

The Philosophy Of Religion Of Āḷvār Śaṭhakōpa

INTRODUCTORY

Āḷvār Śaṭhakōpa is the most illustrious of the āḷvārs, the Śrī Vaiṣṇava saints or mystics, not only because he wrote the largest collection of hymns barring Āḷvār Tirumaḷśai but also because he was the unique exponent of the multi-attitudinal nature of the religious mystic towards the Godhead. Śaṭhakōpa is considered to be the head of Śrī Vaiṣṇavas (kulapati). In the South Indian Temples belonging to Śrī Viṣṇu devotees usually will find that the feet of God inscribed on a *kirīṭa* or head-dress is placed on their heads. This particular head-dress, so to speak, is that which all devotees wear, or rather should wear even as the caste-marks are worn which typify the feet of the Lord. This is also called *śaṭhāri* - a name of Śaṭhakōpa. Thus all the devotees wear Śaṭhakōpa of the form of the feet of God Śrī Viṣṇu on their heads when they visit a Viṣṇu temple, Vēṅkaṭanātha in his *Pādukāsahasra* (second ten verses) has drawn the similarity between the sandals on the feet of the Lord and Śaṭhakōpa, who always wore the feet of the Lord on his head devoutly. But this fact is already referred to by Śaṭhakōpa himself in the *Periya Tiruvandādi* verse 31" By becoming the servants of the Divine we have become as it were His sacred sandals—*aditārom ānom.*" –a verse that must have been the source for Vēṅkaṭanātha's text of *Pādukāsahasra*.¹

Śaṭhakōpa's works are stated to be four, the *Tiruviruttam* (Composed in the *viruttam* metre), *Tiru-Aśarīyam*, *Tiruvāymōḷi* and *Periya Tiruvandādi*, corresponding, according to orthodox writers, to the Ṛg, Yajus, Sāma and Atharvaṇa vedas. The great saint is therefore claimed to be the Saint who rendered the Vedas into Tamil—the rendering being understood in the sense of bringing out the essential meaning and message of the Vedas, and not in the sense of modern literal translations.

I shall first begin with the Tiruviruttam.

TIRUVIRUTTAM

I

"They told me those were males, though truly females;

¹ A facile similarity is usually drawn between the *Tiruvāymōḷi* and *Pādukāsahasra* by many noteworthy scholars and it is even contended that the latter work is a composition on the teachings and philosophy of Saint Śaṭhakōpa. But the above citation gives the cue, the most real cue. *Dramidōpaniṣad tātparya ratnāvali* furnishes the completest exposition of the teachings of Śaṭhakōpa by Vēṅkaṭanātha.

He who hath eyes sees this, the blind discern not."²

Ṛg.Vēda. I. 164-16

Tiruviruttam is the first work of Śaṭhakōpa. The name has been given to this work of hundred hymns because it has been composed in the *viruttam*-metre. This however is not only to that designation. It is narration of an incident in the life of Śaṭhakōpa, a *vrittānta*, and as such it has been composed in the special metre known as *viruttam*. This work is considered by the orthodox to be the essence of the Ṛg Veda. Whatever may be the opinion of scholars as to the essential teaching of the four Vedas, and there is as yet no consensus on the subject, the four works of Śaṭhakōpa have usually been equated with or made to stand as opposite numbers of the four Vedas in Prabandha literature.

In general plan this composition deals with the relationship between the soul and the Divine, and this is indeed the relationship that all hymnal literature including the Vedic represents. In this *Tiruviruttam* the soul is placed in the place of the *nāyaki*, the lover whereas the Divine Lord is the Beloved. The knowledge Divine is the mother as it were playing the role of the introducer of one to the other. In what we may call the language of Aesthetics, the āḷvār seeks to represent or rather narrates the story of his enjoyment of the Divine as the Beloved Object through *Śringāra-rasa*. This will undoubtedly mean that the soul as the loving woman or maid is to experience both separation, and enjoyment after a long waiting for the kindness and grace of the Supreme Self. The *Tiruviruttam* claims in one sense to get rid of the illusion of *dēhātma-bhrama* (that the physical body is the soul), and to remove the obstacles to *Brahmānubhava*³ and this is, it can be seen, the essence of spiritual love.

Thus this composition belongs to the feminine approach to the Divine, and this seems to be indicated by the small quotation from the vedic literature. The Supreme Being is the One Puruṣa, the Primal male, all else, gods, men or other creatures, are in the relationship of females, dependents, *anīgās*, *śaktis* etc.,⁴ We shall see that the mysticism of the later āḷvārs is highly coloured by this most significant attitude, especially as it is of Āñḍāḷ, Tirumangai and Kulaśēkhara. The feminine or *śringāra*

² îõjÉªÉ: °ÉiÉÖ°iÉì = °Éä {ÉÖÆ°É +É½Öp:
 {{É¶ªÉñùlÉh´ÉÉjÉ Ê´É SÉäiÉñùxvÉ!

³ Pēriyavāccān Pillai's introduction to Pēriya-Tiruvandādi.

⁴ Ch. Up. VIII. xii. 5 Divyēna Cakṣusā Manasaitān Kāmān Paśyan Ramatē Ch. Up. VIII. xii. 3. Jakṣat Krīdan Ramamānah; Tait. Bhr. X.5 kāmānī kāmārūpi; tait An.I. ii. So śnute sarvan kāmān saha brahmaṇa vipaścītā. cf viṣṇu dharma: Sa eva vāsudevo, sau sākṣat puruṣa ucyate, strīprāyam itaratsarvanjagad-brahmapurassaram. Puruṣa means Muktebhyo'pi vānmanasā paricchēdya guṇavibhava svabhāvam dadati hi Bhagavān. cf viṣṇusahasranāmabhāṣya: name 14. Parāsara Bhatta cf. My article on the PHILOSOPHY OF SOCIETY OF SRI RĀMĀṆUJA: in vedanta kesari. May 1943.

approach is what might be made by one who has been entranced by the Beauty of the Divine. If the austere Vēdāntic approach has been, despite the impassioned utterances of a Yājñavalkya (Br.Up.IV.iii.33) and of *Ānandavalli* of *Taittirīya*, the revelation of the Being or Nature of Brahman, the mystic soul of Śaṭhakōpa was seized with the Beauty-Experience of Brahman, the *Sundarānubhava* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa (*Kaṇṇan* even as the devout disciple of Śaṭhakōpa, Madhurakavi, has called his Lord-God). It is thus we should approach the work of this great mystic, for through the Beauty (*saundarya*) of God, he renders the real and supreme nature of God as the most wonderful integration of all the manifold auspicious excellences. It is thus that we should see in this first work of Śaṭhakōpa the representation of the supreme attractiveness of the Divine which makes him seek no other company, no other ordainer, no master other than the Divine Lord Himself. This is, it is true, impossible for any one who is yet in the outer court so to speak. The deep intimate and total offering that the āḷvār wants to make, giving up all his other desires desiring Him as lover and husband, is only possible to a soul made feminine. It is further beauty alone, not the outer beauty merely but that supreme beauty which melts the soul. Not until the soul melts can it ever know how to enter into the Divine. That is, only asthetic heat, or intuition, can facilitate the union with the Beloved Object.

