TIRUVĀYMOLI
ENGLISH GLOSSARY
VOLUME III

by

(Iñāna Bhakti Bhūṣaṇa)

S. SATYAMURTHI AYYANGAR, GWALIOR

Published with the financial assistance from the Government of India,
Ministry of Education & Social Welfare (Department of Education)

ANTHACHARYA INDOLOGICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE
G. D. SOMANI MEMORIAL BUILDING
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# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CENTUM</th>
<th>DECAD</th>
<th>HEADING</th>
<th>PAGE (Commencement)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sixth</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>Vaikal Pūṇkalivāy</td>
<td>... 515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Mīṃṇītaī maṭavārkaḷ</td>
<td>... 523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Third</td>
<td>Nalkuravum</td>
<td>... 536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>Kuravai āycciyarōṭu</td>
<td>... 546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Fifth</td>
<td>Tuvalij mā maṇi</td>
<td>... 557</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Sixth</td>
<td>Mālukku vaiyamalanta</td>
<td>... 568</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Seventh</td>
<td>Unṇum Cōru</td>
<td>... 574</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Eighth</td>
<td>Pōṇṇulakāḷīro</td>
<td>... 583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Ninth</td>
<td>Nirāy nilaṇāy</td>
<td>... 592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Tenth</td>
<td>Ulakamunṭa Peruvaṭā!</td>
<td>... 600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Centum in retrospect: Decad-wise summary* ... 610

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seventh</th>
<th>First</th>
<th>Uṭ nilāviya</th>
<th>... 613</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Kaṅkulum pakalum</td>
<td>... 627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Third</td>
<td>Veḷḷaiccuri Caṅkoṭu</td>
<td>... 641</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>Āḷi eḷa</td>
<td>... 653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Fifth</td>
<td>Karṇār Irāmapirāṇai</td>
<td>... 661</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Sixth</td>
<td>Pāmaru mūvulakum</td>
<td>... 672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Seventh</td>
<td>Īlaiyar āvi</td>
<td>... 681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Eighth</td>
<td>Māyā! Vāmaṇaṇē!...</td>
<td>... 689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Ninth</td>
<td>Erṭṭaikkum</td>
<td>... 699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Tenth</td>
<td>Inpaṃ payakka</td>
<td>... 709</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Centum in retrospect: Decad-wise summary* ... 720
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CENTUM</th>
<th>DECAD</th>
<th>HEADING</th>
<th>PAGE (Commencement)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eighth</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>Tēvimār āvār</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Naṅkaḷ varivaḷai</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Third</td>
<td>Aṅkum iṅkum</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>Vārkaṭā aruvi</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Fifth</td>
<td>Māyakkūṭā</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Sixth</td>
<td>Elliyum Kāḷaiyum</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Seventh</td>
<td>Iruttum viyantu</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Eighth</td>
<td>Kaṅkaḷ civantu</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Ninth</td>
<td>Karumāṅikka malai</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Tenth</td>
<td>Neṭumāṟku Aṭimai</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Centum in retrospect: Decad-wise summary ... ... 837

Errata
NOTES ON TRANSLITERATION

In this book, Devanagari characters as well as the Tamil alphabet have been transliterated according to the scheme adopted by the international body of orientalists and since then generally acknowledged as the only rational and satisfactory one, ruling out inconsistency, irregularity and redundancy of English spelling.

I. SANSKRIT (Devanagari) SCRIPT

अ a; आ ā; इ i; ई ī; उ u; ऊ ō; ऋ r̥; ए e; ऐ ai; ओ o; औ ou; ऋ m; ए h; क k; ख kh; ग g; घ gh; ङ n; च c; छ ch; ज j; झ jh; ढ ŋ; ठ t̥; थ th; द d; ध dh; न n; प p; फ ph; ब b; म bh; म m; य y; र r; ल l; व v. श s; ष s; ह h;

क ka; का kā; क ि ki; की kī; कु ku; कू kū; के ke; कै kai; को ko; कौ kou; क k; क: kāh.

Likewise, for all other consonants.

Dot below h gives the visarga (:), dot above m gives the anusvara (') while the dot below n gives the sound, as in 'gone'.

II. TAMIL SCRIPT

அ a; ஆ ā; இ i; ஈ ī; உ u; ஊ ō; ஋ r̥; ஏ e; ஐ ai; ஓ o; ஔ ou; ஋ m; ஏ h; க k; ஖ kh; ஗ g; ஘ gh; ங n; ச c; ஛ ch; ஜ j; ஝ jh; ஢ ŋ; ஠ t̥; ஥ th; ஦ d; ஧ dh; ந n; ப p; ஫ ph; ஬ b; ம bh; ம m; ய y; ர r; ல l; வ v. ஶ s; ஷ s; ஹ h; க k̥;

க ka; கா kā; க் ki; கிக kī; கு ku; கூ kū; கே ke; கை kai; கோ ko; கௌ kou; க k; க: kāh.

Likewise, for all other consonants.
VOLUME III
BOOK VI

Sixth Centum  First Decad (VI-1)
(Vaikal pūn kaḻivāy)

Preamble

We saw in the preceding centum from V-7 and onwards the Āḻvār seeking refuge in successive Pilgrim centres, at the feet of the Lord enshrined there. If the surrender at the feet of the Lord which should yield the result as a matter of course, did not meet with immediate response from the Lord, it was because He willed that the contemporary world as well as posterity should benefit through the Āḻvār's scintillating hymns flowing from his sweet lips. It is indeed our great good fortune that the Āḻvār was not immediately lifted up to Heaven. In V-10, the Alvar prayed intensely for the acceleration of his union with the Lord and now he seeks out the Lord at Tiruvaṉvaṇṭūr, a pilgrim centre in Keralā, but is too feeble to reach that place. The next best he could do in such a forlorn state, was to acquaint the Lord with his critical condition through some one. The Āḻvār, once again, gets transformed as a Nāyakī and sends some birds and bees to convey her message to the Lord. The birds, with their pair of wings, typify the devout, endowed with great knowledge and good conduct, the efficient Preceptors, with a happy blending of these two essential requisites, for serving as an effective medium between Man and God.

This technique of the Āḻvār sending messages to the Lord through birds, bees etc., has already been elaborated upon, vide preamble to I-4. There are four decades, in the whole work, where such messages are sent, the other three being I-4, VI-8 and IX-7. Whereas the message in I 4 was sent to the Lord in His 'Vyūha' aspect at the Milky ocean, the seat of His creative activity, the present one is held to have been addressed to the Lord in His 'Vibhava' or Incarnate Forms. As the message is being sent to the Lord in His 'Arca' (Iconic) Form at Tiruvaṉvaṇṭūr, it might be questioned how the Āḻvār is stated to have sent emissaries to the Lord in His Incarnate Forms. The clue for this can be had from the tenth stanza of this decad, where the Āḻvār specifically mentions Śrī Rāma, stationed at that pilgrim centre. Further, the

T—17
message in the last of the four decades, referred to above, namely, IX-7, is addressed to the Lord in His Arca (Iconic) Form and there is hardly any need for duplication in this regard. In I-4, the Āḻvār invoked the Lord's special trait of forgiveness, while, in this decade, the accent is on His pledge, the creed of extending protection to His devotees, seeking Him ardently. vide also aphorism 156 of 'Ācārya Hṛdayaṁ'.

vaikal pūṉ kaṈivāy vantu, mēyum kurukiṉaṅkāl!
cey koḷ cennel uyar tiruvanvaṉṭūr uṟaiyum
kai koḷ cakkaraṭtu eṉ kaṈivāyṉ perumāṅaṅk kaṉṭu,
kaikaḷ kūppi, collir-vaṇaiyāṭṭiyēṅ kāṭanmaiye. (VI-1-1)

Translation

Ye herds of Heron, always seeking food in water-logged land!
Go unto my Lord with fruit like lips and discus in hand,
Who does for ever in Tiruvanvaṅṭūr reside,
Where there are plenty of rich paddy fields;
And convey the depth of this sinner's love, with your hands, folded.

Notes

(i) The Nāyakī describes the place to which the herons have to go and the hard-hearted Lord to whom they have to report her unique love, emanating from a tender heart. The description of the destination should indeed tempt the birds, for there too, they can have plenty of food. Hard-hearted though He might be, the Nāyakī cannot lift her mind from His fascinating lips and that too, on the heels of her enjoyment of Krṣṇāvatār, in the immediately preceding decad.

(ii) The inner meaning of this song, as brought out in aphorism 154 of 'Ācārya Hṛdayaṁ! is given below:

An Ācārya (Preceptor) of spotless purity in and out, who revels in God-enjoyment in the company of his inseparable disciples and attends pious gatherings along with them, is being sought out, as an efficient medium for securing communion with the Lord.
(iii) The Ājvār, who had tasted the Lord’s condescending love and amazing simplicity during those blissful moments of union with Him, is now inclined to disdain Him for His aloofness, the predominant trait of His transcendent (Paratva) aspect. This is reflected in her warning to the birds to approach the Lord with folded hands, with due regard to His might and majesty.

kātal meṇ peṭaiyōtu utaṇ méyum karu nārāy!
vēta vēḷvi oli mulaṅkum taṇ tīruvaṇvaṅtūr
nātaṇ, ēḷālam ēḷālam uṇṭa nam perumāṇaik kaṇṭu.
pātam kaitōlūtu, pāṇiyir-āṭiyēṇ-tīrämē. (VI–1–2)

Translation

Oh, Stork of complexion fine, move you do in search of food, With your beloved mate: go and report my condition, with hands folded, Unto my Lord, Master of the Universe. Who sustained the worlds During deluge and now in cool Tīruvaṇvaṅtūr resides Amid vedic chantings and rituals with a flourish of trumpets loud.

Notes

(i) The Nāyakī is commissioning a stork to go and reverently report her condition at the feet of the Lord who stands pledged to redeem His ardent votaries, but now remains wholly absorbed in the vedic chantings and rituals put through with great eclat in Tīruvaṇvaṅtūr by its pious brahmīns. It is said of Śrī Rāma that He would be present wherever vedic chantings and ritualistic proceedings were going on.

(ii) It is noteworthy that the Nāyakī advises her emissary to prostrate at the feet of the Lord. This could either reflect her attitude, already commented upon, in para (iii) of the notes below the preceding song or stress the correct code of conduct. It is no use paying obeisance without actually prostrating before the worship-worthy. The great Nāñciyar used to say: “Whenever I saw a
devotee of Viṣṇu and I fell at his feet with my head touching them, it was only then, I felt as if I ate my fill and all my hunger vanished”.

tīrṇaṅkāḷ āki enkum ceykaḷ ūṭu uṭal puḷiṇaṅkāḷ!
ciṅṭanta celvam malku tiruvaṅvanṭīr uṭaiyum
kaṇṭakku cakkarak kaik kaṇivāyp perumāṅaik kaṇṭu,
iṅ ūṅki, nir toṭutu, ṁṇiyīr-aṭiyēṅ īṭare.

(VI–1–3)

Translation

Ye, birds flocking together all over the flush fields,
Go and submit at the feet of my red-lipped Lord, Who wields
The revolving discus and in Tiruvaṅvanṭīr resides,
The abode of riches in plenty, how in misery this vassal fades.

Note

It is the natural habit of the birds to flock together and go hither and thither, in search of food but the God-infatuated Parāṅkuśa Nāyaki thinks that they are also moving about in search of God, out of consideration for her. c.f. II-1. She tells the birds that the Lord whom they are after, resides in Tiruvaṅvanṭīr and advises them to go and meet Him there and, after making a low obeisance to Him, reverently report her miserable condition also. The birds ask the Nāyaki how the Lord could stay at that centre, forgetting all about her and the Nāyaki clarifies at once that it is the immense wealth of the place that has kept Him engrossed with it. whereas for her there is no greater wealth than her Lord, the Śrīya Śrīyāṁ’.

īṭar il pōkam mūḷki, inuṅtu āṭum maṭa aṇṇaṅkāḷ!
vīṭal il vēṭa oli mulaṅkum taṅ tiruvaṅvanṭīr
kaṭalīṅ mënippirāṅ, kaṇṇañai, neṭumālaik kaṇṭu,
uṭalām naintu, oruttu urukum enru unarttumīṅē.

(VI–1–4)

Translation

Ye, modest swans, in joy immersed and to misery unknown!
Go and meet the Lord Supreme, the sea-hued Benefactor great,
Who, in cool Tiruvanṭūr resides, where do reverberate Vedic chantings and report, ‘Here's a woman dwindling down’.

Notes
Addressing the swans who always move in strength and have never, therefore, known the pangs of separation from each other, the Nāyaki asks them to go to Tiruvanṭūr and tell her Lord that here, at this end, is a woman languishing miserably, due to separation from Him.

The swans, immersed in joy and flocking together, denote those in incessant communion with the Lord, speaking the same language (i.e.) the language of rapturous devotion, as the Āḻvārs did.

uṇarttal ṛṭal uṇarntu, ṛṭa mēyum maṭa aṇṇaṅkāl!
tiṇ ṛṭta vaṇṭalkaṅmēl caṅku cērum tiruvanṭūr
puṇartta pūṅ taṅ-tukāy muṭi nam peruṅaṅkaik kūntu,
puṇartta kaiyinaṟaṟy, aṭiyēṇukkum pōṟṟumīṅē. (VI—1—5)

Translation
Ye, inseparable swans, against the ill-effects of separation forewarned!
Go to our Sire, with cool tulāci garland on His crown adorned, Who resides in Tiruvanṭūr, on whose soft sands Conches converge and worship Him, on my behalf also, with folded hands.

Notes
(i) Estrangement on some slight pretext, followed by reconciliation, culminating in union between the lover and the beloved, are factors which commonly characterise connubial relationship. The swans, moving always together, do not, however, have to pass through these vicissitudes.

(ii) The Nāyaki’s request to the swans to worship the Lord on her behalf as well and sing the song of benediction unto Him, sets the pace for those who are not fortunate enough to visit the various pilgrim centres but keenly
miss the bliss. These persons request the fortunate visitors to those places to worship on their behalf also. It is not exactly worship by proxy but the expression of one's yearning for worship.

\[\text{pōṛi yāṇ irantēn, puṇṇaimēl urai pūn kuyilkāl!} \]
\[\text{cēṛil vālai tuḷjum tiruvāṇvantūr uṇaiyum} \]
\[\text{āṛal āḷi aṅkai amarar-perumāṅaik kāṇṭu,} \]
\[\text{māṭum koṇṭaruḷir-maiyal tirvāṭu oruvaṇṇamē.} \]

**(VI–1–6)**

**Translation**

I pray unto ye, lovely koels, dwelling up the laurel trees,
To meet the Lord of the Celestials, wielding the powerful discus
Who, in Tiruvāṇvantūr resides, where revel the fishes
In marshy lands and bring unto me heartening news.

**Note**

*Up the laurel trees:* The laurel (Puṇṇai in Tamil) tree on the west bank of the sacred tank within the precincts of the Temple of Lord Raṅganātha has come in for special mention in Śloka 49 of the first centum of ‘Śri Raṅgarāja Stavaṁ’ of Śri Parāsara Bhaṭṭar. It is said to have imbibed the fragrance of Tiruvāyvmoḷi. This goes to show that generations of devotees have sat under the shade of this ancient tree and reverently chanted Tiruvāyvmoḷi and delved into its inner meanings, discoursing on them. In this process, all the aroma emanating from those recitals and discourses attached itself to the tree, providing it first class nourishment too. It is very likely that the sweet-voiced birds (Koels), resting on the laurel tree, refer to these very devotees.

\[\text{oruvaṇṇam ceṇṭu pukku, eṇakku oṇṭu urai-oṇ kiliyē!} \]
\[\text{ceṇu oṇ pūm pojil cūḷ cēkkār vēḷaṭ tiruvaṇvantūr} \]
\[\text{kuru vaṇṇam, ceyya vāy, ceyya kāṇ, ceyya kai, ceyya kāl,} \]
\[\text{ceṇu oṇ caṅkaṇm, caṅku aṇaiyālam tiruntak kāṇē.} \]

**(VI–1–7)**

**Translation**

Lovely parrot! whatever be the odds you should find your way
To Tiruvāṇvantūr of red soil with flower gardens lovely and say
Just one word on my behalf unto my Lord of dark hue,
Lips, eyes, hands and feet, all red, holding the discus bright
And the conch in its parable, spotting Him well from these clues.

Note
The parrot signifies the Preceptors, true and steadfast, who faithfully pass on the learning gathered by them from their masters, without deviation or distortion. The parrot is known to repeat just what it hears. The parrot in question is advised by the Nāyakī to somehow reach the intended destination turning a blind eye to the enchanting scenery en route, lest it should succumb to the way-side attractions. Even at that end, the emissary shall, for her sake, submit to indignity, if any, heaped on it, such as caning etc., by way of denying it access to the Soverēgn Lord. By rendering service to the Nāyaki, the emissary will be the first beneficiary the immediate recipient of the Lord’s favours, much ahead of the Nāyakī herself, even as Hanumān, on his return from his pioneering visit to Laṅkā, got himself locked in Lord Rāma’s sweet embrace (paṇḍavaṅgo Hanumataḥ), a month ahead of Sitā’s reunion with the Lord.

tiruntak kaṇṭu, eḻakkum ounru uraiyāy-ṇṟ ciṟu pūvāy!
cerunti, niḻal, makiḷ, puṇṇai, cūḷ tān tiruvanvāṇṭür
perum tān tāmaraikkan, peru nil muṭi, nāl tāṭantōl,
karun tin mā mukil pōḷ tiruṃēṇi aṭikalaiyē. (VI–1–8)

Translation
You lovely little Pūvāi, go and see closely you shall...
My cloud-hued Lord with lotus eyes, cool and kond;
Huge crown and hefty shoulders four, Who do I reside
In cool Tiruvanvantūr, by lovely trees surrounded.
And about Him come and tell me a nice word...

Note
Unless the emissary is a keen observer, he can’t be an effective messenger. The Nāyakī wants the little lovely bird to have a close look at the Lord in Tiruvanvantūr in all details and
narrate to her what the little one saw. This is one way of the God-lover sustaining herself.

Translation

Ye, swans, gliding gently on flowers! report you should About this fell sinner, in secret and with joined palms, At the feet of Kannan, my wondrous Lord of love supreme Unto devotees, Who does in Tiruvaṇṇantu always reside Where, at day-break, sweet strains from the conch could be heard.

Notes

In Secret:
When the Lord is alone with His consort, all the attendants having dispersed after discharging their respective duties.

At the feet:
Getting hold of the Lord’s feet is the surest way of evoking response. ‘ anatikramaṇiyam hi caraṇagrahaṇam ’.

Translation

You, sweet-smelling bees, with great respect do I entreat That unto Him (Lord Rāma) of valour great, Who did the ramparts rout Of the mighty demon and now has His abode In Tiruvaṇṇantu, north of river Pampai, with its waters limpid, You do resort and say, here languishes one of His wards.
Note

The Nāyaki has all along been commissioning different birds to convey her message to the Lord, but now she reverently approaches the bees, even as Śri Rāma chose Hanumān for the special assignment of handing over His ring to Sitā. The Nāyaki requests the bees to tell Śri Rāma that He should not rest on His oars with an air of complacency that He has already done everything for Sitā and through her, for her tribe, as a whole; actually, she (Nāyaki) is languishing here, at this end, although she is also one of His many wards.

\[
\text{min kol cēr purinūl-kuṟal āy, akal ālam koṇṭa van kalvan aṭimāl kurukūrc caṭakōpaṇ conṇa paṇ kol āyiraṭul ivai pattum tiruvanvantürkkku īṅkol pāṭal vallār maṭanar, miṅniṭai yavarkkē. (VI-1-11)}
\]

Translation

Those that chant these songs ten, highly delicious, Which unto Tiruvanvantür pertain, out of the mellifluous Thousand, composed by Caṭakōpaṇ of Kurukūr, adoring the feet
Of the Lord, Who, as Vāmana, wearing on His person radiant, The sacred thread charming, took (from Bali) on the sly, the worlds,
Will unto the Lord be dear like the lovers unto their beloveds.

Note

The chanters of this decad will be coveted by the Lord and His devotees, the Apsarās in Heaven.

Sixth Centum—Second Decad (VI-2)
(Miṅ itai maṭavārkal)

Preamble

In this decad, the Ālvār strikes an entirely new note, making a bold departure, rather, in refreshing contrast to the earlier ones. The Saint, who was hitherto pining for the Lord’s presence and crying out his heart, now keeps Him at bay, when He eventually
turns up in post-haste (even as He rushed to Gajendra’s aid) in response to the Nāyaki’s piteous appeal in the last decad, conveyed to the Lord through her special emissaries. The Nāyaki resents the Lord’s delayed appearance and arraigns Him for having strayed elsewhere, making love to the damsels of His special preference and He is being asked to go back to them. The door is shut against Him, a movement in the contrary direction indeed! But there is nothing uncommon about this, as this is a natural ingredient of convivial love, which is super-sensitive to, and extremely intolerant of the lapses on the part of either partner, the overzealous female, in particular, being critical of the remotest risk of alienation of the male from her, by his getting under the spell of any other lady—the characteristic feminine jealousy, keen and cruel. Actually, the Nāyaki’s pangs of separation even egged her on to the extreme step of putting an end to her life, rather than eking out a miserable existence.

Of the nine kinds of relationship subsisting between the Lord (Super Soul) and the Individual Soul, as set out in the Śloka “Pitāca rakṣakaḥ Śeṣī, Bhārthā Jñeyo Ramāpatih……” the husband-wife relationship is attracted here. The strained relationship such as the one exhibited in this decad, did subsist, as a temporary phase, between Lord Kṛṣṇa and the Gopīs. The Nāyaki would now seem to have got into the mood of the Gopīs. Similar treatment is noticeable in Kulaśekara Āḻvār’s Perumāḷ Tirumōli (of Ērmalar Puṅkulal) and Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār’s Periya Tirumōli (Kāṭil Kaṭippitṭu).

mīn ēṭai maṭavārkal-niṅ arul cūṭuvār-muṇpu nāṅ atu aṅicuvañ;
maṅ uṭai ilaṅkai aran kāynta māyavanē!
unnuṭaiya cuṇṭāyam nāṅ arivan; ini atukonṭu ceyvatu en?
ennuṭaiya pantum kaḷalum tantu, pōku nampī! (VI–2–1)

Translation

I am afraid, You and I, the thin-waisted favourites of Yours Will scold, all Your mischief do I know, yet it no longer matters. The ramparts of Rāvana’s Laṅkā, You pulled down in anger great,
You, perfect One of wondrous deeds, from here You better depart
And go anywhere You like but leave my playthings here, all right.

Notes

(i) Reference to playthings, in this song, would make it appear that Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī and the Lord were playing some game and the latter suddenly left. The Nāyakī felt piqued by this sudden departure of the game-partner so that, when He presented Himself later on, she would keep mum. And now, the Lord tried to coax her, in ever so many ways: Helavished epithets on her describing her as a thin-waisted beauty and so on. Even then, she would not respond and the frustrated Lover got hold of the games-materials lying on the ground (Ball etc.) and addressed them amorously. Well, the farthest limit of provocation had been reached and the Nāyakī could no longer resist coming out of her shell. She rebuked the Lord, saying that she was not the thin-waisted beauty referred to by Him and He would do well to go back to those beauties with whom He had been indulging prior to coming down to her. She also cautioned Him that, in case those ladies got to know of His having come over to her, they would scold both Him and her. But then, she was severing her connections with Him and the displeasure of those other ladies was, therefore, of no consequence to her. As the Lord was about to leave the place, picking in hand the games-materials, the Nāyakī sternly asked Him to leave her playthings and go. It may be recapitulated that, in the preamble to this decad, the Nāyakī was stated to be in a desperate mood, ready even to put an end to her life. What else is it but (spiritual) death when she spells out anything as hers, in His presence? That Savant Ciri-yāttāṇ would point out that the notion of ‘mine’ and ‘not mine’ reigned supreme in Dhrtarāṣṭra’s mind and this eventually led to the destruction of his race. Right
at the commencement of Bhagavad Gitā, he asked Sañjaya: Say, Sañjaya, say what wrought my people (mamakā) and the Pāṇḍavas’.

(ii) The Lord’s destruction of Rāvan’s Lañkā is also taken by the Nāyaki with a pinch of salt. She sees in it an attempt on His part to draw into His broad net, the members of the weaker sex, by making it appear that He did so much, ate no food, spent sleepless days and nights, bunded the ocean, fought a pitched battle with the formidable Rāvaṇa and destroyed his citadel, all for the sake of a woman. The Nāyaki spitefully declares that she could very well see through His game.

pōku namśil unnāmarai purai kañ-īñaiyum, cevvāy muṟṟvulum, ākulaṅk: l ce₂ ya, al tāṛkē noṛrō-nē yām;
tōkai mā mayilārk.l-nūr arul cūṭuvār-cevi oçaia vaittu eļa ākal pōkaviṭṭu, kulal útu pōyiruntē. (VI–2–2)

Translation

Get thee gone, oh Sire; we womenfolk seem born to dwindle Under the spell of Your lotus eyes and bewitching smiles On Your red lips, better go and graze the cows, Playing the flute from behind unto the recipients of Your love Having locks lovely like the spread-out plumes of the peacock.

Note

When asked by the Nāyaki to get away, the Lord entered into an argument with her, saying that she could not claim ownership of the game’s materials and that apart, it would be most uncharitable on her part to expel Him who had come over to her, out of deep love. The Lover advanced towards the Nāyaki with bewitching smile and sweet glances but the Nāyaki, still smarting under a sense of deliberate neglect by the Lover, observed that His smiles and glances actually sapped her and other women, unfortunate like her, rather than sustain and bade Him to keep grazing the cows and playing the flute for the delectation of the lucky damsels of Gokula, the recipients of His favours, with lovely locks. The description of the lovely locks of the Lover’s favourites
given here, initially came from His lips, complimenting the Nāyakī but she would not acknowledge it and she spitefully turned it on to those other ladies, basking in the sunshine of His love.

pōyiruntu, niṅ puḷḷuvam aṟiyātava-kku urai, nampī! niṅ ceyya vāy iruṇ kaṇiyum, kaṇkalum viparitam in nāḷ;
veḷ iyrum tāṭam tōḷṉār it tiruvarul peṟuvār evarkol-
mā iyrum kaṭalaik kaṭainta perumānālē?  

Translation

Oh, Sire, better keep off from us and try Your viles
On girls unwary; indeed Your red fruit-like lips and eyes
Are more charming than ever before; I know not who are those,
With bamboo-like shoulders fine that shall be blest
To enjoy this great Churner of the ocean, deep and vast.

Note

The Lord who was asked to go and fend the cows and play the flute, as in the last song, affirmed that He could play the flute and give vent to His love all right, only in the company of His beloved ones, of which the Nāyakī was indeed the crown jewel. But the Nāyakī was adamant and retorted that she would not be led away by His guiles any more and that He would rather play His pranks on unwary customers elsewhere and get on with them. The Lord appealed to her once again, asking her to behold His eagerness to taste the bliss of kissing her lips and gazing at her charming figure. Lo! she found His lips and eyes even more charming than ever before. Overpowered that she was by the Lord’s exquisite charm, she couldn’t help giving expression to it, even in the midst of her feminine rancour. She thought within herself, who those blessed damsels would be, that shall have the most enviable rapport with the charming Lord, like unto the Divine Mother who got at Him through the churning of the Milky ocean.
Translation

Aren't You the One who once reposed on a fig-leaf tender,
Holding all the worlds in Your stomach? Your wondrous deeds,
How can we know when even the Celestials can't comprehend?
Oh, Lord, tending cows near about damsels with eyes like
Don't tantalise us with white lies any more.

Note

The Lord refuted the Nāyaki's allegation of hollowness and insincerity and put it back on her and her mates, saying that He was absolutely forthright and straightforward and it was only they that were full of viles. The Nāyaki was, however, quick to point out the incompatibility of His reposing on a tender fig-leaf afloat, holding, as a tender babe, all the worlds inside His tummy and added that His mysterious deeds baffled even the exalted Celestials. The Lord then explained, rather apologetically, that He got detained by His Mother, who had asked Him to grace the cows, giving Him the stick and that the Nāyaki should not frown at Him to such an extent for this delay, beyond His control. The Nāyakī was, however, in no mood to swallow this fabrication and scorned that, in the name of grazing the cows, He would have been after girls of His special preference. The bubble having been pricked, the Lord kept on shilly-shallying. The Nāyakī cut Him short, saying that He need not tarry any longer and tantalise her with all lies and that He would rather ply His trade with those damsels with fine bamboo-like shoulders, with whom all His pretensions might pass muster.
Translation

Oh. Sire, address not unto us such shallow words,
Your viles are well-known, in all the worlds,
You wielder of the ancient discus, mighty and mobile!
Let me make You realise that desist You shall
From playing with the warbling Pūvai and parrots over here
Lest You should the minds of Your sweet-tongued favourites
injure.

Note

The Lord suggests that they should seek arbitration to prove
that He is the damned liar, they are dubbing Him to be.
The Nāyakī, however, rules out the necessity for such a
course for His stratagems are too well known, both on
Earth and in Heaven. Did He not take advantage of the
screen raised by the smoke from the incense burnt by the
denizens in Heaven just after His sacramental bath and
come down here as Kṛṣṇa and go back to the celestium, a
hundred years after, by which time the smoke subsided? The
Lord’s holy attendants in Heaven were not aware of His
departure during the interval. Again, all that He did as
Śrī Kṛṣṇa is history indeed! And yet, the Lord insists that a
wise and impartial witness should be called upon to sit in
judgement. The Nāyakī rejoins that there is no dearth
of witnesses and, for the matter of that, the discus in His
hand is enough to knock the bottom of His case. Did He
not once say that He would not take up arms in the battle of
Mahābhārata and eventually go back on His plighted word?
Cornered thus, the Lord kept silent, hanging His head down.
Thereupon, the Nāyakī advised Him to listen to her, in case
He was keen on finding a way out of this impasse. The
Omniscient Lord was being advised and yet, He took it all
in good parts and started praising the Nāyakī’s speech as
honey and so on. The Nāyakī took exception to this and
she and her mates withdrew after making the sarcastic
observation that the sweet-tongued damsels in His good
books, were elsewhere. Even then, the Lord wouldn’t
leave the place and started caressing the Pūvai, the little
warbler, and the parrots there. Seeing this from a distance,
the Nāyakī warned that He would certainly prejudice those
other ladies, the lucky recipients of His grace, by going over
here and, on the top of that, fondling the birds living at this
end. The Nāyaki, therefore, advised Him to hasten to those
ladies.

Translation
Oh, Sire, 'tis no use Your riding rough-shod, fondling our
dolls,
What You are, long association with you has shown us well,
Targets we aren't for Your amorous advances, others there are
indeed,
Fit to be Your consorts, of beauty surpassing in all the worlds;
Force You shall not into our group, verily Your deeds
Will put even You to shame and make You hang Your head

Note
Sensing the pulse of the Nāyaki, even the birds flew off and
now, only the dolls remain on the scene. The Lord starts
fondling the dolls but the Nāyaki prods Him, saying that all
this behaviour will not help Him. The Lord, however,
swears that He is hers, contemplating her all the time. This
draws forth a sharp rebuff from the Nāyaki that she has
known enough of Him and His white lies, coming off in an
unbroken succession, with perfect ease. This again gives a
handle to the Lord who remarks that, being used to His
pranks so well, they would sorely miss them all, if He went
away. So saying, He stays on hob-nobbing, much to the
chagrin of the Nāyaki who burst out that all His silly pranks
were more than she could endure and that He would do well
to turn His attention on those other favourites of His, of
matchless beauty. She further warns Him not to force
Himself any more into their group. But even this curt
warning would not deter Him and He lingers on, knowing
as He does, in His heart of hearts, that although the Nāyaki's
tongue utters such harsh words, inwardly she would want Him to stay on and bandy words like these, with her. And the Nāyaki frowns at Him, saying that He would fall low in His own estimation, if only He cared to examine the propriety of His conduct-literally, a re-enactment of the 'Kṛṣṇa-Gopīs episode'. Śrī Parāśara Bhaṭṭar would exclaim:

"Oh, what an amazing simplicity! the Lord of the Universe, the repository of all auspicious traits, the Supreme Controller of all, is feeling helpless before a handfull of shepherdesses, unable to move either way, neither go inside nor get out of the place. How strange it is that sages Vyāsa and Parāśara could not dwell on this astounding aspect of the Lord! Well, who else but these Ālvar Saints, soaked in God-love, could comprehend and handle this theme which passeth all understanding of the common man who can’t readily bring himself to believe that the Supreme Lord could ever condescend to reduce Himself to such a strange pass?

kaṇṇam anṛu eṅkaḷ kaiyil pāvai parippatu; kāṭal-ṅālam uṇṭṭā niṃmalā! nēṭiyāy! uṅakkēḷum, piḷai piḷaiyē;
vaṇṇamē colli, emmai ni viḷaiyāṭuti; atu kēṭkil eṅ aimmār taṇma-pāvam eṅnār; oru nāṛu taṭi-piṅakkē.

(VI–2–7)

Translation

Oh, immaculate Lord, you once gulped down the worlds sea-bound,
It hardly befits You, oh, great One, to squeeze from our hands
Our playthings; a mistake is a mistake even if by You committed,
Words you whisper, we dare not repeat and with us you flirt;
Surely, our brethren, when they get to know, will feel hurt,
For good or bad they wouldn’t care and You they might hit.

Notes

(i) Finding the Gopis terribly vexed with Him, Śrī Kṛṣṇa bade good-bye to them, wishing them well and told them that He would, however, be taking with Him, His playthings. But the Gopis lost no time in picking up
those pieces, with a view to detaining Him and prolonging the controversy. This gave Śrī Kṛṣṇa the golden opportunity He was looking for, to come in physical contact with the Gopīs and snatch the materials from their hands. The Gopīs screamed that this was not the kind of job, expected of Him, to which He replied that this was too petty a job for Him Who had gulped down all the worlds. While conceding His great ability, the Gopīs pointed out that, however big He might be, mistakes committed by Him cannot be overlooked. Śrī Kṛṣṇa tried, in vain, to refute this by saying that He was immaculate and, therefore, above mistakes. At this stage, the Lord pretended to be non-plussed and whispered quite a few secrets into the ears of the Gopīs and they administered a stern warning that He would be belaboured by their brothers without any hesitation, if they got to know about His silly behaviour and the stupid things He spoke to them (Gopīs).

(ii) The secrets whispered into the ears of the Gopīs by the Lord, referred to in (i) above, should, in the particular context of Saint Nammāḻvār re-enacting the old scene of the days gone-by, be taken as God’s secrets with His Saints. While Em ār was discoursing on this song, a few disciples asked him, “What are the secrets, Sire, which the Lord spoke to the Saint?” He replied: “When the Saint, illumined by God, has himself pronounced them as secret, how can you expect me to spell them out?”

piṇakki, yāvaivum yāvarum piḻaiyāmal pētītum pētiyātatu or kaṇakku il kīrtti veḷḷak katir ṅāṇa muṟṭtiyināy!
iṇakki, emmai em toḻimār vilaiyāṭap pōtumīn enṉap pōntōmai unṇakki, nī valaittāl, eṉ collār ukavātavārē? (VI–2–8)

Translation

Oh, Sire, You are the embodiment of all that knowledge radiant, You keep without name and form all things sentient and non-sentient
At the time of dissolution and at creation You do sort them out And put the species back in their spheres, clear and cogent;
(We knew not You’d be here) our mates brought us for play. If You hugged us close, what would the unfriendly say?

Note

When the Gopis threatened to get Śrī Kṛṣṇa beaten, He took up the challenge and shouted at them. The Gopis coolly told Him, they had known all about Him and there was no need for Him to make all that fuss. When called upon by Him to cite what exactly they had known about Him, they stated, as in the first four lines of this stanza. Śrī Kṛṣṇa then questioned them how, despite all that knowledge they dared to get Him belaboured and elicited the reply that one so great, should not meddle with those frail little girls who had come there to play, not knowing that He would also be there. There was a vast gulf of difference between His play and theirs. His was the creation, sustentation and dissolution of the Sportive Universe (Līlā Vībhūti) whereas they were engaged in simple games, with balls and dolls. Śrī Kṛṣṇa was asked to go His own way, leaving them alone, free to go on with their play. So saying, the Gopis were about to withdraw themselves but Śrī Kṛṣṇa intercepted them and would not allow them to retreat. The Gopis remonstrated that, if He encircled and hugged them, personally they had nothing to say, but it was likely to be criticised by the unfriendly spectators around, not aware of the intimate, indissoluble bond that subsists between the individual souls and the Super-Soul. It is here, the Gopis gave out their real mind, hitherto concealed by their rough exterior.

Translation

Smile You could and watch with Your face bright, The castles we built in our play and the food we cooked,
But You kicked them all, You have indeed no heart.
Just to trap us into the sweet looks
From Your large, lotus eyes, with our hearts melting down.

Note
In spite of His intercepting the Gopīs, they went their own way, playing games like building houses and cooking food. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, literally pining for their sweet glances, albeit by way of quarrelling with Him, kicked all those things out. Knowing His mind quite well, the Gopīs looked at Him squarely and addressed Him, as above. The inner (esoteric) meaning of this is:

Those engaged in God-love quite often undergo the pangs of separation, when He does not oblige them with His sweet presence and the communion gets snapped. To avoid this painful contingency, these very people switch on to worldly affairs. But the Lord would not give them up and His lovely feet drag them back into His fold, kicking out their erstwhile aberration, the tendency to drift away from Him.

niṅgu ihā'yu muṭḍiyīṇāy! irupattör kāl araçu kaḷaikaṭṭā
evgli niḷ maḷuva! viyaṇ āḷaṁ muṇ paṭaṭṭāy!
iṅgu iv āyar kulattai viṭṭu uyyat tōṅṛiya karumāṇikkac cuṭar!
niṅ-'aṅgāḷ nalivē paṭuvōṁ eṇṛum. āycciyyōmē. (ṾI–2–10)

Translation
Oh, Sire of sapphire hue You sport the crown grand
With Your axe triumphant You did root out the kings
For generations, the vast Universe You created once,
And now You are here to redeem this shepherd clan,
But we shepherdesses are by You tormented for ever.

Note
The rancour of the overzealous Gopīs would obviously not last long, as it is but a temporary phase, an interim facet of connubial relationship, culminating in the reunion of the lover and the beloveds. Śrī Kṛṣṇa didn’t merely kick the houses etc, put up by the Gopīs during play, but kicked their rancour out and made them gaze at His exquisite Form, from
the lotus feet upwards, right up to His crown. It is only the Victor that wears the crown and by mentioning the grandeur of His crown, the Gopis mean to acknowledge Him as the Victor, in their erstwhile squabble. Even as He created the worlds, with all their contents, from the melting pot to which they had been consigned earlier, He has infused fresh life into the Gopis who had earlier been the victims of devastating feminine jealousy. For Him, who as Paraśurāma, destroyed the haughty Kṣatriya kings, extending over twentyone generations, is it at all much of a job to get the better of the frail Gopis? Of course, the Gopis know, that rejoining their Lord now doesn’t mean perpetual enjoyment of His company and they are in for further spells of misery, due to separation from Him. Even so, they are prepared to brave it and get back to Him at least for the time-being.

āycci ākiya aṇṇa iyāḷ aṟṟu veṇṇey vārtaiyuḷ cirra muṇṭu aḷu kūṭta appaṇ-taṇṇai, kurukūrc caṭakōpaṇ ēttiya tamiḷ-māḷai āyirattuḷ ivaiyum ōr pattu icaĭ yoṭum nāṭṭaṅgāl navila uraippärkkku illai nalkuravē. (VI-2–11)

Translation

Those that chant tunefully these songs ten
Out of the thousand Tamil songs of Caṭakōpaṇ
Of Kurukūr, adoring the Lord, Who (as child Kṛṣṇa) cried bitter
When someone complained, in general, about the theft of butter,
Unto His mother, will never from poverty (of God-love) suffer.

Notes

(i) Here is a splendid reference to one of the many infant sports of the Lord. The shepherdesses of Brndāvaṇ complaned to Yaśodha that all their butter had been stolen by some one. Just cn hearing this gneral complaint without any mention about Him in particular, child Kṛṣṇa cried immediately, as if to plead that He was not the culprit. Thus, by His own unbidden cry, He betrayed Himself as the urchin thief. An interesting
parallel for this is cited in Īṭu commentary. One day, the residents of a mutt (Monastery) asked among themselves as to who should clean and water the monastery and it was decided that the unlearned (uninitiated in the Vedas) among them should be detailed for such menial service. One among them immediately cried (although nobody had spotted him out, as the unlearned): “Sirs, how can I clean such a big place as this?” Poor fellow, he betrayed himself by this spontaneous cry, unnamed and unsought.

(ii) The Lord’s grief, at His repulsion by the Gopis, shutting the door against Him, was just as poignant as when He was tied to the pounder by His mother, as a punishment for stealing butter.

Sixth Centum—Third Decad (VI-3)
(Nalkuravum, Celvum)

Preamble

In VI-1, the Saint sent messages to Lord Rāma at Tiruvaṉavaṭūr but He responded, rather late. This made the Nāyaki furious and she enacted, in the preceding decad, all that tussle, which ensued between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the Gopis. Ultimately, the Lord proved victorious, as seen in VI-2-10, and the reunion between Him and the Saint materialised. The Saint now keeps musing over the superior might of the Lord, in having weaned him round, despite his stout resolve not to have anything to do with that malingering defaulter any more. The Lord reveals to the Āḻvār His extraordinary capacity for achieving the impossible besides the glorious Iconic Form in which He stays in Tiruvinnakar (In Tamilnadu, near Tirukkutantai, covered by V-8). The Āḻvār recounts this experience, in the current decad.

nalkuravum, celvum, narum, kum, cuvarkkumum ay,
velpakaiyum, natpum, viṭamum, amutamum ay,
palvakaiyum paranta perumān, enñai āḻvāṇai,
celvam malku kuṭit tiruvinnakark kaṇṭēnē. (VI-3-1)
Translation

Seen have I in Tiruvinţakar, with riches filled,
My Liege-Lord, Who does encompass in His universe vast.
Pelf and penury, hell and Sarpa, love and hatred,
Poison and nectar and many such opposites.

Notes

(i) The Ālvār says that he has seen in Tiruvinţakar, the Lord who composes within Himself all the incompatibles. It is He who kept kucela poor initially, then made him rich and again pushed him into penury. It is He that puts some people in the luxurious and delightful Sarpa and consigns some others to the dismal hell; He engenders in us hatred as well as love for Him, the one who hates Him is made to love Him and vice versa. For example, the inveterate Kaṇṭā-karna became friendly to the Lord whereas Śīmālika who was an intimate friend of His, got his head severed by the Lord’s discus. It is the Lord who gave Śiva poison and nectar to the Devās; He is like poison unto some and like nectar unto others. Actually, those that look upon everything as forming part of the Lord’s immense possessions, vast and varied, will acquire perfect mental equanimity, making no distinction between these opposite pairs, neither elated by the one nor depressed by the other.

(ii) The Lord, enshrined in this pilgrim centre (Tiruvinţakar), is called by the Ālvār as ‘Oppili Appaṉ’, the peerless Sire, vide the ninth-song, while the Purāṇik tradition carries the Lord’s name as “Uppili Appaṉ”, salt-free dishes being offered to Him during the diurnal worship.

kāṇṭa inpam tuṇpaṉ, kalakkaṅkaḻum tēṟṟamum āy,
tuṇpaṉum tāṉmaiyum, talalum nīḻalum āy,
kaṇṭukōṭarku ariya perumāṉ, engai ālvaṉ ēr
teṉ tiraip puṉal cūḷ tiruvinţakar nal nakarē. (VI–3–2)
Translation

Tiruvinnakar, the lovely city the limpid waters surround
Is where my Lord stays, whose possessions vast none can comprehend;
He is at once pleasure and pain, one sees around,
Clarity and confusion, fury and favour, blistering heat and cool shade.

Note

This is just a follow-up of the theme mooted in the preceding song, the blending in Him of the opposites. Sensual pleasures, hankered after by many, are studiously eschewed by those blessed by Him, as a serious impediment in the way of attaining Him. Again, there are the book-worms, who despite their immense reading do not have clear ideas, suffering as they do from lack of proper assimilation and the Lord’s grace which helps such assimilation. The unlettered score easily over the so-called scholars and, by the grace of their Preceptors, enjoy absolute clarity of thought and understanding. This has already been illustrated in the notes under I-9-6. In respect of the impious and ungodly (Asuras), the Lord is fast and furious and is in no mood to forgive them, while, at the same time, He swears by His devotees, that they are above mistakes and even if they commit mistakes, according to others, He takes them all in good light, saying that they have done well. The climate, with its components of heat and cold, is also controlled by the Lord. Look at the Saints who see heat in cold when the Lord does not commune with them and cold in heat when in His company. In fact, there is nothing in the Lord’s Universe, which is not worthy of love, so far as Saints are concerned, in view of their universal outlook, making them see God everywhere. Two devotees, by name, Cēnāpati tācar and Nallār travelled together to the Holy hill of Tirupati. On the way, Tācar beat the bushes with a stick to clear the way. This brought forth a sharp rebuke from Nallār who asked: “Comrade, why do you punish God’s bush which has not stood in the way of your desires’ (wealth and lust)?"
nakaramum nāṭukālam, ṇāṇamum mūṭamum āy, nikar il cul cuṭar āy, irul āy, nilaṇ āy, vicumpu āy, cikara māṭaṅkal cul tiruvinnakar ġernta pirāṇ pukar kol kirtti allāl, illai-yāvarkkum puṇṇiyamē. (VI–3–3)

Translation

For one and all, salvation lies only in the glowing grace Of the Lord in Tiruvinnakar, with its towering mansions, Who is at once hall and hamlet, intelligence and ignorance. The sky and Earth, pitched darkness and peerless brilliance.

Note

There are some, enjoying the luxuries of life in big cities with extra amenities while there are others, toiling hard and eking out a miserable existence in the villages with no amenities whatsoever. Well, these are all controlled and regulated by the Lord. The correct perception of things, with due intelligence as well as misconception resulting from ignorance, light and darkness, the concrete Earth and the nebulous Sky, all these are directed by the Lord who resides in Tiruvinnakar, in His ‘Arca’ (iconic) Form, wherein converge all His excellences in a perfect measure. It is here, in this land of darkness and nescience, that His auspicious qualities shine all the more, unlike the Heaven where it is just like a lamp burning in broad day-light.

puṇṇiyam pāvam, puṇarcci piriwu egnu ivāi āy, ennām āy, maṟappu āy, unmai āy, īḻmai āy, allān āy, tinā maṭaṅkal cul tiruvinnakar ġernta pirāṇ, kaṇṇaṇ īn arulē kaṇṭukolmīṅkal-kaitavamē? (VI–3–4)

Translation

Know, Ye, ‘tis all the sweet, spontaneous grace of Kaṇṇaṇ, enshrined In Tiruvinnakar, with its solid mansions, Who in Him combines Merit and demerit, solidarity and segregation,
Remembrance and forgetfulness, truth and falsehood and yet remains
To all these unattached; should this solid truth are one-question?

Notes

(i) ‘Puṇya’, giving rise to happiness and ‘Pāpa’ leading to misery, the corresponding pleasure of enjoying the coveted things and pain of privation from them, are directed and regulated by the Supreme Lord.

(ii) Again, remembrance and forgetfulness, the truth revealing His existence and the falsehood denying it, are also controlled by him, as the Internal Controller of one and all and yet, He remains unattached to either of these opposites. This is the supreme truth and its veracity hardly needs questioning.

kañṭavam cernmai, karumai veḷumaiyum āy,
mev poṣ, īḷamai mutumai, putumai paḷamaiyum āy,
ceyta ṭiṇ matiḷ cūḷ tiruvīṇaṇakar cērṇa pirāṇ
peyta kāvu kaṃṭir-perum tēvu utai mūvulakē.

(VI–3–5)

Translation

The triple worlds where reside the exalted Devas (Brahmā and others)
Are but the orchards raised by the benevolent Lord in Tiruvīṇaṇakar,
With its ramparts, robust and lovely, who directs
Truth and falsehood, the sneaky and the erect,
The young and the old, old and new, black and white.

Notes

(i) From Brahmā down to the smallest insect, all are His wards, without distinction of high and low. Some are forthright and straightforward while there are others who are nothing but crooked and who can never be erect in word, deed or thought. Well, all these are controlled by the Supreme Lord who also combines in Himself these contrary traits. For instance, as Kṛṣṇa,
the cowherd boy, He would search for His missing calf inside the butter pots while, as Śrī Rāma, He wouldn’t mind speaking out the bare truth even to a demoness like Sūrpanakhā who met Him at Pañcavaṭi and enquired about Him.

(ii) *Black and white*: The Lord incarnated as Balarāma, of white Complexion and as Kṛṣṇa, of black complexion. When they moved, side by side, it looked as if a black mountain followed a white mountain.

(ii:) *Truth and falsehood*: As Śrī Rāma, the Lord was the great apostle of truth while, as Śrī Kṛṣṇa, He was a bundle of apparent contradictions, truthful unto the devout and the opposite of it to the otherwise.

(iv) *The young and the old*: The ageless Lord incarnated as a Babe, still retaining His stature as the Primate, the oldest of all (Purāṇa Puruṣa).

(v) *Old and New*: Ageless and hence old He, no doubt, is but, all the same, He retains the youthful freshness, ex-hilarating beyond measure.

mūvulakaṅkaḻum ăy, allăṅ ăy, ukappu ăy, muṇivu ăy, pūvil vāl makal ăy, tavaį āy, pukaį āy, paį āy, tēvar mēvit tōḻum tiruviņṇakar cēṇta pīrāṇ pāvīyēṅ maṇattē ưraikīṅṭa paraṇcuṭārē.  

(VI–3–6)

**Translation**

The resplendent Lord Supreme Who, in this sinner’s mind resides
And in Him combines the eternal Heaven and the ephemeral worlds,
Likes and dislikes, the Goddess of affluence and her number opposite;
Fame and opprobrium, stays in Tiruvuṇṇakar, the Celestials’ resort favourite.

**Notes**

(i) The three worlds, with their strange admixture of Satva, Rajas and Tamas, with their inhabitants, bound down
by their actions, past and present, liable to dissolution, as well as the Eternal Land (Heaven) in contra-distinction to the Sportive Universe, referred to above, are controlled by the Supreme Lord.

(ii) A thing, liked by some, is disliked by some others; the same person might like a thing at one time and dislike it at another. Some are affluent, being the recipients of Lakṣmi’s grace, while others are oppressed by chill penury, due to the lack of such grace. Some are praised worthy while there are others who are condemned as despicable. All these are controlled by the Lord; while He is extolled by the devout. He is condemned by the demoniac.

(iii) The Saint calls himself a sinner, recollecting how, in the earlier decad, he had the cheek, the impudence to shut the door against the Lord, when He presented Himself.

-param cuṭar utampu āy, aļukkup patitta utampu āy,
karantum tōṇriyum, niṅrūm, kaitavaṅkaḷ ceytum, viṅnor
ciraṅkajāl vaṇaṅkum tiruviṇnakar cērnta piṟaṅ
varam koḷ pātam allāl, illai-yāvarkkum vaṇ caraṇē. (VI–3–7)

Translation

Refuge, safe and sound, for each and every one,
There's naught but the glorious feet of the puzzling Lord,
Who's both the mundane and the ultra-mundane, hidden and open,
And stays in Tiruviṇnakar where Devas come and bow their heads.

Notes

The entire Universe is the Lord’s body. He also possesses His own unique form (Divya maṅgala vigraḥa), the aprākṛta (ultra mundane) and Śuddha Satva (impeccable purity).

He sustains all things and beings, hidden inside them as their Internal Controller; He also comes out in the open as Śrī Rāma and Kṛṣṇa. He is transparent to the devotees and hidden to the rest. His feet confer all boons and will
not give up the devotees even if the Lord and His Divine Consort Who is grace personified, do give up (a contingency which will, in the very nature of things, never occur). Hence, the Lord’s feet constitute the life refuge for one and all, from the exalted Brahmā down to the meanest creature.

\[\text{van caraṇ ṭuraṅkku āya, acuraṅkku vem kūṟṟamum āya, taṇ caraṇ nilarkil ulakam vaiṭṭum, vaiyāṭum, teṇ caraṇ ticaikkut tiruviniṅkař cērnta pirān eṇ caraṇ eṇ kanaṇ, enāi ālūṭai eṇ appaṇē.} \quad (VI-3-8)\]

**Translation**

In Tiruvinīṅkař, the Refuge of the southerly direction, stays Kāṇṇaṇ, my Liege-Lord, my sole Refuge, the Devas haven safe, The deadly opponent of the Asuras, Who caresses under His feet
And shelters the devout and leaves others in scorching heat.

**Notes**

(i) The Lord is known to be absolutely impartial and yet, whenever the Devas are tormented by the Asuras, the former seek refuge in Him and He engages Himself in a pitched battle against the Asuras and vanquishes them. There is, however, no inconsistency, if looked at in the manner indicated below.

(ii) In the tanks dug by charitable men, one man allays his thirst, while another drowns himself of death. The lamp is there to shed light during nights and make our movements easy. But then, the winged ants rush in and die. The Lord, by Himself, is not overzealous in protecting the Devas or hell-bent to put down the Asuras but none can help the latter category if they court destruction, as in the instances cited here.

(iii) Unto those, who seek Him as the Sole Refuge, He grants cool shelter and makes them forget all their erstwhile miseries. On the other hand, those who stray away from Him and run after the sensual pleasures, like unto trying to quench one’s thirst by swallowing
the blazing flame or reposing under the shade cast by
the swinging hood of the Cobra, are left severely
alone, to wither away.

en appaŋ enakkku āy, ikuḷ āy, enṇaŋ peṟṟavaḷ āy,
poṇ appaŋ, maṇi appaŋ, muttu appaŋ, en appaṇum āy,
miṇṇappoṇ maṭiḷ cuḷ tiruvuṅнакar cēṟuṭa appaŋ,
taṅ oppār il appaŋ, tantaŋaṭa tāḷ nilalē. (VI–3–9)

Translation

The peerless Lord Who unto me is Father, Mate and Mother,
All combined, my Sire, like gold, ruby and pearl put together,
Stays in Tiruvuṅнакar with its golden ramparts all around,
Me. He has under the cool shade of His feet grounded.

Notes

(i) The great Sages have proclaimed: “Vāsudeva tharucchāyă
nāthi śithā na gharmadhā . . . . ,” that is, the shade of
Vāsudeva, the gigantic tree, is most soothing and re-
freshing, it prevents entry into hell and is, therefore,
worth getting into. Such a shade has been granted to
Saint Nammāḻvār by the Lord of His own accord in
His spontaneous Grace. This great benefaction of
the Lord is being extolled by the Saint in this song.
By the shade of the Lord is actually meant service unto
Him in His immediate presence.

(ii) In the world around, the Father is distinct from the
Mother and the Mother is distinct from the Mate.
The combination of all these different functionaries
in one and the same person, is not possible except in
God Who is unique in all respects. So also, Gold
serves a certain purpose, the ruby serves yet another
purpose and the pearl, a third, but one can secure all
these benefits from the Lord alone, who is ‘All
in one’.
nilal veyyil, cirumai perumai, kuruumai neyumaiyum ay, cuvalvu-na nirtana, mariyum ay, avai allanum ay, malalu vay vanfu vail tiruvinnakar mangu piran kalalkal anri, marror kalaikan ilam; kaniinka[el. (VI–3–10)

Translation

Take it on oath, Saviour we have none but the feet
Of the Lord, who resides in Tiruvinnakar where go gay
The lisping bees, Who is at once, short and tall, shade and heat,
Things still and mobile and all else but to them attached. in
no way.

Notes

In every centum of this great work, there is a decad which
is addressed by the Saint to the world at large, wherein
he preaches the Supremacy of God, His amazing simplicity
etc. So then, this is the crucial decad in this centum,
conveying the golden message to the people that the feet
of the Lord, enshrined in Tiruvinnakar constitute our sole
Refuge.

The Lord is said to combine in Him all these contraries, the
cool shade and the scorching heat, the smallest and the
biggest, still, mobile and what not, as the entire universe,
the created worlds with their vast varieties, constitutes
His body and yet, He will not partake of these qualities.

kaniinka[el, ulakir! enru kani[mukapp[ nimirnta
tal-inaiyan-lla[ik kurukur ca[akopa[ Conor
anai ayirattu tiruvinnakarp pattum vallar
konai inri, vin[orkku enrum avar kuravarka[el. (VI–3–11)

Translation

Those that are well-versed in these songs ten, out of the
thousand,
Composed by Ca[akopa[ of Kurukur, at the Lord’s command,
Pointing to the worldlings, right in front, the Lord’s towering
feet,
Will for unreserved admiration by the Celestials become fit.
Notes

(i) The Dramiḍa (Tamil) Vedas, like the Sanskrit Vedas convey the Lord’s command—‘Śrūtis Śmrītir mamāivājñā.’

(ii) Those that are well-versed in these ten songs will compel the unreserved admiration of the ‘Nitya Sūris’ (the Ever-free Angels) in Heaven and command their respect, that even these people, dwelling in the dark land of nescience, are enjoying the Lord so well.

Sixth Centum—Fourth Decad (VI-4)
(Kuravai āycciyarōtu)

Preamble

In the last decad of the last centum, the Āḻvār wished to sustain himself by contemplating the Lord’s wondrous deeds during His Avatāras but literally broke down, overwhelmed by emotion. It was with deep sorrow, born of frustration, he then gave vent to his inability to steady himself and recount the Lord’s deeds, mighty and miraculous. But the picture which has now emerged, is vastly different, the erstwhile emotional break-down and exhaustion yielding place to exhilaration. In every song, the first two lines, (as in the original text), recount the Lord’s glorious deeds and activities while the next two lines bespeak the Āḻvār’s extraordinary joy, resulting from such recital cum contemplation. In dire contrast to the appalling sense of worthlessness, betrayed by him quite often in the earlier songs, the Āḻvār now concludes each song by showering on himself praises like, ‘there is none equal to me in all the land’, “there is none above me” etc. These do not, however, smack of bravado or hauteur, being the expressions of an ecstatic mind dissolved in God-love, by-no-means comparable to the utterances of those who are in their normal senses, dominated by egoistic compulsions.

In this decad, the Āḻvār confines himself exclusively to Kṛṣṇāvatāra. Stray references, here and there, to other Avatāras, such as the Lord spanning all the worlds as Trvikrama, have also an ultimate bearing on Kṛṣṇāvatāra only. c.f. Periyāḻvār Tirumōli
where Queen Yaśodhā beckons Baby Kṛṣṇa as "Come, Come, oh, Vāmana Nampi! Come. my darling!"

kuravai āyceiyarōṭu kōttatum, kuṟṟum onṟu ēntiyatum, uravu nirp poykai nākam kāyntatum utpaṭa, marṟum pala aravil-pallīp pirān-taṇ māya viṇai kalaiyē alaṟri, iravum naṇ pakalum tavirkilan-enṇa kurai enakkē? (VI–4–1)

**Translation**

Could there be any want for us, who dote, night and day, On the many exploits, mighty and marvellous, of the great Benefactor, Our Lord, resting on serpent-bed. His dancing with Gopīs, going gay, Lifting up Mount Govardhana and trouncing the serpent in deep waters?

**Note**

The Lord, who was reposing on His serpent-bed in the Milky-ocean, gave up His bed and came down to Mathurā (Uttar Pradesh). Recountingt he many deeds of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Who thus came down from the Milk-ocean to Mathurā, the Ālvār begins with the famous ‘Rāsa Kṛiḍā ’ where Kṛṣṇa assumes many forms and holds the hand of each of the half a million Gopīs, moving in a circle. It is but appropriate that the Ālvār begins with this event, as he feels that his reunion with the Lord, after all that squabble in VI-2, is like the ‘ Rāsa Kṛiḍā ’. On His part, the Lord, feels that His union with the Ālvār gives Him the same amount of pleasure as He had, when in the company of that vast multitude of Gopīs during that classic dance. And then, the said dance revealed the amazing simplicity of the Lord. Such simplicity can, however, be appreciated in its true light only when it emanates from one who enjoys paramountcy (paratva) as well. Therefore it is, that the Ālvār recounts the lifting of Mount Govardhana, betokening Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s supremacy, immediately after ‘Rāsa Kṛiḍā’.

T—18
kēyat tīm kuḻal ūtīṟṟum, nīrāi mēyytatum, keṇṭai oṅ kaṅ, vāc cap pūṅ kuḻal piṅṅai tōlkāl māṇantatum, māṟṟum pāla māyak kōlap pīṟṅ-taṅ ceykai nīṇaintu, māṇam kuḻaintu, nēyattōtu kaḻinta pōtu -eṅakkku ev ulakam nikarē? (VI–4–2)

Translation
Equal unto me, is there a world, as I go into raptures
Over the wondrous Lord, playing the flute sweet, leading cows to pasture,
Getting locked in sweet embrace of fish-eyed Piṅṅai, whose locks
Are with fragrant flowers bedecked and myriads of such miracles?

Notes
(i) A whole decad has been devoted by Periyāḻvār to a thrilling description of the enthralling strains from Lord Kṛṣṇā’s flute. Śrī Parāṣara Bhaṭṭar has epitomised all that, in just one Śloka of the second centum of his ‘Śrī Raṅgarāja Stavam’, where the author goes to the extent of saying that Śrī Kṛṣṇa felt entranced by His own music.

(ii) Oh, what a wonder of wonders! The Lord in Heaven, unfolding an unending stream of bliss unto the ‘Nityās’ and Muktaś, comes down to Earth, taking birth in the shepherd community, known for its low intelligence, and becomes one of them, tending the cows and calves with great delight, excelling even His desire to stay in Heaven. It is said that, even after His return to the Celestium, He fondly recollected this particular activity of His, during His Avatāra as Kṛṣṇa, and sometimes even uttered the sounds, “ḍriyō! ḍriyō!”, fancying that He was following the flock of cows and calves, tending them. Musing over Lord Kṛṣṇa’s wondrous deeds on Earth, the Saint feels that this unique enjoyment of his cannot be had even in the high Heaven where the Lord’s transcendent glory is far more pronounced, throwing into shade His other aspect of ‘Saulabhya’ (easy accessibility).
nikar il mallaraic cēṟatam, nirai mēyttatam, nil neţum kaic
cikara mā kalīru atṭatam, ivai pōḷanavum, piravum
pukar kol cōtip pirăn-tăn ceykai niṇaintu, ṭulampi, eṇṟum
nukara, vaikal vaikappērēn-eṇakkku eṇ iṇī nōvatuve?

(VI–4–3)

Translation

Could there be any affliction for me, who time does eke
With mind and tongue steeped in the deeds miraculous
Of (Krṣṇa), the radiant Lord, His killing the wrestlers peerless,
Tending the cows and slaying the elephant, tall and huge, with long trunk?

Notes

(i) Śrī Krṣṇa had to encounter hostile wrestlers on two different occasions. The first was when Akrūra escorted Him and Balarāma to Kamsa’s court, all the way from Vrindāvan. Right at the entrance to the palace was stationed a frenzied elephant of formidable size, in must, so as to pull down the Divine Brothers and trample them to death. But Krṣṇa pulled out the tusk and slew the animal with it, effortlessly. After overcoming this initial hurdle, they advanced towards the palace, only to be confronted, very soon, by two heavy-weight wrestlers, Cāṇūra and Muṣṭika, of enormous proportions. These were also vanquished, in no time, by Krṣṇa, the divine lad.

The next occasion, when Śrī Krṣṇa had to face wrestlers, was in Duryodhana’s palace. The Lord went to Duryodhana’s court, as a messenger from the Pāṇḍavas but the evil-minded Duryodhana had put up a nicely decorated throne for Śrī Krṣṇa, on a fake dais, with a false floor. As soon as Krṣṇa took His seat, the flimsy floor gave way and He went deep into the hollow beneath, where remained hidden a band of wrestlers, ready to pounce upon Him. Assuming a gigantic form (Viśva Rūpa), He quelled them all, with perfect ease.

(ii) The radiance of Śrī Krṣṇa, referred to, in this song, is the one, contemporaneously enjoyed and given
expression to, by the fortunate damsels in Mathurā city, who beheld the special glow on the Lord’s face after He vanquished the huge elephant and the mighty wrestlers.

nōva, āycci uralōtu ārkka iɾaŋkIRRum, vaṅcap peŋhaic căvap pāl unṭatam, ūr cakaṭam iɾac cātiyatum,
tēvak kōlap pīrān-taŋ ceykai niṇāntu, maṇam kuḷaṇtun,
mēvak kālaṅkal kūṭiŋeŋ-enaŋku en inī vēṇṭuvatē? (VI–4–4)

Translation
Contemplate do I, with all my heart, all the time,
The wondrous deeds of the Lord of ultra-mundane Form,
The pain on His person, when tied to a pounder by His mother,
His sucking to death the breast of (Pūtanā), the Imposter,
His kicking to pieces the demon in the cart-wheel and many others;
Is there indeed a thing I need, any further?

Note
Naṅciyar used to observe, with great feeling, while chanting this song: “Look at the telling manner in which this song has been worded by the Saint. The pain on the person of child Kṛṣṇa, when He was tied to the pounder by Yaśodhā, is now felt by the Ājvār as if it were inflicted on him. Oh, what an engrossment!”

vēṇṭit tēvar īrakka vaŋtu piɾantatum, viṅku irulvāy,
pūŋtu aŋru aŋnai pulampa, pōy aŋku ōr akkullum puķكاتum,
kāntal iŋri vaḷaṛntu, kaṅcaṇait tuṅca vaṅcam ceytatum,
ṁtu nāṅ alaṟṟapperrR-eñaŋku eṅna ikal uḷaćē? (VI–4–5)

Translation
Full—throated do I recount, right here, the deeds golden,
Of my Lord Who incarnated (as Kṛṣṇa) at Devas’ request,
And to set at naught the mother’s fears did retreat,
Under cover of night, into the shepherd clan and hidden
From enemies grew, outwitted Kañcaṅ and him did slay;  
Is there for me any want that needs to be allayed?

Notes

(i) The Lord’s incarnation is ostensibly at the request of the  
Devas but intrinsically to fulfil His own urge to mingle  
freely with the devout, over here, and feed them with  
His exquisite charm and exhilarating traits—the  
‘Śādhu paritrāṇāṁ’ (Sustenance of the devout), in  
its true sense.

(ii) King Kamsa, simulating affection for Balarāma and  
Kṛṣṇa, his nephews, invited them to attend the festival  
of archery so that they could be vanquished by the  
one or the other agency, set up by him for the purpose  
and then openly bemoan their loss, to avoid public  
suspicion. But, alas! he was outwitted by the Omni-  
scient Kṛṣṇa, who was well aware of Kamsa’s nefarious  
designs on Him, and put an end to him and his evil  
intentions.

(iii) Having lost all the earlier babes, right at emergence  
from her womb, Devaki caught hold of the Divine  
Babe’s feet and begged of Him, both, out of maternal  
love and fear of the tyrant of a brother (Kamsa), to  
retreat elsewhere and remain safe.

ikal koḷ puḷḷaip pilantatum, imil ērukaḷ cerṟatuṟum,  
uyar koḷ cōlaik kuruntu ocittatum upṭaṭa, marṟum pala  
akan koḷ vaiyam aḷanta māyaṅ, en appaṅ-taṅ māyaṅkaḷe  
pakal irāp paravap perrēn-engaṅku enṅa manāp parippē?

Translation

Blest am I to laud, day and night, the wonderful deeds  
Of my mysterious Lord Who spanned all the worlds,  
Tore into twain the beak of the demonia bird, controlled  
The unruly bulls and slew, ‘tween the
And pulled them down, these and many more wonders;
Could there for me be mental affliction any longer?

Note

A demon, set upon child Kṛṣṇa by Kamsa, stood on the bank of the river Yamuna, in the form of a gigantic stork and swallowed the Divine Child Who, however, blistered the stomach of the bird. Unable to bear the torture inside, the devil spat the child out and was about to peck at Him with its beak, when the latter took time by the forelock and split the bird’s beak into two and killed it. In his ‘Yādavābhuyudhayam’, Śrī Vedānta Deśika says that the bird was of formidable proportions, looking like a winged Kailās mountin, creeping slowly and that, after it was slain, its plumes were tied up, here and there, by the shepherd boys, as a warning signal for evil-doers, with sinister designs on the Divine child.

maṇap parippōtu ajukku māṇīta cātiyil tāṇ piṟantu,
taṇakkku vēntu urukkonṭu, tāṇ taṇa cīṟrattīnai muṭikkum
puṇat tulāy muṭi mālai māṟpaṇ, en appan-taṇ māyaṅkalē
niṇaikkum neṅcu uṭaiyēn-eṅakku ini yār nikar nil nilēṭē?

Translation

Is there any one, a match unto me, in this huge world,
Possessing as I do, a mind wholly absorbed in the wondrous deeds
Of my Sire, wearing tulāci garland fresh, on His crown
And winsome chest, the radiant Lord assuming Forms of His own
And coming into the midst of the dirty humans,
Just to give vent to His fury and quell ungodly demons?

Notes

(i) The last line conveys the cream of this song. The benevolent Lord gets terribly furious when His devotees are offended against; if He came down and took birth among the humans, with all their dirt and squalor and engaged Himself in a duel with Hiraṇya and Rāvaṇa,
it was because of the terrible affront they had thrown at His devotees. The Lord’s anger would not get appeased until He tormented and tortured the offenders, even though He could quell them all, by a mere resolve, without moving His little finger. This is how the illustrious Naṅcīyār would interpret the Lord’s advent and obviously, he derived his authority from the text of this song. Nampīḷḷai puts it that the mother’s anger over those, who tease and torment her child, can subside only when she pours forth her ire on them. In this simile the mother takes the place of the Lord and the child, that of His devotee.

(i) The Tulaci garland, cool and fresh, will be worn by the Lord only when His anger subsides after the extermination of the enemies of His devotees.

(iii) For His Avatāras, the Lord assumes the form of His choice, eminently suited for the purpose—” Icchā grahīto abhimatoru dehaḥ”, as the Sages put it and “Sambhavāṁ ātmamāyāya”, as the Lord Himself has stated in Bhagavad Gīta (IV—6). The word ‘ātmamāyāya’ means ‘ātmecchayā’, (as He likes).

-nil nilattoṭu, Vāṇ viyappa, niṟai perum pōrkal ceyu, vāṇaṅ āyiram tōl tuṇittatum uṭpaṭa, māṟrum pala-māṇi āy, nilam koṇṭa-māyaṇ eṅ appan-teṇ māyaṅkaḷē kāṇum neṅcu uṭaiyēn-eṅakku iṅi eṅa kalakkam unṭē?

Translation

Blest with a mind that can envision my wondrous Lord Who, as Vāmana, got as a gift (from Bali) the whole world And (as Kṛṣṇa) waged the battle big, the denizens admired Both in Heaven and Earth and Vānaṅ’s thousand arms severed, How can I from mental agitation suffer any longer?

Note

Bāṇāsura was a descendant of Mahā Bali from whom Lord Vāmana Mūrti managed to get the entire land, as gift. The furious battle waged by Lord Kṛṣṇa against Bāṇāsura and
how, in the end, he was let off with a bare four arms, out of the thousand he had, at the special intervention and request of Rudra, have been set out already, in great detail, in the notes below III-10-4.

kalakka ēl kaṭal, ēl malai, ulaku ēlum, kaḷiyak kaṭāy, ulakkat terrōtu cērā mayamum utpaṭa māṟṟum pala, valakkai āḷi, itakkaic caṅkam ivai utai māḷvaṇṇaṇai, malakkum nā utaiyērku māṟu uḷatō-im maṇṇiṅ micaiyē?

