Religion and Philosophy of NALAYIRAM with Special Reference to NAMMALVAR

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PROFESSOR AND HEAD
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with a Foreword:

Dr. M. ANANTHASAYANAM AYYENGAR
EX-GOVERNOR OF BIHAR

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SRI VENKATESWARA UNIVERSITY
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by

Dr. N. Subbu Reddiar

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TO
THE SACRED MEMORY
OF
Dr. SARVEPALLI RADHAKRISHNAN
THE GREAT MODERN INTERPRETER
OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY
FOREWORD

The author of this work Prof. N. Subbu Reddiar is a well-known Tamil Writer. He got a Department of Tamil founded in the Sri Venkateswara University at Tirupati and has been the Head of the Department for many years. He has recently been raised to the status of a Professor in the University and he richly deserves that position. He has written a number of works in Tamil on various subjects—scientific, technological and academic. His language is easy—flowing and mellifluous, understandable both by scholars and by laymen. He has contributed greatly to Tamil writing.

The present work of his is a unique one dealing as it does with the Āḻvārs. The Āḻvārs are Sri Vaiṣṇavite saints of South India who realised Godhead in His arcā form in the Vaiṣṇavite temples of South India. They are mystics of a very high order and sang of God in ecstasy and their verses number about 4000 which are called the Nālāyira Divya Prabandham. The main Āḻvārs are ten in number who with the addition of two others viz. Āṉṭāl and Maturakavi constitute a dozen. They are drawn from all castes and they gave a great impetus to the spread of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism. Their verses mostly relate to Rāma and Kṛṣṇa—the avatāras of Viṣṇu—besides the absolute Para-vāsudeva in Śrī Vaikunṭha. Of all these Āḻvārs, Nammāḻvār is the foremost one though not the earliest. He is recognised as the patron—saint of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism in southern India. His thousand verses are called Tiruvāyomoli Āyiram as having emanated from his holy mouth. Before the singing of any of these songs, the taniyav or the verse relating to the author is recited and his blessings are invoked. The taniyav of Nammāḻvār describes him as one who rendered the Vedas into Tamil and that his thousand verses have all the sanctity and the authority of the Vedas.

Referring to the Nālāyira Divya Prabandham, Śrī Vedantha Deśika states that they throw considerable light on a number of intricate and difficult passages in the Vedas and help to clarify many doubts therein; and the Tenkalais have given greater authority to the Tamil Prabandhams than even to the Vedas themselves. Nammāḻvār's hymns are considered to be the authority on Śrī Vaiṣṇavism by both the sects of Śrī
Vaiṣṇavism. These Prabandhams are recited during all the temple festivals and have even been made a part of the daily worship both in Śrī Vaiṣṇavite temples and houses of the Vaiṣṇavites. Śrī Vaiṣṇavites must feel greatly indebted to Prof. N. Subbu Reddiar for the deep study and thought he has bestowed on the Prabandhams; he has written on the religion and philosophy of the Āḻvārs in his fine English style, thus carrying the message of the Āḻvārs to the very doors of Vaiṣṇavites and non-Vaiṣṇavites alike. The task is stupendous and though Prof. N. Subbu Reddiar is a born saivite, he has taken a deep interest in the Śrī Vaiṣṇavite literature and written on it with great sympathy, love and admiration much better than even a born Vaiṣṇavite can do. In this his great work which can be called his magnum opus, he has traced the history of Vaisnavite religion from time of the Rg Veda.

He has considered the subject under six sections. The first contains his introduction summarising the work. The second relates to the pre-Āḻvār period starting from the Vedas. The third is a prefatory study of the work of Nāḷāyiram. In section four, he discusses the main theme of the work relating to religion and philosophy of the Nāḷāyira Divya Prabandham with special reference to Nammāḻvār. The fifth refers to post-Āḻvār period and the sixth gives his conclusion. His summary is in sufficient detail to convey a comprehensive idea of his great work in his own language. In the second section, there is nothing controversial in the subject matter but with regard to Vaiṣṇavism during the pre-Āḻvār period, there may be a difference of opinion regarding his observations. It is true that the Vedic scholars of the West have described Viṣṇu as a minor deity during the Vedic period and to some extent he has reproduced their views. The Rg Veda is the earliest Veda and the one on which the other Vedas and later religious literatures are based. It contains a large number of hymns addressed to various natural elements whose aid and blessing the Vedic Aryans invoked by praise and prayer and by offering ablutions and libations to them. But Viṣṇu as He emerges in the Rg Veda is a personal God. The accepted essential feature of all theistic religions is the
existence of a personal God who created the universe. Such attributes like the creator, protector and sustainer are used in the Rg Veda only with regard to Viṣṇu. It is also specifically mentioned therein that He created even the Sun and Varuṇa and that others followed Him and that He grew from a primeval germ into the cosmos. After having created the worlds, fixed his lasting abode for himself a Paramapadam or Heaven which ordinary mortals may not be able to see or reach easily and which place is full of sweetness and bliss. Rg Veda also refers to His consort Śrī Mahālakṣmi. It states that His worship is easy and the repetition of His name is enough. It also refers to His incarnations.

Thus it appears that the essential features of Vaiṣṇavism were known to the Rg Vedic Aryans and they worshipped Him as the Supreme Being. The divine qualities of Viṣṇu were enhanced late by the Brāhmaṇas, the Upaniṣads and the Purāṇas in the North and by the Ālvārs in the South and these laid the foundation for the systematisation of Vaiṣṇavite philosophy and religion by Śrī Rāmānuja.

Coming to the central theme of the discourse of Prof. N. Subbu Reddiar in this volume, all the essential elements of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism, as practised and preached today, have been elaborated by him with special reference to the Ālvār saints. Briefly they are as follows: that Śrīman Nārāyaṇa is the Supreme Being; that He is the creator; that His abode is the highest in the universe; that He is both transcendent in Heaven and immanent in the Universe; that for the devotees, He took the Vibhava form as Rāma and Kṛṣṇa and that to make Himself easily available to all for worship, He has taken the arcā or permanent incarnation in temples. Their conception of the relationship of the individual soul to God is one of Nāyaka-Nāyaki bhāva—that is between a lover and his beloved. Nammālvār and Tirumānকাম্যান্‌ have emphasised this Madhura-bhāva and sung in ecstasy and longed to become one with the divine being. In many passages their description shows how the separation from the Lord is unbearable to them. They appeal to Śrī Mahālakṣmi to recommend them to the Lord’s Grace to perform puruṣahāra. They have developed
sakti and more than that prapatti or saranāgati, the doctrine of surrender, as the means of attaining Godhead. They knew God and realized Him and became one with Him. It is said that after reciting his ten verses, Śrī Tiruppāṇālvār, a harijan saint lost himself in ecstasy and his soul merged into that of Śrī Raṅganātha. The thousand verses of Nammālvār called Tiruvāymoḷi, are treated as sacred. They contain the essence of the Śrīma-veda and particularly, that of Chandogya Upaniṣad which work is largely drawn upon for describing the creation in the Bruhma-sūtras by the Bādarāyana to establish the existence of God, His attributes and the mode of reaching Him. Tatva-traya which is the distinguishing feature of Śrī Vaiṣṇavite philosophy is also referred to by Nammālvār. The emphasis of all the Prabandhams particularly of Nammālvār is laid on true knowledge which is described as one, which finds the universe as the body of a universal consciousness or soul of which body all beings are limbs. It implies that there is only one thing in the world and that is God. In fact, he found God in everything in the universe.

Lastly Saranāgati or self-surrender as the means of attaining salvation and release from the cycle of births and deaths is described wonderfully by every one of the Āḻvārs, and Prof. N. Subbu Reddiar has quoted chapter and verse from the original text in support of his conclusion. I admire his great talents and his inexhaustible energy and industry in gathering the material which has spread over millenia and brought the essence of all the texts in the compass of a single work.

I pray to Lord Venkateswara that He may grant him a hundred years of life to serve the cause of the Tamil language, religion and philosophy in an ever-increasing measure. The greatest tribute that can be paid to Prof. N. Subbu Reddiar for his glorious work is to keep his book in every library and in every home and to read and digest it. I most heartily congratulate him on his glorious work and wish his enterprise all success.

TIRUPATI,

M. Ananthasayanam Ayyengar
EX-GOVERNOR OF BIHAR
PREFACE

This book is a fruit of my study of the compositions of the Āḻvārs from the Religious and Philosophical points of view in the main and occasionally from the literary viewpoint. A fairly thorough critical study is offered in the following pages of the hymns on the strength of work done over a period of five years.

The focus of the study is on Nammāḻvār's poems, for he is the most well-known amongst the Āḻvārs and held as the leading exponent of Vaiṣṇavism through Tamil and as the head of all those who have been following him representing Śrī Vaiṣṇavism in the post-Āḻvār period. However, the compositions of the other Āḻvārs and the contributions made by them to the cause of Vaiṣṇavism have also been taken into consideration for purpose of nothing similarly in treatment to that of Nammāḻvār and for separately mentioning their contributions whichever are individualistic and unique in their nature.

Although a critical study of the commentaries and criticisms upon these compositions is not within the framework of the present study, the expositions of the later Ācāryas including their commentaries are utilised mainly for clarifying the interpretation of certain typical passages and problems of religious significance. A general, but brief, account of some of the well-known commentaries is given in a separate chapter (Section V, Chapter XXXI).

Schools of thought in India and elsewhere have been mostly maintaining Religion and Philosophy as independent branches. However, Indian philosophy has been theistic from the earliest times with the exception of the schools of Absolutism. The concept of a personal deity is involved in this co-ordinated development of religion and philosophy, the principles of which have coalesced rendering impossible a treatment of one in a manner independent of the other. Works which are brought under the subject of philosophy proper do not question the foundations of religious experience and can be admitted to tacitly lend support to the validity of the religious experiences. Works like the Itihasas, Purāṇas and
also Agamas which are written in Sanskrit and the compositions of the Ālvārs which are in Tamil are religious in nature and content. They presuppose the authority of the philosophical foundations on which they are based and on which they are the solid super-structures built at various periods. There is thus no room for a discussion as to the exclusive nature of treatment philosophical or religious of the problems dealt with in these compositions.

A study of the religious and philosophical contributions made by the Ālvārs cannot be undertaken without reference to the materials which are available in cognate sources. To free such materials from the scope of this study would lead to the understanding of these compositions as the rise of thoughts newly invented by the Ālvārs without any traditional background and so not capable of accounting for the popularity at the hands of those who have been steeped in age-long traditional lores. An attempt is therefore made here to classify the results of the study on this subject under sections which represent the beginnings of the religious tradition which inspired the writing of these compositions, a general account of the Ālvārs and their compositions, then an intensive study of Nammālvār's compositions, the influence of these compositions on the development of Śrī Vaishnavism in the subsequent periods and a conclusion on the worth of these compositions.

The study is divided into six sections the first of which forms an introduction dealing with the Ālvārs' approach to Reality. The second section is devoted to proving that the cult of Viṣṇu is as ancient as the Vedas themselves are. The theistic, personal and saguna aspects of the deity are traceable to the Itihāsas, Purāṇas and the Bhagavad-gītā. The various forms which the Lord takes for the welfare of humanity are found better developed in the Agamas, their beginnings being indicated in the other earlier sources. Practical code of conduct of a Vaishnavite gets treatment in the Dharmasāstras in addition to the sources mentioned above. Some of the aspects of the deity are also suggested and described also in the ancient Tamil classical literature. This section serves as a preparatory chapter to the thesis.
The question of the period of the Álvārs is taken up in
the third section where the literary, epigraphical and other
materials are brought forward to fix the dates of the Álvārs
with an approximate degree of certainty. The dispute regard-
ing the actual number of verses and the order in which the
compositions of these Álvārs are to follow are discussed in the
same section which also contains a brief literary appreciation
of these compositions. The traditional conclusions on some of
the matters treated in this section have been shown to be in-
admissible in the light of the materials that are available of
late. This section serves as a useful background for a deep
study of the compositions of the Álvārs.

The fourth section is the biggest with fourteen chapters
dealing with several aspects of the Nālāyiram. The general ap-
proach of the Álvārs is treated at the outset. The preminence
of Nārāyaṇa, His perfections, forms, exploits and His relation-
ship to the self and the world take up the next four chapters.
God is shown to be both immanent and transcendent and the
inner-controller of one and all not excluding Brahmā and
Rudra. Mystic experience which varies among the devout men
belonging to the various faiths of the world finds its presenta-
tion in the form of Nature and Bridal Love. The former is
not to be mistaken for pantheism since it implies God’s
transcendence also. The latter, though it could be traced to
the līlās of Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana, finds a full and rich depiction
only at the hands of the Álvārs. The reason for this lies in the
aesthetic appreciation of God with particular reference to His
descent as Kṛṣṇa and the arcā forms. The available sources
have been fully utilised in this study of this aspect of love.
Apart from devotion which functions ordinarily not at the
mystic level but which draws man closer to the deity, the
spirit of service which man owes to his deity as an act of obli-
gation gets treatment and is shown to attain its perfection in
rendering service to the bhūgavatas. The rich blissful experi-
ence which a devotee is allowed to have by the deity here with-
in the limitations of the material world is openly proved as
obtainable even in the state of release. This aspect does not
receive this much of explicit support in the sources which are
said to belong to the earliest period of literary development.
of eulogizing the bhāgavata cult than what is actually needed to understand the spirit and tenor of the Ālvārs. The anecdotes which find room often times in these commentaries cloud much of the main issue which are involved in the interpretation of the original text.

The last section shows that the doctrine of self-surrender though not unknown in the period before the Ālvārs got a direct advocacy in the composition of the Ālvārs and finding room in the spiritual training became one of the cardinal tenets of the post-Rāmānuja Vaiṣṇavism. It is no exaggeration to state emphatically that through Rāmānuja who gave importance to the path of devotion keeping those of karma and jñāna at just below its level on account of the influence borne on him by the teachings of the Ālvārs7 that the devotional aspect, the mystic ideal of Nature and Bride, the spirit of service to God and His men which characterise any religious faith permeated the theistic schools of later Vaiṣṇavism such as those of Maṭhwa, Nimbārka, Vallabha and others. A study of these compositions in comparison to that of these later schools of Vaiṣṇavism would have pertinence to a study undertaken on the development of bhakti according to Rāmānuja and so is not attempted here as it lies beyond the scope of this thesis.

The materials on which this study is based as also a table showing the method of transliteration adopted are given separately before the thesis proper. The appendicies which are eight in number contain information on the list of Brahma Vidyas, the order of enumerating the Ālvārs, and the anecdotes referred to by the Ālvārs but not traceable to any known source. A list is given on the number of verses composed by Nammāḻvar on the arcā forms of God enshrined in various temples. Another list here contains the number of shrines exclusively celebrated by some Ālvārs. The list of succession of the Vaiṣṇavits ācāryas is also given for the understanding of the two traditions of the post-Rāmānuja school. A table setting out the dates of the Ālvārs acceptable to the traditionalists also forms a separate appendix.
The work was originally submitted as a doctoral Thesis to Sri Venkateswara University. I heartily acknowledge the able guidance provided for the work by Dr. V. Varadachari, then Reader in Sanskrit Department of the University and now Professor Emeritus in the Department. But for his unstinting help and meticulous supervision the work could not have been taken shape as it has.

My thanks to Dr. S. Viswanathan of the Department of English for going through the manuscript and offering useful suggestions.

I owe the publication of the work in book form to the University Grants Commission and to the Government of Tamil Nadu whose generous grants have made it possible. I record my keen appreciation of the scrupulous care with which the printing and get-up of the book have been attended to by the S.V. University Press.

I place on record my gratefulness to Sri M. Anantasayanam Ayyengar, former Speaker of the Lok Sabha and ex-Governor of Bihar, for graciously consenting to write a Foreword to this volume. It is the volume’s privilege to have an introductory word from this distinguished son of India who is an uncompromising votary of Indian Culture and the premier citizen of the holy city of Tirupati.

As a humble gesture to appreciation and regard, I dedicate this volume to late lamented Bharata Ratna Dr. S. Radhakrishnan who did more than any one to acquaint the West with the true essence of Indian thought.

TIRUPATI – 517 502
5 June 1977

N. SUBBU REDDIAR
THE MATERIALS ON WHICH THIS STUDY IS BASED


This work consists of:
(a) Six Thousand by Tirukkurukaip-pirān Pillān
(b) Nine Thousand by Naṅciyar
(c) Twelve Thousand by Vātikesari Aḻakiya Maṅavāḷa Jiyar
(d) Twenty-four Thousand by Periyavāccān Pillai
(e) Thirty-six Thousand by Vaṭakkut-tiruvīṭip-pillai
(f) Arumpatam by Kuṇakarampākkam Rāmānuja Jiayar
(g) Drāmidōpaniṣad-sāram by Vedānta Deśika
(h) Drāmidōpaniṣad-tātparyaratnāvali by Vedānta Deśika
(i) Drāmidōpaniṣhad-saṅgati by Vātikesari Aḻakiya Maṅavāḷa Jiayar
(j) Tiruvāymoḷi-nūṟṟantāṭi by Maṅavāḷamāmāṇikaḷ

3. Annangaracharya P.B.: Divyārta Dīpikai on Nālāyiram (Kanchipuram, Madras).

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A.G.P.  Ärāyirāp-pati Guruparamparā
A.H.  Ācārya Ṣṛdayam
Ahir. S.  Ahirbudhnya Sāṁhitā
Ait. Br.  Aitareya Brāhmaṇa
Ait. Up.  Aitareya Upaniṣhad
AKN.  Akaṇṭhīrū
AL. ST.  Āḷavatār Ṣtotram
A.P.  Amalaṇāṭipirāṇa
Anan. S.  Ānanda Sāṁhitā
A.V.  Atharva Veda
Atri. S.  Atri Sāṁhitā
B.D.S.  Boudhāyana Dharmā-sūtra
Bhāg. P.  Bhāgavata Purāṇa
Bhag. Vis.  Bhagavad-Viṣayam
Bhr. S.  Bhāradvāja Sāṁhitā
Bh. G.  Bhagavad-gītā
Bh. G. B.  Bhagavad-gītā Bhāṣya
Bhr. S.  Bhrgū Sāṁhitā
Br. B. S.  Brhadbrāhma Sāṁhitā
Br. Up.  Brhad Āranyaka Upaniṣad
C. TML.  Cūrīya Tirumāṭal
Ch. Up.  Ānḍogya Upaniṣad
CLP.  Cilappatikāram
D.Sm.  Dākṣa Smṛti
D. S.C.  Divyasūri Caritai
G.P.  Guruparamparā
Gar. P.  Garuḍa Purāṇa
Git. San.  Gūṭartha Saṅgraha
H.G.S.  Hiranyagarbha Sāṁhitā
H.V.  Harivamsām
I.Tv.  Īraṇṭām Tiruvantāti
Iś. S.  Īśvara Sāṁhitā
Iś. Up.  Īśa Upaniṣad
Iti. Sam.  Itihāsa Samuccaya
Jay. S.  Jayākhyā Sāṁhitā
Kath. Up.  Katha Upaniṣad
Kau. Up.  Kauśītaki Upaniṣad
K. C.  Kaṇṭinunā Cūruttāmpu
Ken. Up.  Kena Upaniṣad
KLT.  Kalittokai
K.R.  Kamparāmāyaṇam
KRN  Kuruntokai
Kur. P.  Kūrma Purāṇa
L.T.  Lākṣmī Tantram
M.Šm.  Manusmṛti
M. Tv.  Mutal Tiruvantāti
Mahan. Up.  Mahānārāyanīya Upaniṣad
Mai. Up.  Maitri Upaniṣad
Mān. Up.  Māṇḍukya Upaniṣad
Mar. S.  Marīci Saṃhitā
M. Bh.  Mahābhārata
MLP  Mullaip-pāṭṭu
MNMT  Maṇimēkalai
MTK  Maturaik-kāṅci
Mu. Tv.  Mūṇrām Tiruvantāti
Mun. Up.  Munḍaka Upaniṣad
Nars. Up.  Narasimha Upaniṣad
Nāc. Tm.  Nācciyar Tirumoḷi
Nāṅ. Tv.  Nāṅmukaṇ Tiruvantāti
Nār. Kal.  Nāradiya Kalpa
Nār. P.  Nāradiya Purāṇa
Nār. S.  Nāradiya Saṃhitā
Nār. Up.  Nāradiya Upaniṣad
Nār.  Up.  Nārāyanīya Upaniṣad
N.B.S.  Nārada Bhakti-sūtra
N.P.R.  Nārada Pāñcarātra
NRR.  Naṟṟṇai
P. TML.  Periya Tirumaṭal
P. Tv.  Periya Tiruvantāti
Pad. P.  Padma Purāṇa
Pād. S.  Pādma Saṃhitā
Padm. P.  Padmōṭṭara Purāṇa
Pan. Br.  Paṇcavimśa Brāhmaṇa
Par. S.  Parama Saṃhitā
P.P.S.  Paramapurūṣa Saṃhitā
Pārāmes. S.  Pārāmeśvara Saṃhitā
PRP.  Paripāṭal
Pau. S.  Pauskara Saṃhitā
Peri. Tm.  Periya Tirumoḷi
P.T.A.  Periya Tirumoḷi Aṭaivu
Periyal. Tm.  Periyāḷvār Tirumoḷi
Perum. Tm.  Perumāḷ Tirumoḷi
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<td>P.P.</td>
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<td>Puranāṉūṟu</td>
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<td>Ram.</td>
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<td>R.N.</td>
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<td>R. T. S.</td>
<td>Rahasyatrayasāra</td>
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<td>R. V.</td>
<td>Rg. Veda</td>
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<td>Śrī Vacana Pūṣaṇam</td>
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<td>Svētāsvatara Upaniṣad</td>
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<td>Tc. V.</td>
<td>Tiruccanta Viruttam</td>
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(1) The number following the title indicates the number of the verse. e.g. M.Tv. 59 means Mutaś Tiruvantati, verse 59; T.Pv 28 means Tirup. pāvai, verse 28 and so on.

(2) When two numbers are used, the first number denotes the hymn or chapter (adhyāya, prāśna, valli, anuvāka, khāṇḍa etc.) or kātaī and the second one, the verse or line in it. e.g. Tol. 3: 45 means Tolkappiyam, Book 3, cuttiram 45; Perum. Tm. 8: 6 means Perumal Tirumoli, Hymn 8, verse 6; Sv. Up. 5: 13 means Śvetāśvatara Upaniśad, fifth adhyāya, verse 13; PRN. 23: 13 means Purāṇāṇিru, verse 23, line 3, and so on.

(3) When three numbers are used, the first denotes the work, the Tirumoli or Tirumurai, the second the hymn, and the third the verse. e.g. T.V.M. 6.9: 7 means Tiruvāymoli 6, hymn 9, and verse 7; mere number such as 7.96: 9 means Tirumurai 7, hymn 96, verse 9; Ch. Up. 3.14: 2 means Chāndogya Upaniśad, third prapāṭhaka, fourteenth khāṇḍa verse 2; CLP. 3.22: 11 42-48 means Cilapatikāram, kantam 3, katal 22, lines 42 to 48 and so on.

(4) In the case of other books of commentary or of scholarship, the number refers to the page or pages and is preceded by p or pp.

(5) Wherever words or phrases are quoted from the texts, their transliterated forms are indicated by double marks of quotation, and the translated version of the same by single marks of quotation. In all other cases, the diacritical marks alone easily distinguish them as transliterated words or phrases. Wherever translated versions alone are given, they are denoted by double marks of quotation.
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| 789  | 15   | rigorously |
| 797  | 32   | Siddha |
| 814  | 8    | Śrī |
| 816  | 30   | from |
| 820  | 22   | Periya-parakālaśvāmin |
| 858  | 26   | conscious |
| 866  | 1    | disturbed thereafter. |
SUMMARY

The idea of God is innate in man. Some are fortunate to have the realization of God and very often they pass through various stages beginning from rigid self-training and culminating in divine communion. The *avatāra* of the released selves as Ālvārs could be justified with reference to these stages of God-realization. The inexpressible ultimate Reality finds in the selves a kind of articulation however inadequate it could be for giving a full description of Godhead. The Ālvārs, leaving aside the ontological, and epistemological approaches for the study of God, make the aesthetic approach, and their attempt represents the continuation of the Upaniṣadic description of God. The compositions of the Ālvārs have therefore a greater appeal to the human mind.
Chapter I

Introduction

India has been a secular state since she gained independence in 1947. It has been so declared in the Indian Constitution which came into force on the 26th January, 1950. This declaration was made to suit the conveniences of administering a land peopled by inhabitants who profess faiths which are other than the indigenous Hinduism. Nevertheless, the fact remains there that religion is the warp and woof of the Hindu society. It has been so for millennia. The stability of the Hindu society down to the present day notwithstanding the impact on it of foreign faiths, the uninterrupted enlightened attitude towards ultimate Reality and a real, enduring earnestness in the cause of peace characterize the Hindu society and this is not a little due to the religious influence on the people. It was Alexis Carrel that remarked: "Religion brings to man an inner strength, spiritual light, ineffable peace."

A society needs economic development without which it will be subjected to the militant power of other societies. The economic stability may make it grow stronger with the further development of material welfare. Without the guidance for chalking out the correct path in its policies, the society may acquire an aggressive attitude and as such it needs some direction in the right path. Religion performs this function in a society, by keeping the economic power under proper control without undermining it. The Latin proverb says, 'A man without religion is like a beast without bridle'. What applies to an individual is applicable, with equal felicity, to a society and a nation which is constituted by many individuals who impart strength to the individuality of the nation by their just behaviour. Irreligion or anti-religion is practised by a minority in a nation whose expectations are not fulfilled by the preach-
ings of that religion which they follow and so turn against their own religion out of sheer frustration. Treating the origin and development of irreligion, which is, of course, very ancient, is out of context when the religious attitudes, backed by philosophical inquiry, should engage the attention and study of a research worker.

The word ‘religion’ is made up of two parts, namely, ‘re’ and ‘ligion’ which mean respectively ‘again’ and ‘binding’. The word when thus derived can be taken to mean that man who is finite is part of the infinite from which he got separated. When it is said that he formed part of the infinite, what is meant is that he existed formerly in close union with the infinite. On account of his deeds he had to come away from it and hence the suffering is all the more severe. Even in bondage he is not really far away from the infinite, but owing to karma he feels the separation very keenly such that by practising the religious acts he could get at the Divine. The basis for this kind of feeling is only the desire to get bound or tied again to the infinite. The feeling that the finite is separated from the Divine and is not in a position to have direct communion because of the limitations which are set by the physical frame and material surroundings creates in man a conviction that he had committed a sin on account of which he could not be with God. The acts of sin committed now and then by force of circumstances do affect man. The pious men and the saints do not commit sin; but yet feel that they are sinners. They declare at times that they are the repositories of sins and are at the head of the host of sinners.1 Thus it is not the committing of sins that makes these pious selves get themselves filled with remorse, but the feeling of having committed the sinful acts that makes them give expression to their having sinned. This is called nācyāṇusandhāna a mere declaration that they are sinners. Any act of unfaithfulness which they are forced to commit creates in them a more serious sense of sinfulness than in the case of an ordinary person who commits it.2 This is the reason why such men are not able to bear sepa-

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1 Śtstra-ratnam 23; cf. T.V.M. 4.7.1,3,9; ibid. 5.7.1,2.
2 The Essentials of Theism, p.148.
ration from the deity, while an ordinary man, who though attracted by divine perfection, is not much worried by the lack of opportunities of having God-vision. While in the case of the latter, the thought of God does engage a little of his time, in the case of the former matters other than those of the Divine get insignificant attraction.

The idea of God is innate in man. It is not actually acquired by education or any training spiritual or otherwise. People who could be condemned as very low and uncivilised believe in God. The very lowest Australian bushfolk—the most barbarous perhaps of barbarous creatures—believe in the existence of a supreme being who is a moral law-giver and judge. They even call him 'Father' and worship him in the character of an elderly gentleman. Savages are rarely atheists like us 'they entertain the larger hope.' To have the idea of God is however different from having religious sense.

Sentimental minds are easily affected by beautiful expressions and enchanting music during religious worship. Such affections may reveal themselves in the form of external manifestations such as the gush of the tears of joy, change of voice choked with tears and others. Both those who are subjected to these experiences and who witness them are likely to take these manifestations as religious experiences. However, even the non-believers in the existence of God get, on occasions like these, such emotional experiences, but this need not be wholly applied to all cases, as there are cases of genuine devotees who are to be marked out to be as such with much diligence. However, their experiences could not serve to guide others who are yet to enter the realms of God-realization. People of this kind could form the group of persons who require others' guidance in the matter of spiritual experiences and are better placed than others, for sympathetically responding to the religious content of the appeals made by men of devout faith.

The development of religious consciousness is not a sudden phenomenon. A rather unromantic and deep study of God and His existence is required to be made by the aspirants to spiritual experiences. This will have to be undertaken, not in temples where the din and pomp of festivities easily attract all kinds of persons, but in secluded spots where the earnest aspirant could be in the least affected by the elements of temptation. Such cultivation of a disciplined life ensures at the right time which would be at any time near or distant the budding of the religious experience. This process could rather be likened to the flowering of plants which requires definite lapses of times varying according to the nature of the plant since the seeds were sown for their growth. This could be taken to represent the procedure of karma, jñāna, and yoga which should, as matters of events, follow one after another. However, this may not universally hold good. Man has, at the time of his birth, some residues of previous lives. The achievements in those lives, if any, could possibly change this order with the result that while some are destined to take only to the path of karma, others are endowed, at the time of birth, with sufficient knowledge of ultimate truth that they are not required to do all the deeds. Yet, others, like a yogin in trance, indulge in thoughts about the divine.

Men, whether they pass through these stages or suddenly enter into the portals of God-realization, are not at all competent to guide the destinies of people through their religious experiences. Very few alone among them would have had the direct vision of God. The finitude of humanity cannot by any means gauge the perfection of the divine. It is left to the infinite Being to choose the occasion and reveal Itself to the aspirant and endow him with the necessary equipment for enjoying communion with Him. All the same, it is not every God-chosen man that could himself express to others his experience with God. With all the wealth of attainments for the same, the person may not be able to communicate his experience to others. Some could do this through an artless

5. cf. ibid., p. 7.
talk. Only very few may be able to give expression to their experiences in well-chosen words of enduring appeal. Infinity of God is so inexhaustible that even the most well-equipped God-intoxicated poet cannot adequately speak about God.7

The fortunate selves, who were chosen by God and who had gone to enjoy spiritual communion of non-earthly kind after leaving their mortal coil, are endowed with faultless knowledge of God and His attributes. They have capacities to have enjoyment of bliss (ānanda) and as such are better equipped than others to speak of communion with God. It is this fact that suggests of what would have formed the basis for the divine descent of the Āḻvārs and Ācāryas. While some of them are held to be the divine weapons of Viṣṇu descended down to the earth, others are verily, Ādiśeṣa and Viṣvakṣena. The contact with the material world does not in the least affect the nature of their having been released. With their knowledge and other attributes without being influenced by the limitations of the world, they moved on as if they were in Vaikuṇṭham. The mortal frame alone declared them to be men on earth. This is clear from the life accounts of all the Āḻvārs, with notable exceptions.8 These exceptions are exceptions only in one sense. While the other Āḻvārs had occasions to display their God-hunger from the very time of their birth, these had to wait for an occasion for their spiritual realization getting aroused. This does not however prove that they do not belong to the host of devout men.

As it is God that awakens religious consciousness in man, it is not necessary that to be religious-minded, one should be intelligent or undergo training.9 This is clear from the example of Dhruva.10 Just as one could lead a pure life without being learned and one who is deeply learned is not necessarily

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7. It is in this light that the Upaniṣadic passage requires to be explained. cf. Taitt. Up. 2: 9; The Essentials of Theism, p.93.
9. Man, the Unknown, pp. 282-83.
found to lead a moral life, aesthetic and religious senses could be aroused in men who have no education. Those who are educated are found to lack in aesthetic and religious senses. Hence religious consciousness is not the prerogative of the learned few nor is it confined to the persons born in the higher castes only. The Vaiṣṇavite theology has wisely adopted a sane line of interpretation. Instead of giving credit to the superior social status of a devotee, it has made God's grace, after the pattern of *Upaniṣads*, as mainly responsible for the arousing of religious consciousness, the individual, whatever be his status, being only the medium for the display of religious sense. It is in this sense that Nammāḻvār, though he was not born in the higher caste, is admitted in the tradition of the Vaiṣṇavite religion as the super-*prapanna*, being at the head of all his followers and through whom alone all who came after him have to approach God.

While speaking about God whose infinity in every one of His aspects lies beyond human range, limitations of one kind or other are to be faced. God is the Lord of time and He is not in time. He is beyond space and not within it. Everything other than God is finite. Therefore there is nothing that could be brought in to depict Him or any aspect of His with reference to the temporal, spatial and objective world. It is because of this that the Supreme Person is said to be beyond the reach of the words and thought.\(^{11}\) However, men cannot assume silence on this account. He begins to articulate or blabber what is surging within. This inadequacy of expression is responsible for man's incompetence to effectively and correctly describe God. He therefore chooses his own expressions, for he does not know any other. He draws for purposes of analogical expressions, instances of the world with which he is familiar. Hence he describes God as sugarcane, honey and so on.\(^{12}\) All the same, these do not fully bring out the greatness of God.

\(^{11}\) Taitt. Up 2: 9.

\(^{12}\) Peri. Tm. 7.3; 10; cf. ibid. 2 3: 2; ibid. 7 10: 1, 2 and T.V.M. 3.4. and *The Essentials of Theism* p. 94.
A passionate longing on the part of the devotee to have direct vision of God is not without justification. The prayers and pleadings would not only become unintelligible and worthless but would also create in the mind of the devotee an utter indifference, though not dis-illusionment, towards God, had not the Deity taken step to communicate Himself to the devotees. The sense of complete dependence of the devotee on God instils hope for the aspirant and makes the sufferings for reunion with God bearable. That self could have the direct apprehension of God who chooses to display His greatness to it. It is in this sense that God's presentation of His omnipresent form to Arjuna is to be explained. Man's limited powers of understanding are no match for God's eminence and as such he approaches God with the commingling of reverential fear and attraction. There is room for fear because the whole thing is mysterious and he cannot any longer bear the sight which overpowers him. Divine perfection however draws him near God.

The impact of the external world on the human mind could be interpreted to be threefold. The ideas are aroused, the objectiveness is felt and the human beings function themselves with reference to it verbally or through physical activities. Logic, sense organs and semantics respectively operate in these three fields. The results which are arrived at through the operation of these, establish that there shall be a powerful being behind the subjective world as well as the objective one. The mind of that being who could be designated as God is behind all this. The tasks of creation and protection of these presuppose that the idea of God is sustainable. The more one reflects deeply on this the more one is convinced that a reverential attitude is aroused in man for God. Naturally, those who reflect and meditate upon this become worshippers of the Divine. Others who could not adopt this process follow simply what these do and join them. This is the reason why worshippers of God are far more numerous than the worshippers of mammon or any other thing in the world.  

Philosophy, which is of the nature of enquiry into the nature of reality, adopts several methods of proving the existence of God such as metaphysical and ontological and the moralistic. It is one thing to attempt at proving God’s existence and it is another to attempt at knowing Him. The former is an act which is purely an intellectual feat and comprises analytical procedures which tend to become more and more abstract, leaving aside the existential aspect of God. However, those who are keen on knowing Him do not but take note of the fact that there must be a creator for the world. The devotion which they have for the Divine does not make them indulge in abstract discussions as to the manner in which creation could have taken place or the materials out of which the world has been created. The idea that He who created does also afford protection and therefore He alone shall be approached for protection is uppermost in their minds. Hence the devout worshippers, like the Ālvārs, refer constantly to

The general understanding of creation is that God creates the world in order that the selves, which he inactive during the period of deluge, could take the physical frames in accordance with the results of their past deeds and undergo experiences for such actions and gain also fresh and new ones which if He wills would contribute to their spiritual progress and if He does not would leave them far behind. The Vaiśpavite theology would offer a better and more convincing explanation for this theory. As a matter of fact, this is, in a general way, the interpretation offered by the theologians of any religion. The Upaniṣads declare that creation is an act of the Will of the Divine and that the world is a sport. Both these require an explanation. Why should the Divine entertain a will? If the intention of God is to bring a world into being in which the selves would have recompense for their

14. These methods are not fully effective. Vide: God in Modern Philosophy, pp. 398–399 and History of Western Philosophy, p. 476.
15. cf. The Essentials of Theism, pp. 117, 141.
17. V.S. 2.1: 33.
deeds, then this would be only a repetition of what happened earlier, that is, before deluge. Again, God is said to enjoy the world as a child does its playthings. The selves are not inanimate objects like playthings. They have the capacity to enjoy or suffer when affected by others. Will not God be contributing to their suffering also? How then could he be justified if He adds to their sufferings in His sports with them? A study of the compositions of the Āḻvārs shows that God creates the world through His Will prompted by generosity for mankind. If finite beings exist, they do so because of the sustenance they derive from the Infinite. The selves, which also come under the category of the finite, shall not be allowed to remain in complete ignorance of their nature in relation to the Supreme Person. God therefore provides, through creation, an opportunity for the selves to "have an actual share in the general nature of being". This is well expounded in Vaiṣṇavite theology. It is to protect His men that God descends down to the earth which He has created. It could rather be said with the Āḻvār that God takes such forms which His particular devotee yearns to behold and have communion with and presents Himself before him. This explains the various descents which the Lord took in vibhava and also arca. God felt that He should be with His man and came to him, entered his heart and filled it up to the brim. He made the Āḻvār realize His full pervasion of His person. He has not chosen to leave him on any account. The Āḻvār notably observes that He is casting His looks hither and thither remaining within him. It is this kind of intense communion which the cowherdesses in Vrindavana sought passionately. This is suggested to be the motive for the creation of the world and divine descent of the Lord.

Theology is based on mere faith which takes divine disclosure of truth as never failing and hence does not provide

18. The Essentials of Theism, p. 103.
19. M. Tv. 44.
20. T.V.M. 1.7: 7; 9.6: 3, 5, 8, 10.
21. ibid., 1.9.
22. Rāmānuja: Bhagavadgītābhāṣya 4:8
scope for the exercise of free reasoning. Revelation is admitted of unquestioned authority. On the other hand, philosophical enquiry affords room for a critical examination of all facts and begins questioning even the authority of revelation. The Vaiśeṣic school brings about a reconciliation between the two. Revelation can be examined critically but could not be discarded. Revelation which takes the name of the Vedas is a document as it were containing the findings of eternal truths offered by great seers as a result of their spiritual intuition. These truths intuited by the sages lie beyond the operation of the senses and so beyond inference also. Naturally the authority of revelation which contains information on these truths cannot be explained away but could be explained on grounds of reason.

The Taittiriya Upaniṣad begins with an enquiry of Brahman and notes the stages marked by ānanda, prāma, manas, vijnāna and ānanda. The conclusion arrived at is that Brahman is ānanda which is a strong ground for maintaining that Brahman is bliss (ānanda) and rasa (delectation). Bliss is not denied to the individual self but there is a gradation in the quantum of bliss which goes on increasing with the selves who are placed at different levels. It is said in this Upaniṣad that the bliss of Brahman is too great being at the highest stage representing it from the stage of man.²³ Both these facts are to be studied together and result of this study would show that Brahman is of unexcelled bliss. The Sanskrit word for unexcelled is ‘niratiṣaya’ which means unsurpassed, thereby meaning ‘that a stage higher than that of Brahman does not exist’. The Śaiva school of the Upaniṣads. Hence Nammāḻvār begins the Tiruvāyum with the words “uyarvu aṟa uyarnalam utaiyavaṉ”. “uyarvu aṟa” means ‘having no higher of that category’. “uyarṇlam” means ‘great bliss’. The passage means that Brahman has great bliss which has no higher stage. This is only a paraphrase, rather a more explicit rendering of the Sanskrit word ‘niratiṣaya’. Another factor that requires mentioning here is that the word ‘brahman’ which means ‘big and in-

²³ Taitt Up. 2: 8.
creasing' is aptly rendered by Nammāḻvār in the passage cited above. To be huge or great, Brahman must have some other objects which shall be smaller to it. To be increasing, it must go on increasing, the previous stages being marked by the occupation of others which could not compete with it. Both these meanings show that Brahman is supreme and must possess attributes which alone could be made use of for noting the difference between it and others. Innumerable qualities should be meant here, for Brahman's eminence and superiority over other things must be in all aspects without exception. The Upaniṣads rightly state ānanda as the supreme mark of Brahman and rightly did Nammāḻvār note this and introduced this concept in the opening line of the Tiruvāyul. The ultimate truth (tattva) is thus started here by the Āḻvār.

The Upaniṣads describe Brahman as 'rasa', that is, enjoyable. The next passage tells us that on getting it, the self becomes blissful. That is, the self is able to enjoy communion with God after realizing Brahman. Standing at a distance with awe and terror is not what characterises God-realization. It is not simple karma, doing rights which are enjoined by the Vedas. Merely knowing Brahman does not satisfy the self. Enjoyability of God's presence marks the result which the self shall aspire for even in this life. There is thus a mystic tinge in the Vaiṣṇavite concept of God-realization. This experience (anubhava) cannot be complete and perfect so long as the self lives in this world. It can assume its fullness (paripūrṇabrahmānubhava) only in the stage of final release when all shackles of the material kind get shattered.

It is held that the Upaniṣadic passages like 'All this is verily Brahman'25 point to the pantheistic tinge, but what this passage means is that this world constituting all the existent things is Brahman. The world does not exhaust Brahman which transcends it.26 Besides, the passage means that the

25. Ch. Up. 3.14:1
world is in Brahman, owing its being and sustenance to it. God is transcendental, a feature which explains His infinitude. He is also immanent which consists not only in being the inner essence of the world, or their core but also its epicentre controlling and ruling the world. This explains that God is the redeemer “apportioning pleasures and penalties in exact proportion to the moral worthiness of the kartā or doer.”27 This Vedāntic concept of Brahman does not offer any consolation to suffering humanity. The negative concept28 of Brahman having no inequality or cruelty with reference to the selves who get the results according to the nature of their deeds29 does not give the selves any hope for depending upon God in order to become free from the miserable effects of the deeds committed voluntarily or otherwise. God is therefore declared in the Āgamas as taking the five forms out of mercy for helping humanity. These forms do not represent any anthropomorphic development. Rightly does the school of Vaiṣṇavism attach importance to the vibhava and arcā forms of God. Even there the arcā form gets more significance. Divine grace makes God take the divine form called Subhāś-raya or Divyamaṅgalavigraha (auspicious form) the very name of which shows that it has no material setting. This sets aside the concept of incarnation of the Christian theology from getting applied to this concept of vibhava and arcā which could be better rendered by the word ‘avatāra’ or divine descent. Divine mercy which displays itself in these forms is the outcome of the ethical perfection of God which is represented by amalatva. In one word ‘amalatva’ shows the absence of all possible defects and attributable changes which the selves and the non-sentient things are subjected to. This quality stands for purity of all kinds.

The Absolute or abstract deity does not satisfy the God-hunger of man. The devotion of man does not get perfected until there is a response from the Divine. Man yearns to have some sort of personal relationship with God. The concept of

27. The Philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita, p. 152.
28. V.S. 2.1: 34.
29. Br, Up. 4.4: 5.
a personal deity is thus necessary for the devout worshipper. What kind of personal relationship man would be desirous of having cannot be easily determined. It depends to a large extent on two factors. The first one is the nature of response on the part of God that would evoke feelings of attraction in the devotee. The second factor lies in the mental attitude, aptitude and capacity of man to receive the particular kind of response from God. The accumulated residues of *karma* of the self in previous births have a definite part in shaping the predilections of man. One cannot predict what kind of reception the self would be able to offer to God. God could be considered as creator and protector. In general, fatherhood of God could receive stress in this case. Respect coupled with freedom, restraint associated with submission to the dictates of a supreme well-wisher and a sense of security which the deity would not withhold from the sinner, not in the least mindful of the latter’s defects, mark the attitude of the devotee. The forms of the Lord as the child *Kṛṣṇa* and the youthful Rāma attracted almost all the Āḻvārs making them treat such forms with parental affection. It is really surprising how the element of devotion transforms the attitude of the devotees. Parental affection is expected by the devotees of God but here, the devotee treats himself as the parent of the child who is God Himself. In certain cases, the loveliness of the form of God as that of *Kṛṣṇa* and more so of that in the *arcā* form as in the shrines of Tirunāraiyūr captured the mind and senses of the Āḻvārs to the extent of making them behave as though they were the spouses fit for the Lord.

One of the greatest contributions made by the Āḻvārs in regard to the concept of the Godhead is the stress on the infatuating aesthetic beauty of God. The theological background for this is supplied in the sacred texts such as epics, *Purāṇas* and Āgamas. The Āḻvārs went into raptures at the enchanting beauty of the *arcā* forms which they identified with the Sleeping Beauty in the milky ocean and the *vibhava* forms.\(^{30}\) The aesthetic attribute *ānanda* forms the basis for the enjoyment of the forms whose attractiveness is to a large

\(^{30}\) *The Philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita*, p.205.
extent related to the ethical perfection of amalāvya. This is well borne out by the composition of Tiruppāṇāḷvār who begins it by referring to this attribute and surveys graphically the Sleeping Beauty at Śrī Raṅgam from foot to head. The Āḻvārs conceive of this elegant beauty even in Nature which serves as a vesture to the Divine and become attracted to God treating Him as a child or lover and themselves as father, mother and beloveds. It is rightly remarked: “But to the mumukṣu, as a mystic who seeks the intimacy of communion, the ontological Beyond and the ethically Perfect have no value or attraction. It is aesthetics that mediates between metaphysics and ethics and brings down heaven to earth, and elevates earth to heaven. Aesthetics is midway between sensuousness and spirituality, and bridges the gulf between the finite and infinite”.

The compositions of the Āḻvārs are more expository of God-realization than being a critical enquiry into God's existence. Their mystical experiences are recorded in their compositions. The Āḻvārs had much of the aesthetic temperament which involves hard discipline and renunciation of all the things in the world. Practice of contemplation shall be continued for a long time expecting the spiritual light to be shed. Shut from the world, the aspirant weans himself from himself. “His mind escapes from space and time”. He gets communion with God and enjoys his realization of the ineffable Being possessed of aesthetic perfection and innumerable virtues which draw the human mind to It.

The idea of God, as could be gathered from the ancient sources such as Vedas, Itihāsas, Purāṇas and Āgamas, is found inherited by the Āḻvārs. The Nalāyira Divya Prabandham took up for treatment a personal deity, endowed with a frame of aesthetic perfection. Initiated into mystic experience, the Āḻvārs went into raptures at their communion with the Divine beauty which presented Itself in a variety of

31. ibid., p.201.
32. Man, the Unknown, p.132.
forms and at times in accordance with their wishes also. The one feature that could be declared to be prominent in their compositions is that they felt not infrequently the physical limitations which prevented them from having uninterrupted communion and yearned for a termination of these limits in order to have Him within and without and enjoy His immediate and intense presence.
PRE-ĀLVĀR PERIOD

SUMMARY

In this section it is shown that Vaiṣṇavite philosophy and religion which the Ālvārs have propounded in their works is as old as Hinduism. While philosophy defines Brahma as the Godhead that takes its role in creation, sustenance and destruction, religion identifies the same Godhead as unity in trinity with Viṣṇu who pervades all the souls.

Viṣṇu is a Vedic deity occupying a subordinate position in the Ṛg Veda. He rose to eminence during the period of the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads. His three strides made Him identified with the sun. He is at first a friend and well-wisher of Indra. His eminence is evident from the appellation Puruṣa which He assumed. On the plane of ritualism, He came to be identified with the sacrifice and on the philosophical side, He became the inner controller of all beings. The concept of His divine descent emerges in the later periods when He became fit for adoration and came to be called Nārāyaṇa.

In the epics and Purāṇas, Viṣṇu came to be treated as the supreme deity with the names Bhagavān, Vāsudeva and others. With His countless qualities endearing Him to humanity, both gods and
men approached Him in times of distress. The Pāñcarātra doctrines get treated in these works, especially in the Nārāyanīya section of the Mahā-bhārata. His various descents for the sake of humanity receive special attention in these works. Devotion, worship of the deity and devotees and congregational prayers form part of the practical religion preached here.

The Bhagavad-gītā identifies Kṛṣṇa with Viṣṇu. The concept of Viṣṇu as Puruṣa paves the way for the declaration of Śrī Kṛṣṇa as Puruṣottama, Viṣṇu as the Supreme Deity is reiterated here. Such concepts as that the world is real forming part of the Supreme, the concept of Prakṛti as not being an independent principle, the dependence of self on the Universal Self being only His instrument, that the self should do his duty, the doctrine of karma, the path of emancipation, and the relationship of God and the soul have received significant treatment in the Gītā. Stress is laid here on discipline and duty. Both the deed and its results are to be dedicated to Viṣṇu.

The Āgamas lay stress on the external mode of worship without barring the mental worship emphasized in the Gītā. The various modes of worship, their ritualistic details, the concept of five-fold forms of God, the emphasis on bhakti and prapatti, specific details with regard to the erection of the temples, information regarding the ethical life and code of conduct of the Vaiṣṇavites, specific details regarding the marks of a preceptor have all found their place in the Āgamic texts. The antiquity
of the Pāñcaratra mode of worship is known from epigraphical and literary sources. The arcā form of worship and the elevation of the act of worship to the state of sacred rite (yāga) are some of the striking features of the Āgamas. The Vaikhānasa mode, which is equally ancient, has some marked features. The Jitante Stotra which is perhaps pre-Āgamic in date, deals with the doctrine of prapatti and sād-guṇya of Viṣṇu.

The path of devotion is reiterated in the Bhakti-sūtras of Nārada and Śaṅḍilya with greater emphasis on the unique nature of devotion. Love of God is insisted as an essential pre-requisite for the operation of the divine Grace and therefore posited as a precondition for salvation. Classification of devotion, its manifestation in many forms, the means for the attainment of devotion, the positive means for the cultivation of devotion get full treatment in these texts. The Dharma-sūstras deal with the code of good conduct, modes of expiation for sinful deeds, the religious rites which are to be performed in the sacred fire and the greatness of the deities. The rules to be followed by the devotees of Viṣṇu are endorsed in these works.

These ideas and concepts spread to the far south and found entry in the ancient classics of Tamil literature some of which could be assigned to the period before the birth of Christ. The Pattu-p-pāṭṭu and Eṭṭu-t-tokai collections which are the production of these periods reveal the extent to which the fundamental doctrines of Vaiṣṇavism as recorded in the Sanskrit works came to be admitted into the Viṣṇu
cult in the Tamil regions. The *Pāñcarātra* concept of *vyūha* was a familiar tenet in these parts. Temple worship was a well-known trait of the cult of Viṣṇu. Certain anecdotes in the life accounts of Rāma, Kṛṣṇa and others not to be found in the Sanskrit sources, have been in vogue and seem to have had their rise only in these regions.

There were several streams of philosophical and religious tradition connected with the cult of Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa, Vāsudeva, Nārāyaṇa and Bhagavān are the names of the deity treated at different periods as fit for adoration. The identity of the deity as having some of these names was dealt in some of the source books and finally before the birth of Christ, all these names came to refer to only one deity, Nārāyaṇa. Devotion, mystic experiences, worship in the temple, features marking the life of a devotee have all come to form the foundations of the Viṣṇu cult in the period preceding that of the Āḻvārs and could be treated as the tenets of Vaiṣṇa-ism which created a deep impression on these Tamil Vaiṣṇavite saints.
CHAPTER II

VIŚṆU IN VEDIC LITERATURE

The *Vedas* are the earliest literary records of the ancient Indians. They are four under the names *Ṛgveda*, *Yajurveda*, *Sāmaveda* and *Atharvaveda*. Of these, the *Ṛgveda* is the earliest and is the foundation for the composition of the other three *Vedas*. The name ‘Ṛgveda’ means the *Veda* of adorations. Such adorations are directly addressed to gods whose forms shone forth in the hearts of the poets who were the seers of *Mantras*. Among the various gods who were adored in this *Veda*, Agni and Indra have about two-thirds of 1017 hymns addressed to them. Maruts, Rudra, Aśvins, Savitṛ, Varuṇa, Viṣṇu and Mitra are among the well-known gods who are adored in the remaining portion. Offerings were made in the sacred fire invoking the gods even at the very ancient time when the hymns were composed and for this reason, Agni who represented the sacred fire, was given special treatment in the *Ṛgveda*. Similarly, Indra, as the Lord of gods, received frequent invocations. Agni or Indra do not get any preferential treatment over the other gods nor is any special significance attached to the latter.

In the other *Vedas* and the *Brāhmaṇa* and *Āraṇyaka* portions of them including those of the *Ṛgveda*, Rudra and Viṣṇu gained prominence without any detriment to the positions of Agni and Indra. The exclusive importance which Rudra and Viṣṇu acquired is to be found for the first time in some of the *Upaniṣads* like *Ṣvetāsvatara*, *Atharvāśiras*, Jābala and others in the case of the former and *Mahānārāyaniya*, Subāla, *Nṛśimhatāpaniya* and others in the case of the latter. Later, their greatness shot forth in the *Itihasas* and *Purāṇas* to dizzy heights overshadowing the original great positions of other gods.
Among these two gods, Rudra is celebrated in the *Rgveda* as fierce, exalted and unassailable. The hymns addressed to Him refer to the fear of his terrible missiles. He is implored not to injure people, cattle and to save them from distress. He is referred to as the physician among the physicians. To avoid His wrath, oblations are to be offered to Him and obeisance to be shown to Him. Prayers are offered to Him in order that His worshippers could be happy with sons, grandsons and all their relatives. *Īsāna* and Kapardin appear as His epithets. In the other *Sāmhitās* and *Brāhmaṇas*, Mahādeva and Śiva occur as His names. He holds the Pīṇāka bow in the hand. The *Yajurveda* glorifies Him in a section which became known, as *Satarudriya*. This paved the way for His glorification in the *Śvetāsvatara-upaniṣad*.

The benevolent aspect of Rudra in offering protection to His worshippers in times of distress must have given rise to the appellation Śiva to Rudra. This word 'śiva' which means auspicious, came to be used for Rudra in the post-vedic period and the creed of Śaivism arose out of this word. The word, 'bhāgavata', which is normally taken to mean a devotee of Viṣṇu, seems to have been used with the word 'śiva' as *Śiva bhāgavata*, in the sense of devotee of Śiva.

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1. R.V. 1.43; 1.114; 2.33; 5.42; 7.46
2. ibid. 1.114:9; 2.33:9.
3. ibid. 2.33:10, 14.
4. ibid. 1.114:7, 8; 2.33:14
5. ibid. 2.33:4
6. ibid. 2.33:5
7. ibid 1.114:11; 5.42:11
8. ibid. 2.33:14
9. ibid. 2.33:9
10. ibid. 1.114:1
11. *Maitrāyaṇī Samhitā* 2.9.1; *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* 7.33; *Taittirīya Aranyaka* 10.11:2. Burning of the three cities is referred to in the *Taittirīya Samhitā* 6.2.3.
14. *Vārttika on Aṣṭādhyāyī* 2.1.60.
bhāgavatas are described\(^\text{15}\) to have "carried in their hands iron lances as an emblem of the deity they worshipped"\(^\text{16}\).

It is held that Śaivism was a flourishing creed in North-Western India and that the worship of Śiva extended in the hill regions in the West "as far as Bactria, the present Balkh in Afghanistan, and in the north as far Meros or Mēru, which may be identified with Pamir"\(^\text{17}\). It combined in it the elements of the Vedic and Indus Valley cultures\(^\text{18}\). In the course of its development, it absorbed many of the peculiarities of the Dravidian and Indus Valley civilization\(^\text{19}\). The Dravidian origin of Śaivism and the absorption of this creed into the Aryan fold is also advocated by some scholars. Kashmir and South India have been all along the greatest strongholds of Śaivism.

The Rudra-Śiva cult has more of the ascetic element and yogic practices which characterise the life of its votaries. It is only in the later stages of its development, particularly in Southern India, that devotion marked the dominant feature of this cult. Yet, the cult owes not a little to the Vedic texts for inspiration and development.

Vaiṣṇavism is as old as Śaivism, or for that matter Hinduism and it has been extolled through the ages as the religion of redemption. It connotes the religion in which Viṣṇu, the eternally pure and perfect, enters into the history of humanity with a view to redeeming the bound self from sinfulness and selfishness and vaiṣṇavise its nature. Śrī Vaiṣṇavism makes the meaning more explicit by defining the dual function of Viṣṇu as Śriyādhpati which consists in universal redemption. While Viśiṣṭādvaita as a philosophy defines Brahma as the Godhead that creates, sustains and destroys the universe with a view to brahmanising the finite self, Vaiṣṇavism in its religious aspect identifies the same Godhead

15. Mahābhāṣya 5.2:76
16. Evolution of Hindu Sects p. 94
17. ibid, p. 95
18. ibid. p. 102
19. ibid. p. 104
as unity in trinity with Viṣṇu who pervades all souls and vaisnavises their nature.

The Vedas comprise of four Books, Rk, Yajus, Sāma and Atharva. Each has four divisions called Samhitā, Brāhmaṇa, Āramvaka and Upaniṣad. In the view of the scholars of the West, these Vedas, together with these divisions, were composed at different periods by several authors. The Rg Veda is the earliest among them, some of whose hymns are found incorporated in the Samhitās of other Vedas. These scholars maintain that in the earliest periods, the Rg Vedic seers were worshipping Nature and that anthropomorphism was a feature of Vedic religion. It must, however, be said in this connection that the deities are considered to have both visible and invisible forms and that the forms which are considered to be visible have marked features which could belong to a corporeal form. This proves the inadmissibility of the theory of anthropomorphism. The very idea of worship presupposes that the worshipper is cognisant of the superior and beneficial features in the character of the deity concerned. Without having a concept of what a deity would be like, there cannot rise the concept of worship. Nature too is divine, according to the Hindu ideals, and so if it is said to have been propitiated, it must have been only as representing an aspect of the divine that worship could have proceeded.

Viṣṇu is a Vedic deity occupying a subordinate position in Rg-Veda. He is being celebrated in only five or six whole hymns, but his name occurs not more than a hundred times in all. He is said to be young, but vast in body, not a child, and his one great action is taking of three strides; hence he is called the wide strider. The word ‘urugāya’ which is used in Rg-Veda 1.154:1 is taken by A.A. Macdonell in the sense of ‘wide-going’. Sāyana, however, takes it in the sense of ‘praised by the great’. The long strides which he takes and the three steps by which he measures the universe, are always

22. The Central Philosophy of Buddhism. p. 15
described with an enthusiastic spirit. Of the three strides two are visible to men and can be approached by them, but the third no one can transgress, and is beyond the ken even of birds. But again it is said the wise see the highest place of Viṣṇu—called Paramapada—as it were an eye fixed in the heaven. That highest place where there is well of honey is said to be the dear abode of Viṣṇu, beyond the ordinary mortal ken, which man apprehends not, nor can the soaring winged birds pursue and in which Gods rejoice and god-seeking men delight. The Rg-Vedic poets pray that people may go to this blessed abode of Viṣṇu, 'where he himself dwells inscrutable' to enjoy felicity. Hopkins opines that the later popularity of the god lies in the importance of his Paramapada which is said to have been the home of departed spirits. In later times, Viṣṇu-pada became a synonym of the sky and the abode of Viṣṇu became the goal of spiritual aspirations of the devotees of that God and several places situated usually on the top of the hills came to be styled as Viṣṇu-pada.

It is understood from Durgācārya’s commentary on Yāśka’s Nirukta that the three steps of Viṣṇu are the three periods of the sun’s course viz., his rise, culmination and setting. But Keith points out that this interpretation is not in keeping with the highest place of Viṣṇu. According to another ancient commentator, Śākapūpi, by name, the three padas are believed to refer to the three-fold manifestation of light in the three divisions of the universe, viz., fire on earth, lightning in the atmosphere, and the sun in the sky.

23. RV. 1.155: 5.
25. ibid., I.154: 5.
26. ibid., I.155: 5.
27. ibid., VIII.29: 7.
28. ibid., I.154: 5.
30. Religions of India, p 56.
31. RV. 1.154: 5,6.
34. cf. Vedic Mythology, p.38.
Taittiriva Samhita and the Satapatha Brachman also refer to the three places of Vijn as earth, air and sky. The three imperishable steps mentioned in the Rg-Veda were endowed in later times with a spiritual meaning. The Besnagar inscriptions interpret the 'immortal' padas as denoting 'Self-control, renunciation, and vigilance which lead one to heaven' apparently pointing to the abode of Vijn as the God of gods.

The Rg-Veda regards Vijn as a youth and as a leader who is said to have defeated Sambara. In the capacity of a warrior Vijn is often closely associated with Indra and the two gods are supposed to be masters of the world. He is the helper of Indra with whom he is often allied in the fight with Vrtra. In the hymns addressed to Vijn alone Indra is the only other deity incidentally associated with him. One hymn is dedicated to the two gods conjointly. Through the Vrtra myth, the Maruts, Indra's companions, are drawn into alliance with Vijn, who throughout the hymns is praised in combination with them. According to a legend in the Aitareya Brachmana, Varuna, Brhaspati, and Vijn successively helped Indra in turning out the asuras. In the Rg-Veda Vijn is certainly inferior to Indra as is evident from such names as Indra-Vijn.

But there is no doubting the fact that the Vedic legends served as the basis on which the superstructure of the Vijn mythology of later times was built. Barnett suggests that, according to the lay imagination, a transfusion took place of some of the life blood of Indra, the most truly popular god of action among the Rg-Vedic deities, into the veins of Vijn. as a result of the close relation between the two gods in early Vedic conception.

According to later tradition, Vijn is considered as one of the manifestations of the sun. The later conception

36. Select Inscriptions I, pp.90 f.
38. ibid., 6.69; 7.99.
39. ibid., 4.18: 11.
40. ibid., 1.155.
41. ibid., 1.85: 7.
42. Ait Br. 3: 50.
43. ibid., 4.54: 4; 7.99: 5; 8.10: 2. etc.
44. Hindu Gods and Heroes., p.41.
of Viṣṇu as ‘udyatkoti-divākarābha’ and ‘savitrmanḍalamadhyavarin’ as well as his association with the conch or discus resembling the disc of the sun god with the bird Garuḍa, adapted from the Rg-Vedic conception of the sun as a winged celestial bird, also points to His solar character. In many passages of the Rg-Veda, Viṣṇu is mentioned along with the Ādityas, while later works represent Him as one of them. All this shows that Viṣṇu was regarded as the sun or endowed with the qualities of the sun.

Viṣṇu, in spite of his comparatively subordinate position in the Rg-Veda, began to rise in importance in the time of the Brāhmaṇas. In the Brāhmaṇic period there is the mention of Agni as the lowest (avama) of the gods and Viṣṇu as the highest (para). These two terms may be taken to mean ‘earthly’ and ‘heavenly’ gods respectively. But the same work also regards Viṣṇu as the door-keeper (dvārapa) of the gods. This is no doubt an uncomplementary epithet, unless it is taken to mean that Viṣṇu probably regulated entrance into the heavenly world. A Rg-Vedic passage calls Viṣṇu the germ (garbha) of ṛta which may mean sacrifice or moral order. According to the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, ‘Viṣṇu is the sacrifice; by striding, he obtained for the gods that all-pervading power which now belongs to them’. The equation of Viṣṇu with the spirit of sacrifice was possibly suggested by the fact that both were considered to be helping or strengthening Indra and other gods. In later literature, Viṣṇu is essentially connected with such names as yajña, yajñēśvara, yajñapurūṣa etc. According to the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa He averts the evil consequences of the defects in sacrifice, while Varuṇa protects the fruits of its successful performance. The same work regards Agni and Viṣṇu as the two dikṣāpalaḥ or guardians of initiation.

46. For the incidents in support of Viṣṇu’s importance, vide Sat. Br 14.1: 1; Taiti. Ar. 5: 1; Pan. Br. 7.5: 6.
48. ibid., 1: 30.
49. R.V. 1.156: 3.
52. Ait. Br. 3: 38.
53. ibid., 1: 4.
There is in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa the story of Viṣṇu the dwarf 54 which forms the germ of the post-Vedic story of the Vāmana-Trivikrama avatāra of Viṣṇu. The same Brāhmaṇa also says how ‘having assumed the form of a tortoise, Prajāpati created offspring’ and in the form of a boar, he (Prajāpati) raised the earth from the bottom of the ocean’.55 Again according to Taittirīva Āranyaka, the earth was raised from the waters by a black boar with a hundred arms and the Taittirīva Samhitā identifies the cosmogonic boar which raises up the earth with a form of Prajāpati.56 The former work also alludes to Narasimha or Man-lion. The story of the Great Deluge in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa represents the fish that towed Manu’s vessel into safety as a form of Prajāpati Brahmā and this is sometimes supported by epic and Purānic tradition. In later mythology, however, the function of the Boar, Fish and Tortoise forms of Prajāpati Brahmā is attributed to Viṣṇu, the most benevolent of the gods.

In the Maitri Upaniṣad57 food that sustains the universe is called the form of Bhagavad-Viṣṇu. In the Katha-Upaniṣad,58 the progress of the human soul is compared to a journey, the goal of which is said to be Viṣṇu’s Paramapadā, the abode of eternal bliss.59 The use of the word ‘paramapada’ in this sense lends support to the view that the elevation of Viṣṇu to the dignity of the Supreme Being was due to the fact that the expression was capable of being used to denote this sense. This shows that Viṣṇu was often regarded as the greatest god in later Vedic times. Sometime later, Viṣṇu became even a household god. According to the Āpastamba,60 Hiranyākeśin,61 and Pāraskara Gṛhya Sūtras,62 the bridegroom

55. ibid., 14. 1: 2.
56. Taitt. S. 7.1: 5.
60. Haradatta’s com. on Āpastamba Gṛhyaśūtra 2. 4:15.
62. Pāraskara Gṛhyaśūtra 1. 8:2.
is required to say to the bride in the ceremony of taking seven steps contained in the marriage ritual, ‘May Viṣṇu be with you’ This is perhaps a development of the Rg-Vedic idea that Viṣṇu is a protector of embryos and promoter of conception.\textsuperscript{63}

There are references in the Rg-Veda\textsuperscript{64} to Viṣṇu’s association with cows which is probably indicated by the epithet ‘gopa’ meaning ‘protector of the cows’ or ‘herdsman’ The same work describes the highest abode of Viṣṇu as the dwelling of ‘many horned swiftly moving cows’.\textsuperscript{65} The Baudhāyana Dharma-Sūtra calls him ‘Govinda’ (cow-keeper or herdsman) and ‘Dāmodara’ (one with the cord round his belly).\textsuperscript{66} In later times, spiritual interpretations of both the names were offered.\textsuperscript{67}

The idea which is prominent in the Upaniṣads is that Brahman is the ground of all things. He is a conscious principle.\textsuperscript{68} The word ‘ātma’ is used in these texts\textsuperscript{69} with free identification with Brahman and Puruṣa. The central theme of Upaniṣadic teaching is that Brahman is one without a second.\textsuperscript{70} All the gods are subordinated to him.\textsuperscript{71} Brahman has transcendent nature which baffles all human thought.\textsuperscript{72} He has marvellous qualities which lie beyond human imagination.\textsuperscript{73} He is depicted as having human perfections\textsuperscript{74} which endear the suffering humanity to Him. He creates the world\textsuperscript{75} and remains as its Inner Controller\textsuperscript{76} and the self also.\textsuperscript{77}

\textsuperscript{63} ibid., 7.36: 9; 10. 184: 1.
\textsuperscript{64} R.V. 1.22: 18; 10.19: 4.
\textsuperscript{65} ibid., 1.154: 6.
\textsuperscript{66} B.D.S. 2.5: 24.
\textsuperscript{67} M.Bh. 5.70: 8.
\textsuperscript{68} Ch. Up. 6.9: 3.4.
\textsuperscript{69} Br. Up. 2.5; 1. cf. Sv. Up. 3: 7 to 12.
\textsuperscript{70} ibid., 1.4: 11.
\textsuperscript{71} Ken. Up. 3.
\textsuperscript{72} Kath. Up. 3: 12.
\textsuperscript{73} ibid., 2:21, 22. Mun. Up, 3.1: 7; Sv. Up. 3: 19.
\textsuperscript{75} Br. Up. 4.4:13.
\textsuperscript{77} Br. Up. 3.4: 1; 4.4: 22.
Knowledge which should rise about the correct nature of Brahman is declared as the means of getting final release. Good conduct is required to be practised to get at Brahman. The goal of human endeavour is stated to be the highest place of Viṣṇu.

The leading exponents of Vaiṣṇavism derived from the passages of the Vedic texts, inspiration and support of equating Viṣṇu with Brahman. In arriving at such a conclusion what is to be noted is the method of interpreting such passages. While it is quite possible to arrive at conclusions which would be at variance with the principles of Vaiṣṇavism it must be conceded that the Vedic passages admit also of different interpretations which favour the identification of Viṣṇu with Brahman. It is in the light of this interpretation, that the Vedic passages should be looked upon as having served as the basis for the formulation of the doctrines of Vaiṣṇavism.

The Supreme Being according to Vaiṣṇavism is Viṣṇu with Lakṣmi. The whole universe is pervaded by that Being both within and without. The universe cannot actually contain Him and this justifies that Viṣṇu is growing and growing beyond the limitations of time and place. The selves, the inanimate world and He form together and constitute Tattvātṛaya out of which arose the later concept of God as having the animate and the inanimate as His attributes, thus lending support to the name Visiṣṭādvaita. All the Vedas show Him to be the greatest. The word ‘viṣṇu’

78. ibid., 4.4: 14.
80. ibid., 3: 9.
82. Nar. Up. 94.
83. Puruṣaśūkta. 1.
84. Sv. Up. 1: 8, 12 cf. 1.9 where the three are said to constitute Brahman.
suggests that the Supreme Being has unbounded powers to pervade anything and that nothing could prevent Him from using His own purposes.\textsuperscript{85} One can count the dust particles on the earth, but cannot exhaust His powers.\textsuperscript{86} That the word ‘\textit{viṣṇu}’ is derived from the root ‘\textit{viṣ}’, ‘to enter into’ receive justification here. To render the root ‘\textit{viṣ}’ as active as it is done by A. A. Macdonell does not appear to be warranted.\textsuperscript{87} He is Himself, the creator, protector and destroyer of the universe which represents only Himself,\textsuperscript{88} and this reveals that He is the material and instamental cause of the universe. He created the universe and entered into it\textsuperscript{89} and this suggests that He became the Indweller and then Inner Controller. He controls the world of animate and inanimate beings as the self does the body inside where it dwells. This presupposes the fundamental tenet of the Viṣṇu school that He is the inner soul of all.\textsuperscript{90} He is superior to all other deities who obey Him. The wind, the sun, the fire, Indra and Yama are afraid of Him and do their duties conscientiously.\textsuperscript{91} He is stated to have measured the regions in order that people could have comfortable accommodation.\textsuperscript{92} He maintains those regions\textsuperscript{93} and supports the good deeds of people.\textsuperscript{94} People could perform such deeds only through His favour.\textsuperscript{95} He is available to His devotees in the form of mantras,\textsuperscript{96} which are uttered when He is worshipped. He

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{85} ibid., 1.6, 10, 11.
\item \textsuperscript{86} R.V. 1.1.154: 1.
\item \textsuperscript{87} vide: \textit{Vedic Reader}, p. 31
\item \textsuperscript{88} Taitt. Up. 3.1: 1.
\item \textsuperscript{89} Ch. Up. 6.3:31:1 Ait. Up. 1:1; Taitt. Ar. 3:11; Taitt. Up. 2.6:1.
\item \textsuperscript{90} Mun, Up. 2.1:4.
\item \textsuperscript{91} Taitt. Up. 2.8: 1. He could not be injured by anyone.
\item \textsuperscript{92} R. V. 1.154: 2.
\item \textsuperscript{93} ibid., 1.154: 4. cf. Br. Up. 3.8:9.
\item \textsuperscript{94} ibid. 1.22: 18.
\item \textsuperscript{95} ibid., 1.22: 19.
\item \textsuperscript{96} ibid., 1.154: 2. The word ‘\textit{girṣṭhāḥ}’ is taken by Śāyana in this sense, while Macdonell takes it in the sense of remaining in the mountain. Vide: \textit{Vedic Reader}, pp. 32, 33
\end{itemize}
awards to the people the fruits of their deeds.  

Thus it comes to admitting the need for being devoted to Him in order to avoid distresses.  

He grants the desires to His devotees, and the regions over which He strode are always prosperous.  

The husband and wife are asked to worship through sacrifice and get the results of their undertaking.  

His favour is thus needed and one will be forewarned of these consequences before one intends to commit misdeeds.  

Good deeds, when undertaken remove the sins.  

His control over everything by being within is not realized by people and in order to make this realizable, the things are said to be controlled by His will.  

Earth, water, fire, atmosphere, wind, sky, sun, quarters of heaven, moon, stars, space, darkness (matter), luminaries, all elements, vital airs, speech, eye, ear, mind, skin, understanding and vital fluid are mentioned in this order with the change that ‘ātman’ implies knowledge in the Mādhyandina recension of the Śiklavajraveda.  

He has two forms, one which is visible and the other as lying beyond human apprehension. His body is divine as it is clear from His charming limbs shining like gold and resembling lotuses.

97. ibid., 1.154: 3. The word ‘vṛṣṇe’ is taken in the sense of pouring forth desires by Śāyana’ but Macdonell takes it to mean the bull. vide: Vedic Reader, p.33. The word ‘ekat’ used here is suggestive of Viṣṇu’s greatness in standing above and achieving any task without anybody’s help.

98. Śāyana on R.V. 1.154: 5.


100. ibid., 1.154: 4! Sv. Up. 6:13

101. ibid. 1.154.6. The word ‘vāṁ’ is addressed to husband and wife. Macdonell takes it in the senae of Agni and Viṣṇu.


104 Mahānārāyanīva  17:6.

105. Br. Up. 3.7: 3.

106. ibid., 3.7.3.


108. ibid., 1.6:6; Mun. Up. 3.1:3; Puruṣasūkta. 20.

109. ibid., 1.6:7.
yellow raiment\(^{110}\) lends charm to His frame. His holy smell\(^{111}\) renders fragrant everything with which it comes into contact. He is ever youthful.\(^{112}\) On account of these features He is absolutely free from defects.\(^{113}\) The self and He occupy the same place,\(^{114}\) namely, the body which shows that He sustains them without in the least affected by the impurities of the material body.\(^{115}\) The soul however has to taste the fruits of the deeds done by it in the past.

When Viṣṇu was the Supreme Being, a distinction was drawn to distinguish Him from other deities. This was done by calling Him Puruṣa. Other deities remained as deities. This is evident from the name Puruṣaśukta\(^{116}\) which was given to the hymn which is in praise of Him depicting Him as the source for the rise of every thing. This again suggests that He is both the material and instrumental cause of the animate and inanimate being. It is emphatically stated that there is no means but knowledge of the correct nature of God\(^{117}\) that could help the self for obtaining mokṣa. Deeds are ephemeral and do not endure till the time when their fruits are to be realized and so have no meaning for adoption as the means of release.\(^{118}\) The Supreme Being must be meditated upon; when at an advanced stage in this process, the Lord would be realized through intuition. Then all the knots that bind the self to this world are torn asunder freeing the self to leave the mortal world.\(^{119}\) The Upaniṣads

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112. RiV. 1.156: 2.
113. Sv. Up. 6: 15.
114: ibid., 1.9; Mun. Up. 3.1: 1. cf. RiV: 1,164: 20;
116. Rg-veda, 10:90.
119. Br. Up. 2.4:5; Mun. Up. 2.2: 8
use also the expression ‘upāsita’ which literally means to attend upon by being near and this is highly suggestive of the path of devotion which became later well developed. In spite of all the efforts which an individual takes to visualize Him, it is His will that prevails in the matter of His presenting Himself before the devotee. Those who are deeply learned do not visualize Him while He presents Himself to those who are not learned. The case of the gopis in the Gokula illustrate this truth. He is the cause of both bondage and release.

The word ‘nārāyana’ occurs as His epithet only in later Upaniṣads such as Maitri and Mahānārāyanīya and Nārayanapūrvatāpinī. The Nārayaniya Upaniṣad establishes the identity of Viṣṇu with Nārāyaṇa and Puruṣa and that all the four Vedas extol Nārāyaṇa as the Supreme Being.

The course which would be taken by the soul to reach the place of emancipation, which is elaborated later by the Ānāvās is found described graphically in the Chāndogya. It is known as arcirādi mārga as the self passes over into a flame, then into the day, half month, period of six months and so on. The place which is reached by the self is gloriously described in the Kaṇṭṭakī Upaniṣad. In the released state, the self goes about as it likes with complete freedom eating whatever it desires and assuming the form it desires. Release is thus the enjoyment by the soul of perfect power, freedom and bliss in the world of Brahman. The self thus attains immortality.

There is also a reference in the Munḍaka Upaniṣad to the

mystic union of the self with Brahman in the state of release. According to Śvetāsvatara the self becomes merged in Brahman and is in the state of peace for ever. The Maitri declares that the self obtains a happiness which is undecayable and free from sickness.

In conclusion, it may be said that the predominant thought of the Upaniṣads regarding the relation of the Supreme Being to the individual soul is this: God exists in the embodied individual as its principal consciousness. So some of the Upaniṣadic thinkers are impressed by this fact which led them to identify Brahman completely with the individual. But even then many of them have assumed that the migrating soul is not in all respects with Brahman. In some of the later Upaniṣads the thought appears that Brahman and the individual soul are two, the Supreme Self pervades the finite soul as something different from it, that He does not share in its imperfections and that He seeks by His grace to grant to the finite self that knowledge which it requires for obtaining release. Thus it is seen that even during the Vedic period, the Vedic deity Viṣṇu who was identified with the sun and another deity Puruṣa became one and the same. Later, Viṣṇu, Puruṣa and Nārāyaṇa came to be identified with each other. Viṣṇu came to be recognized as the Indweller of all, thus controlling every one for their well-being. He must therefore be worshipped for the sake of avoiding the sufferings of the world and to acquire complete freedom from worldly life. These texts contain references to the incidents connected with the fish, the boar and the tortoise saving the world from distresses and the three strides of Viṣṇu. These incidents were later developed into the theories of divine descent (avatāra), though there is no indication of this theory being suggested in the Vedic texts as such.

CONCEPTION OF GOD IN ITIHĀSAS AND PURĀṆAS

The Brāhmaṇa, Āranyaka and Upaniṣadic portions of the Vedas contain episodes which were narrated by some Purāṇikas while sacrifices were performed, and are referred to for clarification of the significance of the rites which are then enjoined for performance. Such episodes should have formed the basis for naming such narratives as Itihaṣa, Ākhyāna, Upakhyaṇa and Purāṇa. Itihaṣa is a narration of an incident that occurred at a very ancient period and is therefore referred to as Puravrita. Ākhyāna is the narration of an incident where the name of its author is referred to, while that is not the case with the Itihaṣa. Purāṇa is only a new version of a narrative which is very old, older than that which is called Itihaṣa and has a legendary character. Two definitions of the Purāṇas are contained in the Purāṇas themselves, mainly with reference to the contents of the Purāṇas where these are mentioned. These are found to have only partial applicability in the case of other Purāṇas which must have been originally true to them but must have had later accretions.

Modern criticism of the Vedic literature has invented certain demarcations in the periods of ancient literature as Vedic, Epic, Purāṇic etc. The contents of the Vedas show

1. Ait. Br. 7:3; 5:14; Kau. Br. 6:11; Sat. Br. 1.8.1:1
2. Ait. Ar. 2.
4. ‘Ākhyāna’ is the name given to that which is narrated by the author who witnessed it.
5. ‘Upākhyāna’ is that which is narrated by the author who listened to its narration from author.
6. Rāmāyana is also called Ākhyāna, Bāla. 4.32; Yuddha. 128:118. Mahābhārata is also called Ākhyāna Adi.55:9.
7. V.P. 3.6. 24; Bhag. p.2.10:1.
8. History of ancient Sanskrit Literature, p.36.
that these limits are not only flexible but overlap with each other. Even before the Vedic period could be said to have come to an end, the other periods had not only come into existence but had progressive features which are evidenced by the archaic and Vedic expressions contained in most of the works belonging to these periods. It must however be admitted that notwithstanding these expressions the language of the works of these had become regularised to conform to set grammatical patterns but represent the period of transition from the purely Vedic to the classical stages. That these periods were practically coeval could be admitted on the ground that Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana son of Puruṣārta is held to have acquired the name Vyāsa by his systematic classification of the Vedas and to have compiled the Purāṇas and composed the Jāya, the nucleus of the present Mahābhārata.

The Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata are the two well-known national Epics of India. They had their first public recitation during the performance of the Asvamedha by Rāma and Sarpayāga by Janamejaya respectively. They were recited by the pupils of their authors. This establishes their connection with the Vedic rituals which is further attested by the word sanhitā used to refer to them. These epics contain within themselves some narratives which they call Itihāsas of ancient origin. It is clear that these two epics have been mainly responsible for the growth and development of Vaiṣṇavism in the later periods.

In the epic Mahābhārata, which is held to glorify Viṣṇu and Purāṇas, Rudra's auspicious aspect gets its full treatment and development. During this period, Śiva is already one of the three important deities of Hinduism. Six Purāṇas were treated as conveying His greatness. Among them, the Kārma, Liṅga, Matsya and Vāyu are of paramount

10. ibid., 62:22.
12. ibid., 120: 32; MBh. Uddyoga. 36: 133; Droga 52; Śānti. 103, 104, 111; Anuśāsana. 50.
importance. Here are glorified the exploits of Śiva such as burning of the three cities, destruction of Dākṣa's sacrifice and others. He had taken His abode in Kailāsa. Several holy places, all through the length and breadth of India, became associated with His name, rendered sacred for undertaking pilgrimages.

Kṛṣṇa, representing Viṣṇu in His descent, was ever with the Pāṇḍavas. Yet, Arjuna, one of the Pāṇḍavas, did penance and obtained a powerful weapon from Śiva. Kṛṣṇa was Himself taught the Śaivite doctrines on meditation by sage Upamanyu. The Mahābhārata contains Śivasahasranāma along with that of Viṣṇu. Śiva's greatness is expounded in at least two places in the epic. Kṛṣṇa visits Kailāsa twice and on each occasion He prays to Śiva. However, both Kṛṣṇa and Śiva express their mutual admiration for their proper and perfect understanding of the problems of philosophy. The Purāṇas are more sectarian in their outlook. The epic seems to be above this attitude though Viṣṇu's eminence is repeatedly referred to. The benedictory verse in the Mahābhārata, the reference to this epic as Nārāyana-katha and its supplement Harivamsa dealing with the life and family of Kṛṣṇa bear ample testimony to this fact. The indispensability of this epic for the study of Viṣṇavism is heightened by the treatment it contains of the vyūha doctrine and its containing the Bhagavadgītā which is a lengthy discourse delivered, on the duties of man, by Kṛṣṇa who is no other than Viṣṇu. What the words 'bhāgavata', 'sāttvata', 'vāsu-

13. MBh: Anuśāsana 48
14. ibid., 48
15. MBh: Droṇa 203; Sauptika 17
16. ibid. Droṇa 80; Anuśāsana 203
17. ibid. Droṇa 80
18. Harivamsa 134-48
19. MBh: Śānti 350-30, 352-363
20. MBh. Ādi. 1:32.
22. ibid. Uddyoga.

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deva' and others which are supremely meaningful in Vaishnavism', stand for is readily grasped and their importance assessed by a thorough study of this epic. It is not therefore a surprise if the protagonists of Vaishnavism chose to cite profusely the passages from this epic, far more liberally than from the Rama yana. Rama and Kṛṣṇa are already admitted in these works as Viṣṇu divinely descended for affording personal relief to the suffering devotees. It is a fact that Viṣṇu's descent as Varāha and Vāmana which were prominent in the Vedic texts had gone to the background, when His descents as Rāma and Kṛṣṇa became prominent in the later stages and this is mainly due to the significance attached to them in these two epics.

The Mahābhārata devotes a section called Narayana in the Sāntiparva to the glorification of Viṣṇu as the Supreme Deity regarding which it is said, "He is one whose motions are infinite, whose bodies are infinite, who is without end and without beginning, and without middle, whose middle is unmanifest, whose end is unmanifest...........who is beyond the ken of logic or argument, who is unknowable."23 He is described at times in terms which recall the language of the Upaniṣads: "He cannot be seen with the eye, touched with the sense of touch, smelt with the sense of scent, and that is beyond the ken of the sense of taste."24 Similarly in the Anugita it is declared that "He is without symbols and qualities,"25 and that it is only those who look proper understanding that "regard that entity, through their own ignorance, as invested with the properties of knowledge and others."26 While recognizing thus the transcendent and unknowable aspect of the Supreme Being, emphasized in these writings, their own distinctive approach seems to be that the Being may be known by His devotees. This truth that the Supreme Being reveals Himself to those who are devoted to Him is taught by means of many

25. ibid., Anugita. 34: 5.
illustrative instances in the Nārāyaṇi. The Supreme Being "incapable of being seen by anyone else... showed Himself to His worshipper King Uparicara"; but he was invisible to the priest Bṛhaspati who performed the great Āsvamedha sacrifice. On the priest becoming indignant at this, he was told that "He (God) is incapable of being seen either by ourselves or by thee O Bṛhaspati! Only he can see Him to whom He becomes gracious". Ėkata, Dvita, and Trita practised austerities for four thousand years, but they were sent away without a vision of God, with the message; "That great God is incapable of ever being seen by one that is destitute of devotion. (He) can be seen only by those persons that.... succeed in devoting themselves wholly and solely to Him." It becomes clear then that, though the Supreme Being is transcendent, He is not past human grasp.

It has been said, "When all individual beings and even the aggregate jīva (samaśti) have gone into dissolution and when mahat has become merged into prakṛti (from which it is evolved), there is one remaining as the soul of the universe and He is the Lord Nārāyaṇa"; again "The God Nārāyaṇa is at the beginning; from Him arises Brahmā". "Nārāyaṇa is the Supreme Deity; from Him was born Brahmā, the four-faced, and from Brahmā arose Rudra". Para Brahmān is identified with Nārāyaṇa, Vāsudeva and Viṣṇu. The assertion is made that there is no deity superior to Nārāyaṇa. The word 'nārāyaṇa' is explained as conveying the sense of being the substratum or resting place for men, their belongings and things related to them. Nārāyaṇa is the inner self.

27. ibid., Śānti. 347 : 12
28. ibid., ibid., 337 : 19.
29. ibid., ibid., 337 : 52, 53.
30. ibid., ibid., 210 : 24.
32. ibid., 90 : 3.
33. MBh. Anugītā. 186 : 9, 10.
34. ibid., Bhīṣma 67 : 2.
35. ibid., Anuśāsana 186 : 7.
of all beings. Brahma and Rudra are ever subordinated to Him whose nature they do not comprehend and whom they worship. Naraṇa keeps everything under Him and directs them to carry out his commands. His interest in the well-being of the world and readiness to come to the rescue of Siva are revealed in the victory which Siva gained over the three demons. Siva's chariot could not be drawn against the forces of the demons. So Viṣṇu took the form of bull and dragged the chariot. Siva got victory. All the deities praised Viṣṇu for this and offered a benediction that He should destroy all the foes. He takes up a body which is not made up of the products of matter. Kṛṣṇa is described to have appeared with four hands when He left the world. Further it is stated "The You, the irresistible, assumed the form of Viṣṇu from that eternal existence (viz., Naraṇa) for the protection of all beings." Brahma praised Rama, after Siva's fire-ordeal, as the all-pervading Naraṇa. Himself and having the conch and discus. His identity is then established with the avatāras of Boar and the Vāmana to which frequent reference are found made in the Vedas. He is the inscrutable Brahman, Purusā and Purusottama. He is everything. Viṣṇu, Padmanabhā and Madhu-ūdana. He is the first creator of the three worlds. He is the sacrifice. He is found everywhere in all beings. He is thousand-footed, thousand-eyed and has has hundred heads, reminding the description in the first hymn of the Purusā-sūkta. He supports the entire universe which is His body. Lakṣmi is His consort. He took up the mortal frame to kill Rāvaṇa. Those persons who would be devoted to Him would have their desires fulfilled here and hereafter. At the end, Brahma refers to this praise as an

36. ibid., Śaṅti. 361 : 14, 15.
37. ibid., ibid., 210 : 33.
38. ibid., ibid., 350 : 30; Āsvamedhika, 118 : 37, 38.
41. ibid. Śaṅti. 206 : 60.
42. ibid., Mausala 5 : 34.
ancient *Itihāsa* perhaps available even before the days of Vālmiki. Soon after the death of Rāvaṇa, Maṇḍodāri laments his passing away by making direct references to Rāma as the great Viṣṇu Himself. He is referred to as the Supreme Self, eternal, beyond the material world and having the marks characteristic of His own. He is ever associated with Lakṣmi. He has come down for the welfare of the world by taking the human form. In another context, He is referred to as reclining on the ocean and as having produced Brahmā. He took the human form for the welfare of the world. Rāma’s identity with Viṣṇu is indisputably attested by Haṇumān who said to Śiśu that he whom Rāma decided to be killed could not be saved by Brahmā, Śiva or Indra.

These writers, however, are eager to identify their Deity with the Supreme One of the philosophers, so that the Deity when He reveals Himself is made to say, “I am known as Puruṣa. Without acts, I am twenty-fifth. Transcending attributes, I am entire and indivisible. I am above all pairs of attributes and freed from all attachments.” They are eager to identify Him with everything which symbolises greatness and perfection; for example with the Lords of creation, with the four-faced Brahmā, with the Sun, with the Emperor or King, with Indra and Varuṇa, with the sacrifices and Vedic studies with the Sāmkhya-yōga, with the syllable ‘Om’, with yogic perfections and the like. But merely to regard the Deity as thus identical with what is high and significant does not throw light on the individual perfections which constitute His nature.

Besides: “natural“ perfections such as infinitude, eternity, unchangeability, omnipotence, and omnipresence which the Deity is expected to have as the Supreme Being of the

44. Rām: Yuddha, 120: 13 to 32.
45. Ibid., ibid., 114: 14 to 17.
46. Ibid., ibid., 104: 4 to 11.
47. Rām: Sundara, 51: 45. Here there is no reference to Viṣṇu.
49. Ibid., ibid., 339. cf. Anugītā. 54. 7: 10; V.P. 1.8.
philosophers. He has also "spiritual" perfections which may be classified as knowledge, beauty and goodness. That Brahman as thought or the principle of Intelligence, was as it was seen, one of the main doctrines of Upaniṣadic philosophy. That doctrine is always retained in these works. He is spoken of as "only mind" as "Lord of Speech", as "the embodiment of correctness of judgement or reasoning", as identifiable with the wisdom of Śāmkhya-yoga, as "the Preceptor of the universe", "the highest Intelligence". In the Āgamas jñāna or wisdom is spoken of as not merely an attribute of the Supreme Being, but as constituting His very essence, and the Nārāyanīya, declares that when all things have perished, knowledge remains as the sole companion of the Deity. The beauty of the Deity is indescribable and can be suggested only by means of inadequate analogies. Anuṭā declares, "The stainless lunar light is thy smile. O thou of eyes like the (petals of the) lotus" and adds that beauty of creatures is really the beauty of the Deity Himself. The ethical perfection of the Deity is proclaimed in no less unmistakable terms. The God is perfect in the performance of vows and ceremonies and in yogic restraint. He "has completed all the vows and ceremonies mentioned in the Vedas." He practises the "severe and flawless vow of Brahmacarya". He is "the embodiment of one who has not fallen away from Yoga." He establishes law and in order to set the standard of men, conforms to them Himself. "The ordinances I set are followed by all the worlds. Those ordinances should always be adored, and it is therefore, I adore them." The Anuṭā declares,

50. ibid., ibid., 339: 4.
51. ibid., ibid., 340: 43.
52. ibid., Anuṭā 32: 12.
53. Schrader's Introduction to Pāñcarātra, p. 33.
54. MBh. Śānti. 340: 69.
55. ibid., Anuṭā 52: 11 and 14.
56. ibid., ibid., 52: 13. 67: 80-86.
59. MBh. Śānti. 339: 4.
60. ibid.; ibid., 342: 25.
"Puruṣa is dependent on goodness.....the wise believe in the identity of Puruṣa and goodness. There is no doubt in this".  
Even the very names of the Deity have a sanctifying and cleansing power. The Deity Himself declares, "I have never uttered anything base or anything that is obscene. The divine Sarasvati who is Truth’s self, and is otherwise called by the name of Ṛta, represents my speech and always dwells in my tongue." "I have never swerved from the attribute of sativa (goodness)". "I always hear words that are pure and holy, O Dhanamjaya, and never catch anything that is sinful. Hence I am called by the name of Sucīravas." The discourse of the Deity being ended, the narrator exclaims, "there is nothing holier on earth or in heaven, and nothing higher than Nārāyaṇa. Having listened to this discourse, we feel that we have been cleansed of all our sins and sanctified entirely." Perhaps kindness, compassion, learning, conduct, sense-control and self-control which are mentioned as the six-qualities of Rāma represent a prelude to the later development of the sādguṇya aspect of the Pāñcarātra system.

Besides these perfections, the Lord is full of Love. He shows infinite tenderness and grace to the sinner. The quality of friendly helpfulness was characteristic of Viṣṇu even in the Ṛg Vedic times where he appears as a friend of Indra helping him in his battles. So also in the Mahābhārata as Kṛṣṇa He appears as the special friend of Arjuna, and as Nārāyaṇa, the special friend of Nara. This quality of helpfulness of the Deity has been extolled in the writings of the Vaiṣṇavites. The poems of the Āḻvārs bear testimony to this and it forms the one theme on which the saints love to dwell. In the Nārāyaṇiya, the grace and protecting care of God are the themes of many a passage. "Through Nārāyaṇa’s grace, King

61. ibid., Anugītā 48: 7 and 9.
62. ibid., Śānti. 342: 2.
63. ibid., ibid., 343: 73.
64. ibid., ibid., 343: 75.
65. ibid., ibid., 343: 89.
66. ibid., ibid., 344: 16 and 17.
67. Rām Ayodhyā. 33: 12
Vasu Uparicara ascended to heaven to a spot that is even higher than the region of Brahman Himself\(^{68}\) and by His grace the King was rescued when cast from heaven by a curse of the Rṣis.\(^{69}\) The God is the "grantor of every wish".\(^{70}\) His "troops go everywhere for protecting His worshippers".\(^{71}\) He is "kind to all worshippers", "fond of them", and "ever affectionate towards them."\(^{72}\) He is "the greatest friend",\(^{73}\) and "the one sole Refuge of all men".\(^{74}\) He dispels the fears of all persons."\(^{75}\) From Him "springs the attribute of forgiveness".\(^{76}\) He removes the misery of the humble. He is "the abode of the wonderful grace". Thus it is seen that the Supreme Being as revealed in these works is an Infinite and Transcendent Being who is characterised by knowledge, and more by beauty, goodness and love. He is much affected by the distress of others.\(^{77}\)

Again it is seen in these works that the relation of God to the embodied souls is one of intense active interest and love. Accordingly. He lays aside His supreme form when necessary and assuming finite forms enters the world for their benefit. The doctrine of divine descent which can be traced from the later Vedic literature is very fully elaborated in these works. While the Bhagavad-gītā and following it, the Anugītā, merely lay down the doctrine of repeated descents, other works enumerate in detail all the descents of the Deity in the past, as well as any still to come, and also narrate the circumstances and purpose of each descent. In the Nārāyanīya the Deity is said to assume the

\(^{68}\) MBh: Śānti; 337: 61, 62.

\(^{69}\) ibid.; ibid., 339.

\(^{70}\) ibid.; ibid., 339: 4. cf. V.P. 1.12: 42.

\(^{71}\) ibid., ibid., 339: 4.

\(^{72}\) ibid., ibid., 339: 4; 344: 53 and 54.

\(^{73}\) ibid., ibid., 339: 4.

\(^{74}\) ibid., ibid., 342: 39.

\(^{75}\) ibid., ibid., 347; 17.

\(^{76}\) ibid., ibid., 345: 6.

\(^{77}\) Rām. Ayodhya. 2: 40.
form of a boar to bring back the Earth from the waters for the good of all creatures;\textsuperscript{78} as a man-lion to slay Hiranyakashipu for the benefit of the deities;\textsuperscript{79} as Ādiyā to defeat the asura who appropriates the sovereignty of the universe from the deities;\textsuperscript{80} as Rāma of the race of Bhṛgu to exterminate the Kṣatriyas who becomes proud and arrogant;\textsuperscript{81} as Rāma son of Daśaratha, to slay the Lord of the Rākṣasas, that "thorn of all the worlds"\textsuperscript{82}; as Kṛṣṇa to slay Kaṁsa, and the innumerable Dānavas who will be as "thorns in the sides of the deities" and all such as have done some form of injury or other to others.\textsuperscript{83} He with Arjuna will consume a large number of Kṣatriyas "for doing good to the world" and in these various ways will lighten the burden of the earth.\textsuperscript{84} It is to be noticed here how the interest is fixed in all this in God's desire to do good to these whom He loves. It is seen in the \textit{Gītā} that Righteousness is emphasized as the chief motive of divine descent; Love occupies the chief place here.

The Universe with all celestial and terrestrial beings is a real something which needs to be explained in relation to the Supreme Being. Creation is an evolution or development from one stage to another. It is, according to this theory as J.C. Chatterji puts it, "a process which, while bringing the product into existence leaves the source of the product unchanged."\textsuperscript{85} The Supreme Being is thus regarded as being quite unaffected by the changes which are necessary to bring about the universe. He is the unchanging one, who, through unchanging, is the explanation of all change. Further, the many stages which are postulated between God and the universe seem to make less difficult

\textsuperscript{78} MBh. Śānti. 340: 74.
\textsuperscript{79} ibid., ibid., 340: 76.
\textsuperscript{80} ibid., ibid., 340: 79.
\textsuperscript{81} ibid., ibid., 340: 81.
\textsuperscript{82} ibid., ibid., 340: 85.
\textsuperscript{83} ibid., ibid., 340: 86, 87.
\textsuperscript{84} ibid., ibid., 340: 97, 98.
\textsuperscript{85} Kashmir Saivism, p.59.
the transition from God to universe, which is so different from Him in character. In this way an effort is made to relate to God a world which appears far removed from Him in nature. It is therefore easy to understand how "as the light and heat are stronger or feeble as we are near to the fire, or far off from it, so the energy of the Supreme Being is more or less manifest in the beings that they are more or less remote from Him."86 "In Him is the whole world interwoven; and from Him, and in Him, is the universe; and He, the Supreme Lord of all, comprising all that is perishable and imperishable, bears upon Him all material and spiritual existence, identified in nature with His ornaments and weapons."87

The Divine transcendence and perfection of the Lord may seem incompatible with His being an active agent in relation to the universe. This incompatibility is overcome by a mythological account in the Nārāyanīya section and in the Purāṇas, according to which the Deity Himself does not do this work, but commissions Brahmā, who spontaneously rises out of Him, to create and superintend the universe.88 To preserve the supremacy of the Deity, Brahmā is regarded as obtaining from the Divine Being the intelligence necessary for his task, as well as his great commission89 which is dramatically expressed in the Nārāyanīya thus: "Do thou, O Brahman, duly think of the courses of acts which creatures are to follow. Thou art the great ordainer of all created beings. Thou art the master and lord of the universe. Placing this burden on Thee, I shall be free from anxiety."90 And it is said that "Having unveiled to the Creator of the cosmos the objects that had to be evolved, that Prime Person furnished with a lotus navel vanished in His native form,91 and adopted

86. V.P. 1.22: 56, 57.
87. ibid.; 1.22: 64, 65.
88. ibid., 1.4
89. cf. MBh. Śānti. 350: 16 to 27.
90. ibid., ibid., 341: 89.
91. cf. Bhāg. P. 8.6: 26
the course of actionless *nirūtti*\(^{92}\) or yogic sleep.\(^ {93}\) Again it is asserted that Brahmā who created and superintends the universe, is after all none other than the Supreme Being Himself. "The same transcendent Lord, assuming the three qualities of matter – purity, energy and dullness – wears for the purpose of creation, preservation and destruction, the different designations of Hari, Vīrīci (Brahmā) and Hara"\(^ {94}\) and Brahmā, speaking to an enquirer, declares, "Myself, Thyself... and all other creatures... are the manifestations of that *Puruṣa*... As the sun illuminates its own orbit as well as the outer world, so the universal form of the Great God manifests itself and exhibits all inner and outer objects.\(^ {95}\) The heaven, moon, sun, stars, sky, directions, earth and the seas are borne by the might of Vāsudeva.\(^ {96}\) Being the source of time, He is not affected by it.\(^ {97}\) Nothing could be said to be eternally existent except the self which is none other than Himself.\(^ {98}\) Thus the theories of evolution, of *vyūhas* and of the creator-Brahmā are the attempts to relate the Supreme Being to the universe.

The love of the deity according to these works, not only leads Him to assume finite forms for the sake of His worshippers, but also actively to concern Himself in seeking to free them from *samsāra*. It functions as Grace, leading the soul in numerous ways to Release. It "awakens" the soul. "That person, whom Nārāyana looks on with compassion, succeeds in becoming awakened. No one, O king, can become awakened through his own wishes."\(^ {99}\) It sometimes deprives a man of wealth and friends in order to wean him from attachment to the finite.\(^ {100}\) It leads the Deity to reveal Himself, His attributes and His purpose to the devotee, in order "to

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92. MBh. Śānti. 340: 64 and 65.
93. ibid., 341: 45 ane 46.
94. Bhāg. P. 1.2:
95. ibid.; 2.6:
96. MBh. Anugītā. 254: 136.
97. ibid., Śānti. 196: 9.
98. ibid., 347: 32.
99. MBh. Śānti. 349: 75 and 76.
set a keener edge" on the eagerness of the devotee, and to arouse in him "a holy yearning" after Him. It preserves the faith of the devotees so that it may never flinch. It is also stated in these works that though the Deity works for the salvation of the individual the individual, also has his own role to play. "Hari never casts a kind eye upon the person subject to birth (and death), that is endowed with such a mixed nature" as that which partakes of rajas and tamas 101 Salvation therefore, though entirely dependent upon Nārāyaṇa 102 is conditioned by the soul renouncing the evil qualities of rajas and tamas, and pursuing the good qualities of sattva. for "emancipation is regarded as made up of the attribute of sattva." 103 "The grace of God is the crown and consumption of religious duties piously practised." 104 Other qualities such as knowledge and yogic practice are also mentioned as required before the Deity can grant release, but above all is demanded the devotion of one's own soul to Nārāyaṇa. 105 "Without doubt, the religion of devotion seems to be superior (to that of knowledge) and is very dear to Nārāyaṇa. The end that is attained by a Brahmin who attending to due observances, study the Vedas with the Upaniṣads... and by those that adopt the religion of yatis (ascetics), is inferior, I think, to that attained by person devoted to Hari with their whole souls." 106

The unique significance of the Rāmāyāṇa consists in the Deity offering Himself as the refuge for those who are in distress and are destitutes. Rāma is referred to as dear to those who seek shelter under Him. 107 Sītā assures security to those who have erred and she offers her endeavour (puruṣakāra) in this connection to every one. 108 However, she restrains herself to respect Rāma's greatness when she could have herself

101. MBh. Śānti. 349: 76 and 77.
102. ibid., ibid., 349: 70.
103. ibid., ibid., 349: 70.
105. MBh. Śānti. 349: 74.
106. ibid., ibid., 74: 4. 5.
108. ibid., ibid., 58: 90; Yuddha. 116: 40, 44.
punished Rāvana. The acts of offering shelter by Rāma to Vibhiṣaṇa and the crow are well-known and need no recounting here. All the aspects of the act of self-surrender are discussed in detail with reference to these two incidents by Vedānta Deśika in his Abhayapradaṇasāra.

Hanumān, who was an embodiment of devotion to Rāma, asked Rāma when the latter was about to leave the world, for being ever devoted to Him. As a sincere devotee, he feels as a mortal that he could not control himself and hence his desire to have unflinching and unswerving devotion to Him. Rāma readily granted this request.

However much a scholar be well-equipped and deeply learned in the inner meaning of the Rāmāyaṇa, one cannot sufficiently bring out the importance of this work and even after one makes substantial contribution to the interpretation of it, he very often feels not satisfied with his work. The general tenor of the exposition of the inner meaning is that Rāma represents Viṣṇu, Sītā represents Lakṣmī and Lakṣmaṇa, the self who is devoted to both. From Lakṣmaṇa's there has sprung the beautiful concept of kaiṇkaryā which became the fundamental doctrine of the prechings of the Ālavārs. It is even contended that Bharata represents the role of a devotee and Śatrughna that of the devotee of the devotee.

The self is helpless and ignorant. Its suffering and freedom from it are at the will of the Lord. When the Lord's glance is set on a child at the time of its birth, it

110. ibid. Yuddha. 18 and 19.
111. ibid., Sundara. 38.
112. ibid., Uttara. 40: 15.
113. ibid., Uttara: 40: 19 to 23.
114. cf. ibid., Ayodhya. 11: 1.
116. MBh. Śānti. 12: 36.
becomes śāttvika. The only means of getting relief from the sufferings here and hereafter lies only in seeking shelter under Him and surrendering one's self only at His feet. He is impartial and is a father and mother to the people. One salutation offered to Him would bestow upon him who does it the results which he would get by performing ten horse-sacrifices. One can know Him through mantras, which, however, is a harder process and will not be within the reach of all persons. One should realize that whatever is offered, according to the Vedic rules, reaches His feet. This concept should have developed into the act of doing worship (arcana) at the feet of the Deity. One who has taken shelter under Him shall reside there where elders of upright conduct are worshipped, where there is no loss of dharma, and where the Vedic study, sacrifices, penances, truth, sense-control, non-injury and non-offence to the pious progress unobstructedly. Devotees shall not offend each other and if they do, they would not get any relief even in sacred places. Such persons have nothing for themselves and as such look upon Him as their sole guide. They would be freed from danger, envy, evil thoughts and avarice. Bhiṣma offers his homage to them who salute Varāha, one of the divine descents of Viṣṇu. He is to be worshipped through śāttvika mode.

To enter into Brahman and become merged in Him is more to be desired than all other ends. The details of such

117. ibid., ibid., 276: 2.
118. ibid., Anuśāsana. 142: 59 to 61; Aśvamedha 96: 44, 45.
119. ibid., Vana. 192: 56.
121. ibid., ibid., 276: 2.
122. ibid., ibid., 353: 63.
124. MBh. Śānti. 336: 36.
125. ibid., ibid., 350: 34.
126. ibid., Anuśāsana, 254: 135.
127. ibid., Śānti. 46: 130.
128. ibid., Bhiṣma. 66: 39, 40.
129. MBh. Śānti. 335: 42 and 43.
entering and merging are also stated. The elements involved in this process are thus described. "The path that is theirs...... that are stainless . is fraught with auspiciousness and felicity. Sūrya (Sun), who is the dispeller of the darkness of all the worlds, is said to be the door (through which the emancipate must pass). Entering Sūrya, the bodies of such persons become consumed by the fire. They then become invisible for after that they cannot be seen by anybody at any time. Reduced into invisible atoms, they then enter into Nārāyaṇa (who resides in the centre of Sūrya). Passing out from Him also, they enter into the form Aniruddha. Losing all physical attributes together and transformed into Mind alone they then enter into Pradyumna. Passing out of Pradyumna, those foremost of regenerate persons......then enter into Saṅkarṣaṇa who is otherwise called Jīva. After this, divested of the three primal attributes of sattva, rajas and tamas, those foremost of regenerate beings quickly enter the Supreme Soul otherwise called Kṣetrajña, and which itself transcends the three primal attributes. Know that Vāsudeva is He called Kṣetrajña. Verily shouldst thou know that Vāsudeva is the abode or original refuge of all things in the universe."\(^{130}\)

The stages of Aniruddha, Pradyumna, and Saṅkarṣaṇa through which the soul passes before it enters into Vāsudeva, the Supreme Being, are readily recognized as the same as those gone through in the evolution of the individual soul and the material universe from the Supreme Being, the order being reversed because the process now described is the return of the soul to God.\(^{131}\)

The description of the emancipated beings found in the White Island (Śvetadvipa) suggests that though souls released from samsāra are very similar to the Deity in their effulgence, glory and freedom from material qualities, they are quite distinct from Him, and are engaged in devout worship and adoration of Him. "We beheld a number of men of auspicious features. All of them were white and looked like the

\(^{130}\) ibid., ibid. 345: 13 to 18.

\(^{131}\) This bears the influence of the Upaniṣadic teaching. Vide: Ch. Up; 4. 15; 5. 6; Br. Up. 6.2: 15, 16; Bhag. P. 3.32.
moon, and possessed every mark of blessedness. Their hands were always joined in prayer. They were engaged in silently thinking on Brahman132. The effulgence that was emitted by each of these men resembled the splendours which Sūrya assumes when the time comes for the dissolution of the universe.132 They are divested of senses. They do not subsist on any kind of food.”133 Worshippers of that foremost of all beings, they are devoted to Him with their whole souls. They all enter that eternal and illustrious Deity of a thousand rays.134 The fact that such “emancipated ones” are said as in this passage to “enter” or, as in other passages,135 to be “competent to enter” the Supreme being, shows that although emancipation was not regarded as the same as entering into the Deity, still it was assumed to lead to such a consummation. An all but pictorial representation of a soul entering the Deity is given in one place136 where it is said that the soul “piercing through the firmament, entered into Sūrya’s disc. Mingling then with Sūrya’s energy, he seemed to be transformed into Sūrya’s self. When the two energies thus met together, we were so confounded that we could not any longer distinguish which was which.”137 From this it is clear that though the soul becomes practically identical with the Deity, making it impossible for us to distinguish it from the Deity, it is not entirely identical with Him. This general impression is confirmed by the earlier part of this section, which reads, “The Divine Sūrya is the refuge or home of innumerable wonders. Innumerable munis (saints), crowded with ascetic success, together with all the deities, reside in the rays of Sūrya like birds perching on the branches of trees.”138 Thus Nārāyanīya consistently holds that the soul attains to a closer unity with the Deity. It is to be assumed that these thinkers regarded the soul in Release are attaining very close union with the Deity.

132. MBh. Śānti., 337: 32, 33 and 35.
133. ibid., ibid., 337: 28.
134. ibid., ibid., 337: 27.
135. ibid., ibid., 340: 20, 125; 341: 8.
136. ibid., ibid., 363: 11 to 18.
138. ibid., 363: 2, 3.
There is a collection of *Itihāsas* that goes by the name *Itihāsamuccaya*. It contains much material that lends support to the ideals contained in the two epics, which glorify Vaiśṇavism. The two syllables, "ha" 'rī', when uttered even once paves the way for obtaining *mokṣa*. This does not however confer on such persons who utter them any licence to be wayward in their behaviour and commit acts which offend established codes of good conduct. However, following these codes and performing the sacred rites such as *Aśvamedha* and *Vājpeyī*, without devotion to Nārāyaṇa do not entitle them to qualify themselves for obtaining *mokṣa*. A devotee of God whatever be his social standing, shall not be offended and the offender though an ardent devotee of Viṣṇu, goes only to hell. Hence the devotees should be pleased in order to please God. External marks and appendages like the triple staff and others of an ascetic do not proclaim their possessor to be virtuous, if he is not devoted to Viṣṇu, for even the cruel, evil-minded and heinous sinners get the goal by resorting to Nārāyaṇa. The devotees of Viṣṇu become freed from their sins and so purify the world. The act of expiation for any sinful deed committed lies in recollecting Hari. That it Kurukṣetra, Naimiṣa and Puṣkara where one lives with sense-control. Finally, it must be said that the two epics contain some references to temples and deities there. Ill omens are said to have appeared in the temples

139. Narasimha P. 54: 58 to 62
140. V.P. 3.8: 9 to 19.
143. ibid., 27: 27.
145. ibid., 27: 25.
146. V.P. 2.6: 38 to 40.
147. Iti. Sam. 27: 18
148. Rām. Ayodhya 64, 8. ibid., Yuddha. 131: 90. This is taken as a veiled reference to Śrī Ranganatha. Vide. Tilaka on ibid.
which portended disaster when the Pāṇḍavas left Hastināpura for exile.\(^{149}\)

The Purāṇas had profoundly influenced Vaiṣṇavism in its rich development both on the philosophical and religious sides. The role which they played could be said to have been of as much significant as the two epics, if not greater. The concepts and ideals of philosophy and religion as are found in the Vedic literature had come down to the Purānic literature, as to the epics. It is but natural that the trend of treatment of the subjects and concepts dealt with should be identical even in phraseology. Besides, the vyāha doctrine and Āgamic traditions had penetrated in these to such an extent that a separate treatment cannot be given to the Purānic contribution to the utter exclusion of their influences. Leaving aside the treatment of matters which had been handled alike by all these sources, it would be possible to lay emphasis on the unique place of the Purānic influence on Vaiṣṇavism.

Theistic tendencies such as faith in the personal deity who is a father unto mankind, concept of God as creator, preserver and destroyer, and of soul, its individuality subject to God's free will, the paths of devotion and self-surrender, belief in the divine descents of Viṣṇu and the glorification of Kṛṣṇa and Rāma to a greater degree when compared with others are the fundamental aspects of the influence exerted by the Purāṇas on the development of Vaiṣṇavism.

Much of the contents of the Purāṇas could be said to be saturated with the spirit of sectarianism of Viṣṇu and Śiva but even here it is seen that some of the Purāṇas are not sectarian.\(^{150}\) There is a large number of episodes and narratives which glorify certain observances (vrata) and holy places. The exact period of their finding room in the Purāṇas cannot be fixed for want of evidences. At any rate, the absence of

149. MBh. Sabha. 102. 33.

150. Mārkaṇḍeya and Bhaviṣya Purāṇas, though they are dedicated to Brahmā, do not have any sectarian tinge.
such references in the Viṣṇupurāṇa would point out to the latter addition of them in these Purāṇas.\footnote{154}

Vaiṣṇavism, as handed down traditionally, relies more on the Viṣṇupurāṇa, Harivamśa and Viṣṇudharma and only to a less degree on the Bhāgavata, Padmottara, Varāha, Nārada, Nārādiya or Brhamārādiya, Garuḍa, Brahma, Viṣṇudharmottara, Vāmana and Liṅga Purāṇas. While depicting the life of Kṛṣṇa, more reliance is placed on the Harivamśa which is a supplement to the Mahābhārata and the Viṣṇupurāṇa. The Bhāgavata is not cited for the treatment of Kṛṣṇa’s life, but only for a general treatment of devotion and of the conduct of the devotees.

The Viṣṇu-purāṇa, which is held to be the Purāṇarathna\footnote{152} answers to all the characteristics which a Purāṇa is expected to contain.\footnote{153} It may be no exaggeration to suppose that this definition of the Purāṇa was framed keeping this Purāṇa as the lakṣya grantha. It is cited as an authentic text for Vaiṣṇavism in the Tamil epic Manimekalai\footnote{154} (Second Century A.D.)\footnote{155} revealing its antiquity.\footnote{156} It serves therefore as an ideal upābhārāṇa, supplement to the Vedic literature. The Bhāgavata which is not cited either by Śaṅkara or by Rāmānuja is hailed as containing the essence of the teachings of Vedānta.\footnote{157} It is said to contain in the śloka form the teachings of the Upaniṣads.\footnote{158} The prayer and praise offered to Viṣṇu by the elephant Gajendra are modelled after the Upaniṣadic pattern.\footnote{159}

\footnote{151} cf. Agni. P. Ch 230 (omens) Gar. P. Ch. 47; (Building of mansions)
\footnote{152} Śotraratna. 4.
\footnote{153} V.P. 3.6; 24.
\footnote{154} Manimekalai, 27 line 98; see the commentary on this line (Kajakam edition).
\footnote{155} Tamil Moli Ilakkiya Varalārụ p. 297
\footnote{156} The mention of certain dynasties such as Naiṣadha and Guptaś (V.P. 4.24; 54 to 69) which flourished in the post-Christian era will have to be treated as later interpolation.
\footnote{157} Bhāg. P. 12. 13: 15.
\footnote{158} This is according to the commentator Śrīdhara for 10. 87; 14 to 41.
\footnote{159} Bhāg. P. 8.3; 2 to 29.
The Supreme being according to these Purāṇas is Viṣṇu with Lakṣmī; the two are never separated. 160 Nārāyaṇa and Viṣṇu are identical. 161 He is called Bhagavān 162 and Vāsudeva. 163 His qualities are countless 164, but six among them are prominent. 165 They are knowledge, power, strength, supremacy, valour and splendour. He is absolutely free from defects or features which are to be avoided. 166 He has two forms, namely, visible and invisible 167 The visible one is His own form. 168 The world represents His mobile form. The former is also called Śabda Brahman. 169 as it could be intuited through the Vedas, Vedāṅgas, Itihāsas and Purāṇas which represent verbal testimony. The knowledge of this form is called ādhyātmika. All antitheses such as having no body, and no sense organ 170 but moving, tasting, hearing and seeing are applicable only to this form. This form is not known to any one 171 The visible form is taken up mainly to preserve dharma. Here the visible form must be taken to refer to the body which the Lord takes up. 172 Such a concept like this leads to the formulation of the theory that everything is God 173 All these are of the nature of Nārāyaṇa 1.4 He takes up the body at his free will 175 which is not the product

160. V.P. 1.8: 17, 35; 1.9: 142 to 145; 10.89: 9 to 12.
161 Harivamśa 3.88: 43, 44.
162. V.P. 6.5: 79.
163. ibid., 6.5: 80, 82.
164. Vām. P. 74 to 40.
165. V.P. 6.5: 79, 85.
167. ibid., 1.22: 55.
168. ibid., 1.22: 56.
169. ibid., 5.1: 35 to 50 6.5: 61; to 69.
170. The ślokas 39 to 49 remind the passages of the Upaniṣads such as Sv. Up. 3: 8, 29.
171. V.P. 1.4: 17.
172. V.P. 5.1: 50.
173. ibid., 1.9: 69 to 74; 2.12: 38 to 40, 43.
174. ibid., 5.1: 29, 30.
175. ibid., 6.5: 84.
of matter.\textsuperscript{176} Even gods worship this visible form.\textsuperscript{177} He bears these forms as a self does his body and so He is the self of all those things which He bears.\textsuperscript{178} He bears not only the inanimate things but also the selves.\textsuperscript{179} It can therefore be said that He exists in five ways, namely, through the elements, senses, matter, self and Supreme Self.\textsuperscript{180} Like the self which controls the body, He controls, being the self, the entire thing which is distinct from Him.\textsuperscript{181} For the welfare of the world, He becomes this body which is graphically represented as adorned with ornaments and weapons.\textsuperscript{182} All the things including selves are brought under these two heads. The self is the Kaustubha gem for Him.\textsuperscript{183} The entire world is said to constitute His prosperity\textsuperscript{184} which is not affected by time. He gets into a particular body and carries out His desire.\textsuperscript{185}

He is the Supreme Deity and has full control over all others such as Brahmā and Rudra who are said to have been caught in the worldly delusion.\textsuperscript{186} He is in the heart of the entire world and as such He alone can have control over others.\textsuperscript{187} Therefore He alone shall be fit to be worshipped.\textsuperscript{188} He is the only refuge for humanity.\textsuperscript{189} So not only for final release but for any other benefit such as physical health, material wealth, pleasures that are incidently available.\textsuperscript{190}

\textsuperscript{176} Var. P. 34 : 40.
\textsuperscript{177} V.P. 1.19 : 80.
\textsuperscript{178} ibid., 1.19 : 83; 1.22 : 65; Harivāmśa 3.34 : 19 to 21.\n\textsuperscript{179} ibid., 6.7 : 53 to 59; 2.13 : 2.
\textsuperscript{180} ibid., 5.18 : 50.
\textsuperscript{181} ibid., 2.6 : 8.
\textsuperscript{182} ibid., 1.22 : 67 to 77.
\textsuperscript{183} ibid., 1.22 : 68.
\textsuperscript{184} ibid., 4.1 : 84.
\textsuperscript{185} Viṣṇudharma 108 : 50.
\textsuperscript{186} V.P. 5.30 : 17.
\textsuperscript{187} ibid., 1.17 : 20.
\textsuperscript{188} Viṣṇudharma 2.14 : 8, 28; Harivāmśa 3.89 : 8, 9.
\textsuperscript{189} ibid , 1.59,
\textsuperscript{190} Viṣṇudharma 43 : 46 ; 74 : 43.
He alone should be sought after and not Brahmi and Rudra.  
When He is pleased, there is nothing that is not attainable.  
From Him, the world rises, remains with Him and merges in Him. He pervades the universe through His power.  
Sage Bharu is said to have realized the supremacy of Visnu over other deities.

The Narayaniya and the Anugita mention nothing about the existence of souls prior to samsara. But the Brhadavatapurana and the Vishnupurana incline to the view that souls exist eternally, and therefore prior to creation, in a subtle form within the Deity in one of His aspects. "When this universe was under waters at the time of dissolution, the Deity alone reposed on His mighty serpent couch: His eyes were closed though He did not do away with the power of understanding...And although He had placed within His person all incorporeal bodies, He sent the energy of Time to arouse Him again at the time of creation...Sleeping for four yugas, and thousands of years with His own created energy He expired within His person all those creatures." "All this world was derived from Thee. As the wide-spreading Nyagrodha (Indian fig) tree is compressed in a small seed, so at the time of dissolution, the whole universe is comprehended in Thee as its germ." This view also is conformable to the doctrine, that the rudiments of plants exist in their cotyledons. According to these two works, the soul exists even prior to creation, as some thing externally distinct, although it exists only in the Supreme Being and is completely dependent on Him. It would appear that the individual self is pervaded by the Supreme Being as its soul or principle of consciousness. He seems at times to usurp the place of the individual self. Nevertheless, the fact that the embodied self suffers from

191. MBh. Santi. 350 : 19, 36.  
192. V.P. 1.12 : 79; 1.17 : 91.  
193. ibid., 1.1 : 31 cf. ibid 1.2 : 4.  
194. ibid., 1.4 : 38.  
196. Bhag. P. 3.8 :  
197. V.P. 1.12 : 66, 67.
many evils seems to have prevented from completely identifying the individual with the Supreme Self. The Nārāyaṇiya and the Purāṇas regard the embodied individual as suffering from imperfections. The problem has therefore to be faced in what relation the Deity stands to these imperfections if He exists within the individual as his Soul. Here the Sāṃkhyan conception of the Puruṣa who is spectator or Witness merely and not Agent helps to clear the way. “The one Puruṣa...transcends all Puruṣas and is invisible. The many Puruṣas that exist in the universe constitute the basis upon which that one Puruṣa stands. Though divested of body, He dwells in every body. Though dwelling again in bodies, He is never touched by the acts accomplished by those bodies. He is my inner Soul. He is thy inner Soul. He is the all-seeing Witness dwelling within all embodied creatures and engaged in making their acts.”

Whenever there is distress for the gods, they invariably go to Brahmā who takes them to Viṣṇu who reclines on the serpent in the milky ocean which is part of the material world. This place is taken up by the Lord so as to be within the easy access of His devotees. From this it is made clear that the Lord has invested with His devotees the responsibility for the realization of their incapacity to solve their problems and for appealing to Him for help. The Purāṇas contain references to the vyūha doctrine and there is free admixture of the Upaniṣadic concepts of God and of the vyūha concepts.

The mysterious powers of God could not be easily assessed. Even Ādiśeṣa who always sings in praise of His great qualities, could not recount them. This idea appears to have found the basis for the doctrine of divine descent which is regarded as the central pivot round which revolve the other theories of the Bhāgavata cult. The descent of the

199. V.P. 1.9: 38; 51: 31.
200. ibid., 5.18: 58; Harivamśa 2.3.
Lord is of three kinds, namely ṛṣṭha, kula and ṛṣṭhakula. The first kind represents such descents like Yajña, Vāmana and others where all the powers of God are not required to be revealed. The second type refers to souls who are born in the world with the divinity of God enshrined in them. Vyāsa, Gaya and others would serve to illustrate this kind. The third kind is represented by the admixture of human and divine elements as in the case of Rṣabha.

The descents of Nārāyaṇa could also be considered to be due to the qualities and sport. Those which are based on the qualities are called guṇāvatāras as represented by the vyūhas which are ‘revealed in the isolated corner of an individuals’s mind’. That which is based on the sportive aspect of descent is called Līlāvatāra which is taken up for the benefit and desire of the devotees. A Līlāvatāra behaves like an ordinary mortal just to win over the confidence and thereby to instil into us the ideals of life. The purpose of Līlāvatāra is said to destroy those who are working against the interest of the world and to protect dharma. The divine sport of Kṛṣṇa is coordinated with Viśnu’s immanent and transcendent natures.
The Purāṇas add to the list of the Lord’s descents given in the Nārāyaṇiya. There are no less than four lists of āvatāras in the Bhāgavata-purāṇa numbering as many as twenty-two; but one of the lists admits that the āvatāras are really “numberless”. The Viṣṇu-purāṇa and the Bhāgavata-purāṇa distinguish themselves in their elaboration of the Krṣṇāvatāra among the cow-herds of Mathurā. The tenth book of the latter which is the longest and the most popular section that work is devoted entirely to the birth, life, amours and miraculous deeds of Krṣṇa among the herdsmen and herdswomen of Mathurā. The significance of this theory of divine descent seems to be to establish peace and social concord among the worshippers of different gods. He who worships the Deity in the form of Boar is a worshipper of Viṣṇu no less than he who worships the high-souled Krṣṇa. All are in the end worshippers of the same Deity and accordingly there is no room for sectarian animosity. Again it is generally believed that the being which is descended is a portion of, or an emanation from, the Supreme Being. Thus it is declared, “He who is the soul of all......descends in a small portion of His essence to establish righteousness below,” and speaking of the descent of the Deity as Krṣṇa and his brother, Saṅkarṣaṇa, declares,” the Supreme Lord plucked off two hairs, one white and one black”, and said to the gods, “These my hairs shall descend upon earth, and shall relieve her of the burden of her distress,” which indicates that the beings which descend are a small portion of the Supreme Being. This is generally conceded by the Bhāgavata-purāṇa also, which after enumerating the twenty-two descents of the Deity, declare, “All these are either portions or emanations from the Person” but makes an exception in the case of Krṣṇa-descent and adds, “But Krṣṇa is the Lord Himself.”

215. Bhāg. P. 1.3; 2.7; 6.8; 1.4.
216. ibid., 1.3.
217. V.P. 5; Bhāg. P: 10th Skandha.
218. Periyāl. Tm. from 1.2 to 3.6 could be thought of as having been modelled after this section of the Bhāgavata-purāṇa.
219. cf. V.P. 5.1: 3 to 50.
220. ibid., 5.1: 59, 60. p. 16
The real basis for Viṣṇu's divine descent is thus affording relief to the suffering humanity by removing personally the obstacles which the good people have to face. Viṣṇu came therefore to be looked upon as a benign and sovereign personality. It is but natural that other deities were treated as occupying an inferior status. Rather, they were treated as His mere shadows. This attitude towards Him gave Him the appellation Greater Personality (Puruṣa) to distinguish Him from other deities. This explains the identification of Viṣṇu with Puruṣa whose hymn brought all the animate and inanimate beings under His being. Viṣṇu became the store house of the 'sublimity and majesty of all the gods' who, though having their individuality, were treated like ordinary persons. Though Viṣṇu behaved like men of the world, He retained His original character.

One noteworthy feature of the avatāra doctrine is that while the Lord takes a particular form and is making use of it for the welfare of His devotees, He employs some other form of His in helping them in a different capacity. The Lord took the shape of the tortoise and supported the Mandara mountain which was used as the churning rod. He was on the side of the gods assuming a different form and pulled the body of Vāsuki which was serving as a rope twined round the Mandara mountain. He did this by standing along with the gods. He did the same along with the demons taking up a different form. He was infusing His energy into the mountain, Vāsuki and gods.

It is but natural that the path of devotion is recommended in the Purāṇas as the most sure and easiest mode of winning the Lord who is ever ready to come within the reach of the mortals. Association with men of good conduct is said to arouse the feeling of devotion among the mortals. Devotion is a discipline (yoga) of the spiritual kind which is based on the Upaniṣadic principles of detachment. The

225. V.P. 1.9: 88 to 91.
advance made here over what the Upaniṣads preach lies in the dedication of the self to God by itself.²²⁷ The self shall offer itself and what belongs to itself also.²²⁸ It is only then that the doer would become alive to the fact that the material world has no bearing on his spiritual development. The efforts made, after that, would enable him to reap the benefits of his efforts. Anything that is thought or spoken or done and surrendered to Nārāyaṇa is considered to have spiritual significance.²²⁹ Here are included socio-religious services like the construction of a temple or the digging of a tank.²³⁰

Even though people become devotees of God, they differ from each other owing to the disparity in their temperaments. Those who intend to do injury, to play tricks or to show their jealousy and work hastily towards that end are of the tāmasic kind. To the rājasic kind belong those who adore the idols of God seeking fame and supremacy in the material world. Those who surrender their deeds to Him, having done them because of the obligation are sāttvikas.²³¹ Again it may be pointed out here that a devotee of Viṣṇu is one who bows to Hari, who observes his duties scrupulously, behaves alike to foe and friend, thinks deeply of Him, whose disaffection to the material wealth is revealed by his treating gold as straw, who is clear minded, is free from envy, is quiet and is of good conduct. His words are good and pleasing.²³² He utters always the names of God such as Kamalanayana (Thāmarāṅk-kanpan), Vāsudeva, Viṣṇu, Dharani-dhara, Acyuta, Śaṅkhacakrapāṇi etc. Yama's servants would not lay their hands on him.²³³ He is convinced that he would not be let

²²⁸ ibid., 11.3: 28.
²²⁹ ibid., 11.2: 36; V.P. 2.6: 37.
²³⁰ ibid., 7.15: 48, 49.
²³¹ ibid., 3.29, 7. 10.
²³² V.P. 3.7: 18, 20 to 27.
²³³ ibid., 3.7: 35.
down by God. The evil effects of the past deeds accrued to his credit would be completely wiped off for which he has only to offer Him the flowers of devotion.\textsuperscript{234} For him, in whose heart Hari dwells, the Kali age is Kṛṭayuga and conversely the Kṛta age would become Kaliyuga for him who does not devote himself to God.\textsuperscript{235} God too would not take His abode in the heart that is spoiled by passion.\textsuperscript{236} An ardent devotee, when insulted by another with the use of harsh expressions would only bow his head to him and reply in a calm way.\textsuperscript{237}

The Lord could be pleased by the selves through making some offerings which are metaphorically conceived as flowers. A devotee shall not cause injury to any one. He shall have control over his sense organs. Compassion must be shown to all beings. Forbearance, when there is room for provocation, shall be practised and stress is laid on the practice of this virtue. Correct knowledge of God and self is very much required. Penance shall be practised in the form of religious observances such as fasts, prayers and others. This meaning for this word is suggested by the need to make the physical frame endure certain stresses and restrictions in order to make it remain controlled. Meditation on God is another act which is treated here as a flower. Uttering truth is the eighth flower. When practised, these are held to play the role of flowery offerings. In a way, one can see in the practice of these eight observances a way for getting disciplined so as to serve God sincerely. These could be considered as virtues having ethical significance.

Devotion to Viṣṇu is said to be ninefold with the names śravaṇa, kīrtana, smaraṇa, pādaśeṇa, arcanā, vandana, dāsyā, sakhyā, and ātmānivedana. Śravaṇa consists in listening to the narrations of the greatness of God.\textsuperscript{238} Singing

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{234} Bhāg. P. 12.3: 46.
\item \textsuperscript{235} Viṣṇudharma 109: 57; 99: 13.
\item \textsuperscript{236} ibid., 6: 11; V.P. 3.6: 28 to 32.
\item \textsuperscript{237} Liṅgapurāṇa, 28: 132.
\item \textsuperscript{238} Bhāg. P. 6.16: 44; 3.9: 5.
\end{itemize}
the glory of God is the second kind which is praised as the easy means to get mokṣa in the Kali age. The third kind corresponds to the stage of meditation which is enjoined in the Upaniṣads. This is to be done in accordance with the principles of yoga which are hard to practise. It is therefore enough if a devotee could simply recollect that God is in his heart and hence the word ‘smarana’ which means recollection is used here instead of the word ‘dhyāna’. Rendering service at the feet of God is the fourth kind. Those devotees who acquire the dust from the feet of Viṣṇu do not aspire for residence in heaven, or sovereignty, or yogic power or even mokṣa. By continuously worshipping Viṣṇu, the person, who does service gets his devotion to the the feet of Lord strengthened, gets detachment from other things and correct knowledge about God and finally gets mental quietitude. His evil deeds get controlled and do not bear the undesirable results. Adoration or worship in the real sense of the word is arcaṇa. This is to be undertaken in the form of conducting the act of worship which consists of many items such as offering tuṣasi, flowers and others at the feet of the Lord. This is done to the accompaniment of Vedic mantras or select ślokas which are appropriate to the occasion. This is generally done to the idol of God. There is a certain procedure to be adopted for this purpose. The Prākrit verses of praise could also be sung on the occasion. The method of doing this may be based on the Vedic pattern and also on

239. ibid., 11.5: 36; 1.5; 22.
240. ibid., 12.3; 52.
242. Yogasūtra 2. 29.
244. ibid., 6.3: 33; 10.14: 29.
245. ibid., 10.16: 37.
246. ibid., 11.2: 33, 43.
247. ibid., 11.5: 42.
248. ibid., 11.27: 15; 11.27: 24 (Here the word ‘arcaṇa’ is used).
249. ibid., 11.27: 19 to 49 (The word ‘arcaṇa’ is used in 48); 11.3: 48 to 54.
250. ibid., 11.27: 45.
the Śāramāṇa. Prostration is the next kind which consists in the eight limbs touching the ground. This indicates the devotees’ attempt to reveal their realization of God’s supremacy over them. Servitude (dāsyya) is the attitude which a devotee entertains towards God. Friendship (sakhyā) is cultivated by the devotee for God. The devotee has implicit confidence in God and moves with Him freely actuated by deep affection. Sugrīva, Draupadī and others moved with God as friends. The eternal Brahman became the friend of the cowherds of Nandagopa. Offering one’s self to God is uññatā. He is pleased even with the little offering that is made to Him with devotion.

There are countless names for Viṣṇu, among which Nārāyaṇa, Viṣṇu, Vāsudeva, Bhagavān, Govinda, Dāmodara and Keśava could be said to be prominent. The name ‘Nārāyaṇa’, when uttered, relieves the person who utters it of disease, danger and miseries which oppress him. The word ‘vāsudeva’ means that He dwells in all the things which live in Him. The name ‘Bhagavān’ refers to Him as the cause of all causes. He is the only cause and the first preceptor for all people. This name has the primary import only in Him. This refers also to Para Brahman. The name ‘Govinda’ was conferred on Keśa by Indra out of respect of the Lord’s successfully safeguarding the cows and others from rain.

251. ibid., 11.27: 49.
252. ibid., 11.27: 45.
253. ibid., 9.5: 16.
254. ibid., 11.27: 4.
255. MBh. Vana. 12: 230.
257. ibid., 10.52: 39.
258. ibid.. 10.81: 3.
260. V.P. 5.5: 80, 82.
261. ibid., 6.5: 77, 79; 1.9: 49, 50.
262. ibid., 6.5: 76.
263. ibid., 5.12: 12; Bhāg. P. 10.27: 23; Harivamśa 2.19.
The name ‘Dāmodara’ was acquired by Kṛṣṇa when He was tied to a mortar by Yaśodā with a small rope. Kṛṣṇa reduced His waist so as to be tied by that rope. According to the Mahābhārata, Kṛṣṇa had sense-control (dama) and hence the name. Nārada gave the name Keśava to Kṛṣṇa who killed the demon Keśin. Harivamśa gives a different interpretation. From Viṣṇu were produced Brahmā (ka) and Śiva (īśa) and so He came to be known as Keśava. It is said that in the Kaliyuga, it would be enough, if the name Keśava is uttered. There is another name which is quite well-known, namely, Hari. Whether the name is uttered owing to convention, or jest or without knowing its significance, the persons who utter it are cleansed of their sins and would be prevented from sufferings. Agastya narrates the story of Ajāmila, who by uttering the name ‘Nārāyaṇa’ addressing his son who bore that name, and without knowing that it is God’s name, got mokṣa.

Among the modes of worshipping God, there is the mental one as distinct from the external kind. The former is of a superior kind. The Lord is within every being. The enlightened selves could worship Him. Those who resort to the latter kind shall realise that they have to scrupulously abide by the eight kind of flowers (already referred to) in order that they should shed their dislike and hatred for others. Otherwise, the worship which they offer to the idols is meaningless and does not serve any purpose. The ultimate goal

264. ibid., 5.6: 20; Bhāg. P. 10.9: 11 to 21; Harivamśa 2.7: 36.
265. MBh. Drona, 70: 8.
266. V.P. 5.16: 23. Harivamśa 2.24: 65. cf. Bhāg. P. 10.37 where this incident is narrated, but the name Keśava is not mentioned there as the name of Kṛṣṇa.
269. ibid., 6.3: 31.
272. ibid., 3.29: 22.
274. ibid., 3.29: 22 to 24.
shall be to realize that God is in the hearts of the worshipper and also other beings.  

The ideal of a devotee shall be to think of God constantly and to request Him for allowing Him to continue to be a sincere devotee of Him in the future births and to have no attraction for material prosperity. He must seek to do service at the feet of God. Sage Mārkaṇḍeya who had a longer lease of life than others. saw, during deluge, the Lord reclining as a child on a banyan leaf which was floating in the waters of the sea. He came to be called Brahmaṛṣi through his devotion to Viṣṇu. He requested Śiva who appeared before him, to enable him to have never-failing devotion to Viṣṇu and His devotees. The devotee must also prefer to be inside a cage engulfed in fire to living amidst people who are not devoted to the Lord. Otherwise, it will be a terrible loss for him to remain without thinking of Him. Neither learning, nor penance, control of breath or pilgrimage would purify him as his realization that God is enshrined within him.

The act of devotion is called kṛityayoga. The devotee shall have an image of the Lord made out of gold or silver or any metal. He shall adore it, bow to it and make offerings to it. He shall meditate upon it as Brahman. The Viṣṇudharma where this is stated is called a śāstra and unlike the Viṣṇupurāṇa and Bhāgavata-purāṇa this recommends yoga as the means of propitiating God. If mind could not be con-

275. ibid., 3.29: 25.
276. V.P. 1.20: 18, 19.
278. ibid., 12.8: 4; 12.10: 28 to 37.
282. ibid.; 3.29: 14 to 20.
trolled, then whatever they do, could be surrendered at the feet of God. 285

One shall get on in the world according to the rules of the Dharmasāstras which are binding on all people. A devotee will have to be more careful in observing these rules. The Lord Himself declared that the Vedas and Smṛitis are His orders. Whoever violates them shall be deemed to bear malice towards Him. Even if he who is devoted to Him violates them could not be considered to be a Vaiṣṇavite. 286 One noteworthy feature in the teachings of these Purāṇas is that a devotee is expected to treat another devotee as his superior and show respect to him. 287 It is only when he is treated as a master and kept delighted that the Lord is happy. 288 The devotee shall take the water with which the feet of the Lord and His devotees are washed. 289 One shall surrender himself to him who has in his turn surrendered himself to another who did thus to another who again did thus to him who had surrendered himself to God. Then he would be freed from all sins. 290 A devotee of Viṣṇu would not go to hell whatever be the nature of the family in which he is born. 291 Conversely, those who insult Viṣṇu and His devotees would surely go to hell. 292 Those who treat Him on a par with other gods are condemned as pāsanda. 293 When it is realized that Nārāyana is the inner self of all and that everything is of the nature of Nārāyana, every being will have to be treated with respect. There will then be no room for treating some persons as friends and others as foes. 294

287. Vṛddha Hṛtāsmṛiti 8: 28; M.Bh. Āśvamedhika 106: 23.
288 Pāḍm. P. 81: 52
290 cf. TVM. 3.7: 10; Brhamnāradīya 34: 61.
291. Sātt.S 2.9; MBh. Āśvamedhika 96: 46.
292. V.P. 3.7: 33; MBh. Śānti 336 36.
293. cf. Śrīdhara on V.P. 3.18.
294. V.P. 1.19: 37, 38.

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The devotees of Viṣṇu are born only in some places but they are found, during the Kali age, mostly in the southern regions called Drāvida deśa where the rivers Tāmraparṇī, Vaigai, Kāviri, Pālaṇu and Periyāru flow. Apart from the correctness of the statement, as far as the numerically larger number of Viṣṇu temples are concerned which are in these regions attracting large number of devotees, this passage has some weight; for it is in these regions that the Āḻvārs were born and propagated the path of devotion.

The path of self-surrender does not get exclusive treatment in the Bhāgavata-purāṇa. The devotee is asked by the Lord to seek Him for shelter, so that he could be free from all fears of worldly life. On the other hand, the two main Purāṇas are devoted to the treatment of the path of devotion to the utter exclusion of jñāna and karma. The path of devotion, the greatness of the devotees and other aspects have received a detailed treatment in these Purāṇas.

The supreme region of Viṣṇu is known as Paramapada. It is full of pure intelligence, is eternal, unchanging and has neither beginning nor end. It is neither gross nor subtle and thus lies beyond description. The yogins visualize it in the Prāṇava. Those who reach it do not return to the world. The two Purāṇas speak of this region where the soul lives in bliss with the Lord and all his celestial host. But they do not seem to regard this as the final state of release, for it is said that souls which have become free from sin dwell here till the end of a kalpa and then proceed through the other states till finally they become “immersed in that great Soul.”

296. ibid., 11.12: 15.
297. ibid., 11.20: 31 to 36.
298. ibid., 11.14: 20, 22, 25.
300. V.P. 1.9: 50 to 56.
301. ibid., 2.8: 101, 102; Bhāg. P. 2.2:31
302. ibid., 2.8: 97.
303. Bhāg. P. 2.2:31
Accordingly the Viṣṇu-purāṇa teaches that, as the state of the gods is a thousand times superior to that of pious men, so the state of the liberated souls is a thousand times superior to that of gods in heaven.³⁰⁴ Dwelling as the gods in heaven is only a stage³⁰⁵ in obtaining final emancipation, which he who remembers Hari obtains at once without the necessity of going through the intermediate stages. Similarly it is stated in the Bhāgavata-purāṇa that the devotee reaches directly the state of Viṣṇu, which Śiva and other deities finally attain.³⁰⁶ But it is not stated what exactly this highest state of release is except that it is merging into the Deity. But it is described at times to involve an extinction of sense as in sleep, the cessation of the idea of ego, and with it the disappearance of all distinction between subject and object, seer and seen, in short, the rejection of the idea of duality, and of all differences between the individual and Universal Soul. At other times some kind of distinction between the soul and the Deity is assumed as in the case of Prahlāda attaining unity with the Supreme Being. "He forgot entirely his own individuality and was conscious of nothing. And he thought that he himself was the endless inexhaustible Supreme Soul. And on account of this efficient notion of identity the imperishable Viṣṇu...... appeared in his mind which was wholly purified from sin."³⁰⁷ According to this account, it would appear that the soul, in its beatific experience of union with the Deity, forgets itself or loses consciousness of itself, not that it ceases to exist. This impression gained on the human side from the experience of the soul which had attained unity with the Divine, is confirmed also on the divine side by the words of the Deity Himself. "I have no liking either for Myself or for My immortal consort Lākṣmī without the association of My saintly devotees whose sole refuge I am. How can I leave them who have renounced their wives, home, children, relations, wealth and this world and the next, and completely surrendered themselves to Me? They do not know anything

³⁰⁴. V.P. 2.6: 32, 33.
³⁰⁵. ibid., 2.8.
³⁰⁶. Bhāg. P. 4.24:68
³⁰⁷. V.P. 1.20.3.
other than Me nor do I know anything else but them. It is seen from the above that in release the soul becomes intimately but not completely one with God.

In conclusion, it can be stated that the conception of God as revealed in these works is as follows: the Lord dwells internally in all beings and all things dwell in Him. The Lord Vasudeva is the creator and preserver of the world. Though identical with all beings He is beyond and separate from material nature, from its products, from properties and from imperfections. He is beyond investing substance. He is Universal Soul; all the interstices of the universe are filled up by Him. He is one with all good qualities, and all created things are endowed with a small portion of His individuality. Assuming various shapes He bestows benefits on the whole world, which is his work of creation. Glory, might, dominion, wisdom, energy, power and other attributes are collected in Him. He is the Supreme of the supreme, in whom no imperfections abide: He is the Lord over finite and infinite. God in individuals and universals, visible and invisible, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, almighty.

308. Bhāg. p. 9.4: 63 to 68.
THE SUPREME BEING IN THE BHAGAVAD-GīTĀ

The Bhagavad-gītā or the song of the celestial is more a religious classic than a philosophical treatise. It is not an esoteric work designed for and understood by the specially initiated but a popular poem which helps even those who wander in the region of the many and variable. In fact, it is regarded by almost all sections of the Hindus as one of the most sacred religious works and a large number of commentaries has been written on it by the adherents of different schools of thought, each of which explained the poem in its own favour. For example: the systems of Vedāṇta consider this poem as one of the triple foundations, the other two being the Upaniṣads and the Brahma-sūtras and the three being known as the triple canon or Prasthāna-trāva. It is no exaggeration to say that the Bhagavad gītā gives utterance to, and fulfils the aspirations of, the pilgrims of all sects who seek to tread the inner way to the city of God.

The aim of the Gītā is not so much to teach a theory as to enforce practice, dharma. In fact, the work opens with a practical problem. In the beginning Arjuna is found despondent and declining to fight; his mind is clouded, his conventions unsettled, and his whole consciousness confused; he is being guided by social conventions and customary morality and not by his individual perception of truth. So he refuses to fight and raises difficulties. He puts up a plausible plea for abstention from activity. To convert him is the purpose of the Gītā. Arjuna gets enlightened and declares that his perplexities are ended and he would carry out the command to fight.¹ Right through the work Kṛṣṇa emphasizes the need for action.² He recommends the full active life of men in

2. ibid., 2:18, 37, 3:19, 4:15, 8:7, 11:33, 16:24, 18:6, 72.
the world with the inner life anchored in the Eternal Spirit.

In the discourse, the Lord declares emphatically His identity with Brahman. Arjuna too does the same. This is done by bringing out the teachings of the Upaniṣads in a nutshell. The Gitā has a better appeal to humanity by the happy blending of knowledge, work and religious attitude which form the central teaching of the Upaniṣads. In fact, the Upaniṣads are taken to represent the cows. Kṛṣṇa is the milkman and the Gitā represents the nectar-like milk got through Kṛṣṇa. It is this attitude to the Gitā that made it acquire a significant place both in the philosophical and religious schools of India.

In speaking of the Supreme Deity the Gitā uses terms such as Brahman, the ‘Imperishable,’ and others which are used in the Upaniṣads. But its own distinctive name for God i.e. Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is spoken of as Viṣṇu. The mace and discus which are ornaments of Viṣṇu are mentioned among the ornaments by the Lord in the glorious form in which He appeared to Arjuna. The Gitā’s unique contribution lies in the thought that the Supreme Being of the Upaniṣads, the all-pervading unknowable One whom the philosophers proclaimed has assumed the form of Kṛṣṇa, Arjuna’s charioteer. That Ultimate Being indeed appears in human form, speaks through human lips and is concerned about human affairs.

Viṣṇu occupies a significant place in the Rg. Veda as a deity rendering help to the suffering humanity by taking the three strides. Kṛṣṇa’s identity with Viṣṇu is established directly and through identification with the solar deities.

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3. ibid., 5:29.
4. ibid., 11:36 to 46.
5. ibid., 8:8 to 11.
6. ibid., 10:2.
7. ibid., 9:13; 11.18, 37.
8. ibid., 10:21; 11:24, 30; also as Hari ibid., 11:9; 18:77.
9. ibid., 11:10, 46.
10. It is this condescending nature of the Lord that has appealed to the Āḻvārs who, especially Nammāḻvār, revel in it. Vide TVM 1.3: 1.9: 2.3 etc.
The importance of Viṣṇu as Puruṣa had paved the way for the declaration of the Lord as Purusottama. That Kṛṣṇa is identical with Nārāyaṇa is suggested by His being the resting place of all beings, but there is no specific mention of this in the Gīḍa. Kṛṣṇa has all the attributes ascribed to the Supreme Being. He is spoken of as Supreme Brahman (parabrahman), Supreme Persons (purusottama), Great Lord (mahēśvara), the "Imperishable, the Being, the Non-being, That Supreme", Exalted Being (mahēśvara) and Supreme Self. As Supreme Being, He is incomprehensible, infinite of form having no end, middle or beginning, boundless, from everlasting, primal, unborn, changeless and immutable. He is all-marvellous, terrible, facing every way, possessed of boundless power and infinite might, resplendent and filled with glory. He is connected with the past, present and future. He is subtler than the subtle. The gods do not know Him nor do the great sages for all of whom He is the source. What is revealed as representing God's forms only a fraction of His glory signifying that this cosmos is but a partial revelation of His and showing that His full glory is beyond the human ken. Such are His transcendent qualities which compel fear, awe and reverence. The Lord is immanent. He enters into every living body, controls it and sustains it also. He enters into the three worlds and

15. ibid., 10:15; 11:3.
17. ibid., 11:37.
23. ibid., 11:18.
25. ibid., 10:3.
27. ibid., 9:13.
29. ibid., 11:20.
31. ibid., 11:40.
33. ibid., 7:26.
35. ibid., 10:2.
37. ibid., 11:20 to 31. ibid., 7:26.
38. ibid., 13:22
sustains them Himself without undergoing any change signifying that He penetrates into the inert matter as well and fully pervades it.

Besides these transcendent qualities, the Lord has numerous perfections which render Him the object of man's highest aspiration and love. He is the Light of lights, the discernment of the discerning, the brilliance of the brilliant, the source of memory and knowledge, the dispeller of doubt, the maker of the Vedāṇa, omniscient and unrivalled in knowledge, the source of the seven Great Seers and the four Ancients (Manus), identifiable only with the prime and most significant of every species of existence. Not among the least of the God's attributes is His ethical perfection. At His sight great seers and perfected ones in hosts cry 'hail' and adore Him with hymns of abounding praise and the demons flee in terror. He is without flaw and is strictly impartial. He always sets the standard for men to follow. He has instituted the eternal laws of duty (sāśvatadharma) and is the undying guardian of the eternal law. So important it seems to Him that the laws of duty must not be transgressed that, as in the present case, He even descends in order to establish righteousness. "Whenever there is a decline of righteousness, and rise of unrighteousness, O Bhārata, I incarnate Myself. For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked and for the establishment of righteousness, I come into being from age to age." That God considers even His infinitude of little account when righteousness needs to be established is a remarkable contribution which the Gitā makes to the conception of the Divine. Besides righteousness, there is another attribute, love, which the Gitā ascribes to God. God is the friend of every being.

41. ibid., 8:22. 42. ibid., 13:17.
43. ibid., 7:10. 44. ibid., 15:15.
45. ibid., 15:15. 46. ibid., 15:15.
49. ibid., 10:20 to 38. 50. ibid., 11:21.
51. ibid., 11:36. 52. ibid., 5:19.
53. ibid., 9:29. 54. ibid., 3:23.
55. ibid., 14:27. 56. ibid., 11:18.
57. ibid., 4:7. 58. ibid., 5:29.
As Kṛṣṇa, God appears as Arjuna's comrade. He even stoops to be Arjuna's charioteer. So intimate and human is the Lord Kṛṣṇa's friendship that Arjuna is afraid that in negligence or love, he has not shown the reverence that is due to Him, and asks that He should bear with him "as a father to his son, as a friend to his friend and as lover to his beloved." Kṛṣṇa in His turn declares that Arjuna is exceedingly beloved of Him, and because of His love, He reveals Himself to Arjuna in a form in which no eyes had ever seen Him. And when Arjuna is filled with terror and awe at His glorious form, He assumes a shape more pleasant to Arjuna and consoles the latter. The Unmanifest and the Incomprehensible reveals indeed a heart of love and compassion, and Arjuna bursts forth in adoration at this wonderful revelation.

According to the Gītā, the world is real and forms a part of the Supreme, being created, supported, and dissolved by Him. He is the origin of the universe and its dissolution as well. Every thing in the world is strung on Him as rows of gems on a string. All beings enter into God at the end of the cycle and become one with Him. He releases them at the beginning of the next cycle. Under His guidance, nature (prakṛti) gives birth to all objects, moveable and immoveable and the world revolves. There is nothing moving or unmoving that can exist without Him. He is everything, the taste in the waters, the light in the moon and the sun; the pure fragrance in earth and brightness in fire; and the life in all existences. Prakṛti is a principle with which the material world is always connected. It is not an independent principle; it is His own. It works under His control.

59. ibid., 11:41. 60. ibid., 11:41, 42.
61. ibid., 11:44. 62. ibid., 18:64.
63. ibid., 11:47. 64. ibid., 11:49, 50.
65. ibid., 11:43 to 45. 66. ibid., 7:6; cf. ibid., 10:8.
67. ibid., 7:7. 68. ibid., 11:7.
69. ibid., 11:10. 70. ibid., 10:39.
71. ibid., 7:8, 9. 72. ibid., 9:10.

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in relation to the world is found to display a double nature. He is the material cause of the world on the one hand, and its instrumental cause on the other.\textsuperscript{73} He, however, does not partake of the nature of the three guṇas—sattva, rajas and tamas—the ultimate constituents of Prakṛti. “Know thou that (those three states) are all from Me alone. I am not in them; they are in Me.”\textsuperscript{74} Prakṛti with its guṇas forms an eternal part of God who is the substratum of all beings. He abides in all the beings and controls them.\textsuperscript{75} He remains seated in the hearts of all living beings. This shows that the Lord is the saririn for the soul and for its body.\textsuperscript{76}

The finite selves are sent into worldly existence (samsāra), sustained and finally withdrawn by the Lord at the end of each world-cycle.\textsuperscript{77} The attitude of the Lord to the individual souls is one of love. He is jealous of any other besides Himself occupying their affection, and consequently wishes all to worship Him whole-heartedly without allegiance to any other God.\textsuperscript{78} Whatever work is done is to be done as unto Him, without attachment to anything besides Himself.\textsuperscript{79} One’s thought, one’s remembrance, one’s meditation are to be centred on Him, and no other.\textsuperscript{80} He is the witness of man’s activities which He approves. He shall be known through meditation as present in the hearts of living beings. This realization could be had also through knowledge and work. Those who could not have it themselves shall learn this from those who had known it.\textsuperscript{81} The Lord does not command the self to adopt any of these causes in particular. He makes the self know what these causes are and gives it the full freedom to choose itself the cause it likes to pursue.\textsuperscript{82} Thus it is seen that every method of directing oneself to God is advocated by the Gitā.

\textsuperscript{73} ibid., 9:18, 19; 10.8; 14:4. \hfill \textsuperscript{74} ibid., 7:12.
\textsuperscript{75} ibid., 9:4, 5; 15:13, 17. \hfill \textsuperscript{76} ibid., 10:20.
\textsuperscript{77} ibid., 9:5 to 11. \hfill \textsuperscript{78} ibid., 9:23, 24.
\textsuperscript{79} ibid., 18.2 to 6; 9:27; 3:17 to 19. \hfill \textsuperscript{80} ibid., 3:39 to 43; ibid., 6:7, 14 to 27; 9:34.
\textsuperscript{81} ibid., 13:22, 24, 25. \hfill \textsuperscript{82} ibid. 18:63.
The Lord takes births in the world for the well-being of humanity, but His births and acts are divine and are not bound by the features of mortality. Though unchanging, He descends down to this world through His mysterious power. He presents Himself to mankind as the visible object of devotion. This aspect receives treatment in the Mahābhārata, but it is only here that the Lord offers His assurances to stand by the side of the self showering His graces for which He demands faith from the self.

The jīva is asked to do his duty which is enjoined for his status by the scriptures which could be interpreted into karma yoga i.e., applying himself to the work. This could be done more easily by setting one’s mind on God through devotion. Those who are devoted to God, always worship Him by singing His glory, doing their religious duties and bowing to Him. The devotees are said to perform sacred rites in the form of knowledge. Offering of any kind, be it a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or water when made with pure heart and love, is accepted by the Lord. Whatever one does, whatever one eats, whatever one offers, whatever one gives away, whatever austerities one practises shall be surrendered to Him. One should be freed from bonds of works, from fruits both good and evil. The wise worship Him, set their hearts on Him and talk to each other about His deeds rejoicing in these acts. Doing one’s duty, according to the Gitā is the work of God; it is a mode of worshipping Him. By doing one’s duty with reliance placed on God one gets the imperishable status through His grace. The Gitā repeats that restraint and freedom from desire are essential to spiritual perfection. “Fix thy mind on Me; be devoted to Me; sacrifice to Me;
prostrate thyself to Me". Thus various acts of worship which come under karma have to be performed with single-minded devotion.

The karma doctrine that is based on the ritualistic principles and is emphasized in the Mīmāṃsā system has received a splendid and attractive treatment in the Gītā. Firstly, whatever is enjoined in the traditional texts, shall be carried out by the self, not merely as an obligatory rite but as one's duty (svadharma). One's duty shall never be given up and shall be done at any cost, even risking loss. Secondly, the self shall do this by giving up the feeling that it is the doer and by surrendering both the deed and its results to the Lord. This implies that even if there are any lapses in the discharge of such acts, the self will not in the least be affected by them, the act being God's work. The punishment in the form of sufferings which the self will have to bear according to the Dharmasūtras is thus got rid of. Lastly, the deeds are done with the help of the organs of action (karmendriya). While doing them, the sense-organs (jñānendriya) are kept by mind under control. This in a way prevents the rise of a desire for the self in repeating those acts when alone there will be room for attachment to the world. Thus there is a happy reconciliation in the Bhagavad-gītā of the Mīmāṃsā concept of karma with the karma-yoga. The Lord declares that this concept was taught by Him in ancient times to the Sun from whom it passed to Manu and from him to Ikṣvāku. It became forgotten and so there had risen the necessity for Kṛṣṇa to restate it. This aspect of Karma is called NīŚkāma-karma. It is very easy to appreciate this concept but to put it into practice assiduously, it is necessary to acquire correct knowledge of this and of reality. The other advantage of acquiring knowledge is the case with which the most heinous crimes would get destroyed like the faggots in the fire.
Herein lies the relation of *karma-yoga* with *jñāna-yoga* whose full implications are not meant for application here. It is mere deed that is recommended for practice. Knowledge of reality is required to guide the self for the correct practice of the deed.\(^\text{105}\)

Next comes *jñāna-yoga*. It is taught with *āstānga-yoga*. The devotee should follow this path with purified mind. He should dwell in solitude and have a complete control of his senses; he should eat little, control speech, body and mind and keep engaged in meditation. Practising detachment and casting aside egotism, personal might, arrogance, passion, anger, possession and being tranquil he becomes worthy of attaining God.\(^\text{106}\) It is declared that when this culminating knowledge is reached the soul comes to know God, what His measure is, and who He is in truth, it goes to God.\(^\text{107}\) He is verily the object to be known\(^\text{108}\) the description of which as contained here reminds us of its affinity to the *Upaniṣads* both in tone and expressions.\(^\text{109}\)

The *Gitā* stresses that unswerving devotion to God is the means of reaching Him.\(^\text{110}\) He who meditates on the Supreme Being with his thought attuned by constant practice and not wandering after anything else, reaches Him.\(^\text{111}\) The disciplined yogin easily attains Him.\(^\text{112}\) One who serves the Lord with unfailing devotion of love, and rises above the three strands (*guṇas*) is fit to reach Brahman.\(^\text{113}\) The *Gitā* defines the characteristics of a true devotee and the Lord says that persons with such characteristics are liked by Him.\(^\text{114}\) The virtuous

\(\text{105. ibid., 4:16.}\)
\(\text{106. ibid., 18:51 to 53; cf. ibid., 13:7 to 10.}\)
\(\text{107. ibid., 18:55.}\)
\(\text{108. ibid., 15:15}\)
\(\text{109. ibid., 13:12 to 18.}\)
\(\text{110. ibid., 8:22; 7:14}\)
\(\text{111. ibid., 8:8}\)
\(\text{112. ibid., 8:14.}\)
\(\text{113. ibid., 14:26. cf. ibid., 14:20.}\)
\(\text{114. ibid., 12:13 to 20.}\)
ones who worship the Lord are of four kinds. The afflicted, those in distress, who have suffered losses belong to one class. Those who are desirous of wealth wish to improve their material position form another. The third group consists of devout and upright men who wish to know the truth. They are on the right way. To the fourth belong the jñānis who know "that Vasudeva is all". The Lord, however, is not partial to any one. The true devotee will worship God realising Him as the source of everything. He is endowed with conviction that he would be able to get his wish realised only from Him. Even if a man of vile conduct worships Him with undistracted devotion......quickly he becomes righteous and goes to everlasting peace.

Those who take refuge in the Lord alone, it is stated, can overcome the divine māyā consisting of the modes. Though it is stated that the soul attains the immutable and eternal status by His grace, it is not asserted, at any rate, that it has no part to play in salvation; for it is said "surrendering thought, all actions to Me, regarding Me as the Supreme and resorting to steadfastness in understanding do thou fix thy thought constantly on Me. Fixing thy Krought on Me, thou shalt by My grace, cross over all difficulties"; and again "Flee unto Me, for shelter with all thy being. By My grace shalt thou obtain supreme peace and eternal abode". It may appear from the above, that the loving God is not unwilling to extend His grace to the most undeserving, even apart from all qualifying conditions, if the latter goes to Him for refuge. Accordingly the Lord declares, "Abandoning all duties come to Me alone for shelter. Be not grieved, for I shall release thee from all

115. ibid., 7:16 to 19. of MBHR. Śānti: 341: 33.
117. ibid., 15: 15.
118. ibid., 10: 8.
119. ibid.; 9: 30, 31.
120. ibid., 7:14.
121. ibid., 18: 57, 58.
122. ibid., 18:62.
evils". But fearing that this doctrine of totally unmerited grace may lead to misunderstanding and a life of sin He adds, in the very next verse, "Never is this to be spoken by thee to one who is not austere in life, or who has no devotion in Him, or who is not obedient, or who speaks ill of Me". The self's righteousness demands that good deeds should be rewarded and evil deeds punished. Accordingly the soul which has given itself to such deeds takes its rebirth to reap the fruits of its deeds. The reason for such rebirth is that the soul may thus be led to perfection. "Having attained to the world of the righteous and dwelt there for very many years, the man who has fallen away from yoga is again born in the house of such as are pure and prosperous. There he regains the (mental) impressions (of union with the Divine) which he had developed in his previous life and with this (as the starting point) he strives again for perfection". If, when purity (sattva) has increased, the body-bearing soul comes to dissolution, then he proceeds to the spotless worlds of the most wise. If, when energy (rajas) has increased, he goes to dissolution, he is born among men attached to work; and if dissolved when darkness (tamas) has increased, he is born in the wombs of the deluded." The Lord seeks by His grace to wean the soul away from attachment to the finite and when He has succeeded in directing its entire mind, will and devotion to Him, He takes it to Himself, without sending it once more into rebirth, never again to be separated from Him by samsāra. "With thought controlled by constant practice and seeking no other resort, one goes to the Supreme Celestial Person". "He who constantly meditates on Me, thinking of none else, by him who is a yogin ever disciplined easy am I of access." 

123; ibid., 18: 66. This is caranaśloka. Nammāḻvār the super-propa- nna of Vaiṣṇavism performs this self-surrender (vide TVM. 6.10: 10), as will be seen and explained later.

124. ibid., 18: 67.
125. ibid., 6: 41, 43.
126. ibid., 14: 14, 15.
127. ibid., 8: 4.
128. ibid., 8: 14.
There are also references in the Gitā to show the relation of the soul with God when the former has reached its final goal. The released soul becomes closely united with God,\textsuperscript{129} the eternal and immutable abode,\textsuperscript{130} which is beyond death\textsuperscript{131} and where there is no sickness.\textsuperscript{132} Though the soul enters into God, as it is stated, it does not get merged with Him losing its individuality completely; for it abides in Him,\textsuperscript{133} enjoying contact with Him,\textsuperscript{134} having attained a nature similar to that of God.\textsuperscript{135} At a creation the soul does not come into birth, nor at a dissolution is it disturbed.\textsuperscript{136} In this way the Gitā teaches that the soul in its release becomes closely united with God enjoying communion with Him and sharing in His peace, bliss and perfection.

In the Rāmānuja school of Vaiṣṇavism, the Bhagavad-gitā plays the role of an authority championing the cause of jñāna, karma and bhakti. Rāmānuja learnt from his preceptors the significant import of the Gitā as it was taught by Ālavanār who learnt it from Maṇakkāl Nampi.\textsuperscript{137} In his Gitārtha-saṁgraha Ālavanār declares that the Lord is shown in the Gitā as attainable through devotion alone.\textsuperscript{138} The first section consisting of six chapters define the nature of karma-yoga and jñāna-yoga as the limbs of ātmāvalōkana or the intuition of the ātman as a means to bhakti-yoga. The second section of six chapters establishes the nature of God. It extols devotion as the supreme means to emancipation and its course is effected through jñāna and karma. The third and the last section of six chapters sums up the whole truth, and insists on absolute self-surrender to the Lord as the only way of

\textsuperscript{129} ibid., 4: 10; 14: 19; 18: 55.
\textsuperscript{130} ibid., 8: 28; 15: 5; 18: 56, 62. of. TVM. 2.5: 11; 3.8: 11; 4.7: 11; 4.8: 11 etc.
\textsuperscript{131} ibid., 2: 15; 13: 12, 25; 14: 18, 27.
\textsuperscript{132} ibid., 2: 51. cf TVM. 1.7: 11; 3.5: 11; 9.7: 11; 10.1: 11 etc.
\textsuperscript{133} ibid., 5: 19, 20 cf. Peri. Tm. 4. 1: 10; 4.2: 10; 4.9: 10; 5.5: 10.
\textsuperscript{134} ibid., 6: 28.
\textsuperscript{135} ibid., 14:2.
\textsuperscript{136} ibid.; 14:2. cf. TVM. 4. 10: 11.
\textsuperscript{137} G.P., p. 81.
\textsuperscript{138} Gitārtha-saṁgraha. 1.
redemption. It brings out the nature of God as distinct from matter and self. 139 *Karma-yoga* is to be understood as standing for practices like doing penance, visiting holy places, giving charity and performing sacrifices. 140 The path of knowledge consists in those who have controlled their minds remaining in the stage of flawless self 141. The path of devotion consists in the self taking to mediation in order to exclusively please the Supreme Being. 142 These three courses could mutually become helpful for each other's development. The doing of the obligatory and occasioned (*naimittika*) rites shall be taken as the act of pleasing the Supreme Being. 143 One who yearns to render service to God steadfastly and everlastingly shall get to Him. 144

A dispassionate insight into the import of the *Bhagavad-gītā* reveals that besides laying emphasis on the need to do one's duty, the Gītā asks the aspirant to be devoted to God in order to do his work without any impediment. Faith and Grace are the foundations of *bhakti-yoga* which is ably presented on the basis of sound reasoning. Devotion, according to the Gītā, is one essential element in a religious attitude, where the knowledge and work, play their due part. 145 This is essential even for those who adopt the paths of *karma* and *jñāna*. 146 Dedicating every thing to God is strongly recommended. Apart from the assurance given by the Lord to seek His shelter, the Gītā does not seem to directly recommend the path of self-surrender.

139. ibid., 2, 3, 4.
140. ibid., 23.
141. ibid., 23.
142. ibid., 24.
143. ibid., 25.
144. ibid., 26.
146. Bh. G. 9: 34.
GODHEAD IN THE ĀGAMAS AND IN RITUAL WORSHIP

A perusal of the contents of the Vedas, Ītiḥsās and Purāṇas would show that penances and sacrifices were the means of getting freedom from worldly bondage. The path of devotion as the means of salvation is emphasised in the Purāṇas and is given greater significance than in the other source books. The Sāttvata mode of worshipping God is dealt with for the first time in the Mahābhārata, Viṣṇupurāṇa and other works. References to the worship of the concrete form of God are scanty in these works. The gradually diminishing powers of mental concentration of men with the passage of time must have been responsible for the creation of the cult of arca form. At first, the Tāntrika mode which is based on the mystic diagram and magic formulas should have been adopted but this too having been felt as unsuited for man in controlling himself had been replaced by the concrete image of God. God’s possession of a body analogous to that of human beings, this body being admitted to be made up of matter which is not of the material kind and God’s descent for rescuing the suffering humanity are all the resultant features of theism which came to characterize the Āgamic literature. This is not to declare that the Āgamas prohibit the earlier mode of worship which is called mental or internal sacrifice (mānasā yāga or āntara yāga). The Āgamas lay stress on the external mode of worship (bāhya yāga).

The Āgamas declare that mokṣa shall be the aim to be reached, after death, by those who are in bondage. A correct knowledge will have to be acquired for this and this is dealt

1. L.T. Ch. 36; Pārameś. S. Ch. 5; Jay. S. 12.
2. Ibid., Ch. 37 to 39; Pārumeś. S. Ch. 6; Jay. 13.
with in the section called jñāna-pāda (knowledge part) of the Āgamas. Concentration, though not very difficult as in the other courses of mokṣa, must be practised. This is dealt with in the yoga-pāda (devotion part). Construction of temples for locating the idols and the rules governing such constructions are found treated in the kriyā-pāda (service part). The caryā-pāda (conduct part) is devoted to the observance of the rituals connected with worship. The Pādma, Brhaḍbrahma and Viṣṇutattva have all the four pādas while others have some of them.

The Āgamas prescribe the methods of worshipping the deity. There are many deities and so the Āgamas too have become grouped into heads such as Śaiva, Sākta and Vaiṣṇava according as the deities to be held as supreme are Śiva, Śakti and Viṣṇu respectively. Even among the Vaiṣṇvite Āgamas, there are two prominent divisions, namely Pāṇcarātra and Vaikhānasa. The name Pāṇcarātra is accounted for as being due to the fact that it had been explained by the original expounder in five successive rātris or nights.³ This is so stated in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa as having been narrated in five nights of a Satra.⁴ The word ‘rātri’ may be taken to stand for ignorance and the system of Pāṇcarātra can be taken to destroy the five-fold ignorance. The name is also said to be due to the five qualities of mahābhūta, namely, the five gross elements (bhūtas), the five subtle elements (tāmatras), egoistry or individuation (ahaṅkāra), and thought (buddhi) and the formless original matter (avyakta). These five constitute the rātris or gifts of Puruṣa⁵. Hence the Tantra or the Śāstra which treats of these gifts gets called Pāṇcarātra.⁶ Dr. Schrader throws out a suggestion that the name Pāṇcarātra points to five principal subjects treated in the system, namely, (i) tattva (ontology-cosmology), (ii) muktī-prada (liberation), (iii) bhakti-prada (devotion), (iv) Yaugika (yoga).

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4. Sat. Br. 6: 1. This appears in one of the early Sāṁhitās namely, Ahir. S. ch. 12.
5. Pār. S. 1: 30 to 40.
6. ibid., 1: 33.
and (v) raišeśika (the objects of the sense). In this case, rātra, which meant originally "night", must be taken to mean both a cardinal doctrine of a system as well as the chapter or work dealing with that doctrine, that is: it became synonymous with tantra or saṁhitā so that Pāñcarātra would be a designation of the ancient Vaiṣṇavite system. There is also another derivation according to which the name has been derived from the five-fold duties of routine life, namely, (i) abhigamana (going to the temple of God in the morning with the mind, the speech and the body centred on Him), (ii) upādāna (collecting the materials for worship), (iii) iṣya (worship) (iv) svādhyāya (study of the sacred texts and muttering of the usual mantras) and (v) yoga (meditation). These are to be undertaken in the course of the day which is to be divided into five parts for this purpose. The word 'rātra' must be taken to stand for both day and night. According to another interpretation, the principles of this system were taught to Sanatkumāra by Brahmā, Śiva, Indra. Nāga and Rṣi and what were taught by them came to be called Brahmarātra, Śiva-rātra, Indra-rātra, Nāga-rātra, and Rṣi-rātra respectively.

It cannot be asserted very definitely from the materials so far available as to when this school of thought originated, but to a certain extent it may be said to have had a very ancient history. The Pāñcarātra is traditionally believed to have been first taught by Nārāyaṇa – the supreme deity – to Nara, who in his turn, handed it over to Nārada. Sanaka, Śāṇḍilya, Prahlāda, Sugrīva and other Rṣis. Since its source is of a divine origin it is called Bhagavacchāstra. It has been stated in the Mahābhārata that Viṣṇu who is also the creator of the Vedas took the essence from the Vedas and Vedāntas and gave it in a condensed form for His devotees calling it as Pāñcarātra. Some of the traditional works of the Pāñcarātra school further assert that the literature originated with the Vedas and

that its source is the Ekāyanaśākhā affiliated to the Kāvyāśākhā of the Śuklayajurveda. It is quite probable that the Pāncarātra Śruti and Pāncarātra Upaniṣad mentioned by Utpala in his sandapradīpikā refer to the literature of the Ekāyanaśākhā. Further, passages quoted by the same author under the general name Pāncarātra may probably refer to such ancient works as of the Ekāyanaśākhā because of their Vedic style and the nature of their contents. Utpala also quotes from a number of Samhitās of the Pāncarātra school. Utpala’s quotations are found to be divided in three distinct groups namely, Pāncarātra Śruti, Pāncarātra Upaniṣad, and Pāncarātra Samhitā. It is thus quite conceivable that even as late as the tenth century when Utpala flourished, the Śruti literature of the Pāncarātras existed, and probably, it is this branch of literature that the Pāncarātra Samhitās refer to as the Ekāyana Veda or the Ekāyanaśākhā. The validity of the Pāncarātra Āgama is thus taken for granted by Utpala. Yāmuna vindicates the validity of these texts as also Jayantabhatta of Kaśmirī who lived about 850 A.D. There is a specific mention of this in the Śri Raṅgarājastavam. The whole subject is discussed in detail in the Pācarātra rakṣa by Vedanta Deśika.

The Pāncarātra texts are of three kinds, viz.: (a) Divya (divine) those spoken of by the Lord Himself the examples of which are Sāttvata, Pauśkara and Joyākhya Samhitā; (b) Munibhāṣita (uttered by Brahmā and the sages) for which Īśvara, Pārameśvara, Bhāradvāja and other Samhitās may be as examples; (c) Mānuṣya (composed by men) and for this

9. The word ‘ekāyana’ occurs in the Ch. Up. as the name of a branch of study, Vide: 7.1: 2; 7.1: 4; 7.2: 1; 7.5: 2; 7.7: 1. It means one path (eka-one, ayana-path) for salvation (Is. S. 1: 19).


11. The Āgama prāmāṇya (p 88) which is his independent work on this subject refers to Kāsmira Āgama prāmāṇya without mentioning its author as a work on this subject.


kind Āgamanāmbiya of Yāmunacārya may be given as an example. The texts belonging to this group are called by the names Divyaśāstra, Bhagavacchāstra and Siddhānta. There are 225 texts which belong to the Pāñcarātra system. The names of these ends generally as Samhitā and Tantra, such as Pādmasāṁhitā and Lakṣmītantra. Among these, the Pauṣkara, Sātvata and Jayākhyā Samhītiś are known at Ratnatraya due to their importance and perhaps for having served as the nucleus, as it were, for Paramēśvara, Īśvara and Pādma Samhītiś which are followed now for temple worship.

In determining the antiquity of the Pāñcarātra the materials that are available are very scanty. The Pāñcarātra doctrines are associated with the Puruṣa-sūktā of the Ṛg-Veda, which is, as it were, the foundation stone for all future Vaiṣṇavite philosophy. It is said in the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa that Nārāyaṇa, the great being, wishing to transcend all other beings and becoming one with them all, saw the form of sacrifice known as Pāñcarātra and by performing the sacrifice attained his purpose. The Nārāyanīya section of the Śāntiparvan refers to the Pāñcarātra doctrines which prevailed in the Śvetadvipa which was visited by Nārada. The reference in the Mahābhārata cannot be completely relied upon because it is extremely difficult to fix the date of composition of the different portions of that work. An interesting evidence is furnished by two ancient Tamil works, namely, Cilappati-kāram and Paripātal (Second Century A.D) which refer to the Garuḍadhvaja and the images of Śaṅkarṣaṇa, Vāsudeva and Aniruddha. The description of Viṣṇu as given in the poems of Paripātal referred to here follows closely the description of Viṣṇu as the Supreme Being in the Pāñcarātra texts which have come down to us and it definitely refers to

18. CLP. 5, ii. 169-73; ibid., 19. ii. 7-10.
19. PRPL. 3, 4.
the four vṛūhas and the vibhavas. There is the further statement of the character of immanence (antaryāmitva) clearly made in the poem. Another poem in the same collection makes a special reference that Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva are the deities installed in Tirumālirūṅcōlai, a sacred place near Madurai. This poem gives in circumstantial detail the features of Vāsudeva-Saṅkarṣaṇa, so fully that it leaves in little doubt that this worship had established itself in the remote south much earlier than the period to which the poem actually refers. There are references also to the Trivikrama avatāra and to the lotus-eyed Viṣṇu in the Tirukkural (First Century B.C.). Again, the Besnagar inscription (last quarter of the Second Century B.C.) refers to the setting up of a Garuḍadhvaja (column surmounted by the figure Garuḍa) at Vidiśā in honour of Vāsudeva by his Yavana devotee Heliodorus of Takṣaśilā. Another inscription from Besnagar refers to the erection of a Garuḍa Column for a temple of Viṣṇu. The Ghosundi inscription (Rajasthan) of the first century B.C. records the construction of a pūjā-sīlā-prakāra (stone-enclosure for a place of worship), styled as Nārāyaṇa-vāṭaka by a devotee of Viṣṇu who had performed the Āśvamedha sacrifice in honour of Saṅkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva.

The Nanaghat inscription (Bombay State) of about the same age, belonging to the queen of a Śātavāhana performer of Vedic sacrifices including the Āśvamedha, begins with an adoration of Saṅkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva, among others. These epigraphs support the fact known from literary sources regarding Vāsudeva's association with Garuḍa and therefore with Viṣṇu, and with Nārāyaṇa, considerably before the birth of Christ. Dr. S.K. Ayyengar has however traced the mention of the word 'sāttvata' in the Aitareya and Śatapatha Brāhmaṇas and in determining the date of Pāncarātra these references

20. ibid., 15. However, the mode of worship in this shrine is not of the Pāncarātra kind.
24. ibid., pp. 186 ff.
seem to be of the highest value. It seems very probable that within a few centuries after the Mahābhārata war (3100 B.C.) the human character of Kṛṣṇa was forgotten and he was defied along with his relatives, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha, and their worship was made a special feature of a particular tribe, or a section of a people who came to be recognized as belonging to the Pāñcarātra or the Bhāgavata or the Śaivism or the Vāsudeva school.

In his Mahābhāṣya, Patañjali explains the word "vāsudeva" as the name of Bhagavān, thereby meaning the divinity of Vāsudeva, who is proclaimed as the Supreme deity in the Pāñcarātra texts, Viṣṇu-purāṇas and other ancient books. This would suggest clearly a date for the prevalence of Pāñcarātra principles at least before 800 B.C. which is the date of Pāṇini on whose sūtra Patañjali commented. This makes clear the popularity of these doctrines during several centuries before 600 A.D. which could be fixed as the beginning of the Āḻvār period.

The Pāñcarātra literature is, indeed, vast, but it has been shown that most of the literature is full of ritualistic details and that there is very little philosophy in it. But there are some Saṃhitās like Jayākhya-saṃhitā, Ahirbudhnya-saṃhitā, Viṣṇu-saṃhitā, Parama saṃhitā, Pauśkara-saṃhitā, Lākṣmi-tantra and others which have philosophical elements in them. The theoretical philosophy in all of them is mostly inseparably bound up with the story of creation. There is, however, great difficulty in fixing the age of these texts. Some of these texts refer to the Āḻvārs and their worship. Further, there is mention of the need to sing the compositions of the Āḻvārs. This would decidedly point out that either the Saṃhitā texts which contain such accounts

27. Mahābhāṣya on Aṣṭādhyāyī 4.3: 98.
29. Bhr. S. Kriyādikāra. ch. 34; Is. S. ch. 8; Upen. S. ch. 4, 5, 7 and 8.
were composed after 900 A.D., or such portions containing those accounts must have been interpolated after 900 A.D. into the body of these texts. Again, some of these texts contain episodes\(^{31}\) which are not generally found in the Āgamic texts but this need not be taken serious note of for fixing the age of these texts. And again identical passages\(^{32}\) occur in more than one Sāmhitā suggesting the possibility of subsequent additions and alterations into the body of the texts which were already composed.

According to the Lakṣhmītāntra the Supreme Brahman is Vāsudeva,\(^{33}\) Śrīmaṇ Nārāyaṇa.\(^{34}\) He is also known as Paramātman,\(^{35}\) and Para-Brahman.\(^{36}\) Some other Āgamas describe him as Viṣṇu. The Brahman is limitless.\(^{37}\) He is without a second and is the cause for the creation, maintenance and dissolution of all the worlds. All the worlds arise from Viṣṇu, the Supreme Brahman, who is always with Lakṣmi who is described as Viṣṇu-ākṣi and who acts as accessory for the work of Viṣṇu.\(^{38}\) Both are in the nature of knowledge\(^{39}\) and represent one tattva.\(^{40}\) Śrī rests on Him, is the resting place for others, destroys the defects of others and spreads their qualities.\(^{41}\) She descends down along with Viṣṇu.\(^{42}\) The word ‘viṣṇu’ is derived from the root ‘vis’, to pervade and therefore means one who pervades every thing in point of place and time.\(^{43}\) In fact, three roots, namely,

\(^{31}\) Ahir. S. ch. 43, 45; Brhaḍ. S. ch. 6 to 13.
\(^{33}\) L.T. 2: 5.
\(^{34}\) ibid., 2: 6.
\(^{35}\) ibid., 2:1.
\(^{36}\) ibid., 2: 9.
\(^{38}\) L.T. 2: 11, 12.
\(^{39}\) ibid., 2: 27.
\(^{40}\) Ahir. S. 4: 78.
\(^{41}\) ibid., 21: 8, 9.
\(^{42}\) L.T. ch. 8.
\(^{43}\) Ahir. S. 52: 59.
(i) vi-meaning going, pervading, producing, attracting through splendour etc., (ii) sac - to become united inseparably, and (iii) sru—to flow, have together, given rise to the word 'vismu'.

Though He pervades all things, yet He is called non-existent because He cannot be perceived by the senses. But, just as the fragrance of the flowers can be intuited directly, so God also can be intuited directly. All things are included in His existence and He is not limited either in time or in space. All the animate and inanimate things are governed for sustenance and nourishment by Him. He pervades all these and hence He is called Nārāyaṇa. The word 'bhagavān' which means respectable is applicable to Vāsudeva. He had taken the world as the property and hence He is called Bhagavān. He envelopes the whole thing by His own knowledge and bliss and the whole universe therefore becomes saturated with Him (tanmaya). The universe dwells in Him and He dwells in it. This is the sense of 'Vāsū'. Or it can mean that He passes through every thing like a thread. He shines Himself by creation etc., sports Himself and is praised always by Gods. He is called Narasimha as he destroys the bonds of men and this word means Puruṣottama. By placing men within and remaining all round them, He gets the name Puruṣottama and it is this sense that is conveyed by the word 'narasimha'. Since he is free from all worldly limitations, He is known as Paramātman and He is the self of all other selves.

44. ibid., 52: 45.
45. Jay. S. 4: 76.
46. Ahir. S. 52: 51 to 53.
47. ibid., 52: 58, 59.
49. ibid., 52: 64 and 65.
50. ibid., 52: 66.
51. ibid., 52: 68.
52. ibid., 54: 32.
53. ibid., 54: 50.
54. ibid., 55: 27, 28.
The Pāñcarātra Āgamās speak of five forms of God: (i) Para (the transcendant), (ii) Vyūha (the grouped), (iii) Vibhava (the incarnated), (iv) Antāryāmin (the immanent) and (v) Arca (the idol). According to these Āgamās Para Brahman is called Vāsudeva.\(^{56}\) He lives in a city called Vaikuṇṭha which is guarded by particular persons and which has door-keepers; He is seated in a pavilion of gems on a couch in the form of the serpent Adiśeṣa, placed on a throne having the eight legs Dharma and others; attended by Śrī, Bhū and Nilā; holding celestial weapons, conch-shell, discus and others; adorned with celestial ornaments such as a tiara and others. He is limitless in point of possession of attractive qualities though it is not easy to conceive the supreme deity as having innumerable qualities but what the soul would derive as benefit from these cannot be stated with any degree of certainty and so the Pāñcarātra has specified the qualities as six in number viz. jñāna (knowledge), bala (strength), atśvarya (lordship), virya (virility), sakīt (potency) and tejas (splendour) which are passive qualities. Lordship consists in the Lord’s being the agent which is strengthened by His independent will.\(^{57}\) Strength in His case is marked by the absence of exertion, though He is ever engaged in the creation of the world.\(^{58}\) His virility, though productive of results, does not undergo any change and is also called acyutatva, that is never falling down.\(^{59}\) Splendour in His case consists in not looking for any assistance.\(^{60}\) All these aspects of knowledge.\(^{61}\) His qualities are opposed to what is fit to be abandoned (heyapratyāṅka) and are auspicious (kalyāṇa).\(^{62}\) The Lord’s presence is enjoyed by the eternal spirits such as Ananta, Garuḍa, Viśvaksena and others and by the delivered souls. He is free from the three limitations of space, time and object.\(^{63}\)

\(^{56}\) ibid., 2: 9.
\(^{57}\) Ahir. S. 2: 58.
\(^{58}\) ibid., 2: 59.
\(^{59}\) ibid., 2: 60.
\(^{60}\) ibid., 2: 61.
\(^{61}\) ibid., 2: 61, 62.
\(^{62}\) ibid., 2: 24, 25.
\(^{63}\) ibid., 2: 46 to 53.
In *Vyūha* form Para-Vāsudeva Himself assumes four forms viz., Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha for convenience of worship, and for purposes such as creation etc. While Vāsudeva alone possesses the six ideal qualities in the *Vyūha* form, each one of His three emanations possesses only two of the said qualities in turn. Saṅkarṣaṇa, the destroyer of the universe, in charge of the propagation of the *Pāñcarātra* system has *jñāna* and *bala* as the prominent qualities, and he is the deity for the individual self. Pradyumna is the creator of the world and he is in charge of the propagation of *dharma*, has *āśvarya* and *virya* as the qualities; he is in charge of the mind. Aniruddha who takes charge of maintenance and awards the fruits of *dharma* has *sakti* and *tejas* as the qualities, and is in charge of *ahaṅkāra*. The four *Vyūhas* are described as possessing certain weapons. Besides the *Vyūhas*, there are twelve sub-*Vyūhas* derived therefrom three from each with the names Keśava, Nārāyaṇa, Mādhava, Govinda, Viṣṇu, Madhusūdana, Trivikrama, Vāmana, Śrīdhara, Hṛṣikeśa, Padmanābha and Dāmodara. The images of Viṣṇu are distinguished to represent these twelve forms by varying the order of arrangement of the four appurtenances conch (*śaṅkha*), discus (*cakra*), club (*gada*) and lotus (*padma*) held in four hands of each image. The names of these twelve sub-*Vyūhas* are recited by pious Vaiṣṇavites every day; they are said to protect the devotee’s body if represented on the same (forehead etc.) by painted vertical lines. These twelve subsidiary *Vyūhas* are regarded as the deities superintending each month, representing the twelve suns in each of the *rāsis*.

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64. *Introduction to the Pāñcarātra*, pp. 32 to 35.
66. ibid., 10: 34 to 36; Ahir. S. 5: 22-23.
68. Dr. Schrader points out that the statements regarding the cosmic activities of the *Vyūhas* are somewhat contradictory in nature and quotes instances from L.T., Viṣ. S. and Ahir. S. ibid., p. 38. Vide also *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. III, pp. 56 to 57.
69. L.T. 4: 27.
The Vibhava mode consists of the avatāras (divine descents) of Viṣṇu. There are several of them mentioned in the Āgamas. The principal Vibhavas are thirty-eight, but the chief of them are ten: Matsya (Fish), Kūrma (Tortoise); Varāha (Boar), Narasiṃha (Man-lion), Vāmana (Dwarf), Paraśurāma, Rāma, Balarāma, Kṛṣṇa, and Kalki. The principle of Divine Descent is set forth in the Gītā. The Ahirbudhnya-saṃhitā, however, enumerates thirty-nine avatāras. This includes the additional one called viṣākhayūpa, also called Viṣṇuyūpa which is a divine pillar in Śrī Vaikuṇṭha. The four faces of this are prominently occupied by Aniruddha, Pradyumna, Saṅkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva respectively duly representing the waking, dream, deep sleep and the transcendent stages of meditation which a devotee is required to adopt. It is said that from this arise the descents and arcās of God.

In the form as Antaryāmin the Lord resides in the heart of the selves as the inner controller of the self. In another of His forms He stays within our heart as the object of our meditation. This form can be seen only by yogins and it accompanies the individual souls even when they go to heaven or hell.

The fifth form of God is Arcāvatāra (descent in the form of image). The idol is the most concrete of God's forms. When certain images are made of earth, stone, or metals, and are properly installed with proper ceremonials and invoked by mantras, they are inspired with the presence of God and with His special powers. The belief is that God descends into those idols and makes them divinely alive,
that He may be easily accessible to His devotees and also to give facilities for concentration. The Lord comes in there due to the power of a particular mantra uttered. Because of the Lord’s presence, these idols become aprākṛta having all the six ideal qualities. Bimba, bera and pratimā are also the terms used to refer to arcā. Among the modes of worship that of the idol is said to be laudable, the others being mental, or sacrificial. This is because the mind and the eyes are pleased when the idol is worshipped with flowers. The Pāñcarātra Āgamas contain the procedures for installing the images of the devotees of God and for worshipping them. One of the sanhitās refers to the use of Sathāri. The Ālvārs are described as having shrines. Their birth is predicted in one of the Āgamas.

The act of worshipping God is called yāga or iyā. Special importance is attached to the performance of bhūtasiddhi which takes the shape of the utterance of mantras in order to cleanse one’s physical frame of impurities in order to make it fit for offering worship to the deity. Significance of the ringing of the bell while offering worship is explained. Worship of the deity could be carried out in one’s own residence as part of the daily routine. It could also be done in villages and towns for the welfare of others. For this purpose, temples are built so that persons who get initiated into doing the act of worship could work for the participation in it of others who are not and also could not get initiated. The holy

76. cf. Pau. S. 38: 3 to 13; 15 to 30.
78. Viṣṇutattva ch. 13, 14; V.T. ch. 19; V.R.S. ch. 25; H.G.S. ch. 27; Pārmeś. S. 8: 194 to 209; Bhār. S. 3: 54; Marī. S. Vim. Kal. ch. 19.
79. P.P.S. ch. 8.
80. Bhr. S. Kriyādhikāra, ch. 34.
81.Īś. S. 8: 175, 176.
82. cf. Pārmeś. S. 9: 180 to 187 for details on this.
83. Pārmeś. S. 3: 140 to 222; L.T. ch. 35.
84. ibid., 6: 64 to 104; Marī. S. Vim. kal. ch. 9.
86. Ānān. S. 3: 25; Pād. S. caryā-pāda 1: 9, 10.
places, where temples are erected, are held to be of four kinds. Svayam Vyakta (self-manifested) is of the first kind. The Lord has revealed Himself in these places. The shrines at Śrī Raṅgam, Tirumalai, Śrīmuṇḍam and others belong to this type. To the second kind which is called Daiva belong temples at Kaṇci and other places where God's presence was brought through the efforts of deities like Brahmā. Saiddha represents the third kind according to which God has come to occupy the shrines for the sake of eminent persons like sages. The shrines at Tiruvallikēnī, Tirukkovalūr and Kumbakonam belong to this kind. The last category is styled as Mānuṣa according to which men of piety are able to install images as in the case of modern temples. It has been stated in the Agamas that among the centres of worship those that have manifested themselves are the best. Śrī Raṅgam, Vēṅkaṭādri (Tirumalai), Haḍṭigiri (Kaṇci) and Nārāyaṇādri (Melkote) are mentioned as four places of the Lord.

The Pāṇcarātra texts adopt the Samkhya principles of evolution of matter. What exists becomes transformed into another and does not get destroyed on any account. In this respect, these Agamas represent a distinct line of treatment which is not followed by the Viṣistadvaita school of Vedānta, though it is much indebted to these Agamas for the religious doctrines. Śrī is emphatically declared to be Viṣṇu's potency which is never separate from Him and which represents the Lord's desire to create the world. She takes the forms of sound (letters), six qualities, vyūha, mantra, deities to be meditated by the devotees and the world of animate and inanimate beings. She creates, maintains and withdraws the

87. Īś. S. 20: 112.
88. ibid 3: 178, 179.
89. ibid., 20: 112.
91. cf. Bh. G. 2: 16. For a detailed treatment of this, vide Introduction to Laksmītantra, pp. 29 to 32.
93. ibid., 22: 10 to 28; cf. ibid., 6: 3 to 25.
world and vanishes from the sight of people who could not understand Her real nature and bestows favours on the suffering humanity.\footnote{ibid., 12: 13, 14.}

*Bhakti* and *Prapatti* are the means to attain salvation according to these *Āgamas*. *Bhakti* is the direct path to perfection as it leads to the very heart of religious consciousness. The knowledge of Brahman when it takes the form of worship becomes the means for *mokṣa*. *Yoga* with its limbs is declared to be the means. A devotee is one who knows the real nature of the *vyūha*, who is devoted to the practice of the duties enjoined in these texts for performance at definite times during the day and constantly mediates on the *mantra* of twelve syllables (which glorifies Vāsudeva). A devotee who worships Viṣṇu after understanding His nature, will have material and spiritual goals in his hand.\footnote{Pau. S. 33 : 77; cf. Sāṇḍ. S. ch. 7.} Hence *cakras*, *maṇḍalas* and *mudrās* are recommended.\footnote{ibid., 33: 80 to 83.} The various *mantras* have to be practised and the results obtained.\footnote{ibid., 33: 91 to 127; L.T. ch. 18; ch. 34.} This method could be described as *yoga* materials for worship.\footnote{ibid., ch. 34.} Vāsudeva is the object of this meditation. The devotion of the Lord assumes two forms viz., absence of allegiance to no other Lord and having no aim except service to the Lord. This is *Sātvata dharma*. There is nothing which the Lord cannot give to His devotee. Hence he shall not make Him any request. A devotee of Viṣṇu shall not beg Him of food, wealth, children, age and others even when he is in danger, for the Lord gives all of them even though He is not requested.\footnote{Par. S. 30: 7, 8.} If the devotee forgets Him because of his happy condition, then he gets into dangers.\footnote{ibid., 30: 23, 24.} Devotion to the Lord is the cause of all prosperity and its absence leads to dangers.\footnote{ibid., 30: 27.} Through meditation on
Lakṣmi, people would obtain salvation. A devotee shall ask the Lord this much: "Please give me devotedness at your will. What have I not acquired in the world as I have surrendered myself into You?" The results obtained through devotion are the same whether the devotees who are poverty-stricken and therefore offer worship even without flowers and fruits or they being rich worship Him through offerings in the fire etc. Details regarding the āstāṅga-yoga are mentioned. Offering oneself to the Lord is called hṛdyāga (sacrifice of the heart). This is called mental worship in some of the Pāñcarātra Samhitās. Various postures of the yoga have been described. Methods of meditating on God are also given. The five aṅgas prāṇāyāma and others are said to be essential for purifying the arteries (nādī) and bringing the vital airs under control. The arteries are also described. Mantras acquired from a good preceptor are capable of giving enjoyment and salvation. One whose mind is cleansed through karma can undertake this mode of worship. For those who are incapable of adopting this means and are unable to tolerate any delay in getting salvation, prapatti or self-surrender takes the place of worship.

The doctrine of prapatti, or nyāsa, or saraṇāgati as the means of winning the Lord’s grace has been described in Ahirbudhnya-smhita. It is a sort of prayer or adoration which carries with it the conviction that the sense of egoism and the possession that we have in all things due to beginningless, instinctive passions and desires, is all false and the

102. Sātt. S. 12: 84,
103. Pau. S. 31: 151, 152.
104. ibid. 32: 122, 123.
106. ibid., 31: 3, 4; Īś. S. ch. 2.
107. ibid., 31: 31 to 46.
109. ibid., 32.
110. ibid., 32.
111. Īś. S. 3: 68.
adorer should feel that he has neither independence nor anything that he may call his own. "My body, my riches, my relations do not belong to me, they all belong to God"; such is the conviction that should generate the spirit with which the adoration should be offered. The adorer should feel that the process of adoration is the only way through which he can obtain his highest realization, by offering himself to God and by drawing God to himself at the same time. The purpose of adoration is, so to say, the supreme self-abnegation and self-offering to God, leaving nothing to oneself. The adorer must always be fully conscious of the greatness of God in all its aspects. Hence prapatti or saranāgati can be defined as a prayer for God’s help in association with the conviction of one’s being merged in sin and guilt, together with a belief in one’s absolute helplessness and a sense of being totally lost without the protecting grace of God. The person who takes to the path of this prapatti achieves the fruits of all tapas, sacrifices, pilgrimages, and gifts, and attains salvation easily without resorting to any other method. He is superior several times to those of good conduct, good learning and given to meditation. Prapatti or nyāsa is thus an upāya-śāna and not an upāya; for it is a mental attitude and does not presuppose any action. It is like a boat on which the passenger merely sits, while it is the business of the boatman to do the rest. One who becomes an Ekāntin shall refer to himself as a servant of Viṣṇu and not by his family name or by a reference to his village. The person who surrenders himself to the Lord shall be considered to be flawless, even if he had been an atheist and of bad conduct. It is the Pāncarātra Āgamas that have, for the first time, laid the foundation for the doctrine of prapatti. Even here, the Ahirbudhnya-saṃhitā and Laksñmutantra have

113. Sātt. S. 12: 84
115. ibid., 37: 30, 31; L.T. 17: 60 to 83.
116. ibid., 37: 34, 35.
117. ibid., 37: 25, 36.
118. ibid., 57: 46 to 49.
played a dominant role in giving an elaborate account of nyāsa together with its subsidiaries (aṅgas). These Āgamas exerted a profound influence on the Ājāvārs, who, in their turn, created a deep impression on the Açāryas like Nāthamuni, Ālavantār, Rāmānuja and others.

The next point for consideration is the position that the Gitā occupies in the development of the Pāñcarātra Āgamas. Even a very cursory reading of the Paramasamhitā and the Gitā would show similarity of teaching between the two too close to be neglected and regarded as accidental. The nature of the teaching as well as the details point to the affiliation of the one with the other. The teaching of Pāñcarātra is ascribed to the Supreme Deity of the Bhāgavatās, Vāsudeva, later on identified with Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa leading to very important conclusions in regard to the nature of Pāñcarātra itself. The reference to the name Vāsudeva in the metrical sūtras of Pāṇini and the Patañjali’s interpretation likewise, make it clear that these had some conception of a divine Vāsudeva and Vāsudeva worship apart from Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva. Therefore the acceptance of Para-Vāsudeva as the originator of the Pāñcarātra teaching seems to be fairly correct position. This is borne out by a statement made by Kṛṣṇa himself in the Bhāgavadgitā where he makes the reference that He taught this “yoga of Pāñcarātra” to Vivaśvān, the Sun, and then the Sun taught it to Manu and Manu to Ikṣvāku; and then the statement follows that this in course of time had been forgotten. Para-Vāsudeva is distinct from Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva often spoken of as Vāsudeva as he was an avatāra of the original Para-Vāsudeva. All the literature of the Pāñcarātra, direct and indirect, speak of the supreme in the one form or the other, particularly the more general class of writings than the set of Pāñcarātra texts. This position of the Gitā therefore seems confirmatory of what is said in the Nārāyaṇiya section of the Mahābhārata in

121. Pāṇini 4.3: 95 to 98.
122. Bh. G. 4: 1, 2.
regard to Pāñcarātra itself, its origin and the general tenor of its teaching.

The word ‘sātvata’ signifies a class of Vaiṣṇavites. The devotees of Viṣṇu are called Bhāgavatas, or Ekantins or Sātvatas who are associated with the Pāñcarātra system. The word ‘sāt’ means reality and goodness. Kṛṣṇa belonged to the Sātvata clan and so the teaching of the Gītā may be taken to represent a gist of traditional religion which Kṛṣṇa inherited as the son of Vāsudeva in the family of the Sātvatas. Viṣṇu was worshipped as the Supreme Deity in this family.

The Gītā is a manual of teaching bhakti as the most efficacious method of attaining to salvation, and as such, and as inculcating Viṣṇu bhakti specifically, it could be regarded as a manual of the Pāñcarātra school. The similarity between the Pāñcarātra teaching, and the teaching of the Gītā from the doctrinal point of view, is so close that one cannot resist the conclusion that it was intended to be a manual of Pāñcarātra. Even though it has been regarded that Pāñcarātra is in conflict with Vedic ritualistic teaching, it does make provision for the religious needs of the four varṇas, at any rate specifically and distinctly. It also makes provision for the four-fold aims in life. It is therefore a code of ethics, a dharma sāstra. The principles of jñāna-yoga (the path of knowledge) and karma-yoga (the path of works) as embodied in the Gītā are in tune with those mentioned in Paramasamhitā. In dealing with the fate of those who have faith in God but cannot control their senses, the Gītā says, they, in course of time, come down to this world to a holy place and are born in the family of people who are pure and prosperous and this idea is comparable with the idea mentioned in Pauṣkara-samhitā. The eight-fold nature

123. ibid., 17: 26.
127. Bh.G. 3: 3; Par. S. 10: 3, 4.
128. ibid., 6: 41; Pau. S. 41: 15.
of the Lord as mentioned in the Gitā is exactly the same as in Lakṣmi-tantra. The message of the Gitā is open to all without distinction of race, sex or caste and it declares that people who are lowly born, women, Vaiśyas as well as Śūdras attain to the highest goal when they take refuge in the Lord and the same idea is found in the Paramasamhitā. The principles of knowledge and devotion and the fate of those who give up their bodies thinking of the Lord alone as found in the Gitā are identical with those embodied in the Paramasamhitā. The account regarding the Cosmic Tree as found in the Gitā and in the Paramasamhitā is one and the same.

There are specific details with regard to the erection of temple and the methods of installation of idols in the Pāñcarattra Āgamas. Such specific details as to the particular spots or regions in the temple where the idols of Nara-simha, Vāmana and others are to be installed have been mentioned in these Samhitās. Twenty-six forms of Viṣṇu are enumerated and described. Images of various deities are to be installed in the vimāna and to be worshipped. Details regarding the features of deities at the entrance of the temple have found a place. Mention has been made of the features of idols. Such details as the characteristic marks of the idols are found in the Āgamas. It has been specially

130. ibid., 9: 32; Par; S. 7: 24.  
131. ibid., 10: 9; 7: 5; Par; S: 30: 81.  
132. ibid., 15: 1; Par. S. 26: 3.  
133. Īś. S. ch. 16; Pau. S. ch. 42; Śrīpraś. S. 5, 6 to 8.  
135. ibid., 43; 56 to 59.  
136. ibid. S. 36: 126 to 254.  
137. Īś. S. ch. 3.  
138. ibid. ch. 9.  
139. ibid., ch. 17.  
140. ibid., ch. 23
mentioned that the *Vaikhānasas* should not touch the idol.\(^{141}\) If they offer worship, then installation is again to be done.\(^{142}\)

Every temple of Viṣṇu has the flagstaff (*dhvajastambha*). Devout worshippers bend before it and then enter the shrines. This act of bending is to be explained by treating the flagstaff as representing the *Viṣākhayūpa* which is required to be meditated upon. This staff must have the figures of Aniruddha, Pradyumna, Saṅkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva on each one of the four sides as its base.

