

PATHWAY TO GOD TROD BY SAINT RAMALINGAR

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THE BIBLE OF KINDNESS

“Man must rest, get his breath, refresh himself at the great living wells which keep the freshness of the eternal. Where are they to be found if not in the cradle of our race, on the sacred heights, whence flow on the one side the Indus and the Ganges, on the other the torrents of Persia, the rivers of Paradise? The West is too narrow, Greece is small; I stifle there. Judaea is dry; I pant there. Let me look towards Asia and the profound East for a little while. There lies my great poem as vast as the Indian Ocean, blessed, gilded with the sun, the book of divine harmony wherein there is no dissonance. A serene peace reigns there, and in the midst of conflict an infinite sweetness, a boundless fraternity, Which spreads over a living things, an ocean (without bottom or bound) of love, of pity, of clemency. I have found the object of my search; The Bible of Kindness.”

MICHLET: The Bible of Humanity, 1864*

* I found this passage on the first page of Romain Rolland’s Life of Ramakrishna. I have taken the liberty of prefacing my book also with the same passage as the term “The Bible, of Kindness”, or, to give it its more appropriate name, “The Bible of Compassion” fits our Raamalinga Swaamikal’s Thiruvartupaa in a manner it can fit our other book. Yes, The Thiruvartupaa is the Bible of Compassion indeed!-
AUTHOR

A NOTE ON SPELLING OF TAMIL PROPER NAMES AND WORDS

Familiar and long-accepted spellings of words like ‘Tamil’ have been left as they are spelt at present. Otherwise, in absence of diacritical marks, proper names and other Tamil words have been spelt in a manner which will enable the non-Tamil reader to pronounce them as closely as possible to the correct pronunciation in Tamil (or in Sanskrit).

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Mystics the world over speak the same language - the language of love, not carnal but supernal. In fact, the lives and teachings of mystics constitute the only tangible, and, perhaps, the most rational means for us to know the existence of God.

They have no use for the ponderous tomes that speculate about the existence of God, nor are they preoccupied with the diverse schools of philosophy because they need no theory to affirm the existence of God. They speak of God from the solid ground of personal experience, direct communion with the Beloved whose nature is "love inexpressible". And because there are no words in the language - any human language - to express this "divine love", the mystics use for that purpose the language of human love, howsoever imperfect or insufficient it is. Hence the importance of moral purity for getting an insight into their works.

Every land has produced its mystics, and in India every region has been blessed age after age with their birth.

Whether language chauvinists like it or not, placed as we are at present, but for the unifying role of the English language, the stories and writings of these mystics would not have become the common property of all Indians, nay, the whole world.

It was Gurudev Ranade, a realised soul, who did pioneering work in making available to the spiritually-hungry people the authentic accounts of the mystical experiences of the saints of Maharashtra, Karnataka and Hindi-speaking regions. His monumental works, *Pathway to God in Marathi Literature*, *Pathway to God in Kannada Literature* and *Pathway to God in Hindi Literature* are justly famous. The Bhavan had the privilege of publishing these works of this great modern savant.

It is in this context that we readily accepted the thoughtful suggestion of Sri N. Mahalingam to publish Sri Vanmikanathan's magnum opus, "*Pathway to God Trod by Raamalinga Swaamikal*."

This is the second book by Sri Vanmikanathan in the "Pathway" series. The first was published by the Delhi Tamil Sangam. He is now working on the third book in the series, and with that book he would have covered the entire devotional literature in the Tamil language. It is interesting to note that Sri Vanmikanathan was inspired to write these books after reading Gurudev Ranade's "Pathway" series.

In 1973, at the instance of Sri Mahalingam, we published *The Life and Teachings of Saint Raamalingar* by S. P. Annamalai. It was No. 183 of our Book University Series, and covered 208 pages. We do not, as a rule, publish two books on the same subject, but Sri Vanmikanathan's book is an exception. The present book covers 759 pages besides the very valuable and elaborate index, and its plan is something unique since it interprets the spiritual life of the great Swami with the help of his own poems, more than 1200 stanzas of which have been pressed into service for this purpose. This is, in fact, the most comprehensive translation of Saint Ramalinga's

poems so far available to the non-Tamil knowing reader, being a little over one-fifth of the total output of the Saint.

Born on October 5, 1823 in Marudhur, a small village near Chidambaram in Tamil Nadu, Raamalinga Swami had in his early childhood a vision of Lord Siva in the sacred temple at Chidambaram, sparking the beginning of an intensely spiritual life which came to a close on January 30, 1874.

Ramalinga Swami, who came to be known as “Arutprakasa Vallalar” has left behind a rich legacy of spiritual literature in his mother-tongue, Tamil, the most well-known of which is *TiruArutpa*.

A saint in the line of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Sri Ramana Maharshi, Sri Ramalinga Swami too did not have any formal education, but his hymns, came as they did from the intuitive depths of his inner realization, have rightly earned their place among the immortal mystic literature of the world.

One who had conquered death while living by becoming the beloved of the “Deathless One”, Saint Ramalinga Swami felt that he was commissioned by Lord Nataraaja to spread the message that God can be realised by man “here and now”.

We refrain from saying more about this book here as we will be encroaching on the territory of the scholars who have written the Introduction and Foreword to the book.

In deference to the wishes of the sponsors of this book, it has been priced very moderately in spite of the prevailing high cost of production. Sri Vanmikanathan’s previous books have been marketed on the basis of “buy two and give away one”, that is, a purchaser bought two copies and gave away one of it to a non-Tamil-knowing friend. If the gift went to a Westerner, all the better. In view of the comparatively moderate price of this book despite its 800 odd pages, and the message of compassion and universal brotherhood it conveys, we hope it will be well received by the reading public.

Merit there is none
in whispering among ourselves
ancient tales;
if there is excellent merit in them,
we should make peoples of other lands
pay homage to it.

– Subrahmaniya Bhaarithi

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MESSAGE

It is the lustre shed by Socrates that adorned Greece: it is that shed by Leonardo de vinci that adorned Rome; and it is that shed by Vallalaar that adorns the wonder that is Tamilakam, India, and hence the entire world in fact.

Vallalaar's memory will always be cherished as long as life thrives in this universe as he was destined to be born here for the unique purpose of spreading the message of Reverence for Life (Jeevakarunyam).

It is not only in relation to India's glory that Vallalaar's life eternal is significant, but also in relation to the glory of the entire world.

This work by Sri G. Vanmikanathan presents such a mighty soul's biography as far as it is found in the sweet verse of our seer-poet Vallalar.

The rising influence of our seer-poet is not limited to any particular generation but it is an imperishable gift to the whole world.

The development of the Tamil literature for more than 2000 years and the spiritual heritage of Alwaars and Naayanmaars is the base on which Vallalaar was able to build a great edifice for respect for life and worship of "Jothi".

N. MAHALINGAM

INTRODUCTION

Ramalinga Swamigal was born in 1823 and left the earth in 1874. He is thus almost an exact contemporary of Ramakrishna Paramahansa. Yet while the fame of Ramakrishna has spread throughout the world, partly through the Ramakrishna Order founded by his disciple Swami Vivekananda, Ramalinga Swamigal remains practically unknown. There is, no doubt, more than one reason for this, but one reason is, certainly the neglect of Tamil literature and poetry in the West.

Mr. Vanmikanathan has devoted his years of retirement after an active life as a civil servant to making known some of the classics of Tamil spirituality in English. He has translated the Thirukkural, that classic of 'wisdom' literature, which reminds one of the Wisdom books of the Bible, and is so universal in its character that it has been claimed as a Hindu, a Jain, and even as a Christian work. He has also translated the Tiruvachagam of Manikkavachakar which is regarded as one of the greatest mystical poems in the literature of the world. Now Mr. Vanmikanathan has given us a translation of one thousand poems of Ramalinga Swamigal, inserted in the story of his life, with an elaborate commentary, revealing the extraordinary character of this great mystical poet.

Tamil literature has a quite distinctive place among all the languages of India. It seems to derive from an older tradition than the Sanskrit, which is the base of most Indian languages. Tamil scholars like to trace the origins of their literature to certain academies or 'sangams', which are said to have existed several thousand years before Christ. However this may be, it is certain that Tamil is a very ancient language and its earliest extant literature goes back to a period before the Christian era.

Tamil religion also appears to be very ancient and to have a very different character from the Aryan religion of the north. Certain figures which were found at Mohanjadaro are believed to portray the god Siva, and Tamil Saivism has certain very remarkable features. The Thirukkural, for instance, is remarkable for its 'this-worldly' character. Among the traditional four 'ends' of life, pleasure (kama), wealth (artha), duty (dharma) and liberation (moksha), it deals at length with the first three, but omits the last end which has usually been the dominant concern in Indian thought. Further while it gives a definite place to the ascetic life, it, preference is clearly for the married life of the householder and the duties of civic life, with which it is largely concerned.

There is a realism, an acceptance of this world, of the beauty of nature and of the joy and sorrows of love in Tamil religion, which is reflected in the fact that so many of the Tamil saints were married people engaged in normal human occupations. Many of the Vaishnavite and Saivite saints were mystics, who poured out their love for God in poems and songs of extraordinary beauty, yet there is a realism, a homeliness in their poetry, which reminds one of the writings of the English mystics, like Richard Rolle and Julian of Norwich.

Ramalinga Swamigal is a typical representative of this Tamil tradition in religion and poetry, but he has also his own unique character. He is a Saivite, who worships Siva in his different manifestations as the one, supreme God, but there is

nothing sectarian in his religion. He believed that he was called to proclaim the universal religion, what he calls the Samarasa Sanmarga—the Universal True Path—which was to be the basis of a universal brotherhood. But it is here that, it seems to me, he betrays a certain weakness, which may account in part for his lack of any large following. He was a mystic who had received extraordinary revelations from God, but this seems to have led him to despise all other forms of religion. He speaks in terms of unmeasured contempt for the Vedas and Agamas and all scriptures and creeds. This may be due in part, as Mr. Vanmikanathan suggests, to the tendency common to most mystics to condemn the ‘letter’ in comparison with the ‘spirit’ because of the depth of the truth which they have seen. But there is a lack of measure in his language, which is disturbing. Perhaps one may compare him in this respect with Kabir, who like him was a poet and mystic, who denounced conventional religion and upheld a very pure mystical doctrine, but like Ramalinga remained somewhat of an individualist and failed therefore to command any large following.

But this is not to suggest that Ramalinga was out of sympathy with common humanity. On the contrary, his most distinctive characteristic is his immense compassion and his concern, which took a very practical turn, for the poor and the suffering. His sensibility was so intense that he suffered not only out of sympathy with human suffering, but also out of sympathy with the pain of animals and even of plants. This led him to extend the concern of his universal religion not only to all men but to all living beings, and to be an ardent advocate of vegetarianism which became an integral element of his creed.

In all this one must remember that he was before all things a poet with a poet’s sensibility. This is shown in another characteristic, his habit of attributing to himself every kind of sin. One may think that there is a kind of poetic exaggeration in the language which he uses due to his extreme sensibility, which felt the slightest fault as a serious sin. It is possible that his poetic imagination may account for an opposite characteristic, his attribution to himself of the supreme powers of the Godhead, which are usually considered to be reserved to God alone. It may be that in this matter Ramalinga did not clearly distinguish between what his imagination conceived and what he experienced in reality.

In the development of his mystical life, Mr. Vanmikanathan shows how he seems to have followed closely the path of the purgative, the illuminative, and the unitive ways, which is traditional in western mysticism. This is but one more illustration of the fact that mystical experience tends to follow the same path in East and in West, in Hinduism and Buddhism as in Islam and Christianity. Ramalinga Swamigal thus shows himself as a poet and mystic whose religion was universal, based on the love of God and compassion for all men and all living beings. He had a deep sense of sin from which he was gradually freed by his experience of the purgative way. This led him on to the illuminative way in which he experienced the joy of the spiritual betrothal in that kind of bridal mysticism, which is so well known in Tamil Nadu and which has its parallels in both Islamic and Christian mysticism.

Finally he was led to the supreme heights of the unitive way, where he enjoyed a union with the supreme Godhead that is of peculiar interest. Ramalinga Swamigal, following the tradition of the Saiva Siddhanta, expressed his union with the Godhead in terms of a personal union, of which he can say, ‘I became It and It

became me'. He can even go on to say: 'It became It', yet in this experience there is no loss of personal identity. Mr. Vanmikanathan explains it admirably in the words of a modern Catholic mystic, Thomas Merton, who writes 'When contemplation becomes what it is really meant to be, it is no longer something poured out of God into a created subject so much as God living in God and identifying a created life with his own life, so that there is nothing left of experimental significance but God living in God'. At this point Hindu and Christian mystical experience are seen to be one and the same.

There is another point of resemblance of Ramalinga's experience with that of Christian mysticism. Ramalinga's mysticism does not involve the loss of the body in the final state of liberation but its transfiguration. He speaks of a "golden body" which was given to him, by which he reached a state of 'deathlessness'. This idea of an immortal body is found in Taoist mysticism and in the concept of a 'diamond body' in Tibetan mysticism as also in the 'spiritual body' of St. Paul and Christian tradition. Mr. Vanmikanathan seems to diminish the significance of this state of deathlessness by reducing it to the state of the delivered soul freed from the body in videha mukti. But Ramalinga surely reflects, a deeper insight into the fact that in the final state of deliverance the body is not destroyed but transformed. It is filled with the divine life and becomes a spiritual body no longer conditioned by the present laws of matter, but transfigured in the divine light. The story of his own passing that he simply disappeared, whether it is literally true or not, is surely of deep symbolic value in this respect.

Thus Ramalinga Swamikal comes before us as a profound mystic with a special relevance to the modern world. His is a religion of universal brotherhood, embracing not only all men but all living beings, and the ultimate state of man and the universe is seen not as a liberation from matter and the body, but as their transfiguration by which they are merged in the transcendent life and light of the Godhead.

-BEDE GRIFFITHS

FOREWORD

It was an acute embarrassment to be asked to write a Foreword to Mr. G. Vanmikanathan's massive memoir *Pathway to God*, for I must confess to no more than a very superficial acquaintance with the infinitudes of mystic poetry in Tamil, including Ramalinga Swami's *Tiru-Arutpa*, which is the immediate subject of the present memoir. On the other hand, it was also a challenging invitation to God-experience, with all its predictable upsets, uncertainties, agonies, exhilarations and realisations. Let me record at the outset my gratitude to the author for making me spend several days of self-absorption oscillating between his highly sensitive English renderings from the *Tiru-Arutpa* and the relevant passages in the original, between his total dedication to his task and the splendour of Ramalinga's poesy and ministry that had inspired the task. It has been a singular education for me, a fresh entry into the inner countries of the Spirit.

Mr. Vanmikanathan is a true knight-errant in undertaking some of the most difficult projects in the tantalising field of literary commerce and communication. With his mastery of Tamil, English and Hindi, he is the 'three language-formula' carried to the point of credibility and creativity in the broader context of national integration. Through imaginative identification with the spirit and literary sensibility of the late V. V. S. Aiyar, Mr. Vanmikanathan was enabled to publish Aiyar's illuminating study of *Kamba Ramayana* in a form of rounded completeness. He has translated Thirukkural into English prose and brought out an edition in Hindi verse. And his rendering of *Tiruvagasam* in English is no mean achievement.

Pathway to God, Mr. Vanmikanathan's latest work, is essentially the spiritual biography of Ramalinga Swami, and is told largely in the words of Ramalinga himself. After all, in the life of an illumined ecstatic and God-intoxicated singer like Ramalinga, of what importance are the so-called 'external' facts and dates? The inner history, the soul's travail, the adventures in God-realization—these alone are the heart of the matter. This 'inner life' was a journey and a quest, a protracted struggle with its vicissitudes of failure and success, gloom and ecstasy. It was also a full circle from Thillai to Muruga at Kandhakottam and on to Tiruttani Muruga and Tyagesar at Tiruvottriyur and back again to Thillai Nataraja. The 'external' events are like vague sign-posts, and they throw but little light on the movement of the underground waters of the spirit. This is the reason why Mr. Vanmikanathan covers the 'facts and dates' — the 'bio-data'—in the course of a few pages (Chapter II), and devotes the rest of the book to the inner history of the man and of the man of God.

In his understandable anxiety to read a pattern in the inner spiritual history, Mr. Vanmikanathan has drawn upon St. John of the Cross 'three-step movement', the Purgative, the Illuminative, the Unitive:

"We shall .. follow the footsteps of the Swamikal as he makes his way to the Godhead through these three sections of the Pathway, the first of which is painful and dolorous, the second a strange mixture of sorrow and joy, sorrow being replaced by joy as ignorance is slowly replaced by illumination, and the last a section of sheer delight, of mounting bliss."

The stages are also identified later as the Dualistic, the qualified Monistic, and the Monistic. Doubtless, in all spiritual history, there is at one end the scalding sense of division and separativity, and, at the other, the climactic end, there springs the ineffable feeling of identity, the shedding of all individuality, the bliss of union and the peace that passeth understanding. In between the extremities, there rages a gulf of unknown dimensions which may be bridged by one or more spans; more often, one merely flounders and sinks. Virasaiva Philosophy, for example, speaks of *shatssthalas*, six stages, these again divisible into further intermediate stages. A too rigid formulation of the dynamics of spiritual advancement is thus apt to carry the stamp of artificiality. It is to Mr. Vanmikanathan's credit, however, that he doesn't turn the three-stage pattern into a Procrustes' Bed, but uses the terms Purgative, Illuminative, Unitive - only to guide the reader through the tropical opulence, labyrinthine movements, and dazzling imagery of the *Tiru-Arutpa*.

The definitive edition of *Tiru-Arutpa* by Ooran Adigal in 1972 was a landmark in Ramalinga studies, because it arranged the songs and the song-sequences for the first time in their strict chronological order. This has helped Mr. Vanmikanathan to follow Ramalinga Swami's progress, "not only through year to year of his life, but also through the several stages of his spiritual journey in their chronological order". As Mr. Vanmikanathan says in one place:

"I do not speak; it is the Swamikal himself who recounts in his own words the experiences of his journey on the Pathway to God. I merely add a link phrase or sentence or an explanatory note or interpretative para".

But it must also be remembered that a good deal of the apparently confessional or reminiscential poetry in the Six Books of the *Tiru-Arutpa* can hardly be accepted at its face value as a record of personal experience. The poet is obviously either imitating some of the earlier masters, following certain conventions of all devotional poetry, perhaps even dramatizing recurrent human situations, rather than setting down his own particular defaults, defeats or lacerations. There is a hiatus between the known facts of Ramalinga Swami's life and some of the confessional extravagances of the songs, and Mr. Vanmikanathan is on the whole convincing when he tries to winnow out the true from the merely conventional, fictional and the dramatic, and thus Ramalinga Swami emerges from the pages of the book as a credible person, not the less human for being so often in a frenzy of God-love or the ecstasy of God-realization.

Again, partly following tradition and largely under the main compulsion of his own sensibility, Ramalinga Swami has as many of his songs and outpourings in the imagery of bridal mysticism. Here is a sample:

Seeing Him dance on the mystic stage, my friends,
I fell in love with Him ...
Having taken my maidenhead, Oh my friends!
He has forsaken me.
He has thus exposed me to talk, my friends,
for all and sundry to whisper...
Yet, my friends, I would I embraced Him again:

can't you bring us together ? *

* This and the following 'free renderings' from Tiru-Arutpa are my own experiments in translation.

At all times, the *nayaki-nayaka-bhava* is for a poet something of a razor's edge; a slip could be perilous and fatal. Quintessentially it is a way of journeying - or cantering - from the known and the familiar to the unknown and the mysterious. The hunger of the human soul for God is conveyed through the symbolic figure of Radha pining for and seeking out Krishna, and in poems like Jayadeva's *Gita Govinda*, all erotic imagery is valid to bring out the sequence of the first sudden onset of love and union, the subsequent separation and deprivation and passionate longing, and the culminating ecstatic reunion - in fact, the whole drama of what Sri Aurobindo has called "the *lila* of the love of the human spirit for God". By its very nature, the pull of the human soul towards Siva, of *pasu* for Pati, of Ramalinga for Nataraja, evokes erotic imagery to a less sensuous degree perhaps than the Radha-Krishna relationship. Even so, the poems in *Tiru-Arutpa* cast in the *nayaki-nayaka-bhava* are of variegated richness and comprehend the entire gamut of the music of bridal mysticism. In translation as well as in commentary, Mr. Vanmikanathan has, however, cultivated a delicate touch, always enhancing the theme, never making it of the earth earthy.

One other point: Ramalinga Swami was not merely a great mystic and a God-gifted singer, he was also acutely conscious of the contemporary human situation, the iniquities of the social organization, the cruelties of man to man, the obliquities of the fallen human condition. Pain, want, injustice—anywhere or in any form—distressed him, and in his heart's agony he cried out again and again:

Every time I saw crops withering,
I withered to; as often
as I saw hungry destitute beggars,
I too fainted with hunger.
The sight of chronic victims of disease
made me tremble like a leaf,
and the defeat of the meritorious
has made me wilt in pain ...
Compassion has overwhelmed me as oft
as I've mixed with living beings.
In distress I've petitioned You for help,
as I do again today.
My life's run and soul of compassion are one,
not wholly different things.
My life must cease when my compassion dies –
I swear this at Your feet.

The institutions he founded in his own life—Samarasa Suddha Sanmarga Satya Sabha, Satya Dharmasala, Satya Gnana Sabha—were meant to translate his humane social insights and anxieties into practical as well as spiritual terms. He was a tireless castigator of all profession without practice, all false assumption of superiority based on birth, class, status or privilege alone, all blind superstition and ritual, all bigotry

and hypocrisy, all avarice and ostentation. And yet what gave the accent of apostolic authority to his animad-versions and denunciations was his own personal purity, his radiant sincerity, his decisive ascent into sanctity. It is very near the end of his life that he made this superb affirmation, emphasizing the universality of his unitive experience of the Divine:

I'm asked: "Is your dancer-spouse the same as
the godheads of other creeds?"
Indeed, the hallowed names of these will fit
my beloved Spouse also.
When even the word 'madman' he'll not spurn,
which name will not chime with Him?
Nor can he bear only the names of gods
of the diverse religions:
Your name, my name, or anybody's name
is also my Spouse's name,
His ecstatic dance, multiplying Him,
blazons forth this mystic Truth.

Ramalinga was truly a man of God, he was the living embodiment of the wisdom and love of God, he was the very personation of the concept of Arut-perum-Jyoti that filled so much of his thought and writing and ministry. It is the cardinal merit of Mr. Vanmikanathan's book that Ramalinga the man of God, the witness Spirit, the angel and ambassador of Arut-perum-Jyoti always holds the center of the stage.

Certainly, Ramalinga's is the story of a god-man in its progressive manifestation, and is hence a single or integral piece. But for the reader's sake, Mr. Vanmikanathan has parceled out the story into thirteen manageable chapters, beginning with 'A Child Laughs', which is a reference to Ramalinga's first mystic experience as a child of five months—

When my mother took me as a baby
to the sanctum at Thillai –
You revealed to me, as the curtain rose,
all the transcendental Truth;
Sheer God-knowledge ripened in my nonage,
O my soul's sap and home!

to 'Anubhava Malai' (the last chapter), which contains a complete verse rendering of Ramalinga's culminating poetic recordation, on the eve of his withdrawal on 30 January 1874, of his unitive experience of God as Nataraja, as Arut-perum-Jyoti. By deliberate intention, much of the story is made up of choice renderings from Ramalinga's own poetic outpourings. And here Mr. Vanmikanathan is from time to time seized by a sense of inadequacy bordering on despair:

"Again and again I feel that I should give up translating these songs. Their music, their melody, their cadence, their alliterative sonance, their metrical ebb and flow, all are lost in a translation".

On the other hand, Mr. Vanmikanathan has evidently lived and laved for months—perhaps for years—in the surge and music of the *Tiru-Arutpa*: he has been hearing the parallel strains in *Tiruvvasagam*, *Tevaram*, *Tirumandiram* and other classics of Tamil Saiva mystic poetry: he has heard echoes of the musings of many a Western and Oriental mystic; and thanks to this discipline, this sadhana of total commitment, he has not faltered in daring the impossible; and, taken as a whole, his translations achieve a satisfying fidelity to the original that is most commendable. He is generally close enough to the original in intention and imagery, and the renderings, in their sweeps of thought and feet of rhythmic movement, sound natural enough to ears attuned to English poetry.

Finally, Mr. Vanmikanathan is widely read in the literature of philosophy and mysticism, and there are unexpected but apt citations from the writers and thinkers of yesterday and of to-day – Sankara, Jalal-ud-din Rumi, Aldous Huxley, Romain Rolland, Thomas Merton and a host of others - and these help to sustain his argument. He begins Chapter XII with the disarming remark: “I am not writing this book. It writes itself”. And, in some measure, this is true too. Wholly surrendered to his task, Mr. Vanmikanathan finds that some force is helping him, re-charging him again and again, and inexorably rushing him forward. A native momentum is thus discernible in the wide spaces of the book, and the unwary reader is sometimes likely to experience a sense of surfeit, to feel dazzled and bewildered - and find himself all but lost. *Pathway to God* is thus not a book to be read in a hurry or at one stretch, even as the scaling of a Himalayan summit is not to be accomplished in one leap. Faith and patience and an inner opening are called for, but then the recompense will be incommensurable.

“Matri Bhavan”.
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K. R. SRINIVASA IYENGAR

A good book is the plectrum
with which our else silent lyres are struck.

- Henry David Thoreau

PREFACE

Sri N. Mahaalingam, a great devotee of Raamalinga Swaamikal has been asking me to translate some of the songs of the Saint into English. Only now the divine will which governs all my actions in this sphere of activity gave its sanction. The first impulse was to translate three hundred stanzas which had been selected for another purpose. Divine will had other plans. This book is the outcome. I am very much indebted to Sri Mahaalingam for his lavish patronage of my efforts to propagate the Thirukkural in Hindi and English, and the Thiruvaachakam in English. I fondly believe that I discharge through this book a fraction of that undischageable debt. May he live long with health and wealth to serve his country, religion and language.

Sri N. Giridhaari Prasaad who plays the same role to Raamalinga Swaamikal which Vivekananda played to Raamakrishna Paramahansa, Sri Ooran Atikal, the biographer of Raamalinga Swaamikal and the learned editor of the Thiruvartupaa, Sri S. P. Annamalai, the author of 'Life and Teachings of Sri Ramalinga', Sri Auvai Doraiswaami Pillai who is now engaged in writing an elaborate commentary on the Thiruvartupaa, Sri M. Raamalingam and Sri Bhageerathan of the Raamalinga Mission, Madras, Dr. C. Sreenivaasan of the Annaamalai University, and my friend Dr. Auvai D. Nataraajan, M.A., M.Litt., all have been very helpful to me. I thank them all. My special thanks are due to Dr. K. R. Sreenivaasa Iyengar who has written a most able Foreword to this book. My cousin, Sri N. Raajaratnam, B.E., has rendered me great service by going through the manuscript very carefully and correcting many errors which had escaped my eyes. I am greatly indebted to him for this service of love.

Rev. Fr. Bede Griffiths, M.A. (Lit.) Oxford, of Satchitaananda Aasram at Shaanthivanam in Thanneerppalli has graciously gone through the manuscript of this book line by line, word by word, and has suggested many corrections which I have gratefully carried out. Furthermore, he has now written an Introduction to this book. This is not the first time he has helped me. He has helped me very materially in revising my English translation of the Thirukkural for a future edition and he has shown a very lively interest in my work when I was writing my book, 'Pathway to God through Tamil literature, (i) through the Thiruvaachakam' and has introduced many Westerners to it. I pay my humble thanks to him for all this and more.

I should not forget Kumaari Baby Saroja who has typed the manuscript of this book, not equating work with the wages. Before this book is published, she will be married. I wish her a very happy wedded life.

In conclusion, I pay my most humble homage to Jagadguru Sri Kaanchi Kaamakoti Sri Sankaraachaarya Sri Chandrasekara Saraswathi Swaamikal whose benign benediction and command has enabled me to render a modicum of service to Tamil through my few works in the English language.

I do not like to load a Preface with apologies for any opinions expressed in the book. Mostly such apologies are made in a spirit of pseudo-humility, in a spirit of challenging all and sundry to contradict the author at their peril. Yet, I must say that

this book is an adventure into the depths of the unfathomable mind of Raamalinga Swaamikal. I have enjoyed the adventure, but I cannot say with certainty that my readers will do so. As Henry David Thoreau says:

“The best you can write will be the best you are. The author’s character is read from title-page to end. Of this he never corrects the proofs.”

I have given of my best in this book, but if it happens to be a poor best, I can only say that is what I am. This is a highly subjective book on a subjective subject. There is room for several opinions, interpretations. I have, probably, been quite assertive in some places, but that is my prerogative as an author.

As regards the plan of the book, I found recently a confirmation of the correctness of the lines of my interpretation of the Thiruvirutpaa in a strange place, in St. John of the Cross ‘Argument’ to his ‘Spiritual Canticles’. He writes: “The order which these stanzas follow is from the time when a soul begins to serve God until it reaches the last estate of perfection, which is the Spiritual Marriage; and thus there are touched upon in them the three estates or ways of spiritual exercise through which the soul passes until it reaches the said estate; which are the Purgative, the Illuminative and the Unitive; and concerning each of these are expounded certain of its properties and effects.”

“The earliest of these Stanzas treat of beginners - that is, of the Purgative Way. Those that come next treat of progressives, where the Spiritual Betrothal is made, and this is the Illuminative Way. After these, those that follow treat of the Unitive Way, which is that of the perfect, wherein is made the Spiritual Marriage. This Unitive Way, or that of the perfect, follows the Illuminative Way, which is that of the progressives, and the last stanzas treat of the beatific estate, to which only the soul in that perfect state aspires.”

Thus St. John of the Cross, who lived in the sixteenth century, has written about his work. But he may well be taken to have written prophetically of the Thiruvirutpaa. So well do these words fit our Swaamikal’s great work. I will entreat my reader to constantly refresh himself with these words of St. John of the Cross as he reads chapter after chapter of this book, and particularly when he reads the 12th and 13th chapters.

This place is as good a place as anywhere else to say a few words about my use of the word ‘gnosis’. I have used this term liberally in this book. I use it to distinguish mystical knowledge from worldly knowledge. Chamber’s “Twentieth Century Dictionary” gives the meaning of ‘gnosis’ as ‘mystical knowledge’. A dear friend who is an Englishman, a great scholar, an author, and a contemplative, raised a gentle objection to the use of this word. I was greatly perturbed by his criticism till I came across a passage which I had already quoted in this connection in my book, ‘Pathway to God through Tamil Literature, (i) through the Thiruvaachakam’. I reproduce the same:

“The sub-title to this decad (The Thiruvundhiyaar) is gnaana vetri. This has been translated as ‘Victory through Gnosis’. In an English translation of a French Book by Frithjof Schuon, the title appears as ‘Gnosis’ which word is

paraphrased as ‘divine wisdom’. The translator explains that the term ‘gnosis’, “keeps its original meaning of Wisdom made up of knowledge and sanctity”. He goes on to say: “Many passages in this book .. make clear the distinction, often nowadays obliterated, between knowledge acquired by the ordinary discursive mind and the higher knowledge which comes of intuition by the Intellect, the term Intellect having the same sense as in Plotinus or Eckhart.”

It was to maintain this distinction that I too have used the word ‘gnosis’.

Finally, an apology. An Errata will be found at the last but – one page of this book. I regret to have given the need for this.

3, Annamalaipuram,
Tennur
Tiruchirapalli-620017.
31st July. 1974.

G. VANMIKANATHAN

His Holiness Jagatguru Sri Chandrasekarendra Saraswati Sri Sankaracharya Swamikal has been gracious enough to read this book at one sitting. The book was submitted to him one night at 9 p.m. At 6-30 the next morning he kindly pointed out an error on page 589. The word ‘sadyogamukthi’ should be ‘sadyomukthi’, he pointed out. I am overwhelmed by his graciousness.

– AUTHOR.

I’M A TREE

I am a tree in the orchard of my Master;
He chose the seed and the ground;
The manure too!

In seedling and in sapling He stood guard;
My fence and staff to grow
Areaching Him.

Water was He, and He withheld it too!
His boundless mercy and love
It was that pruned me.

He is the sun and rain and the air I breathe;
The autumn wind that leaves
My limbs so bare.

But forsaken I was not, for even then
He made the leaf-buds sprout
New life in me.

When in the fullness of time He comes to claim

The fruit, could I deny Him?
For He is my life.

His my flowers and fruit,
His the glory!
I am a tree in the orchard of my Master!

G.V.

O GREAT EFFULGENCE OF GRACE!
O GREAT EFFULENCE OF GRACE!
O UNIQUE GREAT MERCY!
O GREAT EFFULGENCE OF GRACE!

CONTENTS:

1. A CHILD LAUGHS.....	19
2. BIO-DATA.....	43
3. ECCE HOMO	51
4. CHILDHOOD	100
5. MAIDEN SONG.....	130
6. THE PURGATIVE WAY	158
7. THE PURGATIVE WAY (Concluded)	201
8. THE ILLUMINATE WAY	231
9. ON THE THRESHOLD OF THE UNITIVE WAY	273
10. THE UNITIVE WAY (First Stage)	306
11. THE UNITIVE WAY (Second Stage)	409
12. THE UNITIVE WAY (Third and Final Stage).....	499
13. ANUBHAVA MAALAI.....	552
APPENDIX I-INSTITUTIONS	590
APPENDIX II-GLOSSARY	603

1. A CHILD LAUGHS

A CHILD not more than five moons old laughed a toothless laugh of sheer delight, its baby face lighted up with a unique illumination born of an ineffable experience.

Raamaiyaa and Chinnammai had taken their fifth child of five moons to the temple of Natarajaa in Chidambaram. After the *darsan*¹ of Lord Natarajaa, they moved to their left for the *darsan* of Chidambara Rahasyam - the Mystery of mysteries which is covered with a curtain, which is lifted at every one of the six services in a day to give the devotees a darsan of this holy of holies, this Mystery of mysteries, the Mystery in which saint Maanikkavaachakar merged in a blaze of light. As the Civaacharyaa, the officiant for that day, reverently lifted the curtain veiling the Mystery of mysteries, and the devotees looked on with wonder and ecstasy, the child in the crook of the left arm of Chinnammai crowed with ecstatic delight. This was the very first occasion on which the child has been taken to the temple and then and there itself a unique rapport was established between the infant and Lord Natarajaa which was to last for the entire life-time of that infant on this earth, a rapport which was to draw that same infant in later years with an irresistible pull all the way from Thiruvottriyoor near Madras to that self-same Chidambaram Thillai to all the long line of devotees - and to that self-same Lord Natarajaa, a rapport which was to inspire that child grown into man to sing hundreds of songs in praise of Natarajaa dripping with love, devotion, adoration, self-abnegation and unqualified total surrender, a rapport which was to lead the child half-a-century later to merge in that same ether² in the 19th century in as dramatic a manner as even Maanikkavaachakar merged in that ether, which is the Godhead, sixteen centuries earlier.

¹ darsan = a Sanskrit word to denote seeing a great personage such as a god or a king or a saint.

² though not in the temple at Thillai but at Mettukkuppam, a village not very far from Thillai.

What made the child laugh? That child itself, in its later years of mature manhood, in the fullness of the apprehension of the Godhead, in a not-to-be-disbelieved freshness of recollection, tells us what made it laugh with delight. He sings:

Oh being, my true Kin,
Who showed to me everything
as the (space and time transcending) ether
Instead of the usual ceiling
when I, in my infancy,
along with my mother and others,
witnessed (the Mystery of mysteries)
in the sacred town of Thillai
when the veiling curtain was lifted!
Oh Sweet Fruit Who have mellowed in my heart
without going through the stage of unripe fruit!
Oh effulgent Natarajaa

Who dance in the Hall of Gems
while the pure ones stand around adoring You!
Do graciously wear
my (garland of) words also³.

4133. VI.57 arul vilakka maalai 44⁴

That child was Raamalingam.

Even as in the case of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ whose parents received divine messages⁵ informing them of the forthcoming birth of their respective divinely ordained child, similarly in the case of Raamalingam his mother received divine intimation of her bearing a divinely ordained child sent by God into this world specially for fulfilling a divinely ordained mission.

³ The word ‘also’ at the end of this poem means that the poet had the back of his mind many other saints, particularly Maanikkavaachakar, who, in the past, had sung songs in praise of Natarajaa in Thillai.

⁴ The first number refers to the serial number of the poem in Ooran Atikal’s edition of the Thiruvartupaa. The roman number refers to the Book. The succeeding number in Arabic digits refers to the decad. The number after the name of the decad refers to the number of the poem in that decad.

⁵ See Gospel of St. Luke, Chapter 1.

It is said that, one day, at noon, Lord Civan Himself came to the doors of Raamaiyaa’s house in the garb of a devotee of Lord Civan and begged for food from Chinnammai. Raamaiyaa was not at home. The lady fed the devotee with all the traditional hospitality of the Tamil housewife, a hospitality of which Saint Kaaraikkaal Ammaiyaar had set a noble example for all the future housewives of Tamilnaadu to emulate. His hunger assuaged, the devotee-who was no other than Lord Civan Himself-as he took his departure, blessed Chinnammai in these words: “Oh Lady, you have assuaged Our hunger. A son will be born to you who will assuage the hunger of all the world. He will make the grace of God shine everywhere. That holy Son of Gnosis will be born in this house. The world will be redeemed by him. He is Our Son. We came today specially to announce his sacred coming. Blessed be you, blessed be you”. So saying, he gave her the sacred ash, adding these words: “Receive this sacred ash which shall give you the treasure of a conception, do you wear it and get your husband also to wear it”. With these words he walked away from the house, and even while Chinnammai was still watching his back he vanished from sight without leaving trace of any further footsteps in the profuse dust of the street.

Raamalingam, whom we shall in future call Raamalinga Swaamikal or Vallalaar which is an abridgement of Arut Prakasa Vallalaar, had no doubt about his mission. He sings:

That I may bring under the fold
of the Society of the True Path (to the Godhead)
all the people of the world,
who are black at heart

but white exteriorly,
by reforming them in this world,
and that they may here on earth itself
gain the hereafter (mukti)
and rejoice,
for this sole purpose
God brought me down in this age
and I arrived here
and grace gained.

5485. VI. 128 utrathu uraitthal 9.

Such divinely ordained children are called “*karuvile thiruvudaiyaar*”, i.e., persons who, even in their embryonic state, have had conferred civanhood⁶ on them. These are servants chosen by God even before their birth. Epictetus says: “Surely God chooses His servants at birth, or, perhaps, before birth”. Raamalinga Swaamikal was one such servant of God.

Man, common man, takes birth after birth, discharges a part of his karma, earns fresh karma and adds to his store of karma and is never freed from this vicious circle unless and until God’s divine grace and the knowledge conferred by that grace are gained. But to Raamalinga Swaamikal the birth as the son of Raamaiyaa and Chinnammai was the very last one, the birth in which he gained the state of never being born again. According to him, this birth was to redress some shortcomings in renunciation and some short-comings in the apprehension of the Godhead in the life before the present one. It is called “vitta kurai, thotta kurai”.

He sings:

Like lotus freed from the bonds
that invest the petals of its bud,
I, freed, from all my thoughts,
contemplate You only;
I do not think of anything else.
This, of course, Oh Lord,
Who shine in the hearts of the perfect ones,
is known to your sacred heart;
Why should I say anything?
I have now on this earth
filled the short-fall in renunciation
and the short-fall in my apprehension of the Godhead;
the moment has come for You to hurry forth
and graciously confer your effulgence of grace;
I boldly say so.
Other than saying that which I experience
with You making me experience,
I am not capable of saying anything
of my own accord.

3819. VI. 33 civa darisanam 9.

⁶ Civanhood = See note in Appendix II.

This poem was written in his mature years, in the afternoon of his life, a life too short by modern standards and even by the standards of his century. But he had this conviction, namely, that this was his last birth on earth, the birth which will preclude all future births. He gives expression to this conviction in a song sung soon after his fifth or sixth year, or, perhaps, in the ninth year. He sings:

Is Brahma capable
of making me be born again?
(If he does so) will he not stand once again
shut up behind the bars of a prison?
Will he forget the great suffering
from the crack on the head
inflicted on a former occasion?
Yama, of the color of night,
would he even in his dreams
think of making me die ever more?
He will not think of it;
for won't he recollect the scars on his body
which had been bruised black and blue
by the kick he had received?
Would the lurking karma come and torment me?
I will not can a tuppence for it.
For I stand merged in Your holy grace
which all the learned hold fast to,
Oh Kandhavel
Who flourish in the dynamic
pilgrimage center at Kandhakottam
In Chennai where excellence (in good virtues)
is prevalent!
Oh Pun Gem with faces of coot grace!
Oh Gem born of Civan of the introspective face
Oh divine Gem with six faces!⁷

27. I.1 theiva mani maalai 27

This purposive child was born on the 5th of October 1823, a hundred and fifty years ago, to Raamaiyaa Pillai,⁸ a village accountant, and Chinnammai at Maruthoor, a village in South Arcot District of Tamilnaadu, about 16 kilometers down a by-road which branches off to the south of Vadaloore from the Madras-Kumbakonam Highway at about the 205th kilometer from Madras. The house he was born in stood intact upto a few years ago. Now, there is only the bare plot of land when it stood.

This is the physical parentage and all too scanty genealogical tree of the child. His biographers have not given us the names of my forefathers of the child. We know very little even about the parents. But this unique child with a unique mission has another genealogical tree, a spiritual genealogical tree that begins, to our knowledge,

with the name of Thiruvalluvar in the 1st century A. D., a tree which has an unbroken line of some of the world's greatest spiritual forefathers, a line which has come down the last two milleniums and will continue for many milleniums to come, a line in which Raamalinga Swaamikal was the most noteworthy 19th century scion of the milleniums-old line of most noteworthy spiritual sons of Tamilnaadu, sons of Lord Civan, heirs to the everlasting Kingdom of God. Our saint almost

⁷ In this song, our saint refers to former occasions on which the wrath of God was visited on Brahma and Yama for presuming to clash in their pride with divine will and divine grace. For more details see note in Appendix II.

⁸ The caste and sub-caste of the parents are deliberately omitted in deference to the avowed strong views of the Swaamikal against caste distinctions. we will content ourselves by saying that he was a Tamizhiyan and that he was not a brahmin.

aggressively lays claim to the heirdom and challenges God to deny it. Thus he sings:

Oh Lord! Am I not one of the long line
of the holy galaxy of devotees
come down the ages
like banana shoot from banana stem?⁹
The how of it I know not.
The misery this wretch suffers,
has it the assent of your divine will?
Is this fitting?
Is this just?
Is this righteous indeed?
Oh bounteous Lord
Who dance in the golden hall set with gems!
Son to You am I not?
And legitimate father to me are You not?
This craven world's soul-searing grief
I can no longer endure.
Graciously bestow on me Your benign light;
graciously bestow it right now.

3803. VI. 32 piriyen endral 4

The simile is worth considering seriously. Just as it is said in English that a single swallow does not make a summer, similarly in Tamil, a woman with only one child is considered barren and is compared to the banana tree which puts forth only one sucker or shoot. By this simile Raamalinga Swaamikal desires to emphasize the rarity of the appearance of saints who do not come in profusion but one in several centuries. It is on this account, that he asks God if the misery which he, the one and only heir, suffers has His divine assent, whether it is fitting, just, righteous. It is on this account that he asks God to confer His benign light right now.

⁹ banana stem = i.e., the rhizome, which is the botanical name for that part of the stem of a banana plant which is buried under the earth.

Who are these long line of devotees who have come down the ages in unbroken succession?

They are:

Thiruvalluvar, 1st century A.C.
Maanikkavaachakar, 3rd century A.C.
Thirumoolar, 5th century A.C.
Thirunaavukkarasar, 7th century A.C.
Sundaramoorthi Swaamikal, 9th century A.C.
The Aalwaars, 5th century to 10th Century A.C.
Pattinathaar, 10th century A.C.
Arunagirinaathar, 12th century A.C.
Meikandaar, 14th century A.C.
Thaayumaanavar 18th century A.C.

Are these the only ones who form the long line of the galaxy of saints who have come down the ages in unbroken submission? Certainly not. Aldous Huxley says in his Perennial Philosophy:

“In every age there have been some men and women who chose to fulfil the conditions upon which alone, as a matter of brute empirical fact, such immediate knowledge can be had ; and of these a few have left accounts of the Reality they were thus enabled to apprehend”

In our case too, there have been many many who have apprehended the Reality, but only a few have left accounts thereof. It is these whom we have listed above.

Raamalinga Swaamikal also claims that he was a devotee in past births as well. He sings:

Oh primal and unique Being
Who bestow Your grace
from the proscenium in Thillai!
Oh Field in which virtue grows!
Oh flawless Gem
abiding in sacred Thirumullaivaayil girt by groves
which grow in a slush of honey!
I am not a new-comer;
note that I am one
who, from ancient times,
have cherished love to Your blossomy feet.
Is it the nature of Your holy grace
to refrain from asking :
“With what idea have you come here?”

661. 11. 9 aruliyal vinaaval 9

In another song, our saint reiterates the same claim.

Would You send me away
as a stranger unto You?
I had dedicated in the past too
my services to Your golden feet.
But, what is the use
of looking into that old account?
I am not aged ;
any kind of service
I shall strive my best and perform;
I am not a boor,
Oh Lord Who own Otriyoor
where Your praises rise up
to the vaults of heaven!
Oh Lord with the flag
bearing the emblem of the bull
who is no other than the pure Vishnu!

1187. II. 56 koti vinnappam 6

Raamalinga Swaamikal reverts to this theme on several other occasions, two of which we quote below.

Addressing Lord Thiyaagesan of Thiruvotriyoor he says:

Though You may say that
I am not Your devotee,
I have remained your devotee
in the past and in the present too.
Oh Sire!
Other than that it is your duty
to put up with all the misdeeds
of this hard-hearted fellow,
I have not known the contrary,
Oh my virtuous primeval Being
with the (sacred ash) dust-laden body!
Oh Lord of the pure ones
with the lovely matted locks!
Oh divine Light
Whom the mean fellows¹⁰ could not search out!
Oh Thiyaagamani who abide in Otriyoor!

1026. II. 40 avalatthul alunkal 10

Again thus in another song:

Oh Being who have adorned Yourself
with things never before donned by anyone!¹¹
What shall I say about your mercy

which, putting up with all the misdeeds
of this false devotee
and showing me scenes never before seen,
dances inside me a dance of charity! ¹²
Whenever I,
an evil wretch of undignified traits of character,
think of this,
note that my heart melts
and tears flow from my two eyes.
Though I am a pride-ridden fellow,
I have realized
that I was Your devotee

¹⁰ mean fellows = Brahma and Vishnu.