The first stage in the life of Śaṭhakōpa, indeed of any religious soul, is this divine-love stage, which the āḷvār points out is not the lust for things of the earth or of heaven, but love for the Lord's transcendent presence and union. It is essential too that none but the conquerer of the sense-desires and lusts can be ready for this deep and fundamental initiation into God's presence and God-experience and God-Being. The orthodox writers hold that one of the names by which Śaṭhakōpa is known is Māran, and explain this name by saying that the āḷvār has been so named because he changed utterly godward no sooner than he beheld God in the temple. This happened to Śaṭhakōpa on the twelfth day after he was born when he was taken to the temple as he did not open his eyes at all during those twelve days. The first object he beheld was God's image in the temple and thereafter he was a god-man. This may be fanciful etymology derived from *māru* (change).⁵ Thus the first work of Śaṭhakōpa is of a changed being, changed towards the Object Adorable in love-wrapt longing and soul-melting ecstasy.

⁵ Māran may be rendered as the changed Being the word Māru. It may also mean the death giver to lust, for death is a type of change, more fundamental but none the less a change of state. The word Māra also denotes the lover (Kāma in mythology). here of God rather than of the world and its objects for they too love Him. Lover of God he was. The sanskrit word Māra, not indeed in sense of Māru is the proper resonating word having symphony with the tamil word as the soft is used in the one case whereas the r cannot be philologically referred to it, in the other case. It is however esoterically valuable. Equally Śaṭhakōpa or Śaṭhajit is said to be derived from the fact of his having conquered the Śaṭha Vāyu (air) which is known as that which causes the transmigratory experiences..

The *Tiruvviruttam* was written for the sake of rescuing men who have fallen into the pit of birth and further still into a second pit of lust (*kāma*) and are wandering (*oruviruttam pukku uzuluruvi*), and thus lift them up so that they may enjoy the divine status. This is the purpose according to Kidāmbi Accan or Praṇatārthiharācārya. This is the fruit of its study obviously and the intention is that the love of God that this composition engenders in the reader who is devout is such that it will be a *sādhana* towards final emancipation through His Grace.

The Tiruviruttam has to be studied firstly as a hymn, or rather series of hymns, revealing the reactions of a soul caught up by the Lord's beauty which from then on it has elected to follow as its one and only supreme object that shall govern the rest of its life. The first verse thus shows the soul which already having beheld the beauty of the Divine Lord in His transcending Grace that had made Him descend into manifold wombs so as to relieve the distress of the souls, now seeks to appeal to Him to hearken to its appeals to remove the obstacles to its *Brahmānubhava*.⁶

"Thou impeller of the eternal! Thou wast born in all manner of wombs for the sake of saving the souls, so that we may not henceforth be touched by the consciousness in the false (*poṅṅi*), the performance of evil deeds, the dirty body and the qualities that reside therein. Condescend to give ear to the true words of thy slave."⁷

This then is the first vision of the Lord Transcendent who is eminently the impeller of all beings, eternal and non-eternal, who out of His abundant Grace has come among men and creatures many times to save them from their little knowledges in things that are false or incapable of being self-contained, so that they may not identify themselves with their bodies born out of evil deeds and thus be freed from even the slightest taint and smell of those objects of sense and the body. Already we have here the definite assurance that the Lord is all grace, who could be invoked through prayer and who, in spite of it too, is anxious to save all His creatures for which purpose He has taken many descents and forms.

⁶ Pērivāccan Pillai points out that this is so because of the first and the last verses of Tiruviruttam almost repeat the words of appeal.

adiyēna śeyyum vinnappam and vinnappām śeyidu.

⁷ The knowledge in the false means firstly that in every existence whether illusory or not there is truth. But what appears to be the meaning conveyed here is that the soul, the conscient entity, begins to identify itself with the body which is material. This is the *dehātma bhrama*, the root of all the ignorances and actions. The body is consequent on the evil karma done by the individual. Dirty body is here used in contradistinction to the pure body that is not a resultant of evil karma. cf. *My Śrī Rāmānuja's Theory of knowledge*. Appendix III.

In this verse according to one commentator what are taught are (i) the difference between pure and impure (ii) *cit* and *acit*, (iii) bond freed and eternal souls (iv) *Īśvara* and soul, (v) Oneness of *Īśvara*. (vi) knower and known. (vii) knowledge between *sat* and *asat*. (viii) ready means and accomplishing means, (ix) difference in practice between *sat* and *asat*, and lastly (x) Higher and lower ends (*puruṣārthas*).

So much is the āḷvār overpowered by the Love shewn by Him to all His sinning slaves that the āḷvār loses his entire being to Him. But the vision obviously was short lived for the verses that follow intimate the feeling of separation. The vision has passed into remembrance.

The next group of verses from 2 to 24 are all intended to demonstrate the growing intensities of the āḷvār's soul, the soul that had but a glimpse of the Divine, like a lightning flash in a dark and heavy night. These verses whether spoken by the maids (the feeling aspect of the soul) or by the soul itself or by the devotees (*indriyās*) of the soul or the Mother (the intuitive gnostic Śrī) or the teachers (of the path) are all representative of the stages of the deepening intensifying strata of consciousness. There is a psychological, rationale in this movement in depth.⁸

The second verse gives a description of love-smitten soul; the third reveals the soul addressing its mind to follow the Lord and to be in his glorious company which consists of the three goddesses Nappinai, Bhūdēvi and Śrīdēvi⁹ who move with Him as His shadow (*niḷarpōlvana*). The mind has to be made to shadow the footsteps of the Lord. This the mind does in extreme one-pointed devotion, facilitated by the beauty already perceived by or taught to it. The āḷvār finds that his mind was entirely taken in by the beauty of the Bird Celestial (Garuḍa) so much so nothing was left of it to follow or appreciate even the Lord's Tulasi, the fragrance celestial of the Lord's person. (v. 4.)

So far the mind has been lost to God's beauty. So much so the āḷvār finds his soul firmly following or pursuing the Lord and the three-fold mothers, even as they themselves do, shadowing Him.

The fifth verse begins with a pant; the oppressive winds are up; senses revolt against this concentration on the Divine; there is danger ahead, passions of earth are alluring forces of evil, extrovert, superficial and painfully false. The northern winds are winds of fury and the soul is tossed between the mind that has lost itself to God and the senses that egg it on towards sense-objects. But the deep and abiding passion of the soul for God is established well. So much so, all the images of the external world are made to refer to this central understanding of the arrival of the Lord. The rainy season is thought to be near by; the soul's hope is that the Lord would return to

⁸ Mystico religious consciousness is always and invariably represented by mages and illustration of height and depth, most often the latter.

⁹ *kovalar madappāvaiyum maṅgaḷum tiruvum. Kovalar Madappāvai* is equated with *Nilādēvi*. Udanamar kātal makaḷir tirumakal maṅmakaḷāyar.

Madamakaḷēnivar mūvarāḷūm ulakamu mūnṛē. Cf Tiruvāymōḷi I. 9.4.

it, as a beloved husband returns during the rainy season,¹⁰ for is it not the rainy season a season when every one is happy to be back at home? God's home indeed is the soul's heart. The soul hankers after the Lord in the hope that its Lord would come. But the rains, the little graces that precede the advent of the real rainy season, are not of the rainy season but of the summer. The soul as *nāyaki*, heroine now appeals to all the devotee souls who go on pilgrimage to the Hills of Tirumalai¹¹ to speak to her beloved Lord about her wretched plight. She has eyes illumined with devotion; she has senses entirely calmed down; and she has love over-flowing from her very fountain-depths. The devout souls look at her proper love with understanding and enjoy such pure love. The āḷvār's soul is excited at the approbation of love, the senses forget even to do their functions, and are concentrated at the object the mind has been pursuing. The one supreme passion is the Supreme, the whole frame is ablaze with it. The soul cries out for God. The fever of love is being fanned upto white-heat by the northern winds. The world-life without God is felt to be oppressive—it now appears to be a vast ocean which is dark, gloomy and serenely indifferent. The most poignant experience then runs with the collapsing feeling.

