

THE NĀLĀYIRAM AS DRAVIDA VEDA

The compositions of the Ālvārs contain references to the *Vedas*¹ and to God as known or proved by the *Vedas*.² The *Vedas* go after Him searching Him³ who expounded them.⁴ Several places where are situated the sacred shrines are described as inhabited by those who are well studied in the *Vedas*⁵ and as resounding with the recitation of the *Vedas*.⁶ This is a clear proof to show that the Ālvārs came in the line of *Vedic* tradition which they followed and recorded in their compositions.

It is from the composition of Maturakaviyālvār that the worth of Nammālvār's *Tiruvāymoḷi* is known as valuable and great as that of the *Vedas*. Nammālvār is stated here to have sung in sweet Tamil the thousand verses which represent the contents of the *Vedas*.⁷ The inner sense of the *Vedas* is fully brought out by him.⁸ This evidence comes from one who was the immediate disciple of Nammālvār whom he served and by whom was taught the *Tiruvāymoḷi* and the other three compositions.

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1. Peri. Tm. 5.5; 9; 7.7: 2; T.V.M. 8.3: 2.
 2. *ibid.* 5.6: 1; 8.4: 1; 8.10: 1; 11.8: 9; T.V.M. 1.6: 2; 1.8: 10; 2.7: 2; 2.9: 8; 3.1: 10; 3.3: 5; 3.4: 6; 3.5: 5; Tc. V.14, 117; Nac. Tm. 4: 10: 10: 2; Nāp. Tv. 13 etc.
 3. *ibid.* 4.1: 6; 4.8: 3,7.
 4. T.V.M. 2.10: 10; I. Tv. 48.
 5. Peri. Tm. 2.10; 10; 3.8: 4; Periyāḷ. Tm. 4.4: 1; T.V.M. 5.7: 9; 10.8: 10.
 6. *ibid.* 3.10: 5; T.V.M. 5.9: 3; 7.3: 1,4.
 7. K.C. 8.
 8. *ibid.* 9.

Nāthamuni was virtually responsible for the spread of the *Nalayiram* and for making its recitation obligatory both in the temples and houses. In the Sanskrit *tanīyañ* which he composed in honour of Maturakaviyālvār, he refers to this Ālvār as deriving delight only by the simple recitation of the *Upaṇiṣads* of Nammālvār. He was the beginner of the tradition which declares the compositions of Nammālvār as *Upaṇiṣads*. In the Tamil *tanīyañ* about the same Ālvār, he refers to the Ālvār as Saṭhākopa who rendered the *Veda* into Tamil: 'Vētam Tamiḷ ceyta Māraṇ'. In the *tanīyañ* to the *Tiruvāymōḷi* he refers to the work as the ocean of *Drāvida Veda* comparable to the *Upaṇiṣad* which has thousand recensions. The *Sāma-veda* is spoken of as having thousand recensions. The *Upaṇiṣad* which is attached to this *Veda* is the *Chāṇḍogya* and Nāthamuni's stand is that the *Tiruvāymōḷi* is a Tamil rendering of the *Chāṇḍogya Upaṇiṣad*. It is obvious from this that in Nāthamuni's opinion, the *Tiruvāymōḷi* is an *Upaṇiṣad* and that too of the *Sāma-veda*.

According to Īsvaramuni, the son of Nāthamuni, Nammālvār rendered the *Vedas* into the *antati* type of Tamil.⁹ Rāmānuja states that the *Tiruveḷukkūṟṟirukkai* of Tirumaṅkaiyālvār contains in entirety the import of the *Vedas*.¹⁰ Among the immediate disciples of Rāmānuja, Anantālvān held that Saṭhākōpa composed the *Veda* in Tamil.¹¹ Aruḷālap-perumāḷ Emperumāṇār refers to Nammālvār as having composed *Tiruvācīriyam* in *ācīriyappā* metre and as the expounder of the *Vedas*.¹² Parācara Paṭṭar refers to the *Tiruvāymōḷi* as *Tamil Veda* in thousand verses¹³ and as the music of the *Veda*.¹⁴ The same scholar describes Āṇṭāḷ as preaching through the *Tiruppāvai* the *śeṣavṛtti* that is taught in the *Upaṇiṣads*. This last reference has much significance in as much as the *Tiruppāvai*

