

DATES OF THE ĀḶVĀRS

In an age that is keenly alive to the historical sense there is obviously no place for fabulous account. Indeed they are suspect. The fabulous claims made on behalf of the ĀḶvārs as belonging to ages far in advance of the historical dates has been given up by every one except the incurably credulous. Whether dates have any value in so far as the acceptance of their teachings or their mission is concerned is a matter that depends on the need at the historical moment when such claims had the useful purpose of advancing the mission itself. The Vedas and the Āgama have always claimed supernatural and super historical status.

The age of the ĀḶvārs has recently received considerable attention at the hands of South Indian Historians.¹ But no one seems to have made up his mind as to the exact dates of these seers.

The order of the ĀḶvārs has been variously stated; and we find that no less than

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- ¹ 1) Dr S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar: *Indian Antiquary* 1906 p. 290. Early history of Vaiṣṇavism. 1920 Ancient India. 1911. History of Tirupathi Vol. 1 p.58ff.
 2) Mr. Rajagopalachariar: Vaishnavite Reformers of India 1909.
 3) Mr. M. Srinivasa Aiyangar: Tamil Studies 1908.
 4) cf. Gopinatha Rao: Madras Review. Feb. and May 1905.
 5) Raghava Aiyangar: Sen Tamil. Vol VI JORM. I. ii; I.iv; II.ii: ĀḶvārkal Kāla-Nilai.
 6) Prof. M.S.Purnalingam Pillai: Tamil Literature. ed 1922 pp. 181-195
 J.M.Somasundaram. JSVOI. Vol. I. pt. ii. p. 161 Vengadam in Tamil Literature.
 7) V.R.R. Dīkṣitar, Early Tamil Religious Literature. I H Q. XVIII.1942.
 8) Inscription on Arulala Temple at Tiru-attiyūr (Conjeevarem Viṣṇu) (Ins. 33 of 1893. GERI 14th aug. 1893.) about provision for annual celebration of the festivals for Pūḍattāḍvār and poygai.

¹ Guruparampara of Piṅpazhakiya Perumāḷi Jiyār Parāśara Bhattar: Tiruvarangatta - mudanār: Veṅkaṭanātha gives two versions: Prabhandasāra: Manavālamāmuni: cf Tamil Varalāru: K.S. Srinivasapillai 1930 p. 136 ff.

Guruparampara of Piṅpazhakiya Perumāḷi jiyar: 1. Poygai, 2. Bhūtattār 3. Pey, 4.Tirumaḷisai, 5. Nammāḷvār, 6.Madhurakavi, 7.Kulaśēkhara, 8. Periyāḷvār. 9.Āṇḍāḷ, 10. Tondaradippodi, 11. Tiruppanāḷvār 12.Tirumaṅgai, Parāśara Bhatta gives another order 1.Bhūtattār, Poygai, Pey: 4.Periyāḷvār. 5. Tirumaḷisai, 6. Kulaśēkhara, 7. Tiruppanāḷvār, 8. Tondaradippodi, 9. Tirumaṅgai, 10. Nammāḷvār
 Tiruvarangattamudanār's table: 1.Poygai, 2.Bhūtattār, 3.Pey.
 4. Tiruppanāḷvār, 5. Tirumaḷisai, 6. Tondaradippodi, 7. Kulaśēkhara, 8. Periyāḷvār, 9. Āṇḍāḷ, 10. Tirumaṅgai, 11.Nammāḷvār.

seven lists² have come down to us. It is doubtless safe to take the traditional order as stated in the *Guruparampara*, but one is afraid even to make a distinction as between the types of traditions that we should accept. The list drawn by Dr.S.Krishnaswami Aiyangar is the traditional one. He gives the traditional dates also.

The first three Āḷvārs

Poygai, Bhūtattār, Pey	: 4203 BC
Tirumaḷisai Āḷvār	: 4203 BC
Nammāḷvār	: 3102 BC
(Madhurakavi)	: 3102 BC
Kulaśēkhara	: 3075 BC
Pēriyāḷvār	: 3056 BC
(Āṇḍāl)	: 3005 BC
Tondaradippodi	: 2814 BC
Tiruppānāḷvār	: 2760 BC
Tirumaṅgai	: 2706 BC

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Dr. Krshnaswami Aiyangar writes rightly "The actual dates ascribed by the hagiologists to these Āḷvārs will not bear scrutiny but the order in which they are mentioned is substantially correct".¹

Mr. Srinivasa Aiyangar, one of the earliest writers, who tried to fix the dates as well as the order of the Āḷvār-list with the help of philological evidence, has made hasty generalisations. For instance, he considers that the first Āḷvārs, Poygai, Bhūtattāra and Pey, should have flourished in the latter half of the seventh century for the only reason that their descriptions of the God on the Tirupati Hills is said to be applicable to both Śiva and Viṣṇu. This statement is unfortunately not a clinching one as it may well be that Viṣṇu took up this form, and the Image continued to be looked upon as Viṣṇu both before and after Rāmānuja. That it was at no time a Śaiva shrine could well be established for the simple reason that none but the Vaiṣṇva saints have sung

Śrī Vēdānta Dēśika gives two versions: 1. Poygai, 2.Bhūtattār, 3.Pey 4. Nammāḷvār, 5. Periyāḷvār, 6. Āṇḍāl, 7. Kulaśēkhara, 8. Tiruppānāḷvār, 9. Tondaradippodi, 10. Tirumaḷisai, 11. Tirumaṅgai, 12. Madhurakavi.

