households, and humorous incidents that poked fun at various caste and religious communities. These largely stereotypical scenarios were paradigmatic of comedic writing that was published in specialised magazines from the 1880s onwards and garnered a relatively small audience. Vasana's cardinal accomplishment was the creation of new columns and sections, such as 'Vikaṭaṇ Talk (*vikaṭaṇ pēccu*)', 'Small Amusements (*cinnañciṇi tamāṣ*)', 'Women's Talk (*peṇ moḷikaḷ*)', and a column for readers to send in their own experiences entitled 'Readers' Comedies (*nēyarkaḷ vikaṭaṇ*)'. These features enabled Vasana to appeal to a wider audience, transforming *Vikaṭaṇ* into the most popular magazine of the period. In 1930, Vasana hired R. Krishnamurthy 'Kalki' (1899–1954), whose short stories and essays brought even greater renown to the magazine.¹⁴

Vasana's business savvy and openness to new genres enabled *Vikaṭaṇ* to gain popularity. However, it was Kalki's witty approach to and deep investment in the journal medium that established *hāsiya ilakkiyam*, or humorous literature, as a major genre of contemporary Tamil writing. Several of his essays used comedy to explain how magazines operate. For example, in 'Poṭu Pattirikai! (Go Ahead, Start a Magazine!)', published in *Ānanta Vikaṭaṇ* in 1934, Kalki offered advice to an imaginary inquirer wishing to start a magazine of his own. Ironically suggesting that the inquirer's circumstances made him a less-than-ideal magazine editor in the journal world, Kalki impressed upon readers how prolific and effective for amassing readers the journal medium was:

You wrote and sent a hundred essays to magazines, and all of them were returned without being published . . . Brother! At a

time when a new era of journals pervades Tamil Nadu, I have to say that you've achieved something rare . . . Usually some editor or other publishes the essay, whatever it might be. In such an age, it's no small feat that you've received rejections from a hundred editors. No wonder you feel it's necessary and appropriate to run your own magazine.¹⁵

In his typical tongue-and-cheek manner, Kalki conveyed that anyone possessing the right resources and a handful of essays and stories ready for publication could launch a magazine. At a more fundamental level, however, he implied that most editors approached language and literature without possessing the discerning eye necessary for shaping a successful magazine. Offering an absurd list of possible topics for publication, such as 'The Secrets of Tripping and Falling', 'Is Death Necessary?', 'Is Blood Red? Or White?', 'Don't Sleep!', 'Churchill Has Been Hit on the Head', and 'Rabindranath and the Cat', Kalki joked that 'the topics on which the essays are written aren't important . . . it's the writing style (*elutum murai*) that matters'.¹⁶ He advised that an editor should include some essays that are written in *ner natai*, or a straightforward style, which, according to Kalki, any idiot (*mūlai illātavar*) can understand. Other essays should follow a *marma* (confusing) and *uyartara* (high-quality) *natai* (style), one so intellectual and philosophical that it makes readers' heads spin. Kalki also sarcastically insisted that a magazine should always include short stories that are selected solely on the basis of whether they are interesting, rather than on the basis of their content or form.¹⁷

Through such quips, Kalki obliquely ridiculed existing magazines. He intimated that literary magazines that used a 'high-quality' style, such as *Manikkoti*, took themselves far too seriously to address readers' needs and interests, while religious and political ones, such as Self-Respect and Saivite journals, failed readers by abandoning literary standards altogether. Subtly critiquing these existing approaches with humour, Kalki highlighted his own expertise and artistry in writing and editing for *Ānanta Vikāṭan*. Running a magazine for the general public was, in his view, an important and highly skilled endeavour.

Like Kalki, the founding editors of *Manikkoti* – T.S. Chokalingam (1899–1963), K. Srinivasan (1904–2001), and V. Ramaswamy Iyengar (1889–1951) – also perceived a lacuna in the Tamil journal world, and they launched their magazine in 1933 to address it. Whereas Kalki viewed comedy as a means for readers to escape their everyday lives, the *Manikkoti* editors believed literary discernment could transform readers' perspectives on life altogether. As B.S. Ramaiah, who was

involved with the magazine from its inception and later became its most well-known editor, recounted in his memoir, *Manikkoti* was more than just a magazine. It was a movement (*iyakkam*) 'launched with the intention of inciting a new awakening . . . within the hearts of the people and elevating their literary taste [*ilakkiya cuvai*]'.¹⁸ In an environment in which classical Tamil was the only literature that politicians and activists celebrated, and in which magazines presented comedy as the only alternative to writing about social reform, religion and politics, *Manikkoti* focused on developing modern prose through a more philosophical and aesthetic lens:

[*Manikkoti*] published 'high literary' [*ilakkiya taramāna*] writing in new genres. . . . To some extent, Kalki first demonstrated that it's possible to express anything in Tamil. But, he believed that developing people's taste and ideas required saying things humourously through ridicule and mockery. *Manikkoti* was the very first to show that humour wasn't the only way that it was possible to say anything in Tamil and to express ideas firmly with depth and significance [*ālum kaṇam keṭṭiyākavum*].¹⁹

