

Śrī Kulaśēkhara's Philosophy of Devotion

I

Śrī Kulaśēkhara is unique in many respects in the manner of his approach to the Divine Object. There is indeed the same fullness and pregnant touches as the bhāgavata-tradition. He is soaked in the literature of the south as well as the north. He indeed speaks about the beauty of tamil and the excellence of the sanskrit (*vaḍamozhi*)¹ and seems to move in freedom in both languages. But the uniqueness of his approach is characteristic of himself alone. His understanding of the psychology of religious consciousness is unlike anything that religious tradition has given to us either before or after him.

Śrī Kulaśēkhara in his *Perumāḷ Tirumozhi*-verses on the Lord comprising of 105 hymns, divided roughly into ten sections, traces in one sense the growth of the religious consciousness. The ideas imbedded in this work are clearly marked out from the approaches made by the other āḷvār's, and it is a pity that his hymns have not had the same amount of attention paid to them as those of other āḷvārs, despite the fact that he is deemed to be a figure of great importance to bhāgavata-cult.

The ten sections of this work reveal a gradual warming up of the relationship between the individual soul and the Divine. The first section shows the earnestness of the soul seeking after Divine Vision, Divine praise, Divine company. It is the lure of the infinite that is visible. The second takes up the practice of all that which would facilitate the attainment—the *ānukūlyasya sañkalpam*, the third section deals with the renunciation of the opposite—*prātikūlyasya varjanam*. Then there is the choice of the Divine experience, the experiencing of the relationship of beloved and the lover, and the experiencing of God as child, and finally the realisation of the utter dependence of man on His will. The chief merit of the entire poem lies in the exquisite turn it gives to the psychological situation of separation of the individual from the Lord.

Śrī Śaṭhakōpa in his *Tiruviruttam* plays and feigns the role of the beloved to the Lord and enjoys Him in that consciousness of union or coition which is enhanced by the *viraha* or *vislēṣa*,¹ that is separation, prior to it. This coitional consciousness which appears to be the ultimate desideratum of all devotees or bhaktas is essentially the unity of two minds, finite or infinite. It is possible to envisage a condition of coition, wherein both the minds are finite or both infinite. In which cases, there is not

¹ Perumāḷ Tirumozhi 1. 4.

¹ Mādhurya is of the highest degree in vipralambha, a little less in karuṇa and still less in śānta.

much of the additional characteristics of religious consciousness pervading the situation. These two cases are exemplified admirably in the case of human affections between husband and wife, and, we are told, as between the Lord and the Mother of the Universe. This indeed is the reason for the speculative idealism of most mystics who seek to convert the finite into the infinite or absolute nature, and thus claim a possibility of fusion or immergence or emancipation or identity with it for the soul. Otherwise, we might be forced to drag down the Supreme Being to the level of the individual finite soul, even as Zoroaster and others¹ have done, and make God a human being, finite and struggling for righteousness. This anthropomorphism is radically opposed to every type of religious feeling or mystical intuition, and therefore we are more prone to accept the former alternative than the latter. God cannot be God unless He be infinite. But is it necessary that the individual soul should be *infinite* in order to win His Grace and Union, and finally through indistinguishability be identical with Him? This is an important question, and we may say that there has been no agreement at all about this. The view espoused by the āḷvārs appears to be that there is nothing preventing the individual *finite* soul from experiencing the Supreme fully and perfectly provided the Divine's Grace is there. Other conditions than finiteness limit our experience. Finiteness on which absolutists stress as the limiting category, is not the obstructing factor in the relationship known as coitional bliss.

We have a distinctive conception so far as it goes, in this āḷvār's philosophy, which lays down the conditions under which two minds, unequal in every respect,¹ seek a coitional experience that shall be perfect. The religious consciousness has now to understand the principle of this relationship. It is difficult of realisation, and can only be grasped by an intuitive sympathy with the actual soul in the travail of this consciousness. The actual feeling of finiteness and limitation and separation from Object of devotion may make every one of us also feel that each one of these consciousnesses may be a limitation. When we wish to go to Madras and cannot find adequate means of transport at once, it is true that we wish our limitations of space and time and body did not exist, and hold that thought alone, swifter than light, will suffice. We may even claim that our true reality consists in this principle of Mind that moves swifter than anything. Every other thing then falls under the category of limitation, because it frustrates our desire, and our hopes of realisation get impeded, arrested and foiled. It is true also that Yoga-technique and aspiration have only one aim, which is to burn the barriers to omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence. Siddhi means this attainment of pure power or conquest over matter and mind, space and time, and God even; and it is this consciousness that has been taken to be

¹ Mind and Deity. J.Laird. cf. Invisible King: H.G.Wells.

¹ The infinite God is Transcendent, Ruler, Ordainer, Teacher, Creator, the Highest Being, of incomparable Bliss. The finite soul is a servant, a slave of fate and lust and desire, a knower or disciple, a creature, miserable, struggling towards a light and bliss utterly free from pain.

typical of mysticism and religion and even philosophy by most. In order perhaps to correct this limitation-consciousness or frustration-consciousness over-stepping the bounds of actual reality, the Bhāgavata and the Madhva-theory of finiteness of the individual came into the field. For the real truth of the theory of dualism means in the actual religious context, a firm and uncompromising affirmation of the finiteness of the individual in everything and in every respect, a finiteness which does not in any sense lose sight of the infinite possibilities of contact and coition and bliss between the Divine Lord and the human soul.

This finite-infinite relationship between the soul and God exists, and through the religious consciousness it has to be manifested in actual life. The defect of ordinary consciousness in respect of the Divine lies precisely in its being oblivious to the existence of the relation between the Lord and the individual soul, since the individual, identifying himself with the body, seeks his experience in the world. Thus the illusion of soul being identical with the body (*dēhātma bhrama*) is the illusion that has to be dissipated; and this dissipation happens through the recognition of the absolute enjoyability of the Lord. But due to the type of relationship exercised by the individual in respect of his body and the objects of sense, the individual loses all consciousness of an abiding inner relationship of dependence and love and service to the Lord. This intimacy is deepened through conscious attunement and devotion.