Has the sky uplifted the Ocean or
 Has the Ocean gone over and embraced the sky?
 Is it the time when the Lord's Earth was carried away by the sky and deluging
 Ocean? Or
 Is it the rainy season?
 O Beautiful One! from thine deep ocean-eyes streams of water are flowing.
 (verse 18)¹²

Such is the self-dejection. The heart's lord, the bridegroom had not arrived.

The physical conditions presaged in the above verses give the great psychic upheavals of the soul in its embodied state; and an increasing deepening faith and love move along with a desperate mental attitude suspecting its own faith, acquirements, strength and purity. Any efforts to cure these psychic symptoms with

¹⁰ The rainy-season motif is very common in all literature from the Rāmāyaṇa downwards. Messenger-sending *dūtya-kāvya*s are plentiful, the finest of it being Kālidāsa's *Mēghadūta*. Veṅkaṭanātha has composed *Haṃsa-Sandēśa* with the Rāmāyaṇa-motif. St. Śaṭhakōpā has used it in the *Tiruviruttam* as well as in the *Tiruvāymōḷi* in more than one place. Cf. *Tiruvāymōḷi* 1.4; II.1 ; & VI.1; VI.1,8; IX.5 and I.7.

¹¹ Tirumalai or Tirupati, the shrine of Veṅkaṭēśwara or Śrīnivāsa is the place of supreme Grace for with His grace all are possible. Union is to be had with the Lord. cf. *Tiruvāymōḷi* III. I where the āḷvār enjoys the Lord of Tirupati as the Ultimate Object of His Love. cf. *Dayāśataka* of Veṅkaṭanātha.

¹² All poetical translations of Tiruviruttam, are quoted from J.M.S. Hooper's translation in the Heritage of India Series: Hymns of the Āḷvārs.

magic of the ordinary psychical consciousness or unconsciousness, such as those practiced by devil-ostracisers¹³ are also foredoomed to failure. This the soul knows, because it knows the causes of its own deepening distress and is aware of the chasm that separates it from its beloved Adorable Object of Union.

Her pain is from a God exceeding great from no slight God who lists to wheedling words!
You with trident! stop! Ye mothers
Hark! Naming His name who swallowed the seven worlds garland her hair with fair Tulasī. (v. 20)

The soul in this closed state of absolute absorption is of course a most fascinating sight, for even the wrapt up souls are verily such; lost to themselves they live in the Divine inseparably close.

There is however also a deep pathos and the guiding hand of a Motherly consciousness standing witness to this excruciation. This Mother-consciousness is some *āpta*, friendly, benevolent, a teacher or *ācārya*, who may be indeed the way, the *purusakāra*, one who is either in close intimacy with the Divine and walking in His light or the Mother who is inseparably united with Him (*anapāyinī*). Thus lasts the period of utter devotion of the mind, when the mind has “god-become.”¹⁴ Then there come the gentle breezes gathering the tulasī-scent of Kṛṣṇa Himself nearing towards the soul, meeting the yearning or returning the look to the mind that has lost itself to Him, in Him and that has been wistfully following Him even as a shadow, offering itself in the consciousness of the Bird-vehicle,¹⁵ on which the Supreme Puruṣa is riding (v. 3). The joy is exceedingly great. When there comes the divine response, be it ever a look, even lasting only for a moment, the joy is intense.

What in this world will Tulasī not do (Plant of the King; the King of the Mighty gods, Lord of all heavenly ones, our Lord!)

Since it has loosed my bracelet¹⁶ and has turned crooked the rod that rules over Kaṇṇan’s earth and Heaven? (v. 25)

¹³ The devil ostracisers are usually described as having triśūla. The words here spoken might be taken to be the inner voice. This devil-ostraciser motif is repeated in the Maḍals of Tirumaṅgai

¹⁴ cf. B.G. XVIII where constantly the Lord calls upon Arjuna to make his mind God’s: *manmanābhava* and *māccittam satatam kuru*.

¹⁵ The Celestial Bird vehicle of Viṣṇu is also the Fire altar which is constructed on the similarity with that Bird, and the Divine as *Kratu* is Viṣṇu the Lord of Sacrifice, cf. *Agni-rāhasyōpaniṣad* (*Sapatha Brāhmāṇā*).

¹⁶ The bracelet-falling motif is found in Bhāgavata X. 60-24.

II

The soul has an ecstatic feeling but not yet a vision of presence. This makes the soul a little life-interested. But the soul is dragged into the divine center. It yearns for the experience of His presence. It hopes that He does keep up or abide by His promises. The soul lapses into itself, and its separation leads to suffering. This second stage reveals the soul's disgust and envy at every other being that has some sort of connection with the Divine. Swans, pure birds, swift messengers, those discriminating birds that live and move in the realm of Manasarovar (lake of Pure Mind), refuse to take her message to God, though having access. She pleads with the swans, herons, clouds too to take her plaint to her beloved Lord. She even laments that outer objects prevent inward growth and total offering. Her own inner voices, friendly to her, feel the callousness and irresponsiveness of the Lord and there is a maternal or self-regarding voice within that even fears that she has entered into a veritable jungle of death. (v. 29-37) Was it not already realised by this soul that even the roar of the rain clouds only pur the question:

Who is that damsel who would even now
Her life enjoy, separated from her husband? (v. 19)

True indeed she has crossed the samsaric ocean.

"O Golden One who has crossed the
Sapless unfertile field (of *saṁsāra*)" (v.20)

But it is not *saṁsāra* alone that is to be crossed over. There are larger pains than the pain of separation from the Beloved.¹⁷ She has also known that the grace of God is auspicious.

"Previously though hour by hour fire was being showered on us by the wind,
(Now) our Kṛṣṇa wearing His cool tulasi-garland having come, all have
become cool (v.27)

Tulasi is God's grace, an invigorating grace that increases faith in the soul. But all have proved like remembrance—transitory ecstasy—food for memory, for rumination. Is it not during this very important period that the mind recalling its vision, through ever so many formulations and recollection through images, enjoys the infinite nuances and shades of glory and of excellence in the Divine thus intensifying them into

¹⁷ Some thinkers like Naiyāyikas and sāmkyas considered that the riddance of *saṁsāra* is mokṣa. Freedom from samsāric sorrow is not enough. Delight in God is necessary—*Brahmaprāpti* is the sequel to *Mṛyutarāṇa*. *Īśa Up.* 11 and 14.

experiences comparable to actual perceptions? All that it beheld in one infinite immortal moment, it spreads out in space and time and sequences of its own free adoration. No wonder in this restless predicament it tries to arrive at Him through messengers—an agelong manner. It finds every tree, every bush, every cloud, every blue lily to reveal or recall the Lord. Such is the intoxication of the vision, slowly blossoming out of the faith, prayer, longing consecration, and refusal to have anything to do with material and physical, and sensory joys or even wants.

Thus when searching for the beloved in every place, for each place somehow recalls sharply His association with it, the soul comes across or is gifted to perceive the Divine in all things, the Viśvarūpa, the world-divine Love form, the indwelling form in all—not the Ghōra-Viśvarūpa the terrible world form.