(VI–4–9)

Translation

By my tongue (love-inspired) I captivate the cloud-hued Lord Who the discus wields in right hand and the conch in His left, Who (as Kṛṣṇa) drove to the regions afar, in a chariot deft, Across the seas seven, the mountains seven and the seven worlds
And many such wonders did perform; equal unto me
Could there, in all the land, any one be?

Notes

(i) The episode of Śrī Kṛṣṇa going in a chariot, along with a Brahmin and Arjuna, to the ultra-mundane region and restoring to the Brahmin, his missing children, reclaimed from Heaven, has been set forth, in detail, in the notes below III-10-5.

(ii) Saint Nammāḷvār is also known as Parāṅkuśa, the goad weaning round his spiritual antagonists through his scintillating hymns and making the Lord Himself pliable, enraptured by these sweet, love-laden hymns. The significance of this name has well been brought out, in this song. The discus and conch in the Lord’s hands typify ‘Time’ and ‘space’ or ‘infinity’ and ‘immensity’, respectively. As Śrī Parāśāra Bhaṭṭar elucidated, while discoursing on this song, it is indeed impossible to enclose and entrap a God of this nature, but the prodigality of a Saint’s love does exceed these limits and encompasses even the Infinite. Verily, a God of ‘Space’ and ‘Time’ is like a wayward Elephant, roaming at liberty, unrestrained and even such an
Elephant, Saint Nammāḻvār, rather Parāṅkuṣa, in this context, claims to curb and restrain. That is why he is significantly referring to the cloud-hued Lord along with His attributes, namely, ‘Discus’ and ‘Conch’.

Translation

There’s none to order me about, blest that I am to approach
And adore the feet of my resplendent Lord
Who rid the Earth
Of its unwholesome burden, thro’ the great war of Mahā-
Bhāratha
And its wondrous strategy, with the resolve firm to rout
The armies, one and all, and did later His Celestium reach.

Note

The inhabitants of the Earth having turned out to be unholy
and selfish pleasure-seekers, Mother Earth couldn’t carry
the unwholesome burden. Lord Kṛṣṇa is said to have
incarnated, to rid the Earth of this unwholesome burden
and the great War of Mahābhārata came in handy for this
purpose, the number of survivors on both sides being so
sparse that they could easily be counted on one’s finger
tips. Lord Kṛṣṇa controlled the military strategy, unique
in several respects, at every turn and led the Pāṇḍavas to
a formal victory. After His hectic deeds, down below,
Śrī Kṛṣṇa went back to the Celestium. The Āḻvār exults
with chuckling pride, in this song, that he could enjoy the
manner of the Lord’s descent into this dismal abode of dirt
and devilry and His safe return to the Celestium, at the end
of His breath-taking activities over here. It is said that,
at the happy conclusion of the ten-day festival (Brahmotsava)
of Lord Raṅganātha, in Srīraṅgam, two Savants, by name,
Mutaliyāṇṭān and Empār, prostrated before each other and
and got locked up, in an embrace, in grateful acknowledgement
of the safe conclusion of the festival of the Lord, of an
extremely delicate Form and that too, in the midst of crores of persons, selfish and egoistic. Nañciyar, who happened to watch the said rapport between those two God-lovers, passed on the information to others and it has thus been handed down to posterity.

näyakan mulu ēl ulākukkum āy, mulu ēl ulakum tañvāyakam puka vaittu, umińntu, avai āy, avai allańum ām kēcavañ aći, ināmicaik kurukūrc caṭakōpañ cōṇṇa tūya āyirattu ip pattāl pattar āvar tuval inriyē.  (VI–4–11)

Translation

Those that learn these songs ten, out of the immaculate thousand
Composed by Caṭakōpañ of Kurukūr, adoring the lovely pair of feet
Of Kēcavañ, the Lord Supreme of the entire Universe Who sustained
All the worlds in His stomach and then spat them out,
Who pervades them all and would all the same
From them remain apart, will blemishless devotees become.

Notes

(i) Blemishless devotees: Those that learn these songs will be exclusively devoted to Lord Kṛṣṇa, like Saint Nammālavār. It is this exclusive devotion like unto that of Tōṇṭaraṭippoti Ālvār for the holy Śrīraṅgam, that the word ‘blemishless’ connotes.

(ii) The immaculate thousand: Contrary to his prefatory resolve to write out Śrī Rāma’s life story, Śrī Vālmiki introduced quite a few extraneous anecdotes, such as the genesis of Gangā, birth of Kārthikeya and so on. Likewise, Sage Vyāsa made no secret of his intention to tell the story of Lord Nārāyaṇa but got terribly discursive and literally turned his Mahābhārata into a war-memoir, with a bewildering maze of episodes, inter-twined and inter-locked. On the other hand, true to his resolve in ‘Tiruviruttam’, the first of his four works, that he would sing the praise of ‘Tirumāl’
(Mahā Viṣṇu) and nothing but that, Nammāḻvār kept up the tempo throughout, uninterrupted by anything else and thus his works became the cream of the whole compendium of ‘Divya Prabhandham’, even as ‘Puruṣa Sūktam’ gets the pride of place among the Vedas, ‘Manu Śrīti’, among the Dharma Śastras, ‘Bhagavad Gitā’ in Mahābhārata and ‘Viṣṇu Purāṇa’, among the Purāṇas. Thus ‘Tiruvāyvomol’ is pure and unalloyed.

Sixth Centum—Fifth Decad (VI-5)
(Tuval il mā maṇi māṭam)

Preamble

The theme of Nāyaki, Mother and Mate, that is, the Āḻvār expressing himself in the vein of a female lover, her mother and mate, by turns, has already been dealt with, in extenso, in the preamble to I-4. Of the hundred decads, comprised in this work, as many as seventeen reflect the ‘Nāyaki’ aspect, seven are put in the mouth of the Mother and three voiced forth, by the mates. Taking this Sixth Centum alone, VI-1, VI-2 and VI-8 are the utterances of Parāṅkuṣa Nāyaki, this one, the song of the mate while VI-6 and VI-7 are ascribed to the Mother. Thus, this centum reflects all the three types, like the fourth centum. As already elucidated, all these songs were, of course, the compositions of the Āḻvār, though ascribed to three different agencies, like unto the waters of the main river being conveyed through different channels. But then, let us now examine the necessity for the songs, in this decad, being put in the mouth of the mate.

In V-6, we saw the Lord’s glory and grandeur, enumerated by Parāṅkuṣa Nāyaki, possessed by the Lord. And now, the Āḻvār wishes to give expression to the depth of his love unto God. This only redounds to the greatness of the Lord, because all the auspicious qualities of the Lord and His unique prowess will go unheard, unnoticed and unsung but for His devotees who can revel in them and recount, just like the cool southerly breeze blowing in a depopulated place like the forest or the moonshine in the wilderness. Did not Periyāḻvār, in his opening song of benediction,
pray for long life for himself also, so that he could keep on singing the Lord’s praise and praying for His safety? Is not Saint Nammāḻvār the Lord’s poet and will not the Āḻvār’s greatness be, therefore, but a reflection of the Lord’s own? Even so, it would not be quite appropriate for him to sing his own glory, albeit the reflected glory of God. And so, the mates are pressed into service and, in essence, it is the exposition of the Āḻvār’s God-love, God-hunger and God-thirst, by some of the devotees. Thus, in this decade, the mates are telling the elderly women around about the profusion of the Āḻvār’s love unto the Lord, enshrined in ‘Tolai—villimaṅkalam’, a pilgrim centre in the deep South (Tamilnādu) near about Āḻvār Tirunakari (Kurukūr), the birth place of the Āḻvār.

tuvaḷ il mā maṇi māṭam ōṅku tolaivillimaṅkalam toḷum
ivalai nīr inī, aṅṅaimīr! umakkku ācāi illai; viṭumīṅṉ-
tavaḷa on caṅku, cakkaram eṅṟum, tāmarait taṭam kaṅ eṅṛum,
kuvalai on malark kaṅkaḷ nīr malka, niṅru niṅru kumūṟumē.

**Translation**

Ye, mothers, this lady is unto you lost henceforth,
Better give up all hopes of her, who the Lord does adore
In Tolaivillimaṅkalam where stand tall castles paved with gems flawless,
With a mind that whirls and tears welling in her flowery eyes;
Utter she can’t the words she feels the urge to express,
“‘The Lord’s lotus eyes broad and His lovely white conch and discus’.”

**Note**

King Janaka showed the horoscope of baby Śītā to the court astrologers. While predicting her great good fortune of getting married to the Supreme Lord and all that, they also foretold her exile into the forests. So also, when Caṭakōpaṇ was born, his parents elicited from the astrologers that he would be endowed with supreme knowledge and become world-famous and yet, there was the great risk of their losing
him, if ever they took him to Tolaivillimaṅkalam. The devout parents could not, however, resist the natural urge to take their child to the shrine in the forbidden place, come what may. The high destiny of the God-bound souls and their aim, none and nothing can avert. The resultant position, insofar as Parāṅkuṣa Nāyakī is concerned, the prophecies come true, is set out here by her mates. Actually, the mates come into the picture, only when the elderly women seek their aid for finding a way out of the trance-state into which the Nāyakī has worked herself up, on seeing minutely every little bit of the pilgrim centre, the temple and the Deity. Temples and pilgrim centres are not places to hurry through, like a race-horse, but to be paced through leisurely, reverentially beholding the towers and turrets. The buildings loom large in the rapturous eyes of the Nāyakī and look like tall castles, paved with flawless rubies. And then, she beholds the Lord’s enthralling Form, His holy weapons and ornaments and gets completely absorbed in admiration of them all. She stands isolated from her folks and finding that she has gone out of hand, the elders seek the good offices of her mates to pull her out of this engrossment. But the mates haven’t anything encouraging to say nor is there any point in putting up a bund after all the water has escaped. They do not mince matters either; they admonish the elders for having brought the Nāyakī to this pilgrim centre, knowing full well her susceptibilities. At the same time, the mates throw a very useful hint to the elders, that they would do well to follow in the Nāyakī’s foot-steps and get absorbed in the Deity and the surroundings, rather than give her up, as incorrigible. It is indeed a sight for Gods, the ravishing love of the Saint, throbbing with God-love, during those blissful moments of communion with the Lord. The Elders are, therefore, advised by the mates to behold, with admiration, the rapturous state of the Nāyakī whose expression falters, choked with emotion, like unto a cow, whose calf is tethered, away from her, pining for the calf to be fed with the milk welling up her teats and yet, unable to express, by mouth, her painful longing to reach her calf.
kumrugum Ocâi vilavu olit tolaivillimañkalam konçupukku,
amuta men moliyalai nîr umakku âcâi îngi akarînîr-
timir konçal ottu nîrkum; marçu ival têva têvapirâng enê
nimiyum vàyotu, kânkâl nîr malka, nekku, ocintu, karaiyumê.

(VI–5–2)

**Translation**

Ye, elders, brought you have to a point of no return,
This lady with a tongue, sweet and soft, having taken
Her to Tolaivillimañkalam with its fan-fare of festivals;
Dazed she remains and mention of the name of the Lord
universal
Twists her mouth and brings forth tears in abundance
From her eyes and keeps she withering down.

**Notes**

(i) Even the normal environment of Tolaivillimañkalam is
enticing enough and what to talk of the festivities, with
their rich and varied fares! The elders having brought
the God-bent Nâyakî during the festival going on there,
they stand no chance whatever of weaning her away from
the Lord and the allied attractions. Incidentally, we
get at the Śâstraik meaning that we would do well to
get initiated into God-head through our elders, rather
than the direct approach.

(ii) Could there be a tongue sweeter than that of the Lord’s
poet, singing the glory of that Insatiable Nectar? For
the devout, the Ālvâr provides the nectarean hymns to
drink deep from.

(iii) The Nâyakî stands speechless like the profound Brahma
Jîâni who scarcely speaks out. In the sixth prapâtaka
of Cândogypâniṣad, Svetaketu comes home after
undergoing a twelve-year course of instruction
(Gurukulavâsa) and finding him tongue-tied, his father
instantly perceives that the boy has acquired Brahma
Jîâna.
karai kol paim polil tan panait tolaivillimaṅkalam kontupukku,
urai kol in moliyālai nir umakkku acai inri akārīpūr-
tirai kol pauvattuc cērntatum, ticāl ūlam tāvī alantatum,
niraikāl mēyttatumē pitarri, netum kān nir malka, nirkumē.

(VI—5—3)

Translation

Ye, mothers, your hold on this sweet-tongued lady is gone,
For you brought her to Tolaivillimaṅkalam with fertile fields
and orchards fine,
On the river bank; utter she does how unto the Milky-ocean
The Lord came, how He spanned the sprawling Earth and
grazed
The cattle herds and as tears well up her longish eyes, she
stands dazed.

Notes

(i) *Sweet tongued*: The Ājvār’s hymns are very sweet to hear
and when one delves into their meanings, the commen-
taries, however numerous and copious they might be,
one cannot plumb their depth fully.

(ii) The elders cannot coax the Nāyakī and get her dislodged
from this pilgrim centre, even as it would not be possible
to induce the fertile fields and the orchards fed by the
waters from the river Tāmraparṇī to get uprooted and
proceed with them; in other words, the Nāyakī stands as
firmly rooted there as the fields and orchards themselves.

nirkum nālmagaivānār vāl tolaivillimaṅkalam kaṇṭapiṇ,
arkam ornūm ara urāl-malintāl kaṇṭir ival-anānaimir!
karkum kalvi ellām karun katha-vanṇan, kaṇṇapiriṅ engē
orkam ornūm ila; ukantu ukantu, ṛl makiṅtu, kuḷaiyumē.

(VI—5—4)

Translation

Ye, elders, this lady has ceased to be modest in the least
After beholding Tolaivillimaṅkalam, the Vedic scholars’ seat;
All her talks centre round Kaṇṇapirāṅ, the sea-hued Lord
And with no reserve, she thaws down, overjoyed.
Note

The Nāyaki was overwhelmed by the sweet chanting of the Vedas in Tolaivillimaṅkalam and she started musing over the Lord Who disseminated the Vedas, at the commencement of the epoch, to the four-headed Brahmā. Her innate modesty is no longer there, in her present rapturous state, and she openly rejoices. speaking solely about the Lord, the ultimate goal of all learning and knowledge.

kuḷaiyum vāḷ-mukattu ēḷaiyait tolaivillimaṅkalam koṇṭupukku, ēḷai kol cōtic centāmarak kan-pirān iruntamai kāṭṭinīr; maḷai peyṭal okkum kāṇṇa niriṇṭu anṟu toṭṭum maiyántu ival nulaiyum cintaiyal, anṉaimir! toḷum-at ticai urṟu nōkkiyē.

(VI–5–5)

Translation

Ye, mothers, this lady with forehead bright, deeply absorbed In the Lord’s auspicious traits, unto Tolaivillimaṅkalam you brought
And showed her the lotus-eyed Lord of bejewelled radiance; Rapturous she is since, with tears torrential in her eyes And with a heart in His beauty rooted, in that very direction she gazes.

Notes

(i) The effulgence of the God-love within is reflected on the Nāyaki’s forehead. By her very nature, she would thaw down in ecstasy, in deep contemplation of the Lord and now that she has been brought by the elders, face to face, with the radiant Lord, bedecked with jewels, at Tolaivillimaṅkalam, her God-intoxication has gone to a very high pitch. The Lord, even when unadorned, is extremely charming and now, He is adorned, imparting lustre to the Jewels on His person. Unto Him, so exquisite, the elders brought the Nāyaki who just fainted in ecstasy and even after she recovered, she would not lift her mind off Him and kept gazing in the direction of the Pilgrim centre. c.f. ‘Ekastha ḫṛdayā nūnāṁ Rāmamevāṅupaśyati’ (Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa, Sundara Kāṇḍa) So then, the chances of the elders getting the
Nāyakī restored to them were next to nil. The Nāyakī's love is unceasingly whirling, like the whirlpool in a stream, boring deeper and deeper but never scattering and passing away.

(ii) *The torrential tears:* When Manakkāl Nampi discoursed about God, Ālavantār (later, Saint Yāmunācārya), the Royal listener caught the spark all right and exclaimed that he Just can’t exist without beholding Him. Struck by this wonderful response, the great preceptor led Ālavantār to the august presence of Lord Raṅganātha, on seeing Whom, Yāmuna broke into tears, full and flooding. Like unto the dry match-stick, which readily strikes fire, the devout have but to be told about God and the heart immediately yearns to see Him; He has but to be seen and it makes them weep with tears of joy like Saint Nammāḻvār.

nōkkum pakkam ellām karumātcu cennel ōnku centāmarai
vāykkum taṇ porunāl vaṭakarai van tolaivillimaṅkāl: m
nōkkumēl, at ticai allāl, maru nōkku īlār; vaikal nāltōrum
vāykkol vācakamum maṇivaṇṇan nāmamē īval, āṟaṟaimē!

(VI–5–6)

Translation

Ye, elders, off Tolaivillimaṅkalam, the lovely city on the north bank
Of the cool Porunāl, full of red lotus flowers in the tanks,
Where stand Sugar-canies and paddy crops tall, where'er one turns,
This young lady, her eyes can’t lift and utters she the words,
At all times, spelling out only the names of the gem-hued Lord.

Notes

(i) Mostly, the Nāyakī is in a trance state and she seldom opens her eyes; if ever she did open the eyes and saw anything, it was only this pilgrim centre with its romantic setting on the north bank of Tāmraparṇi (also known as Porunāl), the cool river. If she opened her mouth, she would only spell out the Lord’s glorious names. Well, these are the observations of the mate.
(ii) In its esoteric meaning, the sweet sugar-cane denotes the devout, with a sweet bearing and disposition; the rich paddy crops, bent with the weight of the grains on the stalks, betoken the men of great learning, full of humility.

āṇṇaṁīr! aṇī mā mayīl ciṟumāṇ ival nammaik kaivalintu, eṇa vāṛttaiyum kēṭikūrāl, tolaivillimaṅkalam eṇu allāl; muṇṇam nōṟṟa vitikolō? mukil-vaṇṇaṅ māyam kolō? avan ciṟṇamum tirunāmamum ival vāyaṅkakal tiruntavē. (VI–5–7)

Translation

Ye, mothers, this lady sweet, like the lovely peacock and the doe young,
Has out of our hands gone and she wouldn’t hear about anything
But Tolaivillimaṅkalam; could this felicity on her devolve
By dint of accumulated merit or the cloud-hued Lord’s sweet resolve?
How distinct does she spell out His names and attributes!

Notes

(i) The Nāyaki’s lovely locks of hair are compared to the colourful plumes of the peacock and her bewitching eyes to those of the young doe.

(ii) The Lord’s names and attributes gain colour, when they are spelt out by His devotees with inimitable fervour, as when Śrī Parāśara Bhaṭṭar sweetly ejaculated the holy name, “Aḷakiya maṇavāḷappurumā! ” (Lovely Spouse), Śrī Śomāśi Āṇṭāṅ entoned “Emperumāṅar! ” (My own Lord, an epithet of Śrī Rāmānuja) and Anantaḷvaṅ uttered the holy name “Tiruvēṅkaṭam uṭṭaiyāṅ !” (The Lord of the holy hill, Tirupathi). It has been said that Vālmiki Bhagavān could impart special lustre to Rāmāyaṇa. The mate wonders whether all this felicity, the Nāyakī currently enjoys, could have accrued to her, by dint of her own merit and is led to think that it could be but the Lord’s sweet spontaneous grace.
tiruntu vētamum, vēlvīyum, tiru mā makaļirum tām malīntu
iruntu vāl poruna vaṭakarai vañ tolaivillimaṅkalam
karun taṭam kaṇṇi kaitoluta an nāl toṭāṅki in nāltorum
iruntu iruntu, aravintalōcana! eru ेrī nāntu, iraṅkumē.

(VI–5–8)

Translation
Ye, elders, ever since this lady, with dark eyes large,
Started adoring Tolaivillimaṅkalam, the affluent city
On the north bank of river Porumal, full of felicity,
With scrupulous vedic chantings and rituals well done,
She calls out now and then, ‘My lotus-eyed Lord’, and
dwindles down.

Note
The Nāyaki’s eyes became dark through their absorption of,
and deep penetration into the dark-hued Lord. From the
moment, she worshipped the Lord, enshrined in this pilgrim
centre, she got entranced by His lotus eyes and thawed down,
when she addressed Him, as her lotus-eyed Lord. She
couldn’t go on repeating it, much as she would like to, as she
dwindled down in a state of ecstasy.

iraṅki, nāltorum vāyverī, iva kaṇṇa nirkaḷ alamara,
maraṅkalum iraṅkum vakai, manivāṇavo! eru kūvumāl;
turaṅkam vāy pilantān urai tolaivillimaṅkalam eru, taṅ
karaṅkal kūppit toḷum-aṉvūrt tirunāmam karrṭaṅ pīṅnaiyē.

(VI–5–9)

Translation
Ye, mothers, this young lady calls out, “oh, gem-hued Lord!”
Day in and day out, with her mind deeply absorbed,
And tears splashing down her eyes, moving trees besides;
Ever since she learnt the name of that city, Tolaivillimaṅkalam,
where resides
The Lord who tore open the mouth of the demoniac horse,
In that direction she turns and with joined palms adores.

Note
Having been initiated into this pilgrim centre, the Nāyaki keeps
on reciting the Lord’s name, in such a manner that even the
inanimate beings, like trees, are moved. If these hymns can move even the stony hearts of the uninitiated men of the present day, what doubt could there be about their impact on the contemporary men and things, when the songs flowed from the Āḻvār’s rapturous lips! When Lord Kṛṣṇa played on the flute, Periyāḻvār would have it, that the trees shed honey in copious quantities, the flowers started falling down and the boughs bent down, in admiration. The voice of the yearning soul of the Āḻvār, with its mellifluous galore, would have doubtless made things around him react likewise. In fact, the mate says ‘that city’, in line 4 of the song, because she cannot reproduce the sweetness with which the Nāyakī spells out ‘Tiruttolaiyillimaṅkalam.’

piṇṇaikol, nila mā makalkol, tirumakalkol, pirantiṭṭal?
ença māyam kolō! ivaḷ neṭumāḷ enṭe niṟṟu kūvumāl;
muzzi vantu, avan niṟṟu, irumtu, uraiyum tolaivillimaṅkalam
ceṇṇiyāl vaṇaṅkum; avvūrt tirunāmam kēṭpatu cintaiyē.

(VI–5–10)

Translation

Perhaps this lady is Piṇṇai or Nilamakal (Mother Earth), full of grace
Or Tirumakal (Mahālakṣmī) herself, what a wonder it is, she keeps calling out
Netumāl (the all-pervading Lord) and bows before Tolaivillimaṅkalam where He stays,
And longs to hear the holy name of that place, by others spelt out!

Notes

(i) Looking at the Nāyakī’s intense longing for Lord Kṛṣṇa, the mates guess that she might be Nappiṇṇā, reborn; and then, her rapturous meditation on the Lord’s advent as Varāha, the Great Boar, makes them inclined to think that she might be an incarnation of Mother Earth. But still, the mates could not make up their minds, as the Nāyakī’s devout contemplation of Lord Rāmā suggests the possibility of her being no less than Sītā, reborn. In his inimitable way, Nampillai would say
that these divine consorts could, in certain respects, be compared to Parāṅkuṣa Nāyāki, but she is of such incomparable excellence that one is left wondering whether she has taken this unique birth for the resurrection of the whole world. What a wonder it is! Of course, anything can take place in the Lord’s Universe.

(ii) Her own love for the Lord is of enormous dimensions and yet, the Nāyāki is overwhelmed by the Lord’s love for her and calls Him out, in terms of His tall love, the all-conquering.

(iii) The Nāyāki loves to hear the name of this pilgrim centre, uttered by some one instead of mouthing it herself. The Lord is said to have come down to Tolaivillimaṅkalam and taken up His residence there, well ahead of the Nāyāki, so as to prepare the ground for the generation, in hér, of such intense God-love.

cintaiyāḷum collāḷum ceykaiyināḷum tēva pirānaiyē tartai tacāēkūrū atāinta vañ kurukūravar caṭakōpañ muntai āyirattuḷ ivai tolaivillimaṅkalattaic concoa centamilp pattum vallār atīmaiceyvār tirumālukkē. (VI–5–11)

Translation

Those that can recite these songs ten,
Which unto holy Tolaivillimaṅkalam pertain,
Out of the hoary thousand composed by Caṭakōpañ
Of Kurukūr, who, by word, deed and thought, adored
The Lord Supreme as Father, Mother and all, rolled
In one, will service unto Him render for ever.

Note

The hoary thousand: It might be asked how this work is claimed to be antiquated while there is the distinct reference to Āḷvār as its author. The element of antiquity comes in automatically if one considers the parity, which this Dṛamiḍa Veda enjoys with its Sanskrit counterpart. These thousand hymns were ordained by the Lord, just like the Sanskrit Vedas, as
revealed by His own words in Bhagavad Gītā, “Śrutis smṛtir Mamaivājñāḥ”, the veracity and blemishlessness, claimed for the Sanskrit Vedas, hold good equally for the Dhrimiḍa Veda (See aphorism 45 of Ācārya Hṛdayam).

The chanters of this decad will be blest to render service unto the Divine couple, without break or blemish, as Lakṣmaṇa did.

Sixth Centum—Sixth Decad (VI-6)
(Mālukku, vaiyam alānta)

Preamble

The last decad was put in the mouth of the mates of Parāṅkuṣa Nāyakī, while, in the current decad, it is her mother who speaks out the desperate condition of her love-lorn daughter. The manner in which the Nāyakī is dwindling down, losing, one by one, her feminine charms and embellishments, is set out, stanza by stanza. As a matter of fact, in IV-8 ante, these very things which now get dropped off, were despised by the Nāyakī, as not worth possessing, insofar as they had no bearing on Divine Service. As she meditates on the wondrous deeds, performed by the Lord, in each of His various Incarnations and the special traits then exhibited by Him, the Nāyakī goes into raptures and her body thaws down and dwindles.

mālukku, vaiyam alānta maṇālarku,
nīlak kartu niṟa mēka niyāyarku,
kōlac centāmaraiṅ kaṇṇarku, eṅ koṅkū alar
ēlak kuḷali īlantatu-caṅkē. (VI—6–1)

Translation

Engrossed is my daughter, whose fragrant locks are with flowers bedecked,
In the cloud-hued Lord with lotus eyes red,
The Spouse, Who the entire Earth once measured,
Full of love unto His devotees and she has her bangles lost.
Note

The Nāyakī withers down, as she gets absorbed in the Lord’s features, His attributes and deeds. The head acquires elegance because of the locks of hair. Again, that head is praiseworthy, which bows down in reverence and thus, locks which impart beauty to the head, correspond to the reverential attitude, which makes the head worth its while.

cāṅku, vil, vāl, taṇṭu, cakkarak kaiyārkus, cēṅkaṅṇivāyc ceyya tāmaraik kaṅṇarīku, koṅku alar taṇ am tuḷāy muṭiyāṅukku, eṅ maṅkai iḷāntatu-māmai niṛamē. (VI–6–2)

Translation

Meditating on the Lord with lovely lips and lotus eyes red, On whose crown is the tuḷāci garland, cool and lovely, which honey sheds, Who, the conch, the bow, the sword, the mace and discus wields, My daughter has lost her complexion fair.

Note

Pining for communion with the Lord of such enchanting description, who spanned the worlds, the Nāyakī is off colour. So says the Mother.

niṛam kariyāṅukku, nīṭu ulaku uṇṭa tiṛam kīlar vāyīc cīrūk-kaḷvāṅ–avaṛku, kaṟaṅkīya cakkarak kaiyavaṇukku, eṅ pīrāṅku irum kūntal iḷāntatu-pitē. (VI–6–3)

Translation

With her thoughts centred on the dark-hued Lord, Who the discus dynamic does in His hand hold, Whose lips suggest His having gulped down all the worlds. Who, in His stomach small, hid many a big world, My daughter with dense locks lovely, has her majestic bearing lost.
Note
The Lord, as the great Saviour, sustained all the worlds, with their variegated contents, in His stomach, during the deluge. And yet, the Nāyaki distressingly feels that it is all mere story, inasmuch as He has failed to extend to her the protection she badly needs.

piṭu uṭai nāṇmukaṇaipp paṭaittāṇukku,
māṭu uṭai vaiyam alanta maṇḍālarku,
nāṭu uṭai maṇḍarkkut tūṭu cel nampikku, eṇ
paṭu uṭai alkul iḷantatu-paṇpē. (VI–6–4)

Translation
My daughter, with broad tummy, has her natural pose lost, Steeped in thoughts of the Lord Who from His navel did create
The majestic Nāṇmukan (Brahmā), the Spouse Who the rich Earth spanned
And for the landed monarchs ran an errand.

Notes
(i) The Nāyaki’s natural composure undergoes alarming modifications, as she keeps meditating on the Lord’s traits, one by one.

(ii) Lord Kṛṣṇa ran an errand on behalf of the Pāṇḍavas, who would not be granted by their cousin, Duryodhana, even a square inch of land, not even a chair to sit on. And yet, the Pāṇḍavas are referred to, as the landed monarchs, in this song, as the Lord was on their side. The Nāyaki has just been thrown off her feet by the Lord’s exhibition of such amazing condescension as running an errand and doing the meanest of jobs for His devotees.

paṇpu uṭai vētam payanta paraṇukku,
maṇ purai vaiyam iṭanta varākarķu,
ten puṇal-paḷḷi em tēva pirāṇukku, eṇ
kaṇṭuṇai kōtai iḷantatu-karpē. (VI–6–5)
Translation

My daughter, with locks attractive, has been thrown
Into mental imbalance, steeped in deep meditation
Of the Lord Supreme, Who did on limpid waters vast recline.
Who, as the Great Boar, did the earthen world lift
And (unto Brahmā) the sanctified Vedas did gift.

Note

The Śāstras have brought out the Lord’s remarkable attention
for His devotees’ well-being and the various acts of bene-
faction, performed by Him for them. The mother now
says that her daughter (Parāńkuśa Nāyaki) has, in her
present state of dejection, lost the perspective and begun to
doubt seriously the veracity of these statements. She is
perhaps inclined to think that Sages Vyās., Parāśara and
Vālmiki might have been hired out by the Lord to say quite a
few good things about Him, which, in reality, do not hold
good.

karpakak kā aṇa nal-pala tōlāṛku,
pon-cutark kuṅru aṇṇa pūn tan muṭiyarku,
nal-pala tāmarai nāḷ-malark kaiyarku, en
vīl-puruvakoṭi tōṛratu meyyē. (VI–6–6)

Translation

My tender daughter, with bow-like brows lovely, has lost control
Over her body, buried in meditation of the Lord, sweet to
behold,
With shoulders many, like an orchard and arms like lotus, in
fresh bloom,
Wearing the crown lovely which does like a gold mount gleam.

Note

(i) The loss of control over the body denotes the Nāyaki’s
state of ecstasy, when she is entirely beside herself.
It is indeed a remarkable irony that the Nāyaki, from
whom the Lord cannot bear being apart even for a
split second, should get lost in meditation of the
exquisite form of the Lord, whereas Sita said, as reported
by Hanumān, that she could wait for a month for her reclamation by Rāma.

(ii) The Nāyaki’s brow has the reputation of making the Lord turn His attention in the direction of her glance, as indicated by the twist of her brow. This ensures the influx of the Lord’s grace on all those associated with the Ālvār.

mey amar pal kalaṅ naṅku aṁintāṅukku,
pai araviṅ aṅaṅp pāliyināṅukku,  
kaiyoṭu kāl ceyya kaṅña-pirāṅukku, en 
taiyal īḷantatu-taṅṇuṭaṅc cāyē. (VI–6–7)

Translation

Gone is the charisma of my daughter, entranced by thoughts Of Kaṅna whose hands and feet are red, Who lay on the hooded serpent, His lovely bed, Wearing many a jewel, well matched with His Form exquisite.

Note

The Nāyaki’s mother says that her daughter sincerely believed that all these enchanting features were possessed by the Lord, only to hold a rapport with her and now that it has turned out to be otherwise, she feels frustrated and withers down.

cāyak kuruntam ocitta tamiyaṅku,  
māya cakaṭam utaitta maṅaḷaṅku,  
pēyaip piñampaṭap pāl uṅ pīrāṅukku, en  
vācak kuḷali īḷantatu-māṅpē. (VI–6–8)

Translation

My daughter with fragrant locks has her grandeur lost, With a mind poised in the Lord Who the twin trees did uproot, The Spouse who to pieces dashed the wicked demon in the wheel And sucked unto death the breast of Pūthānā, the devil.

Note

The mother regretfully watches the present miserable condition of her love-smitten daughter, shorn of all her erstwhile grace and grandeur.
māṇpu amai kōlattu em māyak kuṟalarku,
cēn cuṟark kuṟru aṅṅa cēnuṟar mūrtikkku,
kāṅ perum tōṟrattu em kākutta nampikkku. en
pūn pūṇai menmulai tōṟrattu-porrē.

Translation
My bejewelled daughter, with slender breasts, has lost all her charm,
Wrapt in thoughts of Kākuttan (Lord Rāma) of exquisite Form,
Radiant like red blaze, the shining mount tall,
Vāmana, the wondrous, whose charm did enthrall one and all.

Note
Says the mother, in a fit of depression: “Although born to
entice the Lord by her amazing beauty, yet my daughter has
now lost all her beauty, wrapt in thoughts of the handsome
Lord”.

porpu amai nilmuṭip pūn tan tulāyarku,
mal-poru tōḷ uṭai māyap pirāṇukku,
nirpaṇa pal uruvāy nirkuṅ māyarku, en
karpu uṭaiyāṭṭi iḷantatu-kaṭṭē.

Translation
Stripped of all her attainments stands my daughter of knowledge
sound,
Wrapped in thoughts of the wondrous Lord, Who does abound
In one and all, still and mobile, wearing the tulāci garland
Cool and lovely, on His crown, tall and majestic, whose
shoulders
Are more than a match for the world’s most mighty wrestlers.

Note
Having singled out the loss suffered by the entranced Nāyaki, in
each of the preceding songs, the Mother now says that her
daughter has indeed lost all her feminine attainments, without
any exception. The Lord’s crown, by itself, is exceedingly
attractive and the tulāci garland, worn on it, enhances its
grandeur still further, keeping the Nāyaki spell-bound.
kaṭṭu eḻil-cōlai nal vēṅkaṭavāṉaṇaik
kaṭṭu eḻil-teṇ kurukūrc caṭaṅkōpaṇ col
kaṭṭu eḻil āyirattu ip pattum vallavar
kaṭṭu eḻil vāṉavar pōkam unpărē.

(VI–6–11)

Translation

Those that are well-versed in these songs ten,
Out of the thousand, metrically excellent, composed by Caṭa-
kōpaṇ Of Kurukūr with its ramparts lovely, in adoration
Of the Lord at Tiruvēṅkaṭam, with orchards full of fragrance,
Will on a par with Celestials enjoy heavenly bliss par excellence.

Note

The Lord at Tiruvēṅkaṭam is referred to, but once, in this
decad, and that too, in the end-song. This is similar to
the solitary mention of this Deity, made in the opening song
of III-9.

Sixth Centum—Seventh Decad (VI-7)
(Uṇṇum Cōru, Parukum nīr)

Preamble

The mother continues her narration, in this decad also. She
lay beside her love-lorn daughter, soothing her, as best as could be
done. But suddenly, the mother groped the bed next to hers and
discovered that her daughter was not in it. The former searched for
the latter, high and low, but in vain. The mother was, however,
well aware of her daughter’s exuberance of love for the Lord, en-
shrined at Tirukkōḷūr and, therefore, rightly concluded that the
Nāyakī should have gone there. The Nāyakī’s extraordinary
devotion to that pilgrim centre is now voiced forth by the mother.
Actually, the Āḻvār’s longing for incessant communion with the Lord
at Tirukkōḷūr finds expression, in this decad, the mother functioning
as but the mouthpiece.

uṇṇum cōru, parukum nīr, tiṇṇum vēṟṟilaiyum, ellām
kaṇṇaṅ em perumāṉ eṟṟu enṟē, kankal nīr malki,
maṇṇiṇu avan cīr valam mikkavaṅ ur viṇavi,
tiṇṇam en ilamāṅ pukum ur-tirukkōḷūrē.

(VI–7–1)
Translation

'Tis certain that my daughter like unto the doe young,
Who, with tears welling up her eyes, always keeps saying,
Kaṇṇaṇī is unto her the food of the hungry, beverage of the thirsty
And the betel chewed for pleasure, has, after due enquiry,
Gone to Tirukkōḻūr where resides the Lord. grand and majestic.

Notes

(i) The famous author of 'Ācārya Ḥṛdayam' has succinctly brought out the superior excellence of the Ālvār vis-à-vis the Rṣīs. Whereas the Rṣīs subsisted on the forest produce, such as roots, fruits etc. Lord Kṛṣṇa was the sole Sustainer for Nammāḻvār, the very food needed for appeasing hunger, the water required for quenching thirst and the betels one chews for pleasure, the one and only source catering to his God-hunger, God-thirst and God-love. The Ālvār was 'Kṛṣṇa tṛṣṇā tāta', the very personification of God-love. Unto him, Vāsudeva was all, "Vāsudevas sarvamiti". The gnostic mother was, therefore, quite sure that her daughter of such a disposition would have found her way, after due enquiry, to Tirukkōḻūr, the place where the Lord exhibits the exuberance of His wealth and auspicious qualities, in super-abundance.

(ii) An interesting question was posed by Āḷavantār (Saint Yāmūnācārya) to his audience, as to which of the two, Saint Nammāḻvār who looked upon God as his food etc., or Saint Tirumaṅkai Ālvār who exclaimed that the Lord had stolen away his soul, they had to be more apprehensive about. They observed. "We have indeed to fear more, the former's precipitate flight, alone and unaided, to the shrine at Tirukkōḻūr, than for the latter who is already in the company of the Lord at Tiruvāḷi, no matter how the union came about, stealth or otherwise. Our sympathies are naturally with Parāṅkuṇa Nāyaki, on her lone journey, in quest of the Lord of her heart". The great master, however, thought otherwise; according to him, there was the fear
of Tirumaňkai Āḻvār and the Lord getting into a state of delirium on account of their rapturous reciprocation of ravishing love, a state of inebriation or stupor, such as the addicts of dōśura-narcotic fall into. The plight of Saint Tirumaňkai Āḻvār, drowned in love, therefore, excited their fear more than that of Saint Nammāḻvār who was yet lonely and self-conscious, full of ardent expectation of meeting his beloved Lord.

(iii) The eyes of the Saints, soaked in God-love, swim with pearls of tears of delight. As Mahābhārata puts it, even God-Science, such as Upanishads, is remote from the ambrosia of Lord Hari’s narratives, if it fails to melt the heart, wet the eye and thrill the frame. Nañciyar used to say: “Thrice did I go over the treatise of Tiruvāymoţi with Tirunaraiyūr Araiyyar but none of the teachings did affect and melt my heart so much as when I actually witnessed him once, when explaining a passage, transported into the region of ecstasy, with tears rolling down the cheek”.

(iv) A native of Tirukkōḻūr left the holy land and employed himself elsewhere, tilling the land. Anañtāḷvān, a great devotee, who happened to see him, enquired where he came from. On learning that the man hailed from Tirukkōḻūr, Anañtāḷvān grew furious and exclaimed that one could as well graze a couple of asses, staying in that holy land and eke out one’s livelihood, rather than forsake the land of eternal living where the Eternal Master stays, in all His splendour. Similarly, when Saint Rāmānuja was proceeding to Tirukkōḻūr, he saw a woman coming from the opposite direction and elicited from her that she was actually coming from holy Tirukkōḻūr. The Saint exclaimed, in great surprise “What, is it at all possible for those who have once taken their abode in that holy place to leave it?”

(v) Tirukkōḻūr is one of the eighteen pilgrim centres of Pāṇḍiya nādu. It is also the birthplace of Maturakavi Āḻvār.
绺, ｶ่น, uto, uto, ta alguippôl anôtaiya
periau tårkalumè pita, carpu vàn itarì,
ceru mal valam cer pañat tirukkô sûrkkè
poru kol, uraiyèr, kotiyèn koti-pùvaikalè? (VI–7–2)

Translation

Ye, Pùvai birds, this sinner’s daughter, who makes
The whole world, hall and hamlet, prattle like herself the Lord’s names
And His insignia, breaking the bounds of modesty, has it seems
Reached Tirukkô sûr, rich and fertile; will you unto me utter
If she would at least for your sake come back here?

Notes

(i) The mother enquiries of the little pùvai birds, the playmates of Parâṅkuṣa Nàyakì, whether she would come back, at least for their sake. She is so dazed that she is not conscious of the fact that she can’t expect a reply from the speechless birds.

(ii) The mother is at a loss to understand why her daughter should at all go elsewhere, in search of the Godly, having herself induced God-consciousness in one and all, in her native place itself, where every one keeps uttering the Lord’s holy names and attributes like her. It is noteworthy that, to saints, the utterance of the holy name of God is so precious sweet that they imagine, the whole world sings forth like themselves. The world is indeed acceptable to them when they invest it with their own divine sentiments and see God everywhere; otherwise, it becomes detestable, just like the Kingdom of Ayodhya itself, detested by Bharata, when Râma was not there. Sri Nampillai puts it that the mother questions the necessity for the Nàyaki going all the way to Tirukkô sûr, while she could as well enjoy all that felicity in her native surroundings, the mutual enlightenment and entertainment in the domain of God-love, in the company of kindred souls.
pūvai, painkilikal, pantu, tūtai, pūm puṭṭikal,
yāvaiyum tirumāl tirunāṁkaḷē küvi, eḻum eṇ
pāvai-pōy iṇit tāṇ paḷaṇat tirukkoḻūrkkē–
kōvai vāy tuṭippa, mālaikkanaṇṭu eṇ ceyyum kolō? (VI–7–3)

Translation
All that joy one derives from the articles of sport,  
The ball, flower basket, cooking pots, little birds and parrots,  
In singing the Lord’s holy names my daughter would have,  
And yet, I know not how she would actually fare  
In Tirukkoḻūr, cool and fertile, with trembling lips red and  
tearful eyes.

Note
The mother says: “Even in her childhood days, when one  
could expect her to play with toys, my daughter revelled in  
singing the Lord’s holy names. It is not as if she was devoid  
of the means of sustenance and had to go elsewhere, in  
search of it. I don’t know why she has at all gone to Tiruk  
kōḻūr”.

kollai enparkokolō-kuṇam mikkaṇaḷ eṇpar koḷo-  
cillai vāyp peṇṭukal, ayal-cēri ullaṟum? eḷḷē!  
celvam malki avaṇ kīṭanta tirukkoḻūrkkē  
mel īṭai nuṭāṇka iḷamān cella mēvinaḷē! (VI–7–4)

Translation
My daughter, like unto the doe young, has her mind made up  
To go to plentiful Tirukkoḻūr where reclines the Lord,  
Straining her waist thin; I know not whether the local gossips  
And neighbouring women will praise her as Godly  
Or condemn her as immodest and unruly.

Note
There are two ways of looking at the Nāyaki’s behaviour. Those  
who have unflinching faith in salvation through the Lord’s  
redemptive grace and await the descent of such grace on them,  
in due course, would certainly not countenance the Nāyaki  
running about, courting the Lord, while those, who are all
agog for the quick consummation, the acceleration of the union with the Lord, cutting short the interval, would surely applaud the Nāyaki’s flaming love and ardour. Thus there is scope for condemnation as well as felicitation of the Nāyaki, by the women of the village and those in the neighbouring village, giving rise to the mother’s speculation, as above.

mēvi, naintu naintu, vilaiyāṭalurāḷ en cirut
tēvi; pōy, iṅit tāṅ tirumāl tirukkōḻūrīl
pū iyal poḻilum, taṭamum, avan kōyilum kanṭu,
āvi uḷ kuḷira, eṅnaṅē ukakkumkol iṅre? (VI–7–5)

Translation
My little angelic daughter, in God-head engrossed, has thinned down
And from recreation refrains, she has from here gone
To her Lord unique in Tirukkōḻūr and to her heart’s fill,
Enjoy she shall, the orchids fine, the tanks and the temple;
What a pity, watch I can’t how indeed she regales!

Note
Even during childhood, the Nāyaki’s sole pastime was to sing the holy names of the Lord while her playmates would want to indulge in routine recreation. And now, she has gone to the famous pilgrim centre, Tirukkōḻūr, abounding in lovely scenery, warming up her heart. The manner of her enjoyment will indeed be unique but the mother feels that she is not by the side of her daughter to watch her jubilation.

iṅṛu eṅakkku utavāṭu akaṇṭa iḷamāṅ iṅip pōy,
tēṅ ticait tilatam aṇaiya tirukkōḻūrkkē
cēṛu, tāṅ tirumāl tirukkaṇṇum ceṉvāyum kanṭu,
niṅṛu niṅṛu naiyum-neṭum kaṅkal paṇi malkavē. (VI–7–6)

Translation
My doe-like daughter is unto me of no avail,
She has left me and gone to Tirukkōḻūr, the jewel
Of the South and there she would just dwindle,

T–19
Gazing at the Lord's lovely eyes and lips red,
With tears of joy swelling up her eyes broad.

Note

This song is but a follow-up of the preceding song, describing
the manner of the Nāyakī's rejoicing, at the other end.

malku nīrk kāṇṇōtu, maiyal ura maṇattinaḷāy,
allum naṇ puḷakulum neṭumāl enṛu alaiṭtu, īṇip pōy,
celvam malki avan kiṭanta tirukkuḷūrkkē
olki olki naṭantu, eṇṇaṇē pukumkol ocinte?  (VI–7–7)

Translation

I wonder how my daughter, weak and tired,
With tears brimming the eyes and by deep love fired
For the Lord of her heart, beckoning Him, day and night,
Could trudge her way to Tirukklōr, all right.

Note

The mother has now begun to suspect whether her daughter,
weighed down by God-love, could have at all trudged along,
to Tirukkuḷūr without getting bogged down on the way.

ocinta nuṇ iṭaimēl kaiyai vaittu, nontu nontu,
kacinta neṇciṇāḷāy, kaṇṇa nīr tuḷumpac cellumkol-
ocinta on malarāḷ koḷunaṇ tirukkuḷūrkkē
kacinta neṇciṇāḷāy, emmai nīṭṭa em kārikaiyē?  (VI–7–8)

Translation

With a mind, soaked in love, unto Tirukkōḷūr drawn,
Where resides the Spouse of Lakṣmī, the lotus-born,
My pretty daughter has forsaken me and gone;
Holding her waist, thin and emaciated, in great pain,
With tearful eyes, could she have to her destination gone?

Note

The mother thinks that the Nāyakī should have forsaken the
former and gone to the Lord at Tirukkōḷūr, to worship the
holy conjunction of the Lord and the Divine Mother
(Lakṣmī), banking on Her support, sure and sweet. At the same time, the mother also apprehends whether the frail daughter could at all stand the strain of the journey to that place and make it all right.

kāriyaṁ nallaṅakaḷ avai kā-nil, ēn kānnaṅukku ēnru īriyāy iruṇpāḷ; itu ellām kiṭakka, iṇip pōy, cēri pal pāli tūy iṟaippa, tirukkoḻurkē nēriḷai naṭantāl-emmai oṉṟum nīnaitilalē! (VI–7–9)

**Translation**

My bejewelled daughter with her love-laden heart
Would all things good, unto her Kaṇṇan set apart;
Leaving all the wealth over here she has set out
Towards Tirukkoḻūr; the folks here will come out
With all sorts of scandals against her but she minds not
All that and unto her we really matter not.

**Note**

Whereas the worldlings would want all good things for themselves and their sons and daughters, Parāṭikūśa Nāyakī would, in the exuberance of her love for Lord Kṛṣṇa, insist that all good things be earmarked for His use. With such great wealth of God-love in her, where was the need for her to go anywhere else? This is what agitates the mind of the mother; rather, she feels impoverished without the Nāyakī and pines for the latter’s attention. As a matter of fact, one’s own children become worthy of reverence and worship, when they become God’s own. Saint Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār said in Periya Tirumoḷi, VII-2-9, “How can I look upon the (Spiritual) son, who goes to worship the Lord at Tirukkaṅga-puram, as my (bodily) son?”. Indeed, worthiness makes no distinction between father and son, preceptor and disciple. It is said that one Ammuṅiyāḻvār used to prostrate unto his own disciple, being fully conscious of the latter’s spiritual greatness, demanding such reverence. One day, the great Naṅciyār led his disciple, Nampillai, to the holy assembly, where the former loudly acclaimed the greatness of the latter.
niṇaikkilēn, teyvaṅkāl! netum kañ ilamāñ ipip pōy,
āgaippu ulakum utaiya aravintalōcanaṇait
tiṇaippaiyum viṭāl; avañ cēr tirukkōlūrkkē
maṇaikku vān pāliyum niṇaivyāl-cella vaittaṇalē. (VI–7–10)

Translation

Oh, gods, my broad-eyed daughter, like the doe young, has
gone
To the lotus-eyed Lord Supreme, in Tirukkōlūr, all of a sudden,
With no thought of infamy on her family heaped and gazes
At Him there, all the time, I am indeed in a maze.

Note

Unable to brook separation from her daughter, the mother
feels that the Nāyakī has been away from her, for quite a
long time. It was indeed high time, she had come back but
then the mother visualises the possibility of the Nāyakī
getting absorbed in the exquisite charm of the lotus-eyed
Lord (Aravintalōcana) standing in front of the Deity, all the
time, with no intermission. In such a frame of mind, there
was no question of her being worried about what others
might say about her abnormal behaviour and how it would
affect the reputation of the family, as a whole. The mother
addressed the Celestials in the upper regions, as if to enlist
their sympathy.

vaitta mā nitiyām matucūtanaiyē alarī,
kottu alar polil cūl kurukūrc caṭakōpaṇ conṇa
pattu nūrul ip pattu avaņ cēr tirukkōlūrkkē
cittam vaittu uraippār tikaḷ poṇ—ulaku ālvārē. (VI–7–11)

Translation

Those that chant these songs ten, with devotion to Tirukkōlūr,
Out of the thousand composed by Caṭakōpaṇ of Kurukūr,
With flower gardens in fine array all round, in adoration of
Matucūtana,
The accumulated Treasure supreme, will over the Eternal Land,
reign.
Note

The Lord, as the Treasure supreme, can be freely drawn upon, by one and all, without any fear of extinction, being an in-exhaustible fountain of bliss. The chanters of this decad will have none of the difficulties the Ālvār faced, such as the confrontation between Mother and daughter; on the other hand, they can hold perfect sway over Heaven.

Sixth Centum—Eighth Decad (VI-8)
(Poṇ-ulaku āḷīrō)

Preamble

This is yet another decad, where the Ālvār sends messages to the Lord through birds, bees etc, the two earlier ones being I-4 and VI-1. This is the third such decad and the fourth and the last decad of this kind is IX-7. The technique, in this regard, having been already elucidated in the preamble to I-4, it would suffice if the distinguishing feature of this decad is brought out, namely, the message is now sent to the Lord in His 'Para.' or transcendent and 'Antaryāmi' or hidden Form, as Internal Controller of all, as could be gathered mainly from Stanzas 4 and 5 of this decad. It may be recalled that the messages in I-4 and VI-1 were conveyed to the Lord in His 'Vyuha' and 'Vibhava' aspects, respectively.

The Nāyaṅi, who set out for the coveted Tirukkōḻur, couldn't reach the place; as apprehended by her mother, she got bogged down en route, due to her intense God-love and, stranded half way through, she sends the messages, as in this decad. The trait of the Lord, invoked by the Nāyaṅi, is 'compassion' as Ṣīḻān would put it, as could also be seen from the oft-repeated rerain of the songs, in this decad. According to Śri Parāśara Bhaṭṭar, the Lord's feeling of oneness with His devotees (aikārasya), His sense of identity with them, is invoked, vide the sixth stanza.

Poṇ-ulaku āḷīrō, puṇaṅi mūjutu āḷīrō-
nal nalap pulliṇāṅkāl! viṇaiyāṭṭiyēn nān iranteṅ;
mun ulakkanṟkaḷ ellām paṭaitta mukil vanṇaṅ, kaṇṇaṅ,
en nalam koṅṭa pirāṅ-taṅakku, en nilaimai uraitte. (VI-8-1)
Translation

Ye, birds of manners good, this sinner does entreat
That you should unto the cloud-hued Lord, Who did create
The worlds, the Benefactor, Who in me instilled love so great,
Report my condition; I will then unto you grant
The right to rule the entire Earth and Heaven grand.

Notes

(i) Two special points are made out, in this song. No reward is too great for those who mediate between us and God, not even the Earth and Heaven, put together. Therefore it is, aphorism 432 of ‘Śrī Vacaṇa Bhūṣaṇa’ avers that it would be possible to recompense the Ācāryā, in an adequate measure only if there were four vibhūtīs and two Gods. The idea is that any reward, short of both the worlds (the Nītya Vibhūti or the Eternal Land and the Līlā vibhūti or the sportive Universe) and God Himself, will be inadequate and, in order to make a suitable reward, two sets of each would be necessary, an obvious impossibility.

(ii) Again, the Āḻvār’s greatness is such that he has the power to grant to whomsoever he wishes, sovereignty over Earth and Heaven. God’s love for the Saints is so great that they are endowed with the Lord’s own powers, in this respect. Only a superficial observer, who is just puzzled over the Āḻvār falling at the feet of birds and bees to carry his message to the Lord, will question the Āḻvār’s competence, as above. The questioner will do well to realise that the Āḻvār has been deliberately kept on, in this world, by the munificent Lord, so as to bequeath to His devotees, the nectarean hymns to subsist on. The Lord is indeed so pliable unto the Āḻvār that He unreservedly places Himself and all His possessions at his disposal. The messages, such as those featured in this decad, are but facets of the Āḻvār’s God-love of matchless intensity.

(iii) Tradition has it that Arulāḻapperumāḻ Emperumāṉār (a disciple of Śrī Rāmānuja) made a request to Kūrattalvāṉ (an intimate disciple of Rāmānuja) to plead with Lord
Raṅganātha to take the former to Heaven. Instances of this kind could easily be multiplied.

mai amar vāl neṭum kaṇ maṅkaimār munṛu eṇ kai īruntu, ney amar iṅ aṭiṅl nīccal pāloṭu meṅṅṟō-kai amar cakkarattu eṇ kaṅivāy pṛumāṅṅaiṅ kantu, mey amar kātal colli, kiliṅkāl! viraintu ōṭi vantē. (VI–8–2)

Translation
Ye. parrots, meet you should my red-lipped Lord,
Holding the discus and convey my desire to get locked
In His sweet embrace; come back quick and daily take
In my hand perched, porridge sweet, mixed with ghee and milk,
In front of the mates with long, lovely eyes with collyrium treated.

Note
Having offered both Heaven and Earth to her emissaries, in the last song, the Nāyaki now offers to give her very self unto them, a more precious gift, coveted by the Lord Himself and that too, not secretly, but in front of all her mates. It is noteworthy that the Nāyaki indicates beforehand how she would reward her emissaries. The accent thus ultimately rests on service unto the Lord’s devotees.

ōṭivantu, eṇ kuḷaṁmēl ocaly mā malar ūṟṟō,
kūṭiya vaṇṭiṇaṅkāl! kurunāṭu uṭai aivarkaṭku āy,
āṭiya mā neṭum tēṛppaṭaṁ nīṟu elac cēṟa piraṅ
kūṭiya taṅ-tulavām uṇta tū maṭu vāykaḷ koṇṭē. (VI–8–3)

Translation
Ye, jolly swarm of bees, better go and suck the honey
From the cool tulāci on the locks of my Lord,
Who to pieces got smashed steeds fine and chariots large
And victory won for the five of them (Pāṇḍavas), come back quickly
And, amid the flowers bright, on my hair make merry.

Note
Here is a case of collective bargaining by a swarm of bees, on behalf of the Nāyaki. And when they come back with
their mouths, soaked in honey from the Lord’s locks, they could jolly well play right on the Nāyaki’s head and thus indirectly feed her with the Lord’s honey.

tū matu vāykaḷ koṇṭuvantu, eṇ mullaikaṁmēl tumpikal!
pū matu uṇṇac cellil, viṇṭaiyēṇaśp poycetu aṅkaṇra
mā matu vār taṅ tulāy muti vāṇavar-kōnai kantu,
yām ituvo takkavāru engavēṅtum kaṇṭir, nuṅkaṭkē. (VI–8–4)

Translation

Ye, beetles sweet, lurking in Jasmine flowers by me reared,
When next in search of honey you go, meet the Lord
Of the Celestials in Heaven, sporting cool tulāci garland
On His crown, Who with this sinner freely mingled,
As in a dream and left, and say ‘tis hardly meet
That He should unto sovereignty stick and from me depart.

Notes

(i) The beetles, ever in quest of honey, are directed by the Nāyaki to the Lord in Heaven, on whose crown is honey-studded tulāci garland, so as to gather the honey therefrom and incidentally tell the Lord that He should not keep aloof from her, at that distance, gloating over His transcendent glory. It is through such mediation by the God’s chosen few, His detachment from us is changed into attachment.

(ii) The creatures were languishing without honey, as the flowers on the Nāyaki’s locks as well as the surrounding gardens had all dried up, due to her separation from the Lord. And so, the Nāyaki directs them to the Lord in Heaven, sporting tulāci garlands, studded with honey.

(iii) Lest the Nāyaki should collapse, if ever she got scent of her impending separation from the Lord, He was telling her, during their erstwhile rapport, that He would never part from her. The Nāyaki takes the blame on herself that it is her sin that made even the truthful Lord utter lies, in this manner, during their erstwhile rapport.
nuṅkaṭku yañ uraikkēn vammin, yañ valartta kilikā!
vem kañ pul-ūrntu vantu, viṅaīēnai neṅcam kavaṅtta
ceṅkan-karumukilai, ceyya vāyc cēluṅ karpakattai,
eṅkuc cenrākilum kaṇtu, ituṅō takkavāru? eṃminē. (VI–8–5)

Translation

Come here, ye, my pet parrots, let me unto you tell,
Be it anywhere, You have to go and meet the cloud-hued Lord,
The lotus-eyed, the wish-yielding tree, unique, mounted on
the hot-eyed bird,
Who unto me came and stole this sinner’s heart; Him do tell
‘Tis not meet that He should from me be apart.

Notes

(i) Be it anywhere: Go and ferret Him out, wherever He might
be hiding, even as Hanumān solemnly resolved that
he shall go to swarga and find out Sītā even if he couldn’t
locate her in Lāṅkā. It is this phrase that gives the
clue for the interpretation that this song deals with the
‘Antaryāmi’ (hidden or all-pervading) aspect of the
Lord, as well.

(ii) Unique wish—yielding tree: What indeed makes the Lord
unique, as distinguished from the legendary ‘Karpaka’
tree, has been set out admirably in Iṭu commentary;
The classical tree can only grant the wish of others; it
has no wish of its own nor can it make over itself to
others. But the Lord can and does, of His own will,
give Himself over to His devotees. The Nāyakī feels
that the Lord has gifted away to her both His vibhūtis
(the Eternal land and the sportive universe), in such a
manner that she could, in turn, gift them away to any
one of her choice.

(iii) The hot-eyed bird, referred to, in this song, is Garuḍa
who frowns on the ungodly and blisters them with his
looks.
en minnu nul marvan, en karum perumang, en kannan,
tan mannu nil kalalmel tan tulay namakkku atri nalkan;
kalminkal egri ummai yan, karpiyavitta maggamcolli,
celinkal-tivinaiyen valartta ciru puvaikale! (VI-8-6)

Translation

Ye, little Puvai birds, by this fell sinner reared,
Go unto my dark-hued Kannan with shining sacred thread
On His winsome chest which unto me He once gave,
Sweet and docile, He will to none but us give
The cool tulaci, decorating His feet long; unto Him recite
The hymns I have taught, remembering them quite in tact.

Notes

(i) The little Puvai birds, commissioned by the Nayaki to
carry her message to the Supreme Lord, were naturally
diffident about getting the Lord’s attention. The
Nayaki, therefore, enthuses them by saying that the
Lord, who had enticed her by His sweet decorations,
exquisite Form and amazing simplicity, would surely
give unto His devotees, the tulaci worn on His feet.
As a matter of fact, the sacred basil is worn by the Lord
on His shoulders and chest, crown and feet and yet, the
devotees specially long for the tulaci, worn on the Lord’s
lovely feet, their safe haven. The Lord, who completely
identified Himself with His devotees, would give the
tulaci on His feet to none but them.

(ii) This fell Sinner: The Nayaki says this, in her state of
separation from the Lord, rather feels vexed at that she
has to take work from her pets, instead of fondling them
in the sweet company of her Lord.

(iii) Our great preceptors have taught the ‘Mantra Ratna’
(Dvayam) to one and all, without distinction of big and
small. Likewise, the Nayaki has taught even these
little birds the truth about the Lord, how He would
surely yield the tulaci from His feet to the aspiring
devotees and that one of such great compassion could
ill-afford to be away from the Nayaki.
(iv) The disciples, who stood reverently at the bed-side of Saint Arulâapperumâl Emperumâñâr towards the fag end of his stay in this abode, found that the Saint was exercising his mind over some thing. On enquiry, they elicited, that he was meditating on how a simple bird (dove) caused grief to Lord Râma and literally bled His heart. Vibhiśâna’s admission to Śrî Râma’s camp was hotly debated, down below, while the supplicant was anxiously poised in mid-air, having entrusted himself to His keeping. The Lord was, however, annoyed over the delay in responding to the destitute’s call, caused by such a debate and He affirmed that whosoever sought refuge in Him, be he a friend or foe, was entitled to His protection without demur. Declaring this creed, the Lord also cited the episode which won for a mere dove, deathless praise. Overcoming fear and hatred, the male dove welcomed the slayer of his mate and fed, on his own flesh, the weary fowler. Verily, this episode should have wounded the Lord’s heart sorely, when eventually He slew Râvana, who had kept Sitâ in captivity. Nampîllai used to give out the full import of this episode, thus: “Once we confide in the Lord and entrust ourselves to His keeping, as Vibhiśâna did, this simple gesture carries us on to the very acme of spiritual eminence. After our surrender unto God, as the Sole Refuge, He puts through the process of salvation and such is His glory, perfection and grace on which we have but to implicitly rely. We don’t have to bend even a blade of grass for our salvation”.

pûvaikaḷ pôl nirattan, punṭarikaṅkaḷ pōlum kaṅñaṅ, yāvaiyum yāvarum āy niṅra māyaṅ, en ālip pirāṅ, māvai val vāy piḷanta matucūtaṅku en māṟṟam colli, pāva’kal! tirkkirirē, viṇaiyāṭṭiyēṅ pācaravē? (VI–8–7)

Translation
My dolls, can you my message convey
Unto the wondrous Lord of blue tint and lotus eyes,
Who unto me displayed His lovely discus,
Who the forms of all things and beings acquires,
Who slew Matu and split the mouth of a demoniac horse,
And this sinner's miserable plight allay?

Note

The Nāyaki's plight is such that she is obliged to seek the assistance of even inanimate things like dolls; the Supreme Lord seems to be indifferent while the mobile creatures like the winged birds have their own occupations. In the last resort, she falls back upon her very playthings. The folks around question why at all she should agitate like this, when the Lord is indifferent. The Nāyaki's answer is that she just can't but come under His spell when she meditates on His charming complexion, bewitching eyes, auspicious traits and wondrous deeds.

Translation

You, immaculate stork with flawless plumes, please spare
A day for me, go and meet the Lord in Heaven
With bluish locks, pure and fine, and of Him enquire
How long this sinner should like this dwindle; tell Him, in fine
Except His impeccable Self, refuge for me there's none.

Note

The Nāyaki prays to the stork, near at hand, to carry her message to the Lord of the Celestials, in Heaven and bursts into grief. She can't articulate and spell out her woes, in detail, as both her grief and the Lord, whose separation is the cause thereof, are too deep for words.

pērttu mārtu ēr kalaīkaṇ vinaiyāṭṭiyēn nān onru ēlēṇ; nīrī tirainēl ulavi irai tē ūm ērtu iṉaṅkāl!
kārt tirāl mā mukil pōl kannan, vināvar-kōṇaik kaṇṭu,
vārttaikal koṇṭu, aruḷi uraiṭr-vaikal vantirunte. (VI–8–9)
Translation

Ye, herds of herons, wading thro’ waves, in search of food,
Other than you, this sinner has none to go and meet the Lord,
Like unto dense rain-clouds, Chief of the Celestials
And bring His message and recount graciously
Unto me, sitting beside me, days on end.

Note

These birds are commissioned by the Nāyaki to go and meet
the Lord in Heaven, surrounded by Angels and regaling
them (like unto rains, unleashed on the ocean instead of on the
crops, withering away) and tell Him, His greatness lay not in
His might and majesty in that transcendent setting but in
His loving condescension unto the desolate Nāyaki who
was dwindling, down below, sunk deep in dejection. And
then, these birds were to bring back His message and keep
recounting His words to her, sitting by her side, days on end,
being the only source of sustenance for her, in the present
context.

vantiṟuntu, ummutaiya manic cēvalum nirum ellām,
antaram onṟum inṟi, alarmēl acaiyum anṇaṅkāl!
enn tiru mārvaṟku ennai inṇavāṟu ival kāṁmīn ennru,
mantiṟattu orru unartti, uraiyir-marumāṟṟaṅkālē. (VI–8–10)

Translation

Ye, swans, in front of me, gliding gaily on flowers,
With your lovely males with no hindrance, go and tell
The Lord bearing Tiru on His chest, when alone in His chamber,
How I fare and unto me His reply do come and tell.

Note

The Swans are instructed by the Nāyaki, to disclose her critical
condition to the Lord, when He retires to His private
chamber, on the conclusion of His Durbar, so that it can
catch the attention of ‘Tiru’, Lakṣmi, the Gracious Mother,
the great Intercessor between the Lord and His Subjects.
The birds are to bring back the Lord’s reply and inform the
Nāyaki.
māṛṛaṅkaḷ āyntukoṇṭu, matucūta-pirāṇ āṭimēl
nāṛṛaṅkoḷ pūm pojil cūḷ kurukūrc cāṭakōpaṇ cōṇṇa
tōṛṛaṅkaḷ āyirattul ivaiyum orupattum vallār
ūṛṛiṅkaṇ nuṇ māṇal pōḷ urukāniṟpar nūṟyē.

(VI–8–11)

Translation

Those that are conversant with these songs ten,
Out of the thousand composed in choice diction
By Cāṭakōpaṇ of Kurukūr, full of fragrant flower gardens,
Adoring Matucūtaṇ’s lovely feet, will indeed thaw down
Like unto the sands minute in water springs.

Notes

(i) The end-song usually gives out the tangible (in concrete
terms) benefit accrued by dint of learning the songs in
this decad. Melting tenderness of heart is indeed a
great virtue when one sees that only those with such
a disposition can tread the path of Bhakti (God-love)
and that is acquired by those who are conversant with
this decad. Intangible though it might seem to the
superficial reader, it is indeed a priceless possession
worth coveting.

(ii) The gardens of Kurukūr are once again, in full bloom,
seeing that the Nāyaki herself has derived sustenance
from the certain hope that the message conveyed to
the Lord in Heaven at His private chamber, will not
go unheeded.

Sixth Centum—Ninth Decad (VI-9)
(Nīr āy nilaṁ āy)

Preamble

The Lord did not present Himself before the Ālvār in spite
of the errands run by his emissaries, as in the last decad. The
Ālvār, therefore, decided to raise his own clarion call of deep
yearning, reaching the very Heavens, with robust faith in the
fruition of his full-throated call for deliverance. It would indeed
be well-nigh impossible for the Lord to stay in Heaven, once the
Ālvār’s voice is heard by Him, over there.
nir āy, nilaṇ āy, tī āy, kāl āy, nēṭu vāṇ āy,
cīr ār cūṭarkal īraṇṭu āy, civaṇ āy, ayaṇ āṇāy!
kūr ār āḷī veṇ cāṅku ēnti, koṭiyēṇpāl
vārāy orunāl-maṇṇum viṇṇum makīlavē. (VI–9–1)

Translation
Oh, Lord, You pervade the elements, one and all,
The Sun, the Moon, Civaṇ and Ayaṇ, as Internal Controller
of them all;
Please appear before this sinner, for a day at least, holding
the discus sharp
And the white conch so that Heaven and Earth do rejoice.

Note
The Āḷvār could certainly cognise the Universal Form of the
Lord, in the created world of multifarious things and crea-
tures, even as Prahlāda did. There was obviously no need,
in that case, for him to send emissaries to the Lord, here
and there, as he has been doing. And now, the Āḷvār
clarifies his stand; he pines for the Lord’s extraordinary
Form of exquisite charm, wielding the sharp discus and the
white conch, the Lord’s ‘Divya maṅgala vigraha’, the
Supernal Form. It is for beholding this enthralling Form
of the Lord, even if it be but once, that the Āḷvār is pouring
out his heart. Did not Arjuna insist, after beholding the
Lord’s Viśvarūpa’ (the breath taking Cosmic Form of fromid-
able dimensions) that He be seen as the lovely Kṛṣṇa, as
before, with just four arms, as against the thousands shown
to him?

maṇṇum viṇṇum mak’la, kuṇal āy, valam kāṭṭi,
maṇṇum viṇṇum k-ṇṭa māya ammaṅē!
nāṇī uṇai nān kāṇṭu, ukāntu, kūṭṭāṭa,
nāṇī, orunāl ēṇālattūṭē naṭavāyē. (VI–9–2)

Translation
Oh, wondrous Lord, as the midget (Vāmana), your bewitching
Form,
The whole Universe did enjoy, you did (from Bali) take
All the worlds; for a day at least, do unto this land come, 
So that I dance around, under the magic spell of your walk.

Note

Unto the Āḻvār who invited the Lord to come down here 
and exhibit His superb Form, the Lord would appear to 
have told that He would rather comply with the Āḻvār’s 
request after lifting him up to Heaven, in due course. But 
the Āḻvār insists that He, who displayed His exquisite Form 
to Asuras like Mahā Bali, shouldn’t hesitate to respond 
to his (Āḻvār’s) devout call and regale him, right here.

ñālattūṭē naṭantum, niṟṟum, kiṭantu, iṁuntum, 
cālap pala nāḷ ukamṭōṟu, uyirkaḷ kāppāṉē! 
kōlat tiru mā makalōṭu unṇaik kūṭāṭē, 
cālap pala nāḷ, aṭiyēṅ inṇum tāḷarvēṅō? 

(VI–9–3)

Translation

Oh, Lord, in every age You did on Earth incarnate 
And succour Your subjects for thousands of years, 
Assuming postures many; Still, should I for long be apart 
From you and Your consort Divine and languish, right here?

Note

The Āḻvār rightly questions the Lord who incarnated, in 
many ways and on many occasions, to succour His devotees, 
whether He cannot incarnate once more, for His sake. As, 
Śri Rāma, the Lord walked through the depopulated forests 
where very few could enjoy His entrancing gait. And now, 
why should He not walk in front of the Āḻvār, yearning to 
behold His majestic gait, at least once in a way?

tāḷarntum muṟintum, cakaṭa acurar uṭal vēṟāp 
pilantu viya, tiruk kāḷ āṇṭa perumāṅē! 
kīḷarntu piramaṉ, civaṉ, intiraṉ, viṇṇavar cūḷa, 
viḷaṅka, orunāl kāṇa vāraṅy-viṇṇitē. 

(VI–9–4)

Translation

Oh, Lord, Your mighty feet dashed to pieces 
The demon in the cart-wheel; appear at least once
Up in the sky along with Pīrāmāṇ. Cīvāṇ and other Devas
So that I may enjoy the sight of your grand galaxy.