¹¹ the reference is to the garland of skulls, and the armlets and belt of snakes which are worn by Civan.

¹² charity = highest and most divine form of love.

in my past lives.
On realizing this,
my heart bloomed into a blossom.

3037. V. I anbu maalai 9

Raamalinga Swaamikal did not merely lay claim to belong to the long unbroken line of devotees of the Lord, but he testifies to this by paying profuse homage to the four Camaya Kuravars – the Fathers of the Faith – Thirugnaanasambandhar, Thirunaavukkarasar, Sundaramoorthi Swaamikal, and Maanikkavaachakar, in scores of songs. It is necessary that we reproduce here as many of these songs as is possible so that not only we have no doubt in our own minds about the place of Raamalinga Swaamikal in the hierarchy of the servants of God in Tamilnaadu but also that those among the present day devotees of Raamalinga Swaamikal who wishfully think that he was an orchid blossoming in the arid deserts of the land of nihilists are convinced to the contrary. He sings no less than four decads (the 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th in the 5th Book) often stanzas each), one decad for each of the four Camaya-Kuravar-s (Fathers of the Faith). Raamalinga Swaamikal addresses Thirugnaanasambandhar as his sat-guru. Ooran Atikal, the ablest researcher into the life and teachings of our Swaamikal in the last century and a half, says that the God Raamalinga Swaamikal worshipped was Murukan, the guru he worshipped was Thirugnaanasambandhar, and the book he worshipped was the Thiruvaachakam.

Thus and thus Raamalinga Swaamikal pays homage to the four greatest of his spiritual progenitors. He sings:

Oh ambrosia of a Civa Guru,
Gnaanasambandha of the godly Kaazhi,
cynosure of the devotees!
When, in my early years,

devoid of even a whit of mundane experience,
and not having the capacity to dwell inwardly
and progress up the path of grace
I was turning aside from it,
You led me to climb up the path again and again,
and later bestowed Your grace
that I may no longer deviate from it.

3226. V. 9 aaludaiya pillaiyaar arulmaalai 1

The last but one stanza of this decad of eleven stanzas concludes with another declaration of his great indebtedness to Thirugnaanasambandhar.

He sings:

Oh great unique Gem of the Kauneeya clan
who bestowed the grace of gaining the body of gnosis
and rising with you (to heaven)
on all those who were privileged to witness
the wedding in Nalloor
which gained a great odour (of sanctity thereby) :
What shall I say of your exceedingly great grace
whereby you bestowed on me all to myself
in the course of one morning
all the talent
which cannot be acquired
though one tries all the days
of several aeons to come.

3235 V. 9 aaludaiya pillaiyaar arulmaalai 10

The 11th and concluding stanza of this decad shows us the very high esteem which Raamalinga Swaamikal had for Thirugnaanasambandhar.

He sings:

Oh lamp that shines forth
from the divine clan of Kauneeyars
hailing from far-famed Senpai!
Oh honey that taste sweet
in my mind without causing satiety!
Oh wish-granting tree
growing from the grace of the gaze
of the Coral Mountain¹³
with a throat of dense darkness!
Oh sugar-cane, Oh fruit,
Oh my two eyes,
Oh dark pupil of my eye,
Oh tender shoot of childish prattle
which had, at the comely age of three,

the fortune of being fed
with milk drawn from Umaa's sweet breast!
Oh unique succour to my dear life!
Oh Lord Sambandhaa of great gnosis!
Those who speak of your sacred fame
will revel in great wealth
more and more.

3236. V. 9 aaludaiya pillaiyaar arulmaalai 11

To Thirunaavukkarasar, our saint pays homage in these terms:

Oh virtuous one,
Who, by the strength of the glory of the grace
of the tongue of a Flame that is Civan
which reigns supreme in the holy place Atikai
famed for its sacredness,
becoming a true embodiment
of the experience of Reality,
received the name of King of the Gift of Speech
that the light of the Faith of Civan
may flourish,
and who fittingly shouldered the hoe!¹⁴
Oh wisdom of all the arts
indwelling my thoughts!
Oh merciful sea of gnosis!
Do will that I contemplate your feet!

3237. V. 10 aaludaiya arasukal arunmaalai 1

¹³ Coral Mountain = Lord Civan.

¹⁴ the hoe, besides being a garden tool which Thirunaavukkarasar used to weed the courtyards round the temples, was also a symbol of his mission of weeding out false faiths from the hearts of the people of Tamilnaadu.

In the tenth verse of the same decad our saint calls Thirunaavukkarasar his guru, his father, his family deity. He sings:

Oh luscious honey that seeps forth
from the enlightened mind with exceeding sweetness!
Oh deity who am the king of words!
Oh magnanimous one who bestowed bliss
on Appoothi, illustrious for his adherence to truth!
Oh my father!
Oh fullness of wisdom filling up my mind!
Oh my guru!
Oh our family deity!
Oh flame of the Faith of Civan!
Oh guide in the great path devoid of suffering!

Oh peerless treasure!
Oh you who are famed as ‘appan’!

3246. V. 10 aaludaiya arasukal arunmaalai 10

In one of the ten stanzas in homage to Sundaramoorthi Swaamikal, we find a plea addressed to him which was evidently answered, for an experience similar to the one which Sundaramoorthi Swaamikal had was vouchsafed to Raamalinga Swaamikal also. That song is this:

Oh devotee famed for his contentiousness
Do graciously tell me
what is the great penance you performed
that our great Lord’s feet -
not a whit of which
can be experienced by the Veda-s and all the arts
though they chant their praises endless times
with rising crescendo –
brushed the crown of your head
dedicated to a sacred cause¹⁵.

3250. V. 11 aaludaiya nampikal arunmaalai 4

¹⁵ This poem refers to a mystic experience of Sundaramoorthi Swaamikal. Once when he was sleeping in a resthouse for pilgrims, he felt the feet of another sleeper brush against his head. So he moved away his head to another place. But the feet continued to brush against his head no matter how many times he moved away his head. Waking up to remonstrate with the uncouth sleeper, he found that it was no other than Lord Civan who had thus graciously placed the imprint of His feet not once but many times on his head. Raamalinga Swaamikal too was to have a very similar experience which we shall relate later on.

From the seventh verse of the same decad we learn that Raamalinga Swaamikal not only paid homage through his poems to the four Camaya Kuravar-s but also read their songs daily as a routine item of his spiritual exercises. Thus sings our saint in evidence of this:

When I read every day your sacred songs
which are honey-exuding ambrosia,
I am not aware of my self.
Is it my tongue only which reads the poems?
My flesh reads, my heart reads,
my life reads, and even the life of my life reads;
note that this is my experience,
Oh magnanimous one of unique mercy!

3253. V. II aaludaiya nampikal arunmaalai 7

Thus he addresses Sundaramoorthi Swaamikal.

But it is to Maanikkavaachakar that our saint reserves his highest homage in superlative terms. Mani Thirunavukkaracu, a scholar of this century, has written thus in the 6th number of volume 6 (1928) of a Journal called “The Philosophy of Raamalinga Swaamikal’s Temple Worship”:

“My teacher used to say that our Raamalingam was, by and large, partial to Thiruvaachakam. It was his habit, he used to say, for him to stand often in the presence of Lord Thiyagesan. in Otriyoor and keep singing the following stanza from the Thiruvaachakam with his eyes raining tears, the hair on his body standing erect and his voice tremulous with surcharged emotion, and, ultimately, fall down in a swoon”.

The stanza referred to is this:

Oh our transcendent One
Who have pervaded the earth and sky!
Take note, other support than You I have none.
Oh You Who shine with resplendence!
Oh King of Civapuram (my body)!
Oh Civan who abide in Thirupperunthurai!
Whom shall I blame? To whom shall I tell my woe
if You, Who assumed lordship over me,
will not show me grace?
Take note that I cannot live
in this wide sea-girt earth!
Show me the grace of bidding me come unto You.

decad 28 vaazhaappatthu 1

It is no wonder that Ooran Atikal says that the sacred book that Raamalinga Swaamikal worshipped was the Thiruvaachakam. I do not offer any apology for giving here in English all the ten stanzas of the decad dedicated to Maanikkavaachakar by Raamalinga Swaamikal, though I am only too painfully conscious that my rendering can never bring to the reader the sweetness and the music of the original. Our saint pours out his heart thus:

Oh limpid ambrosia
which tastes sweet in the very depths
of my radiant heart!
Oh Maanikkavaachaka!
Oh great ascetic, the embodiment of bliss!
Do bestow on me you grace
that I too may experience
the flawless experience
described in the great Tamil Vedam.
which stainless you have graciously revealed
through your sacred lips.

1

** ** ** **

Oh gem of eminent Vaathavoor
who have revealed a Veda
dedicated solely to that unique Being
of the form of ether
in Whom you merged completely
while those who were wandering about
for a long time
madly after that great etherial Being -
Who is a stranger
to the space inside the uterus
and Who transcends all the human tools of knowing -
were sore perplexed,
waiting, as they were,
for enlightenment by a guru!

2

** ** ** **

While all those who had been performing austerities
since a long time,
with bodies reduced to bony forms
and their minds concentrated
on the spot midway between their brows,
stood disappointed,
Oh Lord of beautiful Vaathavoor,
you first became the embodiment of love,
then the embodiment of charity¹⁶
and, after that, you became
the embodiment of bliss.

3

¹⁶ charity = the noblest and highest form of love.

** ** ** **

Oh king, whom great ascetics call the guru,
who revealed through your sacred lips
the holy blank verse poem
called 'thiru-anda-p-pakuthi'
which all the world praises
as the great Veda of well-rounded form,
tell me the implication
of that unique blank verse poem
which says 'be'¹⁷.

4

** ** ** **

Oh dear ambrosia
who dance beneath the rosy Feet¹⁸
which dance as very personification of gnosis
in the Hall of Gnosis where bliss is sought!

Oh first citizen of Vaathavoor
where all devotees wend their footsteps!
Do come sometimes and transform
all the despair which I despairingly feel
(into hope).

5

¹⁷ The reference is to the 178th and 179th lines of the poem where occurs this phrase, viz., ‘kataimurai ennaiyum iruppathaakkinam’. In translation the passage will read: “He made even me of the very last rank be (steeped in bliss).” We have to supply the words within the brackets.

¹⁸ Feet of Lord Civan.

** ** ** **

Oh great gem whom the world praises
as the deity of sacred Vaathavoor
rolling in prosperity!
Whenever I meditate on the gospel spoken by you,
I derive a pleasure
more than the pleasure
which a pleasure-anticipating virtuous damsel feels
when thinking of the forthcoming union
with her passionate lover.

6

** ** ** **

Oh Maanikkavaachaka who have merged in the ether!
When I sing your gospel
deeply blended therewith,
it tastes sweet without satiety
like good sugarcane juice
blended with honey,
milk,
rich flavor of fruit,
my flesh,
and my life.

7

** ** ** **

Oh Maanikkavaachaka
who compose verses
that come (from God),
if only one word
out of your verses
is capable of uniting me and my Owner (God),
tell me what is the need
for spiritual exercises,
why worry any more,
why go elsewhere

seeking the precepts of a guru?

8

** ** *

Oh virtuous one!
Was it not for your sake
that the great Lord Civan
Who carries a dam (on his side)
came on a horse
like a care-laden servant,
carried a hod of earth
on the banks of the river Vaikai,
and carries (to this day)
a scar from the lash of a cane
wielded by a Paandiyan¹⁹

9

** ** *

¹⁹ See note in Appendix II.

Oh Maanikkavaachaka
without any despondency!
If on hearing your verses,
even the birds of lowly genus which were there
were filled with longing to hear them
and cruel beasts
yearned for gnosis of the Real,
it is not surprising
that I am similarly affected here.

10

3257 to 3266. V. 12 aaludaiya atikal arulmalai 1 to 10

It is to be noted that these four decads dedicated to the four Camaya-Kuravar-s appear as the concluding decads of the 5th Book of the Arutpaa. This Book was sung when our saint was residing at Karunkuzhi, between 1858 and 1867. We may not be far wrong if we place the date at about 1860. The twelve decads of this Book could not have taken him more than a few days to sing. To put it in another way, this Book was sung just prior to his singing the songs of the 6th Book, the Book in which the final experiences, the mature conclusions and beliefs, the acme of his spiritual life are given expression to. Ooran Atikal, the ablest biographer of the Swaamikal and the most learned editor of his Arutpaa says that the Swaamikal's manuscripts show that the decads of the 5th Book were written in the same order as they are now published in his edition. We may therefore conclude that these four decads dedicated by Raamalinga Swaamikal to Thirugnaanasambandar, Thirunaavukkarasar, Sundaramoorthi Swaamikal and Maanikkavaachakar were in a sense prayers to his spiritual guru-s before he flew into the soaring heights of the spiritual space-world seeking union with the Godhead in the spaceless beyond.

After reading the above poems of homage to the four Camaya-Kuravar-s no one will be left in any doubt about the indebtedness of our Swaamikal to all those who have gone before him in the genealogical tree of spiritual guides of Tamilnaadu or about his legitimate place in that genealogical tree. If any shred of doubt is still left in the mind of anyone, it will be removed by the next few paragraphs.

Claude Alwares in a review on a book on 'Early Buddhism and its Origins' which appeared in the Sunday Standard of August 26th, 1973 writes:

“Just as Christian apologists often forget that Jesus was a Jew, indologists sometimes tend to overlook the equally obvious fact that Buddha was a Hindu, and thus more than merely a personality antipathetic to some of the major Hindu notions of the time. No man can be understood apart from his time, for no man begins from scratch. And if history, as Dr. Will Durant said, is the war between mediocrity and genius, the quarrel between heredity and environment, or the conflict between Hegel and Carlyle, then without either, it becomes evolution. History, for example, in Carlyle, is ultimately created and sustained by great men. In fact, history is evidence that great men worked on the earth. Thus all things that we see accomplished in the world are probably the outer material result, the practical realization and embodiment of ideas that dwelt in the minds of great man. For Hegel, on the contrary, these ideas are the basis of what he would call the *Zeitgeist* (the spirit of the age), on which the superstructure of history stands. And great men have efficacy only in so far as they are the unconscious elements of the *Zeitgeist*. The great man of Carlyle is no more impressive than his predecessors. Only, he is fortunate in having come after them, built on their support and thus achieved a notoriety for genius.

“Written history rebuts Hegel, applauds Carlyle. For this reason it is partisan, offends objectivity which in turn comes largely from perspective, and lacks the taint of enthusiasm”.

I have reproduced extensively from the review by Mr. Alwares since it is very pertinent to the matter we have in hand of fixing the place of our Swaamikal in the long line of the spiritual leaders of Tamilnaadu who have come down the ages in unbroken succession. The first paragraph of the above quotation is very much worth pondering over, though the word 'notoriety' at the end of that paragraph is an unhappy word and may well be replaced by the word 'fame'.

Kahlil Gibran, the Lebanese mystic of the present century, the 20th century Thiruvalluvar, who wrote a modern Aratthu-p-paal on Right Living in twenty-six chapters, addressing the people of the city of Orphalese, says:

“.... the holy and the righteous cannot rise beyond the highest which is in each one of you”.

Consider also this saying of Churchill as recorded by Lord Ismay in his Memoirs. Ismay writes:

“London was under bombardment Churchill was sad at all the suffering and said that he wished that he could do more ‘for the poor people’. I reminded him that, whatever the future held, nothing could rob him of the credit of having inspired the country by his speeches. ‘Not at all’, he retorted angrily, ‘it was given to me to express what was in the hearts of the British people. If I had said anything else, they would have hurled me from office’.”

Churchill put the same thought into other words on his eightieth birthday. He said: “It was the nation and the race living all round the globe that had the lion’s heart. I had the luck to be called on to give the roar”. In India, in the nineteenth century, the nation from north to south and from east to west had the thirst for religious renaissance, and it threw up the spiritual leaders to give voice to its thirst. It was not an accident but the combined will of the silent millions of our nation that threw up in the 19th century Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1774-1833), Raamakrishna Paramahansa (1836-1886) and his contemporary Keshab Chandra Sen in the East, Dayaanand Saraswati (1824-1883) in the West and Raamalinga Swaamikal (1823-1874) in the South. Let us think back and consider the appearance of Thirugnaanasambandar and Thirunaavukkarasar in the seventh century. Was it not the burning indignation of the entire people of Tamilnaadu at the atrocities of the Jain monks which produced these two giants to combat the pernicious influence of Jainism in the Tamilnaadu of that century?

Yes, even the greatest of mints is but a product of his times, a thinker of the unformulated thoughts of his people, a speaker on behalf of all the inarticulate millions of his times. He is not only a product of his times, but an unconscious, but, nevertheless, a real product of the age-old traditions, beliefs, theology, metaphysics, religion, culture of his times and of the ages that had gone before. He speaks for himself in his own voice and also for the long line of his predecessors in his line of life in their several voices. But he is not “His Master’s Voice”, a gramophone record. He speaks in his own right, of course, yet without breaking the thread of the long lineage of which he is the present scion. Even such a scion was our Raamalinga Swaamikal.

This scion of the long line of devotees come down the ages, this daring devotee who asked God:

“Son to You am I not,
and legitimate father to me are You not?”

was reciprocally looked after by God even as a father and mother look after their child, nay, even more solicitously than by them. Raamalinga Swaamikal himself relates some of these touching incidents of solicitous care. He sings:

Oh true Succour
Who, when this lowly youngster,
sleeping one midnight
without the company of any elders
on a high narrow pial²⁰,

²⁰ pial = raised masonry platform on either side of the passage leading to the front door of the house and on a level with the floor of the house. The windows of the front

rooms open on to these platforms. One of these platforms is usually short in length and the other nearly twice as long or more. These are used by male members of the family, especially bachelors, as, sleeping places. These serve also as the drawing room for males in the daytime. The origin of the word 'pial' is not known, but I may not be far wrong if I surmise that it is an erroneous transliteration of the Tamil word 'paayal' which means a bed. In Tamilnaadu, architects use this word in their English writings on house-construction. The corresponding Tamil word is thinnai or thetri. Houses in Russia of the recent past too seem to have had thinnai-s. These were called Zavalina, a bank of earth against the front wall of the house, flat-topped and used as a seat.

had rolled about heavily
and was falling down,
held me up in Your arms,
thereby preventing me
from falling on to the floor below,
embraced me,
and laid me down!
Oh Being Who bestowed bliss
on my soul which You held in Your arms!
Oh true Guru!
Oh Being Who are the fruit
of all the great thavam²¹ performed by me!
Oh Nataraja dancing on the proscenium
Who graciously rid me of all the despondency
which I was despairingly experiencing!
Do wear my garland of melodious verses also.

4134. VI.57 arul vilakka maalai 45

²¹ thavam = There is no single word in English for "thavam". It comprises charity in the heart towards all creatures, austerities, self-mortification, non-attachment, meditation, and contemplation.

Raamalinga Swaamikal could never bear to see anyone suffer from hunger. This compassion was, in all probability the outcome of the divine compassion shown unto him by Lord Civan Himself Who came once as our saint's brother's wife, once as the priest of a temple, once as the divine Mother Herself, and fed him when he was sore distressed by hunger. Our saint relates them incidents with awe and gratitude. He sings:

Oh Mother mine sweet to my soul
Who, when I was lying weary with hunger on a pial,
came with a shining basin
containing delicious food
in me of Your sacred hands
and woke me up, asking:
"Did you go to Otri and suffer hunger?"

and graciously served me the food with pleasure!
Oh Mother of noble characteristics Who bore me
and Who solicitously transformed
all the attachments which beset me
into attachment to Your feet!
Oh King Who dance a great dance
in the Hall of Gems
with persons of noble qualities
standing around praising You!
Do be pleased to accept my blabberings too.

4132. VI 57 arul vilakka maalai 43

Oh my virtuous goodly Succourer
Who, when I was lying one dark night
on a nook and corner pial
hungry and tired,
came looking for me
and offering me food
made me eat,
and rid me of my hunger!
Oh unique Gem
Who, ridding me of the darkness of delusion
and bestowing on me
all the blessings of life,
made me be seated
on the platform decked with gems!

4137. VI.57 arul vilakka maalai 48

Oh Light
Who, bringing me up by giving me good food
whenever I was hungry
as if You Yourself were hungry,
bestowed on me here
the clear ambrosia of enlightenment in such a way
that I never felt the weariness
caused by the carnal hunger!
Oh King of all the souls
Who bestowed on me the boon
that I may have all to myself
a life rare to Indra, the King of the heavens,
to tall Lord Vishnu
and to Brahma of four faces!
Oh Fragrance of flowers laden with honey!
Oh King Who perform the dance of gnosis
in the sacred hall in Thillai!
Do graciously accept my poor words.

4138. VI.57 arul vilakka maalai 49

To this son of God, God was not only a solicitous mother but a stern father too. On one occasion, due to acute hunger our saint had taken his meals before he had been to the temple and had rendered his homage to the Giver of food even to the toad inside rocks²². God punished our saint peremptorily. We are not told what the punishment was, but it must have been quite severe, for our saint devotes ten stanzas to this act of wrathful grace on the part of God. I will content myself with producing two of them here. He sings:

Oh Gem of a ruby
Who bestow grace on those free of ill-repute!
Oh munificent One!
I, a sinner with a mind
that is similar to a granite slab
devoid of any moisture,
a fellow with a heart
which is treachery incarnate,
forgetting to worship You,
had taken my meals
even like the evil dog

²² Our saint sings thus in another place:

**“I did not realize the quality of your grace
which provides food
to even the toad inside the rock**
- 2131.III. 5 mahaadeva maalai 81

which runs about eating
the unappetizing filth.
That very day,
I was punished in Otri
till I trembled in every fiber of my body.

1047. II. 43 pirasaatha vinnappam I

Oh Father
Who, like a mother,
fondly feed your devotees!
Without a darsan of Your feet,
alas, like a pig
that wallows about eating filth,
I had taken my food,
Oh my virtuous Light
with beautiful matted locks at the rear of You head!
Oh Lord of the five elements!
That very day, at Otri where You abide,
punishment was inflicted by You on my body.

1048. II. 43 pirasaatha vinnappam 2

These were not the only acts of unparalleled grace. The greatest was yet to come.

The greatest boon that a devotee of Civan can ever gain is to receive the imprint of Civan's feet on his head. Saint Thirunaavukkarasar begs for this boon in these words:

Before Chieftain Yama valiant in killing
hastens to destroy me,
please engrave on me the print
of Your blossom-like feet;
if You neglect to do this,
note that imperishable slur
will result,
Oh Lord with the hand
on which a fire roars,
Oh Civa, the tendril like flame,
Who abide in Thiruchchattimutram!

His prayer was heard. He was asked to come to Nalloor. There, he received the imprint of Civan's feet on his head. Relating this incident, he sings:

He made evil Karma-s
depart without leaving a trace,
He made a blanket of the hide
of the elephant demented with anger,
He placed on my head
those holy feet -
those special kind of flowers
which with opened petals
were spurting honey
on account of the pressure
of the dense cluster of gem-set crowns
of the heavenly clan
which had come seeking them;
A goodly act is this indeed!

Our Swaamikal refers to this act of unique grace conferred on Thirunaavukkarasar in one of his songs:

Oh King with the rosy hand
bearing the hour-glass shaped drum!
Whenever I think of how our Appar's²³ head felt cool
and experienced bliss
when You placed Your pure flowery golden feet on it
at Nalloor,
not only this sinner's wretched head
where delusion has taken residence
but the mind too feels cool.

²³ Appar = a name, meaning ‘father’ given by saint Thirugnaanasambandar to Thirunaavukkarasar.

Maanikkavaachakar also was vouchsafed this boon. He acknowledges this in these words:

I can tell of that occasion
When He abode in state in Idaimaruthu
and planted thereat
His divine feet on my head

Thiruvaachakam, 2 Keerthitthiru akaval, lines 75, 76

He refers again to this incident in a confirmatory manner in the 4th decad in these words:

Obeisance to You, Oh Knight,
Who made a somebody of even me
and placed Your great feet on my head!

Thiruvaachakam, decad 4, lines 129, 130.

On Sundaramoorthi Swaamikal too, this unique grace was bestowed as we have seen in footnote 15. Sekkizhar, the hagiographer of the 12th century thus relates this unforgettable incident in the life of Sundaramoorthi Swaamikal:

At about the hour
when the sun with the sky-traversing lofty chariot
drawn by the green steed
was about to sink into the western sea
he (Sundaramoorthi Swaamikal)
came to the outskirts of Tiruvathikai.
Saying:” I fear to tread with my feet
and enter this great city
where God-owned (Tirunavukk-) arasu,
the saint praised by the world –
the bearer of the tool, the hoe -
loved to perform with his hands
service to the Lord on the bull”,
he entered the Citthavatamatam
situated beyond the cool fields
fed by the sluices.

** ** ** **

In that matam
surrounded by flower gardens teeming with bees,
Vanthondar,²⁴ with mind filled with love
unto the Lord of Veerattaanam
north of the river Ketilam

of billowing waters,
entered his bed
while his teeming retinue
also went to sleep around him.
Seeing this,
the lovely-eyed Lord abiding in Veerattam
entered the matam common to all,
without anyone knowing beforehand,
in the form of an old brahmin,
and, placing his lotus feet
on the sacred flower-decked head of Sundaramoorthi,
pretended to be asleep on His bed.
Aarooran²⁵, sensing this state of affairs,
said : “Oh Vedic Brahmin,
You have placed your feet on my head”.
To this, He graciously replied:
“It was done without knowing the direction,
you see, it is on account of my old age”.
Tamilnaathan²⁶, accepting this explanation
placed his head farther away
and went to sleep.

²⁴ Vanthondar = contentious devotee; a name given by Lord Civan to Sundaramoorthi Swaamikal.

^{25,26} other names for Sundaramoorthi Swaamikal.

** ** ** **

On the brahmin stretching his feet again
even there on to his head,
the lord of Thirunaavaloor²⁷
saying: “What is this?
You have kicked me many times!”,
asked “Who are you?”
The Lord who has hidden the Ganga in His locks
replied: “Have you not known yet?”
and vanished instantly.

Sekkizhaar’s Thirutthondapuraanam 228 to 233.

²⁷ another name for Sundaramoorthi Swaamikal.

Even as in the case of these three Camaya-Kuravar-s, the favour of favours was conferred on Raamalinga Swaamikal also. One day Lord Civan came in the guise of a devotee of Civan to the dharmasaalai (free feeding house) established at Vadaloore by our saint on the 23rd of May 1867 in his 44th year. He stayed with our saint. At night, on going to sleep, he lay down in such a way that both his feet touched the head of our saint. Our saint, feeling the feet touching his head, pushed them away. Immediately, God showed His true form and, saying, “Can I, Who came to see you, not have this

much liberty?", graciously enslaved him. Our saint relates this incident in the following song:

Oh my Guru who enslaved me saying:
"We have come to know
all the good deeds you have planned to do;
We came to see you in person",
and lay down with intent to graciously establish
Your flowery feet on my head,
and Who, when I haughtily caught hold of the feet
and placed them elsewhere,
laughed and asked:
"What did you think, Oh my son,
have I not this much right?"

4140.VI.56 arul vilakka maalai 51

Such was the child which was born a hundred and fifty years ago on the 5th of October 1823, a child whose birth was foretold to the mother by no less a person than Civan, a child which had gained Civanhood - immediate apprehension of Civan - even while it was in the womb, a child which felt that it had been sent into the world with a very specific mission to perform, a child which claimed to belong to the genealogical tree of the long unbroken line of saints in Tamilnaadu, a child which paid profuse homage to those saints, acknowledging thereby its indebtedness to them, a child which claimed to be the son of God and which challenged God to deny that He was its legitimate Father, a child which claimed that it was the devotee of Civan in birth after birth in the past, a child which was most solicitously looked after by God Himself, being fed by Him when it was hungry, and being punished when it did wrong, a child which claimed that it will never more be reborn on this earth, a child on whose head Lord Civan placed His holy feet and enslaved him.

We shall go into the salient bio-data of this child quickly in the next chapter before we proceed to tread along with this child - this soul, I should say - the Pathway to God which it trod in the half a century of its last and final visit to this world.

2. BIO-DATA

THE father of this unique child, having consigned it to the care of the Father of all beings, apparently thought that it needed his care no longer. He, therefore, passed away when the child was six months old, just one month after handing it over to the guardianship of the heavenly Father.

Our child's mother immediately shifted her family to Cinnakkaavanam, the village of her birth, near Ponneri town in the Chingleput District of Tamilnaadu. She did not stay there very long. In a year or two she migrated with her family to Madras and set up her household in a house, the address of which is given by our Swaamikal himself as a superscription to a letter which he wrote later in his life from Vadaloor to Irukkam Iratthinam Muthaliyaar, whose family lived in one portion of the house while the Swaamikal's family lived in another portion during all the thirty-two or so years (till 1858) the Swaamikal lived at Madras. In all probability the family continued to live there even after the Swaamikal's departure from Madras in 1858. Irukkam Iratthinam Muthaliyaar must have been a child of about the same age as the Swaamikal. The Muthaliyaar, from being a neighbor and a playmate, became a close acquaintance, an admirer, a friend, a disciple, and ultimately a publisher of the Swaamikal. If only he had turned into a Boswell to this Johnson - our Swaamikal, what a rich store of information about the life of the Swaamikal from his infancy to his 'anthardhaan' - vanishing from the vision of man - would have been available to us! The address of the house is 38, Elukinaru Veeraasaamy Pillai Street, Petthunnaayakkanpettai. From some other letters of the Swaamikal, we learn that the house was situated on the eastern side of the street - which shows that the street ran north-south - and was opposite the house of one Supparaaya Pillai who served in the District Collector's Office. Our Swaamikal was very meticulous in whatever he thought, did, spoke or wrote.

Raamalingam was the last of five children to his parents. He had Sabhaapathi and Parasuraaman for brothers and Unnaamulai. and Sundaram for sisters. Chinnammai put her eldest son, Sabhaapathi, to study under Kaanchipuram Mahaavidwan Sabhaapathi Muthaliyaar, and soon Sabhaapathi was earning his livelihood by giving religious discourses on the puraana-s. Raamalingam was brought up under the guardianship of his elder brother. We do not know the difference, in age between them, but we may presume that it must have been at least fifteen to twenty years.

Our saint, though he stayed in Madras from his infancy to his thirty-fifth year, from about 1826 to 1858, yet he never got to like Madras. He grew more and more unhappy and wished to go away from Madras to a small village. He makes reference to this desire in two songs written in his later life at Vadaloor. He sings:

Fearing that if I looked on
the extrovert life of this world
my mind would be disturbed,
I spent every day, all the day-light hours,
seeking (solitude in) the gardens
on the outskirts of the city
and wandering in other places.

Not only in the daytime but at night as well
I wandered in many many places.
What need for this slave to my all this?
This is nothing but what is known to You.

3457. VI.13 pillai-p-peru vinnappam 48

My mind feared that if I continued to stay
in Chennai abounding in wealth
my life will grow mean;
I, therefore, sought the small villages in the country.
Is it possible to record on paper
the weariness I endured
wandering through the forests
in the outskirts of the villages,
through flint-strewn ground,
and through unfertile terrain?
These, Oh my Father,
are things known to You.

3467. V1. 13 pillai-p-peru vinnappam 58

But Thiruvotriyoor, where he was in the habit of going almost every day to worship Civan, going by the name of Thiyaagesan in that shrine, had a great fascination for him, and for sometime he could not choose between Thiruvotriyoor and Thillai. He relates this dilemma in two songs:

That the woes of life may depart from me,
I do not know whether I should stay near Otri
or wend my way to Thillai;
Oh Civan, what shall I do?
I am a mean fellow of little grace,
If you fail to bestow Your grace quickly,
saying: "Come hither",
how can I gain You?
Oh beautiful transcendent One of Otri
Whom the vile cannot approach!
Oh You Who stand in the Common Hall (in Thillai)
for the sake of all those who pay obeisance to You!

1083. II. 16 cirumai vinnappam 7

In the same Book then is another song referring to this dilemma where a soothsayer is requested to consult the stars and give advice. That Song is this:

Oh eminent Sir with the sacred thread!
Consult the stars and tell me
whether the place when the Pure One –
Who wears the snake as a cummerbund
and Who is inapprehensible to Brahma

who does not know His (Civan's) greatness
and to tall Vishnu –
will embrace me
is the Hall of Gnosis in Thillai,
a resplendent gem-set pillared hall of art,
or this Otri town.

1677. 11. 91 sothitam naatal 2

Ultimately Thillai won.

Before we follow, the Swaamikal to Thillai, we may record an incident in his life in Madras, an important incident in the ordinary world's estimation, but a very trifling one as far as the Swaamikal was concerned. He was married in his twenty-seventh year, in 1850. The bride was Dhanammaal, daughter of the Swaamikal's eldest sister, Unnaamulai-ammaal. In 1850, twenty-seven was quite an advanced age for a young man in Tamilnaadu - for that matter, anywhere in India - to be married. From this we can infer that our Swaamikal must have strongly and for long resisted the efforts of his family to get him married. In one of his songs he sings of his aversion to sexual life. He addresses Lord Natarajaa in these words:

If You would still consign me
to the embraces of women,
that is Your will's fulfillment;
it is not the least acceptable to me;
what can I do about this?
As I have a disgust towards this
from even my suckling days,
Oh You Who dance in the eternal hall in Thillai,
all my esteem is only to Your sacred feet blossom.

3392. VI.12 pillai-ch-chiru. vinnappam 7

Aversion he had, of course, for marriage and all that it stands for. To the young man of the world, marriage is the door to the life of the householder, to that walk of life held up to all mankind by Thiruvalluvar as a very noble mode of life, as a type of life that will place the man who leads that life as it ought to be led among the gods who live in heaven. But to one who seeks not the transient pleasures of the world but seeks the Kingdom of Heaven it is a life to be shunned.

But who can escape karma²⁸ – praarabdha karma- that share of karma with which a human being is born in this world and which shall have to be worked off. Moreover, "God's will hath no why".

²⁸ See note in Appendix II.

So Raamalinga Swaamikal was wedded to his sister's daughter. Wedded he was to her, but bound to her he was not. Praarabdha karma, in his case, took him to the threshold of the cavernous hell called worldly life of wife and children, kith and kin,

wealth and penury, pleasures and misery, aagamy karma and rebirth, but allowed him to retreat and escape for ever therefrom. He went into the nuptial chamber with a talisman in his hand, a talisman which guarded him from the beauty of his bride, from the inviting charms of her body, from the heady perfume of flowers, from the silken bed, from the heavy narcotic called sexual life. The talisman was a copy of the book he worshipped - the Thiruvaachakam. He went in a brahmachaari, a celibate, and came out next morning a celibate still. Of this he sings:

Whether it is vengeful cruel karma
or an act of Your grace,
I do not know.
While I was free of any infatuation
over any one of several damsels of sorts,
I, still, felt inclined to touch the hand of one of them.
But, apart from touching her
who had bent down (to touch my feet),
I did not enter her.
But thinking of this even now,
I go cold and clammy (with shame).
Whenever I think of it,
my heart breaks.
What more is there to say,
Oh my Father?
You know.

3452. VI.13 pillai-p-peru vinnappam 43

The Swaamikal came out unscathed by this ordeal by night and Dhanammaal passes out of our story for ever. Her mother, Swaamikal's eldest sister, Unnaamulai-ammaal, seems to have maintained good relations with him, for we find her visiting him at Vadalloor. The Swaamikal writes thus on 20-3-1861 in a letter to Irukkam Iratthinam Muthaliyaar: "It is a month since I sent (manuscripts of certain decads) through my eldest sister who had been here and was returning there. ."

The Swaamikal moved to Thillai - present Chidambaram in 1858, but did not live there. It is said that one Venkata Reddiyar, the village revenue accountant of Karunkuzhi, a village about 30 kilometers from Thillai, met him at Thillai and invited him to stay with him at Karunkuzhi. He assigned to our Swaamikal a room in his house which even today (August 1973) is in the occupancy of the descendants of Venkata Reddiyar. The house is even now in a state of good repair. It has a plinth area of about 235.16 square meters. The Swaamikal's room is about 9.25 square meters in area. Negotiations have been set afoot whereby the house will soon become the property of the Trust which administers the rest of the estate of the Swaamikal.

Our Swaamikal was a great walker. In Madras, he walked to Thiruvotriyoor and back, a distance of over 16 to 20 kilometers in all, almost every day, commencing, perhaps, from his twelfth year to the date he left Madras for good, that is for 23 years. Similarly, he was in the habit of walking from Karunkuzhi to Thillai and back through a shortcut route across the fields and groves.

In 1867, he moved to Vadaloor after a stay of nine years in Karunkuzhi. It is evident from his biography that he made this move in order to supervise the building of the Dharmasaalai and the Gnaanasabai and to direct their daily activities. The Dharmasaalai is a charitable inn which has fed from its inception in 1867 to this date, for over a century, millions of pilgrims, saadhus, the destitute, and the hungry. Vadaloor is the centre where four highways meet and through which people move from north to south, south to north, east to west and west to east, all through the year. The charitable inn had and has no endowments of land or money. It is run on the generosity of the people - of the poor people - and this generosity has not shrunk or dried up to this day. There are four granaries, one each for ragi, rye, parboiled rice, and raw rice. There are chutes in these granaries down which people can pour their gifts and these grains. And people have so poured their gifts unceasingly all these hundred and odd years that no one has been turned away from the daily gruel lines. This and other institutions founded by our Swaamikal are described in Appendix I.

Vallalar, however, had to flee from Vadaloor as the avaricious and the sick and the dead made his life at Vadaloor unbearable. Rumors had gone round that he can turn lead into gold and give life to the dead. He fled to Mettukkuppam, a village four and three quarters of a kilometer to the south of Vadaloor, and took refuge in a rest house which had been built by the villagers for their Vaishnava gurus to stay in when they came from Srirangam annually to bless their flock and to initiate new members into the faith. But very long before our Swaamikal's time, they had ceased to come on tour and, therefore, the rest house, called, 'Tirumaalikai' (sacred mansion) in Vaishnava parlance, was available for our Swaamikal's use. Today, it goes by the name of Ciddhi-valaaka-tiru-maalikai. This name was given by the Swaamikal. Here he stayed till the 30th of January 1874, a period of about four years. On that historic day, he locked himself for the night in his room and vanished for ever from the ken of man. Since then, a part of the room is screened off by a wooden screen behind which no one has stepped in to this day. Once a year the doors of the room are opened by a priest and closed behind him. He then opens a very wide window in the side wall in front of which pass thousands of devotees peering into the dark interior and seeing nothing but the exterior of the wooden screen which keeps to itself the secret of the august chamber.

Born on 5th October 1823, in a life of fifty years, three months and twenty-six days, the Swaamikal had sung the Six Books of the Thiruvartupaa comprising 5818 stanzas, divided into 379 decads, a few of them running into hundreds of lines, and a few more thousands of lines of odd poems and prose writings, some them being letters to certain persons. Of the Periya Puraanam it is usual to say: "pillai paathi, puraanam paathi", that is, the biography of Saint Thirugnaanasambandar takes up half of the book and that the other puraanam-s (hagiographies) take up the other half of the book. We can similarly say of the Thiruvartupaa that the Sixth Book occupies half of the work and the first five the other half. For the first five books comprise 235 decads and 3266 stanzas while the sixth comprises 144 decads and 2552 stanzas. Of these Six Books, the last six decads of the Third Book, a total of 53 stanzas, all of them having Ganapati as the theme, can be presumed to having been sung at Karunkuzhi. As regards the Fourth Book, 21 decads out of 41 decads have definite internal evidence to show that they have Nataraja in Thillai as the theme. These may, therefore, be taken to have been sung in Karunkuzhi. The rest too may, by inference, be presumed to have been sung in Karunkuzhi. The Fifth and the Sixth Books are incontrovertibly

products of the period of the stay in Karunkuzhi, Vadaloor, and Mettukkuppam as well if we can presume that any poems were sung during the period of the four years' stay in Mettukkuppam. It seems more reasonable to presume that his days of authorship of poems ended with his stay in Vadaloor. His mind had completely turned inward and his heart had taken the place of his mouth and was singing a song of songs, a song of beauty for having apprehended the Real. Some scholars, however, think that the last decad of the Sixth Book, the Anubhava Maalai, was sung at Mettukkuppam. They may be right.

In short, the number of decads and stanzas sung in the pre-Karunkuzhi period, that is, in the period of the stay in Madras, in about 26 years, can be reckoned at 176 decads and 2517 stanzas against 203 decads and 3301 stanzas, an output in the next 12 to 13 years only. These figures themselves are a measure of the intensity of the spiritual life of the Swaamikal in the last 16 to 17 years of his sojourn on earth.

Our Swaamikal's life, omitting the short stay of a year or two in Chinnakaavanam, therefore, comprises three periods, namely,

- (i) the period of about 32 years' stay in Madras,
- (ii) the period of 9 plus 4 years' stay in Karunkuzhi and Vadaloor respectively,
- (iii) the period of four years in Mettukkuppam.

These can be designated respectively as

- (i) the period of the Purgative Way (26 years),
- (ii) the period of the Illuminative Way (12 to 13 years),
- (iii) the period of the Unitive Way (4 years).

What are these ways? The Purgative Way, as the name implies, is that part of the long path which one treads towards the Godhead in which one purges oneself of all desires and attachments, of all imperfections, acts of commission and omission, shortcomings in renunciation and shortcomings in the total love of God, in the passion for the apprehension of the Godhead. The Illuminative Way is that part of the path which comes after the Purgative Way and in which one gains illumination, knowledge, gnosis. There is an intellectual aspect and an emotional aspect to this Way. There is a strong outpouring of the grace of God on the pilgrim treading this part of the long road to the Godhead. Last is the Unitive Way, that part of the pathway in which the pilgrim marches on with buoyant and joyous steps, filled with hope and freed from doubt or misconception. The journey is characterized by a sense of urgency. The pilgrim in this part of his journey begins to walk fast, then breaks into a loping trot, and finally gallops on with increasing tempo towards the beckoning smile, the outstretched arms, and is soon locked in an eternal embrace with the Eternal Being, the Godhead, the Ground of all being.

These three Ways, in a manner of speaking, correspond to, what Thomas Merton, a mystic of this century, calls, three modes of contemplation. He writes in his book, 'The Seeds of Contemplation', thus:

“So far, though not explicitly dividing them, we have spoken about three modes of contemplation. They are three possible beginnings. . .”

“The most usual entrance to contemplation is through a desert of aridity in which, although you see nothing and feel nothing and apprehend nothing and are conscious only of a certain interior suffering and anxiety, yet you are drawn and held in this interior darkness and dryness because it is the only place in which you can find any kind of stability and peace. As you progress, you learn to rest in this arid quietitude, and the assurance of a comforting and mighty presence at the heart of this experience grows on you more and more, until you gradually realize that it is God revealing Himself to you in a light that is painful to your nature and to all your faculties, because it is infinitely above them and because its purity is at war with your own selfishness and darkness and imperfection.”

“Then there is a quietud subrosa, a tranquillity full of savour and unction in which, although there is nothing to feed and satisfy either the senses or the imagination or the intellect, the will rests in a deep, luminous and absorbing experience of love.Next you are in the presence of a more definite and a more personal Love, Who invades Your mind and will in a way you cannot grasp, eluding every attempt on your part to contain and hold Him by any movement of your own soul. You know that this “presence” is God. But for the rest He is hidden in a cloud, although He is so near as to be inside you and outside you and all around you.”

However, in all these things you remain very far from God, much farther than you realize. And there are always two of you. There is yourself and there is God making Himself known to you by these effects.

“There you remain, somehow feeling that the next step will be a plunge and you will find yourself flying in interstellar space.”

“The next step is not a step.”

“You are not transported from one degree to another. What happens is that the separate entity that is you apparently disappears and nothing seems to be left but a pure freedom indistinguishable from infinite Freedom, love identified with Love. Not two loves, one waiting for the other, striving for the other, but Love Loving in Freedom.”

“And here, where contemplation becomes what it is meant to be, it is no longer something poured out of God into a created subject, so much as God living in God and identifying a created life with His own Life so that there is nothing left of any experimental significance but God living is God.”

Such are the three Ways which correspond to the three major periods of the Swaamikal’s life on this earth. These three ways are hinted at in the Upanishadic text which has been most happily rendered into English by Dr. Annie Besant thus:

From the unreal lead me to the Real;

From darkness lead me to Light;
From death lead me to Immortality.

Maanikkavaachakar transposing this aspiration and prayer into a joyous achievement renders the Upanishadic text thus:

“Oh Flame of the Real
Who, coming, in Your Grace,
that all unreality in me may dispelled be,
scintillate in me as the gnosis of the Real!
Oh blissful noble Lord,
Oh preeminent Wisdom,
Who dispel the ignorance of me
who have no knowledge of my kind whatsoever!
Oh You who are not created,
and have no life-span or end,
Who create, sustain, destroy, and bestow grace,
do rid me (of this cycle of births)
and induct me into the fold of Your devotees!

Thiruvaachakam, 1. Civapuraanam, lines 37 to 43

We shall in other chapters follow the footsteps of the Swaamikal as he makes his way to the Godhead through these three sections of the Pathway, the first of which is painful and dolorous, the second a strange mixture of sorrow and joy, sorrow being replaced by joy as ignorance is slowly replaced by illumination, and the last a section of sheer delight, of mounting bliss.

In the next chapter we shall see the man that was Raamalingam.

3. ECCE HOMO (BEHOLD THE MAN)

PHOTOGRAPHY had come to India in the life-time of our Swaamikal, but no photograph of him is available to us. It is said that attempts to photograph him always ended in failure, Nor do we have any portrait of the Swaamikal. What we have today and what appears now in books and periodicals is a modern artist's impression of the Swaamikal, a product of the imagination based on certain accounts of the appearance of the Swaamikal and on certain of his poems.

Fortunately, we have on record a vivid description of the Swaamikal by one of his contemporaries, Sri Velaayutha Muthaliyaar of Tholuvor, a disciple of the Swaamikal. Velaayutha Muthaliyaar was born in 1832, and died on 22nd February 1889, fifteen years after the Swaamikal's 'antardhaan'- vanishing from sight of man. By his own admission (in a letter addressed to the author of "Hints on Esoteric Theosophy") he was a disciple of the Swaamikal. He says: "In 1849 I became his disciple". That is to say, he became the Swaamikal's disciple in his 17th year and in the 26th year of the Swaamikal. This discipleship continued till 1874, for a period of exactly a quarter of a century, till the Swaamikal's 'antardhaan'. The Muthaliyaar says:

"In personal appearance, Raamalingam was a moderately tall, spare man - so spare, indeed, as to virtually appear a skeleton - yet withal a strong man, erect in stature, and walking very rapidly; with a face of a clear brown complexion, a straight thin nose, very large fiery eyes, and with a look of constant sorrow on his face. Towards the end, he let his hair grow long ; and, what is rather unusual with Yogis, he wore shoes. His habits were extremely abstemious. He was known to hardly ever take any rest. A strict vegetarian, he ate but once in two or three days, and was then satisfied with a few mouthfuls of rice, But when fasting for a period of two or three months at a time, he literally ate nothing, living merely on warm water with a little sugar dissolved in it."

