

CONTRIBUTION OF ĀLVĀRS OTHER THAN NAMMĀLVĀR

The sum and substance of the teachings that could be gathered from the compositions of the other Ālvārs is similar to what Nammālvār contributed. Yet, there is something unique and individual in their contributions. The other Ālvārs tried their hands at handling several forms of compositions (*tours de force*) and several motifs. Among the Ālvārs Tirumānkaiyālvār was the most learned and even in his own lifetime he was recognised as a great poet¹ and had tried his hands in various literary forms and variety of metres in his compositions and at the same time had exhibited the highest degree of devotion to the Lord in all his works.

THE FIRST ĀLVĀRS

Poykaiyālvār, Pūtattālvār and Peyālvār form the first and earliest group to visualize the Lord with Śrī at Tiruk-kōvalūr and refer to Him as the deity.² The supremacy of Viṣṇu over other deities and in particular over Śiva's is vividly brought out.³ It is Poykaiyālvār that made the unique pronouncement that the Lord would take that form which His disciples desire Him to take up and appear before them. He takes also that name which His devotees wish Him to take up.⁴ He brought out vividly the concept of *śeṣa* by describing the manifold services which Ādiśeṣa renders to the Lord.⁵ These Ālvārs enjoin the utterance of the

1. Peri. Tm. 1.7: 10.

2. M. Tv. 67, 86; cf. I. Tv. 52, 57, 82; Mū. Tv. 1, 2, 16.

3. *ibid.* 5, 74, 98.

4. *ibid.* 44.

5. *ibid.* 53.

name of the Lord as soon as one gets from his bed in the early hours of the morning before sun rise.⁶ Pūtattālvār admires and loses himself in admiring the affection which Yaśoda displayed by making Kṛṣṇa suck her breast soon after Pūtana was killed. She did not in the least worry as to what would happen to her, if she too were to meet with her end. She wanted to see that the child must be fed with breast milk which she offered with affection.⁷ The substance of the teachings of the *Vedas* consists in hailing His name.⁸

All the three Ālvārs speak of the Lord as having the world as His body,⁹ but Pēyālvār in particular offers graphic exposition of this truth.¹⁰ Worship with flowers at the proper time is to be done at His Feet.¹¹ Mere recitation of the *mantras* while doing *sandhyā* does not serve any purpose, if there is no bestowal of any thought on the greatness of God, that is, if there is no devotion to the Lord.¹² The three Ālvārs who must have practised meditation for God-realization as it is evident from the stress they lay on the need to control the sense,¹³ had a direct vision of the Lord and His shining frame.¹⁴ They chose to dedicate at His Feet their compositions which contain the outpourings of their hearts brimming with love.¹⁵ All of them were attached by the Tirumalai hills¹⁶ and the deity there.¹⁷ Ardent devotees meditate on the deity in the hill remaining motionless, not even exhaling. Creepers with flowers grow over their matted

6. *ibid.* 66; I. Tv. 47.

7. I. Tv. 9; Mū. Tv. 29.

8. *ibid.* 39.

9. M. Tv. 29, 73, 92; Mu. Tv. 24.

10. Mū. Tv. 24; 38, 44.

11. M. Tv. 43; I. Tv. 76, 77; Mū. Tv. 24, 44.

12. *ibid.* 33.

13. *ibid.* 47, 50; I. Tv. 6, 26; Mū. Tv. 12.

14. I. Tv. 11, 51, 56; Mū. Tv. 2, 5, 50, 55, 57.

15. M. Tv. 1; I. Tv. 74.

16. *ibid.* 26, 37 to 40, 76; I. Tv. 25, 46, 54; Mū. Tv. 26, 30.

17. *ibid.* 68; I. Tv. 28, 45; Mū. Tv. 14, 40, 70.

hairs.¹⁸ Elephants, monkeys, and others also worship the Lord Who is described as shining like a gem.¹⁹ Pēyālvār refers to the specific characteristics of Viṣṇu and Śiva and states that the forms of both synchronize in the Lord at the Tirupati hills.²⁰ This is not an indication as some hold²¹ as suggestive of the identity of the deity in the hills with Śiva. The Ālvārs emphatically declare that Lord Nārāyaṇa has allowed Śiva to dwell in the left part of His body.²² It may be that Śiva's presence is not noticeable in every form of the Lord. Whenever the Lord's place is mentioned as hill, it must refer only to Tirumalai²³ and not to any other place.

The first three Ālvārs had a synthetic view of the various forms of the Supreme Person. Often they identified the Lord Who lies in the milky ocean with the *arcā* and *vibhava* forms and with the indweller of the selves. Tiruvēṅkaṭam, Tiruvehkā and others get frequent reference in this context.²⁴ The standing, reclining and sitting potures of the Supreme Person in the *arcā* forms are graphically connected with His other forms such as Vāmana, Varāha, Narasimha, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa.²⁵ It seems as though that He chose to lie down after achieving some exploits.²⁶ His omnipresent form²⁷ and His presence as the indweller²⁸ are never lost sight of. These three Ālvārs do not however lay exclusive emphasis on the significance of worshipping the deity in one form alone. Besides declaring that His form cannot be

18. I. Tv. 53.

19. *ibid.* 72; Mu. Tv. 70.

20. Mu. Tv. 63.

21. *Ārāicitt-tokuti*, pp.271, 272.

22. M. Tv. 28; T N. 9; Peri. Tm. 7.10: 3; T.V.M. 1.3: 9; 10.4: 6.

23. Mū. Tv. 69.

24. M. Tv. 39, 77, 99; I. Tv. 25, 28, 46, 54, 70; Mū. Tv. 26, 30, 32, 34.

25. *ibid.* 39, 77, 99; I. Tv. 18, 34; Mū. Tv. 94.

26. Mū. Tv. 64; cf. Nāp. Tv. 35.

27. M. Tv. 94, 96; Mū. Tv. 37.

28. *ibid.* 99; Mū. Tv. 3.

apprehended to be of any particular kind only,²⁹ it is agreed that He presents Himself in a visible and enchanting frame.

Devotion to God is technically called *para-bhakti* in the Viśiṣṭādvaita school as it is directed towards the Supreme Person. *Para-bhakti* creates in the devotee an ardent desire to have a direct vision of the Lord which is called *para-jñāna*. The high delight arising out of this *para-jñāna* is called *parama-bhakti*. All the first three Ālvārs have all these to almost the same degree among them, but because of their different approaches and mental aptitudes, their compositions reveal that one of these is the prominent aspect in the work of one of them while another in others' works. *Para-bhakti* dominates the composition of Poykaiyālvār, *para-jñāna* that of Pūtattālvār and *parama-bhakti* that of Pēyālvār.³⁰ All the three Ālvārs speak only of worshipping the Feet of the Lord and do not conceive of any other means such as knowledge or good works as the way for obtaining release.

Poykaiyālvār begins his composition by referring to the need for the removal of worldly distress and completes his work by asking his mind to set itself to the Lord. Pūtattālvār refers in his first verse and the last one to his devotion to the Lord. Pēyālvār refers to his great rejoicing at the sight of the Lord with Śrī in the first verse and to the Grace of Śrī in the last one. From this, one thing is clear and that is, the first three Ālvārs were so much satisfied with *para-bhakti* that they were not much worried about the miseries of the world. They were already *parama-bhaktas* of the Lord before they met together at Tirukkōvalūr when they had *para-jñāna*. Naturally, they were more concerned with obtaining a direct vision of the Lord which made them, while they got it, *parama-bhaktas*. It is clear that the goal of all these three ways of knowing is one only, which is confirmed by tradition also. The path of knowledge, the path of devotion saturated with knowledge and the path of vision

29. *ibid.* 56, 68, 84; I. Tv. 5, 60; Mū. Tv. 81, 82.

30. *Tivyārta-tīpkai* - Second Tiruvantāti (Introduction).

(intuitive realization) are not three separate ways. They form one unitary manner of progressive realization. Knowledge passes over transcendent devotion, which in its turn culminates in vision of the Divine form and attributes. Though the ways of approach are triple, the object of all the three is one only, namely, the integral experience of God.

TIRUMALICAIYĀLVĀR

Tirumḷicaiyālvār is the most erudite and philosophical-minded among the Ālvārs. Intense meditation on the nature of Reality made him realize the truth about God-head. He moved among the exponents of the various schools of religion and philosophy and made himself familiar with their doctrines. He adopted the powers of ratiocination and arrived at the conclusion that the Lord with Śri is the supreme God. He presented his views in his two compositions *Nāṇmukan-tiruvantāti* and *Tiruccanta-viruttam*.

In the very opening verse of the *Nāṇmukan-tiruvantāti*, he mentions that Nārāyaṇa is the Supreme Person who created Brahmā with four faces who in his turn produced Rudra³¹. Due reflection on the nature of the Supreme God-head would only prove that Nārāyaṇa is the only deity whose greatness is not fully known to any one and it is only His Grace that confers the result on men for their undertakings.³² This Ālvār states that none but he has realised the ultimate truth as reclining in the milky ocean, Śri Raṅgam and the banyan leaf, revealing the self-confidence he has for such a realization and the successful efforts he has made to realise this.³³ That Nārāyaṇa is the only deity who is devoted by all expressions is the doctrine of the Viśiṣṭādvaitic school which was enunciated by this Ālvār.³⁴ Perhaps the period when this Ālvār was living was marked by the aggressive preachings of the

31. Nāṇ. Tv. 1.

32. *ibid.* 2; cf. for a similar idea: Tyāgarāja's kṛti - 'Ēmicēsitenemi Śrīrāmasvāmi karuṇā' in *Tōṭi rāga*.

33. *ibid.* 3, 10, 27, 73.

34. *ibid.* 4.

Jains, Buddhists and Śaivites when the adherents of these faiths chose to assert their individual worth by casting disparaging comments on one another. This is reflected to some extent in some verses of this Ālvār where he emphatically declares that the followers of other religions do not extol Viṣṇu and for that reason are insignificant and mean.³⁵ In particular, the several incidents are enumerated to prove that Śiva is definitely inferior to Viṣṇu³⁶, Nārāyaṇa is ever ready to bestow His Grace on humanity and delay in getting His Grace is due to the lack of enthusiasm on the part of men in making request for His Grace.³⁷ He stands as the very essence of the *Vedas*.³⁸ Those who take to education through the study of the *Vedas* should be deemed to have failed to get the benefit of that education, if they have not realized that Nārāyaṇa is the supreme deity.³⁹ Śiva is described to be seated under the banyan tree and taught his four pupils that the Supreme Being is the One Who measured the world, lies on the banyan leaf and milky ocean and that all shall bend before Him and worship Him.⁴⁰ No other deity but Him Who has Śrī deserves worship.⁴¹ Nārāyaṇa is everything in the world and nothing exists besides Him.⁴² The Ālvār refers to the festival celebrated at Tirumalai on the day when the constellation Tiruvōṇam dominates.⁴³ Every deity including Brahmā and Rudra propitiate the God at Tirumalai⁴⁴. It is this Ālvār that declared openly and emphati-

35. *ibid.* 6, 14, 52.

36. *ibid.* 8, 9, 19, 31, 56, 78; Tc. V. 70, 71.

37. *ibid.* 7.

38. *ibid.* 13, 69.

39. *ibid.* 54.

40. *ibid.* 17, 26. This is suggested by a verse which describes Śiva as a great devotee of Viṣṇu, with rosary garland in the hand, the ultimate truth of Rāma in the heart, the water from the Feet of Viṣṇu on the head and the supreme Rāma *mantra* at the tip of the tongue.

41. *ibid.* 53.

42. *ibid.* 20.

43. *ibid.* 41.

44. *ibid.* 42., 43.

cally the Tirumalai hills as the place liked and respected by the denizens of heaven and earth.⁴⁵ The glory of this hill is described in several ways.⁴⁶ The deity at Śrī Raṅgam shows to humanity that He presents to people Himself out of His own free will and not in the least through the efforts on the part of the people to get at Him.⁴⁷ The ascetics with the triple staff (*tridanda*) are said to live there.⁴⁸ One shall utter His name, or any verse or composition in praise of Him.⁴⁹ His devotees shall be worshipped⁵⁰ and they are respected by Brahmā and others.⁵¹

The other work *Tiruccanta-viruttam* is a polemical treatise, as it were. The Ālvār revels in using numbers symbolic of the *tattvas* he would like to demonstrate as suggestive of Nārāyaṇa's greatness. Number five is used in all possible ways to show the products of matter, senses, elements and that the Lord is the only one God having control over them.⁵² He is the Lord of the syllables and letters which are in the form of consonants and vowels and He is shown to the world in the *praṇava*.⁵³ He is the soul of all beings⁵⁴. He is worshipped by Śiva.⁵⁵ He is the material cause of the world which springs from Him and merges in Him like the waves of the sea ebb and get merged there itself.⁵⁶ The *Upaniṣadic* statement that He is beyond expression, but yet the subject of them is beautifully restated by

45. *ibid.* 45.

