The recent focus on Indian folklore which lays emphasis on the relation between written traditions of Indian literature and oral traditions, goes a long way in redefining the Indian concept of folklore. The interesting point here is that even this new focus has been stressed by foreign folklore scholars working in the field of Indian folklore. But, we can say, even this new turn in Indian folklore research has not made any impact on Indian folklore scholars working in various Indian Universities as they have not started to probe whether the hypothesis is tenable in the background of broad data of folk literature scattered all over different languages of India.

In India, we have a continuous tradition of classical literatures being told from one generation to another in order to carry the tradition forward. This holds good both in the case of Sanskrit as well as regional language texts. So a certain influence such as theme, style, rhythm, delivery etc. of classical literature on folklore texts, and in return folklore on classical literature is inevitable. Blackburn, when pointing out that in Tamil bow song tradition the theme of sexual contact is a marker which triggers intense possession dancing, brings home the idea that the volatile energy in folk traditions poses a psychic counterpoint to the maintenance of control in classical traditions. So apart from style, delivery, rhythm and such patterns of similarities between classical and folk literatures, there is still deeper affinities between them.

Although attention has been turned to study the relation between oral traditions and written literature, Indian scholars are yet to formulate methods or theories as to combine literary theories and folklore studies with an aim to devise indigenous methods of folklore study. But with the advent of “performance studies” of folklore in the west, a new emphasis of combining literary as well as folkloristic methods of research has
become a useful tool to understand the complex cultural communication that operate between tradition-bound groups and individuals\textsuperscript{3}. So the application of the western methods of study of literature to folk literature suggests that an Indian method of study of folk literature may also use Indian concept of literary theories of ancient rhetoricians, information of which is plenty in ancient Indian Grammars and literatures.

There is also a marked shift in the recent influence – study of folklore on literature and vice versa. The earlier methods of study relating literature to folklore largely rest either on the question of identifying whether the verbal texts such as ballads, songs, tales, epics etc., are literatures or, on how much “folk lore” is there in the classical literatures. The new theories of literature as well as folkloristics treat their material as a complex field of individual or collective traditions. Literature and folklore are considered as meaningful allusions to the interpretations of the reader’s and listener’s responses.

These studies are highly sophisticated and call for a high degree of knowledge of the history of western theoretical writing from Derrida to various reader-response theorists of literature. But on a much humbler basis these literary concepts have been tried in the study of Indian folklore. Here comes the name of Prof. A.K. Ramanujam who by way of introducing ancient Tamil concepts like \textit{akam} and \textit{puram} paved the way for a combined approach to literature and folkloristics\textsuperscript{4}. A student of folklore should be well aware that Ramanujan’s attempt has not taken note of the necessity to redefine the concepts of literature and folk literature, as has been done by modern scholars like Richard Bauman and others. But anyhow, Ramanujan is a pioneer who focused our attention to the combined approach of literature and folklore. Another characteristic emphasis Ramanujan gave was that these western concepts can be replaced by indigenous ones, because the genres identified as myth, tale, tall tale, ballads etc., by the western scholarship in their respective traditions were blindly accepted by the Indian scholars. These are questioned in the background of the available collections of folk
literature of today\(^5\). What Margaret Trawick Egmore proposes in the field of ethnographic studies bear promise even here. She is of the opinion that India both exceeds and shatters western expectations. She scorns at the stereotypes that India is “more spiritual” than the west, it's people “impoverished”, “non-materialistic”, “fatalistic” etc. She says that these words are just words, the words of westerners to refer to certain scattered events occurring in South Asia\(^6\). So is the case with using western terms to study the vast area of Indian folklore. But it is certain that all of a sudden the situation cannot be changed as the name of the field “folklore” itself is mostly a translated term in various Indian languages, as has been pointed out by Blackburn and Ramanujan. Anyhow, continuing the attempt, made by A.K.Ramanujan to use indigenous terms and concepts, let us hope, will yield result in the future researches of Indian folklore.