Ānanta Vikāṭan, and Kalki in particular, provided a counterpoint against which *Manikkoti* writers defined their literary project. They maintained that 'in *Ānanta Vikāṭan*, Kalki advanced merely trivial, pass-time literature'.²⁰ Focusing mainly on the short story, they directed their literary energies towards experimentation with language and style and the exploration of individual desire and emotion. The reason why serious-minded Tamil writers had previously experienced difficulty getting their stories published, these writers pointed out, was that no appropriate literary venue existed for their work until *Manikkoti*.²¹ Refusing to send their work to popular (*potujana*) magazines such as *Ānanta Vikāṭan*, the *Manikkoti kulu* (clan), as they came to be called, loftily maintained that 'if life is the earth . . . literature is the blossom that grows out of and stands above it', rising up like a lotus out of the mud.²²

Manikkoti writers argued that Kalki and other *Vikāṭan* editors published writing based on what they believed the general masses desired to read. For this reason, they exercised little, if any, discrimination in selecting essays and stories or in improving them editorially. Ramaiah, by contrast, purposefully shaped *Manikkoti* submissions with a firm hand after he took over the magazine in 1935. Ramaiah's editorial modifications were so influential that, as P.G. Sundararajan

and Sivapathasundaram contend in their now authoritative history of the Tamil short story, they were primarily responsible for establishing *Maṇikkōṭi* as the preeminent literary (*taramāṇa*) magazine of its time.²³

Kalki's development of the genre of comedy notwithstanding, *Maṇikkōṭi* writers furthermore critiqued him and other *Vikaṭaṇ* editors for privileging classical over modern Tamil literature. For instance, in his memoir, Ramaiah described Kalki's involvement with a circle of literary enthusiasts organised by the Tamil scholar T.K. Chidambaranatha Mudaliar 'T.K.C.' (1882–1954). He pointed out that the group did not consider modern Tamil novels as literature or view the poet Subramania Bharati's (1882–1921) free verse as innovative and inspiring.²⁴ *Maṇikkōṭi* writers, by contrast, lionised Bharati's work, viewing it as exemplary of the type of literary innovation they sought to produce.²⁵ In the *Maṇikkōṭi* writers' view, *Ananta Vikaṭaṇ* writers turned to comedy under Vasan's guidance because they were interested solely in increasing the magazine's circulation numbers.²⁶

Despite their differences, however, *Maṇikkōṭi* and *Ānanta Vikaṭaṇ* writers also acknowledged each other's contributions to the field of modern Tamil literature. For example, *Maṇikkōṭi* writers recognised that the periodic short story contests that Kalki held for *Ānanta Vikaṭaṇ* helped to build an interest in modern Tamil literature, even if he implemented them as a money-making scheme.²⁷ Likewise, Kalki expressed great enthusiasm for *Maṇikkōṭi* writers' more 'literary' endeavours, going so far as to drop by the *Maṇikkōṭi* office to discuss every new issue that appeared.²⁸ The mutual respect that these writers expressed for one another stemmed from their shared interest in expanding the Tamil publishing sphere beyond its focus on politics, as well as their keen awareness of the power of literature to shape new readerly interests and desires. By playing off each other's literary perspectives and generic and linguistic experiments, *Maṇikkōṭi* and *Ānanta Vikaṭaṇ* established and marked the polar frontiers of a new literary–popular spectrum of fiction writing within modern Tamil literature.

The purpose of literature

One reason that *Ānanta Vikaṭaṇ* and *Maṇikkōṭi* writers were so successful in constructing such a firm distinction between literary and popular fiction is that they explicitly and deliberately expressed their views on the purpose of literature. Through essays and short stories, *Vikaṭaṇ* and *Maṇikkōṭi* writers critiqued and parodied one another,

while also defining the meaning of literature and its significance in everyday life. Doing so enabled them to instruct readers on how to read their work and appreciate their novel approaches to writing.

Kalki impressed on his readers that humour offered them respite from the stress and disillusionment induced by the independence movement and related events. He perceived that the political writings that dominated most periodicals disheartened readers, leading them to angrily 'rebuke editors and toss down their magazines' in frustration.²⁹ According to Kalki, *Ānanta Vikaṭaṇ* used humour to divert readers' attention from their anxieties and burdens. In the tumultuous political environment of the 1930s, comedy allowed them to cull simple lessons about life, while also providing the escape necessary for revitalising themselves to endure their everyday struggles.

Kalki also elaborated on the inner workings of comedy. For example, in an essay titled 'Hāsiya Vipattukaḷ (The Dangers of Comedy)', published in *Vikaṭaṇ* in 1932, he responded to critics who alleged that humour was dangerous because, too often, readers took jokes as truth instead of fiction. Demonstrating through various examples that a sense of humour is crucial for overcoming troubling circumstances, he ironically concluded:

Of course, there's a danger in taking something humorous as truth. But it's even more distressing to consider a situation in which there's no humour at all. The name 'vikaṭaṇ' [which means 'jest'] is an aid against this kind of mistake. Other magazines have a separate 'comedy section'. . . . [But] we don't use such headings in *Vikaṭaṇ*. We also don't separate things into a 'tragedy section', an 'entertainment section', and a 'horror section' [etc.]. Therefore, is it possible, when you see the name *Vikaṭaṇ*, to take everything humourously and to laugh at those moments when you want to cry? You might consider that this is the most formidable danger of all.³⁰

Kalki distinguished *Ānanta Vikaṭaṇ* from most magazines, which directed readers to understand humour as exceptional, rather than integral, to the human condition. This, in Kalki's opinion, was the most harmful of all approaches to daily life. He furthermore contended that those who took life too seriously perceived humour as threatening because it unsettled their established norms and modes of existence. Through this critique, he implicitly suggested that comedic literature enabled individuals to consider their circumstances from fresh, more advantageous perspectives.