There are several idols in one and the same shrine. There is the idol which is fixed in the *sanctum sanctorum* (*garbhagṛha*) and it shall not be removed from the place at any cost. It is called *Mālabera* or *Dhruvabera*. There is the idol which is taken out in procession both inside and outside the temple and it is known as *Ūtsavabera*. During festivals there is the sacred bath (*avabṛṣṭha*) at the conclusion when a separate idol called *Tirhābera* is taken to a tank or river and is given a plunge there.\(^{143}\) Some idols may be in a sleeping posture as in Śrī Raṅgam, or reclining posture as in Kumbakonam, or seated at Kānci or standing posture as in Tirumalai and Kānci. The very basis for having more than one idol of the same deity is to enable the devotees participate in the festivals in many ways.

These Āgamas contain various details regarding the worship of the idols.\(^{144}\) Almost all the Āgamas state the importance of the idol which is a concrete form of God required for worship. Neither worship, nor meditation nor singing in praise is possible in a formless object.\(^{145}\) Three kinds of worship are stated to be possible viz., worship

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141. Ibid., 19: 135.
142. Ibid., 19: 458.
143. The purposes of having these is well explained (*vide*: Bhṛ. S: *Kriyā-dhikāra*, ch. 8).
144. Pau. S. ch. 37.
through action, worship through word and worship through the intellect. Making use of sandal paste, flowers and other accessories for worship to the accompaniment of mantra is karmayajña. Muttering the name of God, reciting hymns remaining pure and attentive is vākyajña. Leaving aside every thing external and worshipping the Lord mentally is manoyajña. Methods of meditation on the Lord has been stated. All can worship irrespective of caste and sex, old age, or scholarship. Among the three modes of worship, the mental one is said to be the best. Thinking of God with love and affection is said to be true devotion and worship done without devotion is not at all as it should be. Eight-fold devotion has been stated viz., (i) worshipping God for ever, (ii) abiding by standards of conduct and ethics, (iii) faith in the Vaiṣṇavites, (iv) great regard for understanding worship, (v) effort to do worship by himself, (vi) deep interest in listening to talk about or stories of God, (vii) unwillingness to do harm to others, and (viii) non-dependence on doing worship of Him. Specific details regarding the worship of central deity (mūlabimba), worship of Lakṣmī and Sudarśana, and worship of Gauḍa and other retinue are found. Methods of initiation have been stated in these texts.

Mention has also been made about the annual festivals of the temples and how they are to be conducted; the purpo-

146. ibid., 3: 28.
147. ibid., 3: 24, 25.
149. ibid., 3: 26, 27.
150. Īś. S. ch. 34.
152. ibid., 4: 70-
153. ibid., 4: 71.
154. ibid., 4: 72.
155. ibid., 4: 72 to 75.
156. Īś. S. 6: 3.
157. ibid., ch. 7.
158. ibid., ch. 7.
159. Īś. S. ch. 21; Par. S. ch. 7.
ses of conducting those festivals have also been stated. On such occasions the instruments of music are to be sounded; Sanskrit, Prākrit or Tamil songs are to be sung. The Four Thousand Tamil Verses are also to be sung by the Vaiṣṇavites.

The Vaikhānasa is another type of Āgama followed by the Vaiṣṇavites. Though the followers of this Āgama are now a small minority they constitute an important sect among the Vaiṣṇavites of South India. There are different legends concerning the sage Vikhānas, the founder of this Āgama who is the follower of Kṛṣṇayajur Veda. One is that Brahmā descended himself as Vikhānas down to earth to organize the worship of the Lord in His arcā form. He wrote also the Vaikhānasasūtra to guide the people for leading a virtuous life consistent with the doctrines which he preached. The present text Vaikhānasasūtra, into which the precepts of Vikhānas expanded in the course of centuries is the latest of the sūtras of the Taittirīya sākha. According to W. Caland, the Smārta sūtra section, comprising both geṛhya and dharma precepts, preceded the compilation of other section, the Srauta-sūtra, which includes an elaborate mantra samhitā, and is also called Aukheya sūtra because the Vaikhānasas (Aukheyas) constituted a sākha (branch) with the full complement of Saṃhitā, Brāhmaṇa and Sūtras. Vikhānas taught the doctrines of this kind of worship to Atri, Marici, Kāsyapa and Bhṛgu each of whom brought out his version in detail of the doctrines viz., Atri saṃhitā, Marici-paṭala, Jñānakanda, Bhṛgu-saṃhitā and other works. More Vedic hymns are used in the Vaikhānasa school. This system of worship was also known as Srauta sāstra.

The Vaikhānasa-saṃhitās, like those of Pāñcarātra, have four divisions viz., caryā, kṛtya, jñāna and yōga. Worship of the deities is of three kinds: mental, oblation and idol. But the Vīmānārccana kalpa mentions Viṣṇu worship as two-

160. ibid., ch. 10.
161. ibid., 11: 36, 37.
162 ibid, 13: 246.
fold namely amūrtā (formless) that is hōma and mūrtā (in form) that is arcā. But in the Vimānārcanakaḷpa four methods have been mentioned for taking to God’s worship namely japa, hōma, arcana and dhyāna. Arcana is worship in the temple of the Lord in the form of image. Meditation is the yogic practice. Among these, arcana is said to be the best method. In this type of Āgama God is in His five-fold states as in Pāñcarātra and the Supreme Principle is Nārāyaṇa with Śrī (Puruṣa and Prakṛti in one) Śrī being ever associated with Viṣṇu in all his five-fold states. But there is a different Vyūha, namely, Viṣṇu, Puruṣa, Satya, Acyuta and Aniruddha. The primary form is Viṣṇu. He is said to be the sage the indweller of the self. Puruṣa, Satya, Acyuta and Aniruddha are the four-fold forms of Viṣṇu. The four Vyūhas are representatives to afford prosperity to the four castes Among these, Puruṣa, is full of dharma. Satya is knowledge and of the nature of lustre. Acyuta is of unlimited wealth and is the Lord of Śrī. Aniruddha is detachment and destroyer of everybody. There is a reference to the five kinds of Narasimha, viz., (i) born from mountain, (ii) born from the pillar, (iii) Sudarśana Narasimha, (iv) Lakṣmī Narasimha and (v) Pātāla Narasimha.

There are more temples in South-India today under the Vaikhāñasa Āgama than under the Pāñcarātra. Different kinds of idols have been mentioned. The idol for festival may be standing with the goddesses seated on both sides. In some places like Tīrukkuṟuṟuṅkuṭi there are two idols for

164. ibid., ch. 95.
170. ibid., 11: 27 to 59; S. 15. Kal. 57.
172. ibid., 6: 24.
festival. Offering of cooked food is in vogue. This is in practice in the temple Nāccliyārkōyil. Five idols are to be installed along with that of Viṣṇu namely Vāsudeva, Saṅkarśaṇa, Praduynma, Sāmba and Aniruddha which are known as Paṅca viṇāras. There are measurements mentioned for the formation of villages, construction of temples and installation of idols. Principles regarding the construction of prakāra, maṇṭapa, gopura etc., have been laid. Though Viṣṇu alone is the Supreme Deity according to this Āgama, worship of Vināyaka, Durgā and Sarasvatī are included when the Lord and Lakṣmī are to be worshipped. Worship of Viṣṇu only is the means of salvation. Initiation is necessary for the practice of temple-worship. Traits of a spiritual preceptor have been mentioned. The Ācārya shall be one who follows the Vaikhānasa-sūtra. Devotion to the Lord is eight-fold namely, (i) affection to His devotees, (ii) applauding His worship, (iii) devotedness to hear His exploits and stories, (iv) getting overpowered in tone, eyes and limbs (while worshipping Him), (v) recalling Him to mind, (vi) absence of show in regard to Him, (vii) to be ever subordinated to Him and (viii) inability to live without Him. The Vaikhānasas do not worship the Āḷvārs. Ācāryas and Maṭhādhipāthis (pointiffs or monastic heads), though owing to the strong influence of Rāmānuja school, images of Āḷvārs and Ācāryas were set up in some temples under Vaikhānasa Āgamic worship; nor do they recognise Āṇṭāl as the Lord’s consort on a par with Lakṣmī; nor do they brand their bodies with

173. ibid., ch. 17.
174. This is a place which acquires the name of the temple. It is a place near Kumbakonam. The place is referred to as Tiruṇaṟaḷiyūr in the hymns of Āḷvārs.
178. ibid., ibid., 15.
the Vaiṣṇavite emblems of vakra, saṅkha etc., nor, again do they recite the Tamil Prabandham during worship. The mention of Āḻvārs in some texts must have been due to interpolation after the period of the Āḻvārs. Details regarding the principle of expiations for lapses have been mentioned.

Information regarding the ethical life and code of conduct of the Vaiṣṇavites is found in the Āgamas. According to these Samhitās, people who live in sacred places (divya deśas) are rid of their sins and get the favour of the Lord. Though the deeds themselves would not get destroyed by becoming a mortal in a sacred place, the results of these deeds get lost. Mention has also been made of the places of pilgrimage in these Āgamas. It has been clearly stated in these Āgamas that the Lord is present for those who perform nīskāma karma in all figures and idols. The Pāñcarātra Āgamas, as it has been already stated, prescribe a way of life and rules for worshipping the God both in the houses and temples. These who have descended in the line of priests maintain the traditional worship, and have the right to perform the worship in temples. Others shall get initiated and then do it. The Āgamas prescribe a five-fold division of the day and a routine of life to the Vaiṣṇavites. Every day, after offering food to the Lord, the Vaiṣṇavites shall be made to sing the Four Thousand Tamil Verses. Methods of worship are also found.

183. ibid., ibid., 34: 2 to 4.
184. ibid., ibid.; 26 and 27.
185. Jay. S. ch. 22.
187. ibid., 36: 65, 66; Sātt. S. 7: 120.
188. Par. S. ch. 25.
189. ibid., 36: 80.
190. Īś. S. ch. 21; L.T. ch. 20.
191. L.T. ch. 28; Par. S. ch. 27.
Specific details regarding the marks of a preceptor (Ācāryalakṣṇa) are found in these Āgamas.\(^{194}\) Again the characteristic features of Ācārya and Śiṣya have been mentioned. The procedure with regard to initiation has also been stated.\(^{195}\) Principles regarding the performance of annual ceremonies,\(^{196}\) detailed procedures in matters of expiations for lapses of all kinds have been stated.\(^{197}\) One should follow the established codes of good conduct\(^{198}\) and shall not even think of violating them.\(^{199}\) Emphasis is laid on the need to worship the devotees of the Lord.\(^{200}\)

The word ‘yāga’ is used to refer to the act of worship, ‘yāgasāla’ for the place where the holy fire is worshipped on the occasion of festivals, ‘avabṛtha’ for the sacred bath taken at the conclusion of the festival, ‘dīkṣā’ for the strictly religious life which the temple priest takes up during the occasions of the festivals and ‘dīkṣita’ to refer to the temple priest. All these show that the rituals in the temples represent the Vedic ritualism.

The Pañcarātra Āgamas have been responsible for the marking of the arms at the top of men and women with the heated conch and discus.\(^{201}\) Besides, the vertical mark on the forehead with white mud and red pigment is also enforced by them and it is held that without this mark which is called ērdhvapumātra, no rite, however faithfully rendered, would bear the result.\(^{202}\) Tirumalai. Tirunārāyanapuram. Śrīnuṣṇam and others are said to be the places from which this

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195. L.T. ch. 41.
196. ibid., ch. 23.
197. ibid., ch. 25; also Īś. S. ch. 19.
199. L.T. 17: 94 to 96.
mud is to be acquired. The Agamas emphasize the need to offer whatever eatable or objects like sandal and flowers to the deity and partake of it. The remaining portion is called śeṣa and is said to confer on him who takes it much good.

The peculiar feature of the Vaikhānasa school is that only those who are born in the families which adopt the way of life laid down in the Vaikhānasa-sūtra are eligible for worshipping the deity in the temples where the Vaikhānasa mode is adopted. Those who belong to the Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya and Vaiśya castes, are alone qualified for this worship. The Pāncaśātra has been more liberal in extending the scope for worship to others as well. This method of adoration could be adopted by all for worship in the house (grhārca). Even in temples, those who belong to the family of traditional line of priests, have the primary qualification to offer worship while others could do so only by getting initiated. The catholicity of the Pāncaśātra mode has resulted in the adoption of this mode of worship even for house worship among all people except those who follow the Vaikhānasa principles.

The statements which the texts of the Pāncaśātra and Vaikhānasa contain condemning each other’s practices have to be explained as implying the eagerness of the exponents of each school to assert the individual sanctity and authority at the expense of those of the other school. Really speaking, there is more agreement than divergence between the teachings of these schools. Both maintain the supremacy of Viṣṇu. There is also the concept for nyūhas in both. From the very ancient times, the methods of worship in important shrines like Śrī Raṅgam, Kānci, Tirumalai and Tirunarāyanaapuram have been in vogue according to both. While

203. Nārad. S. ch. 76.
204. Śrī Praś. S. 50: 160 to 165.
205. MBh, Bhīṣma 65: 39, 40; Sātt. S. 2: 11.
the Vaikhānasā mode is followed in Tirumalai, the Pāñcarātra method is adopted in other places. More than all this, the method of worship is according to the Vaikhānasā principles in the shrines of Rāmānuja and Vedānta Deśika at Śripurumputūr and Kāñcī. Both the schools adopt the concepts of vibhava,208 arcā and antaryāmin:209

The Āgamas, which are primarily concerned with the worship of the arcā form of God, are found thus to utilize for this purpose, the principles and doctrines of other branches of study. The philosophical doctrines and inquiries about creation and destruction, nature of God, self and world and others are dealt with in some of these Āgamic texts. Linguistic occultism in the form of bijakṣaras, and mantras and mystical diagrams210 play a dominant role. Icons, installation of them and temple building play an important role and here as well as in the previous one, the principles of architecture have been put to the superior purpose of preparing the means of worshipping the deity. Yogic practices and domestic observances have been of immense help in shaping the conduct of the priest and devotee for perfecting his life. The public festivals (utṣava) are the external display of the zeal of the architects of temple worship to attract even those who are indifferent to the path of dharma and make them share the benefits of the religious communion. The temple processions with all the display of attractions such as music have been drawing people from far and near so that they mingle together without the feeling of any kind of disparity. The dragging of the huge temple cars, floating festivals and others could be mentioned specifically here for such an attraction. In a way, the Indian tradition has much to its benefit by the harmonizing features of the Āgama literature which has brought together the brighter achievements


of the various branches to study to fulfil the one task of showing the greatness of the Lord with whom the ordinary people also could have communion.

**Jitantā Štotra** is said to form part of the *dhila* \(^{211}\) which are additional hymns to the *Ṛg-Veda*. Since it is in praise of Viṣṇu, it is called Štotra. Though it is not accented, it is referred as *mantra* in the *Itihāsas*, *Purāṇas* and Vaiṣṇavite *Agamas*. Ėkata, Dvita and Trita, the three sons of Brahmā are said to have taught this to sage Nārada and asked him to recite this while propitiating Viṣṇu.\(^{212}\) The *Ahirbudhnyasamhitā* \(^{213}\) contains an exposition of the first śloka of this Štotra. The *Parama-samhitā* \(^{214}\) and other *Pāñcarātra* texts \(^{215}\) contain references to this Štotra. This Štotra has 128 ślokas grouped within six divisions, each one being called *Jitānī*. The first division refers to Viṣṇu as creator, preserver and destroyer of the world. The Lord is requested to pardon the sins committed by His devotees.\(^{217}\) The devotee finds it difficult to worship Him and requests to be His servant for ever.\(^{219}\) This is to be recited at the conclusion of *Abhi-gamana*. The second *Jitantā* refers to God’s charming personality, \(^{220}\) qualities and *vyūhas*. The self shall beg the Lord for pardoning him for the lapses while worshipping Him and so is intended to be recited after *Ījñā*. With all the limitations imposed by the mortal body, the self expresses its incapacity for properly worshipping Him in the third

\(^{211}\) *History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 51.

\(^{212}\) Periyavācaṉ Pillai’s *Vyākhyāna on Jitāntā* 1: 1, p. 3.

\(^{213}\) *Ahir*, S. ch. 53.

\(^{214}\) *Par. S.* 23: 46 to 63; 21: 40; ch. 13; *L.T.* 17: 20.

\(^{215}\) *L.T.* 17: 20.

\(^{216}\) *Jitantā* 1: 3.

\(^{217}\) *ibid.,* 1: 16.

\(^{218}\) *ibid.,* 1: 19.

\(^{219}\) *ibid.,* 1: 15.

\(^{220}\) *ibid.,* 2: 254.

\(^{221}\) *ibid.,* 2: 38.

\(^{222}\) *ibid.,* 3: 4, 5.

\(^{223}\) *ibid.,* 3: 7 to 10.
Jītañtā. Uninterrupted service\textsuperscript{224} is requested for here. During Upādāna, this shall be recited. The fourth Jītañtā contains a graphic description\textsuperscript{225} of the body of the Lord limb by limb and is to be recited during Śrāddhyāya. The Lord is requested to lead the self in whichever way He finds suited for the self’s approach to Him\textsuperscript{226} and this is to be recited as the fifth Jītañtā during Yōga. The last Jītañtā describes Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa\textsuperscript{227} in Dwārakā which is presented in the minutest detail with reference to the temple,\textsuperscript{228} festivals\textsuperscript{229} and devotees worshipping Him. All these six divisions begin with the words ‘jītañ te’ which mean ‘victory to you’. The purport of this Śtotaṇa is stated to lie to prove that Viṣṇu is the goal and the means.\textsuperscript{230} Viṣṇu is the Lord for both the gods and demons.\textsuperscript{231} The divine form is taken up by Him only to enable His devotees approach Him for refuge.\textsuperscript{232} The Lord shall help the self for retaining the knowledge of Him even in later births.\textsuperscript{233} He is everything for the self and there is nothing which the self need aspire to obtain without Him.\textsuperscript{234} The enlightened self yearns to get at the Lord at Whose feet it could render service.\textsuperscript{235} The Lord is the only refuge for the selves which suffer in bondage.\textsuperscript{236} The prayer which is offered to the deity is Upaniṣadic in expression and tone.\textsuperscript{237} The Śtotaṇa ends with a prayer that good men shall offer their benedictions to the Lord.\textsuperscript{238}

\textsuperscript{224} ibid., 3: 16.
\textsuperscript{225} ibid., 4: 3.
\textsuperscript{226} ibid., 5: 19, 20.
\textsuperscript{227} ibid., 6: 1.
\textsuperscript{228} ibid. 6: 2 to 9.
\textsuperscript{229} ibid., 6: 10 to 14.
\textsuperscript{230} Parāṣarabhāṣṭa: (Śrī Raṅgarājaṇa) – Śtotaṇaḷā p. 109.
\textsuperscript{231} Jītañtā 1: 2.
\textsuperscript{232} ibid., 1: 5.
\textsuperscript{233} ibid., 1: 11.
\textsuperscript{234} ibid., 2: 7.
\textsuperscript{235} ibid., 2: 18 to 37.
\textsuperscript{236} ibid., 4: 13.
\textsuperscript{237} ibid., 5: 1 to 16.
\textsuperscript{238} ibid., 6: 15.
In the development of Rāmānuja School of Vaiśṇavism, this Śūtrā played a dominant role in more than one respect. It emphasized the importance of the path of self-surrender. The devotee shall wish to continue to be devoted to Viṣṇu in all the births which he would be taking in the future. The desire of the devotee to render service to the Lord in whatever situation he is placed in life is referred to here. The Supreme abode (Paramapada) is characterized by the śādguruṇya and is free from the three qualities of matter. It is this Śūtrā that may perhaps have influenced Periyāyār in uttering the words of benediction (Pallāṇṭu) for the Lord which gave rise to the act of maṅgalāsāsanam. The Śūtraratna of Yāmuna and the Gadyatrava were written under the influence of this Śūtrā and that of the compositions of the Āḻvārs. The soul-stirring devotional element in the Nālāyiram is not a little due to this Śūtrā. It may be stated in this connection that this piece does not form part of any known work of antiquity. As it is cited in the Pāñcarātra texts and as it refers to the vyūhas, it could be treated on a par with the Āgamic texts. The Mahābhārata too contains a passage of similar import. Its antiquity cannot therefore be questioned but for want of evidences, it deserves treatment along with the Āgamas.

239. cf. Jitāntā 1: 2, 8.
240. cf. ibid., 1: 13.
241. ibid., 2: 8.
242. ibid., 2: 18.
243. Śūtraratna, 5, 60; cf. Jitāntā 2.7; ibid., 62; cf. Jitāntā 2. 11.
244. Śāraṇāgatigadya. cf. Jitāntā 1: 16; Śri Vaikuṇṭhagadya; cf. Jitāntā, 5.
245. MBh. Sānti, 339: 134.
Chapter VI

THE CONCEPT OF BHAKTI IN THE ANCIENT LORE

Dependence of man on God for his existence and liberation and the need for leading a life fully dedicated to Him out of devotion unto Him received treatment in the Purāṇas and the Bhagavad-gītā. That this could be done and shall be done with more ease through worshipping the arca form of God is found emphasized in the Āgamas. The principles of the path of devotion are reiterated, as it were, in the Bhakti-sūtras of Nārada and Śāṇḍilya, with greater emphasis on the unique nature of devotion. These do not directly refer to the arca form of worship but what they preach has full implication for it in the context of the aspects of devotional life. They could be taken to belong to a period which must have been coeval with that when the Āgamic tenets were in practice, though not when the Āgamic texts were not compiled.

In this context it must be remembered that the path of devotion which is dealt with in the Purāṇas, Bhagavad-gītā, Āgamas and Bhakti sūtras is distinct from the one which is preached in the Upaniṣads. The element of devotion, which knows no limitation of any kind, gets full treatment in the former while the bhakti-yoga which is based on the Brahma Vidyās is treated in the latter which permits eligibility only to those who belong to the first three castes. The rigour of austerities and the dangerous pitfalls that lie in wait for those who are unwary in adopting the aṣṭāṅga-yoga, as taught in the yoga system of Patañjali, are attendant on those who follow the bhakti-yoga. The path of devotion, which is treated in the sources other than the Upaniṣads, is attractive to the suffering humanity and is a never-failing means to win God and a much-easier mode for adoption than others which include bhakti-yoga and hence its popularity.

1. Vide: Appendix I for the List of Brahma Vidyās.
The origin of the cult of *bhakti* in Hinduism is shrouded in mystery. It is an indigenous growth in our country suited to its genius and culture. The germs of this cult are found in the *Vedic* hymns and the *Upaniṣads*. The Vedic hymns of Varuṇa, Savitṛ, and Uṣas are replete with sentiments of piety and devotion. The cult of *bhakti* blossoms forth in the epics and *purāṇas* and later devotional literature; there it is not satisfied with the impersonal *Brahman* of the *Upaniṣads*, but converts *Brahman* into the personal God or Ṣvāra.

Treatises on Philosophy and Religion proclaim in one voice that God cannot be apprehended by senses. He is beyond the ken of logic or argument, and is attained only through whole-hearted devotion. Penances and religious observances lacking in devotion cannot lead to the attainment of God. The revelation of God to man is the highest boon granted by Him to man. The devotees should meditate upon God with minds wholly concentrated upon Him. It has been stated that God is always fond of those who are devoted to Him. No one is dearer to Him in the three worlds than those who are enlightened with wisdom and possessed of high souls. More dear even than these persons is one who is entirely devoted to Him.

Love of God is insisted upon by all schools of Vaiṣṇavite thought as an essential pre-requisite for the operation of Divine Grace and therefore posited as a condition for salvation. Nārada defines *bhakti* as of the nature of intense love for God. It is, according to him, as if a dumb man who has tasted a delicious food could not speak about it. It is of the nature of love (*prema*) which reaches its acme of

4. It reaches its pinnacle in the hymns of Ājvārs.
6. ibid., ibid., 340: 19.
7. ibid., ibid., 343: 54, 55.
8. ibid., ibid., 343: 65.
perfection (parama). The word ‘parama’ indicates three things: (1) Devotion is undivided love for God, free from attachment to worldly objects; (ii) it is not overshadowed by knowledge and action; it is the highest end and it is not a means to any other higher end; and (iii) it is manifested in thought, word and deed. It may be stated that love of God is akin to love for near and dear ones; but there is a world of difference between the two. The object of all worldly attachment is perishable, transient and finite, while the object of devotion is imperishable, permanent and infinite. Love of God is not entirely different from love for earthly objects as there is attachment in both. Prahlāda, the prince among the lovers of God, therefore, offers the following prayer: “May not that uninterrupted attachment, as is entertained by undiscriminating men towards earthly objects, desert my heart, while I am constantly meditating upon Thee.” Love for things that are fleeting and perishing is the cause of misery. Love of God, Who is the eternal source of all things, makes for everlasting happiness. The love for other objects is secondary, while the love of God alone is primary. Husband, wife, progeny, wealth, cattle, castes, the worlds, the gods, the Vedas, the elements and all the rest have no intrinsic value in themselves. They are dear for the sake of God. In short, God is Love. Love may, therefore, be called His differentia which is tantamount to Tīrūmālār’s statement that Śiva is Love – ‘Ampē Civam’.11

As Nārada states, Divine Love is amṛta (nectar or immortality).12 The statement has various shades of meaning,13 all of which are important in the context and it is to suggest them all that Nārada has used the word ‘amṛta’ in preference to other words such as ‘mukti’, ‘kaivalya’ etc. Śāṅḍilya says: ‘It has been taught in the Chāndogya Upanisad that he who has devotion to God becomes immortal. Or he who lives, moves, and has his being in God becomes

10. V.P. 1. 20: 17.
11. Tirumantiram – 270.
12. N.B.S. 3.
13. N.B.S. 56 to 64.
immortal'. That is the highest religion of man from which arises unmotivated and uninterrupted devotion to God, which fills the soul with bliss. Bhakti is defined as realization of God alone as deserving to be called ‘mine’, accompanied by deep love (prema), and without attachment to the desired object, God, being entirely possessed by and absorbed in the devotee. Prema is the most concentrated love for God, which is full of the most intense attachment, and which purifies the heart completely. Divine love (prema) is the completion and perfection of devotion. Devotion is higher than the other means of salvation, because it is its own reward. It is not the means of any other goal; it is the highest goal, the sumnum bonum of life. The path of devotion is the easiest of all and superior to all. It does not require any other proof; it is self-evident. It fills the soul with complete peace and ecstasy of supreme joy.

Sāndilya thinks that mere knowledge does not constitute devotion. Persons having no knowledge, as for example, the milkmaids of Brndāvar, attained liberation simply through devotion to the Lord. According to Nārada, devotion is not identical with faith which forms a part of all actions. To start with, there must be belief in God; then this is deepened into faith; at last, faith is deepened into devotion. Bhakti, the burning faith in God, is free from desire, and is of the nature of inhibition of all desires by which, however, is meant not the extinction of all desires, but the consecration of all desires and actions to God. It is almost impossible to suppress all desires and passions; but they can be canalised towards God from their being directed

16. This mode of bhakti is seen in the hymns of Ālvārs, especially in the poems of Āntāḷ, Tirumānkaliyālāvar and Nammālāvar and so a separate treatment is given under the caption ‘Bridal Mysticism’.
17. N.B.S. 25.
18. ibid., 81.
19. ibid., 58 to 60.
21. N.B.S. 84.
towards earthly objects. One should dedicate all actions to Him, and cherish all passions, desires, anger, egotism and the like only for Him.\textsuperscript{22} It is said that the mind of the devotees of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is engaged in meditating upon His lotus feet; his words are engaged in describing the glories of the abode of Viṣṇu; his hands are engaged in cleaning the temple of Hari; his ears are engaged in hearing the pleasant talk about the Lord; his eyes are engaged in seeing the image of Kṛṣṇa; his body is engaged in coming into contact with His devotees; his nose is engaged in smelling the sweet scent of tuṣasi leaves placed at the lotus feet of the Lord; his palate is engaged in tasting the offerings made to Him; his feet are engaged in going on pilgrimage; his head is engaged in bowing to the feet of the Lord; his desires are engaged in serving the Lord. Thus the whole being of the devotee is entirely dedicated to God.\textsuperscript{23}

The Bhāgavata mentions nine marks of devotion: listening to the name of God, chanting His name, recollection of Him, rendering service to Him, worshipping Him, saluting Him, servitude, friendship and self-dedication to Him.\textsuperscript{24} Sāndilya’s view is that ardour in His worship and talks of His glory characterize a devotee and if they draw the mind away from God and disturb the bliss of the soul, they are of no avail. Nārada holds the view that dedication of all our actions to God and the feeling of extreme uneasiness on forgetting Him are the good marks of devotee. The milkmaids of Brāndžvan dedicated their whole life to Gopāla Kṛṣṇa and felt extreme uneasiness when He went out of their sight even for a short time\textsuperscript{25}. Sāndilya observes that honouring the Lord, honouring any thing or creature that evokes His remembrance\textsuperscript{26}, pangs

\textsuperscript{22} S.B.S. 65.
\textsuperscript{23} Bhag. P. 10. 29: 15; cf. Peri. Tm. 11.7.
\textsuperscript{24} Bhāg. P. 7. 5: 22, 23.
\textsuperscript{25} N.B.S. 19, 21. cf. Nammālvār’s position is of the same nature. It is not possible for a man of God-realization to forget Him at any time.
\textsuperscript{26} cf. TVM. 4. 4: 1 to 9. cf. Parāṅkuśa Nāyaki’s experience.
of separation, aversion to all things that are not associated with Him, constant singing of His glory, preservation of life for His sake, the consciousness that "I and everything that is mine are Thine", the consciousness that He is immanent in all things, and absence of hostility towards Him are the marks of devotion.27

Devotion is broadly classified into two kinds, namely, primary and secondary. Secondary devotion is of three kinds, tāmasa, rājasa, and sāttvika. If a person’s devotion is motivated by malevolence, arrogance, jealously or anger, his devotion is said to be tāmasa. If, actuated by the desire for fame, wealth or any other object of enjoyment, he worships God, his devotion is said to be rājasa. If, in showing devotion towards God, he is actuated by the desire to do duty for the sake of duty, or to burn up the roots of karma (latent-desires) or to please God, his devotion is said to be sāttvika.28 The primary or the highest kind of devotion is absolutely unmotivated.29 It is devoid of the qualities of sattva, rajas, or tamas. It is the spontaneous uninterrupted inclination of the mind towards God. It does not admit the gifts of living in the same world with God (sālokya), exercising supernatural powers of God (sārgṣṭi), being near God (sāmipya), possession of a form similar to that of God (sārūpya), and union with God (sāyujya).30 The devotee who clings to God with his whole soul does not crave even for absolute independence of the soul (kaivalya), not to speak of other things.31 Secondary devotion, according to Nārada, is three-fold according as sattva, rajas or tamas is predominant in the character of the devotee; or according as the devotees are distressed, inquisitive, or selfish.32 Each preceding kind of devotion is superior to each succeeding one.33 According to Śaṅḍilya, primary

27. S.B.S. 44.
29. Ibid. 3. 29: 12.
31. Ibid., 11. 20: 34.
33. N.B.S. 57.
devotion is single-minded, whole-hearted devotion to God. It is the supreme devotion which directly leads to liberation. All other processes are of secondary nature and are indirect causes of liberation, inasmuch as they only lead to primary devotion. Sāndilya says that chanting the name of God, reciting it repeatedly, salutation to the deity, and worship of God constitute secondary devotion. They lead to the knowledge of the deity, through which attachment to Him (rāga) is engendered which ripens into love (prema) of God.

Devotion to God manifests itself in many forms. There are several kinds of human relationship such as filial affection, friendship, reverence, servitude etc. The devotee may hold himself related to God in any of these means. The nature of his attitude depends upon the degree of intimacy with God. The attitude is termed as bhāva. The most important of these attitudes are six: dāsya, sakhya, vātsalya, sānta, kānta and mādhurya. Dāsya-bhāva is the attitude of a servant to his master. Hanuman is the apt classical example of an ideal servant of God. This type of relationship marks the beginning of love. At a later stage devotion gets deepened and is comparable to the love and regard that a man has for his friend. For example, the relationship between Kucela and Kṛṣṇa, and that between Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa. Still higher and more intimate is the vātsalya-bhāva, the love of the parent to the child. For example, love of Kausalyā for Rāma and of Yaśodā or Devakī for Kṛṣṇa. Sānta-bhāva is the converse of vātsalya; it is the feeling of a child to its parent e.g., love of Dhruva and Prahlāda for God, who were the children of God in every sense of the term. Kānta-bhāva is the love of the wife to the husband; as between Sīta and Rāma, and between Rukmiṇī and Kṛṣṇa. This is a closer kinship than those mentioned so far. But the closest of all is mādhura-bhāva, the romantic love of the lover and the beloved, as in the case of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. The last two types should not be understood to mean sensuality. What is Bhagavat-kāma is transempirical, and it is described analogi-

34. S.B.S. 83, 84; cf Bh. G. 18: 68.
35. S.B.S. 56, 57 with commentary.
cally as viṣaya-kāma. But the resemblance between them, is like that between the dog and the dog star.

Spiritual practice must begin naturally with thinking about what one has to attain and knowing the means to attain it. That is the reason why every system of religion insists upon some sort of scriptural study under some teacher. The worthier and purer one’s ideas of God arrived at by the proper use of the intellect, the purer, worthier and truer one’s interpretation of one’s experiences will be. The aspirant should not take delight in vain argumentation and scholastic disputations for their own sake. The proper place for reason is provided for in spiritual practice by the insistence on reflection or manana. It is also held that knowledge and devotion are interdependent. If intellect refuses the aid of feeling and will, it remains dry intellectual dogma. If love is unassisted by intellect and will, it may be blind sentimentalism; and if will is not helped by knowledge and love, it remains merely meaningless, aimless activity. But Nārada thinks that devotion is the fruit of itself, being the means as well as the end of devotion. Śāṇḍilya however feels the necessity of concentration of mind and cultivation of the intellect for the culture of devotion. The cultivation of the intellect for acquiring certain knowledge of Brahman should be continued till devotion is completely purified. Valid knowledge of Brahman is the end of the intellect. Still, listening to the scriptures (śravaṇa), reflection (manana), and intellectual conviction (nididhyāsana) lead to the true knowledge of God. Knowledge is absolutely necessary for firmness and purity of devotion. The life of devotion to God, according to Śāṇḍilya, need not necessarily be a purely emotional one. The venerable saint upholds the cult of devotion enlightened by reason. An echo of this idea is found in the Kūrma-purāṇa also: "Of all the devotees, he who ever worships Me with knowledge is most dear to Me, and no

36. N.B.S. 74.
37. ibid., 29.
38. N.B.S. 30.
other.\textsuperscript{40} It is said that the sages who have faith in God have a vision of Him in their own selves by means of devotion combined with wisdom and renunciation.\textsuperscript{41} Devotion to the Lord gives also rise to knowledge.\textsuperscript{42} That is said to be the real wisdom "which generates attachment to God."\textsuperscript{43}

A life of devotion is not necessarily a life of inaction. The clarion call of the Gitā is to give up weakness of the heart, shake off lethargy and impotency, and do one's duty in the world.\textsuperscript{44} One should live an active life completely dedicated to God. The Bhāgavata also gives the same message. That is real action, karma, which pleased God.\textsuperscript{45} The actions that are done for the pleasure of God, the actions that are consecrated to Him, give rise to devotion, and devotion, in turn, gives rise to knowledge.\textsuperscript{46} One should surrender all actions to God without any desire for their fruits.\textsuperscript{47} The complete surrender of the soul to God is the highest truth.\textsuperscript{48}

The Nārada Bhakti Sūtras contain an elaboration of the teachings of the Gitā and the Bhāgavata. Actions for the preservation of life, such as eating, drinking, and dressing, must be carried on so long as one lives.\textsuperscript{69} The body is the temple of God. Instead of making it an enemy and a source of distraction, one should make it an ally and a means of devotion. One is reminded of Tirumānkaikālvār's rejection of the ascetic way of self-mortification by self-inhibition.\textsuperscript{50} He who renounces the fruits of action, and dedicates all action to God, rises above pleasure and pain, desire and aversion.

\textsuperscript{40} Kūr. P. 2. 4: 24.
\textsuperscript{41} Bhāg. P. 1. 2: 12.
\textsuperscript{42} ibid., 4. 29: 37.
\textsuperscript{43} ibid., 4. 29: 49.
\textsuperscript{44} Bh. G. 2: 3.
\textsuperscript{45} Bhāg. P. 4. 29: 47.
\textsuperscript{46} ibid., 1. 5: 35.
\textsuperscript{47} ibid., 11. 2: 22.
\textsuperscript{48} ibid., 7. 6: 24.
\textsuperscript{49} N.B.S. 14.
\textsuperscript{50} Peri. Tm. 3. 2: 1, 2.
and other pairs of opposites, and attains lasting peace.\textsuperscript{51} One should observe the social and moral obligations, and perform religious duties, dedicating them all, including the self to God.\textsuperscript{52}

According to Nārada the following are the means for the attainment of devotion: Evil company should be shunned by all means, because it excites lust, anger, infatuation, lapse of memory, and loss of intelligence, and finally leads to utter ruin.\textsuperscript{53} Conversation with those who are not with devotees, touching their bodies, sleeping and eating with them, all pollute the souls with sins, and one should fly away from them as from poisonous snakes.\textsuperscript{54} Wealth and sex are the two rocks on which many souls are shipwrecked. Atheists disturb one’s faith in God. So one should not listen to talks about women, wealth and the character of atheists.\textsuperscript{55} Pride, vanity and other vices should be given up.\textsuperscript{56} It is not proper on one’s part to enter into a controversy about God, or other spiritual truths; or about comparative merits of different devotees, for the simple reason that there is plenty of room for diversity in views, and no one view, based upon mere reason, is conclusive in itself.\textsuperscript{57} Devotion to God arises from the renunciation of all objects of enjoyment and of every attachment for them.\textsuperscript{58} He who uproots all earthly attachments gives up acquiring and preserving objects of enjoyment.\textsuperscript{59} These are the negative means which prepare the mind for the attainment of devotion.

The following are the positive means for the culture of devotion: study of the treatises on devotion; constant

\textsuperscript{51} N.B.S. 48.
\textsuperscript{52} ibid., 61.
\textsuperscript{53} ibid., 43 to 45.
\textsuperscript{54} N.P.R. 2, 2: 6.
\textsuperscript{55} N.B.S. 63.
\textsuperscript{56} ibid., 64.
\textsuperscript{57} ibid., 74, 75.
\textsuperscript{58} ibid., 35.
\textsuperscript{59} ibid., 47.
thinking of their teachings; performance of those duties which are enjoined by them; cultivation and preservation of such virtues as non-violence, truthfulness, purity of body and mind, compassion and faith in higher spiritual realities, and the like. 60 One shall incessantly perform uninterrupted loving-service to God. 61 Devotion is obtained, principally, by the grace of the great souls who are devoted to God, or from the least touch of divine compassion. The company of the great is difficult of attainment, which once attained is bound to awaken devotion. The companionship of devotees is attained by the grace of God alone. 62 The grace of God is followed by the response of the devotees, since there is no distinction between God and His men. 63 Sri Krsna says, “I dwell in them, and they dwell in Me.” 64

By attaining devotional love a person becomes fulfilled, immortal and contented. 65 He becomes free from the cycle of births and deaths. He has no more desire for anything. He is free from grief and hatred. Success and failure, gain and loss are equal to him. He becomes intoxicated with joy, absolutely quiet, and completely satisfied. 66 Communing in Him he delights in Himself, sees Him alone, hears Him alone and thinks of Him alone. 67 He is filled with the presence of God. He feels His presence everywhere. 68 He offers his whole being to God. He belongs to Him, and not even to himself. 69 Bhagavan says, “I am like one who is not free. I am entirely dependent on My devotees. My heart is given over to My saintly devotees. I am their beloved. I have no liking either for Myself or for My immortal consort, Lakshmi.

60. ibid., 76, 78.
61. ibid., 36.
62. ibid., 38 to 40.
63. ibid., 41.
64. Bh. G. 9: 29.
65. N.B.S. 4.
66. ibid., 5, 6.
67. ibid., 55.
68. ibid., 70.
69. ibid., 73.
without the association of My saintly devotees whose sole refuge I am. How can I leave them who have renounced their wives, home, children, relations, wealth, and this world and the next, and completely surrendered themselves to Me? They do not know anything other than Me, nor do I know anything else but them.\textsuperscript{70}

Other benefits which result through devotion are: One’s sins which can be destroyed by means of penance, charity, chastity, truthfulness provided they are performed with faith, will be completely wiped out. Devotion is the soul of purity.\textsuperscript{71} It is the best kind of atonement for all sins. By the constant remembrance of the Lord all other atonements are done away with.\textsuperscript{72} According to \textit{Bhāgavata}, the supreme devotion to God can liberate us from bondage.\textsuperscript{73} According to Śāndilya, the cause of births and deaths is not want of knowledge, but want of devotion.\textsuperscript{74} Want of devotion is the cause of egoism which brings about of \textit{samsāra}. The fire of devotion burns up the sense of ‘\textit{me}’ and ‘\textit{mine}’. purges the soul of egoism by destroying the intellect completely, and brings about liberation.\textsuperscript{75} One gets liberated from the bondage of all actions, good and bad, by dedicating their fruits to God.\textsuperscript{76} And by complete self-surrender to God, which is the mark of supreme devotion, one can attain the blissful state of Brahman, which is the highest goal of life.\textsuperscript{77}

\textbf{God is the God of Love.} There is no barrier of caste, sex or nationality. The \textit{Gītā}, in preaching the cult of devotion, throws open the portals of devotional love and, through it, of salvation to all irrespective of caste, character or sex. Nobody can stand in the way of anybody’s right to

\textsuperscript{70} Bhāg. P. 9.4 : 63 to 68.
\textsuperscript{71} S.B.S. 58, 59.
\textsuperscript{72} ibid., 75, 76.
\textsuperscript{73} Bhāg. P. 1. 29 : 36.
\textsuperscript{74} S.B S. 98.
\textsuperscript{75} ibid., 96 with commentary.
\textsuperscript{76} ibid., 54.
\textsuperscript{77} ibid., 96.
love God. Śrī Kṛṣṇa assures salvation even to a person of vilest conduct who worships Him with single-minded devotion. Even persons of sinful origin attain the supreme goal by taking refuge in Him.\(^{78}\) According to the Bhāgavata, even a caṇḍāla is purged of impurity of his caste by firm devotion to God\(^{79}\) and is dearer to God than a brahmin, sadly lacking in faith\(^{80}\). Even a person of low birth is liberated from bondage if he utters the name of God only once.\(^{81}\) Nārada and Śaṅkilya also preach the universality of the cult of devotion. “Among the devotees of God, there is no distinction of birth, learning, appearance, family, wealth, religious observances and the like, since they all belong to Him.”\(^{82}\) They are suffused with the spirit of God. They realize the presence of God everywhere in and around them.\(^{83}\) “All persons, even down to the lowest-born, have equal right to follow the path of devotion; it has been taught by generations of authorities”.\(^{84}\) The path of devotion has no artificial restrictions. The desire for liberation is the starting point of devotion and anybody can tread on that highway, the supreme path. It is perfectly democratic in spirit and outlook.

The Dharmaśāstra texts are based on the sūtras which belong to the kalpa section of the Vedāṅgas such as the sūtras of Āpastamba, Āśvalāyana, Bodhāyana, Drahyāyana and other works. They treat, in the main, the codes of good conduct (ācāra), expiations for the sinful deeds which are committed (prāyascitta) and worldly transactions (vyavahāra). The Kalpasūtras deal elaborately with the religious rites which are to be done in the sacred fire and in that connection, they mention the greatness of the deities. Much as they are concerned with the performance of the rites, they do not deal

78. Bh. G. 9: 30 to 32.
81. Ibid., 5: 1: 35.
82. N.B.S. 72, 73.
83. Ibid., 70.
84. S.B.S. 78.
with the concept of the deity for worship. The Smṛti texts, however, attach some importance to the worship of the deities, but this is done in a rather formal way.

It is in the Manu Smṛti that there is the mention of the creation of the world. In this context, the word ‘nārāyaṇa’ is explained to apply for Viṣṇu, who is described as the ruler. The first person to have been created by Viṣṇu is Brahmā. The Supreme Being is described to be of the colour of gold and is designated as the Supreme Person. He is to be known through the knowledge which is akin to that which rises while one is partially asleep. This only means that He is to be known without the aid of the sense organs. His name is Viṣṇu and He lies on Ādiśeṣa with Śrī. He is rightly referred to as Acyuta being the support to the world. He dwells within the self which is in the heart. Perhaps to show that the person who thinks constantly of Him shall not be made to suffer beyond a limit, the desent of Viṣṇu as Narasimha is frequently mentioned and His grace is said to be yearned for. This deity who would not be pleased by any deed other than that which one has to do, shall be pleased by doing one's own. One shall meditate upon Him as enshrined in a temple.

The Dharmaśāstra texts prescribe rules to be followed particularly by the devotee of Viṣṇu. Early in the morning one shall wake up from sleep and contemplate on Hari whom

85. Manu Smṛti. 1: 10.
86. ibid., 12: 122.
87. ibid., 1: 11; Harita Smṛti 1: 10 to 13.
88. ibid., 12; 122; vide Kulluka on Manu Smṛti.
89. Harita Smṛti 1: 9.
90. ibid., 7:5.
91. Śaṅkha Smṛti 7: 17
92. ibid., 7: 19, 20.
93. Harita Smṛti 1: 2; 2:9; 4: 76; 7: 19.
94. ibid., 7: 21, 22.
95. Vyāsa Smṛti 3: 2.
one shall think of while taking bath. The routine work (āhuika) may be done by following the Vaikhānasa or Pāñcarātra mode. This reference should not be taken to have been made under the influence of the Pāñcarātra Āgama, for the routine of the day is divided into eight parts according to the Sūtrī and so this would only show that the Āgama mode of the daily routine was in vogue when this text (Ausanasi Sūtrī) was written. The sacrifice for God (daivayajña) which is one of the five daily sacrifices, must have assumed greater significance in later days and with the help of the Āagamic influence developed into temple worship. The word ‘devagrha’ used in this context does not make clear whether temples or shrines were in existence in the days of Kalpasūtras. There could have been only holy places where the sacred fire was kept burning into which the offerings were made. The word ‘devakula’ occurring in the Pratimānātaka of Bhāsa must also be taken to mean a place where images for worship are placed. Such places had some external mark in the form of a weapon or flag of the deity enshrined. The images were made of stone. There were sites set apart for erecting temples or for the use of the deities.

The concept of the areśā form of worship was familiar to the authors of some Sūtrīs. The moment one beholds the Lord from the resting place of His feet up to His crown, one’s sins get destroyed. This means that simple offences would even more easily get destroyed. The Sūtrī texts

98. Dakṣa Sūtrī, ch. 2.
99. Apastamba Dharmasūtra 1: 14; 13 1; Bodhāyana Dharmasūtra 2.6: 4.
100. Bodhāyana Dharmasūtra 2.8: 2.
101. The place is also called dhisnya (vide Kalidasa: Abhijñāna Śākuntala, IV).
102. Bhāsa: Pratimānātaka, Act III. It is also referred to as Pratimaggha.
105. Śāndilya Sūtrī 2: 84.
recommend the worship of *salāgrama*.\textsuperscript{106} Saṅkara, the chief exponent of Advaita, refers to the worship of *sālagrama* and equates the *sālagrama* with Hari.\textsuperscript{107}

The *Śrīta* texts recommend the worship of the deity for obtaining the things which have not been obtained before and for keeping in fact what has been obtained.\textsuperscript{108} God shall be worshipped with the chanting of the *Puruṣasūkta* \textsuperscript{109} The deity shall be fondly cherished as a chaste lady would cherish her dear husband, a mother her suckling child, a disciple his master, and a friend his friend. God shall be treated as a master, friend and preceptor.\textsuperscript{110}

God likes those who are devoted to His devotees and conversely does not approve of the devotion of one who does not honour His devotees.\textsuperscript{111} Those who are devoted in their service to the Lord may or may not obtain the result of their service, but it is said, in an exaggerated way, that those, who are devoted to the service of the devotees, are bound to get the results of their endeavours.\textsuperscript{112} Whether it is an animal or man or bird that takes shelter under a Vaiśnavite, that is, a devotee of God, it goes to the supreme place along with that devotee.\textsuperscript{113} Conversely, those who are treading the wrong path, hate Viṣṇu and speak ill of the Vaiśnavite Āgamas are not fit for companionship. The devotion which is already had would get destroyed in their company.\textsuperscript{114}

Atonement for the offences committed could be easily carried out. Addressing God as Vāsudeva, Jagannātha, and other names, one could become freed from the adverse

\textsuperscript{106.} *Vṛddhaharita Śrīta* 8: 183, 189.
\textsuperscript{107.} *Bṛhmaśatrabhāṣya* on 1. 2: 7, 14; 1. 3: 14.
\textsuperscript{108.} *Yājñavālka Śrīta* 1: 100,
\textsuperscript{109.} *Harita Śrīta* 4: 54, 59.
\textsuperscript{110.} *Śanḍilya Śrīta* 4: 37, 38.
\textsuperscript{111.} ibid., 4: 86.
\textsuperscript{112.} ibid., 1: 95.
\textsuperscript{113.} ibid., 1: 15.
effects of patricide and of having killed the cow. The one who steals the bulbous roots and vegetables belonging to others could expiate by building a temple for God with a garden of flowers attached to it.

The Bhaktisūtras and the Dharmasāstra texts thus deal respectively with the path of the devotion and the life a devotee should lead for obtaining the reward of his devoted life. Unlike the former, the Dharmasāstra texts have no primary concern with the act of devotion, but upholding as they do the Vedic theism, they incidentally deal with the topic of the worship of the deity. The general aspect of devotion to God (deva) which marked the earlier texts, became developed in the later periods into the cult of Viṣṇu and Śiva, the former aligning itself with the Viṣṇupurāṇa, Bhāgavata and other works on Vaiṣṇavism.

114. ibid., 1: 120.
116. ibid., 4: 19.
VIṢṆU CULT IN ANCIENT TAMIL LITERATURE

The ancient classics of Tamil Literature, the majority of which so far available, are assigned to the pre-Christian periods, throw much light on the prevalence of and acquaintance with the Vedic study and Vedic rites in ancient Tamil Nad.¹ The worship of Viṣṇu receives a significant treatment in these works though these were not mainly intended to deal with religious matters. They contain references not only to the concept of the deity concerned but also to the cult of the temple worship and the philosophical and religious settings which formed the background of such worship.² These works refer to the worship of Tīrumāḷ (Viṣṇu),³ Kṛṣṇa⁴ and Baladeva.⁵ The verse in the PūranāṆuṟu collection⁶ (1000 B.C. to 300 A.D.) includes Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva, along with Śiva and Subrahmaṇya, as the four controlling deities of the Universe. This irrefutable evidence that, among the gods commanding worship as Supreme Deities along with the Śaiva pair, is indeed of great significance. The theme Pūvatīnilai, as it is called in PurattīṆai Iyal, aims at the identification of a ruling monarch with one of the principal deities of the Hindu pantheon viz., Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva.⁷ Loyalty to the patron had ever been an admirable trait of the

¹ PRN. 2, 15: cf. Cankāṭkāḷum and Vaitikāmarkkamum, pp. 13, 22 to 23.
² Cankāṭkāḷum Vaitikāmarkkamum, pp. 46 to 59.
³ TMR. 1. 12; 1. 151; 11. 164–65; PRMP. 11. 29 to 31; 11. 402 to 404; MLP. 11. 3, 4; MTK. 1. 591, 592; KLT. 105, 119, 124. 127; PRP. 1, 2, 3, 4, 13 and 15.
⁴ PRN. 56, 58, 174, 201, AKN. 59, 175; KLT.134.
⁵ ibid., 56; KLT. 26, 36, 104, 105.
⁶ ibid., 56.
⁷ TLK. 3. 2: 5. 11. 9, 10.
Tamils from times immemorial and there are instances where the king is likened to God. Verily the king is a protector of the people in the same way as Tirumāl or Māyōu is the protector of the Universe. The Paranānāṟṟu verse under reference is a fine illustration of the point. Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva are referred to in one more place, where a Cola and a Pāṇṭiya are together praised as looking like these gods. One verse in Akanānāṟṟu (prior to first century A.D.) refers to the story of Rāma9 and another verse of the same work Kuravaikkuttu (rāsa dance) of Kṛṣṇa.10 The verse in Kalittokai (300 A.D.) mentions the victory of Kṛṣṇa against the wrestlers and slaying of them.11 Apart from these stray references, Paripāṭal (third century A.D.) contains six poems in description of Viṣṇu.12 These are intended to describe the character of Viṣṇu as a deity, and have no more definite object of describing the Bhāgavata or any other cult as such. Even so, the description of Viṣṇu as given in two poems13 by one Kaṭuvaṅga Ilaiyinaṅgar follows closely rather the description of Viṣṇu as supreme in the Pāṇcarātra texts and the Nārīyanīya of the Mahābhārata as well. Another poem of the same work by one Iḷamperuvaluṭiyar14 makes a special mention of Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva as the deities installed in Tirumāḷirināṉolkai. This fact could be confirmed beyond doubt by references in the ancient Tamil Grammar Tolkāppiyam (fourth century B.C.) where it is stated that the presiding deity at Mullai (pastoral) tract is Māyōu (Tirumāl) and it is significant that He is mentioned first in the sūtra.15 It has already been pointed out that the king has been compared with Tirumāl. The ethical literary work Tirukkuṟṟal (first century B.C.) contains two references of this deity.16

8. PRN. 58
9. AKN. 70.
10. ibid., 232.
11. KLT. 134.
12. PRP. 1, 2, 3, 4, 13 and 15.
13. ibid., 2 and 3.
14. ibid., 15.
15. TLK. 3. 1 : 5. cf. ibid. 30.
16. Kural 610, 1103. In the former the reference to the Lord of the three strides and in the latter the abode of Viṣṇu (Paramapadam).
In *Cilappatikāram*, an epic belonging to a slightly later period (second century A.D.), there are a number of references to the temples to Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva in the Cola capital Kāvirippūmpaṭṭiṇam and the Pāṇṭiya capital Maturai alike.¹⁷ One of the early shrines in the far south is Tirumāḷirūṅcolai¹⁸ which finds mention in *Cilappatikāram* along with Tiruvāraṅkam¹⁹ and Tiruppati²⁰ as places peculiarly holy to Viṣṇu. In times later than these there are not merely undoubted references, but elaborate descriptions of devotion to the worship of Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva. These references establish beyond doubt the prevalence of worship of Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva all over the Tamil country.

To come to details, Viṣṇu is mentioned as the foremost among gods.²¹ He is often referred to as the pre-eminent deity spoken of in the *Vedas*,²² which reveal His greatness,²³ and make Him known.²⁴ He is beyond the faculties of apprehension even for sages whose intellect is perfected by constant meditation.²⁵ He is foremost not only among gods but also among the demons. He is thus neither the friend nor the foe of any one. His impartial attitude is thus revealed towards the living beings.²⁶

Garuḍa is His vehicle²⁷ and his emblem marks His banner.²⁸ The conch and the discus are His weapons adorning the left and right hands respectively. The former

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¹⁷. CLP. 1: 5, ll. 169 to 173; ibid., 2: 14, ll. 7 to 10.
¹⁸. ibid., 2: 11, l. 91.
¹⁹. ibid., 2: 11, ll. 35 to 40.
²⁰. ibid., 2: 11, ll. 41 to 51.
²¹. PRP. 13. ll. 1 to 13.
²². ibid., 1. l. 13; 2. l. 57; ll. 12 to 27.
²³. PRP. 1. l. 65.
²⁴. NRR. Invocatory verse.
²⁵. PRP. 3. ll. 46 to 52.
²⁶. ibid., 3. ll. 54 to 58.
²⁷. CLP. 2. 17; 28; PRP. 3. l. 60.
²⁸. PRP. 1. 1, 11; 2. 1. 60; 4. ll. 36 to 48; 13. ll. 38–39; PRN. 56.l. 6; 58.l. 14.
when blown by Him causes horror to all His foes. He is ever wearing a garland of tulaci. He reclines on a couch of Ādiśeṣa and is to be found generally in the milky ocean. Lakṣmī dwells in the chest of Him who is Her husband. The precious stone Kauśṭubha adorns His chest. His garment is golden in colour. These are the marks distinctively belonging to Him and serve to distinguish Him from other deities. These also show that He has a divine and auspicious form which could not be described correctly, but on that account, He is not left undescribed by people. They describe Him in expressions which are poor and inadequate and do not have actual relevance to Him. For instance, though Kṛṣṇa, the Lord, is conceived of as having two arms, He is in reality having innumerable arms. Here lies His unfathomable grandeur. The devotees request Him not to ignore their description and prayers, but to accept them and bless them, not minding their littleness.

He is Himself the sacrifice that is performed and is also Himself dharma (righteousness). He is the embodiment of krpa. He is the rectifier of those who are incapable of treading the right path. He is the pain of those who are opposed to His ways. He is the moon and the sun; He is Śiva, the god of destruction; He is Brahmā, the god of creation; in fact He is Himself the very destruction and creation. He is Himself the cloud, ākāśa, earth and the Himālayas. It is because

29. ibid., 2. ll. 36 to 40.
30. ibid., 13. ll. 60.
31. ibid., 1. ll. 1, 2.
32. ibid., 13. ll. 26 to 29.
33. ibid., 3. ll. 31.
34. ibid., 3. ll. 90.
35. ibid., 1. ll. 9
37. PRP. 13. ll. 46 to 49.
38. ibid., 4. ll. 1 to 5.
39. ibid., 3. ll. 35 to 45.
40. ibid., 1. ll. 33 to 36.
41. ibid., 1. ll. 37 to 48.
that He is everything that he becomes indescribable. There is nothing outside Him which could be brought in for purposes of drawing similarity or contrast to it from Him. Naturally He is equal to Himself.  

All the worlds lose their stability and energy day by day and after aeons, become reduced to a stage when their existence could not be made out. The sun and the moon also become extinct by then. Many aeons pass by. After a long time, matter emerges and from it are produced, in the order, ākāśa, air, fire and water the succeeding one emerging from the antecedent. Aeons roll by and after a long long period earth is evolved, from the water. The water is then so staggering that the earth is on the point of getting fully submerged there. Viṣṇu takes the form of the boar then and keeps the earth secure. This is one of the countless sports of Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu is said to have married the earth known as Bhūdevī. It is humorously remarked here by the poet that His marriage cannot be reconciled since His consort Lākṣmī is ever present in His chest.  

The five elements, the sun, the moon and the sacrificer, the five planets which are other than the sun and the moon, the the demons, the twelve Ādityas, the eight Vasus, the eleven Rudras, the twin Aśvins, Yama and his servants, and the twenty one worlds together with the beings inhabiting them arise from Viṣṇu and grow in Him. This is the truth which is revealed from the Vedas. All these represent Him. Symbolically, the vast earth represents His feet, the sea His garment, the sky His body, the directions His arms and the sun and the moon His eyes. The depiction of the sky as His body receives suport from the Taïttiriya Upaniṣad. This

42. ibid, 1. ll. 50 to 53.
43. ibid., 2. ll. 1 to 4.
44. ibid., 2. ll. 28 to 35.
45. ibid., 3. ll. 4 to 14.
46. NRR. invocatory verse. This description is also given in more or less similar expressions by Śaṅkaraçārya in a sloka contained in his Bhāṣya on the Viṣṇu-saharsanāmam.
must be the reason for taking the Lord to be blue in colour.\textsuperscript{48} In a way, this description of the Lord may be treated as lending support to the relation of self and body as existing between Viśnu and the world of animate and inanimate beings. In fact, He forms the inner essence of every thing.\textsuperscript{49}

He is the father of Brahmā\textsuperscript{50} whom He had created for looking after the subsequent creation. As He is the substance itself and its inner. He is not living in it nor is there a place beside Him for others to live in.\textsuperscript{51} He is the only Lord who safeguards the twenty one worlds in three parts under the umbrella of His grace, dharma being its handle.\textsuperscript{52} The twenty-live realities (tattvas) serve the purpose of realizing Him through them.\textsuperscript{53} He is the protector of all; the discus adorns His right hand\textsuperscript{54} in order that He could use it against those who violate His law. He measured the entire region to wrest it from the demon and saved it from deluge taking the form of a boar.\textsuperscript{55} He took the form of the swan and saved the earth, with out-stretched wings from the torrential rain of deluge.\textsuperscript{56} His ability to vanquish the foes and His brilliance are found in the sun, His sympathy and splendour in the moon, His tenderness and liberality in the cloud, His powers of sustenance and patience in the earth, His fragrance and effulgence in flowers, His exterior appearance and vastness in the sea, His form and voice in the ākāśa and His divine descent and disappearance in the air. All these owe their origin to Him, and exist, as it were, away from Him, but really sustained by Him.\textsuperscript{57}

The substance of the teaching of the Vedas is that the Lord's complexion is akin to that of sapphire; His eyes

\textsuperscript{48} PRP. I. II. 6, 7.
\textsuperscript{49} ibid., 3. II. 63 to 68.
\textsuperscript{50} ibid., 3. II. 13, 14.
\textsuperscript{51} ibid., 3. II. 69, 70.
\textsuperscript{52} ibid., 3. II. 73 to 76.
\textsuperscript{53} ibid., 3. II. 77 to 80.
\textsuperscript{54} ibid., 1. II. 52, 53.
\textsuperscript{55} ibid., 3. II. 19 to 25.
\textsuperscript{56} ibid., 3. II. 25 and 26.
\textsuperscript{57} ibid., 4. II. 25 to 35.
resemble the lotuses; His words never fail in their import just as a particular day would not but come off; His patience is like that of the earth; His grace reaches one and all without any partiality as the cloud impregnated with water. The utterances of the Vedas, oblations, performance of the sacred rites and the sacred fires are God Himself.\(^{58}\)

The four vyūhas of the Pāñcarātra school were known to the poets of the ancient Tamil literature. Vāsudeva is held to be dark in complexion having red eyes, Saṅkarsana to be white with black eyes, Pradyumna to be red and Aniruddha green.\(^{59}\) The popularity of the Pāñcarātra cult during the centuries before the birth of Christ is attested by a reference to the temple of Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva already cited above.

Among the divine descents of Viṣṇu those of Kūrma,\(^{60}\) Varāha, Narasimha,\(^{61}\) Vāmana, Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa are treated. While those of Kūrma, Narasimha and Rāma\(^{62}\) are dealt with in the brief references, those of Varāha\(^{63}\) and Vāmana\(^{64}\) get special attention, but Kṛṣṇa’s descent has more and detailed treatment. Viṣṇu’s greatness as the saviour of mankind received attention in the descents as Varāha and Vāmana. Balarāma is often associated with Kṛṣṇa.

Kṛṣṇa is mentioned as the tender child of Yacōtai.\(^{65}\) His playing on the flute was rapturous and fascinated the gopīs.\(^{66}\) He is said to play on Viṇā also.\(^{67}\) Some of the deeds of Kṛṣṇa are said to be mysterious and are stated to be incomprehensible. The Lord who could use the snake Vāsuki as the

\(^{58}\) ibid., 2. 11. 52 to 68.
\(^{59}\) ibid., 3. 11. 81, 82.
\(^{60}\) CLP. 2. 12. 1. 58.
\(^{61}\) PRP. 4. 11. 11 to 21.
\(^{62}\) AKN. 70; PRN. 378; MNM. 17. 11. 9 to 14; ibid., 5. 1. 37.
\(^{63}\) PRP. 2. 1. 16; 3. 1. 24; 13. 1. 36.
\(^{64}\) CLP. 2. 17. 11. 34, 35; 1. 6. 1. 55.
\(^{65}\) ibid., 2. 16. 11. 45, 46.
\(^{66}\) ibid., 2. 7. 1. 22; ibid. 2. 17. 11. 18, 19.
\(^{67}\) PRP. 3. 1. 86.
rope for churning the milky ocean, became Himself lit to be bound by Yacōtai with a rope. Viṣṇu was not hungry, but devoured the world. However, He ate the butter with avidity through severe hunger. He used His feet to measure the entire world, but had to use it in greater frequency when He went to the city of Kauravas as a messenger of the Pāṇḍavas. These show that He being māyon and māyavana could introduce mysterious activities in His own deeds. There are references to incidents like taking away the garments of the gopis, driving the chariot of Arjuna, killing the demon Vatasa and hiding the sun with the discus.

Kṛṣṇa married Nīlā, the daughter of Kumbha, the brother of Yacōtai. Tamil literature has introduced a new person Nappināi by name and made her play a prominent role in the life of Kṛṣṇa. She takes the place of Nīlā in these classics. Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma had many exploits in the Gokula during which they stood one on each side of Nappināi and danced. They changed their positions and danced again. Nārada is said to have written the work Nārada-śikṣā treating the tāla according to which they danced. When Kṛṣṇa was sporting in the waters of Yamunā with the gopis, He took out the bracelet from one of them and made them feel discomfort. Kṛṣṇa is stated to have danced whenever there was some activity in which He engaged Himself. His dance is known as Alliyam when He broke the tusk of the elephant.

68. CLP. 2. 17.1 32.
69. ibid., 2. 17.11 32, 33, 34.
70. PRP. 15. 1. 33.
71. CLP. 2. 17.11 14, 15, 27,28.
72. ibid., 2. 17.1. 23.
73. ibid., 2. 17.1.34.
74. CLP. 2. 17.1 19.
75. ibid., 2. 17.1. 26.
76. cf Gar. P. Uttarakhanda, ch. 19.
77. CLP. 2. 17.11 14, 15, 16, 24.
78. ibid., 2. 17.11 25, 26.
79. ibid., 2. 17.11 23. 24.
Kuvalayāpiḍa.  

He played Kuṭakkūtu dance when He went to fight with Bāṇa.

Balarāma is considered to be one of the āvatāras of Viṣṇu and He is quite often treated as having the same status like that of Kṛṣṇa. He is described to have had the emblem of the elephant in his flag and a single ear-ornament. The paradox in the case of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma is that Kṛṣṇa is held to be the younger brother of Balarāma, but He is very ancient and much older. Really He is in between the ancient and the modern. The only way of knowing Him is through the Vedas. The paradox that arises here proves only that He is the essence of every thing and so He could present Himself anywhere, at any time and in any form He chooses.

Among the arca forms, the deities at Tirumalai, Tiruvanantapuram and Tirumalirunicolai are referred to and treated. Tiruvanantapuram (Śrī Raṅgam) is the holy place on the island created by the branching of the river Kāviri. The deity there is reclining on the serpent couch. Tirumalai which marks the northern limit of the Tamil country is the hill of Viṣṇu, abounding in many streams. The deity in the temple on the hills is Viṣṇu the ornaments on whose person are referred to as dazzling in appearance. The sun and the moon are described as the discus and conch of the Lord. The Lord appears like a blue cloud with sun and moon shining on each side, lightning playing the part of a new garment. He is in the standing posture. Viṣṇu lies on the serpent couch in Tiruvananta-

80. ibid., 1. 6. 11. 46 to 48.
81. ibid., 1. 6. 12. 54, 55.
82. PRP. 1. 11. 3 to 5.
83. ibid., 1 1. 5.
84. ibid., 2. 11. 20 to 27.
85. ibid., 2. 1. 20. Vide Parimelajakar’s commentary on this line.
86. CLP. 1. 10. 11. 156; 2. 11. 1, 6; ibid. 11. 35 to 40.
87. ibid., 1. 6. 1. 30; 1. 8. 11. 1, 2; 2. 11. 1. 41.
88. ibid., 2. 11. 11. 41 to 52.
puram, which is also known Āṭakamāṭam. The Lord takes His abode anywhere. He chooses beneath the banyan or katampa tree or in the island formed between the two branches of a river. He may choose the hill or the form of any other deity. He is present every where to carry out the wishes of His devotees and to keep them in carrying out their duties.

There are several hills which defy description for ordinary persons, but were studied and described by eminent poets in their works. Only some among them are useful to people who are provided by them with gold, gems, wood and others. Only a few among these have become the lucky abodes chosen by the deities themselves. One among them is Tirumāliruṅcolai which has been chosen as the dwelling place by Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva. This place is beautified by the flow of the river Cilampāru. The groves there are ever green and cool. The references which are made to temples in other places point to the existence of shrines for Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma for whom the flags had the emblems of Garuḍa and Plough respectively. The latter is said to have had the palm tree emblem in the flag. The Paripāṭal mentions a temple for Viṣṇu very near to Maturai. The place which is also called Kūjavāy has also a temple for Ādiśeṣa. The place is also known as Iruntaiyur which is identified by Prof. M. Raghava Ayyengar to be the temple of Kūṭalājakar in Maturai.

The temple of Lord Varadarāja at Kāñcī is located in a part of the town known as Tiruvattiyur. The Caṅkam period is known to have been mostly related to the places in and

90. PRP. 4. II. 66 to 73.
91. ibid., 15. II. 1 to 14.
92. ibid., 15. II. 21 to 23.
93. CLP. 1. 5. II. 171, 172; 2. 14. II. 8, 9.
94. KLT. 104, II. 7, 8; PRP. 2. 1. 22
95. Paripāṭal Tiraṭṭu. 1. II. 1 to 6.
96. ibid., 1. II. 60 to 64.
97. ibid., 1. 1. 5.
98. Ārāyceittokuti, pp. 241 to 244.
around Maturai and so the temple in Aḷakarmalai gets great significance in treatment. Śrī Raṅgam and Tirumalai were too well known far and wide through the Tamil region. Tiru-
vanantapuram which is now in Kerala formed part of the Tamil country and hence found a place for reference in these works. Peruntevaṉār who composed Mahābhārataṭam in Tamil, mentions Tiruveṅkatam, Tirumāliruṅcolai, Tiruvāṅkam and Tiruvattiyur as the four places whose names when uttered by the people would relieve them of their sufferings.⁹⁹ The non-mention of Kāṇci in the early Tamil classics may be due to the non-representation of the poets from Tōṇṭai-
maṇṭalam in the Caṅkam period or the loss of the poems containing references to Kāṇci. This is, of course, a negative evidence which could not be pressed too much in the context.

The worship of Viṣṇu is frequently recommended.¹⁰⁰ Final release from worldly bondage could not be got except by worshipping the Lord.¹⁰¹ Devotion to the Lord is to be preferred even to the correct knowledge that one can get about Viṣṇu and His nature.¹⁰² Worship shall be done only at His feet ¹⁰³ One shall wish for the enduring security which the feet of the Lord give.¹⁰⁴ The head of the devotee shall be bent before and near His feet. A devotee shall do this with his relatives also.¹⁰⁵ No one would refrain from worshipping Viṣṇu’s feet which are the source of everything and which are capable of cutting the chain of birth and rebirth.¹⁰⁶

The Lord is ever present in the hearts of His devotees. He is ever cherished by them.¹⁰⁷ Yet, they do not know Him

⁹⁹ ibid., p. 274.
¹⁰⁰ PRP. 2. 11. 5 to 19.
¹⁰¹ ibid., 2. 11. 15 to 17.
¹⁰² ibid., 1. 11. 33, 34.
¹⁰³ ibid., 1: 11. 62 to 65.
¹⁰⁴ ibid., 1. 11. 63 to 65.
¹⁰⁵ ibid., 2. 11. 66 to 77.
¹⁰⁶ ibid., 3. 1. 1, 2, 15, 16.
¹⁰⁷ ibid., 3. 1. 84.
correctly who is exquisitely described in the *Upaniṣads* as having the highest qualities and accomplishments. The devotees of God shall seek Him for refuge. They could offer their worship to the place of God from a distance if they are unable to reach the place and shall, if it is practicable live too near the temple. They shall offer their prayers to Him by addressing Him as Keśava and Nārāyaṇa. Even the gods praise Him as the ancient people did. A devotee shall be free from self-conceit. Once Garuḍa felt proud that because of him Viṣṇu was able to conquer the demons. At this, he was hurled down by the Lord into the nether regions where he had to remain for long and pray for Lord’s mercy which was at last granted enabling him to continue as the Lord’s vehicle. This incident, which is touched in the *Sāma Veda*, shows that Viṣṇu is the greatest among the gods and that Garuḍa had to seek the grace only of Viṣṇu. The ardent devotee feels that he has become fortunate to share the love of God along with others mainly owing to the good deeds done by him in the previous births. The ideal yearning of a devotee of Viṣṇu is brought to light by describing that the devotee would not feel happy unless he gets the vision of the Lord and serve Him. The ears shall be taken to have served the purpose of their existence by listening to the reputed exploits of Viṣṇu who measured the entire universe in two steps and who went to the forest as Rāma along with His younger brother Lākṣmana. The eyes fail to be lucky if they do not behold Him, His hands, feet and mouth. The eyes should keep cast on Him without even a wink. The only act for the tongue shall be to praise Him Who went to the Kauravas as the messenger of the Pāṇḍavas. Viṣṇu is here identified with Vāmana, Rāma, and Kṛṣṇa in these contexts.
The Tamil classics contain many anecdotes and descriptions of the stories of the Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata, and Bhāgavata which could not be traced to the Sanskrit sources. There could have existed certain versions not properly recorded but for the first time finding room in the Tamil texts. Three of them which relate to the life of Kṛṣṇa deserve mention here, while others which are of minor interest could be explained while commenting on the relevant portions of the compositions of the Ālvārs. The three\textsuperscript{117} are the introduction of Nappināi,\textsuperscript{118} the consort of Kṛṣṇa in Gokulam, Kṛṣṇa's breaking down of the Kurunta tree while taking away the robes of the gopa maidens who were taking their bath in the Yamunā,\textsuperscript{119} and His Kuṭakkūtu.\textsuperscript{120}

The cult of Viṣṇu, as found treated and referred to in the ancient classical Tamil literature could have come into being in the Tamil country as a result of the influence of the religious doctrines which are recorded in the Sanskrit works. Yet, the development and treatment of this cult have been indigenous and exerted profound influence on the unique growth of the cult which is marked by the erection of temples most of which are found only in regions where the Tamil language is spoken. It is not therefore a surprise if the principles of the cult of Viṣṇu as these are treated in these classics had given impetus to the rise of the religious poetry at the hands of the Ālvārs.

\textsuperscript{117} Vide, Appendix III.
\textsuperscript{118} CLP. 2. 17. 11. 16, 28.
\textsuperscript{119} ibid., 2. 17. 1. 21; AKN. 59 and old commentary.
\textsuperscript{120} ibid., 1. 6. 11. 54, 55.
TENETS OF VAIŚNAVISM

The literary sources confirmed by the epigraphical evidences, which have been cited in the previous chapters, lead to the conclusion that Vaiśnavism is a faith of the hoary past the origin of which could be traced to the Vedic texts. It is also found from these evidences that before the period of the Ālvaś, there grew up certain tenets which were peculiarly Vaiśnavite in character, preached and practised by many a pious soul. These doctrines do not get a systematic treatment in these source books but they have left an indelible and deep impression on the Ālvaś. The Ālvaś attached greater importance to the path of devotion than to the other doctrines. It is only after the period of Nāthamuni that these tenets got formulated into a coordinated whole and were given a systematic exposition.

The earliest dogmatic exposition of the religion characterized by devotion centres on the worship of Viśṇu and so it takes the name of Vaiśnavism. The cult has had a long history, going back to very remote times. The deity of this cult bears also the sectarian names Vāsudeva-Ṛṣṇa, Nārāyaṇa and Ṭṛṇa Gopāla. These names indicate the four main streams which mingled into one through a period of several centuries to form the so-called religion Vaiśnavism.

The Bhagavad-gītā represents Vāsudeva as identical with Ṭṛṇa. Vāsudeva is identified with the God Viśṇu as well as the Supreme Spirit, as a scion of Viṣṇi family. The Mahābhāṣya (on Pāṇini)1 gives the forms Vāsudeva, Baladeva and Aniruddha as derivatives from Viṣṇi names, meaning the sons of Vasudeva, Baladeva and Aniruddha respectively. The names of the five Viṣṇi heroes referred to

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1. Aṣṭādhyaī, 4. 1: 114.
in the Mora (near Mathura) inscription of the first century A.D. are given in the \textit{Vāyu-purāṇa} as Saṅkaraṇa (son of Vāsudeva by Rohiṇī), Vāsudeva (son of Vasudeva by Devakī), Pradyumna (son of Vāsudeva by Rukmiṇī), Sāmba (son of Vāsudeva by Jāmbavatī (of non-Aryan origin) and Aniruddha (son of Pradyumna) all of whom are known to have been apotheosized and worshipped.\textsuperscript{2} Again Patañjali (on Pāṇini)\textsuperscript{3} distinctly states that the word ‘vāsudeva’ contained in the \textit{Sūtra} is the name of the “worshipful” i.e., one who is pre-eminent worshipful i.e., God. Therefore the worship of Vāsudeva must be regarded as old as Pāṇini’s grammar (800 B.C.).\textsuperscript{4}

The \textit{Mahābhārata} and the \textit{Purāṇas} usually identify Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa of the Sāttvata family with the highest god, and represent him as the founder of the religion characterized by devotion. This religion is called the Bhāgavata, Sāttvata or Vaiṣṇava Dharma. In the \textit{Bhāgavata-purāṇa},\textsuperscript{5} the highest is stated to have been called Bhagavat and Vāsudeva by the Sāttvata people; and the \textit{Śāntiparvan}\textsuperscript{6} of the \textit{Mahābhārata} states, apparently in reference to the \textit{Gītā} that Sāttvata or Bhāgavata Dharma was taught first by Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna.

That Kṛṣṇa with the name Vāsudeva was held in special veneration is evident from the records of Megasthenes and Mathura inscription. There is a reference regarding the worshippers of Vāsudeva and Baladeva (Saṅkaraṇa) in a passage of the Buddhistic canonical literature called \textit{Mahaniddesa} and \textit{Cullaniddesa} (first century) which mentions, among others, the worshippers of certain deities including elephant, horse, cow, dog, crow etc.\textsuperscript{7} These evidences make clear that

\textsuperscript{2} cf. Proceedings of the Indian History Congress 1944, pp. 82 ff.
\textsuperscript{3} \textit{Aṣṭāḥṣāṭyāt}, 4. 3 : 98.
\textsuperscript{5} Bhāg P. 11. 6 : 2, 6.
\textsuperscript{6} MBh. Sānti. 358 : 48.
\textsuperscript{7} \textit{Vaisnavism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems}, p. 5.
the worship of Kṛṣṇa as Vasudeva was in vogue many centuries before the birth of Christ. The worship of Baladeva or Balarāma who is mentioned with Kṛṣṇa was also prevalent then and it appears that it went out of practice or lost its hold on people after the beginning of the Christian era. His worship is understandable and is justified on account of His place in the list of divine descents of Viṣṇu.

The Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas usually explain the name Vasudeva as the ‘son of Vasudeva.’ Prof. R.G. Bhandarkar draws attention to the commentaries on the Āstādhyāyī and the Ghaṭa Jātaka and suggests that Vasudeva is not a patronymic, but the proper name of the person, whose name Kṛṣṇa shows that he belonged to Kārṣṇāyana gotra which sprang from an ancient sage named Kṛṣṇa with whom Vasudeva of a Kṣatriya family of the Kārṣṇāyana gotra was identified at a later date. The Chāndogya Upaniṣad mentions the sage Kṛṣṇa-Devakiputra (i.e. Kṛṣṇa son of Devakī) as a disciple of the rṣi Ghora of the Āṅgirasa family. Kṛṣṇa is not called Vasudeva in this work. Vasudeva’s association with Sankarṣaṇa (Baladeva, son of Vasudeva by Rohini) in pre-Christian epigraphs as well as in certain passages of the Mahābhāṣya seems to support the epic and purānic tradition that Kṛṣṇa was connected with the Yādavas and Pāṇḍavas. It has also to be noted that the Chāndogya Upaniṣad mentions Kṛṣṇa’s mother as Devakī which was rather an uncommon name. Again the Āṅgirasa family to which Upaniṣadic Kṛṣṇa’s teacher Ghora belonged, was intimately related to the Bhojas who were like Viṣṇus, a sect of the Yādava clan. Some of the doctrines enunciated in the Gitā can be traced in the lessons received by Kṛṣṇa-Devakiputra from Ghora Āṅgirasa according to the Chāndogya Upaniṣad. Consequently it is believed that what he learnt from Ghora was what Kṛṣṇa also taught. His teaching was

8. It is treated in the Kriyādhikāra 11:99 to 107.
9. MBh. Uddyoga 70:3; ibid., Śānti 341:41.
singly successful, for he became the centre of a theistic movement, which in the course of time began to worship him along with his friend Arjuna.

In the Mahabharata the Supreme Spirit is addressed by Brahma as Narayana and Visnu and is identified with Vasudeva. The purport seems to be that in a former age the Supreme Spirit Vasudeva created Sankarshana, procreated his son Pradyumna and through him Aniruddha who himself is Visnu and also created Brahma in the former age and in the present occasion to request him again to be born in the Yadu race as Vasudeva dividing himself into four parts as on the previous occasion. Thus Vasudeva was the name of the teacher of the religion of bhakti and there appears to be an implication here that he existed with the other three in a previous age. In the Anugita portion of the Asvamedhika-parva an accidental meeting of Krsna and a sage of the name Uttanka of Bharu race takes place on the former’s return from Dvaraka. The result of the war is given in detail by Krsna to the sage. At the request of Uttanka Krsna shows himHis universal form. The form was the same as, or similar to, that which was shown to Arjuna according to the Bhagavad-gita; but it is here called the Vaishnava form which name does not occur in the Gitâ. The identity of Vasudeva-Krsna with Visnu is proved by this to have become an established fact. In the Santiparva again, it is seen that Yudhisthira while addressing Krsna identifies Him with Visnu. In the epic period, Visnu is regarded as the Supreme Spirit, but the names of Narayana and Vasudeva-Krsna apparently occur in greater frequency and are more prominent.

The facts which are known from literary sources are supported by epigraphical evidences such as the Besnagar (old

13. MBh. Bhiṣma 65: 54, 56.
14. ibid., ibid., 65: 50.
15. ibid., ibid., 65: 63.
17. MBh. Āsvamedhika, ch. 53 to 55.
18. ibid., Śanti, ch. 43.
Gwalior state) inscription (180 B.C.)\(^1\) and another inscription of the same place referring to the erection of Garuḍa column for the temple of the Bhagavat. The previous inscription is significant for the fact that Garuḍa, a bird sacred to Viṣṇu, is here associated with Vāsudeva and the inscription adds that "three immortal steps...when practised lead to heaven...self-control, charity and diligence"\(^2\), which seem very much like an effort to moralise the three strides associated with Viṣṇu. At any rate, this inscription clearly shows that Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa was fully identified with Viṣṇu. A reference has come to notice recently in a Mathura inscription (first quarter of the first century) recording the erection of a gateway, a terrace and a devakula at the mahāsthāna of Vāsudeva proving worship of Vāsudeva in that locality.\(^3\) Vāsudeva is not called Kṛṣṇa in the early Indian inscriptions; but the use of Kṛṣṇa, as another name of Vāsudeva, in works like the Mahābhārata, especially in the Gītā belonging to its early stratum, Patañjali's Mahābhāṣya, and the Ghaṭa Jātaka is probably pre-Christian.\(^4\) Again the Chinna (Kṛṣṇa District, Andhra) inscription\(^5\) of Yajña-Śātakarni (last quarter of the second century) begins with an adoration to Vāsudeva alone and indicates the progress of Bhāgavatism in the South.

The identification of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa with Viṣṇu leads to the second current which flowed into the making of Vaiṣṇavism. Viṣṇu is a Vedic god and therefore He is much more ancient than Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa. In the Brāhmaṇas\(^6\) He is spoken of as the highest god and came to be considered by the worshippers of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa to be the same as their "God of gods" especially because of some winsome qualities in Viṣṇu's character, such as the quality of helpfulness which was extended to Indra and came to be treated as admitting

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extention to mankind. He is accordingly said to have thrice traversed the earthly spaces for man in distress and in order to bestow it on man for a dwelling. He is also spoken of a protector of embryos. In the Brahmanas he is said to have assumed the form of a dwarf in order to gain dominion over the earth for the gods. In the Mahabharata numerous stories are told of Vishnu’s acts of grace and helpfulness, his assuming various descents in order to aid gods and men in distress! It is not surprising therefore that this God of helpfulness was gradually appropriated by the followers of Vasudeva-Krsna.

In the period of Brahmanas, if not earlier, Vishnu was regarded by some as the Spirit of the Sun, and he has that characteristic in the Gita. When Vishnu was regarded as the Sun, it would be natural for the spiritual descendants of Ghora Angirasa, a priest of the Sun, to worship him as their god. Consequently that Vasudeva-Krsna cult was a sect which grew up within Vishnu-Worship, and when it drifted its leader Vasudeva-Krsna identified him with the god whose worship he had preached. Again in the same period Vishnu was very definitely identified with the sacrifice, thus again showing the close affinity between the Vishnu-cult and the Vasudeva-cult. If they were two, it is not surprising, therefore, that before long they became one. In the Anugita the identification of Vasudeva with Vishnu is complete, for the name most often used in the Anugita for the Deity is Vishnu.

27. ibid., 7. 36: 9.
29. cf. the story about Aditya (sun) being Vishnu’s head. Sat. Br. 14. 1: 1 and 10. Vishnu is mentioned along with the Adityas (Vide A.V. 11. 6:2) but never in the Rg. Veda.
32. cf. MBh. Bhisma 65: 47, 63, 69; and ibid., Aisva. 16: 2 to 13.
The third element which contributed to the development of Vaiṣṇavism is the worship of Nārāyaṇa. The word ‘nārāyaṇa’ means ‘the resting place or goal of Nāra or a collection of Nāras’. There is a tradition which connects Nārāyaṇa with primeval waters. According to another tradition, Brahmā sprang from the lotus in the navel of Nārāyaṇa or Viṣṇu. There is a reference in the Vāyu-purāṇa to Nārāyaṇa being represented as prior to matter in an undeveloped form (avyakta) and from this form sprang the mundane egg, from which arose Brahmā. All these traditions seem to have been based on the account to be found in the Vedas. So Nārāyaṇa, is the resting place or goal to men and gods. He is therefore a different person prior to Brahmā and to the Svayambhu of Manu; he is not a historical or mythological individual. He is another person with cosmic character.

There is a reference in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa to a Puruṣa Nārāyaṇa who is stated to have thrice offered sacrifice at the instance of Prajāpati. Nārāyaṇa is, however, not identified here with Viṣṇu or any of the Ādityas. In another place of the same work Puruṣa–Nārāyaṇa is mentioned to have performed the Pāñcarātra sacrifice and attained a supreme position above all beings. The earliest evidence in favour of the identification of Nārāyaṇa with Viṣṇu is probably to be traced in the Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra (fifth century B.C.). The Taittirīya-Āraṇyaka contains a passage in which Nārāyaṇa, Vāsudeva and Viṣṇu are regarded as one and the same deity. Here Nārāyaṇa is also called Hari and ‘the eternal Deity, the Supreme and Lord’ and He is described.

33. MBh. Anuśāsana 186: 7; ibid., Uddyoga 69: 10.
34. Manu. 1. 10; cf. Samārtharcanādhiśāra 1: 7.
37. R.V. 10. 82: 5 and 6.
40. B.D.S. 2. 9: 10.
41. Titt. Ār. 10: 11.
with all the attributes of the Supreme soul, which are usually found mentioned in the Upaniṣads. Several passages of the Mahābhārata support the identification of Viṣṇu and Nārāyaṇa as found in the above passage.

In the Mahābhārata and Purāṇas, Nārāyaṇa figures as the Supreme God, especially in connection with creation. He is represented, mythologically, as lying on the body of a huge serpent in the ocean of milk. Here it is seen that the original conception of his connection with primeval waters is still being kept to Nārāyaṇa thus making Him a worshippable deity. The same epic describes the heaven of this Nārāyaṇa as the Śvetādvipa or White Island.²² Certain gods are said to have gone there and seen Hari in the abode made of great gems, lying on the serpent couch with Lakṣmī sitting at His feet and attended by the sage Nārada and other devotees.³³ It is also stated that yogins and Kapilasāmkhyas who desire final deliverance (mokṣa) go to the White Island by reciting the prayer and praise composed by Bali. It is therefore evident that the island is the heavenly abode in which Nārāyaṇa, sometimes spoken of as Hari, dwells. The place corresponds in a way to the Vaikuṇṭha of Viṣṇu. It was to this place of Nārāyaṇa that Nārada went and learnt from Him the mono-theistic religion of Viṣṇudeva. There is, therefore, no need as Prof. R.G. Bhandarkar does to suppose that the White Island was a Christian country peopled by white races.⁴⁴

In the epic period when the worship of Viṣṇudeva sprang, he was identified with Nārāyaṇa. In the Vanaparva⁴⁵ there is a description of the conditions of things at the time of dissolution of the universe wherein it is stated that there was water everywhere and there was a body lying on couch on a branch of a banyan tree. The boy opened his mouth

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²² MBh. Śānt. ch. 335.
³³ Kathāsaritśāgara 54: 25 to 27. The prayer which is offered by Naravāhanadatta mentions the six qualities of Viṣṇu. ibid., 54: 31.
⁴⁴ Vaisnavism, Salivism and Minor Religious Systems, p. 45.
⁴⁵ MBh. Vana. ch. 188, 189.
and swallowed Mārkaṇḍeya who roamed in the inside of his stomach and saw the whole universe and was struck with wonder. The boy then vomited him out, when he saw again the waters alone. When Mārkaṇḍeya questioned the boy about his identity, he replied: "Formerly I gave to the waters the name of Nāra, and those were my resting place (ayaṇa), and therefore I am Nārāyaṇa" and in this strain he goes on to describe his greatness. The whole story is told by Mārkaṇḍeya to Yudhiṣṭhira. It appears that the burden of the whole Nārāyanīya section is to establish this identity between Nārāyaṇa and Vāsudeva.

According to another tradition⁴⁶ there was another person, besides this Nārāyaṇa, who was always associated with Nara. They both went from the world of men to the world of Brahman and, being worshipped by the gods and the Gandharvas, existed only for the destruction of the demons. Indra was helped by Nara and Nārāyaṇa in his struggle with the asuras. The concept of companionship between Nara and Nārāyaṇa seems to be traceable to the Upaniṣadic idea of two birds dwelling in a tree, friends and associates of each other⁴⁷ That one of those who is called the lord and the onlooker is in the present tradition Nārāyaṇa and the other, who is engaged in eating the fruit of the tree, is Nara. The old idea was transferred to the new conception of Nārāyaṇa as the abode of all men. Again in the opening section of the Nārāyanīya, it is stated that Nārāyaṇa, the eternal and Universal Soul was born as the son of Dharma in the quadruple form of Nara, Nārāyaṇa, Hari and Kṛṣṇa.⁴⁸ The first two of these are stated to have practised austerities at Badarikāśrama in the Himalayas.⁴⁹ These four are represented as the sons of Dharma and had Ahimsā as their mother. This is perhaps to signify and support righteousness and non-slaughter of animals as against the old Ceremonial of sacrificial rites and Killing of animals. According to certain passages of the

⁴⁶ Vaisnavism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems, p. 45.
⁴⁸ MBh. Śānti 333: 16: 17.
Mahābhārata, Nara and Nārāyaṇa are called ṛṣis, and this might have led to the conception of Nārāyaṇa as the ṛṣi or the composer of the Puruṣa-sūkta. These gods must have been very famous at the time when the epic was composed, since in the opening verse of its different parts obeisance is made to these two gods. Nara is identified with Arjuna and Nārāyaṇa with Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa. And thus the old tradition about the two ṛṣis who were warriors at the same time was brought into a beautiful connection with the interlocutors of the Bhagavad-gītā by the fertile imagination and genius of the poet.

While ideas connected with Viṣṇu, Vāsudeva and Nārāyaṇa thus mingled together to form the religion of the Vaiṣṇavites, there developed, before the beginning of the Christian era, an entirely new element which speaks of Kṛṣṇa as a cowherd, and dwells with great devotion on his birth, childhood, youth and sports and feats of great strength. There is no reference to this cowherd Kṛṣṇa in the authorities so far cited. In the Harivamśa which is a supplement of Mahābhārata and in the Purāṇas such as Vāyu-purāṇa and Bhāgavata-purāṇa, there are stories about Kṛṣṇa’s tender babyhood and wanton childhood. When these works were written, the legend about the cowherd Kṛṣṇa must have already become current and his identification with Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa been effected. It may be presumed that stories regarding the early life of pastoral Kṛṣṇa probably developed partly out of the Vedic legends about Viṣṇu, called ‘gopa’ in the Rg-Veda and ‘govinda’ and ‘dāmodara’ in the Baudhāyana Dharma-sūtra. But there are other factors which appear to have contributed to the development of the mythology of the cowherd Kṛṣṇa. The Yamunā region was possibly conspicuous

50. ibid., vana. 12. 46, 47: 30. 1; ibid., Udyoga. 49: 19.
51. ibid., Sabha. 66: 11.
52. Harivamśa 2: 20.
56. B.D.S. 2.9: 10.
for its cows as early as the age of *Rg-Veda* and a *Vṛṣṇa* (i.e., a member of the *Vṛṣṇi* clan) named Gobala (lit. ‘one strong in the wealth of the cows’) is known from the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* and *Jaiminiya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa*. It is thus probable that the Yādava-Sāttvata-Vṛṣṇis of Mathurā possessed large herds of cattle as did their western neighbours, the Matsyas. Most of the stories about Kṛṣṇa’s early life appear, however, to have been principally due to his identification with certain gods worshipped by Ābhīras and other allied peoples.

The *Mahābhārata* refers to Kṛṣṇa as a cowherd. The *Gītā* contains the address of ‘Govinda’ to Kṛṣṇa made by Arjuna. Kṛṣṇa is referred to as Govinda as He found the earth (go) in the waters which He stirred. But Prof. R.G. Bhandarkar says that the word ‘govinda’ is a later form of ‘goviḍ’ which in the *Rg-Veda* is used as an epithet of Indra in the sense of ‘the finder of the cows’; this epithet as another ‘one Keśiniṣūdana’ which is also applicable to Indra, must have been transferred to Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa when he came to be looked upon as the chief god. The word ‘go’ in Sanskrit conveys more than one meaning. Hence it is not improper to find the use of this word in some other sense as well.

Kālidāsa mentions Viṣṇu as appearing in the garb of cowherd (*gopa*). The exact date of this poet is yet to be

57. Taitt. S. 3. 11. 9: 3.
59. MBh. *Sabhā*, ch. 41.
60. Bh. G. 1: 32; 2: 9. Here the word may be taken as Madhusūdana (on 2: 9), taken as one who knows the speech.
64. The word ‘go’ has several meanings such as heaven, bull, ray, thunderbolt, cow, sight, arrow, direction, speech, earth and water. cf. *Nirukta*. 21: 6; 6: 2; 6: 20.
settled. However, among the Indian scholars, the view has been gaining ground in fixing him in the first century B.C., a date which would prove that identification of Kṛṣṇa with Viṣṇu was an admitted fact. Even a few centuries earlier to Kālidāsa, the epithets ‘Viṣṇu’, ‘Nārāyaṇa’ and ‘Vāsudeva’ were used by Bhāsa in his dramas Dūtavākyā and Bālācarita who is no other than Viṣṇu in the garb of cowherd (gopāla). Kṛṣṇa is identified with Vāmana also, having the appellations Keśava, Hari, Bhagavān and Puruṣottama, all of which occur in the two dramas of Bhāsa cited above. Bhāsa refers to the Hallīśa dance in which Kṛṣṇa took part with the gopis. Harivamśa refers to this dance without mentioning the name. The gopis sang and initiated the actions of Kṛṣṇa who is referred to as a boy of ten years old. Kṛṣṇa is stated in the Bhāgavata to have taken part in the rāsakridā Himself taking as many bodies of Kṛṣṇa as there were gopis.

The foregoing pages show that long before the beginning of the Christian era, Kṛṣṇa was identified with Viṣṇu, Nārāyaṇa and Vāsudeva. All these names came to denote Brahman represented by Viṣṇu with Śrī. Viṣṇu possesses countless auspicious qualities and under the influence of the Pāncarātra Āgamas, six among these qualities were taken prominent note of as characterizing the Supreme Being. He

66. Bhāsa is referred to by Kālidāsa in the Prologue to his Mālavikāgnimitra.
68. ibid., pp. 511 to 560.
69. ibid., p. 523.
70. ibid., p. 441.
72. Harivamśa. 2. ch. 20.
73. The commentator Nīlakaṇṭha calls this as Hallīśa.
74. Harivamśa 2. 20: 18.
76. V.P. 1. 8: 17.
is the creator, preserver and destroyer. From Him arose Brahmā, the creator of the world. He descended down to the world to rescue His devotees from sufferings. Special actions of consecrations make God take His presence in idols and sālāgrāmas in order that His devotees would be delighted by His presence.

The self owes its existence in the world to the will of God. It must realise its limitations and become aware of its abject dependence on His will which alone would save it from bondage. This requires the self to observe the rules of good conduct in order to please God. The self has to acquire the knowledge of its own nature and that of God. Duties which it has to discharge in accordance with the established rules of conduct are considered as *Karma-yoga* which includes the acts of service which it has to render to God.

Devotion is the best course which the self could adopt to win God's grace. The yogic practices of meditation could be adopted. Those who find this course difficult for adoption could simply surrender themselves together with their belongings to God. This does not imply a reference to the path of self-surrender which gets casual reference in these works. It is devotion to God that receives much attention as the means even for knowing the *tattva* and for doing one's duties. The self is asked to surrender to Him its relatedness to the fruits of the deeds done by it.

A devotee seeks to have personal experience of God. He is not in the least interested in the problems about the existence of God and the methods of approach to prove His existence. The experience that he gets is of mystical nature. It has full certitude and is ineffable. It is God that chooses the person to whom He reveals Himself. Study, intelligence and other attainments which the self could have to its credit are of no avail.77 Mystic experience, being of the nature of ravishing emotional intensity and of vivid intellectual illumination78 must be taken, when applied to Vaiṣṇavism, to have


78. *Types of Religious Philosophy, p. 8.*
been aroused by a clear awareness of God’s possessing specific qualities and features which attract the selves to Him. These qualities create in the self astonishment which changes into admiration that becomes transformed into love. The self is won over by them to the side of God. Its self-abnegation is revealed in its denying everything for itself and its preparedness to lose individuality by surrendering unreservedly to God. ‘Mysticism is the religion of feminine natures. Enthusiastic surrender, a delicate capacity for feeling, soft passiveness are its characteristics’.79 This explains why the nāyaka-nāyaki bhāva or bridal mysticism represents an aspect of religious experience.

In this connection, it must be borne in mind that the word ‘bhakti’ is interpreted in two ways. Primarily, it means doing service. Pāṇini80 has two aphorisms, the first of which refers to doing service through devotion and the other implying mere attachment. Evidently, the latter is a reference to the attachment for the material objects. The word ‘kāma’ which means love also admits of two-fold application. It connotes viṣaya kāma or hedonistic pleasure in psychology, ājīva kāma or the desire for the self-realisation or ājīva spiritually and Bhagavat kāma or love of God in the religious sense or ājīva. The classical exposition of kāma in the Upaniṣad is given by saint Yājñavalkya to his wife Maitreyī.81 The bodily self or dehātmā has only perishable value, but ājīva has intrinsic value; while lust is viṣaya kāma, love is divine or Bhagavat kāma, and the two are opposed as darkness and light, and there is no real middle term between the two. It is this Bhagavat kāma, that is emphasised in Sanskrit literature. Wherever śṛṅgāra rasa is portrayed, the joy of seeking the beauty of sex and revelling in love as in the Sākuntala is described and emphasised. It is more or less a way of preparation for the Bhagavat kāma or the divine love. The attainment of bliss and the removal of sorrow are thus ulti-

79. Eastern Religion and Western Thought, p. 65.
80. Aṣṭadhyāyī, 4. 3: 95, 96.
mate objective and aim. The author of the Bhāgavata refers to the gopis as having become rid of their inauspiciousness by the severe pangs of separation from the most dear person, that is, Kṛṣṇa. The moment the gopis got into the presence of Kṛṣṇa, they did not have then their physical frames which are made up of the qualities of matter, that is, they were not then aware of their physical passion. They left off their children, husbands, parents-in-law and came to Kṛṣṇa. They admitted that their duty was to look after these persons, but they said that for all embodied beings, Kṛṣṇa is the most dear person, relation and self. They declared that they were the servants of Him whose face was bewitching them, the like of which they could never have occasion to visualize and which face was capable of conferring auspiciousness to the three worlds.

Devotion to God has much significance when it is directed towards the Lord in arcā and in descents (avatāras). It is not as if other forms are left out, but in these two forms, the act of devotion is easily practised. In the case of divine descents, those of Varāha, Vāmana, Narasiṁha, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa have been arousing much more interest and attraction to the devotees. However, Kṛṣṇa alone seems to have been the object of bridal mysticism. Secondly, the sternness and majesty of Rāma did not arouse, in the minds of devotees, the longing which a woman feels for the company of her husband. The Lord’s readiness to come to the side of His devotees who yearn for His vision and His preeminence demonstrated through incidents like measuring the entire universe, making Śiva holy by the latter’s receiving the waters of Gaṅgā which sprung from His feet are frequently applauded.

83. ibid., 10. 29 : 11.
84. ibid., 10. 29 : 32.
85. ibid., 10. 29 : 39.
86. ibid., 10. 29 : 40.
87. ibid., 3. 28 : 21, 22.
The doctrine of the path of devotion and the practice of it by the devout persons have appreciably influenced the society and their principles have permeated into the core of the society resulting in the development of faith in God as an absolute feature of the life of the people. The thoughts and outlook have become saturated with the principles of Vaisnavism. Any occurrence in the life of an individual or society came to be looked upon as designed by God for the welfare of the society. A true Vaisnavite listens to the singing of God's names with rapturous attention and sings them without any delicacy. He laughs, sheds tears, sings and dances with joy.\textsuperscript{88} Such people join together and participate in congregational prayers. They seek each other's company with avidity.\textsuperscript{89} Devotion, experience of God and detachment from worldly affairs become the nourishment and food for them.\textsuperscript{90} Whatever they do in the religious or secular aspect of their life, they offer it to God.\textsuperscript{91} As a general principle, this is done mentally or to the \textit{arcā} form of Viṣṇu. Neither the practice of penances nor the study of the \textit{Vedas}, neither the acquirement of the sound knowledge of the \textit{tattvas} nor the understanding of doing one's duty brings God near the self. Devotion is the surer mode for communion with God as it is evidenced in the case of \textit{gopikās}.\textsuperscript{92}

Making use of the sacred mud\textsuperscript{85} and the red powder for the ornamental decoration on the forehead and in the specified parts of the body have become part of the daily practices of the Vaisnavites. This mark which is known as \textit{ūrdhva-punḍra} on account of the vertical form which it takes is to resemble the feet of Viṣṇu,\textsuperscript{93} thereby creating the chastening feeling on the part of the wearer that he is decorated with the feet of God on his person. Others who wear such marks are

\textsuperscript{88} ibid., 11. 2: 39, 40.
\textsuperscript{89} \textit{Sātt.} S. 21: 677.
\textsuperscript{90} \textit{Bhāg.} P. 11. 2: 42.
\textsuperscript{91} ibid., 11. 2: 36.
\textsuperscript{92} \textit{Pad.} P. 2. 2: 18.
\textsuperscript{93} \textit{Parameś.} S. 3: 11.
\textsuperscript{94} Is. S. 21: 296 to 317; \textit{Kriyādhikāra}, ch. 38; \textit{Bhār.} S. 3: 66.
to be held in greater veneration. Any work, religious or secular, does not bear any result, if this mark is not worn by its performer.\textsuperscript{95} Branding the upper portions of the arms with the heated Śaṅkha and Cakra came to be treated as the indispensable act which every Vaiṣṇavite has to undergo to qualify himself for recognition of having become a Vaiṣṇavite.\textsuperscript{96} No Vaiṣṇavite shall take anything, food or drink, without offering it to the deity.\textsuperscript{97} A devotee, or as a matter of fact, any Vaiṣṇavite, shall undertake his personal worship of the deity in the form of sālag āma.\textsuperscript{98} Constant utterance of the names of Viṣṇu is enjoined for practice\textsuperscript{99} and the enumeration of the thousand names of Viṣṇu,\textsuperscript{100} in a way, enables the person to set apart a particular part of the day, preferably the morning or evening, for this purpose and attend at other times to his usual routine work. Aṣṭākṣara is the holiest of mantras which a devout Vaiṣṇavite shall meditate upon everyday.\textsuperscript{101} The water, which becomes sacred, by washing the feet of the image of Viṣṇu, as also those of the devotees, and with which the sālagrāma\textsuperscript{102} is worshipped, is very holy and a devotee shall take this and purify himself. Sprinkling with this water over the head also leads to the removal of sins.\textsuperscript{103} The flowers used for God’s worship are sacred and are received by the devotees after the worship is over.\textsuperscript{104}

The region, which a devotee of Viṣṇu, aspires to go to, is described to be distinct from the material world. It is a place which provides the devotees with unalloyed bliss, where is present every factor which is conducive to the arousing of enlightenment and delectable enjoyment of God-

97. Sātt, S. ch. 7.
100. MBh. Ānusāsana, 254.
101. Nārādiya Śnāti, 1: 32.
realization in the concourse of fellow-devotees who had reached that region through devotion to Viṣṇu. It is a place from which there is no return for the released self to this mortal mundane world.\textsuperscript{106} Though there are possibilities for the selves to be near God (\textit{samāpya}), to have a form similar to His (\textit{sārūpya}), to have similarity to Him (\textit{sādṛśya}), the devotee shall yearn to have communion (\textit{sāyujya}).\textsuperscript{106} It is called \textit{Paramapada},\textsuperscript{107} a shining spiritual world, a noumenal realm, which can neither be perceived by the senses nor conceived by the spatialising intellect. Its supreme beauty cannot be adequately portrayed by the divine faculty of the poet, the painter or the musician, but can be intuited and described only by the blissfull \textit{mukta}.

\textsuperscript{105} \textit{Ahi.} S. 37: 26. \textit{cf.} V.P. 1. 6: 40.
\textsuperscript{106} \textit{Bhāg.} P. 3. 29: 13; \textit{cf.} \textit{Jitāntā} 36.
\textsuperscript{107} \textit{R.V.} 1. 154: 5,6; \textit{Bhāg.} P. 11. 20: 37; \textit{Ahi.} S. 37: 26.
A PREFATORY STUDY OF THE NÄLÄYIRAM

SUMMARY

In the section under reference, a study of the age of the Āḻvārs, of the numerology of the Nālāyiram, and a general summary of each of the works of the Āḻvārs are attempted.

The age of the Āḻvārs is shrouded in mystery. Literary evidences such as Guruparamparās, Divya-sūricaritam, anecdotes recorded in later works, glimpses of society depicted in their poems and the linguistic evidences to some extent are examined. Reliance is placed on the names of years in the sixty-year cycle to arrive at the dates of their birth to a fair degree of accuracy leaving aside the dates relating to the yuga calculation as out of consideration. The limits of the dates of the Āḻvārs are fixed C 700 and 850 A.D.

The number of verses in the Divya Prabandham and their pattern of arrangement have been detailed here and the problem of the exact number 4000 with reference to Prabandha-cāram of Vedānta Deśika, the number of Prabandhams in the collection and the needless controversy over the possible order of poems of Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār, the question of claiming
'Tiruppallāṇṭu' of Periyālvār as a separate work, the dissection of the two Ṣāṭals into a number of small slices and naming them as 'verses' to suit convenience, the inclusion of Amutanār's poem in the anthology— are all discussed.

A summary regarding the purport of the twenty-four Prabandhams in the Nālāyiram collection is given to enable a fuller comprehension of the religion and philosophy of the Ālvārs.
THE AGE OF THE ĀLVĀRS

The Age of the Ālvārs is shrouded in mystery. In an age in which historical sense is keenly alive, there is obviously no place for the chronology fabricated by tradition. The fabulous claims, which tradition makes on behalf of the Ālvārs as belonging to the ages far in advance of the dates which are historically valid, have been upheld only by the incurably credulous. Though the age of the Ālvārs has recently received considerable attention at the hands of the historians, no unbiased attempt seems to have been made to arrive at the exact dates of these Ālvārs from the sources available so far. Here is undertaken a brief consideration of their ages from the historical point of view leaving aside the miraculous incidents associated with their birth and life.

According to the Guruparamparās, some of the Ālvārs were born in the Dvāpara-yuga and others in the Kaliyuga.1 Tirumāḷicai Ālvār is said to have lived for 4700 years.2 While dealing with the lives of the Ālvārs and mentioning their names, together with the stars in which they were born, their compositions and the number of verses in their compositions, no particular order is found adopted by the different writers.3 It is also not clear whether these authors had any serious intention to mention the names of the Ālvārs in the order of their birth. At first sight, it appears as though it was intended to maintain this order. Really speaking, with the exception of one writer,4 others had no

1. Poykaiyār, Pūtattār, Pēyār, Tirumāḷicai Ālvār and Maturakavi Ālvār are stated to have been born in the Dvāpara-yuga, while others in the Kaliyuga.
2. G.P. p. 23.
3. Vide: Appendix II.
intention to conform to this order. Curiously enough, there is more unanimity in the *Divyasūricarita*, *Guruparamparā* and *Prabandha-cāra* of Vedanta Deśika in following a particular order. There is of course a reference in one5 of the *Guruparamparās* to maintain an order in the treatment which is different from the one relating to the birth of Ālvārs. It is, however, doubtful whether this deserves acceptance. Besides, the *Guruparamparās* and the life-accounts which are published in the printed texts of the *Nāyīrā Divya Prabandham*, mention the dates according to the *yuga* calculation and the years by their names which are included in the sixty year cycle beginning with *Prabhava*. Historically proved data that are available on the age of the Ālvārs militate against the admission of these dates for the Ālvārs. However, the names of the years are helpful in arriving at the dates of the birth of the Ālvārs to a fair degree of accuracy, of course, leaving aside, out of consideration, the dates relating to the *yuga* calculation. A different order is therefore to be adopted for the treatment of the age of the Ālvārs.

THE FIRST ĀLVĀRS

The first three Ālvārs, Poykaiyār, Pūtattār and Pēyār, were not born in the ordinary way, but miraculously6 in Kāncī, Tirukkaṭalnallai and Tirumayilai respectively. All the three Ālvārs were contemporaries since they were traditionally said to have met for the first time at Tirukkōyilūr.

5. G. P. p. 23.

6. They are said to have born of flowers: Poykaiyār of golden-lotus, in the tank near the Yathōktakāri temple at Kāncī, Pūtattār of the Mātavi flower and Pēyār of red-lotus (G. P. pp. 7, 8). cf. D. S. C. II : 12, where Pūtattālāvār is stated to have sprung out of blue lily; ibid II : 13 where Pēyālāvār is said to have come out of a pond of lilies.

7. M. T. V. 86. A beautiful legend tells us how these saints sought shelter on a dark night from the down-pour of heavy rain in a narrow enclave which could just contain them standing, when Viṣṇu Himself sought their company as the fourth, they felt the pressure due to the presence of the new companion, and recognizing His identity, they praised Him in song then and there.
and afterwards at Tirumalācī near Madras to enjoy the companionship of Tirumalācaiyālvār. Perhaps Pēyālvār was a younger contemporary of the other two Ālvārs. But for the one incident of the meeting of the three saints, the Gruparampara gives no particulars regarding them. The devotion of these early saints is gentle, simple devotion, altogether free from an intolerant sectarian outlook. This fact together with their use of Venpā metre only in their devotional hymns points to a really early date for them—earlier than all the other Ālvārs.

The question of the age of these Ālvārs is involved in hopeless obscurity. Poykaiyār and Pēyār refer to a Viṇṇakaram (from the Sanskrit word viṣṇugṛham) in their respective Aniātis. This Viṇṇakaram is identified by some with the Paramēśvara-Viṇṇakaram (Vaiṅkunta Perumāl temple at Kāncī) and by others with the Nantipura-Viṇṇakaram (Nāthankōil). In the latter case, the word ‘nanti’ is taken to refer to Nantivarman I who, it is said, was a devotee of Viṣṇu. Prof. S. Vaiyapuri Pillai refuses to accept both the identifications, the reason for the former being that Paramēśvara-Viṇṇakaram was built by Nantivarman II (A.D. 731-796) so called by his personal name which was Paramēśvaraṇ. The contention of the learned Professor’s non-acceptance of the latter is that nothing is known about Nantivarman except that he was the father of Simhavīṣṇu and the Pallava line itself was known as Simhavīṣṇu line. Moreover, Nantipura-Viṇṇakaram, the modern Nāthankōil, is in the Cōla country near Kumbakonam; and it was Simhavīṣṇu who brought the region watered by the Kāviri for the first time under the Pallavas.

The one fact, according to Prof. Pillai, which indisputably settles the question of the date of these Ālvārs is a reference by Pūtattālvār to Māmallai which is none other

9. M.Tv. 77; Mū. Tv. 61, 62. I. Tv does not make a reference to this.
10. Tamil Studies, p. 301.
11. Ālvārkaḷ Kālanilai, pp. 40, 41.
12. I. Tv. 70.
than the modern Mahābalipuram. Its original name was Mahāmallapuram. The word ‘vinnākar’ occurring before the word ‘tiruvekka’ in the verse of Poykaiyālvār and Peyālvār referred to above suggests the proximity of Vinnakaram to Tiruvekka in Kānci. That this Vinnakaram could have been built by Paramēśvaravarman I (A.D. 670–680) is evident from the frequent association of the words ‘pallavar-kōṇ’, ‘kacci’ and Paramēśvara-Vinnakaram in Tirumanakaiyālvār’s poem. The traditional year in which the three Ālvārs were born was Siddhārthi which could be taken to correspond to A.D. 719 and not to an earlier date. This receives support from the reference in the composition of these Ālvārs, to Vinnakaram which was built about A.D. 680. Even the tradition says that this Ālvār was born at Kaṭalmallai which is the same as Mahābalipuram. Now Mahāmallai was the famous Narasimhavarman I (A.D. 630–668) who for his military prowess was known with this title. So Pūtattālvār could have lived only after A.D. 650. But on the basis of joint authorship of a verse one can conclude that Kāraikkāl Peyār and Peyālvār were contemporaries and Kāraikkāl Ammaiyyār would need to be placed about A.D. 700. Poykaiyār and Pūtattār belonged to the same period. So these three Ālvārs must have lived in about the beginning of the first quarter of the eighth century.

13. This was founded by Narasimhavarman I Mahāmallai. Vide History of Ancient India, pp. 448, 449.
15. Peri. Tm. 2. 9.
17. Yāparunikal Vṛtti. 93, pp. 350–352. The verse referred to here begins with “Karaippār peru”.
18. Two verses beginning with “Vaṇci veliya” and “Karaippar peru” are ascribed to Kāraikkal Ammaiyya and Avvaiyar jointly by Naccinārkkānīyār (Tol. ceyyul Nac. p. 66). Contrary to this, the former verse is ascribed to Poykaiyar exclusively (Yap. Comm. p. 350) and the latter to Pūtattār and Kāraikkāl Peyār jointly (ibid., 352) by the commentator on Yāpparunkal. Kāraikkāl Peyār may be assigned to A.D. 700. (History of Tamil Language and Literature, pp. 107, 108).
TIRUMALICAI ĀLVĀR

Tirumalai Ālvār, otherwise known as Bhaktisāra, is mentioned next in the list. Born as the son of Bhārgava piṣi at Tirumalai, also called Mahīsāra, and thrown away by his parents on the wayside, the baby was picked up by Tiruvāḷan, who having been childless, was very glad to bring up the foundling as his own child. It was fed upon the milk supplied grattis by a pious cowherd. Soon a child was born to the cowherd also. This child was named Kaṇikanṇan, and he subsequently became a disciple to Tirumalai ālvār.

As the boy Tirumalai Ālvār grew in years, he learnt that it was necessary to examine critically the various systems of philosophy that were then in currency, and after the requisite preparation, he searched for truth in the heterodox systems of Buddhism, Jainism, Cārvaka philosophy. It is said that the Ālvār spent a period of seven hundred years in meditation occupying a cave in a forest near Tirumalai. He examined the six orthodox systems and also that of a Kudrṣṭi which must refer to that of Advaita. The Śaiva schools of religion were examined. It was at Tirumalai that he met the first three Ālvārs and gained their friendship. In their company he paid a visit to Mayilai the birth place of Pēyālvār. He

21. Sage Bhārgava and a celestial nymph were the parents (D.S.C. II: 28-35).
23. D.S.C II: 54. G.P. (p.15) mentions that he spent this period at Tiruvallikēni where he established his greatness by conquering Śiva who on that occasion bestowed upon him the title 'Bhaktisāra'.
24. ibid., II: 58.
25. ibid., II: 60.
26. D.S.C. does not state that all the first three Ālvārs met Bhaktisāra and not certainly at Tiruvallikēni (III: 8). Poykaiyālvār alone met him and both then went to Tiruvallikēni (III: 13). Both sat there under the Kesara tree on the bank of the tank of lilies and enjoyed meditation (III: 14). Bhaktisāra learnt yogic practices from Poykaiyālvār (III: 15).
then proceeded to Kāṇcipuram with Kaṇikaṇṇaṇ who took him from his native village.

There is a story of the Ālvar turning an old prostitute into a young damsel whom the local king married infatuated by her beauty. But her beauty was waxing day by day while the king's was waning. Knowing from his wife the cause for this strange phenomenon and the Ālvar's spiritual greatness, the king sent word to the disciple of the Ālvar, Kaṇikaṇṇaṇ, and wanted him to bring the Ālvar to his presence. The disciple expressed his inability to do so. At this, the king asked him to sing in praise of himself. This was refused by the disciple because mortal lips were given only to praise God, and none else. Enraged at the reply, the king ordered him to leave the capital. The disciple did so followed by his guru, the Ālvar, and it is said that the deity in the temple also followed them. At this, all the other gods and townsmen left, and the whole city of Kāṇcī had wholesale evacuation. The king got alarmed at this and ran up to the Ālvar and requested him to forgive him for the offence, and the Ālvar granted him pardon. After a short stay at Kāṇcī the Ālvar went to Kumbakonam where he spent the rest of his life. This, in brief, is the traditional version of the Ālvar's life-history.

As regards the date of this Ālvar, there is no internal evidence in his writings to proceed upon with any degree of certainty. He was born in the year Siddhārthi which corresponds to A.D. 720. He was a contemporary of the first three Ālvārs who were also born in the same year Siddhārthi. Much significance need not be attached to the period of seven hundred years which he is said to have spent in meditation after which he met the three Ālvārs. That he learnt from Poykaiyālvar the various methods of meditation need not show him to have been younger to Poykaiyālvar. This date of birth as A.D. 720 for this Ālvar becomes acceptable, as he could have made Nandivarman II Pallavamalla (A.D. 731-

27. G.P., p. 19. This took place when the Ālvar was staying in the Yathōktakārī temple at Kāṇcī.
28. P.T.A., p. 3; A.G.P. fol. 7 (b).
794) turn a Vaiṣṇavite through his pupil Kaṇikaṇṇa. But from their general tenor of his poems, it might be inferred that he should have lived at a period when the Jains, Buddhists and Saivites were struggling for religious supremacy. This Āḷvār may be regarded as the Vaiṣṇavite counterpart of Tirumūlar though there is little in common between the Āḷvār’s views against Śaivism and the unconventional cosmopolitan and at times even iconoclastic negativism of Tirumūlar. The story that Tirumalīcāi Āḷvār met the first three Āḷvārs at Tiruvallikkēni may indicate that his real date was the same as that of Tirumūlar whose date is fixed in the first quarter of the eighth century. The miracle of the rejuvenation by Tirumalīcāi Āḷvār of the old prostitute with whom the Pallava king fell in love after her youth was restored is apocryphal. He introduced the use of the sacred mud as the Vaiṣṇavite creed mark and this is perhaps commemorated in the story that he discovered the place in Tiruvallikkēni where the earth for that mark was available. He mentions the shrines of Tiruvēṅkaṭam, Śrīraṅgam and many smaller ones including one at Tiruvallikkēni where a record in the twelfth year of Dantivarman Pallava (A.D. 795-845) is found. His verses are reminiscent of Ācārak-kōvai and other works. His date may not be later than the eighth century.

There are expressions in his work such as ‘potu-pokku’ (Nāṉ. Tv. 32), ‘vāḷatṭum’ (ibid 38), ‘urukinṟēn’ (ibid 42) which are found used in works belonging to a subsequent period. Such linguistic evidences point to an age; but they are in no way helpful in determining the date of the composition.

30. History of Tamil Language and Literature, p. 108.
34. History of Tamil Language and Literature, p. 121 (foot note).
TONTARÂTIP-POTIYÂLVAR

The story of this Āḻvār whose earlier name was Vipranārāyaṇa is the story of a sinner turned into saint like Bilvamangala of Kerala and Vemana of Andhra desa. He was born in a village called Maṇṭāṅkuṭi in Thāḻjavūr District in an orthodox Soḷiya brahmin family. After the study of the Vedas and the Śāstras, he took to the quiet and unostentatious occupation of cultivating a flower garden and dedicating the flowers to the Sleeping Beauty of Śrīraṅgam. He was going on with this work undisturbed, when one day he came across a dancing girl of winning manners and equally tempting features. She was returning with her sister from the court of the Cōla King at Uṟaiyūr. On their way home, this woman made a wager to her sister saying that she would win every one by the charm of her beauty, among whom this austere Vaiṣṇavite saint was no exception. With this view in mind, she began to serve him in the improvement of his garden and in course of time she managed to entice him away from his devotion. Before the end of a year, poor Vipranārāyaṇa had degraded himself having lost all his claims to reverence. All day long his thoughts were set on her and before long he forgot his flower garden. Month after month passed and Vipranārāyaṇa became totally a different person. He turned penniless and in consequence was abandoned by his ‘sweet-heart’.

God would never desert His devotees. Śrī Raṅganātha taking pity on the wretched condition of His devotee undertook to reclaim him. He assumed one day the form of a temple servant and carried a golden bowl belonging to the temple to Vipranārāyaṇa’s concubine, presented it to her stating that it was from her lover Vipranārāyaṇa and that his errand was to communicate to her his desire to meet her that

35. The Contribution of Kerala to Sanskrit Literature, pp. 31-34.
36. Śaṅkara Vāñmaya Sarvasvamu, pp. 134-156.
37. T.M. 45; T.E. 10. In this respect he resembles Periyâḻvār and Mālākāra of the Bhāgavata-purāṇa
38. T.M. 25, 31, 33, 34.
39. ibid., 10.
night. Both met that night and spent a very happy time. Next morning the loss of the golden bowl was brought to the notice of the temple authorities, and on vigorous search it was detected in the house of Vipranārayaṇa’s concubine. Of course Vipranārayaṇa was given to understand that Śrī Raṅganātha was the source of correction. He regained his senses and became an Āḷvār and thenceforward he remained faithful to his Lord. He continued his kaṅkārya as before to the Lord. He expiated his sins by purificatory deeds such as drinking of water washed of the feet of the devotees of the Lord. 40

The Āḷvār’s work, Tirumālai not only gives some autobiographical incidents of his life, but also some valuable evidence regarding his date. The Āḷvār refers to two Purānic stories in his work 41 and one of them about Muḍgala is traced to Viṣṇudharmottara-purāṇa 42 by an ancient commentator. The other story about Kṣatra-bandhu has been traced by Sri T.A. Gopinatha Rao to the seventeenth chapter of the same Purāṇa. 43 This Purāṇa is one of the upapurāṇas and its date is sometime between 628 and 1000, A.D. as it extracts Paitamahāsiddhānta from the Brahma-spuṭa-siddhānta written by Brahmagupta in 628 A.D. which Alberuni (1030 A.D.) studied later very minutely. This fact is helpful in assigning the Āḷvār to a period in the eighth century which is admissible from the evidence of his birth in the year Prabhava which corresponds to 727 A.D. 44 and he is said to have lived for 105 years. 45

The Āḷvār also uses ‘ōlakkam’ 46 ‘patyal’ 47 and ‘pōlkkan’ 48 which are later day words not found even in the

41. T.M., 4, 12.
42. Chap. 90.
44. P.T.A., p. 6.
45. A.G.P., for. 10 (b).
46. T.E., 9.
47. T.M., 37.
48. ibid., 33.
Tivākaram, Piṅkalantai and Čuḷāmaṇi Nikaṇṭu. His word ‘kaṇṭarā’⁴⁹ is hardly grammatical. The recitation of Tiruppaḷḷi Elucci in the Śrīraṅgam temple is provided in a record of 1085 A.D. The construction of the fourth wall of the Śrīraṅgam temple by Tirumāṅkaiyāḻvār in such a way as it should be slightly out of its proper alignment without disturbing Tonṭaraṭip-poṭi’s flower garden and the latter’s personal word of thankfulness to the former,⁵⁰ and the identity of the last two lines of one verse in Tirumāḷai and of one verse in Tirukkuruntanṭakam⁵¹ lead us to conclude that the date of this Āḻvār must be prior to that of Tirumāṅkaiyāḻvār.

KULACĔKARA ĀḻVĀR

The next Āḻvār is Kulacēkara Āḻvār who styles himself as Kollikāvalan (the king of Kolli), Kūṭal–nāyakan (the Lord of Maturai) and Kolikkōṅ (the Lord of Uraiyūr).⁵² These names indicate that he who was a prince had sway over the Kerala, Pāṇṭiya and Cōla kingdoms. He was born in Tiruvaṅcikkūḷam on the Malabar coast as a prince of Kērala.⁵³ Remarkable in his devotion to Viṣṇu, he, in course of time, abdicated his throne in favour of his son and retired to Śrīraṅgam where he is said to have engaged himself in the construction of portions of the temple of Raṅganātha.⁵⁴

In one of his verses,⁵⁵ the Āḻvār uses the expression ‘tonṭaraṭip-poṭi’ which was most probably adopted by Viprāṇāyaṇa as his surname. He is said to have been born in the twenty-eighth Kali Parābhava year. Leaving aside this kali age, if reliance is placed on the year Parābhava, Kulacē-

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49. ibid., 44.
52. Perum, Tm. 2: 10, vide: The Contributions of Kerala to Sanskrit Literature, p. 2.
53. T.P. 374.
55. Perum. Tm. 2: 2.
kara’s year of birth could be 767 A.D. He is said to have composed a lyric called *Mukundamāḷa.* He had a daughter who was much attracted to Śrī Raṅganātha. He gave her in marriage to the Lord. So he could be placed in the eighth century. He was a Cēra king, most probably of the koṅkucēra line. He has not even referred to any of the sacred shrines in the Cēra country. There is nothing to betray his nationality except the word ‘accan’ which occurs in one of his hymns. The Ālvār had sung about Tiruvēṅkaṭam, Tiruvaṅkaṇkam, Tirukkaṇapuram, Ālinakar, Tillaiccitrakūṭam—in the Cōla country. There is reference to Mallaimānakar; but Periyavāccān Pillai, the commentator, gives a different interpretation altogether. Neither Tillaiccitrakūṭam nor the Lord Govindarāja is mentioned by Cuntaramūtti nāyaṅār and probably the date of this temple is 750 A.D. This confirms the date that has been already reached. He has sung one decal on the Lord of Vittuvakkōtu which is identified as a former suburb of Vaṅci–karuvūr by Prof. M. Raghava Iyengar, and this may be accepted. The Ālvār shows his knowledge of Kuṭal. His hymn on ‘Tettaruntiral’ was recited at Śrīraṅgam according to an inscription of 1085 A.D.

57. ibid., pp. 3-5, G.P., p. 27.
60. ibid., 4.
61. ibid., 1, 2, 3; 8: 10.
62. ibid., 8.
63. ibid., 8: 7.
64. ibid., 10.
65. His period has been fixed as the beginning of the eighth century A.D. by Prof. S. Vaiyapuri Pillai (*History of Tamil Language and Literature,* p. 110).
68. ibid., 2.
TIRUPPĀṆĀLVĀR

TiruppāṆālvār, like Tirunīlakāntayāḷppāṉar of the Śaiva hagiology, was a musician of low caste, but, in addition, he was a poet. He was a native of Uṟaiyūr near Tiruccdāṟṟappalī. His low birth deprived him of the privilege of entering the holy precincts of the Lord of Śriṅgampāḷḷī. So he had to sing the praises of Śrī Raṅganātha from the southern bank of the Kāviri. He was a saint of a highly devotional temperament, justly honoured by God, who ordered, it is said, one Lōkaśaraṅgāmuni to carry the Āḷvār to the temple on his shoulders (hence known as Muniṉāhana), where he after contemplation vanished into divinity. He has left only one poem ‘Amalamatiṉpirāṇ’ consisting of ten verses. The poem must have been set to music, though its tune is not given anywhere. The exquisite simplicity of the poem and the deep emotion it evokes makes it an outstanding composition among the hymns of the Vaishnavite saints. Although the ancient musical systems of the Tamils have completely disappeared, its specimen is appreciated through the melody of his composition.

He is stated to have taken his birth in the year Durmati which corresponds to 781 A.D. and to have lived for seventy five years. ‘uitara pantam’, and ‘vāram’ are the two words of a later period used by him in his poem. Since this linguistic evidence is not helpful and since no other evidence is available the only period that is admissible for this Āḷvār is the eighth century.

Apart from the Guruparamparā and other traditional sources, there is no direct evidence to place this Āḷvār immediately after Tōṇṭaraṭtip-poṭi who was born in Kali 298th

70. G.P., p 46.
73. A.P., 4.
74. ibid., 5.
75. History of Tamil Language and Literature, p; 120.
year. Tiruppāṉāḻvār was born in Kāli 343rd year. Leaving Kāli era out of consideration, Tiruppāṉāḻvār must have been born forty-five years after Toṇṭaṟaṭip-poṭi, that is, in 772 A.D., but Toṇṭaṟaṭip-poṭi was born in Parābhava (727 A.D.) and Tiruppāṉāḻvār in Durmati (781 A.D.). This is after fifty-four years which could not be reconciled with the difference of forty-five years noted above. There is no harm in admitting 781 A.D. as the date of this Āḻvār, as there is no evidence to contradict this date and as this is in consonance with the traditional account given in the sources. He must, however, be placed only after Kulacēkarāḻvār.

TIRUMAṆKAIYĀLṆĀR

TirumaṆkaiyāḻvār is believed to have been born of Kalla caste and to have led a life of brigandage. He was a native of Tirukkoraiyalur near Čikāli in the ThaṆjavūr District. His parents named him Kaliyaṉ. It appears that he held the office of the generalissimo under the Cōla king and that he was the feudal chieftain of a small principality or a group of villages called Āli Nāṭu in the eastern part of the Cōla country. His headquarters appear to have been TirumaṆkai, and from the way in which he speaks of this place it must have been an important town in his days, though it could not be identified with any of the existing villages in the Čikāli taluk. He developed into a devotee of Lord Nārāyaṇa through his wife Kumudavalli who was the daughter of a Vaiśṇavite doctor. The pious lady married him on condition that he should become an ardent Vaiśṇavite in thought, word and deed and that he should feed 1008 Vaiśṇavite devotees every day for one year. By her initiation and preaching, Kaliyaṉ became a staunch worshipper of Viśṇu.

TirumaṆkai MaṆnaṉ seems to be the most learned of all the Vaiśṇavite saints. His contributions to the Nālāyiram amount to 1361 verses and consist of six separate poems which

77. Peri. Tm. 1. 9: 10; 2. 1: 10; 2. 3: 10; 2. 7: 10; 2. 8: 10 etc. (the last verses of his hymns).
form, it is stated, the logical supplement to the four poems of Nammālvār. In fact, the works of Nammālvār are conventionally regarded as the four Vedas, while those of Tirumān-kaiyālvār as the six Vedāṅgas. Even in his own lifetime he should have been admitted as a famous poet, a successful controversialist and a great donor of charities. It is chronicled that at a poetical contest he was conferred the title of ‘Nārkavip-perumāl (the Master of the four kinds of poetry). The compositions of this Ālvār are said to be of four kinds, namely, Ācu, Matura, Citra and Viśtāra.

In his later days he resigned his office, perhaps on account of some misunderstanding between him and the Cōla king, and set out on a pilgrimage from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin. Being a man of considerable wealth and influence Kaliyān visited eighty-six shrines out of 108 temples and sang hymns in praise of the deities. The Ālvār spent large sums in building the fourth rampart wall in the Srīraṅgam temple which has been known to this day as ‘Tirumān-kai Maṇṇu Tirumatiil’ (the sacred wall of Tirumān-kaiyālvār). To secure funds for this sacred work, he is said to have demolished a golden image of Buddha at Nākappattinam which was in his days a deserted seat of Buddhism. It is stated that he even resorted to highway robbery in order to

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79. Peri. Tm. 1. 7: 10. In this verse, the Ālvār himself refers to ‘Truntamāl nūrpulavan’.
80. It is mentioned that he worsted Tirujhāna Campantar in a poetical contest. (G.P., p. 52). This is not acceptable as Tirujhāna Campantar flourished in the seventh century, vide History of Ancient India, p. 483.
81. Kūrattālvān’s commendatory verse (Taniyān) praises this Ālvār’s poems as suitable literature for the five branches of Tamil Grammar thereby signifying to the excellence of this Ālvār’s works.
82. G.P., p. 52.
83. It is stated that he had misappropriated the revenue of the villages he had the tenure of, and so the king imprisoned him. He got his release by paying off the amount through the assistance of God Arulālaperumāl of Kānci (G.P., p. 49) and began a new walk of life – that of a highway robber.
84. G.P. p. 53.
carry out his holy mission and charities. The D.S.C. says that he robbed of Śrī Raṅganātha and Śrī Āṇṭāḷ when they were returning to Śrī Villipputtūr.85

Though born at Tirukkuṟaiyalūr of Āli Nāṭu, the Āḻvār spent his last days at Tirukkuṟuṟukūṭi in the Tirunelveli District. He is referred to by several names, namely, Kali−kaṇṭi, Kaliyān, Parakāla, Aṟulmāri, Aṟatamukki etc.86 These titles perhaps indicate his real profession. He must have lived in stirring times, chosen a military career and won high distinctions in it.

The Āḻvār, unlike several of the Tamil poets, has left clear evidence of the time when he flourished. We have ample references to the Pallava and the Cōla kings and the political events of their times. He has sung about Paramēśvara Viṇṇakaram 87 at Kānci which was built by Paramēśvaravarman I (670−680 A.D.)88. It is also possible to suggest that this temple Viṇṇakaram was well known during the period of the first three Āḻvārs and that it became reputed as Paramēśvara Viṇṇakaram after Nandivarman II (731−796 A.D.)89 built or rebuilt it. From the references which the Āḻvār makes to this temple, it is clear that both the temple and the deity were respected and worshipped by the king of Mallas (Mallaiyarkōṇ).90 This king must have been no other than Mahāmalla, the title by which the Pallava king Narasimhavarman I (630−668 A.D.) was known.91 Many armies of the rival kings are stated to have been overcome by the Pallava king.92 This shall refer to the continual victories and defeats which the Pallava kings had in their encounters with the Cālukyaṇa

85. DSC Tamil version (pp. 121−124). That the Lord was on his way to Sri Villipputtūr is not mentioned in G.P. (p. 50).
86. Peri. Tm. 3.4: 10.
87. ibid. 2. 9. This is now known as Vaikuṇṭh Perumāḷ temple.
89. ibid., p. 300.
90. Peri. Tm 2. 9: 1.
91. History of India : Part I Ancient India, p. 300.
92. Peri. Tm. 2. 9: 7.
kings towards the end of the seventh and beginning of the
ninth century. Paramēśvaravarman I (670–680 A.D.), Nara-
śimhavarman II (680–720 A.D.) and Paramēśvaravarman II
(720–731 A.D.) took part in these encounters. These references,
which the Āḻvār gives, contain the word ‘pāṃintā’ having the
sense of the past event, perhaps, lingering in the memory of
the then generation.93 The Āḻvār refers also to ‘Vayiramēkaṇ’
which was probably the epithet by which Dantivarmaṇ (754
A.D.), son of Nandivarmaṇ, was known. The word ‘vāman
kum’ which is used here with reference to this king, conveys
the sense of an event which was occurring in the period of
this king.94 An incident, which is recorded to have taken
place in the twelfth regnal year of this Vayiramēkaṇ, makes
a reference to the restoration of a field to the Pārthasārathī
Perumāl temple at Tiruvallikēṇi by one Pukalṭṭuṇai. This
temple was built about 790 A.D.95 The conclusion that could
be drawn from these references is that this Āḻvār flourished
in the middle of the ninth century.

Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār’s birth in the year Naṭa96 which cor-
responds to 776 A.D., lends support to this period for him.
This Āḻvār is said to have lived for 105 years.97 He must
have visited Kāṇci during the time of Dantivarmaṇ (795–845
A.D.).

Literary and linguistic evidences support this conclu-
sion. A verse from the Nālaṭiyār (680 A.D.) is referred to in
the Ĉīleya-tirumōṭal of this Āḻvār.98 A number of proverbs
in Paḷamōṭi (725 A.D.) occur in some of the compositions of

93. There are other words here which point to the same conclusion,
c.g., mun-nāl (2.9:3), pāṇtorukēl (2.9:4) and ayru (2.9:5).
94. Peri. Tm. 2.8:10. This verse is sung in praise of the deity in one
of the Viṣṇu temples at Kāṇci. Aṭṭapuyakarattāṇ, by which name
the deity is referred to here, shows the deity with eight arms
(puyams).
95. History of Tamil Language and Literature, pp.127, 128.
96. G.P., p.46.
97. A.G.P., fol. 10(a).
98. V. 114, Couplet 4.
this Āḻvār. The story of Vāsavādattā in the Perunkatai (700 A.D.) is referred to in the Ciriva-tirumaṭal. The type of poem named cappōni occurs in the compositions of both Periyāḻvār (785–870 A.D.) and Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār, one line actually finding a place in both. Similarly expressions like ‘yacōtai tan cinkam’ and ‘yacōtai yilanciṅkam’ occur in the works of both Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār and Āṇṭāl (b. in 836 A.D.). On the strength of the above evidences, Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār could be taken to have lived during the period 776–881 A.D., at any rate in the first half of the ninth century.

The traditional sources, however, keep this Āḻvār at the end of the list which enumerates the names of the Āḻvārs, with the exception of some which mention Nammāḻvār as the last one. He was perhaps the Āḻvār who lived up to a very late age (881 A.D.), but in the order of birth, he is to be placed before Periyāḻvār (born in 785 A.D.). In another respect, he deserves to be placed after Kulačēkara (born in 767 A.D.). Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār was born in Kali 398, while Tiruppāṇāḻvār was born in Kali 343. Leaving the Kali yuga reference here, Tiruppāṇāḻvār must be taken to have preceded this Āḻvār by 55 years. This agrees with 776 A.D., the year of birth of this Āḻvār, if the former is to be admitted to have been born in 721 A.D. This date should receive support but for the mentioning of Tiruppāṇāḻvār after Toṇṭaraṭhippoṭiyāḻvār (born in 727 A.D.) in the traditional sources.

PERIYĀḻVĀR AND ĀṆṬĀL

Periyāḻvār is only a surname while his real name was Viṭṭucittān or Viṣṇu-cittān (whose mind was set on Viṣṇu).

99. v 223 = Peri. Tm. 11.8 : 6; v 358 = ibid. 7.10 : 4; v 252 = ibid. 10.9 : 8; v 253 = ibid 11.8 : 3. v 370 = C. Tml. couplet 3.
100. Couplet 65. This evidence need not be attached much significance, as the story of Vāsavādattā was too well known from the beginning of the Christian era about which time, the Brhatkathā was composed by Gaṇāḍhya who flourished near the Vindhya ranges.
101. Periyāḻ. Tm. 1.6 = Peri. Tm. 10.5.
102. Peri. Tm. 6.8 : 6 = T.P. 1.
He was a native of Śrī Villip-puttūr in the Rāmanāthapuram District and a brahmin by birth. He is believed to have been a victor in a religious polemic held at the court of a Pāṇṭiya king and won a bag of gold in prize. The title of Paṭṭarpirān was further bestowed on him by the king. The gold could have been spent in improving his flower-garden which he dedicated to the services of the local deity at Śrī Villip-puttūr.

One day, coming across a female child under a tuṇasi plant in his garden, he adopted her and brought her up as his own daughter. When the girl came of age, he gave her sound education both on the religious and secular sides; and this befitted her to help her foster-father in his devotional activities. The story is that Āṇṭāl developed a fascination for the nice garlands made by her father and she decked herself with it before they were offered to the deity. She would steal away a few moments for the purpose during her father’s short absence and would replace the garlands in their original place before her father returned. One day the father chanced to see his daughter’s freaks and chiding her not to repeat the act of sacrilege, had no garland to present that day. That night Viṣṇu-cittān had a dream in which God intimated to him His special pleasure in accepting only such garlands as had been worn by Āṇṭāl and not any other; in fact, they were doubly dear to Him on account of her using them. Thenceforth the devoted Ālvar conformed to the God’s desire by offering used garlands. On this account Āṇṭāl came to be known as Cūṭikkotutta-nācciyār (the lady who gave what was worn by her). When she came of marriageable age, she refused to marry any one except Lord Raṅganātha of Śrīraṅgam.

104. Tanjyans beginning with “Mannar tatamatil” and “Pāṇṭiyen kontāta” (By Pāṇṭiya Paṭṭar).
106. Periyāl. Tm. 3. 8: 4.
107. This story has become a theme of the well-known Telugu work ‘Amuktamālāyada or Viṣṇu-cittān’ one of the five great Kavyas (epic poems) by the celebrated emperor Kṛṣṇadēva Rāya of Vijayanagar.
108. Nac. Tm. 1: 5.
devotion to Viṣṇu. Āntāḷ dreamt of her marriage with God; and described her experience in a hymn which is sung to this day when a marriage takes place in a Vaiṣṇavite household. God appeared to the Ālvār in a dream to declare before Him His acceptance of the girl in marriage and ordered her to be brought to his temple at Śrīraṅgam. Accordingly Periyālvār took her there with great joy and when she entered the sanctum sanctorum of Raṅganātha she was absorbed into the idol. Periyālvār was duly honoured as the father-in-law of the deity and then sent back to his native place, Śrī Villipputtūr.

The identity of the Pāṇṭiya king referred to by Periyālvār in his hymns as ‘Naṭumāṟan’ and ‘Apimāṇatuṅkān’ is a matter of controversy among scholars. The Guruparamparā works identify him with Śrī Vallabha Pāṇṭiya who had also the name Śrīmāra. This king reigned during the period (815–862 A.D.). Viṣṇu-cittāṇ was born in the year Kurodhanā which corresponds to 785 A.D. and lived for eighty five years. He could have been a contemporary of this king in whose court he won a wager. Āntāḷ was born in the year Naḷa which corresponds to 836 A.D. There is a reference in Āntāḷ’s Tiruppāvai which mentions the setting of Jupiter (Vṛāṇ) and the rising of Venus (Veļli–Śukra). Professor M. Raghava Iyengar chooses December 18 of 731 A.D. as the date which Āntāḷ had in view, and also as the date which tallied with the regnal periods of both Kö-Neṭumāṟan and his adversary Nandivarman II Pallavamalla (731–796 A.D.). But

109. ibid., 6. (Vāranam ṣṭiram).
110. G.P., p. 35.
111. Periyal. Tm. 4. 2: 7; 4. 4: 8.
112. ‘Apimāṇatuṅkān’ appears as an epithet of Celva-nampi, the minister of Vallabha-dēva (G.P., p. 29).
113. G.P., p. 28.
114. History of India, Part I Ancient India, p. 229.
116. A.G.P., fol. 9 (b).
118. Ālvārkal kālanilaṭ, pp. 76–81.
recent researches have brought to light the fact that Paramēśvara Varman II was reigning in (720-731 A.D.). So this date chosen by Professor Iyengar is untenable. Among the alternative dates furnished by the learned Professor, either 885 or 886 A.D. would meet the astronomical requirements. It might after all be straining the astronomical arguments a bit too much. It may therefore be proper to conclude that the Ālvār and his foster-daughter Āptāl probably lived round about 850 A.D.

### NAMMĀLVĀR AND MATURAKAVI

Nammālavār is considered by the Vaiṣṇavites to be the greatest of the Ālvārs for the spiritual wisdom contained in his poems. He was born of a Vellāla family of Tirukkuṟukkūr, now known as Ālvār-Tirunakari in the Tirunelveli District. His parents gave him the name Māraṇ and Śathakopa was the Sanskrit title probably given to him by his spiritual preceptor. Like other Ālvārs, he too was a born yogi. Even as a child he left his house to take his seat under a tamarind tree which was adjacent to his house. He continued to remain there in meditation for sixteen years. He is held to be the greatest of the Ālvārs and he was certainly the most philosophic minded among them. The Bhakti movement reached culmination in him. A disciple of his Maturakavi by name composed a decad in honour of his preceptor and ended the long line of Vaiṣṇava saints.

Maturakavi was a native of Tirukkōlur in the Tirunelveli District and a brahmin by birth. While he was at Ayodhyā on pilgrimage, he happened to observe one night a brilliant light in the southern quarter of the sky. He took it as a mark pointing to the presence of a great person, started in the direction of that light and reached Tirukkuṟukkūr where he found this prodigy. Maturakavi then became the disciple of Nammālavār, who began composing verses which the devout disciple got recorded in the palm leaves.

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119 Vide Prof. K.A.N. Sastry's "New Light on Later Pallava chronology" in M.M. Potdar commemoration volume.
Nammāḻvār was born in the year *Bahudhānya* which corresponds to 798 A.D.\(^{120}\) Maturakavi’s birth was in the year 800 A.D (*Vikrama*).\(^{121}\) Maturakavi installed Nammāḻvār in *arca* form even when the latter was alive and conducted worship and festivals for it.\(^{122}\) He lived for fifty years \(^{123}\) after the passing away of Nammāḻvār in his thirty-fifth year.\(^{124}\) Maturakavi is also counted as an Āḻvār. These two Āḻvārs could therefore be placed in the second half of the ninth century.

The birth of Nammāḻvār in 738 A.D. would have been admissible, had not the Āḻvār sung in praise of the deities at Varakunamaṅkai\(^ {125}\) and Crivaramaṅkalam.\(^ {126}\) Both these places were named after the Pāṇṭiyān king Jatila Parāntaka Varaguṇa I (c. 765-815 A.D.), who had his kingdom extended on all sides, at the expense of the Cōḷas, Keraḷas and other neighbours.\(^ {127}\) The Āḻvār is evidently referring to these shrines when they were known with these names, though their existence prior to this period with a different name could not be ruled out. This enables to place Nammāḻvār in the first half of the ninth century A.D. and make Maturakavi his contemporary.

The years of birth of the Āḻvārs give useful material for fixing the period of the Āḻvārs. The *Kali* and *Dvāpara* eras mentioned in the sources do not make sense and deserve to be rejected in many cases. The names of the years mentioned in this connection help in arriving at the years of the birth of the Āḻvārs but this is to be arrived at only with the aid of internal evidences contained in the compositions of the Āḻvārs. The order in which the names of the Āḻvārs is enu-

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120. G.P., p. 55.
121. P.T.A., p. 8; A.G.P. fol 8(b).
122. G.P., p. 60.
123. A.G.P., fol. 9 (a).
124. A.G.P., fol. 8 (b).
126. ibid., 5.7.
127. History of Ancient India, p. 484.
merated and their life accounts are dealt with in the sources, is only to be discarded in favour of a different order which is based on other evidences which are available internally and from external sources. Till fresh materials are found necessitating a change that is followed here, the traditional sources are to be kept on only for the information they provide for the understanding the life accounts of the Āḻvārs.

Regarding the latest limit for the age of the Āḻvārs, the first half of the ninth century seems to be admissible. Yāmunacārya, who was born in Kali 4018, Dhātu year, was the grandson of Nāthamuni, who was not alive then. 916 A.D. could be the date of birth of Yāmuna. Nāthamuni learnt the four thousand verses of the Āḻvārs from Nammāḻvār himself who appeared to him through yogic power, that is, he did not meet the Āḻvār when he was alive. He met Parāṇkusadāsa, a disciple of Maturakavi and was told by him that the compositions of the Āḻvārs were lost then for a long time. What exactly is meant by the long time is not clear. The Guru-parampara tradition means that the long time must be taken to be fairly long when the Āḻvārs' dates are placed around the beginning of Kaliyuga. This interpretation is untenable and the non-availability of these compositions even for a generation may be interpreted in terms of a long time. This meeting must have taken place after 883 A.D. when Maturakavi passed away. Much significance could not be attached to the 'long time' referred to here. It only means that all the compositions were not then available. The non-availability of them at this time, which was not far distant from the middle of the ninth century when Periyāḻvār, Āntāl, Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār and Maturakavi Āḻvār were in the last years of life, could be explained only by admitting that some of the Āḻvārs, though they were contemporaries, did not have occasion to meet each other and as a result of this, their compositions were not known outside the regions where they flourished. Nāthamuni is said to have arranged the compositions of the Āḻvārs and made them recited by his disciples. This must have taken place about 900 A.D. It will not therefore be wrong, if the limits of the age of the Āḻvārs is fixed in the period 700–850 A.D.
A Continuation of the Earlier Anthology Tradition:

The Nāḷāyira Divya Prabandham literally, the Four Thousand Divine Treatise, codified by Nāthamuni in the tenth century (or the end of the ninth century) was only a continuation of the anthological tradition of the Caṅkam age. But the earlier anthologies were broadly classified under Akam or Puṟam and secular and religious subjects were put together as, for instance, in the Pattu-p-pāṭṭu in which Paṭṭina-p-pālai which is purely secular is grouped with Tirumurukāṟṟṟu-p-paṭṭai which is religious. The dominance of anthologies and anthology-making seems to have characterised only the pre-Pallava period, but sporadic attempts at anthologising were to be seen in the field of religious literature in the Pallava and post-Pallava age, thus continuing an ancient tradition in literature. The Ākam-Puṟam dichotomy was practically given up in literature during these ages and the emphasis was shifted from genus unity to species unity. In other words, in the anthological age, if it could be so called, the Akam-Puṟām, distinction was the sole basis of classification. Taking the Pattu-p-pāṭṭu again, the general theme is Puṟam, but there is fantastic diversity in the subject matter of the different works like Kuruṇci-p-pāṭṭu, Mullai-p-pāṭṭu, and Paṭṭina-p-pālai. Some of the anthologies would appear to have been made mechanically without strict attention to unity. A critical consideration of the principles of anthology-making in the early period of Tamil literature is as interesting as it is ticklish; and before it is attempted in its fullness, only a guess as to the reason for the combination of the different works can be hazarded. The anthologist must have weeded out a number of inferior works and put together only the outstanding ones, and therefore, could not discover as much of the necessary ingredients of unity of subject-mat-
ter as might perhaps have better justified the proclaimed classification as *Akam* or *Puram*. In the later periods, however, it was possible to deviate from the basis of excellence and combine works with identical themes even if the different works did not demonstrate the same degree of superbness, either in language or in thought. The Caṅkam anthologies paid special attention to beauty and accuracy of language and applicability to common social life on the basis of a pragmatic philosophy. The later anthologists who were very few cared for the unity of the subject-matter and as it concerned only religion in most cases, the language aspect became secondary. The mind and personality of the author is not only reflected in the work but the work itself conferred upon him social esteem and reverence. Any vagueness of thought in the process of giving verbal form to emotional fullness and ecstasy or the inadequacy of diction was made up for by commentators whose commentaries were more inspired by devotion to the authors for their personal spiritual worth than embark on an attempt to appraise their scholarship.

The two great anthologies of the post-Pallava period are the Śaivite *Tirumūrīais* and the *Divya Prabandham* the anthology par excellence. The difference between these two anthologies and the Caṅkam anthologies is obvious. A discussion was already under taken on the question of authorship and of the subject-matter elsewhere. While the *Nālāyiram* certainly continued an earlier literary tradition, it was different from, and, from the point of view of the technical aspect of anthology-making, it was perhaps an improvement on the earlier concept of anthology. The unity of the subject is paramount in the *Nālāyiram* in spite of the diversity of authorship and the chronological distance separating each work from others.

There is another difference which is remarkable between the *Divya Prabandham* and the earlier anthologies. While the *Divya Prabandham* is nothing more or nothing less than an anthology from the literary standpoint, it is often equated with the *Vedas* and endowed with scriptural status. The same is true in regard to the Śaivite *Tirumūrīais*. The
Āḻvārs are invested with the sanctity attached to the Vedic ṛṣis (composers) who, however, chose to remain anonymous. The Nālāyiram at least after its codification by Nāthamuni, became a book of daily ‘pāṟāyaṇam’ for Vaiṣṇavites in the Tamil country. The sanctity attached to it was such that even Andhras, and Kannadigas transliterated the work in the script of their own languages for their daily ‘pāṟāyaṇam.’

Authorship:

The anthology consists of the works of twelve devotees of Viṣṇu called Āḻvārs. The word ‘āḻvār’ sometimes interchanged with the word ‘āḻvār’ meaning one who ruled the mind of God. Vaiṣṇavism elevates the devotee and even confers a divinity on him surpassing the divinity of God of whom he is a devotee. Therefore, this meaning is not unwarranted. But the exact root from which the word is derived is ‘āḻ’ or ‘dive’ and āḻvār would get the meaning as one who is plunged in God-enjoyment or a diver in divinity. The Āḻvārs were no doubt intellectually able persons, but their hymns were more the promptings of the heart than intellectual performances. Twelve Āḻvārs share between themselves the three thousand and odd hymns comprising of the Divya Prabandham. They are the first three Āḻvārs (Poykaiyār, Pūtattār, Pāyār), Tiruppaṉāḻvār, Tirumalaiyāḻvār *alias* Bhakti-sāra, Tōṇṭaraṭi-p-poṭiyāḻvār *alias* Vipra-Nārāyaṇa, Kulacekarāḻvār, Periyāḻvār, Aṇṭāl, Tirumāṇakaiyāḻvār, Saṭṭakopa *alias* Nammāḻvār and Maṭurakaviyāḻvār.

The uniqueness of the Divya Prabandham arises out of the fact that many of its authors were neither scholars nor deeply versed in the sacred lore. Yet their spiritual experience which they have conveyed through their hymns, which are their effortless outpourings of the heart, constitutes a very important phase in the development of religion in general. If a study were made of the different religions of the world, Śri Vaiṣṇavism appears to have introduced the new concept of anubhava or god-experiencing and god-enjoyment. The corollary to this anubhava is the direct perception of the countless ecstatic qualities (ananta kalyāṇa guṇas). The devotee’s
enjoyment of these qualities is shared with others through the hymns. The intellect is overwhelmed by the emotions so that experiences rather than ideas dominate the lyrical expressions. The modern student of psychology has plenty of material in the Nalayiram to build up a new branch of psychology in which the mystical experiences could be taken away from the field of abnormal psychology which is not the appropriate head under which one could study this inner development. Excepting Nammalvar who was undoubtedly a genius among men as he was among the Alvars, all the other Alvars have only their experience or anubhava of God to share with others. The Prabandham thus becomes the commonman’s literature embodying the spiritual experiences of persons from the most common run of society.

Religion owes much to this new aspect of spiritual development. The concept of god-intoxication was drawn upon by all the religions of the world, and there is no doubt that the Alvars were primarily responsible for this movement, if not the originators. Sufism which came later shows unmistakable evidences of how much it owes to Sri Vaishnavism in respect of the doctrine of ecstatic spiritual experience.

**Political Background:** The Divya Prabandham literature as also the movement connected with it is definitely post-Caṅkam and excepting the unproved spurious poetical epistle fathered on Periyalvar as his message to the Tamil Caṅkam there is absolutely nothing to warrant the remotest association of any of the Alvars with the Caṅkam period, let alone the Caṅkam itself. Both the Śaivite and Vaishnavite movements started as a result of the Āryan-Tamil interaction in the Tamil country under the stimulus provided by the first great monarchical power of the south – the Pallavas. In a sense, both the movements were parallel originating about the same time under identical stresses and stimuli with no rivalry, but as forces combined to destroy the influence of Buddhism and Jainism.

The Pallavas fostered religion without any bias. All
the cults and sects received their patronage. The climate was
therefore favourable for a new religious explosion within
Hinduism with its two aspects in the Tamil country. The
age of the intellect and secularism which the Caṅkam age
inaugurated was followed by an age in which emotions played
a dominant role in literature because of the patronage of
religion by the ruling power. The Pallavas either enlarged
the old temples or added new ones, and the Tamil country
became dotted with Śaivite and Vaiṣṇavite shrines all over.
The concept of idol-worship was considerably expanded and
newer manifestations of Śiva and Viṣṇu were installed in
temples. A large number of festivals were instituted on
an elaborate scale. An atmosphere of religious activity and
fervour was prevalent throughout the Tamil country and the
Āḻvārs and the Nāyaṇmārs were the products of this atmos-
phere. They had something concrete to sing about and where-
ever they lived they were close to a Tirupati or a Divya Deśa,
a place hallowed by the manifestation of Śiva or Viṣṇu. The
maṅgalāśasanam of deities which constitutes the bulk of the
Divya Prabandham was more or less the expression of personal
ecstasy at the time it was sung. Little would the Āḻvārs have
imagined that their ecstatic outpourings before the deities
would be collected and invested with scriptural status. The
maṅgalāśasanam of a deity became more or less a must, and
in fact the maṅgalāśasanam by an Āḻvār became the mark to
invest a temple with unique repute.

The circumstances of the codification: Nāṭhamuni
takes on himself the credit for having collected the hymns of all
the twelve Āḻvārs and codified them into the Divya Prabandham.
He may be assigned to the later half of the ninth and
beginning of the tenth century A.D. Very little is known
about the life of this great devotee who is ranked with the

2. The Cōlas: (1955 edn.) p. 638. He was born in the year Sabhakṛt
(823 A.D.) (A.G.P. II (b), and passed away before 916 A.D., when his
grandson Yēmuna was born. The traditional version which
mentions him as having lived for 340 years will have to be
dismissed, as this comes into clash with the dates arrived at for the
Āḻvārs in the previous chapter.
Ālvārs and with Rāmānuja except that he was born in Kāṭṭumānuṟ koyil in the South Arcot District and that he led a pious life as a devotee of the local deity. It is possible, as is claimed, that he continued the tradition of the Ālvārs, but either his humility prevented his saving his own hymns for posterity, or they have been lost by neglect. His non-authorship, even if it is a fact, of any original work, does not make him inferior to any of the Ālvārs. On the other hand, he became not only the compiler of the anthology of the hymns of the Ālvārs, but he also synthesised their doctrines into one of the greatest movements of Indian history.

The circumstances under which he started his work on the anthology are, as usual, strange. During his time, the hymns of the Ālvārs had gone into oblivion. In fact, he does not appear to have heard of their existence before he had that experience which prompted his quest for the hymns. He had not heard of Nammāḻvār reputed to be the most intellectual among the Ālvārs.

The exact circumstances under which Nāṭhamuni commenced his quest of the hymns are as follows: He heard some worshippers recite ten verses from Nammāḻvār’s Tiruvāymoḻi completely ignorant of Nammāḻvār as their author. He became inquisitive because the address to God as ‘Āṟavaṉamū’ 3 which he found in the recitation captivated his soul. He asked the worshippers about the authorship of the verses and also of the thousand verses which the last verse of the recited portion alluded to as ‘Āyirattul ippattum’ (these ten verses from out of the one thousand verses). The worshippers directed him to Kurukūr where he could obtain the thousand verses of Nammāḻvār portions of which they had themselves memorised for their own contemplation and worship. Nāṭhamuni proceeded to Kurukūr, the birth place of Nammāḻvār, and after worshipping the deity of the place and at the direction of Parāṅkuṉadāsa, a disciple of Maturakavi, went to the sacred spot under the tamarind tree in the hope of meeting the spirit of Nammāḻvār. But the expected

3. T.V.M. 5.8.
miracle did not happen. He then recited the Kāminum Cīrumāṇḍu composed by Maturakavi which he got from Parāṅkuśadāsa in Kurukūr 12000 times in front of the tree where the idol of Nammāḻvār had been installed. Pleased with Nāthaṃuni's devotion, Nammāḻvār appeared before him along with his disciple Maturakavi and taught him all his four Prabhāndhans with their full meaning. According to a slightly different account of the same tradition preserved in the Divyāsūrī carīta all the four thousand verses were revealed to Nāthaṃuni during this extraordinary interview. There is a third version according to which Nāthaṃuni met Maturakavi from whom he learnt that Nammāḻvār, after composing a big Book of hymns in Tamil and instructing the hymns to him, had attained salvation. The people of the locality had the misconception that the study of the work would be detrimental to the Vedic religion and so they threw it into the river Tāmpraparāṇi. Only one page of the Book viz., Kāminum cīrumāṇḍu was saved. Nāthaṃuni recited this poem 12,000 times, as a result of which Nammāḻvār revealed the purport of the whole work to him. But when Nāthaṃuni wanted to know all the verses, he was advised to approach an artisan of the place who was inspired by Nammāḻvār to reveal all these verses to him. So Nāthaṃuni received the entire work from the artisan.

Nāthaṃuni went back to his native place and organised a band of disciples and started a musical choir for the new hymns as ordained by the God of his native place.

This is the only available account of how the discovery of the Nāḷāyiram was made. Nāthaṃuni justifiably takes the full credit for the discovery of all the hymns which he codified into an anthology. He certainly did much to popularise the

6. The Guruparamparās mention that Nāthaṃuni had set these hymns to music with the help of his nephews Mēḷaiyakatāḻvār and Kīḷaiyakatāḻvār in the divine tunes (which please the gods).
recitation of the hymns during festival seasons and it is not improbable that he introduced special festivals at which the Prabandhams were to be recited by trained pandits.

One interested in the scientific approach to history might refuse to accept the veracity of the above story. It has, however, to be understood that every ancient tradition is a conventional method of stating historical facts, and one has to be acquainted with the symbols to be able to discover the history in a tradition. Barring the supernatural element in the story all else is true history. The supernatural is the inevitable ingredient in any tradition where there is an account of an effort to succeed in which divine help is necessary. One need not create imaginary situations by which Nāthamuni came by the hymns to substitute the supernatural in the story. Neither the historicity of Nāthamuni nor his being the anthologist of the hymns can ever be disputed. There is epigraphical confirmation of the historicity of Nāthamuni.7

THE DIVISION OF THE WORK: The following is the pattern of the arrangement of the Four Books of the Divya Prabandham by Nāthamuni called Mutilāyiram, Periya Tirumoli, Tiruvāy moḷi and Ivar-pā, the first three constituting the Icai-pā group:

Part I: Books of the Icai-pā group

Book I: Mutilāyiram (The Fist Thousand)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME OF COMPOSITION</th>
<th>NUMBER OF VERSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Periyāḻvār Tirumoli</td>
<td>473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Tīru-p-pāvai</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Nācciyār Tirumoli</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Perumāḷ Tirumoli</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Tiruccanta Viruttam</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Tirumāḷai</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Tiruppaḷḷi Elući</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Amalaṅātipirāṉ</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Kanninun ciruttāmpu</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 947

Of these No. 1 is the composition of Periyāḻvār, Nos. 2 and 3 of Āṇṭāḷ, No. 4 of Kulacekarāḻvār, No. 5 of Tirumālicaiyāḻvār, Nos. 6 and 7 of Toṭṭarati-p-poti Āḻvār, No. 8 of Tiruppāṇāḻvār, and No. 9 of Maturakavi Āḻvār. The absence of 53 verses to make up 1000 is not usually made much of and the calculation of 1000 is not meant to be arithmetical.

**Book II: Periya Tirumolī**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME OF COMPOSITION</th>
<th>NUMBER OF VERSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10. Periya Tirumolī</td>
<td>1084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Tirukkuruntāntakam</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Tirunetuntāntakam</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 1134

All the three works are those of Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār. The total number here is in excess of 1000, and should be treated in the same manner as in respect of Book I.

**Book III: Tiruvāymoḷī**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME OF COMPOSITION</th>
<th>NUMBER OF VERSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13. Tiruvāymoḷī</td>
<td>1102</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The whole of this Book is the work of Nammāḻvār

**Part II: Ivar-pā group**

**Book IV: Ivarpā**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME OF COMPOSITION</th>
<th>NUMBER OF VERSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14. Mutal Tiruvantāti</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Iraṇṭām Tiruvantāti</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Mūṇṟām Tiruvantāti</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Nāṇmukān Tiruvantāti</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Tiruviruttam</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Tiru-Āciriyam</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Periya Tiruvantāti</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Tiruvelikkūṟrirukkai</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Ciriya Tirumāṭal</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Periya Tirumāṭal</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 593
Of these Nos. 14, 15 and 16 were composed by the Mutalālvārs (Poykai, Pūtam and Pēy); No. 17 by Tirumāḻicaiyāḻivār; Nos. 18, 19 and 20 by Nammālvār; and Nos. 21, 22 and 23 by Tirumāṅkaikāḻivār. The discrepancy in regard to the total in Iyār-pā is rather more than could be treated with indifference. A discussion on the total numbers of verses in the Nālāyirām appears in this chapter and references to the statements of authorities are made not only in respect of the total number, but also of alternate schemes of numbering believed to be in vogue.

The Köyil-Oḻuku mentions a tradition by which on the day of the Tirumoli-Tirvāymoli Festival which he had himself instituted, Nāṭhamuni got the first three Books belonging to the Icaī-pā category in the finest music pleasing to gods (Devagānām) and the fourth Book belonging to the Iyār-pā category without any musical form. On the basis of this tradition, confirmation is sought to be given to the traditional categorizing of the hymns as Icaī-pā and Iyār-pā.

The categorizing does not seem to be arbitrary or purposeless. The first three Books can be set to music and definitely intended to have the highest musical value as a Tamil parallel to the Sāma Veda. The music is not incidental, but integral and vital. The appeal to God is through the most enjoyable medium. Maturakavi goes one step further and proclaims that he became ecstatic by singing the sweet songs of Kurukur Nampi and that he did not know of any deity (superior to Nammālvār). The existence of ancient manuscripts defining the appropriate tune (Paṇ) and tuning (Tālam) of the hymns also proves conclusively the nature and purposes of the first three Books.

THE ORDER OF THE ARRANGEMENT: Nāṭhamuni got into possession of the hymns in no codified form or in any order.

9. Kaṇṭhinuciruttāmpu-2. The implication is that Kurukur Nampi (Nammālvār) was the object of his worship and he needed no other God.
The work of organising the hymns must have taken all his mental equipment and spiritual fervour. There were many approaches open to him like the chronological, the person to person, and sequence of religious topography. But his codification was based on the only objective of providing a scripture in Tamil with a status not inferior to that of the Vedas. This objective required a thorough reshuffle of the Prabandhams and reorganization on the basis of the requirements of recitation in temples. His work must have been to some extent facilitated by the Ālvarṣ themselves having presented the hymns inseparably complete in themselves in units of ten, thirty etc. Nāyākaraṇa did not take liberty with these units, but just left them as separate divisions. For instance, each of the units of the first Ten of Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvar is organized into a division, but each Tirumoṭi (consisting of ten or more verses) is presented fully in its original form without a further mix-up of verses by different authors. In other words, he did not collect together stray verses from different Tirumoṭis by the same authors or by different authors just for the reason that they dealt with the same subject. Each Tirumoṭi has a concluding stanza in which the phala śruti is given with the authorship which is an indication that the Tirumoṭi is full and intact. What Nāyākaraṇa did was to arrange the hymns into tens possibly in conformity with the Vedic arrangement of the sūktas.

The purposes of his division and sub-division of the whole work are also to be related to his desire to present a Tamil parallel to the four Vedas. First they are intended to be recited like the Vedas. The Sāma Veda being the most pleasing to hear on account of its musical character must have inspired his musical arrangement of the first three Books under the broad category of Icai-pā.

There is needless controversy over the possible order in which the Ālvarṣ might have composed the hymns. For

10. It means here 'poems' and nothing else.
11. The purpose to be attained by reciting the particular unit of stanzas is mentioned in the last stanza of each unit.
instance, the order of the *Prabandhams* of Tirumāṇkai Āḷvār has engendered a lot of heat with very little light at the hands of enthusiastic expositors. But we can easily dismiss the subject of order as purposeless, because the order found in the anthology as organized by Nāṭhamuni and finally fixed as unalterable by Vēdanta Deśika is the order of the anthologists and not of the Āḷvārs.

**THE PLACE OF RĀMĀNUJA-NŪRRANTĀTI:** There is a school of opinion which believes that the *Rāmānuja-nūrrantāti* forms part of the fourth Book, the *Iyar-pā.* But the opposition to the belief stems from the travesty, arising out of the inclusion of the praise of a human being along with the praise of God. Historically the inclusion must be a later-day action as Rāmānuja was later than Nāṭhamuni and the codification had been settled by Nāṭhamuni. Nāṭhamuni does not appear to have designed the anthology as a *En-Nūl.* The *Nāḷāyiram* prefixed to *Divya Prabandham* is certainly of later origin; it probably belongs to the Vijayanagar period when a new interest was evinced in Vaiṣṇavism and Vaiṣṇavite literature. The prefix must have originated during the period of Vēdanta Deśika whose last year is believed to be 1371 A.D. or a little later as a Śrīraṅgam inscription of his composition would testify. This can be accepted as almost the final answer to the origin of the prefix because for the first time it appears in a statement of Śrī Dēśika.

12. One section of Vaiṣṇavites holds the opinion that *Periya Tirumaṭal* is the last poem sung by the Āḷvār and according to them the order is *Periya Tirumoli, Tirukuruntāṇṭakam, Tirunēṭuntāṇṭakam, Tiruvēlukurṟirukkal, Čiṟya Tirumaṭal* and *Periya Tirumaṭal.* This is the order held by Vedānta Daśika (T.P. 379). According to another section, *Tirunēṭuntāṇṭakam* is the last poem of the Āḷvār and their order is: *Periya Tirumoli, Tirukkuruntāṇṭakam, Tiruvēlukkūṟṟirukkal, Čiṟya Tirumaṭal,* Periya Tirumaṭal and *Tirunēṭuntāṇṭakam* (U.P.R. 9. P.B. Annankaracarya’s commentary).


mutaṟar, the most devoted disciple of Śri Rāmānuja, after composing Rāmānuja-nūṟṟantāti had its ‘arankeṟram’ (or the formal release) in the presence of Śrī Raṅganātha, the presiding deity at Śrīraṅgam and it was Śrī Raṅganātha who ordained that this work be included in the Divya Prabandham. 15 While there is no doubt about the literary excellence as also the wealth of bhakti in the work, it is not possible to believe that Śrī Rāmānuja could have permitted something in praise of himself to be included in what was purely a book of prayers and praises of God. However, Paŗāśara Bhāṭṭar composed a verse (Tāṇiyan) in honour of the Āḷvārs which is recited before any composition of the Āḷvārs is taken up for recital. Rāmānuja’s name is included by him along with those of the Āḷvārs. He must have treated Rāmānuja on a par with the Āḷvārs and in all likelihood Rāmānuja-nūṟṟantāti could have been considered as part of the Nālāyira Prabandham during the life time of Paŗāśara Bhāṭṭar who was born in the year 1062 A.D. 16 and received the blessings of Rāmānuja. He died in his thirty second year. Rāmānuja-nūṟṟantāti, in praise of Rāmānuja, could have therefore been included in the Nālāyiram at least soon after 1137 A.D., the date of Rāmānuja’s death. Here Rāmānuja is not the author of any Tamil hymn but came to be venerated by Paŗāśara Bhāṭṭar giving him the status equal to that of an Āḷvār. In order to justify this, the composition Nūṟṟantāti in praise of him by Amutaṟar, could have been included in the Nālāyiram. The composition of the Āḷvārs were regarded as the Tamil Veda. It is but natural that a poem in praise of Rāmānuja who was treated like an Āḷvār should get the status of the Veda and so included in the Nālāyiram. The appellation ‘Prapannagāyatri’ lends justification to this.


16. Satsampradāya Muktaṉadvīt, p. 13. A latest date 1122 A.D., which is suggested in the Guruparamparās in order to justify the tradition that he was a child when Rāmānuja made him his success or is not acceptable for the reason that his father Kurattāṟṟ was 91 years old in 1122 A.D. For a discussion on his date, see T.A. Gopinatha Rao; Lectures on Vaishnavism. He must have lived for more than one hundred years.
There is another instance of praise of a human being appearing among the Prabandham hymns. It is a composition of Maturakavi in praise of Nammāḻvār. But the work had already attained classical value and both Nammāḻvār and Maturakavi were considered as Āḻvārs. Therefore Nāṭhamuni with whom alone we associate the codification chose to include the praise of Nammāḻvār in the Prabandham. The story of how Nāṭhamuni came by the hymns of the Āḻvārs makes Kamīnuṇ-ciruttāmpu the starting point of the effort to unearth the missing hymns. If that were true, Nāṭhamuni must have had a special reason to include this piece of human praise among the God’s prayers and praises. There can, however, be no disputing the fact that after Rāmānuja’s passing away the interest in the Divya Prabandham which Rāmānuja himself had inspired must have led to a new look at the organisation of the Prabandham. By the time Śrī Desīka’s eminence was established, a little change over the content of the anthology could have already taken place and the Divya Prabandham must have got finalised into Nāḷayira Divya Prabandham. One wonders if Śrī Desīka himself might not have played the second Nāṭhamuni and without taking too much liberty with the Nāṭhamuni’s codification regularised the contents by treating the Rāmānuja-nūṟṟantāti as definite part of the Divya Prabandham. In fact, it is Śrī Desīka who presents the first statement in regard to the numbers of verses by the Āḻvārs as also the number of verses in the whole anthology itself as Four Thousand. He also specifies twenty four Prabandhams including Rāmānuja-nūṟṟantāti. Either Śrī Desīka was repeating traditional account of numbers or himself furnishing the picture of the final codification in which he had a prominent part.

VEDĀNTA DESIKĀ’S FINAL VERSION: Between Nāṭhamuni and Vedānta Desīka there must have arisen a new interest in Śrī Vaiṣṇavism with its supreme product in Śrī Rāmānuja who justly takes the credit as the codifier of the new Tamil Vaiṣṇavism, spade work for which had long before been completed by a number of religious leaders including Nāṭhamuni and Āḻavantār. During the period of Rāmānuja,
the old Nāthamuni code does not seem to have undergone any transformation. But during the period of Vēdana Deśika there was the usual historical process of reaction and recession. By then the Vijayanagar empire had come into existence (1336 A.D.) and with it was renewed the old interest in the Vēdas and Vedic study. The Divya Prabandham which had for centuries remained the scripture, in a sense, of the Tamil Vaiṣṇavites was now getting alternative status with the original Vēdas themselves. Vedānta Deśika, however, successfully staved off the trend which might have destroyed the status of the Prabandham as scripture, if only he had yielded to the temptation to join the movement of reaction. Under his leadership the very last codification must have been effected. This was done without any damage to the Nāthamuni code. There are two verses of Śrī Deśika indicating this final codification. A free translation of the verses is as follows:

“If we are to take count of the number of hymns of the first Ālvārs (Poykai, Pūtām, and Pēy) we get 300; Tiru- maḷīca contributed 216; those of Nammāḷvār of profound vedic insight 1296; those of Maturakavi of eminent charity and guru-bhakti 11; those of Kulacēkara king of the Vaṅci country 105; those of Periyāḷvār, also named Bhaṭṭanātha 473; those of Āṇṭāl, a manifestation of Goddess Earth 173; those of Tontaratī-p-poti 55; those of Tiruppāṇāḷvār 10 - to these must be added 1253 hymns of Tirumaṅkaiāḷvār who was the veritable Death to his enemies and whose hymns sang the glorious praise of the world’s Great Father Tiruvēṅkaṇṭamūṭaiyān and also those in praise of Yatirāja (the prince of yatīs) numbering 108 (composed by his worthy disciple Tiruvaranāṅkattamutantaṉ)”.18

If the numbers found in these two verses translated together, when added become 4000, the prefix ‘Nālāyiram’ seems perfectly justified. But the problem is not so simple as it looks.

The arithmetical statement of Śrī Vedānta Deśika has now to be analysed. The number in respect of all Ālvārs

except Tirumaṅkaiyālvār is correct. There is controversy only over two subjects: viz., the number of the two pieces, the Periya Tirumaṭal and Ciriya Tirumaṭal and the inclusion of Rāmānuja-nūṟṟantāi. If the Periya-Tirumaṭal and the Ciriya-Tirumaṭal are considered one long poem each and if 108 Rāmānuja-nūṟṟantāi verses are excluded, the total number is 3776 which is the correct number. The additional 224 is got in the following manner:

Periya Tirumaṭal is taken as a subject in 78 verses and Ciriya Tirumaṭal as one in 40 verses. Between these two we account for $78 + 40 = 118$ verses. The Rāmānuja-nūṟṟantāi contains 108 and the total comes to 226 verses. Śrī Vēṭānta Dēśika thus adds 226 new verses to the number in the Nāṭhamuni code and rounds it off as 4000.¹⁹ There can be no serious objection to this, but for certain criticisms in respect of an arbitrary dissection of one long poem of 297 lines into 78 smaller verses. A poem is a unity by itself and not a convenient stoppage of equal length. Both the Tirumaṭals are in kali-verppā metre which is peculiarly suited to the composition of a single poem of any length. According to conventions of prosody whatever the number of lines or the length the poem is to be taken as a single unit and not to be dissected into verses. In this light the Periya Tirumaṭal is just one long poem and the Ciriya Tirumaṭal is another slightly shorter than the first as the name itself implies. Nāṭhamuni who must have given the names to the two Maṭals to distinguish each has purposely adopted the simple names instead of any name suggestive of the number of verses for the simple reason that he took each Maṭal as a single poem as per rules of prosody. In fact, Nāṭhamuni had no obsession with regard to the total number.

Vedanta Deśika who made the anthology a definite En-Nūl did not wish to exclude the Rāmānuja-nūṟṟantāi.

¹⁹ The calculation is as follows: The total number of verses in the Four Books comes to 3776 ($947 + 1134 + 1102 + 593$). If the two Maṭals are taken away the number reduces to 3774; the number is less by 226 to 4000 $(4000 - 3774 = 226)$. Then the number 4000 is got by adding 3774 and 226 $(78 + 40 + 108)$. 
So he had to provide for 108 in his calculation of 4000 and provided 118 to the two Matals and made up his 4000.20

Appillai Āciriyar another keen student of the Divya Prabandham excluded the Rāmānuja-nūṟṟantāti from his calculation and instead considered both the Matals themselves as consisting of 226 verses. According to him the Periya Tirumāṭal consists of 148½ verses and the Citriya Tirumāṭal 77½ verses. His dissection was into Kanṭi couplets and this was not against a common convention, though the counting of each Kanṭi as a verse is not warranted.21 The author of Nālāyira Divya Prabandha Akarai also follows the principle of dissection in connecting the Matal verses.22

Now there are two distinct numbers 3776 and 4000 and three approaches. Śrī Desika’s version seems to be the most acceptable and final. Even today the inclusion and non-inclusion of Rāmānuja-nūṟṟantāti is a disputed issue though no irreverence is implied. In fact, whether included or not within the anthological system, the Rāmānuja-nūṟṟantāti is given a place of honour as a separate section in every edition of the Divya Prabandham. It is also recited along with the other hymns in all Vaiṣṇavite temples. It could be concluded with the statement that no bones can be made about the arithmetical accuracy in respect of numbers. Even if a few verses are wanted to make up 4000 what is of essence is not the arithme-

20. The inclusion of human praise in a book of prayers to God was done on the basis of a spiritual belief. Rāmānuja was considered an avatāra of Ādiśēṣa and the praise of Ādiśēṣa is appropriate amidst praises of Śrī Nārāyaṇa whose bed the Ādiśēṣa is. Nam-māḷvār is also considered an avatāra of Viṣvaksena and the inclusion of his praise by Maturakavi is also justifiable. Vēdānta Desika invested the inclusion with the seal of his approval to neutralise the vehemence of the objection to its inclusion.

21. The calculation according to Appillai Āciriyar is as follows:
The total number of verses in the Four Books comes to 3776. The number reduces to 3774 by taking away the Matals. Total number of Kanṭi couplets=148½+77½=226. Then we have 4000 by adding 3774 and 226.

22. pp. 26–28; 41 and 43.
tical accuracy in literature, but the completeness of each idea. The Divya Prabandham does not suffer in this respect. The number ‘Āyiram’ has been considered very auspicious by the Hindus. Anything slightly less or in excess of it is also taken as ‘Āyiram’. Thus the 1008 names of Viṣṇu are called ‘Sahasranāma’. The Puruṣa-sūkta begins with the verse “Sahasra Śirṣā Puruṣaḥ, Sahasrākṣa Sahasrapād” etc. We could overlook the fact of the Tiruvāyumoḷi consisting of 1102 verses by accepting its classification as an ‘Āyiram’ by the author himself. The Periya Tirumoḷi also containing 1084 verses gets the title ‘Maṟai Per-Āyiram, Āyiram, etc., from its author. Therefore, there is nothing wrong in imagining that each Book contains 1000 verses and the four Books 4000.

THE PROBLEM OF TIRUPPALLĀṆTU

There is another interesting problem in regard to the ‘Pallāṇṭu’ part of Periyāḻvār Tirumoḷi. According to some, it should be treated as a separate Prabandham and not as a part within another Prabandham. Again, it is intellectual gymnastics and nothing serious is involved in it. Perhaps for a scientific reason, we might say that the Pallāṇṭu cannot be a separate Prabandham and must be considered just as the first part of the first Tirumoḷi which should be considered to have ten parts collectively called a ‘Pattu’. As it is, the first part is the Tiruppallāṇṭu and the Tirumoḷi itself commences as the second Prabandham separately. The first Pattu (Ten) in this arrangement is really nine because of the exclusion of the Tiruppallāṇṭu considered as a separate Prabandham. While there is nothing wrong in separating the Tiruppallāṇṭu, the organisation of the work suffers to some extent by its exclusion. Even at the commencement the equal division of ten Tirumoḷis is affected and only nine have to be designated a ‘Pattu’ (Ten). The pattern of division of each Prabandham into ten Tirumoḷis each is common to the works of Periyāḻvār, Tirumaṇkaiyāḻvār and Nammāḻvār which share the common connotation Tirumoḷi. This seems to be some kind of an application of an organisational pattern adopted in the Vedas.

23. R.V. 10.90:1
24. TVM. 1.1: 11; 1.3: 11; 1.4: 11; 1.6: 11 etc.
25. Peri. Tm. 1.5: 10.
The *sūkta* of the *Rg Veda* may be considered the genesis of the concept of *Tirumoḷi*. A *sūkta* is not a *sūtra* but a reasoning complete in itself. Its form is more elaborate than the aphoristic *sūtra*. In the same way, in each *Tirumoḷi* there are a number of verses though ordinarily even this number is to be restricted to ten. But this restriction is not strictly followed by the Āḻvārs. Those who argue that Periyāḻvār’s First Ten did not include the *Tiruppallāṇṭu* arrived at ten as the exact number of *Tirumoḷis* totalled up all the verses in the nine *Tirumoḷis* excluding the *Tiruppallāṇṭu* and got one hundred which they argued should be the correct quantity for ten *Tirumoḷis* at ten verses each. But while this approach may serve the purpose of an argument to explain away a difficult position, it fails to take note of the unity of the Ten.

In the *Periya Tirumoḷi* of Tirumāṅkaiyāḻvār and in the *Tiruvāyumoḷi* of Nammāḻvār the *sukta*-like *Tirumoḷis* are arranged as a series of Tens without any numerical inaccuracy. In the *Nācciyaṟ Tirumoḷi* of Āṇṭāḷ the arrangement into Tens has not been adopted, because of the inadequate number of *Tirumoḷis*. The traditional belief is that division into Tens is called for only when there is material for more than two Tens. The *Nācciyaṟ Tirumoḷi* does not satisfy this principle.

The *Tiruppallāṇṭu* part is considered separate also on the basis of eminent authority. In the *Upadesaratnamalai* of Maṉavaḷa māmunikaḷ the reference to Periyāḻvār is in association with his having been the author of the *Tiruppallāṇṭu*. In the same work the *Tiruppallāṇṭu* is mentioned as the ancient or Āṭi *Tiruppallāṇṭu*, an artistic work without a parallel. One need not be led away by the overwhelming praise of the *Tiruppallāṇṭu* and invest it with a separateness for this reason. That the *Tiruppallāṇṭu* is an excellent piece of composition in the richness of its devotional fervour, nobody denies. The question is whether it should be treated as a separate *Prabandham*. The volume of opinion leans on the side of its being an integral part of the First Ten. Those who would make it a separate *Prabandham* are swayed by its
superior quality as a hymn and its abstract form contrasted with the anecdotal hymns that follow in the First Ten. But there is nothing objectionable in taking the Tiruppallāṇṭu Tirumoli of the First Ten as indicating the subject matter of the other nine Tirumolīs which is the story of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's boyhood. The references in Upadēṣararātamālai do not imply separate Prabandham status for the Tiruppallāṇṭu but equate it with the Vedie praṇava or Om which is an auspicious beginning for anything. The fact that the Tiruppallāṇṭu is the beginning of every recitation of any Prabandham in the Nalāyiram only shows its greatness and not separateness. The Tiruppallāṇṭu has become the Pūrvāṇga of every auspicious recitation and epitomises the entire substance of the First Ten. Much credence need not be placed on Upadēṣararātamālai whose purpose is entirely different from evaluating the Divya Prabandham. It is purely a source of information about the date of birth and place of the Āḻvārs. Therefore a casual statement in it about the Tiruppallāṇṭu need not be made much of.

The number of Prabandhams has been taken to be twenty four. This is arrived at in two different ways. One is to exclude the Tiruppallāṇṭu from the list of Prabandhams and include the Rāmānuca-nūṟṟantāti; another is to exclude the Rāmānuca-nūṟṟantāti from the list and give separate status to Tiruppallāṇṭu. Vēdānta Dēśika must have considered the Tiruppallāṇṭu as part and parcel of the First Decad because he includes Rāmānuca-nūṟṟantāti among the Prabandhams. The division into twenty-four is long accepted and therefore there need be no controversy about it.

27. D.S.C. also refers to the two compositions of Periyāḻvār. V.: 76.
THE COMPOSITIONS OF ĀLVĀRS (I)

OF THOSE OTHER THAN NAMMĀLVĀR

The compositions of the twelve Ālvārs are twenty three in number, and they have been collected and collated later by Nāthamuni and given the name of Nālāyira Prabandham (The book of Four Thousand verses) or the Divya Prabandham (The Divine Treatise). The names of the compositions and the pattern of their arrangement in the book have been stated and discussed in the previous chapter. So, only the content or the purport of these compositions is attempted here.

THE FIRST THREE ĀLVĀRS

The first three Ālvārs, namely, Poykaiyāḻvar, Pūtattāḻvār, Pēyāḻvār are the authors of the first three Antātis centums of verses in the veṇpā metre (Nēricai Veṇpā) in praise of Viṣṇu. Each one of them has sung a hundred verses like a garland of flowers. The garland of verses (col-mālai) sung by Poykaiyāḻvār, Pūtattāḻvār and Pēyāḻvār are known as Mutal Tiruvantāṭi (first centum), Iraṇṭām Tiruvantāṭi (second centum) and Mūnṟām Tiruvantāṭi (third centum) respectively. The first Ālvār starts singing of the universal God from the point of view of the phenomenon: “The world is the lamp-dish filled with ghee of sea; the shining sun is the lamp. God is


2. Antāti is a type of Tamil poem (Prabandham) where the ending of the first stanza (a letter, syllable or a word) comes as the beginning of the second stanza and so on till the ending of the last stanza is the same as the beginning of the first stanza. This type of poem is composed in nēricai veṇpā or kaṭṭalai-k-kalittuṟai metre the total number of stanzas in an antāti being 100; sometimes the Prabandham is composed with stanzas less or more than 100 as for instance Nānmuttai Tiruvantāṭi and Rāmānuc-āṟṟantāṭi (vide: Yāpparujkalakkūrückai-17.

the Light of lights. I make a garland of verses and place it at the feet of God, the Light of lights." The second Ālvār begins singing not of the outer light but the inner light, the nounemon: "Love is the lamp-dish; pining for the Lord is the ghee therein; the blissful melting heart is the wick; I have lighted this lamp. God is the Light of lights." The third Ālvār sees the lamp lighted by Pūtattālvār the Light of lights, the great God of his heart. His ecstasy broke into a song: "I have seen Tiru (Lakṣmī). I have seen a golden-hued beautiful figure (body). I have seen the lovely effulgence of the rising sun. I have seen the bright disc and the conch in His hands. All these I see today in my ocean-hued Lord."

The three seers then elaborate the glory of the Person they had seen in their lyrical poems or Antātis. They glorify God as the Inner-self and the Saviour of all beings and, at the same time, as transcending the universe. By controlling the outgoing senses, they say that He can be intuited with the inner eye. God, in His infinite mercy and love, assumes the name and form which the devotees desire and reveals Himself in the same form. A spirit of tolerance is in evidence in the poems of these early Ālvārs; probably there were forms of images where one half was Śiva and the other half Viṣṇu. The stories of divine descent are told with a grasp of their essential message. Some of the stanzas in these Antātis are

4. I. Tv. 1.
6. M. Tv. 9, 61, 62; I. Tv. 28; Mu. Tv. 37, 82.
7. M. Tv. 4, 12, 20, 32, 47, 50, 85; I. Tv. 6, 26, 42; Mu. Tv. 12, 14, 40, 79
8. M. Tv. 14, 44.
full of poetic beauty and they contain vivid poetic imagery. The verses are full of humour. Because of the simplicity of these Āḻvārs' language, there is a ring of sincerity in their utterances. These three Āḻvārs revel in the avatāras of Vāmana-Tirivikrama and Kṛṣṇa in their worship of vibhava form of God, and the deity at Vēṅkaṭam in their worship of ārca form. That is why the first two Āḻvārs, according to traditional scholars, conclude their Antātis with the mention of these two avatāras. But the third Āḻvār, unlike the other two of his colleagues, ends his Antāti by mentioning the sacred feet of the Lord and those of His consort Lakṣmī as saraṅgāgati for his salvation. There is only one verse in the whole of three Tiruvantātis on bridal mysticism.

TIRUMALIČAI ĀḻVĀR

Tirumalīcai Āḻvār has left us only two compositions: the Nāṉmukān Tiruvantāti and the Tiruccantaviruttam.

NĀṉMUKĀN TIRUVANTĀTI: This work consisting of 96 verses in venpā metre (Nēricali venpā) is arranged in the Antāti

10. M. Tv. 38, 40; I. Tv. 75; Mū. Tv. 23, 45, 57, 58, 67, 68, 70-72, 75, 86, 89.
11. M. Tv. 6, 19, 24, 42, 47, 53, 54, 56, 67, 69, 70, 81, 84, 91, 92; I. Tv. 5, 9, 15, 16, 36, 49, 56, 61, 97, 98; M. Tv. 6, 33, 34, 48, 49, 52, 54, 60, 62, 64, 67, 73, 74, 81, 84, 89, 91, 92.
12. M. Tv. 6, 16, 21, 30, 31, 50, 51, 57, 64, 67, 68, 72, 78, 79, 83, 86, 88, 89, 94, 95, 99; I. Tv. 4, 12, 21, 27, 34, 51, 55, 65, 74. 76, 81, 85, 87, 90, 92, 93; Mū. Tv. 2, 7, 8, 12, 17, 21, 23, 30, 35, 37, 40, 57, 59, 84, 92, 94.
16. M. Tv. 100; I. Tv. 100.
17. Mū. Tv. 99 and 100.
18. ibid. 69.
scheme. The main theme of this work is the supremacy of Nārāyanā, the consort of Śrī (Lakṣmī). He never thinks of Nārāyanā without the consort ‘Tiru’-Lakṣmī. The statement that has been made in the first stanza of this Prabandham, that Nārāyanā is the supreme Deity is expounded by the Āḻvār step by step with reference to the Vedas, Itihāsas and Purāṇas. He finally clinches his argument in the last verse with full confidence. The Āḻvār was a monotheist as he himself admits and preached that the one and only God was Viṣṇu while the other two of the triad—Brahmā and Śiva—were created by Him. He was sure of a place in Vaikuṇṭha for himself as he had placed a garland of verses (col-mālai) on His feet. He declares that he would not sing verses on humans. The literature, the music, the Itihāsas, the Purāṇas, the five elements, the code of Mānu and the Vedas are, according to the Āḻvār, the will of Viṣṇu. Some thinkers consider that their minds are impediments of realisation and seek to dementalise themselves. But this Āḻvār holds, and this is the most interesting from the point of view of sublimational psychology, that mind is not an impediment at all. It can serve as the most useful and potent instrument of devotion. An easy way is the way of praise and prayer of the Lord by the mind. The Āḻvār speaks of the greatness of the devotees of devotees. The devotion of the devotees to the devotees is greater than the devotion to God. There is one

20. ibid., 1.
21. ibid., 69, 72.
22. ibid., 5, 8, 9, 10, 12, 15–18, 21, 25, 28, 30, 33, 49, 50, 52, 53, 57, 58, 68, 70, 71, 77, 78, 85, 87.
23. ibid., 96.
24. ibid. 2, 56, 66, 67, 69, 70, 74, 82, 84–86, 92, 93, 96.
25. ibid., 1, 19, 26, 31, 42, 43, 54, 73.
26. ibid., 65.
27. ibid., 75.
28. ibid., 76.
29. ibid., 81.
30. ibid., 18, 89.
stanza in this poem in which the idea of a kūṟal—nay the very line itself—is embedded.\textsuperscript{31}

**TIRUCCANTA-VIRUTTAM:** This is the second composition of this Āḻvār\textsuperscript{32} which consists of 120 verses in cantak-kāli viruttam and it takes its title after the type of metre employed. This work is admired for its harmonious versification. It is sung to the tune of four equal measures in a line where each foot consists of a long monosyllable, a disyllable and again a monosyllable. This composition is full of rhythmic beauty, perhaps because of the new device thus introduced. Though the style is majestic and elevated, the ideas are crystal clear. It can very well be said that this work expresses the very rhythmic outburst of the Āḻvār’s heart, springing from his philosophy and religion, warped by the abundance of his love to the Lord. This work is more philosophical than the previous one. It is also more closely packed. It is more metaphysical in the sense that it enumerates the categories in such a way as to point out that everything is ultimately derived from the One. The Āḻvār sometimes composes verses out of a series of numbers.\textsuperscript{33} These verses describe the categories of existence which are declared to have their source in the Brahman—a doctrine adopted from the Upaniṣadic texts. Though this poem begins by employing several of the numericals strung together in pleasing symphony, the significance of which is beyond the comprehension of the ordinary person, the latter portion of the Prabandham blossoms into high class mystic poetry.

There are some autobiographical references in his poems. He is believed to have been the son of a ṛṣī named Bhārgava, but brought up by a man of the hunting tribe.\textsuperscript{34} He was a staunch devotee of Viṣṇu and Viṣṇu alone, and

\textsuperscript{31} ibid., 23, cf. Kūṟal-851.
\textsuperscript{32} T. P. 381.
\textsuperscript{33} Tc. V. 1 – 5, 77, 79, 83, 114.
\textsuperscript{34} ibid., 90.
he knew no compromise or commerce with God. Owing to his intense bhakti, he came to be known as Bhaktisāra. His divine experience was of the immanent type. He declares that the Lord, before he was born, stood on Vēṅkaṭaṁ, sat in Paramapadam and laid Himself down in the sea of milk (Kṣīrābdhi). That great Lord who is arputaṁ, (one with wonderful powers), who is anantaśayanaṁ (reclining on Ādiśeṣa), who is ādibhūtan (the first and foremost Being) and who is mādhavaṁ (consort of Śrī) stands, sits and reclines within his heart. Such was the God-enveloping love of Bhaktisāra. By his intense bhakti, the arca as static God became a dynamic Deity of dayā or grace.

The Āḻvār was a great scholar both in Sanskrit and in Tamil, acquiring equal proficiency in them, and his poems show that he had a competent knowledge of the sacred books of other sects and religions. His mastery of the Rāmaṇa, the Mahābhārata and the Viṣṇu Purāṇa is displayed in both of his poems. He is not tolerant as the first three Āḻvārs but was even a rancorous opponent of the people of other faiths. He worked ceaselessly for the spread of Viṣṇu bhakti. His work was a miracle of mysticism, for it restored the ancient Vaiṣṇavite religion of South India which had been threatened with extinction by non-Vedic sects. It is said in the Guruparampara that the Āḻvār had entered into the spirit of all the religions of the times before he became a Vaiṣṇavite, and when he was a Śaivite he assumed the name of Civavākkīyar. Civavākkīyar must be earlier than Paṭṭiṅattār of the tenth century who refers to him in

35. ibid., 12, 14, 15, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24, 28, 29, 31, 34, 35, 44, 45, 48, 68, 72, 75, 78, 84, 86, 92, 98, 104, 105, 107, 111, 117, 118, 120.
36. ibid., 64, 94, 95.
37. ibid., 65.
38. ibid., 61 vide. Commentary of Śri P.B. Annangarachariar (Diryārtha-dīpaṁka)
39. ibid. 112. cf. Kural-334. The idea expressed in both is identical and even the words employed are the same in both.
40. ibid., 1, 4, 10.
41. Nāṅ. Tv. 6; Te. V. 69.
his poem. There is such a close resemblance in the metre and harmonic flow of the poems of Civavakkiyar and the Tiruccantaviruttam as to make one believe that both the poems were composed by one and the same author. Further, a number of stanzas occurring in both are almost identical and it is probably this which is responsible for the story in the Vaishnavite tradition. Perhaps in the verses which have come down to us as Civavakkiyar's there are interpolations which because of their style should be assigned to a later age. Similarly the story given in the Guruparampara must therefore be a later interpolation.

TONTARAṬI-P-POṬIYĀLVĀR

Tonṭaraṭi-p-poṭiyālvār has left two poems, Tirumālai, the sacred Garland of Hymns and Tiru-p-paḷḷi Ėlucci, the Hymn of the Morning.

TIRUMĀLAI: The work consisting of forty five verses in arucir āciriya viruttam is supposed to be the earlier composition of this Ālvār. The poem glorifies the greatness of Lord Raṅganātha, the presiding deity at Srīraṅgam. How deeply attached this Ālvār became towards this deity can be seen from the fact that he would not even once mention the name of the presiding deity of any other sacred place in this poem or in his other poem. Even Tiruppānālvār who is very much attached to this deity has referred to the Lord of Vēnkaṭam twice in his only hymn of ten stanzas. But to Tonṭaraṭi-p-poṭikaḷ Lord Raṅganātha was everything, and there is no place left in his devoted heart even for the same God residing elsewhere. The verses of Tirumālai make a direct appeal to the heart. To recite them or even hear them recited invariably means being moved to the depth of one's soul. There is no attempt made in the verses to elucidate high philosophy as in the case of Namālvār, or to indulge in high flown language as in the case of Tirumanākai Maṇṇaṉ. Though the Ālvār, in the opening stanza, starts by saying that he has his senses

42. Tiruṭṭai marut ūr mummaṭi-k-kōvai-11, 33.
42a. G.P., pp. 21, 22.
43. A.P. 1, 3.
under control, in the latter stanzas he refers very often to the time when he was the slave of his senses, and appeals to the Lord for help and succour. The verses stating that he does not even seek birth in this world, are those asserting the superiority of bhakti, and those of vivid description of Lord Raṅganātha are of great appeal. Many of the sentiments expressed by him about his personal life really touch the heart of the sophisticated temple-goer and the pseudo-religionist. He tells them that he once tried to deceive the Lord by masquerading as the true devotee; but when he remembered that the person sought to be cheated was not one outside him but one who dwelt in his heart and took note of his thoughts, even as they arose in him, he realised what a fool he had been, and laughed outright at his own stupidity in trying to deceive such a one. His faith in Viṣṇu has taken so deep a root that he became intolerant of other sects. In short, this poem touches the heights of religious fervour.

The verse-forms employed in this poem bear a strong resemblance to Appar’s Tirunēricai and Tirukkuṇṟuntāṇṭakam.

TIRUPPALLI ELLUCCI: This poem consisting of ten verses in eḻucir āciriya viruttam is supposed to be his later work. This is a fine piece of Morning Hymn seeking to awaken the Sleeping Beauty from His yoganidra and make Him respond to the call of devotion for favouring humanity which suffers from the ills of saṃsāra and deserves the grace of God for redemption. In a way, this composition is similar in con-

44. T.M. 5, 16, 17, 25, 26, 27, 30, 31, 33.
45. Ibid., 3.
46. Ibid., 41, 42, 43.
47. Ibid., 19, 20, 23, 24.
48. Ibid., 5, 16, 26, 30, 33.
49. Ibid., 34.
50. Ibid., 2, 10, 35, 36.
51. This means the sleep of the Lord is of the contemplative type when He is described to be lying on Ādiśēṣa.
52. This is an instance of adaptation of the old form Tuyiletainilai to suit the present need of the religion (vide: Tol. Porul. Puṟaṭiṇal-iyal. 36).
tent to Tiru-p-pāvai of Āṇṭāl. Both serve the same purpose viz., arousing somebody from slumber though the ulterior motives in both are different. In this piece the symptoms of dawn are being described in such a vivid manner that even as one reads it one can see the glory of the dawn, hear the sweet sound of the chirping of birds, and smell the morning fragrance of the blossoming flowers fondly opening their buds to the caressing kisses of the golden rays of the rising sun. The total disappearance of darkness is well depicted. In the last verse the Ālvār entreats the Lord to get up in order to bless him with an appointment as a servant to do service to the devotees of the Lord (aṭiyārs); he has come, he says, carrying in his hands the tujaci-garland and the flower-basket on his shoulders. This poem reaches the heights of pastoral poetry.

KULACĒKARĀLVĀR

PERUMĀL TIRUMOḤI: The Ālvār is the author of only one poem known as Perumāl Tirumoḥi consisting of 105 verses in six types of metres roughly divided into ten decades. He has a vivid imagination which helps him portray in dramatic monologues the scenes which appeal to him in the stories of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa. But the Ramāyaṇa is his favourite theme. There are three decades each relating to the story of Rāma. In the first the Ālvār sings a lullaby (tāḷāṭṭu) for Rāmā as a baby in the cradle. This song of lullaby on the child Rāma by the Ālvār gives really a joy to his readers. As one poet states “even when singing of the omnipotent divinity it is more charming and enchanting to sing of it as a child.” Love towards a child is

53. T.E. 1, 2, 3.
54. ibid., 5.
55. ibid., 7, 8.
56. The name borne by this Ālvār. Tontaraṭṭi-p-poṭi, meaning “the dust of the feet of true devotees” is really a title which he longed to have conferred on him as is clear from this stanza.
57. encīr āciriya viruttam, arucīr viruttam, cantakkali viruttam, arucīr viruttam, cantakkali viruttam, kaliviruttam, and koccaka-kalippā.
58. Perum. Tm. 8.
the innocent joy of selflessness. In that mood, poetry becomes sincere and captivates any heart. In the second of the decades he becomes Daśaratha and we hear the heart-rending cry of Daśaratha, the father of Rāma when the latter was exiled. It is difficult to read this Tirumoli without being moved to tears. The pathos is smiting and killing. The language and the sentiments are so realistic and touching. In the third, which is really the last decade of this poem, the Āḻvār gives a rapid recapitulation of the Rāmāyaṇa in a graphic manner mentioning such important episodes which appealed to him most.

As Rāma among the avatāras, Śrī Raṅganātha among the arcās exercised great fascination over the mind of this Āḻvār. There are three decades on the Lord of Tiruvaraṅkam. In the opening decade, he longs to have a vision of the grand Sleeping Beauty of Tiruvaraṅkam. In the second, he reveals his zeal to be in the company of devotees; he points out that there is no greater profit or pleasure for the eyes than to look at the gathering of the meyyaṭiyārs (true devotees) of Raṅganātha who dance in ecstasy out of feelings of love towards the sweet Honey that resides in the small island. The dust on the feet of these devotees is holier than the waters of the Gaṅgā. In the third, the Āḻvār admits his madness after God. The best known hymn of this Āḻvār is the one which

60. ibid.; 9 Kampan utilises this episode in his immortal Epic. In his Rāmāyaṇa a speech of this kind comes before Rāma actually leaves for the forest whilst Daśaratha is being attended by Kausalyā (Ayadhyya Kanda 4: 54-65).
62. Perum. Tm. 10,
63. ibid., 1.
64. ibid., 2.
65. ibid., 2: 2. The phrase 'tonṭaraṭi-poṭi'—'the dust on the feet of the devotees' is found as the name of an Āḻvār. In all likelihood, this is a reference to Tonṭaraṭipōṭi Āḻvār, who, it has been proved in the first chapter of this section, was a predecessor of this Āḻvār.
66. ibid., 3.
relates to the Lord of the Seven Hills. His God-love has assumed an extraordinary aspect. To be near Him, to gaze at and enjoy the beauty of His coral lips, he is willing to forego even the essence of his soul and become an inanimate, senseless and thoughtless object. He seeks to be a stork, a fish, a bearer of the Lord's golden spitoon, a flowering tree, a bush, a peak, a river, a pathway, a stepping stone at the gate in the sanctum sanctorum, in that sacred Hill. The similes employed by him in the Vittuvakōṭu hymn are quite appropriate and convincing.