This is indeed difficult of realisation, and can be achieved only by a tremendous sacrifice of one's self, which in the very act of denial, finds splendid unification with the infinite. The finiteness that one feels here is not the sense of infiniteness as a possibility but the egoistic feeling of possession and perpetuation. The wonder of creation appears to be that, within each and every thing, there is revealed the concept of the Higher which dissolves the limitations without dissolving the terms. Finiteness remains, but all that it cannot by way of limitation seem to pass away on the realisation of the Divine life. The egoistic feeling is the essential condition of finite soul on this planet when it has to struggle against the environment of matter and mass. And so long as this lasts, the finite cannot flow into the stream of infinity, cannot belong to the infinite. The real frustration in the spiritual communion is this incapacity to flow into the Infinite, which leaves the individual finite with the feeling of alienness, of *visleṣa*. This is what is sought to be abolished by all the methods of religion. The finite, once it abolishes this egoistic feeling for itself, finds its very matrix and substance in the Deity. The analysis which M. Bergson made about the practical bent of man which limits and deforms the spiritual and segregates the individual from the total flow or duration or Spirit, is an acute presentation of the need in religio-mystical consciousness to dissolve this separative wall between the finite and infinite. The finale of this experience may be not a dissolution of the finite into the stream of becoming of the Infinite, but rather a participation in the stream of the Divine Becoming or the Ocean of Bliss of God. The *laya-vāda* lives in the consciousness of the frustration which it refers to the finiteness of the individual, which it overcomes

through the annihilation of it; secondly, its concept of finiteness as a segmentation of the infinite makes it necessary that there should be summing up of all finites to form the undivided Brahman or God. A materialistic interpretation is at the bottom of this feeling that the finite-infinite relationship is impossible without dissolving the finite into the infinite. This Idealism does achieve metaphysically, by positing an original *māyā* or ignorance or exteriorisation of consciousness but in doing so, it has not paid heed to the religious consciousness which demands the finiteness of the individual in relation to the Deity. The concept of progressive infinitisation of the finite in evolution affirmed by religio-mystical consciousness is not capable of explaining the actual necessity of this two-fold relationship. We can of course say that the religious consciousness is itself a figment, an illusion or delusion or imagination, a regression into the child-nature or infancy or dotage, and a consequence of the helplessness-feeling. All this might be true, but the unanimity of the experience and its specific quality lead us to the conclusion that the religious feeling is not so unreal after all, as it is made out to be. We cannot exalt the mystical instinct for liberation from all bonds over the religious instinct for dependence on the Highest or higher powers.

Kulaśēkhara was a king, even as Janaka was during the Vedic period. The comparison might be appropriate for the reason that Kulaśēkhara appears to have been well read and his poetry is distinguished by a sense of Divine reality. As a King, to him the consciousness of power or self-power was something natural, essentially inherited from his very infancy. It appears that his mystico-religious mind was engrossed on the problems of devotion to the Lord. His psychological make-up gave him this dependence-consciousness; his environmental and native equipment gave him the independence necessary for executing his royal duties. That he surrendered this duty imposed on him by succession to the throne very early in his life and took to the role of being a hymnist is the account that we receive from Travancore history.² But from the actual concluding verses of every section of the *Pērumāl Tirumōhzi* it appears that he was a successful reigning prince of Madura and other principalities at the time of the composition of these Hymns. In any case at a later stage he might have taken to the religious vocation as his highest goal and purpose.

He was conscious of the Infinite and surrendered all to the Lord, the repository of all virtues. The Lord is the supreme self of all things, and man is merely his dependent. This is the science of the Transcendent. When man knows himself as dependent on the supreme, there happens release. So much so Kulaśēkhara envies in one sense the Kāvēri which encircles the island of Śrīrangam where the Lord resides in splendid majesty, for is she not holy because of touching the feet of the Lord? "The touch of the feet of the Lord it is that has made Śeṣa, the thousand-headed, and Kāvēri enjoy the supreme Bliss."

² Travancore Arch. Series Vol. pt. ii. 1925 p. 104 ff.

The seer, Kulaśēkhara, prays to the Lord and exclaims "When shall I have the pleasure of witnessing the splendour of the Lord at Śrīraṅgaṃ (Tiruvaraṅgam)". "When will be the day I can see the Lord and enjoy? When will be the day I can sing his praise, to the fullest powers of speech, about the Lord at Śrīraṅgaṃ?" (l. 2). "When will be the day I shall be with the servants of the Lord at Śrīraṅgaṃ?" (l.3). "When will be the day I shall loudly praise Him and with my own hands offer the fresh flowers and do obeisance?" (l.4). "When will the time come I shall see Him unceasingly and place my flower-crowned head at His feet?" (l.5). "When will that time come when my mind gazing at His moon-like face melt into Him?" (l.6). "When will the time come when my tears of ecstasy shall flow on seeing the wonderful Lord (*Māyan*)?" (l.7). "When will that time come when I, the sinner, shall be redeemed through becoming fit to enjoy perceiving the Lord? (l. 8). "Moving with devotees, having a mind possessing uncoiling love (*ārātakāda*) singing excellent names of His, propelled by love (*prīti-prēritanay*) with unabated emotion of the mind, thinking of Him with teardrops of ecstasy falling like rain, melting through out the day praising Him, when will time come, when I, worshipping the Lord at Śrīraṅgaṃ where the lordly music simulated the billows of the ocean who is lying on the serpent, waring the discus, awaiting battle, dancing with (madness?), ecstasy (*sa-sambhrama*), shall roll on the floor?" (l.9). "Imperishable during the praḷaya so that the upper worlds of Brahma and others may again arise and the gods may be restored, and the earth produced, and the men resurrected and the sins destroyed and the bliss untainted by sorrow may grow, and the Vaiṣṇavas with unsurpassed joy may worship, the Lord is lying down looking towards the South with love. When is that day to come when looking at Him with the devotees (*adiyār*), I too, can become as one of them," (l.10).

The seer in the first ten verse of the Tirumozhi beautifully shows the manifold ways by which a devotee conjures up the image of his beloved, his religious Object, the Object Adorable. The Object Adorable, is indeed the summit of our craving and fulfillment or realisation. Śrī Kulaśekhara's main effort is the longing to worship at the shrine of Śrī Ranganātha whose posture is described with fine purāṇic sense. But lest it should be considered that the object of his meditation and prayer is only that Lord at Śrīraṅgam, Kulaśēkhara refers later to Śrī Veṅkaṭa in the fourth ten. The Object Adorable is the numinous one, *tejomaya*, resplendent, and the hooded serpent, whose thousand hoods with thousand tongues are intent on praising the glory of the dark-hued Lord canopied by them, is white, and red fumes issue out of these tongues. The expressions here picture in gorgeous majesty the greatness and wonderful nature of the Lord as much as the transcendent power and fear and awe-inspiring nature of the Lord.³

³ The imagery of the serpent-hoods of Ādiśēṣa, the foremost dependent servant of the Lord, recalls sharply the thousand-rayed solar orb within which Śrī Viṣṇu is declared to reside--*sūrya-maṇḍala-madhya-vartin*. The splendid sky not merely the milky way is the milky ocean, brilliant and attractive in which the Lord moves. The flames issuing out of the thousand-heads of the serpent are really the infinite number of rays of light issuing out from the solar orb, fierce hot rays to the world,

The splendid fact about the object adorable is that it is capable of being seen, entered into and enjoyed. To see Him is to get entranced in the majestic beauty with joy overflowing; to see Him is to feel the call of poetic fervour leading to the unceasing praise of the beauty and glory of the Lord. This leads to the seeking of the company of the devotees of the Lord, men of like intent and purpose like oneself, and to offer the freshly gathered flowers to the Lord indicating man's love. Flowers indeed always typified the love expression in all climes. It is not enough to sing to oneself in undertones. It must be vocal and loud that one's feelings may be expressed to the fullest, and praise of the Lord in public through bhajana and dance is the completest speech of surrender and abasement. The praise so made cannot stop at the mere garlanding the feet of the Lord; it must go further. This it does. The individual surrenders entirely at the feet of the Lord and places the gentle feet that trod the earth, heaven and all as Trivikrama, on his head, decorated with flowers. Flowers must be worn by every devotee as the symbol of love. They obviously mean awakened love-feelings blossoming into fullness. The individual longs for that state of his mind when gazing at the Lord, his mind would melt into Him and realise ecstatic union, *samādhī*. The tears that flood the eyes and rain down in continuous streams are of sheer joy of being accepted by the Lord. It is clear that such an intimacy of spiritual union cannot be vouchsafed to any sinner, but the vision of the Lord at Śrīraṅgaṃ will make even such, fit to enjoy the Lord who is most merciful and gracious. The individual, thus excused, will lose himself so completely in the Lord that he will dance with maddest joy and roll on the floor.⁴