Kalki brought this point to the fore in his short story 'Cirañcīvik Katai! (A Timeless Story)', which appeared in the 19 April 1936 issue of *Ānanta Vikaṭaṇ*. Although the story contains no mention of *Maṇikkoṭi*, Kalki clearly aimed it as a taunt towards *Maṇikkoṭi* writers for investing too much literary significance in use of language and form and the depiction of individual desire and intention. According to Ramaiah, Kalki's story poked fun specifically at his column 'The First Chapter (*Mutal Attiyāyam*)', which Ramaiah inaugurated when he became editor of *Maṇikkoṭi* in 1935. The column introduced those stories appearing in each issue that Ramaiah felt were timeless (*cirañcīvi*) and noted their unique features such as unusual plot lines, descriptive details, character development, and formal or linguistic innovation. Kalki's critique of the column, writes Ramaiah, was that it immortalised the stories that it featured before time could prove their literary worth.³¹ Mocking Ramaiah's overbearing editorial direction, the narrator of Kalki's 'A Timeless Story' began:

I'm not going to ask you not to be alarmed when you read this title because you will do the opposite of what I ask. Therefore, I request that you please be afraid when you hear this title. Yes, the story I'm about to write is not a timeless story. In truth, it's not even a long-lived story. For those who read quickly, its lifespan is three minutes. Even if you read the story letter by letter, it would last only five minutes.

Actually, the title 'A Timeless Story' appeared in another humorous magazine. In that story, how a woman took revenge on her sister-in-law by killing her three children and then herself, and how her husband shut down after these events and was run over by a tram were described in a surprising manner and wondrous style. The title of the story was 'A Drink of Immortal Nectar'. Above the title, the magazine editor had expressed his particular thoughts on the story in a highlighted box. The first mistake my protagonist Mister Markanda Mudaliar made was to read the first sentence in that highlighted section. . . [which read] 'This is a timeless story. . .'.³²

Toying with the story's title, the narrator cleverly highlights his deliberate orchestration of the narrative to guide his readers' reception of the story. No story, he suggests, is truly 'timeless', as it endures only as long as the time it takes to read, regardless of editorial intervention. Appropriating the title from another magazine, the narrator points sarcastically to the undue emphasis that 'A Drink of Immortal Nectar'

gives to developing a 'surprising' and 'wonderous' literary style rather than to the mechanism of humour. This was Kalki's way of alluding to *Maṇikkoṭi*, which was clearly not a 'humorous magazine', as evidenced by the overly dramatic plot of the imaginary 'timeless story' to which Kalki's story refers. The narrator of 'A Timeless Story' thus critiques the *Maṇikkoṭi* writers' efforts, while also calling attention to his own equally laughable experimentation with the idea of a 'timeless story'. 'What, indeed, makes a story timeless, and what are its merits?' he prods readers to ask. And more importantly, 'Is there a place for humour in a so-called timeless literary work?'

Contrary to the narrator's view, the story's protagonist Markanda Mudaliar finds the idea of a timeless story irresistible. The magazine editor's comment leads Markanda to wonder, 'Is it possible to be everlasting (*cirañcīvi*) in this world? . . . Must a man die?'³³ Markanda immediately decides to change his daily habits to ensure his own immortality in some way or another. He makes a plan to eat better, exercise more, challenge himself intellectually and philosophically, and even to explore the idea of remarriage after having been widowed several years earlier. After trying his hand at several physical tasks unsuccessfully, he finally resolves to take a walk on the beach to benefit from the fresh sea breeze.

Unbeknownst to Markanda, however, crowds have gathered at the seashore to support Gandhi's Salt March and protest the arrest of several enthusiasts who had set up portable stoves to make their own salt. As Markanda approaches the beach, the crowd begins to pelt the police with stones, and the police open fire in return. Determined to follow through on his new plan and oblivious to his surroundings, Markanda pushes through the crowd only to be shot dead instantly. The narrator dispassionately steps back into the narrative to conclude:

To commemorate Mister Markanda Mudaliar, who gave his life in the shootout at the beach, the Municipal Corporation decided to replace the name of Abdullah Jamvanth Lala Lane in Pudupettai – where Markanda lived most of his life – with the name Markanda Mudaliar Street. The decision was unanimously supported. This is the life history of my protagonist Mister Markanda Mudaliar, who by the age of fifty acquired the title of being an immortal [*cirañcīvi*], just like the ancient rishi Markandeya.³⁴

Ironically, the Municipal Corporation views Markanda's walk on the beach as a great act of nationalist bravado, while Markanda's will to

change his life and desire for self-improvement – which he himself had held most dear – perish along with him. The narrator wittily references the protagonist's namesake, the mythic Hindu sage Markandeya who defeated death by performing extensive penance to Lord Siva. The comparison accentuates Markanda Mudaliar's rather inconsequential existence and highlights the self-serving nature and triviality of his actions. The story's message is both poignant and cynical: seemingly extraordinary political sacrifices are, in fact, driven by mundane motivations, while seemingly powerful personal ambitions become impotent in the face of broader social circumstances. Long-lasting literary renown, furthermore, is fundamentally meaningless. Markanda Mudaliar's death is an absurdly comical twist to an otherwise ordinary story. The narrator uses it to inspire readers to consider the nature of human mortality and the value of literary fiction. A humourous perspective, he suggests, offers much more fodder for thought than any rhetorical turn of language or philosophical exploration of aesthetics.³⁵

The *Manikkoṭi* writers, however, understood literature altogether differently. The casual, almost disrespectful, manner in which Kalki wrote, the 'pass time' content of his fiction, and the polemical life lessons he often expounded were, in their view, antithetical to the primary function of literature. They argued instead that literature provided a more intuitive and evenhanded perspective on life than could otherwise be obtained – a perspective that was rooted in yet also elevated above everyday experience. According to *Manikkoṭi* writers, comedy distracted readers from understanding the underlying enigmatic nature of life, which literature illuminated, and which enabled readers to find solace and meaning where there otherwise seemed to be none.

