

## 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 Ālvārs 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 'ātman' in philosophy. When the word 'ātman' connotes the finite self or the individual soul, it refers to it as distinct from the body (*dehā*), the sense-organs (*indriyas*), mind (*manas*), and the vital breath (*prāṇa*). "By adopting Sankhyā psychology Viśiṣṭādvaita defines *ātman* 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 (*tanmātras*), the five cognitive sense organs, the five conative sense organs, *manas*, *bhuddhi*, *ahaṅkāra* and primal *prakṛti*. *Puruṣa* is the twenty-fifth category".<sup>1</sup> The nature of the body is referred to by Nammālvār as follows -

"Poṅku aimpulaṇum porī aintum  
karumēntiriyam aimpūtam  
Iṅku ivvuyir ēy pirakirutī  
māṅ āṅkāram manāṅkalē".<sup>2</sup>

- 'The five conative senses, the five cognitive senses, the five organs of the body, the five elements, *prakṛti* which is

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 *Paramātmān* owing to their inseparable relation. The *jīvas* 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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> The *jīva* 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"<sup>5</sup>.

Nammālvār realizes the nature of the *ātman* by the grace of the Lord and describes it in the following verse:

"Niṅṅai oṅṅai uṅṅarntēṅṅukku,  
 ātan nuḷ nēṅṅmai aru itū eṅṅru  
 Oṅṅum oruvarkku, uṅṅaralākātu;  
 uṅṅarntu mēlum kāṅṅparitu;  
 Ceṅṅru ceṅṅru, paramparam āy,  
 yātum iṅṅṅit tēyntu arṅṅru,  
 Naṅṅru, tītu eṅṅru arivu aritāy,  
 naṅṅṅāy jñānam kaṅṅtantatē"<sup>6</sup>

- '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-*

3. S.B. 2.3: 26.

4. Sv. Up. 5: 9.

5. *The Philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita*, p. 285.

6. T.V.M. 8.8 : 5.

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 'Itu' will throw more light on the subject :

*Nitya onrai.....nēmai* : 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.<sup>7</sup>

7. cf. Kath. Up. 2: 18. The soul is unborn, constant, eternal, permanent and primeval; it is not slain. Again cf. Ch. Up. 8.1: 5 and Bh. G. 2: 19, 20.

The Ālvār, throughout his *Tiruvāymoli* up to this, never bestowed any appreciable attention on the nature of 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 enru* : 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.

*Onrum 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.

*unarntum.....kāmparitu* : Even if some knowledge concerning it is had, it is only partial knowledge of it, not knowledge of it in its entirety.<sup>8</sup>

*Cenru cenru.....āy* : Beyond and beyond, does soul's nature transcend the several vestures veiling it; - groupable under the general categorical heads as (i) *annamaya* (gross body), (ii) *prana-maya* (subtle or vegetative body), (iii) *manō-maya* (mind-body).<sup>9</sup>

*yātum.....arū* : 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.

*Narū 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.

*nanrāy jñānam kaṭantatē* : The soul is thus by itself a singular verity, and characterised by its own peculiar attributes of intelligence (*jñāna*) and bliss (*ānanda*).<sup>10</sup>

8. cf. Bh. G. 11 : 54. "Arjuna! to know, to see, and enter into, the true nature of spirit, is difficult".

9. Taitt. Up. 2 : 1, 2, 3.

10. cf. Mēnikkavācakar's statement: "Cenru cenru aruvāyt tēyntu onran" - "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 Ālvārs 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 Vaikuṅṭha 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.<sup>11</sup> It is said that he became born as Lakṣmaṇa to serve the Lord who descended down to the earth as Rāma.<sup>12</sup> Garuḍa the vehicle of God, is another self which is generally present in Śrī Vaikuṅṭha. He is of the nature of the *Vedas*.<sup>13</sup> He renders service to God, He is a friend, vehicle, seat, flag, canopy, and fan for the Lord.<sup>14</sup> 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.<sup>15</sup> It is said that the flapping of the wings of the Garuḍa while flying produces the chanting sound of the *Sāma-Veda*.<sup>16</sup> Viṣvaksena is another eternal self who is in-charge of the army of Viṣṇu. He enjoys what is cast off by the Lord after enjoyment.<sup>17</sup> These and others who are eternally present in Śrī Vaikuṅṭha 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. *Śtotraratna*, 40.