This is the general note of Kulaśēkhara's psychological preparation. The wishful thoughts overflowing in mellifluous utterance of the first eleven verses reveal the longing, the wooing period of the religious soul. It is not in any way other than what any soul over-powered by the sense of the Divine and consumed by devotion to it longs for. But there are sufficient incubations of thought, descriptions of delightful reactions, in these verses that clearly point out that the soul is aware of the promise of salvation and joy. The poetic sentiment is strong and decisive. It is because of this ardent unbating uncooling love for the numinous object, Kulaśēkhara is known as specially seeking the abolition of the difference that lies between him and other devotees, who are lower in the scale of the common polity. This is the fundamental renunciation of which he was conscious.

which blind the unseeing, but display the transcendent auspicious form of the Lord to the devotee. A third symbolism mingles with this, it is the Wheel of Power, Cakra, which is the power of great destruction or great creation, the solar orb itself fulfills this condition. The infinite (ananta) is the serpent of thousand-heads, is ahi. The wheel is āzi and the Ocean is called āzi. The tamil words convey the intimate relationship of these terms. cf. Tiruppāvai verse 4, for the three meanings of Āzi cf Vāzi Veena

⁴ The āḷvārs were dionysic in their frenzied love for God. Tiruvoymozhi III 5.5. also.

their souls entranced in the bliss of the infinite, is sought to be induced by a process of sympathetic induction in himself. The emotional state becomes a wave tossed by the greatness of the devotees who are themselves wafted by it.

"For (the sake of) Him who is in the ocean wherein through His contact the waves are blowing, who is wearing the garland of black basil full of bees, who has a mountain-like broad chest, for Him who has red-lotus eyes, the devotees, through being over-powered by emotion, dancing from place to place sing and move about, have become mad with devotion to my Lord Śrī Raṅganātha. To those devotees' greatness (Vāzhvu) my mind has become attached." (II. 8).

This is clearly a fact which reveals the psychological state of emotional tension in the devotee, who is on the path of making himself emotionally fitted, one-pointed towards the object Divine. It is clear that for any real and complete orientation of consciousness towards the highest Object to happen, a gradual adjustment emotionally is a necessity. The several stages herein mentioned show that what is needed is a spontaneous orientation due to constant contact with minds that are suffused with the love of the Divine, whose minds are agog, and steadily so, in matters concerning the Divine only. The *ekānta-buddhi* that emotional preparation grants, is steadied by the *vyavasāyātmikā-buddhī*⁷ of the second. Love overflowing manifests itself in triple ways, of service, of prostration and of intense longing expressed through constant repetition of the names of the Lord, which is the uninterrupted meditation on the Lord.

III

The third decad of verses deals with what have to be renounced *prātikūlyasya varjanam*, namely renunciation of the company of those who are attached to their own bodies or rather of those who treat their souls as their bodies, those suffering from *dēhātma-bhrama*. These souls have voluptuous attachment to slender-waisted women or sensual pleasures. There are others who are themselves beautiful and who pamper to their bodies, eat and dress and are merry. The *cārvāka* pleasure-hunters are of this type. They seek the low pleasures of the body and not the high estate. They are not those who are devoted to God. The company of these persons is indeed a great obstacle to man's progress.

Says Kulasekhara "I shall not join those who have love for their bodies: I shall cry aloud to thee as my Lord Ranga." (III.1). "I shall not move with those who are unable to leave the contemplation of delicate waisted-women"(III.2) "I shall not join those who are cupid-like" (III.3) " I shall not join those who seek food and clothing and seek to

⁷ cf. Bh. Gita. II. 41

live on in this world"(III.4). "With those who seek low pleasures, I shall not join" (III.5) "I shall not join those who are not devoted to God exclusively", "I shall not think of the pleasures of the gods and others" (III.6) "I shall keep my mind in the Lord and become mad with devotion."(III.7).

Not content with speaking of these persons as unassociable Kulaśēkhara goes one step farther and says "Others who seek transient worldly pleasures are to me madmen. I am their madman."(III. 8). This final statement raises a big wall between the life-view of the mystic devotee of God and that of the worldly man pursuing his evanescent pleasures. The psychological wall has been built in between the world-farers and god-farers. Communication between the two spheres is impossible. To treat world-seekers as mad is not an unusual thing for mystics. As the Gītā long ago hinted:⁸

°ÉÉ ÊxÉ¶ÉÉ °É´ÉÇ!ÉÚ!ÉÉxÉÉÆ iÉ°aÉÉÆ VÉÉMÉÉËiÉ
 °ÉÆ°ÉÊ°É !
 °É°aÉÉÆ VÉÉOÉËiÉ !ÉÚ!ÉÉÊxÉ °ÉÉ ÊxÉ¶ÉÉ {É¶°ÉiÉÉä
 °ÉÖxÉä: !!

This attitude of treating the world-seekers as mad should become so spontaneous that all these several obstacles to spiritual life should be included under that category. This is the beginning of vairāgya, the complement of anurāga for God. The love of sex, and the love for embodied existence here, are fundamentally opposed to spiritual life. The stress clearly is on sex-instinct and immortality-instinct here, and not so much on the love for money as such. Pampering to the cravings of the body is one sure sign of unattachment to spiritual life. This being so, the renunciation of these two are necessary conditions of spiritual life. There is here found to exist a strong revulsion against all unspiritual things, environment and men.

IV

The fourth ten continues in one sense the feelings engendered in the third ten. Even after willing the favourable conditions and rejecting the unfavourable, there does not arise the knowledge of the Supreme. The Divine object is not any nearer, though one's whole being is strained towards the object. Kulaśēkhara here prays to the Supreme Lord, the Lord transcendent in Vaikuṅṭha, the symbol and presence of whom on this terrestrial planet is said to be on the Tirupati Hill, *Tiruvēṅgaḍam*. Here is the clear recognition that human efforts are not of much avail. The grace of the Lord of Vēṅgaḍam it is that can break the samsāric bonds, and thus grant to the soul the pleasure of doing service to the Lord. For the first time here we find that Kulaśēkhara

⁸ II. 69: Religious souls are mad after god: worldly persons are mad after wealth and power and pomp. God-intoxication is the same as god-madness.

makes the release from the saṃsāric bonds an item that deserves the Grace of the Lord. Till now this consciousness of bondage is not seriously noticed. Attractions indeed to worldly objects exist, and they could by practice of renunciation be annulled; but the saṃsāric bonds are not capable of being removed by individual effort. They owe their origins to primeval forces of ignorance perhaps. Anyhow not until the renunciation of the obstacles to knowledge and vision of God took place, did Kulaśēkhara realise the presence of more fundamental bonds of *saṃsāra*.⁹