For example, in the 28 October 1934 issue of *Manikkoṭi*, Pudumaippittan – perhaps the most widely read of the *Manikkoṭi* writers – elaborated on the unique function of literature in an essay titled 'The Secret of Literature (*Ilakkiyattin Irakaciyam*)'. For Pudumaippittan, the secret of literature was no different than the secret of life:

What is the place of literature in life [*valkkai*]? . . . There is no opinion more wrong than thinking that literature is a 'means for accumulating desirable things.' Literature is the elaboration [*virivu*] of the self [*ullaṁ*], the awakening [*elucci*] of the self, its blossoming [*malarcci*]. A writer examines life with all of its complexities and problems [*cikkalkaḷ*], subtleties [*nunukkam*] and twists [*pinnalkaḷ*]. On their behalf, he begets a feeling [*uṇarcci*] deep within us. Literature is the very thing that governs over that stream of emotion [*uṇarcci*]. It could

be the name of a flower that he [the writer] doesn't know, a detested political scheme, or the severity of human cruelty that catches his attention. Regardless, as soon as he notices a particular feature, his heart and mind grow weary. Literature is the representation of this arousal of emotion [*calañam*]. . . . The pulse of literature is emotion [*uṇarcci*]. . . . The sheer truth [*uṇmai*] of emotion leads to a new state of consciousness [*vilippu*]. Truth is the very secret [*rakaciyam*] of life.³⁶

For Pudumaippittan and other *Manikkoṭi* writers, *uṇarcci* (feeling, emotion, sentiment, or sensibility), which arose out of the writer's everyday life and inspired his creative production, formed the essence of literature. It was what the writer transferred to readers through his fiction, kindling a transformation of selfhood within them. In the *Manikkoṭi* writers' view, experiencing *uṇarcci* enabled readers to develop heightened aesthetic sensibilities for encountering the world in new, unconventional ways. Pudumaippittan thus suggested that literature is the very truth (*uṇmai*) of life, the primary basis of human knowledge and community belonging.

He expanded this idea in his short story 'Cīrpiyṇ Narakam (The Sculptor's Hell)', published in *Manikkoṭi* in the 25 August 1935 issue. The setting of this unusual story is an unspecified moment in the ancient past when Tamilians, Northern Aryans, Greeks, and Africans lived together in the coastal region of Tamil Nadu. As the story opens, Phylarkkas, a young Greek man, watches the sun set upon a bustling harbor town while sitting on the steps of a bathing ghat. A Tamil religious pilgrim whom Phylarkkas knows well interrupts Phylarkkas's contemplative mood to explain the scene before him: 'Everything is the sacred game of original divine power, [everything is] its manifestation!'³⁷ Phylarkkas good-humouredly responds that religion and philosophy are nonsensical and would be better replaced by hedonism, wine, and women. The two agree to present their debate to Sathan, who best 'understands the secret of creative production (*ciruṣṭi rakaciyam*)'.³⁸

An old and humble sculptor, Sathan invites the two men to his home to see his latest and greatest work, which he has prepared for the king's temple. Versed in sacred scriptures and teeming with life experiences due to his travels, Sathan tells Phylarkkas and the pilgrim that he has put all that he has learned – particularly about the existence of the divine – into making his new sculpture. It is a statue of the god Siva with one leg raised in an artistic dance pose, locks flowing, and hands held in a gesture of grace. Phylarkkas is stunned by the statue's beauty, exclaiming, 'This is real art! This is true creativity!'³⁹ He begs

Sathan not to install the statue in a religious setting, where its artistic significance would be diminished, and dismayed by Sathan's refusal, he angrily walks away.

'The Sculptor's Hell' then abruptly shifts to a second scene, when Phylarkkas is no longer alive and Sathan's sculpture has been installed in the king's temple and consecrated. Sathan has slipped into a bewildering dream-filled sleep, in which he sees his statue lit up before him and then completely enveloped in darkness. As Sathan makes his way into the depths of the temple, he finds the statue no longer has any life. 'Everything is a delusion [*maru!*] . . . a delusion!' he cries. He watches a stream of devotees – mere shadows in his dream – begging God for salvation without ever glancing at the statue: 'Give me release [*mōṭcam*] . . . this was the chorus, the song, everything!'⁴⁰ In a rage, Sathan breaks the statue to pieces, cursing it for losing all meaning in the eyes of its beholders. Covered in the statue's blood, Sathan suddenly wakes, and here, the story concludes: "Oh, what a terrible dream . . . if only poor Phylarkkas were here", [thought Sathan]. Sathan's mind could find no peace'.⁴¹

Initially, 'The Sculptor's Hell' sets up a dichotomy between Phylarkkas's valourisation of individual desire and the pilgrim's and Sathan's reverence for the divine, through which it investigates the meaning of art. Despite the story's historical setting, Phylarkkas represents a more 'modern' outlook – one that elevates individual pleasure and rationality above religion, culture, and tradition. The pilgrim and Sathan embody an opposing 'Tamil Saivite' outlook, which considers all worldly aspects to be materialisations of inexplicable divine power. In their conversations, Phylarkkas holds that 'true' art gives form to the universal nature of beauty, whereas the pilgrim and Sathan consider it to be a revelation of divine essence. However, Sathan's dream gives him a different view of the relationship between life and art by allowing him to glimpse the way in which rote religious beliefs and customs overshadow artistic meaning. When he wakes, the uneasiness and confusion that Sathan experiences evoke similar feelings (*unaṛcci*) in readers. These emotions offer readers insight into the nature of art and its place in daily life, suggesting that Phylarkkas's individualistic approach might be more appropriate to the modern human condition than they may have believed. 'The Sculptor's Hell' awakens a new artistic sensibility within readers by asking them to reflect upon Phylarkkas's foreign perspective, thereby drawing them together within a shared, creative-minded community.