Kṛṣṇa, the sweet Enchanter, has claimed the attention of this Āḷvār in two decades. In the one he puts himself in the place of Dēvaki, the mother who gave birth to Kṛṣṇa, and weeps and wails over the miserable fate of that lady who was obliged to give up the Divine Child born to her to the care and custody of another (Yaśōtā), to whom alone was given the transcendent bliss of enjoying His cradle-days and watching with delight His lisps and numerous playful pranks. The sentiments of an illfated mother have been expressed here with dramatic technique. In the other, he assumes the role of a gōpī who has found out what a "black-guard" this Black God really is, and assaults Him in the excess of her love towards Him, and accuses Him of several misdeeds and breaches of faith. It presents delightful reading.

**TIRUP-PĀṆĀLVĀR**

**AMALANĀṬIPIRĀṆ:** This poem of Tiruppāṅālvār is the shortest one in the collection of Nālāyiram. It consists of only one beautiful hymn of ten verses in two types of

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67. ibid., 4.
68. ibid. 4:9. It is because of this Āḷvār that the step to the sanctum sanctorum in every Vaishnavite shrine is known as Kulacakara-paṭi.
69. Pāṇini, Lm. 5.
70. ibid., 7.
71. ibid., 6. cf. TVM. 6.2.
metres. *Amalanātipirāṇ*, the name of poem, is really not a name, but the opening words of the poem. The verses describe graphically the Āḻvār’s grand vision of the Lord at Tiruvannākam (Srīraṅgam) – His sacred feet, His apparel, His navel, His waist girdle, His chest, His neck and shoulders, His face and crown, His eyes, and His whole body, all so beautiful and captivating to the Āḻvār’s heart, so life-like and divine. The Āḻvār winds up the poem by stating how the cloud-hued cowherd and butter-mouthed Lord has stolen his heart. The last line of this hymn breathes the transcendent air: “My eyes having beheld Thee cannot verily have any place for seeing anything else.” The Āḻvār follows here the tradition that physical frame of the deity should be described from foot to head (*pāḍādi keśa*). It is the Āḻvār’s vision of the Sleeping Beauty that is beautifully projected forth in these verses. God is defined as amalan, the eternally pure, whom only the pure in heart could see. He adores God as the Holy, the Pure and the Perfect (*amalan, vimalan, nirmalan*) and feels blessed by the fact that the divine love invaded his inner being and cleansed him of all sins.

This beautiful poem has appealed so very much to the heart of the great scholar, philosopher, logician and poet, Vēdānta Deśika, who has written a commentary on these ten verses. For an appreciative description of beauty in the arcā form of the Lord this poem has no equal. All the other qualities of God are really derived or inferred from that

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72. āci-iyat-turai and kaliviruttam.
73. A.P. 1.
74. ibid. 2.
75. ibid. 3.
76. ibid. 4.
77. ibid. 5.
78. ibid. 6.
79. ibid. 7.
80. ibid. 8.
81. ibid. 9.
82. ibid. 10.
beauty, and enjoyed as adjuncts to that beauty. The exquisite simplicity of this beautiful hymn and the deep, sincere emotion it evokes make it an outstanding contribution among the poems of the Ālvārs. Vēdānta Deśika has aptly said that the hymn of this Ālvār contains the quintessence of the Nālāyiram, that it is the seed of all that the Vēdāntins have said and that it is the essence of the four Vedas.

TIRUMAṆKAIYĀLVĀR

TirumaṆkaiyālvār, also known as TirumaṆkai Manṇaṉ, Kaliyaṉ and Parakāḷaṉ, is the most learned of the Ālvārs and he has left to us six poems, namely, Periya Tirumoli, Tirukkuṟuntanṭakam, Tiruneṭuntanṭakam, Tiruveḷukkuṟṟirukkai, Cīriya Tirumalai, and Periya Tirumalai. He is quite conscious of his own distinction as a Tamil scholar, like Campantar among the NāyaṆmārs. The works of this Ālvār and those of Nammālvār constitute the major portion of the Tamil Veda (Tamil Maṟai) by which name the Nālāyiram is known to the Śrī Vaishnavites.

PERIYA TIRUMOLI: This beautiful long poem consisting of 1084 verses in eleven types of metres arranged in eleven centums each containing ten decades (hymns) of at least ten verses in each decad is the collection of lyrical utterances on his enjoyment of the beauty and other auspicious qualities of different deities installed at the various sacred places from Badarinfath in the north and Tirukkuṟunaktuṭi in the south. Two shrines, those of Nācciyārkoṭil near Kumbakonam and

83. T.P., 130.  
84. ibid., 131.  
85. ibid., 132.  
87. Peri. Tm. 1.7: 10; 4.4: 10; 5.1: 10; 6.6: 10; 9.3: 10; 10.1: 10.  
89. Peri. Tm. 1.3; 1.4.  
90. ibid., 9.5; 9.6.  
91. Called Tirunaraiyür in the poem. ibid., 6.4. to 6.10; 7.1 to 7.3.
Tirukkaṇṇapuram\textsuperscript{92} near Naṇṇilam in Thaṉjavūr District, have 100 verses each at a stretch to themselves. Several others have far less, but even then quite a considerable number to themselves. In all, this Āḻvār has sung about eighty-six sacred places out of the total of 108 according to a Vaiṣṇavite tradition.\textsuperscript{93} His journey from one end of the country to the other singing the praise of God and practising His loving presence is really the pilgrim’s progress to and in God and ascent from earth to heaven. He begins this poem in his own characteristic way with a confession of his previous sinfulness followed by the feeling of security obtained by uttering the holy name of Nārāyaṇa and ends it with a celebration of the joy of mukti or the freedom from the fear of saṁsāra.\textsuperscript{94} The agonies of saṁsāra are compared by him to the state of a storm-tossed vessel,\textsuperscript{95} of the ant caught up between the burning ends of a faggot,\textsuperscript{96} the pack of jackals on an island enveloped by rising floods\textsuperscript{97} and a person facing a cobra in his residence.\textsuperscript{98} His self-accusations are spontaneous and sincere, though disproportionately heavy to the actual sins committed by him and not merely conventional self-reproof. They were the result not of sick-mindedness but of devotional sensitiveness and fervour.\textsuperscript{99} In his hymns of glory of God, he visualises the varied incarnations of Viṣṇu, especially of Śrī Kṛṣṇa owing to his saulabhya or unique accessibility even to the worst sinner.\textsuperscript{100} He calls out to his fellow-beings not to starve their senses or go to the forest,

\textsuperscript{92} Peri. Tm. 8.1 to 8 10.
\textsuperscript{93} Vide: Pillai-perumāḷ Ayyengar’s \textit{Nūṟṟeḻtu-t-tiruppatti Aṇṭāti’}.
\textsuperscript{94} Peri. Tm. 1.1
\textsuperscript{95} ibid. 11.8: 2.
\textsuperscript{96} ibid. 11.8: 4.
\textsuperscript{97} ibid. 11.8: 5.
\textsuperscript{98} ibid. 11.8: 3.
\textsuperscript{99} ibid. 1.1: 1; 3.5: 8; 1.6:1 to 9; 1.8; 1.10; 2.1; 2.5; 2.10; 3.5; 3.8; 3.9; 3.10; 4.3; 4.6; 4.7; 4.9; 5.3; 5.6; 5.7; 5.8; 5.9; 5.10; 6.1; 6.2; 6.3; 6.4; 6.8; 6.9; 6.10; 7.1; 7.2; 7.3; 7.4; 7.5; 7.6; 7.7; 7.9; 7.10; 8.6; 8.8; 8.9; 8.10; 9.3; 9.5; 9.7; 9.8; 9.9; 9.10; 10.9; 10.10; 11.1; 11.2; 11.4; 11.8.
\textsuperscript{100} ibid., 10.6; 11.5 Besides these decades, there are innumerable references in the Peri.Tm.
and do rigid tapas amidst the five fires; he advises them to quench their passion by communion with God. But he always emphasizes that to realize God one should be righteous, should subdue or sublimate one’s five senses and fix one’s mind on Him with love and devotion. He prefers the feminine path of bridal love. He uses folk-song motifs.

In one decad he makes the rākṣasas pray for refuge from Rāmā and seek his sympathy and in another he makes them dance praying the monkey chiefs not to harm them any further since they recite Rāmā’s name with devotion. The Pīḷḷai-t-tamil motif is also found in this poem. Besides his innumerable references to vibhava forms of God in the poem, he revels in avatāras in one decad. In another hymn the Ājvār speaks of nine avatāras. In one group, the verses contain in each of them a general statement, rather in the form of a proverb, to support the particular event described therein. This long poem contains a mine of information on matters of great interest useful for life.

THE TWO TĀṆṬAKAMS: TāṆṭakam is a form of poetry, generally a poem on God which consists of viruttams.

101. ibid. 3:2: 1, 2, 3 etc. (whole decad) 3.4 (whole decad).
102. ibid. 2.7; 2.8; 3.6; 3.7; 4.8; 5.5; 8.1; 8.2; 8.3; 8.5; 9.2; 9.3; 9.4; 9.5; 9.9; 10.9; 10.10; 11.1; 11.2; 11.3.
103. Where there was not a Tamil king as in the Caṅkam age, the poets had to look to the common man for support. They therefore began to sing folk-songs and develop folk literature. The genesis of this interest in the common man began only at the time of Nāyaṅmārs and Āḻvārs. The earliest work on Śaiva Siddhānta, Tirūvunțiyar by Uyyavanta Tēvar, is a folk song. This motif was successfully handled by Tattuvarāyar, the eighteen cittars, Tāyumāṉavar and Rāmalīṅka Aṭikāl.
104. Peri. Tm. 10.2. Poūkattam Poṅkō.
105. ibid. 10.3, Kulamaṇṭirām.
106. ibid. 10.4; 10.5 cf. Periyal. Tm. 3.1. and 1.6 respectively.
107. ibid. 11.4.
108. ibid. 8.8.
109. ibid. 10.9., Pāḷomoliyāḷ paṅintu uraittu pāṭtu.
110. This is one of the compositions of ninety-six kinds, and the Pāṭṭiyals (grammatical works on prosody and poetics) give us the explanations about a number of these compositions. But no work
of four feet verses containing six cir or eight cir. A Poem containing six-cir viruttams is known as Kuruntanṭakam and the one containing eight cir viruttams Neṭuntanṭakam.\textsuperscript{111} The genesis of this form of poetry is traced to Tirunāvukkaracar alias Appar whose Tiru-tanṭakam is so simple, so sincere, full of all the varying emotions of his heart, full of that divine message so appealing even to an illiterate person. It is said that in this particular kind of composition he has no equal and he has rightly earned the name ‘Tanṭaka-vēntu’. (Master of Tanṭakam). The Tanṭakams of Appar are only Neṭuntanṭakams.

It is perhaps that Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār has modelled his two Tanṭakams, namely, Tirukkuruntanṭakam and Tiruneṭuntanṭakam on Appar’s poems. The former poem contains twenty verses in aṭciṭi rācirya viruttam and the latter thirty pacurams in eṇciṭi rācirya viruttam. Some scholars will classify the thirty verses of the second poem into three decades on the basis of its content or purport. Kuruntanṭakam is not found any where else in Tamil literature except in the Divya Prabandham.\textsuperscript{112} In the first poem, the Ālār says

has arrived yet at the figure ninety-six. These Paṭṭiyals give some astrological explanation of words and metres as being auspicious and unauspicious with reference to the nativity, star and caste of the patron on whom a poem is composed. This poetic tradition of astrological convention is not accepted by the commentators like Naccinārkkiṇiyar, probably because it is not even hinted at in Tolkāppiam (vide commentary on Paṭṭuppāṭṭu by Naccinārkkiṇiyar-Malaippatakaṭṭam, 1.145.).

\textsuperscript{111} The principle of Tanṭakam is not based on the canons of Tamil Grammar. It is based on Sanskrit prosody and poetics according to which the principle is based on letters called ‘laghu’ and ‘guru’ (vide Paṇgirupāṭṭiyal commentary to Suṭra 196). There is a letter-limit to each foot of a Tanṭakam verse. In a Kuruntanṭakam the lower limit is fifteen and the upper limit is twenty six letters including the consonants; in a Neṭuntanṭakam verse each foot should contain more than twenty six letters.

\textsuperscript{112} But this poem is equated with Appar’s Tirunēricai in accordance with the rules of prosody. (Paṇniru Tirumūṟai Varaḷāru-pp.321, 331.). Another scholar equates Tanṭakam with ‘Koccakavorupūku’ of Tolkāppayim) Yāl Nūl, pp.219–220).
that the Lord has taken abode in him;\textsuperscript{113} he cannot leave him and he will enjoy his innumerable auspicious qualities.\textsuperscript{114} The Lord is the unsupported supporter. He is the independent on whom all can depend or do depend.\textsuperscript{115} The only way to get rid of the possible causes of the mental distresses is to praise the lotus feet of the Lord; there seems to be no other method or means.\textsuperscript{116} God came to him, out of His own accord and revealed himself in the inner eye and by this vision, there has occurred purification after this vision of the Divine the Álvár refuses to see anything else.\textsuperscript{117} It is this vision that is the true beginning of faith which serves as the raft to cross over the oceanic experience of samsāra. Not yōga nor steady seat nor the control of senses nor prānāyāma grants this fixity of mind but His grace that cuts our sins and grants the Vision of the most attractive form which alone can salvage man and his soul.\textsuperscript{118} Worship of God, to chant His name, to sing His praise in all forms of His are the ways and the means to this intimacy of Vision and the Kingdom Eternal, the resplendent abode of Bliss.\textsuperscript{119} In the second poem the Álvár speaks directly in the first decad; and in the second and third decades he speaks in the guise of the bride's mother and the bride respectively and so they relate to the bridal mysticism of the Álvár. It is said that the famous Vaiśāvācārya Parāśara Bhaṭṭar was an adept in discoursing on this poem especially the twenty first verse. The verses in this poem are not given to verbosity or florid style; they are simple, soulful utterances which reach the innermost recesses of our beings.

\textsc{TIRUVELUKKURIRUKKI:} This is a beautiful single Hymn of Surrender, to the deity at Kumbakonam Who is in the lying state. It consists of forty seven lines and is in \textsc{āciri-}

\textsuperscript{113} T.K. 1.
\textsuperscript{114} ibid. 2.
\textsuperscript{115} ibid. 6.
\textsuperscript{116} ibid. 11.
\textsuperscript{117} ibid. 12, 13.
\textsuperscript{118} ibid. 18.
\textsuperscript{119} ibid. 15, 16, 17 and 20.
yuppā metre\textsuperscript{120} (Nilaimaṇṭila ācīryappā) of Tamil prosody. It belongs to ‘rathabandha’, a kind of poem among the group of poems called acrostics (citrakavis). The words and phrases of this poem can be arranged in the form of a ratha or chariot the upper and lower parts of which are symmetrical to each other.\textsuperscript{121} The Āḻvār extols the creative and saving power of the Lord and signifies absolute surrender to Him. So we have in this poem a complete illustration of the multiplanal nature of God, His absolute and sovereign transcendence as well as the beneficence of the Deity fully inculcated. It reveals the tattva\textsuperscript{ḥita} and puruṣārtha and thus gives an integral account, as far as it goes, and reveals that it is only an integral surrender, or surrender to the godhead in all levels of His and our existence that can help the attainment.

THE TWO MAṬALS: Maṭal is one aspect of Akam poetry and the literary composition on that aspect of love came to be called Maṭal. This composition will usually be in Kaliyēṁpā metre. Of the two beautiful poems on the deity at Tirunāṟaiyūr, otherwise called Nācciyārkōi near Kumbakonam, the shorter one consisting of 155 lines was called Ciriyā Tirumarṭal and the longer one consisting of 297 lines Periva Tirumarṭal. In Cāṅkam literature itself we have refe-

\textsuperscript{120} Ācīryappā is of four kinds: Nērical ācīryappā; Nilaimaṇṭila ācīryappā Ṣaṅkkurāḷciṭrakāvī appā and Āṭimariṇmaṇṭila ācīryappā. In the first kind there will be four cīrs in all the lines excepting the last but one which consists of only three cīrs; in the second all the lines contain four cīrs, in the third the first and the last line contains four cīrs and the lines in between two cīrs and three cīrs; and in the fourth if stress is given in the beginning, the middle at the end, there won’t be any change either in the rhythm or in the meaning. There is no fixed number of lines in the four kinds. (vide; Yēpparunākalakkalāriṅkai-28)

\textsuperscript{121} Even the saints and the religious poets indulged in this kind of acrostics. There are five poems of this kind, so far known to Tamil literature. The poem of this Āḻvār and a poem found in Māṟan Alankāram by Tirukkuruṇai – p-perumāl kāvīrāyar belong to Vaishnavite literature; the poem found in the First Tirumurai by Campantar and the one composed by Nakkiratēva Nāyanār found in the Eleventh Tirumurai belong to Śaivaite literature. The fifth poem is found in Yēpparunākalā Viruttī with varīa lectico (p. 500).
rences to the possibilities of a lover committing suicide when his love is not returned. A Cañkam poet Mātaṅkiraṅār who has sung only two poems on this minor theme has his name prefixed by the title 'mataḥ pātiya' (one who has sung mataḥ). The mataḥ is stated to be the palmyra stalk which the lover rides on in order to make public the love that he bears in acutest form. The Tolkāppiyam mentions this as mataḥ-mā, that is, a horse made of palmyra stalk. In Kalittokai we get a detailed description of a disappointed unfortunate lover besmearing himself with ashes, wearing the wreaths of unblossomed erukkam buds (calatropis gigantea) on his chest, holding in his right hand the portrait of the lady whom he loves and being dragged round whilst he is seated on a horse made of the sword-like palmyra branches. This in motion will cut through his body. The idea behind this act is to create a public rumour or clamour about her and her lover, so much so, that the lady in love will come to know about his feelings. That the mataḥ leads to this public scandal or sympathy, whatever be the case, is considered to be a great gain, for the goal is the thing and not the means. There is nothing unworthy in such unilateral love, even though the mataḥ may not be the wisest way of making one's innermost inexpressible desires. But love knows neither rhyme nor reason, neither decorum nor decency. Its one aim is to achieve the beloved or die. In Akam poetry there is merely a threat to perform this ritual. Man only is qualified to undergo this trial. But Tirumaṅkaiyālvār in both his

122. NRR. 146, 152, 342, 377; KRN. 14, 17, 32, 173, 182. The reference is for pure antināi only.
123. KRN. 182; NRR. 377.
124. TLK. Porul - Sūtra. 99 (Ilam).
126. Panṉiru-pāṭṭiyal - sūtra. 146. But in the next sutra (147) women also get the qualification to perform the ritual if gods become their heroes or lovers. But it is in any way not the Tamil ideal. Vide Kural - 1137; TLK. Porul - Sutra. 54 (Ilam). The commentator Ilāmpūranār emphasizes that the act will be performed by man only.
Matals, makes this threat come from a woman. The woman here is the soul in love with God. The Āḻvār himself feels this threat by a woman is unknown in the Tamil Land as it is exotic to the Tamil ideal, but he will prefer, he says, to follow the Northern Practice (vaṭaneri) which permits even women to exhibit their erotic ardour and therefore appeals to the story of Vācavattattai going on her own accord in search of her husband Utayaṇan. Even according to the philosophy of this Āḻvār, God the lover should come to save the soul; but the soul is so evolved as to bear no separation any more and hankers, if one may use the word, after the Lord; and this may be described as running after Him. The mere reference to resort to such an act of maṭalēṟutal by a lover is made in ‘anpin aintinai (idealised love aspects); but the actual riding is treated in peruninai (improper lust). The maṭal motif is beautifully handled by Tattuvarāyar and others for expressing their love towards their Guru. But in later day works this motif came to be used in an obscene ways. A new and glorious use, however, has been made of this conception of maṭal by Kiuṉa Piḷḷai. The poet speaks of Christ’s crucifixion as Maṭalēṟutal, sacrificing himself for this love of mankind. Here is indeed a flash of original poetic imagination bringing out the underlying idea of crucifixion in terms of a convention of Akam poetry.

127. P. TML. - couplets 39, 40. cf. Rg Veda. X. 95,. 14. practised by Pūruruvas or threatened to be practised by him against Urvasi who pleads with him not to do so, cf. also Sat Brah. XI. 5.1: 6-9.
128. C. TML. - Couplets - (66-68).
129. TLK. Porul - Sūtra. 99 (llam); the nine poems in Nanninai and Kuiruntokai already referred to.
130. ibid., Sūtra. 54. There are ten poems in Kalittokai (138-147) relating to this theme. Among them, four poems describe masculine Peruntinai and six feminine Peruntinai. cf. ‘Woman.....has far greater gifts for love than man, that is, taking love in its nobler meaning, for that feeling which fills the whole being, is steadfast and faithful, grows ever deeper, and is strongly mingled with altruistic elements” (Meyer: Sexual Life in Ancieni India, p. 277).
131. Tittuvarāyar: Kali Maṭal.
132. Varuṇakulstittai Uḷḷa Maṭal.
133. Iratcaṇṭya yāṭṭirikam.
In both the *Maṭals*, the Āḻvār posits that out of the four-fold goals or *summum bonum* of life viz., *dharma, artha, kāma,* and *mokṣa,* *kāma* alone is the true goal of the human endeavour that a knowing person ought to desire for; he even makes fun of the states attained by the votaries of the other three goals as they are utterly unverifiable and shifty. The hankering of modern mind to fulfil itself here and now, without waiting to go to regions beyond and in times to come, is very well reflected in these two poems. Indeed, if the story of the Āḻvār prior to his conversion is to be considered in this context, it is clear that he had loved his beloved deeply and wholly. He was prepared to dare to do anything for the sake of his object of adoration. Not to have loved at all is one of the things he could hardly put up with. In the *Maṭals* he just transfers his affection from his dear wife who had been his teacher too in one sense, to the Lord Nārāyaṇa. These two beautiful poems are, in short, merely dramatization of the acute psychosis set up by his faith in absolute self-surrender to the Lord.

* * * * *

In the poems of this Āḻvār the hills and rivers get a picturesque description. The groves, fields and the humming of the bees with the sprightly fishes jumping from one rivulet to the adjacent water-way add to the attractiveness of the shrines which are dealt with by the Āḻvār. The recitation of the *Vedas,* the training which the learned brahmins had in the *Vedāṅgas* and the holy rituals which were undertaken by them tend to glorify the religious atmosphere in which the deities in some shrines are described. Apart from the religious fervour which actuated this Āḻvār to undertake a pilgrimage, the beauties of nature did not fail to attract the

134. *P.TML.* Couplets (10-37),
135. It was she (Kumutavalli) who directed the Āḻvār’s affection in religion to the Object Adorable, Nārāyaṇā.
136. Peri. Tm; 1.2; 1.7; 2.1.
137. ibid. 1.4.
138. ibid. 2.10; 3.1; 4, 8, 9, 10; 4.10; 5. 2, 3, 4; 9.8.
139. ibid. 3.4: 1; 3.5: 6; 4.2: 2; 5.1: 8; 7.5: 1; 9.7: 10.
Āḻvār which, unlike as in the case of nature poets who had given themselves to epic glorification, were meaningful to this Āḻvār only when they were presented in the association of the Lord.

PERIYĀĻVĀR

PERIYĀĻVĀR TIRUMOĻI: Viṣṇu-cittan whose surname, or rather title is Periyāḻvār—the Great Āḻvār (Elder Saint)—is the author of Periyāḻvār Tirumoḷi consisting of 463 verses in eight types of metres.¹⁴¹ The first Tirumoḷi is known as Tiruppallāṇṭu.¹⁴² There is a Vaiṣṇavite traditional story about the birth of this decad. Pāṇṭiya king was so pleased with the exposition by this Āḻvār of the superiority of Śrīman Nārāyaṇa as the Supreme Deity and of the greatness of Śrī Vaiṣṇava Siddāṇa as a philosophy of religion that he honoured him in the right royal style and arranged for a procession through the streets of Maturai for Viṣṇu-cittan seated on an elephant. As if to enjoy the unique honour done to His devotee, the Lord Himself seated on His vehicle Garuḍa appeared with all His beauty, majesty and glory. Viṣṇu-cittan witnessed Him and felt the magnanimity with which the Lord was possessed, as a result of which He gave darśana to him and to the large concourse of people thronging in the streets. In a trice he forgot His greatness, supremacy and prowess about which he had discoursed so eloquently in the polemic held in the king’s court a little while ago. A great fear seized him that some evil eye (Kaṇṭ eciil) may be cast

¹⁴⁰ There is a vaiṣṇavite tradition about this title to this Āḻvār. No Āḻvār before or after him sang the song of long life (Tiruppallāṇṭu) to God and for the enduring kingdom of God and Glory on earth. This is one of the two reasons why Viṣṇu-cittan is called Periyāḻvār (U.R.M. 18). The other reason is that the Āḻvār was given the opportunity of offering to the Lord the garland worn by Āṇṭāl. He got the reputation of having become great (mahattara) which he could not got by singing in praise of the Lord (Gōdaśūti 10).

¹⁴¹ āručīr āciirya viruttam, eṇčīr āciirya viruttam, eṇčīr āciirya viruttam, cantakkali viruttam, kali viruttam, kalittālicai, kali-nilaituṟai and kuraḷ veṇcentuṟai.

¹⁴² A discussion about the nature of its composition is included in the previous chapter
on Him and his beauty, to the right of which human eyes are not accustomed, and that some evil may befall Him on its account. At once he burst into song praying for, or rather blessing Him with, long life (eternal years) and every prosperity. This is Tiruppallānṭu. Such a mental frame and such a song can only be the outcome of overwhelming love towards God, so overwhelming that it makes one forget His great power and reduces Him to the state of an object of protection, though in truth and fact He is the protector of the world.

Periyāḻvār is the poet of the divine child. His love towards God is peculiar. It is one of a father to a son, of a mother to her darling and there is appropriateness in his wishing God “eternal years”. That love had converted him into Yacōtai and made him enjoy the pleasures and ecstasies of maternal love towards Lord Kṛṣṇa. Barring the first Tirumoli, a major portion of this Prabandha deals with the child-life of Lord Kṛṣṇa. It is from the second decade of his first Tirumoli that the Āḻvār sings, perhaps as His loving mother in all the details of a child’s life in the nursery, where the background is mythological. Beginning with the birth of Kṛṣṇa in the second decade of the first Tirumoli the Āḻvār goes on in the succeeding decades to describe His beauty, to put Him in the cradle and sing lullaby to Him, and call Him with extended hands to toddler towards him and clasp His hands, to invite Him to come and bathe and to wear

143. This reminds us at once of Cēntaṅar’s Tiruppallānṭu in the ninth Tiumurai of the Saivites.
144. Such a blessing in Vaiṣṇavite parlance is called Maṅgalāsāsanam or wishing for, desiring, and praying for maṅgalam or auspiciousness (welfare). Āśrīvādam (blessing) is what a superior or elderly person utters or invokes in regard to one inferior or younger; when an inferior invokes the welfare of the superior person, generally and only God, it is called Maṅgalāsāsanam.
145. Periyal. Tm. 1.2.
146. ibid. 1.3.
147. ibid. 1.4; 1.5; 1.7; 1.8.
148. ibid. 1.6.
flowers and so on. It is therefore that the commentator Periyavācān Pillai has fittingly said that Lord Kṛṣṇa who resides in the Āḻvār's heart heard the story of His birth and growth narrated by him. It is said by learned Tamil scholars that the germs of the Pīḷḷai-t-tamiḻ type of poetry singing the childhood of any hero or God, has been first laid down by this Āḻvār. As the trammels of conventionalised poetry are not seen in this Āḻvār, he may be looked upon as the originator of this new kind of poetry. It is only from the fourth Tirumولي onwards the Āḻvār deals with the sacred shrines.

Several of the sentiments voiced forth by this Āḻvār in his Prabandha show the intensity and sincerity of his devotion towards God. He counts among his hungry days not those days on which he starves, but those on which he does not resort to the Lord with the flowers culled from the Vedas. He advises people to name their children with the names of the Lord so that when calling them they will be necessarily uttering the names of the Lord and thereby unwittingly earning the merit of having repeated the Lord's names. To Lord Raṅganātha, the presiding deity at Tiruvaranākam, he pays his humble obeisance even now—a prayer made in advance—so that He may come and protect him during his last moments when he may in all probability be unable to think or talk. He winds up his Prabandha by exultingly speaking the infinite mercy of the Lord to save his soul of how the Lord has taken His seat within him and how fondly He has come and

149. ibid. 2.4; 2.7.
150. cf. Periyāḻvar Tirumولي 1.2 to 3.6 with the early portion of the Daśāmaskandha (Tenth canto) of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam dealing with Kṛṣṇa's birth, infancy and boyhood.
151. Commentary to the hymn. Periyal. Tm. 5.4: 11 (last stanza).
152. A History of Tamil Literature. p. 78. For a full discussion vide ibid., pp. 144-146.
153. The influence of this Āḻvār can be seen in Vallabhačārya's worship of Bālakṛṣṇa.
154. Periyal. Tm. 5.1: 6.
155. ibid. 4.6.
156. ibid. 4.10.
settled in his heart after rejecting and renouncing His glorious bed in the midst of the cool ocean and his soft couch on Ādiśeṣa. There is one verse here which shows the appropriateness of his having been named Viṣṇu-cittan. His powerful description of Gaṅgā descending from the top of the Hīmālayas with unprecedented force reminds us of Tirumānkaikālvār who describes things of that sort with poetic elegance and grandeur. There is another verse which gives the quintessence of philosophy.

Though the poetry of this Āḻvār is of a high order, it is his language that arrests our attention. He avoids the learned style and uses colloquialisms, mostly brahminical, of his age. A proverb 'paṭṭanṟu paṭṭinam kāppu', very much in vogue during his time is found in a whole decad. The Āḻvār introduces certain stories of Kṛṣṇa and Rāma which must have been current in the Tamil country as for example the story of Cīmālikā and the incident of Rāma being bound by Śītā with a jasmine garland which have not been mentioned by Vyāsa, Śukā or Vālmīki. There is an element of bridal mysticism in two decades.

157. ibid. 5.4: 9, 10. cf. 5.2: 10.
158. ibid. 5.4., 5. cf. 5. 4: 7, 9.
159 ibid. 4.7: 4, 9. cf. Peri. Tm. 1. 4:
160. ibid. 4.7: 10 where there is a play on the number Three as we find in the poem of Bhaktisāra.
161. ibid. 5.2. This Tirumoli can be compared with a verse in Pillapperumāl Ayyengar's poem Tiruvaramakkattumālai (st. 102). Here 'paṭṭinam' stands for the individual soul. The implication is that the soul is not in its previous state; it is now fortified by Him.
162. ibid. 2.7: 8. (vide Appendix. III).
163. ibid. 3. 10: 2. Perhaps the Āḻvār is influenced by the incident narrated about this Dīnāga's Kundamālā. In this hymn Hanumān refers to certain episodes known only to Śītā and Rāma in order to prove that he is the accredited messenger from Rāma. Kampan utilises these and elaborates them in the scene where Hanumān meets Śītā in the Asoka vāgām. (K.R. Cuntara Kāṇṭham. 4: 60-62).
164. ibid. 3.7; 3.8.
It is interesting to note that Periyāḻvār’s life and philosophy has so attracted Kṛṣṇadēva Rāya, the emperor of Vijayanagar that he wrote a beautiful kāvya, Āmukītamālyadā or Viṣṇu-Cittiva, one of the five great Kāvyas in Telugu. This kāvya deals with the life of the Āḻvār, his exposition of Vaiṣṇavism and the love between his foster-daughter Āṇṭāl and the Lord Raṅganātha. The style of this work which marks the beginning of the influence of Vaiṣṇavism on Telugu literature is involved and complex, the similes are sometimes far-fetched, but all the same the effect achieved is majestic and sublime.\(^{165}\)

Periyāḻvār is known also as the author of the Kalpasūtra.\(^{166}\) Neither the name of the work nor the work is extant. Vedānta Dēsika cites the passage from Periyāḻvār’s Tirumōḻi and justifies the contents of it.\(^{167}\) The Āḻvār means that those who recite the names of God have a right to purchase him. The implication is that He is the seṣa of the devotees of God. The relationship of the principal (śeṣin) and the secondary (śeṣa) and the nature of purchasing and selling are all dealt with the śrautā section of the Kalpasūtras. Periyāḻvār, who commented on these sūtras, must be quite familiar with the question of purchasing and the conditions governing it and so is this passage cited by Vedānta Dēsika.

Āṇṭāl

Āṇṭāl the only feminine mystic in the galaxy of Āḻvārs has left two poems viz.; Tiruppāvai and Nāceivar Tirumōḻi.

TIRUPPĀVAI: This beautiful small piece of work consisting of 30 verses in iyal taravinai-k-kocca-kakalippā metre is a well-known spiritual Tamil lyric and a pastoral poem of a very high order. It is a spiritual song of songs for the Divine Enchanter of Bṛndāvan. ‘Tiruppāvai’ means a sacred girl, a divine girl, and therefore, is likely to indicate Āṇṭāl herself. Her work also is Tiruppāvai which is so called

\(^{165}\) A History of South India (1966), p. 412.
\(^{166}\) Rahasyatrayasāra – Puruṣārtha kāsthādikāra.
\(^{167}\) Periyal. Tm. 4.4: 10.
because it relates to the observance of a Pāvai or Nōṇpu. In fact, all the verses excepting the thirtieth end with ‘Elorem-pāvai’ and the thirtieth ends with ‘Empāvai’ simpliciter. One of the several meanings, perhaps the correct one in the context, attributed to this refrain is based upon the meaning ‘Nōṇpu’ for the word ‘Pāvai’.

The poem has its genesis in Āntāl’s love of Kṛṣṇa. The scene and setting of Tiruppāvai conforms to the archetype of gōpi-love to the Divine cowherd boy who as māyōṇ captured their souls by His bewitching beauty. Āntāl’s poetic soul—the māke-believe element in her—helped her convert herself into a gōpī and with this frame of mind she starts singing Tiruppāvai. She visualised a congregational procession with her companions aroused from sleep to the mansion of the Sleeping Beauty to wake Him up and pray for the boon of pāvai or drum (which is a symbol or token of His inescapable love) to be received from Him. The poem is held to be marked by five divisions representing (i) the purpose of their observance of the nōṇpu; (ii) awakening the maidens, the companions of Āntāl from their sleep, and calling them to participate in the observance of the nōṇpu; (iii) awakening the persons in the mansion of the Lord beginning from the gate-keeper and ending with Nappiṇṇai (iv) arousing the Sleeping Beauty and making their representations to Him and (v) the fruits of their observance of the nōṇpu. The situations connected with these descriptions are depicted graphically and with meticulous care to mark the steps that precede the situations at dawn. The folk-song motif prevalent in those

168. This has been mentioned in Bhāgavatapurāṇam 10th canto, 22nd chapter. There is also reference in Paripātal - 11 to this nōṇpu. The nōṇpu has been observed in the Tamil Nāṭu in some form in the month of Mārkalī (December-January) and the ‘Āṭirai Tirunāl’ being celebrated in the same month in Kerala signifies this nōṇpu.

169. T.Pv. (1-5).
170. Ibid. (6-15).
171. Ibid. (16-18).
172. Ibid. (19-25).
173. Ibid. (26-30).
174. Ibid. (6-8).
times has been taken by Āṇṭāḷ and handled with exquisite skill and masterly technique to give expression to the external longing of the human heart for the love of God. The prayer is for the love of God with whom our relation is eternal and everlasting. The prayer is for service, for kaiśkārya and is for the removal of all other desires. The poem Tiruppavai is noted for its poetic beauty and philosophic suggestiveness. Among the Vaiṣṇavites it is regarded as an Upaniṣad as it contains the quintessence of Visiṣṭādvaita philosophy and Śrī Vaiṣṇavite tradition.

In sheer poetic quality, Āṇṭāḷ is not below the very best of poets. The range of her experience is strictly limited; but the elusive charm and the penetrating sweetness of her tone, which she maintains throughout, is what even the most fastidious of critics might well appreciate. Hers is a truly feminine genius, and for that reason stands by itself in Tamil literature.

An element of svāpadeśa or inner, allegorical meaning, is traced to some of the verses of Tiruppavai. For instance, the verses from 6 to 15 are interpreted as each directed towards the awakening from sleep of one of the ten Āḻvārs—Periyāḻvār, Kulacēkārāḻvār, Nammāḻvār, Tirumalaiyāḻvār, Peyāḻvār, Pūtattāḻvār, Poykaiyāḻvār, Tontaraṭṭip-poṭiyāḻvār, Tiruppāṇaḻvār, and Tirumāṅkalaiyāḻvār. Likewise the same songs are explicated as rousing the Bhāgavatas from sleep. Such allegorizing and reading into lines of meanings are far-fetched and strained and speak

176. T.Pv.6.  
177. ibid. 7.  
178. ibid. 8.  
179. ibid. 9.  
180. ibid. 10.  
181. ibid. 11.  
182. ibid. 12.  
183. ibid. 13.  
184. ibid. 14.  
185. ibid. 15.
more of the overingeniousness of the commentators than of the actual meaning of the verses.

NāCCIYĀR TIRUMOĻI: This poem of Āṇṭāl consists of 143 verses in five types of metres and they have been grouped in fourteen decades. In this poem, Āṇṭāl pours out her burning passion for union with Lord Kṛṣṇa. When there is no response to the message of love sent by her, she pines away in gloom. Then she invokes the aid of Manmatha for her union with the Lord. She describes the ritual of a penance, and a worship and a prayer to that God. But even the seductions of Manmatha’s shafts have no power over the Ravisher of souls. There is a description of a dream in which the love-sick maiden goes through the ritual of a marriage with Kṛṣṇa—a marriage as conducted in those days. In other hymns one gets the neytaḷ theme—the song of despair, full of love and pathos. There is a request to the cuckoo to cry welcome to her Lord; and a group of ten verses sending a massage through the clouds to Him. A decad of verses deals with a mystic circle (kūṭal) by which Āṇṭāl tries her success in attaining the Lord. The poem is an excellent piece of work which has set a standard in erotic

186. aṟṟṟṟ āciriyā viruttam, eluṟṟṟ āciriyā viruttam, kāli viruttam, kalintaitūṟai and kocca kakkallippā.
187. Nac. Tm. 1. A question may be posed whether it would be proper on the part of a true Vaiṣṇavite to worship other deities than Viṣṇu and the answer is, such means namely invoking other deities is approved since efforts are taken owing to intense longing for attaining the justifiable end, namely, Kṛṣṇa and further in bridal mysticism such efforts as taking Matal, or the observance of a vrata etc., are approved, because they have been resorted to in order to please God.
188. ibid. 6.
189. ibid. 10.
190. ibid. 5.
191. ibid. 8.
192. ibid. 4. This is an omen-circle drawn by a lady—love on sand closing her eyes so that the line drawn by the hand completes the circle correctly. Or else concentric circles are drawn and then these are counted. If they are an odd number, success is not predicted; if even, success is assured. cf. Nān. Tv. 39.
literature. Addressed to God, this eroticism is as pure as it is intense. At one stage Āntāl’s passivity gives way to aggressive love and in the frenzy of fierce love, she assaults the Lord by attempting to pluck out the very roots of love budding from the bosom and aim them at the Torturer so that His heart may be pierced by the wounds of unrequited love. Kṛṣṇa has had several abuses hurled at Him—by His parents when He was mischievous, by His playmates when He was exceptionally teasing, and by His consorts in later life whenever they are in suspicion of His fidelity towards them. But the epithets that Āntāl uses to depict and describe Him stand on a class apart. She calls Him one who tells white lies, a mischief monger who is ignorant of dharma, one who never knows how to say ‘Don’t fear’ in short, one who is as black in the interior as He is in the exterior, black of heart and black of body—a black God in his exterior and a Blackguard in His interior and a shameless one with a double tongue like His snake Adiśeṣa, terms which ought to make even Him blush with shame and remorse.

Both in her poems and in her father’s the cycle of Kṛṣṇa stories is most effectively used to rouse the devotion of the hearer, and to a Hindu the repeated allusions to the tales in different settings constitute not the least attractive feature of her work. The hymn ‘vāranāmāyiram’ telling of her dream-marriage with Lord Viṣṇu is sung at all Vaiṣṇavite marriages of today.

MATURAKAVI ĀLVĀR

KANṆINUNṆ CIRU-T-TĀMPU : This poem of Maturakavi Ālvār consisting of eleven verses, arranged in Antāti scheme,

193. ibid. 13: 8.
194. ibid. 14: 3.
196. ibid. 13: 3, 5.
197. ibid. 14: 7.
198. ibid. 10: 3.
199. ibid. 6.
is not on God but on Nammāḻvār, his spiritual guru. The name of the poem is not really a name, but the opening words of the Prabandha. To sing of Kurukur Nampi (Nammāḻvār) is sweeter to this Āḻvār than to sing of Lord. In the first five verses the Āḻvār speaks of how he approached and relied on the saint of Kurukūr as his all, and in the second five verses how the ācārya functions to secure to the disciple the saving grace of the Lord. The tenth verse is very significant because it shows how the ācārya out of his grace towards the disciple corrects his errors and erring ways and makes him a true and loyal servant. In this way Nammāḻvār becomes the first ācārya, or the ācārya amongst the Vaiṣṇavites. It is considered that these verses of the poem reveal the supreme poetic quality of the Āḻvār. The poem is held in high esteem by all Śrī Vaiṣṇavites and has been ranked on a par with the mystic utterances of the other Āḻvārs exuding God-love. It is therefore prefixed and suffixed to the recitation of Nammāḻvar’s Tiruvāyumoll even like the sacred prañava in relation to the ancient Sanskrit Vedas.

Rāmānuca-Nūṟṟantāti: Tiruvāraṅkattamutanār rendered services to Lord Raṅganātha in such an exceedingly splendid way that his admirers began calling him Periyakōyil Nampi. His deep erudition in all sāstras at a very early stage, the good services which he rendered and the reputation which he enjoyed there turned him conceited with the result that he felt he had no compeer. At the instance of Rāmānuja, his disciple Kūṟattālvān contacted Periyakōyil Nampi and relieving him of his conceit by training him in the right path brought him to the side of Rāmānuja whose devoted disciple he chose to remain ever after. Rāmānuja’s desire to make Periyakōyil Nampi contribute to the greatness of the Āḻvārs yielded the appreciable result through the composition

200. K.C. 1. Vedānta Dēśika has nicely put this as ”Maturakavi who freed himself from all sorrow by relying solely on him, who rendered the Vedas into Tamil-Saint Saṭṭakōpa” (T.P. 41).

201. The spiritual lineage of Rāmānuja is traced back to Nammāḻvār through Periya Nampi, Yāmūncārya (Āḻavantār), Maṇakkāl Nampi, Uyyakkoṇṭār, and Nāṭhamuni.

of 108 verses by him in praise of the Ālvārs, each one containing the word ‘Rāmānuja’. This work received the approbation of all the learned men of the day and was named ‘Rāmānuca-nūṟṟantati’. In point of its grand style rich diction and inner sense no other composition can bear comparison with it. The author was therefore conferred the title ‘Amutaṉār’ from the Tamil word ‘amutam’ meaning ‘nectar’.

This composition of Amutaṉār which is in Kaṭṭalai-kalittūṟai metre glorifies Rāmānuja, in the main, recounting the latter’s contribution for Vaishnavism. It is through Rāmānuja, the author feels, that he would get all good things in life here and hereafter. The composition contains realistic depiction of the greatness of each of the Ālvārs, Rāmānuja, Nāthamuni and Yāmunācārya.

203. ibid. 8 to 18.
204. ibid. 19.
205. ibid. 20.
206. ibid. 21.
THE COMPOSITIONS OF ĀLVĀRS (II)

NAMMĀLVĀR

Nammālvār, “Our Ālvār”, the greatest of Ālvārs who is also known as Māraṇ, Śaṭhäkōpā and Parāṅkuśaṇ has given to the world four poems known as Tiruviruttam, Tiruvāciriyan, Periya Tiruvantāi and Tiruvāymoṭi which are supposed to contain the essentials of the four Vedas and so equated to them respectively.¹ Like Śuka, he was conceived and born in godliness. With his instinct for the infinite his hunger and thirst were only for God. His divine love was a divine gift and he was immersed in it for sixteen years at the foot of a tamarind tree till he came down to the waking state and gave articulate expression to his infinite āvā or love in the four soul-stirring poems mentioned above. His is the piercing cry and the inexplicable joy of the heart. All the four poems of this Ālvār are in the Antāṭi arrangement. More than the works of any other saints, Nammālvār’s hymns have shaped the conduct and faith of the southern Vaiśṇavites. Possessing a matchless cadence and simple grandeur, they are characterised equally by their literary charm and by their ethical and spiritual values. To the emotionally inclined, the psalms are simple and appealing prayers to the different forms of Viṣṇu in different sacred places. To the less emotional and more philosophical, they seem to be the outcome of great learning in the Vedas, the Upaniṣads, the Gītā and the Bhāgavata literature. To the practical spiritualist, they are of value as the achievement of one who was in holy communion with God.

TIRUVIRUTTAM: Tiruviruttam, the first work of

¹. U.R.M., 14.
Nammāḻvār, which is considered by the orthodox to be the essence of the Rg Veda (Rg Veda sāra) consists of a hundred verses in kaṭṭalāi-k-kalitturāi metre. This metre was in those days called viruttam and the name ‘viruttam’ has been given to this work as to all literary compositions in that metre. The term ‘viruttam’ applies to this work in another sense too. The poem is a narration of an incident in the life of Nammāḻvār, a viruttānta, and as such the work deserves to be called a ‘viruttam’.

‘Tiru’ is a word in Tamil, like Śrī in Sanskrit, being usually prefixed to any great man or good thing signifying sacredness or auspiciousness as in the case of Tirukkural. Hence the name Tiruviruttam to this poem. The composition belongs to the feminine approach to the Divine as implied in Vedic literature. The Supreme Being is the One Purusā, the Primal male, all else, gods, men and other creatures are in the relationship of females, dependents, aṅgas, śaktis etc.

The mysticism of


3. The older metres such as venpā akaval, and kali became longer and longer during the period of Āḻvārs and Nāyaṇmārs. They then came to be called viruttam and the name was first applied to kaṭṭalāik-kalitturāi which consists of four lines of five cīrs, and later on was used for denoting all such developments. e.g., Poems of Appar, and those of Paṭṭinattup-pillaiyār. Even in the Caṅkam age compositions were named after the same metre. In some cases the whole of the book is in the same metre. e.g., Kalittokai and Paripāṭal.

4. The incident referred to is this: Ever since his birth, Nammāḻvār did not open his eyes. When he was taken to the temple on the twelfth day, he opened his eyes, and the first object he beheld was God’s image in the temple and therefore he was a god-man. Again he closed his eyes and was in that state for sixteen years immersed in divine love. The first work of his is this poem which makes an appeal to God to rid him from saṃsāra. (The word ‘vinnappam’ in Tamil means ‘appeal’). The tradition that the name of a work describing an incident (viruttāntam) is also called as viruttam can be known from the name of works such as Nariviruttam, Kaliviruttam and Eliviruttam most of which are Jain works. cf. Campantar’s Tevāram 3. 39: 5.

other Āḻvārs also is highly coloured by this most significant attitude especially as it is of Āṇṭāl, Tirumānakai Mānan and Kulacēkarar. The feminine approach is what might be made by one who has been entranced by the Beauty of the Divine. The work of this Āḻvār mystic on the basis of this understanding renders the real and supreme nature of God as the most wonderful integration of all the manifold auspicious excellences. It is thus seen in this poem the representation of the supreme attractiveness of the Divine which makes him seek no other company, no other ordainer, no master other than the Divine Lord Himself. It is true that this is impossible for any one who is yet in the outercourt so to speak. The deep intimate and total offering that the Āḻvār wants to make, giving up all his other desires desiring Him as lover and husband is only possible to a soul made feminine. It is further beauty alone, not the outer beauty merely, but that supreme beauty which melts the soul. Not until the soul melts can it ever know how to enter the divine. That is, only aesthetic heat, or intention, can facilitate the union with the Beloved Object.

The poem reveals the reactions of a soul (here Nammāḻvār, as Parāṅkuśa Nāyaki) caught up by the Lord’s beauty which from then on it has elected to follow as its one and only supreme object that shall govern the rest of its life. The very first verse shows the soul which already having beheld the beauty of the Divine Lord in His transcending Grace that had made Him descend into manifold wombs so as to relieve the distress of the souls, now seeks to appeal to Him to hearken to its appeals to remove the obstacles to its brahmānubhava. The sentiment embodied in this verse is exceptional and unique as no other devotee has started with a plea and a petition (viṟṟṇappam) on behalf of suffering humanity. The Lord is all grace, who could be invoked

6. It is worthy of note that the first word of the first verse of his works stands for false-hood (poy ninrajñālam) and the last word of the last verse stands for exaltation uyarṇṭē (T.V.M. 10–10–11). If ever any soul migrated from false-hood to exaltation, it was Nammāḻvār as even the words used by him indicate.
through prayer and who, in spite of it too, is anxious to save all His creatures for which purpose He has taken many descents and forms. So much is the Āḻvār overpowered by the love shown by Him to all His sinning slaves that he surrenders his entire being to Him.

But the vision is obviously short-lived for the verses that follow intimate the feeling of separation. The vision has passed into remembrance. The next group of verses are all intended to demonstrate the growing intensities of the Parāṅkuśa Nāyaki (so the Āḻvār’s soul is called) who had but a glimpse of the Divine like a lightning flash in a dark and heavy night. The condition of the love-smitten woman, the blowing of the oppressive northern winds, the oncoming of the rainy season, pseudo as well as real, when the hero would return as promised have all been vividly portrayed. The fever of love is being fanned into white-heat by the northern winds. The world-life for the Nāyaki without Nāyaka (God) is felt to be oppressive—it now appears to be a vast ocean which is dark, gloomy and serenely indifferent. The most poignant experience then runs with the collapsing feeling. Such is her condition that streams of water are flowing from her deep ocean-eyes. The heart’s lord the bridegroom had not arrived. An attempt is made to care for her love-sickness with magic such as that practised by devil-ostraciser and it has become an utter failure. The Nāyaki knows that the cure will prove futile because she knows the causes of her deepening distress and she is also aware of the chasm that separates her from her beloved Adorable Object of Union. Then there comes the gentle breeze gathering the tulāci-scent nearing towards her. Now her joy is exceedingly great and intense.

7. TVR. 2.
8. ibid. 4, 5, 13, 28, 35, 41.
9. ibid. 7, 18.
10. ibid. 52, 68.
11. ibid. 16, 17, 18.
12. ibid. 20.
13. ibid. 25.
The Nāyaki has an ecstatic feeling but not yet a vision of presence. This makes her a little life-interested. But she is dragged into the divine centre. She yearns for the experience of his presence. She hopes that He does keep up or abide by His promises. She lapses into herself and her loneliness leads to suffering. This second stage reveals her disgust at every other being that has some sort of connection with the Divine. She pleads with swans, herons and even clouds to take her plaint to her beloved Lord. She even laments that outer objects prevented inward growth and total offering. Her own inner voices, friendly to her, feel the callousness and irresponsiveness of the Lord and there is material and self-regarding voice within that even fears that she has entered into a veritable jungle of death. At one stage even tulaci which she has considered as Lord’s grace which is invigorating and increases her faith in Him has proved like remembrance—transitory ecstasy—food for memory, for rumination. At another stage she finds every tree, every bush, every cloud, every blue lily to reveal or recall Lord. Such is the intoxication of the vision, slowing blossoming out of the faith, prayer, longing consecration, and refusal to have anything to do with material and physical and sensory joys or wants. When searching for the beloved in every place, the Parāńkuśa Nāyaki is gifted to perceive the Divine in all things, the viśvarūpa, the world-divine Love form. Then His eyes welling up with love for all, that beauty of His lotus eyes, that beauty of Form, His superb greatness, are one after another revealed to her, all too deep for expression and overflowing all experience.

14. This reverberation of the feeling of hope coming to her mind is an Akam motif. This kind of suggestion, sometimes occurring in more than one hierarchic layer is called iraići (Tol. Poru)-Sūtras.)
15. ibid. 30, 31.
16. ibid. 32, 38.
17. ibid. 35, 36, 37, 70, cf. v. 19.
18. ibid. 32.
19. ibid. 38.
20. ibid. 39.
21. ibid. 43.
psychically one of ardent expectancy. It would be clear that it is of the intensest quality. Now a soothsayer is sought after to give advice; she has diagnosed her real malady as God-infection.\(^\text{22}\) Neither physical malady nor any psychical one is there; the real condition is soul-aspiration. And what she is yearning after is the total personality of God, nothing less can help. She has become thin;\(^\text{23}\) her anguished cry is heard indeed, for she begins to hear the voice of the supreme Lord urging the charioteer to drive fast.\(^\text{24}\) The Lord’s own anxiety to meet and save the soul is great. Now the true rainy season has arrived indeed and the period of union is at last at hand.\(^\text{25}\) The Nāyaki likewise has become tear-filled, inconsolable, since none but God could help. Urgency prompts her to send further messengers, this time, the beetles and bees. The significance of messengers of these kinds may be due to the fact that they have closer intimacy with the honey-laden garland of God.\(^\text{26}\) Then happens the arrival of Lord not yet in front but intimated by the cool sweet southern breeze.\(^\text{27}\)

The third coming is nearer and more intimate than any prior. The Nāyaka’s love for the Nāyaki is made manifest by his secret presence that presents an aura of happiness. His passion too is manifestly sincere and reciprocative as a response to the agony of love of the Nāyaki. Faith has deepened; the impossible has now a chance of fulfilment. The Nāyaki has to get her assurance, and perfect assurance that she would be meeting her Nāyaka. The maid comes to her help. It is she who consoles both the Nāyaka and the Nāyaki. She narrates the greatness, goodness, puissance, condescension and other qualities of the Nāyaka and asks her to wait till His arrival.\(^\text{28}\) She speaks to the Nāyaka also about the inconsolability and

\(^{\text{22}}\) ibid. 53.
\(^{\text{23}}\) ibid. 47.
\(^{\text{24}}\) ibid. 50.
\(^{\text{25}}\) ibid. 52.
\(^{\text{26}}\) ibid. 54, 55.
\(^{\text{27}}\) ibid. 56.
\(^{\text{28}}\) ibid. 58, 61.
utter helplessness of the Nāyaki; she also points out to Him the uninterrupted aspiration or total consecration or offering of her to Him. The Nāyaki refuses to listen to others who say that she has not His grace and finds fullest consolation in reciting constantly His name. Such is she in complete absorption. In the recesses of her being there occur visible changes. The Lord has indeed arrived; her beauty has increased. It is not the physical beauty now but the beauty that is intrinsic, psychical, inalienable, of knowledge too. She is in the madness of love; she is transforming herself in the passion of her Lord. Everywhere she sees His glory, a hallucination as it were. It is under such conditions of psychical exaltation and complete overwhelming absorption that the tulacicool fragrant breeze blows from the direction of the Divine. There is silent grief of being separate from the Lord unlike those who are blessed to be always by His side, inseparably so in worship, work and service, and the present loneliness and evening darkneses are symbolic of the soul's (Nāyaki's) despairs and languishments. But they are no longer of the doubting kind, for absolute fidelity is affirmed. There is impatience and grief which are results indeed only of the separation from the Nāyaka. The whole situation indeed breathes a tense atmosphere of denouement. There is to be a glorious marriage a divine embrace of the soul by its true and inalienable Lord, a superb acceptance of her by the Divine as an eternal companion. The states of consciousness at this high place or altitude of Divine Gnosis are veritable masterpieces of Vision.

29. ibid. 62.
30. ibid. 63.
31. ibid. 64.
32. ibid. 74, 75.
33. ibid. 80, 82, 85, 86.
34. ibid. 74.
35. ibid. 77, 78, 79, 80, 86.
36. ibid. 91, 95, 99.
37. ibid. 87, 88, 89, 90.
38. ibid. 96, 97.
Thus the poem is an account of the pilgrimage of the soul to its real Self, of the Nāyaki to her real and eternal Nāyaka, the Lord. Nammāḻvar has shown that one who sees God becomes a woman. Such is the mystic nature and rapture of the soul in relation to the Universal Soul.

TIRUVĀCIRIYAM: This poem, which is stated to be a mystic rendering of the truths of the Yajur Veda, is the second work of this Āḻvār and it is the smallest among his works. It consists of seven verses in āciriyappā metre arranged in the Antāti scheme and the poem takes its name of the metre employed. This small poem teaches within the brief compass of seven verses the taitva (Nature of Reality), the hita (the Means) and the puruṣārtha (the Goal of human endeavour) as well as the obstacles to the attainment of that ideal and goal.

In the opening verse the nature of God is explained as the supremely adorable Transcendent Object. God is compared to a mountain in the ocean, the Rock of Ages in the samsāra; the Tirivikrama-avatāra of Viṣṇu, His primeval dwelling place as Nārāyaṇa in the waters of the milk ocean,

39 The Akam motif found in Caṅkam literature, beautifully systematised in Tolkāppiṟṟum, has been excellently handled by this Āḻvār for the divine purpose.

cf. Bhāgavatam, V. 5: 15, 16. The motif has received a different treatment. It has been stated that those, who enter the Ilāvarta country where Śiva is worshipping Nārāyaṇa as Saṅkarāśaṇa become women at once, due to a curse. (Perhaps curses by gods or goddesses may be symbolic of good leading to revelation of reality).

40. Verses 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 are Nīlaimaṇṭilā ācirivappās and 5 and 7 are Nērical āciriyappās.

41. But in this poem the ending of the last verse is not the beginning of the first one. This along with the fact that the Āḻvār's name is not given in the last verse as he has given in Tiruvirūttam and Tiruvāyvalī have led some to think that the poem Tiruvācirivam is not a complete poem and some of the verses might have been lost. But this is not sufficient ground to arrive at such a conclusion as the other poem Periya Tiruvantāṭi also does not have his name. The only possible reason may be that the Āḻvār has not preferred to mention his name in these two works.
His perfect creative yāga called susupti of the transcendent Prajñā and that wonderful form the gods ever adore and would like to behold, are all described together. The second verse reveals the Ālvār's infinite avā or desire to worship the lotus feet of the Divine whose sovereignty is so fully established by the three-strided Tirivikrama.42 The third verse points out that offering oneself to God will involve also the devoted and consecrated service to the devotees of God (aṭiyārs) who have realised the truth that their "I" is God alone. But the Ālvār feels also that not all devotees can equal the one Lord, because their powers are only God-limited since they are God-granted. It is necessary to reach the source. So the supreme ideal is indeed the Supreme alone, who has become the "I" of oneself and of all and the fourth verse therefore points out that it is the refuge at His feet alone that grants supreme felicity. The fifth verse gives a grand description of a visvanāpa darśana, the vision of the World Omnipervasive Form of the Lord which is a tender grace-granting figure and it is to that Supreme Divine that saroṇāgati is to be performed. The sixth verse points out the weaknesses of mankind, its inveterate tendency to choose the evil and not the good means which is God Himself and also the sympathy of the Ālvār to them.44 The seventh and final verse makes the stern determination to worship the Supreme Godhead alone for He is the cause, the One Being, constantly reiterated in the earlier verses, who, unaided, creates, sustains, redeems, loves and succours, withdraws and manifests souls and all creation in perfect freedom and perfection.45 In short, this final verse most conspicuously shows the original total cause of the existences to be Himself.

42. cf. Tc. V. 108.
43. The description given in the verse is that of the great exploit of Viṣṇu which, it must be remembered, is nowhere attributed to any other godhead in the Vedas. cf. M. Tv. 17.
44. The commentator Periyavācān Pillai remarks that the intensity and volume of the Ālvār's note of sympathy will be sufficient to reach all the worlds wherever such ignorant people are inhabited. Again Cf. TVM. 4. 6: 2, 3, 7 and 8.
45. Cf. M. Tv. 69; Peri. Tm. 11. 6: 2 and 3.
PERIYA TIRUVANTĀTI: This poem consists of eighty seven verses in venpā metre (Nēricai venpā) and the work is said to be the essence of Atharvana Veda. Even though the poem contains eighty seven verses it is called Periya Tiruvantāti (Great Tiruvantāti) because its greatness consists in the beauty of its diction and in the beauty of its esoteric meanings. Another reason may also be attributed to its name as the Āḻvār himself says in one verse,46 rather humorously, that he is greater than God since he has in him the God who is the owner of the two worlds, the celestial and the terrestrial (ubhaya vibhūtis); and the work which speaks of the Āḻvār’s greatness is called Periya Tiruvantāti.

The purpose of the whole poem is to instruct the mind to worship the greatness of God. It is intended to make the mind attain its real status, śvarūpa-jñāna and make it bathe fully in the flowing waters of the Divine goodness, greatness or majesty and love. The Āḻvār begins the poem by expressing his extreme desire to praise the infinite auspicious qualities of God; but he feels his inability to grasp the glory of God. He submits to the Lord how He transcends words and is beyond praise. The tone of apology in particular is noteworthy where he says, “Please do not get angry with us, because we indulge in such love-antics of ours.”47 And he seeks to justify the lapse by referring to the love that impels men to take to praise Him. As he sings in seven more verses48 this feeling of unworthiness, for worship overtakes him again, and in the next verse49 he says “Who are we and where is worship of Tirumāl?” If at all the only persons who can possibly claim to worship Him are the eight Vasus, the eleven Rudras, the twelve Ādityas, and Śiva and Brahmā and concludes “We have to our credit, immense faults.” There are other pācu-

46. P: Tv. 75.
47. ibid. 2. The verse uses the plural “we” throughout and not the singular “I”. It must be taken for granted that the Āḻvār here sings about the unworthiness of mankind as a whole and not of himself alone.
48. ibid. 3 to 9.
49. ibid. 10.
rams in this poem disclosing a similar frame of mind.\textsuperscript{50} At another stage the Āḻvār says that by praising the God’s auspicious qualities, all our sins will be washed away.\textsuperscript{51} Among the innumerable qualities, saulabha,\textsuperscript{52} vaiśalya\textsuperscript{53} souśilya,\textsuperscript{54} have been praised. The attraction of the Lord is great, for He is independent, and He has made several descents which show His inimitable ever ready grace, incomparable, perfect indweller of all creatures. These distinguishing features make us get closer to Him.\textsuperscript{55} The nearness to God is only a token of sacrificing our egoism. “By becoming the servants of God, we have become as it were His sacred sandals.”\textsuperscript{56} Service is sacrifice and once this is made, God becomes nearer and uses us for His divine purposes and thus we become dear to Him. The path and way is God.\textsuperscript{57} Sacrifice or surrender makes the Divine come close to the soul and destroy all obstacles.\textsuperscript{58} He becomes the protector of the soul.\textsuperscript{59} The necessity, however, is that the soul should desire Him intensely and devote itself to Him and His service. Indeed He alone is the adorable, worshippable object.\textsuperscript{60} Then the Āḻvār describes the process of his absorption.\textsuperscript{61} The Lord has become His father, mother and teacher and has established with him every kind of relationship.\textsuperscript{62}

The topics once dealt with recur to be treated more than once and present no scheme as in the case of his other

\textsuperscript{50} ibid. 14, 20, 32, 34, 38, 59, 84.
\textsuperscript{51} ibid. 15, 38.
\textsuperscript{52} ibid. 36, 37.
\textsuperscript{53} ibid. 17.
\textsuperscript{54} ibid. 19.
\textsuperscript{55} ibid. 24.
\textsuperscript{56} ibid. 31.
\textsuperscript{57} ibid. 46, 47, 48, 52.
\textsuperscript{58} ibid. 33.
\textsuperscript{59} ibid. 36.
\textsuperscript{60} ibid. 42, 43.
\textsuperscript{61} ibid. 38, 40, 41, 45, 46, 47, 49, 52, 53, 55, 56, 60, 62, 63, 64, 68, 69, 70, 76.
\textsuperscript{62} ibid. 5, 77.
three works. There are several types of meditation or prayers to the Divine to come closer to the soul and make it His servant. And a superb note presented in one verse appeals to our mind; the realisation of the Lord here on this planet, in this mortal existence, will remove every desire for the most desirable *paramapada.* The Lord indwelling in the heart of the devoted servant and contemplative will make all sins non-existent. In short, the teaching of this poem mainly consists in revealing the most fundamental aspect of the doctrine of Surrender through service to the Divine, which alone makes for the inward realization of the Divine at the very heart of the devotee. The steps for this are devotion, service or servantship, contemplation, indwellingness, intimacy, exaltation and infinitisation or divinisation.

**TIRUVĀYMOLI:** This long poem consisting of 1102 verses in nine types of metres arranged in 100 decades which are divided into ten sections known as *'Pattu'.* This work is considered to be the essence of the *Sāma Veda.* The hymns of other Āḻvārs are to the effect that the ațtainment of Vaikuṇṭha is not to be preferred to the enjoyment obtainable on this earth by loving Him and singing about Him. But Nammāḻvār's God-love is on a level far more exalted and far more intense. It is more an organic craving than a mere mental feeling. It is more or less a consuming passion. It is seen in this poem the hide and seek which the eternal enchanting lover of his heart plays with him, at one moment the joy of the incomparable blessing, at the other the feeling of isolation, the despair of the dark chamber with intermittent glimpses of the love; finally the eternal joy and light of God, to whose presence he is taken with all pomp and grandeur.

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63. ibid. 67.
64. Kocca kakkalippā, āc ir iyyatturai, kalinilaitturai, vaĉcitturai, arucīr āc ir iyaviruttam, eluçir āc ir iyaviruttam, eĉc āc ir iyva viruttam, kalivruttam and vaĉci viruttam.
65. One *'Pattu'* contains ten decades each decad approximating to 100 verses. Each decad is called a *Tiruvāy mole.* Therefore one *'pattu'* will contain ten *Tiruvāy molis.* Throughout this thesis the decad is referred to as hymn.
66. TVM. 10. 9.
In between these moods, the Āḻvār addresses the world and directly delivers his message of Love and Hope. He often tries to express the inexpressible, in mystic songs of Akam poetry. His is a heart-melting poetry giving us the quintessence of his divine experience. Even in such moods the idea of kūṟāḻ finds a place in his verses; the very line of one kūṟāḻ is embedded in one verse.

The first section of a hundred verses insists on kaiṅkarya to God as the chief goal of life. Bhagavān is the Supreme Lord, who is ever adorable, accessible, holy and blissful and the Saviour of all. The second section analyses kaiṅkarya in all its aspects, pointing out the obstacles in the way, and concludes that kaiṅkarya is only for His satisfaction without any taint of egoism. In the third section, kaiṅkarya has an extended meaning as it finds its completion in Bhāgavata kaiṅkarya (service to the Lord’s devotees or godly men), irrespective of their birth or status. It is the Āḻvār’s firm conviction that the intensity of one’s devotion to the Lord will be explicit in one’s devotion to the Lord’s devotees. The fourth centum traces the way in which the obstacles to the divine life like the temptations of aīsvarya and kaivalya, are surmounted. The Āḻvār makes it clear that the greatest obstacle lying in the path of kaiṅkarya is the enjoyment of

67. ibid. 5. 3: 1, 2. cf. kūṟāḻ. 1147.
68. ibid. 5. 3: 3 cf. ibid.
69. ibid. 1. 1: 1 and 1. 10: 11.
70. ibid. 1. 1.
71. ibid. 1. 3; 1. 5.
72. ibid. 1. 6; 1. 7.
73. ibid. 2. 3: 10.
74. ibid., 2. 9. There is an anecdote in the Itu according to which when Empār begins his discourse on this Tiruvāyumoḻi he used to examine each one in the audience present weed out the undeserving and close and bolt the door signifying perhaps there is none in the world qualified to listen to the purusārtha which is its purport (vide: Iṭṭin Tōmilākkam Vol. II (Ed. 1952), p. 241.
75. ibid. 3. 7: 9.
76. ibid. 4. 1: 1, 9, 10.
sense pleasures. The fifth section is justification by the faith that the Lord Himself removes these hindrances. The Lord Himself has shown His feet as the upāya by which to have whatever the Āḻvār wishes to have and to avoid whatever he wants to avoid. This part contains the decak on the deity at Kumbakonam which had been the key to Nathamuni to unearth the whole of Nālāyiram. The sixth section is rather the epitome, the sum and substance, of the spiritual experience of the Tamil seers (or Āḻvārs). It is an important stage in the spiritual life of this Āḻvār, who is extolled as the super-prapanna of Śrī Vaishnavism, as it defines prapatti as the only way to God and the whole attitude of devotion is consummated in prapatti or self-surrender. But mukti or release from the cycle of births and deaths is not yet in sight to the Āḻvār in spite of self-surrender to the Lord and so the Āḻvār portrays his feeling of dejection in the seventh centum. At first the Āḻvār thinks of the cruelty of God in subjecting him to further hardships in the world of samsāra; but very soon he realises the reason for the delay to mukti as perhaps the Lord enjoys his hymns, however imperfect they may be and that is also by His divine grace. The eighth centum is an account of the purificatory value of the Āḻvār’s disappointment as it leads to further self-naughting and introversion, and increases the hunger of God. It is seen here the redemptive love of God who is drawn by love and dwells forever in the heart of devotees with a view to saving them from sin. In the ninth centum the Āḻvār’s feeling of dejection is soon transfigured into hope and it makes love an irrepressible longing. It is shown here God as the eternal friend and

77. ibid. 4.9.10. cf. Kṛṣṇa-1121. cf. also TVM. 7.1.
78. ibid. 5.7.10.
79. ibid. 5.8.
80. ibid. 6.10: 10.
81. ibid. 7.1.
82. ibid. 7.9.
83. ibid. 8.1; 8.3; 8.4; 8.5.
84. ibid. 8.6; 8.7.
85. ibid. 9.3; 9.4; 9.10.
companion to the mumukṣu. The tenth and last section marks the completion of the spiritual progress of the Āḻvār. It gives a glowing account of his glorious ascent to Vaikunṭha, his divine abode and thus the attainment by him of the eternal bliss of Brahman having its fruition in kaiṅkarya. Here God is shown seeking the Āḻvār more than he seeks God, and so He can be called aptly the "Hound of Heaven."

The descriptions of the shrines whose praises the Āḻvār has sung here contain the representation of the intense passion for the Lord in the ideal setting of the beauteous natural scene. The hills, thick with forests and marked by the presence of the beasts, get a vivid description. The surroundings of some shrines breathe the aroma of the fragrant offerings made in the sacred fires, revealing an atmosphere of Vedic study. The spritely movements of the fish in the adjoining fields of certain shrines add to the attractiveness of the places testifying to the peace and plenty reigning these as a gift from the particular deity to the local inhabitants for which act of grace they remain ever grateful to Him.

GENERAL PURPOSE OF THE HYMNS: The hymns of the Āḻvārs, without any exception, hold that Nārāyaṇa as the supreme Lord, the inner Controller of all beings; He is also the Creator of the Universe. The efficacy of Mūlamantra has been stated by the Āḻvārs in unequivocal terms in their poems. The poems of the Āḻvārs deal extensively with the enjoyment

86. ibid. 9.1; 9.2; 9.4; 9.10.
87. ibid. 10.1; 10.2; 10.4; 10.6; 10.7; 10.8.
88. ibid. 10.9; 10.10.
89. This trend is seen from the hymn 10.6 to the hymn 10.10. Nam pillai, the author of Thirty-six Thousand when he begins his commentary to the hymn 10.6 refers to this trend: "We see the Āḻvār pursuing God from the first verse of Tiruviruttam up to this hymn; and from this onwards God's pursuit of the Āḻvār is noted" (Iṭṭin Tamilakkam, Vol. X., p. 183).
90. TVM. 2.10; 3.3; 10.8.
91. ibid. 5.7; 7.3; 8.6.
92. ibid. 5.9; 6.1; 7.3; 7.10; 8.4; 8.9; 9.2; 9.6; 9.7; 9.8; 9.10; 10.1; 10.2; 10.6.
of arca form of God in several sacred spots. In all, Tirumañkaiyāḻvār has sung about 86 out of 108 Divya Deśas; and Tonṭaraṭipoṭiyāḻvār has sung only one, and that is Tiruvanṭakam; and Tiruppāṉāḻvār has sung Tiruvanṭakam and Vēṅkaṭam. Other Āḻvārs have sung a considerable number in their praise. Again the Āḻvārs refer to innumerable auspicious qualities of the Lord and revel in them especially kṛpā, saulabhya and sausīlya, and so many avatāras which are the concrete manifestations of kṛpā and its periodic invasion into all species when evil triumphs over goodness and creates a crisis in moral life figure in their poems. Even mythology becomes real and vivid to these imaginative poets; and the stories based on mythology are told with a grasp of their essential message. The stories – sometimes cruel and wild – become revelations of only the love of the Lord to the suffering jīvas. It may, in this connection, be pointed out that the novelty, superiority and popularity of the hymnal literatute of the Āḻvārs in Tamil is due to the happy blending of spiritual love with the literary form of human love.93

VAISNAVITE RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY
IN THE NĀLĀYIRM

SUMMARY

This section forms the main part of this thesis wherein the aspects of religion and philosophy of the Ālvars, especially that of Nammālvār, are fully discussed. The already existent concepts of Vaiṣṇavism paved the way for the Ālvars for the formulation of Vaiṣṇavite theism, though not as a system of thought. Nammālvār recognizes the Upaniṣadic concept of Brahman and the one accepted in theology as a personal deity and identifies Him as Nārāyaṇa with Śrī in his poems. His complexion and other individualistic traits are shown to arrest the mind of the devotees.

The Lord’s attributes which lie beyond human comprehension are satyam, jñānam, and anantam. These are the chief attributes which form the basis for the admission of countless qualities. Bliss (ānanda) is an important attribute of the Lord which produces delectable experience in His devotees. Among His many auspicious qualities, saulabhya, sausīlya, vātsalya, dayā have much attraction for the Ālvars. The five forms of God, the transcendent, the grouped, the divinely descended, the immanent and the idol forms mentioned in the
Agamas are accepted by the Ālvārs and they express their experience of such forms in their utterances. God in the transcendental state possesses the super-essential qualities of satyam, jñānam, anantam, amalam and ānandam. In the grouped form the Lord manifests Himself as Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. The avatāras of God takes place (Vibhava form) when evil triumphs over goodness and creates a crisis in moral life. There are frequent references to such avatāras as Varāha, Vāmana, Narasimha, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa. The fourth state of God, antaryāmin, makes the souls pulsate with their creative life and participate in their inner joy and make the mortal selves immortal. The fifth state is the idol which is the reservoir of redemptive mercy. In fact, the poems of the Ālvārs are the treasure of their experience of this form. Nammāḷvār in one hymn of ten verses stresses the easy accessibility of arcā. It has also been pointed out that the Ālvārs revel in the exploits of Nārāyaṇa both in the para and vibhava states and these saints have frescoed them in their hearts, so to say.

The nature of self is clearly realized by the Ālvārs, particularly by Nammāḷvār; but they have not employed the classification of selves as nitya, mukta and bhaddha. Nārāyaṇa is the creator, protector and destroyer of the Universe. A number of verses in Tiruvāyumoḷi refer to the involutionary and evolutionary processes of the Universe. The interrelations of God, self and the world have been explained on the basis of karma. Īśvara as the sartrin of all is clearly intuited by these saints and He is considered as having endless glories or posses-
sions. The \textit{lalā-vibhūti} exists for His sport and \textit{nityavibhūti} is time as eternity.

The Álvārs have a strong faith that the Lord's grace alone could lead us to emancipation. They dived deep in the ocean of His auspicious qualities through their love they had for Him. To them God's \textit{dayā} is more attractive; He is \textit{dayānidhi} to them. In the act of operation of God's grace, the office performed by Lakṣmī is unique and significant. The Álvārs lay emphasis on God-love. This God-love or 'avā' is seen to have been mentioned in their poems. To Nammālvār God is the food he eats, the water he drinks and the betel he chews. The Álvārs in general could not give up the great joy, the ecstasy, they were having by their communion with Him as is seen from their poems and references to this aspect are countless. In their ecstasy of their mystic experience, pain and delight take their positions alternately. The apparent contradictions of the world proclaim only with a loud note that He cannot be comprehended by man. The god-experience is called 'amutu' by the Álvārs. To Nammālvār is "\textit{Ellām Kaṇṇāv}.''

The Álvārs are Nature mystics. The basis of soul and Nature is God who is described under various names by different thinkers. Nature, according to the Álvārs, is the theatre of the Divine \textit{hilā} of Love and the Lord wears the garment of nature and plays with the finite self till the two are united. To them the universe of \textit{cit} and \textit{acit} has its unity only in God. It is the creative expression of the divine sports of love. The intense love of the mystic
for God has one fundamental characteristic feature, namely, he chooses to be quite submissive to the Lord and is passive. Whether man or woman, the mystic has much of the nature of woman. The mystic passes through several stages which a bride undergoes in the periods of wedding-day and honeymoon. The view that God is the bridegroom and the devout soul of the devotees, the bride is an allegorical expression of the intimate communion between the soul and God. This aspect of bridal mysticism is seen in abundance in the poems of the Alvars especially those of Anțal, Tirumankaiyālvār and Nammālvār. So they give expression to their mystic feeling in the language of love and in this mode they have adopted the technique of love poetry. In explaining the bridal mysticism it has been shown that Bhagavat-kāma is different from viṣaya-kāma. All the technical aspects of Akattinai are successfully pressed into service by the Alvars in their portrayal of love indicating thereby that bridal mysticism is only a mental process which transports the mystics of either sex to a plane above the physical one and that it is a masterly device selected by a poet-devotee to give vent to his feelings of passion and love for God.

The intense kind of God-experience or communion does not last long. It is a gift from God and the devotee is to remain only waiting for receiving it. Being aware of his inability to work for it, he feels the imperative need for prayer to get His grace. The primary requisite for undertaking the act of worship is the purity of instrument (karaṇa). It has been shown that this worship can be per-
formed by body, speech and mind and this worship is referred to by the Ālvārs as ‘pūcaī’ or ‘pūcavāi’. By worship one can get rid of his mental impurities. Different kinds of prayers are indicated here; several modes of bhakti are pointed out. Acts of worship, whatever form they take are reducible to the level of service (kaiṅkarya). It has been shown that kaiṅkarya can be undertaken to God in any of His forms and since the para, vyūha and antaryāmin are not within the easy reach of the mortals, the Vaiṣṇavite school has preferred to enjoin service to the deity in the arcā forms.

The cult of bhāgavatas is an important aspect in the Vaiṣṇavite religion. Many of the Ālvārs express their desire of being the God’s devotees. It has been shown that the devotees of Viṣṇu had their existence even in the days of Tolkāppiyam. In Vaiṣṇavism the cult of bhāgavata worship is considered greater than the worship of the Lord Himself according to ancient texts. The Lord is immensely pleased at the service rendered to the devotees who are His very self. Maturakaviyāḻvar is the best instance of a devotee of Lord’s devotee. Nammāḻvār likes to have the company of the devotees of the Lord even in the state of release. It has been shown here that the celebration of festivals and observances of the sacred days play an appreciable role in the bhāgavata cult and that the poems of the Ālvārs refer to the occasions of festivals connected with temples.

The ultimate goal of the religious philosophy of Vaiṣṇavism is mokṣa which is the state of the release of the soul from bondage to karma. Nam-
māḻvaṟ conceives mokṣa as the God's abode and also a place of free souls who are real immortals and refers to this place as "tuyar illā vīṭu". It has been shown that the two concepts 'celkaiś' and 'mākkaiś' in combination may be interpreted to mean the straight and shining path of arcirai gati as mentioned in the Upaniṣads. The means of salvation as suggested in this faith is devotion and self-surrender. The spiritual experience of the Āḻvaṛs is epitomised in the saraṇaṅgati of Nammāḻvaṟ. Almost all the Āḻvaṛs speak of their self-surrender to the Lord. That the purports of three secrets, mūla-mantra, dvayamantra and caramaśloka contain the essentials of Vedānta have been explained here and also shown that the mantras reveal the role of divine grace in the play of God seeking man and man seeking God. The implication of the concept of Godhead as Nārāyaṇa with Śrī has been brought out. The soul's ascent to the Absolute as visualised by Nammāḻvaṟ and the welcome offered to it in Paramapada are indicated.

It has been shown that the teachings of the other Āḻvaṛs are similar to what Nammāḻvaṛ contributed. But they have tried their hands in employing several forms of compositions. The first three Āḻvaṛs have respectively parabhakti, parajñāna and paraṇa bhakti all to almost the same degree, but their compositions reveal that each one of these is prominent in the work of each one of them. Intense meditation on the nature of reality made Tirumāḻicaḷaṅyaḻvaṟ realize the truth about Godhead. The Tiruppaḷḷi Eḻucei of Tontaṟaṭip-poṭiyāḻvaṟ is a fine pastoral poem which is intended to awaken the Lord
in the early hours of the morning. The other work is *Tirumālai* (Sacred Garland) which name was given to it on an analogy to his service of rearing a flower garden and wreathing the flowers into garlands for the Lord which was considered great by him. In these verses he advises people to utter the name of God by citing his own painful experiences with women. Kulacēkarāḻvār's passionate longing to worship the Sleeping Beauty at Śrī Raṅgam, his keen desire in having the company of the *bhāgavatās* while worshipping the deity, his intense longing to be reborn in Tirumalai hills in any capacity, his representing of his absolute dependence of God for protection and the apt analogies to illustrate this aspect show the intense devotion of the Āḻvār. His depiction of the love which the cowherdesses had for Kṛṣṇa his depiction of motherly feeling in the person of Devaki and the fatherly affection in the person of Daśaratha are marked by their naturalness and direct appeal to our feeling. Tiruppānāḻvār's *Amalavāṭipirāv* is unique for its intense religious feeling and gives a very graphic description of the Lord at Śrī Raṅgam.

Tirumāṅkaiyāḻvār is the only Āḻvār who successfully tried his hand at various forms of compositions in wide varieties of metres. His two *Maṭals* are a unique contribution to the *Akam* poetry and to the history of bridal mysticism. Among other Āḻvārs he has shown greater attention to the description of Nature. Many folk-song motifs are successfully handled by this saint. The cardinal tenets of the Viśiṣṭadvaita system find their support in the poems of this Āḻvār. Periyāḻvār is noted for his
maṅgalāsūsanam to the Lord by wishing well of God and praying for His well-being. He is also marked for his depiction of Kṛṣṇa's childhood in a variety of situations so beautifully as to lead the scholars think that he is the founder of Pīḷai-t-tamil type of literature. Āntāl's two poems Tiruppāvai and Nācciyār Tirumōli are, from the point of view of bridal mysticism, inspired lyrical rhapsodies which are the quintessence of mystic love poured out spontaneously with unpremeditated but self-concealed art. The first teaches people of their utter dependence upon God and of the need to serve Him. The Vaiṣṇavite tradition has attached great significance to Tiruppallāṇṭu of Periyālvār and to the Tiruppāvai of Āntāl in the daily worship both in the houses and in the temples and in fact both these saints, father and daughter, have come to occupy supreme position in the recitation of the Nālāyiram. The deced "vāraṇāmāyiram" of the Nācciyār Tirumōli is now recited on the occasion of the marriage in the Vaiṣṇavite families.

Maturakaviyālvār's Kanninuṟi Cīṟuttāmpu which is to be sung before the recitation of Tiruvāymoḷi is undertaken because of his sincere devotion to his preceptor Nammālvār. Amutānṭār's Rāmānuca-nāṟṟṟṟ畎ai is another poem praising the greatness of the preceptor Rāmānuja by his pupil. It is said that the teachings of Nammālvār were ever in the mind of Rāmānuja and guided him in writing his philosophical works. Throughout this chapter it has been stressed that the Ālvārs are mainly instrumental for the popularisation of the arcā form of worship.
Whenever the worldly attractions were irresistible the Āḻvārs prayed to God for saving them from getting entrapped by the senses. Occasionally they offer a bit of advice also to humanity. Nammāḻvār starts singing for the redemption of his fellowmen. This feeling is more pronounced in his Tiruvāymoḻi. In several places he draws God's attention to the world. It has been shown that they are not preceptors to reform the world and enforce ethical code on people. It has been shown that the Āḻvārs are the band of mystic people who came in the line of Vedic tradition. Nammāḻvār is spoken of as “vētam tamiḻ ceyta māṟaṇ” (māṟaṇ who rendered the Veda into Tamil). To many of the Ācāryas after Nātha- muni, Nālāyiram became reputed as Tamil Vedas and Tiruvāymoḻi as the Upaniṣad. Just as the Vedas became the supreme authority as a source book of knowledge about ultimate truths, so also these matters which have attained popularity through the Nālāyiram justify the compositions of the Āḻvārs to get the appellation Vedas and the Nālāyiram can be termed as Drāvida Veda.
THE GENERAL APPROACH OF THE ĀLVĀRS

The vast Sanskrit literature represented by the Āgamas, Purāṇas and epics and the ancient classical Tamil literature provided the Ālvārs with sufficient data about the theistic aspects of philosophy and religion. Much material was then available to them to develop the already existent concepts of Vaiṣṇavism into a fully developed form of Vaiṣṇavite theism though not as a system of thought.

The significant imports which are conveyed by the names Viṣṇu, Vāsudeva and Nārāyaṇa are meant to be denoted by the name Nārāyaṇa itself which the Ālvārs use frequently to refer to the Supreme Being. The Paurāṇic representation of Viṣṇu as one of the Tirimūrtis and as having more power and individuality over the other two and being quite independent of them also is retained by the Ālvārs. The earth which was lifted by the Lord in His descent as Varāha, gained an eminent position in the Purāṇas by getting married to Him, but it is in these compositions of the Ālvārs that she (Bhū) gets the status of becoming His consort along with Lakṣmī. The influence of the Tamil versions of the Bhāgavata story added Nappinnai as one more consort to the Lord. The divine form with its dark complexion, together with the distinguishing marks such as conch, discus and others, is repeatedly mentioned by the Ālvārs to demonstrate the easy accessibility, approachability and identification of the Lord. Another trait of His that finds reference in the Nālāyiram is

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1. Periyāḷ. Tm. 4.6; Peri. Tm. 1 1; Nān. Tv, 1; T.V.M. 1.2: 10.
2. cf. Śrī Gunaratnakāśa, 26.
3. Peri. Tm. 4.5: 5; M.Tv. 42; Tc. V. 72; T.V.M. 8.1: 1.
4. T.V.R. 3; T.V.M. 1.9: 4; Peri. Tm. 2.3: 5.
His plentitude which is never affected by His acts of creation. The Āḻvārs conveniently chose the word 'nampi' which they used to refer to this aspect of Nārāyaṇa.⁵ He is the Lord of the two regions (vibhūtis) of prosperity one representing the material world and the other to be reached by His devotees.⁶ For the first time in the Vaiṣṇavite literature the concept of God having the world as His body⁷ is evolved in these compositions not as a fundamental doctrine but as an experienced fact that requires no proof and therefore to be admitted without any reservation.

That the Lord is also addressed by the twelve names beginning with Keśava and ending with Dāmodara, sometimes brings out the full implications of addressing God with such names.⁸

That the Lord is beyond the reach of the Vedas⁹ but is to be known from the Vedas is repeatedly mentioned¹⁰ thus showing that these compositions deserve a place in the Vaiṣṇavite religion as they owe much to the Vedic sources.

The Āḻvārs were not much interested in enumerating the Lord's attributes but confined themselves to mention by way of illustrations, His easy accessibility and above all His mercy for the suffering selves. They are equally drawn towards the Lord by the parental affection (vātsalya) which He displays now and then. It is but natural that on account of this quality that the Āḻvārs should approach the Lord for guidance and protection, as they would their fathers. The various exploits which He displayed through His divine descents are sufficient proofs for His readiness to relieve His men of their

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5. Periyāḷ. Tm. 1.9: 4; 2.3: 1; T.V.M. 1.10: 8.
6. M.Tv. 68.
7. T.V.M. 1.1: 7; 8.5: 10; Peri. Tm. 7.10: 9.
8. Periyāḷ. Tm. 2.3; T.V.M. 2.7.
10. ibid. 7.1: 2; M.Tv. 33.
sufferings. Their wonder is explicitly uttered through their poems not necessarily for the extraordinary powers which He exhibited but chiefly for His feeling of compassion which prompted Him to take such forms which His men would have desired to visualize. It is therefore that among the five forms which the Lord takes, the vibhava and arcā forms had more attraction for these saints. In this connection it must be noted that the approach of worship by the Āḻvārs to these forms was a synthetic one comprising all the five.\textsuperscript{11}

Certain incidents which are not too well-known but traceable to the Purāṇas are mentioned for purposes of illustrations, but a few among them could not have their sources determined. Killing the seven bulls, breaking the kurunta tree, Kuṭakkuṭtu and others which are all mentioned in the ancient Tamil literature find frequent references in these Tamil poems of the saints.\textsuperscript{12}

Above all this, the Āḻvārs were actuated by a deep attraction towards the Lord, which led to the outpourings of their heart in the mellifluous Tamil verses. Besides the deep yearning to be by the side of the Lord, mystic experience also characterises their love for Him. Love however is not of a uniform nature. The affection which a mother would bestow on the child and the mother’s interest in attending to the child’s bedecking and fondling are gloriously and deftly displayed by Periyāḻvār.\textsuperscript{13} How the Lord’s absence is keenly felt is represented in the disguised form of the lamentations of Devaki,\textsuperscript{14} Kauśalyā, and Daśaratha.\textsuperscript{15} However, the chief mode of display of their love takes the shape of the bride’s love for her lover who is no other than the Lord Himself.

\textbf{Love of the Āḻvārs which is not different from devotion}


\textsuperscript{12} Vide Appendix III.

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Periyāḻ. Tm. 1.3}; 2.4; 2.7.

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Perum. Tm. 7}.

\textsuperscript{15} ibid. 9.
shows their relation with Him. Awe and mystery marked their love with the result that they sang His praise and spoke in favour of worshipping Him and His men. Even there, true to the traditions of theistic religions, the Āḻvārs chose to worship His feet, long for keeping them on their heads thus revealing the feet that they would rather prefer to be His servants than have His companionship which He would of course not withhold from them.

What is of great astonishment and interest is the Āḻvār's great absorption in the arcā forms of God. Firstly, the deep impressions of theistic tendencies are aroused in them at the sight of these forms. Secondly, these saints are made to call the exploits of the Lord through His other forms which are associated with the person of the arcā forms. Thirdly and lastly, the aesthetic beauty of the idols noted for their architectural perfection evokes in the minds of the Āḻvārs feelings of varied nature. Apart from the transcendental heights of the Lord which the saints are conscious of, the fascinating perfection of the beautiful idols draws them close to the deity and make them pay soul-stirring praises which they are capable of giving expression to. The masculine features which arouse in the minds of not only men but also women by reason of their expressiveness of indomitable courage and martial spirit, attract these pious souls and remind them too often of the heroic deeds of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa. At the same time, these features are uniquely mingled with those of bewitching handsomeness which captivate the soul enrapure it as it would the mind of a woman. Naturally, these Āḻvārs pour forth their hearts in musical melodies filled with passionate lyrical touches in the background of devotional elements of very pure and perfect order.

The references to three mantras show beyond the shadow of doubt that they had before their periods the concepts of these but which, on account of their writings, became the crux of the post-Āḻvār Vaisnavism and indispensable to the doctrine of self-surrender.16

16. Chapter - 23
Much as they were alive to the limitations of men in bondage and the sufferings of being mortals, they revealed through their compositions how much of worldly sufferings they knew. They were not, in the real sense, affected by the sufferings of the world but they did not choose to remain passive witnesses of human suffering. In a variety of ways, they offered solutions to end the sufferings.¹⁷

Having relished the sweet experience of communion with God, they could not remain content with the enjoyment of love. They realised that they had to face the limits imposed on them for these enjoyments by the mortal frames. With a view to have uninterrupted enjoyment of God’s proximity they hankered for a life beyond death when there would be no imperfect frame nor the spatial or temporal limitations.

¹⁷. Chapter - 25
CHAPTER XIV

THE GODHEAD

To the Āḻvārs, the existence of the Supreme Deity is an admitted fact and as such there was no need for them to make any attempt to prove His existence. The gross bodies that are seen in the world are only manifestations of God. Though they are not generally apprehended as such, they are to be taken as representing His existence in a subtle form and therefore as lying beyond comprehension. He is likely to be referred to as not existing but in reality He is existing.¹ The epics and the Purāṇas declare the identity between the Upaniṣadic concept of the Supreme as Brahma and the theological one as a Personal Deity.² Nammāḻvār recognizes this and refers to Him in the opening verse of the Tiruvāymoḷi as ‘avaṇ’ a word in the masculine gender. This word which is a personal pronoun suggests that the Supreme Person is well-known and becomes readily understood when this word is used. The name of the deity is not mentioned here in the first deced which is devoted to the treatment of the nature of the Supreme Being.

In the next deced the Āḻvār identifies this person with Nārāyaṇa.³ Elsewhere he refers to Him as ‘Māyaṇ’.⁴ The word ‘nārāyaṇa’ has much significance here. The word ‘nāra’ means the things relating to men and those that are created. The Supreme Person is the resting place (ayana) of all that is created.⁵ Again the Vedic deities, as we know, are more than

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¹. T.V.M. 1.1: 9.
². M.Bh. Anugīṭā 186: 9, 10; V.P. 6.5: 76.
³. T.V.M. 1.2: 10; cf. ibid. 1.3: 3.
⁴. T.V.C. 7.
one and it is necessary to ascertain which among these is supreme as the substratum of others. After the manner of the Purāṇas, the Ālvārs recognise the concept of Tirimūrtti, that is Brahmā as the creator, Viṣṇu the protector and Rudra the destroyer of the Universe.6 Nārāyaṇa is identified with Tirimūrtti.7 He created Brahmā from whom Śiva sprang.8 While Brahmā and Śiva do the work of creation and destruction of the Universe respectively at the instance of Nārāyaṇa, the task of protecting the created was undertaken by Nārāyaṇa Himself.9 This declares Nārāyaṇa’s supremacy over the other two deities. The other deities as Indra, Varuna, Sūrya and others who came to occupy a relatively subordinate position in the epics and the Purāṇas became verily reduced to a still inferior position of utter dependence on Nārāyaṇa, who likewise came to be treated by Nammālvār as the foremost among all deities.10 Nārāyaṇa is equal only to Himself and there is no deity equal or superior to Him.11 Again the Ālvārs, continuing the traditional teachings of the ancient seers, have spoken of these differences between the Lord of all on one side and Brahmā, Rudra and other deities on the other. “The gods are the only food eaten by Bhagavān and vomited afterwards (eaten during pralaya and vomited during creation); are there any (gods) who are not the nature of this vomit?”12 Nammālvār says: “Arjuna saw on Śiva’s head, the flowers of the garland that he had placed at the feet of the holy Bhagavān which had measured the whole world, and understood clearly that Śrīkrṣṇa was the Supreme Deity wearing a garland of green tuṣācī.”13 In another context he

6. T.V.M. 1.1: 8; 1.3: 3; 2.8: 3; 8.4: 9.
7. ibid. 3.6: 1, 2; 7.6: 3, 4; 8.4: 6, 10; 8.8: 4; Peri. Tm. 6.6: 6.
8. Tc. V. 5; Nāṅ. Tv. 1; TVLK. 1. 1; T.V.M. 10. 10: 3. cf. Var. P. 90. 3.
10. Periyāḷ, Tm. 4.10; 7; Peri. Tm. 6.1: 9; Tc. V. 48; T.V.C. 3; M.T. 15; cf. M.Bh. Bhīṣma 67: 2.
12. Peri. Tm. 11.6: 2.
addresses the Lord as: "O Thou art the original bulb of the lotus of the navel, from which arose Brahmā, Śiva, Indra and others who worship Thee with reverence". The contrast between Nārāyaṇa and Rudra is vividly drawn in respect of their positions. While Viṣṇu has Garuḍa as the vehicle, Śiva’s vehicle is the bull. The Vedas speak of the glory of the former while the Śaiva Āgamas alone speak of the greatness of the latter. The milky ocean is the resting place for the former, whereas the latter’s place is the mount Kailāsa. Kindliness characterizes the former who is the protector of the world while ferocity is the mark of the latter who is the destroyer. The discus is the weapon of Viṣṇu whose complexion reminds us of the water-laden cloud whereas Śiva who is fierce like fire has trident as the weapon.

Viṣṇu’s omnipresent form presents every thing in the world to one who can visualise Him. In particular, the Ālvaṁs mention the presence of Śiva in the person of Viṣṇu. "On the right side of the Lord, Rudra takes his place; Brahmā and the worlds created by him abide in His navel." In the compositions of the Ālvaṁs there is thus frequent reference to Śiva in particular, intending to show that Rudra held in highest veneration by the Śaivites, is not the Supreme Person but subordinated to Viṣṇu and Brahmā also. His position is not totally eclipsed by Nārāyaṇa’s eminence as it is the case with other deities. The Ālvaṁs could note his pre-eminent position in the body of Nārāyaṇa. Pārvati is stated to have conveyed to her consort Śiva about Nārāyaṇa’s greatness which it is said, was given to people by Śiva by way of secret instructions. The Ālvaṁs therefore describe the gods as attending upon Nārāyaṇa. "The one with crescent moon and matted hair on his head, the four-faced god, and Indra know Thee to be Supreme and worship Thee." My Lord is He

14. ibid. 10.10; 3.
15. M.Tv. 5.
16. T.V.M. 1.3: 9. cf. 2.5: 2; 4.8: 1, 10; 7.6: 7; 10.4: 6 Peri. Tm. 2.6: 9; 3.4: 9; 6.1: 3; 7.10: 3, 7; 9.6: 1; M.Tv. 28, 98; Mu. Tv. 31.
17. Nāṅ. Tv. 78.
Who swallows (for saving at the time of involution) all sentient beings including Rudra and Brahmā.”

“Indra who rules over the gods, Brahmā the god with four faces, and the great Śiva with matted locks of hair—all these meditate with earnestness and sincerity on His lotus feet and go about praising Him.”

“It is well known through the story of Kapāla mokṣa that Nārāyaṇa is the Supreme deity to the renounced god Rudra, and his father Brahmā and other gods.”

“The unique cloud-complexioned God who, with Mokṣa, Svarga, and Hell as uppermost limits and with the celestials in the middle, and as the three-fold cause, extends everywhere.”

“The dancing God who has His temple at Vaikuntha is worshipped by all the templred gods.”

“The supreme Lord blesses Śiva and Brahmā who find Him beyond their reach and worship Him longing for His grace.”

“The Lord at Tirumāliruṅcōlai is the One Who is celebrated by the three-eyed god, Brahmā the source of knowledge, the Devas and their king, and the rṣis who can dispel ignorance; and “He in the form of Varāha, that lifted the whole universe is God as much of the Celestials and Eternals as of the terrestrials” and further “He who is the embodiment of individuality, He who stands no comparison with other and He amidst others is an individual by Himself.”

“All the deities, Rudras, Ādityas, Sages, Māruts, Yakṣas, Gandharvas, Vidyādharas, Indra and others throng at His gate and patiently await to behold Him in the early hours of the morning.”

20. ibid. 3.10: 9.
21. ibid. 2.2: 10; cf. ibid. 3.6: 4.
22. ibid. 4.10: 4.
23. ibid. 2.8: 10.
24. ibid. 8.6: 5.
25. ibid. 10.7: 6; cf. P. Tv. 71; M.Tv. 74; and M.Bh. Śānti 361: 14, 15.
26. ibid. 10.7: 7.
29. T.E. 6, 7, 8, 9.
In spite of holding a position for higher than that of the mortals, the gods are no better than men in their inability to comprehend the real nature and greatness of Nārāyaṇa.30 Periyāḻvār says: "O Lord Whose glory cannot be adequately understood even by him who rides on the unique bull and by the four-faced god,"31; and again "Neither the god who has the bull emblem for his banner (Śiva), nor Brahmā, nor Indra, nor any other knows the remedy for the disease called 'birth' (samsāra)."32 "Who can know of the glory of the Lord" says Tirumalācāyāḻvār, "who swallowed the universe and brought it into being? Even the blue-throated god and the eight-eyed Brahmā cannot understand it."33 Poykaiyāḻvār says: "One can prattle something which may result in the names of the Lord being uttered; but who can comprehend Him? Even Brahmā who abides permanently in the lotus bulb of His navel cannot see His lotus feet";34 and again, "who can comprehend Thy glory even if one takes to research for all the time? Who can understand Thy auspicious Form? Or who else can know at least the ocean of milk on which You repose?"35 None is equal to the Lord.36

The concept of Godhead as conceived by the Āḻvārs was not narrowed down, or restricted thus in its applicability to Nārāyaṇa alone but was all-encompassing in its aspect. The Paurāṇikas dwell at length on the heno-theistic aspect of various deities. The worship of the phallus is enjoined in some Purāṇas. The Jains and Buddhists uphold their own concept of the deity. All these dispute zealousy with those whose concepts of the deity are opposed to theirs. The truth about all these concepts is that Nārāyaṇa alone presents

30. Peri. Tm. 7.6: 6; Nāṇ. Tv. 2, 10; cf M.Bh. Śānti. 210: 33.
31. Periyāḻ. Tm. 4.10: 4.
32. ibid. 5.3: 6.
33. Nāṇ. Tv. 73.
34. M. Tv. 56.
35. ibid. 68.
Himself with all these features. Nammāḻvār is not advocating polytheism here but monotheism which is catholic in its comprehension. Exclusive and not preferential worship would inevitably lead to this conclusion. The other deities have their role to play but have their subservience to Nārāyaṇa. In a way, this attitude is akin to and not identical with the one which, it is held, was stated by the great Nyāya exponent Udayaṇācārya in the Eleventh century A.D. Hari, another name for Viṣṇu, is described to have been worshipped by the followers of the different schools of thought under different names. Of similar strain is the famous bhajana song of Mahātma Gāndhi.

The one chief aspect of God head in the school of Vaiṣṇavism as taught is the ancient works like Viṣṇupurāṇa and Āḻvārs' compositions is that the personal deity who is no other than Brahmān is Nārāyaṇa with Śrī. The Nālāyiram came into being under the aegis of the Divine Couple, Nārāyaṇa and Śrī who were the prompters of the Prabandhas and the verses of the First three Āḻvārs were sung and had their premiere (araṅkēṟṟam) in Their presence. Poykaiyāḻvār says: "Thou the protector of the cowherds for the torrents of rain caused by Indra, and the Goddess Lakṣmī". The god-intoxicated Peyāḻvār who was blessed with a direct vision of the luminous form of the Lord and Śrī exclaimed: "I have seen Lakṣmī. I have seen a golden-coloured beautiful figure (body). I have seen the lovely effulgence of the rising sun. I have seen the bright discus and conch in the hands. All these I see today in my ocean-hued Lord." Nammāḻvār

37. T.V.M. 4.10: 5.

38. This utterance has only the validity of hear-say, as it is not recorded in any work of this writer. "The Śaivas worship Him as Siva; the Vedāntins as Brahman; the Buddhists as Buddha, the Naiyayikas as Karta (creator); the Jains as Arhat; and Mīmāṁsakas as karma" (Vide: Outlines of Hinduisim, p. 199).

39. "Śīta Rāma is the purifier of those who have fallen down. Jesus (Īśvar) and Allāh are His names. O, Lord give wisdom to all."

40. M.Tv. 86.

41. Mu. Tv. 1.
refers to the Divine Couple in his poem: "Thou art ever with Lakṣmī adorned with shining bracelets'.

"Am I still to remain in samsāra without enjoying You in the company of Lakṣmī?" Thus the Lord is referred to as ever associated with Śrī, and as the consort of Śrī. He is addressed as 'Mātava' meaning consort of Śrī, as He had kept in His chest the accomplished woman, whose looks resemble those of the deer. Tirumālicaiyā̄jvar makes an emphatic declaration that those deities who have no relationship to Śrī are no deities at all. Nārāyana and Śrī are ever united together.

The descent of the Lord as Varāha gave importance to the earth which came to be designated as Bhūdevi, married to Viṣṇu. Thus arose a place for Bhūdevi along with Viṣṇu. Nappināi, the gopi in the gokulam, married Kṛṣṇa. Thus the Lord is frequently referred to as having Bhūdevi and Śrīdevi, and at times also Nappināi. Śrīdevi and Bhūdevi are said to be shampooing the feet of the Lord when He is having the yoganidra.

42. T.V.M. 4.9: 10.
43. ibid. 6.9: 3.
44. ibid. 9.2: 1.
45. ibid. 9.2: 3.
46. ibid. 1.3: 8; 6.10: 10.
47. ibid. 1.9: 1.
49. Nāq. Tv. 53; cf. ibid. 62.
50. V.P. 1.8: 17, 35.
51. Peri. Tm. 4.5: 5; 7.8: 1: 8.7: 9; M,Tv. 42; Te.V. 72.
52. T.V.R. 3, 21; T.V., M. 1.9: 4; 8.1: 1. Peri. Tm. 2.3: 5; 3.3: 9; 3.10: 1.
There are certain characteristics which have a special and particular applicability to Nārāyaṇa alone and to which the Āḻvārs make frequent references. The Lord is of the complexion of the cloud, has four arms adorned with conch, discus, mace, sword and bow.\textsuperscript{54} The sword is called Nandaka and the bow Sārīga. The garland made of tulaci is worn by Him alone and not by any other deity. The Āḻvārs wax eloquent over the Lord's having this garland.\textsuperscript{55} Garuḍa is His vehicle and also the emblem in His banner and not of any other deity.\textsuperscript{56} He reclines on a bed of Ādiśeṣa.\textsuperscript{57} The precious stone called kaustubha adorns His chest\textsuperscript{58} which has a mole called Śrivatsa\textsuperscript{59}. He wears a cloth golden in colour.\textsuperscript{60}

Thus the Supreme Person is, according to the Āḻvārs, Nārāyaṇa with Śrīdevi, Bhūdevi and Nappiṇḍai as His consorts. He is reckoned as one with Tirumūrtti and is also beyond the comprehension of Brahmā, Śiva, Indra and other deities who are all subordinated to Him and who perform the duties of creation, destruction and other functions in accordance with the lines laid down by Him and are therefore indebted to Him who possess peculiar marks which single Him out in the group of His hosts.

\textsuperscript{54} T.V.M. 8.8: 1. cf. ibid.. 2.5: 1; M.Tv. 28, Mu. Tv. 21, 100; P.R.P. 2.11. 36 to 40.

\textsuperscript{55} ibid. 1.5: 7; 1.8: 1, Mu. Tv. 50; Nāṅ. Tv. 11. PRP. 13. 1.60.

\textsuperscript{56} ibid. 1.6: 10; 1.8: 1; 5.7: 3; M.Tv. 17, 22; 1.Tv. 92, 96; Mu. Tv. 7. cf. C.L.P. 2.17: 28, P.R.P. 3.1:60.

\textsuperscript{57} ibid. 6.6: 7; 10. 2; 8; M.Tv. 53, I.Tv. 15; Mu. Tv. 80; cf. C.L.P. 1.11: 1.2.

\textsuperscript{58} Mu. Tv. 87. cf. P.R.P. 1.1.9.

\textsuperscript{59} T.V.M. 10.3: 5.

\textsuperscript{60} T.V.R. 1.1.1; A.P. 2.3; cf. C.L.P. 2. 11; p.50; P.R.P. 1.11. 10, 56; 3.1. 88; 13.1.1, 2.
Chapter XV

The Attributes of the Divine

The Supreme Person in the Vaiṣṇavite system of thought is Nārāyaṇa who is identical with Brahmā. The infinitude of this person is beyond the comprehension of human thought and therefore cannot be adequately described. Nārāyaṇa is said to have a form and also not to have any. He is closely connected with the world, but is also apart from it. There is nothing which He is not. He is Ourselves, He is She, It, This, That and They. He is the god of both good and bad people. He represents things which are nearby and those which are far off. He is those that became, are becoming and would become. He is the things of the past, present and future. He could not be understood even by the learned. He is neither male nor female, nor eunuch. He cannot be said to exist or not to exist. He cannot be known by the senses or mind or His greatness ascertained even if one attempts to do so all through the times. It is difficult to say whether He is standing or sitting or lying or He is not standing, sitting or lying. His activities extend beyond space and hence could not be measured even by Brahmā. He is not that which is or that which is not. It would be highly difficult to speak even a few

1. T.V.M. 1.1: 3.
2. ibid. 1.1: 4.
3. ibid. 1.3: 3.
4. ibid. 2.5: 10.
5. ibid. 2.5: 10.
7. M.Tv. 68.
9. ibid. 1.3: 10.
words about Him. All the six schools of thought could not even discuss His nature, even if they group themselves together and attempt to do this all the time. Though He is said to be of different colours in each yuga, He could not be visualised to have a particular form and a definite colour. Words which are uttered could denote His names, but these are poor aids to know Him.

Such descriptions of Nārāyaṇa which the compositions of the Ālvaṇs, especially those of Nammāḷvār, contain show that the Supreme Person lies beyond the understanding of words and thoughts. In this respect, the approach of the Ālvaṇs is similar to that which is had in the Upaniṣads. The Ālvaṇs refer to the Vedas as revealed by the Supreme Person at the time of creation, having preserved it during deluge. The four eternal Vedas reveal Him as the only and the foremost Supreme Being. God is the subject matter dealt with in the Vedas. He is therefore to be known only through them which are only Nārāyaṇa’s form. This is in consonance with the Vedāntic tradition that the Vedas are the sole authorities in matters relating to the ultimate reality. Perception and other means of valid cognition such as inference are of no avail in knowing the Supreme Person. The ancient Vedas treat Him as non-different from form and

10. ibid. 2.5: 10.
11. ibid. 4.10: 9. The six systems are those of Buddha, Kaṇḍāda, Jaina, Kapila, Patañjali and Gautama.
12. T.N. 3; Tc. V. 44; Nān. Tv. 24; Peri. Tm. 1.8: 2.
13. M.Tv. 56; cf. T.V.M. 2.5: 10; 2.7: 12; 3.1: 2; 3.4.
15. Peri, Tm. 5.7: 3; cf. M.Tv. 33.
16. 1. Tv. 48,
17. T.V.M. 1.1: 7; 1.6: 2; 3.5: 5; M.Tv. 68; 1. Tv. 45.
18. ibid. 3.1: 11; M.Tv. 28; Nān. Tv. 13; Peri. Tm. 3.5: 9. Periyāl. Tm 1.5: 3.
19. ibid. 7.1: 2.
20. ibid. 2.7:2.
formlessness.21 The Sāma-veda, the Chāṇḍogya Upaniṣad, the Kauṭūkakī Bhīmaṇa and the Taittiriya Upaniṣad treat of Him. He is described as fit to be worshipped through the Paṇcāgni which is taught in the Katha Upaniṣad.22 Nammāḻvār goes to a further extent in declaring that the Supreme Person cannot be known even by the Vedas which are held to be repositories of knowledge and wisdom and also by the rare works such as Itiḥāsas and Purāṇas.23 The Vedas describe Him in an indirect way.24 The four Vedas run in search of Him,25 but not yet found Him.26 In a way, this explains the Upaniṣadic statement that words and thoughts return unsuccessfully without getting at Him.27

A study of the Vedas reveals that the subject matter of the Scriptures is the consort of Śrī.28 He is the enchanting music of the Rg. Veda29 and is the nectar as it were obtained from the four oceans of the Vedas.30 He takes His abode in the four Vedas which are properly recited.31 God is thus to be found not in the printed or written text of the Vedas but in their recitations. The Sāstrās also declare Him as the Supreme Person.32 Thus the Vedas serve as the only means of knowing the Supreme Person, however imperfectly He is presented through those texts.

The possession by the Supreme Person of the discus, conch, mace, bow and other weapons presupposes the admission of a physical frame for Him. Such a physical body must be

21. ibid. 7.8: 10.
22. Tc. V. 14; Peri. Tm. 5.5: 9; cf. ibid. 7.7: 2.
24. I.Tv. 83.
25. Peri. Tm. 4.8: 3.
26. ibid. 4.8: 7.
28. Peri. Tm. 5.6: 1.
29. ibid. 6.1: 7.
30. Periyā. Tm. 4.3: 11.
32. ibid. 11.
of finite dimensions which could come within the comprehension of the mortals. At the same time, the admission of a body would deprive the Supreme Person of His infinite nature. It is therefore declared that Nārāyaṇa has two forms, one visible and the other invisible. The former is His own form and the latter is represented by the Vedic, Itihāsas, and Purāṇas. Nammāḻvār goes a step further and declares that the Lord has a form and does not also have a form. To have an invisible form is as good as having no form. The Āḻvār does not see any reason to use the word 'form' which is invariably associated in its sense with the concrete nature and finiteness of the frame. To finitize the infinite is sacrilegious to the worshipper of the divine. When it is said that the Lord does not have a form, what is actually meant is that He has a cosmic body which encompasses the whole universe and which being transcendent is beyond the understanding of both gods and men. Such a cosmic form is not one, but many, most of which are not known to any one. He takes any body He chooses but only a few of these come within the purview of human understanding.

The Itihāsa, the Purāṇas and the Āgamas depict the Supreme Person as in possession of a physical frame which is not made up of the flesh, bones and other products of matter but yet akin to that of the human beings. This is perhaps due to a desire to present to the suffering and devout humanity a frame, the like of which is familiar to it in their own bodies but which is far superior, more enduring and much more attractive than the mortal frames. The Āḻvārs who had already this traditional representation of the Supreme Person began at first to get attracted to the cosmic form in which He found the several aspects of nature presenting themselves as the various parts of the body.

33. V.P. 1.22: 55, 56; 5.1: 35 to 50; 6.5: 61 to 69.
34. T.V.M. 1.1: 9.
35. T.V.M. 2.5: 6; cf. ibid., 8.1: 10.
36. ibid. 8.1: 1. cf. M.Tv. 44.
37. ibid. 3.5: 5; cf. M.Bh. Śānti. 206: 60; Var. P. 31: 40
38. T.V.M. 4.3: 3; N.R.R. invocatory verse.
The depiction of ākāśa in the Upaniṣad as the body of the Brahman should have suggested to the ancient seers and to the Āṗvārs, the dark complexion of the Supreme Person Nārāyaṇa. His face is said to be attractive through the complexion of the sea, water-laden cloud and blue sapphire. The hugeness of the sea must be taken to refer to His cosmic body. The incitement of the water-laden cloud to the solace which it affords from the oppressive heat that His body would, when visualised, free the embodied self from the sufferings in the world. The limited size of the sapphire represents the attractiveness of His features.

The Āṗvārs frequently refer to the parts of His body. Tenderness and charm together characterize each limb of His and so the lotus that is fully blossomed is frequently cited to draw comparisons with each of these limbs. Apart from the eyes which proclaim His tenderness of feeling and compassion to humanity, the crown, the shoulders revealing His might and the feet which are worshipped and sought after by the devout persons get frequent references and receive a graphic description. The feet of Tirivikrama were like lotuses, His body was like the water of the sea and the crown like the sun.

The supramundane radiance which has a bewitching influence on the Āṗvārs affords ample opportunity to them to describe it as the cumulative effect produced on the worshipper without a specific reference to any limb. The mind of the Āṗvārs is enthralled by this beauteous frame which is deco-

41. ibid. 5.2: 3; 6.10; 3; Mu. T.V. 9.
43. ibid., 2.5: 3, 4; 5.5: 6; 8.9: 1; T.V.R. 43, 57; T.N. 21; Mū. Tv. 9.
44. I. Tv. 18.
45. T.V.M. 8.8: 1; A.P. 7.
46. T.V.M. 6.1: 8; 3.1: 10; 3.3: 4.
47. ibid. 1.1: 1; 5.8: 8.
49. T.V.M. 6.10: 1, 1.7: 4.
rated by the gems, ornaments and robes which have each a peculiar grace and elegance.50

The use of the words, ‘uṭampu’51 ‘vaṭivu’,52 ‘uruvam’53 and ‘mūrtti 54 is the clear proof for the Āḻvārs’ recognition of a frame for the deity. The frame is referred to as divine or holy by the prefix ‘tiru’ as an ordinary epithet.55 Quite often the Āḻvārs employ the phrase ‘cuṭar ōḷi’ to convey the effulgent brilliance of the form.56 This frame of the Lord is said to be unique pertaining to Him alone.57

Nammāḻvār describes the Lord’s auspicious form in his poems as possessing the following physical attributes – the conch, the discus, the lotus eyes, the red lips;58 the sacred thread, the ear pendants, the mole on the chest, the constantly worn ornaments and the four arms;59 the victorious bow, the mace and the sword;60 the cool basil garland, the golden crown, the auspicious form, the well-sitting silken garment and the waist girdle;61 the long-drawn eye-brows and well-suited lotus eyes;62 the well-drawn and well-shaped nose and the blue-hued complexion;63 the halo around His body;64 the well curved back, the narrow waist;65 and the beauties of the

50. ibid. 8.4: 7; 8.8: 1; 3.4: 3.
51. ibid. 4.8: 1.
52. Ḫ.Tv. 81.
53. Ṭ.V.M. 8.1: 1.
54. ibid. 3. 10: 10.
55. ibid. 1.10: 9; 7.1: 8.
56. ibid. 3.10: 9; 5.2: 11.
57. ibid. 4.3: 2; 4.8: 1.
58. Ṭ.V.M. 5.5: 1; 1.9; 3; Ṭ.V.C. 1.5.
59. ibid. 5.5: 2; 1.9: 8.
60. ibid. 5.5: 3.
61. ibid. 5.5: 4.
62. ibid. 5.5: 5.
63. ibid. 5.5: 6; 2.5: 5; cf. C. TML. Kaṇ. 12
64. ibid. 5.5: 7.
65. ibid. 5.5: 8.
body from head to foot with the ensemble of all the ornaments.\textsuperscript{66}

The conception of a finitised form for the Supreme Person is based on the recognition of the motive which prompts Him to take up that form. This motive lies in His desire to present Himself before the devotees who are earnestly praying for a personal and direct communion with Him. This suggests that the love of God on the part of the selves brings Him near them. God is then actuated by a desire to join them and enjoy their presence. The Supreme Person must thus be recognized to have certain attributes or qualities which draw Him to the selves. The possession of such attributes is not to be explained through His physical frame.

The \textit{Upaniṣads}\textsuperscript{67} speak of Him as having three ontological attributes viz., \textit{satyam} (real), \textit{jñānam} (knowledge) and \textit{anantam} (infinite). He has \textit{satyam} which is unconditioned reality which is real of the real,\textsuperscript{68} as the essential nature is not affected to expansion and contraction by matter and is not subjected to the workings of \textit{karma}. Likewise, the attribute \textit{jñānam} is infinite consciousness. Brahman is not limited through space or time or any object. The absolute is unconditioned and perfect. It is beyond the passing shows of \textit{prakṛti}, the fleeting flux of time and the endless chain of causation. Though Brahman is in the phenomenal world of space-time, It exceeds their content. It is eternally unconditioned and perfect and therefore It is infinite. These three determining attributes form the essential nature of Brahman.

The Āḻvārs, who were influenced by the tradition of the \textit{Vedas}, refer to Nārāyana as the ever true\textsuperscript{69} and the ever real. He is unchangingly real. This feature forms the basis for the world to remain real, though it has to change ever and anon. The knowledge which is the attribute of Brahman is not

\textsuperscript{66} ibid. 5.5; 9.
\textsuperscript{67} Taitt. Up. 2; 1.
\textsuperscript{68} Br. Up. 2.1: 20; 2.3: 6.
\textsuperscript{69} T.V.M. 1. 1: 2.
simply a knowledge, subjective in its features for our comprehension, but it is the ultimate object of our experience. It is self-luminous and is described as the light of lights. It is the supreme light, through which other things become lighted. Neither the sun, nor the moon, nor the stars shine by themselves. They derive their powers of illumination from Him. 70 It is this supreme and transcendent luminosity of Brahman that has attracted the attention of the Āḻvārs who found it in every aspect of God’s manifestation. The form of Nārāyaṇa is effulgent and surpasses the lightning in its brilliance. Following the Upaniṣadic tradition Nammāḻvār refers to God more or less in the same terminology of light in all his poems. The Lord is referred to as “Peruṅcōti” 71 – ‘the Great Flame’; “Jñānac-cuṭar viḷakku” 72 – ‘the Lamp of Light of Knowledge’; “Jñānac-cuṭar” 73 – the ‘Light of Knowledge’.

The three attributes mentioned in the preceding paragraphs have formed the basis for the admission of the countless qualities in the case of the Supreme Person. 74 There is nothing that is visible or invisible that is not pervaded by Him. 75 This is proof of Nārāyaṇa’s all-pervasiveness and omnipresence. 76 Similarly He is omniscient, and omnipotent.

The word ‘brahman’ which is used in the Upaniṣads to refer to the Supreme Being means ‘huge and increasing’. This aspect of the divine was pressed into service, even in the periods of epics and Purāṇas, to determine the nature of Brahman in terms of essential nature (svarūpa), form (rūpa) and quality (guna) and every aspect of God’s features is treated to be of the highest magnitude surpassing every other

71. P. Tv. 4.
72. T.V.R. 44, 58.
73. T.V.M. 1.5: 10.
74. ibid. 1.3: 5.
75. ibid. 1.1: 10.
76. ibid. 2.8: 8, 9: 3.2: 7.
thing in the world. This explains the use of the words like "uyarvu ara" which means not having anything higher than that.

Bliss (ananda) is a very important attribute of Brahman which makes the devotee's experience of God delectable. The Upaniṣad speaks of the bliss to be of several gradations as enjoyed by several persons placed in different states. The bliss of Brahman is described to be unsurpassed by any others. This is actually corroborated by Nammālvār in the opening line of the Tiruvāyurvedi where the Supreme Person is stated to have unsurpassed bliss.

It is not proper to apprehend defects in God on the ground that He is present every where in the world whose impurities would affect God. The Upaniṣads declare that God is free from sins and possesses true will, and has no stain. 'In Him, the miseries do not exist'. Though responsible for the creation of the world, He is aloof from it. He is unaffected by the impurities like the other in the jar and the sun reflected in water. At the same time God is omniscient, and is full of all auspicious qualities. This proves that the Supreme Person has two marks, namely, absence of defects and presence of all auspicious qualities. The Supreme Person is thus free from imperfections. This is very ably shown by the use of a single word 'amalan'.

77. The Philosophy of Viṣiṣṭādvaita, pp. 201, 202.
78. T.V.M. 1.1 : 1.
80. TVM 1:1 : 1.
82. V.P. 6.5 : 85.
86. V.P. 6.5 : 84.
87. cf. V.S. 3.2 : 11 to 25.
88. V.P. 1.22 : 53.
89. A.P. 1; T.V.M. 3.4 : 5.
which must be taken, in its etymological sense, to mean ‘one in whom the impurities do not exist’. His qualities do not have any defect.

Among these qualities knowledge (jñāna), strength (bala), sovereignty (āśvarya), virility (virya), potency (sakti), and splendour (tājas) are the six chief qualities which declare the supremacy of the Lord. The characteristic feature of knowledge is luminosity which dispels the darkness of the mind. The Āḻvārs were struck with wonder at this quality of Nārāyaṇa that they could not resist expressing the result of the vision of this quality by treating God as light itself which is imperishable. It is not therefore surprising to find the first three Āḻvārs get a clear vision of Lord amidst material darkness. He is “Paraṅcōti” – ‘the Transcendental Brightness’; “Vān cuṭar” – ‘the effulgence of all Space’; “Paraṅcuṭar” – ‘the Transcendental Flame’; “Jñāna veḷḷac-cuṭar vilakku” – ‘the Lamp with the Radiance of the flood of Knowledge’; Netuṅcuṭar cōti” – ‘the Great Bright Radiance’; “Cuṭarkōḷ cōti” – ‘the Bright Radiance’; “Periya para nalmarccōti” – ‘the Transcendental, fine flowary Brilliance’ and so on. Again according to the Āḻvār the Lord is “Ellaiyil āṇattan” – ‘He is One of limitless Knowledge’. He is spoken of as “Jñāna veḷḷac-cuṭar mūrti” – ‘the One who embodies the flood of the light of the Knowledge’; “Nirāinta jñāna mūrtti” – ‘Knowledge fully Incarnate’;

90. V.P. 6.5 : 85.
91. Peri. Tm. 3.8 : 1.
92. ibid. 3.1 : 3; 3.6 : 3; cf. Peri. Tm. 11.8 : 7, 8.
93. ibid. 2.5 : 2.
94. ibid. 3.2 : 8; 3.5 : 7; 3.6 : 10; 4.3 : 9; 7.1 : 10. cf. Peri. Tm. 1.8 : 4; 9.9 : 4.
95. ibid. 2.6 : 2.
96. ibid. 2.9 : 10.
97. ibid. 10.1 : 4.
98. ibid. 10.10 : 10.
99. ibid. 3.10 : 8.
100. ibid. 2.2 : 6.
101. ibid. 4.7 : 7; 4.8 : 6.
"Cuṭar oli mūrtti"\textsuperscript{102} – 'the Image of Radiant Light'. He is therefore conceived as "Jñānap-pirān"\textsuperscript{103} – 'the Lord of Knowledge'; "Ātiyam cōti uru"\textsuperscript{104} – 'the Original in the form of Light'. Sometimes He is referred to, paradoxically, as light and darkness: Oṇcuṭaroṭu iruḷumāy"\textsuperscript{105} – 'the Lord who is both effulgent Light and Darkness'.

Light, flame, brightness, radiance are all various ways of describing real knowledge which is the form of God as Čit because the inexpressible can be expressed only through similes and metaphors. Knowledge is therefore described as "Oṇcuṭarkkarārāi"\textsuperscript{106} – 'the beam of Radiance'; "Nālvētattul niṇāra malarccuṭar"\textsuperscript{107} – 'the flowery Radiance of the four Vedas'; "Oḷikkonṭa cōti"\textsuperscript{108} – 'the bright Radiance'; "Cōti jñānamūrtti"\textsuperscript{109} – 'the Image of the Light of Knowledge'. The idea of this Absolute Light is described poetically as "Cāti nal vayiram"\textsuperscript{110} – 'the fine Diamond of the first water'; "Manimāṇikkac – cuṭar"\textsuperscript{111} – 'the gem-like Efficience'. It is also conceived sometimes as Blissful Absolute. The Ālvār refers to it as "Cuṭar jñāna iūpam"\textsuperscript{112} – 'the Bliss of Bright Knowledge'. The idea of Absolute Beauty is expressed as "Pukarkoḷ cōtippirān"\textsuperscript{113} – 'the God of Radiance with Beauty'. It is eternal, never going out: "Vaḷar oli ḍac"\textsuperscript{114} – 'the Lord of waxing Brightness'; "Mūvā mutalvan"\textsuperscript{115} – 'the Unageing

\textsuperscript{102} ibid. 3.7 : 1; 5.2 : 11.
\textsuperscript{103} T.V.R. 99.
\textsuperscript{104} T.V.M. 3.5 : 5.
\textsuperscript{105} ibid. 5.10 : 7.
\textsuperscript{106} ibid. 1.7 : 4.
\textsuperscript{107} ibid. 3.1 : 10.
\textsuperscript{108} ibid. 3.7 : 6.
\textsuperscript{109} ibid. 4.3 : 8.
\textsuperscript{110} ibid. 3.4 : 4.
\textsuperscript{111} ibid. 5.7 : 6.
\textsuperscript{112} ibid. 10.10 : 10.
\textsuperscript{113} ibid. 6.4 : 3.
\textsuperscript{114} ibid. 3.10 : 10.
\textsuperscript{115} ibid. 2.1 : 10.
Original'; Māmaṇi vaṇṇāṇaḥ'116 – the handsome Lord of gem-like Brightness'; "Olīmaṇi vaṇṇāṇaḥ"117 – 'the Shining Handsome One'. Its purity and holiness are referred to as "Tūya cuṭārc-cūti"118 – 'the pure bright Effulgence'. That the Absolute does not depend upon anything else is spoken of in terms of spontaneous and self-luminous light: "Nāntā vilakkame"119 – 'the Unkindled Flame'. That it transcends everything else, even the lights of the world and the soul, is brought out by such expressions as "Pāraṇcuṭar"120 "Pāraṇcūti"121 "Paramacūti".122

The Lord is self-luminous as real knowledge. He is within our mind. When the inner darkness disappears through yogic practices, He blazes forth as the beautiful light of the great gem. Nāmmāḷvār calls Him as "Karumāṇikkac-cuṭar"123 – 'the Black Gem-like Flame'; "Cēṇcuṭar mūrtti"124 – 'the Dazzling Radiant Image'. He is also referred to 'Karumāṇikkam' in many a place.125 This metaphor of a gem not only brings out the self-luminous aspect but also its precious worth as the ultimate value. The aspect of bliss is also brought out by this because it is only endearing things and persons of love that are metaphorically spoken of as precious gems. The Lord is the great precious gem of beautiful colour: "Kuru māmaṇi"126 – 'the Great, Excellent Gem'; "Maitōy cūti maṇinvaṇṇaḥ"127 – 'the Handsome One Who has the Radiance of pitch-dark Brightness'. It seems that Nāmmāḷvār is

116 Peri. Tm. 7.3: 7; 9.5: 6; 11.2: 7; 11.6: 9.
117. T.V.M. 3.4: 7; 3.10: 2.
118. ibid. 8.7: 4.
119. ibid. 2.1: 9. cf. Peri. Tm. 4.9: 2.
120. ibid 3.6: 10.
121. ibid. 3.6: 3.
122. T.K. 11.
123. ibid. 6.2: 10.
124. ibid. 6.6: 9.
125. ibid., 1.10: 1; 2.7: 1; 3.3: 3; 3.6: 10; 5.1: 5; 5.10: 7; 7.6: 5; 9.5: 7; 10.10: 1; 10.10: 3.
126. Peri. Tm. 7.10: 5. cf. ibid., 3.10: 2; T.K. 6
127. T.V.M. 2.9: 2.
very fond of the precious stone — "Māṇikkam" — the red car- 
buncle, because to refer to God he employs the word with 
prefixes and suffixes profusely: "Cāti māṇikkam"128 — 'the Red 
stone of first water'; "Karumāṇikkam"129 — 'the Dark Gem'; 
"Maṇimāṇikkam"130 — 'the Beautiful Gem'. He calls Him as 
"Poṇmalai"131 — 'the Hillock of Gold'; Maṇikkunṟam"132 — 
'the Hill of Gems'; "Karumāṇikkamalai"133 — 'the Hill of 
Black Gems'; "Karumāṇikkamāmalai"134 — the Great Hill of 
Dark Gems', "Karumāṇikkak-kūṟam"135 — the Hillock of 
Dark Gems; He is "Marakatakkunṟam"136 — 'the Hillock of 
Emerald'. He presses into service almost all the names of 
the precious stones to refer to God. He addresses Him "My 
Gem! my Pearl! and my precious Gem!"137 "My precious Stone! 
my Emerald! and my Gold of Perfect Purity!"138 He refers to 
Him as "the Pool of Emerald Gems".139 The great Parakāla 
calls Him as "the Coral Reef of the Transcendental Hill",140 
"the Gold, the Great Gem, the Bright Ornamented Light-
ning",141 "the Emerald with Pearly Brightness, the One of the 
Hue of the Thundering Clouds",142 and "the Lamp without 
Extinction".143 Nammāḻvār calls Him as "Paramēṭṭi" 144— 'the 
Divine Man', and "the Great Original of Flaming Light"

128. ibid. 3.4: 3.
129. ibid. 5.1: 1.
130. ibid. 5.7: 6. cf. Peri. Tm. 11.8: 8.
131. ibid. 2.6: 3. cf. Peri. Tm. 2.5: 1.
132. ibid. 5.3: 1.
133. ibid. 8.9: 1.
134. ibid. 9.9: 7.8.
135. ibid. 8.7: 6.
136. T.V.C. 1; T.V.M. 2.5: 4.
137. T.V.R. 84.
138. ibid. 85.
140. Peri. Tm. 7.1: 6.
141. ibid. 10.1: 2.
143. Peri. Tm. 10.1: 4.
etc.\textsuperscript{145} He is the delectable Knowledge,\textsuperscript{146} which is not produced\textsuperscript{147} and through which He presents Himself to those who could see.\textsuperscript{148} His pervasion of the universe is through the boundless knowledge.\textsuperscript{149}

Strength which consists in the absence of exertion in spite of continuous engagement in taxing work is revealed in the exploits of Kṛṣṇa who was only a young boy. The Lord had then to engage Himself with the demons almost everyday in the groves and meadows of Gokulam while tending the cows there. Lordship is a quality which the Lord possessed as a result of which He was Himself the agent of many acts which He undertook through His strength. This was done by Him out of free will and not by becoming subservient to any one, as for instance the Lord assumed the form of tortoise\textsuperscript{150} in order to support the Mandara mountain which was getting sunk in the milky ocean at the time of its being churned for the purpose of getting the nectar. Virility is marked by the absence of any adverse effect due to exertion and the never-failing nature of the undertaking in yielding the result. The successful defeat inflicted by Kṛṣṇa on the demons sent by Kamsa intending to have the former killed serves to illustrate this quality of the Lord.\textsuperscript{151} Potency shows the unbounded ability of the Lord to withstand any amount of attack from the adversaries like Madhu, Kaiṭabha\textsuperscript{152} and the forces of Rāvana\textsuperscript{153} and his hordes and also the taming the seven ferocious bulls\textsuperscript{154} and plucking out the tusks of the kuvalayā-piṭa.\textsuperscript{155} Splendour consists in the Lord’s having no need to

\textsuperscript{145} ibid. 10.1: 5.
\textsuperscript{146} ibid. 10.10: 10.
\textsuperscript{147} ibid. 3.1: 5.
\textsuperscript{148} ibid. 3.2: 7.
\textsuperscript{149} ibid. 3.2: 4.
\textsuperscript{150} Peri. Tm. 11.4: 2.
\textsuperscript{151} Tc. V. 37, 80.
\textsuperscript{152} M.Tv. 83.
\textsuperscript{153} I.Tv. 43:
\textsuperscript{154} T.V.M. 2.5: 7.
\textsuperscript{155} ibid. 2.7: 2.
look for anyone's assistance to achieve the task He has undertaken. This is best illustrated by Kṛṣṇa's fighting alone against the demon Bāna and the god Śiva and achieving victory over them. The brilliant display of this quality is revealed by the Lord when He held no weapon of warfare but only the whip for driving the horses of Arjuna's chariot in the battlefield. He made Pāṇḍavas get victory with nobody's assistance.

Nammālvār revels in the auspicious qualities of Bhagavan. He says: “O my resplendent Lord! I am absorbed in Thy auspicious qualities which are as delicious as milk.” He addresses the Lord as One Who ravished Nappināi, and who is possessed of qualities which can fascinate Him though full of sins. Among His manifold auspicious qualities such of them as saulabhya, vatsalya and sousilya have more significance and greater appeal to the Ālvār as they make Him more accessible to one and all.

Accessibility (saulabhya) is the quality which consists in the Lord's mixing freely with all people without reference to their position or status. Kṛṣṇāvatāra is full of incidents to exhibit this quality. The very thought of His birth, how He grew up and how He managed the Mahābhārata war melts the saint's soul. It is difficult to translate the fervour expressed by the simple Tamil words employed in the verses. The Ālvār thinks of the incidents relating to Pūtana, and Śakaṭāśura, and then pictures to himself the fear exhibited by that sweet little Lord when Yaśodā threatened to beat Him with a small stick for having stolen ghee. That picture wherein the Divine Child is seen with His lotus eyes full of tears appears to cast a spell on the Ālvār's soul which again melts away into unprecedented love. The story goes that the

156. ibid. 3.10 : 4.
157. ibid. 3.2 : 3.
158. P. Tv. 58.
160. T.V.M. 1.3 : 1, 2
161. ibid. 5.10 : 3.
trance that the Āḻvār got into while singing this hymn lasted for six months. No wonder that the language employed in the verses of this hymn is enough to melt even the stony hearts. This trance, it is told, was the second one which he is said to have got into. The first one was much earlier while singing “Pattuṭai aṭiyavarkku eḷiyavan”. Here in this verse the saint seeks to demonstrate how easy of approach the Lord is to his devotees. At once, and as an instance of that saulabhya he conjures up before his mind’s eye the vision of the Lord in bondage. Says the Āḻvār: “How great is the accessibility of the great Lord of Lakṣmi who in the form of the child Kṛṣṇa submitted Himself to be tied to the mortar in a cowherd’s house, and that too as a punishment for stealing butter as it was being churned!” With the onrush of feeling engendered by thus contrasting the consort of Śrī with the cowed down, weeping child tied to a mortar, the Āḻvār became speechless for six months, and got immersed in the inward enjoyment of the lapse of the High into the low, of the Eternal into the ephemeral. ‘Dāmodara’—the quality of the Lord is proclaimed in this name itself, for it means ‘the One who has a string wound round His belly’. The Āḻvār again says: “The easy accessibility of the Lord is so great that He without limit or discrimination is born into numerous births (avatāras) and that all His auspicious qualities without end get brightened in the light of His saulabhya.” The Āḻvār dwells particularly on the fact that the Great Lord reduced Himself to the status of a charioteer to Arjuna at the time of the Kurukṣetra war. Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār too makes a reference to the Lord’s assumption of the role of a charioteer to Arjuna—Pārthasārathi. “The tender lotus-like hands inserted into and then pulled out of the pot full of butter, from

163. T.V.M. 1.3 : 1.
164. ibid. ibid.
165. ibid. 4.5 : 3.
166. ibid. 1.3 : 2.
167. ibid. 3.6 : 10.
168. Peri. Tm. 2.10 : 8. The contemplation of the Āḻvār is highly eloquent.
which He tries to eat, (Yaśodā) whipping Him with a fine string, the Lord — child in a state of fear, the red-lips curd — whitened, the cries and look of fright, the stutter of lips, the stance of prayerful cringing” — this posture of the God-child fascinates Kulacēkarāḻvār who expresses it in the words of Devaki. The Āḻvār says that Yaśodā who had the divine gift of witnessing that posture had also experienced the pinnacle of Paramānanda.169 Nammāḻvār says: “The Lord by His saulabhya became the son of Nandagōpa, the cowherd as a god-sent find for him, and gave heavenly bliss to Yaśodā by turning Himself, of His own accord, into a child in her arms170” Thus, as the commentator points out the Lord presented the highest heavenly bliss in the form of the ordinary small pleasures of life — “Antamil pēriṇpattaic ciṟṟinpamāk-kiṇān”.171 In other words, Yaśodā’s Krṣṇānumbhava was a hundred times more sweet than the bliss of Paramapada. Again the saint says: “For the sake of Pāṇḍavas who were so companionable to Thee, Thou becamest the excellent charioteer”.172 The Āḻvār avers that the Lord was so considerate as to enter the heart of such a despicable being as himself; and, what is more, to compose Tiruvāyirul from there for him.173 Tiruvaṅkaiyāḻvār in the last line of every verse of one hymn has a refrain in which he contemplates the saulabhya of the Lord in His Krṣṇāvatāra in the posture of being bound by the curdmaidas as a punishment for stealing curd and butter.174 In another hymn of the same Āḻvār, a flying is carried on between two maidens. In the first half of each verse, a maiden narrates an incident in which the Lord reduces Himself to a state of lowliness. In the second half, the other maiden counters the first by pointing out the greatness in the lowliness. As instances of the Lord deliberately attaining lowliness are mentioned Rāma’s treading the rough woods barefoot, Krṣṇa’s being brought up as a cowherd

169. Perum. Tm. 7 : 8; cf. Peri. Tm. 6.7 : 4; 2.10 : 6.
170. T.V.M. 8.1 : 3.
172. T.V.M. 8.5 : 8.
173. ibid. 10.6 : 4.
174. Peri. Tm. 10.6.
child, stealing butter and getting bound for it, His turning the messenger for the Pāṇḍavas and a charioteer for Arjuna, and His begging Mahābali for ‘three foot’ of land. Pūtattār declares that he would address the Lord with His “great names” such as ‘the one who grazed the cows’, ‘the one who stole the butter’, ‘the one who was bound with the strings’, ‘the one who was tied to the mortar’ etc., because He would respond to these names readily because of His saulabhya. In this connection it is worthy to note what the small names are. Āṇṭāl, for instance, begs forgiveness of the Lord for having addressed Him using His “small names” such as “Nārāyana’, ‘Govinda’ ‘Maṇiṇaṇa’ etc. Nammāḷvār affirms that if one, without doubting whether Lord would be inaccessible, or accessible, or indifferent, were to believe in His saulabhya, in His Kṛṣṇāvatāra, He would be the role of every kind of relative. “The greater our feeling for the Lord,” says the Āḻvār,” the more accessible He is” The Āḻvār refers to a specific instance when the Lord exhibited His saulabhya. The devotees in Heaven were offering incense to the Lord during ablation. When the smoke of incense was screening His face, He mysteriously came down to Gokulam to take in the butter and danced between the horns of the seven wild bulls in order to win the hand of Nappinnai. The Āḻvār wonders at the Lord’s willingness to mix freely with the devotees in Vaikuṇṭha and with the gopīs in the Gokulam without considering the status of the latter.

Sausūlya is the intimacy that grows between the infinitely great or Īśvara the infinitesimally small or jīva. Nammāḷvār contemplates this quality of the Lord in accommodating Brahmā and Rudra who came to Him out of self-interest in His navel and in one side of His body respectively.

175. ibid. 11.5.
176. I. Tv. 50.
177. T. Pv. 28.
178. P. Tv. 36.
179. ibid. 29.
Similarly He entertained the celestials as His servants.\textsuperscript{181} “The Lord intermingles with my heart” says the Āḻvār, “and makes me compose verses (not minding my low status)”.\textsuperscript{182} He personifies His quality as Lord Himself and addresses Him as such which fascinates his soul.\textsuperscript{183} Tirumāṇkaiyāḻvār praises the Lord for His unusual gesture of good mixing in befriending Guha without any thought about his low class, his murderous career and his ignorance, but also introducing Sītā and Lakṣmanā as Guha’s kinsfolk.\textsuperscript{184} Similarly he praises the Lord for His love towards Hanumān with whom He was prepared to sit for dinner for his honest and devout service, without minding the fact that Hanumān was of the animal species, a monkey.\textsuperscript{185} Saving the elephant from the clutches of the crocodile,\textsuperscript{186} of Sumukha from the threat of Garuḍa\textsuperscript{187}, assuring the learned Brahmin of a place in Vaikuṇṭha after death,\textsuperscript{188} allowing Mārkaṇḍeya to be ever at His feet,\textsuperscript{189} bringing the dead son alive to his father,\textsuperscript{190} bringing back to life the dead sons of an orthodox Brahmin after the lapse of several years\textsuperscript{191} and instructing the king Toṇṭaimān in the secret doctrines\textsuperscript{192} prove how the Lord mixed freely with people of all ranks.

\textit{Vātsalya} is the tenderness and affection that overpowers, as it were, divine omniscience and makes it forget the sinfulness of the sinner. Nammāḻvār contemplates the affection of the lion-shaped Lord who readily made His

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item T.V.M. 9.3 : 10.
\item ibid. 10.7 : 1.
\item ibid. 3.8 : 8.
\item Peri. Tm. 5.8 : 1.
\item ibid. 5.8 : 2.
\item ibid. 5.8 : 3.
\item ibid. 5.8 : 4.
\item ibid. 5.8 : 5.
\item ibid. 5.8 : 6.
\item ibid. 5.8 : 7.
\item ibid. 5.8 : 8.
\item ibid. 5.8 : 9.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
appearance when Hiraṇya hit the pillar angrily challenging his son to demonstrate the presence of the Lord there and then.\textsuperscript{193} He addresses the Lord in one verse as the One who swiftly removed the sorrow of the Elephant—“Ollai kaimmā tunpam kaṭinta pirāne!”\textsuperscript{194}; he again refers to Him as Kaṇṇaṇ the cloud-hued Lord who redeemed the Elephant caught by the crocodile in a pond of fine flowers.\textsuperscript{195} The Āḻvār revels in the Govardhana incident: he refers to the Lord as the One who lifted the mountain and held it as an umbrella to protect kine from the rain of stones;\textsuperscript{196}; as the Prime subject of the Vedas who descended here on earth while His bright Form continued in Heaven in order to chastise Kaṁsa the oppressor of the good.\textsuperscript{197} Again and again the Gajendra incident comes to the mind of the Āḻvār. Says the Āḻvār: “I salute Thee with my hands folded above my head. I lose myself in Thy love. O, the One who wiped the sorrow of the Elephant.”\textsuperscript{198} He is the Lord who relieved the heart-sorrow of the Elephant which standing in the pond surrendered itself at His feet in the belief that there was no refuge other than Himself.\textsuperscript{199} The reference to the incident of Gajendra and Prahlāda by Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār in his Tiruvallik-kēṇi hymn is some thing eloquent. The Āḻvār refers to the Lord as One who rode the Garuḍa and rushed to wield His discus in order to relieve the distress of the Elephant of the woods it stood with its trunk uplifted in prayerful appeal, with the crocodile catching its foot, when it went into the pond to pluck fresh flowers to offer for worship to the Lord.\textsuperscript{200} Hiraṇya hardly liked it when his school-boy son chanted the thousand names of the Lord. He, enraged with his son, hit the pillar angrily. The Lord, in the shape of a bright lion with crescent-shaped canine teeth, flaming eyes and wide-open mounth, manifested Himself.\textsuperscript{201}
The Lord is the embodiment of mercy. The infinite perfections of Īśvara are dominated by the redemptive motive of dayā. He embodies Himself as dayā to redeem the jīva. The Lord as dayānidhi is the rock of love and the sole refuge of those who are immersed in desolation and distress. The quality of mercy inspires confidence in God as the God of salvation and it soothes the broken heart and the contrite spirit. The Ālvārs revel in this quality of the Lord. It is this quality, according to all of them, that forces the cosmic ruler or Nārāyaṇa to drive nara’s chariot and from that chariot-seat to drive utterance to the gospel of redemption. It is again dayā that prompted the Lord to save the world from the Deluge. Tirumāṇkaiyālvar contemplates this quality in one full decad. He refers to the Lord as the one who saved the earth, the heaven, the celestials, the demons and others from the unpreventable Deluge by devouring all and lodging them safely in His stomach. Namalvar in several verses celebrates the same quality of the Lord who churned the deep sea to get nectar for the sake of the celestials. Tirumāṇkaiyālvar refers to this incident in several verses bringing out the Lord’s mercy. Again, Namalvar contemplates the quality of dayā of the Lord in several verses in the incident of the Lord lifting the Govardhana mountain and protecting the cowherd settlement with its cattle from the rain of stones by Indra. It is this dayā, according to the Ālvārs, that is the solace of life and the solace of death and has therefore the highest claim to universality. To them, dayā is the soul of Bhagavān Himself, as it is the source, sustenance and satisfaction of the divine nature. The deities other than Nārāyaṇa shall not be approached for mercy, as

202. ibid. 1.8: 4; 2.10: 8; 4.10: 5; 5.1: 7; 6.7: 7; 7.5: 2; 9.1: 9; 11.5: 8; Periyāḷ. Tm. 4.2: 7; I.Tv. 15; T.V.M. 4.6: 1; 7.5: 9; 8.5: 8.
203. T.V.M. 4.8: 6; 7.5: 10.
204. Peri. Tm. 11.6.
205. ibid. 11.6: 7.
206. T.V.M. 5.10: 10; 6.2: 3; 7.4: 2; 8.1: 1; 8.4: 4.
207. Peri. Tm. 1.4: 7; 3.10: 2; 6.8: 2; 8.5: 7; 8.8: 2; 10.6: 2.
208. T.V.M. 3.3: 8; 4.5: 7; 5.6: 5, 6; 5.10: 5; 7.2: 8; 7.4: 10; 7.7: 5.
209. M.Tv. 15.
any gesture shown by these deities to show pity would not yield any purposeful effect.\(^{209}\)

Rectitude (\textit{ārya}) is one of the innumerable qualities which explains the honest behaviour of the person concerned through his dealings by thought, word and deed. God’s rectitude in lifting up the Govardhana mountain enchanted the Āḷvār.\(^{210}\) Śrī Kṛṣṇa stood by the cowherds and cows till Indra was forced to withdraw his spirit of vengeance. Liberality (\textit{audārya}) of Nārāyaṇa is frequently referred to and this had made the Āḷvārs call the deity as ‘pirān’\(^{211}\) using it together generally with the words ‘rāma’ and ‘kṛṣṇa’. Many other qualities are there in Nārāyaṇa which have some kind of reference in the compositions of the Āḷvārs. Omnipotence\(^{212}\) (\textit{sarvaśaktīva}), true will\(^{213}\) (\textit{satya saṅkalpaiva}) and others are suggested to be the qualities of Nārāyaṇa.

It appears that the Āḷvārs did not conceive of the \textit{sādguṇya} aspect of the Lord’s qualities. They were much impressed by the knowledge which is one of the characteristic features declaring the essential nature of the Lord. Their love of God must have inspired them to experience the qualities of mercy, easy accessibility and others. It is these qualities which belong to God whose essential nature is already established that became more endearing to the Āḷvārs. Nārāyaṇa’s attributes, which pertain to His divine auspicious form, and the qualities which are helpful and endearing to humanity, are found to be not deficient in any thing or defective in any aspect. These are found generally to be present in other deities and men too to a far less degree than in Nārāyaṇa and highly to a limited extent. When they are not surpassed in the case of others and are found to be free from any deficiency, they attain perfection and they do so only in the case of Nārāyaṇa, the Divine Person whose essential nature explains why these are perfect.

\(^{210}\) T.V.M. 1.8: 4; 3.3: 8.
\(^{211}\) Ibid. 6.1: 4; 9.6: 11
\(^{212}\) Ibid. 1.5: 10, 1.6: 9.
\(^{213}\) Ibid. 3.7: 7.
CHAPTER XVI

THE FORMS AND EXPLOITS OF NĀRĀYANA

The concept of divine perfection is open to an objection which is based on the existence of evil in the world. The prevalence of misery and suffering in one world would prove the Supreme Person guilty of partiality (vaiśāmya) and cruelty (nairghṛnyā). This charge against theism is to be met by tracing the sufferings to the moral responsibility of the selves.1 Though this is in consonance with the True desire (satyakāma) and True will (satyasaṅkalpa) of the deity, yet the suffering self does not get any consolation from this. The school of Vaiśnnavism brings in the redemptive grace (dayā) of God, which forgives the sins of the selves. It is this that explains why the Supreme Person presents Himself in a finitised form. While the self seeks to deserve this grace, the Supreme Person assumes forms to get at the self which yearns for union with Him. The forms are suited for the experience of the Self of Him and are mostly after the human pattern which is quite familiar to the self. The Supreme Person, according to Nammāḻvār, takes birth in the world in all categories of living beings for protecting them from their age-long sufferings and giving succour to them.2 The Pāncaratra Āgamas mention that the Supreme Person presents Himself to the suffering humanity in five forms known as the transcendent (para), the grouped (vyūha), the divinely descended (vibhava), the immanent (antaryāmin) and the idol (arca).3 The Āḻvārs believed in this tradition which influenced them to a great extent. While giving their experience of such forms of God, the Tamil saints do not forget

1. V.S, 2.1: 34; Br. Up. 44: 5.
that the formless and the Cosmic Person becomes possessed of form and frequently refer to this.\textsuperscript{4}

The transcendental state which is the highest form is expressed in such terms as Nārāyaṇa, Parabrahman and Para-Vāsudeva. This is the self-realized absolute having the super-essential qualities of satyam (truth), jñānam (light), anantam (infinity), amalām (goodness), and ānandam (bliss). He is the Eternal of eternals which is formless, changeless, and transcendental. He lives in the city called Vaikuṇṭha in Paramapada where "matter exists without its mutability, time exists as eternity, and the mukta lives without the moral limitations of karma".\textsuperscript{5} The divine city is guarded by the city-watchers such as Kumuda, Kumudākṣa, Puṇḍarīka, Vāmana, Saṅkukarṇa, Sarvanētra, Sumukha, etc., who are equipped with divine weapons, ornaments, attendants and other paraphernalia.\textsuperscript{6} Nārāyaṇa is seated in a pavilion of gems on a couch in the form of the serpent Śeṣa placed on the throne having eight legs such as dharma and others in the mahāmaṇiśaṇaṭapa within the divine abode attended by the gate-keepers such as Cauḍa, Pracaṇḍa, Bhadra, Subhadra, Jaya, Vijaya etc. He is the possessor of a divine auspicious figure adorned with divine ornaments such as crown and others. He is four-armed, equipped with the divine weapons such as conch, discus and others. He is accompanied by Śrī, Bhū, and Nilā. His presence is being enjoyed by the eternals such as Ananta, Garuda, Viśvakṣena etc., and other Sāma-singing liberated souls. It is with this state of God that the finite self attains union. The Upanīṣads glorify the transcendental beauty of Brahman as paramjētis.\textsuperscript{7} Paramapada is the highest world beyond which there are no higher worlds with the highest Person of infinite splendour in the supreme world of eternal glory or nityavibhūti\textsuperscript{8} of which this phenomenal world (śīlā-vibhūti) is only a partial expression due to

\textsuperscript{4} Peri. Tm. 5.6; 5.
\textsuperscript{5} The Philosophy of Viśistādvaita, p. 154.
\textsuperscript{6} Yat. Dip. IX-17.
\textsuperscript{7} Mun. Up. 2.2: 9, 10.
\textsuperscript{8} Ch. Up. 3. 13: 7.
His *yōga-māya*. Nammāḻvār refers to God in this form: "the permanently great and the first and foremost of the celestials"; "the Lord reclined on the bed of the five mouthed snake"; "the One Who reigns in Vaikuṇṭha"; "Nārāyaṇa the Lord of the seven worlds"; "the One Who became Trinity and the foremost of the Trinity"; "intense effulgence descended"; "the sole Lord who enjoys varied pleasures without hindrance, the one who is sugar-candy, honey, nectar, milk, fruit, sugar-cane for three worlds, One Who wears honey-secreting basil coronet in His head"; "the Lord of the celestials"; "the foremost of the heavenly who wields the sword, the mace, the conch, the discus and the bow"; and "the Lord Who has His abode in Vaikuṇṭha and Who is worshipped by all the gods in temples".

Perfection in Śrī Vaikuṇṭha does not afford much scope for the Supreme Person to display His *dayā*, there being none to suffer from any malady. Besides, this place is beyond the limits of the material world and so could not be visited by any mortal. The Lord therefore takes up His abode in the milky ocean which lies within the material world. The gods invariably proceed there headed by Brahmā whenever they are in distress. In the *vyūha* state (grouped form) Brahmā the absolute becomes Īśvara the God-head Who is the ground of the universe as its creator, preserver and destroyer. The metaphysical absolute becomes Vāsudeva, the perfect, to satisfy the meditational needs of the *mumūkṣu* and for the creation of the universe. He manifests Himself

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10. ibid. 2.1: 6.
11. idid. 2.6: 1.
12. ibid 2.7: 2.
13. ibid. 3.6. 2.
14. ibid. 3.7: 1.
15. ibid. 3.10. 3
16. ibid. 4.5: 2
17. ibid. 7.2: 6.
18. ibid. 8.6: 5.
19. Peri. Tm. 4.3: 4; V.P. 1.9: 38; 5.1: 31.
as Saṅkarṣaṇa with the two qualities of jñāna (knowledge) and bala (strength), as Pradyumna with the two qualities of aśvarya (lordship) and virya (virility) and as Aniruddha with the two qualities of śakti (potency) and tejas (splendour) without any diminution of Divinity. This, however, does not mean that each vyūha has only its two respective qualities, but each vyūha is Viṣṇu Himself with His six qualities of which two only in each case become manifest. The vyūha Vāsudeva is the same as the transcendent form of the Lord and replete with all the six qualities. The other three are named after the elder brother, the son and the grand-son respectively of Kṛṣṇa. There is a distinctive function assigned to each of these vyūhas in cosmic creation as well as in the act of redeeming the souls. With Saṅkarṣaṇa, creation assumes an embryonic form; through Pradyumna the duality of Puruṣa and Prakṛti makes it first appearance; and finally, Aniruddha enables the body and soul to grow. As regards the process of redemption, Saṅkarṣaṇa promulgates Ekāni mārga (monotheism), Pradyumna helps its translation into practice (tat-kriya), and Aniruddha brings about the fruit of this practice (kriyā-phala) which is liberation.

The Āḻvār refers to Him as “Vētam muṇ virittāṁ” — ‘the first Unfolder of the Vedas’ and as “Pāṇpuṭai vētam payanta paraṇ” — ‘the Lord who created the beautiful Vedas’. Regarding the destruction of the universe the saint refers to as ‘Pālanaṭy ēḷ ulaku uṇṭu’ — ‘a child who devoured the seven world’. In the history of the adventure of the souls occur certain epochs of moral crisis, when egoism becomes so inflated and sinfulness becomes so iniquitous that Īśvara in His infinite mercy withdraws the instruments of evil and thus arrests the wrong-doers from their career of crime and sin. This is called pralaya and has a soothing effect on the self. Pradyumna creates the universe and introduces all

23. ibid. 6.6: 5.
24. ibid. 4.2: 1.
25. Dayāśataka-16.
dharmas. Srṣṭi is also a redemptive process and after the refreshment of pralaya, the jiva wakes up to moral activity, enters on a new life. He is given a fresh opportunity for attaining freedom. The withdrawing and delivering the universe, as it were, thus reveal the redemptive mercy of the Saviour and cosmology is to be reinterpreted as a philosophy of redemption. Nammāḷvār reveals in these two aspects. The Āḻvār says: “Jñālam murṟum umiṇṭa Nārāyaṇaḥ” - ‘Nārāyaṇa who released the whole universe from His mouth’; “Munṭir jñālam paṭaitta em mukil vaṇṇaṇē” - ‘the cloud-hued Lord who created the sea-girt world’; “Mun ulakaṅkāḷ ellām paṭaitta mukil vaṇṇaṇ” - ‘the cloud-hued Lord who created the ancient worlds’ . Sometimes both the withdrawal and the deliverance are referred to in one and the same verse. The Āḻvār says: “Oruṅkākāvē ulakeḷum viḷiṇki umiṇṭita peruntēvan” - ‘the great Lord who had swallowed and released the seven worlds together.’ Again this involution and evolution of the universe are spoken of by other Āḻvārs also; in fact, they have a strong appeal to their minds. Tirumāṅkaiyāḻvār reveals in this incident in one full decad.

Each one of these four vyūhas descends into three sub-vyūhas. Vāsudeva hypostatizes into Keśava, Nārāyaṇa and Mādhava; Saṅkaraśaṇa into Govinda, Viṣṇu and Madhusūdana; Pradyumna into Tirivikrama, Vāmana and Śrīdhar; and Aniruddha into Hṛṣīkesa, Padmanābha and Damodara. These twelve tutelar deities are the presiding deities of the sun in the twelve months of the year. The names of these twelve deities are recited by the pious Hindus every day. There is a hymn by Nammāḷvār which goes by the name of

27. ibid. 3.2: 1.
28. ibid. 6.8: 1. cf. 7.1: 9; 7.6: 1; 8.10: 7. cf. Tc.V. 30.
29. ibid. 4.6: 4. cf. 9.3: 2; 10.2: 3. cf. Tc V, 28.
30. Periyāḻ Tm. 2.6: 6; 4.1: 9; 4.3: 9. Perum. Tm. 8.7. Tc.V. 10, 12, 22, 28, 30, 31, 105. A.P. 9. Peri. Tm. 1.3: 6; 1.10:3; 2.2: 5; 2.4: 6; 2.9: 4; 2.5: 1; 3.1: 3; 3.9: 3; 3.10: 3; 4.1: 5; 6; 4.8: 6; 4.10: 5; 5.4: 2; 5.7: 9; 5.9: 2; 5.10: 2; 6.1: 5; 6.6: 1; 7.2: 4; 7.8: 10; 8.10: 2; 9.2: 9; 9.9: 3.
31. Peri. Tm. 11.6.
'Pānīrītu tirunāmap-pāṭṭu' the recitation of which leads us to the God’s lotus feet. A hymn of Periyāyār containing the advice to people to name their children with the names of the Lord bears some of these names. Another hymn celebrating the piercing of the lobes of the ears of child Kṛṣṇa contains these twelve names. Yośoda addresses Him with the names in the hymn. Again the images of the Lord are distinguished to represent these twelve forms by varying the order and arrangement of the appurtenances held in the four hands of each image.

The third state of Brahman is Vībhava which is the descent of Īśwara among beings by means of forms similar to that genus. "It is the embodiment of the redemptive working of the raksāka in the moral will of humanity with a view to recovering it from its sinfulness". "It is a periodic invasion of kṛpā into all species and into the history of humanity, when evil triumphs over goodness and creates a crisis in moral life, in order to arrest the progress of social disruption, redeem the sinner from his sinfulness, and commune with the devotee who thirsts for His living presence." The ten principal descents are Fish (Matsya), Tortoise (Kūrma), Boar (Varāha), Man–Lion (Narasimha), Dwarf (Vāmanā), Parasurāma, Balarāma, Kṛṣṇa and Kalkin. The redemptive grace of Vībhava is realized in the recovery of Vedas from its destroyers, the extraction of immortality (nectar) from the waters of life, the maintenance of cosmic order and the law of righteousness and the living assurance of salvation to all being. According to Viṣvaksena-saṁhitā and Lakṣmītantra

32. T.V.M. 2.7.
33. Perivāḷ. Tm. 4.6.
34. ibid. 2.3.
35. The philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita, p. 156.
36. Bh.G. 4:7.8
37. According to Aḥibudhyā-saṁhitā, avatāras are thirty-nine; they are thirty-nine according to the Sāttavata-saṁhitā also. But Yatindra mata Dīpika following Varavaramuni admits thirty-six avatāras only, since Kapila, Dattātreya and Parasurāma are supposed to be secondary avatāras.
all the *avatāras* descend from the fourth *vyūha*, viz., Aniruddha. But *Pādmatantra* declares that of the ten *Vibhavas*, *Matsya, Kūrma* and *Varāha* descend from Vāsudeva; Narasimha, Vāmana, Śrīrāma and Parasurāma from Saṅkarṣaṇa; Balarāma from Praduṁna, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Kalkin from Aniruddha.\(^{39}\)

Among the *avatāras* of the Lord, some get meagre and brief references because of the short time of His stay in that form and particularly the smaller number of persons who alone were intended to be favoured by that form of the Lord. The *Matsya* descent has therefore a brief reference.\(^{40}\) The Kūrmāvatāra has more references.\(^{41}\) Through the form of Parasurāma, He destroyed the insolent kṣatriyas.\(^{42}\) The descent Varāha, Vāmana–Tirivikrama, Narasimha, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa have frequent references in the works of the Ālvārs. Even the first three Ālvārs, the earliest of the Ālvārs, refer to these *avatāras* in their poems\(^{43}\) thereby proving the popularity of the worship of the several of them prior to the period of Ālvārs. As regards varāha *avatāra*, Namālavār says: “Perum nilam Kīntavan”\(^{44}\) – ‘the one who burrowed and dug out the earth’; “Poṭil ējum ēnam onṟay nuṇiṟ kōṭṭil vaithāy”\(^{45}\) – ‘in the form of a Boar You poised the seven worlds on Your tusk’; “Maṇ- maṭantai poruṭṭu ēnam ēy āṭi am kālattu akal

\(^{39}\) *Introduction to Pāñcarātra*, p. 48.

\(^{40}\) T.V.M. 1.8: 8; 2.8: 5; Peri. Tm. 5.4: 8; 6.8: 2.

\(^{41}\) Ibid. 2.8: 5; 7.1: 7, Peri. Tm. 5.3: 6; 5.4: 8; 8.4: 4.

\(^{42}\) Ibid. 6 2: 10; Peri. Tm. 3.2: 5; 3.4: 5; 6.2: 7.

\(^{43}\) For these five avatāras, respectively be referred to: (1) M.Tv. 2, 9, 25, 39, 91; I.Tv. 30, 31, 47; Mu. Tv. 45, 54. (ii) M.Tv. 3, 14, 17, 20, 21, 48, 50, 79, 84, 100; I.Tv. 5, 10, 18, 23, 30, 34, 36, 47, 52, 61, 71, 78, 87, 91, 99; Mu. Tv. 4, 6, 9, 13, 18, 20, 23, 34, 36, 40, 41, 47, 49, 52, 58, 83, 90, 93. (iii) M.Tv. 17, 23, 25, 31, 36, 40, 90, 93; I.Tv. 18, 84, 94, 95; Mu. Tv. 31, 42, 49, 65, 95. (iv) M.Tv. 23, 27, 35, 59; I.Tv. 15, 25, 29, 43, 79, Mu. Tv. 51, 52. (v) M.Tv. 8, 11, 18, 22, 23, 27, 34, 39, 54, 62, 86, 92; I.Tv 8, 15, 19, 23, 28, 49, 62, 63, 68, 89, 92, 93, 98, 100; Mu. Tv. 21, 28, 29, 32, 34, 41, 42, 43, 47, 48, 49, 51. 54. 60, 65, 68, 71, 74, 80, 85, 91, 98.

\(^{44}\) T.V.M. 1.7: 6.

\(^{45}\) Ibid. 2.3: 5.
iṭam kirṭavār” 46 — “for the sake of Goddess Earth, You descended in the form of a Boar and brought out by digging the vast space”; “Eṃam āy nilam kiṇṭa eṅ appanē” 47 — “my Lord who in the shape of a Boar brought out the earth”; “Nṅu tiru-eiyṛaḷ iṭantu ni koṇṭa nilamakaḷ kēḻaṇē” 48 — “the Lord of Goddess Earth whom You dug out by Your tusk”; “Alaperum puṇal tāṇuḷ aluntiya jālattai tāḷappaṭaḷmal taṇpāḷ oru koṭṭitaṭ tāṇ koṇṭa kēḻal tiru uru āyṛṟu” 49 — “in order to rescue the earth from submerging, He in the form of a Boar balanced it on His tusk”; “Kōḷa varākam onṟāy nilam koṭṭitaik koṇṭa entāy” 50 — “in the form of a fine Boar You carried the earth on Your tusk”. There are references to this avatāra in his other works also. 51 Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār beautifully expresses the grandeur and majesty of this avatāra. He says:

“Cilampin iṭaic cīru paral-pōḷ periya mēru
 tirukkuḷampil kāṇakaṇappa tiru ākāram
 Kūḷuṅka nilamaṭantai taṇai iṭantu pulkik
 koṭṭitaik vāḷṭaruḷiya kōmaṇ” — 52

This can be translated as: ‘The Lord who, with Mount Mēru jingling like a trinklet within the anklet between His hooves, with Lakṣmi tossed about within His bosom, scooped up Goddess Earth, embraced and placed Her on his tusk’. The English rendering, however, hardly does justice to the beauty of the sentiments expressed, or of the eloquence of the language employed, by the Āḷvār.

Innumerable references are found regarding Vāmana— Tirivikrama avatāra in the Āḷvār’s works. The Āḷvār says: “Perunilaṃ kaṭanta nal atīp-pōṭu ayarppilaṅ alaṟṟuvaṅ taḻuvaṅ vaṇaṅkuvaṅ” 53 — ‘I shall tirelessly utter the name

46. ibid. 4.2: 6.
47. ibid. 5.7: 6.
48. ibid. 7.2: 9.
49. ibid. 7.5: 5.
50. ibid. 10. 10: 7.
51. T.V.R. 45, 99; P.Tv. 7, 42.
52. Peri. Tm. 4.4: 8.
of, embrace and bow my head, to the lotus-feet which measured the whole world; "Pulăn koḷ māṇāy nilam koṇṭānē"54 — ‘the One Who acquired the earth as a youth (brahmachari) who had conquered the seuses’; "Oru māṇik kuṟaḷāki nimirnta karumāṇikkam"55 — ‘the Dark Gem which expanded itself from the state of a short youth’; "Ulakēḷum or mūvaṭi koṇṭānāi"56 — ‘taking the seven worlds in three strides’; "Mēltanṃai mītiṇa nimirntu maṇ koṇṭa māl-taṇṭān mikkum or tēvum uḷatē"?57 — ‘Is there a Lord greater than the One Who acquired the Cosmic form and got the earth for Himself’; "Tirukkanṟaḷā"58 — ‘the great Dwarf!’; "Maṇ koṇṭa vāmaṇaṇ"59 — ‘the short One Who acquired the earth’; "Ulaku aḷantān"60 — ‘World-measurer’; "Ulkam koṇṭa aṭiyavan"61 — ‘the One Who took the world in his strides’; "Aṇṭu orukāḷ vaiyyam aḷanta pirān"62 — ‘the Lord Who once measured the world’; ‘Aṭiyai mūṟṟai iranta āṟum āṅkē niṟṟu aḷktalum maṇṇum viṇṇum, muṭiya ḫaṇṭiyāl muṭittuk-koṇṭa mukkīya-mum"63 — ‘the begging for three footsteps of land, and then taking in just two strides the deep sea, the earth and the heaven’; ‘Maṇṭu amai kōḷatū em māyak kuṟaḷarku"64 — ‘the mysterious Dwarf with handsome shape’; ‘Maṇṇum viṇṇum maṇṭa koṇṭa māyak aṭiyāl kuṟaḷāy valaṅkāṭṭi, maṇṇum viṇṇum koṇṭa māya aṁmāṇe"65 — ‘O Lord Who acquired the form of the Dwarf to the delight of earth and heaven and acquired by treading both earth and heaven’; "Kuṇṭu īḷ pār īḷ cūḷ kāṭal jāḷam muḷu īḷum, niṟṟē tāviya nīḷ kāḷai āḷit tirumāḷē"66 — ‘O Lord who in

54. ibid. 1.8:6.
55. ibid. 1.10:1.
56. ibid. 1.10: 5.
57. ibid. 2.2:3.
58. ibid. 2.6:1.
59. ibid. 3.8: 5; 4.7
60. ibid. 4.4:8.
61. ibid. 5.3:5
62. ibid. 5.4:10.
63. ibid. 5.10: 9.
64. ibid. 6.6:9.
65. ibid. 6.9:2.
66. ibid. 8.3:8.
your stationary position stood astride the Seven mountains, the Seven worlds surrounded by sea, and the universe'; "Ivvulakam mūṟṟum utaṟ niṟaiyā ciṟumāmēnī nimirtta eṇ centāmaraikkān tirukkurāḷaṇ"67 - 'the lotus-eyed handsome Dwarf who filled with His small body expanded into cosmic largeness all the three worlds'; "Kuṇṟāmal ulakam aḷanta aṭiyāṇai"68 - 'the One Who completely taking the whole world in His stride'. After measuring the earth and the heavens with His feet, He puts His Foot on the head of Mahābali for the third step. The emphasis of the Āḷvār is that is the joy of the Lord in touching His children - all living beings in this act of measurement. The idea of inspiring the future generations with hope and love through and by this story is important. Reference to this avatāra are also found in his other three works.69

The Āḷvār, when referring to Narasimhavāṭāra, says: "Iraṇiyan akal māṟvam kiṟta en munṇaik kōḷariyē"70 - 'O Lion Who tore the broad bosom of Hiraṇya'; "Kiḷar oḷiyāl kuṟaiyu illā ari uruvāy kilarantu eluntu, kiḷar oḷiya iraṇiyanatu akal māṟpam kilittu ukanta, valar oḷiya kaṇal-āli valampuriyāṇ"71 - 'the One with the brightening fire-spitting discus and the conch Who, vigorously rashing in the form of Man-Lion enjoyed the tearing of the bright bosom of Hiraṇya; 'Allal amararaic ceyyum iraṇiyan ākattai mallal ari uruvāy ceyya māyaṃ"72 - 'the deed which He, in the form of the fighting Lion, performed on the chest of Hiranaya who persecuted the Devas'; "Kaćuttaṭāv āvūṇaṇ utaḷ irre pīḷavāka kaiukir āṇṭa em kaṭalē"73 - 'my Lord Who with Your hand-nails tore in two the body of the fighting demon'; "Cempon ākattu avuṇaṇ uṭal

67. ibid. 8. 10: 3.
68. ibid. 9. 4: 10.
70. T.V.M. 2. 6: 6.
71. ibid. 4. 8: 7.
72. ibid. 7. 5: 8.
73. ibid. 8. 1: 3.
kiṇṭavaṇ”74 – ‘the One Who tore the golden-red bosom of the
demon’. References to this avatāra are found only in Periya-
tiruvantāti”75 and not in other two works.

The Ālvār enjoys the contemplation of Rāmāvatāra
in his works. He says: “Nil kaṭal cūḷ ilaṅkaik kon toḷkal
talai tunī ceyṭān”76 – ‘One Who hewed down the head and
shoulders of the king of Lanka girt by the vast seas’; “Ilaṅkai
cerṟavane”77 – ‘O the Destroyer of Lanka.’; “Ilaṅkaiyai
nīrē ceyta netuṅcutar cōti.”78 – ‘the effulgent Light which
burnt Lanka to ashes’; “Kompupōl cītai-poruṭṭu ilaṅkai
eri uyṭtavar”79 – ‘the One Who sacked the city of Lanka for
the sake of Sītā, tender like a delicate creeper’; “Matil
ilaṅkaik kōvai viyac cilai kuṇitīy”80 – ‘You Who discharged
the arrow from the bow to fell the king of walled Lanka.’;
“Kīlimoṭiyāl kāraṇamāk kilar arakkaṇ nakar eritta kalīmalart
rulāy ilaṅkal kamal muṭiyān”81 – ‘the One with the honey-
secreting fragrant basil coronet Who sacked the city of the
bright demon for the sake of the one with the sweet voice of
the parrot’; “Pēreyil cūḷ kaṭal tenṇilaṅkai cerṟāpiṇ”82 –
‘the Lord .Who burnt up the Southern Lanka surrounded by
big ramparts and the seas’; “Āṅ tīrāl mīḷi moympīn
arakkaṇ kulattait tāṭintu, mīntum avan tampikkē virinir
ilaṅkai arūḷi āṇṭu-tam cōti pucka aram arī ērū”83 – ‘the celestial
Lion which wiped out the race of the manly and formidable
demon, and vouchsafed the island of Lanka to his brother,
and then entered the Realm of Light there’; “Tayaratan
peṟṟa marakata maṇi”84 – ‘the sapphire gem-like son of

74. ibid. 9.10: 6.
75. P.Tv. 11,66.
76. T.V.M. 1.6: 7.
77. ibid. 2.4: 4; 5.7: 2.
78. ibid. 2.9: 10.
79. ibid. 4.2: 8.
80. ibid. 4.3: 1.
81. ibid. 4.8: 5.
82. ibid. 7.3: 7.
83. ibid. 7.6: 9.
84. ibid. 10.1: 8.
Dasaratha’. The Alvar’s other works also allude to this *avatara*.  

Inordinate love is evinced towards *Krṣṇavatāra*. No other *avatāra* of the Lord exercised such a fascination over the saint’s mind. The very thought of the birth of the Lord, the manner in which He grew up and how He managed the Great war of *Mahābhārata* melt his soul. He is delighted to speak of the various exploits of *Krṣṇa* and He actually reveals in them. In other places the Alvar says: "Vāncappēy viyat tīya kulaviyāy viṭap-pāl amuṭā amuṭa ceytiṭṭa māyaḥ"68 - 'the mysterious One Who as a cherub drank like nectar the poisonous milk of the false demoness and sucked her to death': "Ēṅkaḷ āyar koḷunte"69 - 'the true Sprout of our cowherds'; "Vem mā vāy kiṇṭa cem mā kaṇḍāṇe"70 - 'O *Krṣṇa* with the large reddish eyes Who tore the mouth of the terrible horse demon'; "Okkalai vaittu mulai-pāl un eṅru tantiṭa vāṅkic cekkam ceka aṅru avalpāl uyir ceka uṇṭa perumān"71 - 'the Lord Who when placed in her arms and offered milk by the female demon sucked her to death so that the very (bad) thought may end with her'; "Uṛikkonṭa veṇṇai pāl olittu unnum ammān"72 - 'the Lord Who ate (and drank) the butter and milk stored in the suspenders'; "Kāmpu aṇai tōl piṅgaiṅkku āy ēṅru uṭaṅ ēḷ ēṛṟatuvum"73 - 'the One Who mastered the seven bulls and married Nappiṅnai with shoulders like bamboo-sprouts'; "Malaiyai eṭṭutu kalmāri kāṭtu pacunirai tannait tolaivu tavirtta pirān"74 - 'the Lord Who lifted the mountain, and protected the herds of cows against the hailstorm of stones'; "Vampu avil kōtaiporuṭṭā 

85. T.V.R. 36, 77,92; P.Tv, 64.  
86. T.V.M. 5.10; 1.  
87. ibid. 6.4.  
88. ibid. 1.5; 9.  
89. ibid. 1.7; 2.  
90. ibid. 1.8; 2.  
91. ibid. 1.9; 5.  
92. ibid. 2.3; 8.  
93. ibid. 2.5; 7.  
94. ibid. 3.5; 3.
mālviṭai ējum ātartta cempavāḷat tirāl vāyaṇā⁹⁵ – ‘the Lord Who with his coral lips quelled the seven bulls for the sake of the damsel like a garland emitting fragrance’; “Cātu caṇattai naliyum kāṇcaṇaic cātippataṛku ātī am uruvai aṅku vaittu iṅkup piṅanta vētamulvan”⁹⁶ – ‘the Originator of the Vedas Who left His original form in Heaven and was born here to destroy Kamsa who afflicted the innocent’; “Paṭarpukalp pāṛṭtaṇum vaitikanum utan ērat tin tēr kaṭavi cutar olijāy niṅra tāṃuṭaice cōtiyil vaitikan pīḷāikaḷai uṭalōṭum koṅtu koṭuttavan”⁹⁷ – ‘the One Who ascended the chariot in the company of the reputed Pārtha and the orthodox brahmin and from His effulgence in Vaikuṇṭha restored the sons in flesh and blood to the brahmin’; “Pōṛppāku tān ceytu aṅru aivarai velvitta māyap-pōṛt tēṛpākaṇār”⁹⁸ – ‘the mysterious Charioteer Who brought out a war and made the Five (Pāṇḍavas) win’; “Cāyak kurumant ocitta tamīyaṅku, māyaṅ caṅaṭam utaita maṇāḷaṅku, pēyaṅ piṅampaṭa pāl uṅ pirāṅukku”⁹⁹ – ‘to the One Who felled the kurunta tree, who kicked away the mysterious cart, and who sucked to death the female demon’; “Maṅ aṅcap pāṛatattup pāṇṭavarkāp paṭai toṭṭān”¹⁰⁰ – ‘the One Who ventured to wield His weapon to the terror of the kings, for the sake of the Pāṇḍavas of Bhārata’. More references to this avaiṅra are also found in his other poems Tiruvirutham¹⁰¹ and Periya Tiruvantāti.¹⁰²

Nammālvaṛ fancies that the Lord ate in days of yore the seven worlds and kept them in His stomach and ejected them later. Some mud, which is one of the constituents of earth must have remained in the stomach. The Lord found delight in taking butter perhaps thinking that it may serve as a medicine to dissolve that mud.¹⁰³ There is frequent refe-
rence to the dance of Kṛṣṇa with the pots. This is known as kuṭakkūṭtu. Kṛṣṇa danced in between the horns of seven bulls which He controlled and thus won the wager to get the hand of Nappinnai.

Balarāma, though He was an elder brother of Kṛṣṇa and was also an avatāra of Nārāyaṇa, receives meagre treatment at the hands of the Āḻvārs, perhaps His activities getting overshadowed by those of Kṛṣṇa.

The mysterious powers of Kṛṣṇa are referred to by Nammāḻvār. The flawless and brilliantly lustrous frame of the Lord remained unchanged when He came down to earth as Kṛṣṇa. He was born among men who are immersed in sorrow; yet He remained untainted by the impurities of the inhabitants of Gokulam with whom He moved very freely. By coming visible to all people, He made His divinity felt in the world. His divine perfection remained in tact during this avatāra.

The compositions of the Āḻvārs contain references to some other minor descents of God. A demon Somukha by name took away the four Vedas and disappeared in the flood of waters which filled the earth. Nārāyaṇa took the form of fish, killed that demon by tracing him inside the waters and appeared as the swan before Brahmā and imparted the Vedas to him. This is an incident relating to God’s descent as Ḥamsha. The gods, who were immersed in darkness when the Vedas were stolen, prayed to and praised Nārāyana. Thereupon, the Lord took the form of the swan.

104. T.V.R. 38; Perī. Tm. 2.5: 4; Periyāṭ. Tm. 2.7: 7.
105. Vide for details Appendix III.
107. Periyāṭ. Tm. 1.7: 5.
109. Perī. Tm. 5.1: 8.
110. ibid. 5.3: 8; Periyāṭ. Tm. 1.8: 10.
The *avatāras* Varāha, Vāmana, Narasimha, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa have frequent references in the works of the Ālvaṣ and frequency of the last two *avatāras* is still greater, the reason perhaps being that these two *avatāras* took birth seemingly like ordinary mortals, lived with them for a longer period and had contacts in the day to day life whereas the other *avatāras* were for a specific purpose at particular periods and when the purpose was fulfilled they disappeared. Yet the *Varāha avatāra* involves the acquisition by the Lord of his own consort in the shape of the earth which is the region of *karma*; the *Vāmana avatāra* resulted in the Lord’s feet touching the whole of the earth and thereby all the selves in the world and emancipating them; and the *Narasimha avatāra* was itself for redeeming the wrong done to a devotee as though to prove that *Bhāgavata aparākāra* is a move heinous sin than *Bhagavat aparākāra*. For these reasons, these three *avatāras* too come in for large attention at the hands of the Ālvaṣ.

The fourth state, namely, the immanent form of God is *antaryāmin*, the indwelling self in the region of the heart. The Lord in this form stays with the individual self as its friend in its states of experience such as heaven, hell etc., and is perceptible only to the *yogins*. The moral idea of Īśvara taking this form is for making the *jīvas* pulsate with their creative life and participate in their inner joy and for making the mortal selves immortal. Though He co-exists with the individual self, He is untouched by the taints inherent in the latter. The *Upaniṣad* in its classical exposition of Brahman in this form defines His nature, immanence and intimacy in the following terms: “He who, dwelling within the self, is different from the self, whom the self does not know, of whom the self is the body, who rules the self from within, He is thy Self, the Inner Ruler Immortal”.¹¹¹ The Upaniṣadic analogy of two birds on the same tree, of the shining one above, and the suffering one below, becoming united in the end is more sublime and appropriate.¹¹² Nammāḻvār refers to this form

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¹¹¹ Br. Up. 5.7: 22 (Mādhyadina reading).
in his Tiruvāyūmoli. He says: “Tān oṭṭi vantu enṭañi neṅcái vaṅcitta un oṭṭi ninru en uyiril kalantu”113—‘He came of His own accord, fascinated my lone heart and incorporated Himself in my body and my soul’; “Māyān en neṅcil ullān”114—‘the Mysterious One is in my heart’; “Tānum yānum ellām tānāḷḷē kalantoḷintōm, tēnum pālum neyyum kāṇṇalum amutum ottē”115—‘He and I became One within me (Him?) as honey, milk, ghee, cane-sugar, and nectar all being mixed’; “Eṇatu āviyul kalanta peru nal utavikkū kaimmāru enatu āvi tantolintēn”115—‘as return for the great, good help of getting communed in my soul I have given up to You my soul itself’; “Mulū ēḷ ulakum unṭān ukantu vantu atiyēn utpukuntān”117—‘the One Who ate up all the seven worlds came affectionately of His own accord and entered my soul’; “Yātu avaṅkalum cērkōṭēn ēṛu engul pukuntu iruntu tītu avam keṭukkum amutam”118—‘the nectar—like One Who in order to preclude any kind of harm coming to me got into me and stationed Himself there and undoes all harm’; “Mēḷāt tēvarkalum nilat tēvarum mēvīt toḷum māḷār vantu īṇāḷ atiyēn manattē maṇṇirār”119—‘the mysterious Lord, worshipped by the highest of the celestials and the devotees of this world, this day has lodged Himself in my heart’; “Vēḷaic curi caṅkiṅōtum āḷi ēṇti tāmaraik kāṇṇaṅ eṅ neṅcīṅīṭē pullaik kaṅṭaṅṅa āṟṟal kāṅīr”120—‘contemplate the mode of the lotus-eyed Lord with His white involute conch and discus riding on Guraḍa into my heart’; “Eṟṟum eppōtum eṅ neṅcam tutippa ulḷē irukkiṅṅa pirān”121—‘the Lord Who is within me and Whom my heart worships for ever and ever’; “Ukantē uṇṇai ṻḷum

113. T.V.M. 1. 7: 7.
114. ibid. 1.9: 5, 6. The Āḻvār in this hymn finds the Lord in every one of his limbs and organs.
115. ibid. 2.3: 1.
116. ibid. 2.3: 4.
117. ibid. 2.6: 7.
118. ibid. 2.7: 3.
119. ibid. 5.1: 8.
120. ibid. 7.3: 1.
121. ibid. 7.10: 6.
en uḷḷattu akampāl akamṭa amarntē iṭam koṇṭa amatā’’

‘O the pure One, Who made a home for Yourself in my inner being which longingly hankers after You’; ‘Nirmayāl neṇcam vaiccittup pukuntu enṇai, Irmai ceytu en uyiray en uyir uṇṭān’

‘the One Who has merged with me, life into life, by fascinating my heart and entering it through His generosiity and making it tender’; ‘En neṇcattu īl iruntu īnku irunta-miḻ nūl ivai moḷintu, valneṇcattu iraniyaṇai mārupu iṭanta vāṭṭarrāṇ’

‘the Lord of Tiruvāṭṭāru Who tore off the chest of the hard-hearted Hiranya, and Who stationing Himself within my heart composed great Tamil works’; ‘Tāmaraikkaṇ en ammān nilaipērāṇ en neṇcattu eppōtum

‘my lotus - eyed Lord will never shift from my heart’. In one hymn the Ālvar gives an elaborate description of every limb and organ of the Lord with all His divine appurtenances, as He has become one with himself. Again in one verse the saint envisions the Deity of Tiruccirāru at Tiruccēṅkuṟūr as occupying his mind and heart with every one of His limbs and organs. In another verse he feels the presence of the Lord within himself in the body, with His large red-lined eyes, His coral lips, the white shining pearl-like teeth and prominent tossing ear-rings cloud-hued and brightly crowned, with four shoulders bearing the bent bow, the white conch, the mace, the sword and the discus.

The Supreme Lord has entered into the self and does not leave it. Probably the hills like Tirumalai and Tirumāliruṅcolai, the noisy ocean and Vaikuṇṭha have been discarded as worthless (lit. straw) for His stay. That the Ālvar is conscious of His stay within himself is stated. He is not

122. ibid. 9.4: 1.
123. ibid. 9.6: 3.
124. ibid. 10.6: 4.
125 ibid. 10.6: 6.
126. ibid. 2.5.
127. ibid. 8.4: 7. cf. Peri. Tm. 7.3: 7.
128. ibid. 8.8: 1. Peri. Tm. 3.5.
129. P.Tv. 68. cf. Peri. Tm. 8.9: 5 where the Lord is stated as not intending to leave the heart of the Ālvar.
worried about anything, since he had kept Him steadfast in his heart.\footnote{130} This realization is said to result by listening to the Vedic passages which speak about Brahman. The Lord has entered within the Ālvār through his ears. He refers to himself as having become great. In as much as the Ālvār has the Supreme Person within himself, the Ālvār asks the Lord to reflect and find out how He could still be great.\footnote{131} The Lord has entered into the mind of the Ālvār and stands there, sits there, lies there and moves about there. Yet He is not satisfied with all this and so has not left it.\footnote{132}

The fifth state of God is the permanent incarnation of arcā worshipped in temples, houses, villages, towns, sacred places and hills. The \textit{para} and \textit{vyūha} forms of the Lord are beyond the reach of the denizens of this \textit{terra firma}. All the living beings have not been gifted to live in times when the Lord chose to come down as \textit{avatāras}; owing to lack of \textit{jñāna} and \textit{bhakti} they are not able to see the \textit{ātman} in them. Hence the only alternative left to people is to resort to the arcā form to satisfy the spiritual longings and aesthetic cravings.\footnote{133} This arcā consists of idols or images, made of gold, silver, or any material chosen by the worshipper. The belief is that God in the forms of Supreme Vāsudeva (\textit{para}), the \textit{vyūhas}, and the \textit{vibhavas} descends into the idol and makes it divinely alive, so that He may be easily accessible to His devotees. In this manifestation, God, out of His condescension, chooses to will that He seem entirely in the hands of His worshippers, hiding His omniscience and omnipotence, or seeming the very reverse of these in His worshippers’ hands. God Supreme (\textit{para}) is experienced in this form. Idols are permanent incarnations, and reservoirs

\footnote{130} ibid. 70.  
\footnote{131} ibid. 75.  
\footnote{132} ibid. 35.  
\footnote{133} “Āgamūrti” is the name given to the arcā form of the Lord by Tirumāli Ālvār (Tc.V. 17). It is the corrupted from of “Yāgamūrti” which is suitable for worship. It may also be conceived as the form which the Lord Himself has assumed by His divine will or \textit{sāṅkalpa}. 
of redemptive mercy. "Arcā is not the idealised projection of creative imagination touched by religious feeling nor the symbolic expression of the infinite in the finite". It is but the descent of God Himself as the embodiment of His accessibility in the world of mortals. The infinite God enters into finite forms without the loss of His infinity and Īśvaratva for communing with the devotee that longs for His contact and for infinitising his religious consciousness. The Āḻvārs had a genius for intuiting the arcā. They had direct sight of Him. Their inspiring utterances serve to invite humanity to share in the mystic rapture of such divine communion. Bhagavān Saunaka has said: "Having shaped a beautiful image of Viṣṇu with a lovely face and lovely eyes, out of gold, silver and the like in a manner that would be pleasing, one should adore it, bow to it, sacrifice to it and meditate on it. By doing so, one would enter into that form which is none other than Brahman and will have all one’s sins dispelled".

This kind of experience is illustrated by the commentators with reference to an incident in the life of a Vaiṣṇavite.

134. The Philosophy of Viṣīṭādvaita, p. 208.
135. V. Dh. 103: 16.
136. An anecdote has been recorded by the commentators of Tiruvāyurvedi regarding the experience of God in this form. A Viṣṇappam ceyvār (devotee) used to carry his nut-wallet with him; in it he had kept his Salagrama-image as his constant companion. When, by accident, the tiny marble-like image, mixed up with the nut (which he ate) entered his mouth, he would feel the hardness of the marble differing of course from the nut. He would then reverentially take it out, wash it in water he had in his vessel, dry it with his robe, dress it, and taking cymbals in his hand sing a song of praise from St. Namālāvār and then lull it to sleep again in his nut-wallet. This confusion often happened to him. A Vaiṣṇavite of ritual type (more than of love to God) often observed this. To him it was blasphemous. He went to the ceyvār and asked him to present his "desecrated marble-God" to him. The ceyvār gladly transferred his Holy Property. The Vaiṣṇavite took it home, and worshipped it with all the strict details of ceremonial worship, enjoined for such occasions. The Image appeared to him in his
The arcā form of God is the only form which is easily accessible to His devotees at all times. Pillaiāłokācāryār makes the following comparisons with the five forms of God: the attempt to comprehend the transcendent form is like getting water from the other world for quenching thirst; the vyūha form is like the legendary ocean of milk which also is not easy of access; the descended forms are like the occasional floods that inundate the country for a while, but do not last long; the immanent form is like subterranean water which is not readily available to a thirsty man although it is right underneath his feet; and the arcā is like the pool which remains stationary after occasional freshes pass away and from which anyone at any time could slake his thirst. This may be the reason why the Āḻvārs have preformed self-surrender to this form of the Lord which is the reservoir of divinity and redemptive mercy. According to yogi S. Parthasarathi arcāvatāra has the following advantages: (i) It is reachable by our senses and the mind; (ii) hence it produces a desire for godliness; (iii) as soon as such a desire is produced, it at once serves as a Means to lead us to the apogee of spiritual greatness; (iv) it serves to inspire the virtues of piety and love for God; and (v) it gives us an opportunity even while we are in the midst of our world-enemy to practise service, which we aim at performing in reality when we reach Heaven and there are face to face with God. Our St. Nammāḻvār had, while he contemplated the manifestations of the Lord in His arcā form at several holy places presented to his consciousness the several auspicious attributes of God as Holy subject for his meditation.

137. S.V.P. First part, Śūtra 39.
The Śāstras like Pāñcarātra Āgamas postulate God as a certain Being in one place, and hand Him down to us in another place, in the form of vivid Idols which, according to them, He has Himself chosen of His free will to make His special abodes. Once the omnipresence is conceded to God, it must logically follow that the Idol which is intended to visibly personify Him for the pleasure of His devotees must also contain Him. The efficacy of the consecrating mantras is said to be so potent that once the installation is duly performed, the Idol acquires abnormal, and super-natural powers. If by mere sight of certain Idols, as for example the one at Tirumalai, or the taking of vows with respect to certain others, as for example, the one at Cōḻasimhapuram, certain phenomena occur which cannot be rationally explained or explained away with reference to any known theories of science or other laws, it must be admitted that the idols do have life to a certain extent or in a certain measure. To see Him fully manifested in the Idol is not to deny Him in other places, or in other forms. It is only seeing Him intensely at that place. One should meditate on the Lord’s placing Himself at the disposal of those who seek His protection in a manner which cannot be understood by the mind or described in words, for it has been said, “Whoever wants to see Me and in whatever form, to him I reveal Myself in that very form”;¹³⁹ as Poykaiyāḻvār says, ‘He assumes the form desired by His devotees’ — “Tamarukantatu evvuruvam avvuruvam tānē”¹⁴⁰ He should also meditate on the alluring beauty of the Lord of which Tiruppāṇāḻvār says: ‘The eyes that have seen the Lord will refuse to see other thing’s.”¹⁴¹

The Nāḷayirm is the treasure of experience or anubhava of the Tamil religious Seers who have uniformly sung in praise of the idols in the several sacred spots. Their sayings most emphatically and unambiguously point to the fact that they were not praising an abstract God, or His attributes in the abstract, but a personal living God, who to

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¹⁴⁰. M.Tv. 44.
¹⁴¹. A.P. 10.
those saints stood personified in the piece of stone, wood or copper before them. Almost all the Āḻvārs have uniformly sung the praises of the presiding deities in the several sacred spots situated throughout length and breadth of our holy land. Tirumāṅkaiyāḻvār alone has sung about eighty-six Divya-Desas out of the total of one hundred and eight situated from Badāri in the north to Tiruvaṅpariṇāram in the south. It has been rightly pointed out and emphasized by later Ācāryas that the hymns of this Āḻvār which constitute more than those of other Āḻvārs put together are particularly intended to inculcate and enhance the enjoyment of the arcā forms of the Lord in the temples. It was left to this Āḻvār to prove to the world that in each of the five forms of God the manifestation is full and complete and that there is no gradation among them, one leading to the other; and also how it is possible to get out of arcā form here and in this world the same bliss that the Eternals in Vaikuṇṭha are said to obtain in the transcendental form which is beyond the human ken. Otherwise, how else can one account for the Āḻvārs’ breaking their hearts over the pose or poise of the Lord at each of the several shrines? They saw the Lord in flesh and blood residing in the Idol. One can recall here the experience of Tiruppaṇāḻvār whose eyes, bewitched, as they were by the glory of the Lord’s form travelling slowly from foot to head and drinking deeply from the fountain of Beauty and Grace. It is even said that with Tirumāḻicaiyāḻvār one of the most living and life-like of Idols held a conversation transgressing even the self imposed limitations of arcā. While at Kumbakonam worshipping in the shrine of Sāraṅgapāṇi Perumal (the ārāvamatu of Nammāḻvār), enraptured at the restful pose of that beautiful God, asked Him the reason for it: “Do the legs ache because of excessive walking (the earth from end to end as Rāma)? Or did the body get shaken far too much while You delved this trembling earth in the form of a Boar? What is the reason for Your lying down and resting in Kuṭantai on the banks of the Kāviri which spreads itself far and wide after crossing all the hills and dales that came in her way? Won’t You rise up and speak?”¹⁴² At this request

¹⁴²  Te. V. 61.
made in a submissive tone and beautiful poetry, it is said, that this Lord lifted up His head and attempted to rise from His serpent couch. The Āḻvār moved by this graciousness on the part of the Lord at once sang ‘Vāḷi kēcanē’ meaning "Thou with beautiful locks of hair! May Thou livest long and undisturbed!" The Lord stayed as He was at that moment. To this day the Idol is seen as one lying down with head slightly raised (uttānasāyee) and seemingly most ready to open Its lips.

The arcā forms, as they are enshrined in temples, reveal two aspects of God's relation to man. Nārāyaṇa takes that particular form which His devotee desires to visualise. Hence there is a large amount of difference in the postures of the images in the various shrines. The Paurāṇic versions make this clear by declaring that the Lord appeared in a specific form before a sage or a king who was devoted to Him. The other aspect is that the principal (mūla) image in the shrines is made of stone dark in appearance, in all probability, to conform to the Upaniṣadic statement that Brahman has the blue ākāśa as its body. The temples together with the images principal and the other ones as those taken out in procession during festivals came into existence before the period of the Āḻvārs. Hence the frequent reference in their compositions to the complexion of God as bearing semblance to the sea, water-laden cloud and blue sapphire.

The Āḻvārs, who were mad with love for God, had great veneration to the sacred places, hills and shrines. They bowed to those places which is suggestive of specific impor-

143. M.Tv. 44.
144. Peri. Tm: 2.2. For instance, vide: Mark. P. Tiruvevuḷūr Mahātmya ch. 1 to 11.
146. T.V.M, 3.6: 10, 7.3: 11.
147. Tc. V. 120; Peri. Tm. 1.9: 10; T.V.M, 7.2: 11.
149. Vide: Peri. Tm. 1.5; 1.8; 3.8; 3.9; 3.10; 5.10; 6.4: 8.6; 9.7; 9.8. T.V.M. 2,10,
tance which such places have enjoyed during their periods. The Tirumalai, Tirumālirūṅcōlai, Tiruvaraṅkam, Tirukkaṇṇapa-
puram, Tirukkuṭantai, Tiruvehkā and others have relatively larger number of verses sung in praise of these deities. Tiruvaraṅkam has the credit of having the verses from all the eleven Ālvārs. Tirumalai comes next with ten Ālvārs' verses. Seven Ālvārs extolled Tirukkuṭantai. Tirukkaṇṇapa-
puram, Tirukkōṭṭiyūr, Pāṭakam and Tiruvehkā have each the verses of five Ālvārs. The other shrines which are hundred and one in number have songs of a relatively less number of Ālvārs.

The compositions of the Ālvārs contain here and there enumeration of some shrines on certain principles. The Lord measured the worlds with His feet and perhaps of having stood for a time He became tired and therefore sat down in Vēlukkai in Kāṇci puram and lay down in Tiruvehka also at Kāṇci. He is lying down on Ādiśeṣa in Tirukkuṭantai, Tiruvehkā, Tiruvehvulūr, Tiruvaraṅkam, Tiruppērnakar, Aṇvil and Milky ocean. The Lord is standing in Tirumalai, seated in Viṇṇakar, lying in Tiruvehkā and is walking in Tirukkōvalūr. The strain of churning the milky ocean made the Lord perhaps lie down in Tiruvehkā, sit at Pāṭakam, and stand in Tiruvūrakam, all in Kāṇci.

The four compositions of Nammālvār contain in all 1296 verses of which 395 are devoted to the praise of the arca forms of God. The traditional scholars treat all the verses of the Tiruvaḻmolo as dedicated only to the deity at Śrī Raṅgam. This is not, however, borne out by the availability of decades in the Tiruvaḻmolo in praise of the arca forms in thirty-two shrines other than Śrī Raṅgam. The Ālvār treats of the nature of the Supreme Person in the first two centums

150. Mü. Tv. 34.
151. Nāṅ. Tv. 36.
152. M. Tv. 77.
153. Mu. Tv. 64. This order is reversed in Tc. V. 63 and 64.
154. These contain sixteen verses in praise of arca.
much in the manner of the Upaniṣads and so draws little reference to the arcā form here. The third and the fourth centums, which treat the nature of the self, contain a little more reference, suggesting the relatedness of the self to God in arcā form. The fifth and the sixth centums deal with the means of getting at God and the verses on the images contained here lay stress on the need for worshipping the arcā form of the Lord. The verses in the next two centums show how through the arcā worship, the obstacles in the path of attaining God are removed. Those in the last two centums show clearly that the goal could be reached here itself, namely, experience of direct communion with the Lord. This could be achieved mainly through the worship of the arcā form of God.

Nammāḻvār sang in praise of thirty-three sacred places out of which seventeen were sung only by him. These seventeen and six more shrines (which were sung by other Āḻvārs as well) are all situated in the Tirunelveli District of the Tamil Nadu and in the adjoining areas of Kerala State. Of the remaining ten, Vaṭamaturai and Tuvarai (Dvārakā) lie in the north, Tirumalai lies at the southern extremity of the Andhra Pradesh, Tirumāḻiruṇcōlai and Tirumōkūr in the Madurai District, Tiruvelkā at Kānci and the remaining four in Thaṉjavoor District of the Tamil Nadu. Of all these Tirumalai is the only shrine on which the Āḻvār sang sixty-two verses. The next one which attracted his attention in importance was Tirumāḻiruṇcōlai which was being celebrated by forty-six verses. (Vide Appendix IV for the list of arcā forms of God celebrated by Nammāḻvār with actual number of verses on each.)

155. There are fifty eight verses here.
156. One hundred and twenty two are found here on the arcā form.
157. Seventy-one verses are found here on the idol.
158. There are one hundred and eighteen verses here.
159. Most of these are treated in the sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth centums.
160. These are treated mostly in the fifth, eighth and ninth centums.
While expressing his surging love and devotion for the *arcā* form of the Lord in certain shrines the Āḻvār does not fail to take note of the religious and ritualistic atmosphere prevailing in those places where some of the shrines are situated. Such references which the saint offers reveal the extent to which the culture of the *Vedas* and the religious practices prevailed in those places mostly situated in the southernmost regions of South India. Vāṇamāmalai, as known at present, is Śrīvaramaṅkalam where lived persons proficient in the four *Vedas* 161 Those persons, who were of perfect knowledge, performed the *Vedic* rituals. 162 Another shrine called Ten-tiruppēryil is said to be ever resonant with the recitation of the *Vedas* and the din and bustle of the festivities. 163 The *Vedic* rites164 were ceaselessly performed here and the *Sāma-Veda* was chanted. 165 The Āḻvār-Nayaki loses all her bashfulness and reticence to the enchanting figure of the Lord.166 Tiruccceṅkunṟū Tiruccirṟaru is a shrine where lived three thousand Brahmins deeply learned in the *Vedas*.167 The smoke to which fragrance is imported by the oblations offered into the fire, rises up high in the sky screening the sun.168 Those Brahmins adore the deity from all directions.169 They are liberal minded, individually reputed and have their knowledge equalled only by their spotless conduct.170 The sound of the recitation of the four *Vedas* fill the places where the shrines Tiruvanvaṅtūr,171 Tiruvallvāl172 and Tirukkatīṭāṉam173 are situated. The holy smoke rising

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161. T.V.M. 5.7: 3.
162. ibid. 5. 7: 4, 7, 9.
163. ibid 7.3: 1.
164. ibid. 7.3: 6.
165. ibid. 7.3: 4.
166. ibid. 7.3: 3.
167. ibid. 8.4: 6.
168. ibid. 8.4: 5.
169. ibid. 8.4: 8.
170. ibid. 8.4: 9.
171. ibid. 6.1: 2, 4.
172. ibid. 5.9: 3. where the *Sāmaveda* was recited.
173. ibid. 8.6: 10.
from the fire fills the areas of Tiruvallavāl and Tiruvanvantūr.