46. *ibid.* 46, 47, 48.

47. Periyavāccāṅ Piḷḷai cites this as an illustration of the *mantra* contained in Kaṭh. Up. 2: 23.

48. Tc. V. 52.

49. Nāṅ. Tv. 65, 88.

50. *ibid.* 89, 90.

51. *ibid.* 91.

52. Tc. V. 3.

53. *ibid.* 4.

54. *ibid.* 5.

55. *ibid.* 9.

56. *ibid.* 10.

the Āḷvār.⁵⁷ His real nature is beyond human comprehension, but He is too well known as the Lord of Nappinnai.⁵⁸ Though He could not be named specifically in any particular way, He is having the discus in the hand and is glorified in the *Sāma-veda*, that is, *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*.⁵⁹ He is to be known through the four *Vedas* and six auxiliaries.⁶⁰ It is only this Āḷvār that expounds the *vyūha* doctrine of the *Pāñcarātra* system.

“Ēkamūrṭti mūṅṅumūrṭti nālumūrṭti naṅmaicēr
Pōkamūrṭti puṅṅiyattin mūrṭtiēṅṅil mūrṭtiyāy
Nākamūrṭti cayaṅamāy nalaṅkaṭar kiṭantumēl
Ākamūrṭti āyavaṅṅam eṅkol āti tēvaṅṅē ”.⁶¹

In this verse ‘Ēkamūrṭti’ means one person who is Paravāsudeva. ‘Mūṅṅumūrṭti’ signifies Saṅkarṣaṇa, Aniruddha and Pradhymna who are cosmic deities incarnated by the Divine. ‘Nālumūrṭti’ means Pradhāna, Puruṣa, Avyakta and Kāla forms; ‘Pōkamūrṭti’ (*bhogamūrṭti*) means Enjoyable Being otherwise known as immaterial form. ‘Puṅṅiyamūrṭti’ stands for the Person realised through merit or the form realized in liberation. ‘Eṅṅilmūrṭti’ signifies the person of many manifestational forms or *vibhava* forms. ‘Ākamūrṭti’ (*Yākamūrṭti*) means many forms of *arcā* desired by the devotees. The Lord is responsible for orderliness in any aspect of life such as sex, gender in grammar, matter etc.⁶² This Āḷvār refers profusely to the divine descents of the Lord, but makes individual references to the exploits of the Lord as Kṛṣṇa.⁶³ Following the *Bhāgavata*, the Āḷvār refers to the colour of the Lord as white, red, dark and blue in the *Kṛta*, *Treta*, *Dvāpara* and *Kali* ages respectively.⁶⁴ His synthetic presentation of the Lord’s forms is marvellous when he

57. *ibid.* 11.

58. *ibid.* 13.

59. *ibid.* 14; Ch. Up. 1.6 : 6.

60. *ibid.* 15.

61. *ibid.* 17.

62. *ibid.* 26.

63. *ibid.* 30, 31, 35, 37, 38, 40, 43, 58, 107.

64. *ibid.* 44.

mentions the Lord as standing on the hill (Tirumalai), lying in the milky ocean, measuring the worlds, keeping the worlds within Him at the time of deluge, lifted the world as Varāha and created the beings and gods. He is thus the primeval Lord.⁶⁵ He refers to the incident of Rāma aiming the earthen clod in the bow and striking at the hump-backed Mantara and made her relieved of her egoism.⁶⁶

Tirukkuṭantai (Kumbakonam) is described to be a place inhabited by brahmins wearing the sacred threads, constantly reciting the *Vedas*.⁶⁷ The Lord who stands at Tiruveṅkaṭam where the rich bamboos reach the skies is lying at Kumbakonam rich in plantations brimming with honey.⁶⁸ The Ālvār asks the Lord at Tirukkuṭantai whether He is lying there due to the legs aching when He walked through the forests in the descent of Rāma or because of the bodily ache when He lifted up the earth in His Varāha descent. He asks Him to get up and talk to him.⁶⁹ It is held that the Lord got up slightly from the serpent couch and continued to remain in that posture. Frequent references are made to the various postures with which the Lord presents in the various shrines.⁷⁰

The means that could be adopted to get at Him lies in weaning of the mind from the objects of the world and then enter into meditation which is only *karma-yoga*. The sins could be got rid of and then it will be possible to reflect on His qualities.⁷¹ The repetition of the eight-lettered *mantra* is necessary to have spiritual progress.⁷²

Tirumaḷicaiyālvār is rightly called Bhakti-sāra and *para-bhakti* is meant here.⁷³ His *Nānmukan-tiruvantāti* declares

65. *ibid.* 48.

66. *ibid.* 49.

67. *ibid.* 56.

68. *ibid.* 60.

69. *ibid.* 61.

70. *ibid.* 63, 64, 65.

71. *ibid.* 75, 76.

72. *ibid.* 77; cf. *ibid.* 78. vide *ibid.* 67 for *arcirāti-gati*.

that Nārāyaṇa is the subject matter of all the *Vedas*. After the manner of the *Upaniṣads* this Ālvār takes up the Lord as the cause of the world and concludes that He is the only God to be worshipped. The other work *Tiruccanta-viruttam* deals mostly with the relation of body and soul as existing between the world of sentient beings and non-sentient things, and God. The composition is called poetry or song⁷⁴ because of the metrical mode as distinct from other ordinary modes. He is rightly called 'cōtt'⁷⁵ as he was like a lustrous lamp throwing a flood of light on the surrounding objects. Through his works he brought to light many of the truths of Vaiṣṇavite religion.

TONṬARATIP - POTIYĀLVĀR

The small poem *Tiruppaḷḷi-ēḷucel* of this Ālvār is a fine lyrical piece which is intended to awaken the Lord in the early hours of the morning. This piece is a perfect artistic production of poetic beauty describing that the day has dawned which is graphically represented to come into being step by step each indicated by the results produced. Darkness recedes,⁷⁶ gentle wind blows⁷⁷ and the stars gradually fade.⁷⁸ Chirping of the birds is heard.⁷⁹ God Who is the protector of people from their distresses⁸⁰ is frequently mentioned to be awaited. He is awakened by all sorts of deities,⁸¹ sages, semi-divine beings who throng at His doors and compete with each other to have precedence over others. They all sing to the accompaniment of musical instruments.⁸²

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73. T.P. 371 where the Ālvār is referred to as 'paraṇ'.
74. *ibid.* 371. Here the composition is referred to as '*canta viruttap-pāṭal*'.
75. *ibid.* 40.
76. T.E. 1.
77. *ibid.* 2.
78. *ibid.* 3.
79. *ibid.* 4, 5.
80. *ibid.* 2.
81. *ibid.* 6, 7, 8, 9.
82. *ibid.* 9.

The Āḷvār preferred to worship the Lord at Śrī Raṅgam, a place where Vibhīṣṇa offered his worship.⁸³ While Viśvāmītra, who initiated the service of arousing the Lord, requested Rāma to get up⁸⁴ to attend to daily routine, this Āḷvār requests the Lord at Śrī Raṅgam to get up in order to make him become the servant of His devotees.⁸⁵ This important aspect of this piece has permeated the practice of the Vaiṣṇavites to make the recitation of this piece obligatory during the *Dhanurmāsa* (December-January).

Tirumālai is the other work of this Āḷvār in forty-five verses. The Āḷvār rendered service to the Lord at Śrī Raṅgam by rearing a garden of flowering creepers and trees and wreathing the flowers into garlands for the Lord. This service was considered great by him and so named this composition as *Tirumālai* (sacred garland) each verse being considered as a flower. The Āḷvār does not actually claim his verses to be treated as conforming to eight kinds of flowers (*aṣṭapuspikā*) but it is not difficult to find references to some of those flowers. Sense control shall form part of the discipline to prepare oneself for serving God.⁸⁶ Deep remorse is conveyed by the Āḷvār for not having controlled his senses and for having allowed himself to be lured by women's enticing tricks.⁸⁷ The Āḷvār is bent more on advising people to utter the name of God by citing his own painful experiences and as such this composition could be justifiably named *Tirumālai*. Two festivals mark out this composition as unique by the stress laid on the value of uttering God's name.⁸⁸ It is devotion that marks out a devotee and not his nobility due to birth or social status.⁸⁹ The words 'accutā', 'amararērē' 'āyartam koḷuniē' are enumerated with significance suggesting respectively that 'the Lord would never let down His devotees', 'is

83. *ibid.* 5.

84. Rām. Bāla. 23: 2.

85. T.E. 10.

86. T.M. 1; cf. *ibid.* 21, 30.

87. *ibid.* 31, 33.

88. *ibid.* 1, 41.

89. *ibid.* 39, 40.

the Lord of the great gods', and is 'the darling of the cow-herds.'⁹⁰ God is thus within the reach of people whether they are high or low.⁹¹ The enjoyable experience which this Ālvār got through reciting the names of the Lord make him not to wish for even the position of Indra.⁹² The Ālvār's advice to people is rich with his insight into the worldly behaviour.⁹³ It is enough if one utters the three-lettered name when one is in distress.⁹⁴ One would be rid of his sins by simply listening to the casual utterance of the Lord's name.⁹⁵ Simply uttering the word '*arāṅkam*' would protect people from distress.⁹⁶

The recounting of the Ālvār's personal experience with women and how the Lord at Śrī Raṅgam lifted him up from distress is full of feeling.⁹⁷ The Lord is true to those who are true to Him.⁹⁸ The Lord entered within him and instilled respectful consideration for him.⁹⁹ He became delectable to him who would not bow to Him or praise Him.¹⁰⁰ The sight of the Lord is so endearing that tears gush forth from his eyes and prevent them from getting fixed at Him.¹⁰¹ Merely talking and talking does not confer any benefit or greatness on the speaker. Words would fail only when the mind, which is pure, is directed at the Lord Whom it cannot gauge. The

90. *ibid.* 2.

91. *Periyavāccāṅ Piḷḷai* on *ibid.* 2.

92. T.M. 2.

93. *ibid.* 4 to 14.

94. *ibid.* 4. *Periyavāccāṅ Piḷḷai* takes the Sanskrit name 'Govinda' here and draws the analogy by uttering the Tamil word (*amma*) which is three-lettered and uttered when one is in difficulties.

95. *ibid.* 12.

96. It is this aspect of the utterance of the name that is in vogue among Vaiṣṇavites in uttering the word '*raṅga*' when sneezing.

97. T.M. 16 to 24.

98. *ibid.* 15.

99. *ibid.* 16.

100. *ibid.* 17.

101. *ibid.* 18.

mind is asked to tell him whether it is not a fact.¹⁰² The charming appearance of the Sleeping Beauty at Śrī Raṅgam is so ravishing that the Ālvār could not forget it at all.¹⁰³ The Ālvār appeals for God's mercy, as he is fully incompetent for adopting any other means such as worshipping fire, *bhakti* or *jñāna*.¹⁰⁴ His remorse at his past misdeeds is such that he feels that he did not do that amount of service which a squirrel did for Rāma at the time of building of a bridge to Laṅka by the monkeys,¹⁰⁵ and this is interpreted by the Ālvār as service rendered after taking bath in the sea water. His appeal to God is really pathetic as conveyed in the passage: "I do not own any landed property or have any one whom I could claim as my relation. Therefore I hold on Your Feet. O, Supreme Lord! O, Lord of the hue of the cloud! Lord of enchanting eyes! I am crying in distress. Who is there for me as saviour? O Lord of Tiruvarāṅkam!"¹⁰⁶ He had come to the Lord after wasting the life in debauchery and women.¹⁰⁷ He was leading the life of a holy person without the mental purity required for it.¹⁰⁸ That he alone would decide whom He would favour is clear from His readiness to save the elephant from distress and making Brahmā and Śiva to wait for a long time to earn His favour.¹⁰⁹ Another striking feature in the work of this

102. *ibid.* 22. Periyavāccāṅ Piḷḷai goes a step further and asks the tongue which is fickle in incoherent talk to tell him whether this is a fact. (Vide: His commentary on *ibid.* 22. cf. *Jagannātha Pāṇḍita: Bhāmini Vllāsa*. 4:10.)

103. *ibid.* 23. Periyavāccāṅ Piḷḷai in his commentary on this verse remarks that some would retain their charm only in one posture, namely, standing. When they lie down, they would appear detestable. The Lord is of enchanting appearance even or perhaps more in his reclining posture at Śrī Raṅgam.