12. Pad: P. 6.269; 94.

13. *Catuslokt*, 1; *Śtotraratna*, 41.

14. *Śtotraratna*, 41.

15. M.Tv, 5, 74; T.V.M. 5.7: 3.

16. T.V.M. 3.8: 5.

17. *Śtotraratna*, 42.

enjoy rendering service to the Lord in Śrī Vaikunṭha. The bound *jīvas* (*baddhas*) are those who suffer the worldly ill. Due to beginningless *karma*,<sup>18</sup> 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.<sup>19</sup>

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 eternal himself. 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 *jīva* 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.<sup>20</sup> 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 *jīva*, who belongs to Brahman 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: 13.

19. cf. T.V.M. 4.10: 10.

20. S.B. 2.1: 4 and R.T.S. Ch. 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 Ālvārs hold the view that Nārāyaṇa is the creator, protector and destroyer of the Universe. Nammālvār 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";<sup>21</sup> "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".<sup>22</sup> The same idea is repeated in a number of verses in his important work *Tiruvāymoḷi*.<sup>23</sup> As a protector of the Universe "the Lord reclined on the banyan 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"<sup>24</sup> and "my Lord both created and lodged the universe within Himself (for preserving it)".<sup>25</sup> In his other poem *Periya Tiruvantāri* the Ālvār refers to God as the creator who brought into being all the various forms of creation on a widespread scale.<sup>26</sup> 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?<sup>27</sup> He swallowed the earth; He spat

21. T.V.C. 2; cf. T.V.M. 4.10: 1; 7.4: 9.

22. *ibid.* 6; cf. T.V.R. 74. cf. T.V.M. 10.5; 3: 10.7: 9.

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.

24. T.V.C. 7. cf. T.V.M. 3.10: 9.

25. *ibid.* 2.

26. P.Tv. 18.

27. *ibid.* 24.

it out; He raised it up; He measured it; He created it and He is immanent in it.<sup>28</sup> "The world, the deluge which comes into existence when the world remains destroyed, the blue sea with the beautiful waves, mountains, the bright fire, wind, *ākāśa*, all these are the products created by the Lord of Śrī with His will".<sup>29</sup> This accords well with the *Upaniṣadic* sense that the Brahman intended to become Itself many and be born.<sup>30</sup> It is not the world alone that is produced by His will. Music, *Vedas*, *Itihāsas*, *Purāṇas*, *Manusmṛti* and other books on *Dharma*, which are all transformations of sound in particular settings are also the products created by His will.<sup>31</sup>

The central principle on which the theory of the origin and development of the universe is based is familiarly known as *satkāryavāda*<sup>32</sup> 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*)."<sup>33</sup> This idea is expressed by Nammālvār as follows: "The Lord of the Eternals created Brahmā, Śiva, Indra and the *ṛṣis*, and the whole sentient and non-sentient beings single-handed by the mere wish".<sup>34</sup> The processes of involution and evolution are spoken of as "Uṇṭu umiṭtal". They refer to the Lord as "Mūvulaku uṇṭu umiṭ tēvapirāṇ";<sup>35</sup> "jñālam muṇṇu uṇṭu umiṭta nātan"<sup>36</sup> and so on. At a time when there was no world or any living being, He became the inherent cause (*vittu*) for the world.<sup>37</sup> The delightful class of Gods, the sentient beings

28. *ibid.* 42; Peri. Tm. 5.9: 2; 5.10: 3; 6.1: 1, 4, 5.

