

Bhaktisāra Yōgi and his Philosophy Of Religion or Āḷvār of Tirumaḷisai (Mahisārapuri)

I

Bhaktisāra is the fourth Āḷvār amongst the Śrī Vaiṣṇava saints. He is said to have been born of Bhārgava and Kanakāṅgi, an apsaras woman, in a forest near Mahisārapuri. The traditional date is about 4203 B.C.¹ Having been left in the forest by his parents no sooner than born, he was picked up by a childless cowherd and taken home and brought up amidst cowherds. He possessed from his very birth freedom from desire for food. His foster-father went and consulted a Śūdra sage nearby who divining that the child was a great soul prayed to it and offered milk. The child drank the milk and asked his foster-mother to drink the remaining milk, saying that that would make her beget a child. A child was born to them in due time and was named Kaṇikaṇṇa. For seven years Bhaktisāra did not partake of any food. At the end of this period he left the home of his foster-parent on pilgrimage to holy shrines. He practised Yoga, and in his wanderings he came across all types of religious and philosophical schools such as Śākva, Nyāya, Vaiṣeśika, Kāpila and Pātanjala and Kapāla. After a thousand years, says the tradition, he discovered Śiva to be the Final Object (*Para-Tattva*). He became a chief exponent of Śiva-theosophy and later he entered upon a vow of silence (*mauna-vrata*). Pēyāḷvār (the third saint of the Śrī Vaiṣṇavas) coming to know of Bhaktisāra as a great philosopher and yogi, came over to where he was, intent upon correcting him. But he found Bhaktisāra observing mauna or silence, and would not enter upon any philosophic discussion. He thereupon hit upon a plan. He set a small garden-plot just in the sight of the Āḷvār's residence. In it he planted seedlings, but with their roots in the air and the leaves underground. He then proceeded to water these inverted seedlings with the help of a pot which had so many holes that water never remained to reach the plot.

Looking at this absurd procedure, Tirumaḷisai, the silent, burst into a laughter exclaiming what a fool! Pēyāḷvār immediately retorted "Who is the fool? Not I but you". Thus started a long argument about the wisdom of the one or the other, and finally the superiority of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa was accepted by Bhaktisāra, whom he found or saw has been declared by the scriptures to be the First Cause of all, including Rudra or Sankara who happens to be the grand-son of Nārāyaṇa.¹ It is as a result of

¹ Ancient India and South Indian Culture: Dr. S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar, Vol. II. p. 734 O.B.A. 74. Poona 1941

¹ This version is contradicted by the statement of Bhaktisāra in the First verse of Nānmukhana Tiruvandādi that he was the first to know this fact.

this that Bhaktisāra composed the *Nānmukhan Tiruvandādi*. It is also said that Pēyāḷvār taught him all the sacred and secret lore of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism. We find that Bhaktisāra became the philosophical exponent of the Śrī Vaiṣṇava doctrines through his Tirucchanda viruttam, wherein we find for the first time in the Āḷvār-literature a mention about the Pāñcarātra doctrine of the Vyūhas.

Tirumaḷisai Āḷvār was always a yogi and his practices towards realisation of Nārāyaṇa were so complete that he could say that he knew Him better than any one else and completely. His austere and total surrender to Nārāyaṇa was so complete that he did not permit even a shadow of Śiva, his own previous object of adoration, to fall on him. There is a story, amusing indeed, about his exclusive devotion to Nārāyaṇa. Once when Bhaktisāra was meditating on Nārāyaṇa, both Śiva and Pārvati were cruising in the sky over him. He avoided their shadows. Perceiving this, they came down and seeing his strong devotion to Nārāyaṇa, Śiva asked Bhaktisāra to elect a boon. Bhaktisāra replied that he wanted nothing. But being pressed, he requested Him to grant him salvation. Śiva replied that He could not grant that request as it was not in His power to do that. But yet Śiva asked him to choose some other boon. Being pressed further Bhaktisāra prayed that the thread he was having might pass through the eye of the needle. Śiva was enraged at this, tradition says, and opened his third eye of destruction at this wanton insult. Tirumaḷisai Āḷvār revealed to Śiva that he also had an equally powerful eye and that in his foot, due to the grace of Nārāyaṇa and his *yogic siddhi*. This the tradition goes on to say, made Śiva realise the greatness of Parabhakti, and praising him He called him Bhaktisāra by name. Another story describing his occult powers is also told as to how a magician by name Sūktisāra, was travelling in the sky on a tiger. Bhaktisāra stopped it by his occult power and made him come down. The magician finding that an occultist did this, approached Bhaktisāra offering him a present of a magic cloak. But the Āḷvār, refusing that cloak, offered him instead a coat of precious stones. Seeing this the magician asked Bhaktisāra to convert his *Japa-Mala* into a garland of precious stones. Bhaktisāra through his occult power converted it much to the amazement of the magician. Wondering at his marvellous powers he prostrated before the Āḷvār and left humbled. There is a story of the Āḷvār having converted mud into gold, and also of making an old woman young. The latter incident took place when the Āḷvār was staying at Kāñci, *Yadōktakāri-temple*.

This incident led to a new situation. On seeing this young girl the local Rājah was infatuated by her beauty and married her. But as her beauty was waxing day by day, the king's was waning day by day. He queried her about this strange phenomenon. She then told him that it was due to the Āḷvār, who was staying at the Yadōktakāri shrine, that she got back her youth. The Rājah sent word to the disciple of the Āḷvār, one Kaṇikaṇṇan and wanted him to bring the Āḷvār to his presence. The disciple told him that that was impossible. The Rājah was enraged and he asked him to sing a praise of himself. This too was refused by the disciple because mortal lips were given

to praise one's teacher and God, and none else. Incensed at this the Rājah ordered him to leave the city. The disciple left followed by the Āḷvār, and it is said that the deity in the temple also followed. Seeing this, all the other gods and townsmen left, and the whole city of Kāñci performed wholesale evacuation. The Rājah got alarmed and ran up to the Āḷvār and requested him to forgive the offence and the Āḷvār gave him refuge.

The Āḷvār in his final days went to Kumbhakonam. En route he had to pass through villages and towns. On one occasion when passing through a town the persons in that place found God being taken in procession in every street that the Āḷvār went. There is also narrated a story that once when passing through a town where Vedic recitations were taking place, the reciters stopped reciting them on seeing the Āḷvār who was not competent to hear them. After the Āḷvār left the place, when they started to recommence their recitation, they could not start again as they had clean forgotten all the Veda. They then ran upto the Āḷvār, penitent at their behaviour, and requested him to assist them. *Being avidic*, he through signs made them understand and recall the Veda. He was honoured by them for this supreme gift, as greater than the Veda-knower. After a considerable period the Āḷvār gave up his body.

The Āḷvār's life as above given is the traditional version. Tirumaḷisai Āḷvār's life was rich in its varied philosophical, occult and devotional experiences. He was a seasoned thinker and knower of Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava tradition and Vedic lore. He was a siddha, a perfect yogi, who had the experience of the divine and was himself a person endowed with enormous power which he used to humble the proud. The intimacy of his relationship with God was such that God lived and moved and enjoyed with him.

Internal evidence however points to certain stories about him being remarkably otherwise than anti-Śaiva or anti-Śiva. Tirumaḷisai Āḷvār seems to have had great reverence for Mārkaṇḍeya and Śiva himself. His own life seems to have run on similar lines. The story of the meeting between Śiva and Bhaktisāra is impossible, when we consider that Śiva was the object adorable of Bhaktisāra prior to his conversion to Vaiṣṇavism, though it may well be argued that new converts are always most antipathic to their order loyalties. The Nānmukhan Tiruvandādis 15,17 and 18 speak to the fact that Śiva taught the path of attaining Nārāyaṇa to his four disciples and that Mārkaṇḍeya trod the path shown by Śiva. The power of Śiva was fully appreciated and his greatness fully known (*Tirucchanda Viruttam* 8). These two facts make it clear that when Bhaktisāra left Śiva-worship for Nārāyaṇa, it did not mean anything more than the fact to which Pēyāḷvār drew his pointed attention that the Adorable and Salvation-giving fact is the First Cause and nothing else. This is Nārāyaṇa and none other. Even Śiva, the Gaṅgādhara, was the witness to this fact, the salvation-fact, of Nārāyaṇa. Mārkaṇḍeya is well-known as a devotee of Śiva who

saved him from Yama (Mh.B. Vana 191). He was blessed with immortality (*Cirañjīvatva*). Mārkaṇḍēya is said to have been the son of the son of Mṛkandu, who presumably was the son of Dhāta, the son of Bhrigu through Khyati. Thus he happens to be a Bhārgava, even as Tirumaḷṣai Āḷvār was. Mārkaṇḍēya's life after his having been saved from Yama or death by Śiva in the first *manvantara* is not narrated anywhere except in the Bhāgavata XII skanda.² It is there declared that he lived through six *manvantaras* and gained the fruits of tapas or austerity. At the beginning of the present *manvantara* it is said Nārāyaṇa gave him His *darśanaṃ*. Nārāyaṇa asked him to choose a boon and Mārkaṇḍēya replied that the *darśanaṃ* He gave was all sufficient. He however wished to see His Māyā. Nārāyaṇa then showed him the Praḷaya, deluge of all the universes, in which Mārkaṇḍēya alone persisted amidst the involution. He then saw a child on the vaṭapatra enchantingly beautiful, whom he recognised as the Lord Nārāyaṇa. The child opened its mouth and Mārkaṇḍēya saw within it all the worlds and himself too. This is the fullest experience of Nārāyaṇa and it is seen that Tirumaḷṣai Āḷvār in the third verse³ of the Nānmukhan Tiruvandādi writes:

"Who knows as I do that Supreme Causal Substance of the Universe, the true substance enjoyable of all eternal, is the Incomparable Person in the waters, lying on the Ocean of Milk and at Śrīraṅga, and who slept on the Leaf"?

