

# EROS AND MYSTICO-RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS

## I TIRUMANGAI ĀḶVĀR

The great NammāḶvār experimented in his divine experience on almost all lines of approach dictated by the manifold sentiments that crystallise themselves in human relationships with one another. The *Nava-Rasās* or nine approaches of experience of the soul's relationships with other objects, of more correctly and legitimately, objects of diverse kinds and levels,<sup>1</sup> have been in a clear and luminous manner expressed by that āḶvār. We find that earlier than him, there have been some āḶvārs who did experience the Divine in one or other of these sentiments, and after NammāḶvār, we find that the other āḶvārs experimented upon and achieved the divine experience through certain definite sentiments which made the relationships rather intimate and closely personal. The symbolic transfer of relationships of mother and father on to oneself was practised with excellent results by Kulaśēkhara and Viṣṇucitta. The erotic or feminine approach was made by NammāḶvār, and more appropriately by Āṇḍāl, foster daughter of Viṣṇucitta. But the most dynamic of all the āḶvārs in this approach

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<sup>1</sup> 1. *Rati*. *Hāsa*, *Śōka*, *Krōdha*, *Utsāha*, *Bhayānaka*, *Jagupsa*, *Vismaya* and *Śanta* form the nine rasas or sentiments. We know that the first five are integrated with one another and proceed from one to the others around the central desire for coitive relationship. Whatever may be the value of this approach, it was clearly perceived by Kulaśēkhara that with the swift and torrential outbursts of energy seeking consummation, there burn in its wake the *śōka* and *krōda*, depleting the fine images of the Object Beloved, tossing the soul in the fire of conflict. We can see these tossing in the souls of Śaṭhakōpa, Āṇḍāl and Kulaśēkhara and Tirumaṅgai ĀḶvār as represented in their *Tiruviruttam*, *Nāciyāra Tirumoḷi*, *Pērumāl Tirumoḷi* (5) and the two *Maḍals*. *Utsāha* and *Bhaya* again are the two faces of the relationship between God as Friend and object of Refuge and the Fierce Avenger of Evil. But of the *Jagupsa* relationship with the Divine, there is no evidence at all amongst the āḶvārs. Whatever be the explanation of this approach as leading to immortal enjoyment on the part of Rāvaṇa and others in the Bhāgavata-which must be considered to be at once not clear and hardpressed to find a justification for the Experience Integral in the Divine, *jugupsa*, hatred for the Divine, cannot be an ultimate approach, not even an approach. But a revulsion for the Divine's not coming to succour, not keeping up the tryst with the soul as promised, and at the vision of the success of the evil forces may be construed to be apiece with this attitude. cf. Art. on Bopadeva's Doctrine of Bhakti: Sarasvatī Bhavan Series 1923. *Vismaya* or *adbhuta* nature of the Object Adorable, and the worship of His wonderful nature is again a passing sentiment due to a vision of the infinite Omnipotence and Transcendence with all that they cannot to the individual. The experience of TiruppāṇḶvār of the *Amalan* and the quiet peace experienced by the soul reveals the quiet faith in the Lord's power to complete the promise underlying His transcendent nature. No two showed it more efficiently than Tirumaḷisai ĀḶvār and Śaṭhakōpa. The first there ĀḶvārs showed the *vismaya*-nature or *adbhuta* nature of God whilst the fourth and the fifth showed exquisitely the Quiet Grace of the Captain of the Soul, in whom our faith abides and can abide eternally without being tossed. For in that experience, the *rati* becomes *ātma-rati* enjoyment of the Self.

is assuredly Tirumaṅgai Āḷvār. He has celebrated his ardent and total wooing in two compositions called *Maḍal*.

Tirumaṅgai Āḷvār, otherwise known as Parakālan, lived about the eighth Century. He was a petty chieftain. He was in many respects a dynamic figure, ardent in love, spectacular in his deeds, a rebel, a social reformer, and an exquisite lyricist and hymnist. His verses are numbered at 1,361. He seems to have lived for about 105 years. His early life leading upto his marriage reveals his ardent nature. He fell in love with a Vaiṣṇava girl and wooed her. But she would have nothing to do with one who was not a worshipper of Viṣṇu and His devotees. She, it is stated, further extracted a promise from the āḷvār that he should feed a thousand bhāgavatas a day for the duration of a year. Tirumaṅgai acceded to these demands and became a convert to Vaiṣṇavism. It is also stated that in order to find money for these feedings he had finally to spend away the monies entrusted to him by his local chief and had recourse even to high way robber. In order to renovate the Śrīraṅgaṃ temple, it is narrated that he secured through theft the golden idol of Buddha at a shrine in Nāgapaṭṇaṃ which he melted and sold and found the requisite money. It is doubtful, whether all or any of these stories are true, but we may well believe the story of his conversion through, or for the sake of, love of the woman. The other stories are likely to be exaggerations, unless we can reconcile the high ideals of Tirumaṅgai and his insistence on single-minded devotion to the Lord with a blatant casuistry, such as came into being in the Jesuit schools and later Christianities that have been imbued with the spirit of proselytizations and conversions.

A poetic temperament, highly sensitive to beauty, ardent and loving, enthusiastic in every undertaking, he was considered to be the incarnation of the Bow (Kārmuka) of the Lord, intended for punishing the wicked and securing the righteous to the true fold.