29. M.Tv. 61; Nāṇ. Tv. 37; cf. T.V.M. 2.2: 5.

30. Taitt. Up. 2: 6.

31. Nāṇ. Tv. 76.

32. *Saṅkhyakārikā*, 9.

33. Br. Up. 2.1: 20. cf. *Tiruvārāṅkattu Mālai* -18

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.<sup>38</sup> 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 *Tiruvāymōḷi* referring to the involutory and evolutionary processes of the Universe wrought by the Lord. The Āḷvār says: "Thou swallowedest the seven worlds and the brought them out";<sup>39</sup> "He gobbled up the seven worlds (for protection)";<sup>40</sup> "My Lord gulped the three worlds together and repaired to the banyan leaf".<sup>41</sup> In the form of a child He devoured all the worlds and went to sleep on the banyan leaf";<sup>42</sup> "His bed is the (small) banyan leaf. But His stomach could hold within itself all the seven worlds";<sup>43</sup> "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?"<sup>44</sup>; "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";<sup>45</sup> "the Lord is the Brahmā who, created by Him and settled on His navel, creates. The Lord is the Rudra who destroys".<sup>46</sup> The creative function of the Lord is referred to in a number of verses.<sup>47</sup> In one verse the Āḷvār says: "Thou createst the four-faced Brahmā within Thyself commanding him to create all the worlds";<sup>48</sup> in another "Thou art the single, self-

38. T.V.M. 2.9: 6.

39. T.V.M. 1.5: 8. cf. T.V.R. 65.

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";<sup>49</sup> and further he addresses Him "O cloud-hued Lord, Thou createst the world surrounded by the sea".<sup>50</sup> Regarding the preserving function he says: "Thou preservest the world in the present, the past and the future";<sup>51</sup> and again "Thou with the resplendent discus, protectest the seas and the world".<sup>52</sup> In some verses the Ālvār speaks of both the functions - evolution and involution.<sup>53</sup> 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.<sup>54</sup>

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.<sup>55</sup> 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.<sup>56</sup> 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. Nāṅ. 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.<sup>57</sup> 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.<sup>58</sup> He is rightly called *Ātippirān*, the Primal Protector, as He created all the gods, worlds and beings and has been protecting them.<sup>59</sup>

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*."<sup>60</sup> 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

57. M.Tv. 87.

58. Peri. Tm. 5.7 : 8.

59. T.V.M. 4.10 : 1.

60. *The Philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita*, 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*,<sup>61</sup> 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 Ājvār saints refer to *karma* by various terms as "Tol-vinai",<sup>62</sup> "Aruvinai",<sup>63</sup> "Paḷavinai",<sup>64</sup> "Val-vinai"<sup>65</sup>

61. There are three kinds of *karma*: *Sañcita*, *Prārabdha* and *Āgāmi*. *Sañcita* 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.

62. T.V.M. 4.4: 11.

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”,<sup>66</sup> “Kotu-vinaikal”,<sup>67</sup> “Vinai val iruḷ”,<sup>68</sup> “Tuyar”,<sup>69</sup> “Vem-tuyar”,<sup>70</sup> “Piṛavit-tuyar”,<sup>71</sup> “Vaṅtuyar”,<sup>72</sup> “Peruntuyar itumpai”,<sup>73</sup> “Tukkam”,<sup>74</sup> “Tukka cīlam”,<sup>75</sup> “Tuṅpam”,<sup>76</sup> “Tuṅpakkataḷ”,<sup>77</sup> “Iṭar”,<sup>78</sup> “Iṭarkatal”,<sup>79</sup> “Iṭar cuḷi”,<sup>80</sup> “Caṅmam”,<sup>81</sup> “Nōykaḷ”, “Nōy”,<sup>82</sup> “Allal”,<sup>83</sup> and “Pāvam”,<sup>84</sup> perhaps in the sense of sins. They refer to merits and demerits as “Nalvinai and Tivinaī”<sup>85</sup> and sometimes “Iruvalvinaikal”.<sup>86</sup> They consider birth itself as a great sorrow – ‘piṛavi-tuyar’; “piṛappu ām pollā aruvinaī”.<sup>87</sup> They want to be rid of this birth – “ākkai nōy aṟuttu”;<sup>88</sup> “iṛappōṭum piṛappu aṟukkum”.<sup>89</sup> Merits and demerits are, according to them, chains that fetter the self, though the

