

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

1. cf. *The Religious Consciousness* p. 348.

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".⁶ 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.⁷

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"⁸ characterize the life of a mystic. These are not 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".⁹ 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.

7. *ibid.* pp. 366, 67.

8. View of Heilar cited in the *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 65.

9. *ibid.* p. 65.

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 vivāha*), 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 Vedānta philosophy of Nammālvār and Rāmānuja interpreted as Vaiṣṇavism 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 *Nālayiram*. The Caṅkam literature has idealised love; its poetry of love is the poetry of the noumenon. As the Vaiṣṇavite commentators point out, the Ālvārs start singing in '*tānāna taṅmai*' i.e., as themselves as men but in the white heat of their passion for God they lose themselves and sing in '*pirāṭṭiyāna taṅmai*' i.e., as the lady-love. In the Ālvārs' hymns the whole of a hymn is either in '*tānāna taṅmai* or *pirāṭṭiyāna taṅmai*'. Aḷakiya Māṇavālap-perumāḷ Nāyanār has beautifully summarized this aspect of Ālvārs in the aphoristic sūtra style as, "*jñānattil taṅ peccu; prēmattil peṅ peccu*".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 Caṅkam age, purified still further by Tiruvaḷḷuvar in his immortal *Tirukkuraḷ* and identified with God by Tirumūlar, is revealed in all its concrete elaboration in this story of the love of the eternal lovers - the soul and God. The Ālvārs and the Nāyanmārs 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. *Kantabhāva* (*kaṭṭu*) 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 transempirical and it is described here in terms of *viṣaya 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.I grasp something inwardly as with the embracements of love.....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 adolescence. 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 spiritual 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.

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 equallation 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 man 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.¹⁷ 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.¹⁸ 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, irrevocableness and intimacy, the well known marks of ancient marriage.¹⁹

The Ālvārs and the Nāyanmārs 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. "*Kaṁṁanukkē am atu kāmam*" is the Vaiṣṇavite explanation of Tiruvaraṅkattamutaṅār.²⁰ "To love Lord Kṛṣṇa and none else is real love" is its meaning. The

17. *Philosophy of Mysticism*, (Ed. 1919), p. 330 ff.

18. *Mysticism*, p. 139.

19. *ibid.* p. 138.

20. R.N. 40. The word '*Kātal*' 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 '*aṅṇu*' and '*paṅṇu*'. 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-kūṣṭam*' (TLK. 3.3:1). Tiruvaḷḷuvar names the third part of the book *Tirukkuṣaḷ* 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 Yājñavalkya, 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".²¹ *Kāma* may be of three kinds, viz., *viṣaya kāma*, *ātma kāma* and *Bhagavat kāma*. *Viṣaya 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.²² Evil is changed into goodness and goodness into godliness as Brahman permeates all beings and brahmanises them.

21. Br. Up. 4.5 : 6.

22. Bhāg. P. 10. 29: 15.

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.²³ The regions are five: One part is *Kuṟṟiñci*, 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 *Pālai*, 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.²⁴ 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*, *Kuṟṟiñci*, *Marutam* and *Neytal*. The concept of 'nāṇṇilam' has this significance. But the term *Aṁtiṇai* in Tamil Grammar denotes the five different aspects of love conduct. Of these, except *Pālai*, the other four love aspects have their own regions. *Pālai* has no region of its own because there is no arid desert tract in Tamil Nad. This is the reason why inhabitants of desert found no place in *Akattiṇai* 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 Nad 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: li. 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.²⁵ The poetry of *Akattinai* 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.²⁶ 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 (*iyarkaippunarcci*); 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 (*puṇartal*), separation (*pirital*), married love of peace (*iruttal*), sorrows of desolation and despair (*irankal*) and the protests of unrequited love (*ūṭal*). The names of different regions have also been ascribed to the different aspects of love also.²⁷

The importance of the conception of God as Cosmic Beauty becomes significant when the Lord steals our hearts

25. *Studies in Tamil Literature and History*, p. 178. cf. *The History of Tamils* (Chap. 1).