Later in the same Bhāgavata Purāṇa XII⁴ it is stated that once when Mārkaṇḍēya was lost in intense contemplation of Nārāyaṇa, Rudra with Pārvati was moving in the sky. Seeing Mārkaṇḍēya they came down but Mārkaṇḍēya was oblivious of their presence. However Rudra was able to awaken him, and Mārkaṇḍēya having been awakened perceived Rudra and Pārvati and prostrated before them. Rudra then asked Mārkaṇḍēya to choose a boon. Mārkaṇḍēya replied "By seeing you I have become full of desirable things and they will never leave me. What is the boon I have to ask for? Nevertheless I will ask for this boon namely that my love for Bhagavān, for those that regard Him as the Highest goal, and for you may remain unshaken." (XII 33-34) Rudra granted him this request and went his way.

Thus we have in the life of Mārkaṇḍēya as found in the Bhārata and Bhāgavata version an attempt at revealing the fact that Mārkaṇḍēya became a devotee of the Bhagavān Nārāyaṇa after having been saved from death by Śiva. Tirumaḷṣai Āḷvār who obviously realised the truth of Nārāyaṇa's ultimate causality after having been a close and firm believer in Śiva, realised also that truth even as Mārkaṇḍēya did (N,T.18). It is therefore likely that the story of the meeting between Śiva and Tirumaḷṣai Āḷvār has been embellished in a sectarian manner. It is however

² cf Harivamśa, Bhaviṣya Parva Ch. IX & X.

³ Even the first verse says "Being myself the first (knower), I have made known this inner meaning. Do thou know this without remainder. "

⁴ cf Harivamśa, Bhaviṣya Parva Ch. IX & X.

clear from Bhaktisāra's writings that he had absolutely no doubt as to unfitness of Śiva being the Object. Nānmukhan Tiruvandādi 53, Tirucchanda Viruttam 42 and 113 show Śiva to be pervaded by rajas-tattva, and as such not the Ultimate. Śiva is described as one who smears his body with ashes which are the result of his destruction of Kāma, through anger. In his matted locks there is only the one-digitated moon, and in his hand he carries a skull, and his vehicle, the bull, is cruel. Obviously these might have been the reasons which made him transfer his loyalty to Nārāyaṇa, despite the fact Śiva taught Mārkaṇḍēya and others the path of Final salvation through Surrender to Nārāyaṇa.

Historically considered we find that this chapter on Mārkaṇḍēya is unique to the Bhāgavatam and is not found in the Mahabhārata and in the Mārkaṇḍēya Purāṇa to which Bhāgavata refers. Tirumaḷisai Āḷvār is placed in the 3rd or fourth Century, though some others incline to the sixth century. The Bhāgavata view being substantiated by Bhaktisāra, the Bhāgavata account presumably must have been widely accepted and Bhaktisāra must have discovered and spread the fact. As we know, the Purāṇas had undergone great changes and editing at the hands of Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava theologians. This unique account about Mārkaṇḍēya is well worth further investigation.

II

Tirumaḷisai Āḷvār has left us only two compositions: the *Nānmukhan Tiruvandādi* and the *Tirucchanda Viruttam*. The first is written in the same meter as the Tiruvandādis of the first three Āḷvārs, and may be considered to be continuing the spirit of the first three Āḷvārs. The Nānmukhan Tiruvandādi declares the supreme causality of Nārāyaṇa whilst the first three *andādis* are utterances of the vision of the Lord through transcendent supramental knowledge, through supramental devotion, and the supramental devotionalised knowledge. The last gave the vision of the conjoint experience of the Mother and the Lord of the Universe. This unique experience of the primal causality of God Nārāyaṇa is stated by Bhaktisāra to have been first vouchsafed to him perhaps in the vision of the Lord as at Śrīraṅga, as in the Milk-Ocean and as the Child on the Vāṭa-Patra (1 & 3 N.T). The Tirucchanda Viruttam is more metaphysical and enumerates the categories in such a way as to point out that all are of the One. The central mystical principle enunciated by both the works is that the Most Supreme Cause alone can be the Path, the Goal and the Means for man, either for liberation or for bliss, or for work or weal.

1. Taking the *Nānmukhan Tiruvandādi* first, which can be deemed to be the earlier of the two works for the reason that it may well belong to the revelation-stratum along with the first three *andādis*, we are presented with the nature of God.

"Nārāyaṇa begot the fourfaced; the fourfaced one, being the first (creature), himself

begot Śaṅkara.

Being myself the first (knower), I have made known this inner meaning. Do thou know this without losing nay part."

2. God is also the supreme Being. There is no second to Him. His transcendence is very great over the universe. This is the real maning of reality. The real is that which lives by Him, who controls and creates and sustains it.

"If investigated (all knowers) will declare the Lord to be One only." "His Greatness none knows. This alone is the conclusive meaning of reality". (N.T. 2)

The unity of nature, the purposiveness of order in the world and other such features, reveal the Oneness or unity of the Governing power.

3. The lord is also the ordainer of all the fruits of *tapas* or *Yoga*. He alone is the granter of result of all actions, and this is a special characteristic of deity, though the law of karma that every action has its result, is by no means abrogated by this statement. Every cause is followed by an effect. This provides the mechanical link. It is this that is usually affirmed as the complete statement of the cause-effect relationship. But when the activities are by individuals who are seeking certain ends or results, it is seen that these individuals have the 'awareness' of the results accruing from certain activities. This 'awareness' of the cause-effect relationship itself cannot however yield the notion that there is a being or person who has destined or determined or fixed the appropriate fruits of the actions, or in other words, is the ordainer of fruits. It is this Being, that the *Mīmāṃsakas* affirm as not necessary, since there is no need to posit the existence of God over and above the reciprocal relationship between causes and effect even in respect of supernatural fruits. In other words, they assert that the ritual causal-relationship is not different from the mechanical causal-relationship, even though we are in this case unable to perceive the link, and even though there is no immediacy in the consequences, and even though there is a lot of time-gap. This atheistic *Mīmāṃsā*-view is refuted by the *Āṭvār* here by saying that the Lord is the ordainer of fruits of actions, ritualistic as well as mechanical or natural and moral actions, for He is the master of all orders of existence. That is why he says:-

" Fruits or effects of all actions of *tapas* of those who perform them, come finally from the Lord whose hand holds the discus (*Nārāyaṇa*)." (N.T. 2).

4. The *Āṭvār*, as already stated, declares the Lord to be the One person who is incomparably great, whose greatness cannot be known by anyone except by men like himself. Says he:

"Who knows, as I do, that the supreme causal substance of the world, the true substance enjoyable of all eternal, is the Incomparable Person in the waters, lying

in the Ocean of Milk and at Śrīraṅga and Who slept on the Leaf." (N.T. 3)¹

This verse intimates the enjoyable nature of God. God is knowable, enjoyable and is also the primal Being established in the waters. (Manu I. 8). This primerval form is assumed in order to reveal the unity of the material and efficient causality of God. "God is all" ² "Thou art verily all this world. Verily their existence is due to thy grace. Thou art indeed the God of these gods of austerity" Thou art indeed the flaming fire, the big mountains, the eight quarters, the two lights (sun and moon) in the egg". God is thus the material cause since the whole universe is His body. It is this original causality that makes God also the supporter, ruler, saviour and protector of the universe (N.T. 19). He has unequalled and unexampled greatness. It is His will that brings into being all beings. *Tirumāl akaippu* is most important (N.T. 37). It is an echo of the *upanīṣadic icchā* which is not merely a will to be many but also a desire to save, to redeem and to land. It is not nature, *svabhāva* that makes the things manifest themselves.¹ For it is not in the power of *svabhāva* to move backwards into its own unmanifest state, nor has it the power to grow. A clock movement of winding and unwinding, *abhivyakta*, is not capable of going beyond the starting point, or beyond mere repetition. An independent or transcendent Being is necessary to bring it into existence as well as to withdraw it from existence. It is this that is implied in the rulership of God as well as creatorship. This of course cannot be proved by the Logic of intellect. That is why the Āḷvār clearly says that he knows, since he has seen Him to be all the three forms.

5. In the fourth verse the Āḷvār affirms that God Nārāyaṇa is the *Sarva-Vācaka-Śabda*.² Every word ultimately denotes Him only. He is thus not merely the total cause, he also is the object denoted by all words.