Note
The Lord’s feet afford protection not only to us all. His subjects, but to the Lord, as well. Baby Kṛṣṇa was fast asleep in the cart, an improvised cradle, when a demon entered the cart-wheel. The Babe cried for milk and the legs kicked violently against the wheel, shattering the demon to pieces. Therefore it is, the text in this song (original) contains a phrase (Tirukkālāna Perumāṇ) which denotes that the Lord got many a thing accomplished through His feet. It should indeed not be difficult for the Lord to concede the Āḻvar’s request, as impediments, if any, could easily be overcome by the Lord’s feet.

vinīmitu iruppāy! malaimēl niṟṟpāy! kāṭal cēṟṟpāy!
manmitu uḷalvāy! ivarṟul eṇkum maṟṟintu uṟṟavāy!
en mitu iyaṇṟa pura aṇṟattāy! eṇatu āvi-
ulumitū āṭi, uruk kāṭṭātē olīṟṟpāyō?

Translation
Oh, Lord. (in Your transcendent glory) You stay in High Heaven,
Stand do You in Mount (Tiruvēṅkaṭaṁ, in Your Iconic Form),
You recline on the Milk-ocean and on Earth You’d roam
(In Your Incarnate Forms); invisible You’d remain
Inside all things and beings. innumerable are the regions far beyond,
Which You pervade; should you hide yourself after stimulating my mind?

Notes
(i) The five different manifestations of the Lord, namely, ‘Para’, ‘Vyūha’, ‘Vibhava’, ‘Antaryāmi’ and ‘Arca’ are set out here. The ‘Vyūha’ denotes the Lord’s seat of creative activity, namely, the Milk-ocean; all the other aspects have been indicated in the verse itself, within brackets.
(ii) The Āḷvār longs for the external perception of the Lord inside, in His ‘Divya Maṅgala Vighraha’ (exclusive Form of exquisite charm).

pāy ōr aṭi vaittu, ataṅ kīlp paravai nilam ellām tāy, ōr aṭiṅāl ellā ulakum taṭavanta māyōṅ! unṅaik kaṅpāṅ varunti, eṇaṁāḷum tīyōṭu uṭaṅcēr melukāy, ulakil tirivēṅō?

(VI–9–6)

Translation

My wondrous Lord, encompass You did, in just one pace, The entire land by oceans surrounded and by another Pervaded all the regions above; in vain do I bother To behold You, how long more should I in this world suffer Like wax close to fire ere we come face to face?

Note

There was a time when the Lord was after the Āḷvār, trying to reclaim the errant soul, straying away from Him and eluding His grasp. But now, it is the other way round; the Āḷvār is madly after the Lord. Who is eluding him.
The Āḷvār’s plight is like that of the wax close to fire, as distinguished from wax actually placed on fire, neither dead nor alive, in the true sense.

ulakil tiriyum karuma kati āy, ulakam āy, ulakukkē ōr uyirum āṇāy! puṛa aṇṭattu alakil polinta ticai ṭattu āya aruvēyō! alakil polinta aḻivilēṅukku arulāyē.

(VI–9–7)

Translation

My Lord, You are the Super-Soul of both the visible and the invisible,
The acts and the performers in all the worlds besides the souls innumerable
In the regions afar, the released souls whose knowledge permeates
Ten directions; shed unto me, with failings innumerable, Your sweet grace.
Notes

The sentient beings (intelligent souls, embodied) and the non-sentient matter, which constitute the worlds, form the body of God and they are inseparably related to Him, as attributes are to a substance, body to the soul.

Whosoever performs acts as the means for securing certain objectives, owes the very performance of those acts to the Lord who endowed them with body and limbs but for which they can't function in the manner they are doing. And then, the reward due, in respect of such performance, is also made by Him.

ārivilēñukku arulāy, ārivār uyr āṇāy!
veri koḷ cōti mürttiñ atiyēñ neṭumālē!
kīrīcēytu, ēṃnaip purattīṭtu, inṇam keṭuppāyō-
pīrītī oṛu arīyā atiyēn āvi tikaikkāvē? (VI-9-8)

Translation

Oh, Lord, in the gnostics your very Soul You find,
Your Form resplendent is full of fragrance, unto me You bear
Inordinate love, Your grace on this ignoramus please do con-
fer,
I look upon You as my Sole Refuge, pray do not confound;
To put me astray thro’ some mischief, do You still intend?

Note

In the preceding song, the Āḻvār invoked the Lord’s grace and yet, the Lord did not condescend to come unto him. The Āḻvār grows sceptical about the Lord’s intentions whether He still tries to confound him and unsettle his firm conviction that the Lord's lovely feet constitute his sole Refuge, making him slip back to his old ways.

āvi tikaikkā, aivar kumaikkum ciṅṅpam
pāviyēnaip pala ni kāṭṭip paṭuppāyō?
tāvi vaiyam koṇṭa taṭṭam tāmaraikaṭkē
kūvik koḷḷum kālam inṇam kuṛukātō? (VI-9-9)
Translation

My Lord, won’t you cut out the interval and in Heaven bind
Me unto Your lotus feet large which spanned the worlds
Or do You intend to finish this sinner off and confound my
mind,
Keeping me unto petty pleasures of the senses five exposed?

Notes

(i) The Āḻvār prays unto the Lord that He need no longer
persevere in the dangerous experiment of keeping him
in this land of nescience, where the senses have free
play. Nampillai, in his unique diction, would put it,
as a preamble to this song, the Āḻvār telling the Lord,
"You ask me what mischief You have played unto me;
let me tell You that Your exposing me to the vagaries
of the senses is the farthest limit up to which Your
mischief can go. I very well knew, the day You put me
in this harrowing world, You actually buried me alive
and put spadefuls of earth on top."

(ii) When Naṉciyar was at the bed side of ailing Tirukkur-
kaippirāṅ Pillāṅ (one of the commentators of Tiruvāy-
moḻi), the latter was heard repeating the last line of
this song (as in the original text), "Will not the final
call from Heaven come quick?". Naṉciyar started
sobbing, on hearing this, pained by the thought of the
master passing away from their midst. The illustrious
Pillāṅ, however, called the Ciyar to order, asking him,
"What indeed moves you thus, to tears? Do you
really think that the Heavenly bliss is inferior to our
sojourn here?"

Translation

Oh, wondrous Lord, the so-called bliss, in disembodied state
On final emancipation, is no doubt eternal and changeless at
any time,
But, alas! can it ever match the bliss of service at Your feet
Even if it be but once and that, only for a short time?

Note
Reference to the petty pleasures, prompted by the five senses, was made by the Āḻvār in the last song. This would appear to have raised a doubt in the Lord’s mind whether or not the Āḻvār eschewed the ‘Kaivalya Mokṣa’, which was everlasting, undergoing no modification, at any time. The Āḻvār, therefore, hastens to clarify his stand in this regard, as well. The so-called bliss of enjoying one’s own self endlessly, in the disembodied state, is hardly worth a day’s purchase. It cannot stand any comparison with the bliss of rendering service at the Lord’s feet, even if it be for a short while.

terital, niṇaital, eṇnal ākāt tirumālukku
uriya tooṭar toṭar tooṭan caṭakōpaṇ
teriyac conṇa or āyirattul ip pattum
uriya tooṭar ākkum, ulakam unṭārkē. (VI–9–11)

Translation
Those that learn these songs ten
Out of the profound thousand, composed by Caṭakōpaṇ, The vassal of the vassals’ vassals, the eternal Servants Of Tirumāl Whom mere learning or contemplation Or meditation cannot gauge, will become the exclusive servants Of the Lord Supreme, Who did all the worlds gulp down.

Note
The Lord is, no doubt, to be realised through learning, contemplation and meditation but all these, by themselves, will be of no avail, unless accompanied by deep love for Him. The Āḻvār plunges himself down to the bottom-most depth of service, like unto the extremely thirsty diving into the deep pocket of water in the river bed. This is the only way by which he could ward off the postures of the worldlings on
the one hand, and the intensity of his longing for communion with the Lord, on the other. In this very vein, the Ālvār spells out the benefit accruing from the recital of the songs in this decad, namely, getting absorbed in the intimate service of the Supreme Lord.

Sixth Centum—Tenth Decad (VI-10)  
(Ulakam uṇṭa Peruvāyā)

Preamble

In the last decad, the Ālvār voiced forth, in deep anguish, his inordinate longing for communion with the Lord, so as to be audible to Him, right in Heaven. And yet, there has been no response from the Lord and the Ālvār is, therefore, in a state of extreme mental distress and physical debility. He is, however, quick to realise that the Lord stands enshrined in holy Tiruvēṅkaṭam (Andhra Pradesh), the common meeting ground of the 'Nitya Sūris' (Eternal Heroes in Heaven), the 'Nitya Samsāris' (worldlings), birds and beasts. At this holy centre, the Ālvār seeks refuge at the feet of the Lord through the good offices of the Divine Mother, inseparably poised on His winsome chest, voicing forth his sole dependence on Him. In the first nine songs of this decad, the Ālvār dwells upon the glory and grandeur of the Lord, the Great Saviour, and, in the tenth, he surrenders at His feet, the Sole Refuge. No doubt, the Ālvār had surrendered himself earlier also at the feet of the Lord, enshrined in other Pilgrim centres, c.f. IV-9, V-7 and V-8, but there is as much difference between those and the one currently resorted to, as between 'Tirumantram' and 'Dvayam'. While the holy conjunction of Mahālakṣmī, the Divine Mother and the Lord is but implicit in the former, it is explicit in the latter, as in this decad, vide tenth song.

ulakam uṇṭa peruvāyā! ulappu il kirtti ammanē!
nilavum cuṭar cūl oḷi mūrtti! neṭiyāy! aṭiyēn ār uyirē!
tilatam ulakukku āy niṅga tiruvēṅkaṭatu em perumāṇē!
kula tōḷ aṭiyēn uṇa pātam kūṭum āru kūrāyē.  (VI—10—1)
Translation

My Lord at Tiruvēṅkaṭam, the bright vermilion mark on Cos-
mos’ face!
With Your mammoth mouth You gulped down the whole
Universe
And thus retrieving it, gained peerless fame;
Of supernal form resplendent, Thou art Supreme,
Dearest unto me, Your humble vassal from generations,
To attain Your feet, Your grace I invoke with veneration.

Notes

(i) The Āḻvār prays that he should be enabled to enjoy the
beatific bliss, in close proximity to the Lord at
Tiruvēṅkaṭam. The Āḻvār’s grief, in not being able to
get at the Lord’s feet, calls for the same attention on
His part, as the great deluge when He did sustain all
the worlds, with their contents, inside His stomach.
All that fame, He derived by that great gesture, will
be totally nullified in case He didn’t relieve the Āḻvār’s
distress.

(ii) The great Saviour is indeed large-mouthed, as the Āḻvār
puts it. Pledged to protect the supplicants who seek
refuge in Him, He goes the whole hog out and still
does not feel satisfied that He has done enough for them,
as in the case of Draupati-an insatiable hunger for
protecting those who seek protection. At His bidding,
enemies turn friends. A serpent, named Sumukha,
sought Lord Kṛṣṇa’s refuge and protection against the
fearful raids of Garuḍa, the tribal enemy of the serpent
race. The Lord vouchsafed protection to Sumukha,
invited Garuḍa and consigned the former to the latter’s
care. Garuḍa, the inveterate enemy, had thus to lay
aside his racial enmity and befriend Sumukhā; the
erstwhile oppressor becomes the protector, oh, how
potent is the Lord’s will!

kūru āy, nīru āy, nilaṅ āki, koṭu val acurar kulam ellām
cīrā eriyum tiru nēmi valavā! teyvak kōmāṉē!
cēru ār cuṇait tāmarai cēntī malarum tiruvēṅkaṭattāṉē!
ārā aṉpil aṭiyēṅ uṉ aṭicēr vaṇṇam arulāyē. (VI–10–2)
Translation

Oh, Supreme Lord, residing in Tiruvēṅkaṭam in whose cloddy ponds
The lotus blossoms fiery red and holding in Your right hand,
The hissing discus effulgent, which cut, burnt and razed to the ground
Hordes of monstrous Rākṣasas, pray shed Your grace sweet
Unto me of limitless love, to enable me to attain Your feet.

Notes

(i) The Ālvār prays unto the Lord holding the discus, the great destroyer of all enemies, to destroy his enemies also and take him unto His lovely feet, so that His stay on mount Tiruvēṅkaṭam could indeed be fruitful.

(ii) The Ālvār's God-love is an inexhaustible fountain which won't dry up even if the ponds in Tiruvēṅkaṭam went dry; that is because all that knowledge, which blossomed into intellectual love of God, was dowered on him by the Lord Himself. (I–I–1).

vaṅgam maru! kōḷ anī mēkavaṇṇā! māya ammāṅē!
ēṅgam pukuntu tittikkum amute! imaiyōr atipatiyē!
tēḷ nāḷ aruvi mani pōṇ muttu alakkum tiruvēṅkaṭattāṅē!
anḍalē! un aṭi cēṇa, aṭiyēṛku āā! ēṃṅāyē. (VI–10–3)

Translation

Oh, Lord of Celestials, beaming in Tiruvēṅkaṭam, whose cascades clear and lovely,
Bring in rubies, gold and pearls in plenty,
Of wondrous traits, my cloud-hued Sire! grace personified You are,
My heart you do sweeten as you enter,
Take pity on me and let me your feet attain, my Master!

Note

The Lord at Tiruvēṅkaṭam is the very embodiment of grace;
He, who imparted unalloyed knowledge to the Ālvār,
resulting in his single-minded devotion to the Lord, should also help him to attain His feet. This is the humble submission of the Āḻvār.

āā! enppātu ulakkattai alaikkum acurar vāl-nālmēl
ṭi vāy vālī malai poḻinta cilaiyā! tiru mā makil kēḻvā!
tēvā! curarkal, muṇikkanaṅkaḷ virumpum tiruvēṅkaṭattānē!
pū ār kaḷalkāḷ aruvignaiyēṅ poruntumāṭu puṇarāyē. (VI–10–4)

Translation

Oh, Tirumāmakāḷ’s Spouse Divine, residing in Tiruvēṅkaṭam, Adored by sages and Celestials, in strength, arrows spitting fire, You, great Archer, did on the unrelenting Acurar shower, Teach this sinner dire how to attain Your florid feet, my Sanctum.

Notes

(i) The Āḻvār tells the Lord that none of the means, outlined in the Śaṇṭras for attaining His feet, has been of any avail to him and that He should, therefore, teach him yet another way, implying thereby that, for him, the Lord should at once be the ‘Means’ and the ‘End’, the path and the goal.

A disciple of Naṇciyar caused him great mental pain by questioning the need for the act of Surrender to God (plainly indicative of something done, out of one’s own free will), if God is our only Means of salvation and there is nothing for us to do. It is a pity, the questioner did not receive the sacred truth of ‘Prapatti’, resignation to God, in good faith and failed to appreciate the spirit underlying it, namely, our free-will inclining to God’s grace is itself due to His grace. Naṇciyar regretted very much that he should have passed on to the questioner (not truly responsive) this sacred truth, handed down, as a holy legacy, through an unbroken succession of preceptors. Smiting his palm against his forehead, he retired to his private chamber, moved with pity and sorrow at the obduracy of
men's hearts in not receiving and understanding such sacred truths, in their proper perspective.

(ii) Unrelenting Acurar: The Asuras are the ungodly, who inflict miseries on their fellow-beings. The great Nañciyar taught his disciples to distinguish the Godly from the otherwise, as follows: We may console ourselves as related to God, if our hearts are moved with compassion when any ill befalls others; if, on the other hand, we gloat over others' miseries, surely, we are cast away from Him.

puñarā nīṅga maram ēl aṅru eya oru vil valavā! ō!
puñar ēy nīṅga maram iranṭiṅ naṭuvē pōṇa mutalvā! ō!
tiṅar ār mēkam eṇak kalīru cērum tiruvēṅkaṭattāṇē!
tiṅar ārcāṅkattu unā pātam cērvatu aṭiyēṅ, ennaḷē? (VI–10–5)

Translation

Thou art the unique Archer, Whose shaft once sped
Thro' the Sal trees seven huddled together,
The Primate Who ' twixt the twin (Maruta) trees crawled,
And art now in Tiruvēṅkaṭam where elephants do gather,
Akin to dense clouds; My Lord, wielding the bow mighty,
When shall this vassal reach Thy feet doughty?

Notes

(i) The Lord would appear to have told the Ālvaṛ that He was surely taking him to His abode in Heaven; the expectant Ālvaṛ is, however, not satisfied with a general assurance of this kind and insists that a date be set for the consummation.

(ii) It can be both ways, namely, elephants gathering like clouds and clouds gathering like elephants, in that holy mountain. The Lord, enshrined there, is Himself referred to, as the cloud adorning the crest of Veṅkaṭādri (Mount Tiruvēṅkaṭam)—"Śri Veṅkaṭādri śikharālaya Kālamekhaṁ". Saint Tirumaṅkai Ālvaṛ also refers to the Lord at Tiruvēṅkaṭam as the Elephant, adorning the North.
(iii) The mighty bow in the Lord’s hand is quite reassuring and the Ālvār is, therefore, sanguine of attaining to His feet. All that He wants now is that the Lord should graciously specify the point of time at which he would be lifted up.

ennālē nām maṇ alānta ināit tāmaraikal kāṇḍatarku ēṅṟu,  
enpaḷum ninaṟṟu imaiyorkal ētti, iraiṇci inam iramāy 
meyn nā maṇattal vaiṅpāṭu ceyyum tiruvēṅkaṭattāpē!  
meyn nāṭ eytē, en naḷ uṇ athikkan athiyēṅ mēvuvatē? (VI–10–6)

Translation
Enshrined in Tiruvēṅkaṭam where do wait reverently, days on end,
Groups of Celestials, to worship Your lotus feet, the pair that spanned
The Universe, and meditate on You by word, deed and thought,
Oh, Lord! when shall this vassal, in reality, attain Your feet?

Note
There was indeed no need for the Lord to set a date for His union with the Ālvār, as desired by him, in the preceding song; he could very well enjoy that bliss, right here, at Tiruvēṅkaṭam, where even ' Nitya Sūris ' come down from Heaven and worship. And so, he would not like to miss that bliss, near at hand.

āṭiyēṅ mēvi amarkinṟa amutiē! imaiyor atipatiyē!
koṭiyā aṭu puḷ uṭaiyānē! kōlak kaṇivāyp perumānē!
ceṭi ār viṇaikal tīr maruntuē! tiruvēṅkaṭattu em perumānē!
noṭi ār poḷutum uṇa pātam kāṇa nōlātu, āṛṛēnē! (VI–10–7)

Translation
You are the Nectar, by this vassal enjoyed, Oh, Lord of Celestials,  
On Your banner is Garaḍa Who the enemies burns out, for dense ills  
You are the panacea, Oh, Lord at Tiruvēṅkaṭam, Your lips attractive
Like unto lovely fruit, I am eager to behold; I am indeed restive, Brooking no delay, not a trice, in worshipping Your feet, Although I have to my credit no special rite.

Notes

(i) It is the insatiable Nectar, deeply imbedded in the mind of the Āḻvār, that he hastens to behold physically. All this flutter, on his part, is not because of any misgiving regarding the attainment of the goal but because of his inability to brook the delay in getting at it, overwh elmed by its grandeur.

(ii) 'The Nectar by this vassal enjoyed', is yet another addition to the long list of the Lord's holy names, similar to the one coined by the Āḻvār earlier, 'The One in me mingled', vide II-5-2. The Nectar, enjoyed by the Āḻvār, is indeed far superior to the one said to have been enjoyed by the Devas, a mere salt extract, in comparison to the current enjoyment of the Āḻvār, and, for the matter of that, the Āḻvār's manner of enjoyment is unique, by-no-means comparable with that of others.

(iii) This song (as per the text in the original) is being chanted by the devout while making offerings of dishes to the Lord, as part of worship, as ordained by Śrī Parāśara Bhaṭṭar.

nōlātu āṛṛēṇ uṇā pātam kāṇa eṇru, nuṇ uṇarvinī nil ār kaṇṭattu aṁmaṇum, niṅai nāṁmukaṇum, intiraṇum-cēl ēy kaṇṇār palar cūḷa-virumpum tiruvēṇkaiattāṅē! mālāy mayakkī, aṭiyēgpāl vantāy pōlē vārāyē. (VI–10–8)

Translation

My Lord, dwelling in Tiruvēṇkaṭam, unto you do resort The revered blue-necked Sire (Śivā) of intelligence acute, Nāṁmukaṇ, of knowledge consummate, and Intiraṇ, saying that inadequate Is their equipment to worship Your feet and with their consorts
Of bewitching looks, they eagerly serve You; pray do appear
Before this dependant, as did the entrancing Kaṇṭāṇ before
His parents dear.

Note

Apprehending the possibility of the Lord keeping aloof, in
view of the inadequacy, rather, absence of any equipment,
worth the name, in the Āḻvār, referred to by him already, in
the preceding song, he now claims parity, in this
regard, with those in the higher echelons. Even the Celestial,
at the top, suffer from inadequacy in this respect,
despite their massive learning, acute intellect and great
prowess. Still, they do come down to Tiruvēṅkaṭam, along
with their consorts, to serve the Lord, with great zeal.

vantāy pōlē vārātāy! vārātāy pōl varuvāṇē!
centāmaraiṅ kaṇ, ceṅkaṅi vāy, nāl tōl amutē! eṅatu uyirē!
cintāmaṅiṅkal ākkul allaippakal cey ti-uvēṅkaṭattāṅē!
antō! aṭiyēṅ uṇa pātam akalakilēṅ, iṟaiyumē. (VI–10–9)

Translation

Oh, Lord at Tiruvēṅkaṭam, where gems of unique sheen
Make the night shine like day, You are seemingly near, yet far,
But when (in despair), You seem afar, You draw near;
With lotus eyes red, lips like ripe fruit, Your Form nectarean,
With shoulders four, is unto me dearest; from Your feet,
Alas! this humble lover cannot, for a moment, be apart.

Notes

(i) The gems could refer either to those in the sacred Mount
or those embedded in the Jewels on the Lord’s person.

(ii) The Āḻvār’s mental vision of the Lord was so full and
complete that he could easily mistake it for physical
perception, in three dimensions; when, out of deep
yearning, he held out his arms for embracing the Lord,
he would be disillusioned, rather extremely disappointed.
Again, at a time, when the Āḻvār would not have the
faintest hope of enjoying the Lord’s vision, the Lord
would suddenly present Himself before his mind's eye. As a matter of fact, we have witnessed such fluctuations and vicissitudes, all along.

akalakillēn ippaiyum enṟu alarmēl māṅkai uṟai māṟpā!
nikar il pukalāy! ulakam mūṟu utaiyāy! enṟai ālvāṅē!
nikar il amarar, muṉikkaṉkāl virumpum tiruvēṅkaṭattāṅē!
pukal oṅṟu illā aṭiyēn uṅ aṭikkīḷ amantu pukuntēṅē.

(VI–10–10)

Translation

Oh, Resident of Tiruvēṅkaṭam, reverently sought by the peerless Amarars
And sages in their bunches, on Your winsome chest inheres
The Divine Mother who from a flower emerged, ever saying that
From You she shall not for a moment be apart;
Of incomparable glory, You are the Lord of all the three worlds,
And at Your feet lovely, this vassal squarely takes refuge, with no other hold.

Notes

(i) In the preceding nine songs, the Āḻvār described the Lord’s greatness and grandeur and also gave vent to his deep yearning to get at Him. And now, he takes refuge at the Lord’s feet, seeking the good offices of the Divine Mother, ever present on the Lord’s chest, so as to accelerate his union with the Lord. While doing so, he gives expression to his abject destitution and exclusive dependence on the Lord. It has to be noted that the Āḻvār is still seated in lotus pose, inside the hollow of the tamarined tree at Tirunakari. Of the three types of ‘Prapatti’, surrender to the Lord’s loving grace, by word, deed or thought, this one falls under the first category, ‘vācika’ (Aṉjalī, paramā mudrā kṣipram Devaprasādinī).

(ii) The Divine Mother, Laksāṁī, the lotus-born, is inseparably poised on the Lord’s chest and yet, why should she keep uttering the words, “From you, I shall not, for a moment,
be apart’’. As the saying goes, ‘‘A thing is too good to last long’’. No wonder, in the exuberance of her enjoyment of the Lord’s nectaran person, the Mother is, side by side, haunted by the fear of getting dislodged from this exhilarating milieu and hence, her constant submission, as above.

Translation

Those that recite or listen to these songs ten,
Which unto holy Tiruvēṅkaṭam pertain,
Out of the thousand sung by Kurukūr Caṭakopaṅ
To cut out worldly ties, in sweet adoration
Of the peerless Lord, Who His feet exhibits for ever,
Exhorting the devotees to take refuge therein,
Will in High Heaven for ever remain.

Notes

(i) The thousand songs were sung by Saint Nammālvār, stung by the severe fright of the worldly distractions and the mischief of the unruly senses, in order to cut out the worldly ties, vide also VI-9-9.

(ii) These ten songs are made over to Tiruvēṅkaṭam, out of the thousand, meant, as a whole, to adore Lord Raṅganātha, enshrined in the walled city of Śrīraṅgam.

(iii) The Lord at Tiruvēṅkaṭam stands in a unique pose, His right hand pointing to the dazzling feet below, to show that there and there alone lies our salvation. It is worth recalling, in this context, sloka 110 of the first centum, in Śrī Parāṣara Bhaṭṭar’s Śrī Raṅgarāja Stavam, ‘‘Kirīṭaṁ Śrī Raṅge śayithuḥ…………………..’’ It is said that, in His reclining posture, Lord Raṅganātha
is touching the crown on His head with one hand, while the other hand, stretching down to His knee, points to His lotus feet; the former proclaims His overlordship, the supreme sovereignty over Brahmā, Śiva and all else, while the latter reveals His easy accessibility, offering His lotus feet, as the sole Refuge of His devotees.

THE CENTUM IN RETROSPECT
(DECAD—WISE SUMMARY)

(VI-1): In the opening decade of this centum, the Lord seeks out the Lord, in His worshippable Form at Tiruvanantapur (in Kerala State). Being too feeble to reach that place, the Āḻvār, once again transformed as the Nāyaki, in a forlorn state, sends some birds and bees to convey her message to the Lord, in His Incarnate Form (a gathered from the tenth song of this decad), invoking His pledge to extend protection to His devotees;

(This is the second of the four decades in the whole work, where the Āḻvār (transformed as Nāyaki) sends emissaries to the Lord at various destinations, to convey her message to Him; the earlier one is I-4 and the later ones are VI-8 and IX-7).

(VI-2): In response to the message sent, as in the opening decade, the Lord eventually presents Himself before the Nāyaki who is, however, seen, in the second decad, resenting His delayed appearance. With the characteristic feminine jealousy and rancour, the Nāyaki arraigns the Lord for having apparently strayed elsewhere, making love to the damsels of His special preference, and asks Him to go back to them. This is virtually a re-enactment of Krṣṇa-Gopīs episode of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam; the rancour of the overzealous Gopīs would obviously not last long, being but an interim facet of connubial relationship, culminating in the reunion of the all-conquering Lover and His beloveds;

(VI-3): The Saint keeps musing over the superior might of the Lord, in having got him round, despite his stout resolve not to have anything to do with that malingering defaulter, any more. The Lord reveals to the Āḻvār His extraordinary capacity for achieving the impossible and reconciling the incompatibles besides the glorious Iconic Form in which He stays in Tiruvinnakar (in Tamil Nadu, near Tirukkuṭantai, already covered in V-8). The Āḻvār recounts his current experience, in the third decad;

(VI-4): His erstwhile emotional break-down and exhaustion having yielded place to exhilaration, we see the Āḻvār recounting, in the fourth decad, the Lord’s glorious deeds and activities besides giving vent to his extraordinary joy, resulting from such recital cum contemplation. The Āḻvār concludes
Sixth Centum (VI-10)  

each song, in this decad, by showering on himself praises like **"There is none equal to me in all the land"**, **"There is none above me"** etc., expressions of an ecstatic mind, dissolved in God-love;

(VI-5) : In the fifth decad, the Nāyaki’s (Āḻvār’s) mates tell the elderly women around about the profusion of the Nāyaki’s love unto the Lord, enshrined in Tolaiyillimaṅkalam (deep south in Tamil Nadu). The mates keep guessing whether the Nāyaki could be but Nappiṇṇai (Lord Kṛṣṇa’s favourite Consort) reborn or an Incarnation of Mother Earth, full of grace or Mahālakṣmī Herself;

(VI-6) : The gnostic mother speaks out, in the sixth decad, the desperate condition of her love-born daughter (Āḻvār); the manner in which the latter is dwindling down, losing, one by one, her feminine charms and embellishments. As the Nāyaki meditates on the wondrous deeds performed by the Lord in each of His various incarnations and the special traits, then exhibited by Him, she goes into raptures and her body thaws down and dwindles;

(VI-7) : The mother continues her narration—in the seventh decad also, voicing forth the Nāyaki’s extraordinary devotion to the Lord at Tirukkoḷūr (a pilgrim centre, also deep south, in Tamil Nadu), her inordinate longing for incessant communion with Him;

(VI-8) : The Nāyaki, who set out for the coveted Tirukkoḷūr, could not reach the place, bogged down, en route, due to her intense God-love; stranded half-way through, she sends messages through birds etc., as in the eighth decad, to the Lord in His ‘Para’ (transcendent) and ‘Antaryāmi’ (hidden form as Internal Controller of all beings), invoking His trait of ‘aikarasya’ (feeling of oneness with His devotees);

(This is the third decad of this pattern, the earlier ones being I-4 and VI-1; one more, namely, IX-7 will follow).

(VI-9) : His errands, as in the eighth decad, not having evoked the desired response, the Āḻvār raises, in the ninth decad, his own clarion call of deep yearning, reaching the very heaven, with robust faith in the fruition of his full-throated call for deliverance;

(VI-10) : In the ninth decad, the Āḻvār voiced forth, in deep anguish, his inordinate longing for communion with the Lord, so as to be audible to Him, right in the high Heaven. And yet, there has been no response from the Lord, reducing the Āḻvār to a state of extreme mental distress and physical debility. He is, however, quick to realise that the Lord stays, in His worshippable Form, in holy Tiruvēṅkatam (Andhra Pradesh), the common meeting ground of ‘Nitya Sūris’ (ever-free angels in Heaven), the ‘Samsāris’ (worldlings) on Earth, birds and beasts. In the first nine songs of the concluding centum of this decad, the Āḻvār dwells upon the glory and grandeur of the Lord, the great Saviour and, in the tenth, he seeks refuge at the feet of the Lord, through the good offices of Lakṣmī, the Divine Mother, inseparably poised on His winsome chest, voicing forth his sole dependence on Him.
BOOK VII

Seventh Centum--First Decad (VII-1)
(Uṣṇīśa-viśva-viśva-viśva)

Preamble

In Bhagavad Gita (VII-14), the Lord stated that those who take refuge in Him alone can get beyond Māyā (Prakṛti). Then and then only, the ‘Prakṛti’ helps towards liberation instead of hindering by concealing the real nature of the Lord. The net woven around each individual soul by the Almighty Lord, in the light of past Karma, has to be disentangled by Him alone, seeing that we are much-too-feeble and cannot disentangle even the nest built by a frail bird, in the manner it does. Only He can undo this bondage of ours, when we clasp His holy feet as the Sole Saviour. It was against this background that the Ājīvār sought refuge at the feet of the Lord at Tiruvēṇkaṭam in VI-10-10. But then, it didn’t yield the desired result immediately. Why was it so?

Who indeed can question the love and integrity of Bharata who did ‘Prapatti’ (surrender) unto Śrī Rāma, begging of Him to get back to Ayodhyā and take up the reins of the Kingdom? Why did Bharat’s surrender not meet with quick response? Well, the Rṣhīs of Daṇḍakāranya had surrendered unto Rāma earlier and He had promised them succour from the depredations of the Rākṣasas. Bound by this earlier commitment, Śrī Rāma could not obviously comply with Bharata’s request. Even so, some would appear to have surrendered unto the Lord prior to the point of time at which the Ājīvār did ‘Prapatti’, praying that they be blest with hymns par excellence for their uplift. As a matter of fact, the clue to this kind of inference can be had in X-7-5 which indicates the root-cause for the emergence of Tiruvāyāmoḷi, as such. That crucial stanza brings out: The sages met at a conclave and decided that they should pray unto the Lord for the birth of a work of this kind, which will do adequate justice in bringing out the Lord’s inherent nature, form, attributes, wealth and deeds. This was again due to the fact that they found the Sanskrit Vedantās (upaniṣads), meant to expatiate on the Lord’s greatness and grandeur, lagging far behind and retreating, admitting defeat—‘yato vāco nivartante’. The Lord Himself sang the Tiruvāyāmoḷi
through Saint Nammāḻvār as His mouthpiece. Once Tiruvāymoji came into being, the sages found it had done full justice to their cherished objectives and fully covered the various facets of the Lord, enumerated above, with the result that they very much wished that the Lord had still more attributes, treasures etc., so that they can have another work of such excellence, a complete reversal of their attitude towards the Upaniṣads.

And so, it is clear that the Lord deliberately delayed the consummation of the Āḻvār’s ‘Prapatti’ so as to get all the 1102 hymns from his sweet lips, the full length of this splendid treatise which would have otherwise remained truncated.

In this decade, the Āḻvār follows up the trend of thought as in VI-9-9 where he dreaded the mischief of the senses and the frightful possibility of his going astray in the event of the prolongation of his stay in this abode. It might, however, be questioned why the Āḻvār, who was well beyond the mischief of the senses, having taken a deep plunge into the ocean of divine consciousness, should dread in this manner. For this, the Āḻvār has himself provided the answer. This land is notorious for its corrupting influence, bringing within its dirty pale even the ‘Nitya Sūris’, the Attendants in close proximity to the Lord in Heaven, should they ever happen to come on to this soil. Further, when a person sees the houses all around, on fire, he has got to apprehend the danger of his own house catching fire and safeguard it. A rope lying by the side of an anti-hill, the hide-out of serpents, is easily mistaken for a serpent. So also, the Āḻvār possessing a body like unto that of the worldlings, grows apprehensive about himself, finding those other persons dominated by the wayward senses.

-ul nilāviya aivarāl kumaitīrri, enṇai unn pātapaṅkayam  
nan-nilāvakaiyē nalivān, innum enṇukinrāy:  
en ilāp peru māyaṅē! imaiyōrkal ēttum ulakam mūṅru uṭāi  
aṅṅalē! amutē! appaṅē! enṇai ālvāṅē!  
(VII–1–1)

Translation

Oh, my nectarean Lord, Benefactor great, adored by Celestials, 
Māyā (Matter) of dimensions unlimited You have at Your disposal,
My Sire. Master of all the worlds, do You intend this vassal
To be tormented by the senses five within, still,
So that I attain not Your lotus feet lovely?

Notes

(i) The Ālivār questions the propriety of his being made a
prey to the senses haunting him from within, by being
kept still in this body by the Lord. Unlike the external
enemies who are quite visible and inflict injuries through
weapons etc., the five senses, constituting the hidden
enemies, torment the individual souls in ever so many
ways, a very pathetic and intolerable situation indeed.
But then, why should the Ālivār blame the Lord for
this?

(ii) Of the numerous names borne by the Lord, ‘Hṛṣikeśa’
is one; He is the Controller of the senses (Hṛṣikam),
Ṛṣi Udaṅka approached Lord Kṛṣṇa and queried him
thus: “Both kurus and Pāṇḍus are equal to Thee.
oh, Lord, and yet, you have caused the destruction of
the former while the treatment of the latter has been
quite the opposite. How can you be partial?” Lord
Kṛṣṇa adduced many a reason for His preference for
one party as against the other and ended by pointing
out to the sage that Duryodhana and his party were
found obstinately averse to all righteousness, despite
His indefatigable efforts to turn them from their evil
ways, the Kurus had a perversity of will which would
not listen to any persuasion and so on. The Ṛṣi,
however, coolly retaliated, “But, my Lord, You
could certainly have predisposed them also for righteous-
ness”.

(iii) The Ālivār is indeed frightfully agitated as to why he
should be kept in this body, exposed to the vagaries of
the unruly senses, even after his taking refuge at the feet
of the Lord. A learned dissertation on the why and
wherefore of this posture can be found in ‘Śrīvacana
Bhūṣaṇam’ where the illustrious Pillaiḷokācārya has admirably elucidated, as follows:

The ‘Prapanna’, that is, a person who has surrendered himself to the loving grace and protection of the Lord, passes time in this world, between revelling in the glory of God and His devotees and contemplation of his own short-comings. Contemplation of his short-comings incites fear of the dreadful possibility of prolongation of the cycle of births and rebirths but the antidote for this lies in recounting the Lord’s auspicious qualities of love, mercy, etc., which at once dispels such fears. If, on the other hand, he thought in terms of his own spiritual equipment and advancement as sure hopes for his salvation and tried thereby to get over the fear in question, it would indeed be a case of virtue defeating itself, a self-defeating virtue clouded by conceit. Even as Saint Nammāḷvār has complained in this song, Saint Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār feels terribly panicky about the forbidding prospect of the Lord still condemning him to life inside the mother’s womb and, on this account, feels insecure like the tree standing on the fringe of a river, which could be uprooted any moment by floods. This fear and the resultant reproach from these Āḻvārs, however, stem from their intimate bonds with the Lord Whom they regard as their Sole Sustainer. This is just like the child playing in the streets, sustaining an injury at play, rushing home, crying and beating the mother for her apparent slackness in preventing the injury. Apart from their eternal and inviolable bond of relationship, the Lord is Omnipotent and could easily wipe off the malaise of His subjects. And now, considering the relationship between the creatures and the Creator as between children and Mother, it would appear as if God stands responsible for everything that befalls the creatures. For instance, if a child fell into a well, they would hold the mother as blameworthy for her failure to keep a watchful eye on the child and prevent the occurrence. Had she not permitted the child to walk up to the edge of the well, the child would not have fallen into the well.
If non-removal of the child from the vicinity of the well could be construed as permission granted for its stay there, it might as well be argued that it is the same permissive attitude of the Lord that is responsible for the individual straying away from the Lord and getting bogged down in the difficult terrain of 'Samsāra'. Well, this is not the case. Even as the consent of the Individual to submit himself to the Lord's protection is not the cause of the benevolent protection eventually extended by the Lord and it is His own redemptive grace that matters, permission granted by the Lord for the individual's stay in 'Samsāra' is not responsible for the latter's downward trend. Actually, it is the Lord's command that the subjects should conform to the dictates of the Śāstras and work their way up to Him. It is, therefore, but natural that He expects the subjects to show due regard to the Śāstraic decree and injunctions and develop love for Him. In the final analysis however, it turns out that the subjects get stranded over here, enjoying the fruits of their own 'Karma' and it is only the Lord's spontaneous grace that pulls them out of the morass.

(iv) As stated in para 3, above, recounting the Lord's auspicious qualities of love, mercy etc. dispels one's fears. It is worth noting that in every song in this decad the Āḻvār cries forth his fears in the first two lines (as per original text), while he dwells upon the Lord's glory and grandeur in the next two lines. As Piḷḷai Tirunārayūr Arāiyar put it, the first two lines of each song in this decad are like the outbursts of a child right from the mouth of a tiger facing the Mother in front (In the English rendering of the songs the position is, however, reversed).

enṉai āḻum vaṉ kō ēr aintu ivai peytu, irāppakal mōtu-
unṉai nāṉ anukā vakai ceytu, pōṭikanṭāy: [vitiṭṭu,
kaṉnaḷe! amutē! kār mukil vaṉṉaṉē! kāṭal-ṅāḷam kākkiṅṟa
miṅṉu nēmiyināy! viṉaiyēṉuṭai vēṭiyāṅē! (VIII-1-2)
Translation

My most delicious Nectar, Oh, cloud-hued Lord, You wield
The radiant discus which does the ocean-bound worlds shield
Well beyond this sinner’s reach, You are by Vedas comprehended,
Me You have consigned to the senses five and their cruel sway
Day and night, and thus from You have kept me away.

Notes

(i) Āḻvār to the Lord: My Lord, why should You at all
endow me with the refractory senses, which upset the
natural order of things and hold me in their cruel grip,
day and night? You are so far away that I can’t even
cry out my woes to you. The natural order of things
would be: The individual soul is the vassal of the Lord,
the mind is subordinate to the individual and the senses
are under the immediate control of the mind, the over-
all control of the mind and the senses vesting in the
Individual. But what is the position now? It is the
bottom-most member of the hierarchy that keeps the
top-most under its heels!

(ii) Lord to the Āḻvār: Oh, Āḻvār, Why do you despise these
ancillaries which can be harnessed to the best possible
use? The ears can listen to discourses on Me, the
tongue can sing My praise, the eyes can behold Me and
My devotees, the nostrils can enjoy the sweet odour of
the sacred basil (tuḻaci) offered to Me and the body can
get locked in My sweet embrace.

(iii) Āḻvār to the Lord: If the senses can subserve me in the
manner outlined by You, I would certainly love them
most. But, it is the other way round and they only
distract me from my single-minded devotion unto You
and hence my complaint about my continued stay in this
explosive setting. It is like Your presenting the fake-
derer before Sītā and putting her into the hands of the
seven hundred odd Rākṣasīs in Lāṅkā, who teased and
tormented her.
(iv) **Lord to the Ālvār**: In the untoward contingency of the senses overpowering you, better let me know so that I do apply the necessary remedies.

(v) **Ālvār to the Lord**: But then, my Lord, You are quite out of hand and I am not in a position to lodge my complaint. Had You not unravelled unto me Your glorious Form, I would jolly well like to be in the company of the senses unmindful of You. But now, I just dread every moment the mischief of the senses which might lead me astray. And You keep Yourself away, out of sight, as if You have to be comprehended only through the Vedas instead of my enjoying You through direct perception!

vētiyāṇīrkum aivarāl viṇaiyēṇai mōtuvittu, uṇ tīruvāṭic cātiyāvakai nī tāṭuttu, eṇ peṟuti? antō!
āṭī āki, akal-iṭam paṭaṭuttu, uṇṭu, umiḷntu, kaṭaṭantu, iṭaṇțiṭta cōṭi nīl muṭiyāy! tonṭaṇēn matucūtaṇaṇē! (VII–1–3)

**Translation**

Oh Lord, sporting the long crown radiant, the worlds You did create
And gulped them down during deluge and later spat out,
You spanned them once and again, from deep waters, pulled out;
Oh, Slayer of Matu, You did enthrall me but then, shut me out From Your lovely feet, flocking me against the senses with no respite,
Alas! this sinner knows not how, by this, You do profit.

**Notes**

(i) The Scriptures enjoin that the Brahmins should tend the ritualistic (sacramental) fire throughout life and stipulate the morning and the evening as the periods during which it should be done. The Ālvār, however, yearned to serve the Lord all his life without any intermission whatever. But what is happening? He is cruelly dominated by the wayward senses without break.
(ii) The wondrous deeds of the Lord, mentioned in this song reveal Him as the Benign Sustainer, but the question now is, why He does not play the same beneficent role, in the case of the Ālvār also, without keeping him under the terrific clutches of the malignant senses.

cūtu nāṅ ariyāvakai cuḷaṛi, ŏr āivaraih kāṭṭi, ūṅ aṭīp
pōtu nāṅ aṅukāvakai ceytu, pōṭikaṇṭāy:
yātum yāvarum ĭṛi nīṅ akampāl oṭukki, ŏr āliṅ nīḷ ilai-
mītu cēr kuḷavi! viṇāiyēṅ viṇāitir maruntē! (VII–1–4)

Translation

As a mere Babe, You lay on a tender, fig-leaf, oh, Lord,
And did in a corner of Your stomach all things and beings hold;
You are the drug that cures the ills of this sinner
And yet confounding me, You did put me into the snare ;
Of the senses five, on the sly, keeping me very far
From Your lotus feet, invisible and far off that You are.

Notes

The Ālvār bitterly complains that:

(i) The Lord, who had weaned him away from the mischief of the senses and cured him of all his sins, has now exposed him to the serious risk of slipping back to his old ways;

(ii) The Lord has bewildered the Ālvār who was looking upon His feet as the Sole Refuge, by bringing him once again under the cruel spell of the five senses and

(iii) The Lord has kept aloof from him, lest He should have to shed His grace on him, in case He stood beside him; as a matter of fact, he would have put up with any amount of torture by the senses, if only the Lord could be visualised by him, all the time.

tīr maruntu ĭṛi, aintu nōy aṭum ċekkil ĭṭṭut tirikkum aivarai
ner marunṣku utāṭṭā atātttu, nekilppāṅ okkirāy:
ār maruntu ĭṇ ākuvār-ātal āli ċenti, acurav vāṅ kulam
vēr marunṣku āṛuttāy! viṇṇulār perumāṇe? ō! (VII–1–5)
Translation

Oh, Lord of Celestials, You have cut out, root and branch, 
The mighty hordes of Acurar, with Your discus radiant; 
Into the grinding mill where the sense-organs will crunch 
Me under the impact of the senses five, with no way out, 
You have pushed me, it looks as if your hold on me 
You are loosening. Who indeed will hereafter my elixir be?

Notes

(i) The grinding mill is the human body where the five senses 
are ever active with the relative activities and their 
ramifications leaving no chance for the soul to thrive, 
crushing it beyond recognition and making redemption 
impossible, even by the omnipotent Lord. By putting 
it down as an incurable state of affairs, the Ājvār only 
stresses the severity of the impact of the senses, like 
unto the young warrior (Abhimanyu, the great hero of 
Mahābhārata) caught up inextricably in the enemy 
camp amidst doyens and super-doyens of warfare.

(ii) If the Lord, who is at once the Drug and the Doctor, gave 
up the subject, could there be any cure for the malady? 
How could any one survive without that infallible 
medicine, the Lord? That is why the text of the song 
is "Who shall be my elixir?" instead of 'What shall 
be my life-saving drug?"; the drug being an inanimate 
substance, is usually referred to in the neuter gender.

(iii) The Ājvār’s address to the Lord as the Chief of the Celestials 
is meant to stir up the feelings of the Celestials in 
that glorious setting of unalloyed bliss and draw their 
attention to his own critical condition down below. 
This is like unto the wailing of Sītā, during her captivity 
in Lāṅkā.

viṇṇulār perumārkku aṭṭimai ceyvāraiyum ceṟum aimpulān ivai 
maṇṭul eṇṭaiṇ peṟṟāl, eṇ ceyvā-marru niṟum vittāl? 
panṇulāy! kavi taṇṇulāy! pattiỹi uḷḷāy! paramiçaṇē! vantu, eṇ 
kaṇṇulāy! neṇcuḷāy? colluḷāy! oṟṟu collāyē. (VII–1–6)
Translation

Oh, Supreme Lord, my yearning, its depth and voice You know, 
Reside You do in my eyes and mind and the word I utter, 
Can't You unto me come and a word of comfort utter? 
The senses five will taint even the Celestials, in Your service aglow, 
Should they this soil touch; what is it these won't do 
In regard to poor me if I am given up by You too?

Note

Even exalted persons, in the upper regions, including the high Heavens are not above the mischief of the senses. That being so, the Āḻvār's fears are indeed well-founded, the more so, when he stays in this physical body and in this land of dark nescience. To cite but a few instances of the havoc played by the senses on noted personages, let us take first, Indra, the Chief of the Devas. Among the many atrocities committed by the formidable Narakāsura from his abode in Prākṣyōṭiśa on Earth, was the snatching of the precious ear-rings of Aditi, Indra's mother. At Indra's request, Lord Kṛṣṇa slew the demon and went to Indra's citadel along with queen Satyabhāmā, mounted on Garuḍa to restore the ear-rings to the venerable lady. The concealed and ungrateful Indrāṇi, Indra's consort, however, thought Satyabhāmā, a mere human, living on Earth down below, unworthy of being offered the Pārijātha flower, grown exclusively in Devalokā for the exclusive use of the women-folk there. This only excited the curiosity of the distinguished visitor who managed to have the very tree uprooted by Lord Kṛṣṇa from Indrā's garden. As the divine couple were flying back to Earth on Garuḍa along with the tree in question, Indrāṇi got scent of it and at her instance, Indra, along with his soldiers, intercepted and fought a pitched battle with Lord Kṛṣṇa. The Lord made them bite the dust, resumed His flight to Earth and planted the tree in Sāthyabhāmā's garden. What a disgraceful behaviour of Indra, consumed by conceit going to war with his great Benefactor, right on the heels of the help received from Him!
And then, did Garuḍa, adorning the glorious rank of ‘Nitya Sūris’ in Heaven, fare any better? Sumukha, the serpent, when hotly pursued by Garuḍa, took refuge at the feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa. When Garuḍa requested the Lord to part with the serpent, He declined to do so and, on the top of that, entrusted the serpent to Garuḍa’s safe keeping. The mentally upset Garuḍa had then the cheek to tell the Lord: “Well, You have snatched my very food from me. Is it for this that I have been lifting you and your consorts on my back, all these days?” On another occasion, Garuḍa took pride in his immense strength and boastfully enquired of the Lord whether there was indeed any one more powerful than he, who could carry effortlessly, at the tip of his plumage, the Omnipotent Lord and His consorts. The Lord chided the presumptuous Garuḍa and disclosed to him that all the three worlds put together can hardly bear His weight and that the truth of the matter is that He supports Himself and Garuḍa who was supposed to carry Him and His consorts. So saying, He placed just one arm on Garuḍa’s shoulder and asked him if he could sustain it. Poor Garuḍa fell down fainting, unable to bear the weight of a single arm of the Lord.

Sugrīva, the monkey-king abused the kindness of Śrī Rāma and just lost count of time, immersed in the pleasures of wine and women. And then, a sage of the eminence of Vismāmitra fell an easy prey to the meretricious charms of Menaka and had a rapport with her for ten long years till he got jolted back to normal thinking.

The Supreme Lord, who holds sway all over and who can’t but hear the Āḷvār’s heart-rending appeal and note the depth of feeling behind it, is nevertheless holding Himself back and it is indeed a matter of deep regret for the Āḷvār.

ogru colli oruttinil nirkilata o arivar van kayavarai
guru yand velkirpan-un tiruvurar illaiyel?
angur tevar acurar vanaka, alaiatat aravam alavi, oren kunram vaatta entay! kotiyen paruku in amute! (VII–1–7)
Translation

My Lord, You are the Nectar grand, by this sinner drunk,
The mountain huge You once planted in surging waters
And made the Devas and Asuras churn it with a serpent;
But for Your sweet grace how can I the senses conquer,
Notoriously fickle, not sticking to one thing or the other?'

Notes

(i) The churning episode reveals the extent to which the Lord would go to help His devotees in multifarious roles, and yet, if He does not go to the rescue of the Āḻvār, how can He at all get the better of the notoriously fickle senses?

(ii) The Nectar grand, drunk by this sinner: Far from being satisfied with the interior bliss with which the Lord has endowed Him in super-abundance, the Āḻvār complains that this is not supplemented by external perception and experiences. Conscious of his ingratitude in not acknowledging the many favours already heaped on him by the Lord but running into a complaining mood, the Āḻvār calls himself a sinner.

in amatu eṉat töngri āṟ āivar yāvaraiyum mayakka, ni vaitha muṇṇam māyam ellām muḻu vēr arintu, eṉai uṉ cinṭhamum tiru mūrttiyum cēntitu, ēttik kaitōjavē, aruḷ eṇakku:
eṇ ammā! eṇ kaṇṇa! imaiyōr-tam kulamutalē! (VII–1–8)

Translation

Kaṇṇā, my Lord, Chief of Celestials, Your grace I invoke
To cut out, root and branch, my age-long yoke
Unto Samsāra, the senses five under the garb of pleasures nektarean,
Which cast their spell on one and all. just your creation
And fix my mind on your insignia (the conch and discus fine)
Your Form exquisite, sing your glory and worship you, all the time.

Note

The sensual pleasures of sound, sight, smell, touch and taste, assume the garb of happiness, to begin with and eventually
throw the participants into the abyss of endless miseries. Hence, the request of the Ālvār that he be studiously kept beyond their mischief so that he may constantly meditate on the Lord’s exquisite Form, wondrous weapons etc, sing His glory and worship Him, thus involving himself in such exclusive participation, by word, deed and thought.

**Translation**

My Kaṇṇā of splendour supreme, the worlds You did create And their contents, still and mobile; of you do I entreat To dower on me robust strength to cut out, branch and root The senses five, breeding sins which would the entire clan uproot.

**Note**

The sins committed by the sense-buried affect generations, back and forth. c.f. Hanumān’s advice to Rāvana, that one of the latter’s calibre and wisdom should desist from committing sins which shall destroy the entire race. The Ālvār wants the Lord to dower on him the strength which will make him tougher than this tough fountain-source of all sins, so as to demolish it effectively.

**Translation**

Oh, Lord, You churned the ocean once and delivered the nectar, Steeped in love unto Your lotus feet, I am bound to utter Your sweet names, oh Splendour Supreme! but this burden (body) You did dower;
For me to groan under its weight and the senses five do shatter
Poor me, pulling in different directions, alas! I can hardly bear.

Note

The Alvar is puzzled how the Lord gives nectar to some and
the sense-bound body to some, like unto a deadly poison.
The very body, dowered by Him for God-enjoyment, has
deteriorated into a facile field for the foul play of the domi-
neering senses, each pulling in a different direction; oh, what
a tragic picture, like unto a Prince standing on the road-side,
weaving a head-gear for carrying load, in place of his regal
crown, being forced by strangers to carry their loads!

koṉṭa mūrṭti Ĩr mūvaṟāyk kuṇaṅkaḷ paṭaṅtattu aḷḷittuk keṭuk-
puṇṭaṟikak koppūḷ puṇal-paḷḷi āppaṅukkē [kum ap
toṅṭar toṅṭar toṅṭar toṅṭan caṭakōpaṇ col āyirattūl ip pattum
kaṇṭu pāṭa vallār viṇai pōm, kaṅkulum pakalē. (VII–1–11)

Translation

Gone are the sins of those who sing day and night these songs
ten,
With understanding fine, out of the thousand composed by
Caṭakōpaṇ,
The vassal of the vassals’ vassals of Lord Padmānābhaṅ,
Who, as Trinity, carries out the functions of creation, preser-
vation and dissolution
And who, during deluge, did on the vast expanse of water
recline.

Notes

(i) Lord Nārāyaṇa, on whose navel emerged the lotus flower
on which Brahmā appeared, carries out the triple func-
tions of creation, sustentation and dissolution, the
middle one by Himself and the other two as the Internal
Controller of Brahmā and Śiva.

(ii) The Āḻvār seeks to assuage his mental agony in talking
about the senses and sensuality, by going the whole hog
out in the service of the devout, like unto a parched-up
soul diving fast into the deep pockets of water.
Seventh Centum—Second Decad (VII-2)
(Kaṅkulum Pakalum)

Preamble

Towards the end of the sixth centum, we saw the Āḻvār surrendering himself at the feet of the Lord at Tiruvēṅkaṭam. Finding, however, that he was still lingering in this material world, dominated by the unruly senses, he cried out his fears in the last decad, like unto a child crying out from the tiger's jaws, facing the mother standing in front. The Lord was, no doubt, well aware of the intensity of the Āḻvār’s God-love and his deep yearning to get out of the material shackles with no further delay. And yet, He deliberately prolonged the Āḻvār’s stay in this abode and his resultant uneasiness, just to do lasting good to the world at large through him. Of course, this is like starving one’s children and entertaining the guests. Actually, the Āḻvār wrought the miracle of transforming the very duds and the deluded, given up as incorrigibles even by the Omnipotent Lord and every moment of his stay in this abode would certainly enrich the world through the scintillating hymns flowing from his lips, both by way of adoring the Lord and advising the world.

But then, the Āḻvār, in deep anguish, is once again (figuratively) transformed as the Nāyakī (Mistress), weighed down by melancholy too deep for words. The critical condition of the speechless Nāyakī and her various moods are narrated in this decad by the (Imagined) mother to Lord Raṅganātha, enshrined in Śrīraṅgam (Tamilnadu), bending over her daughter, right in the Sanctum. The mother enquires of Lord Raṅganātha, the Sole Saviour, as to what His intentions are and how exactly He would like to deal with her love-torn daughter.

Whenever Śrī Parāśara Bhaṭṭar discoursed on this decad, he would place both his palms over his head, charged with emotion, and cry, "How can we, hard-hearted people, incapable of feeling the pulse of Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī, her sentiments and yearning do justice to the words of deep love uttered by her in this decad?" How can any one indeed enter into the spirit of the Nāyakī whose torrential tears were bailed out by her palms? It was like attempting to drain off the oceanic waters with a tiny leaf. c.f. Hanumān’s
enquiry as soon as he met Sītā in Aśoka vana how it was that tears kept flowing from her lovely eyes like a cascade.

kaṅkulum pakalum kaṇ āriyāl;
kaṇṇa nīr kaikalāl iṟaikkum;
cāṅku cakkaraṅka! ēṅru kai kūppum;
tāmaraiṅ kaṅ! ēṅē talarum;
eṉṉaṅē tarikkēṇ unṇai viṭṭu? ēṅnum;
iru nilam kai tuḷā iṟukkum—
ceṅkayal pāy nīrt tiruvaraṅkaṭṭāy!
ival tiṟattu en ceỳkintāyē?

(VII–2–1)

Translation

Oh, Lord, reclining in Tiruvaraṅkam where flows water in abundance;
And the gay fish gambol, this lady knows no sleep, day and night,
Tears in torrents from her eyes do flow and she with her palms bails them out;
Utters she with joined palms, “Oh conch,”, “Oh discus”,
“these are the lotus eyes”,
She says and reels, all earth she gropes for her Lord from whom she can’t bear
Being apart, what indeed do you intend doing with her?

Notes

(i) The worldlings are steeped in sleep, both day and night, while the Celestials in Heaven have neither nights nor sleep. The Nāyaki also knows no sleep, like the Celestials. It is said that she knows no sleep instead of saying that she doesn’t sleep, because when in communion with the Lord, He wouldn’t allow her to sleep and, when away from Him, she is so disconsolate and dejected that she just can’t sleep. Either way, sleep is unknown to her.

(ii) Tears trickling down the cheeks copiously could be a common occurrence in the case of devout contemplation of the Lord’s auspicious traits and heroic deeds. Bailing out the tears with the Nāyaki’s palms, denotes
the abundance of tears like the water in the river Cauvery
ingning around. Reference to the fish joyfully dancing in the river waters carries with it the suggestion that even as the fish cannot stay out of water, the Nāyakī
cant stay apart from the Lord. Delirious that she is, she can still behold the Lord in His iconic Form right in front and suddenly she exclaims, "here is the conch, here is the discus, here are the lotus-eyes" and so on. As one subsisting solely on Him, she cant bear being apart from Him and she says so. Even then, she cant find Him beside her and she runs her fingers through the whole Earth in search of Him, as if He is handy, like taking sandal paste from a porcelain cup.

(iii) The mother exhibits the love-smitten Nāyakī even as the Ṛṣis of Danḍakāranya showed Rāma their emaciated bodies, tortured and tormented by the Rākṣasas and enquires of Lord Raṅganātha what He proposes to do with her daughter, as the Lord's remembrance of the individual in the light of his ultimate redemption, is the only 'Means' for his salvation. (see also aphorism 66 of Śrīvacakabhūṣanam).

en ceykiṅgāy, en tāmaraik kaṇṇā?
ennum; kaṇṇir malka īrakkum;
en ceykēn, eṇī nīrt tiruvaraṅkattāy?
ennum; vevvuyirttu uyirttu īrakum;
mun ceyta viṇaiyē! mukappaṭāy ennum;
mukilvaṭṭa! takuvato? ennum—
mun ceytu iv ulakam uṇṭu, umiṇtu, aḷantāy!
eṇkolō muṭiṅṭrattu īvaṭkē? (VII—2—2)

Translation

"My lotus-eyed Lord, unto me what will you do?"
Is the question by this lady put, her eyes filled with tears,
She stands still and queries again, 'What shall I do
To get at you, oh, Lord of Tiruvaraṅkam with surging waters?"
Says she, panting and breathing hot, 'Come before me, my
past sins,",
'Oh cloud-hued Lord! is this all your mercy?', unto this girl
tense,
Say what will happen, Oh, Lord, Who the worlds did create, 
Ate and spat, spanned and did many such things, them to protect?

Notes

(i) The Nāyaki would like to know what those massive sins committed by her, are, which stand between her and the Lord. That only shows, she is painfully conscious of the fact that she has to face the consequences of her past sins, instead of blaming the Lord. But then, the cloud-hued Lord, known for His munificence like the rain-clouds, could, in the exercise of His quality of mercy, wipe off the sins, in toto, and in no time.

(ii) Breathing hot, the Nāyaki melts under the impact of that heat as if she isn’t there to sigh anymore.

(iii) So great is the heat generated by her separation from the Lord that she would like to be thrown by some one into the cool waters of the river Kāvēri in Śrīraṅgam, the river Tāmraparṇi in her birth place having already become hot because of her desolation.

vaṭku ilaḷ iṟa iyum; maṇivaṇṇā! eṇnum;
vāṇamē nōkkum; maiyākkum;
ūṭku uṭai acurar uyir ellām uṇṭa
oruvaṅē! eṇnum; uḷ urukum;
kaṭkili! ūṇṇaik kānumāṟu aruḷāy;
kākuttā! kaṇṇaṅē! eṇnum—
tiṇ koṭi matil cūḷ tiruvaraṅkattāy!
ivaṭṭirattu eṇ ceytiṭṭāyē?

Translation

Shaking off all reserve, this lady calls out, “Oh, Lord of sapphire hue,”
And at the sky gazes, pining for Him unique, Who slew
The Asuras formidable, thawing down, she prays, “Oh, Lord invisible, 
You did incarnate as Kākuttā (Rama) and Kaṇṇaṅ, make yourself visible
Unto me now"; Oh, Lord, who in Tiruvaraṅkam does recline,
The walled city strong, what's it you have unto this girl done?

Notes

(i) The mother is amazed at the complete lack of the innate modesty on the part of her love-intoxicated daughter, her calling out loudly the name of her spouse and that too, the one indicative of His bewitching Form which she ought to enjoy secretly at heart.

(ii) The Lord, who slew the Asuras and relieved the distress of the Devas, notoriously selfish, should certainly rush to the aid of the weaker sex, particularly those who cling to His feet under all circumstances.

(iii) The upaniṣads state that the Lord will exhibit His exquisite Form and splendour to the subjects of His choice. It is this that emboldens the Nāyaki to call upon Him to appear before her. The Incarnate Forms like Rāma and Kṛṣṇa could, of course, not be seen at all times, they having already gone back to the Celestium. So then, the Āḻvār wants the Lord at Tiruvaraṅkam to appear before him in His iconic Form. Actually, the tough walls of the holy place would seem to extend an invitataion to the devout to come and enjoy the Lord reclining there in His worshippable form all the time, unlike the Lord’s incarnations, the irretrievable past.

(iv) The mother wants to know what exactly the Lord had done to bring about this kind of infatuation in her daughter.

iṭṭa kāl, iṭṭa kaiyalāy ērakkum;
ejuntu ulāy mayaṅkum; kai kūppum;
kaṭṭamē kātal ēŋṟu mūrcçikkum;
katalvānā! kaṭiyaiḳān ēṇnum;
vaṭṭa vāy nēmi valaṅkaiyā! ēṇnum;
vantitāy ēŋṟu ēnṟē mayaṅkum-
ciṭṭañē! ceļu nirt tiruvaraṅkattāy!
īvaḷṭirattu ēṇ cintittāyē?  

(VII—2—4)
Translation

Sometimes this lady is motionless and she moves about, at times,
Insensate she remains but still seen with joined palms,
She swoons, exclaiming, "God-love is indeed hard to endure";
Says she, "Oh, sea-hued Lord, You are unto me much too severe",
Calling out many a time, Him that wields the discus round
In His right hand, she faints when He comes not; oh, Lord immaculate,
Reclining in fertile Tiruvāraṅkam, what is it you do for her contemplate?

Notes

(i) The Nāyaki, intoxicated with God-love, exhibits the same behaviour as those struck by Śri Rāma's mighty arrows. The targets of those arrows will be severally seen fainting with pain, tortured or running about here and there in great fright. So also, the Nāyaki is at times insensate, sometimes, she moves about here and there agitated, and at other times, feels tortured by the immensity of her God-hunger still remaining unappeased. The Āḻvār, who was hitherto looking upon God-love as an end in itself, now feels it a terrible-torturer, much beyond his capacity to endure.

(ii) The mother's reference to an Immaculate God is rather ironical. She seems to suggest that, after inflicting all this pain on her daughter, He masquerades as the perfect One, like unto a Brahmin going about chanting Vedas, wearing white sacred thread and twisted Kuśā grass in the fourth finger, the very picture of a perfect Brahmin, after killing several Brahmins.

(iii) *Fertile Tiruvāraṅkam*: The mother chides the Lord whether He came down to that cosy place only to sleep away, unmindful of the precarious condition of her daughter and His duty towards her.
cintikkum: ticaikkum; tēṟum; kai küppum;
tiruvaraṅkattullāy! enŋum;
vantikkum; āṅkē mālaikkān nir malka,
vantīṭāy enṟu enṟē mayaṅkum—
antippōtu avuṇaṅ ṛṭal ḍantaṅē!
alai kaṭal kaṭainta ār amutē!
cantittu ūṇ caraṇam cāṟvaitē valitta
taiyalai maiyal ceytāṅē! (VII—2—5)

Translation

Oh, Lord, Avuṇaṅ’s body you tore off at twilight,
You are the Nectar insatiable that churned the ocean,
You have the heart of this lady stolen,
With resolve firm to join you and stay at your feet,
Dwindles she in contemplation of her erstwhile union;
Suddenly rallies round and with joined palms and head bent,
She calls out, “Oh, Lord in Tiruvaraṅkam”, and tears from
her eyes do rain,
“... You haven’t come, You haven’t come...”, she utters and
faints.

Notes

(i) Turning the searchlight inward, the Nāyaki finds that a
soul, badly caught up in the vortex of worldly life, with
its terrific involvement in a recurring cycle of birth and
death, was attracted by the Lord’s bewitching eyes,
had the blissful union with Him for a while, only to be
deserted by Him as at present. Contemplating thus,
she breaks down and even then, her palms are joined in
reverence, a unique feature of hers, under all
circumstances.

(ii) Despite the Lord having taken up His abode in
Tiruvaraṅkam, in His worshippable (Iconic) Form, it is
indeed distressing that He hasn’t obliged the Āḻvār
with His presence. Did He not assume the Form of
Narasinga and keep Himself ready for emergence
at the precise moment, where and when His presence
would be demanded, all for the sake of the young
lad, Prahlāda, son of Avuṇaṅ (Hiranyā)?
(iii) *Stealing the heart of this lady:* It was just because a mere crow inflicted a slight injury on the person of His beloved consort, Śrī Rāma sent 'Brahmāstra', a super-missile, in hot pursuit of the little creature, literally applying heroic remedies for petty maladies. Even so, He took great pains to enthrall a petty soul like the Āḻvār's and the latter gave away her heart unto Him, in sweet contemplation of this great gesture on His part.

(iv) The three successive stages of love to God, indicated in this song, are worth noting. These are Recollection, Trance and Rallying—recolIection of all the past ravishments vouchedsafe by the benign Lord, trance, fainting in desolation caused by such recollection in the light of the present state of non-enjoyment and rallying, that is, the sudden lucidity while in the trance state considered to be very dangerous indeed. The momentary lucidity in a delirious state, is akin to the sudden lighting up of consciousness in a person under the spell of death-coma or the sudden flicker of the dying light. That was the reason why Naṉciyar exclaimed, with great fright, when Uyntapiḻai, ciyar's disciple, recited this song, "Woe unto her (Saint's) lucidity! I am undone".

maiyal ceytu enṉai maṉam kavarntāŋē!
enṉum; mā māyaŋē enṉum-
ceyya vāy maṇiyē! enṉum; taṉ puṟal cūl
 tiruvaraṅkattuḷḷay! enṉum;
veyya vāl, taṉtu, caṅku, cakkaram, vil
enṉum viṇṇor mutal! enṉum:-
pai kol pāmpu anaiyāy! ivaltiṟṟatu arulāy-
pāviyēn ceyarpālatuvē.  

(VII—2–6)

**Translation**

Please say what this sinner can do unto her daughter,
Who exclaims, "Oh, you that enticed me and stole my heart,"
"You that worked many wonders huge," "Oh, Arañkañ reclining amid cool waters?"
"You of sapphire hue, with lips red, Chief of Celestials, wielding weapons hot,"
And so on, Oh, Lord, reclining on the hooded serpent,

Note

The mother says unto Lord Rañganathā;

"My daughter keeps wondering how you stole her heart, by engendering in her enormous love, how, during your union with her, you worked many wonders such as exhibiting your loving condescension of amazing magnitude, how you enthralled her by your exquisite physical charm, your red lips and sapphire hue, how you don't come unto her, although so very near in Tiruvarañkañ, how your mighty weapons do not cut out her sins, if at all, they do stand between you and her and so on. Should you not be inseparable from my daughter even as you cling to your serpent-bed? How is it you relax yourself on this cosy bed, when my daughter is struggling hard, panting for you, as above? Please say what this sinner (self) witnessing the sad spectacle, can at all do to relieve my daughter's distress".

pāla tuñpañkañ iñpañkañ pañtaittāy!
parrilār parra niñrāpē!
kāla cakkattāy! kañal iñtam koñta
kañalvanṇā! kañnanē? enṇum;
cēl koḷ tañ puñal cūl tiruvarañkattāy!
enṇum; en tīrttanē enṇum;
kōla mā maļaiṇkañ pani malka irukkum-
enṇuṭaik kōmalak koḷuṇtē. (VII–2–7)

Translation

Says my tender darling, her eyes, cool and lovely, filled with tears,
"Oh, Distributor of weal and woe among your creatures, Even unto those who seek not refuge in you, you are the Protector,
Oh, Controller of the wheel of Time, the Milk-ocean is your abode.
Oh, sea-hued Lord. Oh, Kaṇṇā, You that in Tiruvaraṅkam do reside,
Amid cool waters full of fish, You, my Sanctifier, and so on.

Notes
The Nāyaki's address, as above, quoted by the Mother, when analysed, would reveal her trend of thought as follows:

(i) My Lord, You are known to inflict miseries on the ungodly and regale the devout. Perhaps, you have excluded me from the scope of such a dispensation.

(ii) My Lord, You carry the credential that you extend protection even to those who do not submit themselves as such to your protection (Āsaranyā Šaranyah) and yet, you torment me like this. Paradoxically, a prickly plant has been glorified as a grand tree, like unto the wish-yielding tree.

(iii) Oh, Lord, if you mean to say that the propitious time for my succour has not yet arrived, may I point out to you that time is at your beck and call?

(iv) Reference to Lord Raṅganātha, in the midst of cool waters, full of fish, points to the Nāyaki's incapacity to stay apart from Him even as fish can't stay out of water. And yet, can He afford to Keep away from the Nāyaki?

(v) "You, my Sanctifier!" The Lord has instilled in the Nāyaki sanctity, by way of endowing her with the firm conviction that He is her sole Saviour, a belief which remains unshaken, even in the most desperate situation.

(vi) Tender darling like unto a creeper which can thrive only when it twists round a pole, firm and fixed, like unto the Lord Himself. The mother says, her daughter is shedding tears in plenty, unable to endure her separation from the Lord. Actually, it was on account of His indefatigable efforts that He has been able to induct
in her such assiduous love for Him and yet, He would not come and see for Himself, the fruits of His labour!

 köḻuntu vāṇavarkatku! ennūm; kunṟu ēnti,  
kō-nirai kāṭtavān! ennūm;  
aḻum; toḻum! āvi aṅala vevvuyirkku;  
aṅcana vaṇṇaṅē! ennūm;  
eḻuntu, mēl nōkki, imaippila īrkkum;  
eṅṅaṅē nōkkukēn? ennūm-  
cēḻum tātam puṇal cūḷ tiruvaraṅkattāy!  
eṅ cēyken eṅ tirumakatkē? (VII–2–8)

**Translation**

Oh, Lord, reclining in Tiruvaraṅkam amid sacred waters,  
what shall I do  
For my daughter, like unto Tirumakaḷ, ever calling you,  
‘Oh Chief of Celestials, Oh, Lifter of Mount (Govardhan)  
and Protector of cows,’?  
With joined palms and tearful eyes, breathing hot she calls,  
‘Oh, dark-hued Lord,’ gazing at the sky she would ask  
How and where indeed she could for you look.