104. *ibid.* 25 to 34.

105. *ibid.* 27.

106. *ibid.* 29; cf. *ibid.* 30, 31.

107. *ibid.* 33. According to Periyavāccāṅ Piḷḷai this is like entering the house through the back-door.

108. *ibid.* 34.

109. *ibid.* 44.

Āḷvār lies in his abiding devotion to the *bhāgavatas* whose worth lies in their faith to the Lord and not in their birth.¹¹⁰

The Āḷvār claims for himself the appellation '*Toṅṅaraṅṅip-poṅṅi*', that is, the dust clinging to the feet of those who do service (*toṅṅar*) to the Lord.¹¹¹ It is clear from this that he is not enamoured of the devotion of some elevated souls, as that is beyond the reach of most men. In this respect, this Āḷvār has made an improvement over the generally accepted concept that a devotee shall choose to be the servant of the devotees at the eighth stage in the downward step.¹¹²

On a perusal of the two works of this Āḷvār it will be known that the saint knew only the Sleeping Beauty at Śrī Raṅgam and he celebrated only Him and none else. The Vaiṣṇavite *ācāryas* hold that the *Tirumālai* is the *Viṣṇudharma-sāra* and the greatness of this work is to be understood from the Tamil proverb "He who does not know *Tirumālai* cannot apprehend Perumāḷ".

KULACĒKARĀḶVĀR

The greatness of this Āḷvār lies in his passionate longing to worship the Lord at Śrī Raṅgam by beholding Him,¹¹³ sing His praise,¹¹⁴ offer flowers at His Feet,¹¹⁵ fold the palms,¹¹⁶ bend before Him,¹¹⁷ have his heart firm with ecstasy¹¹⁸ and to roll down on the ground in great delight.¹¹⁹ He is keen in

110. *ibid.* 42, 43. According to Periyavācēṅ Piḷḷai a *prapanna* must avoid worshipping a deity other than Viṣṇu and offending a *bhāgavata*.

111. *ibid.* 45.

112. *Pallāṅṅu.* 6, cf. *Perum*; *Tm.* 3. 6.

113. *Perum.* *Tm.* 1: 1,7.

114. *ibid.* 1: 2.

115. *ibid.* 1: 3.

116. *ibid.* 1: 4.

117. *ibid.* 1:5.

118. *ibid.* 1: 6.

119. *ibid.* 1: 9 cf. *Tēvāram* 1. 40: 1 to 9.

having the company of *bhāgavatas* while worshipping the deity.¹²⁰ To see such persons is itself a fortune and to dance with them as they utter the name '*araṅka*' is a great treat.¹²¹ The mind of this Āḷvār is entertaining intense affection to think of them.¹²² The Āḷvār does not like to be in the company of people who are interested only in food, clothing and material attractions.¹²³ Rebirth is not desired at all, but if it should be, the Āḷvār likes to be reborn in the Tirumalai hills in any capacity like a fish¹²⁴ or bird¹²⁵ in the tank there or a pillar¹²⁶ or step¹²⁷ or anything¹²⁸ so that he would not lose the vicinity of God. Whatever be the severity of his sufferings, he could not have the protection of any but the Lord. The analogies that are drawn to illustrate this aspect are unique and arresting.¹²⁹ To cite an illustration, a chaste woman, even if she is despised by her husband to the utter disgrace of the onlookers around her, would not care for any one but her husband for seeking protection.¹³⁰ All the verses in this decad are addressed to the Lord at Vittuvakkōṭu.

The intense longing of this saint to have direct vision of the Lord and his inability to wait for the time when he could have his mental state turned into that of a bride complaining that her spouse did not keep to the tryst and therefore remonstrating with him for it and asking him to get away from her.¹³¹ The whole decad takes the form of reaction on the cowherdesses by Kṛṣṇa's delaying tactics to meet them at the time already fixed. The Āḷvār depicts

120. *ibid.* 1: 10.

121. *ibid.* 2: 1, 2.

122. *ibid.* 2: 1, 4, 7, 8.

123. *ibid.* 3: 4, 5.

124. *ibid.* 4: 2.

125. *ibid.* 4: 1.

126. *ibid.* 4: 5.

127. *ibid.* 4: 9.

128. *ibid.* 4: 10.

129. *ibid.* 5.

130. *ibid.* 5: 2.

131. *ibid.* 6.

vividly how a cowherdess had to give some kind of different excuses to each one of her friends for her leaving them to have a clandestine meeting with Kṛṣṇa.¹³² The Lord is taken to task for having enjoyed the company of her female messenger whom the *gopi* sent to Him with an errand.¹³³ She had seen Him proceed in front of her house in disguise in the company of some other woman making some gestures on the way.¹³⁴ His deceitful utterances and behaviour are not unknown to her.¹³⁵ He is really a hypocrite for His enjoying the company of another woman in her vicinity while she was called by Him to wait for Him there.¹³⁶ This decad which the Ālvār meant for singing is unmatched for the lyrical elegance¹³⁷ it displays and for the effective rebuke which the beloved casts on the fugitive Lord Whose playing on the flute influenced them with mellifluous notes.¹³⁸ It is doubtful whether this representation of the woman's disappointment could be better presented by a woman composer.

The intense religious experience does not leave the mental states of the devotee, but lie still and undisturbed. Age-long experiences impress the self with residues of manifold nature, which are aroused by external factors. Besides the longing which a woman gets aroused for the physical union with her lover, there are other attitudes when a self could be made to display under the stress of deep experience. The self could imagine to be the mother fondling her child. The keen disappointment which the Ālvār feels for not being able to get the vision of the Lord is represented by Devaki's motherly feeling that the child which was born of her could not be tended by her. She feels that she is the worst among the mothers to leave her child to the care of another

132. *ibid.* 6: 3.

133. *ibid.* 6: 4.

134. *ibid.* 6:5.

135. *ibid.*, 6: 6, 7.

136. *ibid.*, 6: 8.

137. *ibid.*, 6: 10.

138. *ibid.*, 6:9; cf. Bhāg. P.10.21.

woman.¹³⁹ She feels that the delight which Yaśoda and Nandagopa were having in the company of Kṛṣṇa is not to be had by her and Vāsudeva.¹⁴⁰ The tender and charming limbs of the child and his sweet utterances are enjoyed by Yaśoda who is therefore held to have become divine.¹⁴¹ She could not behold the child crawling in all forms and postures¹⁴² or suck her breasts.¹⁴³ Yaśoda and not she is lucky to see the child take the butter and to behold when it cries.¹⁴⁴ She could not be a witness of the Lord lifting the Govardhana hill or indulge in *kuravaikkūttu* and *kuṭakkattu* or slay the demon by throwing him at the tree or dance on the hoods of Kāḷi-yaṅ.¹⁴⁵ These descriptions are in fact the presentations, in disguise, of the Āḷvār's fancy at his inability to have such of those visions of the incidents of child Kṛṣṇa, but the disguise is richer for presentation, as Devaki's emotion is more natural and is full of sympathetic appeal. It is the result of her feeling for her unfortunate lot that she is to be away from her child whose exploits she could only listen when narrated.

The Āḷvār presents a fine lullaby addressed to Rāma as a child put in a swing and the deity is enshrined in Kaṇapuram (Tirukkannapuram).¹⁴⁶ The intense separation from the Lord is well depicted through Dasaratha's lamentation at Rāma's proceeding to the forest. The representation is very well conceived and the pathetic feeling is much heightened by Dasaratha asking Sumantra and Vaśiṣṭha whether Rāma's proceeding to the forest was justified on any ground and referring to the happy lot of Kaikeyi.¹⁴⁷ The story of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is recounted admirably in a decad which refers to the Citrakūṭam where three thousand brahmins praise the Lord

139. *ibid.* 7: 1.

140. *ibid.* 7: 2, 3.

141. *ibid.* 7: 4, 5.

142. *ibid.* 7: 6, 7.

143. *ibid.* 7: 7.

144. *ibid.* 7: 8.

145. *ibid.* 7: 9.

146. *ibid.* 8.

147. *ibid.* 9

and to which place he is keen on proceeding.¹⁴⁸ Agastya is referred to as the great Tamil sage. The story of Uttara-kāṇḍa of the *Rāmāyaṇa* forms the continuous narration of the epic story.¹⁴⁹ The Lord at Śrī Raṅgam is bowed to and is said to be extolled in hymns composed both in Tamil and Sanskrit.¹⁵⁰ *Kaiṅkarya*¹⁵¹ to the Lord is what the Ālvār yearns to have and not lordship over the world.¹⁵² Enjoyment of life of the material kind is to be shunned.¹⁵³

TIRUPPĀNĀLVĀR

Amalanātipirān the only poem of Tiruppānālvār is unique in several respects. Firstly, it does not contain any reference to the feeling of separation and sending of message as in the compositions of Namnālvār and others or advice to others or refutation of other schools of thought as found in the works of Tirumaḷicaiyālvār or Tirumaṅkaiyālvār. It is pregnant with the intense religious feeling of devotion which the Ālvār had for the Lord. Secondly, it contains ten verses all of which are devoted to the description of the Lord at Śrī-Raṅgam from foot to head (*pādādikēśa*) perhaps after the manner of Sanskrit compositions. Thirdly, there is a synthetic treatment of all the forms of the Lord, particularly those of Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Vamāna and the deity at Tirumalai and Tiruvaraṅkam.

This poem contains the essence of the teachings of the various passages of the *Vedas*¹⁵⁴ such as *Antarāditya Vidya* *Īśavāsyopaniṣad* and *Puruṣa-sūkta* and showing them to consist in the auspicious figure of the Lord. This gains more relevance and significance because the auspicious form of the Lord is required both when the self adores the Lord here and when it gets at Him in the state of release.

148. *ibid.* 10.

149. *ibid.* 10: 8, 9, 10.

150. *ibid.* 1: 4.

151. *ibid.* 4: 1.

152. *ibid.* 4: 2, 5, 9.

153. *ibid.* 4: 6.

154. T.P. 378; cf. "Paḷamaraiyiṅ poruḷāi".

The Divine is above all as the supreme object of the religious consciousness, transcendent to all the faults and mistakes and errors and illusions of man, or the soul, however high up in evolution. He is therefore addressed as the 'amalan',¹⁵⁵ the enemy of all defects. He is the cause of the world and its protector and His Feet are to be worshipped. He has made this Ālvār become a servant of His devotees.¹⁵⁶ He is often identified with the Lord at Tirumalai,¹⁵⁷ Nara-simha,¹⁵⁸ Vāmana¹⁵⁹ and Rāma.¹⁶⁰ He had relieved Śiva of his guilt committed at Brahmā.¹⁶¹ In spite of the fact that all the forms of the Lord represent only one Deity, the Ālvār declares that his eyes which feasted on the Lord at Śrī Raṅgam would not set on any other thing. This may be taken as hinting at the greatness of that deity or that nothing but the Lord Viṣṇu would attract him. It is therefore apt when Aḷakiya-Manavāḷapperumāḷ Nāyaṅār says that this Ālvār unlike other Ālvārs is fully devoted to the *arcā* form which is the most approachable form of God.¹⁶²

TIRUMAṆKAIYĀLVĀR

Tirumaṅkaiyālvār who won the reputation of *Nalukavi-perumāḷ*, displays much erudition like Tirumaḷicaiyālvār. He is next to Nammālvār in contributing more verses than others. He is the only Ālvār who successfully tried his hand at various forms of compositions.¹⁶³ His two *Matais* are a unique contribution to the *Akam* poetry and to the history of bridal mysticism. Among other Ālvārs, he has shown greater atten-

155. A.P. 1.

156. *ibid.* 1.

157. *ibid.* 1, 3.

158. *ibid.* 8.

159. *ibid.* 2, 4.

160. *ibid.* 2.

161. *ibid.* 6.