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9. *Tanīyañ* beginning with 'tiruvaluti-nāṭu.
 10. *Tanīyañ* beginning with 'cīrār'.
 11. *Tanīyañ* beginning with 'ēynta'.
 12. *Tanīyañ* beginning with 'kācīṇiyōr'.
 13. *Tanīyañ* beginning with 'vāṇ-tikaḷum'.
 14. *Tanīyañ* beginning with 'mikka irai'.

does form part of the *Tamil Vedas*. In addition, it is the cream of the *Vedas*, as what is taught through *Vedānta* is taught in this piece.

The *Ārāytrap-paṭi* of Piḷḷān is extolled by Maṇavaḷa-māmuṇikaḷ as conveying the import of Nammāḷvār's *Veda*¹⁵. Vedānta Deśika refers to the Āḷvār as having rendered the *Vedas* into Tamil.¹⁶ Nāthamuni is said to have taught the *Tamil Vedas* in musical setting.¹⁷ Tiruvaraṅkattamutaṅār makes frequent references to the *Tamil Veda*. Poykaiyāḷvār wrote in pure Tamil about the purport of the *Vedas*.¹⁸ So also did Tiruppāṇāḷvār¹⁹ and so was strung a garland of *Tamil Veda* by Toṭṭaraṭippotiṅyāḷvār.²⁰ The imports of the *Vedas* which are beyond the reach of the people were brought out by Saṭhakopa in thousand sweet Tamil verses.²¹ Rāmānuja had the realization of the import of the *Vedas* composed by Nammāḷvār.²² Through Rōmānuja's services, the *Vedas* which reveal Nārāyaṇa became delighted and the pure *Tamil Vedas* composed by Nammāḷvār continued to flourish.²³ What is noteworthy here is that eminent scholars of the *Vedas* like Periyāḷvār²⁴ and Maturakaviyāḷvār composed hymns in Tamil in praise of God and Āḷvār respectively. Vedānta Deśika refers to the preceptors as holy (*bhagavān*) who are proficient in the *Tamil Vedas*.²⁵ He calls the composition of Nammāḷvār 'samhita', a word which is widely used to refer to the *Vedic* texts.²⁶

15. U.R.M. 41.

16. *Guruparamparā-sāra* verse 2 (Tamil).

17. *ibid.* last verse.

18. R.N. 8.

19. *ibid.* 11.

20. *ibid.* 13.

21. *ibid.* 18.

22. *ibid.* 46.

23. *ibid.* 54.

24. The very title 'Paṭṭar' shows that Viṣṇu-cittar was a vedic scholar and the author of commentary on the *Kalpasūtra*. One of the passages in his compositions suggests his acquaintance with the *Pūrvamīmāṃsā* rules (Vide: RTS p.545).

25. R.T.S. p. 523.

26. *Drāmidōpaniṣat-tātparyaratnāvallī*, p.4. of. *Pādukāśāstra* 1:3.

It is thus noticed that after Nāthamuni, the *Nalāyirām* became reputed as *Tamil Vedas* and the *Tiruvāymoḷi* as the *Upaniṣad* in Tamil. The two works *Drāmidopanīṣat-sāra* and *Drāmidōpanīṣat-tātparyaratnāvallī* which are in brief the sum and substance of the *Tiruvāymoḷi* lend support to this tradition of thought. This shows at the same time that the other three compositions of Nammālvār as also those of other Ālvārs were treated simply as the *Vedas*.

The first twenty-one verses of the *Tiruvāymoḷi* convey clearly the purport of the Vedānta system. They represent the twenty-one recensions of the *Ṛg Veda*. The thousand verses which are set to music represent the *Sāma-veda* teachings in thousand recensions. The hundred decads represent the *Yajur-veda* which has one hundred recensions. This composition abounds in the delineation of the eight sentiments and so represents the *Atharva-veda* which has eight recensions. Hence the *Tiruvāymoḷi* shall be taken to represent all the *Vedas*.²⁷ This is only an attempt to justify that the Ālvār's composition *Tiruvāymoḷi* is *Tamil Veda*.