The Lord of the Tirupati Hills is praised by Nammālvār in sixty-two verses. Eight verses of Tiruviruttam portrays the mystic experience of the Ālvār who, as the bride of the Lord, experiences the pangs of separation from Him. The deity at Tirumalai is visited by gods, men and sages, and Śiva, Brahmā and Indra who bring with them the members of the family for worshipping the Lord. The Lord is present there with Śrī as the parents of the world. In those Hills the Lord has manifested Himself with all His glory and splendour. 'It is our duty to render spotless service at His feet for all times to come'—"Ovil kālamellām utanāy manī, valuvilā atinai ceyyavēntum nām". In this connection the Ālvār expresses anxiety about the past that has gone by and that has not been fruitful. He cannot get it back, but he is afflicted with the thought that it has been a waste. He does not want the very thought of the waste that has taken place. So he resolves to devote the rest of his life for austerity and devotion to the Lord of the hills. He says that the devotees recite the manifold names of the Lord at Vēṅkaṭam of north with cascades of cool waters in such a frenzy that others call them mad. "When there is my Lord" says he, "father-like and elephant-like at Tiruvēṅkaṭam, the haunt of murmerous bees, I will not compose verses on my tongue to any human being". The depiction

174 ibid. 5.9: 3, 5.
175 ibid. 6.1: 2.
176 T.V.R. 8, 10, 15, 31, 50, 60, 67, 81.
177 T.V.M. 1.8: 3.
178 ibid. 6.10: 4.
179 ibid. 6.10: 8.
180 ibid. 6.10: 10.
181 ibid. 2.6: 10.
182 ibid. 3.3: 1.
183 ibid. 3.5: 8.
184 ibid. 3.9: 1.
185 ibid. 3.3.
of the Lord is \textit{Upani\text{\'s}adic} in purport.\textsuperscript{185} The divine auspicious
from is never lost sight of.

The Ālvār celebrates in forty-six verses his communion
with the Lord at Tirumālirūṇcōlai. When he celebrates the
Lord of Tiruppērṇakar he could not avoid making reference to
his realisation of communion with the Lord of Tirumālirun-
cōlai.\textsuperscript{186} The Lord at Tiruppēr-ṇakar, the Lord who is lodged
at the Hill of Tirumālirūṇcōlai, has entered into his heart
saying that He would stay there (for ever).\textsuperscript{187} He refers to
the deity of the place who lodged the three worlds in His
stomach, who is merciful towards generation after generation
from time immemorial, who is beyond the reach of Brahmā
and Śiva who praise Him has vouchsafed Grace on him.\textsuperscript{188}
Even though he casually mentioned the name of the Hill of
Tirumālirūṇcōlai as one of the series of hills, Tirumāl rushed
and filled his heart because accidentally he uttered His name
\textit{Tirumāl} an element in the name of the Hill.\textsuperscript{189} He advises
the people of the world to pay a visit to the Hill before the
bubbling youthfulness passes away\textsuperscript{190} and circumambulate the
temple daily.\textsuperscript{191} He is captivated by the beauty of the deity of
the place and says: \textquote{Has the lustre of Your face blossomed
forth as the lustre of Your crown? Has the lustre of Your
feet blossomed forth as the lotus on which You stand?}\textsuperscript{192}
The self shall entertain a desire to go on a pilgrimage to such
a place.\textsuperscript{193}

\textit{Tiruvaraṅkam} is praised by the Ālvār in one decad.
The mystic experience of the Ālvār, as the bride of the Lord,
is treated here, depicting the pangs of separation from the

\textsuperscript{185} ibid. 10.8.
\textsuperscript{186} ibid. 10.8. 6.
\textsuperscript{187} ibid. 10.7: 6.
\textsuperscript{188} ibid. 10.8: 1.
\textsuperscript{189} ibid. 2.10: 1.
\textsuperscript{190} ibid. 2.10: 8.
\textsuperscript{191} ibid. 3.1: 1.
\textsuperscript{192} ibid. 2:10.
Lord which is experienced by the Āḻvār.\textsuperscript{194} The Sleeping Beauty at Tirukkuṭantai is shown as love in corporeal form with all divine perfections and qualities of unsurpassed excellence.\textsuperscript{195} The auspicious and divine form of the Lord is described as present in Tiruvinānakar which is enriched in natural and material prosperity. The Lord’s glory is admirably shown to consist in the pairs of many opposites which are mutually incompatible but could subsist only in Him.\textsuperscript{196} The huge, lofty ramparts, dashed by the waves of the sea, mark the shrine at Tirukkaṇṭapuram wherein the Supreme Person presents Himself to the selves, grants refuge to those who perform self-surrender, and emancipation after their death. The only way open for the devotees to get rid of the sufferings of the world is the worship of His feet with flowers.

The Āḻvār’s direct experience of the Lord in many shrines near his birth place produced an indelible and deep impression that he is reminded of the divine enchanting form of the Lord and yearns to have direct experience after the manner of His bride.\textsuperscript{197} He prefers to send messengers to the Lord.\textsuperscript{198} The feeling of separation is much intense in the background of the pleasant natural surroundings of the Tāmpraparāṇi river and of the prosperous life in certain places where the shrines are situated.\textsuperscript{199} That there is no refuge apart from the Lord is stated repeatedly by the Āḻvār who had communion with Him whose divine figure refuses to leave his heart.\textsuperscript{200} Much stress is laid on the significance of the name Kāḷamēkam of the deity at Tirumōkūr,\textsuperscript{201} and Ātippirān at Tirukkurukūr.\textsuperscript{202} The graceful looks which the

\textsuperscript{194} ibid. 7.2.
\textsuperscript{195} ibid. 5.8.
\textsuperscript{196} ibid. 6.3.
\textsuperscript{197} ibid. 5.5; 5.9; 6.5; 7.3; 8.9.
\textsuperscript{198} ibid. 6.1; 9.7.
\textsuperscript{199} ibid. 5.7; 6.5.
\textsuperscript{200} ibid. 7.2; 8.4.
\textsuperscript{201} ibid. 10.1.
\textsuperscript{202} ibid. 4.10.
Āḻvār received compel him to wish to offer service to the Lord in many shrines.203 The saint has a call to Tiruvāṇa-
vilai. He is eager to settle with all his filial devotion, circumambulate the temple and lift up his hands in prayer,204 the deity will have to be sprinkled with sweet-smelling water and he will walk round the temple and offer his worship;205 he will pray to the deity every day for all times to come;206 once he gets an opportunity to worship round the temple, all his sins will vanish;207 his deep thoughts are to reach the temple and pray the deity round the sanctum;208 once he has become a slave to the Lord, He will be able to know whether all his thoughts were not centred on Him and Him alone.209 The Āḻvār requests the Lord at Tiruppuḷiṅkuṭi to set His eyes on and say a few words to the devotees “who have been for generations doing service in Your temple through Your grace and the grace of Lakṣmī from times immemorial”.210 In the conception of the Āḻvār, the presiding deity at Tiruvanantapuram is the same as the Lord at Paramapadam and the divine service at one is as important as at the other. The Lord there is majestic in reclining posture;211 those who worship Him with flowers are those that are the most virtuous;212 those who reach His lotus feet attain the status of the Eternals;213 those who get a chance to sweep and clean the temple yard will get rid of their worst sins;214 those who offer worship with sweet smelling flowers and incense will be bereft of their sins;215 those who worship Him with sandal paste,

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203. ibid. 7.10; 9.2; 9 6: 9.8; 10.2.
204. ibid. 7.10: 1.
205. ibid. 7.10: 2.
206. ibid. 7.10: 3
207. ibid. 7.10: 8.
208. ibid. 7.10: 9.
209. ibid. 7.10: 10.
210. ibid. 9.2; 3.
211. ibid. 10.2: 1
212. ibid. 10.2: 4.
213. ibid. 10.2: 5.
214. ibid. 10.2: 7.
215. ibid. 10.2: 9.
light, and incense along with select lotus flowers for daily prayer will be entitled to immortal greatness. The Lord at Tirukkurunukuṭi is referred to as the soul of all and as the consort of Śrī. The Āḻvār-Nāyaki has lost her heart to the Lord who is seen by her in her vision with all His appurtenances. The delectable experience which the Āḻvār had in some places is recollected with much gratefulness to the Lord for His grace. The Lord at Tiruvāṭṭāru has ordained that the Āḻvār after giving up his worldly attachment should serve Him incessantly. He that had ripped open Hiranāya in His Narasimhāvatāra has stationed Himself as seṣā-sāyee at Tiruvāṭṭāru conveying a message that those who surrender to the Great can be sure of unexpected rewards.

One whole hymn is devoted to stress on the easy accessibility of arcāvatāra. The Āḻvār assures the men of the world that the arcā form of the Lord is indistinguishable from Śrīmaṇ Nārāyaṇa of Vaikuṇṭha and that if this form (arcā) is contemplated Śrīmaṇ Nārāyaṇa Himself responds to the prayer. In all these aforesaid five states Bhagavān is ever present with Śrī; this import is established by scripture and other means of knowledge. In these varied forms He creates, maintains and destroys all, is also the giver of mokṣa and has such other activities. These activities of His are, as it were, due to the over-flow of His bliss or ānanda. Again, the five forms of God are equally real in the philosophical sense, though from a point of view of religious value each succeeding manifestation may be more valuable to the devotee. Knowledge and other attributes of God are not in the least affected when any of these forms is assumed.

216. ibid. 10.2: 10.
217. ibid. 1.10: 9.
218. ibid. 5.5.
219. ibid. 8.6; 10.6.
220. ibid. 10.6: 10.
221. ibid. 3.6.
222. Yat. Dip. IX. 29.
223. L.T. 2: 60.
is God’s will that brings into existence these forms which are of pure sattva. The Lord takes up these forms to protect the good people and establish righteousness. Consequently, all these forms have equal importance and significance. Hence the Ālvārs are found to treat an arcā form as identical with the vibhava or para form. All these or some among them are said to be same as the Indweller. The Lord who lies in the ocean is Keśava, the destroyer of the demon Keśin. He lies in Tirukkuṭantai wearing a gem-set crown. He is the protector of the cows. The primeval Lord of the gods, who measured the entire world, leaving no inch of land has become born among the cowherds. The Lord who lies on Adiśeṣa in the milky ocean and is in yogic slumber, takes in the worlds at the time of deluge, lifts up the Govardhana for protecting the people. It is the Lord whose chest is ever occupied by Śrī that became Govinda and removed the deformity of the hunch backed woman. The Lord who lifted up the earth from the waters is permanently stationed in Tirumalai, which place He reached after measuring the earth and He is the same as the Lord who lifted up the Govardhana to protect the kine and cowherds from torrential rain of pebbles He punished Bali, made the demon Bāna become submissive by cutting of the thousand arms and killed Kamsa. He who tore open the beak of the crane, passed through the twin Maruta trees making them fall down, and controlled the seven fierce bulls has taken His dwelling in Śrīvaramankalam (Vāṇamāmalai). The Lord who brought the earth out of the waters, who acquired the name Keśava by killing Keśin, who killed the elephant Kuvalayapídā and who,

227. ibid. 74.
228. T.V.M. 1.5: 5.
229. ibid. 1.8: 3
230. ibid. 3.3: 8.
231. ibid 3.8: 9.
232. ibid. 5.7: 9.
being beyond the comprehension of gods, lies in the ocean, has come very near to Nañmālvār. Nārāyaṇa who withdrew the earth during deluge, released it at the time of creation, measured it at one time, and raised it at another from the waters, had coronation as the Lord of the earth, ruled it and married Bhūdevi. The Lord who is in Paramapada stands in Tirumalai, sleeps in the ocean and moved about in the world in His divine descents. He remains unseen within all objects and is staying in the mind of the Āḷvār. He created the earth, lifted it up from the waters, kept it within the stomach during involution, released at the time of evolution, and measured it as Tirivikrama. All these forms have been assumed by the Lord only to protect the world and the beings inhabiting it from difficulties. The Āḷvār’s attempt to offer a synthesis between these forms is aimed at to prove that the Lord is only one, though for the specific reasons which prompt Him to appear differently at different times.

The Āḷvārs revel in the exploits of Nārāyaṇa both in the transcendental state and in the states of avatāras. Periyālvār says:

"Unnuṭaiya vikkiram oru oliyāmal ellām
Ennutaiya neičakampāl cuvarvali ēluṭik-konṭēn" 238

- ‘I have frescoed in my heart all thy exploits without exception’. He celebrates the heroism of the Lord in His Narasimha, Varāha, Rāmā and Kṛṣṇa avatāras

233. ibid. 1.9. 2.
234. ibid. 4.5: 10; 8.1: 5.
235. ibid. 6.9: 5. All the five forms of God are mentioned here.
238. Periyāl. Tm. 5.4: 6.
239. ibid. 1.5: 2; 1.6: 8; 2.7: 7; 4.8: 8.
240. ibid. 2.10: 9; 3.5: 5; 4.8:8.
241. ibid. 1.6: 8; 2.6:8; 3.9: 6; 4.1: 3; 4.2: 2; 4.3: 8; 4.7: 1 etc.
242. ibid. 1.5: 5; 1.5: 2; 1.5: 4; 1.9: 9; 2.5: 2; 2.5: 5; 3.6: 4; 4.3: 2; 4.8:1; 4.8: 2 etc.
revelling the manifold exploits in them. The incidents of devouring the worlds by the Lord,243 and the churning of the ocean by Him,244 are extolled by this Āḷvār. The hurling of Namuci, the son of Bali, in the air is praised by him.245 Almost all the Āḷvārs praise the incidents of Rāma and Krṣṇa more in their poems than those of other avatāras.

Nammāḷvār celebrates in his poem the Lord’s exploits. The Lord who, though reclining on the small banyan leaf, could lodge within Himself the seven worlds,246 and again “Our Kaṇṭhān swallowed the earth, heaven and all” ,247 He portrays the churning of the ocean by the Lord: “O my Lord, Thou churned the ocean with the snake with the two ends held by the Devās and the Aśuras and Thou heldest aloft the Mantara mountain”.248 When referring to the Lord of the three strides, he says that from being a midget He became the titanic Supreme Lord.249 He delineates the episode of the three demons facing the Lord, one of them, Māli, getting killed and the other two getting pushed into the nether world.250 He mentions the Hīranyā incident. “O the lion-shaped Lord! Thou torest asunder the boom of Hīranyā who entertained insulting thoughts about Thee”.251 The axe-wielding Lord, in the form of Parasurāma, rooted out the Kṣatriya race for twenty-one generations.252 The Lord hacked down the shoulders and heads of the lord of Laṅka begirt with the seas.253 He caused Laṅka to be set on fire, consigned

243. ibid. 1.2: 13; 2.7: 9; 4.1; 9. 4.3: 9. etc.
244. ibid. 1.6: 10; 2.2: 9,
245. ibid. 1.8: 8; 2.5: 9; 2.10: 7.
246. T.V.M. 2.2: 7. cf. ibid. 1.8: 7; 2.1: 10; 2.3: 4.
247. ibid. 2.2: 1.
248. ibid. 7.1: 7.
249. ibid. 1.10: 1
250. ibid. 7.6: 8.
251. ibid. 2.6: 6. cf. ibid., 4.8: 7; Peri. Tm. 3.3: 8.
252. ibid. 6.2: 10. cf. Peri. Tm. 6.7: 2; 7.2: 7; 7.6: 2; 8.5: 8; 8.8: 6; 9.1: 6; 11.4: 6.
253. ibid. 1.6: 7.
to the flames. He hit the seven trees (marāmaram) set in a zig-zag order with a single arrow. "My Lord" says the Āḻvār, "lifted up the great earth" and again, "My Lord Keśava in the form of a Boar poised the whole earth on the tusk". The Lord reclines on the earth; He is seated on it; He stands upright on it; He devours it; He spits it out; He embraces it in the form of His consort. This incident of lifting up of the earth by the Lord in the form of a Boar is celebrated by Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār in a beautiful picturesque language. The Āḻvār evinces inordinate love towards Kṛṣṇavatāra and so he takes a keen interest in mentioning the exploits of Kṛṣṇa frequently in his hymns. The smiling, red-lipped Lord who sucked the breast of the demoness (Pītāna), kicked away the demon in the form of the wheel, uprooted the maruta trees by walking in between them, tore apart the mouth of the horse-demon, and slew the elephant (Kuvalayāpidā). He held aloft the Govardhana mountain effortlessly. He subdued the seven ferocious bulls. He cut off the thousand arms of Bāṅāśura. The Āḻvār celebrates the incident in which the Lord set the demon in the form of a calf on the demon in the shape of a wood-apple tree and dispatched them both at once and also the slaying of the two wrestlers Cāṅūra and Muśṭika and Kamsa too. He delineates the Lord's ascending into the Heaven in the company of Arjuna and the orthodox Brahmin and bringing back and restoring to the Brahmin his four sons placed in

254. ibid. 2.1: 3. cf. ibid. 2.6: 9.
255. ibid. 1.7: 6.
256. ibid. 1.7: 8.
257. ibid. 1.9: 2.
258. ibid. 2.8: 7.
259. Peri. Tm. 4.4: 8. cf. ibid., 3.4: 3.
260. T.V.M. 5.3: 8. cf. ibid. 1.8: 2; 1.9: 2; 1.9: 5; 2.1: 8; 2.1: 10; 2.10: 10; 4.8: 3.
261. ibid. 1.8: 4.
262. ibid. 1.8: 7; 2.5: 7; 2.9: 10; 5.7: 9. cf. Peri. Tm. 3.4: 4.
263. ibid. 2.4: 2; 3.4: 10; 3.8: 9; 4.8: 9. cf. Peri. Tm. 6.7: 2.
264. ibid. 7.3: 5.
265. ibid. 8.4: 1. cf. ibid. 3.8: 9.
Heaven in exactly the same state in which they were born. Most of the exploits of the Lord in *Krṣṇavatāra* are narrated in one hymn—the lifting of the mountain, the subduing of the serpent Kāliyan, the slaying of the wrestlers, and of the elephant, of Pūtana and of Sakatāśura, the cunning disposal of Kamsa, and of the demon in the form of a crane, the subduing of the bulls, the uprooting of the tree into which the demon entered, the cutting down of the Bāga’s shoulders, the acquisition of the earth as Vāmaṇa, the rescuing of the four sons of the orthodox Brahmin, and the conduct of Bhārata war. Similarly Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār also, in one hymn, celebrates the exploits of Kṛṣṇa. The incident in which Śrī Kṛṣṇa brought and planted the *Pārijāta* tree from the land of the Devas for the sake of His consort Satyabhāma has been celebrated both by Periyāḻvār and Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār in their hymns.

The Āḻvār allots one full hymn to a commemoration of the Lord’s exploits: each verse to a description of a particular accomplishment. The cosmic dimensions of the Lord with all His accoutrements in Tirivikramāvatāra striding the earth are outlined. The phenomenal noise and impact of movement and counter movement produced at the time of churning the ocean are brought out. The delicate poising achieved by the Lord at the time of having up the earth in the form of a Boar is portrayed. The chaotic dissolution into which He cast the Universe while devouring it at the time of Deluge is indicated. The unprecedented noise caused by him at the time of the Bhārata war with soldiers fighting and the Devas watching is referred to. The strength of the impact

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266. ibid. 3.10: 5; 6.4: 9.
267. ibid. 6.4. cf, ibid. 5.10.
268. Peri. Tm. 7.4.
269. Periyāḻ. Tm. 1.9: 9; 3.9: 1: Peri. 3.4: 8; 4.6: 8.
270. T.V.M. 7.4: 1.
271. ibid. 7.4: 2.
272. ibid. 7.4: 3.
273. ibid. 7.4: 4.
274. ibid. 7.4: 5.
involved in the killing of Hiraṇya in Narasimhvāvatāra is described. The exploits of the Lord during the war with Rāvaṇa are depicted. The Lord’s direct facing and hacking down of Bāṇasura and defeating of Subramanya, Agni and Śiva are portrayed. The Lord’s creation of the elements, the stars, and planets, and all forms of life, all in a trice, is wondered at. The way the Lord lifted up and held as an umbrella the Govardhana mountain for the protection of the cows and cowherds is traced.

The Āḷvār gets himself lost in admiration while recounting how the Lord whose mouth is described to be very huge for eating the world, kept it within His stomach and lies like a very small child on the tiny banyan leaf. He sleeps there for a long time. This state of childhood is peerless and could not be imagined. Of all these forms, the significance of the Lord using Garuḍa as His vehicle requires to be mentioned. An elephant had once quenching its thirst by drinking water in a deep pond. Its legs were seized by a crocodile. The elephant put up a tough fight and tried to extricate itself from the clutches of the crocodile, but with no result. It then realised the futility of its personal endeavour and remembered the mantra which it was taught in the previous birth and shouted it out in dire distress. The Lord at once started on His vehicle Garuḍa hurried to rescue the elephant. He killed the crocodile with the discus. There were several poets like Pōtana who were stuck with admiration at this ever readiness of the Lord to rush for protecting the devotee, and depict Garuḍa and weapons running swiftly after the Lord to be of use to Him but the Lord was more alive to save the life of the devotee than to take to the

275. ibid. 7.4: 6.
276. ibid. 7.4: 7.
277. ibid. 7.4: 8.
278. ibid. 7.4: 9.
279. ibid. 7.4: 10.
280. ibid. 2.6: 7; 4.2: 1; 6.10: 1 etc.
281. ibid. 3.7: 10.
282. Pōtana, B: Mahābhāgavatamu: Ch. 8: 96 to 98.
weapons which He would like to make use of. Some versions of this incident depict the elephant as entering into the tank to fetch the lotuses for worshipping the Lord and as having got then into the clutches of the crocodile. 283 Besides revealing fully that the Lord has unbounded mercy for the suffering humanity, this incident has been mainly instrumental to declare the Lord’s greatness, superiority over others and His individuality.

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283. ibid. 3.1: 9.
CHAPTER XVII

INTER-RELATIONS OF GOD, SELF AND WORLD

The acme of perfection in attributes which is reached only in Nārāyaṇa, the Lord’s supremacy and His divine descents are meaningful only when what is other than Him is understood in its true nature. The frequent references which are contained in the compositions of the Ālvarś to the Lord’s having no one as superior or equal to Him prove this. All these which are inseparable from Him have their own individuality, which, however, adds to the meaning of Godhead.

The self is referred to by the terms ‘spirit’, ‘soul’ and ‘ātmāna’ in philosophy. When the word ‘ātmāna’ connotes the finite self or the individual soul, it refers to it as distinct from the body (dehā), the sense-organs (indirīyas), mind (manas), and the vital breath (prāṇa). “By adopting Sankhyān psychology Viśiṣṭādvaita defines ātmāna negatively as puruṣa different from the twenty-four categories of prakṛti. The latter is composed of the five gross elements (bhūtas), the five subtle elements (tānmatras), the five cognitive sense organs, the five conative sense organs, manas, bhuddhi, ahaṅkāra and primal prakṛti. Puruṣa is the twenty-fifth category”.¹ The nature of the body is referred to by Nammālvār as follows -

"Poṅku aimpulun āṟum pori aintum
karuměntiriyam aimpūtam
Iāku ivvuyir ēy pirakiruti
māṃ āṅkāram manaṅkaḷē".²

‘The five conative senses, the five cognitive senses, the five organs of the body, the five elements, prakṛti which is

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¹. The Philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita, p. 283.
². T.V.M. 10.7: 10.
associated with the life-principle, mahat, ahaṅkāra, and the will—these constitute the living body. No doubt the ātman has its own separate being, but its ultimate meaning is Brahman and it is therefore indistinguishable from it. So the nature of ātman cannot be known from that of Paramātman owing to their inseparable relation. The jivas are projected into manifestation by Brahman. Prior to this manifestation the ātman is atomic in size, resides in a separate body, lies inactive like a bird whose wings have not yet grown. It is God that awakens it from its torpidity and sets in on a career of activity. It is self-luminous, sentient subject of experience and an agent. Though it is infinitesimal in its monadic existence, its attributive knowledge (dharmabhūtajñāna) can be infinite and all pervasive like the light of the sun. The self is infinitely smaller than the hundredth part of a point of a hair which is divided a hundred times. Yet it is infinite in its range. The jiva is said to be “windowless in the sense that it perseveres in its unique being; but its consciousness is capable of having a cosmic range and can mirror the whole universe”.

Nammāḷvār realizes the nature of the ātman by the grace of the Lord and describes it in the following verse:

“Niṟṟa onṟai unarntēṇukku,
atan nuḷ nērmaī atu itu euṟu
Onṟum oruvarkku, unaralākātu;
unarntu mēlum kāṇparitu;
Ceṟṟu ceṟṟu, paramparam āy,
yātum inṟit tēyuntu arṟu,
Naṁṟu, titu enṟu arivu aritāy,
nanṟṟy jñānam kaṭantate”

—‘The soul is eternal, and is essentially characterized by intelligence (jñāna); the soul which the Lord has condescended to exhibit to me as His mode, or related to Him as the predi-
cate is to the subject, or attribute is to substance; the soul which cannot be classified under any category, as this or that; the soul, the nature of which is beyond the comprehension of even the enlightened; the soul, whose apperception by the strenuous mental effort called yoga (psychic meditation) is even then not comparable to such perception or direct proof as arising from the senses conveying the knowledge of the external world; the soul (as revealed to me by the Lord) transcending all other categories of things, which could be grouped as ‘body’ or as ‘the senses’ or as ‘the vital spirit’ (prāṇa), or as ‘the mind’ (manas), or as ‘the will’ (buddhi), because destitute of the modifications and corruptions to which all these are subject, the soul, which is very subtle and distinct from any of these, neither coming under the description ‘good’, or ‘bad’. In brief, the soul is an entity which does not fall under the cognizance of sense-knowledge.

A close following of the commentary ‘Ītū’ will throw more light on the subject:

Ninra onurai........nērmai: The soul is a unique verity distinct from the body, the external senses, the sensory (manas) and the reason (buddhi). While these are perishable, the soul alone remains apart as the Imperishable.⁷


The Āḻvār, throughout his Tiruvāymoli up to this, never bestowed any appreciable attention on the nature or the soul, for the reason that all his mind and heart were absorbed in the contemplation of the Lord and His blessed Attributes, Glory etc., before which the soul-nature is like the fire-fly before the Glory of the Effulgent Luminary, the Sun. The saint had no time to give to rational meditation (gnosis) to realise soul-nature, to the detriment of emotional devotion (amor) to realised God. For, as in the manner of the released soul, not caring to waste a thought over the painful memories surrounding the embodied state, the saint who is transported with the revels of his enjoyment with his Lord, the Spouse, never considers it his worth while to waste his time over a search after the inferior kind of soul-knowledge. However, he sketches a knowledge of this inferior nature, because, as a part and mode and predicate of Himself, God was pleased to bestow this knowledge on him.
atu itu enṛu: The soul cannot be known as this or that, for all objects of experience are known by the methods of agreement and difference; but no such method is applicable to the thing soul.

Onṛum oruvarkku unaralākātu: Neither by speech nor by any process of thought is it possible to disclose the nature of the soul even to those minds which have made great advance in spiritual knowledge.

unarnium...........kāṇparitu: Even if some knowledge concerning it is had, it is only partial knowledge of it, not knowledge of it in its entirety. 8

Cenṛu cenṛu...........āy: Beyond and beyond, does soul’s nature transcend the several vestures veiling it;—groupable under the general categorical heads as (i) annamayā (gross body), (ii) prana-maya (subtle or vegetative body), (iii) manō-maya (mind-body). 9

yātum...........arṛu: Not partaking of the nature of any of these categories, nor of the imperfections attaching thereto, the soul stands aloof, as of its own distinct, subtle, species.

Nanṛu titu ....aritāy: When a comparison is instituted between one object and another, or as when one material principle of a group is compared with another of another group, notions such as ‘this is better than that’, or ‘that is worse than that’ arise; but soul being a spiritual principle it is incapable of such comparisons.

nanṛāy jñānam kaṭantaiē: The soul is thus by itself a singular verity, and characterised by its own peculiar attributes of intelligence (jñāna) and bliss (ānanda) 10

8. cf. Bh. G. 11: 54. “Arjuna! to know, to see, and enter into, the true nature of spirit, is difficult”.
10. cf. Māṇikkavacakar’s statement: “Cenṛu cenṛu anuvāy tēyntu organ” – “Nearer and nearer to Thee it droweth, wearing away atoms by atom (its non-spiritual accretions), till it is one with Thee” (T.V.K. 394).
The Āḻvārś do not, therefore, treat the nature of the self or the classification of the selves as nitya, mukta, and bhaddha. However, they are aware of the nature of the selves which could be brought under these categories. Those who are eternal and so do not have to undergo any of the sufferings due to bondage have a clear conception of their own essential nature, their relationship to the Lord and their being subordinated to the supreme Person. Therefore, they dedicate themselves to His service consistent with the work allotted to them. These souls live only in Śrī Vaikuṇṭha and accompany the Lord wherever He proceeds. Ādiśeṣa, as the name signifies, is the serpent which is subordinated to Him from the very beginning. To the Lord who is with Śrī Ādiśeṣa becomes the umbrella when the Lord moves about, the throne for Him to sit on the sandals (pāduka) to stand in and while He lies down, he becomes the bed, jewelled lamp with the lustrous gems on his hoods, a towel and a pillow. It is said that he became born as Lakṣmaṇa to serve the Lord who descended down to the earth as Rāma. Garuḍa the vehicle of God, is another self which is generally present in Śrī Vaikuṇṭha. He is of the nature of the Vedas. He renders service to God, He is a friend, vehicle, seat, flag, canopy, and fan for the Lord. It is because of him that the Lord is possessed of the unique reputation of riding on him and having his figure in the flag. It is said that the flapping of the wings of the Garuḍa while flying produces the chanting sound of the Sāma-Veda. Viṣvakṣena is another eternal self who is in-charge of the army of Viṣṇu. He enjoys what is cast off by the Lord after enjoyment. These and others who are eternally present in Śrī Vaikuṇṭha are also referred to as Nityasūris. Some souls get the name mukta (released) after they leave the worldly bondage through God’s grace and

11. M.Tv. 53; cf. Śṭotratatna, 40.
13. Catusṭihoki, 1; Śṭotratatna, 41.
14. Śṭotratatna, 41.
15. M.Tv, 5, 74; T.V.M. 5.7: 3.
16. T.V.M. 3.8: 5.
17. Śṭotratatna, 42.
enjoy rendering service to the Lord in Śrī Vaikuṇṭha. The bound jivas (baddhas) are those who suffer the worldly ills. Due to beginningless karma, they have their essential nature (svarūpa) concealed with the result that they have individually diverse stands of knowledge, potency, and other attributes. They could not have perfect knowledge of themselves nor can they have a uniform realization of God. They include Brahmā, Rudra, Indra and other denizens of heaven, sages and ordinary men.

The individual soul is stated as being dear to the Lord of Lakṣmī even like the Kaustubha; he can be called the prince, the Lord’s son, His disciple, His attendant, His dependant existing solely for Him (śeṣa) and His servant. It is by His gracious desire that all souls should enjoy His blissful state and attain their goal. The individual self therefore, by his essential nature, entitled to the service of his master as his birth right as the eternals themselves. But sunk in the sleep of beginningless māya, he has fallen into the wilderness of matter, has had repeated births in quick succession, has lost the primary aim of existence, has found no comfort or consolation, has lost the splendour of his real nature owing to evil desires and passions and finally attains immortality by realising his true nature and purpose. The condition of the jiva in samsāra has been aptly described by Rāmānuja and Vedānta Deśika by the parable of the young prince who in a boyish way strays away from his royal father, enters the huts of wild tribes and identifies himself with them. But a trustworthy friend weans him away from his wicked surroundings by reminding him of his royal destiny and succeeds in reclaiming him. The father who was searching for his lost son is very happy and overjoyed to meet him, and the two are at once reunited in love. Similar is the state of jiva, who belongs to Brahmān and who identifies himself with the body, loses his real character and assumes a different nature. He sleeps in and as matter in the pralaya state and subjects him-

18. Peri. Tm. 4.7: 7; P.Tv. 22; cf. Peri. Tm. 1.1: 1.
self to the wheel of *samsāra* with all its hazards and hardships till he is made to relax his folly by a loving *guru*. He at last retraces his steps, regains his self-knowledge, is freed from the fetters of *karma*, and enters his home in the absolute. The freed self withdraws itself for ever from the twenty-four *tattvas* of *prakṛti* in the same way in which it entered into them and became practically a mode of matter. Being Brahman he becomes Brahman.

The Āḻvārs hold the view that Nārāyaṇa is the creator, protector and destroyer of the Universe. Namālvār says: “At a time when there was as yet no created world or creature, after Deluge, the Lord as the Originator planted the four-faced Brahmā, the three-eyed Śiva and created the three worlds from His navel”; 21 “the first great God who through such measures as creating it, heaving it, devouring it, releasing it by spitting, and striding it, protects the universe in the past, present and future”. 22 The same idea is repeated in a number of verses in his important work *Tiruvāyumoḻi*. 23 As a protector of the Universe “the Lord reclined on the bānyan leaf after drawing into Himself for protection at the time of the Deluge, Śiva with the cool moon on his head, the four-faced Brahmā, Indra, all the creatures and worlds, the elements, the sun and moon and planets all in tact” 24 and “my Lord both created and lodged the universe within Himself (for preserving it)”. 25 In his other poem *Periya Tiruvantāti* the Āḻvār refers to God as the creator who brought into being all the various forms of creation on a widespread scale. 26 He is the self-created, best of men; He is unparalleled; He is immanent in all objects; if He relaxes His protective care, the universe will become topsy-turvy; and He alone can set in aright. Who can estimate His power? 27 He swallowed the earth; He spat

23. T.V.M. 2.8; 7; 3.1: 10; 4.5: 10; 7.1: 3; 8.1: 5; 8.4: 2; 9.3: 2; 9.9: 2.
25. ibid. 2.
27. ibid. 24.
it out; He raised it up; He measured it; He created it and He is immanent in it.28 "The world, the deluge which comes into existence when the world remains destroyed, the blue sea with the beautiful waves, mountains, the bright fires, wind, ākāśa, all these are the products created by the Lord of Śrī with His will".29 This accords well with the Upaniṣad-dic sense that the Brahman intended to become Itself many and be born.30 It is not the world alone that is produced by His will. Music, Veda, Itihāsa, Purāṇa, Manusmṛti and other books on Dharma, which are all transformations of sound in particular settings are also the products created by His will.31

The central principle on which the theory of the origin and development of the universe is based is familiarly known as satkāryavāda32 according to which nothing new comes into being, nor is anything created out of nothing. "As a spider moves along its threads, and as from a fire tiny sparks fly in all directions, even so from this Self come forth all organs, all worlds, all deities and all beings. Its mystic name is the "Truth of truth" (satyasya satya)."33 This idea is expressed by Nammāḷvar as follows: "The Lord of the Eternals created Brahmā, Śiva, Indra and the rṣis, and the whole sentient and non-sentient beings single-handed by the mere wish".34 The processes of involution and evolution are spoken of as "Uṇṭu umilta". They refer to the Lord as "Mūvulaku uṇṭu umil tevapirām";35 "jñālam muṛrum uṇṭu umilta nātan"36 and so on. At a time when there was no world or any living being, He became the inherent cause (vittu) for the world.37 The delightful class of Gods, the sentient beings

28. ibid. 42; Peri. Tm. 5.9: 2; 5.10: 3; 6.1: 1, 4, 5.
31. Nāṅ. Tv. 76.
32. Saṃkhayārikā, 9.
34. T.V.M. 1.5: 4.
35. ibid. 8.9: 4. cf. ibid. 4.2: 1; 8.10: 4; 9.3: 2; 9.9: 2.
36. Peri. Tm. 4.8: 6. cf. ibid. 4.10: 5; 5.7: 9; 5.9: 2; 5.10:
37. T.V.C. 4; T.V.M. 1.5: 4.
belonging to the mortal group and the inert matter and the lustrous luminaries like sun and moon blossom forth in Him, that is, were in the dormant stage till they got manifested by Him from Him. He is both the father and mother, thus being the inherent cause of everything, existing permanently in all the three times, present, past and future.

There are a number of verses in Tiruvāyimoli referring to the involutionary and evolutionary processes of the Universe wrought by the Lord. The Āḻvār says: "Thou swallowedest the seven worlds and the brought them out"; 39 "He gobbled up the seven worlds (for protection)"; 40 "My Lord gulped the three worlds together and repaired to the banyan leaf". 41 In the form of a child He devoured all the worlds and went to sleep on the banyan leaf"; 42 "His bed is the (small) banyan leaf. But His stomach could hold within itself all the seven worlds"; 43 "Who else can protect except the Lord Who created by His will the celestials, the three worlds, and all the objects, and lodged these within Himself for the safe keeping?"; 44 "the Lord Whose function is to protect at the time of the Deluge drew into Himself all objects and in His navel produced Brahmā, Indra, the celestials and their worlds"; 45 "the Lord is the Brahmā who, created by Him and settled on His navel, creates. The Lord is the Rudra who destroys". 46 The creative function of the Lord is referred to in a number of verses. 47 In one verse the Āḻvār says: "Thou createst the four-faced Brahmā within Thyself commanding him to create all the worlds"; 48 in another "Thou art the single, self-

40. ibid. 1.8: 7; 1.10: 5. cf. T.V.R. 20. 56. 79, 91; T.V.M. 7.3: 9.
41. ibid. 1.9: 4; 6.2: 4.
42. ibid. 4.2: 1; 2.6: 7; 5.7: 7; 7.1: 4.
43. ibid. 2.2: 7.
44. ibid. 2.2: 8.
45. ibid. 2.2: 9; 7.2: 2.
46. ibid. 2.8: 3; 3.6: 1; 7.5: 4.
47. ibid. 7.1: 9; 7.6: 1; 7.8: 8.
48. ibid. 3.1: 7; 5.10: 8.
created great God who created Brahmā, who, in his turn, created the three worlds and all life”; 49 and further he addresses Him “O cloud-hued Lord, Thou createst the world surrounded by the sea.” 50 Regarding the preserving function he says: “Thou preservest the world in the present, the past and the future”; 51 and again “Thou with the resplendent discus, protectest the seas and the world.” 52 In some verses the Ālvār speaks of both the functions – evolution and involution. 53 Tirumaṅkaiyālvār devotes one whole hymn to a celebration of the solicitude of the Lord in protecting at the time of Deluge and creating all the worlds, the gods and the celestials by swallowing and then releasing by spitting them out. 54

The created products continue to exist every moment through His will. It is the Lord’s will that shapes the world out of Himself and it is the same that makes it endure as long as He desires. Thus it is preserved and protected by Him. 55 The Lord gives to the jīvas the ways and means of leading a healthy and good way of life. The selves, however, put these means to bad use and add to their suffering. In order that such sufferings, which grow boundless, are put an end to, the Lord destroys the world through His will. His will thus belongs to Him and is mysterious. 56 It must, however, be borne in mind that the Lord does not merely allow the world that He has created to continue to exist but protects it from sufferings which befalls the jīvas now and then. He protected the kine by lifting up the Govardhana, the Vedas and the systems of thought which He had promulgated whenever there were fears for their disappearance, Brahmā and Rudra when they faced difficulties and the entire world during Deluge.

49. ibid. 8.10: 7.
50. ibid. 3.2: 1; 6.8: 2.
51. ibid. 3.1: 5. cf. ibid. 6.9: 3; 7.4: 4.
52. ibid. 7.1: 2. cf. ibid. 8.4: 11; 9.1: 1; 10.1: 3; 10.8: 2.
53. ibid. 8.4: 8; 8.9: 4; 8.10: 4; 10.7: 9.
54. Peri. Tm. 11.6.
55. Nāṉ. Tv. 32.
56. Tc. V. 41.
Protection for all these on the occasions as those mentioned above did not come forth from any one but Him.\textsuperscript{57} His interest in preserving the integrity of the world is evidenced in Himself being the aeon, the head of the sacred rites and the antaryāmin of the sun who has a one-wheeled chariot. He gave protection to the lordly elephant, sent forth arrows at Lanka and destroyed it and helped Arjuna by screening the sun with His discus.\textsuperscript{58} He is rightly called Ātippirāñ, the Primal Protector, as He created all the gods, worlds and beings and has been protecting them.\textsuperscript{59}

The noumenal self or ātman as puruṣa is free and eternal, but somehow "it gets phenomenalised, becomes bound to prakṛti and is caught up in the causal necessity of karma."\textsuperscript{60} Each act of karma leaves behind an impression or mark on the mind. The successive actions of similar type deepen the impressions which assume the form of inherent inclination or predilection. The moral experiences of the good and bad deeds are ultimately traceable to the responsibility of the empirical self. If the ātman falsely identifies itself with prakṛti and its guṇas, it becomes a sensitive self or the product of nature; it is phenomenalised and subjects itself to the external determinations of sense inclinations and becomes a slave of desire. But if it exercises its moral freedom, it realises its noumenal nature as a spiritual being and attains self-mastery and autonomy. The self can become a dog or a god with its immense potentialities, and no being on earth or beyond can destroy its consciousness. As the sower of the seeds alone is answerable for the harvest, man harvests the type of fruits according as the type of the seeds he sows.

The central idea of the doctrine of karma can be clarified with the help of an analogy. A shop keeper or a business man by his earning and spending in a year must leave a

\textsuperscript{57} M.Tv. 87.
\textsuperscript{58} Peri. Tm. 5.7: 8.
\textsuperscript{59} T.V.M. 4.10: 1.
\textsuperscript{60} The Philosophy of Visisṭadvaita, p. 311.
balance in his fund by each item of income and expenditure and the resultant interactions. And by the end of the year the residue or balance of that year becomes the capital of the next year because the capital is of great importance here. Thus, what is carried over in the present year is brought forward in the next year. With the coming of the new year (birth) the capital which is the residue of the last year cannot remain as before or static owing to the necessity of constant business transactions; earning and spending would instantaneously force the capital to fluctuate sedulously. Similarly death is the last act of one's birth; hence the balance or residue with which one dies becomes the birth-making karma in the next birth. This capital of karma, called Prārabdha, by the inevitable process of action and reaction of the present birth begins to fluctuate in perfect conformity with the merits and demerits of those actions. Prārabdha, in this way, changes and is perpetuated with new and fresh actions and successive changes beget successive new phases of it. This play of actions goes on until man rests in death or annihilates the subsequent birth-making residue of karma by spiritual knowledge by attaining liberation when the momentum of Prārabdha has exhausted itself in the course of life. All jivas, from the butterfly to the Brahman, are alike conditioned by the law of karma. Karma causes rebirth and rebirth adds to the propensity of the evil, and this vicious circle throws the souls into the maelstrom of misery.

The Ālvār saints refer to karma by various terms as "Tol-vinai", "Aruvinai", "Paḷavinai", "Val-vinai".

61. There are three kinds of karma: Sāṅcita, Prārabdha and Āgāmi. Sāṅcita is all the accumulated karma of the past. Part of it is seen in the character of the individual, his tendencies and aptitudes, inclinations and desires etc. Prārabdha is that portion of the past karma which is responsible for the present body. Āgāmi is the coming karma which includes also the karma that is being gathered at present.

63. T.V.R. 37, 66; P.Tv. 7; T.V.M. 3.5 : 11.
64. Peri. Tm. 2.7 : 10; 5.7: 10; T.V.M. 10.6: 2.
65. T.V.R. 10, 59; Peri. Tm. 4.7 : 7; P.Tv. 26; ibid. 22, 69.
"Val-vinaiyar", "Kotu-vinaikal", "Vinai val irul", "Tuyar", "Vem-tuyar", "Piavat-tuyar", "Van tuyar", "Peruntuyar itumpai", "Tukkam", "Tukka cilam", "Tunpam", "Tunpakkaṭal", "Iṭar", "Iṭark katal", "Iṭar culi", "Caṇmam", "Nōyka", "Nōy", "Allal" and "Pāvam" perhaps in the sense of sins. They refer to merits and demerits as "Nalvīṇai and Tīvīṇai" and sometimes "Iruvalvinaikaḷ". They consider birth itself as a great sorrow - "piravi - tuyar"; "pirappu āṁ pollā aruvinai". They want to be rid of this birth - "ākkai nōy āruttu"; "irappōṭum pirappu arukkum". Merits and demerits are, according to them, chains that fetter the self, though the

66. P.Tv. 69.
67. Peri. Tm. 5.10: 10.
68. T.V.M. 10.5: 10.
69. ibid. 3.10: 5; 4.1: 11; Peri. Tm. 5.1: 10; 8.7: 10; 11.3: 10; Periyāḷ Tm. 3.7: 11.
70. Peri. Tm. 5.7: 9.
71. T.V.M. 10.4: 3.
72. P.Tv 54.
73. Peri. Tm. 1.1: 1.
74. ibid. 10.8: 10; T.V.M. 3.10: 8.
75. T.V.M. 4.6: 11
76. ibid. 3.10: 6; Perum. Tm. 6: 10.
77. Nāc. Tm. 13.10.
78. T.V.M. 3.10: 4; Peri. Tm. 4.7: 1, 2, 3, 6; 10.6: 10; 10.7: 10; Periyal. Tm. 1.3: 10; 1.4: 10; 3.2: 10.
79. Tc. V. 115.
80. ibid. 98.
81. T.V.M. 3.7: 11; 3.9: 11.
82. ibid. 2.6: 7; 1.7: 11.
83. ibid. 3.10: 7; 10.8: 10.
84. Peri. Tm. 5.2: 10; 5.8: 10; 6.10: 10; 7.5: 10; 7.9: 10; 8.8: 10; 9.6: 10; 9.9: 10; Nac. Tm. 4:11.
85. T.V.R. 89; T. Tv. 67; Nāṅ. Tv. 57.
86. T.V.M. 1.5: 10.
87. T.V.R. 100.
88. Tc. V. 97.
89. ibid. 46; cf. T.V.M. 3.1: 11; 10.4: 6; 10.6: 10; 10.8: 3.
former is of gold and the latter is that of iron. Good and evil are therefore relative as they are linked by causal necessity. They subject the self to the adventures of numberless births and deaths and so the self is caught up in the see-saw of samsāra.

It is, therefore, clear from the above, that every man reaps what he sows. No doubt God is good, and therefore the existence of evil and other imperfections has to be traced to the freedom of the finite self. Moral freedom is a real choice between different possible courses of action, and the jiva is responsible for the choice of evil; and God is responsible not for the choice between good and evil, but for the pleasures and pains that follow the deed. The existence of evil in the divine plan is only a bare possibility, but it is the self that makes the possible actual and enjoys the fruits of karma. Pleasure and pain are determined by the nature of karma, and they vary with different persons at different times. Nothing, cite or acit, is intrinsically good or bad, pleasant or painful and the hedonistic value of a thing is relative to the moral differences caused by karma.  

It may be asked why Īśvara, Who is the well-wisher of all living-beings, allows the jiva to suffer, and why does He not grant cessation of these sufferings. Īśvara is always inclined to bestow His grace. He is eager to confer mokṣa on those who seek His protection. But owing to man's desire, the Lord agrees to keep Him here in this world for sometime longer. He avails Himself of those karmas which have begun to yield their fruit (prārabdha) and which are the cause of these sufferings and punishes these men of hard hearts in order to correct them as a father and the like would do in the case of such as their sons with a whip at hand. It is therefore proper to consider such punishments as special favours, a sort of blessings in disguise. According to Paṭṭar even a disease could be a teacher for us, as it would create a repentance in our mind. Kūrat-tālvān the disciple of Rāmānuja on losing his eye-sight did not long for his eyes again, as they would
make him look at the object of sense-pleasures.\textsuperscript{91}

The sufferings are therefore intended only to reveal, to some, their offences with their consequences and then conceal them in order to create utter disgust, disgust like that of Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār who says: “My mind cannot bear the thought of living in a house in the roof of which there is a serpent”\textsuperscript{92} so that thereby they too, might long for the release from samsāra which Īśvara has already made up His mind to confer on them. So emancipation is a combined process of gracia operans and gratia co-operans. In such contexts, the aspect of the experience of sorrow or pain is the fruit of evil deeds in the past. Among these, some punishments are the fruit of certain good deeds in the past which have begun to operate (prārabdha). When the crow (kakāśura) fell at Śrī Rāma’s feet praying for life, the Lord gave him his life; the fruit of His prapatti was full and complete. Even the punishment inflicted on this wicked crow whereby he lost the sight of one eye was not really of the nature of punishment. It was, as it were, a special form of favour, because it would prevent him from doing evil again.\textsuperscript{93}

The self thus requires opportunities to bear the consequences of its doings. It requires for this purpose a medium in the form of a physical frame. The residues of the deeds, though they are present with him, could not by themselves determine the nature of the body that is required for exhausting them, nor can the soul do it, for if it can, it could have had easy control over its own residues. In its helpless state, the Lord determines the nature of the physical body in accordance with those residues in order that the experience of them through that particular body would enable to exhaust them. In the self-multiplication and creation of the world, this is the main motive of the Lord which also explains why certain selves are made to obtain their coming into being in particular

\textsuperscript{91} Somewhat as Milton reconciled himself to his blindness.
\textsuperscript{92} Peri. Tm. 11. 8: 3.
\textsuperscript{93} Periyāḻvār refers to this incident. Vide Periyāḻ. Tm. 3.10:6.
places and to possess certain specific bodies. Merits and demerits of the selves thus are the accessories for God in creating the world.\(^\text{94}\)

Iśvara is called the inner self or soul (śarīrā), because as long as they exist, He is, in regard to sentient and non-sentient substances, their support (ādārā), their controller or ruler (niyanta) and their Lord or Master (śeṣi) for whose purposes they exist. Sentient beings and non-sentient things form His body, since, with regard to Him, they stand as substances supported by Him, controlled by Him, and existing solely for the fulfilment of His purposes, throughout their existence. Iśvara is therefore called the Supporter and the Controller or Ruler of all sentient beings and non-sentient things, because from His essential nature (svatāt) and His will (saṅkalpa), they derive their existence, continuance and activities. Just as Iśvara is the abode, or support (ādāra) of the attributes which define His essential nature (viz., satyam, jñānam, ānandam and the like) and the other qualities possessed by Him with His essential nature so defined (qualities like compassion and accessibility), He is also the inseparable and direct support of all substances, sentient and non-sentient, other than Himself. He is also the support, through these substances (i.e., indirectly) of the qualities that pertain to them.

Iśvara's support is, according to Śāstras, by His essential nature and by His will. "The Heavens, the sky with the moon, the sun and the stars, the different quarters, the earth, the great ocean - all these are supported by the might of the Supreme Being, Vāsudeva".\(^\text{95}\) The human body exists from the time of the entry of the soul into it and perishes or disintegrates when the soul leaves it. It is therefore known to be supported by the essential nature of the soul. In the state of dreamless sleep and the like, when the will of the soul is dormant, the body continues to exist without any

\(^{94}\) Vedānta-sūtra 2.1: 34; Br. Up. 4.4: 5.

\(^{95}\) M.Bh. Anusāsa 254: 136.
deterioration; so its existence then is clearly dependent on the
essential nature of soul and not its will. In the waking state,
when the body is kept from falling, it is sustained by the will
of the soul. When the existence of the body is dependent
only on the essential nature of the soul it is supported
(ādheyatva) by the latter; and when the existence depends on
the will, it is controlled and directed (niyamyatva) by the
latter.

This truth of Brahman or Īśvara as the saririn of all
beings is clearly intuited by Nammāḻvār. He says:

"Tiḻavicumpu erivaḻi nīrnilam ivaimicaip
Paṭarpourul muḻvatum āyavai avaitoṟum
Uṭalmicai uyireṅak karantuṇkum parantuḷan;
Cuṭarmiku curutiyaḻ ivaiuṭṭa cuṟanē."96

- "My Lord is one who in-forms all the objects and creatures
that appear on the earth, on water, in the atmosphere, in fire
and in the firm expanse of space, and at once interpenetrates
and transcends all these objects, internally and externally,
much like the soul in-forming the body", and again "He
extends in a hidden form into every minute object in every
minute region on the earth and in the worlds above just as the
universe extends spaciously through the atoms of water which
go to make the ocean".97 These ideas are expressed together
in another verse, of course, in a slightly different form with an
explanatory simile. "My Lord, Thou hast for Thy body the
dive elements and all the objects which emerge from these.
As butter in fresh-drawn milk, Thou art present unseen in all
those objects."98 A similar conception of God is found in a
verse of Caṅkam poetry: "The flawless Lord with the discus,
celebrated as the foremost of the Vedaś, has the vast earth
for His feet, the encircling, pristine ocean for His garment,
the expanse of space as His body, the directions for His
hands, the moon with cool rays and the blazing sun as His

97. ibid. 1.1: 10.
98. ibid. 8.5: 10; cf. Peri. Tm. 7.10: 9.
eyes, with all these as part of Himself. 99 One comes across many verses in the whole of his works and in the works of other Āḻvārs the same sentiment being expressed in different ways. For example, "The Lord is in the form of the ever moving wind, the extensive space, the terra firma, the boundless ocean, the blazing fire, the sun and moon, the Devas, men and all sentient and non-sentient creation;" 100 "The Lord stands such that all the five elements and the whole of creation are Himself"; 101 "The Lord is like the very life of life......He is the life principle of all the worlds." 102 Again Nammāḻvār says: "The Lord extends at all times and in all places effortlessly; He has the Prime form of ānāna; and He is at the same time so formless that He cannot be got at through the senses"; 103 "Thou art all the three fair worlds; Thou art the three-eyed Lord and the great Brahmā; Thou art the gods like Indra who has the terrible weapon of Vajrāyudha in his hand"; 104 "Nārāyaṇa Who Himself is all sentient creatures and non-sentient things, and the Devas like Brahmā who having attained to the highest reaches in the path of Dharma have secured the state of śānti". 105 Peyāḻvār says: "The Lord is a nonpareil who has for His body all objects, persons like Brahmā and others who have attained to a meritorious state through penance, the constellations, the blazing fire, the great mountains, the eight directions and the sun and moon." 106 Tirumāṅkaiyāḻvār, in one of his verses, expresses the same sentiment: "The foremost of gods, Śrīman Nārāyaṇa, has for His body all living beings and all non-sentient objects, the inner meaning of the Vedas and the Trinity in the form of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva". 107 That the Lord is the Ruler can be seen from

99. NRR. invocatory verse.
100. T.V.M. 3.6: 5.
101. ibid. 7.6: 2.
102. ibid. 8.1: 5.
103. ibid. 3.10: 10.
104. ibid. 7.6: 4.
105. ibid. 1.3: 3.
107. Peri. Tm. 4.1: 2.
the following: “Thou art my ruler! all the worlds, all the
gods worshipped in these worlds for fruit, all the rites of
worship offered to these gods, all the objects that might be
beyond these worlds, the agent and the unknown doer, the
creatures which are beyond the grasp of the senses – all these
have been ordained by Thee”\textsuperscript{108} Tirumāṇkaiyāḻvār expresses
the same sentiment thus: “The Lord is Trinity in unity
performing the functions of creation, preservation and
and destruction when viewed from the sarīra–sarītri bhāva
point of view, but is, actually, of a particular different
shape.”\textsuperscript{109} Just as the body and soul of a person are spoken
of together as one entity, Brāhmaṇa, Śiva and other gods are
identified with Viṣṇu though Viṣṇu has, at the same time, a
distinct shape of His own. In other words, the other gods
are like the body and Viṣṇu like the soul. Again Nammatēḻvār
brings out the idea rather more clearly: “He once lodged in
His stomach all the seven worlds, earth and heaven, all the
men and gods, animals and vegetation and the five elements,
manifested Himself in the form of the universal creative will,
established Himself in the region of eternal glory and
acquired as His body the Trinity who take charge of creation,
preservation and destruction”\textsuperscript{110} and again, “When wilt Thou
draw me to Thy unattainable Feet, having placed me in the
castle of Brahmāṇḍa (the microcosm) which is but the
arrangement of the five elements that were manifested by
Thee at the time of creation, withdrawn at the time of
involution and later again brought out”.\textsuperscript{111} In this connec-
tion the illuminating remark of Piḷḷai Tirunāṟaiyūr–Araiyar is
worth noting: “It is impossible for any one to unravel the
involutions of a sparrow’s nest. When therefore the Almighty
has woven a net about our soul, in due regard to the acts of
every one of us, how can powerless man disentangle this net?
Only He can do it when we clasp His holy feet”.\textsuperscript{112} In this
way every thought, word and deed refer ultimately to the

\textsuperscript{108} T.V.M. 8.1: 6.
\textsuperscript{109} Peri. Tm. 2.5: 3.
\textsuperscript{110} TVM 3.6: 1:
\textsuperscript{111} ibid. 4.9: 8.
\textsuperscript{112} Bhag. Vis. Book IV. 4.9: 8 (Commentary).
śaririn who is the life of our life, the light of the universe and the love of our love. The śaririn is the source and sustenance of all thinking beings and non-thinking objects, which therefore exist as and for His satisfaction.

Īśvara is said to be the ṣeṣin of all things, because they exist solely for the fulfilment of His purposes. They are His ṣeṣas.\textsuperscript{113} The relationship may be paraphrased as the owner-owned relationship. In using the sentient beings and non-sentient things for His own purposes, God’s glory is manifested. This is being ṣeṣi. “Acut or cīt is not a being-in-itself, but a being-for-another. Matter exists as a medium for self-realisation, and self-realisation is not for self-satisfaction, but for the satisfaction of the inner Self”.\textsuperscript{114} The Infinite enters into the finite and evolves into the names and forms of the finite and resides in them as their eternal inner Ruler. The divine purpose consists in the deification of the self by the universal Self entering into it and insinuating it. The self or soul derives its substantiality from the ṛdheya aspect and its function from the niyānta aspect, and exists for the satisfaction of the ṣeṣi and all these depend absolutely on His will.

This concept of ṣeṣu-ṣeṣi bhāva or the owner-owned relationship is well intuited by the Tamil seers of Vaiṣṇavism. Nammāḻvar says: “Ṭaṅṅuḷ anāittulakum nīṟka, neṟimaiyāl tāyum avarṟul nīṟkuṁ pirāṅ”\textsuperscript{115} - ‘The Lord with all the worlds infolded within Him, infolds Himself in them’ and again “Having entered my heart through His affection, He pierced me in two, became life of my life, and drew it into Himself”.\textsuperscript{116} In another context he says: “I am Thou, the hell of samsāra is ordained by Thee. If that is so, enjoyment

\textsuperscript{113} A sūtra (3:1:2) in Ēuruva Mīmāṁsa says: “That is called a śeṣa which serves the purpose of another (and that other is called a śeṣi). e.g. In a sacrifice, the grains of rice are śeṣa to the sacrifice which is śeṣi because they serve the purpose of the sacrifice”.

\textsuperscript{114} The Philosophy of Viṣiṣṭādvaita, p. 182.


\textsuperscript{116} ibid. 9:6:3.
in Heaven and suffering in Hell are the same. With this knowledge, I face without fear the ills of samsāra. Yet, I pray that I may be drawn into Thy feet".\(^\text{117}\) Pūtattālvār says: "Even if a person is incapable of being aware of his ēśatva, if only room is made available for the Lord in his heart. He enters it of His own accord, just as, even if men are incapable of bringing rain, they provide tanks for rain water to get stored in",\(^\text{118}\) and again "We worship Śrīmaṇa Nārāyaṇa the supreme Lord on Whose chest constantly lives Lakṣṇa and His feet and we hear His holy names being uttered in all the four directions, because of the relation of ēśa-ēṣi bhāva between Him and us".\(^\text{119}\) The word 'urimaṭal' (by our right) in the verse brings out the full significance of its meaning. The Lord stands in the relation of a ēṣi to both sentient beings and non-sentient things in common. In relation to non-sentient things He is ēṣi, because they exist for His purposes. In relation to sentient beings or jīvas endowed with intelligence, He is ēṣī in the special sense of being śvāmi or Master whom it is their duty to serve. In being ēśa to the Lord the selves share in common with non-sentient things but are ēśas in the special sense also of being His servants.

It may be asked what this sentient being does gain by being supported and controlled by Him and by existing solely for His master. The answer is that by having the Lord as his ādhara, the jīva becomes an inseparable attribute of the Lord even like His own attributes, jñāna and śakti. By being the Lord's ēśa and by having the Lord as his ēṣi, the jīva acquires a taste for an ultimate goal which is appropriate to his essential nature, for every being aims at a goal suited to the conception held by it about its nature. By being the ēśa of the Lord and by having Him as his controller and ruler, he comes to know the specific means or upāya (viz., Bhagavān) of attaining the goal or ultimate aim suited to his essential nature. This upāya or means is the Lord Himself Who is the only proper means for the attainment of this end who and does

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117. ibid. 8.1 : 9.
118. I.Tv. 16.
119. ibid. 57.
not require any auxiliary aid for helping Him. It follows therefore that this sentient being has no other support, exists for nobody else, and has no ther protector than the Lord. This relationship of seṣa-seṣi between the self and the Lord is disclosed in the first syllable of the eight-lettered mantra viz., 'Om'.

This hypostatic relation of the soul to God is clearly brought out in the line "añēñ uḷān uṭal uḷān" — 'He inheres in the soul and He inheres in the body'. An anecdote has been recorded in the commentaries in respect of the explanation of this concept. Once, when Rāmānuja was holding his holy court of religious discussions, there arose among the audience the question whether the soul is proof of jñāna (intelligence) and ānanda (bliss) or seṣatva (leigehisp). Though Rāmānuja was perfectly informed in the matter, he wished to see the truth expounded by his guru, Tiruk-kōṭṭiyūr Nāmpi. He sent his disciple Kūrattāḻvān to Tiruk-kōṭṭiyūr to learn from Nāmpi the truth. After six months of waiting upon the great Ācārya, Āḻvān was not able to know the truth as the Ācārya condescended not to reveal the secret truths. Āḻvān thereon asked his permission to return to Rāmānuja when the Ācārya condescended and put across the answer in a cryptic sentence in which he quoted Nammāḻvār's phrase "In me the vassal". Later Āḻvān explained the meaning thus: "When the Āḻvār uses 'añēñ' elsewhere he means the body to be at the fore in the body-soul. For example, in 'añēñ ceyyum viṇṇappam' the word 'añēñ' does not signify soul since the soul without body cannot make an appeal to the Lord. Similarly in 'añēñ ciṟiya jñānattam' the word 'añēñ' does not stand for soul. The participation of the body is inevitable in the context for the phrase that follows the above is 'kāmpān alattuvan'. So also in the verse preceding the one under discussion. But the verse

120. T.V.M. 8 8: 2.
121. Ittiḻ Tamilākkam. Vol. VIII. 8: 8: 2 (Commentary).
122. T.V.R. 1.
123. T.V.M. 1 S: 7.
124. ibid. 8: 8: 1.
under discussion for the reason that ‘uṭalullān’ meaning that ‘He inheres in the body’ follows ‘āṭiyen uṭlān’, āṭiyen uṭlān specifically emphasises the soul, bringing out that the Lord inheres in the soul as well as in the body. But the nature of soul is described to be that which is intelligent (jñāna) and blissful (ānanda). But these attributes are of little account. What characterizes the soul is its relation of liegeship (as creature) to God the Lord (as creator) = (Seṣātva)”. The seṣātva of the soul is thus established.

Nārāyaṇa pervades the entire universe with His will.125 All the same, the universe is very small for Him, that is, it occupies only a small portion of Him. The eight quarters were occupied by the shoulders of the Lord when He measured the universe. The limbs of the world would grow still further but there was no space to occupy. The world is thus small for His pervasion.126 He is Himself grace and punishment; the states of final release and bondage are the resultants of His will and are therefore not different from Him.127 The air, fire, water, ākāśa and earth out of which arise the five sense-organs are not also distinct from Him. The blue mountains, the blue sea and the submarine fire128 raging there are also Himself. All these are pervaded by His will. This shows that God is All, but this is not pantheism, as the “universe has its being in God, but is not God, and does not exhaust His infinity”.129 The concept of sārīra-sārīra bhāva leads to the unitary nature of reality. Nothing could then exist apart from the Lord and God exists wherever anything is found or felt to exist. This is not to deny individual existence of anything. The fire rages, the water flows and the wind blows but they are conceived to do this under the control of God.

125. ibid. 4.5: 9, 10; cf. ibid., 3.6: 5.
126. Mū. Tv. 43, 90.
127. MBh. Śānti. 196: 4.
128. This refers to the anger of Sage Aurova which took the shape of fire raging in the sea. cf. Tc. V. 94; Peri. Tm. 5.7: 9; 9.4: 9; T.V.M. 1.1: 4; 1.5: 4; 6.9: 1.
129. The Philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita. p. 77.
Indra, Brahmā, Rudra and other gods and countless selves have in Him a father and a mother. He is unto others a son, kinsman and relative. He is the medicine to cut at the root of worldly bondage. He is the real Nature, and He is the End and the Principle of Life.\textsuperscript{130} He is Himself all sentient and non-sentient beings, which means that He is the Self of them.\textsuperscript{131} He is the sun and moon, and every thing.\textsuperscript{132} Doubt and correct decision, untruth and truth and all other objects are Himself.\textsuperscript{133} He is sin and virtue, mokṣa, bliss, misery, anger and favour and all qualities.\textsuperscript{134}

The Lord is also considered as having endless glories or possessions (vibhūtis). Passages like the following describe His vibhūtis: "These are the vibhūtis (glories) of Viṣṇu (i.e.) Brahmā, Manu and others, time and all beings".\textsuperscript{135} "He has, for His abode, the region of eternal glory called Mahā-vibhūri".\textsuperscript{136} "There is no end, O mighty warrior, to my divine glories".\textsuperscript{137} These ideas are expressed concisely by Ājāvantār: "The anāha or the Universe and whatever else is found within that anāha are His vibhūtis."\textsuperscript{138} These vibhūtis of God are of two kinds, sentient and non-sentient, and these again are of two kinds, some existing for His līlā or sport and others for His enjoyment (bhūga). This division into things for play and things for enjoyment is based on the difference in the rasa or delectation, though all of them have agreeableness (or anukūlya) in common. Bhagavān is considered as being engaged in the work of the universe merely for His play or sport, for it has been said: "From whom is the origin etc.,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{130} Peri. Tm. 5.7: 2.
\item \textsuperscript{131} ibid 4.1: 2.
\item \textsuperscript{132} ibid. 4.5: 7.
\item \textsuperscript{133} ibid. 4.5: 8.
\item \textsuperscript{134} ibid. 4.5: 9.
\item \textsuperscript{135} V.P. 1.22: 32.
\item \textsuperscript{136} ibid. 5.1: 50.
\item \textsuperscript{137} Bh. G. 10: 40.
\item \textsuperscript{138} Ājāvantār Štōram. 17.
\end{itemize}
of the world ".139 "All this is Hari's play or sport ".140 "Of Him who plays like a child ".141 "Playing like a boy with His toys ".142 "Thou playest with Thy creatures, as if they were balls for sport ".143 "All this is merely for play (on the part of the Brahman) as in the world (kings play with the balls)."144 Nammāḻvār says: "The Lord constitutes action of both of pleasure and pain, the various worlds, the blissful heaven as well as the pleasureless hell, and the various living beings through His great and manifold play;145 "My Lord, Kaṇṇaṅ, at once creates and identifies Himself with the near, the distant and the medial objects and persons, with all objects and all persons and He is the sole, great Originator who preserves them ";146 "the effulgent Lord of the great flood of knowledge holds within Himself, without huddling them, all objects and all persons";147 "the sole God took birth in a unique way as mankind, other forms of life and all life";148 "the dark-complexioned Lord created and became the moving air, the extending space, the solid earth, the vast ocean, the burning fire, the sun and moon, the celestials, and all beings".149 The Lord not only brings into being, but pervades into the five elements, the stars and planets, all forms of life of all the worlds, human and celestial.150 It is said that the līlā vibhūti, the world of splendour which exists for the sport of the Lord, is the play of the eternal in the temporal and the nītya vibhūti or eternal splendour of Paramapada is time as eternity. The Lord is the eternal link of love between the two realms and soul-making, as it were, is the goal of cosmic līlā.

139. V.S. 1.1 : 2.
140. MBh. Śānti. 206 : 58.
141. V.P. 1.2 : 18.
142. MBh. Śānti. 40 : 78.
143. ibid. Sabhā 40 : 78.
144. V.S. 2.1 : 33.
146. ibid. 1.9 : 1.
147. ibid. 2.2 : 6.
148. ibid. 3.5 : 6.
149. ibid. 3.6 : 5.
150. ibid. 7.8.
Śrī Vaikuṇṭha represents the eternal glory (*nitya vibhūti*) of the Lord. It is a place of pure *sattva* not having any tinge of *rajas* and *tamas*. The place, the halls, and the structures, the bodies of God, of the selves who inhabit there eternally and of those who reach it after getting freed from worldly bondage are eternal and are of the nature of this pure *sattva*. There are passages in the traditional texts which speak of this glory. "I know this Great Person of sun-like lustre, who is altogether beyond darkness". Here the word 'darkness' (*tamas*) is to be taken to mean the world of *prakṛti*. "The wise always sees the Highest Place of Viṣṇu". "He is in the Imperishable Region (sky)". "Him Who dwells in the place which is beyond *rajas*". "The All-pervading ancient one who is beyond matter". "The celestial heavenly chariots moving unrestrained, halls, the grove of various kinds and the lotus-pools of crystal-water. All these, O dear, are halls when compared with that abode of the Highest Self". It is a self-luminous place of beauty Yonder, where nature shines for ever as spaceless Space without the passing shadows of evolutionary modifications of *prakṛti* and the contracting influence of its three strands. It is also a place where time is infinite and beyond the plane of space-time. No analogy drawn from human experience can adequately bring out the real nature of this wonderful region.

153. ibid. 2.3: 1.
154. ibid. 2.2. 12: 5.
155. ibid. 2.1: 1.
THE ECSTASY OF THE ĀLVĀR’S GOD-EXPERIENCE

The transcendental nature of God is shown in the epics, Purāṇas and other ancient texts to be difficult for human comprehension. In His infinite mercy for the suffering humanity, God presents Himself to the world in the fivefold finitised forms. The selves which are under the spell of karma desire earnestly to get relieved from the effects of karma, but are not in a position to find out the proper means for it. Traditionally, knowledge of reality (tattvajñāna) is enjoined as the course open for man to achieve this and, but not all the jivas could have the capacity for it. Adoption of the path of karma (deed) is also prescribed, but it is found in practice to lead not always to the desired end. Vaiṣṇavism has achieved distinction by restricting the scope of jñāna to realizing the real nature of the Supreme Person. Nārāyaṇa whose divine form is blue in complexion like the water-laden cloud and who protects the several worlds is the deity that could help the jivas in distress.\(^1\) Having created the world and reclaimed it from the waters, He had devoured it, let it out and measured it. He is not different from others who do, under His guidance, the works of creation and destruction. This knowledge of reality is to be acquired,\(^2\) by the self in order to have faith in Him for obtaining relief from the worldly ills. People have to take to the footsteps of the seers who had realized Nārāyaṇa as the purport of the Vedas and other texts and as the remedy which could destroy the diseases. Those seers acquired this knowledge by worshipping Him.\(^3\) It will be futile if one seeks to find out whether the Supreme Person would be like this or that or any

2. ibid. 9.3: 2.
3. ibid. 9.3: 3.
other deity or beyond our reach, thus to realize His real status. Such an enquiry need not be conducted, as it would entail much wastage of time and energy. Nārāyana is only Kṛṣṇa. The realization of this would lead to knowing that He is Himself any other deity.⁴

When utter disappointment was faced by the Upaniṣads⁵ in discerning His nature, it is foolish on the part of the selves to search for Him and try to obtain correct knowledge about Him. Brahmā who is sprung from the navel of Viṣṇu, could not have the perfect vision of His feet. This is proof to make clear that He is beyond comprehension.⁶ The great seers declare that He is the only God, but no one can know Him correctly. By adopting the various courses such as jñāna and karma, the result could not be obtained. Lord's grace alone could yield the intended result.⁷

There were many occasions when the Lord came down to the mortal world for helping those who had faith in Him and who looked upon His favour in times of dire distress,⁸ for destroying those who tried to violate His rules and make the innocent souls suffer, and proclaiming the way of good conduct. The divine descents which He took for achieving this end had provided the selves with occasions for their experience of His qualities such as dayā, saulabhya, sausīlya, vātsalya, aiśvarya and tejas. The occasions when the Lord displayed these qualities caught the vision of seers like Vyāsa and Śuka who offered graphic descriptions of such occasions. The Āḻvārs dived deep into the ocean of these qualities through the love they had for Him and presented in their compositions their experience of those qualities. Divine Grace came to be looked upon by them as a powerful weapon to strike at the very root of karma which brings untold sufferings to the

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4. P.Tv. 36.
5. Taitt. Up. 2; 4.
and it is but natural that they should not only seek earnestly to obtain it but also to expatiate on the imperative need to deserve it. Hence the centrality of the idea of Divine Grace in the Śrī Vaiṣṇavite system of philosophy. No wonder that Nammāḷvār and other Āḷvārs too insist on this idea. In their hymns are outlined the factors requisite for the attainment of Divine Grace as well as the effects it produces.

God seeks the soul even more than the soul seeks God, and it is therefore said that the soul-hunger of God is greater than the God-hunger of the soul. God is therefore aptly called the "Hound of Heaven" or the ravisher of the souls. The Hound of Heaven hunts the separated soul. The love-chase is so remorseless that the more the flight of the soul, the greater is the following of the Lord and the love-chase. The infinite auspicious qualities of Īśvara are dominated by the redemptive motive of Grace (dayā). Divine Grace is eternal and infinite, and it is immanent in all living beings. The descent of God typifies the soul-hunger of God and the idea transforms the Holy of holies into the ravisher of the souls. There is a reference in Tiruvāyūmoḻi to this beautiful concept of God's soul-hunger:

"Vārikoṇṭu unṟai viḷuṅkuvaṅ kāpil enṟu
Āṟu uṟṟa enṟai oḷiya en-nil muṟṇam
Pāṟittut tān enṟai muṟṟap parukinān."

Using the metaphor of hunger and eating, the Āḻvār says that, as he was eagerly awaiting an opportunity to 'devour' the Lord, the Lord ravenously 'devoured' him wholesale, and thus fore-stalled him. The Lord has already, 'eaten' his soul piece-meal,10 says the Āḻvār, and now He has devoured his 'whole' and quenched His thirst. No doubt God is food and drink to the Āḻvār; to Him the Āḻvār is food and drink.

An object that is charming fascinates and creates

10.  ibid. 9.6: 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9.
avidity in man to possess it. As man’s desire grows to have it, he is not satisfied with its mere possession by him and presence of it with him. He seeks to have it for himself, rather desires to devour it so that no one else could have any claim on it. This must be the reason for the depiction of a deep and intense longing to gaze passionately at a person as drinking the beauty of that person with the eyes.\textsuperscript{11}

Though the Vaiśāṇavite definition of Godhead includes the Upaniṣadic idea of Brahman and Īśvara and Pāńcarātra idea of Bhagavān, its concept of God as dayānidhi exceeds them all. “The Lord is rich in mercy and has not dayā as His differentia but is dayā itself and is therefore impersonal. Dayā is for dayā’s sake, and is not the fruit of righteousness, and is therefore not juristic or moralistic. It is neither vindictive nor retributive. It does not brook bartering at all by the arithmetical calculations of punya-pāpa and scheme of rewards and punishments. Dayā is spontaneous in nature and instantaneous in effect.”\textsuperscript{11a} It is the soul of the Lord Himself and it is the source, sustenance and satisfaction of the divine nature. The Lord saves the righteous but, with infinite loving kindness, He seeks and forgives the wicked of their transgression. His juridical severity is surpassed by His forgiveness. He makes haste to redeem the wicked from their wicked course and gives them succour. This divine Grace is natural (śrābhāvikā) and unconditional (nirhētuka). God only waits for some pretext to save the soul. Even an act remotely connected with the Holy, such as the unwitting utterance of God’s name, is sufficient to set the redemptive power of Grace to operate. In this act of operation of Grace, the office performed by Lakṣmī, the chief consort of Nārāyaṇa, is unique and significant. She is all tenderness towards the souls, her children, and

\textsuperscript{11} The queen Sudakṣiṇā is described to have drunk her husband with eyes which were as though fasting (Raghavamśa) 2: 19 Janaka looked at the beauty of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa sitting by the side of Visvāmitra (K.R Pālākāṇṭam-kulamurē 2).

\textsuperscript{11a} *The Philosophy of Viśiṣṭadvaita*, p. 410.
intercedes with her Lord on their behalf. By virtue of her motherhood in relation to souls and wifehood in relation to the Lord, she is eminently fitted to play the role of mediator between the two. As Lord's Grace or Arul is the Mother, the Sri Vaisnnavite theism equates God-head with the dual self of Laksmi-Narayana or Sriyahpati. This concept explains that while He loves rule, she rules love and transforms the love of law into the law of love. Surrender brings on the selves the Absolute rain of Grace which is bestowed and not merited by egoistic effort. Namalvar refers to this Grace as "His tiruvarul". The Lord's lotus-like eyes are the fountain-head of this Grace. So the Alvar prays to the Lord to turn those blessed eyes towards him - "Tamaiaik Kanyakala nakkay". The never-ending cycle of karma is then transcended. All the fetters and ignorance recede away like a mirage which has been deceiving and teasing as though it were a beautiful pond of pure water in the desert. When self-renunciation is fully accomplished by giving up the lusts of the flesh, divine communion results. Namalvar says that he has, by contemplation of the Lord and by the singing of His praises, completely divested himself of age-old karma. He believes that he will remain free from the fear of hell for generations to come and that nothing will be impossible of attainment to him because the Lord has entered him, is not going to leave him and has wheedled out all traces of karma. "The Lord in His Grace has ordained me to sing of His glory, His paratva and saulabhya, and has dispelled the sins of not only myself, but all those associated with me, for generations to come". "The Lord, solicitous of me, owned me and offered Himself up to me, and gave me all". "By clasping

12. T.V.M. 8.7: 5. Periyalvar calls it 'Per arul' (Periyal. Tm. 5.3: 7).
13. ibid. 9.2: 1.
14. ibid. 2.6: 6.
15. ibid. 2.6: 7.
16. ibid. 2.7: 4.
17. ibid. 2.7: 11. cf. T.V.K. 397 "Tantatu uanthaai kuntu eanthaai, canakara arkollo caturar" - 'What You gave me was Yourself; what I gave You was myself: who gets the better of the bargain?"
the Lord I have completely dispelled my *karma*. The last line of all the verses of this hymn runs in the same strain. Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār says; "I have no refuge other than Thy Grace......I have been redeemed on seeing Thee". The Āḻvār declares that he will rely on none else than the Lord who ordained him through His grace to long for Him as the calf does for its mother cow.

It has been explained that the working of *karma* can be considered as a kind of redemption and punishment as *dayā-kārya* or work of compassion. It is meant for the redemption of the wrongdoer from his career of sin by the inflow of divine grace. Forgiveness is the foundation of the moral law, and redemption from sin is its religious fruition. To the logical intellect, the absolute is beyond description and definition. But to religious consciousness, He is the inescapable Redeemer. In His infinite mercy, He assumes suitable forms to recover, and reunite with, the lost self. The ascent of the self to the Absolute is not so valuable as the descent of God into evolutionary forms and into humanity. This quality of God is known in Viṣistadvaitic philosophy as *saubhāvyā* or divine accessibility. *Karma* and other fetters are from one point of view fetters of ignorance and darkness which disappear when the light of the divine knowledge blazes forth. Nammāḻvār says that the Lord had stationed in his heart to dispel his nescience. The Āḻvārs in general refer to *karma* as 'Iruḻ' and 'Vināi'. Perhaps the references imply that these saints are equating 'Vināi' and 'Iruḻ' as effect and cause. The great Tamil saint Tiruvaḷūvar speaks of "Iruḻ cēr iruvinaḻ" and "Iruḻ niṅki inām payakkum". The Āḻvār refers to them as "Iruḻār vinai" — 'the darkness

18. ibid. 3.10: 4.
19. ibid. 3.10.
20. Peri. Tm. 7.1:7.
21. ibid. 7.3: 2.
23. Kural. 5.
24. ibid. 352.
of *karma*. That cause of seed of all miseries is described as due to "*vinaip pațalam*"26 - 'the cloud of *karma*'. The real is obscured in this darkness and therefore the name and form of various things in the world are not visible in their real perspective and hides the Reality from vision. This darkness is torn away by the pure light of real knowledge which is the brightness of the Absolute.

Nammāḷvār who experienced the unsolicited Grace of the Divine describes it in the following terms; "He made me an entity and reposed Himself in me"27; "the Lord who came to me unawares and redeemed me";28 "without my knowledge Thou gavest me wisdom and did so much for me";29 "Thou transformed my evil heart into good by making me chant Thy names and worship Thy feet with songs and a pure heart";30 "Thou gavest me the kind of heart which enables me to worship Thy feet in birth after birth chanting Thy names";31 "my soul and Thine merged so that one could not tell them apart from each other";32 and "what good did I do Him to deserve it that He has placed Himself in my heart?"33

Piḷḷai Lōkācāryār in his Śri *Vacana Pūṣaṇam* through a series of telling similies brings out the mode of operation of divine Grace and shows how the Lord takes all the initiative for saving the souls. Much as a father who, even though he lives happily with his other sons, longs for the company of one of his sons who lives abroad in a distant land, so also the Lord, even though He enjoys the company of the Eternals and *muktas* in Vaikuṇṭha, cannot brook separation from the souls wandering in the sea of *samsāra*, and so sees to it that

26. P.Tv. 76.
27. T.V.M. 10.8: 9.
28. ibid. 1.7: 5.
29. ibid. 2.3: 2.
30. ibid. 2.7: 8.
31. ibid. 2.7: 7.
32. ibid. 4.3: 8.
33. ibid. 10.6: 8.
they are reminded of their links with Him by giving them their senses. Perhaps the Lord with the fear that on His direct manifestation they might grow jealous of Him and drive him out, approaches them invisibly like the mother taking up the sleeping baby in her bosom without disturbing its sleep. All the time He stays in their company and watches their doings they are reminded of their links with Him by giving them with solicitude, and though they may perform a number of acts of evil, He looks out for occasional unconscious good deeds on their part such as the casual mention of the Lord's name or the name of the town where there is the Lord's shrine, or casual unwitting service to His devotees. He collects the merits of these good deeds, magnifies them and stores them up for them so that these accumulate into great merit, just as the goldsmith collects tiny amounts of gold left behind on his touchstone with his wax and accumulates them into a sizable amount of gold. An instance of this kind of concern of the Divine for the human is to be found in Lalitācarita in Śri Viṣṇu Dharma.34

Civajñāna yōkikāḷ explains the working of karma in the operation of the Divine Grace in his commentary on Civajñānapōtam. According to him all the good acts which the jīvas perform, bring on good results, but they are after all gold-fetters as opposed to iron-fetters of evil acts. The yōkikāḷ terms these good acts as ‘Pacupunṇiyam’ because they are not done with the proper feeling of self-sacrifice in the name of God; they will be ‘Civapunṇiyam’ only when they are performed in that spirit. In the former the egoism is not dead, whilst in the latter it is completely annihilated. The saint offers this explanation to show how one escapes from these fetters by doing good acts: though the Pacupunṇiyam is intended to benefit some others in society, because the Lord is omnipotent and all pervasive, this act consciously intended for some one else, goes unconsciously to please the Lord ultimately. In this manner Pacupunṇiyam leads to Civapunṇiyam. No doubt by the performance of this act the result is the gold-fetters, but ultimately on account of accumulation

34. S.V.P. - Sūtras 381 and 382 (Śri P.B. Āṇāṅgasārācāryāś edition).
of Civapunñiyam the soul is transformed and it experiences the Divine Bliss.\textsuperscript{35}

Again the Ālvārs praise this Grace of the Lord many a time and in many ways. He is the Lord of Grace – ‘Pērauru-ṭāḷan’\textsuperscript{36} – according to Tirumāṅkaiyālvār. He is the munificent Lord who bestows His Grace to Nammālvār who is a devotee of God’s devotees – “Aruḻpeṟuvār aṭiyārtam aṭiyāṇēṟku āḷiyān, aruḻ taruvān amaṅkairān.”\textsuperscript{37} Parāṅkuśa says: “Kurikkoḻ jāṇaṅkajāl eṇai ūḷi cey tavumum, kurikkoṇtu ippirappē cila nālil eyṭinaŋ yān”\textsuperscript{38} – ‘Through the Divine Grace I, a poor person, could, within a few days, attain to accomplishments which are possible of achievement only through yoga and sadhana for generations’. When God’s Grace flows freely no one can prevent it. The saint says: ‘Though I chanting the praise of the Lord with discus in hand as my Dark Gem (karumāṁikkam), in hollow fashion, and was wallowing in samsāra, I got the rewards of a true devotee. When God’s Grace operates who can stifle it?’\textsuperscript{39}; ‘when I was helplessly tossed about like a boat in the stormy sea of samsāra, He with His divine Form with discus and conch in his hands took pity on me and merged with me to release me ’;\textsuperscript{40} “Āṇāṅ āḷuṭaiyāṅ ēṅru aḥtē koṭṭu ukantu vantu, tāṅe īṇnarul ceytu eṇṇai murṟavum tāṅ āṇāṅ’\textsuperscript{41} – ‘Taking me at my word that I was His slave, He affectionately blessed me with grace and became my all-in-all’. It is only by His Grace the Lord entered him even though he did not seek Him. Says the Ālvār: “The Lord whom I did not think of seeking and uniting with myself at all came of His own accord, fascinated my heart, and united with my body and life. How can He part from me

\textsuperscript{35} The Religion and Philosophy of Tēvāram, pp. 1214-15.
\textsuperscript{36} Peri. Tm. 9.5 : 4.
\textsuperscript{37} T.V.M. 10.6 : 1.
\textsuperscript{38} ibid. 2.3 : 8. Note Pillān’s comment on this. The Ḭtu refers to the story of Dadhibhānda.
\textsuperscript{39} ibid. 5.1 : 1.
\textsuperscript{40} ibid. 5.1 : 9.
\textsuperscript{41} ibid. 5.1 : 10.
hereafter?" He will put me on the road to makṣa, removing all hurdles, and liberating me from the two kinds of karma, and freeing me from illusory attachment, and finally making me lose my heart to Him." The glorious Lord will remove two kinds of karma (pūnya and pāpa) — "Perumai utāiya pirāṇār irumai viṇaik kaṭivārē". The very contemplation of the excellent form of the Lord ensures freedom from the bondage of sin and merit alike. The Āḻvār terms our karma as 'bushes of diseases' (ceṭṭivār nōykaṭ). The immortal poet Tiruvalluvar has aptly remarked that to those who are attempting to rid themselves of their future births, even their body is too much for them — "Piṟapaṟukkal urṟārkku utṟampum mīkaṭ". When the soul turns Godward forgetting its erstwhile identification with the imperfection and aims at communion with the perfection it enjoys freedom from this disease, and the bliss of spiritual health. God is therefore the medicine — "vinaiṟirmarunṭu". He is the sweet medicine, according to Nammāḷvar, that dispels the sinfulness of the devotees. He is the repository of wealth, the medicine of all ills, and the One Who saves man from getting destroyed by the five senses. The Eternals praise Him as the medicine which gives them the joy of His experience. The Lord is also spoken of as 'Anuuṭ' in so many places by the Āḻvār.

Nammāḷvār, when he attains realization, transcends the endless see-saw of karma and ethics. It is a negation of moral laws; it is rather their fulfilment and transcendence to the higher, more wonderful and more mysterious harmony of the Absolute. In the Absolute, all the contradictions,
all the *dvandvas* or pairs of opposites like success and failure, pleasure and pain are transcended and harmonized. According to Pūtattālvār the man who meditates on the feet of the Lord is not elated at the possession of wealth, nor does he feel dispirited when what he possesses is lost.  

Nammālvār emphasizes this importance of ethics. He speaks of the removal of the faults, the erroneous notions of ‘I’ and ‘Mine’; once the worldly pleasures and worldly attachment are given up *mokṣa* is immediately attained. Therefore true renunciation is of the mind. The false sense of prestige and vain desire inhering in the mind should vanish. The God’s devotees are described as those whose minds are saturated with God’s love. Nammālvār describes them as those who take care of themselves in all their births. He calls them “Paramar” — the great men; “Nātar” — the lords; “Āḻuṭayērkai” — those to whom he is a slave; “Perumakkai” — superior men and so on. He refers to the three types of devotees, “Cayame aṭimal talai ninirá” — the kind of service of which the depth is only known to those to whom the very performance of the service is itself the reward; “nikkamil aṭiyār” — that kind of service which is rendered to God ever in His company; and “kōtil aṭiyār” — that kind of service which is flawless. Service is said to be tinged with few when, in the idea of serving God direct and to the exclusion of His Elect, the element of pride enters, namely, the pride that he is face to face with God, and that he is preferred beyond others. This was present *passively* in Bharata (first type), *actively* in Lakṣmana (second type), but *entirely* absent in Śatrughna.

52. I.Tv. 45.
53. T.V.M. 1.2: 3; 2.9: 9.
54. ibid. 1.2: 5.
55. ibid. 3.7: 1.
56. ibid. 3.7: 2.
57. ibid. 3.7: 3.
58. ibid. 3.7: 4.
59. ibid. 8.10: 2.
It is said that doing good to others is the highest Dharma. Tāyumāṇa Atīkal says: “Ånpaṁ pari ceyya enai ālākki viṭṭuvitṭal, ḫpañilai ṭāṇē vantu eytum” — the state of happiness will automatically come to one who is made to serve others. Internal purity engenders this state of mind where sympathy and pity become almost an instinct. Tiruvalluvar calls this state of mind as “Maṅalam” — ‘goodness of mind’ — which according to him brings future bliss. Truly Nāṇcīyar has said that “if when seeing the suffering of others, one’s pity is excited and one ejaculates ‘oh’, one may know of oneself as a true Vaiṣṇavite and such a person can be sure of his or her salvation. To be a Vaiṣṇavite is to belong to God, and to belong to God is to be like God Himself i.e., conform to His ideals, one of them being to be ‘the friend of all creatures’. When this sympathy is absent, there is no hope of salvation. When the feeling of desolation overtakes Nammāḷvār and he begins to condemn himself, he feels a revulsion at his imagined unsympathetic mind. ‘I have not ever given alms’ says the Āḻvār, ‘in charity, nor drinks to the thirsty’ — “Īṭakillēn onṟu āṭṭakillēn”.

To yearn for His sight, it is essential that the jīva should have the heart rid of all the impurities. A heart that is purified would have enough control over itself and would not tend to be tempted by worldly attractions and so would continue to feel the unique nature of His dayā and other qualities and value them highly. Those who suffer from worldly ills will have to control their senses and get themselves absorbed in the experience of His ever fruitful qualities. The Āḻvār was able to have control over the senses only through God’s Grace. Every accessibility could be said to crown all His auspicious qualities, as through it, He

60. Tāyumāṇavar Pāṭal: Parāparakkaṇṭi – 155.
63. T.V.M. 4.7: 9; cf. ibid., 5.1: 4, 5, 6.
64. ibid. 2.8: 4.
65. ibid. 7.1: 7.
gets easily mixed up with high and low and enables them to have communion with Him. His transcendence does not suffer even though He becomes accessible to all. Those who commit sins act against the commands of God, but God has sympathy (kārumya) for them and enters into them and fills them, giving them the experience of His presence and of this quality. The Lord who is in Paramapada comes down and attracts the mind of the Ālvār, thus revealing how He is easy of reach to any one who is earnest to get at Him. He is the Lord of gods and so He is at the highest position which is beyond the reach of all, including gods. The Ālvār says that he is mean and low, indicating his or any jīva’s position at the lowest level. Not only is the self thus an abode of all defects, but is having not even a single merit or virtue which could make him deserve the commendation of the wise. This is in wide contrast to the Lord who has no defects and is the abode of auspicious qualities. The Lord did not mind the littleness of the Ālvār. As the Lord of Tirumalai, He possesses a body of supreme lustre and has passion for the Ālvār. This suggests His vatsalya and also His ever-readiness to be of help to His devotees. The little act, like uttering His name or the name of His place, is enough for Him to stand steadfast by His devotees without deserting them. The Ālvār uttered the name ‘Tirumālirūnçōlai’ the place of the Lord. At once the Lord came to the Ālvār with His consort Śrī and filled his heart - “Tirumālirūnçōlaṁmalai enṛṃ; eṇṟa, Tirumāl vantu eṇneṇcu niṟaiyap-pukuntāṇ”. The Lord made an announcement assuredly to Ajuna that those who seek His feet would be rid of their sufferings and sins. To fulfill His obligation, He protects people in every birth which they take and takes them in a particular birth of theirs to His

66. ibid. 1.3: 2.
67. Vide Parācara Paṭtar’s remark (ṭu on T.V.M. 1.3: 2).
69. ibid. 5.3: 9.
70. ibid. 3.3: 4.
71. ibid. 2.7: 3.
72. ibid. 10.8: 1.
place and offers them the right occasion to render service. In this respect He is verily the father (appan) and exhibits His inborn nature of being true to His word.\(^74\) It is really surprising that the Āḻvār finds it difficult to control himself on hearing some one utter the name ‘Nārāyaṇa’ which he himself does not care to utter. He then tries to search for His presence, while He, Who is omnipresent, has taken pity on him and stays with him days and nights without a break. This is due to His confidence in the Āḻvār.\(^75\) He who is ever filled with all good qualities (nampī) has chosen not to leave away the Āḻvār.\(^76\) His liberality is displayed by offering Himself wholly to the Āḻvār whom He has made His own. He is not simply the Absolute but the divine wish-yielding tree (karpakam). This quality is further attested by the Āḻvār referring to Him as having the good mountain Vēṅkaṭām and as Dāmodara.\(^77\) His tenderness is evidenced in His occupying the mind of the self of His own accord, although the fact is that the self is not competent to know that he is the servant of Him.\(^78\) His quality of sympathy will only yield fruitful results, while that of deities other than Him would lead to no good end.\(^79\)

Among the arcā forms, specific mention is to be made, by way of implication, of the Tirumalai Hills which makes the flame of the heart of eternal selves shine with full radiance and puts out the blazing fire of karma of all those who do not care for God after obtaining their desires from Him, those who ignore Him after getting their isolation (kaivalya) and those who worship Him for ever to get final release.\(^80\) This is mysterious since one kind of fire, namely, sins, is destroyed, and another kind of fire, namely, devotion or love, is made effulgent.\(^81\)

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74. T.V.M. 3.7: 7.
75. ibid. 1.10: 8.
76. Iṭu on T.V.M. 1.10: 8.
77. T.V.M. 2.7: 11.
78. I.Tv. 16.
79. M.Tv. 15.
80. ibid. 26.
81. cf. The wind behaves as the friend of the fire which burns the forest but that itself puts out a (burning) lamp. Who will be the friend of the weak? (original: a Sanskrit Śloka).
The realization of the value and purpose of these qualities which show the Lord to be both transcendent and immanent is capable of causing thrill even to one whose heart is immune to emotional stress. Recapitulation of this experience will afford the jīvas occasional vistas of bright joy amidst the dark and dense clouds of worldly sufferings. The Āylvārs, who are the divine beings descended on earth for the welfare of humanity, are immersed in the deep sea of God-realization and as such have perennial enjoyment of bliss, having nothing to suffer from worldly ills. Admiration of these qualities arouses in the mind of the self a state "of desire, vague and disturbed, very real, and liable to be very intense as a possession of the soul". With the repeated occasions that are obtained by the self for enjoying such qualities, this desire turns into a profound and lasting ambition. The idea of the objects of this desire becomes a steadfast property of the soul. This could be termed as the love which the self has for God. As this love becomes deep rooted, the self is affected by certain reactions. "The things that charmed us lose their colour; the things we had admired seem debased; our dearest affections cease to fill our hearts. The things of the world no longer hold us; each of them now awakens in us the idea of its opposite. In all the objects presented to our sight we see only the distortion, the empty image, wan and dead, of the living idea perfect and definite, which sensible realities are powerless to express. We conceive as the supreme object of our desires, the infinite, the eternal, the perfect — God".

The Āylvārs have laid emphasis both by their lives and their hymns on God-love. Anpu, vēṭkat, kātal, āva (the words meaning 'love') used in their works for and towards God is the most noteworthy feature of the hymns of the Nālāyiram.

83. ibid. pp. 367-368.
84. T.V.R. 2; T.V.C. 2; Peri. Tm. 8; T.V.M. 6.10: 2.
85. T.V.M. 2.1: 10; 9.6: 1; 10.3: 2.
86. T.V.R. 59; T.V.C. 2; I.Tv. 56; T.V.M. 5.3: 4; 5.5: 10; 7.3: 6; 7.3: 8.
87. T.V.R. 64. 84; T.V.C. 2; T.V.M. 10.10: 10.
But the traditional order of evolution of devotion is from kātal to api. from api to vētkai and from vētkai to aavā. Yet it will be noticed that in respect of the Ālvārs the stages of evolution do not strictly follow this order, or precede or succeed one another in strict conformity. This perhaps implies that the Ālvārs' bhakti includes and transcends all the four stages at the same time all the time. Or another explanation could be offered to this. The saints have the moments of ecstasy to be followed by occasions of disappointment. Severe longing was also given to their lot to obtain union with God. The compositions of the Ālvārs contain their expressions of ecstatic experiences as they were having then and also subsequently. As they had varied experiences alternately at the will of God, one cannot expect the graded development of their love for God. In fact, the saints take the generic name, 'Ālvār' (one who gets immersed) from the fact of their being eternally immersed in God-love. While to the Advaitin God-love or bhakti is only a means to the attainment of jñāna or true-knowledge, to the Ālvārs, and indeed to all the Vaiṣṇavite ācāryas, bhakti is the summum bonum of religious experience. It is both the means and the end. It is an upāya or means, since it is a sure method of obtaining Divine Grace; it is also a puruṣārtha or goal, since there is no higher state to be realised by man than to love God as an end in itself. Usually upāya is difficult and hard and not very sweet in the process. But here bhakti as upāya is indescribably sweet and pleasant. In fact, before the practice of bhakti even the pleasures of paramapada pale into insignificance. Sādhanā bhakti itself is so sweet indeed that there is no desire to think beyond it of sādhyā bhakti. The sayings of several of the Ālvārs are to the effect that the attainment of Viṣṇu is not to be preferred to the enjoyment obtainable here by loving Him and singing about Him. The Ālvārs,

88. A.H. Sūt. 98 (Commentary).
89. An Idealistic View of Life, pp. 93, 94.
90. The word 'Ālvār' means 'one who dives deep into divinity' or one who is immersed in God-love and God-bliss.
91. T.V.R. 108; T.V.C. 2; T.V.M. 2.9:1, 5; T.M. 2. I.Tv. 90; cf. Deśika's Varadarāja Pañcasat, 49.
mystics as they are, have the instinct for the infinite and to them the best proof of the existence of God is the immediate experience of God, a soul-sight of Him here and now and a revelling in His love. Just as famine-stricken ryots who long for rainfall are not satisfied with the weather chart, so also these mystics are not interested in the dialectic and divided thinking or in rational arguments. As the former are satisfied only with a down pour of rain, the latter too are satisfied only in the integral experience of the deity.

While this amount of God-love is seen in every Āḻvār, Nammāḻvār’s God-love is on a level far more exalted and far more intense. It is more an organic craving than a mere mental feeling. His is a consuming passion. The Āḻvār’s songs of anguish, and his songs of rhapsody, both have their origin in this passion for God. While all devotees of God long mentally for communion with Him, the Āḻvār pants for that communion with every pore and cell of his body and with every beat of his heart. In one beautiful hymn are shown the hunger and craving not only of the saint but of every one of his senses and faculties for God-realization. His mind, his mouth, his hands, his eyes and ears and even his soul—each faculty vies with the other in throbbing for consummation and fruition in the matter of God-enjoyment. And one very noteworthy feature of this very peculiar state is that each faculty is anxious to obtain realization not only in the manner legitimately and normally obtainable by it, but by exceeding and transcending even its functional limitations, a sort of synaesthetic interchange of functions. Thus the hands want to praise Him with lofty words, the eyes desire to worship Him with flowers, the ears long to see Him and so on, in addition, of course, to respectively worshipping, seeing, hearing etc., in the exercise of their respective legitimate and normal functions. This extra-sensuous desire of each sense in the matter of God-enjoyment does not appear to have been given expression by any one else. The Āḻvār appears to justify

92. T.V.M. 3.8.
93. ibid. 9.9; 9.
such a longing on his part, and to adopt the same procedure in which God Himself sports by talking with His eyes, and by looking through the melodious tunes of His flute. This is a singular and single instance of the mystic realisation of the Āḻvār which really baffles comprehension and classification. This super-sensuous and organic love and infatuation towards God is the hall-mark of this Āḻvār’s compositions. He makes no secret of it. In fact, he avowedly attempts to attain, and ultimately attains, God through love which he terms as ‘matinalam’ which Rāmānuja translates as ‘bhakti-rāpapanna-jñānam’.

Nammāḻvār uses the word ‘avā’ very frequently in his hymns. The word signifies an intense craving. This avā or the God-infatuation of the Āḻvār can be seen to have been mentioned in all his four works. This ‘avā’ is seen sprouting in his first work Tiruviruttam where he says: “kayya poṇ ālī veṇcaṅkoṭum kāṇpān avāvan nāṁ” – ‘I long to have sight of the One with the golden discus and the white conch in hand’. In the next work, Tiruvāciriyaṃ, this avā begins to assault and outgrow the Āḻvār. He says:

“Ulaku paṭaittu upṭa entai aṟaikaḷal
Cutarppūn tāmarai cūṭutaṅku avāvu
Āruyar uruki ukka nēriya
Kāṭal anpīl inpuṅ tēṟal
Amuta veḷḷattān āmcīṟappu viṭṭu”

– ‘The suffusion in a flood of joy of loving devotion springing from the soul’s transport of longing to place the decorated feet of the Lord on his head is an incomparably great experience’. This infinite avā, it is seen, begins to flow like a river in his third work Periya tiruvantāṭi where he uses the word ‘anpu’. The Āḻvār says: “arukum cuvaṟum teriya uparōm; anpē perukum mika......nummai numakku”.  

94. ibid. 1.1: 1.
95. T.V.R. 84; cf. ibid. 64.
96. T.V.C. 2.
do not know how to approach You or the means of access to You. Yet our longing for You keeps growing. The love which flowed like a river becomes as big as the sea in his fourth and final work Tiruvāymoḻi where in one hymn the Āḻvār says: Pēramar kātal kaṭalpuraiya vilaiyitta kāramar mēni nam Kṛṣṇa”98 – ‘Our cloud-hued Kṛṣṇa who has expanded my love for Him (which has a big scandal in store with it) as wide as the sea’. It then becomes bigger than the sea – “Kātal kaṭalin mikap peritāl”99 as the Āḻvār says; next it almost immediately grows to such universal and cosmic dimensions that it envelops the entire earth, the seven seas and even the immeasurable vast space. In the words of the Āḻvār, “Maṇṭiṇi jaṭalamum ēl kaṭalum niṭvicumpum kalīyap peritāl”,100 God does not vouchsafe His full Grace even now, and so the Āḻvār whips up his love to even greater proportions. So far his love has grown big enough to envelop all matter, the entire acetana tattva; now it begins to excel the next bigger tattva, the individual soul, the jīva. He feels that his individual soul is too small to hold this divine love (here he calls it ‘vētkai’) and so he says: ”Akam uyir akam-akamūrūm uḻ pukku, aviyin param alla vētkai”101 – ‘the innermost recesses of the soul are perhaps inadequate to accommodate the vast cosmic dimensions of my yearning (vētkai) for the Lord has penetrated and soaked in it’. Thus the love outgrows the Āḻvār and by degrees outgrows and envelops the Lord Himself. Not till He, the biggest Being (Brahmaṇ), is made small by the fast-growing passion of the Āḻvār’s God-love, does God deign to vouchsafe His love and grace unreservedly to the Āḻvār. The Āḻvār says: “When my longing for You expanded, deepened, and enveloped the vast spaces, You enlarged Yourself into something greater than by longing (which comprehended the three tattvas of Viṣistādvaita (acīt, cit and Īśvara) and merged Yourself into me, and thus satisfied my great yearning”.102 The Āḻvār now finds and

98. T.V.M. 5.3: 4.
99. ibid. 7.3: 6.
100. ibid. 7.3: 8.
101. ibid. 10.3: 2.
102. ibid. 10.10: 10.
realises that he has reached his goal. In this very strain he 
sings in the closing verse of this hymn. In the last line 
"Cūntu atanīl periya en avā aparac cūltāyē" he describes his 
avā as one which enveloped Him and outgrew Him; the Lord, 
on His part, outgrows and envelops that avā and thereby 
holds the Āḻvār in His embrace.

The development of the saint's God-love as seen in and 
through his four works is something marvellous and unique in 
the history of Divine Love in any language and literature. 
That the love of a small child sitting under the tamarind tree 
in the Āṭinātā Temple in Āḻvār-tirunakari could assume 
supra cosmic proportions and could even transcend Him, who 
as Tirivikrama has transcended everything and everybody, 
has been demonstrated by the songs sung by this super-mystic. 
His God-hunger was intense enough to consume that very 
God who was the object of his love. And it is because of 
such hunger and thirst for God evinced by the great saint 
that Parācara Bhatta has referred to him as the embodiment 
of 'Krṣṇa-Trṣṇā-Tattvam'.

No descent other than Krṣṇa's exercised such a fasci-
nation over the saint's mind as this one. The very thoughts 
of the birth of the Lord, how He grew up and how He 
managed the Mahābhārata war melt his soul.103 The inci-
dents pertaining to Krṣṇa's life assail his soul in all their 
freshness, and steadily melt and eat it away. That his poems 
abound in references to Krṣṇa, His deeds and misdeeds, His 
guṇas and aguṇas, are but a corollary to the saint’s great 
devotion to Krṣṇa. Every thing good was set apart for his 
Kaṇṇaṇ. Even when the Āḻvār was in a peculiar mood 
wherein he thinks, talks and acts as if he were himself the 
God of the universe, the only descent of the Lord that he 
imagines himself to be is Krṣṇa. The Āḻvār says: "It was I 
who lifted the Govardhana. It was I that subdued the seven 
fierce bulls. It was I that grazed the calves of Gokulam and 
protected the herds of the cows. It was I that was the chief

103. ibid. 5.10: 1.
of the *gopas*.104 This experience of the saint gets justified from a passage of the *Upanishad* 105 Brahman gets the experience that It is everything. Gods, sages and men had the realization that they are Brahman or anything else. Sage Vāmadeva had adopted this process and had the experience that He was Manu. The *jivas*, even of the ordinary kind, could have the full experience of Brahman, if they meditate upon It and intuit that they are Brahman. It must, however, be borne in mind that when a self meditates ‘I am that’ it must include Brahman or *Paramātman* within ‘I’ and then meditate. Even gods cannot obstruct this kind of meditation. Prahlāda had a similar experience.106

Many of the hymns sung by the Āḻvār in a state of the lady-love, her mother and her companion are packed with words every syllable of which being loaded with indescribably acute God-love. At times the Āḻvār gets into an exultant mood and imagines himself as the specially favoured devotee. Such periods are very rare, unlike the periods of depression which are more numerous and frequent. In one Tiruvāymoḷi, the Āḻvār is seen indulging in a feeling of elation and that hymn is bound up with Kṛṣṇa. The Āḻvār begins the hymn with a verse in the language of satisfaction and in a spirit of security by exclaiming that he has learnt day and night to expatiate upon the inexplicable and inscrutable sporting of Lord Kṛṣṇa. All the worlds cannot be equal to him as he has learnt to spend his time in love, his mind revelling in the contemplation of the sports of that sweet Flutist.117 In fact, all the verses of this hymn run in the same strain and show us the pulse of the heart of the venerable saint being soaked with Kṛṣṇa-love. This is the only place where it is seen that the thirst of the Āḻvār for Kṛṣṇa is being quenched in a measure. In almost all other places where Kṛṣṇa is referred to the saint is found thirsting and throbbing, pulsating and

104. ibid. 5.6: 6.
106. V.P. 1.19: 85, 86.
107. ibid. 6.4: 1.
palpitating for the union with Kṛṣṇa. To Nammāḻvār, in
short, Kṛṣṇa was everything. He was the food that he ate, the
water that he drank, and the betel that he chewed—“Uṉṉum
coru, parukum nir, tinnum verrilaiyum elam Kannan”.

The commentators on the Tiruvāyamoli very often put down the
Āḻvār’s intense longing for Kṛṣṇa to a feeling of frustration
engendered by the thought that if he had only been born a
week earlier he would have been blessed enough to worship
the Lord in flesh and blood. Parācara Bhatta’s disciples
asked him once: “How is it Master, that all the Āḻvārs have
showed a preference to God as Lord Kṛṣṇa, not as Lord
Rāma, or any other descent?” Bhatta’s reply was this: “When
a man is subjected to bereavement from his loved ones, the
grief caused thereby decreases as time elapses; when it is
fresh, its pangs are acute. So to the Āḻvārs, Kṛṣṇāvatāra is
nearest to them in time; that is, more recent than all the
avaīaras. Hence their lamentations were great. Nammāḻvār
who was born just forty five days after the Ascension of Lord
Kṛṣṇa, groaned thus from love: ‘Sinful man that I am, I have
been born six weeks late! Ah! that what had reached lip
(i.e., Kṛṣṇa) has slipped away’. Periyāḻvār’s hunger for
God is somewhat peculiar. He says that his hungry days are
not those on which he forgoes food and drink but those on
which he fails to worship at the Feet of the Lord with the
chosen flowers culled from the four Vedas.

On His part, the Lord too finds it difficult to leave off
the devotee whom He had chosen to bless and whose heart
He had occupied. He will not leave the heart of that person
who has found His presence there. The Āḻvār who has

108. ibid. 6.7: 1.

(“Piṟanta”).

chronology in the statement is undoubtedly incredible. The inten-
sity of love of the Āḻvār to God only is to be taken into account.

111. Periyāḻ. Tm. 5.1: 6.

112. P.Tv. 35.
realized that the Lord took His abode in his heart in order to dispel nescience from there and to lead him to do good and shines there with singular splendour, feels that there is nothing which could prompt him to leave Him. One more reason for his inability to leave Him is that He had come and settled in his heart out of a liking for him.

Tirumāṅkaiyāḻvār says that he would not give up the great joy he was having by his communion with the Lord. He could not also forget His charming person. He had kept Him steadfast in his heart and will not leave Him on any account. He will not even think of any other deity. Peyāḻvār is happy to find the Lord who lies in the milky ocean, whose complexion is like the stagnant ocean and who is a remedy for getting rid of the hell-like worldly existence, present in his mind. The Lord left the fine couch of Adiśeṣa and has occupied the bed of the mind of this Āḻvār.

It is very difficult to know Him. He presents Himself to those who are true or straightforward in their behaviour though they have no mind to their credit. He does not appear to those who are unscrupulous or false in their conduct. It is at Śrī Raṅgam that this Lord who is charming to behold is present, setting aside any doubt that may arise for one who learns that there is God. One must therefore be grateful to God who had done good to him like a father, mother and others and having shown him the righteous path. He is the relation of all sorts to the Āḻvār, namely, wife of fish-like

113. T.V.M. 1.7: 4. cf. ibid. 1.7: 5, 6.
114. ibid. 2.6:7.
115. Peri. Tm. 6.3: 1.
116. ibid. 6.3: 2, 6.
117. ibid. 6.3: 5.
118. Mū. Tv. 3, 83.
119. ibid. 15.
120. ibid. 11.
121. T.M. 15.
122. P. Tv. 5.
eyes, good issues and respectable parents. He is also the vast wealth.\textsuperscript{123}

Beholding the charming person of the Lord at Tirumālirūcōlai. Periyāḻvar managed to leave his attachment for his body and so could not leave Him.\textsuperscript{124} He has encircled the Lord and so would not allow Him to get away from him. He requests the Lord not to hide Himself from him.\textsuperscript{125} He could not approach any ordinary fellow for favour, as it would belittle the greatness of the Lord as a saviour.\textsuperscript{126} This Āḻvār is happy to state that he could not have a place of refuge like the Lord where he could find a shelter after much wandering or get water to quench his thirst anywhere else.\textsuperscript{127}

It is a herculean task to control the mind even if one knows well that one should be rendering service to the Lord. The mind behaves in its way going off the righteous path.\textsuperscript{128} Though some could realize His presence within one’s self, there are not many who could have the experience of Him. Those who extol Him through poetry will have only the consolation that they are singing in praise of Him, but really speaking they could not have a vision of Him.\textsuperscript{129} Those can know Him, if they can control the five senses, forego the activities like taking food and sleeping, becoming afraid as to the occurrence of certain undesirable incidents and enjoyment of sensual pleasures, keep the quality of sattva in a dominant position by suppressing rajas and tamas and thus seek to cut at the root of worldly existence.\textsuperscript{130} This is only deep meditation or yoga.\textsuperscript{131} It is also possible to direct the mind towards the Lord’s feet but only those who could have control

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{123} T.V.M. 5.1: 8.
\item \textsuperscript{124} Periyāḻ. Tm. 5.3. 1.
\item \textsuperscript{125} ibid. 5.3: 2.
\item \textsuperscript{126} ibid. 5.3 : 3.
\item \textsuperscript{127} ibid. 5.3 : 4.
\item \textsuperscript{128} P.Tv. 32.
\item \textsuperscript{129} Mū. Tv. 84.
\item \textsuperscript{130} T.V.L.K. 11, 15 to 19.
\item \textsuperscript{131} Peri. Tm. 5.6 : 9.
\end{itemize}
over the activity of their five senses and realize that they are subordinates to the Lord can hope to do this. God-realization is not altogether an impossibility. He will Himself be present for realization in the mind of the self. The intensity of this realization would be in proportion to the earnestness of the jīva to behold Him.

Nammāḷvār grows very happy to have had the experience of the great benefactor and master of all. People of seven generations prior to him and subsequent to him have gained the distinction of being the devotees of the Lord, through his realization of God. Periyāḷvār says that He has entered the heart as a preceptor, removed the defects there and placed His feet on his head.

God-realization is not the result of the operation of any means of valid cognition such as perception, inference, or verbal authority. The sense-organs are totally incompetent to apprehend God and for that reason, inference which depends on the working of the perceptive process, cannot operate. Verbal testimony can only give rise to the knowledge of the deity. These pramāṇas do not therefore operate and as such could not be trusted for obtaining the experience of God. The Lord is beyond knowledge, contemplation and thought. He is One with unparalleled glory. He transcends everything else and all forms of ordinary knowledge. He is realized as an experience through intuition or mystic experience. He is therefore described as One who has no equal or comparison—"Tan oppār il appan". That He transcends other kinds of knowledge excepting mystic experience is brought out by Nammāḷvār as that He cannot express adequately the quality

133. P.Tv. 55.
134. ibid. 28, 29.
135 T.V.M. 2.7 : 1; cf. ibid. 2.7 : 4.
136. Periyāḷ. Tm. 5.2 : 8.
137. T.V.M. 6.9 : 11. cf. ibid. 5.5 : 11.
138. ibid. 6.10 : 10.
139. ibid. 6.3 : 9.
of the Lord. He is the Lord of the form which cannot be known as anything distinct and which cannot be classified according to the ordinary sources of our knowledge. It is not possible to produce any evidence, because the Absolute is not something objective like the things or objects of the world. It is the integral experience or Paripūrṇa Brahmānubhava which is more than the perceptual, rational and intuitional aspects. It is the direct apprehension of the svarūpa or form of Brahma and the comprehension of its character or guṇa. It is, as it were, the recorded experiences of Upaniṣadic seers and the Ālvārs. The Lord is impossible to be reached even by contemplation by the mind for the reason that mind is also made up of matter. He transcends matter. Even the Vedas cannot reach Him: “Nān maraḷiyum ittāraṭa pāḷakaṇ”; Nān maraikal tēti eṟṟum kāṇamāṭṭāc-cēlvaṇ”. Even those who have reached higher spheres cannot measure Him, measure His infinite greatness: “Amararkkum arīyān” — ‘He is rarity to even the celestials’. His glory is unequalled and unsurpassed.

The direct intuitive experience which the Ālvārs had of God is more real and is fuller than that which is had through perception. This is mystic experience which is ineffable, transcendent and passive. “It is an immediate consciousness of God not to be mediated by the intellect or the will of the individual or of society, but attributed directly to God Himself”. However much an individual attempts to have this, he fails in obtaining it as there is nothing in him which he could make use of for the purpose. It is this aspect of the experience that is stated to be unobtainable through study, intelligence and rich learning. The Lord shows Himself to him

140. ibid. 3.1 : 3; cf. ibid. 2.5 : 9, 10.
141. ibid. 3.4.
142. Peri. Tm. 4.1 : 6.
143. ibid. 4.8 : 7.
144. T.V.M. 10.5 : 9.
145. ibid. 1.7 : 10.
146. A Philosophy of Religion, p. 432.
whom He chooses for the purpose and that person gets it.\textsuperscript{147} The mystic gets the integral experience of the Lord together with the entire or part of the world which forms a portion of Him and which He chooses to show to His men.

Though mystic experience is ineffable, it is not unanalyzable. For others who have yet to enter into the realm of mysticism, two aspects are noticeable in the experience of the mystic. In one of them, namely, emotional, the mystic has an intense feeling which is not altogether without rich content. Some central idea, as intellectual certainty, is had by him through immediate intuition of reality. The mystic is able to communicate this. The more intense is emotion the more personal God becomes and less cosmic also. It is the personal Deity that tends to arouse sentiment in the self. This is the reason for the popularity and appeal of the later Upāniṣads like Svetāsvatara, Bhagavadgītā and Purāṇas as inspiring belief.\textsuperscript{148} The other aspect of mysticism is cognitive and ideational. The mystic experience has immediacy, expressive of directness and stands by itself with the presentative character. Hence the ultimate truth is presented there as a Reality already established beyond doubt, not requiring any representative knowledge to prove it.\textsuperscript{149} Neotic tendency is another mark of mystic experience which enables the mystic to have the reality revealed face-to-face like his sense of eye or ear would do. It makes the mystic speak emphatically about reality and its fundamental character is what is frequently called 'self transcendence', the direct cognition of reality other or larger than the cognitive state of consciousness itself.\textsuperscript{150} The consciousness of the mystic is not only emotional but intuitive from the unknown 'Beyond'. The union between God and the mystic is actual perception of God.\textsuperscript{151} However, the cognitive and emotional elements of mystic experience are blended together and become mutually influential. It is not

\begin{tabular}{l}
\textsuperscript{147} Kath. Up. 1.2: 23. \\
\textsuperscript{148} The Religious Consciousness, pp. 348-49. \\
\textsuperscript{149} cf. ibid. pp. 400-01. \\
\textsuperscript{150} Cited as the view of Professor Ewer in ibid. p. 405. \\
\textsuperscript{151} View of Father Maynard cited. ibid. p. 412.
\end{tabular}
therefore possible to dissect mystic experience in two independent forms and analyse them without getting one related to the other.

When ecstasy is said to be the chief mark of mystic experience, it does not mean that the mystic has to his lot only joy and not pain. Pain and delight take their positions alternately. The feeling of pain could be the result of not having the continued vision of God. Ecstatic joy comes to the self of its own accord and makes him mystic who cannot order its continued presence in him. This may be due to the relatively beginning stage of mystic life. In the higher stage also, the mystic, who had intensely intuited the vision of God, does not feel joy because of the lack of communion. He will feel that he had been deserted by God because of himself having been a sinner and as such completely unworthy of God's presence. The mystic then struggles hard to get it in vain. He then feels the hollowness of life around him which brought in this separation for him from God. Even this immediate sense of separation "from a Being who yet is felt as in some way present" forms part of his mystic experience. The influence of beautiful, natural scenery and of music and poetry, which arouse emotion, tend to arouse religious emotion as well.

In the ecstatic condition of his realization of God, the mystic experiences an intense communion which "offers a far better solution of the ills of life than philosophy and metaphysics". Ecstasy represents the unitive stage in mysticism "when the soul begins to perceive the odour of the divine perfumes". God does not let the self have His vision continued beyond a limited period and this arouses in the self a sense of disappointment, despair and intense longing.

152. The Religious Consciousness, p. 353.
154. Theory and Art of Mysticism, p. 156.
155. For other stages, vide The Religious Consciousness (a psychological study), p. 394
156. ibid. p. 396.
to have the vision of the deity. "Ecstasy and dryness are episodes which oscillate and give place to each other through long years". 157 Certain features mark this stage of ecstatic joy. The self has its personal consciousness absorbed in the personality of the deity and realizes that he is taken possession by God for ever. Secondly, he has nothing to do, for God does everything through him and as such he has no longer any desire whatsoever to be fulfilled. Thirdly and lastly, there is the feeling of energy and fulness that God is good in looking after himself. 158 The previous experience of the worldly type which the Āḷvār had before are not helpful in interpreting the vision which God gives them. 159 It is therefore natural for the mystic to wonder at the mysterious presentation. The mystic finds the difficulty in translating his experience with adequate expressions, and so chooses a variety of images to represent by analogy the vision which is too great for his words.

Nammāḷvār describes vividly how the Lord entered into him and occupied in him. He did not know that He was entering within. He came of His own accord and deceived him, that is, He took possession of him who was till then feeling that he was independent by himself and brought him under His control without his consent and awareness. He entered into the body and got united with his self. The Āḷvār declares that he could not leave Him on any account. 160 The Lord Who is pre-eminent among the sentient and non-sentient under Whom all these get their being and sustenance, Who is the Inner Controller of them, Who has demonstrated His easy accessibility in His descent as Kṛṣṇa, Who allows Himself to be enjoyed by the selves and also enjoys them and Who is the consort of Śrī, stood within the Āḷvār and around Him. The Āḷvār has

158. For a detailed treatment of this aspect, vide The Religious Consciousness, pp. 437-439.
159. Note that Arjuna got dismayed unable to apprehend the cosmic form of God, though he was endowed by the Lord with divine vision. (Vide Bh. G. 11: 52).
160. T.V.M. 1.7: 7.
here direct experience of the Lord with Śrī.¹⁶¹ Not merely
does the Lord present Himself in the finitised form but the
form is synthesised by the Āḷvār with the forms with which
He took the descent of Varāha, acquired the name of Keśava,
killed the elephant Kuvalayāpīḍā, Who is beyond the know-
ledge of the gods and Who lies on the deep and vast sea.¹⁶²
The Lord is shown here to have come down to him as on other
occasions mainly to protect those who are in distress. The
Āḷvār was afforded by Him delectable experience of Him,
allowing the former to visualise His blue-coloured body and
lotus-like eyes.¹⁶³ He is identified here through His unique
marks like the possession of auspicious attributes having no
defect, possession of a divine form, and Garuḍa as His vehicle
and being the Spouse of Śrī.¹⁶⁴ The Lord who has His con-
sorts Śrī, Bhūdevi and Nippināi and who laid Himself on
the banyan leaf after devouring all the worlds, occupied his
waist¹⁶⁵ and heart.¹⁶⁶ He, who is the body and self of all, far
away for some and too near for others, lying beyond the com-
prehension of even the learned and enlightened and pure and
from whom arise doubts and erroneous cognitions, occupied
the shoulders of the Āḷvār.¹⁶⁷ The Lord is the source of
recolletion, knowledge and their removal or disappearance,¹⁶⁸
which means that He is virtually the controller of not only the
beings, but also every aspect of their life. It is significant
here that the Āḷvār refers to shoulders as having been occupied
by Him, perhaps drawing a reference to the knowledge which
the Lord gave to the child Dhruva by touching his shoulder
with His conch.¹⁶⁹ This may also mean that the Lord occupied
the shoulder of the Āḷvār and He would ride on the shoulders

¹⁶¹  ibid. 1.9 : 1. cf. Twenty Four Thousand on this verse.
¹⁶²  ibid. 1.9 : 2.
¹⁶³  ibid. 1.9 : 3.
¹⁶⁴  Twelve Thousand on 1.9 : 3.
¹⁶⁵  T.V.M. 1.9 : 4.
¹⁶⁶  ibid. 1.9 : 5.
¹⁶⁷  ibid. 1.9 : 6.
¹⁶⁸  Bh. G. 15 : 15.
¹⁶⁹  V.P. 1.12 : 51.
of Garuḍa. Then He, who wears the garland of tulaci, who is peerless and possesses a dazzling form, took His seat in the tongue of the Āḻvār which suggests that He became the subject for the Āḻvār’s expressions. The eyes of the saint were then occupied by Him, remaining there with His divine appurtenances in His four arms. He is the controller of both sound and sense of all arts or subjects of study. He dispelled the defects such as imperfect knowledge of the Āḻvār. All the five sense organs were then filled by Him. The forehead of the saint was then occupied by Him. Finally, He took His position on the head of the Āḻvār which is anxiously waited and yearned for by the devout worshippers of the Lord. This decad has supreme significance in as much as the Āḻvār gets the mystic vision of the Lord’s communion with Him and graded occupation of his body limb by limb. The Āḻvār gives an elaborate description of the auspicious form of the Lord with all His divine appurtenances, as He has become one with himself. The experience which the Āḻvār had of God’s presence in him emboldens him to state that He would not leave him at any time. He is delectable like nectar at all moments, days, months, years and aeons and His eyes, feet and hands are like the lotuses blossomed just at the moment they are seen. Rather it must be said that the red corals do not bear comparison to His lips, lotuses fall down in point of standard of beauty when compared to His eyes, feet and hands and charming necklaces do not match His tresses, thus proving that these are only apologetic standards of comparison while describing Him. The Lord alone is the source, sustenance and satis-

172. ibid. 1.9:8.
173. ibid. 1.9:9.
174. ibid. 1.9:10.
175. ibid. 2.5.
176. ibid. 2.6:7.
177. ibid. 2.5:4.
178. ibid. 2.5:5.
faction of life \( (dahraka, \ p\dot{s}aka \ and \ bh\ddot{o}gya) \) – "\( \textit{U\ddot{a}num \ c\ddot{o}ru \ parukum \ nir \ tir\ddot{u}num \ verrilaiyum \ ell\ddot{a}m \ Kann\ddot{a}n} \)."\textsuperscript{179} The sooner he hears the name 'N\ddot{a}r\ddot{a}ya\dot{a}n' the quicker are his eyes welled up in tears.\textsuperscript{280} "At the very utterance of the name of the Lord" says Tiruma\ddot{n}kaiy\ddot{a}lv\ddot{a}r, "tears well up in my eyes. I am very much moved. I will not befriend anyone else than the Lord".\textsuperscript{181}

The Lord came to Namm\ddot{a}lv\ddot{a}r of His own accord and filled his heart fully.\textsuperscript{182} This mystic union aroused in the saint a sense of relatedness to God with the result that he feels very much for the Lord being alone as it were. The Lord does not have any servant for service. He has to bear the conch and discus Himself, as also the sword and the bow. There is no follower for Him. No one is offering worship to Him with hands losing himself to the beauty of His feet and shoulders.\textsuperscript{183} He entered into the \( \ddot{A}lv\ddot{a}r \) in the form of having devoured the worlds and remained there as a lamp of knowledge. He remained there without looking to any of the sides.\textsuperscript{184} The A\ddot{v}\ddot{a}r had the direct experience of \( K\ddot{r}\ddot{\ddot{i}}\ddot{v}na \) and then composed the particular verses in praise of Him.\textsuperscript{185} When the A\ddot{v}\ddot{a}r bowed the Lord at His feet as He lifted the foot to measure the higher regions, His eyes looked like a charming lotus-tank with the slightly slanting stalk.\textsuperscript{186} His eyes which were set on him, did not leave him.\textsuperscript{187}

The intensity of the direct experience fills the A\ddot{v}\ddot{a}rs with remorse. They feel for not having had the vision earlier at times when they simply wasted their time. The Lord is

\textsuperscript{179} ibid. 6.7:1.
\textsuperscript{180} ibid. 1.10:8.
\textsuperscript{181} Peri. Tm. 7.2:1.
\textsuperscript{182} T.V.M. 10.8:1.
\textsuperscript{183} ibid. 8.3:3.
\textsuperscript{184} ibid. 2.6:2.
\textsuperscript{185} ibid. 9.4:8, 9. cf. ibid. 10.6:4; 10.7:5.
\textsuperscript{186} T.V.R. 42; cf. ibid. 45.
\textsuperscript{187} ibid. 63.
lying on His serpent couch. The waves of the sea gently touch and pat His feet as if to make Him sleep. Poykaiyāḻvār saw Him sleep with red eyes and feels that much time had elapsed not in beholding Him.\(^{188}\) The Lord who ripped open the chest of the demon Hiranya with the sharp claws, who rides on Garuda, measured the worlds, with His shoulders pervading all the directions and His crown measuring the upper regions. The saint did not have then the occasion to have this vision.\(^{189}\) The Lord left His place in the ocean and came over to Mātura in order to remove the chains with which Kamsa had bound His parents Vāsudēva and Dēvaki. He measured the earth and made it His own denying its ownership to the demons. The gods then offered flowers to His feet and worshipped them. The Āḻvār feels that He did not have an occasion to serve Him then.\(^{190}\) Śrī Rāma went after the deer which was no other than Mārīca in disguise and killed it. Nammāḻvār gets the direct presentation of the Lord having the beautiful discus in his hand. He did not have then the feeling that the Lord did this and stood before him. He did not extol Him then. He wasted all the time before he got this vision due to lack of wisdom.\(^{191}\)

When desolation overcomes the Āḻvār at the sight of the world, especially after his mystic experience of the Lord, he often has the feeling that he bears on his shoulders the crushing weight of the faults and the waywardness of the world and sings hymns of self condemnation. Sometimes the picture painted in the very darkest colour is of himself as the very embodiment of all that is immoral. The saint says: "The wretched journey of life in which enemies rejoice and friends are filled with sorrow to see us suffer untold miseries!\(^{192}\) How wretched is life in the world in which sudden death, sufferings, and the grief of agnates and cognates over the dead

\(^{188}\) M.Tv. 16.
\(^{189}\) ibid. 17.
\(^{190}\) ibid. 20.
\(^{191}\) P. Tv. 82.
\(^{192}\) T.V.M. 4.9: 1
body are the order of the day! How wretched is life in which elation and arrogance, and the happy company of those near and dear and one's mate are made to leave by the sudden stroke of death! As wealth accumulates, men decay and the *tamasic* quality predominates. Birth, disease and death are so common that one wonders whether there could be a hell worse than this world. Ensnared through fear in the torture of the worldly existence, men have their maw for their gospel.

As against *tapas* and control of the five senses and their sublimation, which all form the way to attain His feet, Nammāḻvār speaks in one full hymn of his own slavery to the senses and of his being caught within the net spread over by the five 'lords'. The revulsion of this kind can be seen here and there in many of his hymns. Tirumāṅkaiyāḻvār is more eloquent in his reference to this kind of revulsion. The classical portrayal of this Āḻvār of the tyranny of *karma* and the tragedy of human sorrows by the analogies of the strom-tossed ship, the dilemma of the ant caught between the two burning ends of the faggot, the pack of jackals on an island enveloped by the rising floods and the men dwelling with cobras in the house is surpassed in religious literature.

In other places, Nammāḻvār, and for that matter other Āḻvārs too, exaggerates his faults: "I have not folded my straying senses in, nor have gathered flowers in due time

193  ibid. 4.9: 2.
194  ibid. 4.9: 3.
195  ibid. 4.9: 4.
196  ibid. 4.9: 5.
197  ibid. 4.9: 6.
198  ibid. 7.1.
199  Peri. Tm. 6.2.
200  ibid. 11.8: 2.
201  ibid. 11.8: 4.
202  ibid. 11.8: 5.
203  ibid. 11.8: 3.
everyday for worship. My hard and wicked heart overflowing with desire leads sinful me to grope for the Lord’s help.’’

He continues in the same strain: ‘‘I did not observe any penance; I do not have any subtle knowledge. Even then, as a man without resources, I cannot bear to part from Thee. I belong neither with the Eternals nor with the worldlings. I am neither here nor there in my pursuit of Thee.’’

To Nammāḻvār, life appears to be hollow with nothing worthy to attract him. The pathetic nature of life which he comes to take note of when his ecstatic joy came to an abrupt end with the Lord going out of his vision presents a contrast to the enjoyable state in which he was then placed. In spite of his having had several births one after another, the Āḻvār remarks that he had got some encouragement in the present life itself by having the enjoyment of delight. The Lord who rides on Garuḍa destroys the hosts of demons to protect those who suffer. Being thus a father to him also, He shall not have him removed from Him, as it would lead to becoming aware of the hell-like life of the world. ‘‘My sins are so powerful, though I am a small one. I place my palms on my head and request You to come to me to remove my distress. When shall I, to whom You had given an enjoyable experience of unlimited bliss, have the occasion to see You with my eyes? I am calling You day and night for help. I do not know how many sins I had committed which could not be brought to an end. I fervently appeal to You with tears. I am a shameless fellow while calling Him for help. Even Brahmā and others are not able to see You.’’

\[204\] T.V.M. 4.7: 9.
\[205\] ibid. 5.7: 1.
\[206\] ibid. 5.7: 2.
\[207\] T.V.M. 2.6: 8.
\[208\] ibid. 4.7: 1.
\[209\] ibid. 4.7: 2.
\[210\] ibid: 4.7: 3.
\[211\] ibid. 4.7: 4.
the fickle-minded, to have a vision of You.\textsuperscript{212} I know well that You are pervading every-where including myself, within the soul and the body. Yet I am stretching forth my tongue within myself to taste Your presence by casting my looks in all directions to behold You. This is a clear proof of my ignorance.\textsuperscript{213} The Āḻvār is conscious of having had the direct experience of joy with Him within himself and also of having his nescience removed,\textsuperscript{214} but appeals for His immediate presence before him so that he could worship His feet using his arms fully for offering flowers there, sing His praise and dance with delight.\textsuperscript{215} All these painful feelings arise because he could not get the vision of the Lord any where. He could desist from these attempts, but he had already a vision of Him who is made known by the light of the Vedas. Even though he has been pleading to the Lord, He had not shown any sympathetic consideration for him. The Āḻvār asks the mind whether He is now occupying a place which He had specially chosen as to be beyond the reach for His mercy.\textsuperscript{216}

The feeling of separation is depicted with the touch of uniqueness and originality. The mind had gone after Him. The body is, however, placed far away from Him, much as it had committed sins.\textsuperscript{217} This is indirectly expressing the Āḻvār’s anxiety and longing to be in direct physical communion with the Lord. All the same, his mind could not leave His vicinity nor will his tongue do nothing but praising Him. His body feels the thrill.\textsuperscript{218} The Āḻvār offers then a different kind of appeal to the Lord. “People who are placed in a superior position are found to help the people in the lower stratum of society who suffer and appeal to them for relief and they do this sometimes even by undergoing personal suffering. When I make this appeal to You, You are not to

\textsuperscript{212} ibid: 4.7: 5.
\textsuperscript{213} ibid. 4.7: 6.
\textsuperscript{214} ibid. 4.7: 7.
\textsuperscript{215} ibid. 4.7: 8.
\textsuperscript{216} P. Tv. 74.
\textsuperscript{217} ibid. 7.
\textsuperscript{218} T.V.M. 1.6: 3; cf. T.K., 1.
suffer in any way. Please accept my appeal and show Yourself to my vision".\textsuperscript{219}

Nammāḻvār pleads passionately to the Lord and asks whether he would get at least to the sacred shrine at Tirunāvāy which would remove the obstacles that lie in the path of God-realization.\textsuperscript{220} He is keen on serving the Lord\textsuperscript{221} and enjoy His bliss.\textsuperscript{222} He requests the Lord to appear before him at least for a day with the discus and the conch.\textsuperscript{223} Reminded by the act of measuring the world, he asks the Lord to show him His beautiful gait.\textsuperscript{224} In spite of having been for a very long period related to the Lord and Śri, he is now separated from Him.\textsuperscript{225} He requests the Lord to present Himself before him at least for a day with the sight of being served by Brahmā, Śiva, Indra and other gods.\textsuperscript{226} The Lord in His five forms hides Himself from him.\textsuperscript{227} The Ālvār does not know how long he would be required to wander about in order to have Him in his vision as Tirivikrama.\textsuperscript{228} As an Inner Soul of all, He is requested to show His compassion to his ignorant self.\textsuperscript{229} He does not know why the Lord should make him suffer more and more by subjecting him to sensual attraction upsetting his mental equipoise.\textsuperscript{230} Even the never-ending, ever-unchanging and unlimited joy of kaivalya does not bear any comparison to the act of service at His feet, even if it should last for a short duration.\textsuperscript{231}

\textsuperscript{219} P. Tv. 13.
\textsuperscript{220} T.V.M. 9.8: 1-3.
\textsuperscript{221} ibid. 9.8: 4.
\textsuperscript{222} ibid. 9.8: 5.
\textsuperscript{223} ibid. 6.9: 1.
\textsuperscript{224} ibid. 6.9: 2.
\textsuperscript{225} ibid. 6.9: 3.
\textsuperscript{226} ibid. 6.9: 4.
\textsuperscript{227} ibid. 6.9: 5.
\textsuperscript{228} ibid. 6.9: 6.
\textsuperscript{229} ibid. 6.9: 7.
\textsuperscript{230} ibid. 6.9: 8.
\textsuperscript{231} ibid. 6.9: 10.
In a mood of abject dejection, the Āḻvār speaks of not having done any good act, not having refrained from doing sinful deeds and was far away from the Lord owing to his indulgence in matters of little significance. The Lord is, however, capable of creating wonders and so is requested to take him to His feet.\(^{232}\) The behaviour of the world is really wonderful. Some people get their daily bread by terrorising others and forcing them by torture to commit sinful deeds. The Āḻvār cannot live in such a world any longer and therefore requests the Lord to take him whom He had already admitted as His servant.\(^{233}\) Again, the five senses are so powerful that they afflict even the Eternals if they were to come down to this mortal world and stay for sometime. One can easily imagine how powerfully they would subjugate an ordinary being. The Āḻvār tells the Lord that if He were to let him down, then his position at the hands of these senses would be very pitiable. He requests the Lord to come and give him a word of encouragement.\(^{234}\) The Lord has control over the Āḻvār and the seven worlds. He is Himself the deities whom He had ordained to carry out His injunctions. He is everything in the world, remaining on occasions in a subtle form as causes and not visible to the senses. How can then the Āḻvār get at Him?\(^{235}\)

It should be taken for granted that Namāḻvār sings in this strain only in moments of despair when he feels for the world or when he thinks that he is away from God or godly life. This represents only the value he sets on ethical codes. As the saint has undergone the purgation, he is the purest soul, the very embodiment of morality. The Āḻvār himself gives expression to his conviction: “The Lord dispelled my two karmas and He has taken me to His fold”;\(^{236}\) “I have worn His feet on my head”.\(^{237}\) He continues: “The Lord who cannot be apprehended by the Vedas or by those who are

\(^{232}\) ibid. 3.2: 6.
\(^{233}\) ibid. 4.9: 6.
\(^{234}\) ibid. 7.1: 6.
\(^{235}\) ibid. 8.1: 6.
\(^{236}\) ibid. 10.4: 2.
\(^{237}\) ibid. 10.4: 3.
well-versed in them has been depended upon by me as the medicine to cure all ills.\textsuperscript{238} "I shall tirelessly utter the name of, embrace and bow my head to, the Lotus Feet which measured the three world\textsuperscript{239} "I extolled the golden feet of my Lord sought and worshipped by the Eternals with my compositions\textsuperscript{240} "When Thou hast been the theme of my hymns" says the Āḻvār in another context, "I would never address to another those sweet words that emanate from my tongue?\textsuperscript{241} Can we not take our Āḻvār to be one who always sings exclusively the Lord – in the language of Saivite saint Cuntaramūrtti, a ‘Paramanāiyē pāḻuvār’?\textsuperscript{242}

When the devotee cries out for having God’s presence, God certainly listens to His appeal and presents Himself before him. The Āḻvār was struggling hard to live without God and was about to get drowned like a boat in the sea of worldly existence; the Lord came and joined him with a divine form bearing the conch and the discus. The Āḻvār remarks that the Lord felt compassionate towards him crying ‘ah, ah’ thereby revealing that He could not any longer bear the torments of His devotee, the Āḻvār.\textsuperscript{242} The Lord stood in his heart casting a favourable look at him.\textsuperscript{243} He got united with the saint destroying completely the power of the senses and stood always looking at him.\textsuperscript{244} The Āḻvār could not visualize anything except Him with red lips, the white teeth and shining ear-ornaments. The lustre of each of His limbs vies with that of the other. He is remaining in the mind of the Āḻvār displaying a smile in His red lips.\textsuperscript{245} The Lord will show His sympathy to those whom He likes to receive it without expecting anything from them. He stays on in the mind of a small person like the Āḻvār.\textsuperscript{246}

\textsuperscript{238} ibid. 9.3 : 3.
\textsuperscript{239} ibid. 1.3 : 10.
\textsuperscript{240} P. Tv. 45.
\textsuperscript{241} T.V.M. 3.9 : 1.
\textsuperscript{242} ibid. 5.1 : 9; cf. Peri. Tm. 7.6 : 2; 7.7 : 9.
\textsuperscript{243} ibid. 8.7 : 1.
\textsuperscript{244} ibid. 8.7 : 2.
\textsuperscript{245} ibid. 8.7 : 7.
\textsuperscript{246} ibid. 8.7 : 8.
Tirumāṅkaiyāḻvār uttered the names of God who is the Self of all and stays in the shrine at Śrī Rāṅgam. Though these holy names were uttered by the impure and filthy-bodied being with the sullied mouth, the blue-coloured Lord appeared within his eyes offering shelter for him.²⁴⁷ The effect of the sight of the Lord at Śrī Rāṅgam dispelled all the sins which are irremediable and which give rise to diseases.²⁴⁸

Nammāḻvār had a rich and enjoyable experience, at the shrine Tiruvippakar, with the Lord whose prosperous states include all the mutually contradictory factors known to man such as poverty and riches, hell and heaven, hatred and enmity, poison and nectar, pleasure and pain, confusion and clarity, punishment and favour, heat and shade, town and country, knowledge and nescience, light and darkness, earth and sky, merit and sin, union and separation, memory and forgetfulness, existence and non-existence, crookedness and straightforwardness, black and white, truth and falsehood, youthfulness and old age, rejuvenation and decrepitude, the three worlds and the Paramapada, likes and dislikes, prosperity and adversity, fame and infamy.²⁴⁹ He has a body which is not the product of the matter and also a body in the form of the dirty world. He is concealed and explicit.²⁵⁰ He is the refuge for the gods and the lord of Death for the demons. He keeps the world well protected under the shade of His feet and does not protect those who depend on others.²⁵¹ He is the shade and sunshine, microcosmic and macrocosmic, short and long, and moveable and immovable.²⁵²

From the point of view of ordinary knowledge the insoluble philosophical problems relating to the Absolute lead to series of contradictions as these mentioned by Nammāḻvār. These contradictions proclaim with a loud note that He can-

²⁴⁷  T.K. 12.
²⁴⁸  ibid. 13.
²⁴⁹  T.V.M. 6.3 : 1 to 6.
²⁵⁰  ibid. 6.3 : 7.
²⁵¹  ibid. 6.3 : 8.
²⁵²  ibid. 6.3 : 10.
not be understood by man - "arivu ariya pirän". He is the End, the Beginning and the Beginning of the Beginning. He is the ancient Lord without end. He is the Principal behind root and seed. He is the true cause in its entirety and the overlord of everything, the sole Original and the Primal seed of all things: "mūvāt tāṇimutal", "tāṇi vittu", "muṭu mutal" etc. All these do not satisfy the dialectical arguments. Again, contradictions like these show that the Absolute presents a philosophical problem, as the Upaniṣads do, which baffles the metaphysicians. These features present themselves to the mystic Āḻvār as part of the vibhūti of Nārāyana and so does not require any proof to reconcile them. They are irreconcilable and remain as such for the immature mind whose vision is limited to the comprehension only of the parts or those features and not as related or integrated into one composite whole.

Ecstasy, which falls to the lot of the fortunate few, lies indescribable, for want of adequate expressions, but the person who had the experience of it cannot but give expression to it. He could use only such words and expressions with which he is familiar to describe his experience, but these are poor and inadequate aids. The Lord is described and addressed with those expressions. He is delectable and so is insatiable nectar which by its superworldly nature could be the nearest equivalent to describe Him. He is enjoyable and so is the perfect note played on the vina. It is these objects that serve as fit for presenting a likeness to Him under His various aspects. Thus metaphors and similies play a dominant role in such descriptions. Attractiveness of the Lord's appearance is an important aspect in the depiction of the

253. ibid. 5.5 : 11.
254. Peri. Tm. 9.7 : 1.
255. T.V.M. 1.3 : 5.
256. ibid. 2.8 : 10.
257. ibid. 2.8 : 5.
258. ibid. 1.5 : 3; T.V.C. 4.
259. ibid. 1.7 : 8.
Lord. From this point of view the Lord is the most beautiful blue-diamond (or elil nilamani), and the purest (amalap) and the faultless (ninmalap). Periyāḻvar calls Him ‘Alakan’ and ‘Maṇavāḷav’. Nammāḻvār refers to Him as ‘Alakar’ and he revels in the ocean-hued or cloud-hued colour of the Lord and in many places he calls Him ‘the Dark gem’ (karumāṇikkam) He addresses Him as ‘paraṅcōṭi’ (or the supreme shining self); to him He is Bhuvana Sundara without any shade of ugliness. Aesthetics as art criticism applies the criteria of immanence and transcendence, and elevates the science and art of aesthetics into a philosophy as the critique of the creative impulse. It is the intuitive expression of infinite beauty through the medium of the finite, and it portrays the beauties of nature and the embodied self as partial revelations of the absolute beauty of God. Nammāḻvār expresses the beauty of the Lord: ‘My Lord! Has the effulgence of Thy face turned in itself into the effulgence of Thy crown? Has the splendour of Thy feet become the splendour of Thy foot-rest? Has the brightness of Thy waist spread itself into Thy ornaments and garments?’

The most intimate experience of the Lord’s bliss is often spoken of as ‘amutu’ (the nectar). The commentators of Nalaiyiram bring out the greatness of this conception of ‘arāvaṇamutu’ which is according to them unique in their mystic language. Says the Āḻvār ‘He and I became one

261. A.P. 10.
262. ibid. 1.
263. ibid. 1.
264. Periyāḻ. Tm. 4.3: 5.
265. ibid. 4.9: 4,
266. T.V.M. 2.10: 2.
267. ibid. 3.3: 3; 5.1: 5; 5.10: 7; 8.9: 1; Kulacēkarāḻvār refers to Him as Karumaṇi (Perum. Tm. 1.1).
269. ibid. 3.1: 1.
270. ibid. 1.6: 6; 2.3: 7; 2.5: 5; 2.7: 11; 3.3: 5; 3.4: 5; 3.5: 6; 3.6: 7; 3.8: 7; 3.10: 3; 4.9: 6; 5.5: 9; 5.8: 1; 5.9: 5; 6.3: 1; 6.10: 3; 7.1: 1; 7.2: 5; 8.1: 1; 8.4: 2; 8.8: 4; 9.2: 10; 10.7: 2; 10.8: 6; 10.10: 5.
271. Iṭṭin Tamiḻakkam Vol. V. 5.8:1 (Commentary).
with me (Him?) as honey, milk, ghee, sugar-cane juice and nectar, all being mixed”. The idea conveyed is that, whilst sense enjoyment is exciting and exhausting, the joy of Divine contact expresses the inexpressible joy which is satisfaction without satiation. Almost all the Āḷvārs refer to the Lord by this term. The hymn on the deity at Kumbakonam beginning with “ārāamūte” is unique in its experience. Our Āḷvār refers to the Lord as ‘amūtu’ with so many prefixes and suffixes with that word: “kaṭal-pāṭa amūte” – ‘the nectar which has no connection with the salt sea’; “ārā amutam” – ‘insatiable nectar’; ‘vetattu āmutam’ – ‘the nectar of the Vedas’; “nalam-kaṭal amutam” – ‘the nectar of the milky ocean’; “inna-mutu” – ‘sweet nectar’; “enṭam puguntu tittikkum amūte” – ‘the nectar which enters the mind and is sweet there’ etc. The Lord is the sweetest experience to the devotee and for want of apt words the Āḷvār speaks of Him as “tiṇi” (honey), pāl (milk), ney (ghee), kannal (sugar-cane juice). Again he refers to Him as “karumpin in āru, (the sweet juice of the sugar-cane), katti (sugar-candy)” and “kaṇi” (fruit). To Periyāḷvār the Lord is ‘nālveṭak-kaṭalamūtu’ (the nectar of the seas of the four Vedas). These several metaphorical expressions used by our saint are all too sweet by themselves.

Tirumānākaiyāḷvār could not contain himself while having the direct vision of the Lord at Tirukkaṇṭamāṅkai. The Lord is like a bull which is uncontrollable. He is a man in being independent of others and is a woman by His depend-

272. ibid. 2.3; 1.
273. ibid. 2.3: 5.
274. ibid. 2.5: 4.
275. ibid. 3.3: 5.
276. ibid. 3.4: 5.
277. ibid. 3.6: 7; 5.1: 2; 5.9: 5.
278. ibid. 6.10: 3.
279. ibid. 2.3: 1: 5.1: 2; 5.5: 9.
280. ibid. 3.5: 6; 3.10: 3.
281. ibid. 3.10: 3.
282. Periyāḷ. Tm. 4.3: 11.
ence or sub-servience to His devotees. He is a necklace of pearls and a heap of pearls. He is a bud and full-blown flower. He is a sugar-cane of sweet taste having been grown watered by nectar. He is the sweet fruit, the sugar-candy and the juice of the sugar-cane. He is treasure, gold and gem. He is air and water. He is music, musical melody, lustrous light, and mountain. He is pearl and lustrous green emerald.

To Nammāḻvār He is the fresh-drawn milk, ghee and sweet taste of ghee, nectar, taste of nectar, and the joy of having tasted it. He is nectar and honey. He is a pillar of corals, because of the support He affords to people to rely on and because it cannot be taken to parts. He is the sweet sugar-cane grown in the hearts of the devotees. He is a golden hill, perhaps because a hill rises above many mounds all round and its golden nature shows its charming hue, stiffness and high value. The Lord is the highest and unchangingly charming unlike the host of gods. He is the divine wish-yielding tree (kaṟpakam), thus a boon to the devotees. He is the young elephant in the groves of Tiruvintalūr. The happiness of the Āḻvār is greater when he says that the Lord is the sweet nectar to his soul and transcendent light intermixed with his life. He is the sweet fruit experienced by the seers and ṛṣis. "One cannot adequately describe", says Periyāḻvār, "the greatness of those who, at the point of death, chant the several names of the Lord, instead of calling upon

283. Peri. Tm. 7.10: 1.
284. ibid. 7.10: 2.
285. ibid. 7.10: 3.
286. ibid. 7.10: 4.
287. ibid. 7.10: 9.
290. Peri. Tm. 5.6: 3; cf.
   ibid. 7.3: 5.
291. ibid. 2.5: 1.
292. ibid. 4.9: 2.
one's kith and kin."  

Again the Ālvār says that he had filled his body with the bliss of the Lord as if a vessel is being filled with the nectar by churning the sea.  

"As a return for the great, good help", says Nammāḻvār, "of communion in my soul, I have given up to Thee my soul itself".  

The Lord has incorporated Himself with the Ālvār, life into life, by fascinating his heart and entering it through His generosity and made it tender.  

"The Lord has merged into me" says the saint, "having absorbed into Himself my life and heart, filling these with Himself, without the knowledge even of His consort and associates".  

Nammāḻvār describes Bhagavān as the very embodiment of moral grandeur. The Lord not only loves morality in His followers but He Himself is pure, holy and moral. He helps His followers, the devotees, to become moral and pure. He is the Truth—"Meyyan", He is the Pure—"punīyan"; the Holy—"tirrtan". In other places He is described as "tūyāy", "tūmoḻiyāy", "tūyān" all giving the same sense that Bhagavān is the pure One. The Lord is the Holy of holies destroying sin — "pav iran", "pāvanācan"; He is the very form of Virtue — "punniyan". In Tirumālirūṅcōlai hymn He is described as "Ālakar".
parable beautiful form is brought out in another hymn.  

The Beautiful Absolute, Bhuvana Sundara, can only be the Purest. The aesthetic philosophy of the Ālvars transforms the Brahman of metaphysics and the Īśvara of Ethics into the Bhuvana Sundara of Bhagavata. The absolute of metaphysics becomes the beautiful God of aesthetic religion. He is “naṇṭu eṉil nāṟṟan”. Sometimes the Lord is described metaphorically as “Tūva amutu” – ‘the pure nectar’ and as “Oṉ cuṭṭar kaṟṟai” – ‘the Resplendent Bundle of Rays’.

The idea described above is also expressed in a negative way. He is “amalay” – ‘the taintless One’, “ninamalay” – the ‘faultless One. Negative metaphors are also employed to describe Him. The Lord is “uṇamil celvam” – ‘the wealth devoid of any deficiency; “antamil pukaḷy” – ‘the One with endless glory’; “ēṭṭu arum kirṭiriyiṇāy” – ‘the One with praiseless glory’; “iṭum etuppum il ican” – the Lord without equal or superior’; “torrām kēṭu avai illavan” – ‘the One who is neither created nor destroyed; “kēṭu il viluppukal kéca-van” – ‘Kēcava with imperishable, great glory’; “ellai il jṭṭanaiṭṭu” – ‘the One with endless knowledge’; “tanthai oppār il appaṇ” – ‘the One without any equal to Him; “kēṭu il pukalk kaṇṭan” – ‘Kṛṣṇa with faultless glory’;
“ulappu ilān”\(^{324}\) – ‘the One with endless auspicious qualities; and “pirappili”\(^{325}\) ‘the One without birth’. He is also referred to as “pirappu il palpiravip perumān”\(^{326}\) – ‘the One without birth, but taking countless births’. This means that He is beyond birth which is not conditioned by karma, but his births are self-determined and self-evolved.

The Lord is full of those rare and auspicious attributes and there is no comparison to Him in this respect. He is therefore called “viripukaṭan”\(^{327}\) – ‘the One with extensive and vast glory’. He is without birth which is the basis for all defects. He is ‘uttaman’\(^{328}\) – ‘the Supreme Being’ who is possessed of all moral attributes. Because of His infinite attributes, He has a thousand names – “pērum ēr āyiram piṟa pala uṭaiya emperumān”\(^{329}\) – ‘the One with a thousand names along with many others, being our Lord’; “nāmaṅkaḷ āyiram uṭaiya nampērumpān”\(^{330}\) – ‘our Lord possessed of a thousand names’. Among these qualities knowledge, strength, lordship, valour, energy and splendour – these six are associated with His nature as the Supreme Being, the other qualities like goodness, spontaneous love etc., making Him easily accessible to us. These qualities have an eternal appeal to the humanity. So Brahmanubhava differs with different seekers of salvation and this brings out the uniqueness of each experience and its universality. The seeker after salvation meditates on some single quality of the Lord according to his or her inclination and even the eternal seers, it is said, enjoy only one aspect of the divine nature. Even though the methods and the starting points may vary with the psychological variations of the individual, the goal is the same, namely, the intuition of Bhagavān, which is of the nature of supreme unsurpassable Bliss.

\(^{324}\) ibid. 5.8: 4.
\(^{325}\) ibid. 3.5: 6.
\(^{326}\) ibid. 2.9: 5.
\(^{327}\) ibid. 4.8: 8.
\(^{328}\) T.P. 3.
\(^{329}\) T.V.M. 1.3: 4.
\(^{330}\) ibid. 5.9: 11.
Has not Nammāḷvār said that “He is all knowledge and bliss?”\textsuperscript{331}

The intensity of God–love of Nammāḷvār or rather his God–infatuation can be seen in all his four compositions. His is not mere emotion, divorced from intellect. It is an emotion born out of jñāna. That is why it is called ‘mati-nalam’\textsuperscript{332} in the phraseology of the Āḻvār. Mere jñāna leads to dissection and vivisection of God and God–concepts, and can be of little or no help to the pursuers after it. Similarly mere faith and fervour border on sensuousness and sentimentalism, and are apt to drown the seeker into vice and sin and borne out by many an instance in daily life. A happy blend of jñāna and bhakti is what is most beneficent to the human soul dissatisfied with worldly pursuits. Jñāna must ripen into bhakti, “Jñānam kaṇinta nalam”\textsuperscript{333} as Amutantar terms it. Knowledge divides, but love unites. Nammāḷvār has exemplified by his life and works the glory that a man can achieve by a happy blend of knowledge and love. Love towards God fulfils itself in the case of the Āḻvār in love towards the entire creation which is organically one with God, all beings and things being but His body (Sarīra-sarīri bhāva). And that is why Nammāḷvār is sought after by man as much as God Himself, Who, after a long long search, found a person who could say ‘All is Vāsudeva’ – “Ellām Kaṇṇan”.\textsuperscript{334}

\textsuperscript{331} ibid. 1.1:2.
\textsuperscript{332} ibid. 1.1: 1.
\textsuperscript{333} R.N. 66.
\textsuperscript{334} T:V.M. 6,7: 1; ṭf. Bh.G. 7: 19.
CHAPTER XXX

NATURE MYSTICISM

Every experience is a matter of subject-object relationship in which the subject is usually generalized as the spirit or soul while the object is spoken of as Nature or Universe or more generally as Prakṛti. The basis of soul and Nature is God or the absolute which is described under various names such as Brahman, Nārāyaṇa, Śiva and so on in the various systems of philosophy. Mysticism is the way in which man experiences union with God and attains immortal bliss. It is a philosophy of religion as it is both a view and way of life. It describes the spiritual quest of man for God and justifies this spiritual experience by a philosophy or theoretical explanation. It is a personal spiritual approach to God as the God of love. In spite of differences due to environment, endowment, organisation and other factors the mystics of all lands experience God in and through Nature. They postulate what they call the self-evident truth that mystic experience is knowable. They maintain that the gulf between the sensible and the super-sensible can be bridged. To them what is here is ‘yonder’ and what is ‘yonder’ is here. The two are alike and the like can know the like. God is a Supreme Reality that is realisable according to them.

Though the philosophy of nature or prakṛti is not so important as that of the spirit or ātman it furnishes a corrective to the subjective tendencies of mysticism as a personal intuitive experience. It is a matter of common knowledge that science studies in a disinterested way a particular province of reality and has a piecemeal view thereof. But philosophy reflects on nature as a connected whole; and, as the cosmology of religion, it enquires into the nature of God as the ground of all beings. Nature is the world of space-time-cause and it is governed by the law of uniformity and unity. God
is in nature, but is not nature. Nature is external to the finite self, but not to God. Nature and the self are eternal but neither is derived from the other nor created by it. Though they are eternally distinct, they are not external to God who is their ground and mystic goal.

Creation is the self-limitation of God in the interests of soul-making. Nature is the theatre of the Divine līlā of Love and the Lord wears the garment of nature and plays with the finite self till the two are united. The flowery garment of the world as revealed in the shining sun and the moon, the fragrance of the lotus and lily and the sweet song of the cuckoo and the koel is for some mystics a medium of ineffable perception, a source of exalted joy, the veritable clothing of God. It serves as a fine medium for the self to reach out to the Absolute. The mysterious vitality of trees, the silent magic of the forest, the strange and steady cycle of its life, possess in a peculiar degree this power of unleashing the human soul. Unsullied by the corroding touch of consciousness, that life can make a contact with the "great life of the All", and through its mighty rhythms man can receive a message concerning the true and timeless world of "all that is, and was, and evermore shall be". The poet, the artist and the mystic gifted with "the vision and the faculty divine" intuit their spiritual kinship with the soul of Nature and are lost in blissful communion with its glowing beauty and rhythm.

According to Nammāḻvār, God is the subject and the object: "He is my Lord, the Lord of Vaikuṇṭha, the Master of the Eternals, who as the sole, independent Form constituted the Primordial Seed, created by the mere wish. Brahmā, Siva, Indra and other deities, the great seers, the sentient beings, men and animals, and non-sentient beings, and created the great mystic ocean (sea of Āvaraṇa) and is asleep on it"; Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār's perception of nature itself as God is something grand: "Clothed with the garment of the waters

1. T.V.M. 1.5: 4.
of the ocean, with the wide earth for His feet, with the wide expanse of the space for His body, the eight fair directions for His shoulders, and the zenith of the macrocosm (anādam) for His crown, He stands".² The Lord is gloriously depicted by Nammāḻvār as a hill of emerald, wearing the ruddy huge cloud and bearing on the head the red brilliant-rayed sun. The cool-rayed moon is His ornament adorning the neck called significantly as 'candrahāra'. The multitude of twinkling stars are His lustrous ornaments. The yellow garment, crest-gem and the candrahāra are thus represented by these three presentations of Nature. The Lord is imagined by the Āḻvār to be lying on the arm of the God of the sea.³ The vision of the mystic poets is more or less akin to that of Arjuna who beheld the Universal Form of the Lord with the aid of the supernatural eye bestowed by Him.⁴ These mystics necessarily have recourse to metaphors, allegories and parables when they begin to express and explain their inexpressible experience and naturally their language becomes poetic. The saints of Nāṉaiyiram have had such experiences which have found expression in their exquisite poetry.

God is held to be the inner controller (antaryāmin) of the selves and of the inanimate world. This form which God takes is one of the five finitised forms. Though this is to be admitted, it is not so easy, as it appears to be, to prove it in the case of the inanimate world. He is to be shown to remain within the world whose another name is Nature and this becomes a possibility by recognising God's full pervasion of Nature. He is not only beyond Nature but is in Nature. The soul-essence is rooted or grounded in the super-essence of God and is sustained by His love. God is closer to us than our own breath and nearer than our hands and feet. God's centre is every where and circumference nowhere. He dwells in the stone below and the star above and is eternal in the

² Peri. Tm. 6.6: 3; cf. M.Tv. 17, and the invocatory verses of Naṟṟinai; again cf. Mū. Tv. 41. Here the Āḻvār speaks of God having the lightning as his garment.
³ T V, C. 1.
⁴ Bh. G. 11: 5 to 8.
temporal. The Lord says: "Cleave the wood and there I am". The immortal Tamil poet Kampan says: "Know thou that the Lord is present alive in the smallest unit of length and in the hundredth part of an atom; in the great Mēru mountain and in the pillar standing here, and in the words spoken by thee too". Prahlāda’s intuition of the Paramātman in the pillar and Yaśoda’s cosmic vision of Kṛṣṇa are classic examples to illustrate divine immanence in inanimate as well as human nature. William Blake is only echoing the mystic notion of Boheme who speaks of our seeing a flower to whom the world is but a mirror of the Deity where the soul can hold a converse with Him therein and even, according to whom, a flower in the wall will reveal God in all His glory like the lilies and the starry heavens. Tennyson when he sees a flower experiences the same truth. He sees the unity of the universe in the flower.

Similarly, Nature mysticism inspires the devotee who experiences and enjoys the beauty of God objectively in all things and at the end he realizes the mystery of this Absolute beauty remaining already enthroned in the heart as the Lord of Love. Tagore had a vision of the world bathed in the radiance of beauty which, according to him, looks Heaven and Earth when the song of the singer was not distinct from Him Who was Rasa itself in the drama of love and spiritual wedding. The immortal poet Kampan describes the unfailing rains, feeding the perennial river the Gaṅga made holy and sacred in the minds of the people by legends and literature. The rains and the floods remind him of the divine legends.

8. "Flower in the crannied wall
   I pluck you out the crannies
   Hold you here, root and all in my hand
   Little flower, but if I could understand
   What you are, root and all and all in all,
   I should know what God and man is"
Like God, they take the form of many things, sometimes reminding us even of the prostitute. He does not leave us in doubt; for he tells us that, like God appearing in many forms according to the beliefs of various sects and religions, water takes many different forms of channels and reservoirs according to the shape men give it.\textsuperscript{10} Cosmic consciousness, as pointed out by Bucke, is the consciousness of the Cosmos in its entirety; but it is not a mere addition or summation of all things of the world. Cosmos is the eternal expression of the dynamic love of the Almighty while creation is the process of the Formless God revealing to us in varied forms.\textsuperscript{11} The one becomes many out of love according to an Upaniṣadic statement. This is to help the soul thrown into space and time, as it were, to unveil itself and intuit its true divine nature, to kiss it away unto divinity. Before creation, prakṛti was in a latent state; but in creation the latent becomes the patent and manas, prāṇa and the elements gradually evolve from it. The self is different from prakṛti and is eternal. It is somehow associated with the body made of prakṛti which is subjected to the ills of mundane life. But it can release itself from the perishing body and attain immortality by the redemptive grace of the Saviour Who is the Soul of souls. The sense of separateness is dissolved when the soul feels ensouled by His grace and greeted by His Love. Then it realizes that spirituality has its meaning and value in Divinity and not in mere Nature Mysticism.

Higher mysticism is the communion between the self of the man and the In-dwelling Self, and Nature mysticism is a half-way house to it and not the goal or the final stopping place. Even the ancient Caṅkam poetry of the Tamils has in general no touch of divinity in it even though Nature comes.

\textsuperscript{10} K.R. Pāla, 619.

\textsuperscript{11} cf. K.R. Cuntara. (invocatory verse).
there as the background and stage for the drama of human life, 'uri-p-porul' as it is called. The Câñkam poetry abounds in description of Nature which colours the human life in many ways. For example, the droning noise of the sea appears like the mourning cry very much to the desperate heroine separated from her lover. The sea seems to mourn in sympathy with her. Sometimes a jarring note is heard; an opposition or disregard is felt. The same heroine sometimes feels that the sea which goes on with its dance of waves remains cruelly unconcerned about her own sufferings. All these moods are too well known in any poetry to need emphasis. Description of Nature, as in any high poetry, stands as a symbol to reveal to us the inner meaning of the story, the ebb and flow of emotions, as seen by the poet in his vision. Nature plays another important role, especially in ancient Tamil poetry, as giving room for the free play of allegory (uḷḷurai uṇamam) and suggestion (iṟaiicci). There Nature helps the poets to wield their satirical remarks, biting or sweet, with hidden meaning to achieve the concentration and economy they aim at. Such descriptions of Nature are seen in the hymns of Āḻvārs who achieve their purpose by this aspect.

The universal love of Nammālvār and other Āḻvārs may be better understood by our realization of the wide scope of their poetic interest with vision of Beauty everywhere. A list of the fauna and flora of their poetry may help us here. One may note in their poetry various kinds of bamboos, the sugar-cane, various kinds of paddy and grains, the cocoanut, the arecanut, the palmyra and varieties of the plantains being often found mentioned. The sandal, the mango, the veṅkai, the kōṅku, the punnai, the āṭal, various kinds of jack tree, the vākai, the nelli (āmlakam), the cura-punnai, the kuraṇam, the acōkū, the aloe, and others are referred to. Miḷaku and karī (pepper varieties), turmeric, are their favourites. Some of these are food like paddy; others like

13. ibid. 123.
sandal, *akīl* etc., are famous for their fragrance; still others like the jack, the mango, the plantain etc., are noted for their fruits; a few others like the *vēṅkai*, the *kuravam* etc., for their flowers and fewer still like pepper for their spices.

The Āḻvār poets are generally fond of flowers. They refer to the blooming *kōṅku*, *vēṅkai*, *puṇṇai*, *kuravu*, *makiḻ* (*vakulam*), *kuruntam*, *cerunti*, *mallikai*, *mauval*, and *mullai* (jasmine varieties), *mātavi*, *kurukkatti*, *ceṅpakam*, *piṭavam*, *karuviḻai*, *pūval*, *iruvāti*, *pāṭiri*, *karumukai*, varieties of the sword flower (*tālai* and *kaitai*), *mantāram* (*pāṟijāsam*) and *kuriṇci*. The beautiful water flowers of all varieties and descriptions whose distinctions the later generations have forgotten occupy in the Āḻvārs the unique position of beauty — *kaḻunir*, *ceṅkaḻunir*, *kāvi*, *karuṅkuvaḻai*, *ceṅkuvaḻai*, *karunilam*, *nilam*, *kumutam*, *allī* (*āmpal*), *kamalam*, *aravintam*, *paṅkayam*, *muṇṭakam* and *tāmarai* (lotus varieties).

The floods of Kāvirī, Maṅṇi and Gaṅga rush down carrying in their floods many precious things like fruits, fragrant wood, yak tails, (*veṅcāmarai*) elephant tusks, precious gems, pearls, coral and gold, conches and fish and thereby enriching the country. Triumāṅkaįyalvār mentions even the clothings of nymphs being carried by the waters of the Gaṅga.14

Mention is made of the birds of all varieties by these saints. The koel (cuckoo), the peacock, the dove, the parrot, the *anril*, the *cempōṭtu*, the *pūval* (*nākaṉavāyṛ-puḻ*), and even the wild cock, the crow and the eagle are the favourite birds of the poet-saints. The water birds like *kuruku*, *nārai*, *kokku* and *annam* have beauty of their own and the saints refer to them in many contexts. The dancing of the peacock according to the singing of the bees and the repetition of the *Vedas* and the God’s name by the parrots is often mentioned.

Among the insects the bee is the highly popular one with our saints. It is more attractive to them than the birds. Though the possession of six legs is the characteristic feature of all insects in general, that aspect (aṟupatam) is reserved for the bees by the poets of our country. The keen and loving eye of the poet distinguishes a variety of them: vaṇṭu, curumpu, varvaṇṭu, tumpi etc. The poets lose their heart in their hum and dance round the honey of the flowers; hence the general name 'matukaram' to them.

The monkeys (a variety of them viz., kaṭuvan, manti, kuraiṅku), the loving couple of elephants, the dark buffalo, the varieties of deer (pulvāy, kalai, marai, māṇ) the yak, the boar varieties (keḷal, ēṇam), the tiger, the lion, the māciṃam (perhaps python), the wild dog, the must elephant, and the jackal, engage the attention of those poets and they occupy a happy place in their hymns. The mention of the aḷi by these poets is perhaps in the sense of a lion; for, otherwise, it is a mythological animal. Such descriptions as a female monkey requesting the male monkey sitting on a high peak in the Tirupati hills to pluck out the full moon from the sky and give it to her, and a male elephant offering prayer to the Lord add beauty to their verses.¹⁵

The poet-saints enjoy the glimpses of divine beauty in the moving, jumping and darting of the fish in the rushing floods and in the sleeping ponds. Vaḷai, kayal, varāl, keṇṭai, cel, āval, vel ēraṇu and malaṅku (serpent fish) are the favourite fish varieties mentioned in the hymns. The crab varieties (nāṇṭu, nalli, alavaṇ), and the tortoise have all attracted the attention of the Āḻvārs along with the sacred conches ippī, caṅku and vālampuri.

But in the mysticism of the Āḻvārs and Naiyānmaṅs and other later Tamil poets like Kampan there is no boundary line between nature, human nature and God since they have a strong faith in the immanence of God in all things as well as in man and also His transcendence. Nature sets the stage for

¹⁵. Mū. Tv. 58, 70.
Man; he can rise from animal nature in the suitable environment. To the Indian mystic the universe appears animated by the vital impulses of God. To him the universe of acit and cit has its unity only in Brahman. It is the creative expression of the divine sports of love. The beauties of nature and the fair forms of human and celestial beings are but partial revelations of the unsurpassed beauty of God. The whole Cosmos appear in His Rūpa which Viśīṣṭadvaitins call sartra of God. The universe as form of God was revealed to Arjuna.\(^{16}\) The universe appears as the divine Light to Poykaiyāḻvār who says:

\[
\text{"Vaiyam takalīyā vārkaṭālē nēyyāka}
\text{Veyya katirōn vilakkāka"}^{17}
\]

— "The world is the bowl; the sea is the ghee; the fierce-rayed sun is the luminous wick".

It cannot be said that the objective world does exhaust Nature. Nature appearing as the objective world not only includes all that are seen external to us, but includes our body as well. Even this becomes sanctified as the temple of the Lord. People moving with their bodies on this earth also form part of this world and Nature. They are the walking temples, ‘nāṭamāṭum koyikal’ as Tirumūliar calls them. "The heart-beat in the mystic is in tune with the heart-beat of the world owing to spiritual community and the immanence of God in each person. Like the germ-cell in the body, the soul is the epitome of the universe as an inter-related living whole"\(^{18}\) It is the microcosm of the Cosmos macrocosm. As in the macrocosm (aṇḍam), so in the microcosm (piṇḍam) the Universal Soul is reflected in the mirror of our individual soul. Nay, He is the ‘antaryāmin’ the inner Soul; and as such, He is the Reality of reality, the life of Life; the great

\(^{16}\) Bh. G. 11. The Tamil Kantapurāṇam gives a description of a similar form of Murukan appearing in the Viśvarūpa before the aṭṭa Cūrapāṇman.

\(^{17}\) M.Tv. 1.

\(^{18}\) Mystics and Mysticism, p. 57.
Light as the Upaniṣads put it from which the lesser lights get their illumination. The light of macrocosm is found, as it were, in that of microcosm. Devotion (anpu) is the lamp-bowl, aspiration (ārvam or prēma) or hankering after the Lord is the ghee (oil), the blissful heart is the wick and knowledge (jñāna) is the bright flame: this is the mystic vision of Pūṭatālāv in which the Lord appears as the Inner Light.

"Anpē takliyā ārvamē neyyāka
Inpuruku cintai īṭutiriya – naṇpuruki
Naṇac cuṭarvilak kërrinē nāraṇarku
Naṇat tamiḻ purinta naṇ".20

These two lights, the outer and the inner, reveal the hidden Lord who is the soul in all things. So it appears that every soul is the temple of the Lord demanding its worship and service.

Nammālvār's mind is so filled with the experience of the beauty of God that He is reminded of Him whenever he beholds the dark clouds, big hills, the vast sea, pitch darkness and the flower called pūval which are ever with the bees and any object dark in appearance.21 The saint's life which is thinly attached to the body and thus is ready to fly off from there owing to unbearable love for the Lord, becomes firm and the body too becomes stout, when he beholds pūval-pū, kāyūm-pū, karuneytal-pū and eenkaḷunir-pū which are all blue in colour.22 It is imagined that the clouds should have continuously put forth efforts, and swept over the vast sky, for they must have performed some kind of penance somewhere as otherwise their resemblance to the complexion of the Lord cannot be explained.23 The Ālvār who entertained a fancy of this kind seems to address the clouds themselves. "O clouds! what processes (yoga) did you adopt to become

20. I.Tv. 1
22. ibid. 73; cf. T.V.M. 4.4: 4, 9; 8.5: 8; Nāc. Tm. 9: 4; Nān. Tv. 23.
23. ibid. 85.
similar to God in appearance? How did you obtain these processes? Could this be the penance you had performed by torturing your bodies through wanderings in the vast skies bearing the water for preserving the life of beings? Your getting this result of your penance must be due to the favour of God”.

The beautiful water-laden cloud with a streak of lightning brings to the mind of Pēyāḻvār the presence of the Lord with Śrī. The cloud does its work of giving protection from the sun’s heat and rain by wandering through the sky thus bearing a likeness to the Lord who moves quickly from place to place to protect the suffering humanity. It thunders during the rainy season and resembles in this respect the Lord who blows His conch.

The Āḻvār is reminded of God’s complexion by the sight of the blue lilies. The lilies ought to be found in the forests but they did not choose to remain there. They entered into tanks and stood there motionless which is proof of the strength of their legs for performing penance there. Thus they acquired the complexion of the Lord. The sea, which is blue in colour, is said to have acquired this complexion by having always close touch with the body of the Lord who lies there. The blue sapphire when it is beheld, reminds us the complexion of the Lord. The sky at twilight shows the Lord who wears the garland of tulāci.

The Lord’s pervasion in the universe is such that the form of any object whatsoever presents to us only His form, since that object could not exist without Him. The form of Brahmā, the constellations, the blazing fire, the mountains, the eight directions, sun and moon are all the forms of the Lord. His form is presented by the ever moving wind, the vast expanse of the space, the hard earth, the blazing fire.

24. T.V.R. 32.
25. Mū. Tv. 86.
29. ibid. 38.
the sun and the moon, men and other living beings inclusive of immobile non-sentient objects. The Lord, who is of
the nature of the self-luminous knowledge, pervades the uni-
verse through the full length, breadth, height and depth and
is the very life of all Nature and of all the selves.

Nature's exhilarating and exuberant charm is such that
it more often arouses and inflames the sensuous appetite of the
selves. The souls, which have taken up a physical body due
to the effects of the past deeds become much impassioned by
the impact of the alluring aspects of Nature under the most
tempting circumstances. Nature which Yamuna describes
as māya and Rāmānuja as obscuring the nature of God, takes
a powerful hold on such occasions on men with very rare
exceptions. To this class of exceptions belong the religious
minded persons, who, affected by intense detectability, find,
beneath the sensuousness of such sights, visions of God who
is the ultimate basis for such fascinating environments. The
religious back-ground, which is furnished by the recitation of
the Vedas, the performance of the ritualistic acts and such
other functions, evokes the emotion of the Ālvārs with the
result that they wax eloquent over the attractive features of
the shrine and the presiding deity there. Mystic experience
which is the specific feature of the life of devotion of the
Ālvārs is better revealed in their ecstatic presentation of the
temples situated in such surroundings.

The hymns of Nālayiram abound in the descriptions of
Nature, its mountains, rivers and cities these Ālvār saints
visited. These places are held to be equally holy and divine
as the temples where the Lord has chosen to be present as
arcā. It is therefore tantamount to saying that the description
of Nature is one way of describing the Lord Himself. Tiru-
maṅkaiyālvār describes the Himalayas as a place full of odorî-

32. cf. At the sight of the cloud, the mind of a person, though
happy, becomes changed, that is, it entertains a longing
(Meghadūta 1).
ferous groves where the dark clouds rumble and the heavy feathered peacocks climbing the steep slopes on their bellies dance on the peaks; where roam the sharp-toothed lions which have their abode in the caves and which frighten even the huge mountain-like and majestic tuskers; where in the shade of *venkai* trees on flowery beds the tusker sleeps with its consort; and as a great mountain with its slopes on which clouds enclose the *venkai* trees with thick growing pepper creepers entwining them, and with the adjoining hills haunted by striped, battle-ready tigers. The Āḻvār refers to Čiṅka-vēlkunram (Ahobilam) where the tigers from their hiding in bamboo bushes watch the tracks of the roaming elephants. In the Tirupati Hills, according to Pūtaṭaiḷvār, a male elephant uproots a tender bamboo and thrusts it into a big honey-comb and offers it with sweet honey to its mate. The same idea is repeated by Tirumaṅkaiyālvār too. This Āḻvār shows Tirumāliruṅcōlai Hill to us as a place where, as the clouds having collected water from the deep sea ascend the sky rumbling, the lion, mistaking that sound for the trumpeting of the elephant, roars in reply.

The sacred Gaṅga in its course brings the clothes and garlands of *Apsara* women, and also precious stones; the river, through its main force and with swift currents in its depths, breaks mountains and pushes along its course even huge tuskers. The holy Kāviri also brings in its course the tusks of elephants killed by lions, white-teak trees (*akil*), excellent pearls, and the white locks of hair of mountain deer (*kavari māg*) and other such precious mountain finds.

33. Peri. Tm. 1.2: 1.
34. ibid. 1.2: 2.
35. ibid. 1.4: 7.
36. ibid. 1.7: 6.
37. I. Tv. 75.
39. ibid. 9.8: 6.
40. ibid. 1.4: 4.
41. ibid. 1.4: 6.
42. ibid. 3.8: 3.
river in its swelling course carries many kinds of flowers and heaps of mangoes which drop into the river because of the falling of cocoanuts from tall well-grown trees; it also gathers in its course the nine precious stones, the precious pearls in the bamboos and the locks of hair of mountain deer; it collects and carries along white-teak logs, sandal wood logs, gold ingots and pearls; it brings in its course gold ingots, pearls, claws of lions and tusks of elephants.

Nammāḻvār pleads for mercy from the deity at Tirumalai abounding in the blossomed lotuses shining like fire, perhaps reminding us of the presence of Śri. The clear and beautiful rills in that hill flow with gold dust, pearls and gems, which form part of the minerals imbedded in the dense hilly ranges. This adds to the picturesque scenery of the hill which therefore attracts the devotees to the Lord. Pēyāḻvār offers a graphic description of the hill. The supreme Lord, the indweller, pervading in all the directions, revealing the Vedas whose purport He is, is present in the Tirumalai hills which by their loftiness appear to reach the region of the moon and where the waters in the flooded rills raise pleasant and rumbling sounds. That deity is present in the mind of the Āḻvār. The waters too perhaps sing in their wonted tone, the praise of the Lord who has created them.

The towns and cities are spoken of as being surrounded by the beautiful fields and groves. Tiruvallikkēṇi is a town where into the cool, thick groves, with fragrant kurava flowers and resounding with the sounds of cuckoos and peacocks, the sun’s rays do not penetrate at all.

43. ibid. 4.4: 3.
44. ibid. 5.1: 9; 5.4: 9; 5.7: 10.
45. ibid. 6.9: 5.
46. ibid. 6.9: 6.
47. T.V.M. 6.10: 2.
48. ibid. 6.10: 3.
50. Peri. Tm. 2.3: 7.
is described as a place which is like the smithy of the goldsmith, with dark neytaL flowers as charcoal, with punnaL buds as pearls, the blossoms as gold, and with red lotuses as fire;\textsuperscript{51} as a place where the sweet sugar-cane grows to the music of swarms of honey bees in groves full of kōngu blossoms, cura-pumnaL and kurava trees;\textsuperscript{52} the town is surrounded by areca-nut groves; the arecanut palms have buds resembling white pearls, the ripening ones becoming green emeralds and the ripened fruits reddening like corals.\textsuperscript{53} In the groves near Tiruvakāntrapuram heard of monkeys romp about, eating jack fruits, on vēnkai, kōnku and cepakA trees full of golden flowers.\textsuperscript{54} The women agricultural labourers at Cikāḷi take the neytaL flowers for their eyes and ampaL flowers for their lips stand still refraining from weeding operations;\textsuperscript{55} the town is surrounded by the fields where the neytaL flowers resemble the eyes, the lotuses the faces and the ampaL flowers the collection of lips of beautiful women;\textsuperscript{56} where in the groves the juice oozes out of jack fruits with the weight of which the branches are bent down, because of the fall of ripened arecanuts as a result of squirrels leaping about from branch to branch.\textsuperscript{57} The description of Nāṅkūr is catching. Near that town the buffaloes keep wallowing in pools with mud on their horns after having eaten up well grown sugar-canes;\textsuperscript{58} on the top of mansions abound pearls dropped from clouds pierced by spears planted on the building top;\textsuperscript{59} beside the beautiful groves the sound of the musical instrument spread sky-high; the hum of the bees, the chant of Vedas, and the tinkling of the anklets of women combine into something like the roar of the floods at the time of Deluge;\textsuperscript{60} the

\textsuperscript{51} ibid. 2.10: 3.
\textsuperscript{52} ibid. 2.10: 4.
\textsuperscript{53} ibid. 2.10: 7.
\textsuperscript{54} ibid. 3.1: 5.
\textsuperscript{55} ibid. 3.4: 3.
\textsuperscript{56} ibid. 3.4: 5. cf. Tēraḷunṭūr hymn 7.5: 10.
\textsuperscript{57} ibid. 3.4: 8.
\textsuperscript{58} ibid. 3.8: 6.
\textsuperscript{59} ibid. 3.9: 4.
\textsuperscript{60} ibid. 3.10: 5.
peacocks dance to the hum of bees at the time of the rumbling of clouds overhanging the cool and vast groves; the young arecanut trees drop their pearl-like buds into crab-holes vacated by the crabs which with wide open mouths enter the lotus flowers on slushy ground; the gazelle-eyed, red-lipped damsels teach soft words to emerald-green parrots perching on their hands. In the groves surrounding Puḷḷam-pūṭāṅkuṭi the curumpus (species of wasps) drone on fragrant flowers, comely peacocks dance, and striped winged bees make music. In Kūṭalūr the fish in water mistake the sword-flower (tāḷam-pū) on the shore for cranes and get frightened. In the mango groves at Tiruvellāra the cuckoos to counter the bitter tang of tender mango leaves pecked at by them drink the sweet juice of jack fruits. The mansions at Tirukkaṉaṅkuṭi are surrounded by plantain fields heavily laden, arecanut trees growing tall, kurava trees, fine jack fruit trees, cool mango groves and māṭavi creepers; in that place herds of peacocks roaming the woods stop to dance as thick clouds provide drum music with their rumbling, and as the bees in search of honey hum tunes. The world is thus the beautiful garment of God to these mystic seers.

The Tirukkuṭantai hymn glorifies the deity at Kumbakanam and is stated to have fascinated Nāṭhamuni and aroused in him a burning zeal to unearth all the compositions, depicts Tirukkuṭanti (Kumbakanam) in an ideal setting with the prosperous rich paddy fields all around, assured of plenty of water supplied to them. The lotuses grown there often remind us of the Lord’s enchanting eyes. The place

61. ibid. 4.2: 3.
62. ibid. 4.4: 1.
63. ibid. 4.4: 6. cf. 3.8: 8.
64. ibid. 5.1: 1.
65. ibid. 5.2: 9.
66. ibid. 5.3: 4.
67. ibid. 9.1: 6.
68. ibid. 9.1: 7; 1.10: 6; 2.3: 2; cf. P.Tv. 5, 70.
69. T.V.M. 5.8: 1.
70. ibid. 5.8: 2.
abounds in rich mansions where dwell persons supreme through their devotion to the Lord.\textsuperscript{71} It is no surprise, if the Ælvār grows rapturous and addresses the deity as supreme through enchanting beauty and exclaims that he could not contain the insatiable beauty.\textsuperscript{72} He is the fascinating melodious music of the \textit{vīṇā}, nectar, fruit of the wisdom, the bold lion\textsuperscript{73} and the hill of corals shooting up to the stellar region.\textsuperscript{74} When He entered the mind of the Ælvār, He was not visible as He was then formless but after entering, He possessed a divine form. Being an insatiable nectar, He is deliciously sweet not to the tongue which cannot taste it, but mystically relished from within.\textsuperscript{75} Nammālvār's experience is the result of the surroundings which tempt the religious emotion to burst into rhapsody.

Nammālvār yearns with severe longing to reach the feet of the Lord of Tiruvallavāl where the shrine is situated amidst the groves rich in floral-juices and jasmine flowers.\textsuperscript{76} Trees like \textit{punnai, makil}, \textit{matavi}, arecanut and cocoanut palms, and plantain and others wafting gentle fragrance.\textsuperscript{77} The lotuses which by their beauty remind the lustrous and enchanting faces of women, the sweet hum of the bees and gentle breeze lend charm to the surroundings providing an ideal and favourable mental attitude to drink deep the charm of the Lord.\textsuperscript{78} The shrine at Tirukkāṭkarai fascinates him by its natural surroundings to such an extent that the Ælvār feels the intense longing no longer bearable. The streets in this place are fragrant with blue lotuses (\textit{kāvīl}) and the mind of the Ælvār loses its balance while it reflects on the beauty of the Lord in this shrine.\textsuperscript{79} The tanks and

\textsuperscript{71} ibid. 5.8 : 3.
\textsuperscript{72} ibid. 5.8 : 5.
\textsuperscript{73} ibid. 5.8 : 6.
\textsuperscript{74} ibid. 5.8 : 9.
\textsuperscript{75} ibid. 5.8 : 10; cf. ibid. 6.10 : 3.
\textsuperscript{76} ibid. 5.9 : 1.
\textsuperscript{77} ibid. 5.9 : 2, 4.
\textsuperscript{78} ibid. 5.9 : 6, 7, 9.
\textsuperscript{79} ibid. 9.6 : 1.
groves of flowering trees remind the Āḻvār of the greatness of the Lord. The mind melts at the thought of this place and the soul cannot tolerate his singing the greatness of the Lord. The Āḻvār is at a loss to understand the Grace of the Lord with which He enjoyed the soul of this insignificant person. The rich flooded regions on the southern bank of the Kāviri where the shrine of Tiruppērnakar is situated remind the Āḻvār of the happy setting of Tirumāliruṅcōlai, where the deity entered into the Āḻvār and fully occupied his mind. The groves abounding with the hum of the bees fill the Āḻvār's mind when the Lord entered his mortal frame and removed all the karma.

Tirumāṅkaiyāḻvār recapitulates how the Lord at Tiruvāḷi entered into him out of His own accord and afforded him a delectable experience. The Āḻvār could not dissociate the regions from the red sprouts of acōka, or of the dance of the peacocks which mistake the smoke rising from the jaggery-manufacturing centres for the dense clouds, reminding the Āḻvār of the huge blue hill lying in the milky ocean. The fishes jumping from the fields during harvest proclaim the prosperous condition of the regions there. The puṇṇai trees and the fields inhabited by swans seduce the mind by drawing it towards the slender-waisted women, but the Āḻvār wonders that the Lord took care to place the mind of the Āḻvār at His feet drawing it away from that sensuousness. On the contrary, the sweet melody of music, the boom of the conches, the dispersing sound of the musical instruments and the sweet sound of the dances, prevail at Tiruvāḷi. They are equally tempting and so the Āḻvār requests the

80. ibid. 9.6: 2.
81. ibid. 9.6: 4, 5.
82. ibid. 10.8: 1; cf. ibid. 2.10.
83. ibid. 10.8: 5.
84. Ṛṣi. Tm. 3.5: 1.
85. ibid. 3.5: 3.
86. ibid. 3.5: 4.
Lord not to leave his mind now engaged in worshipping Him with flowers.\(^{87}\)

The tender paddy stalks wafted by the gentle breeze present the picture of chowries. The swans, koels, peacocks, and parrots move about their wonted way in the rich fields and groves of plantains and arecanuts. Such surroundings at Tiruvâluntûr allured the Āḻvâr to identify the Lord in the shrine there with Śrî Krṣṇâ’s whose elegant sports receive a graphic depiction.\(^{88}\) Tirukkâṇṭâṅkûţî is a place refreshed with floral scents emanating from the flowers like jasmine. The Lord is therefore He who took the form of the Fish who controlled the ever-surging flood.\(^{89}\) The swans are seated on the lotuses, the lotus-leaves above them appearing like umbrella.\(^{90}\) The peacocks dances in the groves, the clouds issue the gentle rumbling sound of the drum and the intoxicated bees hum probably to applaud the feet of Śrî Râma.\(^{91}\) Tirukkâṇṭâpuram has a peculiar attraction to Tirumaṅkaiyâḻvâr where there is the shrine for the Lord who held high up the Govardhana hill. It is but natural that this place should be surrounded by waters which take with them in their course creepers of corals.\(^{92}\) The clouds and columns of smoke of amber should proclaim that the blue-complexioned Lord is enshrined there.\(^{93}\) Hares and fishes move about in the shallow fields.\(^{94}\)

To Nammâḻvâr the Lord becomes everything. He is the fire, the water, the earth, the sky and the wind; He is the mother, the father, and the sons and daughters; He is other things beyond these, and one and all. He is the sound of the

\(^{87}\) ibid. 3.5 : 5.
\(^{88}\) ibid. 7.8.
\(^{89}\) ibid. 9.1 : 3.
\(^{90}\) ibid. 9.1 : 5.
\(^{91}\) ibid. 9.1 : 7; cf. ibid. 9.1 : 9.
\(^{92}\) ibid. 8.3 : 1.
\(^{93}\) ibid. 8.3 : 2.
\(^{94}\) ibid. 8.7 : 3.
strings of the harp, the sugar-cane juice and the nectar.\textsuperscript{95} He is the sun and the moon; the numerous beautifull stars and darkness; the down-pour of rain, praise and blame alike; and cruel death with cruel eyes.\textsuperscript{96} He is the prime mover of all the yugas and of the innumerable similar and dissimilar objects in those yugas.\textsuperscript{97} He is being and non-being, numerous sentient and non-sentient beings and the prime mover behind all these.\textsuperscript{98} He is body and soul, elimination and generation and the player of tricks of illusion.\textsuperscript{99} He is forgetfulness and remembrance, heat and coldness, the quality of wonder as well as the objects of wonder, victory and defeat, deed and its fruits.\textsuperscript{100} He is the doer of deeds of sorrow, arrogance, gratification, desires which bring sorrows, the measure of things, the static and the dynamic.\textsuperscript{101} He is the three worlds, their creator, the one immanent in them and transcendent over them.\textsuperscript{102} He is the desired taste, sight, touch, sound and smell of all the organs and the senses.\textsuperscript{103} He is the Form celebrated in the ancient scriptures as well as the Formless.\textsuperscript{104} So His nature and shape are impenetrable to all.\textsuperscript{105} That the behaviour of Parâńkuśa Nâyaki in her intense love of God, as described by her mother, will clearly reveal that God is all.\textsuperscript{106} “All the world is the creation of Kaṇṭha” – ‘Eriya pittiyōtu ella ulakum kaṁṭha paṭaippu ennum’.\textsuperscript{107}

Nammāḷvār enjoys the wonder of the self-contradic-
tions of the world play or viruddha vilhūti\textsuperscript{108} of the wonderful Mayin and seeks to laugh it away by trying to go beyond it. In the blending of the joy of the eternal realism and the tragic tension of the realm of samsāra, there results the aesthetic feeling that the cosmos has a cosmic touch. The Āḷvār is simply amazed at His paradoxical glory in the course of which he gives free and full expression to his feelings of wonder and amazement at the way the Lord manifests Himself in the world. He puts a question point-blank to Him to divulge the secret by which He manages to be all this. This is perhaps a question to which no answer is vouchsafed except that He is "arivu ariya pirān"\textsuperscript{109} – ‘the Lord who cannot be understood by human intellect’. The Āḷvār himself says in another context: "I of very small intellect hanker to see Him who cannot be known by any one. Can there be a greater folly than this?"\textsuperscript{110} Unfinitess to sing of Him is gradually disclosed to be only a corollary to the appreciation of the Lord’s unsurpassed greatness, which is far above human ken. One can see that Āḷvār’s modesty is not born of a superficial sense of conventionality, but out of an abiding sense of His indescribability. The Āḷvār refers to the comparisons, similes and analogies, that he and others of his ilk indulge in very often, while trying to describe His indescribable beauty and features: “The lotus can never equal Thy eye or feet or hand. Molten gold can come nowhere near the resplendence of Thy Form. And so the comparisons and the suggestions we employ in order to praise Thee, only show how small and trivial our attempts to praise Thou art”;\textsuperscript{111} and again “All the sacred words that are uttered by any one in any world are nothing but a pale reflection of Thy praise. What words can I employ to sing in praise of Thee.”\textsuperscript{112} “What shall I call Thee” is the refrain of a whole hymn. “Shall I call Thee Earth, Sea, Fire,
Wind, Sky, Sun and Moon? Shall I call Thee the groups of mountains, loving rain, the ever-shining constellations of stars, the arts that are mouthed by the tongue, or the very breath which is ultimately responsible of these arts? Shall I call Thee medicine that is desired by every one, or the nectar of the sea of Milk? Shall I call Thee milk, or shall I speak of Thee as the cream and essence of the four Vedas, or the religious code? and so on. There are about fifty-two ‘enkos’ (engo = Shall I say thus?) in the first eight verses of this hymn. It is seen here how the Āḷvār fumbles and flounders for words and expressions suited to describe Him.

The God is both eminent and immanent; He is inside the world becoming the world itself, but He is beyond it all. The statement of the Āḷvār that Brahma, Śiva and Indra are beyond the ken of vision of men, but Kaṇṇan (Viṣṇu) beyond the ken of these gods themselves emphasizes this great truth. Nammāḷvār is not a mere Nature mystic. He intuits God in Nature and also as transcending it. He says: “Thou art the soul of the world; Thou art in the shape of the released souls which extend in all ten directions innumerable in the outer space”;

“Thou art the prime mover of the permanent three worlds; having created them, Thou art both immanent and transcendent in these”; whatever is beyond this world, Thou art that too;......Thou art also what are beyond the grasp of the senses; “He is the life-principle behind all that is beyond the Universe too; Thou art the prime mover behind the ‘elements’ and the life-principle. Thou art the ethereal space, and also Brahma and Śiva who are in

114. ibid. 3.4:2.
115. ibid. 3.4:5.
116. ibid. 3.4:6.
117. T.V.M. 7.7:11. cf. 1.3:9; 1.9:5; 1.9:8; 3.1:10; 3.10:9; 4.10:4 10.7:6; 10.7:7; 10.10:3.
118. ibid. 6.9:7.
119. ibid. 7.8:8.
120. ibid. 8.1:6.
121. ibid. 8.8:2.
it”\(^\text{122}\) “Thou art the ever expanding Form which informs and enfolds within itself the dimensions of space, the Self of self, which is larger than these, and also transcends the above two”\(^\text{123}\).

In this connection, transcendence (\textit{ananta}) of the Lord is to be considered from several angles. In point of time, He is unlimited, as time is under His control, rather He is the Lord of time.\(^\text{124}\) In respect of space, He knows no limitations. Even in the finitised visible form as Tirivikrama, the world which He measured could not be fully pervaded by His foot, as the world was so small that His foot is to be treated as having gone beyond the world.\(^\text{125}\) In His formless condition there is no vocabulary to render His greatness. Hence the Vedas confined themselves to stating that He has a thousand heads, thousand eyes, and thousand feet. It is said that He pervaded the entire earth and stood beyond to the extent of ten inches\(^\text{126}\) Here the word ‘\textit{thousand}’ must be taken to mean ‘\textit{countless}’\(^\text{127}\) and the word ‘\textit{inch}’ (\textit{aṅgula}) must mean ‘an unlimited extent’\(^\text{128}\). The words ‘\textit{ten inches}’ shall mean that ‘this is only an attempt to span the space to the extent of which He extended and this is only an apology for the space which cannot be measured fully and accurately’. There is a third kind of transcendence according to which there is no object anywhere which could bear any comparison to Him.\(^\text{129}\)

122. ibid. 10.10: 4.
123. ibid. 10.10: 10.
124. ibid. 1.1: 2; 3.8: 8.
125. cf. M.Tv. 84.
CHAPTER XX

BRIDAL MYSTICISM

The experience of God which falls to the lot of the mystic is one of joy and calm which could be described as the milder aspect of mysticism.1 The disappointments which the mystic feels when he could not approach God or when he does not have the vision of God imbedded in him show his sufferings of pain of the negative kind.2 These aspects of mysticism as experienced by the mystics continually leave indelible impressions with them making them recount their experiences with joy at times and with sorrow at others. The other aspect of love for God which is evidenced in the life of the mystics is intense and is termed as sweetness of God as opposed to the milder tone which is referred to as pure truth.3 This is to mean that in the milder stage, the reality of God is experienced directly by the mystic. This experience is real and correct and as such is full, and being free any flaw shall be treated as Pure Truth. It is characterized by the cognitive element which dominates it. When this milder aspect continues and is developed, it grows intense and the experience becomes sweet and pleasant. This intense stage is marked by the experience of joy and positive pain. The mystic "sometimes 'wrestles in prayer' seeking in vain to regain the lost sense of peace and to escape the ache and hollowness of a life that longs for God and apprehends Him, yet cannot come to Him."4 "He regards conceptual knowledge as ever unsatisfying or meaningless, and immediate experience as the only trustworthy guide and the only solid satisfaction".5 Any thing that distracts his

2. ibid. p. 352.
3. ibid. p. 348.
4. ibid. p. 353.
5. ibid. p. 366.
attention is treated as unworthy of attention. "The pleasant tone of the milder form of religious experience with which the mystic began now fails to satisfy, or only intensifies his thirst for deeper draughts of the Divine". He therefore longs for union with God. The intense stage of love for God is chiefly characterized by emotion and imagination. The mystic has never-failing confidence in his emotional experience and very vivid imagination. In this respect, he is a romanticist.

The intense love of the mystic for God has one fundamental characteristic feature. The Lord is the storehouse of innumerable, ineffable virtues which sustain the mystic by drawing him very close to Him and yearn for reunion when the material factors pull him away to this world. In this yearning, the mystic chooses to be quiet, submissive to the Lord and is passive. He surrenders himself to Him to look after his interests fully confident that He would not let him down. Even if let down, He alone can lift him up. The moments of union with Him fill him with much feeling. "Enthusiastic surrender, a delicate capacity for feeling, soft passiveness" characterize the life of a mystic. These are enforced on him from without, nor received against the individualistic spirit, as a man does out of necessity to eke out his livelihood by serving a master. They form part of the nature of woman and mysticism is therefore called "the religion of feminine nature". The purpose of such a life is the experience of bliss or esoteric joy which is not altogether distinct, in feeling, though different in the nature of feeling from the enjoyment of the sensual kind which a woman longs to have and experiences in the company of a man. It could therefore be said that a mystic whether man or woman has much of the nature of the woman. More often than not, the mystic passes through the several stages which

6. ibid. p. 368.
a bride undergoes in the periods of wedding-day and honeymoon. To this extent, the mystic experience of a devotee could be described as bridal in its aspects.

The view that God is the Bridegroom and the devout and ardent soul of the devotee, the bride, is an allegorical expression of the intimate communion between the soul on the one hand and God on the other; this mystic view, expressed in beautiful and sensible figures and similes, has been prevalent both in the East as well as in the West. In what could be called the spiritual marriage (atma vivaha), the Lord descends from His almightiness to the human level of lowliness, and longs for the joyous embrace of, and union with, the human soul. The Vedanta philosophy of Nam-malvar and Ramanauja interpreted as Vaishnavism defines Brahman the Absolute as God the Beautiful (Bhuvana Sundara) and regards this mystic experience of communion with Him as the consummation of the philosophy of love. In this process the soul, rendered ugly by karma, is purified and transformed into His own nature. It is a matter of common knowledge, at least among philosophers, that God as Lord is feared, as Father revered, as Master honoured and served, but as Bridegroom is loved. Love is not a contract nor a holy sentiment but is its own end and is love for love's sake. The soul is inwardly embraced by the arms of wisdom and it tastes of heavenly sweetness. The presence of the Beloved is felt in the interior of the soul. In the divine influx of the union, all self-feeling is transformed and divinised.

"Love wrapped me in its all-dissolving power
I saw not, heard not, moved not, only felt
His presence flow and mingle with my blood,
Till it became His life and His grew mine.
And I was thus absorbed".

This is how Shelley gives expression to this transforming power. All these suggest the relationship of the ideal lovers. This spiritual realisation becomes the story of the love of the soul, the betrothed becoming the wedded love, losing itself in the embrace and rapture of union with the Lord.
Bridal mysticism has been well explained by the commentators on the Nālāyiram. The Ĉāṅkam literature has idealised love; its poetry of love is the poetry of the noun-nom. As the Vaisṇavite commentators point out, the Āḻvārs start singing in 'tānāna tanmai' i.e., as themselves as men but in the white heat of their passion for God they lose themselves and sing in 'pirāṭtiyāna tanmai' i.e., as the lady-love. In the Āḻvārs' hymns the whole of a hymn is either in 'tānāna tanmai or pirāṭtiyāna tanmai'. Ĉākkiya Māṇavālap-perumāl Nāyanār has beautifully summarized this aspect of Āḻvārs in the aphoristic sūtra style as, "jñānattil tan pēccu; prēmattil pen pēccu".¹⁰ (In the path of jñāna there is the speech of the poet as himself; in love there is the speech of the poet as the lady who loves). The idealised love of the Ĉāṅkam age, purified still further by Tiruvaḷḷuvār in his immortal Tirukkural and identified with God by Tiruvaḷḷuḷ, is revealed in all its concrete elaboration in this story of the love of the eternal lovers—the soul and God. The Āḻvārs and the Nāyanāmars turn in their poetry into women pining for the embrace of God.

The mysticism of spiritual marriage must be interpreted very carefully as having spiritual content and value. Kanta-bhāva (kaṟpu) is the experience of the bride and the bridegroom. Madhurabhāva (kaḷavu) is the experience of clandestine love. Both are free from carnality and fleshly lusts. The craving for contacting God is clothed in the language of sex borrowed from the science of erotics. It is therefore sometimes misunderstood and erroneously spoken of as erotic mysticism. But it must be borne in mind that those who criticise have completely ignored the transcendental experience of the Divine Presence and the influx of the Divine Love which passes human understanding and surpasses the psychological ways of knowing. The symbolic terminology employed here is entirely free from morbidity and erotomania; there is nothing degrading about this love. What is Bhagavat kāma is transemperial and it is described here in terms of visāya kāma; but the difference between them is like that between

¹⁰. A.H. Sūtra, 118.
the dog and the dog-star. It is nothing but a method of
explaining the unknown by the known; and the method is
pressed into service since there is no other popular and
psychological way of expressing the inexpressible. But all
these are metaphors and symbols, for the Real transcends all
this terminology. The ecstatic joy of the mystic is the joy of
his union with God. "All other pleasure beside that of
enjoying God seems to be insipid.\(^{11}\) Some mystics expressly
say "Suddenly I feel myself transformed and changed; it is
the joy unspeakable. \\ldots\ldots I grasp something inwardly as
with the embraces of love.\ldots I struggle deliciously not
to lose this thing, while I desire to embrace without end.\(^{12}\)
'Embracement', 'ravishment\(^{13}\) and such other expressions
used by the Western writers on Mysticism bring out clearly
the union which the mystics enjoy. "Those to whom this
heavenly love is known may get some conception of it from
earthy love, and what joy it is to obtain possession of what
one loves most.\(^{14}\)

The aspect of bridal mysticism has much in common
with the experiences of the individuals in the age of adole-
scence. The periods during this age are marked by storm
and stress and doubt. The spontaneous awakening which
the individuals face has got a significant bearing on their
attitude towards religious experience. Emotional and spirit-
ual aspects dominate this experience in proportions which
vary from individual to individual. While men have less of
the emotional aspect, women are much awakened to it.
While women do not have a deep insight into spiritual truth,
spirituality has greater attraction for men. It is most likely
that religious experience which is marked by much of
emotional feeling should be associated with the feminine
features. The mystics therefore are prone to treat themselves
as the bride of God, not as belonging to either of the sexes.