We have the Swaamikal's own songs to corroborate the Muthaliyaar. He sings:

Knowing the tenderness of my fervid heart
and the frailty of this poor fellow's body,
if, yet, You would not take pity on me,
Oh our only One with the celestial Ganga,
the crescent moon, and the luxurious matted locks,
who else will show pity to me?

* * * *

Even after noticing
the sensitiveness of my mind
and the frailty of my body
which feel embarrassed at the hands
of the base ones of furtive minds,
if You would not show me grace

by taking pity on me
even to a trifling extent,
who will take pity on me
in this jeering world?

2631, 2632. IV. 7 thiruppukazh pathikam 1, 2

Though I am a base cur
of hypocritical conduct,
I worship Your blossom feet only!
Oh munificent One!
Even after seeing the sensitiveness of my mind
along with the frailty of my body,
alas, my Father,
You have refrained from pitying me
even by the least trifle.

* * * *

Oh Lord with the outspread matted locks!
Even after seeing the breadth of my mind
and the frailty of my body,
without showing me
even the least of Your indispensable grace,
You have stood aside
after betraying my mind
to treacherous Karma.

2644, 2647. IV. 8 cinthai thiruppathikam 4, 7

Oh Mother, Oh my Father,
Oh Ambrosia of the holy Hall of Gnosis!
Contemplating You only,
performing Your service only,
I keep yearning in my mind
that the thing called Your mercy
may keep me eternally in this world.
Your sacred mind knows
the sensitiveness of my mind
and the chronic frailty of my body.

3524. VI. 13 pillai-p-peru vinnappam 115

The Muthaliyaar speaks of the Swaamikal as “a moderately tall, spare man - so spare, indeed, as to virtually appear a skeleton”. Moreover, according to him, the Swaamikal was “of a clear brown complexion”. The Muthaliyaar, however, seems to have failed to notice another aspect of his body, or, at least, has failed to mention it, if he had noticed it. The latter is, perhaps, the case.

Maanikkavaachakar sings of two bodies in lines 115 to 120 of the Thiru-anda-p-pakuti, the 3rd decad of the Thiruvaachakam, to which our Swaamikal was very attached as will be seen from his song (stanza 4 of decad 12 of Book V, continuous serial number 3260) quoted at foot of page 17. Those lines are:

The Superb One
Who, like the fragrance of flowers,
rising high and filling everywhere without omission,
pervades everything,
that effulgent Being
Who, for my sake, coming today,
without any effort on my part,
did away with the body which spells ruin;
He came today without any effort on my part,
and abode in me;
obeisance to Him;
He made for me a body which yields ecstasy;
obeisance to Him.

Jalal-ud-din Rumi, the Persian Mystic of the 13th century throws light on these lines thus:

“The spiritual way ruins the body,
and, having ruined it, restores it to prosperity”.

In elucidation of this cryptic and esoteric statement, Rumi illustrates it by four similes, thus:

“Ruined the house for the sake of the golden treasure,
and with that same treasure, built it better than before;

“Cut off the water and cleansed the river bed,
then caused drinking water to flow into it;

“Cleft the skin and drew out the barb,
then made fresh skin grow over the wound;

“Razed the fortress and took it from the infidel,
then reared thereon a hundred towers and ramparts;

“Sometimes the action of God appears like this,
sometimes the contrary;
(true) religion is nothing but bewilderment”.

It is this “body which yields ecstasy” that Velaayutha Muthaliyaar has failed to mention in his letter to the author of “Hints on Esoteric Theosophy”. Perhaps he did not know about this unique body, or, more probably, he felt that it would not be proper to mention such an esoteric matter in a letter to a stranger. We have to go to our Swaamikal’s songs for information about this unique body. He has sung many songs in which he refers to this body, but we shall quote only a few here. He sings:

To the amazement of everyone,
You raised me high up,
me who have no peer in vileness;
GOLDEN FORM, unsullied mind,
perfect gnosis, overfull wealth,
and spiritual powers
that can achieve everything one thinks of,
great bliss,
all these to myself You bestowed on me.
Oh supreme Chief with no peer to You,
what shall I say of Your benevolence!

3849. VI.36 petra petrinai viyatthal 8

Oh grand Life
resplendent in the dazzling Hall of Gnosis!
Oh God Who manifest Yourself
in the midst of a tongue of flame
which discloses (You to me)!
Oh You Who graciously let Your ears be filled
with a plea which I presented
that this body which I don now, all of it,
may turn into imperishable golden form!

3859. VI. 37 azhivuraa arul vativa-p-peru 8

What is there fit for me to do
in return for Your grace which,
severing the much bruited about mighty (bond)
called maayai, karma, and ignorance,
and taking my heart as its holy shrine,
imparted to me all the mystic powers,
turned the body as well into a golden body,
and, moreover, served me fresh ambrosia?

3866. VI. 38 per arul vaaimaiyai viyatthal 5

I take the liberty of quoting quite a few more songs, though they may repeat the same fact, as their very numbers will go to convince the reader that the Swaamikal was not talking about an imaginary or illusory or delusive phenomenon but about an indisputable actuality. He sings:

Oh the manner in which
our great Lord has mercy on me!
Bestowing on me
the peerless great effulgence of grace,
He told me: "Go and sport about
as a very mother to the world",
and, therefor giving me

a never decaying lush golden body,
blended with my soul.

3869. VI. 38 per arul vaaimaiyai viyatthal 8

Shall I call You –
Who, making my city (body)
an undecaying golden city (body),
graciously assumed lordship over me –
a unique Fruit ripened on (the tree called) love,
or the Intelligence
Which, established in my intelligence,
acts as the power of intellection,
or Civanhood pervading my bliss,
or the Husband Who is the succour of my life,
or the Light shining in the uncontending mind,
or the King in the eternal Hall (of gnosis)?

4020. VI. 50 aandaruliya arumaiyai viyatthal 7

Oh Sugar-candy
Which, without dissolving away,
stays on my tongue
and gives heavily sweet taste!
Oh gracious Ambrosia
Who came rushing up
and ended all my sufferings!
Oh true Grace !
Oh Lamp who shine as Truth itself!
Oh Divine Will
Who bestow the grace
that my body filled (with life)
my instantly turn into a golden body
and continue to flourish undecayingly!
Oh true Reality!
Oh King dancing in the Common Hall
Who had courted and wed me!
Graciously wear the garland of words
which I string with delight.

4096. VI. 57 arul vilakka maalai 7

He of the Golden Hall,
which rises high like undiminishing wealth,
spoilt my sleep
and gave me bliss;
I was rid of all my grieving,
my mind was filled with contentment,
and I bore a golden form,
truly indeed.

I wish I had space to reproduce all the sixteen stanzas of this 101st decad of Book VI. The name of the decad is “The Blessing of the Golden Form”. Our Saint relates in this decad spiritual experiences of a very high order not given to many to have, and given to fewer still to record. I had almost said that these stanzas should have found a place in the very last decad of Book VI, called ‘anupava maalai’, i.e. the ‘Garland of Experience’. But the experience (I deliberately do not use the plural) related in that decad belongs to the category of experience spoken of by Thomas Merton, the greatest mystic of this century, in the paragraph quoted below from his book “Seeds of Contemplation”. He writes:

“What happens is that the separate entity that is you apparently disappears and nothing seems to be left but a pure freedom distinguishable from infinite Freedom, love identified with Love. Not two loves, one waiting for the other, striving for the other, but Love loving in Freedom.

“Would you call this experience? I think you might say that this only becomes, an experience in a man’s memory. Otherwise it seems wrong to even speak of it as something that happens. Because things that happen have to happen to some subject, and experiences have to be experienced by someone. But here the subject of any divided or limited creature experience seems to have vanished. You are not you, you are fruition. If you like, you do not have an experience, you become Experience; but that is entirely different, because you no longer exist in such a way that you can reflect on yourself or see yourself having an experience, or judge what is going on that is not eternal and unchanging and an activity so tremendous that it is infinitely still”.

The experiences described in the decad from which a stanza has been quoted are of a different order and, in a way, are preludes to the ultimate experience when one cannot be said to have an experience but becomes Experience itself. That is, probably, the reason why the Swaamikal did not include this experience of gaining the golden body in the ‘anubhava maalai’.

The next stanza which I wish to quote is one of exultation. It runs:

Blow, Oh conch, blow
that He redeemed my soul,

Blow, Oh conch, blow
that bliss resulted.

Blow, Oh conch, blow
that He gave me a golden form;

Blow, Oh conch, blow,
“Hail Father of the Golden Hall!”

Rapidly, rapidly I crossed the steps,
I partook of the ambrosia from above²⁹
in amazement;
with my mind dissolving, dissolving,
and melting,
with tears welling up,
with my thoughts blossoming out
and appropriating Him,
with fragrance of gnosis rising up,
I realized the King of the Hall of Gems,
and I shone with a shining golden body
in place of the shrunken and flabby-skinned one.

5482. VI. 128 utrathu uraitthal 6

²⁹ “ambrosia from above”= It is said that, as a result of certain yogic practices of a very high order, a fluid which tastes sweet as nothing on earth, a life-sustaining fluid, drips from inside the frontal bone of the forehead, from a spot just behind the point of the Junction of the, eye-brows, through the posterior nares down the throat into the stomach. It is said that yogis who have reached this condition stand in no need of food or water for months end years.

The above poem lets us into the secret of when the shrunken and flabby-skinned body becomes a body of golden hue. This happens, as the Swaamikal tells us, when one has realized God. This is confirmed by another song of the Swaamikal with which we will close this matter of the transformation of the body subject to decay into a body of golden hue. Our Swaamikal sings thus in the last decad of his Arutpaa:

Whenever I was hungry
giving me good pure food,
as if He Himself were hungry,
and, ridding me of the harassing hunger,
He graciously established both His feet
in my heart replete with flesh,
and gave me sanctuary.
At the moment when my Bridegroom –
Who dances in the Hall of Gnosis,
and Who is rare for even the king of the heavens to gain –
embraced me externally,
I hugged the golden form
which He pressed on me
and rejoiced.
As regards the esoteric embrace,
is it possible to tell you of its sublimity?

5807. VI. 142 anubhava maalai 94

When Thirugnaanasambandhar merged with his bride and the members of the marriage party in the Effulgence that is Civan in Nalloor, when Maanikkavaachakar merged in the Mystery of mysteries in Thillai, when Sundaramoorthi Swaamikal ascend to heaven on the white elephant, when Thirunaavukkarasar merged in Civan in Thiruppukaloor - the Sanctuary Town - with these words: “Oh virtuous One, verily, I am coming to Your feet!” and, if I may take the liberty of saying so, when Jesus Christ ascended to heaven after rising from the grave, all of them had gained this golden body and it was with it that they merged in the effulgence that is the Godhead. So too did our Raamalinga Swaamikal when he shut himself up on the 30th of January 1874 in his room in the Siddhi-valaaka-t-thiru-maalikai and vanished from the ken of mankind.

In the matter of clothing our Swaamikal was quite austere. “His garments consisted but of two pieces of white cloth”, says Velaayutha Muthaliyaar. Ascetics in Tamilnaadu did not take to the ochre cloth, but wore the same white cloth which the householder also wore. In fact, in some of his poems, Thirugnaanasambandhar sneers at the ochre cloth fancied by Jain monks. There was a difference, however, in the way the cloth was worn. While, perhaps, the house-holder wore it trailing down to his ankles, the ascetic wore it like a midi garment, the edge of the cloth not reaching below the middle of the calf-muscles of the legs. This garment was called ‘kanthai’, and even Civan is sung as wearing this ‘kanthai’! Today ‘kanthai’ means, in Tamil, a cloth in tatters, but that is not the case with the garment of the ascetic. The Swaamikal himself describes his dress and deportment. He sings:

Shy of walking with arms aswinging,
I walked about
with my arms crossed on my chest;
hating to show my bare body,
behold, I hid my body entirely
with white cloth;
Oh my Sire, I never noticed carefully
the garb, gait, and color
of others in this world,
and if (by chance) I happened to see them
I was greatly seized by fear.

3461. VI.13 pillai-p-peru-vinnappam 52

The crossing of the arms on the chest is an external sign of an internal atakkam udaimai, a self-control, a control of the five senses. The crossing of the arms may, therefore, be called a mudra, a gesture or pose, similar to the poses of the hands and fingers assumed by dancers, of the Bharatha-Naatyam to express a sentiment. The Swaamikal was modesty incarnate. He did not like the limelight before which he was exposed to the world. Referring to this, he sings:

Even though those who had ripened
(in spiritual life)
in that manner³⁰
did not know the least
(about the Godhead),

I had thought to remain unknown to anyone
after having had a vision
of the unique Form
ripened (in my mind) in the perfect manner;
I do not know whether
it was God's natural act of grace
or act of the great maayai
of that noted colour (darkness)
that I,
who had decided to remain incognito in this manner,
was dragged into the street
for all to know me.
Oh dancing King of the proscenium,
behold, my mind is pacing the hall
(in great perturbation).

3710. VI.24 tharbodha izhappu 1

³⁰ “in that manner” = the Swaamikal does not explain in what manner.

He disliked costly clothing and objected to even an umbrella being held over his head by solicitous friends. He sings:

When my friends clothed me
in specially chosen gold-lace-bordered cloth,
all those who witnessed the dismay I felt
were dismayed in turn (for my sake);
and whenever, in the hot sun,
they held over me an umbrella,
surprised (at my going about without it),
I felt disconcerted in my mind;
fearing to walk in the muddy street
swinging one end of the loin cloth
held in my hand,
Oh my Father,
I pulled up the lower hem of my cloth
and tied it round my waists³¹.

3460. VI 13 pillai-p-peru-vinnappam 51

³¹ This habit, peculiar to Tamilians and Malayaalees, seems to have been prevalent in the 19th century also.

Similarly, our Swaamikal hesitated to sit on a high seat, or to sit with a leg thrown over the other, or to do many other similar acts of arrogance which we commit several times a day without giving the least thought to the fact that they are outward signs of an inward hauteur, Hear our Swaamikal sing:

I feared to be seated on a high seat
which will expose me (to the gaze of people),
I feared to cross leg over leg.
I feared to sing in such a manner
that the song will be heard far elsewhere;
while seated on a pial built (high above the ground)
I feared to hang my legs
down the side of the pial
rejoicing much thereby;
and, talking while so seated
with down-swung legs,
I feared even to think of,
Oh my father!

3476. VI.13 pillai-p-peru-vinnappam 67

The Muthaliyaar says that our Swaamikal wore shoes contrary to the habit of ascetics. But from a song of our Swaamikal we learn that often he went about bare-footed. Describing an incident, which probably caused him great amusement, he sings:

Shoes there are none,
no white shirt is on the body,
no decent cloth there is,
personality there is none,
no money is in the hand,
the body has no body³²,
no house, no hauteur,
there is no bent of mind for marriage,
Oh mind of mine,
what path have you taken?

847.VI. 26 nenjodu kilatthal 3

³² body = substance, bulk.

It is said that this song was sung with reference to an invitation to a wedding in Madras at Sabhaapathi Muthaliyaar's house. Perhaps, the Swaamikal was rebuffed at the doors of the marriage hall.

Our Swaamikal held the sacred ash in the highest regard and we need have no doubts that he wore the ash for the best part of his life, if not throughout his life. He has sung as many as five decads, 51 stanzas, specifically devoted to the sacred ash. These are the 14th, 30th and 45th decads of Book 1 and the 25th and 38th decads of Book II, called 'aarezhutthu unmai'; 'punniya neetru maanyam', 'sevi arivurutthal', 'punniya vilakkam', and 'siva punniya-t-thetram' respectively. I am not unaware that these songs were sung in his early years, in the years when he was a devotee of Murukan at Kandhakottam and Lord Thiyaagesan at Otriyoor. These facts need not deter us from using these stanzas to gain a mental picture of the Swaamikal in absence of a photograph or a portrait.

In the 14th decad he pays praise, obeisance, to two things, the aarezhutthu or shadaakshara or the Six (mantric/tantric) Letters, namely, Sa-Ra-Va-Na-Bha-Va, and the sacred ash. Even as Na-Ma-Ci-Vaa-Ya is the Five Mantric Letters to invoke Civan, so is Saravanabhava, the Six Mantric Letters, to invoke Murukan. Our Swaamikal sings:

Oh Treasure of greatness,
Oh Son begot by great penance
by the great Lord
Who has Vishnu as His bull steed!
If, here on earth,
Your Six Letters are pronounced
with one-pointed mind,
and the supreme sacred white ash is worn,
prosperity here and in the here-after
will accrue,
while not the least of evil will accrue.

211.I.14 aarezhutthu unmai 1

Oh pure Lamp Who gleam
at the apex of the multitudinous Vedas!
Oh Flood of bliss!
Oh mother-like One!
Oh Father on Thanikai hill!
If one pronounces Your Six Letters,
meditates on them in the mind,
and wears the supreme, sacred, white ash,
Your feet will adorn his head
as an ornament
and no evil will approach him.

215.I. 14 aarezhutthu unmai 5

In the last stanza of the same decad he asserts:

The grace of Him
Who burnt the City of those
who would not think of Him
will accrue to one,
and one will be enabled to approach
the shade of the Feet (of Civan)
which the sacred tall Vishnu could not approach,
if one wears the sacred ash heavily saying:
“Oh Son
Whom the mountain-dwelling Dame
of music-laden speech
has graciously borne!
Oh twelve-eyed One!

Oh our Father!”

364.I.30 punniya neetru maanmiyam 10

It is in the 38th decad of Book Two that the Swaamikal gives very strong expression to his attachment to the sacred ash and those who wear it and his aversion to those who do not wear it. He sings:

Oh my eyes!
Avoid seeing even in your dreams
the lowly wretches
who would not wear God’s ash;
look upon with love
the devotees who wear the holy ash
which will do away with
the impurities which attack the soul,
that we might approach (and gain) Him
Who, listening to the veena
from which sweet music is evoked,
(and pleased therewith)
bestowed on (Raavana) the Raakshasa
long life along with a sword.

997.II.38 civa punniya-t-thetram 1

While it would be inadvisable for the purposes of this book to reproduce here the remaining nine stanzas of this decad, it is, however, very necessary to give extracts of at least the first two lines of each of them. He sings:

If you happen to meet the base ones
who, saying: ‘Obeisance to You, Oh Lord!’,
do not wear the ash,
forsake that place in disgust.

** ** ** **

If You meet the mean ones
who do not wear the divine ash
run away and hide yourself
as if you had met the hissing snake. .

** ** ** **

If the demons
who do not wear the pure ash,
were to say something,
deem it to be rubbish,
and shut (your ears tightly).

** ** ** **

Let your dear life tremble
if the bodies of the dogs
who do not wear the goodly ash
happen to stink

** ** ** **

If those who do not wear the grace-giving ash
serve you ambrosia itself as food,
avoid eating that filth

** ** ** **

If those who would not wear the ash
which bestows release from the bondage of birth
were to touch you
even with the tips of their fingers,
tremble with resentment
as if thorns were piercing you

** ** ** **

Forsake giving even as much as
half a sesame seed
to the base cum, the vile ones,
who do not wear the sweet ash

** ** ** **

Avoid walking in the hall of a house
where lie the fools who do not wear the ash

** ** ** **

Oh my heart!
Forsake thinking, even by oversight,
of the vile ones
who do not wear the ash
which confers eternity

** ** ** **

It is inconceivable that the Swaamikal, who was so strongly attached to the sacred ash and who, personification of compassion as he was, yet felt so deeply a to say: “Forsake giving even as much as half a sesame seed to the base curs, the vile ones, who do not wear the sweet ash”, retracted all these beliefs in his last days. This idea has got about, I believe, through a thoroughly erroneous recording and/or interpretation of some of his last days’ utterances by the disciples who heard them. He

did not recant, he grew out of them; he evolved. We shall deal with this matter in detail far down this book. .

The mystic Five Letter mantra – Na-Ma-Ci-Vaa-Ya -in its various forms, was very dear to our Swaamikal. The mantra is called ainthezhutthu in Tamil, and panchaaksharam in Sanskrit. Even as the Four Camaya-Kuravars had sung on the greatness of the mystic five letters, so has the Swaamikal as well. The Five Letter mantra is of several forms, the most common being Na-Ma-Ci-Vaa-Ya and Ci-Vaa-Ya-Na-Ma, the former being called the gross Five Letters and the latter the subtle Five Letters. Ci-Va-Ya, a mantra made up of only three of the Five letters is called the Causal Five Letters, The Swaamikal has devoted one decad for each of these three forms of the mantra, the 37th, the 25th and the 21st decads respectively of the Second Book. Ooran Atikal has listed 25 more stanzas scattered through the Arutpaa which have reference to the Five Letters.

Oh mind of mine!
What profit did you find
in getting infatuated by the eyes
of women with brows shaped like bent bows,
and suffering at the hands
of those perfidious ones
and yet daily yearning for them?
Go with me to beauteous Otriyoor
and meditate chanting
“Om Civa Shanmuka Civa Om, Om Ci-Vaa-ya,
Who are sweeter than honey-filled sugar-cane
and Who, saturating the minds of your devotees,
am arisen thereon”.

794.II.21 arul naama vilakkam 1

Of the gross Five Letters, he sings:

Oh my heart!
Even though you have given up the fight,
beset as you were by the enmity
of the five senses,
which should, in truth, have fallen back
in the fight,
fear not, fear not at all.
While the Veda-s Four
prayed for survival
and Vishnu and Brahma
prayed to continue to live,
note that the name of the Lord
Who accepted the poison
as very ambrosia in His throat
is Namachchivaayam.
That is the succour we gain.

987.II.37 natrunai vilakkam 1

Oh my heart,
it does not matter
if the King of sacrifices³³ confronts you,
or Cupid shoots his arrows at you,
or Kaalan³⁴ (Father Time) himself comes,
or King of the lotus³⁵ is enraged with you,
or Vishnu comes to war with you;
why have you become a victim
to unmatched great grief?
Do not fear the least.
Have you not learnt the secret?
Note that the ally we gain
is Namachchivaayam
Who brought to the shore³⁶
the King of the gift of the tongue.

988.II.37 natrunai vilakkam 2

³³ King of sacrifices = Indra, A person who successfully performs one hundred horse sacrifices gains the status of Indra.

³⁴ Kaalan = Yama, King of death.

³⁵ King of the lotus = Brahma,

³⁶ Thirunaavukkarasar, for the offence of forsaking Jainism for the Faith of Civan, was cast into the sea by a Jain King with a huge stone tied to his feet. Lord Civan made the stone float and serve as a raft for Thirunaavukkarasar.

Oh heart of mine,
do not be concerned thinking:
“Whom shall I approach
about his hunger which torments me”.
Alack, it seems that you do not know one thing,
The succour we will gain
is Namachchivaayam,
the name of the Lord Who owns us,
and Who, on that day in the past,
in Aalakkoil, for the sake of Sundarar,
went about begging for food
to the distress of His rosy great blossomy feet,
and graciously served it to him.

990.II.37 natrunai vilakkam 4

Oh my heart!
You, grieve saying:
“The sun runs his course,
and following him the days depart
one after the other;

what shall I do
if that cruel god of death gets angry ?”
Fear not!
Don’t you know the glory
of Maarkandeyar?
Know that our succour is
Na-Ma-Ch-Chi-Vaa-Yarn,
the name of the Lord
of those who seek Him.

991.II.37 natrunai vilakkam 5

“Vishnu too will perish
and Brahma will die;
all the rest of the heavenly ones
will entirely expire”,
thinking thus,
why do you stand wondering:
“Who else is the suitable good succour for us?”
Oh heart of mine!
you are a fool.
Note this. Namachchivaayam is the name
of the transcendent Being of the four Veda-s
Who reduces to ruin
the thousand crores and odd spheres
that surround us
and recreates them,
and sustains them;
He is the succour we gain.

993.II.37 natrunai vilakkam 2

In the 10th stanza of the 7th decad in Book IV, we find a positive statement to show that the Swaamikal made it a rule to repeat the Five Letters with fervor and faith. He sings:

Though I am a person of unlettered conduct
and lacking in Your mercy,
I do not know of any support
other than the name Namachchivaaya
praised by all good men.
Oh You Who own everything
(in the universe),
If You do not show grace to me,
who (else) will show pity to me?

2640.IV.7 thiruppukazh pathikam 10

As we said earlier, a whole decad of ten stanzas has been devoted by the Swaamikal to the subtle Five Letters, Ci-Vaa-Ya-Na-Ma, as well. We shall quote the first stanza and give extracts only from the rest. Our Swaamikal swears by his own name thus:

It will bestow a power of speech to sing sweetly,
milk and rice it will give with solicitude,
it will provide an assembly of devotees
sweet to associate with,
good character it will bestow;
Oh heart of mine dear to play with,
fear not.
I swear by my name;
go and wear the ash
saying 'Civaayanama',
and it will bestow on you
a felicity rare to find.

834.II.25 punniya vilakkam 1

The next ten stanzas catalogue a varied list of benefits which will accrue from pronouncing the subtle Five Letters, Ci-Vaa-Ya-Na-Ma. Says the Swaamikal:

Black delusion it will remove,
death it will weed out,
the (true) path it will show,
extirpated will be the craving
for vain women. 2

** ** *

Cuts off the roots of fervid Karma;
the pure path to reach Reality -
the Home of Gnosis -
and be redeemed, will it show. 3

** ** *

It will enable You to gain
the hereditary service
of praising the shapely blossomy twin feet. 4

** ** *

It will bestow also the Sword of Grace
to raze to the ground
the forest of perfidious senses 5

** ** *

It will show to us

the Gem that monopolizes all our gaze,
the three kinds of Fruit,
the Sugar-cane,
the Candy of the sugar-cane,
the Ambrosia which those in heaven gain,
our King seated on His bull

6

The next five stanzas being variants on the same theme as the six, are not summarised. But that six stanzas out of eleven in a decad are devoted to the theme, namely, that pronouncing the subtle Five Letters will enable one to gain the Real and to have a vision of Him, shows how strong was the faith of our Swaamikal in ‘Ci-Vaa-Ya-Na-Ma’. That this faith is not one of the early immature years and that this faith survived throughout the life of the Swaamikal is shown by two lines (1315, 1316) in the sacred Arut-perum-jothi-akaval, the 1596 line-long stanza and decad, the quintessence of the experiences of the Swaamikal, the paeon of praise of God which is recited early every morning in every shrine dedicated to the memory of Raamalinga Swaamikal. He sings:

“Oh true Mantra
Who a. the A, U, M,
and undying Ci and Va.

4615.VI.81 arut-perum-jothi-akaval, lines 1315, 1316

The subtlest of subtle forms of the Five Letters is Ci-Va. It is for this reason that these letters are enblazoned these days on the temple towers of Civan in Tamilnaadu. Persons who have left the out-going path, the pravrutthi maarga, and are on the returning path, the nivrutthi maarga, am given initiation into this mantra by their gurus. Ci-Va is not only the subtlest of subtle forms of the Five Letters but the Godhead as well.

Our Swaamikal wore the sacred ash and chanted the Five Letters in its gross, subtle, subtler and subtlest forms. Just as Maanikkavaachakar exclaims,

“Did I indeed, perform thavam
and Ci-Vaa-ya-na-ma gained to chant?.

our Swaamikal too is amazed at his good fortune. He sings:

What is the virtuous deed I performed
that I gained the good fortune
of being able to pronounce Civaayanama
with my tongue made of flesh

2260.III.6 thiru arul muraiyeedu 90

The privilege of chanting the mystic Five Letters is not assumed by oneself. One has to be initiated by a guru. Who was the guru who initiated our Swaamikal? Let him answer:

“Oh (my Lord, the) great Life
Who, preventing the imprint
of the oft-spoken of world of desires on my mind
at my playful tender age
when I had just been weaned,
imprinted instead on my mind
the Five Letters themselves
which stand out dispelling illusion!
Oh Bliss who occur in my life!
Oh Ether
Who shine like the embodiment of effulgence
rendering the stars impotent!
Oh great Being
Who spread out to contain in Yourself
the endless sky!
Oh dancing King
Who, bestowing a form of light
on men of great thavam who have forsaken flesh,
rise above everything!

4167. VI.57 arul vilakka maalai 78

It would be in the fitness of things to conclude this long series of quotations of songs relating to the mystic Five Letters with the following song:

Though the child might forget
the mother who bore it,
though the mother who bore the child
might forget it,
though the soul might forget the body it had assumed,
though the body which has gained the soul
might forget it,
though the mind might forget
the arts it has learnt,
though the eyes might forget to wink,
and (in fact) cease to do so,
I will never forget Namachchivaaya
which shines forth
from the hearts of men of excellent thavam.

820.II.23 Namachchivaaya sankeertthana lahari 7

Writing of the Thiruvaachakam, I said, elsewhere,

“ The cadence of its songs, the unique sweetness of the Tamil language, the use of simple household words to whose pregnant and poignant thought-content the Tamil mind has become insensible through over-familiarity, these factors contrive to make us unaware of the great heritage we have in the Thiruvaachakam. Its flood of devotional out-pourings has submerged the scintillating gems of spiritual teachings even as a torrent of tears hides the iris of the eyes.

As Aldous Huxley says:

‘Familiarity with traditional hallowed writings tends to breed, not indeed contempt, but something which, for practical purposes, is almost as bad, a Stupor Of the spirit, an inward deafness to the meaning of the sacred words’.

These words, if we substitute ‘The Arutpaa’ for ‘The Thiruvaachakam’, will apply equally to the Thiruvartupaa. Not everyone can study the Arutpaa as analytically as Ooran Atikal or as intuitively as Giridhaari Prasaad. It is for this reason that I wish to quote as extensively as this book will permit from the Arutpaa so that we can see the passages with a fresh eye and new understanding.

Velaayutha Muthaliyaar says that our Swaamikal was “excessively abstemious”. This is an understatement, as some of the Swaamikal’s songs will show. He sings:

You, Who have inseparably mingled in me,
know the hatred I have,
from my early years
of lack of discriminatory knowledge,
towards eating;
what shall I say today?
Even if I am an immature lowly creature,
I desire Your sacred ambrosia of grace only.
Oh unpungent Savour,
Oh my Father,
desire of any sort have I none
towards anything.

3393. V1.12 pillai-ch-chiru vinnappam 8

Not even an iota of attachment has grown in my mind
to this body which has grown up (to this state).
Whenever I indulged in food
to assuage my hunger,
I ate it with aversion,
I still eat with aversion.
I had never wished
for this malodorous fleshy body
to become stout even the least;
even today I wish it to grow thinner still;
what need is there for me to say this;
it is what You already know.

3397. VI.12 pillai-ch-chiru-vinnappam 12

Abstemious though one may be, it is difficult indeed to oppose the ‘killing’ kindness of parents and friends who press on one many a delicacy and insist on one eating it in their presence. The Swaamikal was no exception to this kind of ‘cruel’ hospitality. He relates in three poems what he did on such occasions.

Whenever I saw and whenever I ate food
described as a delicacy to delight in,
I feared it with squirming mind.
And, on the auspicious occasions,
when friends invited me
to partake of the feast that was served,
I kindly spoke some words of excuse to them
and, hiding myself nearby,
was seized by fear,
Oh my Father!

3438.VI.13 pillai-p-peru-vinnappam 29

Whenever I ate appetising food,
my mind trembled with fear
wondering what suffering will come
out of this joy,
and (therefore) often remained
with an empty gnawing stomach.
Oh my Father,
I received whatever loving friends
gave out of love, saying:
“Alas, Oh God,
do not let me suffer by these”,
and ate the things with fear in my mind
and abided (awaiting consequences).

3439. VI.13. pillai-p-peru-vinnappam 30

From the day on which I gained the age of adolescence³⁷
in the world which I had entered,
fearing to see the disappointment
of the mother who bore me,
I have eaten heavily on some days;
on some other days,
I feared that relatives, friends,
and those who bear me affection,
would become sad,
and, therefore, ate;
these occasions apart,
my mind trembled to take delectable food,
You know this.

3440. V1.13 pillai-p-peru-vinnappam 31

³⁷ age of adolescence in India is 12 years for boys.

Sekkizhaar, the 12th century famous hagiographer of Tamilnaadu, whose Thirutthondar-puraanam (better known as the Periya Puraanam) has been given the signal honor of being counted among the Thirumurai-s, writes thus about the qualities of the Servitors of the Lord in his great work:

Men as pure inside as the ash
smeared on their spotless frames resplendent with gems;
by their effulgence they light up every side,
and shine with ineffable glory.

** ** ** **

Even if the elements five their balance lose in chaos,
never forget they the blossom-feet of Him
with the Lady as His Twin,
but stand steadfast by strength of far-famed path of Love;
great rocks of blameless character they are.

** ** ** **

Endowed with eternal riches which never wax or wane,
shard³⁸ and red gold both with equanimity they view;
they shine with resolve
which with welling love seeks only to adore,
and seeks not deliverance at all.
Wooden beads their necklace, rags their robe,
their duty none other but God's service;
full of compassionate love, they lack nothing;
how can I describe their resoluteness?

³⁸ shard - pieces of broken earthenware.

** ** ** **

Of mien and garb as fancy dictates,
unique servitors of the Dancing Lord
of age-long fame; how shall I
here praise or sing their state?

Can one find truer or better words to describe Raamalinga Swaamikal? We are here concerned particularly with the line: "Shard and red gold both with equanimity they view". History of saints in Tamilnaadu records the case of only two³⁹ persons in the world of Tamil saints who viewed with equanimity a broken piece of a mudpot and gold. Saint Thirunaavukkarasar of the 7th century A.C., one of the Four Camaya-Kuravar-s or Fathers of the Faith, was one. Before receiving him into His bosom, Lord Civan, at Pukaloor, wanted to show the world of what stuff the saint was made. As usual, the saint was weeding out the courtyard around the temple with his ubiquitous hoe and was throwing away the rubbish into a tank near by. Lord Civan

made rubies and grains of gold come along with the rubbish turned up by the hoe. Let Sekkizhaar tell the rest of the story.

In those circumstances,
while Arasu⁴⁰, who ruled (over his five senses and mind),
was doing his work,
our Lord, in order to show to the world
his remarkable state of mind,
graciously ordained that pieces of the nine kinds of gems
along with grains of gold
come glittering out of whatever places
his hoe penetrated.

³⁹ In Bengal of East India, Raamakrishna, Paramahansa (1836-1886), a contemporary of our Swaamikal, was another such person.

⁴⁰ Arasu, King of Speech = Saint Thirunaavukkarasar.

While the red gold and the nine gems
shot their brilliance far and wide,
our lord, King of Speech⁴¹,
scooped them up along with the rolling about grit,
as matching each other,
and flung them far to fall in the tank
of teeming soft lotus blossoms.

** ** ** **

And before the good man,
who had reached a state
of making no distinction between
grass and grit, gold and gems,
the Lord of Thiruppukaloor, in His grace,
along with the Dame whose forehead
was equipped with bows⁴²
came along the skies and descended to earth.

Thus Lord Civan of Thiruppukaloor, for the edification of the world, made the final test before taking Thirunaavukkarasar to His bosom.

The only other person about whom it is on record, in his own words, that he treated gold and dust alike is Raamalinga Swaamikal. Of this state of mind, he himself sings:

I, with a mind free of pride,
never desired money.
Moreover, it is something which You Who are within me
have always known.
Even in my early years,
when I did not know what is what,
I flung back on them itself

or on the rubbish heap
the money given by those near and dear to me.
I have gained Your great wealth of grace
which is inseparable from me;
what is there to my further?

3395.VI.12 pillai-ch-chiru-vinnappam 10

⁴¹ Arasu, King of Speech = Saint Thirunaavukkarasar.

⁴² bows = eye-brows.

I have no attachment to money;
Oh, my Father,
the money which I had,
often I threw it in wells,
I threw it sometimes in ponds;
But I do not throw away
the riches which You,
in Your generosity of character, give!
I give it to others only.
I have witnessed Your grace
which You show every moment;
what is there to say any more?

3396.VI.12 pillai-ch-chiru-vinnappam 11

Oh Father who bestow grace on me!
You know the sweat I was in
when I received the money thrust on me
by people with love unto me,
and went my way.
Your sacred heart knows also
my throwing away those deluding monies
into the gutter,
and the mental distress I experienced
and how my heart trembled with fear
that my mind will be denigrated
by the monies.

3454, VI.13 pillai-p-peru vinnappam 45

Since the world exists by help of wealth,
I feared that
if I sought out people frequently
on account of liking them,
they might think
that I was seeking them out often
on account of desire for money,
and might fear me.

I desisted, therefore, from going anywhere;
this, Oh my Father, You know.
Moreover, whenever I thought of that wealth
which I shunned,
I retched with nausea.
This also You know.

3455. VI.13 pillai-peru-vinnappam 46

“A strict vegetarian” records the Muthaliyaar. I would call this the greatest understatement of the century. A person may be a vegetarian just because he was born in a vegetarian family or because of some favor received or to be received from God. Or he might have become a vegetarian from conviction. Yet this would be a strictly personal matter with him and he would not allow it to intrude into his relationship with the world at large. Such was not the case with Raamalinga Swaamikal. His vegetarianism was but an outward manifestation of an unparalleled compassion of the heart, unparalleled by even Buddha himself, or, we might say, to avoid controversy, paralleled only by Buddha. Hear him:

Oh gracious God Who told me:
“All those who take a life and who eat flesh
are not our near and dear kin,
they are outcasts to us;
help them in respect of assuaging the despicable hunger
otherwise do not speak to them
words of courtesy with ardour,
nor give them your friendship here on earth
till they join the desirable True Path.
This, indeed, is Our Command!”
Oh my King of the great dance
Who dance in the Common Hall in Thillai
with men of mayaa-dispelling true thavam
paying obeisance to You!

4160. VI.57 arul vilakka maalai 71

Oh my Guru
Who, to my joy, told me:
“The hard-hearted ones
Who, after witnessing the slaying (of a beast),
will still eat flesh
are not, even in any the least way, you kin.
Oh My son who am filled with love,
as far as they are concerned,
do assuage their hunger only;
otherwise, do not presume to do
any other act of grace”!
Oh unique Mother Who bore me!
Oh my King!
Oh King of the pure dance

in the holy Common Hall
praised by men of sorrow-eradicating true thavam
who surround You!
Do graciously wear (the garland of) my words also.

4161. V1.57 arul vilakka maalai 72

What a stern command, an almost harsh command. But this is moderated by the next stanza and we heave a sigh of relief. The Lord goes on to temper justice with mercy and bids:

“Even though those who do killing (of animals)
and relish flesh are wicked people indeed,
yet, when a specific danger besets them,
so long as you are on this earth,
do not look on it and rejoice,
but eradicate their grief,
suffering and fear”.
Oh Guru Who solicitously bade me thus!
Oh great Being
Who displayed to me Your feet
and the crown on high
while the tall one (Vishnu), the four-faced Brahma,
the immortals,
and others who are called the pure ones
were looking on!
Do graciously wear my garland (of poesy).

4162. VI.57 arul vilakka maalai 73

I doubt whether even Buddha was given such a stern direction by God or, we should say in his case, by his conscience, Even today, you can see on the outer wall of the compound of the Satya-gnaana-sabhai at Vadalore a notice prohibiting the entry of people who are not vegetarians. This notice was got written by the Swaamikal himself.

A question will arise in the mind any thinking reader whether the entire world can be taught, persuaded, compelled, to become vegetarian, and if killing of every sort can be entirely wiped out from the face of the earth. We will revert to this topic when, later down in this book, we make an assessment of the teachings of Raamalinga Swaamikal and of their impact on the people of Tamilnadu.

Saints and mystics can be classified into two major groups, i.e., those who have a great concern for the world, and those whose chief concern is their soul. The greatness of our Four Camaya Kuravars and of Raamalinga Swaamikal lies in that, like Buddha and Jesus before them, they exhibited such a great concern for the world that often it seemed that their spiritual life was in danger of dissipation. But they preferred to be classed with Abu Ben Adam, even at the risk of their spiritual life.

Our Swaamikal's repugnance to, flesh extends to even his own fleshy body so much so that he regrets the necessity (for his soul) to live in such a body. Addressing God he sings to this effect thus:

Oh my uncut Gem,
You know my regret of regrets
thinking and thinking
about the filthiness of this putrid fleshy body
and my association with it,
through entering it and living therein.
Moreover, I wasted away
till even my bones shriveled
and I fainted with quaking heart
at the sight of men who eat tough flesh (of animals).
This wasting away too, Oh Sire, You know.

3450.VI.13 pillai-p-peru-vinnappam 41

This horror was at the root of his vegetarianism.

He slept but little. In the precepts he laid down in a sermon called "Rules for Daily Routine", he recommended seven and a half naazhikai-s of sleep. A naazhikai is 24 minutes and 2 1/2 naazhikai-s make an hour. Later, in his work called Kudumba-kosham not a part of the Thiruvirutpaa – he prescribed only five naazhikai-s of sleep, and, ultimately, in precepts preached at the dusk of his life in Siddhi-valaaka-maalikai at Mettukuppam, he prescribed only one hour Of Sleep, that is, two and a half naazhikai-s. He sings thus in this respect:

Oh rare great Effulgence
without end or beginning
Who abide in the Common Hall in Thillai,
I do not know
whether this is a speciality with me;
I find myself sleepy day and night!
Whenever I felt sleep coming on
I lay down with fear;
and whenever I woke up,
Oh Civa - Civa,
with continuing fear,
I got up wondering
when sleep will forsake me.

3442.VI.13 pillai-p-peru vinnappam 34

Our Swaamikal was compassion incarnate. His compassion included the vegetable world as well. He sings:

Whenever I saw withering crops
I too withered.
I writhed in my mind

on seeing the empty-handed ones
worn out with unassuaged hunger
in spite of begging house to house
faint with hunger;
my heart shook like an aspen leaf
when those who were suffering
from long-drawn chronic disease
happened to come before me
and I saw them;
I wilted on seeing the down-hearted ones
who are men of unmatched self-respect,
poor though they are.

3471. V1.13 pillai-p-peru-vinnappam 62

His compassion had no limits. Albert Schweitzer says; “That man is truly ethical who shatters no ice-crystal as it sparkles in the sun, tears no leaf from a tree. cuts no flower”. Had he but known about our Swaamikal he would have held him up to the world as the example par excellence for his dictum. I wish you, dear reader, to share with me some of the songs of the Swaamikal on this aspect of his personality. He Sings:

Whenever my mind strayed into worldly affairs
due to surging compassion
towards living beings,
I got alarmed
and petitioned Your feet,
and even. today petition Your feet;
assuredly, my life and my compassion
are one, not two;
if compassion departs (from my heart),
my life too departs;
Oh unique One in my heart!
I swear this by Your feet.

3506. VI.13 pillai-p-peru-vinnappam 97

You are the merciful magnanimous One
Who, consenting to let me and compassion be together,
brought me down to stay
and lead my life in this world;
What is the need to tell this matter to You?
Though I am Your slave,
yet in the role of Your child,
I tell You this, Oh my Father!
There is not even a moment
when I have not carried out here on earth
the command You uttered
bidding me act in this manner.

3509.VI.13 pillai-p-peru-vinnappam 100

Oh Being rare to be known
by even perfect guru-s!
Oh True One! Oh Sire!
You know the distress of my mind
whenever I saw the weariness
on the faces of those attached to me Your servant,
friends, those around me, relatives,
mother, brothers and sisters, neighbors,
and others of this category.

3418.VI.13 pillai-p-peru vinnappam 9

Oh my Father of the splendid Hall of Gnosis!
Oh my God!
Oh my great Glory!
Does not Your mind know
my mind getting terrified
and quaking with distress
whenever I saw in this glittering world
the hectic wanness from disease or hunger
(on the faces and forms)
of mothers, companions, neighbors,
relatives, friends, and even strangers?

3419.VI.13 pillai-p-peru-vinnappam 10

Oh transcendent Being
Who graciously dance up above
in the unique region of the transcendent ether!
oh rare great Being!
Does not Your mind know
how my heart trembled and broke
whenever the grey-haired, the young and the rest ---
sufferers, in the life they led on this earth
at the hands of the sinner
called Distress of Poverty –
treating me as a friend,
related to me their respective grievances?

3420.VI.13 pillai-p-peru vinnappam 11

How I feel fettered, constrained, confined, by the limitation of space this book imposes on me. Our Swaamikal's 'arutprakaasa maalai', 'arul vilakka maalai', 'pillai-ch-chiru-vinnappam', 'pillai-p-peru vinnappam', and 'anubhava maalai', all these five decads should be completely translated and included in this book. As a second best solution, I am quoting extensively from those decads wherever necessary. You, dear reader, and I have to be content with this.

I was perturbed by the cawing of crows;
hearing the harsh cry of the Kestrel,
I was upset;
I took fright on the striking owl giving voice.

I was stunned
hearing the hue and cry
along with the wailing voice
of the pack of dogs.

I shivered in the heart of hearts
when people talked to each other
in a loud voice.
Alas, my stomach turned
when, often, people knocked loudly at doors
with their hands.

Seeing others shedding tears,
Oh Sire, I too shed tears
and felt great distress in my mind.

Looking at the faces of those who came to me
And wondering whether they were grief-stricken
Or were filled with joy,
And what they would say,
I forgot to welcome them.

I was seized with fear
when cows and calves. Which I came across, lowed,
I grew faint in my mind

when I saw proud cattle
and other animals
grown emaciated.

3433, 3434, 3465, 3466, 3468, 3469, VI. 13 pillai-p-peru-vinnappam, 24, 25, 56, 57, 59, 60.

The same spirit of compassion was at the bottom of the Swaamikal's strong feeling against sacrifices to minor deities. He sings:

Sorely hurt in my mind,
Alas, I trembled in my heart
Seeing goats, pigs, cocks and sacrificial bulls
being led to sacrifice to what are called
harassing minor deities,
established in our country
under many names.
I was also seized with fear
on seeing the evil temples
of minor deities
which are prevalent in this kaliyuga.

3472.VI.13 pillai-p-peru vinnappam 63

“To all living creatures they are kind,
known as the sages of mankind”.

sang Thiruvalluvar. Our Swaamikal bears testimony to the truth of that maxim.