Human instincts are very powerful despite all attempts to curb them, to canalise them or to divert them. The principle of substituting ends other than the instinctive ends, ends which whilst satisfying the instinct do not degrade the individual to the level of a mere beast, is very valuable in every walk of life.¹⁰ But there is just one defect in it, and that is, the human will is incapable of jumping out of its fixed orbit of instinctive life for ever. There happens always a regression due to various reasons. The tendency to 'rationalise' an instinct which means something quite different from what it intimates at first look, means only to give other reasons for what it intimates at first look, means only to give other reasons for practicing old instinctive practices than what they originally have. That is to say, the tendencies to decorate oneself, to adorn one self, to perfume oneself are said to be done not for the sake of the individual but for the sake of the Lord whom one worships so as to feel worthy of Him. This rationalisation is indeed what has been practised and is being practised so constantly in society, that finally it defeats itself. The hypocrisy of such conduct is realised sooner or later. And man finds that the conditioned-reflex that at first admirably suited the spiritual life, has by a regression finally revealed its true form and nature as merely a way of pleasing one-self through a devious process of transposition of the instinct. Rationalisation of the instinct thus finally is condemned as being not quite capable of transforming the nature of the specificity of the instinct. Unless the instinct and its specificity, are utterly broken or its fundamental self-supporting self-perpetuating and self-pleasure-giving character transformed, there can be no steady ascent in spiritual life. This it is impossible to achieve by means of human endeavour. Human endeavour can only be negative. It cannot open up new altitudes or grant force of transformation. God is invoked for this tremendous purpose through prayer and surrender, for He alone could.

Says Kulaśēkhara "I, who am enlightened, shall not seek the transient human frame. I shall seek to be a bird(*kurukāy*) in the temple at Tirumalai" (IV. 1) " I do not pray for Indra's pomp surrounded by the immortal beauty of the apsaras (nymphs) and the Heaven (*svarga*), but shall seek to be a fish in the streams of the Hills" (IV. 2)¹¹

⁹ Revulsion is identical with refusal to accept the conditions of material existence.

¹⁰ cf. Doctrine of Substitution in Religious Consciousness. Journal Sri Venkatesvara Oriental Institute Vol.II pt. 1.

¹¹ cf. HYMNS OF THE ĀLVĀRS: J.M.S.Hooper. Heritage of India Series, Calcutta, and MUKUNDAMALA; Verse 4.

" I do not seek to rule over this kingdom, the joys of riding elephants," (IV. 5). " I do not seek to see the dance of Ūrvaśi, Mēnakā and others and hear their music" (IV. 6) "Even though I gain the excellent gold-bejewelled Ūrvaśi, I shall not desire her. I shall seek to be some object on the sacred Hills" (IV. 10) Kulaśēkhara asks for the grace of the Lord on the Vengadam. It is a most intense prayer. Mercy is possible only under conditions of absolute dependence and faith, that is to say, when the seeker reduces himself to the level of the unconscious even. So utter should be the dependence so that the Divine might dispose of him as He chooses for the welfare of the individual whom He loves. The lord is *dayā-maya*, is *karuṇā* itself. The prayer or desire to be a crane (*kurukāy*) (IV. 1), a fish (*mīn*) (IV.2) a bearer of the spittoon (IV.3), a step on which tread the devotees of God (*nēriyāy kidakkum nilaiyudayavan*) (IV.8) (*padiyāka virundu*) (IV.9) or any thing (*yātēnum*) (IV. 10) shows the desire to be near the Lord in every sense, and it also reveals, side by side the desire to be firm in the askesis (*tapas*) (IV.5 and IV.6) and whose mental flow of *dhyāna* on the Lord shall be like the hill-streams (IV.7) continuous and uninterrupted (*tiruvēṅgaḍa-malai-mel kānarāy pāyum karuttudaiya-nāven*). The Lord only, however is capable of removing all our sins (*seḍiyaya val vinaikal tīrkkum tirumāle*) (IV. 9).

Thus we find that in this group of hymns the prayers are of utter devotion, even a stone-like inconstance or more correctly passivity due to completest surrender of mind and body and being which forms the elementary stage of this askesis (*tapas*) is craved for. An inner dynamism and an outer passivity are the two sides of this great *tapas*, clearly portrayed here as the veritable conditions of the incidence of the Divine Grace on this human soul.

V

The fourth ten has shown the utter dependence on the Divine *ananyārha-śeṣatva*. But this utter dependence has only one obstacle, one limiting adjunct, *upādhi*, that frustrates its fullest exercise, and that is the sense of 'I' and 'mine'. This sense of egoism, *ahamkāra*, of independence, which might be described to be abstract in nature but sufficiently powerful to influence the course of conduct adverse to the dharma of the self, can be given up or renounced only by a deepening sense of the transcendent and a fuller craving for dependence on that Transcendent Self of all.

Cries out Kulaśēkhara "I am like a babe which weeps yet thinks of the mother's grace, though she with anger fierce has thrust it from her face" (V.1); "Even like a well-born girl, who only her husband knows, though deeds such as men may mock her lover does, so will I sing, though thou'lt not be my Lord, thy anklets tinkling." (V.2).

"Like the subjects looking to the rod of the wreathed king, though he regards them not and works deeds harrowing" (V.3).

And I am "Like a sickman, who though physician cut with knife and brand, yet loves him with a love as long as life"(V. 4) and

"Like a great bird (on a ship) am I
Which goes around and sees no shore and comes at last
Back o'er the tossing sea and perches on ship's mast" (v.5)¹²

In the above five ways, Kulaśēkhara expresses his relationship with the Lord to be devout and permanent and instinctive, as a babe to its mother, as wife to her chosen Lord, as subjects to their leige Lord and Sovereign, wherein their duty of obedience is to exist despite the unrequited duty or the obligation on the part of the Lord or King to protect his subjects. The fourth comparison of God with the surgeon, who despite the initial pain he causes for the sake of curing his patient, is most kindly and reverable as the saviour of one's life, is of a different kind form the previous. As Kulaśēkhara himself has declared in his *Mukundamāla* God is the protector from fear and calamity "He is the Garuda to the serpent-like calamities" (V. 22) "He is the mystic mantra annihilating the enemies" (V.23). "He is the medicine *auṣada*, *par excellence* for annihilating the desires for arresting the impetuous movements of the sage's minds, the sorrow-giver to the asura-lord, the life-renewing elixir of the three worlds, the most good to the devotees, the crushing remedy for the fears of saṃsāra, the medicine that grants Śrēyas."(v. 24).