An earlier book of Tamil language, grammar and poetics, *Tolkāppiam* gives the details of rhetorical techniques of poems\(^7\): The account given in this ancient book paves the way for re-constructing the Indian poetical tradition in a non-Sanskritic direction. What is noteworthy is that certain postmodernist techniques brought recently to light in the west has been anticipated in this ancient Tamil book of poetics. A poem is required to employ an ‘utterer’ (*Kilavikkuriyār*) and a ‘listener’ (*Kētkunar*). This rule was followed in the composition of thousands of ancient Tamil poems. Another important aspect of this poetics according to tradition, is that by way of using the technique of *munnam*, even a poem which does not mention the utterer and listener can presuppose that the text has these two voices\(^8\). We may draw parallels with the reader-response theories of various authors. Jacobson’s model of linguistic communication proposes a configuration where the addressee send messages or code to the addressee\(^9\). The other reader-response theorists like Wolfgang Iser (1978), Umberto Eco (1979), Gerald Prince (1973), Stanley Fish (1980) have also stressed that the reader’s response is important in interpreting a poem. Taking note of these recent development in the field of literary theory we will look into the ancient Tamil model of literary discourse.
Without going into the details of the Tamil model of understanding the text, we can say what is envisaged in the ancient poetics is that the text is not a finished product. It is deemed to be a process or relation between two voices, one, that of the utterer and the other, of listener. Since ancient Tamil poems were recited and transmitted through word of mouth, the ancient codifiers of poetic rules, no doubt, thought that the text, a linguistic construct, was a network of relations of human beings mainly determined by the utterer and listener, not the writer and the reader\textsuperscript{10}. After structuralists and post-structuralists have come with the novel theory of the text, basing mostly their attention to the written aspect, the spoken aspect of the text calls for a reformulation as to demand a theory of ‘orality’ like the theory of textuality\textsuperscript{11}. But constructing a theory of orality can never ignore what the Tamil poetics aim at and how this poetics is practiced at various levels of poetry by different poets of ancient Tamil language. This theory of orality, unlike the theory of textuality will highly depend on the human behavior of recitation of the poem. The Tamil poetics also aims at this aspect of composition of a poem as the relation between the utterer and the listener is an intimate relation of speech, colored always with human emotions, very often crossing the linguistic boundaries. In this respect the concept of utterer is slightly different from the non-human linguistic concept of Jacobson. The performance studies in the field of folklore, we shall say, coincide with our concerns as they give prominence to the interpretation of the text (‘Oral text’) as textuality, just like the Tamil understanding is a network of relations of different cultural significations. Richard Bauman recognizes that the symbolic forms we call folklore, unlike the concepts of earlier folklorists, have their primary existence in the action of the people and their roots in social and cultural life. He views that the raw material of oral literature is a thin and partial record of deeply situated human behavior\textsuperscript{12}. Comparing with this concept of folklore, the Tamil concept of performance which is the manipulation of text in action from the reciter’s as well as hearer’s points of view, plays a peculiar game of opposites which draws parallels in Chinese Taoism. The Taoist concept of the relation between yin and yang are interpreted as oppositional and continuous at the same time. Likewise the utterer and the listener are also two components of Tamil poetic strategy which are both oppositional and continuous. As hinted above, the intimacy of relations exhibited in a
particular Tamil poem conceived around two opposing terms, say “I’ and “you” – overflow to merge the meanings of these opposing terms. This generally is the common trend of ancient Tamil poems falling under this method of presentation. Margaret Trawick Egmore, when elucidating the addressee of a paraiyar “crying song” points out that the intended addressee is not always the person apostrophized in the song. Blackburn and Ramanujan believe that in Indian literature the addressee is not addressed directly. Now it is clear that like the Taoist concept of oppositions as shown to represent both opposition and continuation, the utterer (Kilavikkuriyār) and the listener (Kētkuṇar) also are both oppositional and continuous, which is the resolution of the opposition. This kind of ambiguity is explained by Margaret Trawick. She brings out many aspects of Tamil life by pointing out how distinctions are laid to enter into an ambiguous area. The distinctions are, as shown by her, a stage of the process of cultural balancing of the imbalance. Thus the presence as well as the absence of utterer and the listener, felt in a higher level of demarcation where the law of the excluded middle is not respected. Thus, remarks Margaret Trawick, a thing can be both A, and not A simultaneously. This seems to justify the codification of the Tamil poetics that the distinction between utterer and listener, and presence and absence of these two are clear and ambiguous simultaneously.