In fact, to our Swaamikal, the life of every creature was as dear as his own life, or, perhaps, dearer than his own. Consequently, he held in the highest regard those who did not make any difference between their lives and the lives of other creatures. He sings:

Whosoever realise that every life has a common source,
and, therefore, feeling compassion towards it,
render help to it,
I learnt that all the actions of such upright men
are, indeed, the actions of the Holy Grace.
My mind is eager to do with delight
menial service to those men
of that infamy-free sacred code of life;
my mouth is aquiver to sing their glory!

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Whoever, feeling not the least difference,
consider every life as their own lives
and as having equal rights,
and delight therefor in their minds,

I realised that their mind, indeed, is the place
where our great Lord,
in the form of pure gnosis,
performs His dance.
To do menial service to the feet
of those amazing persons,
my mind is greatly desirous!

5296, 5297. V1.125 thani-t-thiru alankal 1, 2

It is not surprising that, with such a compassionate heart, and uniquely sensitive mind,
our Swaamikal's earnest desire should be:

Oh my Father!
Note that it is my desire,
Oh eternally young One,
that, as very personification of mercy,
I should, by Your grace, avert
the intense suffering, fears et cetera
which beset others,
and bestow joy on them,
and that I should induce all the world
to tread the path which shuns
both eating of flesh and killing (of creatures),
and that I should publicly declare
from the platform praise associated with You.

3407.VI.12 pillai-ch-chiru-vinnappam 22

It is no wonder that Velaayutha Muthaliyaar says that our Swaamikal went about with
a look of constant sorrow on his face. His face was the index of his mind.⁴³

⁴³ Raamakrishna Paramahansa, our Swaamikal's contemporary in Bengal shared with
our Swaamikal this physical and spiritual hypersensitiveness. Romain Rolland, in his
book "The Life of Raamakrishna" says thus in a footnote:

"A thousand other instances of this hyper-sensitiveness might be related. A blow
given to a man in the street by a furious enemy left its physical mark on the flesh of
Raamakrishna. His nephew saw his back red and inflamed at the sight of a man whose
back was scored with the whip. And Girish Chandra Ghosh, whose witness
unimpeachable, has certified to the fact of this stigmata, This spiritual contact with all
forms of life made him at one with animals and plants. It has been said of him that he
felt a brutal step upon the earth as it were upon his is own heart."

Our Swaamikal was dead set against Worship of minor deities and observance of
caste and creeds. He sings:

Oh King dancing on the proscenium
Who proclaimed to me
and bade me see this clearly by the light

of the Effulgence of Grace
that all the heads of religions
from (Brahma-s) the four-faced ones, the goodly Rudhra-s.
Naaraayan-s, Indra-s, the famed Arukar,
Buddha, and others
are just a gang of small children
who, coming from the portals of heaven,
and having gained a little of gracious illumination,
have sported about
in heaven and earth
as their fancy dictated
like people who have drunk (fermented) honey.

4178. V1.57 am[vilakka maalai 89

Students of The Thiruvaachakam will easily recall to mind parallel passages from that unique work.

In the very first decad sung by him, our Swaamikal, even at that very early age of nine or thereabouts, is firm in his resolve not to worship minor deities, alien gods, or Brahma, Vishnu, Indra, Naaraayan, Rudhra and the rest. He sings:

Apart from respecting those
who sincerely praise You,
the magnanimous One,
if I am told to respect other heavenly ones,
I will not respect them even in my dreams
through oversight even
other than Your feet
which have their abode in guileless minds,
even were they to thrust before my eyes
the feet of other gods,
and offer them saying “Love these”,
I would stand aside,
hating them bitterly.
There is not the least of any aspersion
in this talk;
it is the truth.
Do assume lordship over me
and bestow grace on me,
Oh my Father, Oh my Mother,
Oh my Bliss, Oh my Wisdom,
Oh my Love, Oh Kandhavel
Who are arisen in Kandhakottam,
the flourishing pilgrimage center
in Chennai which cannot be disregarded.

4.1.1. theiva mani maalai 4

Reminding us of Maanikkavaachakar’s poem where he declares:

“Accept I shall not,
the status of Indra, Vishnu or Brahma. . . .”

our Swaamikal sings in another place;;

Desire I did not the status of sacred Vishnu or Brahma;
even if they beg and say “please accept”,
I will not accept (those status).
Oh Lord dressed in the big hide of the tusker!
I remain steadfast, hugging to mind
only the type of life which Your devotees respect;
this is as far as my undecided mind
is concerned;
now, I do not know
just exactly how Your will is,
Oh Gem of a Thiyaagesaa of Otriyoor
where kings of hillock-like holy shoulders
and men of great thavam
abound.

1022.II.40 avalatthu azhunkal 6

In another song, our Swaamikal goes much further in his assertion of undivided devotion and produces evidence which Lord Civan cannot, by any means, set aside. He sings:

You should graciously accept me
Whether this wretch lives or dies,
even if the noted Vishnu, Brahma and deva-s
were to hang themselves
(if I did not sing about their feet),
my tongue will not stir itself
to sing any but Your foot
which is firmly planted
on the Common Hall in Thillai
(while the other is lifted in a dance-pose),
This is the truth.
If You think of finding an evidence for this.
is it not evident from Your twin feet
which have sought refuge inside my mind.

1093.II.47 aatraa vinnappam 6

As a natural corollary, our Swaamikal was a strong monotheist and held that there is but one God and that it is utter falsehood to say that there are more. He sings:

Those who think that there are many many gods,
those who speak of many many ways
of reaching God,

those who talk of several scriptures
spawned by falsehood,
those who admire false religions,
they are people
without enlightenment by the holy grace
springing from Truth.
They do not know the consequences;
they waste (their life).
Oh Lord Who woke me up from sleep
and bestowed on me true bliss!
Please rid them of the suffering that will accrue to them.
and graciously bestow wisdom on them.

4726.V1.92 mey-inba-p-peru 11

Caste with all its evils was an anathema to our Swaamikal. I shall conclude this chapter on Raamalinga Swaamikal - the Man, by reproducing some of his songs thundering against castes, creeds, and institutional religions. If only the people of Tamilnaadu had taken note of our Swaamikal's most revolutionary preaching against these institutions which drag a human being into the mire of cruelty, corruption, superstition, ignorance, lack of love and understanding, sins against the brotherhood of Man, and disunity at all levels of life beginning from the home and the village panchaayat and going right up to the House of the People, what a glorious people we Tamils would have been today. Alas, our eyes were blind, our ears were deaf, and our heart was stone. Let us listen to the Swaamikal even now and be redeemed. Here are some of his utterances on the subject:

Oh men of the world
who wander about attached
to castes, creeds, religious doctrines,
the hubbub of theology,
quarrels about lineage,
and the rest!
It is not proper
that you should wander about in vain
and be ruined.
There is One Who is a unique Leader
Who dances in order to establish the world
in the just way and the Pure Path;
this is the time for Him to come
to play in the street
the game of the Effulgence of Grace;
I am calling you (to join Him in the game).

5566. V1.133 punita kulam perumaaru pukalal

Ooran Atikal lists as many as 42 stanzas and 8 couplets in stanza 4615, the Arut-perum-jothi-akaval, which thunder against castes and sects. They range from one stanza in the 3rd Book to 41 stanzas scattered in the 6th Book, from its beginning to stanza 5805, just thirteen stanzas short of the end of the Arutpaa. If we exclude the

one stanza (No. 1972) in the 3rd Book, we see that this hatred of castes and creeds began with the Swaamikal's entry into the Illuminative Way, and continued right through his journey on the Unitive Way. The shackles of traditions, the loyalty to family, the respect to parents and elders cannot be cast aside easily or without great mental conflict and suffering. It takes time for Truth to win the heart of man and to drive out all competing factors. I feel that I must quote at least five more stanzas on this subject before I go on to other and more shocking aspects of the personality of Raamalinga Swaamikal, shocking to hide-bound, tradition-bound, superstition-bound, caste, creed and sect-bound poltroons. Hear him thunder against caste, creed and sect:

I do not know Your further will;
Oh Mother and Father to me,
other than Your Feet,
who else have You known in this world,
who can be a Succour
who would undo the shackles
which are forged by caste
and transform me into the effulgence
which is Your own form?

1972.III.4 civa-nesa venba 5

Oh my Guru,
Oh smouldering bright Fire,
Oh darkness-dispelling Light
immanent in the fire,
Oh my Spouse,
Nataraja of the dance of ethics,
Who are aloft the mountain
of attributeless bliss
and transcendent acme of the cosmic sound-Om,
Who told me:
"The creatures on earth,
without realizing that
all the religions, creeds, and sects
which are found in this famed world
are demoniacal crazy child's play,
have engaged in controversies
and, fighting here, there, and everywhere,
have died and am damned.
That they may not be further damned.
hurry up and impart to them
the creed of the goodly True Path
which confers purity,
show them the true Being,
and enable them to gain
the lofty state of bliss.
Since you are my child,
I have commanded you
to do this work;

do not think differently in your mind”.

3677. VI.22 nataraajapathi maalai 27

Oh my King,
Oh unique Nataraajaa,
my Gem of a true guru,
Who told me:
“Since a sinful religion
of multifarious creeds and sects
had till now spread (in the world),
men of the world had not known the perfect Path,
and, dying and dying,
have gone to dense darkness;
therefore do you go
and, rescuing them from the vile Path,
direct them into the godly way
that is the Pure True Path,
also called the Universal Path,
which is graciously bequeathed
by the heavenly fresh Ambrosia”,

3696. VI.23 sathguru mani maalai 12

Oh preeminent Gem of gnosis,
Oh my sacred dancing Spouse,
people of the world,
seized by all kinds of madness,
shout about the reputed religious creeds,
but they have not known
of anyone gaining any profit thereby;
in vain they turn to ashes,
or become dust and stink;
like them, do I think of going to perdition in this vast world?
(No), I long for the skill
to climb up from my condition;
therefore, open that holy door which shines there,
and, bestowing on me sweet ambrosia,
be pleased to enable me to gain
the skill of true gnosis
which causes cessation of grief.

3766. VI.28 thiruvart-pukazhchi 7

Oh men of good physique
which does not know
greying, dying, or ageing!
Oh you men of this world of four regions⁴⁴!
You do not know
that you are men of good caste;
You divide men

into men of matchless high caste
and men of low caste;
You see men of both castes die.
The moment has come
when my unique Father
who is sung by the Veda-s
will come,
and when,
realizing that all your moth-eaten castes
are wormy castes,
you may drink of the fresh ambrosia
and gain the lofty pure caste.
Come here;
I have proclaimed the truth to you.

5572. VI.133 punitha kulam perumaaru pukalal 7

⁴⁴ world of four regions = the mountainous region, the forest region
of the foot-hills, the plain, and the sea-coastal region.

The last quotation is taken out of a decad called “Advising People to Gain the Pure Caste”. In ten soul-stirring stanzas he invites the world to gain the caste-less caste the most superior caste, the caste of the devotees of God. Our Swaamikal felt so strongly against the caste system that he has sung an entire decad of ten stanzas on the subject. Ooran Adikal’s list will swell up to 50 stanzas if these are added to it.

Out Swaamikal very strongly hated superstitious beliefs and practices. He sings:

You bestowed grace on me in particular
with the intent that
all the blind (superstitious) practices –
pure fabrications of the books on religion –
observed as eternal truths
may be covered over by a rain of dust,
that delusion-free True Creed alone
may established be,
that the world of Truth may flourish.
You instructed me that right now, when indifference
(on the part of the people) has ceased,
is the good moment;
therefore, come and abide in me,
Oh You Who uttered the Truth!
You dissolved my rock-like hard mind
and bestowed sacred ambrosia on me,
Oh Crown Jewel of my mind,
Oh my holy dancing Spouse!

3768. VI.28 thiru arut-pukazhchi 9

Thirugnaanasambandhar too hated blind superstitious beliefs. He was about to set out for Madurai to challenge Jain supremacy. On the eve of his departure, the building he was staying in caught fire and was reduced to ashes. Saint Thirunaavukkarasar, who was with Thirugnaanasambandhar, requested him to postpone the journey as the day fixed for the journey was inauspicious. In reply, the child-saint sang the ‘kolaru-thirup-pathikam’. The first two stanzas are pertinent to our purpose. They are:

Since the Partner of Her with shoulders
like the smooth bamboo,
He with the throat which swallowed the poison,
He Who plays the veenaa
and wears on His crown
the flawless moon and the Ganges,
since He has entered my mind,
the Sun, the Moon, Mars, Mercury,
Jupiter, Venus, Saturn,
and the two Snakes (Raahu and Kethu)
they all are unqualifiedly good, good indeed,
goodly good are they to the devotees,
exceedingly good they are!

In the next stanza, he lists a few more things which are good to the devotees. He sings:

Since He (Lord Civan)
with bones, the boar’s tusk,
and the tortoise shell dangling on His chest,
mounted on the bull along with His Consort,
adorned with the golden garland
of datura flowers and the Ganges,
since He has entered my heart,
Pooram the ninth star from Kaarthikai,
the first (Karthikai),
Aayilyam the seventh, Pooraadam the eighteenth,
Poosam the sixth,
and the related ones,
namely, Barani, Thiruvaathirai.
Punarpoosam, Makam, Chitthirai,
Swaathi, Visaakam, Kettai, Uttharaadam,
all these are lovingly good, good indeed, very good,
exceedingly good to the devotees (of Civan)⁴⁵.

⁴⁵Thirugnaanasambandhar does not give the names of the asterisms but gives clues to them. For the benefit of the reader, I have chosen to give clearly their names.

All these stars, constellations and planets, the Saint said, are exceedingly good provided . . . He put a big proviso. Provided we are devotees of God. But we prefer to go in terror of them, we prefer to allow them to make us arrant cowards, we prefer to

be creatures at the mercy of shadows and stars. Thiruvalluvar said: “Fear governs the code of conduct of the vile people”. It was so in his days, and it is more so in these days. Just go along with me into a calculation. Out of 28 days of a lunar month (which are covered by twenty-seven asterisms), fourteen of them (they are listed in the above song) are inauspicious to start on a journey or to begin a new undertaking. It works out to 182 days in a lunar year. If this was the entire story, it would be tragic enough. But we have added to this list. We have made the days of the week auspicious or inauspicious. Tuesday is a very much sinned-against day. Then there are inauspicious hours. There is Raahu-kaalam, a matter of one and a half hours a day, and there is yamakandam, another one and a half hours a day. These two account for 45 days in a year. Then there are the ashtami and navami thithi-s, that is, the eighth and ninth days from the full moon or the new moon. These account for 52 days a year. Thus a grand total of 280 days are declared inauspicious to start on a journey or to begin a new undertaking. Then there are the vaara-soolai days, days on which journey in a particular direction should not be made. Thus we get barely two months or sixty days in a year to do anything, i.e., to be men and not craven cowardly wretches. All because of what? Because we have no faith in the unbounden grace and mercy of God. Because we would not become devotees of God. Could the all-loving God, the all-merciful God, have given us the days and hours only to rob us of almost all of them by one taint of malignity or the other? When we ask ourselves this question, the great truth in Thiru gnaanasambandhar’s poem strikes us with an outburst of illumination. This is it. No day is evil, all of them are good, very good, extraordinarily good, exceedingly good. 13 centuries have passed since Thirugnaanasambandhar declared this great truth, but we have, not accepted it. More than a century has passed since Raamalinga Swaamikal raised his voice against the. superstitions. He sang:

Oh my mind!
 Why are you looking for an auspicious time
 to think of God Who has transcended time?

4289. VI.66 nenjodu nerthal 3

But we merrily continue to turn the pages of the almanac and to consult the priest for an auspicious day to go north to south or south to north. The only day not in our choice is the day of our death. It is no wonder that we, as a nation, are behind all the nations to the east of us not to speak of the nations to the west of us.

Our Swaamikal had scant regard for the Veda-s, the Aagama-s, the Purana-s, the Ithikaasa-s, and considered that, for the most part, they were a tissue of lies. He sings:

Today with You instructing me, out of love,
 the true state,
 I learnt exactly what You, dwelling in my mind,
 had instructed me in the very beginning,
 that all the theological rubbish
 which has marked out many streets
 in castes and creeds
 is worthless,
 and I arrived at the Universal Pure Creed
 which those who have realized by study praise;

I got the opportunity to behold
the Assembly of Gnosis,
and I received within me
the King of the dance of effulgence Who is the Reality,
my Spouse, the Life of my life,
the Fullness of true bliss,
and I rejoice thereat!

5805.VI.142 anubhava maalai 92

Oh great Effulgence of Grace,
You, indeed, are my Seignior!
For, You made a manure of the rubbish
which doctrines of ignorant nature and theologies are
and spread it on the dry land of two yields,
and You threw into a pit
confounding castes, creeds, sects
and observance of varnaasram⁴⁶
and covered them all with mud,
and, that the clarity-endowed Pure True Path's
good ethics may shine splendidly,
You made the Effulgence of Grace
dance in the street.

4653. VI.85 civaanandatthu azhunthal 10

The Great Effulgence of Grace
with no beginning, middle, or end
has truly blended with my heart
and has filled it.
I, on my part, have become eternal.
Oh men of the world!
I shall enable you to forsake
caste, creed and sect,
and I shall establish you
on the path of Pure True Conduct.
I have proclaimed the truth,
come hurrying on.

5453. VI.125 thani-t-thiru alankal 15

⁴⁶ Varnaasram = division of human beings into four categories
such as brahmana, kshatriya, vaisya and soodra.

Oh true Preceptor Who told me
that all the reputed cultural chronicles
beginning with the four varuna-s⁴⁷,
the stages of life,⁴⁸ traditional observances et cetera,
is a game of children,

and that no one has seen of known
high caste or caste by color of skin,
and bade me: “Open your eyes and see”!
Oh true Being Who showed me everything to be seen
without my feet being worn out
by wandering in vain!
Oh dancing King
Who dance to raise to the higher category
those who had outgrown
the category of delusive castes!
Do deign to graciously wear my garland of poesy.

4174. VI.57 arul-vilakka maalai 85

Oh Being of unique sovereignty
Who, rescuing me from caste, clan, and sect,
and all the rest,
raised me above them
and bestowed on me unique sacred ambrosia!
Oh Light, without exhibition
of beginning, middle or end,
that fills the interior and exterior
and everything else besides
of the spheres and their off-shoot spheres
and all the dear creatures!
Oh Kin of mine Who transformed me
into the form of Experience⁴⁹ itself
without special study or experimentation
while all those
who had made special study and experimentation
request me (to instruct them in the art
of the apprehension of the Real)!
Oh King of pure dance
Who, shining forth as Effulgence incarnate,
dance on the unique Common Hall in Thillai,
do deign to wear my (garland of) words!

4112. VI.57 arul vilakka maalai 23

⁴⁷ varuna-s - brahmana, kshathriya, vaisya, soodhra.

⁴⁸ stages of life - celibate, householder, the man setting out for the forest, the ascetic.

⁴⁹ Thomas Merton Writes: “if you like, you do not have experience you become Experience.....”

Achcho! Achcho!⁵⁰
I have apprehended Him
Who, freeing me
of caste, long-winded creeds and sects,
established me in the ethics of gnosis

and in the region of the Pure Blissful True Path,
Who is the Half,
Who is the One,
Who is the transcendently transcendent Being,
Who is my Spouse,
Who is the beginningless Beginning
(of all creation),
Who is the Great Effulgence of Grace
in the Hall of Gnosis.

4674. VI.87 achcho-p-patthu 10

⁵⁰ achcho - a word of exclamation expressing astonishment mingled with wonder and gratitude at one's good fortune.

Oh rare great Effulgence
with manifestation of neither beginning nor end!
Oh Mother!
Oh my Father!
Oh my Sire!
Oh my King!
Oh unique Being,
rare to be experienced in any manner by study,
Who exist in nature just as You really are!
Oh my Owner
Who, paying me wages therefor,
assumed lordship over me,
and shine unceasingly inside and outside me!
Oh Truth Who rescued me
from all the wordy falsehood
of this caste and this sect!
I partake of the limpid ambrosia of truth.

4637. VI.84 peraa-p-peru 3

Oh Being
Who, though with neither beginning nor end,
are united with me
filling me in and out,
filling me in the exterior of the interior
and in the exterior of the exterior,
and yet are unknowable by study or experimentation!
Oh true Spouse Who shine
in the Hall of Gnosis
which occupies my mind!
Oh Ambrosia that is Freedom⁵¹
Who, becoming the Effulgence
and the source of that Effulgence,
surround me and are bringing me up!

Oh Kin of those who have forsaken
caste and sects!
Oh Gem of a true Guru!

3704. VI.23 sarguru manimaalai 20

⁵¹ Oh Ambrosia that is Freedom - Thomas Merton talks of “Freedom living and circulating in God Who is Freedom”.

I realized Him Who is Effulgence and Omniscient Being,
Who, becoming a unique Flame
with neither beginning nor end,
dances on the Common Hall (in Thillai)
that ethics and integrity may prevail (on earth);
I (forthwith) abandoned caste
and estrangement-causing sect
and am now free.

5546. VI.131 civaananda-p-patru 6

Oh great ones
(who presume to be) greater than the Great One⁵²
Who caused an uproar by capturing the elephant!
You loudly shout
“our god”, “out god”
quoting as authority
false theological texts
from religions of various kinds.
What will you do when your body,
made up of five kinds of elements,
dies?
You do not know
how to make the perishable body imperishable.
The moment has come
when my unique Father,
Who is the way of redemption,
arrives;
come hither
and receive bliss.

5570. VI.133. punitha kulam perumaaru pukalal 5

⁵² Great One - Civan Who caught the elephant sent to kill Him and skinned it and used the hide as a robe.

You carry on vain disputations
talking of Veda-s and Agama-s;
you do not know the product

of the Veda-s and Aagama-s.
They speak mystifyingly,
and do not so speak
that truth is plainly visible;
of what use are these?

5516. VI.129 suddha civa-nilai 30

All theological works do but say things
which trip you;
this apart, they are not capable
of showing things (clearly) like eyes do;
I researched and learnt with pleasure
that eyes are the special physical manifestation
of the holy grace of Him
Who abides in the Hall of Gnosis.

5515. VI.129 suddha civa-nilai 29

The code of conduct prescribed by the Veda-s
the code of the Aagama-a,
the code which the Puraana-s expound,
the code prescribed by the Ithikaasa-s,
You exposed to me the humbug
all of them teach
and its ulterior design
and so explained them to me
that I may understand what is there
as it truly is.
I have understood now without error;
I have not the least mind
to spend time in vain;
Oh Crown-jewel of my mind!
Oh my holy dancing Spouse!
Do embrace me
and exercise all-powerful sway over my mind
that evil may extirpated be.

3767. VI.28 thiru-arut-p-pukazhchi 8

Oh King Who dance,
while those possessing the kind of knowledge
which knows nothing else (but You)
pay obeisance to You!
Oh great Gem of a preceptor of gnosis
Who graciously took it into Your mind
to tell me in particular thus:

“Those who talk of the works
ranging from the Veda-s, Aagama-s,

Puraana-s, Ithikaasa-s,
down to the works on magic,
consider the book on magic only
as wizardry;
but I say unto You, know all the works as wizardry,
and look at all deeds by the light of my grace!”
Do wear my garland (of poesy)

4176. VI.57 arul vilakka malai 87

These passages relating to the Veda-s and the Agama-s should be properly examined as to their setting and context, and interpreted with insight and understanding. All these utterances occur in the Sixth Book. The Sixth Book has been divided by learned editors into three sections, called the preliminary section, the middle section, and the final section. The first and last sections correspond to the period of the Illuminative Way, and the Unitive Way respectively while the middle section is a period of transition from the Illuminative Way to the Unitive Way, and, therefore, contains songs relating to both types of experience. A mystic treading the Unitive Way loses all identity with caste, creed, sect, specific gospels and scriptures. Religious scriptures have nothing more to teach him; in fact, by the light of his direct experience of God, the teachings seem to fail far short of the ineffable truth. We cannot be far wrong, therefore, if we conclude that Raamalinga Swaamikal sang the songs on the Veda-s and the Agama-s when he was going up the Unitive Way. Looked at in this light, the seemingly harsh utterances regarding the Veda-s, the Agama-s, the Puraana-s and the Ithikaasa-s fall into their proper place in the scheme of things and turn out to be perfectly natural and proper.

It will help us to appreciate our Swaamikal’s attitude in this matter at the acme of his spiritual life if we recall to mind the following utterances of Lord Sri Krishna:

Flowery speech is uttered by the foolish,
rejoicing in the letter of the Veda-a.
Oh Paartha, saying:
“There is nought but this”.
With desire for self, with heaven for goal,
they offer birth as the fruit of action,
and prescribe many and various ceremonies
for the attainment of pleasure and worship.

The Veda-s deal with three attributes,
be thou above these three attributes, Oh Arjuna,
beyond the pair of opposites,
ever steadfast in purity,
careless of possessions, full of the **SELF**.
All the Veda-s are as useful
to an enlightened Brahmana as is a tank
in a place covered all over with water.

Bhagawad-Gita, Ch. II. pp. 42,43, 44, 45, 46.

The utterances of Raamalinga Swaamikal are to be taken in the same spirit as we take the above utterances of Lord Sri Krishna no more, no less.

I am loathe to leave this subject here. Let me give a quotation from a mystic who has realized God, who has gained immediate apprehension of the Real.

Eckhart says:

“Meanwhile, I beseech you by the eternal and imperishable truth, and by my soul, consider, grasp the unheard of. God and Godhead are as distinct as heaven and earth, and even so the Godhead is above God. God becomes and disbecomes”.

Explaining the above statement, Aldous Huxley writes in his “Perennial Philosophy” thus:

“In Eckhart’s phrase, God, the creator and perpetual re-creator of the world, ‘becomes and disbecomes’. In other words, He is, to some extent at least, in time. . There seems to be no reason why a God who is exclusively temporal - a God who merely becomes and is ungrounded in eternity - should not be as completely at the mercy of time as is the individual mind apart from the spirit. A God who becomes is a God who also disbecomes, and it is the disbecoming which may ultimately prevail, so that the last state of emergent deity may be worse than the first” “Analogously, God in time is grounded in the eternal now of the modeless Godhead. It is in the Godhead that things, lives and minds have their being; it is through God that they have their becoming - a becoming whose goal and purpose is to return to the eternity of the Ground”.

It is this Godhead which Raamakrishna Paramahansa gained, it is the same Godhead which Raamalinga Swaamikal sought and gained. This Godhead cannot be explained in words or analyzed in thought. It is the ineffable Whole. The moment one seeks to describe it in words, immediately the limiting, the circumscribing, quality of all words goes to make the Godhead into God who is in time. Therefore, it follows that anything in words or writing can but speak of God and not of the Godhead. Maanikkavaachakar has a poem in his Thiruvaachakam on this subject. He sings:

“Whereas the mind, attempting to comprehend You,
comes up against its limitations,
by speech, not the least whit is possible.
What is spoken (about You) is only hearsay.
You Who are the entire universe,
five senses cannot perceive.
What kind of a thing, what kind of a thing is it,
and where is it, my Father’s foot?
Tell me, that I may gain it.

5. Thiruchchatakam 76

All religious works, including the Veda-s and the Aagama-s are things of speech, speech reduced to writing. That being so, to a contemplative looking down from the heights of realization of the Real, it is not surprising that all these works appear false and misleading. The Godhead is not to be spoken of. Therefore, these utterances of

Raamalinga Swaamikal have to be interpreted in the light of the above explanations. However, the fact that he labeled all these as false and misleading should not tempt us, common mortals, to think or say the same of these scriptures.

The guru who instructed me in the Thiruvaachakam used to say that we - he and I - were not fit to repeat several of the stanzas of be Thiruvaachakam as we had not the requisite qualification to do so. Similarly, in the case of the utterances of Raamalinga Swaamikal also, we can but reverently read and meditate on certain of them, but we should not arrogate to ourselves the right to repeat those utterances as if they were our own.

The Swaamikal just like Thirumoolar was averse to the burning of dead bodies. He wanted them to be buried. His songs in this respect are:

You bathe the newborn ones
and bring them up to grow big;
you burn the dead;
how on earth do you reconcile
this with that?
As you are capable of setting fire
to those who went to sleep at night
and forgot (to wake up),
you have made your mind
fit to be praised
as a special kind of diamond-like hard rock.
Why were you born
and why do you wander about?

* * * *

To the great noise raised by the women,
and to the surging noise of the drums
accompanied by the burlesque dance,
alas, you wash the corpse
and take it away and burn it.
Oh corpses yet to die,
if at least the vultures eat it,
it would be of some use;
what profit did you find by burning it?
You found the ash only.
It will not be suitable as manure
even for the dry lands.

5608, 5609, VI.135 samaadhi varpurutthal 5, 6

Saying that, if you burn
that in which the soul shut itself up
in order to enshrine its attributes,
it is murder indeed,
I tell you till my lips grow stiff

that you should bury it in flower-gardens.
Even after hearing my words,
you would not agree to bury corpses;
you are indeed fools who agree to bury money.
Those who go to sleep to bury their worries
will fear to sleep by your side,
oh demons!

* * * *

I say that this body is a gift of God,
and that it is a sacrilege to burn it;
but you burn
making the head (of the Corpse) writhe.
The sacred days are near
when the many many dead will rise,
the God of miracles
giving them the power to do so.
Oh you blind cattle,
will you not see the circumstances
in which the good people,
aware of this (forthcoming event),
buried (the corpses)
to give them heaven?

5610, 5612 VI. 135 samaadhi varpurutthal 7, 9

Such was the man who was Raamalinga Swaamikal. Moderately tall and spare, possessed of a golden unperishing body, clad in white cloth which hid all his body except his face, arms crossed on the chest, modest to the extreme degree, afraid to sit on a high seat or to cross his legs or to let his feet swing down the side of a pial, his body smeared with the sacred ash, given to chanting unceasingly the mystic five letters in its gross, subtle, subtler and subtlest forms, extremely abstemious in the matter of food, viewing broken pieces of pottery and gold as equally worthless, a strict vegetarian, dead against killing of animals to petty gods, sleeping but an hour or two in twenty-four hours, filled with compassion for the sick, the hungry, even withering plants, the sorrows of others, distressed by loud talk, harsh cry of birds and animals, loud knocking at doors, spurning worship of petty deities, hating castes, creeds, sects, a stern monotheist, having little regard for the Veda-s, Aagama-s, Puraana-s, Ithikaasa-s; averse to burning of the dead.

You have beheld the man.

4. CHILDHOOD

RAAMALINGA Swaamikal was a hyperlexic. What, or, rather, Who is a hyperlexic? The word is not yet in the dictionaries; it is a very recent product of psychologists and psychiatrists. It may not be found in Medical Dictionaries even. The following astounding Passage - astounding for Westerners but not astounding for those people of Tamilnaadu who are acquainted with the biographies of Saint Thirugnaanasambandhar, Meikandaar and Kumaraguru-para-swaamikal - from a recent article in a newspaper will explain far better than I can the meaning of the word.

“He was only three years and ten months when I realized he was something special”, remembers the mother of Tom Smith. “He got hold of a copy of the newspaper and read me a story straight through. I had taught him nothing about reading. It was frightening”.

* * * *

“What one must realize”, says 38-year-old Mrs. Shirley Berton, a London dentist’s wife whose eight-year-old son, Mark, taught himself to read at three, “is that these children although old in knowledge, are, as unworldly as any other children of their age”.

* * * *

“The high-light of a recent edition of the “World’s Surprise Show” on Tokyo television was a solemn South Korean named Kim Ung Yong who performed breath-taking feats of mental arithmetic and integral calculus, ending his performance with a recital in four languages and a poem he had composed on the spur of the moment. And the surprise? Simply that Kim Ung Yong was only four years and eight months old”.

“Fantastic”, “unbelievable”, I hear you say. But these cases are true and must be believed. These extracts are out of an article by Michael Philips in the Magazine Section of The Sunday Standard of the 2nd of September 1973. He says that there are “only 13 boys and girls throughout the world who have been found to have this uncanny ability of instant assimilation”. To the West, to America in particular, the world does not include this great sub-continent that is Bharat. For if any investigations had been made in our country we could have raised the figure of 13 to at least 20. The Virginia University Medical School in the U.S.A., the American Medical Association, the Explorers Limited in Britain - an association for gifted children, the National Association for Gifted Children, the London University in California, U.S.A., and, probably, many other big and small Educational and Scientific Bodies are taking interest in this subject and in this type of children.

But in India, any such report relating to Indian children will be read with a sneer, with a guffaw of unbelief. For we are such clods. Have we not persons among us - quite a number of them - who sneer at the account of Saint Thirugnaanasambandhar of the 7th century composing and singing songs at the age of three, or at the account of

Meikandaar revealing the Caiva Siddhaantha Philosophy in his childhood or at the account of Kumara-guru-para-swaamikal composing ‘Meenakshi-Ammai-p-pillai-t-thamil’ at the age of five, having been dumb till that age.

Hyperlexics are persons who instantly assimilate whatever they read. In the present context, they are ‘super-kids’ of three or a little more years who, without being taught to read, read and instantly assimilate what they have read.

Disbelievers apart, it is a fact that Raamalinga Swaamikal composed and sang songs at an age when his mother should have been singing a lullaby to him. He himself relates this incident in his life. He sings:

. . . . in this age-long world, note that He (God) is the good mother
(of mine) who, before this servitor could rejoice hearing his own
mother sing (a lullaby to him), heard me sing and rejoiced.

1965.III.3. nenjarivurutthal, couplet No. 186

Raamalingam was a headache to his eldest brother Sabhaapathi, He could not get the child to learn under a tutor or under him. He ordered his wife not to serve food to Raamalingam till he learned to be a better student. All to no avail. Sabhaapathi’s wife, who loved her husband’s very young brother as her own son, was sore beset by the waywardness of an otherwise lovable child. So one day she pleaded with him so tearfully that Raamalingam was deeply touched by her loving sorrow and said, “You want me to study, is it not? Good, give me that small room and provide me with a lamp and a mirror there”. This was done and Raamalingam occupied that room with a vertiable load of books. What he did behind the closed doors we do not know, but he became learned, far more learned than anyone in the audience who listened to the religious discourses which Sabhaapathi was giving both as a vocation and as a means of livelihood.

How did he gain this ability? To know this, we have to go to an incident which occurred in the room to which our Swaamikal, perhaps a lad of eight or nine, had retired with his load of books and a mirror. He sat, records his biographer, before the mirror and spent his time engaged in meditation on Murukan, the name by which God went in the shrine at Thirutthanikai Hill. And to this child thus engaged in meditation, even as, in the hoary past, Duruvaasa Muni in his childhood, had sat in meditation of the Lord, came a vision. Let us hear him relate it:

The beauty-endowed divine faces six,
the illustrious shoulders twelve
encircled by a garland of katappam flowers,
the lotus feet,
a spear with a sharp blade,
the peacock, the rooster-emblazoned banner,
and the famous Thanikai Hill
with a canopy of a cloud of grace,
these my eyes beheld.

42.I.3 piraarthanai maalai 1

The more ignorant a man is, the more a scoffer is he. But highly educated people too can be scoffers as I learnt recently when I heard a man who has a reputation as a great scholar talk of this incident in the life of Raamalinga Swaamikal. He said: “A mirror reflects only that object which is before it, it cannot reflect an object which is not there. Therefore, this story is plain humbug”. When I heard him, I instinctively thought of Thiruvalluvar’s caustic saying:

“Men with learning have two eyes, it is said;
The blockheads’ faces have two sores instead”.

Poor man, he was thinking of seeing with the two sores on his face, with what are called ‘oona-k-kankal’-fleshy eyes. Raamalingam did not see the vision with his fleshy eyes, he saw with his ‘gnaana-k-kankal’ - eyes of gnosis. Very few indeed gain the eyes of gnosis. To revert to our savant, it would appear that he had not read, or had forgotten if he had read, the passage from Maanikkavaachakar’s Thiruvaachakam, which runs thus:

“(I can tell how), at Saanthamputthoor,
in the mirror
of the hunter who wields the bow,
He bestowed on him what he desired for”.

decad 2, keertthi-t-thiruvakaval, lines 31, 32

In my translation of the Thiruvaachakam I had added within brackets the words “of the mind” after the word – “mirror” and had given the following footnote. “When the hunter was seated in contemplation of the Lord, He clove his mind with the Sword of Discrimination of the Real and gave him enlightenment. This sword is said to be one of the weapons in the hands of Civan”. In support of this interpretation, I quoted a passage from a 14th century book called ‘Privy Counsel’ and followed it by an explanation of this quotation by Rev. Fr. Johnston in his book, The Mysticism of the Cloud of Unknowing. It is worthwhile reproducing here the quotation and the explanation.

“Let that darkness be thy mirror and thy mirror wholly”, is the quotation.

Fr. Johnston’s explanation is:

“The mind is a mirror; void of images and thoughts, but filled with faith; it is in darkness, and in the darkness one sees God”.

Continuing his explanation, Fr. Johnston says:

“This darkness which wholly fills the mind when, void of discursive reasoning and conceptual thinking, it is grounded in supernatural faith, this darkness is the cloud of unknowing. And out of this darkness of faith there arises ‘the blind stirring of love’, also called ‘the naked intent of the will’ that darts upward (or more correctly downward) towards God Who, by grace, is in secret

and silence in that mysterious part of the soul that is called ‘the sovereign part of the spirit’”.

With this explanation in mind, I would prefer to interpret the vision on its lines without ruling out the possibility of the vision having occurred in a mirror made of glass with mercury-backing. For to God, everything is possible.

It is worthwhile to relate here a true story which my friend, Sri Trivedi Krishnaaji, B.A., B.L., author of Mahatmas, and one who has since taken the vows of a sanyaasi, told me. He said that a deeply religious person was a frequent visitor and sometimes an inmate of the aasram of Sri-la-sri Gnaanaananda Giri Swaamikal at Koyiloor. Once the Swaamikal bade the devotee to go out into the world and give religious discourses. The devotee replied that he had no suitable knowledge for the purpose. Forthwith, the Swaamikal pointed out a large collection of books and directed the devotee to study them. This he did, but without any appreciable advent of knowledge. He reported to the Swaamikal his plight. Thereupon, the Swaamikal directed him to make a bundle of the books, dig a hole in the garden, bury the bundle in it, and sit on top of that spot and meditate. Bizarre as this direction appears to be, the devotee, nevertheless, obeyed it to the letter, and, lo, he had acquired all the knowledge those books had to offer. He is today performing bhajans and giving discourses to audiences a few thousands strong. His name, you would like to know. He is Haridas Swaamikal.

If the grace of a mere guru who is only a human being could perform this miracle, what cannot be done by the grace of Lord Murukan who appeared to our Swaamikal in the mirror in the room or in the mirror of his mind. It is, therefore, not a matter for wonder or disbelief that Raamalingam became a hyperlexic.

Raamalingam’s brother did not know what his younger brother was doing, and he did not care to know, for he was fed up with this boy who would not be disciplined in any manner at all. Neither did his sister-in-law know. His secret burst forth like a grand roman-candle⁵³ one evening when Sabhaapathi was unable to keep his engagement to give a religious discourse. Sabhaapathi had been using his little brother to read aloud to the audience the texts on which he based his discourses. So, on this occasion, the organizers of the discourse requested Sabhaapathi to send his brother to entertain the audience by reading from the sacred puraanam and avoid disappointing them. So Raamalingam went and read out from the book of the Puraanam of puraanam-s, the Periya Puraanam, the hagiography of the Saints of Tamilnaadu. He read so sweetly and with such seemingly real understanding of the words and the purport of the words as well that someone in the audience asked him, perhaps, half in jest and half in earnest, to expound the text. This Raamalingam did to the amazement of the audience in a manner that Sabhaapathi had not so far done. nay, in a manner no other pauraanikar before him had done. The child-prodigy, the super-kid was born. How old was he then? The biographer has no date to go upon, but he could not have been more than nine. Who taught him? Let him answer. He sings:

All Your servitors learn
without considering the fact
that their way (of learning) is round-about
and greatly deceitful;
(therefore) then and now too

they do not realize You.

⁵³ Roman candle - a firework discharging a succession of white or colored stars.

Oh my Master
Who dance a dance of bliss
in the light-radiating Hall of Gem!
By Your grace,
it is from You I learnt,
it is from You I heard (my lessons),
it is through You that I realized (You),
it is at Your hands I ate,
it is from You I received (initiation),
it is through You I experienced bliss.
Had I, indeed, performed great penance (in the past)?
Amazing is my good fortune!

3044. V.I. anbu maalai 16

Raamalingam was not taught in a school, he was taught by God Himself. Asserting this, he sings:

Your devotees have brought garlands
of (about to blossom) buds;
saying: “Civa-Civa, obeisance to You”,
they rejoice.
The brahmin (priest) has announced
that this is the hour
when the pure sweet rice is offered
to You at (the hour of rising from) bed;
Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
Who, in the past, without educating me in a school,
instructed me everything,
and, removing all the foibles of the body,
roused me from the sleep (of ignorance)!
Oh my Father!
Do, in Your grace, rise from Your bed.

4891. VI.106 thiru-p-palli-ezhuchchi 7

In a prose writing called ‘samarasa suddha sanmarga sathiya-p-peru vinnappam’, (Universal Pure True Path’s True Great Plea), occurs a passage relevant to this subject. The passage is:

“Oh unique Chief, Oh God Who are everything and, yet, are not anything, and Who shine filling the interior and exterior of the entire world of mobile and immobile creatures! In my boyhood, without a teacher to impart education to me, You, abiding in my mind,

graciously imparted to me an education impossible of being learnt by my own skill!"

The Swaamikal, we said, was a hyperlexic. He confirms this in this song:

Oh Spouse of mine!
Oh Lord with the feet which perform
a dance of gnosis and bliss
on the proscenium!
Oh Justice incarnate
Who, making me informed
without being instructed (by a teacher),
stood established in my mind
and imparted esoteric truths to me!
Forgetting You, what else shall I think of
in this ages-old world?

2775.IV.15 thani-t-thiru-viruttham 49

A song in 'anbu maallai' takes us further into the details of the varied fields of knowledge covered by this process of being inculcated in the arts and letters without being instructed. He sings:

Oh pure transcendent Being
Who dwelt within me,
and Who, after giving Your breast to this infant
who dwelt in the darkness of nescience of anything,
made a little wisdom accrue,
then, indwelling my consciousness,
made me cognizant of the Veda-s-
(ordinarily) the subject of (laborious) study –
and the arts without any study whatsoever,
and, showing me the true state of grace,
prevented me from going up the evil-thronging path
of religious sectarianism,
and directed me into the true universal path
of holy grace,
and, whenever I became confused,
exhorted me saying: "Oh son, do not get confused",
and rid me of all confusion!

3055. V.I anbu maalai 25

In another poem, our Swaamikal makes a more positive and clear statement that God instructed him in the Veda-s as well. He sings:

Oh my Father, Oh my Mother,
Oh my Sire, Oh my King,
Who graciously dance
in the Center of the pure Golden Hall!

Oh my rightful Spouse
 Who with delight wrote in my mind
 all the Veda-s never before inscribed on palm leaves!
 Oh transcendently transcendent One
 Who bestowed good grace
 on damsels adorned with anklets and on men
 that they may profit by the True Path!
 Oh Lord of mercy
 Who transformed the forest of maayai
 into a flourishing country!
 Oh sweet Fruit ripened on the Hall of Gnosis!

4642. VI.84 peraa-p-peru 8

In a song which we have already quoted (4112.VI.57.23) on that page, occurs a passage which goes far beyond being instructed in the knowledge contained in books. Our Swaamikal, without any effort on his part, without my outside instruction, but purely by the grace of God, gained intuitively the highest spiritual knowledge and experience. Of this, he sings thus in that poem:

Oh King of mine Who transformed me
 into the form of Experience itself
 without special study or experimentation
 while all those
 who have made special study and experimentation
 request me (to instruct them in the art
 of the apprehension of the Real)

Composing and singing songs were not two separate operations with the Swaamikal. Both were instantaneous and simultaneous. Again, it was God's grace alone and no merit or effort on the part of our Swaamikal which conferred this gift on him. He testifies to this in several songs. He sings:

Oh God Who from formlessness
 become one endowed with form!
 At an age when I was small in stature,
 and, without the least of understanding,
 was in the habit of running to play in the street,
 scampering about on my tiny logs,
 You made me sing songs about You!
 Who else has Your cool⁵⁴ love?

2218.III.6 thiru arul murai-yeedu 48

⁵⁴ cool love - expressions differ with climates of countries. In cold countries the expression would be warm love. But in a hot country, like India, it is cool love.

At an early age
 when I did not know

even an iota of the way of singing songs,
You stood close and closer still to me
and endowed me with the art of singing songs.
That those who are worthy of being sought after
may think well of me,
You endowed me with a little of good sense
and rid me of stupid sense,
and You established this youngster
in the pure blissful code of conduct
of the True Path;
what shall I say of Your grace?
All those who are fit to unite with You
are looking forward to a sign,
Oh Hill of Excellence
Who take all foibles as excellences!

3042.V.1 anbu maalai 14

Oh Being of the form of bliss
Who is the pure perfect WHOLE,⁵⁵
Who, becoming THAT (Tat of Tat-twam-asi)
Which is known to the experiencing gnosis (only),
dance on the Hall of Gems!
Was it not You Who enabled me, a poor fellow,
to sing songs on You
to the delight of even those
famous for their knowledge of the Real,
and walk eagerly in the path of Your grace
at an age of tearfully and gleefully
playing about (in the streets),
totally ignorant of experiencing anything
through even the least knowledge
gained by the five senses?
You should graciously tell me
what is the thavam performed
in a former birth by this evil fellow
of a mean mind filled with false wisdom.

3055.V.1 anbu maalai 27

⁵⁵ ‘the pure perfect WHOLE’ - This phrase recalls to mind the Upanishadic Invocation which is ‘Om poornamadha: poornamidham, poornamudhachyathe; poornamasya poornam aadhya poornamevaasishyathe’. “THAT is the WHOLE; this is the whole, from the WHOLE the whole has come. The WHOLE is still WHOLE even though the whole has been taken out of the WHOLE!” In this verse ‘the WHOLE’ stands for the Godhead, and ‘the whole’ stands for the universe.

We saw first a song from the 3rd Book, later, two songs from the 5th Book, and we shall see three more songs from the 6th Book. The fact that our Swaamikal is

conscious of this unique gift at every stage of his spiritual journey shows that the consciousness of the very special manner of the conferment of the gift is not a childish fancy but an indelible memory of a true event, a memory that did not diminish or die out with growing age. He sings thus in the 6th Book:

Oh Unique One
Who assumed lordship over me
at an immature age when I did not know anything,
and bade me sing in the sweet language
I was (just) learning!
Oh Succour of my life!
Oh immaculate One,
resplendent in the Common Hall in Thillai,
Who are the Veda-s
and the profit (of chanting them)!
This is the fit moment
to bestow illumination;
graciously unite,
graciously unite with me.