The inner feeling of loyalty, *śraddhā*, to the Lord should be so strengthened by devotion that there might not happen a revulsion from the actual perception of misery and frustration. All these miseries and fears and delusions and disasters and defeats are so many operations which have to be endured as so many acts of God for the perfection of the devotion of man. As a modern writer put it "Pain is a precious ointment, though it hurts deeply it healeth greatly."¹³

The last comparison is really quite different from the previous analogies, in so far as the idea is that no bird can forever go astray on a sea but must seek its resting-place on some mast. God is the raft or ship, and the world's miseries are the Ocean, the bird is the individual soul seeking its liberty and exercise. It returns back to the ship because it cannot see any nearby shore. It is true, only too true, as the mystics have from beginningless time shown, that life is misery, and one should cross this Ocean of misery. Buddha, Mahāvīra, Kapila, and every other thinker had to face this problem of escape from or conquest or crossing over the Misery-Ocean of Life.

The cry of Kulaśēkhara is clearly the Love of God, which alone can soothen this

¹² cf. HYMNS OF THE ĀḶVĀRS: J.M.S.Hooper: Sri Aurobindo has translated this fifth decade into English in ĀRYA: Vol. II. p. 238.

¹³ J.Krishnamurti: Talks.

misery of existence, this separation from the Mother, Lover, Surgeon, Kind and Ship.

" Though thou wilt not remove my woe, my heart melts not save at thy boundless love" (V. 6)

" So I
Thy servant more and more will set my mind on thee,
Though thou wilt not remove my human misery" (V. 7).

The love is such that it cannot but seek refuge in the Lord, and this is comparable to the rivers seeking the Ocean (v.8) The Upaniṣadic idea is here strongly recalled. The true haven of man is God, just as the true direction of the rivers is towards the Ocean (Mund, Up.).

VI

The psychological situation is complete: firstly, the preparation for realisation; secondly, the renunciation of all that prevent or obstruct realisation; thirdly, the prayer to the Lord to remove the irremovable obstacles through human effort or will; and fourthly, the achievement of the utter or total dependence or one-pointedness of mind in regard to the Object Adorable, though there has been as yet no reciprocal response from That Being. There is however sufficient appreciation of the possible flow or response in so far as the soul speaks of That as of boundless love(6). The inner assurance of God's response without any actual display of that responsiveness on the part of that Object is all that is now observed. The soul has been promised the union with the Lord, and it is in this state of the soul that we now observe Kulaśēkhara. The sixth ten verses reveal Kulaśēkhara in the attitude of the maiden awaiting the arrival of her beloved. The devotee's relationship to his Lord is on a par with the relation of the well-born damsel to her husband, however much he may be unresponsive and antagonistic (V.2). This attitude is plainly a simulated one, in so far as these verses are put in the mouth of the gopi-damsels awaiting Śrī Kṛṣṇa on the banks of the Yamunā—a bhāgavata motif.

"The place of enjoyment should it not be in solitude?
And the tryst should be kept on the sandy dunes?
Yet you have not come" (VI. 1).

It is the lover's voice that craves for the visit of Lord of Beauty, numinous and splendid, who will dispel the darkness. The voice is of one who, having become enraptured by a woman's love of beauty of the Divine Lord, has become verily reflective of the great experiences of other souls, deluged by the self-same lover's beauty.

There is a unique commonness in all the ālvārs, as it were, most-splendidly in Nammālvār, Kulaśēkhara and Āndāl. They belong to the feminine school of devotion, and follow literally the grammar of the Bhāgavata-school of expression of love or devotion, and there is in them the intricate play of jealousy and ardour, faintness and impatience, which entwine in a surging unitary movement. In the mind of the lover, there exists a state of overwrought imagination of the beloved constellated in a unique manner of total surrender. The culmination of a total affection is a total attraction for the being and body of the Beloved. This is what we find in the beautifully tender words

"Desiring the beloved lover these hymns sung at midnight out of extreme absorption in Him."

"kelvaṅṅnnai nayandu elki emap pozhutil udi elki uraitta uraiyatanai."

It is not often that men deem themselves as women, for it is most difficult to undergo this sexual metamorphosis. But the devotional literature in India profoundly and profusely illustrates this attitude. Indeed it holds that not until the soul becomes utterly feminine, that is to say, utterly conscious of its dependence on the Lord, who can surely save it, and love and satisfy it completely, can there be any release, any joy, pure and unsullied. Woman loves with her whole soul, whereas man only loves for pleasure or convenience. The view of the western mystics or religious souls substantiates this view. St. Thomas Aquinas held the view that it is necessary to become women in order to be lovers of God.¹⁴ Man must become a woman if he would enter the portals of Divine Life. But precisely why it should become that is not so very clear except when we take this attitude in a psychological sense. The one supreme fact about devotional praxis and askesis is the slow adjustment which inevitably leads to this great transformation or metamorphosis of love, utter and single-pointed, divinely passionate, all now concentrated and consecrated to the Lord alone. The heart has become the temple of the Lord and the beloved. The direction being thus given, the manifestation of love is full and overflowing. But it is not tender; the softness of love (*snēha*), and its sure innocence are not clear; it has to lead itself to the figure of the child. The mother's affection for the child is something quite

¹⁴ ST. THOMAS AQUINAS; Gerald Vann. O.P. (Hague and Gill Ltd., London). It would be necessary to point out definitely that this so-called feminine and masculine relationship has nothing of the carnal or fleshy relationship usually affirmed of such natures. Hemacandra holds that mādhyura is of the highest degree available in vipralambha, a little less in Karuṇa and still less in Śānta. Kulaśēkhara's enjoyment exploits this kind. But the dangers of madhurabhāva are very great, in so far as it has tendency to slip into the vital carnality or promiscuous sexuality. Not until sex is given up is one truly feminine. Kulaśēkhara is well aware of the slippery road of Madhurabhāva. It has enormous consequences of regression. There can be no compromise with sexuality. One should de-sexualise oneself so as not to be provoked by it. Kulaśēkhara appears to be well aware of this and seeks to transform himself into a mother of love. cf. DIVINE LADY; JSVOI. Vol.II. part II.

different from the passionate maiden's for her beloved. This is in one sense utterly inverted as we shall show, but by no means irrational or perverted. It shows the abasement of the maiden, who has almost sworn to be the slave, being gradually replaced by the attitude of motherhood, an affectionate personal selfless relationship with the Object Adorable. No longer is there the urge for the purely sexual figures which bring on in their train a host of undesirable associations and relationships, delightfully miserable in themselves in a human context, but obviously out of place in relation to the Divine.

VII

The unique contribution of Kulasekhara to devotional psychology lies precisely in this conversion of the marital into the motherhood relationship. It is true, metaphysically and theologically speaking, that this attitude of mother and child between man and God, is a strangely inverted relationship, the truth being that God is the Mother, and the soul, the child, of God. Herein consists the invertedness of the relationship mentioned above. The efficacy of this attitude must be measured not in terms of its actual, metaphysical or theological availability, but in terms of the positive contribution to the evolution of the individual to the summit of relationships—the Divine Unity. This relationship of mother and child between man and God is capable of being realised in the History of Religious incarnation, where the historical relationship between the man and God takes up the simulations of mother and child. Dēvakī and Kṛṣṇa, Kausalyā and Rāma attitudes are illustrative of these historical situations, though it must be always a moot-point whether there can be any incarnations at all. Indian Theology always accepted this avatār-principle. Incarnation of the Divine is inevitably entwined in the idea of redemption of man. The Bhagavad Gīta has stated it in most emphatic terms that the Descent of the Divine into terrestrial existence is for the sake of protection of the good, punishment of the wicked and for the establishment of Righteousness, the Kingdom of God or Heaven on Earth *dharmasamsthāpanārthāya*.