Tirumaṅgai Āḷvār on his conversion directly performed his act of Surrender in his *Tiru-vē-zuḷḷirukkalai*. The surrender to the Divine Nārāyaṇa soon after his initiation, entailed according to his lights the joy of being one of the elected souls. This joy is found registered in the opening lines of his second work, the *śīriya-tirumaḍal*. In point of time the smaller *maḍal*-a composition in *kalivēmba* metre,<sup>2</sup>-is earlier than the

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<sup>2</sup> cf. Ilakkaṇa-Vilakkam 857: " in which a man who has beheld an unknown woman in a dream vows to possess her in reality or to die by riding a palmyra stem. cf. Tamil Lexicon under *ḶḶḶḶḶḶ*. But the real root of this word is certainly not this but *maḍal*, to die, which is a pure Dravidian word which is found in Kannada, Telugu, Tamil *ḶḶḶḶḶḶ*. He died. Because the getting up on a palmyra or palm stem and sitting on the palmyra branch means absolute or certain death it might have later on meant a figurative or symbolic reference to suicide. These obviously must have lost this relationship to each other. The *Periya-maḍal* indeed speaks of running to the God who is being taken in procession riding the *maḍal* or ascend to death. *ḶḶḶḶḶḶ* having more meaning of ascent rather than riding.

bigger one. Whilst the Prabandha is known as *maḍal* the ideal of Maḍal seems to be not merely a versification according to a prescribed metre but to convey a significant idea. It is the idea of a loving act of sacrifice committed by a lover in order to express openly the love he (or she) bears. The *maḍal* is a special act committed by a lover who has met her (or his) beloved object just for a moment, even as in a dream, (or in a dream alone) and for whose attainment pines away in silence at first, and finally unable to contain this soul-secret without possession of her (or his) object, openly declares her (or his) allegiance and love to that person in public. It may proceed further. She (or he) may have recourse to the final act of tragedy of committing suicide.<sup>3</sup> The intensity of feeling is so great that separation from the beloved, for whatever reason, entails the acceptance of the most drastic step a soul is capable of taking, a veritable *Brahma-astra*, a weapon of Divine Power of Brahman. This act is called *Maḍal* which is variously described, [Strange as it may appear Tirumaṅgai Āḷvār uses this *astra* twice for the same purpose.]

The description of the *Maḍal* is nowhere clear, Indeed though it is mentioned in Tōlkāppiyam (Pon.51) and Kuraḷ, we do not have the precise description as to how it is to be done. The Tōlkāppiyam mentions this as a horse made of palmyra (Maḍal-mā). The *Kuraḷ* (ch.114)<sup>4</sup> speaks of 'riding' the palmyra stalk, even as the two maḍals are content to state that alone. The *Kuruntokai* says that "(Mad lovers) will ride upon

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<sup>3</sup> "When two lovers are separated due to intensity of feeling the determination to commit suicide is Maḍal."

<sup>4</sup> Chapter 114. (V.V.S.Aiyer's translation).

"To those who are torn from their loved one and suffer from the pangs of their passion, there is no better recourse left but the riding of the palmyra stalk.

"Body and soul cannot support this anguish and have consented to ride the palm: they have trampled down all shame.

"Firmness and delicacy I had formerly: but now I possess only the stalk of the Palmyra tree that is ridden by the lovelorn lover.

"I put my trust on the raft that was built of firmness and delicacy, but the rushing stream of passion hath carried it along its course.

"This fair one who weareth tiny bracelets and who is tender as a flower, it is she that hath given me the palmstalk and the anguish of eventide.

"My eyes cannot sleep for thinking of that artless one: I shall ride the stalk therefore even to this late hour of the night

"Nothing is grander than the woman who refuseth to ride the palm stalk even when the passion of her heart is deep as the ocean.

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"My passion considereth not the strength of my modesty nor my kindness towards itself and betrayeth my secret by showing itself abroad."

"My passion seeth that none taketh notice of it; and it wandereth about in the streets in great anguish."

"Fools laugh at me to my very face: for they have not felt all the pangs that I feel."

the palmyra-stem as if on a horse;<sup>5</sup> ". Thus the maḍal is stated to be the palmyra stem which the lover rides in order to make public the love that he bears in acutest form.

The *Kuraḷ* describes this *maḍal* in the section on love (*Kādaḷ*). Love becomes so great and intense that the lover is unable to close his eyes as the image of the beloved appears then also. Then comes a state when the lovers becomes unabashed, immodest, and oversteps the bounds of social propriety and decorum.

The following chapters go to show that the idea behind the *maḍal* is to create a public rumour or clamour about her (Ch.115) and her beloved, so much so, the lover will come to know about her and her feelings. That the *maḍal* leads to this public scandal is considered to be a great gain, for the goal is the thing and not the means. There is nothing unworthy in such one-pointed love, even though the *maḍal* may not be the easiest way of making known one's innermost inexpressible desires. But love knows neither rhyme nor reason, neither decorum nor decency. Its one aim, as has been stated, is to achieve the beloved or to die. The whole aim is to show that if there

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Māvena maḍalumūrpa: Pūvēnak  
Kuvimukiz erukkaṅ kaṅṅiyum cūḍupa:  
Mārukin ārkkavum patupa:  
Piṛitum ākupa: Kāmam Kāzkkoline!!–Kuruntokai

" (The Mad lovers) will ride upon the palmyra-stem as if on a horse: adorn themselves with bud-bunches of Calotropia as flowers: are drawn across the street in uproar: undergo other tortures even: when the love intensifies."