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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; Periyāḷ. 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; I 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 *jīva* 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, *cit* 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*.<sup>90</sup>

It may be asked why *Īśvara*, Who is the well-wisher of all living-beings, allows the *jīva* 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.<sup>91</sup>

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 Tirumaṅkaiyālvār who says: "My mind cannot bear the thought of living in a house in the roof of which there is a serpent"<sup>92</sup> 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 (*kākāśura*) 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.<sup>93</sup>

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

91. Somewhat as Milton reconciled himself to his blindness.

92. Peri. Tm. 11. 8: 3.

93. Periyālvār refers to this incident. Vide Periyālv. 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.<sup>94</sup>

Īsvara is called the inner self or soul (*śarīrī*), because as long as they exist, He is, in regard to sentient and non-sentient substances, their support (*ādhāra*), 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. Īsvara is therefore called the Supporter and the Controller or Ruler of all sentient beings and non-sentient things, because from His essential nature (*svarūpa*) and His will (*saṅkalpa*), they derive their existence, continuance and activities. Just as Īsvara is the abode, or support (*ādhāra*) 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.

Īsvara'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".<sup>95</sup> 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-sāra* 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 *śarīrin* of all beings is clearly intuited by Nammālvār. He says :

“Tṭṭavicumpu erivaḷi nīrnilam ivaimicaip  
Paṭarporuḷ muḷuvatam āyavai avaitoṟum  
Uṭalmicai uyireṇak karantueṅkum parantuḷaṅ;  
Cuṭarmiku curutiyaḷ ivaiuṭṭa curaṇē.”<sup>96</sup>

– ‘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 spaciouly through the atoms of water which go to make the ocean”.<sup>97</sup> 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 five elements and all the objects which emerge from these. As butter in fresh-drawn milk, Thou art present unseen in all those objects.”<sup>98</sup> 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 *Vedas*, 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

96. T.V.M. 1.1: 7.

97. *ibid.* 1.1: 10.

98. *ibid.* 8.5: 10; cf. Peri. Tm. 7.10: 9.

eyes, with all these as part of Himself."<sup>99</sup> One comes across many verses in the whole of his works and in the works of other Ālvārs 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;"<sup>100</sup> "The Lord stands such that all the five elements and the whole of creation are Himself";<sup>101</sup> "The Lord is like the very life of life.....He is the life principle of all the worlds."<sup>102</sup> Again Nammālvār says: "The Lord extends at all times and in all places effortlessly; He has the Prime form of *jñana*; and He is at the same time so formless that He cannot be got at through the senses";<sup>103</sup> "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";<sup>104</sup> "Nārāyaṇa Who Himself is all sentient creatures and non-sentient things, and the *Devās* like Brahmā who having attained to the highest reaches in the path of *Dharma* have secured the state of *śānti*".<sup>105</sup> Pēyālvār 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."<sup>106</sup> Tirumaṅkaiyālvār, 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".<sup>107</sup> 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.

106. Mū. Tv. 38.

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".<sup>108</sup> Tirumāṅkaiyālvār expresses the same sentiment thus: "The Lord is Trinity in unity performing the functions of creation, preservation and destruction when viewed from the *śartra-śartri bhāva* point of view, but is, actually, of a particular different shape."<sup>109</sup> Just as the body and soul of a person are spoken of together as one entity, Brahamā, 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 Visnu like the soul. Again Nammālvār 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"<sup>110</sup> and again, "When wilt Thou draw me to Thy unattainable Feet, having placed me in the castle of Brahmānda (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".<sup>111</sup> In this connection the illuminating remark of Piḷḷai Tiruṅaraiyūr-Araiyaṅgar 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".<sup>112</sup> In this way every thought, word and deed refer ultimately to the

108. T.V.M. 8.1: 6.

109. Peri. Tm. 2.5: 3.

110. TVM 3.6: 1:

111. *ibid.* 4.9: 8.