26. T.L.K. 3.1: 57.

27. Among the characters numbering fourteen who figure in the love episode of the hero and the heroine of the *Chāṅkam* literature, the *Ālvārs* have pressed into service only two viz., mother of the heroine and her maid-companion. For the role of these fourteen characters, Vide: *Tolkāppiyam Kāṭṭum Vāṅkai*, pp. 55-65.

as "*Kaṣyan*"²⁸ "*Paṣṣan*"²⁹ "*Perālan*".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 *līlā*; and the *Tiruvāymolli*, the outpouring of Nammālvār, is the spiritual biography of the eternal game of divine love. To the Hindu mystic philosopher, Brahman is *ānanda* 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 *līlā* of God which aims at turning men into seekers after salvation.

God is Love and it is a dynamic love abhorring its solitude and hankering 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 '*Ēkāki*' 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 *Śrīyahpati*. 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.

31. Br. Up. 1.4: 3.

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 Itself and the true dialectic is this triad of love. The cosmic drama depends on this self-division into loving pairs.³² 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 Brindāvanam and ending with the *Rāsa Līlā* are the symbols of this cosmic drama. Almost all the Āḷvārs 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 Āḷvārs. Pēyāḷvār was God-mad from his very birth and he may be considered as one who had followed the *yogic* path. But the life of Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār 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 Nāyanmārs call both *yogis* and *bhogis* as *tapasvins* and therefore *bhogis* are those who enjoy *Bhagavat kāma*.³³

The concept of *Akattiṇai* has its bearing on the hymns of the Āḷvārs 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 (*puṁartal*) 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 the *Bhagavatam*, attracts the Āḷvārs, especially Āṭṭāḷ, Nammāḷvār and Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār. Their expression of the love of God through the medium of *nāyaka-nāyaki* love is unmatched in mystic literature for its moving power. The commentators³⁶ of *Nālāyiram*, bring out the beauty of the *Akam* poetry of the Āḷvārs by renaming the saints as feminine poetesses: Parāṅkuṣa Nāyaki (Nammāḷvār), Parakāla Nāyaki (Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār) 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

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 Āḷvārs.

36. For example, Sri P.B. Annangarachariya.

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 *samsleṣa* (*puṁartat*) 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 *visleṣa* (*pīrtat*) or separation of lovers. *Bhaktīrasa* is ripe in the process of what is known as the game of love or *samsleṣa* and *visleṣa*. Mystic idealism utilizes this game to its advantage; it utilizes the fidelity and mutualness given in this game of *śṛṅgāra rasa* and elevates it to the level of the Divine Love of Rādha and Āṅṭā]. 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, *nityavibhūti*. In the alternation between union and separation, the soul is freed from sensuality and egoism and yearns for the dawn of unitive consciousness. 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 Ālvārs, Tirumaṅkai Maṅṅaṅ and Nammālvār, and in the feminine ardour of Āṅṭā], the foster-daughter of Periyālvār.

37. It is said, according to Catholic mysticism, the Lord, the Bridegroom, comes thrice in the flesh.

The Ālvārs, especially Nammālvār, Tirumaṅkaiyālvār and Āṇṭā, 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 *Tirumantram*, 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. *Iraiyānār Akapporuḷ-ut* 1 (Commentary - the meaning of the word 'kāmaṁ').

extra-ordinary efforts. This idea is implied in the second word of *Tirumantiram*, namely 'Namah' (*namō*). When the *Ālvār-nāyaki* speaks in her own person in a third group of hymns, what is implied is the irrepressible desire of the *Ālvār-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 place 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. Sūti 133. (Vide Maṇavālamūnikā's Commentary). The commentator brings out beautifully the three different states of mental consciousness.

41. cf. *Subhasitavali* v. 1559; cf. *Drāmidōpaniṣadtātparyaratnāvali*. 3.

42. cf. K.R. Pala. *Tāṣakavatai*. 32; *ibid.* *Āraṇya. cūrpanakai*. 59.

43. *Rām. Adyodhya*. 3 : 29.