I am indebted to Sri T.P. Palaniappa Pillai, B.O.L. Reader in Tamil of the Institute for supplying this reference and its translation.

The Kuruntokai reference is valuable also in so far as it states at greater length the custom of *Maḍal* as an established social fact or organisation or provision for the love-lunatics.

Kulaśēkhara and others were anxious to roll on the floor in the temples out of sheer delight of experience. The further description of the lover's plight is nowhere evidenced to in the customs and practices of South India. If so where did this originate? This is an anthropological question if not purely social. The *Maḍal* habit is not found anywhere. But strange as it may appear there is a Spring festival of Gangamma, a spirit of spring, which takes place on Vaiśāk Tuesday, every year at Tirupati. It is stated to be the period of wooing by an Asura of Gangamma, whom she does not accept. The so-called *jātarā* or festival has the duration of a week. On the first day which starts on Wednesday the Asura is stated to woo her in the form of a Vairāgi-ash-smearred over all the body and wailing loud for her. Of course the persons who wear this disguise on that day have the liberty to use obscene language. The next day the asura makes the overture with goat-like cries of despair -- a sacrificial lamb as it were. There is however the fourth disguise which answers very well with the wearing of calotropia-flowers or *Banda*-flowers and smearing the body with red saffron powder. The *Maḍal*-practice in a later day description leads to the most obscene conditions of exuding vital fluid in all the pores of the body injured by thorns. This too is traceable in this *Jātara* but it does not bear description. But the last stage is of suicide verily-deaths of the Asura. Asura means one of vital nature.

is no gaining of the beloved, or if the loved one does not reciprocate even after knowing of this love, then he or she would become mad or a sannyaṣi or commit any other insufferable act.

Here we find that according to Vaḷḷuvar, who is a psychologist, the maḍal is something performed ( and not could or could not be performed) by both sexes, and that it is more open to men than to women, yet they too will do it however much against the rule.<sup>6</sup> Tirumaṅgai āḷvār in his bigger maḍal mentions this fact that it is not customary for ladies in South India to practise this maḍal, but that he would prefer to follow the Northern Practice which permits even women to exhibit their erotic ardour (P.M.40 couplet). Examples of these cases are many, namely Vāsavadattā<sup>7</sup>, Sitā following her husband to the forest out of love, Vēgavatī, Ulūpī<sup>8</sup> who kidnapped Arjuna and married him in Nāgaland, Uśā who dreamt of Aniruddha, and falling in consolable love, had him carried away to her castle, of Umā whose love for Śiva was so great that she practised austerities and finally won him, the austere ash-smearred God.<sup>9</sup> (P. Maḍal 46-72). For them life without love was impossible, not worthwhile.

<sup>6</sup> Woman....has far greater gifts for love than the man, that is, taking love in its nobler meaning, for that feeling which fills the whole being, is steadfast and faithful, grows ever deeper, and is strongly mingled with altruistic elements" Meyer; Sexual Life in Ancient India, p.277.

<sup>7</sup> S. Tirumaḍal. 64-77 gives the reference to Vāsavadattā: Kathāsaritsāgara story of Vāsavadattā's love for Udayana of the Vatsas in his captivity at her father's house. The dream element is not clear.

"Will those who are full of love heed the slanderous talk? This being so, that girl known as Vāsavadattā is not some girl. (She was a Rājput girl). That well-jacked beautiful breasted Vāsava indeed is praised by all. She went with the chained Kālan (Vatsarāja) of broad shoulders in the festooned street abandoning her numerous maids. Was she criticised for that?" Sīriyatiru-Maḍal 64-67.

The Kālan as epithet of Vatsarāja strongly reminds the āḷvār of himself who was named Para-Kālan. It must be remembered that this *śīriya tiru-maḍal* is the earlier of the two.

<sup>8</sup> Maḍal in Ṛg Veda: X. 95,14 practised by Purūruvas or threatened to be practised by him against Ūrvaśi who pleads with him not to do so, cf. Śat. Brāh. XI. 5.1, 6-9.

Vegavatī: Kathāsaritsāgara (Ocean of Story. Tawney : VIII. p. 24 ff.) Ulūpī (Uluci) - a Nāga Girl carried away Arjuna who was under penance of Brahmacharya and vowed that either he must yield to her love or else she would commit suicide. Mh.B. Ārana. 234.18, Airāvata a son was born to them.

¡ÉHÆð ¡ÉVÉ°É "ÉÉÆ {ÉÉÍÉÇ °ÉiÉÉ"ÉäiÉx"ÉiÉÆ ¡É¡ÉÉä!  
xÉ EòÈ®ú¹ªÉÉ°É SÉänäù´ÉÆ "ÉÚiÉÉÆ "ÉÉ"ÉÖ{ÉvÉ®úªÉÉ !! Ādi 206.29

(critical Ed.)