112. Bhag. Viṣ. Book IV. 4.9: 8 (Commentary).

*śarīrin* who is the life of our life, the light of the universe and the love of our love. The *śarīrin* 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 *śeṣin* of all things, because they exist solely for the fulfilment of His purposes. They are His *śeṣas*.<sup>113</sup> 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 *śeṣi*. " *Acit* or *cit* 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".<sup>114</sup> 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 infinitising it. The self or soul derives its substantiality from the *adheya* aspect and its function from the *niyanta* aspect, and exists for the satisfaction of the *śeṣi* and all these depend absolutely on His will.

This concept of *śeṣa-śeṣi bhāva* or the owner-owned relationship is well intuited by the Tamil seers of Vaiṣṇavism. Nammālvār says: " *Taṇṇuḷ anaṭṭulakum niṛka, neṛimaiyāl tāṇṇum avaraṇṇuḷ niṛkum piṛāṇ*"<sup>115</sup> - '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".<sup>116</sup> In another context he says: "I am Thou, the hell of samsāra is ordained by Thee. If that is so, enjoyment

113. A *sūtra* (3.1 : 2) in *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* 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".

114. *The Philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita*, p. 182.

115. T.V.M. 9.6 : 4.

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".<sup>117</sup> Pūtattālvār says : "Even if a person is incapable of being aware of his *śeṣatva*, 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",<sup>118</sup> and again "We worship Śrīman Nārāyaṇa the supreme Lord on Whose chest constantly lives Lakṣmī and His feet and we hear His holy names being uttered in all the four directions, because of the relation of *śeṣa-śeṣi bhāva* between Him and us".<sup>119</sup> The word '*urimaiyāl*' (by our right) in the verse brings out the full significance of its meaning. The Lord stands in the relation of a *śeṣi* to both sentient beings and non-sentient things in common. In relation to non-sentient things He is *śeṣi*, because they exist for His purposes. In relation to sentient beings or *jīvas* endowed with intelligence, He is *śeṣi* in the special sense of being *svāmi* or Master whom it is their duty to serve. In being *śeṣa* to the Lord the selves share in common with non-sentient things but are *śeṣas* 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 *adhara*, the *jīva* becomes an inseparable attribute of the Lord even like His own attributes, *jñāna* and *śakti*. By being the Lord's *śeṣa* and by having the Lord as his *śeṣi*, 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 *śeṣa* 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

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 other protector than the Lord. This relationship of *śeṣa-śeṣi* 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 "aṭiyēn uḷḷān uṭal uḷḷān"<sup>120</sup> - '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.<sup>121</sup> 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 *ananda* (bliss) or *śeṣatva* (leigeship). Though Rāmānuja was perfectly informed in the matter, he wished to see the truth expounded by his *guru*, Tiruk-kōṭṭiyūr Nampi. He sent his disciple Kūrattāḷvān to Tiruk-kōṭṭiyūr to learn from Nampi the truth. After six months of waiting upon the great *Ācārya*, Āḷvān was not able to know the truth as the *Ācārya* condescended not to reveal the secret truths. Āḷvān 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 Nammāḷvār's phrase "In me the vassal". Later Āḷvān explained the meaning thus: "When the Āḷvār uses 'aṭiyēn' elsewhere he means the body to be at the fore in the body-soul. For example, in 'aṭiyēn ceyyum vinnāppam'<sup>122</sup> the word 'aṭiyēn' does not signify soul since the soul without body cannot make an appeal to the Lord. Similarly in 'aṭiyēn ciṭiya jñānattan'<sup>123</sup> the word 'aṭiyēn' does not stand for soul. The participation of the body is inevitable in the context for the phrase that follows the above is 'kāṇpān alaṅṅuvan'. So also in the verse preceding the one under discussion.<sup>124</sup> But the verse

120. T.V.M. 8.8: 2.

121. *Itiṅṅ Tamilākkam*. Vol. VIII. 8.8: 2 (Commentary).