162. Vide: *Tivyārtta-tīpikal* on A.P. 10

163. His works contain references to the names of certain rulers over the regions where some shrines are situated. (Vide *Peri. Tm.* 3. 2:3; 5.8; 9; 6.6; 7.7: 4).

tion to the description of Nature in his poems. He has, in this respect, modelled his poems on Campantar's. Almost every verse of his refers to the beauty of Nature. The groves, the *Vedic* atmosphere, festive appearances are all depicted by this saint.¹⁶⁴ To some extent Nammālvār could be held to have had attraction for similar aspects of Nature.¹⁶⁵

The folk-song motifs are successfully handled by this Ālvār. Some of them are *Kāttumpi*, *Poñkattam poñko* and *Kulamanitūram*. The bee is asked by the bride to go in search of honey in the flowers which the Lord would usually wear and to get the honey and fragrance from the flowers worn by the Lord of Tirukkappapuram and blow them on her.¹⁶⁶ *Poñkattam poñko* are expressions which make no sense. They are used by persons when they engage themselves in dance signifying their defeat and praying for refuge.¹⁶⁷ These words do not occur anywhere in Tamil literature. *Kulamanitūram* is a similar dance.¹⁶⁸

That the ultimate Reality is Śrīman Nārāyaṇa is very well presented by this Ālvār. The Lord is having Śrī in His chest. His presence is felt in the directions, earth, water, fire and others. He is wind which exists together with sound.¹⁶⁹ He is Himself the *Vedas*, rituals, sky, the two luminaries and the beginning of everything.¹⁷⁰ The Ālvār admits his dependence and service to the Lord and gets detach-

164. Peri. Tm. 2.10: 7; 3.4: 1; cf. *Tēvāram* 1.79: 3; 1.102: 4.

For further references vide:

Peri. Tm. 3.4: 3. *Tēvāram* 1.129: 1.

ibid. 6.7: 4. ibid., 2.64: 9.

ibid. 9.6: 8. ibid., 1.99: 3.

ibid. 3.8: 8. ibid., 2.122: 2.

165. T.V.M. 5.9; 8.4; 8.9.

166. Peri. Tm. 8.4; cf. T.V.K. (215 to 234).

167. ibid. 10.2.

168. ibid. 10.3.

169. Peri. Tm. 7.6: 7; cf. ibid. 8.7: 7.

170. ibid. 9.4: 9.

ment from the worldly life.¹⁷¹ He finds it difficult to be away from God and his expression of this feeling has the mystic feature of the bride in love with Him.¹⁷² Those who ever cherish Lord reclining at Tirukkāṭalmallai,¹⁷³ Tiruccērai¹⁷⁴ are his masters.

He is in every form such as lightning, *Vedas*, moon and free from birth and death. He is of the hue of gold, gem, five elements and so on.¹⁷⁵ The Āṭvār is aware of keeping His Feet on his head. Though He is present in all the forms of the three deities, the form of the Lord with Śrī is quite peculiar. The three deities have the colour of gold, fire and sea but the deity with the colour of the cloud is His deity.¹⁷⁶ The deity could be apprehended only by *Tirumantiram*.¹⁷⁷ Those who meditate upon Him with self-control could visualize Him correctly.¹⁷⁸ Yet, the mind does not set itself on Him steadily and remain there. Devotion could not be practised by Him. Except service at His Feet, he finds no way of getting at Him.¹⁷⁹

Viṣṇu is the Supreme Person¹⁸⁰ with every thing as His mode (*prakāra*).¹⁸¹ The cardinal tenets of the Viśiṣṭādvaita system find their support in the works of this Āṭvār.¹⁸² The relationship between the Lord and world is that which exists between the self and the body.¹⁸³ The Lord is of every form¹⁸⁴

171. *ibid.* 6.3.

172. *ibid.* 8.3.

173. *ibid.* 2.6.

174. *ibid.* 7.4.

175. T.N. 1; cf. T.K. 2.

176. T.N. 2.

177. *ibid.*, 4.

178. T.K. 18.

179. *ibid.* 10.

180. Peri. Tm. 2.10: 1; 4.1: 4; 6.9: 10.

181. *ibid.* 5.7: 1, 2.

182. cf. *ibid.* 2.5: 3.

183. *ibid.* 2.5: 3; 4.1: 2; 6.6: 3; 7.6: 7.

184. *ibid.* 4.5: 6; 5.6: 5.

and is the Indweller.¹⁸⁵ He Himself receives the oblations¹⁸⁶ which are offered in the holy fire when the sacred rites are undertaken.

The Ālvār gives a graphic description of each of the ten *avatāras* of Nārāyaṇa. The waters of deluge made the gods seek Viṣṇu for shelter. The Lord took the form of fish and supported the hills on His back bringing them out of the waters.¹⁸⁷ He took the form of tortoise and while supporting the *Manṭara* mountain on His back, looked like a mountain supporting another mountain.¹⁸⁸ The earth which was drowned in the sea was brought out by the Lord who took the form of boar. The sun, moon, the gods, the seven worlds, the eight directions, Mēru mountain, the six *Kulaparvatas* and the seven oceans occupy only a portion of the hoof of Ādivarāha.¹⁸⁹ Narasimha is the name of the form which God assumed to kill Hiraṇyakaśipu whose body was ripped open into two by Him with the claws. The blood that flowed then from the body of the demon was thrice in quantity the waters of deluge.¹⁹⁰ Nārāyaṇa came to King Bali in the form of a Dwarf and like a sage uttering the *Vedas* impressed upon the king that he was a genuine beggar. When He got the gift of three Feet of land, His Foot grew big beyond the *Manṭara* mountain and passed through the seven upper regions and was worshipped by the moon and Brahmā.¹⁹¹ The Lord became Parasurāma, who destroyed the kings for twenty-one generations. He is the Lord of Śrī, Bhūdevi and Nīlā.¹⁹² As Rāma, the Lord killed Mārīca Who appeared before Him and Sītā in the enchanting form of a deer to effect a separation between them. He reduced the demon Rāvana and his

185. *ibid.* 2.5: 7; 7.2.

186. *ibid.* 5.6: 5.

187. *ibid.* 11.4: 1.

188. *ibid.* 11.4: 2.

189. *ibid.* 11.4: 3; cf. 4.4: 8.

190. *ibid.* 11.4: 4.

191. *ibid.* 11.4: 5.

192. *ibid.* 11.4: 6.

border to utter extinction.¹⁹³ Next is described Hamsāvatāra.¹⁹⁴ The achievements of Kṛṣṇa such as killing Pūtana, Kuvalayāpidā and others are celebrated.¹⁹⁵ With less details, these *avatāras* are described in another part of this composition.¹⁹⁶ There is fine poetic beauty in the depiction of the feelings of the demons in the battle between Rāvaṇa and Rāma.¹⁹⁷ The demons request the monkeys not to harass them.¹⁹⁸ The *Itihāsa* of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa are depicted in the form of conversations between two female companions.¹⁹⁹

The Āḷvārs are mainly instrumental for the popularisation of the *arcā* form of worship which came into vogue on the strength of the Āgamic preachings. They followed the principles of Āgamas and evolved a synthesis of all the forms of the Supreme Being. The exploits of the Lord in His descent have been quite popular among the people through the *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas*. They have been frequently cited by the Āḷvārs to heighten the importance of the *arcā* forms. Being deep meditators of the Indweller, they have been frequently laying stress on the *antaryāmin* form of the deity.

Though all the Āḷvārs had given primary importance to the shrines where God is worshipped in the *arcā* form, the first three Āḷvārs, Tirumaḷicaiyāḷvār, Nammāḷvār and Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār paid attention to this form by singing in praise of the deity in more temples drawing a synthesis even among the *arcā* forms.²⁰⁰ It is the praise conferred on the deity in such shrines which the Āḷvārs visited that brought into vogue a new concept of temple worship in South India. These shrines which have received *maṅgalāsāsanam* of the Āḷvārs

193. *ibid.* 11.4:7.

194. *ibid.* 11.4:8.

195. *ibid.* 11.4:9, 10.

196. *ibid.* 8.8.

197. *ibid.* 10.2.

198. *ibid.* 10.3.

199. *ibid.* 11.5.

200. Peri. Tm. 10.1; T.N. 8; C. TML, Kan. 69 to 74.

came to be regarded as supreme in importance and are known as '*pāṭal peṇṇa talaiṅkaḷ*' (temples celebrated by the hymns). Tirumaṅkaiyālvār and Nammālvār enjoy a special repute in this respect. The former is the only Ālvār who visited almost all the shrines which²⁰¹ are now called 'temples celebrated by the hymns' and some were sung only by him and some others were extolled only by Nammālvār.²⁰² Among 108 temples there are five temples having more than one hundred verses viz., Tiruvarāṅkam 247, Tiruvēṅkaṭam 213, Tirukkannapuram 128, Tirumāliroṅcōlai 114 and Tirunaṇaiyūr 109. Special mention requires to be made here of Tirumaṅkaiyālvār's particular contribution to the shrines of Tirukkannapuram, Tirunaṇaiyūr, Tiruvarāṅkam and Tiruviṅṅakar.²⁰³ The Ālvār has sung a centum of verses on each of the deities of Tirukkannapuram²⁰⁴ and Tirunaṇaiyūr.²⁰⁵ Tiruvarāṅkam²⁰⁶ gets half a centum, Tiruvēṅkaṭam²⁰⁷ four decads, and Tiruviṅṅakar²⁰⁸ three decads.

The Ālvār makes specific reference to the prevalence of *Vedic* study and *Vedic* recitals in some places where the shrines are situated²⁰⁹. The brahmins who dwell there attend to their *nitya*, *naṁmittika* and *kāmya* rituals and teach the *Vedas* to others.²¹⁰ The brahmins in Pullampūtaṅkuṭi never utter a lie, are well studied in the *Vedas* and are great through the worship of three fires and have reputation for that, forbearance and generosity.²¹¹ The smoke of incense arising

201. This brings out the importance of the impact of the *Nāḷayiram* on temples and temple worship.

202. Vide *Appendix - V* for a list of shrines celebrated exclusively by these two Ālvārs and by Pūtattālvār, Tirumaṅkaiyālvār, Kulaśēkharālvār and Periyālvār.

203. Many of these shrines are all situated in and near the banks of Kāviri.

204. Peri. Tm. 8.1 to 8.10.

205. *ibid.* 6.4 to 6.10; 7.1 to 7.3.

206. *ibid.* 5.4 to 5.8.

207. *ibid.* 1.8 to 1.10 and 2.1.

208. *ibid.* 6.1 to 6.3.

209. *ibid.* 3.10 : 1; 4.1 : 3, 7, 8; 4.2 : 10; 4.3 : 2, 3, 6; 4.6 : 1; 10; 4.8 : 8.

210. *ibid.* 2.10 : 2; 3.5 : 6; 4.2 : 2; 5.9 : 6, 9.

211. *ibid.* 5.1 : 5, 8.

from the rites performed add to the fragrance filling Tiruvarāṅkam.²¹² The performance of the *Sōma* sacrifice at Tirukkōvalūr by the brahmins whose mind is pure and who are well-versed in the four *Vedas* is stated to have brought about the rich growth of paddy there.²¹³ Each house in this sacred place is stated to be resounding with the recitation of the *Vedas*. The *maṅṅapams* in the houses which were situated in the charming streets there were occupied by the *Vedic* scholars who adopted a particular method of studying the *Vedas* known as '*vāram*' which consisted in giving the *padapāṭha* (splitting the *samhitā* portion of the *Veda* into separate words) of the entire text whose beginning would be mentioned by one of the scholars assembled there.²¹⁴

A special reference is required to be made here to Tirukkōvalūr which is described by this Āḷvār as prosperous having scholars. Goddess Durga, with the deer as her vehicle, is present in the shrine. She has eight hands and is stated to guard that place.²¹⁵ Men of restraint create the impression that this place could be that of Śiva who rides on the bull, and their wealth suggests its identity with the city of Kubēra. The charm of the place leads to mistake it to be the dwelling of Indra. Brahmā could be taken to live there from the *Vedic* recitations which go on there.²¹⁶ The great men who live there appear as capable of great achievements which expected of Brahmā and Śiva.²¹⁷

Citrakūṭam is graphically described by this Āḷvār as a prosperous place with fine groves.²¹⁸ Three thousand brahmins offer worship every day to the Lord in this place.²¹⁹ They are

212. *ibid.* 5.4: 7.

213. *ibid.* 2.10: 1.

214. *ibid.* 2.10: 5.

215. *ibid.* 2.10: 6.

216. *ibid.* 2.10: 8.

217. *ibid.* 2.10: 9.

218. *ibid.* 3.2: 1, 3, 5.

219. *ibid.* 3.2: 8.

well studied in the *Vedas* and offer worship daily in the sacred fires.²²⁰ Girls listen there to the recitation of the *Vedic* texts and reproduce even the lengthy passages in tact. The parrots, which listen to this recitation, reproduce them to the brahmins for their revision or reutterance of those passages.²²¹ The Lord is frequently described as going through the streets of Tillai Tiruccitrakūṭam showing that the deity is taken in procession on the occasion of festivals.²²² The Lord is taken on the vehicle Garuḍa.²²³ He will present Himself as Nara-simha on a particular day during the procession²²⁴ and would pass through the streets.