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.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 (*anyāpadeśa*) as some commentators⁴⁵ on the *Tiruvāymōḷi* 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 *Tiruvāymōḷi* is the presentation by Nammālvār of his God-experience. Twenty-seven decads of this work contain the vivid expression of the Ālvār's experience as the bride of the Lord. The Ālvār was in the state of trance for several years⁴⁶ and the result of this experience is contained here. During the milder stages of mystic experiences, the Ālvār 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 Ālvār seems to have hit upon a plan for treatment. He himself gives expression to his love as the bride in seventeen decads.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

44. T.V.R. 52, 60.

45. *Divyārta Dīpikā*: Introduction to *Tiruvruttam*

46. The period was 16 years. (D.S.C. 4:44).

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 decads of this kind in the *Tiruvāymōli*.⁴⁸ 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.⁴⁹ This is dealt with in three decads.⁵⁰ One of the three decads occurs in the fourth centum, where the nature of the self as the *śeṣa* 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 Āḷvār is only a male mystic, he had rightly chosen the mother and the maid-companion of the bride,⁵¹ who could better represent the mental agony of a woman in suffering than a male member.

The irrepressible 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 *arcā* (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 decads which treat of bridal mysticism, nine decads⁵² and three verses⁵³ in a decad are mainly intended to show that the Āḷvār was uncontrollably passionate in his love for the *arcā* 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 Nammāḷvār which contains a centum of verses presents the various aspects of the love which the Āḷvār has for the Lord. Ten verses⁵⁴ are sung by the Āḷvār 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.⁵⁵ An admirable artistic finish is revealed in the Ālvār'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.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 Ālvār devotes six verses.⁵⁷ Nineteen verses⁵⁸ 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 wishes⁵⁹ 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 Ālvār makes a person, not directly connected with any of the persons mentioned above, offer his remarks warning people against sensuous love⁶⁰ and describe the plight of the bride who pines in love-lorn condition.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 *tuḷaci* and use them for affording relief to the bride.⁶² Tiruvarāṅkam,⁶³ Tiruvēṅkaṭam⁶⁴ and

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.

56. *ibid.* 23, 26, 50, 55, 57, 65 to 67, 75.

57. *ibid.* 19, 24, 37, 47, 59, 60.

58. *ibid.* 2, 5, 7, 15, 20, 22, 33, 34, 36, 52, 58, 61, 62, 68, 69, 73, 81, 83, 87.

59. *ibid.* 2

60. *ibid.* 6.

61. *ibid.* 9.

62. *ibid.* 53.

63. *ibid.* 28.

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. *Sṛṅgārarasa* 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, Kaṇṇaṇ, whose sole artful 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 *samsṛeṣa* and *visṛeṣa*, the systole-diastole movements of *premabhakti* or the devotion of love. In *visṛeṣa* each moment stretches into eternity,⁶⁶ but in *samsṛeṣa* 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 unio-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 *Māyan* as the soul Enchanter enters into the inner being of the beloved and enjoys it as ever-creative '*ārāvamutu*'.⁶⁷ 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.⁶⁸ The bride feels that it is sweeter than honey and ambrosia.⁶⁹ She revels in the various exploits of Kṛṣṇa.⁷⁰ The thought of His accessibility or *saulabhya*, as expressed beautifully in the verse,⁷¹ simply astonishes her and transports her to the point of a trance wherein she is lost. The unitive joy of *samsāleṣa* 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 *samsāleṣa* 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 ('*amutllum āṛṛa iṇiyan*').

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 Nammālvār 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. *Vīśeṣa* 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 renouncement by the self of the 'me' and 'mine' is, the *sine qua non* of spirituality; and self-love and sensuality are completely rooted out.⁷² The spiritual quest for the Lord ripens now into the mystic thirst for Him. The woes and agonies of separation described in *Tiruvāymoḷi* and *Tiruviruttam* 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.⁷³ There is tremor with trembling all over the body. Even the mind and the sense

72. *Ibid.* 1.2:3. "nīr numatu eṅṅu ival vārmuṭal māyṭtu".