Curiously enough, attempts were made, in this period to declare that the *Tiruviruttam*, *Tiruvācīriyam*, *Periya-tiruvantāti* and *Tiruvāymoḷi* represent the essential teachings respectively of *Ṛg*, *Yajur*, *Atharva* and *Sāma Vedas*.²⁸ This identification does not stand to reason. The *Tiruviruttam*, which is the first work of Nammālvār, begins with a reference to the worldly sufferings and a request to God for listening to his humble petition for rendering service at His Feet. The work shall rather be taken to contain the incidents which take place in life, in order to get freed from repeating them. The name '*Tiruvācīriyam*' refers to composition in *ācīriyap-pā* metre. It represents the supremacy of Narayana and His glory. *Periya-tiruvantāti*, which is composed in the *antāti* scheme and in *veṅpā* metre, depicts the *parama-bhakti* of the Ālvār and it is for this reason that the word '*periya*' which

27. *Drāmidopanīṣat-tātparyaratnāvallī*, 5 cf. *ibid.*, 10.

28. *Vide* : A.H. Sūt. 50: U.R.M. 9; The printed texts contain references of this kind at the beginning of these compositions.

means 'big' is used as the adjective here. The fourth composition, the *magnum opus* of this Ālvār, is *Tiruvāymoḷi* which is not merely an utterance that issues out of the mouth but is great and supreme and hence has the adjective 'tiru' being prefixed to it.

On the contrary, any attempt at establishing parity between these four compositions and the four *Vedas* would only lead to confusion. The *Vedas* as such could be interpreted as expression of the Lord's greatness, and in that sense alone these four compositions and those of all other Ālvārs could be deemed as the *Vedas*. Too much has been made of the fact that Nammālvār's compositions number four, and also the fact that Tirumaṅkaiyālvār's number six, so that an equation is sought between the four *Vedas* and Nammālvār's four works and similarly between the six "*Vedāṅgas*"²⁹ and the six works of Tirumaṅkaiyālvār. The two *Maṭals* or the *Tāṇṭakams* of Tirumaṅkaiyālvār have nothing in common with any of these nor could *Periya-tirumoḷi* be identified with any of them. The *Tiruveḷukkūṟṟirukkai* is more a *citrabhandā* than an ordinary piece and does not have any comparison to *śikṣas* or *chandās*. Moreover, there is no justification to treat these six compositions as auxiliaries to the four compositions of Nammālvār. It is idle to play on the 'number' of these compositions and try to connect them with the *Vedas* and their auxiliaries. Moreover, it remains to be explained as to what place the compositions of the other Ālvārs would occupy among the *Vedic* texts. When these two sets of these compositions exhaust the comparison with the *Vedas* and their auxiliaries, the other compositions should either cease to be designated as *Vedas* or given some other names such as *Upa-Vedas*. All these attempts would lead to draw unjust and invidious distinctions among the compositions of the Ālvārs. The proper procedure that deserves to be adopted is to admit the tradition that has been handed down from Nāthamuni and to treat the *Tiruvāymoḷi* as an *Upaniṣad* of

29. The ancillaries are six in number viz., phonetics (*śikṣa*), grammar (*vyākaraṇa*), prosody (*chandās*), etymology (*nirukti*), astronomy (*jyotiṣa*) and ceremonial texts (*kalpa*).

the *Sāma-veda*, the composition being based on the same number of recensions of the *Sāma-veda* and that of verses in the *Tiruvāymoḷi*. The remaining compositions in the *Nalayiram* represent the *Vedas* as such. There is no need to mark out some of them as identical with a particular *Veda* nor is it proper to treat the other three compositions of Nammālvār as other three *Vedas*.