3828. VI.34 anuboga nilaiyam 1

Oh great Lord
Who, when I, at a very early age,
was roaming about
playing with young boys
in the hot afternoon,
taught me the way of singing about You
in adoring meditation,
beginning the (first) line with the words,
“Oh our great Lord”!
This is but the true fruit
of the great thavam performed by me.
Oh good Succour,
Who, without directing this youngster,
even in the least, into mean ways,
put me up the great Path!
Oh Father!
Oh great Being dear to my soul!
Oh my King on the proscenium!
Do graciously wear my garland (of poesy)!

4165. VI.34 anuboga nilaiyam 7

The last song ended with a petition praying the Lord to wear his garland of poesy. The next song of our choice shows the petition fulfilled. It runs thus:

Oh Father Who, in the (very) beginning,
assumed lordship over me
and took seat in my intellect!

Oh Love (incarnate)!
 Oh my dear Life!
 Oh Ambrosia!
 Oh my Master
 Who, in Your grace, estimating highly
 that the age of childhood
 in which I was roaming about
 playing in the street
 as quite a big age,
 and, making me long for
 the effulgence which is Your grace,
 bade me string an anklet of sweet words,
 and (graciously) wore it
 on Your feet!
 Oh dancing King
 Who fill the Chamber
 that is the Hall of Gnosis!
 Do graciously wear with resplendence
 this garland (of words) as well
 which Your slave has this day strung.

4183. VI.53 arul vilakka maalai 94

Our Swaamikal is so everlastingly and gratefully conscious of his irreparable debt to God for this boon of effortless, instantaneous, spontaneous, composing of songs that he sings his gratitude even at the end of the last Book of the Thiruvartupaa. Hear him sing:

In the days of my nescience itself
 He called me peremptorily
 and bade me compose songs
 on His dancing holy feet.
 All the offences committed by this mean one
 of a mind unfocussed on Him,
 He took as mere delightful frolics
 and donned my garland.
 The great Lord, Nataraja,
 Who, inseparably, mingling in me, tastes sweet,
 united with me in marriage.
 How can I express here the degree
 of the intimacy of that esoteric union
 which the Wise One Who is grace incarnate
 graciously bestowed on me
 that I may thrive
 without the worldly attachments destroying me.

5813.VI.142 anubava maalai 100

This boon, this remarkable gift of poesy conferred on the child Raamalingam was of no mean variety. Raamalingam became an expert in composing poems in an

extraordinarily wide variety of metric forms. Ooran Atikal, in the introduction to his edition of Arutpaa, lists as many as twenty-nine metric forms, some of them of the most intricate kind rarely attempted by poets in the past or present in Tamilnaadu.

Before we leave this aspect of the life of our Swaamikal, we must record that these songs are not labored compositions contrived with the aid of Books on Prosody and Thesauruses, but spontaneous outpourings, products of inspiration of the moment. The Swaamikal's manuscripts rarely show any deletion, correction, or revision. And how can there be any correction, deletion or revision when the words are not his but God's. We need have no doubt about this, for our Swaamikal has left many songs which bear testimony to this strange yet very true fact. He sings:

I have beheld my Spouse
Who has transformed
all my actions as His action
and makes me flourish (on earth);
I have beheld the Elixir
which, instructing me
in the art of making gold,
abides in my mind;
I have beheld my Treasure;
I have beheld my true Guru
of the True Path
who, doing away with opposition,
made me shine in the entire world;
I have beheld Him
in the Satya-gnaana-k-koiI⁵⁶
(at Vadalloor).

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I have beheld the true Guru,
Who, for the sake of me
who have no compeer in baseness,
came in the dark night
and bestowed grace on me;
I have beheld the true Succourer
Who, accepting all my words as His very own,
embraced me, shoulder rubbing with shoulder;
I have beheld the Chief, my Father
Who has no peer to Him.

3962, 3963.VI.46 irai thiru-k-kaatchi 9, 10

⁵⁶ Satya-gnaana-k-koiI - the temple of the great Effulgence of Grace at Vadalloor.

In the poem quoted above occurs the line "Who, for the sake of me who have no compeer in baseness, came in the dark night and bestowed grace on me". The phrase "dark night" appearing in this line is not the night which follows day.

Maanikkavaachakar also sings of this dark night. In stanza 4 of decad 37 of his Thiruvaachakam, the Decad of the Apprehension of the Godhead (pidittha-p-patthu), he sings:

“In the dark place I have caught You firmly;
henceforth where will You, at Your pleasure, go?”

I cannot do better than reproduce the comment I gave on the phrase “the dark place” in my book “Pathway to God through Tamil Literature (i) through the Thiruvaachakam”. This is it.

“This dark place, in which Maanikkavaachakar tells the Lord that he has caught hold of Him securely, needs explaining. Not all my words can explain it as well as certain quotations from ‘The Cloud of Unknowing’. Its unknown author says:

‘Cease not, therefore, but labor on until you feel this hunger for God. The first time that you try, you will find only a darkness, as though it were a Cloud of Unknowing, which you do not understand, only that you feel in your will a naked intent unto God. Whatever you do, this darkness and this cloud is between you and your God, and keeps you back so that you may not see Him either by the reasoning of your intellect or feel Him in the affection of your heart. Therefore, you will have no other course than to stay in this darkness in the best spirit that you can, always calling upon Him Whom you desire. For if ever you are to see Him and feel Him (to the degree that it is possible here) it must always be in this darkness. If you will continually struggle as I bid you, I trust that, in His mercy, you shall come to His love. Do not think because I call it a darkness or a cloud, that it is any cloud congealed out of the clouds that fly in the air, or any darkness such as is in your house when the candle is out. Such a cloud and such a darkness one can create out of the lightest day of summer, and also in the darkest winter one can imagine a clear shining light. Leave such false images alone. I do not mean such; for when I say darkness, I mean a lack of knowing, such as those things that you do not know or have forgotten⁵⁷ are in the darkness.^{57a} In your present state you are not able to see with your spiritual eye. It is for this reason that it is not called a cloud of air, but a Cloud of Unknowing that is between you and your God’.

^{57. 57a} The word ‘thirodhaanam’, - a veil that hides things from the soul, may be pondered upon here. The darkness is the aanava-malam, ‘the taint of ignorance’, of Caiva Siddhantha.

I do not offer any apology for the very long exposition given above as it is necessary that we proceed on our journey in the footsteps of our Swaamikal with a thorough understanding of the esoteric phrases he uses in his songs.

Let us go to other songs on the theme under consideration.

Oh Guru Who told me:
“All your words which are uttered,
that the people of this vast world

may be reformed,
are indeed my eternal words;
this is the truth.
My son, do not have the least fear
in your heart.
I have bequeathed all to yourself
the dancing Great Effulgence of Grace.
Remaining in a never-perishing state
with the help of love,
do you joyously roam about everywhere
at your sweet will and pleasure
and flourish in this world!"

Oh Father of great mercy
Who bestowed on me,
in the early morning of my life itself,
the gnosis that is Experience of You,
which occurs in between the eyes
where it is usually sought for (by sages)!

Oh Mother, Oh Friend, Oh Succour,
Oh Bliss Who have taken never-departing abode
in the core (of my heart)!

Oh Beloved! Oh Unique One!
Oh formless One!
Oh Nataraaja-pathi
Who, becoming ambrosia which seeps inside me,
rise on the apex of the six (aadhaaraa-s)⁵⁸!

3679.VI.22 nataraajapathi maaIai29

⁵⁸ six aadhaaraa-s - Please see note in Appendix II.

The next poem in this context makes a positive declaration addressed to the people of the world. Our Swaamikal asserts:

Oh people of the world!
Apart from the fact that all the words I utter
are the words of my Spouse,
they are not words uttered by me.
Can I say anything?
Who am I?
What wisdom or experience have I for my own,
if Civan had not sought out my flesh
and is abiding there?

5504. VI.129 suddha siva nilai 18

Maanikkavaachakar too exclaims: "Who am I, what worth is mind, what matters my learning, who would recognize me, had not the Lord of the heavenly ones enslaved me!"

All the words I utter
 are the words of my Spouse;
 do believe me, Oh my kin!
 This is the best moment
 to go forward and receive
 our oncoming great Lord
 Who dances on the Hall of Gems
 which scrapes the sky,
 and, by His grace, receive all the boons.
 I am setting out
 to the delight of my honey-plastered mind;
 do you too, knowing this, come here
 and set out with me;
 you can gain siddhi
 (release from the bonds of birth and death).
 Why am I telling you this?
 Note that it is out of pity for you
 that I am announcing this to you
 with the object of you all receiving
 the bliss which I am gaining.

5594.VI.134 maranamilaa-p-peru vaazhvu 19

Here are two more songs sung in the very evening of our Swaamikal's life, when he was joyously treading the fast lap of the Unitive Way.

Alas, these men say
 that the words which my mouth uttered,
 to wit, "This is the moment
 when the Effulgence of Grace,
 which the (divine) Mother mentioned,
 will come" ,
 are my words!
 Oh Chief
 Who, dancing on the holy Common Hall
 which Mother mentioned to me,
 have blended with my mind!
 These people here do not know
 that these are holy words uttered by You.
 What kind of an exercise
 of the intelligence of these people is this?

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These people say
 that the words,
 to wit, "This indeed, is the moment
 when the many dead people
 will arise here (on earth)",

spoken by me that the dharma of truth may flourish,
are my words.
Am I, a forgetful youngster,
capable of uttering these words?
Oh Omnipotent One!
These men have not realized
that these are Your notable words.
What, indeed, is the calibre
of the intelligence of these people?

5604, 5605. VI. 135 samaadhi varpurutthal 1, 2

After reading these several poems, nobody can be but convinced that the songs sung by our Swaamikal are not merely songs inspired by God but are songs uttered by God Himself seated in the core of the mind of our Swaamikal. I will modify this statement a little. I will say that a large number of the songs in the 6th Book at least are songs uttered by God seated in the core of the mind of our Swaamikal. This does not mean, however, that I altogether deny this quality to the songs in the other Books. The inspired reader, the reader with insight, the reader blessed by the grace of God, can easily put his fingers on the songs which can but be utterance of God Himself. For instance, the first song of the first decad of the 1st Book, the very first song to ever come forth from the lips of our Swaamikal can but be merely God-inspired, not God-uttered. That song is a petition addressed to Lord Murukan in the shrine called Kandhakottam in George Town, Madras. Today, it goes by the name of Kandaswaamikovil. Here is the poem:

Oh Kandhavel
Who am arisen in Kandhakottam
the flourishing pilgrimage centre
in trees-abounding Cennai!
Oh pure Gem of cool faces!
Oh Gem born of the introspective face of Civan!
Oh divine Gem of six faces!
Which day is the day of my redemption
when
 with holiness-imbued virtuous deeds
 in the ascendancy,
 talent-increasing wealth⁵⁹
 will increase in Your devotee,
when wisdom will increase
 that closeness (to God) my increase.
 and (in consequence) brimming-over bliss
 will increase splendidly.

⁵⁹ 'talent-increasing wealth' - worldly riches and the wealth of God's grace which will increase the capability of the devotees to do more virtuous deeds.

when, bestowing grace on me,
fragrance-wafting rosy lotus flower-teeming

flower-bed⁶⁰ will rise (in my heart),
when the quality of growing mercy
will predominate, (in me),
when the stream of limpid ambrosia will swell,
when You, assuming the form of bliss
will soar up,
when the full effulgence of experience
in which the shape of gnosis rises,
will shoot up,
when You will emerge
mounted on the proud peacock,
when Your feet, which are full of compassion
for every creature,
will arise in my heart
that prosperity may swell (in my life)?

1.I.1 theiva mani maalai 1

⁶⁰ the reference is to the six faces and twelve eyes of Murukan. It is a tradition to compare the faces to lotus flowers and the eyes to bees feasting on the nectar in the lotus flowers.

God-uttered songs must have a message to humanity.

It is with great hesitancy and misgiving that I have translated this poem, the very first to be sung by the Swaamikal at a very tender age of eight or nine years. When I was engaged in the translation and interpretation of the Thiruvaachakam, my guru warned me in solemn words to take care not to turn the gold of Thiruvaachakam into base lead in English. It would be an irony, indeed, if, in the case of Raamalinga Swaamikal, who was credited with the ability to turn base lead into gold, I were to turn his twenty-two carat gold of poetry into base lead. However, for this reason, we cannot any longer allow his unique spiritual treasure to remain unavailable to those who do not know Tamil. It is with this object in mind that I have ventured to translate the Swaamikal's songs into English. Let my translations serve till an able man, a poet at heart and a mystic by the grace of God, comes to offer a translation which will have the stamp of an original work.

The Ant poem is a query. "Which day is the day of redemption when . . . Your feet, which are full of compassion for every creature, will arise in my heart?" asks little Raamalingam of Lord Murukan. The favor was not very late in being conferred.

Before we proceed further, it is pertinent that we pause to think of the names and forms in which the Swaamikal worshipped the Godhead from stage to stage of his life. He did not worship many gods. He worshipped the one and only God under various names and forms and in various shrines. I am reminded of a story I invented and used to relate when anyone questioned me about my switch-over from one form and name of God to another name and form of the same God during my spiritual journey which, to tell the truth, has hardly begun. Two boys reading in the same class and the same school were, as is natural, close friends. One boy came of a poor family.

The other, whose name was Murukan, came of a family of noble ancestry. Being friends, however, this difference in status did not affect the boys. The poor boy, whom we shall call Raamalingam, had to pass the house of Murukan on his way to school. So he made a habit of stopping at the doorstep of Murukan's house and giving a loud hail to his friend to hurry up and accompany him to school. Though they were bosom friends, Raamalingam never dared to walk up the steps of the house to the door, not to speak of entering the house. For on the pial of the house was seated Sri Sadhaacivam who, to the childish eyes of the poor boy, seemed a very forbidding person. SriSadhaacivam could not but notice the boy who shouted for his son every day. But the look which he turned on the boy, a look which he considered was benign and welcoming, appeared to the quaking urchin as a stern and minatory look. So he kept his distance. So days passed. Murukan and Raamalingam continued to be dear friends. One day, however, when he called for Murukan, the latter was somewhat late in coming. Raamalingam did not know what to do. He dared not climb up the steps of the house, much less had he the courage to enter the house. He was fidgeting about, undecided whether to go away or wait some time more. Sri Sadhaacivam was watching the boy with amusement. Finally he called the boy to come up the steps. The lad came with trepidation. Sri Sadhaacivam knew why Murukan was delayed, so he wished to keep his friend engaged in a conversation. Therefore, he asked him many questions; who his father was, who his mother, where he lived, what his father did, whether he had brothers and sisters. Little by little the lad lost his fear and answered the questions intelligently. Meanwhile, Murukan came and both of them rushed away in haste to reach the school before the final bell rang. From the next day, a sort of a cautious friendship arose between Raamalingam and Sri Sadhaacivam. but, even after weeks of this sort of tentative friendship, the lad was not completely at ease with Murukan's father. One day Murukan's mother, Paarvathi, saw her husband talking to her son's friend in his gruff voice, and, coming up to the door, she spoke chidingly to her husband and asked him: "Is this the way to talk to a child? Why do you keep him trembling with concealed fear at the doorstep? Why could you not bring him into the house, or, at least, ask him to go in and look for Murukan?" Saying so, she addressed the lad endearingly in a dulcet voice and taking him by the hand took him inside the house and with an arm thrown around his bony shoulders she drew him close to her as she sat on a divan and plied him with delicious sweets and numberless questions at one and the same time. The poor lad, who had never known his own mother, who bore him, ever draw him to her except to cuff him, was lost in wonderment and beatitude. From that day onwards, there was no more waiting at the street level or standing with trepidation on the doorstep before Murukan's father. He came along the street and in two jumps was inside the house calling 'ammaa', 'ammaa' with as much right as Murukan, and the Mother of mothers, the Mother of the Universe, was there to receive him with open arms and benign face and loving eyes. In course of time, she led him through many chambers to the sanctum sanctorum where there was a lamp burning day and night in the flame of the effulgence of which the Mother disclosed to this son the Mystery of mysteries. It is not for us to pry into this Secret of secrets, this eternal play of God with man, His most beloved son.

I envisage the spiritual journey of Raamalinga Swaamikal in much the same manner as that of the boy who struck up a friendship with the Son of the house, then progressed to an acquaintance with the Father of the house and then was received into the bosom of the Mother herself who took him into the nooks and corners of her

many-roomed mansion and ultimately into the Holy of Holies, into the presence of the Effulgence that is the Godhead.

We saw the very first poem sung by our Swaamikal. We shall consider a very remarkable prayer in that same decad, a prayer formulated at the early age of eight or nine. He prays:

Association with the noble ones
who contemplate with one-pointed mind
Your holy blossom feet
I want.
Association with those
who have in mind something
and speak something else outside,
I want not.
Your renowned praises I should speak;
lies I should never speak.
Lofty ideals I should hold
and live up to them;
the devil called pride should not possess me.
Forget, I should, desire for ensnaring women,
forget You I should not.
Wisdom I want; the wealth of Your mercy I want;
disease-free life I should lead.
Grant me this my prayer,
Oh Kandhavel Who abide in Kandhakottam,
the pilgrimage centre of ever-growing sanctity
in Cennai abounding in righteousness!
Oh pure Gem of cool faces!
Oh Gem born of Civan with the introspective Face!
Oh divine Gem with six faces!

8.I.1 theiva mani maalai 8

Is it a matter for wonder that a life begun at the very early age of eight or nine with a prayer of this kind of high purpose should be crowned with the blessing of blessings, the apprehension of the Real and merging therein?

We may give ourselves the pleasure of participating in one more prayer of this same period, a prayer which, in fact, appears in the same decad. This decad, 'theiva mani maalai' the first decad of the First Book, is, in its entirety, a decad of prayers of the highest quality. Hear this:

Oh Kandhavel Who abide in Kandhakottam,
the pilgrimage center of ever-growing sanctity
in Cennai, a mother to all (other cities)!
Oh pure Gem of cool faces!
Oh Gem born of Civan with the introspective face!
Oh divine Gem with six faces!
Grant me a nature

of never standing before a person
and saying “Give”.
Grant me the capacity to give
without saying “No”
when a person comes to me saying “Give”.
Grant me the state of grace
of You, Who is my God, never deserting me.
Grant me the practice of ceaselessly contemplating You.
Grant me a mind which never covets
any the least of others’ wealth.
Grant me the steadfastness of never slipping
from the state of union with Reality.
Grant me the principle of never calling others in the world
bad names such as ‘chee’,⁶¹ devil, and cur.
Grant me unyielding adherence to truth;
and grant me purity.
Grant me all these
and make me a slave unto Your holy feet.

9.I.1 theiva mani maalai 9

⁶¹ chee – an explosive sound used to drive away a mongrel. Thirumoolar, with a privilege all his own, calls the sookshma panchaaksharam (the subtle five letters) - Ci-vaa-ya-na-ma - the dog-driving manthram on account of the word beginning with the letter ‘ci’.

This decad is, as I said, the very first decad our Swaamikal sang, and it is, in its entirety, a decad of remarkable petitions to God from a remarkable child of eight or nine years. At that very age our Swaamikal was a single-minded monotheist. The fourth stanza of this decad bears testimony to it. He sings:

Apart from respecting those
Who sincerely praise You,
the magnanimous One,
if I am told to respect other heavenly ones,
I will not respect them even in my dreams
through oversight even.
Other than Your feet
which have their abode in guileless minds,
though they were to thrust before my eyes
the feet of other gods
and offer them saying: “Sir, love these,”
I would stand aside,
looking at them with strong aversion.
There is not the least of my hypocrisy in this talk;
it is the truth.
Do assume lordship over me
and bestow grace on me,
Oh my Father, Oh my Mother,

Oh my Bliss, Oh my Wisdom,
Oh my Love, Oh Kandhavel
Who are arisen in Kandhakottam,
the Flourishing pilgrimage center
in Cennai which cannot be disregarded.

4.I.1 theiva mani maalai 4

This is as good a place as anywhere else, or to put it more correctly, this is a far better place than anywhere else to mention another prayer of the Swaamikal. The two prayers which we have reproduced above are prayers of his childhood. The prayer we going to see is the product of his mature years. By a comparison of these two sets of prayers, the discriminative reader will discern how far our Swaamikal has travelled, from Kandhakottam to Vadaloor, from 1831 or 1832 to 1867 or 1868, from his eighth or ninth year to his forty-third or forty-fourth year, from the stage when

“in the heart of this contemplative
thought of God was born”⁶²

to the stage of his journey on the Illuminative Way. Thus the Swaamikal sings:

Oh Father!
You should listen to what I pray for
and bestow grace on me.
I should show love
towards all Your dear creatures.
To whatever worlds there are,
to whatever stations⁶³ there are,
to everywhere I should go
and, my Father, speak of the fame of Your Grace.
You should so direct Your Effulgence of Grace
that the Pure Creed of Bliss
should resplendently reign supreme
high up in a lofty state
beyond expression.
Should I do any wrong,
You should put up with it.
Oh my Spouse,
I pray as well for a state
of never being separated from You.

4079.VI.56 suddha san marga vendukol

⁶² line 42 of Potri-t-thiru akaval, decad 4 of the Thiruvaachakam.

⁶³ stations - a soul, after it leaves the body, gains various stations such as Brahmapadham, Vishnupadham, Indhrapadham, etc. It holds these stations of heavenly life for a period but is soon reborn on earth.

We note that the first item in the list of petitions made in this prayer is:

“I should show love
to all Your dear creatures”.

The original text is ‘naan anbu seyal vendum’; ‘naan’ means ‘I’, ‘anbu’ means ‘love’, ‘seyal’ means ‘do’, ‘vendum’ means ‘should’. Love, being an abstract quality, cannot be seen. It can only be inferred from deeds. Therefore, our Swamikal prays, ‘naan anbu seyal vendum’, ‘Love’ is the title of the 8th Chapter of the Thirukkural. The first seven chapters comprise a preface or prologue of four chapters and a definition in three chapters of the persons to whom the Thirukkural is addressed. They are the husband, the wife and the children who constitute a family. Next follow sixteen chapters on the qualities which this family should strive to cultivate. The chapter on ‘Love’ heads this list of sixteen qualities. Love - anbu - being an abstract quality has necessarily to be exhibited through acts which are prompted by that love. What are these acts? The headings of the fifteen chapters which follow the chapter on ‘Love’ provide the answer to this question. They are:

Hospitality

Sweet Speech

Gratefulness

Impartiality

Control of the Self

Righteous Conduct

Not Lusting After Another’s Wife

Forbearance

Not Envy Others

Not Coveting Others’ Wealth

Not Back-biting

Not Speaking Vain Words

Dread of Doing Evil Deeds

Realizing One’s Obligation to

Follow-men

(philanthropy)

Giving to the Poor.

This list does not end here. When these qualities have been assiduously cultivated and, thus, love has reached its fullness, it is transformed into Arul- Charity. As Thiruvalluvar puts it in his inimitable poetic way, Love begets the child called ‘Arul’. What is this ‘Charity’? The Chamber’s Dictionary defines the word as ‘Universal Love’. This is all that a dictionary can do. But let us turn to an eminent thinker of this century and hear him. Aldous Huxley, writing in his ‘Perennial Philosophy’, says:

“By a kind of philological accident (which is probably no accident at all, but one of the more subtle expressions of man’s deep-seated will to ignorance and spiritual darkness), the word ‘charity’ had come, in modern English, to be synonymous with ‘almsgiving’, and is almost never used in its original sense, as signifying the highest and most divine form of love.

“Systematically or in brief aphorism and parable, the masters of the spiritual life have described the nature of true charity. Let us consider its principal characteristics in order. First, charity is disinterested, seeking no reward, not allowing itself to be diminished by any return of evil for its good. God is to be loved for Himself, not for His gifts, and persons and things are to be loved for God’s sake, because they are the temples of the Holy Ghost. Moreover, since charity is disinterested, it must be of necessity be universal”.

‘Charity’, therefore, is the highest and most divine form of love. This kind of love is possible only for ascetics. Thiruvalluvar concludes the 3rd Chapter of the Thirukkural on ‘The Greatness of Ascetics’ with this maxim:

“Since they behave with compassion to each and every creature, the ascetics (alone) are the compassionate ones”.

This kind of love, again, could be made visible only through acts inspired by it. It is for this reason that a chapter on ‘Charity’ heads the list of nine virtues which an ascetic should cultivate in order to gain the quality of ‘charity’ even as the householder had to cultivate fifteen virtues in order to gain the quality of ‘love’.

These qualities are:

Giving up Eating of Flesh
Thavam
Eschewing Conduct Unbecoming an Ascetic
Not Stealing
Truthfulness
Not Getting Angry
Not Harming Any Creature
Not Killing Any Creature

The word, ‘thavam’ in the above list needs an explanation. It is an untranslatable word. It means charity in the heart towards all creatures, austerities, self-mortification, non-attachment, meditation and contemplation. Thus, ‘Love’ and its child ‘Charity’, the highest and noblest form of love, are amalgams of the fifteen plus eight qualities listed in the foregoing paragraphs. Therefore, when Raamalinga Swaamikal prayed that he should show (do acts of) love to all creatures, he was praying for all these twenty-three qualities, the absence of any one of which will be a deterrent to his doing acts of love to all living creatures. With one phrase “*anbu seyai vendum*”, “I should do acts of love”, he prays to be made into a Saandron, the Perfect Man, of the Thirukkural, the embodiment of all the teachings of the Aratthu-p-paal, the Section on Righteousness in the Thirukkural. And so, indeed, he became. What a prayer and what a fulfillment!

This entire decad of eleven stanzas are petitions, vendukol-s, and is worth reproducing here in its entirety if only space would permit. But what a big “if”. So let me proceed, for I have great distances to cross and vast territories to cover before I arrive at the Great Effulgence of Grace which is beckoning me on even as it kept beckoning our Swaamikal.

We are still in the digression we made from the route of our story. Let us therefore make one more digression before we join the main road, the Broadway up which our Swaamikal trod towards his goal.

It is a natural phenomenon with boys who have a pious and religious bent of mind from childhood to be seized with a desire to leave the mundane world and become a sanyaasin⁶⁴. Raamalingam was no exception. He relates this incident in the following song:

⁶⁴ sanyaasin - me who throws the burden of his upkeep on society and frees himself for the pursuit of God.

Oh Sire! In my years of playful childhood itself,
I turned to my good friend next-door, and said:
“My dear fellow! I have no fancy for this false world,
tell me, what about you?”
He too assenting, we went away from home saying:
“Truly we shall renounce this world”.
But on Your true grace recalling us,
we returned (to the world).
Oh pure One, this You know in Your heart of hearts!
Oh my Father! What shall I tell You today?

3485. VI.13 pillai-p-peru vinnappam 76

This super-kid, this hyperlexic, this infant prodigy, this child whose unique prayer would make many older persons hang their heads in shame, this child who asked in his very first song when the day will come when Lord Murukan’s feet will take abode in his heart, this pert child who challengingly asked God, “Son to You am I not, and legitimate Father to me are You not”, had his petition granted in his ninth year. He records this experience in his own songs:

Oh Lamp Who need no trimming
and Who desirously confer whatever is desired for
on those who desire them
while those who desire desirelessness
stand by!
Oh slender Tongue of a flame
Who dance on the Hall in Thillai
Oh my life’s Succour!
Oh Sea of grace Who enslaved me
In my sixth plus third year!
Oh God seated in my heart!
If You do not divine
The thought in the mind of this mean fellow
And graciously say, “Come hither”,
What will I do?

2697.IV.12 atimai-p-pathikam 3

There is reference to this enslavement in the ninth year in another song as well. This is the song.

Are there anyone who do not want Your grace?
Since not only those above but all those below
petition You that they may prosper here,
is it anything new (surprising)
that I petition You?
Oh Lamp Who need no trimming!
Oh Gem of an Effulgence
Who abide in the Holy Common Hall!
Formerly, when I was six plus three, You enslaved me;
do graciously bestow Your mercy (now).

3597.VI.17 vaathanai-k-kazhivu 7

There are many more songs which, although they do not specify the age, declare that God enslaved our Swaamikal at a very early age, an age of playful sporting in the street. Before we go into them, I wish to quote here a song which, in my opinion, clearly states the day on which God enslaved our Swaamikal. This song is a very popular one not only with the devotees of Raamalinga Swaamikal, but with all lovers of devotional literature in Tamil. To the best of my recollection, I heard it for the first time in my twelfth year in the house of my maternal grand-father, a devout lover of devotional literature in Tamil. The street I live in is named after him. From morning to evening, and even upto late hours of the night, his house was echoing with the melodious soul-stirring lines of the Thevaaram and The Thiruvaachakam and Thiruvartupaa. The song I wish to quote to you is this:

Oh cool Tree
which offers me a chance of refreshing myself
in the summer heat!
Oh Shade under the tree!
Oh Fruit mellowed in the shade!
Oh Water of sweet savor trilling in the brook!
Oh fragrant Flower of sweet smell
blossoming amidst the delightful water!
Oh soft gentle breeze blowing on the plaza!
Oh Bliss born of the breeze!
Oh Benefit inherent in the bliss!
Oh Bridegroom Who wed me on the full-moon day of Chithrai!
Oh King Who dance on the hall in Thillai!
Do graciously wear my garland of poesy.

4091. VI.57 arul-vilakka-maalai 2

‘Full-moon day of Chithrai’ is the Way I translate the word “*aadaiyile*” in the original. Aadai is the name for Chithrai-t-thiru-naal, i.e. the holy day in the month of Chithrai, the first month of the Tamil New Year which falls in April-May. That holy day is the day of the full-moon in that month. Raamalinga Swaamikal belonged to the

Karuneeekar sub-caste among the Caiva-Vellaalars. Their first ancestor is said to be Chithraguptan, the legendary accountant of the Lord of Death. The full-moon day of Chithrai was sacred to our Swaamikal's clan as the Day of Remembrance of Chithraguptan. We may presume, therefore, that the Swaamikal was referring to the deep spiritual experience which very fittingly befell him on such a day.

Again and again I feel that I should give up translating these songs. Their music, their melody, their cadence, their alliterative sonance, their metrical ebb and flow, all are lost in a translation. Even so, I hope you can get a glimpse of the great poetic skill of our Swaamikal, his gift for imagery, which he sustains with great ease line by line all throughout the poem we have just now reviewed, The tree, the shade, the trilling brook, the fragrant flower on the brook, the zephyr bringing the bliss born of the fragrance, all contrive to construct a lucid soulful picture in our mind, so much so that we, for the moment, believe that we are actually standing under the tree, and enjoying the scenery and the breeze and the bliss too. Not even kambar, the Emperor among poets, can offer us a poem to match this one. Nor do any of the Four Camaya-Kuravar-s. Yet there is not a single word to understand which even a student of the fifth class need seek the aid of a dictionary or a teacher. Don't you, dear reader, wish that you were born in a Tamil family to experience the captivating beauty of soulful songs such as this.

Our Swaamikal is not tired of singing about the great privilege of being enslaved by God in his tender years. And well might he be proud of it. For when we look into the case of the Four Camaya-Kuravar-s, we find that Appar was enslaved not earlier than, probably, when he was nearer forty than thirty. Maanikkavaachakar who lived only up to thirty-two years was enslaved after he had been a very trusted chief minister of the Paandiyar King, that is to say, when he was nearer twenty-five than twenty; Sundaramoorthi Swaamikal was enslaved on the eve of his wedding, probably at about his twelfth year (since he is said to have lived eighteen years only). It was Saint Thirugnanasambandar only who was enslaved - if we can use such a word in the case of an infant - at the age of three. Raamalinga Swaamikal can therefore be justly proud of his enslavement at the age of nine. Let us hear some of his songs, in which, however, the specific age of nine is not mentioned.

The first song is out of the 42nd decad of the 1st Book. This decad is called "*tiru-arut-vilaasa-p-patthu*". the Decad of the Leela (Play) of the Holy Grace. All the ten stanzas end with the refrain "Oh Deva Deva Who enslaved me in my early years". The twelfth year of the Swaamikal was an important land-mark in his life. Later, we will be referring to some songs relating to this age, but the decad under consideration, and the refrain of its stanzas cannot be said to refer to that age. We must presume that the reference is to the enslavement in the ninth year. The song is:

Oh six-faced Sea of great mercy!
Oh Hill of a Gem
in which Theivayaanai⁶⁵ takes delight!
Oh King!
Oh Flame born of the great Flame
endowed with a face with three eyes!⁶⁶
Oh great magnanimous One
Who graciously wield a bloody spear!

Oh Clarity which reigns in the hearts
of men of noble character
from whose faces gnosis of Brahman - the Godhead -
radiates (all around them)!
Oh Flood of bliss!
Oh Deva Devaa
Who, as a great gracious Guru
of belief-inspiring face,
enslaved me in my early years!

450.I.42 tiru-arut-vilaasa-p-patthu 1

⁶⁵ Theivayaanai and Valli are the two brides of Murukan.

⁶⁶ Great Flame. three eyes – Civan.

This entire decad of ten stanzas, as we said earlier, dwells only on this theme of enslavement at a very early age. As the Swaamikal grows more and more old, he is more and more conscious of this great blessing which fell to his lot in his very early years. He dwells on this theme in the 4th Book and in the 6th Book, in his days of journey on the Illuminative Way and on the Unitive Way. Ooran Atikal lists as many as fourteen stanzas. Let us examine as many of them as possible. I believe that you, dear reader, are as much desirous of listening to as many of the sweet songs of the Swaamikal as I am desirous of offering them to you. Some of these are in the form of lamentations of having been deserted at an advanced age though enslaved at an early immature age.

Some of them belong to the category of bridal mysticism. Let us hear him.

You bestowed on me perception of You
at an age when I could not understand anything;
I wish that Your mind would consent to bestow the same
today as well. . . .

2592.IV.11 kali vinnappam 8

Oh Guru of mine
Who enslaved me in my age of nescience!
Oh Bliss rightfully mine!
Alas, You seem to have made up Your mind
to desert me today

2698.IV.12 atimai-p-pathikam 4

Oh You Who made all the excesses
perpetrated in this amazing world
by this waster, who has grown thin watering the weeds,
vanish like cotton fed to fire,
who is here to prevent You,
Oh Sire, if You assume lordship over me?

Did You not bestow on me
the shade of Your mercy,
enslaving me at an early age
when I could not grasp anything,
and declaring for all the world to know
that I am slave unto Your feet?
If this day, You wash Your hands of me,
what shall I do,
I who have no anchorage?

2703.IV.12 atimai-p-pathikam 9

When I clamour
“Oh Civam, Oh Civam,
Who enslaved me in my tenderest of tender years”,
does not pity for me rise in You yet?
Tell me what is the. secret animus
You have against me.

2988.IV.34 innam thyavu varavilaiyaa 2

He Who is on the stage
in Thillai girt by groves reaching to the heavens,
He who is greater than everyone,
Natarajan Who abides in the minds of devotees,
He came with ardour
and garlanded me with the bridal wreath
in my tender age
when I was ignorant
of my potential-characteristics-endowed self.
He never saw me again.
All the women with daughters endowed
disrespect me, and speak hoity-toitily;
I shrink with shame.
I am called the mad woman.
Endowed with eyes,
is there any reason for falling in a pit?
Having got His measure,
will I let Him get may with it?
You watch, Oh my companion!

3017.IV.39 vetkai-k-kotthu 1

At an early age
when I did not know myself even the least,
You graciously took seat in my mind,
and whenever I (faltered and) fainted,
You, declaring Yourself as my mother,
graciously showed solicitude,
and, from time to time,

making it clear that You were my father,
and so informing me,
stood by me.
What shall I say You are to me?
Shall I say that You are my life,
or shall I say that You are a friend
who is a life-long succour,
or shall I say that You are my Guru
who graciously extirpates all troubles,
what shall I say of You,
shall I say that You are my bliss?

3041. V. 1 anbu maalai 13

Oh great Hill of nobility
Who took all my faults as good qualities
and enslaved me
at an early age
when I was running around
and playing about
without even the sense to hide my nakedness!
Oh Honey which sweetens the mind
of those men of true thavam
who had done with likes and dislikes,
Oh Spouse of good ethics,
I have placed my trust in You,
do not abandon me.

3562, VI. abhaya-t-thiran 10

Even in 1908 or 1909, when I was eight or nine years old, boys roamed about quite naked and were not the least self-conscious about it. Since then, we have eaten of the forbidden fruit and we chide a little child of even one or two years who comes before company in the suit it was born in and tell it, “go back to your mother and come clad at least in a chaddi”. Oh Sophistication! You are the villain who kills Innocence! Let me quote here some utterances on the matter of clothing by Kahlil Gibran, the present century Mystic from Lebanon. He says in his “Prophet”:

“Your clothes conceal much of your beauty,
yet they hide not the unbeautiful.
“And though you seek in garments the freedom of privacy,
you may find in them a harness and a chain.
“Would that you could meet the sun and the wind
with more of your skin and less of your raiment.
“For the breath of life is in the sunlight
and the hand of life is in the wind”.

Let us see another song of the Swaamikal.

You adorned me

with the garland of bliss,
 forcibly catching hold of me
 who was playing about in the street;
 has all the desire which You had for this form
 at that tender age
 fled today?
 Have You fallen in love with a new form?
 Oh Saviour Who protected me
 even in the embryonic stage!
 I have caught hold of Your feet,
 will I let it go?
 Take my hand (in marriage),
 or if that frightens You,
 take charge of my life;
 I will not let You go
 unless my life departs;
 I will not let You go!
 Let You go, never will I!

3808. VI.32 piriya endral 9

Oh Succour Who blended with my embryo (itself)!
 Oh Ambrosia Who blended with me in my dreams!
 Oh Light blended with my eyes!
 Oh Delight blended with my thoughts!
 Oh Beauty blended with my form!
 Oh King blended with my life!
 Oh Bliss blended with my sense of perception!
 Oh my unique great Lord!
 Oh Deva of great mercy
 Who bestowed the achievement of true gnosis
 all to myself,
 a little fellow joining in play in the street!
 By the strength of the mercy of my Mother,
 I proclaim with my mouth itself as a drum
 that this is the moment
 for all the thronging world
 to embrace (God) and live blended (with Him).

4626. VI.83 irai inba-k-kuzhaivu 2

Are not my body, soul, and possessions Yours?
 Oh my Father, should I tell You today,
 "Receive these?"
 My mind thinks of the manner in which
 You enslaved me in my tender age!
 Thinking thereon, tears well up
 and drench my body.
 What kind of an affinity is this affinity
 which has grown between You and me?

Is this affinity an affinity
which can be gained by others
in this world?

4968. VI.112 meiyarul viyappu 5

As I write down this poem, tears well up in my eyes thinking of the manner God enslaved Raamalinga Swaamikal and wondering with him whether anyone else in the world could gain the affinity that grew between him and God, his Beloved.

After reading this large volume of internal evidence, I am confident that no one would be left in any doubt about the enslavement of Raamalingam by God at the tender age of nine.

Ooran Atikal is of the opinion that the several amazing incidents in the early life of our Swaamikal, such as learning without being instructed, worship at the Kandhakottam shrine, vision of God in the mirror, helping his brother during his religious discourses by reading the texts from the books, the maiden discourse, singing about Murukan at Kandhakottam and Thirutthanikai, occurred between the ages of nine and twelve of our Swaamikal. His surmise is probably correct. But I would prefer to place the last item only in the period of these last three years of the childhood of the Swaamikal and place the rest of the incidents in the years before his ninth year. But we need not labor this point as what is material to our purpose is the fact that the period covered by this chapter is the period of the intimate comradeship of Raamalingam and Murukan, the period in which Raamalingam became a hyperlexic by the vision of Murukan in the mirror (the mind), became educated without being instructed by any one, was enabled to compose and sing songs without any training in prosody, was enslaved at the early age of six and three. This was the period when the 52 decads and 570 stanzas of the 1st Book of the Thiruvartupaa were sung. We cannot properly conclude an account of the period of the childhood of the Swaamikal without a survey of the 1st Book of the Thiruvartupaa in as detailed a manner as space would permit. However much I might restrain myself, this survey is bound to take quite a number of pages, the addition of which to this chapter will make it very long. It is better to devote a separate chapter to the subject.

5. MAIDEN SONG

Before I proceed to an analysis of the First Book of The Thiruvirutpaa, I should say something about the architectonics of Ooran Atikal's edition of the Arutpaa. It differs very materially from all the previous editions, the last one being the edition by the very able and deeply dedicated editor, the late Sri A. Baalakrishna Pillai in the nineteen-fifties. The Fifth Book of the previous editions is the First Book of Ooran Atikal's edition. This edition, unlike all previous editions, has for its basis the chronological order of the composition and delivery of the decads. Such an edition is a most invaluable aid for the kind of book which I am writing. We can follow Raamalinga Swaamikal's progress not only through year to year of his life but also through the several stages of his spiritual journey in their chronological order. I feel so grateful to Ooran Atikal for his work that if it were permissible to dedicate a book more than once and to more than one person, I would dedicate my book to Ooran Atikal as well. For without his edition, I would never have been able to write this book.

To come to our analysis. The First Book comprises 52 decads and 570 stanzas. Murukan is the aspect of the Godhead who is addressed in these stanzas. They include every variety of petition and are composed in 17 out of 29 varieties of metrical forms which our Swaamikal has used in his entire Arutpaa. One of the metrical forms is used in only 10 stanzas of decad. 30 of the First Book and nowhere else in the rest of the Arutpaa. Majority of the decads in this book are composed in lines of 8 feet (9 decads) or 6 feet (20 decads) and 7 feet (7 decads). Moreover, 18 out of 51 decads in the entire Arutpaa which are in the form of Anthaadhiththokai (the first word or syllable of a stanza beginning with the last word or syllable of the previous stanza) are found in this book. The Second Book, however, has 19 such decads.

For the purposes of this analysis, I feel that a detailed analysis of the very first decad sung by the Swaamikal followed by a general survey of the other decads of the First Book will best serve our Purpose. The first decad is called Theiva-mani-maalai and comprises 31 stanzas. These stanzas are cast in every possible mood and mode of expression of our Swaamikal's entreaty, petition, praise, and prayer. A few of these stanzas have been reproduced in the previous chapter, but for the purposes of this analysis the reader would welcome the repetition of those stanzas here as well instead of being obliged to refer to the pages where they have already appeared. I do not know whether Ooran Atikal would agree with me, but I feel that the 31 stanzas of the 1st decad should be re-arranged in another order. Be it as it may, I do not propose to take them in the order in which they appear in the Arutpaa, but in the order of the moods and modes of expression of the Swaamikal's heart-felt plea to Murukan.

Devotees of Civan, says Caiva Siddhaantha, are greater than Civan Himself. Maanikkavaachakar sings:

The Mistress dwells in midmost of You;
within the Mistress centred You dwell;
Oh our Primal Lord, Whose being knows no end,
Who dwell in the sacred Golden Hall,

if in the core of Your servant both of You do really dwell,
come forward and bestow on me, Your servant,
the Grace amidst Your servants to abide,
that my heart's purpose may be fulfilled.

Sekkizhaar, the great hagiographer of the Saints of Tamilnaadu, puts the following words in the mouth of Lord Civan Himself extolling the qualities of the servitors of the Lord:

In their glory themselves they equal,
By devotion they appropriate Me,
By union with Me they conquer the world,
Failings they have none my longer;
Established in unique state they are;
Through their love they enjoy bliss;
Duality they have transcended;
Do you go and join them.

(Stanza 196 of Thaduththaatkonda Puraanam)

Raamalinga Swaamikal, therefore, pays his homage to the Servitors of the Lord in 3 stanzas and gives us, in another Stanza, a pen-picture of a non-devotee as well. He sings:

Glory of Devotees

Can a mean worm take hold of a strong big live coal,
can a deer jump over the sky,
can a rat hiss at a strong tiger,
can a fly vexatiously shake a mountain with its wings,
will a granite pillar be smashed in two
by a piece of a straw,
will darkness envelop the sun,
will rain get wet in the storm?
Never.
Similarly, can sorrow attack those
who wear on their heads
the blossom feet of those
who contemplate the golden feet
of Your devotees?
Can desire or anger affect them?
Will their minds be seized by arrogance
or discord?

13

What Devotees Will Gain

Those who sing the glory of Your devotees will gain
the noble quality of showing pity
on seeing the faces of those
who, driven by hunger through the ways of this world,

come and beg of them;
 they will, furthermore, gain love unto Your holy feet,
 full measure of years, lands and righteous wealth,
 experience of the Real, noble contentment,
 innate tolerance, true fame,
 a gift of neither ailment nor evil
 ever so little encroaching on their lives,
 true fortitude and sure shelter (of Your feet).

12

The Blessedness of the Organs of the Devotees

Oh Sire, the mouths of the blessed ones
 who speak Your glory
 are holy mouths which have partaken of limpid ambrosia;
 Oh Father, the heads of those
 who worship Your holy feet
 are heads which will wear a crown and flourish;
 Oh True One, the eyes of the virtuous ones
 who have sew Your holy body
 are eyes which shed forth brilliant light;
 Oh Lancer, the holy ears of those
 who hear Your praise
 are ears which will hear
 happy news of auspicious events;
 the hearts of the noble ones
 who contemplate Your feet
 are hearts of truly happy form;
 Oh Scion (of Civan),
 the hands of the great ones
 which are joined in worship in Your presence
 are hands which will bestow gold (on others).

19

Our Swaamikal devotes a stanza to give us a contrasting picture of the miserableness of the organs of the unblest creature who does not sing the glories of God. He sings:

Oh Father, the mouth of him
 who does not praise You
 is a mouth which yearns for even a mouthful of gruel;
 Oh our great Lord, the head of the fool
 which does not bow down to You is a head
 which carries demeaning firewood;
 the eyes of the vile one which do not see
 the very fragrant body of Yours
 are rotting eyes which exude a barrellful of tears;
 Oh God, the ears of the waster
 which do not hear Your praise
 are ears destined to hear mournful news;
 the heart of the sinner
 who does not think of You
 that his bonds may be sundered

is a heart which will quake with terror;
Oh transcendent Being,
the hands of the perfidious one
which do not join in worship in Your presence
are hands which will be stretched out
to receive the sacrificed offal.

18

Benefits Which Will Flow From Contemplation of Murukan's Feet

Water there will be;
rain-clouds there will be,
fertile land there will be,
and produce too,
wealth, fame, wisdom there will be;
a path with sanctuary at the end there will be,
and stability as well;
a place and name, gems and a job,
clothes and gifts, all these there will be;
food to eat and eat and rejoice,
peace-dwelling mind, prosperity,
chariot, elephant, horse,
and other riches;
everything, there will be,
provided, Oh King, there is contemplation
of Your feet
which wear the anklet of Kadamba flowers
which contain bees
which have drunk the honey in them.