6. The Āḷvār then speaks of God as the creator of all gods, men, animals and plants (N.T. 5). In speaking of God as the creator, the Āḷvār also speaks of Him as the Destroyer too of Hiranyakaśipu. God is thus described as redeemer of all creatures, saviour of all souls in the same breath as creator. Thus in brief outline the first five verses describe the nature of the *paratattva*— the transcendent Godhead.

7. The Āḷvār then mentions that men are misled about God's real nature, being, attributes, powers and manifestations. The Āḷvār points out that whilst the supreme Deity Nārāyaṇa owes His nature and others to Himself, and as such these are intrinsic to Him, the rest including the god-souls (*dēvas*) have their godhood or nature extrinsic

¹ Mārkaṇḍēya's vision of Nārāyaṇa's Māyā at the beginning of this Manvantara (Cf. Bhāgavata XII. 8-12).

² N.T. 20: T.C.V. 55.

¹ Cf. Svēta. Up. VI.1

² Cf. T.C.V. 4

to them. It is something granted to them for their austerity and devotion to Him. (N.T.53). This godhood or divine status may be acquired even like the Ṛbhus, or may be permanently retained too, even like the immortality from which there is no fall. God is the supreme protector (N.T. 30). He is the destroyer of the evil and the restorer of the good. (N.T. 48)—a statement recalling the promise of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the Gītā. Not only this, God runs after His devotees (N.T. 60). He is indeed the only or sole means to realisation. (N.T. 64), for it is due to Him and His creatorship and transcendence that we exist at all. To attain the transcendent is not possible by any other means such as knowledge or works but through His grace alone (N.T. 30)¹ Man's love of God is the supreme wealth, no other wealth has he. God alone is the treasure-house of man (N.T. 61). The path of surrender through wearing the feet of the Lord on one's forehead is the path of liberation.

8. Having described the nature of God and the duty of man towards Him, it may be asked as to what the results of not doing one's duty (dharma) by God are? Not to do it entails all risks of misery of birth and death. Tapas (askesis) is of no use in this direction, for obviously it is a method of great privation and suffering undertaken to get over misery. What is requisite is the knowledge of the creatureliness of man and the knowledge of God whose creature man is. The Āṣvār's main purpose is to reveal in broad and definite outlines the creatorship of God and to point out as to which god fulfills this criterion most satisfactorily. Secondly, in pointing out the creatureliness of all beings including in this category all the hosts of heaven, the Āṣvār clearly points out the possibilities of tapas (askesis) which can only grant godhood not liberation.(N.T 6 & 53). Liberation could be granted only by that saving knowledge which rescues man from his Kārmik embodied existence. (N.T.79). For in the verse 79 the Āṣvār says that embodied existence is a disease,¹ this despite the fact the Āṣvār lived very long on this planet. He did not envisage an earth immortality but only an immaterial existence in divine substance. Thus the nature of God, the nature of the seeker, and the means to liberation and the goal of attainment have been stated.

9. The Āṣvār feels the importance of the concept of God's nearness to man in his struggle to surrender to the Divine. God's descent into humanity for the sake of helping humanity and creation is a positive fact of the greatest importance to Religious consciousness.

¹ N.T. 53 "I have no other God except Rāma the destroyer of Lañka of the asuras. Do not deem as fit to be attained Śiva and others, who being cruel have not the Godly nature, though they have achieved god-state." Mr. Pisharoti wrote in his ed. of Mukundamāla that Rāma is not loved at all by the earlier Āṣvārs except Kulaśēkhara, and that Kulaśēkhara Āṣvār was a devotee of Rāma, thus proving that Rāma cult was later than the Kṛṣṇa-cult. The above verse clearly disproves his assumptions, Cf. My. article "The Kulaśēkhara's Philosophy of Devotion S.V.O.I. III.p.I.

¹ Cf. T.C.V. 83.

"Thou hast manifested thyself as Milk-white, Golden, Green and Black (in the four yugas).

Thou hast willed the destruction of both the Kuru and the Pāndava armies, being the Commander "(of the World)" (N.T.24)

The Āṅgīr mentions the various descents of Nārāyaṇa as Rāma,¹Varāha, Vāmana, Trivikrama, Kṛṣṇa, Narasimha, and Matsya.

10. The Philosophy of Descent is a unique exposition and its role in theology is inestimable.² It is the most revealing fact about Hindu religion. It reveals the nearness and the dynamic redemptive act of God Himself. *Āśrita-vātsalya*, *Saulabhya* and *Sauśilya* are the prominent features of Providence.³ "By this means thou hast sought to relieve the (sorrows of) the refugees." (N.T 25). The nature of providence is such that it reveals that the God's government is ultimately based on Goodness and truth. The concept of the avatār apparently reveals an inner contradiction. According to some thinkers it is inconsistent with the nature of God as Omniscient and Omnipotent. There is no need for God to descend when He could as well save without descending. The evil could be destroyed by a fiat and indeed evil need not be created at all. It is possible to conceive of a devotion without goodness, in which case it is necessary to justify the destruction even of the devoted as against the good or those devoted to the good. Again, what is the criterion of the good? Is it that which means obedience to the laws of the society at any particular time or of some theology, or to a messenger, or is it any obedience to the inner voice or inner law, personal to the striving soul? Again if the avatār is to be conceived as a finite God, something in the manner of Ahura Mazda, has He to live a historic life of suffering, or has He merely to veil His transcendence, of His own will by the form He assumes? Is His tenement a kārmic one or an un-kārmic one, yielding to the transcendent plastic stress of His own superior status? Indeed does the body or form interfere with the transcendence omniscience and omnipotence and His oneness or His manyness and omni-pervasiveness? These questions have been the most important philosophically

¹ Rāma : N.T. 8, 53, 85: T.C.V. 32, 33, 39, 91, 94, 116
Varāha : N.T. 70. T.C.V. 25, 26, 32, 48,
Vāmana : N.T. 70. T.C.V. 25, 26, 32, 105, 109
Trivikrama : N.T. 9, 15; T.C.V. 105, 109
Kṛṣṇa : N.T. 16, 24: T.C.V. 25, 30, 31, 35, 36, 38, 40; 41; 42; 43; 49; 71; 92.
Narasimha : N.T. 5,18, T.C.V. 23, 24, 25, 63
Matsya : N.T. 22, T.C.V. 35

² An entire volume can be prepared on the Avatār concept. Cf. My contribution to SRI AUROBINDO JAYANTI VOLUME 1942 on Divine Evolutionism expounding Sri Aurobindo's view pp. 11-24.

³ Cf. Tiruvoymozhi I. 8, 9, 10.

and theologically speaking and have vexed and taxed the ingenuity of all expositors of the doctrine.

The descent if it were to be fruitful, must be a total presence involving no diminution of the greatness and glory, omniscience, omnipotence and omnipervasiveness of the descending Godhead. His form, whether it be of the lowest animals or the human or divine dēva, whether He incarnates through a womb or not, is of divine substance and not of mere matter. He descends out of His own will and grace, and not out of any sort of compulsion. His course of activities are already fulfilled, but He enjoys them in time and space and creation. That which is the delight of eternity He makes a delight in History, because the many individual souls are creatures of History. He shows Himself as the creator of History and the Lord of historical growth and progress. That not a whit of His transcendent power is lost in the descent, the Āḷvār reveals by saying.

"Thou who destroyest` Hiranyakaśipu in a day, art also the being who created gods, men, animals and plants." (N.T.5).

"Destruction is the lot of those who do not worship Thee". (N.T.6 &14).

God in this sense, if transcendent to matter and change, yet descends into them as their complete master. They are real and His descents are also real, and verily, for the purpose of associating with the souls more closely, accessibly and perfectly.

11. We may suspend for the present a consideration of the metaphysical implications of the avatār as this concept is accepted by the Āḷvār apparently from the Pāñcarātra literature which is clearly seen from his referring to the fivefoldness of the Divine in the *Tirucchanda Viruttam*. (17).¹ The Āḷvār is equally concerned with the Arca descent of God in the form of Image (*pratimā*) for the sake of the human worshipper who has invoked Him through his prayers and chants and offerings. The Āḷvār mentions in the *Nānmukhan Tiruvandāḍi* the following sacred places (*tirupatis*) Śrīraṅgaṃ (30, 36, 60), Mailāpōr (35), Tiruvallikēṇi (35), Tiruveṅgaḍaṃ (34,39-48), Kumbhakoṇam (36),² Yadōktakāri, Tiruvellōre, Tirupperūr (36), Kilāmbi (36). This may not mean that other temples were not existent about this time (4th century), but only that the Āḷvār had not either sung about them or visited them.

12. The largest group of hymns refers to Vēṅgaḍam The Āḷvār is almost love-sick

¹ Ṛg Veda IV. i. 7.

"Threefold are those supreme births of this divine force that is in this world, they are true, they are desirable: He moves there wide-overt within the Infinite and shines pure, luminous and fulfilling....."

Cf. Ṛg Veda X. 53,5. This is the very earliest reference to Pañcarātra in Āḷvār-Philosophy. Therefore it is historically important.