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\(^{11}\) Vide for citation, *The Religious Consciousness*, p. 416.

\(^{12}\) Vide for citation, ibid. p. 417.

\(^{13}\) ibid. p. 420.

\(^{14}\) View of Plotinus cited, ibid. p. 418.
The emotional turmoil of adolescence suggests highly the storm and doubt which fill the young devotee of God. Although it would not be proper to equate the period of the mystic’s life which is marked by romanticism with the period of adolescence in the real sense of the term, it would be true to admit that the period of bridal mysticism precedes the stage of the mystic’s life when the emotional life quiets down. “Youth is the time for hailing the vision and coming to love the light; the religious task of the great middle years is to live and act in the light that has been seen”.\(^{15}\) This equallisation of bridal mysticism with adolescence cannot, however, be carried on beyond a limit. While the interests of active life in the youthful periods lose their hold upon the mind of the person who imperceptibly grows into age, the religious experience does not lose its hold on the person in his later days. The religious men who is getting old “finds clustering all the lively impressions and the pleasant pictures of his childhood, and all his hopes and longings for the mysterious Beyond. So religion becomes the storehouse of the values of the Past and the Future, and stands to him for life itself”\(^{16}\).

The reason for the mystic’s experiencing the feminine feeling of emotion is not also difficult to seek. The mystic is usually unaware of sexual delight and sexual desire which permeate most of the life of the living being in a mild and disguised way. The mystic has this as any other person has but, being essentially pure, is free from all taint of the sexual natures. What happens in his body as the resonance of the emotion is of no interest to him, but others who evaluate his love of God find much interest in it. To be aware of carnality of such desires and yet to be deeply devoted to God can only be taken as inconsistent.

According to Catholic theology sex has a spiritual meaning in spiritual marriage. Edward Ingram Watkins emphasizes that the male element is operative, active, and directive, whilst

15. *The Religious Consciousness*, p. 120.
16. ibid. p. 120.
the feminine is responsive and receptive thus each being complementary to or co-operating with God. Coventry Patmore, the mystic poet, treats a true woman as God’s image infusing clod with purity. Heavenly marriage is the original of the earthly marriage. God is the husband of the Heavenly and every soul in the bridal dispensation is a worm before God who does justice to the feminine factor. The Christian mystic Richard of St. Victor speaks of four stair-ways of love: (a) the betrothal, where the soul thirsts for the Beloved; (b) the marriage, where the Absolute leads the soul as its bride; (c) the wedlock, where the soul is oned with God and transfigured into Him and (d) the copulation or union when the soul is caught up into divine delight. The creature is put off and the Creator is put on. The soul submits to the Divine embrace. The Hound of Heaven hunts the separated soul and wounds it. According to Miss Underhill the simile of marriage and of the embrace is a parallel on a lower level to the consummation of mystic love owing to the virtues of mutuality, irreversibility and intimacy, the well known marks of ancient marriage.

The Āḷvārś and the Nāyaṁmārs speak this language of love in giving expression to their mystic experience. Kāma there is not viṣaya kāma or sensual passion; it is Bhagavat kāma, spiritual love. “Kaṇṇanukkē āṁ atu kāmam” is the Vaiṣṇavite explanation of Tiruvaraṅkattamutanār. “To love Lord Kṛṣṇa and none else is real love” is its meaning. The

18. Mysticism, p. 139.
20. R.N. 40. The word ‘Kūral’ employed in Akam poetry denote the kindness to all sorts of relatives including husband and wife (Ain 195; N.R.R. 241, 237; AKN. 275, 310). It has gradually enlarged to express all kinds of love, and has become a synonym with ‘apyu’ and ‘parru’. The general idea implied in the use of the word is the mental attachment between the being that loves and the object of love irrespective of physical contact. The word ‘kāmam’ is now understood to mean a reckless indulgence of sexual impulse. In Caṅkam period normal physical passion was meant by this word (AKN. 28). The bodily union of the lovers is known by ‘kāmak-kūṭam’ (TLK. 3.3:1). Tiruvalluvar names the third part of the book Tirukkuṟaḷ as ‘Kāmattuppāl’ and removes the sting in the word.
concept of kāma is enshrined in the Upaniṣad. The classical explanation of kāma is given by the sage Yājnāvalkya, the super-vedantin, to his worthy wife Maitreyī at the time of his renunciation or resort to sannyāsa. Maitreyī realises the truth of the wise saying, "What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?" and asks him to teach her the way to immortal bliss. The sage imparts to her in imperishable language the meaning of ātma kāma: "Verily is the husband dear, not for the love of the husband, but for the love of ātman. Everything is dear not for the love of everything but for the love of ātman is everything dear. The ātman should be reflected on and realised." Kāma may be of three kinds, viz., viśaya kāma, ātma kāma and Bhagavat kāma. Viśaya kāma is desire for the objects of sense, and its satisfaction is momentary and fraught with pain in all its stages, and it lands one finally in the wilderness of samsāra. One has then to retrace one's steps and follow the way of ātma kāma by self-control and introversion. The joy of self-realisation is, no doubt, enduring, but it arises from the flight of 'the alone to the alone' and being a state of solid singleness it is tinged with egoism. Bhagavat kāma is love directed to the Lord who is the source and centre of all human love. When kāma is spiritualised and directed Godward, it loses its sting and is reckoned a virtue. Kāma is the urge of love, but as Bhagavat kāma, it is a craving for the spiritual marriage with the Beloved. Love is a relation between the ātman and its eternal 'other' and is a longing for a communion. When it becomes an infinite longing for the Infinite, as in the case of Maitreyī, it leads to immortal bliss. When, therefore, instincts are harmonised and spiritualised, they become the eternal creative expression of Divine Love. Not only kāma, but even krodha (anger), dveṣa (hatred) when directed to God with devotion lose their sting and become transformed into the mystic instinct for the Infinite. Evil is changed into goodness and goodness into godliness as Brahman permeates all beings and brahmanises them.

The ancient Tamils have their technique in portraying their adventures of love which are designed to promote intimacy, fidelity and mutualness. The literary conventions of the age are seen not only in the gracious blending of the human passions with the beauties of nature. They have also classified the sentiments of love in accordance with the different regions and assigned them to particular seasons and hours. The regions are five: One part is Kurinći, the mountainous region considered appropriate for pre-marital love. The second is Mullai, the pastoral tract which is the setting for the idyllic home life of chastity and peace. The third is Palai, the desert region, enhancing the feeling of desolation in the poetry of love in separation. The fourth is Neytal, the coastal region or seaboard, enhancing the feeling of desolation and despair, when in the course of pre-marital love there is an inexplicable, continued absence of the hero. The fifth is Marutam; this agricultural tract of civilised life full of wealth and pomp, characterised by the institution of public women gives rise sometimes to suspicion and sometimes to escapades into extramarital relationship, and this enhances the heroine's sulky mood. Each of these regions

23. T.L.K. 3.1: 5 to 10 and their commentaries. The ancient poets have found out that in a particular season of the year and in a particular hour of the day, a particular region appears most beautiful and most influential, that every landscape is seen best under the peculiar illumination of a season and a period of it when its influence is powerful on human impulses and activities. Thus the different stages of love have also been correlated to the different aspects of natural environment.

24. According to Tolkāppiyam (T.L.K. 3.1: 5) the Tamil land surrounded by seas on three sides was divided into four regions viz., Mullai, Kurinći, Marutam and Neytal. The concept of ‘nānilam’ has this significance. But the term Ajintinai in Tamil Grammar denotes the five different aspects of love conduct. Of these, except Palai, the other four love aspects have their own regions. Palai has no region of its own because there is no arid desert tract in Tamil Nadu. This is the reason why inhabitants of desert found no place in Akatintai as heroes and heroines and as no part of the desert was set as the background for the meeting of the lovers except the incidents of separation of the lovers of the four regions being described. Through Tamil Nadu has no desert proper at all times, it has a long and hot summer, capable turning mountainous and pastoral tracts into desert-like appearance (CLP. 2.11:11, 64-6).
has its own peculiar flora and fauna and other aspects and so each mood of the lovers viz., union, patient suffering, separation, sorrows of separation and the protests of unrequited love is coloured by the environment and conditioned geographically. It is worthy of note that, though the geographic control of life and growth is an idea recently reached by science and newly expounded in treatises on Anthropogeography the genius of the ancient Tamil poets somehow understood this influence of natural environment on the life of men and established conventions in their works especially on love and its various aspects.  

The poetry of Akattinaï is the poetry of the noumenon, the poetry of the inner inspiration of love, something to be felt and realised but only to be hinted to those who have had similar experience. The hero is no particular person; and according to the poetic convention his name should nowhere be mentioned. Therefore Akam poetry does not express anything with reference to any particular person; it is something universal, common to all men, and thus seen and revealed in the ideal situations of a man. It is best revealed from the various situations of a homely love, starting as a providential and natural pre-marital love (iyarikaippunargeri); only persons attached to the family are chosen as characters to figure in this poetry. The five various aspects or sentiments of this love, as pointed out already, are the first union (punargal), separation (pirital), married love of peace (iruttal), sorrows of desolation and despair (irañkal) and the protests of unrequited love (uṭal). The names of different regions have also been ascribed to the different aspects of love also.

The importance of the conception of God as Cosmic Beauty becomes significant when the Lord steals our hearts

27. Among the characters numbering fourteen who figure in the love episode of the hero and the heroine of the Chaṅkam literature, the Āvārs have pressed into service only two viz., mother of the heroine and her maid-companion. For the role of these fourteen characters, Vide: Tolkāppiyam Kattum Vālkai, pp. 55-65.
as “Kaṭṭana”²⁸ “Paṭiṭan”²⁹ “Perāṭan”³⁰ He is the Puruṣottama, where all souls become His beloved in love with Him, a love which transcends even the love of the husband and wife. To the Hindu mystic, the tattva is Brahman the Beautiful, the hita is prema and the realisation of the bliss of Brahman is puruṣārtha. Prema is thus the spiritual copula between the knowledge of Brahman and the realisation of its bliss. Brāhmānubhāva may be mystically explained by the experience of love and beauty. The Bhāgavatam and the Bhagavad Vīṣayam are the treasure houses of this experience. The Bhāgavatam is the home land of divine lilā; and the Tiruvāy-moti, the outpouring of Nammāḻvār, is the spiritual biography of the eternal game of divine love. To the Hindu mystic philososopher, Braman is ananda and rasa. The universe has its source and sustenance only in the bliss of the Brahman. It is the theatre, so to say, of the lilā of God which aims at turning men into seekers after salvation.

God is Love and it is a dynamic love abhorring its solitude and bankering after union with soul. Love no doubt is a unitive experience, but it presupposes the duality of the experiencing subjects. The Upaniṣad explains this truth in the form of a beautiful story: “Brahman was alone before creation as the Sat without a second as ‘Ekāki’ and was not pleased. Aloneness gave it no joy; He desired a second and He divided Himself into twain”.³¹ This twain is the duplication of the one into divided love. In life even the lowest unit is a pair functioning as male and female and the twain are one in love. Self-division into loving pairs is the essence of cosmic life. The Lord who remained alone in the pralaya state became Śriyapați. He experiences creative joy by self-giving and love and becomes complete only by self-division into loving pairs. The one Self that is without a second sports as two, as the lover and the beloved, without losing His wholeness. The blissful Brahman in its sportive act of love

²⁸. Peri. Tm. 3.7: 1. cf. T.V.M. 2.2: 10.
²⁹. ibid. 3.7: 2.
³⁰. ibid. 5.5: 8.
separates itself from its beloved ‘other’, seeks it, and then becomes one with it. The Absolute itself assumes a bewitching form of beauty in order to attract its ‘other’ to Itselt and the true dialectic is this triad of love. The cosmic drama depends on this self-division into loving pairs. The cosmos is born in Beauty and the whole creative act is the magic of the divine love. The miracles of love enacted in Gokulam and Brindavanam and ending with the Rāsa Līlā are the symbols of this cosmic drama. Almost all the Āḻvārs revel in the cosmic process as the spontaneous expression of Brahman as the divine artist.

Sex is the secret device of the Divine Artist by which the animal instinct is humanised and spiritualised. If kāma as sexual feeling is not humanised, it is bestial and blind, clamant and chaotic, and becomes a deadly vice. But when it is idealized and disciplined into married love, selfishness disappears, and the fleeting voluptuousness of reckless adventure is replaced by the lasting happiness of perfect pleasure. If it is further spiritualized into divine love, it loses all traces of selfishness and becomes ethereally ennobled. While mystic experience may be gained by the way of yoga (ascetic introversion) or bhoga (hedonistic extroversion), the way of the latter or aesthetic religion has an irresistible appeal to the mystic who follows the method of Bhagavat kāma. There are instances for both the types in the lives of the Āḻvārs. Pēyāḻvār was God-mad from his very birth and he may be considered as one who had followed the yogic path. But the life of Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār was quite different. At first he indulged in viṣaya kāma or hedonistic pleasures and later on became a convert to Bhagavat kāma for contacting God as the Bridegroom. To the Saivites the Lord is a Yogi among yogis and a Bhogi among bhogis; and the Nāyānmārs call both yogis and bhogis as tapasvins and therefore bhogis are those who enjoy Bhagavat kāma.

The concept of Akattinai has its bearing on the hymns of the Āḻvārs when they express their spiritual quest and con-

32. cf. Appar: Hymn. 4.3
33. The Religion and Philosophy of Tēvāram, p. 1244.
quest. The bride is the soul that yearns for divine union and the Lord who is the Soul of the soul and is one with it and oned with it is the eternal Bridegroom. The joy of the first union (punartal) or samsleṣa is momentary, but it gives a foretaste of the immortal bliss in future. The union is followed by visleṣa (pirital) or the woes of separation. The forlorn bride is sick-minded and desolate and suffers from the agonies of separation as the heroine in the Caṅkam literature does; her beauty fades away and her spirits are depressed.\(^34\) In her helpless state the bride sends messages of unrequited love to the Lord through the herons, the bees and the cloud and His love is stirred by their moving power.\(^35\) The Lord is then moved by love and at long last the lovers are united and the spiritual wedding takes place. The lover and the beloved, the nāyaka and the nāyaki, are two in one and one in two like the sun and its light, or the word and its meaning, or the flower and its fragrance. Kṛṣṇaprema the quintessence of mystic love in its purity and perfection, as enshrined in in the Bhagavatam, attracts the Āḻvārs, especially Āṇṭāl, Nammāḻvār and Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār. Their expression of the love of God through the medium of nāyaka-nāyaki love is unmatched in mystic literature for its moving power. The commentators\(^36\) of Nāḻiyiram, bring out the beauty of the Akam poetry of the Āḻvārs by renaming the saints as feminine poetesses: Parāṅkusa Nāyaki (Nammāḻvār), Parakāla Nāyaki (Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār) etc.

Sex is the master device of nature to draw souls together, and cosmic creation itself is traced to the Sat without a second, realizing itself as the male and female principles of life. The science of erotics or kāma sāstra is an

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34. This state of suffering is aptly called by the Christian mystics 'the dark night of the soul' and it expresses the infinite 'hazards and hardships' of the divided life.

35. In Caṅkam literature it is found the heroine in a context of despair giving expression to her feeling of desolation by addressing the birds, bees and begging them sometimes to go and fetch the hero (Vide N.R.R. 54, 70, 102). This motif has been successfully employed by the Āḻvārs.

36. For example, Sri P.B. Annangarachariyar.
aesthetic education, which consists in changing the brute feeling into human love and bringing about the psycho-
physical at-one-ment of the two souls. The joy of samśleṣa
(pūmarṇal) or the union of the lovers is more than the logical
separation of the synthesis of opposites. The paradox of love
lies in conquest by submission and the heightening of love by
viśleṣa (pirītal) or separation of lovers. Bhaktirūsa is ripe in
the process of what is known as the game of love or samśleṣa
and viśleṣa. Mystic idealism utilizes this game to its advan-
tage; it utilizes the fidelity and mutualness given in this game
of sṛṅgāra rasa and elevates it to the level of the Divine Love
of Rādha and Āṇṭāl. The Lord plays hide and seek with the
beloved soul. The joy of union and the sorrow of separation
alternate with each other. The former is momentary and
fleeting in this world of līlā and it becomes stable and secure
only in the world beyond, nītyavībhūti. In the alternation
between union and separation, the soul is freed from sensua-
ality and egoism and yearns for the dawn of unitive conscious-
ness. It is by wise introversion in the state of separation that
the soul, which is the bride, comes into proper perspective,
distinguishes between what is momentary and changing and
what is eternal and permanent and renounces the egocentric
feeling of ‘my’ and ‘mine’ and is purged of its pride. Again, in
the state of separation, the bride develops anguish and lapses
into depression and despair. The Lord of Love also suffers
from the woes of loneliness and yearns for communion with
the soul, His beloved. In the rapture of reunion each rushes
into the arms of the other and reflection expires in ecstasy.37
In this way the whole game of love subserves the purpose of
soul-making and deification. In the furnace of love, in its
austere and arduous purgation of its pride, all the fleshly
feelings melt away and the soul and God are glued together in
mystic union. This process of mystic union is beautifully
portrayed in the mystic experience of two Āḷvārs, Tirumāṅkai
Māṇnan and Nammāḻvār, and in the feminine ardour of
Āṇṭāl, the foster-daughter of Periyāḻvār.

37. It is said, according to Catholic mysticism, the Lord, the Bride-
groom, comes thrice in the flesh.
The Ālvārs, especially Nammālvār, Tirumaṅkaiyālvār and Ānṭāl, are preoccupied with *Kṛṣṇa-prema*, mystic love in its pristine purity and perfection as enshrined in the *Bhāgavatam*. Apart from other modes of worship of the Lord such as chanting His names, contemplating His auspicious qualities, His personal beauty, the glory of His shrines situated in the various places in our country and the greatness of His devotees as it has been explained elsewhere in this work, the Ālvārs employ their mystic love as an interesting mode of enjoying a relationship with the Lord—that of imagining themselves to be the bride of the Lord's a habit which is part of the general cult of *Madhura bhakti* or *nāyaka-nāyaki bhāva*. This mode is a special feature of their hymns which are in the form of utterances spoken by the maid-companion, by the mother and by the lady-love or the bride of the Lord herself;38 yet they all centre on the relationship between the Ālvār-nāyaki and the Lord. The essential dependence of the souls of the Ālvārs on the Lord leads them to establish this kind of intimate contact with the Lord. Though the language and terms of physical relationships and physical pleasures might be employed, these ultimately point to deeper spiritual, non-physical meanings. The terminology of love-relationship is used more or less as a sort of sugar-coating so that the higher truths are made the more easily consumable.39 When the maid-companion is introduced in a group of hymns as describing the condition of the Ālvār-nāyaki, she is to be taken as uniting the Ālvār-nāyaki and the Lord for the reason that the soul of the Ālvār deserves to be united only with the Lord, a link which is implicit in the first word of *Tirumantiram*, namely, “*Om*” (aum). When the mother of the Ālvār-nāyaki is introduced in another group of verses as restraining her, it is meant to suggest that the Lord Himself will take the initiative and show the way without our having to make

38. This type of composition is known as the *anyāpadeśa* mode of utterance. By adopting this mode, different levels of emotion are beautifully presented, and an effect of interesting variety is attained.

39. cf. *Iraiyanār Akapporu*l-sut 1 (Commentary—the meaning of the word ‘*kāmam*’).
extra-ordinary efforts. This idea is implied in the second word of Tirumantiram, namely ‘Namah’ (namō). When the Āḻvār-nāyaki speaks in her own person in a third group of hymns, what is implied is the irrepressible desire of the Āḻvār-nāyāki to achieve union with ‘Nārāyaṇa’ (the third word used in the Tirumantiram) in all the aspects of His glory and splendour, which will not brook any restraint or delay.40

Sexual impulses and sexual desires could be admitted to exist in each living being in a mild form. Emotional feeling and surrendering to the Supreme Person could be taken to mark the feminine features. The mystic, though, to all intents and purposes, is a man, can feel like a bride to the husband, his Lord. How this transformation takes places in the mental set up requires to be clarified. This change takes place only in the mental plane and is free from carnality. The feminine aspect of this mental attitude is not inborn, but is required to become so with due deference to the Lord who alone deserves to be the husband with unmistakably masculine character, ethical severity and all amiable qualities. The Lord is the husband and all beings are His spouses. On the reverse side, the women who beheld Draupadi bathing in the river were fascinated by her physical charm and experienced the feeling that they became men with reference to her.41 Vālmiki describes Śrī Rāma as captivating the eyes and mind of men through the form and qualities. The external appearance of Śrī Rāma was so fascinating that men (purūṣam) got much attracted to him.42 This means that their looks were lost to His beauty which shows that masculine hand-someness made men subdued to it, making them feel as spouses to him. The qualities of Śrī Rāma were so exalted that ideationally, the men became mystics.43

40. A.H. Süt 133. (Vide Maṇavā|amāmunika’s Commentary). The commentator brings out beautifully the three different states of mental consciousness.
41. cf. Subhasitavali v. 1559; cf. Drāmidōpaniṣadrāpparyaratnāvali. 3.
42. cf. K.R. Pala. Tāṭakaivatai. 32; ibid. Āraṇya. cūrpaṇakai. 59.
Such transformations become possible with the result that mentally the mystic becomes a female, not being alive to his masculine body. It is because of this that the mystics, though they are men, refer, as women would do, to the parts of the body of women such as breasts.\textsuperscript{44} This makes clear that transformation is complete. It is needless to take such references as having secondary sense, for the mystic is not aware of it. Once the primary sense is denied, suggesting an indirect reference (anyāpadesa) as some commentators\textsuperscript{45} on the \textit{Tiruvāyamoḻi} do, the whole structure of the bridal mysticism falls down. There is sensuous element in the utterances of these people who are not aware of it as such, for if they were, they would not have communion with God. In order to find the full charm in the presentation of the aspects of bridal mysticism, it is necessary to maintain the primary sense of these expressions.

The whole of the \textit{Tiruvāyamoḻi} is the presentation by Nammāḻvār of his God–experience. Twenty-seven decades of this work contain the vivid expression of the Āḻvār’s experience as the bride of the Lord. The Āḻvār was in the state of trance for several years\textsuperscript{46} and the result of this experience is contained here. During the milder stages of mystic experiences, the Āḻvār is continually conscious of his disappointments in being unable to have union with the Lord. A rather continuous, rhapsodical outpouring of the heart surcharged with feeling would be tedious from the artistic side of the composition. In order to avoid such a monotony, the Āḻvār seems to have hit upon a plan for treatment. He himself gives expression to his love as the bride in seventeen decades.\textsuperscript{47} The bride, whose passion gets beyond control, may not be able to control it and may also be exposed to the public through her abnormal and unwomanly behaviour. The mother of the bride is therefore interested in keeping her

\textsuperscript{44} T.V.R. 52, 60.

\textsuperscript{45} Divyārtha Dipikai: Introduction to Tirupiruttam

\textsuperscript{46} The period was 16 years. (D.S.C. 4:44).

\textsuperscript{47} T.V.M. 1.4; 2.1; 4.8; 5.3; 5.4; 5.5; 5.9; 6.1; 6.2; 6.8; 7.3; 7.7; 8.2; 9.5; 9.7; 9.9; 10.3.
daughter within reasonable limits of conduct. The one aim of hers is to see that her daughter is made to get married to the proper man and make her lead a happy conjugal life. Therefore she tells her visitors and friends that none but the Lord whom her daughter loves could afford relief to the sufferings of her daughter. There are seven decades of this kind in the *Tiruvāyāmolī*. The maid-companion of the bride also shows her interest in her welfare and speaks of the means to get her friend united with her husband. This is dealt with in three decades. One of the three decades occurs in the fourth centum, where the nature of the self as the *ṣeṣa* of the Lord is depicted, another in the sixth centum which is devoted to treat the means of getting at the Lord and the third one in the eighth centum wherein the result of the means, namely, God-experience is dealt with. The companion is thus shown to be helpful to the bride. The mother’s feelings about the well-being of the daughter are well placed in the second centum where the nature of the Lord is treated, in the fourth which shows the attitude of the self to the Lord, in the sixth where anxieties and sympathies for the adoption of the proper course to get at the Lord are dealt with and in the seventh where the goal to be achieved is treated. Such a treatment fulfils an artistic effect by relieving the monotony of the narration and also shows that the introduction of the mother and companion serve two specific purposes. The first purpose is that these two do not play any role as in the melodrama but are, in virtue of their personal relationship to the bride, shown to reveal their abiding affection for her and the keen interest to see her united to her husband. The other purpose lies in the choice of woman as showing their interest in her welfare and giving expression to their cares and anxieties about her. Had even only one male member been shown as having spoken about the condition of the love-lorn bride, the charm of the entire composition would have been thrown into winds. While

48. ibid. 2.4; 4.2; 4.4; 5.6; 6.6; 6.7; 7.2.
49. This character is introduced in *Akam* poems to cut short the furtive course of the lovers and induce them to get married as early as possible.
50. T.V.M. 4.6; 6.5; 8.9.
it is admitted that all the souls are only brides for the Lord, yet there is more tenderness in the feelings when they are depicted as exhibited by the women-folk under the extreme stress of love in separation. Though the Āḻvār is only a male mystic, he had rightly chosen the mother and the maid-companion of the bride, who could better represent the mental agony of a woman in suffering than a male member.

The irrepresible love of the mystic is closely associated with the physical form of God, whether it is in the supreme form (para) or descent (avatāra) or the indweller (antaryāmin) or arca (idol). The lady in love gets fascinated by the figure which she recapitulates by representing or referring to any incident or episode of the Lord in one or more of His descents or in temples. At times, a synthesis is effected by treating more than one of such forms as being of equal appeal. Of the twenty-seven decades which treat of bridal mysticism, nine decades and three verses in a decade are mainly intended to show that the Āḻvār was uncontrollably passionate in his love for the arca forms of the Lord. It is interesting to note that of these five occur in the fifth and the sixth centums which deal with the means of getting at the Lord, three find room in the seventh and eighth centums where the result of the endeavours is recounted and one occurs in the ninth centum which treats the obstructions that lie in the path of God-realization.

The Tiruviruttam of Nammāḻvār which contains a centum of verses presents the various aspects of the love which the Āḻvār has for the Lord. Ten verses are sung by the Āḻvār himself in the form of an appeal to God for His grace, the first and the last being in the form of an introduction and conclusion respectively. The sufferings which the bride has to bear due to Nature and recollections of previous experiences in the company of her lover are recounted by the lady—

51. Following the tradition of the Caṅkam poetry of the Early Tamils.
52. T.V.M. 5.5; 5.9; 6.1; 6.5; 6.7; 7.2; 7.3; 8.9; 9.7.
53. ibid. 8.2: 1, 4, 6.
54. T.V.R. 1, 21, 93 to 100.
in-love in fifty three verses.\textsuperscript{55} An admirable artistic finish is revealed in the Āḻvār's efforts in presenting a friend of the Lord, the Lord Himself, the mother of the bride and the female-companion of the bride. The Lord is found, in the capacity of the lover, to express and depict certain situations to the bride and to His friend which takes nine verses.\textsuperscript{56} Curiously enough, the friend of the Lord is shown to take some part and does not give utterance to any verse. The mother of the Lord, as any mother is wont to do, expresses her fears and anxieties for the well-being of her daughter for which the Āḻvār devotes six verses.\textsuperscript{57} Nineteen verses\textsuperscript{58} are devoted to showing how the female-companion advises the beloved to be calm and composed awaiting reunion with her Lord, occasionally expressing her disapproval of the Lord's attitude. The beautiful eyes of the bride are filled with tears which swell because of her unbearable separation from the Lord. The maid-companion wishes\textsuperscript{59} that this plight shall continue for ever, thereby meaning that the severe longing for union with the Lord shall be aspired by a devotee, as otherwise, she could not be at ease in the atmosphere of the material world. In a verse the Āḻvār makes a person, not directly connected with any of the persons mentioned above, offer his remarks warning people against sensuous love\textsuperscript{60} and describe the plight of the bride who pines in love-lorn condition.\textsuperscript{61} An old lady, rich in her worldly experience, advises the people who suffer at the plight of the bride to bring in the things of the Lord, like the \textit{tuḷacī} and use them for affording relief to the bride.\textsuperscript{62} Tiruvaraṅkaṁ,\textsuperscript{63} Tiruvēṅkaṭaṁ\textsuperscript{64} and

\textsuperscript{55} ibid. 3, 4, 6, 8 to 14, 16 to 18, 25, 27 to 32, 35, 38 to 46, 48, 49, 51, 53, 54, 56, 63, 64, 70 to 72, 74, 76 to 80, 82, 84 to 86, 88 to 92.

\textsuperscript{56} ibid. 23, 26, 50, 55, 57, 65 to 67, 75.

\textsuperscript{57} ibid. 19, 24, 37, 47, 59, 60.

\textsuperscript{58} ibid. 2, 5, 7, 15, 20, 22, 33, 34, 36, 52, 58, 61, 62, 68, 69, 73, 81, 83, 87.

\textsuperscript{59} ibid. 2.

\textsuperscript{60} ibid. 6.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid. 9.

\textsuperscript{62} ibid. 53.

\textsuperscript{63} ibid. 28.

\textsuperscript{64} ibid. 26.
Tiruvehkā⁶⁵ are the only three shrines mentioned by the Ālvār in this poem while giving expression to his love for God.

*Bhagavat kāma* as bridal love is different in kind from *viṣaya kāma* as *kāma* is really no middle term between the two. *Srīngārarasa* or erotic joy is contrasted with *Brahmarasa* or the bliss of Brahman. The Ālvār is free from the taint of *kāma* and carnality, but owing to his aesthetic bent of mind as a poet-mystic; he is specially susceptible even to the physical attractions of the Divine Enchanter, Kaṇṇan, whose sole artifice design is to ravish the soul through every trace of fleshly feeling. It is in this context of poetic philosophy that the bridal mysticism of Nammālvār with his mystic instinct for the receptivity, responsiveness and mutualness of feminine love is to be understood and it is distinguishable from the merely poetic or philosophic experiences of other mystics.

The bridal mysticism portrays the union of the individual self with the Universal Self. The intensity of soul-hunger of God is greater than the God-hunger of the soul. The reciprocity of love leads to irresistibility by the mystic process of *samśleṣa* and *viśleṣa*, the systole-diastole movements of *premabhakti* or the devotion of love. In *viśleṣa* each moment stretches into eternity,⁶⁶ but in *samśleṣa* eternity is crowded into a moment. The former is the desolation of winter when the grace and glow of love fade away, and the bride pines away owing to the feeling of unrequited love and becomes pale and passive. The latter is the spring season when love blossoms and the soul is caught up to God and has a momentary joy of union or ecstasy. Thus while separation provides an opportunity to the bride to think of the perfections of the Lord or His infinite auspicious qualities and to arouse devotional ardour, union is the soulsight of His bewitching beauty followed by God–intoxication. This opposition is known as the mystic paradox, and its object is the transmutation of the earthly self into the godly by a process

⁶⁵ ibid. 8.
⁶⁶ T.V.M. 5.4:3.
of spiritual alchemy. Like gold in the refiner’s fire, the self is purified and deified by alternate depressions and exaltations. At one time it is thrilled by His touches; at another, it is torn away from Him and languishes. In mystic philosophy both are the essential elements of love and the dualism between the two is overcome by the attainment of unico—mystico or unitive consciousness. The bride passes through this process of union and separation till she becomes one with the Lover and enjoys the eternal bliss of such communion.

The bride, gifted with the highest imaginative art of lyric poesy, is blessed with the Beatific vision of the Lover and she sees Him face to face and is filled with rapture. She is immersed in the sea of delight and the whole soul and its overt sensation and form melt into the orison of love. The sense of separation is dissolved in the joy of the unitive life. The Mâyān as the soul Enchanter enters into the inner being of the beloved and enjoys it as ever—creative ‘ārāvamutu’.

The Tamil word ‘ārāvamutu’ is significant and sweet and is unique in mystic language. While the sense of enjoyment is exciting and exhausting, ‘Ārāvamutu’, the joy of Divine contact, expresses the inexpressible joy which is satisfaction without satiety. The bride feels that it is sweeter than honey and ambrosia. She revels in the various exploits of Kṛṣṇa. The thought of His accessibility or saulabhya, as expressed beautifully in the verse, simply astonishes her and transports her to the point of a trance wherein she is lost. The unitive joy of samślesa exceeds all hedonistic joys even of heaven (svarga) and the peace of kaivalya which passes understanding. Here there is no commerce with God or fear of hell as it is communion with the Inner Immortal Self of the self. The joy of samślesa overflows the inner springs and inundates the mind and the conative and cognitive sense organs. Rapture is the sudden onrush of joy and ecstasy is the temporary

67. ibid. 1.7: 7; 1.8: 5; 1.9: 5.8: 10.
68. ibid. 2.3: 1.
69. ibid. 1.6: 6 ("amutilum ārā iniyan").
70. ibid. 5.10.
71. ibid. 1.3: 1.
suspension of the functioning sense-organs; but in both the cases, the self-feeling is swallowed up in joy. When Beauty rushes to the embrace of the beloved, the beloved expires in the arms of ecstasy.

To the lady in love-in-separation, as pointed out already, even a day in the union passes off like a moment and even a moment in separation is felt like a yuga. In the case of Nammāḻvār the joys of union with its visions and voices are only an intimation of eternal bliss and are not therefore enduring. But the Māyan as the maker of souls seeks to turn the bride’s vision inward by playing the game of hide and seek. Viśleṣa is spiritual purification as it is a process of negation; here Bhagavat kāma is purified by vairāgya or freeing the mind from every trace of sensuality; the renunciation by the self of the ‘me’ and ‘mine’ is, the sine qua non of spirituality; and self-love and sensuality are completely rooted out. The spiritual quest for the Lord ripens now into the mystic thirst for Him. The woes and agonies of separation described in Tiruvāyvōli and Tiruvīruttam are unmatched in mystic literature for their moving power. In this mood the joy of orison is swept away abruptly and is followed by the Divine withdrawal and separation. It is the period of privation, blankness and despair. This mood may be psychologically analysed in general as the ascending stages of distress, depression, despondency and defiance with their own bodily expression and the psychic manifestation of thought, feeling and will.

The colour and glow and even grace of the bride fade away; life becomes dreary and desolate. The body loses its weight and becomes a dead weight. She becomes very thin and her bracelets slip down. Her mother thus shows that she spends many a sleepless day and night and tears flow down her cheeks in torrential profusion. There is tremor with trembling all over the body. Even the mind and the sense

72. ibid. 1.2:3. "nīr numatu enṟu ivai vēṟmutal māyantu".
73. ibid. 6.6: 1, 2, 3; 7.2; 8.2: 1, 3, 4, 6, 8.
organs pine away. The bride sighs and sobs, weeps and wails, groans and cries in utter anguish. In his love-lorn stage, the Álvar fancies that some objects in the world have also a suffering similar to his and that too for the same reason, namely, separation from the Lord and yearning to have Him. The stark which does not sleep is white in complexion due to palor consequent on separation from the Lord. The bird kurari (anřil), which is also called krauñca, cries in distress and this may be due to its desire to have the tulaci of the Lord. The sea is restless both day and night, does not sleep and is reduced to the state of liquid on account of the longing to seek the feet of Śrī Rāma. May this sea become happy unlike her. The wind which does not remain stable anywhere at any time moves through the sea, mountains and sky and must be feeling intense pain in the limbs while going in search of the Lord. The cloud sheds tears in the form of rain as it is not in a position to be with the Lord. May it prosper with its sufferings removed. The moon which is in the form of a crescent shows its state of waning as it is emaciated by its love for the Lord. Darkness, which is not tolerated by the lovers, is fancied to be harassing the lovers. May it become freed of cruelty. The canal, with its black waters, flows night and day, thereby showing its condition which has become miserable by its love for the Lord. The lamp which is burning is considered to be heated by separation from the Lord. The bride is not able to tolerate the roar of the sea. She fancies that the sea is angry against God who had churned it and extracted nectar from it. The sea likes to get it back, but being unable to

74. ibid. 3.8.
75. ibid. 2.1: 1.
76. ibid. 2.1: 2.
77. ibid. 2.1: 3.
78. ibid. 2.1: 4.
79. ibid. 2.1: 5.
80. ibid. 2.1: 6.
81. ibid. 2.1: 7.
82. ibid. 2.1: 8.
83. ibid. 2.1: 9.
do so, turns its anger against the beloved of the Lord, for the reason that she has fascination for His tulāci. In order to take from her the bangles in her hands, the sea ebbs and challenges her. The gentle wind carrying with it the fragrance of the jasmine flowers, the kuriṇci type of music, the even-tide and red clouds, torment the bride and make her lose all hope of happy life. The intense experience which she had is vividly described. Even at the time when the cows return from grazing fields she does not find any indication of getting at Him. The gentle breeze brings with it the smoke of the fragrant aloe wood, the twang of the lute called yāl, the note 'p' (pañcama) and the cool sandal paste and wages war as it were with her weak person. She could not stand the mellifluous notes of the flute when played by Him. This decad is brilliantly and artistically perfect in as much as it follows the previous decad which is devoted to sending a message to the Lord. The mind of the lady which is anxiously awaiting the Lord is not only disappointed but positively tortured by the many factors that influence the sensuous desire.

To the lady-love, the limbs cease to function followed by fainting and unconsciousness and the body remains like a log of wood. Oppressed by the thought of separateness, her mind is plunged into gloom and is emptied of all content resulting in the feeling of utter distress and agony. The will is completely paralysed and it becomes passive, impotent and inert. Spiritual distress, as we know, is more intense.

84. T.V.R. 51.
86. ibid. 9.9 : 3.
87. ibid. 9.9 : 5.
88. This is one of the seven notes in Indian music and it is held that it could inflame sensuous love.
89. T.V.M. 9.9 : 7, 8.
90. ibid. 9.9 : 8. The Bhāg. P. (10.21) describes vividly how the gopīs became completely powerless on hearing Kṛṣṇa's playing the flute. cf. Periyāl. Tm. 3.6.
91. ibid. 9.9.
than what is expressed through the mind-body as it is soul-sickness leading to soul-torture. The bride is over-powered by the sense of unworthiness and sinfulness which ends in remorse and prayer for forgiveness. Her lover overflows her inner being and her spiritual cry assumes cosmic dimensions and is heard even in the world beyond the sphere of Samsāra. By utter self-naughting and with the feeling of her nothingness, she surrenders herself to His mercy without any hedonistic or utilitarian considerations. The Māyan could not resist the call of love of His beloved and claim for reunion. Now again the Samśleśa follows and both the Lover and the beloved rush into the arms of each other and are lost in ecstasy. The rapture of communion overflows from the inner springs and inundates the senses. It is therefore more delightful than all the tastes, smells and sounds which have a sensory origin. Now her Kaṇṇañ again disappears.

This time the distress due to separation from her Lover deepens into depression bordering on despondency. The bride's self-feeling is wiped out and she drops into passivity by the growing feeling that she really has, does and is nothing. The anguish due to sudden disappearance shakes the soul to its very depths and what is called dark night in the language of mysticism sets in. The shades of night fall fast and the world is wrapped in utter darkness and all persons sink into sleep. The bride alone is awake in the long awful night bemoaning her forlorn condition. In a state of desperation she thinks of suicide like Sīta in the Aśoka Vana and soon she recollects that she has no life or will of her own as the Lord alone is her life and sustenance. Kaṇṇañ is the food she eats, the water she drinks and the betel she chews; in other words, He alone is the source, sustenance, and satisfaction

92. Ibid. 6.5.
93. Ibid. 10.3:2.
94. Ibid. 6.9: 7.6.
95. Ibid. 6.10
96. Ibid. 5.4: 1, 2.
97. Ibid. 5.4: 3; cf. Rām. Sundara 25: 19.
of life (dhāraka, poṣaka and bhōgya). But her soul-hunger and thirst are not satisfied by the cunning Kṛṣṇa. The game of hide and seek played by the Murali-dhara can be known only by knowing the Māyan or the player of the game. The tormenter is, however, elusive as usual and the bride is unable to give vent to her state of torment. So she portrays the tragedy of love’s labour lost dramatically in the guise of the mother, maid-companion and messengers.

In the words of the mother she sighs for Him day and night. The loss of complexion of the bride afflicts her maid-companion who asks whether the Lord is justified in afflicting the beloved under the pretext of affording protection. The maid-companion depicts the love-lorn condition of the bride to be beyond the scope of finding out remedies. Having lost herself to the Lord at Tolaivillimaṅkalam she is speechless and her intense suffering is revealed by her tears.

The bride’s maid-companion reports to the mother the details of her God-intoxication. Her heart melts like wax and lac. In her Divine madness, she embraces the burning wind and fire thinking that they are parāṅcoitis and seeks the sea as her blue-hued Lord. Her similar behaviour is portrayed in this decad.

The bride is described by her mother as talking about herself as having created the world which is surrounded by the seas, as having entered into it, as having received the world, as having lifted it up and as having kept it within herself. In other words, the bride feels the absence of the Lord

98. ibid. 6 7: 1.
99. ibid. 7. 5: 9.
100. ibid. 4. 2.
101. T.V.R. 33; cf. ibid. 62.
102. T.V.M. 6. 5: 1.
103. ibid. 8. 9.
104. ibid. 2. 4: 3.
105. ibid. 4. 4: 3.
106. ibid. 4. 4.
and tries to maintain herself against this sudden affliction by trying to imitate the Lord's exploits.\textsuperscript{107} She created the lores, showed them, kept them herself and is herself the essence of the lores.\textsuperscript{108} She is herself the five elements,\textsuperscript{109} the activities of all the three times, the enjoyer of such acts and the creator of those acts.\textsuperscript{110} She protects the worlds, lifted up the Govardhana hill, killed the demons, protected the Pāṇḍavas and churned the ocean.\textsuperscript{111} She herself did the feats of Kṛṣṇa.\textsuperscript{112} She is herself the relation of every person\textsuperscript{113} and herself every deity.\textsuperscript{114} She is the dispenser of justic, and herself the primordial person.\textsuperscript{115}

When the bride, who had on previous occasion the intense experience of the Lord, suffers and this incident of experience is not known to the mother of the bride. The mother apprehends the possession of evil spirit and calls the sorceress to find out the cause of her daughter's illness. The sorceress explains that an evil spirit had taken possession of the bride. The devil dancer is requested to perform the dance (which is known as '\textit{veriyāṭṭu}' in Tamil Literature) for driving the evil spirit away. The mother is in a mood to consult the medical materialist thinking that her daughter's madness is due to hysteria or possession by evil spirits and seeks to remedy the disease by propitiating them with the offer of flesh and toddy. But the maid-companion advises her not to resort to such a method as the real malady is something different and the possible cure is to recite the praises of God or sprinkle the feet-dust of the God's devotees.\textsuperscript{116} Spiritual malady can only be cured spiritually. Thereupon

107. ibid 5.6: 1; V.P. 5.13: 23: Bhāg. P. 10.30: 18 to 23.
108. ibid. 5.6: 2.
109. ibid. 5.6: 3.
110. ibid. 5.6: 4.
111. ibid. 5.6: 5.
112. ibid. 5.6: 6.
113. ibid. 5.6: 7.
114. ibid. 5.6: 8.
115. ibid. 5.6: 9, 10.
116. ibid. 4.6.
the maid-companion interferes and remarks that the sickness to the lady is concerned with her love for the Lord and is not in any way due to any evil spirit. She asks the devil dancer (vēlan as he is called) to stand aside and suggests to the women folk that the remedy that should be adopted is putting on the bride the āḷaci uttering the names of the God while doing so.¹¹⁷ This aspect of the description of the bride’s suffering is called ‘veřivilakku’ in Tamil literature; the same is described in another verse¹¹⁸ where the āḷaci garland or āḷaci leaves, or the āḷaci twig or its root or the mud where it grows shall be placed on the suffering bride. The words ‘conch’ and ‘discus’ could be uttered into her ears to remove her illness.¹¹⁹ Or, prayers in praise of the Lord’s feet would be a suitable remedy to her malady.¹²⁰ They could also bow to the devotees of the Lord.¹²¹

When there is no response to her irrepresible and yearning love, the mood of the bride changes from despondency to defiance. Reaction soon sets in and passivity changes into an invading and assaulting mood. Love takes the offensive and becomes flaming and fierce, and, in the agony of disappointment and despair, the bride resolves to resort to the ultimatum ‘mañal ārta’. She gives up all canons of her modesty and fear of public opinion and openly denounces Him for his cruel desertion, rebukes his cruelty and exposes his treachery.¹²² When love’s labour is lost, by not being responded to, its fierceness bursts all artificial bounds and the lover is publicly chid for his faithlessness. But her feminine love reasserts itself and the mood changes from reprisal to remorse and longing for reunion. Every trace of self-feeling or egoism is now uprooted. The bride is wearied of earthly life with its fleeting joys and woes. She spurns physical love as a perishing pleasure and a dream; she now

¹¹⁸. ibid. 53.
¹¹⁹. T.V.M. 4.6:2.
¹²⁰. ibid. 4.6: 3, 9, 10.
¹²¹. ibid. 4.6:7.
¹²². ibid. 5.3.
longs for eternal bliss. The Lord of love seized with soul-madness enters into her whole being,\textsuperscript{123} communicates His joy to her and makes her pulsate with joy. The joy of love's embrace is inescapable and irresistible and the bride is immersed in divine deliciousness and the thirst of ages is satisfied. The joy of unitive experience is not in the loss of personality but in personality. Sensation, form and self melt into Him, and finite thought expires in infinite bliss.

The bride gets estranged from the Lord and asks Him to give her back the balls and the pebbles with which she used to play and get away from her. She knows His selfishness.\textsuperscript{124} The women like her get themselves lost to Him whose eyes and smile are bewitching. There are the women in Gokulam who could be fascinated by the sound of His flute, but this bride is no longer bound by His faithlessness. He may go away and play on the flute while tending the cows.\textsuperscript{125} He need not any longer utter His false assurance to her. There may be other women who could listen to them. The bride at the same time feels her helpless lot and could not but express her admiration for those women who would enjoy His embrace.\textsuperscript{126} Even the selves who are free from worldly life cannot know the tricks of Him who is asked by her not to utter any word to her.\textsuperscript{127} He need not also exhibit His attachment to her brids such as pāvaī and parrot.\textsuperscript{128} He shall not keep with Him her playthings. His behaviour to them is childish. He need not force Himself to join the company of hers and her friends.\textsuperscript{129} She warns Him that her elder brothers would give Him blows with stick, if they were to know His sports with her and deceitful utterances.\textsuperscript{130} When she is called by her companions for sports, if He too were to

\textsuperscript{123} ibid. 2.5 : 2.
\textsuperscript{124} ibid. 6.2 : 1.
\textsuperscript{125} ibid. 6.2 : 2.
\textsuperscript{126} ibid. 6.2 : 3.
\textsuperscript{127} ibid 6.2 : 4.
\textsuperscript{128} ibid. 6.2 : 5.
\textsuperscript{129} ibid. 6.2 : 6.
\textsuperscript{130} ibid. 6.2 : 7.
present Himself amidst them unexpectedly, then those who do not approve His presence there would only blame her and her companions.\textsuperscript{131} She and her friends, while they were playing, requested Him to take the food which they prepared. He came there and kicked off the food they cooked (just a piece of sport). He is not therefore known to have done her any helpful act.\textsuperscript{132} The bride identifies herself with the cowherdesses in Gokulam and refers to their lot which has been one of teasing at His hands.\textsuperscript{133}

The bride finds it difficult to remain in her place with the experience of the Lord's presence within her. She expresses her resolve to proceed to Tiruppēreyil a place abounding in Vedic recitations and where the blue-complexioned Lord Kṛṣṇa dwells.\textsuperscript{134} She could no longer remain bashful and control herself.\textsuperscript{135} There is no purpose in her mother chastising her, as she is lost to Him in her admiration of His wondrous acts.\textsuperscript{136} She requests the elderly ladies to take her there.\textsuperscript{137} Her mind left her and had gone to that shrine and has not returned. As her mind could not be brought to her by any one, she chooses to go after it and reach that shrine.\textsuperscript{138} All the women had scandalised her for loving the Lord. The bride tells her friend that she could not describe the intensity of her love. She could only indicate its depth as pervading all the sky, the world and seven seas.\textsuperscript{139} She asks the elderly women not to console her and comfort her to forget the Lord, as her mind and control of the self are not there with her and as such their efforts would not bring forth any result.\textsuperscript{140} The Āḻvār, who is in the role of the bride, refers to his

\textsuperscript{131} ibid. 6.2:8.  
\textsuperscript{132} ibid. 6.2:9.  
\textsuperscript{133} ibid. 6.2:10.  
\textsuperscript{134} ibid. 7.3:1,2.  
\textsuperscript{135} ibid. 7.3:3.  
\textsuperscript{136} ibid. 7.3:4.  
\textsuperscript{137} ibid. 7.3:5,6.  
\textsuperscript{138} ibid. 7.3:7.  
\textsuperscript{139} ibid. 7.3:8.  
\textsuperscript{140} ibid. 7.3:9. 
having lost himself to the Lord several years ago. She would wander about the cities and countries in search of it. The intensity of her love for Him has made her deprived of the sense of bashfulness.\(^141\)

Then the Lord presented Himself to her mind, remaining invisible to her physical vision. She is not able to bear the sight of His two eyes which pierce her and make the foundations of her existence shattered. She feels that the two eyes of the Lord are actually two causes to bring about the death of the women of her type. She is not also sure of their identity. The eyes present themselves in all directions as if there are the fresh blown lotuses.\(^142\) His nose is so charming that it could be imagined to be the creeper of the divine desire-yielding tree. It is shining there as if it were an unchanging flame of a lamp.\(^143\) The lips of the Lord appear to be unique kind of fruit. As she could not taste it then and there, she imagines that the lip could be the concrete form taken up by her sins. It can rather be treated as a fully developed place of coral. She could not decide its identity but could state definitely that His lip presents itself on every side wherever she turns and tortures her life.\(^144\) Could these be the two blue-hued bows to bend and strike the women in order to attract them towards Him? Or, are these the Cupid's bow of sugarcan? They are the eye-brows of the Lord, the father of Cupid which are bent upon taking away her life.\(^145\) Can this be the flesh of lightning which is but enduring with the red glow? Or, is this the cluster of pearls that slay her? Her life is tormented by the gentle smile of the Lord who lifted the Govardhana hill.\(^146\) These are perhaps the sprouts of the shape of the fish, presenting themselves to women, and demons and suggesting that they could live on them. Ah! these are the Lord's ears with

\(^{141}\) ibid. 7.3: 10.
\(^{142}\) ibid. 7.7: 1.
\(^{143}\) ibid. 7.7: 2.
\(^{144}\) ibid. 7.7: 3.
\(^{145}\) ibid. 7.7: 4.
\(^{146}\) ibid. 7.7: 5.
crab-shaped ornaments that ceaselessly affect her life.\textsuperscript{147} This is another aspect or thing which could not be presented to draw another's attention. It is perhaps the moon crescent in shape and so rising during the eighth night in the white fort-night. Or, it is the poisonous leaf for those who have become weakened with love. No, it is the forehead of the Lord which is affecting her soul to end her life.\textsuperscript{148} These limbs which are peerless form His face and have taken away her life.\textsuperscript{149} Here is the mass of threads blue in hue with darkness pervading the world rolled to form them. No, it is the lovely tresses of the Lord.\textsuperscript{150} Her mind is captivated by the lustrous crown on His head and so she could not be dissuaded from loving Him. There was no purpose also in chastising her for beholding the Lord in the open.\textsuperscript{151} The Lord who could not be visualised by any one including Brahmā, Śiva and Indra, presented Himself to the Āḻvār's mind whose description is called uruvelipātu or uruvelittōṟṟam (hallucination). A more impassioned depiction of the sight of the Lord is hardly found elsewhere except in another part of Tiruvāymozhi.\textsuperscript{152} While in one part\textsuperscript{153} the auspicious form of the Lord is experienced by the bride filling up her mental vision, the other part\textsuperscript{154} shows the same experience of the Lord in all His entirety of the infatuating limbs which the Āḻvār finds in the arcā form of the Lord at Tirukkurūṅkuṭi. Rather it could be said that the pleasant experience which was had through the arcā form whose worship falls in the fifth centum of the work is repeated as the result which is depicted in the seventh centum.

The bride refuses to be dissuaded by those who are interested in her welfare and her setting her mind on the

\textsuperscript{147} ibid. 7.7: 6.  
\textsuperscript{148} ibid. 7.7: 7.  
\textsuperscript{149} ibid. 7.7: 8.  
\textsuperscript{150} ibid. 7.7: 9.  
\textsuperscript{151} ibid. 7.7: 10.  
\textsuperscript{152} ibid. 5.5.  
\textsuperscript{153} ibid. 7.7.  
\textsuperscript{154} ibid. 5.5.
Lord. She expresses her helpless condition by referring to the enchanting arca forms at Tirumalai,\textsuperscript{155} Peruṇkuḷam\textsuperscript{156} and Tirukkuṭantai.\textsuperscript{157} She is prepared to wait for any number of ages to get at Him.\textsuperscript{158} At last, she states that her mind had reached His feet.\textsuperscript{159}

A decad\textsuperscript{160} in the eighth centum depicts how the bride is reported to her mother by her maid-companion to be uttering the name of the Lord in His arca form in the shrine of Tiruppuliyur at Kuṭṭanāṭu (Kerala State) and singing His praise. The bride's experience of this Lord is evident from her red lips. This decad has significance for the utterance of His names which a devotee is to repeat when he gets the vision of the Lord. Tiruvallavāḷ rich in the atmosphere of Vedic rites enthralled the Āṭvār-nāyakī who longs for the sight of the feet of the Lord\textsuperscript{161} to wear on the head the dust of His feet,\textsuperscript{162} to behold the nectar-like Lord\textsuperscript{163} and to worship His feet,\textsuperscript{164} or at least the flowers adorning them.\textsuperscript{165} She is eager to worship Him \textsuperscript{166} and utter His names\textsuperscript{167}

The happy union with the Lord is not likely to last for the bride, as there are occasions when temptations would thwart the balance of her mind. The notes, cooings and shrieks of birds like female cuckoos, hens, krauṁca, pūvai, parrots, bees and tumpi and cranes are likely, together with the blue clouds, to bring her out to the material world and

\textsuperscript{155} ibid. 8.2: 1.
\textsuperscript{156} ibid. 8.2: 4.
\textsuperscript{157} ibid. 8.2: 6.
\textsuperscript{158} ibid. 8.2: 7.
\textsuperscript{159} ibid. 8.2: 10.
\textsuperscript{160} ibid. 8.9.
\textsuperscript{161} ibid. 5.9: 1, 3, 6.
\textsuperscript{162} ibid. 5.9: 2.
\textsuperscript{163} ibid. 5.9: 5.
\textsuperscript{164} ibid. 5.9: 8.
\textsuperscript{165} ibid. 5.9: 7.
\textsuperscript{166} ibid. 5.9: 9.
\textsuperscript{167} ibid. 5.9: 10.
make her suffer. These are the factors that obstruct the life of a devotee who enjoys God's presence. The bride does not have any attraction for them as she had before having union with the Lord. She carefully avoids such distractions by recalling the happy time she had in His company and by recognizing that she had become His object and so could not deflect from such noble thoughts that fill her.\textsuperscript{168} It is but fitting that the bride's thoughts of this kind should be depicted in the ninth centum which deals with the factors that prevent the devotee from getting at the Lord.

The bride is unable to bear the separation from Him who had gone out tending the cows and the time of His departure from her place is indicated by the chirpings of koels, peacocks and other birds. She finds it difficult to spend the day time without Him and so calls Him as relentless.\textsuperscript{169} She who had the intense delectable experience of having a slight embrace with Him realized that this was only a dream experience. The agony cuts the vitals of her body. She therefore asks Him not to follow the cows for tending.\textsuperscript{170} She could not contain herself while recalling the sweet nectar-like utterances of the Lord.\textsuperscript{171} The evening time had arrived wafting the fragrance of the fresh-blossomed jasmine flowers. She yearns to have the embrace with His chest shining with the lustre of the kaustubha. She desires to taste His kiss and wants His tender hand placed on her head.\textsuperscript{172} She shudders to think of the encounter He would have with the demons while in the forest.\textsuperscript{173} She is not jealous of Kṛṣṇa enjoying the company of many beloveds. She desires that He should not go to the forest to tend the cows.\textsuperscript{174} This may appear to be unnatural and opposed to the feminine intolerance at the possibility of the husband's allowing a woman other than his

\begin{footnotes}
168. ibid. 9. 5.
169. ibid. 10. 3: 1.
170. ibid. 10. 3: 2
171. ibid 10. 3: 4.
172. ibid. 10. 3: 5.
173. ibid. 10. 3: 6.
174. ibid. 10. 3: 9.
\end{footnotes}
wife to share his love. This passage occurs in the concluding centum which deals with the factors that prevent the result from getting fructified and where the Āḻvār’s experience of the Supreme Deity is depicted. The bridal aspect of the life of the mystic dominates this decad but yet is not altogether free from the undercurrent of the bride’s being primarily a devotee of God. As a devotee, the Āḻvār should aspire to join the host of other devotees and enjoy the communion with the deity together with them. This enjoyment has some likenesses in the conjugal happiness but is not non-different from it. This reveals that the Āḻvār is not completely unaware of his identity, though he has then the mystic experience. This fact is confirmed by the last verse of a decad stating the result following from the recitation of the particular decad in question.

In the setting of a kāvya, the Tiruviruttam depicts the bride’s love in separation. The rise of the moon creates a longing for the bride to have the company of the Lord and therefore becomes intolerable and as if this is not enough, the gentle and cool breeze blows aggravating the mental agony of the bride. The night which takes the full sway over the world after sunset creates pitch darkness adding strength to the suffering of the bride in separation. The shriek of the kraiṣa bird and the roar of the waves of the sea kindle the passion of the bride and make her more miserable. That the wind which is cool as it blows, is experienced by the bride as hot and the same becomes bearable to her when she gets for her use the garland of tulāceti which was worn by Him. The mother of the bride is much worried as to what would happen to her daughter who takes the wind and moon as scattering the sparks of fire. The same wind creates an agreeable and pleasant touch to the bride in the company of

175. T.V.R. 35; cf. ibid., 72
176. ibid. 87; cf. ibid. 62.
177. ibid. 5; cf. ibid. 41.
178. ibid, 27.
179. ibid. 47; The bed also is felt to be hot. cf. T.V.M. 9.9: 4.
the Lord. The dark clouds roar from the sky as if asking whether there is any woman who could have self control. The mother of the bride feels her daughter’s plight and wishes for the removal of her distress, particularly because the bride has become the target of public scandal upon her having given expression to her love for the Lord.

From times immemorial, the lovers when they could not get at each other for some reason or other, used to send a message of their love to each other. There were more cases of men sending the message to their beloveds. The service of Hanumān as a messenger and that of the swan in the case of Nala and Dhamayanti are too well known. Rukminī sent a delightful presentation of her love to Śīr Kṛṣṇa through a brahmin. What is strikingly significant here is the nature of sending the message. Epistles appear not to have been in much favour. Oral messages served the purpose.

Regarding the selection of the messenger, the lovers were not wise enough to find out in advance whether the particular messenger whom they had chosen would have the ability to deliver the message. For instance, the love-lorn yakṣa is made by Kālidāsa to select a cloud as his messenger to convey the tidings to his beloved far away at Alaka in the Himālayas. The poet himself discusses the propriety of such a selection and answers that the lovers in separation could not make a discriminate selection from among the animate and inanimate beings. Such an explanation was not found convincing to the poets of the later age. However, it must be borne in mind that the lovers whose hearts are filled with the sorrowful feeling that they are suffering on account of the separation from their lovers usually fall into a reverie, a mental condition which is of absorbing interest. They are then alive only to the miserable plight in which either or both

180. ibid. 56.
181. ibid. 19.
182. The heroine sends a message to King Laksmaṇasena through the wind, as depicted in the Pavanadūta of Dhoyī (c. 1200 A.D.).
of them are placed and are not aware of the correctness or otherwise of their undertakings in the external world. However, they are not forgetful of the roles which the messengers, whom they choose, have to play. For instance the yakṣa in the Megadūta is concerned with his eagerness to send a message and continues to touch upon the route in which the cloud should pass on its way to Alaka and how it should deliver the message to his beloved. Since it is the mental attitude that prompts the lover to send the message, the lover is not prepared to verify whether the message has been delivered nor does he wait for the delivery of the reply from his beloved. The lover is satisfied that the message has been sent and there was no need on his part to worry about any further.

The Ālvārs also follow the same literary tradition in their poems. The bride sends messages of her forlorn state to the beloved through the cloud, and birds like the swan and the cuckoo, the heron and the bee. The sky has His blue colour. The bee drinks the Divine ambrosia. The cuckoo coos and woos Him. The parrot repeats His name. The skylark soars towards Heaven. The swans are spotless like lilies. Nature itself shines in His light and reflects His glory. They are thus fit to plead for her and say that her sin is not so sinful as to forfeit His mercy, and that the lady-love (heroine) is mad after Him, and that her life is His. The Nāyaki, in her excessive God-intoxication,

184. According to a Tamil verse from Irattinâc-curukkam swan, peacock, parrot, cloud, pūvai, maid-servant, koel. mind, breeze, bees are traditionally employed as messengers (vide: Introduction to Pukatulalai Vītu Tūtu (1939) edited by Dr. U.V. Swaminatha Iyer (Ed.). But the poets employ other species also according to their imagination. cf. T.L.K. 3.5: 2.

185. T.V.M. 1.4; 6.1; 6.8; 9.7. These four decades according to A.H. (Sūt. 156) respectively contain messages to God in the forms of vyūha, vibhava, paratva and antaryāmin, and arcā.

186. ibid. 1.4.

187. ibid. 6.1.

188. ibid. 4.5.
imitates Him with all His cosmic glory (manifestation) and power (śakti).\textsuperscript{189} The bees are chosen by the Āḷvār in his love for the Lord as the messengers, because they are more likely than others, to get attracted to the flowers adorning the Lord’s feet or to the feet themselves as they appear like lotuses. The rather fast-flapping wings would carry them to the Lord at the shortest time possible when they start to go to the Lord. They are requested by the bride to all the words composing the message in order to convince her about the accuracy of the expressions.\textsuperscript{190}

It is significant to find that Nammāḷvār begins his bridal mystic experience with sending a message to the Lord. The cranes, which are white in colour, feed the young ones searching for food from early dawn, and fly in the sky and so are chosen here as the messenger.\textsuperscript{191} The bride asks the bird to be her messenger and if it is taken up and put in the cage by the Lord, as Naṭa tried to do,\textsuperscript{192} the bird must consider itself to be fortunate to be with the Lord.\textsuperscript{193} The koels which could utter some sweet expressions are then addressed.\textsuperscript{194} The swan, which is happy with its consort, is asked to go to the Lord and tell Him of her condition.\textsuperscript{195} The krauṇca is asked to tell Him that she would be deprived of her life because of Him.\textsuperscript{196} The heron,\textsuperscript{197} the bee,\textsuperscript{198} and the parrot\textsuperscript{199} are then addressed in almost a similar strain. The small bird called ‘pūvai’ did not convey the message and therefore is asked by the lady to go away from her.\textsuperscript{200} If the wind

\textsuperscript{189} ibid. 5.6; cf. Bh.G. 10 : 19 to 42.
\textsuperscript{190} T.V.R. 54.
\textsuperscript{191} T.V.M. 1.4 : 1.
\textsuperscript{192} Naṭadhiya Caritam. 1 : 124. 125.
\textsuperscript{193} T.V.M. 1.4 : 1.
\textsuperscript{194} ibid. 1.4 : 2; cf. Peri Tm. 5.3 : 4; T.V.M. 6.1 : 6; Nāc. Tm. 5 : 1.
\textsuperscript{195} ibid. 1.4 : 3.
\textsuperscript{196} ibid. 1.4 : 4.
\textsuperscript{197} ibid. 1.4 : 5.
\textsuperscript{198} ibid. 1.4 : 6.
\textsuperscript{199} ibid. 1.4 : 7.
\textsuperscript{200} ibid. 1.4 : 8.
does not find it convenient to be the messenger, it is asked to do away with her life.\textsuperscript{201} At last, the mind is asked to be the messenger and convey her misery and remain with Him for ever.\textsuperscript{202} The Āḻvār-nāyaki, while adopting the means to get at the Lord at Tiruvaṅkaṭūr, asks the cranes to make clear to Him her earnestness to be with Him.\textsuperscript{203} The stork, the swan, the koel, the parrot, the pūvai, the bee and the host of other birds are all addressed to proceed to the Lord and tell Him that she is one among the many whom He has to protect.\textsuperscript{204}

There are other aspects which are of interest in the matter of the lover’s sending messages. The mind was taken to be innocent, and as belonging to oneself and therefore sent to Him. It is still roaming about God and has not returned to the bride with any news from Him.\textsuperscript{205} The swans and the herons are chid by the bride for not having gone to the Lord.\textsuperscript{206} The male swans are spending their time in the company of the female ones without taking the message of the bride to the Lord and they do not show any sympathy for the woman in suffering.\textsuperscript{207} The clouds too which proceed towards the Tirumalai hills do not oblige the bride.\textsuperscript{208}

It is not correct to hold\textsuperscript{209} that the bride sent messengers to the Lord in His vyūha,\textsuperscript{210} vibhava,\textsuperscript{211} paratva and antar-

\textsuperscript{201} ibid. 1.4: 9.
\textsuperscript{202} ibid. 1.4: 10.
\textsuperscript{203} ibid. 6.1: 1.
\textsuperscript{204} ibid. 6.1: 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10. The doves are also included. ibid. 6.8: 7; the clouds too are sent to the Lord at Tirumaiḷikkaḷam. ibid. 9.7: 4, 5.
\textsuperscript{205} T.V.R. 46.
\textsuperscript{206} ibid. 30.
\textsuperscript{207} ibid. 29. There is a similar description in Act IV of Kālidāsa’s Vikramorvasiyam where Purūruvas gets disappointed not being able to get any tidings of his beloved.
\textsuperscript{208} ibid. 31.
\textsuperscript{209} Divyārtha Dipikai on T.V.M. 1.4: 1 (following the tradition of A.H.).
\textsuperscript{210} T.V.M. 1.4.
\textsuperscript{211} ibid. 6.1.
yāmin,213 and arcā212 forms of God. The decad 1.4 of the Tiruvāymoḻi does not contain any reference to the vyūha aspect of God. On the contrary, it contains a reference to the vibhava aspect214. The decad 6.1 is mainly devoted to the arcā form, with a significance to the vibhava aspect.215 The decad 6.8 refers to vibhava 216 and contains no reference to antaryāmin. The decad 9.7 does contain main references to the arcā form and makes a single reference to the vibhava form and in this respect, it is not different from the decad 6.1. In this context it is better to bear in mind that Nammāḻvār begins Tiruvāymoḻi, his magnum opus, with reference to the para form of God. Though the arcā form gets a special treatment at his hands, he treated all the forms alike and evolved a synthetic view of them and as such the para aspect is referred to in all the four decades under reference. Rather it must be admitted that para, vibhava and arcā forms get treated in these decades among which two218 were mainly intended to treat the arcā form.

Bridal mysticism is thus a mental process which transports the mystics of either sex to a plane above the physical one, where the feminine features of enthusiastic surrender and passivity dominate without reference, however, to the external bodily features of the female sex. Love for God is akin to the love which a woman has for her choice among men (puruṣa), with the shift of accent to Puruṣottama. Puruṣas are many and so each has a beloved but Puruṣottama is only one and it is but natural that others, who are different from Him, should be His beloveds. Carnality is not completely overcome in conjugal bliss at the human level while it finds no place in divine love. Therefore both men and women are divested of their awareness of their bodily features denoting

212. ibid. 6.8.
213. ibid. 9.7.
214. ibid. 1.4: 3.
215. ibid. 6.1: 10.
216. ibid. 6.8: 3, 7, 9.
217. ibid. 9.7: 1.
218. ibid. 6.1: 9.7.
sex and have only the feminine tendencies as far as love is concerned. Single-centredness in love, pining away in the absence of the husband, intensive emotional feeling and silent resignation to the circumstantial powers mark out feminine love of a woman and in the higher degree determine the love of God. There is rather nothing like love of manly nature. There is passion of the overbearing type accompanied by resoluteness and violence to bring everything under subjection and this is the masculine trait of love which lacks in emotional feeling. Devotion is emotional and also must be treated as feminine. It is therefore that through this aspect of mysticism that a poet-devotee finds better scope to give vent to his feelings of passion and love for God than in the prosaic form of poetry.
Mystic experience is not the only kind of religious experience. The intense kind of that experience does not last for long duration of time. Intensity or reverse of it, which characterizes the religious experience, is not acquired by the mystic through conscious efforts nor does it admit of development through practice and training. It is a gift from God and the mystic is to remain only awaiting for receiving it. Such being the case, the mystic has more occasions when he is aware of the stormy and disturbing world. The experience which he undergoes creates on occasions, when he is without it, a passionate longing to have it again. Mindful as he is of his inability to work for it, he feels the imperative need to pray and request for God's grace. The unscaleable dizzy heights of the Godhead and the ineffective and inefficient lowliness of the self reveal to the mystic that the flow of the Divine Grace has always a downward motion to inundate the rather uneven human frailities and relieve the selves of the parching of life here. He cannot on account of his natural incapacity raise himself up even to make an effort to go half way and receive the benign favour. He is not however forbidden from taking to such methods, which lie within his limits and power, to work for deserving Divine Grace.

The efforts of God-realization though of temporary duration are seen in the abolition of personal consciousness and in the realization that there is a Personality much vaster and much more powerful than his own. Any action that is to be undertaken or carried out by the individual is the action of God Himself prompted and accomplished by Him. The self is no longer desirous of any objective. It feels energetic and enthusiastic about life and life's purpose. It is rid of
the sense of possession and egoism. In the most ideal spirit of God-intoxication, Nammālvār asks people to give up the possessive and egoistic attitudes. "Reach the Lord", he says, "tearing of the roots of the attitudes of 'You' and 'Your'". The mystic saint should have perforce used the words 'I' and 'Mine' which stand for ahaṅkāra and mamakāra. He tries to avoid using them, as it would smack of himself becoming guilty of having such attitudes. Hence he carefully worded the expressions as 'You' and 'Your'. If 'I' and 'You' and 'Mine' and 'Your' are combined together as fit to be shunned, it is easy to understand that this leads to the realization that as there is nothing as 'Mine' or 'Your', everything must belong to Him and not to him or them. As 'I' and 'You' are required to be suppressed, He alone remains in the world. So much so, this concept is helpful to realize the ultimate tenet of the Vaishnavite school that everything including 'I' and 'You' and therefore 'He' or 'She' or 'It' also should belong to Him. This shows further that every being animate or otherwise exists only for Him and so deserves the name īśa while He is īśin.

Every thought, word, or deed that is undertaken by a being is really prompted by God and belongs to Him, the self being only a medium for that thought, word or deed concerned. The responsibility for this therefore rests with God and the self which realizes this is actually not afraid of anything nor is it overburdened by anything. The self cannot therefore operate its senses on anything for deriving personal gratification. Hence the need to control the senses. This is the surest method for self-renunciation by the self. The difficulty in controlling the senses which drag the self as they choose points to the lowliness of human effort and to the need to practise humility, leaving one's self to the care of the Lord who alone could bring those senses under control. The desire for the sense objects and their transient pleasures are the root causes for karma in action. Viśaya kāma is the

2. T.V.M. 1:2: 3.
3. ibid. 2:8: 4: M.Tv. 50.
desire for the object of senses, and its satisfaction is momentary and fraught with pain in all its stages namely originating in pain, mixed with pain, and causing pain. The primary cause of suffering is traceable to the desire for the objects of sense. While the moth, the deer, the elephant, the fish and the bee are drawn to death in the act of gratifying a single sense organ, man is allured by the cumulative charm and solicitation of the five senses and suffers physical and moral death.\textsuperscript{3a}

Nammäḻvār laments variously the hold of the five senses over him and pleads to God for an escape from it. He cries: "How long will You immerse wretched me in the petty pleasures of the five senses?"\textsuperscript{4} "Why should You still propose to keep me away from Your Lotus-Feet with the five senses within wearing me away?"\textsuperscript{5} Again he refers to these senses as: "Made to struggle day and night with the rival slaughters of the tyrants (of the five senses) ruling over me;"\textsuperscript{6} "overwhelming and blinding me to Truth through five senses;"\textsuperscript{7} "milling me in the disease of the five senses without prospect of cure;"\textsuperscript{8} "the five senses which enslave even the Eternals (nityasūris)";\textsuperscript{9} "the five senses which can never be set at rest;"\textsuperscript{10} and "the five senses which entice every one as though they are nectar."\textsuperscript{11} In fact the whole hymn is on the interplay of senses; finally the Āḻvār prays to Him to grant freedom from the illusion of the five senses and the meditation of His symbol and form. Tirumankaiyāḻvār also decries the role of five senses in him. "I have sought refuge in Thee" says the Āḻvār, "for the five senses press me hard constantly."\textsuperscript{12} He

\textsuperscript{3(a)} Tiruviṅkaṭak-kalampakam-27.
4. T.V.M. 6:9;
5. ibid. 7:1: 1.
6. ibid. 7:1: 2, 3.
7. ibid. 7:1: 4.
8. ibid. 7:1: 5.
10. ibid. 7:1: 7.
11. ibid. 7:1: 8.
again says; "While the senses have planted themselves in me to give me worldly pleasures, I reject them and seek Thy protection from them;" 13 "the five senses harass me and spoil my soul; despite my determination for endurance, unable to withstand the senses, I reach Thee for rescue;" 14 "the five senses like fierce and strong youths hold me from Thee; I have escaped their guard and reached Thy feet for deliverance" 15 and "lords over me, the five senses having fixed their abode within me, pester me for their gratification and will not leave me. I cannot withstand them. At a loss as to what to do, I pray that Thou takest pity on me and relieve me." 16 Thus from the cradle to the grave life therefore is a will-o'-the wisp. When destiny drags the jīva down and subjects it to sorrow, the inner divinity in each jīva urges it to choose the way of blessedness, and it drifts between destiny and divinity till it decides on nukti and becomes a seeker after salvation.

Like all the poets who preface their works with an expression of their unworthiness to deal with the themes taken up by them, Nammāḻvār also does the same. But in his case it is not mere conventionality, but springs from a real and deep consciousness of his unworthiness to talk about God. For in him is seen this expression of humility being perceivable throughout all his four poems. The Lord is everything and beyond everything and hence arises the difficulty in calling Him by any definite name. 17 It is equally difficult to name Him as having particular enchanting limbs or possessions. The Upaniṣads rightly refrained from describing Him, as He is beyond the reach of words and thought. Nammāḻvār's treatment of this matter in the decad under reference is a clear confession of his inability to describe the incomprehensible nature of the Lord. The greatness of the Lord is so impeccable that it would be tarnished if even

13. ibid. 7.7: 3.
14. ibid. 7.7: 7.
15. ibid. 7.7: 8.
16. ibid. 7.7: 9.
17. T.V.M. 3.4.
gods and sages were to worship Him with flowers in their hands. To extol Him is definitely an impossibility, for there is no object that could bear any likeness to any part of His body or aspect of greatness nor could the expressions be of any use. All the available literature have only dealt with His greatness only to a limited extent. The Ājvār appears to convey here that the disparity between the dizzy heights of His excellence and the depths of human frailties is so vast that attempt to praise Him or describe Him would rather belittle His greatness and would be an apology for praising Him. His first poem Tiruviruttam begins in a plaintive and humble mood by making a submissive appeal to the Lord. Again and again in the course of that poem the saint is assailed by a feeling of unworthiness born of a realization of his smallness. In moving words he says: “Only great orthodox people (vaidikas) can truly claim to bow in all humility before Thy dark body and lotus eyes. Therefore, they alone are fit to talk about Thee. But here I am trying to sing about Thee. Shall I tell Thee what it is like? A vast herd of cows is being taken towards pasture-fields far away from the village. When, after going a long away, tempting and rich green grass is sighted, all the cows in the herd send forth sounds of joy. In their midst, however, is a blind cow which cannot see for itself those green pasture-fields that have been sighted by the rest. Nevertheless, along with them, the blind cow also bellows in unison. In such a manner I also speak of Thee. What else can I say?” In another verse he refers to the great skill with which Tirumāl (Srīyahpati) gets Himself sung by one like his own humble self. He compares himself to the tiny bacillus wallowing in a wound in a living body, — living, moving and having its entire existence there; how can it know of the entire world? The idea embodied here is that he too knows, and can know, nothing of God. But he is sure and certain that his words

18. ibid. 1.5: 2.
19. ibid. 3.1: 2, 3.
20. ibid. 3.1: 6.
21. ibid. 3.1: 7 to 9.
22. T.V.R. 94.
will command attention. Is it not, he asks, an ancient custom to attach significance even to the sounds made by a lizard? In yet another verse the Āḻvār says that his learning the names of the Lord (Tirunāmac-col) is like taking a bite out of an unripe fruit for want of a good ripe one. For, according to him, only the celestials of the earth (nitaḷ-tēvar) can claim to pay their obeisance to God in the hallowed words of the Vedas (irukkārmoli).

In the Āḻvār’s second poem, Tiruvāńciyam, the same sentiment is reflected in one verse, as its central idea: “Is it possible for me to worship those highly exalted Feet of the Lord - of that great God of māya (wonder)?” The underlying idea is that those Great Feet are beyond his worship.

The Āḻvār’s third poem, Periya-tiruvantāti, starts with an apology. The second verse can be set out in full for our consideration here:

"Pukālvōm paḷippōm; pukālōm paḷiyōm; Ikaḷvōm matippōm; matiyōm ikaḷōm; marçu Eṅkalmāl! ceṅkaṇmāl! ciṟalṅi; tīvālaṅyōm Eṅkalmāl kaṇṭāy ivai." "

‘Our praise of Thee amountst to dispraise, nay, even abuse. As long as we do not attempt to praise Thee, we at least have the satisfaction that we have not defamed Thee. If we demean Thee, it is really respecting Thee. If we do not pretend to respect Thee, it at least ensures that we do not demean Thee. Our own Lord of Love! O Lord with lotus-like eyes! kindly do not get angry. These are all the love-antics of ours, - sinners we are of the worst type’. In a paradoxical tone, the Āḻvār talks in a wonderful strain

23. ibid. 48.
of the wide disparity between the object of the praise on the one hand, and the person who seeks to praise, on the other; The plural "we" in this verse signifies the unworthiness of mankind as a whole and not himself alone. Barring those who never care to utter one word of praise on or worship of, God, the saint thinks of the rest of mankind, and on their behalf, submits to the Lord how He transcends words and is beyond praise. The tone of apology in 'Please do not get angry with us, because we indulge in such behaviour' is noteworthy. And he seeks to justify the lapse by referring to the love that impels men to take to praising Him. As he sings seven more verses, this feeling of unworthiness overtakes him again and in the next verse he addresses his mind and asks "who are we and where is worship of Tirumāl"? He prefaces this by saying that possibly the eight Vasus, the eleven Rudras, the twelve Ādityas, and the great Two (out of the Trinity, Brahmā and Śiva) may claim to worship Him. "Alas" concludes the Āḻvār, "we have to our credit only immense faults." There are other verses in this poem disclosing a similar frame of mind.

The last poem, Tiruvāyurvedi, is a work of mature wisdom where is found this sentiment gathering greater momentum and is being expressed in several ways. In one hymn the Āḻvār thinks of the superiority and transcendence of the Lord, and in a fit of depression at the thought of his lowliness as against His greatness he seeks to run away from Him. There he sings: "I of very small intellect hanker to see Him who cannot be known by any one...... Can there be a greater folly than this?" Unfitness to sing of Him is gradually disclosed to be only a corollary to the appreciation of the Lord's unsurpassed greatness, which is far above human ken. Similar sentiments are voiced forth by the Āḻvār: "I cannot find adequate and suitable words to describe Him"; "Is it possible to study the glory of the

27. ibid. 9.
28. ibid. 10.
29. ibid. 16, 18, 20, 24, 27, 29, 33, 71, 76, 82.
30. T V.M. 1.5: 7.
31. ibid. 2.5: 8.
lion-shaped Lord?" 32 Finally the Āḻvār says that the Lord has made him a medium to sing Himself; it is He that praised Himself with His own words. In the Āḻvār's own words: "God has made me a tool to sing the Tamil Prabandham in order to make known what even the Vedas have not unravelled; 33 the Prabandham of my own words and of my authorship is made popular by His efforts and by seeking a place in me, He has sung about Himself; 34 taking possession of my mind and investing me with clarity about Himself (as the Supreme God) He strung garlands of verses from my tongue and sang about Himself; 35 not being gifted with the ability to sing sweetly of His divinity, He took possession of a person most incompetent like me blessed me and through my agency had the sweet hymns praised all over the world sung about Himself; 36 the Lord of Vaikunṭha without getting the foremost poet of sweet expressions 37 to sing about Himself, reserving all the blessings for me, through me sings the best verses about Himself; 38 one most incapable like me has been made his equal, and rendered capable of singing all about Himself; 39 I had nothing to forget because I had nothing to remember and taking possession of me, He made me

32. ibid. 2.8: 9.
33. ibid. 7.9: 1.
34. ibid. 7.9: 2.
35. ibid. 7.9: 3.
36. ibid. 7.9: 5.
37. cf. Divyartha Dipikai on this: It is needless to take this as a reference to the first Āḻvārs. The word does not refer to the composers as having used Tamil for their compositions. Eminent poets like Vālmīki, Vyāsa and Parāśara were better equipped for singing the glory of God in well-chosen expressions. They could have been chosen by the Lord for composing songs in His praise. Perhaps, the Lord chose this Āḻvār to compose hymns in Tamil. Further there is objection to interpret this reference in favour of the first Āḻvārs; for there is no evidence, except the tradition (aitihya) prevalent in certain sections of the Vaiṣṇavite community, to prove that Nammāḻvār knew about the first Āḻvārs and their compositions.
38. ibid. 7.9: 6.
39. ibid. 7.9: 8.
inexhaustible in my utterances about Him;" in return for the
gift of singing the *Tiruvāymoṭi* when my soul tries to find out
what I can give back, the answer that I get is that even my
soul is His. Therefore nothing can be too precious to be
returned to Him." Similar sentiments have been expressed by the venerable
saint in other places: "Having received the gift of perfor-
mimg consecrated service to Him, whatever may be exalted
position as a result of His having taken possession of my
most despicable body and given me the understanding about
Himself, the joy that I would get by exhausting my hymns
with the devotees of the Lord can bear no comparison to any-
thing else;" having been chastened out of all *nirguṇas* I have
been ordained to sing the *Tiruvāymoṭi* as the food for the
devotees of the Lord;" seeking a place in me and from there
He performed the authorship of the great Tamil work,
*Tiruvāymoṭi*;" He took possession of my mind and spirit even
without the knowledge of His consort near Him and played
the role of a poet incognito;" having destroyed the *āsuras* to
the great joy of the *devas*, the devotees longing to know
more about the Lord, He responded by His becoming myself
and singing about Himself." This is all a truly wonderful
synthesis mingling in itself the humility of the Āḻvār, the
unspeakable glory of God, His sport or *līlā* by which He
enjoys Himself, and His grace with which He blesses His
devotees.

The moments of disappointment created by the loss of
God-realization oppress the Āḻvārs to such an extent that
they do not find fault with God for their sufferings but prefer
to condemn themselves as having committed sins and not

40. ibid. 7.9: 9.
41. ibid. 7.9: 10.
42. ibid. 8.10: 5.
43. ibid. 9.4: 9.
44. ibid. 10.6: 4.
45. ibid. 10.7: 1.
46. ibid. 10.7: 5.
refrained from such evil acts. In moments of self-condemnation Nammālvār, sometimes in desperate moods, cries out:

" Kı̄rpan killēn enru ilan munam nājāl
Aṟpa cāraṅkal avai cuvaittu akaṅrojintēn" 47

‘In the past I never enjoined on myself the task of doing good nor did I forbid doing evil. I had been involved in the most objectionable ways of life in utter disregard of Thy presence’;

"Mēvu taṅpa viṅaikaḷai viṭuttumilaṇ
Ēvutal iṁri uḷ kalal vaṇāṅkiṟṟilēn" 48

‘I had not absolved myself of sins capable of harm nor have I concentrated at the worship of Thy presence’. Speaking of the smallness of his being he says: ‘I am a little man for the reason that I am devoid of anything good, but the sins that I have committed have made me notoriously big’ – “cilam illāc ciṟiyaṅērum eeyviṅaiyō perital”; 49 ‘I am the most despicable of beings shameless for all my deeds. Of what avail will it be if I shout for Thy divine presence?’ – “Nāṇam illāc ciṟutakaiyēn nān iṅku alaṟṟuvatu eṅ?”. 50 He further continues and reaches the climax of self-condemnation: ‘I am the most obnoxious with no virtues to my credit’ – “Nīcaṅēn nīraivu onṟum ilēn”. 51 About his omissions the Āḷvār confesses:

"Iṭakillēn onṟu aṭṭakillēn aimpulāṇ vella killēn
Kaṭavaṉ āki kālantōṛum pūp pāṟṟittu ēṭṭa killēn” 52

‘I have not done one act of charity; I have not even quenched the thirst of those who were thirsty; had I controlled my senses I would have at least set foot on jñāna—yoga; I have not even attempted that. With self-control if I had at least gathered flowers for worship at Thy feet I would at least have set foot on bhakti—yoga’; ‘I had not done anything

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48. ibid. 3.2: 8.
49. ibid. 4.7: 1.
50. ibid. 4.7: 4.
51. ibid. 3.3: 4.
52. ibid. 4.7: 9.
capable of good nor had I engaged myself in achieving the finest wisdom” — “Nōṟṟa nōṟṟu ilēn nuṟṟuṟu ilēn”\(^\text{53}\) He confesses that he had been a pseudo-devotee: “I had falsely flattered Thy appellations as the possessor of discus and one with the complexion of the dark gem kindly disposed towards me; in this way I had wasted my time in ungodly ways”\(^\text{54}\) About his pitiable condition he cries in agony: “koṭuvinaiyēn” \(^\text{55}\) — ‘I am the most unfortunate’; “valviṇaiyēn” \(^\text{56}\) — ‘I am an irredeemable sinner’; “koṭiya valviṇaiyēn” \(^\text{57}\) — ‘I am the worst sinner’ and so on. In one of his soul-stirring verses the Āḻvār bemoans his lot:

“Aṅkurrā allēn inkurrettēn allēn unnai kānum avāvil viṇtu nān
Eṅkurrettēnum allēn” \(^\text{58}\)

— ‘I am not of those chosen few up above (the Eternals), gifted to be with Thee and by Thy side for ever and ever; nor am I one of those who spend a happy contented life over here (the terrestrials), without any trouble or fear about a life or lives beyond. Tormented by a passion to obtain a vision of Thee I am neither here, nor there, nor anywhere. Even though such a matured and devout soul as Nammaiḻvār has described his condition in the above words, the condition will truely describe the state of many here who have not the courage to be godly and strength of purpose to be saintly, but who at the same time are not thoughtless enough to mix freely with the world at large with all its temptations and allurements. Worldly-mindedness that has been with us for ages and the lives untold will not let go their ancient hold on us, and so the clinging to the flesh and all that the flesh is heir to, is present in us in a pronounced degree. At the same time, a little intellect, a few spiritual flashes vouchsafed to us now and then by a merciful God and an environ-

53. ibid. 5.7: 1; cf. Peri. Tm. 1.1: 5, 8; T.M. 25, 26, 30, 31.
54. ibid. 5.1: 1; T.M. 34.
55. ibid. 9.2: 10.
56. ibid. 8.1: 8.
57. ibid. 5.10: 9.
58. ibid. 5.7: 2.
ment of religiousness not entirely of our seeking, have worked serious havoc with our materialistic stability and equilibrium. And hence we are very often tossed between one extreme and another and as frequently deadened by a morbid feeling of inertia and helplessness.

Realization of jiva's lowliness incompetence and inefficiency to do what is good and to avert what is dangerous shows to the self that it is under the gentle control of the Lord who is ever ready to redress the miseries of the selves. It is beyond the normal ability of the self to carry out the vedic rites for purifying itself and to acquire the knowledge of reality. The only course open for the self is worship of the Lord. The word 'puja' which is used in the sense of worshipping God conveys the meaning of regard with deep respect for the perfection of the Lord and affection for the Lord's qualities which are endearing and attractive to the self. The words 'bhajana' and 'bhakti' reveal the self's awareness and admiration for the Lord and His possession of perfection which is unattainable to any one and therefore the self's willingness to serve Him. The word 'service' which is derived from the Latin cognate 'servus' is closely connected in its import with the Sanskrit word 'sevā'. In its primary sense, the word 'sevā' means labour and in the religious sense, it means the willingness of the self to offer himself as a slave to God. Worship can also be taken to stand for penance through love. Worship entails certain observances which are like the rigours of penance. Besides pleasing the Lord, this leads to the purification of the self.

This process of spiritual purification or catharsis is spoken of as 'tavam' or penance. Tapas, as Tirumaiñkai-yañvār points out, is not merely torture of the body and the practice of austerity.\textsuperscript{59} It has received its wider treatment in Tirukkuṟaḷ under the caption 'Tiruvāraṟṟam' (ascetic virtue) which has been divided into two parts viratam (tapas) and jñānam. The spiritual progress is really a spiritual discipline which restrains the free license of the mind and utilises its

\textsuperscript{59} Perl. Tm. 3.2: 1.
energies in fruitful and spiritual channels. Tiruvalluvar calls this process ‘turavu’ in the sense of renunciation because there is renunciation of selfishness. One who has reached this stage must have developed the feeling of universal love or arul, a child of ampu, the love with which a man starts his life’s journey. “Place yourself in the place of others” says the immortal poet to explain that feeling of universal love. At this stage of human development there cannot be any longer the distinction between ‘You’ and ‘I’, the ‘Mine’ and the ‘Yours’. The life of renunciation is really the renunciation of this duality. It is the full bloom of the personality without these restraints; Tapas consists here in putting up with all sufferings and proceeding to do good acts to help even the dumb beasts. Truth to such a man is the progressive driving out of all injury and misery, which is the expression of arul. In the spiritual path one may have to undergo suffering, but that suffering augments the love and attenuates misery. It is this positive feeling which Tiruvalluvar expresses it in a negative way in terms of its effect: “Uṟṟa nōy nōṟṟal uyirkku urukan ceeyāmai. arē tavattirku uru”\(^{60}\) – ‘the nature of religious discipline (tapas) consists, in the endurance (by the ascetic) of the sufferings which it brings on himself, and in abstaining from giving pain to others.’ If the positive aspect of tapas is forgotten and emphasis laid only on its negative element, it reduces to nothing more than self-torture; it cannot be called a mere discipline.

In the absence of intense and deep love, the tapas becomes cruel. Bhakti is for the sake of bhakti and it has its fruition in absolute self-surrender to Bhagavan as the upāya or means and the upāya or goal. In other words in this path of love the means and the goal are nothing but Bhagavan. The self enters the service of the Lord not owing to merely the attraction of His auspicious qualities but owing to its own real nature also. The devotee recognises God as his only Lord and serves His will, as such service is the only goal of religious experience and constitutes the highest joy of life. He longs to see the beauteous form of the Lord with

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60. Kuṟal-261.
the eye of the soul and hear the music of love with the spiritual ear. He does not seek any other fruits as gifts from God, but the Giver Himself. Periyāḷvār says: “Now that I have the austerity (tapas) of rendering service to Thee, it would be detraction from Thy glory, if I were hereafter to stand with bowed head in front of the house of any other. Kindly note.” 61 The Ālvār has also pointed out that there will be no activity for securing other things (upādāna): “I will not beg of Thee food for eating or cloth for wear.” 62 Nammāḷvār will never adore any deity other than Bhagavān even in his thoughts. 63 “My thoughts” says the saint again, “are never with any deity other than the Lord. The omniscient Lord is aware of this.” 64 Poykaiyāḷvār says: “The mouth will never sing the praise of any one other than the Lord.” 65

The primary requisite for undertaking the act of worship is the purity of instrument (karaṇa) which is employed for the purpose. In the absence of purity, the act itself becomes insincere and also would be ostentatious. Worship is through all the trikaraṇas – body, speech and mind. Nammāḷvār says that he has dedicated his mind, 66 his speech 67 and his sensory organs 68 to the services of the Lord. 69 Those who keep the Lotus Feet of the Lord both on their lips and mind will be relieved of old age, birth and death. 70 Poykaiyāḷvār says: “My lips will not praise any one except the Lord; my mind will not render service to any one except Him; nor my ear will hear any body’s

61. Periyāḷ. Tm, 5.3: 3.
62. ibid. 5.1: 4.
63. T.V.M. 4.6: 10.
64. ibid. 7.10: 10.
65. M.Tv. 11.
67. ibid. 3.8: 2.
68. ibid. 3.8: 3, 4, 5.
69. ibid. 6.5: 11.
70. ibid. 3.3: 9.
name except His”, 71 and again “one with control of one's mind and with discriminate understanding of Swāmi-Dāsa relationship will be willingly inclined in search of God's Feet as a calf does in search of its mother cow.” 72 Mind is much more important than the tongue and the body, for it is the mind that moves them. Nammāḻvār therefore advises us to devote our mind in worshipping the Lord day in and day out; 73 and that too with pure mind. 74 He is sure that the Lord who has taken His abode in his mind will not shift. 75 He refers to the devotees as those who contemplate the Light of light in their mind. 76 He affirms that his innermost recesses of the heart is enjoying His presence there to its full satisfaction. 77

The pūja or worship by the devotees or the followers of God is referred to by the Āḻvārs as pūcai or pūcanai. Tirumāḻicaiyāḻvār says:

"Vācittum kēṭṭum vanaṅki vaḷipaṭṭum
Pūcittum pōtu pōkkīṁē" 78

- 'I spent my time, reading (about Him), listening to (His praises and exploits), bowing (to Him), offering ritual worship and performing pūja'. This forms part of caryāpāda. The symbol, image or idol of God (arcā) is placed before the worshipper and God is felt or imagined to present Himself in that form. Usually that form is in human form with four arms with usual divine appurtenances made of stone or metal. Nammāḻvār envisions such a form of Deity at Tirucceṅkuṇṟū as occupying his mind and heart with every one of His limbs and organs. 79 In his opinion the only God who created

72. M.Tv. 30; cf. ibid., 47.
73. T.V.M. 3.6: 3.
74. ibid. 3.6: 7.
75. ibid. 10.4: 5.
76. ibid 3.7: 6.
77. ibid. 9.4: 7.
the four-faced Brahmā in His naval in order to create the celestials and all other things deserves offerings of flowers and puja. Worship is done, besides praising the Lord and his greatness, offering flowers. There are several rules and regulations which speak of the kinds of flowers that are to be plucked and the time of getting them. Offering a flower is only the representation by the devotee of his giving away something which he has by nature or acquired through the rightful means. This is the convenient way in which the self could overcome the feeling of possession over objects which do not actually belong to it. This is figuratively depicted as of eight kinds, namely, non-injury (ahimsa), control over senses (indriyanigraha), sympathy for all beings (sarvabhūtadayā), forbearance (kṣamā), knowledge (iñāna), penance (tapas), meditation (dhyāna) and truth (satya). All these would please Viṣṇu. It means that when these are practised, the devout worshipper is taken to have adored Viṣṇu with flowers. Love for God is stated by Nammāḻvār to have been used by him to adorn the Feet of the Lord, perhaps meaning that it is the basis even for offering the eight kinds of flowers. By worshipping the Lord with flowers, one gets rid of mental impurities, evils do not attend on him and he would also be materially prosperous.

Offerings are made to the Lord in the image. Any leaf or flower and a handful of water is enough to please the Lord Who is hungering for the love of the souls. The worshippers usually do not stop with the leaves and flowers. They offer the Lord incense, lamp and sandal paste. The poems of the Āḻvārs abound in descriptions of these things. Poykaiyāḻvār says: "Tiruvēṅkaṭam where converge discriminating and well-informed devotees from various directions every day bearing incense and lamp, flowers and holy water;" "those who worship in strict accordance with the code the Lord with

80. ibid. 2.2: 4.
81. T.V.R. 2.
82. M.Tv. 43.
84. M.Tv 37.
tulaci garland day in and day out;”

"devotees with offerings of flowers and holy water;”

"the thirty-three minor deities daily resort to Tirumāl with parti-coloured flowers, chanting purusa-sūkta!" 

"O mind! let us redeem ourselves, gathering flowers and holding up the incense in worship of our Lord." Pūtattālvār also refers to these rituals of worship: “With fresh-picked flowers, and with a mind full of devotion;”

"with the tongue praising Thee and with flowers (for Thee) in hand;”

"those who offer worship at the Feet of the Lord daily with fragrant flowers praising Him as ‘my Lord’ and exulting that it is one’s day to enjoy the auspicious presence of the Lord;”

"with incense and fragrant flowers, I worshipped Thy Feet which measured the three worlds;”

"at nightfall decorate the Feet of the lion-shaped Lord with flowers and at daybreak worship Him with folded hands, and emancipate yourself;”

"I saluted Thy auspicious form, and lovingly offered at Thy Fair Feet, with my own hands, beautiful lotus-flowers;”

"every morn, noon and evening, I shall with the offer of available flowers contemplate the thousand names of the Lord with the discriminating understanding;”

"it is proper for the devotee to celebrate the twin Feet of the Lord and to bow to them, having procured choice sandal paste, excellent ornaments, silken shawl, and highly fragrant white jasmine;”

85. ibid. 26.

86. ibid. 43.

87. They are the eight Vasus, the eleven Rudras, the twelve Ādityas and the twin Aśvinīdevatas.

88. M.Tv. 52.

89. ibid. 58.

90. L. Tv. 6.

91. ibid. 10.

92. ibid. 31.

93. ibid. 34.

94. ibid. 47.

95. ibid. 65.

96. ibid. 73.

97. ibid. 76.
contact with the Lord with fresh-blooming flowers;” 98 “and the Lord Who is surrounded by the celestials who offer fine flowers to Him standing in hierarchical order”. 99 Peyāḻvār too echoes the same details in his poem: “Those who are free from the darkness of ignorance and who fold their hands in worship offering fine flowers at the Feet of the Lord;” 100 “and the handsome Eternals who daily bow their heads and scatter fragrant flowers at His Feet.” 101

The great Bhaktisāra gives similar details regarding the nature of worship: “Worship Him with cool flowers, bending the head;” 102 “offering flowers at the Feet of the Lord who measured the earth and worshipping Him;” 103 “the four-faced god of the fragrant lotus and the three-eyed god constantly offer lotus-flowers at the Feet of the Lord and praise Him;” 104 “devotees of the Lord who present flowers with affection at His Lotus Feet and stand like the bare trunks of trees (whose branches have been lopped off)”; 105 and “those who aspired to be stationed in Heaven and realized their aspiration are those who have offered various kinds of flowers at the Feet of the Lord”. 106 According to the conception of this Āḻvār those devotees who offer lotus flowers at the Feet of the Lord are superior to the celestials like Brahmā and Śiva, the Eternals and all others. 107 The saint directs us to worship and praise Him with whatever flowers are available. 108

98. ibid. 86.
99. ibid. 99.
100. Mū. Tv. 19.
101. ibid. 22.
102. Nāṅ. Tv. 11.
103. ibid. 15.
104. ibid. 42; cf. ibid., 82
105. ibid. 45.
106. ibid. 90.
107. ibid. 91.
108. ibid. 64; In this connection one is reminded of Paṭṭar pointing out to Naṅcīyar in his explanation of the phrase ‘purivatam pukai pūvē’ (T.V.M. 1.6: 1) in the course of a discourse that only the flower with thorns (Kaṇṭakālip-pū) has been prohibited, that too
Tirumānkiyālvār’s poems also contain these details: “Piriti (a place in Himālayas) where the celestials, having bathed in pools full of fine flowers, carrying flowers and chanting the thousand names of the Lord, offer worship to Him”;109 “our Lord who blesses those who offer choice flowers with devotion and seek relief from the clutches of Yama with fervour;”110 “and the heart of myself who has been for long presenting various flowers at Thy Feet”.111 Kulacēkarālvār says: “Brahmā, Śiva, Indra, and the great ṛṣis and the divine damsels jostle each other and rush strewing flowers in all directions towards the Deity at Śrī Raṅgam”.112

Poykaiyālvār directs the mind to attain the Feet of the Lord.113 A devout worshipper cannot think of anything else.114 The very purpose of having Vedic study is only to worship His Feet.115 Performance of the sacred rites as per injunctions of the Vedas, acquisition of the knowledge of reality through the study of the Vedas and Śastras and other activities which are based on the Vedas have only the direct results in these which in the long run should lead to the Lotus Feet of the Lord. Besides bowing down to His Feet, one shall, according to Pēyālvār, greet the Feet.116 The self shall be devoted to the Lord. It would be prudent on the part of the individual to be attached and devoted to the Lord’s Feet which have more significance.117 The self shall not at any time forget His Feet.118 The Feet shall be adorned and worship-

not because the Lord does not accept it, but because the devotees’ hands would be pricked by the thorns (vide Ittiṭ Tamiḻakkam Vol. I. 1:6: 1); cf. Peri. Tm. 11.7: 6.

110. ibid. 2.4: 8.
111. ibid. 3.5: 5.
114. ibid. 31.
115. ibid. 58.
117. ibid. 44; I. Tv. 80.
118. I. Tv. 41.
ped.\textsuperscript{119} One whole decad of \textit{Periyatirumoli}\textsuperscript{120} is devoted to the glorious description of the Lord at Tirunaraiyur. The mind is directed in every verse to think constantly of His Feet and attain them. The effects of worshipping, and constant thinking of His Feet are manifold. They would not have the haughtiness that they have some thing as their possession, nor would they lose their heart when their possessions are lost.\textsuperscript{121} Worship of their Lord’s Feet with flowers, which could be taken as penance,\textsuperscript{122} was done by Brahmā\textsuperscript{123} and when it is done by the selves would relieve them of the worldly bondage and would confer on them any benefit.\textsuperscript{124} Nammālvar instructs his mind to offer flowers at His Feet and praise Him with folded hands in prayer\textsuperscript{125} He refers to the details of ritual worship in his \textit{Tiruvāymoli}. The celestials, the seers and others contemplate His qualities and worship Him with woven garland, holy water, sandal paste and incense.\textsuperscript{126} The Ālvār refers to Tiruvēṅkaṭam as a place where the celestials led by their leader Indra, attain salvation by worshiping the Lord with choicest flowers, holy water, lamp and incense.\textsuperscript{127} He makes frequent reference to the offering of flowers and holy water.\textsuperscript{128} There is reference to the collection of flowers at appropriate times (for worship).\textsuperscript{129} The devotees and the ascetics with \textit{Puruṣa-sūkta} on their lips in strict accordance with the ritual code offer service at the Feet of the Lord with plenty of flowers, incense, lamps, sandal paste and holy water.\textsuperscript{130} Circumambulating (the Deity) with folded hands is

\begin{itemize}
\item 119. ibid. 47.
\item 120. Peri. Tm. 6. 9.
\item 121. I. Tv. 45.
\item 122. ibid. 77.
\item 123. ibid. 78.
\item 124. Mū. Tv. 4.
\item 125. P. Tv. 84.
\item 126. TVM 1.5 : 2; 1.6 : 1.
\item 127. ibid. 3.3 : 7.
\item 128. ibid. 4.3 : 7; 4.7 : 8.
\item 129. ibid. 4.7 : 9.
\item 130. ibid. 5.2 : 9.
\end{itemize}
one aspect of worship according to this Āḻvār;\textsuperscript{131} and also doing the same thing with fragrant holy water.\textsuperscript{132} Sometimes circumambulating the town (or the mountain) is also spoken of.\textsuperscript{133} The Āḻvār again says: "O devotees! worship Him with fresh flowers",\textsuperscript{134} "in strict accordance with code of worship offering flowers and performing pūja";\textsuperscript{135} "contemplate His name by offering flowers with holy water".\textsuperscript{136} Again the saint refers to collecting the incense and fragrant flowers, absolutely pure and offering them at His feet;\textsuperscript{137} and offering praises of the Lord with sandal paste, lamp, incense and good lotus flowers.\textsuperscript{138}

The mode of worship (pūja) referred to above is the replica of the services that are usually rendered to a beloved guest or an honoured king. The presence of the Deity is invoked (āvāhana); a seat is offered (āsana); the Feet are washed (pādyā); an offering of sandal-wood paste and rice as a sign of respect is made (arghya); the sacred thread is put on the idol (upavita); sandal-wood paste is smeared (candana); flowers (puspa) are offered; incense (dhūpa) is burned; the lamps (dīpa) are waved; food (naivedya) is offered and then the betel (tāmbūla); next camphor (nirājana) is burned and gold is given as a gift (suvarṇapuspa); finally the Deity is bidden farewell to (visarjana). Thus the images of Viṣṇu and of His incarnations are the popular idols that are worshipped both in temples and in the household. In the temples the priest will attend on the Deity as he would on a king. The King of kings is roused from sleep with music early in the morning. Morning Songs (Tiruppaṭṭi-eṭucci) of Toṇṭaraṭṭip-poṭiyāḻvār is used for the purpose. Then after the ceremonial bath He is dressed in royal robes and decked with ornaments.

\textsuperscript{131} ibid. 7.10: 1; 10.1 : 5.
\textsuperscript{132} ibid. 7, 10 : 2.
\textsuperscript{133} ibid. 10, 1 : 7.
\textsuperscript{134} ibid. 9.10 : 3, 4.
\textsuperscript{135} ibid. 10.2 : 4.
\textsuperscript{136} ibid. 10.2 : 5.
\textsuperscript{137} ibid. 10.2 : 9.
\textsuperscript{138} ibid. 10.2 : 10.
and flowers. Artistic lights are waved before Him. Food is offered at regular intervals. The King holds His daily court, gives audience to His devotees, hears their complaints and bestows on them His Grace. On festive occasions He goes out in state with all the regalia befitting the King of kings. This mystery play God enacts in all Viṣṇu temples of Tamil Nadu for enticing those who are not enlightened from their hum-drums ways of life that lead only into regions of blinding darkness.

The kind of worship that was referred to above is offered every day. The word ‘nālum’ signifies this. Nammiḻvār says: “Worship the Lord both morning and evening, offering lotus flowers so that karma will be dispelled”.

Worship in the early morning is important as it begins the day with the sacred thought. Āṇṭāḷ says: “Ciṟṟañciṟukalē vantu unaic cēvittu” — ‘worshipping Thee at the early morning’. Pūtattār says:

“Mālai ariyuruvaṁ pātamalar aṇintu
Kālai toḻuteḻumīn kaikōli”.

The phrase ‘toḻuteḻumīn’ is to be noted. The word ‘eḻumīn’ (wake up) is important. The first word is ‘toḻuvaḷ’ (bowing down). The phrase as it stands means that worship should occur first and then waking which is an impossibility. So the commentators generally change the word order and interpret them ‘eḻuntu toḻumīn’ i.e., wake up and worship. But following the traditions of Parimelajakar and Pērāciriyar, this could be interpreted in this way: the worshippers always contemplate on God; their last thought before they go to bed is their worship of the Lord and their first thought on waking up at dawn is the same worship, and therefore they wake up thus with the thought of worshipping the Lord. Worshipping and waking are said to occur simultaneously.

139. This is seen in Lord of the Seven Hills at Tirupati by millions of pilgrims and devotees daily.
140. M.Tv. 37.
142. T.Pv. 29.
143. I. Tv. 47.
The worship is performed thrice a day, at morn, noon and evening. Different forms of worship such as "tōḷuturaś" (bowing down), "nīṉaitaś" (contemplating on Him), "valḷu-pāṭal" (worshipping Him), and "eṇuṇal" (thinking of Him) are also referred to by the Āḻvārs. Bowing down, falling at the sacred Feet, touching them with the head, and folding the palms in what is called aṉjali pose are all mentioned by the saints. Rāmānuja has described, following the traditions of the Āḻvārs, the special form of worship (pūjā) which is referred to by Tirumāḻicaiyāḻvār: "I will now explain the manner in which the man with exclusive devotion to Bhagavān should perform the adoration (ārādhana) of the Lord. Having become a worshipper with supreme and exclusive devotion to Him and with a desire only to serve Him, remain mediating on Him, with a vision as clear as visual perception and with extreme love to Him." This service to the Lord consists in five forms in the course of the day. Kulacēkaṟāḻvār refers to these five forms as "Iṟu muppōḷuṭu ēṭṭi" - 'performing adoration five times in the day'.

The mystic saints who have sung hymns of Tēvāram have been referred to as "paramaṇaiye pāṭuvār" - 'those poets who sing songs only on the Lord'. According to the Saivite conception these poets have sung in Tamil and they have looked upon Tamil as the very form of the Lord. The later generations have considered these songs or hymns as the Tamil Vedas and the verses in Tamil as Tamil mantras. Similarly the Vaiṣṇavites also regard the hymns of Āḻvārs as the Tamil Vedas and the verses as Tamil mantras. The Āḻvārs them-
selves have said that they worship the Lord through their poetry, Nammaiylvār refers to his poems as "garlands of words addressed to the cloud-complexioned Lord"; "the Tamil garland of a thousand verses" etc.; in Tirumāṅkaiyāḻvār's opinion his hymns are "the divine garland woven with sweet words by Kalikaṇṭi (Tirumāṅkaiyāḻvār)"; "the garland of fine words woven by the poet in great Tamil, the ruler of Tirumāṅkaï"; "the cool garland of Tamil offered by Kaliyāṅ (Tirumāṅkaiyāḻvār)"; "the garland of verses sung by Kalikaṇṭi"; "the garland of fine words sung by Kalikaṇṭi in music of unabated sweetness"; "the garland of songs sung by Kaliyāṅ"; and "the garland of words uttered for the sake of the Lord's devotees". Again in other places he voices forth: "Through my songs Thou hast manifested Thy presence in my heart"; "songs which do not celebrate the Lord Whose chest is decorated with the basil garland are no songs at all"; "I decorate my Lord with a pure garland of my own words". Periyāḻvār, in his humility and self-condemnation, says: "I uttered wretched verses with my evil tongue on Thee Whose hands carry the conch and the discus". Poykaiyāḻvār says: "I lay this wreath of words at the Feet of the Lord with the blazing discus so that the sea of troubles might vanish". Pūtattār expresses this idea as: "My humble self, well versed in great Tamil, dedicates the garland of noble Tamil to Thy

154. ibid. 2.7: 13.
155. Peri. Tm. 1.1: 10.
156. ibid. 1.7: 10.
157. ibid. 2.2: 10.
158. ibid.2.3 : 10.
159. ibid. 2.8: 10.
160. ibid. 4.4: 10.
161. ibid. 7.3: 10.
162. ibid. 8.10: 9.
163. ibid. 10.7 : 4.
164. T.K. 16.
165. Periyāḻ. Tm. 5.1: 2.
166. M. Tv. 1.
twin Feet";¹⁶⁷ "Nectar, honey, the One with the discus, the One Who delighted in bringing nectar (from the sea) – with a garland made of such nectar-like words I praised the great Lord."¹⁶⁸ The great Bhaktisāra gives expression to this idea thus: "I will not sing praises of man with my tongue which has sung of the Lord of Vaikuṇṭha Who did not deem it a great event even when Rudra with fire-red matted hair offered worship at His Feet with flowers".¹⁶⁹ Again Nammāḻvār says: "I extolled the golden Feet of my Lord sought and worshipped by the Eternals with my compositions".¹⁷⁰ "O my mind! Present your garland of verses to Mātava, Nārāyana, Keśava, the Lord from time immemorial, the One as impressive and awe-inspiring as the mountains, if you want to scatter the heavy sorrows which afflict us".¹⁷¹ Again the Āḻvār voices forth: "I long to merge into the Feet of the Lord by divesting myself of the body through sustained and long singing of His praises";¹⁷² "I am not the one born to sing the glories of man. The Lord of the numberless auspicious qualities with the discus in His hand is there for my lips to sing His praises";¹⁷³ "I am the poet-laureate of the Lord Who goes on creating world after world. Is it proper for me to compose verses in praise of any one else?"¹⁷⁴ "When Thou hast been the theme of my hymns, I would never address to another those sweet words that emanate from my tongue".¹⁷⁵ In the whole of one decad, invariably in the third line of every verse, the Āḻvār refers to his destiny to praise the Lord in garlands of verses: "He that ripped open the horse-demon will not make me lack anything for seven into seven births if I continue to worship Him and raise my hands in prayer as much as I can and sing His praises for which I am

167. I. Tv. 74.
168. ibid. 85.
170. P. Tv. 45.
171. ibid. 65.
173. ibid. 3.9: 9.
174. ibid. 3.9: 10.
175. ibid. 3.9: 1.
gifted;\textsuperscript{176} with words full of meaning and music my garlands of verses have saved me from the worst of sufferings and I have realized in my mind the Lord of Eternals;\textsuperscript{177} for long I have worshipped and realized Him with my garlands of words full of music;\textsuperscript{178} the Supreme Lord, armed with the invincible discus, has been approached with the service of my tongue which strung garlands of music for His worship;\textsuperscript{179} the future cannot be fruitless to me who has suitably adored the Lord of the Eternals with the music the garlands of verses and realized Him in my experience;\textsuperscript{180} I have been blessed with the gift of His accepting my garlands of words and therefore I lack nothing;\textsuperscript{181} even in the region of Eternity, I have none of my equals for my having obtained the mental tranquility to sing my garlands of words adoring the Supreme Lord Whose Feet are borne by the lotus-flowers;\textsuperscript{182} on the Lord of the Eternals it has been given to me to weave the Tamil Prabandha which, to the devotees, forms clouds capable of their rain of bliss (ānanda).\textsuperscript{183} Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār says: "Through my songs Thou hast manifested Thy presence in my heart".\textsuperscript{184}

The greatest contributions made to the tradition of divine enjoyment is by Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār who is a great Tamil scholar—'Iruntamil nūrpulavān'. The Āḻvār is a master of the four types of Tamil poetry viz., ācu (sudden), vittāra (elaborate), matura (sweet) and cittira (artistic), and hence is known by 'nāṭukavip–perumāli'. The words he uses, the metres he chooses, lend themselves to such symphony and sweetness that to recite or sing his hymns is tantamount to enjoyment of God. He himself says to God: "pāṭṭināl unnai en neṭcattu

\textsuperscript{176} ibid. 4.5:1.
\textsuperscript{177} ibid. 4.5:2.
\textsuperscript{178} ibid. 4.5:3.
\textsuperscript{179} ibid. 4.5:4.
\textsuperscript{180} ibid. 4.5:6.
\textsuperscript{181} ibid. 4.5:7.
\textsuperscript{182} ibid. 4.5:8.
\textsuperscript{183} ibid. 4.5:10.
\textsuperscript{184} Peri. Tm. 8.10:9.
iruntamai kāṭṭināy-’ 185 ‘By song Thou showest to me that Thou art inside my heart’. Really the Āḻvār’s hymns show Him to us. 186 The alliteration, the balance and the appropriate sound-sense all make for exquisite poetry that captures the ear and ravishes the soul. The aesthetic perfection and the captivating beauty of the Āḻvār’s arcā form in his birth-place (Tiruvāḷi) are equalled only by the ecstatic outpourings of his love-laden heart in the shape of the rapturous verse. 187 Thousands of devotees, votaries and admirers revel in feasting their eyes on the ethereal beauty of form and face, and regale their souls with the recitation of the soul-stirring hymns of this Āḻvār-poet who has shown that the path towards God lies not through penance or self-mortification, but in literature and love. 188

Nature is looked upon as the very form of Godhead worshipped by almost all the Āḻvārs. Tirumāḷiruṅcōlai, Tiruvēṅkaṭam and Cīṅkavēḻkūṟam are to them the very Lord and the saints describe those mountains in their hymns without even speaking of the respective deities there. 189 Says Nammāḻvār: “Tiruvēṅkaṭramāmalai onṟumē toḷa nam vinai oṭumē” 190—‘all our sins will be removed by the worship of Tiruvēṅkaṭam mountain only.’ Poykaiyāḻvār refers to the mountain as one which puts out the fire of karma—“vinaić cuṭaraic nanuvikcum vēṅkaṭam.” 191 Tirumāḷicaiyāḻvār directs us to go and worship the majestic Vēṅkaṭam as the hill dispels our sins. 192 He speaks of his chance utterance of the name of

185. ibid. 8.10: 9.
186. ibid: 9.2 (for example).
187. ibid. 3.5; 3.6; 3.7.
188. This reminds us Cēkkilār’s statement ‘arccanai pāṭtē ākum’ where he equates the recitation of the hymns and the chanting of the mantras, constituting His thousand names. (vide P.P. Taṭuttāṭ-koṇṭapuruṇam, 70).
189. T.V.M. 2.10; 3.3; Peri. Tm. 1.7; 1.8; 2.1; Nac. Tm. 9; M. Tv. 76; 1. Tv. 53, 75; Mū. Tv. 58, 68, 71, 75; Naṅ. Tv. 39, 47, 48.
190. ibid. 3.3: 8.
that hill giving him emancipation. Nammāḻvār advises us to go and worship the Tirumāḻirūṟūcōlai hill before our bubbling youthfulness begins to disintegrate. Śaṇḍīya Śūtra compares the creation proceeding from God with the creation of poetry or any work of art proceeding from the imagination of the poet or artist. This gives us a better understanding of the poetry of the Āḻvārs.

To Nammasāḻvār Nature is the beautiful form of the Lord. "Yāvaityum pāvarum āy nīra māyan." – ‘Māyan Who becomes all objects and all persons too.’ He is known by many names; his resplendent forms are many. He is neither male nor female nor neuter; it cannot be said that He is, nor He is not. The Āḻvārs see the Lord as the pure form reflected in Nature. At other times, Nature itself appears to them as worshipping the Lord very much like themselves. They see in Nature the animals such as elephants, lions and monkeys, birds such as parrots and peacocks, and insects like the honey bees worship and sing the glories of the Lord. For example, in the Tirupati Hills a male elephant performs its ablutions by washing its month and its feet in its rut (ichor) gathers fresh flowers laden with honey and offers its worship to the majestic Lord at Vēṅkaṭam. Tirumāḻicaīyāḻvār speaks of an elephant which has its trunk uplifted with the intention of getting the moon for a lamp for the Lord. The mythological lion (āḷi) kills an elephant, takes out its tusks and offers oblations at the feet of the deity at Čiṅkavēḻ-kunṟam. The monkeys enter the floral garden in the early

193. ibid. 40. According to Sanskrit tradition the word ‘vēṅkataṁ’ is made up of two words viz., vēm + kaṭam; vēm–sins. kaṭam–burning; the one which burns our sins.
194. TVM. 2.10: 1.
195. ibid. 6.8: 7.
196. ibid. 2.5: 6.
197. ibid. 2.5: 10.
198. Mū. Tv. 70.
199. Nāṅ. Tv. 46.
200. Peri. Tm. 1.7: 1.
hours of the morning, gather flowers just blossoming and offer worship.  

No doubt the whole teaching of the Āḻvārs is suffused with the principles of the Bhakti school as set forth in the āgamaic text-books. Even the first Āḻvārs have direct references to the general principle inculcated in the work that unalloyed and single-minded devotion to Viṣṇu in the simplest form possible is the most efficient means for the attainment of salvation. In fact, they state that the more elaborate forms of worship in the manner of Vedas and vedic learning may be suited to those that have the equipment for doing it; but, for actual attainment of salvation, that is not at all necessary for those who do not have the equipment. A far simpler method of devotion, the mere recitation of the names of God, is enough, provided only that devotion is absolutely single-minded. The great Bhiṣma gave a list of thousand names of Viṣṇu to Yudhiṣṭhira who asked for an easy means to be freed from bondage. Thus arose the thousand names of Viṣṇu (Viṣṇu sahasranāma) to which frequent references are contained in the works of the Āḻvārs. He is referred to as one having thousand names. The utterance of even one among these would bring to the person who utters it results which increased thousandfold of what would normally be the effect of uttering a single name. The thought that His names are to be uttered drives away the sins. Through the resolve of this kind, the individual gets lustre, valour, wealth, handsome appearance and good qualities. The compositions of the Āḻvārs contain frequent

201. I. Tv. 72.
202. ibid. 38.
203. P. Tv. 70; T.V.M. 8.1: 10; 9.3: 1.
204. T.V.M. 10.2: 2,3.
205. P. Tv. 53.
207. Peri. Tm. 1.2: 7. Prahlāda is said to have recited them much to the discomfort of his father (Peri. Tm. 2.3: 8). The cowherds and gods too did the same (ibid., 3.3: 3).
references to the thousand names of Viṣṇu, to the need for their recitation and also to the efficacy of this recitation.\footnote{207} The thousand names show only that the Lord’s names are innumerable. His names are countless and in an apologetic tone, Bhiṣma refers to them.\footnote{208} However, He is referred to as one having thousand names.\footnote{209} To the atheist and the idealist, the repetition of such names would appear as superstitions, but “there is also a subjective element, a recognition that the creed or prayer or formula thus recited, even though not understood, brings with it a certain religious atmosphere, a sense of reverence or dependence, or a renewed and strengthened faith.”\footnote{210} “The very form of words itself has a kind of sanctity, is peculiarly religious, and is naturally regarded as specially pleasing to the deity.”\footnote{211}

The devout brahmīns worship the feet of the Lord by chanting the \textit{Vedic} hymns. Those, who are not qualified to study the \textit{Vedas} could, with the same effect, utter His names.\footnote{212} Names like Viṣṇu, Govinda, Kuṭakkūta, Kōvalaṇ are uttered by the Āḻvār.\footnote{213} This means that any name of God, whether it forms the \textit{Sahasranāma} or it is a word in Tamil referring to God, could be uttered. Namāḻvār goes on further to suggest that if any one simply counts the numbers as one, two, three......the Lord will present Himself before the devotee. The Lord would surely appear when in this enumeration, number twenty-six is mentioned.\footnote{214} “Well and good” says Pūtattāḻvār, “if you can, chant the \textit{Vedas}; if not, the utterance of the names of the Lord brings you the essence of all the \textit{Vedas}; the ultimate significance of the \textit{Vedas} lies enshrined in these names.”\footnote{215}
Poykaiyāḻvār says: "As long as you have the power of utterance, if you utter the various names of the Lord, that by itself will be better than ritual worship through the conventional charms." The name of the ocean-hued Lord is heard, remembered and meditated upon by His devotees who wake up early in the morning. Again Pūtattāḻvār says: "Thy auspicious names is the inner meaning of Purāṇas and Itihāsas; Thyself are the essence of these; let me realise Thee through the perfect Logos," and "We will be elevated to the status of Eternals if we utter the names of the Lord with understanding by jñāna". Pēyāḻvār’s advice to his mind is this: "O mind! let us fold our hands in worship, uttering the names of the Lord like Nārāyaṇa and so on."

The daily work of Tirumalāṭcāiyāḻvār is to repeat the names of the Lord. Unlike the rest of the world, the uttering is a whole-time pre-occupation with him. According to Periyāḻvār our fingers are meant for counting the auspicious names of the Lord. The Āḻvār's foster-daughter Āntāḷ in the course of waking her comrades asks the lady of one house, "The utterance of various such names as Māmāyan, Mātavan Vaikuṇṭhan gives delight to your daughter and pushes her into bliss of sleep." "To those who chant the names of the cloud-hued Lord" says Nammāḻvār, "there is no sorrow; whatever the births they take they are equal to the Eternals," and again "We acquired the Grace of Nārāyaṇa by simply chanting His various names." The Āḻvār as the bride takes particular delight in the utterance of

216. M. Tv. 70.
217. ibid. 66.
218. I.Tv. 64.
219. ibid. 2.
221. Nāṇ. Tv. 85.
222. Periyāḻ. Tm. 4.4: 3.
223. T.Pv. 9.
224. T.V.M. 10.5: 8; cf. the whole decad 10.5.
225. ibid. 10.6: 3.
His names: “All the words that emerge from her lips without intermission are the names of the blue-hued Lord.”226 “How beautifully the distinguishing features and the names of the Lord emerge from her lips!”227 “The delight that Ājvār-nāyaki as a child gets from uttering the names of the Lord is greater than the delight she gets from the pet birds pūval, parrots, the playball, the toy cooking pots and the flower baskets.”228 “Leaving this bliss of uttering Thy names, I do not want even the bliss of going to the world of the celestial and ruling over it”229 is the statement of Tonṭaratip-poṭiyālvar. “Whether I am destined to go to the world of Eternals or celestials, I will always cherish the name of the Lord without forgetfulness”230 says Nammālvar.

Bhagavān Nārada has declared in Śrimad Aṣṭākṣara Brahma Vidyā that there are in different men varying degrees of faith in the Mālamantra. He says: “In proportion to the degree of faith that a man has in the eight-lettered Mantra will he attain the fruit thereof. It is impossible to measure its greatness”.231 The Supreme Ruler of all will ultimately protect even those devotees who are far from perfect and whose faith is not strong enough. For it has been said: “By the man who has once uttered the two syllables ‘Hari’ - by him steps have been taken for entering mokṣa”.232 In accordance with this, Ājvantār has conveyed the same idea: “Whoever folds his hands in worship to Thee in any manner and at any time - his sins vanish at once. It penetrates all good things. It never fails to bear fruit”,233 and so also, “A single drop of the ocean of nectar called bhakti towards the two lotuses of Thy Feet will extinguish instantly the spreading wild fire called samsāra, and confer

226. ibid. 6.5; 6.
227. ibid. 6.5: 7.
228. ibid. 6.7: 3.
229. T.M. 2.
230. T.V.M. 2.9: 5.
232. V.P. 70: 84.
233. Śotraratnam-28.
superior happiness. “By uttering the three syllables ‘Govinda’ says Toṣṭaraṭip-poṭiyāḷvār, “Kṣhtrabandu who stood surrounded by his past karma swarming like ants, attained the highest state”. It is therefore seen from the above, that Īśvara will promote perfection of the upāya and protect the man. “The divine seers say that Thou art to be sought as the Saviour and that Thou protectest those who have sought Thy protection.”

The utterance of Bhagavān’s name will destroy all sins, provided the man who utters it does not hate Him. The man, who, even without his being aware of it, pronounces the name of Bhagavān, is freed from all sins, in the same way as a forest is freed from deer owing to the fear of a lion.”

“The mention of Bhagavān’s name—though it be to call a person who (merely) bears that name, though it be in irony, though it be pronounced wrongly, though it be in derision—the mere mention of His name will destroy all sins”. “The mention of many of the names of Bhagavān which describe his attributes and actions is much more than necessary. The mention of a single name is enough.

The devotee believes in the mercy of God, but cannot undertake any initiative in adopting the means for the removal of his own distress. He realizes that his efforts would only become abortive. The one act (apart from uttering His names), which he could undertake is offering prayers to the Lord. While doing this, love and endearment should guide his prayers and not fear and dread that God would punish him for the offences. Hedonistic tendencies are found to

234. ibid. 29.
236. Ram. Yuddha. 120: 18.
237. V.P. 6.8: 19.
239. For example; Ajāmila, sinful though he was, attained mukti by calling his son Nārāyaṇa at the time of his death (Vide Bhāg. P. 6.3: 24).
have left ultimately a hollow on the seekers of pleasure which leaves dissatisfaction and disappointment on them. Besides producing a salutary effect on those who pray with faith, the prayers are unsurpassed in being the effective means to turn grief into resignation. Fears are replaced by readiness to face dangers. Mental calmness takes the place of the din and bustle of life. In addition, there is no other method for appealing to God like this more simple for application and certain in producing the result. If prayers could not be offered at all times the intervals when they are not offered could be spent by simply talking about the Lord in any way, even if it be irrelevant.\(^{241}\) At least the mind and speech are directed towards the single purpose, that is, God, though lacking in concentration. This need not be considered as worship, but as living in God for the time being. When prayers are not offered, when there is no one with whom one can talk about God,\(^{242}\) one can simply think of Him, not, of course, undertaking any contemplation.

One attractive feature in prayers is the inclusion of music. Prayer assumes the highest form of expression when it is set to music. The rhythm and speech produce a profound and powerful effect on the mind of the singers. Music has more a subjective influence, though the objective one is not to be ruled out, but has a singular appeal. Very often the spontaneous utterances of the mystic singers of earlier periods are put to music and sung or recited as the case may be. It is in this sense that the Vedic recitals are arranged both in temples and houses and for the same reason the hymns of the Ālavārs, together with the stotras of the ācāryas, have become part of prayers both in private and temple worship.\(^ {243}\) Quite often, these prayers are in the form of descriptions of the Lord, His body, His retinue and exploits. While praying to God for protection, the devotee must appeal for protection to the discus, conch, sword, bow, club or mace, the guardians of the eight quarters. They are to be requested to be on the

\(^{241}\) P. Tv. 38.

\(^{242}\) ibid. 66.

\(^{243}\) ibid. 86.
alert. Garuda shall not be asleep. All these have to keep watch over the body of the devotee, as the Lord has occupied the bedroom of the devotee’s body. In practice, the religious-minded people continue to offer their prayers, even if they find their prayers not answered. They find “in prayer something of very much greater value than an easy means of satisfying particular wants.”

The prayers take also the form of conversation. “The individual praying talks to the Great Listener and feels at times some faint suggestion of a response.” The method is helpful for making a personal confession of one’s sins. Though pragmatic, the devotee finds it easy to be frank about his sins. Āṇṭāl in one of her lovely lyrics puts the question: “ Kovintarkku ūr kuyēval immaip piravī cayyātē iup poyc ceyyum tavamtān en?” – ‘If it is not serving Govinda here and in this life, what else as penance have I to perform?’ In another context the lady-saint says:

“Er̄āikkum āl āl piravikkum untānōtu
Ur̄ōmē āvōm unakkē nām ātceyvōm.”

– ‘For ever and anon and for as many as seven times seven births, we are Thy kith and kin; we are Thy bond servants’. A bird in the hand is certainly worth many more in the bush. Here we are, blessed with a thoughtful and feeling life, unlike myriads and myriads of souls which are dragging on their miserable existence in unthinking animal and bird bodies. If here and now God, whom we so eagerly long after cannot vouchsafe to us the sweetness of His company and the rapture of His enjoyment, a fig for the hereafter, the problematical uncertain hereafter, of which we can be sure only by the strength of our faith and not by positive proof of the senses! Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār poses the question: “Er ūr muyalviṭṭuk

244. Periyāl Tm. 5.2 : 9.
245. The Religious Consciousness, p. 324.
246. ibid. p. 326.
248. T. Pv. 29.
When one can get enough food from out of sure terra firma, why go after the winged denizens of the air?" About such consecrated service of the Lord, Periyālvār says:

"Uṇakkup panicey tirukkum
tavamuṭai yēniṇip pōyoruvan.
"Taṇakkup paṇintu, kataittalai
nirkainin cāyai alivukanṭāy"—250

—'Having once become a devotee to Thee by virtue of my great luck if I leave Thee and go to serve another Your supremacy will crumble';

"Kātam palavum tirintulaṇ
rērkāṅkōr niḷalillai niṟillai, uṇ
Pāta niḷalallāl marṛōr
uyirppitam nāneṇkum kaṅkinrīlēn'”—251

'Having roamed about in vain for leagues and leagues without water or shelter I have at last discovered that the shelter of Thy Feet is the only life-giving spot, which I have not come across with any where';

"Aṟu vaiyirṟi kīṭantirun
tēyaṭi māiceyyal uṟiruppān
Inṟuvantu iṅkunnaik kaṇṭukōṇ
tēniṇip pōka viṭuvatunṭē”—252

'Even when I was in my mother’s womb I had determined to serve Thee: now after having come out of it and having enjoyed Thy divine presence, wherefore can I be gone?’ Some of the Ālvārs, as it has been pointed out elsewhere in this work, have not hesitated to whittle down the pleasures attainable in Vaikuṇṭha. Even Nammālvār, in one of these 'drunken moods' of spiritual bliss, interrogates God Himself thus: "To me who regard Thee as my food, my drink, and my joy, what have You to give in return for my unceasing
love?" "Vaikuṇṭha" replies the Lord, "is my supreme possession and nothing higher have I got to bestow on you". The Āḻvār rejoins: "Do you think that Vaikuṇṭha is sweeter than the mind of Your devotee deeply lodged in Your goodness, greatness and grace? Why, if it were so, have You Yourself discarded Your lofty seat in that Vaikuṇṭha and come to dwell permanently in our hearts?" This conversation is but one of the many in which these holy saints, immersed in the deluge of divine bliss, indulged pretty often.

There are also prayers of the cosmic type, where the petty things here become known as insignificant and God's real nature is getting felt directly and the devotee gets more occasions for direct communion with God. This kind of prayer leads to meditation. This could be considered as the exalted type where there is the emotional awareness of the ultimate Reality. Mystic experience is another result of this kind of prayer.

The devotee, while offering his prayers, is reminded of the exploits of the Lord and the occasions and instances which reveal His acts of help to the suffering humanity. It is but natural that he should mention such instances in his prayers to strengthen his claim for God's grace. The qualities of the Lord are also recounted showing that the devotees have faith in their efficacy for winning the Lord. Nammāḻvār records the effects of singing the glories and attributes of God through his personal experience. He has nothing to complain or worry about; by praising Him, singing in musical melodies about His greatness and dancing with joy he has supreme satisfaction. Nothing obstructs his realizing God nor does any affliction affect him. He does not feel the fatigue of the worldly life nor has any suffering. The Āḻvār expresses

253. P. Tv. 53, 68.
255. ibid. 39: cf. ibid. 78.
256. T.V.M. 3.10: 1, 2.
257. ibid. 3.10: 4, 5.
258. ibid. 3.10: 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.
his joy at having the fortune to worship and pray at the Lord's Feet.\textsuperscript{259} He asks his mind not to forget the Feet and have permanently the daily experience of them.\textsuperscript{260}

The very first verse of \textit{Tiruvāymoji} is in the form of an appeal to the mind which is asked to worship the Feet which are lustrous enough to remove the miseries. The Feet of the Lord are brilliant and so they remove the darkness of the worldly sufferings. The selves have only one duty to perform and that this worshipping the lustrous Feet of the Lord. This leads to the spiritual elevation of those selves.\textsuperscript{261} The prayer of a self shall also be not to get any thing from the Lord but only receiving the touch of His Feet with its head.\textsuperscript{262} The Āḻvār requests the Lord to bestow on him the knowledge and strength to pray and have His Feet on the head.\textsuperscript{263} The Lord shall not permit him to get into the material world.\textsuperscript{264}

The Āḻvār who had the delectable experience of having the Lord's Feet on his head had sold out his self to God. Since it has been sold out, the Āḻvār cannot any longer claim possession of it, that is, cannot have either \textit{ahaṅkāra} or \textit{mamakāra}. The Lord's Feet are there on the head of the Āḻvār who, in the absence of \textit{ahaṅkāra}, cannot also lay claims to them, though he had as it were purchased them for the self.\textsuperscript{265} The elephant Gajendra which was firmly seized by the crocodile, could not find any one for its rescue and hence shouted out to the Lord. This cry brought the Lord to it. The elephant used to pluck the flowers for worshipping the Feet of the Lord. It must have had the firm conviction that nothing but the Feet of the Lord could be a refuge for people.\textsuperscript{265(a)} When the crocodile seized it, it was then having

\begin{tabular}{ll}
259. & ibid. 10.4: 6. \\
260. & ibid. 10.4: 8. \\
261. & ibid. 1.1: 1; 1.2: 10. \\
262. & ibid. 2.9: 2; cf. \textit{Śtotraratnam} 31; P. Tv. 87. \\
263. & ibid. 2.9: 3; P. Tv. 12. \\
264. & ibid. 2.9: 10. \\
265. & ibid. 8.1: 10. \\
265(a) & \textit{Mumukṣup-pati} – 146.
\end{tabular}
flowers in the trunk for offering them at the Feet of the Lord but alas, it could not do so and so the Ālvār fancies that the painful feeling which the elephant had then for not being able to offer the flowers at the Feet of the Lord was removed by the Lord who appeared before it and killed the crocodile.  

Prayers which are offered by the devotees to God are generally in the form of supplications. The self feels much worried about the material disadvantages, once it realises the nature of God and its relationship to Him. Too often, it requires freedom from the dangers that lie in wait for him and people of his kind would be content with the minimum facilities which are available to them. On such occasions, he finds no one to come to his rescue and realizes that men of his kind are of limited powers and so appeals to God for safeguards from dangers. The prayers are offered on the conviction that the Lord would surely lend his ears to them and attend to his needs. Petitional is the important form of prayer. More intelligent and enlightened selves make an appeal for spiritual blessings. The times of crisis do not affect this attitude of theirs considerably. They ask for reunion with God here and here itself. Rarely, the prayers are offered in order to reach Him after death. Sometimes, the prayers take the form of thanksgiving. Instances are not rare when the devotees wish well of God, out of deep love for Him in order that His position would continue to be stabilized. It is not as if a poor self could contribute to God’s stabilized greatness, but ardent love and abiding faith in Him establish a bond between Him and the devotee and this tie makes the Deity present Himself to him more as a lovable person than a Deity who is difficult for approach.

Weeping is one of the methods invariably resorted to by the weak and the impotent for the attainment of their heart’s desire. Weeping excites sympathy, disarms opposition, and goes a long way in securing the desired object from the hands of the unwilling giver. It is also designed by nature to

256. T.V.M. 7.10: 8.
267. Peri. Tm. 4.7.
indicate pain and the existence of suffering. No wonder then
that the seekers after God also weep and wail a great deal.
They feel incomplete without God Who is the Object of their
love; they feel desolate and forlorn when they think that they
have been abandoned by their God in a wilderness of suffering
and sorrow; they feel further deeply distressed at their
helpless plight; they are daily in mortal dread of the tempta-
tions and allurements of the material world which threaten
to drag them away from their spiritual path. Experiencing all
these and seeing by introspection several other kindred
sensations of fear and insecurity, they wring out their hearts
in grief and break out into rhapsodies of melancholic strain
which are as beautiful in their melody as they are striking in
their disconsolateness. The songs and hymns of the devout
men of yore are nothing but a musical record of the wailing
of their souls in the fulness of their longing and the poignancy
of their yearning for a God Whom they loved, worshipped,
and sought after. Intense dissatisfaction at their present
state, and a keen aspiration to true spiritual greatness shook
these devotees to the very foundation of their beings, and the
result is a series of sobbing songs sung out of sheer agony of
the soul.

It is a matter of common knowledge that only the
materially-minded and sordid man-of-the-world, who does not
feel the existence of a spirit behind and beyond the matter
that meets the eye, that can be satisfied with his present state,
and be content with mere animal existence. He may be
troubled by unfulfilled desires and thwarted ambitions in
material life, but he is not worried by spiritual wants and
longings of which he knows nothing. On the other hand,
there are a few others who out of their faith in God have made
it their pleasure to love Him, their duty to do His behest, and
their purpose to reach Him. These men of God are not
satisfied with their present lot; nor are they content with their
present existence. Their noble soul clamours for a beatific
union or a coalescing unity with God, and they will know no
satisfaction, nor find any comfort, till they attain their
ultimate goal, God. It is these disappointed devotees, and
disquieted seekers that have specialised in the art of weeping
and they have left to us a large legacy of laments, portraying their divine discontentment. The loudness of their lament is in direct proportion to the intensity of their longing that prompts us to weep. If one feels like a fish out of water one is sure to writhe in agony till one is thrown back into the water, or till one dies. If one feels only lukewarm in one's desolation, then one simply moans in a low tone about one's woes. In the course of a man's spiritual progress, a certain amount of sickmindedness is a necessary stage. A dispassionate contemplation of the futility of the human endeavour is an absolute prerequisite for spiritual stability. In other words, as soon as a discriminating self-analysis of one's ways of life discloses to one what one really is and has been, and what one really ought to be, a sense of remorse is an invariable sensation that results out of the introspection. This feeling of remorse causes the first weeping. When one takes stock of one's past life, nothing is left to one but to exclaim: "ūmānār kaṇṭa kaṇavilum paḻutāy oḻintana kaḻinta annāṭkai?"268 - 'the days that are past have gone away like the dreams of a dumb man, useless and unexpressed.' Like the water that has flown down a river, those days are no more to be, and there is no possibility of redeeming them from the lap of the past. This feeling of lost chances is so bitter that Poykaiyāḻvār cries out: 'I wept in sheer dread that all the several days that are past have been spent to no purpose' - "paḻutē pala pakalum pōyina evru-ānci alutēn."269 Nammāḻvār regrets that he has wasted all his past days without any feeling for God.270 After one has wept out this feeling and risen chastened out of it, one makes a big effort to be pure in future, and to learn to pine for God Whom one has so long forgotten. Here again the feeling of one's smallness and His greatness may oppress and depress one. Here is the second lament, on the unworthiness of the individual soul laden with past sins and full of potentiality for future sins to realise the pure and blemishless God. The

268 Peri. Tm. 1.1: 3.
269. M.Tv. 16.
270. P. Tv. 82.
failure to qualify for true spiritual greatness in the past was the first cause of grief; the incapacity to qualify for it in the present is the second cause, and perhaps a more disquieting one. This feeling is also in turn wept out. Wide reading and deep reflection on the Lord’s abounding saulabhya (accessibility) and abiding Grace, dispel all fears born out of inequality, and it is realised that with all His greatness, God is not quite approachable. As Nammāḻvār says: “pattuṭai aṭiyavarkku eṭiyavan” – ‘He is always amenable to love or bhakti of His devotees.’

It has been elsewhere described the stages in the growth of love in the case of Nammāḻvār and one can presently see how the venerable saint wailed and wept through over the thousand verses of Tiruvāymoḷi with emotion and fervour.

Nammāḻvār’s sorrows, especially those of the Tiruvāyamoḷi are the best example of this cult of weeping as a method of God attainment. The Āḻvār says in a verse: “cetiṭār ākkai aṭiyāṟaric cērtal tīrkku tīruṇālai, aṭiyēs kāmpān alāṟṟuṇan” – ‘He that can redeem me from mortality characteristic of the jungle of samsāra, Him I would bewail for to enjoy darśan of;’ in another verse he cries: “kūvik kūvik koṭuvinai tūṟṟul niṟra, pāviyēn palakālam vaḷi tikaitu alamkinnēn” – ‘Embroweled as I am in the inextricable tangle of samsāra for long years without knowing how to extricate myself, I shout and shout for redemption.’ In another place his God-hunger finds expression thus: “Thou art my very life; Thou art the very precious nectar; Thou hast enslaved me; Thou that hast Garuḍa for Thy chariot and the resplendent discus for Thy weapon; Thou, most handsome of visage! I am a sinner; I yearn with a poignant heart in my appeal to Thee, but it has not been given to me to enjoy the experience of Thy darśan”; in another verse of the same hymn he pathetically

272. ibid. 1.5: 7.
273. ibid. 3.2: 9.
274. ibid. 3.8: 7.
exclaims: “How long can I mourn interminably? Thou hast uprooted the twin maruṭā trees by the mere act of Thy crawling between them. My great Lord, mine is the longing to enjoy darśan of Thy Feet. In my utter futility I became woe-begone and through my garland of verses I still make appeal to Thee.”  

“In an attitude of confession of sins the Āḻvār prays for divine presence:

“Tāvi vaiyam koṇṭa entāy tāmōṭarā enṛ ṇu enṛ 
Kūvik kūvi neńcṳ̄ruki kaṇṇa caṁa niṅrāl
Pāvi nięṛu oṛu collāy pāviyēṅ ṇaṇa vāntē.”  

—‘Thr Feet covered the whole world in conquest; Thou shrank into a meek being for cords! In this way I shout for long. My heart melts, my eyes overflow. I may be a sinner. But if Thou appeared before me to condemn me even as a sinner I can enjoy Thy divine presence’. In another place the saint cries: “Great God, Thou hast insŃised Thyself at Kuṭantai (Kumbakonam) for worshippers of my calibre. My lot has been to look up the heavens to enjoy Thy divine darśan. I cry hoarse and I worship Thee. In my ecstasy I trepidate; I put down my head in shame, sinner as I am. Though I am most loathsome I sing of Thy praises’.  

Here is the struggle of the Āḻvār as Nāyaki; the struggle has found expression in the words of the maid-companion: “At first sight the Āḻvār–nāyaki talks of the beautiful white conch and blazing discus, and of the lotus–eyes of the Lord. Her eyes overflow and she stands breathless and speechless”;  

“she stands petrified. As soon as she hears the holy name ‘Teva-pirāṅ’, she softens herself, her lips seem to utter, betimes her eyes overflow”;  

“She is in a divine trance; she mutters the vyūha state of the Lord in the milky ocean, of the three strides of the Lord to conquer the world, and of His role as a cowherd”;  

“All her utterances are inclined towards the blue-complexioned Lord, Kaṇṇapirāṅ. Her coyness has given

275. ibid. 3:8: 10.
276. ibid. 4:7: 3.
277. ibid. 5:8: 4, 5.
278. ibid. 6:5: 1.
279. ibid 6:5: 2.
280. ibid. 6:5: 3.
place to an inward joy and an inner ecstasy". The Ālavār calls loudly in words that could possibly melt away the hearts even of listeners. In a verse he pathetically cries: “Tāvi vaiyam koṇṭa taṭam tāmarāiktāṅkē, kāvikkoṅṭum kālam īnnaṃ kurukāṅkē” - ‘The God’s handsome but gigantic Feet have subjugated the world. When will it be given to me to repose in Them?’ The Ālavār-nāyaki says: “He has enjoined me to describe Him by the names Māl, Hari, Nāraṅāṇ, Śrī Mātavaṅ, Gōvindaṇ, Vaikuṇṭhan; but He never once cared to show Himself up or even to give a semblance of His coming. The intensity of his feeling of woe reaches its peak in one Tiruvāymoṭi. Having failed in all his appeals and utterances to have a glimpse of the beauty of the Lord’s Divyamaṅgalā vigraha, despair leads to despondency and the Ālavār comes to the end of his tether. He has deeply yearned to have His darśan in full, His handsome appearance, His vision like the clouds, His majesty like the rising sun, all these have been great expectations. “Alas! I met my bitterest disappointment; I am on the point of frustration. Will it end in my death?” Finally the God-enveloping love was vouchsafed to the Ālavār. Such is the potency of weeping for God that a small child under a tamarind tree at Ālavār-tirunakari was able to outgrow in love the big Brahman by the sheer strength of his loud lamentations in the ecstasy of an unfulfilled love felt for the lotus Feet of the Lord, Who was made to feel that even a remote Paramapada is not secure from the reach of the loud notes of a languishing and agonized soul below, pining away in love and crying aloud for the fulfilment of that love. Among the Saivite saints Māṇikkavācakar has won the distinctive title of “Alutu Alutu Aṭiyoṭainta Aspaṇ” - ‘One who reached God by the strength of his weeping’. The noble saint has prescribed weeping as a means for attaining God: “alutāl umaip pēralāmē” - ‘I can attain Thee if wept’.

281. ibid. 6.5: 4.
282. ibid. 6.9: 9.
283. ibid. 8.2: 7.
284. ibid. 8.5
286. T.V.K. 94.
The prayer takes sometimes the form of an yearning to see His fascinating figure.\textsuperscript{287} Some of the prayers contain pleadings for protection.\textsuperscript{288} The God shall not keep the devotee away but advise him as to how he should live happily.\textsuperscript{289} On some occasions the Āḻvār expresses his difficulty to live without seeing Him\textsuperscript{290} and requests to provide him with facilities for doing service.\textsuperscript{291} He desires to know when He would allow him to be near Him\textsuperscript{292} and be at His Feet.\textsuperscript{293} He does not know when he would be able to go round Him and worship Him.\textsuperscript{294} He prays to God that he must not be made to forget His enchanting divine form. More than rendering service to Him, he likes not to forget Him at any time.\textsuperscript{295}

One important aspect of worship is that self should not feel simply satisfied with God's vision. "Its endearing love for Him must make it wish for the well-being of that vision, that is, shall treat the Lord as the most beloved person and offer prayers in order that evil eyes would not cast on Him to suffer that vision.\textsuperscript{296} This is technically known as 'maṅgalā-sāsanam' and takes the form of a blessing denoted by such expressions as 'pallāṇṭu', 'vāli' and 'pōrri'. This 'maṅgalā-sāsanam' is also the means for removing the mental distress.\textsuperscript{297} This is not the only direct result of this act. Happy life here is also assured by the constant performance of this act.\textsuperscript{298} The act must really be made for the Feet of the Lord.\textsuperscript{299}

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\textsuperscript{287} T.V.M. 3.8: 7, 8.1: 1, 2; 8.9: 10.
\textsuperscript{288} ibid. 5.7.
\textsuperscript{289} ibid. 5.7: 7 to 9.
\textsuperscript{290} ibid. 5.8: 2; 7.1; 10.3.
\textsuperscript{291} ibid. 5.8: 8.
\textsuperscript{292} ibid. 5.10:2, 9; 7.6.
\textsuperscript{293} ibid. 6.10: 4.
\textsuperscript{294} ibid. 7.10: 1 to 4
\textsuperscript{295} P.Tv. 58.
\textsuperscript{296} ibid. 67; cf. T.V.C. 4.
\textsuperscript{297} ibid. 43.
\textsuperscript{298} ibid. 83.
\textsuperscript{299} ibid. 84.
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Besides controlling the senses, one will have to put them to proper use. By control is meant the restraint put on the senses which attempt to get directed towards the sensuous objects. Once they are controlled, they cannot become defunct. They have to be used for spiritual purposes. The eyes, which are once set on the charming person of the Lord Who took the descents like the Dwarf and Kṛṣṇa, do not see any other object. The mouth, the organ of speech which shall be used for praising Him, would not like to taste any food and feel delight. “My mouth will not greet any one but Him. The hands will not worship any one but Him Who measured the worlds. The eyes will not be set at any one but Him, the blue-complexioned Lord Who killed Pūtana. The ears will not listen to the expressions about any one but Him.” The only function for the tongue is to recite His names. The shouluders would have served the purpose of their existence only by serving the Feet of the Lord. Tirumaliciyāḻvār asks people to fold the palms, bend the head before Him and worship Him with flowers. Their mouth shall greet Him, eyes shall feast on Him and ears listen to His exploits.

The intense experience of the Lord makes the Āḻvār take up the role of the bride and express what the Lord does not find interesting in her, than that limb or aspect of life shall be given up. Charm in the bride shall be considered to be purposeful, if it could be of use or could attract her lover. Otherwise the bride loves interest in herself and life. Therefore the bride does not have any liking for complexion, mind, feminine modesty, sweet colour,
her own knowledge, beauty bangles, waist girdle and self which have failed to attract Him. In a word, this decad is highly suggestive of the need to ignore the personal decorations and attractions on the part of the devotee. It is for this reason that the limbs are required to be used in serving God. The hands shall be folded to worship Him. The ears shall exist only for listening to the sweet utterances about Him. The tongue shall speak of His feet. The prayer of the devotee shall be that his mouth shall always greet His feet. If this could happen at least in the future, the devotee need not worry about the past or the present.

The Āḻvar emphasizes, both positively and negatively, the importance of our contemplation of God in inspiring His Grace. God blesses only those who have thoughts about Him and He hides from those who are devoid of this capacity. The Āḻvar says:

“Meyyaṉ ākum virumpit toḻuvārkkku elliḻam
Poyyaṉ ākum puṟamē toḻuvārkkku elliḻam”

- 'To those who contemplate on Him as upāya with sincere heart He goes as the very Truth; to those who contemplate on Him for some material benefits, He does not reveal Himself in His true form.' He will be nearer to those who worship His Feet. He goes away if one goes away from Him. He draws nearer if one approaches Him. But to those who think of Him for a moment with a melting heart, He enters their heart and resides there; taking it as His abode.
"He came of His own accord, fascinated my lone heart and incorporated Himself in my body and in my soul." 321  "My lotus-eyed Lord will never shift from my heart." 322  The Lord is impossible of approach to those who do not approach Him with loving contemplation overflowing with devotion. Has not Śrī Kṛṣṇa said that He is the dice of the gamblers? 323  The Lord takes His abode in the mind of those who do not swerve from the right path. "(The Lord) stationed in my heart with love in order to destroy my karma"—"En val vinai māyatu aṣa, nācattināl neḻcammātu kuṭikontān." 324

The highest goal of man is kaiṅkarya or consecrated service to God through self-abnegation; it is the highest spiritual ambition of man in his religious experience. The self belongs to God, exists for His satisfaction and surrenders itself to His redemptive mercy. The moral self realizes its freedom by subduing the self or ahaṅkāra, attunes its will to that ofĪśvara and views every karma as kaiṅkarya. Every deed is consecrated service to Īśvara, as kaiṅkarya and the gift of the self is the supreme kaiṅkarya to the Lord Who is its real Self and Redeemer. This ultimate solution of the Problem of Life is enunciated in a verse which Nampīḷḷai used to repeat:

"That soul indeed has reached bliss,
Which hath its nature realised:
Its nature:— ‘Dependence of God’;
Its end:— ‘ternal service to Him’. 325

Nammāḻvār refers to this service as “antam-il aṭmāi”—‘endless service’; 326  “vaḻu ila aṭimali” 327—‘spotless service’; and “tonṭu” 328—‘service’. The last verses of Tiruvalōḻv hymns

321. ibid. 1.7: 7.
322. ibid. 10.6: 6.
326. T.V.M. 2.6: 5.
327. ibid. 3.3: 1.
328. ibid. 9.8: 6; 10.4: 9.
give the results which will flow from a recitation of the hymns. The opportunity to perform kaiṅkarya is one among them as the following statements will show: "They will get the rare opportunity of service at His Feet";⁷²⁹ "they will be able to do daily service to the Lord";⁷³⁰ "they will be able to engage themselves in their daily service to the God with the discus";⁷³¹ "they will for ever be pleased with the service of the Lord";⁷³² "they will be redeemed from the sins of their previous births and will live to enjoy the great pleasures of service to God".⁷³³

Among the different modes of bhakti such as dāsyabhakti, sakhyabhakti, vātsalyabhakti etc., the attitude of a servant viz., dāsyabhyakti is the best as it obtains a superior spiritual gain. To be more of the character of a servant is better fitted to win the master’s mercy than to be objects of love like children to their father. Children but inherit portions of the master’s property, but servants become objects of his strong affection. The former is but a material gain, whereas the latter is a superior spiritual gain. The efficacy of this dāsyabhyakti is brought out by the incident regarding the offence committed unwittingly by Piḷḷai Akaḷaṅka Brahma Rāya, the disciple of Kūrattāḷvāṇ, against the holy Parācara Paṭṭar, who left Śrī Raṅgam for Tirukkoṭṭiyūr on account of this and how reconciliation was brought out by one Iruṅkaimata- Vāraṇaṁ the intimate servant of Paṭṭar serving as mediator in this case.⁷³⁴ Similarly

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329. ibid. 3.4: 11.
330. ibid. 6.5: 11.
331. ibid. 7.3: 11.
332. ibid. 8.9: 11.
333. ibid. 4.1: 11.
334. Rāya was very anxious to conciliate with Paṭṭar. He sent Iruṅkaimata-Vāraṇaṁ to Tirukkoṭṭiyūr for this peace mission. Vāraṇaṁ opportunely plied Paṭṭar in a coaxing language which pacified and pleased the holy ācārya so much as to deign forgive Rāya. When certain observers remarked about the exemplary way of bringing out this event by Vāraṇaṁ, Paṭṭar said: "No wonder, He is a born servant (i.e. his very nature is made for service) which conquers all". (vide: Iṭṭīn Tamiḻākkam, Vol. IX, 9.4: 10).
service to God as a servant to God excites His Grace. The self in the dāṣya-bhāva very soon realizes its noumenal nature as a spiritual being and attains self-mastery and autonomy. The true meaning of the spiritual freedom thus won consists in the knowledge that the real author of all our actions is the Inner Ruler of all beings and in the dedication of every act of ours as the adoration of the highest Self. The motive of conduct is also shifted from the self to its Inner Self and every karma is consecrated as kaiṅkarya. In this way, according to Vedānta Deśika, the seṣṭa-seṣṭi relation between the finite and the infinite is transformed and deepened into the relation between servant and master, dāsa and svāmin, or servant and master. When the spiritual self has attained this conception, it offers its freedom as a self-gift to God as the real Self or author of all activity; it attunes itself to the will of the infinite as the sarva seṣṭi and svāmin. It further realises that there is no God but God and He alone is omnipotent and His will is eternally self-realized and also that every creature depends on His redemptive will for its being and function. But the self has the creature-consciousness that it is made in the image of God, and owes its nature and value to Him as the master. Dāsyatva or the idea of being a servant of God is thus the self’s consciousness of the eternal self-dependence of Īśvara and the dependence of the self on Īśvara and its free submission to His redemptive purpose. It is also realized that the supreme goal of life is attained not in the natural world of prakṛti or in the spiritual world of ātman, but in the religious sphere of Paramātman. The idea of seṣṭi gives the highest meaning to moral and spiritual experience as He is the means as well as the end of conduct. This is the true meaning of conduct as kaiṅkarya, and the highest freedom of life lies in the self-less service to the Supreme Who is the only Self without a second. That is the reason why the attitude of the slave has always been the richest ambition of the devotees of God Who do not feel it as loss of independence any more than the sovereign sitting on his throne and administering justice feels that the rules, laws and codes of mercy and justice he is dispensing bind him.

335. R.T.S. Ch. 3.
In the very notion of bondage to God, there is the notion of freedom and independence; for is it not God the very life—antarātma—of our lives?

The svāmi-dāsa relation is rooted in the living faith that God as svāmin alone is the Lord of our being, and in the feeling of the absolute dependence of the soul on Him. Dāsyam or service is not prostration to God as enforced obedience is the pathological expression of a slave mentality which makes Deity a capricious demoniacal despot and the creature a cringing crawling servitor. But it is the self-gift of the ātman that is not the slave of sense and sensibility, but is the autonomous sovereign of the ethical realm that exalts itself by submitting to the will of the svāmin and is the servant of God. The spiritual motive of Bharata and Lakṣmaṇa is the motto ‘I serve’, and the free man’s worship is really like that of the wise Hanuman, who, by serving Rāma, His Lord, could conquer the whole universe.

Like Bharata who conducted himself like a servant of a king before Śrī Rāma’s sandals, the devotee should render service as to a king, with materials earned righteously. He should look upon this service as a wedded wife would look upon the careful custody of her sacred wedding-thread and the like. He should have the conviction that he has attained this ultimate aim of life, which begins from service to Bhagavān and extends up to the service to His devotees, by his relationship with his good ācārya; for it has been said that Kṣhatrabandhu, the great sinner, and Puṇḍarīka, the virtuous

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337. Kṣhatrabandhu led the life of a highway man in a forest. He was a source of terror to the sages who lived in that forest. Once when the sage Nārada happened to pass by him, he rushed at him with his stick. Nārada took pity on him and asked him to find out from his wife and children whether they would share the sin he was committing, as it was done for their sake. They refused and Kṣhatrabandhu realized his folly and begged to be instructed by Nārada in the truths of religion.
338. Puṇḍarīka was a virtuous brahmin, who, though he followed the righteous path and went on a pilgrimage to holy places, did not get a vision of God. It was only after being initiated into Aśṭākṣara by Nārada that he realised God.
attained mokṣa by having ācāryas. So also has it been said:
“Our ācāryas are like bees which place us at the flower-like holy Feet of the Lord, Who is our Master and Who renders help to the Eternals”339 and “If Viṣṇucittar (Periyāḻvār) who was born in the city of Villipputtūr and who was perfect in the qualities of the spirit, by some means in his power, makes the Lord appear before us, we can see”;340 in other words, without the grace of Viṣṇucittar, the ācārya, they cannot do anything themselves. The devotee should feel grateful to the Lord at the thought of His innate compassion which is the common and primary cause of all these and which, in the state of mukti; removes the dreaded possibility of a break in the enjoyment of Bhagavān Whose independent will cannot be questioned. For it has been said by Periyāḻvār: “The Lord makes us climb to Vaikuṇṭha through the centre of the sphere of the sun whose rays dispel darkness and He removes the ladder that helped to climb, so that there may be no coming back”,341 and again, “If one goes to Vaikuṇṭha after performing prapattī by uttering the words ‘Namō Nāraṇa’, He will not let one come back to the world of samsāra, even if one should furnish security for going back to Vaikuṇṭha”342 Nammāḻvār says: “The firm Feet of Nārāyaṇa whose praise is unsurpassed” (the Feet being firm, those who have caught hold of them can never slip down);343 and again, “Bhagavān is our Father who takes away from His devotees their future births, leads them to Vaikuṇṭha, helps the manifestation of their essential nature (svārūpa) and goes to their ever remaining under His Feet even like the lines on the soles (of His Feet)”;344 and further, he adds, “the Lord looks after our welfare by taking us to His Feet and by preventing our fall therefrom”.345 The devotee should feel grateful to the Lord of Laksī, the ṣeṣi, Whose will is ever absolute and who, even

340. Nāc. Tm. 10.10.
341. Periyāḻ. Tm. 4.9: 3.
342. ibid. 4.5: 2.
343. T.V.M. 1.2: 10.
344. ibid. 3.7: 10.
345. ibid. 7.5: 10.
after mokṣa, shows the same compassion as during samśāra. Our Āḻvār says: "By Thy Grace and the Grace of Thy Spouse Who lives in the lotus, I served at Thy shrine".\(^{346}\) A devotee shall attempt to any kind of service to God.\(^ {347}\) He shall not be trying to find out what sort of service could be done to God and what service he could take up. The devotee shall seek to take up any service, for any service to God is good as any other service.\(^ {348}\) Sweeping the gate of the Lord at Tiruvāṉantuapuram (now Trivandrum in the Keral State) is enough to remove the heinous sins.\(^ {349}\)

A figurative description of service is given by Nammāḷvār who states that his mind which is too closely attached to Him could be treated as the sandal paste fit for blue-hued frame.\(^ {350}\) His expressions are the garlands, silken cloth and ornaments for Him.\(^ {351}\) His self becomes the flower-wreath for his crest.\(^ {352}\) His love becomes ornaments, cloth and also glory for Him.\(^ {353}\) This hymn brings out the mystic bliss of the Lord which the Āḻvār had experienced and at the same time it shows that he had rooted out completely the feeling of 'I' and 'Mine' and also that he exists for His purpose.

The decad 4.4 of the Tiruvāyūmoḷi is held to preach the cardinal principles of Vaiṣṇavism. Here the devotee who is a mystic after the manner of the bride, finds the Lord in everything through some trait found there which is treated to be related to God. If any one has smeared his forehead with a vertical line of the ashes then she treats him as the devotee of Viṣṇu.\(^ {354}\) This does not mean that ashes are to be used by the Vaiṣṇavites. It means only that anything that has the

\(^{346}\) ibid. 9.2: 1.
\(^{347}\) ibid. 1.2: 6.
\(^{348}\) ibid. 1.6: 2.
\(^{349}\) ibid. 10.2: 7: cf. 10.2: 6.
\(^{350}\) ibid. 4.3: 1.
\(^{351}\) ibid. 4.3: 2.
\(^{352}\) ibid. 4.3: 4.
\(^{353}\) ibid. 4.3: 5.
\(^{354}\) ibid 4.4: 7.
vertical resemblance is treated as the ṛudhvapunḍra and as such denoting the person who has it as a Vaiṣṇavite. Or, the word ‘niṟu’ shall be taken in the sense of the dust of the feet of the devotees of the Lord. This interpretation gets support from another passage in the Tiruvāyur. The real Vaiṣṇavite would not use the ashes but those who do not have the correct mode of conduct are found using the ashes. In a different context, the Āḻvār uses the word ‘niṟu’ with the attribute ‘veḻyva’ which means the black pigment. It can also mean the powder of ‘paccai karppūram’. That the white mud alone is used by the Śrī Vaiṣṇavites is further evidenced by Tirumāḷicaiyāḻvār obtaining this mud from the Lord of Tirumalai.

Congregational prayer is another form of worship. The greatest contribution of Tamil Nadu to the sphere of devotional music is the body of the hymns called Tēvāram of the Saivite lore and the Nālāyiram of the Vaiṣṇavite literature. From very ancient times the month of Mārkaḷi (November-December) has been considered especially sacred and appropriate for adoring the Lord and the Saivites and the Vaiṣṇavites have their own devotional recitals for this month, the Tiruvempāvai and the Tiruppāvai; and even special temple endowments were made for the latter in Cōḷa times. Similarly in the times of Rājarāja I, Rājendra I, and Rājādhirāja endowments were made for the singing of the Tiruvāyur at Uttaramērūr, Śrīraṅgam, Enṉāyiram and Tribhuvani. A fifteenth century record in the former

356. Saccarataraṅka, p. 68.
357. T.V.M. 4.6: 6
360. Twelve Thousand on ibid. 4.5: 6.
361. Dramidopaniṣat-tātparyaratnāvali 4.5.
Pudukottai State makes a gift of a village to the rector of the hymns of Nammāḻvār.⁴⁶⁵ This special adoration of the Lord through devotional singing in Mārkāṭi has continued to the present day. Parties of devotees get up early in the Mārkāṭi mornings, bathe despite the chill, and go round the local temple and the tank singing devotional songs. Tiruppāvat, as the author herself refers to as ‘Caṅkat-tamiḻmālai’⁴⁶⁶ (a garland of verses to be sung in chorus) is intended only for group-singing. This practice is popularly called bhajana. While a few gifted singers, who led these bhajana parties, stopped at particular places to sing elaborate songs, there were nāmāvaliś or simple strings of God’s names and epithets which they uttered as they moved on and which the accompanying congregation took up in chorus. As each song or nāmāvali was finished, the leader pronounced what is called punḍarika, an expression of devotion to God like ‘Śīrā-kāṇiṁśarṇam’ or ‘Govinda nama raṅkirtanam’ to which the whole party would respond with formulas like ‘Jaya Jaya Rāma’ and ‘Govindā, Govinda’. This bhajana was conducted in a more organized manner, within the precinct of bhajana-maths, everyday or on special week-days (in many places, Saturdays being preferred) or on holy days like the Ekādaśi.

Sometimes a whole bhajana-session was conducted for several days once or twice a year in a far more elaborate manner. This was usually done when the bhāgavatas would celebrate festivals, utśavas, of the marriage of Śīrā-Rāma or of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. During these days the bhāgavatas go through their entire repertoire, Gopīka-gītā, the kīrtanas of Rāmdās and similar devotional songs. Besides these, they sing, during these festivals, special services of songs called utśava-sampradāya kīrtanas and songs invoking the Lord with simple addresses and epithets divyanāma-saṅkīrtanas to both of which the renowned saint-musician Tyāgarāja (1767–1847 A.D.) made an outstanding contribution and provided a rich musical medium for this method of worship. Some of these

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365. No. 70 of 1909.
366. T.Pv. 30. cf. Peri. Tm. 3.4: 10.
are sung with a simple dance movement around a brass lamp-stand or *tulaci* pot, in imitation of the circular *rāsa*-dance. Some *utṣava* specialists among these execute more difficult dances, carrying the lamp-stand or circumambulating it with their prostrate bodies. Large numbers of devout people of both sexes take part in these *bhajanās*.

There are several references in Nammālvar's poem to such rapturous, congregational worship. The Āḻvār says: "What is the use of those who do not sing the names of my Lord Kaṇṇan, leap up and dance about in ecstasy?" Those who do not sing the Lord in strains full of music and leap and dance are sure to be born again and again in this mundane world. Those who do not somersault in their rapturous repetition of the Lord's praises are bound to be plunged into Hell. What use is the birth of such people among the good as do not sing the real praises of Śrīdhara and dance in ecstasy headside down without restraint? Those such as do not praise the Lord extolled in the *Vedas* and walk the streets forgetting themselves in chanting His praise, however great their scholarship might be, do not deserve to be called men. Those who celebrate the Lord, and caper in their enthusiasm are as good as the all-knowing. Those who fail to praise the Lord and to dance about in the rapture of devotion are not likely to do any service to the devotees, and are there only to feed and fatten themselves. Even the Eternals worship those who constantly babble the names of the Lord both in solitude and in company and trisk about in extremes of devotion and love of God so that the others call them mad and laugh at them." In another place he says

368. ibid. 3.5: 2.
369. ibid. 3.5: 3.
370. ibid. 3.5: 4.
371. ibid 3.5: 5.
372. ibid. 3.5: 6.
373. ibid. 3.5: 7.
374. ibid. 3.5: 8. cf. Perum. Tm. 3: 8.
that the world is full of the devotees of the Lord who constantly chant His names, sing His praises and dance about, and lose themselves in the rapture of devotion.

The devotees of the Lord have to follow a course of action which is faultless and agreeable. They should observe the code of conduct prescribed for their varṇa and their āśrama and for the sake of delight in the enjoyment of the auspicious qualities of the Lord; they should study Vedāṇta with good men, should teach the sweet and noble utterances of the Śrīvaiśnava always and also listen to the religious discourses. They should follow this line of conduct as long as they live. The following passages from the Nalāyiram indicate the line of conduct: “I read the books which describe the attributes and qualities of Bhagavān; I listened to other people reading them; I bowed to Him, I worshipped Him always and performed service to Him and thus saw to it that my time was not spent in vain.”

“Men should get rid of their sorrow which is as deep as the sea on account of past karma surrounding the soul, by meditating on those passages which reveal the Lord’s qualities. If they should not do so, by what other thought can they get rid of their sorrow while in samsāra?”

“We should without intermission render service to the Lord in all places and in all circumstances and at all times.”

“If the Lord is so gracious as to enable me to spend my time always with the passages which describe His qualities in my mouth, with His form alluring the eye and other senses in my mind, and with flowers fit enough for His form in my hands — if I find this grace, what is there unpleasant for me while living here?”

“This is the only object that I desire — that the Lord should take me into His service for His own satisfaction.”

“I do not long for birth accompanied with wealth that only

375. ibid. 5.2
377. P. Tv. 86.
379. ibid. 8.10; 4; cf. ibid., 1.4: 9; 9 2: 10.
380. ibid. 2.9: 4; cf. T.Pv. 29; Nāc. Tm. 4: 1; Periyāl. Tm. 4.4: 3.
makes the flesh grow but pray to be born as a heron in the sacred Puṣkaraṇi in the Vēṅkaṭa Hills”

A devotee should not remain complacently ignorant of what should be known in that state, on the presumption that he has already known what should be known. Knowledge and love are both essential for the perfect enjoyment of the Lord. Therefore he should not beg of the Lord any thing but knowledge and love for His holy Feet. Periyāḷvār says: “The Lord of the yellow raiment (piṭaka āṭaip pirāṇār) has incarnated as the guru to teach the Vedas” So the devotee should learn from such ācāryas possessed of exclusive devotion to the Lord and having a clear knowledge of the truth. He should obtain clear knowledge from them by following the injunction of the Gītā: “Learn that by humble reverence, by enquiry and by service. The men of wisdom who have seen the truth will instruct thee in knowledge”. He should have his knowledge rendered clear and pure, as Kālidāsa says, even a man that is dull becomes intelligent by seeking the company of the wise as muddy water becomes clear and pure by being mixed with the lather from soap-nut. It has been said: “He whose knowledge of the truth (concerning Bhagavān) extends up to the enjoyment of the Lord – all those who fall within the range of his eyes will be purified of all their sins”. So a devotee should live in close contact with such men who are well established in this knowledge. “In a tank which is intended for all and for various purposes, one should take only as much of the water as is required for one’s purposes”. So a devotee should determine what he should choose, from among their ways of life and conduct, what is in accordance with his varṇa, his āśrama, his gotra, his character and the like and conduct himself in keeping with that determination. He should walk warily lest he should fall into the pitfall of think-

381. Perum. Tm. 4:1.
382. Periyāḷ. Tm. 5.2: 8.
383. Bh. G. 4: 34.
384. Mālavikāgnimitra, 2.7.
385. Sātt. Sam. cited in RTS. Ch. 15.
ing of his own superiority and the inferiority of others, which might arise from his conceit while observing this code of conduct.

Even if, as it occurred to such great men of yore as Nammālvār and Nāthamuni, the devotee is blessed with the special grace of the Saviour so as to enjoy the rise of such benefits as the vision of the Lord, he should feel sure that it is not due to any merit of his own as Periyālvar says “I do not know what is good and what is bad”\(^{387}\) and “Even if I know what is good and what is evil, I cannot obtain what is good and avoid what is evil”. He should see to it that his being destitute of all upāyas (\(ākiñcanya\)) which is due to his svārūpa, his maintenance (\(sthihi\)) and his activities (pravṛtti) being entirely dependent on the Lord does not suffer any change or loss. He should remember his utter helplessness (\(kārpanya\)) as described in the śloka “I am the abode of all transgressions, I have no means of protecting myself and I have nothing else to attain than Thee”,\(^{388}\) and in such verses of the Ālvārs as: “I have not seen observing the code of the disciplined life, nor have I keen intelligence”,\(^{389}\) “What can I do? Who will protect me?”,\(^{390}\) “May my misery be put an end to by Thee! If Thou dost not do so, there is no one else to protect me”,\(^{394}\) “I have no other upāya and no other protector”, \(^{392}\) I do not know of any one whom I can hold as the Saviour of my soul”,\(^{395}\) “We are such as ignorant women belonging to the race of cowherds who eat in forests while grazing the cows there”,\(^{396}\) “I have given up the rites pertaining to brahmins of worshipping the three fires after ablutions”,\(^{393}\) “I was not born in any of the four castes wherein one is fit to

\(^{387}\) Periyāl. Tm. 5.1: 3.

\(^{388}\) Ahir. Sam. 3: 30.

\(^{389}\) T.V.M. 5.7: 1.

\(^{390}\) ibid. 5.8: 3.

\(^{391}\) ibid. 5.8: 8.

\(^{392}\) ibid. 6.10: 10.

\(^{393}\) ibid. 10. 10: 3.

\(^{394}\) T. Pv. 28.

\(^{395}\) T.M. 25.
follow dharma”, “I am ignorant and of low birth”, “I have no one to seek for support”, “Even if Thou dost not remove from me the sufferings due to karma, I have no other refuge than Thee”, “I have not practised karma-yoga; I have not understood the real nature of the disembodied self i.e., I have not performed jñāna-yoga; nor have I bhakti towards Thy holy Feet”. The devotee should realise his own helplessness by remembering the statements as embodied in the verses of the Ālyārs.

Owing to the knowledge of his own unfitness from time immemorial and the loss of the Lord’s service which resulted from it, which may cause excessive disgust, the devotee should not fall into despair which make one lament in the words of the Ālvār saying, “The nature of the man in samsāra is such that he identifies himself with the perishing body and calls it ‘I’; from it arises also evil conduct and from it arises again the body that is foul”. Without falling into despair he should hearten himself with the latter part of the same verse: “O Lord of the immortals, Thou wast born into all castes and even from the wombs of animals in Thy eagerness to protect the jīvas”: He should comfort himself with the words of the Saviour to Arjuna as “For the protection of the good and the destruction of the wicked and so also for the establishment of dharma I am born again and again in every yuga”. He should bathe and dive deep, as it were, in the words of Bhagavān which reveal the secret of the avatāras and take courage: “Whatever a man may have been in the past, if he lives a righteous life in his old age, it will do him good; his evil deeds in the past will do him no harm” and “A man may have been wicked in his past life; he may have fed on anything

396. Tc. V. 90.
397. Perl. Tm. 5. 8: 1.
399. Perum. Tm. 51.
400. Śtotsra-ratna 22.
(however impure); he may have been ungrateful; he may have been a sceptic; in spite of all that, if he earnestly seeks the protection of the Lord, Who is the cause of the world, know that man is faultless owing to the Lord’s greatness. "In one half of an instant, a jīva commits a sin which cannot be expiated even in the course of ten thousand kalpas of Brahmā. But Thou pardonest him if only he gives up the thought of sinning again, even though he has transgressed. "How wonderful this is!" "The past is past, what can we do concerning it? The wise man should think of erecting the dam, even when the water is flowing." "It is good to die after performing prapatti to the Lord at least in the dying moments."

In accordance with what has been said above, the devotee should not lament over the past. He should not run away at the thought of his past unfitness. He should make himself fit for the future by reflecting on the present fitness which has resulted from the infinite greatness of the Saviour which brooks no questioning, like those who construct a dam for the water that will come up in the future. He should not stray from the path of performing the commands and permissions of the Lord which are in keeping with his present state as a devotee. As described by Nammāḻvār, the senses which have become tired with expectations of enjoying the Lord should be rendered fit to enjoy Him by means of pure food and service and directed towards such spiritual experiences as are available and turned away from the desire for unwholesome objects, like cows that are turned away from stealthily eating the crops.

Vedānta Deśika illustrates the condition of the devotee by means of a beautiful analogy. When people

405. Vaikunṭhastava. 61.
408. ibid. 3.8.
409. R.T.S. Ch. 15.
are waiting for the boat in order to cross the stream to go to a place of their desire, some of them may avoid playing chess or other game with stakes, as it could not be stopped whenever desired but may be engaged in playing the game without any stakes so that they might be in a position to give up the game when the boat has come. Though they play merely for the enjoyment and not for money, they move the pawns on the board in strict accordance with the rules of the game. In the same way though the devotee does not expect any profit out of it, he performs gladly the rites commanded and permitted by the Lord, which are really services to Him, in accordance with the specific time and place at which they are ordained for performance. In performing them, he should resemble not those who drink milk for relief from excess of bile, but like those who have got well easily and quickly with the help of a medicine and who drink milk with pleasure, not as a cure for disease.

It has been pointed out that a bhāgavata has, by nature, the sole character of a seṣa to Bhagavān and he takes delight in rendering service to Him. It is not at all likely that he will offend against the Lord. If as a result of a past karma which has begun to operate (prārabdhā) and under adverse conditions of place, time and circumstance slight offences against the Lord take place, through inattention in the waking state or in dreamless sleep and other such states those offences will disappear without causing any stain. Again as the devotee is in close association with prakṛti like one who lives under the same roof with a serpent, it is just possible that, owing to his deficiency in spiritual qualities, certain lapses might, as in the case of weak-hearted rṣis, even occur with his knowledge. If such lapses do occur, the Lord of Mahālakṣmī Who, by His very nature, is his well-wisher, stands ever ready to save him. These lapses in his actions will therefore be momentary like lightning; he will quickly reflect on these lapses from his state as a devotee, feel ashamed at them, repent of them, and perform proper atonement (prāyacitta) that is suited to his competence. “If there

410. Peri. Tm. 11.8: 3.
is offence the atonement that is to be done is only the performance of prapatti again. If, after performing prapatti for the sake of mokṣa, a man should perform karma-yoga and the like with the thought that these are upāyas (to mokṣa), it would also constitute an offence. In order that this offence might disappear, prapatti alone should be performed again." 411 "Whether a man commits an offence knowing that it is an offence or does it without knowing it to be one, the only atonement that has to be performed is to beg in these words: 'Pardon the offence.' 412 If the devotee does not obtain pardon by atonement, he will not go to the world of Yama, but receive punishment in this very life. For it has been said: "Seeing his attendants with the noose of death in their hands Yama whispers in their ears: 'Do not approach those who have performed prapatti at the Feet of Madhusūdana. I have sway only over others and not over the devotees of Viṣṇu'" 413 and again "O Thou with lotus-like eyes, O Vāsudeva, O Viṣṇu, O Thou that bearest the earth, O Thou that art armed with the conch and the discus, be Thou my refuge—those who utter these words, leave them at a distance for they are not the sinners" 414 and further "Those that perform prapatti to Viṣṇu, the God Who is armed with a bow, never go to the world of Yama, for Hell is not their dwelling place". 415 As stated in these treatises the offenders do not go to the land of Yama, but are punished with the blindness of an eye, or the lameness of a leg, or some such thing and thus relieved of their burden of sin. They will be punished in this life itself here. The Supreme Lord, being possessed of forgiveness, kindness, compassion and over-flowing love, relents in His anger and protects the devotees after light punishment for his offence. Even in the case of deliberate offence the punishment is not severe. When the offences have been committed, atonement also will have to be made in

412. The Verses of Vaṅkipuram Nampi, 520.
414. Yama's words. V.P. 3.7: 33.
public. This is for the sake of setting an example to the rest of the world. If it were not done, it would be a transgression of the Lord’s command.

The atonement is prescribed only for a sin that has already been committed. If a man dreads the possibility of future sins committed deliberately, he should perform atonement in the form of a prapatti for the sins of the past life which have begun to operate and which are the causes of these possible future sins. It has been said: “The sins committed in previous births afflict a man in the present life as diseases. They can be got rid of by medicines, charitable gifts, japa, offerings to the fire (homa) and adoration of Bhagavān.” It is indeed stated here that, even by japa and homa, the sins of the past which have begun to bear fruit in the present life can be destroyed. Such being the case, there is no reason to doubt that prapatti can destroy such sins. Therefore if a man performs prapatti in dread of the possibilities of future sins which might be caused by the sins of the past, these can be got rid of and no such future sin will be deliberately committed.

It is, therefore, clear that the process ultimately consists in purifying the mind and the heart, a sort of catharsis. When one thinks of Him for a moment, He makes that heart as his abode. If the mind is oriented towards Him, He rushes into it. If the soul is hungering for God, God is also hungering for the soul. Nammāḻvār speaks of this experience: “When I stood tip-toe eager to swallow Him up, He, Who had put the idea into my head, came of His own accord and devoured me into Himself”. “The very hearing of the name of the Lord” says the Āḻvār, “brings tears to my eyes. I searched for Him, but He has been there with me always”. This is a statement reminding us of the Prophet Mahomet’s saying, “When man walks towards God, God runs towards him”. It looks as though He has no grandeur elsewhere.

416. Ṭālvantār Śotra 4.
418. ibid. 1.10: 8.
Again, the Āḻvār says: "The Lord, reclining on the ocean of milk, without minding the fact that I am so lowly that I do not deserve His grace, has entered into me on His own initiative and relishes me day and night". Dependence on the Feet of the Lord will wipe out age long sins. Constant relishing of the nectar-like Lord has dispelled the delusions due to birth into the world. "My soul has made contact with the Scion of the Yādavas and has merged with Him inseparably". "The Lord Who mixes butter with His hands and eats up every day has merged with my body". "By contemplation of Thee and by singing of Thy praises I could divest myself of my age-old sins". "The Lord is like insatiable nectar to me every moment, every day, every month, year and kalpa". "Now that the Lord has entered my heart, the former inhabitant there, my karma has no longer room for itself there, and has to quit". Afraid of the fierceness of karma, I offered praise to the Lord through my verses. "To herd together the five senses which rule over the heart and to quell them and to drive them afield". "Now the five senses which were once fiercely dominating me have left me hanging their hands in shame". "Redeemed by Thee, and having got rid of heinous sins, I entered Thy eternal service. There is no leaving this state hereafter". "After repeatedly undergoing a number of births, I reached Thy feet, cleansed my mind and got immersed in the ocean of bliss". Again the saint says: "Thou shouldst remove every trace of
fascinating *samsāra* which is of Thy making and enable me to contemplate and worship Thy divine weapons and auspicious form in thought, word and deed". 432 "The Lord of myself as much as the Lord of the Eternals, ...... has in an instant removed my age-long sins". 433 "I strayed in the path of the pleasure of the body which Thou gavest me. When can I attain to Thee, after a period of remorseful realization during which I could get rid of *karma*?" 434 The same sentiment is expressed in the next verse also. 435 The Āḻvār continues further: "Delicious as insatiable nectar to my life and body, Thou rulest over me, to the destruction of my *karma*. 436 He prays: "Unite me unto Thy feet adorned with flowers", 437 and he asks the Lord, "How can I adequately contemplate the great help of the Lord in wiping out my sins, cleansing me, merging with me, and, above all, making me celebrate Him in verses as the Lord of Vaikuṇṭha?" 438 The whole decad is in the same strain. "I do not know" says the Āḻvār, "how my soul which is lost in the affairs of the three worlds can find its way to effulgent Thee at Vaikuṇṭha". 439 Again he says: "My Lord who destroys root and branch the two-fold *karma* and keeps the soul distinct from the body redeems His devotees". 440 "The Lord ever removes the two-fold *karma* and reigns over me". 441 He prays to the Lord: "Even if Thou showest not Thy grace to me, make me an object which can stay near Thy feet". 442 "Thou, the Lord of Tiruvinnakar, if Thou grantest me to worship Thee, I shall give up my desire for family life" 443 –

432. ibid. 7.1: 8.
433. ibid. 8.4: 3.
434. ibid. 3.2: 1.
435. ibid. 3.2: 2.
436. ibid. 5.8: 10.
437. ibid. 6.10: 4.
438. ibid. 7.9: 7.
439. ibid. 7.6: 5.
440. ibid. 9.3: 8.
441. ibid. 10.4: 2.
442. ibid. 9.8: 8.
443. Peri. Tm. 6.1: 1.
this offer to reject family life is repeated as a refrain in all the verses of the hymn. Tirumâṅkaiyâlvâr says: "I developed tolerance and indifference to blame; I gave up the pleasures of the senses, exhausting them, and wealth and desire; I have abandoned love and hate alike. I have surrendered at Thy Feet".\(^{444}\) "I forgot Thee: therefore in that forgetfulness, I fell into the pit of birth, and suffered. Now I am fit for surrender at Thy Feet".\(^{445}\) "Having realised that mate and children cannot stand by me at the hour of judgement, I gave up contact with them; wielding the weapon of absolute surrender which is Thy gift, I get rid of the trouble brought by the five senses and reach Thy Feet".\(^{446}\) "Having realised that the greatest of kings have gone the way of all flesh, I gave up interest in mundane life and seek Thy Feet" and "the fiery mouthed, fell sins stayed by me like my relations and were about to throw me into Hell. Therefore I seek Thy help".\(^{448}\) "Those who lead blameless and sinless lives constantly praying to Thee live happily".\(^{449}\) Again Pùtattâlvâr says: "O heart! you have realised the evil nature of samsâra; you have experienced its ills; you have developed a repulsion towards samsâra".\(^{450}\) According to Namîlvâr, those who have grasped the hundred verses of Tiruviruttam will not get stuck in the bog of birth due to karma.\(^{451}\) He again refers to the purification of mind as one of the results flowing from the recitation of his hymns. The minds of those who recite his Tiruvâyumoṭi hymns, according to the Âlvâr, will be rendered pure;\(^{452}\) they will be blessed with clarity of mind.

444. ibid. 6.2: 1.
445. ibid. 6.2: 2.
446. ibid. 6.2: 4.
447. ibid. 6.2: 5. cf. Paṭṭinattâr's statement: "Even the great kings are, at the end, reduced to a handful of ashes....". (Paṭṭinattâr Paṭalkâl Tiruttilai. 7).
448. ibid. 6.2: 7.
449. I.Tv. 20.
450. ibid. 66.
452. T.V.M. 5.2: 11.
amidst the encircling gloom of the world.\textsuperscript{453} Further, the Āḻvār says: “My heart and I have agreed upon the need for dispelling the evil karma”.\textsuperscript{454} Even the Lord taking possession of the Āḻvār’s heart, is due to His Grace only.\textsuperscript{455} Once the Lord takes possession of his heart, the Āḻvār does not think that he thinks, he acts or he sees, or he moves in the world; God alone thinks, lives and moves thereafter. In this connection one is reminded of what St. Paul has said: “It is not I that live, but Christ dwelleth in me”.

It is thus seen that worship of the Deity has a particular meaning in the Vaiṣṇavite school. Acts of worship, whatever form they take, are reducible to the level of service (\textit{kāyṅkārya}) to God. Service (\textit{aṭīmai}) as the Āḻvārs conceive of, is to be rendered to \textit{Puruśottama} and as such does not have any disadvantage or inconvenience attached to the result as understood in the ordinary sense of the term. This position cannot be objected to on the ground that dependence on another is painful,\textsuperscript{456} for what another is for depending upon is to be explained through the real nature of the self. The selves acquire the physical frames of the tiger, deer, cow, man, bird and another species due to \textit{karma}. Being distinct from the body, the self is of the nature of consciousness and its nature is to be subsidiary to the Lord. Those who have not realized this truth may have notions such as ‘I am a tiger’, ‘I am a man’, ‘I am a master’, ‘I am a servant’ and so on. The relation of \textit{seṣa} and ṣeṣi justifies that any other relation between the self and God would declare pain as the only result of service. The Lord is of the nature of bliss. Every other thing becomes pleasurable or painful due to circumstances.\textsuperscript{457} Dependence on such things would lead only to pain. Service that is rendered to an unworthy person will necessarily lead to pain. The Lord is the most deserving person and as such is to be served by all at all times. The Lord

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{453} ibid. 7.5: 11.
\item \textsuperscript{454} P.Tv. 26.
\item \textsuperscript{455} T.V.M. 8.8: 3.
\item \textsuperscript{456} cf. \textit{Mānuśmṛti}: 4. 160.
\item \textsuperscript{457} V.P. 2.6: 47.
\end{itemize}
Himself declared: "He, who serves me, following the path of undivided bhakti, transcends these qualities (of prakṛti) and will attain self-realization".\(^{458}\) He, being the storehouse of unlimited bliss, would enable the devotee partake of His bliss and make him happy.\(^{459}\) The bridal aspect of love, which provides the woman with more joy due to her passivity and willing subservience and thus enables her to find delight in pleasing her lover through service, adds to the charm of the aspect of Worship as kaīṅkarya. Worship is thus delectable and is therefore cherished as life's purpose, beyond which there is nothing that a devotee could wish for.

Kaīṅkarya is to be undertaken by a devotee to the Lord in any of His forms. Since the para, vyuha, and antaryāmin are not within the easy reach of the mortals, the Vaiṣṇavite school has performed to enjoin service to the deity in the vibhava and arcā forms. Of course, neither the Āgamas nor the Ālvārs have expressed any preference to the arcā form of worship to the exclusion of other forms. The Ālvārs often draw a synthesis of these five forms and are ever reminding us that it is impossible to think of one form without reference to the other. The acāryas have suitably presented a form of worship in arcā where the Ālvārs find the vibhava forms of God\(^{460}\) and recommended it for doing kaīṅkarya.\(^{461}\) It is this aspect of doing service that assumed prominence in the days after the Ālvār period. Hence it is that Maṇakkāl Nampi took Ālavantār to Śrī Raṅgam for service. Thereafter, Śrī Raṅgam became the ideal place for doing service and after its model, other shrines also gained importance as places for the rendering of service by the devotees.

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459. cf. Vedārthasamgraha, pp. 244-250.
460. cf. Peri. Tm. 7.2; 2; Mū. Tv. 34.
461. T.V.M. 3.3; Peri. Tm. 2.1; A.P. 10; R.T.S. ch. 15.
CHAPTER XXII

THE CULT OF BHĀGAVATAS

The Gita speaks of four kinds of devotees of the Lord. The afflicted, those in distress, who pray to Him for delivery from misery are one class. Those who adore God for the object of knowing Him constitute the second class. Others who pray to Him for the attainment of objects of desire form the third category. The fourth are the wise man (jñānis) who are devoted to God for the sake of devotion only. The Lord says: “Of these, the wise devotee is ever in constant union with Me in thought and is attached to Me with single-minded devotion. For I am supremely dear to him and he is also dear to Me”.1 The Mahābhārata also speaks four classes of devotees2 of whom three are desirous of rewards while the best are the single-minded worshippers. Others ask for favours, but the sage asks nothing and refuses nothing. He yields himself completely to the Divine accepting whatever is given to him. His attitude is one of self-oblivious non-utilitarian worship of God for His own sake. It is the blessing of such great and lofty Mahātmas who are the walking gods of this earth that can elevate ordinary mortals like us and make it possible even for us to love, and be loved by God. And hence does Yāmunācārya invoke their loving and gracious katāksa upon himself as the surest way of becoming one of the chosen devotees of the Lord: “O Lord; grant that I may be recipient of the gracious glances of those Mahātmas, who, in their intense longing to behold thy repturous Form once, reject the pleasures of the earth and the promises of the Paramapada, and separation from whom even for a moment is to Thee is most sufferable”.3

2. M.Bh. śānti. 341. 13.
3. Śotra-ratnam – 56.
Bhakti is meditation on Brahman touched with love. It is absolute devotion to Bhagavān as the life of our life and is love for love’s sake. The true bhakta is a true jñāni. He knows clearly well that God alone is the source and sustenance of life. So he meditates on Him as his self and cultivates exclusive devotion to Him. This state of bhakti is known as  ākabhakti as his devotion is controlled by the single idea of attaining mukti. It comes to one unsolicited by the Grace of God and sacrifice. Upon gaining it, man realizes his perfection and divinity, and becomes thoroughly contended. He desires nothing more. He is then free from grief and hatred. He does not rejoice over anything, nor does he exert himself in the furtherance of self-interest. The realization makes him intoxicated and fascinated as it were, because he is completely immersed in the bliss of Paramātman. Says Toṇṭaraṭip-poṭiyālvār: “Iccuvai tavira yāū pōy intira-lōkam ālum, accuvai perinum vēntēn”⁴ – ‘I do not desire even the pleasures of svarga except the pleasure (of meditating of Lord)’. Kulacēkatalālvār goes a step further by saying, “Paṭiyāyk kiṭantu un pavaḷavāy kāṇpēnē” – ‘Remaining as a stepping stone in the sanctum sanctorum of the Lord I shall enjoy the beauty of Your coral lips’.⁵ Nammālāvār’s devotion to Lord is supreme. “‘Let it be that I may attai mokṣa or reach the place of heaven or hell, but I will go on meditating the Lord unceasingly without ever forgetting Him” says the Āḻvār.⁶ One is reminded in this connection of Cēkkilār’s tribute to the greatness of these devotees. Their mind, according to him, is pure and white like the sacred ash besmeared on the body. Even if the elements go astray, their minds will not swerve from the love of God. To them gold and potsherd are the same. They care not even for mokṣa, if only they could be assured of loving worship. They have no burden other than the service of the Lord, these merciful lovers and heroes wanting in nothing.⁷ Saivism refers to these devotees as ‘Paraṁaṇaiye pāṭuvār’ (the singer of the Lord).

4. T.M. 2.
5. Perum. Tm. 4: 9.
7. P.P. Introduction part 6 to 8.
A devotee, who leads the ideal life by rendering service to God, is required to avoid two pitfalls which generally take those who are not aware of them. One is the company of the wicked and the other is offending God. Those who are deceitful, do not do their duty, and are bereft of the knowledge of ultimate Reality, are declared to be wicked. In a way, they are different from the good whose mind is set in Purusottama and so are free anger, envy, greed and evil thought. A good man who is devoted to Hari, will not desire for what belongs to another, and will not cultivate friendship with those who are mean and who, though not intending to do harm, support the sinners in their acts. He will spend his time who are righteous and would not extol any one except Tirumāl (Viṣṇu). Kulacēkaraḻvār’s third hymn enumerates the mental attitudes and activities of such people who deserve to be classed as bad. Such persons prefer to live with the enticing material world. They like most the company of woman. They are interested in food and clothing only. To this Āḻvār, others are mad and to them he is mad. Tirumāṅkaiyalvār refers to his resolve not to take note of the existence of those who do not think of the Lord at Tirukkaṭalmallai. Those who do not become the servants of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, are not to be treated as man. The contact with such people, even if had for worldly purposes would change the devout persons into atheists. The other source of danger to the religious life is apacāra. The word ‘apasāra’ means swerving from the path prescribed by God in the form of Vedas and Śmṛtis. Besides, in the real sense of religious life, to think of any other deity as equal to

8. Manuśmṛti; 4: 30; Yajñavālkyāṃśti 1. 130.
10. M.Tv. 64.
12. ibid. 3: 2, 3.
13. ibid. 3: 4.
14. ibid 3: 8.
15. Peri. Tm. 2. 6: 1.
16. ibid. 11.7: 9.
or superior to Nārāyaṇa constitutes the greatest guilt. One shall also avoid offending the devotees of God. Some may sometimes be tempted to treat the Lord as powerless and so fit to be insulted. Nammāḷvār cites the attempt of Pūtana to kill Kṛṣṇa which brought her own end. Activities of this kind are to be treated as insulting God who, however, would not get offended, but would delay in showing His grace after enforcing a light punishment on the offender.

The best characteristic of a devotee is the philosophy of Vaiṣṇavism. Vaiṣṇavites are those who are in a way related to Viṣṇu who is vibhu, all pervasive. Therefore it becomes logically true that no one can exist without any relation to Viṣṇu. A true Vaiṣṇavite will realize this truth, basic principle. He will show true love and render service to one whether one is a friend or foe. The mention of Pillai Lōkācārya’s statement is relevant to the context. He says: “One should exercise forbearance, show sympathy with a smile and appreciation to those who have done evil; and also one should take it for granted that they have extended their help”. This idea must have been prevalent prior to the period of that great ācārya among the Vaiṣṇavites and attained the status of a mahāvākyya (significant statement) at his times. An incident in Parācara Paṭṭar’s life may throw a clear light on the statement. One day Paṭṭar was standing in the Raṅga-nātha’s sanctum sanctorum in a mood of self-examination. Without noticing his presence there, some heaped abuse after abuse on him. This saddened the hearts of bhaktas who were standing with Paṭṭar. But to the surprise and wonder of all the devotees present there, Paṭṭar presented his ring to one of those who abused him; he further blessed the one who abused him most with the honour of covering him by his gold-laced cloth. To them Paṭṭar said: “Don’t think that I have made presents to them on account of the fear of their abuses”. This statement increased their surprise and wonder. He further added: “I should be thankful to them for the help

17. Peri. Tm. 8.10: 3; cf. Nan. Tv. 68.
19. S.V.P. Ch. 3. Sūt. 122.
they have rendered to me by bringing to the notice of the Lord the mistakes which I was not conscious of and thereby helping in my self-examination”. This utterance moved not only his friends but his foes as well. Tiruvaḷḷuvar suggests the novel method of punishing those who have done wrong to one: “Inṇai ceṭṭarai oruttal avar nāṇa, naṅṇaṅam ceṭṭu vilai” 20. “The (proper) punishment to those who have done evil (to you) is to put them to shame by showing them kindness in return and to forget both the evil and the good done on both sides”. This teaching of the Tamil saint could have been responsible for shaping the life of the Vaiṣṇavites. The arrogance born of one’s learning, wealth and high birth should have no place in a true Vaiṣṇavite. This has been metaphorically referred to by Amuṭañār as “Vaṅca mukkurumpām kuḷi” 21. – ‘a vile trap-like triple pit’. He is really a Vaiṣṇavite, who while listening to the harsh expressions uttered by a devotee, bows to him and addresses him patiently. 22 Without the use of the word ‘vaiṣṇavite’ Nammāḷvār states that the trait of those who possess good qualities consists in rendering service to the Feet of the Lord, after controlling the mind and the five senses. 23 With keen religious insight, Pūtattāḷvār declares that kings who, before our presence, ride on horses, must be occupying their positions not by accident. They must have worshipped the feet of the Lord in their various previous births with flowers. 24 This is the only explanation that could be given to show how some people are able to occupy prosperous positions. Any position which an individual occupies is due to the will of God and the position of the kings can be no exception to this. The character of a true Vaiṣṇavite is also enshrined in the famous song of the true Vaiṣṇavite which was made popular by Mahātma Gandhi:

“He is the true Vaiṣṇava who knows and feels
Another’s woes as his own

20. Kural. 314; cf. Manusmṛti 6: 43; M.Bh. Śānti-300: 10, 12, 16, 18.
22. Liṅgapurāṇam. 2,4: 9, 10
24. I. Tv. 69.
Ever ready to serve, he never boasts
He bows to every one and despises no one,
Keeping his thought, word, and deed pure,
Blessed is the mother of such an one. He
Reverences every woman as his mother.
He keeps an equal mind and does not
Stain his lips with falsehood; nor
Does he touch another’s wealth.
No bonds of attachment can hold him.
Ever in tune with Rāma nāma his body
Possesses in itself all places of pilgrimage
Free from greed and deceit, passion
And anger, this is the true Vaiṣṇava:

Nammāḷvār speaks of Pattar,25 Aṭiyār,28 Aṭiyavār,27
Toṇṭar26 Pakavar,29 Kēcavaṇ-tamar,30 Nāraṇaṇ-tamar,31
Mātavaṇ-tamar,32 Aṭiyān-tamar,33 Vaikuṇthaṇ-tamar,34 and
Vaiṣṇavar35 in his Tiruvāyvavai. ‘Kēcavaṇ-tamar’ literally
means relatives of Kēcavaṇ or the Lord signifying His
devotees; similarly the meanings of others (tamar—relatives).
The word ‘vaiṣṇavar’ signifies a band of people who have
embraced Vaiṣṇavism. But, Nāṉclav, one of the Vaiṣṇavite
ācāryas, gives the definition of Vaiṣṇavite like this: “Any one
can test himself as a true Vaiṣṇavite or not. If, when seeing
others’ adversity, his pity be excited, and he does ejaculate
‘oh! I he may know himself as a true Vaiṣṇavite; but if his
heart be steeled against others’ tribulation and further viti-
ated by emotions of vile pleasure surging up at his sight, he

25. T.V.M 1.5: 11; 6.4: 11.
26. ibid. 5.2: 9; 5.6: 1; 7.4: 11; 10.5: 11; 10.9: 7, 8, 11.
27. ibid. 3.5: 11; 3.7: 7, 9, 10.
28. ibid. 3.7: 4; 3.7: 11; 5.2: 10; 6.9: 11; 10.8: 11.
29. ibid. 5.2: 9.
30. ibid. 2.6: 11; 2.7: 1.
31. ibid. 10.9: 1,2.
32. ibid. 10.9: 5.
33. ibid. 10:9: 6.
34. ibid. 10:9: 9.
35. ibid. 5.5: 11; cf. Periyāḷ. Tm. 5.1: 3.
may know himself as not belonging to such a holy band. To be a Vaiśṇavite is to belong to God, and vice-versa. To belong to God is to be like God Himself, i.e., conform to the ideals which he has preached and practised, one of these ideals being to be “the Friends of all Creatures”. It appears that both these words relate to one and the same meaning. Again the words ‘pāṭṭar’; ‘aṭiyār’ (aṭiyavar), ‘toṇṭar’ and ‘pakavar’ signify only devotees of Viṣṇu; they may be taken for granted emphasizing respectively: Bhakti—reverential love, Aṭimal—absolute self—surrender, and Toṇṭu—service. “Pakavar” signifies a kind of devotees who carry ‘mukkōl’, or ‘tiri—danḍa’ with them. The Tolkāppiyam refers to them as ‘antaṇar’ who are ascetics. The same work refers to ‘pāṛppār’ (brahmins), ‘ārivar’ (sages or wise men), and ‘tāpate’.

