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## **CONSTRUCTING THE BILDUNGSROMAN OF A COMMUNITY: A STUDY OF PRINTED PERSONAL INVITATIONS**

Several studies have focussed attention on the origin and growth of the Indian print media as an off shoot of the British Colonisation. However, Tamil print media is unique in that it pre-dates the British era. Moreover, there has been a staggering variety of public and private uses of the Tamil print media. In addition to books, magazines, journals and newspapers, there is a rich history of the use of print as personal invitations, drama/ movie notices, greetings and pamphlets. These are available as 'single sheet' material in the collection housed at the Roja Muthiah Research Library, Chennai. These invitations effectively contest the notions of technological determinism and technological elitism. More importantly, they combine the public and the private spheres of life.

This study attempts to analyse a selection of 'single sheets,' which are all personal invitations. These invitations chart the growth of individuals from birth to death. For instance, there are invitations for naming a child, adopting a child, initiation into learning, sacred thread ceremony, puberty rites, wedding, pre-confinement ceremony, 60<sup>th</sup>, 70<sup>th</sup> and 80<sup>th</sup> birthdays, house warming and death. Together, these invitations constitute a bildungsroman or a narrative of growth into maturity. It is my contention that these single sheet invitations construct not only a private life narrative but also map the individual's progression in society and the social influence on personal lives.

**Key words:** *bildungsroman, growth narrative, Tamil print media, single sheets, personal invitations, technological determinism, technological elitism.*