**Notes**

(i) The Nāyaki mentions, side by side, the Lord’s supremacy and simplicity, so that one need not be scared of the former nor be tempted to underrate Him because of the latter;

(ii) The mother suggests that the Lord should be inseparably attached to her daughter even as Tirumakāḷ (Mahā-lakṣmi) inheres in His chest always, brooking no separation;

(iii) Not sighting the Lord in the direction she looks up, the Nāyaki would turn behind in the fond hope that He might take her by surprisr, and embrace her from behind.
en tirumakal cēr mārvaṇē! ennum; ennuṭai āviyē! ennum; niṇ tiru eyīṭāl īṭantu, ni koṇṭa nilamakal kēvaṇē! ennum; aṅgu uru ēḷum tajuvi, ni koṇṭa āyamakal āpanē! ennum-ten tiruvaraṅkam kōyilkoṇṭāṇē! telikilēṇ muṭivu ival-taṇakkē.

(VII—2–9)

Translation

Oh, Lord in Tēntiruvaraṅkam enshrined, ‘tisn’t unto me clear

What indeed will be the end of this lady’s inordinate longing;

Calls she, “Oh, my Soul, bearing on Your chest Tirumakal, my Mother,”

“Oh Spouse of Dame Earth whom You lifted on Your bent tooth long,”

“Oh, dear One unto the shepherd girl whom you once took over,

Slaying the unruly bulls seven with the voice of thunder,”

Notes

(i) The Nāyaki wonders how she could suffer inspite of Tirumakal (Mahālakṣmi), the unfailing Intercessor between the Lord and His subjects being ever present on His winsome chest. The Lord is the soul of all souls and what is more, the Mother is always in conjunction with Him; here then is a grand setting, the soul of our soul, the super-soul being a mighty combination, highly conducive to our well-being. When Naṇciyar spelt out in one breath, without a break, the first line of this song as in the original text, (third line here), so as to yield this meaning, his preceptor, Parāśara Bhaṭṭar, the high Priest of Lord Raṅganātha, was taking food and listening to the marvellous recital by the inspired Saint. Thrilled by this manner of chanting, with the new light thrown on the text, Bhaṭṭārya stopped eating and reclined in the easy chair, wrapt in rapturous meditation.

This way of addressing God is indeed very fascinating. Tradition has it that the famous Anantālvān named his daughter as “My Mother, Lakṣmi” (En Tirumakal) Śrī Parāśara Bhaṭṭar, reputed to be no less than the son
of Lord, please consider me as but a part of the bridal outfit of Your consort, Mahālakṣmi, my Mother and also grant that I may love You as the Beloved of my Mother-(Ālakīya Maṅavāla or Lovely Spouse)”.

(ii) The Lord can be dear to Mother Earth only if He could take care of her favourites like the Nāyaki.

(iii) “Having slain the seven unruly bulls with thunderous voice, for winning the hand of Goddess Nīlā, incarnated as Nappināi, the shepherdess, Oh, Lord, you are now relaxing in Tiruvarāṅkam on your serpent-bed. How indeed do you intend to put an end to my daughter’s afflictions?”, asks the gnostic mother of Parāṅkuśa Nāyaki.

muṭivu ival-tanakku ọnu ărīkēn ęṅnum;
mùvulaku ăliyē ęṅnum;
kaṭi kamal koŋraic caṭaiyanē ęṅnum;
nāṃmukak kaṭavulē ęṅnum;
vaṭivu uṭai vāṅōr talaiyanē ęṅnum;
vaṅ tiruvarāṅkapē ęṅnum;
aṭi aṭaiyāṭal pōl ival aṅuki,
aṭaintaṅal-mukilvanṇan aṭiyē.

(VII–2–10)

Translation
It seemed this lady panting for the Lord wouldn’t attain Him,
‘I know not the end of my sufferings at all’, she did exclaim,
“Oh, Supreme Master of the three worlds,”, “Oh Internal Controller
Of Śiva wearing on matted locks fragrant flowers
And Brahmā, the four-headed,” “Oh, Chief of Celestials of like form,”,
“Oh, generous Tiruvarāṅka,” and so on, but now has she attained
The lovely feet of the cloud-hued Lord indeed!

Notes
(i) The mother is mighty glad that her daughter, who was in a hopelessly desperate condition with no prospect
of an early end to her sufferings, has, after all, attained the feet of Lord Raṅganātha Who is graciously reclining in Tiruvaraṅkam so as to be worshipped by all down below desirous of beholding and enjoying His exquisite Form, instead of being the close preserve of the denizens in Heaven.

(ii) The Celestials in Heaven are endowed with a form like unto the Lord's own and what is more, the continual stream of joy flowing unto them from the Lord who is an inexhaustible fountain of bliss, is reflected on their person enhancing their charm, ever more.

mukilvaṇṇan atiayai ātaintu, arul cūti uyantavān, moy puṇal porunāl
tukil vaṇṇat tū nīrc cērppaṇ, vaṇ poļil cūł van kurukūrc caṭakōpaṇ
mukilvaṇṇan atimēl conña col-mālai āyirattu ip pattum vallār
mukil vaṇṇa vaṇṇattu imaiyavar cūḷa, iruppar-pēriṇṇa velḷattē. (VII–2–11)

Translation

Those that are well-versed in these songs ten,
Out of the choice thousand, composed in adoration
Of (Lord Raṅganātha) the cloud-hued Lord, by Caṭakōpaṇ
Of fertile Kurukūr on the bank of Porunāl, the river sacred,
Who the cloud-hued Lord attained and was by His grace salved,
Will be by Celestials surrounded in High Heaven
And immersed in eternal joy remain.

Note

It is quite clear from this song that the entire hymnal, comprising a thousand songs, is in adoration of Lord Raṅganātha, enshrined in Tiruvaraṅkam (Śrīraṅgam in Tamilnadu). The invocatory song (serial number 4), cited at the beginning of this hymnal, also highlights this fact. No doubt, particular decades have been dedicated to the Lord enshrined in other
pilgrim centres as well. This is like portions from the main dedication, doled out like holy food first offered to Lord Raṅganātha being divided out and distributed among the minor deities in the chapels around, as Nampiḷḷai would put it.

Seventh Centum—Third Decad (VII-3) 
Veḷḷaie curi caṅkoṭu

Preamble

The bliss of the union of the Nāyaki and Lord Raṅganātha having overflown its continents, the Lord hit upon a method whereby the enjoyment could be stabilised instead of the Nāyaki being swept off by its exuberance. He went to Tentiruppēreyil, near the Āḷvār’s birth-place, game-hunting by way of relieving the distress of the people over there from the depredations of wild animals. The Nāyaki herself equipped Him with weapons, went with Him straight to the outer gate and bid Him farewell, wishing Him success. The Lord, mounted on Garuḍa, threw a bewitching parting glance at her. But then, she couldn’t bear the separation and insisted that she would also go to Tentiruppēreyil to join her Lord, in the face of opposition from her mother, mates and other kinsmen. The Nāyaki, bent upon going, suggests a via-media namely, if they are against her going alone, they could as well escort her to the place and leave her there with her Lord.

velḷaie curi caṅkoṭu āḷi ēnti,
tāmaraik kaṇṇan eṇ neṅcinūṭe
pullaik kaṭākiṇra ārraik kāṇir;
eṇ collic collukēn, ṣṟṟaiṁিṛkāl?
velḷac cukam-avāṇ vīṭirunta-
vēta-oliyum, vīḷā oliyum,
pillaik kulā vīḷaiyāṭṭu oliyum
arā-tiruppēreyil cērvāṇ nānē. (VII–3–1)

Translation

Ye, elders, for Tiruppēreyil I am indeed bound,
Where Vedic chantings, festivals and joyous shouts of children resound
With no break and the Lord, the very spate of bliss, stays;
How can I express the glorious vision that sways
My mind, the way the lotus-eyed Lord mounts the bird
(Guruḍa)
Holding the spiral conch white and the discus in hand,
Which is what You people can’t comprehend?

Notes
(i) The Nāyaki says, she can’t describe her glorious mental
vision adequately. What she has said in this song,
touches but a fringe of the subject.

(ii) The undying noise of the children at play, is the unique
feature of this pilgrim centre where the children play
right in front of the temple. Eager to witness the
children at play, the Deity would appear to have asked
Guruḍa, installed right in front, to step aside without
obstructing His view. Further, the festivals, with
their usual fanfare, go on in this centre in an unbroken
succession; it is said that Akrūra, the great devotee of
Lord Kṛṣṇā, celebrated festivals in quick succession,
after he came by the fabulous ‘Syamantakamaṇi’,
a rare gem capable of generating fabulous wealth and
here is Parāṅkuśa Nāyaki, the gem of a woman and
there can be no dearth of festivals, wherever she goes.

nāṇak karaṇ kuḷal tōjimūrkāl!
anṇaiyarkāl! ayal—cēriyārkāl!
nāṇ it taṇi neṇcam kākkamāṭṭēṇ;
en vacam aṇṟu itu; irāppakal pōy,
tēṇ moýtta pūmpōḻil taṇ paṇai cūl
tēṇ tiruppēreyil vīṟgirunta
vāṇap piṟāṅ, maṇivāṇaṅ, kaṇṇaṅ
ceṅkaṅi vāyiṅ tirattatuṅē. (VII–3–2)

Translation
Ye, mates with dark hair aromatic, ye, elders and neighbours,
Gone out of hand, My mind, I can’t control; day and night,
Ahead of me it goes and lurks in the lips, like unto red fruit,
Of Kaññañ, the heavenly Lord of sapphire hue, Who stays
In Tęṅtiruppęreyil with lands fertile and flower gardens full
of honey bees.

Notes

(i) The apparent incongruity of the mates appearing before
the disconsolate Nāyaki with their hair nicely tended
and perfumed, is reconciled by Nampijjai, as
follows:—

When the Nāyaki was in communion with the Lord, the
flowers worn and discarded by Him would be picked
up by the mates and worn by them even if they be mere
shreds. The perfume therefrom is everlasting and it
serves to sustain the Nāyaki, when the Lord is not
beside her, as at present.

Alternately, it could be that the mates, bent upon rallying
the Nāyaki round, should not themselves present a
picture of dejection, with dishevelled hair. This is like
Lakṣmaṇa having kept himself fit for serving Rāma,
although the former’s grief was by-no-means less than
that of the latter over the abduction of Sitā.

(ii) The worldlings cannot be weaned away from sensual
pleasures even as the Nāyaki cannot be weaned away
from God-head. The God-bent mind of the Nāyaki
has taken a leap ahead of her and got absorbed in Him
completely. There is, therefore, no question of her
being brought round by any one, not even the concerted
action of the mates, mother and neighbours. Instead
of the mind being subordinate to her, it is now the
other way round. In short, the Nāyaki, enthralled by
the Lord at Tiruppęreyil, is beyond recovery, from the
point of view of the worldlings to whom she is lost
altogether.

cēnkanī váyin tırattatáyum,
cēni cuṭar nil mutí tāḻutatáyum,
cañkọṭu cakkaram kaṇṭu ukantum,
tāmarai kañkaḷukku arrut tirntum,

T—21
tiṅkaḷum nāḷum vilā arāṭa
ten tiruppēreyil vīṟirunta
naṅkal pirāṇukku en neṅcam-tōḷi!
nāḷum niṟaiyum ilaṇṭatuve.

(VII–3–3)

Translation

Come, ye, mate, enthralled by the Lord's fruit-like lips red,
Enamoured of His tall resplendent crown, glowing red,
Enticed by His conch and discus and by His lotus eyes enslaved
My mind has unto the Lord, in Tenṭiruppēreyil enshrined,
With its fanfare of festivals unbroken, lost its reserve and refinement.

Notes

(i) The elders and neighbours having retreated from the scene, giving up the task of reclaiming the Nāyaki as hopeless, only the mate stays on, for further counsellī ing. When she points out how unbecoming of the feminine rank and position the conduct of the Nāyaki is, the latter indicates in this song what indeed brought her to this pass. Actually, the Nāyaki's mind is getting exclusively absorbed in each one of these features of the Lord, even as He pervades all things, in toto, inside out. It is worth recalling, in this context the anecdote of Śaubhari. Great indeed was the spiritual prowess of sage Śoubhari. One day he went to a pond and noticed the fish playing about, huddled together. This fascinated the mind of the sage, steeped in renunciation till then, to lead a married life and rear up a large family, as in the fish pond. Learning that king Māndhāthā had fifty charming princesses, all un-married, the sage asked the king to give him one of his daughters in marriage. The King evaded the issue by asking the sage to propose to the Princesses directly so that whosoever liked him could be taken as his bride. The sage knew the trick of the King quite well and, therefore, transformed himself into a charming young man whom the Princesses vied with one another to marry. The powerful sage took on fifty forms, on
account of his great tapasya, and married all of them. Similar is the intensity of the Ālvār’s longing to enjoy the Lord, in minute details, assuming different forms.

(ii) The Lord is enshrined in His Iconic (Worshippable) Form for the sake of us, the bound souls lingering in this world, even as His transcendent Form in Heaven is for the enjoyment of the ‘Nityas’ (Eternal heroes) and ‘Muktas’ (Released Souls) there, the ‘Vyūha’ (Operative Form) in the Milky ocean is for those akin to ‘Muktas’ and the Incarnate Forms are for the fortunate ones, who existed in those good olden times. This being the case, how could the Nāyaki keep away from the Lord in His ‘Arca’ (iconic) form at Tiruppēreyil?

įlanta em māmaitīṟṟattup pōna en neñcīñārum ānkē olintār; uḷantu iṈi, yaraikkōntu en, u-ākō?-ōtak kaṭal oli pōla, eṅkum eḷunta nal vētàttu oli niṆṟu, ṯōṅku teṅ tiruppēreyyil vīṭirunta muḷaṅku caṅkak kaiyāṅ māyattu āṉtēṅ- āṅnaiyarkāl! enṇai en munintē?  
(VII–3–4)

Translation

Ye, elders, that doyen, my mind, sallied forth to get me back  
The lustre lost but there itself got badly stuck;  
My mind, thus lost, who shall hence my companion be  
And what shall I speak ? can you indeed be angry with me,  
Seeing me immersed in the wondrous Lord Who wields  
The resounding conch and stays in Teṇṭiruppēreyil, the standing seat  
Of Nalvētam, reverberating all over like the roaring sea?

Notes

(i) The mind is accorded an exalted position by the Nāyaki and referred to, with great respect, by reasons of its being God-bent and competitive in its exuberance for God-enjoyment. Discoloration set in because of the Nāyaki’s extreme dejection, in her state of separation from the Lord. In a bold bid to restore to the Nāyaki her lost lustre, the mind went up to the Lord but alas!
it got stuck up at that end, completely absorbed in Him. The Nâyaki can hardly find any company other than her own mind for giving her the much-needed solace and, she feels worse off than Sîtâ in captivity, where she had at least Trjâdâ and Saramai to console her. The Nâyaki is worse off than Sîtâ, in the sense that the former cannot court the company of anyone, neither the sense-buried Earthlings nor the egotistic tin-gods of the upper worlds, nor the Nityas, totally absorbed in God-enjoyment in the yonder heaven and least of all, the One who keeps aloof, having robbed her of her very garment.

(ii) She herself is now caught up in the compelling charm of the Lord at TeNTiruppêreyil and she keeps musing over the Lord’s fascinating features, all the time.

(iii) This pilgrim centre is said to be resonant with the sweet chanting of Nalvêtam (Sâmaveda)

muñintu cakaṭam utaittu, mâyap-
pēy-mulai uṇṭu, marutu itai pōy,
kanṭinta vilavukkuk kaṇṭu erinta
kaṇna-pīrāṇukku en penmai tōrēn-
muñintu īpī en ceytir, aṅṅaimiṟkāl?
muṅni avaṇ vantu vīṟirunta
kaṇṭinta poḷil tiruppēreyirķē,
kālampera, eṅṅaik kāṭtumine. (VII—3—5)

Translation

Ye, elders, what would you gain by rebuking me? lost is my feminity
Unto Kaṇṇaṉ, who the demon in the cart-wheel kicked in fury,
Sucked unto death the devil’s breast and crawled ‘twixt the twin trees,
Smote a calf against the wood-apple right on the tree
And slew both the demons; take me, with no more delay,
To Tiruppêreyil, full of gardens nice where my Lord stays.

Note

The Nâyaki is lost unto Kaṇṇaṉ (Lord Kṛṣṇa), in the sense that the bonds of feminine reserve and refinement have burst
in the face of her overwhelming, rather overpowering God-love. She advises the elders not to attempt the senseless task of putting up the bund after all the water has escaped down the sluices but to take her to Tiruppēreyil and leave her there where the Lord has come, in advance, to reclaim her. This they should do quickly when she is still alive, seeing her precarious condition.

Translation

Ye, elders, it seems the cloud-hued Lord is in front of me
And yet beyond my reach; alas! my love is bigger than the sea,
Better take me quick to Tiruppēreyil, the place on Earth
Where the Lord has come to stay, full of mirth,
With water in plenty and paddy crops lovely, the centre great
Where vedic scholars zealously perform sacred rites.

Notes

(i) The elders point out that the Lord had just left on a
hunting expedition with her consent and that the
Nāyaki should not be so very impatient and that too,
so soon. But then the Nāyaki’s consuming passion is
such that she can’t brook separation from her Lord
even for a short while. Her love is even more expansive
than the ocean. That it is fast gathering momentum can
be seen from the fact that her God-love, as set out in
V-3-4, was of the size of the ocean and now it has
grown bigger than the ocean. A little later, that is, in
the eighth song of this decad itself, we find it surpassing
the Earth, the seven peripheral oceans and the
ultramundane regions, far beyond as well. In X-10-10,
it swells up to such astounding dimensions as to encompass the Supreme Lord Himself, the very object of love.

(i) How could the Nāyakī contain the on-rush of God-love with such rapid strides, and keep it under restraint, as advised by the elders, the more so, when the glorious vision of the blue-hued Lord is right in front, and yet baffles external perception and sensibility? The only way this love could be nurtured is to take her to Tiruppēreyil, where the Lord is in His worshippable form, in all His heavenly splendour, surrounded by profound Vedic scholars, fertile fields and lovely gardens. Even as the paddy crops are sustained by the standing columns of water, the entire landscape of that holy centre sustains the Nāyakī.

Translation

My mind that went in quest of the Lord, who burnt down Laṅkā, across the sea, surrounded by walls gigantic,
And now stays in Tiruppēreyil, hasn’t come back;
Nobody else can keep me company nor is there any one
To restore my mind unto me; here’s none who can perchance
Do unto me a good turn and my mind I shall follow hence.

Notes

(i) “Having seen in Tiruppēreyil, the victorious Lord who vanquished that felon, Rāvana,” says the Nāyakī unto the mate, “it is no wonder, my mind doesn’t come back to me. Having lost such a great companion, there is hardly any point in my staying behind, as there is none who can take his place. Even you are in a state of extreme debility. It is, therefore, but meet that I follow suit and join my mind right where it has gone.” Did
not Śrī Rāma say, in Uttara Rāmāyaṇa, when he set out for the Celestium after His long stay in this abode, that He was going the way Lakṣmaṇa had gone a little earlier? Lakṣmaṇa was the first to go and Śrī Rāma went a little later.

Śrī Nampiḷḷai would say that Hanumāṇ visited even the inpenetrable Laṅkā, remote and inaccessible, from where none could return safely and came back with a message from Sitā but the Nāyaki’s mind could not get back from near-by Tiruppēreyil. And now, instead of sending a message to God, she has to send one to her mind. There is none to carry the message either. There is thus no remedy except her going there herself.

(ii) The Lord in Tiruppēreyil is said to be fresh from His victory over Rāvana. But then, that was the time when Śrī Rāma’s mind was vitiated by feelings of suspicion and anger, leading to His acrimonious address to Sitā, in such harsh terms as:

“My love is fled, for on thy fame
Lies the dark blot of sin and shame;
And thou art hateful as the light
That flashes in the injured sight”.

Śrī Ālavandār (Saint Yāmunācārya), the great preceptor, was greatly piqued by this unreasonable accusation of the Mother and he said: “Surely, it isn’t my radiant Mother’s light that hurts but Rāma’s sore eye that is hurt. The mote is indeed in Rāma’s eye; Sitā is absolutely pure, bright like the pure flame that appears tainted owing to dark suspicion obscuring Rāma’s heart”.

kaṇṭatuve koṇṭu ellārum kūti,
kārka kaṭal vaṇṇaṇōtu entirattuk
koṇṭu, alar tūrīruru; atu mutalāk
koṇṭa en kāṭal uraikkil, tōli!
Translation

My mate, ever since the elders began to complain,
Seeing the outer change in me, about my union
With the Lord of oceanic hue, my love unto Him has swollen
Beyond the Earth, its peripheral oceans seven
And the ultra mundane regions afar; so then,
My Lord at Tiruppēreyil I have to go and join.

Note

The people around could hardly know the depth of the God-love swelling up the Nāyaki’s bosom but they could, in a way, notice it from the words she uttered, her lamentation and other external changes in her complexion, behaviour etc. Then, they started rebuking her but their remonstration produced the opposite effect, virtually serving as the rich manure for the speedy cultivation of her God-love. And now, it has grown to the astounding dimensions, set out in this song (See also the notes under V-3-4), VII-3-6 and X-10-10).

cērvan centu-ennaṭait tōḷimirkāl!
ānṇaiyarkāl! enṇait tērta vēṇṭā;
nīrkal uraikkinnratu en ḫarku?
neṭcum niṟaivum enakkku iṇku illai;
kārvāṇṇāṅ kāṅk kaṭal ūḷam uṇṭa
kāṅṇa-pirāṅ vantu vīṭvirunta-
ēr vala on kāḷaṇip pāḷaṇa-
ten tiruppēreyil māṇakarē.

Translation

Ye, mates and elders, make no attempt to reclaim me,
There’s hardly anything you can say, gone is my mind
And my modesty too, and now for Tiruppēreyil am I bound,
With its fields fertile, fed with water in plenty,
Where resides Kaṇṇan, my Lord of blue tint,
Who the Sea-bound worlds did gulp.

Note

The Nāyakī insists upon going to Tiruppēreyl, as the mates
and elders counselled her patience and infused in her hopes
of an early return of her Beloved Lord. The Nāyakī is,
however, in no mood to listen to such hollow inducements.
As a matter of fact, stripped of her mind, which has preceded
her in its flight to the Lord, she can hardly be receptive to
all that they say. At any rate, she did not have that type
of mind, that would respond to their advice. Further, she
stands enthralled by the exquisite charm of the blue-hued
Lord, the great Redeemer.

nakaramum, nāṭum, piravum tērvēn;
nanēnakku illai, en tōlimirkāl!
cikara maṇi netu māṭam niṭu
ten tiruppēreyl virirunta
makara netuṅkulaiṅ kātaṅ, māyaṅ,
nūṟruvarai aṟṟu maṅka nūṟra
nikar il mukilvaṅṅaṅ, nēmiyāṅ, en
neṅcam kavirntu eṅai āḷiyāṅe?

Translation

My mates, I am not in the least shy to go forward
To cities and villages in quest of those that look down
Upon my love unto Makaranētuṅkulaiṅkātaṅ, the peerless
Lord, cloud-hued,
With discus in hand, of wondrous deeds, who got slain
The hundred Kaurav brothers and now resides in Tiruppēreyl,
The ancient city with its turrets tall and stately castles,
Who since ages long did my heart steal.

Notes

(i) The mates pointed out that the Nāyakī would, by darting
forth in the manner repeatedly proposed by her, only
invite public ridicule and criticism of her conduct. The Nāyakī, however, retorts that she would go forward in search of these very persons, in hall and hamlet, as it would indeed gladden her heart to be told about her union with Lord, Makarabhūṣaṇa (whose ears are bedecked with pearls), especially in her present state of separation from Him.

(ii) Even as the Lord manoeuvred, by stages, to get the hundred Kaurava brothers slain, He seems to have planned long, long back to steal away the Nāyakī’s heart.

ülitōru ūli, uruvum pērum
ceykiyum vēravaṇ, vaiyam kākkum
āli nir vanṇaṇai, accaṇaṇai,
anī kurukūrca caṭakōpaṇ conṇa
kēl iḷ antāti őr āyirattul
ivai tiruppēreyil mēya pattum
āli aṅkaiyaṇai ētta vallār
avar aṭimaitṭirattu āliyārē.

(VII–3–11)

Translation

Those that adore the Lord, with conch and discus fine,
By chanting this decad which unto the Deity at Tiruppēreyil pertains,
Out of the thousand peerless songs composed by Caṭakōpaṇ
Of lovely Kurukūr, extolling Accutan, the sea-hued Lord, Who takes on
Different names and forms in different ages, to carry on
His steadfast work of universal protection,
Will in His eternal service be blessed to remain.

Note

The end-stanza brings out that those well-versed in these ten songs, will be blessed with the great good fortune of rendering eternal service unto the Lord, like unto His discus, ever alert and dutiful.
Seventh Centum—Fourth Decad (VII-4)
(Āli eļa)

Preamble

Just when the Nāyaki was attempting to go to Tiruppēreyil where the Lord had gone for game-hunting, He returned victorious, like Śri Rāma back home from exile, after vanquishing Rāvana and his formidable horde of Rākṣasas. It may be recalled that Sitā locked Śri Rāma in her sweet embrace by way of nursing wounds on His person after His remarkable victory over Kara, Dhūṣaṇa, Tṛśiras and the fourteen thousand Rākṣasas under them, singlehanded and in an amazingly short space of time. Even so, Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī, exceedingly jubilant over the Lord’s quick return from His victorious hunting expedition, gets locked up in His sweet embrace, by way of relieving His fatigue. In her festive mood, she also goes on recounting the Lord’s wondrous deeds and benefaction, vast and varied, as set out in this decad, exclaiming, “What a marvel!” “what a wonder!” and so on.

(Āṟāyirappati Commentary)

āli eļa, cāṅkum villum eļa, ticai
vāli eļa, tāṇṭum vāḷum eļa, anṭam
mōḷai eļa, muṭi pātam eļa, appaṇ-
ūli eļa-ulakam koṇṭavārē! (VII-4-1)

Translation

Oh, how wonderful! the way the Benefactor great spanned the worlds,
The discus, first to grow tall like unto the Lord,
Was by the conch, bow, mace and sword followed;
Benedictory shouts from all directions went up,
The massive globe got pierced and bubbling came up
Peripheral waters, the Lord’s crown and feet moving up,
And for Devas, the good days showed themselves up.

Note

The breath-taking expansion of the Lord as Trvikrama, spanning the entire Universe, up and below, is mentioned first. When the King embarks on a mighty undertaking,
his immediate attendants vie with each other in exhibiting their eagerness to ensure its successful achievement. When Rāma set out on exile, Lakṣmana was the first to step forward to accompany Him. Likewise, when the Lord started expanding upward, His discus, the principal weapon, was the first to expand, the other weapons following suit. In Śrī Nampiḷḷai’s unique way of putting things, the discus coolly stuck to the Lord’s hand so that when the Lord rose high up, it could automatically go up; actually, the amazing rapidity with which the Lord rose up made the discus sceptical of keeping pace with the Lord through its own effort and hence this device. The luminous discus shone with extra brilliance while the conch bellowed forth, striking terror in the hearts of the ungodly. The discus has always had a dominant role to play in all the Avatāras of the Lord. During His advent as Rāma, the aura of the discus permeated the bow, the same aura charged itself into the bent tooth, long and protruding, of the great Boar (varāha), into Narasimha’s nails and Paraśu Rāma’s axe. It was the discus that spoilt the eye of Śukrācārya, the high priest of the Asuras, assuming the shape of the twisted grass in Vāmanā’s finger. Ever sharp, the alert discus would dart forth from the Lord’s hand and instantly hit the target, the Lord wishes to attack, the moment He thinks of it. (śudarśana satakam)

In this marvellous expansion, the Lord’s crown and feet seemed to rise together. With the ascent of the Lord and His appendages, in this manner, the good days were also coming up for the down-trodden Devas. The entire scene is presented by the Āḻvār, as if it was a contemporaneous event televised.

āṟu malaikku etirnṭu ōṭum oli, aravu
ūṟu culāy malai tēykkum oli, kaṭal
māṟu culuṇru altaikkinṭa oli-appan
cāṟupata, amutam koṇṭa nāṉē! (VII–4–2)
Translation

During the festive days when the great Sire for Devas gave
The nectar from the ocean churned, the great noise came
Of rivers bound for the ocean running back to the mountains,
Of the mighty snake rustling round the gigantic mountain
And of the oceanic water whirling round and round.

Note

When the momentous churning of the Milk-ocean took place,
so great was the upheaval of the ocean that the rivers bound
for the ocean were repulsed so fast that they had to swirl
back to the mountains whence they sprang. And then,
there was the mighty serpent, Vasuki functioning as the rope
churning the great mountain, making all the noise that the
tremendous friction could produce; and to cap it all was the
roaring of the oceanic water whirling with great momentum.
What an astounding scene indeed! It is even more astonishing
that the Ajvār could visualise it in such graphic details
at this distance of time. As already mentioned elsewhere,
the Lord assumed multifarious roles in this breath-taking
project.

nāṃrīla ēl maṇṇum tāṇattavē; piṇṇum,
nāṃrīla ēl maḷai tāṇattavē; piṇṇum,
nāṃrīla ēl kuṭal tāṇattavē- appaṇ
ūṇī, iṭantu, eyirrīl koṇṭa nāḷē.  

Translation

Oh, what a wonder! when the Lord pulled the Earth out
With His tooth unique from under the waters deep,
The islands seven didn’t from erstwhile positions slip,
The mountains seven were as they had been and didn’t tilt,
And again, the oceans seven didn’t burst and were in tact.

Note

The Lord incarnated as the Great Boar, slew the demon
Hiranyakṣa (the golden-eyed) in a pitched battle, and
forked the Earth, hidden by him under the waters, with His
unique tooth, long and protruding. When the Lord put
the Earth back in position, all its contents, namely, the seven islands, the seven mountains and seven oceans were quite in tact, without undergoing any change whatever. This is indeed characteristic of the Omnipotent Lord. The inhabitants also continued to jog on as before, running after food and raiment, unmindful of the herculean tasks performed by the Lord. This is yet another wonder indeed!

nāḷum ēℓa, nilam nīṟum ēlā, viṇṇum
kōḷum ēlā, eri kāḷum ēlā, malai
tāḷum ēlā, cuṭar-taṇum ēlā, appaṇ-
ūḷi ēlā ulakām uṇṭa ūṇē! (VII–4–4)

Translation

Oh, how wonderful! the Lord did during deluge sustain
In His stomach which with noise great sucked in
The worlds seven, the sky and the planets tumbling down,
Land and water got uprooted and Time ceased to function,
The wind and fire, the mountains seven,
The stars and other luminaries fell off their position.

Note

This song brings out the extraordinary situation that prevailed at the time of the deluge when all the elements, Sky and Earth, the Sun, Stars and other luminous bodies fell from their respective positions and moved into the Lord’s stomach, literally sucked in, to avoid being swept off. When the Sun, the chief indicator of time and its numerous components go. dislodged, Time automatically ceased to function. Here then is a state of terrible impasse but all things are quite safe inside the Lord’s stomach. Oh, what a miracle!

ūṇṭai mallar tatarnta oli, maṇṇar
aṅ uṭ. ic cēṇai naṭuṅkum oli, viṇṇul
ēṇ uṭait tēvar velīṛ paṭṭa oli-appaṇ
kāṇūṭaiṇ pāratam kai aṟai pōṭē! (VII–4–5)

Translation

When (Krṣṇa) my Sire did the armies assemble
For the wondrous battle of Bhārata where did scream and tremble
Kings and warriors great and wrestlers fat and strong, fell, 
Clashing with noise great and the exalted Celestials, 
Gathered in outer space, did within great wonder bubble.

**Note**

On seeing Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Divine Charioteer, ranged on the side of the Pāṇḍavas, Kings and Warriors of great prowess, arrayed opposite, screamed and trembled. The exalted Celestials came in their strength and watched from above, bubbling with reverent admiration, the wondrous battle down below, whose strategy was directed by the Lord at every turn, culminating in the victory of the Pāṇḍavas.

pōḻtu melinta puṇḍ cekkaril vāṇ, ticai cūḷum, eḻuntu utirap puṇalā, malai kīṭu, pilanta ciṅkam ottatāl-appaṅ āḷ tuyar ceytu, acuraraiṅ kollumārē! *(VII–4–6)*

**Translation**

Oh, what a wonder! the way the demon (Hiraṇya) was by my Sire slain; 
Right at dusk, like a lion standing over a mountain lain Down below and cleaving it, splashing blood in all directions . And high up in the sky, turning it all crimson.

**Note**

Oh, what a thrilling spectacle it was, the way Narasimham slew Hiraṇya, like unto one mountain cleaving another lain, down below, blood flooding all over, high and low! Isn’t it strange that the blood should flow, in all directions, including the sky, like water flooding low-lying areas?

māṟu niraittu iraikkum caraṅkaḷ iṅa nūṟu piṇam malaipōḷ puraḷa, kaṭal āṟu maṭṭuttu utirap puṇalā-appaṅ nīṟupaṭa, ilaṅkai ceṟra nērē! *(VII–4–7)*
Translation

Hundreds of corpses (of the Rākṣasas) were felled down
Like mountains huge, by noisy arrows darting in succession,
Filling with blood the ocean and thence into the rivers over-
flowed,
This is how the great Sire (Rāma) did Laṅkā burn down.

Note

Oh, what a grand imagery! The blood of the Rākṣasas,
rolling down dead in large numbers, fills the ocean and
overflows into the rivers pushing the waters back. Lord
Rāma’s arrows reduced Rāvana’s Laṅka to ashes, a veritable
grave-yard. The arrows sped in different directions, clashing
with each other, roaring like the sea.

nērcarītāṅ koṭik kōlī koṇṭāṅ; piṅnum
nērcarintāṅ eriyum anālōṅ; piṅnum,
nercarnitāṅ mukkan-mūrtti kaṅṭīr-appaṅ
nercari vānaṅ tīntōl koṇta anē!  (VII–4–8)

Translation

When Kṛṣṇa, my Sire, did chop off the mighty arms
Of the retreating vānaṅ the one with peacock banner
Had to give way and so did the one (Agni) that beams,
The triple-eyed (Rudra) too beat a retreat, in like manner.

Note

Kṛṣṇa’s encounter with Vānaṅ (Bānāsura) and his allies has
already been set out, in detail, in the notes under III–10–4.
Subrahmaṇya, Son of Śiva, is referred to here as the one
with peacock banner. Agni, the fire-god, flaunted all his
fortynine facets, in vain; he had to cut a sorry figure, like
his compatriots, before Lord Kṛṣṇā.

aṅru man, nīr, eri, kāl, viṇ malai mutal;
aṅru cutar irañtu, pīravum; pinnum
aṅru malai, uyr, tēvum, marrum-appaṅ
aṅru mutal ulakam ceytatumē!  (VII–4–9)
Translation

When the Lord first created the worlds,
The elements five, the mountains and other things were ushered,
All at once and so were the Sun, Moon and Stars,
That very moment came up the clouds that shower
Rains and the lives they sustain, all things still and mobile,
And the minor deities, oh, what a marvel!

Note

This song could refer either to the initial creation of the worlds with their diverse contents as one of His great achievements or be treated as a follow-up of the preceding song, dealing with the subjugation of Bānāsura by Lord Kṛṣṇa. The Lord’s creation became worth its while, only when He subdued Bānāsura and quelled his hauteur galore, crop-protection does indeed form an integral part of crop-cultivation.

mēy nirai kīl puka, mā puraļa, cuṇai
vāy niṟai nir piliṟic coriya, ḫa
ā-niraipāṭi aṅkē  gözüka-appaṅ
ṭi mālai kāṭtu, kuṛaṃ etuttāņē

(VII–4–10)

Translation

When (Kṛṣṇa) my Sire, held the umbrella of a mountain
And warded off (Iṅḍra’s) rain of destruction,
The whole of Āyppāṭi, the town fertile, remained under its protection,
The grazing cattle just moved aside and carried on,
The beasts tumbled as the mount was held upside down
And water from tanks, full to the brim, came gushing down.

Note

Here is a short and sweet picture, graphic enough, of Lord Kṛṣṇa’s mountain-lifting to protect a whole township and its cattle from the fury of Iṅḍra, which visited on them through a heavy down-pour of revengeful rains for a whole week. While the cattle grazed on undisturbed, moving a
little down on the mountain slopes, the wild animals, caught unawares, tumbled down, as Śrī Kṛṣṇa held Mount Govardhan upside down, like holding an umbrella. Again, the tanks on the mountain slopes, full to the brim, got inverted and the waters discharged therefrom came down with roaring noise, like unto rain-fall from numerous belts, the phenomenon of a multiplicity of rains raised in the process of shielding the township from a single rain visited by the irate Indra. How magnanimous indeed of the Lord to have patiently held aloft a mountain for a whole week and spared Indra, a votary of His (unlike the in'mical Asuras), despite the wrong done by him!

kuṇṭram etutta pirāṇ aṭiyārotum
onī niṛṇa caṭakōpana uraiceyal
nāṇṭi puṇaṁta ēr āyirattul ivai
veṇṭi tarum-pattum mēvik karparkkē.  

(VII–4–11)

**Translation**

Success in many ways will these ten beneficent songs confer
On those that learn them, out of the thousand composed
By Caṭakōpana who did unto the devotees adhere
Of the Benefactor great, Who aloft did mount Govardhan hold.

**Note**

The Āḻvār feels as if he is one of those who took shelter under mount Govardan, when Lord Kṛṣṇa held it aloft. It could also be interpreted as his joining the rank and file of the Śrī Vaiṣṇavas, who have sought refuge at the Lord’s feet, scared of the worldly life, like unto those in the pastoral village, who took shelter under Govardan. As Nampīḷḷai puts it, the Āḻvār feels drawn towards the Lord’s remarkable simplicity in holding aloft Govardan for a whole week and His exquisite charm in that position. And so, he gives vent to his Joy by mentally mingling with those who were then under the Lord’s protective umbrella. Surely, the chanters of this decad which sets out, one by one, the Lord’s victorious achievements, will be crowned with success in all their undertakings.
Seventh Centum—Fifth Decad (VII-5)
(Karpār-irama-piranāi)

Preamble

The Ālvār, who revelled in the last decad, recounting some of the Lord’s glorious deeds, cites some more achievements of the Lord’s glorious deeds, cites some more achievements of the Lord in this decad, much to his own delectation. At the same time, he could not help wondering how the worldlings, whose birthright it is to share this enjoyment, kept aloof and he even felt vexed with them for their callous indifference. What a pity! Oblivious of the huge treasure of gold, buried within inches right in the centre courtyard of their houses, these folks struggle elsewhere with swollen feet in search of fleeting wealth of no consequence.

karpār irāma-piranāi allāl, marrum karparō-pul pā mutalā, pul ēṟumpu āti onṟu ēṟiyē,
nal-pāl ayōttiyil vāłum carācaram muṟṟavum,
nal-pālukku uyttanān-nāṁmukaṇār perra nāṭtulē? (VII--5–1)

Translation

Will those in quest of Knowledge seek to Know any but Irāmapiraṇṭ
Who did instil love great for Him even in the smallest ant
And tiny grass in Ayōtti, the blessed city (with God-love rampant),
Things still and mobile, with no effort on their part,
Of all the places in this world, created by Nāṁmukaṇṭ?

Notes

(i) When Irāmapiraṇṭ (Śrī Rāma) went into exile, even inanimate things got choked with grief, the trees withered away, the tanks and rivers boiled up to such an extent that none could go near them. And when He returned to Ayodhya at the end of His exile, the trees started yielding fruits out of season, the orchards were all in full blossom, betokening the exuberance of their joy over the Lord’s home-coming. Such was the great
spell of love cast upon all things, still and mobile, and all creatures in the blessed Kingdom of Ayodhā, by Lord Rāma! It has to be noted that this God-love of amazing magnitude was generated in them by the Lord’s spontaneous grace, without any effort on their part such as pursuing the paths of discipline laid down by the Sāstras for cultivation of it. This aspect has been dwelt upon in aphorism 105 of ‘Ācārya Ṣṛdayam’ with the Author’s characteristic profundity. Even trees and animals were spell-bound, when the Lord, during His next Avtāra as Kṛṣṇa, produced sweet strains from His magic flute.

(ii) In his ‘Dramiḍopaniṣad tātparya Ratnāvali’ Śrī Vedānta Deśika, however, interprets this song, as referring to final emancipation of all things and beings in Ayodhya, due solely to Śrī Rāma’s voluntary grace. “Śākethe muktidhānāt”. All the other glossators, except the author of the twelve thousand grantha commentary, hold that this song highlights Lord Rāma’s extraordinary grace in investing the creatures in Ayodhyā with an abundance of God-love, matching with that of the denizens in the High Heaven. Nāmukmaṇ (Brahmā) is the demi-urge nominated by the Supreme Lord for carrying out the function of creation. Even so, in the worlds created by him there was just one place known as Ayodhyā where all creatures, including the tiniest of beings and things like the ants and grass, were soaked exclusively in love for Lord Rāma, instead of being dependent on Brahmā, the ostensible Creator. Among the living creatures, the ant is the smallest and the grass is the tiniest among things, still and immobile. Mention of these two in this song, goes to emphasise that it is not one’s spiritual learning and deep erudition that secure the final goal of ‘Mokṣa’ but the Lord’s sweet to spontaneous grace and ‘apratiṣedha’ or non-resistance the influx of His grace, on the part of the beneficiaries. Of all places within the ambit of creation of that functionary, known as Brahmā, there is just one, called Ayodhyā where all things and beings from the highest
to the lowest, subsist on God-love a passionate love for Śrī Rāma, in total replacement of the normal source of sustenance, namely, food. And, therefore, can one long to know of any but Lord Rāma who instilled such love out of His sweet, spontaneous grace?

(iii) Among our Pūrvācāryas (Great Preceptors), Kūrattālvāṇ felt that the perfections and graces of Godship were complete in His incarnation as Rāma, eclipsing the glories of all the other Avatāras of the Lord. Bhaṭṭārya, the illustrious son of the illustrious father, had also a distinct predilection for Rāmāvatāru, before whom all the other Avatāras paled into insignificance, according to him. One day, he reacted sharply to the observation made by one Ciriāṭṭāṇ that Lord Rāma did not display the virtue of condescension (S ubhāya) to the remarkable extent displayed by Lord Kṛṣṇa by running an errand, on behalf of the Pāṇḍavas like unto a carrier-pigeon. Bhaṭṭārya stoutly defended his own position, saying: “It is not so; Rāma would have certainly been prepared to go as a messenger but there was none to bid him to carry any message”.

nāṭṭil pīrāntavaī nāraṇakaru āl āpri, āvarō—
nāṭṭil pīrāntu, pātātaṇa pāṭṭu, maṇicarkkāy,
nāṭṭai naliyum arakkārai nāṭit taṭintittu,
nāṭṭai alittu, uyyac ceytu, naṭantamai kēṭumē? (VII–5–2)

Translation

Will those that to the land belong (where reigns supreme The Lord’s glory), be the vassal of any one but (Him) Nāraṇar
Even after knowing how He unto this wicked land came
And suffered miseries untold for the sake of the humans,
Tormented by the Rākṣasas, how He sought and routed them,
Restoring peace and piety in the land and went back to the Celestium?

Notes

(i) Śrī Rāma stayed in this land for eleven thousand years although He slew Rāvaṇa and vanquished the monstrous
hordes under him in His thirty-eighth year itself. During this long period, the Kingdom of Ayodhyā became saturated with love for Him and the subjects looked upon Him as their sole sustainer. No wonder, when He went back to the Celestium, He took them all with Him.

(ii) In the text of this song, Rāma is referred to as Nārāyaṇa (Nāraṇaṇ) being an incarnation of the latter. After the overthrow of Rāvaṇa, Brahmā, Rudra and other Celestials assembled in outer space and sang Śrī Rāma's praise in a chorus, when they said 'Bhavān Nārāyaṇo Devah' etc. Brahmā requested Rāma to get back to the Celestium just then, but Rudra referred to by Vālmiki, as "Śaḍartha nayana Śrīmān" pleaded that He should deign to get back to Ayodhyā and restore happiness to His mothers, brothers and the subjects pining for Him and nurture them with His loving grace.

(iii) Wasn't it His condescending love and deep concern for the sorrowing mortals, down below, sunk in deep distress, that made Him come down to this hideous land which is abhorred even by us, mortals bound by Karma, and stay in the mother's womb for full twelve months, a couple of months more than we do? And what more? No human ever suffered like Him, His separation from Sītā, His beloved Consort, like unto the Soul remaining on one side of the ocean and the body, on the other, loss of jatāyu, the vulture King, extremely dear unto Him etc., etc., and yet these very men for whom He underwent all the harrowing hardships are so ungrateful as to criticise and find fault with Him at this distance of time. Even the Devas, who would not deign to step on to this loathsome soil and receive the libations offered to them by we men and over here, only from a distance, had no compunction while requesting the Lord to come down to Earth and slay Rāvaṇa, King of Laṅkā and rout the city. So very selfish, these Devas are.
kētpārkal kēcavaṇ kīrtti allāl, māṟṟum kētparō-
kētpār cevī cuṭu kīlmai vacai vukalē vaiyum
cēnāl paḷam pakaivāṅ, cicupāḷaṅ, tiruvaṭi
tāḷ-pāḷ aṭaṃtā taṅmai aṟivāra layāṟuṭūṟumē?

(Ⅶ-5-3)

Translation
Will those that yearn to listen to things great
Listen to aught but the glory of Kēcavaṇ from those
That know how He got restored unto His feet
Even Śiśupāla, the age-long enemy inveterate, who railed abuses
On Him, so vile and mean, that even those who longed
To hear Him maligned found them unsavoury and blistering?

Note
What is there to hear but the glory of the magnanimous Lord Krṣṇa (Keśava) who salved even the malicious Śiśupāla, His sworn enemy, whose sole occupation it was to vituperate Him in the meanest terms, from those who have already got to know about it? Even while abusing, Śiśupāla chose Lord Krṣṇa as his target, keeping Him in view and mentioning His name all the time, though in bad light. The felon did so not only in one birth but in every one of his many births. And what about the intensity of his hatred for the Lord? Even those, who longed to hear the Lord maligned and hired out persons for this job, could not stand the blistering invectives of Śiśupāla. The merciful Lord perhaps took this as yet another form of recital of His names, ‘Nāma Saṅkīrtana’ and salved the age-long offender! So then, even enmity to God is preferred to friendship with Satan, seeing that Śiśupāla could obtain salvation, although he was a staunch hater of Lord Krṣṇa, reciting His holy names by way of malicious indictment, though coming face to face with His bejeweled Person, the great fortune of a great enemy! And what to say of the infiniteness of His grace, much beyond the competence of we mortals to conjecture! The Lord’s grace is all the more pronounced, seeing that Śiśupāla had, on his part, not even the remotest wish (arthitva) for salvation and it is incredible that he could ever attain it.
tāṇmai aṟipavaṟ tām avarku āl aṁri, āvaṟo-
pāṇmaip pāṭar porul ātum il pāḷ neṟum kālattu,
naṁmaip puṇal paṇṇi, nāṁmaṇaṁp pāṇṇi, tāṇṇulḷe
togmai mayakkiya tōrriya cūḷalkal cintittē? (VII–5–4)

Translation

Will those, that meditate on the grace galore of the Lord,
Become the vassals of any but Him who put back the worlds
In positions, as of old, creating the beneficent water first,
And Brahmā, the four-headed, next, finding all things lost
For a whole eternity, in a state of veritable naught,
When one thing could not from another be told, in His stomach
caught?

Note

We can't but belong to the Supreme, Lord, our Sole Master,
the first cause of all things, who created the worlds
of differences, with their assortments as Dev.ś, humans,
birds and beasts, plants and things, still and mobile. It
was indeed His grace galore that made Him sustain in His
stomach all the worlds with their varied contents, without
their being swept off, during the Great deluge (Mahāpralaya),
a state of virtual non-existence or nothingness, pending the
restoration of the old order of things in due course when
He put them back in position. Is there any need then to
specifically state that we can't but belong to Him, our
creator?

cūḷalkal cintikkil, māyaḷ kalal aṅgī, cūḷvarō-
āḷap perum puṇal-tāṇṇul aḷuniyā ŋāḷattait
tāḷap paṭāmal, taṅpāḷ oru kōṭṭitait tān koṇṭa
kēḷal tiru uru āyirruk kēṭtum, uṉarntumē? (VII–5–5)

Translation

Will those who seek the means to achieve their ends
Lean on aught but the feet of the wondrous Lord,
Having (from sages) heard and pondered how He pulled
The Earth out from the depth of the water vast,  
As the Great Boar, on His tooth unique, well in tact?

Note
Once we get to know the Lord’s grace galore and ponder over it, the manner in which He created the worlds and later, preserved them from being swept off by the deep waters of the Deluge, does it not behove us to look upon Him as our Sole Refuge? When He forked the Earth out, effortlessly on His long tusk, bent and protruding, it looked like a blue gem, at one end of the tooth. It was indeed the Lord’s extra-ordinary grace that induced Him to assume a Form out of all proportion to the actual needs, like unto a generous host out to feed a bare forty persons, cooking for a hundred.

kēṭṭum unārntavar kēcavārkku āḷ aṅgī, āvarō-vāṭtam ilā vaṇ kai māvali vāṭikka, vāṭippūṇṭu,  
itṭam koḷ tēvarkal ceṇḍu irantārkku īṭar nikkiya  
kōṭṭu aṅkai vāmaṇan āy, ceyta kūttukkal kaṇṭumē?

(VII–5–6)

Translation
The Devās, tormented by Māvali, the donor great with devilish pride filled,  
Did the Lord entreat to rid them of their pain extreme;  
Wonders He then performed and the donor’s pride He quelled,  
As Vāmaṇan, with outstretched arms, seeking the queer kind of alms;  
Having all these from the great sages heard  
And pondered over, how can one submit to any but Kēcavan, my Lord?

Note
If Māvali (Mahābali) was a peerless donor, the Lord too went to him as a peerless Seeker of alms! It was Bali’s infliction of unbearable miseries on the Devas, big and small, which made the otherwise discordant team (cutting at each other’s throat, one chopping the head of another, like unto the land-lords envious of the greatness of one another) combine together and appeal at the feet of Lord Mahāviṣṇu.
kaṇṭum, telintum kaṭṭār kaṇṇarku āḷ aṇṭi, āvāro-
vaṇṭu uṇ malari toṅkal markkaṇṭēyaṇukku vāḷum nāl
inṭaice caṭāimaṭi icaṇ utoṇkoṇṭu ucāc cella,
koṇṭu aṇku, taṅgotoṇ koṇṭu, utaṇ ceṇratu uṇarntumē?

(VII–5–7)

Translation

Ican, with matted locks pronounced, led the little lad,
Mārkanaṇṭeyaḥ, with lovely garland bedecked, unto the Lord,
Who blessed the youngster with long life and unto His fold
Admitted him; having heard all these by the great sages told,
Will those that ponder over the Lord’s grace galore
Adore any but Kaṇṇaṇ, with their vision clear?

Note

In the preceding song, Indra and other Devas who sought
refuge in the Lord, were blessed by Him. But that is
nothing when compared with His shedding grace on
Mārkanaṇṭeya, a votary of Śiva. Here then is yet another
proof of the Lord’s infinite grace. As regards Mārkanaṇṭeyaḥ’s
episode and the relative role of Śiva and Mahāviṣṇu in
redeeming that great initial votary of Śiva, see the elaborate
notes under IV-10-8.

cella uṇarntavar celvan-tan cir aṇṭi, karparō-
ellai ilāta perum tavattāl pala cey mirai,
allai amara ara ceyum ḫranṭiyaṇ ākattai,
mallal ari uru āy, ceyta māyam arintumē?

(VII–5–8)

Translation

Will those with knowledge, full and perfect,
Learn aught but the glory great of the Lord affluent,
Knowing how, as the gigantic Ari, He tore apart
The body of ḫranṭiyaṇ, the demon who thro’ penance immense
Acquired enormous strength and did the Devās tease and
torment?

Notes

(i) The knowledgeable persons, whose thoughts can reach
the farthest lengths, will not stop short of revelling
in the Supreme Lord’s glory. His auspicious traits and wondrous deeds.

(ii) Hiranya (Irañīyañ) was very formidable indeed. armed with many a boon acquired by Him, by dint of the severest penance imaginable. But he paled into insignificance before the mighty Ari (Narasimha) of enormous size like unto the water collected in the hoof-mark of the cow (the shallow depression on the ground caused by the hoof of the animal) vis-a-vis the oceanic waters. Could one’s mind be turned away from a Lord shedding such astounding grace on His devotees?

māyam aṛipavar māyavarku āḷ aṛī, āvarō-tāyam cērum oru nūṛuvvar maṅka, ōr aivarkku āy,
tēcām aṛīya ṥr cāratiyāye cēṛu, cēṇaiyai
nācām ceyiṭṭu, naṭanta nal vārtaī aṛintumē? (VII–5–9)

Translation

Will those well-versed with the wondrous Lord’s exploits magnificent
Ever subserve any but Him, so loving and munificent,
Knowing how He became world-famous as the peerless charioteer,
For the sake of the illustrious five to whom He did cater,
Annihilating their hundred coparceners unfriendly and did the armies shatter
And the heartening word that He went to the Celestium there-after?

Note

Oh, what an amazing simplicity! the Supreme Lord of the entire Universe did the mean job of driving Arjuna’s chariot and that too, in public, on the battle field. When, at his sweet will, a superior person condescends to serve a subordinate, it is usually done in camera, and not in public. But here is the Divine charioteer, who not only kept Himself open to public gaze in His Incarnate Form as Kṛṣṇa, but even to day stands before us, in His Iconic (worshippable)
Form as ‘Pártha Sárathi’ (Arjuna’s charioteer) at Triplicane (Tiru-allikkēni) in Madras, and as Pánḍava Dhūta in Tamilnadu (near Madras) and also in Kāñci (also in Tamilnadu).

vārttai aṟipavar māyavarē āḷ aṟi, āvarō-pōrtta pirappōtu, nōyōtu, mūppōtu, irappu ivai pērttu, perum tuṟpam vēr aṟa nīkkī, tān tāliṅkīlc cērītu, avaṇ ceyyum cēmattai ēṉīt teḷivuṟṟē? (VII–5–10)

Translation

Will those that appreciate the wholesome message
Of the Lord’s ‘Song Celestial’ and with clarity of mind ponder
What unto them the Lord has done, the long list of favours,
Ridding them of the blinding cloak of birth, pestilence, old age
And death, cutting out, (root and branch), the great disaster
(Of getting lost in self-enjoyment) and granting asylum secure
At His very feet, serve aught but the wondrous Sire?

Notes

(i) The quintessence of the Lord’s message in Bhagavad Gitā is in the ‘Carama Ślokā’ (XVIII-66), that which treats of the final or the ultimate ‘Means’, the loving path of surrender unto God, taking Him as the Sole Refuge, the ‘Means’ and the ‘End’ combined. This song is virtually a commentary of that Ślokā, vide also the closing aphorism (289) of ‘Mumukśuppaṭi’ (Lokācārya’s Manual for the seekers of Mokṣa).

(ii) Birth, in the midst of the worldlings with the attendant risk of becoming oblivious of one’s essential nature caught up in a mesh like the spider’s web, sickness which saps one’s energies, the sudden onslaught of old age, like a thunderbolt and the dark hand of death falling on one’s shoulders unawares, are disastrous enough. The greatest disaster of all would, however, be emancipation from the above calamities and staying in a disembodied state, lost in self-enjoyment (known as Kaivalya mokṣa) without tasting the bliss of divine service. It is indeed the greatest of all the favours
showered on us by the Lord to wean us away in toto from courting this eternal disaster of 'Kaivalya anubhava' and vouchsafe unto us the blissful service at His lotus feet, in that Eternal Land (Heaven), with absolutely no risk of our slipping back to the old ways, indeed the greatest of all His benefactions before which all the rest shall pale into insignificance.

tēlvūṟṟu vīvu iṅṟi nippāvarkku iṅpāk kati ceyyum
tēlvūṟṟa kaṇṇaṅait teṅ kurukūrca caṭakōpaṇ col
tēlvūṟṟa āyirattuḷ ivai pattum vallār-avar
tēlvūṟṟa cintaiyar pā maru mūvulakkattullē.  (VII–5–11)

Translation

Those that learn these songs ten
Out of the lucid thousand composed by Caṭakōpaṇ
Of kurukūr, adoring the Lord, who clarity personified is
And bestows on His devotees, clear and steadfast, final bliss,
Will clarity of mind attain even in this land of dismal distress.

Notes

(i) *The lucid thousand*: Like unto the turbid water in the river becoming clear and limpid in certain areas, the vedas, confused like the gummy substance in the jack fruit sticking to the straw-like stuff covering the fruit, acquire clarity in the hands of Saint Nammāḷvār.

(ii) *The devotees, clear and steadfast*: Devotees with a clear conviction, like that of the Āḻvār, that the Lord is their Sole Refuge, which cannot be shaken. The clarity of knowledge is like that obtained by Arjuna who confessed to his doubts having been dispelled on hearing Lord Krṣṇa’s teachings. In this context, it is interesting to recall the following conversation between Naṉciyar and his illustrious disciple, Nampiḷḷai:

*Nampiḷḷai*: “Sire, did Arjuna attain the Lord or not?”
Nañciyar: "It is immaterial whether Arjuna attained God or not and your question is hardly relevant. We have to pin our faith to Gitá as the Lord's teachings without enquiring who are all the beneficiaries, even as the thirsty quench their thirst by drinking nice, cool water at sight, without caring to ascertain the names of those whose thirst has already been quenched by drinking water".

Seventh Centum—Sixth Decad (VII-6)
(Pā maru mūvulakum)

Preamble

In the last decad, the Saint's address to the world is implicit, although the third person has been used throughout, instead of the second. No doubt, the worldlings kept aloof from God because of their exclusive absorption in sensual pleasures, totally shorn of God-love. But then, here is the Ālvār with an enormous yearning for the Lord, of unimaginable depth and yet, he has not been able to experience the bliss of lasting communion with Him. We have of course seen him ravished by internal joy, during those delirious moments of union with the Lord (mental vision), overflowing its contents and finding expression through hymns adoring Him and extolling His great glory. In the contrary state of desertion by the Lord, he would lament loudly as in this decad, melting the stony hearts of even the ungodly. Śrī Nampīlai puts it that the Ālvār's lamentations were so loudly vociferous that it looked as if a vast ocean rose on its feet and roared with all its might; surely it cannot but dislodge the Lord from His seat in the high Heaven and compel Him to come down to the Ālvār and oblige him with His sweet presence.

Ācārya Ammanki Ammal would exclaim:

"We can only sing and listen to this decad sung by others. We are, however, least competent to gauge and express, in concrete language, the unfathomable depth of the Ālvār's languishment, finding utterance in such soul-stirring diction".
pā maru mūvulakum paṭaitta paṟpanāpā! ō!
pā maru mūvulakum aḷanta parpa pāṭā! ō!
tāmaraik kaṇṇā! ū! taṇiyēn taṇi āḷā! ū!
tāmaraik kaiyā! ū! unṇai eṇṛukol cērvatuvē?  (VII–6–1)

Translation

Oh, Paṟpanāpā, Who created the worlds three, vast and varied,
Oh, Lord with lotus feet that spanned the sprawling worlds three,
Oh, Lotus-eyed, You are the Master unique of this soul lonely;
Oh, Lord, with lotus hands, when do I attain Your feet comely?

Notes

(i) Paṟpanāpā (Padmanābhā): The Supreme Lord, the Primate, from whose navel sprouted the lotus stalk; from the lotus flower at the upward end of that stalk, emerged Brahmā who gave birth to all the rest. The navel of the Lord thus proclaims Him as the First and Foremost.: The implication of the address in the opening line is: “Oh my Sire, can You who created all things, destroy me? I am on the verge of extinction”.

(ii) The worlds created by the Lord were misappropriated by Mahā Bali unto himself and hence the Lord had to wrest them back from him. Thus there is reference to the spanning of the worlds by the Lord as Tṛvikrama. The Lord set His feet then on all and sundries but now He would deny those very feet to the Āḻvār who pines for them.

(iii) The Āḻvār was enthralled by the Lord’s lotus eyes and thenceforward he has been subsisting on them alone. How then can the Lord withdraw from the Āḻvār his very sustenance?

(iv) It was with His lotus hands that Śrī Kṛṣṇa embraced Akrūra and the same hands dealt a mortal blow to Kaṇṭākarna. And now, the Āḻvār is not asking the Lord to embrace him as He embraced Akrūra but only wants Him to say when exactly He would lift him unto
His lotus feet, even as He, as Lord Rāma, assured Bharata about His return to Ayodhyā from exile at the end of fourteen years.

Translation

As the Soul You stand of land, water and fire,
Air and space, creatures, one and all, oh, Sire,
You tended the cows and held aloft mount (Govardhan)
To save them, oh, pot-dancer great. alas! when shall I attain
Your lovely feet, Nāṃmukaṇṭ (Brahmā) and Aran (Śiva) adored?

Note

The Ālvār longs for the Lord’s lovely feet, coveted by the exalted Brahmā, the demi-urge, in charge of creation and the eminent Rudra in charge of dissolution. Specially endowed that he is, the Ālvār can of course conjure up the cosmic vision of the Lord in all things and beings, as their in-dweller but he ‘longs for the Lord’s holy feet in His specialised Form of exquisite charm.

Translation

Oh, You Dancer great, aloft You held the mountain
And beat off the hail storm, on Your crown is tulaci, cool
and nice,
Oh, Internal Controller of Śivā and Brahmā! Your glory
description defies,
You are my Soul dear, me, you do, on your own, sustain
And Yet I know not where You I shall attain?
Notes

(i) Indra visited his fury in the shape of a hail storm, raining stones and Lord Kṛṣṇa warded it off by holding mount Govardhan aloft like an umbrella. As Nampīḷḷai puts it in his unique way, the Lord would have lifted the ocean itself instead of the mountain and shielded the subjects, had Indra sent down watery rain instead of the stony one! The Āḻvār now asks whether the Lord will shield only a whole township and that against the fury of the elements instead of a single individual like him, pelted by the rain of sorrow, visited on him by his very existence in this world. Actually, his affliction is much more intense than the combined intensity of the sufferings of a whole township. And yet, the Āḻvār does not want the Lord to lift yet another mountain for his sake but pines only for the sight of the sinewy arms of the Lord, the lifter of Govardhan.

(ii) Says the Āḻvār “Oh, Lord, You are the Soul unto me, Your body. Where is the question of the body attaining the Soul? As one exclusively dependent on You, I know of no Means but You, to attain you. Does it not follow, therefore, that You have to pick me up?”

eṅkut talaipeyvaṅ nāṉ-eḻil mūvulakum niyē;
aṅku uyār mukkaṅ-pirāṅ, pirama-perumāṅ-avaṅ ni;
vem katir vacciRAk kai ıntiraṅ mutalāt teyvam ni:-koṅku alar taṅ am tulāy muti enğuṭaik kōvalaṅē? (VII–6–4)

Translation

The lovely worlds three You control, oh, Kōvalaṅ, wearing on Your crown,
Tulāci, cool and nice, shedding honey; the triple-eyed Śiva and Brahmā, the exalted
Are at Your disposal and so is Indra who the mace powerful wields;
So then, how can I attain You, on my own?
T—22
Note

The Lord having revealed to the Āḻvār, His grand glory, as the great ordainer, maintaining the exalted Brahmā, Śiva and Indra, their respective estates, as the best of all good things and at the same time, His inordinate love for His devotees, it is but meet that the Āḻvār calls upon Him to cut out all his impediments and lift him unto His feet. There is no question of the Āḻvār attaining Him through his own effort. Can a rat-boned weakling be expected to lift a mountain on his back?

εννυταικ κωβαλανε! εν πολλακ καρυμανικκαμε!
υγνυται υντι μαλαρ υλακαμ αβαι μυγρυμ παραντου,  
υγνυταικ κοτι υελλαττου ακαμπαλ υγναικ καντου κονιττου,  
enntai är uyirar ennanaekol vantu eytuvar? (VII–6–5)

Translation

Oh, my beloved Kōvalan, sweet unto me like virgin gem,  
How shall this cussed soul, (soaked in worldly pleasures, one and all)  
Attain You and behold Your resplendent Form,  
In the High Heaven, the land aglow, unique and eternal?

Note

The Āḻvār avers that one like him steeped in sensual pleasures cannot attain the Lord of Supreme Splendour in the High Heaven, except through His spontaneous grace. This is obviously his reply to the question supposed to have been posed unto him by the Lord, whether he should not make some effort to attain the end in view.

van tu eytumårù ariyên-malku nîlac cuṭar taļajippa,  
cefıcuçarc cōtikal pûttu, oru māṇikkam cêrvatu pöl,  
antaramèl cempaṭṭöṭu aṭi, unti, kai, mārpu, kaṇ, vây  
cefıcuçarc cōti viṭa uṟai en tirumârpaṇaiyê? (VII–6–6)
Translation

I know not how to get at my Lord
Bearing Tiru (Lakṣmi) on the chest and reclining on Serpent bed,
In the Milk-ocean, His body beaming blue that expands,
His feet, navel, hands, chest, eyes and lips glowing red,
Like unto a ruby radiating lovely rays red.

Note

Here again, the Saint repeats that he has no "Means" other than the Lord reclining in the Milk-ocean like unto a multi-coloured garment spread over the soft, somnolent serpent-bed, and that He should, therefore, admit him unto His fold in the exercise of His voluntary grace.

eṇ tirumārpan-taṇṇai, eṇ malaimakal kūraṇ-taṇṇai,
eṇrum eṇ nāmakaḷai akampāl koṇṭa nāṁmukaṇai,
niṅṭa cacipatiyai, nilam kiṅṭu eyil mūṇṟu eritta,
veṇṟu pulaṇ turanta vicumpu āliyai-kāṇēṉō?  (VII—6—7)

Translation

Shall I behold Him that bears on His chest, Tiru, my Mother,
The Internal Controller of the Spouses of Malaimakal, Nāmakal
And Caci, the Redeemer of Earth, who did help Brahmā, conquer
The senses, the destroyer great of the triple citadels?

Note

The Lord got Brahmā and Śiva married to their respective consorts, Malaimakal (Pārvatī) and Nāmakal (Sarasvatī) and so also Indra to Saśi as the parent gets the sons, come of age, suitable brides. The Lord is also the Internal Controller of all including these exalted personalities. There are certain things like redemption of the Earth by the Lord Himself, assuming the gigantic form of a Boar and certain others like the destruction of the Trūpurā (three citadels) and the three demoniac brothers who ruled the citadels, functioning as the Internal Controller of Rudra. Brahmā, the Demiurge had to acquire control over the senses, preparatory to his being entrusted with the task of creation.
āliyaik kāṇ pariyyā, ari kāṇ narīyyā, arakkar
ūlai ithu anṛu ilaṅkai kaṭantu, pilam pukku oḷippa,
mili am pullaik kaṭāy, viṟal māliyaik koṇru, piṇṇum
āḷ uyār kuṇṭāṅkaḷ ceytu, aṭartṭāṇaiyum kaṇṭum kotle?

(VII—6—8)

Translation

When shall I behold my Lord Who did mount the lovely
bird (Garuḍa)
And annihilate the Asuras who from Laṅkā fled and hid
Inside the underworld, like the horse by the Dinosaur scared,
And the fox by the lion, slew the formidable Māli and his hordes
Throwing up the corpses into heaps of mountains tall?

Notes

The incidents, set out in chapters 5 to 8 of Rāmāyaṇa, Uttara
Kāṇḍa, are alluded to in this song:

Mālyavān, Māli and Sumāli, the three sons of Śuksesa, a
Rākṣasa, acquired enormous strength through terrific
penance, settled in Laṅka and raised a huge population giv-
ing endless trouble to the Devas. The Devas, who sought
the help of Lord Śrīman Nārāyaṇa, were vouchsafed by Him,
protection. This enraged the Asuras who invaded
the upper worlds, surrounded the Lord who appeared there,
mounted on Garuḍa and engaged Him in a pitched battle.
When Mali was slain by the Lord, his brothers Mālyavān
and Sumāli encountered Him and were also beaten off.
The two Asura chiefs then retreated, along with the remain-
ing followers, into the Pāthāla (underworld) and hid them-
soevere there. Sumāli’s daughter, named, Kaikaśi gave birth
to Rāvana and others.

The Ājvār would want to know when he can enjoy the supreme
bliss of beholding the Lord who can undoubtedly cut out
all his foes (impediments) even as He destroyed these formid-
able demons. In the first two songs of this decad, the Lord
has been set out as the goal, the next five songs reveal that
He is also the ‘Means’ for attaining Him while in this
and the next two songs, He is shown as the great Redeemer,
vanquishing the forces of evil and thus cutting out all our
sins.
kāntum kolo, neñcamē!-kaṭiya viñaiyē mゅyalum
aṅ tiṅal mīli moympīn arakkan kulattait taṭintu,
mṅtum aṅan tampikkē virī nīr ilaṅkai arulī,
āṅṭu, taṅ cōti pukka aŋmar ariyēṛiṇaiyē?

(VII–6–9)

Translation

My mind, shall we at all behold the Chief of Celestials,
Who the clan routed of (Rāvana) the formidable Asura bent
on evil
And on the throne of Lāṅkā, the peninsular Kingdom, installed
(Vibhīṣaṇa), his brother, returned to Ayodhyā and there ruled
Thousands of years and then to the Celestium returned?

Note

The Āḻvār enquires of his mind whether he will be able to
behold Lord Rāma in the glorious setting in Heaven,
surrounded by Angels, soaked in God-love, unlike the Earth
where the ungodly aimed missiles at Him.

ēṛtu-arum vaikuntattai arulum namakku-āyar kulattu
İrru ĭlam pillai onṭayp pukku, māyaṅkalē ĭyarri,
[Du kūṛu iyal kaṅcaṇaik korru aivarkku āy, koṭum cēnai taṭin
āṛṭal mikkāṅ, periya paraṅcōti pukka ariyē

(VII–6–10)

Translation

Surely, we will be granted the Heaven, difficult to attain,
By the merciful Ari, Who entered Gokul as a Babe just born,
Worked many a wonder ere the devilish Kaṅcan was by Him
slain,
Got the armies of the cruel enemies routed, as a Partisan
Of the five brothers and repaired back to the High Heaven,
Still feeling that enough unto them hasn’t been done.

Notes

(i) The Āḻvār is now placating his mind to which he had
posed the question, as in the last song.
(ii) Kṛṣṇa, as a mere Babe and later, as a Boy, worked many
wonders culminating in the slaying of the fiendish
Kamsa who had tried all methods he could possibly
conceive of, to do away with the Divine Child. And
when Kṛṣṇa came of age, He controlled the wonderful
military strategy in that great battle at Kurukṣetra and
led the Pāṇḍavas to victory against the evil-minded
Kauravas. Having done so much, the Lord still felt
He had not done enough unto His devotees. How
magnanimous of Him! And what more? Even after
His return to Heaven, His fury over the demoniac
kamsa, Duryodhana etc., remained unabated.

pukka ari uru āy, avuṇaṇ uṭal kiṇṭu, ukanta,
cakkarac celvaṇ-taṇṇaik kurukūrc caṭakōpaṇ cognā
mikka ār āyirattuḷ ivai pattum vallār-avarait
tokku, pallāntu icaittu, kavariceyvar ēḷaiyarē.  (VII–6–11)

Translation

Those that are well-versed in these songs ten
Out of the illustrious thousand composed by Caṭakōpaṇ
Of Kurukūr, adoring Tirumāl, wielding the discus fine,
Who, as the Man-Lion marvellous, emerged and tore open
Avuṇaṇ’s body, will the High Heaven attain
And there the damsels bright will adore them and entertain.