² T.C.V. 55-60 refer to Kumbhakoṇam, 50-54 to Śrīraṅgaṃ as also 119.

with the Lord at Veṅkaṭa.

"I shall call upon the Lord of Veṅkaṭa to appear. I shall draw a mystic circle³ on sand (for prophesying whether I shall) reach that Mountain in whose serpentine caverns stumble the elephants frightened at the falls which drown down sparkling stones." (N.T.39).

This is the first utterance of any Āṅvār of the beloved-lover relationship. It is this that has been developed to perfection by Śaṭhakōpa, Kulaśekhara and Āndāḷ.

The nature of the Lord of Veṅgaḍaṃ is to grant salvation.¹

"I have always sung about Veṅkaṭācala when singing about a mountain. Thus have I secured salvation.

Steadily established I am meditating and lo! I have been caught in the net called the feet of the Lord of Śrī, who in turn is caught in the net called Vedic usage."²

The lord cannot exist without love (dayā)

" O Lord of Raṅga, Thou who art difficult to obtain through one's own efforts, Thou who art running after thy devotees...."

The Lord at Veṅkaṭa's asterism is Śravanaṃ (41). He is the sin-abolisher (42). His transcendence is so great that the first born fourfaced Brahmā and the three-eyed Śiva are offering flowers at the altar of His feet and sing His praises at eventide. At eventide one could see, says the Āṅvār, the two gods Brahmā and Śiva wending their way together to Veṅkaṭa in the North (43). This particular use of the word "Lord of Veṅkaṭa of the lofty heights of the north" definitely intimates the Northern limit of the land of the Tamils (*vaḍa-vengaḍam*).

The Lord is eternally a youth (*kumāraṅ*). Those who worship the eternal Youth become eternally youthful (*tridaśa*).

"O youthful ones! Do you seeking refuge go to the Veṅkaṭa mountain, in whose gardens is resident the eternal Youth (Kumāraṅ), who, when a child long ago, counted with His feet (toes?) the heads of the punishable demon (Rāvaṇa). (44)¹

³ The omen-circle is drawn closing the eyes so that the line drawn by the hand completes the circles correctly. Else concentric circles are drawn and then these are counted. If they are an odd number then success is not predicted. If they are even success is assured.

¹ The above text might have been the original of Vēṅkaṭanātha's Dayā-Śataka.

² The doctrine of the Mother is a truth of the Veda. Śrī is the object of Supramental intuition as the third Āṅvār has shown. The play on the word, nūl, shows the thread of composition. God is the thread of unity in all the many Hymns along with the Mother.

¹ The story is not traceable in any extant Purāṇa

He is the treasurehouse of the freed and the bond (*vāṅōrkicum maṅṅōrkum vaippu*) (N.T. 45).²

The Veṅkaṭa-Hills is described as a wonderful Hill wherein elephants, lions, yālis, gold, precious stones, pearls and flower trees, nine kinds of gems, forests and streams abound. Monks and huntsmen (kuravas) dwell on it. (47). Indeed it was a treasure-mountain of all desires (46). Veṅkaṭa therefore is sought after even by immortals (*nityamuktas*) as something to be attained for, it is verily capable of annulling all sins and curing all diseases. It is Veṅkaṭa which is the Mountain of Him who protects gods by destroying the demons with His discus (48). Having thus extolled fully the greatness of the Mountain and its Lord, the Āḷvār deems himself to be highly fortunate. He even compares himself with the Lord: "Who is my equal? (51); not even God is my equal for I have a saviour whilst He has none."¹

13. The means of liberation is the Lord Himself (N.T. 64,83). He is the ready-means (*siddopāya*) as the Vedāntic teachers say.

"The Lord who has the discus, Who appears as if having His love for His devotees itself as His body,² granting to the devotees the pleasures of this world, as the protecting King God, Heaven, coolness, relations, Mother, and every other, Himself finally makes him attain the supreme above". (N.T. 83).

This magnificent verse summarises neatly that the Lord grants everything. Attaining Him one attains the entire freedom of the Universe of God and all that it contains. The means in special measure is be adopted is surrender complete and total to Him alone and none other however great or exalted, even if perforce it be one's own earlier teachers. Man must know His Lord God and surrender to Him. This God is Nārāyaṇa.

14. Some thinkers consider that their minds are impediments to realisation and seek to dementalise their minds. The Āḷvār on the contrary holds, and this is most interesting from the point of view of sublimational psychology, that mind is not an impediment at all.¹ It can be a most useful instrument of devotion (81 N.T) An easy way is the way of praise and prayer of the Lord by the mind. (N.T 52). He utters a stern warning against taking gifts of men.

"Evil men become slaves for money; obtaining sins through gifts, experience them. They walk as human sacrifices in exchange for (another's) head.

² Chā.Up. VIII. 3.2 where the Divine is described as Hiranyaṇidhi.

¹ Cf. Tyāgarājasvāmi's wonderful song : @ yμ^o R! V^o R! «s V^o g D «s V^o s! «s V^o.

² Cf. Dayāśataka, 6.

¹ Cf. Aryan Path: Vol. XIII. No. 2 (Feb. 1942).

Ignorant me not praising the Lord as He who drank the poison as different (that is as nectar) from the breast (of Pūtana) experience sin." (N.T. 52).

The praise of the Lord is the intelligent man's way to salvation. It means exclusive mental devotion. The Āṭvār writes

"Let the mouth praise! Let the eyes adore! Let the ears hear Thee.

Do thou offer cool flowers bending thy crown low and with hands crossed (in reverence), thinking on the Lord adorned with Tulasi garland and High Crown, attached to me from beginningless time." (N.T. 11).²

Again

"No mental suffering will visit if one but accepts Madhusūdāna as sole refuge, for God is man's wealth"(61).

"Those who have meditated with devotion on the Lord Creator and are able to fix Him in their minds attain quickly."(79).

He appeals to his mind.

'O good mind! Hast thou not seen the Supreme Being? Is He not always? Is He not dwelling in the hearts of all meditators? Know thou that the unequalled Lord is the protector of me and of those like me." (N.T. 86).

"I have made devotion my vocation" (84) and "My whole time is taken up with the praise of God" (85).

"I shall not withdraw my mind which has only desire for Thee." (60).

Asking himself whether there is need for any further individual effort (*puruṣakāra*) to supplement or augment the God's redeeming grace, the Āṭvār says that God's power is so great that it is not waiting on man's effort, which is puny, ignorant and frustrating.

"Is it necessary to plant the seed of effort in the field of the ancient Saṃsāra of the Tiller Who has killed the Bulls?"

"The moving water-bearing Cloud will reveal the black cloud-form of Nārāyaṇa" (N. T. 23).

There is no need for *puruṣakāra* once the offering of oneself entirely to God has

² Cf. Kulaśekhara's Mukundamāla -Stanzas, for they almost copy these ideas; and both may have got it from the Bhāgavatha literature.

been made. There is only praise to be done in order to keep the mind in constant attunement with the Divine Presence. God is the only doer and the only instigator of all things (kartā and kārayitā).

As I have already pointed out, the Āḷvār says that this path has been already taught by Śiva himself, Śiva whom many others proclaim as the Highest Creator, to whom his devoted spouse reminded the fact (N.T.78)

"Rudra of right austerity taught the four seers¹ under the shade of the banyan tree in the previous aeon the Way of His surrender to the Lord who measured the world and is reposing in the Ocean" (Nārāyaṇa). (N.T.17).

This fact is more explicitly stated in an earlier verse(N.T.15).

If thou art but able to worship the Lord after offering flowers at the feet of Him Who measured the world, as the gods do, then could you know the manner how the blue-throated (Rudra) was able to retain the poison in his throat, even as Markandeya did know.".(N.T.15).²

Surrender to the Lord is the way to conquest over death. It is the path leading to eternal youthfulness, physical and temporal immortality even as in the case of Mārkaṇḍēya, whose life, as I have already shown, the Āḷvār's life simulates.

15. Thus the *Nānmukhan Tiruvandādi* of which an analysis has been given above lays bare the essential attributes of God, describes the *avatār* and *arcā* of God, points out the means to the realisation of the Highest Bliss even here and now, and declares unequivocally that the Path of Surrender to the Highest alone is capable of sublimating the human, and that this was the path taught by seers like Mārkaṇḍēya and Śiva Himself.

III

1. The *Tirucchanda Viruttam* is a more philosophical poem than the previous. It is also more closely packed. If the Paratattva and the Hita have been taught in the previous poem, here, in the latter, the cosmic elements or categories are dealt with at

¹ Agastya, Pulastya, Dakṣa and Mārkaṇḍēya were taught by Śiva the path of surrender to Nārāyaṇa or Trivikrama in the earlier manvantara. Here the Āḷvār grants the epithet of "right austerity" in strange contrast to N.T. 53. T.C.V. 42, 113 M.Bh.Santi. Ch. 49, 17-18 (Dutt's trans)

² The above story points out that Rudra was able to retain the poison through His surrender to Trivikrama-Nārāyaṇa and that Mārkaṇḍēya who was saved from Yama in his sixteenth year by Śiva knew this secret, and became the devotee of Nārāyaṇa. This was what made him immortal as the Bhāgavata story XII 8-12 says. This is what is to be inferred. This version will make the Bhāgavata an older version which was expunged by later writers from the other Śaiva Purāṇās. Mārkaṇḍēya Purāṇa strangely does not have this later history of Mārkaṇḍēya and his worship of Nārāyaṇa. Is it a case of translation of content in sectarian legend-making?

greater length.