In the Prabhanda-Sara the order he gives is: Tirumaḷisai the 10th in the first version is restored to his traditional place as the 4th Āḷvār, Madhurakavi is the 6th as in the tradition. Periyāḷvār is the 8th and Āṇḍāl the 9th, Tondaradippodi becomes the 10th, and Tiruppānāḷvār the 11th and Tirumaṅgai the 12th, Śrī Manavalamāmuni writing about this states another list: 1. Bhūtattār, Pey, Poygai Nammāḷvār, Tirumaḷisai, Periyāḷvār, Tirumaṅgai, Kulaśēkhara, Tondaradippodi, Tiruppānāḷvār, Āṇḍāl, Madhurakavi.

¹ ANCIENT INDIA p. 194

praises about this image on the Hills of Vengadam.²

We may point out in this connection that the descriptions of the Poygai Āḷvār said to intimate the Unity of Śiva and Viṣṇu in the Image at Tiruvengadam, or elsewhere generally in his philosophico-theological conception, do not bear scrutiny. The description given in *Mudal Tiruvandādi*. 5, is a description in contrast of both the gods Śiva and Viṣṇu which finally declares that the former is the body of the other.

Hara (is the name of the one) Nārāyaṇa the name (of the other):
Ignorant Bull (and) Garuda(are) the vehicles:
Āgama (and) Veda (are) the scriptures :
Mountain (Kailās) (and) ocean (of milk) place of residence;
Destruction (and) Protection (their) function;
Trident (and) Wheel (their weapon) in their hands;
Fire (and) Cloud the hue;
One is the body.*

This last statement is an important realisation of the body-soul theory and Śiva is declared to be the body of the Lord. Taken out of the context it may mean that they both have one form, but in the manner of the statement by poygai there is no possibility of taking that view. This is equally true of the 74th verse of the *Mudal*

² It is only in XVII and XVIII century that Śivajñāna Muṇivar and Aruṇagiri have sung about the Tirupati hills as the resort of Kumāra. But this may well be accepted since Kumāradhāra-waterfalls on the Hills is considered to be the place where Subramaṇya practised austerities to realise Nārāyaṇa there.

* cf. HISTORY OF TIRUPATI; Vol I. p.60. But refer to Pēriavāccānpillai's Commentary, which does not permit us to make any different construction about the Form being one: Mēni Yōṇḍu only means that one is the body of the other.

cf v. 28 which clearly points out that Śiva is in one portion of His (cosmic) bodies Māmatil mūṇṇeyita ḷaiyān Ninnākattirāy . This ought to dispose of all speculative translation.

And of. Annual Report of Mys. Arch. Dept for 1930. p. 69. "The real character of Veṅkaṭēśa is a matter of great interest since he has been perhaps the most popular of the Vaiṣṇava gods of South India from about the sixteenth century A.D. The Jaṭamakuṭa and the cobra across the shoulders, which are said to be present in the original Tirupati image are definitely Śaiva features, while the figure of Lakshmi engraved on the chest is clearly Vaiṣṇava. The Tirupati image has no conch or discus in stone and there appears to have been some reason for the Śaiva opponents of Śrī Rāmānujācārya to have claimed it as Śiva. But about 1110 A.D or earlier, even during the life-time of this teacher, the Choḷās carved the figure of Veṅkaṭēśa at the back of the temple of Mukti-Nātheśvara at Binnamangal in the Bangalore District. The figure has Jaṭa-makuṭa and phalaksha or the third eye and holds discus and conch in stone. Since it stands between Śiva and Brahmā, it is certainly Viṣṇu among the Trimūrtis. Thus Rāmānujācārya was justified in claiming Veṅkaṭēśa as Viṣṇu. At the same time, the Jaṭa and the third eye give it a Śaiva leaning." But Dr. Kṛṣṇa is wrong since Sriman Narayana Hari is described at some places as having Jaṭa makuṭa: cf. Harivaṃśa 52 chapter. verse 2.

Tiruvandādi.³ Nor does this catholicity, so apparently modern, reveal that the lord was considered to be anything but capable of both the activities, and indeed of all world-activities. The reference does not clearly show that the Āḷvār had in his mind the Vengadam Shrine. As Dr. Krishnaswami Aiyangar points out the Āḷvār is devoted to Viṣṇu alone without doubt, and His love for Tirupati is because the "God in Tirupati is Viṣṇu beyond a doubt."⁴ All Gods are considered to be the body of Viṣṇu, Śiva, Brahma, Indra and others also. It is this fact that is reiterated so constantly that men might choose to worship the one Supreme Being, Viṣṇu, Nārāyaṇa, Trivikrama, the Lord at Vengadam, in whom are all other gods. The verses 5,28,74 and 98 of the *Mudal Tiruvandādi* have to be construed in this spirit. Construed in this manner, the point made out by Srinivasa Aiyangar, Dīkṣitār and, to a certain extent, conceded by Dr. Krishnaswami Aiyangar, seems to be pointless and wrong. The heroic deeds of Śiva and Viṣṇu are not interchangeably used either as Dikṣitār affirms. It is likely that the abhedabuddhi between the two deities consisted in clearly perceiving that Śiva was the instrument, a very great and powerful instrument of Nārāyaṇa, as the fourth Āḷvār affirmed in his *Nānmukhan Tiruvandādi*. The effort to place the first three or four Āḷvār at the declining period of the Sangam Age, namely the sixth century, has been to show that the particular development of their style of writing which couldnot be set to Music almost came to a close about this time. Dīkṣitār thinks that this justifies the placing them about the sixth century. Prof V.Rangacharya,⁵ merely affirmed that the Āḷvārs lived during the three centuries between the sixth to eighth, without adducing any evidence.