Tirunaṛaiyūr is described as a place inhabited by *Vedic* scholars. The shrine in that place is stated to have a very huge golden door. Śrī stands by the side of the Lord of enchanting appearance. She resembles the slender *vañci* creeper, her gait resembles that of the swans, has the looks of the deer and her tresses bear comparison to the plume of the peacock. In thinness, her waist resembles the lightning. Her shoulders are bent like the tender bamboo; her breasts resemble the jars. With the lips red like *kōval* fruit, her eyes resemble the fish.²²⁵ This is the bewitching description of Śrī in *arcā* form given only here.

The streets of Tirunaṛaiyūr are ever putting up a charming appearance on the occasion of temple festivals and when the sacred rites are performed.²²⁶ A similar description is given of Tirumaṇimāṭakkōvil,²²⁷ Vaikunṭhaviṇṇakaram.²²⁸ Arimēyaviṇṇakaram²²⁹ and Tirutteṛṇiyampalem.²³⁰ The beauti-

220. *ibid.* 3.2: 2.

221. *ibid.* 3.2: 6.

222. *ibid.* 3.3: 1 to 5.

223. *ibid.* 3.3: 6.

224. *ibid.* 3.3: 8.

225. P. TML. Kaṇ. 72 to 80.

226. Peri. Tm. 6.4: 8; 6.7: 1.

227. *ibid.* 3.8: 4.

228. *ibid.* 3.9: 2.

229. *ibid.* 3.10: 2.

230. *ibid.* 4.4: 8.

ful streets of Tiruvaḷuntūr are inhabited by brahmins who are not old in age and who worship the fire at the three fixed times during the day.²³¹ Tirukkappapuram receives an effective and detailed description at the hands of this Āḷvār who devoted one hundred verses²³² for this purpose. Devotees of God assemble there on occasions of festivals.²³³ They are well-versed in the *Vedas*.²³⁴ The place Tiruppullāni is described in the ideal setting. The deity would fulfil the wish of the devotee who worships His Feet every day. If He does not grant the wish even then, the devotee shall continue to offer the worship.²³⁵ The *koels* also utter the words "ari, ari" in the graves surrounding the temple at Tiruveḷḷiyāṅkuṭi²³⁶. Cikāṣi which is referred to Kāliccīrāmavinṅakaram, is described as a place inhabited by brahmins well-versed in the *Vedas* and *Vedāṅgas*, who performed the five daily sacrifices. The place resounds with music. The streets are filled with the pomp of the festivals of the Lord there.²³⁷ The streets in Tiruvāli are broad enough for dragging of the temple car with the deity in it.²³⁸

The Āḷvār's life is a typical case of *viṣayā-kāma* (amorousness) turned into *Bhagavat-kāma* (divine love). Nature mysticism enables the Āḷvār to enjoy the Beauty of God objectively in all things and it turns into true immanent mysticism. At this stage the Āḷvār-nāyaki develops a view and vision of Bhagavān as Love in the form of Kṛṣṇa enthroned in her heart. She is much captured and captivated by the entrancing beauty of the Beloved that it is relished even

231. *ibid.* 7.5:1.

232. *ibid.* 8.1 to 8.10.

233. *ibid.* 8.7:2.

234. *ibid.* 8.7:7.

235. *ibid.* 9.3:9.

236. *ibid.* 4.10:7.

237. *ibid.* 3.4:1.

238. *ibid.* 3.6:6.

in the physical plane.²³⁹ Throughout the hymns²⁴⁰ describing his bridal path of love God is seen as the cunning Kṛṣṇa, the Enchanter of souls, playing the game of 'hide and seek'. The Beatific vision of the Lord is only for a brief interval of time and has disappeared; it is mostly sensuous and empirical but it stabilises love or *bhakti* by directing it inward.

The bride now experiences *visleṣa*; the sorrows of separation are more intense and last longer. But this experience is spiritual one as it is a process of negation by its fulfilment. In this stage, *Bhagavat-kāma* is purified by *vairagya* of the taint arising out of *viṣaya-kāma*. The experience of separation is one long tale of sorrow and depression. It starts with simple pain and ends with irresistible agony.²⁴¹ Generally the experience of separation passes through three usual stages of distress, depression and defiance. The soft gentle southern breeze is felt as a burning gale by the bride.²⁴² Her body languishes and loses weight and the bracelets drop down.²⁴³ Every moment is like an aeon for her.²⁴⁴ The colour of her body changes; she feels even the sāṅdal-paste as blasts of fire²⁴⁵. No sensation, song or soul that does not reveal Him has any existence or value.²⁴⁶ In divine madness, she has no thought of food or drink and she spends sleepless days and nights.²⁴⁷ Then sorrow increases with continued disappointment.²⁴⁸ It is a favourite dramatic device of the Ālvār mystics to express the agony of separation in the words of

239. Peri. Tm. 2.8; T.N. 21, 22, 24, 25.

240. There are 21 decads in *Periya Tirumōli* besides his two *Maṭals* and twenty verses in *Tirunetuntāṅtakam* (11-30) describing his bridal path of love.

241. Peri. Tm. 3.6.

242. *ibid.* 2.7: 4.

243. *ibid.* 8.3; T.N. 12, 19, 23, 25.

244. *ibid.* 2.7: 4.

245. *ibid.* 2.7: 3, 9; T.N. 17.

246. *ibid.* 2.7: 5, 7, 8.

247. *ibid.* 1.5.5: 1.3; 8.2: 4; T.N. 11, 12.

248. *ibid.* 3.7: 4.8.

the mother, ²⁴⁹ and friends and of messages to the Beloved. ²⁵⁰ This is an adaptation from the Tamil technique of love poetry. The elopment of the lovers and consequent lamentations of the mother (*makaṭṭpōkkiya rāy irāṅkal*)²⁵¹ are found to be resourceful topics for poetic imagination.²⁵² The fond mother is sorely distressed by the failing health and sick-mindedness of the daughter in her forlorn state.²⁵³ The artful Māyan or Kaṅṅan as the seducer of souls had secretly entered into her heart and stolen it away.²⁵⁴ The bride raves about Him.²⁵⁵ The mother implores Him to have mercy on the poor bride.²⁵⁶ She is unable to find out the cause of her daughter's madness. In another mood, she thinks that it is an incurable disease due to possession by evil spirits and seeks to propitiate them by offerings like toddy and meat.²⁵⁷ But divine intoxication is different in kind from possession by the devil and diabolical mysticism. So she is lost in helplessness and drops down in despair.

The crisis is reached when the dark night of the soul or depression arrives and the bride is consumed in flaming love. The heart melts away like wax. While all nature is asleep in the dark night, she alone is awake;²⁵⁸ she is tormented by the sense of separation. She bursts into agony. She weeps and wails and cries aloud and her body is bathed in overflowing tears.²⁵⁹ In her sinking mood she addresses crows, cuckoos,

249. *ibid.* 2.7; 3.7; 4.8; 5.5; 8.1; 8.2; 9.9; 10.9.

250. *ibid.* 3.6; 9.3; 9.4; T.N. 26, 27.

251. *ibid.* 3.7.

252. Out of 378 Caṅkam *Akam* poets, 28 poets have entertained a partiality for these related themes with the result that they are touchingly treated in 122 poems (i.e. one-seventh of the total *kaḷavu* poems) with a depth of psychological acumen (*vide: The Tamil Concept of Love in Akattinai.* pp. 57-59).

253. *ibid.* 5.5.

254. *ibid.* 3.7.

255. *ibid.* 4.8; 8.1; 8.2.

256. *ibid.* 9.9.

257. T.N, 11.

258. Peri. Tm 8.5: 2, 6.

259. *ibid.* 11.1; 11.2; 11.3.

lizards, parrots, cocks to make omen-cries or sounds signifying the coming of her Lord.²⁶⁰ But her Kannaṅ Who is the Giver of love and so easily accessible is nowhere to be seen; yet He has entered into her soul and is inescapable.²⁶¹ Nature is very sympathetic to her moods and reflects them. The birds with their mating instincts also express their sympathy with her in her parted state. She then sends messages of her forlorn state through the birds and even her mind itself.²⁶² Kannaṅ is in her inner eye and also the self as its light and also in her poesy.²⁶³ Yet the mind knows Him not.²⁶⁴ Kannaṅ, the Māyaṅ, dwells in her and yet she pines away.²⁶⁵

The stage comes when she becomes desperate and defiant and resorts to the device of foiled feminine love known in Tamil as *Maṭal*. She publicly censures Him for having wounded her by His shafts of love and deserted her when the suffering was acute and could be cured only by Him. In both the *Maṭals*, she abandons her shyness and reticence and publicly exposes His cruelty and faithlessness. The mood very soon changes from assault to remorse and prayer for mercy. The soul clings to Kannaṅ and Kannaṅ alone and He cannot escape her. The *avatāra* who came down only for the Āḷvār is Āḷvār-mad. He longs to reunite with her purified by self-naughting and the feeling of unworthiness. He Who hides Himself in the light of her lyric poesy as his Inner 'I' longs for communing with her in the nakedness of her beauty.²⁶⁶ He eagerly yearns for living in the Āḷvār's song, soul and every sensation. In her inner life as what He is rather than what He does and He longs to possess her whole being or true being. As *prema* to start with, the Āḷvār is seized with a sense of sinfulness and God-fearingness; but his mystic love reasserts itself and he realizes his intimacy with God as lover

260. *ibid.* 10.10.

261. *ibid.* 7.3; 8.9.

262. *ibid.* 9.3; 9.4; T.N. 26, 27.

263. *ibid.* 8.10; 9.

264. *ibid.* 9.2: 8.

265. *ibid.* 9.2; 11.3; T.N. 28, 29.

266. *ibid.* 9.2: 1.

and is blessed with the boon and grace of the unitive life, and the stability of the eternal Light even beyond Badari, the highest peak of spirituality here below.²⁶⁷

The *Cīṭiya-ttumaṭal* is in defence of *kāma* as a pursuit in life, but it is directed towards the higher purpose of reaching the Lord. The word '*kātal*' applies to worldly love and also in its perfected state to spiritual love. People talk of attaining *mokṣa* by getting rid of this body. In the meanwhile, the aspirant of *mokṣa* shall live on fruits and leaves that fall from the trees of their own accord. He has to undergo untold sufferings like living in cottages and taking bath in tanks bracing at times the inclemencies of weather. If all this is to be admitted, no one who is said to have obtained *mokṣa* has come back to report that Paramapada is a place of bliss and shall therefore be preferred to material love. Mere talk of the nature of *mokṣa* does not carry any conviction and so it would be prudent on the part of people to stop discoursing on it. *Dharma* as a *puruṣārtha* will enable one to get to heaven after death and sport with gazelle-eyed women, listen to enchanting music and move in the ethereal region. *Artha* as a *puruṣārtha* yields the same results. Desire or *kāma* is the basis for both these and so it is better to stick to *kāma* and achieve those two ends.²⁶⁸

The tradition of the Tamils is that men alone shall undertake *maṭalūrtal*,²⁶⁹ but Tirumaṅkaiyālvār rejects this convention following the tradition of Sanskrit literature.²⁷⁰ Adoption of *maṭal* way would become practicable only when the sense of shame is completely given up and when one could proceed through the streets for exhibiting one's love. Women who are by nature bashful, would not be in a position to adopt '*maṭal*' and this is perhaps the basis for the Tamils' restricting the adoption of this method to men. The Ālvār, however, remarks that those who do not adopt and admit the Sanskrit

267. *ibid.* 1.3; 1.4.

268. P. TML. Kaṇ. 11 to 18.

269. *ibid.* Kaṇ. 38, 39.

270. P. TML. Kaṇ. 40.

tradition could not realize the effects of application of sandal paste, southern breeze, the sweet sound emanating from the bamboo, of the oxen, shriek of the *anṇil* and so on.²⁷¹ The Ālvār cites then instances which show women, unable to repress their love, went after their lovers. Graphic and pathetic is the description of Sītā's following Rāma to the forest.²⁷² Vēgavati, a maiden, could not find her lover in his place, went to the battle field, aroused him from slumber and enjoyed his company.²⁷³ Uhūpi, the daughter of the Nāgas, compelled Arjuna to break his vow of celibacy and spent a pleasant time with him.²⁷⁴ Uṣā, the daughter of Bānāsura, had a dream wherein appeared a handsome youth whom her friend identified to be Aniruddha, son of Pradyumna and grandson of Kṛṣṇa. Her friend Citralekhā brought him stealthily to her whose company Uṣā enjoyed without the knowledge of her father.²⁷⁵ Pārvati openly adopted penance as the weapon to force Śiva to come to her which when fully described would be another *Mahābhārata*.²⁷⁶

It is very creditable on the part of this Ālvār to suggest that the bride of the Ālvār felt her passion aroused at the sight of Śrī by the side of the Lord at Tirunāraiūr.²⁷⁷ The sounds of the sea, the moon-lit night, southern breeze, the feeble voice of female *anṇil* on the palm tree were enough to make her position intolerable.²⁷⁸ She throws a challenge to the Lord that if He were not to accept her love, she would publicly declare His base and bad activities such as getting tied to a pestle for stealing butter, eating cart-loads of food intended for Indra, going as a messenger in spite of his being insulted, insulting women like Sūrpaṇagā who loved him and killing Tātaki.²⁷⁹

271. *ibid.* Kan. 39 to 44.