The first five verses describe the categories of existence which are declared to have their source in Brahman—a doctrine adopted from the Upaniṣadic texts. The numerological description of the categories is the first of its kind in Tamil literature, and it is difficult to understand except with the help of commentaries. It also shows with preciseness the categories as accepted at the time of this Āḷvār.

Having become the five in the earth*
In the water the four, in the fire the three
In the strong wind the two, In the above (ether) the one,
Becoming distinguished as different from these,
(Thee), Who can know thy being (as the One cause)?
T.C.V. 1.

Here we have the five elements as well as their qualities nearly stated, and that all these have their original cause in the One which is different from them.

2. The second verse represents the Form of God as, at the same time, the Object of meditation, of tapas (askesis) of adoration and praise, as also as the giver of beneficence. Some things can be objects of knowledge but cannot be deemed to be the givers of beneficence, even like matter; some others can be considered to be beneficent but they cannot be object of cognition (āśraya-sūnya). God in the Āḷvār's philosophy is śubhāśraya.

Being in six¹ (karmas)
Being in six² (seasons)
Being in six¹ sacrifices,
Being (worshipped by) the five (sacrifices)² five Ahutis³ and the five (agnis),⁴
He Who is the excellent Two (qualities),⁵ the three⁶ the seven,⁷ the six⁸ and the
eight,⁹ and having made distinct the knowledge,¹⁰

¹ The six karmas are *adhyayana*, etc.,

² The six seasons are *vasanta*, *grīṣma*, etc.,

¹ The six yagas are *āgnēya*, etc.,

² The five are *dēva*, *pitur*, *bhūta*, *mānuṣya*, and *brahma*.

³ The five *āhutis* are *prāṇāhūti*, etc.,

⁴ The five fires are *gārhapatya*, *āhava-nīya*, *daksināgni*, etc.,

⁵ The two qualities are god-knowledge and renunciation of all else.

⁶ The three are lordship, liberation and realisation or *parabhakti*, *parajñāna*, *paramabhakti*.

⁷ The seven activities are *vivēka*, *vimōka*, *abhyāsa*, *kriya*, *kalyāṇa* and *anavasada*.

⁸ The six are those qualities of *jñāna*, *baka*, *aiśvarya*, *vīrya*, *śakti*, *tējas*.

⁹ The eight are *apahatapāpmā*, *ajarah*, *vimṛtyu*, *vīśōka*, *vijighīsa*, *ipipāsa*, *satyakāmaha* and *satya-sankalpa*.

¹⁰ The good knowledge for the good and bad for the bad.

Being the True and the deluder,¹¹
And is the (self of) the five,¹²
He, the Lord, is verily a magician (māyan).

God is here described as having the fullest Lordship of the world and the paths, and there is in Him nothing of evil. He is the transcendent and the immanent ruler of all things, activities, efforts, enjoyments. He is the teacher of duties and philosophies, and, even whilst teaching the true path, He deludes the evil spirits and hurls them down—even for the sake of finally winning them over.

3. The third verse deals with the five-fold powers of the Lord:

"The five (elements), the five (senses), having made the five (motor organs), the five (*tanmātras*),
Having made the three (*ahamkāra*, *mahān* and *sūkṣma-prakṛti*) into one (*manas*),
and becoming the Self of the soul in these,
Thee the First Cause, who art thus, Who can see in the World the five (transcendent forms), the five (sense organs), the five (sound etc) becoming the five (sthānas).¹

By the above verse are mentioned the absolute enjoyability and experienceability of the Deity.

4. The fourth then mentions that the deity is also the source of all vocables. God is *sarva-vācaka-śabda*. The Veda is His body So too the poet prays to the Lord to

¹¹ Revealing the good form to the good, and deluding the asuras.

¹² He is the inner self or ordainer of the five elements along with their respective qualities of *sparśa*, *śabda*, *rūpa*, *rasa* and *gandha*, as stated in the 1st verse.

Veṅkaṭanātha explaining the presence of deluding doctrines in the world which are said to have been promulgated by seers like Bṛhaspati and Śiva, whilst not disputing their authorship, harps constantly on the point that wages of sin is sin itself, wages of evil cannot be good, for even the good appears to them as undesirable and delusive. It is only when the evil persons come across the fatal knot of their delusive activities that they gain a total and irretrievable defeat which makes them collapse and thereby makes them akincanyas, helpless, seized by kārpaṇya, losing their svabhāva of asuras--a state in which they too seek the Grace of the Divine. Cf. The Wicked succeed: my article Scholar Annual 1934.

¹ *Bhōgasthāna*, *bhōgōpakarana*, and *bhōgāyatana*, etc., c.f. T.C.V. 77.

Being the (self of) eight and eight and eight (i.e. 24).

Being the One (support of) seven (dvīpas) and seven (Hills) and seven (oceans).

Being (self of) the eight and three and one (12 Ādityas).

The Prime Lord, Those who make the eightfold surrender and speak the eight (lettered) word.

Affirm (Him as) the Supreme Abode.

Surrender is usually said to be *śad-vidham* and not *aṣṭa-vidham*. The two more elements may belong to the two *niṣṭas*, *ācārya* or *svaniṣṭa*, as these too constitute steps in the path of surrender. It is yet an interesting point to investigate whether the so-called six or eight types (*vidhānī*) are not merely six or eight parts or steps (*angānī*) as in the case of yoga which is said to have eight angas.

reveal Himself as his own self (āvi).

5. God is all: *sarvam khalvidam-Brahma-nikiṅṅra dēllām nēḍumāl*.

6. The sixth verse reaches the peak of this statement of the unity of the material and efficient causality, as well as the teleological causality of God (*upādāna-nimitta-puruṣārtha-kāraṇatva*). The description is intended to show mythologically the Selfness or supporterness (*adhāraakatva*) of God.

The Meru that is supporting Heaven (nākam)
The Earth that is being supported by the directional elephants (nākam),

The Supreme Sky that is full of happiness (nākam)
The Supreme Abode (paramapada)
The flowing Gaṅga that is upborne by the sky (nākam),
The clouds supported by the sky, the fire, the incomparable five breaths—All these
are supported by the One Substance.

7. So far we have the description of the categories and of the Deity who is the One substance behind all, supporting all, denoted by all words and names. The nature of the Deity in relation having been taught, the Āḷvār describes the Lord as He is in His own essence—*svarūpa-nirūpita-viśēṣaṅās*.

Being the One and two forms.⁵
Being the Lord of both knowledge and ignorance
Creating the One and the two times,
Being the Lord of Kārmic earth,
Making one and two fires,
Wonderful Lord born amid cowherds!
Can He who has three eyes know thee?

Even Śiva cannot know Thy greatness and wonderful nature. The relationship between cause and effect is affirmed as subsisting between the souls and ignorance. The relationship of cause and effect considered as material causality is one between the *sūkṣma-cidacid-ciśiṣṭa-Īśvara* and the *sthūla-cidacid-viśiṣṭa-Īśvara*. Or as the commentator Peria-Vācchān Pillai writes under the verse 8, the states of cause and effect are like subdued fire and flaming fire.

⁵ Cf. Viśvaksēna Sam:-
Caturvidhasya bhagavān mumukṣūṅṅam hitāya vai
Anyēsām apī lōkānām sṛṣṭisthityanta siddhayē !
Cf. Jayākhya Śam: which states these forms to be Satya, Acyuta and Puruṣa as the
emanations of the One.

8. The creator as already mentioned is a wonderful being-Māyan (T.C.V. 11). It is a wonder of wonders that the Utterly transcendent is identical with the Person who creates Himself as the Descent (*avatār*); and what is still more wonderful is that He is born of the creatures (T.C.V. 12).

Mythological theology reveals two things, firstly the transcendence of God does not involve and is not opposed to immense.⁶ Creatorship on His part does not imply non-creation of Him-self through descent or self-manifestation. The descent is to use very excellent expression of Śrī Aurobindo 'a coming down of the Divine below the line which divides the divine from the human world or status'. This is the divine birth—*Janma karma ca me divyam evaṃ yo veti tattvataha*-(BH.G IV.9). The creator exhibits all the fullness of His creatorship and lordship in the terrestrial scheme. The *avatār* is thus a profound mythological principle of descent of the creator, self-creating Himself for some purpose of delight which may be of the redemptive kind (*dayā-svarūpa*). Creatureliness is a play on His part, if indeed He plays that part.⁷ The apparent fatherhood and motherhood of creatures is due to the Will and Grace of the Creator so that the creatures may be granted the pleasure of a total experience which consists of infinite types of relationships. The fundamental note in all true relationships in respect of the creature to the Creator is to be totally conscious of their creatureliness, *Śēṣatva*. That is why we should mark a radical distinction between the birth of the creatures which is their ordinary lot at the direction of God as a result, equal and opposite, of, or earned by, their own karma. Nor can the secret of the *avatār* be known except through His inimitable Grace, for the Lord's body is Love, beneficence, *dayā* itself as is stated in the *Nānmukhan Tiruvandādi*, 40. So also is the *avatār*.