All places shining like great lotus pools
on a blue mountain broad, to me are but
the beauties of His eye—the lord of earth
grit by the roaring sea, Heaven’s Lord, the Lord of
other good souls black-hued Lord and Mine. (v. 39)

Then His eyes willing up with love for all, that beauty of His lotus-eyes, that beauty of Form His Superb greatness, are one after another revealed to her, all too deep for expression and over-flowing all experience.

Lotuses are thine eyes
Thine palms and feet too!
O God of mountain-like hue!
My consciousness expanding,
The Heaven Transcending
Going beyond Brahmā
All else overspreading
Sees the Beauty of the Helper of me and of the eternal!
(v.43)

Thus the mind has become expansive. The stage is psychically one of ardent expectancy. It would be clear also that it is of the intensest quality. Just as on the previous occasion a magician ostraciser was called in, here a soothsayer is sought after to give advice. No physical malady is this, though the psychical malady has now passed off leaving behind a soul-aspiration. Physicians and psychiatrists are not in need any longer, but only such as can read the stars. And what the soul is yearning after is the total personality of God, nothing less can help. She had become thin (v.47),¹⁸ though indeed the second intimation, a closer view, a world-view, a beauty

¹⁸ The loosening of bangles signifies growing thinness of body: the wrist of the arms are said to be the first place where this thinness happens due to love. This is further stated to be a sudden

quest had come to the soul in the form of Kṛṣṇa's tulasi-breeze.

Then we see her complaining

"Though many deepening darknesses previously we have known, like this spreading darkness we have never seen, known or heard. (v. 48)

The cry of the anguished soul is heard indeed, for she begins to hear the voice of the supreme Lord urging the charioteer¹⁹ to drive fast. (v.50). The lord's own anxiety to meet and save the loving soul is great. He is *satyavrata*—truth-abider (v.52)

Now indeed the true rainy season has arrived. The period of union is at last at hand²⁰.

The Mother (Śrī) whose eyes are like rain, born of the lotus, when she mounted the serpent-bed wast accepted (by her Lord) on the white waves of the blue ocean;

The Mother (earth) wailing aloud to the sky that Viṣṇu was cruel, wept, shedding tears of rain on her breast-mountains. (v. 52)

Likewise she has come tearfilled, inconsolable, since none but God could help. Urgency prompts her to send further messengers; the messengers are the beetles and bees (v.54). The significance of this kind of messengers may be done to the fact that they have closer intimacy with the honey-laden garland of God, not to speak of God Himself as *Madhu* (v.50).

Then happens the arrival of the Lord not yet in front yet intimated by the cool sweet breezes.

"A cool south wind has been secretly with honey sweet of His tulasī, rainlike has it caressed my limbs and ornaments." (v. 56)

phenomenon, for this happens no sooner than one of been smitten by love. Tamil literature is replete with references to this phenomenon.

¹⁹ The charioteer is indeed God Himself or is to the grand celestial vehicle the Garuḍa - the descending Grace is the chariot indeed of Light.

²⁰ As already pointed out the importance of the rainy season is clearly seen from earliest times.

When Vṛtrā was destroyed by Indra it is to liberate the waters sequestered or dammed by Vṛtrā.

So too the Pānis. So too Vala. When Indra, Bṛhaspati or Maruts etc., release the waters there happens rainy season. The lovers rejoice in this season. The pseudo-rainy season is yet a state of weeping earth nor the rain of Grace

The third coming is nearer and more intimate than any prior. The Lord's love for the devotee is made manifest by His secret presence that spreads an aura of happiness. His passion too is manifestly sincere and reciprocative as a response to the agony of love of the soul. Faith had deepened; the impossible has now a chance of fulfillment. The soul need not pine away into death as in the aesthesis of Tirumangai. But then no soul is satisfied with report, fragrance or even with the secret presence in the dark chamber. The soul hearkens after light, and God is light: the soul craves for love and open love and God is love. Not in the sanctuary but in openness lies the fulfillment. The soul has yet to gain this state of being with God in the open.²¹ The soul has to get the assurance, and perfect assurance that this is possible.

The dejection is on a higher and deeper plane, and the ordinary ways of physicians and magicians, soothsayers and others are insufficient to appease or help the soul. Friends, true friends on such an occasion are friends who know having seen the ways of god. These friends are important help and the rising soul does meet them. They are indeed messengers from the Divine. Thus one friend, and the commentator holds her to be none other than Śrī, the Mother of Transcendent Grace, says that God's greatness is a sign of His goodness and not a sign of His power as such. The mother (*śraddhā*) of the soul pities the soul at the length of the night (tapas or askēsis). Her mother pities the youth and regrets that she should have so very early immaturely in very youth devoted herself to God alone. The divine friend however consoles the āḷvār. The greatness, goodness, puissance, condescension and other qualities of the Godhead are narrated to the āḷvār by the Divine Friend. But the Divine Friend not only consoles the soul, she speaks to the Lord also about the inconsolability, that is to say, the uninterrupted aspiration or total consecration or offering of the soul to God and her helplessness. The soul refuses to listen to others who say that she has not His Grace (v.61) and finds fullest consolation in reciting constantly His name (v.64). Such is the soul in complete absorption. The soul become beautiful; so much so even the Divine Friend, the Mother Śrī, gets infatuated by her looks. Bewitching indeed has she become to all the connoisseurs of Divine Love. The Divine Friend however consoles the soul and asks the soul not to despair at the approach of Night.²²

²¹ God is to be known some say only in the inner being, in *suṣupti*, in *samādhi* in mystic rapture or *turīya*. But all these are responses in depth, and the surface remains unaltered except in so far as it betrays also the inner gains in the psychic being. But the Jāgrat or waking is the meridian of existence. The Kṛta Yuga is the era of Open Love and fullest manifestation of Deity.

²² Night is the symbol of darkness in consciousness, wherein one finds the need for fellowship; and the fellowship with one's dearest and nearest is most opportune and essential. Thus one seeks light amidst darkness. God is both these, friend of friends, companion of companions and light of

Now comes to destroy me quite
Comes this one night a thousand ages long !

(v.59)

The soul of the āḷvār has progressed far in its faith that it no longer bears any ill speech about God. (v.61). In the recesses of her being, there occur visible changes. So much so her mothering understanding feels that she is making advances to God, but even these advancing movements are stated to be due to God and not due to her own will. In spiritual life after a stage the soul finds that all it has to do is to depend on the Divine alone, a thing that is facilitated by the constant utterance of speech of submission to God.²³ Love on the part of the soul expressed by this self-offering or self-sacrifice makes the Lord lead the soul Himself. Others may say that it is the soul that is advancing, but the soul knows that its efforts have been reduced to cypher, and that the Lord alone is leading the soul without its even knowing itself as being led. The soul is in the madness of love (v.70), for it is floating asail, on the raft of God, pleasanter, cooler, sweeter than the cool breezes of the Moon which lovers claim for their meeting-hour (v.61-73).

Then we find the soul of the āḷvār changing attitude; the Lord indeed has arrived; her beauty has increased. It is not the physical beauty now but the beauty that is intrinsic, psychical, inalienable, of knowledge too (v.74-75). She is transforming herself in the passion of her Lord God. Every where she sees His glory; in the effort the āḷvār reveals this madness a something quite similar to the ordinary love of girls whose loves are discovered by their mothers. But this love is the modest true love. So much so every thing spoken of with interest is construed by others as referring to the beloved Being.²⁴

It is under such conditions of psychical exaltation and complete overwhelming absorption that the Tulasi-cool fragrant breeze blows from the direction of the Divine:

A soft south breeze is blowing
that has played on Tulasi on His head who knows
all things, His great eyes closed in sleep
(of Yoga) reclining on breaking waves; the lord
who gulped the world
who did a mount uproot and uphold for shade. (v.74)

The ordinary moonlight, the symbol of mere peace is unendurable. The

lights. How much more than the soul's fear of Night—a soul in soul-throes of birth into the Divine Being?