With this guiding knowledge of theoretical background, a study of a few modern ballads of Tamil language may be undertaken. These folk songs are called by the singers as ballads (Kataippāṭal) although these songs are conspicuously different from the comparably lengthy ritual ballads. In order to identify the specificity of this new kind of folk songs as against the lengthy counterparts sung at rituals we will call these songs as ‘modern ballads’. These modern ballads are of two types: One narrating a story, and the other singing an event or a tragic happening without a story. The modern folk ballads selected for our study are brought in print by K.A. Gunashekran. These poems are usually written by folk poets. If they live in an urban area, they sing an urban theme or if they live in a village, they write a ballad of that locality.
The ritualistic ballads are lengthy and always sing a story of a local hero or a mythic character, who is later deified. But the modern ballads are short, usually sung for a few minutes and composed on local marginal heroes who commit murders or such other acts. These heroes are not deified. The ritual ballads are sung in rich meters and musical rhythms whereas the meter and music of the modern ballads are rigid.

Apart from these differences, these two groups of ballads are similar in singing the predominant tragic ends of the heroes (even among ritual ballads of Tamil, only social and historical ballads end in death) or tragic mood of the events. Stuart Blackburn divides the ritual ballads as ballads of death and birth depending on the theme the ballad speaks of. Of the eleven ballads we have selected for our study, almost all of them talk of deaths; the ballads having biographies as their theme usually end with the death of the main character. Another point of similarity between these two groups of ballads is that they follow the stylistic formula of end rhymes, one of the specific features of folk songs in Tamil. Likewise, beside the point that both these types are written by different authors, both are performed in different styles. In both the categories, during the performance, the written forms are changed and interspersed with dialogues of singers. The dialogues are ordinarily in colloquial prose of the area.

The modern ballads, as we have seen, do either sing a biography or narrate a story. Some of them sing the sorrows of a train accident, or the worries people experience in their routine daily life or the falling down of the roof of a school or the havoc caused by floods though without a story.

Even now we cannot group all the modern ballads together forgetting their differences. For example, while the other modern ballads are free of divine connotations, one ballad (Maikkēlam Kātaippātāl) notes that the main character, at the end worships a Christian saint, and is saved from punishment. The Hindu worship
of a local deity is replaced by the Christian saint here. The second group comprises narrative ballads exhibiting folksong qualities in their exposition. The third group of modern ballads sing only non-narrative folksongs depicting the sorrows and agony of people's daily life or some accident, such as flood havoc or a train accident.

These differences of modern ballads also have to be accounted for in our genre theory so that we could explain how a modern ballad with a narration and without a narration could be accommodated in our proposed genre definition.

3

In the background of the differences and similarities between the ritual ballads and what are called modern ballads, we will be able to define and understand their respective characteristics if we resort to a generic definition of modern ballads. A generic definition studies the various aspects of the new form, taking note of the relation with similar forms. So these forms retain a kind of stability and continuation of similar generic qualities and at the same time display new characteristics. A theoretical treatment of the qualities of change and stability as has been discussed in folkloristics will lead us to a correct understanding of modern ballads. A generic definition as far as folklore is concerned, deal with the internal as well as external aspects of the item under study.

Alan Dundes, in one of his earlier articles, “Texture, Text and Context” lists three aspects to be necessary to define a genre. Of these, the text and the context are generally two ambiguous concepts and at the same time the only reliable tools to understand and outline a possible new genre.
The two notions of text and context, although have come from a folklorist of Alan Dundes' stature, nonetheless encompass an area of theoretical interest where Tamil concepts also share common ground. We may point out that the Tamil notion of textuality is built around an absence/presence of the utterer and listener. Here the absence of the utterer and the listener is equally the cause for the creation of the text as the presence of the utterer and the listener, due to the rhetorical strategy of muṇṇam of Tolkappiyar as we have mentioned earlier. Even in modern theoretical and philosophical debates, the necessity of conceptualizing the absence is recognized.19