9. Mentioning the *avatār*, the Āṅvār correctly anticipates the supreme doctrine of descents or emanations of the Divine. The idea of a descending Divine into the scheme of Humanity and infra-humanity is always intrinsic to the idea of the Creator indwelling and entering into the created. The Ṛg Vedic statement of three fold births (Ṛg Vedic IV. i. 7), the statement that there are souls which had five-fold births (Ṛg Vedic X. 53,5) the statement of the Upaniṣads on the Antaryāmin doctrine, the Gītā affirmation of the *avatār* as the most splendid exemplification of His Divine Nature even in and amidst the material-vital-mental and space-time scheme, and lastly the Pāñcarātra statement of the five-foldness of the Divine Para, all are grouped as it were by the Āṅvār in the most luminous verse of the *Tiruchhanda Viruttam* 17.

"One Person."⁸ In all four persons.

⁶ Sec. 10 under Nānmukhan Tiruvandādi in this paper.

⁷ Cf. "Kulaśēkhara's Philosophy of Devotion:" J.S.V.O.I., Vol. III. I Devakī-Kṛṣṇa, Kauśalya-Rāma, Vasudēva-Kṛṣṇa, Daśaratha-Rāma, relationships are all of this 'inverted kind'.

⁸ The three persons are Samkarṣaṇa, Pradhymna, and Aniruddha.

Being thus the Enjoyable Being⁹ and the Person realised through merit,¹⁰ and the Person of (many) manifestational forms.¹¹
O First Lord lying on the serpent in the Milk Ocean and beyond it, Thou art the Transcendent special Form.¹²

The four *vyūhās* are different from the other four, such as *Arcā Antaryāmin* (*Punniyattin Mūrti*), *Avatār* (*Ēnnil Mūrti*), the *Vāsudēva* (in the Milk Ocean) and the *Aka-Mūrti* the Para-Nārāyaṇa.

10. The theory of *vyūha* is a unique contribution of Āgama literature of Theism. It confirms not merely the immanence and transcendence of God; in the universe it reveals the Deity operating widely in the several planes of existence. *Vyūha* is defined 'as a process which while bringing the products into existence leaves the source of product unchanged.'¹³ This is too wide a definition since it will apply to the *vikṛitis* of *Prakṛiti* in Sāmkhya unless we are prepared to consider that unchanged means absolutely unchanged, in which case the definition cannot apply to the *Sacchidānanda* even, for there is indeed a change. The doctrine of the Veda in respect of this *vyūha* is beautifully expressed by the text.

Pūrṇamadah pūrṇamidam pūrṇātpūrṇamudacyate |
Pūrṇasya pūrṇamādāya pūrṇamevāvaśiṣyate ||¹

Here we have clearly expressed the theory that when the Divine incarnates as the Cosmic Deities of *Samkarsaṇa*, *Anirudha* and *Pradhyumna* who are the *adhiṣṭāna* dēvatās of *Buddhi*, *Manas* and *Ahamkāra* of all creatures, as the *antaryāmin* of all souls, as the *avatār* incarnating in all strata of creatures and planes, and finally as the *arcā*, the Lord in material form which is yet a supramaterial existence, the Divine continues to be the All, transcendent to all and in each of His own incarnate and unincarnate Beings.

⁹ This is the immaterial form.

¹⁰ This is the form realised in liberation.

¹¹ The form that is *vibhava* or *avatārs* like Rāma, Kṛṣṇa - *vibhavajātīya*.

¹² The utter. Being beyond all creation of which these are all emanates. He cannot be known at all. It is this that the āḷvār considers himself to have seen even like Mārkaṇḍēya. N.T.3

The Vaikhānasa and the Kāśhmīrian Śaivism accept the *vyūha*-doctrine. It is most probable that the latter accepts this on the precedence of the Pāñcarātra and Vaikhānasa Āgamas.

¹³ Kashmirian Śaivism: J.C.Chatterjee, p. 59.

¹ Viśvaksena Sam : XI
Samkarṣṇa stu deveśo jagatśraṣṭumanāsratah!
Jīvatattvam adhiṣṭāya prakṛtēstu vivicya tat!!
Aīśvryavīryasambhedād rūpam pradyumnam ucyate!
Pūrṇasādguṇya evayam acyutopi mahāmune!!
Cf. Ahir. Sam Ch. V 29-38
Cf. N.T. 7.

The Vaikhānasa theory of *Vyūha* which is enunciated in their *Arcanākalpa* has reference to the five-foldness of the deity similar to the Pāñcarātra view, but the forms are *Viśṇu, Satya, Puruṣa, Acyuta* and *Aniruddha*. *Vyūha* means a sundering apart (vi+√uh).²

Of what is this the sundering it may be asked? Pāñcarātra says that it means the keeping apart, for the purposes of creative, redemptive, meditative and providential activity of the Divine, the several qualities, perfect and matchless in themselves, such as the six qualities of *jñāna, bala, aiśvarya, vīrya, tejas* and *śakti*." When such a Brahman which is of the nature of knowledge and is endowed with all qualities, resolves Himself into the idea of splitting Himself into the many" without becoming separated from the Main and Original Unity or self-identity of His eternal nature, then we have the multiplanal or multidimensional or multi-personal manifestation of the One person.¹⁴ The manifestation proceeds in pairs, it is declared by Pāñcarātra,¹⁵ one of the pairs being cognitive and the other conative or volitive, or one being theoretical and the other practical or expressed in quite a different way, quietistic and dynamic. Thus Jñāna and Bala, Aiśvarya and Vīrya, Tējas and Śakti are the three pairs of qualities which are manifested under the triple personalities of Samkharṣaṇa, Pradhymna¹⁶ and Aniruddha. The manifesting of each pair is described by the Pāñcarātra as if successive at the beginning, till finally all the pairs are represented by the three distinct persons or entities or deities. It is however commended by all philosophical schools that this successiveness should not be equated with origination or creation of creatures, or that these parts are caused by their previous pairs, or that the qualities of the Divine could be taken away from the Divine Nature that is integral. Nor should it be considered that these qualities could be divested from their substrate, the Divine, so as to build up new souls or persons, for the obvious reason, *qualities are not things*.

11. Thus we have in all, three cosmic forms of the Self having two attributes each, the Lord of all creatures indwelling in all as Self, as *Arcā* and as *Avatār*. The āḷvār of Tirumaḷīśai has shown that there is a running thread of unity of all in and through the Transcendent. The personalities of the three or five forms are not of the

² Vyūha means also dispersal or removal cf. Īṣā. Up. 16 Vyūha Raṣmīn Samūha Tējaha.

¹⁴ Christian theology speaks about three persons: God before incarnation, Son during incarnation, and the holy ghost as that which takes of the son and carries it on to men. Power is God, Wisdom is son, holy ghost is love. They form one life, not three minds but one mind, not three substances but one substance. Cf. Dean Inge: Personal Idealism and Mysticism, p. 36. The point is that they are represented to have here a temporal succession but not contemporaneous existence, though that is not by any means ruled out.

¹⁵ Introduction to Pāñcarātra: O. Schrader. Adyar, p. 81.

¹⁶ Cf. Mahāsanatkumāra Saṃhitā Vāsudēva creates from His mind the white Goddess Śānti, and together with her Samkharṣaṇa or Śiva: Then from the left side of the latter is born the red Goddess Śrī whose son is Pradhymna or Brahmā, the latter again created the yellow Sarasvatī and together with her Aniruddha or Puruṣōttama. This view is not acceptable to Āḷvār-Theology however.

finite souls, independent and individual, but the continuous single continuing manifestative Self, infinite and indivisible and eternal Brahman—ajayamānō bahudhāvijayate. The āḷvārs have shown that there is no difference between the *Arcā*, and *Avatār* and *Nārāyaṇa*. In their Hymns they reveal the fact that they were conscious of this supreme continuity and inseparable identity of the One Supreme Self represented by various descents of His. The personalities of God are thus different in kind from those of the many souls. It is this fact that has to be remembered in connection with the view maintained by Rāmānuja that in the Pāñcarātra system the souls are not held to be created. This point is very important in the understanding of the metaphysics of Pāñcarātra which whilst distinguishing radically between the souls and Īśvara, affirms the emergence or creation of the personalities of the Īśvara which are initiated for the cosmic, individual, beneficial and redemptive purposes and evolutionary delight of extracting a harmony out of the many. God has to be conceived as the *Unitas multiplex* Reality, if not *unitas quintuplex* or *septiplex*.