Note

Although the Lord did not wield the discus or, for the matter of
that, any other weapon during His Avatāra as Nara-
Simhā, it could be seen from ‘Sudarṣana Śatakam’ that
that the aura of Sudarṣan (Discus) permeated Narasimha’s
nails, which tore open Avuṇaṇ’s (Hiranya’s) body. The
chanters of this decad will have a good reception in
Heaven, attended upon by the Apsarās over there. See
also X-9-7.
Seventh Centum Seventh Decad (VII-7)  
(Elaiyar aivi)

Preamble

The soul-stirring utterances of the Saint, as in the last decad, should indeed have gone straight to the Lord in Heaven. In a way, the Lord would seem to have pacified the Alvär by enabling him to comprehend mentally His exquisite Form, limb by limb. Led away by the Lord’s charming beauty, the Alvär, aims at physical enjoyment of the Lord’s exquisite Form, with outstretched hands and feels frustrated when such an experience is denied to him. Thrown into deep dejection, the Alvär, once again (figuratively) transformed as the Nāyakī, hits back the mates and elders. She asserts that she could hardly yield to their threats and cajoling, overwhelmed as she was by the Lord’s bewitching Form, in all its details, on a par with physical perception through the senses.

This decad is similar to V-5 and yet, there is a difference between the two. There was an alternation of the Alvär’s rejoicing and regret, in the earlier decad, while, in the current one, the expression of stinging regret dominates, in so far as the Alvär could not envision the Lord’s Form as a whole, but perceive only one limb, at a time, whetting his appetite, all the more, for visualising the Lord’s Form, in its entirety. In this peculiar context, the Nāyakī would look upon the bewitching eyes of the Lord’s as but death-dealing twins.

ēlaiyar aivi uñnum inaik kūram kolō? ariyēn!  
āli am kaṇça-pirān tirukkănkal kolō? ariyēn!  
cūlavum tāmarai nāl-malar pōl vantu tōrrum kaṇṭir;  
tōliyarkāl! anṇaimīr! eṇ ceykēn-tuyāraṭṭiyēnē? (VII–7–1)

Translation

Ye, mates and elders, I know not whether what I see  
Are death-dealing twins or the lovely eyes of Kaṇṇapirān,  
the sea-hued Lord;  
Know ye that these are by me seen all around  
Like lotus flowers in full bloom, tormenting poor me  
And women-folks; how can I get over my distress indeed?
Note

Of all the limbs of the Lord, His lotus eyes, which kept the Āḻvār dumbfounded, presented themselves before him first, because it was the Lord’s bewitching eyes that attracted the Āḻvār unto Him, as confessed by him in the first of his four hymnals (Tiruviruttam). But then, why should he feel tormented by the vision instead of being delighted? Had the Lord’s Form, as a whole, been perceived by him, surely, he would have revelled in that glorious vision. But now, the Lord would appear to indulge in some cruel fun at the expense of the Āḻvār, by showing him His limbs, one by one, and watching his reaction thereto. The Āḻvār exclaims that these very eyes that attract the women-folks, could also prove fatal if their ardent aspirations to enjoy Him, roused by these eyes, are not fulfilled betimes. And again, being seen all round like lotus in full bloom, they oppress him without leaving him any chance to miss it by turning his attention elsewhere. Indeed the Lord’s bewitching eyes would cast their spell on the Lord Himself if only He beheld them in a mirror.

Note

Now it is the Lord’s charming nose, in between the pair of lotus-eyes, that torments the Nāyakī. At first sight, it looks like a ‘Karpaka’ creeper or leaf adjoining the Lord’s eyes. It is only on a closer examination, it turns out to be the Lord’s nose. The nose instantly reminds the Āḻvār of

āṭṭiyum tūṛṭiyum niṟṟu, anṭaimūr enṟai nīr nalintu en?
māṭṭu uyār karpakattiṉ valliyō? koḷuntō? aṟiyēn!
Iṭṭiya venṉey uyntān tirumūkkku enatu āviyullē
māṭṭiya val vilakkin cuṭarāy niṟkum-vāliyatē. (VII–7–2)

Translation

Ye, elders, there’s no use your prodding and rebuking me,
I know not whether ‘tis the creeper or the leaf of ‘karpaka’
tree.

That does the Lord’s eyes adjoin or the nose of the One that ate Butter by stealth, blazing like a steady flame bright, in my heart.
Krṣṇa, as a child, having eaten the stored-up butter stealthily and exposed Himself by smearing the nose with the stolen butter, a tell-tale. The Nāyakī relates that incident as if she has perceived it with her eyes: actually, even the characteristic smell of butter she appreciates now in her mental vision. The elders, therefore, asked the Nāyakī to point out to them the Lord’s nose with which she was so much obsessed, but she said it was shining forth in her heart (mind’s eye) like a flame, steady and bright, as if to torment her with a vengeance.

vāliyatu ěr kaṇiḳoḷ? viṇaiyāṭṭiyēn valviṇaikoḷ?
kōḷam tiraḷ pavaḷak koḷum tuṇṭamkōlo? ariyēn!
nīḷa neṭu mukil pōl tirumēṇi ammāṇ toṇtāivāy
ēḷum ticaiyul ellām vantu tōṇrūm-en īṇ uyirkkē!  (VII–7–3)

Translation

Is this a fruit unique, ever in tact, or is it
This sinner’s sin tough, that can’t enojoy it right now or is it
A chip of coral, pretty and delicate, I know not;
The red lips, fruit-like of the cloud-hued Lord are seen
In every direction I turn, tormenting my life sweet.

Note

The Lord’s red lips look like a red fruit which is ever fresh and knows no growth or decay; they also look like a chip of coral. The Nāyakī recognises on a closer look that they are but the lips of the cloud-hued Lord of bluish tint, which she would like to enjoy that very moment, but can’t do so, because of her heavy sins standing in the way. The nectarean lips are indeed oppressive to the Nāyakī, in her present state of frustration, like nectar becoming a veritable poison, in so far as a sinner is concerned, precluding him from enjoying it. Surely, the Lord’s lips would not lag behind His eyes and nose, in exhibiting to the Nāyakī their oppressive charm, making themselves distinctly visible wherever she turns, determined to end her life.
in uyirkku elaiyarmel valaiyum inai nila vigkol-
manjiya cir mataana karuppuc cilaikol?-mataana-
tan uyirt tatai, kanha-perumana puruvam? avaiye
en uyir melanavay atukirana-enrum nire!

(VII–7–4)

Translation
Well, is this a tantalising pair of bluish bows
Whose targets are the sweet lives of poor womenfolks
Or the amorous bow of Mataana of undying charm,
Or his Sire, Kanha’s brows which fiercely aim
At my life, standing quite firm?

Notes
(i) And now, it is the turn of the Lord’s brows, well bent
like a pair of bows, to torment the Nayaaki and sap
her life. The proverbial bows of ‘Manmata’ (Cupid)
are known to attack their natural targets, the
women.

(ii) Lord Krisna could be regarded as the Father of Manmata,
the deity of exquisite charm, inasmuch as He begot upon
Rukmini, Pradyumna, extremely charming, as it were,
a re-incarnation of Manmata. Kanha’s brows bore
such a perfect resemblance to the bows that they could
be easily mistaken for each other.

enrum nire tikalam ceyya in cutar ven minyukkol?
anri, en avi atum ani muttamilolo? ariyen!
kungram euttta piran muruval enatu avi atum;
onrum arikirilen, anaimir!-enakkku uyvu itame!

(VII–7–5)

Translation
I just don’t know whether it is the lightning white
That stays and reveals the radiance red or pearls white,
In a cluster that does my life torment; well, these smiles
Of the Lord, Who lifted mount (Govardhan) aloft, do scorch
my soul,
Oh, Elders, see I can’t how I can survive at all.
Note
The Lord’s smiles are likened to the lightning, with this difference that unlike lightning which is seem during a split second, the lightning smiles of the lord stay on and reveal the radiance of His red lips on which they keep dancing. The smiles are also likened to white pearls. The Āñâṛ seems to have currently on view the smiles on Lord Krṣṇa’s lips when He was holding Mount Govardhana aloft. But then, there a whole township took shelter but poor Nāyakī cannot find a single spot where she can take shelter and escape from the current oppression. Speaking about the Lord’s smiles, Śrī Nampīḷai admirably elucidates that they dance on His lips and are thus virtually at the entrance of the lips; they should, as such, have been dealt with first and the lips thereafter. The smiles, therefore, oppress the Nāyakī, now, resenting, as it were, their relegation from the natural order.

Translation
Are these the leaves fish-shaped? No, these are the ears, Bedecked with rings, studded with pearls, of the Lord Who has As His bed, the hooded serpent poisonous, which finish off alike Womenfolks, asuras and demons and torment me with no break.

Note
The ears of the Lord leave no chance of survival for the Asuras and Rākṣasas who will die of jealousy on beholding the charming lobes, and again, the weaker sex (women) would pine for the Lord and collapse due to the non-fulfilment of their aspirations. The Āñâṛ, feels tormented because he could not enjoy the Lord there and then, much as he pined for such enjoyment. It is not merely the natural charm of the Lord’s ear-lobes that torments the Nāyakī
but it stands heightened by the pearls worn on them and the back-drop of Ādiśeṣa on whom the Lord is reclining. So then, the poignancy of oppression from this source makes the earlier tormenters pale into insignificance, and they even appear comparatively as benefactors like charitable persons setting up booths to quench the thirst of the weary sojourners.

kaṇmīṅkaḷ, āṇṇaiyarkāḷ! enṟu kāṭṭum vakai ariyēn!
naḷ maṇṇu veṅ tiṅkaṅkōl, nayantāṟkaṅkō naccu ilaikōl,
cēṅ maṇṇu nāḷ tāṭam tōḷ perumāṅ-tāṅ tiru natalē?
kōḷ maṇḍi āvi atum-koṭiyēn uyir kōḷ ilaṅtē! (VII–7–7)

Translation

Whether 'tis the waxing moon in the mid-fortnight
Or the herb deadly unto God-lovers, say I can't.
Oh, Elders, how I wish I could show you what I behold!
But I know not how it can be done, well, 'tis the forehead
Of the Lord with shoulders four, stout and fine
That blisters this sinner's soul, out to snatch my life.

Notes

(i) The Lord's charming forehead is now visualised by the Nāyaki. She wants to show it to the elders around but she can't do so, it being only a mental vision confined to her. Nor can she ask them to see it because they are not similarly gifted with this vision. The Lord's sinewy shoulders have also been mentioned in this song to identify the forehead as that of the One whose shoulders, stout and fine, enthralled the Ālvār even as they attracted Hanumān, at first sight.

(ii) The Lord is indeed a delicious herb, as acknowledged by the Ālvār himself in V-7, but He turns out to be deadly like poison, in the Nāyaki's present state of dejection.

(iii) If the Lord's charming features should turn out to be oppressive, it is because of the Ālvār's sins, as he put it.
köl īlait tāmaraiyum, koṭiyum, pavalamum, villum, köl īlait tuṇ muttamum, taḷirum, kulīr vān piraiyum, köl īlaiyā utaiya koḻum cōtiavāṭam kol-kaṇṇan köl īlai väl-mukamāy, koṭiyēn uyr kolkiṅgerē? (VII–7–8)

Translation

The eyes like unto self-decorating lotus, the creeper-like nose, Coral lips, leaf-like ear-lobes, brows well bent like bows, The radiant smiles, like unto a jewel, the moon-like forehead A veritable region of radiance galore, all these decorate Kaṇṇan, my Lord,
And His beaming face peeps out to sap this sinner’s life alas!

Note

The aggregate charm of the various limbs of the Lord, detailed in the seven preceding songs, each one of which is a decoration by itself, is reflected in Kaṇṇan’s beaming face, a veritable region of radiance galore, which has, however, a devastating effect on the Saint in his present disconsolate state. If he sinks down instead of being boosted up by the glowing vision of the Lord’s superlative charm, it is because of his sins which preclude the external perception of the Lord’s charm as well.

kolkirra kōl irulaič cukirntīṭṭa koḻum curulīn ulkońta nila nal nūl talai kol? anṛu; māyaṇ kuḷal vilkiṅra pūn tuṇ tulāy virāi nāra vantu, en uyīraik kalkiṅavāṛu ariyīr, aṃṇaimīr! kaḷara nirīrē. (VII–7–9)

Translation

Is it that pitched darkness enveloping the whole world, Compressed into dark-blue thread, neatly packed and rolled? No, these are the lovely strands of hair of my wondrous Lord Wafting the sweet fragrance of tulacci, cool and nice, You, elders, know not how it steals away my life And saying one thing or another, me you just chide.

Note

It is indeed a grand poetic imagery, the comparison of the peerless beauty of the Lord’s locks. If the unwholesome
part of the grim darkness, that gripped the entire universe.
during the great deluge, were weeded out, the rest could be
compressed into nice, dark-blue rolls, like unto cotton
strands from which yarn is spun. Attempting a comparison
like this unto the Lord’s lovely locks, the Saint realises that
comparisons, as a rule, are much-too-feeble when it is a
matter of describing the Lord’s beauty galore, defying
description and he would, therefore, simply call them the
locks of the wondrous Lord.

nirī nirattutēnru neritta kaiyar āy, ēṅṅai nir
cūriyium cūlntum vaitī; cuṭar cōti manī niṭam āy,
murā im mūvulakum virikiṅga cuṭar muṭikke
orrumai koṅṭatu ullām; āṅṅaimir! nacai ēṅ nuṅkaṭkē?
(VII–7–10)

Translation

Elders, You rebuke me as being forward and twist
Your fingers, surrounding me for ever, in protest,
But ‘tis no use your expecting me to get round,
For immersed in the Lord’s resplendent crown is my mind.

Note

The Lord’s radiant crown is shedding its lustre on all the worlds
and the Nāyaki’s mind stands rivetted to it. There is,
therefore, no point in the elders blaming her as transgressing
the feminine bounds of modesty and pulling her up all the
time. On the other hand, she would expect them to take
steps to hand her over to the Lord to whom she rightly
belongs, having come of age for such consummation.

kaṭku āriya piramaṇ, civaṇ, iṅṭiraṇ ēṅṛu ivarkkum
kaṭku āriya kaṅṅaṇaik kurukūrc caṭakopaṇ coṅṇa
uṭku uṭai āyirattul ivaiyum oru pattum vallār
uṭku uṭai vānavarōṭu uṭaṅṇy ēṅṛu māyārē. (VII–7–11)

Translation

Those that can recite these songs ten
Out of the thousand composed by Kurukūr Caṭakopaṇ,
Presenting the picture of Lord Kaṅṅaṇ, true and graphic,
And adoring Him, invisible to humans and exalted Devas alike, 
Will for ever remain in the company of ardent Celestials in Heaven.

Note
Those that chant these ten songs don’t have to languish without enjoying Lord Kṛṣṇa’s Divine presence. They will remain in Heaven partaking of the eternal bliss of divine Service, along with the holy band of ‘Nitya Sūrīs’ inseparably. The entire hymnal of Tiruvāymoḻi depicts the Lord’s Form, attributes and wealth faithfully. There lies its merit, its great strength.

It is noteworthy that the Lord, whom even the exalted Devas like Brahmā, Śiva, Indra and others cannot easily behold, made Himself visible to the Saint wherever he turned.

Seventh Centum—Eighth Decad (VII-8) (Māyā! Vamanāṅe!)

Preamble
In the last decad, the Alvar felt tormented by the mental vision of the Lord’s limbs, one after the other, rousing his appetite for God-enjoyment all the more. The Lord would not, however, fulfil the Āḻvār’s aspiration even now and is obviously waiting for the appropriate moment of consummation. The Āḻvār knows the Lord’s mind all right but still he is egged on by the exuberance of his God-love to crave for immediate union. So great was his ardour that non-fulfilment thereof should have normally resulted in his immediate extinction. He was, however, still kept alive, much to his surprise and he enquired of the Lord how exactly He enacted this wonder. “Well,” said the Lord “this is not the only wonder wrought by Me, better behold My kaleidoscopic cosmic wealth”. The Lord thus exhibited unto the Āḻvār many wonders, as against just one on which he sought elucidation. Overawed by the amazing magnitude of the Lord’s wealth and wonders, even as sage Akrūra beheld with dismay the Divine Brothers
(Balarâma and Kṛṣṇa) inside the running water of river Yamunâ, as well as on the river bank, the Āḻvâr voices forth in this decad, his mental reactions to the wonderful phenomena in front of him. It might be recalled that the Lord had displayed unto the Āḻvâr His cosmic wealth and splendour earlier also in III-4 and VI-3. In III-4, however, the Āḻvâr just didn’t know where to begin and what to say, unable to express himself with any degree of precision; in VI-3, the Lord revealed His extra-ordinary capacity to achieve the impossible and compose, with perfect ease, the incompatibles, the opposites, within His fold. And now, we see an over-awed Āḻvâr attempting to describe the wonderful phenomena before him and seeking clarification from the Lord in respect of the bewildering complexities, baffling intellectual comprehension.

mâyâ! vâmaṇâṇē! matucūtâ! nî arulây;
tî ây, nîr ây, nilaṇ ây, vicumpu ây, kâl ây,
tây ây, tantai ây, makkaḷ ây, marṟum ây, murṟum ây,
nî ây, nî niṟraṉâru-ivai enṇa niyâyaṅkaḷē! (VII–8–1)

Translation

Pray, reveal unto me Your facets many, oh, Vâmaṇâ!
My wondrous Lord, You slew the demons, (Madhu and Kaitabha),
You are the elements five and of us all, the mother, the father
And the progeny too and all else one can, by name, utter,
As well as those one can’t utter; I can’t comprehended how You are
Your Form unique and also stand in all things everywhere!

Note

Many indeed are the wonders performed by the Lord. As Vâmana, the Midget, He went to Mahâbali, as soon as He emerged, compelled his attention, got the donation of land of three strides, expanded Himself and spanned the entire universe; He crushed to death, the demons Madhu and Kaiabha under His thigh; He is at once fire and water, father and mother and their progeny as well, a unique position, none else can hold. Fire cannot be water and water cannot be fire; mother is different from father and the
children are altogether separate entities. Well, all these pertain to His attribute of being all-pervading. His cosmic or universal form. And yet, the Ālvār could enjoy, with perfect mental equanimity the Lord’s resplendent personal Form, as in Heaven, the perennial spring of nectar which the denizens over there drink deep all the time, as well as His universal Form, permeating all things, all over. This is because His immanence is a matter of superb wonder which keeps the Saint aghast.

am kaḷ malart tan tulāy muti accutaṇē! arulāy;
tiṅkaḷum ūyirum āy, čeṣum pal cūṭar āy, irul āy,
poṅku poḷi maḷai āy, pukaḷ āy; paḷi āy, pinnum nī
vem kaṇ vem kūṟramum ām-ivai enṇa vicittiramē! (VII–8–2)

Translation

Oh, Accuta, wearing on Your lovely locks tulāci garland cool, With honey-studded flowers, pray let me know what the wonder is, That You are the Sun, the Moon, the bright stars in broad expanse, And darkness too, the rains torrential, fame and ill-fame as well, And then, the unrelenting Death with cruel eyes.

Notes

(i) Towards the end of the last song, the Ālvār contemplated 'the Lord’s exquisite personal Form. That has led him on to the description of the tulāci-bedecked locks of the Lord in this song.

(ii) The Sun generates enervating heat while the Moon spreads its radiance, cool and refreshing; the stars and planets affect people both ways, for good and bad; darkness, the antithesis of light, provides a facile cover for the lewd and the thief; the rains help to raise the crops to feed the lives of creatures; the Lord directs and controls all these and He is also the much-sought-after praise as well as the disdainful opprobrium; when the people in different worlds, commit unpardonable moral
transgressions, He functions, as the unrelenting Agent of dissolution of the universe, being Yama's Yama. 'Mrutyu' (Yama, the deity of death) is like unto the pickles in the eating plate. The pickles, with their appetising flavour and agreeable taste, serve as effective media for consuming food with great relish and ultimately, what remains of the pickles in the plate, is also consumed. Yama, functioning as the Lord's appointed agent for dissolution, is also consumed by the Lord likewise, at the end of each Epoch, marked by the great Deluge. The upaniṣads say: "Mrutyur yasya upasecanam'. The Ājvār seeks clarification from the Lord how He could at once be all these things notwithstanding their mutual incompatibility.

cittirat tēr valavā! tiruc cakkarattāy; arulāy;
ettaŋail ēr ukumum avai āy, avarrul iyalum
otta on pal porulkal ulappu illaŋa āy, viyavu āy,
vittakattāy nīri nī-ivai eŋga viṭamanaṅkalē!

(VII–8–3)

Translation

Do unto me reveal, oh, marvellous Charioteer,
Wielding the discus lovely, the great wonder You are,
Holding the cycle of Yugas and their occurrences interpel,
The lovely things, vast and varied, all under Your control.

Note

The thing mentioned last in the preceding song was 'dissolution'. Speaking about dissolution, the Ājvār would seem to have been reminded about the riddance by Lord Kṛṣṇā, of the entire mass of unwholesome burden on Mother Earth, through the annihilation of the armies in the great battle at Kurukṣetra. It is well known to every Student of Mahā Bhārata that Lord Kṛṣṇā was the pivotal Figure around whom the whole thing revolved. The great Bhīṣma was heard to say that he would have routed the Pāṇḍavas and their soldiers, with just one arrow, but for Lord Kṛṣṇa functioning as Arjuna's Charioteer, plying it in an amazing manner. When Arjuna's horses were paralysed with thirst,
the divine Charioteer could perform the miracle of getting water from the depth of the barren soil, by sending a shaft deep inside. Seeing this miracle, the monarchs, ranged opposite, sank down to the bottom-most depth of despair. And then, the Lord’s discus could shut out the evening Sun and induct artificial sun-set, which lulled Jayadratha, the brother-in-law of Duryodhana into a sense of false security and made him fall an easy prey to Arjuna’s revengeful arrow. Arjuna had sworn that he would avenge the death of his son, Abhimanyu, by killing his slayer, Jayadratha before sun-set that day. Mistaking the artificial sun-set induced by Kṛṣṇa by holding His discus aloft and shutting the Sun out for the real one, Jayadratha came out of his hiding place, feeling quite safe, when the Lord suddenly withdrew the discus and the sun shone again, making it easy for Arjuna to kill the enemy instantly. As regards this episode, there could arise a legitimate doubt, how the discus which is itself million times more radiant than the Sun, could, by merely shutting out the Sun, introduce darkness—‘Śūdarśanaṁ Bhāskara Koṭi tulyam’. Well, this is yet another miracle of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

The cycle of Yugas has been going on and each yuga is characterised by a special feature, which is its key or dominant note. And then, the created world of staggering diversity and strange incompatibility is held together by the wondrous Lord betokening His Omnipotence. The Ājvār cannot but marvel at this.

kaḷ avil tāmaraikkaṅ kaṇṇanē! enaṅku oṅru arulāy;
ullatum illatum āy, ulappu illaṅa āy, viyavu āy,
vellat taṭam kaṭalul viṭa nāku-anāimēl maruvi,
ullap pal yöku oeyt-iivai enaṅ upāyaṅkaḷē! (VII–8–4)

Translation

Oh, Kaṇṇā, the lotus-eyed, pray clarify a thing unto me not clear,
The Master Supreme of all things and beings that You are—
The non-changing Individuals in many an assorted grade
And the ever-changing things, vast and varied; in the Milk-ocean broad;  
You keep pondering, reposing on Your poisonous-serpent bed;  
What are the plans up Your sleeves indeed?

Note

(i) The Āḻvār seems to question the Lord whether even He  
has to indulge in this kind of contemplation, despite His  
omni-science and omnipotence and seeks clarification  
from Him as to what precisely He means to hit upon, as  
a result of such deep thinking in a state of Yoga-nidhrā  
(the highest form of activity).

(ii) The sentient beings (the Jivas) do not change at all, only  
the material outer cloak, the body changes; on the  
other hand, the non-sentient things are ephemeral, in  
the sense that they undergo frequent changes of state.  
The Lord is the great ordainer of both the species.  
Innumerable indeed are the Jivas, each one with its own  
propensities, accumulated wisdom and load of ‘Karma’  
(deeds good and bad), unless the Jiva is God-bent, the  
Lord cannot possibly pull it up and naturally He keeps  
pondering over the ways and means of resuscitation  
of the Jivas.

pācaṅkaḷ nīkkī, eṇṇai uṇakkē aṟak kōṇṭīṭṭu, nī  
vāca malart taṇ tūḷāy muṭi māyavaṇē! arulāy;  
kāyamum cīvaṇum āy, kāḻivu āy, pīṟappu āy, pinṇum, nī  
māyaṅkaḷ cēyṭu vaitti-ivai eṇṇa mayakkukkalē!  
(VII–8–5)

Translation

My wondrous Lord, wearing tulaci, cool and fragrant, on  
Your locks fine!  
You rid me of all things unwholesome and made me Your  
vassal  
The body that binds and the bound souls, their growth and  
decline  
Are all by You controlled and yet, You have kept me still  
In this body foul, what glamour You find in it, please tell.
Note

This is the key-song, providing the preamble for this decad. The Saint asks the Lord to elucidate the riddle of His keeping him, in this material body, in mundane surroundings, even after weaning him away from the worldly things and engendering in him inordinate God-love, brooking no further delay in its consummation. With all this special equipment provided unto him by the Lord Himself, the Áḷvár felt sanguine that the Lord had admitted him into His sweet fold. Prolongation of his stay in this abode of dark nescience, however, makes him doubt the Lord's intentions and hence the clarification now sought.

mayakkā! vāmanaṇē! mati āmvāṇam onṛu arulāy; ayarppu āy, tēṟramum āy, alal āy, kulir āy, viyavu āy, viyappu āy, venrikal āy, viṉai āy, payan āy, piṇṇum, nī tuyakku āy, nī niṟṟavāṟu-ivai enṇa tuyaraṅkaḷē! (VII–8–6)

Translation

Pray vouchsafe unto me clarity, oh, Vāmaṇa, of bewitching beauty,
The individuals caught up in the vortex of varying experiences, Heat and cold, wonder and the wonderful, confusion and clarity Victory and defeat, act good and bad and their consequencences, Are all by You ordained; but then, immense are the sorrows Caused unto Your Subjects by such (sporting) activities of Yours.

Note

The Saint enquires of the Lord whether He would keep even His votaries, unto Him solely devoted, bewildered like the demoniac Mahābali. May be, it is all part of His Ilā (Sport) but what a lot of distress it brings on His subjects!

tuyaraṅkaḷ ceyyum kaṇṇā! cuṭar nīl muṭiyāy! arulāy; tuyaram cey māṇaṅkaḷ āy, mataṅ āki, ukavaikaḷ āy, tuyaram cey kamaṅkaḷ āy, tulai āy, nilai āy, naṭai āy, tuyaraṅkaḷ ceytu vaittį-ivai enṇa cuṇṭāyaṅkaḷē! (VII–8–7)
Translation

Oh, Kaṇṇā, sporting the radiant crown, putting me in great distress,
You set the temptations many and unwholesome desires,
Elation and lust breeding miseries, before all beings, stationary
and mobile,
Pray let me know why You indulge in such sports vile.

Notes

(i) The Lord, proclaimed by the Upaniṣads as an inexhaustible fountain of bliss, is addressed by the Saint, in this song, as the Inflector of miseries. The fact of the matter is that, on visualising the Lord sporting the resplendent crown, the Saint's longing for communion with Him has been intensified and he feels miserable. This is but the language of the Saints, in such moments of desolation.

(ii) The unwholesome desires are those directed towards the enjoyment of sensual pleasures, straying away from God-head and remaining self-centred 'Sohān' while the wholesome desires are those centred round God and His devotees (Dāsohan); the former breeds miseries while the latter is blissful.

dena cuntayaṅkaḷal niṅṛīṭṭāy-ṇṇāḷ āḷum kaṇṇā?
ingatu ōr taṃmaiwa eṇṛu uṇṇai yāvarkkum tēṟṟarivai;
munṇiwa mūvulakum avai āy, avar páiṇṭattu,
piṇnum ullāy! pūṟattāy!-ivai eṇṇa iyar kaṅkale! (VII-8-8)

Translation

How sportive indeed You are, oh, Kaṇṇā, my Master,
None can comprehend how and what You are;
You are the Controller of the worlds three and their Creator,
And You also pervade them all, in and out, oh, what a power!

Notes

(i) The Lord's sports are many and inscrutable. Even the wisest and the most exalted can hardly plumb the depths of His mysteries, His disposition and dispensation.
(ii) The Vedas proclaim that the Lord’s immanence is full and complete, in and out, even inside the minutest object of sub-atomic size, which, of course, baffles intellectual comprehension.

 elő áya kaikaálá él áa añáñë nññü tay-én káññá?
tuññu karacarañam mtáláka ellá uruppum
 uññu cuvai, oíi, úru oli, nárram, murrum níyé;
uññai uñnaravuril. ulappu illai-nñukkañkalé. (VII-8-9)

Translation

Oh, Kaññá, my Lord, when one defines You, there’s no end
To Your intricacies, the mode and manner in which You stand,
The senses five You control, taste, light and sound,
Touch and smell to enjoying which the various organs contend.

Note

The intricate glory of the Lord with its innumerable facets
defies description and baffles scrutiny. The deeds performed
by the vast multitude of His subjects, with the help of the
bodies and limbs dowered on them by Lord, the senses five and their subtle bases, the elements from which they emanate, all these are directed and controlled by the Lord, standing within all things and beings; There is no end to such intricacies.

illai nñukkañkalé itaññil pññitu eññum vaññam
tollai nal nüüil coñña uruvum, aruvum níyé;
allit tulñy alañkal aññ máñpa! eñ accutaññ!
vallatu õr vaññam coññal, atuvë uñnakku ám vaññamë.
(VII-8-10)

Translation

My Lord, Accyuta, sporting on Your lovely chest a garland of
tulaci and lotus!
You inhere in shapely things non-sentient and sentient beings
formless,
(Both in the subtle and gross states), as revealed by Vedas, hoary and immaculate;
Yet You are just what Your devotees comprehend of You and contemplate.

Note

Both in the unmanifest (subtle) state and the manifest (gross) state, the Lord is in conjunction with the formless individual souls and the shapely non-sentient things. This is revealed by the Vedas, hoary and authentic. He is also visualised by the Saint, in His unique Form, bedecked with flowers and bejewelled, wielding conch and discus. Even the wisest sages and the most exalted Devas can touch only a fringe of His glory, attributes and cosmic wealth. And yet, the Lord thinks, He is no more than what His devotees comprehend of Him and meditate upon, for He loves them so well.

āṁ vaṇṇam iṇṇatu onṛu enṛu arivatu ariya ariyai
āṁ vaṇṇattāl kurukūrc caṭakōpan aztintu uraitta
āṁ vaṇṇa on tambilkaḷ ivai āyirattul ip pattum
āṁ vaṇṇattāl uraippār amaintār, tamakku enṛaikkumē.

(VII–8–11)

Translation

Those who chant, as best as they can, these songs ten
Out of the thousand elegant Tamil songs of Kurukūr Caṭakōpan
Revealing the Lord, difficult to comprehend but by him well discerned,
Will for ever enjoy undiminished, the bliss divine.

Notes

(i) The Scriptural texts contain many apparent discrepancies, one text seeming to contradict or be at variance with another and only the devout, blessed by the Lord Himself with clarity of vision and understanding, as in the case of Saint Nāmmālvār, can reconcile these apparent discrepancies and get at the Spiritual truths, in their correct perspective, shorn of all doubts, deviations and discrepancies.
(ii) Those that recite this decad will enjoy the Āḷvār’s grace and be thus assured of an unbroken enjoyment of eternal Divine bliss, without being put to the necessity of direct supplication to the Lord. As Nampillai puts it, these chanters do not have to drink water off the Lord’s sleeves.

Seventh Centum—Ninth Decad (VII-9)
(Enraikkum)

Preamble

It was indeed the Lord’s ingenuity that was in full evidence in the last decad, whereby He could gain time and divert the attention of the Āḷvār, astounded by the bewildering net-work of His superb wonders. In fact, we have seen this kind of happening all along, the appeasement of the Āḷvār at every turn by the Lord, exhibiting one or the other of His special traits and prolonging his stay in this abode. But now, the Āḷvār is determined to clinch the issue and demand of the Lord, what precisely makes Him resort to such tantalising tactics, without responding to the request made by him far back, in the opening song of his very first hymnal (Tiruviruttam) that he should be lifted from this foul body, full of dirt and devilry. Was there anything wanting in regard to his yearning or did the Lord’s capacity to salve him decline? No, neither this nor that. But then, why should the Lord extend his stay in this cussed land with its sordid surroundings? Well, this is precisely the Āḷvār’s query unto the Supreme Lord, to which the Lord’s answer is “Āḷvār! You jolly well know my intention and yet speak as if you are ignorant. Well, I have kept you in this abode to get from you the soul-stirring hymns of unparalleled sweetness for the edification and enjoyment of Myself and My devotees even as I kept the wise Bhisma in the specially erected bed of arrows for quite some length of tune and enriched the world through the dissemination of knowledge by that great Savant”. The Āḷvār feels overawed by the Lord’s tender solicitude and extraordinary love for him and exclaims: “My Lord, You are known to be above all wants and it is indeed very strange that you too should be suffering from a want like this. Even assuming that you have one such desire, You could have easily got it fulfilled
by sages Vālmīki, Vyāsa, Parāśara and others of that eminent order or by the first three Ālvārs, the divine bards, *par excellence*. It is indeed amazing that You should have chosen me, the lowliest of the lowly, absolutely ill-equipped, for this great assignment. This is indeed the limit of Your loving condescension.”

And so, in this decad, the Ālvār gratefully acknowledges the Lord’s great gesture, perplexed a good deal, at the same time, over his own inability to recompense Him.

enṭaikkum enṭai uyyakkoṇṭu pōkiya  
aṇṭai kkā uṇṭu enṭait tāṇṇākki, enṭāl tāṇṇai  
in tamiḷ pāṭiya tāṇṇai, ātiyāy  
niṭṭa eṉ eōtiyai, eṉ colli nirpanō?  

(VII–9–1)

**Translation**

Strayed I from the Lord for long and yet He did admit  
Me unto His fold firm and blest me in ample measure,  
Knowledge, strength and all He did on me shower,  
Putting me with Him on a par and by His charm exquisite  
Inspired me and brought out this hymnal sweet  
How can I His grace galore express indeed?

**Note**

The Saint thaws down in gratitude over the Lord’s enormous grace in getting hymnals sung through him, duly equipping him for this assignment. Indeed, the outpourings of Saints are all inspired by God and therefore it is that the Ālvār does not claim authorship for the hymnal, sung by the Lord through him as His mouth-piece. This hymnal is claimed to be sweet because the authorship vests in the Lord. Otherwise, it ill-becomes a poet to glorify his own poems. As Nampāḷai would put it the liberated soul, that goes to Heaven, sings there the Sāma Veda in sheer joy. Likewise, the Alvar gives vent to his joy by singing ‘Tiruvāymoḷi’ and the Lord, attracted by it, participates in the singing Himself and elaborates. It is just like the teacher holding the finger of the young pupil and writing; the little lad pushes the pencil in one direction and the teacher corrects it and makes good the lapses of the young chap. And again, the Lord set aside the mantle and revealed His exquisite
Form to the Ālvār who stood enthralled by it and shouted with Joy, which, in turn, took the form of this hymnal.

en colli nirpaṇ-en in uyir iṅṟu onṟay,
en collāl yāṅ congā iṅ kavi eṅpittu,
tan collāl tanṟaṅkāṅ kirttitta māyaṅ, en
muṅ collum mūvuruvāṁ mutalvaṅē?

(VII–9–2)

Translation

How shall I my gratitude express unto the Primate,
Who as Trinity functions and Who would from within me
dictate
And sing His glory in words, this mean vassal would repeat,
Bring out this hymnal and, as its author, make me out?

Note

The Ālvār is indeed at a loss to find words to express the boundless grace of the Lord, who weaned him away from his waywardness and chose him as His mouthpiece to repeat the words dictated by Him and then glorified him as the great author of this grand hymnal. This is just like His discharging the cosmic functions through Brahma, Rudra, Indra and the whole hierarchy, standing within them all as their Internal Controller. The Ālvār, it will thus be seen, does not own authorship of the hymnals sung by him and makes it out as the Lord’s own utterances through the medium of His beloved Saints. Even as the minor deities are made by Him to appear as Creator of the worlds, Destroyer of Trpura the (three flying citadels) and so on, in respect of acts actually performed by the Lord as their Internal Controller, He makes it appear that the Ālvār is the author of this hymnal. Had the Lord uttered this hymnal directly, it would be just another piece like His Gitā and be far from the juicy thing it is, extremely delectable, coming as it does from the month of the Saint. Apart from the fact that the Lord attaches more importance to the utterances of His devotees than to His own, Nampi Tiruvaḻuti Nāṭu Tācar would illustrate the relative importance of the utterances of the Lord and the Ālvār and their
impact on an assembly of learned men, as follows: When a person, reciting Ślokas from Bhagavad Gītā went there a-begging, they just dismissed him with a handful of rice, without allowing him a place in their midst. On the other hand, when an itinerant came across, warbling the sweet songs of Tiruvāymoḷi, the whole town and the Deity enshrined there, as well, rose to greet him, escorted him to places assigned by them with competitive exuberance and treated him with the utmost respect and hospitality.

ām mutalvaṇ ivan enru taṇ tērai, en
nā mutal vantu pukuntu, nal in kavi
tū mutal pattarkkut taṇ taṇāic conṇa en
vāy mutal appaṇai enru marappaṇo? (VII—9–3)

Translation

Shall I ever forget my Lord Who desired, I would better
Become Chief of Prapannas’ clan and on me clarity bestowed,
Entered my tongue to sing songs delicious which unto the
pious cater,
The Benefactor great, Who unto me the gift of speech endowed?

Notes

(i) The Āḻvār gratefully acknowledges the Lord’s assignment
to him of the role of redeeming the worldlings, sunk in
sorrow and despair, by instilling in him, as a preparatory
measure, clarity of knowledge and understanding that
He is the Supreme Lord of the Universe, the Sole
Refuge of all His subjects. Bent upon redeeming the
subjects in the ‘Lilā Vibhūti’ (Sportive Universe)
and bringing them on a par with the denizens of Heaven,
the Lord inspires His chosen few, His messengers.
Tradition has it that, during his sojourn at Śrī Kāñci,
the great Āḻavandār (Saint Yāmunācārya) spotted
out, by mere insight, young Rāmānuja, seen in the
company of Yādavaprakāśa, at the holy shrine of Lord
Varadarāja, as the great religious reformer, the Chief
Personage, who would, in the coming days, spread the
gospel of Viśiṣṭādvaita actually known as ‘ Emperumānār
Dharśana’. Āḻavandār had no acquaintance with Rāmānuja nor did the latter know the former.

(ii) In the very manner of its birth, this hymnal (Tiruvāymoli) scores over Rāmāyaṇa. While the Lord stepped on to the Āḻvār’s tongue and straightaway produced this great hymnal, Rāmāyaṇa had to pass through a number of intermediaries in succession, namely, Lord to Brahmā Brahmā to Sarasvatī and from her to Vālmikī, in the sense that she entered Vālmikī’s tongue to enable the latter to sing the great epic.

appanai ēṇu marappan-ēn ākiyē,
tappatal ēṇi, tanai kavi tan colli,
opplāt tiviṇaiyēnai uyyakkoṇṭu,
ceppamē ceytu. tirikīṇa cīrkanṭe? (VII–9–4)

Translation

How can I, at anytime, forget my Benefactor great,
Seeing His great love unto me, the sinner great,
Redeeming me, tending me all along and singing His glory great
Thro’ me, taking care to see no blemish creeps in, at that?

Notes

(i) It is not a matter for any wonder if the Lord sang poems of His great glory Himself. But the real wonder is, He chose Caṭakōpan, ill-equipped for hymning, to sing the songs and ensured, at the same time, their perfe-
etin, eliminating the risk of contamination through his association. “It is because of His omniscience and omnipotence that He,could achieve this through me” says the Āḻvār, “notwithstanding my absolute incompetence and my sins galore, involving a good deal of reclamation”.

(ii) Empār would reinforce the purport of this song, by saying: “when the Lord preaches directly, as He did, in His Song Celestial (Bhagavad Gitā), such gospel is indeed absolutely free from blemishes. On the other hand, when our human ingenuity is called into play,
in bringing out laudatory hymns, it is laboured out, bearing the mark of our limitations. But when God chooses us as His select instrument for the propagation of His message to the world at large, He Himself speaks, untainted by the imperfections of His medium. As a matter of fact, He rids the medium of all imperfections and it is this that the Ālvār gratefully acknowledges in this song”.

[c.f. Milton’s exclamation in his swan-song:

“Give me now my lyre, I feel the stirrings of a gift divine, within my bosom blows unearthly fire, Lit by no skill of mine”.

]  
cir kāntukoṇtu, tiruntu na iñ, kavi  
nērpāṭa yāṇ collum nīrmaī ilāmāiyil,  
ērvu ilā ennait tάṇnākkī, ennāl tάṇnāip  
pār paravu iñ kavi pāṭum-paramārē.  

(VII–9–5)

Translation

The Lord Supreme blest me, least competent to hymn,  
Thro’ songs, sweet and pure, deeply absorbed in Him,  
And the medium effective made of me, with Him on a par  
To sing and spread His glory throughout the land, near and far.

Note

The Ālvār says that he was not qualified to compose poems, as he did not have any poetic talent worth the name, and even assuming that he could compose poems, he was hardly eligible to sing the Lord’s glory, as he didn’t know a wee wit of His greatness and grandeur. But what has the Lord done? He has instilled in the Ālvār the requisite knowledge and qualities and elevated him on a par with Him. The Lord sings through the Ālvār and yet looks upon him as the Poet, par excellence. The Saint acknowledges this great gesture of the Lord Whose magnanimity knows no bounds, with melting tenderness of heart. Indeed, no further evidence is needed to establish the Lord’s greatness.
in kavi pâṭum parama kavikalâl,
tân kavi tân taṅanghai pâṭuviyâtu, iṅgu
naṅku vantu, eṇuṭan âkki, eṇâl taṅnai
vaṅ kavi pâṭum-eṅ vaikunta nātaṅē!

(VII–9–6)

Translation

Oh, how gracious it is of the Lord of celestials
To choose me as His instrument and shed on me His grace
To get His glory by me sung although He could very well
Press (the first three Ālvârs), the sweet-singing poets supreme,
into service!

Note

There have indeed been many sweet-singing poets combining
poetic skill and piety, like Vyāsa, Parāśara and Vâlmiki,
the great Sanskrit poets and the first three Ālvârs and
‘Tirumâlicai Ālvâr’ who have many sweet, soul-stirring
hymns in Tamil to their credit. The Lord could have got
the ‘Tiruvâmoji’ also sung by these super-eminent poets
and yet He deigned to shed His special grace on Nammâlvâr
who came long after, and got these songs of His choice
mouthed by him. The Lord revealed unto the Ālvâr His
grandeur as the Lord of Heavens so that the latter could
sing His glory. It was only when He heard His praise sung
by the Ālvâr, He could feel His position as the Heavenly
Lord, stable. Actually, the Heaven is the eternal land
of unquestionable stability, well beyond the mischief of the
deluge, when all the other worlds enter the Lord’s stomach
for sheer survival. And yet, the Lord is inclined to treat
His transcendent glory in Heaven, on a par with the fame
attained by Him through the Ālvâr’s laudation.

vaikunta nātaṅ, eṅ valvînal māyntu aṛac
cey kuntaṅ, taṅnai eṅ âkki, eṇâl taṅnai
vaikuntaṅ âkaḍ pukala, vaṅ tîm kavi
cey kuntaṅ-taṅnai, en nāl cintiṭṭu āṛvaṅō?

(VII–9–7)

Translation

My heart’s fill I never can have, however long I muse
Over my beneficent Lord who did enthuse
Me to sing songs, sweet beyond compare, of His glory
As the heavenly Lord, cleansing me of my sins gory
And putting me on a par with Him, mingling freely.

Note

The Lord of the Universe, Chief of the exalted Celestials has condescended to shed His limitless grace on a great sinner, and cleanse him thoroughly, making him pure like Him. And what more? The regenerated Āḻvār, of immaculate purity, is made by Him to sing His heavenly glory and grandeur to His great delectation. It is indeed amazing that the Lord should feel that He flourishes only as a result of the Āḻvār’s laudation; this is akin to a father, who gifted away a cow to his son, getting back the same cow as the latter’s gift. So great is the Lord’s loving condescension that the Āḻvār can’t but muse over it endlessly. Even so, he cannot do adequate justice, seeing that the span of life is much-too-short while the magnitude of the favours heaped on him by the Lord is much-too-large.

ärvanō, āḷī āṅkai em pirāṇ pukal
pār, viṇ, nir, mūṟṟum kalantu parukīlum-
ērvu ilā ennait taṅṇakki, ennāl taṅṇaic
cīṟpera in kavi conṇa tirattukē?

(VII—9—8)

Translation

Will I reach the end of satisfaction, if all the worlds,
Up and down and those in the Milk-ocean assembled
And praised the Lord, wielding the discus, Who made me laud Him, in hymns sweet, raising unto His level me, a mere dud?

Note

Yet another way of interpreting this song could be as follows: Even if the Āḻvār acquired the combined power of speech of the denizens of Earth, Heaven and the Milk-ocean, and expressed his gratitude for the Lord who chose him as His instrument for singing ‘Tiruvāyumolī’, he can never reach the end of exhaustion. This is so, because the Lord not merely made the Āḻvār sing His glory, despite the absence
of either the inclination or the competence therefor and on the top of that, He felt elated that His glory was heightened by the Älvär’s laudation. Even otherwise, the songs He made the Älvär sing are so very sweet and before this favour of His, all the others heaped on him pale into insignificance.

tirattukku ēy tuppuravu ām tirumālini cīr
irappu etir kālam parukilum, ārvāṇō—
marappu, ilā ennait tanṇākki, ennāl tanṇai
urap pala in kavi conṇa utavikkē?

(VII–9–9)

Translation

Were I to muster back the entire past and assemble
The whole future, right now, and enjoy the glory great
Of the potent Lord, who unto His level did elevate
Me, totally oblivious of Him, and made me warble
Many a sweet song proclaiming His prowess great,
I would still never feel satiate.

Note

In the preceding song, the Älvär mustered the combined
power of speech of the denizens, currently on Earth, Heaven
and Milk-ocean but now he invokes the aid of those who
dwelt in those places in the past as well as the future in-
habitants; with his insatiable ardour, he feels that all these
agencies, put together, would still be inadequate.

utavik kaimmāru en uyir ennā uru ennīl,
atuvum marū āṅkavan tanṇatu; ennāl tanṇaip
pataviya in kavi pāṭiya appaṇukku
etuvum onṟum illai ceyvatu-iṅkum aṅkē.

(VII–9–10)

Translation

There’s nothing in all the worlds, here, there and everywhere
With which to recompense the Lord Who made me hymn
Songs sweet, this grand Hymnal adoring Him;
T–23
Methought I could unto Him my soul offer
But then even that is but His own.

Note

There's no question of repaying the Lord's extraordinary kindness; even otherwise, there is nothing the Āḻvār could call his own, which unto the Lord be could offer. Even the soul is not his but belongs to Him as His vassal from time immemorial. At least, in this land of dark nescience, people with theirerrerous notions of 'I' and 'Mine' might commit the mistake of offering something to the Lord as their own and realise their mistake later on with the dawn of true knowledge regarding their essential nature. Surely, there is hardly any scope for the commission of a similar mistake in the yonder heaven populated by the 'Nityās' and 'Muktās', duly enlightened.

iṅkum aṅkum tirumāḷ aṅri iṅmai kaṭṭu,
aṅnaṅē vaṅ kurukūrc caṭakōpan
iṅnaṅē coṅṇa oṅ āyirattu ip ṭattum,
eṅnaṅē collīnum, iṅpam payakkumē. (VII–9–11)

Translation.

These songs ten, out of the thousand sung
By that great Saint, Kurukūr Caṭakōpan,
With no Refuge, both here and in Heaven,
Other than 'Tirumāl', will breed joy, in whatever manner sung.

Note

This decade, whether sung with devotion or otherwise, will breed joy. The Āḻvār, who heads the clan of 'Praparnnās' looks upon the Supreme Lord, the Spouse of Mahālakṣmī, as the Sole Refuge, both here, in the state of supplication and in Heaven, after attaining the final state of blissful union with the Lord. These songs, whether sung mechanically or with the ardour of the triple faculties of thought, words and deed, will generate joy on a par with the perennial bliss of communion with the Lord. Certainly it goes without saying that it will be ideal if one sang these songs with due fervour.
Preamble

In the last decad, the Ālvār, who thought in terms of repaying the Lord’s kindness in choosing him, of all persons, for the sacred mission of singing ‘Tiruvāymoḻi’, was bewildered on finding nothing, he could offer unto the Lord, for there wasn’t anything he could call his own and the Lord, who is above wants of any kind, would need anything from him either. The merciful Lord would not, however, keep a devotee of such a high order in a state of mental torture. And so, He told the Ālvār that he too would be given a chance to fulfill his desire by singing this hymnal in the pilgrim centre, called ‘Tiruvāṉvilai’ (Kerala State), unto Him and His Divine Consorts, much to Their delectation. It may be recalled, at this stage, that Śrī Rāma listened to His own story, Rāmāyaṇa, sung by Kuśa and Lava, the Divine lads, His own progeny. Even so, it was not on all fours with the assignment currently given to the Ālvār by the Lord. There Śrī Rāma was alone when He granted audience to the young minstrels, having got separated from Sītā, the Divine Mother, whose story, (Sītāyāś caritam mahat) Rāmāyaṇa virtually is. But here, the Lord, in His Iconic form, is looking forward to the ecstatic experience of listening to the rapturous songs of Tiruvāymoḻi, sung by the love-intoxicated Ālvār, in the company of His Divine Consorts. The Ālvār leaps with joy, finding that the Lord not only got the hymns sung by him but was also intent upon listening to his chanting them. How gracious of Him indeed! The Ālvār, therefore, attempts to render the service assigned to him, at Tiruvāṉvilai in this decad, looking upon that holy place as his final goal, to the exclusion of all else, even as Hanumān said ‘Bhāvonānyatragacchati’, thereby expressing his stout determination not to forsake this land trodden upon by Lord Rāma and go elsewhere, not even the much-coveted Heaven. As a matter of fact, God would have nothing of our own and there is nothing we can call our own either. All that He expects from us, in return for all that He does, is to do His bidding and this is taken by Him as adequate expression of our gratitude.
Translation

Will the good days draw near when I can lovingly go round Tiruvāraṇvilai which fine gardens surround
And worship my Sire who happily rules all the worlds
And now stays there in the gay company of Lakṣmī, the lotus-born?

Notes

(i) The Lord has indeed chosen an enchanting place from where He and His consort could enjoy listening to Tiruvāymoji recital by Saint Namakkālār. The Ālvār is eagerly looking forward to his visit to this pilgrim centre.

(ii) Happy indeed is the blissful union of the Divine Couple and happy indeed are the subjects who behold this holy conjunction; on seeing the happiness of the subjects, the pleasure of the Divine couple gets enhanced like unto the mother happily watching the babe sucking milk from her breast.

(iii) When Śrī Rāma took leave of Queen Kauśalyā while setting out on exile, the venerable mother wished that that very day could also be the day of His return from exile, if at all he had to go. Likewise the Ālvār pines for quick consummation of his desire to reach this holy centre.

Translation

Sprinkling water richly perfumed, shall I go round
And worship at Tiruvāraṇvilai, the walled city with castles tall
And banners aloft, where stays lovingly my Sire, Vāmanaṇa,  
Who spanned  
In two strides, with no misgivings whatever, the worlds one and all?

Notes
(i) Even now, the devout pilgrims visiting this centre besmear the temple walls with sweet-smelling sandal paste, echoing the sentiments of the Āḻvār as disclosed by this song.
(ii) Did not Šatrugna sprinkle ice-cold water all the way from Nandigrām to the Āśram of Sage Bharadvāja, to greet Śrī Rāma’s home-coming?

Translation
Shall I be so blest that I keep adoring for ever
Tiruvāraṇvilai, with its gardens big, where reside scholars,  
Performing the rituals five, chanting aloud the Vedas four and well-versed  
In their six adjuncts and worship the buoyant Hari, mounted on the victorious bird (Guaruḍa)
Kōvintaṇ, Matucūtaṇ, my Lord, who the demons slew?  
When indeed will my longing deep be put through?

Note
Even as the Āḻvār adores the seat of the Lord and the devout over there more than the Lord Himself, the Lord reciprocated by adoring Kurukūr, the birth place of the Āḻvār. Therefore it was that He was speeding towards Kurukūr, mounted on Garuḍa. They have now met halfway at Tiruvāraṇvilai. The Āḻvār enjoys the Lord at this holy centre as Kōvinta, the ardent Lover of the devout and as Hari and Matucūtaṇ, the Destroyer of the enemies of His devotees.
vāykkumkol, nīcēalum, epполutum maṇaṭṭuṅku nīṇaikkappera-vāykkum karumpum perum cenēlum vayal cūl tiruvāṟanvilai vāykkum perum pukal mūvulaku içaṅ, vaṭamaturiap piṟaṅta vāykkum maṇi nīrak kaṇṇa-piṟaṅ-taan malar aṭippōtukalē?

(VII–10–4)

Translation

When shall I the felicity acquire and without break contemplate
The blooming lotus feet of Kaṇṇa, my Sire of sapphire hue
detectable,
Who in Vaṭamaturai was born, the Supreme Lord of glory
great,
Residing in Tiruvāṟanvilai with sugar-canes stout, paddy crops
rich and fields fertile?

Notes

(i) The Āḷvār pines for perpetual contemplation of the lotus
feet of the Lord enshrined in Tiruvāṟanvilai, from
where he is, even if it be not possible for him to go
over there. This contemplation is to run on, all the
time, unlike the daily rituals like ‘Agnihotra’ which
are confined to certain parts of the day only.

(ii) There is a Jitantā śloka, recited at the end of the daily
worship of the Lord, which brings out that the mere
longing to serve the Lord, right in this mortal body, is
rated by the devotee higher than his ascent to Heaven
and occupying an exalted position there.

(ii) Here is an interesting anecdote:

Iḻaiyāṟṟukkuṭi Nampi, a great devotee used to go to the
temple at Śrīrāṅgam during the festivals only, and kept
on musing, with great delight, the proceedings of the last
festival, till he attended the next festival. With declining
age, the centenarian-devotee could not be present on the
opening day of a festival, a fact, which the Deity took
special note of and exclaimed “We doubt very much
whether this is at all our festival when we don’t find
our beloved Iḻaiyāṟṟukkuṭi Nampi around!” When
the devotee presented himself with great difficulty on
the sixth day of the festival, the Lord felt greatly pleased
and enquired, “Nampi what can we do for you!” Nampi replied: “Sire this body dowered by you has done its job so far and now its mobility stands impaired”. “Well, said the Lord”, “if your body has dwindled, better stay with us”. Nampi breathed his last by the time the Deity left the temple gate for the ceremonial procession.

malar atippotukaen neincattu epoolatum irutti vananaka, palar atiyar munpu aruliya pampu-anai appan amarntu urai-malariin mani neitu matanaikal nitu matil tiruvaranvilai [yum ulakam mali puka] pata, nammel viinai orumb nellae ketum.  

(VII—10—5)

Translation

The moment we sing the glory great, spread far and wide, Of the high-walled Tiruvaranvilai where flowers abound, The castles tall beam and the Lord reposes on serpent-bed, Whose lotus feet lovely are for ever implanted in my mind, Who chose me over many others and His grace on me shed And made me wholly adore HIm, all our sins will vanish indeed.

Note

The Àlvär says, the Lord has shed His special grace on him, even as Śri Rāma lavished special graces on Hanumān. See also notes under VII-9-6 in regard to the preferential treatment extended by the Lord to Nammālvār. Here is a fitting anecdote to illustrate how implicit faith in one’s masters works miracles.

A Cōla king, named Kṛmikanṭa (the worm-necked) launched a crusade on Vaiṣṇavism, determined to break the images of Viṣṇu in the temples all over. On his, however, being warned by his advisers of the disaster that would befall him, if specially consecrated idols like those of Lord Raṅganātha were demolished, the King hit upon a safeguard, namely, the appointment of a competent sorcerer, who would, by special incantations, render the images effete, destroying their spiritual power. The sorcerer would make himself invisible by applying to his eyes a magical collyrium and then
enter the Sanctoria of the Viṣṇu temples, extract the power from the idols enshrined there and then throw them into the sea. Greatly depressed by this turn of events and apprehending the calamitous repercussions of such an unholy project, Saint Rāmānuja had serious consultations with his Guru, Periya Nampi.

Periya Nampi decided that he shall pace round the periphery of the holy temple of Śrīraṅgam, thereby providing a cordon of protection and asked whether Śrī Rāmānuja could send a disciple to go with the great Master, literally as his shadow, with no thought of the self, as a separate entity. Śrī Rāmānuja very well knew that he had one such disciple, fully conforming to the specification of the master, in Kūrattāḻvān and yet, he wanted the choice to be made by the master himself. Śrī Rāmānuja, therefore, told his master, “Sire, I wonder whether there is any one answering to your description, a camp follower, who hardly feels that he is following another ”. Periya Nampi was, however, quick to point out, “Well, Kūrattāḻvān is surely one such. Let him be detailed for this service ”.

Even as Kūrattāḻvān was spotted out by the master, out of so many, the Lord pitched upon Nammāḻvār for shedding on him the divine grace!

ōṟṟum nillā keṟum murṟavum tīviñai; uḻlit toḷumin toṇṭir-ḻanṟu anku amar veṅṟu uruppiñi naṅkai aṇi neṟum tōḷ puṇaruo-ṇṟum eppōtum eṅ neṅcam tutippa uḷē irukkiṅṟa pirāṅ, [tāṇ, niṅṟa aṇi tiruvāṟaṅvilai eṉṟum nī] nakaram-ātuve. (VII—10—6)

**Translation**

Ye, votaries, all you dire sins will get destroyed
If you could with reverence meditate on the city great,
The lovely Tiruvāṟaṅvilai, where resides the Lord,
Who once came off with flying colours in a skirmish and caught
Uruppiṇi, the damsel, bejewelled and enchanting, in embrace tight
And is in my mind firm, for me always to contemplate.

Notes
(i) The Ālvār beckons the Lord’s votaries to just meditate on holy Tiruvāṟaṇvilai to get all their ills and evils eradicated, in toto. We can, at best, wipe off only an infinitesimal fraction of our sins, through our own efforts, but the Lord’s grace will wipe them off in full.

(ii) Uruppiṇi (Rukmiṇi), an incarnation of Māhalakṣmī, was the only daughter of Bhiṣmaka, king of Kuṇṭinam. She had five brothers. When she came of marriagable age, Śrī Kṛṣṇa went and sought out her hand but her brother Rukmaṇi opposed it. Intending that she should be married to Śisupāla, he arranged for her Svayamvara, when several kings would assemble, from whom the bride could choose the one most eligible. But Rukmiṇi was so resolute that she would marry none but Kṛṣṇa and emboldened by this determination, she even sent a secret epistle to Kṛṣṇa, inviting him to come down at the appropriate moment and take her away some how, from those devils. Śrī Kṛṣṇa accordingly got hold of Rukmiṇi at the crucial moment, and drove her away openly. Śisupāla and other kings, mustered by Rukmaṇi, who encountered Śrī Kṛṣṇa, were beaten off. The infuriated Rukmaṇi, however, pounced upon Kṛṣṇa, bent upon slaying Him and his life was spared by the Lord, at the special request of Rukmiṇi and, poor fellow, he was let off with mere disfigurement.
(Srimad Bhāgavatam)

Translation
Tiruvāṟaṇvilai, the citadel huge, abounding in flower gardens,
Is our destination and our Sole Refuge is the Benefactor great,
Of love unlimited, Who lovingly resides there, Chief of the denizens
Of Heaven, Lord Kaṇṇaṇ, Who Vāṇaṇ’s thousand arms did smite,
Waging the battle fierce in his citadel, putting the tripled Rudra askance.

Notes

(i) The Ālvār considers this pilgrim centre, as his ultimate destination, even the High Heavens being relegated to a lower status and the Lord enshrined here, who vanquished the formidable foes, as his Sole Refuge. For details of Lord Kṛṣṇa’s encounter with Bāṇāsura and his great allies, see notes under III-10-4.

(ii) No doubt, the heaven is the land of eternal bliss, the land whence there is no returning. And yet, Tiruvāṟaṇvilai is so enchanting that even the Lord looks upon it on a par with heaven.

Translation

Were it possible to visit and go round Tiruvāṟaṇvilai, by lovely gardens surrounded.
Where lovingly resides the Lord, Who the deep distress relieved
Of the Elephant in the pond huge, who his faith did pin
On His lovely feet, squeeze we can from our hearts all sins.

Note

The Lord, who rid Gajendra, the pious elephant, of dire distress, and now stays in Tiruvāṟaṇvilai, will certainly cure us of all ills and evils. With its leg right in the jaws of the tough crocodile, the elephant was engaged in a titanic struggle for years, trying to extricate himself from the
monster. When this self-effort, great and long, proved not only abortive but turned out to be a hindrance to the influx of the Lord’s grace, the great devotee that the elephant was, he looked upon the Lord as the Sole Saviour and deliverance followed. The elephant was not in the least bothered about its own emaciation and eventual dissolution but its sole concern was to offer the lotus flower plucked by it, at such a heavy cost and still held in its trunk, at the feet of the Supreme Lord. What distressed the elephant even more, was his deep concern that the Lord’s reputation as the Sole Saviour should not get tarnished by His not coming down to his rescue. It is precisely this, that has been referred to in this song, as the deep distress of the elephant. And so, the Lord feels benefited by the elephant, helping Him to redeem His reputation as the Sole Saviour of His subjects. This great trait of Lord Mahāviṣṇu of identifying Himself as the recipient of a favour when He is actually conferring one on His devotees and feeling distressed over the miseries of His subjects even more than they do, is inherited by His devotees. A true Vaiṣṇava (a votary of Lord Viṣṇu) is, therefore, one who possessed this remarkable trait.

tīvṇaśi utāttāṁ cārvu alla ākī, telī vicumpu ērullītāl,
nāvīṅṛullum, utāttullum, amainta toḷiṅṛullum navīṅru,
yāvanum vantu vaṇaṅkum poḷil tiruvaṅṇvilai-aṭaṇai
mēvi valaṅceytu, kaitolak kūṭumkol? eṇnum-ēṇ cintaṇaiyē.
(VII–10–9)

Translation

With a mind thoroughly cleansed, rid of all sins,
I could perhaps reach Heaven and yet, in my thoughts do I pine
For lovely Tiruvārṇvilai where the pious with thorough discipline
Of word, deed and thought congregate and worship; I wish
I would remain
In that holy centre, circumambulate and worship with joined palms.
Note

The Ālvār’s desire to reach this pilgrim centre is so great that even the high Heaven recedes to the background. Therefore, his thoughts are wholly centred on whether he would at all be able to reach that centre, stay firmly there and go round the place with great piety. Not only that, he feels that this holy centre is so very enchanting that is is bound to attract even the denizens of Heaven.

cintai marqonin tirattatu allāt taṅmai tēva-pirān ariyum;
cintaiyināl ceyva tān ariyātaṇa māyaṅkal oṟṟum illai-
cintaiyināl, collināl, ceykaiyāl, nilattēvar kuḻu vaṇaṅkum
cintai makīl tiruvāraṅvilai urai tīttaṇukku arra pīpē.

(VII–10–10)

Translation

There’s hardly a thought that crosses one’s mind,
The omniscient Lord cannot comprehend;
Surely, He knows that I think not of aught
But the Lord immaculate, Who remains enshrined
In Tiruvāraṅvilai, that exilarates one’s heart.
Worshipped by the devout thro’ word, deed and thought.

Note

This song provides the reply to the question supposed to have been put to him as to what he would do in case the Lord forced him into Heaven, which he had been demanding from Him quite often before. The Lord, being all-knowing, He is well aware that the Ālvār’s mind now stands rivetted to Tiruvāraṅvilai which has taken precedence over everything else, including the Heaven. Further, He is known to grant the boon prayed for by the subject, (Purusārta). That being the case, there is absolutely no risk of the Lord granting him anything other than that desired by him, even Heaven falling in the excluded category in this particular context. It is noteworthy that the Ālvār does not even mouth the word. ‘Heaven’ and says, in general terms, that he does not think of anything else but the holy centre of Tiruvāraṅvilai.
tīrṭaṇukku uttaraṇaṁ. maṁ su ṛcanaṁ lai evam aṁ, tīrṭaṇukkē
tīrṛta manattanm aki, ceļuṁ kiṟuṟuṟa caḻakōpaṁ conna
tīrūṭṭakal āyirattil ivai pattum vallarkālai tēvar vaikal
tīrūṭṭakalē evam pucittu, nalki urappar tam tēviyarkkē.

(VII–10–11)

Translation

Unto their spouses shall ever say the Celestials in Heaven,
That those well-versed in these songs ten
Out of the immaculate thousand of Kurukūr Caḻakōpaṁ,
Dedicated to the immaculate Lord, as the sole Means
Are indeed very pure, entitled to great reverence.

Notes

(i) It has been given out here, as the benefit accruing to
those chanting this decad, that the Eternal Heroes
(Nitya Sūrīs), in Heaven, shall honour them a great
deal and refer to them as of great sanctity, while talking
to their spouses at the height of their joy born of
their blemishless service unto Lord Vaikuṇṭhanātha
(the transcendent Lord in Heaven, in His ‘Parama’
aspect). It is then that they feel inclined to divulge
the secrets to their dear ones, even as the redoubted
saint Rāmānuja divulged to those, eagerly assembled
in front, the purport of the ‘Cārama Śloka’, not-
withstanding the oath of secrecy administered to him
by his master, Goṣṭipūrṇar. Garuḍa has two wives,
by name, Rudrā and Sukṛti while the wife of Śenāpathi
(Cēnai Mutaliyār) is Sūtravati. These pre-eminent
‘Nityās’ would always speak in superlative terms about
the chanters of this decad.

(ii) The Lord immaculate: Himself of impeccable purity,
He is also the great Sanctifier, Who renders His votaries
also absolutely pure. River Gangā got sanctified by the
touch of His feet and Śiva, in turn, got sanctified by
holding Gangā on his matted locks.

(iii) Immaculate thousand: All the songs in this great hymnal
are like unto as many sacred waters.
THE CENTUM IN RETROSPECT
(DECAD WISE SUMMARY)

(VII-1): In the opening decad, the Āḻvār follows up the trend of thought, as in VI-9-9, where he dreaded the mischief of the senses and the frightful possibility of his going astray in the event of the prolongation of his stay in this abode. If the Āḻvār dreads in this manner, despite his having taken a deep plunge into the ocean of divine consciousness, it is because this land is notorious for its corrupting influence, bringing within its dirty pale even the 'Nitya Sūris', the proximate attendants of the Lord in Heaven, should they ever happen to step on to this soil;

(VII-2): The Āḻvār, whose stay in this abode is being prolonged by the Lord, despite his protestation, is once again (figuratively) transformed as the Nāyaki (Mistress), weighed down by melancholy too deep for words. The critical condition of the Nāyaki and her various moods are narrated in the second decad by the gnostic mother to Lord Ranganātha, enshrined in Śrīraṅgam (Tamil Nadu), bending over her daughter, right in the Sanctum. The mother enquires of the Lord, the Sole Saviour, as to what His intentions are and how exactly He would like to deal with her love-lorn daughter. This decad, however, ends on a happy note, the mother being mighty glad that her daughter has, after all, attained the benign feet of Lord Rāṅganāha;

(VII-3): The bliss of the union of the Nāyaki and Lord Rāṅganātha having overflowed its continents, the Lord hits upon a method whereby the God-enjoyment of the Nāyaki could be stabilised, instead of her being swept off by it. The Lord goes to Tentiruppēreyil (near the Āḻvār's birth place) on a hunting expedition, by way of relieving the distress of the people over there from the depredations of wild animals. Although the Nāyaki herself equipped Him with weapons and bid Him farewell, wishing Him success, yet she is all agog to go there herself, unable to brook separation from her Lord even for a short while. In the third decad, we see the Nāyaki insisting that she shall go, in the face of stiff opposition from her mother, mates and other kinsfolk. At best, she would allow them to escort her and leave her with the Lord, even if they cannot allow her to go alone;

(VII-4): Just when the Nāyaki was attempting to go to Tiruppēreyil where the Lord had gone for game-hunting, he returned victorious. Exceedingly jubilant over the Lord's quick return from the victorious expedition, Parāṅkuṣa Nāyaki gets locked up in His sweet embrace, by way of relieving His fatigue (mental experience of course). In his current festive mood, the Āḻvār recounts in the fourth decad the Lord's wondrous deeds and benefaction, vast and varied, exclaiming, "What a marvel!" "What a wonder!" and so on.

(VII-5): In the fifth decad, the Āḻvār cites some more achievements of the Lord, much to his own delectation. At the same time, he could not help wondering how the worldlings whose birthright it is to share this enjoyment,
kept aloof from God and he even felt vexed with them for their callous indifference to Him, in the face of His numerous deeds, good and great, bringing to the fore His benevolent dispensations and loving condescension.

(Although it is all worded in the third person, this decad is indeed yet another address of the Ālvār to the worldly me).

(VII-6) : Despite his enormous yearning, of unimaginable depth, the Ālvār has not been able to experience the bliss of lasting communion with the Lord. Alternating between ravishing joy and deep dejection, as seen all along, the Ālvār, in his present disconsolate state laments loudly, in the sixth decad, so as to melt even the stony hearts of the ungodly. In the first two songs of this decad, the Lord has been set out as the goal, the next five songs reveal Him as also the ‘ Means ’ for attaining Him while the three following songs highlight Him as the Great Redeemer, destroying the ungodly and salvaging the devout through His voluntary grace, cutting out all their impediments (sins).