²³ This is usually the esoteric mantra

²⁴ This is an ancient love motif.

turns Godward. No longer does it look outward with its senses but gathering its senses it plunges into its own depths of meditation, *dhyāna*, and slowly the voices of the spiritual world speak to it; the reciprocal feelings of love blow like the wind and soothen the soul, even as in the earlier state the outer sensory emotions and desires blew their hot winds and made life insufferable. Then the voices of the spiritual helpers yield place to the voice of the Divine Himself and the soul melts into Divine and realises its perfect unity and harmony with Him and through Him with the entire universe. One thing is thus clear that the *sādhana* herein intimated by Śaṭhakōpa is a direct approach to the Divine, knowing Whom one recoils from everything else, but attaining Whom one recoils from nothing at all; loving Whom one hates everything else but Uniting with Whom one loves all; Seeing Whom one's eyes are blind to all else; but entering into Whom one sees all with compassion and beauty. Such is the mystic rapture of first level and the second or ultimate level. More than all Śaṭhakōpa has shewn that one who sees God becomes a woman; even as the *Bhāgavata* has stated that those who enter the *||āvṛata* country where Śiva is worshiping Nārāyaṇa as Samkarsaṇa become women at once, due to a curse:²⁸

<™ôÉ'Ép;Éä iÉÖ |ÉMÉ'ÉÉxÉÂ |É'É BEò B'É
 {ÉÖ"ÉÉjÉÁxªÉ°iÉjÉÉ{É®úÉä ÊxÉÌ'É¶ÉÊiÉ |ÉÉ'ÉÉxªÉÉ::
 ¶ÉÉ{ÉÉxÉÉ"ÉkÉYÉÉä ªÉijÉ'ÉäªÉiÉ:
 ÚÉÒ|ÉÉ'É°iÉ{ªÉ,ÉÉqùªÉÉÊ"É!! |É'ÉÉÉxÉxÉiÉè:
 ÚÉÒMÉhÉªÉÖÇnù°É½p»Éè®ú'É°üt"ÉÉxÉÉä
 |ÉMÉ'ÉiÉ,ÉiÉÖ"ÉÚÇiÉæ"ÉÇ½pÉ {ÉÖ°ü¹ÉªªÉ iÉÖ®úÒªÉÉÆ
 iÉÉ"É°ÉÒ "ÉÚÉiÉ |ÉÉpòÊiÉ"ÉÉi"ÉxÉ::
 °Éd÷{ÉÇhÉÉ°ÉÆYÉÉ"ÉÉi"É°É"ÉÉÊvÉ°ü{ÉähÉ
 °ÉÊjÉvÉÉ{ªÉèiÉnùÊiÉMÉp hÉxÉÂ |É'É ={ÉvÉÉ'ÉÊiÉ !!
 Bhāgavatha V.5.15 &16.

III - Tiruvāśariyam

The next composition by Śrī Śaṭhakōpa is the *Tiruvāśariyam*. The name of this composition itself means an observance²⁹ with due rites or forms of worship of the One Supreme Divine. The *Tiruvāśarium* is the smallest among the works of Nammālvār. The ālvār considers that adoration of the Supreme is the highest rite. What other *yajña* (sacrifice) is to be performed by the devotee than the *jñāna-yajña* or *ātma-yajña*? as the great ācārya Śrī Kṛṣṇa stated (Bh.G. IV) Devotion is the

²⁸ Curses by Gods or Goddesses are really Symbolic of good-leading to revelation of reality. The soul is truly feminine in relation to God in a personality-experience. That is what it is cursed to become, and this is in reality a blessing to the seeker after Salvation.

²⁹ Āṇḍāl owes her inspiration for her two works to this work apparently.

overflowing love of God, the mystic wine (Soma), which is offered in the flame or Fire-altar of knowledge so as to grant results far above any terrestrial or superterrestrial benefits which the ordinary rites and sacrifices may grant. No wonder sacrifice considered from the mystic standpoint is not anything other than self-offering for work, transmutation, indwelling and elevation to the Divine. No wonder too that the Sukla Yajur Veda (*Vājasanēya-saṃhita*) concludes with the *Vājasanēya-saṃhitōpaniṣad (Īśāvāśyōpaniṣad)*³⁰ which shows that the highest among sacrifices is the offering of all without remainder to the Lord Himself knowing that the Lord is the indwelling or omnipervading Supreme Being, and the perfect being whom nothing of fault or frailty or inability or sin can touch or smear or hurt. Renouncing to Him one's self, one attains the immortal. Then alone does one truly enjoy or attain perfect happiness. This Supreme Object of our adoration is described in the *Tiruvāśariyam*.

The *Tiruvāśariyam* is stated to be a mystic rendering of the truths of the Yajur Veda. Yajur Veda is the Veda that deals with the offering, with sacrifices to the gods and to the highest Godhead. It deals with doing or performing rightly the activities for the attainment of worldly and heavenly benefits. The *Kratu* is Īśvara, Viṣṇu, the three strided one, the primordial Cause, the one without a second, the omnipervader. Agni is the pathway, the messenger of the gods and the leader of the way to the highest seat. Thus it is that the *Brāhmaṇas* mainly deal with Agni and Viṣṇu who, in the words of the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, are the lowest and the highest among Gods.

Rightly then the offering of devotion is to be done to the One Supreme Godhead Viṣṇu, who is the soul or self of Agni.

The *Tiruvāśariyam* teaches within the brief compass of seven hymns the *tattva* (Nature of Reality), the *hita* (the means, the Good) and the *puruṣārtha* (the ideal of man) as well as the obstacles to the attainment of that godhead, the ideal and goal (*prāpti-virōdh*).

In the opening hymn the nature of God is explained as the supremely adorable Transcendent Object. God is compared to a mountain in the ocean the Rock of Ages in the *saṃsāra*;

Like the lustrous emerald-green mountain with huge red-clouds,
 With Crimson-Sun Cool-Moon adorned and wearing many stars with coral red-reefs
 asleep on the palm of the Ocean Lord,
 Thou art wrapt in yellow robe, with crown, necklace and adorned with bright jewels,
 bright-lipped and red-eyed entrancing-bodied on the conch-like serpent,
 poisonous, brooding; In the midst of the Ocean enjoyest thou yoga-sleep, so that
 Śiva, Brāhmaṇ, Indra and other hosts of gods may worship thee.
 O thou lotus-navelled One Supreme Lord !
 O thou who hast feet that measured the three worlds!

³⁰ cf. Introduction to Īśāvāśyōpaniṣad S.V.O. Series. No.5.

In the above verse the Trivikrama-avatār of Viṣṇu.³¹ His primeval dwelling place as Nārāyaṇa in the milk-ocean's waters, His perfect creative Yoga called Suṣupti of the transcendent Prajñā—so thoroughly misunderstood by later writers—and that wonderful form the Gods ever adore and would like to behold, the *Para*, are all described together, for they exist together. The next verse reveals the superb difference between this divine ecstasy and the pleasures of the world and heaven and all lordships or *siddhis* (attainments). Men must tread the higher path of Gods and choose the inner and higher life of worship of the Divine feet whose sovereignty is so fully established by Trivikrama.

The soul, through its intense desire to wear it on its head, abandoning a puerile end, melting, losing itself in devotion and love, in that enjoyability-delight of transcendent nectar-flood struggles to attain the feet resounding with bangles of my Lord world-creator- devourer.