The traditional commentators and exponents simply held that the four thousand verses of the Ālvārs are the Tamil renderings of the purport of the four *Vedas*.³⁰ It was suggested by Vedānta Deśika, in the context of maintaining the parity between the *Tiruvāymoḷi* and the *Vedas*, that this composition of Nammālvār represents the essence of the four *Vedas*.³¹ All the commentators of the *Divya Prabandham* as a whole or in part have recognized that Nammālvār composed the four compositions in the order of *Tiruvitruttam*, *Tiruvāciriyam*, *Periga-tiruvantāi* and *Tiruvāymoḷi*.³²

Nāthamuni refers to the *Tiruvāymoḷi* as the ocean of *Tamil Veda* which is comparable to the *Upaniṣad* of *Sāma-veda*. The basis for maintaining this comparison is not hard to seek. The *Vedānta* system, which is based on the Sanskrit sources, is said to have triple foundations (*prasthāna-traya*) of which the *Brahma-sūtras* formed the chief subject of study and exposition. These *sūtras* which were compiled by Vyāsa represent the authentic exposition of the philosophical inquiry of the tenets of the *Vedānta* school following a particular order in the treatment. These *sūtras* were prepared following the traditions maintained in the *Sāma-veda*.³³ Nevertheless, they became the foundations of the *Vedānta* traditions for the followers of all the branches of the *Vedas*. This is evident from the larger number of citations made by the exponents of these *sūtras* from the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* than from any others. That these *sūtras* were

30. T.P. 384.

31. *Drāmidōpaniṣat-tātparyaratnāvali* 5, 8.

32. *ibid.* 126.

33. Belwalker, S.K.: *Vedānta Philosophy* (Poona, 1929); p. 141.

adopted by the followers of other *Vedas* as well is clear from the profuse citations made from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, *Taittirīya*, *Attareya* and *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣads* which belong respectively to the *Suklayajur-veda*, *Kṛṣṇayajur-veda*, *Rg-veda* and *Atharva-veda* not to speak of many other *Upaniṣads* like the *Svetāśvatara* and others. Besides these, relevant passages are cited from the *Samhitā*, *Brahmaṇa* and *Āraṇyaka* portions of the *Vedas*, *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Viṣṇu-purāṇa* and others showing thus, all these sources of knowledge represent a unified whole. Yet the fact remains that the essence of the teachings of the *Brahma-sūtras* belongs to the *Sāma-veda*. It is in this light that Nāthamuni should have treated the *Tiruvāymoḷi* as the *Upaniṣad* of the *Sāma-veda*. Maturakaviyālvār who was a follower of the *Sāma-veda*, declares that Nammālvār had brought out the full import of the *Vedas*. Nāthamuni and Maturakavi are not really contradicting each other, as what is taught in the *Sāma-veda* is also conveyed by other *Vedas* and their *Upaniṣads* and the *Vedāntins* did not find any discrepancy in citing freely the passages from more than one *Veda* and one *Upaniṣad* to support an interpretation in the same context. Perhaps the recent attempt at establishing the parity of the four compositions of Nammālvār with the four *Vedas* represents over-shooting the mark, revealing the zeal to reconcile the statements of Maturakaviyālvār and Nāthamuni.

The outpouring of the heart mellowed by the deep sensuous realization of the *arca* form of the deities at Tirumāli-ruñcolai, Tirukkuṟuṅkuṭi and other places, the sudden outburst of the mental anguish caused by severe disappointment at the loss of the divine communion and the contemplative expressions at the dizzy heights of the Lord's eminence and His descents providing easy accessibility to the suffering mankind were experiences discontinuously had by Nammālvār with the result that there is not found in this composition the sequential treatment of these experiences. It is therefore apt to maintain a likeness between the *Tiruvāymoḷi* and the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* or for that matter any other *Upaniṣad* or even the *Veda* which contain various currents of thoughts which are not presented in a particular order. It is therefore

all the more appropriate to refer to Nammālvār as a seer³⁴ like the seers of the *mantras*. Hence the *Tiruvāymoḷi* can both be a *Samhitā* and an *Upaniṣad*.