(VII-7) : In response to the soul-stirring utterances of the Ālvār, as in the sixth decad, the Lord enabled him to comprehend (mentally of course) His exquisite Form, limb by limb. Led away by the Lord’s charming beauty, the Ālvār aims at external perception and physical enjoyment of the Lord’s enchanting Form, with outstretched hands but feels frustrated, when the experience longed for, is denied to him. The Ālvār, once again transformed (figuratively) as Nāyaki, hits back the prodding mates and elders, overwhelmed by the Lord’s bewitching beauty. But it is a note of singing regret that runs through the entire seventh decad as the Nāyaki could not envision the Lord’s Form as a whole, but perceive only one limb at a time, whetting her appetite all the more for the enjoyment of the Lord’s Form, in its entirety;

(VII-8) : Cut out from the worldly moorings and with God-love welling up his bosom, by leaps and bounds, the Ālvār craves for immediate union with the Lord. So great is the Ālvār’s ardour that non-realisation of his inordinate longing should have normally resulted in his collapse and extinction. It is, therefore, a matter of great wonder for him that he is still kept alive in this narrowing abode, with all its susceptibilities. When asked by him to elucidate this wonder wrought by the Lord, he exhibits unto the Ālvār, many more wonders—His kaleidoscopic cosmic wealth. Thereupon, the Ālvār voices forth in the eighth decad his mental reactions to the wonderful phenomena in front of him, besides seeking clarification from the Lord, in regard to the many bewildering complexities, baffling intellectual comprehension;

(VII-9) : Perplexed over the prolongation of his stay in this cussed land with its sordid surroundings, the Ālvār elicits from the Lord his intention in this regard. The Ālvār is informed that he has been kept in this abode in order to get from him, the soul-stirring hymns of unparalleled sweetness, for the edification and enjoyment of Himself and His devotees. Overawed by the Lord’s tender solicitude and loving condescension, in choosing him for this assignment, in preference to the eminent sages like Vyāsa, Parāśara and Vālmiki and the sweet singing divine bards, par excellence, the first three
Āḻvār, the Āḻvār gratefully acknowledges in the ninth decad the Lord's great gesture, perplexed a great deal over his inability to recompense the Lord, as there was hardly anything he could call his own;

(VII-10): The Lord has indeed chosen an enchanting place, namely, Tiruvāṟaṇvilai (Kerala State) from where He and His dear Consort (Mahanālakṣmi) could enjoy listening to Tiruvāyumāḷ recital by Saint Nammāḻvār. The Āḻvār, whom we saw, in the ninth decad, remaining perplexed over his inability to recompense the Lord for the extraordinary grace shed by Him, was, therefore, given a chance to fulfill his heart's desire, by singing this great hymnal unto Him and His Consort, in that holy centre, much to Their delectation.—And so, in the concluding decad of this Centum, the Āḻvār attempts to render the service graciously assigned to him by the Lord. So great is his desire to reach this fascinating pilgrim centre, looking upon it as his ultimate destination, relegating even the high Heaven to the background.
BOOK VIII

Eighth Centum. First Decad (VIII-l)
(Tēvimār āvār)

Preamble

In the last decad, the Ālvār longed for the pleasure of singing Tiruvāymoḷi before the Divine couple at Tiruvāṟanvilai; and rendering unto Them other kinds of service as well. But then, the project did not get off the ground and non-fulfilment of his cherished desire made the Ālvār grow sceptical of the Lord’s bonafides and His ability to concede the wish of His devotees. This doubt is expressed in this decad.

The Ālvār feels vexed that he has been thwarted from achieving his desired objective even under the most propitious circumstances. The Divine consorts are beside the Lord, reclining on the serpent-bed at Tiruvāṟanvilai, ready to grant him audience and the ‘Nitya Sūris’ are also around; the Lord is omnipotent and can easily meet the aspirations of the devotees by assuming any Form, suited to the purpose and on his part, the yearning is much-too-deep. And yet, the Ālvār could not achieve his objective, giving rise to frustration that casts doubts in his mind as to whether the well-known traits of the Lord such as His readiness to respond to the requests of His devotees, looking upon their woes as His own, in the sense that they are but His modes etc., have become ineffective, because of him. This was precisely how Sitā bemoaned her miserable lot during her captivity in Laṅkā, seriously suspecting Śrī Rāma’s intention and inclinations towards her. As a matter of fact, the saint subsist solely on the sweet contemplation of the Lord’s auspicious traits and once this vital communication is cut out, they will just cease to exist. The Lord apprehended that the Ālvār, sunk in despair under the delusion that the Lord’s auspicious traits have dried up, might collapse altogether and, therefore, set at naught his doubts by calling upon him to ponder over all that He had done for him earlier and assuring Him of the due fulfilment of whatever He intended to do further for him. Thus consoled, the Ālvār feels elevated from the erstwhile depression.
tēvimār āvār tirumakaḷ, pūmī;
ēva, marṟu amarar āṭcēyvār;
mēviya ulakam mūṛu-avai āṭci;
vēṇṭu vēṇṭu uruvam niṇ uruvam—
pāviyēn-taṇṇai aṭukīṅga kamalak
kaṇṭatu ōr pavaḷa vāy maṇiyē!
āviyē! amutē! alai kaṭal kaṭainta
appaṇē! kaṇumārū arulāy.

Translation
Tirumakaḷ and Mother Earth are Your Consorts Divine,
(Befitting Your beauty and majesty), the Celestials are Your
vassals,
(Ever ready to do Your bidding) You are the Sovereign
Of the three worlds, assume You can any Form at will;
Your lotus eyes and coral lips peerless, however, torment this
sinner’s soul,
Oh, gem of a Lord, dear unto me like life! Nectar insatiable,
Oh, Sire, You did the surging ocean churn, pray, let me behold
you.

Note
The Lord has revealed Himself before the Āḻvār’s mental vision
in all His might and majesty in that glorious setting; the
Divine Consorts and the Nitya Sūnīs, who make the
supplicant’s position safe and sound by virtue of their good
offices, are around; the Lord is the Sovereign Master of all
the worlds and apart from the immensity of His wealth,
He is omni-potent, He churned the Milk-ocean once and
delivered the ‘Amrūt’ (ambrosia) to the self-centred and
egotistic Devas and in spite of such an extremely favourable
background, it is a pity He would not grant the wish of a
selfless devotee of the eminence of Saint Nammāḻvār.
While this very thought is depressing enough, the dejection
gets accentuated when he muses over the Lord’s lotus
eyes, coral lips and radiant Form which he could not
currently behold. Of course, the Āḻvār doesn’t want the Lord
to take, for his sake, the trouble of churning the ocean as
He did for the selfish Devas, and all that He prays for is
that he might be enabled to behold the Lord’s bewitching Form, so as to sustain himself.

kānumāru arulāy enṛu enṛē kalañki,
kañña nir alamara, viñaiyēn
pēnumāru, ellām pēṇi, niṇ peyāřē
pitārrumāru arul enakkua; antō!
kānumāru arulāy-kākuttā! kañña!
toṭtañēn karpakak kañiyē!
pēnvār amutē! periya taṇ puṇal cūl
peru nilam eṭutta pērāļā!  

Translation

Agitated stands this sinner, tears flooding the eyes,
(For, many a time did I call you, eager to behold
Your Form exquisite), many a method did I adopt (which
success defied)
Your grace rests merely on my prattling Your names (bad luck)
alar!
Oh, Lord, You did, as Kākuttaṇ and Kañnan, incarnate,
You are unto this vassal the fruit of the wish-yielding tree,
Nectar of the devout, You did redeem, oh, Benefactor great,
The big Earth from deep waters, cool, may You be visible
unto me.

Note

No doubt, it is the Lord’s grace that makes the Ālvār cry out
for it all the time, till it actually descends on him, without
indulging in any kind of aberration, egging him on to self-
effort to induce His grace. An irrepressible longing for
quick consummation, resulting from inordinate God-love,
made an impatient Ālvār attempt quite a few methods, aimed
at acceleration of his union with the Lord but all these proved
ineffective. And now, he does nothing more than mention-
ing the Lord’s names which again is, of course, due to the
Lord’s grace and stamps him out as one apart from the
worldlings. But this is not enough and the Ālvār pines for
beholding the Lord’s bewitching Form and he invites
Him to appear before him, even as He had come down
as Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, in His incarnate Forms, making Himself visible to sages and shepherdesses and the inhabitants of the remote forests. Actually, the Lord has never been apart from Himself nor is He aware of those separated from Him; while the ‘Nitya Sūris’ (Ever-free angles) in Heaven, His proximate attendants know no separation from the Lord, the ‘Nitya Samsarīs’, wallowing in worldly life, are totally oblivious of Him and are, therefore, not conscious of their separation from Him. The Ālvār is the solitary soul, at this end pining for the Lord, unable to bear the pangs of separation from Him.

Translation

The little one dear as life unto Nantakōpan, the great Treasure-grasper,  
Acōtaí’s vicarious Joy personified, the elephant calf of that clan You are,  
Oh, Benefactor great, Who did unto this vassal Your glory reveal, 
An ocean of compassion unto the devout, You tore off with Your nails,  
Avunāṇ, the battle-hungry, into halves and yet, now You appear not 
Before me, taking up the Form You deem fit; (should you thus neglect),  
How can devotees like me trust You (as the Protector great)?

Notes

(i) The Ālvār’s enquiry, as above, could either point out to the Lord, how at all His devotees can sustain themselves
if He doesn’t oblige them with His sweet presence, the
great Elixir of life, but keeps away, as He is doing at
present,

or

express the doubt as to how His reputation as the
henchman of His devotees, aired through the Scriptures,
the Itihāsa Purāṇas etc., with a great deal of fanfare
and publicity, could be taken for granted, without the
concrete proof thereof, especially when He is keeping
aloof from the Āḻvār, despite his passionate longing
for His immediate presence.

(ii) Nandagopa is aptly referred to, as the great Treasure-
grasper inasmuch as the Lord (Śri Kṛṣṇa) crossed over
to him on the very night of His descent into this world.
Nand: hadn’t even dreamt of this windfall and yet, the
Lord of the Universe, higher than the highest (Para
Brahmam), at His sweet volition, courted Nanda’s
courtyard, regaling him in a thousand ways, while
the luckless Vasudeva had to be contented with a mere
glimpse of the Divine Babe, born in the Prison-house,
only to get out of it immediately. This makes all the
difference between ‘Svagata svākāra’ (i.e.) courting the
Lord as the ‘Means’ and ‘Paragata svākāra’ (i.e.)
the condescending love of the Lord shed on some one
of His choice, at His sweet volition. Is there indeed
a greater Treasure than the Lord Who resides right
inside every one and yet can be enjoyed only by the
felicitous few? Nandagopa is, therefore, rightly ac-
claimed as the great Treasure-lifter, who didn’t have
to lift the Treasure, as such, but could enjoy it like one
who comes by a fabulous treasure-trove by sheer luck.
Even so, the lion’s share of the enjoyment of this great
Treasure went to Acūtai (Yaś dhā) who played the
mother of the Divine Babe, a role which should have
actually been filled by poor Devakī. The bliss enjoyed
by Yaśodhā was indeed several times more than that
enjoyed by the Celestials in the High Heavens.
(iii) *The elephant calf*: A mighty animal though, the elephant meekly submits itself to be tethered to a peg which could be easily uprooted, with but a small jerk of the huge frame of the beast. The Almighty Lord submitted Himself to the yoke of Yaśodhā who tied Him fast to a pounder, as if He was such a helpless pigmy and then, the Gopīs (the damsels of Virundāvan) would order Him about. Oh, what an amazing submissiveness! The Ālvār too seems to feel, according to Nampillai, that the Lord could have as well been directed and controlled by him even as Nandagopa and Yaśodhā did, assuming the ‘vātsalya’ stance instead of following the ‘Masterservant’ relationship, allowing Him to play the overbearing overlord who would not mingle freely with His subjects.

(iv) ‘Avunaṅ’ is the Tamil word for Hiranya whom Lord Narasimha tore down, all for the sake of that little lad, Prahlāda. The Ālvār would seem to feel that he is not obliged by the Lord Who did so much for that young chap. The Ālvār is even led to suspect whether the Lord had hired out all those Sages, Vyāsa, Parāśara etc., to lavish all those epithets on Him, which do not actually fit in with Him. At least to clear up such misgivings lurking in the Ālvār’s mind, the Lord should appear before him, assuming an appropriate Form.

> ünkātkātṛkā tuṛvakā nīṅ tuṛvakā<br>āki, un-taṇakku aṅkār-<br>aṅkar ukantā ceykā tin māyai<br>āṅkivu oṅrum caṅkippaṅ viṅīyaṅ-<br>amar atu pāṇī, akal itaṁ puṭai cūl<br>atu puṭai avitta ammāṅgi!<br>amarat-tam amutē! acurarkal naṅcē!<br>ṛṇuṭai ār uyireyō! (VIII–1–4)

**Translation**

My Lord, the battle (of Mahā Bhārata) You brought on to quell the cruel armies, spread across, nectar You are unto the
Celestials, Deadly poison You are unto Asuras and dear life unto me! You assume
The Form dear unto Your devotees, the wondrous deeds, You perform,
Endear You unto the devout; this sinner is, however, led to suspect
Whether all that is said of You is at all correct.

Note
The Ājvār hitherto subsisted on the sure and certain knowledge that God subserves His devotees, ready to do their bidding and assume the Forms they devoutly long to enjoy. But his knowledge and faith, in this great trait of the Lord, are getting shaken, in his present state of dejection. The Lord is undoubtedly the repository of innumerable auspicious traits and it is the Ājvār’s sins, as he puts it, that makes him stand apart from Him and even go to the length of suspecting this unassailable position of the Lord.

ār uyirēyō! akal iṭam mulutum
 paṭaittu, iṭantu, uṇṭu, umiṇtu, aḷanta
pēr uyirēyō! periya nīr paṭaittu, aṅku
 uṛaintu, atu kaṭaintu, aṭaittu, uṭaitta
çīr uyirēyō! maṇicarkkut tēvar
 pōlat tēvarkkum tēvāvō!
ōr uyirēyō! ulakaṅkaṭku ellām!—
 uṇṇai! nāṅ eṅku vantu urukō?

(VIII-1-5)

Translation
You are my life dear, oh Lord! You did create
The spacious worlds, one and all, pulled them out From beneath the waters deep, during the deluge ate And later spat them out, the Supreme Lord that You are, You spanned the worlds, reposed on the vast sheet of water, Churned the ocean once, then bunded it and broke the bund later;
Could You unto Devas be what they are unto men, oh, great One,
You, the unique Soul of all the worlds, where shall I attain?
Notes

(i) In the preceding song, the Āḻvār would appear to have provoked the Lord into questioning him, how one, so ill-equipped as he, could think of attaining Him and on the top of that, doubt His greatness and bonafides. The Āḻvār’s answer is that he is but the body and the Lord, the life within, whose bounden duty it is to take care of him. There was hardly any question of the body pursuing a path of its own, by way of practising austerity, discipline etc. Actually, it was He who did, from time to time, all that had to be done, by way of creating the worlds, sustaining them within His stomach during the deluge, refunding them later on to their former sittings, rescuing the worlds from Mahā Bali, the usurper, by spanning them all, in just three strides, so on and so forth. And then, He lay on the ocean where came the Divine Mother through His churning; He also bunched the ocean to cross over to Laṅkā, to get at the Mother and later demolished the bund, so as to prevent the entry of the Rākṣasas into the mainland.

(ii) The humans could subsist on mere food and water while the Devās need ‘Amrut’ (ambrosia) for their subsistence. If this marks the distance between the mortals and the immortal Devas, well, there is not only that much distance but very much more between the Devas and the Supreme Lord, the ‘Devādi Deva’ and the comparison is thus not on all fours. While the ratio between Man and Deva is a definite quantum, that between the Deva and the Lord would baffle even the wildest imagination and cannot be put in finite terms.

eṇku vantu urukō, enṇai āḻvāṅē?—
el ulakaṅkaḷum niyē;
aṅku avarkku amaitta tēyvamum niyē;
avartu-avai karumamum niyē;
poṅkiya puṟampāl porul uḷavēlum,
avaiyumō ṅī ᵃṅē āṅāl,
maṅkiya arivām nērppamum niyē;
vāṅ puḷaṅ irantatum niyē. (VIII—1–6)
Translation

My Sovereign Lord, the worlds seven and the deities worshipped therein,
The rituals unto them performed as well as things in regions beyond,
All things and beings, subtle or manifest are unto You bound;
Well, such a one where and how do I attain?

Notes

(i) The Āḻvār’s query is how he can, on his own, attain the Lord Who is the Supreme Controller of all the worlds, Agni, Indra and other deities, worshipped by the respective votaries in different climes, the rituals performed, as part of such worship, as well as all things lying in the regions beyond. How can a lame man get on to the top of Mount Meru? The lameness denotes the incapacity to pursue the normal paths prescribed by the Scriptures to get at the Lord. But then, it behaves the Lord, as the Master, who has striven hard all the time for the Āḻvār’s evolution, right up to this stage, to follow it up to the point of final fruition, with no ancillary effort on his part.

(ii) As already stated in V.2-8, it is the Supreme Lord Who has set up in different climes the minor deities to receive the homage the votaries pay them and grant them boons. This is reinforced here. The prescriptive rites and rituals offered to these deities actually reach the Supreme Lord Whose agents these deities are, rather His bodies through which He carries out His multifarious functions.

(iii) As mentioned in Śloka 17 of Śrī Āḻavandār’s ‘Stotra Ratna’, the Lord’s possessions (Vibhūti) are indeed very vast and immense, comprising, inter alia, the numerous Cosmic worlds with all their inner contents and the external multiplicity of layers, each of which is ten times bigger than the immediately preceding one. (yat daśottarāṇyāvarāṇāni yānī ca). The region beyond the seven worlds, alluded to in this song, denotes these external layers.
irantatum nīyyē; etirntatum nīyyē;
nikaḷvatō nī; ippē āṇāl,
ciranta nīṇ taṇmai atu, itu, itu eṟu
aṟivu oṟrum caṅkippaṇ viṇaiyēṅ—
kaṟanta pāl! neyyē! neyyiṅ in cuvaiyē!
kaṭalyuḷ! amutamē! amutil
piṟanta in cuvaiyē! cuvaiyatu pāyaṅē!
piṇṇai tōḷ maṇanta pēr āyā!

(VIII–1–7)

Translation

Sweet as milk fresh-drawn and the ghee that from it ensues,
You are, my Lord, the very sweetness in ghee, the ambrosia,
That from the ocean emerged, with its sweet contents,
The joy that from such sweetness results; the charming Piṇṇai
You did wed, oh, Gopal, the past, the future and the present
You do control; this sinner is losing faith in You, even then,
As the Lord Supreme of all things, near, far and in between.

Note

The Āḻvār says that the knowledge of the Lord being the
Supreme Controller of all things and beings, abiding in
all, which sustained him hitherto, is forsaking him now, the
sinner that he is. Time, with its triple components of
‘Past’, ‘Present’ and ‘Future’ and all things and beings
embraced within its folds, are but the Lord’s modes. The
Āḻvār could, therefore, discern the hand of the Lord, in all
happenings, at all times. The Lord is the quintessence of
all that is delicious, the inner core of sweetness. This
sweetness gets heightened manifold, when the Lord is in
conjunction with His Divine Consort. The Āḻvār can,
therefore, hardly subsist without partaking of such unalloyed
and unlimited bliss and yet, in his present state of separation
from Him, he is even led to suspect whether all this glory,
attributed to the Lord, is at all real or a mere figment of
imagination. The doubt expressed by the Āḻvār earlier in
this decad, was about the Lord’s capacity to redeem His
subjects. There at least, the Lord could escape by putting
the blame on the supplicant’s inadequacy, failings etc.
But here, the Āḻvār is led to suspect even the basic feature of
the Lord, as the all-pervading, inner Controller of all
things and beings, said to be but His modes or attributes.

mananta pêr âyâ! mâyattâl mulûtum
valvînaiyênaî Írkiêra
kuñañkâlai ûtâiâyä! acurar van kaiyar
kûrramê! koṭiya puł uyarttây!
pâñkâñl ûyiramûm ûtaiya pain näkap
pâliâyä! pârkaçal cërrpâ!
vañañkumâru ařiyên-mañamum, vâcåkamum,
ceykerûm, yânum nî-tâñê. (VIII-1-8)

Translation

Mighty Gopâla, Piññai, You did wed with love intense,
Your auspicious traits, in their full complement, tear into
halve
This sinner great, deadly unto the mighty Asuras, You have
On Your banner Garûda, who does on them miseries impose,
In the Milk-ocean, on the thousand-hooded serpent You
repose;
I and my mind, word and deed are all swayed by You,
And so, I know not how I can, on my own, worship You.

Notes

(i) The Ālvâr would appear to have been pulled up by
the Lord as to why he did not even make a formal
obeisance to Him. The Ālvâr clears up the position
by pointing out that, as one who belongs to Him,
lock, stock and barrel, and is wholly dominated by
Him, even this formal act of bowing has to be ordained
by Him.

(ii) The very traits of the Lord, which do sustain the devotees,
are proving injurious to the Ālvâr in his present dis-
consolate state, making his separation from the Lord
all the more poignant. The Ālvâr attributes this mental
state to his sins. Wounds inflicted by missiles could
be cured but not the sickness imposed by the Lord’s
traits themselves. The ungodly Asuras are destroyed
by the Lord’s weapons but His auspicious traits,
strangely enough, torment the devout like Saint Nammāḻvār, as he puts it in this song, splitting him into halves, even as Hiraṇya was cleaved by Lord Narasimha.

(iii) Ādi-Śeṣa, the Lord’s serpent-bed, can, on his spacious bosom, accommodate the Lord and His Consorts; his thousand hoods spread themselves out and dance with great joy because of his contact with the Lord.

(iv) Mind, body and speech of the sentient being are the Lord’s gifts, capacitating the individual for worshipping Him and yet, the Āḻvār could not, on his own, bow unto the Lord, because he and his appendages, the mind etc., are all wholly dominated by Him. This is indeed the farthest limit of self-abnegation, totally objuring the element of self-effort, (Sādhana yogyatā), that is, employing ‘Means’ other than the Lord Himself.

yānum ni-tāṅē āvatō meyyē,
aru nāraku-avaiyum ni; ānāl,
vāṅ uyar inpam eytil en? marrai
narakamē eytil en? eniŋnum,
yānum ni-tāṅayt telitorum, nāṟṟum
aṅcuvan narakam nāṅ aṭaṭal;
vāṅ uyar inpam manaṽi viṟṟiruntāy!—
aruḷu niṅ tālkalai enakkē. (VIII–1–9)

Translation

True it is, You are in me as You are in everything else,
The hell of a life I now eke out is also Yours;
So then, it matters not whether You grant me heavenly bliss
Or keep me lingering in this hellish life, full of distress.
And yet, life here I dread when I do my essential nature realise,
I beseech you, therefore, oh Lord, seated in the blissful heaven!
To bless me that I do your lovely feet attain.

Note

To those gifted with the vision of the Lord’s Universal Form (Viśvarūpa), like Prahlāda and Nammāḻvār, it should indeed be possible to perceive the presence of the Lord everywhere,
Eighth Centum (VIII–I) 735

looking upon Hell and Heaven alike, with perfect mental equanimity. The doubt, therefore, arises why the Älvăr abhors existence over here and aspires for his ascent to Heaven, exhibiting a distinct predilection for the latter. This song clears up the position in this regard. It is the corroding, rather, the corrupting influence of life in the midst of the worldlings with its potential risk of seriously interfering with his essential nature, as the exclusive vassal of the Lord solely dependent on Him, that scares the Älvăr and frightens him to such an extent. No wonder, therefore that he longs for his quick ascent to Heaven where the Lord can be served and enjoyed in that transcendent setting, without break and fear of contamination of any sort.

tālkāḷai eṇakkē talaitallaic cīṟappat
tanta pēr utavik kaimmāṟāt
tōḷḷaḷai ārat taluvi, en uyirai
aṟa vilai ceytanaṟ-cōṭī!
tōḷḷaḷ āyirattāy! muṭikaḷ āyirattāy;
tūṇaimalar kaiṅkaḷ āyirattāy!
tālkāḷ āyirattāy! pērkaḷ āyirattāy!
tamiyaṇēn periya appañē!

(VIII–1–10)

Translation

With pleasure great, my Soul I have unto You, scld, sure and certain,
Oh, resplendent Lord, this is indeed in return
For the unflinching faith in Your feet, You have on me bestowed;
Shoulders many, crowns in plenty and a vast multitude
Of lotus eyes and feet many, I see in You, bearing names many,
My Sire, I know you intend showering on poor me favours many.

Notes

(i) Although the Lord has still not obliged the Älvăr with His presence, the latter is jubilant that he has not been contaminated by the worldlings and the Lord’s lovely feet are unto him what food and raiment are for the worldlings. This is indeed a great favour done to the
Aḷvār by the great Lord, who has not only made the Aḷvār abhor and abjure the ways of the world but also look upon the Lord as his Sole Sustainer. What is even more, He has chosen the Aḷvār for singing these hymns of 'Tiruvāyumōli' without giving this special assignment even to sages of the eminence of Vālmīki, Vyāsa and Parāśara or the first three Aḷvārs, a piece of special favour, a great felicity, already acknowledged by the Aḷvār in the earlier decad. For this benefaction, the Aḷvār now seeks to recompense the Lord by offering Him his soul, like unto a father putting his arms round the shoulders of his daughter and giving her away in marriage to the bridgeroom. In the exuberance of his joy, the Aḷvār seems to have coolly overlooked past history in this regard, his own earlier attempt to barter away his soul, thwarted by an almost immediate realisation that he was trying to give away the Lord's own, under the erroneous belief that it was his own. Well, even as recently as in the eighth stanza of this very decad, the Aḷvār was conscious of the fact that he, his mind, word, and deed were all swayed by Him and that he had nothing to do with these.

(ii) Even as the Aḷvār delightfully made a confounded gift of a thing that didn't belong to him, the Lord received it with great jubilation, as if it did not already belong to Him, beamed with joy and expanded marvellously by way of expressing His great joy, exhibiting thousands of shoulders, crowns, eyes, feet etc. This is on a par with the Kṣatrya Kings, in exultation over a great turn of events in their lives, sharing their joy with their favourite queens, in amorous company.

periya appañai, piraman appañai,
uruttiran appañai, munivaruku
uriya appañai, amarar appañai,
ulakukku ṏr tanī appañ-taññai
periya van kurukūr van caṭakōpan
pēnīna āyirattuḷḷum
uriya col-mālai ivaiyum pattu ivarṛāl
uyyalām, toṇṭir!—nāṅkaṭkē.

(VIII–1–11)
Translation

Ye, devotees, salvation we can all attain, reciting these songs ten,
Out of the choice thousand composed by Kurukür Catakopan, 
Adoring the peerless Lord of the Universe, of unique grandeur, 
The great Sire of Piraman, Uruthirar and the worthy Master 
Of illustrious sages like Sanaka and the Devas, one and all.

Note

This end-song epitomises the contents of this decad and avers 
that those who recite this decad will attain salvation, even 
though they have been immersed for ages in sensual 
pleasures, straying away from God-head.

(Piraman=Brahma; Uruttirar=Rudra)

Eighth Centum—Second decad (VIII-2) 
(Naikaal varivalai)

Preamble

In the last decad, the Alvar began to suspect that, with his 
coming into the world, the Lord’s reputation as the repository of 
many an auspicious trait and the grand ordainer of all things, was 
becoming extinct. The Alvar was, however, brought back to normal 
thinking by the Lord and the Alvar’s misgivings were cleared up 
in a way. But then, the external perception of the Lord’s exquisite 
Form and physical contact, longed for by the Saint, did not, as yet, 
materialise. This, therefore, gave rise to yet another doubt in the 
mind of the Alvar whether the Lord was keeping away from him 
on the ground that he was still not quite free from worldly desires. 
No doubt, the Alvar kept himself studiously aloof from the world 
and its meretricious charms, as far as he could be conscious of it. 
And yet, the Omni-Scient Lord might have found traces of worldly 
desires still lurking inside the Alvar unknown to him, and this was 
perhaps the reason why the Lord was holding back. The Alvar, 
therefore, thought of clearing up even this inkling of a doubt and 
vindicating his absolute detachment from the world and its affairs, 
but did not open up a direct dialogue with the Lord. Instead, he 
resorted to the device of informing the Lord and impressing upon
Him through argumentation between the Nāyakī and her mates and elders, the theme of the dialogue being as follows:

The Nāyakī (Āḻvār) who got separated from the Supreme Lord after her erstwhile union with Him cannot contain herself and patiently await His return. She, therefore, darts forth, in an attempt to meet her Lord in His dwelling place in the yonder region but gets pulled up by her mates for transgression of the norms of feminine conduct and the restraint of modesty which it imposes. The mates counsel patience but it falls on deaf ears. The Nāyakī sternly declines to conform to the so-called norms of the worldlings, being on a pedestal of her own, totally dissociating herself from all things ungodly and fiercely concentrating on her Lord, with no other thought, crossing her mind.

Against this background, the key stanzas of this decad are the seventh, eighth and the eleventh.

\[\text{naṅkal varivalai āyaṅkālō!} \\
\text{nammuṭai ētalar muṇpu nāṇi,} \\
\text{nuṅkaṭku yān onṟu u-aikkum māṟṟam} \\
\text{nōkkukiṅgēn; eṅkum kāṇa māṭṭēn;} \\
\text{caṅkam carintaṇa, cāy ilantēn;} \\
\text{taṭa mulai poṇ niramāyt talartēn-} \\
\text{veṅkaṅ paṟavaiyēṅ pākaṅ eṅkōṅ} \\
\text{veṅkaṭavāṇaṇai vēṇṭic ceṅrē.} \] (VIII–2–1)

**Translation**

Ye, my mates, bedecked with bangles nice,  
I wish I could in you confide and freely tell  
What unto hostile elders I feel shy to disclose,  
And yet, words I find not, my thoughts to spell;  
My Lord at Tiruvēṅkaṭam Who conducts the bird  
With hot eyes, I desired to see and lo! lose I did  
My complexion fine, down the wrists my bangles slid,  
With the colour off my breasts, I just became jaded.

**Notes**

(i) Finding the Nāyakī off colour and debilitated, her mates enquired of her what was going wrong with her. The Nāyakī felt shy to disclose her love-sickness but her
friendly mates could put her at ease. Even then, words failed her and, at long last, she gave out the genesis of her malady, as above.

(ii) The bangles would not rest on the wrists of the Nāyakī, grown gaunt and emaciated, while the mates had their bangles, in tact. Even as Lakṣmaṇa, whose grief over Śītā’s abduction, stemming from a stinging sense of unwariness on his part, was even greater than Śrī Rāma’s, steadied himself so as to be fit to serve Śrī Rāma all right, the mates here had to keep themselves fit, in order to bring the Nāyakī round, instead of lamenting along with her.

(iii) The elders have absolute faith in the Lord’s grace, which is bound to lead them on to the final goal without fail. They would, therefore, counsel the Nāyakī to coolly await the descent of the Lord’s grace at His sweet will, without getting jittery. This kind of advice is, however, unpalatable to the Nāyakī, who is all agog for the quick consummation of her inordinate God-love and hence, the elders are deemed by her to be hostile. And now, hostility is of two kinds, the inner and the outer, as brought out in aphorism 139 of ‘Acārya Hrudayam’. Those, who employ ‘means’ other than the Lord Himself to attain Him, are regarded as the external enemies while those who look upon God as the ‘Ready Means’, the ‘Siddhopāya’, and yet remain opposed to getting into a state of flutter and throbbing for quick consummation, on the ground that it militates against the creed of ‘Pāratantrya’ (exclusive dependence on the Lord), are categorised by the Nāyakī as the internal enemies.

(iv) Garuḍa, the hot-eyed bird:

Garuḍa, being hot-eyed, is, at times, favourable, and unfavourable at other times, depending upon the particular mood of the God-lover. This mighty bird could quell the ungodly with blistering looks and fly the Lord unerringly down to where the Nāyakī is eagerly awaiting
His arrival. The Nāyakī would then thank Garuḍa for his good offices. The same Nāyakī would, however, speak disparagingly of the bird, when he takes away the Lord from her and leaves her sadly alone, as in her present state of ‘Viśleṣa’ (separation). This is just like the Gopis (the damsels of Virundāvan) dubbing the saintly Akrūra as the one with a cruel heart, who separated them from Kṛṣṇa and took Him to Kamsa’s citadel (Mathurā)—‘Akrūraḥ Krūrahruḍayāḥ’.

(v) The Lord has some down all the way from Heaven to Mount Tiruvēṅkatam, to be beheld by us all. He has not come to the Nāyakī and so, she thought of going up to this holy centre, specially courted by Hīm. But these are the changes instantly wrought in her—the sliding down of the bangles, loss of complexion and all that.

vēṇṭic ceṇṭu oṃṛu peṇκirīpārīl
enṇuṭait tōliyar nunkaṭkēlum,
ṁṭu itu uraikkum paṭiyai, antō!
kāṅkipilēṇ-īṭarāṭṭiyēṅ nāṇ;
kāṇ taku tāmaraik kaṇṭñā kalvaṇ,
vinnavar-kōṇ, naṅkaḷ kōṅaik kaṇṭāl,
ṁṭṭiya caṅkum niṟaiyum koḻvaṇ
ettanai kālam ilaikkirṛē! (VIII—2—2)

Translation
Alas! I know not, in my present state of woe,
What to say of me even unto You, my mates dear!
Who would from me always get whatever you desire;
Were I to see the lotus-eyed Lord, bewitching to behold,
Who by His looks could our hearts steal, the Sovereign Lord
Of the Celestials and us alike, I can unto me get restored
My bangles and modesty and for this I am since long trying hard.

Note
Ever since the Lord withdrew Himself from the Nāyakī’s vision, she has been without her bangles which slid
down her wrists, and the innate sense of modesty, characteristic of women under restraint. It is only when she gets the vision back again, she can hope to get back her lost possessions. It is a pity, she is still in a state of longing, with fulfilment nowhere in sight.

Translation

I am in endless pursuit of Kaṇṇaṇ, my cloud-hued Lord, Of limitless blue, beaming far and wide, to get unto me restored, My bangles lovely and complexion fair; Indeed, the whole world Blames me for transgression of my bounds, Ye, mates with foreheads bright. There's no use my fighting shy anymore, please note; This sinner will persevere and me Time can never beat.

Note

Apart from the crowning trait of modesty for women, as a class, the ‘Prapanna’, who pursues the path of loving surrender to the Lord’s voluntary grace, has to await the descent of such grace at the time deemed appropriate by the Lord, with absolute faith in Him, a robust confidence. It is this very plank, the mates also stand upon and so, they try to bring round the Nāyāki. But the Nāyāki says, she has become brazen, after all the notoriety and opprobrium she has earned by dint of her sending the birds and bees as emissaries (I-4) and her attempt to come into the open and arraign the Lord for His cruel unresponsiveness (V-3). She is determined to try till the end of time and get back her bangles, the external possession, and modesty, the internal
decoration, stolen away from her by the Lord of exquisite charm. This is, as it were, a challenge to the mates who advised the Nāyakī to give up her futile pursuit, right now, instead of acknowledging defeat at a later date, after a long and strenuous struggle.

kūṭac cenē̄-iṇi en koṭukkē̄n?
kōlvai, nēcē̄t tōṭakkam ellām
pātu arīru oliya iltantu, vaikal
palvalaiyārmuṇ paricu ālintē̄n—
māṭak koṭi māṭīl teṇ kuḷantai
vaṅ kuṭapāl niṅra māyak kūttāṅ
āṭal paṇava iyaṛta vel pōr
āḷivalavaṇai āṭarittē.

(VIII–2–4)

Translation

Court did I Lord Māyakkūṭtaṅ, borne aloft by the gay bird,
Enshrined in the western part of Teṅkuḷantai with castles tall
And stately walls, Who the victorious disc does wield,
And lost my bangles lovely, my mind, one and all;
Indeed I have nothing more to lose, having lost, long back,
My feminine bearing, in the eyes of the women wearing
bangles, in bulk.

Notes

(i) This song brings out the Āḷvār’s adoration of Māyakkūṭtaṅ, the Deity enshrined in Teṅkuḷantai, popularly known as Peruṅkuḷam, near Āḷvār Tirunakari (Kuruṅkūr), the birthplace of the Saint.

(ii) Māyakkūṭtaṅ: This could either refer to Lord Kṛṣṇa’s vast array of wondrous deeds, performed during the brief span of His advent over here, right in the middle of the rituals performed by the Celestials in the yonder Heaven, as part of their diurnal worship of the Lord in His transcendent Form.

or

Generally, the Lord who binds us to this body, like unto a bird’s nest and watches all the fun and frolic that follow.
(iii) Garuda flutters its wings with hilarious joy, in contemplation of the prospective outing of the Lord mounted on him.

(iv) When the mates chide the Nāyakī that, by her daring she stood to lose all her possessions, one by one, she replies that there is nothing more to lose, having already lost her all.

āḻivalavaṇai āṭarippum,
āṅku avaṇ nammil varavum ellām,
tōḷiyarkāḷ! nam uṭaiyamēṭān?
colluvatō iṅku ariyāṭatāṇ—
ūḻitōru ūli, oruvaṇāka
naṅku uṇavārkkum uṇaralākāc
cūḷal uṭaiya cuṭark koḷ āṭit
tollai am cōti niṇaiKKuṅkālē?

(VIII–2–5)

Translation

Ye, mates, it would hardly be proper to say things harsh

About the Lord wielding the discus, the Primate of brilliance everlasting,
Of ultra-mundane origin, of wondrous deeds which the devotees enthrall,
Whose glory even the most knowledgeable can’t fathom and comprehend,
However much and however long they might try to find;
’Tis nothing new for devotees to covet Him and for Him to respond.

Notes

(i) Trying to convict the Nāyakī out of her own mouth, the mates advise her not to court the Lord and lose all her possessions in the process, as owned by her in the immediately preceding song. Pat comes the admonition from the Nāyakī, warning them against any possible misunderstanding of the Lord’s glory and greatness and dubbing Him as callous, hard-hearted and so on. It was not as if she was the only God-lover, subject to
such fluctuations. There have been very many God-lovers before, who did covet the Lord’s presence and craved, like Parāṅkūṣa Nāyakī, for incessant communion with Him and the Lord also graciously responded and mingled with the devout very freely, exhibiting many wonderful traits and deeds.

(ii) The statement that intellectual stalwarts too cannot comprehend the Lord, even if they should engage themselves in such pursuit for ages, might seem to come into conflict with the texts, such as, ‘Vedāhametaṁ Puruṣāṁ Mahāntaṁ’, ‘Aham vedmi Mahātmānaṁ’ etc., which claim to know God. The authority to whom these texts apply is what is called the Brahma-Jñāni or ‘Tattva vith’, the knower of Brahman, the ultimate Principle or Truth. Well, all that these eminent persons could know is that the Lord cannot be fully comprehended and His ways are inscrutable. For example, the Lord Himself has declared many a time that He would act only when Mahālakṣmī plays the recommendatory role, mediating and pleading for the suppliants at the door-step. And yet, He would also say, ‘Nāsou Puruṣakāreṇa nacāpyanyena hetunā, Kevalaṁ sycchāyaivāhaṁ prekṣa kancit Kathācana’, that is, He could not be coaxed into redeeming His subjects by any means including the mediation of the Divine Mother and that His own will was paramount, in the matter of extending His grace. Again, He has declared, in unambiguous terms His severe displeasure in regard to the transgression of the dictates of the Scriptures, which are but His commands—‘Śrutis Śrūtir Māmaivajña yasth āmullangya vartate, āgnācheti Mama dhrohi Madbhaktopi na vaiśnavah’. And yet, in Chapter IX-30 of Bhagavad Gīta, this stern warning seemed to have got totally diluted, when Lord Kṛṣṇa averred, “apicet sudurācāraḥ bhajate Mām ananya bhāk, Sādhureva samantavyah Samyagvyavasito hi saḥ”, that is, “Even he, who has committed grave breaches of the codes of conduct, appropriate to the different stations in life, deserves to be placed on a par
with a Saint and honoured likewise, if he meditates on Me, with selfless devotion, with no other end in view." Did not Lord Rāma wind up the heated debate on Vibhiṣaṇa’s admission into His camp, by announcing His great creed of granting asylum to any one, who sought refuge in Him and responding, without fail, to the call of a destitute, be he friendly or a foe in the guise of a friend, and whatever be the magnitude of his sins? How then can anyone, however exalted and sagacious, claim to have known fully, the Lord and His ways? The only exception could, of course, be the chosen few unto whom the Lord has revealed Himself, in toto, and imparted crystal-clear knowledge, shorn of all doubts, discrepancies and deviations.

(iii) The Nāyaki’s hopes are kept alive because the Great One, Who baffles scrutiny and defies description, is also known to be amazingly simple, mixing freely with His ardent devotees. How then can the mates dissuade the Nāyaki from pinning her faith in His descending love?

tollai am côti niṇaikkunkāl, en
   col alavu anṟu; imaiyör-tamakkum
ellai ilātana kūlpuc ceyyum;
at tiram nirṇa-em mâmai koṇṭān;
alli malart tan tulāyum tārān-
   ārkkku ḫukō iṇip pūcal? collīr!—
valli vaḷa vayal cūḷ kuṭantai
   mā malarkkan valarkiṅga mālē. (VIII–2–6)

Translation

Tell me, my mates, to whom else I shall my woes depose,
When the resplendent Lord of prowess extra-ordinary, much
   beyond the grasp
Of even Celestials, the Great one of amazing grandeur, Who
does repose
In Tirukkuṭantai amid nice gardens and fields fertile, who did
grab
My complexion fair but wouldn’t favour me with tulaci garland,
   full of fragrance.
Notes

(i) The mates would appear to have been prodding the Nāyakī, saying that the Lord is indeed dear to attain and not the easily accessible one, as she was making out. The Nāyakī, however, effectively silences them by pointing out that it matters not whether He is near or far, seeing that He has kept her mind solely fixed on Him. And, in this state of mind, the Nāyakī sees no other way but to be a supplicant at His door-step, instead of hanging on to those with whom she has nothing to do. As a matter of fact, it would not be possible even to the exalted Celestials like Brahmā and Rudra to define the Lord’s stance with any degree of certainty. He, who is beyond reach some times, is the most easily attainable at other times, and the doubt, therefore, assails the minds of one and all, high and low, as to what the Lord would be like, at any one time. In the ‘Mokṣa Dharma’ of Mahābhārata, Brahmā said unto Rudra, that none, including them, could fathom the infinite Mind of the Lord and plumb its mysterious depths.

(ii) Such a Great one condescended to reveal His exquisite Form unto the Nāyakī and steal away her heart, as evidenced by the discoloration that has set in. During those moments of His union with the Nayaki, He was totally subservient to her but now that He keeps aloof of her, He would not care to give her even the tuijaci garland worn on His person, which could, to some extent, alleviate her suffering. Even so, it behoves her to wait at His door-step only, whatever be His dispensation, good, bad or indifferent, because of the inalienable link between the two.

māl, ari, kēcavaṇ, nāraṇaṇ, cīmātavaṇ, kōvintaṇ, vaikunṭaṇ eṣu eṣu
ōḷamiṇaṇaṇaṇ paṇṇi, viṭṭiṭṭu,
oṅṛum uruvum cuvaṭum kāṭṭaṇ;
ēḷa malarkkuḷal aṇṇaimērkāḷ!
ēṇuṭaṇaḥ tōliyaṅkāḷ! eṇ ceykēn?
kāḷam pala cēṛum kāṅpatu-āṇai;
unikaḷōṭu eṅkaḷ itai illaiyē.

(VIII–2–7)
Translation

Ye, elders, with fragrant locks, flower-bedecked, Ye, my mates, His names, my Lord has made me cry out, As Máł, Ari, Këcavañ, Naraññ, Cimãtavañ, Kôvintañ, Vaikutanañ, and so on. But of Him no trace could I see: what shall be done? Till the end of time, struggle shall I, on and on And see Him, sure and certain, let me swear, There’s indeed no link ‘tween you and me I am sure.

Notes

(i) Even when the Lord keeps aloof, the subject cannot help pining for Him and uttering His sweet names, expressive of His auspicious attributes and wondrous deeds, as the sole means of subsistence. That is why Parâñkuša Nâyaki resent the advice tendered by her mates, not to attempt the unattainable but stay quiet. She would rather cut away from her kith and kin who can’t see eye to eye with her. (See the concluding para of the preamble to this decade) The Lord (Tirumâl) known to possess boundless love for His devotees, cannot keep away from them for long; He is Ari (Hari) the destroyer of all our sins which impede our union with Him; He is Kešava, whose dark, curly locks entrance the devotees and He should be fully aware that the Nâyaki would be musing over this sheer beauty, all the time; and then, He is Naraññ, of tender solicitude for the devotees, ‘Aśṭavatsala’ and also ‘Mâdhava’ (Cirimâtavañ) Who, by reason of His conjunction with the Divine Mother (Śri), would never give up the devotees; He is Kôvintañ (Govinda) Who subserves those that take refuge in Him and all these qualities only go to embellish His transcendent glory as ‘ Vaikutanañ’ residing in that super-eminent abode, known as Heaven.

(ii) Although the Nâyaki called out the Lord’s names lustily, yet, He was nowhere in sight. When Bharata went to the forest to meet Śri Râma, the former could locate the latter’s residence with the aid of the smoke that shot up in the sky from the ritual-fire. But, in the Nâyaki’s
case, currently there is no trace whatever of the Lord nor any clue regarding His whereabouts.

İtai illai-yân vaḷartta kilikāl!
pūvaikaḷkāl! kuyilkāl! mayilkāl!-
ūṭaiya nam māmaiyum, caṅkum, neṅcum,
oṅrum oḷiya oṭṭatu koṃṭān;
amūṭaiyum vaikuṇtānum, pāṅkāṭalum,
aṅcāṇa verpum avai naṇiya;
kaṭaiyarap pācaṅkaḷ viṭṭapinṇai
aṇṭi, avaṇ avai kāṅkoṭāṇe. (VIII–2–8)

Translation

Ye, parrots, peacocks, Koels, little Pūvai birds, my pets all,
There’s nothing more you can from me have, my possessions,
one and all,
The Lord has from me snatched ‘tis, however, not difficult to attain hence
Vaikuṇtānum, Milk-ocean, Mount Aṅcāṇam and other holy centres,
But these the Lord reveals not unless one sheds the last shred
Of attachment unto things in the domain outside.

Notes

(i) The main theme of this decad being complete eschewal of, and total dissociation from all things ungodly, this is yet another topical stanza of the decad. (See also stanza 7)

(ii) The pets were reared up by the Nāyakī merely as ancillary to her God-enjoyment, by way of heightening the enjoyment and now, in her present state of separation from her beloved Lord, all these birds are of no avail and the Nāyakī doesn’t hesitate to sever her connection with these unwanted pets, in the same way as she stands apart from her mates and the elders who tempt her the wrong way. A doubt might, however, arise, at this stage, how these birds, which are said to denote the great preceptors (Ācāryās), as elucidated earlier, could at all be discarded notwithstanding their exalted position
as the sure Guides to Heaven. As a matter of fact, in Saint Rāmānuja’s swan-song, ‘Śaraṇāgati gadya’, he specifically includes even the preceptors in the category of persons, dear and near, excluded by him, ‘Gurūn santyajya’. The idea behind this is that one’s parents, wife, sons, relations, friends and preceptor, loved and adored, as belonging to the Lord, have also to be eschewed, if they turned out to be inimical to God-enjoyment. Vide also aphorism 153 of ‘Ācārya Hrudayam’.

(iii) The Lord having forsaken the Nāyākī after His erstwhile union with her, He has simultaneously deprived her of her fair complexion, bangles, mind and all, which He has taken with Him to the yonder Heaven, thinking that it is much beyond the Nāyākī’s reach. But the Nāyākī is well aware that the Heaven is not that remote and unattainable, being, as a matter of fact, the destined Land, the ultimate destination of every one, which the Super-sensitive Lord shall, however, make available only when the earthly desires and sensual pleasures are given up in toto and one loves Him exclusively. Mount Añcaṇam, mentioned in this song, is Mount Tiruvēṇi-kaṭām. This holy centre and the Milk-ocean are held on a par with Heaven.

kāṅkoṭuppāṇ allan ārkkum taṇṇai;
kaicey appālantu őr māyam-taṇṇāl
māṇ kuṟal kōla vaṭivu kattī,
maṇṇum viṇṇum niṟaiya malarnta
cēṅ cuṭart tōḷkāḷ pala talaitta
tēvā-pirāṇku ēn niṟaiviṇōṭu
nāṇ koṭuttēṇiṇi ēn koṭukkēn?—
enṉuṭai nal-nutal naṅkaimirkāḷ?

(VIII–2–9)

Translation

My mates with foreheads bright, I have to lose nothing more,
Having my femininity lost and with that, my sense of modesty
Unto the Lord of the Celestials, with shoulders many, bright and hearty, 
Who the most exalted eludes and remains unseen but did appear before (Bali), as the unique Vāmana, charming beyond compare, 
And did from him snatch, on the sly, all the worlds, 
Earth, Svarga and all, which He did span and pervade.

Notes

(i) The Nāyakī averred in the preceding song that the Lord would certainly grant admission to His transcendent abode, if we unreservedly gave up attachment to all things ungodly. She was hit back by the mates, who said that all that the Nāyakī could do was to sever her connections with them and go on losing all her possessions, one by one, but she would never gain the Lord, she longed for, at such great cost. And now, the Nāyakī says that she has nothing more to lose, having already lost her feminine bearing itself, along with modesty, its essential ingredient. She has thus lost both her priceless kingdoms, whereas the Lord restored to Indra, his lost kingdom, getting it back from Mahābali. The Nāyakī and Bali sail in the same boat, both having lost their respective kingdoms, enthralled by the Lord’s exquisite charm. Even so, Bali won everlasting fame as a great donor.

(ii) The Lord would not reveal Himself to those, who seek to gain His presence, by dint of their own efforts, however exalted they might be. So far as the Nāyakī is concerned, she has been enthralled by His bewitching beauty, which He revealed unto her and, in the process, He has stolen away her heart and all, even as He appeared before Mahābali, as the exquisite Vāmana and snatched away all his possessions. The shoulders and the entire frame of the Lord’s person went on expanding
the moment Bali poured water into His right palm, betokening his gift unto the Lord of what was sought of him.

enñutai nal-nutal nañkaimírkál!
yan inic ceyvatu en-en nènçu enñai
nìñ ìtaiyèn allèn ençu nìñki,
nèmiyum cañkum irukaik koñtu,
pal neñum cul çutar ñàyiìrgòtu
pàl mati ënti, òr kòla nila
nal neñum kuñram varuvatu oppàñ
nal-malarp pàtam añaintatuvè? (VIII–2–10)

Translation
My mates with foreheads bright, me my mind has forsaken
And attained the lovely feet, like unto lotus in fresh bloom,
Of the Lord, Who does the conch and discus wield and gleam
Like a lovely blue mountain, tall and mobile, bearing on its crown
The effulgent Sun with multiple rays besides the silvery moon;
What then can I do, thus dispossessed of my mind?

Notes
(i) The elders coaxed the Nàyàkì, saying that they are the persons really interested in her well-being and she was, therefore, bound to listen to their advice. But the Nàyàkì felt helpless, having become totally unresponsive and impervious to advice of any kind, in the absence of her mind, which has already crossed over to the Lord and taken shelter at His lovely feet, much beyond her reach, at the moment.

(ii) The hefty Lord of bluish tint is like unto a gigantic blue emerald mountain, tall and lovely; His holding the radiant discus and the white conch looks like the Sun and the Moon rising on the crest of a blue mountain simultaneously, a phenomenon which can hardly be noticed, except in the person of the Lord and is thus as unique as the Lord Himself.
pātam aṭaivataṇ pācattālē maṇṭavaṇ
pācāṇkāḷ mūrva viṭṭu,
kōtu il pukalk kaṇṇaṇ-tan aṭimēl
vaṇ kurukūrc caṭakōpaṇ caṇṇa
ṭītu il antā ti ör āyirattul
ivaiyum ör pattu icaiyoṭum vallār
āṭum ör ṭītu ilar āki, īṅkum
āṅkum ellām amaivārkal tämē.

Translation

Those that sing tunefully these ten songs unique,
Out of the flawless thousand, graciously, composed by Caṭa-
kōpaṇ
Of Kurukūr, who to attain Lord Kaṇṇaṇ’s feet was very keen
And adored His glory immaculate, shedding all desires, alien
To the cherished goal, will from blemishes of all kinds be absolved
And enjoy the best of all good things, here and abroad.

Notes

(i) The end-stanza gives out the benefit accruing from the
tuneful chanting of this decad, namely, God-enjoyment,
both here and in the yonder Heaven, completely purged
of all grossness and worldly desires. The portion under-
lined is the key-note of this decad. As a matter of fact,
these chanters will gain unique prominence, both in this
world and the yonder heaven.

(ii) By the immaculate glory of the Lord is meant that, by
meditating upon which one cannot entertain any other
desire. Should the two, however, go hand-in-hand, it
shall indeed be a reflection on the self-sufficiency of the
Lord’s glory for one’s exclusive enjoyment and will thus
constitute a blemish. The flawlessness of this hymnal
of Nammālvār and its exclusive excellence, rather
incomparable excellence, have already been brought out
at the appropriate places, and do not, therefore, need
repetition.
Eighth Centum—Third Decad (VIII-3)  
(Aṅkum iṅkum)

Preamble

It was indeed a grand poetic imagery of the Āḷvār, conjuring up the vision of the Lord, as an emerald mountain, tall and lovely, moving along, bearing on its crest the radiant Sun and the silvery Moon, all at once vide VIII-2-10. The Āḷvār could not lift his mind off this spectacular grandeur and, at the same time, this made him apprehensive of the safety of the Lord, so charming, who in this exquisite Form, moves about alone and unattended in this wicked world peopled by the ungodly and the selfish. The Āḷvār, felt vexed that there was none else to share his anxiety in this regard. While the Celestials in Heaven are soaked in ‘Brahmānubhava’, drinking deep of that perennial nectarean spring, namely, the Lord in that glorious transcendent setting, the worldlings are engrossed with sensual pleasures, Brahmā and other Devas would not hesitate to secure their selfish ends involving the Lord in battling against the ungodly Asurās and making Him the target of the arrows of the hostile hordes. When the Saint voiced forth his fear, as above, the Lord set him at ease, by pointing out that there was hardly any room for such fears, surrounded as He always is by the ‘Nityās’, ‘Muktās’ and the devout seekers of salvation. The Āḷvār then regains his composure, rid of his erstwhile fears. The initial disquietitude is reflected in the third song of this decad and its clearance is revealed in the tenth song.

aṅkum iṅkum, vāṇavar tāṇavar, yāvarum,  
eṅkum iṅaiyai eṅu unṇai aṇiyakiḻatu, aḷḷṟī,  
aṅkam cērum-pūmakal, maṇmakal, āyamakal-  
caṅku cakkarak kaiyavan eṉpar caṇāmē.  
(VIII–3–1)

Translation

The Vāṇavar, Tāṇavar and all else, here, there and everywhere,  
Can hardly comprehend You but reckon You, in their own way,  
Merely as their Saviour, in times of need,  
The one, who the conch and discus wields  
And does on His person the triple Consorts Divine hold.
Notes

The highest love to God is love rendered for God’s sake, love culminating in benediction or glorification of God. Love, so disinterestedly rendered, is love of purity and virginity and, under its influence, what is uppermost in the mind of the devotee is the Lord’s remarkable tenderness (Saukumārya) and bewitching beauty and he grows apprehensive of the Lord’s safety and seeks His well-being. This is what the Ālvār would expect of every votary of the Lord but, on a close scrutiny, he was shocked to find the votaries in all ranks, the Devas known to be friendly to God, the Asuras, inimical to the Devas and the humans falling under numerous categories, one and all of them, praying to the Lord only for making good all their deficiencies and bestowing on them the felicity they lack. None of them is found to bear any love to God for God’s sake, in the manner indicated at the outset. The glorious setting in which the Divine consorts are borne on the Lord’s winsome chest and the manner in which the white conch and the radiant discus are gracefully held in His hands should make the true God-lover enjoy them all and become, in turn, apprehensive of the Lord’s safety, ever alert to the possible danger to the Lord’s person, with a view to averting it. But these self-seekers look upon this very setting as conducive to their own well-being, to bestow choice gifts on them through the mediation of the Goddesses and protect them, with the discus and other weapons, whenever they are in trouble: The Ālvār just abhors all such selfish persons seeking transient riches and expresses his abhorrence in this song, couched as an address to the Lord Himself.

caranām ākiya nānmaṟai nūlkalum căṟātē;
maraṇam, tōṟram, vān pīṇi, mūppu eṟṟu ivai māyytōṁ-
karaṇap pāl patai pāṟṟu aṟa oṭum kaṟal āli
araṇat tīn patai ēntiya ḍcaṟku āḷāēy. (VII–3–2)

Translation

Alas! even those, who abjure the path the Vedas four prescribe
For acquiring riches, have their final goal circumscribed
By mere freedom from birth and death, pestilence and old age
And do not get themselves in service engaged
Of the Lord who the grand galaxy of protective weapons yields.

Note
In the preceding song, the Saint condemned those who hanker after the transient riches, instead of getting soley absorbed in God-love. And now, he speaks disparagingly of the ‘Kevalas’, those whose final goal is limited to mere emancipation from the terrific cycle of birth and death and remaining thereafter in disembodied state, lost for ever in that stupid self-enjoyment, thereby denying themselves the supreme bliss of serving the Lord in Heaven in that glorious setting. It is a great pity, these persons are not alive to their essential nature (Svarūpa), as the exclusive vassals of the Lord, bound to serve Him exclusively. And so, the Ālvār can hardly muster strength for the service of the Lord either from the ranks of the seekers of the so-called ‘riches’ or those of the ‘Kevalas’.

āḻum āḻār; āḻiyum caṅkum cumappār tām;
vāḻum villum koṇṭu piṅ celvār maṟṟu illai;
tāḻum tōḻum kaikaḷai ārat toḻak kāṉēṅ;
nāḻum nāḻum nāṭuvān aṭiyēṅ-ṇāḷatte. (VIII–3–3)

Translation
Alas! there’s none to attend on my Lord,
The conch and discus He Himself bears,
I see none following Him, carrying His bow and sword;
There’s none to admire His lovely feet and sinewy shoulders
And worship Him to heart’s fill and so, I do fear
His safety in this wicked world and Him I wish to follow.

Notes
(i) In the last two songs, the Ālvār deplored his own loneliness, there being none to join him in whole-hearted and self-less service of the Lord. And now, he feels for the Lord’s loneliness, there being no camp-follower to carry His weapons and attend on Him, with utter devotion, swayed by His exquisite charm.
(ii) The Ālvār feels agitated, seeing that the Supreme Lord of the entire universe has not employed any one to attend on Him; deeply touched by His tenderness (saukūmārya), the Ālvār feels that the conch and discus might impose a great burden on Him and that He should, therefore, employ some one to carry them. Well, even if, as some would put it, the conch and the discus are the Lord’s insignia and have to be necessarily borne by Him, why should not some one be pressed into service for carrying His sword and bow? As a matter of fact, during His incarnation as Śrī Rāma, there was Laksmaṇa to carry the bow and arrows and serve Him in every conceivable manner. But now, in His Iconic Form, ther is no such attendant and this depresses the Ālvār, a great deal.

(iii) The Lord’s majestic gait and His imposing shoulders are indeed so charming that one can’t but pray that nothing untoward happened and marred the beauty, par excellence. And yet, the Ālvār finds none in this wicked world, attracted to the Lord in this manner. That is why his fears are aggravated and this is particularly relevant in the context of the Lord’s iconic manifestation in this notorious world of miscreants like Rāvaṇa, Kamsa and Duryodhana, each with his own machinations for harming the Lord during His avatāras as Rāma and Kṛṣṇa.

ñālam pōṇakam parṛi ṥr muṛṭā uru āki,
ālam pēr ilai aṇṇavacameyyum ammāṇē!
kālam pērvatū ṣr kār iṟul ūli ottu uḷatāl-uṇ
kölam kār ēlīl kāṇaluṛru, āḷum koṭiyērkē. (VIII–3–4)

Translation

Oh, Sire, as a tender babe, You did on a fig-leaf repose,
Bearing in Your stomach the entire Universe;
Feast I would on Your Form exquisite like unto a rain-cloud,
And when this Sinner is from it precluded,
A split-second seems an age like unto the longish night.
Note

The Lord allays the fears of the Ālvār by pointing out to him, His role as the Protector of the whole Universe and reminding him of how He sustained all the worlds with their numerous contents, right inside His stomach, during the deluge. Instead of allaying the Ālvār’s fears, this episode only stirred up his thoughts in yet another direction, like unto a doting mother. On a vast expanse of water floats a tender fig-leaf on which reposes a tender babe and this babe holds in its stomach all the seven worlds with their massive contents. How incongruous and hence how frightful, the whole setting is! The Ālvār can think of this babe only in terms of the turbulent One that slept in Yaṣodhā’s cradle, after getting fed by her. Whether it was the result of immaturity, the work of a mere babe, the Ālvār kept wondering. Could not the Lord have assumed a gigantic Form, sprawling far and wide on an equally spacious platform, so as not to frighten God-lovers of the calibre of the Ālvār? His boundless love unto the Lord makes him lose all perspective of time-sequence and the Lord’s omnipotence itself, reducing Him to the abject position of a mere ward, under his loving protection. The Ālvār’s anxiety is whether the Divine Babe lying on a tender leaf, alone and unaided, might slip into the deep waters; at least there was Yaṣodhā keeping constant vigil when He slept in the cradle, but now there is none beside the Babe (īṭu.)

koṭiyār māṭak kōļūr akattum, puḷiṅkuṭiyum maṭiyātu īṅgē ni tuyil mēvi makiṅntatu-tān atiyār allal tavirtta acaivō? anṛēl, ip paṭi-tān nīṅtu tāviya acaivō? paṇiyāyē. (VIII–3–5)

Translation

How is it, my Lord, You lovingly repose and turn not this side or that,
In kōļūr and Puḷiṅkuṭi where banners play on castles smart? Is it due to the fatigue caused (during Your avatāras) When you did many a feat perform to alleviate Your devotees’ sufferings or the one that did result
From the long strides you took to span the world immense? Which it is, may You unto me disclose.

Notes

(i) Seeing the Āḷvār’s disquietitude over His lying alone on a tender leaf during the deluge, the Lord hastens to reveal unto him a different setting altogether, pertaining to His Iconic Form where He is attended upon by the votaries in their full complement. Mention of just two pilgrim centres, in this song, should be taken as covering the numerous other pilgrim centres where the Lord is reposing on His serpent-bed, such as Śrīraṅgam, Tirumeyyam, Kaṭānmallai, Tiruppēr, Anpil, Tiruvekkhā etc.

(ii) The banners are displayed on house tops in the pilgrim centres, as a measure of decoration. But, in the eyes of the Āḷvār, this looms as a potential danger, helping the ungodly to easily locate this centre and invade it, intent upon harming the Lord enshrined there. Actually, the Āḷvār would want the Lord to remain out of reach of the devilish folks, even as Lord Kṛṣṇa grew up as a babe and then as a boy, in studious seclusion, fearing Kamsa’s machinations.

(iii) The Lord, in His perfect Iconic Form, is seen reposing in the aforementioned pilgrim centres, since long, all for the sake of redeeming His straying Subjects over here. It is indeed noteworthy, rather praiseworthy that He has not changed His posture even once, by turning right or left and yet, for all this immense hardship undergone by Him, none seems to appreciate it. If the Lord has not got up in sheer disgust and gone back to the Celestium, it is because of His fond hope that, some day, some devotees might turn up and appreciate His great gesture.

(iv) The Lord appears to be relaxing after all the labours undertaken by Him on behalf of Indra, spanning, on the very day of His emergence as Vāmana, all the worlds, high and low, setting His tender feet on hill
and dale. The Ālvār enquires of the Lord whether He would not permit him to massage His shoulders or the feet, whichever needed relief from pain.

pañiyā amarar pañiyum, pañpum, tāmē ām aṇi ār āliyum caṅkamum ēntum a[v]ar kāṇmiṅ—
taniyā vem nōy ulakil tavirppāṅ, tirunīlā maṇi ār mēniyōtu, en maṇam cūla, varuvārē. (VIII–3–6)

Translation

The Supreme Lord, served and adored by the Celestials in Heaven.
Who know no Master other than He, has into this world come down,
Wielding the conch and discus, like unto lovely jewels,
Displaying His Form exquisite of saphire hue, the panacea for all ills;
Bewildered is my mind whether any evil shall on Him befall.

Notes

(i) The Lord’s exquisite charm is such as to excite the fear, (needless, of course, in that holy Land of the Celestials in Heaven) in regard to His safety. As elucidated, time and again, such an attitude stems from the inordinate love borne by them for the Lord whose rare charm and effulgence, just like all good things loved and longed for, excite, rightly or wrongly, fears regarding their durability. Such being the case, it is no wonder, the Ālvār grew apprehensive of the safety of the Lord, who has come down, in all His splendour, to this dark land of dirt and devilry.

(ii) The Celestials, referred to, in the first line of this song, are the ‘ Nitya Sūris ’, the ever-free angels in heaven, as distinguished from the ‘ Muktas ’, the souls that reached heaven, after emancipation from the bondage of birth and rebirth, that dreadful cyclic operation. Unlike the latter, the former have the unique distinction of never having prostituted and defiled their head and tongue by bowing before the unworthy and singing their praise.
varuvār, celvār vaṇparicāratu irunta en
 tiruvāl mārvaṅku en tirām collār; ceyvatu en—
 uru ār cakkaram caṅku cumantu, īṅku ummōtu
 orupātu uḷalvāṅ, Đr ātiyāṅum uḷan enṛē?

(VIII–3–7)

Translation

Alas! those passing in and out of Vaṇparicāram, where resides my Lord
Bearing Tiru (Lakṣmi) on His winsome chest, tell Him not, Here is a vassal ready to get close to Him and roam behind, Carrying His discus and conch lovely, keeping one end.

Note

The Ālvār, seated inside of the hollow of the sacred tamarind tree in Tirunakari, pines for the service of the Lord in nearby Tiruvanparicāram. He fancies that the passers-by are all moving to and from Tiruvanparicāram, only to tell the Lord over there about him and his ardour to serve Him, looking upon Him as his all (Vāsudevassarvamiti), and bring him back the message from that end. But, unfortunately, none goes near him and he concludes, with a gallant sense of disappointment, that none of these persons has functioned in the manner he expected. By offering to keep up one end, the Ālvār is only filling up a gap, the other end being always kept up by Lakṣmaṇa, ever in the Lord’s service.

enṛē-enṇai uṇ ēr ār kōlat tiruntu aṭikkīl
nirṛē āṭceyya nī kōṭaruḷa niṇṇappatutāṅ?
kuṇṭu ēl, pār ēl, cūḷ kaṭal, ṇāḷam muḷu ēlum
nirṛē tāviya nīḷ kaḷal āḷit tirumāḷē.

(VIII–3–8)

Translation

Oh, Tirumāḷ, wielding the discus, when will You deem me fit
To get a lift unto your extremely lovely feet
And serve You firm and steadfast, for ever?
Merely standing on Your feet tall, you did cover
The worlds seven, islands seven, mountains seven and the oceans round about.
Note

Seeing that there is none to plead with the Lord on his behalf, the Ālvār himself now enquires of the Lord what exactly His intentions are in the matter of taking service from him. The Ālvār sees in front of him the Lord, full of love, ready to concede his wish and yet, the Ālvār can brook no further delay. He impresses upon the Lord his rapturous love unto His ornamental feet, so very alluring that He cannot bear being apart from Him, any longer. The Ālvār longs to render selfless service unto the Lord, with single-minded devotion and with no break, remaining by His side always. The Lord, however, keeps silent and this makes the Ālvār suspect whether the Lord insists on the necessary attainment in him to warrant such an aspiration. Reference to the Lord measuring all the worlds, setting his feet on all and sundries, is, therefore, significant. Did He not set His feet on one and all, high and low, unsolicited, caring least for their attainments? As a matter of fact, the Ālvār is bound to serve the Lord, out of gratitude for His condescending to come all the way to Tiruvanparicāram. It further behoves him to go the whole hog out to serve the Lord and get Him fully relaxed after His arduous spanning of the worlds, setting His tender feet over hill and dale, full of rubbles and brambles. And yet, the initiative for this should come from the Lord and the Ālvār is eagerly awaiting the day when He would invite him to do His bidding.

tirumāl! nāṃmukaṇ, ceṇcaṭaiyāṇ eṇṟu ivarkal em
perumāṇ taṇmaiyaṉ yār aṅkiripār? pēci eṉ?
oru mā mutalvā! ūlp pirān! eṇṇai āḻuṭaik
karu mā mēṇiyaṉ! eṉpan-en kātal kalakkavē. (VIII–3–9)

Translation

Tirumāl, can either Nāṃmukaṇ or the one with matted locks red

Comprehend Your tenderness? 'tis indeed no good
Talking about this; with a mind by deep love confounded,
I keep saying, You are the Primate unique, my Lord,
Time and all else are by You controlled
And so on, by Your exquisite Form of bluish tint enthralled.

Note
On the Álvár being told by the Lord that there is hardly any room for the fears entertained by him regarding His safety, when the four-headed Brahmā and a host of other Devas were there to attend on Him, the Álvár rebuts this position. He points out that they are not the persons to appreciate Him, in terms of His remarkable tenderness and bewitching Form, being mere self-centred boon-seekers. Even he (Álvár), soaked in God-love, could only touch a fringe of the Lord’s tenderness of Form and keep on uttering a few things over and over again, in the exuberance of love for Him and do nothing more. Neither the self-seeking Devas nor the love-intoxicated Álvár is, therefore, up to the mark in the matter of expressing solicitude for the Lord’s well-being.

kalakkam illā nāl tava muṇivar, karai kaṇṭōr,
tulakkam illā vāṇavar ellām toļuvārkal;
malakkam eyta mā kaṭal-taṇṇaik kaṭaintānai
ulakka nām pukaļkīrpatu eŋ ceyvatu? uraliyē.  (VIII—3—10)

Translation
There are the sages great with perfect clarity of mind,
The released Souls and Eternal Heroes of Heaven to attend
And dote on the Lord. who the mighty ocean churned;
Say then, if we frail beings can at all comprehend
His glory great, seeing that unto it there is no end.

Note
It was only when the Lord finally brought home the fact, quite reassuring, that He was carefully attended upon by the most eminent sages like Sanaka, Nandana and others, the ‘Muktas’, released from the bondage of samsāra and the ‘Nityas’, the Eternal Heroes in Heaven, and, above all, His own prowess unlimited, the Álvår’s fears were set at
naught. But then, it might be asked whether this was not already known to the Ālvār, endowed by the Lord with perfect knowledge. The love-intoxicated Ālvār just didn’t know when and what could be the source of his anxiety about the Lord’s well-being and when and how such anxiety would get cleared, as the illustrious Nampillai would put it.

uraiyē vem nōy tāvira, arul nil muṭiyāṇai
varai ār māṭam maṇṇu kurukūre caṭakōpaṇ
gerai ēy coltoṭai ņr āyiruttul ip paṭtum
niraiyē vallār nīṭu ulakattup pīravārē. (VIII–3–11)

Translation

Those that learn well these songs ten,
Out of the thousand divine songs of Caṭakōpaṇ,
Hailing from Kurukūr with its castles tall,
In adoration of the Lord wearing the crown tall,
Who did his parlous fears about Him quell,
Will never in this sprawling world be reborn.

Note

The benefit accruing from learning well this decad as set out above, is self-explanatory. It is, of course, not mere freedom from rebirth in this wretched land where there is none who would feel concerned about the Lord’s safety and well-bei’g but also eternal enjoyment in Heaven where the whole lot of them are dedicated to the Lord’s well-being. As regards the reference in this song to the tall crown of the Sovereign Lord, here is a juicy interpretation furnished by a preceptor, named, Ammaṅki Ammāl:

“The Lord would appear to have nodded His crowned head, by way of assuring the Ālvār about fulfilling his desire.” The fulfilment of the Ālvār’s desire in this context, would mean exhibiting unto him the band of devotees who would attend on the Lord and do His behest, such as following Him, carrying His bow and arrows etc., thereby curing him of his erstwhile fears regarding the Lord’s loneliness, un-aided and unattended.
Eighth Centum—Fourth Decad (VIII-4)
(Var kaṭā aruvi)

Preamble

The Lord’s presence, in this dark land, alone and unaided, excited the reasonable fear of the Ālvār that the worldlings would approach Him only to achieve their own selfish ends, with little or no care or love for Him. No doubt, the Lord allayed the Ālvār’s fears, as we saw towards the end of the last decad. Still, the Lord has a lingering doubt that, in the exuberance of the Ālvār’s love for Him, he might once again entertain similar fears about His safety and feel agitated. And so, He wanted to dispel the Ālvār’s fears, with no chance whatever of their revival and revealed unto him His invulnerable abode in Tiruccēṅkuṟū Tiruccēṟūṟu (in present Kerala State), out of bounds to the ungodly, attended by the mighty band of three thousand Vedic scholars, full of devotion. As a further precaution, the Lord also exhibited unto the Ālvār, His wondrous deeds revealing His extra-ordinary strength and valour. With his fears thus eradicated in toto, the Ālvār could whole-heartedly enjoy in this decad the Lord’s exquisite beauty.