122. T.V.R. 1.

123. T.V.M. 1.5: 7.

124. *ibid.* 8.8: 1.

under discussion for the reason that '*uṭalullān*' meaning that 'He inheres in the body' follows '*aṭiyēn ullān*', *aṭiyēn ullān* 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) — (*Śeṣatva*)". The *śeṣatva* of the soul is thus established.

Nārāyaṇa pervades the entire universe with His will.<sup>125</sup> 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.<sup>126</sup> 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.<sup>127</sup> 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 fire<sup>128</sup> 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".<sup>129</sup> The concept of *sārira-sartri 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 Aurva 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.<sup>130</sup> He is Himself all sentient and non-sentient beings, which means that He is the Self of them.<sup>131</sup> He is the sun and moon, and every thing.<sup>132</sup> Doubt and correct decision, untruth and truth and all other objects are Himself.<sup>133</sup> He is sin and virtue, *mokṣa*, bliss, misery, anger and favour and all qualities.<sup>134</sup>

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".<sup>135</sup> "He has, for His abode, the region of eternal glory called *Mahāvibhūri*".<sup>136</sup> "There is no end, O mighty warrior, to my divine glories".<sup>137</sup> These ideas are expressed concisely by Ājavantār: "The *aṇḍa* or the Universe and whatever else is found within that *aṇḍa* are His *vibhūtis*".<sup>138</sup> 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 (*bhōga*). 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.,

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130. Peri. Tm. 5.7: 2.

131. Ibid 4.1: 2.

132. Ibid. 4.5: 7.

133. Ibid. 4.5: 8.

134. Ibid. 4.5: 9.

135. V.P. 1.22: 32.

136. Ibid. 5.1: 50.

137. Bh. G. 10: 40.

138. Ājavantār Śtotram. 17.



of the world".<sup>139</sup> "All this is Hari's play or sport".<sup>140</sup> "Of Him who plays like a child".<sup>141</sup> "Playing like a boy with His toys".<sup>142</sup> "Thou playest with Thy creatures, as if they were balls for sport".<sup>143</sup> "All this is merely for play (on the part of the Brahman) as in the world (kings play with the balls)."<sup>144</sup> Nammālvār says: "[The Lord constitutes action of both of pleasure and pain, the various worlds, the blissful heaven as well as the pleasurable hell, and the various living beings through His great and manifold play;]<sup>145</sup> "My Lord, Kannaṅga, 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";<sup>146</sup> "the effulgent Lord of the great flood of knowledge holds within Himself, without huddling them, all objects and all persons";<sup>147</sup> "the sole God took birth in a unique way as mankind, other forms of life and all life";<sup>148</sup> "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".<sup>149</sup> 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.<sup>150</sup> 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 *nitya 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.

145. T.V.M. 3.10 : 7.

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".<sup>151</sup> Here the word 'darkness' (*tamas*) is to be taken to mean the world of *prakṛti*. "The wise always sees the Highest Place of Viṣṇu".<sup>152</sup> "He is in the Imperishable Region (sky)".<sup>153</sup> "Him Who dwells in the place which is beyond *rajas*".<sup>154</sup> "The All-pervading ancient one who is beyond matter"<sup>155</sup> "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".<sup>156</sup> 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.

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151. Taitt. Ar. 3.13: 1.

152. Taitt. S. 1.3: 6.

153. *ibid.* 2.3: 1.

154. *ibid.* 2.2. 12: 5.

155. *ibid.* 2.1: 1.

156. M.Bh. Śānti. 1964: 4.