Uśā's story is narrated in Bhāgavatā. X. 62: Hari Vāmsā II. 118: Viṣṇu P.V 23.

<sup>9</sup> Umā's story is stated to be in the Varāha Purāṇa where she vows to marry Śiva. cf. Mh. B. Ādi. 206.29 Aśvamēdha Parva 74-78.

cf. The story Nala-Damayanti is an intense exposition of the *maḍal-dharma*.

Ê´É´É "ÉÉÉOÉ VÉ™Æô ®úWÉÖ "ÉÉ°iÉÉªÉä iÉ´É EòÈ®úhÉÉiÉÁ. Mh. B.

Aran 53.4 b (critical Ed)

Tirumaṅgai āḷvār rightly affirms that the practice is certified to by many more works in Northern Literature.

Maḍal was the final prostration before the altar of love, in the condition of utter helplessness which is the prerequisite in Śāraṇāgati, *Kāraṇya* state, the sixth vidha so to speak, of the soul in the pangs of separation.

The Maḍal considered in its essential nature is the final and concluding act of Śāraṇāgati to the Divine one does not know, but of whom one has heard as the Saviour-lord. It is that state when the love of God, even like that of the lover, has become totally absorbing and the only refuge. It is the śōka-state which yet waits on the promise of the Lord' infinite compassion. It wakes up the inner feelings of spiritual life, seeking Divine mercy and grace. It is difficult to consider that the public display of riding on a palmyra horse, or riding palmyra-stalk as if it were a horse, had been a custom in the South, though as I have pointed out, it is not impossible that such a thing should have existed or been prevalent in some crude form in lower strata of society. At least Tirumaṅgai Āḷvār when he states that he would do it, and has perhaps done it at Tiru-Nāraiūr, it must have been something that was prevalent (8th century). Further, its indecorousness would not have been as socially repugnant as in the case of a lover and her beloved, for in his case it is utilised otherwise<sup>10</sup> than in its purely sexual relationship. It is a symbolical act which serves the purpose of substitution of a spiritual object in the place of lover and usual types of objects. Undoubtedly Tirumaṅgai's is a madder ecstasy than that of Āṇḍāḷ or Śathakōpa or Kulaśēkhara. It almost reads like a threat to God,<sup>11</sup> for its intention seems to be to show to the world that God is not the *Śāraṇāgata-rakṣaka*, saviour and protector of those who seek refuge in Him, nor in He Saulabhya (easily accessible), a threat which is fortunately never treated by God as not worth taking notice of (!), according to the mystico-religious seers of all times and climes. These two characteristics are more important than any other two qualities of the Divine in the relationship to the individual soul. The *maḍal* is on the one hand a frantic appeal to the Lord to come down from His transcendent height to accept the purest flower of love-offering *kāma-puṣpa*, despite the love coming from a being unfitted in every sense to receive such a Grace. On the other hand, it is what the individual soul cannot but do.<sup>12</sup>

Another plausible explanation given of this act of Maḍal is that it is a kind of non-violent resistance to use the modern expression *satyāgraha*, which be it noted, is an open declaration of the inward right to be accepted, which makes the unrepentant

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<sup>10</sup> cf. My articles "Substitution in Religious and Mystical Consciousness" JSVOI II and Aryan Path, Jan. 1942 and Jan.1943.

<sup>11</sup> Pillaivāccān gives the explanation as above. But it seems to be not the idea behind the yearning, for coitional unity, *Śrīgāra-rasa* between the soul and God. The Lord cannot be won by threats however human this might be.

<sup>12</sup> The idea appears to be implicit in the famous verse of Bh. G. Sarvadharmān Parityajya ... The Maḍal is the final act of upthrowing of *māna-dhambhā* etc., which are stated to be *Asambhūti*, death of all prāptivirōdhis, by Veṅkatanātha, by which the soul achieves the union. The Bhāgavata story of the stealing of the clothes by Kṛṣṇa is probably an illustration of the need for *Maḍal*.

and unrelenting beloved scandalised, so much so she or he yields to this overt expression of love, that is true, poignant and completely loyal.

It may be asked whether Tirumaṅgai āḷvār was prepared to put an end to his existence in his efforts to attain the Lord, or whether he is offering a threat to God challenging him to prove His claim to truth-speaking truth-being and truth-loving, or whether the āḷvār is dramatising merely the acute psychosis set up by his faith in Śaraṇāgati. It is likely that we should take the last to be nearer the truth than either the first or the second. Indeed if the story of the āḷvār prior to his conversion is to be considered in this context, it is clear that he had loved deeply and wholly his beloved. He was prepared to dare to do everything for the sake of his Object of adoration. Not to have loved at all is one of things he could hardly put up with. In the maḍal he just transfers his affection from his dear wife who had been his teacher too,<sup>13</sup> to the Lord Nārāyaṇa. Such then is the psychological situation under which the āḷvār becomes as one who loves with one's entire soul, becomes so to speak a woman-for in the words of Prof. W.P.Jacks, the famous editor of the Hibbert Journal, it is a woman who lives with her whole soul. The result is an intolerable experience of distance and separation due to having beheld the beloved just for a moment as in a dream. The āḷvār feels life itself void, valueless, vain and vanishing. Death appears to be preferable to a life of torture. (Vide *Pēriya Tiru-Maḍal*).