A striking parallel to this can be found in Lord Rāma’s exhortation to Sugrīva, the monkey king, by way of dispelling his fears regarding Vibhīṣaṇa’s admission into their camp. In the heated debate that was going on, opposition to the grant of asylum to Vibhīṣaṇa was mounting high. Intervening in the debate, the Lord asserted, inter alia, that He could, if He liked, destroy the Rākṣasas all the world over (not merely those in Laṅkā) with the mere tip of His thumb. This was enough to root out Sugrīva’s fears about the possible ill-effects of granting asylum to Vibhīṣaṇa, come down from Rāvaṇa’s Laṅka. The reassured Sugrīva, the erstwhile leader of the opposition in the debate that preceded, exclaimed:

“Oh, Rāma, You have a thorough mastery over the subtleties of Dharma; as the Protector of the entire universe, your creed is to instil happiness in one and all and it is indeed praiseworthy. I am now quite clear in my mind about the bonafides of Vibhīṣaṇa and it is but meet that I myself go up to him, anchored in the mid-air, and bring him here.”

While Śrī Rāma quelled the fears of Sugrīva and others in His camp by a mere utterance, as above, Lord Kṛṣṇa set at naught the
grim fears of the on-lookers through actual demonstration of His immense strength, making mincemeat of the monstrous wrestlers, set up by Kamsa, in no time.

\begin{align*}
\text{vár kaṭā aruvi yañai mà malaiyīn} \\
\text{maruppū iñai kuvātu ihuttu, uruṭṭi,} \\
\text{ūr kol tin pākaṭ uyir cekuttu, araṅkīn} \\
\text{mallaraīk koŋru, cūl paraṁmēl} \\
\text{pōr kaṭā aracar pūrakkiṭa, māṭam} \\
\text{mīmicaik kaṅcaṇait takarta} \\
\text{cīr kol cīṟāyan tiruccēṅkuṇpurīl} \\
\text{tiruccēṅṟu eṅkaḷ cēcārvē.}
\end{align*}

(VIII–4–1)

**Translation**

Tiruccēṅkuṇpurī Tiruccēṅṟu is unto us the fearless haven, Where resides the victorious cowherd young (Kṛṣṇa) who pulled down Kaṅcaṇ from the floor above and slew, having already slain The wrestlers at the palace gate and the elephant terrific, Like unto a mountain in must, pulling out its tusks, The twin peaks and the mahout as well, making the armed kings around run back.

**Notes**

The valour, exhibited by the Lord unto the Āḷvār, permeates this very song, as seen from its martial tempo. Kuvalayāpīṭa, the huge elephant, in must, stationed right at the entrance to Kamsa’s palace, is compared to a mountain with its cascades and the tusks of the elephant, the mountain peaks. The Divine cowherd boy slew the elephant effortlessly and killed the mahout also. The rest is self-explanatory and yet, it is interesting to note down here what Ācārya Ammaṅki Ammāl said about the Lord’s decapitation of Kamsa.

“The Lord makes, at His pleasure, a king of a man and invests him with a crown and other insignia of royalty; but when it pleases Him to unmake the King, he is deprived, first, o
all his royal emblems, and, thus stripped, the erstwhile King becomes a mere pigmy of a man and he is then punished as he might deserve."

It was a frustrated and terribly frightened Kamsa, who had taken shelter in the first floor of his palace, who was pounced upon by young Kṛṣṇa who shot up to where the felon of an uncle was hiding. The Divine lad pulled Kamsa down, by the locks and broke him up like an earthen pot, still wet.

eṅkaḷ cecārvu, yāmuṭai amutam,
imaiyavar appaṅ, en appaṅ,
pouṅku mūvulakum paṭaittu, alittu, aļikkum
poruntu mūvuruvaṅ, em aruvaṅ,
ceṅkayal ukaḷum tēm paṇai puṭai cūḷ
tiruceṅkuṛūrt tiruccīṛāṟu
aṅku amarkiṅa ātiyāṅ allāl-
yāvar marṟu en amar tuṇaiyē?

(VIII–4–2)

Translation

Saviour have I none but the Primate, my very life,
Residing in fertile Tiruceṅkuṛū Tiruccīṛāṟu, our haven safe,
The overlord of the Celestials, our Nectar, who takes on,
For the creation of the sprawling worlds, their sustentation
And dissolution, the triple forms appropriate.

Note

In the preceding song, the Lord displayed His valour and now He reveals His nectarean sweetness. When the Ālvār refers to Him, as 'our Nectar', instead of 'My Nectar', it only bespeaks his universal love and catholicity, his deep concern for us all, who have the great, good fortune to be connected with him, the Progenitor of the clan of 'Prapannas', vide also II-7. The Lord discharges the functions of creation and dissolution, standing within Brahmā and Rudra, as their Internal Controller, while He Himself looks after the function of 'Protection' of the whole Universe. Such a one stays permanently in Tiruccīṛāṟu in His Iconic Form, (Unlike His Incarnate Forms as Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, of limited
duration, in by-gone days), the safe haven of the Ālvār and all those associated with him.

eṇ amar perumāṇ, imaiyavar perumāṇ, iru nilam ḳṭanta em perumāṇ, muṇṇai val viṇaikal muḷutu ṭaṇ māla, eṇṇai āliṅra em perumāṇ, teṅ ticaikku anī koḷ tiruccēṅkuṇṟūril tiruccīṟṟāṟṟaṅkaraṇ mīpāl
niṅra em perumāṇ aṭi allāl-caraṇ
niṅaippilum piriṭu illai eṇakkē. (VIII–4–3)

Translation

The Lord is the Master of the Celestials and me alike;
From beneath the waters deep, the wide Earth He pulled along;
His is the glory of destroying, in a trice, my dire sins age-long
And making me His vassal; embedded in my thoughts, as my sole refuge,
Are the feet of my Lord, Who does on the west bank reside
Of Tiruccēṅkuṇṟū Tiruccīṟṟu, the beaming jewel of the south.

Note

The Lord is the Master of the exalted Celestials and that proclaims His Supremacy; but then, He is also the Master of the Ālvār, the lowliest of the lowly and this brings out His amazing simplicity. The Lord could enlist the Ālvār as His vassal, by revealing unto him His great prowess as the Sustainer and Redeemer of the universe, during and after the deluge, respectively; the Ālvār, therefore, seeks refuge at His feet and his mind cannot turn towards any one else.

piriṭu illai eṇakkū-periya mūvulakum
niṅaiyap pēr uruvamāy nimiṅtā
kuṟiya māṅ ennāṅ, kuṟai kaṭal kaṭainta
kōḷa māṅikkam, eṇ ammāṅ,
ceṟi kulai vāḷai, kamuku, teṅku anī cūl
tiruccēṅkuṇṟūrt ti uccīṟṟu
atiya meymmaiyē niṅra em perumāṅ
atiṅai allatu-ūr araṅē. (VIII–4–4)
Translation

Refuge have I none but the pair of feet of my Lord,
Who stays in Tiruccirāru with orchards, fine and fertile,
In all His true splendour, the Benefactor great, Who did unto me reveal
His emerald Form lovely, Vāmana, my Sire, Who grew big and spread
All the worlds over, who the bellowing ocean once churned.

Notes

(i) If, as a tender Babe, the Lord could hold in His stomach all the worlds, where was the need for Him to grow big and span all the worlds in three strides, instead of doing it in His diminutive Form as Vāmana, with which He had demanded the gift of land from Bali? The great Nampillai has a ready answer, admirable as usual. The expansion of the Lord's Form into Tryvikrama, was due to the exuberance of His joy in having accomplished the mission for which He incarnated.

(ii) Whenever the episode of the churning of the ocean is alluded to, the Ālvār invariably feels why the Lord, of remarkable tenderness, should have under taken all the trouble, when there were large numbers of Devas and Asuras, rugged enough, for the job. Actually, those guys, with all their complement, were not equal to the task and the Lord had to assume two different forms and join both the groups, so as to put His own shoulders to the wheel and deliver the goods.

(iii) The Lord of such great prowess has manifested Himself in all His pristine splendour in the Iconic Form in which He stays at Tirucekkuṇṭūr Tiruccirāru, so that every one could recognise Him as the Supreme Lord.

allatu ὦ arañum avaṇil vēru illai;
atu poruḻ ākilum, avaṇai
allatu eṅ āvi amarantu anaikillātu;
ātalal, avaṇ uraikinra
nalla nāṇmāṟaiyōr vēḻvīyul maṭutta
narum pukai vicumpu oḷi maṟaikkum
nalla-nil māṭat tiruccēṅkuṟṟūril
tiruccīṟṟāru ēṇakkku nal araṇē.

Translation

True 'tis, the Lord enshrined in temples elsewhere isn’t different
From the One in Tiruccēṅkuṟṟū Tiruccīṟṟāru enshrined and yet
My mind abides not, in any other; 'tis indeed my haven safe,
Where there are castles, tall and elegant and the fumes fragrant
Shoot from the ritual fire and darken the firmament.

Notes

(i) While conceding the fact that the Lord, enshrined in Tiruccīṟṟāru, also graces many other pilgrim centres, the Āḻvār says that his mind stands rivetted to this particular centre. This is like Hanumān having abjured even the Heaven and preferred to stay in this abode itself, saying, “Bhāvo nāṇyatra gacchati”.

(ii) The rituals performed by the Brahmins of this sacred place were not for securing any selfish ends and thus ‘niṣkāmya’, done, not with an eye on results, but as an end in itself. Even if there was a motive behind, it could be only by way of warding off the evil forces, the ungodly, so that no harm shall befall the Deity. This is, by-no-means, objectionable, as Nampillai would say. Even the great Rāmānuja had recourse to special rituals, using spells and incantations invoking Lord Veṅkaṭeśvara of Holy Tirupati, for cutting out the seemingly interminable life of that felon, the cruel Cola king, kṛmikaṇṭa (worm-necked) whose religious persecution had forced that Saint to stay away from Sīraṅgam for eleven long years. After a lapse of two or three days, a stinking smell, like that of singed hair, emanated from the sacrificial fire, whereupon Saint Rāmānuja stopped the ceremony, guessing that the heretical Cōla must be dead. The same day, a doorkeeper of Cōla poked the king in the neck with a staff,
causing a loathsome stinking sore, full of vermin and
the King gave up his ghost.

eṇakku nal araṇai, eṇatu ār uyirai,
imaiyavar tanta tāy-tnaṇai,
taṇakkum taṇ taṇmai ariy-ariyaṇai,
taṭam kaṭal-palli ammaṇai,
maṇakkoḷ cī mūvaiyarar-vaṇ civaṇum,
ayaṇum tāṇum oppār-vaḷ
kaṇakkoḷ tin māṭat tirucceṇkuṇṭūrīl
tiruccēṟāṟu ataṇuḷ kaṇṭēṇē.

(VIII–4–6)

Translation

My haven safe, my sole Sustainer, the All-in-one unto Celestials,
He, who can’t gauge His own disposition (unfathomable),
He, who does on the ocean vast repose, I could envision
In Tiruccēṇkuṇṭūr Tiruccēṟāṟu, abounding in solid mansions
And Brahmins numbering three thousand, potent like the
mighty Civaṇ
And Ayan, in whose whose hearts the Lord stands enshrined.

Notes

(i) It may be recalled that, as already mentioned in the
preamble to this decad, the Lord pacified the Ālvār and
disarmed him of his fears, by pointing out to him this
very setting. The Lord is safe and sound in this
pilgrim centre, surrounded by three thousand brahmins
who are as potent as Brahма and Śiva and could as
well discharge the functions assigned by the Lord to
those exalted functionaries. c.f. Sloka 20 of Ālavan-
tār’s Stotra Ratna-“ tvadāśritānaam jagadudbhavasthitī,
praṇāsa samsāra vimocanadayaḥ bhavanti leela, ” which
means:

“The creation, preservation and dissolution of the uni-
verse, release from family bondage etc., constitute the
sporting activities of Your devotees themselves”.

(ii) These Brahmins, immersed in devout contemplation of
the Lord’s numerous auspicious traits, are ever alert to
the impending danger, studiously safeguarding the
Deity of their hearts. They are on a par with Sage Bharadvāja, who was apprehensive of the safety of Śrī Rāma and party in exile, during the interval between their first meeting with him and their subsequent return after vanquishing Rāvaṇa.

tiruccceṇkuṇṟūrīl tirucciṟṟăṟu-ataṇṇul
kaṇṭa at tiruvatī engūm-
tiruc ceyya kamalak kaṇṇum, cevvāyum,
cevvaiyum, ceyya kaiyum,
tiruc ceyya kamala untiyum, ceyya
kamalai mārput, ceyya uṭaiyum,
tiruc ceyya muṭiyum, āramum, paṭaiyum
tikala-eṇ cintaiyulāṇē. (VII–4–7)

Translation

Lodged in my heart for ever is the Lord, I envision
In Tirucciṟṟu with red lotus-eyes, coral lips and feet red,
Red palms, the navel lovely, bearing the lotus red,
The chest red, bearing (Lakṣmi) the lotus-born,
Silken robes red, the crown red, the lovely jewels and gleaming weapons.

Note

The Āḻvār goes into the details of the Lord’s exquisite charm—the eyes, broad and bewitching, like the red lotus in fresh bloom, the stabilising smile, that is, the Lord’s smile from His coral lips which stabilises the attraction held out by His gracious looks unto the votaries, the lovely feet at which the votaries, enthralled by the Lord’s scintillating smiles, seek refuge, the hands that gather up and embrace those seeking refuge at His feet, the navel, the seat of all creation, the centre of eternal attraction and enjoyment, the winsome chest bearing the Divine Mother, the great intercessor, who could wean away even the ungodly and make them God-bent, the matching robes, the fear-dispelling crown proclaiming the Lord’s sovereignty and the beneficent weapons. With this intense enjoyment of the

T—25
Lord's regal Form, inch by inch, could there at all be any room for any kind of fear in the Ālvār's mind?

tikāla en cintaiyul iruntāṇai,
čelu nilattēvar nāṉmaṟaiyōr
ticai kaikūppi, ēttum tiruccēṇkuṟūrīl
tiruccciṟṟāṇi karaiyāṇai,
pukar kōl vāṇavarkāl pukaliṟam-taṇṇai,
acurar vaṇ kaiyar vem kūṟai,
pukaiḻumāṟu ariyēn-poruntu mūvulakum
paṭaiṟpoṭu keṟṟuppuk kāppavaṅē.

(VIII–4–8)

Translation

The Lord sparkling in my heart, Who in holy Tiruccciṟṟu
resides,
Adored by the vedic scholars, brahmins bright, from all sides,
The shelter safe unto exalted Devas but deadly unto Asura
hordes,
The great Sire, who creates, sustains and dissolves the three
worlds,
Him I hardly know how unto my heart's fill I can laud.

Notes

(i) The exaltation of the Devas results from their ability to
grant the boons, sought by their respective votaries. Even these luminaries seek refuge in the Supreme Lord in times of dire need and danger. Did not the Lord save Prajāpati (Brahmā) from a calamity like the spoliation of the vedas and Paśupati (Śiva) from the sin of patricide and molestation by demons, besides conferring on them several other benefits? At the same time, the Lord is worse than deadly to the ungodly Asuras, who give endless trouble to Devas.

(ii) The Ālvār cannot resist the urge to praise the Lord of such great glory but, at the same time, he does not know how to laud Him, the precise manner in which he could
sing the Lord’s praise. At best, he can only say, in
general terms, that the Lord controls the triple functions
of creation, sustentation and dissolution of the three
worlds and so on.

paṭaippoṭu keṭuppuk kāpavaṇ, pirama
paramparaṇ, civapipraṇ avanē;
iṭaippukku Ṽ uruvum olivu illai avanē;
pukkalvu illai; yāvaiyum tāṇē-
koṭaip perum pukalār ināiyar tan ānār
kūriya viccaiyyoṭu oṭukkam
naṭaip pali iyarkait tiruccēṇkuṇṟūril
tiruccirṟāru amarnta nātaṇē.

(VIII–4–9)

Translation

The Lord, Who lovingly stays in Tiruccirṟāru where do reside
The Brahmins, known alike for their piety and generosity,
richly endowed
With knowledge sharp and power immense and in worship
well engaged,
Is the One, Who, creation, sustentation and dissolution, con-
trols,
Who, Brahmā and Śiva, directs, as their Internal Controller
And staying in between them protects the Universe, pervades
every one
And things, one and all; ’tis indeed no exaggeration.

Notes

(i) The Āḻvār avers that the Lord, enshrined in holy Tiruccēṇ-
kuṇṟū Tiruccirṟāru is the One, who controls all crea-
tures from Brahmā down to the tiny insect and directs
them through the different stages of creation, suste-
nance and dissolution, like unto the Soul directing and
supporting the body.

(ii) This song also highlights the manifold glory of the Brah-
mins residing in this holy centre, whose attainments
place them on a par with the Lord Himself. The Āḻvār,
finds it really heartening that there are a good many of them, attending on the Lord unremittingly, with great devotion.

amarnta nāṭaṇai, avar avar āki,
avarkku arul arulum ammānai,
amarnta tan palaṇat tirucceṅkuṇṟūrul
tiruccirrāragaṅ karaṇāṇai,
amarnta cir mūvāyiravar vētiyarkaḥ
tampati avaṇitevar vāḻvu
amarnta māyōṇai, mukkaṅ ammaṇai,
nāṇmukaṅai-amarnṭeṇē. (VIII–4–10)

The worthy Master, the Lover great of His votaries all,
The great Grantor of boons by them sought, one and all,
Who resides in fertile Tiruccirrāru, the home and hearth
Of the three thousand brahmins and Vaiṣṇavas, the Devas on Earth,
The wondrous Lord I have attained, who dwells within
The triple-eyed Sire (Ṣiva) and (Brahmā) Nāṇmukaṅ.

Note

The Supreme Lord, Mahā Viṣṇu alone deserves the appellation, ‘Master’. His supremacy notwithstanding, He has made Himself visible and easily accessible to one and all, staying in the holy Tirucceṅkuṇṟū Tiruccirrāru. The Āḻvār says, he has attained the Great Master, right here. The Lord is the one and only Giver, a liberal Donor, who exults in lavishing His bounty on all those who seek favours from Him.

tēṅai, nāṇ pālai, kaṇṇalai, amutai,
tiruntu ulaku unṭa ammānai,
vāṇa nāṇmukaṅai malarnta tan koppul
malarmicaip paṭaṭita māyōṇai,
kōṅai, vaṅ kurukūr vaṅ caṭakōpaṅ
coṇṇa āyirattul ip pattum
vāniṅ mīṭu ēṛṭṭi arulceṭṭu, muṭikkum
piṟavi mā māyak kūṭtiṇaiyē. (VIII–4–11)
Translation

These ten songs out of the thousand of Kurukṣeṇa Ṛṣi's. 
Adoring the Lord, highly delicious, like honey, milk and cane- 
juice, 
Who in His stomach did all the worlds sustain, 
The wondrous Lord, who did on the cool lotus, from His navel, 
produce 
The exalted Brahmā, will their chanters lift unto Heaven 
And engage them in the eternal service of the Lord, 
The mysterious cycle of birth and rebirth, no more to dread.

Notes

(i) Release from family bondage, that is, end of the great saga of worldly life and attainment of the final bliss of eternal service unto the Lord in Heaven are the benefits of chanting this decad. Attainment of the heavenly bliss automatically results in the severance of worldly ties, like unto the prince, languishing in prison, being crowned as soon as the king dies, (so as to avoid the land going without a monarch even for a while), followed by the removal of his fetters.

(ii) The Ālvaṛ grew apprehensive of the Lord's safety because of His extra-ordinary sweetness, like unto honey, milk and cane-juice and this fear got dispelled by the recollection of the Lord's unique prowess in sustaining all the worlds, during the deluge.

Eighth Centum—Fifth Decad (VIII-5) 
(Māyak kūṭā)

Preamble

In the third decad of this centum, the Ālvaṛ grew apprehensive of the safety of the Lord of exquisite charm, moving along in this wicked land alone and unattended. The Ālvaṛ could, however, regain his composure, shaking off the fear in question, on the assurance given by the Lord, vide VIII-3-10. The following decad revealed an Ālvaṛ, fully relieved of his erstwhile fears, but the intense mental enjoyment of the Lord's regal Form, enchanting
every inch, resorted to by the Ālvār in VIII–4–7, once again resulted
in a deep yearning, an insatiable longing for external perception
of the Lord’s Form, as envisioned by him and getting locked in
His sweet embrace. Non-fulfilment of his longing has consigned
the Ālvār to the bottom-most depths of dejection, the like of
which has not been witnessed in the earlier decade. He cries out,
like unto one bodily trapped in a forest fire and his limbs appear
to be even more worn out than their owner. The Saint beckons
the Lord to appear before him in all His regal splendour, wearing
His crown, tall and majestic and moving along, like the exhilara-
ting rain-cloud, the rising Sun, so on and so forth. The Lord did
not, however, respond and so, this decad ends on a despondent
note, the Ālvār being led to believe that he would just pass away,
immured in grief.

māyak kūttā! vāmaṇā! viṇaiyēn kaṇṇā! kaṇ, kai, kāl
tūya ceyya malarkalā, cōtī ccevvāy mukiḷatā,
cāyal cāmat tirumēṇi tān pācaṭaiyā, tāmarai nil
vācat taṭampōl varuvānē! orunāl kāṇa vārāyē. (VIII–5–1)

Translation

Wondrous Lord, Oh, Vāmaṇā, oh, Kaṇṇā beyond this sinner’s
reach!
With eyes, hands and feet like red lotus in fresh bloom,
Lips, red and radiant, cool, green, leaf-like complexion, You
seem,
As You walk along, a huge lotus pond in motion, full
of fragrance!
May it please You to appear before me, for a day at least.

Notes

(i) The Ālvār’s request to the Lord is that He should appear
before him like a lotus pond, the mere sight of which
quenches one’s deep thirst. The Lord’s eyes, hands
and feet look like red lotus flowers in bloom. His coral
lips with bewitching smiles resemble the lovely lily and
His emerald form looks like the green pond with lotus
leaves. This completes the picture of the lotus pond,
envisaged by the Ālvār. c.f. ‘Karacaraṇa Saroje........
Harsarasi’—(Mukunda Mālā)
(ii) What precisely egged the Ālvār on to such a longing has also been indicated in this song. As he was contemplating the Lord’s incarnation as the bewitching Vāmana, at Indra’s behest, the Ālvār longed that He should also present such an exquisite Form to him. If the Lord’s incarnation as Vāmana was for the sake of Indra, His incarnation as Kṛṣṇa was only to torment the Ālvār, by going back to the Celestium, just six weeks before his coming into this abode, like unto a dainty dish hitting against the teeth and falling to the ground without getting inside the mouth to be chewed with great relish. That is why the Ālvār calls Kṛṣṇa, as the one beyond his (sinner’s) reach.

kāṇa vārāy enru enru, kaṇṇum vāyum tuvarntu, aṭiyēṅ nāṇi, nal nāttu alamantāl, iraṇki, oruṇā! nī, antō!
kāṇa vārāy!—karu nāyiru utikkum karu mā māṇikkā nāl nal malaipol cuṭarc cōṭi muṭi cēr cēṇi ammānē!

Translation

Many a time did I call you out, with dried up eyes
And lips parched up, that You do before me appear
Like unto a dark, rising Sun, shedding the lustre rare,
Like the sapphire grand, sporting Your radiant crown, neatly poised
On locks beaming like a lovely mountain, just sprung up;
Alas! for me to behold but once, You don’t turn up,
Stricken with shame, fatigued do I on this good Earth languish.

Notes

(i) The eyes have become dry and worn out, looking for the Lord in all directions, hoping that He might come from any direction; the lips have become parched up, by calling Him out frequently. The Ālvār’s stinging shame is due to the Lord not turning up, even though he had not called him for trivial personal gains but merely for the pleasure of beholding Him. This might make the worldlings look at him askance, in a derisive spirit, that it is such an unresponsive Lord, he is madly
after. The expression 'Good Earth' could either be in the ironical sense, indicating its notriety indirectly, or might mean, as Piḷḷān would put it, that the Earth is really a good place for all but the Ālvār, inasmuch as all others presumably enjoy the Lord, quietly as could be inferred from their not calling Him out, as the Ālvār does. It seems the Ālvār is the solitary soul, left without such enjoyment and, therefore, crying out, as he has been doing.

(ii) The Sun, rising over the emerald mount, appears to be dark and the Lord's person is like an emerald mountain and hence, the imagery.

muṭicēr ceṇṇi ammā! niṉ moy pūm tāmat taṇ tulāyk kaṭicēr kaṇṇi perumāṇē! enṟu enṟu ēṇki aḻutakkāl, paṭicēr makarak kuḷaiṅkuḷum, pavaḷa vāyum, nāl tōḷum, tuṭi cēr itaiyum amaintatu ōr tū nir mukil pōl tōṅrāyē.

(VIII–5–3)

Translation

Time and again, did I in deep anguish call You out,
Oh, Sire, donning on Your lovely locks the majestic crown,
Oh, Lord, wearing the tulaci garland, pretty and fragrant;
But You wouldn't before me appear and exhibit Your pearl pendants,
Which Your Form exquisite befit, coral lips, shoulders four,
Thin waist and Your complexion like rain-cloud bearing water clear.

Note

The Ālvār has been crying himself hoarse, pining for the external perception of the Lord's enchanting Form and enjoying it in all its details. When, due to constant clamouring, his voice gets choked, it should indeed compel the Lord to come down at once and see what has gone wrong with the yearning devotee. And yet, He has not turned up, making the Ālvār suspect whether He is beyond his ear-shot.
tū nīr mukil pōl tōγrūm niŋ cuṭar koɬ vaṭivum, kaṇīvāyum, tē nīrk kamalak kaŋkalum vantu, eŋ cintai niṟaintava-
mā r.ır veḷḷi malaitaṃmēl van kār nīlā mukil pōla,
tū nīrk kaṭalul tuyilvānē! entāy!—collamāṭṭēṇē. (VIII—5—4)

Translation
My Sire, reposing in the Milk-ocean on serpent-bed,
Like unto the dark rain-cloud on the crest of silvery mount,
Embedded in deep waters! describe I can’t
How my thoughts are filled with Your Form radiant,
Like the rain-cloud bearing water clear, lips red
And eyes lovely, akin to lotus which sweet water holds.

Notes
(i) This song and the next, striking a jubilant note, the exact opposite of what is revealed by the other songs in this decad, are indeed ironically couched. The Ālvār really feels vexed that the Lord’s sweet and enchanting Form torments his thoughts, in the absence of the external enjoyment, longed for, by him.

(ii) Here is indeed a grand poetic imagery. The cloud-hued Lord resting on Ādi-Śeṣa, the white serpent, in the Milk-ocean, is likened to the transparent water-laden cloud on the crest of a white mountain embedded in the deep oceanic waters. Not only this enchanting Form but the lovely eyes and the fruit-like lips appear before the Ālvār and each one of these tempts the Ālvār to enjoy them separately and thus torments him.

colla māṭṭēn aṭiyēn-uṅ tulaṅku cōṭit tiruppātam
ellai il cir ila naiyiru iraṇṭupōl eŋ ullāvā;
alall eṅnum irul cērtarku upāyam eṇi-e-li cül
mallai fiālam muлатu uṇṭa mā nīrk koṇṭal vaṇṇāpē?

Translation
Oh, Lord, You are like unto a water-laden cloud,
The worlds, by oceans surrounded, You did in Your stomach hold,
The radiance within me, shed by Your dazzling feet superfine,
Like unto a pair of rising Suns, I just can’t define,
Say then, how I can the affliction dark, of forgetfulness, attain.

Notes

Äîvār to the Lord:

“ My Lord, Your enchanting Form is tormenting my mind without respite; I can survive only if I forget all about this. I can, however, never forget this and I, therefore, pray unto You, my great benefactor, to suggest ways and means of forgetting You altogether ”.

Lord: “Äîvār, You haven’t gained my physical presence as yet. It should, therefore, be possible for you to forget me easily”.

Äîvār: “Oh, Sire, have I not told You already (in I-10-10) that I can never more forget You, firmly lodged in my heart? Having cut out my nescience, in toto, through Your redemptive grace, Your dazzling feet are in my mind firmly implanted. It is up to You now to solve this riddle and find out some means by which I can forget You and be spared all this misery ”.

So then, here is a peculiar problem for the frustrated Äîvār who can’t have the external enjoyment, intensely longed for by him and is yet continually tormented by the radiance of the Lord’s dazzling feet, shining in his head. The Äîvār prays unto the Lord to put out this light and induce darkness that can make him forget Him altogether. In Nampillai’s Ḥru commentary, two interpretations have been set out: According to Parâśara Bhaṭṭar, the Äîvār prays unto the Lord: “If You are intent upon tormenting me by withholding from me Your physical presence, better induce in me the dark nescience, rather suggest how I can acquire it ”.

Āacarya Ammaṅki Ammāl would say: “With Your dazzling feet illumining my mind all the time, there is no room whatever for nescience, the distressing darkness; if such darkness could, however, be induced in me, I can safely
align myself with the worldlings and run after food and
raiment like them, forgetting You altogether."

konthal vanṭha! kuṭakkūttā! viṇaiyēn kaṇṭha! kaṇṭha! en
aṇṭa vāṇṭh eṇṛu, eṇṛai aḷaḷ kūppitsu aḷaḷittakkāl,
viṇ-tanmēl-tāṇ, manmēl-taṇ, viri nirk kaṭal-tāṇ, maṛuttāṇ,
toṇṭaṇēṇ uṇ kaḷalkaṇa, orunāl vantu, toṇṛayē. (VIII–5–6)

Translation

Oh, cloud-hued Lord, Oh, Pot-dancer, when this sinner calls
You out,
Oh, Kaṇṭha, Oh, Kaṇṭha, Oh, heavenly Lord, so that You may
enlist
Me, in your service, even for a day You appear not
Before this vassal either from Heaven, Earth or oceanic waters
vast
Or from wherever You might be, omnipresent that You are,
For me to behold your lovely feet.

Note

Where there is a will, there is a way. The Āḷvār feels poignantly
why the Lord, who could, if He so wills, come from any-
where, does not present Himself before him. He could
manifest Himself right from the space above, come down from
Heaven in all that transcendent splendour, from the
Earth where He had already incarnated as Rāma and
Krṣṇa or from the vast ocean, the Vyūha, the seat of all
His creative activities, or from any of the Pilgrim centres,
in His Iconic manifestation or from anywhere else, being
all-pervasive, in every post and pillar. The Lord’s feet
constitute the Āḷvār’s source of subsistence and it is only to
behold them and render service at those very feet that the
Āḷvār is inviting the Lord to appear before him, at least
one day.

vantu toṇṛay; anṛēl, uṇ vaiyam táya malar atikkīl
munti vantu yāṇ nirpa, mukappē kūvip panikollay—
centaṇ kamalak kaṇ, kai, kāl, civanta vāy ōr karu nāyīṛu
antam illāk katir parappi, alarntatu okkum ammāṛē!

(VIII–5–7)
Translation

Oh, radiant Lord, like unto the endless rays of a black Sun,
With eyes like lotus, cool and red, hands, feet and lips, all red,
Even if You appear not before me, pray, lift me on
To Your lotus feet, which did span all the worlds
And from this vassal service do command.

Note

The Ālvār is granting the Lord the option either to come down here so that he may behold Him or if, in the light of His grandeur and the pettiness of the supplicant, He doesn’t deign to come, He would do well to take him over to that end (Heaven). There, the Ālvār would not only behold the Lord and have his heart’s fill but he would also want the Lord to take service from him, so that he could render unstinting service at the Lord’s feet which spanned the worlds and, in the process, stepped on the heads of one and all, without distinction of high and low, Vaśiśṭa or caṇḍāla. The Lord’s enchanting beauty has made the Ālvār pine for Him and like the fish out of water, he can’t bear being apart from Him any longer and hence, this kind of insistence on his part.

Translation

Every time I see the gathering clouds, I am by Your memory stung,
My Lord, Your fame as the devotee’s henchman is far flung,
As [Arujuna’s] charioteer unique, You led to victory the worthy five,
Their hundred cousins crumbling down yet down you don’t dive
And regale me [in that very Form],
Is this how You do unto Your fame conform?
Note

Here is the Āljvār who sees in the rain-clouds, gathered up above, the Lord’s likeness and is haunted by His memory, unlike the worldlings who would think of such clouds only in terms of the rainfall and the bumper crop. Even the Pāṇḍavas, on whose behalf the Lord underwent immense hardships and did even the menial service of driving Arjuna’s chariot, were not of the grand calibre of the Āljvār. And yet, the Lord known for His readiness to serve His devotees, does not deign to appear before the Āljvār and satisfy his craving to behold Him and feast his eyes on His insatiable beauty. The Āljvār’s poser, as in this song, would seem to raise grave doubts about the veracity of the great epic of Mahā Bhārata, the wondrous deeds performed by the Lord and His breath-taking activities on behalf of His devotees, establishing His fame as a partisan of His devotees. Could it be mere propaganda, carried on, through His hirelings, the sages?

ituvō poruttam? míŋ ālip paṭaiyāy! ērum irum ciṛaippul—
atuvē koṭiyā uyartāṅē! ēṛu ēṛu ēṅki alutakkāl,
etuvēyākak karuntuṅkol-im mā ṣālām poṟai tiṛppāṅ!
matu vār cōlai uttara maturaip piṟanta māyaṅē?  (VIII–5–9)

Translation

Oh, wielder of the effulgent discus, that mighty weapon!
On Your banner is that bird, Your carrier with large plumes, How indeed your callousness can unto Your fame conform,
Often do I ask myself and keep sobbing; what is at all the intention,
I can hardly guess, of the wondrous Lord, Who was born
In Uttaramaturai (Mathurā), abounding in orchards fine.

Notes

The Āljvār is now revolving within his mind, what the Lord of wondrous deeds and auspicious traits, who, during His incarnation as Krṣṇa, took birth at Mathurā (in Uttara Pradeś) might be intending to do with him. Let alone what He did for the Pāṇḍvas, as against the Kauravas, how indeed
does He mingle with Garuḍa, who (as Ālavantār puts it, in Śloka 41 of his Stotra Ratna) is said to fulfil several roles, as servant, friend, vehicle (carrier), seat, banner, canopy and fan! Does the Lord really take all this service from Garuḍa or does He keep him also at a distance, as is the case with the Ālvār? If the Lord so wills, He could come down to the Ālvār, mounted on Garuḍa. Perhaps, even Garuḍa is not pressed into service, by the Lord, these days!

And then, the discus could have jolly well been commissioned by the Lord, to cut out all those impediments, which operate as a bar to the Ālvār’s union with Him and yet, if He has not done so. that only means, His relationship with the discus is no better than that which subsists between Him and the Ālvār.

The Ālvār is now left a-guessing what precisely the Lord’s intentions might be, with regard to him.

piṇanta māyā! pāratam poruta māyā! ni ḫē
ćiṇanta kāl, tī, nīr, vān, maṃ, piṇavum āya perumāṅē!
kaṟanta pāluḷ neyyē pōḷ ivarṟuḷ eṅkum kaṟṭukol—
িɾantu niɾa peru māyā! unṇai enḱē kāṁkēṅē? (VIII—5—10)

Translation

Wondrous indeed are Your incarnations, oh, Lord,
Many a wonder You did, during the battle of Bhārata,
perform,
The famous elements five and all things from them derived
Are unto You, the bodies many; like ghee, latent in milk fresh drawn,
You do in all things mysteriously abide; where can I find you indeed?

Notes

(i) No doubt, the Lord exhibited His amazing simplicity during the Incarnations, betokening His loving condescension. But the Ālvār, born at a later time, missed them all. Again, the Lord is said to abide in all beings and things and yet, He cannot be see
with the naked eye. Where then could the Lord be seen is the question put by the Ālvār in this song. He is really worried whether he would just pass away without realising his desire to come face to face with the Lord.

(ii) The Lord’s incarnation itself is a matter of great wonder. the birthless Being born, of course, at His sweet will and then His mingling with the rest, with no reservation. The wonders performed by Him, during His incarnation as Kṛṣṇa, were many indeed and, in particular, those bearing on the course and conduct of the great battle of Mahā Bhārata were: Taking up arms, at one stage, contrary to His earlier pledge not to wield any weapon, conversion of day into night, spotting out the vital centres of life, the vulnerable spot in the enemy attacking which would prove fatal, so on and so forth.

(iii) How could it be asserted that the Invisible Lord resides in all creatures and things? The Upāniṣad provides the answer: “ghrutamiva payasi nigūḍaṁ”. The milk is churned into butter, which again is melted into ghee. But none can, on the face of it, perceive the presence of ghee in milk. And so does the Lord abide unseen in all that exists.

eṅkē kāṅkē, in tulāy ammaṁ-taṅṇai yān? enru enru, aṅkē tājnta cōrkālāl, am tān kurukūrc cāṭakōpan ceṅkēl coṇṇa āyirattuḷ ivaiyum pattum vallārkal, iṅkē kāṇa, ip pirappē makilvar-elliyum kālaiyē. (VIII–5–11)

Translation

Those that are conversant with these songs ten, Out of the thousand elegant songs of Kurukūr Čaṭakōpan, Who did pine for the Lord, wearing tulaci garland superfine, And with melting tenderness cry out where indeed he could behold Him, Will, right here and now, enjoy with no intermission bliss supreme.
Note

The end-song avers that those that learn this decad will be steeped in God-enjoyment, day and night, right in this world and, in this very birth, without undergoing the hardships and the vicissitudes which the Ālvār had to pass through. The Lord will, on His part, make amends for His remissness in not responding to the Ālvār’s invitation, as in the opening song of this decad, to come and take service from him, by dulyrequiting the chanters of this decad. Unto these persons, He will rush up and shower on them divine bliss without intermission.

Eighth Centum—Sixth Decad (VIII-6)
(Elliyum kālaiyum)

Preamble

The Ālvār’s yearning, in the last decad, was indeed too deep for words. At the same time, it has to be stressed that, if the Jñāni loves God dearly, He loves the Jñāni even more. And so, the Lord’s love for the Ālvār also defies description. Stung by a deep sense of remorse over His laxity in not responding to the Ālvār’s invitation, the Lord pondered over the step to be taken by Him to placate the Ālvār. But then, if He straightaway presented Himself before the Ālvār, in his present state of mind, he would just collapse, due to excessive joy. It was, therefore, expedient that the Ālvār’s enjoyment of the Lord should be induced by stages, so as to be stable, without anything untoward happening. This was precisely the reason why Śrī Rāma despatched Hanumān first to meet Bharata and convey to him the news of His return from exile soon. It was only a day later, after availing of Sage Bharadwāja’s hospitality en route, that Rama met Bharata who was meanwhile getting ready to receive the elder, back home from His long exile. Lord Kṛṣṇa likewise adopted the ‘go-slow’ tactics by making a night-halt outside Hastināpur and going to the citadel, only the next day. Meanwhile, news had reached the ardent devotees like Vidhura, of the impending visit of the Lord on His famous errand to Dhrutarāṣṭra’s court. But for this phased programme, excessive joy due to the sudden arrival of Lord Kṛṣṇa
would have upset those devotees and thrown them into a state of mental imbalance. In this particular case, the Lord who wished the Ālvār to come and mingle with Him freely, stationed Himself at the pilgrim centre, known as Tirukkāṭittānām (in Kerala State). The Ālvār, who got scent of it, felt greatly elated over the Lord's overwhelming love for him. He gives vent to his resultant joy, in this decad.

elliyum kālaiyum taṇṇai ninaintu ella,  
nalla arulkal namakkē tartū-arulceyvān—  
alli am taṇ am tulāy muṭi appaṭ ēr,  
celvakal vāṣum, tirukkāṭittānāmē.  
(VIII–6–1)

Translation

Tirukkāṭittānam, where reside the devotees rich, is the place
Where my Lord sporting tulaci garland cool and lovely, on
His crown, stays,
And salves us, shedding on us solely His extra-ordinary grace
And making us meditate on Him always [day and night].

Notes

(i) The Ālvār is indeed overwhelmed by the Lord's spontaneous grace. Well, he doesn't take it on a quid-pro-quo basis, that is, he does not look at this influx of the Lord's extra-ordinary grace, making him meditate on Him day and night, as compensation for the grief he experienced in the last decad, but as one shed on him for the Lord's own pleasure and exultation, at His sweet will. What more? The Ālvār feels that the Lord has not shed on any one else, not even the 'Nityas ' in Heaven, grace of this magnitude. It is indeed most gratifying to the Ālvār that the Lord presents Himself in Tirukkāṭittānam, wearing the tulaci garland, pretty and fragrant, as longed for by him in the third song of the last decad.

(ii) Rich devotees: The text of the song, as in the original refers to this pilgrim centre, as one inhabited by rich persons. The richness, alluded to here, is, however, not of the material kind but the 'Kainkarya Śri' like
that of Lakṣmaṇa who served Lord Rāma in all possible ways and was thus extremely rich in divine service. Real affluence lies in eternal service to the Lord.

tirukkaṭittāṇamum eṇṇutaić cintaiyum
orukkaṭuttu, ullē uraiyum pirāṇ kaṇṭir-
ceruk kaṭuttu anaṟu tikaitta arakkaraī,
uruk keṭa, vāḷi poḷinta oruvaṅē. (VIII–6–2)

The Lord, who lovingly resides in Tirukkaṭittāṇam and my heart alike,
Is none but the Warrior great, Who arrows did rain
On the Asuras, who, filled with pride, had grown
Violent and war-mad, and destroyed them, in bulk.

Note

The Āḻvār acknowledges the Lord’s great gesture in quelling the Asuras, symbolic of the clearing up of all the evil forces in him, the impediments that stood in the way of the Lord reclaiming him and thereafter, stepping on to Tirukkaṭittāṇam, the spring-board, whence He was to land right in the Āḻvār’s heart, His ultimate destination. The Lord’s attachment to the Jñāni’s physical form even surpasses His love for the pilgrim centres, where He has condescended to shed His grace on the votaries in His ‘Arca’ Form. This is quite understandable, seeing that the very purpose of His manifestation in ‘Arca’ Form, is only to get hold of His subjects, by some means or the other. And when He gets His catch all right, and a big haul at that, His gratification knows no bounds. The Lord’s stay in the pilgrim centres is thus not an end in itself but only a means for the reclamation of His subjects, His ultimate destination being the heart-centre of the subjects, spiritually regenerated through His redemptive grace. Once the destination is reached, the means employed for reaching it get relegated to a place of secondary importance. It is then the turn of a devotee like Pēy Āḻvār to request the Lord not to relax His interest in the pilgrim centres which operate as the spring-board whence the Lord could reach His devotees. It is now a case of the Lord loving the pilgrim centres, firstly, as
places adored by His devotees, and secondly, out of gratitude to those centres for helping Him to reclaim the subjects, by making them God-bent (See aphorisms 169-174 of Śrī Vacana Bhūṣāṇam);

oruvar, iruvar, ōr mūvar, eṇa niṟṟu, uruvu karantu, uḷḷumtōrum tittippaṅ-tiru amar mārvaṇ, tirukkaṭittāṇattai maruvi uṟaṅkaṅa māyaṉ pirāṉē. (VIII–6–3)

Translation

The Warrior Great, Who did arrows on Asuras rain
Was seen first as one, then as two and three later on,
And at one time hardly visible; this wondrous Benefactor
great,
Who bears Tiru (Lakṣmī) on His chest, does in Tirukkaṭittāṇam
lovingly stay
And is indeed very sweet to contemplate.

Notes

(i) This song does not stand by itself, being but a follow-up of the preceding song. The warrior, referred to, is Śrī Rāma. When Rāvaṇa unleashed his special Reserve forces (Mūlabalam), after the valiant Rākṣasas had vanished, one by one, into the jaws of death, the manner in which this extra-ordinary situation, which struck unspeakable terror in the minds of the Devas, was handled by Śrī Rāma, is alluded to here. The battle was as spectacular as it was terrific and Vālmīki was simply thrilled by the uncanny and superhuman effort, displayed by Śrī Rama. In śloka 22 of chapter 94 of Yuddha Kāṇḍa, it has been said that Rāma was hardly visible and yet, one could see the enormous extent of destruction wrought by Him. This only reveals the marvellous agility with which He went gyrating around, routing the enemy forces. A little further down, in śloka 27, it has been stated that thousands of Rāmas were seen in action. Again, in the latter half of the same śloka, it has been stated that Rāma alone and
none else could be seen on the battlefield. It was indeed a wonderful wonder of wonders the way the Lord encountered the enemies who were not only powerful but also very elusive.

(ii) The Lord exhibits even greater love towards the Ālvār than that bestowed on the Divine Consort, borne on His very chest, the simple reason that he is Her ward. Again, the Lord loves Tirukkaṭittāṇam, only because it is adored by the Ālvār. This has already been set out, at length, in the notes below the second song. Yet, it is mentioned here, only to reveal the Ālvār’s immense jubilation, as he meditates on this aspect.

māyap pirāṇ, eṇa valviṇai māyntu aṟa,
neṭattiṇāl neṇcam-nāṭu kuṭikōntān-
tēcattu amarar tirukkaṭittāṇattai
vācap pojil maṅṇu kōyil koṇṭāṇē.  \(\text{VIII–6–4}\)

Translation

The wondrous Lord, Who, in Tirukkaṭittāṇam, stands enshrined,
Abounding in orchards, full of fragrance, the lovely resort Of even the Celestial’s bright, has lovingly sought The kingdom of my heart, to get my dire sins ruined.

Note

Whereas the Lord gives ‘dharṣan’ to the votaries in the pilgrim centres only during stated hours, mostly by day, He stays for ever, in the heart of the Ālvār, coveted by Him a great deal. This very thought, coupled with the realisation of the fact that the Lord has chosen to grace Tirukkaṭittāṇam, only to please him, has heightened the Ālvār’s joy.

kōyil koṇṭāṇ taṇ tirukkaṭittāṇattai;
kōyil koṇṭāṇ ataṇōṭum eṇ neṇcakam;
kōyilkoḷ teyam ellām toḷa, vaikuntam
kōyil koṇṭa kuṭakkūṭta ammāṇē.  \(\text{VIII–6–5}\)
Translation

The Lord Who is by the exalted Celestials adored,
Who has the high Heavens as His abode,
Who (as Kṛṣṇa) did the wondrous pot-dance perform
Is the One Who made Tirukkaṭittāṇam His home,
And has, along with that home, moved now into my heart,
Making it His new habitat.

Notes

(i) As already elucidated, Tirukkaṭittāṇam was but the stepping stone, the spring-board whence the Lord could get into the Ālvār’s heart. The Lord initially thought of entering the Ālvār’s heart, all alone, without His retinue and all that. But then, He changed His mind and entered the Ālvār’s heart along with that pilgrim centre itself c.f. Periyālvār Tirumoḷi V-2-10, where Peryālvār says that the Lord resorted unto His body with His entire retinue, the serpent-bed, the Milk-ocean and the Divine Consort and rested on the cool crest of the ocean, to grant him the necessary protection.

(ii) The Lord incarnated as Kṛṣṇa, among the cowherds and performed the pot-dance; to get over the resultant fatigue, He released Himself at Tirukkaṭittāṇam and thence shifted to the Ālvār’s heart, along with that pilgrim centre.

{kūṭta ammāṇ, koṭiyēṉ iṭaṁ muṟṟavum
māyṭta ammāṇ, matucūta ammāṇ, urai,
pūṭta polīḻ taṇ tirukkaṭittāṇattai
ēṭta, nilā-kuṟikkoļmin iṭaē. (VIII–6–6)
}

Translation

Tirukkaṭittāṇam, the holy centre, cool and nice, amid orchards, in full bloom,
Where resides my Lord of wondrous deeds, Matucūtaṇ, my Sire,
Who did, in full, destroy the miseries of this sinner dire,
Will set at naught our miseries, one and all, be sure,
The moment we adore it, with love supreme.

Note

Lest the preceding song should give some the impression that
the pilgrim centre, known as Tirukkaṭittāṇam, has ceased to
exist as such, having entered the Ālvār’s heart, *en masse*
the Ālvār now calls upon his fellow-beings to worship the
holy centre. As already elaborated upon in the notes below
the second song of this decad, the pilgrim centres acquire
importance, firstly, as places adored by the Lord’s devotees
and hence loved by the Lord as well, and secondly, as the
centres of attraction helping the Lord to reclaim His subjects,
by making them God-bent and hence gratefully loved by the
Lord.

koḻmin, itar kēta, ullattu-kōvintaṇ,
maṇ viṇ mulutum alanta on tāmarai
maṇnavar tām toḷa, vāṇavar tām vantu
nāṅgu tirukkaṭittāṇa nakarē. (VIII—6—7)

Translation

Set your mind on Tirukkaṭittāṇam, the holy city,
Where the people of this land worship the lotus feet lovely,
Of Kōvintaṇ, which, the earth and the regions above, did
measure wholly,
And the denizens of heaven also come down and adore,
So that all your miseries do instantly disappear.

Notes

(i) In the preceding song, the Ālvār exhorted the worldlings
to worship this pilgrim centre but here he says it would
suffice if they just think of the place.

(ii) Even as Heaven is the land of the Nityas (Eternal Heroes),
the pilgrim centres on Earth belong to us, the earthlings,
as Nampillai would put it. It should indeed be a matter
of deep wonder to the exalted ‘Nityas’ in Heaven,
with profound knowledge, how the Great Lord abides
in the midst of the worldlings over here, steeped in dark
nescience and is easily accessible to them, an act of grace galore, denoting His amazing simplicity, the very antithesis of Heavenly grandeur and majesty (Paratva or transcendent glory). And so, it is a case of the ‘Nityas’ coming down here to have a taste of His amazing simplicity, even as those over here go up to Heaven to witness and enjoy His transcendent glory.

tāṇa nakarkal talaicciṟantu enkeṅkum—
vāṉ, in nilam, kaṭal-murrum em māyarkē
āṇaviṭattum, en neńcum tirukkaṭit-
tāṇa nakarum tāṇa tāyap patiyē. (VIII–6–8)

Translation

This earth, the yonder Heaven, the Milk-ocean and other habitats
Are, no doubt, elegant and exhilarating, which my Lord befit
And yet, Tirukkaṭittāṇam, the holy city and my heart
Are just the ones, the Lord has chosen as His favourite spots.

Note

There are innumerable delectable centres here, there (Heaven) and elsewhere, which could regale the Lord. Still, Tirukkaṭittāṇam and the Āḻvār’s heart are the only two regions, which the Lord feels compelled to enjoy and esteem, as devolving on Him as a matter of right.

tāyap patikaḷ talaicciṟantu enkeṅkum,
māyattināl māṇṉi, viṟṟiruntān-urai,
tēcattu amarar tirukkaṭittāṇattul,
āyarkku atipati, aprutan-tāŋē. (VIII–6–9)

Translation

Tirukkaṭittāṇam, the loving resort of even Celestials bright,
Is where the wondrous Chief of cowherds (Kaṇṇan) alights,
With pleasure immense, looking upon it as the best
Of the pilgrim centres that do all over exist.
Note

All pilgrim centers, without distinction of big and small are sacred indeed, and yet, the Lord covets Tirukkaṭittāṇam most, being the centre which enabled Him to gain access to the Āḻvār by exhibiting to the latter His grandeur as well as grace galore, His amazing simplicity.

ṇṟputaṇ, nāṟāyaṇaṇ, ari, vāmaṇaṇ, nirpatu-mēvi iruppatu en neṭacakam—
nal puṅkal vētiyar nāṇmarai ninṟu atir karpaṇac cōlait tirukkaṭittāṇamē. (VIII—6—10)

Translation

'Tis only to stay lovingly in my heart, His ultimate abode,
Nāṟāyaṇaṇ, Who is also Ari and Vāmaṇaṇ, the wondrous Lord,
Stands in Tirukkaṭittāṇam, with lovely orchards,
Where the celebrated brahmins reside,
Chanting the Vedas four, for ever and aloud.

Note

In order to gain access to the Āḻvār, the Lord came down to Tirukkaṭittāṇam and stood there. Once He got on to His destination, the Āḻvār's heart-centre, He would stay there only all the time.

cōlait tirukkaṭittāṇattu urai tirumālai matil kurukūrc caṭakōpan col pālōtu amutu aṇṇa āyirattu ip pattum mēlai vaikuntattu iruttum-viyantē. (VIII—6—11)

Translation

These songs ten, out of the thousand delicious songs, Gracefully composed by Kurukūr Caṭakōpan, adoring The Lord Who resides in Tirukkaṭittāṇam, abounding In orchards many, will the chanters thereof elevate Unto the exalted Heaven with delight great.

Notes

(i) These ten songs will, by themselves, elevate their chanters to the high Heavens, on the ground that the Lord shall
not brook separation from them even for a trice. This, of course, means that the Lord will be greatly delighted to hear these songs and, in the exuberance of His joy, instantly lift the chanter up to His heavenly abode.

(ii) The songs relate the glory of the great Lord and their author is no less than His most beloved Saint Nam-mālvār. The text, in the original, says that these songs are delicious like the milk porridge (rice boiled in milk and neatly spiced); the Lord constitutes the milk and the Ālvār's songs, the other ingredients, put together—a delightful combination of diction and subject-matter and manner of expression.

**Eighth Centum—Seventh Decad (VIII-7)**

(Īruttum, viyantu)

Preamble

The bliss enjoyed by the Ālvār in this decad, stands on a pedestal of its own. It can even be asserted that there is no comparable decad in the whole hymnal.

When one pauses and ponders which indeed is the greater of the two pulls, namely, the Lord's effort to get at the Ālvār and the Ālvār's desire to get at Him, it will be seen that the Lord exerts the greater, naturally, the stronger pull, His desire to get at the subject, His coveted belonging, being supreme. Did He not declare, in His 'Song Celestial', that the gnostic, who knows Him truly, is undoubtedly responsible for His very existence and that it is very hard to find a truly discerning devotee who looks upon Him as everything, the highest goal, the Sole Means, Father, Mother, Friend. Refuge, Resting place etc.? It is, therefore, abundantly clear that the Lord considers it His greatest gain to reclaim a Jīva (individual soul) and, to this end, He goes on preparing the ground, all the time. His intense longing to get at the individual Soul is virtually the copper plate, establishing His right of ownership over the subject, sought to be reclaimed. And, therefore, the Lord mingles with the Ālvār with such an inordinate longing. Noticing this, the Ālvār realises with a stinging sense of shame that he had tried to reverse the role by begging of the Lord for his redemption
overlooking the fact that it was the Lord who was all along been
the supplicant for the Ālvār’s love unto Him. The Ālvār acknow-
ledges in this decad with great feeling the enormous love bestowed
by the Lord on the individual Soul, as the indefatigable cultivator
of God-love in the latter.

iruttum, viyantu eṇνait taṇ poṇo atikkil, eṇru
aruttittu, eṇaittu ār pala nāl aḷaittēṛku,
poruttam utai vāmaṇaṇ taṇ pukuntu, eṇ-taṇ
 karuttaị uṛa, virriiruntāṇ-kaṇṭu koṇṭe. (VIII–7–1)

Translation
Vāmaṇaṇ, my Lord, Whose grace I invoked, days on end,
To lift me unto His golden feet, has, I find,
Been very Keen Himself to get hold of me and now come
Right inside me, looking at me, all the time.

Note
The Ālvār was beseeching the Lord all along, panting and
craving for Him, to come and reign in his heart. This was
indeed superfluous for the Lord is even more enamoured of
the Ālvār and He has, all the time, been looking forward to
getting hold of the Ālvār and being firmly lodged in his heart.
And now, He has got inside the Ālvār and He keeps looking
at him with doting love, like unto a father who keeps looking
at his beloved son, just recovered from a dire disease
generally known to be fatal. As a matter of fact, the Ālvār
has survived the deep yearning of his, in VIII–5 (Māyakkūṭtā)
to which he could have as well succumbed. Even as the
Lord, as Vāmana, sought out Mahābali and snatched away
his possessions, the Lord sought the Ālvār and took over
from him, his deep longing, and with a longing of even greater
intensity, He took hold of the Ālvār and got inside him.

iruntāṇ kaṇṭukoṇṭu-eṇatu ēlai neṇcu āḷum
tiruntāṭa ār aivarait tēyuntu āra, maṇgi;
perum tāḷ kaḷiṟṟukku arulceyta perumāṇ
tarum taṇ arul-taṇ inī yān ariyenē. (VIII–7–2)
Translation

The Lord's grace unto the elephant, with feet large,
Does in my eyes no longer loom large,
For standing within me, firmly lodged,
He has worn down to naught the cruel senses five,
Which had kept my fickle mind in their grip tight
And He now keeps gazing at me, all the time.

Notes

What the Lord did unto the Āḷvār was to destroy his formidable opponents, the five senses and wean him away from their mischief by exhibiting His charming beauty.

In the case of Gajendra, the elephant, it was, no doubt, a long and grim struggle but it was just an encounter with a single crocodile, as against the five crocodiles, the five formidable senses, the Āḷvār was pitted against. And then, the venue was a mere pond in the case of Gajendra, whereas it was the vast ocean of Samsāra in which the Āḷvār was caught up. Again, Gajendra's struggle with the crocodile lasted a bare thousand years, while the Āḷvār's grim battle with life went right through a staggering past. Further, the Lord has got right inside the Āḷvār and keeps on looking at him with the same avidity with which a pauper from generations, keeps gazing at his new-found treasure. It has been said in Rāmāyaṇa that, after Śrī Rāma befriended Sugrīva, the monkey king, the two of them used to sit gazing at each other with insatiable joy, days on end. There at least, it was a sort of mutual pact, what could be termed as complimentary roles. In the case of the Lord's help to the Āḷvār, however, it was all one-sided with no obligation on the Āḷvār. All these go to enhance the Lord's grace unto the Āḷvār mani-fold and make the Lord's succour of Gajendra, the elephant, pale into insignificance.

arul-tan ini yan ariyen; ava'n en ul,
irul-tan ara, viriruntan; itu allal,
porul-tan epil, mujulakumporul alla:
 marul-tan ito? maya mayakkumayakkē?  

(VIII–7–3)
Translation

Indeed, I know of no grace but that of the Lord.
Who does inside me stay, dispelling the darkness within;
It seems I am unto Him the sole concern,
He values not so much even His overlordship of the three worlds,
Is it yet another mystery of His or a mere illusion?

Notes

Overwhelmed by the immensity of the Lord’s love unto him, the Āḻvār feels it to be too good to be true and even suspects that it might be just an illusion.

In the preceding song, the Āḻvār deemed it an incomparable act of grace galore, on the part of the Lord to have subjugated his unrelenting senses and destroyed them. But now, he says even that dwindles down before the loving condescension with which He has got Himself lodged in the Āḻvār’s heart, dispelling its erstwhile darkness. What is more, the Lord’s condescension is full and complete, seeing that, in His boundless love for the Āḻvār, He has relegated even His overlordship of the Universe to a secondary place. In his unique diction, Nampillai puts it, that the Āḻvār says here “Alas! the Lord had kept me in a state of bewilderment all along, caught up in the vortex of ‘Prakṛti’ (Māyā) and now again, He keeps me bewildered by His extra-ordinary love unto me.”

māya mayakkū mayakkāṁ, eṇṇai vañcittu;
āyaṇ, amararkku ariṇţu, eṇatu ammān
tūya cutārccōti taṇatu eṇ ūl vaitān—
tēcam tikālum taṇ tiruvarul ceytē. (VIII−7−4)

Translation

The Divine Cowherd of limitless glory, even Celestials can’t comprehend,
Has unto me displayed His grace galore of universal fame,
His resplendent Form immaculate, He has in my heart planted firm,
A solid reality this is and not an illusion, as I did apprehend.
Note

The Ālvār is now quite clear in his mind, that the Lord is really regaling in his heart and avers that it is a matter beyond doubt. As a matter of fact, in His unbounded love for the Ālvār, the immaculate Lord has set His dazzling feet, dispelling darkness and distress, inside the Ālvār, keeping all the worlds spell-bound by this act of grace galore. Surely, He would not play ducks and drakes with His devotees and bewilder them, as He did in the case of the ungodly Duryodhana and others of his ilk.

tikajum tan tiruvaru ceytu, ulakattar
pukalum pukal tan atu kattit tantu, en ul
tikajum manik kunram onge ottu, niyan;
pukalum pukal maru enakkum or porulé?

(VIII–7–5)

Translation

Nothing more praiseworthy do I deem than the grace radiant,
Shed by the Lord, gleaming inside me like an emerald mount
And revealing to me the praises of the inhabitants
Of the worlds, heaped on Him, on this account.

Note

"Is there indeed anything more praise-worthy than this super-
abundant grace of the Lord in standing within me firmly,
gleaming like an emerald mount?", asks the Ālvār,
Again, this grace is twice-blest, in that the Lord feels exultant
over the bestowal of His grace on the Ālvār and the latter
is also bubbling with jubilation over his being the object of
the Lord’s extra-ordinary love. And yet another phase, the
third one is the chorus of praise sung by all the worlds for this
act of grace galore on the part of the Lord and what is even
more impressive is the revelation of this fact to the Ālvār
by the Lord Himself.

porul maru enakkum or porul-tanuil cirkkat
tarumel, pinai yerku avan tanaiak koikkum-
karu manikkak kunattatt tamaraipol
tiru marpu, kal, kañ, kai, cevvay untiyane?

(VIII–7–6)
Translation

If the Lord, whose winsome chest and other limbs
Do a cluster of lotus flowers blooming on emerald mount resemble,
Were on me to bestow lesser gains, short of He Himself,
Is there at all any other to whom He will give of Himself?

Notes

(i) There are two broad groups of the Lord’s votaries, namely, those who ask of Him boons like acquisition of wealth, freedom from rebirth and so on, while those in the other group seek none but the Lord Himself. The Ālvār falls in the latter group, no doubt, and yet, if the Lord has given Himself unto the Ālvār, it is because of His inordinate love for the Ālvār and not because there are no other like-minded votaries in that group.

(ii) The enchanting description of the Lord’s exquisite charm, as set out, in detail, in the original text of this song, does not stem so much from the Lord’s natural charm as from the extra lustre and grandeur imparted to His whole Form, limb by limb, by His union with the Ālvār.

(iii) Reference to the lotus flowers blooming on the crest of an emerald mount is a grand piece of poetic imagery, flight of poetic fancy.

cēvāy, utti, ven pal, cuṭark kulai tammōṭu
evāyc cuṭarum tammil mun valāy₃ kōlla,
cevvāy mūruvalōṭu enaṭu uḷḷattu irunta
avvāy aṛī, yān ariyēn maṛṭu aruḷē.  
(VIII–7–7)

Translation

The Lord’s mouth red, the navel, the teeth sparkling white,
The earlobes with pearls bedecked and all other limbs bright
Do vie with each other to attract me all right,
But I can think of nothing but the grace of the Lord Who stays
In my heart with beaming smile which on His red lips plays.
Note

Although the Lord’s limbs vie with each other in casting their fascinating spell on the Ālvār in whose heart the Lord is now lodged, His bewitching smiles, revealing His great delight in mingling with the Ālvār, are said to attract him most. Consequently, his mind is solely fixed on these ravishing smiles and the Lord’s unique grace. Like unto the flower in fresh bloom, the Lord’s radiant smile illumines His entire Form, limb by limb.

arıyēn marṟu arul; ēnnaī āḷum pirānār
veṟitē arulcēyvar, ceyvārkaṭku ukantu-
ciriyēnuṭaic cintaiyuł, mūvulakum taŋ
neṟiyā vayiril koṇtu, ninjōlintārē. (VIII–7–8)

Translation

I know of no other benefaction but the stay of the Lord.
Within my frail heart, keeping in His stomach all the three worlds,
Well in tact; unto those of His choice, He, who has me enthralled,
Does His grace solely extend, out of His own accord.

Notes

(i) The Ālvār expatiates on the Lord’s sweet, spontaneous grace (nirhetuka krupā) inasmuch as the grace, with which He has now flooded him, is itself a matter of such voluntary grace. The Lord of the universe has shifted the venue of His vast governance to the heart-region of the Ālvār. What else is this but the Lord’s spontaneous grace and is there at all any need to adduce any other example? In this song, the Ālvār thus pin points the Lord’s spontaneous grace, extolling the Lord as one, who sheds His voluntary grace on those whom He singles out for such favours and has thus chosen to get Himself firmly lodged in the Ālvār’s mind. While the Ālvār looks upon himself, as the lowliest of the lowly, the Lord regards him as one far more precious than all the worlds put together.
(ii) In the hymns of the Ālvār where the Lord’s grace is expounded there might appear to be mutual contradictions in some places to the superficial reader, but a critical and cogent study will remove such doubts. This position has been thrashed out in aphorisms 393 and 394 of “Śrīvacaṇa Bhūṣaṇam”; the reader is invited to study either the original text or the English rendering thereof by the author of this work.

vayirill koṇṭu niṟṟolintārūm, evarum,
vayirill koṇṭu niṟṟu, oru mūvulakum tam
vayirill koṇṭu niṟṟavaṇṇam niṟṟa mālai,
vayirill koṇṭu, maṇṇa vaittēn-matiyālē.  (VIII–7–9)

Translation

The Lord, Who, in His stomach, holds with no effort,
The earthly rulers who, in their stomachs, keep their subjects,
The exalted Celestials and the worlds three,
I have consented to get firmly inside me.

Notes

(i) To a question, doggedly put to him, suggesting that there ought to be some merit in him for the Lord to bestow on him His grace, of such a magnitude, the Alvar says that the only merit in him is his passive quiescence or mere non-resistance to the influx of His grace. To those sticklers who have a fad for bargaining and would, therefore, insist upon making the influx of the Lord’s grace contingent upon some kind of initiative in us, the Ālvār’s own utterances should serve as the eye-opener. Even this consent to the Lord’s reclamation is induced by the Lord’s grace. Therefore it is, this hymnal is replete with expressions like: “Oh, Sire, You have lifted me unto Your holy feet, after due moulding and reconditioning my mind, so as not to stifle your effort to redeem me”. See also the elucidation in aphorism 110 of ‘Ācārya Hrudayam’.

(ii) By the earthly kings holding, in their astomachs, their subjects, is meant the protection extended by the
former to the latter like unto the mother feeding the babe inside her womb. The Lord’s retention, in His stomach, of the exalted Celestials and all the worlds with their contents, also denotes His role, as the universal Protector, a function which He discharges through a mere fraction of His resolve.

vaittēṇ matiyāl ēṇatu ullāttu akattē;
eytē olivēṇ allēṇ ēṛum, eppōtum-
moyttu ēy tirai mōtu tan pāṛkaṭalulāl
paittu ēy cuṭarp pāṃpu-ānai nam paraṇāyē.  (VIII–7–10)

Translation
The Lord, who has the hooded serpent bright,
As His somnolent bed on the cool, milk ocean,
With surging waters, I have got fixed in my heart,
Suffer shall I no more from pangs of separation.

Note
Mere passive quiescence on the part of the Āḻvār has resulted in the Lord entering him, with all His retinue. Naturally, this has infused in the Āḻvār robust confidence that he shall no more suffer from the pangs of separation from the Lord.

cuṭarp pāṃpu-ānai nam paraṇai, tirumālai,
ātic cērvakai vaṇ kurukūrc caṭakōpan
muṭippāṇ coṇṇa āyiratu ip pattum caṇṇam
viṭat tēyntu ara nōkkum-taṇ kaṇkāl civantē.  (VIII–7–11)

Translation
These songs ten, out of the thousand of Kurukur Caṭakōpan, Whose natural bent it is to adore, ever and anon, The feet of Tirumāl, Who does on the radiant serpent recline, Aimed at the complete severance of his moorings earthly, Will grind to a halt the chanters’ cycle of birth and rebirth, Looking on it [as it were] with red eyes [spitting deadly poison].

Notes
(i) As stated in what is known as ‘Paryaṇka Vidyā, in the Upaniṣad, the Lord, seated on the serpent cushion,
along with Mahālakṣmī in that glorious setting, grants audience to the ‘Muktas’ (Released Souls) on their reaching Heaven. This very setting is alluded to in the opening line of this song as in the original, in keeping with the benefit accruing to the chanters of this decad as set out in this song, namely, release from the bondage of Samsāra and the terrific cycle of birth and rebirth. These ten songs, by themselves, deliver the goods, looking as it were, at the worldly ties of the chanters of these songs, with red eyes, spitting poison, so as to effectively destroy these ties and put the chanters in Heaven.

(ii) The Ālvār’s ultimate goal is the Lord’s pair of feet where he longs to render incessant service, rather than the heavenly bliss, as such.

Eighth Centum—Eighth Decad (VIII-8)
(Kaṇkaḷ civantu)

Preamble

In the fifth decad of this centum (Māyak kūttā), the Ālvār’s yearning was too deep for words. The Lord responded with even greater avidity and the two of them got wrapt up in mutual delight. The Ālvār gave vent to his jubilation in the last decad, and even so, in the eighth song of that decad, he referred to himself as a frail being, with whom the great Lord of unlimited prowess has chosen to mingle freely and stay on. The Ālvār’s frightful sense of his own pettiness, in contra-distinction to the Lord’s grandeur of limitless dimensions, which was rearing up its head now and then, was studiously kept under effective check by the Lord who was apprehensive of the Ālvār’s tendency to shrink back from Him on this score. The Lord, who noticed, with great concern, a revival of this trend in the Ālvār, wished to cut it out, there and then, root and branch. The Lord wanted to quell the Ālvār’s notion of the soul’s pettiness by revealing to him its real grandeur. But then, the soul, like unto a mere glow-worm, may not hold out any appeal to the Ālvār, profoundly struck by the Lord’s exquisite charm. The other alternative for the Lord
was to exhibit the grandeur of the Ālvār’s soul along with that of His own. The Lord accordingly revealed to the Ālvār, His charm first and then the grandeur of the Ālvār’s soul, in its relation of liegeship to the Sovereign Lord, as delectable unto Him as His ornaments. And so, in this decad, the Ālvār dwells on the intrinsic beauty of the soul, as the exclusive vassal of the Lord, as revealed by the Lord Himself.

Translation

The cloud-hued Lord of grandeur unique, with eyes, red and wide,
Reddened lips, teeth sparkling white, imposing pearl pendants,
Beaming crown, shoulders four, curvate bow, lovely conch,
the sword,
The mace and discus majestic, stands, inside this vassal, resplendent.

Notes

(i) In this song, the Ālvār goes into raptures on beholding the Lord’s exquisite Form displaying the rare charm acquired by Him on His union with the Ālvār. In VIII-5-2, the Ālvār was with eyes fully dried and lips parched up, when he beseeched the Lord to oblige him with His sweet presence. The Lord too had undergone such modifications then and He was also off colour and lack-lustre like the Ālvār! It was only when His union with the Ālvār materialised, that He regained His original complexion and composure, heightened by the extra lustre imparted by the exuberance of His joy in the coveted company of the Ālvār. The Ālvār, who took due note of this marvellous reciprocity on the part of the Lord, got choked down to a trance state, as he meditated on the Lord’s amazing simplicity and boundless love for him. This was the third and the
last spell of suspended animation, passed through by the Ālvār, who was struck dumb and insensate every time he contemplated the Supreme Lord’s extreme simplicity in bringing Himself down on a par with His devotees and some times, even relegating Himself lower still. Every time, this trance-state lasted six months, as seen from aphorism 58 of ‘Ācārya Hrudayam’ and Śrī Maṇavāla Māmunī’s glossary thereon; the two earlier stages pertain to I-3-1 and V-10-1.