12. God is described next (T.C.V.19) as the most important Power, as the subduer of all creatures and as the Teacher of all. The symbol of the Bird is used. Taking the form of a bird (*puḷ*) He moves with birds, slays birds evil in nature, and yet has a bird (Garuḍa) for His ensign, and yet the Great Being lays Himself down on the bed formed by a serpent which is the food of that Garuda. Before Him everything trembles. He is not inconscient in a bird-form. He is full of transcendent power and consciousness whatever form He takes, even though not the cosmic forms above mentioned. Nor does He tolerate evil amongst birds and beasts. Evil is what He destroys or converts into pure Good and meed. He elevates everything through getting their services. This is His enjoyment and love (*kādal*). God helps all creatures in every way, taking even lowly forms of tortoise (20), fish (30) Lion-man (*Nṛsimha*) (23) so that His devotees may attain immortality and progress in their life-aims (20). This same activity of Grace produces these infinite *vibhavas* or special births in and out of wombs. God in every form and body incarnates without interference to His supreme Nature *svarūpa svātantrya*.

13. After describing in the 22nd Hymn that God is the "Womb, Protector, Transcendent, becoming a Child rolling the seven worlds up into Nectar," the āḷvār addresses God thus.

" Thou retest on a banyan-leaf. O Primordial God!

Thou who wearest the beeful tulasi-cool garland art with the Beautiful Lotus -born Mother in thy chest. Thou Lord of the Earth, whose body is blue like the Ocean!(24)

The āḷvār describes the greatness of the Avatār:

" Conjoining Womanhood with manhood (Thou createst), became the Lord of neuter

too and the Ruler of all.
Becoming the inner ruler of all persons, thou maddest creation evolve from matter.
Thou became a cowherd who loves the cows;
Thou became false (to the wicked non-seekers) (and)
Thou wert the Real (to the seekers);
Thou wert a bachelor (or rather livest in Brahman);
Thou art fit to be sought by the world as supplicant;
Thine form is complex. Who canst know thy Wonderful Form?

And again

" Transcendent of the Transcendent!
Having the Ocean as bed, and enjoying the Supreme Lady in the chest, Thou
loving, wert born in human wombs. Lord of the Form of Knowledge! None can
know thy greatness as this, ¹⁷(29 T.C.V.).

14. God's accessibility is one of the most important experiences of the āḷvārs. It is indeed the keynote of the Descent. Saulabhya goes along with *niyāmakatva*, *rakṣakatva* and *nāśakatva* of the wicked. It also is *bhogyatva*. The āḷvār laments the bad faith of men, who ought to know that great accessibility of God.

"Milkwhite (in *Kṛtā*), Copper-red (in *Tretā*), moss-green (in *Dvāpara*) and (in Kali) of the hue of the blue-lotus enjoyed by the bees.
During all these periods the hues taken by Thee will be hues of the ages.
The accessibility of Viṣṇu in all these periods not enjoying, What hue is it that the men of the earth have? (T.C.V.44).

The bad and evil souls do not belong to any period, and indeed they belong to all periods and have a distinct hue or darkness (*tamas*) in their natures, a darkness that is incapable of enjoying the Divine who is accessible at all times.

And again the āḷvār addresses the Divine :

¹⁷ (i) is the Para, (ii) is the Vāsudeva in the Milk Ocean, (iii) is Aniruddha, says the commentator, (iv) Avatār, (v) Antaryāmin. The Arcā is also a form of knowledge even though in image-form. Cf. T.C.V. 79.

Can there be attainment of Him (Who is the ruler of the) ten (lords) of the ten (directions),
Being the One ordainer of the seven (notes of music) and nine (sentiments),
Who descended for the sake of the good of the fourteen (worlds) ten times into them and is the
One (being)
Who has incarnated previously.

In all His descents His nature is Divine not material nor vital nor mental.
Janma-Karma Ca Me Divyam Evam Yō Vētti Tattvatah Bhā. Gītā, IV.

"Thou who have taken up thy residence on the Earth whilst yet the Ruler of the eternals and art standing eager to help (thy devotees) (*mayangi nir̥reṅṅu*), and art beyond all thought,

Thou who grantest visions to thy seekers and art distinct.¹⁸
O Thou the Cause of my good, seated on a serpent.
O Thou the most pure Being, adorned with Tulaśi-garland
(T.C.V 45).
What wonder!

Least it be said that God being manifest in one Form will not be available for Worship in any other form, the āḷvār says (T.C.V. 47) that He has no limitation to His omnipervasiveness (*vāsyatva*).¹⁹

15. The āḷvār's praises on the God at Śrīrangam and Kumbhakonam breath the air of the accessibility of God and His extraordinary integral nature stretching from the terrestrial to the supra-terrestrial universes of God. The most important aspect of the Divine nature which usually fascinates and yet frightens is the *Ugrarūpa* of God—the terrible-aspect of God. So much has been made of the *ugra-rūpa* of God as a necessary and fundamentally intrinsic nature of God, that it has been sought to be held as the real aspect of the Deity.²⁰ Rudra is therefore declared to be the real Deity. Power, Fierceness, Violence and Dionysic frenzy are considered to be more the nature of the deity than the quiet, fascinating, redemptive and beneficent Apollonian Deity, and welcome to the human mind.

Tirumaḷśai āḷvār recognises the importance of this *ugra* or *ghora* form of the Deity for is it not an essential part of the nature of the Deity as Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself revealed in His *Viśvarūpa*? That form is terrible to behold, encompassing as it does all awe. Man feels his head reeling, throat parched and limbs trembling, and words are held up. In the 61st verse the āḷvār tries to synthesise the *Ugra* or *ghora-rūpa* of God with the *saulabhya* and *saukumārya-rūpa* of God. This is testified to by mentioning the Varāha and Siṃha forms which are forbidding and fierce to behold in the same breath as the Lord whose feet are being washed by the river Kāvēri at Śrīraṅgaṃ, girdling as it does the island temple. God is Keśava because He is the destroyer of misery and therefore is it that He cannot stand the misery of others. His fierce form is shown not

¹⁸ Cf. T.C.V, 79.

¹⁹ The haters of God are distant to God. "To those whose faces are turned away from Govinda, those minds are attached to objects (of senses), to them that Supreme Brahman is then the fair; to those whose minds are absorbed in Govinda, having renounced all objects, one should know that is near "Viṣṇu Dharma 99. 14.

Cf. Īśa-Comm. Veṅkaṭanātha on verse 4. J.S.V.O.I. Vol. III. 1. 1942.

²⁰ ⁶⁰ Cf. Śaivism in South India: C.V.Narayana Aiyar, Ch. II.

indeed to frighten the devotees but to reveal that His power is illimitable. The *Trivikrama*-form is a wonderful aspect of the illimitable power of surpassing plenitude—a power to be exercised against the foes of truth and light. Not only did the foes tremble before this form, it was strangely the form at which the devotees of light, the votaries and martyrs of humanity and divinities never quailed, for they knew that this was His Māyā, His essential power that revealed the magnificent Infinity of His Grace and transcendence.²¹ In the story of Mārkaṇḍēya in the Bhāgavata to which reference has been made, Mārkaṇḍēya prays to Nārāyaṇa to reveal to him His Māyā—and that was the deluge awe-inspiring and soul quaking. The Ugra-Rūpa does not frighten, indeed does not destroy the knower, for it is also the manifestation of the Love and Saulabhya nature of God.

" Entering the hearts of those who with one-pointed mind seated through Yoga seek to attain thee, and residing therein. Thou hast become difficult of perception. O Thou Dispeller of sorrows, Lord of Gods!

The āḷvār finds in the descents of God as avatār (63b) the supreme mingling or fusion of both the fierce and ruthless and destructive effort in respect of evil, and the calm, benevolent, exalting and elevating love of the Good. Indeed if we could say that the destruction of evil is half good, if not the good itself, as some schools of thought contend²² then, the avatār such as Narasimha really typifies this happiness as achieved by man through His descent. But this is not all in the theism of the āḷvārs, which holds that God does not stop short at the destruction of all obstacles to His devotees, but goes further to grant them the felicity of the supreme nearness to His supramental plane and presence (*Parama-Pada*).

This shows that man is the dependent, the instrument and servant, conscious and willing if good and knowing, and conscious and rebellious and obstructive if evil and blind—but all the same a helpless tool of God.²³ For it is this important fact that is usually missed by theists who descry in this failure of God to convert the evil, a finiteness on His part and even a helplessness on His part, and thus describe Him as an Ahura Mazda fighting His battles against His foe, or else as a finite soul apotheosised for certain exceeding virtues—a hero at best. God is then described as a Hero made Ideal, and nothing more. But what about His foes? Can there be foes at all and has He to struggle against them? Does He destroy them or do their evil deeds recoil on them and destroy them, even as the Bhāgavata explains the destruction of Sagara's sons?

²¹ Kva yauvanonmukhibhūta sukumāra tanur harih!

Kva vajra-kāṭhinābhoga śarīroyam mahāsurah!!

²² Nyāya, Buddhism and Sāmkhya contend that annihilation of sorrow is the final enjoyment. Śānti or peace is the resultant of the annihilation of sorrow and suffering.

²³ Bh. Gītā. XVIII. 60.