Here the difference between written text and its performance as well as a performance text and its context has to be understood clearly. The notion of text and its context are not fixed categories. If there are written texts and performance texts, the first becomes the text and the second, context. Likewise, if we have a performance text and a context, in the form of a ritual ballad and possession dance respectively, the singer's ballad is the text and the ritual dance, the context. In the same way when we get a version of a tale, the tale is a text and the version of the tale is a context. The other notion of competence and performance popularized by Noam Chomsky also calls for a comparison here. But, although these texts and contexts are two shifting categories, their relation with regard to sharing certain elements among them is discernible. These elements are the codes. The codes present in the texts are contexts (utterer and listener) share common interpretation of a folklore item.20 This understanding of codes brings to us that even the listener or the reader has a role to play in the interpretation of the text of both a performed folksong and a printed one. We may use the example of a Tamil proverb, “A snake will recognize the leg of another snake”. The meaning of this metaphorical proverb is - one evil person will know another of their kind. This proverb by itself is clear but a contextual study of this proverb will give different meanings. The difference between meaning of the fixed proverb text and its contextual meaning demonstrates how text and context are different and how the relation between utterer and listener of different context determine the meaning. The play of the codes depending on the situation how a proverb is told by an utterer to a listener determine the
meaning. Here there is a contract between the utterer and listener. Since the Tamil notion of utterer and listener does not demand explicitly the presence of these two voices, a presupposed utterer and listener are always present when the genre of folk literature is considered. For example, when a proverb is presented even in print, we suppose that it has an utterer and listener. When this text is presented in a context, the notional utterer and listener are actualized. On the other side, the relation the utterer and listener has with the text is, in a sense is continuous because even though the text in different listener contexts gives different meanings, one particular text of a context cannot be substituted by another text or a version of that text. So as there is difference in the meaning of a text between one listener-context and another, there is also an affinity between one text and its different listener contexts. That is the reason why Sandra Dolfv Stahl contends that ultimately the distinction between text and context become invisible to the researcher\textsuperscript{21}. Also the Tamil notion of utterer and listener without their excluded middle, remains to be two levels of a constant process whose distinct as well as indistinct codes can merge and separate. When the distinct codes of utterer and listener operate in the literary text, the indistinct codes are suspended to the inoperative level of the process. The codes that encircle the utterer's domain represent the stable elements of a folkloristic process and the codes found around the listener's domain largely deal with the realms of change. So the codes of stability is understood to cause the utterer's text as its main components retain tradition and history, and the codes that produce a variant, tend to pull our attention towards the performative side of folklore as it signifies transformation and change. So the utterer's sphere is concretized by the codes of stability and this is characterized as text; the listener's sphere is constituted of the codes of context which largely borders on the changing elements of folklore.

Now the following two levels of understanding may be discerned for further study. They are:
1. The stability or continuation of folkloristic tradition in modern ballads that share common characteristics with the ritual ballads, though the commonness includes resemblance or near resemblance to earlier forms.

2. The change of folkloristic qualities of modern ballads; that is to account how the new genre accommodates new elements, or reality.

The first may be characterized as roughly happening due to the linguistic maneuvering of folklore and the second due to the situational domain.

If we examine the source material of our study, we can further group two kinds of materials on the basis of the linguistic domain of our study.

a) The continuation of the tradition of folklore is displayed in the modern ballads through retaining the motif of death and tragic sentiments;

b) Textual strategies of positioning the utterer and listener and the pattern formation of rhythmic occurrence through repetition, end-rhyme etc.

The second aspect, that is, the situational domain, demands the following divisions:

a) The comparison between the textual event and narrated event of both ritual ballads and modern ballads which leads to a new characterization of these modern ballads; that is, the modern ballads are secular.

b) The role played by new external realities like court, police, hospital, train etc., mostly determine how folklore reacts to the modern stare and technologies, and its language.

It is interesting to note that though we observe the division of linguistic domain from situational domain, in actual analysis the linguistic domain or the text creates its
own situational domain. And the exclusive situational domain merges with the text in such a way that we have to conclude that they both are interdependent.