While 'The Sculptor's Hell' focuses specifically on the meaning of art and takes no heed of Kalki's more popular style of writing, other

Manikkoti stories blatantly critique it. For instance, in the 25 April 1937 issue of *Manikkoti*, Ki. Rajanarayanan 'Ki. Ra.' (1922 –) published the story 'The Comedy Magazine Editor (*Hāsyā Pattirikācīriyan*)', which sought to demonstrate comedy writing's lack of originality and depth. The first-person narrator of the story, an editor for a comedy magazine just like Kalki, struggles to produce a short story to fill the last seven pages of the upcoming issue before it goes to print that evening. Unable to brainstorm ideas, he sits glued to his desk, considering his profession: 'Who better serves humankind than a comedy magazine editor? What greater service is there in the world than taking away the sadness of humanity? In those days, I used to think all kinds of things'.⁴² After a year at his job, the editor tells readers, he began plagiarising stories from other (particularly English) magazines to come up with new material.⁴³ On this day, however, his life takes a drastic turn, and he has an even greater change of heart about the purpose of comedy. He suddenly receives a telegram announcing the death of his ailing wife, who had been visiting her parents. He thinks to himself, 'To have to write comedy at a time like this! What cruelty! Fate looks at a man and laughs!'⁴⁴ He tries to hand over his responsibility to produce a humorous story by the print deadline to his superior so that he might catch a train to his wife's parents' home. When his superior denies his request, the editor simply steals the plot of a story he recently read somewhere else, publishing it as his own so that he can now focus on the more important aspects of his life. Comedy, the story implies, is trivial, derivative, and distracting. Its objective to entertain hardly meets life's more serious demands. Readers would be better served, the story furthermore contends, by fiction that examines life's hardships and individuals' personal struggles.

Repercussions of the new literary-popular continuum

Through such short stories and essays, *Āṇaṇṭa Vikaṭaṇ* and *Manikkoti* writers formulated their distinct literary projects by responding to and critiquing one another's aesthetic worldviews. Doing so enabled them to train readers to recognise the differences between 'popular' and 'literary' fiction, both of which were relatively new genres in the 1930s Tamil publishing sphere. Yet, what led *Āṇaṇṭa Vikaṭaṇ* and *Manikkoti* writers to focus so intently on fashioning these new genres and developing readerly interest in them? In their work, these writers often explained their views on the meaning and purpose of literature, but they much less frequently (if at all) discussed why they felt these

views mattered. In the opening passages of this essay, I suggested that understanding what was at stake in the *Manikkoti* and *Ananta Vikatan* debates about literary and popular fiction requires viewing their endeavours in relation to contentions surrounding language and caste identity in late colonial Tamil Nadu. Let me conclude by briefly elaborating this argument to consider how these writers' establishment of a literary-popular continuum of modern fiction helped to consolidate a uniquely Tamil modernist tradition in the face of growing Dravidianist dissension.

It was no secret that *Ananta Vikatan* and *Manikkoti* were aligned with Gandhian civil disobedience and the anticolonial objectives of the INC – both of which Self-Respecters and Pure Tamil activists considered to be dominated by Brahminism and therefore rigorously opposed. Nonetheless, *Vikatan* and *Manikkoti* writers were discreet and diplomatic in those few instances when they articulated their political views.⁴⁵ As I demonstrated above, they eschewed politics in their fiction, contending that it misled readers, increased their daily troubles, and impeded the development of literary taste. In principle, *Ananta Vikatan* and *Manikkoti* writers agreed that readers needed less political discourse and more literary appreciation at a moment when politics pervaded their lives.

Despite this perspective, however, *Vikatan* and *Manikkoti* writers did not refrain from discussing their perspectives on Tamil language and literature – two issues that lay at the heart of Dravidianist politics. By limiting their discussion to language and literature rather than the broader politics of caste and ethnicity to which these elements were linked, *Ananta Vikatan* and *Manikkoti* writers fashioned a 'pure' literary sphere in which literature, seemingly freed from the confining shackles of politics, became the preeminent concern. For example, Kalki and Pudumaippittan mourned the backward state of modern Tamil literature due to the grip that purists held on the use of Tamil language. Both writers contended that because scholars and activists cared solely about classical Tamil, no properly modern Tamil literature existed compared to other Indian languages. They pointed out that the majority of new publications in Tamil consisted of premodern cultural histories, that the drive to rid Tamil of English and Sanskrit influences was misdirected and detrimental to literary production, and that the paramount duty of Tamil writers was to develop Tamil prose in a flexible and modern style.⁴⁶ Kalki and Pudumaippittan formulated these arguments without overtly discussing the Dravidianist agendas driving the scholars and activists they critiqued, but the political implication of their outwardly 'literary' message remains clear: in their

view, the hold of anti-Brahmin politics on contemporary Tamil culture prevented Tamilians from modernising and adapting to the rapidly changing conditions of the late colonial period.⁴⁷