These are important questions as any student of Religion will admit. Three important questions arise: Can God have hatred if He be all-love or beneficence? Can God be cruel if He be all-love? Can God lead to destruction of any one, however wicked, if He be all love? We know that if we answer these three questions in the affirmative then we shall be landed in endless confusion, since love is something that negates hatred, cruelty and destruction of anything, except those pains inflicted surgically, those privations administered for correction. Non-violence, Ahimsa, is one of the most important attributes, just as much non-hatred (*nirvaira*) is of any spiritual soul. This is the essential meaning of the great instruction of love your enemies, deem your enemies also as belonging to the self, but not their wickedness. The path of conversion of the wicked from his wickedness to goodness is the necessity, and this is to be achieved only with the help not of *bhēda* and *daṇḍa* or *māyā* or *indrajāla* but with the purest means of *śama* and *śānti*. Means must be appropriate to the end, and cannot be quite the opposite, for the proposition of thesis, anti-thesis to synthesis is not on a par with the ethical structure of the recognition of God as the indwelling self of all. The avatār of love would be quite different from the ordinary notions of God we know of. The naturalistically minded theist stops short of the finite God struggling with his righteous weapons against the mighty unrighteousness or anti-christ, as H.G.Wells's *Invisible King* does and Prof. Laird has stated in his *Mind and Deity* following his footsteps. This may lead to the emphasising of the nature of God as perpetually 'creative', by which is meant more or less a God who is in the birththroes of creative struggle—not a God who is a master-willer (*saṅkhalpa-siddha*). He would be a way-farer as Mrs. Rhys Davids will put it. Such a naturalistic theism distinguishes rightly between the Good and Evil radically, and postulates two adverse and opposed powers sustaining the two sides or armies. This view is also facilitated by the fact that some of the noblest children of God, seers and prophets especially in the West, had to pass through fire literally, and martyrdom was their lot however glorious. Whatever spiritual evidence of their successes they had, whatever might have been the social repercussions and recoil that made their canonisation possible posthumously, the fact of supreme concern remained that God was unable to come to their rescue at that critical and crucial historical moment on the terrestrial plane. This has been the most difficult part of the theistic postulate of faith in God or God Himself, and has been the target of atheistic thinkers throughout the History of Religions.

In India however we find that this crucial critical historical moment had always led to the descent of the Divine even in the form that may be requested. The challenge of Hiraṇyakaśipu was to reveal God here and now, and anywhere and in a form that none could imagine. So indeed it is claimed that God manifested Himself. The Purāṇic stories though essentially mythological and fantastic do indeed preserve the central fact of philosophico-theological interest of an answering deity. Miraculous! Miracles are no arguments it may be said but being as real as brute facts they have to be faced and explained. It cannot be that God in the West was experimenting with

penury and suffering and testing men with fire and torture, stake and inquisition, decapitation and mass-murder, whilst He was experimenting with love and intercession and teaching in the East. It is true that we have evidences of the self-same fierce and unholy hatred bred intolerance through non-perception of God as the self of all beings, between the sects such as the Jains and Lingāyats, and the Śivas and Vaiṣṇavas which had also led to experiences of martyrdom. The *deus ex machina* theory that God helps those who are fit to be helped through some good act of theirs whilst He is impartially unmovingly looking on at the catastrophic moment, at those who have done nothing, or done anything inadvertently, and adversely leaving them to the kind or hard mercies of the mill of the natural law that grinds slowly but surely without any distinction of good or bad, is a fine calculus of cause-effect, but hardly capable of explaining the abiding conflict in the man's soul about God's omnipotent omni-benevolence. Special grace is a special expression of the ever present general Grace, a fine inundation of his grace at the appropriate moment. This is what the āḷvārs consider to be the result of an act of surrender and prayer to the Lord. The evil ones even are saved because of some good act of prayer they have done. The mechanical calculus of the ordinary life is not the calculus of God. Rigidly does the law of karma work, but its rigidity is qualitatively raised so as to appear very much revealed of its tension, by the apprehension by man of God's supreme Will. Obstruction is indication, a sign of the disapproval of nature against man, which man has to overcome. The triumph over the obstacles to the attainment of God is the only important effort which will be achieved by a total surrender to God. Pursuit of any others or any other objects such as pleasures or even of higher things like the path of the solar orb is of a low order or kind. These small ends are sinful and sorrow-producing (T.C.V.67)

16. Happiness is the goal of all endeavour be it religious or secular. This happiness may be graded from the lowest to the highest according to the degree of permanence and satisfaction of the inmost nature. The āḷvār raises an interesting but important proposition whether liberty or liberation, *mokṣa*, is higher than service of the Divine, and replies (T.C.V.83) that happiness in the state of *samsāra* can be, provided there is uninterrupted possession of the love of god. Happiness is the experience of the Love of God, and God inalienably.

“O Lord, decorated with honeyful Tuḷasi-garland!

Even though I attain the blessedness immeasurable on reaching Heaven on separation from your feet, the love of thee which bound my mind to thee with tenfold rope²⁴ firmly, will itself become my happiness.”

²⁴ The tenfold rope is stated to be Bhakti. The Bhāgavata mentions 8 forms: 1. Śravaṇaṃ 2)Kīrtanaṃ, 3. Viṣṇu Pādasēvanaṃ! 4. Arcanaṃ 5. Vandanaṃ 6. Dāśyaṃ 7. Sākhyāṃ 8. Ātma Nivēdanaṃ. Kānta and Tanmaya are the 2 others.

Nārada's classification of forms of Bhakti:

Even if other bodies have to be taken, happiness will be ordained by the Lord through the love the devotee and surrenderer bears to His feet (T.C.V.84) in any and every state—a note that is so often struck by the succeeding āḷvārs like Kulaśēkhara—and a note struck by those who profess to enjoy Jīvanmukti. Though this is the happiness, the āḷvār says that all rest in the hands of the Lord, even to deny all love, all knowledge, all action. God's will is not capable of being prophesied. It is because of this incapacity to measure or calculate or anticipate the Will of God, there is fear. Against this fear, God alone can help. "The immeasurable Magician alone must help man." He alone can keep fear away from the breasts of His devotees (T.C.V. 91,92) 17.

A general survey of the two masterpieces of this Āḷvār Bhaktisāra shows clearly that he has represented the *tattva*, *hita*, and *Puruṣārtha* very luminously, and has shown that man should seek the Highest tattva alone, and not any tattva, thinking that that could lead to ultimate and integral happiness. The Āḷvār, despite the avowed sectarianism, really makes out a case for the acceptance of the very Highest Being, and *paurāṇically* so to speak, seeks to affirm the Supremacy of Nārāyaṇa who is Origin and substance and Destroyer of the Universe, who makes poison into nectar and who is Love itself as revealed in His manifold descents into the spatio-temporal scheme of the Human beings. In all the goal is to perceive "the Oneness in the manyness" of the Deity:

"Thou art the breath in the body, sleep along with wakefulness, the five-fold produce of the cow, and their purity is Thee.
The attractive products of the Ocean are thee;
The air that moves in the ether and the earth is thee. I too am thee. Thou art Rāma too, my Lord! (T.C.V. 94).

The *sāmānādhikarāṇya* doctrine is clearly mentioned here. He the Lord is always with the Mother of the Universe—this is a specific experience of the Śrī Vaiṣṇava seers.

"Though one attains the things of the world of Brahmā blest with undestroyable prosperity, and the things of the World of Hara blest with power of all destruction,

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1. Śānta :Ṛṣis, Sanaka, Sanat-Kumāra, Markaṇḍeya , Bhakti- Sāra
 2. Dāsyā: Uddhava, Vidura, Dhruva, Prahlāda, Hanumān
 3. Sakhya: Arjuna
 4. Vātsalya: Vasudēva, Devakī, Nanda, Kauśalya, Yaśōda
 5. Mādhurya: Rādhā, Āṇḍā! (Ujjvala)

10 fold -rope: refers to 1. glorification($\text{MÉÖhÉ}^{\text{°}}\text{ÉÉ}\frac{1}{2}\text{pÉx}^{\text{°}}\text{aÉ}$) 2. Form (Rūpa)
3. worship ($\{\text{ÉÚVÉÉ}^{\text{°}}\text{ÉÉÉÉ}\}$), 4. Service 5. Remembrance 6. Sakhya
7. Kānta 8. Vātsalya 9. Ātmanikṣēpa 10. Tanmaya(losing oneself in HIM).

and the things of the world of the thousand-eyed Indra, and even the fullest happiness that is the sign of the Highest God,

Should not the mind seek out that Happiness of being United to thee alone" (T.C.V. 108).

The Highest goal and aspiration has been pitched by the āḷvār on the Integral One Being of whom every one is a member and servant and disciple and votary. This is the *siddhi*; not the attainment of *Īśvaratva* (divine existence, or godhood) nor yet aṣṭasiddhis of even the Higher Gods.

Thus does one achieve the immortal in mortal existence, the secret of which was enunciated by the doctrine of service of the divine, *kainkarya*, and prayer and singing and ecstasy of living in Brahman. The general lines are thus well and firmly laid for the great proliferation of the later saints of bhakti. In Tirumaḷṣai āḷvār, bhakti is dynamic, realising and not merely ecstatic or resignatory or aesthetic. There is not the frenzied dionysian need for dance and song and *tāṇḍava-nṛtya*. Such is the significant contribution of the fourth āḷvār to the stream of Divine Experience in South India.