We will elaborate these points further considering the written forms of ritual and modern ballads. The printed folklore, like the folklore of other media are considered by Blackburn as a new force in folklore study. That the death of the hero, which is the basic tenet of the death ballads as has been explained by Blackburn, plays an important part in the modern narration ballads too is an indication how this new ballad shares continuous elements of folk literature of earlier forms of its likeness. This continuation is maintained in singing the death which is usually the main theme of the non-narrative modern ballads too. So what is the shared experience between the text of the ritual ballads such as bow songs and modern ballads of both varieties (with narration and without narration) is the theme of death or tragic sentiments. So the continuation of a predominant generic tradition, that is the theme of death, tragedy and pathos exhibit that the new genre follows the basic requirements of folkloristic qualities of a related genre. The theme of death is thus perceived by these two groups of written folksongs, the ritual ballads and their modern counterparts, in their own ways, to create meanings according to their listeners. The ritual bow songs sing the death of local heroes or the death of lovers when they become the deity of the locality. But in modern ballads this aspect relating to deification is notably absent and thereby it is secular. So we see a kind of stability of tradition retaining the same theme of death in the new form of modern ballads and as well as marked silence of deification which highlights the change of tradition in different situations. Thus stability and change of tradition is, in various levels, preserved in the new genre. What we have seen so far happens within the boundary of the linguistic or textual domain.

If we go further in this direction to study the textual strategies of the modern ballads we find that they display the textual positioning of the narrator and the listener. These ballads address formally the listeners specifically requesting them either not to
mind if there are mistakes in their exposition or to listen to the ballad attentively\textsuperscript{22}. In some of the modern ballads, however, the names of poets who wrote these ballads are mentioned. This is the direct method of presenting the personal narrative voice of the poet who wrote this. The exhortation by the narrator is also explicit here.

Another kind of voice of the narrator also is discerned in these ballads. Here the narrator’s voice merges with the listener’s voice and both the voices become anonymous. For example, the ballad, \textit{Maikkēlamma} presents the traditional rhythmic meter of folksongs and never mentions the opening formula of the narrator, explicitly addressing the listener as the other modern ballads do. The anonymity of the narrator is achieved by using repetitive phrases or words or names of the characters of the ballad in specific gaps of the delivery which in effect enhances the aesthetic appeal\textsuperscript{23}. This appeal, in return, captivates the listener and blinds him to the enthralling rhythmic structure of the text and thus the listener is brought face-to-face with the narrator in absentia. Along with repetitive occurrences of words and names, the parallelism, end-rhymes etc., also help to enhance the aesthetic appeal of the ballads. Now, one is reminded of the definition drawn up by Ben-Amos that folklore is “artistic communication in small groups”. These Ballads attract the listener to sink deep into the vortex of a sentimental carnival and make him lose his individual identity. Another feature of these repetitive words is that with the shift of words denoting the heroine from that of the hero the focus is freely altered\textsuperscript{24}. The free play of different focuses also enable the modern ballads assume anonymity, thereby lending a helping hand to the speedy merger of narrator’s and listener’s specific voices, thus there is an alternating play of real and structural (an effect of aesthetic strategies) narrator as well as listener in these ballads.

Thus the real narrator (one who narrates/writes the ballad) and the structural narrator nonetheless carry out the function of a fictional and objectivized voice. Likewise the narrator’s voice is determined by the listener’s voice. And hence the utterer’s exhortation to the listener or the reader to forgive the narrator (real or structural) if he
commits errors in presenting the performance or the text. As against personal narratives about which there is a growing interest among Western folklorists now, these modern ballads do not present a personalized voice. But as far as modern ballads are concerned, although most of them present this personal voice as against the ritual ballad where this voice is fully absent, the alienating effect leading to the blurring of the personalization which is a continuing folkloristic tradition, is not ruled out. Thus the narrator's and listener's presence is discerned in these modern ballads and simultaneously their eclipse is also hinted at. Again what happens is the merging of opposites with the abolishment of the differentiating middle which is characteristic of the Tamil poetical logic as we have noted above.

Leaving this linguistic domain or modern ballads we will now enter into the other domain of situational context of the modern ballads.