Thus the mother-child relationship is a historical relationship however much we may try to belittle it. The Mother-concept or Mother-ideal of the soul is thus a historical possibility. It is this motif that Kulaśekhara utilises. The Devakī-Kṛṣṇa attitude as well as the Kausalyā-Rāma attitude, reveal the special features of tenderness, concern and self-forgetting to the fullest. It is not an abasement of an abject dependent servant before his sovereign lord; it is not the abasement of the flaming passionate woman to her beloved who rejects her advances or at least does not reciprocate them; on the contrary, it is the fine abasement of the mother for the welfare of the child, who enjoys the child as her very soul and being and love

rejuvenated from her very womb. The relationship is exacting of unalloyed joy and not of pain; the Child-God is all for the Mother.

The mother suckles the Lord; the master is now dependent on the dependent being, and though in His infinite majesty there is nothing that He wants from a mortal woman, however fortunate, but only the nectar of love, the milk of human kindness, innocent, loving, pure and splendid. God needs man's love; and man needs God's Love. In the concept of mother-child the reciprocal fusion in the most s̄atvic or harmonious manner reaches its maximum capacity. It is the symbol of this greatest instinct which makes all other instincts holy or rather sublime.¹⁵

The songs of the seventh ten are the cradle-songs about Kṛṣṇa, now idolised by His mother, who is said to be conscious of His transcendent prowess and nature and Being. It may be asked whether this is a plausible incentive to the enjoyment of the Universal Being. Though these verses are put in the mouth of Dēvakī, the drama of this relation is being enacted by Kulaśēkhara. But to be a mere mother entails the impossibility of treating God except as one's own. Further Kulaśēkhara introduces the pathetic sentiment. Dēvakī feels that her own child could not be called her own, for was not Kṛṣṇa brought up by Nanda and Yaśōda as a cowherd, and knew them to have been fortunate? as the Bhāgavata says. The important observation in this context is that Kulaśēkhara makes this dramatic situation of Devakī-Kṛṣṇa reunion after separation, a convenient situation to canvas the period of separation between the Lord and himself. This reveals the excellent dramatic instinct of Kulaśēkhara.

The glorious activities of the Lord are sung to melodious tunes to the Lord Himself in the form of the infant. The āḷvār, as the unfortunate Dēvakī, who could not enjoy the cradle-days and early pranks and lisps of her child, separated by a cruel fate, as she was, imagines the good luck of Yaśōda who had this proud and transcendent privilege. There is joy of a mother at her son's greatness, but sorrow at having been deprived the joy of bringing him up herself. This recounting of the deeds and greatness of Kṛṣṇa and the fortune of Yaśōda, gives just that deepening intimacy needed for total absorption. The love of nearness and reunion are established firmly here.

VIII

In the eighth ten, on the contrary, Kulasekhara experiences God as infant again or

¹⁵ Writes A. Noel Roberts in his 'Mystery of Death and the Two Resurrections' (Hurst and Blackett 1918 London) p.12. What we call "Love" in the sex sense bears little or no resemblance to Divine Love; but the nearest human approach to it lies in parental love of offspring, more particularly mother-love, of the most selfless, unselfish and self-sacrificial sort."

child or son, not in the person of Dēvaki the frustrated mother, but of Kausalya¹⁶, the mother who was fortunate enough to enjoy the child's prattles and plays. But it is not the childhood pranks and plays that she recalls but the great deeds performed by Rāma during his sojourn in the forest, and in Lanka. The joy of the mother at her sons's greatness is strongly represented but there is sorrow also in not having been with him during those momentous years of Rāmas life.

In a sense, we can say that these two tens, the seventh and the eighth, reveal a complete picture of the Lord, as great and transcendent and mighty, as child as well as man, an experience that can be fully tenderly and passionately experienced by a mother as her own son's. The complete Lord is experienced as avatār, as the Transcendent Divine incarnate amidst His creatures, by Kulaśēkhara, who cleverly dramatises this to strengthen his dhyāna or continuous contemplation of the Divine.

The psychological situation is that the periods of separation from one's dear ones, be it in the earlier years of the cradle or later years, is the stimulus for a continuous recollection of the stream of experiences that might have been one's own, if this separation had not occurred. The situation is a retrospect, an unceasing and unforgettable retrospect of the history of the beloved one, and is thus capable of inducing that one-pointedness of mind for the approachable and amiable (*Śubhāśraya*) form of the Divine Lord. The Bhāgavata and the āḷvārs have always felt the lure of the baby Kṛṣṇa and loved His complete absence of reservation in matters pertaining to love and kindness and mercy and power. God's love is the complete love, a love which has none of the grossness of the sexual, a love that can level up to the highest state of God-intoxication. The chief merit of Kulaśēkhara's method of Divine experience is to show that it does not matter when the separation happens, it can at all times induce the feeling of continuous affection that reveals itself in parental outbursts of tenderness and succour, in the most spontaneous meditation. There is a two-fold significance also in this relationship that relieves it from being purely a parental relationship. There is firstly the relationship, natural indeed, to the mother, of fondness and intimacy, of belonging to one another, of possession too, but not the possession claimed and sought after by the sexual intimacy. But more than all these, there is present, as an aura, over all these sentiments and feelings and instincts, the feeling of the presence of the Transcendent in the Object Adorable, to which one is profoundly and consciously related as dependent slave or servant (*adiyā*). As has been already stated, it is possible to experience Him only in the actual historical manifestation of God. It is for this purpose that the Arcā avatār, the image worship of the avatārs has come into existence from most ancient times in India. Kulaśēkhara enjoys God as Kṛṣṇa and as Rāma even as Dēvakī and Kauśalya actually did after reunion that came about after long separation.

¹⁶ (Rāmayaṇa Sundara Kanda XXXII.48; XC. 44-46. Sīta opining about Kausalya's state to be if Rāma should perish)

IX

Thus we find that having realised through pathos (*śokarasa*) of the mother for her child, the ecstasy of continuous contemplation, Kulaśēkhara, in the ninth ten, begins with the lament of Daśaratha, who had sent his son Rāma into exile.

" O my most enjoyable Son!
Having decorated you to crown you as the city's king,
I sent you, alas! into the impenetrable forest, listening
to the words of your mother Kaikēyī. (IX. 1).