272. *ibid.* Kan. 45 to 51.

273. *ibid.* Kan. 52 to 55.

274. *ibid.* Kan. 55 to 59.

275. *ibid.* Kan. 60 to 64; Bhāg. P. 10: 62.

276. *ibid.* Kan. 65 to 71.

277. *ibid.* Kan. 77 to 80.

278. *ibid.* Kan. 81 to 85.

279. *ibid.* Kan. 137 to 140.

What was set forth in favour of *kāma* as the worthy pursuit of life in *Cīṟiya-tirumaṭal* is confirmed in *Periya-tirumaṭal*. In the former, there is vivid depiction of the arrival of Kṛṣṇa by the bride who was playing ball. He came playing *kuṭakkūtu* which attracted her and so she went out of the house to witness it.²⁸⁰ She lost at once her beautiful complexion, and bangles slipped off from her hand.²⁸¹ Her mother came there and did *rakṣa* with the dust.²⁸² She bowed to the deity Sāttan, now known Ayyapan at Sabarimalai in Kerala State. She was not used to do this, but she did without getting any result.²⁸³ A sooth-sayer was brought there and it was predicted by her that the deity with the thousand names was responsible for her malady.²⁸⁴ The exploits of the Supreme Person, particularly those of Kṛṣṇa, are all mentioned in detail.²⁸⁵ The bride would have adopted '*maṭalūrtal*' but for the fear that she would be scandalised for doing so.²⁸⁶ She could not send her mind as a messenger, since it had not come back to her from the ocean-complexioned Lord.²⁸⁷ Her love for the Lord is deep and immeasurable as it is vast as the ocean.²⁸⁸ She cites the incident of Vāsava-datta, going through the streets after Vatsarāja.²⁸⁹ She was not condemned by any one and so the bride makes up her mind to take up '*maṭalūrtal*'.²⁹⁰ She will utter His names through the streets.²⁹¹

280. C. TML. Kaṇ. 13, 14.

281. *ibid.* Kaṇ. 14.

282. *ibid.* Kaṇ. 16.

283. *ibid.* Kaṇ. 17, 18.

284. *ibid.* Kaṇ. 20 to 24.

285. *ibid.* Kaṇ. 28 to 55.

286. *ibid.* Kaṇ. 57.

287. *ibid.* Kaṇ. 60 to 63.

288. *ibid.* Kaṇ. 64, 65.

289. *ibid.* Kaṇ. 68 to 71. This incident is not traceable to any *Purāna* as suggested by *Tivyārta-tīpikā* (p. 7). It is contained in the *Pratīñāyāngandharāyana* of Bhāsa and Somadeva's *Kāthāsarit-sāgara*.

290. *ibid.* Kaṇ. 77.

291. *ibid.* Kaṇ. 74 to 77. cf. If the thousand names could be recited to glorify Him, it must be quite possible to repeat the same for condemning Him also. (Periyavāccāṅ Pillai on *ibid.*).

In the *Tiruvelukkūṟṟirukkal* the Ālvār revels in the use of numbers from one to seven for *Citrabhandha* (a kind of poem of acrostics). The word 'one' may refer to the unique nature of the Lord, apart from time, *sattva* quality. The number 'two' denotes the pair of Feet of the Lord, besides the sun and moon and others. The three strides of the Lord are referred to by the number 'three' besides three qualities, the three worlds, three fires, sacred thread and others. The word 'four' refers to the *Vedas*, four pursuits of life and many others. The five weapons of Viṣṇu are meant by the number 'five',²⁹² besides the five sacrifices, five elements and others. The word 'six' could refer to the six schools, bee which is six-footed (*aṟu-patam*), six tastes and others. The number 'seven' refers to seven worlds. Care is taken to start with number 'one' up to 'seven' depicting what each stands for in relation to the Lord and come down from that number to number 'one' in the same way.

The Ālvār got every thing from the Supreme Person Himself. He dwells in great detail on the *Tirumantra* showing its importance. It is admitted that through the worship of the *arcā* form of God that any one turns a theist and in this respect, the contribution of this Ālvār is invaluable. The prefix '*periya*' to his composition *Periya Tirumoli* brings out not only the larger number of verses he had composed but also its greatness through poetic beauty and the sense it conveys. The number of verses and to stages through which love for God is made to develop justify the title *Tirunetuntāṅṅakam*. The sages, mother and bride contribute in this piece respectively in the first, second and third tens. Besides, the name '*Kalliyā*' which refers to this Ālvār is the Tamilised form of '*Kaliha*' which means that this Ālvār contributed much for destroying the effects of Kali age through his compositions.

PERIYĀLVĀR

Periyālvār attained greatness by offering to God the garland which his foster-daughter Anṭāl wore at first before it

292. cf. Appar's *Tēvāram* 4. 26 : 5; 4. 53 : 7.

was offered to the deity²⁹³ and also for blessing the Lord with long life and wishing for Him every prosperity.²⁹⁴ The word 'periya' which is prefixed to his name, thus suggests his greatness, although he was not great in the sense of being senior to other Ālvārs in age or by composing more verses than others. He himself refers to the name he enjoyed during his life time among his contemporaries and to his erudition.²⁹⁵

The ardent attachment which the self has for God is not altogether free from entertaining apprehensions about the safety of the deity. The Supreme Person is verily omnipotent and could protect Himself. In fact, it is He that protects every one from dangers. Yet, too much of affection scents dangers.²⁹⁶ The beauty, goodness and auspiciousness which are stored only in Him may perhaps catch the evil eye of some people and so, the devotee feels that it is his duty to wish well of God and pray for His well-being so that the world may be happy. It is not therefore a surprise if Kausalyā observed certain auspicious rites at the time of Rāma's departure to the forest and pronounced *maṅgaḷam* for Him.²⁹⁷ The citizens of Ayodhyā bowed to all the deities in order to keep Rāma in good repute.²⁹⁸ The sages too who met Rāma as He entered the forest welcomed Him offering *maṅgaḷam* to Him.²⁹⁹

In the twelve verses of *Tiruppallāṅgu*. Periyālvār offers *maṅgaḷam* to the Feet of the Lord,³⁰⁰ Śrī, discus, conch and

293. *Gadāśūtri* 10.

294. *Pallāṅgu*

295. Periyā. Tm. 1.1: 10; 1.3: 10; 1.4: 10; 1.5: 10; 1.7: 11; 2.2: 11; 2.3: 13; 2.4: 10; 2.7: 10; 2.8: 10; 2.10: 10; 3.1: 11; 3.2: 10; 3.4: 10; 3.5: 11; 4.1: 10; 4.4: 11; 4.6: 10; 4.9: 11.

296. cf. *Abhijāna Śākuntala*. Act V.

297. Rām. Ayodhya. 25: 28 to 45.

298. *ibid.* 2.52.

299. *ibid.* Āraṇya. 1: 11, 12. cf. *Śrī Guṇaratnakōśa* 24 where the five weapons of Viṣṇu are ever ready to keep a keen watch over the person of the Lord. Tyāgarāja too asks people to offer their prayers for protection to Rāma in the Bairavirāga kīrtana "Rakṣa peṭṭarē".

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to the close proximity between the Lord and His devotees.³⁰¹ The Ālvār invites people, even of those in heaven to mingle together for this purpose.³⁰² The *maṅgaḷam* is offered to the Lord Who killed Hiranyakaśipu,³⁰³ Bāṇa,³⁰⁴ Rāvaṇa and his hordes³⁰⁵. This piece refers to the devotees' keen desire to have the remnants of what the Lord had used,³⁰⁶ the festival³⁰⁷ conducted on the day which is in connection with the constellation 'Tiruvōṇam'. The Ālvār makes a clear pronouncement about the greatness of the Lord's name³⁰⁸ and himself as belonging to a family where all his ancestors in seven generations have been the servants of the Lord.³⁰⁹

Periyālvār was much attracted to Kṛṣṇa Whose childhood is very well depicted by him. The festivities celebrated by the inhabitants of Gokulam when Kṛṣṇa was born is graphically described.³¹⁰ The divine child is described from feet to head by Yacoda and the minute description is very artistically presented.³¹¹ The various decorations are sent by the gods for bedecking the child who is put in the cradle and the lullaby is sung by Yacodā;³¹² Yacodā's calling the moon to be near the child is full of references to Kṛṣṇa's divinity.³¹³ Elegance marks the depiction as Yacodā's request to Kṛṣṇa's *cenkīrai*³¹⁴ and *coppāṇi*.³¹⁵ The gentle and faltering steps of the child

301. *ibid.* 2.

302. *ibid.* 4.

303. *ibid.* 6.

304. *ibid.* 7.

305. *ibid.* 3.

306. *ibid.* 9.

307. *ibid.* 6, 9.

308. *ibid.* 4, 11, 12.

309. *ibid.* 6.

310. *Periyaḷ. Tm.* 1.1.

311. *ibid.* 1.2.

312. *ibid.* 1.3.

313. *ibid.* 1.4.

314. *ibid.* 1.5; the first voluntary movements of the child is known as '*cenkīrai*'.

315. *ibid.* 1.6; *coppāṇi* is the first clapping of the hands. cf. *Peri. Tm.* 10.5.

Kṛṣṇa are vividly portrayed³¹⁶ The *accō* stage is set on an ideal background of the exploits of the Lord as Vāmana and others.³¹⁷ It is doubtful whether any woman could describe better the feelings she would have had when her child clings to her back. Yacodā, rather Periyālvār, depicts this aspect with extraordinary grace³¹⁸ which is equalled only by the Ālvār's depiction of '*appūcck-kāṭṭal*'³¹⁹. Yacodā's asking the child to suck her breasts gives the pen-portrait of the child approaching the mother in certain poses.³²⁰ The twelve names of the Lord are used in the decad describing the lovely earlobes of the child by addressing with one name in each verse.³²¹ The celebration of the whole occasion is described in detail commencing with the women folk assembled to participate in the celebration. The bath for Kṛṣṇa is arranged and Yacodā asks Him to take the bath leaving aside His pranks.³²² The dressing of the hair,³²³ bringing a stick³²⁴ and decoration of the hair with various flowers³²⁵ are all well described. Yacodā takes proper precautions to see that evil eyes are not cast on the child and hence undertakes *rakṣa* for Him.³²⁶ The complaints of the women regarding Kṛṣṇa's mischief and Yacodā's asking the boy not to play tricks and come to her are vividly portrayed.³²⁷ References are made here to the Lord as enshrined in *arcā* forms as in the previous decad. Kṛṣṇa's drinking away the milk,³²⁸ eating away the rice cooked with jaggery,³²⁹ and snatching away the bangles of a girl and giving

316. *ibid.* 1.7.317. *ibid.* 1.8. cf. the last decad of T.V.K.318. *ibid.* 1.9.319. *ibid.* 2.1.320. *ibid.* 2.2.321. *ibid.* 2.3.322. *ibid.* 2.4.323. *ibid.* 2.5.324. *ibid.* 2.6.325. *ibid.* 2.7.326. *ibid.* 2.8.327. *ibid.* 2.9.328. *ibid.* 2.9: 5.329. *ibid.* 2.9: 7.

them to another girl for buying rose-apples in exchange³³⁰ are skilfully presented by women to Yacodā. Yacodā recounts His mischievous acts to Him on His face and refuses to give Him breast-milk.³³¹ She feels sorry for having sent the child after the cows in the hot sun without allowing Him to play with His friends and without giving even footwear and umbrellas.³³² The motherly affection and the pride of having such a charming child causing jealousy in the mind of other women are ably portrayed and are superb and graceful.³³³ Admirable is the description of the behaviour of women of Gokulam (Āyarpāṭi) when they cast their looks at the boy Kṛṣṇa who was returning in the evening after tending the cows.³³⁴ The description of the Govardhana hill and its lifting by Kṛṣṇa and playing on the flute are well conceived.³³⁵ The exhilarating effect of the sound of the flute is vividly portrayed with the minutest details of Kṛṣṇa applying His little fingers on the holes of the flute and the movements of His lips and the fine bending of His eyebrows when He played on the pipe.³³⁶ The effect of His music on celestial women, sages like Nārada, semi-divine beings like *kinnaras* is well depicted.³³⁷ The celestial dancers like Menaka and her other three comrades, and the *gandharvas* became aware of their insignificant position in dance and music and felt ashamed.³³⁸ The denizens of heaven came down to Gokulam and were following Kṛṣṇa wherever He was proceeding to listen to His music.³³⁹ The bird species deserted their nests and kept lying on the ground, the cows came alert with rapt attention without even moving their ear-lobes, the deer stopped grazing and listened with attention to the music with grass-lits still clinging to