73. *Ibid.* 6.6:1, 2, 3; 7.2; 8.2:1, 3, 4, 6, 8.

organs pine away.⁷⁴ The bride sighs and sobs, weeps and wails, groans and cries in utter anguish. In his love-lorn stage, the Ālvār 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.⁷⁵ The bird *kurart* (*anṭil*), which is also called *krauñca*, cries in distress, and this may be due to its desire to have the *tuḷaci* of the Lord.⁷⁶ 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.⁷⁷ 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.⁷⁸ 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.⁷⁹ 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.⁸⁰ Darkness, which is not tolerated by the lovers, is fancied to be harassing the lovers. May it become freed of cruelty.⁸¹ The canal, with its black waters, flows night and day, thereby showing its condition which has become miserable by its love for the Lord.⁸² The lamp which is burning is considered to be heated by separation from the Lord.⁸³ 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 *tuḷaci*. In order to take from her the bangles in her hands, the sea ebbs and challenges her.⁸⁴ The gentle wind carrying with it the fragrance of the jasmine flowers, the *kuṭīñci* type of music, the even-tide and red clouds, torment the bride and make her lose all hope of happy life.⁸⁵ The intense experience which she had is vividly described⁸⁶ Even at the time when the cows return from grazing fields she does not find any indication of getting at Him.⁸⁷ The gentle breeze brings with it the smoke of the fragrant aloe wood, the twang of the lute called *yāḷ*, the note 'p'⁸⁸ (*pañcama*) and the cool sandal paste and wages war as it were with her weak person.⁸⁹ She could not stand the mellifluous notes of the flute when played by Him.⁹⁰ This decad⁹¹ 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.

85. T.V.M. 9.9: 1.

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. Periyāḷ. Tm. 3.6.

91. *ibid.* 9.9.

than what is expressed through the mind-body as it is soul-sickness leading to soul torture.⁹² 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 being⁹³ and her spiritual cry assumes cosmic dimensions and is heard even in the world beyond the sphere of *samsāra*.⁹⁴ By utter self-naughting and with the feeling of her nothingness, she surrenders herself to his mercy without any hedonistic or utilitarian considerations.⁹⁵ The *Māyan* could not resist the call of love of His beloved and claim for reunion. Now again the *samsleṣa* 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 *Kaṇṇaṇ* 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.⁹⁶ In a state of desperation she thinks of suicide like *Sītā*⁹⁷ in the *Asoka Vana* and soon she recollects that she has no life or will of her own as the Lord alone is her life and sustenance. *Kaṇṇaṇ* 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*).⁹⁸ But her soul-hunger and thirst are not satisfied by the cunning Kṛṣṇa. The game of hide and seek played by the *Muraḷi-dhara* can be known only by knowing the *Māyan* or the player of the game.⁹⁹ 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.¹⁰⁰ 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.¹⁰¹ 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.¹⁰²

The bride's maid-companion reports to the mother the details of her God-intoxication.¹⁰³ Her heart melts like wax and lac.¹⁰⁴ In her Divine madness, she embraces the burning wind and fire thinking that they are *parañcōtīs* and seeks the sea as her blue-hued Lord.¹⁰⁵ Her similar behaviour is portrayed in this decad.¹⁰⁶

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.¹⁰⁷ She created the lores, showed them, kept them herself and is herself the essence of the lores.¹⁰⁸ She is herself the five elements,¹⁰⁹ the activities of all the three times, the enjoyer of such acts and the creator of those acts.¹¹⁰ She protects the worlds, lifted up the Govardhana hill, killed the demons, protected the Pāṇḍavas and churned the ocean.¹¹¹ She herself did the feats of Kṛṣṇa.¹¹² She is herself the relation of every person¹¹³ and herself every deity.¹¹⁴ She is the dispenser of justice, and herself the primordial person.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 '*veṭṭiyāṭṭu*' 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.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 *tuḷaci* uttering the names of the God while doing so.¹¹⁷ This aspect of the description of the bride's suffering is called '*veṟivḷakku*' in Tamil literature; the same is described in another verse¹¹⁸ where the *tuḷaci* garland or *tuḷaci* leaves, or the *tuḷaci* 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 irrepressible 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 '*maṭal arṭal*'. 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

117. T.V.R. 20.

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,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.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.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.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.¹²⁷ He need not also exhibit His attachment to her birds such as *pīvai* and parrot.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.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.¹³⁰ When she is called by her companions for sports, if He too were to

123. *ibid.* 2.5: 2.

124. *ibid.* 6.2: 1.

125. *ibid.* 6.2: 2.

126. *ibid.* 6.2: 3.