The commentaries and the sub-commentaries of Piḷḷāṅ and others on the *Tiruvāymoḷi* containing profuse citations from the epics and *Purāṇas* bear comparison to the *Bhāṣyās* on the *Upaniṣads* and the *Vedas*. As in the sphere of the *Vedic* studies, here too there are differences in interpretation noted within the frame of Vaiṣṇavism.

The *Brahma-sūtras* represent the teachings of the *Upaniṣads* in an orderly manner. In the light of this treatment, it is possible to find out a systematic presentation of the Vaiṣṇavite doctrines from the *Nāiāyram*. The relevant passages are scattered all through the *Tiruvāymoḷi* and other compositions of the Ālvārs. Following the doctrines preached in the *Itāntastotra*, *Mahābhārata*, *Vīṣṇu-purāṇa* and other sources, the Ālvārs recognized Brahman as the Supreme Person, Nārāyana with Śrī.³⁵ He has unsurpassed bliss³⁶ and is the abode of unlimited auspicious qualities. He has the world of sentient beings and non-sentient things as His body.³⁷ He is everything.³⁸ Nothing is beyond Him.³⁹ He is superior to Brahmā and Śiva⁴⁰ and has none as His equal or superior.⁴¹ He is the Supreme Light.⁴² He has a body golden in com-

34. *Pādukāsahasra*, 1.3:

35. Mū. Tv. 1 and Nāḡ. Tv. 54.

36. T.V.M. 1.1: 1.

37. R.V. 1. 115: 1 and T.V.M. 1.1: 1; Br. Up. 5.9: 28 and T.V.M. 1.1: 2.

38. cf. Ch. Up. 3.14: 1 and T.V.M. 1.1: 4; 1.1: 7; 1.3: 9; 2.6: 10; 3.4: 10; 3.10: 10. 8.1: 6, 7; I.Tv. 24, 31; M. Tv. 89; Nāḡ. Tv. 51, 56, 96; Tc. V. 86, 94; Peri. Tm. 5.10: 1; 9.4: 10.

39. cf. Muṇ. Up. 1.1: 7 and T.V.M. 1.1: 10.

40. cf. Sv. Up. 6: 7 and T.V.M. 1.1: 1; 8.1: 5.

41. Sv. Up. 3: 9; 6: 8 and T.V.M. 1.2; 1.3: 2; M. Tv. 89; and Nāḡ. Tv. 51, 56.

42. *Taitt. Nārāyaṇiya* 93 and T.V.M. 3.7: 1; cf. Ch. Up. 8.3: 4 and T.V.M. 3.1: 2; T.K. 12.

plexion⁴³ and his eyes resemble the lotus.⁴⁴ He is the creator of all,⁴⁵ being the prime cause for everything.⁴⁶ Though the created world is not different from Him, He is not in the least tainted by its impurities.⁴⁷ He has full control over everything⁴⁸ and is the Indweller of the sentient beings⁴⁹ and the inanimate world which He pervades fully.⁵⁰

Nārāyaṇa bestows on the selves right knowledge⁵¹ which becomes progressively devotion unto Him. This shows that the self and knowledge cannot be identical.⁵² He is the Lord of all created beings which establishes that He is distinct from them which also have difference among themselves.⁵³ The word 'cuṣṭar'⁵⁴ suggests that the lustrous frame which lends radiance to others could not be screened by anything, let alone nescience. It is also suggested in some of the verses that certain doctrines which are held by certain schools of