Many folklorists who work in the area of literary folklore have already stressed that the linguistic or textual and contextual are united. Still they do not work without attempting to fix the textual and contextual elements of folk genres. In the Tamil modern ballads too, although the textual and contextual world of significations are united, we have to tackle problems on trying to separate the text from the context. As we have equated the text with utterer's interpretation we come to recognize the position that the listener determines the performance. When the utterer or narrator of a ballad sings the death of the hero, the listeners identify with the deity and the contextual domain is brought to bear on the functional aspect of the text. The possession dances triggered by the singing makes the listeners enter into a different world of performance. This world is the domain of context of the text. Here the textual event gets transformed into a real event. These observations are true of ritual ballads. But this is not the case with the modern ballads. The modern ballads signify a secular connotation. They do not present their real event as they do not present their real event as an extension of the text as has happened in the case of ritual ballads. The deaths of the main characters of modern
ballads are only textual events and they end there. They do not extend into the real world. The death event of a modern ballad, for example, presents its performance in a different way. The ritual ballad depicts that the death is framed in the middle slot of the three day bow song performance. The death scene of these stories, says Blackburn, is sung at the exact moment of tipārātaṇai ritual and possession dance. This explains the importance of ritual and deification for ritual ballads. But in the performance of a modern ballad, Manikkuravan story, the death of the main character is shown to bring the story to a climax by paraphrasing through a prose-dialogue what is sung in a song. Thus if at all these modern ballads enter into the real world, it is only as an aesthetically communicative medium and not to fulfill a devotional requirement as expected of the ritual ballad. So again, even in the performative mode which is the context, the modern ballad is different from the ritual ballad.

But if we go to study the contextual domain or listener's domain with regard to certain realities that have come to find a place in the text of modern ballads they warrant our close attention. A careful study of modern ballads show that certain new features have found a place in these texts.

They are:

a. The mention of court, police, hospitals and references to train, skylab etc.

b. The frequent use of English words in the ballad which has been noted by other scholars.

These new signs of modern social reality form the context of these ballads. The various textual situations of modern ballads determined by these signs of modern society show that the text does not overflow as in the case of ritual ballads. The textual events of those ritual ballads flow out to form a part of external reality when the death event inspires some to become the medium of the deity about whom the ballad sings. The textual event establishes a contact with an actual event in ritual ballads. This is
reversed in the modern ballads where the real events like the occurrence of court proceedings, the mention of police and hospital, and the references to modern technologies, form part of the text. Unlike the ritual ballads, here the text does not flow out to establish a contact with these real events. But these real events are folded up in the space of the text. That is how a modern ballad text brings the context within its boundary. This is a very important distinction because the occurrence of Court, Police, Hospitals etc., form an integral part of the story or the main event of modern ballads. These real events of modern social reality are absent in the main story of the ritual ballads.

The occurrence of English words too explain that these words are considered by the teller and the listener not only as words but as signs of a modern society. In the recently published English translation of a German book, its author Hermann Bausinger states that when there are pressures of change in folklore, the members of the society strive to restore and maintain tradition through inventing new folk forms or reviving the old ones. The signs of change that are brought inside the textual domain of modern ballads from the contextual domain are the courts, hospitals, jail etc., of modern state. The language of modern Indian state is considered as English and there is no wonder that these words are included in the folk tradition of modern ballads which are absent in the song text of ritual ballads. According to Hermann Bausinger the signs of change happen in the domain of text as he sees new adjustments of tradition is natural in folklore. But, if we understand that these new changes are happening in the listener's domain due to the performer's consideration of the listener, then this explanation lays stress on the contextual side. Anyhow the textual adjustment to accommodate the context is nonetheless clear here, bringing us back to rely on the Tamil logic of the mediation which avoids pinning down of the opposing exclusives distinctly. The unboundedness of the terms, the utterer and the listener, assuming to be the text and context in folklore bring forth that indigenous theoretical concepts are capable of tackling certain problems in identifying the emerging new genres in a language community.
So, in both the textual as well as contextual levels, that is, be it the continuation of death or tragic events of ritual ballads through modern ballads, or the blurring of the distinction between the utterer’s and the listener’s voices of text, or the folding up of the real events of modern social reality of technological development, what we attempt is to discern how the text and context function under an operative tension. In the course of our study, we have outlined that there is an ambiguity between the text and the context positions. And the recognition and delineation of this ambiguity, which also informs the text and context as they too share some of the qualities of the utterer and listener of the Tamil poetics. This ambiguity will also enable us to solve the problem of having different patterns of modern ballads, one with a narration, another without narration and the third with reference to divine aspects of the hero with a modern religious signification, that is Christianity. As a study of text and context helps one differentiate the ritual ballads from modern ballads, the presence of ambiguity in the textual and contextual realms assists us in recognizing that the modern ballads do not occupy a fixed position just opposite to the ritual ballad. If they are positioned opposite to the ritual ballads, their generic definition is characterized by this special position. But as the modern ballads exhibit different levels of evolution (which is temporal) in their formation, they come nearer to Tamil Folksongs due to many rhythmic and stylistic features. This is true particularly of the non-narrative modern ballads which mainly deal with the themes of flood havoc, fear of the falling of the skylab etc. So, instead of fixing the position of modern ballads opposite to the ritual ballads spatially, we will hold that these various modern ballads occupy a fluid state that spans between ritual ballads and the folksongs of Tamil people sung on various occasions. As the text and context binary is useful in one level, the ambiguity informed in these two, is useful in another level to characterize this new genre of modern ballads in Tamil.
NOTES