The bravery needed to perform this act of perfidy against the beloved of the City was something that he was vaguely conscious of. This consciousness of his own breach of faith with one's son is a concept that can be seen to apply with equal validity in the case of breach of faith to God, a breach of law that is natural to the human mind. Sin is an act of breach of faith or law of God, but this by itself is of no value. What is necessary is the consciousness of sin or of having sinned. It is the latter that is invaluable for the psychology of religious consciousness. The act of sin is greater, when the crime committed is against God. Daśaratha was conscious of the supernatural nature of his son, for was he not a god-given son? Was he not the person who, whilst yet in his boyhood, helped in the destruction of the demons who interfered with the sacrifice of Visvāmitra? Thus the consciousness of the supernatural nature of the son was at the back of Daśaratha's mind when this lament started. The deceit practised on him by his dear wife, and his sworn commitment to her, had made him helpless, had rendered him powerless against his own plighted word. And the next verse renders the poignancy all the greater. For instead of hesitating in the slightest degree, Śrī Rāma casting aside the robes he had worn for his coronation, leaving behind the elephants and chariot, walked into the forest with his brother and bejewelled wife. This revealed another great quality of his son, the absolute unperturbed act of renunciation with only one concern for the truthfulness of his devotees. The pathos is smiting and killing. The visible tears now turn red, each of them as it were, reflecting the sores on the feet of the Lord, the son.

Listening to the evil speech of the cruel-speeched,
How did you, my Lord! leaving the citizens of the City,
Abandoning the elephants and the chariot,
Entering the forest with your brother and bejewelled wife,
Walk on? What can I do for you? (IX. 2).

The deed indeed recoils on the individual. The consciousness of sin penetrates the inner core of personality, and with catastrophic results. There is here a most pathetic sight which reveals the impotence of man before God's irrevocable will. Love of God

as son even, has not availed in this case. It is this feature that is most enjoyable and significant for the religious consciousness surges and springs surprises, moving as it does from one sentiment to another, re-enforcing each other, never for a moment losing sight of the Adorable Object, until finally it settles itself in the impotence of oneself before one's fate and the feeling of being a sinner (Pāvai) (IX. 5). He was a sinner great, but his wife Kaikeyi was a greater sinner. His consciousness of great sin is different from that of his wife's, for in his case it was his hopeless word of promise; not so his wife's. This consciousness makes it even more intolerable and agonising.

The consciousness of sin is already traceable in the feeling of Dēvakī and the emotion of Kausalyā, but in this case, it is a positive act of banishment of his own divine son. The result is the prostrating pathos of the crying soul of Daśaratha who was the instrument of this act. Daśaratha longs for death even, in the final verse, as more welcome than this responsibility for the exile of his divine son.

The shift from the mother-attitude to the father-attitude clearly, shows that the parental instinct is bi-focal. Kulaśēkhara's analysis representing, as it does, his own unique psychological experience, shows this admirably.

X

The tenth ten verses describe the climax, the full and complete recapitulation of the Rāmāyaṇa, to which the last two tens, eight and nine, were also devoted. It concludes with the prayer asking all to praise the Lord for the deeds He has done. Even this is for the glorification of the Lord. The fullest servant hood is realised when the soul ecstatically continues to enjoy the Lord. Even this method, say Kulaśēkhara, is the path of *upāsana*, of meditation that is continuous, and Kulaśēkhara's brilliant analysis of the religious emotion shows that the successive order of meditation should be to love Him as beloved, as mother and as father till finally, there happens the total experience of the transcendent greatness of the Lord as *śēṣin*.

We have here a philosophy of religious consciousness uttered by an adept in ecstatic union, and it is as complete an analysis as is available in the history of a soul. Here the transmuting force of pathos and powerful nature of that in concentrating the entire forces of consciousness in the direction of the Object Adorable is most exquisitely expressed. The sex-instinct is thoroughly and at the earliest opportunity sublimated, and it no longer troubles the feminised soul. The recovery into masculinity in Daśaratha is not definite, since the over-whelming distress of separation from the divine Object figured before the mind as Son, makes the soul almost a woman. The conclusion is clearly not the feelings of a masculine or feminine soul, for the soul itself is neither masculine nor feminine, but only is the *śēṣa* and *dāsa* glorifying the Lord for ever and ever.

Kulaśekhara reveals himself as a master poet, and greatest dramatist of the soul's experiences in Religious union.

*PSYCHOLOGY OF FREEDOM AND RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS
IN K. ULĀSEK. HARĀ'S PHILOSOPHY OF DEVOTION*

In a paper submitted by me to the tenth session of the All-India Oriental Conference, 1940, I claimed that the Upanisadic seers were aware of the dilectic inherent in the mystical and religious consciousness. I also showed that the mystical consciousness was more a liberty-instinct, and apparently contradictory to the dependence-instinct that typifies the religious consciousness. These two were clearly represented by the words *asambhūti* and *sambhūti*, the former meaning the destruction of all obstacles to individual freedom and attainment, whereas the latter means the experience of Brahman-God. When they acted separately there resulted interminable darkness. These two have, therefore, to be practiced together, the *asambhūti* being subordinate to *sambhūti* both these lead to the highest knowledge.

It is interesting to know that this view is corroborated by many of the real seekers after religious consciousness through the individualistic way of mysticism. Mysticism, if not anything else, is thoroughly individualistic, for, from its very nature, it proceeds from the consciousness of the individuality of one's self, a right that it finds to be existent, a right that it finds to have been thwarted by the society, its laws and statutes, and by the family and everything in fact that obstructs the fullest exercise of individual choice. This fact of freedom it is that, is at once the feeling of existence or *existenz* as Kierkegaard, a Danish mystico-religious thinker of the last century, whose writings are now alone being made available to the English-reading public, says, and without this there can be no further development of consciousness towards a religious life. Man to be conscious of himself as a freedom-striving, freedom-loving being, as one who holds decisions to himself as coming out of his own reflective thought, must have arrived at that critical situation in his environment and conditions so as to be compelled to make the decisions by himself, irrespective of whomsoever else is involved in this situation. This extreme situation involving a radical choice of one self has always been envisaged by the Indian Philosophers and Mystics as the feeling of despair, defeat and misery. The Buddhist revolt against everything of the earth and nature seeking that utter nothingness of the universe, is indeed the Nothingness-feeling of the Universe. The *Māyā* is another variant of this nothingness-sense. *Sāṃkhya*, *Nyāya* and *Vedānta* all have their first starting-point in this feeling of misery which means the Dread of losing oneself. When therefore Kierkegaard makes the first psychological standpoint in religious consciousness the feeling of Dread—a dread that is sympathetic antipathy or antipathetic sympathy—a feeling that we bear to evil things such as a snake for example which attracts whilst it repels. *Samsāra* is this peculiar situation. The worldly life at once attracts and repels. *Asārah samsārah*.

Says Manu: *Ghore smin bhūtā-samsāre nityam satata yāyini*¹⁷. It is because of this that man dreads this world. This awakened feeling that samsāra is not something to delight in but something to be mightily afraid of is the first step in religious or mystical awakening. The next step follows immediately. This dread of common life, the dread of losing oneself utterly in the universe, a dread that finally appears as dread of all, is a critical situation. It is a state of infinite possibilities. The self even, which thus finds itself in this parlous condition might feel itself to be nothing. It is the state of the soul in ‘the shadow of valley of death’ as Bunyan puts it, it may be the way to the ‘vale of soul-making’ too, when the soul decides to stand apart and alone out of the turmoil of the changing universe and gaze into its own depths. But such a relief from it—*vairāgya*—renunciation of the universe out of dread of it, is a passing stage. This stage indeed is the most unenviable in the life of the mystic or religious man. Men at this moment, may, if they have been firmly conditioned by a right theology in their infancy and youth, find a relief from samsāric dread in the belief or faith in God, but such a faith would lack the acute self-decision which characterises the knowing of oneself. What one must consider under such conditions is that this period of self-choice that finally leads to the choice of the Supreme as the real source of our freedom may be a prolonged one or a brief one. In any case, one must consider in a psychological analysis the interim stage between renunciation and acceptance, Dread and Devotion. There are many who afraid of this dread, this vacuity of existence, and unable yet to know that this very vacuity reveals the inner poise of self-existence, the pure ‘I’, that gazes at its own finiteness and tremendous possibilities of annihilation or divinization, stand at the cross-roads of choice.