## II THE TWO MADALS

Though the smaller *maḍal* is considered to be the earlier of the two, yet the bigger Maḍal gives an interesting philosophy of *maḍal* or erotic approach to the Divine, or rather more exactly the *Kāma*-approach to the Divine. For in this *Periya-tiru-maḍal* the Āḷvār shows that of the four fundamental puruṣārthas, *Dharma Artha*, *Kāma* and *Mokṣa*, the last one and the first two are utterly unverifiable and shifty, whilst the *Kāma-puruṣartha* is capable of fulfillment. I shall give a brief summary of the Periya Maḍal.

"The Lord, whose feet were being massaged by the Mother Earth (Bhū-Dēvi), swan-gaited and beautiful, who in Yoga sleep is on the thousand-hooded serpent in the billowy ocean, whose waves are resembling the *cāmaras*, with the sky revealing the sun and the moon and the star-route like a garland of flowers (of the Bhūdēvi) and clouds being the hair and her breasts the southern Tiru-Māliuruṅjulai mount and the Northern Hill (Tirupati), brought forth from His navel a lustrous single exquisite Lotus and on it created the four-faced (Brahmā). He (Brahmā) created the four Books (Vedas) at first.

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<sup>13</sup> She was that because it was she who directed his affection in religion to the Object Adorable, Nārāyaṇa.

2.The ends declared by these works are dharma (*aram*), artha (*poru*), kāma (*inbam*) and mokṣa (*vidu*). Are not the praise worthy goals in the world these four?

Among these four the last *mokṣa* gives the end after (*piṇa*) (death).<sup>14</sup> Thus is it said, Those who desire this incomparable ancient achievable (End), eating the fallen fruits, old leaves, torturing their bodies sleeping on the sheds made of leaves, drinking the full heat of the hot Sun's rays and living in the beautiful tanks, here, one departing from the body, attain the beginningless attainable haven of Liberation (*mokṣa*). Thus is it being declared. But we do not hear of When and Who attained this (*mokṣa*). Nor have those who have attained (this liberation) come back and told us.

Even though we accept that there is that (*mokṣa*), yet, tell me of him who went to that beginningless attainable haven which is said to be liberation through the small door in the Middle of the Sūryamaṇḍala?

"We shall ourselves teach those who give no answer to this (our question), and who are ignorant and small-minded.

Here we see that the āṭvār emphatically says that whatever may be this so-called most important goal of man, it is something problematical, and despite the Veda, not the correct path or goal. He then proceeds to refute dharma which only grants celestial bliss with apsarasas and celestial maidens fair. Sexual life is the only goal of dharma, though the enjoyer deems it to be the immortal elixir. He assails its cruelty of sacrifices. The description of the sexual attractions of every limb and action and movement and the gazes of the celestial attendants is depicted with vigour. But for all its charms it has to cease. It is terminable and not eternal. Such is dharma's fruit. Equally is the artha (*poru*) seeking in this world. Material and Social fullness is also of a transitory nature. Those who counsel these material things and social triumphs are verily those who have not known the lure of the Divine Call. The Love-call and Love-Goal, Kāma, is for the Āṭvār, the fundamental puruṣārtha.<sup>15</sup> The difference that the āṭvār vigorously makes is between sexual experiences which are for personal gratification and true Desire or Love experience of Divine Nature and Form. The materialists are

"Those who have not melted (or fallen to pieces) at the melody of the flute of the

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<sup>14</sup> The Mukti definitely accepted by Tirumaṅgai Āṭvār is *Videha-Mukti* and not *Jīvanmukti*. He affirms that the Vedas teach this doctrine. This doctrine accordingly is not a Rāmānuja-reading but the traditional reading according to Āṭvārs.

*Innator Kalattinatyarituperṛār annavum Kēttarivatillai*

<sup>15</sup> Therefore we shall study the desire-path or the path of Love without trespassing its laws (*Vazhi-mura*). But whether this can be called Kāma as usually understood is a moot- point. In Carvāka-philosophy, desire is all for the self-gratifying Asura nature: Lokāyata: A.S.V.O.I Vol. I pt. II.p.137 ff.



Cowherd (Kṛṣṇa):

"They are those who have not broken (into ecstasy) on hearing the bells of the fascinated Bulls (returning home):

"They are those who on hearing the tender call issuing from the throat of the bird on the palm tree do not fall into a fit thinking (of their own beloved).

"They are those whose bodies do not get burnt up in the fire of Moon's clear rays in the sky.

"They are those who do not walk (lovesick) in the beautiful streets<sup>16</sup> when the powerful Cupid discharged his flower-arrows from his bow." (41-40)

"They may be excellent girls and dames who sleep comfortably on the flower-spread beds and with fresh flower on their heads. But they have never felt love. For true womanhood consists in loving with the entire being. We have heard of the maxim that woman should not have recourse to maḍal. But ladies, high and fair, of swan-gait and deerlooks, tender and timid, for the sake of their beloved have had recourse to Maḍal. We follow the Northern ancient view. Those who do not accept it are those who do not know the inexpressible (fragrance of) the sandal-flower in bloom on the Mountain of the Southern King."(P.M.40).