1. This new emphasis is made in a book edited by Stuart H. Blackburn and A. K. Ramanujan. This book contains nine papers which are written by foreign scholars or Indian scholars based in USA. See Stuart H. Blackburn and A. K. Ramanujan (1986).


3. Stahl, Sandra Jolby (1989) gives a vivid description of how the recent developments in literary theories particularly deconstructive criticism and the reader-response theories of literature prove to be vital to carry out researches in literary folkloristics. See the specific chapters of theoretical importance, that is, the introduction and chapters 1 to 3 of the book.


5. In two Tamil books, Lourdu, S. D. (1981, 1988) talks about the difficulties one faces when Western analytic concepts of ethnic traditions like ballad, myth etc., are used. For example, the Tamil categories of lengthy folksongs containing a story are called Villuppāttu (Bow Song), Kaniyāṭt Kūttu (the dance of Kaniyan), Utukkaippāṭṭu (the song sung with the accompaniment of the musical instrument Udukkai) and so on. These songs are recited in exclusively different performance situations. Hence, these can be grouped under one Western rubric, ballad. But the westernized Tamil Folklore scholarship has been considering, teaching and writing of these three sub-genres are mere ballads.


7. Although many people attribute the authorship of Tolkāppiyam to Tolkappiar, some doubt this. Certain scholars view that this book might have been written by at least two authors. Anyhow, this book in its first and second parts, gives the details of letters (phonemes) and syntax respectively. The third part is exclusively devoted to different techniques and themes of poetic composition.
8. For elucidating Munnam, llampūraṇar, one of the commentators gives two lines of an ancient poem of Kalittokai.

   CODE
   MESSAGE

9. ADDRESSER----------------------CONTACT----------------------ADDRESSEE

   CONTEXT

10. The ancient book of poetics, Tolkāppiam mentions that there are determinants like time, space, theme etc., too. Anyhow, for the sake of simplification let us concentrate only on the two concepts specified in the paper.

11. A cursory look at the theory of textuality as has been formulated by Roland Barthes (1981) demands a new theory of orality specifying the particular aspects of the signifying practices of oral transmission shared by an utterer and listener by way of producing it. The concept of textuality as has come to us, at times concentrates much on the graphemic side of the text.


   13. For example, consider this ancient poem:

   What could my mother be
to yours? What kin is my father
to yours anyway? And how
did you and I meet ever?
   But in love our hearts are as red

   earth and pouring rain:
mingled
beyond parting.

_Cempulappeyanirar_

(Tr: by A.K. Ramanujan)

In this poem, the meaning of first person singular transforms into second person singular, when the sex of "I" is changed from male point of view to female point of view, as this poem notes the points of view of the gender. This was brought to my attention by G. Nanjundan.