Let it. If lordship, established place and imperishable strength over the three worlds, be got without liberation, will knowers aim at that?

Man's path is the path of service, of devoted consecration to the leaders on the path whose devotion to God is unsurpassed. The third hymn thus points out that the offering of oneself to God will involve also the devoted and consecrated service to the lovers and servants of God. That too is the next step in the sacrifice.

Because of whose will the three worlds tread the good path is he famed as Sole Refuge.

³¹ Note: References in the Yajur-Veda to Trivikrama are many: BK. II. 25: BK. V 15-25: 38,41: BK.VI 2-3: Bk.X.19: Bk. XII,5: Bk.XXVII.49 Bk. XXXIV.43: Bk.XXXVI 9. The most characteristic is of course the XXIII 49-52: (Griffith's trans)

" Friend of the god: I ask for information, if thou in spirit has obtained knowledge.
Hath Viṣṇu this whole universe pervaded in the three steps wherein the God is worshipped?"
"I also am in these three of Viṣṇu wherewith this universe He permeated.
The Earth and Heaven I circle in a movement and this Heaven's summit with a single organ."
" What are the things which Puruṣa hath entered? What things hath Puruṣa contained within
Him?
This riddle we propound to thee, O Brahman! Why dost thou give no answer to my question?"
"Within five things hath Puruṣa found entrance. There Puruṣa hath within Himself connected.
This is the thought which I return in answer."

The commentator says the five things are the five breaths. It is more likely that they are the five planes: matter, breath or energy or soul the mind, the other and the five elements. Another point is that the Puruṣa means the Viṣṇu the ultimate godhead and not any individual soul, cf. Iśā Up. 16, So'sau Puruṣah.

Who destines all to be true, who among the three gods is Chief,
Whose chest is luminous,
Who in the cold ocean full of high waves that roar like thunder-bolts at which the
mountains quake, wound the serpent-king round the huge mountain and churned
(nectar),
To that One-Supreme—God's devotees, we shall become servants, hereafter
creation after creation.

The Lord is the Lord who grants immortality, And the myth of *Amṛtamathana* is a figure of the sacrifice that is throughout assisted by the Lord as supporter, as executer and as instrument and finally Giver. The beauty of God is such that He could simultaneously manifest in many forms and execute the many functions of His divine Nature. The worship of God's devotees (*adiyārs*) the worshippers of the feet and the knowers of the truth of their complete dependence on God and who have realised the truth that their 'I' is God alone, is not however enough. The supreme ideal (*parama-puruṣārtha*) is indeed the Supreme alone, who has to become the 'I' of oneself and of all. It is the refuge at His feet alone that grants supreme felicity.

Will it not come to pass that creation after creation unceasingly undisturbed we shall seek refuge at the feet of the Primeval Divine Wonderful Being.

Who at some one time when all the worlds were not and all the worlds and all beings ceased to be, was unattainable by countless souls, unaided, the sole Seed, out of His navel brought forth the supremely powerful Brahman, Ísa and other gods and willed the existence of three worlds?

Not all Bhāgavatas can equal the one Lord. Their powers indeed are only God-limited, because God-granted. It is necessary to reach the source. Till then there can be no respite in *sādhana*. It is true that the Divine can and should be presumed to act at some times even against his own determination (for his freedom is absolute). The purāṇas reveal certain instances when the Divine Avatār had fulfilled the vows of his devotees setting at naught or in contravention of His vows as in the case of an Arjuna or Bhīṣma. But even that utter and unlimited concern of the Lord for the welfare and even wishes of His beloved ones does not entitle any devotee to seek any lesser fruits than the Lord's feet. It is true that many teachers,³² ācāryas, have always counselled *ācārya-niṣṭhā* as more easy, more safe and more self-assuring than the path of direct approach, and the third and the fourth hymns as it were seem to have given consent to the *ācārya-niṣṭhā*. But the fifth hymn shews that to be of lesser worth than the niṣṭhā of Divine being. The best harmonisation that might be made is

³²The ācārya-niṣṭhā has been very highly spoken of by Madhurakavi. Āṇḍāl and others and Śrī Veṅkaṭanātha in his magnificent work *Rahasyatrayaśāra* has expounded both ācārya-niṣṭhā and Svaṇiṣṭhā and inclines to the former since the latter requires an inwardness and psychic development not usually vouchsafed to ordinary seekers. The Southern School of Vaiṣṇavism inclines to ācārya-niṣṭhā.

Cf. Tiruvāymōli II. 3.2..... Yennai Pēṇṇattāyāyittandāiyāy Yariyāta- navarivitta attāni Veyanavadiyēnariyēnē: cf. Periya Tiruvandādi. 5

that the devotion to the ācārya or bhāgavata is not and cannot be contradictory to *svaniṣṭhā* or devotion to the self, the 'I' within on the contrary, the one supreme Godhead being at once the 'I' within and the 'I' of all, and the primal ācārya (teacher) as Ekaṛṣi,³³ all the niṣṭhās merge in one another.

The fifth Hymn give a grand description of a *viśva-rūpa- darśana* (vision of the World Omnipervasive Form).

Making thy one foot-lotus face downwards covering the Earth entire O Thou
Primordial Cause,
With the brilliant other foot-lotus hast covered the entire sky so that Brahma's world
feels wonder and joy.
And the Gods the path shewn by the Veda tread;
With eyes like the lotus-garden in bloom, with lips like fruit, wearing a crown lustrous
like the Dawn or an infinite-rayed thousand suns
Thou art with a thousand shoulders like the Kalpaka forest.
(To thee who art thus) Canst not the worlds be Thy slaves, O Lord?

The description given in the above hymn, as already remarked, is that of the great exploit of Viṣṇu, which exploit it must be remembered is nowhere attributed to any other godhead in the Veda, though the Sun is described as having covered the sky with his three paces. The purāṇik story of Bali (Mahābali) who sacrificed everything or gave everything that was asked of him as his great sacrifice as *dāna* (gifts) is a gloss on this exploit. The officiating priest was Śukra Uśanas, the Bhārgava. This great Asura King was so powerful that no gods could equal him. Then Vāmanāvatār was taken up by Viṣṇu to beg of him just three paces of ground and when Bali gave this small gift of three paces of ground, the dwarf form of Viṣṇu became so huge and large that the three paces³⁴ were seen to cover the Earth and sky and finally needed the head of the Bali himself for the third pace. The story read like this means only that the Supreme Divine cunningly got his gift and denuded Bali of all his riches and all this for the sake of Indra and the gods. But the deeper meaning of the story grants us an insight into the spiritual or occult phenomenon. Viṣṇu is sacrifice, *kratu*. His coming in the form of a brahman-dwarf shows that the Divine comes to man unrecognised but purely and seeks just a living space or rather standing space or lying down space as described in the lives of the first three āḷvārs. This small sacrifice entails, of course, the complete possession of the entire mansion of man by God. This complete offering that results from the small and even unrecognised gift of the three paces of the outer wealth and higher wealth and finally the inward being to God, results

³³ Iśā 16. Praśna II. 11.