28

Murukan's mercy, be it gracious mercy or be it, what is called, marakkarunai, harsh mercy, is always fruitful of genuinely benevolent blessings. Our Swaamikal devotes the 21st stanza of the first decad of the first Book to this mercy. He sings:

If you had not bestowed harsh mercy
on Thaarukan who did the mean thing,
on Singamukan (the Lion-faced Giant)
of a thousand eyes,
and on Sooran of unimaginably rare might,
and had not taken them into Your service,
where would the heavens be,
where the drink Of ambrosia,
where the life of the immortals,
where their magnificence,
where the rule of the king of the deva-s,
when their gnosis,
where the contemplation Of sages,
where the activities of the four-faced One,
where the performance
of the function of protection by Naaraayanan,

where the conduct laid down by the Four Veda-s,
where would all these be?

21

* * * * *

In the 4th stanza, he declares his bhakthi and loyalty. He sings:

Apart from respecting those
who sincerely praise You,
the magnanimous One,
if I am told to respect other heavenly ones,
I will not respect them even in my dreams
through oversight even.
Other than Your feet
which have their abode in guileless minds,
though they were to thrust before my eyes
the feet of other gods,
and offer them saying; “Sir, love these:”,
I would stand aside,
looking at them with strong aversion.
There is not the least Of any hypocrisy in this talk;
it is the truth;
Do assume lordship over me
and bestow grace on me,
Oh my Father, Oh my Mother,
Oh my Bliss, Oh my Wisdom,
Oh my Love, Oh Kandhavel
Who are arisen in Kandhakottam,
the flourishing pilgrimage centre
in Cennai which cannot be disregarded.

4

* * * * *

As the obverse of this coin of bhakthi, he sings in the 26th stanza the nature of those
who worship petty deities:

Those who contemplate petty deities
instead of You with the beautiful cock banner
are similar to a small black crow
which, passing by a ripe sweet fruit,
eats the fruit of the margosa tree;
those who speak the praise of others
to the loss of the beauty of their tongue
instead of Your good fame
are ghouls who have a taste
which prefers dog’s milk;
those who serve others instead of serving You
Who bestow strength on them
are mere boastful wasters
who water the weeds instead of the paddy.

26

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The necessary foundation has been laid for the worship of Murukan, and, now, our Swaamikal proceeds to make his vow. He sings:

The vow I have taken is
that, apart from Your feet,
I shall not seek others.
A mischievous dog called “Want”
has come, and, snatching this fruit of a good vow.
is, alas, running away;
what shall I do my more,
what shall I do?
I have not the strength
to lift a stick called “Steadfastness”
and beat it;
do graciously look with grace
upon the face of this youngster;
Oh limpid Ambrosia
gained by the heavenly people!
Oh great Rain of mercy!
Oh Rain-cloud!
Oh magnificent One!
Oh Pupil of my two eyes!
Oh my Bliss!
Oh Ruby that rides the peacock!
Oh Kandhavel
Who are arisen in Kandhakottam,
the flourishing pilgrimage centre
in Cennai
which You have appropriated to Yourself!

31

He is initiated by Murukan Himself into the methods of His worship.

Oh Guru Who came into my mind
and bestowed the perception
that through ritualistic worship of Pathi (God)
and similar good rites
the creaturely instrument of understanding
called the mind
will be rid of impure concepts
and stand established in pure contemplation
and, thereby, the state of true union with Pathi
with result;
that, thereupon, buddhi, the power of ratiocination,
freed from (the triad of) bonds
will merge in the mind,
and that, forthwith,
the state of absence of incoming and outgoing⁶⁷

will be gained
in the shape of unwavering real gnosis.

⁶⁷ absence of incoming and outgoing - there will be no break in experiencing he
Godhead.

Maanikkavaachakar sings:

“When in the hearts of contemplatives
thought of God was born,
and on that Being Who is free from hate
contemplation set in,
six crores of delusive powers
severally began their illusive play”.

Raamalinga Swaamikal catalogues these in the 14th stanza and eight more.

His Delusions

Oh Guru Who taught the truth to me who,
like one who gets confused in mind
by the similarity of things
and sees
 water in a mirage,
 a thief in the stump of a tree,
 a snake in a piece of rope,
 silver in the mother o’ pearl lining a sea-shell,
 and gold in heavy brass,
seeing imaginary things in maayai,
was having mental aberrations
thinking of wife and children,
relations and riches,
successful living and self-respect,
flawless body, life, and mind,
introversion and extroversion,
and sky and earth!

14

* * * * *

His Desperate State

My mind is not in my control,
my ancient karma does not leave me even the least while,
no love is there to Your feet,
there is no dearer succour to me other than You,
there am none to tell You:
“He is a youngster, You should show grace to him”,
nor are there people
to stand in Your presence and ask:

“Why are You showing grace to that wretch?”
Your ever-flourishing grace never decreases,
There is no complaint against You,
You never say “no” to those who beg of You,
You are not a hard-hearted person.

* * * * *

His Shortcomings

I do not mix with noble learned men,
and remain steadfast in their company,
I do not Choose a line of learning
and learn assiduously,
I do not melt in my mind,
and think of Your holy Feet
even in a dream,
I am not a good person;
to do wrong is my characteristic;
if it is Your gracious characteristic
to take all that wrong
as good qualities,
please do away with all my shortcomings
and bestow your grace on me.

* * * * *

Attachment to Body

What shall I do for this?
I do not give up attachment
to this salt-eroded vessel of a body
with nine holes
out of which seep malodorous secretions,
this body which I have realized in my mind
as a stone thrown in the sky high up,
or as a stream rushing down a mountain,
or as a light in a high wind,
or as a lightning in the clouds,
or as a fluff of cotton or a cloud
in a tempest,
or a mere delusive disguise gifted by karma,
or the egg-shell of a fledgling
which has hopped on to a tree-branch,
or a false dream,
or writing on the surface of water.

17

* * * * *

Attachment to Life & Body

I desired the eternally weed-infested life,
 performing all kinds of jobs
 right from laborious ploughing,
 earning filth-like lucre in quantity,
 stowing away white rice
 to the full extent of the stomach,
 and growing this body
 like a useless othi tree;
 Oh Sire, I did not declare this cruel body
 a false thing;
 I do not know whether this is due to
 external delusion
 or the poisonous delusion of maayai,
 or delusion by my fate.
 Worship Your twin feet
 adorned with anklets,
 and, desirous of Your mercy, praise You,
 calling You, "Oh my Refuge!",
 "Oh my two Eyes endowed
 with twice six eyes!",
 I did not!

20

* * * * *

Infatuation with Youthfulness

This youthfulness which wastes away
 with the stages of life of this karmic body
 and which the perceptive ones
 of enlightenment through study do not want,
 is it a daylight masquerade,
 or the waters of the raging sea,
 or deception,
 or the gold of the sunlight,
 or a rainbow,
 or a water-bubble,
 or the bellows which blows air
 that the forge may get fiery hot?
 I do not know which it is.
 Holding on to this firmly
 and falling into the net
 of the bewitching eyes of women,
 I have lost my senses to them
 and, wallowing in the mire,
 am committing sins only;
 other than this, I have not learnt
 to take hold of Your feet
 by even the least bit.

15

* * * * *

Tirade against Mind

it is difficult indeed to give voice to all this.
What shall I do, what shall I do?
Oh magnanimous One, this mind of mine
which, instead of eternally resting at Your rosy feet,
is beset by love of land, lass and lucre
and revels in them,
is it a maddened demon-possessed wild monkey
drunk with toddy,
and thrashed by a stick,
or the wheel whirled by the oft-spoken of potter,
or a ball played by a silly girl,
or a cruel beast which pounces with rage,
or a kite whirled about by a high wind,
or an incarnation of time, the Reaper,
or a form invoked by black magic,
or the embodiment of my karma,
I do not know which!

Tirade against Mind

This little urchin, my mind,
will not respect the wise guru,
will not gain the learning
which delights in the glory of Your feet,
will not keep quiet,
will fall in the deep pool of lust
and be whirled about,
will endure torment
in the torrid desert called anger,
will enter the narrow cave called avarice,
will walk in the darkness of blind infatuation,
will go up the artificial hill called pride
and fall down,
will descend into the hot pit of envy,
a thing of the same ilk as the rest;
alas, what shall I say?
He will not fall into my hand;
what shall this wretch do about this?

22

* * * * *

Save me from Temptation of Wealth

Grant me Your grace
that I may not give any thought to wealth
which, alas, is soulless stuff,

a never-pleasure-giving thing,
 a very huge mass Of worry,
 a mean thing,
 a delusive trap of the outside world,
 a deserter, a poison, a perfidious tripper,
 the flood that rushes down the river,
 the waves of the sea,
 a net of arrogance,
 the thunder-cloud of the peak of summer,
 the raging whirlwind,
 the water that runs down the long canal,
 a thing which wallows in the mire in an uncouth way
 like women without chastity.

16

Now beset by all these delusive devils our Swaamikal asks God, with a cry that goes to our heart, when His feet will be implanted in his heart and these devils driven therefrom.

Oh Kandhavel
 Who are arisen in Kandhakottam
 the flourishing pilgrimage centre
 in trees-abounding Cennai!
 Oh Pure Gem of cool faces!
 Oh Gem born of the introspective face of Civan!
 Oh Divine Gem of six faces!
 Which day is the day of my redemption
 when
 with holiness-imbued virtuous deeds
 in the ascendancy,
 talent-increasing wealth⁶⁸
 will increase in Your devotees,
 when wisdom will increase
 that closeness (to God) may increase,
 and (in consequence) brimming-over bliss,
 when, bestowing grace on me,
 fragrance-wafting rosy lotus flower-teeming
 flower-bed⁶⁹ will rise (in my heart),
 when the quality of growing mercy
 will predominate (in me),
 when the stream of limpid ambrosia will swell,
 when You, assuming the form of bliss,
 will soar up,
 when the full effulgence of experience,
 in which the shape of gnosis rises,
 will shoot up.
 when You will emerge
 mounted on the proud peacock,
 when Your feet, which are full of compassion
 for every creature,
 will arise in my heart

⁶⁸ talent-increasing wealth - worldly riches and the wealth of God's grace which will increase the capability of the devotees to do more and more virtuous deeds.

⁶⁹ the reference is to the six faces and twelve eyes of Murukan which it is a tradition to compare to lotus flowers, and the bees sitting on them.

And several other prayers rise up from the depths of our Swaamikal's heart, prayers which you and I and all the world may adopt as our daily petitions to God, our Light in the darkness of doubt and despair, our Saviour from the six serpents of lust, anger, greed, infatuation, obstinacy and pride, and a seventh serpent, rarely spoken of by others, but given by our Swaamikal a prominent place in the evils that stand in the way of an aspirant for the grace of God, the serpent of killing of living beings. Here are the prayers:

Oh Crown-Jewel of true gnosis
and blissful radiance
Who, bestowing the knowledge
of the majesty of the rare word 'Om',
which occurs in the bliss-laden great Veda-s,
on Sage Agastya,
was pleased with his contemplation!
Oh Kandhavel
arisen in Kandhakottam,
the flourishing pilgrimage centre
in renown-radiating Cennai!
Oh pure Gem of cool faces!
Oh Gem born of the introspective, face of Civan!
Oh divine Gem of six faces!
Graciously grant that I may not be seized by
Anger, the cruelly wicked fellow,
Lust, the internal foe,
mighty Greed, the utter fool,
violent Infatuation, the wastrel,
gross Obstinacy
also called wicked blind arrogance,
happiness-robbing Envy,
the parasite and evil-doer called Killing,
these seven persons and those related to them.

6

* * * * *

Graciously bestow on me the grace of leading a life
endowed with women of noble families
called staunch desirelessness,
sons called continuing peace,
good riches called munificence
arising from righteous ideals,
the succour called wisdom

which does away with delusion,
the friend called unfaltering lack of arrogance,
good servant called the mind,
and a place where there is neither
the three taints of ignorance, karma, and matter
nor even the state of being tainted by ignorance only.

7

* * * * *

Prayer for Association with Good People

Association with the noble ones
who contemplate with one-pointed mind
Your holy blossom feet
I want.
Association with those
who have in mind something
and speak something else outside,
I want not.
Your renowned praises I should speak;
lies, I should never speak.
Lofty ideals I should hold
and live up to them;
the devil called pride should not possess me.
Forget, I should, desire for ensnaring women,
forget You I should not.
Wisdom I want; the wealth of Your Mercy I want;
disease-free life I should lead.
Grant me this my prayer,
Oh Kandhavel Who abide in Kandhakottam
the pilgrimage centre of ever-growing sanctity
in Cennai abounding in righteousness!
Oh pure Gem of cool faces
Oh Gem born of Civan with the introspective face!
Oh Divine Gem with six faces!

8

* * * * *

Do bestow on me Your grace
that I may gain the association of those
who speak Your praises
and not gain the association of those
who scream, like the black crow,
endless vain stories,
who smell of the stench of toddy
and halitosis,
and in whose mouths the foul odour of utter falsehood
smells a mile away,
who carry on argumentative disputations
with tireless mouths,

and impose silence
on golden mouths of devotees
which smell of the fragrance of Civan's name.

10

* * * * *

Do bestow Your grace that I may not associate
with the vile ones who ask:

“ What is this transcendent Being you talk of,
what is the talk about the results
which karma brings in its train,
where is this pathi (God), pasu (creatures)
and passam (bonds),
what is this bhakthi and what mukthi,
what are sins and virtuous deeds,
boons, thavam, vows and penances,
whatever are these?”
and who say;

“ There are none like any of these.
Eating the good food that the mind likes,
wearing good clothes,
seeking out comely women wearing fragrant flowers,
sporting with them,
letting the hand explore and touch their breasts,
living with them and delighting in their company,
this is bliss indeed, this is visible bliss,
and this, indeed, is tangible profit of living!”

2

* * * * *

Oh Kandhavel Who abide in Kandhakottam,
the pilgrimage centre of ever-growing sanctity
in Cennai, a mother to all!
Oh pure Gem of cool faces!
Oh Gem born of Civan with the introspective face!
Oh divine Gem with six faces!
Grant me a nature
of never standing before a person
and saying: “Give me”;
grant me the capacity to give
without saying: “No”
when a person comes to me saying: “Give”;
grant me the state of grace
of You, Who is my God, never deserting me;
grant me the practice of ceaselessly contemplating, You,
grant me a mind which never covets
any the least of others' wealth;
grant me the steadfastness of never slipping
from the state of union with Reality;
grant me the creed of never calling others in the world

bad names such as 'chee'⁷⁰ devil, and cur;
grant me unyielding adherence to truth,
and grant me purity;
grant me all these
and make me slave unto Your holy feet.

9

⁷⁰ Chee - an explosive word used to drive away a mongrel; Thiru-moolar, with a privilege all his own, calls the sookshma panchaaksharam (the subtle five letters) - Ci-Vaa-Ya-Na-Ma - the dog-driving mantram an account of the word beginning with the letter 'Ci'.

Joy of Slavery Unto Your Feet is Joy Indeed

Oh Kandhavel
arisen in Kandhakottam
the flourishing pilgrimage centre in Cennai
where live men who excel a mother in compassion!
The several days-old rice-washings⁷¹
in the dilapidated homes
of the pouncing tiger-like curs -
the vile ones -
is collected at the cost of as much labor
as the heavenly ambrosia,⁷²
the deteriorated wild rice fallen to the ground
is picked up with as much care as flowers,
the bran is saved as carefully as precious jewels,
the lowly chaff is cherished as verily precious gold.
Is their enjoyment of these things
an enjoyment indeed?
The joy of settling down in the great life
of slavery unto Your feet
which are beyond the well-researched conclusions
of the Veda-s
and gaining thereby the path blest by Your grace
and the state of apprehension of the Real
is joy indeed!

25

⁷¹ rice-washings - water in which rice has been washed.

⁷² the heavenly ambrosia - a battle was fought between the deva-s and the asura-s for its possession and for the privates of drinking it.

Finally, his Prayer for Enslavement

Oh Bliss that taste sweet
in every corner of my mind!
Oh unique One Who are the Life of my life!
Oh Joy of bliss!
Oh mystic Union (with my soul)!

Oh my great Treasure!
 Oh Primal One Who are the prime Cause for mukthi!
 Oh Image of true gnosis!
 Oh deathless Murukaa!
 Oh Nephew of tall Vishnu!
 Oh dear Son Whom Lord Civan kisses!
 Without making me one among the people
 who wallow on this earth,
 do enslave me, bestowing on me
 attachment to Your feet
 which graciously pleased with bhakthi,
 eagerly bestow grace,
 Oh Kandhavel
 Who are arisen in Kandhakottam
 the flourishing pilgrimage centre
 in Cennai on the shores of the roaring sea.

30

He has been enslaved; the feet of Murukan have been implanted in his mind. He exults in this unique blessing and declares that there is no more any birth or death for him.

Is Brahma capable
 of making me be born again?
 (If he does so) will he not stand once again
 behind the bars in a prison?
 Will he forget the great suffering
 from the crack on the head
 inflicted on a former occasion?
 Yama, of the color of night,
 would he even in his dreams
 think of making me die evermore?
 He will not think of it;
 for won't he recollect the scars on his body
 which had been bruised black and blue
 by the kick he had received?
 Would the lurking karma come
 and torment me?
 I will not care a tuppence for it.
 For I stand merged in Your holy grace
 which all the learned hold fast to,
 Oh Kandhavel
 Who flourish in the dynamic pilgrimage centre
 at Kandhakottam
 in Cennai where excellence (in good virtues) abounds!
 Oh Pure Gem with faces of cool grace!
 Oh Gem born of Civan of the introspective face!
 Oh divine Gem with six faces! ⁷³

27

⁷³ In this song, our saint refers to former occasions on which the wrath of God was visited on Brahma and Yama for presuming to clash in their pride with divine will and divine grace. For more details see note in Appendix II.

A heavy dish of songs, though deliciously sweet, has been offered to the reader in the foregoing pages of this chapter. But this could not be helped. I take it that the reader is not a fly-over-the-page reader, but one who dwells with great concentration on the matter presented to him in the pages of the book he is reading. One Dr. Bidwell, M.D., writing in a book on Medicine, said: "It is not alone what the author has to offer to a reader that tells, it is what the reader can get out of the author". I am confident that the readers of this book are of the latter category. 29 out of 31 stanzas of the First Decad have been analyzed, classified, grouped and presented here in a logical arrangement of the most probable thought-processes of a traveler on the Pilgrim's Way to the Ground of all being. Two more stanzas have been set apart for a detailed consideration in later pages. In the 29 stanzas spoken of, the glory of the devotees, the blessedness of the various organs of their bodies, the cursedness of the various organs of the bodies of those who are not devotees, the benefits which will follow contemplation of Murukan's feet, the fruits of Murukan's apparently harsh mercy even, these precede a declaration of devotion and loyalty. Then follows an account of the nature of those who worship deities other than Murukan. With this heavy preface, Raamaalinga Swaamikal declares the vow he has taken not to seek any feet other than those of Murukan. Murukan initiates him into his own worship, rids Raamalingam of his delusions. But still Raamalingam is in great distress and recounts with great sorrow and despair his many shortcomings, his attachment to life and body, his infatuation with youthfulness and women, his uncooperative and base mind, and concludes this section with a prayer to never let him give my thought to wealth. Then begins a series of prayers which ends with a song of exultation that Brahma can no longer make him be born on earth again and again, that Yama, the king of death, can no longer dare take his life, and that Karma will never torment him.

I said that two stanzas of the decad under consideration have been reserved for special comment. One of them is this:

“ We am Brahman,
other than us there is no such thing that is Brahman;
there is neither good nor evil ;
It stands established as common
to the two modes of worship
called external worship and internal worship”.
Thus saying, the Adhvaithists will waste days
in argument.
Moreover, they will teach and assert
to the confusion of those who ask:
“ What is this ‘I am Brahman’ cult?”
They will not ordinarily give up their foolish creed,
but if an act of their Brahman
interferes with their life,
they will give it up.
Note that their fatally delusive intelligence

which claims that they are Brahman
is the type of intelligence
which calls a rope a snake.

11

Among the vast variety of subjects in which our Swaamikal received instruction without being instructed, the Veda-s were one. He sings in the 8th stanza of decad 84 of the Fourth Book thus:

“ Oh my rightful Spouse
Who with delight wrote in my mind
all the Veda-s never before inscribed
on palm leaves!”

Therefore, it is conceivable that the boy of nine was intelligently conversant enough with the Veda-s to pronounce this condemnation of the presumptuous and preposterous claim of the Vedhaanthin.

Our boy of nine should have had intimate knowledge of not only the Veda-s but also of the fourteen Saastra-s of Caiva Siddhaanta, for the stand taken by the boy is also the stand taken by the exponents of Caiva Siddhaanta. A scholar researching into the Thiruvartupaa will find enough material for him to write a thesis that Raamalinga Swaamikal was a Caiva Siddhaanthi. “Perish the thought”, I hear some ardent orthodox devotees of the Swaamikal say; I add, in response, ‘Amen’. For the Swaamikal was a revolutionary thinker in matters religious and no imprisoning shackles of dogma and doctrine of institutional religions could ever fetter him. He was a free bird of the sky, a lark singing in the soaring heights of sunshine and clouds, of rain and wind, of thunder and lightning, of the sun and the moon, of the planets and the stars, of spaceless space. Some great thinker said (I am unable to recall his name to mind) “When institutions spring up, truth flies out of the window”. Raamalingam was a child of the Great Effulgence and not a mole burrowing in the dark warrens of dogmas and doctrines of ‘isms’ and ‘itys’.

The other stanza is not so easy of interpretation as the one we have just considered. Our Swaamikal sings:

Waist like an hour-glass,
gait like a swan or an elephant,
double-plaited tresses like twin clouds,
breasts called perfidy,
navel spoken of
as luscious pomegranate flower-shaped whirlpool,
eyes called (twin) swords,
face called the full-moon -
what shall I do to encompass the death
of the sinner called my mind -
who, approaching women of parts thus described,
is seized with infatuation -
that I my survive?

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When we recall to mind that this stanza was sung at the age of nine, in the very first decad to be ever sung by the child Raamalingam, then we are overpowered with amazement that a mere child, a God-inspired child, a child of very good up-bringing, a child beloved of God, should be tormented with the type of emotions and passions, so vividly described in the stanza under consideration. We ask ourselves: “How can this be? Was this poem really sung by a child of nine? Or is this stanza an interpolation?” We must give very serious thought to this problem. Tackling a similar problem in the Thiruvaachakam, I wrote an exhaustive note. It will be relevant to reproduce that note here. I said:

“ Another point which it would be wrong of me to avoid is that of the faults, shortcomings, sins, commissions and omissions of which Maanikkavaachakar accuses himself in nearly 40 per cent of the stanzas in his work. He accuses himself of almost all the cardinal sins as well as many of the venial ones. He accuses himself of lust for women not in one place, but in scores of places in his work. Even in the last decad of his work, he accuses himself of this charge of venery.

Now we have to look at this question squarely in the face. We should not shirk it. I had occasion to discuss this point with some savants and their immediate reaction was horror at my raising the question. Their love, devotion, and regard for Maanikkavaachakar prevent them as much as the common man from thinking for even a moment that Maanikkavaachakar was ever troubled by lust. So an explanation has been found to get over the difficulty which such passages present. The savants and the devotees say that Maanikkavaachakar accuses himself of the sins of the world, in a sort of vicarious manner. This, the savants say, is out of very great love for mankind. They say that Maanikkavaachakar himself was pure and innocent and that he described himself in these terms purely to instruct mankind in the dangers of such sins. This interpretation would be true if Maanikkavaachakar had accused himself in this spirit of mind in a few places in his work. But it is not so. In decad after decad, in stanza after stanza, we find Maanikkavaachakar torturing himself – with these accusations against himself. These passages are too many to make us believe that they are a sort of a vicarious atonement for the sins of mankind. Moreover, once we accept the explanations of the savants, a large part of the appeal of The Thiruvaachakam to the sinful aspirant is lost. For the one lesson which a reader of The Thiruvaachakam draws is that what Maanikkavaachakar achieved he too can achieve. But if Maanikkavaachakar is put by us on a pedestal of immaculate purity, of an unapproachable purity, then the aspirants lose their hope of ever emulating Maanikkavaachakar.

In that case, was Maanikkavaachakar a libertine? If we take him at the face value of his accusations against himself, he comes out as a libertine of libertines. Is that a true picture of Maanikkavaachakar? Certainly not. While we are on the subject, we may ask another

question too. Was Maanikkavaachakar married? He was the Chief Minister of a Paandiyan King. He was said to be sixteen years old . . . Would a king take a bachelor as his minister? If we conclude that Maanikkavaachakar was married, we may not be far wrong. In which case, the ordinary love-life of a husband led by him might be tormenting him when he began to tread the spiritual path. Roberts Frost sings of:

‘ A speck that would have been beneath my sight
on any but a paper sheet so white

and Dag Hammarskjold paraphrases the same thought when he says:

‘On a really clean table cloth, the smallest speck of dirt annoys the eye. At high altitudes, a moment’s self-indulgence may mean death’.

“And the readers are quite familiar with the advertisements for certain washing soaps. The picture shows two persons, one clothed in an off-color white garment and the other in a snow-white garment. Let us take these two persons. In the case of the person clothed in the off-color white garment, another smudge or spot on that is not going to make much of a difference or cause great worry to that person. On the contrary, to the person clothed in the snow-white-garment, even a speck of dirt or a pin point of ink causes great grief and she grieves and grieves that her saree has been ruined. Transfer this analogy to a person like Maanikkavaachakar of immaculate purity of soul and imagine how even a fleeting thought of a woman in terms other than that of a mother or a sister would distress him. In one place he says that when the mantle covering a woman’s breast was disturbed by the wind, exposing her breasts for a fragment of a second, his attention was drawn to her. To him this appeared as an enormous crime, an unpardonable crime, a sin against God, a fall from bliss. As Hammarskjold says: ‘At high altitudes, a moment’s self-indulgence may mean death’.

“ I may be permitted a digression”.

“ I had a friend in Lahore. Let us call him Naraayanan (that is not his name). He was pure in thought, word and deed. He was loving, pure in heart and poor in spirit. He was a brahmachaari. He was a man of few words, words of love and devotion. Many loved to call him friend and many were proud to have him as a week-end guest. A young married couple was among such people. Naaraayanan was often an honored guest at their house. The hostess was well-educated, cultured, and deeply religious. She used to request him to advise her on books to read. At that time, his relatives in remote Kerala were pestering him to get married. They were driving him crazy with their importunities. Thereupon, apparently, he began thinking how excellent it would be if he could get a wife like his hostess. That was all. But it was enough to make his saintly mind accuse him of lechery, venery, debauchery, of everything in the vocabulary of lust. He began imagining that people at his office, at the tea-shops he frequented in the streets, were pointing at him and charging him with

all the sins in the calendar. He was going mad. Fortunately my interpretation of his malady and Dr. Divan Jaichand, the great homeopath's skill saved him.

“But how many men would have been so affected? Day in and day out, there are millions of men in the world today who mentally strip naked any beautiful woman who passes before them and give not a moment's thought to the sinful aspect of their act.

“To an already dirty mind, one more dirty thought does not make my difference. Not so in the case of Maanikkavaachakar; for, in the case of his snow-white pure mind, thoughts which seem ordinary to us loomed dark like hell. Therefore, such self-accusations of Maanikkavaachakar have to be interpreted in the light of the purity of his heart and his thirst for the attainment of unity with the Godhead.

“At the beginning of this book, I have quoted a passage from Aldous Huxley in which he has said that God can be apprehended only by those who are loving, pure in heart and poor in spirit. “Pure in heart” - to Maanikkavaachakar who aspired to attain this purity, every ever so little a venial thought was a cardinal sin. It is in these terms that we should interpret these self-accusations of Maanikkavaachakar. To believe, on the contrary, that the self-accusations are vicarious in their character is to reduce The Thiruvaachakam to a farce and to rob it of its usefulness to the common man”.

Satisfying as the above note may be in the case of Maanikkavaachakar, it does not meet our present problem on all fours. I venture, with great hesitation, to surmise that Raamalingam the boy of 9, being a hyperlexic, had assimilated a great many of the songs of his predecessors on the Pathway to God, like Arunagirinaathar for instance, without an understanding of their significance, and has reproduced those sentiments in his own words out of a highly retentive memory.

This explanation may help us to get over the problem of how Raamalingam, the boy of nine, came to sing a song of this tenor, but it cannot fully explain how the same theme recurs not only in all the stanzas of decads 18, 24, 25, 27, 35, 40, 46 but in many odd stanzas of other decads in the First Book.

If these were the only songs of this kind in the Thiruvartupaa, I would have preened myself on having offered through my note quoted from my book on the Thiruvaachakam a satisfactory solution to the problem which faces us in respect of such songs. But, unfortunately for me, similar songs are found strewn in plenty on hundreds of pages of the other Books of the Arutpaa.

Raamalinga Swaamikal lived, in comparison with many other saints of Tamilnaadu, quite close to us, not more than a century ago, and, till about a decade ago, the grandson of Sabhaapathi, the elder brother of our Swaamikal, was alive and had been interviewed by Ooran Atikal who, in addition, had himself photographed in his company. Moreover, there were in Swaamikal's own time two contemporaries of about his own age, who were very intimately associated with him, in one case, for the entire span of the life of the Swaamikal and in another case for nearly three decades of the Swaamikal's life on earth. These contemporaries were Irukkam Iratthina

Muthaliyaar and Velaayutham Muthaliyaar respectively. The latter was, by his own account, a disciple of the Swaamikal from his 19th year till the ‘anthardhaan’ of the Swaamikal in 1874. If there has been anything shady, anything, shoddy, anything to be ashamed of in the Swaamikal’s life, these two contemporaries would never have been such committed devotees of the Swaamikal as they were. Therefore, though in the case of the songs occurring in the First Book of Thiruvartupaa the explanation offered by me in the case of similar passages in the Thiruvaachakam may be found, I fondly believe, to be acceptable to my readers in particular, and to the earnest devotees of the Swaamikal in general, yet that explanation cannot cover all the songs in the entire Thiruvartupaa. We have to seek our explanation elsewhere. I have reflected for several months on this matter. As a result of these reflections I have two points of view to present before the reader. “Spiritual Practice”, a book by ‘Ananda’ published by the Advaita Ashram, Almora says:

“ Till one has realized God, lust will remain to a greater or a lesser degree”.

Thiruvalluvar places his chapter on “Extirpation of Desire” after the chapter “Apprehension of Reality”. He says:

“ Take up attachment to Him without attachments; hold on to that attachment in order to leave (other) attachments”.

It is in the light of the above two sayings that I wrote in my book “ Pathway to God through Tamil Literature - (i) through the Thiruvaachakam,” thus:

“The body which was an asset so long has become a liability as soon as the Jeevan-muktha state has been attained, as soon as the mystic union with God has been achieved. Liable as it is to disease and decay, to pain and putrefaction, the Jeevan-muktha now longs for release from the body, longs for death. He has obtained, it is true, supreme bliss, but still evanescent bliss; he has obtained union with God, but still not eternal union. The mystic lives with a dread for his companion, the dread of losing the bliss, the ecstatic union with God. For, as Thomas Merton says: ‘there is no infallible way of guaranteeing the mystic against every mistake; he can never be perfectly sure of any human technique’. So the Jeevan-muktha now longs for death, for release from the human body, for eternal bliss and union everlasting”.

“The mystic lives with a dread for his companion”. The dread is that desire, lust, anger, delusion, etc., will take hold of him again. This is one probable answer to the problem of why our Swaamikal devoted hundreds of songs accusing himself of lustful desires and deeds. For instance, here is one song which has puzzled me exceedingly much.

Oh splendid Flame
that dispels the darkness (of ignorance)
Oh Civa-guru Who are graciously seated
in the minds of Your devotees!
Oh Father!
Though I had cast off the iron manacles

called the woman in my house,
alas, I stand infatuated,
wearing the strong fetters
called desire of alluring prostitutes!
Even the lowly animals
will not do a thing like this!
If You would put up with the offence
of this pariah-dog,
it would be a novelty indeed!

2147.III-5 mahaadeva maalai 77

Arunagirinaathar alone equals our Swaamikal in his amazingly outspoken and profuse confessions to acts of lust. My puzzlement is made much worse by the following songs which flatly contradict all that the Swaamikal had said in the hundreds of songs to which I have referred in the preceding paragraphs. He sings:

Oh My Father!
You know also how,
whenever women wilfully came to me,
I trembled in my mind
thinking that if, bewitched by their charms,
I embraced them and delighted in my mind,
harm will come to them who sported with me,
and that it will be injurious to me
to witness the misery of those left behind,
and that I cannot bear to witness that misery
and that the whole thing would be a shameful deed.

3436. VI.13 pillai-p-peru vinnappam 27

Oh my Father! You knew that
when importunately soliciting women
stealthily approached me in the street, I,
thinking that if these women saw me
they will not let go of me easily,
and that if I enjoyed them to my heart's delight,
I shall have to tremble
on witnessing the suffering of others
hurt by my action,
felt frightened and, shrinking into myself,
hid myself and escaped by another street.

3428. VI.13 pillai-p-peru vinnappam 28

I trembled in my mind
when I set eyes on shapely women;
when those single-purposed women pestered me
I hid myself in a neighboring lonely house
and kept aloof.

3458. VI. 13 pillai-p-peru vinnappam 49 (extract)

When comely women of the city I lived in
took hold of my hands and forcibly pulled me,
made gestures,
and met me in privacy,
and got acquainted with me through alluring talk,
swore false oaths and leaned on me,
and tried to persuade me
by making gifts of many things,
I never embraced them ,
I trembled,
yet never chided them.
You know this.

3462.VI.13 pillai-p-peru vinnappam 53

One phrase in the above poem needs our careful attention. We should return to it again and again and meditate on it constantly. That phrase is “ I never chided them”. In this, our Swaamikal was Christ-like in his boundless compassion. To the woman taken in adultery, Jesus said:

“ Woman, where are those thine accusers?
Hath no man condemned thee?”
She said: “No man, Lord”,
And Jesus said unto her,
“ Neither do I condemn thee,
go, and sin no more”.

Are we not reminded of this incident in the life of Jesus when we hear our Swaamikal declare: “I never chided them”.

On only one occasion in the half-a-century of his life, our Swaamikal had touched a woman who was not his mother, or, perhaps sisters. This was the bride he married. Of this he sings:

Whether it is vengeful cruel Karma
or an act of Your grace,
I do not know.
While I was free of my infatuation
over any one of several damsels of sorts,
I, still, felt inclined to touch the hand of one of them.
But, apart from touching her
who had bent down (to touch my feet),
I did not enter her.
But thinking of this even now,
I go cold and clammy (with shame).
Whenever I think of it,
my heart breaks.

What more is there to say?
Oh my Father,
You know.

3452. VI.13 pillai-p-peru vinnappam 43

I could not make up my mind as to which verses to believe and which to disbelieve. Vaakeesa Kalaanidhi Sri K. V. Jagannaathan, the direct disciple of Mahaamahopaadhyaya Dr. U. V. Swaaminaatha Iyer (the Grand Old Man of the world of Tamil scholars of this century) and Editor of 'Kalaimagal', came to my rescue and solved the problem for me. He is very well versed in the works of Arunagirinaathar. During one of his religious discourses, referring to Arunagirinaathar's confessions of unprecedented acts of lust, he said that it was humanly impossible for any one person to have perpetrated in one life-time all the acts of lust confessed to by Arunagirinaathar. He asserted that it is totally untrue to say that Arunagirinaathar lived a riotous orgy of a licentious life. Then, what about all his confessions and self accusations in his poems? Sri Jagannaathan explained that they were sung on behalf of others. The learned scholar said that if Arunagirinaathar had addressed Lord Murukan saying: "Here are all these sinners in the world guilty of the worst forms of lust and lechery, pray forgive them", he would have been guilty of great pride and pharisaic conduct, and would not only have failed in his objective of helping the people of the world to come to the feet of Lord Murukan but would have actually frightened them away from His feet. For they would come to believe that those feet are unapproachable and unattainable by them in their sinful state. Therefore, explained Sri Jagannaathan, Arunagirinaathar took upon himself all the lustful sins of the world and pleaded with Lord Murukan for their forgiveness. In this way, he put hope into the people of the world that they too can gain the grace and pardon of God and thus enabled many a sinner to be redeemed. As if in support of this elucidation of Sri Jagannaathan, here are two songs of our Swaamikal on which we should ponder very seriously. He sings:

Oh Being Who am arisen in the Hall in Thillai!
All the stark fear, obstacles, and misery
which I have experienced so far,
all of them are for the sake of others
and not for this outcaste wretch.
I have stated this
that Your honey-seeping blossomy twin feet may know.
There is no desire for any thing for myself,
neither is there fear,
nor are there my mishaps,
none there are (as far as I am concerned),
Oh my Father!

* * * * *

Even though it was not for myself,
yet, Oh my Father,
the fear and the mishaps I endure
on account of compassion towards others

eat me up alive;
alas, if these mishaps and fears continue still,
my life will not last any longer;
Oh Ambrosia Who are my Mother,
my Guru, my Father,
bestow Your grace on me and redeem me.

3536,3537.VI. pillai-p-p-peru-vinnappam 127, 128

In the face of these two songs and the five songs reproduced a page earlier no one can be in any doubt about the significance of the hundreds of songs in which the Swaamikal had accused himself of the worst forms of lust and lechery, We cannot but conclude that in those songs our Swaamikal makes vicarious atonement for all the sins of humanity, past, present, and future. In himself, he was absolutely pure in thought, word, and deed.

Reverend Father Bede Griffiths, a Benedictine monk, himself a contemplative, has kindly offered a thought provoking interpretation which I reproduce below.

“The theory I suggested about Raamalinga Swaamikal was that human nature as a whole is present in some way in every man, and a poet is one who is especially sensitive to the different feelings which belong to all humanity. Thus, Shakespeare could experience in himself the jealousy of Othello, the despair of King Lear, the mental uncertainty of Hamlet, the savage feelings of Lady Macbeth. All these feelings are latent in human nature and the poet can experience them in himself without undergoing the actual experiences he describes. So I suggest that Raamalingam, who was essentially a poet, could actually experience in himself the sins of humanity, lust, pride, etc., which are latent in every human being, and so could identify himself with sinful men without actually sinning. “This is not far from your own theory, but I suggest that he was not simply speaking in the name of others, but actually experienced these feelings as a poet does without being subject to them.”

It strikes me that of all the explanations which can be offered for this problem, the one offered by Rev. Fr. Bede Griffiths comes nearest to the truth.

The first decad of 31 stanzas is a microcosmic model of the macrocosm which is the entire Thiruvartupaa of 379 decads and 5818 stanzas. Making allowances for the age at which it was sung and the initial stages of spiritual life it represents, this decad can be recommended to any enquirer who is in a hurry and yet desires to have a glimpse of the glory of the teachings of the Arutpaa. Of course, he may not find the blinding light of the Great Effulgence, he may not find evidence of the unique compassion of the suffering heart which writhes at the sight of withering crops, but these are details which should not be looked for in a small scale model. But the earnest student will find the sun that is Raamalinga Swaamikal reflected in the prism that is the first decad of the First Book in the Thiruvartupaa. There is enough material in this decad for any pauraanikar - a person who gives religious discourses - to keep an audience enthralled for 31 days.

Though the period between 1823 and 1835, i.e., from the date of birth to the 12th year of our Swaamikal has been classified as the period of Kandhakottam, yet from the manuscripts available to us, we get only one decad, namely, the first decad of the First Book, which has as its theme-shrine the temple of Murukan in Kandhakottam which goes today by the name of Kandhaswaami koil. All the rest of the decads having Murukan as the theme-deity, place Him in Thirutthanikai Hill. There is one exception however. This is the second decad called Kandhar-sarana-p-pattu. This decad does not mention the name of the shrine of Murukan Who is its theme-deity. But, following as it does the first decad of petitions and prayer, this decad can be presumed indeed, Ooran Atikal has done so - to have been sung at Kandhakottam. The theme of all its stanzas is surrender to the feet of Murukan. This is, indeed, a fitting theme for a decad which follows the first one. The theme-word is 'saranam', meaning 'refuge'. The corresponding Tamil word is 'ataikkalam'. All the ten stanzas play on the same theme of refuge with a variety of phrases of adoration. Two stanzas, the first and the last of the decad, will serve as samples.

Oh Ambrosia abounding in grace,
 refuge, refuge, I seek with You;
 Oh pure One Who have enslaved me as a worthy being,
 refuge, refuge I seek with You;
 Oh Gold, Oh Gem,
 refuge, refuge, I seek with You;
 Oh rare One to deluded people,
 refuge, refuge, I seek with You;
 Oh Lord with the peacock mount,
 refuge, refuge, I seek with You;
 Oh Abode of mercy,
 refuge, refuge, I seek with You;
 Oh Kandhaa, refuge, refuge, refuge, I seek with You!

* * * * *

Oh Content of the Veda-s,
 refuge, refuge, I seek with You;
 Oh Lord of the heavenly ones,
 refuge, refuge, I seek with You;
 Oh Quintessence of teachings,
 refuge, refuge, I seek with You;
 Oh Lord mounted on the beautiful peacock,
 refuge, refuge, I seek with You;
 Oh Sound of Om,
 refuge, refuge, I seek with You;
 Oh faultless One,
 refuge, refuge, I seek with You;
 Oh Lord of fame sweet to the ear,
 refuge, refuge, I seek with You;
 Oh Kandhaa, refuge, refuge, refuge, I seek with You!

32,41. I.2 Kandhar- sarana- p-patthu, 1, 10

Thus ends the Kandhakottam stage in the life of our Swaamikal.

6. THE PURGATIVE WAY

Though, in a manner of speaking, our Swaamikal had begun his journey on the Purgative Way even in the first decad of the First Book of the Thiruvirutpaa, we my, however, take that the journey proper commences only from the 3rd decad of the First Book. This is a long journey, a tedious journey, a toilsome journey, a wearisome journey, a journey of dark despair and despondency which is, however, relieved by feeble rays of faith and hope. The journey is characterized by confessions of commission of several prohibited deeds and omission of several prescribed deeds and confession of lack of love - bhakthi.

This journey will take us through hundreds of stanzas of the Thiruvirutpaa, through the whole of the First Book and 74 decads of the Second Book. In terms of number of stanzas, this journey traverses the weary length of 1384 stanzas out of a total of 5,818 stanzas of the Thiruvirutpaa. Expressed in terms of time, this journey takes us from the 9th year of the Swaamikal to, perhaps, his 30th year, from 1832 to 1853. To put it in another way, the journey lasts all but, perhaps, five years of our Swaamikal's stay in Madras, it lasts the period of the worship at Kandhakottam, the worship at Thirutthanikai Hill and major part of the period of worship at Thiruvotriyoor.

The biographer of our Swaamikal is silent in regard to the question whether our Swaamikal journeyed frequently to Thirutthanikai Hill, even as he did later on from Madras to Thiruvotriyoor or from Karunkuzhi to Thillai. Thirutthanikai is 84 kilometres from Madras, not at all a small distance for a boy of nine to cover frequently. In that case, did he go up to Thirutthanikai and stay there for a period of a year or two or three? Or, as in the case of the four Camaya-kuravar-s with regard to certain pilgrimage centres, was Thirutthanikai a vaippu-t-thalam? A vaippu-t-thalam is a shrine which had not been visited by the Saint who sang of the deity in that place, but a place which was mentioned in a song sung elsewhere. Two stanzas in the 3rd decad of the 1st Book seem to lend support to the notion that our Swaamikal called upon Murukan of the Thirutthanikai hill from Madras and that he did not go there. In the 5th stanza of that decad, our Swaamikal sings:

Even if I do not pay obeisance to You,
do forcibly enslave me,
and, in order to bestow Your feet on me,
do graciously say the words:
“Come quickly to Thanikai”.

46.I.3 piraartthanai malai 5. (extract)

In another song of the same decad, he says that he had not made the pilgrimage to Thanikai. He sings:

I have not sought (You) in Thanikai
with my mouth repeating Your praises,
with my hands folded in worship,
with tears raining from my eyes,

with body prickling with excitement,
and with cessation
of all egoistic acts

64.I.3 piraartthanai malai 23 (extract)

What is the conclusion? Shall we conclude that our Swaamikal, sang most of the songs of Murukan at Thanikai Hill from Madras itself, though we cannot rule out the possibility of his having visited the place a few times in the company of his eldest brother, whose grandson was named Thanikaachalam, in memory of Murukan abiding on that hill? It seems best to do so.

We deal in this chapter with the lap of the journey on the Purgative Way which takes us through Thanikai Hill on the way to Thiruvotriyoor. Our Swaamikal has recorded his despondency and despair, his diffidence and drawbacks, his failings and foibles, his longings and hopes, his pleas and petitions, in fifty decads five hundred and twenty nine stanzas.

It would be folly to attempt to describe our Swaamikal's experience in any words other than his own. We shall therefore hear from his own lips his experiences. Just as the very first decad which the Swaamikal sang is a microcosmic model of the macrocosm which is the Thiruvartupaa, similarly the third decad of the First Book presents in thirty stanzas all the kaleidoscopic emotional experiences which are described elaborately in the remaining forty-nine decads of the First Book. If I but gave a translation of the thirty stanzas of the third decad alone, I would have covered the subject of this chapter almost completely. But we would, in that case, miss the extraordinary variety of our Swaamikal's poetic skill, religious fervor, and spiritual experience. Let us now tread in the footsteps of our Swaamikal on the Purgative Way from Kandhakottam to Thiruvotriyoor via Thirutthani. I had thought of arranging the selections of our Swaamikal's songs for this chapter in the same manner as I had re-arranged the stanzas of the first decad in the previous chapter. But, on serious consideration, I have come to the conclusion that it is better to quote the selections the order of the decads. This natural arrangement will disclose better, than all my words can, the turmoil of emotions which assailed our Swaamikal in this period of his life from day to day.

The beauty endowed divine faces six,
the shoulders twelve
encircled by illustrious Katappam garland,
the lotus feet,
a spear equipped with a sharp blade,
the peacock,
the rooster-emblazoned banner,
and the Thanikai Hill
with a canopy of a cloud of grace,
these my eyes beheld!

42.I.3 piraartthanai maalai I

This is the first stanza of the 3rd decad of the First Book with which begins, what may be called, the Thanikaachalam period. This Decad is named, “The Decad of Petitions”.

This stanza relates the vision of Murukan. The stanza ends with the words “these my eyes beheld”. We had wondered whether our Swaamikal did actually go to Thirutthanikai Hill. From these words occurring at the end of this stanza, it would appear that he did not go there but merely had a vision, while he stayed elsewhere. We had seen that Ooran Atikal surmises that this vision took place in the room in Madras. In which case, this stanza goes further to confirm the presumption we have made on an earlier page that our Swaamikal sang the songs on Murukan abiding at Thanikaachalam Hill without actually going there.