Further the wide acquaintance of the early Āḷvārs with the purāṇic literature clearly shows that they were adepts in the Sanskritic thought and language. The fourth Āḷvār, Bhakti-Sāra; Tirumaḷiśai, exhibits a close understanding of the categories of reality as maintained by the orthodox schools. Indeed we have in the person of the fourth Āḷvār, a Philosopher-seer. "It is said that he entered into all religions prior to being converted to the Vaiṣṇava faith by Pey- Āḷvār. If this be so, it must have been at a time when the Jainas, Bhuddhists and Śaivas were fighting with one another for religious supremacy" says Srinivasa Aiyangar.⁶ Now the *Guruparampara*, a work belonging to the XIIIth century, states that Tirumaḷiśai was a Śaiva seer and poet for a

³ Bull (vehicled) (and) Bird-vehicled; Burner of the Fort (and) breaker of the Chest; Ash-smearred (and) Blue-hued; having woman as part of his body (and) having the Lotus-born (on his heart); with matted hair (and) with high crown: the Gaṅgā wearer is fit to be protected by the Long-footed (Trivikrama): v. 74.

cf. Śvēt. up. I. 9: Jñājnāu dvā vajā niśau: and also Śveta. up. 1.7 which immediately after describing the greatness of Rudra switches on to the higher than He, viz. the Parabrahman. Cf. Śvet. IV, 5ff; 12,

⁴ HISTORY OF TIRUPATI. Vol, I. p. 65

⁵ Review of HISTORY ON TIRUPATI Vol. I. "HINDU" 22nd Sept. 1940.

⁶ TAMIL STUDIES p. 305.

period of two thousand years, before he was converted to Vaiṣṇava theology. Whatever this might mean, it is certain, that it was a period of considerable religions searching and sincere approach to the problems of religion and redemption. Tirumaḷṣai's wanderings into the several sects which were contemporaneous in South India were more of the modern variety of joining every sect in order to understand the inner meaning and value of the several practices. Such a possibility need not be ruled out at any period in history. The claim therefore that he belongs to the period of rivalry when the atheistic buddhists and jainas were being slowly submerged or weeded out by Smārta and Paurāṇic tradition alone, is not clear. It is not until we reach Kulaśēkhara that we find the proselytising zeal in full swing.

Secondly, it is a moot-point as to when the Purāṇic literature² started. Admittedly almost all the modern editions of the Purāṇas have undergone steady, and in some cases, complete interpolation and rejection and amendments. For instance the version of the *Mārkaṇḍēya Purāṇa* cited in the *Nānmukhaṇ Tiruvandādi* is not found in any edition of it. But the version is to be found in the Mahābhārata.³ Such being the case if we accept that the sixth century forms the culmination of all modern editions, the earlier versions which have been almost omitted by sectarians must have been considerably older. Dr. R.C Hazra's dates regarding the Paurāṇic Age thus help us in placing the earlier Āḷvārs considerably earlier than the sixth century. Possibly a rough estimate may be third century, at the beginning of the so-called Sangam Age rather than at its close.

Thus during the age of the Āḷvārs Poygai, Bhūttār, Pey and Bhakti-Sāra, there is clear and unmistakable evidences of Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva and other sects but not their antagonism. That varieties of sects existed in the pre-Āḷvārs periods too, as testified to in the vedic literature of Varuṇa, Agni, Iṇdra, Prajāpati, Brāhmaṇaspati superiorities,

² Earliest references to Purāṇas are in A.V.XV. 6. 11-12, XI. 7. 24. cf. AGE OF PURANAS: S.D.Gyani. New Indian Antiquary. V.p. 131, where he divides the Purāṇic period into four sub-periods. The period is from B.C. 1200 to 1000. B.B. The second period B.C, 1000-600. B.C. Bifurcation stage where we have Bhaviśya accounts, the third is the Pancalakṣaṇa stage B.C. 600-A.D. 100 and lastly the sectarian or encyclopaedic from A.D 100-700 A.D.