127. *ibid.* 6.2: 4.

128. *ibid.* 6.2: 5.

129. *ibid.* 6.2: 6.

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.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.¹³² The bride identifies herself with the cowherdresses in Gokulam and refers to their lot which has been one of teasing at His hands.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.¹³⁴ She could no longer remain bashful and control herself.¹³⁵ There is no purpose in her mother chastising her, as she is lost to Him in her admiration of His wondrous acts.¹³⁶ She requests the elderly ladies to take her there.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.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.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.¹⁴⁰ The Ālvār, who is in the role of the bride, refers to his

131. *ibid.* 6.2:8.

132. *ibid.* 6.2:9.

133. *ibid.* 6.2:10.

134. *ibid.* 7.3:1, 2.

135. *ibid.* 7.3:3.

136. *ibid.* 7.3:4.

137. *ibid.* 7.3:5, 6.

138. *ibid.* 7.3:7.

139. *ibid.* 7.3:8.

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 sugarcane? 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.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.¹⁴⁸ These limbs which are peerless form His face and have taken away her life.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.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.¹⁵¹ The Lord who could not be visualised by any one including Brahmā, Śiva and Indra, presented Himself to the Āḷvār's mind whose description is called *uruvelipāṭu* or *uruvelittōṟṟam* (hallucination). A more impassioned depiction of the sight of the Lord is hardly found elsewhere except in another part of *Tiruvāymoli*¹⁵² While in one part¹⁵³ the auspicious form of the Lord is experienced by the bride filling up her mental vision, the other part¹⁵⁴ shows the same experience of the Lord in all His entirety of the infatuating limbs which the Āḷvār finds in the *arcā* form of the Lord at Tirukkuṟuṅkuṭi. 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

147. *ibid.* 7.7: 6.

148. *ibid.* 7.7: 7.

149. *ibid.* 7.7: 8.

150. *ibid.* 7.7: 9.

151. *ibid.* 7.7: 10.

152. *ibid.* 5.5.

153. *ibid.* 7.7.

154. *ibid.* 5.5.

Lord. She expresses her helpless condition by referring to the enchanting *arcā* forms at Tirumalai,¹⁵⁵ Peruṅkuḷam¹⁵⁶ and Tirukkuṭantai.¹⁵⁷ She is prepared to wait for any number of ages to get at Him.¹⁵⁸ At last, she states that her mind had reached His feet.¹⁵⁹

A decad¹⁶⁰ 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 *arcā* form in the shrine of Tiruppuliyūr 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 *Āḷvār-nāyaki* who longs for the sight of the feet of the Lord¹⁶¹ to wear on the head the dust of His feet,¹⁶² to behold the nectar-like Lord¹⁶³ and to worship His feet,¹⁶⁴ or at least the flowers adorning them.¹⁶⁵ She is eager to worship Him¹⁶⁶ and utter His names¹⁶⁷

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, *krauñca*, *pūvai*, parrots, bees and *tumpi* and cranes are likely, together with the blue clouds, to bring her out to the material world and

155. *ibid.* 8.2: 1.

156. *ibid.* 8.2: 4.

157. *ibid.* 8.2: 6.

158. *ibid.* 8.2: 7.

159. *ibid.* 8.2: 10.

160. *ibid.* 8.9.

161. *ibid.* 5.9: 1, 3, 6.

162. *ibid.* 5.9: 2.

163. *ibid.* 5.9: 5.

164. *ibid.* 5.9: 8.

165. *ibid.* 5.9: 7.

166. *ibid.* 5.9: 9.

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.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.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.¹⁷⁰ She could not contain herself while recalling the sweet nectar-like utterances of the Lord.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.¹⁷² She shudders to think of the encounter He would have with the demons while in the forest.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.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

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.