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43. Ch. Up. 1.6: 6 and T.V.M. 2.5: 1.
 44. *ibid.* 1.6: 7 and T.V.M. 3.7: 1.
 45. cf. Sv. Up. 6: 9 and Tc. V. 1: He is the creator of Brahmā and Rudra also. Nārāyaṇīya Up. 1. and T.V.M. 8.1: 11; Nāṅ. Tv. 1.
 46. This shows that He is both the material and instrumental cause of the world. cf. Ch. Up. 6.8: 1 and T.V.M. 1.9: 1; Br. Up. 3.4: 1, 17 and T.V.M. 1.5: 2, 5; 2.8: 5; 10. 10: 8. Creation, maintenance and destruction are also meant by this. cf. Gh. Up. 3. 14: 1.
 47. Keth. Up. 2.5. 11 and T.V.M. 3.4: 10; cf. Ch. 6.8: 1; 3.14: 1; *Suklayajur-veda: Śāntipatha*; and T.V.M. 1.1: 6; 1.1: 10; 1.5. 2; 3.4: 10; 7.6: 1; 10.5: 3; 10. 7: 2.
 48. cf. Taitt. Up. 2: 8; and T.V.R. 5.
 49. Br. Up. 3.7: 11; Taitt. Ar. 3. 11 and T.V.M. 8.1: 5; 10. 5: 3. He has also the forms of Brahmā, Rudra and Indra. cf. Nārāyaṇīya Up. 10.1 and T.V.M. 8.8: 11; 9.3: 2; 1.1: 7. Etymologically the word 'nārāyaṇa' is apt to represent Brahman of T.V.M. 1.2. 10; 1.3: 7.
 50. cf. Taitt. Up. 2.7 and T.V.M. 1.1: 7.
 51. cf. T.V.M. 1.1: 1.
 52. This is the rejection of Sāṅkhya view.
 53. The world cannot therefore be illusory. Differences shall persist, as otherwise, the worldly process which goes on through mutual differences and variations among the animate and inanimate groups could not be explained.
 54. This is an attempt to reject the theory of the Advaitins that though Brahman is self-luminous, it is screened by māyā.

thought could not be maintained. They are: (i) An effect cannot be pre-existent in the cause and cannot be produced anew;⁵⁵ (ii) the world is a void;⁵⁶ (iii) Brahmā and Rudra and others could also be supreme deities on a par with Viṣṇu⁵⁷ and (iv) Brahmā and self become identical during the period of release.⁵⁸ These may be taken to represent the contents of the second chapter of the *Brahma-sūtras*. It is thus proved that the position of Brahmā itself and in relation to the world stands un-contradicted.⁵⁹

Brahman is to be known only through the *Vedas*⁶⁰ which however do not reach Him as He is beyond thought and description by words.⁶¹ Knowledge of reality is necessary for obtaining *mokṣa*⁶² and this reality is only the Supreme Person. Since He alone would choose the self which He desires to favour,⁶³ the self should realise that through devotion unto Him, it could win His favour. When He reveals Himself, the latter's experience of Him is as delectable as nectar.⁶⁴ As this does not lie within the capacity of the selves, self-surrender⁶⁵ is the easiest means which a self could adopt. All this is dealt with in the third chapter of the *Brahma-sūtras*. The path called *acīrāti-mārga*⁶⁶ which is dealt with in

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55. This is Ārambhavāda of the Nyāya Vaiśeṣika schools. This is contradicted in T.V.M. 1.1:11.
56. This Sūnyavāda of the Buddhists which is contradicted in T.V.M. 1.1:9.
57. The doctrine of Trimūrtti gets emphasis in the Purāṇas and this is contradicted in T.V.M. 4.10:1.
58. This is the Advaita doctrine which is contradicted in T.V.M. 8.8:9.
59. This is the position arrived at in Ch. 1 and 2 of the *Brahma-sūtras*.
60. *Nārāyaṇa* Up. 94; T.V.M. 1.7:1.
61. *Taitt. Up.* 2.3:8; *Peri. Tm.* 4.1:6
62. *Sv. Up.* 3:8; T.V.M. 1.7:1.
63. *Kath. Up.* 1.2:23; cf. T.V.M. 2.3:1; 2.5:1; 5.5:1; 6.5:3, 7.7:1.
64. *Br. Up.* 4.5:14; and T.V.M. 2.5:9; 10.10:11.
65. *Nārāyaṇa* Up. 148.
66. T.V.M. 10.9:1; 1.3:11; 10.9:9; P. T.M.L. Kan. 16; C. T.M.L. Kan. 7; *Peri. Tm.* 4.9:3; *Tc. V.* 67; cf. *Ch. Up.* 4.15:5.