17. This collection is the printed version of these ballads. But these are sung in different southern districts of Tamil Nadu. I have heard them on different occasions. Wherever necessary the study made by George Hart on a performed version of one ballad, _Manikkuravan_ Story, is used (Blackburn and Ramanujan, 1986). The above mentioned collection has an introduction by A. Marx, which tries to theorize folklore in a neo-Marxist frame. But the title and other details given in this collection erroneously state that such ballads are sung only in urban areas. This collection has eleven modern ballads: (i) _Karuvāya tēvaṉ Kataippāṭal_, (ii) _Manikkuravaṇ Kataippāṭal_, (iii) _Ariyalūr rayil vipattuk Kataippāṭal_, (iv) _Maikkēlamma Kataippāṭal_, (v) _Mutturāmalinka tēvar Kataippāṭal_, (vi) _Tanushkoti alinta Kataippāṭal_, (vii) _Carasvatippaḷḷi itinta Kataippāṭal_, (viii) _Kōnār Kataippāṭal_, (ix) _Vaikai Velḷattuyar Kataippāṭal_, (x) 'Skylab' _Kataippāṭal_ (xi) _Pancumil Kataippāṭal_. Of these, (i) _Karuvāyatēvaṇ Kataippāṭal_, (ii) _Manikuruvaṇ Kataippāṭal_, and (iii) _Maikkēlamma Kataippāṭal_ are the three which sing the biographies of different heroes. _Mutturāmalinka tēvar Kataippāṭal_ is devoted only to sing the event of the death of _Muthuramalinga Thevar_ and not his biography.
18. Dundes, Alan (1978:22-37)

19. Pierre Macherry speaks of a kind of absence being necessary to account how a book comes into existence out of a silence. For details see Macherry, Pierre (1978 :85).

20. As we have already remarked, although the oral (folkloristic) and linguistic characteristics of the textuality are noted by the Western scholars of folklore, in the third world context where much of the present prose writings too are still retaining the qualities of oral characteristics, the orality has to be distinguished from textuality which is largely the conceptual output of writing seen in print. But anyhow use of this word is confusing in the present context. So I use the terms text and textuality throughout this paper.


22. This kind of exhorting the listener or reader is of three types: one is a poetic technique called *avaiatakkam* and the second is the informal way of calling the attention of the crowd. The third technique is addressing the listener not as in the previous two ways; it is an indirect use of this technique by way of introducing the theme of the tale in the beginning of the song. Except the two modern ballads *Maikkēlamma Kataippāṭal* and *Kōṇār Kataippāṭal*, all the other nine ballads exhibit this technique. One modern ballad, *Vaikaivelattuyar Kataippāṭal*, presents this technique at the end of the song.

23. In the modern ballad *Maikkēlamma Kataippāṭal*, the name of the character Michaelamma occurs 36 times at a particular position, the name of the hero Cēciyarē, 16 times etc., In the ballad, *Carasvati pallikūtam Itinta Kataippāṭal*, the word *ayyā* occurs 8 times. In *Kōṇār Kataippāṭal*, the word *ponnata, ennatta* etc., occur. In *Vaikaivelattuyar Kataippāṭal*, the word *rācākka* occurs 20 times and the word *ayyakka* occurs 14 times. In 'Skylab' *vilunta Kataippāṭal*, the word *ayyā* occurs 21 times.
24. For example, in the modern ballad *Maikkēlamma Kataippāṭal*, the woman character Michaelamma herself narrates the story using the one word refrain of her name Maikkēlamma as if it is the name of someone else occurring at the third line of many of the stanzas. Destroying the narrative voice of "I" with the use of the name of person, Maikkēlamma, narration assumes an alienating effect. Also notable is the shift of the voice from the use of the word Maikkēlamma to Cēciyarē, the name of the male character to bring about a conversational tone now and then. So the shift of the voice occurs from "I" to "Maikkēlamma" is further focused differently when the shift occurs from Maikkēlamma to Cēciyarē.

25. See Blackburn, Stuart, H (1988)


27. Of the eleven modern ballads, at least six of them mention the various apparatuses of the modern state such as jail, court, police etc., and almost all of these ballads mention about the various items associated with present times such as skylab, gun, town, cycle, car, suitcase, railway, telephone, aero-planes, bomb, newspaper, rocket, machines, lorry, telegram etc., freely.


29. Margaret Trawick remarks that in the Tamil's idea of culture, the exclusiveness is shared with its opposite. She describes that the Tamils are androgynous by giving the examples of Tamil males wearing flowers etc. See Trawick, Margaret (1992).

30. When sentenced to death, the hero of the ballad *Maikkēlamma Kataippāṭal* asks the court to give him permission to pray in the Church consecrated to Saint Sebastian and the ballad ends abruptly saying that he is saved.