Ananta Vikatan and *Manikkoti* writers therefore used literature to highlight individuals' shared values, as opposed to their caste and religious differences. They argued that literature brought readers together on the basis of their common experiences of pleasure and light-hearted entertainment (in the case of Kalki and other *Ananta Vikatan* writers) and artistic inspiration and emotional suffering (in the case of *Manikkoti* writers). Despite these writers' intention of building greater inclusivity, however, the unfortunate consequence of fashioning such an exclusively literary sphere – which, as I demonstrated above, ranged from high literary writing to purely popular entertainment – was that modernist experimentation became largely the province of Brahmin and upper-caste writers. Until the interventions of Tamil Dalit writers in the 1990s, not just Dravidian literature, but rather all literature expressing a political slant, has been considered outside the realm of respectable literary production. In this sense, the caste dynamics of the Tamil literary sphere reflects the scholarly characterisation of Indian literature more generally, that it is shaped by ideas of literariness that cohere around 'a High Textuality of the Brahminical kind'.⁴⁸

Still, I want to underscore that in spite of the pan-Indian resonances between these writers' humanistic themes and those of modernists in other Indian literatures, the establishment of the literary/popular distinction in modern Tamil literature emerged in response to local circumstances as much as (if not more so than) pan-Indian discourses of nationalism, tradition, and anticolonialism. While Markanda Mudaliar and Sathan are certainly modern individuals who push back against social norms in the 'rebellious' sense that Geeta Kapur elaborates, these characters' engagements with Indian nationalism and tradition are ultimately ambivalent and debauched. Neither 'A Timeless Story' nor 'The Sculptor's Hell' takes a clear position on these issues. Read in light of the late colonial disputes surrounding ethnic identity and caste oppression in Tamil Nadu, Kalki's and Pudumaippittan's stories illustrate instead how *Ananta Vikatan* and *Manikkoti* writers targeted their efforts towards developing modern Tamil literature into a medium with which all Tamilians could identify and in which all Tamilians could take pleasure. Local disputes surrounding the authority of the pan-Indian nationalist agenda, the role of Tamil Saivism, the place of Tamil literature, and the use of Tamil language preoccupied *Ananta Vikatan* and *Manikkoti* writers, just as much as their Pure Tamil and Self-Respect contemporaries, and these were the issues

that they addressed through their fiction and criticism. For this reason, rather than understanding the literary/popular debate in Tamil Nadu as, to use Kapur's language, a paradoxical 'double-take' that sometimes 'seems to subvert . . . nationalism', I view it as subordinating themes of Indian selfhood and anticolonial resistance to Tamil debates regarding language and caste. Indianness was just one component of the broader modernist conversation that late colonial Tamil writers had about how literature should fit into daily life.

Notes

- 1 Swami Vedachalam 'Maraimalai Adigal' launched the Pure Tamil Movement in 1916, which 'proposed that Brahmin power in Tamilnadu would be subverted if Tamilians stopped using Sanskrit words in Tamil writing and speech'. See Sumathi Ramaswamy, *Passions of the Tongue: Language Devotion in Tamil India, 1891–1970*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997, p. 147. E.V. Ramasami Naicker 'Periyar' began the Self-Respect Movement in 1925 to eradicate the entrenched caste, gender, and religious norms associated with Brahminical Hinduism. Adigal's neo-Saivite glorification of Tamil history departed significantly from E.V.R.'s atheistic and rationalist vision of Dravidian solidarity. Still, the two movements converged insofar as they resisted Sanskritic (Brahmin, Aryan) culture. For discussion of Adigal and the development of Tamil linguistic nationalism, see *ibid.* For more on the relationship between the Pure Tamil and Self-Respect Movements, see M.S.S. Pandian, *Brahmin and Non-Brahmin: Genealogies of the Tamil Political Present*. Delhi: Permanent Black, 2007; 'Notes on the Transformation of "Dravidian" Ideology: Tamilnadu, C. 1900–1940,' *Social Scientist*, vol. 22, no. 5/6, 1994; A.R. Venkatachalapathy, *In Those Days There Was No Coffee: Writings in Cultural History*. New Delhi: Yoda Press, 2006. For more on Periyar, see K. Nambi Arooran, *Tamil Renaissance and Dravidian Nationalism, 1905–1940*. Madurai: Koodal Publishers, 1980; V. Geetha and S.V. Rajadurai, *Towards a Non-Brahmin Millennium: From Iyothey Thass to Periyar*. Calcutta: Samya, 1998.
- 2 Supriya Chaudhuri, 'Modernisms in India,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Modernisms*, ed. Peter Brooker, et al. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 944.
- 3 Vinay Dharwadker, 'The Modernist Novel in India: Paradigms and Practices,' in *A History of the Indian Novel in English*, ed. Ulka Anjaria. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, p. 106.
- 4 Chaudhuri, 'Modernisms,' 946; Dharwadker, 'The Modernist Novel,' pp. 108–109.
- 5 Chaudhuri draws on Kapur to highlight the contradictory tendencies of Bengali modernist painters to combine European avant-garde techniques with indigenous ones to produce a critique of colonial urban culture. See Chaudhuri, 'Modernisms,' pp. 943–946. Dharwadker does not directly reference Kapur, but his view of Indian modernism aligns with her national-modern framework. For example, Dharwadker argues that understanding