the fourth chapter of the *Brahma-sūtras* is explained in greater detail by the Ālvārs. During the period the self is to live here, it shall refrain from following the material ends and get detachment from them.⁶⁷ It shall ever entertain a keen desire to get release.⁶⁸ The released souls see Him for ever in the Paramapada⁶⁹

Some *Vedic* scholars took objection to the study and recitation of the verses composed in languages other than Sanskrit. The following are the grounds on which their objection is based: (i) The languages other than Sanskrit are not sacred and so do not deserve a special status for composing prayers. (ii) If these languages are used for spiritual purposes, women and *sūdras*, who are forbidden the study of the *Vedas*, would learn these compositions and use them for holy purposes. (iii) The *Tiruvāymōli* was composed by Nammālvār who was born in the *sūdra* caste and as such what he composed shall not be studied or recited by the brahmins. The Ālvār's composition could not be the source for gaining knowledge about Brahman. (iv) Unlike the *Vedas*, these verses could be understood only by people who live in a particular region where Tamil is spoken and understood. (v) Even though those who are qualified to study the *Vedas* but do not do so, take to these compositions. (vi) These compositions speak about love (*kāma*) which is opposed to the teachings of the *Vedas* and *Smṛtis*. (vii) Lastly, these works speak of *kaivalya* which is said to be the *puruṣārtha*.

Nañciyar, who noted down these objections, cites a verse from the *Matsya-purāṇa*⁷⁰ referring to Kaiśika and others who sang in different languages. He notes that in the same context Yama is reported to have declared that recitation is only of those verses which do not deal with God. Nañciyar adds that if because what is written in a particular language is to be rejected, then what is written in Sanskrit

67. Ch. Up. 8.15:1 and T.V.M. 10.6:1.

68. Kaṭh. Up. 1.1:26 and T.V.M. 4.1:1.

69. Taitt. Sam. 1.3:6.2 and T.V.M. 5.10:11.

70. *Līṅga-purāṇa*, 2.3:43, 44.

could also be rejected with the result that the Sanskrit language could be given up. The Ālvārs composed these compositions in Tamil in order that even women and *sūdras* could make use of them for prayers. Though born in the *sūdra* caste, Nammālvār received the Grace of God and therefore became possessed of the real nature of *tattva*, *hita* and *puruṣārtha* and so was qualified to deal with philosophical matters. He is thus superior to Vidura, Śabari and others. Those who had attained much proficiency in literatures in other languages like Sanskrit appreciate these compositions. The words 'vedana' and 'upāsana' which are mentioned in the *Upaniṣads*, mean devotion which the *Tiruvāymoli* refers to as *kāma*. *Aiśvarya* and *kaivalya* are rejected in these compositions as the results got through them are little and unstable. These compositions cite the *Vedas* as evidences for the doctrines that they preach.⁷¹

Vedānta Desika⁷² without reference to this objection, states that the songs composed in languages other than Sanskrit are commendable. The following are the reasons stated in this connection: (i) The Lord Nārāyaṇa is dealt with in these compositions. (ii) In accordance with the statement,⁷³ that the Lord is to be worshipped as if He were a youthful king, intoxicated elephant or a dear guest, He is to be worshipped as a king. This means that the servants could use their own languages while attending upon the king who becomes delighted with their service. The language that is used here is of no consequence. (iii) The Tamil language was devised and developed by Agastya. The members of all the castes could make use of this language. Like the epics and *purāṇas* which are supplementary to the *Vedas*, the *samhitā* of Saṅhakōpa reigns supreme in this respect and is superior to them. That is, it offers a splendid exposition of the purport of the *Vedas*. It is further said by the same author⁷⁴ that a language other than Sanskrit must be adopted,

71. *Nine Thousand*, pp. 36-37.

72. *Drāmidōpaniṣat-tūtparya-ratnāvali*, 4.

73. *Sāṅḍilya Śmṛti* 4: 31.

74. *Satsampradāya Parisuddhi*, pp. 35-36.

if necessary that a language other than Sanskrit must be adopted, if necessary that being helpful in the better understanding of the *Vedāntic* truths.