³ But cf. BHAGAVATA XII 8-10 has the story. I wrote in my article on Philosophy of Religion of Tirumaḷṣai Āḷvār (J.I.H. 1942) about his experience of Nārāyaṇa being identical with that of Mārkaṇḍēya. I also remarked there that Mārkaṇḍēya's conversion to Nārāyaṇa-worship was to be seen clearly in the Bhāgavata XII alone and is not found in the Mh. B. But I now find that we need not treat this Bhāgavata XII version as an interpolation as the entire story is narrated in the Mh.B. Vanaparva 187 and 188 chapters. Further the Mārkaṇḍēya Purāṇa begins with the benedictory salutation "Om Vaiṣṇave Namaha" giving it the character of a Vaiṣṇava Purāṇa, wherein Mārkaṇḍēya describes the previous creations. gi. Ed. IV. ch. 186 ff. I could not get the critical Edition Mh. B. (B.O.R.I.) for consultation. But Dr. V.S.Sukthankar has remarked that there are fewer interpolations and variations in this parvan than in the others. I presume this story makes the date of the Āḷvārs definitely early.

is a clear and much evident fact. To speak of Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava sects thus as special feature of the post-early- Āḷvārs period, is to misunderstand the entire tradition of Hindu thought. Thus we know that in the earliest South Indian Tamil Literature it was well recognised that Viṣṇu (Māyon), Iṇdra (Vendan), Varuṇa (Varuṇaṇ) and Subramaṇya (Seyan) were the four Gods worshipped.¹ The Pāñcarātra doctrine is very old; so is the Vaiṣṇava school of Āgama. But this sectarianism was not tarnished with financial persecution of each other on the social side. There was the common understanding of the mythological unity of consciousness that all the several gods existed and had powers of granting boons and favours in return for praise and sacrifice, as is evidenced by the Brāhmaṇa-literature perfected by Mīmāṃsās. These worships of several gods by one and the same individual were made in order to gain favours from each one of them in respect of things they could grant, because they were the adhisthāna-dēvatās of such objects of desire. This however, did not entail the competition between the Gods. It is only because the fourth *Puruṣārtha, Mōkṣa*, became the most important, having which man has everything, that impelled the Āḷvārs to assert the One God from whom all did take their rise and growth and power. This was considered to be Nārāyana. Such being the case, the Āḷvār—consciousness (as in the case of Nāyanmār—consciousness) being focused, unlike the philosophic consciousness of the upanisadic pursuers Naciketas and Swetaketu, on the one supreme personal deity, who was transcendent to all creatures and creation, and the alpha and omega of all things and beings, discovered the One Supreme Nārāyana to be the self of all gods. The Trivikrama appellation which definitely refers to Viṣṇu, Nārāyaṇa is the Highest Object of Knowledge, Action, Devotion and Ānanda. He is the one constant figure and symbol of Deity referred to by the earlier and later Āḷvārs.

V.R.R. Dīkṣitār points out that *Yapparumkālavirutti* mentions that *Pōyhaiyār*, Kudamukkirabahavara, *Putattār*, Karaikkarpeyār and Mūlar are *arittakkavi*, seer-poets, of earliest Tamil literature.

Nammāḷvār- Nammāḷvār or Śaṭhakopa is placed by Srinivasa Aiyangar in the Xth century on the basis of alleged philological discoveries. He asserts also that, since there is a reference to *Liṅgā Purāṇa* (Tiruvayomoli IV.x.5) and obviously to other Purāṇās also. He considers the dates of these Purāṇās to be about the seventh and eighth centuries. These Purāṇās alone, it is claimed, teach the worship of the many sectarian Gods. Obviously if the Āḷvārs did not know anything about Sanskrit literature and were inventors of a kind of worship not found in earlier literature therein other than the Purāṇās, then the argument of Srinivasa Aiyangar will hold good. But the Purāṇās are sufficiently old and the Mahābhārata contains most legends whose versions have come down to us in the different Purāṇās, even as the stories of the Brāhmaṇās have undergone modifications in the Itihāsās and Purāṇās. The Purāṇās

¹ TOLKĀPPIYAM (2nd cent. B.C.?) Poruladikāram Ahattinai 5.

are not new creations. But they have had great additions and interpolations and even distortions; and splitting of their contents have produced other Purāṇās as well. Dr. R.C.Hazra has put forward interesting facts in his scholarly work on the Purāṇic tradition. They are not referable to any late date because they are Purāṇās. Further we know that certain verses which Śrī Veṅkaṭanātha has referred to in his bhāṣya on Īsāvāsyōpaniṣad and Rahasya Śikhāmaṇi as belonging to Varāha Purāṇa are not to be found in the extant Purāṇā. Thus Purāṇā-date will not determine the Āḷvār-date. Nor can philology be an absolute criterion in an age of literature that was discovering a way of expression of the highest truths. The vast ocean of literature of the Pañcarātra and Vaikhānasa have been the source of greatest inspiration and guidance to these Āḷvārs. Especially we have it clearly indicated by Tirumaḷiśai Āḷvār in his Tirucchandaviruttam. This is as old a literature as any other Āgama.

2. Mr. Srinivasa Aiyangar speaking philologically finds that betel-leaf is not mentioned in earlier literature than Nammāḷvār, and that the betel leaf is mentioned for the first time as in use in India not earlier than A.D. 500.¹ As a matter of fact this is mentioned in the Śilappadikāram, which is claimed to belong to the 2nd century.

3. The reference to Jaina, Buddhist, Śramanas and Śaivās is found in Tirumaḷiśai works as well as in Nammāḷvārs, and this fact is not of such great importance in the determination of dates. The natural waning of the influence of Buddhism and Jainism in the South may be a consequence of a growing religious consciousness which saw in these two great atheistic religions nothing but glorified ethics. The religious consciousness stirred again, thanks to the renaissance activity of Sanskrit literature, which however now underwent vernacularization at the hands of the most eminent knowers of religious life. The date of the collapse of the Buddhism and Jainism might have been some time before A.D. 500 or thereabouts, though there are evidences of these continuing late into the Xth century and after. The age of Religion had succeeded the Age of Ethics, of worship the age of duty; or the duty to God triumphed over the duty to mere teachers of the Way.