It is certain that these words do not refer to the same class of people or each word does not refer to different types of people. Pāṛppār are different from ārivar and antaṇar. The latter refer to ascetics, who have controlled their senses and the mind, always thinking of God, and who can predict the past, present and future incidents. Tāpate are those who are tapasvins and who are ready to attain the state of ārivar. Pāṛppār are brahmins who have only taken up the study of Vedas, but who have not attained the state of ārivar or antaṇar. There are references in Kali—tokai to antaṇar. The tiri—danḍa can be taken to signify Īśvara, cit acit and the relationship between which explain the principles of Viṣṇu—dvaitic Viṣṇavism. References to ‘mukkōl’ (tiri—danḍa) are found in the Pattup—pāṭṭu and the Kali—tokai. Nacchinārkkiniyar, the well—known commentator, gives the meaning of the phrase, ‘mukkōl koṭ antaṇar’ occurring in the work as ‘saf—

38. ibid. - Śūtras: 74, 175.
39. ibid. Śūtras; 74, 152.
40. ibid. Śūtra, 74.
42. Mullap—pāṭṭu - 1. 38.
43. K.L.T. 126, l. 4.
from colour dressed groups of people' thereby meaning ascetics. The later work Taṇcaivaṇan kōvai speaks of 'mukkōr-pakavar'. It is these ascetics who are referred to as pakavar in the ancient Tamil literature. The later works such as Kövai literature refer to them as 'mukkōr-pakavar' and 'mikkōr'. It is said that a knowledge of philosophy and love of God are the two basic necessities for any kind of religious faith. It is also assumed that the former does intensify the latter. But it is well-known that these two are not found to exist in persons in equal measure. Some are more philosophical-minded and others more religious-minded. But the inclination of both is towards renunciation. Those whose inclination is more towards philosophy are known as 'pakavar' and those householders whose inclination is towards bhakti as 'atiyār'. Periyāḻvar not only refers to these types of devotees, but also sages who recite the Vedas: “Pattarkāḷum pakavar-kaḻum palamoḻivāy munivarkaḻum” – the bhaktas, pakavar and sages who mouth Vedas’. Nammāḻvar refers to both these saints in his Tiruvāyumōi. Says the Āḻvār: “The world is full of atiyārs and pakavar who render service to God by strictly adhering to the principles of bhakti-marga and by uttering the Puruṣa-sūktas, Nārāyaṇuvāka etc.; so go to them, reventially worship them and attain salvation”. This advice of the Āḻvār, according to the commentators, relates to those who render service to the Lord as for example to Lakṣmaṇa to Rāma referred to here as atiyārs and to those who meditate the Lord and his manifold auspicious qualities as for instance Bharata to Rāma Āḷavaniḻar interprets ‘tolutal (worship) as the worship of the devotees of God; but Rāmānuja interprets it as the worship of God. Even though all the words denote the bhāgavatas in general, some distinction can be seen through from the suggestive meanings of tonṭar, anṟpar and pattar. The word ‘anṟpar’ can be taken as emphasizing, ‘tonṭar’ the bodily activity and ‘pattar’ the speach aspect. Atiyārs are the life of the Bhakti cult. It is from this point of view that Vaiṣṇavism becomes a religion of service.

44. Taṇcaivaṇan kōvai, 341.
45. Periyāḻ. Tm. 4.9: 6.
In regard to the Supreme Ruler of all, the jīva who is the śeṣa is bound to promote His glory. That glory will depend on the nature of the śeṣa, whether it be sentient or non-sentient. The jīva, with his body and the like, can confer only such glory as non-sentient things do. So this service is common to him and acit. The special glory that he can promote must be by means of his intelligence. "Bhagavān, Who has all beings as His body, rejoices when a jīva does what is good and does not rejoice when the action is evil"47 when a man acts in accordance with the Śāstras, he gives thereby delight to the Lord and thus does not let his generosity and other qualities run to waste, but promotes the glory of the Lord so that He extols him as "All these are indeed, generous."48 Again they are the devotees whose devotion is single-minded and whose highest goal is only the Lord. They live in the Divine. God is dear to them and they are dear to God. These devotees belong to God to be used according to His will. These can give rise to a special kind of enjoyment to the Lord and thus promote His glory in the same way as the muktas and the nityas do so by direct perception of the Lord’s will and by acting in such a way as to give Him enjoyment. "When shall I always be Thy servant, look upon Thee as my Master and in this way give Thee delight?"49 says Ālāvantār.

In Vaiṣṇavism the cult of the bhāgavata worship of the ātyārs or devotees - is considered greater than the worship of the Lord Himself. The sāstras disclose that the service rendered to His devotees is most delightful to Him. The following authoritative statements bear testimony to this: "Of all forms of homage, the homage paid to Viṣṇu is the best, but superior even to this, is the excellent homage or adoration to Viṣṇu’s devotees."50 "I have great affection to those who are devoted to my devotees. Therefore one should render

47 M.Bh. Śānti. 199: 25.
48 Bh. G. 7: 18.
49 Śiotrāraṇam. 46.
50 Padmottaram, 29: 81.
devout service to them”.

“They are my devotees who do not show devotion to any other deity, who love those that are devoted to me and that have sought me as their upāya”. From these statements it becomes clear that, of all forms of service which a seṣa of the Lord may render, that rendered to the bhāgavatas is the most important and is the most pleasing to the Lord, in the same way as the fondling of the prince is most pleasing to the king. Again, according to pramāṇas, Īśvara, who has the bhāgavata as His body is the object of worship. As the devotees are His very self, He would be pleased at the service rendered to bhāgavata, as if it were service rendered (directly) to His own inner self and not as that done to His body. Nammāḻvār speaks of service rendered to the bhāgavatas as the supreme goal of life. In referring to the result flowing from the recitation of his hymns the Āḻvār says: “The Lord and His Spouse will possess them and they will get the benefit of rendering service to the devotees of Viṣṇu,” and “they would live amidst wife and children a full life and yet to be dedicated to the service of the devotees of the Lord.” In this connection, a beautiful anecdote is referred to by the commentators.

Again, those who look upon themselves as seṣas to His devotees are, mediately through these devotees, seṣas to the Lord Himself. Tirup-pāṇāḻvār says: ‘The Lord Who is spotless and Who has made me the servant of His servants’—

52. ibid. 104 : 91.
54. TVM 5.6 : 11.
55. ibid. 8. 10 : 11.
56. Once Rāmānuja returned to Tirukkōṭiyūr along with a great band of bhāgavatas and entered into the mansion of Celva Nampi who was then not in station. There was no rice in the house then except some hundred bundles of paddy-seeds reserved for sowing in the season. Nampi’s wife hulled that paddy and fed the devotees. On the following day Nampi returned and when he enquired his wife about the absence of paddy-seeds, quickly came the reply “I have sown them in the Paramapada”. (Vide: Itṭin Tamil-ākkam Vol. VII 8. 10 : 11 (Commentary).
“atiiyarrku enñai atpatutta vimañ.”

So does Nûrada say: “I, Nûrada, have come here with an eager longing to see you. To men like me, O Brahmin, those who are bhaktas of the Lord are masters.”

In this connection Periyâlvaar’s statement is very significant. “Those who are the servants of bhâgavatas – (devotees of devotees) – who utter such names as Këcava, Purutoâttama etc., of Bhagavâñ are entitled even to sell us.”

This is also the purport of the middle word in Tirumantiram, namely, namo: na mama (not for me). A reflection on this purport will clearly show that our being sësa to the Lord is both mediate (through the bhâgavatas and immediate (direct to Him). Accordingly the service that should be rendered by the sësa is also (both) mediate and direct. Therefore it is the farthest limit of our service to perform, as much as it lies in our power, service to the bhâgavata, since it is part of the duty of one who is sësa to Bhagavâñ. So this outer-most region of service to bhâgavatas should be kept properly cultivated so that it may not become fallow land full of weeds.

The Agamas also support the service to the bhâgavatas.

“It is not wrong for a wedded wife to honour her husband and to honour his servants, whether in his presence, or absence” and “Among the Lord’s retinue are two classes: those that are dear to Him and worthy of His trust and those who are not. To the former class belong the Eternals, the released souls and the bhâgavatas. To the latter class belong Brahmâ and other gods who are subject to the sway of past karma. The seeker after salvation should not adore the latter;” the devotee who is exclusively attached to the Lord and whose dharma resembles that of a chaste wife would therefore do well to act according to the will of his Lord. Since the relationship of sësa to bhâgavatas arises

57. A.P. 1.
58. Padmottaram, 81: 52.
59. Periyâl. Tm. 4:4: 10.
60. Pous. Sam. cited in R.T.S. Ch. 16.
61. ibid. cited ibid.
from no other cause than the knowledge of our being _śeṣa_ only to the Lord and to no other, this service to the _bhāgavatas_ is not improper, because it does not arise from other causes like the desire for wealth or power.

Maturakaviyāḻvār can be cited as the best instance of a devotee of Lord’s devotee as he says, “Naṇṇit ten kurukūr nampi enṟakkāl, aṉikkum amutu urum en nāvukkē” - ‘In clinging to Nammāḻvār, if I utter his name it is highly sweet; even nectar secretes in my tongue’ and “Tēvu māṟṟaṟiyēn” - ‘I do not know any other God except my own guru, Nammāḻvār.’ Saivism refers to these type of saints as ‘Pattarāyp-panṉivār’ (devotees of devotees). ‘Paṉītal’ emphasizes here bending low in humility and service. Like Maturakaviyāḻvār in Vaṇṇavism were saints in the Saivism also who worshipped the three great _Tēvāram_ saints with reverence and admiration. Kaṟaṅnāṭar worshipped Campantar; Appūtiyaṭikaḷ worshipped Appar; and Perumijalaikkūṟumpar worshipped Nampi Āruṟar. Irrespective of the greatness of Saivite _atiyārs_ it was thought that one should offer one’s service to the _atiyārs_ in general looking upon them as no other than the Lord Siva himself. In the biography of certain saints like Ṛṇātināṭar, Meyp-poruḷ Nāyaṉar, Pukaḷcōḷa Nāyaṉar and Kaḷaṟṟaṟaṟivār the reverence for the outward form is clearly brought out and they were prepared to offer their all and sacrifice their dearest and nearest as well as their own lives. This is termed as _Cariya-mārga_ in Saivism. According to Vaṇṇavism, following the path of the Lord is _Sāra Dharma_ the good; surrender to Him is _Sārataha Dharma_, the better; surrender to His devotees is _Sāratama Dharama_, the best. Therefore it is said that God would forgive an offence to Himself, but an offence to His devotees - _atiyārs_ - was unpardonable. _Bhāgaṉavata-apacāra_ is more heinous than _Bhagavat - apacāra._

Though it is said, in general, that one should serve the devotees of God, and the devotees of God are treated as deities, yet the best relation that could be said to crown the devotion for a devotee is that of an individual’s treating the devotee as his spiritual preceptor. Maturakaviyāḻvār stands
at the head of the best of disciples who propitiated the devotee. God is available for man to get from Him enjoyment of bliss, mokṣa and detachment. The Lord Himself comes to rescue the devotee from sins. He teaches the nature of Reality to him and gives him His nature and descends down for the sake of those who are devoted to Him. Yet Maturakaviyālvar sought the feet of Nammālvār who rendered into Tamil the difficult imports of the Vedas.

The idea of reverential feeling towards the devotees is nothing new. Periyālvār talks of these devotees as a separate community—"tonṭakkulam" (a clan of divine servants or devotees) thereby abolishing the feeling of all castes, and creating a spiritual community of all those who worship the Lord to whatever caste or creed they may belong. The love for God reaches its highest point only when it becomes the love of the bhāgavatas or tonṭars, even to the neglect of God. The phrase 'tonṭaraṭip-poṭi' referred to by Kulacakarālvār is very significant; the dust on the feet of the devotees is purer than the waters of the sacred Gaṅga according to the conviction of the Ālvār. 'Tonṭaraṭip-poṭi āṭa nām peril, kaṅkai nīr kuṭaintu āṭum vēṭkai eṉ āvate?' is the statement of the Ālvār. In fact the whole hymn speaks out the Ālvār's regard and respect for the devotees of the Lord. There is no greater profit or pleasure for the eyes than to look at a gathering of the true devotees of Lord Raṅganātha who dance in ecstasy out of feelings of love towards the 'Dark Gem' that resides at Śrī Raṅgam. In Saivism āntaramūrtti creates a democracy of devotees of all times and climes. In his well-known hyman of Tevāram, better known as Tirutonṭattokai, he enumerates with joy the names of all these saints. It is a beautiful vision of all such āṭiyārs of the past, the present and the future belonging to the whole of the universe, a vision

62. Gurnparamparā-sāra Introductory verse. 2.
63. Periyāl. Tm. 1.1: 5.
64. M.Bh. Śānti. 108 : 32.
65. Perum. Tm. 2 : 2.
of a spiritual democracy of love and service. In the hymns of Āḷvārs there occur some requests to the birds to carry the message of love-sick maiden to the Lord. The Vaiṣṇavite commentators have always interpreted these birds as the bhaktas, as spiritual guides carrying the message to the Lord.67 The four hymns of Tiruvāyulī68 on sending of messages through birds have to be interpreted in this manner. Many of the Āḷvārs take a pride in calling themselves as Tonṭarkal,69 Tonṭaraṭip-poṭi,70 Aṭiyān,71 Tonṭan Catakopān,72 Tonṭanēn.73

It was a common belief in the age of Āḷvārs that for a full-blown devotee to be born, his previous seven generations should have been pure and should have been worshipping the Lord. Periyāḷvār refers to this as, “Entai tantai tantai tantai tam mūttappaṇ ēḷpatikāl toṭaṇki, vantu vaḷivaḷi āţceykin-rōm”74 – ‘My father, his father, his father, his father, his grand father and like this we have been serving the Lord for the last seven generations.’ The same belief is referred to by Nammāḷvār also. “We are the devotees of those people who have been worshipping the Lord Who is sleeping on the banyan leaf in the Milky Ocean as a small child after having taken the world trodden by His sacred Feet at the time of Tirivikramāvatāra in His stomach in their seven generations,”75 says the Āḷvār. The Āḷvār considers those devotees of devotees as his masters provided they become the devotees of the cāntājas of cāntālas who are far beyond the lowest rungs of the four castes when these cāntālas are the devotees of blue-coloured Lord with discus in His right hand.76 Again, he says that the

68. T.V.M. 1.4; 6.1; 6.8; 9.7.
69. PerivāɁ Tm. 1.1 : 8.
70. T.M. 45.
71. T.E. 10.
73. ibid. 8.5 : 6.
74. PerivāɁ Tm 1.1 : 6.
75. T.V.M. 3.7 : 10; cf. ibid. 3.7 : 1.
76. ibid. 3.7 : 9.
people who are undergoing the most difficult punishment in the hell are worthy of His worship in His manifold births provided they worship the Lord Who is the creator of the world Whose greatness cannot be comprehended even by the celestials and in Whose bosom Lakṣmī has taken Her abode. 77 In another place he refers to God as "Empirai enta tantai tantaikkum tampirānai" 78 — 'God not only as his helper, but also the Lord and master of his father and his father .......... (meaning all his forefathers).’ It may be noted the same belief being expressed in the Tirumāṇkaiyālvār’s hymns also. "Oh the Lord of Tiruvintaḷur! Thou art hesitating to show Thy physical presence to me who belong to a family in which the past seven generations are continuously rendering devoted service to Thee," 79 says the Ālvār.

The compositions of the Ālvārs furnish much information on the greatness of the devotees. If people think simply that Rāma and Kṛṣṇa are only the Lord descended on earth, they would be the Lord’s men (bhāgavatās) and the gods would be pleased at this and they will ever have their palms folded to respect them. 80 Nammālvār waxes eloquent while speaking the greatness of the devotees. The bhaktas sing the praise of the Lord and move about the earth with the result that the hells and the sins have been destroyed on earth and the lord of Death has no work to do nor has the kali age anything to do. 81 This shows that the names of the Lord as also His praises, when uttered, purify not merely those who express or sing them but also those who listen to them. This does not stop there. The entire regions which are traversed by such devotees become purified, leaving no room for any evil force. 82 On account of this, the kali age become kṛta age. 83 Diseases, hatred, hunger and other evil forces have

77. ibid. 3.7: 8.
78. ibid. 1.10: 3.
79. Peri. Tm. 4.9: 9.
80. P.Tv. 64.
81. T.V.M. 5.2: 1, 2; cf. ibid. 5.2: 4.
82. V.Dh. Ch. 90; cf. T.M. 12.
83. T.V.M. 5.2: 3.
become destroyed. The bhāgavatas are the bodies of the Lord and as such they could be worshipped. This decad 5.2 of Tiruvāyimalı asks people to worship the devotees of God. The worship of such great souls is held to be greater significance than that of God Himself. Affection for the devotees of God, rejoicing when God is worshipped by them, eagerness to listen to the narrations about Him, affection of the tone, eye and limbs while others worship the Lord, making one’s own attempt to worship Him, straight forwardness (absence of hypocrisy) in dealing with the Lord, constant thinking of Him and dependence upon Him not for the ends other than mokṣa are stated to be the eightfold devotion. Even the misbehaved (miēccha), who has these, is the best among the brahmins, is a meditator, is prosperous, is a recluse and scholar. One shall give gifts to him and shall receive gifts from him. He is to be worshipped like God Himself.

An ardent devotee shall aspire to long for the companionship of the bhāgavatas. The Āḻvār likes to have the company of the devotees of the Lord even in the state of release. He is anxiously yearning to get the opportunity of rendering service to them. Those fortunate persons who reflect upon the greatness of the sacred places like Tirukkaṭalmallai are to be treated as lords, nay they are the deities. They are to be worshipped and circumambulated. The bhāgavatas who bow at the Feet of the Lord at Tiruccēṟai deserve to sit upon other’s heads, that is, they

84. ibid. 5.2: 6.
85. ibid. 5.2: 7.
86. Padmottāram 29: 81.
88. T.V.M.2.3: 10.
89. T.V.C. 3.
90. Peri. Tm. 2.6: 2, 3.
91. ibid. 2.6: 4.
92. ibid. 2.6: 7, 8, 9.
93. ibid. 2.6: 6.
are fit to be bowed by others. Such persons dwell for ever in the heart of Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār. This Āḻvār states emphatically that he would not leave the company of those great men who could be taken to be superior even to the eternal selves. His heart feels the delectable experience when it thinks of them. His senses derive supreme satisfaction as they set on them. Neither the god of Death nor sins would dare approach those who worship these bhāgavatas. The Āḻvār speaks with full of feeling that in worldly experience which is felt to be excruciating, he is singularly fortunate in that his mind is set on the devout persons who worship the Feet of Śrī Sārānatha at Tiruccēṟai. Again it has been stated in the Śāstras the choice of a proper residence for a devotee. A devotee shall choose to live in a place where the bhāgavatas dwell. The people, who live in Tirukkōṭṭiyār must have practised austerities for living there where live the devotees of God. That place shall be chosen where the devotees of God are honoured.

According to Vaiṣṇavism, offence against God’s devotees (bhāgavata apacāra) is the worst of all sins. God will neither brook nor excuse who offend His devotees. It is to punish the offender of the devotees that God took birth again and again in this world. This is also the secret (rahasya) of His avatāra (divine descent). One of the several kinds offence against God’s devotees distinction of caste shown between one bhāgavata and another is worst. This is even more

94. ibid. 7.4: 1.
95. ibid. 7.4: 2.
96. ibid. 7.4: 4.
97. ibid. 7.4: 3.
98. ibid. 7.4: 5.
99. ibid. 7.4: 6, 7.
100. ibid. 7.4: 8.
101. ibid. 7.4: 9.
103. Periyāḷ. T.m. 4.4: 7.
104. M.Bh. Śānti. 349: 86 to 88.
105. S.V.P. Chap. 2. Sūt. 78.
heinous than examining the material of which God’s image
is made in the temple. This has been pronounced in the
Śāstras as equivalent to a man’s examining the womb of his
own mother. The punishment for offending the feelings
of God’s devotees are, as it is seen in the ancient scripts,
very severe and, strictly speaking, severer than offending
God Himself. To cite a few examples, Tīrīcaṇku, a
kṣatriya, became an outcaste (caṇḍāla) in one night by
offending sage Vasīṣṭha; when Prahlāda, a devotee of Nārāyaṇa,
was threatened by his father Hiraṇya, the Lord appeared
as Narasimha and killed the offender of His devotee; Gāruḍa
lost his wings by wounding the feelings of Cāṇḍilyai (a female
devotee) residing in Rishabha Hills. Gāruḍa’s crime was that
he considered the residence of Cāṇḍilyai not as a holy Hill
but as an ordinary mountain. Soma Sarmā, a brahmin
possessed by a brahma rākṣasa, got himself free from it by the
blessings of Nampāṭuvān, an outcaste devotee. From
these examples it is learnt that there is no question of superi-
ority of birth in a devotee.

Brahmin birth is intended to be useful for the study of
the Vedas and thereby attaining God. But if that study con-
duces to bhāgavata apacāra, the study becomes useless and
his birth has no value. God, according to Toṇṭaraṭip-poṭi-
yālvar, has instructed those (brahmmins) who follow the tradi-
tional knowledge of the four Vedas to respect His devotees
even though they belong to the lowest caste and give the
highest truth to them and take the same from them. If
they, though born of brahmin caste and learnt the Vedas
and their anāgas, speak disrespectfully of His devotees and
their castes, the very instant they would become outcastes.
The Āḻvār goes to the extent of saying that those who accept
the remnants of food from the devotees of the Lord,

106. ibid. Chap. 2. Sūt. 83.
107. Peri. Tm. 2.3:8; 3.1:4.
108. M.Bh. Udyoga Ch. 112.
110. T.M. 42. cf. ibid. 39.
111. ibid. 43.
devotees in the sense that they have simply praised Him as the One Whom the celestials cannot see and as the One Who has worn the fresh tulāci garland, though the latter have committed baser acts and have abetted others to commit these acts.\textsuperscript{112} By these, it is seen that one's high or low birth is not the primary cause for attaining salvation, but the true cause is his relationship with God. In attaining mokṣa, the brahmin is necessarily at a disadvantageous position if he is proud on account of his high birth. Secondly, by virtue of his birth, he is obliged to observe other means of salvation, namely, bhakti-yoga which is a steep path hedged in by the exacting conditions of karma-yoga and jñāna-yoga including the wearisome disciplines of aṣṭāṅga-yoga and the sātvic patience to endure the ills of prārabdha-karma till it is exhausted or expiated which are against the true nature of the soul. So long as a brahmin has got these two faults in him, it is ever difficult for him to attain salvation. Those in the other castes too have the same disability varying in greater or less degree.\textsuperscript{113} The caṇḍāla of the lowest rank has no such predicament; he is totally free from the superiority complex of birth which is a great impediment to salvation. So every one must cultivate the virtues of humility and recognise the utter uselessness of seeking other means of salvation.

On the other hand one must regard these low born devotees as equal to ācārya, and superior to samsāris (worldlings), to himself and even to God. These truths are shown in Itihāsas, Purāṇas, and Āḻvārs' hymns. It is generally believed that for the good done in this generation we reap the fruits in the next. So it may be argued that these bhāgavatās of the low caste can become sages only in the next. It is also argued that conversion will not be visible in the one and the same life. But it is not so in the case of bhāgavatās. The moment the caṇḍāla becomes a devotee, he becomes spiritually reborn and entitled to all respect. Nammāḻvār's reference to caṇḍāla as mentioned above can be an instance in point.

\textsuperscript{112} ibid. 41.
\textsuperscript{113} Iti. Sam. 30: 100.
There are other illustrations also. While Viśvāmitra, a ksatriya, can become a Brahma-ṛṣi in the same generation, it is not strange or impossible that a devotee of God can become purified in the same generation. Śrī Rāma performed Brahma-mēḍha (rites due to a Brahmin) to Jaṭāyū, a mere bird, because the latter had by devotion attained that merit. Dharmaputra performed similar rite to Vīdhura though the latter was a sudra. Several ṛṣis waited at the gate of Dharmavyādha (the butcher devotee) to clear their doubts in the Vedas. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, passing through the dwellings of learned Bhīṣma, the high born Drona, and of King Duryodhana, delighted in dining in the house of the blessed Vīdhura, as he offered the food with all humility and God’s own unlike the offerings of others which were tainted with ahāṅkāra. Again Śrī Rāma graciously accepted with love the half-bitten fruit from Sabhari, a hunter devotee. Periya Nampi, one of the spiritual masters of Rāmānuja performed Brahma-mēḍha according to the highest Brahmin rites, to Māra-Nēr Nampi (equivalent to Parāṅkuṣa himself), a Harijan saint, a disciple of Ālavantār. Therefore in the philosophy of aṭiyārs one attains one’s greatness only by one’s bhakti, not by one’s birth. In the words of Pillaiappurumāḷ Ayyeṅgār 114 only those who transcend the barriers of consciousness of birth, caste and other factors are entitled to be included in the fold of tonṭakkulam 115 – universal brotherhood – the vision of Periyāḻvār. Therefore one has to please the bhāṅgavatas in order to win the Grace of the Lord. This is a condition that is necessarily to be fulfilled.116 Such persons would be relieved of their sins.117 People meet with downfall by bending before those who are not the devotees of Viṣṇu, by insulting Kēcava and scandalizing the devotees of the Lord. Those who are unfavourably disposed to the devotees of the Lord are farther away from the Lord.118

114. Tiruvaraṅkak-kalampakam, 15.
115. Periyāḷ. Tm. 1.1: 5.
117. M.Bh Āśramavāsika, 96: 46.
118. V.Dh. 99: 13.
Even Garuḍa, the Lord’s servant, friend, vehicle, seat and emblem on the banner, who committed an offence against the righteous Sāndīliyai had to undergo the evil consequences of it until he obtained pardon from her. It may be asked whether an Eternal like Garuḍa could commit offences at all. The answer is that, if the Eternals incarnate like Bhagavān, they have to act the part of those who are subject to the sway of karma and perform atonement for offences in order to promote the good of the world by setting a proper example. Of these sins which have to be atoned for, Śrī Rāmānuja has pointed out that offences done to the bhāgavatas stand in the front rank like those done to the wives of a king.”

Rāmānuja says that though the fruit of upāsana or bhakti is mukti still the time of its attainment is uncertain, because of the presence or absence of obstacles. It may be asked whether there could be any such obstacle in the case of one whose upāsana which gets him mukti is far stronger than all other karmas. The answer is, according to Bhāsyakāra, that even in his case there may be obstacles of the nature of offences done in the past to those who meditate on Brahman.

It is true that particular actions and abstinence from such actions have been prescribed in the case of bhāgavatas as due to conditions of caste and the like as stated in the Vedānta Sūtra: “That there is permission and prohibition in respect of castes is due to their relationship with their bodies as in such things as fire.” In spite of these ordinances the following also should be considered. “Even a man of bad conduct should be considered a good man if he worships Me without expecting any other benefit. He should be treated with respect.”

“The caṇḍāla who has devotion to Bhagavān—to think even by mere chance, of this caṇḍāla to talk to him and to treat him with respect—these purify the man who does so, O Brahmin.”

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119. V.S. 3.4: 51 (Rāmānuja’s commentary)
120. V.S. 2.3: 47.
121. Bh. G. 9: 40.
122. Iti. Sam. 31: 55.
sudra, a huntsman, or a man who eats a dog’s flesh, the man who looks upon him as identical with other men of those respective castes will go to hell.”\textsuperscript{123} “Therefore one should do what one can to please the devotees of Bhagavān. By this, Bhagavān becomes favourably disposed to bless one. There is no doubt about this.”\textsuperscript{124} So also has it been said by Nammāḷvār that those who are the devoted servants of the Lord even if they are born of the lowest rung of the castes and candālas of candālas are his masters in all his future births;\textsuperscript{125} and that the moment he made up his mind to render service to the Lord’s devotees, his past karma was destroyed and that he would never think of giving up his service.\textsuperscript{126} In the same way, it is our duty not to fail in reverence toward’s Lord’s servants. Even if there is only this mental reverence, it would amount to sesa’s service to the Lord Who is perfect and self-sufficient. The thought that “this man is of the Lord” is itself capable of doing good. If there is any deviation from this path, one should tremble in fear as if one has entered into the jaws of Death. In such a case, one should at once beg pardon of these devoted servants of the Lord, as in the case of Sugrīva and Lākṣmana who apologise to each other.”\textsuperscript{127}

Whether a man has offended bhāgavatas in this life or whether some bhāgavatas hate him owing to his wicked deeds in past lives though he has committed no offence in this life, he should obtain the pardon of Bhagavān by obtaining the pardon of such bhāgavatas by some means or other. If a man does not do so, he will pass beyond the reach of the Grace of the Lord and will lose also what is essential to his nature as a devotee to Viṣṇu, namely, his being a sesa to Bhagavān and, likewise, his qualities of self-restraint and patience. For it has been said: “Those who are bhāgavatas, they are Myself. There is no doubt about this; when they are adored, I am adored; when they are pleased, I am also

\textsuperscript{123} ibid. 27: 26.
\textsuperscript{124} ibid. 27: 27.
\textsuperscript{125} T.V.M. 3.7: 9; cf. Peri. Trm. 2 6: 2 to 10.
\textsuperscript{126} ibid. 8.10.
pleased. He who hates them hates Me also.”

Toṇṭarātip-poṭiyāḷvār who realised and enjoyed his relationship of being a seṣa to the bhāgavatas, which he considered as his distinctive feature, has described how miserable it is to be outside the pale of Lord’s Grace as follows: ‘My Lord has not said ‘This is a lad deserving of my affection.’ How wicked are my sins!’

The Āḷvārs in general are always conscious of not committing offences to the devotees of Bhagavān, as in the following passages: ‘We will never do what ought not to be done. We will never go to any ācārya and study heretical Sāstras’ – “ceyyāṭana ceyyōm, tīkkurāḷai cēṟu ōtōm,”

and ‘Vouchsafe Thy Grace so that I may not do wicked deeds’ – “ceyyēn tivniāi cēṟu aruḷ ceyyum.”

If we consider the statement of Tirumalāṭciyāḷvār viz., “O Lord of the world! Consider my offences as virtuous acts,” it also means the prayer that offences should be pardoned. Therefore, if a devotee happens to commit an offence, he is bound to obtain pardon. “Whether offences are committed deliberately or out of ignorance, the only expiation that is required is to say ‘Pardon me.’” Periyāḷvār says: “My servants will not commit offences. Even if they commit them, I will consider them as if they were virtuous.”

Even this verse indicates that offences are not unlikely. The sentence “If they commit offences, I will consider them as virtuous actions” means “If done out of ignorance, I will pardon them. If offences are committed deliberately and if they do not obtain pardon, I will condone them after inflicting punishment, but will never forsake them.” That, as a matter of fact, these offences are not virtuous acts as is indicated therein when it is said: “It will be considered as if they were good deeds.” It is distinctly stated: “If there is an offence, expiation should be done at once. The expiation that is to be done is to perform prapatti again.”

128. V.Dh. 52: 20.
129. T.M. 37.
130. T.P. 2.
131. T.V. M. 2.9: 3.
132. Vaṅkipuram Nampi: Kārika. 520.
133. Periyāḷ. Tm. 4.9: 2.
134. L.T. 17: 91, 52.
The celebration of festivals and observance of sacred days play an appreciable role in the cult of the bhāgavatas. The sanctity of certain moments and periods of time by association with memorable events, holy persons, and notable psychic experiences is the basic idea underlying the observance of sacred days and festivals. The one noteworthy feature of the Hindu attitude in this respect is the thoroughness with which the principle is worked out in the programme of devotions and pious exercises for every month and almost every day. All Hindu festivals are predominantly religious in character and significance. Though the origins of many of them are lost in the gloom of remote past, they all alike bear witness to the wide-spread popular faith and interest in the exercise of piety and devotion—in fasting, in vigils, in worship, in ablution, in offering to the manes, in gifts to holy persons, and in the practice of austerities and physical hardships as benefiting the spirit within. They also show as it were, how festivities lent joy and jest and variety to life's monotonous routine.

The observances of fasts and feasts are spread over all the months of the year, and are intended to serve as occasions for intensive contemplation of God. They are meant to be holidays from worldly life, especially the fasts giving opportunities to man to look within and search his heart. Many of these festivals are commemorations of great events recorded in the Purānas. The advent of avatāras like Narasimha, Rama and Kṛṣṇa, and the momentous events like the vanquishment of the demon Naraka by Viṣṇu are celebrated. One observes colourful scenes on such festive days in Indian cities and villages alike, because they are meant to be occasions for joys and thanks giving. Each one of these festivals commemorates the glory of God which puts down evil and enables good to prevail. Symbolically these feasts mean the overcoming of all that is base in us by the higher or real self.

A different group of festivals are the purificatory fasts. The followers of Vaiṣṇavite cult have their own special days in the year which they spend exclusively in prayer and worship. Many people on these occasions fast and keep vigil during the
night, read from the sacred texts and keep their minds engaged in thoughts on God. Birthdays (Tiru-naksatrams) of the Ālvārs and those of great spiritual teachers like Rāmānuja, Vedānta Deśika and Maṇavāḷamāṇuṅikaḷ are also celebrated in temples. During those occasions verses from the Nālāyiram are recited. Hinduism has always given the pride of place to the ācāryas. In the temples are honoured not only the idols of the Lord but also the images of the devotees. The true leaders of humanity are they who lift the veil of ignorance and let the lamp of God-knowledge shine. They are the real heroes who through spiritual valour and divine courage conquer the forces of evil and help their fellow-men to cross safely the ocean of somsāra. It is but fitting, therefore, that the dates of their advent should be commemorated every year.

The one purpose that runs through all the festivals is to create a spiritual climate for the people, a climate in which they could find their spiritual health and cultivate their soul. It is on these days, if properly observed, that one really lives. They are days of renewal of contact with God but for Whose presence no creature can live even for a moment. It is true that the ideal life is that which is spent without any break in the contemplation of God and in the service of all beings. To the truly wise all days are holy and sacred. But the people at large who have a long way to travel on the spiritual road need special days of prayer and religious rest. The festivals which are such days serve the same purpose in time as the temples do in space. Just as the temples are places which remind us of God, the festivals are times which make us commune with Him. Not only through worship and daily service of the images of the deities, but through the grand celebrations of their annual festivals, when the deities were taken out in procession, these temples created religious fervour among huge crowds of people drawn from far and near. The car-festival, specially, drew together the entire population of the locality. That such festivals in temples served as suitable occasions for religious discourses is also known from a reference in the Tamil work Peruṅkatal.35

135. Peruṅkatal.
The compositions of the Āḻvārs refer to the occasions of festivals connected in temples. It is natural that the devotees of the Lord would throng in larger numbers on such occasions. Tirunaṟaiyūr is said to have the streets ever putting on festival appearance. Those who are well-versed in the four Vedas are stated to join together and celebrate the festival for the Lord at Tirukkōṭṭiyūr and greet Him. Tirukkaṇṭapuram is also a place of the Lord where the devotees of God have gathered in larger numbers in connection with festivals. There are frequent references to the celebration of the festival on the day having 'Tiruvōṉam' as the constellation which has Viṣṇu as the presiding deity.

136. Peri. Tm. 6.4: 8; 6.7: 1.
137. Periyal. Tm. 4.4; 7.
138. Peri. Tm. 8. 7: 2.
139. Tiruppallāṇṭu, 6, 9; Nāṁ. Tv. 41.
THE ULTIMATE GOAL

It was Shelley who wrote "Die if thou wouldst be with that thou dost seek." But the experiences and the teachings of the Ājvārs are to the contrary. To the true lover of God Whose love is truly reciprocated, departure from this world and from this body is not essential for the realization of spiritual bliss. Encased in this material body and surrounded by this material world with all its temptations and allurements, he still finds it possible to realise the fulfilment of his soul and to reach the goal of his spiritual endeavour. In spite of his physical shortcomings and his material surroundings, he is able to centre his mind in God and convert this world of samsāra, in so far as he is concerned, into a world of eternal bliss. When that frame of his mind breaks into rhapsody, he sings in the following strain: "What is there wrong or low in my continuing in this life, if my beautiful lotus-eyed Lord so grant that my lips shall always utter His ever-increasing greatness and glory, my mind ever be filled by His rapturous and seductive Form, and my hands be unceasingly engaged in offering the choicest flowers at His divine Feet?" Those who render service to Lord Kṛṣṇa are verily in the Paramapada and so need not aspire to reach that place. Offering greetings to Him shall be practised assiduously not minding the worlds here and hereafter. Toṭṭāraṭṭippottiyālvār is fascinated by the Sleeping Beauty at Śrī Rāngam. Therefore he emphatically rejects the offer of even Indra's post in heaven. Vedānta Deśika, who could be said without

1. *The Complete Poetical works of Shelley.*
3. P. Tv. 79.
4. ibid. 67.
5. T.M. 2.
any exaggeration, to have lived a peaceful life dedicating himself for the service of the Lord, enjoyed the supreme and ineffable charm of Lord Varadaraja at Kāñci and swore that he did not have any attraction for Vaikuṇṭha. Devotees like these pious souls did not really choose to leave the world, but God chose them to be with Him in Vaikuṇṭha and so they had to leave their mortal frame.

It is true that the individual soul has not yet cast off its body which still ties it down to the material plane. But the centre of its existence has been shifted from itself to God. The Ptolemaic theory has given place to the Copernican theory and it is now deeply realized and fully felt that our centre is outside us. When it was shown that the earth was not the centre about which the rest of the planets revolved, but was itself a microscopic speck revolving along one of several circumferences round another centre, then there came a revolution in the astronomical world. The shifting of the centre is so full of meaning and significance there. In a similar manner the individual soul is made to realize that the physical world, the animal world, the rest of mankind, the starry firmament above, and the warring elements below have not all been created for its pleasure and well-being, but that along with it viz., the individual soul, they are all revolving round one and the same centre, — God. And as concentric circles can never touch one another, clash or conflict cannot occur. Once this is understood in all its aspects and significance, there is no more trouble. The individual existence is no more in conflict with the cosmic existence. The motion of the planets round their own axis together with their moons and satellites is quite consistent with their motion round the sun. The individual beings have gravitated in like manner towards the Supreme Being and in that very gravitation, they find their source, sustenance and satisfaction.

This is the state that can be equated with the bliss of the Eternals. This is also the state referred to by Nammālvār

6. Varādārājapāṇaśat, 49.
as one of the results flowing from the recitation of his hymns. Though they are born on earth as samsāris they will be superior to all others. They will be enjoying the divine experience without interval of day or night and they will be blessed by God. They will be blessed with the praises of the world and will lead a full life. In short, theirs will be a “Pukal vāṭkai” — ‘a life of renown’. On attaining this earthly — unearthly state, the individual soul feels all the security and all the bliss that are usually understood to be the lot of the mukta, and thinks that this state itself is mokṣa and not merely a pale foretaste of it. It even feels in the first flush that this stage is higher and sweeter and more difficult of attainment than mokṣa itself. Many of the Āḻvārs claim for this state greater excellence than for the state of mokṣa in the eternal region of Paramapada.

Intense experience of God fills the mystic devotee with delectable enjoyment relieving him of the stress and storm of worldly life. This experience lasts only for short periods which may vary from individual to individual. Occasions when such an experience is not had make the mystics yearn passionately for a reunion with the Divine. While this is expressed by some mystics, others become conscious of the worldly ills and plead to God for an escape from them. The actual impact of the sufferings of people, mystical and non-mystical, impress alike upon the mystics. The inevitable nature of the sufferings of the world is admitted by them. Ailments of mind and body, old age and requirements of daily life and the social adjustments with people of different abilities and capacities which are invariably unpalatable to the mystics together with the arousing of the impressions in themselves that have been imbedded in the beginningless series of previous births show the mystics that the world and life here, however much they are kept beyond the comprehension by the mystic experiences, have to be got rid

8. ibid. 8:5:11.
9. ibid. 3:3:11.
10. For example, vide P. Tv. 51, 79.
of once and for all. This shall be sought after, if sufferings, which had fallen to their lot, should be ended never to recur. God too teaches His men only this by withdrawing from time to time the intense experiences which are afforded by Him, in order that the real nature of mortality could be made known to them. Thus arises the need for final release or emancipation.

*Mokṣa* is the state of release of the soul from bondage due to *karma*. It is a return from the becoming of *samsāra* to the being of Brahman. It is thus a reversal of the empirical process due to the complex of *avidyā*, *kāma* and *karma* and the infinite regress of causality. In other words, it is liberation from worldly and other-worldly limitations and entry into the infinite. It thus implies self-transcendence in the subjective aspect of mastery over *karma* and in the objective aspect of going beyond the limits of space-time. Thus in a true emancipation the eternal transcends the temporal, and it is only in the world of Brahman transcending the phenomenal world that the self is transformed or brahmanized and enjoys eternal life. The *mukta* belongs to the realm of Brahman. Nammāṉṉar in his vision of *mokṣa* views himself so far advanced in realization that he transcends the realm of the senses, apprehends the key differences between *ātman* and *prakṛti*, rises above the joys and sorrows, *puṇya* and *pāpa* of the world, and thereby experiences the release of the soul. The verse under reference contains a full and apt description of the experience of *mokṣa* in and through the soul.

The state of final release is conceived differently by the different schools of thought and it is due to the concept of life that is idealised by the particular school. The schools like Saṅkhya, Nyāya, Buddha and Jaina which stress on the worldly ills, declare the state of release as *nirvāṇa* (blowing out of everything that is distressing), *apavarga* (escaping from the material world), and *kaivalya* (existing in isolation). The Vaiśeṣika school, though closely allied to the Nyāya in its attitude to the world, mentions the state of release as supremely prosperous (*niḥśreyasa*), verily a state in which the self is free

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11. T.V.M. 8.8: 6; cf. ibid. 1.2: 5.
from the material bonds and so lies in its own state. To the Advaitin, the state of mokśa is an ideal one when the attributeless Brahman alone exists. The same is the case with the schools of Bhedābhedā and Suddhādvaita. All the other schools of Vedānta and the theistic schools of religion believe in the omni-presence of God. God comes down to this world and enables His devotees to have communion with Him. The love which the devotees have for God must perforce be wished to be everlasting. The awareness that mortality could not permit this naturally makes them wish to have the same experience in a life hereafter when no material binding can cut it at any stage. God Who condescends to grant His devotees such an experience here by presenting Himself unto them must and will grant an experience of the same kind to the maximum degree of delectability when the selves are not bound by any limitations. Naturally, the state of release is held by all these schools to be marked by supreme bliss without the least trace of suffering.

It is also said that mukti is the realization of the meaning of the relation between the self and the Universal Self enshrined in the Upaniṣadic text "Thou art That". There is more value in abolishing the ahaṅkāra of the jīva by self-effacement and surrender of the self to the true Self. Kāṅkāryarasa brings out the joy of selfless service. In attuning his naughted will to that of the śesi, the mukta feels that he is like a lute on which the supreme singer plays. Love is fulfilled in surrender and service; its cosmic value lies in attuning itself to the infinite. But it is the experience of the bliss of Brahman that expresses the supreme value of mukti in the Viśiṣṭādvaitic sense of the ecstasy of the unitive consciousness. Then the mukta is immersed in the supreme and unsurpassable bliss of Bhrahmānubhava without losing his self-being. It is a state of sāyujya in which the unitive experience of bliss is present without the loss of self-existence.

14. R.T.S. Ch. 22.
Nammāḻvār conceives *mokṣa* as the God’s abode and also a place of the freed souls who are the real immortals. The Āḻvār refers to this place in his works as “*vīṭu*”, 15 “*tuyar illā vīṭu*”, 16 “*vīṇ nāṭu*”, 17 “*vān nāṭu*”, 18 “*vaikunṭham*”, 19 “*Vaikunṭha vān nāṭu*”, 20 “*vaikunṭha-māṇakar*”21 and “*puy-ulaku*”.22 The reference to “*vaikunṭha nāṭan*”22 or the Lord of Vaikunṭha signifies that God is the ruler of the city Vaikunṭha. *Vīṭu* is deliverance, deliverance from the worldly life or *samsāra*. The conception of *vīṭu* is not given by Tiruvalluvar in unequivocal terms; but the nearest approach can be seen in *Tirukkuṟaḷ*.24 The same concept is clearly expressed by Nammāḻvār as “*Aṟṟatu pāṟṟenil uṟṟatu vīṭu uyir*”25 – the *jīva* (soul) once gives up its attachment to the worldly things attains *mokṣa*. The words ‘*vīṇnāṭu*’, ‘*vān nāṭu*’ suggest that the so-called place of *mokṣa* is situated far above the world in the endless space. The place it free from misery – “*tuyar illā vīṭu*.” The Āḻvār while stating the specific result flowing from a recitation of his hymns gives expression to *mokṣa*. Generally the ideal is always described in a positive way such as “those who recite this decad of ten verses will reach Vaikunṭha”,26 “those who sing these verses of the hymn will become the followers and lovers of the Lord”,27 “those who recite this decad will be freed from the cycle of births”28

15. T.V.R. 95; T.V.C. 2; P. Tv. 48; T.V.M. 1.1:10; 2.8:1,10; 2.9:10; 2.9:11; 3.4:11; 3.10:11; 10.5:5; 10.10:11.
16. ibid. 2.8:2.
17. T.V.R. 9, 54; P. Tv. 48, 79.
19. ibid 66, 68; P. Tv. 53; T.V.M. 2.1.11; 2.5:11; 4.7.11; 4.8:11; 5.3:11; 5.4:11; 5.10:11; 9.10:5; 10.7:8; 10.9:9.
20. P, Tv. 68.
22. ibid. 6.8:11.
23. ibid., 7.9:4.
24. *Kāṇṭal* Ch. 35-37.
25. T.V.M. 1.2:5.
26. T.V.M. 2.5:11; 4.8:11;
27. ibid. 2.6:11; 3.6:11; 5.5:11; 6.4:11; 6.9:11; 7.3:11.
28. ibid. 3.2:11; 3.7:11; 3.9:11; 8.3:11; 8.4:11.
"the reciters of the hymn of ten verses will be freed from karma", 29 "the deced on His sacred Feet will lead us to His Feet", 30 "this deced will purify and cleanse the heart", 31 "the reciters of the hymn will render service to Laks mí-Nára-yaña", 32 "those who learn this deced will attain His Feet" 33 etc. Other Ālvárs too have the same conception regarding mokṣa. They too refer to mokṣa more or less in the same words and phrases. The words and phrases referred to by them are "perumilam" (Great Land), 34 "peru vicumpu" (Great Space), 35 "umpar ulaku" 36 (World of Devas), Viññakam 37 (Celestial Abode), "Náraṇaṇ ulaku" 38 "Iñpavilu" 39 (an Abode of Bliss), "Amarar ulakam" 40 (World of Celestials), "Váñor kaṭinakar" 41 (a City of Celestials with its ramparts) etc. Kulacékaraḷvár describes the mokṣa idea in a negative way as "those who have mastered this deced of Kulacékara will never go to Hell." 42 The description of mokṣa coincides more or less with the Nitya-vibhúi as described in the Vaiṣṇavite Āgamas and other Vaiṣṇavite texts.

According to Vaiṣṇavism, Īśvara is the object of the knowledge which is the means, upáya, and also the object of the knowledge which is attainment: He is the means as being the giver of the desired fruit and the bestower of Graça, and likewise, He is upáya because Himself the object that is to be

29. ibid. 4.6: 11; 7.1: 11; 10.1: 11.
30. ibid. 4.9: 11.
31. ibid. 5.2: 11.
32. ibid. 6.5: 11; 8.9: 11.
33. ibid. 10.4: 11.
34. Peri. Tm. 1.1: 9.
35. ibid. 5.6: 5.
36. ibid. 11.4: 10.
37. M. Tvt. 68.
38. Perum. Tm. 7: 11.
39. Tc. V. 120.
40. I. Tvt. 41.
41. ibid. 88.
42. Perum. Tm. 5: 10.
reached. He is the ever-attained means (Siddhôpâya).\textsuperscript{43} As auxiliary to this means there are two other means, namely, bhakti and prapatti. The former is mainly based upon the teaching of the Upanisads and its adoption is restricted to the higher castes; the latter is meant for all and its source is to be traced mainly to the Vaiṣṇavite Āgama. In the case of those who have adopted prapatti as the sole and independent means, Īśvara takes the place of their upâyas. In the case of others (i.e.) those that adopt bhakti, Īśvara whose favour has been won by prapatti (adopted as an auxiliary means to bhakti) intervenes and, standing in the place of rites and duties which are too hard for them in those situations which lie between the beginning of karma-yoga and the completion of the (prescribed) meditation, brings about the removal of sins and the manifestation of sattva which can result from their performance. He sees to it that the meditation or worship which can be adopted as an upâya is so complete as to bear fruit.

The path to mukti or mokṣa is referred to \textit{\textasciitilde celkati}, \textit{\textasciitilde māk-kati} by the Āḻvârs. Celkati is the good path which a jīva has to choose and māk-kati is mokṣa. These two concepts in combination may be interpreted to mean the straight and shining path of arcitādi gati as mentioned in the Chandogya Upanisad\textsuperscript{45(a)}. Tirumâṅkaiyâḻvâr mentions this in his Ciṟut-tirumâṭal\textsuperscript{46} and elaborates it in his Periyatiru-maṭal.\textsuperscript{47} The soul travels through the solar rays, reaches the sun, enters through a minute hole in the sun and then attains the place called mokṣa where, it is said, it enjoys the Lord. The making of a single mukta is a cosmic event, as it were, and even the celestials hail the entry of the finite self into infinity and sing hallelujahs in their own celestial way. The glorious

\textsuperscript{43} T.V.M. 3.5 : 10; P. Tv. 46.
\textsuperscript{44} Peri. Tm. 1.1 : 5, 8
\textsuperscript{45} Mū. Tv 95.
\textsuperscript{45(a)} Ch. Up. 4.15 : 5.
\textsuperscript{46} C. TML Kaṇṭhi, 7, 8.
\textsuperscript{47} P. TML Kaṇṭhi, 16, 17.
ascent of the soul to its original home has been vividly described by Nammāḻvār.48

The course of devotion involves a training in three stages known as karma-yoga, jñāna-yoga, and bhakti-yoga in the progressive realization of mokṣa. These three stages constitute the to-be-attained means (sādhyopāya). The path of karma means the performance of certain kind of karma or rites and duties49 as the result of knowledge acquired from the sāstras in regard to the true nature of self and the Universal Self. One should perform one’s duties for the fulfilment of God’s purpose; the person should do them subordinating his will completely and whole-heartedly to the divine will. The duties are done solely to please God. By thus working for the Lord, one not only renounces the fruits associated with them, but purifies one’s heart. This purification is looked upon as the necessary result of so dedicating all one’s deeds to God. This karma-yoga has several subdivisions50 which include such items as the adoration of the gods, the performance of austerities (tapas), pilgrimage to sacred places, giving in charity, and sacrifices. Some of these rites and duties are referred to by the Āḻvārs Nammāḻvār says: “Enjoying the sight of Thy presence with my eyes, and offering flowers culled from all directions at Thy Feet to my hands’ content, and dancing and singing of Thy praises”;51 “which deity other than the Lord Who created Brahma to create the Devas and the whole universe deserves offerings of flower and ritual worship?”;52 “without separation from the Lord, offering Him holy water, and, after that, incense and

49. The rites and duties consist of (i) nitya karma or regular duties to be performed compulsorily (like the daily sandhyāvandanam), (ii) naimittika karma or rites to be compulsorily performed on specific occasions (like the eclipse of the sun or the moon), and (iii) such kāmaya karmas or rites as are optional and as have been chosen to be within one’s ability.
50. Bh. G. 4:25 and et seq.
51. T.V.M. 4.7:8.
52. ibid. 2.2:4.
flowers”; 53 “Tiruvēṅkaṭaṁ where the Devas led by their leader (Indra) attain salvation by worship with the choicest flowers, holy water, lamp and incense”; 54 “Devotees and Pakavars who with Puruṣa-sūkta on their lips, in strict accordance with the ritual code, offer service at the Feet of the Lord with plenty of flowers, incense, lamps, sandal paste and holy water”; 55 “Are not the days near when I can circumambulate and worship with folded palms the deity at Tiruvāṟanvilai;” 56 “Am I not sure to realize my aspiration to walk round the temple with fragrant holy water and to worship with folded hands;” 57 “Let us emancipate ourselves by service to the Lord and by worship of Him with choice flowers, holy water, lamp and incense”; 58 “How great is the merit of those who worship the Lord at Tiruvaṅantapuram with the offer of flowers in strict accord with the ritual code!” 59 In this process the self-regarding sentiments like self-love and self-possession are subdued. Animal instincts and inclinations are transmuted into an organic craving for God, like baser metals are transmuted into gold in the furnace. The whole process is one of self-realization by self-renunciation; the earth-bound self then becomes spiritualised.

The path of knowledge is a stage of constant and uninterrupted contemplation, by one who has conquered his mind by karma-yoga, of his essential nature or the self as being distinct from matter (the body, the senses and the like) – his svāraṣṭa which is the mode of Iśvara in virtue of its relation to Him as His body. Jñāna-yoga is a path of contemplation, of self-illumination and of self-renunciation leading to its positive sequel of self-realization. Contemplation is turning the out-going mind within with the help of yogic auxiliaries like yama (self-restraint), niyama (observation of rites) and

53. ibid. 1.6:1.
54. ibid. 3.3:7.
55. ibid. 5.2:9.
56. ibid. 7.10:1.
57. ibid. 7.10:2, 8, 9.
59. ibid. 10.2:4; cf ibid. 10.2:9; 10.2:10; 10.5:5; 10.5:10; I. τv. 67:
prāṇāyāma (the control of the breath) and seeking the inner quiet. In this state all activity is swallowed up. The yogin can arrest the outgoing tendency by thinking on thought itself, on contemplation on the nature of the ātman. Nammāḻvār prays: "O Father! lend me the helping hand of jñāna so that I may reach Thy inaccessible Feet." 60 When the purified self reflects on itself, all the thoughts are thought away; the contractions caused by karma and the confusions due to avidyā are then destroyed by the fire of jñāna. The ātman at this stage returns to itself and shines by itself and enjoys the quiet of kaivalya. It is no longer bound by prakṛti and its three guṇas, but attains calmness and serenity. This self-cognition itself is an orientation towards God-cognition. The yogin who has intuited the ātman sees the same self in all jīvas owing to the similarity of their spiritual intelligence. The seer who has a soul-sight and sweet reasonableness intuits the same ātman in a dog as in a god. In a higher stage he has a glimpse of Paramātman, the Supreme Self as the pervading identity in all jīvas, and sees Him in all beings and all beings in Him. Tirumāḻcaināḻvār says: "With a complete shutting of the gates of the senses, and with an opening of the gate of God-knowledge, by kindling the blaze of jñāna, by making the body and the heart pine away for God, by such fully mature devotion one can realise the Lord with the discus." 61 In the next higher stage this spiritual experience is further enriched. Pēyāḻvār says: "The jñānis are those who can penetrate with knowledge the Lord Who is the inner meaning of the four Vedas and Who is immanent in their hearts." 62 The spiritual insight of ātmajñāna is completely acquired in the fourth stage by the exhibition of universal sympathy in which the jñāni realizes the kinship of all jīvas and regards the joys and sorrows of others as his own. Nammāḻvār says: "May we all (entire mankind) never more wallow in this woeful state of false knowledge, evil conduct and filthy body?" 63 If he escapes the snare of being (perma-

60. ibid. 2.9: 2; cf. ibid. 1.7: 1.
61. Tc. V. "6.
62. Mü. Tv. 84.
63. T.V.R. 1.
nently) attracted by the pleasure of enjoying this vision which is so great as to create a distaste for all sense-pleasures, then he begins the practice of *bhakti-yoga* which is the direct means for the attainment of the supreme goal of enjoying Bhagavān. While practising *bhakti-yoga*, the aspirant contemplates on Bhagavān as the Inner self of his own self which is His body. The vision that he has already acquired of his own pure self is then useful, for it is only through it that he reaches its Inner Self, just as the cloth within which a gem is tied up is first to be seen before the gem itself can be seen. In this way the vision of one’s self serves as a qualification or a stepping stone for the practice of *bhakti-yoga*. The chanters of a hymn of *Tiruvāymolī*, according to Nammāḻvār, will be blessed with *jñāna*.

*Bhakti-yoga* is the special form of meditation which is of the nature of unsurpassed love and which has, for its object, the essential nature and form and qualities of Bhagavān Who is not dependent on any one else, Who is not subject to the authority of any one else, and Who does not exist for the fulfilment of the purpose of any one else. It is a process in which the seeker after salvation sheds his egoism and ego-centric outlook, attunes himself to the will of God and yearns for eternal communion with Him. *Bhakti* is of the form of a continuous stream of knowledge which is of the nature of uninterrupted memory like the flow of oil streaming down continuously; it has clearness similar to that of visual perception; it grows from strength to strength by being practised every day until the day of journey to Parmapada and terminates in the remembrance of the past moment. This *yoga* is the direct path to perfection as it leads to the very heart of religious consciousness which consists in shifting the centre of reference from the *ātman* to the *Paramātman*. This stage effects a revolution in our life, which is of far greater importance than the Copernican revolution. While the astronomer realizes the littleness of the earth and the greatness of the sun that draws it to itself, the religious man or devotee knows the emptiness of the earth-bound self and the

64. T.V.M. I.10: 11.
saving might of God Who is the source and centre of all living beings. The knowledge of the finite self has its religious fulfillment in the integral experience of the Infinite which is its ground and goal. The self is merged in the Supreme Self like the sponge in the sea. Nammāḻvār says: “To the Lord, the sandal paste for wearing is my heart; the garland is the garland of verses composed by me; the silken garment too consists of these; the bright ornaments are the folding of my arms in worship”.\(^65\) To this saint Keḻan (Krṣṇa) is everything: He is the food that he eats, the water he drinks, and the betel he chews.\(^66\) Again the Āḻvār says: “Even if it is not given to me to worship Thee with cool flowers at the appropriate hours, I give over my very life as ornament to Thy fair-head, well decorated with flowers”:\(^67\) “I cry (for the Lord); I bow (before Him); I dance before Him; and I sing and rave”.\(^68\) Periyāḻvār’s sentiment of bhakti runs like this: “Laying out the shrine of the heart, and installing the deity of Mātavaṇ there, and offering the flower of devotion at the point of death will enable one to escape the horrors of the world of death”.\(^69\) The whole hymn stresses this sentiment that thoughts of the Lord at the point of death will ensure salvation. The Āḻvār’s foster-daughter says: “To worship the Lord with fresh flowers in a state of purity, to utter His glory with one’s tongue and to cherish it in one’s heart would dispose of past and future demerits as dust in fire”.\(^70\) Kulacēkarāḻvār’s god-love is so intense that he says “All are mad to me; I am a mad man to all........ I have grown mad after the Lord”.\(^71\) In the whole of the decad the Āḻvār’s madness after the Lord that is expressed. Again he says: “Just as wealth, even though spurned on by the devotee clings to him again and again (by God’s Grace), so also I (the property of the Lord) again and again cling to

\(^{65}\) ibid. 4.3: 2.
\(^{66}\) ibid. 6.7: 1.
\(^{67}\) ibid. 4.3: 4.
\(^{68}\) ibid. 5.8 5.
\(^{69}\) Periyāḻ. Tm. 4.5: 3.
\(^{70}\) T. Pv. 5.
\(^{71}\) Perum. Tm. 3: 8.
Thee though Thou may reject me;" and further in the same hymn, "Even if You spurn me I have no one else to look up to; like a child put aside by its mother, in anger, like a true wife ill-treated by her husband, like a citizen looking up to the king though he be a despot, like the lotus flower which unfolds itself only to the burning rays of the sun, and like the crops that always look up to the clouds that never come, I look up to Thee and rely on Thee even though Thou does not want me". This is a rare idea, a very difficult concept which has been very beautifully brought out by the Ālvār in this hymn which has no equal elsewhere even among the verses of the Nalāytram. Tirumānkaiyālvār expresses his devotion: "I am not going to let Thee out, Who have entered the heart of myself, who has the firm determination to attain salvation by worshipping Thee with the offer of eight kinds of fragrant flowers". Bhaktisāra has expressed his devotion as that he has controlled the uncontrollable senses, rid himself of the interest in things of the world and concentrated all his attention on Him; as a humble devotee, he has rooted out wrath and malice, controlled the destinies of the senses, and his devotion has been multiplying. Again the saint says that he spends his time in reciting His glory, writing about it, reading about it, listening to accounts of it, prostrating before Him, performing service to Him, and offering worship to Him, those who long for attaining to Paramapada soon, and so meditate constantly on the Lord are likely to regard their body itself as a disease; those who contemplate the

72. Perum. Tm. 5: 9.
73. ibid. 5.1.
74. ibid. 5.2.
75. ibid. 5.3.
76. ibid. 5.6.
77. ibid. 5.7.
78. Peri. Tm. 3.5. 6.
79. Tc. V. 95.
80. ibid. 98.
82. ibid. 79.
Lord of the ocean of milk continuously will be rid of the sins of the past generations attached to the soul, and will reach Paramapada. Among the first three Āḻvārs Poykaiyāḻvār says: Those who unswervingly stick to the path of bhakti and worship Thee will find the Body of the Lord celebrated in the Upaniṣads incorporating Itself in them”; “My heart seeks nothing but Thy Feet; my tongue speaks of nothing but Thy glory”. Pūtattāḻvār says: “Making my heart the abode of the Lord, I offered Him the golden lotus of bhakti;” “The faculties are ready; the heart is in it; the lotus flowers are in plenty; the time for His praise is so freely available;” “My heart delights in meditating on Thy form; my tongue delights in celebrating Thy Feet; my body delights in dancing and singing the praises of Thy weapons;” “It chanced me to perform service to Thee; I contemplated Thy Lotus-Feet; I identified myself with them in devotion” Peyāḻvār says: “Those who recite the Veda well, acquire true knowledge, quell the five senses, practise self-control and then meditating on Him reach His presence;” “If one, controlling the senses and prayerfully concentrating one’s mind on the Lord, realises the pitfalls of samsāra and turns away from it, one can rise above the cycle of births.” This bhakti-yoga is also a means in accordance with the specific desire of the aspirant for acquiring lordship (in this world or in svarga) and other fruits (like kaivalya). Among the four kinds of devotees referred to in the Gītā and Mahābhārata the one who worships Bhagavān with exclusive devotion the best and he attains moksa.

83. ibid. 89.
84. M.Tv. 76
85. ibid. 88.
86. I. Tv. 4.
87. ibid. 21.
88. ibid. 32,33.
89. ibid. 80.
90. Mū. Tv. 12.
91. ibid. 79.
93. M.Bh; Sānti. 350. 33-35
Bhakti-yoga which has thus been prescribed as the means of obtaining mokṣa has been called para-bhakti. Love of the Lord which results from intimacy with sāttvikas (and the scriptures) and which produces para-bhakti is also called bhakti, because it generates an eager desire to know Īśvra with perfect clearness. The statements of Nammāḻvār as "the lotus-eyed Lord takes his abode in my eyes,"94 "He will not go out of my eyes"95 and others96 describe the stage of para-bhakti. When this para-bhakti develops in its turn into a thirst or eager desire and determination to see the Lord it is called para-jñāna. "O Lord, Thou art the abode of attributes like fāna, be blessed to show Thy whole self!",97 "Vouchsafe Thy Grace so that I may see Thee"98 and "May I see Thee some day!"99 - these statements of Arjuna and the Āḻvār describe this stage of bhakti. By this keen desire alone the devotee wins the Grace of the Lord Who rewards him with a perfect visual perception of Himself for the time being. This visual perception is para-jñāna. From this perfect vision of the svarūpa of the Lord is born an excessive and unsurpassed love for Him and unquenchable spiritual thirst similar to that felt by a man suffering from great thirst at the sight of a tank. This (excessive and unsurpassed love for the Lord) is called parama-bhakti which produces an eager desire and determination to enjoy the Lord without any limitations,100 as the devotee feels that it is impossible to live any longer without this experience of eternal bliss as described by Nammāḻvār101 where he cries out that he will not hereafter allow the Lord to leave Him (ini nān pōkal ottēn) and that he must become one with the Lord and

95. ibid. 10.8:8.
96. ibid. 2.8:10; 3 2:10; 4 7:7; 5 7:5; 5 8:1; 6 3:1; 9 4:8; 10 4:9.
99. ibid. 6 9 4.
100. R.T.S. Ch. 9.
101. T.V.M. 10 10 1.
declares all this with an oath that cannot be ignored by the Lord. It causes likewise an excessive eagerness in the Lord to give him mokṣa immediately and makes him attain it after quenching his great thirst for union; they are finally united in the realm of mukti. The soul is a glow with divine fire, but is not identical with it. As the life of our life, God feeds the soul and divinises it. Likewise the soul feeds on God; and in the unitive stage 'I' becomes He and He becomes 'I'. In the bliss of unitive consciousness, the soul-hunger of God and the God-hunger of the soul are both finally satisfied. The temporal pleasures of earth, the seductive joy of svarga and the joy of kaivalya are nothing when compared to the integral experience of Brahman. The ecstasy is only a momentary rapture, but the instant is construed as eternity. The soul is not passive, but energises enthusiastically and shares its joy with others.

A simple way of reaching the ultimate goal is also envisaged. This way is unqualified and absolute self-surrender, known as Prapatti. It is also called Saranāgati. It is the highest stage of God love. Prapatti stands in the place of para-bhakti to the man who adopts it as the direct and independent means. This way preserves the essentials of bhakti, dispenses with its predisposing causes or conditions, and omits the non-essentials like the need for ceaseless practice. It is thus a direct and independent means for salvation to those who do not belong to the three higher castes, and (likewise) also for those three higher castes who are wanting in jñāna or ability or both and to those who cannot endure any delay in the attainment of mokṣa and are extremely impatient. Since it will be the means of securing all desired objects, it has been prescribed in the place of para-bhakti for those who know their limitations. The only requisite for this means is the change of heart or contrition on the part of the mumukṣu and his absolute confidence in the saving Grace of the Rākṣaka. The supreme merit of this means lies in the universality of its appeal to all castes and classes, including even the jīvas in the sub-human bodies, the guarantee of salvation

102. ibid. 10.10 : 2.
to all jivas who cannot follow the arduous and precipitous path of bhakti, its intrinsic and independent value as means and the naturalness and ease in securing immediate effect.

The spiritual experience of the Tamil seers (Āḻvārs) is epitomized in the Sāraṇāgati of Nammāḻvār who is extolled as the super-prapanna of Śrī Vaiśnavism. The Āḻvār says: "Tāriyēṅ ini uṉ caraṇam tantu en caṇmam kaḷaiyāyē."108- 'Henceforward it is impossible for me to possess myself in misery without the darsan of Thy Feet.' He extends the hospitality of his divine experience to the whole world of jivas, with a view to establishing a spiritual community of bhaktas. Says the saint: "What else is protection save to serve Kṛṣṇa born in Mattrā?"109 In another place the Āḻvār advising the people, says: "(God is) the Protector of those that surrender at His Feet";105 "Lover of those that seek refuge at His Feet;"108 and "is nearer to those who bow to His Feet."107 The saint records his experience of performing the act of self-surrender at the Feet of the deity at Tīrūmōkūr; "There is no salvation other than surrender to Kāḷaṉēkam, the presiding deity at Tīrūmōkūr"106 and "the lotus-like Feet of the deity is the only salvation."119 The peak of his action is seen performed in the presence of Lord of the Tirupati Hills. The Āḻvār confesses to the Lord: "We have been for generations enslaved to Thee. May I be blessed with the attainment of Thy Feet;"110 My love and devotion to Thee are immeasurable. My I be blessed with the gift of attaining Thy Feet;111 For me to reach Thy holy Feet I plead for sympathetic compassion in respect of me.115 May I be guided,

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103. ibid. 5.8: 7.
104. ibid. 9.1: 3; 5.
105. ibid. 9.10: 5.
106. ibid. 9.10: 6.
107. ibid. 9 10: 8.
108. ibid. 10.1: 1; cf. ibid., 10.1: 2.
110 ibid. 6.10: 1.
111. ibid. 6.10: 2.
112. ibid. 6.10: 3.
sinner as I am, to attain Thy Feet filled with flowers. As long as Thou bearest the strong bow, I cannot lose hope. All that I need is to know when I can attain Thy Feet. When is it that I can really attain Thy Feet not as in a dream, but in reality. I have not performed penances to attain Thy Feet, but not for a moment can I possess myself because I am overborne by eagerness. Like Kṛśna Who has made His appearances to all those that deserved His darśan, even for me Thy presence should be ensured. I cannot refrain even for a moment separation from Thy Feet, having trodden the footprints of my past generations enslaved to Thee. Lakṣmī that has, abandoning Her abode of flowers, sought Her abode on Thy handsome bosom to abide in perpetuity, I, that have no stake in life, had entered the shelter of Thy Feet most appropriately to abide there for ever.” Almost all the Āḻvārs speak of their self-surrender to the Lord. They are satisfied with their relationship to the lordship of God instead on the relationship of the mother or the father. All of them have practised this tapas or self-surrender to the Lord. Poykaiyāḻvār says: “The only means to dispel karma, disease and sin is self-surrender to the Lord.” Periyāḻvār says that God has planted His tender Feet on his head as one Pāṇṭiya king planted his Fish-emplem on the Mahāmēru mountain. Tirumalaiyāḻvār requests the Lord to tell him ‘Don’t fear’ as he had surrendered to Him.

The Hindu religious tradition has recognised the place of intellect in spiritual development. It never encourages blind faith. Taking its clue from the words of Yājñavalkya

113. ibid. 6.10: 4.
114. ibid. 6.10: 5.
115. ibid. 6.10: 6.
116. ibid. 6.10: 7.
117. ibid. 6.10: 8.
118 ibid. 6.10: 9.
119. ibid. 6.10: 10.
120. M.Tv. 59.
121. Periyāḻ. Tm. 5.4: 7.
122. Te V. 92.
in his discourse to his wife Maitreyī in the *Upaniṣad*, the Vedānta system recognises three stages in the path of self-realisation, viz., śravaṇa, manana and nididhyāśana. There is the teaching of the Master, the revelation of the Truth. The disciple listens to it and learns the Truth. This is śravaṇa, which is the study of the scriptures under a qualified Master. Religion, it is said, is not taught, but caught. Mere intellectual study of the Scriptures is not of much avail. The purport of them may be mixed. And so the meaning of the *Upaniṣads* should be learnt from a realised soul. Manana is reflection. After studying the teaching of the *Upaniṣads*, one should reflect upon it and try to understand why it alone is true and not any other teaching. There may arise innumerable doubts which should be dispelled by the process of cogitation. Manana does not reveal any new truth. It only serves to remove the doubts regarding the final truth that has already been received through śravaṇa. Intellectual conviction alone will not do for self-realisation. Old habits of thought may reassert themselves and stand obstacles in the way. To get over them, nididhyāśana or deep contemplation is needed and this leads to the clarity of the vision of the Truth. Bhaktisāra indicates these three srages. Through this gradated process what was at first was a mere theoretical knowledge of the Self becomes the direct perception or intuitive experience of the Absolute. It is the stage of inseparable communion or unity with God. The Īṭu interprets the terms ‘iterītīl,” “ninaitīl” and “emnīl” as referring respectively to śravaṇa, manana and nididhyāśana. Perimēlalakar translates them as kēṭvē, vimarīsam (vimarsa) and pāvai (bhāvai). Nammāḻvār uses the terms “āṟivu”, “ninaiṟu”, and “uṇarvu”. “Āṟivu” is learning through

123. Br. Up. 2.4
125. Īṭu on T.V.M. 6.9: 11.
126. Kural. 353 (Commentary).
127. T.V.M. 1.1: 8; 5.5: 11.
128. ibid. 1.1; 3.
129. ibid. 1.3: 6; 3.5: 6.
"sraṇaḥ", "nīnāvū" is manana, and "uṣparu" is nidadhyāsan. The phrase "aṭī-cērtal" used by the saint may be taken to mean self-surrender, the final communion—the "prapatti" or "ātma nivētana" referring to what Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives us as His final message. The phrases "īdē-cērtal," "tiruvaṭi aṭaital", and "pūtam cērtal" may also be taken as referring to this niṣṭha. Out of the clearness of vision and of the firmness of conviction comes the unloosening embrace of real communion. Does not this saint say in another context, "unmai nān piṭitēn koḷ cikkenavē"?

The Āḻvār speaks of yoga also, besides caryā and kriyā. The above description is in a way yoga. But the yoga system refers to the eight stages of contemplation. Those stages are specially designed to draw the mind from the outgoing tendency and dispersal, to subdue its rāsanās and to centre it in samādhi. As bondage is a descent to the world of samsāra, muktī is the process of retracing the steps and returning to the spiritual home in God. The whole scheme of upāsana is governed by this central concept. The upāsana promotes spiritual intimacy and the unitive consciousness. The Lord accepts the flower of devotion more than the flower offerings of outer devotion and it is the eight-petalled flower of ahimsa, kindness, patience, truth, self-control, tapas, inwardness and jñāna. The result is that the Lord, with all the three worlds in His stomach, had filled "my mind".

The final state is what is called communion or identity. That is jñāna. It is not mere emotion divorced from intellect. It is emotion born out of jñāna. It is spoken of variously by

130. ibid. 6.10: 2; 4.1: 2; 4.9: 11.
133. ibid. 4.9: 10.
134. ibid. 6.10: 5.
135. ibid. 2.6: 1.
137. T.V.M. 8.7: 8.
Nammāḷvār as "kātal", "kāṭaṁmai", "vēṭkai", "anpu", and "ava". It is a melting of the heart. They (the devotees) will, says Nammāḷvār, 'like the sands amidst a fountain, melt as a liquid product' - "uṟṟiṅkaṅ nuṟnuṅmaṇal-pōl urukā-nirpār nirāyē". We know that love is a union and inseparability and both these aspects are emphasized in the poems of Āḻvār. Śrī Vaiṣṇavism defines Brahman the Absolute as Bhuvanasundara or God the Beautiful and regards the mystic experience of communion with Him as the consummation of the philosophy of love. This Divine Love is Universal Love and the seers and saints are characterized by their love and sympathy. It is a happy blend of jñāna and bhakti. It is "matinalam" as our Āḻvār calls it and "jñānam-kaṇṭinta nalam" as Amutaṇar terms it.

The paths of devotion and self-surrender have more relevance to the position of God in Vaiṣṇavism than those of karma and jñāna as such. To fall in line with the Upaniṣadic concept that knowing Him is the means of obtaining final release, the great exponent Rāmānuja evolved a very convincing exposition of bhakti, jñāna and prapatti, according to which all these represent certain stages of jñāna itself. All the same, stress is laid more on the bhakti and prapatti aspects of jñāna. It is in the light of this stress that the three esoteric doctrines have come to be formulated as the basis of the Vaiṣṇavite religion. These three secrets (rahasya-traya) contain the essentials of Vedānta in terms of tattva, hīta and puruṣārtha. The Lord Himself has expounded the technique and value of self-surrender. The three secrets are known as mūla-mantra, dvaya and carama-śloka of which the first states

139. ibid. 6.1:1.
140. ibid. 10.3:2.
141. P.Tv. 8.
142. T.V.M. 10.10:10; TVR. 84.
143. ibid. 6.8:11.
144. ibid. 1.1:1.
145. R.N. 66.
146. Taitt. Ar. 3.12:7.
in a nutshell, the second makes the meaning more explicit and the third elaborates it still further. These three mysteries (*mantram*) which are an epitome of the truths that ought to be known and of the means of attaining salvation, which are the distinctive, unique and exclusive doctrines of this system of religion and philosophy are invaluable and therefore to be preferred like ambrosia in the ocean.

The *mūla-mantra* is otherwise known as *tirumantra*; it is the eight-lettered formula whose meaning is ‘Om! salutation to Nārāyaṇa!’ It has been stated to contain everything within itself, and, if it is known the meaning of everything becomes known. This *mantra* helps us to understand such things as our essential nature (*svarūpa*) which finds true happiness only in being the *śeṣa* of the supreme Being. By that (revelation), it creates a longing for the supreme Goal of attainment preceded by the removal of all obstacles thereto and also a feeling of urgency (in regard to that attainment) whereby the competency for the adoption of the means becomes perfected. "This eternal *mūla-mantra* is therefore the highest of all *mantras*; of all secrets this is the supreme secret; of all things that purify, this is the most purificatory".\(^{147}\) It is the essence of all the *Vedas*; it is capable of removing all evil influences; it is the means of obtaining all the objects desired by men; it helps in the adoption of all *upāyas*; it can be uttered by all castes either in its *Vedic* form (*with* *aum*) or in its *tāntric* form (*without* the *aum*), in accordance with their respective competence. The Ālvārs sing its praise with delight; "with the help of the garland of verses (which constitute the *Prabandha*) I could acquire a full realisation of the great *tirumantra*, namely, Namō Nārāyaṇa";\(^{148}\) "with the highest and the learned in the Scriptures listen to and learn by heart (*śravaṇa* and *manana*) are the names of the Lord (which constitutes the *mantras*)";\(^{149}\) "the tongue is ready in the mouth; it does not require to be chanted without taking breath, the comparatively short,

\(^{147}\) *Nāradīyaṃ, 1:11.*

\(^{148}\) *M.Tv. 57.*

\(^{149}\) *ibid. 66.*
eight-lettered mantra which is the easiest means of salvation";\(^{150}\) "those who constantly chant the name of Nārāyaṇa with a full understanding are blessed";\(^{151}\) "I cannot deem those who omit to chant the name of the Lord to be men at all. O mind! deem it thy duty to utter His name";\(^{152}\) "the name of the red-eyed Lord is pleasant to the ear; it is the refuge of all the inhabitants of the earth; He is the theme of all verses........and the essence of the Vedas too";\(^{153}\) "those who have been initiated by the ācārya into the mantra with eight letters and utter it with proper niṣṭha are capable of ruling over Paramāpada";\(^{154}\) "you were devotees that sang the name of the Lord saying 'Namō Nārāyaṇāya' so that country and town might understand";\(^{155}\) "by uttering the holy name 'Namō Nārāyaṇāya' in the proper way (i.e.) without seeking any material gain";\(^{156}\) "if one utters on one's lips the great tirumantra with folded palms on one's head at the time of death, one is not likely to be sent afterwards back to this world at all, but only to Paramapada" and again "the utterance of the prapāya mantra in the proper fashion and worship of the sea-hued Lord are sure to place one among the Eternals".\(^{158}\) In one of Tirumāṉakāiyāḻvār's hymns the phrase "Nārāyaṇa eṇṇum nāmam" (the name of Nārāyaṇa) occurs as a refrain in the last line of all the verses, the whole of which is a celebration of the efficacy of the mantra.\(^{159}\) The babbling of the name of the Lord Vāmana–Tirivikrama will wipe out the sorrow of birth".\(^{160}\) Nammāḻvār says: "Ye who aspire to reach the twin Feet of Kaṇṭha, meditate on no name

150. ibid. 95.
151. I.Tv. 20.
152. ibid 44.
154. Tc. V. 77; cf. ibid. 78.
155. Tiruppallāṇṭu, 4.
156. ibid. 11.
157. Periyal. Tm. 4.5 : 2.
158. ibid. 4.5 : 4.
159. Peri. Tm. 1.1; cf. ibid. 6.10.
160. ibid. 3.2 : 4; cf. ibid. 5.9 : 7, 8; 8.10 : 3.
else than Nārāyaṇa’s? The seers (ṛṣis) too, have declared: ‘Many were the great seers like Sanaka who attained the abode of Viṣṇu by uttering the eight-lettered mantra’. "Just as among the deities there is no one superior to Nārāyaṇa, there is, among the mantras, no mantra superior to aṣṭākṣara".

The praṇava in the mula-mantra sums up the wisdom in the sacred sound. The Upaniṣadic text distinguishes praṇava as the bow, the self as the arrow, Brahman as the target and the act of surrender as the hitting of the target. Sāndilya has explained the way in which the meaning of praṇava should be considered: "This supreme Being is of such and such a nature and the jīva is of such and such a nature. Yoga is said to be a knowledge of the relationship between the two (that Iśvara is the ṣeṣī and the jīva the ṣeṣa)". This meaning is elaborated as follows: The a in praṇava (aum) is Viṣṇu Who creates, sustains and destroys the world; the m (in it) means the jīva, who exists for the fulfilment of the purposes of Viṣṇu. The u (in it) indicates that this relationship between the two can exist only between them (and no others). So praṇava which consists of three letters and is the essence of the (three) Vedas reveals this meaning. Tirumāṅkaiyāḷvār also explains this meaning: ‘I am the servant of Bhagavan, the Lord of Tirukkaṇṭapuram; how am I entitled to be the servant of any one else?’ The word ‘namō’ of the mantra which means ‘I adore’ prescribes the abandonment of all egoism (ahaṅkāra) or self-naughting, and saraṇāgati as the chief hita or upāya. and it also connotes the truth that God is the only goal of life. The term ‘Nārāyaṇa’ in the mantra is significant and singular. It signifies God as the One without a second, not in the

162. Nāraṇīyaṁ. 1:16.
163. ibid. 1:42.
165. Sāndilya Smrti 5.17.
166. Aṣṭa Ślokī. 1.
167. Perī. Tm. 8.9: 3.
mathematical, but in the metaphysical sense. As the letter a and Nārāyaṇa, Paramātman is immanent in all beings as their life without losing His transcendental eminence and is the Saviour of all that redeems all jivas from their evil career. He is the ground of all existence and the giver of all good. Nara is the letter m of praṇava and it refers to the universe of cit and by implication (upalakṣaṇa), acit also of which Nārāyaṇa is the pervading Self. Nārāyaṇa is immanent in nara and is also the goal or ayana of the na-a. Thus the mūla-mantra as a whole and in each of its parts proclaims that Nārāyaṇa alone is the source of all existence, the goal of all experience and the means of realizing that goal.\(^{168}\) Nammāḻvār distinctly brings out the meaning of the word ‘nārāyaṇa’: “He who has, as His sesās, countless jivas with knowledge and bliss as their attributes and with self-luminousness as their nature and also His own noble qualities—that Nārāyaṇa”\(^{169}\) and “Nārāyaṇa is the Lord of all the seven worlds”.\(^{170}\) In these two passages are implicit (Bhagavan’s) possessing the two kinds of attributes, namely, freedom from defects and possession of all auspicious and noble qualities and likewise, His possession of the two vibhūtis viz., this material universe (līlā-vibhū) with all the sentient and nonsentient beings in it and the transcendental region of eternal glory (niyā-vibhū) with all that it contains. The mūla-mantra is also an expansion of the praṇava and it makes the meaning more clear by equating Brahman with Nārāyaṇa and explaining the means to mokṣa as self-gift to the sesi to whom the self belongs by divine right.

The dvaya is so called because it treats of two points, namely, the means and the goal of attainment (the upāya and the upēya). It is a gem of a mantra and has pre-eminence over the other mantras as it brings out the full implications of the supreme tattva or truth as Śrīman Nārāyaṇa or Nārāyana and Śrī, namely, “I take refuge at the Feet of Śrīman Nārāyaṇa. Salutation to Śrīman Nārāyaṇa”. The first

168  R.T.S. Ch. 23 and 27.
169  T.V.M. I.2: 10.
170  ibid. 2.7:2.
part reveals that the jīva has no other refuge than Nārāyaṇa, and the second that he exists for no purposes other than those of Nārāyaṇa, while in both parts, the idea of the jīva having no other support (ādhāra) is evident (from the word ‘nārāyaṇa’). The idea enshrined in this mantra is implicit in the Upaniṣad171 and it is elaborated by Rāmanuja in his Gadya and by Vedānta Deśika in his Rahasya-trayasāra272 and exemplified by Āḻavantār.173 The meaning of this mantra is also implicit in the two ślokas of Rāmāyaṇa viz., “He (Lakṣmaṇa) fill at the two feet of his brother” and said in the presence of Śīta,174 “Thou shalt be happy Thyself with Śītā on the slopes of the mountains. Whether Thou art awake or asleep, I (Lakṣmaṇa) will render every form of service to Thee”.175 The man who is not for any other upāya or for any other end or object (in view) has full competence for the adoption of this mantra. Nammāḷvār has stated the meaning of this great mantra: “Meditate soon on the Feet of Nārāyaṇa and His consort and acquire a new life”.176 Here the words up to ‘and acquire’ express the upāya stated in the first part of the mantra and what follows indicates the meaning of the second part. Again the Āḻvār says “The man that has sought the Feet of the Lord dark as the raincloud (mukilvaṇṇan) and who has thereby attained new life”,177 and “O Thou on Whose chest abides Lakṣmī because She cannot endure separation from Thee even for an instant”178 etc. Thus the meaning of this mantra is that redemption is the result of Lakṣmī’s meditation, and that the soul should realize its utter destitution and seek no other refuge than the Lord.

The carama-śloka which is the final instruction of the Lord Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna in the Gītā teaches how self-surrender
is to be performed. A knowledge of this supreme secret is intended to remove the sorrows of life and afford the stability of salvation. The mantra declares that Bhagavan is Himself the already existing and established means for attaining Him, for He is ever ready to help us to attain Him, and that, in order to secure His help, we have yet to accomplish or adopt a means which is self-surrender to the Lord. “Renounce all dharma and take refuge in Me; I shall release you from all sins. Grieve not.”

Here prapatti is explicitly enjoined as the sole means for the release of the soul. All other sadhanas such as external worship, deeds of piety, study of the scriptures, yoga meditation etc., are only auxiliaries that may lead to the final act of surrender. The woman saint Antāḷ says: “If the Lord reclining on the serpent should forget His own word of assurance (the carama-sūkha) that He is the first and last refuge, He will be guilty, in the opinion of the world, of cruelty to a maid.”

Nammāḻvar says: “Those who know the Lord’s word of assurance (the carama-sūkha) cannot but be His slaves, and no other person’s.” According to this mantra the Lord is ultimately both the endeavour and the goal, the upāya and upēya. The sādhya is the act of self-surrender to the will of the Saviour Who is the inner ruler and the siddhāṣṭa is the Lord Himself. The Lord reveals Himself to the prapanna, who seeks Him as His absolute refuge. The sinner seeks God and is saved, and God seeks the sinner and is satisfied. The unique value of this mantra lies in its universal appeal to all sinners to seek refuge in Him and be saved.

The mercy of the Lord could not brook the sight of the misery and at the mere sight of the pitiable plight of His devotee the flood-gates of the Lord’s mercy will be opened as in the case of Arjuna; and on account of him the whole race of grieving humanity, who are out to reach Him, has been deluged by the divine out-pouring of Mercy, Grace and Love.

180. Nīc. Tm. 8 : 9.
The words ‘Do not grieve’ have been addressed, as it were, from the Charioteer’s seat in Arjuna’s car to the whole of humanity who crave for the Lord’s company, hanker for His Grace and pine away in love. The cult of prapatti is based on this Declaration of Divine Dispensation. The first and foremost qualification for this act of self-surrender is the feeling of unutterable woe and dire helplessness. Ākincanya or the realization of self-nothingness (the utter feeling of inability to other means) is a sine qua non for prapatti. Ananyagatitva or a feeling of not having any other means and a turning away from all other refuge than Bhagavan is another condition for the person who adopts this means. One must feel one’s desolateness in all its aspects, and comprehend the full significance of one’s spiritual solitariness. One must also realize that one is alone, absolutely alone in this huge and vast world with nothing, and no one, not even himself, to rely on except God. The sense of solitariness must be forced upon one to such an extent that one can clearly see one’s soul in naked helplessness, when the encasing body, and not merely friends and relatives, is cast off, and it is left to march out on its lonely quest after God. Nammāḻvār says: “God only is everything for me; He is the group of beautiful damsels, abundant wealth, good children and revered father and mother to me.”

The sense of one’s weakness must be so deeply realized that what will be left to him here below is only to cry helplessly even as a Nammāḻvār who felt that he had been banished from God’s Grace and locked up in a prison. It is only such intense grief that can provoke and invoke the Grace of the Lord, for He is not an unwise Being to waste His love on those who do not want Him, however much He may feel compassionate towards them. The words ‘Do not grieve’ clearly indicate that the person to whom they are addressed is afflicted and depressed by a consuming grief from which nothing but the Lord’s assurance can uplift him. If, however, the seeming devotee lulls his consciousness by the thought that the Lord is dōṣa-bhōgya (lover of sins), and that therefore his very sins will save him, or if he hypocritically says

183. T.V.M. 5.1: 8.
that as God's Grace is not conditioned by any effort on the part of the devotee (nirhētuka), and thereby gets confirmed in his spiritual indolence, no God can or will save him. No doubt God is dōsa-bhōgya and loves His true devotees with all their faults. He is certainly avyāja vatsala, and gives of His love for no recompense or return. But He must and will be satisfied that there is true love or craving in the upāsaka (devotee) towards Him, and that it is not a lip-deep avowal, having its root in indolence, hypocrisy and sinfulness, with never the slightest pangs of grief or remorse in the heart. To say that a Vasiṣṭha or a Vāmadeva pursuing the path of bhakti-yōga is rejected and preference is accorded to a pretend-ing prapanna, who gloats over his sins as his saviours, and revels in his ignorance and indolence with a covert sneer and an illconcealed contempt for spiritual effort and spiritual endeavour, may be a catching system; but it cannot be true. God rewards the prapanna sooner because of the intense and consuming desire of his heart that cries for quick realization. Prapatti is a momentary action and it has been truly remarked that it is more severe and more difficult than bhakti. An archer's action in discharging an arrow for hitting a target may be constituted of several separate acts (like observing the object, taking the aim and discharging the arrow) and yet it is all accomplished in a single moment. Similar is the act of surrendering (to the Lord) the responsibility of one's protection.\textsuperscript{184} That this surrender of the responsibility of protection (bhāra-samarpana)\textsuperscript{185} should be chiefly thought of while uttering mantras of prapatti is clearly stated by the Saviour Himself, Who undertakes the responsibility: "With this mantra one should surrender one's self to Me. The one who has surrendered to Me the responsibility of doing what should be done will become one who has done one's duty."\textsuperscript{186} God must be made to feel that nothing but His saving Grace can put an end to the mumukṣu's disconsolate affliction, born of love towards Him, and seeking for ultimate and early fulfilment in Him. Till that stage is reached wherein love

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{184} Mun. Up. 2 4.
\item \textsuperscript{185} For the aṅgas (accessories of prapatti) vide R.T.S. Ch. 11.
\item \textsuperscript{186} Sātvaki Tantra (Quoted by Vedānta Deśika.)
\end{itemize}
finds response, and desire gets satisfaction, one has got to go on weeping, wailing, sorrowing, bemoaning, and lamenting, tearing out one's heart in misery and in despair as Nammāḷvār did under the celebrated Tamarind Tree at Āḻvārtirunakari. And not till the Glory of God has settled on one, and one has been gathered to the breast of his Beloved, and folded within the loving embrace of the Divine Arms, can this weeping cease, and yield place to the endless ecstasy of the mukta, rejoicing in the company of the Lord, revelling in the Beauty of His auspicious Form, and rhapsodying in the highest Bliss of Divine Communion.

These three mantras reveal also the role of Divine Grace in the play of God seeking man and man seeking God. The self which cries unable to bear the mundane suffering, manages to bring God near itself.\(^\text{187}\) The mūla-mantra explains the theory of self-surrender, the dvaya-mantra elaborates it and also shows how it is to be practised, and the carama-śloka explicitly prescribes self-surrender as the means to be adopted by the aspirant to mokṣa who is incapable of Bhakti-yaga and expressly promises him release from all the accumulated load of sins that prevents his enjoyment of birthright of absolute service to the Lord in Vaikuṇṭha. It has been stated by our ancient ācāryas that these three mantras have been enshrined in the four compositions of Nammāḷvār: the purport of tirumantra has been included in his Tiruviruttam and Tiruvācirum, that of carama-śloka in his Periyatiruvantāṭi and that of dvaya in his Tiruvāymoṭi.\(^\text{188}\)

The Āḻvārs advise people not to put the physical frame or its limbs to any undue strain and subject it to mortification. Even the adoption of the postures of yoga for bhakti puts the senses to considerable strain. The limbs shall not be allowed to wither away nor need any one fast. The five senses shall not be mortified. The soul shall not suffer thus and perform

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187. cf. Tyāgarāja's kirtana "Tanayuni brovo" in Bairavi raga where the child's cry to the mother is described to bring the mother to the spot where the child is lying.

penance.\textsuperscript{189} There is no need also to eat raw and unripe fruits, nor shall one stand on aching legs. It is also not necessary to perform severe penance amidst five fires. It is enough instead to think of God and proceed to Citrakūṭam.\textsuperscript{190} It is thus found that a synthetic approach is more in the Vaiṣṇavite religion in the matter of adopting the means for obtaining final release. Basic knowledge is essential to ascertain the particular means which one can take up with confidence. Every aspirant shall get instructions from a spiritual preceptor who alone could guide him in the path which he is competent to pursue.\textsuperscript{191} Curiously enough, it is not every individual that gets the desire aroused in him for feeling the need to have spiritual guidance. God's Grace, merit, acquired involuntarily, His compassion, absence of hatred for God and inclination towards Him and talks with good men arouse in man a desire to get a spiritual teacher and make him to get one.\textsuperscript{192}

Above all this, devotion to Viṣṇu is essential to get any thing, whether one has or not a spiritual preceptor or qualification for adopting the particular means for obtaining salvation. This devotion may begin with simple adoration such as worshipping with flowers and bowing at His Feet. The concept of the God-head, as evolved by the Ālvars, consists in the admission of Viṣṇu as the Supreme Deity. According to these saints a careful study of the nature of several deities are to be attempted in order to arrive at the idea of Supreme God. Worship of such a deity bestows supreme knowledge and devotion on the person who offers it. That person could get rid of the evil effects of the deeds committed by him.\textsuperscript{193} Not any amount of self-mortification enables the

\textsuperscript{189} Peri. Tm. 3.2 : 1.
\textsuperscript{190} ibid. 3.2 : 2; cf. P. Tv. 13; Mu. Tv. 76.
\textsuperscript{191} Vide. Guruparamparāsūra where Kṣatrabhandhu and Puṇḍarīka are said to have attained final release through having a spiritual preceptor.
\textsuperscript{192} R.T.S. Ch. 1.
\textsuperscript{193} Te. V. 74; T.V.M. 1.6 : 8.
aspirant to behold Him.\textsuperscript{194} Love for Him brings Him near the devotee.\textsuperscript{195} That Viṣṇu is the Supreme deity to be worshipped is evidenced by Mārkaṇḍeśa.\textsuperscript{196} There is no protector for humanity other than Kṛṣṇa.\textsuperscript{197} He is to be worshipped not merely for obtaining mokṣa but also for any pursuit in life.\textsuperscript{198} A concept of this kind leads to the conclusion that other deities need not be worshipped for any favour.\textsuperscript{199} Viṣṇu is not merely the Supreme Deity but the foremost and first among the spiritual preceptors.\textsuperscript{200}

Sī Vaiṣṇavaite theism equates God–head with the dual self of Lakṣmī–Nārāyaṇa or Śrīyah–pati.\textsuperscript{201} The Vaiṣṇavite Āgamas describe Him as being always with Lakṣmī who herself is designated as Viṣṇu–śaktī.\textsuperscript{202} The two–fold spiritual form of Brahman as Lord and Śrī is philosophically inseparable though functionally distinguishable.\textsuperscript{203} The cosmic ruler is ruled by love, and Lakṣmī resides in the ever–blooming lotus of love and is the very heart of the divine nature. Nammāḻvār speaks of this concept of dual self as ‘Harbouring Lakṣmī with gazelle–like eyes in Your bosom’ – “māṅ ēy nōkkī maṭavāḷai mārpil koṇṭāy”\textsuperscript{204}; ‘the bosom with Goddess Lakṣmī on it draws my spirit towards it’ – “tirumaṭantaī cēr tiru–ākam ēn āvi īrum”;\textsuperscript{205} ‘the One on Whose bosom sits the Goddess of the Lotus Flower’ – “allimāṭar amaram tirumāṛpiṇāṇ”\textsuperscript{206}; ‘Nārāyaṇa, the kindly eyed one, with Lakṣmī eternally resting

\textsuperscript{194} ibid., 75.
\textsuperscript{195} ibid. 76.
\textsuperscript{196} T.V.M. 5 2: 7.
\textsuperscript{197} Periyāl. T.m. 5.3: 6; T.V.M. 2.2: 1.
\textsuperscript{198} M.Tv. 59.
\textsuperscript{199} Nāṅ. Tv. 66, 75.
\textsuperscript{200} Periyāl. Tm. 5.2: 8.
\textsuperscript{201} Puruṣa–śūktā describes Him as “Hrīśca le lakṣmīśca patnyau”.
\textsuperscript{202} L.T. 2: 11, 12.
\textsuperscript{203} Śrī Śūktā speaks as “Īśvarim sarva bhūtānām”.
\textsuperscript{204} T.V.M. 1.5: 5.
\textsuperscript{205} ibid. 9.9: 6.
\textsuperscript{206} ibid. 9.10: 10.
on Himself” — “ἐν τῷ θρόνω μετὰ ὑπόκεισθαι τοῦ ἐν καθαρίᾳ”, 207
‘Lakṣmī on the lotus, determined not to part from Him even for a moment’ — “akalakīlēn 伊拉克um enru alaramēlmaṅkai urai mārpa”, 208 ‘Srīman Nārāyaṇa with Goddess Lakṣmī set on His bosom’ — “tikalikīṅa tirumārpiṅl tirumaṅkai taṇṇōtum tikalikīṅaṅa tirumālār”, 209; “the one harbouring the lotus-seated Śrī in His garlanded bosom” — “vaṇkamalat tirumātiṇaṅt tattaṅkol tārmārpiṅnil vaṭtavār”; 210 ‘O Śrīmaṅ Nārāyaṇa, into Whose bosom the fair Goddess Lakṣmī on the lotus with Her collirium-blackened eyes throws Herself’ — “maiyaṅ karūṅkaṇṇi kamalamalar mēl ceyyāl tirumārpiṅnil cēr tirumālē”, 211 ‘the one who seats in His bosom the flower-seated Lakṣmī’ — “malarmēl uraivāl uraimārpiṅnān”; 212 and so on. There are innumerable references both in the works of this Āḻvār and in those of other Āḻvārs to this dual concept. The Lord revealed Himself to the three seers at Tirukkovalūr only in the dual form and the God-possessed Pēyāḷvār gave expression to this form beginning his verse with “tiruk-kaṇṭēn” (I saw Lakṣmī). ‘The One on Whose chest abides Lakṣmī’ — “tiru amar mārpān”, 213 “malarmakaṅ niṅ ākathaṅ”, 214 “neṭu- malarāṅ mērvāṅ”, 215 pūmakaṅ tikaḷum tirumārpaṅ”, 216 “mētu ukanta mērvāṅ”, 217 “tiru irunta mērvāṅ” 218 and “the One with Śrī in His bosom’ — “Tirumārpaṅ”, 219 can be cited as examples. The word ‘tirumāl’ meaning ‘Nārāyaṇa with Lakṣmī (tiru–Lakṣmī; mēl–Nārāyaṇa) occurs in a number of

207. ibid. 10.4: 2.
208. ibid. 6.10: 10.
209. ibid. 10.6: 9.
210. ibid. 4.2: 7.
211. ibid. 9.4: 1
212. ibid. 4.5: 2.
213. ibid. 8.6: 3.
215. I. Tv. 52.
217. ibid. 54.
218. ibid. 57 and Nān. Tv. 92
219. T. V. M. 3.7: 8; 7.6: 6, 7; 8.3: 7; Periyāl. Tm. 1.8: 4; Perum. Tm. 2: 8. Peri. Tm. 3.1: 2; 6.2: 2; 6.3: 9; 6.10: 3; 7.7: 1; 8.4: 1; 8.6: 1.
places in the Āḻvārs’ hymns. The Lord rules the world by His relentless law of karma and His holy wrath against the evil-doer is inescapable, but the rigour of karma is overpowered by the redemptive love of keṟpā. Evil is destroyed and the evil-doer saved. As the Lord rules by law and Śrī rules by love, the love of law and the law of love are so vitally intertwined in the divine nature as to render nugatory any attempt at the philosophic analysis of their exact nature. The majesty of the holy law of justice is eternally wedded to the all-conquering might of mercy. Śrīyahpati as Lord and Śrī as a second self constitute a kind of one in two and two in one and their co-operative identity is indispensable to the seeker after salvation. The concept of Śrīyahpati therefore recognizes the foundational truth of ethical religion, that the holiness of law is ever wedded to the forgiveness of love. Each acts and reacts on the other, and in their interaction lie the stability of the social and moral order and the salvability of the sinner. Nam-mālvār says: “I have taken refuge with my Mother: one of my Mothers, – the Earth; for Her sake You undertook a mighty exploit by incarnating Yourself as a boar; for obtaining the other Mother Lakṣmi, You churned the very ocean. If they are dear to You, and I am dear to Them, how can You not but be dear to me? Hence my salvation by mediation is secure against everything that might conspire such an end. Once bound to You thus, I am so secure that neither You cannot shake me off, nor I can shake You off”.

Even in worldly life the father punishes a wayward son while the mother pleads for him and lessons the punishment

220. T.V.R. 7; 48, 62, 87, 88, 95, 100; P. Tv. 10, 69; Periyāl. Tm. 1.1: 10; 3.5: 6; 3.6: 1; 3.6: 10; 4.1: 5; 5.1: 3; Nac. Tm. 5.8; 9.3; 14.8; Perum. Tm. 4: 9; Perl. Tm. 5.6: 7; 6.3: 2; 6.5: 10; 6.10: 6; 7.7: 9; 8.9: 2; 10.6: 4; 10.6: 6; 10.4: 10; 10.7: 10; Naṅ. Tv. 14.

221. T.P. 85.

222. T.V.M. 10.10: 7; It is said that Parācara Paṭṭar in his dying exhortation to his disciples has advised them to recite this holy verse of Nammālvār along with the holy dvaya – Imantra (Vide: Bhag. Vis. Book X. 10.10: 7). Lakṣmi is therefore said to have three forms or play three roles, namely, siddhōpāya sādhyaśpāya and puruṣa-kāra.
or saves him from punishment. The very nature of the father is generally enshrined in law and justice while that of the mother always goes with love and excuse. The Vaishnavite theology has based its dual form of God-head on this analogy. The concept typifies the Fatherhood and Motherhood of God designed to inspire the hope of universal salvation. It reminds the seeker after God that Narayana is not only the source and centre of the universe, but He is also the Lord of Love and that Sri resides in the heart of Narayana to redeem the sinning sundered self from its sinfulness. Among the six meanings of the word 'Sri' the most relevant one is the idea of Her converting Isvara as Ruler into Saviour by Her timely intercession and mediation on behalf of the repentent sinner. In the epic conflict between the ideas of retribution and forgiveness, law rules over love in the moral realm, and the two are balanced in ethical religion. But in the sphere of the religion of redemption, mercy dominates over retributive justice and transforms the love of law into the law of love. Lakshmi is svamin to the jiva, and as mediator (purusa-kara) she mediates on behalf of the sinner and is the eternal link of love between the Ruler and transgressor. She transforms the former into the Saviour and the latter into the penitent seeker after pardon. By virtue of her motherhood in relation to the souls and wifehood in relation to the Lord, she is eminently fitted to play the role of mediator between the two. She becomes the Isvara and changes His law of karma into the rule of kripa.

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223. The conversation said to have taken place between Nañciyar and Paññar may be quoted as relevant to our point. Nañciyar put this question to Paññar: "For salvation, is it enough to resort directly to the Universal Lord? Why should it be necessary to go to Him by mediation of the Mother?" To which Paññar replied: "In nature we know the protection which the mother affords to a child when it is found guilty and the father is thereby angry. The mother knows exactly the opportunity when the father is in the proper mood to be appeased and made to forgive the child, and renew his natural love for him. Even so is the case with God in protecting His creatures He is the Judge; as mother He is the Forgiver." This is the principle of vicarious redemption and the quality of mercy existing in God to overflowing. This is also the meaning of the holy formula: "Sri-man-Narayana". (Vide: Ittin Tamilakkam Vol. I (Commentary on T.V.M. 1.3: 8).
The mind–body of the empirical self is composed of the twenty-four tattvas or principles of prakṛti including psychic material and cosmic stuff\(^{224}\) and freedom from embodiment connotes the withdrawal of jīva from the psycho–physical sphere of avidyā–kāma–karma and the cosmic sphere of space–time. At the time of the dissolution of the physical body, which may happen at any time and in any manner, the released self withdraws from the gross to the subtle state and ascends to the absolute. The dissolution is not the destruction of the psychic make–up, but it is only a process of withdrawal and involution. Death to the wise man who knows Brahman is the re–entry of the self into the realm of the infinite. At that stage the indriyas enter into manas and manas into prāṇa and prāṇa is absorbed in the jīva; the self, with its homing instinct, sheds the body for ever and retires from functioning in the world of sense and understanding and returns to its centre which is the heart of Brahmapuri. It is at this stage there is the parting of the ways known as arcirāti\(^{225}\) or the path of the gods and dhūmāyana\(^{226}\) or the path of the smoke. The bound self that has not intuited Brahman follows the second path and descends into the wilderness of samsāra after a temporary enjoyment of pleasures of pūrloka or the world of the manes and of svarga. But the wise man who has esoteric knowledge of Brahman prefers the first path and ascends into it. The Brahmaranendra\(^{227}\) is the gateway to God and is illumined by the indwelling self; the enlightened soul then finds the hole and soars gloriously to the world of eternal beauty by the radiant path of the gods. The released self realizes the unitive consciousness. The infinite of space–time, which staggers the scientific imagination, pales into infinitesimal littleness in the light of the infinite and the eternal glory of Paramapada which transcends the limits of thought. The wise man enjoys

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\(^{224}\) T.V.M. 10.7: 10.

\(^{225}\) Restrictions about the place and time of death as recorded in M.Bh. Anusāsana, 220–31 do not apply to one who pursues this path.

\(^{226}\) Vide: Yājñavalkya Smṛti 4: 166 to 169.

\(^{227}\) It is an aperture on the top of the head of the human beings through which the self leaves the body on its way to mokṣa.
all the perfections of Vaikuntha like sōlokya or identity of abode, sāṃipya or proximity, sārūpya or similarity of form and sāyujya or intimate union; he is ever immersed in the eternal bliss of Brahman. Sōlokya (coexistence) leads to sāmipya (fellowship) and sārūpya (transformation and deification) and is consummated in sāyujya (the bliss of communion).

The mukta is immersed in the supreme and unsurpassable bliss of Brahmanubhava without losing his self-being. It is a state of sāyujya, according to Sūtra-kāra, in which the unitive experience of bliss is present without the loss of self-existence.228 Brahmananda is the state of blessedness of the divine communion which ‘passeth all understanding’. It is the Brahmacārīni alone that can give, from his experience, a definition of that exalted state which transcends the imperfect medium of thought and language.229 In that state of sāyujya the soul-hunger of God and the God-hunger of the soul are satisfied, and the separate consciousness of both is swallowed up in the enjoyment of bliss. Expressing of this state, the Upaniṣad bursts into ecstasy: “I, who am food, eat the eater of food”.230 “As a man embraced by his beloved wife knows nothing that is without or within, even so the self when embraced by the All-knowing Self knows nothing without and nothing within”.231 Thus in Brahmananda the experients exist, but their feeling of separateness melts away in the irresistibility of ecstasy. Even wisdom is, as it were, swept away and sunk in rapture. In the rapt love of mystic union the mukta is mad with God and sings about His glory and goodness by chanting the songs of the Sāma-veda. The bliss of union is ever fecundative, and it enhances the value of the released state. The bliss of self-realizedness signifies the self that is realized and its value is eternally conserved”.232

228. V. Sūt. 4.4: 21.
229. T. itt. Ānand. iv.
230. Tait. up. Bhrgu. 10
232. The Philosophy of Viśistādvaita, pp, 491, 492.
The soul’s ascent to the Absolute is beautifully described in the Paramapada Sūpāna by Vedānta Dēśika. The author indicates nine steps in the path to perfection. The first five viz., vivēka, nirvēda, virakti, bhīti-bhāva and upāya constitute the means and awaken the religious consciousness and induces the mumukṣu to practise devotion and self-surrender. The remaining four steps consisting of utkramaṇa, arcirādi, divya dēsa prabhāva and prāpti deal with the summum bonum of spiritual endeavour. They portray in a pictorial way the ascent of the redeemed soul to its home in the Absolute. The author follows the Vaikuṇṭha-gadya of Rāmānuja and the Kauśitaki Upaniṣad in his description. The soul soars on the two wings of freedom and wisdom along the solar path of arcirādi\(^{233}\) and goes beyond the cosmic sphere of space-time consisting of seven spheres. There it is led by the ambassador of eternity; at last it enters the waters of immortality, or Viraja as it is called. This holy river marks the boundary line between the transcendental sphere of Brahman and the empirical sphere of karma. The soul then plunges spiritually into the Ocean Pacific, and frees itself from the contractions of karma in its dual aspect of punya-papa and the pairs of opposites. It then goes to the other shore, purified and perfected, like the stranded islander crossing the sea, and enters its own home in the country of the universal Soul where “the sun does not shine, nor the moon nor the stars; by His light everything is lighted”\(^{234}\). When Brahman is intuited the fetters of the

\(^{233}\) It is devayāna or the path of gods. The Lord Himself helps the mukta to climb up by a ladder to Vaikuṇṭha through the sphere of the sun whose hot rays dispel the darkness and then removes the ladder (Periyāl. Tm. 4.9: 3). He leads the mukta with the following to guide him, namely arcis (fire), day, the bright half of the month, Uttarāyana, and the year, Vāyu, Sun, Moon and Lightning, Varuṇa, Indra and Brahmā. (Ch. Up 4.15: 5, 6; cf. ibid. 5.10: 1, 2 and also Br. Up 6.2: 15, 16). Mention about the route of the soul is found in the poem of Āḻvārs (vide Peri. Tm. 4.5: 10; P.TML. Kaṇ. 16, 17; C. TML. Kaṇ. 7, 8; Tc.V.67). It may be noted in this connection that the presiding deities (abhīmāni-devata) of fire, day etc. are referred to as guides, since fire, day etc., are themselves inanimate.

\(^{234}\) Kath. Up. 5: 15.
heart are broken, all doubts are solved and all \textit{karma} is destroyed. As the flowing rivers disappear in the ocean losing their name and form, a wise man freed from name and form, goes to the divine \textit{Puruśa} and becomes immortal. The Kauśitaki Upaniṣad portrays the ineffable ecstasy of attaining Brahmaloka or Vaikuṇṭha in the language of sense symbolism and artistic imagery. The process of transfiguration is explained metaphorically as \textit{Brahmālaṅkāra}, \textit{Brahmagandha}, and \textit{Brahmarasa}. The form, flavour, and fragrance of \textit{Brahmānubhava} are not physical, or psychical, but are super-sensuous (aprākṛta).

The redeemed self gloriously enters into Śrī Vaikuṇṭha which is the heart of Brahmaloka or Paramapada and its headquarters. This city is situated in the realm of eternal manifestation with twelve enclosures and surrounded by many gates and ramparts. The soul then reaches the diving abode of ānandamaya or bliss and has a direct soul-sight of \textit{Parānjoyōti} or Supreme Light in a hall known as \textit{mahāmanimandopam} constructed with thousands of pillars made of jewels. Brahman as infinite Beauty is seated on the throne known as \textit{prajña} (wisdom) with its couch being placed on \textit{Ananda} (Ādiṣeṣa) and supported by \textit{dharma}, \textit{jñāna}, \textit{vairāgya} and \textit{aśvarya}. The soul is ever drawn by the beauty of Brahman and enjoys its bliss. The sense of dependance is revealed by the truth that \textit{sarira} depends for its life on the \textit{saririn} and serves as an instrument of His will. In the mystic sense, the self-feeling is swallowed up in the supra-personal experience of inseparability (avibhāga) of the bliss of Brahman. As the \textit{Viṣṇupurāṇa} says, the \textit{mukta} attains \textit{ātma-bhāva} like magnetised iron and is not identical with Brahman. This concept of \textit{muki} is similar in all respects to that as defined in the \textit{Gītā}.

236. ibid. 3.2: 8.
238. Yat. Dip. VI. 11.
239. V.P. 6.7: 30.
240. Bh. G. 14: 2. cf. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect". \textit{Matthew} V. 48.
The departed soul reaches Brahman according to many Upaniṣads, and continues to exist as a separate entity and enjoys personal immortality. 241 The cosmic gods like Agni, Vāyu, Varuṇa, Indra and Brahmā greet the soul as a rare spiritual victor which has regained its spirituality by subduing worldliness. The spiritual ascent is facilitated by the help of a trans-human person known as amāṇava puruṣa who is really the ambassador of the Absolute. 242 The Āḻvār says: "with these guides who are immortal, the soul reaches Vaikuṇṭha and casts off this beautiful prison-house of samsāra." 243 The mukta can apprehend Brahman with the divine eye, comprehend His nature and have an integral experience of the Absolute. He is led from the unreal to the real, from darkness to light, and from death to immortality. The mukta, with the expansive consciousness of dharmabhūta-jñāna, realises the unitive state. He overcomes the moral distinction of punya-pāpa and realizes all his desires. His self-feeling melts away at the sight of the bewitching beauty of Brahman and his Vedāntic thought expires in the ecstasy of mystic union. In true mukti, the eternal transcends the temporal, and it is only in the world of Brahman transcending the phenomenal world that the jīva is transformed or brahmanised and enjoys eternal life. In this state, the mukta is free from sin, old age, death, grief, hunger and thirst, and the taint of error, evil, ugliness and other imperfections. He enjoys the perfections of Brahman with Brahman and enjoys everything everywhere by his mere will without any external aid or constraint. He wills the true and the good and every conation of his is immediately fulfilled. He is no longer subject to Vedic and Vedāntic imperatives and injunctions and other external determinations. He has cosmic freedom to move in

241. The poems of Āḻvārs too agree to this view which can be seen in the last verses of their hymns (vide: TVM 5.1:11; 6.5:11; 10.5:11; Peri. Tm. 8.1:10; 8.5:10; 8.6:10, 8.10:10; 9.2:10; 9.10:10 etc., Periyāḷ. Tm. 1.2:21; 1.8:11; 2.1:10; 3.4:10; 3.5:11; 5.10:10; 4.6:10; 4.9:11; 5.1:10; Nāc. Tm. 2:10; 3:10; 9:10; 12:10. Perum. Tm. 1:11; 7:11; 10:11.


both *līlā-vibhūti* and *nitya-vibhūti*, and can even meet departed loved ones, as in the dream life, which is here taken as a foretaste of the world of Brahman.\(^{244}\) His all-pervasive consciousness destroys the barriers of distance and time and so he lives in spaceless space and timeless time. The mortal becomes immortal and the self regains its eternity as it were. Self-illumination in the state brings out the infinite intelligence and omniscience of the finite self. Its *viśīṣṭa aikya* is then apprehended in non-difference from Brahman. Prahlāda describes in his ecstasy the onset of cosmic consciousness and brings out this state: "As the infinite is all-pervading, He is myself, all things proceed from me, I am all things, all things are in me who am eternal."\(^{245}\) So it is clear that the *ātman* is non-different from the Supreme Self by attaining the being of its being. Nammalvār also affirms the truth of this cosmic experience. In the excess of his love, the Āḻvār, in the guise of a bride, imitates and mirrors forth the glory of God and claims the two *vibhūtis* of the cosmic and ultra-cosmic functions as his own. The saint feels that he owns the infinite when he has a soul sight of "that divine thread which holds the whole congeries of things". Thus the *mukta* with his all-inclusive cosmic consciousness, views himself and the cosmos with the eye of Brahman. He experiences his *aham* as the *prakāra* or mode of Brahman and his *jñāna* mirrors forth the whole universe and he realises his oneness with Brahman.

Nammalvār gives a graphic description of his proceeding to Śrī Vaikuṇṭha. This is the result of his intuiting his departure from the world.\(^{246}\) The Āḻvār is able to visualise the experience in anticipation, and to live in his imagination the experience, in vivid detail and in the graphic present, of the great welcome that will be accorded to him in Heaven as he enters it. Nature celebrates the occasion by wearing a festive garb; and the entire cosmos rejoices. The elements

\(^{244}\) Br. Up. 8.1:5.  
\(^{245}\) V.P. 1.19:85; cf. T.V.M. 5.6.  
\(^{246}\) Pillān on T.V.M. 10.9:1.
themselves such as the clouds and the ocean signify welcome to him. All the clouds roar giving peals of thunder resembling the sound of the tabors announcing the auspicious occasion; all the seas dance in ecstasy at the emancipation of the soul of the Āḻvār.²⁴⁷ The ṛṣīs and the gods welcome and show him the way standing in rows in the sky.²⁴⁸ The kinnaras and others sing and offer all honours; the celestial damsels sing the praises of the Āḻvār.²⁴⁹ The Māruts and the Vosus accompany him to regions beyond theirs and extol him.²⁵⁰ All of them take him to the limits of the material world.²⁵¹ On the borders of the Eternal realms, the Eternals bid him welcome and wash his feet with the ladies of moon-like faces offering him, jars filled with holy waters (pūrṇa-kumpam), treasures, fragrant powders and auspicious lamps.²⁵² Then he lives for ever with the Eternals enjoying eternal bliss.

²⁴⁷ T.V.M. 10.9: 1, 2.
²⁴⁸ ibid. 10.9: 3, 4.
²⁴⁹ ibid. 10.9: 5, 6.
²⁵⁰ ibid. 10.9: 7.
²⁵¹ ibid. 10.9: 8.
²⁵² ibid. 10.9: 9, 10.
CONTRIBUTION OF ĀLVĀRS OTHER THAN NAMMĀLVĀR

The sum and substance of the teachings that could be gathered from the compositions of the other Ālvārs is similar to what Nammālvār contributed. Yet, there is something unique and individual in their contributions. The other Ālvārs tried their hands at handling several forms of compositions (tours de force) and several motifs. Among the Ālvārs Tirumaṅkaiyālvār was the most learned and even in his own lifetime he was recognised as a great poet¹ and had tried his hands in various literary forms and variety of metres in his compositions and at the same time had exhibited the highest degree of devotion to the Lord in all his works.

THE FIRST ĀLVĀRS

Poykaiyālvār, Pūtattālvār and Peyālvār form the first and earliest group to visualize the Lord with Śrī at Tirukkōvalūr and refer to Him as the deity.² The supremacy of Viṣṇu over other deities and in particular over Śiva’s is vividly brought out.³ It is Poykaiyālvār that made the unique pronouncement that the Lord would take that form which His disciples desire Him to take up and appear before them. He takes also that name which His devotees wish Him to take up.⁴ He brought out vididly the concept of sēṣa by describing the manifold services which Ādiśeṣa renders to the Lord.⁵ These Ālvārs enjoin the utterance of the

¹. Peri. Tm. 1.7: 10.
². M. Tv. 67, 86; cf. I. Tv. 52, 57, 82; Mü. Tv. 1, 2, 16.
³. ibid. 5, 74, 98.
⁴. ibid. 44.
⁵. ibid. 53.
name of the Lord as soon as one gets from his bed in the early hours of the morning before sun rise. Pūtattāḷvār admires and loses himself in admiring the affection which Yaśoda displayed by making Kṛṣṇa suck her breast soon after Pūtana was killed. She did not in the least worry as to what would happen to her, if she too were to meet with her end. She wanted to see that the child must be fed with breast milk which she offered with affection. The substance of the teachings of the Vedas consists in hailing His name.

All the three Āḻvārs speak of the Lord as having the world as His body, but Pēyāḻvār in particular offers graphic exposition of this truth. Worship with flowers at the proper time is to be done at His Feet. Mere recitation of the mantras while doing sandhyā does not serve any purpose, if there is no bestowal of any thought on the greatness of God, that is, if there is no devotion to the Lord. The three Āḻvārs who must have practised meditation for God-realization as it is evident from the stress they lay on the need to control the sense, had a direct vision of the Lord and His shining frame. They chose to dedicate at His Feet their compositions which contain the outpourings of their hearts brimming with love. All of them were attached by the Tirumalai hills and the deity there. Ardent devotees meditate on the deity in the hill remaining motionless, not even exhaling. Creeper with flowers grow over their matted

6. ibid. 66; I. Tv. 47.
7. I. Tv. 9; Mü. Tv. 29.
8. ibid. 39.
10. Mü. Tv. 24; 38, 44.
11. M. Tv. 43; I. Tv. 76, 77; Mü. Tv. 24, 44.
12. ibid. 33.
13. ibid. 47, 50; I. Tv. 6, 26; Mü. Tv. 12.
15. M. Tv. 1; I. Tv. 74.
16. ibid. 26, 37 to 40, 76; I. Tv. 25, 46, 54; Mü. Tv. 26, 30.
17. ibid. 68; I. Tv. 28, 45; Mü. Tv. 14, 40, 70.
hairs.¹⁸ Elephants, monkeys, and others also worship the Lord Who is described as shining like a gem.¹⁹ Peyāḷvār refers to the specific characteristics of Viṣṇu and Śiva and states that the forms of both synchronize in the Lord at the Tirupati hills.²⁰ This is not an indication as some hold²¹ as suggestive of the identity of the deity in the hills with Śiva. The Āḻvārs emphatically declare that Lord Nārāyaṇa has allowed Śiva to dwell in the left part of His body.²² It may be that Śiva's presence is not noticeable in every form of the Lord. Whenever the Lord's place is mentioned as hill, it must refer only to Tirumalai²³ and not to any other place.

The first three Āḻvārs had a synthetic view of the various forms of the Supreme Person. Often they identified the Lord Who lies in the milky ocean with the arcā and vibhava forms and with the indweller of the selves. Tiruvēṅkaṭam, Tiruvēkka and others get frequent reference in this context.²⁴ The standing, reclining and sitting potures of the Supreme Person in the arcā forms are graphically connected with His other forms such as Vāmanā, Varāha, Narasimha, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa.²⁵ It seems as though that He chose to lie down after achieving some exploits.²⁶ His omnipresent form²⁷ and His presence as the indweller²⁸ are never lost sight of. These three Āḻvārs do not however lay exclusive emphasis on the significance of worshipping the deity in one form alone. Besides declaring that His form cannot be

18. I. Tv. 53.
19. ibid. 72; Mu. Tv. 70.
22. M. Tv. 28; T N. 9; Peri. Tm. 7.10: 3; T.V.M. 1.3: 9; 10.4: 6.
23. Mū. Tv. 69.
25. ibid. 39, 77, 99; I. Tv. 18, 34; Mū. Tv. 94.
27. M. Tv. 94, 96; Mū. Tv. 37.
28. ibid. 99; Mū. Tv. 3.
apprehended to be of any particular kind only, it is agreed that He presents Himself in a visible and enchanting frame.

Devotion to God is technically called para-bhakti in the Viśiṣṭādvaita school as it is directed towards the Supreme Person. Para-bhakti creates in the devotee an ardent desire to have a direct vision of the Lord which is called para-jñāna. The high delight arising out of this para-jñāna is called parama-bhakti. All the first three Ālvārs have all these to almost the same degree among them, but because of their different approaches and mental aptitudes, their compositions reveal that one of these is the prominent aspect in the work of one of them while another in others’ works Para-bhakti dominates the composition of Poykaiyālvār, para-jñāna that of Pūtattālvār and parama-bhakti that of Pēyālvār. All the three Ālvārs speak only of worshipping the Feet of the Lord and do not conceive of any other means such as knowledge or good works as the way for obtaining release.

Poykaiyālvār begins his composition by referring to the need for the removal of worldly distress and completes his work by asking his mind to set itself to the Lord. Pūtattālvār refers in his first verse and the last one to his devotion to the Lord. Pēyālvār refers to his great rejoicing at the sight of the Lord with Śrī in the first verse and to the Grace of Śrī in the last one. From this, one thing is clear and that is, the first three Ālvārs were so much satisfied with para-bhakti that they were not much worried about the miseries of the world. They were already parama-bhaktas of the Lord before they met together at Tirukkōvalūr when they had para-jñāna. Naturally, they were more concerned with obtaining a direct vision of the Lord which made them, while they got it, parama-bhaktas. It is clear that the goal of all these three ways of knowing is one only, which is confirmed by tradition also. The path of knowledge, the path of devotion saturated with knowledge and the path of vision

29 ibid. 56, 68, 84; I. Tv. 5, 60; Mū. Tv. 81, 82.
(intuitive realization) are not three separate ways. They form one unitary manner of progressive realization. Knowledge passes over transcendent devotion, which in its turn culminates in vision of the Divine form and attributes. Though the ways of approach are triple, the object of all the three is one only, namely, the integral experience of God.

TIRUMALICAIVÄLVÄR

Tirumälicaiyälvär is the most erudite and philosophical-minded among the Älvärs. Intense meditation on the nature of Reality made him realize the truth about God-head. He moved among the exponents of the various schools of religion and philosophy and made himself familiar with their doctrines. He adopted the powers of ratiocination and arrived at the conclusion that the Lord with Śri is the supreme God. He presented his views in his two compositions Nāmukan-tiruvantāti and Tiruccanta-viruttam.

In the very opening verse of the Nāmukan-tiruvantāti, he mentions that Nārāyaṇa is the Supreme Person who created Brahmā with four faces who in his turn produced Rudra.31 Due reflection on the nature of the Supreme God-head would only prove that Nārāyaṇa is the only deity whose greatness is not fully known to any one and it is only His Grace that confers the result on men for their undertakings.32 This Älvär states that none but he has realised the ultimate truth as reclining in the milky ocean, Śrī Raṅgam and the banyan leaf, revealing the self-confidence he has for such a realization and the successful efforts he has made to realise this.33 That Nārāyaṇa is the only deity who is devoted by all expressions is the doctrine of the Viśiṣṭādvatic school which was enunciated by this Älvär.34 Perhaps the period when this Älvär was living was marked by the aggressive preachings of the

32. ibid. 2; cf. for a similar idea: Tyāgarāja’s kṛti – ‘Ēmicēsitenemi Śrīrāmasvāmi karunā’ in Tōṭi rāga.
33. ibid. 3, 10, 27, 73.
34. ibid. 4.
Jains, Buddhists and Śaivites when the adherents of these faiths chose to assert their individual worth by casting disparaging comments on one another. This is reflected to some extent in some verses of this Āḻvār where he emphatically declares that the followers of other religions do not extol Viṣṇu and for that reason are insignificant and mean.\footnote{35} In particular, the several incidents are enumerated to prove that Śiva is definitely inferior to Viṣṇu\footnote{36}; Nārāyaṇa is ever ready to bestow His Grace on humanity and delay in getting His Grace is due to the lack of enthusiasm on the part of men in making request for His Grace.\footnote{37} He stands as the very essence of the Vedas.\footnote{38} Those who take to education through the study of the Vedas should be deemed to have failed to get the benefit of that education, if they have not realized that Nārāyaṇa is the supreme deity.\footnote{39} Śiva is described to be seated under the banyan tree and taught his four pupils that the Supreme Being is the One Who measured the world, lies on the banyan leaf and milky ocean and that all shall bend before Him and worship Him.\footnote{40} No other deity but Him Who has Śrī deserves worship.\footnote{41} Nārāyaṇa is everything in the world and nothing exists besides Him.\footnote{42} The Āḻvār refers to the festival celebrated at Tirumalai on the day when the constellation Tiruvōṇam dominates.\footnote{43} Eevery deity including Brahmā and Rudrā propitiate the God at Tirumalai\footnote{44}. It is this Āḻvār that declared openly and emphati-
cally the Tirumalai hills as the place liked and respected by the denizens of heaven and earth. The glory of this hill is described in several ways. The deity at Śrī Rāṅgam shows to humanity that He presents to people Himself out of His own free will and not in the least through the efforts on the part of the people to get at Him. The ascetics with the triple staff (trident) are said to live there. One shall utter His name, or any verse or composition in praise of Him. His devotees shall be worshipped and they are respected by Brahmā and others.

The other work Tiruccanta-viruttam is a polemical treatise, as it were. The Āḻvār revels in using numbers symbolic of the totvās he would like to demonstrate as suggestive of Nārāyaṇa’s greatness. Number five is used in all possible ways to show the products of matter, senses, elements and that the Lord is the only one God having control over them. He is the Lord of the syllables and letters which are in the form of consonants and vowels and He is shown to the world in the praṇava. He is the soul of all beings. He is worshipped by Śiva. He is the material cause of the world which springs from Him and merges in Him like the waves of the sea ebb and get merged there itself. The Upaniṣadic statement that He is beyond expression, but yet the subject of them is beautifully restated by

45. ibid. 45.
46. ibid. 46, 47, 48.
47. Periyavācēn Pillai cites this as an illustration of the mantra contained in Kaṭh. Up. 2: 23.
48. Tc. V. 52.
50. ibid. 89, 90.
51. ibid. 91.
52. Tc. V. 3.
53. ibid. 4.
54. ibid. 5.
55. ibid. 9.
56. ibid. 10.
the Āḻvār. His real nature is beyond human comprehension, but He is too well known as the Lord of Nappināi. Though He could not be named specifically in any particular way, He is having the discus in the hand and is glorified in the Sāma-veda, that is, Chāndogya Upaniṣad. He is to be known through the four Vedas and six auxiliaries. It is only this Āḻvār that expounds the vyūha doctrine of the Pāṇcarātra system.

In this verse ‘Ēkamūrtti’ means one person who is Paravāsudeva. ‘Mūṇṟumūrtti’ signifies Śaṅkarāṇa, Aniruddha and Pradhyaumna who are cosmic deities incarnated by the Divine. ‘Nālumūrtti’ means Pradhāna, Puruṣa, Avyakta and Kāla forms; ‘Pōkamūrtti’ (bhogamūrtti) means Enjoyable Being otherwise known as immaterial form. ‘Puṇṭiyamūrtti’ stands for the Person realised through merit or the form realized in liberation. ‘Enṭi’mūrtti’ signifies the person of many manifestational forms or vibhava forms. ‘Ākamūrtti’ (Yākamūrtti) means many forms of arca desired by the devotees. The Lord is responsible for orderliness in any aspect of life such as sex, gender in grammar, matter etc. This Āḻvār refers profusely to the divine descents of the Lord, but makes individual references to the exploits of the Lord as Kṛṣṇa. Following the Bhāgavata, the Āḻvār refers to the colour of the Lord as white, red, dark and blue in the Kṛta, Treta, Dvāpara and Kali ages respectively. His synthetic presentation of the Lord’s forms is marvellous when he

57. ibid. 11.
58. ibid. 13.
59. ibid. 14; Ch. Up. 1.6: 6.
60. ibid. 15.
61. ibid. 17.
63. ibid. 30, 31, 35, 37, 38, 40, 43, 58, 107.
64. ibid. 44.
mentions the Lord as standing on the hill (Tirumalai), lying in the milky ocean, measuring the worlds, keeping the worlds within Him at the time of deluge, lifted the world as Varāha and created the beings and gods. He is thus the primeval Lord. He refers to the incident of Rāma aiming the earthen clod in the bow and striking at the hump-backed Mantara and made her relieved of her egoism.

Tirukkuṭantai (Kumbakonam) is described to be a place inhabited by brahmins wearing the sacred threads, constantly reciting the Vedas. The Lord who stands at Tiruveṇkaṭam where the rich bamboos reach the skies is lying at Kumbakonam rich in plantations brimming with honey. The Āḻvār asks the Lord at Tirukkuṭantai whether He is lying there due to the legs aching when He walked through the forests in the descent of Rāma or because of the bodily ache when He lifted up the earth in His Varāha descent. He asks Him to get up and talk to him. It is held that the Lord got up slightly from the serpent couch and continued to remain in that posture. Frequent references are made to the various postures with which the Lord presents in the various shrines.

The means that could be adopted to get at Him lies in weaning of the mind from the objects of the world and then enter into meditation which is only karma-yoga. The sins could be got rid of and then it will be possible to reflect on His qualities. The repetition of the eight-lettered mantra is necessary to have spiritual progress.

Tirumāḷcayāḻvār is rightly called Bhakti-sāra and para-bhakti is meant here. His Nāmukāṇ tiruvantāti declares

65. ibid. 48.
66. ibid. 49.
67. ibid. 56.
68. ibid. 60.
69. ibid. 61.
70. ibid. 63, 64, 65.
71. ibid. 75, 76.
72. ibid. 77; cf. ibid. 78. vide ibid. 67 for arcirāti-gati.
that Nārāyaṇa is the subject matter of all the Vedas. After the manner of the Upaniṣads this Āḻvār takes up the Lord as the cause of the world and concludes that He is the only God to be worshipped. The other work Tiruccanta–viruttam deals mostly with the relation of body and soul as existing between the world of sentient beings and non-sentient things, and God. The composition is called poetry or song\textsuperscript{74} because of the metrical mode as distinct from other ordinary modes. He is rightly called 'cōti\textsuperscript{75} as he was like a lustrous lamp throwing a flood of light on the surrounding objects. Through his works he brought to light many of the truths of Vaiṣṇavite religion.

**TONṬARATĪṆ - POṬIYĀṆRĀṆ**

The small poem Tiruppallī-ēluchi of this Āḻvār is a fine lyrical piece which is intended to awaken the Lord in the early hours of the morning. This piece is a perfect artistic production of poetic beauty describing that the day has dawned which is graphically represented to come into being step by step each indicated by the results produced. Darkness recedes,\textsuperscript{76} gentle wind blows\textsuperscript{77} and the stars gradually fade.\textsuperscript{78} Chirping of the birds is heard.\textsuperscript{79} God Who is the protector of people from their distresses\textsuperscript{80} is frequently mentioned to be awaited. He is awakened by all sorts of deities,\textsuperscript{81} sages, semi-divine beings who throng at His doors and compete with each other to have precedence over others. They all sing to the accompaniment of musical instruments.\textsuperscript{82}

\textsuperscript{73} T.P. 371 where the Āḻvār is referred to as 'paran'.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid. 371. Here the composition is referred to as 'canta viruttap-pēṭal'.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid. 40.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid. 2.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid. 3.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid. 4, 5.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid. 2.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid. 6, 7, 8, 9.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid. 9.
The Āḻvār preferred to worship the Lord at Śrī Raṅgam, a place where Viśhnu offered his worship. While Viśvāmitra, who initiated the service of arousing the Lord, requested Rāma to get up to attend to daily routine, this Āḻvār requests the Lord at Śrī Raṅgam to get up in order to make him become the servant of His devotees. This important aspect of this piece has permeated the practice of the Vaiṣṇavites to make the recitation of this piece obligatory during the Dhanurmaṣa (December-January).

_Tirumālai_ is the other work of this Āḻvār in forty-five verses. The Āḻvār rendered service to the Lord at Śrī Raṅgam by rearing a garden of flowering creepers and trees and wreathing the flowers into garlands for the Lord. This service was considered great by him and so named this composition as _Tirumālai_ (sacred garland) each verse being considered as a flower. The Āḻvār does not actually claim his verses to be treated as conforming to eight kinds of flowers (āṭapuspika) but it is not difficult to find references to some of these flowers. Sense control shall form part of the discipline to prepare oneself for serving God. Deep remorse is conveyed by the Āḻvār for not having controlled his senses and for having allowed himself to be lured by women's enticing tricks. The Āḻvār is bent more on advising people to utter the name of God by citing his own painful experiences and as such this composition could be justifiably named _Tirumālai_. Two festivals mark out this composition as unique by the stress laid on the value of uttering God’s name. It is devotion that marks out a devotee and not his nobility due to birth or social status. The words ‘accutā’, ‘amararēre’ ‘āyartam kolunē’ are enumerated with significance suggesting respectively that ‘the Lord would never let down His devotees’, ‘is

83. ibid. 5.
85. T.E. 10.
86. T.M. 1; cf. ibid. 21, 30.
87. ibid. 31, 33.
88. ibid. 1, 41.
89. ibid. 39, 40.
the Lord of the great gods’, and is ‘the darling of the cow-
herds’.90 God is thus within the reach of people whether
they are high or low.91 The enjoyable experience which this
Āḻvār got through reciting the names of the Lord make him
not to wish for even the position of Indra.92 The Āḻvār’s
advice to people is rich with his insight into the worldly
behaviour.93 It is enough if one utters the three-lettered
name when one is in distress.94 One would be rid of his sins
by simply listening to the casual utterance of the Lord’s
name.95 Simply uttering the word ‘araṅkam’ would protect
people from distress.96

The recounting of the Āḻvār’s personal experience with
women and how the Lord at Śrī Raṅgam lifted him up from
distress is full of feeling.97 The Lord is true to those who
are true to Him98 The Lord entered within him and instilled
respectful consideration for him.99 He became delectable to
him who would not bow to Him or praise Him.100 The sight
of the Lord is so endearing that tears gush forth from his eyes
and prevent them from getting fixed at Him101 Merely
talking and talking does not confer any benefit or greatness
on the speaker. Words would fail only when the mind, which
is pure, is directed at the Lord Whom it cannot gauge. The

90. ibid. 2.
91. Periyavācēṉ Pillai on ibid. 2.
92. T.M. 2.
93. ibid. 4 to 14.
94. ibid. 4. Periyavācēṉ Pillai takes the Sanskrit name ‘Govinda’
here and draws the analogy by uttering the Tamil word (amma)
which is three-lettered and uttered when one is in difficulties.
95. ibid. 12.
96. It is this aspect of the utterance of the name that is in vogue
among Vaishnavites in uttering the word ‘raṅga’ when sneezing.
97. T.M. 16 to 24.
98. ibid. 15.
99. ibid. 16.
100. ibid. 17.
101. ibid. 18.
mind is asked to tell him whether it is not a fact. The charming appearance of the Sleeping Beauty at Śrī Raṅgam is so ravishing that the Āḻvār could not forget it at all. The Āḻvār appeals for God’s mercy, as he is fully incompetent for adopting any other means such as worshipping fire, bhakti or jñāna. His remorse at his past misdeeds is such that he feels that he did not do that amount of service which a squirrel did for Rāma at the time of building of a bridge to Lāṅka by the monkeys, and this is interpreted by the Āḻvār as service rendered after taking bath in the sea water. His appeal to God is really pathetic as conveyed in the passage: “I do not own any landed property or have any one whom I could claim as my relation. Therefore I hold on Your Feet. O, Supreme Lord! O, Lord of the hue of the cloud! Lord of enchanting eyes! I am crying in distress. Who is there for me as saviour? O Lord of Tiruvāraṅkam!” He had come to the Lord after wasting the life in debauchery and women. He was leading the life of a holy person without the mental purity required for it. That he alone would decide whom He would favour is clear from His readiness to save the elephant from distress and making Brahmā and Śiva to wait for a long time to earn His favour. Another striking feature in the work of this...

102. ibid. 22. Periyavācchān Pillai goes a step further and asks the the tongue which is fickle in incoherent talk to tell him whether this is a fact. (Vide: His commentary on ibid. 22. cf. Jagannātha Pāṇḍita: Bhāmini Vilāsa. 4:10.

103. ibid. 23. Periyavācchān Pillai in his commentary on this verse remarks that some would retain their charm only in one posture, namely, standing. When they lie down, they would appear detestable. The Lord is of enchanting appearance even or perhaps more in his reclining posture at Śrī Raṅgam.

104. ibid. 25 to 34.

105. ibid. 27.

106. ibid. 29; cf. ibid. 30, 31.

107. ibid. 33. According to Periyavācchān Pillai this is like entering the house through the back-door.

108. ibid. 34.

109. ibid. 44.
Āḻvār lies in his abiding devotion to the bhāgavatas whose worth lies in their faith to the Lord and not in their birth.\textsuperscript{110}

The Āḻvār claims for himself the appellation ‘Tonṭaratippoṭi’, that is, the dust clinging to the feet of those who do service (tonṭar) to the Lord.\textsuperscript{141} It is clear from this that he is not enamoured of the devotion of some elevated souls, as that is beyond the reach of most men. In this respect, this Āḻvār has made an improvement over the generally accepted concept that a devotee shall choose to be the servant of the devotees at the eighth stage in the downward step.\textsuperscript{112}

On a perusal of the two works of this Āḻvār it will be known that the saint knew only the Sleeping Beauty at Śrī Raṅgam and he celebrated only Him and none else. The Vaiṣṇavite ācāryas hold that the Tirumāla is the Viṣṇudharmaśāra and the greatness of this work is to be understood from the Tamil proverb “He who does not know Tirumāla cannot apprehend Perumāl”.

KULACĒKARĀĻVĀR

The greatness of this Āḻvār lies in his passionate longing to worship the Lord at Śrī Raṅgam by beholding Him,\textsuperscript{113} sing His praise,\textsuperscript{114} offer flowers at His Feet,\textsuperscript{115} fold the palms,\textsuperscript{116} bend before Him,\textsuperscript{117} have his heart firm with ecstasy\textsuperscript{118} and to roll down on the ground in great delight.\textsuperscript{119} He is keen in

\textsuperscript{110} ibid. 42, 43. According to Periyavaṟeḻan Pillai a prapanna must avoid worshipping a deity other than Viṣṇu and offending a bhāgavata.

\textsuperscript{111} ibid. 45.

\textsuperscript{112} Pallāṇṭu. 6, cf. Perum; Tm. 3. 6.

\textsuperscript{113} Perum. Tm. 1: 1,7.

\textsuperscript{114} ibid. 1: 2.

\textsuperscript{115} ibid. 1: 3.

\textsuperscript{116} ibid. 1: 4.

\textsuperscript{117} ibid. 1:5.

\textsuperscript{118} ibid. 1: 6.

\textsuperscript{119} ibid. 1: 9 cf, Tēvāram 1. 40: 1 to 9.
having the company of bhāgavatas while worshipping the deity. To see such persons is itself a fortune and to dance with them as they utter the name ‘araṅka’ is a great treat. The mind of this Āḻvār is entertaining intense affection to think of them. The Āḻvār does not like to be in the company of people who are interested only in food, clothing and material attractions. Rebirth is not desired at all, but if it should be, the Āḻvār likes to be reborn in the Tirumalai hills in any capacity like a fish or bird in the tank there or a pillar or step or anything so that he would not lose the vicinity of God. Whatever be the severity of his sufferings, he could not have the protection of any but the Lord. The analogies that are drawn to illustrate this aspect are unique and arresting. To cite an illustration, a chaste woman, even if she is despised by her husband to the utter disgrace of the onlookers around her, would not care for any one but her husband for seeking protection. All the verses in this decade are addressed to the Lord at Vittuvakkōṭu.

The intense longing of this saint to have direct vision of the Lord and his inability to wait for the time when he could have his mental state turned into that of a bride complaining that her spouse did not keep to the tryst and therefore remonstrating with him for it and asking him to get away from her. The whole decade takes the form of reaction on the cowherdresses by Kṛṣṇa's delaying tactics to meet them at the time already fixed. The Āḻvār depicts

120. ibid. 1: 10.
121. ibid. 2: 1, 2.
122. ibid. 2: 1, 4, 7, 8.
123. ibid. 3: 4, 5.
124. ibid. 4: 2.
125. ibid. 4: 1.
126. ibid. 4: 5.
127. ibid. 4: 9.
128. ibid. 4: 10.
129. ibid. 5.
130. ibid. 5: 2.
131. ibid. 6.
vividly how a cowherdess had to give some kind of different excuses to each one of her friends for her leaving them to have a clandestine meeting with Kṛṣṇa. The Lord is taken to task for having enjoyed the company of her female messenger whom the gopi sent to Him with an errand. She had seen Him proceed in front of her house in disguise in the company of some other woman making some gestures on the way. His deceitful utterances and behaviour are not unknown to her. He is really a hypocrite for His enjoying the company of another woman in her vicinity while she was called by Him to wait for Him there. This deced which the Āḻvār meant for singing is unmatched for the lyrical elegance it displays and for the effective rebuke which the beloved casts on the fugitive Lord Whose playing on the flute influenced them with mellifluous notes. It is doubtful whether this representation of the woman's disappointment could be better presented by a woman composer.

The intense religious experience does not leave the mental states of the devotee, but lie still and undisturbed. Age-long experiences impress the self with residues of manifold nature, which are aroused by external factors. Besides the longing which a woman gets aroused for the physical union with her lover, there are other attitudes when a self could be made to display under the stress of deep experience. The self could imagine to be the mother fondling her child. The keen disappointment which the Āḻvār feels for not being able to get the vision of the Lord is represented by Devaki's motherly feeling that the child which was born of her could not be tended by her. She feels that she is the worst among the mothers to leave her child to the care of another

132. ibid. 6: 3.
133. ibid. 6: 4.
134. ibid. 6: 5.
135. ibid., 6: 6, 7.
136. ibid., 6: 8.
137. ibid., 6: 10.
woman. She feels that the delight which Yaśoda and Nandagopa were having in the company of Kṛṣṇa is not to be had by her and Vāsudeva. The tender and charming limbs of the child and his sweet utterances are enjoyed by Yaśoda who is therefore held to have become divine. She could not behold the child crawling in all forms and postures or suck her breasts. Yośoda and not she is lucky to see the child take the butter and to behold when it cries. She could not be a witness of the Lord lifting the Govardhana hill or indulge in kuravaikkūṭu and kuṭakkuṭu or slay the demon by throwing him at the tree or dance on the hoods of Kālīyān. These descriptions are in fact the presentations, in disguise, of the Āḻvār’s fancy at his inability to have such of those visions of the incidents of child Kṛṣṇa, but the disguise is richer for presentation, as Devaki’s emotion is more natural and is full of sympathetic appeal. It is the result of her feeling for her unfortunate lot that she is to be away from her child whose exploits she could only listen when narrated.

The Āḻvār presents a fine lullaby addressed to Rāma as a child put in a swing and the deity is enshrined in Kaṇapuram (Tirukkaṇṇapuram). The intense separation from the Lord is well depicted through Dasaratha’s lamentation at Rāma’s proceeding to the forest. The representation is very well conceived and the pathetic feeling is much heightened by Dasaratha asking Sumantra and Vaśiṣṭha whether Rāma’s proceeding to the forest was justified on any ground and referring to the happy lot of Kaikēyi. The story of the Rāmāyana is recounted admirably in a decad which refers to the Citrakūṭam where three thousand brahmins praise the Lord

139. ibid. 7: 1.
140. ibid. 7: 2, 3.
141. ibid. 7: 4, 5.
142. ibid. 7: 6, 7.
143. ibid. 7: 7.
144. ibid. 7: 8.
145. ibid. 7: 9.
146. ibid. 8.
147. ibid. 9.
and to which place he is keen on proceeding. Agastya is referred to as the great Tamil sage. The story of Uttarakanda of the Rāmāyana forms the continuous narration of the epic story. The Lord at Śrī Raṅgam is bowed to and is said to be extolled in hymns composed both in Tamil and Sanskrit. Kaiṅkarya to the Lord is what the Āḻvār yearns to have and not lordship over the world. Enjoyment of life of the material kind is to be shunned.

TIRUPPĀṆĀLṉĀR

Amalanāṭipirān the only poem of Tiruppāṇāḻvār is unique in several respects. Firstly, it does not contain any reference to the feeling of separation and sending of message as in the compositions of Nammāḻvār and others or advice to others or refutation of other schools of thought as found in the works of Tirumāḷjaiyāḻvār or Tirumāṅkaiyāḻvār. It is pregnant with the intense religious feeling of devotion which the Āḻvār had for the Lord. Secondly, it contains ten verses all of which are devoted to the description of the Lord at Śrī Raṅgam from foot to head (padādiķēśa) perhaps after the manner of Sanskrit compositions. Thirdly, there is a synthetic treatment of all the forms of the Lord, particularly those of Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Vamāna and the deity at Tirumalai and Tiruvārangam.

This poem contains the essence of the teachings of the various passages of the Vedas such as Antarāditya Vidyā Īśavāsyopaniṣad and Puruṣa-sūkta and showing them to consist in the auspicious figure of the Lord. This gains more relevance and significance because the auspicious form of the Lord is required both when the self adores the Lord here and when it gets at Him in the state of release.

148. ibid. 10.
149. ibid. 10: 8, 9, 10.
150. ibid. 1: 4.
151. ibid. 4: 1.
152. ibid. 4: 2, 5, 9.
153. ibid. 4: 6.
154. T.P. 378; cf. "Paḷamaraiyin poruḷ"
The Divine is above all as the supreme object of the religious consciousness, transcendent to all the faults and mistakes and errors and illusions of man, or the soul, however high up in evolution. He is therefore addressed as the ‘amalai’, the enemy of all defects. He is the cause of the world and its protector and His Feet are to be worshipped. He has made this Ālvār become a servant of His devotees. He is often identified with the Lord at Tirumalai, Nara-simha, Vāmana and Rāma. He had relieved Siva of his guilt committed at Brahmā. In spite of the fact that all the forms of the Lord represent only one Deity, the Ālvār declares that his eyes which feasted on the Lord at Śrī Raṅgam would not set on any other thing. This may be taken as hinting at the greatness of that deity or that nothing but the Lord Viṣṇu would attract him. It is therefore apt when Aḻakiya-Maṉavāḷappērumāḷ Nāyānār says that this Ālvār unlike other Ālvārs is fully devoted to the arcā form which is the most approachable form of God.

TIRUMAṆKAIYĀLVĀR

Tirumāṅkaiyālvār who won the reputation of Nālukavippērumāl, displays much erudition like Tirumaḻicaiyālvār. He is next to Nammālvār in contributing more verses than others. He is the only Ālvār who successfully tried his hand at various forms of compositions. His two Maitals are a unique contribution to the Akam poetry and to the history of bridal mysticism. Among other Ālvārs, he has shown greater atten-

155. A.P. 1.
156. ibid. 1.
157. ibid. 1, 3.
158. ibid. 8.
159. ibid. 2, 4.
160. ibid. 2.
161. ibid. 6.
162. Vide: Tivyāṭṭa-tīpikai on A.P. 10
163. His works contain references to the names of certain rulers over the regions where some shrines are situated. (Vide Peri. Tm. 3. 2:3; 5.8: 9; 6.6; 7.7: 4).
tion to the description of Nature in his poems. He has, in this respect, modelled his poems on Campantar’s. Almost every verse of his refers to the beauty of Nature. The groves, the Vedic atmosphere, festive appearances are all depicted by this saint.\textsuperscript{164} To some extent Nammāḻvār could be held to have had attraction for similar aspects of Nature.\textsuperscript{165}

The folk-song motifs are successfully handled by this Āḻvār. Some of them are Kōṭtumpi, Poṅkattam poṅko and Kulamaṇītūram. The bee is asked by the bride to go in search of honey in the flowers which the Lord would usually wear and to get the honey and fragrance from the flowers worn by the Lord of Tirukkaṇṇapuram and blow them on her.\textsuperscript{166} Poṅkattam poṅko are expressions which make no sense. They are used by persons when they engage themselves in dance signifying their defeat and praying for refuge.\textsuperscript{167} These words do not occur anywhere in Tamil literature. Kulamaṇītūram is a similar dance.\textsuperscript{168}

That the ultimate Reality is Śrīman Nārāyaṇa is very well presented by this Āḻvār. The Lord is having Śrī in His chest. His presence is felt in the directions, earth, water, fire and others. He is wind which exists together with sound.\textsuperscript{169} He is Himself the Vedas, rituals, sky, the two luminaries and the beginning of everything.\textsuperscript{170} The Āḻvār admits his dependence and service to the Lord and gets detach-

\textsuperscript{164}. Peri. Tm. 2.10: 7; 3.4: 1; cf. Tēvāram 1.79: 3; 1.102: 4.
For further references vide:
Peri. Tm. 3.4: 3. Tēvāram 1.129: 1.
ibid. 6.7: 4. ibid., 2.64: 9.
ibid. 9.6: 8. ibid., 1.99: 3.
ibid. 3.8: 8. ibid., 2.122: 2.

\textsuperscript{165}. T.V.M. 5.9; 8.4; 8.9.

\textsuperscript{166}. Peri. Tm. 8.4; cf. T.V.K. (215 to 234).

\textsuperscript{167}. ibid. 10.2.

\textsuperscript{168}. ibid. 10.3.

\textsuperscript{169}. Peri. Tm. 7.6: 7; cf. ibid., 8.7: 7.

\textsuperscript{170}. ibid. 9.4: 9.
ment from the worldly life.\textsuperscript{171} He finds it difficult to be away from God and his expression of this feeling has the mystic feature of the bride in love with Him.\textsuperscript{172} Those who ever cherish Lord reclining at Tirukkaṭalmallai,\textsuperscript{173} Tiruccērai\textsuperscript{174} are his masters.

He is in every form such as lightning, \textit{Vedas}, moon and free from birth and death. He is of the hue of gold, gem, five elements and so on.\textsuperscript{175} The Āḻvār is aware of keeping His Feet on his head. Though He is present in all the forms of the three deities, the form of the Lord with Śrī is quite peculiar. The three deities have the colour of gold, fire and sea but the deity with the colour of the cloud is His deity.\textsuperscript{176} The deity could be apprehended only by \textit{Tirumantiram}.\textsuperscript{177} Those who meditate upon Him with self-control could visualize Him correctly.\textsuperscript{178} Yet, the mind does not set itself on Him steadily and remain there. Devotion could not be practised by Him. Except service at His Feet, he finds no way of getting at Him.\textsuperscript{179}

\textit{Viśṇu} is the Supreme Person\textsuperscript{180} with every thing as His mode (\textit{prakāra}).\textsuperscript{181} The cardinal tenets of the Viśiṣṭādvaita system find their support in the works of this Āḻvār.\textsuperscript{182} The relationship between the Lord and world is that which exists between the self and the body.\textsuperscript{183} The Lord is of every form\textsuperscript{184}

\textsuperscript{171}. ibid. 6.3.
\textsuperscript{172}. ibid. 8.3.
\textsuperscript{173}. ibid. 2.6.
\textsuperscript{174}. ibid. 7.4.
\textsuperscript{175}. T.N. 1; cf. T.K. 2.
\textsuperscript{176}. T.N. 2.
\textsuperscript{177}. ibid., 4.
\textsuperscript{178}. T.K. 18.
\textsuperscript{179}. ibid. 10.
\textsuperscript{180}. Peri. Tm. 2.10: 1; 4.1: 4; 6.9: 10.
\textsuperscript{181}. ibid. 5.7: 1, 2.
\textsuperscript{182}. cf. ibid. 2.5: 3.
\textsuperscript{183}. ibid. 2.5: 3; 4.1: 2; 6.6: 3; 7.6: 7.
\textsuperscript{184}. ibid. 4.5: 6; 5.6: 5.
and is the Indweller.\textsuperscript{185} He Himself receives the oblations\textsuperscript{186} which are offered in the holy fire when the sacred rites are undertaken.

The Ālvār gives a graphic description of each of the ten avatāras of Nārāyaṇa. The waters of deluge made the gods seek Viṣṇu for shelter. The Lord took the form of fish and supported the hills on His back bringing them out of the waters.\textsuperscript{187} He took the form of tortoise and while supporting the Mantara mountain on His back, looked like a mountain supporting another mountain.\textsuperscript{188} The earth which was drowned in the sea was brought out by the Lord who took the form of boar. The sun, moon, the gods, the seven worlds, the eight directions, Mēru mountain, the six Kulaparvatās and the seven oceans occupy only a portion of the hoof of Ādivarāha.\textsuperscript{189} Narasimha is the name of the form which God assumed to kill Hiranyakaśipu whose body was ripped open into two by Him with the claws. The blood that flowed then from the body of the demon was thrice in quantity the waters of deluge.\textsuperscript{190} Nārāyaṇa came to King Bali in the form of a Dwarf and like a sage uttering the Vedas impressed upon the king that he was a genuine beggar. When He got the gift of three Feet of land, His Foot grew big beyond the Mantara mountain and passed through the seven upper regions and was worshipped by the moon and Brahmā.\textsuperscript{191} The Lord became Parasurāma, who destroyed the kings for twenty-one generations. He is the Lord of Śrī, Bhūdevi and Nīḷā.\textsuperscript{192} As Rāma, the Lord killed Mārica Who appeared before Him and Sītā in the enchanting form of a deer to effect a separation between them. He reduced the demon Rāvaṇa and his

\textsuperscript{185} ibid. 2.5: 7; 7.2.
\textsuperscript{186} ibid. 5.6: 5.
\textsuperscript{187} ibid. 11.4: 1.
\textsuperscript{188} ibid. 11.4: 2.
\textsuperscript{189} ibid. 11.4: 3; cf. 4.4: 8.
\textsuperscript{190} ibid. 11.4: 4.
\textsuperscript{191} ibid. 11.4: 5.
\textsuperscript{192} ibid. 11.4: 6.
hordes to utter extinction. Next is described Hamsāvatāra. The achievements of Kṛṣṇa such as killing Pūtana, Kuvalayā-pidā and others are celebrated. With less details, these avatāras are described in another part of this composition. There is fine poetic beauty in the depiction of the feelings of the demons in the battle between Rāvana and Rāma. The demons request the monkeys not to harass them. The lilās of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa are depicted in the form of conversations between two female companions.

The Ālvārs are mainly instrumental for the popularisation of the arcā form of worship which came into vogue on the strength of the Āgamic preachings. They followed the principles of Āgamas and evolved a synthesis of all the forms of the Supreme Being. The exploits of the Lord in His descent have been quite popular among the people through the Itihāsas and Purāṇas. They have been frequently cited by the Ālvārs to heighten the importance of the arcā forms. Being deep meditators of the Indweller, they have been frequently laying stress on the antaryāmin form of the deity.

Though all the Ālvārs had given primary importance to the shrines where God is worshipped in the arcā form, the first three Ālvārs, Tirumalicaiyālvār, Nammālvār and Tirumānkaiyālvār paid attention to this form by singing in praise of the deity in more temples drawing a synthesis even among the arcā forms. It is the praise conferred on the deity in such shrines which the Ālvārs visited that brought into vogue a new concept of temple worship in South India. Those shrines which have received maṅgalāsāsanam of the Ālvārs

193. ibid. 11.4: 7.
194. ibid. 11.4: 8.
195. ibid. 11.4: 9, 10.
196. ibid. 8.8.
197. ibid. 10.2.
198. ibid. 10.3.
199. ibid. 11.5.
200. Peri. Tm. 10.1; T.N. 8; C. TML, Kan. 69 to 74.
came to be regarded as supreme in importance and are known as ‘pūtal perā talaṅka’ (temples celebrated by the hymns). Tirumāṅkaiyāḻvār and Nammāḻvār enjoy a special repute in this respect. The former is the only Āḻvār who visited almost all the shrines which\textsuperscript{201} are now called ‘temples celebrated by the hymns’ and some were sung only by him and some others were extolled only by Nammāḻvār.\textsuperscript{202} Among 108 temples there are five temples having more than one hundred verses viz., Tiruvaraṅkam 247, Tiruvēṅkaṭam 213, Tirukkaṅnapuram 128, Tirumāliruṅcōlai 114 and Tirunāraiyūr 109. Special mention requires to be made here of Tirumāṅkaiyāḻvār’s particular contribution to the shrines of Tirukkaṅnapuram, Tirunāraiyūr, Tiruvaraṅkam and Tiruvιṅṅakar.\textsuperscript{203} The Āḻvār has sung a centum of verses on each of the deities of Tirukkaṅnapuram\textsuperscript{204} and Tirunāraiyūr.\textsuperscript{205} Tiruvaraṅkam\textsuperscript{206} gets half a centum, Tiruvēṅkaṭam\textsuperscript{207} four decades, and Tiruvιṅṅakar\textsuperscript{208} three decades.

The Āḻvār makes specific reference to the prevalence of \textit{Vedic} study and \textit{Vedic} recitals in some places where the shrines are situated\textsuperscript{209}. The brahmans who dwell there attend to their \textit{nitya, naimittika} and \textit{kāmya} rituals and teach the \textit{Vedas} to others.\textsuperscript{210} The brahmans in Pullampūtaṅkuṭi never utter a lie, are well studied in the \textit{Vedas} and are great through the worship of three fires and have reputation for that, forbearance and generosity.\textsuperscript{211} The smoke of incense arising

\textsuperscript{201} This brings out the importance of the impact of the \textit{Nālāyiram} on temples and temple worship.

\textsuperscript{202} Vide Appendix – V for a list of shrines celebrated exclusively by these two Āḻvārs and by Pūrattāḻvār, Tirunāţiçaiyāḻvār, Kulaçekar- āḻvār and Periyāḻvār.

\textsuperscript{203} Many of these shrines are all situated in and near the banks of Kāviri.

\textsuperscript{204} Peri. Tm. 8.1 to 8.10.

\textsuperscript{205} ibid. 6.4 to 6.10; 7.1 to 7.3.

\textsuperscript{206} ibid. 5.4 to 5.8.

\textsuperscript{207} ibid. 1.8 to 1.10 and 2.1.

\textsuperscript{208} ibid. 6.1 to 6.3.

\textsuperscript{209} ibid. 3.10: 1; 4.1: 3, 7, 8; 4.2: 10; 4.3: 2, 3, 6; 4.6: 1; 10; 4.8: 8.

\textsuperscript{210} ibid. 2.10: 2; 3.5: 6; 4.2: 2; 5.9: 6, 9.

\textsuperscript{211} ibid. 5.1: 5, 8.
from the rites performed add to the fragrance filling Tiruvaram. The performance of the Sōma sacrifice at Tirukkovalur by the brahmins whose mind is pure and who are well-versed in the four Vedas is stated to have brought about the rich growth of paddy there. Each house in this sacred place is stated to be resounding with the recitation of the Vedas. The manṭapams in the houses which were situated in the charming streets there were occupied by the Vedic scholars who adopted a particular method of studying the Vedas known as ‘vāram’ which consisted in giving the padapātha (splitting the samhitā portion of the Veda into separate words) of the entire text whose beginning would be mentioned by one of the scholars assembled there.

A special reference is required to be made here to Tirukkovalur which is described by this Āḻvār as prosperous having scholars. Goddess Durga, with the deer as her vehicle, is present in the shrine. She has eight hands and is stated to guard that place. Men of restraint create the impression that this place could be that of Śiva who rides on the bull, and their wealth suggests its identity with the city of Kubera. The charm of the place leads to mistake it to be the dwelling of Indra. Brahmā could be taken to live there from the Vedic recitations which go on there. The great men who live there appear as capable of great achievements which expected of Brahmā and Śiva.

Citrakūṭam is graphically described by this Āḻvār as a prosperous place with fine groves. Three thousand brahmins offer worship every day to the Lord in this place. They are

212. ibid. 5.4: 7.
213. ibid. 2.10: 1.
214. ibid. 2.10: 5.
215. ibid. 2.10: 6.
216. ibid. 2.10: 8.
217. ibid. 2.10: 9.
218. ibid. 3.2: 1, 3, 5.
219. ibid. 3.2: 8.
well studied in the *Vedas* and offer worship daily in the sacred fires. Girls listen there to the recitation of the *Vedic* texts and reproduce even the lengthy passages in tact. The parrots, which listen to this recitation, reproduce them to the brahmins for their revision or reutterance of those passages. The Lord is frequently described as going through the streets of Tillai Tiruccitrakūṭam showing that the deity is taken in procession on the occasion of festivals. The Lord is taken on the vehicle Garuḍa. He will present Himself as Narasimha on a particular day during the procession and would pass through the streets.

Tirunāraiyaṇur is described as a place inhabited by *Vedic* scholars. The shrine in that place is stated to have a very huge golden door. Śrī stands by the side of the Lord of enchanting appearance. She resembles the slender *vañci* creeper, her gait resembles that of the swans, has the looks of the deer and her tresses bear comparison to the plume of the peacock. In thinness, her waist resembles the lightning. Her shoulders are bent like the tender bamboo; her breasts resemble the jars. With the lips red like *kōvai* fruit, her eyes resemble the fish. This is the bewitching description of Śrī in *arcā* form given only here.

The streets of Tirunāraiyaṇur are ever putting up a charming appearance on the occasion of temple festivals and when the sacred rites are performed. A similar description is given of Tirumāṇimāṭakkōvil, Vaikunṭhaviṇṇakaram, Arimēyaviṇṇakaram and Tirutterṛiyampalem. The beauti-
ful streets of Tīruvāṅuntūr are inhabited by brahmins who are not old in age and who worship the fire at the three fixed times during the day.\(^{231}\) Tirukkaṇṇapuram receives an effective and detailed description at the hands of this Āḻvār who devoted one hundred verses\(^ {232}\) for this purpose. Devotees of God assemble there on occasions of festivals.\(^ {233}\) They are well-versed in the Vedas.\(^ {234}\) The place Tīrūppullāṇi is described in the ideal setting. The deity would fulfil the wish of the devotee who worships His Feet every day. If He does not grant the wish even then, the devotee shall continue to offer the worship.\(^ {235}\) The koels also utter the words “ari, ari” in the graves surrounding the temple at Tīruvēḷiyanākūṭi.\(^ {236}\) Cīkāḷi which is referred to Kāḷīcīṟāmaviṇṇakaram, is described as a place inhabited by brahmins well-versed in the Vedas and Vedāṅgas, who performed the five daily sacrifices. The place resounds with music. The streets are filled with the pomp of the festivals of the Lord there.\(^ {237}\) The streets in Tīruvāḷi are broad enough for dragging of the temple car with the deity in it.\(^ {238}\)

The Āḻvār’s life is a typical case of viṣayā-kāma (amorousness) turned into Bhagavat-kāma (divine love). Nature mysticism enables the Āḻvār to enjoy the Beauty of God objectively in all things and it turns into true immanent mysticism. At this stage the Āḻvār-nāyaki develops a view and vision of Bhagavāṇ as Love in the form of Kṛṣṇa enthroned in her heart. She is much captured and captivated by the entrancing beauty of the Beloved that it is relished even

231. ibid. 7.5:1.
232. ibid. 8.1 to 8.10;
233. ibid. 8.7:2.
234. ibid. 8.7:7.
235. ibid. 9.3:9.
236. ibid. 4.10:7.
237. ibid. 3.4:1.
238. ibid. 3.6:6.
in the physical plane.\textsuperscript{239} Throughout the hymns\textsuperscript{240} describing his bridal path of love God is seen as the cunning Kṛṣṇa, the Enchanter of souls, playing the game of ‘hide and seek’. The Beatific vision of the Lord is only for a brief interval of time and has disappeared; it is mostly sensuous and empirical but it stabilises love or bhakti by directing it inward.

The bride now experiences viślesa; the sorrows of separation are more intense and last longer. But this experience is spiritual one as it is a process of negation by its fulfilment. In this stage, Bhagavat-kāma is purified by vairagyā of the taint arising out of viṣaya-kāma. The experience of separation is one long tale of sorrow and depression. It starts with simple pain and ends with irresistible agony.\textsuperscript{241} Generally the experience of separation passes through three usual stages of distress, depression and defiance. The soft gentle southern breeze is felt as a burning gale by the bride.\textsuperscript{242} Her body languishes and loses weight and the bracelets drop down.\textsuperscript{243} Every moment is like an aeon for her.\textsuperscript{244} The colour of her body changes; she feels even the sāndal-paste as blasts of fire.\textsuperscript{245} No sensation, song or soul that does not reveal Him has any existence or value.\textsuperscript{246} In divine madness, she has no thought of food or drink and she spends sleepless days and nights.\textsuperscript{247} Then sorrow increases with continued disappointment.\textsuperscript{248} It is a favourite dramatic device of the Ālvār mystics to express the agony of separation in the words of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{239} Peri. Tm. 2.8; T.N. 21, 22, 24, 25.
\item \textsuperscript{240} There are 21 decades in Periya Tirumoli besides his two Maṭals and twenty verses in Tirunetuntāṇṭakam (11–30) describing his bridal path of love.
\item \textsuperscript{241} Peri. Tm. 3.6.
\item \textsuperscript{242} ibid. 2.7: 4.
\item \textsuperscript{243} ibid. 8.3; T.N. 12, 19, 23, 25.
\item \textsuperscript{244} ibid. 2 7: 4.
\item \textsuperscript{245} ibid. 2.7: 3, 9; T.N. 17.
\item \textsuperscript{246} ibid. 2.7: 5, 7, 8.
\item \textsuperscript{247} ibid. 1.5.5: 1.3; 8.2: 4; T.N. 11, 12.
\item \textsuperscript{248} ibid. 3.7: 4.8.
\end{itemize}
the mother, and friends and of messages to the Beloved. This is an adaptation from the Tamil technique of love poetry. The elopement of the lovers and consequent lamentations of the mother (makaṭpōkkiyā tāy iraṅkal) are found to be resourceful topics for poetic imagination. The fond mother is sorely distressed by the failing health and sick-mindedness of the daughter in her forlorn state. The artful Māyan or Kaṇṇaṇ as the seducer of souls had secretly entered into her heart and stolen it away. The bride raves about Him. The mother implores Him to have mercy on the poor bride. She is unable to find out the cause of her daughter’s madness. In another mood, she thinks that it is an incurable disease due to possession by evil spirits and seeks to propitiate them by offerings like toddy and meat. But divine intoxication is different in kind from possession by the devil and diabolical mysticism. So she is lost in helplessness and drops down in despair.

The crisis is reached when the dark night of the soul or depression arrives and the bride is consumed in flaming love. The heart melts away like wax. While all nature is asleep in the dark night, she alone is awake; she is tormented by the sense of separation. She bursts into agony. She weeps and wails and cries aloud and her body is bathed in overflowing tears. In her sinking mood she addresses crows, cuckoos,
lizards, parrots, cocks to make omen—cries or sounds signifying the coming of her Lord. But her Kaṇṇā who is the Giver of love and so easily accessible is nowhere to be seen; yet He has entered into her soul and is inescapable. Nature is very sympathetic to her moods and reflects them. The birds with their mating instincts also express their sympathy with her in her parted state. She then sends messages of her forlorn state through the birds and even her mind itself. Kaṇṇā is in her inner eye and also the self as its light and also in her poesy. Yet the mind knows Him not. Kaṇṇā, the Māyaṇ, dwells in her and yet she pines away.

The stage comes when she becomes desperate and defiant and resorts to the device of foiled feminine love known in Tamil as Maṭal. She publicly censures Him for having wounded her by His shafts of love and deserted her when the suffering was acute and could be cured only by Him. In both the Maṭals, she abandons her shyness and reticence and publicly exposes His cruelty and faithlessness. The mood very soon changes from assault to remorse and prayer for mercy. The soul clings to Kaṇṇā and Kaṇṇā alone and He cannot escape her. The avatāra who came down only for the Āḻvār is Āḻvār-mad. He longs to reunite with her purified by self-naughting and the feeling of unworthiness. He Who hides Himself in the light of her lyric poesy as his Inner ‘I’ longs for communing with her in the nakedness of her beauty. He eagerly yearns for living in the Āḻvār’s song, soul and every sensation. In her inner life as what He is rather than what He does and He longs to possess her whole being or true being. As prema to start with, the Āḻvār is seized with a sense of sinfulness and God-fearingness; but his mystic love reasserts itself and he realizes his intimacy with God as lover.

260. ibid. 10.10.
261. ibid. 7.3; 8.9.
262. ibid. 9.3; 9.4; T.N. 26, 27.
263. ibid. 8.10; 9.
264. ibid. 9.2; 8.
265. ibid. 9.2; 11.3; T.N. 28, 29.
266. ibid. 9.2; 1.
and is blessed with the boon and grace of the unitive life, and the stability of the eternal Light even beyond Badari, the highest peak of spirituality here below.  

The Ciriya-tirumñal is in defence of kāma as a pursuit in life, but it is directed towards the higher purpose of reaching the Lord. The word ‘kātal’ applies to worldly love and also in its perfected state to spiritual love. People talk of attaining mokṣa by getting rid of this body. In the meanwhile, the aspirant of mokṣa shall live on fruits and leaves that fall from the trees of their own accord. He has to undergo untold sufferings like living in cottages and taking bath in tanks bracing at times the inclemencies of weather. If all this is to be admitted, no one who is said to have obtained mokṣa has come back to report that Paramapada is a place of bliss and shall therefore be preferred to material love. Mere talk of the nature of mokṣa does not carry any conviction and so it would be prudent on the part of people to stop discoursing on it. Dharma as a puruṣārtha will enable one to get to heaven after death and sport with gazelle-eyed women, listen to enchanting music and move in the ethereal region. Artha as a puraṣārtha yields the same results. Desire or kāma is the basis for both these and so it is better to stick to kāma and achieve those two ends. 

The tradition of the Tamils is that men alone shall undertake maṭalūrtal, but Tirumaṅkaiyālvar rejects this convention following the tradition of Sanskrit literature. Adoption of maṭal way would become practicable only when the sense of shame is completely given up and when one could proceed through the streets for exhibiting one’s love. Women who are by nature bashful, would not be in a position to adopt ‘maṭal’ and this is perhaps the basis for the Tamils’ restricting the adoption of this method to men. The Āḻvār, however, remarks that those who do not adopt and admit the Sanskrit

267. ibid. 1.3; 1.4.
268. P. TML. Kaṇ. 11 to 18.
269. ibid. Kaṇ. 38, 39.
270. P. TML. Kaṇ. 40.
tradition could not realize the effects of application of sandal paste, southern breeze, the sweet sound emanating from the bamboo, of the oxen, shriek of the anṟil and so on.\textsuperscript{271} The Āḻvār cites then instances which show women, unable to repress their love, went after their lovers. Graphic and pathetic is the description of Sītā’s following Rāma to the forest.\textsuperscript{272} Vēgavati, a maiden, could not find her lover in his place, went to the battle field, aroused him from slumber and enjoyed his company.\textsuperscript{273} Ulūpī, the daughter of the Nāgas, compelled Arjuna to break his vow of celibacy and spent a pleasant time with him.\textsuperscript{274} Uṣā, the daughter of Bāṇāsura, had a dream wherein appeared a handsome youth whom her friend identified to be Aniruddha, son of Pradyumna and grandson of Kṛṣṇa. Her friend Citralekha brought him stealthily to her whose company Uṣā enjoyed without the knowledge of her father.\textsuperscript{275} Pārvati openly adopted penance as the weapon to force Śiva to come to her which when fully described would be another Mahābhārata.\textsuperscript{276}

It is very creditable on the part of this Āḻvār to suggest that the bride of the Āḻvār felt her passion aroused at the sight of Śrī by the side of the Lord at Tirunāṟaiyūr.\textsuperscript{277} The sounds of the sea, the moon-lit night, southern breeze, the feeble voice of female anṟil on the palm tree were enough to make her position intolerable.\textsuperscript{278} She throws a challenge to the Lord that if He were not to accept her love, she would publicly declare His base and bad activities such as getting tied to a pestle for stealing butter, eating cart-loads of food intended for Indra, going as a messenger in spite of his being insulted, insulting women like Sūrpaṇagā who loved him and killing Tāṭaki.\textsuperscript{279}

\begin{itemize}
\item 271. ibid. Kaṇ. 39 to 44.
\item 272. ibid. Kaṇ. 45 to 51.
\item 273. ibid. Kaṇ. 52 to 55.
\item 274. ibid. Kaṇ. 55 to 59.
\item 275. ibid. Kaṇ. 60 to 64; Bhāg. P. 10 : 62.
\item 276. ibid. Kaṇ. 65 to 71.
\item 277. ibid. Kaṇ. 77 to 80.
\item 278. ibid. Kaṇ. 81 to 85.
\item 279. ibid. Kaṇ. 137 to 147.
\end{itemize}
What was set forth in favour of kāma as the worthy pursuit of life in Čiriya-tirumāṭal is confirmed in Periya-tirumāṭal. In the former, there is vivid depiction of the arrival of Kṛṣṇa by the bride who was playing ball. He came playing kuṭakkuṭu which attracted her and so she went out of the house to witness it.²⁸⁰ She lost at once her beautiful complexion, and bangles slipped off from her hand.²⁸¹ Her mother came there and did rakṣa with the dust.²⁸² She bowed to the deity Sāttan, now known Ayyapaṇ at Sabarimalai in Kerala State. She was not used to do this, but she did without getting any result.²⁸³ A sooth-sayer was brought there and it was predicted by her that the deity with the thousand names was responsible for her malady.²⁸⁴ The exploits of the Supreme Person, particularly those of Kṛṣṇa, are all mentioned in detail.²⁸⁵ The bride would have adopted 'maṭalūṯal' but for the fear that she would be scandalised for doing so.²⁸⁶ She could not send her mind as a messenger, since it had not come back to her from the ocean-complexioned Lord.²⁸⁷ Her love for the Lord is deep and immeasurable as it is vast as the ocean.²⁸⁸ She cites the incident of Vāsavadatta, going through the streets after Vatsarāja.²⁸⁹ She was not condemned by any one and so the bride makes up her mind to take up 'maṭalūṭal'.²⁹⁰ She will utter His names through the streets.²⁹¹

²⁸⁰ C. TML. Kañ. 13, 14.
²⁸² ibid. Kañ. 16.
²⁸³ ibid. Kañ. 17, 18.
²⁸⁴ ibid. Kañ. 20 to 24.
²⁸⁵ ibid. Kañ. 28 to 55.
²⁸⁶ ibid. Kañ. 57.
²⁸⁷ ibid. Kañ. 60 to 63.
²⁸⁸ ibid. Kañ. 64, 65.
²⁸⁹ ibid. Kañ. 68 to 71. This incident is not traceable to any Purāṇa as suggested by Tīvyārtta-Nīpakal (p. 7). It is contained in the Pratijñāyangandharāyana of Bhāsa and Somadeva’s Kathāsaritrasāgara.
²⁹⁰ ibid. Kañ. 77.
²⁹¹ ibid. Kañ. 74 to 77. cf. If the thousand names could be recited to glorify Him, it must be quite possible to repeat the same for condemning Him also. (Periyavāccān Piḷḷai on ibid.).
In the Tiruvēḷukkāṟṟirukkai the Ālvār revels in the use of numbers from one to seven for Citrabhandha (a kind of poem of acrostics). The word ‘one’ may refer to the unique nature of the Lord, apart from time, sattva quality. The number ‘two’ denotes the pair of Feet of the Lord, besides the sun and moon and others. The three strides of the Lord are referred to by the number ‘three’ besides three qualities, the three worlds, three fires, sacred thread and others. The word ‘four’ refers to the Vedas, four pursuits of life and many others. The five weapons of Viṣṇu are meant by the number ‘five’, besides the five sacrifices, five elements and others. The word ‘six’ could refer to the six schools, bee which is six-footed (āru-patam), six tastes and others. The number ‘seven’ refers to seven worlds. Care is taken to start with number ‘one’ up to ‘seven’ depicting what each stands for in relation to the Lord and come down from that number to number ‘one’ in the same way.

The Ālvār got every thing from the Supreme Person Himself. He dwells in great detail on the Tirumāntra showing its importance. It is admitted that through the worship of the arcā form of God that any one turns a theist and in this respect, the contribution of this Ālvār is invaluable. The prefix ‘periya’ to his composition Periya Tirumoli brings out not only the larger number of verses he had composed but also its greatness through poetic beauty and the sense it conveys. The number of verses and to stages through which love for God is made to develop justify the title Tirunēṭuntāṇṭakam. The sages, mother and bride contribute in this piece respectively in the first, second and third tens. Besides, the name ‘Kaliyan’ which refers to this Ālvār is the Tamilised form of ‘Kaliha’ which means that this Ālvār contributed much for destroying the effects of Kali age through his compositions.

PERIYĀLVAR

Periyyālvar attained greatness by offering to God the garland which his foster–daughter Āntāl wore at first before it

was offered to the deity and also for blessing the Lord with long life and wishing for Him every prosperity. The word 'periya' which is prefixed to his name, thus suggests his greatness, although he was not great in the sense of being senior to other Ḥīvārs in age or by composing more verses than others. He himself refers to the name he enjoyed during his life time among his contemporaries and to his erudition.

The ardent attachment which the self has for God is not altogether free from entertaining apprehensions about the safety of the deity. The Supreme Person is verily omnipotent and could protect Himself. In fact, it is He that protects every one from dangers. Yet, too much of affection scents dangers. The beauty, goodness and auspiciousness which are stored only in Him may perhaps catch the evil eye of some people and so, the devotee feels that it is his duty to wish well of God and pray for His well-being so that the world may be happy. It is not therefore a surprise if Kausalyā observed certain auspicious rites at the time of Rāma’s departure to the forest and pronounced maṅgaḷam for Him. The citizens of Ayodhya bowed to all the deities in order to keep Rāma in good repute. The sages too who met Rāma as He entered the forest welcomed Him offering maṅgaḷam to Him.

In the twelve verses of Tiruppallāntu. Periyālvār offers maṅgaḷam to the Feet of the Lord, Śrī, discus, conch and

293. Godāśṭuti 10.
294. Pallāntu
295. Periyāl. Tm. 1.1: 10; 1.3: 10; 1.4: 10; 1.5: 10; 1.7: 11; 2.2: 11; 2.3: 13, 2.4: 10; 2.7: 10; 2.8: 10; 2.10: 10; 3.1: 11; 3.2: 10; 3.4: 10; 3.5: 11; 4.1: 10; 4.4: 11; 4.6: 10; 4.9: 11.
296. cf. Abhiñāna Śākuntala. Act V.
298. ibid. 2.52.
299. ibid. Āranya. 1: 11, 12. cf. Śrī Gunaratnakāśa 24 where the five weapons of Viṣṇu are ever ready to keep a keen watch over the person of the Lord. Tyāgarāja too asks people to offer their prayers for protection to Rāma in the Bairavirāga kīrtana “Rakṣa peṭṭar”

300. T.P.L. 1.
to the close proximity between the Lord and His devotees. The Āḻvār invites people, even of those in heaven to mingle together for this purpose. The maṅgalam is offered to the Lord Who killed Hiraṇyakaśipu, Bāṇa, Rāvana and his hordes. This piece refers to the devotees' keen desire to have the remnants of what the Lord had used, the festival conducted on the day which is in connection with the constellation 'Tiruvōṇam'. The Āḻvār makes a clear pronouncement about the greatness of the Lord's name and himself as belonging to a family where all his ancestors in seven generations have been the servants of the Lord.

Periyāḻvār was much attracted to Kṛṣṇa Whose childhood is very well depicted by him. The festivities celebrated by the inhabitants of Gokulam when Kṛṣṇa was born is graphically described. The divine child is described from feet to head by Yacoda and the minute description is very artistically presented. The various decorations are sent by the gods for bedecking the child who is put in the cradle and the lullaby is sung by Yacodā; Yacodā's calling the moon to be near the child is full of references to Kṛṣṇa's divinity. Elegance marks the depiction as Yacodā's request to Kṛṣṇa's ceṅkirai and cappāṇi. The gentle and faltering steps of the child

301. ibid. 2.
302. ibid. 4.
303. ibid. 6.
304. ibid. 7.
305. ibid. 3.
306. ibid. 9.
307. ibid. 6, 9.
308. ibid. 4, 11, 12.
309. ibid. 6.
310. Periyāḻ. Tm. 1.1.
311. ibid. 1.2.
312. ibid. 1.3.
313. ibid. 1.4.
314. ibid. 1.5; the first voluntary movements of the child is known as 'ceṅkirai'.
315. ibid. 1.6; cappāṇi is the first clapping of the hands, cf. Perī. Tm. 10.5.
Kṛṣṇa are vividly portrayed. The accō stage is set on an ideal background of the exploits of the Lord as Vāmana and others. It is doubtful whether any woman could describe better the feelings she would have had when her child clings to her back. Yacodā, rather Periyāḻvār, depicts this aspect with extraordinary grace which is equalled only by the Āḻvār's depiction of 'appūccik-kāṭṭal'. Yacodā's asking the child to suck her breasts gives the pen-portrait of the child approaching the mother in certain poses. The twelve names of the Lord are used in the decad describing the lovely ear-lobes of the child by addressing with one name in each verse. The celebration of the whole occasion is described in detail commencing with the women folk assembled to participate in the celebration. The bath for Kṛṣṇa is arranged and Yacodā asks Him to take the bath leaving aside His pranks. The dressing of the hair, bringing a stick and decoration of the hair with various flowers are all well described. Yacodā takes proper precautions to see that evil eyes are not cast on the child and hence undertakes rakṣa for Him. The complaints of the women regarding Kṛṣṇa's mischief and Yocoda's asking the boy not to play tricks and come to her are vividly portrayed. References are made here to the Lord as enshrined in arcā forms as in the previous decad. Kṛṣṇa's drinking away the milk, eating away the rice cooked with jaggery, and snatching away the bangles of a girl and giving

316. ibid. 1.7.
317. ibid. 1.8. cf. the last decad of T.V.K.
318. ibid. 1.9.
319. ibid. 2.1.
320. ibid. 2.2.
321. ibid. 2.3.
322. ibid. 2.4.
323. ibid. 2.5.
324. ibid. 2.6.
325. ibid. 2.7.
326. ibid. 2.8.
327. ibid. 2.9.
328. ibid. 2.9: 5
329. ibid. 2.9: 7
them to another girl for buying rose-apples in exchange are skilfully presented by women to Yacodā. Yacodā recounts His mischievous acts to Him on His face and refuses to give Him breast-milk. She feels sorry for having sent the child after the cows in the hot sun without allowing Him to play with His friends and without giving even footwear and umbrella. The motherly affection and the pride of having such a charming child causing jealousy in the mind of other women are ably portrayed and are superb and graceful. Admirable is the description of the behaviour of women of Gokulam (Āyarpāṭi) when they cast their looks at the boy Kṛṣṇa Who was returning in the evening after tending the cows. The description of the Govardhana hill and its lifting by Kṛṣṇa and playing on the flute are well conceived. The exhilarating effect of the sound of the flute is vividly portrayed with the minutest details of Kṛṣṇa applying His little fingers on the holes of the flute and the movements of His lips and the fine bending of His eyebrows when He played on the pipe. The effect of His music on celestial women, sages like Nārada, semi-divine beings like kinnaras is well depicted. The celestial dancers like Menaka and her other three comrades, and the gandharvas became aware of their insignificant position in dance and music and felt ashamed. The denizens of heaven came down to Gokulam and were following Kṛṣṇa wherever He was proceeding to listen to His music. The bird species deserted their nets and kept lying on the ground, the cows came alert with rapt attention without even moving their ear-lobes, the deer stopped grazing and listened with attention to the music with grass-lits still clinging to

330. ibid. 2.9: 10.
331. ibid. 3.1.
332. ibid. 3.2.
333. ibid. 3.5.
334. ibid. 3.4.
335. ibid. 3.5; 3.6.
336. ibid. 3.6: 8.
337. ibid. 3.6: 3.5.
338. ibid. 3.6: 4, 6.
339. ibid. 3.6: 7.
their mouths and seemed as if they were in picture.\textsuperscript{340} The trees began to exude the flow of honey, and the branches turned towards Kṛṣṇa offering flowers exuding honey.\textsuperscript{341} The mother’s description of how her little daughter felt fascinated by Kṛṣṇa is ably portrayed\textsuperscript{342} as also her anxiety about her daughter’s safety when she is not found in the abode and therefore guessed to have gone after Him.\textsuperscript{343} She is apprehensive of the scandal that may arise as a result of this incident. A kind of sport called ‘untiparattal’ in which little girls take part is described about the child Kṛṣṇa.\textsuperscript{344} Hanuman’s offering the identity regarding Rāma to Sīta are beautifully depicted.\textsuperscript{345} The Ālvār mentions that there are people who had directly seen God in his descents as Ṛṣiṣimha,\textsuperscript{346} Rāma in the sacrificial hall of Janaka,\textsuperscript{347} on the seashore on the eve of crossing the ocean to reach Laṅka,\textsuperscript{348} Kṛṣṇa when He killed the seven bulls,\textsuperscript{349} in the battlefield\textsuperscript{350}, while on the throne with ten thousand wives,\textsuperscript{351} in the battle field of Bhārata,\textsuperscript{352} hiding the sun with discus\textsuperscript{353} and as Varāha having Bhūdevi on his side.\textsuperscript{354} The Tirumāḷiruṇcōlai hills are beautifully described as belonging to the Lord Whose exploits are recounted.\textsuperscript{355} The holy place of Tirukkōṭṭiyūr is well described as a place inhabited by brahmins deeply learned in the Vedas and so must have done good deeds in their previous births to inhabit that

\begin{table}
\caption{Footnotes for page 660}
\begin{tabular}{ll}
340. & ibid. 3.6: 8.9. \\
341. & ibid. 3.6: 10. \\
342. & ibid. 3.7. \\
343. & ibid. 3.8, \\
344. & ibid. 3.9. cf. TVK. Tiruvuntiyār (295–314). \\
345. & ibid. 3.10. \\
346. & ibid. 4.1: 1. \\
347. & ibid. 4.1: 2. \\
348. & ibid. 4.1: 3. \\
349. & ibid. 4.1: 4. \\
350. & ibid. 4.1: 5. \\
351. & ibid. 4.1: 6. \\
352. & ibid. 4.1: 7. \\
353. & ibid. 4.1: 8. \\
354. & ibid. 4.1: 9. \\
355. & ibid. 4.2; 4.3
\end{tabular}
\end{table}
place. People who do not extol the deity in the shrine there
but are after only wealth, cloth and food, must be great sin-
ers. The world is really lucky in being able to get the
contact with the dust of the feet of those who praise this
deity. Such devotees have the right to sell their devotees to
others for any praise, that is, the devotee of God shall
treat himself as a servant of bhāgavatas.

The Āḷvār asks people to utter the names of God even
if it is necessary to go about begging. The holy shrine of
Śrī Raṅgam is described in three decades. In this description
are contained much of the tenets of Vaiṣṇavism. The Lord
will always be by the side of His devotees whatever be the
nature of the activities. He Himself takes His men to His
place. The devotee shall worship the Lord even in advance,
as he is not likely to think of Him in his deathbed. If the
Lord’s Feet are worshipped with flowers to the recitation of
Ṛg, Yajur and Sāma Vedas then that time must be considered
good, otherwise it will be a day of fast. All the diseases
left him because of the protection he received from the
Lord.

ĀṆṬĀL

ĀṆṬĀḷ the foster-daughter of Periyāḷvār composed two
poems of which one is the well-known Tiruppāvai and the
other is Nācciyār-ṭirumolī. The Tiruppāvai is in thirty verses
which teach people of their dependence upon God and of the

356. ibid. 4.4.
357. ibid. 4.4: 3, 4, 5.
358. ibid. 4.4: 6.
359. ibid. 4.4: 10.
360. ibid. 4.6. cf. ibid. 4.5.
361. ibid. 4.8; 4.9; 4.10.
362. ibid. 4.9: 2.
363. ibid. 4.9: 3.
364. ibid. 4.10: 1.
365. ibid. 5.1: 6.
366. ibid. 5.2.
need to serve only the Lord. This doctrine which is based on 
seṣatva is derived from the Upaniṣads. The whole piece is
addressed to the maidens for undertaking a solemn observance
during hēmanta season in the first month. The observance is
known as Kātyāyanī-vrata, worshipping Kātyāyanī, the god-
dess for receiving a suitable husband. The Bhāgavata refers
to this observance by the maidens in Gokulam who bathed in
the Yamuna before daybreak and worshipped the image of that
goddess made of sand. The request of these maidens was to
Kṛṣṇa, the son of Nandagopa as their husband. They used to
go to the river singing the glory of Kṛṣṇa all the way.

Āṇṭāl, being an ardent devotee of Viṣṇu, takes up only
the element of undertaking the observance, the deity to ber
worshipped being only Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. She conceived her
place Śrī Villiputtūr as Gokulam. The maidens there, were
considered as the maidens of the cowherds, and the temple of
the Lord there as the abode of Nandagopa.

The whole piece of Tiruppāvatī could be taken to have
been divided into six groups of five verses each, the first group
of verses representing the nature of observance that she is
undertaking. The maidens are called out for participating in
the observance. They have to take bath early in the morning
and avoid taking ghee, milk and applying collyrium to the
eyes and wearing flowers. They shall avoid doing the forbid-
den acts and uttering evil expressions. They would offer gifts
to the deserving. Besides getting Kṛṣṇa for their husband,
their observance would bestow on lands plenty of timely
showers, peace and above all vast yield of milk on which the
cowherds live. They have to sing the names of Puruṣottama
Who measured the worlds. They request the lord of rain to
shower enough water for their bath. They shall approach

367. Vide: Taniyan beginning with ‘Nila’.
369. T. Pv. 2.
370. ibid. 3.
371. ibid. 4: cf. Tiruvempāvai 16.
the Lord with pure mind, offer pure flowers, bend before Him, utter His names and meditate upon, with the result that the sins committed previously and that are likely to be committed in the future would be utterly destroyed.\textsuperscript{372} The time for starting to the river is announced by the chirping of birds, the blowing of the conch and the brahmmins uttering the words 'hari' when they get up.\textsuperscript{372} 

The second group of verses is devoted to rousing the maidens from their sleep. The cowherdesses begin to churn the curds.\textsuperscript{374} The mothers of some of those maidens are requested to awaken their daughters.\textsuperscript{375} One gopi asks one of the maidens who is sleeping to rise up and open the door.\textsuperscript{376} In the third group of verses, the maidens are called to follow her to the abode of Nandagopa.\textsuperscript{377} Some who have detachment for the world wear the saffron robes and go through the streets to their temples blowing the conches.\textsuperscript{378} The maidens also intend to proceed to sing the glory of Kṛṣṇa.\textsuperscript{379} The fourth group describes how the gate-keepers of the mansion of Nandagopa are requested to open the doors and permit them to enter for awakening Kṛṣṇa.\textsuperscript{380} Nandagopa, Yacodā and Balarāma are then requested to wake up.\textsuperscript{381} Nappināi is then asked to open the door.\textsuperscript{382} The fifth group is devoted to the attempt at the representation of the aspirations to Kṛṣṇa by the gopīs after waking Him up. Kṛṣṇa is informed of the arrival of the enemies of God who have suffered much and now realized of His greatness.\textsuperscript{383} They request Him

372. ibid. 5.
373. ibid. 6.
374. ibid. 7.
375. ibid. 9.
376. ibid. 10.
377. ibid. 13.
378. ibid. 14.
379. ibid. 15.
380. ibid. 16.
381. ibid. 17.
382. ibid. 18.
383. ibid. 21.
to come out of the bedroom like a lion which has waken up just now and walking with a majestic style to occupy the throne and listen to their supplications. All the people wish for His Feet by doing maṅgalāsāsanam. If He were to fulfill their aspirations, they would be able to sing His prosperity and the advantage of serving Him. This would enable them to get full relief from the worldly ills and enjoy bliss. In the last group, the bath which they would now undertake is justified on the strength of the practice of it by the elders. They require certain equipments for their worship of Him, namely, huge conches which would terrify the world with their resonant sound, and big musical instruments. They must have people who would do maṅgalāsāsanam for Him. They require also auspicious lamps, flags and canopies.

The observances of a vow of this kind does not, however, get sanction from the Vedic sources, but certain acts have been in vogue as practices of pious and righteous men whose conduct and behaviour cannot be questioned. On the analogy of Holaka and other practices, these have to be treated as authoritative. The gopīs request the Lord to give them suitable ornaments to put on and allow them to prepare rice with milk and ghee. The gopīs exult over their good fortune for having Kṛṣṇa amidst them. They are all persons roaming in the forests tending the cows. They are utterly unlearned and Kṛṣṇa is born to live as one among them. This reveals God's saulabhya. The relationship between them and Kṛṣṇa is such that it can never be got rid of. This is the highest tattva which scholars seek to realize but is very easily known to these cowherdesses. They could have, out of ignorance and childishness, addressed Him with expressions that deserve to be used

384. ibid. 23.
385. ibid. 24.
386. ibid. 25.
387. ibid. 26.
388. Sabarahāsya on Mīmāṃsā-sūtra 1.3: 15.
389. ibid. 27.
with reference to people of low status. Tho Lord is requested to forgive them for that fault and grant their request. They request the Lord to listen to the purpose of their coming to Him early in the morning in order to do maṅgalasāsanam at His Feet. He must accept their services. They are not the persons to be satisfied with the result they would gain from Him for the time and forget Him afterwards. They request to be related to Him intimately for all times in each and every birth of theirs. They shall do service only to Him. He shall relieve them of any thought as aspiration other than this. Following the tradition of her father she offers maṅgalasāsanam to the Lord.

The fundamental truth preached here is that the selves live only for Nārāyaṇa Who is Uttama, or Puruṣottama. While worshipping God, the deeds which are prohibited have to be given up. The ultimate purpose lies in praising and worshipping His Feet and whatever is done shall be an act of service.

Prapatti is the path for obtaining final release. When the devotees proceed to study the tattva from the preceptor, they are required to take their classmates also with them. Mind is the guard of the temple of God. The spiritual preceptors shall be worshipped in advance and God shall be approached through their favour. Śrī shall be worshipped at first. The preceptor's advice shall be followed and Śrī shall be

390. ibid. 28.
391. ibid. 29.
392. ibid. 24.
393. Bh.G. 10
394. T. Pv. 2.
395. ibid. 3. cf. Tiruvempāvai 15, 16, 19; 20.
396. ibid. 12.
397. ibid. 13.
398. ibid. 16.
399. ibid. 17.
400. ibid. 18.
401. ibid. 19.
requested for Her help.\textsuperscript{402} The Lord shall be awakened, worshipping Him Who resides as Indweller.\textsuperscript{403} External worship (bāhyayāga) shall then be undertaken\textsuperscript{404} The six instruments refer to the six seats arranged for the Lord\textsuperscript{405} The Indweller is then worshipped\textsuperscript{406} and this is called anuyāga. The way of practising prapatti and its effect are suggested.\textsuperscript{407}

The Vaiṣṇavite tradition has attached great significance to the Tiruppallāṅṭu of Periyāḻvār and to the Tiruppāvai of Āṃṭāḷ. The worship of the deity with the recitation of the Nalayiram shall begin with the first two verses of Tiruppallāṅṭu and end with the recitation of the last two verses of Tiruppāvai. The verses of Tiruppallāṅṭu treat of offering māṅgaḷam to the Feet of the Lord, Lord, Śrī and His conch and discus. It is prudent on the part of the worshipper to hope for God’s vision and wish for that for all times. It is foolish to harp upon selfish ends, such as redressal of grievances and removal of miseries. The prayers shall end with an appeal to the Lord to enable the worshippers serve Him for all times. Kaiṅkaryā is thus the sole aim and purpose of the life of a Vaiṣṇavite and it is not therefore a surprise that the compositions of Periyāḻvār and Āṃṭāḷ have come to occupy supreme position in the recitation of the Nalayiram.

Āṃṭāḷ was born for bridal mysticism.\textsuperscript{408} The Āḻvār-nāyakis of Tirumaṅkai Māṇnan and Nammāḻvār with introspective jñāna could only wear the bridal garb and imbibe the intensity of prema and employ the terminology of the bride. The symbology of spiritual marriage is not different from the metaphysical language of deification by which the self is divinised by the alchemy of love. From the point of view of bridal mysticism, Āṃṭāḷ’s two poems, Tiruppāvai and Nacciyār-

\textsuperscript{402} ibid. 20.
\textsuperscript{403} ibid. 21.
\textsuperscript{404} ibid. 23, 24, 25.
\textsuperscript{405} ibid. 26.
\textsuperscript{406} ibid. 27.
\textsuperscript{407} ibid. 28, 29.
\textsuperscript{408} A.H. Sūt. 133.
tirumoli are inspired lyrical rhapsodies which are the quintessence of mystic love poured out spontaneously with unpremeditated but self-concealed art. Her mystic experiences are not visionary or hallucinatory but are historic and true. Here is an inspiring example of a spiritual marriage. It is only those who have pure hearts and who have subdued the lusts of the flesh and tasted bhakti-rasa that can understand her suprarational experience clothed in symbolic imagery and a sensuous garb, and appreciate the language employed by her.

Anthal was like the gopi born for Gopala, the Divine Dark and she vowed to wed Him alone and none else. In her poems there is unique poetic or dramatic gift of portraying with consummate feminine art, the procession of virgin love with her comrades with praise in her lips and prema in her heart to the mansion of Lord Krsna, enthroned in their hearts, wake Him up from his yoganidra and present to Him a petition for granting them the boon of the unitive life. It should prove much more easy for her as a member of the fair sex to realize the Highest through her own route of being. It is clear that for the female of this incarnation, the path of Anthal shows how the transformation could be effected and the rich raptures of the supramental are open to her.

SrI Krsna is accessible to her as Gopala, the cowherd boy; yet He is the Dazzling Divine Dark hidden in the light of love and as the cloud of the Unknowing He is elusive. Now her poetic genius and make-believe come in her way. She imagines herself to be a gopi mad after SrI Krsna; but He is a Divine Beauty which the eye has not seen, the ear has not heard and the hand has not touched. The heart can know Him, but logic cannot. So Anthal invokes Manmatha, but that attempt was not fruitful. Then she tries her success by drawing an omen-circle on the sand (kutal); then she craves the

409. Nac. Tm. 1.5; cf. ibid. 12.4.
410. T. Pw. 6 to 19.
411. Nac. Tm. 2, 3.
412. ibid. 4. This motif has been borrowed from the Akam poetry of the ancient Tamils.
cuckoo to cry for her ocean-hued Lord’s arrival; it is really a pathetic appeal of a love-infected girl. The love-sick maiden sees-Him in her dream as if she goes wedded with Him with all ritualistic details of her marriage function. When she opens her eyes the vision disappears; the joy of physical embrace fades away at the thought of Divine clasping of love. It is an amazing experience which only a born mystic like Ḍārā can feel and know. Now Ḍārā’s flaming love reaches the white heat of consuming passion. There is no response to her irresistible yearning and yet she knows that her love is inescapable. So she sends messages of her burning love to her cruel-hearted Lord through the clouds to intercede on her behalf. But this attempt too does not bear any fruit. So her feelings of forsakenness and frustration ends in the agony of despair.

Normally feminine love is meek, modest and passive but it becomes aggressive when it is not answered and when there is no mutualness or reciprocity. Her prema becomes irrepresible. It becomes irresistible and in its frenzy it bursts the bounds of conventional self-restraint. Despondency has its reaction in defiance and assault. The love-smitten maiden rebukes the lover for his cunning and cruelty. He is a thief as He has stolen away her heart and is elusive and deceptive. He is cruel and callous as He has forsaken a maid captivated by His beauty and suffering from divine possessesion and intoxication. In her desperate mood, she resorts to a unique expedient of assault which has no parallel in bridal mysticism either in the East or in the West. She pines away and seeks relief by plucking out the very roots of feminine love budding from her breast and aims them as missiles at her Torturer.

413. ibid. 5.
414. ibid. 6.
415. ibid. 8.
416. ibid. 10; cf. 9 also with this.
417. ibid. 13.
418. ibid. 13.2, 6; 14.3.
419. ibid. 13.1, 3, 4.
420. ibid. 13.8.
The Fisher and Falconer of feminine souls Who is also seized with soul-hunger could no longer escape from the inescapable love of Āṇṭāḷ. He is pierced by the shafts of love and can no longer resist it. His yearning for contacting her, His elect bride, and enjoying her union has now reached the stage of consummation. At last heart speaks to heart and Āṇṭāḷ visualises her being led in bridal array in all pomp and splendour by the Beloved. The doors of the Sleeping Beauty of Tiruvārāṅkam are flung open. She is caught up in the Bliss of Divine Embrace and is deified.

Āṇṭāḷ's life is idealised and she is idolised in Śrī Vaiṣṇava-vite shrines and homes and millions of Vaiṣṇavites through the ages, particularly in South India, have worshipped her as the embodiment of the fidelity of feminine love raised to the Divine level as His eternal 'other'. Indeed St. Āṇṭāḷ stands as the most marvellous exponent of the bridal path of Mystic Attainment. The sixth decade of the Nācciyār tirumoḻi is now recited on the occasion of the marriage in families which are Vaiṣṇavite in outlook and conduct.

The bridal path attracted also Periyāḻvār and Kulacakāra Āḻvār whose strong inclinations were respectively motherly affection towards Kṛṣṇa and devotion to Rāma, and prompted them to indulge on this theme. Periyāḻvār has sung three decades421 on the gopī's love to Kṛṣṇa and Kulacakakāḻvār only one decade422 on the role of a gopī accusing Kṛṣṇa of several misdeeds and breaches of faith. But bridal mysticism has not taken a deep root in their hymns.

The Upaniṣadic seers have shown that at the back of all types of affection is the love of Self.423 Knowing Him, one becomes attractive to all others.424 Therefore the love-approach is not to be condemned as such. The Āḻvārs, avowedly follow the Bhāgavata. Their love-approach is the

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421. Periyāḻ. Tm. 3.4; 3.7; 3.8.
422. Perum. Tm. 6.
desire for the attainment of God Kṛṣṇa, even as the gopis desired Him. The history of the gopis is the expression of their close and intimate and personal relationship with God, an intimacy possible to the supreme knowers alone. Sensual love was not an item in their approach. They were therefore considered to be ṛṣis come down in their real nature as women; for they were utterly dependent on God, the Primal Male. There is, however, a difference between the Āḻvārs and the gopis. Whereas the gopis were in a situation of actual physical relationship, thrown in His Society, the Āḻvārs had to gain this intimacy in and through the arcā-vatāras of God, all over this Holy Land. They always practised the love to these arcā idols, invariably and without any exception. They removed the dire blot of sex and carnalism and every trace and reminiscence of these, from their love experiences. Sublimation was effected by the worship of the manifestations of God, even abandoning the historical avariṇas, for the arcā viraha are but representations, descents actual, of the Divine. For their part Āṇṭāl, Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār and Nammāḻvār worshipped arcā as their Love-object and clung to it alone. Their eyes saw all human beings including themselves as female; they themselves became spouse fit for the Lord. Their entire dependance on God, or femininity, was absolute, inescapable, divinely ordained from sepulchral years.