The fact that could be gathered from the stand taken by Nānclyar and Vedānta Desika on the place of the *Nālayiram* is that the compositions of the Ālvārs are based on the teachings of the *Vedas*. They are thus not preaching anything which could be considered as antagonistic to the *Vedic* truths. These works contain references to the *Vedas* and to some recensions⁷⁵ as well and so are to be considered as expositions of the *Vedic* teachings in a different medium, namely, Tamil. They are certainly intended for the use of women and *sūdras* who are forbidden the study of the *Vedas* and for those who inhabit the Tamil Nad and who know the Tamil language. The epics and *purāṇas* are supplements to the *Vedas*. In a similar way, these shall be considered as the supplements of the *Vedas*. They are not the *Vedas* themselves but are *Vedas* in Tamil in so far as they serve the purposes which the *Vedas* serve. Many a matter whose source could not be traced to the *Vedas* were visualized by the sages, namely, Ālvārs and dealt with in these compositions and as such they have come to be treated as the *Vedas* themselves. For instance, the worship of the *arcā* form of God, and devotion to God and to the devotees of God are dealt with in the *purāṇas*, but they were brought to the people at large only by the Ālvārs. The doctrine of self-surrender though traceable to the *Pāñcarātra Āgamas*, became popular only through the compositions of the Ālvārs. The greatness of the *Veda* lies in its being the store house of knowledge which is not available through any other means. That is, the *Vedas* became the supreme authority as a source book of knowledge about ultimate truths. Similarly, these matters which have attained popularity only through the *Nalayiram* justify the compositions of the Ālvārs to get the appellation of the *Vedas*.

A perusal of the life accounts of the Ālvārs would reveal the fact they were mystics who composed these poems

75. Peri. Tm. 3.4:1.

merely through inspiration. It is not made clear how they were able to divine the ultimate truth and present it in a wonderful manner. To this extent, they could be treated as the seers (*ṛṣi*) like the *Vedic* seers. The eternal truths are presented by the seers either through the *Vedas* or through these Tamil compositions.

After the period of Nāthamuni, one and the same scholar had deep grounding in the *Vedānta* and Sanskrit sources and that is based on the *Tiruvāymoḷi*. The highlight of the adoption of this kind of training is found in the *Ubhaya Vedānta* concept which was anterior to Rāmānuja in origin and secures on reliable evidence, to have been held as a title by Tirumalai Nampi.⁷⁶ Vedānta Desika held it to be his proud privilege for calling himself as the follower of the *Tamil Veda*,⁷⁷ as he would claim to be the follower of the branch of the *Veda*. A further result of this training lies in the traditional study of the *Tiruvāymoḷi* with commentaries, as one of the four texts⁷⁸ taken up for spiritual study under a preceptor. Further, the *Nālayiram* is studied from the preceptor as the *Veda* Rāmānuja, as we know, had the *adhyayana* of the *Tiruvāymoḷi* at the feet of Tiruvaraṅkap-perumāḷ Araiyaṅ and had the exposition at the feet of Tirumālaiyaṅṅān.

The concept of *Ubhaya-Vedānta* was only in so far as the study and realization of the ultimate Reality. Like the *Vedānta* among the *Vedic* texts, *Tiruvāymoḷi* is more popular among the compositions of the Āḷvārs. Yet, like the *Veda* of a particular recension, the entire compositions of all the Āḷvārs have importance in the scheme of spiritual training of the Vaiṣṇavites. Hence those who have studied these compositions of the Āḷvārs are called '*Tamil Maṛaiyōr*'.⁷⁹

76. *Yatirāja Vaibhava*, 1

77. T.P. 384. '*cantamku Tamil Maṛaiyōn*'.

78. The other three are: (i) *The Rakaṣya-granthas*, (ii) *Bhagavad-gītā Bhāṣya*, and (iii) *Śrī Bhāṣya*.

79. cf. R.I.S. Ch. 5. '*Maṛainūl tantavēṭṭiyōrē*'.