330. *ibid.* 2.9: 10.331. *ibid.* 3.1.332. *ibid.* 3.2.333. *ibid.* 3.5.334. *ibid.* 3.4.335. *ibid.* 3.5; 3.6.336. *ibid.* 3.6: 8.337. *ibid.* 3.6: 3.5.338. *ibid.* 3.6: 4, 6.339. *ibid.* 3.6: 7.

their mouths and seemed as if they were in picture.³⁴⁰ The trees began to exude the flow of honey, and the branches turned towards Kṛṣṇa offering flowers exuding honey.³⁴¹ The mother's description of how her little daughter felt fascinated by Kṛṣṇa is ably portrayed³⁴² as also her anxiety about her daughter's safety when she is not found in the abode and therefore guessed to have gone after Him.³⁴³ She is apprehensive of the scandal that may arise as a result of this incident. A kind of sport called '*untipaṇattal*' in which little girls take part is described about the child Kṛṣṇa.³⁴⁴ Hanuman's offering the identity regarding Rāma to Sīta are beautifully depicted.³⁴⁵ The Ālvār mentions that there are people who had directly seen God in his descents as Narasimha,³⁴⁶ Rāma in the sacrificial hall of Janaka,³⁴⁷ on the seashore on the eve of crossing the ocean to reach Laṅka,³⁴⁸ Kṛṣṇa when He killed the seven bulls,³⁴⁹ in the battlefield³⁵⁰, while on the throne with ten thousand wives,³⁵¹ in the battle field of Bhārata,³⁵² hiding the sun with discus³⁵³ and as Varāha having Bhūdevi on his side.³⁵⁴ The Tirumāliruñcōlai hills are beautifully described as belonging to the Lord Whose exploits are recounted.³⁵⁵ The holy place of Tirukkōṭṭiyūr is well described as a place inhabited by brahmins deeply learned in the *Vedas* and so must have done good deeds in their previous births to inhabit that

340. *ibid.* 3.6: 8.9.

341. *ibid.* 3.6: 10.

342. *ibid.* 3.7.

343. *ibid.* 3.8.

344. *ibid.* 3.9. cf. TVK. Tiruvuntiyār (295-314).

345. *ibid.* 3.10.

346. *ibid.* 4.1: 1.

347. *ibid.* 4.1: 2.

348. *ibid.* 4.1: 3.

349. *ibid.* 4.1: 4.

350. *ibid.* 4.1: 5.

351. *ibid.* 4.1: 6.

352. *ibid.* 4.1: 7.

353. *ibid.* 4.1: 8.

354. *ibid.* 4.1: 9.

355. *ibid.* 4.2; 4.3.

place.³⁵⁶ People who do not extol the deity in the shrine there but are after only wealth, cloth and food, must be great sinners.³⁵⁷ The world is really lucky in being able to get the contact with the dust of the feet of those who praise this deity.³⁵⁸ Such devotees have the right to sell their devotees to others for any praise,³⁵⁹ that is, the devotee of God shall treat himself as a servant of *bhāgavatas*.

The Ālvār asks people to utter the names of God even if it is necessary to go about begging.³⁶⁰ The holy shrine of Śrī Raṅgam is described in three decads.³⁶¹ In this description are contained much of the tenets of Vaiṣṇavism. The Lord will always be by the side of His devotees whatever be the nature of the activities.³⁶² He Himself takes His men to His place.³⁶³ The devotee shall worship the Lord even in advance, as he is not likely to think of Him in his deathbed.³⁶⁴ If the Lord's Feet are worshipped with flowers to the recitation of *Rg, Yajur* and *Sāma Vedas* then that time must be considered good, otherwise it will be a day of fast.³⁶⁵ All the diseases left him because of the protection he received from the Lord.³⁶⁶

ĀṆṬĀḶ

Āṅṭāḷ the foster-daughter of Periyālvār composed two poems of which one is the well-known *Tiruppāvai* and the other is *Nācciyār-tirumoḷi*. The *Tiruppāvai* is in thirty verses which teach people of their dependencce upon God and of the

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356. *ibid.* 4.4.
 357. *ibid.* 4.4: 3, 4, 5.
 358. *ibid.* 4.4: 6.
 359. *ibid.* 4.4: 10.
 360. *ibid.* 4.6. cf. *ibid.* 4.5.
 361. *ibid.* 4.8; 4.9; 4.10.
 362. *ibid.* 4.9: 2.
 363. *ibid.* 4.9: 3.
 364. *ibid.* 4.10: 1.
 365. *ibid.* 5.1: 6.
 366. *ibid.* 5.2.

need to serve only the Lord. This doctrine which is based on *śeṣatva* is derived from the *Upaniṣads*.³⁶⁷ The whole piece is addressed to the maidens for undertaking a solemn observance during *hēmanta* season in the first month. The observance is known as *Kātyāyanī-vrata*, worshipping *Kātyāyanī*, the goddess for receiving a suitable husband. The *Bhāgavata* refers to this observance by the maidens in Gokulam who bathed in the Yamuna before daybreak and worshipped the image of that goddess made of sand. The request of these maidens was to *Kṛṣṇa*, the son of Nandagopa as their husband. They used to go to the river singing the glory of *Kṛṣṇa* all the way.³⁶⁸

Āṅṅā, being an ardent devotee of *Viṣṇu*, takes up only the element of undertaking the observance, the deity to be worshipped being only Lord *Śrī Kṛṣṇa*. She conceived her place *Śrī Villiputtūr* as Gokulam. The maidens there, were considered as the maidens of the cowherds, and the temple of the Lord there as the abode of Nandagopa.

The whole piece of *Tiruppāvai* could be taken to have been divided into six groups of five verses each, the first group of verses representing the nature of observance that she is undertaking. The maidens are called out for participating in the observance. They have to take bath early in the morning and avoid taking ghee, milk and applying collyrium to the eyes and wearing flowers. They shall avoid doing the forbidden acts and uttering evil expressions. They would offer gifts to the deserving.³⁶⁹ Besides getting *Kṛṣṇa* for their husband, their observance would bestow on lands plenty of timely showers, peace and above all vast yield of milk on which the cowherds live. They have to sing the names of *Puruṣottama* Who measured the worlds.³⁷⁰ They request the lord of rain to shower enough water for their bath.³⁷¹ They shall approach

367. Vide: *Tānīyan* beginning with 'Nīla'.

368. *Bhāg. P.* 10.22: 1 to 6.

369. *T. Pv.* 2.

370. *ibid.* 3.

371. *ibid.* 4: cf. *Tiruvempāvai* 16.

the Lord with pure mind, offer pure flowers, bend before Him, utter His names and meditate upon, with the result that the sins committed previously and that are likely to be committed in the future would be utterly destroyed.³⁷² The time for starting to the river is announced by the chirping of birds, the blowing of the conch and the brahmins uttering the words 'hari' when they get up.³⁷³

The second group of verses is devoted to rousing the maidens from their sleep. The cowherdesses begin to churn the curds.³⁷⁴ The mothers of some of those maidens are requested to awaken their daughters.³⁷⁵ One gopī asks one of the maidens who is sleeping to rise up and open the door.³⁷⁶ In the third group of verses, the maidens are called to follow her to the abode of Nandagopa.³⁷⁷ Some who have detachment for the world wear the saffron robes and go through the streets to their temples blowing the conches.³⁷⁸ The maidens also intend to proceed to sing the glory of Kṛṣṇa.³⁷⁹ The fourth group describes how the gate-keepers of the mansion of Nandagopa are requested to open the doors and permit them to enter for awakening Kṛṣṇa.³⁸⁰ Nandagopa, Yacodā and Balarāma are then requested to wake up.³⁸¹ Nappinnai is then asked to open the door.³⁸² The fifth group is devoted to the attempt at the representation of the aspirations to Kṛṣṇa by the *gopīs* after waking Him up. Kṛṣṇa is informed of the arrival of the enemies of God who have suffered much and now realized of His greatness.³⁸³ They request Him

372. *ibid.* 5.

373. *ibid.* 6.

374. *ibid.* 7.

375. *ibid.* 9.

376. *ibid.* 10.

377. *ibid.* 13.

378. *ibid.* 14.

379. *ibid.* 15.

380. *ibid.* 16.

381. *ibid.* 17.

382. *ibid.* 18.

383. *ibid.* 21.

to come out of the bed room like a lion which has waken up just now and walking with a majestic style to occupy the throne and listen to their supplications.³⁸⁴ All the people wish for His Feet by doing *maṅgalāsāsanam*.³⁸⁵ If He were to fulfil their aspirations, they would be able to sing His prosperity and the advantage of serving Him. This would enable them to get full relief from the worldly ills and enjoy bliss.³⁸⁶ In the last group, the bath which they would now undertake is justified on the strength of the practice of it by the elders. They require certain equipments for their worship of Him, namely, huge conches which would terrify the world with their resonant sound, and big musical instruments. They must have people who would do *maṅgalāsāsanam* for Him. They require also auspicious lamps, flags and canopies.³⁸⁷

The observances of a vow of this kind does not, however, get sanction from the *Vedic* sources, but certain acts have been in vogue as practices of pious and righteous men whose conduct and behaviour cannot be questioned. On the analogy of Holaka and other practices,³⁸⁸ these have to be treated as authoritative. The *gopis* request the Lord to give them suitable ornaments to put on and allow them to prepare rice with milk and ghee.³⁸⁹ The *gopis* exult over their good fortune for having Kṛṣṇa amidst them. They are all persons roaming in the forests tending the cows. They are utterly unlearned and Kṛṣṇa is born to live as one among them. This reveals God's *saṅgābhya*. The relationship between them and Kṛṣṇa is such that it can never be got rid of. This is the highest *tattva* which scholars seek to realize but is very easily known to these cowherdresses. They could have, out of ignorance and childishness, addressed Him with expressions that deserve to be used

384. *ibid.* 23.

385. *ibid.* 24

386. *ibid.* 25.

387. *ibid.* 26.

388. *Sabarabhāṣya* on *Mīmāṃsā-sūtra* 1.3: 15.

389. *ibid.* 27.

with reference to people of low status. The Lord is requested to forgive them for that fault and grant their request.³⁹⁰ They request the Lord to listen to the purpose of their coming to Him early in the morning in order to do *maṅgalasāsanam* at His Feet. He must accept their services. They are not the persons to be satisfied with the result they would gain from Him for the time and forget Him afterwards. They request to be related to Him intimately for all times in each and every birth of theirs. They shall do service only to Him. He shall relieve them of any thought as aspiration other than this.³⁹¹ Following the tradition of her father she offers *maṅgalasāsanam* to the Lord.³⁹²

The fundamental truth preached here is that the selves live only for Nārāyaṇa Who is *Uttama*, or *Puruṣottama*.³⁹³ While worshipping God, the deeds which are prohibited have to be given up.³⁹⁴ The ultimate purpose lies in praising and worshipping His Feet and whatever is done shall be an act of service.³⁹⁵

Prapatti is the path for obtaining final release.³⁹⁶ When the devotees proceed to study the *tattva* from the preceptor, they are required to take their classmates also with them³⁹⁷. Mind is the guard of the temple of God.³⁹⁸ The spiritual preceptors shall be worshipped in advance and God shall be approached through their favour.³⁹⁹ Śrī shall be worshipped at first.⁴⁰⁰ The preceptor's advice shall be followed⁴⁰¹ and Śrī shall be

390. *ibid.* 28.

391. *ibid.* 29.

392. *ibid.* 24.

393. Bh.G. 10.

394. T. Pv. 2.

395. *ibid.* 3. cf. *Tiruvempāvai* 15, 16, 19; 20.

396. *ibid.* 12.

397. *ibid.* 13.

398. *ibid.* 16.

399. *ibid.* 17.

400. *ibid.* 18.