MATURAKAVIYĀḻVĀR

The piece of Kamminuciruttāmpu consisting of eleven verses was composed by Maturakaviyāḻvār in praise of his preceptor Nammāḻvār. The poem which is in the form of antāti considers not God but the spiritual teacher Nammāḻvār as the śeṣin. He knows no other deity. Repeating the utterance of his master's name this Āḻvār got supreme delight. He seeks only the feet of the Āḻvār. He will sing the praise of his feet. It is only by being the servant of the Āḻvār that he could see God. Nammāḻvār is his father, mother and

426. ibid. 3.
ruler; he sang the inner sense of the Vedas. It is out of the sincere devotion of Maturakaviyālvar to his preceptor this piece is to be sung before the recitation of Tiruvāyvmoṭi is undertaken. What Maturakaviyālvar practised is not something which was unknown to other Ālvārs. There are numerous instances in which the other Ālvārs extolled the greatness of bhāgavatas and held them as their lords.

TIRUVARAṆKATTAMUTANĀR

The Rāmānuca-nīṟṟantāti of Tiruvaraṅkattu Amutanār which is included in the Nālayiram depicts in the anīṭṭi form the greatness of Rāmānuja. After a brief introduction showing how he had to compose this piece, Amutanār refers to the Ālvārs and their contributions. Peyālvār is referred to as the head among the Tamil scholars. Rāmānuja is stated as cherishing what each of these Ālvārs preached and also keeping their feet on his head and getting guidance from them for his writings. This is clear proof that the writings of the Ālvārs influenced to a large extent Rāmānuja’s philosophy and particularly in writing the Gadyatraya. Rāmānuja is stated to have preached that the three pursuits dharma, artha and mokṣa are related to Vāmana and kāma to Kṛṣṇa. It is said that the teachings of Nammālvār were ever in the mind of Rāmānuja and guided him. Devotion to the spiritual preceptor is stressed by citing his own example of worshipping those who are devoted to Rāmānuja.

The constellation Śravaṇai, which is known as Tiruvōnam in Tamil is held to be presided over by Viṣṇu and the day, when that constellation is present, is celebrated and this celebration
is in honour of Viṣṇu. The compositions of the Āḻvārs contain frequent references to the celebration of this great festival. Perhaps the frequent references to this festival coupled with the Vedic concept of Lord Viṣṇu as the deity presiding over the constellation Śravaṇa are responsible for the observance of this day in each lunar month in great shrines like those at Tiruvarankam, Kāñci, Kumbakonam, Triplicane and others when the deity is taken in procession. The supreme significance of this constellation for undertaking a celebration must have been left unnoticed resulting in the celebration of it in an ordinary humdrum way.
THE ĀLVĀRS AND THE WORLD

The devout men of God are also men of the world. They are also as much living a life in the material environment as others do. Some of them are fully alive to the temptations of life and sufferings of humanity. In fact, Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār and Toṇṭaraṭipōtiyāḻvār had tasted the harder aspects of life. On the other hand, some Ālvārs had, as a result of age-long experience, a subjective attitude of the worldly ills. All the same their minds were steeped in enjoying God-realization and as such avoided the allurements of the world. Whenever the worldly attractions were irresistible, they prayed to God for saving them from getting enticed by the senses. The compositions of the Ālvārs refer frequently to these aspects of their life and on occasions, the Ālvārs offer a bit of advice also to humanity.

"The true mystics of all ages and climes claim to have had a direct experience of God and proclaim in their joy ‘come and see’ and invite humanity to have similar experiences. They are free from the barries that divide one man from another and therefore extend their spiritual hospitality to others".¹ Nammāḻvār, the great mystic as he is, has immense sympathy for his fellow-beings, and occupies a pre-eminent place among God’s devotees. It is he alone that starts singing for the redemption of all his fellowmen. The first song with which he opened his lips is a humble appeal for mercy for the whole mankind. Like the great ṛṣis of Daṅḍakāraṇya² who drew the attention of Rāma to the mutilated limbs of the sages of that place victimised by the Rākṣasas in order to invoke His sympathy and obtain His promise of redress. Saint Parāṅkusa draws the Lord’s attention to the serious

1. Mystics and Mysticism, p. 428.
2. Rām Āraṇya. 6: 15, 16.
drawbacks and failings of humanity: "O Lord; Pray lend Thy ear truly to the humble petition (viṅṇappam) of mine. May we all (entire mankind) never more wallow in this woeful state of false knowledge, evil conduct, and filthy body."

The above sentiment is voiced forth by one who had never talked a word before that since his birth. Is it not a sure indication of the compassion residing in his heart for the whole of mankind?. It may be presumed that this compassion must have been his upper most thought drowning probably even the God-love that had kept him speechless for many years. The sentiment expressed in the first verse of the Āḻvār is exceptional and unique; his compassion for the suffering humanity is commensurate only with his love towards God. It can be seen that this feeling being reflected throughout his four poems, coming to the surface only now and then, but ever present there. The first word of the first verse viz., "poy" stands for falsehood and the last word of the last verse viz., "uyarnti" stands for exaltation. If ever any soul migrated from falsehood to exaltation it was Nammāḻvār. Prince Siddhārtha activated by his pity and compassion for the afflicted renounced his kingdom and took to the life of a mendicant trying to find a solution to soothe and heal and became a Buddha; but he did not postulate God in his philosophy. But Saṭhakōpa, whose compassion for the erring humanity equalled, and even exceeded Buddha's indulges very frequently in heart-felt prayer to his God to help man to cast off sin, and partake of the pleasures of divine Bliss. There are indeed occasions when he bitterly complains against God and accuses Him of being selfish and self-centred and not caring for the true welfare of His created beings. There are again occasions when finding that no one in the world responds to his call to come and pray, the Āḻvār becomes bitter and says things very uncomplimentary to man. He says: "Let

5. T.V.R. 3, 4, 13, 25, 33, 50: P. Tv. 6, 9, 15, 22; T.V.M. 1,4; 2.1; 2.4 5.3; 6.2; 8.5: 9.6.
6. T.V.M. 4.9; 7.5.
any one do anything he likes. Who can try to correct this wide and diverse world? I rejoice in the feeling that by the Grace of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Who is the Lord of the Eternals, I have been enabled to wipe out pain and distress from my mind."7 But his fellow-feeling very soon asserts itself. Then we find him casting off complacency, putting in a plea once more for afflicted men and telling the Lord that it would be wrong for Him to expect men to think of Him or come to Him even to pray for succour.8 He asks: "What stuff are they made of? Where are they situate? How can'st Thou expectest them to think of Thee, or to come to Thee for relief?"9 The Āḻvār tries to explain by referring to the primordial sin that prevents man from even bowing his head or folding his hands in prayer;10 and to the potency of the senses that are strong enough to assail even the Lord's chosen devotees in Paramapada—"Viṇṇulārpermārku aṭimai ceiyāraiyum cerum aim-pulan ḳivai".11

This alternation of feeling in the Āḻvār between sympathy for man in his distress, and disgust at man's waywardness which persists in putting God out of man's thought, word and deed, - and between prayer for his own safety and for the safety of the entire humanity - is seen even more pronounced in his Tiruvāyōnti. He is even more vociferous here in his condemnation of God's indifference to human woes: "Already this wretched world is unable to concentrate on the freshness and beauty of Thy glorious Form. And to such a distraeted world Thou hast given a multitude of conflicting and mutually destructive faiths and schisms. If Thou, Who art bound to protect them, indulge in self-satisfaction, and think of nothing but the freshness and fragrance of Thy tulacī garland, willst not this world goest to ruin?"12 That even during

7. P. Tāv. 25.
8. ibid. 32.
9. ibid. 47.
10. ibid. 84.
12. ibid. 3.4:4.
his ecstatic moments of God-enjoyment, the saint has an eye
towards afflicted humanity and never fails to shed a tear for
their inability to partake of the feast of the soul he is revel-
ling in, speaks volumes about his compassion for suffering
humanity. His is a desire to share his God-enjoyment with
his fellow beings. Even in the first contum he calls out to
them in three decades. It is noteworthy that these three
decades are couched in short metre quite unlike the others
which is not a mere coincidence. It must be a deliberate trick
of language indulged in to invite reluctant men into the
Divine fold by giving them short, but sweet advice. Be that
as it may, one thing is clear: the one hundred decades of the
great work of this Āḻvār are interspersed with hymns addressed
to his fellowmen. Those hymns point out to them the empti-
ness of human life and the vanity of human wishes at times;
at other times, they draw their attention to the greatness and
glory of God, and to the pleasures and ecstasies derived and
derivable from God-life and God-love.

There are several places in the course of the Tiruvāyumoli
where the Āḻvārs drows God's attention to the world. The
feelings with which he does so are markedly diverse. In one
hymn he dreads, shuns and abhors the world that he sees
before him, and prays to God to take him away and not to
show him the wicked world. The Āḻvār loses himself in the
thought that God combines in Himself all the contradictions
known to man. As a born mystic he is sustained by the
love of God and he extends the hospitality of his divine
experience to the whole world of jīvas with a view to
establishing a spiritual community of devotees.

Life on earth is only for a limited period. The maxi-
mum duration, as known from the Vedas, is limited to one
hundred years. Half of this is spent in sleep. Fifteen years
of the remaining half are spent in childhood and boyhood.
The rest is taken up by all kinds of sufferings such as illness,

13. ibid. 1.2; 1.6; 1.8.
15. ibid. 6.3.
hunger, old age and miseries.\textsuperscript{16} There is however no guarantee that every individual is bound to live for one hundred years. One may die now or at a later date. People do witness that life here is not stable. Yet they have faith in life as if it would be everlasting. They are really of debased thought.\textsuperscript{17} Until the physical frame begins to scent debility, the self does imagine that it has been always strong and formidable.\textsuperscript{18}

Apart from the desire to live for long, there is the attraction of sex which creates a self-complacent attitude that man enjoys the company of women and that the pleasurable situation in which he is placed could not be taken away from him at any time. Personal experience teaches man, however, that there sets in both physical and mental debilities.\textsuperscript{19} Ton\textit{ṭ}araṭīp-poṭiyāḷvār recollects with much remorse how he lost the occasions for rendering service to God by being lured into the company of women.\textsuperscript{20} When the eyes roll with rheum and the man is affected by consumption, the women who were sweet in their utterances to him, ask him to go away gently. Such women would join together and laugh at him and ask him why he was coming to them coughing. They may laughingly tell him ‘Don’t come to see us in this condition’. The women, whose slender waists fascinated him before, would scorn at him and shut the door against his face. They, whose eyes were once bewitching him and uttered sweet words to him will now jeer at him. They, whose sexual passions were uncontrollable, now suppress them and refer to him as wicked and old. He who was fondled as cupid is now treated as decrepit. Such are the situations which a man of voluptuousness will have to face.\textsuperscript{21} Therefore the Āḷvārs warn

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{16} T.M. 3; cf. Bharṭṛhari: \textit{Vairāgyaśatakam} (v. 10) for a similar description.
  \item \textsuperscript{17} Tc. V. 66; cf. English rendering of this verse: “Living beings enter the abode of Yama every day. Those who remain behind wish to live permanently. What is more wonderful than this?”
  \item \textsuperscript{18} cf. T.M. 6.
  \item \textsuperscript{19} T.M. 5.
  \item \textsuperscript{20} ibid. 33; cf. ibid. 16.
  \item \textsuperscript{21} cf. Peri. Tm. 6.4.
\end{itemize}
people not to get attracted by women. They are requested to think of the evils that lie in the path of material life and pray to God for protection before they are deceived by women and they are still in sound health. The diseases eat away the body. The relatives press him when he is disabled to tell them where his possessions lie. The senses and limbs gradually fail to function. People begin to cry in distress all round. In addition to the residues of past experiences, there is the danger of man falling an easy prey to bad company. To this evil group belong those who mistake the unreal for the real and vice versa and who are lascivious. Food and clothing alone form their pursuit.

The Āḻvārs appear to enjoin a code of conduct for themselves as it were. They would not aspire to have the wealth of another, nor would they make friends with the wicked. They would only think of God, worship Him and his devout men. The Āḻvārs therefore appeal to their mind and also to the people to worship God. According to them the Ascent to the Absolute starts with purified and moral state. They speak of the removal of faults, the removal of angry mind, the false sense of prestige and vain desire. They also refer to the necessity of conquering or transmuting the passions. The devotees are described as those whose mind has become calm and is without any blemish. Their company therefore gives acme of divine bliss to these saints. God is pleased with the character and behaviour of such devotees who are capable of worshipping His Feets. Therefore the Āḻvārs always desire the company of goodmen, – the bhāgavatas – the devotees of God who in their opinion can influence to a great deal their life and conduct.

22. T.M. 2.
23. Periyāḷ. Tm. 4.5; cf. Peri. Tm. 1.1 : 7.
24. Perum. Tm. 3.
25. cf. M. Tv. 64 to 67.
26. Peri. Tm. 1.5; 3.9; M. Tv. 48; I. Tv. 41.
27. ibid. 11.6; T.V.M. 2.10; 4.10.
28. cf. Peri. Tm. 6.1; 6.2; 6.3; T.V.M. 3.8; 4.9; 7.1.
29. T.V.M. 8.10: 9, 10.
30. ibid. 8.10 : 7.
The Āḷvārs were imbued with sympathetic outlook for humanity but were not men who were to mix up freely with the sufferers and live amidst them. The devotional element was preponderant in their lives and as such they either went into deep meditation or moved from place to place visiting the sacred shrines. The knowledge of the sufferings in the world which they had is found suggested or described in their poems when they became aware of the limitations set to their enjoyment of God’s presence. Then they appealed to God to free them from such restrictions enabling them to have supreme bliss without any hindrance. On occasions, they appealed to their minds not to return to the worthless atmosphere of material prosperity and advised people to forsake the worldly pleasures for taking to a better and healthier way of life which would lead to eternal prosperity. Tirumāḻicaiyāḻvār, Toṇṭaraṭi-poṭiyāḻvār and Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār had much to contribute by way of advice to people. The Āḷvārs are not thus either spiritual preceptors or ācāryas or reformers imbued with the zeal to enforce ethical codes on people. They did not have a band of disciples whom they could train or a host of followers who carry out their injunctions. They were more poets to sing of the glory of the Divine, leaving the task of leading the people in the right direction to those who were prepared to work towards that end.
Chapter XXVI

THE NĀLĀYIRAM AS DRAVIDA VEDA

The compositions of the Āḻvārs contain references to the Vedas and to God as known or proved by the Vedas. The Vedas go after Him searching Him who expounded them. Several places where are situated the sacred shrines are described as inhabited by those who are well studied in the Vedas and as resounding with the recitation of the Vedas. This is a clear proof to show that the Āḻvārs came in the line of Vedic tradition which they followed and recorded in their compositions.

It is from the composition of Maturakaviyāḻvār that the worth of Nammāḻvār’s Tiruvāymoḻi is known as valuable and great as that of the Vedas. Nammāḻvār is stated here to have sung in sweet Tamil the thousand verses which represent the contents of the Vedas. The inner sense of the Vedas is fully brought out by him. This evidence comes from one who was the immediate disciple of Nammāḻvār whom he served and by whom was taught the Tiruvāymoḻi and the other three compositions.

1. Peri. Tm. 5.5: 9; 7.7: 2; T.V.M. 8.3: 2.
2. ibid. 5.6: 1; 8.4: 1; 8.10: 1; 11.8: 9; T.V.M. 1.6: 2; 1.8: 10; 2.7: 2; 2.9: 8; 3.1: 10; 3.3: 5; 3.4: 6; 3.5: 5; Te. V.14, 117; Nac. Tm. 4: 10; 10: 2; Nāṇ. Tv. 13 etc.
3. ibid. 4.1: 6; 4.8: 3,7.
4. T.V.M. 2.10: 10; I. Tv. 48.
5. Peri. Tm. 2.10: 10; 3.8: 4; Periyāḻ. Tm. 4.4: 1; T.V.M. 5.7: 9; 10.8: 10.
6. ibid. 3.10: 5; T.V.M. 5.9: 3; 7.3: 1,4.
8. ibid. 9.
Nāthamuni was virtually responsible for the spread of the Nalayiram and for making its recitation obligatory both in the temples and houses. In the Sanskrit tanīyān which he composed in honour of Maturakaviyāḻvār, he refers to this Āḻvār as deriving delight only by the simple recitation of the Upaniṣads of Nammāḻvār. He was the beginner of the tradition which declares the compositions of Namamāḻvār as Upaniṣads. In the Tamil tanīyan about the same Āḻvār, he refers to the Āḻvār as Saṭhkopa who rendered the Veda into Tamil: ‘Vētam Tamiḻ ceyta Māṟan’. In the tanīyan to the Tiruvāy- moṭi he refers to the work as the ocean of Drāvida Veda comparable to the Upaniṣad which has thousand recensions. The Sāma-veda is spoken of as having thousand recensions. The Upaniṣad which is attached to this Veda is the Chāndogya and Nāthamuni’s stand is that the Tiruvāymoṭi is a Tamil rendering of the Chāndogya Upaniṣad. It is obvious from this that in Nāthamuni’s opinion, the Tiruvāymoṭi is an Upaniṣad and that too of the Sāma-veda.

According to Īśvaramuni, the son of Nāṭamuni, Namamāḻvār rendered the Vedas into the anīti type of Tamil.9 Rāmānuja states that the Tiruvelukkūṟirukkai of Tirumāṅkaiyāḻvār contains in entirety the import of the Vedas.10 Among the immediate disciples of Rāmānuja, Anantāḻvān held that Saṭṭakōpā composed the Veda in Tamil.11 Arulāḻap-perumāḻ Emperumāṅgar refers to Namamāḻvār as having composed Tiruvāciryāma in āciriyappā metre and as the expounder of the Vedās.12 Parācara Paṭṭar refers to the Tiruvāymoṭi as Tamil Veda in thousand verses13 and as the music of the Veda.14 The same scholar describes Āṇṭāḷ as preaching through the Tirupāvai the ṣeṣavṛtti that is taught in the Upaniṣads. This last reference has much significance in as much as the Tirupāvai

9. Tanīyan beginning with ‘tiruvaluti-nāṭu.,
10. Tanīyan beginning with ‘cīrār’.
11. Tanīyan beginning with ‘cēnta’.
12. Tanīyan beginning with ‘kācīṇiyōr’.
13. Tanīyan beginning with ‘vān-tikalum’.
14. Tanīyan beginning with ‘mikka īrai’.
does form part of the Tamil Vedas. In addition, it is the cream of the Vedas, as what is taught through Vedānta is taught in this piece.

The Ārāyirap-paṭi of Pillān is extolled by Maṇavaḷamāmūnīkaḷ, conveying the import of Nammāḷvār’s Veda\(^{15}\). Vedānta Deśika refers to the Āḷvār as having rendered the Vedas into Tamil.\(^{16}\) Nāṭhamuni is said to have taught the Tamil Vedās in musical setting.\(^{17}\) Tiruvanakattamutaṅgar makes frequent references to the Tamil Veda. Poykaiyāḷvār wrote in pure Tamil about the purport of the Vedas.\(^{18}\) So also did Tiruppānāḷvār\(^{19}\) and so was strung a garland of Tamil Veda by Toṭṭaraṭippotiyāḷvār.\(^{20}\) The imports of the Vedas which are beyond the reach of the people were brought out by Saṭṭhakopa in thousand sweet Tamil verses.\(^{21}\) Rāmānuja had the realization of the import of the Vedas composed by Nammāḷvār.\(^{22}\) Through Rāmānuja’s services, the Vedas which reveal Nārāyanā became delighted and the pure Tamil Vedas composed by Nammāḷvār continued to flourish.\(^{23}\) What is noteworthy here is that eminent scholars of the Vedas like Periyāḷvār\(^{24}\) and Maturakaviyāḷvār composed hymns in Tamil in praise of God and Āḷvār respectively. Vedānta Deśika refers to the preceptors as holy (bhagavān) who are proficient in the Tamil Vedas.\(^{25}\) He calls the composition of Nammāḷvār ‘samhita’, a word which is widely used to refer to the Vedic texts.\(^{26}\)

17. ibid. last verse.
18. R.N. 8.
19. ibid. 11.
20. ibid. 13.
21. ibid. 18.
22. ibid. 46.
23. ibid. 54.
24. The very title ‘Paṭṭar’ shows that Viṣṇu-cittar was a vedic scholar and the author of commentary on the Kalpasūtra. One of the passages in his compositions suggests his acquaintance with the Pūrva-mīmāśa rules (Vide: RTS p.545)
It is thus noticed that after Nāthamuni, the Nālāyirām became reputed as Tamil Vedas and the Tiruvāymoḷi as the Upaniṣad in Tamil. The two works Drāmidopaniṣat-sāra and Drāmidtopaniṣat-tātparyaratnāvali which are in brief the sum and substance of the Tiruvāymoḷi lend support to this tradition of thought. This shows at the same time that the other three compositions of Nammāḻvār as also those of other Āḻvārs were treated simply as the Vedas.

The first twenty-one verses of the Tiruvāymoḷi convey clearly the purport of the Vedānta system. They represent the twenty-one recensions of the Rg Veda. The thousand verses which are set to music represent the Sāma-veda teachings in thousand recensions. The hundred decades represent the Yajur-veda which has one hundred recensions. This composition abounds in the delineation of the eight sentiments and so represents the Atharva-veda which has eight recensions. Hence the Tiruvāymoḷi shall be taken to represent all the Vedas. This is only an attempt to justify that the Āḻvār’s composition Tiruvāymoḷi is Tamil Veda.

Curiously enough, attempts were made, in this period to declare that the Tiruviruttam, Tiruvāciriyam, Periya-tiruvantāti and Tiruvāymoḷi represent the essential teachings respectively of Rg, Yajur, Atharva and Sāma Vedas. This identification does not stand to reason. The Tiruviruttam, which is the first work of Nammāḻvār, begins with a reference to the worldly sufferings and a request to God for listening to his humble petition for rendering service at His Feet. The work shall rather be taken to contain the incidents which take place in life, in order to get freed from repeating them. The name ‘Tiruvāciriyam’ refers to composition in āciriya-pā metre. It represents the supremacy of Narayana and His glory. Periya-tiruvantāti, which is composed in the antāti scheme and in venpā merte, depicts the parama-bhakti of the Āḻvār and it is for this reason that the word ‘periya’ which

27. Drāmidopaniṣat-tātparyaratnāvali, 5 cf. ibid., 10.
28. Vīda : A.H. Sūt. 50: U.R.M. 9; The printed texts contain references of this kind at the beginning of these compositions.
means ‘big’ is used as the adjective here. The fourth composition, the magnus opus of this Ālvār, is Tiruvāymoḷi which is not merely an utterance that issues out of the mouth but is great and supreme and hence has the adjective ‘tiru’ being prefixed to it.

On the contrary, any attempt at establishing parity between these four compositions and the four Vedas would only lead to confusion. The Vedas as such could be interpreted as expression of the Lord’s greatness, and in that sense alone these four compositions and those of all other Ālvārs could be deemed as the Vedas. Too much has been made of the fact that Nammāḻvār’s compositions number four, and also the fact that Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār’s number six, so that an equation is sought between the four Vedas and Nammāḻvār’s four works and similarly between the six “Vedāṅgas”29 and the six works of Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār. The two Maṭals or the Tāntakams of Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār have nothing in common with any of these nor could Periya-tirumoḷi be identified with any of them. The Tiruveḻukkuṟṟirukkai is more a citrabhanda than an ordinary piece and does not have any comparison to śikṣas or chandas. Moreover, there is no justification to treat these six compositions as auxiliaries to the four compositions of Nammāḻvār. It is idle to play on the ‘number’ of these compositions and try to connect them with the Vedas and their auxiliaries. Moreover, it remains to be explained as to what place the compositions of the other Ālvārs would occupy among the Vedic texts. When these two sets of these compositions exhaust the comparison with the Vedas and their auxiliaries, the other compositions should either cease to be designated as Vedas or given some other names such as Upa-Vedas. All these attempts would lead to draw unjust and invidious distinctions among the compositions of the Ālvārs. The proper procedure that deserves to be adopted is to admit the tradition that has been handed down from Nāṭhamuni and to treat the Tiruvāymoḷi as an Upaniṣad of

29. The ancillaries are six in number viz., phonetics (śikṣa), grammar (vyākaraṇa), prosody (chandas), etymology (nirukti), astronomy (jyotisa) and ceremonial texts (kalpa).
The Sāma-veda, the composition being based on the same number of recensions of the Sāma-veda and that of verses in the Tiruvāymoḷi. The remaining compositions in the Nālāyiram represent the Vedas as such. There is no need to mark out some of them as identical with a particular Veda nor is it proper to treat the other three compositions of Nammāḻvār as other three Vedas.

The traditional commentators and exponents simply held that the four thousand verses of the Āḻvārs are the Tamil renderings of the purport of the four Vedas. It was suggested by Vedānta Deśika, in the context of maintaining the parity between the Tiruvāymoḷi and the Vedas, that this composition of Nammāḻvār represents the essence of the four Vedas. All the commentators of the Divya Prabandham as a whole or in part have recognized that Nammāḻvār composed the four compositions in the order of Tiruviruttam, Tiruvācīrīyam, Periga-tiruvantāti and Tiruvāymoḷi.

Nāṭhamuni refers to the Tiruvāymoḷi as the ocean of Tamil Veda which is comparable to the Upaniṣad of Sāma-veda. The basis for maintaining this comparison is not hard to seek. The Vedānta system, which is based on the Sanskrit sources, is said to have triple foundations (prashṭhāna-traya) of which the Brahma-sūtras formed the chief subject of study and exposition. These sūtras which were compiled by Vyāsa represent the authentic exposition of the philosophical inquiry of the tenets of the Vedānta school following a particular order in the treatment. These sūtras were prepared following the traditions maintained in the Sāma-veda. Nevertheless, they became the foundations of the Vedānta traditions for the followers of all the branches of the Vedas. This is evident from the larger number of citations made by the exponents of these sūtras from the Chāndogya Upaniṣad than from any others. That these sūtras were

30. T.P. 384.
31. Drāmidōpaniṣat-tātparyaśayamāvali 5, 8.
32. ibid. 126.
adopted by the followers of other Vedas as well is clear from the profuse citations made from the Brīhadāraṇyaka, Taittirīya, Aitareya and Mūḍaka Upaniṣads which belong respectively to the Suklayajur-veda, Kṛṣṇayajur-veda, Ṛg-veda and Atharva-veda not to speak of many other Upaniṣads like the Śvetāśvatara and others. Besides these, relevant passages are cited from the Samhitā, Brāhmaṇa and Āraṇyaka portions of the Vedas, Bhagavad-gitā, Viṣṇu-purāṇa and others showing thus, all these sources of knowledge represent a unified whole. Yet the fact remains that the essence of the teachings of the Brahma-sūtras belongs to the Sāma-veda. It is in this light that Nāthamuni should have treated the Tiruvāymoṭi as the Upaniṣad of the Sāma-veda. Maturakaviyālvār who was a follower of the Sāma-veda, declares that Nammālvār had brought out the full import of the Vedas. Nāthamuni and Maturakavi are not really contradicting each other, as what is taught in the Sāma-veda is also conveyed by other Vedas and their Upaniṣads and the Vedāntins did not find any discrepancy in citing freely the passages from more than one Veda and one Upaniṣad to support an interpretation in the same context. Perhaps the recent attempt as establishing the parity of the four compositions of Nammālvār with the four Vedas represents over-shooting the mark, revealing the zeal to reconcile the statements of Maturakaviyālvār and Nāthamuni.

The outpouring of the heart mellowed by the deep sen- suous realization of the arca form of the deities at Tirumālī- ruṇcolai, Tirukkurūṇkuṭi and other places, the sudden outburst of the mental anguish caused by severe disappointment at the loss of the divine communion and the contemplative expressions at the dizzy heights of the Lord’s eminence and His descents providing easy accessibility to the suffering man-kind were experiences discontinuously had by Nammālvār with the result that there is not found in this composition the sequential treatment of these experiences. It is therefore apt to maintain a likeness between the Tiruvāymoṭi and the Chāndogya Upaniṣad or for that matter any other Upaniṣad or even the Veda which contain various currents of thoughts which are not presented in a particular order. It is therefore
all the more appropriate to refer to Nammālvār as a seer\(^{34}\) like the seers of the mantras. Hence the Tiruvāymoḷi can both be a Samhitā and an Upaniṣad.

The commentaries and the sub-commentaries of Pillān and others on the Tiruvāymoḷi containing profuse citations from the epics and Purāṇas bear comparison to the Bhāsyās on the Upaniṣads and the Vedas. As in the sphere of the Vedic studies, here too there are differences in interpretation noted within the frame of Vaiṣṇavism.

The Brahma-sūtras represent the teachings of the Upaniṣads in an orderly manner. In the light of this treatment, it is possible to find out a systematic presentation of the Vaiṣṇavite doctrines from the Nāṭāysram. The relevant passages are scattered all through the Tiruvāymoḷi and other compositions of the Āḻvārs. Following the doctrines preached in the Jitāntastotra, Mahābhārata, Viṣṇu-purāṇa and other sources, the Āḻvārs recognized Brahman as the Supreme Person, Nārāyana with Śrī.\(^{35}\) He has unsurpassed bliss\(^{36}\) and is the abode of unlimited auspicious qualities. He has the world of sentient beings and non-sentient things as His body.\(^{37}\) He is everything.\(^{38}\) Nothing is beyond Him.\(^{39}\) He is superior to Brahmā and Śiva\(^{40}\) and has none as His equal or superior.\(^{41}\) He is the Supreme Light,\(^{42}\) He has a body golden in com-

34. Pādukāsahasra, 1.3:
35. Mū. Tv. 1 and Nāṇ. Tv. 54.
38. cf. Ch. Up. 3.14: 1 and T.V.M. 1.1: 4; 1.1: 7; 1.3: 9; 2.6: 10; 3.4: 10; 3.10: 10; 8.1: 6, 7; I.Tv. 24, 31; M. Tv. 89; Nāṇ. Tv. 51, 56, 96; Tc. V. 86, 94; Peri. Tm. 5.10: 1; 9.4: 10.
41. Sv. Up. 3: 9; 6: 8 and T.V.M. 1.2; 1.3: 2; M. Tv. 89; and Nāṇ. Tv. 51, 56.
plexion and his eyes resemble the lotus. He is the creator of all, being the prime cause for everything. Though the created world is not different from Him, He is not in the least tainted by its impurities. He has full control over everything and is the Indweller of the sentient beings and the inanimate world which He pervades fully.

Nārāyaṇa bestows on the selves right knowledge which becomes progressively devotion unto Him. This shows that the self and knowledge cannot be identical. He is the Lord of all created beings which establishes that He is distinct from them which also have difference among themselves. The word 'cūṭa' suggests that the lustrous frame which lends radiance to others could not be screened by anything, let alone nescience. It is also suggested in some of the verses that certain doctrines which are held by certain schools of

44. ibid. 1.6: 7 and T.V.M. 3.7: 1.
46. This shows that He is both the material and instrumental cause of the world. cf. Ch. Up. 6.8: 1 and T.V.M. 1.9: 1; Br. Up. 3 4: 1, 17 and T.V.M. 1.5: 2, 5; 2.8: 5; 10. 10: 8. Creation, maintenance and destruction are also meant by this. cf. Ch. Up. 3. 14: 1.
47. Kath. Up. 2.5: 11 and T.V.M. 3.4: 10; cf Ch. 6.8: 1; 3.14: 1; Suklavya-jur-veda: Śāntipatha; and T.V.M. 1.1: 6; 1.1: 10; 1.5: 2; 3.4: 10; 7.6: 1; 10. 5: 3; 10. 7: 2.
49. Br. Up. 3.7: 11; Taitt. Ar. 3. 11 and T.V.M. 8.1: 5; 10. 5: 3. He has also the forms of Brahmā, Rudra and Indra. cf. Nārāyaṇīya Up. 10.1 and T.V.M. 8.8: 11; 9.3: 2; 1.1: 7. Etymologically the word 'nārāyana' is apt to represent Brahma of T.V.M. 1.2: 10; 1.3: 7.
52. This is the rejection of Sāṅkhya view.
53. The world cannot therefore be illusory. Differences shall persist, as otherwise, the worldly process which goes on through mutual differences and variations among the animate and inanimate groups could not be explained.
54. This is an attempt to reject the theory of the Advaitins that though Brahma is self-luminous, it is screened by māyā.
thought could not be maintained. They are: (i) An effect cannot be pre-existent in the cause and cannot be produced anew; (ii) the world is a void; (iii) Brahmā and Rudra and others could also be supreme deities on a par with Vişnu and (iv) Brahmā and self become identical during the period of release. These may be taken to represent the contents of the second chapter of the Brahma-sūtras. It is thus proved that the position of Brahmā itself and in relation to the world stands un-contradicted.

Brahman is to be known only through the Vedas which however do not reach Him as He is beyond thought and description by words. Knowledge of reality is necessary for obtaining mokṣa and this reality is only the Supreme Person. Since He alone would choose the self which He desires to favour, the self should realise that through devotion unto Him, it could win His favour. When He reveals Himself, the latter’s experience of Him is as delectable as nectar. As this does not lie within the capacity of the selves, self-surrender is the easiest means which a self could adopt. All this is dealt with in the third chapter of the Brahma-sūtras. The path called acirāti-mārga which is dealt with in

55. This is Ārambhavāda of the Nyāya Vaiśeṣika schools. This is contradicted in T.V.M. 1.1:11.
56. This Sūnyavāda of the Buddhists which is contradicted in T.V.M. 1.1:9.
57. The doctrine of Tirimūrtti gets emphasis in the Puraṇas and this is contradicted in T.V.M. 4.10:1.
58. This is the Advaita doctrine which is contradicted in T.V.M. 8.8:9.
59. This is the position arrived at in Ch. 1 and 2 of the Brahma-sūtras.
60. Nārāyaṇa Up. 94; T.V.M. 1.7:1.
61. Taitt. Up. 2.3:8; Peri. Tm. 4.1:6.
63. Kath. Up. 1.2:23; cf. T.V.M. 2.3:1; 2.5:1; 5.5:1; 6.5:3, 7.7:1.
64. Br. Up. 4.5:14; and T.V.M. 2.5:9; 10 10:11.
66. T.V.M. 10.9:1; 1.3:11; 10.9:9; P. T.M.L. Kan. 16; C. T.M L. Kan. 7; Peri. Tm. 4.9:3; Tc. V. 67; cf. Ch. Up. 4.15:5.
the fourth chapter of the *Brahma-sūtras* is explained in greater detail by the Āḻvārs. During the period the self is to live here, it shall refrain from following the material ends and get detachment from them.\(^{67}\) It shall ever entertain a keen desire to get release.\(^{68}\) The released souls see Him for ever in the Paramapada.\(^{69}\)

Some *Vedical* scholars took objection to the study and recitation of the verses composed in languages other than Sanskrit. The following are the grounds on which their objection is based: (i) The languages other than Sanskrit are not sacred and so do not deserve a special status for composing prayers. (ii) If these languages are used for spiritual purposes, women and *sūdras*, who are forbidden the study of the *Vedas*, would learn these compositions and use them for holy purposes. (iii) The *Tiruvāymoṭi* was composed by Nammāḻvār who was born in the *sūdra* caste and as such what he composed shall not be studied or recited by the brahmins. The Āḻvār’s composition could not be the source for gaining knowledge about Brahman. (iv) Unlike the *Vedas*, these verses could be understood only by people who live in a particular region where Tamil is spoken and understood. (v) Even though those who are qualified to study the *Vedas* but do not do so, take to these compositions. (vi) These compositions speak about love (*kāma*) which is opposed to the teachings of the *Vedas* and Śrīvīśīṭis. (vii) Lastly, these works speak of *kaivalya* which is said to be the *purusārtha*.

**Naṉcīyar**, who noted down these objections, cites a verse from the *Matsya-purāṇa*\(^{70}\) referring to Kaiśīka and others who sang in different languages. He notes that in the same context Yama is reported to have declared that recitation is only of those verses which do not deal with God. Naṉcīyar adds that if because what is written in a particular language is to be rejected, then what is written in Sanskrit

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69. Taitt Sam. 1.3:6.2 and T.V.M. 5.10:11.
70. *Liṅga-purāṇa*, 2.3: 43, 44.
could also be rejected with the result that the Sanskrit language could be given up. The Ālvārs composed these compositions in Tamil in order that even women and südras could make use of them for prayers. Though born in the südra caste, Nammāḷvār received the Grace of God and therefore became possessed of the real nature of tattva, hita and puruṣārtha and so was qualified to deal with philosophical matters. He is thus superior to Vidura, Ṣabari and others. Those who had attained much proficiency in literatures in other languages like Sanskrit appreciate these compositions. The words 'vedana' and 'upāsana' which are mentioned in the Upaniṣads, mean devotion which the Tiruvāyumoḷi refers to as kāma. Aīśvarya and kaivalya are rejected in these compositions as the results got through them are little and unstable. These compositions cite the Vedas as evidences for the doctrines that they preach.¹¹

Vedānta Deśika²² without reference to this objection, states that the songs composed in languages other than Sanskrit are commendable. The following are the reasons stated in this connection: (i) The Lord Nārāyaṇa is dealt with in these compositions. (ii) In accordance with the statement,²³ that the Lord is to be worshipped as if He were a youthful king, intoxicated elephant or a dear guest, He is to be worshipped as a king. This means that the servants could use their own languages while attending upon the king who becomes delighted with their service. The language that is used here is of no consequence. (iii) The Tamil language was devised and developed by Agastya. The members of all the castes could make use of this language. Like the epics and purāṇas which are supplementary to the Vedas, the samhitā of Saṭhakōpa reigns supreme in this respect and is superior to them. That is, it offers a splendid exposition of the purport of the Vedas. It is further said by the same author²⁴ that a language other than Sanskrit must be adopted,

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73. Sāṇḍilya Śmṛti 4: 31.
74. Satsampradāya Parisuddhi, pp. 35–36.
if necessary that a language other than Sanskrit must be adopted, if necessary that being helpful in the better understanding of the Vedantic truths.

The fact that could be gathered from the stand taken by Naṅcīyar and Vedānta Deśika on the place of the Nālāyiram is that the compositions of the Ālvārs are based on the teachings of the Vedas. They are thus not preaching anything which could be considered as antagonistic to the Vedic truths. These works contain references to the Vedas and to some recensions as well and so are to be considered as expositions of the Vedic teachings in a different medium, namely, Tamil. They are certainly intended for the use of women and sūdras who are forbidden the study of the Vedas and for those who inhabit the Tamil Nad and who know the Tamil language. The epics and purāṇas are supplements to the Vedas. In a similar way, these shall be considered as the supplements of the Vedas. They are not the Vedas themselves but are Vedas in Tamil in so far as they serve the purposes which the Vedas serve. Many a matter whose source could not be traced to the Vedas were visualized by the sages, namely, Ālvārs and dealt with in these compositions and as such they have come to be treated as the Vedas themselves. For instance, the worship of the arcā form of God, and devotion to God and to the devotees of God are dealt with in the purāṇas, but they were brought to the people at large only by the Ālvārs. The doctrine of self-surrender though traceable to the Pāñcarātra Āgamas, became popular only through the compositions of the Ālvārs. The greatness of the Veda lies in its being the storehouse of knowledge which is not available through any other means. That is, the Vedas became the supreme authority as a source book of knowledge about ultimate truths. Similarly, these matters which have attained popularity only through the Nalayiram justify the compositions of the Ālvārs to get the appellation of the Vedas.

A perusal of the life accounts of the Ālvārs would reveal the fact they were mystics who composed these poems

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75. Peri. Tm. 3.4:1.
merely through inspiration. It is not made clear how they were able to divine the ultimate truth and present it in a wonderful manner. To this extent, they could be treated as the seers (drśta) like the Vedic seers. The eternal truths are presented by the seers either through the Vedas or through these Tamil compositions.

After the period of Nāθhamuni, one and the same scholar had deep grounding in the Vedānta and Sanskrit sources and that is based on the Tiuvāymoḷi. The highlight of the adoption of this kind of training is found in the Ubhaya Vedānta concept which was anterior to Rāmānuja in origin and secures on reliable evidence, to have been held as a title by Tirumalai Nampi.66 Vedānta Deśika held it to be his proud privilege for calling himself as the follower of the Tamil Veda,71 as he would claim to be the follower of the branch of the Veda. A further result of this training lies in the traditional study of the Tiuvāymoḷi with commentaries, as one of the four texts78 taken up for spiritual study under a preceptor. Further, the Nālaviram is studied from the preceptor as the Veda. Rāmānuja, as we know, had the adhyayana of the Tiuvāymoḷi at the feet of Tiruvarankap-perumāḷ Araiyan and had the exposition at the feet of Tirumālaiyāṭān.

The concept of Ubhaya-Vedānta was only in so far as the study and realization of the ultimate Reality. Like the Vedānta among the Vedic texts, Tiuvāymoḷi is more popular among the compositions of the Āḻvārs. Yet, like the Veda of a particular recension, the entire compositions of all the Āḻvārs have importance in the scheme of spiritual training of the Vaiṣṇavites. Hence those who have studied these compositions of the Āḻvārs are called ‘Tamil Maṟaiyōr’.

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76. Yatirāja Vaibhava, 1
77. T.P. 384. ‘cantamikku Tamil Maṟaiyōn’.
78. The other three are: (i) The Rahaśya-granthas, (ii) Bhagavad-gītā Bāṣya, rdd (iii) Śri Bāṣya.
79. cf. R.G.S. Ch. 5. ‘Maṟainūl tantaveṭiyōṟē’. 
SECTION V

POST-ALVÅR PERIOD

SUMMARY

In this section it is shown how the religion and philosophy of the Alvars were formulated by the Ācāryas and how the gospel of the saints had been kept alive. From Nathamuni up to Vedānṭa Deśika on the one hand and Maṇavāḷamāmunikaḷ on the other it is shown, with reference to the sources in the relevant texts and their commentaries, how these Ācāryas and their disciples and followers have promoted the Alvār cult.

It was Nathamuni who arranged for the recitation of the compositions in temples and in private worship and also composed introductory verses called 'taniyans' to certain compositions, which tradition was followed by his successors for other compositions. The establishment of Ācārya cult, the installation of niches and temple: for the Alvars and Ācāryas, the writing of commentaries for the Alvars' compositions and the writing of the original works on the Alvars' poems by way of explanation or elucidation have helped the propagation of the cult. The contributions of Uyyakkoṭār, Maṇaṅkaḷ Nampi, Ālavantār and his six important disciples and Rāmānuja have kept alive the tradition of learning the compositions of the Alvars.

It is also shown how Rāmānuja had fulfilled the desires of Ālavantār who had laid down the
fundamentals of Viśiṣṭādvaīta, how he was fully equipped by his six preceptors who were the important disciples of Āḻavantar, how he took special interest in placing the Nalāyiram on an equal footing with the Vedas and also how the Āḻvārs’ poems had helped him in writing his works.

Further it is also pointed out how Rāmānuja established Ācārya dioceses with pious householders who were his disciples as their heads to popularise Vaiṣṇavism and its philosophy with the zeal of missionarise and how his followers like Kūśattāḻvān, Anantāḻvān, Pillān, Mutaliyāṇṭān, Kitāmπi Āccās, Yajñāmūrtti, Vaṅkipurattu Nampi, Pillaittiru-nāraiyār, Araiyyar, Empār, Parācāra Pattar and others have kept the mantle of Āḻvār cult burning by their composing of ‘taniyans’ for the poems of the Āḻvārs and by their expositions of the Prabandhams regularly in temples and other places, and how those expositions have become to stay as permanent commentaries in certain cases are discussed here briefly. It is also shown how the two schools of Vaiṣṇavism arose for the propagation of the compositions of the Āḻvārs after the death of Rāmānuja with two conflicting sets of works, two Guruparamparas which give two different accounts of Rāmānuja’s successors and their achievements and also the probable causes which give rise to this schism. It is further pointed out how Vedanta Deśika as a representative of Vatakalai sect had flooded the Vaiṣṇavite world with his copious writings of many forms of religious literature in Tamil as well as in Sanskrit for the propagation of the Āḻvār cult and how Pillai Lokācāryar as a representative of the
Tenkalai school had produced an appreciable quantum of works in the field for the same purpose. It is shown also how an attempt was made to depict the lives of Āḻvārs and Ācāryas in the form of epic as in the case of Divyasūri-caritam and to recount the tradition of Vai avism as in the case of Prapannāmrttam and Aricamaya-tipam according to the sources available to the authors of these works. The eighteen points of difference between the two sects of Vaiṣṇavism have received some brief discussion here.

How the impact of the Nālayiram as their basic text had a powerful influence and appeal to the exponents of Viśisṭādvaita Vedānta is indicated here and how this sacred anthology provided the basis of a speculative philosophy and how it bridged the gulf between day-to-day life and religion have been pointed out. It is further shown that the influence of the Nālayiram on temple worship is unique in that in no Vaiṣṇavite shrine in the South, the daily routine worship and the during the days of festivals are conducted without the recitation of portions or whole of one or more compositions of the Āḻvārs. The recitation of the Nālayiram before the deity in procession and on twenty days in the month of Mārkaḷi (December–January), the singing of Tiruppavai and Tiruppallıt-i-ellucci during Mārkaḷi month and of 'Vāranamāyiram' during marriages illustrate the influence of these compositions on society.

Even in the days of Rāmānuja it was felt the necessity of having a commentary for the Tiruvāyamolī for the understanding of its philosophical and
religious purport. The *Six Thousand* was the first work brought out by Pillai. Very soon other commentaries followed from the pen of Naćiyyar, Alakiyamaṇavāla Jiyar, Periyavāccān Pillai, Vatakkuṭ-tiruvitip-ḷai Kōneri, Tāṣyai, Raṅgarāmnūjamuni, Periyaparakālaśvāmin, Vedānta Rāmnūjaśvāmin and others giving out the various shades of meanings and different kinds of interpretations to certain verses in these compositions thus contributing a great deal towards the philosophy and religion of the Ālvārs.
NĀTHAMUNI TO RĀMĀNUJA

FROM THE ĀLVĀRS TO THE ĀCĀRYAS: There arose a new epoch in the history of Sri Vaishnavism—the age of the Ācāryas. The hagiologists make a distinction between the Ālvārs and Ācāryas in this, that, while the former were only inspired men who were divers into divinity, the latter, though they too are inspired, had their inspiration tempered by learning and scholarship. The Ācāryas are the expositors of the Ālvārs’ experience; they based their teachings on both the Sanskrit and Tamil scriptures. Their task was to interpret the Ālvārs’ experience in terms of Viśiṣṭādvaśaic thought and the Viśiṣṭādvaitic philosophy in terms of Śrī Vaishnavism and spread the gospel of propatti among all persons. They taught that Brahman is the sarīrin of all persons and things and though He is the One without a second metaphysically, He also exists as Śrīman Nārāyaṇa in the interests of world redemption. Further, they did not solely rely on bhakti as the Ālvārs had done, but united jñāna and karma with it for realizing God. This was required to be done in the light of Prasthānatraya.

THE ROLE OF THE ĀCĀRYAS: The main object of the Ācāryas was to reconcile the teachings of the Nālayira Divya Prabandham with those of the Vedas, the Upaniṣads, and the Gītā. In fact, they aimed at interpreting the former in terms of the latter. In consequence of this, posterity has given them the significant title of Udbhaya-Vedāntins. It is worthy of note that the Ācāryas regarded the Ālvārs as objects of worship—in fact, as the incarnations of Viṣṇu’s weapons, carriers, or immediate followers in Vaikuntha.1 They regarded the Tamil

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1. According to the Guruparamparās Poykaiyār, Purattār and Pēyār were the incarnations of Saṅkhya (crotch), Gada (club), Nandaka (sword); Tirumalicaip pirāṇ was regarded as the incarnation of Cakra (wheel) of Viṣṇu, Nammāḻvār that of Visvaksena, Kula-
Prabandham as the equal of the Vedas, and introduced it in public and private worship. They thus broadened the curricula of holy studies so as to include Tamil scriptures, and were the promoters of the Āḻvār cult. Further, they elaborated and perfected the Viśiṣṭādvaita school of thought with the aid of the doctrines, particularly that of self-surrender which they derived from the Āḻvārs as well as from others sources. Ācāryas passed through the different stages of orthodox life, and discharged their duties so as to serve as patterns for their followers. All the Śrī Vaiśṇava festivals, observances, fasts, vows and customs can be traced to the rules laid down by the Ācāryas. They were thus the makers of modern Śrī Vaiṣṇavism – its society, rituals, practices and ideals. It is not surprising, therefore, that they too, in their turn, have become objects of worship, and have been raised to equality with the Āḻvārs whom they themselves apotheosized.

Nāṭhamuni-His Services to Vaiṣṇavism: The first of the Ācāryas was the famous Nāṭhamuni whose full name was Raṅganāṭhamuni. Nāṭhamuni was an erudite scholar in the Vedas, Sūtris, and other scriptures; he was a yogin and a great devotee of Viṣṇu. He was born, according to Guruparamparā tradition, in the year Sbhakṛ of Kaliyuga 3684 which corresponds to 583 A.D. and lived for 340 years. This account becomes inadmissible, since the period of these 340 years corresponds to that of the Āḻvārs, and it does not fit in with the tradition that Nāṭhamuni was for a long time not aware of the compositions of the Āḻvārs till he heard the eleven verses of Nammāḻvār sung by the devotees who visited his place Viṇārāyanaṇapuram. It is also said in the Guruparamparā that he did not live up to 916 A.D. when his grandson

ckenarap-perumāl that of Kaustubha, Periyāḻvār that of Garuḍa, Tonṭaraṇi-poṭiyāḻvār that of Vanamāla and Tirumāṅkaiyāḻvār that of Sāgara. Aṇṭāl was considered to be the incarnation of Nila Dēvi.

2. T.V.M. 5.8.
3. G.P. p. 72. The place is now known as Kāṭṭumānār kōyil (South Arcot District).
Āḷavantār was born. Therefore his date of birth could be fixed as 823 A.D. which was also Sobhakṛti year. He could have lived up to about eighty years, till 903 A.D.

HIS ELEVATION OF THE STATUS OF THE PRABANDHAMS: It has already been mentioned how Nāthamuni acquired the Four Thousand verses of the Āḻvārs direct from Nammāḻvār. He collated these verses and arranged them into four parts of approximately one thousand verses each, in the manner of four Vedas arranged by Vyāśa, added introductory verses to some sections and classified the verses according to different metres; the musical modes of these verses were also settled by Nāthamuni with the help of his two nephews and introduced the Prabandham to be sung in the temple of Rājagopāla in his village. By giving the Prabandham the status of the Vedas in the temple, he proved that the holiness of the works written in Tamil was not in any way inferior to that of the works written in Sanskrit. Very soon the Prabandham came to be, like the Vedas, an essential part of Śri Vaiṣṇavas’ education.

Besides arranging for the recitation of the compositions of the Āḻvārs, Nāthamuni composed four introductory verses, three in Sanskrit and one in Tamil. The verses of this kind are technically known as ‘tanyāns’. They bring out the greatness of the particular Āḻvār and of his contribution, before the compositions of the Āḻvār are sung. The first piece is in praise of Periyāḻvār. Here it is said that this Āḻvār was able to cite passage after passage from the Vedas when he argued before Vallabhaddeva of Madurai and established the superiority of Viṣṇu over other deities. He had not studied the Vedas in the traditional manner from any preceptor. Nevertheless, he could distinguish himself as well-versed in the Vedas through the Grace of God. He was the father-in-law of Lord Raṅganātha. He was respected by gods and was an ornament for the Brahmin community. This piece is recited

4. ibid. p.76.
5. Vide: Section III. Chapter X.
6. G.P. p.73.
7. This begins with the words "Gurmukhamanadhitya".
when Periyālvār Tirumoli is taken up for recital. The second verse is sung before Maturakavīḻvār’s composition is taken up for recitation. Nāṭhamuni prays for Maturakavi’s appearance in his heart. He is keen not to forget him, as it is only for reciting this Āḻvār’s piece Kaṇṭinūm-ciruttāmpu 12,000 times he was able to get the vision of Nammāḻvār. Here it is said that Maturakavi did not know any thing in the world except Nammāḻvār. His only happy experience consisted in singing the Upaniṣads. By the word ‘upaniṣad’, Nāṭhamuni means that the compositions of Nammāḻvār were held by Maturakavi who was well versed in the Vedas and Sāstras as sacred as the Upaniṣads. Attracted by the qualities of Saṭṭakōpa, Maturakavi considered Nammāḻvār as the only sēsin for him. There is also a Tamil piece in praise of Maturakavi. Here it is stated that Maturakavi is the only saviour for Nāṭhamuni. Maturakavi felt convinced that his existence was dependent on Nammāḻvār who was also known as Māraṇ, whose songs capture the essence of the Vedas in Tamil and who was the chief person in Āḻvār Tirunakari. He did not know anything else and sang in praise of Nammāḻvār. The fourth piece which is in Sanskrit is in praise of Tiruvāy-moli, and is recited before its recital is taken up. The Tiruvāy-moli is an ocean as it were of the Tamil Vedas. It appears to its devotees as nectar, thus conferring on them immortality, so that they would never miss the grace of the Āḻvār and of God. It is admirable and acceptable to all the people. It grants the four fold aims of life (purusārtha). It is in the form of utterances of the Āḻvār and it is only the Chāndogya Upaniṣad in Tamil containing one thousand verses which correspond to the thousand recension of the Sāma-veda. These four verses bring out clearly the respect which Nāṭhamuni had for the comositions of the Āḻvārs.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ĀCĀRYA CULT: Once made a holy authority, the Prabandham had to be intensively studied,
obscure passages had to be explained and commentaries had to be written. The words of the Āḷvārs had to be interpreted in the light of the Śrutiś and Smṛtiś. All this required the formal recognition of an authoritative pontiff. This necessity together with that of expanding and defending the Pāṇcarātra doctrine against rivals, led to the establishment of the post of a universal Ācārya, whose authority was law in religious worship and whose advice was a guide to temples and householders. It was natural that when the institution of the pontiff was established, the choice fell on Nāṭhamuni.

INSTALLATION OF THE IMAGES OF ĀLVĀRS IN TEMPLES: Nāṭhamuni took efforts to install the images of Ālvārs in the Śrīraṅgam temple and made arrangements for their birth-day celebrations. The recitation of the Prabandham was made an integral part of temple worship at Śrīraṅgam. This innovation effected a silent revolution in temple worship, as it raised the status of the Prabandham to the level of the Veda and liberalised the meaning of Revelation. The celebration of Prabandham-recitation festival, otherwise popularly known as Pakal-Pattu and Irāp-pattu (Day-Ten and Night-Ten) integrated with the great Ākādaśi Festival in the month of Mārkaṭi (November-December) was introduced lasting for three weeks. The adoption of the Prabandham as a sacred text by the Śrīraṅgam temple and of the Prabandham-recitation festival was very soon taken up by the prominent Vaiṣṇavite temples of South India. The establishment of the images of the Ālvārs and the recitation-festival soon spread throughout the Śrī-Vaiṣṇavite world. There is epigraphic evidence that at least from the time of the Cōla king Rājarāja I, the hymns were recited in Viṣṇu temples during worship and in festivals just as Ṭevāram hymns were recited in Śiva temples. One inscription of 1242 A.D. mentions a choir of fifty-eight brahmins reciting Tiruvāymoli in Kāṇcipuram.

THE WORKS OF NĀṬHAMUNI: With Nāṭhamuni, Śrī Vaiṣṇavism commenced a new era of activity and expansion. As a scholar and thinker he wrote two Sanskrit works, viz.,

Nyāya-tattva and Yoga-ropaśya. Both the works are now lost except a few stray quotations from Nyāya-tattva which are given in the Nyāya-Siddhānta and other works of Vedānta Desika.14 Nyāya-tattva is the first modern treatise on the Viśistādvaita Metaphysics and Logic and it was elaborated by the later Ācāryas Yoga-ropaśya appears to have dealt with the methods of meditation (yoga) for God-realization probably according to the Vaiṣṇavite school. Probably the doctrine of self-surrender, the most important dogma of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism, was first authoritatively enunciated by Nāthamuni. He is said to have had eight disciples15 of whom Uyyak-konṭār and Kurukaik-kāvalappan were the most prominent. Nāthamuni imparted all the fundamentals of the Ācārya cult to these disciples.

UYYAK-KONṬĀR: Nāthamuni devoted all his time in his last days to the practice of samādhi.16 He was thus, in another respect, a true representative of the tradition of Vaiṣṇavism of adopting meditation as the appropriate means for obtaining direct vision of the Lord.17

Nāthamuni was succeeded by Uyyak-konṭār (826-931 A.D.)18 otherwise known as Pundarikākṣa for a short period of spiritual headship. He had six disciples, namely, (i) Manikkal Nampi, (ii) Tiruvallik-kēṇip-pāpperumāl arayar, (iii) Čeṭṭai-pūcic-ceṇṭalaṅkarar, (iv) Śrī Puṭṭarika-

14. Nyāya-tattva is also referred to by Vaiṣṇa Deśika in his Nyāya-parisuddhi in which Gautama's Nyāya-sūtras were criticised and refuted. p. 13.
15. They are: (i) Uyyak-konṭār, (ii) Kurukaik-kāvalappan, (iii) Nampi karunākarakatāsar, (iv) Ėru-tiruvuṭaiyār, (v) Tirukkanya-maṅkaiyāṭṭān (vi) Vānamāmalai teviyāṭṭān (vii) Uruṭṭūr Āccan Pillai, and (viii) Čokatūr Ālvān (vide Ālyārkul Vaiikkuravar Yaralāru, p. 17).
16. G.P. p. 76.
17. There are mentioned two occurrences which happened in his last days which show effectively he used this means to realize God (vide G.P. pp. 75-77).
18. He was born in the year Parābhava (826 A.D.) and lived for 105 years. Vide A.G.P. fol. 13(b), 14(a)
tāsar, (v) Kōmaṭam Tiruvinnakarappān and (vi) Ulakup-perumāl Naṅkai. It is stated that Maṅkkāl Nampi served his master Uyyak-konṭār for twelve years as a devoted dis-
ciple. After the death of his master’s wife, he took charge also of the household duties of his venerable guru. Uyyak-
konṭār asked Maṅkkāl Nampi to teach Yāmuna all that he was taught. Yāmuna, however, was not born during the life-
time of Uyyak-konṭār,19 and Uyyak-konṭār only prophesied his birth in accordance with the old prophecy of Nāṭhamuni.

Uyyak-konṭār’s training under Nāṭhamuni and in all probability his realization of the supreme significance of the Dvaya-mantra, made him endear himself to the message con-
tained in the Tiruppāvai of Āṇṭāḷ. It is not therefore sur-
prising that he, in his zeal to carry on the traditional res-
sponsibility entrusted to him by his preceptor, should have been alive to the need to propagate the philosophy of the Āḻvārs. Hence he composed two verses in Tamil which are now sung before Tiruppāvai is recited:

The first verse20 means that one must repeatedly utter the name of Āṇṭāḷ who was born in Śrīvilliputtur, who composed several lyrical verses in praise of Śrī Raṅganātha ren-
dering them in musical melodies. She had also decked herself with flower garlands prior to the offering of them to the Lord. In the other verse,21 he addresses Āṇṭāḷ as a golden creeper. She was wearing various kinds of bangles, the resonant sounds of which were heard while she undertook an observance according to an ancient tradition. He desires that she should help him in scrupulously realizing the significance of the Tiruppāvai and putting it in practice. The purport of the Tiruppāvai is stated to be that its reciter requests Āṇṭāḷ to enjoin on him Kaiṅkarya to Śrī Vēṅkaṭēswara, the Lord of Tirumalai. Perhaps, this is suggestive of the practice of the

19. In the light of this information which is contained in G.P. p. 78, it is difficult to admit the evidence of P.T.A. on the direction of Uyyak-konṭār’s life.
20. It begins with the words “Anṉvayal putuvaṉ”
21. This begins with the words “Cūṭikkoṭutta”
Hindus to undertake any observance in the name of Sri Vēṅkaṭēśwarā, which is in vogue even today and must have been the case even in the days of Uyyak-koṇṭār.

The other chief disciples of Nāthamuni, named Kurukaiikkāvalappan, inherited from his master the methods of meditating on God. He spent much of his time in meditation, Āḷavantar, the grandson of Nāthamuni, missed initiation in yoga from him who directed the former to meet him on a particular day. Āḷavantar did not remember the day and went to see only the vacant site where the master would be in deep meditation. These practices did not deter Kurukaikkāvalappan from evincing interest in the Divya Prabandham. His direct visualizing of God through yogic practices must have created a liking, in particular, for the Third Anṭai of Pēyāḻvār who began his composition with his glimpse of Lākṣmī and Nārāyana.²² Pēyāḻvār was also a yogin. Hence Kurukaik kāvalappan composed a verse in Tamil which is sung before this Anṭai is taken up for recitation.²³ Here it is said that this Āḻvār saw God who resembled the cloud in complexion in the beautiful Tirukkōvalūr. The mind is asked to think in praise of that Āḻvār’s feet who said “I saw Lākṣmī”. In the Tiruvāymoli²⁴ the Āḻvār says that God had entered into him. There He remained with unsurpassed knowledge and all auspicious qualities. The Āḻvār is visualizing Him. The Lord is so attached to the Āḻvār that he would not divert His attention towards anything else. Kurukaikkāvalappan is stated to have explained to Āḷavantar and added that even if Lākṣmī were to tighten Him in Her embrace behind, he would not have His attention diverted from the Āḻvār.²⁵

Tirukkaṇṇamaṅkaivyāntan another disciple of Nāthamuni composed two verses which are sung before Anṭai’s Nācciyār-tirumoli is taken up for recitation. In the first

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23. This begins with the words “Cirūrum maṭa”.
24. T.V.M. 2. 6 : 2.
25. Vide Periyavācchān Pillai’s commentary to T.V.M. 2. 6 : 2 in his Twenty-Four Thousand.
piece 26 Ṭāḷ is said to be the friend of the divine woman Lakṣmi whose seat is the lotus. Ṭāḷ was well-known as the beautiful daughter of Viṣṇu-cittan not only in Śrī Villiputtūr but also in the adjoining Mallī-nāṭu. She was like the enchanting peacock for that region. This may be taken to mean that she captivated that region also through her qualities. She well deserved to be in the company of Kṛṣṇa. She was the lamp for the family of Vēyars in which her foster-father Viṣṇu-cittan was born. In the second “taniya”, 27 reference is made to Ṭāḷ’s asking the conch Pāṅcacanyā how it felt the mouth of the Lord when he blew it. 28 She asks it to explain how fragrant the mouth of the Lord would be. She was like the parrot moving in the groves and capable of offering to Śrī Raṅganātha the garland which she wore at first. Her holy Feet, Tirukkaṇṭamanaṅkaiyāṭaṅ tells us in this verse, are the refuge for all. Tirukkaṇṭamanaṅkaiyāṭaṅ must have been a native of Tirukkṛṇamaṅkai which is a place rendered holy by the hymns of Āḻvār and situated near Tiruvārūr in Thanjavūr District.

Besides these, Īsvaramuni, the son of Nāthamuni, appears to have evinced a great interest in the propagation of the philosophy of Nammāḻvār’s compositions. He composed a verse for being sung before Tiruvāyamoḷi is taken up for recitation. In this piece which is in Tamil, the mind is asked to remain clear and think constantly of the place of Nammāḻvār which is called by several names such as ‘Tiruvalutti nāṭu’ ‘Tenkurukūr’, ‘the beautiful Tamparaparāṇi’. The mind shall always contemplate upon the Feet of the Āḻvār who composed Tamil Antāṭis equivalent to the Vedas. There is one more piece 29 by this scholar 30 which is to be sung

26. This begins with the words “Allināṭṭamaṇarai”.
27. This begins with the words “Kōlaaccureicaṅkal”.
28. Nac. Tm. 7.
29. It begins with the words “Tiruvalutti nāṭu”.
30. This begins with the words “Manattalum vāyālum”.
31. This scholar is mentioned as Coutai Nambi in the printed editions of Tiruvāyamoḷi. He is identified with Īsvarabhattāḻvāṅ, son of Nāthamuni, since he belonged to the family known as ‘Coutai’ (vide G.P. p.83).
before undertaking the recitation of Tiruvāymōli. Here the scholar says that he would not worship either by words or by thought any one except those who worship Nammāḻvar. He is not in any way poor for that. He has taken shelter under Saṭṭhakōpa.

MANKKĀL NAMPI: Maṇakkāl Nampi (889–994 A.D.) who was also known as Śrīrāma was the successor to the pontifical seat which Uyyak-kōṭṭār occupied. The latter could not live to see the birth of a grandson for Nāthamuni and so he instructed his pupil Maṇakkāl Nampi to carry on the tradition through ‘Yamunait-tūraivan’ which, according to the wish of Nāthamuni, shall be the name of the grandson. Accordingly, a son was born to Īsvaramuni, son of Nāthamuni and he was named Yamunait-tūraivan by him. After education, circumstances brought to Yāmuna which is the shortened form of the boy’s name, a princely life in the palace of the ruling king where he was known as Āḻavantār. Maṇakkāl Nampi managed to meet him in person and took him to Śri raṅgam where he taught him the Bhagavad-gitā which he learnt from his preceptor. His contribution to the study of the Āḻvār’s compositions is a verse which he composed in Tami to be sung before undertaking the recitation of Perumāl-tirumoḷi of Kulacēkarāḻvār. Here is a reference made to an incident which is narrated in the Gurupa-amparās to have taken place in the life of Kulacēkarar when he was the king. An ornament was lost and the devotees of God, with whom the king moved freely, were suspected to have committed theft by the palace authorities. To convince them that the devotees of God would not have stooped to pilfering, Kulacēkarāḻvār introduced his hand inside a jar within which a poisonous cobra was placed. Their innocence was to be admitted if the

32. Bodily worship must be intended here.
33. He was born in the year Virōḍhi of Kaliyuga 4052 vide P.T.A. p.
34. G.P. p. 78.
35. ibid. p. 81.
36. It begins with the words ‘Āram Ketapparan’.
serpent did not bite him. He thus got a victory over his enemies. A great archer and the king of Kolli, a Cera is addressed here as the chief of kings. This is clear proof to suggest that Maṇakkāl Nampi was in touch with the propagation of the Āḻvārs. The suggestion that perhaps this verse which was composed by Maṇakkāl Nampi could have been intended by its author to wean Āḻavantār away from the royal glory which he was then enjoying may be admitted but is lacking in evidence to support it. Besides, it is not stated that he taught any of the compositions of the Āḻvārs to Āḻavnatār.

Maṇakkāl Nampi had five disciples, namely, (i) Yāmuna, (ii) Teivattukkaracu Nampi (iii) Kömatam Tiruvinṇakarappān, (iv) Cirupaḷḷūrapaiya Pillai and (v) Vaṅkipurattu āycci. Yāmuna Alias Āḻavantār: Maṇakkāl Nampi was succeeded by Yāmuna as the spiritual head. Even as a boy, it is stated, that Yāmuna showed his prodigious learning and skill when he accepted the challenge of Ākkiyāḻvān, the court Pandit of the Cōla King, made to his teacher Mahābhāṣya Paṭṭār and easily vanquished him in the learned assembly of the king by a clever puzzle. He was at once greeted by the queen as “Āḻavantār” for having conquered the proud poet, and was granted a portion of the kingdom according to the terms of the polemic duel. Thereafter he was known as “Āḻavantār.” He lived a life of luxurious ease for a long time, enjoying his riches, and took no notice of Maṇakkāl Nampi. But Maṇakkāl Nampi with some difficulty obtained access to him and availed himself of the opportunity

38. Āḻvārkaḷ Vaḷikkurarav Varalāru, p. 35.
39. He was born in Kali 4017 Dhātu year (916 A.D.) and lived for 125 years vide P.T.A. p.
40. Prapannāmṭam, Chap. III.
41. There is an anecdote in the Prapannāmṭam to the effect that, when Yāmuna became a king and inaccessible to Maṇakkāl Nampi the latter was very much concerned as to how he could carry out the commands of his teachers and initiate Yāmuna into the path.
of teaching him the Bhagavad-gitā, which aroused the spirit of detachment in him. Āḷavantār followed Maṇakkāl Nampi to Śrī Raṅgam eagerly to take possession of the treasure about which Maṇakkāl Nampi had intimated to him. There he was shown the Sleeping Beauty in the shining shrine and was told that was the patrimony bequeathed to him by his grand-father Nāthamuni. He became converted and, renouncing everything, became a great devotee and took sannyāsa. One of the last instructions of Maṇkkāl Nampi was to direct him to go to Kurukaik-kāvalappaṇ and learn from him the yoga-rahaṣya which was taught to him by his grand-father who had asked his disciple, Kurukaik-kāvalappaṇ to communicate the same to his grand-son Yāmuna.

YĀMUNA’S CONTRIBUTIONS: After becoming a sannyāsi Āḷavantār’s whole life was dedicated to spirituality and service, the twin ideals of a Vaishnavite and he made Śrī Raṅgam a veritable Vaikuntha on earth. As a philosopher his main task was the criticism of the Advaita, and he was an eminent controversialist and author of valuable treatises on Vedāṇīa. He was fond of Nammāḻvār’s works the doctorines of which were often explained to the people. He was the author of six rahaṣya works, viz., (i) Siddhi-traya, (ii) Gitārtha-saṅgraha, (iii) Āgama-pramāṇya, (iv) Stōtra-raṇṭa, (v) Catu-ślokī and (vi) Mahā-puruṣa-nirṇaya. Of these the Siddhi-traya is the most important which explains the main teachings of Viśiṣṭādvaita in three sections: Ātma-siddhi, Īvara-siddhi, and Sāṁvit-siddhi, demonstrating respectively the nature of the individual soul, the supreme Lord and relation between the soul and the objects of percep-

of devotion. He got into tuch with Yāmuna’s cook, and for six months presented some green vegetables (alarka-śāka) which Yāmuna very much liked. When, after the six months, the king asked how the rare vegetables found their way in the kitchen, Maṇakkāl Nampi stayed away for four days praying to the Lord Raṅgānatha, the the local deity, to tell him how he could approach Yāmuna. In the meanwhile, the king missed the green vegetables and asked his cook to present the old sannyāsi when next he should come to the kitchen: Maṇakkāl Nampi was thus presented to Yāmuna.
tion. His Gitärātha-saṅgraha is a masterly summary of the truths of the Gitä and it is a luminous exposition in about thirty two ślokas of the nature of prakṛti, puruṣa and puruṣottama and of the need of bhakti and prapatti as the supreme means of salvation. According to Āḻvantār, yōga in the Gitä means bhakti-yōga. This work was later developed by Rāmānuja and further elaborated by Vedānta Desika. The Āgama-pramāṇya is a work in which he tries to establish the high antiquity and undisputed authority of the Pañcarātra literature, which is supposed to be the canon of the Srivaishnava-vites. Āḻvantār's Śtōtra-ratna, which is a master-piece of lyrical devotion, reveals his disceering faith in Nārāyana and Srī and the intense humility of the philosopher-devotee who pours forth his heart-felt bhakti in seventy soul-stirring verses to which there is no parallel in Śtōtra literature. It is really in ardent praise of the doctorine of self-surrender. The Catu-śloki, as the name itself implies, is a poem consisting of four verses in praise of Srī Lakṣmī. It describes the status of Lakṣmī as the consort of Viṣṇu and the part played by her in the soul's salvation. It is the earliest of the stōtras sung about Srī and furnishes the foundation and basis of later works on Srī Tātvika such as those of Āḻvān, Parācāra Paṭṭār and Vedānta Desika. In his Mahāpuṣṭa-nirñaya, Yāmuna proves the supremacy of Viṣṇu, who, he holds, is the Mahāpuṣṭa of the Puṣṭa-sūkta, "the essence of the Vedas". In fact, Yāuma has clearly laid down the lines on which Rāmānuja later on elaborated the system of Viśiṣṭād-vaita.

His Śtōtra-ratna is, firstly, highly suggestive of his indebtedness to the contents of the Nālāyiram. A casual study of this poem would suggest this, and a critical study would confirm it.42 Secondly, Yāmuna had three wishes to accomplish in this life-time, but he could not carry out even one among them. His hand had three fingers bent even

42. cf. Śtōtra-ratna, 40; M.Tv. 53.
ibid. 22; TVM 6.10: 10; 5.7: 1.
ibid. 38; ibid. 10.10: 2.
ibid. 61; Tc.V. 90.
though he expired. Rāmānuja, who was brought there by Periya Nampi, one of the disciples of Yāmuna, at the behest of the master, noted this and enquired if the master had any wish of his unfulfilled. The disciples who were assembled there informed Rāmānuja of the master’s wishes. One among them was that much interest should be shown in the compositions of Nammāḻvār. Rāmānuja agreed to carry out all the three wishes upon which the fingers got straightened. From this, it is evident, Yāmuna had an earnest desire to make people familiar with the teachings of the Āḻvārs.\textsuperscript{43}

A more convincing evidence to prove that Yāmuna had deep enthusiasm for the propagation of Tiruvāymozhi is from the verse composed in honour of Nammāḻvār and which forms part of his Śrūtra-ratna. Here he tells of his bowing his head at the Feet of Nammāḻvār. These feet are attractive because of the bakula flowers adorning them. He admits the Āḻvār as the chief of the entire family of those who had surrendered themselves to the Lord. The Feet of the Āḻvār represent the mother, father, young women, sons and material prosperity and so for him, they are everything and there is nothing for him but them. While interpreting the verse\textsuperscript{44} in Tiruvāymozhi, Yāmuna is said to have interpreted the word ‘tamilar’ as referring to the first three Āḻvārs, the word ‘icaikār’ to Tiruppāṇāḻvār and the word ‘paṭṭar’ to Periyāḻvār.\textsuperscript{45}

In this connection it is amusing to find later sub-commentaries of the Tiruvāymozhi, frequent references to the view of Yāmuna on the import of some of the hymns of Nammāḻvār. The Guruparamparā does not mention anywhere that he was taught the Prabandhams from any preceptor, yet it is not proper to suggest that Yāmuna did not offer any comment on these hymns. What is difficult to understand is the absence of a single reference expressive of Yāmuna’s views in the Six Thousand of Tirukkuraikaip-piran and Nine Thousand of Naṅciyar. Frequent references to these are found in the

\textsuperscript{43} G.P. p. 102.
\textsuperscript{44} TVM. 1:5: 11.
\textsuperscript{45} Ḵu on 1:5: 11.
Twenty-four-Thousand of Periyavāccān Piḷḷai (1168–1263 A.D.) and Thirty-six-Thousand Īṭu of Vaṭakkut-tiruvīṭip-piḷḷai (1168–1265 A.D.). In all probability, these matters passed on orally from preceptor to pupil until they got recorded in the sub-commentaries of the above-mentioned two writers.

There is one aspect which remains inexplicable. In some of the cases noted by the commentators Rāmānuja explains in full, the significance of Yāmuna’s interpretation. In certain cases, the later commentators note a difference of opinion offered by Rāmānuja, when he was taught by Titumālai-yaṇṭān (Māḻādhara) the interpretation of Yāmuna. With reference to the purport of one Tiruvāy-moli, it is said that Tirumālai-yaṇṭān said to Rāmānuja that this decad conveyed the significance of prapatti. After writing Śrī Bhāṣya Rāmānuja took this decad to convey the sense of bhakti. Empār also followed Rāmānuja in this respect. It is a bit fantastic to note that Rāmānuja, who succeeded Yāmuna as the religious head in accordance with the instructions of Yāmuna and who expressly stated at the beginning of his commentary on the Bhagavad-gīta that he had become an entity at all only through the grace of Yāmuna, should offer a different interpretation to this decad even after Tirumālai-yaṇṭān told him of Yāmuna’s view. That bhakti is dealt with here is stated in the Six Thousand, Dramidōpaniṣat-tāirparya-ratnāvali of Vedānta Desika and Dramidōpaniṣatsaṅgati of Ajāgiyamaṇa-vāla-jīyar. Evidently Rāmānuja’s teaching was followed by all these writers but there is no evidence to prove that Yāmuna-cārya declared prapatti to be the purport except in these later commentaries. In all likelihood, Yāmuna did not subscribe to this view and so a reference like this cannot be valid by itself. In some instances, Tirumālai-yaṇṭān is said to have mentioned to Rāmānuja the name of Yāmuna with the interpretation.

46. Twenty-Four Thousand on TVM. 2.10; 3.3: 6; 5.1: 9; 5.10: 4; 6.1: 10; 7.9: 1; 8.9: 3; 9.9.
47. Īṭu on TVM 1.2.
48. There are similar instances: Vide Twenty-Four Thousand on 2.3: 1; 2.3: 3; 2.5: 1.
49. cf. Twenty-Four Thousand on 1.2; 10.4; 5.2.
YĀMUNA’S DISCIPLES: Yāmuna is referred to by later writers as Periya Mudaliar. Though he did not write anything by way of a commentary on the Nālāyira Prabandham he was instrumental in arousing a living interest among his pupils and grand pupils for the study of the compositions of the Āḻvārs. It is stated that Āḷavantar had twenty-one disciples of whom six were most prominent, namely, (i) Periya Nampi, (ii) Tiruvaraankap-perumal Arayar, (iii) Tirukkacci Nampi, (iv) Tirumālai-yāntān, (v) Tirumalai Nampi, and (vi) Tirukkottiyur Nampi. The other disciples were: (i) Māraṇēr Nampi, (ii) Āḷavantar Āḻvār, (iii) Vāṇamāmalai-yāntān, (iv) Teivavāri Aṇṭān, (v) Iśanāntān, (vi) Iyār Aṇṭān (vii) Tirukkurukūrappan, (viii) Tirumōkūrappan, (ix) Tirumōkūr Nīṉrān, (x) Teivap-perumal, (xi) Vakulaparana Comāciyār, (xii) Tirukkurukūr-tāsari, (xiii) Tirumāliruṅcōlai-tāsar, (xiv) Vaṭamataipa-piṟantān, and (xv) Ātkoṭiyammaṅki.

Among his disciples, Tirukkacci Nampi, composed two verses in Tamil to be sung before taking up the Tiruccanta-viruttam of Tirumālaiyāḻvār. In the first verse, the place Tirumālaiyai is described to be an enchanting one with fragrance of sandal and aloe wood emanating, the kōṅku trees spread all over there emitting delectable aroma. The Āḻvār composed the Tiruccanta-viruttam to relieve the world of its miseries, and this means that a recital and understanding of this composition would rid people of their sufferings. The other verse means that in ancient days, a question arose as to the relative superiority of the earth and the sacred place Tirumālai. So the two were placed in a balance and it was found that Tirumālai was found heavier than the earth.

50. Īṭu on 6.2: 1; 9.8; Rahaśvatara-sāra. p. 308.
51. Āḻvārkal Vaḻikkuravar Varalāru, p.34.
52. He was born in the year Sobhakṛṣ which corresponds to 943 A.D. A.G.P. 19(b). He was also known as Kāṇci-pūṟṇa.
53. This begins with the words, "Tiruccantap-poḷḷi".
54. It begins with the words, "Ulakum mālicatyum".
because of its superior excellence. Thus the greatness of this sacred spot is referred to here.

Tiruvaraṅkap-perumālaraiyar (son of Yāmuna) who was also known as Ālavantārāḻvār taught Rāmānuja the Divya Prabandham. He is referred to as a good singer who could depict the emotions of the hymns of Tiruvāyūmoṭi with appropriate gesticulations. The later commentary Īṭu contains a reference to his interpretation of a hymn of Nammāḻvār. In a verse composed in Tamil in praise of the Tirumālai of Toṇṭaraṭiṉ-poṭiyāḻvār this scholar asks the mind not to wander unnecessarily elsewhere. He wants to speak of this Āḷvār who composed Tirumālai which is in praise of Lord Raṅganātha who went after cows while they were grazing. The other Tamil verse composed by him is in praise of the place of Manaṅkuṭi which was inhabited by brahmins learned in the Vedas. It was an old town, the residential place of this Āḷvār. The fields all round are resonant with the humming bees. The Āḷvār has sung the hymn Tiruppaṭṭili-ellucci to arouse Lord Raṅganātha from His holy slumber.

Tirumālaiyāntān, known also as Mālādhara, taught Rāmānuja the interpretations of Tiruvāyūmoṭi as he was taught by Ālavantār. According to him, Tiruvāyūmoṭi 1.2 conveyed the sense of prapatti. The finite self shall consider itself as lucky if it could recollect God’s name and His greatness at the point of death and be clearly conscious of himself being the śeṣa of God. This scholar is sometimes referred to as simply Āntān. The views of this scholar are said to have

55. Civājñāna Muṇivar in describing the beauty of the city of Kañci employs the same analogy, but in a more improved form (Vide Kāñcipurāṇam-Nakarop-pañcaratam. St.1.).
56. He was born in the year Pingala which corresponds to 957 A.D. A.G.P. fol. 18(a).
57. Īṭu on T.V.M. 5.3: 6.
58. ibid. on T.V.M. 5.10: 6.
59. The verse begins with the words, "Marpoṭṭum vēntā".
60. It begins with the words "Maṇṭauṅkuṭi-enpar"
61. He was born in the year Sarvādhāri which corresponds to 988 A.D. Vide A.G;P. fol. 19(a).
62. Twenty-Four Thousand on TVM 8.3: 8.
63. Īṭu on T.V.M. 5.6: 7; 5.8: 4; 8.8: 8.
been expressed by his disciple Ṣāiyaperumāḷ. It is said that he was surprised to hear from Rāmānuja different interpretations for the compositions of Nammāḷvār different from what he learnt from his master. He composed a verse in Sanskrit to be sung before taking up the recitation of Toṇṭa-raṭīp-poṭiyāḷvār’s Tiruppaḷi-ellucci. Here the author conveys his respects to the holy Toṇṭa-raṭīp-poṭi who composed the composition to awaken the Lord from slumber. He considered Lord Raṅganātha as Para-Vāsudeva, the supreme deity in Śrī Vaikunṭha and also was respected as though He were a king.

Periya Nampi (997–1102 A.D.) who was also called Mahāpūrṇa was the immediate preceptor of Rāmānuja and was one of the disciples of Yāmuna. It was he that initiated Rāmānuja in the secret doctrines of Vaiṣṇavism including the purport of the Brāhma-sūtras. He composed a verse in Sanskrit to be recited before Tiruppāṇāḷvār’s Amalanāṭipirān is taken up for recital. Here it is said that this Ālvār rejoiced by beholding the Lord Who is reclining in the midst of the river Kāviri. He had the full experience of the Lord Who is reclining there, from foot to head (pāṭāti-kēcam) and decided that his eyes could not be set on any other object in the world. This Ālvār occupies the enviable of position of having been carried to the shrine of Lord Raṅganātha by sage called Muṇivāhana.

Tirumalai Nampi, one of the disciples of Yāmuna, who was also known as Śrī Saila-pūrṇa was the maternal uncle of Rāmānuja. Rāmānuja, it is said, got to know from him the full sense of Rāmāyaṇa. He composed a verse in

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64. ibid. 5.6: 7.
66. It begins with the words, “Tameva matva”.
67. He was born in Kali 4098 Hēvilambi yeavr (vide P.T.A. p. 12).
68. A.G.P. fol. 22(a).
69. It begins with the words; “Āpādacudam”.
70. G.P. p. 45.
71. ibid. p. 134.
Tamil\textsuperscript{72} to be sung before Tiruppāṇāḷvār’s Amalanāṭipirān is taken up for recitation. Here it is described how the Ālvār had the vision of delectable experience of Śrī Raṅganātha from feet, clothing, navel, waist girdle, chest, neck, coral lips, eyes and the whole body of the lord. We shall sing the praise of this Ālvār who had the direct communion with God through music. This scholar offers a fine observation on a hymn in Tiruvāyvalī.\textsuperscript{73} The Ālvār says here that he could not offer any refreshing service to the Lord when He performed great exploits. However, the Lord has now applied the mind of the Ālvār as an unguent which will soothen the tiresomeness of the Lord. This scholar remarks that ordinarily any one who gets the object which he is keen on getting, then slackens his interest on it in course of time. That is not the case with God-realization. He is never satiated with the vision of God which he is lucky to get.\textsuperscript{74} Two illustrations are contained in the Īṭu and are given within brackets. It is not clear whether they could have been given by Tirumalai Nampi himself. Kausalya said to Rāma that she could not live without him and desired to follow him to the forest. When Rāmā pointed out to her that what she was intending to do was against dharma, as she was attempting to leave her husband behind, she forgot all her misery and offered him all her blessings for a safe journey. Kṛṣṇa asked Arjuna not to grieve or think of flight from fighting the enemies. Arjuna gave up his nervousness and expressed his willingness to fight.\textsuperscript{75}

Tirumāṅkaiyāḻvār sings in praise of the Lord at Māmallapuram\textsuperscript{76} and identify Him with Kṛṣṇa with the manifold exploits and God as Kālki. In this connection, he describes the deity as resembling the blue cloud which takes in the waters from the tanks that are situated in the forests on the hills. Tirumalai Nampi offered here an interpretation for this. The comparison of the deity with the blue cloud

\textsuperscript{72} It begins with the words, Kāṭṭavē kanta’.
\textsuperscript{73} T.V.M. 4.3.
\textsuperscript{74} Īṭu on T.V.M. 4.3.
\textsuperscript{75} Bh. G. 18: 73.
\textsuperscript{76} Peri. Tm. 2.5: 3.
be justified by showing the purpose for this comparison. The calves which Kṛṣṇa would be tending would move through the hills, bamboo groves and forests. Naturally they would become thirsty. The Lord creates a lake here. He takes water there along with them. With two palms dipped in water and face downwards, He would dring water. Having done this He becomes full (paripūrṇa)," that is, pleased that others are happy.

Tirukkōṭṭiyur Nampi, who was one of the disciples of Yāmuna, taught Rāmānuja the secret doctrines (rahaśya). He composed a verse in Sanskrit to be sung before the Periya-tirumoṭi of Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār is taken up for recitation. Here it is said that this scholar remembers the name of this Āḻvār with great regard. This Āḻvār had destroyed the evil effects of the kaliyuga. He was a sun illumining the world of poets. This is a direct reference to the title ‘Poet in the four-fold branches of Tamil poetry’ (Nālukavi-perumāḻ) which he acquired through his literary skill and so was at the head of the poets. His compositions dispel the ignorance (or darkness) created by nescience. Internal darkness which is there in man due to past deeds is removed by the illuminating compositions of this Āḻvār.

Thus the six disciples of Yāmuna kept alive the tradition of learning the compositions of the Āḻvārs. Much of what they had said by way of expounding and interpreting the hymns in these compositions should have remained unrecorded. The oral traditions kept some of these preserved to posterity. Rāmānuja should have derived immense inspiration from these scholars and their contributions. All these interpretations found themselves recorded in the commentaries of Periyavācceṉ Pillai and Vaṭakkut-tiruvītip-pillai.

77. Nigamaparimala of Periya Parakāla Swāmin on Peri. Tm. 2.5:3
78. He was born in the year Sarvajit which corresponds to 987 A.D. Vide P.T.A. p. 12.
79. It begins with the words, ‘Kaliyāmi kalidhvamsam.’
80. G.P. p.52.
CHAPTER XXVIII

RĀMĀNUJA AND THE NĀLĀYIRAM

It was given to Āḷavantār to lay down only the fundamentals of Viṣiṣṭādvaita philosophy and not to write an elaborate commentary on the Vedānta-sutra as Saṅkara had done for Advaita. That great task was performed by Rāmānuja, the synoptic thinker and saint. Rāmānuja’s father was a disciple of his brother-in-law, Tirumalai Nampi, Āḷavantār’s grand-son and disciple, who is said to have obtained from the Lord Himself the title of Tatācārya.1 Rāmānuja is said to have been named as such by his maternal uncle, Tirumalai Nampi, who expected him to equal the great Lakṣmaṇa in his service and devotion to the Lord. The traditional date of Rāmānuja’s birth is A.D. 1017,2 and he is said to have lived for 120 years. According to one authority3 his long life was spread over the reigns of three Cōḷa kings Kulōṭṭuṅka I (A.D. 1070-1118), Vikram Cōḷa (A.D. 1118-1135), and Kulōṭṭuṅka II (A.D. 1123-1146).

Rāmānuja became the grand disciple of Āḷavantār whom he did not see in person. He was taken to ŚrīRaṅgam from Kāṇci by Periya Nampi at the behest of Āḷavantār who was nearing his end, but he could see only the physical frame of Āḷavantār lying in state. As he looked intently on the whole figure and scanned it up and down, he discovered to his

1. The story is this: Tirumalai Nampi used to bring water for the Tirūmaṅcanam (bathing) of the Lord Śrīnivāsa’s image from the Pāpanāsa-tīrtha in the midst of the Tirumalai Hills. It is said that one day the Lord Himself relieved him of the arduous task in the guise of a youth, calling him ‘Tāṭā’ or grand-father.

2. He was born in the year Piṅgala which corresponds to A.D. 1017 Vide Yatīraja Vāibhavam. 6.

surprise three of the fingers of the right palm of the sage remaining closed. He turned round to the assembly there and questioned them about the strange sight. But they replied that they had never marked that before. Rāmānuja reflected for a moment and thought that the sight had probably signified some unfulfilled ardent wish of the venerable saint. He asked the by-standers if they were aware of any specific wishes of the sage expressed to them at any time in the course of his religious talks with them. He got the reply from them that they were not particularly aware of such directly, but indirectly they knew that he wished very much to see three things perpetuated viz. (i) to convert people to the āraṇī doctrine of Vaiṣṇavism making them well versed in the works of the Āṗvārs in general and the immortalization of the glory of Nammāḻvār in particular, (ii) to perpetuate the memory of Parācara, the author of the Viṣṇu-pūrāṇa, and (iii) to write a commentary on the Brahma-sūtra to bring out the real Viṣistādvaita sense contained in the sūtras. On hearing this, Rāmānuja promised to fulfil the three great tasks, provided he had the health, the grace of the Ācārya (Āḻavāntār), and the Divine will. It is chronicled that no sooner did he make this promise than the three bent fingers of the sage opened out as if to say: "Aye". The whole assembly was witness to this miracle. In one voice they declared that the sage's grace was fully on him, the very power and glory would enter into him and he was the fit successor to him for the propagation of the Faith.

Āḻavāntār died before Rāmānuja became Ācārya and the interval was filled up by Periya Nampi, Tirukkōṭiyūr Nampi and other disciples of the late master. One thing which facilitated Rāmānuja's advent to, and Ācāryaship at, Srī Raṅgam was his embracing the monastic life. The san-nyāsa order enabled him to dedicate himself wholly to the cause of religion and service to humanity. Rāmānuja spent two years studying the teachings of Āḻavāntār from the specialists who had been trained by him. Six of Āḻavāntār's disciples, as already mentioned, had become the spiritual teachers of Rāmānuja and imparted to him the teachings of
While at Kaṇci Rāmānuja became attached to Tirukkacci Nampi and learnt from him a few great truths communicated to him by Lord Varadarāja Himself. They were an answer to six doubts in Rāmānuja’s mind. They were: “(i) I am the Supreme Trutti, the way and the goal; (ii) the world of souls is different from Me and depends on Me as its source and sustenance; (iii) Prapatti is the only way to salvation; (iv) the liberation of My devotees, even though they fail to remember Me at the time of death, is sure to take place; (v) as soon as My devotees give up their bodies, they attain the Supreme Object; (vi) choose Periya Nampi for your Ācārya.” Periya Nampi was Rāmānuja’s principal Ācārya who initiated him in the pañca-saṅskāra.

4. Vatuka Nampi, a disciple of Rāmānuja, refers to five teachers only. (Vide: Rāmānuja Aṣṭottara śata nāma - stotram, 10). He does not refer to Tirumalai Nampi, even though he refers to him later as the one under whom he studied Rāmāyaṇa. But Vedānta Desika, in his Guru parampara sāram omits Tirukkacci Nampi among the five Ācāryas, even though he refers to him previously as one from whom he learnt six truths. Sri P.B. Annangaracchārīya accepts the latter’s view (vide. Pūrvācārya-prabāvan - Rāmānuja, pp. 23-24) (Sri Rāmānuja - 198 (Journal). But Swami Rāma Krishnānanda accepts the former’s view (Vide: Life of Rāmānuja, p.158).

5. He was a non-brahmin, belonging to the chetti caste and was the native of Pūviruntavalli near Madras. Even now Tirukkacci Nampi’s shrines at Tirupati, Kaṇci and Pūviruntavalli (his own native place) are managed by trustees belonging to the chetti community only.


7. It has been said that he initiated Rāmānuja in the name of his ācārya Āḷavantār. It has been revealed by Periya Nampi himself that Āḷavantār had placed his sacred feet on his (Periya Nampi’s) head for the sake of Rāmānuja and attained Paramapada, as Rāmachandra had done on Bharata’s head when he went to the forest. So it may be said that Āḷavantār is the direct ācārya to Rāmānuja and Periya Nampi is only the medium. This has been confirmed both by Rāmānuca-nūrrantāti (verse 21) and Gitā-bhāṣya (Vide: Invocatory verse and its commentary in Vedānta Desika’s Tātparya-andrika). In appreciation of Rāmānuja’s concern for the salvation of others as evidenced by his revelation of the Tirumanaṃtra from the tops of the temple towers at Tirukkoṭṭiyūr made at the risk of hell for himself for disobeying his guru’s injunction, the guru Tirukkoṭṭiyūr Nampi, forgetting all his anger against the
(fivefold Vaisnava rites) and into the esoteric meanings of Dvaya Mantra at Maturāntakam by a happy coincidence when both of them wanted to meet each other. The initiation was done under the holy Vakula tree near the shrine of Kōtaṇṭa Rāma, called the Lake Guard (Ērikāṭta Perumāl). After making eighteen times the journey from Sri Raṅgam to Tirukkōṭṭiyūr, Rāmānuja learnt from Tirukkōṭṭiyūr Nambi the hidden truths of Tirumantra and Carāma-śloka. He learnt from Periya nampi the three thousand verses of all the Āḷvārs except Nammāḷvār and the meaning of the Brahma-sūtras. The compositions of Nammāḷvār and of Maturakavi were studied by him under Tiruvanāṅkap-perumāḷ Araiayar. Then he acquired from Tirumāḷaiyāntān the meaning of Tiruvāyvomoli and of the compositions of Tirumāṅkaiyāḷvār. The tradition, according to Guruparampara, does not refer here to Maturakavi or Parakāja’s works. When Rāmānuja happened to sojourn at Tirupati for a year in the house of Tirumalai Nampi (his own maternal uncle), he studied Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa under him and understood many esoteric lessons of the first of the Itihāsas. Thus the great six who were the most intimate disciples of Āḷavantār, became the teachers of Rāmānuja and taught him many works in the way of traditional interpretation of the scriptures. Trained by each and all of them Yatirāja (the prince of the sannyāsin, now became, as it were, the second manifestation of Āḷavantār, for the great saint was present in six parts in his own six disciples. Now these six parts were made one in the frame of Rāmānuja. Thus equipped with the knowledge of spiritual truths and the sādhanas to mukti gained from the specialists, Rāmānuja disciple for violation of his command. invested Rāmānuja with the title of ‘Emperumāṇār’ and taught him the creed of Vedānta, which came to be known to the world as ‘Emperumāṇār Darśanam’.

8. Yatirājavaiḥbhavam, 47.
9. ibid. 61.
10. ibid. 62.
11. There is an idol of Sri Rāma even now in the shrine of Tirumala Nampi inside the Govindarāja temple at Tirupati; this, it has been said, signifies that Rāmānuja studied Rāmāyaṇam at the feet of Tirumalai Nampi.
became qualified to enter on his mission of spreading the gospel of Viṣiṣṭādvaitic Vaiṣṇavism and to become a world teacher.

Rāmānuja’s studentship was now complete; his spiritual greatness was ahead of his intellectual powers. He then began to teach his own disciples Nammāḷvār’s Tiruvāymoṭi. But a superhuman genius as he was, to the amazement of his disciples, often enough he began to give various new mystic interpretations. During that period, the Tiruvāymoṭi became very popular as a religious treatise and possibly the most important work of daily study and recitation among the Vaiṣṇavites. A representation was made to Rāmānuja through Tirukkurukaippirāṉ Pillāṉ, the son of his uncle, Tirumalai Nampi, to write a commentary to Tiruvāyamoṭi. Rāmānuja charged Pillāṉ himself to do the task with a view to creating an interest in the study of the sacred work of the great Āḻvār. Tirukkurukaippirāṉ Pillāṉ, as a true disciple of Rāmānuja, undertook the rather difficult project and composed an authoritative gloss on the Tiruvāyamoṭi as taught and expounded by his venerable master Rāmānuja. This commentary is known as Ārayirap-paṭī (Six Thousand) as it was completed in 6000 granthas. His determination of the number of paṭis reflects his devotion to Lord Viṣṇu whose story is told in 6000 granthas in the Viṣṇu-purāṇa. This commentary is the earliest and, in some respects, the best commentary on the hymns of Nammāḷvār. It was the model on which many compositions were later written, particularly in the maṇipravāḷa or Sanskrit-Tamil mixed style. Thus Rāmānuja fulfilled his first vow in the preparation of Nammāḷvār’s name and glory.

Rāmānuja is said to have fulfilled his second vow of perpetuating Parācara’s name by giving it to the elder son of his friend and follower, Kūṟattāḷvān, and directed him to compose a commentary on the Viṣṇu-sahasraṇāma. Parācara Paṭṭar completed the sacred task in compliance with his

12. According to a principle of Grammar 32 granthas or letters omitting the consonants make one paṭī.
13. Yasirājavaibhavam, 84.
masters's instructions and the commentary is known as
Bhagavadgītādarpana. Rāmānuja fulfilled his third vow by
his magnum opus, the immortal Sri Bhāṣya, which is an
authoritative exposition of the Vṛṣa's Brahma-sūtra as Sari-
raka Sāstra in the true sense of the term. He is said to have
gone as far as Kaśmīr in order to copy the Vṛtti or com-
tenary of Bōdhāyaṇa which interpreted the Brahma-sūtra in the
Visiṣṭādvaita mode. It is said that Kūrattālīvān assisted
Rāmānuja in his writing of Sri Bhāṣya. In this way the dream
of Āḷavantār to formulate Visiṣṭādvaitic Vaiṣṇavism became
an accomplished fact. But the Guruparamparā-prapāvam of
Pinpaḷakīya Perumāḷ Jīyar gives a different account of Āḷavant-
ār's wishes viz., (i) Gratefulness to Vṛṣa and Parācara for the
help they rendered to the cause of Vaiṣṇavism; (ii) Deep
love for Nammāḷvār; and (iii) Writing a commentary on
Vṛṣa's sūtras in the light of Visiṣṭādvaita. The third wish of
Āḷavantār was fulfilled by Rāmānuja by writing the Śri
Bhāṣya, Vedaṇa-sāra, Vedaṇa-dipika and Bhagavad-gītā-
ḥāṣya. The elder son of Kūrattālīvān was named Parācara
Paṭṭar by Rāmānuja and thus the second wish was fulfilled.
Siṇṭya Gōvindap-perumāḷ, younger brother of Empār, had a
son born to him and he was named Parāṅkuśa Nampī and thus
the third was fulfilled. There is some discrepancy, no doubt,
in this source regarding the order in which the wishes are
mentioned and are stated to have been fulfilled. Besides, here
is a reference to the commentary on Tiruvāymozhi.

The works of Rāmānuja are as valuable as his life, and
they were the fulfilment of his promise, as observed above, to
carry out the message of Āḷavantār to systematise the whole
Teaching of Visiṣṭādvaita in its metaphysical, moral and
Mythical aspects. His reputation was mainly due to the sys-
Teematisation of the contributions of the earlier writers to his
system and his own invaluable contribution to the cardinal

14. ibid. 80.
15. ibid. 72.
17. ibid. p. 140.
18. ibid. p. 145. cf. Uttama Nampī's Lakṣmī-kāvyā
doctrines of the system. He is known as the author of seven works viz., *Vedānta-saṅgṛaha*, *Sri Bhāṣya*, *Vedānta-dīpa*, *Vedānta-sāra*, *Nitya*, *Bhagavadgītā-bhāṣya* and *Gadyātraya*. Of these, the earliest one was the *Vedārtha-saṅgṛaha* which is in the form of lectures delivered by him in front of the Lord Śrīnivāsa, the presiding deity of the Tirumalai Hills. This is an elaborate essay on the teachings of the principal *Upaniṣāds*, in which he analyses the defects of the systems of Saṅkara, Bhāskara and Yādavaprakāsa and harmonises the apparently conflicting texts of the *Upaniṣāds* by his foundational principles of *sarīra-sarīri* relation. His *magnus opus*, the immortal *Sri Bhāṣya*, is an authoritative exposition of *Vedānta-sūtras*. In this work the Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy is expounded. It is less intellectual and more emotional than the philosophy of Saṅkara. While Saṅkara taught idealism, Rāmānuja is an advocate of realism. While the former is for a pantheistic neuter Brahmā, the latter advocates a personal deity possessed of all auspicious attributes and capable of granting salvation to devotees in reward for their devotion. The individuality of the *jīva* is preserved in the Rāmānuja’s system even after *mokṣa* while it is lost in Brahmā according to Advaita.

The *Vedānta-dīpa* is a brief commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras*. In the introductory verse, after prayer (*maṅgala-ñloka*), Rāmānuja states that following the path shown by the preceptors, he is illumining the subject matter of the *Vedānta* as it is available in the words used in the *Brahma-sūtras*. This approach perhaps suggested to the author the title *Vedānta-dīpa* for this work. The scope and nature of the Viśiṣṭādvaita system are given at the outset in a highly illuminating passage. The *Vedānta-sāra* is also a concise commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras*. After the invocatory song, the author states that he is presenting the quintessence of *Vedānta*, through the Grace of the Supreme Person. After explaining the meaning of the first *sūtra*, Rāmānuja gives a brief survey of the Viśiṣṭādvaita system by citing the relevant *sūtras* and *upaniṣādic* authorities in the proper context. In another prose work called *Nitya* Rāmānuja elaborates the ideal of the daily life of a true paramaikāntin and lays the procedure for worshipping the Lord.
The Gadyatraya and the Bhagavadgītā-bhāṣya deserve separate treatment since they contain the quintessence of propattī, the most important dogma of Vaishnavism. The former is a work in prose which consists of three divisions or independent pieces called Saranāgati-gadya or Prithu-gadya, Sri Raṅga-gadya and Vaikunṭha-gadya. The first mentioned work begins with the self-surrender made to Lakṣmī who is considered to be the mother of all, the refugee for the destitutes. The author then makes the offering of the self at the Feet of the Lord. He addresses the Lord in such of those epithets which speak of this glory as the only refuge for the individual selves. In the Sri Raṅga-gadya, Rāmānuja requests the Lord of Sri Raṅga to enable him to serve Him for all times. He takes refuge under the Lord. The Vaikunṭha-gadya is a rapturous outpouring on the transcendental beauty and bliss of Vaikunṭha. The author directs every individual to surrender himself to the Lord. Having done that, he has to constantly think and ponder over it in order to better his own future. He shall pray to the Lord in Vaikunṭha and shall attend on Him. He shall meditate with the Lord's Feet placed on his head and live in peace. The five limbs of the act of self-surrender, the greatness of the Lord and the need to acquire the spirit of self-surrender and all other matters are dealt with in this Gadyatraya.

The Bhagavadgītā-bhāṣya is a development of the Gītārtha-saṅgraha of Āḻavantar and explains the building up of bhaktī and constructs a ladder as it were from the world of prakṛti to the realm of Puruṣottama. Rāmānuja opens his commentary with a reference to his concept of duty. Brahman has no defects and is an ocean of merits. He is the Lord of Lakṣmī. He is beyond the reach of speech and mind. He is Nārāyaṇa. He is the creator of all. He descends to the world and being worshipped by the peoples rewards them with the fourfold results. Under the pretext of relieving the earth of its undue burden, He comes down and becomes visible to the mortal eyes. His acts are captivating to the minds of all people, high and low. He makes many people very pious. Under the pretext of inducing Arjuna to fight, He taught the course of devotion as the means for obtaining the highest pur-
suit in life. This course is dealt with in the *Vedānta* and is to be developed through knowledge and acts. Devotees of God have their minds fixed on Him, could not live without Him, and they talk to each other about the qualities and delightful deeds of God of which they had personal experience.\(^{19}\) The *Bhagavad-gītā* is an authoritative text on self-surrender. All these great works are ever-enduring monuments of Rāmānuja’s synthetic genius.

While learning the significant meanings of the composition of the Āivārs, Rāmānuja is said to have suggested better and different interpretations improving upon those of Tirumālaiyāntān. He is said to have averred that Yāmuna’s interpretation was the same as that which was given by him. Tirumālaiyāntān could not get reconciled at this; as he was a direct disciple of Yāmuna, from whom he learnt the interpretation of Nammālvār’s compositions. Tirukkōṭṭiyūr Nampi, who came to mediate between the two, agreed with Rāmānuja’s interpretation and recognized it to be that which was offered by Yāmuna.\(^{20}\) For instance, there is a passage in the *Nālāyiram* in which Nammālvār treats himself as a beloved of the Lord (Parāńkuśa Nāyaki) and conveys a message to Him through the stark to the effect that she is pining out of love for Him. The Lord is referred to as Vāmana and the word ‘kaḷvAN’ (thief) is used in the text. Tirumālaiyāntān interpreted this word as ‘vaṇcakAN’ (cheat) meaning thereby that Vāmana deceived Bali by assuming a huge form and measuring everything as though belonging to Him. Rāmānuja did not approve of the sense of cheat for the word but explained it as meaning one who thought of doing one thing but did something else.\(^{21}\)

The first decad of the second centum is devoted to an appeal to the Lord for refuge. There is the element of bridal mysticism in this. Yāmuna states that the devotee who is a beloved to the Lord has languished losing all her usual lustre

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21. Ḫu on TVM, 1.4: 3.
and cannot also cry aloud. The Āḻvār Nayaki asks how long He would be teasing her, treating her as though she were His enemy and hoping to get delight at the destruction of such an enemy. Rāmānuja says that even enemies would show their compassion on those who are distressed. There is no enmity, really speaking, between the devotee and the Lord. The Lord is more cruel to the devotee than He would be to His enemy.22 While interpreting a verse23 Yāmuna explained that He produced in the devotee the knowledge of his relation to Him at a time when he was not wise and later produced for him a body which would destroy that knowledge. Rāmānuja, hearing this interpretation, refers to the verses which precede and follow this and declares that they refer to the feeling of delight that the devotee has for the kind things he has received from God and so this verse cannot be interpreted in the context to mean grief and disappointment which the devotee is said to be experiencing. The better interpretation must therefore, says Rāmānuja, be that the Lord had shown His affection by providing His devotee with the spirit of service even when he was not grown wise. In the case of the verse, TVM. 3.3: 6, Yāmuna interprets that if the word ‘namah’ is uttered with reference to the Lord of Vēṅkaṭam, all the deeds done with the help of the body would get destroyed. Rāmanuja remarked that the deeds already done and those which are likely to be done in the future would also get destroyed.24 While interpreting the phrase ‘pukalum poru-paṭai’ in the verse, TVM. 8.9: 3, Yāmuna says that the divine weapons of the Lord would sing His praise. Rāmānuja interprets it that the enemies too would praise the Lord Who has the weapons with Him. The last line of the verse, TVM. 9.5: 10, according to Yāmuna’s interpretation, means that the devotee feels despondent unable to join the Lord, and intending to die wishes the country to become happy and flourishing. But Rāmānuja, interpreting it in a different way, says that the devotee wishes that the country is to be spared the torments

22. ibid. 2.1.
23. ibid on TVM. 2.3: 3.
24. cf. T.Pv. 5. (last line).
which he was made to endure.\textsuperscript{25} While interpreting the hymn, TVM. 1.2, Yāmuna took this as dealing with the doctrine of self-surrender. Tirumālaiyāntān taught this to Rāmānuja who, after writing out the Sri Bhāṣya, interprets this as conveying the doctrine of devotion. How far could this interpretation become acceptable has been discussed in the previous chapter. Again with reference to TVM. 3.7, Rāmānuja lays stress on the need to be in contact with the devotees of God and remarks that this has been dealt with in the hymn under reference. Śatruighna is stated by Rāmānuja to have put into practice the contents of TVM. 3.7. and TVM. 8.10. Moreover, Rāmānuja is said to have witnessed the recitation of a hymn in Tiruvāymoḷi with gesticulations by Tiruvāraṅkaperumāḷ Araiya,\textsuperscript{26} and enjoyed it keenly.

That Rāmānuja was much influenced by the compositions of the Ālvārs and that his way of life was shaped by the teachings of the Ālvārs are amply borne out by the auspicious references which are contained in the Rāmānuca-nāṟṟantāi. Nammālvār’s compositions played a significant role in enabling Rāmānuja to build the religious system of Vaiṣṇavism. They sing the greatness of the innumerable auspicious qualities of Viṣṇu Rāmānuja therefore bowed to the feet of this Ālvār and lived a glorious life through his dependence on this Ālvār.\textsuperscript{27} Nammālvār’s compositions represented to him prosperity of this world and of Vaikuntha, parents and the Lord, nay everything for him.\textsuperscript{28} Rāmānuja demonstrated through his teachings that this is the Truth.\textsuperscript{29} He would be constantly thinking of Nāṭhamuni who set the Tiruvāymoḷi to music.\textsuperscript{30} He enshrined that Tamil Veda in the temple of his devotion which means that he treasured it very

\textsuperscript{25} For similar references see Īṭu on 2.3: 1; 2.5: 1; 2.9: 8; 2.10: 4; 5.1:9; 5.2: 6; 6.1: 10; 7.2: 10; 7.9: 1; 9.4: 3 etc.

\textsuperscript{26} Īṭu on TVM 5.2. For further similar instances vide Īṭu on TVM. 8.7: 3; 9.7: 5, 9.8: 1.

\textsuperscript{27} R.N. 1.

\textsuperscript{28} Śotraratna, 5.

\textsuperscript{29} R.N. 19.

\textsuperscript{30} ibid. 20.
highly and his devotion assumed a definite and refined shape by this composition. The compositions of Nammāḻvār challenged, countered and suppressed the preachings of the six schools of thought. Rāmānuja understood this significant contribution made by the Tiruvāymoḻi. The Vedas and the compositions of Parāṅkuśa flourished through the work of Rāmānuja. Rāmānuja’s contribution to the propagation of the importance of Tiruvāymoḻi is poetically described by Amutaṉār. The venerable saint’s presence is felt wherever the jñānis perform their yōga, wherever the musical notes of Tiruvāymoḻi are heard, and wherever the Lord with Lakṣmi in his chest takes His abode.

Amutaṉār speaks then of Rāmānuja’s indebtedness to Tirumāṅkaiyāḻvār. Rāmānuja did not even care to think of people who were not devoted to the Lord at Sri Raṅgam and was ever devoted to the feet of Tirumāṅkaiyāḻvār, who composed hymns in praise of the Lord at Tirukkaṇṭapamaṅkai. He acquired his strong skill in disputation by his deep study and realization of what this Āḻvār taught in his musical compositions. This Āḻvār is referred to as learned in arts which may include sāśiras also.

Rāmānuja cherished the composition of Poykaiyār who lit a lamp for dispelling ignorance in the world, and of Pūtattār for dispelling the internal darkness. He was ever praising the feet of Pēyāḻvār who was an eminent Tamil scholar and who visualized the Lord with Lakṣmi. He was

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31. ibid. 29.
32. ibid. 46.
33. ibid. 54.
34. ibid. 60.
35. ibid. 2.
36. ibid. 17.
37. ibid. 88.
38. ibid. 8.
39. ibid. 9.
40. ibid. 10.
even bowing to the feet of Tiruppānālvar\(^{41}\) and had his heart occupied by the feet of Tirumañcāiyālvar.\(^{42}\) He does not have liking for anything but the feet of Tonṭaraṭīp-poṭiyālvar, who offered garlands to the Lord Raṅganātha and composed two poems which are equal to Vedas.\(^{43}\) He praises the feet of the elders who sing the hymns of Kulacekarālvar.\(^{44}\) The mind of the saint fixes in the feet of Periyālvar who offered benediction (maṅgalāsāsana) to the Lord on account of his undying immense whirlpool of love.\(^{45}\) Rāmānuja lives and is ever dependent upon the grace of Āntāḷ who offered the garland to Lord Raṅganātha after wearing it herself.\(^{46}\)

It is said that Rāmānuja recited Pallāṇṭu the hymn of Periyālvar when he went to offer his services to Raṅganātha, Srīnivāsa, Varadarāja and Selvap-piḷḷai at Śrī Raṅgam,\(^{47}\) Tirumalai,\(^{48}\) Kāṇci\(^{49}\) and Tirunārayaṇapuram\(^{50}\) respectively. He is said to have taught the Nālāyiram to Aruḷāḷap-perumāḷ Emperumānār who was Yajñamūrti, an Advaitin, and who assumed this name after he became a Vaiṣṇavite and disciple of Rāmānuja bearing this name.\(^{51}\)

Anantāḷvān, one of the disciples of Rāmānuja, speaks of him as ever cherishing the Tamil Veda composed by Nammāḷvār.\(^{52}\) Parācara Paṭṭar speaks of Nammāḷvār as the mother who delivered the ‘Thousand verses’ and Rāmānuja was the foster–mother who gave milk to them, which shows

\[\text{\textsuperscript{41} ibid. 11.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{42} ibid. 12.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{43} ibid. 13.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{44} ibid. 14.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{45} ibid. 15.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{46} ibid. 16.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{47} G.P. p. 114.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{48} ibid. p. 134.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{49} ibid. p. 131.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{50} ibid. p. 163.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{51} ibid. 129.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{52} Vide: A verse beginning with words ‘Eynta periikirti’ composed by him in praise of Rāmānuja.}\]
that Rāmānuja was responsible for the propagation of Tiruvāyimoli. It is also said that what Namāḻvār composed was cherished in the heart by Rāmānuja.

Rāmānuja composed 'taniyay' for the compositions of some Āḻvārs. In the verse composed for Kulacekarāḻvār's Perumāl-tirumoli, he addresses a parrot to come near him to take the nectar which he would be offering to it. The nectar is uttering the name of Kulacekarāḻvār, the powerful king of the Čeras, attractive to damsels, who would sing the praise of the Lord at Śrī Raṅgam. Evidently he means that the parrot could easily repeat the word 'raṅga' as it is generally found to do so and with ease repeat also the word 'kulacekarar'. This may be taken to be a reference to the verse in praise of this Āḻvār according to which there is the loud announcement of undertaking pilgrimage to Śrī Raṅgam made daily in his city. To the Periya-tirumoli of Tirumāṅkaiyāḻvār Rāmānuja composed a 'taniyay' which wishes a long life for the Āḻvār who was the god of Death for others who were opponents of the Āḻvār in spiritual matters and political matters as well. The Āḻvār who removed the evil effects of the Kali age shall live long. He who was the king of Kuṟaiyāḻṟū the region which he ruled over, may live long. May the Āḻvār live long who obtained initiation in the sacred mantra from the Lord Himself on the point of his sword at Him to deprive the latter of His possessions. His place is called Tirumāṅkai and so he is referred to as the ruler of that place. May the big and shining weapon of the person who was pure live long with him. In the 'taniyay' for the Namāḻvār's Periya-tiruvantāṭi Rāmānuja addresses

53. Vide Paṭṭar's 'taniyay' beginning with the words 'Vāy tikalum'.
54. Vide his 'taniyay' beginning with the words 'tilatamulakkakaṇa'
55. This verse begins with the words 'innamutam ūṭṭukēn'.
56. This refers to the Sanskrit verse beginning with the words 'ghusyate yasya nagare'. This is a verse in praise of Kulacekarar recited at the beginning of Mukundamāla, a lyrical poem composed by Kulacekarar in praise of Viṣṇu.
57. It begins with the words 'Vāli parakālan'.
58. For this incident vide G.P. p. 50.
59. This begins with the words 'munturra neće'. 
his mind which generally goes in advance at the object that is sought to be obtained, to utter the name of Nammālvār. He asks it to take interest in him to represent to the Āḻvār his miserable condition and bless him, after bowing to the Āḻvār. The mind shall freely praise the Āḻvār who is the lord of Kurukūr which is encircled with groves of sandalwood trees having the flow of honey and has nearby the river Tāmraparāṇi.

The four thousand verses of the Āḻvārs deal in the main with the exploits of Viṣṇu in His divine descent (avatāra) and with the arcā form enshrined in the temples. Much of the matter which has philosophical significance is contained mostly in the compositions of Nammālvār. On the whole, all the verses, with some notable exceptions, are addressed directly to the deities concerned. The Sri-Bhāṣya, the Vedānta-sāra, and the Vedānta-dīpa which deal with materials which bear philosophical import do not appear to have been much influenced by the compositions of the Āḻvārs. The Gitā-bhāṣya and the Gadyatraya, the latter in particular, bear ample testimony to the influence of the Nālāyiram. Rāmānuja addresses God, in the Saranāgati-gadga as mother, father, relation, as preceptor, learning, wealth and everything else. This has the influence of the passage of Nammālvār which states that the Lord is the father and mother of the world and also for him. In the Sri-Bhāṣya, Rāmānuja explains the meaning of the words ‘existens’ and ‘non-existens’. ‘Existence’ means that the thing which is said to exist has name and form while ‘non-existence’ when applied to it implies its subtle status and does not mean its non-existence. This shows the influence of Nammālvār’s verse which means that God is in subtle form when He is said not to exist, and to exist in the gross form. God is referred to

60. S.G. 174.
61. TVM. 1. 10: 6; cf ibid. 2.3: 2 where God is equated with life; 2 6: 10 with time also and 5.7: 7. There is a passage in the Sri-Vaikuntha-gadga similar to this. Vide p. 180.
63. TVM. 1.1: 9.
by Rāmānuja to possess features which are distinct from those of everything else.64 Nammāḻvār influenced Rāmānuja here though his description of God as being different from soul and matter65 In his Bhagavad-gitāa-bhāsyā Rāmānuja’s reference to God as the form of knowledge and bliss66 points to its indebtedness to the composition of Nammāḻvār.67 God is of the nature of knowledge and His nature is immeasurable or could not be gauged.68 The same sense is conveyed by a passage from Periya-tirumoḷi.69 Tirumāṅkaiyāḻvār refers to God as ‘Śāmiyappan’70 which means that God is protector and this could perhaps have influenced Rāmānuja’s idea of God as bent only on protecting the world.71 Rāmānuja’s reference to Nīḷa as the consort of Viṣṇu72 bears the influence of the Nalāyiram which mentions Nappinnaipp–pirāṭṭi who is identified with Nīḷa.73

Āntāḻ describes how she worshipped the Lord at Tirumāḷiruṅcōlai. She offered butter and a preparation of rice cooked with jaggery in a hundred big vessels each74. On realizing the significance of this verse Rāmānuja went to Tirumāḷiruṅcōlai and made the offerings to the Deity as Āntāḻ described and then visited Srivilliputtūr to worship Āntāḻ. Āntāḻ was much pleased with the way in which Rāmānuja carried out what she wrote, and conferred on him the name ‘Nam Kōil Anṉan’ which means that she treated Rāmānuja as her elder-brother residing at Kōil (Sri Rāngam). He behaved thus like her elder-brother in fulfilling her

64. S.G. p. 174.
65. TVM. 1.2: 4.
67. TVM. 10.10: 10; 1.1: 2; 9.2: 3; 10.10: 10.
69. Peri. Tm. 3.8: 1.
70. ibid. 2.2: 7.
71. Benedictory verse in the S.B.
73. T.Pv. 20.
74. Nac. Tm. 9: 6.
cherished desire.\textsuperscript{75} Rāmānuja was so much fascinated by a verse of Āṇṭāl’s Tiruppāvai\textsuperscript{76} that he came to be called ‘Tiruppāvai Jīyar’.\textsuperscript{77}

Āndhra-pūrṇa (Vaṭuka Nampī), one of the disciples of Rāmānuja, refers to his preceptor as one who knew the essence of the two Vedāntas,\textsuperscript{78} one of them being based on the Upaniṣads and the other on Nammāḻvār’s Tiruvāyumoḻi. This shows that not only was the composition of Nammāḻvār treated as one of the two Vedāntas, but Rāmānuja was proficient in both, though he did not write himself any treatise on the compositions of Nammāḻvār. From other references in the other works of Vaṭuka Nampī, it is found that during the period of Rāmānuja, a festival was conducted at Śrī Raṅgam for the compositions of Nammāḻvār. This had to be given up owing to external pressure when Rāmānuja was away from Śrī Raṅgam to escape persecution at the hands of Kulōttunka. On his return to Śrī Raṅgam he revived this festival by installing the idol of Nammāḻvār.\textsuperscript{79} The festival was conducted for twenty days and was called Adhyayana festival.\textsuperscript{80} He then admitted after approval Rāmānucaṃṭramattai composed in his honour by Tiruvaramūkattamaṭṭai as part of the Four Thousand verses of the Āḻvārs. Then he installed the idols of other Āḻvārs and Āṇṭāl in the temple at Śrī Raṅgam.\textsuperscript{81}

Such was Rāmānuja’s interest in the Nalāyiram and its propagation that he came to be placed on an equal footing with the Āḻvārs. Hence his name is mentioned along with the names of Āḻvārs in a ‘taniyān’ which begins with the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{75} G.P. p.167; Āndhra-pūrṇa’s Rāmānuja Aṣṭottraśatānāma stotra, 26; Yatirājavaiḥham, 106. Āṇṭāl is therefore referred to Perumputtur māmunikkulpīppāṇāl (Appillai’s ‘Vēḷi-tirunāmam’, 12).
\item \textsuperscript{76} T.Pv. 18.
\item \textsuperscript{77} Owing to intense interest in the poem he came to be known by convention as Tiruppāvai Jīyar.
\item \textsuperscript{78} Rāmānuja Aṣṭottraśatānāmastotra. 6.
\item \textsuperscript{79} Yatirājavaiḥham, 104.
\item \textsuperscript{80} ibid. 105.
\item \textsuperscript{81} ibid. 106.
\end{itemize}
words *bhutam saraśca*. Vedānta Desika aptly included in his *Pirapanta-cāram*, a verse in praise of this synoptic philosopher mentioning the *Rāmānuca-nūppanātēti* of Amuttaḥār. In another verse too, the name of the saint occurs along with those of other Ājvārs. He is really *uṭāiyavar* or the owner of the two worlds and this truth expresses the Srīvaiśṇava loyalty to the great Ācārya and their living faith in him as the preceptor that holds the keys of earth and heaven. In brief "he was not merely the representative of his age but a philosopher for all time who combined in himself the profundity of a thinker and the humility of a saint. With his magnetic personality, encyclopaedic knowledge and brilliant powers of exposition, he summed up in his long life all that was good in the known past, namely, the heart of Buddha, the head of Saṅkara and the apostolic fervour of the Semitic religions. Even after ten centuries of his passing away, the dynamic influence of bhakti that was created in his lifetime is not only not exhausted, but is ever on the increase."
Rāmānuja, at the close of his career, devoted his main attention to the consolidation of his missionary work. He remained at Śrī Raṅgam and organised temple worship on the basis of Vaiṣṇavite Āgamas and made the hymns of the Ālvārs part and parcel of daily worship in the temples. The steps which Rāmānuja took in order to popularise his teachings indicate that he was as great a practical organizer as he was a synoptic thinker. He divided the Vaiṣṇavite world into a number of Ācaryic dioceses, and appointed pious householders who were his disciples as heads, or simhāsaṇādhipatis as they were called, to popularise Vaiṣṇavism and Visisṭādvaīta. These spiritual leaders took up the task of teaching the Vaiṣṇavite religion and philosophy in the villages and homes throughout the length and breadth of this holy land.

(1) The followers of Rāmānuja

Kūrattālvān: Rāmānuja had, during his life time, in Kūrattālvān, a comrade, scholar and a disciple deeply devoted to him, who was also known as Śrī Vatsāṅka mīśra. He became a disciple of Rāmānuja when the latter assumed the ascetic order of life and was living at Kānci and studied vedāṇā under him. He assisted Rāmānuja in writing the Śrī Bhāṣya. According to one version he accompanied Rāmānuja to Kāśmīr and studied Bodhāyana-vṛtti, a gloss on the Brahma-sūtras which was available only there. He committed the whole Vṛtti to memory when the authorities in charge of the manuscript did not permit Rāmānuja to take it with him. He helped Rāmānuja in writing the Śrī

2. ibid. p.111.
3. ibid. pp.139 and 140.
Bhāṣya by reciting the relevant passages of the Vṛtti.¹ When Rāmānuja was ordered by Kulōttuṅka to appear before him and admit Śiva's supremacy, Kūrattālvān apprehended insecurity to Rāmānuja's person through persecution at the hands of the king. He had his plain clothes exchanged for the ascetic robes of Rāmānuja and appeared before the king and had to lose his eyes when he was not able to create conviction in favour of Viṣṇu in the mind of the king who refused to be convinced. His devotion to the Lord was such that he was able to visualise the divine vision of Lord Varadarāja at Kāṇci and describe Him to Rāmānuja.²

Kūrattālvān wrote Pañcaśāṇa which comprises (i) Śrī Vaikunthasayaa, (ii) Atimānuṣastava, (iii) Sundarabhāhusta, (iv) Varadarājastava, and (v) Śrīstava which are respectively in praise of the Lord in Vaikuntha, the supreme exploits of the Lord, Śrī Sundararaja in Tirumāliruṅcōlai, Śrī Varadarāja in Kāṇci and Goddess Lakṣmī. His devotion to Nammālvar is revealed in his reference to the feet of the Āḻvār as adorning the heads of people who are proficient in the three Vedas. It is treated as the eternal wealth belonging to the enlightened people and as the holy refuge for people who are without shelter.³ The Āḻvār is fancied to be the boundless ocean which is filled with the sweet water of devotion that is animated by his marvellous compositions rich in love for God. This ocean is a treasure house containing the gems in the form of meanings of the Veda and is the divine abode for Viṣṇu.⁴ These two passages show that the compositions of the Āḻvār are the Vedas themselves and are held in great respect by those who are proficient in the Vedas. The holy Feet of Śrī Raṅganātha are described to dwell in the mind of the holy saint Saṭhakōpa and as immersed in the devotion of the Āḻvār.⁵ The kinyyara women set the compositions of Saṭhakōpa to the appropriate śvaras, and sentiments, and began

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4. ibid. p.140.
5. ibid. pp.116, 150.
7. ibid. 3.
8. Atimānuṣastava, 3.
to sing them in the slopes of the hills at Tirumālirūncōlai. At this, even the stones in the hills melted. Kūrattālvān finds no difference between the presentations of Viṣṇu in arcā form in several sacred shrines. For instance, Kallaṇakar, in this shrine is identified with Śrī Raṅgānātha and Śrī Śrīnivāsa, and Śrī Varadarāja and also with the Deity reclining in the milky ocean. This concept of the Deity is peculiarly Vaiṣṇavite in its nature and is found evolved out of the similar treatment found in the compositions of the Āḷvārs. He asks Śrī Varadarāja which place His Lotus-Feet find most comfortable, from among the four – the heart of the people, the Upaniṣad, head of Saṭṭakopā and Hastigiri (at Kānci). He appeals to Śrī Varadarāja for His Grace, as he had taken shelter under Rāmānuja, a lamp for the family of Yāmunamuni who came in the line of Nāṭhamuni. Nāṭhamuni was a member of the family of Saṭṭakopā who was a servant of Lakṣmi and Śrī Varadarāja. Here Kūrattālvān means that Nāṭhamuni was the spiritual descendant of Saṭṭakūpa.

Kūrattālvān composed two taniyāns in praise of the perceptrors and Rāmānuja and one for recitation before Periya-tirumol is taken up for singing. The latter tells us that the compositions of Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār contain the five features of Tamil poetry, namely, elūtu, col, porul, yāppu and anṭi. They would act on the systems of others like fire on cotton wool. They are like lamps dispelling the internal

9. Sundarabāhustava, 12.
10. ibid. 119.
11. ibid. 117.
12. ibid. 118, 126 and 127.
13. ibid. 119.
15. Varadarājastava, 59.
16. ibid. 102.
17. Both are in Sanskrit. One of them begins with the words ‘Lakṣmi-nāṭhasamārmbhām’ and the other with ‘Yōnityamacyūta’.
18. This is in Tamil and begins with the words ‘Neṇcukku irul’.
darkness and are nectar to counteract the effects of the poison of life in this world.

The works of Āḻvān show the extent to which he was inspired by the works of earlier writers belonging to Vaiṣṇava- viṣam. The existence of the entire world is dependent on the will of God, and could not be changed or cancelled by anyone. That the devotees of God are to be worshipped with fervour gets emphasis in the works of the Āḻvārs and this influenced Kūrattāḻvān in describing the devotees of God as ever wishing to be subordinates to other devotees. It is said here that such people are in fact the deities for this devoted soul. There is reference to the four-fold ārya doctrine with the six qualities present in Vāsudeva and two each among the other three. The path of self-surrender is the course to be adopted by the selves who wish to get mokṣa. The Lord has nothing to be sought after. Creation, maintenance and destruction of the world take place at His free will. He descends down to the earth to mingle freely with His devotees who are in various kinds of families. All the positions held by an individual are the results of the serving of God. The Lord dispenses justice to the devotees, creates the worlds and protects them only to please Lakṣmī. The significance of arcā is revealed in Āḻvān’s describing the Feet of Śrī Kallājakar as fascinating with shanks appearing like the lotus stalks, the Feet resembling the lotuses kept upside down. Such charming descriptions of arcā form

19. Śrī Vaikunṭhastava, 36.
20. ibid. 55.
21. I. Tv. 43; Nan. Tv. 91.
22. Atimānuṇṇastava, 77 cf. Periyal. Tm. 4. 4: 10; TVM. 3. 7; 8. 10: 10.
23 Varadarājastava, 16.
24. ibid. 84, 92.
25. ibid. 64.
26. ibid. 81.
27. Śrīstava. 1, 8.
abound in Sundarabāhustava, Sri Vaikunṭhastava, and Varadarājastava. Kūrattālvāṇ was in no small measure indebted to Yāmuna's Śrīṭrāratna.

ANANTĀLVĀṆ: Among the disciples of Rāmānuja, Anantālvāṇ received instructions from his preceptor and went to Tirumalai Hills and dedicated Himself to the service of Lord Śrīnivāsa. He maintained a flower garden for the Lord and was arranging for the daily offering of garlands to the Lord. In a taniyan composed by him and sung when the Tiruvāyirmoḻi is taken up for recitation, he offers his respects to the great Rāmānuja for making his mind steady for the study of that sacred work, the Tamil Veda.

MUTALIYĀNTĀṆ: Mutaliyāṇṭān, also known as Daśarathi, was the nephew and disciple of Rāmānuja. He composed a taniyan to be sung before Mutal-tiruvantāti is taken up for recitation. This verse says that Poykaiyālvār was born in the town of Kāṇci which was surrounded by groves of the Kētaki (plant with sword-like leaves) plants. This Āḻvār was the best among the poets. He composed an aṇṭāti in a hundred verses of fine Tamil in order to make the devotees of the Lord live peacefully. Or, it can mean that they could get life in Vaikunṭha. He explained to Empār, the cousin of Rāmānuja that in the verse, TVM 2.9: 2, Nammālvār requests God to put him in the path of devotion (bhakti), that is, to help him in being devoted to Him. He says that he could not himself adopt it. Mutaliyāṇṭān says that if one had fallen into a well, it would be better if two persons, instead of one, lift up that person. It seems that the Āḻvār

29. cf. ibid. 37 to 53.
30. cf. Śrī Vaikunṭhastava. 67 to 74.
31. cf. Varadarājastava, 21 to 46.
32. cf. Śrīṭrāratna, 29 to 44.
33. This verse begins with 'Eynta peruṅkiṟṟti'. The Sundalaiyam edition attributes this verse to the authorship of Tirukkkurukaippirāṇipillān. The Itu on TVM 5. 3: 11 contains a reference to his view on the interpretation of this verse.
34. This begins with the words 'Kaiṭaićēr'.
35. Itu on TVM. 2. 9: 2.
means that Lakṣmi and Nārāyaṇa should lift him up from bondage. This could be taken as a proof to show that Lakṣmi and Nārāyaṇa together represent Brahman.

KITĀMPI ĀCCĀṆ: Kitāmpi ĀccāṆ, also called Praṇatarttihara (of Ātreya gotra), looked after the work of preparing and serving food to Rāmānuja. His proficiency in Vedanta was such that he was conferred the title of ‘Vedānta Udayaṇa’ by his preceptor Rāmānuja. His taniyam for Nammāḻvār’s Tiruviruttam says that people come out of the womb of their mother and fall into the deep pit of sensual love (kāma). Then they become old. The author calls upon these people to recite a portion of the Tiruviruttam of Nammāḻvār so that what they should get would not be obstructed and they could live in the Vaikuntha.

YAJÑAMŪRTTI: Yajñamūrtti, an Advaita scholar, challenged Rāmānuja for a debate which took place for eighteen days at the end of which he was defeated and became a disciple of Rāmānuja. He entered the order of the ascetics with the name Arulāḷapperumāḷ Empeṟumāṉār. He learnt from Rāmānuja the Four Thousand verses of the Āḷvārs. He composed a taniyam for Nammāḻvār’s Tiruvācīriyam where he says that the Āḻvār was born in the world for uplifting the suffering humanity and in the aciriyyappā mode, he explained the intricate meaning of the Sāstras which would not otherwise be known. He wrote two works called Jñānasāram and Pramāṇyasāram. The former, which is in forty verses in Tamil, deals with

36. He was born in the year Ḫēvilampi corresponding to 1058 a.d.
37. The word ‘Kitāmpi’ is the corrupt form of the word ‘ghatāmbu’ which means water (ambu) kept or brought in a jar (ghaṭa). Praṇatarttihara, the disciple of Rāmānuja, was asked by Tirukkoṭṭiyūr Nampi to be in charge of serving food to Rāmānuja. He used to take water in the jar for him and hence was known as ‘ghatāmbu’.
38. This verse begins with the phrase ‘karuvirutta’.
40. The verse begins with the word ‘Kaciniyōr’.
41. His interpretations are cited in Itt on TVM. 8 1: 6.
42. This is printed with the commentary by Maṇavāḻamāmunika.
the doctrine of self-surrender, greatness of Ācārya and the need to render service to God. Any utterance by a devotee of God shall be held as authentic, irrespective of nature. The latter work deals with the import of the Tirumantiram.

VAṆKİPURATTU NAMPI: He was a disciple of Rāmānuja, and is mentioned as the author of a Nitya, a work dealing with the daily routine life of a Vaiṣṇavite. This work, which it now lost, requires a man to follow the Pāṅcarātra mode of life and worship Hari. Thus shaping one’s life, one would not suffer at all. His remarks on some of the passages in the Tiruvāyamoḻi are referred to in the Ḭtu. He declared that arthapaṅcaka is the matter dealt with in the Vedas and Tiruvāyamoḻi.

PIĻĻAI TIRUNARAIYŪR ARAIYAR: He was a disciple of Rāmānuja who composed two tan iyans for the two Maṭals of Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār. The one that is to be sung when Ciriya-tirumataḻ is to be recited states that Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār composed this piece. The Āḻvār wears a garland of mulțî flowers. He is liberal in gifts without having any feeling of uneasiness (lit. the mind blazing forth like the fuel burning at mid-day). He is rich. He is the destroyer of ignorance. He has a lance to fight with others. The other tan iyan is sung before Periya-tirumataḻ is taken up for recitation. This is in the words of a bride addressing her lady-companions. The purport of this verse is this: If the Deity at Tirunaṟaiyūr Who is extolled by the denizens of heaven and Goddess Earth does not show recourse to maṭalūṟtal. Some of his remarks on some of the passages in the Tiruvāyamoḻi are found recorded in the commentaries. In a verse TVM. 4.9: 8 Nammāḻvār

44. ibid. pp.499, 813, 1181 and 1182.
45. ibid. p.1365.
46. Vide Ḭtu on TVM 4.8: 9 and 9.2: 8.
47. Vide Bk. I. p. 95.
48. This begins with the words ‘Mulțîc cuḷumalaro’.
49. This begins with ‘Ponnulakil’
appeals to the Lord for his release from this world to attain His Feet in the Paramapada. The phrase “imāyār vāl taṇimuttal kōṭṭal” in the verse denotes this universe. In a fort, those inside and those outside of it find difficulty in coming in and going out; the ocean of samsāra is one similar to that. Araiya remarks that no one is able to disentangle the intricately woven nest of the sparrow. When therefore the Almighty has woven a net about our soul, in due regard to the acts of every one of us, how can one with no back-bone in him disentangle this net? Only He can do it when we clasp His holy Feet.50.

EMPĀR: He was the cousin of Rāmānuja. He was originally known as Govindan. He was converted into a Saivite by Yādavap-prakāsa and was the priest in the temple at Kālahasti.51 His maternal uncle Tirumalai Nāmpi persuaded him to become a Vaiṣṇavite and brought him to Tirumalai.52 At the instance of his uncle, he became a disciple of Rāmānuja, and took to the order of ascetics under the name Empār which is a contracted form of the word ‘Emperumāṇār’ by which Rāmānuja was known. Thus the confusion was avoided which would have been there, had both Rāmānuja and his cousin were to be known by the same name. Empār’s devotion to Rāmānuja was intense and inspiring and so was held to represent the shadow of Rāmānuja’s feet, thereby meaning that he did not leave his master at any time. No wonder than that he wished to pass away following the death of Rāmānuja and he did so through the Grace of Lord Raṅganātha.53 It will not therefore be surprising to find him addressing Rāmānuja in a taniyāt which is to be sung before Tirumāṇkaiyāvār’s Periya-tirumoḷi is taken up for recitation. He appeals here to Rāmānuja as the protector for him and his disciples and as an eminent performer of

50. Itu on TVM. 4.9: 2
52. ibid. pp. 115 to 118.
53. ibid. p. 135.
54. G.P. pp. 196 to 198.
55. The verse begins with the words ‘Eukāl katiyē’. 
penance who safe-guarded the Vaiṣṇavite system from the attacks of rival faiths by clearing all the doubts raised at that time. Rāmānuja is requested to bless him with a mind which could retain the thousand verses of Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār. He is said to have admired the path of self-surrender for adoption which would be helpful to the individual who takes to it and those belonging to him. This is rather a difficult task, as besides one’s own affair, one has to take the responsibility for the uplift of others also. Empār offers an analogy to explain this. A master ordered his servant to bring sesame of a certain quantity. When he found that the servant could not carry it, he ordered him to bring oil of that quantity which is of less weight and so could be easily brought. The path of self-surrender is thus described to be an easier mode for obtaining mokṣa.

The later commentaries on the Tiruvāyurmoḻi contain much information regarding Empār’s views and interpretations of Nammāḻvār’s hymns. When a question arose as to who should be treated as the first Spiritual Preceptor for the soul in the lecture-assembly of Empār and in the discussion, some held that the Ācārya shall be treated as the foremost among the preceptors while others opined that the godly man who helps us to take us to the Spiritual Preceptor for acceptance is to be treated to be so. But Empār declared that the Supreme Person who is seated in our hearts and Who unseen, gives us the impulse not to resist, but to yield to the proposals for good services offered by the visible preceptors or helpers could be taken as the First Preceptor. It will not be difficult for any one who had made a thorough study of the Vedas and sāstras to determine the nature of the Supreme Being, while many such scholars are still indecisive in arriving at the correct conclusions, the women and men of no learning who have become the followers of Rāmānuja have unflinching faith in the concept of Supreme Being and treat other deities as mere brick or stone of which the hearth is made.

56. RTS., p. 420.
57. Ṭṭṭu on TVM. 2 3: 2 cf. Periyāḻ. Tm. 5.2: 8.
58. ibid. on TVM. 4.10.
Tiruvāymoḷi describes the lot of a devotee⁶⁹ which is presented as that of a beloved who is much afflicted with love in separation. The trees also sympathise with her lot. Empār explains how the trees also are affected. Even persons, whose minds are not smoothened by self-control, shed tears at this verse. There need be no doubt regarding the reaction of trees.⁶⁰ According to Empār, the self was treated in the first four verses of TVM 8.8 as mode of God and the next four describe the nature of self which could not be separated from God.⁶¹

PARĀCARA PAṬṬAR: Parācara Paṭṭar, who was the elder son of Kūrattālvān, was born in 1122 A.D.⁶² and made substantial contribution to Viṣṇavism within the short span of his life of twenty-eight years.⁶³ Since his father passed away while yet he was young, he became the disciple of Empār, the cousin of Rāmānuja. He was a dialectician of high order as is known through his Tatvaratnākaram now lost and on independent treatise on Viṣistadvaita metaphysics. He is the author of two lyrics, entitled Śrī Raṅgarājastava⁶⁴ and Śrī Guṇaratnakōśa in praise of Lord Raṅganaṭha and Śrī Raṅga-nāyaki respectively. His Aṣṭāloki brings out the significance of the Tirumantiram. His Bhāgavadgūḍadarpana is a commentary on the Viṣṇusahasranāma. He calls Saṭhakōpa a sage (ṛṣi) who by his insight into the world which has beyond the human understanding visualized the Tamil Veda. This Veda is called by Parācara Paṭṭar “Brahmasanuḥśīla” as it is Veda and as it deals with Brahman. This Veda has thousand recensions and is identical with the Sāma-veda. This Veda also represents the reality of the yearning to commune with Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Parācara

59. TVM. 6.5: 9.
60. Ītu on TVM. 6.5: 9. cf. Kālidāsa: Raghuvamsa 7: 70.
61. ibid. on TVM. 8.8: 5.
63. Tradition records him to have lived for 28 years. This is questioned. See History of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism. pp. 40–41.
64. V. 1: 36 refers to Tirumāṇakaiyālvār as having built the jewelled halls and ramparts.
Paṭṭar treats the Tiruvāyunti as apauruṣeya. Lord Raṅganātha is described to be shining having been praised by the hymns in Sanskrit and Tamil, the latter evidently referring to the hymns of the Āḻvārs. Nammāḻvar and other Āḻvārs are referred to as the foremost among men. There is a punnaga tree in the temple at Śrī Raṅgam which Parācara Paṭṭar describes as acquiring its own fragrance as a result of watering it with the thousand verses of Nammāḻvar. It means that the compositions of Saṭhakōpa are frequently recited in the temple and that recitation produces a celestial atmosphere near the place where the punnaga tree is situated. The Supreme Person (Paramapurusa), Who is reclining in Śrī Raṅgam is the same as the Deity lying on the banyan leaf, in the womb of Devaki, at the head of the Vedas (Upaniṣads), lives with Lakṣmī and is in the body of the compositions of Nammāḻvar. These show that Paṭṭar was much influenced by the compositions of this saint.

Though Parācara Paṭṭar did not leave behind any work in Tamil on the compositions of the Āḻvārs, his views and interpretations are frequently referred to by the later commentators, Periyavāccān Piḷḷai and Vaṭṭakkuttiruvīṭippiḷḷai. They are highly suggestive of the intellectual eminence but are not actually cited by his disciple Naṉciyar in the commentary on Āṟāyirap-paṭi. On TVM 1.6:1 which tells us that those who worship the Lord offer him water, incense and flowers, Paṭṭar remarks that one of these could be offered and the option must be meant to avoid the devotee from his fingers getting pricked by the thorn while plucking the flowers and that this must be the sense of the passage which declares that a flower which has association with the thorn shall not be offered to the deity. Nammāḻvar states that the decad

65. ŚrīRaṅgarājastava 1:6.
66. ibid. 1:16.
67. ibid. 1:41.
68. ibid. 1:49.
69. ibid. 1:78.
70. Twenty-Four Thousand on TVM 1.6:1.
TVM 1.6 is free from the three defects, namely, those which pertain to the author, the matter and composition. These defects are denoted by the words ‘tītu’, ‘avam’ and ‘ētam’ respectively. There was not a definite and acceptable interpretation for these words which were taken by some scholars to refer to the matter, author and composition respectively. Parācara Paṭṭar interpreted the word ‘ētam’ as referring to the composition and the words ‘tītu’ and ‘avam’ as related to the author. Perhaps his intention was to leave aside the matter here. The Lord is the subject matter and it is sacrilegious to mention Him, even though it is sought to be shown that there is no defect pertaining to Him. Nammāḷvār refers in TVM 2.5:10 to the Lord as neither male, nor female nor eunuch and describes Him as having dissimilarities from things known to us. Parācara Paṭṭar describes the word ‘allan’ which means ‘he is not’ as indicative of the Lord Who is Puruṣottama.

Parācara Paṭṭar is the author of two taniyans in Sanskrit and two in Tamil. The first one in sanskrit is a prayer offered to the Āḻvārs. This mentions ten Āḻvārs and Rāmānuja, who is raised to the status of the Āḻvār due to Rāmānuca-nūṟṟantāi composed in his honour by Tiruvaraiṭṭamutān. The other Sanskrit taniyan is in praise of Āṇṭāl and is recited before Tiruppavai is undertaken for recital. The composition is elegantly worded and is highly suggestive of Parācara Paṭṭar’s special liking for, and interest in, this composition. Āṇṭāl arouses Kṛṣṇa from His sleep and conveys to Him her existence for another’s sake which means that she belongs to Him alone. This suggests that she is the sēṣa while He is sēṣīn. Parācara Paṭṭar remarks that this state of being sēṣa is established through the passages in the several Upani-

71. Itu on TVM. 1.6:11.
72. Twenty-four Thousand on TVM 2.5:10.
73. This begins with the words ‘bhūtam sarāśca’. This is, according to the edition of the Bhagavad-visayam edited by A.R. Tiruvenkatachariar, Sundapālaiyam (1912), the composition of Tirukkurukaiippirāṇ Pillān.
74. This begins with the words ‘nilātuṅga’.
śads. This suggests also that Rāmānuja could have been influenced by this aspect of the purport of the Tiruppāvai in evolving the concept of sēsin and sēṣa, though it is already available in the Upaniṣads which Rāmānuja cites for his authority. Āntāḷ wore the garland of flowers and made the Lord wear it and this chained Him, as it were, to be always with her and she enjoyed the communion.

The first taniyan75 in Tamil means that the Tiruvāyamoṭi is in praise of the greatness of Lord Raṅganātha. Nammāḷvār gave expression to them and Rāmānuja nurtured it. Rāmānuja is referred to here as the nurse because of the installation of the idol of Nammāḷvār in many holy shrines, the arrangement for the festival in the month of Mārkāḷi (December-January) when this composition is required to be sung and for directing Tirukkurukaip-pirān Pillān to write a commentary on this composition of Nammalvar. The other taniyan in Tamil76 states that the Tiruvāyamoṭi conveys the sense of ‘arthaṁcaṇcaṅka’. The nature of Brahman which is to be attained is stated at the outset77 and then the self is stated to be real and eternal. The means which is to be practised to get at Brahman is then stated as that which is consistent with the nature of the self.78 The sins which were committed in previous births by the self obstruct the self from entering into a desirable phase of life for its betterment. Finally, obtaining the final release is stated to be the goal.79 Here the word ‘vāḻvū’ is used to convey that, according to Nammāḷvār, the goal is marked by a stage of better and conscious living. Parācara Paṭṭar remarks that this is the substance of the teachings of Nammāḷvār whose Tiruvāyamoṭi is Veda itself and is to be sung.

75. This being with the words ‘vāṅtikalum’. The Sundapāḷaiyam edition attributes this to the authorship of Pillān.
76. This verse begins with ‘mikka irainlaiyum’. The Sundapāḷaiyam edition attributes the authorship of this to Tirukkurukaip-pirān Pillān
77. cf. T.V.M. 4.5:11; 4.9:10; M.Tv. 86.
78. This may be bhakti or prapatti.
79. cf. TVM. 10.10:11.
Parācara Paṭṭar was equal to his father in composing enchanting religious poetry. The Lord’s control over the existence of things is fully brought out when the Supreme Being is identified by him with Lord Raṅganātha. The vyūha principle is referred to by making mention of Saṁkarśaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha as possessing the respective two qualities. The Pāńcarātra system prescribes meditation on God in four stages, Aniruddha, Pradyumna, Saṁkarśaṇa and Vāsudeva to be worshipped respectively in each stage. Parācara Paṭṭar says that Lord Raṅganātha has all those vyūhas in Himself.

Parācara Paṭṭar’s Śrī Gūṇarānakōsa is noted for remarkably high poetic fancies. Lakṣmī is auspicious by her very nature and it is through her that the Lord becomes auspicious. While the Lord is in a fix, like a father, unable to decide how best he could guide his children, the offenders, Lakṣmī shows Him that there is none who is free from offence and makes the people share His Grace. Thus she becomes the mother. The author prays to Lakṣmī that she should treat them as the citizens of Mithila, finding delight in serving her. They should be enabled to get God’s favour.

The form and freedom are the same for Lakṣmī as in the case of Lord. She is getting included within the Lord for purposes of mentioning and therefore even the Vedas do not make a separate reference to her. This makes clear the fact that both Lakṣmī and Viṣṇu form together the principal deity. In every respect they are alike. Wreaking vengeance on the enemy, equanimity and such other traits which belong to men are possessed by Him while Lakṣmī possesses tender-

80. Śrī Raṅgarājastaya, 2: 87.
81. ibid. 2: 39.
82. Introduction to Lakṣmītantra, p. 25.
83. Śrī Raṅgarājastaya, 2: 40.
84. Śrī Gūṇarānakōsa, 29.
85. ibid. 52. cf. ibid. 50.
86. ibid. 51.
87. ibid. 28.
ness, subordination to the husband, compassion and forbearance and other qualities which belong exclusively to women.\(^{88}\) The Lord is therefore addressed by Parācara Paṭṭar as the ornament of Lākṣmī.\(^{89}\) Lākṣmī has the confidence and authority for assuring shelter for one who seeks it even without prior consultation with her Lord.\(^{90}\) Paṭṭar appeals to Lord Raṅganātha for protection. His burden was entrusted at the Feet of the Lord by his preceptors.\(^{91}\)

Paṭṭar's *Nitya*,\(^{92}\) a manual of daily conduct of the Vaisnavite and *Lākṣmikalyāṇa*,\(^{93}\) a drama depicting the marriage of Lākṣmī with Viṣṇu are both lost to posterity. In the latter work, the author made Nammāḷvār one of the characters speak of Lākṣmī's greatness. Paṭṭar's contribution to the cause of Vaiṣṇavism and to the propagation of the teachings of the Āḷvārs is singular and great. He had the good fortune of receiving the blessings of Rāmānuja.\(^{94}\)

After the passing away of Rāmānuja there arose two schools for the propagation of the compositions of the Āḷvārs. One of them started from Tirukkurai-pirān Pillān through his disciple Enkaḷāḷvān. The other was from the same writer through Naĩcilyar.\(^{95}\)

**TIRUKKURUKAI-PIRĀN PILLĀN**:\(^{96}\) He was the son of Tirumalai Nampi and became the spiritual son (*jñāna putra*) of Rāmānuja. He offered his services to Rāmānuja for writing a commentary on the *Tiruvāymoḻi*. Rāmānuja, who was then

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88. ibid. 34. cf M.Tv. 67; TVM. 1.3: 6.
89. Śrī Raṅgarājasatava 1.9 cf. Peri. Tm. 7.7: 1.
90. Śrī Gūnaratnakośa, 50. cf. ibid. 58 where her affection to humanity is revealed.
91. Śrī Raṅgarājasatava, 2: 102.
92. RTS. p. 1182.
93. Vedānta Deśika: Sārasāra, p. 46
94. G.P. p. 189.
95. Vide Appendix VI for the line of succession of Ācāryas in the two schools.
96. He was born in the year *Plavaṅga* corresponding to 1068 A.D.
thinking about how he could fulfil the wish of Áḷavantār, felt surprised at this and embraced him calling him as ‘my spiritual son’ and directed him to carry out the task, as he was equipped for it being a member of the family of Nāṭhamuni. He did this accordingly and the commentary is known as Árayirap-paṭi. He was also called the sandals of Rāmānuja. He is considered to be the full moon which arose from the ocean of the king of ascetics meaning that he was the foremost among the disciples of Rāmānuja. Rāmānuja installed him as the sole authority for the two Vedāntas which were represented by the Śri Bhāṣya and Árayirap-paṭi. Thus the line of tradition for both the Vedāntas passed down to posterity from Rāmānuja through him. He could rightly be described as the first scholar from whom the tradition of Udbhaya-vedāntācārya started. He composed a taniyan for the Iranṭām-tiruvantātī. He bows to the feet of Pūtattār for getting rid of the life here. This Āṉvār offered the composition which begins with the words ‘āṇpē takaḷiyā’. He hails from Māmallapuram, also known as Tirukkaḷalmallai, which abounds in famous pearls which are cool for touch.

ŚRĪ RĀMA PĪṢLĀI: He is the younger son of Kūrattāḷvān and a disciple of Rāmānuja and Empār. He composed a taniyan to Nāṟumukkān Tiruvantatī. The verse appeals to the mind to live peacefully on the strength of the statement of Tirumalāciyāḷvār that Nārāyaṇa created Brahma from whom Siva was born. The mind shall praise the feet of this Āḻvār.

OTHERS: Among the innumerable disciples of Rāmānuja most of whom were fully conversant with the import of Nālāyiram, there were scholars, besides those mentioned above whose views on and interpretation of particular passages are cited by

97. Yatirājavaiṭhavam, 81, 82.
98. ibid. 83.
100. Yatirājavaiṭhavam, 108.
101. The verse begins with the words ‘ēṇ pīṭavi ṭira’.
102. This begins with the words ‘nārāyaṇaṇ paṭaiṭṭāṇ’.
Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai in his *Twenty-four Thousand* and Vaṭak-kut-tiruvītip-pillai in his *Īṭū* or *Thirty-six Thousand*. Some of them are Piḷḷai-amutanār,¹⁰³ Vaṭuka-nampi,¹⁰⁴ Ammaṅki-yammal,¹⁰⁵ and Piḷḷaiuṟaṅkā-villitācar.¹⁰⁶

Tirukkurukaip-pirān Piḷḷān's disciple Viṣṇucitta,¹⁰⁷ who was also called Enkajāḷvān, did not write any work on the *Nālāyiram*. His commentary on the *Viṣṇu-purāṇa* is the only work that is extant from among his Sanskrit works. His disciple was Vāṣya Varadācārya,¹⁰⁸ also known as Naṭāṭur Ammāḷ. He was the grandson of Naṭāṭur Āḷvān, the nephew and disciple of Rāmānuja. He was the author of many works in Sanskrit, of which mention is to be made of *Pramēyamāla*, *Tattva-sārām* and *Tattva-nirṇayam* which uphold the tenets of Visiṣṭādvaita against the contentions of the Advaita and Saiva schools. He was the most authoritative exponent of Rāmānuja’s *Śri Bhāṣya*.¹⁰⁹ There is nothing unexpected in this that Piḷḷān, who was in charge of two *Vedāntas* and under whom Śrī Rāmamiśra (Cōṁciyāṅtān), a disciple of Rāmānuja, studied *Śri Bhāṣya* thrice¹¹⁰ transmitted the *Śri Bhāṣya* tradition to Enkajāḷvān without whom, Naṭāṭur Ammāḷ had declared, that he could not have mastered the *Śri Bhāṣya*.¹¹¹ Besides, Naṭāṭur Ammāḷ must have been best gifted to become the most authoritative exponent of the *Śri Bhāṣya* inheriting the talents of his grand father Naṭāṭur Āḷvān who was at the head of those who were taught the *Śri Bhāṣya* by its author himself.¹¹² This attracted Sudarśana-sūri the grandson of the

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103. *Īṭū* on TVM. 6.1: 6. The writer may be Tiruvaraṅkattu Amutanār the author of *Rāmānuca-nūṟṟantāṭi* or Aṉiyaraṅkattu Amutanār.
105. Vide *Īṭū* on TVM, 5.9: 10; 8.4: 1.
106. Vide ibid. on TVM 6.4: 5; 6.8: 1.
107. He was born in the year *Vijaya* corresponding to 1108 A.D.
108. He was born in the year *Pārthiva* which corresponds to 1165 A.D.
109. His views on certain passages in the *Tiruvāyomoli* are contained in the *Īṭū*. Vide *Īṭū* on TVM 7.4: 4; 7.6: 10; 8.5: 5.
110. G.P. p. 182.
111. Ibid. p. 193, where the *taniyān* of Enkaḷāḷvān is given.
112. *Yatirājaivaibhavam*, 71.
brother of Parācara Paṭṭar from Śrī Rāṅgam and make him undergo the study of the Śrī Bhāṣya under Naṭāṭur Ammāl. This writer recorded what his preceptor taught him in a work called Śruti-pra-kāśikā, a commentary on the Śrī Bhāṣya.

Ātreya Rāmānuja^{113} the third in the descent in the family of Kiṭāṇi Accān who attended to the preparation of and serving food to Rāmānuja, was a pupil of Vāṭsyā Valādācārya and is the author of a polemical treatise Niṣṭhīṣa. He had the title 'Vāṭihamsambuvāha', which means the cloud for the swans in the form of disputants. Like the clouds which cause fear to the swans which therefore move to a place were they could be secure from them, Ātreya Rāmānuja was terror to the rival disputants who dared not to face him.

VEDĀNTA DEŚIKA: After Rāmānuja he was the great star in the spiritual horizon. He was the nephew and disciple of Ātreya Rāmānuja. He was born in 1268 A.D. and lived up to 1369 A.D. His name is Veṅkaṭinātha and he was conferred the titles 'Vedāntācārya', 'Kavitārkkikasimha' (the lion of poets and logicians) and 'Sarvatantra-svatantra' (the master of all arts and sciences) by Lord Raṅganātha and Śrī Raṅganāyaki. He received instructions in the secret doctrines (rahasya), Śrī Bhāṣya, Tiruvāyumoḻi and Bhagavad-gitābhāṣya from his uncle Ātreya Rāmānuja. His life was one of unceasing literary activity which bore the result in his writing nearly 115 works. His aim in this pursuit was (i) to establish a solid ground for the teachings of Rāmānuja and Nammāḻvār and (ii) to propagate the doctrines of Visiṭṭādvaita among the people by writing in Sanskrit and Tamil in various forms such as drama, poetry, lyrics and others. His works include original works in Tamil, like those of Āḻvārs, and a large number of commentaries. His Tamil works are available under the title 'Tēcikap-pirāpantam'. All these works can be classified under five heads: (i) Panegyrics of a devotional character on different deities or Ācāryas (ii) Poems and drama, (iii)

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^{113} He was born in the year Vikrama which corresponds to 1221 A.D.
Treatises for maintaining the Viśiṣṭādvaita system by elaboration and criticism (iv) Works in Tamil and Sanskrit reconciling the teachings of the Āḻvārs with those of the Prasthāna-traya and (v) Original Tamil poems on Viśiṣṭādvaita topics.

Among the twenty-eight Sanskrit lyrics, special mention must be made of the Yatirājasaptati which is in praise of Rāmānuja. His prayer to Nammāḻvār\(^1\) here has great significance. It runs thus: We worship Saṭhāri (Nammāḻvār), whose composition that is rendered fragrant by the smell of Vakuṭā flowers is capable of affording rest to the Vedas. The Vedas got tired of praising Brahman and so declared,\(^1\) "From whom words recede together with the mind without reaching it." The composition of Nammāḻvār appears to ask the Vedas to take rest and then itself take up the description of God and achieve success also there. It is also shown here that there is need to recite the names of earlier teachers referring to their greatness.

The Dehalīṣa-stuti, which is in twenty-eight verses, is another lyric which is valuable for understanding how the deity at Īrakkōvilūr was instrumental for the compositions of the hymns in Tamil for the first time. The deity pressed hard the self-controlled and eminent poets (the first three Āḻvārs) and made them sing in praise of Him in Tamil.\(^1\) These poets were pure in mind and had the yogic vision obtained by Vedic study. They sighted Him with the lamp lit in the dead of night. The lamp had their devotion as the oil and their flawless qualities as the wick.\(^1\) May the sayings, which are not inferior to any other, which were uttered by the foremost devotees and which correctly make clear the real nature of God, protect the universe from evil.\(^1\) The Bhagavad-dhīyanasūpaṇā is modelled on the Amalanaitipirāṇ and is devoted to the description of Lord Raṅganātha from

\(^{114}\) Yatirājasaptati, 4.
\(^{115}\) Taitt. Up. 2.3:8.
\(^{116}\) Dehalīṣa-stuti, 2, cf. ibid. 7, 16.
\(^{117}\) ibid. 6.
\(^{118}\) ibid. 27
foot to head. The descriptions of each limb of bewitching beauty are executed with great artistic skill. The last śloka\textsuperscript{119} refers to the court of Lord Rāgaṇātha which is held in respect by men of refined taste (rasika). Evidently the Āḻvārs are referred to here all of whom were greatly attracted by the arcā form of Lord Rāgaṇātha. Emotion of love (devotion) made them sing His praise and so they are referred to here as rasikas.

In the Devanāyakapaṅcāsat, which is devoted to singing the charming appearance\textsuperscript{120} of Śrī Devanātha at Tiruvahindrapuram, the author offers his respects to the line of preceptors starting from Nammāḻvār and Nāthamuni and ending with Rāmānuja.\textsuperscript{121} The decad of Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār on Śrī Devanātha must have inspired the author in the description of the deity and also in addressing the deity as ‘nātaṣatya’ which means true to the devotee, \textsuperscript{122} in the Acyutaśataka which was written in Prākṛta in praise of the same deity and is a proof of the author’s command over that language. That the Āḻvārs, who had divine vision, could not comprehend the greatness of Śrī Vardarāja is suggested\textsuperscript{123} by the author in his Varadarāja-paṅcāsat where the deity is described in the language of the Upaniṣads and the traditional sources of the system. Attracted by the chastening and enchanting form of this deity, the author declares emphatically his unwillingness to proceed to Vaikunṭha.\textsuperscript{124} The incident of the Lord accompanying Tirumāḻicaiyāḻvār and Kaṇikaṇṇaṅ who left Kāñci when they were expelled by the ruler there and returned to the same shrine on their return at the request of the ruler is stated in the Vēgāsētu-śiotra.\textsuperscript{125} The path of self-surrender, which the Āḻvārs dealt with in their compositions

\textsuperscript{119} Bhagavad-dhyānasōpāna. 12.
\textsuperscript{120} cf. Devanāyakapaṅcāsat, v. 17 to 44.
\textsuperscript{121} ibid. 2.
\textsuperscript{122} Acyutaśataka 7, 19, 20, 79; for dāsasatya vide ibid. 71. cf. Peri. Tm. 3.1.
\textsuperscript{123} Varadarāja-paṅcāsat., v. 2.
\textsuperscript{124} ibid. v. 49.
\textsuperscript{125} Vēgāsētu-śiotra, v. 6.
received an effective treatment in the Saranagati-dipika and illustrated in Parmarthasa-stuti which glorify respectively the deities Śrī Dīpakāsa at Kānci and Śrī Vijayarāghava at Tiruppuṭkuḷi in the outskirts of Kānci.

Much originality is revealed in the Daya-sataka which is devoted to extol the quality of compassion (dayā) that is inseparably associated with Śrī Śrīnivāsa of Tirumalai. This quality is indispensable for the Lord Who is ever intending to uplift the suffering humanity. It is raised to the high status of being the queen, helping and guiding the Lord before Whom all the beings, being the recipients of its Grace, become alike without any trace of their natural differences. Rāmānuja, Yāmuna and others could do what is beneficial to the world only because of this quality.

That all material prosperity, however great and attractive they could be, is unwanted for one who has realised the need for serving God alone, is revealed in the Vairāgya-pāncaka which bears the influence of the Tirumalai. The Cau-slokī of Ālavantār, Śrīśtava of Kūrat-tālvān and Śrī Guṇaratnakāsa of Parācara Paṭṭar bore an appreciable influence in the Śrīśtuti. Deśika composed Abhīṣṭāvya praying for security to all people and in particular to Śrī Raṅgam which was attacked in 1336 A.D. by Malik Kaffur. Here he refers to the temple at Śrī Raṅgam with its towers and guardians of the entrances and the savage attacks of the Muslims. The final prayer he made was that he must be allowed to live amidst people who wish for each other’s well-being. In

126. This is the name by which the deity is known in this shrine. Vedānta Deśika refers to Him by epithets such as ‘Raṇga-puṅgava’, ‘Samarapuṅgava’, etc.
128. Ibid. 59.
129. T.M. 2.
130. Introduction to Saṅkalpa-sūvodaya, p.70.
132. Ibid. 22.
133. Ibid. 28.
this connection, it is worth nothing that his services during this period were unique and commendable. Through his efforts, the utsava idol of Śrī Raṅganātha which was then taken to Tirumalai for security, was brought back to Śrī Raṅgam and installed in 1347 A.D. as evidenced by two ślokas which were composed by him and inscribed in the temple wall at Śrī-Raṅgam.\textsuperscript{134} The other service, which he then rendered, was in preserving the Śrutapraκāśikā of Sudārśana-sūri and protecting the lives of the two sons of Sudarśana-sūri when the Muslim forces attacked Śrī Raṅgam. He gave them due propagation\textsuperscript{135} among his disciples for the study of this commentary, which must have been lost to posterity but for his interest in its preservation and propagation.

It is only Deśika that sang the praise of Śrī Bhūdevi and Āṇṭāḷ in the Bhūṣtuti and the Godāstuti respectively. In the latter piece, a reference is made to the Tiruppāvai which is composed by Āṇṭāḷ.\textsuperscript{136} The word ‘godā’ which denotes the name of Āṇṭāḷ, also refers to the river Godāvari which fact is utilised to contrast and compare Āṇṭāḷ with the rivers Soṅā, Tuṅgabhadra, Sarasvatī, Virajā, Godāvari and Narmadā by employing pun.\textsuperscript{136} The garland which Āṇṭāḷ wore at first and then offered to God is shown to be superior to any garland, including the celestial one and liked more by God.\textsuperscript{138} If God is favourably disposed to the offending devotees, it is because God is restrained by her garland from having his own way of dealing with offenders and by her compositions which are sweet like melodious notes emanating from the strings of the Viṇa.\textsuperscript{139} Lord Raṅganātha is fancied to be reclining with his face turned to the South, because of His esteem for that


\textsuperscript{135} Vide. Vardanātha: Vedāntadesīkamangalā śasanam, 8. cf. Introduction to Sāṅkalpa-śūryodaya, p. 70.

\textsuperscript{136} Godāstuti, 4.

\textsuperscript{137} ibid. 6.

\textsuperscript{138} ibid. 14 to 16.

\textsuperscript{139} ibid. 5.
direction in which lies Śrī Villipputtūr the place of her birth. Periyāḻvar, the father of Āṇṭāḷ composed hundreds of verses in praise of God but did not get any reputation for that though God usually becomes pleased with a little praise. He got the reputation of having become great by offering the garland which was rendered fragrant having adorned her head, that is, Viṣṇu-citta, her father, came to be known as Periya (great) Āḻvār.

Again, it appears that except for Kūrāṇāṟṟaṉaṉaḷ, who wrote the Sudarṣana-śrāvaṇa, Vedānta Desika alone wrote independent lyrics in praise of the ten divine incarnations in the Dasāvaṭāra-śṭotra, the divine missiles of Viṣṇu in the Sodeśayudha śōtra, the discus of Viṣṇu in the Sudarṣana-śākta and Garuḍa the vehicle of Viṣṇu in the Garuḍa-donḍaḷa and Garuḍa-praṇcāsaṭ. It is held that the author made use of his knowledge in the mantra and tantra sāstras in composing the Sudarṣana-śākta and the Garuḍa-praṇcāsaṭ. In the latter work, Garuḍa’s status is described. His bringing nectar and the exploits which he exhibited in bringing the serpents under control are expounded in detail. Each limb of Garuḍa is then graphically described and this is followed by a description of the astounding feats and achievements of Garuḍa. The Garuḍa-donḍaḷa has much importance for one who intends to meet the counter-attacks of the rivals. Greatness of Garuḍa had a meaningful purpose in the life of Deśika who repeated the Garuḍa-maṇtra several times on the hill before the shrine of Śrī Devanāṭha at Tiruvahindrapuram. Garuḍa appeared before him and initiated him in the Hayagrīva-maṇtra. It is through the Grace of Hayagrīva that Deśika, who was already proficient in all branches of study, acquired stupendous talent and outshone every other scholar in his time.

The doctrine of self-surrender receives treatment in his three works, namely, Nyāsa-daśaka, Nyāsa-vimśati and Nyāsa-tilaka. Appeal to the deity for shelter is stated in the

140. ibid. 11.
141. Periyāḻ. Tm. contains 473 verses.
142. Goda-śutt, 10.
first mentioned work. The second work gives the attainments and qualifications of the preceptor\textsuperscript{143} and pupil,\textsuperscript{144} treats the doctrine of prapatī from the point of acceptability, after refuting the objections that are raised against it and deals with the way of life which one, who had adopted the course, shall practise. The third work discusses the admissibility of this course and refers to the practice of this through his uncle who was the great grandson of Kiṭāmpī Ācārān\textsuperscript{145}. His utter dislike of serving any one else for personal gains is aptly conveyed in this work.\textsuperscript{146} These lyrical poems, which are remarkable for the grace and diction of the Sanskrit language, serve two purposes, namely, (i) the path of self-surrender is presented directly or suggested and its importance is explained and (ii) the greatness of arca worship is stressed. Both these are mainly due to the inspired teachings of the Āḻvārs.

Among his five works which represent the poetic and dramatic forms, the Pādukā-sahasra consists of one thousand verses in praise of the sandals of Lord Raṅganātha. The most original and individual flights of poetic fancy are displayed in this which is one of the Indian poems unsurpassed in poetic excellence. The sandals are called ‘Saṭhāri’ and Nammāḻvār is also known as Saṭhāri (Saṭhakōpa). The author pays his respects to Nammāḻvār whose name is that of the sandals and who had produced another Saṁhiitā of the Vedas.\textsuperscript{147} Saṭhakōpa composed the Thousand Verses in Tamil and he has entered into the sandals in order to bring Viṣṇu’s Grace within the reach of those who could not make a study of the Tiruvāyulī.\textsuperscript{148} Deśika’s Saṅkalpa-sūryodaya is in criticism of Kṛṣṇamiśra’s Prabodha-candrōdaya. In this work the author combats the Advaitic conclusion of Kṛṣṇa-

\textsuperscript{143} Nyāsa-vimāti 1.
\textsuperscript{144} ibid. 2.
\textsuperscript{145} Nyāsa-tilaka, 9.
\textsuperscript{146} ibid. 26 to 29.
\textsuperscript{147} Pādukā-sahasra 1: 3.
\textsuperscript{148} ibid. 2: 2.
moony effulgence of ātma-jñāna. It is an allegorical drama in ten Acts representing the conflict in the jīva between the forces of Vivēka and Mahāmoha heaped by Kāma, Krūdha, Darpa and Daṁbha. Vivēka subdues the evils of rāga and dvēṣa and is reinforced by Vairāgya and tattva jñāna led by Viṣṇu bhakti. The hero is Vivēka and Sumati is his queen and their plan is to free Puruṣa from the hazards of Karma and to enable him to attain muktī. This work is unrivalled in allegorical literature for dignity grandeur, and intellectual eminence and has more divinity in it than the Divine Comedy of Dante. His Yādavābhayudaya is a fine and elegant poem which won the admiration of the renowned Appaya Dīkṣitar in the sixteenth century and made him compose a valuable commentary on it.

Three out of the twenty-seven works which Deśika wrote for maintaining the Viṣistādvaita doctorines are now lost. Some of the available works are in the form of commentaries on the works of earlier writers. Five of them are devoted to establish the path of self-surrender as authentic and valid and to prove the validity of the Pāncarāra system and the practices governed by it. The Dramidopaṇiṣatsāra and Dramidopaṇiṣat-tātparya-ratnāvali contain in essence the messages enshrined in Nammālvār's Tiruvāyコミュ. His Tattvātikā is an extensive gloss in vigorous and masterly prose on the Rāmānuja's Śrībhāṣya; his Adhikaraṇa sāravalī is a series of beautiful Sanskrit verses of surpassing excellence summarizing the discussions on the various topics of the Vedānta-sūtra; his Nyāya-siddhāṅjana is a text book of Viṣistādvaitic logic and it consists of six sections dealing with the problems of jada, jīva,Īśvara, muktī, buddhi and adravya; his commentaries on Īsāvāsyopaniṣad and Rāmānuja's Bhagavad gīta bhāṣya controvert the Advaitic theory of ajñāna and akarma and defend the view that Brahman is saguna and not nirguna and that karma is transfigured into kaiṅkarya; his Seśvara-Mimāṁsā is a reconstruction of Jaimini's Purva Mimāṁsā by integrating two Mimāṁsās and controverting the atheistic interpretation of the former; his Tattvamukti-kalāpa is an elaborate and critical discussion of the nature of the universe in the light of the
Viśiṣṭādvaitic philosophy, together with an explanatory gloss on it called Sarvārtha-siddhi; and his Satadūṣaṇi is a polemical treatise directed against Advaita.

Deśika wrote thirty-four works in Tamil mixed up with Sanskrit for the easy understanding of the tenets of the school by those whose scholarship in Sanskrit Śāstraic system is not deep rooted. All these works contain a decisive treatment of the various doctrines of the school viewed from various angles. The conclusions are justified by citing the passages from the Vedas, Ṛishiśasas, Purāṇas, works of earlier writers and from the Nālāyiram. Two among these are lost and one, which was known as Steyāvirōdha justified the activities of Tirumānkaiyāḻvār for propagating Vaiṣṇavism and the other was Maturakaviyādhīyam, a commentary on Kaṇṭhimān-cīruttāmpu. The Guruparamparā-sāra deals with the line of spiritual teachers in the school of Rāmānuja. It is said here that those passages of the Vedas which are not understandable, rather the doctrines which are preached in the Vedas are easily understood through the compositions of the Āḻvārs. No other spiritual teacher in the school of Rāmānuja has made a categorical statement of this kind. That a spiritual preceptor is needed for every one without whom progress in life is impossible is stated by drawing the instance of Maturakavi who worshipped only Namāḻvār and no one else.

The Rahasyatrayasāra is the biggest among these works and deals with the three secret mantras. In the introductory section, the author pays his respects to those who recite the compositions of the Āḻvārs in the presence of Lord Varadarāja at Kāṇci. They are described as the servants who clean the streets which belong to that Lord. They are described as capable of resolving the doubts that arise in regard to Karma-kāṇḍa and Jñāna-kāṇḍa of the Vedas. The Pāṇcarātra Āgamas declare that songs which are composed in Tamil could be sung on occasions of festivals.

149. RTS. p. 9.
150. ibid. p. 20.
151. ibid. Chap. 1, p. 72.
152. Is. S. 11: 256.
Those who sing them shall march before the deity thus purifying the streets for the Lord's procession. This is what the author means here by cleaning the streets. Those persons are proficient in Vedas and Vedanta to the extent of offering the correct solutions for the doubts arising there. Then the author discusses in greater detail the features and importance of arishecapanaka, Tativrata,Viṣṇu's supreme position, means of getting mokṣa, and the three secret mantras. His skill in offering an original treatment of the topics in this work is equalled only by his extraordinary talents used in citing the most appropriate authorities from Sanskrit works as well as the Nalayiram. His Paramapadasopana also brings out of his idea of mukti more beautifully wherein he constructs a spiritual ladder from the worldliness to Vaikuntha. The main milestones in this pathway to mukti are the metaphysical knowledge of Brahman arrived at by viveka, the moral progress of the pilgrim through vairagya, the religious striving by bhakti or prapatti and the mystic ascent to the home in the Absolute. In the Satsampradāya-parisuddhi, one among these works, the author says that another language (that is Tamil, which is other than Sanskrit) shall be adopted to treat the Vedantic doctrines, as it would be easy to make clear the Vedantic doctrines through that language. The author's eagerness in maintaining the tenets of the system against misinterpretation is revealed when he says that there is nothing contradictory to the tenets among the spiritual descendants of Rāmānuja. The difference, if at all is pointed out to be present, must only be interpreted as arising out of adopting different methods of construing the passages. Any difference in the practices due to time and place could not be taken to show that the doctrines have changed. This is a reference to the differences of views

153. RTS. Chap. 2.
154. ibid. Chap. 3.
155. ibid. Chap 4
156. ibid Chap 6 to 10.
158. Seventeen Rahasyas, p.3.
159. ibid. p. 5.
in certain doctrinal interpretations which were arising in the
days of the author. The other works are of varying size, some
being very brief. The treatment that is given to the same
matter varies from one work to another. God had the nectar
brought out of the ocean that was churned, and helped the
world. The Feet of God are more sweet than nectar and
these are shown only by the spiritual teacher (Ācārya).\textsuperscript{160}
No one could be considered to be even equal to those who are
devoted to God.\textsuperscript{161} That creation and maintenance of the
world of sentient and non-sentient beings are due to
God's will and are not dependent on anybody else is dealt
with in the work \textit{Taitvasandesa}.\textsuperscript{162} The author recounts the
action of benefaction which the world has received from the
Lord.\textsuperscript{163} The path of self-surrender is discussed in brief\textsuperscript{164}
and it is shown that the Lord has given assurance that those
who surrender unto Him would not suffer.\textsuperscript{165} In the \textit{Virodhaparihara}, one hundred and nine objections to the tenets of
Vaishnavite school are brought in and answered. Some of
the conclusions arrived at are as follows: No one but
Narayana could be the supporter for all.\textsuperscript{166} The sins committed
before and those committed due to carelessness and also
wilfully get destroyed by \textit{prapatti}.\textsuperscript{167} The self does not stand
to lose anything by being in bondage, or subjected to the work-
ing of \textit{karma} or directions of the \textit{sastra}.\textsuperscript{168} The Lord becomes
subordinated to the devotees.\textsuperscript{169} He does not take note of their
offences.\textsuperscript{170} A servant is one who carries out the order
of the master. A devotee is a servant in the sense that he
carries out the orders issued by the Lord, his master, through

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{160. ibid. p. 8.}
\footnote{161. ibid. p. 16.}
\footnote{162. ibid. pp. 32 to 35.}
\footnote{163. \textit{Upakārasaṅgraha}.}
\footnote{164. \textit{Añjalivaibhava}.}
\footnote{165. \textit{Abhayapradāna-sūra}}
\footnote{166. \textit{Nan. Tv. 7, 57.}}
\footnote{167. T.M. 40, \textit{ibid.} Tv. 94.}
\footnote{168. \textit{Virodhaparihara}, p. 280. cf. TVR. 1.}
\footnote{169. ibid. p. 252.}
\footnote{170. cf. \textit{Varadarājastava} 20; \textit{Peri. Tm. 4.9: 2}.}
\end{footnotes}
the sāstras with regard to Himself and His devotees. Not carrying out these orders constitutes an offence. Purification, sipping of water, worship of saṅdhyā and others are included under kaiṅkarya. When these are not carried out, the individual becomes unfit for the specific services. That an interpretation of this kind for the concept of kaiṅkarya is not applicable to the kali age is no argument, for that is kaliyuga when the Lord is not in the heart of a man and kaliyuga becomes kṛtyayuga when He dwells in the heart of the devotee. The concept of service derives its source from the concept of seṣa which declares the relationship of a self to God. To become borne (ādheya) and to be ordained (vidheya) become meaningful only when the spirit of service is meant to be put to practice. A self who becomes seṣa to his Ācārya, continues to be the seṣa for God. It is not proper to argue that service is attended with the feeling pain, being likened to the life of a dog, for he, who treats his nature to be controlled by the Lord, would certainly like that dependence and consider that as enjoyable. God is protector of all in two ways, namely, (i) the nature and existence of the selves are not allowed to be affected by anything, and (ii) the selves are protected by the removal of the undesirables for which God expects a sort of request from the devotees. Deśika's Pradhānāśataka deals with the important aspects of Vaiṣṇavism under one hundred heads. Some of them could be stated as follows: Service is to characterize the life of a Vaiṣṇavite. One has to avoid doing offences. Kaiṅkarya to the devotees is

171. Virodhaparihāra, p. 274.
173. ibid. p. 280.
175. ibid. 284 cf. TVM 3.7: 7.
177. ibid. 4: 6.
179. ibid. pp. 250, 251.
more important than the one for God. Even here, the service to the Ācārya is more important. While rendering service to God, the order of doing it must be for Para at first, Vyūha next and so on. No discrimination shall be made among the divine descents (avatāras) on this account. Procurement of the materials like tuḷaci for purposes of worship shall be made without infringing the directions of the sāstra. The holy place shall be preferred to an ordinary one for doing kaiṅkarya. Priority shall be given here to the places which have manifested themselves (svayamvyakta), then those established by gods (saiddha), then those which are installed by sages (ārṣa) and lastly the ones which are established by men (māuṣa). If it is difficult to observe this order, one shall render service in the place where he dwells. Ardent devotion is required for rendering service. One should necessarily get into the company of the sāttvikas. A pupil shall at no time bear malice towards the preceptor. If one offends at a devotee, he shall expiate that offence by seeking the help of another devotee.

Deśika achieved distinction by composing eighteen poems in Tamil, all of them being intended to bring forth the V.śiṣṭādvaitic doctrines. Five of them are now lost. Significance of the three secret mantras, arthapañcaka,

182 ibid. No. 58.
183 ibid. No 64.
184 ibid. No. 70.
185 ibid. No. 71.
186 ibid. No. 75.
187 ibid. No. 76.
188 ibid. No. 77.
189 ibid. No. 78. cf. Periyāl. Tm 4.4: 7 and TVM. 5.3: 11.
190 ibid. No. 68. cf. Nāc. Tm. 11: 10.
191 ibid. No. 82.
192 ibid. No. 84.
193 ibid. No. 86.
194 Tirumāṇitrac-cuṟukku, Dvayac-cuṟukku and Caramaślokac-cuṟukku.
195 T.P. 248 to 258.
act of self-surrender, and the routine life of the devotee are dealt with in some of these. The twelve names of the Lord are explained in detail. The author dwells at length on the rapturous sound of the trumpet blown at Kānci during festival of Śri Varadarāja. The matter which is taught in the Bhagavad-gītā is treated in twenty-one Tamil verses, eighteen among them being devoted to the treatment of each one of the chapters. Śrī Devarātha the deity at Tīrūvalīndrapuram is described as an enchanting person, the sight of which will remove bondage. Mummaṇikkāvai, which shall consist of thirty verses is available only in ten verses. The author's treatment of himself as a woman in love with Śrī Devarātha bears the influence of the Ālvārs' treatment of Nāyaka-Nāyaki bhāva. In fine Tamil the author enumerates the restrictions which are required to be observed in the matter of one's taking of food. The Pirapantacāram consisting of eighteen verses is a prayer to the Ālvārs to bless him with the purport of their poems. It tells us the number of verses in each of the works of the Ālvārs and arrives the number 4000 in the Nālāyirām. Even though Nāṭhamuni codified it, he did not restate the exact number of verses in each Prabandham; at the time of Rāmānuja a poem of 108 verses had been added to the collection as the twenty-fourth Prabandham. It may perhaps be the view of Desika to restrict that no more addition was to be made to the holy collection and so he arrived at the number 4000 in his own way taking also into account Amutanār's poem on Rāmānuja and also to stop the tendency of interpolations by the later Tamil poets.

196. ibid. 237 to 247.
197. ibid. 259 to 268.
198. ibid. 280 to 292.
199. ibid. 269 to 279.
200. ibid. 326 to 346.
201. ibid. 357 to 366.
202. ibid. 347 to 356. Vide Paṇṇirupāṭṭiyal-Sūt 156,
203. ibid. 385 to 405.
204. ibid. 367 to 384.
The dizzy eminence Deśika reached in the domain of philosophy and dialectics is only matched by the brilliance of his intellectual energy exhibited in every one of his works. It is no exaggeration to say that the moral and intellectual forces that radiated from the long line of great Ācāryas were all the more genuinely and actively combined in him than in any other religious teacher known to history. The powerful influence that he exerted as much during his life as after, is, in no small measure, due to the fascination of his great and attractive personality which was an embodiment of uprightness and nobility, simplicity and wisdom. No framework in which we may try in words to enclose this towering personality, can do justice to the varied power of his intellect, the wide range of his knowledge, or the burning faith of his simple life. No wonder that eminent scholars even of divergent philosophic and religious thought joined in paying their unstinted homage to his greatness as a thinker, writer and controversialist.

NAINĀRĀCĀR: After the death of Deśika the mantle of the Ācārya fell on the shoulders of his son, Varadācārya otherwise known as Nainārācār; but after him there was no pontiff to hold the flock together. One of his disciples, Brahmatantra-svatantra, who was also a leader, withdrew to Tirupati and lost touch with the generality of people.

NAṇČĪYAR: The other line of Divya Prabandha tradition branching off from Tirukkuruakaip—pirān Pillān, was first represented by Naṇčīyar, the disciple of Parācara Paṭṭar from whom he studied the Six Thousand. Naṇčīyar had the reputation of being known as Vedāntin living in the west to Śrī Raṅgam, perhaps in the Karnatak State. At the direction of Rāmānuja, Parācara Paṭṭar went to his place, and won him in a debate, converted him to become a Vaiśpa vīte and gave him the name Naṇčīyar (nam-our, cīyar-saint). He wrote with the permission of Paṭṭar a commentary known as Nine Thousand on the Six Thousand of Pillān.  

206. ibid. p. 189.
207. ibid. p. 214.
Accān told Naṅcīyar that he was taught by Rāmaṇuja that wherever the Lord is mentioned, Lākṣmi must be taken to have been included in that reference. Naṅcīyar wrote the Nitya, a manual for daily practice of a Vaiṣṇavite, but this work is lost. He had a disciple called Nampūr Varadarāja whom he affectionately called Nampiḷḷai (‘our son’). He was also called Kalivairidāsa. He had four disciples, namely, Periyavēccān Piḷḷai, Vaṭakkut-tiruvītip-piḷḷai, Pīntaḷakiya Perumāḷ Jīyar, and Ḡuṇi Mātavapperumāḷ. Nampiḷḷai’s contribution lies much in what he imparted to these disciples.

PERIYAVĒCCĀN PIḷḷAI (1168-1263 A.D.): He commented on Tiruvēymoli in his work called Twenty-four Thousand. He is the only writer who commented on all the four thousand verses of all the Ālvārs, of which the portion on the Periyavēr-tirumoli is not available except for the first piece Tiruppallāntu. He has also the credit for compiling the Taniśloki which is a collection of the important ślokas in Valmiki’s Rāmāyanam. He commented on them in Tamil mixed up with Sanskrit and cited the relevant passages from the compositions of the Ālvārs for better elucidation of those ślokas. His other works are Paranta-rahasya-nivāraṇam, Māṇikka-mālai, Navaratna-mālai, Sakalapramāṇa-tātparīyaṇam, Upakāra-rattinam, commentaries on the Gadyatraya and Stotra-ratna, Caramarahaṣyaṇam and Nikamanap-pati.

VAṬAKKUT-TIRUVĪTIP-PIḷḷAI (1167-1263 A.D.): He was otherwise known as Kṛṣṇapāda. He prepared a commentary on the Tiruvēymoli embodying what was taught by Nampiḷḷai during his discourses on Naṅcīyar’s Nine Thousand. Nampiḷḷai read through this and found that not even a letter of what was taught by him was left out. He was much fascinated by this composition. However, he desired that Ḡuṇi Mātavapperumāḷ, one of his disciples, who had the name of Naṅcīyar, must gain importance as a scholar and so gave the

208. R.T.S. p. 750.
209. Ibid. p. 1182.
210. Naṅcīyar’s name was Mādhava.
composition of Vaṭakkut-tiruvitip-pillai to Mātavapperumāl. This composition was known as Thirty-six Thousand and came to be called Nampillai Ḥtu, because it contained the record of what Nampillai had taught. Ḥtuṇṇi Mātavapperumāl was responsible for the propagation of Ḥtu.

VĀTIKESARI AĻAKIYA MAṆAṆĀLAṆ-PERUMĀL JĪYAR: He wrote a commentary called Twelve Thousand on the TīruvaṆmoji. From the number 12000, it must not be presumed that this work was anterior to that of his preceptor Periyavāccān Pillai. In fact, the attempt of this writer was to present a simple commentary as compared to Twenty-four Thousand and Thirty-six Thousand.

NAINĀRĀCCĀṆ PILLAI: He was the son of Periyavāccān Pillai and the author of Caramarahasya-traya which dealt with the three secret mantras. He expressed and maintained the view that Lakṣmī, the consort of Viṣṇu, is an individual self and renders aid (puruṣakāra) to the suffering humanity for obtaining the Grace of God. Meghanādārī was perhaps a contemporary of this scholar. He maintained the same view about Lakṣmī. Curiously enough, SriRāmamiśra, who was also known as Cōmāciyāṇṭān, and was a disciple of Rāmānuja and an ancestor of Meghanādārī, maintained that both Lakṣmī and Viṣṇu together form the sēsin. In all likelihood, this writer could have been influenced by contemporary views.

PILLAI LÕKĀCCĀRYAR: The famous Pillai Lōkācāryar the eldest son and successor of Vaṭakkut-t-tiruvitip-pillai, the elder contemporary of Vedānta Deśika is generally regarded as the founder and formulator of Tenkalaisym as a distinct sect. He is called the younger Pillai to distinguish him from Nampillai who was given the name of Lōkācāryar by one Kantāṭai Tōḷappar, the grandson of Mutaliyāṇṭān.

211. Nayadyumani, pp. 255-256.
213. U.R.M. 51. He was renowned expositor of Divya Prabandham basing his exposition on Itihāsas and Purāṇas.
and who lived earlier. When the Muhammadans sacked Śrī Raṅgam, slaughtered the Vaiṣṇavites and committed sacrilege in the temple, he took a leading role in removing the idol of the temple to a place of safety. An intellectually brilliant man, he composed eighteen Rahasyas or sacred manuals of Tenkalaism, generally known as Aṣṭādaśa Rahasyas, to uphold the teaching of his school. These works are mostly of Manipravāla or Sanskritised Tamil. Most of these works are small in size; but they came to be regarded by the Tenkalai sect as the only correct interpretation of the cults of Rāmānuja and the Ālvārs. Among his works, the Artta-pañcaçakam brings out the essentials of Viśiṣṭādvaita in their fivefold aspect of (i) the nature of Īśvara, (ii) the nature of the jīva, (iii) the puruṣartha, (iv) the āpāya and (v) the virōdhi. Each aspect is analysed into five forms with its own special features. Īśvara or God exists as para, vyūha, vibhava, antaryāmin and arcā of whom the last mentioned form as the permanent incarnation of the Grace of God is most accessible to the mumukṣu. The jīva or soul is classified into five kinds, viz., the nītya or ever free, the mukta or the freed, the baddha or samsārin, the kevala enjoying kaivalya in a state of stranded spiritual solitude, and the mumukṣu. The five chief ends of conduct are dharma or the performance of the Vedic duties, artha or the acquisition of the economic goods of life, kāma or the enjoyment of the pleasures of life here and in Svārga, atmanubhava or kaivalya and Bhagavanubhava or God-experience. The five means of attaining Brahman are karma, jñāna, bhakti or solvation by self effort, prapatti or submission to the redemptive will of God and ācāryabhimāna or absolute loyalty to the guru as a living mediator between the mumukṣu and the Lord. The obstacles are also fivefold, and they are traced to faith in other gods, other means and ends than those prescribed for the mumukṣu, the mistaken faith as the svarūpa jñāna as an end in itself, godlessness and the confusions relating to prapatti. This kind of classification runs counter to the traditionally accepted matters and seems to have been intended to lay stress on some of them as essential for the spiritual progress. Tattvatraya is written in a terse aphoristic manipravāla style on the model of Brahma-sūtras. It consists
of three parts, defining the nature of Cīt, Acīt and Īśvara. The first part, Cīt-prakaraṇam, defines ātman and its jñāna and explains the classification of ātman. The second part, Acīt-prakaraṇam, describes Acīt in its three aspects of kāla, suddha-tattva and mīśra tattva or prakṛti evolving into twenty-four categories including the psycho-physical factors of buddhi, manas and indriyas and the cosmological elements of the five bhūtas and tan-mātrās. It is also known as avidyā or māya. The third part Īśvara-prakaraṇam, is devoted to the understanding of Īśvara including his svarūpa, rūpa and guṇa. His Śārasaṅgṛaha is valuable for exposition of the significance of the Dvaya-mantra. This mantra conveys ten senses: (i) The Lord is the husband of Lakṣmī; (ii) He is Nārāyaṇa; (iii) His pair of Feet are adorable; (iv) the Feet are the means for mokṣa; (v) the self must have faith to request for God’s Grace; (vi) Service at the Feet of Lakṣmī is closely associated with this; (vii) the Lord is the enjoyer; (viii) He is the svāmin for all; (ix) Service to Him shall be for all times; and (x) the proofs for maintaining eternality of service. All these ten meanings are explained and it is shown that they are suggested by the ten centums of the Tiruvāyumoḷi. In his work Navavidha-sambandha, he enumerates that the Lord and the self are related by nine kinds of relation: veṣaṣana-viṣesa, raksya-raksana, seṣa-seṣin, bharti-bhārya, jñātjñeya, svasvāmin, sarīra-saririn, dhārya-dhāraka and bhoktri-bhogya. The Mumukṣup-pāṭi brings out the greatness of Tirumāṇtra. The uppermost limit for the Lord’s accessibility lies in the arcā form of worship. Service (kainkarya) is said to include karma. Śrī Vacana Pūṇaṇam is also aphoristic and terse. This work consists of four chapters; it is more popular on account of its main religious motive and value. The first chapter brings out the status of Śrī or Lakṣmī in the salvation scheme as the divine mediatress or puruṣakāra between the sentient being (cetana) and the Lord. Her unique qualities of ananyārhatva (of being His alone), pāratantrya or dependence on Him, and kṛpā as exemplified

215. ibid. 139.
216. ibid. 270.
in Sītā's life. She joyfully submits herself to Īśvara, as she has her being in Him and belongs to Him, and always intercedes on behalf of the sinner by pleading for his being forgiven. She subdues the retributive will of Īśvara by the beauty of her enticing love and at the same time she melts the hearts of the sinner by her infinite tenderness. It is the sinner mentality of the sinner that occasions the intervention of the Divine Grace, and this grace is spontaneous and not conditioned by the effort of the self as in the case of the bhakta. Of the fivefold forms of God it is the arca only that is ever available to the cetana who thirsts for God. The Lord is Himself the means of salvation and the goal of endeavour. The true meaning of self-surrender is not winning the Grace of God by self-effort, but responding passively to its free flow. The second chapter dwells on the superiority of paragata svikāra, in which the Lord seeks the sinner, over the svagata svikāra, in which the devotee or bhakta seeks the Lord. Grace is the free gift of God. It flows spontaneously like the mother's milk (mulaip-pāl); if it is to be gained by effort, it resembles the artificial milk for the same baby, purchased in the milk depot or a chemist's shop (vilaip-pāl). When man seeks God, even prapatti is futile; but if the Lord elects him, even his sinfulness is ignored, if not relished. Prapatti has its fruition in service to God or to His devotees in a spirit of utter humility without the slightest trace of egoism. A devotee is known by his spiritual worth and not by his birth. The concept of high birth is an impediment to devotion; it becomes a heresy when a devotee of low birth is not duly respected. The third chapter assigns the highest value to maṅgalā-śāsanam or benediction offered by the devotee, in his intense solicitude of love, to the Lord for His eternal reign of Grace and to deep devotion as in the case of Viṣṇu-cītta who was so much drawn by the beauty of the child Kṛṣṇa that, in his God intoxicated state, he forgot His Īśvaratva and with deep concern for the safety of the Divine child tended him with the affection of a fond parent. The fourth chapter prefers ācāryabhimāna to the Grace of God. The main reason for its preference is that, while the Lord is both just and
merciful, the Ācārya is moved only by mercy. The work then concludes with the statement that service to the Ācārya and to the bhāgavatas irrespective of their station in life is the highest and the only means of attaining God. The author stresses that the Rāmāyaṇa is of great importance on account of Lakṣmī who was in prison as Sītā and according to the scholar the Mahābhārata’s greatness lies in Kṛṣṇa’s having undertaken work of a messenger. The Āḻvārs practised prapatti only in the arcā form of God. The para form of God is like the water surrounding us, vyūha like the milky ocean, vibhava like the rivers that flow, arcā like the water in the ponds and antaryāmin like the water inside the earth. Those who are not learned like us, those who are great in their knowledge like the earlier Ācāryas and those who are extremely devoted to the Lord like the Āḻvārs are qualified to adopt the path of self-surrender. The path of self-surrender is expounded with illustrations. The arcā form of God shall not be spoken of in terms of the material out of which it is made. It is still worse to talk of the ancestry of the devotees of God. The conduct of a pupil towards his preceptor and the attitude which is expected to be shown by a preceptor towards his pupil are dealt with in the section called Sadācārya anuvartanam. The concept of service is dealt with as having three stages. The first stage is marked by rendering service to the Ācārya, the second by that to the Lord and the third to the devotees of God.

ĀLAKIYA MANAVĀLAP-PERUMĀL NĀYANĀR: He was the younger brother of Pillaī Lōkācāryar. He commented on

217. The worship of Ācārya became in later days a main feature of some of the sects of Vaiṣṇavism in North India also.
218. SVP. 1:5.
219. ibid. 1:35.
220. ibid. 1:39.
221. ibid. 1:43.
222. ibid. 1:80.
223. ibid. 2:195.
224. ibid. 3.
225. ibid. 4:412.
the compositions of Tiruppāṉāḻvār and Maturakaviyāḻvār and Āṉṭāl’s Tiruppāvai. The Ācārya Hṛdayam is the best known work of this scholar and is held to be a supplement of Śrī Vacana Puṇṇam. In it Nammāḻvār’s greatness is clearly expounded and the contrast is drawn between his work and Gītā.225 The ten centums of Nammāḻvār’s Tiruvāymozhi are taken to present the ten divine descents (avaṭṭaras) of the Lord.227 Rāmānuja is said to have written the Śrī Bhāṣya with the help of Tiruvāymozhi.228 The Lord is described to have taken divine descent as Varāha, Kṛṣṇa and Nammāḻvār was born as the son of Kāri mainly to uplift those who belonged to the low castes.229

TIRUVĀYMOŽI-PILḷAI: Pillai Lōkācāryar’s position as the leader of the Tenkalai sect was taken by Śrī Sāila otherwise known popularly as Tiruvāymozhip-pilḷai.230 He made Āḻvār-tirunakari (Tirunelveli District), the birth place of Saṭṭha-kōpa, the scene of his preaching activities and carried on the traditions of this school throughout the period when worship at Śrī Raṅgam was disorganized. His great and main task was to train the celebrated Varavara Muni or Maṇavāḷa-māmunikāḻ, the acknowledged prophet of Tenkalai sim.

MAṆAVĀĻA-MĀMUNIKĀĻ (1371-1443 A.D.): This well-known leader of Tenkalai school was born near Āḻvār Tirunakari in Tirunelveli District. He is believed by his followers to have been re-incarnation of Rāmānuja. He soon acquired proficiency in the tenets of Viṣiṣṭādvaita and was initiated into the essentials of Tiruvāymozhi by Tiruvāymozhip-pilḷai. On the death of his teacher the leadership of Tenkalai school devolved on this scholar. At that time Tenkalai school was definitely consolidated and established by him. After a few years’ stay at Āḻvār Tirunakari he moved to Śrī Raṅgam and

226. A.H. Sūt. 190 to 193.
227. ibid. Sūt. 214.
228. ibid. Sūt. 65.
229. ibid. Sūt. 84.
230. He was also known as Tirumalaiyāḻvār.
made the place his headquarters. He spent his time there in consecrated service to the Lord and the co-ordination of worship in the Vaiśnavite shrines by organizing the work of his disciples in different centres of tradition. He entered the sannyāsa order and spent his days in devotion to Lord Raṅganātha and exposition of the Nālayiram. He laid down the principle that Thirty-six Thousand was the Īṭu or equal of Śruta-prakāśika. He introduced the Īṭu formally as a subject of holy studies. To popularise the teachings of Piḷḷai Lōkācāryār, he wrote commentaries in a lucid style on Tattvātraya, Śri Vacana Pūṣāṇam, Mumukṣup-pāṭi and Ācārya Nyādayam. He also wrote commentaries on Periyāḻvār-tirumoṭṭi, Rāmānuca-nūṟṟuṇṭu, and on two Tamil works viz., Jñāna-cāram and Prēmēya-cāram of Arulāḷappurumāḷ Emperumanār otherwise known as Devarāj. He also composed a Tamil work in veḻpā metre called Upailecā Ratnamalai which contains the main teachings of the Āḻvārs. The six works of Tirumānkalīvār are said to be the six ancillaries (Vedāṅga) for Nammāḻvār’s compositions which are Tamil Vedas. The Tiruppallāṇṭu of Periyāḻvār serves like the prāṇava for the Vedas and are recited both before and after the recitation of the Tamil hymns. The importance of Piḷḷai Lōkācāryār’s Śri Vacana Pūṣāṇam is stressed by him, as due to the relationship of the perceptor and pupil. His other Tamil works are Tituvāyoolī-nūṟṟuṇṭu which is a summary of the hymns of Tiruvāyoolī, Ārttip-pirapantam, a small treatise on methods of daily worship at home called Tiruvāṟatana-kramam and two little pieces in praise of Rāmānuja. In his Yatirāja-viniśati he mentions Rāmānuja as devoted to Nammāḻvār who was ever serving the Feet of the Lord. On account of his deep devotion to Rāmānuja he was known as Yatindra-pravāṇa.

TWO OTHER SCHOLARS: Nammāḻvār’s greatness is sung in the Śri Parāṅkuśapaṇcaviniśati by Vādhula Varadanārāyaṇa

231. URM. 9.
232. ibid. 19.
233. ibid. 53 to 59.
234. ibid. 60 to 72.
235. Yatirāja-viniśati, 1.
of unknown date. Nammāḻvār is the prominent person among the other Āḻvārs.\textsuperscript{236} That the path of self-surrender is the only means for mokṣa was taught by this Āḻvār.\textsuperscript{237} One Abhirāmavaraguru composed the Nakṣatramālikā in twenty-seven ślokas, enumerating the name of each of the twenty-seven constellations in their order and representing the greatness of Nammāḻvār.

OTHER WORKS ABOUT ĀḻVĀRS AND ĀCĀRYAS: An attempt was made by Śrīnivāsa who had the title Gurudāvāhanapāṇḍita to depict the lives of the Āḻvārs and Ācāryas in the form of an Epic called Divyāstirīcarita in eighteen cantos. The verses from this work are quoted with the mention of this work by Piṇḍākaiyaperumāḻ Jiyyar in his Guruparamparāpirapāva while mentioning the dates of birth of the Āḻvārs.\textsuperscript{238} The author of this work was a pupil of Nampiḷḷai (1147–1252 A.D.) and so it is to be assumed that Gurudāvāhanapāṇḍita should have lived before this date when his work must have become reputed. He is held to have been a contemporary of Rāmānuja. His work stops with the life account of Rāmānuja and this suggests that he could have been a younger contemporary of Rāmānuja. One departure from the traditional account of the life of the Āḻvārs that is found here lies in the author’s description of Āṇṭāl’s svayamvarā at Āḻvār–irunakari. The arrival of the Lords from various holy places is graphically described and they are described vividly revealing an intended and clever imitation of Kālidāsa’s treatment of Indumati’s svayamvara and the entry of the prince and princess into the city of the Vidarbha king.\textsuperscript{240} Piṇḍākaiyaperumāḻ Jiyyar’s Guruparamparāpirapāva begins with the life account of Poykaiyāḻvār and stops with the life account of Nampiḷḷai who was his preceptor. This biography is valuable for the information it provides about

\textsuperscript{236} Śrī Parāṅkuṣapaṇcaviṃśati, 2.
\textsuperscript{237} ibid. 6, 7.
\textsuperscript{238} G.P. pp. 7 to 9.
\textsuperscript{239} D.S.C. canto 12 and 13.
\textsuperscript{240} Raghuvamsa – canto 7.
the life-accounts of the Āḻvārs and Ācāryas and for the citations from earlier sources. There is a work with the title Yatindra-pravānaprabhāva by Pillaiṉukka Jiyar whose aim in writing this work was to describe the glory of Maṉavāḷa-māмуnikaḷ who was also known as Yatindrapravaṇa. The author traces the tradition of the Guruparamparā to Nam-piḷḷai and deals with the greatness of Piḷḷai Lōkācāryār and Maṉavāḷa-māmuṇikaḷ. Neither he or Piṇpalakiyaperumāḷ Jiyar took note of the contribution of Periyavāccān Piḷḷai. The third Brahmaṇḍa-śvatantra-śvāmin of Parakāla Mutt, Mysore, wrote the Guruparamparā according to the Vaṭakalai school. This work begins with the life-account of Poykaiyāḻvār and ends with that of Varadaṉa son of Vedānta Desika, greater importance being attached to the life-accounts of Rāmānuja and Vedānta Desika. Similarly, Satsampradāya-muktāvalī was written by Śri Saṭṭhakopaya-yatindra the thirty-third Head of the Aḥobila Mutt (1851–1877 A.D.) with greater emphasis laid on the life and achievements of Ādivaṇ Saṭṭhakopaya-mahādesika (1379–1460 A.D.). The Prapan-nāṁṟam and Aricamaya-dipam represent the attempts to recount the tradition of Vaiśṇavism according to the sources available to their authors. The scholars who came after Vedānta Desika and Maṉavāḷa-māmuṇikaḷ contributed to the cause of Vaiśṇavism by writing more and more commentaries on and criticism of the earlier works on the Nālāyiram. It could be said that much of what was written during this period was in the form of criticism on the doctrines of Viśiṣṭādvaita school.