The Pāñcarātra Philosophy beautifully summarizes this aspect. There is to be the Choice of the Goal, *goptrva- varaṇam*,¹⁸ which is the fourth stage in self-submission to the Divine. The first two are the *ānukulyasya saṅkalpaḥ*—the willing of that which is helpful to the elf. Stated without the knowledge of the Ultimate, it means the definite awakening of the sense of evil and good, the unhelpful and the helpful to one’s own self. Man has by this already, achieved the initial initiative in self-recognition and choice of oneself, *existenz*, as Kierkegaard puts it. The second is the complementary aspect of the former choice of the helpful, the renunciation of the Dreaded and the obstructive. This is done as beautifully shown by Kierkegaard as the losing oneself more fully in the dread rather than escape from it into the universe or object dreaded. This is a choice of the nothingness-feeling to the uncertain existence of the previous state, that from which escape has been necessitated. Choose misery, choose dread, choose the horror of being alone, to the horror of being in this interminable hell: this

Kulaśēkhara, author of the Mukunda māla and Perumāl Thirumozhi, is one of the twelve āḷvārs of Śrī Vaishnavism

¹⁷ Manu, 1, 50 (b)

¹⁸ Anukulyasya saṅkalpaḥ pratikulyasya varjanam !
Raksisyatiti visvaso goptrva varanam tatha !!
Atmaniksepa karpanye sadvidha saranagatih !

has been the advice of the mystics. Thus when one has chosen the helpful, his own well-being and freedom to the universe of his former affections that he now shuns and dreads, and has rejected firmly every one of the fascinations of that Dreaded Object or obstructions to the realization of oneself as *existenz*, as being apart from the rest of humanity and the world, when man stands in his loneliness, he has cast upon him the third effort of choosing the Object or his Goal. It is this that follows upon an intermediary stage of faith in the Divine as the Being who can save us—*rakṣiṣyatīti viśvāsaḥ*. The consciousness of the Power and Ability of the Divine to help us out of this utter voidness of existence, which is aptly expressed by the *ālvārs* as the *viślēṣa-rasa* of the beloved, so typically expressed in the lives of the Gopis of the *Bhāgavata*, in the *Purāṇa* and actually expressed and experienced by the great *Nammālvār* and *Kulasēkhara* and brought to its fullest climax of enjoyment in *Āndāl*, is nothing more than that feeling of voidness of vacuity without the One sole soul-sustaining presence of the beloved. It is undoubtedly this state of *Nirvāṇa*, of *Śūṇyatā*, where life and meaning of all things have withdrawn into a dark haze and there is the straining after some flame of hope, some torch of illumination, some kind work of grace. This it gets in the faith that God will help us in overcoming the disaster of life's hopes and grant to man his existence of being. Man must enter into his decisive-faith in God, else it is certain that the way is long and arduous and verily a torture. It is clear this phase of psychical consciousness enfolds the sense of pathos overlain with a sense of sin, as clearly to be seen in the cry of the Gopi in the sixth ten of *Kulasēkhara*, in the wail of *Dēvakī* and *Kausalya* in the seventh and eighth tens and finally in the poignant realization of *Daśaratha* in the ninth ten of the sin of man in losing his God, his beloved, with whom one can never be separated even in thought. The consciousness of sin in *Kulasēkhara*'s philosophy thus plays quite a large role, and it is seen that this is coeval with the recognition by Faith of the Divine Presence as the most intimate relationship between man and his God. As *KIERKEGAARD* remarks "For one thing the self-knowledge on which the 'Choice of one self' depends is possible before God, because sin only emerges 'in the presence of God': and the consciousness of sin can alone give us a point of radical criticism of that very inner impulse of one's being which seeks to realize *existenz*."¹⁹

No other *ālvār* has so clearly and unmistakably shown the nature of this two fold consciousness of sin and of faith intermingling in the *viślēṣa-bhāva* or *viraha-bhāva*, and has shown that there is fate in the move of things that is guided by the sense of the Omniscient God.

The surrender that follows upon this consciousness of the Lord who is chosen as the inner and outer Lord or all process and conduct, is the veritable conclusion of this effort at self-realisation. He who knowing that he is a self, dependent upon the Highest Being, does not offer it to God but pursues the path of selfishness may

¹⁹ Philosophy, Vol. XVI. No. 63, *KIERKEGAARD'S Philosophy of Existenz* by Dorothy M. EMMET.

become an isolated being—a *kevala*, but for him the luminous mansions of God are forever closed. Thus *Ātma-nikṣēpa* is the conclusion - a most fitting and inevitable conclusion, of an awakened consciousness which is conscious of its own radical difference from the Divine. Self-surrender is followed by utter helplessness evoking compassion or pity (*kārapaṇya*). It is this final peak of surrender—*śaraṇāgati* that leads to the incidence of Grace on the soul.

Śrī Kulaśēkhara wonderfully illustrates the final state of prostration, of helplessness, in the Daśaratha-motif in his *Tirumozhi*. Such a profound helplessness in Kulaśēkhara's view can be cultivated. It cannot be had without a radical conception of man's purpose and life in the universe, which is conscious recognition of his futility in terms of his previous life and environment.

The western analysis of the individual struggle after liberty which I have traced to the innate impulse or drive towards self-consciousness or *existenz*,²⁰ is incapable of any perfect orientation without the consciousness of the Divine, which appears as its dialectical opposite, but which it is not, when understood from the standpoint of bhakti analysed by the ālvārs, and it is refreshing to see that Kiekegaard's analysis of the consciousness of religion which passes through the fire of mystic struggle after self-being or *existenz* confirms the *anubhava* of the mystico-religious seers of India.

It is not the least interesting part of the philosophy of Kulasēkhara that he never craves for freedom, liberty as such, for to him the life in the Divine, as of the Divine, as belonging eternally to the divine has rendered the Dread, the *ghora*, almost non-existent, and his own *existenz* has been guaranteed a reality and excellence. It is thus that the Prapatti mārga gets rid of the mystical dark night of liberty through the religious consciousness of a conscious birth into the Divine life, by a jump or dialectic so exquisitely suggested by the two figures of the Veda, the asambhūti and sambhūti, which are instructed to be practiced together there.

It is to the ālvārs then we turn to tell us the stages of the approach to the solution of the problem of liberty versus divine life.

²⁰ Cf. Living Teaching of Vedanta: i. section on Advaitic Mysticism may be referred to where I have affirmed that the living teaching of Advaita is its insistence on selfhood distorted unfortunately by the three states.