The first decad of the first lap of the Purgative Way begins with the happy augury of a vision of Murukan in all His splendor. It assured our Swaamikal just as much as it assures us that miserable as the journey on the Purgative Way may seem to be, may actually be, yet it is the Way which leads ultimately to union with the Godhead Whose vision was given as a sign of beckoning along the down-hearted traveler. The memory of this vision will be a heartening force throughout the dreary journey on the Purgative Way.

I have mentioned in one of the early chapters three ways and have called them the Purgative Way, the Illuminative Way, and the Unitive Way. It is necessary to explain before we proceed any further that these are not three separate ways, three divergent ways. When I think of these three ways, I am reminded of a road in Thennur where I live. Though it is less than a mile long, it has three names. The section at the western end of the road is called “Bishop’s Road”, the middle section is called “Keezhchatram Road” and the eastern end is called “Thennur High Road”. Similarly these three ways are sections of one and the same road, a road that begins in misery and ends in bliss. Moreover, in these three ways, you do not travel anywhere in the sense of covering any distance in a period of time. The journey is not measurable in terms of kilometres covered, or in days spent in covering that distance. Thomas Merton says, in his book “The Seeds of Contemplation”,

“When the next step comes, you do not take the step, you do not know the transition, you do not fall into anything. You do not go anywhere, and so you do not know the way by which you got there or the way by which you come back afterwards. You are certainly not lost. You do not fly. There is no space or there is all space; it makes no difference.”

This journey on these three Ways is a spiritual journey performed in the innermost region of the heart which the Chaandogya Upanishad (VIII.1.i. to iii) describes thus:

“Now, here in this city of Brahman (the human body), is an abode, a small lotus flower; within it is a small space. What is within that should be sought, for that, assuredly, is what one should desire to understand. “If they should say to him, with regard to this city and the abode and the small lotus flower and the small space within that,’ what is there that should be sought for, or that, assuredly, one should desire to understand”, “He would say:’ as far, verily as this (world) space extends so far extends the space within the heart. Within it,

indeed, are contained both heaven and earth, both fire and water, both sun and moon, lightning and the stars. Whatever there is of Him in this world and whatever is not, all that is contained within it.”

It is in this vast region of the heart that the journey takes place.

Our Swaamikal bemoans in scores of songs that he had gone begging to perfidious people who would not give away anything. This theme occurs again and again in the First Book as well as in the Second Book. Here are two songs:

Oh great eternal Medicine called Gnosis!
Oh great Pupil inside my eyes!
Oh Pin of Gold⁷⁴ used for assay work!
Oh my dear Life!
Oh Lord of Thanikaachalam!
I have not stood at Your feet.
On the other hand,
I have gone to the perfidious fellows
who do not bow their heads to You
and have been serving them;
thus I have gone astray,
alas, what shall this fool do?

44.I.3 piraartthanai maalai 3

⁷⁴ pin of gold - goldsmiths have pins of certified qualities of gold in order to assay the gold their customers bring to them.

Oh Lord of the peacock-mount!
Do bestow such grace on me
that the shame
of my going to and begging from
the vile ones who do not give away anything
may not increase;
Oh transcendent Flame
Who bestow grace on the good people
who have extirpated varied desires!
Oh Lord abiding in Thanikaachalam
of undiminishing prosperity!

47.I.3 piraartthanai maalai 6

In the fourth song of the third decad, our Swaamikal piteously asks Murukan why he is delaying taking pity on him. This is the song:

“Oh my Mother, Oh Father who begot me”
thus wailing, I yearn for You;
how is it, Oh my Father,
that You are procrastinating

without taking pity on this wretch?
Oh Gold,
Oh Rock of good qualities,
Oh King abiding in Thanikai,
Oh beautiful great Gem
seated on the fan-tailed peacock!

45.I.3 piraartthanai maalai 4

“Even if I do not pay obeisance to You, You should bear with me” is the theme of several songs. One of them is:

Even if I,
who, having fallen in the mire
which is the worldly life
am struggling therein,
do not pay obeisance to You,
You should bear with me;
I can no longer endure (this life),
Oh my King,
Oh Ambrosia,
Oh Wealth of grace,
Oh Velavan of Thanikaachalam
with groves in which honey of high quality
is plentiful.

51.I.3 piraartthanai maalai 10

Our Swaamikal is, as is natural with all aspirants to the apprehension of the Godhead, very afraid of the arrows of Cupid. He sings:

Oh transcendent Guru in Thanikai!
Unless one sees
the hand holding the spear,
the mighty shoulders,
the striking posture
on the resplendent peacock,
the blossoms which are the faces six,
the anklet-symbol of bravery –
on the fragrant lotus
which are Your feet,
would the force of the arrow
shot by Cupid be mitigated?

52.I.3 piraartthanai maalai 11

It is Your duty to protect me, pleads our Swaamikal:

Oh Guru,
Oh munificent One,

Who, holding with delight the spear,
come to rid the grievances of the world,
while Brahma, Vishnu and others praise You!
Oh Great Mountain of noble qualities!
Oh beautiful Tree!
Oh Treasure of compassion abiding in Thanikai!
It is Your duty to protect this lowliest fellow,
cutting the roots of the seed of birth
which is a sea of misery.

53.I.3 piraartthanai maalai 12

“Do not bear in mind my misdeeds”, pleads our Swaamikal:

Oh virtuous One
who wed Valli,
the brilliant Gem of the (millet) field,
and, enslaving her,
bestowed grace on her!
Oh Thanikai-abiding Heavenly One
Who transform the sorrows of the mind (into joy)!
Desirous of gaining You,
I, wailing aloud, wither here,
Do bestow grace on me;
do not harbor in Your mind
the misdeeds of this forlorn fellow.

54.I.3 piraartthanai maalai 13.

“Do enslave me” wails our Swaamikal in this song:

Oh my Sire, sunk in the sea of unending misery
and distressed in my heart,
I wail aloud to your golden Feet,
do enslave me.

56.I.3 piraartthanai maalai 15

Once again, our Swaamikal bewails the delay in bestowing grace on him and fears death will overtake him before he receives grace. He sings:

Oh great Medicine,
You remain as if You have not heard
the wail this wretch sets up,
beset by unendurable troubles as I am
in this depraved life.
Oh Ray of an unpierced Gem,
Oh Pure Being of Thanikaachalam,
if days pass like this, what shall I do?
The punishment of death will surely overtake me.

58.I.3 piraartthanai maalai 17

“These indeed are my aims”, declares our Swaamikal:

That this perfidious heart of mine,
which brings about degradation only, may die,
that I may approach
the assembly of Your devotees,
that I may sport in the sea of bliss,
and that I may worship Your sacred Name
which tastes as verily ambrosia,
these, indeed, are my aims,
Oh Lord Who abide in Thanikaachalam!

59.I.3 piraartthanai maalai 18

“What shall I do”, asks our Swaamikal, “if You do not reform me”:

I stay here
wearied by the torment of this delusive steely mind.
I have had enough
of sinking into this new life
of rock-like karma.
If You do not divert today itself this lowly wretch
to Your anklet-girt feet
which destroy the seeds of birth,
what shall I do,
Oh limpid Ambrosia of Thanikaachalam?

60.I.3 piraartthanai maalai 19

In the ensuing song, our Swaamikal catalogues his shortcomings. The song ends with the phrase, “Oh my Lover!”. We can see in this endearing term the beginnings of bridal mysticism, or, What is called, naayaka-naayaki bhaavam.

Apart from saying
that I am Yom slave,
I do not quiver with eager excitement
on seeing those
who have arrived at Your feet,
I do not read Your grace-imbued fame
which Arunagiri sings,
I do not melt with throbbing heart,
I do not bow down (at Your feet),
I do not eschew all the attachments of the mind,
I do not visit Thanikai,
what shall I do,
Oh my Lover!

62.I.3 piraartthanai maalai 21

Here is one more song about his shortcomings. We will find many such songs strewn about in the pages of the First, Second, and Third Books.

What kind of a deed is this?
What kind of a deed is this,
Oh my Father?
I do not rejoicingly adorn Your golden feet
with a garland of flowers
that my cruel karma may forsake me;
I have not sought You at Thanikai
with my mouth repeating Your praises,
with my hands folded in worship,
with tears raining from my eyes,
with body prickling (from ecstasy),
and with cessation of all egoistic deeds.

64.I.3 piraartthanai maalai 23

“Desires I have none”, asserts our Swaamikal, “other than the desire for the feet of the devotees.” As in the case of Maanikkavaachakar and, for that matter, the others, our Swaamikal too has very great regard for the devotees of God and longs for their company.

Oh Lord Who have chosen as Your shrine
Thanikai which all Your devotees seek!
Apart from the sacred feet of the servitors
who seek Your-like feet,
this mean slave of Yours does not desire
on earth or in Heaven lands or riches, kin or fame,
or the enjoyment of the cool breasts
of women of sweet speech.

65.I.3 piraartthanai maalai 24

Doubts assail him whether he will ever gain the grace of the Lord.

Would there ever be Your grace to this sinner
Who, that he may leave the vast sea
Of undiminishing misery,
Has not bowed down at Your blossomy feet?
Oh Wealth of grace Who are like a jewel
To those who have done away with creaturely bonds,
Oh lord of Thanikaachalam,
Oh Lord Who are immanent
in the eight forms⁷⁵ of Sun and the rest?

67.I.3 piraartthanai maalai 26

⁷⁵ eight forms-earth, water, fire, wind, ether, the sun, the moon and Iyamaanan, i.e. the soul.

Death and Yaman, lord of death, are often in his mind. He bemoans what he shall say to Yaman when he calls to take away his life.

Oh Gem,
Whom Vishnu of gold-like shoulders and Brahma praise!
Oh Succour of my soul!
Oh King abiding in Thanikaachalam!
I am enduring suffering unnecessarily
Without praising Your golden feet;
If Yaman, who cause harm, were to come
What shall I say to him?

70.I.3 piraartthanai maalai 29

The last song in the 3rd decad. from which we have given liberal extracts so far, ends on a note of hope and faith, on a note of utter trust in God.

Oh my Sire!
Oh King ruling over the splendour of Thanikai Hill!
I have learnt to worship You saying:
“ Oh Omnipotent One
Who utter words of grace
to those men who, with love in their hearts,
weave garlands of plentiful flowers
that are words of poesy”.
Henceforth all my mighty karma, will take leave
and flee;
the anger of Yaman too
will not prevail over me.

71.I.3 piraartthanai maalai 30

I have reproduced no less than 18 out of the 30 stanzas of decad 3 of the First Book which heads the 50 decads of songs sung during the first lap of the journey on the Purgative Way so that the reader can gain an insight into what awaits a pilgrim who aspires to march up the hard road to the Godhead. In a manner of speaking, the other 49 decads of the First Book are but development of the theme already outlined in the songs of this third decad.

Once again, our Swaamikal reverts to his lack of love and devotion.

Oh Lord of great repute
Who have the spear bedecked with jewels!
I have not bowed down at Your feet with love,
I have not danced in Your presence

with melting heart,
I have not sung (Your praises),
my mental delusion has not diminished,
I have not thought of sacred Thanikai,
I have not resolved to tread the path unto You;
what have I done by living (on this earth)?
I, a sinner will never escape from my misery!

72.I.4 enna-p-patthu 1

Consequently, doubts assail him about his redemption.

Oh God Whom Vishnu, the father of Cupid
who holds aloft a fish-emblazoned banner,
and others worship!
Oh son of Civan!
Oh great Thanikai Hill-abiding Life
Whom those possessed by delusions cannot know!
Oh munificent One
Who hold a spear in Your hand,
and bestow grace!
Would I ever rejoice, beholding myself
taking hold of Your feet
which the four Veda-s cannot see,
and You, in response, bestowing mercy on me?

73.I.4 enna-p-patthu 2

He wonders how his expectations will turn out. He sings:

I do not know how will end
this aspiration of mine
who am engaged in the act of looking forward
to Your sacred advent
when, mounted on a peacock,
You would come and bestow grace on me,
Oh Sire Who destroyed the great tree with the spear,
Oh God with six faces,
Oh Lord Who go by the name of Kandhan in Thanikai,
the lovely shrine
which matches Kailai (in glory)!

75.I.4 enna-p-patthu 4

Such doubt and diffidence cause him to pray that his misdeeds should not be thought of. He sings:

Do not think of the misdeeds
of this wicked fellow of steely heart;
Oh Sire, now graciously protect me

from this perfidious dark grove (of despair).
Oh beautiful Sea of Mercy,
Oh Ambrosia
which, seeping from my love,
has shot forth (as a fountain),
Oh my Father with the spear,
Oh peaceful Hill of noble qualities
abiding in Thanikai
which the burning son avoids!

76.I.4 enna-p-patthu 5

In the last but one stanza quoted above, our Swaamikal referred to an aspiration of his, which is that Lord Murukan should come before him mounted on the peacock. Now he fears what the devotees of Murukan will say if He were to fulfil this aspiration. He sings:

If You were, to come today,
mounted on the great peacock,
before this wretch
with the intention of extirpating the grief
of the heart
of this very perfidious fraudulent fellow
who, tormented by hill-like grief
of birth and death,
had not thought of Your feet,
that will be good, good indeed!
But, Oh Lord abiding in Thanikai,
what will Your devotees say to that?

77.I.4 enna-p-patthu 6

As a natural reaction, he declares that he has no other succour but Murukan.

Other than the succour of Your twin feet
I have no one else as succour.
Would You make me live
meditating at Your feet,
or make me confounded in my mind?
Oh God Who create
the world and the vast variety of living beings,
Oh beautiful Lord of Thanikai
which has gained the distinction
of being praised by the world,
I do not know Your divine will.

78.I.4 enna-p-patthu 7

The 5th decad of the First Book is a good example of the misery which our Swaamikal suffers in his journey on the Purgative Way. Its eleven stanzas are a study

in despondency and despair, in self-accusation and remorse, in pleas and hope. Here are all the eleven stanzas of that decad called “Sezhunjudar Maalai” from the phrase with which all the stanzas end.

Pining away,
crying for food, clothing and riches,
and tottering in my mind,
I sink, in vain, in (the sea of) grief;
other than Your feet,
I do not see any succour,
Oh Ambrosia,
Oh Sea of great mercy,
Oh Fruit,
Oh Sugar-cane,
Oh Medicine (to the disease of birth and death)
 on Thanikai Hill
 which rises to a good height,
Oh Honey,
Oh brilliant Flame of gnosis!

When I think of it,
as You are the Father and Mother who begot me,
with all the world and the heavens as witness,
is it fair that
this wretch should suffer unceasing misery?
I will drag You to court,
with all the world to see;
what else can I do?

2

** ** **

Oh Being whom Brahma worships!
Oh my Darling!
I will not look on the cruel faces
of the perfidious men
who do not give any thought to You.
If You do not come forward
and, saying: “Never fear”,
extirpate my sufferings,
note that this slave of Yours cannot endure
(this life any longer),
Oh Honey of Thanikai Hill
abounding in red sandal trees,
Oh brilliant Flame of gnosis!

3

Becoming a victim to the misery

which comes of the worldly life
 that resembles a (fleeting) lightning,
 I, with a mind like a stone,
 forgot You;
 note what I gained thereby;
 Oh Karpakam, (the wish-fulfilling tree),
 Oh Gold,
 Oh great Gem of a God,
 Oh Object of all initiation,
 Oh Fullness,
 Oh King of Thanikai
 that resembles honey,
 Oh God,
 Oh brilliant Flame of gnosis!

4

**

**

**

I have become emaciated like a child
 whose mother's milk has dried up before its time;
 wilting under a great misery
 which, besieging me all-round, torments me,
 I do not see my succourer to console me;
 what shall I do
 and how shall I be redeemed,
 Oh my Father,
 Oh Flowering Tree from which plentiful honey drips,
 Oh Heaven,
 Oh Feast unto the eyes,
 Oh God of Thirutthanikai
 Whom those revelling in the wealth
 of Your bliss praise,
 Oh brilliant Flame of gnosis!

5

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Alas, I have fallen unknowingly
 into the sea of misery
 which sorely torments me;
 I do not see anyone
 Who would rescue me out of it.
 Oh my Father,
 What shall I, a wretch, do?
 Oh Darling of our Lord
 with the poison-stuck throat!
 Oh Sea of righteousness!
 Oh Herb of Thanikai Hill
 Who put an end to my misery!
 Oh Honey!
 Oh brilliant Flame of gnosis!

6

* * * * *

Instead of turning away,
trembling in my body, on seeing before me
the dirty faces of avaricious persons who starve,
because, if they eat,
their riches will decrease,
I spend my time waiting at their doors
and begging from them.
Meanwhile, Your devotees have acquired Your grace;
I am the only one who have been left out;
Oh God of Thanikai Hill bearing the mighty spear,
Oh brilliant Flame of gnosis!

7

* * * * *

Desire did I Your grace;
I, victim of Karma,
can no longer endure this suffering,
Oh, my Gem, Oh my Mother, Oh my King;
I shall not fix my mind on this worldly life;
even if Brahma and Vishnu were to come before me
I will not love them.
Would You not bestow on me (Your grace),
Oh Lord of Thanikai
with groves where honey sparkles on high,
Oh brilliant Flame of gnosis?

8

* * * * *

That You are the Mother who protect me
even though I am an unlettered cur,
this all the world knows;
therefore, my Father,
if You desist from bestowing grace on me,
evil infamy will come upon You, Oh King!
What more shall I say?
Oh Lord of Thirutthani
surrounded by lightning-laced groves!
Oh brilliant Flame of gnosis!

9

* * * * *

Crying, "Oh Mother, Oh Father",
I wander here filled with eager desire
to gain Your feet;
how is it that You have not taken
the least pity on me?
Is your good heart just like my heart,
Oh King,

Oh brilliant Ruby,
Oh Golden Hill of noble qualities,
Oh God of Thirutthanikai
girt by groves abounding in coconut trees,
Oh brilliant Flame of gnosis?

10

* * * * *

Even though I,
 who, wasting away through the misery
 brought on by the worldly life,
 am wallowing about without seeking You,
am lowlier than a cur,
Oh my Darling,
is it not Your duty to protect me?
What stands in the way?
Come forth,
come and bestow Your grace.
Note that this, indeed, is the right moment,
Oh God of sacred Thanikai
Who get rid of all misery!
Oh brilliant Flame of gnosis!

11

82 to 92.I.5 sezhunjudar maalai 1 to 11

Even if I had not written the previous chapter or any part of this chapter except the translation of the eleven stanzas quoted above, the reader would have got a clear idea from these eleven stanzas alone of what the journey on the Purgative Way is like to a pilgrim on the Pathway to God. All his faults, shortcomings, misdeeds, his omissions and commissions, not only in the present life but in past lives as well, loom ominously before his mind's eye. Maanikkavaachakar devotes two decads (150 stanzas) to his journey on the Purgative Way. The first of these decads, the Thiruchchathakam, is divided into ten sub-decads, the titles of which are:

- i. Discrimination of the Real
- ii. Acquainting God of one's aspirations
- iii. Abandoning discursive method of knowing
- iv. Purification of the soul
- v. Rendering a fit return for grace received
- vi. Sublimation of experience
- vi. Pleading for divine compassion
- vii. Being steeped in bliss
- xi. Ecstatic Bliss
- x. Transcendent Bliss.

The first seven sub-decads record the journey on the Purgative Way. I wrote as follows on this decad in my book, "Pathway to God through Tamil Literature - (i) through The Thiruvaachakam":

“The Thiruchchathakam is a manual of instructions for the conquest of the self and the apprehension of the one Reality. A study of the hundred stanzas shows that the varied disciplines are indeed formidable. The disciplines related in these stanzas appear to correspond to what Thomas Merton calls “the most usual entrance to contemplation”. He says:

‘The most usual entrance to contemplation is through a desert or aridity in which, although you see nothing and feel nothing and are conscious only of an interior suffering and anxiety, yet you are drawn and held in this darkness because it is the only place in which you can find any kind of stability and peace. As you progress, you learn to rest in this arid quietitude, and the assurance of a comforting and mighty presence at the heart of the experience grows on you more and more, until you gradually realize that it is God revealing Himself to you in a light that is painful to your nature and all its faculties, because it is infinitely above them and because its purity is at war with your own selfishness and darkness and imperfection.’”

The above eleven stanzas of our Swaamikal and those which follow have to be understood in the spirit of the above extract from my book.

“Have You abandoned me, saying: ‘He is a sinner’”, bewails our Swaamikal.

Oh my Father, Oh my Father,
how is it You have not turned Your eyes
on this child
who, sunk in the sea of unceasing misery,
is despondently weeping day after day,
and yearning for You?
Have You abandoned me, saying;
“He is a sinner” ?
For many days past I have been foolishly hoping
that You would bestow on me the wealth
which is Your grace;
what shall I do?
I have no one (to succour me).

94.I.6 kurai-irantha patthu 2

* * * * *

‘Does it befit Your grace?’ he asks in another stanza.

Oh Life Who dwell
in the pilgrimage centre of Thanikai Hill,
Oh primal Being
Whom Vishnu and other deva-s worship,
Oh Seed for mukthi,
Oh Lord with the spear in one hand
transcending description in words!
In order to redeem all the souls

that ever are in the world,
You bided your time
and, on one single day, put an end
to the karma of those souls.
Do You not see
how this wretch is sore distressed,
Oh You Who have twelve eyes?
Does this befit Your unremitting grace?

96.I.6 kurai iranthe patthu 4

“What shall I say to Yaman” laments our Swaamikal in another stanza.

Alas, hoping everyday that I will gain Your grace,
I pine, looking along the road (for your coming);
I have become a target
for the cruel tormenting disease (of birth and death)
and misery;
I grieve unto death;
I do not see any sign of Your Grace.
if He,
who cunningly catches (the soul)
with the famed noose, comes
what Shall I say to him?
What shall I, a wretch,
who do not know any succourer, do?
Oh Pure Kumara-guru,
Oh Effulgence Who abide in South Thanikai,
will You not take pity on Your servitor?

98.I.6 kurai iranthe patthu 6

Oh, King!
Oh my clan's Gem Of gnosis
abiding on Thanikai Hill!
Oh Guhaa! Oh true Guru!
Oh God of everyone!
Do listen to my single Petition.
Do bestow Your grace on me
that I may day-in-day-out meditate in my mind
on the glory of Your two feet
which Brahma on the lotus, Vishnu,
handsome Indra whom all the Deva-s praise,
and the great Lord who rides the bull
praise here that this world my flourish,
and rejoice therein.

102.I.6 kurai iranthe patthu 10

There will be no end if I recount

all tile sufferings I undergo
on account of previous karma,
suffering as I am
on account of attachment to mother and others
and wearied in mind as I am
wandering daily to nourish this stomach of mine.
Do not get angry with me
thinking of my offences,
Oh Sire,
Oh Hill of grace which resembles gold,
Oh Unique One,
Oh Fragrance of (Civan) the three-eyed Flower,
Oh Honey,
Oh Gem of poets-praised Thanikai
which alone is its own peer,
Oh genuine Life Who graciously fill the world
as a Witness of life.

108.I. 7 jeeva saatchi maalai 6

“ My mind is a monkey”, he bewails!

Oh Sire! Did you make me
the showman of the troupe of monkeys
called the furtive minds
of those who will not pay obeisance to You,
knowing fully well my secret,
namely, that the monkey that is my mind
capers about exercising its sway over me?
Note that I am unable to bear
this monkey of a mind’s sway over me,
Oh great Sea of limpid ambrosia,
Oh Honey, Oh Quintessence of gnosis,
Oh my God, Oh Lord of the deva-s!
Oh Gem residing in Thanikai
of undying fame,
Oh changless Life
Who graciously pervade everywhere
as a Witness (of the soul’s progress)!

123.I.7 jeeva saatchi maalai 21

“ If devotees would expel me, I would hang down my head in shame”, asserts our
Swaamikal:

If devotees would get angry with me, saying;
“ This is a sinner
who does not follow in the footsteps of the Father,
Who begot him”,
and expel this fool

who, on account of previous karma,
is not treading the path unto You,
I will hang down my head in shame and will fall back.
Oh my Father,
If You would but bestow a little of You grace,
I would have no other thought;
but would live in solitude,
Oh Gem of Thanikai hill
with groves of sky-reaching sandalwood trees,
Oh genuine Life Who graciously fill the world
as a Witness of life!

129.I.7 jeeva saatchi maalai 27

He relates his sufferings at the hands of perfidious people and pleads, “Come and enslave me”.

Come and enslave me, Oh Sire!
Though You have heard me cry
that I am suffering at the hands
of perfidious people,
Oh my Father,
since You are not taking pity on me,
is Your mind too just like my mind?
Oh Fruit-Juice
that seeps in the minds of those
who say: “Kandhaa”,
Oh Sugar-cane, Oh Sugar-candy,
Oh Gem of Thirutthanikai
Who enslave me
and bestow mukthi,
Oh genuine Life
Who graciously fill everywhere
as a Witness of life!

124.I.7 jeeva saatchi maalai 22

Oh munificent One
Who hail wretches like me
and enslave them
that their foibles may eradicated be!
Even after witnessing all the sufferings
this sinner undergoes in this waning life,
You have not rushed forward eagerly.
If I do not worship You,
is it just to discard me?
Is it not a blot on Your holy grace?

134.I.8 aattraa murai 4

* * * * *

“What would Your devotees say,” asks our Swaamikal, “if You bestow grace on me?”

I yearn for the life that resembles a fair,
Oh Sire, I have no love unto Your feet,
Oh my Father, if You would enslave me
at Your pleasure,
I do not know what Your devotees
would say about me;
Oh eternal One, Oh Chief,
Oh Lord of sacred Thanikai,
Who, coming as father and mother,
bestow mercy
even if You were to receive abuse for it!

135.I.8 aatraa murai 5

“I shall drag You into a law-court”, threatens our Swaamikal in the ensuing poem. We find such a threat repeated at certain intervals. It denotes, in all probability, the depressed state of the spirits of the Swaamikal from time to time as is often the case with a pilgrim on the long and dreary path to the Godhead. The name of the decad where this stanza appears is appropriately given as ‘Plaint of Unendurability’. He sings:

Instead of You, Who begot me,
putting up with whatever I may do,
how could You discard this wretch, thinking,
‘this fellow did such and such thing’?
I will drag You here and now to court,
Oh munificent One
Who dwell in Poroor
surrounded by groves
of pollen-raining flower-trees!
Oh Lord of sacred Thanikai,
do not consider me a penurious fellow
and stand aloof!

137.I.8 aatraa murai 7

Raamalinga Swaamikal, a master of negandu, Thessaurus, of the Tamil language, uses a rare simile to illustrate what kind of a union he wants with God. As far as I can remember, none of the Four Camaya-Kuravar-s have ever used this simile at all or at least in this context. This is an instance of the skill of Raamalinga Swaamikal who uses throughout his large work the most simple words and phrases to express the most obscure spiritual experiences. In this he resembles Raamakrishna Paramahansa and Jnaanadev.

Oh Munificent One
Who, becoming mother and father,

kith and kin, and friend
 to this great demon
 who loves scatter-brained women
 whom even the demons fear,
 bestowed on me the cool sea of grace!
 I desire that You and I should stand established
 as milk and water;
 would this be proper,
 Oh Lord Who eliminate the cruel birth (and death)
 to which I gravitate,
 Oh Lord of Thirutthanikai Hill!

138.I.8 aattraa murai 8

Would You make me hold on to Your feet
 and live thereunder (blended with You)
 like milk and water –
 me of perfidious heart who, forgetting Your feet,
 wallow here infatuated with delusive life,
 or would You make me stand
 dazed by the evil charms of women
 with eyes like those of the selfish?
 Do clearly state what is Your will,
 Oh Lord of Thirutthanikai.

140.I.8 aattraa murai 10

All saints and mystics have always been at war with their mind and heart. For these
 are in love with worldly pleasures and are at cross purposes with the mystics who
 wish to proceed to the Godhead, the Ground of all being. Raamalinga Swaamikal too
 has several decads addressed to his heart or mind. Here is one song out of one such
 decad.

Oh rotten heart of mine,
 we daily spend the day, saying:
 “ We shall go tomorrow
 and worship (Him)!”
 Ah me, Ah me,
 we have not lived
 meditating on the feet
 of the Lord of lofty Thanikai,
 we have not realized
 that this is the moment
 when life will desert the body;
 what shall we do,
 We of unutterable misery?

141.I.9 irantha vinnappam 1

Just like the mind and heart, the body too is, oftentimes, an obstacle to spiritual progress. Our Swaamikal stresses this point in the ensuing song:

Considering this decaying false bodily life as true,
I am wandering here;
today, would I gain Your holy grace
or would I forever be born and die like this
in this world and wallow therein?
Well, Your divine will is my felicity,
Oh Lord in goodly Thanikai!

148.I.9 irantha vinnappam 8

“Your divine will is my felicity” - declares our Swaamikal in the above song. The word used in the original text for felicity is ‘baakkiam’, a Tamil form of the Sanskrit word ‘bhaagya’. In this simple homely phrase, our Swaamikal makes his declaration of submission of his will to the divine will. This submission is not out of helplessness, not as a matter of accepting the inevitable, not as a weak will submitting to a stronger will, but as joyful free exercise of his own will, an exercise in the full knowledge of the fallibility of his own will and the infallibility of the divine will, an exercise made with the full realization that divine will ever and always works to man’s ultimate and unalloyed good. Man’s will is always a mixed blessing, God’s will ever a pure blessing. Some one said, “To be free to choose and to choose God’s will is what differentiates a human being from an animal”, and another has said: ‘God’s will hath no why’. Our Swaamikal, as all those who have gone before him in the spiritual world, made a free and joyous choice to submit to God’s will and to completely destroy his own will. We may recall here the Lord’s Prayer by Jesus Christ in which he prays: “Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven”. This prayer too was made in the full knowledge of the unalloyed grace and infallibility of God’s will.

“Forsake me not”, is the theme of the song that follows:

Oh Sire,
Since then is no other refuge anywhere except You
to this fraudulent fellow,
do not forsake me,
hating me as a wicked fellow,
Oh true Being, Oh Velan of Thanikai!

152.I. 10 karunai maalai 2

“Your devotees will blame You” is reiterated in the next song. It maybe recalled that Lord Civan at Tiruvaroor commanded St. Sundaramoorthi Swaamikal to first pay obeisance to His devotees before coming into His presence. The approbation of the loving devotees of the Lord is a prerequisite to acceptance by the Lord. This is the reason why Raamalinga Swaamikal and Saint Maanikkavaachakar long before him were very anxious about gaining the approbation of the devotees of the Lord and about admission to their company. Here is the song:

Oh my Father!

Oh wise One of Thanikaachalam Who bestow grace!
Oh Velan mounted on the peacock!
If You put up with the great offence
of this mad fellow,
Your genuine devotees will only blame You.

164.I.10 karunai maalai 14

An element of humour is introduced by our Swaamikal in the next song on our list. Depressed as we were, as much as Raamalinga Swaamikal was, over his plight, this song, for the moment, with its sly dig at Father and Son cheers us. He sings:

If, as it is said, You are the Son
of Him who receives alms,
what can You do unto those
who entertain desire in their heart,
Oh transcendent Lord
on the emerald-green great peacock,
Oh Lord Kadamba of Thanikai
which equals Kaanchi (in sanctity)?

166.I.10 karunai maalai 16

For the second time in the same decad, Raamalinga Swaamikal reverts to the matter of joining the assembly of devotees. From this, we can see how much this subject exercised his mind.

Oh eternal Lord of Thanikai
Whom those who take the path unto You praise!
Oh Sire!
with regard to this rabid dog
who does not associate with the devotees
who have fixed their minds on You,
will You smile
or will You get angry?

170.I.10 karunai maalai 20

“What shall I do if You say, ‘get thee gone’”, our Swaamikal asks Murukan.

Oh death-dismissing Friend at Thanikai,
if You say to this sinner
who does not worship Your sacred feet
where the crown of the Veda-s shines:
“No bestowal of grace there is for you today,
get thee gone”,
what shall I do?

176.I.10 karunai maalai 26

“Unless You bestow Your grace, I will be disheartened”, declares our Swaamikal:

Oh Gem, Oh Pupil of the eye of this slave,
Oh Medicine (for the disease of birth and death),
Oh Jewel Whom Your devotees wear
(in their hearts with delight),
Oh King of Thanikai, Oh limpid Ambrosia,
Oh my dear Life,
I am tossed about here
tormented by suffering
which amounts to a chronic disease,
and am wandering about
possessed by a demon which is my mind;
unless you bestow Your grace on me
my thirst will not be quenched,
and I will be disheartened.

183.I.11 marul maalai vinnappam 3

Our Swaamikal’s reversion in the ensuing stanza to the subject of admission to the company of the devotees of the Lord once again emphasizes the importance of such an admission.

Note that I cannot endure,
I cannot endure,
this wretched me seeking the company of those
who have not the wisdom to worship Your feet
which are the transcendent flame
which becomes the light
which pervades (the minds of those)
who have devotion unto You.
Oh King, Oh Ambrosia Who hold in one rosy hand
the spear that is Sakthi!
Oh Saravanabhava Who abide on Thanikai!
I would be redeemed
If You would but graciously think of admitting me
into the company of Your eternal devotees.

197.I.12 porukkaa-p-patthu 7

Our Swaamikal is ever conscious about his foibles, faults, misdeeds, commissions of proscribed deeds, and omissions of prescribed deeds. He sings:

I do not know Your holy fame,
Oh Lord, I do not rush unto Your feet,
I do not bow down to it,
I do not dance,
I do not sing Your praises,
I do not wear (Your feet on my head) ecstatically,
I do not visit Thanikai,

I do not die,
nor do I have remorse;
I belong solely to my stomach;
alas, how shall I be redeemed here?

208.I.13 vetkai vinnappam 8

“There are the Six (mantric) Letters and the sacred ash” are the talismanic. words with which the Swaamikal puts cheer and hope into himself every time he despairs of his ever being redeemed. The decad in which the ensuing song appears is called “The Six Letters are there”. “The Six Letters are SA-RA-VA-NA-BHA-VA, meaning “Oh Lord born in the Saravana Pool”. They and the sacred ash have been there from time immemorial for all to take advantage of; but how many of us take advantage of them! He sings:

Oh Flame of grace difficult to gain!
Oh Omnipotent God!
Oh Deity of Thanikai of prosperity
difficult to bring about by man’s artifice alone!
If only a person would pronounce Your Six Letters
that he may be redeemed,
and wear the excellent sacred white ash,
he will gain fame that can never be traduced,
and no harm will befall him.

211.I.14 aarezhutthu unmai 2

He harps back in the next decad to his foibles and shortcomings and fears.

Learnt I have not Your gracious names,
‘Guhaa’, ‘Kandhaa’!
I have not stuck day-in day-out to the path
shown by You Aagama-s.
Will, I, lowliest one, be ever redeemed,
Oh Fresh Honey which blends with the love
of devotees who never suffer by their speech,
Oh rare Ambrosia of Thanikai
yielded by the single-petalled lotus,
Oh Hill of blissful grace?

221.I.15 pokkuraiyeedu 1

Oh Tamil Hill of grace
who became Sambandhan,
the chief among Caivite Saints!
Oh my God!
I do not have any succour other than You;
does not Your Holy Grace know it?
My heart is desolated
through suffering in the company of perfidious people

who pin infamy only;
I do not understand what to do;
I, a youngster without clarity of mind?

228. I.15 pokkuraiyeedu 8

Here is a song in the naayaka-naayaki bhaavam, the bride and bridegroom relationship.

Would I never approach with joy
the Thirutthanikai Hill,
and, arriving there,
Oh my Dear,
would I never see to the delight of my eyes
the splendour of Your being seated thereon?
And, on seeing You,
would I never gather You in my arms
and, bathing You with my tears of joy,
would I never do service unto You
to Your satisfaction;
would I never sing Your praises
to my heart's content,
I, a sinner?

231.I.16 panitthiram vettal 1

In the same decad there is another song in the same vein where our Swaamikal asks his Beloved whether He would not appear to him in his dreams at least.

Oh Golden Hill of noble qualities!
Take pity on the suffering
being experienced by this sinner
and bestow grace on me.
Won't I at least have a dream
of Your hailing me thus:
"Come unto Me at Thanikai",
and graciously assuming lordship over me?
Oh Soul! Oh Gnosis! Oh my Beloved!
Oh my King!
Though I would not pay even the least obeisance
to Your feet,
do not forsake me;
the devotees will speak ill of you.

232. I.16 panitthiram vettal 2

Early in this chapter we came to the conclusion that the songs addressed to Murukan on Thanikai Hill were addressed from far-off Madras. The sentence "Won't I at least have a dream of Your hailing me thus: 'Come unto Me at Thanikai'?" lends one more argument in favor of our supposition.

The ensuing two stanzas are addressed to a non-cooperative mind.

Not content with leading a life
of not worshipping the King
mounted on the peacock with encircling fan-tail,
the Thanikai-hill-abiding Honey
Who bestows Grace on us
that we may fare well,
you entertained thoughts
which no one but evil ones who go to ruin entertain,
and, today, you have so tormented me that I am laid low;
Oh rickety mind,⁷⁶ won't you die!

243.I.17 nenjodu pulatthal 3

⁷⁶ rickety mind - the words used in the original are 'savalai manam': literally it means 'Oh mind gone rickety due to your mother's milk drying up before its time!' This happens when the mother has conceived another child before the previous child had attained the weaning age. I do not know of any single word in English for the Tamil word 'savalai'.

Oh my Heart!
Thinking that you are the most suitable companion for me,
I deliberately made friends with you;
but when I scooped up the Ambrosia
of the cloud-capped Thanikai Hill
and was about to gulp it,
you distilled poison inside me;
good indeed is your company!
In future, only if I part company with your friendship
I will be redeemed;
if not, I will fall into cruel hell,
and will not gain anything.

249.I.17 nenjodu pulatthal 9

In chapter I we saw how the Lord placed His feet on the crown of the head of Raamalingam, while he was asleep. We saw also from another song (in the same chapter) that this greatest of all boons was conferred on Raamalinga Swaamikal in his childhood, somewhere between the ages of nine and twelve. All the ten stanzas of the 19th decad of the First Book (which, we may remind the reader, deals with the spiritual life of the Swaamikal upto his twelfth year), from which the ensuing song has been taken, end with the refrain "please place Your sacred feet on the head of this slave". After studying this decad, we are in a position to assert that the Lord placed His feet on Raamalingam's head in response to his entreaty in this decad. The song we have chosen is:

That the torrid spell-binding eyes of women
 may not fall on me,
 even like the sun on the worm,
 and that I may gain admission
 into the assembly of Your devotees
 who praise You
 Who carry a sharp spear in Your hand,
 Oh golden Hill of noble qualities
 Who abide in Thanikai where Kuyils⁷⁷ make love,
 Oh Gem mounted on the peacock
 with the spreading fan-tail,
 do place on the crown of this slave's head
 Your sacred feet.

267.I.19 thiruvadi sooda vizhaithal 6

⁷⁷ Kuyil - An Indian bird of the cuckoo family. Its song can be heard during the spring season, especially in mango groves. But the bird can rarely be seen. It is black in color. Poets in Tamilnaadu consider this bird as lovers' friend. Maanikkavaachakar in his songs of bridal mysticism uses this bird as a messenger of love.

The name of the decad from which the next song has been chosen is "Unendurable Passion". The name itself suggests that the songs would be very impassioned. The example chosen here will show how impassioned they are:

Will I never reach Thanikai Hill!
 Will I not see the beauty of the Lord?
 Will I never leave the helpless state (of the disease)
 of birth and death?
 Will I never overflow with love (unto You)?
 Will I never enjoy the waters of grace
 which add beauty to You?
 Will I never be relieved of unquenchable thirst
 (for Your grace)?
 Will I never join the assembly of devotees
 who serve You,
 Oh Lord of the characteristic of taking pity
 on the (people of the) earth?

272.I.20 aatraa virakam 1

Once more we see in the next song that the Swaamikal is much worried as to what the devotees of the Lord would say if He showed grace to him. This frequent concern for their opinion emphasizes the belief in Tamilnaddu that while devotees are the slaves of God, God, in turn, is the slave of His devotees.

Apart from knowing
 how to spend my days in vain,
 I do not know to be steadfast

in cherishing Your feet;
I would not arrive at Thanikaachalam
to join the band of devotees
who strive to perform thavam.
Who am I?
If You give even me
a place them where You are,
when Your devotees ask:
“Who is this fellow,
what is his qualification?”
who would You say I am?

288.I.21 ezhaimaiyin irankal 7

The ensuing poem is as much a catalogue of the Swaamikal’s failings as even the previous one is:

Done I have not
menial service at the feet of Your devotees;
tears I have not rained
going round Thirutthanikai Hill clockwise;
controlling the senses five,
swum across the sea of death and birth I have not;
womankind I have not reviled;
flowers I have not plucked (for Your worship);
garlanded You I have not;
Oh Gem, I do not relate Your sacred fame;
I have not gone to You;
why was this wretch born bearing this body?
I am a burden to the earth.

293.I.22 panitthiran saalaa-p-paadizhivu 3

“I have not gazed at You” laments our Swaamikal in a decad of ten stanzas out of which the ensuing two are taken:

Oh Flood of wealth
abiding in adamantine Thanikai!
Oh transcendent Wisdom!
I have not humbled myself before You
that the fear-inspiring worldly delusion
may leave me,
I have not gazed at You to the satiety of my eyes,
with heart melting through weeping and weeping,
and with hands clasped above the head.

301.I.23 kaanaa-p-patthu 1

Oh Velan with shoulders wearing resplendently
the garland of katappam flowers with fragrant lips!

Oh Sea of righteousness abiding in Thanikai
 by virtue of the thavam
 performed by this earth!
 I have been wandering about in a daze,
 having fallen into the billowy sea
 of births (and deaths);
 alas, I have not ascended to the shore
 of gnosis of the Godhead
 and seen Your form
 to the satiety of my eyes!

308.I.23 Kaanaa-p-patthu 8

“I do not see any succour; is this proper?” asks our Swaamikal:

Even though I have taken birth as a human being,
 I resemble a brutish tree
 which does not worship You;
 I am despondent in mind;
 having fallen in the sea of sorrows,
 I do not see any succour,
 Oh God with the forged spear which split the rock,
 Oh unsatiating limpid Ambrosia,
 Oh matured Pearl of Civan,
 the three-eyed Sugar-cane!
 Is this proper, is this proper, is this proper?

328.I.26 murai itta patthu 2

He is, however, only too conscious of his shortcomings which he relates in the next
 decad out of which the following is taken:

I am a person of perfidious heart,
 I resemble a wild animal,
 I roll down the hill - the breasts of women,
 I am an embodiment of the five crimes,⁷⁸
 I am a sinner;
 with what face shall I approach You,
 Oh beautiful Sea of mercy
 Whom Brahma and Vishnu praise,
 Oh Pearl that scintillates in (Civan) the Sugar-cane
 that has three eyes,
 Oh glorious One
 Who protect the devotees saying:
 “Fear not! fear not!”,
 Oh King on Thanikaachalam Hill!

338.I.27 nenjavalam koral 2

⁷⁸ five crimes - killing, lying, stealing, drinking toddy, and talking ill of the guru.

“Lamentation out of Unbearableness (of misery)”, is the title of the decad from which the next two songs have been chosen:

Without meditating on You, saying:

“Oh my Father, Oh my dear Sire,
Oh Lord with twelve eyes,
Oh Lord holding a spear in one hand,
Oh Lord of the color of red coral,
Oh King of the goodly Thanikai”,
I am forever sunk in the great sea of misery!

347.I.28 aatraa-p-pulampal 1

Oh Gem Whom this eternal earth praises!
I have been wallowing about (in this earth)
without trying to approach Your golden grace,
Oh Father of Arunagiri!

Oh my Father
Who graciously abide in goodly Thanikai,
won't You even now take pity on this wretch?

348.I.28 aatraa-p-pulampal 2

“What will Your devoted say”, is, once again, the theme of a song in a decad called “Yearning for Holy Grace.”

Oh Treasure begot by Civan!
Oh Sire at Thanikai!
I do not praise You and find grace,
I waste my days here basely.
Oh Sire,
if You come forth and bestow grace on me,
what will Your exalted devotees say?
I do not feel ashamed,
I do not tremble,
I do not shrink with shame,
I who am lowlier than a cur!

352.I.29 tiruvarul vizhaithal 1

The Six Letters and the sacred ash come to the troubled mind of our Swaamikal and he takes heart saying that if he pronounces those letters and wears the ash, his misery will be relieved. Accordingly, he sings in two decads the virtues of the Six Letters and the sacred ash. Four out of twenty stanzas are quoted here.

If one wears the grace-filled ash saying:
“Civa-shanmuka”, evil diseases which infest a man daily
will be averted,
the travail of being born again and again
will cease,
fame will spread here on earth and in heaven,
and, with the ash encircling the person
like an armour,
the evil eye will be averted.

355.I.30 punniya neetru maanmiyam 1

Along with Kubera
the King of Amaraavathi,
Brahma and Vishnu
will become our kin,
gnosis of bliss will flourish in us,
mukti will come near to us,
skill to conquer Yamaraj, the King of Death,
we will gain,
fame will accrue,
if we wear the cool sacred ash
saying: “Kumaraa, Oh Guru to Civan”!

360.I.30 punniya neetru maanmiyam 6

Oh my Heart who grieve
thinking of the dark clouds of disease,
poverty etcetera!
There are the Six Letters of the Lord of Thanikai
and the sacred white ash, do not despair;
unceasingly worship him night and day.
Take note of my words
and never fear.
Take note of my words
and never fear.
This is the truth.

365.I.31 uruthi unarththal 1

Oh my excellent Heart!
There are the Six Mystic Letters
of the Lord of Thanikai
and there is His sacred calcined ash
as a course of grace-filled medicine
to eradicate the unknown root cause
of our disease (of birth and death).
Therefore, do you unceasingly
worship Him day and night.

Do not fail to take heed
of this injunction of mine;
this is my command to you..

366.I.31 uruthi unartthal 2

“What gift shall I bring to You”, enquires, our Swaamikal.

Oh virtuous One
Whom the flower-seated one and Vishnu
standing in Your presence praise!
With what gift shall I approach
Your sacred feet?
What shall I do furthermore?
I do not know what Your divine will is.
Would You consider me an evil person
and refrain from showing me even the least grace,
or, thinking that this is a little fellow,
and this is none of his doing,
would You bestow Your grace on me,
Oh God Who abide in Thanikai?