(ii) The two schools of Vaiśṇavism in the post-Rāmānuja period:

Thus there have come into existence two schools of Nālāyiram tradition, the one being known as Vaṭakalai owing its allegiance to Vedānta Desika and the other Teṅkalai relating to Maṉavāḷa-māmuṇikaḷ. These names, Vaṭakalai and Teṅkalai are of very late origin and perhaps belong to a period subsequent to Maṉavāḷa-māmuṇikaḷ. The differences which could have been instrumental for the naming of the two schools have been deep-rooted from early times, perhaps during the period which followed the passing away of Rāmānuja.
The Sri Bhāṣya and Bhagavad-gitā do not suggest any clue that could have given rise to any difference in the interpretation of the central doctrines which they deal with nor does the Nalāyiram contain any. Rāmānuja was taught some secret doctrines by Tirukkōṭṭiyūr Nampi. These were known as rahasyas and must have included the three, namely, Tirumantra, Dvaya and Carama-śloka, the last which is taken from the Gitā. Unlike as in the case of Brahma-sūtras, Bhāgavad-gitā and Tiruvāymoḷi, there was no authentic work treating these rahasyas. Having been orally transmitted, there must have been ample scope for a preceptor to give an exposition of them in a manner which he felt was not merely the correct one but also authentic. There must have been slight variations in the expositions offered by more than one preceptor for the same rahasyas. The methods which were adopted by the preceptors in the practice of their conduct must have been different according to individual capacities and these must have had a bearing in the interpretations of the rahasyas. The disciple also should have taken only such interpretations as authentic and supported them by citing those practices. In fact, there were some practices in the days of Rāmānuja which called forth criticism from certain quarters. These were individual cases and also represented exceptions to the general customs. The masters and pupils in the same and succeeding generations cited such practices and chose to treat them as the correct ones, forgetting their departures from the established rules. This, however, was not always the case. The attitudes of others were different towards such practices resulting in the evolution of not two theories, one for and the other against them, but more than two, their number depending on the number of approaches made by them. This resulted in another change of attitude towards tradition. Every interpretation was required to be substantiated by relevant citations from works of accepted authenticity.

243. G.P. pp. 121, 122, 149.
In their attempt to justify their interpretations, the preceptors and scholars forced their views on the sources and expounded them in a manner that could accommodate their view points. Thus started the differences in the interpretations of Tiruvāyamoli and the rahasyas. A beginning in this direction appears to have been made in the interpretation of the passages in Tiruvāyamoli by Tirumālaiyāntān and Rāmānuja.\(^{244}\) Even after the commentary was written by Piḷḷān on the Tiruvāyamoli, Parācara Paṭṭar is mentioned, as evidenced in the Ḫu, to have expressed disagreement to the views of Piḷḷān and offered his own.\(^{245}\) The tone of references to such differences both in the period of Rāmānuja and Parācara Paṭṭar is only suggestive of these two savants' eagerness to offer a better interpretation and not intended to cross the earlier ones. Much discredit was brought by later scholars for the earliest exponents by reading in between the lines and by asserting the authenticity of their own expositions. The unitary nature of the concepts of rahasyas was thus lost sight of. This resulted in the formulation of certain concepts most of them being based on the side of religion. Such concepts were acceptable to only one of the traditional schools and drew justifications from the Nalayiram and the passages from the works of earlier writers. There was not much for the two schools of Vaiṣṇavism to quarrel about regarding the matters in the Śri Bhāṣya and Bhagavad-gītā-bhāṣya which were not therefore cited. The Rahasyas and the compositions of the Ālyārs afforded ample scope for the exhibition of divergences of opinion. While one school interpreted the Rahasyas and the Tiruvāyamoli without even suggesting a deviated sense for them by remaining faithful to the sacred sources like Dharmasāstras and Āgamas, the other school swore by the deviation and supported it by the practice of the teacher who was held in the highest respect. It was not the language that effected this schism. While equal importance was given in one school for the Sanskrit sources and Tamil sources, the other school stood more by

\(^{244}\) Vide Ḫu on TVM 1.2: 1; 2.3: 3; 5.10: 4.

\(^{245}\) Vide Ḫu on TVM 6.5; 2.4: 1.
the Tamil sources ignoring the Sanskrit sources when they ran counter to the former and thus attached less significance to Sanskrit sources. For a long period till recently, the followers of the Tenkalai system were deeply studied in the Sanskrit sources like Sri Bhāṣya and Gītā-bhāṣya for matters of philosophical importance and followed the views of their school in matters pertaining to the rahasya and Prabandham. The two sources were thus kept apart thus maintaining in practice the concept of Udbhaya-vedānta. The Ācārya was the only guide in these matters for the Tenkalai school, while he was also the guide for the Vaṭakalai school.

The differences which keep these schools apart from each other seem to have taken their rise in the later half of the thirteenth century and are mentioned by Naiyārāccān Pillai, Pillai Lōkācāryār and Vedānta Deśika in their works. This does not, however, suggest that the two schools were treated then as rivals as they are held today. Vedānta Deśika, who was aware of such differences, remarks that there was no difference regarding the doctrines among the followers of Rāmānuja and there existed only a difference in the interpretation of the same doctrine. The differences must have become marked resulting in the rise of the two distinct schools in the Fifteenth century A.D. The Vaṭakalai school traces the origin of their doctrines to Pṛaṇāṭārtihara (Kiṭāmpi Āccāṇ) who was in charge of serving food for Rāmānuja. The Tenkalai school does it to Empār, the cousin and disciple of Rāmānuja. Neither of these scholars, however, left any written record of their theories.

The main points on which these two sects differed are said to be eighteen. It is worthwhile to consider what these points are:

246. Satsampradāya-parisuddhi, p. 5.
247. cf. RTS. p. 1377.
248. An anonymous Sanskrit verse gives out these eighteen differences:
    bhēdās svāmikrāphlānyagatiṣu śrīvyāptyupāyatvayoh
tadvātsalyadayaṁiruktivaśaṁ nāyase ca tatkārtari
dharmatīyāgavīrodhayos svāvihite nāyāghetutvayoh
prāyāścittavidhau tadi-bhanjane 'nuyāpti kaivalyayoh!
quoting by Sri V. Krishnamacharya in his beautiful Sanskrit introduction (p. 48) to Saṅkalpa-sūryodaya.
1. GOD’S GRACE: The Tenkalai school insists that the operation of God’s Grace is unconditioned by human endeavour and is absolute. They say that the well-known text “He is to be obtained only by the one whom, He chooses”\textsuperscript{249} is confirmed by the Carama-śloka of the Gīrā,\textsuperscript{250} and the mystic experience of Nammāḻvār. According to Vaṭakalais, God’s Grace though it is uncaused becomes operative only through bhakti or prapatti, just as the divine tree is considered to yield the results desired by the seekers of them only at their request. Those who are in need of God’s Grace have to make a request of God for it.\textsuperscript{251} They argue that if Grace is free and unconditioned, vāśamya or arbitrariness and nairghṛṇya or cruelty would be attributable to the divine nature.\textsuperscript{252} In that case, all people would in time be emancipated, and there would be no need of any effort on their part. If it was supposed that God in His own spontaneity extended His Grace to some in preference to others, He would have to be regarded as partial. It is therefore to be admitted that, though God is free in extending his mercy, yet in practice He extends it only as a reward to the virtuous or meritorious action of the devotee. God, though all-merciful and free to extend His mercy to all without effort on their part, does not actually do so except on the occasion of the meritorious actions of His devotees. The extension of God’s mercy is thus both without cause (nirhētuka) and with cause (sahētuka).

2. MOKṢA: There is no difference of opinion as to mokṣa being the ultimate goal. The Tenkalais believe that for those who take to the course of devotion, mokṣa consists in having the experience of God Himself, but those who take to the path of self-surrender have to render service to God even during the state of release. But the Vaṭakalais believe that

\textsuperscript{249} Kath. Up. 2: 23.
\textsuperscript{250} Bh. G. 18: 66.
\textsuperscript{251} L.T. 17: 78.
\textsuperscript{252} V.S. 2.1: 34.
whatever be the courses adopted by the individuals, they become released without any distinction among themselves. They have therefore occasions for experience of God as well as service.

3. MEANS OF MOKṢA: According to the Tenkalais, there are five kinds of means, namely, Karma-yoga, Jñāna-yoga, Bhakti-yoga, Prapatti-yoga and Ácāryabhimāna-yoga for mokṣa. They believe that Prapatti-yoga is a distinctive means from the rest and also believe that each of these five means is a means by itself. But the Vātakalais believe that Bhakti-yoga is the only other means of mokṣa besides Prapatti-yoga. Karma-yoga and Jñāna-yoga are only stages leading to Bhakti-yoga. Karma-yoga is actually self-purification which destroys egoism and leads to Jñāna-yoga which is the process of self-realization by self-renunciation, contemplation and the attainment of the orison of Kaivalya. The third stage is the Bhakti-yoga which is unitive life of beholding God face to face or spirit to spirit. This is the highest realization of reality. Respect for the teacher, according to this school, is only a phase of Prapatti-yoga.

4. LAKŚMI (status): Lakṣmi occupies an important position in Śrī Vaishnavism. But as there are only three categories in the Śrī Vaishnave system, a question may naturally arise regarding the position of Lakṣmi in the three-fold categories of Ctt, Acit and Īśvara. On this point, the Tenkalais hold that Lakṣmi is by nature atomic in size and occupies a special and unique place of her own below that of Bhagavān; they relegate Her to the level of jīva, the finite being, but is entitled to the service of the selves in this world and to that of the nityas and the muktas in the world beyond viz., the region of eternal glory (Nitya-vibhūti). Bhagavān, according to them, is, however, the sole upāya for the attainment of mokṣa and Lakṣmi has no part in this in the same way as she has no part in the creation, sustenance, and destruction of the world. The Vātakalais believe that Lakṣmi is akāra and not makāra or jīva and state that She is an inseparable attribute of Bhagavān as described in Pañcarātra.288 equally
infinite and illimitable, without whom the conception of the Lord is impossible.\textsuperscript{254} She is not \textit{anu} or atomic, but \textit{vibhu} or all-pervasive and omnipresent. They base their argument on the authority of \textit{Viṣṇu-purāṇam}.\textsuperscript{255} Lakṣmī, according to them, is in every way the object of equal veneration and worship as Bhagavān and that our worship is always to the Lord and His spouse. Being inseparable from Him, She participates in all His activities except in the creation, maintenance and dissolution of the world. She is \textit{śeśi} to all of us, \textit{bhaddas}, \textit{muktas} and \textit{nityas} as much as Lord Himself. This concept of \textit{Vāṭakalai} school receives support from the following evidences: (a) The Lord declares that \textit{lilā-vibhūti} and \textit{nitya-vibhūti} are the \textit{śeśa} for Him and Lakṣmī.\textsuperscript{256} This means that She is also the \textit{śeśi} like the Lord; (b) Parācara declared that Viṣṇu represents all coming under the category of male and Lakṣmī those under the female.\textsuperscript{257} (c) Kītāmpī Āccūn told Nāṅcīyar that he was taught by Rāmānuja that the mention of the Lord in any context must be taken to have included Lakṣmī.\textsuperscript{258} This is attested by Parācara Paṭṭar;\textsuperscript{259} (d) Śrī Rāmāmiśra, the pupil of Rāmānuja declared that Lakṣmī and Viṣṇu together are Brahman;\textsuperscript{260} (e) Piḷḷai Lōkācāryār states in his work \textit{Tattva-traya}\textsuperscript{261} that the eternal kind of the selves refers to Ādiśeṣa, Garuḍa and others. If, in his view, Lakṣmī was a self, She, being eternal, must have been mentioned here.

5. LAKŠMĪ (power): According to \textit{Tenkalai} school, Viṣṇu alone can grant final emancipation. But Lakṣmī can play

\textsuperscript{254} Ram. 6.21: 15.
\textsuperscript{255} V.P. 1.8: 17 and 1.9: 124.
\textsuperscript{256} \textit{Viśvākṣenasamhitā}.
\textsuperscript{257} V.P. 1.8: 35.
\textsuperscript{258} RTS. p. 750.
\textsuperscript{259} Śrī Gunaṭrakārakāśa, 28.
\textsuperscript{260} This is taken from the author’s work \textit{Sadārthasamkṣepa} cited in the RTS. p. 748.
\textsuperscript{261} \textit{Tattva-traya}, p. 45.
the role of a mediator between the sinning folk and the Lord; she cannot exercise independent or co-ordinate power in granting salvation. The Vaṭakalais believe that both Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī can grant mokṣa and they base their argument on Viṣṇu-pūrṇa²⁶² and according to them Lakṣmī's redemptive mercy is omnipotent. She is not only the mediator (puruṣa-kāra) interceding and pleading for the pardon of the offences of the selves, but also the upāya along with Her Lord for the attainment of mukti by the prapanna. Our service after the attainment of mukti extends to Her as much as to Bhagavān. The Vaṭakalais say that mithuna or unity of the Lord and Śrī is vital to the seeker after salvation. Whatever be the ontological status of Lakṣmī, there is no doubt, that both the sects insist on Her kṛpā or mercy as essential to the final release. This beautiful concept is stated in a beautiful way: 'On the one hand, Lakṣmī subdues the retributive will of Īśvara by the beauty of her enticing love and on the other she melts the heart of the sinner by her infinite tenderness'.²⁶³ As the link of love, she mediates between the infinite that is omnipotent and the finite that is impotent; and transforms the majesty of law into the might of mercy. It is perhaps strength (Father) is tempered by sweetness (Mother) and sweetness is supported by strength; the one stimulates and the other to persuade. The Vaṭakalai school defends its position on the following evidences: (a) The Lakṣmittantra contains a passage which means that the Lord together with Lakṣmī is the protector.²⁶⁴ The word 'together' is to mean that Śrī protects the people as much as the Lord. This passage occurs in the context of finding out a means for obtaining mokṣa. (b) Śrī is addressed as the ātmavidya and described as awarding the result of mokṣa.²⁶⁵ (c) Parācara Paṭṭar says that he would resort to Śrī at first and then to

262. V.P. 1.9: 118. cf. TVM. 4.5: 11. "vēri mārāta pūmēl iruppāl viṇai tīrkkumē" - 'the occupant of the most fragrant lotus is the Mother who will relieve us of all our sins and bless us'.

263. "Cētanaṅai aruḷālē tiruttum; Īśvaraṅai aḷaṅkālē tiruttum" - SVP., 1: 13.


265. V.P. 1.9: 120.
the Lord. He desires to do kauñkarya to the Lord who is together with Lakṣmi. He qualifies the word 'Īśvara' here by the words 'as the means of the desired object'. He means evidently that both are the 'upāya'. (d) Parācara Paṭṭar wrote a drama with the name Lakṣmikalyāṇa in which Nammālvār is made to ask the Lord for taking him under the refuge of Himself and Lakṣmi. It may be added here that the Lord is referred to as Śrīman Nārāyaṇa. Śrī is the attribute and Nārāyaṇa is having Śrī as His attribute. The substantive and attribute may have independent ontological existence as in the case of blue lotus but as a metaphysical category, it must be only one. This is the way in which the Vaṭakalai school maintains its view.

6. VĀTSALYA : The Tenkalais define this quality as the Lord’s enjoyability of the defects of the jīvas. According to them the pardoning Lord is the god of the sinner and He seeks the evil doer more than He does the sāttvika, as the target of His Grace. They say that the Lord treats the sins committed by the selves as “enjoyable” like garland, sandal paste and others. He even relishes the physical evil or doṣa in the prapanna like the mother who embraces with pleasure her dirt-stained child returning from play, or like the cow which licks the slime on the body of the new-born calf. Similarly God would consider even the faults, offences, and short comings of the self as agreeable (bhogya). To a lover, the dirt on the person of the beloved is far from being hateful. The Tenkalais argue that it is the nature of the forgiveness of the Lord to welcome the sinner and not to penalise him for his wrong doing. They support this theory of theirs by citing the Rāmāyaṇa. The Vaṭakalais, on the other hand, believe that filial action (vātsalya) consists in not taking note of the doṣa of the jīvas; that is to say, the defects are ignored. They point out that the admission

266. Aṣṭāloki, 6.
267. This is cited by Vedānta Deśika in Sūrasūra, p. 46.
268. Mumukṣupāti: Caramaślokaprakaṇa — Sūt. 27.
269. Rām. 5.18: 3.
of the views of the *Tenkalais* would show that sins ought to be committed as they are to be “enjoyed” by God and expiation for the sins done need not be performed.

7. **DAYĀ:** The *Tenkalais* hold that God’s compassion consists in His getting afflicted on noticing that of others. That is to say, it is ‘para duhkē duhkitvam’ entering into the sorrows of others and experiencing the suffering of others as one’s own. They support this view by quoting the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

To the *Vaṭakalais*, compassion or dayā consists of an active sympathy on His part, as manifested in His desire to remove the suffering of others on account of His inability to bear such miseries. In the case of those who could not physically remove others’ distress, it must be taken to mean entertainment of a desire to remove others’ distress. It must include the removal of others’ distress in the case of a person who has the power to do so. So in the *Vaṭakalai* view, the Tenkalai opinion amounts to saying that God will always be in suffering since all the living beings are mostly in a state of suffering. Again to suffer Himself at others’ distress will have to be treated as a defect (*doṣa*) which would run counter to the concept of God as the abode of auspicious qualities which are opposed to defects (*heya-pratyayika*). The passage from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, which is cited here must be taken to mean that Rāma was not in the least really affected but was acting the role of a protector of people where the definition of the *Tenkalai* school would be applicable. This school seeks the evidence of Parāśara Paṭṭar, Periyāvāccha Pillai and Sudarśanasūri who interpreted dayā as inability to bear others’ misery.

8. **PRAPATTI:** According to the *Tenkalais*, prapatti consists in the absence of any initiative on the part of the individual, as God’s love is spontaneous and will, of itself, bring salvation. Or, it may be taken to mean the knowledge

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271. Rām. 2.2: 40.
272. Śrī Raṅgarājastavam 2: 98.
274. ibid. p. 42.
of one's own self as the śeṣa of the Lord. They interpret prapatti not as a human endeavour, but a mere faith in the Grace of God. A jīva who is completely dependent upon God cannot practise it. The Vaṭakalais say that before resorting to self-surrender or prapatti there must be self-effort. It is only when this self-effort fails to lead the realization of God, and in consequence a feeling of complete helplessness and unalloyed faith in God's Grace is firmly entertained, that one can resort to prapatti. It is, therefore, in their view, in the form of practising the act of surrender of one's self. It does not consist in merely possessing the knowledge of one's dependence. The saying of the Upaṇiṣad "with a desire to get released, I seek shelter"²⁷⁵, the saying of Bhagavad-gītā "you take shelter under Me alone"²⁷⁶ and the saying of Lokṣmitantra "The Lord expects from the jīva the need for protection"²⁷⁷ support that the act of surrender has to be practised. The paradox of prapatti śāstra arises from the Viśiṣṭadvaitic truth that the sarvā-śeṣi is both the upāya and upēya, the means as well as the goal of Vedic life, and it leads to the dualism between the spiritual effort of the jīva and the spontaneity of Divine Grace. The Vaṭakalai school asserts that the soul must exert itself, show a contribution of heart and deathless faith in the Saviour, as the way of opening the flood gates of kṛpā and employs the analogy of the young monkey clinging to the mother for protection (markaṭa-nyāya) to illustrate the soul seeking refuge at the Feet of the Saviour. The other party asserts that God's Grace is like the care of the mother-cat carrying the kitten in its mouth (mārjāra-nyāya) which is independent of all efforts on the part of the latter illustrating that the soul requires no self-effort.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁷. L. T. 17: 78.
²⁷⁸. There is a tendency among some of the philosophers to compare the Vaṭakalai and Tenkalai views to the volitional type and the self-surrender type mentioned by William James in his Varieties of Religious Experience, and the Christian distinction between justification by works and justification by faith. But the comparison is superficial as the distinction between those two types is entirely different from the Śrī Vaṁśavite views of sahētuka katāksa and nirhētuka katāksa.
9. QUALIFICATIONS TO DO PRAPATTI: As regards the person who is qualified for prapatti, the Tenkalais base their authority on the Gitā. In the Gitā the Lord deals with various attributes as forming subsidiaries to devotion. Finally He asks to give up all duties. This shows that one who follows this cannot have adequate confidence in devotion. Such a person alone, according to them, is fit to take to the path of prapatti. Again they say that it is only those who study the Tamil Prabandhams can be fit to be called prapannas. But the Vaṭakalais hold that the qualifications to perform the act of self-surrender are having no other course to adopt, miserable position and inability to tolerate any delay on the part of a devotee. The main requirements for the course of bhakti or devotion are a clear philosophic knowledge of the realms of karma, jñāna and bhakti, the will regorously to undergo the discipline in due order, and the sāttvic patience to endure the ills of prārabdha karma till it is exhausted or expiated. Yāmuna declares: "I am not devoted to Your Feet. I have nothing and I have no other course to adopt". This makes clear the relative qualifications for the paths of devotion and self-surrender. This does not in any way mean the lack of confidence in the path of devotion on the part of the nīmuksu. They do not subscribe to the view that the mere reading of Tamil Prabandhams will make one a prapanna for, in that case, one who reads the Sanskrit passages in the Upānisads can become a devotee of God, which is utterly meaningless on the very face of it.

10. GIVING UP THE DHARMAS: The Tenkalais think that the person who adopts the path of prapatti should give up all scriptural duties assigned to the different stages of life (āśrama); for they argue, it is well evidenced in the Gitā text that one should give up all one's religious duties and surrender oneself to God. "Abandoning all duties, come to Me alone for shelter." They opine that it is no offence at all for the prapanna to give up the performance of nitya

279 Śiotaratna, 22.
and naimittika karmas.\textsuperscript{281} But the Vaṭakalais think that the scriptural duties which are obligatory should never be given up by those who have taken the course of self-surrender.\textsuperscript{282} Whatever is done shall be attended with the giving up attachment to the result.\textsuperscript{283} They further hold the view that the scriptural duties, being the commandments of God, should be performed for His satisfaction by these people. Otherwise, they would have to suffer for their negligence. Rāmānuja emphatically remarks that the nitya and naimittika deeds are to be carried out as they are done to worship God.\textsuperscript{284}

11. CONTRADICTION: According to the Tenkalai view, the path of devotion is by nature contradictory to the jīva who is a ṣeṣa or one who is in tune with the will of God. The paths of duties and of knowledge assume an egoism which contradicts prapatti. The Vaṭakalais, however, say that the path of devotion is not in any way opposed to the nature of the self, but is opposed to only one’s miserable condition. The so-called egoism is but a reference to our own nature as self, and not to ahaṅkāra, an evolute of matter.

12. DUTIES OF CASTES: On the social side, the Tenkalais feel that the acts of the prapannas are amoral and should not be judged by the moral standards applicable to the ordinary men following the rules of varnāśrama, and the question of moral laxity, condemnation or condonation does not arise in their case. Duties prescribed by the Dharmaśāstra texts could however be carried out only for keeping the social status; but they are not binding on the prapannas. But the Vaṭakalais insist on the performance of svadharma or the duties relating to one’s station in life even in the stage after prapatti as kaiṅkarya and in conformity with the divine command. They support their view on the strength of Lakṣmi-tantra\textsuperscript{285} according to which a learned man shall never violate

\textsuperscript{281} Mumukṣu-paṭi – Caramaślokaprakaraṇaṃ – Sūt. 8.
\textsuperscript{282} cf. Bh. G. 4:32.
\textsuperscript{283} vide: Bhagavadgītābhāṣya on 18:6.
\textsuperscript{284} ibid. on 18:5, 9.
\textsuperscript{285} L.T. 17:94.
the conduct prescribed in the Vedas; these duties have to be performed at any cost. The Lord declared that the Vedas and Smritis are His commandments. Any one violating what one is ordained by them would become a sinner.\textsuperscript{286}

13. ACCESSORIES OF THE PATH OF PRAPATTI: The accessories of prapatti are counted as six.\textsuperscript{287} The Tenkalais hold that the man who adopts the path of prapatti has no desires to fulfil and thus he may adopt any of these accessories according to his capacity and inclinations of his mind. The Vatchakalais, however, think that even those who follow the path of prapatti are not absolutely free from any desire, since they wish to have bhagavadanubhava, and do service to God. Though they do not crave for the fulfilment of any other kind of need, it is obligatory upon them to perform all the six accessories as they have been ordained in the scheme.

14. CAUSE FOR THE ACT OF SELF-SURRENDER: On the strength of Upanishadic saying\textsuperscript{288} the Tenkalais assert that God's Grace could not be obtained by mere exposition of religious functions and hence the act need not be performed. But the Vatchakalais insist that the act of prapatti has to be performed. Their argument is supported by a passage in the Lakamishantra: "This means is considered by Me as both easy and difficult."\textsuperscript{289} They further argue that the passage quoted from the Mundaka Upanishad must be taken to signify the importance of the Lord. It does not indicate that the act of self-surrender shall not be undertaken. If it were to convey this sense, then even jñana-yoga will have to be given up, as there is always God Who by Himself takes care of everything.

15. MEANS OF EXPIATION: The prapanna will have their sins absolved by God's forbearance even when they are done voluntarily. Therefore, the Tenkalais say, there is no need

\textsuperscript{286} Bh. G. 16: 23.
\textsuperscript{287} L.T. 17: 60, 61.
\textsuperscript{288} Mun. Up. 3.2: 3.
\textsuperscript{289} L.T. 17: 104.
to perform any act of expiation. This receives support from the *Gita* where the Lord declares that He would free the *prapanna* from all sins. But the *Vāṭakalais* insist that the act of expiation has to be done to get relief from the sinful acts done voluntarily. This will be the course when the *prapanna* has adequate facilities to perform them. According to them, repetition of the act of self-surrender shall be the course to be adopted only when the *prapanna* is helpless.\(^{291}\)

16. ADORATION OF BHĀGAVATAS: According to *Tenkalai* ideal, the devotees of God shall be treated on a par with one another irrespective of the caste to which they belong. The *prapanna* is a *bhāgavata* and his spiritual worth is not in any way influenced by his birth and social status and it is one of the greatest offences to treat him with indifference, disregard, ill-will or contempt on the ground of caste. The idea of service extends to all castes and outcastes irrespective of the social distinction determined by the *vānāsārama* ideal. They support their ideal on the strength of *Mahābhārata*.\(^{292}\) The *Vāṭakalais* say that though the devotees of God have certainly to be respected and should on no account be disregarded, the rules of caste which pertain to the body and not to the soul apply as long as the body endures and are not annulled by the act of *prapatti*. There will, of course, be no difference in the attainment of *mokṣa* and there will be no such things as castes in Paramapada, but as long as the body lasts, the *prapanna*, too, however great his devotion to God and however pure his life, has to follow the rules and regulations of castes in social life. "The temple cow is certainly more worthy than other cows inasmuch as its milk, butter and the like are used in the service of God, but on that account, it does not cease to be a cow." Similarly, a man of a low caste shall be respected with the reverence due to a devotee as he is superior to all others in his caste.

17. GOD'S IMMANENCE: The *Tenkalais* say that God, owing to His immense capacity can enter into a soul which is

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\(^{291}\) 18-20; 596.

atomic in size to accomplish acts which could not otherwise he accomplished. The *Vaṭakalais* assert that God is immanent in the *jīva* as its *antaryāmin* and there cannot be any place in the world, either animate or inanimate where God is not present, and hence there is no question of God entering any soul.

18. KAIVALYA: This consists in having the experience of self alone, otherwise called self-realization. It may be called a flight of "the Alone to the Alone" in which the self enjoys inner quiet and is self-satisfied. It is different from God-realization. The *Tenkalais* maintain the view that *kaivalya* is not a stage on the road of *mukti* but is mukti itself in which the *mukta* enjoys the 'peace that passeth understanding'. In this state the *mukta* belonging, of course, to an inferior class, is in some corner of Paramapada and has no hope of intuiting God and enjoying the bliss of communion. But the *Vaṭakalais* favour the theory that *Kaivalya* is only a stage on the path to perfection and those who cross it will eventually reach the divine goal.

There are other minor differences also that exist between these sects. Differences of opinion came into being in many other points of practical importance, such as the extent to which pilgrimage could conduce to salvation, the duties of a *prapanna* if he was a *sannyāsī*, the details of ceremonial to be observed on certain special occasions, the extent of the purifying influence of contact with the *bhāga-vatās*, the shape of sect mark, etiquette, certain restrictions regarding food and service, the relation between *sannyāsins* and householders, the tonsure of widows and so on and so forth. But they have little philosophical or religious basis or background.

The works of the *Tenkalai* school which are mostly in Tamil are complementary to those of the *Vaṭakalais* and not contradictory to them. The eighteen points of difference enumerated above can be reduced to the single problems of *kṛpā* versus *karma* in its aspect of the practice of *upāya*. If salvation is by antecedent merit and justification by effort, it
is said to involve more faith in the inexorability of the moral law of *karma* than in the inescapability arising from Divine Grace. If salivation is by faith and antecedent of grace and guarantees the remission of sin without any condition like remorse, it is said to favour the faith in election and predetermination and the idea of divine arbitrariness which might lead to the toleration of moral laxity and chaos. Vedānta Deśika's view of *vyāja* or occasion seems to be a good reconciliation of the two extreme views. The Lord is Himself the *upāya* and the *upēya* and the true meaning of human responsibility consists in our responsiveness to the call of divine mercy. Even a gesture and change of heart and the feeling of unworthiness shown in an infinitesimal degree on the part of the sinner evokes sympathy and elicits the infinite Grace of the Saviour. A spark of repentance destroys the whole load of *avidyā-karma* and thus an infinite series of *karma* is annihilated by infinitesimal effort. It is the recognition of the fact that endeavour consists in recognizing the futility of endeavour. This view preserves the idea of divine justice and provides for the domination of Divine Grace which is its fruition. And if there is any difference between these schools, it is in the starting point and not in the goal. It is, so to say, in the emphasis of aspects and not in the choice of opposing theories. If it is assumed that the human will is in any way free, it conflicts with divine determinism. It is difficult to take the dilemma by the horns or escape between them or rebut it. *Dayā* is neither won by effort nor forced on the individual soul. If the problem is restated in terms of *Sariraka Śāstra* and not of *Hētu Śāstra* or logic, the distinction becomes philosophically negligible. *Katākṣa* or grace is neither *sahētuka* nor *nirhētuka*. It is based on organic union. Mystic experience is alogical and amoral and it is illegitimate to apply logical and ethical terms to the transcendent law. The gift of grace and self-gift are virtually related like the systole and the diastole of the heart; their relation involves reciprocity and responsiveness. The sucking of the mother's milk by the child is instinctively related to the spontaneous secretion of milk and the two form an organic process in the maintenance of life. It is impossible to divide this unitive process and decide how much it comes from the child and how
much from the mother. Similarly, the jñāni is dearest to God, the sarīrin, and God is dearest to jñāni, the sarīra, and this organic relation is beyond logical analysis. Dayā pours itself fully into the self and the self flows irresistibly into dayā; and it is undesirable, so to say, to dissect this living flow into the logical categories of cause and effect.

In conclusion, we may say that the relation between righteousness and redemption in the working of God in human history is a holy mystery which is more worthy of reverential study than analysis of logical categories or philosophical dogmas. The karma-kṛpā riddle is the mystery of the religious experience and cannot be lightly dismissed as a theological dogma meant for the ignorant. The vexed problem cannot be solved either by logic or by ethics. It can be dissolved only by the direct intuition of God which is the experience of the Āḻvārs. If such is the case, the distinction between the two schools regarding the working of kṛpā is a distinction without much difference.
The composition of the Ālvārs undoubtedly produced a powerful impression on the Southern school of Vaiṣṇavism which owed its origin and development to the Viṣṇu-purāṇa and Vaiṣṇavite Āgamas. The Sanskrit sources furnished this Vaiṣṇavite school with sufficient material for the development of its own philosophy. The Divya Prabandhas were also influenced if not inspired to a large extent by these Sanskrit sources. The product of the earlier exotic influences was something unique, a devotional lyricism of a type not known earlier in the Tamil country. The entire credit goes to the Ālvārs and the Nāyaṇmārs for presenting in lyrics emotionally affective material on godhead and godhood. This had a powerful appeal to the exponents of the Viṣistādvaita Vedānta who drew copiously from the Nālāyiram as their basic texts. This sacred anthology verily provided not only the basis of a speculative philosophy but also a way of life, and bridged the gulf between day-to-day life and religion.

The Āgamas enjoyed singular popularity as they governed the conduct of the rituals in the temples. The compositions of the Ālvārs contained much material that had connection with the arca aspect of God. What they delineated about arca became codified into a system of worship in temples in conformity with the Āgamas during the period of Rāmānuja. That pilgrimages to temples for worship had already become a notable feature of Vaiṣṇavism is evident from the fact that the Ālvārs who not content with mere visits composed hymns in Tamil extolling the greatness of the deities in the several shrines. Nāṭhamuni made pilgrimages to well-known shrines following the example of the earlier Ālvārs.
There arose a particular concept, in the post-Rāmānuja period, though the exact period of the name of the Ācārya responsible for it could not be found out, regarding the greatness of certain shrines and their place in the list of holy ones which were considered as fit to be visited. The accounts about such places that are contained in the Purāṇas were taken into account for determining the importance of the particular shrine. Along side of them, the recognition that a particular shrine was visited by one or more Ālvārs who sang the glory of the Lord there was the criterion to declare that shrine as more holy or worthy of visit in preference to others about which there is no record of their connection with the Ālvārs. It is this attitude of the Vaiṣṇavites towards the importance of the temples that was instrumental in giving the first place to ŚrīRaṅgam among the shrines where the deity had his glory sung by all the Ālvārs. Tirumalai, Tirukkaṇṭapuram, Tirumāliruṅcōlai and others come next according to the number of Ālvārs who visited them. It appears that these shrines at ŚrīRaṅgam, Tirumalai, and Kāñci were prominent even before Rāmānuja’s time and have definitely got preference over other shrines in the enumeration of the shrines as Kōyil, Tirumalai and Perumāl Kōyoil. The services rendered by Tirumalai Nampi and Tirukkacci Nampi to the shrines at Tirumalai and Kāñci respectively bear testimony to the significant place which these two shrines had in the early period of Vaiṣṇavism. The Ācāryas visited certain shrines on account of which they become prominent such as Maturāntakam, Manārgudi and Tirunārāyanapuram. Places like Śrī Muṣṭam were already prominent on account of their celebrity handed down by tradition as recorded in the ancient texts like the Purāṇas. The Agamic classification of the shrines like Svayamvyakta, Saidha, Ārṣa and Mānuṣa also received recognition while determining the glory of a sacred place, along with its connection with the Ālvārs.

1. The name ‘Perumāl Kōyil’ must have been given to keep this shrine distinct from the Saivite shrines of Kāñci. cf. In the enumeration of Saivite temples, Chidambaram gets the name Kōil perhaps on account of its prominence.
After the compositions of the Ālvārs became popular, Vaiṣṇavite temples came to have small niches for the Ālvārs within their enclosures. Nammālvār has the unique distinction of presiding over a separate shrine at Ālvār Tirunagari. 2 Āntāḷ has a shrine set apart for her in all temples. The other Ālvārs have separate shrines for themselves in the places of their birth. In Ālvār Tirunakari, the birth place of Nammālvār, even the tamarind tree beneath which the Ālvār meditated, is still preserved.

In all the temples the Nālāyiram is recited every day in the morning and evening. The recitors are mostly those who have the right of heredity for doing this service and very often, they are joined by others as well who have training in the recitation. During occasions which could be normally five or six every month, festivals of a moderate nature which are ordinarily two on the average for a month and the Brahmotsava which is annual, the Divya Prabandham is recited in front of the deity by the party leading the procession either inside the temple or through the streets in the place where the temple is situated. Those who recited the Vedas follow the deity. The recitation of the composition of the Ālvārs, which has the sanction of the Āgamas, 3 is described by Vedānta Deśika as an act which could rid the streets of all impurities in order that the deity could be taken in procession to follow their recitors. 4 Vedānta Deśika is said to have taken part in a dispute at Kaṇci on the occasion of the festival there, with those who questioned the propriety of singing the Tamil hymns in the presence of the deity in addition to the Vedic recitation 5 succeeded in regularising the recitation of the Tamil hymns. On all occasions, the procession which starts, is stopped at a particular place fixed for the purpose and all the music comes to a stop when the Prabandham is begun for recitation. After the recitation of the few songs of which there is understanding about their

2. This was visited by Nāthamuni, Vide G.P. p. 72.
3. Īv. S. 11 ; 256.
5. Introduction to Saṅkalpasūryodaya, p. 63.
number is over, the procession starts and after the return of the deity to the temple, the same process is repeated to mark the conclusion of the Prabandham recitation. Just before the beginning and conclusion, the reciters are honoured by the temple priests with sāthāri. Saṭṭhāri, it must be understood here, is the image of the God’s Feet fixed to the top of a crown-shaped pedestal made of metal with the hollow facing down. To receive it with the bowing head is the greatest honour one can yearn to receive in a temple.

Before the period of Rāmānuja, the festivals were conducted in big temples and in the shrines situated in the places of the birth of the Āḻvārs for ten days, the concluding day coinciding with the day of birth of the Āḻvārs. Thus the Āḻvārs were raised to the status of deities receiving worship in temples like God and had their birth days celebrated in the form of festivals. In some places, there is the regular flagstaff (dhvajasahambha) in front of the shrine of the Āḻvārs. The Āḻvār and the deity are taken in procession through the streets on the day of his birth (called Tirunakṣatram) and every formality beginning the recitation of the Prabandham is observed then as it would be when the deity alone is taken in procession. Saṭṭhāri and honouring the devotees with it became part and parcel of worshipping the Āḻvār. In due course, this principle and procedure came to be applied to great Ācāryas like Rāmānuja, Vedānta Deśika and Maṇavaḻamāmunikal who have separate shrines in almost all the temples and have their annual festivals where the procedural details are not different for those obatined when the deity is worshipped. The principle of Saṭṭhāri gets its applicability here also.

During daily service called ‘Tiruvārādhanam’ and ablutions known as ‘Tirumaṇcaṇam’ which take place on occasions, there are certain items which require the recitation of the hymns of the Āḻvārs without which the particular undertaking would be considered incomplete. For instance, there is mantrapuṣpam which a person holding the right attends to it,

consists of recitation of the relevant yet fixed passages from the Vedas and from the compositions of the Āḻvārs especially the verse of the Mutil-tiruvaniyāti beginning with the words ‘cēnṟāl kuṭaiyāṁ’ and from those of the Ācāryas also. During the ablutions, passages from the Puruṣa-siikta and the Taṭṭiriya Upaniṣad are at first recited and uniformly a hymn beginning with the words ‘veṟṟai aṟaiyāta’ in the composition of Periyāḻvār, where the Āḻvār calls the young Kṛṣṇa who was dusty in his body by taking butter and playing in the mud to come to him for taking bath. A person who holds the highest honour for rendering service in a shrine at a particular place may also recite a collection of slokas and Tamil hymns of the Āḻvārs which is technically called ‘Kaṭṭiyam’. The verse beginning with the words ‘naṭanta kālka! nontavō’ of the Tiruccanta-viruttam gets generally included here. The daily recitation of the Prabandham begins with the recitation of the ‘taniyans’ in honour of (i) Vedānta Deśika or Maṉvāḷa-māmūṉiṉikal, (ii) the Guruparamparā, (iii) Rāmānuja, (iv) Nammāḻvār (v) all the Āḻvārs and (vi) Periyāḻvār. This is followed by the recitation of Periyāḻvār’s Tiruppallāntu. All the five are to be recited before the composition of any Āḻvār is taken up, to be followed by the ‘taniyans’ of that Āḻvār and then his composition.

During the annual festivals, the deity is taken in procession on the horse-vehicle on the eighth day during the night. The idol of Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār is brought to a particular place to meet the Lord. This is held as marking the occasion

7. M. Tv. 5.
9. Tc. V. 61. It is also said that Parācara Paṭṭar prepared a ‘Kaṭṭiyam’ to be recited in the temple at Śrī Raṅgam.
10. The verse beginning with ‘Rāmānuja dayāpātram’.
11. The verse beginning with ‘Srīśaila dayāpātram’.
12. The verse beginning with ‘Lakṣmīnāthaśamārambham’.
13. The verse beginning with ‘Yonicyaameentha’.
14. The verse beginning with ‘Bhūtam saraśca’.
when the Āḻvār tried to rob the wayfarers of their valuable belongings and use them for feeding the Śrī Vaiṣṇavites. According to the life-account of this Āḻvār, God initiated the Āḻvār in the learning of the Rahasyas, when the Āḻvār began to express emotionally the first verse16 beginning with ‘vāṭinēn vāṭi’ in the Periya-tirumoli. The reciters sing the whole hymn, then the Āḻvār is duly honoured and then the procession continues. On the day in the jyeṣṭha month (corresponding to ‘Āṇi’ month of the Tamil calendar) which has the constellation ‘Śvāti’ the deity in big shrines is taken in procession on the Garuḍa vehicle Periyāḻvār by His side. This day is held in great respect to celebrate the singing of Pallaṇṭu by this Āḻvār.17 All the temples celebrate the birthday of Āṇṭāḷ, usually called ‘Tiruvāṭippūṟam’ for ten days when the idol of Āṇṭāḷ is taken in procession. In recognition of having composed the Tiruppāvai, the idol of Āṇṭāḷ is taken in all places every morning in the Tamil month of Mārkaḷi to a tank or lake nearby. The ablutions take place there during the day and the procession returns to the shrine in the evening. This is generally done at least for ten days the last day coinciding with the Bhōgi day which precedes the Poṅkal (Makara Saṅkarānti) day. Āṇṭāḷ is held to have married Śrī Raṅganātha on the Bhōgi day and in view of this, this day is devoted in all temples to celebrate the marriage of Āṇṭāḷ and Śrī Raṅganātha, if that shrine is there or the presiding deity in that place, inasmuch as there is no formal distinction in Vaiṣṇavism, between Śrī Raṅganātha and the deity in the other temples. Again, during the month of Mārkaḷi, there is a festival conducted in all the temples for twenty days, the first ten which is called ‘Pakal-pattu’ and which comes to an end on the day preceding the Vaikuntha Ėkāthasi day and the next ten called ‘Irāp-pattu’ starting on the Vaikuntha Ėkāthasi day and lasting for ten days from that day. The Pakal-pattu festival was, it is held, started by Nāṭhamuni when he arranged the Four Thousand verses of the

17. This day is known as the day when the reality of the supreme person (paratattvaniṁṇaya) was settled in the court of Pāṇṭiya by this Āḻvār.
Āḻvār. The other festival had been begun, it is stated, by Tirumāṅkaiyāḻvār himself. In the latter all the idols of the Āḻvārs and Ācāryas are brought to a hall where the deity is seated. They are individually honoured on all the ten days. The three thousand verses of all other Āḻvārs are recited in the first ten days and the thousand verses of Nammāḻvār during the second festival. The composition of Maturakavi is recited on every day in the latter case. In some temples, one of the days in the second festival is devoted to celebrate the composition of Maturakavi Āḻvār. The two festivals are called Adhyayana Utsava because the Divya Prabandham has been treated to be equal to the Vedas. Further, during the festivals celebrated for the deity, or the Āḻvārs, or the Ācāryas, all the four thousand verses of the Nālāyiram are recited. The recitation begins with the compositions of the First Three Āḻvārs, Nānmukān-tiruvanṭāṭi of Tirumāṅkaiyāḻvār, Nammāḻvār’s Tiruviruttam, Tiruvāciriyam, and Periya-tiruvanṭāṭi, and Tirumāṅkaiyāḻvār’s Tiruvelukkāṟṟirukkai, Ciriya-tirunāṭal and Periya-tirunāṭal. Then follow the compositions of Periyāḻvār and others. The descendants of Tiruvanakappuramāl Araiyar who taught the Tiruvāyumoli to Rāmānuja recite the Divya Prabandham before Śrī Raṅganātha at Śrīraṅgam with dance poses and appropriate music. Nearly seven days are declared in a month as days when the Vedas should not be studied. The Nālāyiram came to be looked upon as Vedas in Tamil. The convention of the Vaiṣṇavite school has been that from the Pūrṇimā day in the Tamil month of Kārttiikai till the end of the Irāp-pattu festival, the period is treated as the days when the Divya Prabandham should not be recited. During this period all the taniyans for the Divya Prabandham are alone recited, as also the Tecikap-pirapantam of Vedānta Deśika and the Upāṭecca-ratnamālai of Maṅavāḷamāmuṇikaḷ.

18. G.P. p. 84. This contains a reference to this festival at Śrī Raṅgam.
19. Nāthamuni set the Prabandham to music. G.P. p. 74; for dance poses vide ibid. p. 84.
20. These are called ‘Anadhyayana days’.
The concluding session in a temple either daily or occasionally as in the case of a festival of the presiding deity, or Ālvār, or Ācārya has an important item called ‘cāttumāraṭi’ which marks the end of the recitation of both the Vedas and the Nālāyiram. As in the case of the Vedas, there is a general pattern of the commencement of the Prabhanda cāttumāraṭi. The last two verses of Tiruppāvai and the first two verses of Tiruppallāntu are recited twice each and then follow the passages which mean the following: ‘May the divine command of the respectable Rāmānuja grow strong and grow stronger, with its powers unobstructed in all places or all occasions and at all times. May the divine command of Rāmānuja shine forth every day, pervade to the end of the quarters, for it aims at the welfare of all the worlds. O Lord, please make the glory of Śrī Rāṅgam grow strong every day without any trouble’. (This is recited twice). The Vaṭakalai school has the taniyāns of Ātreyya Rāmānuja21 and Vedānta Deśika22 to be recited next. The Tenkalai school recites the taniyāns of Tiruvāyōmopippilai23 and Maṇavālamāmunikaḻ24 This is followed by ‘vālittirunāmam’25 in honour of Vedānta Deśika for Vaṭakalai school. This is composed in Tamil and refers to the contribution made by Deśika. Here Deśika is mentioned as having had the grace of Ātreyya Rāmānuja and offered a splendid exposition of Nammāḻvār’s Tiruvāyōmōli and Rāmānuja’s Śrī Bhāṣya. This is followed by the expression of long life prayed for Vedānta Deśika which means only the continuation of the traditions set up by him. Among them, are mentioned his clear exposition of the Tamil Vedas, his agreement with and therefore cherishing the ideals of Tirumāṅkaiyāḻvār and the epithet centamīḻ tuppil26 for him which brings out his erudition and proficiency in Tamil and his

21. This begins with the words ‘Nāmōramānujaṝyāye’
22. This commences with the word ‘Rāmānujadaiyāpāṭram’.
23. This begins with the words ‘Namah śrisailanāṭhya’.
24. This commences with the word ‘Śrisailesādapāṭram’.
25. This consists in the repetition of the name of the Ālvār or Ācārya who is then glorified associating it with the word ‘vālī’ which expresses the sense of ‘wishing for the life’ of that Ālvār or Ācārya as the case may be.
family name ‘tuppi’ which also means holy (tū) grass (pul). In the next passage, there is a prayer for the continuation of tradition of the four Vedas and the Vedu of Nammālvār and for the well-being of the worlds. Vedānta Deśika is then wished to live on for one more century. Lastly, it is recited that more praising or admiring the feet of Vedānta Deśika would pave the way for leading a life free from suffering. The day of his birth is then glorified in two verses in which it is mentioned that Vedānta Deśika understood well the worth of Tamil of the lord, wearing the Vakuḷa garlands i.e., Nammālvār. The Tenkalai school’s ‘vāḷitirunāmam’ extols Manavāḷamāmunikaḷ as having had the grace of Tiruvāyumoḷ-pillai and given a splendid exposition of the contents of the Tiruvāyumoḷ of Nammālvār. Then there is a prayer for the long life of Manavāḷamāmunikaḷ which is finally followed by a prayer for the continuation of the tradition of the bhāgavatas, for the well being of Śrī Raṅgam, of the Tamil Veda of Saṭhakōpa and of the worlds which are surrounded by the seas and a wish to Manavāḷamāmunikaḷ to live for a century more. Besides, there is a ‘vāḷitirunāmam’ for each Āḻvār, which is sung during the celebration of their annual birthday festivals. Each one mentions the number of hymns composed by the particular Āḻvār in whose honour the ‘vāḷitirunāman’ is composed. The days of birth of Rāmānuja and Manavāḷamāmunikaḷ are also glorified. Thus the temples, where the rituals are performed according to the Āgamas, were brought under the influence of the Āḻvārs’ compositions to such an extent that through the efforts of Rāmānuja, every facility is made available to cherish the worth of and celebrate, through glorification, the contributions of the Āḻvārs. The Tamil Prabandhamas have spread beyond the limits of Tamil Nāṭu and are sung in the temples situated in the Mysore and Andhra States.

The Vaiṣṇavite community has been much influenced by the Divya Prabandham. Its importance is so well realized that it has deeply penetrated into every aspect of the life of a Vaiṣṇavite. No marriage in a Vaiṣṇavite family is complete without having Aṃṭāḷs hymn ‘vāṟavaṇamāyiram’ sung in chorus.

with the bride and bridegroom made to sit facing each other gently rolling the cocoanut at each other. The daily ritual of worshipping the deity in the house is done much in the same way as in the temple, though not so elaborately. At the conclusion of the pūja the ‘cāttumāra’ is conducted much in the way of the temple. Devout Vaiṣṇavites take bath early before sunrise every day in the Markali month and recite Tiruppaḷli-elucee of Toṇṭaraṭippoṭiyāḷvār and Tiruppāvai of Āṅṭāḷ. Again on the occasion of death anniversaries (‘srāddha’) the Vaiṣṇavites arrange for the recitation of all the four thousand verses or at least any portion which they can arrange for. On the thirteenth day from the date of passing away of an elderly person, there is arrangement for the recitation of the Vedas and the Nālāyiram and those, who have facilities, take also a procession through the main streets of the locality with these recitations. It is not therefore surprising that both the Srāddha day and this day are called Tiruvadhyayana days.

What a devotee should be like and how should one treat a devotee are in a general way known to have been treated in early Sanskrit sources. The concept of a devotee and of a devotee of a devotee, as it is understood in later Vaiṣṇavism, represents a development of these concepts treated in early sources under the influence of the compositions of the Āḻvārs and also the preaching and practice of them by Rāmānuja and his followers for generations. A devotee is not satisfied with what he is able to get due to devotion. He feels immensely pleased when he could share it in the company of other devotees. This practice could be traced to Periyāḻvār asking others to join him and wish for the welfare of the Lord. It is not as if God requires any wishing from the devotees but the devotee cannot even dream that anything untoward could happen to the Lord Whom he loves. Hence his prayer for communion. The devotees of God therefore join together on occasions. They yearn to have such an occasion and are reluctant to leave such a communion
easily. They have much respect for one another. In such a communion, every devotee realises that God is the Supreme Person and that he is likely to be His servant to render service at His Feet. At the same time, each devotee feels that as an individual he must show respect to a devotee of God. He must perform treat himself as inferior in order to treat the other as a person to deserve respect at his hands. Since every bhakta has the same feeling towards another, the social status of one becoming the superior and the other inferior disappears and inequalities in life become suppressed. No wonder then that a bhakta readily prostrates at the feet of another who does the same for the former. In such gatherings, even if there is a visible indication of few of them holding a definite position of advantage over others as Ācārya or Ācārya-puruṣa having an occasion to exhibit in public their rather relatively superior position, they are respected by others who do not mind their position relegated to the background and openly display their humility which has been the hallmark of culture in India. The behaviour of such men in other gatherings is of a different kind, sometimes smacking of their anxiety to dominate over others.

It is this mental attitude of a Vaiṣṇavite that has been the sole moving force for the efficient conduct of festivals, for which they go in largest numbers, firstly to do service to God and then to other bhaktas. One noteworthy feature here is that the bhakta is not visiting any shrine for the mere darśana as the communities other than those of the Vaiṣṇavites do, but to do service (kaṅkarya) which may be of any kind. Bearing the idol of the deity or reciting the Veda and the Nālāyiram or simply to follow in the company of a bhakta is considered to be service. Since greater facilities are available for discharging one’s duty to the arcā form of God, people are found to assemble in large numbers on the occasion of a festival. It is this that has been the motive behind the

28. cf. the sentiment expressed in Kural, 394.
29. The devout Vaiṣṇavite yearns for becoming a servant of a bhakta. Vide: T.E. 10; A.P. 1; cf. TVM 3.7; 5.2.
30. Peri. Tm. 2.1; TVM. 1.4: 11; cf. T. Pv. 29.
desire of people to spend their life in a sacred place. Even in the present days when people have to go to far-off places for earning their livelihood, the Vaiṣṇavite community is still found to be inhabiting Tirupati, Kāñci, Kumbakonam, Śrī Raṅgam, Śrī Villiputtūr, Āḻvār Tirunakari and other places spending the time in visiting the shrine. Maturakaviyāḻvār’s devotion to Nammāḻvār which did not even admit God to receive it, impressed the community to such an extent that the devotion and service to the Ācārya came to be considered as sacred and obligatory as that which is to be shown to God. It is this that made every Vaiṣṇavite seek an enlightened and accomplished Vaiṣṇavite as his Ācārya. A taniyāṉ which is composed glorifying that Ācārya, is recited daily by the devotee. The annual birthday of the Ācārya is celebrated by each disciple in his house or by all such disciples in a common place.

As an individual, the Vaiṣṇavite uses the word ‘Āṭiyēṉ’ which means ‘humble self’ while referring to himself to another Vaiṣṇavite, thereby putting to practice, in himself, the humble behaviour which he was taught by his Ācārya. The same individual refers to the Vaiṣṇavite before him as ‘Tēvar’ or ‘Tēvarir’ which means that the latter is a deity or God for him, which shows that every Vaiṣṇavite must practise in himself, the act of treating any Vaiṣṇavite as God Himself. The daily worship that is done in the house is not referred to by the word ‘pūja’ which is quite common among the Indians but by the word ‘ārādhana’ which means the act of delighting another. The deity must be served in such a manner by the devotee that he deights the former by his intense devotion and service. The same word ‘ārādhana’ is used also while respecting the Ācārya and any great devout Vaiṣṇavite. The devotee uses the word ‘kuṭicai’ (hut) to refer his abode however magnificent it may be and the word ‘tirumāḷikai’ (mansion) whatever be the insignificant nature of the residence of the Vaiṣṇavite whose abode is referred to. While welcoming a Vaiṣṇavite one uses the expression ‘Eḻuntarula vēṇṭum’ meaning that he is requested to be with him and confer on him his blessings. All these expressions

32. Peri. Tm. 4.4: 7.
reveal very clearly how the Vaiṣṇavite community has been trained to treat the bhaktas or for that matter any Vaiṣṇavite, by extending to them the regard which they would show to God Himself. An enlightened attitude of this kind could not have come to prevail but for the preaching of the compositions of the Ālvārs by Nāṭhamuni and all his followers in the succeeding generations. This has so much permeated the community that no one feels the need for questioning the authority of this kind of behaviour or entertaining any doubt about it. The expressions ‘aṭiyār’ meaning a servant willing to render services, ‘tonṭaraṭip-poti’ and ‘tonṭanukkui-tonṭan’ — all reveal how the influence of the Ālvārs’ compositions has impressed the community. In fact, the names of Ālvārs such as Saṭhakōpan, Maturakavi, Viṣṇucittan, Parakālaṇ are quite common and are borne by the people. The names ‘Āntāl’ and ‘Kōtai’ are frequently had by the women of the community and some times by the members of the Saivite community also. Nextly, ‘Rāmānuja’ and ‘Deśika’ are too familiar names of the Ācāryas now held by the Vaiṣṇavites. While writing letters one refers to himself as ‘caramāvādhi dāsa’ meaning that he chooses to be the servant at the lowermost rung of the ladder which is marked by at least six people who are treated by him as his Ācāryas.

The enlightened attitude of a devotee is such that a particular devotee is admitted to have the freedom and right to sell away another devotee to any one, since the latter feels that he is a devotee of the former. It must be remembered in this connection that the word ‘bhakti’ is used to refer to the devotion of a self for God and also to the respect which a self has for a devotee. This suggests that the devotee is held in much veneration by others. This is proof that like God, a bhakta is the sēṣi while a self, as he is to God, is the sēṣa to that bhakta. Naturally, the conclusion that could be
drawn from this is that every self considers himself to be the property (svam) of the devotee whom he addresses as svāmin (the possessor of himself, the property).37 This attitude has grown as a result of the imbibing of the essence of what the Śāṅkarcārya’s use of the word ‘Ṭoṇṭaraṭipaṭī’38 has much significance. The dust clinging to the feet of the devotees is more sacred than the waters of Gaṅga. Hence the Vaiṣṇavite tradition believes in the practice of taking the Śripāda tīrttām of reverential persons. Such devotees are called ‘Ṭoṇṭar’ as they render service to God.40

Man cannot but commit sins on account of his ignorance of the nature of Reality. Lack of training in good directions is mainly responsible for this condition. A proper understanding and realization of the need for leading a good ethical life could be achieved by the study of the sacred texts but it is found even persons who have this kind of training do err. So an easier and surer means of correcting one’s evil behaviour lies in worshipping the devotees of God. Those who have realized that they are the last devotees (caramāvādhi-dāsa) are capable of purifying those who came into contact with them.41 The moment one makes up his mind to serve the devotees, one is absolved of one’s sins.42 Even though one would have become a greater sinner by violating the laws of God, one has to get rid of them only by bowing to the devotees. He who bears with patience the harsh words that are uttered by the devotees of God is verily the Vaiṣṇavite.43 The Vaiṣṇavite community of the present day may not be aware of these sources which prove the need for joining the company of the devotees but has been trained by the earlier generations of Vaiṣṇavites to involuntarily seek the company

37. A.P. 1; Peri. Tm. 8.10: 3. cf. TVM. 3.7: 1.
38. This is due to the influence of TVM. 3.7: 9.
40. Periyāl. Tm. 1.1; T.M. 45.
42. TVM. 8.10: 1; Periyal. Tm. 1.1: 9.
43. cf Liṅgapuruṇam 2.4: 9, 10.
of the bhaktas and bhāgavatas. This may not appear to be peculiar on the face of it to Vaishnavism; but, while they are received as guests in houses and mingle in congregations, the behaviour would show that these traits have penetrated deep into the life of the Vaishnavites only. It is this that explains why men and women, both young and old, proceed to the abode of a great bhakta and pay their respects to them. The words ‘taṇṭam camarpittal’ which means literally ‘offering oneself before the respectable persons like a stick’ convey how willingly the Vaishnavites have been trained to lie prostrate at the feet of a Vaishnavite and these are accompanied by the use of the words ‘Aṭiyēn tāsāy’ revealing that the man who bows reveals his humility and refers to himself as a servant ready to carry out any command that he would be called upon to do. Thus these people get the evil effects of the previous deeds removed without themselves being aware of it. These expressions and the concepts underlying their usages have not come to prevail from any Sanskrit source. Having been used by the Āḻvārs, they have found their rightful place in the life of the Ācāryas and have been continuing to the present day.

On the model of reciting the Divya Prabandham there has come into existence the system of congregational prayer of which two phases could be mentioned here. One is the singing of the Tiruppāvai by a band of singers in the early mornings of the Tamil month of Mārkaṇḍi. This is done by the devotees going round the streets of the locality singing the Tiruppāvai in chorus to the accompaniment of the drone (śruti) and the drum. 44 Āṇṭāl herself made a reference to this as ‘Caṅkat-tamiḻ māla’ 45 (a garland of verses to be sung in chorus). The other kind is singing the names of God called ‘nāma-sāvālis’. 46 The Āḻvārs make reference to the latter kind. 47 Both the kinds come under the bhajana type of singing and is a

44. This kind of group-singing is in vogue at Tiruvaiyāru when musicians sing the Pāṇcarātra kṛitis of Tyāgaraja.
45. T.Pv. 30.
46. These are in vogue specially among the bhajana parties.
47. TVM. 3.5 : 1.
mode of worshipping the Lord. Some of the participants grow rapturous and also dance to the subdued resonant sounds of the drum. Congregational prayers are of common occurrence and particularly on every Saturday evening, on the Śrī Jayanti, Śrī Rāmanavami, Vaikuṇṭha Ekādaśi and similar other occasions. People with deep devotion arrange themselves in more than one bhajana party and follow the deity on occasions of festivals through the streets. The participation in bhajana parties like this produces a refreshing effect. The material prosperity has come to be looked upon as an appendage and so wealth has been spent for the construction of halls for congregational prayers (bhajana mathās) and for the creation of trusts to conduct such prayers on occasions. The time spent by people in participating in these prayers is usefully spent. It chastens the soul and promotes the development of good will among the people. Here again, the Āḷvārs’ compositions as taught and preached by the Ācāryas have been more instrumental for the development of this spirit among the Vaiṣṇavites particularly among those who occupy rather a low status spiritually and economically also. It is not as if, all other compositions, which are in Sanskrit, are forbidden to be used here. For instance, the Gopikā-gitā and Mukundamālā have frequent uses in group singing. The commonest form of bhajana has taken the shape of repeating the God’s names as many times as possible. The Viṣṇupurāṇa suggests this and more has been contributed in this direction by the Āḻvārs.

Ever since Rāmānuja passed away, the word ‘Rāmānūjaaye divyājña’ is repeated every day during cāttumāṟai both in the houses and temples. If trust could be placed on the information contained in the source books, Rāmānuja is said to have addressed his disciples thrice when he was about to lay down his mortal frame. The first address was

48. ibid. 2.7.
49. ibid. 3.5: 2. cf. ibid. 5.2.
51. V.P. 3.7: 33.
52. TVM. 2.7; M.Tv. 51, 66; I.Tv. 50.
to ask them not to lament his death. He warned them that if they did so, they would have no relationship to the feet of Ālavantār. The second address was delivered to the Śrī Vaiśṇavites to the effect that the Vaiśṇavites have six services to discharge as long as they live on earth. They are: (i) the Śrī Bhāṣya should be studied and taught to others; (ii) if one is not qualified for this, then he shall show regard to the composition of Nammāḷvār, thereby indicating that the Tiruvaḻyomoṭi should be studied and taught to others; (iii) one shall reside in any one of the places of the Lord, which means that a place where is a shrine for the Lord should be selected for residence; (iv) service is to be rendered to the Lord and from the context, this must mean only in that sacred place; (v) reflecting or the constant meditation of the Dvaya-mantra; (vi) rendering service by becoming the friend of and following the prapannas. The use of the expression, ‘when there is no qualification’, must be taken to be implied in the succeeding cases also, as otherwise, there would result the absurd conclusion that all the five except the first will have to be attended to at one and the same time. This is also recounted in Tamil. The second kaiṅkarya is related to the compositions which is referred to as ‘arulic-ceyal’ which means ‘composing after conferring a blessing on the listeners’. Such expressions are used by a writer with reference to the compositions of the Ācāryas whose words are held as authority. In the context, this may be taken to refer to all the Four Thousand verses of the Āḻvārs. A verse in Sanskrit is cited in this context which means that the kaiṅkarya, which is mentioned as the fourth, shall be discharged by residing in Tirunāṟāyaṉapuram in the Mysore state. Vedānta Deśika enumerates all these three in succession, but mentions five only among them, omitting the third. It is impossible to

53. RTS. pp. 560, 561.
54. This is given in the form of a verse in Sanskrit, vide G.P. p. 190.
55. cf. TVM. 2.6: 5; 3.3: 1.
56. vide G.P., p. 190. The mention of Tirunāṟāyaṉapuram must be taken to imply an illustration here and so any sacred place may be taken to have been mentioned here.
57. RTS. pp. 562-563.
infer that Rāmānuja did not, according to Vedānta Deśika, include this. From the context containing three addresses Deśika, suggests that a holy place is one where the devotees dwell\(^{58}\) and a Vaiṣṇavite shall reside where the Ācaryas are honoured\(^{59}\) and make a slashing remark\(^{60}\) that even the seven sacred places\(^{61}\) would cease to be sacred if they do not appeal to the liking of the devotees of Viṣṇu. The third address is regarding the conduct and behaviour of his devotees in society. It can be stated as in the following lines: 'In this life on earth, find out by careful discrimination your friends, enemies and the indifferent. Śrī Vaiṣṇavites are your friends; those who hate God, are your enemies; the worldly are the indifferent ones. Let your heart rejoice at the sight of friends as though you have come across fine betel, flowers and scents. At the sight of your enemies let your heart tremble as though you have faced a snake, a tiger, fire and so forth. At the sight of the indifferent, do not mind them as you would not mind stocks and stones before you. Such should be the conduct of those who have taken refuge in God. Association with your friends, the Vaiṣṇavites, will confer spiritual illumination on you. Shun the company of your enemies and the indifferent too, do not talk to them, never show respect to them in consideration of the worldly benefits thereby accruing to you, for such benefits are sure to make you soon an enemy of God. Remembering that the All-merciful Being is ready to supply you all that you pray for, never beg of your enemies.'

Among these, the first is of the nature of advice or direction and could not be referred to as command. Evidently, the second and third addresses which enumerate the services that are to be rendered by a Vaiṣṇavite according to his capacity and treat the attitude of a devotee in social

58. ibid, pp. 620–621.
59. ibid, pp. 622–623.
60. ibid, p. 634.
61. Ayōḍhya, Mathura, Māya, Kāśi, Kānci, Avanti and Dvāraka are mentioned as the seven sacred cities which enable those who reside there get mokṣa.
Himself is said to have composed this, this composition can be treated on a par with the Bhagavad-gītā. The musical melody which the hills are resonant with can be treated as not different from the chant of Sāma-veda. The Lord has sung this by entering the interior of the Āḻvār.

Rāṅgarāmānujamuni (c. 1650 A.D.) the commentator on the main Upaniṣads, Śrutaprakāśika and works of Vedānta Deśika, wrote a Sanskrit commentary on the Tiruvāymoḻi. It is on the model of Arāyirap-paṭi and should have been written to make the Tiruvāymoḻi popular among those who do not know Tamil.

Periya Parakāḷasvāmin (c. 1700) commented on the Arāyirap-paṭi in his work called Eighteen Thousand (Paṭineśmā-yirap-paṭi) which is written in a śāstric manner explaining the meaning of each word, offering critical exposition for each verse. He refers to the views of Rāmānuja and Nāṉciyār. The exposition of verse 10.8: 9 is superb and the conclusion drawn on 10.10: 10 gives a well-reasoned exposition of the tenets of the Vaiṣṇavite school in the light of the tradition of the Drāvida Veda. Like Vedānta Deśika this author gives at the end of the work, in the maṇipravāja style, the substance of each decad in the Tiruvāymoḻi.

Of all these commentaries, the commentary of the Vedānta Rāmānujasvāmin (c. 1700 A.D.) who was also reputed as Sākṣātsvāmin seems to be an ideal exposition. It gives an accurate explanation with sufficient criticism on the commentary of Pīḷān. Almost every word in the Arāyirap-paṭi is taken up and explained. This commentary which is known as Twenty-four Thousand is written in the manner of bhāśyas on the Sanskrit Śāstrā texts. For instance, the gloss on 4.4: 4 is ably expounded by citing and identifying the passage in the Arāyirap-paṭi as expository of the passage in the Tirumēḻuntanṭakam. Pīḷān’s gloss on T.V.M. 4.3: 3 is strictly

117. Eighteen Thousand on 10.7: 1.
118. ibid., 10.7: 3; the commentator defends Naṉciyār’s interpretation on 10.10: 10.
life must be taken to stand for the divine command. Curiously enough, the *Yatindra-pravâna-prabhâva* mentions Râmânuja to have appeared in the dream of Mañavâlamâmunikaḷ and asked him to study *Śri Bhâşya* at Kânci under Kiṭâmphi Nâyanar, the grand disciple of Vedanta Desîka and then propagate the commentaries on the compositions of the Ālvârs. Earlier in his life, Mañavâlamâmunikaḷ was asked by his preceptor Tiruvâymolip-pillai to study the *Śrî Bhâṣya* only once and remain at Śrî Raṅgam by devoting all his life for the propagation of the *Nâlâyiram*. Mañavâlamâmunikaḷ's proficiency in the *Nyâya*, *Mimîṣâ* and *Vyâkaraṇa* systems was amazing that he established his superiority in argumentation to the scholars at Kânci. Râmânuja's command was that only he who is not competent to study and teach the *Śrî Bhâṣya* to others, could devote his time to the study and teaching of the *Divya Prabandham*. Mañavâlamâmunikaḷ was quite competent to carry out the first mentioned kaiṅkarya. It must be remembered that free and wide choice was not intended by Râmânuja to be exercised in the selection of the kaiṅkarya from the list. Lack of competence of a person to take up a particular service among those enumerated here must be deemed to qualify that person to take up the service mentioned next to that. Râmânuja would not have meant that a selection of a particular kaiṅkarya should be left to the free will of the individual who would be taking to that ignoring completely the divine command of Râmânuja. It is only the command of the Ācârya, that is Tiruvâymolip-pillai and not any other consideration that mattered most for Mañavâlamâmunikaḷ in the selection of kaiṅkarya which is now mostly adopted by the adherents of the Tenkalai school. The study and teaching of the *Śrî Bhâṣya* and of *Divya Prabandham*, residence in a holy place, and rendering service in any capacity to that deity were included in order to enable all Vaiṣṇavites who are competent to discharge one duty or other. The other two services would enable all others who could not do

62. *Yatindrapravâna-prabhâva*, p. 42
63. Ibid. p. 31.
64. Ibid. p. 43.
any of the above services to be in the Vaiśṇavite fold so as to give others the delight of being in the gathering of the bhaktas. It is saddening to note that this all comprehensive scope of Rāmānuja’s command has been lost sight of and narrowed down to have limited applicability not on account of incompetence but because of the exercise of the individual’s free will. The expression ‘Rāmānujācārya divyājña’ is repeated as a parrot does every day in every temple, and houses also without realizing the full implication of the holy command.

The Brahma-sūtras and Nammālvār’s Tiruvāymoḻi gained importance in the days before Rāmānuja’s. Since both represent the Upaniṣadic teachings, both come to be referred to as Vedānta. Through his commentary Śri Bhāṣya on the Brahma-sūtras, Rāmānuja established the import of the teachings of the Upaniṣads. The scholars who immediately preceded Rāmānuja were fully aware of the import of the Tiruvāymoḻi as taught by Āḷavantār. Rāmānuja who was initiated in the study of the Tiruvāymoḻi by Tirumālaiyāntān, realized the importance of this composition for Vaiśṇavism and so authorised Pillān to compose a commentary on this sacred work. He made him also the chief person to be in charge of both the Vedāntas. That the Vaiśṇavite tradition treats the Tiruvāymoḻi as Vedānta is evident from the references made by later writers to it as Drāmidōpaniṣad, which means Upaniṣad in Tamil. In his taniyan composed in honour of the Tiruvāymoḻi Nāthamuni referred to it as representing the essence of the Upaniṣad (Chāndogya) of the Sāma-veda. The first hymn in the Tiruvāymoḻi has four lines. The first line which means that the Lord is bliss which is unsurpassed represents the contents of chapters I and II of the Brahma-sūtras. The second line which means that the

65. Yatirājavaihvam, 1 which refers to Tirumalai Nampi.
66. Rāmānuja Aṣṭottara satanāmaṣṭotra, 6. Here Rāmānuja is referred to as Vedānta dvyaṣārājña, that is, one who knows the essence of the two Vedāntas.
67. ibid. 108.
68. cf. Draidōpaniṣad-sāra.
69. This begins with ‘Baktāmṛtam’.
Lord has given the Āḻvār the knowledge which is free from ignorance and also devotion, represents the contents of its chapter III. The third and fourth lines mean that the Lord is the head of all the gods and the appeal is made to worship the fact of that Lord which would destroy all miseries and these represent the contents of Chapter IV of Vyāsa’s work. The two Vedāntas have been connected as supplementing each other. The full import of one is not fully understandable without the proper appreciation of the contents of the other.

Even to those who are not Śrī Vaiṣṇavites the hymns of the Āḻvārs and the compositions of Rāmānuja and his followers have brought a particular liking. It is readily admitted that discourses on any episode of the Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata are enlivened only by the citations and expositions of the hymns of the Āḻvārs as recorded in the works of Parācara Paṭṭar, Vaṭakkut-tiruvīṭip-piḷḷai, Vedānta Deśika and Maṉvāḷamāmunikaḻ and others. Of course, there is a regular programme of such discourses running to months even in certain places like Madras, Tiruccirappalli, Coimbatore and in the north Indian cities also like Bombay and Delhi, not to speak of the arrangement of the Tiruppāvai discourses during the month of Mārkaḷi. It is thus evident that the essence of what the Āḻvārs intended to convey to humanity through their compositions has been propagated by the Ācāryas and besides propagating it, put it also in their practice. The Ācāryas were primarily reponsible to make it permeate into the conduct of the temple ritual and into the routine life of a Vaiṣṇavite. This has resulted in the moulding of the character of a Vaiṣṇavite who strives earnestly to live up to the high ideals which he inherits form his own family, Ācārya and bhāgavatas. Strifes and quarrels would have become ended if these ideals are kept in view by every Vaiṣṇavite, so that Rāmānuja’s divine command would stand true to the description that it is intended to benefit the world.
Perhaps the most intellectual among the Nalayiram lyricists, Nammalvar, who is extolled as the super-prapanna of Sri Vaishnavism, has presented in his Tiruvaymoli consisting of one thousand and odd hymns the essence of Sri Vaishnavism and the basis of the Viishistadvaita philosophy which Ramanauja later drew liberally on. The Tiruvaymoli constitutes the sumnum bonum of Sri Vaishnavite literature and implies and involves the most intimate acquaintance with the details of Sri Vaishnavite traditions and philosophy. This fact had been realised even in the days of Ramanauja and a commentary was considered most essential for a proper understanding of the philosophical and the religious purport of the Tiruvaymoli.

It is known from the accounts contained in the Guru-parampara, that Yamunacarya taught the Tiruvaymoli to his disciples offering his own interpretations. Tirumalaiyantha who was one of his disciples instructed Ramanauja on the import of the Tiruvaymoli. The Guru-parampara refers to a few interpretations where Ramanauja suggested a different interpretation although he did approve of Yamuna’s interpretation as it was given by Tirumalaiyantha. Ramanauja too taught the significance of the teachings of Nammalvar to his disciples. Yamuna’s wish that Nammalvar’s composition should be properly propagated was fulfilled by Ramanauja though Pillan whom he asked to write a commentary on the Tiruvaymoli. Tirumalai Nampi, father of Pillan and maternal uncle of Ramanauja was himself proficient in the interpretation of not only the Tiruvaymoli but also the other compositions of the Nalayiram. The inheritance which Pillan had from his father was much useful to him in imbibing the authentic exposition of the Tiruvaymoli as it was given to him by Ramanauja.
During the days of Pillān, Parācara Paṭṭar, Empār, Kiṭāmpi Āccān, Mutaliyānṭān and Naṅcilyar who were all his contemporaries were equally proficient in the correct exposition of the Tīruvāymoṭi. It is the only Naṅcilyar that wrote a commentary known as Nine Thousand on the Ārāyirappaṭi. When several preceptors had the unique privilege of discoursing and discussing with others about the interpretation of select verses of the Tīruvāymoṭi, there must have been slightly different approaches made to appreciate the import of certain verses, which could have been just taken note of by the contemporary scholars. Such differences did not get recorded in any commentary till the period of Nampillai whose disciples Periyavāccān Pillai and Vaṭakkut-tiruvīṭip-pillai took interest to have them recorded in their commentaries. It must be noted in this connection that these two commentators did well in avoiding offering their criticisms on such references to the views of early scholars. Again it is to be admitted that in their zeal to have such matters incorporated, they had found room in their commentaries for some anecdotes which have no relevance in certain cases to the verses that are explained. As anecdotes, they may have value but too often, the context in which they occur is undermined and the real significance of the verse is lost sight of. They are of great value while delivering discourses but not when a composition is commented on in the form of a work.

In order to fulfil the third wish of Yāmunācārya that the compositions of Saṭhakopa should be duly made popular, Rāmānuja authorised Tirukkurukaip-pirān Pillān himself to compose an authoritative gloss on the Tīruvāymoṭi as taught and expounded by him. The disciple undertook the rather difficult project and completed it successfully. This commentary is known amongst the Vaiṣṇavites as the Ārāyirappaṭi or the Six Thousand (so called from the number of granthas, one paṭi or measure consisting of thirty-two letters). The author's

1. cf. Ḳu on T.V.M. 4.3; 5.10; 4.10: 2.
2. Ḳu on T.V.M. 4.3: 5; 6.7: 1; 6.7: 5; 6.9: 9.
5. Yāpparuniṭalak-kārikai-Preface (Com.).
determination of the length of the number of *granthas* reflects his devotion to the Lord Viṣṇu whose story is told in the *Viṣṇu-purāṇa* in six thousand *grandhas*. This work is the earliest and, in some respects, the best commentary on the hymns of *Tiruvaṉmoḷi*. It served as the best model upon which many compositions were later written, particularly in the *maṉi-p-pravaḻa* or Tamil–Sanskrit mixed style.

This commentary is not a literal one nor a word–to–word exposition. An authentic exposition is attempted for each verse giving in prose its contents and purport. The authenticity of it is attested by its being the basis for the writing of several super–commentaries on it. Besides, its author Pillāṉ was made the chief exponent of both the *Vedāntas*, that is, Rāmānuja’s *Ṣri Bhāṣya* and Nammāḻvār’s *Tiruvaṉmoḷi*. Many of the expressions in Sanskrit which the author employs are taken from Rāmānuja’s *Gadyatrāya, Vedārthasaṅgraha, Śri Bhāṣya* and *Bhagavadgītā-bhāṣya*. While commenting on T.V.M. 1.1:2 Pillāṉ writes that this verse establishes that Brahman is distinct from the sentient and the non-sentient. The next verse shows the Lord to be the only *śeśin*, the Self of the whole world, untouched by the impurities of the world, or the controller of the world. The next three verses establish that the nature, maintenance and other aspects of the world are under the control of the Lord. In his comment on the seventh verse, Pillāṉ cites the *Vedic* and *Purānic* passages profusely to show that Śrīman Nārāyaṇa alone is presented in these passages which are not sublated by any *pramāṇa* and thus the stand points of Saṅkara, Bhāskara, Yādavaprakāśa and others stand refuted. That Brahmā, Rudra and others could not be Brahman is shown while explaining the eighth verse. Taking up the ninth verse, the commentator remarks that the doctrine of the nihilists would not stand the test. Existence and non-existence when predicted to an object, say Brahman, mean only the different

6. He was born in the year Śrīṁknka corresponding to 1033 A.D.
8. The very first sentence is a proof of this feature. cf. Pillāṉ on T.V.M. 1.1:3; 1.1:7; 4.5:1 to 3; 4.10:1 to 5; 8.1:1.
stages in which the Brahman is approached. Existence is an attribute at one stage and non-existence at another, both for Brahman which is ever existent. The explanation for the tenth verse seeks to show that Brahman is all-pervasive, that is, pervading the gross objects but also the subtle ones. His presence is not limited by any thing any where and could not be perceived by any one. He is thus only one Supreme Person. The phrase ‘vētam vallār’ is interpreted as Śri Vaiṣṇavites. The word ‘tonṭar’ which means one who serves (the Lord) also is taken to refer to Śri Vaiṣṇavites. The Āḻvār tells us that the name ‘Nārāyaṇa’ must be repeated to get at Him and uttered while worshipping His Feet with flowers. Pillān takes this as meaning the repeating of Tirumantra.

Besides writing this commentary, Pillān appears to have offered his own interpretations of not only Tiruvāyulī but other poems as well like Tiruppāvai probably during his discourses on these compositions or probably when his views were required to be offered on select passages of these compositions. Such expositions do not form part of Ārāyirappattī. The references to these are contained in the commentaries of Periyavāccān Pillai, Vaṭakkut-tiruvitip-pillai and Preriy Parakālasvmin. The Āḻvār’s utterance of his plight through the garb of a beloved shows that the Āḻvār would cry in distress, embrace Him and bow to Him. This is the experience of the Āḻvār. Circumambulating the hill Tirumālirūncélai is the proper act which a devotee shall do, according to the Āḻvār. Pillān remarks that this act would endow the devotee with the right knowledge. The word ‘perumāyaṇē’ which is

10. ibid. 4.7: 8.
11. ibid. 10.5: 1. 5, 10.
12. His commentary on T.V.M. 5.10:2; 6.4: 8; 6.8; 7.9: 9. 8.1: 6; 8.7: 1; Peri. Tm. 4.6: 9.
13. Ĭṟu on T.V.M. 1.3: 10: 1.4: 7; 2.4: 1; 2.4: 5; 5.9: 3; 5.10: 7.3; 7.8: 7; 7.10: 10; 9.8: 8.
15. Ĭṟu on T.V.M. 1.4
16. ibid. 2.10: 7.
used as a term of address and which means One Who is of wondrous activities, is interpreted as of the nature of all auspicious qualities.\textsuperscript{17} This interpretation is justifiable, as the main qualities of the Lord are required to be meant here for protecting the Āḻvār from worldly distress. Nāṇciyar asked Pillān once whether God's presence is to be known through his own nature (śvarūpa) or His pervasion in the auspicious forms (divyamaṅgaḷa vigrahā) or both are acceptable. To this Pillān replied that Rāmānuja, while delivering the discourse on the Tiruvāyumoḷi, accepted only God's pervasion through His nature. Empār, however, remarked them that God pervades the divyamaṅgaḷa vigrahā in order to be ever present at the mind of His devotees who are devoted to Him.\textsuperscript{18}

From the language employed here which is called maṇi-pravāla, it is evident that this kind of language must have been already familiar to Pillān when he learnt the inner significance of the Tiruvāyumoḷi from Rāmānuja. Anyway, the method of exposition and the nature of language employed by him paved the way for the writing of super-commentaries on the Ārāyira-p-paṭi and also independent texts on select and fundamental doctrines of Vaiṣṇavism by Pillai Lokācāryar, Vedānta Deśika and others.

The author of Oṇpatāyirap-paṭi or Nine Thousand is Nāṇciyar whose version of the commentary was in nine thousand granthas\textsuperscript{19} by way of reflecting his reverence for Śrī Rāmānuja whose Śrī Bhāṣya is in nine thousand granthas. Nāṇciyar secured a copy of the Ārāyira-p-paṭi from the hands of his teacher and guru Parācara Paṭṭar and found that it required some elaboration. He obtained his guru's permission to undertake the great task and accordingly fulfilled it with success. Nāṇciyar devoted himself heart and soul to the preparation of this commentary. When Nāṇciyar succeeded headship of Śrī Vaiṣṇavites after the death of his guru he wanted to have a fair copy of the manus-

\textsuperscript{17} ibid. 7.1: 1.
\textsuperscript{18} ibid. 7.3: 1.
\textsuperscript{19} U.M.R. 42,
cript of his work. On the suggestion of his disciples, he secured the services of one Nampūr Varadarājar who had a fine hand for the task.20

Nañcíyar’s *Nine Thousand* is a super-commentary on the Ārāyirap-pati and is for the most part an epitomized rendering of his exposition of Piḷḷān’s work. According to him, the word ‘avāṅ’ which is repeatedly used in the text T.V.M. 1.1: 1 shows that each quality proves God independently and declares that the Advaita tenet is wrong. The reference made by Namāḷvār to the taking in of poisoned milk from Pūtana by the Lord is shown by Nañcíyar as the Lord’s assurance that the sins of His devotees would not affect Him in any way.21 While Piḷḷān states that the Āḷvār asks people to bow at the Feet of the Lord, Nañcíyar goes a step further and advises people to repeat utters the exploits of the Lord, if he could not be visualized for bowing at His Feet.22 While interpreting the decad 1.8., he writes that the Lord permits for the selves communion with Him by contracting His nature and activities. The Lord devoured the worlds and measured them, without the selves ever requesting Him to do so. This is to prove that He would safeguard the interests even of those who do not expect a need for it and do not therefore make a request to Him for that.23 His lying on the banyan

20. An interesting story is told that Varadarājar lost the manuscript in the floods of Kāviri which he was crossing with the manuscript tied on his head. However, Lord Raṅganātha appeared in his dream and blessed him with the power to recall the matter written in the lost manuscript and so Varadarājar found no difficulty in writing out the fair copy of the commentary by Nañcíyar. In doing so, he introduced a few interpretations of his own unable to resist the temptation to demonstrate his scholarship which was nothing mean. Nañcíyar was immensely pleased with the intelligent way with which the fair copy of his manuscript had been prepared and embraced him with the affection and delight and called him ‘Nampillai – our son’, give the spiritual name ‘Tirukkalikanpīrāsar’ and placed him by his side. From that day onwards Varadarājar was known as Nam Pillai (G.P. pp. 283–284; cf. Ḥitīṇ Tamilākkam Vol. I, pp. 35–38).


22. ibid. 1.6: 7.

23. ibid. 1.10: 5.
leaf keeping all the worlds within Him is praised by the Ālvār and is, according to Naṉciyar, proof for His sovereignty (iṣvaratva). The reference to the Lord’s lifting up the world as Varāha serves to show that He had taken the Ālvār out of the sea of worldly existence. According to Piḷḷān, the Ālvār requests the Lord to grant him the puṟuṣārītha which, according to Naṉciyar, is that he should be only for Him. The self cannot have full realization of the Lord with the body that is made up of matter. The Lord however permitted even the mortals to have communion with Him during His descents. Yet many could not enjoy His stay then and in order to allow them His presence, the Lord has taken His place on Tirumalai. The Lord in the Tirumalai Hills is free from defects. This absence of defect is not merely a quality in that it does not allow the classification of people as those dear to Him and those not dear to Him. Besides, it is His nature. That the Lord Whose bed is Ādiśeṣa has taken His abode in these Hills proves that He likes these Hills more than Ādiśeṣa. Easy accessibility of the Lord is said to be had in arcā form. The general sense in which the phrase ‘mūvar akiṟa mūrtti’ is taken is that Lord Viṇu presents Himself in three forms, one being His own and the other two those of Brahmā, and Rudra. The supreme position of the Lord is due to the presence of Śrī in His chest. The love-lorn condition of the bride is required to be remedied by applying the white dust to her uttering the Lord’s names. Naṉciyar writes that the utterance of the Lord’s name would rectify the ailments which are created by having had contact with

24. ibid. 2.2: 7.
25. ibid. 2.3: 5.
26. ibid. 2.9.
27. ibid. 3.2.
28. ibid. 3.3: 5.
29. ibid. 3.3: 10.
30. ibid. 3.6.
31. ibid. 36: 1. Twelve Thousand also offers the same explanation. This could be justified on the strength of the passage in the Nārāyaṇīya Up.
32. ibid. 4 5: 2.
deities other than the Lord and the dust of the feet of Śrī Vaiṣṇavites would remove the ailments which rise by the presence of those who are in contact with the deities other than Viṣṇu. 33 The brahmins (ceṭṭunilat-tēvār) who worship the deity at Tiruccēṅkuṇṟūr are the Śrī Vaiṣṇavites. 34

It is of great interest to find that the commentaries of Pillān and Naṅciyar are unique in the expositions they contain for the verses of Nammāḻvār. Except for some references to the views of others 35 whose names are not mentioned, Naṅciyar’s commentary is free from the mentioning of any exponent and is in this respect similar to the work of Pillān. For a careful reader who takes up both these commentaries together for the understanding of the composition of Nammāḻvār, there is no discrepancy in the interpretation of Naṅciyar of the passages of Pillān. Rather, it must be unquestionably admitted that Naṅciyar’s gloss is faithful to Ārāyira-p-pati and throws much light on the brief exposition of Pillān.

Yet, the later commentators refer to the views of Naṅciyar which are not to be traced to the existing Nine- Thousand. 36 For instance, there is mention of maṅgalāsāsana in the Tiruvāymoṭī 37 for the devotees of God. To this an objection is raised on the ground that like Periyāḻvār maṅgalāsāsana is to be done at first to the Lord and then to His devotees. Naṅciyar remarked that already maṅgalāsāsana was done to the Lord Whose glory stretches all through the seven worlds and it is here that the Āḻvār does it to the devotees of God. 38 The author of Īṭu remarks that Naṅciyar actually rejected while commenting on T.V.M. 7.8: 4 what Pillān wrote on T.V.M. 7.8: 2.

33. ibid. 4.6: 5.
34. ibid. 8.4: 8.
35. ibid. 5.2.
36. Īṭu on T.V.M. 4.6.
38. Īṭu on T.V.M. 5.2: 1.
Aḻakiyamaṇavāḷajiyar, a disciple of Periyavāccāṅ Pīḷḷai wrote a commentary known as Twelve Thousand. The length of the work was decided by the author on a par with the length of Śrimad Bhāgavatam which consists of twelve-thousand granthis. According to the author, the ten centums of Tiruvāyumoṅi deal respectively with the protector, that is sesin, enjoyability of experience with Him, self, God’s liking

39° U.R.M. 45. This commentary Pannirlāyirap-paṭi, a later work in point of time to Twenty-four Thousand and Thirty-six Thousand. But it is placed here in the order of the number.

40. The story of its composition is very interesting by reason of its author having remained an illiterate until his thirty secondth year and having attained bedazzling scholarship at what ordinarily may appear a wrong age for education. There is the amusing story of his meeting a group of students studying something. Out of an innocent curiosity he inquired of them what they were studying. The students knew that the questioner was an illiterate person from the way in which he interrogated them, and in order to fool him they replied that they were studying ‘Mucala-Kiśalayam’ (Mucala Kīṣālāyam—the sharp end of pestle. Mucalam—pestle, Kīṣalāyam—a shoot of a plant. ‘Mucala Kīṣalāyam’ signifies imbecility, as the pestle cannot be expected to put forth shoots). Such a work did not exist, but the students wanted to indirectly make a big fool of the ignoramus. The illiterate person believed what the students said and asked Periyavāccāṅ Pīḷḷai, his Ācārya, what the ‘Mucala-Kiśalayam’ was. The learned Ācārya at once understood that the imbecile had been fooled by the young learners and frankly told him that as he was not educated it, had been easy for a set of arrogant students to fool him. The illiterate immediately realized the danger of his being illiterate and prostrated before Periyavāccāṅ Pīḷḷai to accept him as a student. Periyavāccāṅ Pīḷḷai gladly accepted him, in spite of his over age, as his pupil and taught him from the scrap. The student was very enthusiastic in his learning and in the long run the learned Ācārya taught him Kāvyas, Nāṭakas, Alankāra śāstras, Vyākaraṇam and Purva Mīmāṁsā and Uttara-Mīmāṁsā. The illiterate very soon emerged as a great scholar and became renowned also as a dialectician and debater, which his name ‘Vādi Kēśari’ implies. He fooled those that fooled him by writing a beautiful Kārya entitled Mucala-Kiśalayam. His interest in Tiruvāyumoṅi was profound. He studied all the earlier commentaries and found them above the head of the common man. So he beautifully condensed the elaborate meanings and details and wrote this Twelve Thousand in a way which is understandable and easily comprehensible to all.
for the self, the means for mokṣa, prayer for His Grace, obstacle to mokṣa, its removal, nature of the result and the getting of it.\textsuperscript{41}

The importance of this commentary lies in two respects: This is the earliest commentary to offer word for word meaning for each verse and to state the metre in which each decad is composed. While interpreting the decad 1.6., this commentator writes that the Lord would not mind the defects of His devotees. Merely folding the palms out of respect for Him would set aside what is undesirable and make the desired thing obtainable. Removal of what is undesirable depends on His will. Worship of the Lord is recommended by the Āḻvār which is justly interpreted as consisting in offering the aṇcali.\textsuperscript{42} The Lord's having Garuḍa as the vehicle is justified as knowable through Vedānta because of the vehicle Garuḍa being of the nature of the Veda.\textsuperscript{43} Enjoyment of God's presence is stated by the Āḻvār to be delectable like honey, milk, ghee and sugar-cane. It would have been enough if only one had been mentioned for illustration. The mention of so many is to show that God-realization is delectable when viewed from all possible angles.\textsuperscript{44} The creation of the world is a proof of His easy accessibility and His descent is intended to afford protection for the things created. His unsurpassed acts, affection for those who resort to Him, enjoyability, and revelation of His greatness even in descents and arcā are all meant to demonstrate that everything is subordinated to Him.\textsuperscript{45} The Āḻvār refers to himself as the servant of the servants of those who are the servants of God, showing that the series could be extended further on, himself being at the lower-most level. Generally as in hereditary lineage, the seven steps are meant here also. The commentator remarks here that the ideal of a devotee shall be to choose service at

\textsuperscript{42} Twelve Thousand on T.V.M. 1.6: 8.
\textsuperscript{43} ibid. 2.2: 10.
\textsuperscript{44} ibid. 2.3: 1; cf. for a similar interpretation.
\textsuperscript{45} ibid. 3.5: 6.
the lower-most level of the series and logically, this must be taken to mean that for a devotee, another devotee shall be his *šešin* and this shall be further adopted in the series. Thus there is a long series of *šešins* as that of *šešas*. The verse 6.10:10 is exquisitely interpreted as suggestive of the significance of the *Dvaya-mantra*. This commentary contains here and there some references to the views of Parācara Paṭṭar and others. Tirumalai is a place which is common to the world and Paramapada.

Periyavaṭcāṇ Pillai who was the direct disciple of Nampillai wrote *Twenty-four Thousand* reminiscent of the length of *Śrimad Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa*. This commentary contains, besides word for word interpretation, much of what had been handed down by way of tradition. The views of many scholars on the interpretation of some verses, which were not incorporated in the works of Pillān and Naṅcīyar, are cited here. This commentary was given publicity by his son Nainārācāṇ Pillai.

In the introductory portion, this commentator writes that the descent of the Āḻvār on earth is due to the good deeds

46. ibid. 3.7: 10.
47. ibid. 3.5: 1.
48. ibid. 3.9: 9.
49. ibid. 1.8: 3.
50. U.R.M. 43: There is the interesting story of how he happened to write the commentary. A grandson of Kūrattāḻvāṇ, Naṭuvil Tiruvvīṭi-p-pillai Paṭṭar by name, was studying *Tiruvāyvomoli* at the feet of Nampallai. The disciple committed to writing every night what he had listened to from his learned teacher that day. At the end of the course the student discovered that he had written down a commentary in one lakh and twenty-five thousand *granthas*. This he showed to his master who was provoked that the student had done the work without his approval and took it from him and cast it away as food for white ants. However, Nampillai realized later that a new version of *Tiruvāyvomoli-commentary* was necessary and so he charged his most brilliant disciple Periyavācāṇ Pillai who had studied all the śāstras in every detail to write it out. And thus the commentary had to be written by Periyavācāṇ Pillai (Vide G.P. pp. 299–301; and cf. *Ittiṇ Tamilakkam* Vol. I, pp. 39–41).
of the selves. Much of God-realization which the Āḻvār had experienced is so well presented in the Tiruvāy藐i that it could clear any doubt that may be raised about the import of the Vedas, epics and Purāṇas.\(^5^1\)

Nammāḻvār refers to his composition as admired by those who are poets of milk-like Tamil, those who are proficient in music and devotees of God.\(^5^2\) Periyavācār Pillai takes this respectively to refer to the first three Āḻvārs, Maturakaviyāḻvār and Periyāḻvār. He makes references to Parāṇkusa-nampi, a disciple of Maturakaviyāḻvār, Tiruvarānḳkapperumāl Araiyan and others.\(^5^3\) Such an interpretation like this requires careful scrutiny. Nammāḻvār should have meant only scholars of Tamil musicians and devotees in a general manner. There is no evidence to show that Nammāḻvār was aware of the other Āḻvārs as his predecessors. What Nammāḻvār would have meant is not and need not be the same as what the later exponents would like to convey as the sense of this verse. Any attempt as done by this commentator to illustrate this sense by referring to the savants of old and recent years who had achieved distinction in these spheres cannot easily be approved as conveying the import of the verse. It can serve better as an annotation which would serve the purpose through illustrations. Otherwise, anachronism would be the chief defect of interpretations of this kind. In all probability, what Nampillai had taught by way of annotation was sought to be recorded as much by Periyavācār Pillai and treated by later generations as meant by Nammāḻvār himself.

The Āḻvār describes the Lord as not male, not female and not eunuch.\(^5^4\) The commentator shrewdly remarks that this is merely to show that He is Puruṣottama but has no compeer.\(^5^5\)

Taking the verse 2.10: 10, the commentator interprets the

52. T.V.M. 1.5: 11.
53. Twenty-four Thousand on T.V.M, 1.5: 11.
54. T.V.M. 2.5: 9.
55. Twenty-four Thousand on T.V.M. 2.5: 9.
phrase ‘vētam muñ virittān’ as God’s exposition of the sense of the Vedas through the Bhagavad-gītā. Tirumalai is also spoken of as Ādiśeṣa. Service rendered at a particular holy place by having birth there would enable the removal of sins committed by the enjoyment of prohibited things. The sound produced by the flapping of wings of Garuḍa is taken as that produced by the chantings of the Sāma-veda. Tiruvēṅkaṭam is described as the holy place where the Lord lying on the serpent at ŚrīRaṅgam, stands in order to meet the gods.

While interpreting the verse 4.1:1, Periyavāccān Piḷḷai writes that the use of the word ‘tirunāraṇan’ means that the deity to be sought after and reached is the divine couple, that is, Nārāyana with Śrī is that deity and the whole thing is the ṣeṣa for this couple. The self gets into mortal life because of not having the knowledge that the Lord is the Supreme Person and because of its feeling that it is independent. To get rid of these two factors, one shall get instructions regarding the supremacy of the Lord. The interpretation which this commentator offers for the verse 6.5:3 as vyūha and vibhava forms are experienced in Tolaivilli-maṅgalam, does not appear to be correct, for there is no reference in the original passage to the vyūha form. Perhaps Krṣṇa, who is no other than Vyūha Vāsudeva, is taken to be referred to here but this in interpretation is evidently far-fetched.

The views of Parācara Paṭṭar, Kiṭāmpī Ācān, Tirumalai Nampi, Rāmānuja in reference to those of Ālavantār

56. ibid. on T.V.M. 3.3:10.
57. ibid. 3.6.
58. Twenty-four Thousand on T.V.M. 3.8:5.
59. ibid. on T.V.M. 7.2; vide ibid. 4.2:4; 5.1:10 for interesting discussions.
60. cf. ibid. 6.8:1 where the commentator declares that both the vibhūtis are subordinated to the couple.
61. ibid. 4.10.
62. ibid. 1.6:1; 1.10; 2.4:5; 2.4:9; 2.5:9.
63. ibid. 1.7:6.
64. ibid. 1.4:8.
and others, Mutaliyānta, Kūrat-tāvān, Pitāi (Nam-pitāi) and others are frequently cited. Special mention must be made of the fine expositions of Parācara Paṭṭar on some verses. Many of these citations appear for the first time recorded in this commentary. There are many anecdotes referred to in the commentary whose relevance to the context is better explained by the occasions when the relevant verses were expounded. One of the singular contributions which Periyavācān Pitāi made through this commentary is that he took the relevant verses from Vālmiki’s Rāmāyana and offered interpretations to them.

Iṭu which is also known as Thirty-six Thousand, is the commentary prepared by Vatakkut-tiruvitip-pitāi, another disciple of Nampitāi. Being the product written under the guidance of the same preceptor, it bears much likeness to the Twenty-four Thonsand of Periyavācān Pitāi. It contains more information than the latter and has been more popular also. The author’s ardent devotion to Rāmānuja was reflected in his choice of the number of granthas for his commentary. Śri Bhāṣya had a commentary entitled Šurtaprakāsika by Sudarśana Paṭṭar in thirty-six thousand granthas. On the basis of its length this author also limited his commentary to thirty-six thousand granthas and hence the commentary came to be known as Thirty-six Thousand. As the real author of

65. ibid. 2.1; 2.3: 1.
66. ibid. 8.8: 5.
67. ibid. 8.9.
68. ibid. 5.9: 7; 6.7: 3.
69. ibid. 2.8; 4.9: 11; 5.7: 10; 6.1: 1, 6.2: 6.
70. cf. ibid. 2.7; 2.9: 2; 6.4: 9; 4.7: 1.
71. cf. ibid. 2.1; 3.5: 4.
72. There is a beautiful legend about how it happened to the world. The author used to take notes from the discourse on the Tiruvāy-moli by his learned preceptor Nampitāi and prepared a fair draft of his lectures with the help of his notes taken. One day he submitted the draft to his master telling him that it was the substance of his (the master’s) discourse on the Tiruvāy-moli. The master perused the whole draft and was immensely pleased with it because it was neither too long nor too short and it was to the length of
the work was Nampiḷḷai, the work is generally known as *Nampiḷḷai Ītu* or simply Ītu.

The name ‘Ītu’ has many interpretations. One meaning of the word ‘Ītu’ is *kavacam* or armour.14 As an armour, Ītu protected *Tiruvāimoli* from fantastic expositions by half-wits and quarter-wits. Another interpretation is based on the circumstance of its being committed to writing by Vaṭakkū-t-tiruviti-p-piḷḷai, ‘iṭu’ meaning writing. ‘Īṭutal’ means ‘writing’ in Tamil. Another meaning of the ‘iṭu’ is ‘equal’ in Tamil: “iṭum etuppum il icoan”15 ‘Ītu’ here has this meaning. As this work is equal in length to *Śrutaprakāśika*, and as the commentary forms the link or chain binding the God and His devotee, it came to be known as Ītu or the instrument of ‘iṭupāṭu’ or engagement with the theme of God. The author of the commentary himself had held the view that it was equal to the greatness of *Tiruvāimoli* itself.

This commentary begins with a brief survey of the systems of Indian thought. Seventeen systems get treated here, the conclusion being drawn in favour of the Viśiṣṭādvaita school of *Vedānta*. Nammāḷvar was responsible for the interpretation of the *Dvaya-mantra*: The divine couple, Nārāyaṇa with Śrī, is the deity.16 The concept of *ṣeṣa* shall

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*Śrutaprakāśika*. But as it was committed to writing without his permission, the master took it from his disciple and kept it idle with him. But one of Nampiḷḷai’s disciples, Iyuvanī Māṭava-perumāḷ by name, was very eager to have the commentary and prayed Lord Raṅganātha to fulfil his desire. To satisfy the ‘pēravā’ or the great desire of his devotee and also to bless the world with the commentary, the Lord hinted Nampiḷḷai who had come to worship His Feet through the temple priest to hand over the manuscript to Māṭava-p-perumāḷ otherwise known as Čīryāḷvan Appiḷḷai. And thus the commentary came to us. (G.P. pp. 311–12; cf. *Ītiḷi Tamiḻakkam* Vol. I, pp. 41–43).

73. U.R.M. 44, 48, 49.
75. T.V.M. 1.61.3.
apply to the devotees of God as well as it does with reference to God. While the Vedānta prescribes the path of devotion to the twice-born and that of self-surrender to those who have no other path to pursue, Nammāḻvār declares the path of self-surrender as the means for all. The path of self-surrender is not the means for adopting the path of devotion, being an independent means by itself. The second half of the Dvaya-mantra is expounded in the centums 1 to 3, its first half in 4 to 6 and the qualities helpful for this in the remaining centums. Among the citations which this work contains to a large number, special mention is to be made of the Sarva-siddhāṅtasaṅgraha of Saṅkara and of the Tatvā-vicāraṇa of Yādavaprakāśa.

The Lord cannot be known accurately to be of a particular nature but yet He has thousand names. Since He had shown Himself in several places, to several people, He came to be called by the names which came to be associated with His act at the particular places. While interpreting the verse 1.3: 5, this commentator remarks that the word ‘bhagavān’ has primary denotation to Him alone while it has secondary application to others. The phrase ‘tava neri’ does not mean penance but devotion.

This commentator states that all other Āḻvārs are to be treated as forming part of the whole which is Nammāḻvār. This concept must be considered to have developed out of the importance the Tiruvāyumoḻi gained as a work which came to be studied only through the preceptor. However, the fancied

77. ibid., p. 90 where T.V.M. 2.3: 10; 3.1 are cited.
78. ibid. pp. 92-93 where are cited T.V.M. 5.7: 1; 5.7: 10; 5.8: 11; 5.9: 11; 5.10: 11; 10.10: 3.
79. ibid. p. 94.
80. ibid. p. 96.
81. ibid. p. 59.
82. ibid. p. 56.
83. Ḫu on T.V.M. 1.3: 4.
84. ibid. on T.V.M. 1.3: 5.
85. ibid. on T.V.M. 1.4: 2.
whole does not appear to have any basis, for like the *Tiruvāy-moilī*, the compositions of other Āḷvārs have their own individual importance and for that reason are not any the less in comparison to the *Tiruvāymoilī*. The prime cause for the importance of the *Tiruvāymoilī* lies in the fact that Nāṭhamuni became the pupil of Nammāḻvār who came therefore to be known as the head of those who have sought shelter under the Lord. Nāṭhamuni propagated the compositions of other Āḷvārs as well as he did those of Nammāḻvār and all the four thousand verses came to be treated as *Drāvida Veda*. There is no separate treatment of the *Veda* as parts and whole in this *Veda* and this must mean that all the Āḷvārs are to be treated alike as ṛṣis, the ancient seers of truth but Nammāḻvār’s composition is supreme as Ḫe is. This does not mean that there is anything like the concept of the part and whole among the Āḷvārs. That they occupy a position lower in order to that of Nammāḻvār must however be admitted.

Like Periyavāccān Pillai, this commentator also offers some interesting observations on T.V.M. 1.5: 11. The musicians are Maturakaviyāḻvār and Nāṭhamuni. Kūrattāḻvān is said to have referred to Parāṅkuśa-nampi, the disciple of Maturakaviyāḻvār as the Tamil poet. Yāmunācārya is said to have referred to the first three Āḷvārs as Tamil poets, to Tiruppāṇāḻvār as the musician and Periyāḻvār as devotee.

The sins of the devotees could be removed by Nārāyaṇa because He is the husband of Śri. Like Śri, Nappinnāi too has *puruṣakāra* for the sake of the selves. Detachment is to be given greater importance than knowledge, as it is clear from Sahadeva declaring Kṛṣṇa as most deserving worship. Hence there was a shower of flowers on his head. This anecdote has relevance to the interpretation of T.V.M, 2.2: 4, for Sahadeva said that he would set his foot on the heads of those who would not admit the overlordship of Viṣṇu. The word ‘*maṟṟai*’ in T.V.M. 3.1: 10 is interpreted in two ways. It

86. ibid. on T.V.M. 1.6: 10.
87. ibid. on T.V.M. 1.7: 8.
means *Veda* and means also that which conceals its own features to those who are unbelievers in the *Vedic* tradition but shows them to those who believe in the *Vedic* tradition.

While interpreting the verse 4.3: 3 this commentator renders ‘*ōkam*’ is the *para* form, ‘*irumūrtti*’ as Vāsudeva and Sankarśaṇa and ‘*mūru mūrtti*’ as Pradyumna added to these two. This is not only ingenious but also apt in the light of the Vaiṣṇavite tradition. On the verse 5.7: 11 this commentary states that although the thousand verses convey the sense of the *Vedas*, yet they did not come into being of their own accord like the *Veda*. The *Vedas* occupy a position that is comparable to that of *para* form, the epics and *Purāṇas* as that of the divine descent and these verses that of the *arcā* form. The decad 6.9 is said to expound the *Tirumantra* and 6.10 the *Carama-stolka*. The Tirumalai Hills are said to crown the beauty of the earth and in this respect, are like an ornament that gives perfection to the decoration of women.88 While commenting on the verse 6.10: 10, it is remarked that *paratva* is far distant and hence beyond the reach of the self. *Vyūha* is enjoyable to Brahmā and others like grains. The divine descents are helpful only for those who are lucky to be present during the periods of those descents and are not useful for others and so are removed from them by time. The Tirumalai Hills do not have any deficiency of this kind and so the Feet of the Lord of Tiruvēṅkaṭam are the refuge.89 *Paratva* is intended for those who are eternally released, *vyūha* for those who are almost released, that is, those pious selves who could be taken to be released for all purposes but for their possession of the physical frame and *vibhava* for those who have committed good deeds.90 The Ālvār uses the word ‘*kunta*’ as the name of the Lord. The commentator remarks that the word ‘*mukunta*’ has become shortened into *kunta*.91

88. ibid. on T.V.M. 6:10: 2.
89. ibid. on T.V.M. 6.10; 10; cf. ibid. 7.2 for a slightly different version of this.
90. ibid. on T.V.M. 7.3: 3.
91. ibid. on T.V.M. 7.9: 7.
Like Periyavaćcān Piḷḷai, this commentator also cites several passages from the Rāmāyaṇa⁹² and Viṣṇu-purāṇa⁹³ and interprets them. Besides citing the views of many earlier exponents like Parācara Paṭṭar,⁹⁴ this commentator refers to the views of a scholar who is named Ammāl⁹⁵ in some contexts and Ammaṅkiyammāl⁹⁶ in others. It is hard to find out whether these two were identical or different persons. If they were different, then Ammāl must be identical with Vātsyya Varadācārya who was well known as Naṭātūr Ammāl who lived at least up to 1274 A.D., when he blessed Vedānta Deśika (c. 1268 A.D.).

Tiruvāymoḷi Vācakamālai" which is also known as Vivaraṇa-satakam, was written by a woman, Tirukkōṅēri Tāśyai. It is mentioned at the end of this commentary that the work was completed in the year Āṅgirasa twenty-sixth day of Mārkaḷī month.⁹⁸ The author dedicated this work at the Feet of Śrī Ārāvamutan at the shrine of Kumbakonam. She pays respect to her preceptors, Āḷvār (Nammāḷvār), Emperumānār (Rāmānuja), Candragiri Ayyaṅ, Śrīman Nārāyaṇa-jīyar, Tirukkōṭṭiyūr-jīyar and Vaṭakkut-tiruvūtīp-piḷḷai. In all probability she was the direct disciple of Vaṭakkut-tiruvūtīp-piḷḷai. Nothing is known about the three teachers who preceded Vaṭakkut-tiruvūtīp-piḷḷai. That she is citing a passage from Vedānta Deśika cannot be proved beyond doubt, as the two words which are supposed to have been cited occur in the reversed order in the work of Vedānta

⁹² ibid. on T.V.M. 1.4: 3; 1.10: 1; 1 10: 4; 2.2: 5; 2.4: 1; 2.9 2.10: 4; 2.10: 7; 3.3: 7; 5.5: 10.
⁹³ ibid on T.V.M. 2.7; 3.7: 4 4: 3; 6.10.
⁹⁴ ibid. on T.V.M. 1.6: 11; 1.8; 5.10.
⁹⁵ ibid. on T.V.M. 7.4. 4; 7.6: 10.
⁹⁶ ibid. on T.V.M. 4.5: 1; 5.9: 10; 8.3: 11; 8.4: 1.
⁹⁷ For a detailed estimate of this work see Introduction of this work, pp. (62-71).
⁹⁸ Tiruvāymoḷi Vācakamālai, p. 334. The year may correspond to 1273 A.D., or 1213 A.D.
⁹⁹ He was born in the year Sarvajit which corresponds to 1168 A.D.
Deśika. If reliance is placed on this citation, she must have lived posterior to Vedānta Deśika (1268–1369 A.D.) in which case she could not have been a direct disciple of Vaṭakkut-tiruvitip-pilījai. She could have hailed from the Andhra State, because of some errors crept in the writing of Tamil in this commentary. Candragiri Ayyan who might have belonged to Candragiri, a place near Tirupati, happened to be in the line of preceptors of this commentator.

One noteworthy feature of this commentary lies in the exposition offered here only for one hundred verses of the Tiruvāyimooli justifying the other title Vivāraṇaśatatakam of the commentary. Secondly, the metre is mentioned in which the particular verse that is taken up for interpretation is composed. Thirdly, the commentator seeks to show that all 1101 verses of Tiruvāyimooli are only expository of the first verse. The commentator must have been taught by her preceptor, the author of the Ṛtu which speaks of the first ten verses as the epitome of whole work, the first three verses of the decad as the summary of this decad, the first verse that of the first three verses and the first line that of the first verse. The sense of the first verse can be taken up to mean this: ‘O mind! worship the Lord’s lustrous Feet which destroy the miseries of devotees, the Lord Whose bliss is unsurpassed, Who offers to the devotees the correct knowledge, and Who is the lord of the eternal selves’. This commentator takes up a verse in almost every decad and shows, by way of exposition, that it is only an explanation of the opening verse of the Tiruvāyimooli. This is clear from the verse beginning with the words ‘ōlivil kālamellām (3.3: 1). This verse means: ‘We have to be steadfast in serving the Lord for all times’. This service shall never break up. The place for rendering service shall be Tiruvēṅkaṭam which resonates with the sounding waterfalls. The Lord Who is to be served is the father of the father of the

100. Tiruvāyimooli Vācañāmalai. Int. p.70. cf, Vedānta Deśika’s Nyāsa Tillaka 22 with Tiruvāyimooli Vācañāmalai, p.204.
father and is enchantingly radiant’. The commentator explains that the first line refers to the unlimited bliss of the Lord at all times, places and stages. The second line shows that He favours the devotee to do all kinds of service without having any delusion regarding the goal. The third line shows the Lord to be supreme among gods who do verbal service by singing Sāmaaveda. The waterfalls appear to invite people for visiting the hills and sing His praise. The last line refers to the Lord as the foremost among others. The Feet are said to be lustrous and capable of destroying the miseries. The name ‘Veṅkaṭam’ is significant here and brings out the sense of the word ‘tuyar’ which refers to the three guṇas, that is three debts and three offences. The lustrous beauty of the Feet sets aside the lustres of the sky, water, light and cognition.

In another verse (4.8: 2), the Āḻvār means that His heart is occupied by Lākṣmi, His hands are charming and strong, He had taken the Āḻvār into His service and He is blue like the emerald. According to the commentator this verse establishes Śrī also as īṣṭi and also as His īṣa. His arms are strong and award mokṣa through knowledge and devotion. He is addressed as ‘Ārāvamuṇe’ in another (5.8:1) meaning that He is delectable and is never satiable. In the exposition of each of these verses, the commentator refers to the Taittiriya passage on the gradation of bliss.

There are references to the differences in the interpretations among the early exponents. While Periyāḻvār refers to the extension of the Vaiṣṇavite tradition at least to

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103. The three debts are for gods, the sages and manes and are discharged by performing the sacrifice, reciting the Vedas and begetting children.

104. The three offences are those incurred at God, God’s men and by being hostile to God by nature.

105. The commentary bears here the influence of Itu on TVM 3.3:1.

106. The exposition for T.V.M 9.3; 6.10: 1; 10.6: 1 and 10.7:5 is detailed and highly informative.


seven generations, 109 this commentator speaks of it as extending to twenty-one generations. 110 There are few references to the difference in the interpretations of certain passages among the early exponents of Vaiṣṇavism. 111 The interpretation of the word 'catumaritī' is generally given in favour of the vyūha concept; 112 but according to this commentator, valour, heroism, prowess and others constitute His body which shows that His overlordship is due to His destroying the enemies of His devotees. 113 There is also reference to the dialectical usage of a Tamil word. 114

In the verse 10.8:5 the Āḻvār speaks of his composition as causing disaster to the demons and as having hailed by gods and sages. The Lord HImself composed this by Himself. The hills at Tirumāliruṇcōlai are resonant with delightful music sung by the bees. 115 The commentator remarks that the Lord listened to the composition of the Āḻvār and became very much delighted and sets the surroundings in the hills resound with the preliminary representation of the musical melody of the song which is generally done with the use of the letters 'ta' and 'na'. This is done through the humming of the bees. The Lord's composing of this Tiruvāyomoḻi is like His own descent, causes destruction to the evil-doers and protects the good persons. This reveals that the Lord is the embodiment of supreme bliss. The composition itself is a gift of perfect knowledge to humanity. This is, unlike the Vedas, within the easy reach of all and successfully representing God's greatness in full. The reference to the sages getting delight through this composition shows that they contemplate on His Feet. It shows also that this composition would serve the purpose for enjoyment of God-realization and as such the sages could be taken to mean the eternal selves. As the Lord

109. Pālāṅṭu. 5.
110. Tiruvāyomoḻi Vācakamālai on 2.7:1.
111. ibid. on 1.10:1; 8.7:3; 10.6:1.
114. ibid. 9.8:1.
115. Arāyirap-paṭi on ibid.
followed without trying to make a reference to the nyāha doctrine. Services through the body, mind and word are said to be conveyed by the verses 2.9: 1 to 3. The meaning of the Draya-mantra is said to be conveyed in the verse 6.10. 10.120 This commentary refers to the differences in the readings of the Tiruvāymoḷi and Ārāyirap-pāṭi.121 There is also reference to some previous gloss by a writer whose name is not mentioned.122 Besides this commentary, this author had also written a gloss on the Tiruvāymoḷi, explaining each verse word by word and offering informatory explanation wherever necessary.123 But for a solitary reference to a tradition involving Rāmānuja’s explanation, the commentary is free from anecdotes and presents a faithful explanation for a critical understanding of both the Tiruvāymoḷi and Ārāyirap-pāṭi. Attempt is thus made to make the text of the Tiruvāymoḷi understood and there is presented a criticism on the verses directly and then the exposition follows on the Ārāyirap-pāṭi.

Vedānta Deśika presents a critical epitome of the Tiruvāymoḷi in one hundred and thirty-three verses in Sanskrit of which the first ten are introductory and the last twelve offer concluding remarks, the remaining ones giving a gist of each decad in the śāstraic fashion. The Tiruvāymoḷi is a treatise on mokṣa and has the sentiment of quietitude as the dominating element.124 This work was written by Vedānta Deśika at the request of scholars. What is best as the gem in the ocean of the Tiruvāymoḷi is taken out by churning the Upaniṣad of Nammāḷvār.125 Bridal mystic element is dominant in this composition and in a composition of this mystic

120. For similar expositions vide Twenty-four Thousand on Ārāyirap-pāṭi on T.V.M. 1.3: 7; 2.6: 1; 4.1: 1; 4.3: 2; 4.8: 4; 4.10: 1; 5.3: 1; 6.2: 1; 8.9: 1.
121. Vide: ibid. on 1.3: 10; 1.4: 10; 1.6: 1; 1.7: 6; 4.9: 10.
122. Vide: ibid. on 1.6: 2.
123. Vide: the gloss by Vedānta Rāmānujaśrāmin on T.V.M. 4.5: 1; 7.5: 5.
125. ibid. 2.
saint, the messengers who are sent by the Āḻvār are only the spiritual preceptors. After dwelling on the greatness of the Tamil rendering of the original Sanskrit sources, the Tiruvāyāmoli is shown to represent the substance of the four Vedas. The substance of the Tiruvāyāmoli, the endearing qualities of the Lord and the greatness of the Tiruvāyāmoli are then stated. A summary of the contents of each centum is given at the end of each centum. In the concluding portion are given the contents of the four compositions of Nammāḻvār. In his other work known as Drāvidōpaniṣatsāra Deśika summarises the contents of each centum in twenty-five verses.

Ajakiyamaṇavāla-jīyar composed in Sanskrit verse from a brief summary of each decad. The work goes by the name Drāvidōpaniṣatsaṅgati. The author’s name is given at the end as Vādikeśari Ajakiyamaṇavāla-jīyar who is no other than the author of Twelve Thousand on the Tiruvāyāmoli. Maṇavālamāmunikal wrote a piece called Tiruvāamoli-nūṟṟan-tāti summarising in Tamil verse the summary of each decad.

The gloss known as Arumpadam by Kuṇakarampākkam Rāmānuja-jīyar is very scholarly and is explanatory of the Īṭu. The word ‘amāṭṭi’ means a particular kind of versification. The author of the gloss remarks that what marks the end of the previous body marks the beginning of the next body. This is a philosophical interpretation justifying the adoption of this mode of versification in some of the compositions of the Nālayiram.

126. ibid. 3.
127. ibid. 4.
128. ibid. 5.
129. ibid. 6.
130. ibid. 7, 8.
131. ibid. 9, 10.
132. ibid. 126.
133. The treatment is very convincing on T.V.M. 1.9:1; 6: 2.1; 6: 2.2: 1; 2.3: 1; 2.6: 2 4.1: 7; 6 10: 4.
134. Arumpadam on T.V.M. 2.6: 1.
Apart from the *Tiruvāyumēli* the other three compositions of Nammāḻvār and those of other Āḻvārs also were commented on by several writers of course all of them being posterior to Pillai and Naṅćiyar. Periyavāccān Pillai was the earliest scholar who commented on the entire four thousand verses of the *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham*. While heaping insult after insult on Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Śisupāla was only getting freed from sins and thus his act could be considered as recollecting God before death. The Lord's name is to be uttered. Then the Lord will come to that self who utters it. Brahmā occupies the navel of Viṣṇu. Yet he does not know the greatness of the Lord. Simply by standing or being near the sea coast, one cannot have the estimate of the sea. The Lord at ŚrīRaṅgam is lying facing the southern direction. The commentator remarks that the region lying to the north of Tamil Nad does not have the fortune of being popular with the singing of the hymns of the Āḻvārs. The beauty of His back is presented to such regions in order to attract the people there to ŚrīRaṅgam and make them acquainted with the songs of the Āḻvārs. This interpretation has much poetic beauty but looks rather exaggerated. There is a vast area lying to the north of ŚrīRaṅgam forming part of Tamil Nad wherein are numerous shrines whose glory was sung by many an Āḻvār. The suggestion could be admitted, if the Lord at Tiruvēṅkaṭam had been in the lying posture facing the south. The real position happens to be that the Lord chose to face the south wherein lay the kingdom of Viśūsana. The Lord is the gem resting on the golden plate of Ādiśeṣa. The verse 38 of the *Tirumālai* can be treated as the *Cārama-śloka* for this composition. It conveys the sense of *Dvaya-mantra*. Nammāḻvār gave the import of the first half of the *Dvaya-mantra* and Āṅtēḻ gave that of the

135. Some verses in *Periyal*. *Tm.* are lost and Maṇavāḷamāmūni commented on these.
136. Periyavāccān Pillai on M.Tv. 35.
137. ibid. on M. Tv, 56.
138. ibid. on T.M. 19.
139. ibid. on T.M. 38.
140. Vide: Commentary on T.M. 38.
141. T.Pv. 29.
second half of the same mantra. The interpretation\(^{142}\) of the word 'kōlīkkōn' as the Lord of Uṟaiyūr does not seem to be justified as the author Kulačēkarāḷvār was the king of Kōlīkkōtu (modern Calicut) in the Kerala State while Uṟaiyūr lies near Śrī Raṅgam. The Āḻvār in the guise of the bride feels the night unbearable. The commentator remarks that the Lord controls every one. By manliness, He subjugates those who are opposed to Him and those who are favourable to Him through His charming appearance.\(^{143}\) The sacred rites have to be performed in order that devotion to the Lord would increase and sins would get destroyed.\(^{144}\)

Vedānta Deśika commented on the Amalanāṭipirān of Tiruppāṇāḻvār. This commentary which is known as Muni- vāhanabhōga was composed by the author for pleasing a pious soul who was then living at Śrī Raṅgam. At the end of his commentary the commentator writes that he explained this work of the Āḻvār for the delight of a pious self (sāttvika). There is a difference of opinion regarding the identity of the pious self. While the fact is that there is no definite evidence for identifying this person, the Tenkalai school takes this person to be Periyavāccāṉ Pillai\(^{145}\). Many such persons were the contemporaries of Deśika at Śrī Raṅgam. If guess could have its sway the person could have been Pillai Lokācārya.

Vedānta Deśika speaks of Tiruppāṇāḻvār as having acquired the bliss of Paramapada on earth and had the experience of that at the Feet of the Lord at Śrī Raṅgam which took the shape of the ten verses beginning with the words “amalanāṭipirān”. The entire composition is described to be an exposition of Tirumantra. Great care and minute study of the poem exercised by the commentator explain how the Tamil poems convey the sense of the import of the Vedas.

\(^{142}\) Perum. Tm. 9: 11. This may perhaps be due to Uṟaiyūr being known also as Kōlīyūr.

\(^{143}\) Periyavāccāṉ Pillai on T.V.R. 12

\(^{144}\) ibid. on M. Tv. 12.

\(^{145}\) cf. Dusana Nirāsa. Sri Vaiṣṇava sudarasana.
It is held that Vedānta Deśika wrote also Maturakavi-
hrdayam, a commentary on the piece Kaṇṭhinum-ciṟuttāmpu of
Maturakaviyālvār but this is now lost. It is also held that
this commentator expounded the Tiruvaṃṭoli in a work known
as Nigamanparimala.

In the third section of his work Upakārasaṅgraha
Deśika takes up the first verse of Tiruviruttam and interprets
it. The Āḻvār represents to the Lord for listening to the four
compositions of his, in all of which he prays for rendering
service to Him. The words are individually expounded and
the senses suggested to show that the entire principles of
Vedānta are conveyed by this verse. The main import of this
verse consists in giving expression to the sense of gratitude
which the Āḻvār feels for God offering His own place to His
devotees.

The Tiruppāvai of Āṇṭāl has unique popularity in having
many commentaries. Attempts were made by most of these
writers to interpret the verses as they convey sense and also
to suggest the underlying import intended to be conveyed by
Āṇṭāl. Raṅgārāmāṇuṇjasvāmin, who wrote commentaries on
the ten principal Upaniṣads, composed his exposition of each
verse of Āṇṭāl in Sanskrit. The commentaries of Periya
Parakālesvāmin and Raṅganāthasvāmin are very useful as
they are written on the śastraic lines, conveying the actual
meaning of each word and discussing the sense and import of
it in the context. The commentary refers to the explanations
of several early exponents which were not however recorded
in the form of works of these writers. The explanations of
Kiṭāmī Āccān, Piḷḷān, Tirumalai Nampi, Enkaiḷālvān

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146. Introduction to Saṅkalpasūryodhaya p. 36.
147. ibid. p. 37.
148. Periya Parakālasvāmin’s commentary on Tiruppāvai, p. 32.
149. ibid. p. 32.
151. ibid. p. 62.
Ālavantar,\textsuperscript{152} Empir,\textsuperscript{158} and Emperumānār\textsuperscript{154} have found places in it. There are also certain anecdotes referred to in the commentary.\textsuperscript{155}

Periya Parakālasvāmin achieved distinction like Periyavāccān Pillai in commenting on all the four thousand verses of the \textit{Nalayiram}. Ālakiyamaṇṭāḷajiyar wrote a \textit{svāpadeśa} commentary on the \textit{Tiruppāvai} on which Nampillai is said to have commented in a work which is also called Īḻu. Nāṉcīyar's commentary on the \textit{Tiruppaḷḷi Eḻucci} is available. \textit{Amalanāṭipirān} has a commentary by Ālakiyamaṇṭāḷap-perumāl Nayānar, the younger brother of Pillai Lokācāryar. Nālūr Pillai the disciple of Īyuvṇi Padmanābha, wrote commentaries on the compositions of Periyāḻvār and Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār.

Apart from these some other attempts were made to expound and interpret the \textit{Tiruvāymoḻi} and one such attempt was made by a group of people who are referred to by Periyavāccān Pillai and Vaṭakkut-tiruvitip-pillai as Tamilians.\textsuperscript{156} Perhaps, such persons depended more on the Tamil classical literature for offering their interpretations. Rejection of such interpretations perhaps shows that they did not have the traditional authority of Vaiṣṇavism for interpreting the \textit{Tiruvāymoḻi} which had become then raised to the rank of the \textit{Veda}. Nāṉcīyar took objection to such interpretations.\textsuperscript{157} The verse 8.2: 2 means that the bride is skilful to proceed to God with a view to get something from Him but she could not get it. The Tamil scholar remarked here that what the bride means here is that the statement that God would grant what all the devotees want to get from Him is only true as far as the statement is made. It has failed to produce the effect in

\textsuperscript{152} ibid. p. 189.
\textsuperscript{153} ibid. p. 241.
\textsuperscript{154} ibid. p. 241.
\textsuperscript{155} ibid. pp. 113, 203
\textsuperscript{156} \textit{Twenty-four Thousand} and \textit{Thirty-six Thousand} on T.V.M. 1.6: 2; 2.1: 5; 4.6: 2; 3.9: 7, 9; 4.6: 2, 5; 4.10; 5.4: 6; 7; 5.4: 7, 7.5: 8; 7.7: 2.
\textsuperscript{157} Vide: \textit{Twenty-four Thousand} on T.V.M. 7.7v.6.
her case. In verse 9.6: 6, the Āḻvār says that Kṛṣṇa's exploits or deeds would be honest and sincere to him. The word 'cem' means straightforward. The Tamil scholar however took this in the sense of helpful.

The text of the Tiruvāyulī and the commentaries on it have become popular and are held sacred for spiritual study directly under the preceptor. This literature alone has won the enviable position of being called Bagavad-vaśayam. The knowledge of this brought in the name Udbhayavedānta for one who had already studied Rāmānuja's Śrībhāṣya with commentaries on it.

During the period of the commentator Nampiḷḷai, an interesting feature began to mark the writing of the commentaries. Some of the compositions of the Āḻvārs seemed to convey an inner sense in addition to the direct one which is available at their first reading. The Āḻvār expressed his views and representations in the garb of another person. For instance the Āḻvār addresses the Lord as a bride would do to her lover, as a mother to the daughter and as a lady-friend to a lady who is in love with the man of her choice. In all such cases, there is the primary sense available for such passages. Since the Āḻvār is the person conveying his views, it cannot be admitted that he actually intends to convey this sense, since he is neither a woman in love, nor a mother or a lady-friend. There must be some other inner sense which is suggested. The commentators therefore grouped in such cases the utterances of the Āḻvār as svāpadeśa and anyāpadeśa. The former means utterance of one's own intention and the latter his own through that of another. That is, the former is conveyed by the Āḻvār himself while the latter is done through some one else. Thus there is the svāpadeśa commentary for the Tiruviruttam of Nammāḻvār by Āḻakiya maṇavāla-jīyār. Similarly, Āṇṭāl's Tiruppāvai has the outer garb of

158. Itu on T.V.M. 8.2: 2.
taking bath in the early hours of the morning and worshipping the Lord. But this is only the anyāpadeśa in sense for by svāpadeśa Āntāḷ intends to gather the devotees together and render service to God in congregation.
CONCLUSION

The Āḻvārs prefer to deal with the personal aspects of the deity. The various currents of the Viṣṇu cult got reconciled in their compositions. The traditional dates of these saints are not acceptable in the face of literary, epigraphical and other evidences to the contrary. The concept of God as Śrīyāḥpati owes its development entirely to the compositions of the Āḻvārs. Bridal mysticism gives a unique stamp to the devotional aspects of the teachings of the Āḻvārs. The Vedic ordinances were developed into the concept of kaiṅkarya, and thus the cult of the Āḻvārs both retained and acquired religious sanctity. Through the paths of devotion and self-surrender God is brought close to mankind giving relief to the suffering humanity, otherwise at sea without any hope of protection. The concept of the shrines as ‘pāṭal perṟa talaṅkal’ gained supreme significance for daily visits of the devotees to offer their service. More than the spirit of doing kaiṅkarya the principle of offering blessings to God (maṅgalāsasana) become the moving force for the visit of the spiritually great to such shrines. A bold step was taken by the Āḻvārs in using the Tamil language for conveying the Vedic and religious truths and glorifying the deity. The devotional element reached the stage of perfection in the Āḻvārs’ compositions to such a degree as to become the source for influencing the rise of many
theistic schools of Vaiṣṇavism through the length and breadth of India.
CONCLUSION

The aspects of religion and philosophy in the compositions of the Āḻvārs which are dealt with in the preceding chapters may now be reviewed with reference to some important features that characterise Vaiṣṇavism in the post-Āḻvār period. That the growth of Vaiṣṇavism at this period is mainly due to the compositions of the Āḻvārs needs no exaggeration. The chief features of this religion, though traceable to the epics and Purāṇas in the pre-Āḻvār period, assumed a full and orderly development as a result of the influence exerted by the Nālāyira Divya Prabandham on the leading exponents of this religion. The impact of the teachings of the Āḻvārs on the Viṣiṣṭādvaīta Vedānta school has been immense that from Yāmuna, whose works represent the earliest ones now available, the basic doctrines of the Āḻvārs' compositions got incorporated into tenets of this school of Vedānta as they were then handed down from earlier expositions such as Drāmiḍa, Taṅka and others. Thereafter the Viṣiṣṭādvaīta Vedānta became a pronouncedly theistic school of Vaiṣṇavite philosophy and religion. The synthesis of the two became complete at the hands of Rāmānuja whose followers enriched what their master had taught them, by their valuable literary contributions.

The fundamental tenets such as belief in a personal deity who is the creator and protector of the world, in the Divine Grace which alone saves the living beings from distress and in God Who becomes the object of devotion are common to many theistic religions of India and also those of foreign origin. Several streams of thought have been flowing from time immemorial. Some of them are traceable to the Vedic sources. Some are recorded in the epics and Purāṇas while others are dealt with in the Āgamas. There were also
versions of anecdotes and incidents in the ancient Tamil literature which were different from those recorded in the Sanskrit sources or which deviated from them. In the case of some religious beliefs of India, only one of these courses of thought formed the basis for the development of a particular faith, the other courses were availed of for support and interpretation of that faith.

The Vaiṣṇavite school of religious thought is found to have been the result of a reconciliation effected between the various currents of doctrines taken from all the sources mentioned above. 'The ideas of God as conveyed by the words 'brahman', 'viṣṇu' 'nārāyaṇa', 'vāsudeva', and bhagavān' in these sources got coalesced to yield the concept of Godhead which on grounds of theology and philosophy proved itself to be acceptable to the exponents of this theistic school of Vaiṣṇavism. In this context, a reference is required to be made to the question of the period of the Āḻvārs. The tradition, as recorded in the Guruparamparās, place most of the Āḻvārs in the period ranging from 4200 B.C. to 2702 B.C. 1 Almost all these Āḻvārs refer to Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His exploits both as a child and as a warrior who took part in the war between the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas. 2 From the evidences which are available in the Mahābhārata, it is found that Kṛṣṇa left His mortal coil on the day when the Kaliyuga started. 3 This was in 3101 B.C. Poykaiyāḻvār, Pūtattāḻvār and Pēyāḻvār, Tirumālicaiyāḻvār and Maturakaviyāḻvār lived before this date. Nammāḻvār was born on the forty-third day after Kaliyuga started. To suggest that the Āḻvārs could not have had direct vision of Kṛṣṇa's exploits and that they had to learn about them from the Mahābhārata and other source books on Kṛṣṇa's activities is sheer impudence. The incidents which are found recorded in the Purāṇas are mentioned and described by the Āḻvārs, as if they were eye witnesses of

1. Vide. Appendix VII.
2. cf. M. Tv. 8, 11, 18, 23, 24, 54, 83, 87; I. Tv. 10; 15, 19, 92; Mū. Tv; 28, 41, 51, 54, 92; Nan. Tv. 33, 57; Tc. V. 19, 31, 37, 38, 53, 71, 107. K.C. I. T.V.M. 5.10; 6.4; Perum. Tm. 6, 7; Periyāḻ. Tm. 1.1, 2.9; 3.5; 3.6 etc.
such acts. Reason demands a critical view of this matter. In Vyāsa or Parāśara could predict the royal dynasties which could have come into being far later, it would not be preposterous to suggest that the Āḷvārs had a provision of the doings of Kṛṣṇa at a period posterior to theirs. But the admission of an explanation of this kind would throw chronology out of gear. An impartial study requires the recognition that certain events must precede their being made known to people. All the Purāṇas are attributed to Vyāsa who was at least their compiler. Vyāsa’s period having been contemporaneous with that of Kṛṣṇa, a considerate view about the probable date for the release of the Purāṇas could have been about 3042 B.C. It would be prudent to admit that about or after this date, the stories of Kṛṣṇa became well known to such an extent that those who listened to the recitation of the Āḷvārs’ compositions could have ready understanding of the references to Kṛṣṇa’s exploits contained in them without any need for the narration of the anecdote in the context. Admission of this explanation would not show that Kulacakaraḻvār and Periyāḻvār were fully conversant with the stories of Kṛṣṇa, if they are admitted to have lived at a period which tradition fixes for them. It is therefore difficult to agree with these traditional dates for the Āḷvārs mentioned above. -Āṇṭāl, Tōntaraḻip-Ṇoṭiyāḻvār, TirupaṆāḻvār and Tirumanakaiyāḻvār are stated in the Guruparamparās to have lived after 3000 B.C. One need not intend to subscribe to the traditional accounts of the dates mainly to affect their sacrosanctity. There are overwhelming evidences which militate against the acceptance of these traditional dates. It is idle to look down upon these evidences which are supported by linguistic, literary, epigraphical and historical

5. V.P. 4.24: 34. A similar prediction is said to have made by Nārada about the descendents of Karikāl Cēla (Vide: Kaliṅkattup-paraṇi, Ch. 8).
6. Vyāsa was present when the Mahābhārata was practically released to the Public by way of exposition on the occasion of the sacrifice which was performed by Janamējaya. The latter’s coronation took place in 3042 B.C. of M.Bh, Adi, 49: 17.
facts. Till evidences to the contrary are to be obtained, the dates between 700 and 850 A.D. appear to be acceptable.

Regarding the Godhead it must be noted that the Ālvars follow generally the account given in the Purāṇas. Either Viṣṇu is treated as the Supreme Deity amidst the hosts of gods or as one among the Trinity constituted by the other two Brahmā and Śiva and yet holding the supreme place over the other two. At the same time, there are references to show that according to the Ālvars, Viṣṇu is not merely of the form of the other deities but is superior to the Trinity composed of Brahmā, Śiva and Indra. This is in accordance with the Upaniṣadic passage which has been of late changed in its reading to provide a room for Viṣṇu (called Hari) here in order that Viṣṇu could be on a par with the three deities Brahmā, Śiva and Indra. The earliest reading seems to have been without the word 'hari' and receives support for its authenticity from the citation of this Upaniṣadic passage by Tirukkōṇeri Tāsyai in her Tiruvāyvōţi Vācakamālai.

Another significant contribution which the compositions of the Ālvars have made is that the Lord is Śrīyaḥpati and not mere Viṣṇu or Nārāyaṇa. This concept of Godhead which is referred to in the Viṣṇu-purāṇa had given rise to the name 'Śrīnivāsa' as applicable to Viṣṇu. In fact, Rāmānuja used for the first time in the field of Viṣṭādvaita philosophy the word 'śrīnivāsa' as an epithet of Brahma. This name Śrīnivāsa has become all too common a name for the Lord at Tirumalai where He was known as the Lord of Vēṅkaṭam

7. Vde. Section III, Chapter IX of this thesis where a detailed discussion of this matter will be found.
12. M.Tv. 67; I.Tv. 52; Mū. Tv. 16; Nan. Tv. 53; Peri. Tm. 4:5: 5.
13. V.P. 1:18: 17 and 35.
14. Śrī Bhāṣya, maṅgalaśloka 1.
before the period of Rāmānuja. The Ālvārs refer to Him as ‘Tirunāl’;¹⁵ ‘Tiruvālmārpan’¹⁶ etc.

Bridal mysticism is a remarkable trait enlivening the devotional spirit of the Ālvārs. The relation of the bride and lover (nāyaka–nāyaki bhāva) which subsists between a devotee and God is nothing new to the writers of lyrics of the religious type. But it appears that before the period of the Ālvārs this aspect of devotion did not get the treatment which it should have had. The sublimation of the love of men for women and vice versa, complete removal of carnality from the domain of sexual references and man transforming himself into a woman for purposes of devotional love are the marks that characterise the poems of the Ālvārs¹⁷ as some of the outstanding devotional lyrics, perhaps the only ones of its kind to influence the writing of similar lyrics in other languages during the post-Rāmānuja period. It is true that ‘Ākam’ type of poetry exerted some influence on the Ālvārs, but the contribution of the Ālvārs to this kind of poetry and the various modes adopted by them to express the surging love according to the occasions and situations are so unique and charming that it seems as though the Ālvārs had themselves invented this mode of treating divine love. There were poets in a large number who had successfully delineated this love on the material plane. They would not have felt any difficulty to depict this love, as they were dealing with love with which both the writers and readers or spectators as the case may be were quite familiar. On the other hand, the Divine Person, with no trace of blemish of any kind, presents Himself enchantingly to the Ālvār who was much aware of carnality like any other mortal but who has to banish it and at the same time not speak in a language that is foreign to erotic love. To transform himself into a woman at the mental level and have the lust aroused and controlled puri-

15. M.Tv. 8, 64; 1.Tv. 30, 32; Mu. Tv. 30, 93: P. Tv. 10, 69 etc.
16 Peri. Tm. 7.6: 3.
17. cf. I feel a creeping sense come over me
    when I utter the name of my beloved.
    I feel a delicate movement
    running through my skin and bones

fying it of carnality is something which lies beyond the ability of even a scholar who is endowed with much discretion. The Āḻvār, however, succeeded in depicting their bridal love for the Lover, the Lord, basing it on the external stature of the Lord and the subdued but animated figure of the woman. This method of delineation has deeper moorings. The psychological aspects of the woman are then aroused in the Āḻvār’s mind. They operate at the conscious level when acted upon by the handsome and bewitching beauty of the arcā form of the Lord. The Āḻvār then is only a bride in the physiological frame of man. He is then totally unaware of his masculinity and treats the Lord as her lord and pours out her heart to him. God-experience which is then had is presented by the Āḻvār in a language with which he is quite familiar and which could be easily understood by others.

The concept of ‘maṭalūrtal’ is not known to the Sanskrit writers, but Tirumāṅkaiyāḻvār speaks of the approach of the Sanskrit writers to this aspect of love-representation. The motif of ‘maṭalūrtal’ is however known to Sanskrit writers as also the adventurous and courageous approach by woman to take the initiative in achieving their purpose is likewise well-known to them as shown by this Āḻvār through numerous instances from the ancient sources. ‘Maṭalūrtāl’ is only a public display of one’s unrequited love which could be adopted by women also. This touch of erotic element purified and sanctified by the element of devotion gives a unique stamp to the compositions of the Āḻvārs, particularly Nammāḻvār’s. The method of sending a message to the Lover is also adopted by Āṉṭāḷ and Nammāḻvār adding variety to the treatment of devotion. Besides, the parental affection and endearment evidenced in the poems of Periyāḻvār and Kulacakarāḻvār have few parallels elsewhere to outshine them.

Devotion, which is the name of one of the various aspects of affection and endearment subsisting between two persons, takes several shapes under the influence of awe and wonder, filial attachment, parental endearment, friendly affection and love of a bride for a man and vice-versa. The literature before the period of the Āḻvārs contains a vivid de-
piction of all these features of devotion. The compositions of the Āḻvārs also depict all these but they have outshone the earlier sources by the singularly superb treatment given in them of the filial, parental and bridal features of love. Even there, the bridal one gets the delicate treatment. While there is a twofold course for the flow of love, that is from the Lover to the Beloved and from the Beloved to the Lover and therefore the treatment of devotion on both these courses could be justified, most of the mystical religions preferred the devotional approach from the aspect of the bride. Tenderness, charm, delicacy and such other feminine traits of love could be found in God but God is very powerful, omniscient and formidable and hence manly traits could be better associated with Him. The ulterior purpose which is sought by being in love or devoted to God is reunion of the aspirant who is the self with God. To achieve this end, the womanly approach is more suited to the self which is weak and ignorant. The manly approach, which is marked by the fatherly affection, is apt when God is treated as a son who becomes the object of all the endearment and affection of the father.

The doctrine of worship (pūja) taking the form of kain-karya is not peculiar to those who adopt the path of self-surrender nor is so the concept of ṣeṣāṭva or service to the ācarya or bhakta. All these have been from early times the aspects of religious experience particularly that of worship which forms part of bhakti. In the post-Ṛāmānuja period of Vaiṣṇavism these aspects gained more importance as a result of the preaching of the doctrines of the Āḻvārs and come to be closely associated with the path of self-surrender. Both the Āḻvārs and Ṛāmānuja enjoin these practices mainly with service to God, that is worship.

18. The Āḻvārs' treatment of these features might have served as a source of inspiration and of the best models to adapt them for the treatment of these features and few others, by Bārathi in his poem 'Kāṇṇaṇ Paṭṭu'.
20. Perum. Tm. 9.
21. cf. Peri. Tm. 6.3: 2; Rāmānuja: Saranāgatigadya—last varse.
It would have been preposterous, if the Āṉars had decried openly the performance of the sacred rites which are enjoined by the Vedas and Kalpasūtras. A clever way of reconciling the performance of the Vedic rites with the duties which a devotee could discharge to his deity was envisaged in the Purāṇas and epics. It was in the Bhagavad-gītā that statements are found enjoining the performance of the duties without the entertainment of the desire to get the rewards of them. According to the Purāṇas an act of devotion came to be viewed as a religious rite (karma) which could conveniently take the place of Vedic rite. The Gītā idea of renouncing the result of the acts gets promoted when it is considered that God being supreme, there is no need for the doer to saddle himself with the responsibility of getting the results of his deeds. So any act of devotion came to be looked upon as sevā or kāṅkāryā to the Lord, which was to be done to please Him who would surely bestow on his devotee the fruit of it according to His own liking. Moreover, the Vedic deity remains invisible when invoked on occasions of the ritualistic performances and so there will always be the apprehension regarding the getting of the result when the offering is not made personally to the deity. Here, however, there is God Himself in arcā form whom it is easy to propitiate in His very presence. This idea of service involves also the relation of master and servant between God and man. Fully alive to the limitations imposed on him and being conscious of his forlornness and incapacity to do anything by himself, the devotee chooses to do what the Lord bids him to do. He is ever ready to be the servant of God and this is the purpose and goal of life. This service is known as kāṅkārya or aṭimai to do which even other gods feel the sense of rivalry and competition. The spirit of service could be further extended to the devotees of God who are to be served by another devotee. In

23. Kūr. P. 2. 18
24. cf. "The urge of life is to serve Thee alone,
   For the God. Conscious a moment without
   Thee is verily a sin".
a sense, this attitude seeks to eliminate the rather wide gap that separates man from man socially and also materially.

_Kaiṅkaryā_ or rendering service to the deity in a shrine has become the chief trait that governs the life of a Vaiṣṇa-vite. The development of this trait has been there even before the period of the Āḻvārs in some form. It was definitely in relation to the life of an individual who is devoted to his Lord. It is the compositions of the Āḻvārs that gave a definite shape to this concept in favour of rendering service to the deity in a shrine. The words 'neṭumāṛku aṭīmai'²⁵ show that service is to be rendered to Viṣṇu. That service is to be rendered to the Lord at the Tirumalai Hills is actually mentioned by Nammāḻvār.²⁶ This makes it clear that the _arca_ form is to be preferred for rendering service. This explains why Rāmānuja refers to himself as having been directed by the Lord at ŚrīRaṅgam to stay there comfortably.²⁷ References to the Yādavāḍī²⁸ and others also support this interpretation of worship. Again, this explains why Yāmuna was taken to Śrī Raṅgam by Maṇakkāl Nampi, Rāmānuja and Tirumalai Nampi rendered service at Kāñci and Tirumalai respectively, Rāmānuja had his pontifical seat at ŚrīRaṅgam, Vedāṇṭa Deśika and Maṇavāḷamāmuni spent most of their time at Śrī Raṅgam. It is in the light of this concept of _kaiṅkaryā_ that gave rise to the institution of group of enlightened people as Ācārya Puruṣas for rendering service in the temples and of persons well trained in the _Vedas_ and _Prabandhams_ as part of their _kaiṅkaryā_ in such shrines. In and around each shrine, there arose a band of workers who included the priests, cooks, pipers and others, all of them having, for their life’s purpose, only service to the Lord. This principle for rendering service came to be applied to the Āḻvārs and Ācāryas in places where pontifical seats are established and also in the houses where the Ācāryas dwell. The development and prevalence of this concept, as practised, is undeniably due to the Āḻvārs’ compositions.

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²⁶ ibid. 3.3.
²⁷ _Śaraṇāgati*gadya*.
²⁸ G.P. p. 190.
The bhagavata cult which has been in existence from very early times, even before the period of the Ālvaṛs, got a fillip under the inspiration of the teachings of the Ālvaṛs. The basis for this attitude is not difficult to explain. Since God is dear to the devotee, God’s men too should be equally dear. They owe respect at the hand of the devotee being related through devotion to God Whom they worship. If God could not be offended on moral grounds, God’s men too ought not to be offended. Bhakti, as the path of salvation, is a moving force for bringing God’s men for congregational prayers 28

Whether the Ālvaṛs used the word ‘avar’, ‘kātal’ or ‘ārupu’, it is very clear that they were much drawn to the Supreme Person by the spirit of devotion.29 It is true that they frequently refer to this path and speak of the act of meditation 31 as a sure method of God-realization. Tirumāḷicaiyālvaṛ and Nammālvaṛ did adopt this means. However, the Ālvaṛs do not appear to have been in favour of practising devotion in all its eight limbs.32 Control of the sense-organs33 relying upon God as the sole refuge and doing service to God through thought, word and deed appear to have been preached by the Ālvaṛs. Though these could not be held to form part of path of devotion as preached by the Upanisads through the Brahmā-vidyas, they are yet part of the act of devotion which any soul could adopt when it is aroused to God’s presence and gets attracted to Him. This attraction interprets effectively that the bond connecting that soul and God is nothing but the bond of devotion.

The path of self-surrender which is treated as an independent means of mokṣa and which preserves the essential features of bhakti, is well expounded in the Pāñcarātra Āgamas

29 cf. “I pray for Thy Love and for the Love of Him who loves Thee”
- Love of God, p. 20.
30. Section IV, Chapter XVIII of this thesis deals with this matter.
31. Nāṅ. Tv. 61; Mu. Tv. 79,
32. Peri. Tm. 3.2; Nāṅ. Tv. 13.
33. cf. Peri. Tm. 5.6: 9.
and the Bhagavad-gītā. The words used in this connection are ‘niśaśa’ which means placing one’s burden at the Feet of the Lord, ‘prapatti’ conveyed by the verbal forms such as ‘prapādye’ which really means proceeding and going and ‘saraṇa’ which means house and protector. Entrusting something to another or keeping it as a deposit is the general sense conveyed by the words ‘niśaśa’ and ‘nikṣepa’. Any one who requires protection or safety from some source of insecurity would naturally proceed to a place of refuge (saraṇam) or seek refuge under a protector (saraṇam). Though the Bhagavad-gītā contains references to these words, it is only the Carama-sloka that could be held to convey the idea of prapatti. It is highly difficult to aver that the Bhagavad-gītā preaches primarily the path of prapatti. In fact, it preaches the path of bhakti in clear terms. The Carama-sloka could as well be taken to imply the position of prapatti within the framework of bhakti. The verse of Nammāḻvār means that the Āḻvār had sought shelter under the Feet of the Lord of Tiruvēṅkaṭam. This is a clear proof that prapatti was adopted as the means by the Āḻvār and so he is declared to be at the head of all people who seek shelter under God (prapanna janakūṭastha). The traditional interpretation of this doctrine through the Carama-sloka and the Tiruvāyumoḻi of Nammāḻvār was handed down to Rāmānuja by Tirumāḻalaiyāntān. In this context, it is necessary to refer to a criticism on the interpretation of the second decade of the first centum of the Tiruvāyumoḻi. According to a line of interpretation, Yāmuna interpreted this decade as conveying the essence of prapatti. Rāmānuja too held this view before he wrote the Śrī Bhāṣya, but after writing it, he was in favour of bhakti as the import of this decade. Naṅeḻvar and Vaṭākkut–tiruvitip–pillai adopt this line and the latter writer mentions Empēr as having given his assent to this interpretation. Curiously enough, Pillāṉ, the spiritual son of Rāmānuja and the first commentator of Tiruvāyumoḻi which he

35. ibid. 18: 66.
36. ibid. 9 and 18.
37. T.V.M. 6.10.
38. Thirty-six Thousand on T.V.M., 1.2.
interpreted according to the instruction of Rāmānuja, mentions prapatti (bhāra-nyāsa) as the import. This is very delicate point on which criticism could not be offered except with great caution.

The second decad of the first centum begins thus: "Renounce all things. After doing so, you offer your souls to Him Who is the master of mokṣa". The Āḻvār then asks the selves to give up all thoughts of ahaṅkāra and mamokāra (the feelings of 'I' and 'Mine') and to have no connection with the world. The entire existence is under His control. All the activities, mental, verbal and physical, should be directed towards Him for His service: His Feet which are the only support of the selves should be held firmly. Giving up the ideas of possession and egoism and reaching or holding to the Feet of the Lord are acts which could be practised also by those who are devoted to God and who adopt the path of devotion. The doctrine of self-surrender has, for its fundamental concept and trait, the placing of one's own self at God, Who is the refuge. The basis for this act of self-surrender lies in the realization by the self that it cannot take care of itself and that God alone, Who is its master, can give protection. These are conveyed by words such as 'I reach or proceed to shelter (saraṇam prapādye). The line 'offer your selves unto Him' is a clear indication of the act of self-surrender which the Āḻvār asks people to adopt. The other contingent aspects of this doctrine are clearly conveyed in this decad. In a similar strain, the Āḻvār mentions his act of self-surrender in another line: 'I do not have any refuge. I take refuge under Thy Feet'. The word taṭiyēn is used significantly conveying the sense that he is a servant of Him Who is the Lord of the three worlds and Who governs them.

40. T.V.M., 1.2: 1.
41. Ibid. 1.2: 3.
42. Ibid. 1.2: 7.
43. Ibid. 1.2: 8.
44. Ibid. 1.2: 10.
45. Ibid. 1.2: 1.
46. Ibid. 6.10: 10.
Apart from references contained in the contemporaries of Naṣeṣiyar and others to the effect that Rāmānuja revised his opinion regarding the import of this decad in favour of the path of devotion, what remains inexplicable is the motive for this revision of opinion. It is true that there are far more numerous evidences in favour of the path of devotion than for the path of self-surrender. If Rāmānuja felt that Vedānta doctrines preach and uphold the path of devotion, it must be admitted that there is justification for it. This must have been Rāmānuja’s view while commenting on the Brahma-sūtras in the ŚrīBhāṣya. According to the Gupuparamparā, Rāmānuja was taught by Tirumālaiyāntān that the import of the second decad of the first centum of the Tiruvāymoṭi was in favour of adopting the path of self-surrender. This was the traditional view handed down from Yāmuna. As far as his discourses of the Tiruvāymoṭi were concerned, Rāmānuja should have taught his disciples only the doctrine of prapatti as the import of this decad. When he directed his disciple Pillān to write a commentary on the Tiruvāymoṭi, he must have had confidence that Pillān would be writing in accordance with what he was taught by him. Rāmānuja did approve of this commentary Ārāyirap-paṭi and commanded his disciples to look upon Pillān as the master of both Vedāntas.47 If Pillān’s mentioning prapatti as the import of this decad were not traditionally correct or were contrary to his own opinion, Rāmānuja would not have given recognition to this commentary or would have at least forced Pillān to change the version in favour of bhakti. What really could have happened seems to be an incorrect understanding of the situation. That the Tiruvāymoṭi preferred to enjoin the path of self-surrender is to be admitted without reservation, but it would be presumptuous on the part of Rāmānuja to attribute this concept directly to the Vedānta tradition as propounded by the Brahma-sūtras and Upaniṣads, particularly when he strained every nerve to advocate in favour of the doctrine of devotion being not in any way different from that of knowledge. The traditions in the two Vedāntas were thus slightly different. Pillān had given thus the import of the decad as it was taught by Rāmānuja.

47. Yatirāja-vatbhavam, 108.
He must have been fully aware of the difference in Rāmānuja's approach. Whether Empār held a converse view as stated by Naṅciyar cannot be verified. The difference in the two approaches was not probably realised. Naṅciyar mentions that the import of the decad is in favour of devotion and also attributes this view to Rāmānuja and Empār intending to cite them for his support. Besides, Naṅciyar and his followers could not also explain what made Rāmānuja revise his opinion and thus made him preach against the tradition handed down to him from Yāmuna. In fact, there is no contradiction between the import of this decad and the contents of the Śrī Bhāṣya. From this it does not follow that Naṅciyar and his followers were against the spirit of the preachings of the Ālvārs. That the Ālvārs taught the path of self-surrender as the only means of salvation is readily admitted by both the lines of teachers who trace their descent from Rāmānuja.

It is really interesting in this context to note that Rāmānuja did not anywhere in his works mention that prapatti is an independent means of mokṣa. He makes references frequently to the path of devotion. In one context⁴⁸ he mentions that the act of self-surrender is the means to win God over to the side of the devotees. It is not stated here that it is the direct means of mokṣa. However, the Gadya-traya and the Śarapāṇagati-gadya in particular, show that Rāmānuja adopted prapatti as the means. Similarly it could be said, of course with some reservation, that the Ālvārs preached mainly bhakti as the method of reaching God but referred to prapatti far more frequently than Rāmānuja did in his works. What Rāmānuja taught through his works and practice became incorporated in the commentary of Piḷḷān. The ubhaya-vedānta concept to which Andhirapūraṇa⁴⁹ refers in a way should have formed the main tenet of the Vaishnavite school from the time of Piḷḷān with the result that prapatti assumed more significance than before. After this period, it came to be treated as an independent means. Objections should have been raised

⁴⁸  Śrī Bhāṣya on 1.4: 1.
⁴⁹  Yatrāja-vaibhavam, 1.
for this status offered to *prapatti*, as it is known from the *Niksāparakṣā* which was written by Vedānta Desika to vindicate the validity of the doctrine of *prapatti*.

If the Āḻvārs make frequent references to the path of self-surrender, it may be taken that it is devotion that made them seek refuge when they were forlorn unable to bear the sufferings of separation from Him. These sufferings prove only that it is devotion which the soul has for God that makes it feel the separation from Him keen and making it miserable. The helpless self can do nothing to overcome it. The only thing which it can do is to seek shelter under God. In this sense alone, the Āḻvārs seem to have used the words ‘*tiruvatī aṭātal*’. 50 There is nothing wrong if this is taken to mean the doctrine of self-surrender which is supported by devotion. To suggest that the Āḻvārs had their *prapatti* as the only method, giving up or without reference to devotion is too much straining the issue. Thus devotion seems to have entered into the doctrine of self-surrender at least as its main ingredient. It is only then that the concept of *bhāgavata* worship could be explained as meaningful.

The principle of *Arthapaṇcaka* may also apply to the path of devotion, although the later writers adopt it in support of the path of *prapatti*. Some of the exponents in the post-Rāmānuja period apply this principle to the *Tiruvāymoḻi* and seek to show that this work of Nammāḻvār is in reality an exposition of this principle. 51

In the state of release a liberated soul could choose any one pattern of existence such as identity of abode (*sālokṣya*), proximity (*sāmipya*), similarity of form (*sārūpya*) and intimate union (*sāyujya*) and can enjoy all the perfections of Vaikunṭha. To have the appearance of the Lord and to be ever near Him are to be desired by a self. Immense delight could be derived by these states. However, the Āḻvārs preferred to have only *sāyujja*, that is, close communion, a state which need not be

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distributed thereafter. Feeling of oneness with God and the awareness that he is part of Him would give greater delight to the self who adopts the sāyujya aspect of existence.

The temples which were already reputed during the period of the Ālvārs were visited by these saints who sang in praise of the deities there. While Nammālvār sang for the most part of the shrines situated in the Tirunelveli District and the Southern part of the Kerala State, Tirumāṅkaiyālvār sang in particular the deities in and around his native place in Tirunakari in the Thaṅjavūr District not to speak of the innumerable shrines in the whole of India which he alone visited. But for these two Ālvārs, most of the shrines would have passed into obscurity. Tiruvāraṅkam, Tirumalai and Tirumāḷiruṅcōlai are the three important shrines which were popular at the time of the Ālvārs and were visited by most among them. Subsequent to the period of the Ālvārs and probably after Nāṭhamuni's arrangement for the recitation of the compositions of the Ālvārs, a shrine in whose honour an Ālvār composed at least a verse came to be held in greater respect in comparison to the one which did not receive such an attention from the Ālvārs. Such shrines came to be designated as 'pātal perṟa talaṅkal' (shrines celebrated by the hymns of the Ālvārs). One hundred and eight holy shrines are brought under this head. It is quite possible that Nāṭhamuni was responsible for the formulation of this idea of treating a shrine as 'pātal perṟa talam' although there is no means of verifying it. This suggestion could be admitted in view of the fact that Śrī Raṅgam became the seat of the Vaiṣṇavite Ācāryas since his time. It is perhaps during the period of Rāmānuja that the important shrines got enumerated in the order of Śrī Raṅgam, Tirumalai and Kāṅcipuram. The

52. Jitānte Śotra 2: 36.
53. Appendix V gives the list of shrines exclusively sung by one Ālvār only.
54. The list of such shrines start with Śrī Raṅgam and end with Paramapadam. They are grouped according to the regions where they are situated. (Vide the list contained in Śrī P. Krishnamācharyar's edition). cf. Nūṟṟṟṭuṭ-tiruppattī Antāṭi of Pillai-pērumāḷ Ayyengar.
first one is also known simply as kōyil and its presence at the head should have been due to the largest number of verses sung by the Ālvārs on the presiding deity there. The Tirumalai comes next. Kaṅcipuram is also known as Perumālkōyil in order to distinguish it from the Śiva Kaṁci, with its innumerable temples of Śiva. How Kaṁci or Perumālkōyil came to occupy the third place is not known. According to the general understanding, the temple at Tirukkacci has only two verses from Pūtattālvār.\(^{55}\) Nammālvār who mentions only the three shrines Tiruvaramakam,\(^{56}\) Tirumalai\(^{57}\) and Tiruvēkā (at Kaṁci),\(^{58}\) did not take note of this temple. To some scholars the first decade of the first century of Nammālvar’s Tiruvāymoli is in honour of the deity at Tirukkacci.\(^{59}\) This contention is perhaps intended to justify the mentioning of Tirukkacci or Perumālkōyil as the third in the list. The shrine at Melkote known as Yādavādri in the Karnātaka State grew in importance after Rāmānuja and is generally enumerated as the fourth shrine after Perumālkōyil. There are of course temples as in Mannārgudi, Maturāntakam, Śrīmuṣṇam and other places which are important in their own way, but are not known by the designation ‘pāṭal pedra talaṅka’.

It was Rāmānuja that created a new kind of atmosphere in and around the temple where the Ālvārs and the singing of their compositions came to attain much importance. This was done in the first instance at Śrī Raṅgam and was perhaps adopted by others in other shrines. The recitation of the whole or part of Nālāytram has become obligatory in all shrines dedicated to Viṣṇu and situated at least in the Tamil Nadu and at Tirumalai, Ahōbilam, Badrācalam, Nellore, Maṅgalagiri and others in the Andhra State and also at Yādavādri at Melkote and other places in the Karnātaka State.

\(^{55}\) I Tv. 95 96. The word ‘kacci’ is taken to refer to only this shrine. cf. Nālāyira Divya Prabandham p. 286. (Ed.) by Mayilai Mātava Tāṣan (Madras. 1962).

\(^{56}\) T.V.R. 28.

\(^{57}\) ibid. 8, 10.

\(^{58}\) ibid. 26.

\(^{59}\) Vide: Candragiri Venkatesa’s commentary on Vedānta Desikā’s Drāmidopaniṣat-sāram verse, 5.
The act of *maṅgalāsāsanam* (celebration by hymns) which the Āḻvārs performed is in reality not exactly a prayer in a plaintive tone for the redressal of personal or human misery in general. Nor is it a glowing description of God's grandeur which very often defies expression. It is not also the narration of anecdotes or episodes which recount His exploits. The word *maṅgalāsāsanam* means hoping or wishing well, welfare or auspiciousness to another. Periyāḻvār stands at the head of those who could do this form of prayer. When he was taken on the elephant through the streets of Madurai, there appeared the Lord before him. He did not at once begin to praise Him, but wished that the Lord's presence should continue to flourish for hundred of years. He wishes at first that there shall be no separation between God and His devotees. The true spirit of an ideal religion or religious experience cannot be anything other than this aspect. What has happened is reunion with or coming together of God and His men. This is the ideal of religious experience. This communion shall never get disbanded. The prayer is therefore an ideal. Then the Āḻvār wishes for the welfare of Lakṣmī discus and conch, all of which show that the most Supreme Person shall have this *maṅgalāsāsanam*.\(^60\) Other Āḻvārs also do this.\(^61\)

Another factor that must be noted is that elders talk of doing *maṅgalāsāsanam* while they go to offer worship in the shrines. They do not go to fulfil any vow or observance as most of the shrine-goers do nowadays as in the case of Tirumalai, Shōliṅgar (Coḷasimhapuram) and others. The real spirit underlying these could be easily guessed. The sight of the Lord in a particular pose is extremely exhilarating. The Āḻvārs do not become haughty that they alone deserve to have that sight. They wonder as to how they alone were chosen and offer an explanation for this on the ground that their good deeds done in the past should have brought God's person before them. Such a sight they wish to last for all times un-

\(^{60}\) *Pallāntu*

\(^{61}\) Periyal. Tm 1.9: 5; TVM. 7.6: 11
tainted by worldly defects. Aṅṭāḷ remarks exquisitely that each limb, foot etc., of God deserves the mangalāsāsanam. The Lord Who has come down shall remain for the welfare of humanity.

A very bold step, which is never known in any religion, was taken only in Vaiṣṇavism and that is, rendering the principles of theistic faith which is found fully developed in the ancient sources into Tamil, a language which like the languages other than Sanskrit, was not envisaged to become as vehicle for conveying religious ideas. The entire matter that could be gathered from the sources down from the Vedas is retained in toto in these Tamil Prabandhams, as though testifying to their inheritance to the Vedic religion. The compositions of the Āḻvārś are not translations of the Vedas or Purāṇās nor are they the Tamil renderings of portions of the Vedic texts or anecdotes recorded in them. They are in the literal sense of the word representations of what could be described as the sum and substance of the theistic teachings available in the Sanskrit sources.

It was Vedānta Deśika that offered a convincing justification for the adoption of the Tamil language for purposes of religious and philosophical preachings. The essence of what is taught in the Vedas is presented by the Lord Himself through a language which all the inhabitants of the region occupied by Sage Agastya could easily adopt and understand. The substance of the Vedānta is more easily grasped when it is presented in the medium of Tamil. Both the Āḻvār’s presentation of the Vedic truths and principles and Vedānta Deśika’s support of this adoption could be taken as presaging the present day trend of adopting the regional or mother-tongue as a medium better suited for the purpose of learning. This is indeed a democratic element in the religious and philosophic sphere.

63. Guruparamparāsāra. p. 3.
64. Seventeen Cillaṟai Rahaśyaṅgal. p. 3.
The objections which were noted by Naṉeṉiyar and others regarding the adoption of a profane language for religious and devotional purposes, show that the reception which was accorded to the Divya Prabandham was not uniformly a favourable one. It is to build up a strong defence that Nāṇṭha-muni, Yāmuna and Rāmānuja sought to raise the compositions of the Āḷvārs to the status of a religious text. These compositions, at the time when Pīḷāṉ was directed by Rāmānuja to comment upon, were held to be sacred like the Vedas, in spite of the non-Sanskrit language in which they were composed. The followers of Rāmānuja maintained by all means at their disposal the holy nature of these compositions and went to the extent of arranging for the recitations of these both in temples and houses on occasions of worship. Not only did Vedānta Deśika defend and establish the obligatory recitation of these on the festive occasions in front of the deity but also recorded in a suggestive manner to the respect one should show for their reciters. Perhaps it was about this period that the Āgamas recommended the recitations of these hymns in praise of God composed in ‘bhāṣa’, a word which then meant a language other than Sanskrit.

The Lord Himself is described to have come down in descent for the sake of humanity. While He took ten main avatārās under the vibhava kind, He came down in a new kind of ten avatārās. Vedānta Deśika, who made this statement, sought to establish that the composers of the Nalāyiram were men of no mean merit. They were master-minds that came down with divine elements. This may perhaps point to a tradition which Vedānta Deśika was aware of during his time,

65. He took part in disputes with those who did not agree upon this and came out victorious and established the practice of reciting the Prabandhams on strong grounds (Vide: Introduction to the Saṅkalpasūryodaya. Part I. p.63).
68. Guruparamparāsāra, p. 3. There are actually twelve composers. Antāli is treated as part of Periyāḷvār and Maturakaviyāḷvār as part of Nammāḻvār.
or even if he should take credit for this description, there is justification for the worship of the Āḻvārs in temples and conducting festivals to them as are done for God. While God came down and displayed His greatness to His men who expressed their love, gratitude and admiration for His exploits, here the Āḻvārs did make notable achievement in glorifying God and God alone, Maturakaviyāḻvār being an exception worthy of note. If God came down to satisfy the God-hunger of men, the Āḻvārs demonstrated through their compositions what God-hunger is. Men of ordinary abilities could not achieve this and therefore is the suggestion that is made here that God himself came down in the form of the Āḻvārs to achieve this purpose. In fact, even God cannot do this by Himself. He could do it only in the garb of His men who are endowed with His divinity for which purpose He had to come down as the Āḻvārs.

In this connection, Vedānta Deśika offers an apt analogy. The salty waters of the sea are taken in by the clouds and are released as pure water which is fit to be drunk. Even so, the contents of the Vedas are beyond the understanding of the ordinary people and therefore could not be realized through the direct study of the Vedas. The Āḻvārs, like the clouds, grasped the Vedic doctrines, and conveyed them through Tamil medium which is not only sweet (palatable) but is also fit to be drunk like rain water. As it is holy to take bath in the sea on occasions of sacred days, the Vedic texts have to be respected for use on occasions. Like the rain water, the compositions of the Āḻvārs could be stored in reservoirs and used for various purposes. None is forbidden from using these compositions like the water which all can make free use of. The compositions of the Āḻvārs are thus readily understandable even to ordinary men. It will be no exaggeration if it is suggested here that just as the nature and good conditions of the containers like the tanks, reservoirs and pipes are responsible for keeping the water drinkable, so also, only such individuals could be taken to have grasped the truths

69. Guruparamparāsāra, p.3.
of these compositions by being sincere in their doings, honest in intentions and good by temperament. The unworthy in both cases are not only dependable but harmful also and therefore are fit to be discarded.

Like the Vedānta system which is mainly concerned with a disquisition about Brahman’s nature and the means of attaining it, the compositions of the Āḻvārs reveal the interest of their authors in depicting God’s perfection and their personal experience of Him. While the Vedāntā system seeks to demonstrate that Brahman’s eminence could not be questioned or affected, the Āḻvārs, on the other hand, seek to draw attention to their experiences which reveal beyond the shadow of doubt God’s eminence. The Vedānta-sūtras begin with the statement that there is a keen desire to know Brahman. Existence of Brahman is an already admitted fact which requires no proof. The marks for this assumption lie in the world owing its origin, maintenance and disappearance to Brahman. This is all known from the scriptures. The Āḻvārs too treat of the Supreme Person as too well-known and thus requiring no proof to demonstrate His existence. Without exception, He is referred to as the creator of the universe which He maintains and preserves during deluges. There is of course more of the logical aspect in proving God’s relationship to the world. Visualizing God everywhere in the black sea, blue cloud and others is really an experience which could not be explained away. God chooses to reveal Himself to His men through Nature. “Nature, which is the time-vesture of God and reveals Him to the wise, hides Him from the foolish.” Metaphysical discussions have the places of their own. They dissect the ultimate Reality into parts which become abstract having no attraction for the man with God-hunger. The deeply devout man, with his unshakeable faith in God, does not need any proof for God’s existence. “There is nothing more real than what comes from religion. To compare facts such as these with that comes to us in outward existence would be to trifle with the subject. The man who

70. Passage from Carlyle cited in the Ideas of God. p. 172.
demands as reality more solid than that of the religious consciousness knows not what he seeks. 71

This kind of description of the origin of the compositions raises another important issue. The Vedas are admitted to be apauruṣeya, that is, not of human origin. The compositions of the Āḻvārs, being designated as the Drāvida Veda, should be considered also as apauruṣeya. This matter was raised by some scholars in the post-Rāmānuja period who held that these were not of human origin. 72 Such a view does not stand to reason. Whether Nammāḻvār is stated to have rendered the Vedas into Tamil, 73 or the compositions are given the name Drāvida Veda, the fact remains there that these compositions contain the essential teachings of the Vedas. In this respect, they are in no way different from the epics Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata and the Bhagavad-gītā. 74 The Rāmāyaṇa which is the work of a human being Vālmiki, is stated to be only an edition of the Veda in the form of the Kāvyā. It is only the Veda of Vālmiki who refers to it as sanhitā. 75 The Mahābhārata which was composed by Vyāsa in its nuclear portion is hailed as sanhitā 76 which is open to all, irrespective of their social standing. It is also called the Veda of Kṛṣṇa. 77 Its author is admittedly the avatāra of Viṣṇu. 78 With all this both the epics are admitted to be of human origin. The Bhagavad-gītā which contains the quintessence of the teaching of the Upaniṣads, is the song of the Divine but yet is treated not as a Veda of no human origin but as a smṛti, that is which reminds us of the Vedic truths. The designation Veda which is given to the Nālāyirān must be taken to convey only this sense.

71. Passage cited from Bredby's Appearance and Reality in the Idea of God. p. 449
72. Evidence is wanting to identify the person or group of persons who held this view.
73. K.C. 8.
74. cf. ibid. Sūt. 189 to 194.
75. Rām. 6. 128 : 120.
76. M.Bh. Ādi. 1: 78.
77. ibid 1:294; 62: 20.
of revealing the truths in a medium different from that of the
Vedas. Like the epics and Purāṇas these are verily the sup-
plements to the Vedas, still retaining the names Veda and
samhitā.

Mention must be made here about the work known as
Bhagavannāmasaṅghastra recently prepared by Pandit V. Anant-
acharya and A. Srinivasaraghavan. It is based on the
Drāmidopaniṣat-tātparya-ratnāvali. This work summarises the
gist of each decad in a sloka which contains at least ten words
conveying the sense of each verse in that decad. The Tiruvāy-
moli, which is considered to be dealing with the Lord’s attrib-
utes is thus held to contain at least thousand qualities of the
Lord. Those who composed this work took each word which
deals with the gist of verse and turned it to suit the formation
of a name of the Lord. So there are thousand names prepared
from Vedānta Deśika’s work but based on the contents of each
verse of the Tiruvāyamoḷi. This is another sahaśranāmam for
Viṣṇu like Viṣṇusahasranāmam which is included within the
Anusāsana parva of the Mahābhārata.

No better tribute could be paid to Nammālvār and his
compositions than repeating Vedānta Deśika who said of him
thus: ‘‘We worship the toe of Saṅha, whose literary outpour-
ings bearing the fragrance of Vakuḷa flowers made the Vedas
take rest’’. This means that the Vedas felt that Brahma lies
beyond thought and expression. The Tiruvāyamoḷi proceeded
further where the Upaniṣads left by dealing at great length
about God and His perfection. In another context, he remarks
that the utterances made by those preceptors who are the re-
cipients of Nārāyaṇa’s favour are more authentic than and
superior to those of the sages even though their hearts are
pure. Again he emphatically asserts that it is only through
the grace of Saṅhakopa that all the Vaiṣṇavites have found it

79. cf. Drāmidopaniṣat-tātparya-ratnāvali. 4.
80. Yatiṅjasaṁpati. 4.
82. Anurāsaṅvadī, 27.
possible to bow with their heads at the Feet of the Lord, rather reach His Feet with bent heads.  

It may be concluded that the popularity of Vaiṣṇavism during the period of Rāmānuja has been mainly due to four features which characterized the tenets of the school. The difficult and arduous paths of karma and jñāna were replaced by the path of devotion, not that which is enjoined in the Upaniṣads but practical life filled with the emotion of love for God. Abstractness, rigidity, idealism and inaccessibility which mark the Upaniṣadic concept of God—head gave room for emotional appeal, tenderness, realistic approach and easy accessibility of God which made the course of devotion very attractive and practicable coming within the reach of common man irrespective of social status, and equipment. That God would overlook the guilt of man and would surely help in times of distress personally or through agency gives strength to the weak-minded and makes them feel much drawn and attached to him. Prapatti has played an important role in this respect. To seek refuge under God is welcome measure so as to be rid of the responsibility for looking after one’s own interest and also others. The concept of service to God and His men is more endearing to humanity than the mere practice of devotion. The meeting together of persons who are devoted to God is welcomed with their differences rid of them and enjoy communion with God. Hereby the spirit of tolerance gets full scope for development.

It is clear that the preachings of the Ālvārs influenced Yāmuna and Rāmānuja to develop a system of Vedāntic thought based on the Vedas and the Nālāyiram. The courses of bhakti, prapatti and the concept of kaińkarya and the cult of the bhāgavatas had far-reaching effect on many a religious school all through India. The Kṛṣṇabhakti of Nimbārka and Vālībha owes its rich development to the devotional hymns of the Ālvārs whose spirits were reflected in the Gadyatrāya of Rāmānuja, Pāñcastava of Kūrattālvān and the Śtotras of Parācara Paṭṭar. Not merely did these two schools adopt bhakti

83. ibid. 25.
as the main course for *mukti* and for propitiation here but the emotional element of devotion brings to our mind much of what is contained in the hymns of the Āḻvārs, whose sweet and intensely sincere contributions which are outstanding and unique in their poetic and devotional content are universally acclaimed.

The practical influence of the compositions of the Āḻvārs made itself felt on the masses of people in no small measure and played an important role during the great revival of Hinduism in the period between the fifth century and the twelfth century which spelt the end of the vogue for Buddhism and Jainism. Apart from acting as a shaping factor in the quotidian religious consciousness of the Hindu, no matter whether he be a Vaiśṇavite or not, the general spirit and influence of the hymns of the Āḻvārs have had a deep and long lasting extra-religious effect on the sensibility and culture of the Indian people. The emotional approach, and the ready, human appeal of the hymns have through the centuries of their popular dissemination successfully educated and cultivated the modes of feeling and outlook of the people in general, besides carrying the message of *bhakti* far and near. It may not be exceptional to claim that the Āḻvārs take credit for their contribution through these hymns not only to the cause of religion but also to the enrichment of the main stream of Indian culture.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX I

LIST OF BRAHMA VIDYĀS

SECTION II CHAPTER VI

NOTE: The Brahma Vidyā is the name given to a particular mode of meditating on Brahman. The effect of adopting them is the same. Yet, the Vidyās are distinct from each other due to the differences in the qualities of Brahman which are due to be meditated. These are dealt with in the Upaniṣads and Brahma-sūtra.

There are at least five sources providing information on them:

1. Govindacharya, A: Rāmānuja's Bhagavadgīta-bhāṣya (Translated into English). The appendix in this work contains information on the Brahma Vidyās. This list does not mention Ādityamaṇḍastha Satyabrahmavidyā but mentions Bhargavi Vāruṇī Vidyā.

2. Narayanaswami Iyer, K: Brahma Vidyās. In this work Nyāsa Vidyā is omitted. Puruṣa Vidyā and Udgītha Vidyā are mentioned separately (vide p. 127). Pandit V. Krishnamacharya examines and proves that Nyāsa Vidyā could not be denied a place in the list of Brahma Vidyās.


3. Hastigiri Māhātmyam of Vedānta Deśika with a Tamil commentary by M.M. Cetlūr Narasimhacharya.

4. Adhikaranaśārāvalī of Vedānta Deśika. The introduction of this work (pp. xi-xiii) gives useful information and treats of six Vidyās which are distinct from those given here dropping some among them.

This Appendix is based on the work No.3 *Hastigiri-māhāimyam*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Vidyā</th>
<th>Source</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Īśāvāsyā Upaniṣad Vidyā</td>
<td>Īśāvāsyā Upaniṣad 15, 16.</td>
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<td>2. Paramapuruṣa Vidyā</td>
<td>Praśna Upaniṣad 5: 5</td>
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<td>Brahma-sūtra 1.3: 12.</td>
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<td>3. Sad Vidyā</td>
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<td>Brahma-sūtra 1.1: 5.</td>
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<td>4. Vaiśvānara Vidyā</td>
<td>Chandogya Upaniṣad. 5.18: 1</td>
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<td>Brahma-sūtra 1.2: 25; 3.3: 55.</td>
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<td>5. Ānandamaya Vidyā</td>
<td>Taittirīya Upaniṣad: 5.18: 1</td>
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<td>Ānandvalli 2.1: 1.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Brahma-sūtra 1.1: 13.</td>
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<td>Chāndogya Upaniṣad 5.1: 1</td>
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<td>Brahma-sūtra 3.3: 10.</td>
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<td>7. Śāṇḍilya Vidyā</td>
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<td>Brahma-sūtra 3.3: 19.</td>
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<td>Brahma-sūtra 1.3: 33.</td>
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<td>9. Upakosala Vidyā</td>
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<td>Brahma-sūtra 1.2: 13; 15.</td>
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<td>10. Uddālaka Antaryāmi Vidyā</td>
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<td>Brahma-sūtra 1.2: 19-21.</td>
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<td>11. Bhūma Vidyā</td>
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<td>Brahma-sūtra 1.3: 7.</td>
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<td>12. Dahara Vidyā</td>
<td>Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 8.1: 1</td>
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<td>Brahma-sūtra 1.3: 13; 3.3: 38.</td>
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<td>13. Gārgyakṣara Vidyā</td>
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<td>14. Madhu Vidyā</td>
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<td>17. Pañcāgni Vidyā</td>
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<td>Brahma-sūtra 3.3: 32.</td>
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18. Ādityaṁdaṇḍalastha
   Satyabrahma Vidyā
   Chāndogya Upaniṣad 4.15: 1
   Bhāradvāryaka Upaniṣad 5.5: 2
   Brahma-sūtra, 3.3: 20.

19. Akṣitha Satya-brahma Vidyā
   Chāndogya Upaniṣad 4.15: 1
   Bhāradvāryaka Upaniṣad 5.5: 2
   Brahma-sūtra, 3.3: 20.

20. Śrīman Nyāsa Vidyā
   Taītirīya Nārāyaṇiya
   Upaniṣad, 79.

21. Paraṇjyotir Vidyā
   Chāndogya Upaniṣad 3.13: 7
   Brahma-sūtra 1.1: 25.

22. Nāciketa Vidyā
   Katha Upaniṣad, 3.2
   Brahma-sūtra, 1.2: 12.

23. Akṣarapara Vidyā
   Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 1.1: 5
   Brahma-sūtra 1.2: 22.

24. Satyakāma Vidyā
   Chāndogya Upaniṣad 8.7: 1
   Brahma-sūtra 4.4: 3.

25. Aṅguṣṭhapramita Vidyā
   Katha Upaniṣad, 4.12
   Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad 5: 8.
   Brahma-sūtra, 1.3: 23.

26. Jyotiṣam Jyotir Vidyā
   Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad
   4.4: 16
   Brahma-sūtra 1.3: 31.

27. Uṣastha Kahola Vidyā
   Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 3.4: 2.
   Brahma-sūtra, 3.3: 35.

28. Ākāśa Vidyā
   Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 8.14: 1
   Brahma-sūtra 1.3: 42.

29. Antarāditya Vidyā
   Chāndogya Upaniṣad 1.6: 6.
   Brahma-sūtra, 1.1: 21.

30. Pratardana Vidyā
   Kauṭīṣṭaka Upaniṣad, 3.2
   Brahma-sūtra 1.1: 29.

31. Paryaṅka Vidyā
   Kauṭīṣṭaka Upaniṣad 1.3.

32. Gārytrī Vidyā
   Chāndogya Upaniṣad 3.12: 1
APPENDIX II

LIST OF ĀLVĀRS MENTIONED IN SEVERAL VAISHNAVITE LITERATURE

(SECTION III : CHAPTER XIX)

I. Tiruvaramkattamutarpār’s List (after R.N.)

1. Poykaiyālvar
2. Pūtattālvar
3. Peyālvar
4. Tiruppānālvar
5. Tirumajicaliālvar
6. Toṭṭaratippoṭṭiyālvar
7. Kulacēkarālvar
8. Periyālvar
9. Aṇṭāl
10. Tirumāṅkaiyālvar

II. Parācara Paṭtar’s List (after a sloka by him)

1. Pūtattālvar
2. Poykaiyālvar
3. Peyālvar
4. Periyālvar
5. Tirumajicaliālvar
6. Kulacēkarālvar
7. Tiruppānālvar
8. Toṭṭaratippoṭṭiyālvar
9. Tirumāṅkaiyālvar
10. Nammālvar
   Nāthamunikal
   Yāmunācārya
   Rāmānuja

III. Pinpālakiya Perumāl Jīyar’s List (after G.P.P.)

1. Poykaiyālvar
2. Pūtattālvar
3. Peyāḻvār
4. Tirumāḷiçaḻvār
5. Nammāḻvār
6. Maturakaviyāḻvār
7. Kulacēkaḻvār
8. Periyāḻvār
9. Āṉṭāl
10. Tontaraṭippotiyāḻvār
11. Tiruppāṉāḻvār
12. Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār

**IV. Vedānta Desika’s List (after his Atikārāsaṅkrahaṃ)**

1. Poykaiyāḻvār
2. Pūtattāḻvār
3. Pēyāḻvār
4. Nammāḻvār
5. Periyāḻvār (and Āṉṭāl)
6. Kulacekarāḻvār
7. Tiruppāṉāḻvār
8. Tontaraṭippotiyāḻvār
9. Tirumāḷiçaḻvār
10. Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār
11. Maturakaviyāḻvār

**V. Vedānta Deśika’s List (after his Pirapantaśāram)**

1. Poykaiyāḻvār
2. Pūtattāḻvār
3. Pēyāḻvār
4. Tirumāḷiçaḻvār
5. Nammāḻvār
6. Maturakaviyāḻvār
7. Kulacekarāḻvār
8. Periyāḻvār
9. Āṉṭāl
10. Tontaraṭippotiyāḻvār
11. Tiruppāṉāḻvār
12. Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār
    Tiruvaraṅkattamutanār
VI. Maṇaṉaḷamāmunikal’s List (after his Iyalcāṭtu)

1. Pūtattāḻvār
2. Peyāḻvār
3. Poykaiyāḻvār
4. Namāḻvār
5. Tirumalicaivyāḻvār
6. Periyāḻvār
7. Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār
8. Kulacēkarāḻvār
9. Toṇṭaraṭippotiyāḻvār
10. Tiruppāṉāḻvār
11. Āṇṭāl
12. Maturakaviyāḻvār

VII. List (after Nāḷāyiram)

1. Periyāḻvār
2. Āṇṭāl
3. Kulacēkarāḻvār
4. Tirumalicaivyāḻvār
5. Toṇṭaraṭippotiyāḻvār
6. Tiruppāṉāḻvār
7. Maturakaviyāḻvār
8. Tirumaṅkaiyāḻvār
9. Namāḻvār
10. Poykaiyāḻvār
11. Pūtattāḻvār
12. Pēyāḻvār
APPENDIX III

INCIDENTS RECORDED BY THE ĀLVĀRS, BUT NOT FOUND IN ĪTIHĀSAS AND PURĀNAS

(SECTION II : CHAPTER VII; SECTION III : CHAPTER XI)

1. A reference to Rāvana (M. Tv. 45; Mu. Tv. 77; Nāṉ-Tv. 44) : Once Rāvana, hiding his ten heads, went in disguise to the four-faced Brahmā to get boons from him. Nārāyaṇa transformed Himself into a baby, pretended to be asleep in the lap of the four-faced god and counted Rāvana’s concealed heads with His leg thereby hinting to Brahmā the real identity of the receiver of the boons and what would result by the grant of the boons.

2. Controlling of the seven wild bulls by Kṛṣṇa (M. Tv. 62, 83; I. Tv. 62, 63; Mu. Tv. 25, 49, 85; Nav. Tv. 33; Perum. Tm. 2, 3; Peri. Tm. 1.2: 3; 1.4: 6; 1.10: 7; 2. 2.4: 2.9: 9; 2.10: 7; 3.4: 4; 3.8: 9; 3.10: 10; 4.4: 4; 5.1: 6; 5.9: 8; 6.5: 5; 6.10: 5; 7.7: 7; 7.8: 8; 8.6: 9; 8.9: 3; TVR. 21; TVM. 1.5: 1; 1: 8: 7; 2.9: 10; 3.5: 4; 4.2: 5; 3.3: 1; 4.8: 4; 5.7: 9; 6: 2, 6; 7.2: 9): Kompakan, a leader of cowherds and the brother of Yaçōtai had a daughter Nappinnaï by name born of the amsa of Nīlā. He sent a proclamation that any one who could control the seven wild bulls kept by him was eligible to marry his daughter. Śrī Kṛṣṇa appeared before the bulls in seven forms, controlled them and won the hands of Nappinnaï. Of all the consorts married by Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Nappinnaï is most glorified in Tamil literature and this tradition is handed down to the Ālvārs’ poems.

3. Kuṭākkuttu (Pot-dance) by Śrī Kṛṣṇa (I. Tv. 98; Mu. Tv. 73; Tr. V. 38; Perum. Tm. 7: 9; Peri. Tm. 2.5: 4; 3.10: 8; 5.5: 6; 9.10: 9; C.TML. Kan. 11, 12; Periyaal. Tm. 2.7: 7; 2.9: 6; Nac. Tm. 3.6; TVR. 38; P.Tv. 31; TVM. 2.7: 4; 3.6: 3, 7; 4.2: 5; 4.4: 6; 8.5: 6; 10.1: 11; 10.10: 4): Kuṭākkuttu is a kind of pot-dance in which the dancer will carry a pile of pots on
his head, two pots, one on each shoulder; he will then throw pots up in the air with both the hands and receive them deftly in quick succession. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is said to have been an adept in this dance. When Pradyumna was put into prison by Bānāsura for having loved and secretly lived with his daughter Uṣā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa rushed to Bāṇa’s capital to retrieve His grandson. This is the version of the incident recorded in the Purāṇas. The Tamil Literature mentions, in addition to these doings of Kṛṣṇa, the Koṭakkūtta enacted by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in Bāṇa’s city, Cōṇitapuram. This is explained by Aṭiyārkkunallār, the commentator of Cilappatiṭāram.

4. Story of Cīmālikan (Periyāḷ. Tm. 2.7: 8): Cīmālikan was an intimate cowherd friend of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He learnt the wielding of many weapons from Śrī Kṛṣṇa, became arrogant of his strength and started giving trouble to peace loving people. Śrī Kṛṣṇa was very much worried about this, called him and advised him not to do so. Cīmālikan not only did not pay heed to His advice, but also found fault with Śrī Kṛṣṇa for not teaching him how to wield the discus. Even though Śrī Kṛṣṇa tried to convince him that it would be a difficult affair, Cīmālikan insisted on his learning of it. Thinking that it would be the proper time to dispose of his undesirable comrade, Śrī Kṛṣṇa rotated the discus with His single finger, sent it up in the air and received it back with great deftness. Cīmālikan tried to do the same, but alas! in the process, had his head cut off his neck by the rotating discus.

5. Rāma bound by jasmine garland (Periyāḷ. Tm. 3.10: 2): When, once in Ayodhyā, Rāma and Sītā were spending a pleasant night, there arose a petty quarrel between them. In a sulky mood for which the reason is not known, Sītā in an endearing love–quarrel bound Rāma by means of a jasmine garland.

6. The squirrels’ part in building the dam for Rāma across the ocean (T.M. 27): Seeing the monkeys rolling and carry-

ing the mountains in the building of the dam across the ocean, the squirrels also desired to do their humble mite in the sacred task. They dived into the water, besmeared themselves with the sand of the ocean bed by rolling on it and came up to spill the sand on the dam.

7. Breaking of Kurunta tree (M. Tv. 27, 54, 62; Nan. Tv. 57; Tc. V. 37; Peri. Tm. 1.8: 1; 4.3: 8; 5: 5; 4.5: 4; 9.10: 8; 10.5: 4; 11.2: 1; TVM 6.4: 6; 6.6: 8; 6.8: 8). The incident alluded to by the Ālvārs, it seems, is based on the Tamil tradition according to which Kṛiṣṇa took away all the garments of the gopīs when they were taking bath in the Yamuna and climbed in a Kurunta tree to hide them. When he saw Balarāma coming on that way He thought that He would be scolded by His brother. So He bent the tree towards the river so that the gopīs could hide themselves from his sight.

8. Namuci’s fate (Periyal. Tm. 1.8: 8): When Vāmana grew into Tirivikrama and began to measure the three feet of the land got as a free gift from Bali, Bali’s son, Namuci, rushed to His feet and hit at the growing feet of the Lord in order to prevent His measuring process. Namuci demanded Him to measure with the same feet He appeared in as Vāmana, because He got His gift only on that measure. The Lord argued that the physical body cannot be static but only growing and told him the impossibility of His returning to His previous form. In spite of His argument, Namuci clung to His feet firmly. So the Lord hurled him in the air.

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3. AKN. 59 and old commentary.
4. For further details refer to Ārāyccittokuti, pp. 61 to 65.
# APPENDIX IV

NAMMĀLṆĀR’S VERSES ON THE ARCA-FORM OF GΩI

(*Section IV  Chapter XVI*)

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<td>T.V.M. 8.6</td>
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<td>Tiruppēnēyil*</td>
<td>T.V.M. 7.3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiruppēnākar</td>
<td>T.V.M. 10.8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiruppulįṅkuṭi*</td>
<td>T.V.M. 8.3: 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T.V.M. 9.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiruppuliyūr</td>
<td>T.V.M. 8.9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiruvallavāḷ</td>
<td>T.V.M. 5.9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiruvanantapuram*</td>
<td>T.V.M. 10.2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shrines</td>
<td>References</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiruvāpparicāram</td>
<td>T.V.M. 8.3: 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiruvanṉaṭṭūr</td>
<td>T.V.M. 6.1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tiruvaraṅkam</td>
<td>T.V.R. 28</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T.V.M. 7.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiruvāṇvilai</td>
<td>T.V.M. 7.10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiruvāṭṭāru</td>
<td>T.V.M. 10.6</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiruvebhkā</td>
<td>T.V.R. 26</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiruvēṅkaṭam</td>
<td>T.V.R. 8, 10, 15, 31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50, 60, 67, 81</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T.V.M. 1.8: 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.6: 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.6: 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.7: 11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.5: 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.9: 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8.2: 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.3: 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.5: 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.7: 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiruvīṇṇakar</td>
<td>T.V.M. 6.3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolaivillimaṅkalam*</td>
<td>T.V.M. 6.5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuvarapati (Dvāraka)</td>
<td>T.V.M. 5.3: 6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varakuramamoṅkai*</td>
<td>T.V.M. 9.2: 4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaṭamaturai</td>
<td>T.V.M. 9.1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number of shrines: 33
Total number of verses: 395

**Note:** The Vaiṣṇavite traditionalists count the number of sacred shrines as 108 in which Tiruppārkaṭal and Paramapadam are included. However, the number available in the list of arca forms actually celebrated by the Āḻvārs comes only to 106, Tiruppārkaṭal and Paramapadam not being the places for arca forms. Besides, Paramapadam represents by itself the Para form of Nārāyaṇa.

* Indicates the shrines celebrated only by Nammāḷvar.
**APPENDIX V**

List of shrines celebrated exclusively by Pūtattālvār, Tirumālīcayālvār, Kulacēkarāvār, Tirumaṅkaiyālvār, Periyālvār and Nammālvār.

*(Chapter IV Chapter XXIV)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of verses sung</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pūtattālvār</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tontail-nātu</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Tirukkacci (Attikiri)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tirumālīcayālvār</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Anpil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Kavittalam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cōla-nātu</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Arimēyavinṇaṇakaram (Tirunāṅkūr)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Ātāṅgūr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Compoŋceykōyil (Tirunāṅkūr)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Cirupuliyūr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Kāḷīccīramāviṇṇakaram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Kaṇṭiyūr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Karampagūr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Kāvāḷampāḷḷi (Tirunāṅkūr)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Kūṭalūr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Maṇimāṭakkōyil (Tirunāṅkūr)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Nantiŋurvinṇaṇakaram (Nāṭhankoyil)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Pāṛṭtanpāḷḷi (Tirunāṅkūr)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Pullampūtaṅkuṭi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Talaiccaṅkanāṅmātiyam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Tirucceṟai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Tiruintalūr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Tirukkanṇaṅkuṭi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Tirukknṇaṅkai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Tirumaṅnikkūṭam (Tirunāṅkūr)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Tirunāṅkai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Tirunaraiyūr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Tiruttterṭiyampalam (Tirunāṅkūr)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
23. Tiruttēvōṅarttokai (Tirunāṅkūr) 10
24. Tiruvaļuntūr (Tēraļuntūr) 45
25. Tiruveṭṭiyaṅkuṭi 10
26. Tiruveṭṭakkulam (Tirunāṅkūr) 10
27. Uṟaiyūr 1
28. Vaikuntevinpākaram (Tirunāṅkūr) 10
29. Vanpuruṭṭottamam (Tirunāṅkūr) 10

**Pāṇṭi-nāṭu**
1. Tirukkuṭal (Maturai) 1
2. Tirumeyyam 10
3. Tiruppullāṇi 21

**Naṭu-nāṭu**
Tiruvayintirapuram 10

**Tonṭai-nāṭu**
1. Kārakam 1
2. Kērvāṇam 1
3. Nilāṭṭiṅkaḷ-tuṇṭam 1
4. Niṅkakam 1
5. Paramēccuravippakaram 10
6. Pavaiḷavaṇṇam 1
7. Tirukkaḷvaṇūr 1
8. Tiruniṅṟavūr 2
9. Tiruppukuḷi 2
10. Tiruttanḍakā 2
11. Tiruvitāventai 13

**Vata-nāṭu**
1. Cīṅkavēḻkuṟram (Ahōbilam) 10
2. Naṅmicāṟaṇyam 10
3. Tirupliriti 10

**Kulacēkarālvār**

**Malai-nāṭu**
1. Vittuvakkūṭu 10

**Periyālvār**

**Vata-nāṭu**
1. Kāḷṭuṅkaṭṭinakar (Devaprayāgai) 11
Namalvär

Pāṇṭi-nāṭu

1. Cirīvaramañkai 11
2. Śrī Vaikuṇṭham 2
3. Tirukkōḻūr 11
4. Tirukkulantai (Peruṅkuṭam) 1
5. Tirukkurukūr 11
6. Tiruppērai (Tiruppēreyil) 11
7. Tiruppulīokuṭi 12
8. Tolaivilimaṅkāḷam 11
9. Varakuṟamaṅkai 1

Malai-nāṭu

1. Tiruceṅkuṇgūr-cirṟṟu 11
2. Tirukkaṭittāṅgam 11
3. Tirukkāṭ-karai 11
4. Tiruvaṅnantapuram 11
5. Tiruvaṅparicāram* 1
6. Tiruvaṅvaṇṭūr 11
7. Tiruvāṟanvilai 11
8. Tiruvāṭṭāṟu 11

*The whole decad (T.V.M. 8.3) is the celebration of the deity at this place according to the author of Ācārya Hṛdayam (A.H. Sūt. 173).
APPENDIX VI

LINE OF SUCCESSION OF VAISHNAVITE ACARYAS OF TWO SCHOOLS

(SECTION V; CHAPTER XXIX)

Nāthamuṇi (823–903 A.D.)
Uyvakkoṇṭar (826–931 A.D.)
Maṇakkāl Nampi (889–994 A.D.)
Ālavantar (916–1041 A.D.)
Periya Nampi (997–1102 A.D.)
Rāmānuja (1017–1137 A.D.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vaṭakalai line</th>
<th>Tenkalai line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tirukkurakappirān Pillān(^1) (b. 1068 A.D.)</td>
<td>Empār(^3) (b. 1025 A.D.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eṅkalālvān (Viśnucitān) (b. 1108 A.D.)</td>
<td>Parācara Paṭṭar(^4) (b. 1062 A.D.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naṭṭtur Ammāi (Vāṭṣya Varadācārya) (b. 1165 A.D.)</td>
<td>Naṅcīyar (c. 1113 A.D.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kīṭāmpī Appullāri(^2) (Ātreya Rāmānuja) (b. 1221 A.D.)</td>
<td>Nampīḷḷai(^6) (1147–1252 A.D.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vedānta Desika (Viṅkaṭanātha) (1268–1369 A.D.)</td>
<td>Vaṭakkuttiruvitippillāi(^4) (Kṛṣṇapāda) (1167–1265 A.D.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naṅgārāccar (b. 1316 A.D.)</td>
<td>Pillāi Lōṅkācārīyar (c. 1300 A.D.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tiruvaṃmolippillai (Śrīsaileśa) (c. 1380 A.D.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manavālamāmūṇikaḷ (Varavaramuṇi) (1371–1443 A.D.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Satysompradāya Muktāvali, p. 15.
3. Ibid. p. 12.
**APPENDIX VII**

**DATES OF THE ĀLVĀR**

*(For General Reference)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Ālvār</th>
<th>Traditional Date</th>
<th>Date arrived at</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Poykaiyālvār</td>
<td>Dvāpara Era 862901 (4200 B.C.)</td>
<td>713 A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Pūtattālvār</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Pēyālvār</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Tirumālīcāiyālvār</td>
<td>Dvāpara Era 862901 (4200 B.C.)</td>
<td>720 A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Tontaraṭīp-potiyālvār</td>
<td>Kali Era 298 (2803 B.C.)</td>
<td>726 A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Kulcēkarālvār</td>
<td>Kali Era 28 (3073 B.C.)</td>
<td>767 A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Tiruppāṇalvār</td>
<td>Kali Era 343 (2758 B.C.)</td>
<td>781 A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Tirumānākaiyālvār</td>
<td>Kali Era 399 (2702 B.C.)</td>
<td>776 A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Periyālvār</td>
<td>Kali Era 47 (3054 B.C.)</td>
<td>785 A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Āṇṭāḷ</td>
<td>Kali Era 98 (3003 B.C.)</td>
<td>767 A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Nammālvār</td>
<td>Kali Era 43rd day (3101 B.C.)</td>
<td>798 A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Maturakaviyālvār</td>
<td>Dvāpara Era 863879 (3222 B.C.)</td>
<td>800 A.D.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX VIII

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   d. Nine Thousand by Raṅgarāmānujaswāmi.
   e. Pratipatam by Vedānta Rāmānujaswāmi.
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   a. Twenty-four Thousand by Vedānta Rāmānujaswāmi
   c. Pratipatam by Vedānta Rāmānujaswāmi.

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b) Yāmunācārya: *Stotraratnam*
c) Rāmānuja: *Śaraṇāgatigadaya*
d) Rāmānuja: *Śrīrangaśāstra*
e) Rāmānuja: *Vaikunṭhagadaya*
f) Kūrattālīvāṇ: *Śrī Vaikunṭhastava*
g) Kūrattālīvāṇ: *Atimānuṣastava*
h) Kūrattālīvāṇ: *Sundarābhāhastava*
i) Kūrattālīvāṇ: *Varadarajastava*
j) Kūrattālīvāṇ: *Śrīstava*
k) Parāśarabhaṭṭa: *Śrī Raṅgarājastava*
l) Parāśarabhaṭṭa: *Śrī Guṇaratnakosa*
m) Parāśarabhaṭṭa: *Aṣṭaśloki*
n) Āndhrapūrṇa: *Rāmānujastotra*
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