4. We have to consider in connection with the date of Śaṭhakopa two other dates, namely of Madhurakavi, his immediate disciple and contemporary and of Nāthamuni, the first Ācārya of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism. Madhurakavi (who is also reckoned by some to be an Āḷvār) belongs according to some writers to the eighth century. Prof. K.Nilakaṇṭha Śāstri says that "though we have an account of a temple built by one Marangari for Viṣṇu in stones, in the Ānamalai Hill six miles to the east of Madura about 770 A.D." yet "It cannot be taken as established that the Madhurakavi of this family was the same as the Vaiṣṇava Āḷvār, in spite of the similarity in name and religious faith between the two".¹ Now despite this doubt about their identity, if we

¹ cf. OCEAN OF STORY; ed. Tawney and Penzer, Vol. VIII, Appendix.2

¹ Pāndvan Kingdom. p. 61.

identify them we find that Nammālvār would belong to this same century. This view is what Srinivasa Aiyangar does not accept, as he holds that Nammālvār should have belonged to the Xth Century. This is because Nāthamuni belonged to Xth Century. Nāthamuni is claimed to have been born at Viranārāyaṇapuram (S.Arcot) founded by Parantaka II (906-946 A.D.) the agrahāra having come into existence in 906 A.D.⁷

Now this date of Nāthamuni is a definite starting point as it is clearly known that the grandson of Nāthamuni was Yāmunācārya, who was also the grandfather of Rāmānuja. Xth Century for Nāthamuni is thus without any doubt the date. But is it necessary to postulate that Nammālvār or Śaṭhakopa was an elder contemporary of Nāthamuni? Indeed the orthodox writers say that Nāthamuni was a yoga-disciple of Nāthamuni, Śaṭhakopa having taught him the entire Bhagavad Viśaya in response to the prayers made by Nāthamuni who having heard of only some stanzas sought the place of Śaṭhakopa after these centuries.⁸ If any reliance can be placed on this story, then it will not be difficult to place Nammālvār in the sixth century as Dr.Krishnaswami Aiyangar avers. Madhurakavi's date will be the date of Nammālvār. This will mean either the Yogic intuition of Nammālvār and the Grace of Nammālvār were powerful enough, or else it may mean that Nammālvār had an abnormal life of three hundred years.⁹ This point has never been such a great wonder as moderns are making it out to be. Tirumaḷṣai Ālvār has been credited with a long life. Even so the first three Ālvārs perhaps became immortal siddhas, as it is mentioned in the life story of Tirumaḷṣai that they gave him darśan in his cave at the end of his life. Nor is the first alternative unacceptable.

5. Periyālvār¹⁰ and his foster daughter Āndāl, are seen to have belonged to the second half of seventh century or even the first, being the contemporary of Jaṭila Parāntaka I.This point is important since the order of seniority of Ālvārs places Periyālvār considerably later than Nammālvār and this date can safely be fixed as the Tiruppāvai seems to have been composed in the year 731 December,A.D.¹¹ This will place Nammālvār earlier than the seventh century that is about the second half of the sixth century, and not as late as A.D 840-915 as Srinivasa Aiyangar holds.

⁷ cf. NATHAMUNI AND HIS TIMES: R.Ramanujachari, Annamalai Uni. Journal, Vol. IX.8.p. 272.HISTORY OF THE VAIṢṆAVĀS: T.A.Gopinath Rao, p. 30. COLAS; K.A. Nilakanta Sastri. Vol. II. p.448;

⁸ Life of Dhyānēśvar who gave his Dhyānēśvari 300 years after entering Samādhi to Ēkantha.

⁹ Abnormal age is not at all inconceivable. Sri Aurobindo in his life had met a sage on the banks of Narbada who is said to have lived on those banks for a more than two-hundred years. ARAVINDA JĪVITAMU 2nd ed. p. 65. His name is stated to be Brahmānanda Svāmi of the Āśram of Chandot.

¹⁰ EARLY HISTORY OF THE VAIṢṆAVA SECTS; H.C. Raychaudari p. 110 wrongly states him to be a Pariah saint.

¹¹ DATE OF THE Tiruppāvai: K.C.Varadachari. JSVOI.Vol. ii. p.451 ff.

6. The only important defect is the wide difference of a three hundred years, but this is overruled by the records of seers continuing to live considerably longer. There is a consistent and uniform belief in the actual existence of such immortal seers. Therefore we may have to accept it, as Dr.Krishnaswami Aiyangar himself affirms.

7. The fact that Tirumaṅgai Āḷvār instituted the singing of these hymns of Śaṭhakopa in the Vaiṣṇava temple at Śrīrangam as part of daily worship which is testified to by Guruparampara, itself shows that the age of Śaṭhakopa was considerably, by some centuries at the least, earlier than that of Tirumaṅgai Āḷvār who belonged to the eighth century. This will again fix the date of Nammāḷvār some where in the Sixth Century.