- Mulk Raj Anand's English-language novel *Untouchable* (1935) requires placing it in conversation with Premchand's Hindi-language theorisation of idealistic realism (*ādarśanmukhī yathārthvād*). The comparison enables Dharwadker to explain how Anand's novel moves between (typically European) modernist experimentation with style and form and (characteristically Indian) realistic description of the protagonist's casteised life experience. See Dharwadker, 'The Modernist Novel,' pp. 112–118.
- 6 Geeta Kapur, *When Was Modernism: Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India*. New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2000, p. 292.
 - 7 *Ibid.*, p. 294.
 - 8 Kumkum Sangari, 'The Politics of the Possible,' *Cultural Critique*, vol. 7, Autumn 1987, p. 162., quoted in Kapur, *When Was Modernism*, p. 295.
 - 9 Kapur, *When Was Modernism*, pp. 293–294.
 - 10 *Ibid.*, p. 291 (emphasis in original).
 - 11 The main Saiva Siddhanta journals in which Maraimalai Adigal published were *Navacakti*, *Cittāntam*, *Civanēcaṇ*, *Centamil*, and *Centamil Celvi*. See Venkatachalapathy, *In Those Days There Was No Coffee*, p. 123 n. 40.
 - 12 The magazines Periyar ran were *Kuṭi Aracu*, *Revolt*, *Puraṭci*, *Pakuttarivu*, and *Viṭutalai*. In addition, he regularly provided introductions to newly arising non-Brahmin magazines in *Kuṭi Aracu*, promoting their endeavors and discussing their importance for giving voice to non-Brahmin perspectives and raising awareness about non-Brahmin issues. See, for example, Periyar's writings in the section 'Ceytikal (News and Information)' in E.V. Periyar Ramasami, *Periyār Ī. Ve. Rā. Cintannaiṭal* [*Thoughts of Periyar E.V.R.*] ed. V. Anaimuthu, vol. 3. Tiruchirappalli: Cintanaiyalar Kazhagam, 1974, pp. 1889–1981.
 - 13 See Venkatachalapathy, *In Those Days There Was No Coffee*, pp. 128–136.
 - 14 R.A. Padmanabhan, who was a sub-editor at *Ānanta Vikaṭaṇ* in the early 1930s, describes some of Vasana's and Kalki's accomplishments at *Ānanta Vikaṭaṇ*. See R.A. Padmanabhan, *Tamil Italkal, 1915–1966* [*Tamil Journals, 1915–1966*]. Chennai: Kalachuvadu, 2003, pp. 77–90.
 - 15 R. Krishnamurthy Kalki, 'Poṭu Pattirikai! [Go Ahead, Start a Magazine!],' in *Kalki Vāṭartta Tamil* [*the Tamil That Kalki Developed*]. Chennai: Vikatan Prachuram, 2007 [1934], pp. 131–132.
 - 16 *Ibid.*, pp. 133–134.
 - 17 *Ibid.*, pp. 134–137.
 - 18 B.S. Ramaiah, *Manikkōṭi Kālam* [*the Era of Manikkoti*]. Chennai: Meyyappan Pathipakam, 1980 [1969–1971], n.p.
 - 19 *Ibid.*, p. 64.
 - 20 Padmanabhan, *Tamil Italkal*, p. 93.
 - 21 See, for instance, the editorial in the 29 April 1934 issue of *Manikkōṭi*, quoted in P.G. Sundarajan and Cho. Sivapathasundaram, *Tamiḷil Cīrukatai: Varalārum Vālarcciyum* [*the Tamil Short Story: History and Development*]. Chennai: Crea, 1989, p. 99.
 - 22 Ku. Pa. Rajagopalan, 'Maṇumalarcci [Renaissance],' in *Manikkōṭi Italkal Tokuppu* [*Collected Writings from the Journal Manikkōṭi*], ed. P.G. Sundarajan, Ashokamitrān, and Pa. Muttukumarasami. Chennai: Kalaiñān Patippakam, 2001 [1934], p. 153. Although many writers published in *Manikkōṭi*, the key figures that most literary histories consider part of the