401. *ibid.* 19.

requested for Her help.⁴⁰² The Lord shall be awakened, worshipping Him Who resides as Indweller.⁴⁰³ External worship (*bāhyayāga*) shall then be undertaken⁴⁰⁴ The six instruments refer to the six seats arranged for the Lord⁴⁰⁵ The Indweller is then worshipped⁴⁰⁶ and this is called *anuyāga*. The way of practising *prapatti* and its effect are suggested.⁴⁰⁷

The Vaiṣṇavite tradition has attached great significance to the *Tiruppallāṅṅu* of Periyālvār and to the *Tiruppāvai* of Āṅṅāḷ. The worship of the deity with the recitation of the *Nalayiram* shall begin with the first two verses of *Tiruppallāṅṅu* and end with the recitation of the last two verses of *Tiruppāvai*. The verses of *Tiruppallāṅṅu* treat of offering *maṅgaḷam* to the Feet of the Lord, Lord, Śrī and His conch and discus. It is prudent on the part of the worshipper to hope for God's vision and wish for that for all times. It is foolish to harp upon selfish ends, such as redressal of grievances and removal of miseries. The prayers shall end with an appeal to the Lord to enable the worshippers serve Him for all times. *Kaiṅkarya* is thus the sole aim and purpose of the life of a Vaiṣṇavite and it is not therefore a surprise that the compositions of Periyālvār and Āṅṅāḷ have come to occupy supreme position in the recitation of the *Nalayiram*.

Āṅṅāḷ was born for bridal mysticism.⁴⁰⁸ The Ālvār-nāyakis of Tirumaṅkai Maṅṅan and Nammālvār with introspective *jñāna* could only wear the bridal garb and imbibe the intensity of *prema* and employ the terminology of the bride. The symbology of spiritual marriage is not different from the metaphysical language of deification by which the self is divinised by the alchemy of love. From the point of view of bridal mysticism, Āṅṅāḷ's two poems, *Tiruppāvai* and *Nacchiyār-*

402. *ibid.* 20.

403. *ibid.* 21.

404. *ibid.* 23, 24, 25.

405. *ibid.* 26.

406. *ibid.* 27.

407. *ibid.* 28, 29.

408. A.H. Sūt. 133.

tirumōḷi are inspired lyrical rhapsodies which are the quint-essence of mystic love poured out spontaneously with unpre-meditated but self-concealed art. Her mystic experiences are not visionary or hallucinatory but are historic and true. Here is an inspiring example of a spiritual marriage. It is only those who have pure hearts and who have subdued the lusts of the flesh and tasted *bhakti-rasa* that can understand her supra-rational experience clothed in symbolic imagery and a sensuous garb, and appreciate the language employed by her.

Āṅṅāl was like the *gopī* born for Gopāla, the Divine Dark and she vowed to wed Him alone and none else.⁴⁰⁹ In her poems there is unique poetic or dramatic gift of portrying with consummate feminine art, the procession of virgin love with her comrades with praise in her lips and *prema* in her heart to the mansion of Lord Kṛṣṇa, enthroned in their hearts, wake Him up from his *yoganidra* and present to Him a petition for granting them the boon of the unitive life.⁴¹⁰ It should prove much more easy for her as a member of the fair sex to realize the Highest through her own route of being. It is clear that for the female of this incarnation, the path of Āṅṅāl shows how the transformation could be effected and the rich raptures of the supramental are open to her.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is accessible to her as Gopāla, the cowherd boy; yet He is the Dazzling Divine Dark hidden in the light of love and as the cloud of the Unknowing He is elusive, Now her poetic genius and make-believe come in her way. She imagines herself to be a *gopī* mad after Śrī Kṛṣṇa;⁴¹¹ but He is a Divine Beauty which the eye has not seen, the ear has not heard and the hand has not touched. The heart can know Him, but logic cannot. So Āṅṅāl invokes Manmatha, but that attempt was not fruitful. Then she tries her success by drawing an omen-circle on the sand (*kuṭal*)⁴¹²; then she craves the

409. Nāc. Tm. 1.5; cf. *ibid.* 12.4.

410. T. Pv. 6 to 19.

411. Nāc. Tm. 2, 3.

412. *ibid.* 4. This motif has been borrowed from the *Akam* poetry of the ancient Tamils.

cuckoo to cry for her ocean-hued Lord's arrival; it is really a pathetic appeal of a love-infected girl.⁴¹³ The love-sick maiden sees-Him in her dream as if she goes wedded with Him with all ritualistic details of her marriage function.⁴¹⁴ When she opens her eyes the vision disappears; the joy of physical embrace fades away at the thought of Divine clasp of love. It is an amazing experience which only a born mystic like Āṇṭāḷ can feel and know. Now Āṇṭāḷ's flaming love reaches the white heat of consuming passion. There is no response to her irresistible yearning and yet she knows that her love is inescapable. So she sends messages of her burning love to her cruel-hearted Lord through the clouds to intercede on her behalf.⁴¹⁵ But this attempt too does not bear any fruit. So her feelings of forsakenness and frustration ends in the agony of despair⁴¹⁶

Normally feminine love is meek, modest and passive but it becomes aggressive when it is not answered and when there is no mutualness or reciprocity. Her *prema* becomes irrepressible. It becomes irresistible and in its frenzy it bursts the bounds of conventional self-restraint. Despondency has its reaction in defiance and assault. The love-smitten maiden rebukes the lover for his cunning and cruelty.⁴¹⁷ He is a thief as He has stolen away her heart and is elusive and deceptive.⁴¹⁸ He is cruel and callous as He has forsaken a maid captivated by His beauty and suffering from divine possession and intoxication.⁴¹⁹ In her desperate mood, she resorts to a unique expedient of assault which has no parallel in bridal mysticism either in the East or in the West. She pines away and seeks relief by plucking out the very roots of feminine love budding from her breast and aims them as missiles at her Torturer.⁴²⁰

413. *ibid.* 5.

414. *ibid.* 6.

415. *ibid.* 8.

416. *ibid.* 10; cf. 9 also with this.

417. *ibid.* 13.

418. *ibid.* 13.2, 6; 14.3.

419. *ibid.* 13.1, 3,4.

420. *ibid.* 13.8.

The Fisher and Falconer of feminine souls Who is also seized with soul-hunger could no longer escape from the inescapable love of Āṅṅāḷ. He is pierced by the shafts of love and can no longer resist it. His yearning for contacting her, His elect bride, and enjoying her union has now reached the stage of consummation. At last heart speaks to heart and Āṅṅāḷ visualises her being led in bridal array in all pomp and splendour by the Beloved. The doors of the Sleeping Beauty of Tiruva-raṅkam are flung open. She is caught up in the Bliss of Divine Embrace and is deified.

Āṅṅāḷ's life is idealised and she is idolised in Śrī Vaiṣṇavite shrines and homes and millions of Vaiṣṇavites through the ages, particularly in South India, have worshipped her as the embodiment of the fidelity of feminine love raised to the Divine level as His eternal 'other'. Indeed St. Āṅṅāḷ stands as the most marvellous exponent of the bridal path of Mystic Attainment. The sixth decad of the *Nācciyār tirumolī* is now recited on the occasion of the marriage in families which are Vaiṣṇavite in outlook and conduct.

The bridal path attracted also Periyālvār and Kulacēkara Ālvār whose strong inclinations were respectively motherly affection towards Kṛṣṇa and devotion to Rāma, and prompted them to indulge on this theme. Periyālvār has sung three decads⁴²¹ on the *gopis'* love to Kṛṣṇa and Kulacēkarālvār only one decad⁴²² on the role of a *gopī* accusing Kṛṣṇa of several misdeeds and breaches of faith. But bridal mysticism has not taken a deep root in their hymns.

The *Upaniṣadic* seers have shown that at the back of all types of affection is the love of Self.⁴²³ Knowing Him, one becomes attractive to all others.⁴²⁴ Therefore the love-approach is not to be condemned as such. The Ālvārs, avowedly follow the *Bhāgavata*. Their love-approach is the

421. Periyāḷ. Tm. 3.4; 3.7; 3.8.

422. Perum. Tm. 6.

423. Br. Up. 6(5): 6.

424. Ken. Up. 4.6.

desire for the attainment of God Kṛṣṇa, even as the *gopīs* desired Him. The history of the *gopīs* is the expression of their close and intimate and personal relationship with God, an intimacy possible to the supreme knowers alone. Sensual love was not an item in their approach. They were therefore considered to be *ṛṣīs* come down in their real nature as women, for they were utterly dependent on God, the Primal Male. There is, however, a difference between the Āḷvārs and the *gopīs*. Whereas the *gopīs* were in a situation of actual physical relationship, thrown in His Society, the Āḷvārs had to gain this intimacy in and through the *arcāvatāras* of God, all over this Holy Land. They always practised the love to these *arcā* idols, invariably and without any exception. They removed the dire blot of sex and carnalism and every trace and reminiscence of these, from their love experiences. Sublimation was effected by the worship of the manifestations of God, even abandoning the historical *avatāras*, for the *arcā viḡrahas* are but representations, descents actual, of the Divine. For their part Āṅṅāḷ, Tirumaṅkaiyāḷvār and Nammāḷvār worshipped *arcā* as their Love-object and clung to it alone. Their eyes saw all human beings including themselves as female; they themselves became spouse fit for the Lord. Their entire dependance on God, or femininity, was absolute, inescapable, divinely ordained from sempiternal years.

MATURAKAVIYĀḶVĀR

The piece of *Kaṅṅinunṅciṛuttāmpu* consisting of eleven verses was composed by Maturakaviyāḷvār in praise of his preceptor Nammāḷvār. The poem which is in the form of *antāti* considers not God but the spiritual teacher Nammāḷvār as the *śeṣin*. He knows no other deity. Repeating the utterance of his master's name this Āḷvār got supreme delight. He seeks only the feet of the Āḷvār. He will sing the praise of his feet.⁴²⁵ It is only by being the servant of the Āḷvār that he could see God.⁴²⁶ Nammāḷvār is his father, mother and

425. K.C. 2,7.

426. *ibid.* 3.

ruler;⁴²⁷ he sang the inner sense of the *Vedas*.⁴²⁸ It is out of the sincere devotion of Maturakaviyālvār to his preceptor this piece is to be sung before the recitation of *Tiruvāymoḷi* is undertaken. What Maturakaviyālvār practised is not something which was unknown to other Ālvārs. There are numerous instances in which the other Ālvārs extolled the greatness of *bhāgavatas* and held them as their lords.⁴²⁹

TIRUVARANĀKATTAMUTANĀR

The *Rāmānuca-nūṟṟantāḷi* of Tiruvarāṅkattu Amutaṅār which is included in the *Nālayiram* depicts in the *antāḷi* form the greatness of Rāmānuja. After a brief introduction showing how he had to compose this piece, Amutaṅār refers to the Ālvārs and their contributions.⁴³⁰ Peyālvār is referred to as the head among the Tamil scholars.⁴³¹ Rāmānuja is stated as cherishing what each of these Ālvārs preached and also keeping their feet on his head and getting guidance from them for his writings. This is clear proof that the writings of the Ālvārs influenced to a large extent Rāmānuja's philosophy and particularly in writing the *Gadyatraya*. Rāmānuja is stated to have preached that the three pursuits *dharma*, *artha* and *mokṣa* are related to Vāmana and *kāma* to Kṛṣṇa.⁴³² It is said that the teachings of Nammālvār were ever in the mind of Rāmānuja and guided him.⁴³³ Devotion to the spiritual preceptor is stressed by citing his own example of worshipping those who are devoted to Rāmānuja.⁴³⁴

The constellation *Śravaṇa* which is known as *Tiruvōṇam* in Tamil is held to be presided over by Viṣṇu and the day, when that constellation is present, is celebrated and this celebration

427. *ibid.* 4.

428. *ibid.* 9.

429. *Perum.* Tm. 10; T.E. 10; A.P. 1; *Peri.* Tm. 2.6; T.V.M. 3,7; 5.2; 8.10.

430. R.N. 8 to 19.

431. *ibid.* 10.

432. *ibid.* 40.

433. *ibid.* 46, 60.

434. *ibid.* 85, 86, 96, 97.

is in honour of Viṣṇu. The compositions of the Ālvārs contain frequent references to the celebration of this great festival.⁴³⁵ Perhaps the frequent references to this festival coupled with the *Vedic* concept of Lord Viṣṇu as the deity presiding over the constellation *Śravaṇa* are responsible for the observance of this day in each lunar month in great shrines like those at Tiruvarankam, Kāñci, Kumbakonam, Triplicane and others when the deity is taken in procession. The supreme significance of this constellation for undertaking a celebration must have been left unnoticed resulting in the celebration of it in an ordinary humdrum way.

435, Pēriyāl. Tm. 2.4; 1. 2.9; 7; 3.3; 9; *Tiruppāllāntu* 6,9; Nāṅ. Tv. 41.