³⁴ The idea sometimes in some Purāṇas is that the earth, sky and Heaven or earth antarikṣa and sky are the three paces covered. Dramatic effect is instituted by the third pace, being reckoned as the head of Bali.

apparently in the denudation of all these possessions in exchange for the liegeship to God alone. The third pace is the acceptance of surrender of the head of man, of the ego which is very powerful, conceited and unbending, worshiping mere power or authority. This last phase of the spiritual path can only be granted by the God's grace. It is this experience of the total denudation of all possessions including one's own apparent self that is asked by God in return for the intimate ecstasy of living with Him, guarded by Him in the plane of essence, *Ānanda (Rasātala)*. It is the prayer of every great soul to God Almighty to live and move and have His being within the individual as Self and Lord and Master of all ceremonies and functions and thus be not the Guest alone. It is because God remembers the good work that has been done by the soul by way of surrender to Him, however unconscious of the fact in its fullness it might have been at that time, provided the soul is righteous and true and sincere, the Divine Lord as the Lord of Sacrifice completes the sacrifice. *Śaraṇāgati* to the Supreme Master who has the ability to perform wonderful deeds is an offering of one's ego and all to the Divine.

The vision of the Lord as Trivikrama to Mahābali is of a saving Divinity, of an all-pervasive Deity who is tender even when as Yajñā Puruṣa he reaches upto the highest skies. It is a tender grace giving figure that Śaṭhakōpa represents; the feet of God are lotuses, the eyes are like the lotuses in bloom in the lotus-pond indicating the *sahasrākṣa*-nature of the Deity, omni-perceiving and with Grace (or the Mother who is Padmā); the *kalpaka*-allusion to the thousand hands reveals the varada-nature, the giving-nature of God (the god who receives just three paces is wonderfully the God who grants immensely thousand-fold, because He is the All-giver, the true-giver)!

Having thus instructed or rather spoken about Him as the Tattva (reality) or Causal Source, and as *Puruṣārtha* (Ideal), Śaṭhakōpa reveals the obstacles to the attainment of Union with that Supreme Being. The means which men usually employ are sacrifices to lesser gods or even false gods, gods who are generically gods but not possessing the true attributes of Divinity. The fruits granted by such gods (*dēvās*) are tinged with misery, or at least are incapable of granting that liberation or freedom which is the special nature of God as Love. The real deity, according to the āḷvār, is He who has the power to create truly, to sustain and to destroy, to redeem the souls and to incarnate in every plane of existence without loss of that primacy of perfection and existence which by virtue of His eternal nature as deity He possess. God is essentially Love, and it is His Grace that upholds the Universe of law, verily even the law of Karma. The āḷvār knows the weaknesses of mankind, its inveterate tendency to choose the evil and not the good means which is God Himself. God alone is the ultimate good, means to the Good. There is, however, always the realisation of the tragic situation of separation of man from the Divine Lord.

Alas man's nature is this:- to adore the wooden doll³⁵ whilst the mother who brought him forth is before:

Whilst the God who brought forth (the world), raised it, spat it out, measured it, muses on it and saves it exists, to worship some gods one has known, reveals one's stupidity which pains the knowers:

Their (lesser gods') services lie in causing pain and other prohibited works³⁶:

The fruits granted (by them) are joys mixed with grief; they become the cause of complete submergence, unceasing in the beginningless vast deluding *saṃsāra* through manifold deluding things of sense.

The seventh and final hymn makes the stern and integral determination to worship the Supreme Godhead alone for He is the cause, the One Being, constantly reiterated in the earlier hymns, who unaided creates, sustains, redeems, loves and succours, withdraws and manifest souls and all creation in perfect freedom and perfection. This final hymn most conspicuously shews the original total cause of the existences to be Himself. The material and the instrumental cause of the Universe is God Himself. But mystical insight leads up to the realisation of the integral reality of God and His creation and the monistic ideal is nowhere mooted nor granted any place.

He who upholding Rudra who wears the moon on his matted locks, Brahman, the fourfaced, Indra, the chief of the Gods, of leaf-green-hue, all the worlds, the earth with all its creatures, water, fire, air, light pervaded ether, the brilliant Sun and Moon with their rays, all other things, simultaneously restrains in one place from falling asunder, through His power so that they might not be seen (in *praḷaya*) (i.e., within Himself), is He who is resting on the banyan leaf;

Him our Lord, the Great God of Māyā alone, no other lower God shall we adore.

Thus concludes this hymn as a reply to the Vedic Hymn which is said to question "To Which God shall we offer with our oblation?"³⁷ pointing out that the goal of life is to adore continuously, age after age, and birth after birth the supreme Divinity who alone is integrally characterised by the six fundamental attributes of *jñāna-bala*, *aiśvarya-śakti*, *tējō-vīrya* or rendered in other words, causality and power, omniscience and redemptive love, and perfection and spontaneity.

IV–Pēriya Tiruvandādi

This work is said to be the essence of the Atharvaṇa Vēda. It consists of eighty-seven verses. The purpose of the whole work is to instruct the mind to worship the greatness of God. It is intended to make the mind attain to its real status *svarūpa-*

³⁵ The simile is later used by Tirumaṅgai Āḷvār in his *Periya-tirumōji*

³⁶ Prohibited works may refer to tāntrik excesses of the śāktēya cults, and not only to the śaiva and other atheistic schools of the śramaṇas and śakyas,

³⁷ Ṛg Veda X 121. 1ff

jñāna and make it bathe fully in the flowing waters of Divine goodness, greatness or majesty and love. This is the *avagāhasnāna*. If we consider that the Atharvaṇa Veda does consist of several remedial mantras, which help in overcoming all the diseases that man is heir to, even here the names of God, service of God and the constant deification of the divine qualities will enable the utter and complete attainment of spiritual health and conquest over destructive forces. God's infinite attractiveness and causal efficacy are immeasurable, and though Nammāḷvār has sung the proverbial thousand, just as another āḷvār even doubled the number, this truth bears repetition, reiteration, renewal. Thus the soul attains purity even as it attains purity by *avagāhasnāna*.³⁸

In the Tiruviruttam, Nammāḷvār has pleaded for the giving up of all connection with and dependence on any one other than the Divine Lord the primal male, for all the rest are but ties with *prakṛti*, matter, and obstacles to Brahmanubhava.³⁹ In the *Tiruvāśariyam* the magnificent majesty of God's nature as Trivikrama, the Lord of all the worlds, is intimated and this world and the transcendent world are reconciled in the Sovereignty of God. The *Tiruvāymōḷi* details the multi-dimensional nature of God's Beauty, graces and glories, every one of which is an aid towards realisation of the Lord's love and perfection. In the *Tiruvandādi* he points out that when enjoying the glory of God through praises one can live even here on this transient planet. One important verse mentions that in all flowers he perceived God⁴⁰. Does not the flower symbolize for us the supreme fulfillment of a deep aspiration of an innocent seed sown in the mire which thirsting towards divine beauty reveals its own full blossom and offers it to God in the open skies? Man should become a flower, or a bird with golden wings, the vehicle of God.

The ultimate salvation is to live for God and in God, purified, regenerated and transformed into the Divine nature, immortal and spiritual.

The first verse begins with the soul's inability to grasp the glory of God. Śaṭhakōpa says "If I speak about the Supreme, I would have really belittled His greatness. If I did not praise Him, then I would not have done it. If we did think of them we should have stepped Him down. If we did not we would not have done it. O Lord, do not get angry with us. It is our delusion due to terrible sin that makes us praise or not praise you. "

The Supreme is transcendent as the Upanisad says. From it all thought and

³⁸ *Tiruvāṇḍādi-taniyana Ślōka*, Mystic symbology holds that *snāna* and *japa* are the outer and inner apparatuses of purification.

³⁹ Tiruviruttam 100.