Concluding we can say that there is nothing impossible in one Madhurakavi who was an elder contemporary of Śaṭhakopa and the first discoverer of Śaṭhakopa in his spiritual consciousness, being identical with the founder of the temple at Ānāmalai hill six miles from Madura sometime in A.D 770 if we are prepared to concede that these earlier Āḷvārs (that is to say the first three and Śaṭhakopa and Madhurakavi his disciple) attained immortal existence even here in a subtle form. Supposing we do not, following the doubt raised by Prof. Nilakanta Sastri we may say that Madhurakavi belonging to Marangāri family was a descendent of the famous Madhurakavi who was a great devotee of Śaṭhakopa and his disciple, in which case Madhurakavi's date could well be placed in the sixth century or beginning of seventh century. It would be wrong to place Śaṭhakopa in the tenth century and make him the last of Āḷvārs as Srinivasa Aiyangar does, as Āṇḍāḷ indeed mentions his name early enough in 731 A.D as Yengalai munnam-ezuppuvāna vāy - peṣum nangāy (Tiruppāvai 14).

8. If the traditional order is to be followed, Kuḷaśēkhara is the Sixth Āḷvār. He is declared to be a chief of a Chola principality in Kerala. Kozhiyarkon (Chief of Uraiyūra) Kudai Kuḷaśēkharan or Kollinagarkku irai, 2.10 (Pērumāl Tirumoḷi: 10 .11) Kudal Kōman the chief of Kollinagar and king of Madura (Pērumāl Tirumoḷi 6. 10; 7. 11; Kuḷaśēkharan, whose weapon was the lance (vel) In the III. 9. Kuḷaśēkharan states that he is the Lord of Kongu (the Northern one?) Vēdānta Dēśikha names the principality as Tiruvañcikkalam, and the identification of this place has not yet been finally made.¹ Mr. M.Srinivasa Aiyangar affirms that he is a Pāndyan king who ruled at Travancore between A.D. 780-890 eighth century. The traditional date that places him in B.C. 3075 is fabulous. The Kuḷaśēkhara of the Mukundamāla has been placed by Mr. Pisharoti in the seventh century A.D. But he does not like to identify the two.

¹ cf. 1. Ep. R.1 dated 24th July 1903. p. 4. Kulaśēkhara's Mukundamala verses found in an Ins. 13th cent. in the Viṣṇu temple Pagan.

PRABHANDASĀRAM: Quoted by Mr. Ganapati Sastri. Tr. O.S.XI. introduction.

MUKUNDAMĀLA : (Annamalai University Sanskrit series) Introduction.

cf. Kulaśēkharas of Kerala: VI. All-India Or. Con. vol. II p. 319 ff.

He contends that there have been several Kuḷaśēkhara, good authors and dramatists in Sanskrit in Kerala and it is unlikely that though they have been Vaiṣṇavas they ever rose to the level of Tamil hymnists. But it is clear from the Pērumāl Tirumoḷi that Kuḷaśēkhara Āḷvār was a ruling prince in Kerala, and so was the author of the Mukundamāla-Rājñā kritā kritiriyam Kuḷaśēkhareṇa. But that is no justification for identifying them according to Mr. Pisharoti. There is however no evidence brought forward by Mr. Pisharoti to prove that Kuḷaśēkhara of the Mukundamāla did not know Tamil or was not a Tamil hymnist as well. More reasons there is to hold that he was, because there is such a wonderful reiteration of his devotion in the Perumāl Tirumoḷi. An obvious lack of acquaintance has led to a strange argument. Nor is the fact that the author of Mukundamāla was a Kṛṣṇaite whereas the Āḷvār was a Rāmaite convincing, since a perusal of the Perumāl Tirumoḷi will reveal that there is no exclusive devotion to any one avatār. Mr. Pisharoti tries to make out that Mukundamāla does not make even a single mention of Rāma, and as such, perhaps the author should have been blind to the existence of that avatār, since he does make mention of other avatārs in it. This is a shrewd and ingenious statement, but like all others of its kind not clinching. It is usual for the Hymns to devote themselves to the description, praise and experiencing of the God in whose presence they are at any one time even as in the Vedic Hymns exclusively devoted to some one god, rather than another. Nor is this charge true. The Mukundamāla makes a grand identification of the several manifestations of Śrī Nārāyaṇa, and though Kṛṣṇa is the favourite avatar of almost all Āḷvārs to the exclusion of all else, yet in this piece in the 36th verse Śrī Kuḷaśēkhara mentions Śrī Rāma as God.

Śrī-Nātha Nārāyaṇa Vāsudeva
 Śrī Kṛṣṇa Bhakta- Priya Cakrapāṇe!
 Śrī Padmanābhācyuta Kaiṭabhāre
 Śrī Rāma, Padmākṣa, Hare Murāre!!