- Maṇikkōṭi kulu* (clan) include B.S. Ramaiah, C.S. Chellappa (1912–1988), C. Viruthachalam 'Pudumaippittan' (1906–1948), Ku. Pa. Rajagopalan (1902–1944), Na. Piccamurti (1900–1976), and P.G. Sundararajan 'Chitti' (1910–2006).
- 23 Sundararajan and Sivapathasundaram, *Tamiḻil Cīrukatai*, pp. 104–105; Ramaiah, *Maṇikkōṭi Kālam*, p. 159. Sundararajan was part of the *Maṇikkōṭi* clan.
 - 24 Ramaiah, *Maṇikkōṭi Kālam*, p. 61. Kennedy notes that T.K.C.'s discussion group – of which Kalki was an active member – was involved in revitalizing classical Tamil literature, something that *Maṇikkōṭi* writers resisted. Kennedy also describes a dispute that broke out in the pages of *Maṇikkōṭi* and the Tamil newspaper *Tiṇa Maṇi* between Kalki and *Maṇikkōṭi* writers over Bharati's literary merit. *Maṇikkōṭi* writers argued that Bharati should be considered a world literary figure, whereas Kalki viewed his work as pedestrian. See Richard Kennedy, 'Public Voices, Private Voices: Maṇikkōṭi, Nationalism, and the Development of the Tamil Short Story, 1914–1947,' unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, 1980, pp. 137–139.
 - 25 In the first issue of *Maṇikkōṭi* – published on 17 September 1933 – the founding editors noted that they named the magazine after a verse in Bharati's poem, which praised the jeweled banner (*maṇikkōṭi*) representing the strength and glory of the Indian nation. See Sundararajan and Sivapathasundaram, *Tamiḻil Cīrukatai*, pp. 95–96; Kennedy, 'Public Voices,' p. 123.
 - 26 Ramaiah, *Maṇikkōṭi Kālam*, pp. 158–159.
 - 27 Sundararajan and Sivapathasundaram, *Tamiḻil Cīrukatai*, p. 86.
 - 28 Ibid., pp. 96–97; Ramaiah, *Maṇikkōṭi Kālam*, p. 37.
 - 29 Kalki's editorial in the 19 November 1933 issue of *Āṇṇṭa Vikāṭaṇ*, quoted in Sundararajan and Sivapathasundaram, *Tamiḻil Cīrukatai*, p. 95.
 - 30 R. Krishnamurthy Kalki, 'Hāsiya Vipattukkal [the Dangers of Comedy],' in *Kalki Vāḷarttta Tamiḻ [the Tamil That Kalki Developed]* (Chennai: Vikatan Prachuram, 2007 [1932]), p. 59.
 - 31 Ramaiah, *Maṇikkōṭi Kālam*, pp. 182–183.
 - 32 R. Krishnamurthy Kalki, 'Ciraṇcivik Katai [a Timeless Story],' in *Kalki Vāḷarttta Tamiḻ [the Tamil That Kalki Developed]* (Chennai: Vikatan Prachuram, 2007 [1936]), pp. 358–359.
 - 33 Ibid., p. 360.
 - 34 Ibid., p. 366.
 - 35 Kennedy argues that 'Kalki's message [in "A Timeless Story"] is that action is the only true "immortal story." I view the story, conversely, as an illustration of how individual action is often futile and how "timeless" literary narratives are based in misconception, falsehood, and undue acclaim. See Kennedy, 'Public Voices,' p. 105.
 - 36 Pudumaippittan, 'Ilakkiyattin Irakaciyam [the Secret of Literature],' in *Putumaippittan Kaṭṭuraikal [Pudumaippittan's Essays]*, ed. A.R. Venkatachalapathy (Chennai: Kalachuvadu, 2002 [1934]), pp. 118–119.
 - 37 'Cīpiyiṇ Narakam [the Sculptor's Hell],' in *Pudumaippittan Kataikal [the Short Stories of Pudumaippittan]*, ed. A.R. Venkatachalapathy. Chennai: Kalachuvadu Pathippakam, 2000 [1935], p. 326.
 - 38 Ibid.
 - 39 Ibid., p. 329.
 - 40 Ibid., p. 330.
 - 41 Ibid.
 - 42 Ki. Rajanarayanan, 'Hāsyā Pattirikāciriyaṇ [the Comedy Magazine Editor],' in *Maṇikkōṭi Itai Tokuppu [Collected Writings from the Journal Maṇikkōṭi]*, ed. P.G. Sundararajan, Ashokamitrān, and Pa. Muttukumarasami. Chennai: Kalaiṇān Patippakam, 2001 [1937], p. 429.
 - 43 *Maṇikkōṭi* writers accused Kalki of plagiarising English magazines in order to produce new material for *Āṇṇṭa Vikāṭaṇ*. See Sundararajan and Sivapathasundaram, *Tamiḻil Cīrukatai*, pp. 151–153.
 - 44 Rajanarayanan, 'Hāsyā Pattirikāciriyaṇ,' p. 435.
 - 45 See Sundararajan and Sivapathasundaram, *Tamiḻil Cīrukatai*, p. 69; Ramaiah, *Maṇikkōṭi Kālam*, pp. 68–69; Swarnavel Eswaran Pillai, *Madras Studios: Narrative, Genre, and Ideology in Tamil Cinema*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2015, p. 156. Vasān, Kalki, and the founding *Maṇikkōṭi* editors all mentioned their support for Gandhi and the INC in various essays and editorials, although they generally dwelt little on this position.
 - 46 See, for example, R. Krishnamurthy Kalki, 'Eṇka! Tamiḻ Moli [Our Tamil Language],' in *Kalki Vāḷarttta Tamiḻ [the Tamil That Kalki Developed]*. Chennai: Vikatan Prachuram, 2007 [1933]; Pudumaippittan, 'Tamiḻaip Paṇṇi [About Tamil],' in *Putumaippittan Kaṭṭuraikal*, ed. A.R. Venkatachalapathy. Chennai: Kalachuvadu, 2002 [1934].
 - 47 Kalki was far more sympathetic to Tamil purists' position on language and literature than *Maṇikkōṭi* writers, however. Influenced greatly by the Tamil journalist and littérateur T.V. Kalyanasundaram 'Thiru. Vi. Ka.' (1883–1953), who developed a classical Tamil oratorical style, Kalki stressed the greatness of classical Tamil language literature. He went on, in the 1940s, to write a number of popular historical novels based on Tamil mythology as well as to support the *Tamiḻ Icai Iyakkam* (Tamil Music Movement), which contested the domination of Carnatic music by Brahmins. *Maṇikkōṭi* writers had disbanded by this period and continued to refrain from taking overt political positions in their writing. See Kennedy, 'Public Voices,' pp. 107–108; Amanda Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern: The Postcolonial Politics of Music in South India*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006, pp. 180–182.
 - 48 Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Nations, Classes, Literatures*. New York: Verso, 1992, p. 244.