⁴⁰ Tiruvāṇḍādi 73. It is not strange therefore that the first three āḷvārs were stated to be born of flowers

speech and senses recede.⁴¹ If our thought cannot grasp Him, how can speech or senses grasp him?⁴² Thus all efforts to praise God adequately will fall far below His real nature and appear as mere mockery. Yet it is the infinite that constantly beckons to us to offer our submission to Him and this because He is supremely great. Words of praise are not mere adulations but statements of His capacity to save us. The fact that we cannot think of God in any finite terms is good, whereas if we did we could be committing sin. But is it in the competence of man to cease to praise or think or describe Him? "It is independent of me " cries Śaṭhakōpa(3). We can only surrender to God. It is up to God to make man's mind stop thinking of Him or otherwise; to praise Him or not to praise Him is also His will. "My mind has become your slave. Divine Lord! Thus I am greater than all others"(4). The mind—and the soul is what is meant by the word mind—has been definitely linked up with God-experience. This fact is certainly already visible in the earlier works. Says Śaṭhakōpa "You are the Mother who brought me forth. You are the father who gave birth to me. You are the bestower of knowledge to me. You alone thus are all to me" (mother, father and teacher,) thus are you the triple Godhead to me (5)⁴³. And why did you bring me forth, for enjoying suffering and sin? No, but to save me from my sins and suffering by granting refuge. Says Śaṭhakōpa "Why have you brought us forth? Is it not for granting refuge to us from our sins?"(6).

Perhaps it is not even that. But to make me love you, desire you only. For the Divine is Kāma,⁴⁴ is Tadvanam (vanānīya) in a fuller sense than the ordinary Kāma. For even Desire desires you, *SarvaKāma*, is yourself. Desire fully desires its consummation in you alone. So much so "my mind has become your devotee and near to you. But we are afar, being sinful". Desire having the mind as vehicle has already attained a station and place near you. This beautifully explains the distance—near aspect of the soul in two of its planes⁴⁵. The ultimate object of man's mind or desire must be God alone. "If we become servants of others of what use (is that)? To become your servants alone is our goal, whether successful or unsuccessful our plight".

"Other than the eight (Vasus), the eleven (Rudras), the twelve (Ādityas) and the two (Asvins) who are we to the Lord of Śrī? What is(our)refuge(worth)? Our sins are terrible O Mind! yet we have boldness." (verse 10)

For the attraction of the Lord is great. He is independent, has made several descents

⁴¹ Tait. Ān. 9: Yato vāco nivartanteCf. Kena. I.6.

⁴² Yajus 7, 5, 13 Manah Pūrvo Vāguttarah.

⁴³ Subāla Up: 6

⁴⁴ cf. A.V. IX. 2-19-25.cf.Rv.X 151. The Supreme Godhead, the god of the gods as the Kena Up. pointed out is alone worthy of fullest worship for from Him alone all draw their powers and puissances and he is 'Tad Vanam' cf. Kenopaniṣad-Bhāṣya S.V.O Series No.8

⁴⁵ cf. Iṣa Up. 4 & 5 (S.VO.S. No.5)

which show His inimitable ever-ready grace, incomparable, perfect, indweller of all creatures.⁴⁶ These distinguishing features make us get closer to him (p.24) The nearness to God is achieved only by sacrificing our egoity. "By becoming the servants of God, we have become as it were His sacred sandals"(31). Service is sacrifice and once this is made, God becomes near and uses us for His Divine purposes, and thus we become dear to Him. The path and the way is God. Sacrifice or surrender makes the Divine come close to the soul and destroy all obstacles (33). He becomes the protector of the soul (36). The necessity, however, is that the soul should desire Him intensely, should devote itself to Him and His service. Indeed He alone is the adorable, worshippable Object.

Then the āḷvār describes the process of his absorption. This has been already presented with excellent details in the *Tiruviruttam* and the *Tiruvāymōḷi*. Why dost thou not glance lovingly at the mind that is always continuously pursuing thee without seeking anything else?"(50), which is constantly praising and contemplating on God's names.

The ideas in the *Pēriya-Tirūvaṇḍādi* flit from topic to topic and present no scheme as in the case of the *Tiruviruttam* and the *Tiruvāymōḷi*. There are several types of meditations or prayers to the Divine to come closer to the soul and make it His servant. But we are presented in the 67 verse with a superb note:

" Knowing that the experience of the Divine Lord is quite different if you seek to go to that world wherein the eternals reside it is not a difficult thing. Even if you desire it you can enjoy that (world eternal, empyrean)even here on earth. O Mind, who are devoted to the Lord renouncing those enjoyments devote yourself to the praise of Kṛṣṇa's feet alone."

The realisation of the Lord here on this planet, in this mortal existence will remove every desire for the most desirable paramapada. The Lord indwelling in the heart of the devoted servant and contemplative will make all sins non-existent.

" The supreme Lord, blue-hued, who has entered into my heart will never leave me. But that Vaikuṅṭha-space, which intimates Śēsācalaṃ, the Milk -Ocean, has lost importance. "(68). "What can sins do except become fierce with red rage? But who can trouble me who has the Lord of all, the auspicious and Ocean of excellent qualities within my heart?"(69)

Sin is utterly uprooted wherever the Divine resides, for from Him all sins recede and by Him all sins are utterly consumed.—*apahatapāpma*. On our surrendering to the holy feet, our sins fly afar (54) but when He resides superiorly in the heart they are

⁴⁶ cf. Tiruvāśariyam and Periya Tiruvaṇḍādi, 42.

nowhere to be found.⁴⁷

The āḷvār intimates the manner of His entry into the heart.

"The earth, the expansive sky exist in you. You are residing in my heart having entered into me through my ear."(75)

And the effect of this indwelling of the Divine in the heart has vast possibilities or potentialities. For immediately follows the verse.

"As between us I am the greater who knows about your greatness: ponder: O wearer of the Sudarsanā who drinks enemies' blood:" (75)

"By contemplating on You my mind becomes a thrill. By the look of yours which removes all my sins and makes me see you, I shall be able to be in all the worlds where you are. O Lord who pervades all worlds! Do tell me whether it is not so?"(76)

This last clearly intimates the fullest possibility of the individual's consciousness becoming omnipervasive or coterminous with God's. Man, the finite, swells to universal dimensions. Sārūpya, results from sāyujya and sālōkya, where the word lōka is used to designate not the world but the vision omnipervading, supramental and super-sensory. For as the Kenopaniṣad puts it the Brahman is to be known as the Mind of mind, Sense of senses, and Life of life. Knowing Him one becomes lovable or attractive to the entire universe.

The teaching of the *Pēriyatiruvanḍādi* mainly consists in revealing the most fundamental aspect of the doctrine of Surrender through service to the Divine, which alone makes for the inward realisation of the Divine at the very heart of the devotee. This immediately makes for expansion of the soul's consciousness and makes it even like God's, infinite and omnipervading. The steps are devotion, service or servanthship, contemplation, indwellingness, intimacy, exaltation and infinitisation or divinisation.

Śaṭhakopa has undoubtedly sought to present here the Divine as the Beautiful and Beatitude. His approach in the two works *Tiruviruttam* and *Tiruvāymōḷi* was feminine, while in the *Tiruvāsariyam* and *Tiruvandādi* there is the approach of the worshipper and the servant, and yet it is to the surpassing beauty and delight and infinity of God that he offers himself as such.

⁴⁷ cf. v.54 van tuyarai marungu kaṇḍilum vanomarikadalo marutamotiyakamo kane voringirru.

2 Periyāḷvār Tirumōḷi. Vth: Panikkadalil.....