The statement that the Āḷvār was a pure Śrī Rāma devotee and his work does not treat about Kṛṣṇa in as exquisite a way as in the devotional lyric Mukundamāla, does not bear examination. On the contrary the Perumāl Tirumoḷi¹ has more passages dealing with Śrī Kṛṣṇa than with Śrī Rāma. The first tirumoḷi deals with the Lord of Śrīranga. The second tirumoḷi mentions Śrī Rāma and Mahābali incident, Varāha and Yaśoda and destruction of Kāliya serpent. The third tirumoḷi shows how Kulaśēkhara renounced all but the love of God. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is described here as the Object Adorable, for whose sake the worldly pleasures are given up. The fourth tirumoḷi is a continuation of zeal for renunciation. These two tirumoḷis seem to repeat the ideas of the Mukundamāla's fourth and fifth verses. The beauty and riches of God are greater

¹ KULASEKHARA'S PHILOSOPHY OF DEVOTION; Dr. K.C. VARADACHARI JS VOI; Vol. III p. 1-22.

than all that may be got from the pursuit of transient pleasures of the earth or the permanent enjoyments of Heaven (Svarga). The fifth tirumoḷi is a magnificent affirmation of dependence on the Lord for all succour, and shows how he clings to the Lord even as a child reprimanded by the mother seeks its mother, even as an abandoned wife seeks her husband's company, even as a loyal people pray for their despicable sovereign, even though the Lord gives pain as a doctor does the patient clings to him for cure. The sixth tirumoḷi reveals the Āḷvār as enjoying the Lord as the Beloved, an example of which was already shown by Nammāḷvār, but we do not find any intimation of borrowing. The seventh tirumoḷi reveals the attitude of Yaśoda enjoying her son Kṛṣṇa. It is only in the eighth tirumoḷi that the cradle song of kausalya in respect of Śrī Rāma is available. Out of ten tirumoḷis if only two tirumoḷis, are devoted to Śrī Rāma, it does not show that the Āḷvār was unconscious of Śrī Kṛṣṇa or that his devotion to Śrī Rāma was more than his devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Indeed it is absurd to speak of rivalry between the two avatārs, though some persons seem to be able to enjoy one Avatār more than the other. At no one point is there any indication of preference shown. The greatness of the Āḷvār-literature is that despite the fact that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is adored and praised more than any other Avatār of the Supreme Nārāyaṇa, there is no tendency to place one avatār above the other, as is the case in that peculiar interpretation of the hierarchy of Gods called *Henotheism*. Thus the contention of Mr. Pisharoti that the Āḷvār was a Rāmaite and the author of the *Mukundamāla* as a Kṛṣṇaite will not bear scrutiny. It only shows the very obvious ignorance of the Āḷvār compositions. Nor is his contention that Kulaśēkhara Āḷvār belongs to a later date because he belongs to the Rāmaite period which he considers to be a later wave from the north than the Kṛṣṇaite, in a better predicament. The truth is that there is not a whit of evidence to show that the two are not one and the same individual. This is the traditional view. A further contention was made that no thinker or commentator was available for the *Mukundamāla* till the seventeenth century and even then not amongst the Śrī Vaiṣṇavitēs, and therefore it could not have been that it was venerated as one of Kulaśēkhara's works. This is such a simple and charming poem that it did not need a commentary for misinterpreting it as the commentary published by Mr. Pisharoti does. There is no justification for any type of advaitism and māyāvāda in the *Mukundamāla*. Further the *Mukundamāla* is ordinarily used for daily chanting by Vaiṣṇavās. Thirdly it is seen that though not largely quoted, at one place at least Śrī Venkatanātha (13th Century), that most important and illustrious leader of the Śrī Vaiṣṇavas, the *Ubhaya-Simhāsanādhipati*, has quoted part of the 19th verse of the *Mukundamāla* in his comment *Tātparyacandrika* on the Gītā X.15.

Yathā dēvādīnām kītaḥ, tathā paramātmāno devā api! "Kītāssamastās-surāḥ" iti hyāhuh!

It is therefore clear that the views of Mr. Pisharoti are untenable and incorrect. There is nothing to show that the royal saint was not a Tamil scholar as well as a Sanskrit

poet. Further, one thing that strikes a student of the Āḷvār-literature is that they have direct access to the Bhāgavatha and Viṣṇu Purāṇa sources not to speak of Upaniṣadic thought and Rāmāyaṇa. For it is traditionally well known that Rāmāyaṇa, is the Śāraṇāgati-Veda par excellence. Nor is the love of Rāma anyway incompatible with the love of Kṛṣṇa, and indeed the saint has lost himself to both.

It is seen however that there have been other Kulaśēkharas who had been Vaiṣṇavas as well as sanskrit dramatists and poets. The author of the *Tapati-Samvaraṇam* and *Āścarya-mañjari*¹ is stated by Mr. T.Ganapati Śāstri, editor of the Trivandrum series to be identical with the Saint Kulaśēkhara for two reasons, namely, he was the ruler of *Tiruvañcikkalam* now identified with Mahodayapura and that he was a devout admirer of paramahamsas, and thirdly, he was a Vaiṣṇava. But he places the author in the 10th Century because his commentator must have been his contemporary, who gives the date of the composition to be 1159 A.D (Śaka 1081 and Kali 4260). This is too late a date, since Nāthamuni who fixed the 4000 flourished in the 9th and 10 century. Thus Mr. Ganapati Śāstri's view is unacceptable. The author of the dramas thus is a different Kulaśēkhara Varma.

Thus we conclude that Kulaśēkhara Āḷvār was the author of the Mukundamāla as well as the Perumāḷ Tirumōḷi and that he lived in the 7th century, as ruler.