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 Āḷvār'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 Āḷvār 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 Āḷvār 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.¹⁷⁵ 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 *krauñca* bird and the roar of the waves of the sea kindle the passion of the bride and make her more miserable.¹⁷⁶ That the wind which is cool as it blows, is experienced by the bride as hot¹⁷⁷ and the same becomes bearable to her when she gets for her use the garland of *tuḷocī* which was worn by Him.¹⁷⁸ 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.¹⁷⁹ 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.¹⁸⁰ 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.¹⁸¹

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.¹⁸² The service of Hanumān as a messenger and that of the swan in the case of Nala and Dharmayanti are too well known. Rukmini sent a delightful presentation of her love to Śrī Kṛṣṇa through a brahmin.¹⁸³ 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 *Alakā* 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 Lakṣmaṇasena through the wind, as depicted in the *Pavanadūta* of Dhoyi (c. 1200 A.D.).

183. *Bhāg. P.* 10.52: 37 to 53.

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 *Alakā* 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.¹⁸⁴ 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.¹⁸⁵ 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,¹⁸⁶ and that the lady-love (heroine) is mad after Him,¹⁸⁷ and that her life is His.¹⁸⁸ The *Nāyaki*, in her excessive God-intoxication,

184. According to a Tamil verse from *Irattinac-curukkam* swan, peacock, parrot, cloud, pūvai, maid-servant, koel, mind, breeze, bees are traditionally employed as messengers (vide: Introduction to *Pukattiyalai Viṭu 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 decads 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*).¹⁸⁹ The bees are chosen by the Ālvār 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.¹⁹⁰

It is significant to find that Nammālvār 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.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 Nalā tried to do,¹⁹² the bird must consider itself to be fortunate to be with the Lord.¹⁹³ The *koels* which could utter some sweet expressions are then addressed.¹⁹⁴ The swan, which is happy with its consort, is asked to go to the Lord and tell Him of her condition.¹⁹⁵ The *krauñca* is asked to tell Him that she would be deprived of her life because of Him.¹⁹⁶ The heron,¹⁹⁷ the bee,¹⁹⁸ and the parrot¹⁹⁹ 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.²⁰⁰ If the wind

189. *ibid.* 5.6; cf. Bh.G. 10: 19 to 42.

190. T.V.R. 54.

191. T.V.M. 1.4: 1.

192. *Naiṣadhīya Caritam.* 1: 124, 125.

193. T.V.M. 1.4: 1.

194. *ibid.* 1.4: 2; cf. *Peri Tm.* 5.3: 4; T.V.M. 6.1: 6; *Nāc. Tm.* 5: 1.

195. *ibid.* 1.4: 3.

196. *ibid.* 1.4: 4.

197. *ibid.* 1.4: 5.

198. *ibid.* 1.4: 6.

199. *ibid.* 1.4: 7.

200. *ibid.* 1.4: 8.

does not find it convenient to be the messenger, it is asked to do away with her life.²⁰¹ At last, the mind is asked to be the messenger and convey her misery and remain with Him for ever.²⁰² The *Āṅṅār-nāyaki*, while adopting the means to get at the Lord at Tiruvaṅvaṅṅūr, asks the cranes to make clear to Him her earnestness to be with Him.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.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.²⁰⁵ The swans and the herons are chid by the bride for not having gone to the Lord.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.²⁰⁷ The clouds too which proceed towards the Tirumalai hills do not oblige the bride.²⁰⁸

It is not correct to hold²⁰⁹ that the bride sent messengers to the Lord in His *vyāha*,²¹⁰ *vibhava*,²¹¹ *paratva* and *antar-*

201. *Ibid.* 1.4: 9.

202. *Ibid.* 1.4: 10.

203. *Ibid.* 6.1: 1.

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 Tirumuḷikkaḷam. *Ibid.* 9.7: 4, 5.

205. T.V.R. 46.

206. *Ibid.* 30.

207. *Ibid.* 29. There is a similar description in Act IV of Kālidāsa's *Vikramorvasiya* where Purūruvas gets disappointed not being able to get any tidings of his beloved.

208. *Ibid.* 31.

209. *Divyārta Dīpikāi* on T.V.M. 1.4: 1 (following the tradition of A.H.).

210. T.V.M. 1.4.

211. *Ibid.* 6.1.

yāmin,²¹³ and *arcā*²¹² forms of God. The decad 1.4 of the *Tiruvāymoḷi* 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*²¹⁷ 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 Nammālvār begins *Tiruvāymoḷi*, 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 decads under reference. Rather it must be admitted that *para*, *vibhava* and *arcā* forms get treated in these decads 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.