Then the āḷvār describes the instances of those great and high-souled ladies who had followed their Lord Beloveds into the forests and prisons, and performed penances and even kidnapped their lovers, so that they may have the fulfillment of the desire of being near them for ever. What would not a woman do if her love be stirred? Sītā, Vēgavatī, Ulīpī (daughter of Nāgarāja), Uṣā, Umā and Vāsavadattā(S M.) are not small persons who had trodden this path.

"Did not Umā, the beautiful, swan-gaited girl subduing her senses and tying up her hair in matted locks, herself in that form seek out Rudra, with thousand-hands spread out in all directions, radiating Fire, whose legs adorned with Vīrakhaḍiyas, was dancing in such a manner that all the seven worlds are pervaded whilst the gods in terror are crying aloud, and the firm Kula mountains with the winds and stars are moving along, and Who has the trifoliated weapon, and is a Lover of Dance and is ash-smearred, and embrace His Beautiful (Radiant) Body (all for Love)? (65-71)

Then follows the Āḷvār's own wooing of God. The bigger and smaller Maḍals are similar. Here I shall, give the smaller Madāl.

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<sup>16</sup> With *maḍal* palmyra-stalk adds the commentator. Damayanti should undoubtedly be added in this category as she chose not even gods nor her father's quiet mansion. " It is better to have loved and lost than not to have loved at all."

### III SIRIYA–TIRUMADAL

"Are not the ends of life spoken of by those who worship the Earth-goddess, who has cloud-full mountain-breasts, vast ocean-cloth, exquisite luminous Sun-ornament on forehead, red passionate river-garlanded chest, long cloud-tresses and cool-scented waters, three-fold?

These three, if we inspect, are Duty (dharma-*aram*) Objects (*pōru*) and Desire (Kāma-*inbam*).

Those who tread the desire-goal amongst these (three). will achieve the other two (also).

Whosoever declares that there is any other permanent (goal),that too, is it not stated without observation? Listen! I shall state what the worldly persons say without thought:

Is there that object, from which we do not return after attaining, that Transcendent sphere, whereto we go after enjoying the nectar-person (*ārāvamutu*) insatiable, by entering through the full radiant orb of the Sun wandering in the cloud-moving sky in his one-wheeled chariot, drawn by seven horses? Let that be.

O tender-breasted ones! Is it a task<sup>17</sup> to run after a crow (difficult to catch) leaving the beautiful hare (easy to seize)? What has happened to me is this:

Having plaited my dark hair, and firmly tied my breasts with a jacket, and worn a bejewelled waist-girdle, and anointed with collyrium my dark-like eyes, I was playing with a beautiful ball: whilst that Supreme Person with lotus-eyes, lifting up the two renowned pots in the broad street pot-danced calling aloud who will not be pleased? " Whilst there was beating of drums<sup>18</sup> in rhythm to the movements of dance, "Who else?" queried He. Seeing this my beautiful tender breasted mother and others called me "Won't you too come?"

I went up to them, owing to my great sin, (for) there I became as one who saw not the Black attractive Form (Person) and as one who lost her bangles:

I accepted not the words (of assurance) of other:

My mother, more sweet-tongued than a parrot, seeing me with my mind lost and my body withering, taking pity, as protective charm smeared me with the dust of the Beautiful (feet of the Lord), and herself to the Śāstā (village deity) made another (vow) (a vow), which was never made.

Even by that, my mental distress did not vanish:

Nor my illusion: nor did(My) luster return:

Perceiving this, some other ladies there who know old remedies, said:

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<sup>17</sup> = worth while

<sup>18</sup> *Ṭā* = drum

If you do what common-folk say, He (who made her thus) will be found out:

Hearing that, a dark medicine-woman (sorceress), devoted, taking up handful of paddy threw it on a winnow working herself into a state till she perspired and got cold and her hair raised (in emotion); smelling her palms, to herself said she "He is the Thousand-named," and showed Him to be the Dark-hued one and that He has in His hands the Beautiful conch (Pāñcajanya), and that He wears the garland of Tulasī.

Then openly said she: "Be not ye afraid even a wee bit. He who caused this illness is non other. I know Him. O ye girls with darting-eyes! Harken ye! by Whom the world has been measured, by Whom Lañka has been destroyed, by Whom men were protected (at Gokul) from rain of stones, by Whom the oceans have been churned, He it is indeed!

Having shepherded the cows, swallowed up the universes, and vomitted them, yet unsatiated, in this world, once upon a time, in Gokula, when Yaśōda, the firm-breasted one, with red lips and beautiful cloth and waist, holding firmly the churning thread till weary, for a long time, having churned curds, extracted Butter; then, she, perspiring in the face, keeping it in another vessel, kept it in a hoop (Uṛi): He, getting up from His feigned sleep as if innocent of all this till the fair-one of dartlike eyes left the butter neatly, putting His long arms into the vessel, ate it up till satiated, and throwing the vessel down, laid Himself down as before as if He knew nothing. She, as soon as she returned, seeing this, finding the Butter gone, beating her stomach asking herself as to who else could have entered that place, and concluding that He alone should have stolen it, took up a long thread, and tied Him up firmly to a roller (mortar) angrily, so that all may see. Then, He whose belly was full of Butter, who could not be without it, ran up to a huge lake, full of vicious waves, wherein a cruel thousand-headed serpent was, and challenging it to come out, on its hoods, danced:

"He (once upon a time) with his sharp sword cut off the ears and nose of the demon (*Śūrpañaka*) who deceived herself to be equal to his Sītā, and bent the bow to kill her brother Khara, so that he may not achieve (any other) terrible Hell (than his);

"Who has those red eyes of joy at having cut off the ten heads of Rāvaṇa of broad shoulders, which snatched away Sītā, the crimson-lipped and jacket-breasted:

Who, delights (all seekers);

Who tore off with His sharp nails Hiraṇyāsura's body (whose name is gold—ponpeyarān) with sharp (steel) tridents, and wore his entrails on the chest—the place of Śrī—and having lifted the bleeding one and throwing him on His shoulder Who manifested Himself as a Lion (Hari):

Further Who at the time of His descent as Vāmana, seeking of the great Bali three feet of ground, and receiving it, cunningly measured all universes;

Who Himself and the war-unsatiated (arāta) asuras placed the cloud-clad mountain (in the milk ocean) and would round it the serpent (Vāsuki) and quietly supported (as tortoise) that mountain from moving away, with his Tulasi garlanded-chest;

Who getting wild (with the crocodile) on hearing the cries of the great mountain-like lord of Elephants who was caught by its feet (by the crocodile) in a lake, upraising its trunk, with a lotus praying to Him "O Lord Nārāyaṇa! O azure-hued Lord! O Lord resting on the serpent! Do thou abolish from me this disaster," ran up thence and cut into two (that crocodile), and thus removed that Elephant's great sorrow;

Who is my Lord, that Lord of a thousand names! O mad damsels! He it is Who has caused this unceasing pain to your daughter" she said:

Thus having heard that none else was the cause of my distress, my mother, addressed (them)"o sisters! whose eyes are flashing ready with fight! Do you think that if He be the Lord of all, He would not give beautiful Tulasi? Is she not His slave? He is none other (than gracious Saviour)." Thus saying she became silent.

On mere seeing His blue form, losing control, shivering I am wandering. Further the cool breeze breaking through my frame entering into me is causing me passion (delusion). I am unable to know in what manner.

I have kept quiet without making any effort so as to protect myself from the scandal of some ladies with plenteous hair.To me who sent my mind after the blue ocean-hued form (as messenger) with the words "O sluggish mind! Get up. If you but go and say such that none of the enemies can hear, one of the two words: 'Will He of blue-stone hue, out of grace give us beautiful Tulasi, or will not give us" After this query, hearing (the reply) come back to me. Even if He do something that should not be done,<sup>19</sup> do not stay back there but come back to me."

The mind did not come back. It forgot me.

I, who am a great sinner, have become the laughing stock. To me there is no other messenger. My soul is melting like wax near the fire. Even though townsmen are asleep, my eyes will not close. I am uttering the names of Supreme Lord (*uttaman*).

Will those who are full of love (desire) like the ocean, heed slanderous talk? This being so that girl who is known as Vāsadattā (*Vāsadattai yenṛu*) is not some (low born) girl. That well-jacketed beautiful-breasted Vāsavadattā is indeed praised by all. She went with the chained Kālan (Vatsarāja) of broad shoulders in the festooned streets, abandoning her numerous maids.

Was she criticised for that?

Will those who counsel otherwise in my case become leaders (*nāyakarē*)?

Going (on Pilgrimage) till I get the vision: of His form at the famous Tiruvēṅgadam, at Tirukovalūr, at Tiruvūrakha in walled city of Kāñci.Thiruvēṅṅarai where the Lord broke down

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<sup>19</sup> (Hold you in enthralling embrace)

the firm Maruta trees, Tiruvēhkā, the broad doored Tiruttankāl, Tiranaraiyūr, Tiruppuliyūr, the garden circled Rangam, Tirukkaṇṇamangai, Tiruvinnagaram, the place of Kriṣṇa the blue-stone-hued Lord, Beautiful Tirukannapura, Tiruccerai, Tiruvaḷḷundūr, the Tirukkuḍandai full of water, Tirukkaḍikai (Sholingur), Tirukkaḍalmalai (Mahābalipuram), the excellently garden-girted Tiruvidavēndai, Tirunīṟmalai, the splendid Tirumāḷirunjōlai, Tirumōhūr, the laudable Badari, Northern Mathura and other places. Without exception, I shall recite the innumerable auspicious names of that famous Person, who broke the tusks of an elephant, and removed the peril of another elephant, whose eyes are red, and who is unapproachable (or afar - *nediyanaḷ*) who is adorned with honeyful tulasī garland, who has lotus-eyes, (and then) even though people may abuse (me), I shall verily ride (the Palm) on the main road.