9. The next Āḷvār is Periya Āḷvār or Viṣṇucitta whose date is stated to be about the same as that of Nammāḷvār and Madhurakavi. We are not aware of any statement about the time he lived except that he was contemporaneous with the *Purohita* of the Pāndyan Monarch by the name of Śelvan who was instrumental in installing God at Tirukōttiyūr and in bringing about the Āḷvār's visit to the Pāndya capital. He makes reference to the time of one Nēdumāran of the southern Madura (*Ten-Kuḍaḷ*) (*Pēriyāḷvār Tirumōḷi* IV. 2.7). His foster daughter, Gōdā or Āṇḍāḷ or in Tamil *Kodai* is to be placed about the same time. It is clear that these two belong to the seventh century or thereabouts.¹

10. The next two Āḷvār Tondaradippodi (or in Sanskrit *Bhaktāngrirēṇu*) and Tiruppān Āḷvār (Sanskrit. *Yōgivāna*) lived in the seventh or about the eighth century and we do not have any historical details about the times they lived. All that we glean

¹ Trivanmdrum Sanskrit series XI. Introduction p.4.

In the Karpūramañjari by Rājaśēkhara, ed. Kāvyaṁāla 4 Durgaprasāda and Parab verse from Sūktimuktāvali, said to have reference to Kulaśēkhara, whom Prof. Apte identifies with the author of the Mukundamāla.

nÖù®úÉnùÊ{É °ÉiÉÉÆ "Étä Ê™ôÊJÉi´ÉÉiÉªÉÇ"É+®úÓ"ÉÂ!
EÖò™ô¶ÉäJÉ®ú´É"ÉÉÇJÉªÉÉÆ SÉEòÉ®úÉ Éª"ÉÇi®úÒ"ÉÂ!!

cf. VANCI : Dr. S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar, 1941.

¹ DATE OF TIRUPPĀVAI : K.C.Varadachari, JSVOI, Vol. II, pp.451.

from their compositions is only the general renaissance of religious activities and nothing more.

11. The time of Tirumaṅgai Āḷvār has indeed one of great controversy. As already pointed out Mr.Srinivasa Aiyangar, anxious to place him earlier than Nammāḷvār, is not able to place him before the eighth century (A.D 680-720). The fact is that as clearly shown by Dr. Krishnaswami Aiyangar the period of the Āḷvārs closes by the 9th century. The references show Pallavas were in the declining state but yet in power; the Cholas had not yet come into power or prominence. "There is one reference, however which should give us a narrow enough limit for his time. In the last stanza of the decad immediately preceding that just considered in celebrating the shrine of Aṣṭabhujkaram in Kānci he makes what, in his case, appears as a somewhat peculiar reference to a certain Vairameghan, bowed down to by the ruler of the people of the Tonda country whose army (or strength) surrounded Kānci².....". Among the inscriptions so far brought out, we have not often come across the time but to the Rāṣṭrakūṭa Dantidurga II of the geneological table of the family in Fleet's Kannada Dynasties, is ascribed this title in the Kaḍamba plates published by Mr. Rice (EPIGRAPHICA CARNATIKA gGb. 61 vol. Xi, Tumkur). This was the personage who overthrew the natural enemies of the Pallavas, namely the Western Chālukyas of Bādāmi, and in their stead established the Rāṣṭrakūṭās power. According to the Ellore inscription referred to by Dr. Fleet, Dantidurga completed the acquisition of sovereignty by subjugating the ruler of Sandubhūpa, the lord of Kānci, the rulers of Kalinga and Kośala, the lord of the Śrīśaila country (Karnūl country), the Seshas. This Dantidurga was deposed by his uncle Kṛṣṇa I about A.D 755. The king of Kānci (during the period including 754, the only known date for Dantidurga Vairameghan) was Nandivarman who ruled for fifty years from about A.D 710 (Śēn TAMIL Vol.i,p.80)." The interval between the time of Tirumaṅgai and Nammāḷvār must have been considerable since the Hymns of Nammāḷvār seem to have fallen into desuetude by the time of Tirumaṅgai who had to revive it. Further it must have fallen again into disuetude after him so that Nāthamuni had once again to resuscitate its recital and the differences in age between the three should have been considerable. That indeed is the case if we accept the view that Nammāḷvār lived about the sixth century, Tirumaṅgai in the eight and Nāthamuni in the tenth century, after Christ. This is also clear from the contemporaneity between Tirujñāna Sambandar and Tirumaṅgai. But this contemporaneity is now being questioned. The contention that he is not the latest, but earlier to Nammāḷvār because he does not mention him or his place, is on a par with his usual practice of not mentioning the other Āḷvārs, if indeed he knew of them. He knew full well the Āḷvār since he is said to have fixed up permanently persons to recite the entire four thousand which now must have been completely available, including his own. Whether Tirumaṅgai would have canonised himself in

² ANCIENT INDIA : Dr. S. Krishnaswamy Aiyangar 1st ed. p. 411 ff, for a very complete survey of the evidence for Tirumaṅgai āḷvār's date. Further criticism has not altered the period very much.

this manner is a very doubtful point, and requires much more than the traditional statement that he did make such an arrangement. Tirumaᅅgai himself seems to refer to Tirumalai in the verse "TIRUMALAI Pādakketu" (Tirunedu Dandakam 14.)