(ii) The description of the Lord and His mighty weapons, (which in the eyes of the Ālvār loom, more as lovely jewels decorating the Lord) is that of the rejuvenated Lord, on His getting lodged in the Ālvār’s heart. This could also fit in with line 2 of Śrīman Nāthamuni’s śloka, ‘Yadgosahaśraṁ apahanti..........’, in adoration of Saint Nammālvār, as per the former’s yogic comprehension. There it has been said that the Bakula-flowered (Narcissus) Nammālvār is the Sun, beaming through the thousand rays of Tiruvāymoḻi, where Lord Śrīman Nārāyaṇa resides, wielding His discus and conch and surrounded by His entire retinue, the region adored by the Brahmins learned in the Śrutis, the cynosure of the Celestials. (See also Introduction).

(iii) What the Ālvār envisaged within him was like unto what meets one’s eyes when a box full of sparkling diamonds is thrown open.

atiyēṇ uḷān; uṭal uḷān-anṭattu akattān, purattullān, paṭiyē itu enru uraikkalām paṭiyān allān, paramparaṇ, kaṭicēr nāṛṛattu ālai ṭiap tuṇpaku kāli nērmai oṭiyā ṭiap perumaiyōṇ, unarvil umpar oruvāņē. (VIII–8–2)

Translation

The One, who does within me (His vassal) dwell,
Stays in this body, as well, being the Inner Soul
Of the worlds, one and all and the regions beyond, as well;
Of fragrance unique and sweet like flawless honey is His bliss perennial,
Higher than the highest, none can His modes fathom,
He is the One, of knowledge supreme.

Note
The Ālvar has high-lighted, in this song, ‘śeṣatva’ or exclusive service to the Lord, as the essential attribute of the individual soul. Instead of saying that the Lord, Who pervades all things all over the worlds and the regions beyond (the external multiplicity of layers), stays within him and his body, he says, the Lord stays in this vassal (aṭiyēn) and the body (uṭal) as well. The Ālvar has thus identified his soul. as the servant (vassal) of the Lord, thereby bringing to the fore, the ‘Śeṣatva’ (servanthood) attribute of the Soul. Although the word ‘aṭiyēn’ (self) occurs in various other songs of the Ālvar and even in the very first song of his first hymnal (Tiruviruttam), it has connoted, in all other places, the embodied soul and not the soul, as such.

Of the two principal attributes of the Individual soul, namely, ‘Jñātrutva’ (bliss of wisdom or knowledge) and ‘śeṣatva’ (service to the Lord), why should the latter alone be taken as the essential attribute of the soul, in preference to the former? This has been examined at great length in aphorism 73 of ‘Śrīvacana Bhusaṇam’. It is reproduced below.

If ‘Jñātrutva’ is held to be the sole attribute of the soul, this is also the attribute of the Lord and hence it is necessary to bring out the distinguishing feature of the individual soul. If, on the other hand, ‘Śeṣatva’ is held to be the sole attribute of the soul, this attribute is applicable to ‘Acit’ (non-sentient matter), as well, and it cannot, therefore, be the distinguishing feature of the soul. And so, both the attributes of the ‘Jīva’ (soul), namely, ‘Jñātrutva’ and ‘Seshatva’ are attracted. We now come back to the question, as to which of these two should be considered the essential attribute of the soul. Could it be ‘Jñātrutva’, which stamps out the soul from the unintelligent matter or ‘Śeṣatva’ which differentiates ‘Jīva’ from ‘Īśvara’ (Lord)? ‘Śeṣatva’ or service unto the Lord, being that which sustains the individual soul and makes it thrive, this attribute naturally comes to
the fore, relegating the other attribute to the back-ground. The assumption of ‘Jñātrutva’, as the essential attribute of the ‘Jiva’, would place it on a par with the Lord and this smacks of ‘Advaita’ or non-difference between the two entities. This is effectively quelled by the ‘Seṣatva’ aspect of the ‘Jiva’. When this topic came up for discussion in Saint Rāmānuja’s holy court of religious discussions, the Saint, although perfectly informed in the matter, wished to get it expounded by his Guru, Tirukkōṭṭiyur Nampi. Kūrattālvān, the illustrious disciple of Saint Rāmānuja, was sent, all the way to Tirukkōṭṭiyur to learn from Nampi the truth, in this regard. Even after waiting on Nampi for six long months, Āḷvān could not obtain from the great preceptor, any hint. But, when he sought Nampi’s permission to return to Srirangam, the latter condescended, at long last, to pin-point the truth admirably, by pointing out: “Son, don’t you know that Saint Nammāḻvār, inspired and endowed by the Lord Himself with perfect knowledge, has said ‘Atiyēn uḷḷān’ (the opening words of this song)?” Grasping at once the implication of this, Āḷvān exclaimed with joy, “Good Sire, I am indeed blessed, I have known the truth” and returned to his Master at Srirangam. The exact import of these two words has already been set out in sub para above.

uvārvil umpar oruvaṇai avaṇatu arulāl urā poruttu, en uvaṇível iruttīṇēn-atuvum avaṇatū in arulē; uvaṇvum, uyirum, uṟampum, marṟu ulappilāṇavum, pāḻēyām uvaṇvaip pera, unntu, iṟa ēri, yāṇum tāṇāy olintānē.

(VIII–8–3)

Translation

To get at the overlord of the celestials of knowledge profound, I did His grace invoke, impounding Him in my thoughtful desires;
Even this act of mine was by His sweet grace ordained, Getting inside me thus, He did make me wholly averse To the earthly moorings, body and soul, pleasures sensual And allied knowledge; He did unto me fully reveal
The essential nature of the soul, as His exclusive vassal, 
Who can't, apart from Him, remain viable.

Note

By His spontaneous grace, the Supreme Lord made the Āḻvār 
God-bent and also revealed unto him, the true nature of his 
Soul, in order to stabilise his God-love, to the exclusion of 
everything else. The true nature of the Soul, as belonging 
to the Lord, as His exclusive vassal, and remaining but His 
mode, His very body, was disclosed to the Āḻvār so that 
he shall not shrink back from Him, any longer.

yānum tāṇāy oḷintāṇai-yātum, evarkkum muṅṅoṇai—
tāṇum, civānum, piramaṇum ākip paṇaitta taṇimutalai-
tēṇum, pālum, kaṇṇalum, amutum ākit tittittu, ēṅ 
ūṅil, uyiril, uṇarviṅil nīṟra oṅra-uṅarntēṅē. (VIII–8–4)

Translation

Realised have the one unto whom I stand indissolubly bound; 
My soul, which does thro’my body, spirit and intellect extend, 
Is His body, delectable unto Him like honey, milk, candy and 
nectar,
To things and beings, one and all, He is anterior,
The Primate unique, who did the Trinity compose and stand 
Alongside Civaṇ and Piramaṇ, whose functions He ordained.

Note

The Lord has now made the Āḻvār aware of the fact that his 
soul is indeed extremely delectable to Him. No doubt, 
all things and beings, with different forms and names, were 
ushered in by Him alone, and yet, in the process, He 
pursued different modes of operation. The ungodly and 
those not bent towards Him were created solely in the light 
of their past actions; Brahmā, Rudra and other Devas, 
hankering after wealth and power, were assigned positions 
where they could wield such power and command wealth; 
in the case of the Āḻvār, however, He demonstrated unto 
him the fact of his soul being exclusively His, highly enjoyed 
by Him, thereby making him realise that he is not apart
from Him, being but His body, an attribute to Him, as whiteness is to a white wall or white cloth. Prior to the dawn of this knowledge, the individual relished the soul as his own and now he relishes the soul as the Lord's, even as the Lord lavishes his affections on it as His attribute.

\( \text{niŋra oŋr}_{\text{ai}} \text{ uŋārntēŋukku, atan nərmai-} \text{atu itu cēr}\text{ə—}
\text{oŋrum oruvarkku, uŋaralākātu; uŋarntum, mēlum kāŋpu-aritu;}
\text{cēru cēru, paramparam āy, yātum iŋrīt tēyntu aŋr}_{\text{u,}}
\text{naŋr}_{\text{u, tītu eŋr}}\text{u ariŋu-aritāy, naŋr}_{\text{āy nānām ka} tāntatē.} \)

Translation

The subtle beauty of the Soul, eternal and intelligent, the Lord's attribute,
None can comprehend, in terms concrete, as this or that
And much less visualise; 'tis indeed very much apart
From matter and does its components, one by one, excel;
One can't with things material compare and tell,
'Tis good or bad and yet He did reveal
Unto me, in its true perspective, my soul.

Note

In the opening song of this hymnal (I-1-1), the Āḻvār acknowledged the fact that he had been graciously endowed by the Lord with knowledge, full and complete. Knowledge of his soul, its characteristics, sepecial features and inter-relationship with the Lord etc., would have doubtless been imparted to him then, as part of the vast range of that knowledge. The emphasis, however, rested on God-love (matinalam) and all that knowledge acquired by the Āḻvār got rooted in it. (Bhaktirūpāpanna Jñāna). The Āḻvār did not, therefore, turn his attention to the study of his soul, as such, a mere firefly, compared with the splendour of the Supreme Lord. It has, however, become necessary now for the Lord to impress upon the Āḻvār the grandeur of his soul and its glorious impact on Him, in the particular context, explained in the preamble to this decad. The Lord has now condescended to exhibit the soul as His mode, that is, one related to Him, as the predicate is to the subject or attribute
is to substance. Even the wisest and the best informed individuals, with the most strenuous mental effort (yoga) or psychic meditation, cannot perceive this wonderful entity, the soul (Ātmā) not comparable with the external objects, with form and content, discerned by the senses. The soul transcends the several vestures veiling it, which could be grouped as ‘body’ (annamaya) or as the senses, ‘prāṇa’ or the vital spirit (Prāṇamaya) or ‘manas’ (manomaya), the mind, or ‘buddhi’, the will. Not falling within the mischief of the modifications and corruptions to which all these are subject, the soul is very subtle and distinct from any of these, not cognisable as ‘good’ or ‘bad’, being outside the purview of sense-knowledge. Neither by speech nor by any process of thought would it be possible to disclose the true nature of the soul in its entirety, even by those who have made great advance in spiritual knowledge. c.f. what the Lord said to Arjuna in Bhagavad Gita. “To know, to see and to enter into the true nature of the soul is difficult”. The soul is thus, by itself; a unique entity (truth), characterised by its own special attributes of intelligence (Jñāna) and bliss (Ānanda).

As the illustrious Ācārya Empār would put it, in the preceding songs, the soul was referred to as an appendage to the Lord, His dependent, an attribute (viśeṣaṇa), the Lord being the substance (viśeṣya); in the four songs commencing from this one, the soul is dealt with as a singular entity, characterised by its own attributes of intelligence (Jñāna) and bliss (Ānanda).

naṁrāya ṇāṇam kaṭāntupoy, nal īntiriyam ellām īrttu, (tu, oṁrāykkāṭanta arum perum pāḷ ulappu il-ātaṇai uṇarntu uṇarn-ceṟṟu āṅku, inpat tuṇpankal ceṟṟuk kaḷaiantu, pacai arrāl, aṅrē appōṭē vīṭu; atuḷ vīṭu-viṭāmē. (VIII–8–6)

Translation
If one can the cruel senses discard, going well beyond. The sense-objects and the sprawling domain of matter transcend,
Discern the soul as a distinct entity and its true nature comprehend,
Abjure, with all one's heart, the fruits of actions, good and bad,
There and there lies the realisation of the soul from bondage freed.

Note

The Āḻvār sets out here the enormous effort needed for the perception of one's soul, dissociated from its material moorings, through the Yogic practices, aimed at the conquest of the senses etc. The practicant has to discern, first of all, the soul as a separate entity, apart from the inert matter with which it is intricately wound up, like oil in seeds, fire in wood etc. The next step will be to get oneself weaned away from the sensual pleasures, the Prakṛti or matter-oriented desires, which are little better than one aspiring for a rich harvest in a vast desert area, a huge waste land, non-cultivable and, therefore, lying fallow. Even after giving up the inert matter as unavailing, the acts giving rise to the fruits, known as 'Punya' and 'Papa' will get one stuck up in worldly life. Therefore, these should also be given up with no chance of their revival, by striking at the roots and cutting out the age-long propensities and the odours driven underground. The soul, thus released from bondage, could, unless the practicant was short-sighted, merely looking upon such emancipation as the final goal, be steeped in the eternal service of the Lord without let or hindrance, the destined goal. The other alternative will be to get lost in self-enjoyment, the disembodied soul enjoying itself, without turning its attention on the service of the Lord. Of course, this alternative which the Āḻvār has elsewhere, in this hymnal, referred to as a great disaster, is indeed farthest from his mind.

atuve viṭu; viṭupēṟṟu īṇam tāṇum atu; tēri,
etuvi tāṇum parṟu īri, yātum ilikal ākiṟkil,
atuvi viṭu; viṭupēṟṟu īṇam tāṇum atu; tēṟatū,
etuvi viṭu? ētu īṇam? ēṟṟu eyṭṭār-eyṭṭār, eyṭṭārē. (VIII–8–7)
Translation

The vision thus gained, of the soul, the Lord’s attribute, Freed from worldly desires and material contacts, does constitute True emancipation and the bliss which from it accrues; Those, who are about this not clear and get confused, Will for ever remain so, ‘asking what is heaven and heavenly bliss?’

Note

The Ājvār affirms that this and this alone (the modus operandi, indicated in the preceding song) is the way to achieve self-realisation and the bliss resulting therefrom. Attempts made, in any other manner, will not fructify. It is only through a total abandonment of all desires passing in one’s mind, except the desire for the ‘Ātman’ (Self, forming the Lord’s attribute), with no chances of their sprouting again, one is said to be steady in the knowledge of the Self (Bhagaved Gita II-55). With a mind steadied in this manner, the vision of the soul is acquired and such an acquisition is, however, worthless, if it does not hinge upon the service of the Lord, in keeping with the essential nature of the soul.

eyttār, eyttār, eyttār eṇṇu, illattārum puṟattārum moyttu, āṅku alaṅi muyaṅka, tām pōkumpōtu, uṇmattarpōl pittē eṟi, anurākam poliyumpōtu, em peṃmāṇōtu ottē eṇṇu, āṅku uḷḷam kūṭek kūṟṟūkēl-nal uṟaiippē.

Translation

One has indeed to steer clear of all temptations, The spurt of desires and fix the mind, in great devotion, On the Lord during those lingering, last moments Of one’s life, when friends and relations gather around and lament, Wailing aloud, “oh, he is gone! he is gone! he is gone!” With their minds agitated, like unto madmen.

Note

The Ājvār stresses here the importance of meditation on the Lord, with absolute calm and clarity, during the last moments
of one’s life, when the whole scene is so tense and bewildering, what with the wanton wailing of the relatives and friends and the terrible off-chance of a sudden spurt of all suppressed desires and unrealised ambitions. It is noteworthy that even stanzas four to eight of this decad, which deal with the characteristics of the ‘Jīva’ (Individual Soul) are rooted in the ‘Śeṣatva’ (servanthood) aspect of the soul. The Āḻvār is indeed grateful to the Lord for such revelation.

kūṭiṟṟākil, ual uṟaippu; kūṭamaiyaik kūṭiṇāl, āṭal-paṟavaī uyar koṭi em māyāṇ āvatu; atu atuva; viṭai paṇṇi, oru paricē, etirvum nikaḷvum kaḷivumāy ōṭit tiriyum yōkikaḷum ularum-illai allarē. (VIII–8–9)

Translation

It will be good, no doubt, if there can be a blend
Of the soul with the Super-Soul but it will be a notion blind,
That the soul could itself become the Lord with the flying bird
On His banner, oh, what a grotesque misfit indeed!
Pity! there exist such perverts gross, at all times, who wallow
In family ties, with all fanciful notions of the final goal.

Notes

(i) Meditation of the Lord during the last moments of one’s life, emphasised by the Āḻvār in the preceding song, stresses incidentally the basic difference between the two entities, namely, the ‘Jīva’ (individual soul) and ‘Paramāṭmā’ (Īśvara, the Supreme Lord). Unfortunately, there are perverts, extant in this world at all times, who propagate fanciful notions that the individual soul, rid of nescience, becomes ‘Brahman’ and thereafter, there is but a single entity, namely, ‘Brahman’, the other entity, the ‘Jīva’ having ceased to exist, as such. The Āḻvār now condemns such heresies.

(ii) If the impossible happens, that is, the incompatibles blending into one, as in the fanciful event of the individual soul and the Super-Soul (the Supreme Lord) blending into a single entity, the Āḻvār wonders what a
grotesque and preposterous misfit it would turn out to be. The individual soul can then be the Master of Garuḍa, the Eternal Hero and fly on him. But this cannot be, flying on Garuḍa being the sole prerogative of the Lord. It is indeed a pity that there have been in the past, there are at present and there will be in the future, persons expounding such heretical doctrines according to their individual fancies.

Translation

Unto His devotees He can never cease to be and does always subsist
While, unto others, He is not, though He does always exist;
Such a unique Lord does in my heart now subsist,
And in me knowledge clear prevails, with no fluctuation
Like the Moon waxing and waning, darkness and sunshine.

Note

The Āl?vār rejoices that the Lord, who enthralled him by exhibiting His auspicious traits, exquisite beauty and cosmic wealth, has now entered his heart, dispelling all doubts and discrepancies to which the perverts succumb and infusing in him knowledge, steady and sound, unlike the fluctuating fortunes of the Sun and the Moon. The solar day is followed by the dark night while the Moon waxes for some time and then wanes. The Āl?vār’s knowledge of the Divine is, however, not subject to such fluctuations, rise and fall.

teruḷum maruḷum māyytu, taṅ tiruntu cempoṇ kaḷaḷ aṭikkīḷ
aruḷi iṛuttum ammaṇām, ayaṇām, civaṇām tirumāḷāl
aruḷap paṭṭa caṭakōpaṇ ōr āyirattul ip pattāl
aruḷi, aṭikkīḷ iṛuttum nam aṇṭal karumāṇikkamē. (VIII–8–11)
Translation

The Lord of sapphire hue will bless and under His feet retain
The chanters of these songs ten out of the unique thousand of
Caţakopan, h
Blest by Tirumâl (Lord Supreme), Who inside Ayan and Civan stays
As their Internal Controller, infuses knowledge, firm and sound, and takes
His devotees unto His victorious feet, with lovely anklets of gold bedecked.

Note

All knowledge that militates against God-love and God-enjoy-
ment will be rooted out and unalloyed knowledge of the
Divine infused in the chanters of this decad by the Supreme
Lord who discharges the triple functions of creation, sus-
tentation and dissolution, the first and last being got done by
Brahmâ and Rudra, Himself standing within them as their
Internal Controller. What more? They shall be lifted by
Him unto His lovely feet, without being allowed to bow
unto others and fall at their feet.

Eighth Centum—Ninth decad (VIII-9)
(Karu māñikka malai)

Preamble

This decad is spelt out by a mate of Parâṅkuśa Nāyaki (Ālvār,
figuratively turned into a female lover). In the entire hymnal,
there are three décads of this type and this is the last of the series,
the two earlier ones being IV-6 and VI-5. In IV-6, the mate advised
the elders, gathered around Parâṅkuśa Nāyaki, who were treading
the mis-guided path of invoking minor deities to cure the Nāyaki’s
malady, to desist from their wrong methods and smear the Nāyaki’s
body with the dust from the feet of Śrī Vaiṣṇavas. In VI-5, it may
be recalled, the mates pointed out to the elders, the futility of their
trying to extricate the Nāyaki, completely absorbed in the Deity
at Tolaivillimāțikalam, having committed the initial mistake of
taking her to that pilgrim centre and then brought her face to face with the Deity there.

The background of this decade is, as follows:

Seeing that Parāṅkuśa Nāyaki (Ālvār) has come of marriageable age, the parents make known to the folks in the town their intention to get her married to an eligible bachelor. Parāṅkuśa Nāyaki is, however, fiercely steeped in the Supreme Lord. As a matter of fact, she has already had secret contacts with the Lord, enshrined in Kuṭṭanāṭṭu Tiruppuliyūr (Kerala State), of which her parents were not aware. The mate, who enjoys the Nāyaki’s confidence, however, knew about it from the change wrought in the Nāyaki’s person and the manner of her talking, but she was afraid of inviting the wrath of the elders upon herself, in case she publicised the truth about the Nāyaki. At the same time, if the truth was not revealed to the elders, they might go ahead with the unwholesome project of getting the Nāyaki married off locally to some one and embarrass poor Nāyaki who might keep reticent out of shyness. Caught thus, in the horns of a dilemma, the mate hits upon a via-media to tide over the situation. The mate makes it appear that she has just got to know about the Nāyaki’s affair with the Lord at Kuṭṭanāṭṭu. Tiruppuliyūr and points out to the elders that, in view of this development, it would no longer be feasible for them to pursue their former plans. This brings to the fore the Nāyaki’s inalienability from the Lord to whom she stands totally dedicated as the object of His exclusive enjoyment. Thus, the essential nature of the soul, as set out in the last decade, gets crystallised still further in this decade.

It deserves to be noted that, enlightened by the Lord about the soul’s grandeur as His vassal, highly delectable to Him, the Ālvār is mighty jubilant, to the point of being turned into the feminine state (Nāyaki). The Ālvār, thus transformed, highlights the current mood of the Nāyaki, her total dedication to the Lord as His exclusive vassal in the esoteric sense, adopting the theme as above. In fact, this is the solitary decad in the entire hymnal, where the Nāyaki gives vent to her joy, indirectly though. In all other decades reflecting the Nāyaki stance, she is in a state of extreme discomfiture due to the immediate non-fulfilment of her particular longing.
karu māṇikka malaimēl maṇit taṭam tāmarak kāṭukan pōl, tirumārvu, vāy, kaņ, kai, unti, kāl, utai-āṭaikaḷ ceyya pirān, tirumāl, emmān, cēlu nīr vayal kuṭṭanaṭṭut tiruppuliyūr aru māyaṃ pēr aṉṟip pēccu ilai, aṉṇaimūr!-iṭaṟku eṉ ceykēṉō?

(VIII–9–1)

Translation

She utters not anything but the holy names
Of the wondrous Lord, difficult to attain, Who remains
In Kuṭṭanaṭṭu Tiruppuliyur, abounding in fields fertile,
Like unto lush forests which with large lotus flowers bristle,
Blooming over the crest of a mount of dark ruby, His lips lovely,
Chest, eyes, hands, feet, navel and robes, being red, one and all;
Ye, elders, I know not what I can do for her, at all.

Notes

(i) The mate says that the Nāyakī cannot fix her mind on anything else, having been enthralled by the exquisite beauty of the Lord enshrined in Tiruppuliyūr in Kuṭṭanaṭṭu (present Kerala State) and she keeps on uttering His names alone. This pilgrim centre is one of the thirteen centres, sung by the Ālvārs, in Kerala State. There is another pilgrim centre bearing the same name in the territory comprised in the former Cōḷa Kingdom (now Tamil Nāṭu), called Cōla Nāṭṭu Tiruppuliyūr. The pilgrim centre covered by this decad, is, therefore, distinctly mentioned as Kuṭṭanaṭṭu Tiruppuliyūr.

(ii) There is nothing like a dark ruby, ruby being only red. And yet, the Ālvār has used this expression, as poetic imagery, to project the picture of the Lord of bluish complexion, of generous dimensions, whose chest bearing the Divine Mother (Mahālakṣmi), lips, hands, navel, feet and silken robes are all red. This exquisite charm would indeed be beyond the purview of our enjoyment but for His coming and staying in ‘Arca’ (iconic) manifestation, out of condescending love, induced by Mahālakṣmi, the Divine Consort.
Translation

Ye, elders, What can I do, if this lady stands lost in admiration Of Tiruppuliyūr, abounding in lovely gardens, where remains The Lord with the crown resplendent, garland and jewels many Beaming like the glorious sun that on lovely mount Mēru rises And the grand galaxy of stars luminous?

Note

The mate goes on repeating, “what can I do for this lady’s condition?” just to impress upon the elders that she was not a party to this involvement of the Nāyaki and that it was a sudden development, of which neither she nor they had any inkling. Besides uttering the Lord’s holy names, the Nāyaki is said to be all praises for Tiruppuliyūr which abounds in fertile fields and lovely gardens. She could also describe in detail, the Lord’s beaming person, His crown, garland and jewels shining like the grand assembly of all luminous bodies; surely, this throws sufficient light on her intimate contact with the Deity over there.

Translation

This lady keeps praising the grandeur, day and night, Of Tiruppuliyūr, where stand castles tall in lustrous array, And stays the Lord wielding lovely weapons such as the discus bright, Who to battle went, like the surging sea set ablaze, Moving along with flames around, and did the Asuras rout.
Note

Here is another grand poetic imagery, the Lord of bluish tint entering the battlefield, wielding the dazzling discus and other weapons of rare excellence, being likened to the blue sea set ablaze, moving about with flames all around. Even as Sītā locked herself up in the sweet embrace of the great warrior, Śrī Rāma, the Vīra Rāghava Who stood victorious in front of her, after vanquishing, single-handed, the entire horde of Rākṣasās in janaśāna, numbering as many as fourteen thousand, in an amazingly short period, Parāńkuśa Nāyakī is now all admiration for the warrior in Tiruppuli-yūr and keeps on recounting His great prowess. This gives yet another clue to the mate about the Nāyakī's engrossment with that Deity. Even as Sītā lavished all her affections on Ayodhya, in preference to Mithila, her birthplace, the Ālvār is all praises for Tiruppuliyūr, giving Tirunakari, his birthplace the go-by.

ūr vaḷām kilar cōlaiyum, karumpum, perum cennelum cūlntu,
ēr vaḷām kilar tān paṇaik kuṭṭanāṭtut tirappuliyūr
cir vaḷām kilar mūvulaku uṇṭu, umiḷ tēva pirāṇ
pēr vaḷām kilarntaṅtip pēccu ial, iṅṭu-ip puṇai-ilaiyē.

Translation

This dame with jewels bedecked, these days,
Recounts, with no respite, the holy names,
That bespeak the glory great of the Lord Who gulped down
And spat the worlds three, Who stays
In Kuṭṭanāṭtu Tiruppuliyūr, full of lovely gardens
And rich crops of sugarcane and paddy, amid fields fertile.

Note

Lost in admiration of the enchanting environments of Tiruppuliyūr, the Nāyakī goes on describing its fauna and flora, the rich fields with extensive cultivation and all that with great delight. And then, she goes into raptures over the role of the Deity there, as the great Protector of the entire universe and talks about it, days on end, in a manner very much out of the ordinary run. As she speaks on with
great zest, she brightens up and looks exceedingly charming, as if she is bedecked with jewels. The mate is led to conclude from the Nāyaki’s speech and comportment that she has had contacts with the Deity at Tiruppuliyūr.

puṇai iļaikaḷ anivum, āṭai uṭaiyum, Ṛtukkaṇippum niḷaiyum nīrmaiyatu aṅru iviṭku; itu niṅṛu niḷaiṅkappukkāl, cuṅaiṅuḷ taṭam tāmarai malarum taṅ tiruppuliyūr muṇaiṅaṛ, mùvulaku āḷi, apaṅ tiru-arul múlkināḷē.

(VIII–9–5)

Translation

The way this lady bedecks herself and dresses up
And the amorous glow on her if one pauses to look up,
One can discern, ’tis beyond comprehension [in terms earthly],
Bathed she must have been in the grace lovely,
Of the Sovereign Master of all the worlds, reigning supreme
In cool Tiruppuliyūr in whose ponds lotus flowers are in full bloom.

Note

The mate is gradually getting into the thick of the subject, by way of adducing incontrovertible evidence of the Nāyaki’s involvement with the Deity at Tiruppuliyūr, in order to convince the Nāyaki’s mother, still bent upon binding her daughter to the earthly home and heart’. The mate’s initial suspicion about the Nāyaki’s intimacy with the Deity at Tiruppuliyūr gets confirmed on three counts, namely, (i) the manner in which the jewels are worn by the Nāyaki at present, differs from that in which they were worn before, revealing the fact of their having been interfered with by some one else, removed and put back on her person; (2) her clothes also bear evidence of similar interference, and (3) the wholesome change in her complexion and comportment like unto the parched-up-land getting flushed with a copious supply of water, turning it lush and green. These are, as the mate puts it to the Nāyaki’s mother, unmistakable indications of the Nāyaki’s love affair with the Lord, which the mother should also take due note of. It is indeed impossible to reclaim the Nāyaki, drowned in the ocean of the Lord’s grace.
tiru-arul mūlki, vaikalum ceļu nīr-niṅak kānta-pirāṇ
tiru-arulkaḷum cērtamaikku ataiyālam tiruntha ulla;
tiru-arul arulāl avan cēntu cēr tāṇ tiruppuliyūr

tiru-arul kamuku on paḷattatu-melliyal cevviṭālé. (VIII–9–6)

Translation

This lady’s lips are glowing red like the arecanut fruit,
Which by the Lord’s grace thrives in cool Tiruppuliyūr, His
favourite resort;
This is a sure sign indeed that she remains immersed for ever
In the sweet grace of Kāṇṭapirāṇ of oceanic colour.

Note

The arecanut trees in Tiruppuliyūr do not thrive on water but
are fed by His grace. If the Nāyakt’s lips are also red like
the arecanut fruits of that place, it only shows that she is also
the recipient of His sweet grace. According to her mate,
there are very many indications of her revelling in His grace,
since long. Her reddened lips, with a special glow, not so
pronounced before, the aftermath of her union with the Lord,
put the whole matter beyond all doubt.

mel ilaic celva vaṇ koṭip pulka, viṅku iḷam tāḷ kamukīṇ
mal ilai maṭal vāḷai ḫa kāṇi cūlntu, maṇam kamaḷntu,
pul ilait teṅkiṇūṭu kāḷ uluvum taṇ tiruppuliyūr
mallaḷ am celvak kāṇṭaṇ tāḷ aṭaṇṭāl-im maṭavaḷāḷē.

(VIII–9–7)

Translation

It seems this young lady has attained the bounteous feet
Of the Lord in cool Tiruppuliyūr where plays the southerly
breeze
Amid cocoanut groves and ripe bunches of plantains waft
fragrance sweet
And lovely betel creepers nestle the mature, sturdy arecanut
trees.

Note

“Even the inanimate things of Tiruppuliyūr live in close amity,
moving hand in gloves; in such a glorious setting, the Nāyakt
would appear to have mingled with the presiding Deity of the place and got on very well with Him, ” says the mate unto the elders.

Translation

What shall I tell you, elders, about the felicity of this damsel? She utters not anything but the holy names of the Lord, Whence does on hooded serpent recline in Tiruppuliyûr cool, Whence the fumes of the ritualistic fire lit by Vedic scholars grand, Fed by ghee, right up to the sky, ascend And envelop the home of the celestials in the region beyond.

Notes

(i) “The Nâyakî would appear to have been attracted by the vedic rites and rituals, in full swing, in Tiruppuliyûr and gone in union with the presiding Deity of the place.” says the mate. The mate is not in a position to say anything more about the Nâyakî. Could it be said that the Nâyakî was subservient to her mate or that the mate was also a party to the excesses committed by the Nâyakî or that the Nâyakî defied her mate and got out of hand? No, none of these and the mate could do nothing better than withering her hands disconcertingly. It is indeed surprising that the Nâyakî should describe, without any reserve, the very bed she shared with her Lord, overlooking the fact that her mate was standing beside.

(ii) It is noteworthy that the Álvâr, who is the author of the Tamil vedas, got attracted by the rituals performed according to the Sanskrit Vedas. These rituals of the Sanskrit Vedas propitiate the Lord, in His ‘ Antaiyâmi ’ aspect, residing in all things and beings as the Internal Controller but not visible to the naked eye. The
hymns of the Tamil vedas aim at service unto the Lord, in His ‘Arca’ or worshippable Form, being sung in front of Him, to His great delectation.

paravāl ival niṟṟu, irāppēkal-pañi nīr niṟak kaṟṇa-pirān
viravu ār icai marai vētiyar oli vēlaiyīn niṟṟu olippa,
karaṟu ār taṭamtorum tāmaraik kayam tīvikai niṟṟu alaram
puṟavu ār kaḷanikal cūl tiruppuliyūṟp pukal āṇṟi, māṟṟē.

(VIII–9–9)

Translation

This young lady sings, day and night, nothing but the glory
Of Tiruppuliyūr where bloom bright lotus flowers in sweet
array,
In huge ponds with crocodiles infested and the chantings sweet
Of the vedic brahmins, like unto the roaring of the sea, rever-
berate,
The cloud-hued Lord Kaṟṇapiṟṟi’s favourite seat,
Surrounded by fields many of fertility great.

Note

The Nāyakī speaks of nothing but Tiruppuliyūr, the exquisite
form of the Lord ens rined there, the vedic chantings of the
devotees over there and the lush fields and luscious fruits
in plentiful supply. The mate avers that this clearly points
to the Nāyakī’s involvement with the Deity over there.

āṇṟi, mēṟṟor upāyam eṉ, ival amtaṇ tuḷāy kamaḷtal—
kuṇṟa mā maṉi māṭa maḷikaik kōlak kuḷāṇkal maḷki,
teṇ ticaist tilatam purai kuṭṭanāṭṭut tiruppuliyūr
niṟṟa māyaṉ pirān tiruvarulām ival nēṟpaṭṭate? (VII–9–10)

Translation

The aroma of tuḷaci, cool and nice, on this lady reveals
Her contact gracious with the wondrous Lord in that crest jewe!
Of southerly direction, Tiruppuliyūr, where stand castles tall
In cluster grand; what other reason can I, for this, tell?
Eighth Centum (VIII–9) 825

Note

The mate now adduces yet another evidence which conclusively establishes the fact of the Nāyaki’s contact with the Lord at Tiruppuliyyūr. The fragrance of tulaci, the Nāyaki’s person exudes, is the tell-tale, betraying her contact with the Lord, who wears the aromatic tulaci garland on His crown, chest and shoulders. “Could there at all be any other reason for this special aroma on the Nāyaki’s person?”, the Mate emphatically asks.

nērpaṭṭa niṟai mūvulakukkum nāyakaṉ-Taṉ āṭimaī
nērpaṭṭa tonṭar tonṭar tonṭar tonṭaṅ caṭakopaṅ col
nērpaṭṭa tamil-mālai āyirattul ivai pattum
nērpaṭṭār-avaru nērpaṭṭār-neṭumārku āṭimaī ceyyavē.

(VIII–9–11)

Translation

Those that are well-versed in these songs ten
Out of the choice thousand composed by Caṭakopaṅ,
The vassal of the vassal of the Sovereign Master’s vassals’ vassal,
Will for His loving service become truly eligible.

Notes

(i) The chanters of this decad are assured of the attainment of the final goal, namely, eternal service unto the Lord. The Āḻvār describes himself as the vassal unto him that stands last in the long chain of the Lord’s devotees, steepep in His loving service. Evidently, this sets the pace for the decad, that immediately follows, highlighting service unto the Lords’ devotees as the highest goal.

(ii) It has to be noted that this song refers to the Lord, the Sovereign Master of the entire universe, the essential nature of the individual soul as the humblest servant of the devout, the excellence and potentiality of the hymnal expounding the Lord’s greatness and the ultimate benefit devolving on the chanters of this decad.
Eighth Centum—Tenth Decad (VIII-10)  
(Netumārku atīmai)

Preamble

The subject’s exclusive dependence on the Supreme Lord was emphasised in the last decad. But then, dependence on the Lord could extend up to the Lord’s devotees as well by virtue of His unbounded love for them. This is like our wearing on our heads, the holy sandals of the Lord and swallowing the water obtained by giving them a sacramental bath. Did not Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār declare in VIII-10-3 of his ‘Periya Tirumolī’ that, as a result of learning the eight-syllabled Tirumantra, he became a vassal of the devotees of the Lord, enshrined in Tirukkaṇṇapuram? Service unto the Lord’s devotees, the logical culmination of service to the Lord (which is implied in the word ‘namaḥ’, occurring in Tirumantra), is dealt with, in this decad. Actually, the end-song of the last decad has already set the pace for this decad. No doubt, the essential nature of the soul, with special emphasis on servanthood (ševatva), as the Lord’s vassal, extending up to the Lord’s devotees, was set out, as far back as III-7 ‘Payīlam Cuṭarōli’. We, however, see in this decad, the Āḻvār intensely longing for the fulfilment of such service, constituting the final goal. Being the liege unto the Lord’s favourite apostles and Saints on Earth is deemed to be a greater virtue, carrying to greater value than direct allegiance to the Lord Himself. In ‘Īṭu’, mention has been made of an anecdote, shedding copious light on this topic. Ammuṇi Āḻvāṅ, a disciple of Śri Parāśara Bhaṭṭar was greeted, as follows, by the illustrious master, on the former’s return to Srirangam from his sojourn in the Hoysala country (Mysore):

“Son, we learn with great pleasure about the service you have rendered, during your sojourn in those parts, to the Śrī Vaiṣṇavas, over there. In keeping with your spirit of service unto the Lord’s devotees, you richly deserve a discourse from me on ‘Netumārkaṭīmai’, the decad of Tiruvāymoilī, bearing on this very aspect.”

The Āḻvār ends up this decad by praying unto the Lord, that this passionate longing of his to serve the Lord’s devotees should endure till the end of time and it should also be instilled in all those associated with him, generation after generation.
neṭumāṛku aṭimai ceyvēnpōl avanai̱k karuta, vañcittu, taṭumāṛru aṛṛa tikkatikaḷ muṛṟum tavirnta; caṭir niṇaṁtāl, koṭu mā vinaṇēṇ avan atiyār atiyē kūtumitu allāl, viṭumāṛu enpatu en, antō-viyan mūvulaku perinumē?

(VIīI–10–1)

Translation

If even the mere thought of simulating service unto the Lord, Who for His devotees bears love immense, could truly rid Me of all my cruel sins, unknown to me, can this sinner great Give up service unto His devotees, at their lovely feet? Need I say, except this, I would reject outright all else Be it even a gift unto me of all the worlds immense?

Note

If the mere wish of the Ālvār, with hardly any semblance of sincerity to serve the Lord, could surely blot out all his deadly sins, that very moment, without his being aware of the whole process how much more beneficial could whole-hearted devotion to His apostles be? This is how the Ālvār revolved, in his mind, seeing that the Lord bears inordinate love for His devotees and service unto His devotees would, therefore surely please Him much more than direct service unto Him. If the Ālvār were to choose between service unto the Lord's devotees on the one hand, and possession of the combined wealth of all the three worlds devolving on him as an unconditional gift on the other, he would not set his eye on the latter but firmly stick to the former; the latter stands no comparison whatever with the former.

viyan mūvulaku perinumē, pōytāṅē tāṅē āṅālum, puyal mēkampōl tirumēṇi ammaṇ puṇai pūm kaḷal atikkilc cayamē aṭimai talainirār tiruttāl vaṇāṅki, immaiyē payaṅē īnpam yāṅ perāṭatu urumō-pāviyēṅukkē? (VIII–10–2)

Translation

Neither sovereignty over the sprawling worlds three Nor enjoyment of one's self, freed from bondage, can equal the bliss,
This sinner has attained, of adoring the feet lovely
Of the self-less devotees in the vanguard of service
Unto the cloud-hued Lord bedecked with lovely flowers and anklet victorious.

Notes

(i) Even the combined gift of vast wealth and the 'Kaivalya' state of perennial freedom from bodily ties, cannot equalise the bliss of service at the holy feet of the self-less apostles of the Lord, His hot favourites.

(ii) The self-enjoyment, referred to, in the second line, is the 'Kaivalya' state, denoted by the phrase in the first line of the original text of this song, "self becoming self". The self in family bondage, cannot enjoy itself, having to be in the midst of the family members, sharing their weal and woe. If it attained Heaven and partook of the bliss of eternal service unto the Lord, it has to be in the company of the glorious attendants over there and once again, there is no scope for solitary enjoyment of one's own self. And so, the phrase in question could denote only the 'Kaivalya' experience or enjoyment of itself by the emancipated soul, in disembodied state. Although this is an eternal state, the Alvar would not regard it as the ultimate value (Puruśārta) worth coveting, rather, he shuns it all along.

Translation

Would it be appropriate if I did attain
The lotus feet, of fragrance sweet, of the lotus-eyed Lord,
Who did His midget form expand and pervade
The worlds three, all at once, seeing that there remain
In this abode, His devotees great, the 'little-big' men,
Who did redeem me, and my mind I can't turn
On anything but unremitting service unto them?

Notes

(i) Having abjured wealth and 'Kaivalya Mokṣa' in the two preceding songs, the Ālvār now asserts that even service unto the Supreme Lord has to be given the go-by, overwhelmed, as he is, by service unto the 'little-big' men (as in the original text), over here, which is virtually an enlargement of service unto God. The 'little-big men', an apparent contradiction in terms, refers to the great apostles of profound knowledge but with frail bodies, who move about, in this harrowing world, and propagate the gospel of God-love. Here is an interesting anecdote, in elucidation of this extra-ordinary phrase. When Kūrīatāḷvāṉ was reciting this stanza within the hearing of his son Parāśara Bhaṭṭar, the latter, a mere boy, was curious to know how the diametrically opposite qualities of littleness and bigness could inhere in one and the same individual. When the young lad sought of his erudite father, clarification in this regard, the latter appreciated the query but expressed his inability to illustrate the position in the light of the Vedic truths, which could not be inculcated in the boy, at that stage, when he had not yet had the spiritual initiation through 'upanayana', the sacred investiture ceremony. The learned father, however, found it handy to bring home to the boy the import of the expression in question through concrete examples of the great devotees, profound scholars like Cīrīyāccāṇ, Mūtāliyaṉṭāṇ, Empār Arulāḷapperumāḷ Emperumāṇṇār etc., possessing frail bodies.

(ii) It might be recalled that the Ālvār was earlier under the irresistible spell cast by the enthralling beauty of Lord Vāmanā but now he switches on to the service of the devotees subjugated by Vāmana's exquisite charm.
iṅkē tirintēṛku īḷukku uṟṟu eṅ-iru mā nilam muṅ uṟṭu, umīḷnta,
ceṅkōlatta pavaḷavāyce cēntāmaraiṅkaṇ eṅ ammaṅ
poṅku ēḷ pukalkal vāya āy, pulaṅkoḷ vaṭīvū eṅ maṅattatu āy,
āṅkuēy malarkal kaiya āy, vaḷīpaṭṭu ōṭa, aruḷilē? (VIII–10–4)

Translation

What would be wrong indeed, if I abjured heaven
And stayed on, in this abode, my tongue spelt out
The radiant glory of the lotus-eyed Lord with lovely lips, who
gulped down
All the worlds once and then spat them out,
I did in my heart implant His form exquisite
And my hands worshipped Him with choice flowers,
In the foot-steps of His devotees of great fervour?

Note

It is but meet that the ‘ carama parva niṣṭā ’, that is, one who
adores the Lord’s devotees much to the delight of the Lord,
should adore Him also for the gratification of the devotees.
Matura Kavi Ālvār, who knew no God other than
Parāṅkuśa (Nammāḷvār), said, in the third stanza of
‘ Kaṅṇinun Čiṛuttāmpu,’ that there was nothing wrong
in his adoring the cloud-hued Lord, for the delectation of
Nammāḷvār, His staunch devotee. That song of his would
appear to have been inspired only by this song of his master.
The Ālvār’s tongue, which should sing the glory of the
Lord’s devotees, now sings His praise; his mind, where
the devotees are to be enshrined, now holds the Lord and
his hands which should offer flowers at the feet of the great
apostles of the Lord, now place those flowers at His lovely
feet. This does not, however, constitute any deviation from
his arowed stance of being the vassal of His devotees
(Bhāgavata seṣatva). Verily, it is but an extension of that,
directed towards the pleasure of those devotees themselves,
c.f. Śatruṅga’s devotion to Śri Rāma, as but a corollary to
the former’s devotion to Bharata, by-on-means detracting
from it. See also the elucidation in aphorism 127 of
‘ Ācārya Hrundayam ’.
valipatitu ōta, arul pērī, māyan kōla malar atiikkīle
culipatitu ōtum cuṭarcoṭi veḷḷatū ḫurru iruntālum,
ilipatitu ōtum uṭalīṅīl pirantu. taṅ cir yāṅ kāṛu,
molipatitu ōtum kaviamutam nukarcci urumō-muḷutumē?
(VII–10–5)

Translation
Were I blest by the wondrous Lord to render service eternal
At His lotus feet lovely, in the yonder land supernal,
With its whirling splendour in spate and rejoice, would it at all equal
The rapturous rapport with the devout,
Singing in their holy company, the songs nectarean that sprout,
From the sweet contemplation of the Lord’s qualities great,
Albeit possession of the meanest of bodies is my lot?

Note
The Ālvār is gradually working up the unique bliss of service
unto the Lord’s apostles and Saints and holding a rapport
with them, before which even the bliss of eternal service
in the yonder Heaven, resplendent with the stream of whirling
radiance at the lotus feet of the Lord of transcendent glory,
pales into insignificance. In the earlier songs, possession
of the wealth of all the three worlds and self-enjoyment
in a disembodied state after final emancipation from
bodily bondage, have been discarded as insignificant nothing,
in comparison with the glory of service unto the Lord’s devotees. The Ālvār does not mind acquiring the meanest
of bodies if that would not hamper the joy of his experiencing
the Lord’s glory and transmitting it in the form of sweet
songs to be sung in the company of the holy men over here.
Feeding the devotees with such songs, providing real nourish-
ment to them, is an important facet of service unto the
devotees. It is, therefore, very appropriate that this aspect
finds mention in this decad.

nukarcci urumō müvulakīn viṭu pēru-taṅ kēl il
pukarc cem mukatta kalīru aṭṭa poṇ āliṅkai en ammāṅ,
nikarc cem paṅki e ṣi vīḷiṅaṅ niṅṭa aṣurar uvir ellām
takarttu, uṅṭu, uḷalum pul-pākaṅ, periya taṅi māp pukalē?
(VII–10–6)
Translation

Will the prowess great, astounding cosmic wealth and sovereignty
Of the Lord, my Sire, sporting the ring lovely
And flying (Garuḍa) the bird, smart and lively,
Who slew the majestic elephant peerless, red with rage,
And did the red-haired Asuras hefty, with fiery eyes, flay,
Stand any comparison with the supreme bliss
Of contemplation of the vast array of His attributes peerless?

Note

This song is but a follow-up of the immediately preceding song, amplifying the idea conveyed therein. The bliss of contemplation of the Lord’s peerless glory, finding expression through such scintillating hymns, is indeed an experience so great that, before it, even the Lord’s own happiness resulting from His Sovereignty and might, cosmic wealth etc., pales into insignificance.

taṇi māp pukalē eṇaṅgum niṟkum paṭiyāt tāṇ tōṅgī,
muṇi māp pirama mutal-vittāy, ulakam mūṅgum muḷaippitta
taṇi māt teyvat taḷir āṭikkilp pukutal anṛi, avan aṭiyār
naṇi māk kalavi ḍempemē nāḷum vāyka-naṅkaṭkē.(VIII–10–7)

Translation

May we the supreme bliss of communion enjoy, for ever,
With the devout, setting aside even the rapport with the Lord Supreme,
Of peerless glory, the first cause of one and all, Who did usher
By a mere resolve, all the worlds of incomparable fame,
That shall, true to vedic dictum, endure the test of time!

Notes

(i) Here is a case of the Āḻvār wanting to reach the farthest limit of God-enjoyment, culminating in rapturous rapport with His devotees (these virtually taking the place of God) and abiding in it, for all time.
(ii) The Lord's peerless glory referred to here, is His extraordinary grace in thinking of resuscitation of the Universe, lying dormant in a subtle state, without distinction of name and form and putting it back on its feet, Himself being the triple cause (material, operative and instrumental) for such an evolution. The chief merit of this creation is the opportunity it provides unto the creatures to exhibit their gratitude unto their Creator, the great Benefactor, by seeking His lotus feet, as their sole refuge. In the present context, the Ālvār's ultimate goal, however, extends up to the devout who thus seek refuge at the Lord's lovely feet and it is the incessant communion with these Vaiṣṇavas (Lord's ardent devotees) that the Ālvār avidly longs for.

nālum vāyka naṅkaṭku-nālir nīrā kaṭalaip patāittu, taṅ tāḷum, tōḷum, mutikalum, camāṅ ilāta pala parappi, nīḷum paṭar pūṅi kāppakak kāvum, nīṟai pāl naṅīṟṭīn kōḷum, utaiya māṇi maḷaiṭōl kiṭantān tamarkaḷ kūṭṭame.

Translation

May we for ever behold the assembly grand, of the apostles great,
Of the Lord, who lay on the cool oceanic waters He did create,
With outstretched feet, shoulders and crowns, many and matchless,
Like unto an emerald mount, abounding in crawling orchids
And gardens fine, beaming with the radiance of Suns in myriads.

Note

Nothing more is needed, the Ālvār now says, than even the mere sight of the grand congregation of the Lord's self-less devotees, steeped in the enjoyment of His enchanting Form, as described herein. Creating, first of all, the vast expanse of water, the Lord lay on it with perfect ease, stretching out His numerous feet, shoulders and crowns, like unto an emerald mount abounding in lovely orchards in repose.
tamarkal kūṭa valviṇāyai nācam ceyum catu mūrtti,
amar koḷ āli, caṅku, vāl, vil, tāṇṭu āti pal paṭaiyaṇ,
kumaraṇ, kōla aiṅkaṇai vēḷ tātai, kōtu īl atiyār-tam
tamarkal tamarkal tamarkalām catire vāyka-tamiyērkē.

(VIII—10—9)

Translation

May this vassal, left alone amidst the worldlings, be blest:
With the bliss of service unto the vassal, who stands last
In the grand chain of the blemishless devotees of the Lord,
Who did unto Manmata, perennial youth and exquisite charm impart,
Who the militant weapons, conch, discus, sword, bow etcetera does wield
And, with His might unique, rids the enemies tough of holy band.

Notes

(i) The Lord destroys en masse the entire band of those tough enemies of His devotees. It could also mean destruction of the obstacles confronting the band of devotees as a group or the destruction of the cluster of evils, as and when they crop up.

(ii) Even the proverbial youth and handsomeness of Manmata, the deity reputed to be a paragon of beauty, are imparted unto him by the Lord, who is ‘Manmata Manmata’

(iii) Three types of devotees have been mentioned in stanzas 2, 9 and 10 of this decad. In the category of those exemplary devotees to whom service of the Lord is an end in itself, alluded to in the 2nd stanza, falls Bharat in the category of blemishless devotees who are absolutely selfless, mentioned in this song, is included Satrugna, while, in the next category of the inseparable devotees who can’t brook separation from the Lord, Lakṣmaṇa is right in the vanguard. Likewise, he Álvār and his associates stand on a pedestal of their own, well apart from the mad pursuits of the worldlings.
vāyka tamiyērku ālitōru ūli ūli-mā kāyām—
pūk kōl mēpī, nāŋku tōl. poŋ ālik kai, en ammāŋ
nīkkam illā ātiyār–tam ātiyār ātiyār atiyār em
kökkaŋ; avarkē kuṭikalāyac cellum nalla kötpāē.

(VIII—10—10)

Translation

Those that stand last in the chain of the devotees inseparable,
Of the Lord of the lovely tint of lily blue, with shoulders four,
Who wields the discus bright, art unto me, my Masters sure;
May the desire keen to serve them wholly and for ever,
On me devolve and pass on to my clan, as a whole.

Note

The Ālvār is very keen that such an ardent desire to serve the
one that stands last in the long chain of the Lord’s ardent
devotees, should not stop with him alone but trickle down to
those connected with him, generation after generation.
The inseparable devotees, referred to, are those like
Lakṣmaṇa, who longed to serve Lord Rāma, day and night,
without respite, in all possible ways. (See also notes
under VIII-10-9).

alla kötpāṭtu ulakaṅkaḷ mūṅṅūllum tāṅ nirainta
allik kamalak kaṅṉaṅai am tāṅ kurukūre caṭaṅkaṅ
otpocallapaṭṭa āyirattul ivaiyum pattum vallārkal
snalla patattāl maṅai vāḷvar, koṅṭa peṇṭir makkāle.

(VIII—10—11)

Translation

Those that are well-versed in these songs ten,
Out of the thousand uttered by Kurukūr Caṭaṅkopaṅ,
Adoring the Lord with lotus eyes, large and lovely, who
pervades
All the three worlds with wholesome creeds,
Will as householders flourish, with fervour great,
To serve unremittingly the Lord’s devotees aright.

Notes

1. (i) The Ālvār invests all the three worlds with his remarkable
fervour to serve the Lord’s devotees, which has become,

T—27
as it were, a creed with him. This is the wholesome creed with which he invests all the worlds also. As Śrī Nampillai puts it, the worlds settled down to orderly thinking, good conduct and behaviour, only after the Āḻvār sang this decad (Tiruvāymoli).

(ii) Far from getting vexed with the Āḻvār for his by-passing Him and getting into the domain of ‘Bhāgavata-śeṣatva’ (Service to His devotees), the Lord gazes at him in great wonderment, seeing that he pines for this creed of his to trickle down to his future generations also. In the process, the Lord’s eyes get widened further still, making them even more attractive than before and inviting the Āḻvār to take due note of it and give expression thereto in this end-song.

(iii) The benefit accruing to the chanters of this decad, as set out in this end-song, sounds rather queer. To get consigned to the life of a house-holder would seem like getting into something the Āḻvār has been abhorring all along, and detests in the very next decad (IX-I). The point to be emphasised here is, however, the merit attaching to ‘Grhaṭāśrama’, life as a virtuous house-holder, ably supported by members having the common objective of serving the devout with unremitting zeal and sincerity, such as that of Kūrathālvāṇ, Ananṭālvāṇ and other savants. It is only family life which does not conform to this ideal, that needs to be condemned and eschewed. In ‘Ītu’ there is, as usual, a juicy anecdote to reinforce the wholesome aspect of family life. The great Ācārya, Śrī Rāmānuja, set out on a pilgrimage to ‘Ananṭacayaṇām’ (Trivandrum in Kerala State), accompanied by a large number of dis iples. On the way, they halted at the residence of Celva Nampi, an ardent devotee of remarkable excellence, (vide also the 11th stanza of Periyāḻvār’s Tiruppallāṇṭu) at Tirukkoṭṭiyūr. Although Nampi was out of station, at that time, his equally devoted wife lavishly entertained Śrī Rāmānuja and his huge entourage, overjoyed at the voluntary arrival of so many ‘Bhāgavatas’ (devotees), all at once, an act of grace galore on their part. The
household granary which was full of paddy, recently harvested, was pounded into rice, *in toto*, with great jubilation and all that rice was consumed by the venerable guests. On Celva Nampi’s return home, he found the granary absolutely empty. Without the slightest disquietitude, the perfect hostess, his wife was, she assured Nampi that their granary in Heaven should indeed be full. Let it be noted that this is the kind of household that has been vouchsafed by the benign Álvár to the chanters of this decad.

Toțanur Nampi, Eccân and a few other great savarits are also said to have dedicated their lives to the service of the devout (Bhāgavatas).

**THE CENTUM, IN RETROSPECT:**

**(DECAD–WISE SUMMARY)**

**(VIII-1)**: In the concluding decad of the Seventh Centum, we saw how the Álvár was longing for the immense pleasure of singing these hymns (Tiruvây-moli) before the Divine Couple at Tiruvâranvilai and rendering unto Them, other kinds of service, as well. But then, the project did not get off the ground and non-fulfilment of his cherished desire made the Álvár grow sceptical of the Lord’s *bona fides and attributes*, mainly, His traits of loving condescension and ability to concede the wishes of His devotees. And so, we see him giving expression to his misgivings, *in the opening decad of this Centum*. Apprehending, however, that the Álvár, sunk in despair, under the delusion that all His auspicious traits have dried up, might collapse altogether, the Lord set at naught his doubts by calling upon him to ponder over all that He had done for him, so far and assuring him of the due fulfilment of whatever He intended to do further for him. Thus consoled, the Álvár feels elevated from his erstwhile depression;

**(VIII-2)**: Although the Álvár’s misgivings were cleared up, in the last decad, he was still not happy because of his inability to achieve the external perception of the Lord’s exquisite charm and physical contact, longed for, by him. This gave rise to yet another doubt in his mind, whether the Omniscient Lord still discovered in him traces of worldly desires and was, therefore, holding back. And so, the Álvár vindicates, *in the second decad*, his absolute detachment from all things ungodly, fiercely concentrating on the Lord, with no other thought crossing his mind. But then, he does this, not by means of a direct dialogue with the Lord but through argumentation between him, turned as Parâŋkuśa Nâyaki and the mates and elders;
(VIII-3) : The Āḻvār could not lift his mind off the vision of the Lord's exquisite Form of spectacular grandeur, conjured up by him in VIII-2-10 and, therefore, he voices forth in the third decade his apprehension of the safety of the Lord who moves about, in all His heavenly splendour, alone and unaided in this wicked world, peopled by the ungodly and the selfish. In the exuberance of his God-love, the Āḻvār loses perspective of the sequence of time; he would like to move about as the Lord's camp-follower, carrying His bows and arrows; he is anxious that the turbulent child, who slept in the cradle under Yaṣodhā's nose and is now reposing, as a tender Babe, containing all the worlds in His stomach, on a tender fig-leaf, over the vast expanse of water, with none to attend on Him, should not fall asleep and slip down, into the deep waters; seeing the Lord, in His Iconic manifestation, in a reclining posture in quite a few pilgrim Centres, the Āḻvār thinks that He is relaxing Himself after His strenuous endeavours, such asspanning all the worlds, setting His tender feet over hill and dale, rubbles and brambles etc., and offers to massage His shoulders and feet. Above all, he feels vexed, with his loneliness, not finding yet another, in the whole world, sharing his anxiety in this regard. Towards the end of the decade, we find that the Lord has set the Āḻvār at ease, by convincing him that there was hardly any room for such fears and made him regain his composure, cured of his erstwhile fears;

(VIII-4) : Apprehending that the Āḻvār might, in the exuberance of his God-love, once again entertain fears similar to those voiced forth by him, in the third decade, the Lord wanted to dispel the Āḻvār's fears, with no chance whatever of their revival. He, therefore, revealed to the Āḻvār, His invulnerable abode in Tiruccēṅkuṅṟū Tiruccērṟū (Kerala State), out of bounds to the ungodly, attended by the mighty band of three thousand Vedic scholars, full of devotion. As a further precaution, the Lord also exhibited to the Āḻvār, His wondrous deeds, revealing His extra-ordinary prowess and valour. With his fears thus totally eradicated, the Āḻvār could whole-heartedly enjoy in the fourth decade the Lord's exquisite beauty;

(VIII-5) : The intense mental enjoyment of the Lord's regal Form, enchanting, every inch, resorted to, by the Āḻvār, in the seventh song of the fourth decade, once again resulted in a deep yearning, an insatiable longing for external perception of the Lord's Form, as envisioned by him and getting locked in His sweet embrace. Non-fulfilment of his longing has consigned the Āḻvār to the bottom-most depths of dejection, the like of which has not been witnessed, in the earlier decades. He cried out his misery, in the fifth decade, like unto one bodily trapped in a forest fire and his limbs appear to be even more worn out than their owner. The Saint beckons the Lord to appear before him, in all His splendour, wearing His crown, tall and majestic and moving along, like the exhilarating rain-cloud, the rising Sun, so on and so forth. The Lord did not, however, respond and so, this decade ends on a despondent note, the Āḻvār being led to believe that he would pass away, immersed in grief;

(VIII-6) : Stung by a deep sense of remorse over His laxity in not responding to the Āḻvār's invitation, the Lord pondered over the steps to be taken by Him to placate the Āḻvār. But then, if He straightaway presented Himself
before the Āḻvār, in his present state of mind, he would just collapse due to excessive joy. It was, therefore, expedient that the Āḻvār's enjoyment of the Lord should be induced by stages, so as to be stable, without anything untoward happening. The Lord, therefore, stationed Himself in Tirukkaṭṭīṭāṅam (a pilgrim centre in Kerala State), so as to enable the Āḻvār to go over there and mingle with Him freely. The Āḻvār, who got scent of it, felt elated over the Lord's overwhelming love for him and gave vent to his resultant joy in the sixth decad;

(VIII-7) : The Lord's desire to get at the subject, His coveted belonging, is very much more than that of the Āḻvār to get hold of Him. The Lord, therefore, minglest with the Āḻvār, with such an inordinate longing that the Āḻvār realises, with a stinging sense of shame, that he had tried to reverse the role, by begging of the Lord for his redemption, overlooking the fact that it was the Lord who was all along the supplicant for the Āḻvār's love unto Him. It is an exceedingly grateful Āḻvār that acknowledges in the seventh decad, with great feeling, the enormous love bestowed by the Lord on the individual soul, as the indefatigable cultivator of God-love, in the latter The bliss enjoyed by the Āḻvār, in this context, stands on a pedestal of its own and it can even be asserted that there is no comparable decad in the entire hymnal;

(VIII-8) : No doubt, the Āḻvār gave vent to his great jubilation, in the seventh decad and even so, in the eighth song of that decad, he referred to himself as a frail being with whom the great Lord of unlimited prowess has chosen to mingle freely and stay on. The Lord noticed, with great concern, the revival of the earlier tendency of the Āḻvār to shrink back from Him, with a frightful sense of his own pettiness, in contra-distinction to the Lord's grandeur of unlimited dimensions. Therefore, He wanted to quell the Āḻvār's notion of the Soul's pettiness by revealing to him its real grandeur. But then, the soul, like unto a mere fire-fly, may not hold out any appeal to the Āḻvār, profoundly struck by the Lord's exquisite charm. The Lord, therefore, revealed to the Āḻvār, His charm first, and then, the grandeur of the Āḻvār's soul, in its relation of liegeship to the Sovereign Lord, as delectable unto Him as His ornaments And so, in the eighth decad, the Āḻvār dwells on the intrinsic beauty of the soul, as the exclusive vassal of the Lord, as revealed by the Lord Himself;

(VIII-9) : Seeing that Parāṅkuṣa Nāyaki (Āḻvār) has come off marriageable age, the parents make known to the folks, in the town, their intention to get her married to an eligible bachelor. The Nāyaki is, however, fiercely steeped in the Supreme Lord and, as a matter of fact, she has already had secret contacts with the Lord, enshrined in Kuṭṭanāṭtu Tiruppulliyūr (Kerala State), of which her parents were not aware. The mate, who enjoys the Nāyaki's confidence, however, knew about it from her speech and comportment but she was afraid of inviting the wrath of the elders, if she publicised the truth about the Nāyaki. At the same time, she did not want that the elders should go ahead, with their plans and so, as a va-media, the mate makes it appear that she has just got to know about the Nāyaki's affair with the Lord, at the aforesaid pilgrim centre. The mate further impresses upon the elders that,
in view of this development, it would no longer be feasible for them to pursue their former plans. This brings to the fore, the Nāyaki’s inalienability from the Lord to whom she stands solely dedicated, as the object of His exclusive enjoyment. Thus the essential nature of the soul, as set out in the eighth decad, gets crystallised still further, in the ninth decad.

(This is the last of the three decad, in the entire hymnal, put in the mouth of Parāṅkuṣa Nāyaki’s mate, the earlier ones being IV-6 and VI-5).

(VIII-10): The subject’s exclusive dependence on the Supreme Lord was emphasised in the preceding decad. And now, service unto the Lord’s devotees, the logical culmination of service to the Lord, is dealt with, in the concluding Centum of this decad. No doubt, the essential nature of the soul, with special emphasis on the concept of servanthood (Ṣesatva), as the Lord’s vassal, extending up to His devotees, was already set out in III-7 (Payilum Cuṭaroli). We, however, see, in this decad, the Āḻvār intensely longing for the fulfilment of such service, constituting the final goal. Being the liege, unto the Lord’s favourite apostles and Saints on Earth, is deemed to be a greater virtue, carrying a greater value than direct allegiance to the Lord Himself.
ERRATA (Vol. III)

PAGE  LINE

515  5 Insert , after ‘ saw’, Centum and ‘ onwards’
     , 8 Insert , after ‘ which’.
     , 13 For Alvar read as Ālvār.
     , 16 Insert , after ‘ do’.
     , 18 For tran- read as trans-.
516  7 (From bottom) substitute ‘ for !
517  9 For mulaṅkum read as mulaṅkum.
521  3 For ins parable read as inseparable.
     , 15 Insert , after ‘ beneficiary’.
523  18 For Caṭakopāṇ read as Caṭakopaṇ.
524  12 (From bottom) delete ‘ of’.
531  9 For handful read as handful.
532  23 For Emār read as Empār.
534  12 (From bottom) insert , after ‘ grand’.
537  8 Delete ‘ the’ before ‘ Lord’
539  4 (From bottom) delete, before ‘ Ye’.
540  3 For ‘ are one’ read as ‘ any one’.
     , 12 For him read as Him.
542  9 Insert — after ‘ praise’.
543  12 For Devas read as Devas’.
     , 12 (From bottom) For of read as to.
547  18 For Recountingt he read as Recounting the
565  8 For Porumal read as Porunal.
569  2 (From bottom) insert , before ‘ with’.
576  4 For dōtura read as dātura.
577  13 For enquiries read as enquires.
581  11 For aprt read as apart.
583  2 (From bottom) For ulakkaṇkal read as ulakkaṇkal.
584  19 For Ālvrā read as Ālvār.
610  13 For a read as.
613  17 (From bottom) For Rshis read as Rśīs.
619  12 (From bottom) delete, after ‘ then’.
     , 11 (From bottom) For flocking read as knocking.
620  14 Delete ;
622  3 (From bottom) insert , after ‘ concert’.
630  6 Delete , before ‘ are’.
634  2 For Son read as on.
     , 5 For literarally read as literally.
635  2 Delete ?
     , 15 Delete , after ‘ all’.
636  5 Insert ” after ‘ Sanctifier’.
638  15 (From bottom) insert ‘ in ’ after ‘being’.
Delete ’ after Lord and insert the following:
Raṅganātha, by virtue of the special circumstance of his birth,
is said to have requested the Deity, “oh Lord!

Insert , before ‘with’.

Insert , at the end.

For counsell read as counsell-

(From bottom) For reasons read as reason.

For impenetrable read as impenetrable.

(From bottom) Delete ) after 4.

Insert , before ‘fat’.

For Warriors read as Warriors.

Substitue ; for , after ‘galore’.

(From bottom) delete , before ‘held’

Delete the whole line

(From bottom) insert , before ‘out’

For Ayodhā read as Ayodhyā.

For Āvatāra read as Avatāra.

(From bottom) delete ‘to’ and insert ,

(From bottom) add ‘to’ at the end.

(From bottom) For smoe read as some.

(From bottom) insert , after ‘we’ and delete ‘and’ after ‘men’.

(From bottom) delete , before ‘though’ and insert , before ‘coming’.

For Ícan read as Ícan.

Last For to day read as today.

(From bottom) insert , after ‘nature’.

Insert , after ‘great’

Delete ’ before ‘longs’

For ‘hail storm ‘ read as hailstorm.

For unto read as unto.

For you read as You.

(From bottom) insert after ‘him’ and ‘pleasures’.

(From bottom) delete after ‘Brahmā’.

(From bottom) delete that’.

Delete , after Ālvār.

For enojoy read as enjoy.

(From bottom) For in so far read as insofar.

(From bottom) For identity read as identify.

Insert , after ‘life’.

(From bottom) For theif read as thief.

For mately read as ly.

(From bottom) insert , after Lord.

Delete ;

(From bottom) For act read as acts.

(From bottom) For consequences read as consequences.

For enjoying read as enjoy.
697 19 Insert ' the ' before ' Lord '.
699 7 (From bottom) For tune read as time.
700 12 For eōtiyai read as cōtiyai.
\ldots 9 (From bottom) insert , after ' it '.
\ldots 6 (From bottom) insert , after ' singing '.
701 5 (From bottom) For month read as mouth.
702 Last Insert , before ' actually '.
703 1 For Dharṣana read as Dharṣanam.
\ldots 11 (From bottom) For ęctin read as ection.
704 9 Insert after ' song ' (Samson Agonistes).
708 6 For be read as he.
\ldots 7 Insert , after Him.
\ldots 9 For errorneous read as erroneous.
\ldots 11 Insert , after ' on '.
\ldots 10 (From bottom) insert , at the end.
\ldots 5 (From bottom) For ' words ' read as ' word '.
709 8 For would read as wouldn't.
710 5 (From bottom) For maṭī read as maṭīl.
711 16 For vāykkum read as vāykkum.
\ldots 8 (From bottom) insert , before more.
713 1 Insert , after ' Nampi ' and substitute ? for ! after ' You '.
\ldots 2 Insert , after Sire.
\ldots 4 Insert ' before ' said ' and delete '' after ' Lord '.
715 7 For totto read as toto.
716 5 For tripled read as triple-eyed.
\ldots 10 (From bottom) substitute , for full-stop, at the end.
\ldots 3 (From bottom) insert , after ' leg '.
717 12 Insert , at the end.
\ldots 16 Insert , after ' Mahāviśṇu '.
\ldots 6 (From bottom) For ' For ' read as ' for '.
718 7 For ' is ' after ' that ' read as ' it '.
\ldots 18 For full-stop, at the end, substitute ,
\ldots 3 (From bottom) substitute , for full-stop after ' word '.
721 5 For me read as men.
\ldots 9 Insert , after ' state '.
\ldots 20 Insert , after ' experience '.
\ldots 14 (From bottom) For narrowing read as harrowing.
\ldots 13 (From bottom) For he read as He.
723 15 (From bottom) For requests read as requests.
726 6 For angles read as angels.
\ldots 7 For samsārīs read as samsārīs.
\ldots 10 Insert , after ' end '.
730 14 For sístuations read as situations.
732 22 Insert , after ' beings '.
733 14 For halve read as halves.
734 14 For objuring read as abjuring.
735 15 (From bottom) delete , after ' You '.
740 10 For some read as come.
742 8 For pātu read as pātu.
744 23 For Kāneś read as Kāncit.
745 11 (From bottom) insert , after ' terms '.
747 15 For resent read as resents.
748 12 (From bottom) For Āśravatsala read as Āśravatsala.
749 15 Insert , after ' matched '.
750 3 Insert , before ' in '.
752 11 Delete , after ' graciously '.
753 11 Delete , before ' felt '.
755 15 For strenth read as strength.
756 14 For ther read as there.
760 12 Delete ' of ' after ' inside '.
761 15 For measuring read as measuring.
763 8 For Kurukūre read as Kurukūre.
765 9 (From bottom) delete , before ' the ' and insert ' to '.
769 20 Insert ' were ' before ' thus '.
770 18 Delete ' whose ' before ' hearts '.
775 15 Last Delete , before ' first '.
777 6 For intense read as intense.
782 13 (From bottom) For Kulāñkāl read as Kulāñkāl.
783 14 For Lorq read as Lord.
785 6 Substitute , for the full-stop, at the end.
787 2 Insert , after ' Lord '.
790 2 Insert , after ' wonders '.
791 13 (From bottom) insert , before ' in '.
792 6 Insert , at the end.
794 21 Insert , after ' only '.
796 1 Insert , at the beginning ; delete ' been '.
797 15 (From bottom) insert , after ' pauper '.
798 18 For complete read as complete.
802 5 (From bottom) For duy read as duly.
2 (From bottom) For stomachs read as stomachs.
14 (From bottom) For Introduction, read as Appendix, Vol IV.
13 For great read as great.
14 For permist read as permis-
16 Insert ' I ' after 'have'.
16 (From bottom) For graciously read as graciously
20 For know read as known.
7 Delete ' ' before 'asking' and insert ' ' before ' what'.
7 For expound read as expounding.
20 Delete the full-stop at the end.
16 (From bottom) For heart read hearth
12 (From bottom) insert, before 'at'.
15 For Kannapiṭāṃ read as Kannapiṭāṃ.
13 For netumārku read as netumārku.
9 (From bottom) For steeped read as steeped.
15 (From bottom) delete ' to ' before 'greater'.
2 Delete :
3 (From bottom) For by-on-means read as by-no-means
3 Insert , after 'mount' and after 'orchards'.

Last