O beautiful faced ones! I shall verily swear to do this so that all may hear, unless my beautiful and full breasts He enjoys, He, who measured the Universes after becoming big, who is in Tirunaraiyūr, quickly shall I go and tie myself to the prominent branch of the Palm tree (*Maḍal*).<sup>20</sup>

#### IV

The above will clearly reveal the general line of the psychology of a religious consciousness that, having become feminine, has proceeded to crown its seeking with that total consecration. Man, and more woman, is a creature of the Ego-*ahamkāra*. Its self sufficiency-instinct, its absorbing concern with self increase and will to power are all nugatory of the Highest Unity with the most Universal Being, the great transcendent in each and all. Total self-annihilation, psychic and psychical, is the condition of the fruition of the Love. The mind must be lost, and seek the mind of its Loved One. Out of the catastrophic embers of its desolation, so amazing arises the flower of Divine Ecstasy. *Maḍal* is the sacrificial act of love, an act that cannot but be done without any hope of fulfilment, selflessly for the sake of the welfare of the Beloved and through Him of oneself, It is the purest expression in psychical consciousness, of Pati-Vratā Dharma. This seems, according to the āḷvārs, a necessary state in the ascent into Divine Union and Experience. *Maḍal* is atmanikṣēpa and kārpaṇya rolled into one.

The love-approach in Religion has been described as impossible.<sup>21</sup> Lust it has

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<sup>20</sup> cf. Īraiyānār akappōruḷ p. 40. *Māḍal-Vilakkam* is done by the loved girl (or male?) because of the cruelty accruing from killing incidentally the male and female birds and crushing the eggs in the nest on the palm tree when procuring the palm branch. This is a farfetched meaning. Palm symbolised in christianity victory and hope. cf. Ency.Rel. and Ethics article: Symbolism.

<sup>21</sup> cf. Aryan Path. March 1943. But as the *Tolkāppiyam* one of the earliest works in Tamil says man's love-approach to God and God's love to man are legitimate: *Kāmappakuti Kaḍavaḷum Varaiyā*, 83.

been admitted is a degradation of love, a carnalization and a fleshy vital degradation. It is imperative to transform this impulse, as it appears in most human kind. The Upaniṣadic Seer has shown that the back of all types of affection is the Love of Self (Bṛh. Up.VI.5.6) the Sundara-Ānanda. Knowing Him one becomes attractive to all others, says Kenopaniṣad (IV.6). How than could it be said that the love-approach is condemnatory as such. The Gopī's love approach to Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhāgavata* has been criticised on all hands, including Bopadeva. But it was very different from Tāntrika-Sādhana of the Left.

The āḷvārs avowedly follow the Bhāgavata. Their love-approach is the Desire for attainment of God Kṛṣṇa, even as the Gopī's desired God Kṛṣṇa. The history of the Gōpīs is the expression of their close and intimate and personal relationship with God, an intimacy possible to the supreme knowers alone. Sensual love or lust was not an item in their approach. Wherefore they were considered to be Ṛṣis incarnate in their real nature as woman, for, they were dependant utterly on God, the Primal Male.

There is however a difference between the āḷvārs and the Gōpīs. Whereas the Gōpīs were in a situation of actual physical relationship, thrown in His Society, the āḷvārs had to gain this intimacy in and through the Ārcāvatāras of God, all over the Land. They always practised the Love to these Arcā vighras, invariably, and we may add, without any exception. They removed the dire blot of sex and carnalism and every trace and reminiscence of these, from their love experiences. Sublimation was effected by the worship of the manifestations of God, even abandoning the historical avatārs, for the arcā vighras were but representations, descents actual, of the Divine. Śathakōpa, Āṇḍāḷ, Tirumaṇagai worshipped Arcā as their Love-object and clung to it alone. Their eyes saw all human beings including themselves as female; they saw themselves as spousefit for the Lord. Their dependence-nature on God or femininity alone was absolute, inescapable, divinely ordained from sempiternal years.

Even their Mother-Worship was based on their Beloved-Worship. Her Vyūhas were all worshipped. They behaved as children to the Arcā-Mother Śrī. They worshipped both God and Mother together, knowing them to be eternally together.

Thus even the suspected possibilities of the love-approach of the Gōpīs were ruled out by the āḷvārs wonderful conception of the erotic-approach.

The tāntrik methodology is rooted in evil. It believes that the evil itself has in itself the gems of self-purification. This is utterly impossible even when Śiva and Śakti are invoked to sanctify the evil *Pañcamakāras* by their participation. As Śrī Aurobindo

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pointed out in his *Mother*, it is impossible to realise anything of Godhead in terms of our degraded attitudes. Secondly, its theory of āhvāna or pratiṣṭa of God or Mother in oneself or in a Kumārī, or any other debased woman, is atrocious materialism and vicious. For once these āhvānas are accepted in the ācārya, or sādḥaka or the females and males participating severally or congregationally in the tantric rite, the degradation is completed by acts which put to shame riotous Bacchus himself. Human instincts are let loose. Anubhava theory or the theory of free life and learning through experience is utterly fallacious in spiritual praxis. There can be no sublimation of sex, and other instincts by this means, for there is only one way—the way to total disaster; intellectual, because there has been *rationalisation* of the instincts; spiritual, because there is no possibility of ascent from the grips of these matter-hunting extrovert tendencies; and physical, because there is riotous depletion of God-given vitality.

This radical distinction has been missed by most thinkers who condemn the Love-approach. The āḷvār-approach is entirely spiritual, sublimated, self-directed self-offering to the Divine, who is seen to be the One Beloved of the Universe. The tāntrik approach is degrading, instinct-governed, charged with infinite potentialities of self-destruction.