368.I.32 ennatthenkal 1

We are almost amused by the four songs in the next decad which introduce an element of comic tragedy in the midst of all the lamentations and wailings which our Swaamikal has been setting up in the thirty-two decads that have gone by. For, in this decad, he laments that he has no camphor to burn at the shrine of Murukan. One song is given below:

Oh rare Medicine (for the disease of birth and death)
Who are the Pupil of the eyes
of the Lord with the sacred bead-encircled throat
Who is the medicine to prevent birth in a womb!
Oh my dear Life
Who abide in Thanikaachalam!
What shall I do for a piece of camphor
to light before the sacred presence
of You abiding in Otriyoor
abounding with riches all round?

371.I.33 kaiyadai muttarkkirankal 2

“Make me do menial service to Your devote”, prays our Swaamikal:

Oh my Father
Who bestow grace
abiding in Thanikai
where people of every sort worship!
Making the core of my heart

the foot-stool for Your golden feet,
and ridding me of the cruel misery
of going to perfidious people
who resemble highly potent poison,
graciously make me do menial service
to your devotees.

374.I.34 atiyar pani arula vendal 1

“How is it that You have not known the sadness of the heart of this wretch”, asks our Swaamikal:

Oh Medicine, rare to gain,
in Whom the heart of the Dancer –
the Lord bathed in the sacred ash,
the transcendent Being Who bestows grace –
delights!
Oh Hill of noble qualities
abiding in sacred Thanikhai
which has a tall crest reaching to the sky!
How is it that You have not known
the sadness of the heart of this wretch
who goes daily to the cruel vile wretches
who do not sing and praise Your sacred glory,
and stands yearningly before them with tired face?

398.I.36 anbil pethural 9

Our Swaamikal has covered nearly three quarters of the distance between Tirutthanikai and Tiruvottriyoor, and we have traversed three-quarters of the First Book. Our Swaamikal has been relating in heart-rending terms his misery, his sins, his undeservedness, his foibles and faults, his lack of love. Nevertheless, he is eager for the mystic union which is the goal of bridal mysticism. In the 37th decad, he gives expression to his longing for that union. Here are three songs out of that decad:

The Lord with one side of golden hue,
of fame which everyone relates,
clad in the skin of the tiger,
with shoulders four,
with matted locks dripping with honey,
with the emblem of the bull on his flag,
Lord Civan –
His Son, my Spouse,
dear to me as my very life,
He of the great peacock,
the Lord of heavenly ones,
He of Thanikaachalam,
came when I was alone
and caused me to fall in love with him.

403.I.37 koodal vizhaithal 4

The Lord at the foot of the banyan tree
the Lord Who endured a blow by a stone,
the Lord Who created the worlds,
the Lord beyond reach of the Veda-s,
the Lord with a crown
round which lightning plays,
Lord Civan –
His dear sacred Son Who possesses everything,
the Lord of Thanikaachalam,
my spouse,
the Lord with the spear,
He robbed me of my bangle
when I was in the midst of my friends;
later, He never came;
He went away on the Peacock.

404.I.37 koodal vizhaithal 5

The Son of the great Lord
with the battle-axe in one hand,
the Lord with the sharp spear,
the Lord Who will not moderate
the effects of the karma of those
who will not embrace (His feet),
the Lord of Thanikaachalam
abounding in beauty,
while those who worship His feet
weep (with joy),
fall down (at His feet),
rise (ecstatically),
serve waiting for him
and never cease praising Him,
He appeared before me
who cherish this worm-ridden body,
and benignantly bestowed His grace on me
and left.
How good of Him, indeed!

407.I.37 koodal vizhaithal 8

Our Swaamikal is athirst for a vision of his Beloved, and expresses this longing in ten stanzas in the 38th decad:

I will see at Thanikai and worship
The Lord with the spear in His hand
who made Vishnu, Brahma, and (Indra)
the King of the heavenly ones
to wait His pleasure,

the Lord Who bestows grace
in response to the songs of the devotees
who themselves are like embodiment of music,
the Lord Who is the embodiment of cool grace
which enslaves one's intelligence,
the Son Whom the Bestower of boons
Who is of all colours
graciously begot.

411.I.38 tharisana vetkai 2

I shall behold in Thanikai
and worship the Gem rare to gain,
the Ambrosia,
the King easily accessible
to the love of the devotees,
the Lamp that shines
in the hearts of ascetics
who delight in great austerities,
the immeasurable Being,
the Sugar-cane,
the Fruit that mellows inside me,
the radiant Effulgence surging forth
from inside the uniquely transcendent Godhead⁷⁹
Who bestowed (on mankind)
the Sea of grace⁸⁰
that ungrudgingly bestows grace.

414.I.38 tharisana vetkai 5

⁷⁹ the uniquely transcendent Godhead – Civan.

⁸⁰ Sea of grace – Murukan.

Our Swaamikal counts the days and feels aggrieved at the delay in gaining the vision
and the ecstatic union:

How many days are yet to pass
before this wretch
can get out of the sea of sorrow,
Oh great wise Lord in Whose band
the lightning-like spear scintillates?
Oh Son of Civan
Who are graciously seated
on the thickly wooded goodly Thanikaachalam!
Oh noble munificent Lord
Who are mounted on a peacock!
I do not know the intent of Your holy mind.

420.I.39 naal enni varunthal 1

From the 41st decad onwards, we see a remarkable change in the spirit which pervades the poems. A note of hope, of cheerfulness, of intimacy, of rejoicing, of exultation replaces the note of despondency and despair which marked the decads so far reviewed by us in the First Book. This is the same case with the Thiruvaachakam too where we will find a similar change from the 33rd decad onwards. The ten stanzas of the 41st decad, for instance, are stanzas of exultation with not a trace, of misery in them. Here are two of them:

The Son begotten by Him
Who burnt the cities
of those who would not ally with Him,
the Son of Him of the holy city of Ottri,
the Son of Him Who is renowned for the dance
which shakes the Hall in Thillai,
came riding on the green peacock.
I saw the sight.
To whom shall I say
that in His presence my clothes slipped down
without staying on round my waist?⁸¹

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⁸¹ a sign of pining way due to unrequited love.

The Son bestowed on us by the Lord with the hand
on which a deer is seen,
I saw Him on the peacock, He saw me,
both of us smiled.
Immediately, my companions
with eyes like those of the selfish
made it out into a great disgrace.
My mother asked: 'Why did you look at Him ?'
What I shall say in reply!

441.445.I.41 bhavani-ch-cherukku 2, 6

The following stanzas do not need any comment:

You taught all learning;
You made me find a friend in You;
You instructed me in every possible way
that this world is a mirage;
Oh my Owner,
abiding inside me,
You bestowed on me Your grace as well;
You gave me such a prosperity
that I had no need to go before others
and beg, expressing my want;

what a mercy, what a mercy,
Oh God,
Who, becoming my dear gracious Guru,
enslaved this cur in his tender years!

453.I.42 thiruvavuI vilaasa-p-patthu 4

Oh Flood of bliss!
Oh Sea of grace!
Oh God !
Oh great imperishable Being!
Oh King of great mercy
which You bestow on Your devotees!
Oh Fruit of Experience!
Oh transcendent Effulgence
rare for the intransigent to gain!
Oh Gem bearing the forged spear!
Oh Jewel!
Do reduce to dust
my impediment of a misery
and condescend to bestow joy on me!

467.I.43 tiruvarut-pettru vizhaivu 8

The six faces,
the twice six strong shoulders,
the twin merciful feet,
the proud peacock, the spear of the unique God,
we have as succour here;
the hissing snake of disease of birth,
the cruel planets, evil karma,
these will never approach me;
moreover, stinking terror-striking Yaman's power
will not prevail here;
and the world will sing my praises.

469.I.43 thiruvavut pettru vizhaivu 10

As a sure sign of the change in the mental state of our Swaamikal at this stage of the close of the first lap of his journey on the Purgative Way, the following song is utterly free of any plaint or petition. It is a pure paean of praise;

Oh rare Medicine
Who delight in giving kisses
with Your sacred mouth
to the three-eyed Sire
described as easy of access to devotees,
and to the Mother
Who has borne the world!
Oh Rock of mercy

on Whom fragrance-laden katappa flowers blossom!
Oh Karpaka, the wish-fulfilling tree!
Oh Pupil of my eye!
Oh radiant Ray
which makes the lotus –
the mind of devotees –
blossom!
Oh transcendent Being
Who became the earth, wind, ether, fire, water –
all the five elements!
Oh ineffable Treacle of true gnosis!
On Unique Prime Being,
with a hand holding the spear,
Who destroyed the Asura-s
on the deva-s entreating You
to destroy the entire army of Asura-s!
Oh Gem, born of Civan,
abiding in Thanikaachalam, the pilgrimage!
Oh Shamnukaa!

470.I.44 selva-ch-ceerthi maalai 1

Raamalinga Swaamikal, we have noted, was very much attached to the sacred ash. He does not tire of singing about its powers to eradicate misery. He tells his heart:

Oh Heart of mine
which, like the boneless worm, suffers
in the grievous company
of loveless perfidious men!
if you would but wear the ash saying;
“Oh Shanmuka of unceasing bliss”,
you will gain the environment
where the unique state of no suffering prevails.

484.I.45 seviarivurutthal 5

Oh my despicable Heart who unwisely loiter
at the doors of perfidious rich men
who have no contentment!
if you wear the ash saying:
“ Oh Shanmuka Who never desert anyone!”,
you will gain the doors of undying state of Civanhood!

485.I.45 sevi arivurtthal 6

The title of the decad in which the above two songs appear is ‘sevi arivuratthal’- ‘Giving Advice in the Ear’. that is, letting some one, his own heart in this case, into a secret by whispering in the ear.

Here is a delightful poem in the bridal mysticism style:

Oh Swan on the golden (lotus) flower
that shames gold!
Go unto the Lord on cool Thanikai,
Who inspires a passion in one
that her mother may berate her
and spread gossip about her,
and tell Him
that I have put you to shame
and have appropriated
your gait.

501.147 ingitha-p-patthu 9

Here is another decad which is a pure paeon of praise of the Lord. Such a decad can come out of an exultant heart only.

Obeisance to You,
Oh fragrant newly-blossomed Flower,
Oh Fruit of divinely rich flavor,
Oh Tree Who bestow bliss on Your devotees
that the heat of their sufferings may be cooled!
Obeisance to You,
Oh King with the anklet-girt feet
which (Civan) the great Chief of demons praises!
Obeisance to You, Oh youthful⁸² true Guru!

507.I.48 pottri-t-thiruviruttham 3

⁸² Youthful true Guru – Kumarasathguru.

Only lesser mortals delude themselves with the belief that the grace of God bestowed on them is nothing more than what they have deserved, what they have earned. This is not the case with great souls who always think of themselves as most undeserving wretches. If we but pause for a moment to meditate on this, we will see only all too clearly that we have never deserved all the grace that we receive unceasingly from God. The following song has to be taken in the spirit of the above thoughts.

If Time called Yaman would come
claiming right to my withering life,
would younger brother and elder brother
be succour to me,
or would sons and wife go with me?
Instead of taking up the flower-basket
to pick thumbai flowers
for Him Who is on the great high hill,
Thirutthanikai,
which the heaven-dwellers praise,

I have taken delight in this body.

520.I.49 Thiru-p-palli-t-thaamam thaangal 1

The 50th and 51st decads are poems of sheer exuberant delight in the style of bridal mysticism. We quote two stanzas. In the first of the two, the exulting bride-to-be calls her companions to a dance of rejoicing in which they sing the praises of the divine bridegroom to the accompaniment of rhythmic clapping of the hands in unison.

Oh dears, He will come riding on a great peacock!
Oh dears, He will bestow boons
to the grateful praises of devotees!
Oh dears, He is of a fame without any evil in it!
Oh dears, clap your hands and dance,
singing His glory!

524.I.50 shanmuka-k-kommi 2

Come, come, Murukaa
with the divine spear forged from steel!
Spouse of Valli, come!
Oh Lord on the spotted peacock, come!

538.I.51 shanmukar varukai 1

The last dead of the First Book is a miscellany of 21 stanzas, not only in respect of the types of metric forms used but also in respect of the subject matter and their emotional content. I have selected two stanzas which strike a sobering note.

Oh golden Hill of eight qualities!
Take note that You do not think
ever so little even in Your mind
about all the misdeeds of this cur
who has a demoniac nature
worse than the nature of women;
even if You do not protect this sinner
out of Your magnanimous nature
even as You protect Your devotees
who are distinguished
for the quality of their character,
do not, at least, forsake me,
Oh Lord with the steel spear!

558.I.52 thani-t-thirutthodai 9

Oh Sire, endowed with six faces!
Since all my woes
are but on the upward trend
and are not on the downward trend,
do so wield the javelin

with the victory-suffused war-head in Your hand
that its prowess my stand out
and that those woes
which confront me with spitting faces
may flee (before it).

561.I.52 thani-t-thirutthodai 12

After reading these selections of over a hundred stanzas out of the First Book of 570 stanzas, it may strike us as quite an easy thing to gain the grace of God. We have but to relate our woes in the most abject terms, and, hey presto, the grace of God will descend on us. Here I am reminded of a Tamil poem which describes the presumptuousness of a turkey. The song goes like this:

A turkey which watched
the grove-dwelling peacock dance
imagined itself to be as good as it,
and danced spreading its vile feathers
and strutting about

Let us think for a moment. Would anyone of us catalogue our shortcomings, our faults, our foibles, our sins, our base desires and lusty passions in as frank a manner as our Swaamikal has done even if it were for our eyes alone to see. Would we feel as intensely as the Swaamikal feels. Even if we were but to sing the words of our Swaamikal only, making them our own for the moment, can we infuse them with one-thousandth of the sincerity with which our Swaamikal has surcharged his words? Never. We have to undergo stern disciplines, rigid self-denials, we have to do most painful heart-searchings, we have to shed all shyness, hesitancy and shame in confessing even to ourselves our shortcomings. All this will be useless without an unparalleled love of God. Defining a Mystic, Aldous Huxley wrote “a mystic is one who surrenders to a power of love that is greater than human.....” What is this love that greater than human? Kahlil Gibran writing of ‘Love’ said in his ‘Prophet’:

“ Like sheaves of corn
He gathers you unto himself,
He threshes you to make you naked.
He sifts you to free you from your husks.
He grinds you to whiteness.
He kneads you till you are pliant.
And then he assigns you to His sacred fire
that you may become sacred bread
For God’s sacred feast.
All these things shall love do unto you
that you may know the secrets of your heart,
and in the knowledge
become a fragment of life’s heart.”

God is a most exacting lover. The love you give should be pure, selfless, undivided, whole. As Kahlil Gibran puts it.

“ Love gives not but itself,
and takes not but from itself.
Love possesses not,
nor would it be possessed;
for love is sufficient unto love,
Love has no Other desire but to fulfil itself.”

The Naaradha Bhakthi Sutra says:

To the Lord, having dedicated himself,
all his worldly and heavenly affairs,
it behoves him (the devotee) not to worry
about the worldly calamities.
When love is still unattained,
activities of the world are not to be scorned,
but, fruits discarded,
acts should be performed.
Discussion on women, wealth and enemies
is not to be heard;
pride, vanity and the like
are firmly to be erased.
All actions to Him having surrendered,
desire, pride, anger and the like,
in Him should be expressed.⁸³
Dissolving three factors of experience,⁸⁴
as a servant or as a wife
Love alone must we pursue,
Love alone must we pursue.

⁸³ that is, instead of desiring worldly things, one should desire God, instead of being proud about worldly things, one should be proud of the God he worships, instead of being angry with people, one should be angry with oneself for not being devoted to God and with God for not bestowing His grace and so on.

⁸⁴ The three factors of experience are subject, object and their relationship. In other words, they are Gnaatru, the Knower, Gneyam, - That Which is known, and Gnaanam, Knowledge.

When we have learnt to experience this sort of love, then we can think of emulating Raamalinga Swaamikal. Till then, to think of using his songs as our songs would be a hypocritical sin.

The careful reader would have noted that no songs representative of the 18th, 25th, 27th, 35th and 45th decads have been quoted. All these decads have as their theme infatuation with women and worse. I have dealt with this subject exhaustively in the concluding pages of Chapter 5 while dealing with the 3rd stanza of the First decad of the First Book, and, have, in addition, stated that I would not refer to this subject again in this book. Accordingly, these decads have been passed over.

7. THE PURGATIVE WAY (Concluded)

In the second and last lap of the Purgative Way, our Swaamikal goes from Thirutthanikai Hill to Thiruvottriyoor, from Murukan the Son to Civan the Father, from childhood to adolescence and youth. This journey occupies two decades in terms of time. It does not end till the Swaamikal is ready to leave Thiruvottriyoor for Thillai.

The twelfth year of our Swaamikal is a landmark in his life. This much only we are able to learn from a few of his songs. We are not able to surmise what happened to him in that year other than that he became a devotee of Lord Thiyaagesan at Thiruvottriyoor in that year. This is, of course, quite an important landmark in his life. Sri Ooran Atikal states that our Swaamikal commenced his spiritual life properly at this age.

The songs which we shall see presently are important evidence to show that the Purgative Way extended beyond his twelfth year and Thiruthanikai Hill. He sings:

If the tale of the agitation and affliction
which I suffered here
from the day I gained knowledge
of the nature of the world
to this day
will not diminish by the telling,
though men of, no matter, howsomuch ability relate it,
what can I say?
What I have said is enough.
Oh my Chief,
that is the most suitable moment
(to bestow Your grace).
All this is well known to Your sacred mind!

3478. VI.13 pillai-p-peruvinnappam 69

Since there would be no end to it
if I were to recollect and relate
all that I experienced
from the beginning of my twelfth year
to this day,
I have related only a few;
nevertheless, Oh Effulgence,
Who are radiantly established
in the interior, exterior
in the interiorly exterior,
and in the exteriorly exterior
of my mind,
all of them You have known,
why should I catalogue them for You!

3535. VI.13 pilli-p-peru vinnappam 126

In two more songs, our Swaamikal reiterates the same plaint. He sings:

If it were to think of
what I have suffered on this earth
beginning with my twelfth year
to this day,
even a mountain will melt (with sympathy)!

* * * *

If it were to think of what I have suffered
beginning with my twice sixth year
to this day,
even iron will melt (with sympathy)!

5041.5042. VI. 112. meyyarul viyappu 78, 79

The first two out of the four songs quoted above occur very early in the Sixth Book whereas the next two occur towards the end of that Book. There is a difference too in the way the last two end. Whereas the first two have no relieving clause, the last two end in a remarkable manner This is the ending:

Lo, without exception,
all that suffering has become joy!
Oh my Sire,
lo, Your true grace, here (and now),
has become my very own!
What is the affinity between You and me?
Is this affinity an affinity
which anyone else in this world can gain?

The first two songs were sung, in all probability, at Karunkuzhi, sometime in 1858 or 1859, whereas the last two were sung, in all probability, at Mettukuppam, sometime in 1873. In this span of about fifteen years, what was unrelieved misery had become metamorphosed into joy. This is not the effect of the passage of time which dulls the edge of misery, but a genuine change in the outlook on what seemed like misery. This is the result of the affinity - a spiritual rapport between Raamalinga Swaamikal and the Godhead, which has grown stronger and stronger with the years, a rapport that has grown into the relationship of bride and bridegroom.

What was this misery which will not diminish by telling, the misery which will make mountains and iron melt with pity? This is the misery which we have been studying in the last chapter and which we are studying in this chapter as well. This is not the place to say more about this; when we come to deal with the period of the Unitive Way, the period from 1859 to 1874, the period covered by the Sixth Book, we shall have quite a good deal to say about this unique type of misery.

The twelfth year is the year in which a child enters the period of adolescence. We saw that the Swaamikal made special mention of his ninth year and here he makes mention of his twelfth year. This chapter will cover our Swaamikal's life from that year to the time when he is ready to leave for Thillai. The Swaamikal is still traversing the Purgative Way, but the Way is no longer one of unrelieved darkness and despair. Gleams of illumination light up the Way here and there, growing stronger and stronger till, before we are aware of it, our Swaamikal has left the Purgative Way and has entered the Illuminative Way. This is not to say that our Swaamikal will not, from then onwards, feel any despair or despondency. In the manner in which a bitterly wailing child, which had been consoled and comforted and has fallen asleep, brings up a sob and a whimper now and then, more out of the memory of the past than out of immediate suffering, so will our Swaamikal sob now and then till the very end of his journey, till he has united with the Ground of all being. For no mystic ever forgets for even a fleeting moment his total unworthiness for all the grace which has been showered on him and is being continuously showered on him. To the end, he is the basest of base creatures, a vile cur. The first song of the first decad of the second Book clearly stresses this point. He sings:

Oh Lord, to all good people
 You are ever a good Person;
 this cur of a slave
 is ever the most evil one
 of all evil persons;
 Oh Lord Who own everything,
 do not think that,
 by this correspondence between us,
 I am an opponent to You;
 consider me a kinsman.
 Instead of doing so,
 why any dispute (between us)?
 Oh Seat of grace,
 are You not neutral towards all dualities?⁸⁵

⁸⁵ God has neither desires nor aversions.

571.II.1 karunai vinnappam 1

In terms of Books and decads, we will traverse in this chapter, through three-quarters of the decads of the Second Book. As we proceed, we will find the way growing less and less dark till in the 75th decad of the Second Book we feel we have left the Purgative Way and have stepped on to the Illuminative Way. Other than saying that this decad is called "Vadivudai Maanikka Maalai" I shall not say more here but shall reserve my comments till I reach that decad.

In the previous chapter we heard the Swaamikal wondering what the devotees would say if Murukan were to bestow grace on him. He feared that they will not approve of the benevolent act But now he sings differently.

Is it fair

that this cur, falling into the sea of sorrow,
should undergo suffering?
I would not give anything to good people here,
I possess nothing;
what will I do?
Oh You Who ate like a mother unto me,
would it be wrong for You
to show a little compassion to me?
Would You desert this child?
If You desert, would not the world laugh at You?

576.II.1. I karunai vinnappam 6

If You were to put up
with all the misdeeds done by me
and bestow Your good grace on me,
Oh Sire, Oh great God with three eyes,
there is no one to prevent You, saying:
“ Why did You show grace to him ?”
Oh my King, whoever on this earth has obstructed
the good done by the sky?”⁸⁶

⁸⁶ the good done by the sky - rain poured by the clouds.

586.II. 2 praartthanai-p-pathikam 6

The emphasis has changed. It is no more on his foibles, failings and faults. The Swaamikal shifts the blame from himself to the Lord Whom he accuses of delaying the bestowal of grace. He sings:

If You desert me,
laugh will they,
who have received Your great grace,
Oh Civan, Oh Civan, Oh Civan!
Words of infamy they will say in Plenty.
Oh Lord on the white bull,
If You desert me,
who would advise You in a suitable manner,
saying:” Keep this fellow in Your gracious, charge”,
Oh Lord impossible for the heavenly ones to find out?

77.II.1 karunai vinnappam 7

Far from saying, “what would Your devotees say if You bestow grace on me”, our Swaamikal now asks for admission into that very band of devotees. This very request shows how far our Swaamikal has travelled up the Pathway to God. Here is the song :

Admit me into the noble sacred assembly
where dwell resplendently

those who have gained the state
where Your grace is ever present;
graciously deign that I may praise
the rosy blossoms – Your feet –
which formerly, Vishnu as the burrowing boar
wished to reach,
and also deign to put up with my falsity!

622.II.5 kali muraiyeedu 12

Who are these devotees into whose assembly our Swaamikal prays for admission? 7
Maanikkavaachakar too made the request. In fact, in his case it was his one and only
request to God. Sekkizhar the twelfth century hagiographer of the saints of
Tamilnaadu sings the glory of these devotees in eleven verses. It would be pertinent to
know those verses, as Calve Siddhaantha deems the admission into this Galaxy of
Devotees as tantamount to conferment of mukthi - release from the cycle of deaths
mid births. Thus Sekkizhaar sings:

In the lovely temple
where abides the Lord of the heavenly host –
He Who took residence in the ant-hill,
the Primordial Lord –
in its effulgent beauteous court
adjoining the portals
of the surrounding ancient ramparts,

* * * *

lies the holy chamber called “DEVAASIRIYAM”
ceaselessly filled with Brahma, the flower-seated one,
Indra and Vishnu - in whose wide chest
resides She, the lotus-dweller –
and with other heavenly ones besides.

* * * *

It resembled several thousands of Seas of Milk,
filled as it was by the pure effulgence
of the sacred white ash
on the bodies of the sorrow-dispelling devotees,
and by the resonance of the talisman –
the Mystic Five Letters:

* * * *

It resembled the world entire,
as the entire world was gathered therein,
deeming that those who worship the feet of Him,
the Cause of all, are entitled to rule the world.

* * * *

Chosen by the Father
and publicly given the accolade of Servitude,
their bodies prickling and hearts palpitating with love,
bounden to do sacred service with their hands,
these and countless others besides,

* * * *

men as pure inside as the ash
smeared on their spotless frames resplendent with gems,
by their effulgence they lit up every side,
and shone with ineffable glory.

* * * *

Even if the elements five their balance lose in chaos,
never forget they the blossom-feet of Him
with the Lady as His twin;
but stand steadfast
by strength of far-famed path of Love;
great rocks of blameless character (they are).

* * * *

Endowed with eternal riches which never wax or wane,
alms-bowl and shard both with equanimity they view.
They shone with resolve
which with welling love sought only to adore,
and sought not deliverance at all.

* * * *

Wooden beads their necklace, rags their robe,
their duty none other but God's service;
full of compassionate love, they lacked nothing;
how can I describe their resoluteness?

* * * *

Of mien and garb as fancy dictates,
unique servitors of the Dancing Lord
of age-long fame; how shall I
here praise or sing their state?

Admission to this august assembly is what our Swaamikal prays for.

The 8th decad of Book Two is one of exultation on having a darsan of Lord Civan at Thiruvotriyoor. A note of familiarity and derision replaces the note of abjectness with

which we have become all too familiar in the first half-a-thousand stanzas of the Arutpaa. The image of Civan in the temple is attired in a piece of cloth which is the object of derisive comment. In the few stanzas reproduced below, the word ‘kanthai’ has been retained. In common parlance, the word means a rag but it also means a loin cloth which stops short of the calf-muscles. Our Swaamikal uses the word in both senses. He sings:

Oh bounteous Sea without waves!
 Oh glittering Gold
 not the least rubbed on a touch-stone!⁸⁷
 Oh Lord with a creeper of matted locks
 which grows without restraint!
 Why are You wearing the kanthai
 which does not reach to the ground?

643.II.8 kaatchi-p-perumitham 1

⁸⁷ the reason being that there is no touch-stone on earth which can test the quality of the gold that is God, He alone being His equal.

In other stanzas he asks:

Tell me how You wind the kanthai round You!

* * * *

How did You come to get
 this old cloth?

* * * *

Is there no one to darn
 the kanthai for You?

* * * *

Is there no one
 who would courageously remove
 the kanthai You are wearing
 and clothe You in another?

* * * *

It would be more clean
 to wear the pelt (of the tiger)
 than the old kanthai You are wearing!

* * * *

If You would Yourself stand clothed
in the much-mended kanthai,
what kind of a gift
would You confer on me?

* * * *

Winding round You
this speckless kanthai,
alas, You look like a wandering mendicant;
what shall I do?

* * * *

Oh Lord, You are wearing
this much preserved kanthai,
tell me, Oh sire,
have You no kith or kin?

644 to 657.II.8 kaatchi-p-perumitham 2 to 9 extracts

From this note of banter and badinage, the last stanza of this decad most unexpectedly lifts us to great heights of spiritual fervor and we see that all this banter and badinage came out of a heart surcharged with deep love and devotion, ardour and adoration. He sings:

Oh Lord
with the delicate fragrant blossomy feet!
Oh Spouse embraced by the creeper (-like Parvathi)!
If one covers himself with this flimsy kanthai,
to, his stone-like heart melts!

652.II.8 kaatchi-p-perumitham 10

A note of aggressiveness, impudence, characterizes the 9th and 11th decads which confirms our surmise that the misery of the journey on the Purgative Way is getting lighter and lighter. Our Swaamikal sings thus in the 9th decad

Oh Sea of holy grace
which tastes sweet like honey!
Oh God Who manifest Yourself as the rain!
Oh flawless Gem abiding in Thirumullaivaayil!
Although I am an insensate person,
a mere mass of flesh,
when I arrived at Your holy temple,
You kept quiet without enquiring
“Why have you come?”;
is this the nature of Your holy grace?

653.II.9 arul-iyal vinaaval 1

The 11th decad is characterized by a refrain which runs through all its ten stanzas. “Why don’t You open Your mouth and say a word?” asks our Swaamikal. He sings:

You have gained
a sacred name as ‘Thiyaagesar’⁸⁸
with which the worthy Vishnu and Brahma praise You!

⁸⁸ Thiyaagessar means Lord Who sacrifices His all for His devotees.

Oh Lord capable of conferring boons!
When I come unto You
how is it that You do not open Your mouth
and say even a single word?
You do not give a single thing
to those who beg of You;
being so,
why did You take this name?

673.11.11 kodaimata-p-pukazhchi 1

“If He would not graciously bestow something on us, the great Lord Thiyaagar of Otri is a great beggar of a Lord indeed!” is the refrain of all the ten stanzas of decad 19. Here is one of the stanzas:

If He would not graciously bestow
something on me
who am looking forward to rejoicing at the sight
of His eternal role of being seated
with the Dame, Who bestows grace
on the devotees, (on one side of Him)
and with the lad with the spear (on His lap),
the Lord of gnosis, the Lord at Thillai,
the great divine Lord, Lord Civan,
the great mad Lord,
Lord Thiyaagar of Otri,
is, indeed, a great beggar of a Lord!

776.11.19 thiyaaga vanna-p-pathikam 3

A song in the 20th decad is another pointer to the change in the spirit of our Swaamikal. He sings in most reassuring tones to his heart:

Why are You suffering with yearning?
Everything you think you want
I shall obtain (from God) and give you;
fear nothing;
come rejoicingly with me

Oh my Heart!
Let us go and seek refuge
at the feet of the Pillar (of strength),
our Otriyoor-abiding opulent Father
Who bears on His matted locks
the snake, the luminous moon, and the Ganges.

785.II.20 thiruvadi-ch-charanpukal 2

In order to get a clear picture of the change in the spirit of our Pilgrim on the Pathway to God, the reader should turn back frequently, while reading this section, to the pages of the previous chapter where copious extracts have been given from the First Book. Nowhere in all the 52 decads of that Book can a poem of similar promise be found.

Decad 29 is another set of songs of invitation to the heart. He sings:

Oh my Heart!
Don't You know
that begging from those
who never say 'no'
to those who beg of them
is as good as giving indeed!⁸⁹
Even in your dreams,
do not think of those
who withhold what they have.
The Lord with the flower-bedecked matted locks
is One Who gives generously
to those who approach Him
even if they are base ones!
He is the Lord of the demons,
He is the Lord with the golden hill as bow,

⁸⁹Kahil Gibran said: "And what desert greater shall there be, than that which lies in the courage and the confidence, nay, the charity, of receiving?" And Thiruvalluvar long before him said:

Begging from those who would not entertain
even in their dreams the thought of withholding
is as good as giving.

He is the Hill of gnosis,
let us go to Him at Thiruvotriyoor
and, meditating on Him,
gain the goal of taking birth as man!

880.II.29 nenjai-t-thetral 3

Decad 30 is a similar invitation to the heart. He sings:

The three-eyed One,

the Lord with the stained throat,
 Lord of the Ganges,
 the Lord with a Dame as a part of Him,
 the Them of long songs set to music,
 the Lord with the lotus-like feet
 which step a dance on the proscenium,
 having taken His abode in Otriyoor
 where damsels with bright eyes
 practise their dance,
 lives there.
 Go there with me, Oh my Heart,
 let us adorn verily Him
 with a garland of goodly flowers of Tamil
 that our delusion
 which destroys our magnificence
 may be eradicated.

888.II.30 nenjarai kooval 1

In the 42nd decad there is a stern note of warning to the mind, a threat to part from it. Till very recently the mind was the master, but it is now being shown its place in no uncertain terms. He sings:

I have forsaken the perfidious life;
 Oh Mind,
 (if you like) take all it offers
 and live here;
 even if it were poison,
 you would eat it;
 is it good for me also to desire it?
 I am proceeding today without hesitation
 to Otriyoor where abides the great Lord
 Who bestows grace on those
 who say "You are my refuge";
 I have informed you too,
 it will not be my fault
 (if You do not go with me)

1040.II.42 nenjarivuroo 4

The First Book, as we saw, comprises 52 decads. In all these, there is only one decad, the 17th, nenjodu pulatthal, which depicts a struggle with the heart. In passing, we may mention that with Raamalinga Swaamikal, the terms nenju (heart), 'manam' (mind), 'ulam' or 'ullam' (mind) all an inter-changeable terms and refer to the mind only. We find the Swaamikal using the word 'nenjam' in the 1st, 6th, 7th, 8th and 11th stanzas and the word 'manam' in the 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th stanzas of the above decad. On the other hand, in the Second Book of 99 decads (I omit for this purpose the 100th, 101st, 102nd, and 103rd decdas) there are thirteen decads -a baker's dozen -addressed to the mind. There is a significance in this which we must endeavour to appreciate. These decads are the 17th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 25th, 26th, 29th, 30th, 42nd,

50th, 62nd and 65th. These addresses cease after the 65th decad, and ten decads later - from the 75th decad - vadivudai maanikkamaalai - we enter a new phase of the spiritual journey of the Swaamikal. In the third Book, however, there is a decad - a long decad, the longest decad addressed to the mind, a decad of 1406 lines, a grand homily - which we will analyze in another chapter.

What is this special significance which we must endeavor to appreciate in them decads? These decads are the record of a war, a war which every pilgrim on the Pathway to God wages day and night, at every step of his journey. The enemy is within himself, lives with him, breathes with him, is nurtured by him, and is, every moment, covertly and overtly conspiring with ten satellites to prevent the pilgrim from reaching his goal. This enemy is the mind and its satellites are the five sense organs, the eye, ear, nose, mouth, skin, and the five senses, sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. When we think of it, the First Book and the Second Book are historical records of one thing only, of the Swaamikal's long and weary war with his mind. In the first lap of the journey on the Purgative Way which is covered by the First Book, our Swaamikal was engaged in skirmishes with satellites of the enemy. In the Second Book he has engaged the enemy himself and is fighting a battle of life and death, of spiritual life or spiritual death. By the grace of Lord Civan, our Swaamikal forever and always subdues the enemy, and in the 3rd decad of the Third Book, after pointing out to the fallen enemy all the wrongs he had done, makes him his eternal ally. This is the significance of the thirteen decads of the Second Book addressed to the mind, in fact this is the significance of the Second Book itself. In passing, we may mention that the Second Book lends itself to a division into two parts, the first part comprising the first 74 decads and the second part comprising the 29 decads of the rest of the Book. The journey on the Purgative Way ends with this hypothetical first part of the Second Book.

Before we pursue the footsteps of Raamalinga Swaamikal in his journey on the, second lap of the Purgative Way, we will be benefited by reviewing our Swaamikal's addresses to his mind in the decads we have referred to above. Here are some representative songs:

Oh vagrant Mind of mine,
listen to this.
Seek the feet of the immaculate One
of flourishing Otriyoor. –
our patam-pakka-Naathan!⁹⁰
if you seek them,
the Kingdom (of Heaven) is ours.

755.II.17 nenjodu therthal 2

⁹⁰ patam-pakka-Naathan - A name of Lord Civan at Thiruvotriyoor. It arises from a musical Instrument called patam-pakkam which is special to the temple at Otriyoor.

In the 20th decad, he exhorts his mind thus:

Do not run away anywhere,
what do we lack?
Do not grieve, Oh my Mind,
like those who have no sure good succour;
come willingly with me.
Let us both go together
and, arriving rejoicingly at the temple of Otriyoor
which resembles Madurai,
let us seek refuge at the feet
of our Father, the Wealth of grace,
Who offers the haven of His feet
to enslave all our clan.

784.II.20 thiruvati-ch-charan pukutal 1

Here is a stanza from the 21st decad.

..... Oh my Mind,
alas, how are you going to be redeemed?
Go with me to beautiful Otriyoor,
and, in order to swim across the ocean called birth
in the company of devotees
praised in verses
and climb out of it,
meditate, repeating the words,
“ Oh Civa-shanmuka-Civa-Om,
Om Civaaya”.

801.II.21 arul naama vilakkam 8

You have been loitering at the doors
of men of withholding mentality;
if you would still remain perturbed
and keep weeping,
the night will pass away quickly;
get up, Oh my Mind,
let us go to the pilgrimage centre
called beautiful Otriyoor
and adore the Lord, saying:
“ Paravu Shanmuka Civa Civa Om,
Para-suyambu, Sankara,
Sambu, Nama Om, Hara”,
Do not have any doubt,
I swear by my soul,
we will certainly gain His grace!

809.II. 22 Civa-shanmuka-naama-sankeerthana-lahari 6

In passing, we may note that in addressing Lord Civan at Thiruvotriyoor, our Swaamikal used the term ‘Shanmuka’. It is clear from this that for our Swaamikal

Shanmuka was not a God different from Civan. Our Swaamikal was a strict monotheist.

Today itself,
it⁹¹ will make Him come riding on the bull,
Him, the Chinthamani,
the Treasure Which we found
after many days of search,
the Fruit with the crown
adorned by a chaplet
formed by the crescent moon;
alas, Oh my Mind,
don't you be frightened by karma;
note that I swear on my soul;
do but wear the sacred ash,
saying: "Civaayanama"
the Word with which Vishnu adores Him.

842.II.25 punniya vilakkam 9

You have learnt to wither away,
what is this, Oh my Mind?
You have not learnt to sing
sindhu⁹² set to music,
You have not learnt to don false disguise,
alas, who will give you riches?
Henceforth, think of our Lord of Otri
Whom the men of vast learning praise.

846.II.26 nenjodu nekizhthal 2

⁹¹ it - the word 'Civaayanama'.

⁹² sindhu - a kind of poetic composition.

In the 29th and 30th decads our Swaamikal most earnestly invites his mind to go with him to Him, offering it various inducements. He sings:

Do not be upset, Oh my Mind,
by going to people of stony hearts.
Ask for whatever you think of.
The beautiful Lord praised in the Veda-s,
the Lord of the ancient city of Otri
surrounded by groves,
our Lord with a throat darker than night,
the Lord rare to be known by Brahma or Vishnu,
He will give bounteously;
I will receive all He gives
and hand them over to you,
come with me.

851.II.29 nenjai-t-thetral 4

The Lord Who stood towering high
while Brahma and Vishnu
taking different forms
sought Him up above and down below,
the Lord with the sacred matted locks
on which shine the river and kondrai flowers,
the snake and the crescent moon,
who had sought refuge there,
the Lord Who has countless abodes and names,
note He is the transcendent Lord
in Otriyoor of great repute;
let us light lamps in His temple;
blessed be you, go at once with me,
Oh my Mind.

895.II.30 nenjarai kooval 8

Let us proceed to other decads. He sings in the 37th decad:

You ask for medicine
to extirpate diseases of the body
and diseases born of confounding delusion;
blessed be you!
Oh my Mind, do not be perturbed;
perhaps you have not noticed
the gracious sacred white ash in my hand.
You are worried, desiring to prevent
the ineradicable great disease of lust;
do not be perturbed;
note that Namachchivaayam,
the name of our undying benevolence-endowed Lord
with the russet-colored matted locks,
is the great succour we have.

992.II.37 natrunai vilakkam 6

In the 42nd decad our Swaamikal is fed up with the recalcitrant mind and addresses it more in sorrow than in anger thus:

Oh Mind!
Imagining the life of misery as happiness
you are sunk in delusion;
I do not know whether obstreperous you
would go with me or would stay here;
I am going today itself to Otriyoor
where abides the great nine-aspected⁹³ Lord
to lead a life of bliss;

I have informed you also;
no blame attaches to me
(if you fail to go with me).

1038.II.42 nenjarivuroo 2

⁹³The nine aspects are: Aruvam i.e., formless 4, i.e., Civam, Sakthi, Naadam, Vindhu. Aruvuruvam i.e., shapeless or amorphous form 1, i.e., Sadhaacivam. Uruvum i.e., with form 4, i.e., Mahesan, Ayan or Brahma, ThirumaaI or Vishnu and Rudhran. This note has been given to me by Professor Auvai S. Doraiswami Pillai.

In the 50th decad our Swaamikal asks the famous question ‘quo vadis’– ‘where are you going’.

Where are you still going,
Oh my foolish Mind!
If I but think of the misery
of our being born in the past
here and there and wallowing therein,
my guts twist and turn.
What kind of a sure succour you are to me!
Alas, you have not accepted my words.
if only we would think of our munificent Lord
Who abides eternally in the beautiful Hall,
the state of never being born
will come to pass.

1124.II.50 nenjodu therthel 6

Thillai had already started to call our Swaamikal, as will be seen from the references to Thillai in the song quoted from decad 19, a few pages earlier. In this song also, though sung at Thiruvotriyoor and addressed to Lord Thiyaagesar, the reference to the place where the Lord abides is given as the beautiful Hall – ‘ezhilkolum pothu’. Pothu is a term which specifically denotes the Hall of Gnosis in Thillai. It has never been used by any devotee to denote any other place. Stanza 4 of the decad which we shall be quoting presently has more pointed reference to Thillai which clearly shows that our Swaamikal’s mind has already turned to Thillai where we shall accompany him in the next but one chapter. Two more songs and we have finished with the War for the Conquest of the Mind. In the 62nd decad, our Swaamikal sings:

My mind baser than a cur
goes towards women lacking in goodness
in spite of my opposing it;
what shall I do?
Though I may not worship You,
You should enslave me here (and now),
Oh Sire,
Oh Lord who are good (to me)
more than my dear mother,

Oh Treasure-house of compassion
abiding in Otri!

1247.II.62 nenju nilai-k-kirangal 5

The 65th decad ends this war for the conquest of the mind. He addresses the mind thus in one of its stanzas.

Oh my Mind,
we do not know
whether we would be living on the coming day;
do not ever think of anything
other than the sacred feet
of the virtuous One of the Hall,
where Thirunaalai-p-povaan worshipped Him,
Who became a very mother unto me at Otri?

1277.II.65 nenjuruttha thirunerisai 4

The Thirunaalai-p-povaan referred to in the above stanza is the famous Harijan saint, Nandanaar, whose one ambition in life was to go to Thillai and worship in the month of Maargazhi, December-January. Here is Thillai again calling.

The Second Book is in fact built around these thirteen decads addressed to the mind. To put it more precisely, the account of the second and final lap of the journey on the Purgative Way recorded in the first 74 decads of the Second Book is built round these thirteen decads, this record of the incessant battle with the arch-enemy, the mind. Who won in the battle? The answer is supplied by the tenor of the other decads of this Book which are inter-woven with the decads of the Battle on the Field of the Mind. Let us examine some of these other decads in the light of the above observation and see the answer they provide.

We cannot find in all the 52 decads of the First Book a parallel to the two songs which we reproduce below from decads 23 and 24.

Their extraordinary self-assurance and faith are pointers to how the battle is progressing. Here are the songs:

Even if I were to live many many more days,
or even if I were to die this very moment,
even if I were to enter
the heavenly haven thronging with devotees,
or even if I were to wallow wearily in the great hell,
whatever more (tribulations) may come upon me,
whatever my Lord may do unto me,
I will never forget Namachchivaayam
who having sought out my goodly mind,
is superbly established therein.

823.II.23 namachchivaaya sankeerthana lahari 10

An ear-ring has He,
the pelt of a tiger has He,
a bull that sleeps on the bosom of the sea has He,
the battle-axe and the deer (in His hands) has He,
a begging-bowl, which is Brahma's skull, has He,
Otriyoor has He,
the lofty White Forest⁹⁴ has he,
an eye in the forehead has He,
He is my God!

824.II.24 thiruvāruḷ vilakka maalai 1

⁹⁴ White Forest - Thiruvēnkaadu, a place of pilgrimage in Thanjavoor District.

Such songs of confidence are not to be found in the doleful dismal decads of the First Book. Hear these two other songs:

Oh eyes of mine,
shun, shun to see if You happen to meet
the base ones, the vile ones from days of yore,
the slaves to prevarication,
the men of quarrelsome habits,
the hankerers after the world,
who do not meditate upon and praise
the Lord with the matted locks,
the Lord of everyone,
the Lord with the garland of kondrai flowers,
the Lord Who is immanent
in the mobile and immobile world,
the Lord with Otri as His city,
the Lord preeminent over the Three⁹⁵ !

903.II.31 patrīn thirām pakarthāl 6

⁹⁵ Brahma. Vishnu and Rudran.

Oh Father,
Oh Father in Otri,
even if I am a mean fellow,
I will never place faith
in any other God but You;
if You forsake me,
on account of this rabid fellow's misdeeds,
what will this slave do?
Note that it is Your duty
to bestow mukthi on me
and my duty is to serve You!

“What requital shall I make to You” for making me come to this town of Otri, for giving me a desire to sing about You, for making me learn Your fame”, etc. etc. is the refrain of the 11 stanzas of the Thirty-third decad. We should not forget that our Swaamikal is still treading the Purgative Way. If I were to give a stanza from every decad, it will swell the size of the book without adding materially to the interpretation of the Swaamikal’s spiritual journey. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore several guide posts on the Way which give us the answer to the question ‘quo vadis’.

Let us proceed on our journey on the path our Swaamikal trod. He is filled with a great longing for a vision of the Lord which he expresses in many decads. In the 36th decad, he gives vent to his pent up longings in as many as 36 stanzas. He cries out:

Oh Father in Otri;
will I never praise
with full-throated voice
Your sacred feet
laden with the fragrance of the Veda-s!

* * * *

Oh Father in Otri,
will I never hear to my ears’ content
Your divine fame!

* * * *

Oh Father in Otri,
will I never inscribe on my heart
Your from!

* * * *

Oh my Father in Otri,
will I never sing and adore You
in songs fragrant with tunes!

* * * *

Oh my Father in Otri
with no one to call You father,
will I never, like those before me,
lie at Your feet
embracing it to my great joy!

* * * *

Oh Father in Otri,

will I never witness
Your dance on the proscenium
by which You actuate the world!

* * * *

Oh Father in Otri,
will I never become a slave
unto those true devotees
who gain Your feet
and thus myself approach
Your delicate blossomy feet!

951, 954, 958, 963, 967, 983, 986.II.36 arul thirattu alaisal 1, 4, 8, 13, 17, 33, 36
(Extracts)

Such is his great longing that he turns with fury on his sense organs which are the enemies who obstruct the realization of his deep longings and exhorts them in the ten stanzas of the 38th decad thus:

Oh eyes of mine,
avoid seeing even in your dreams the base ones
who do not wear the ash of God;
look with love on the servitors (of God)
who wear the sacred ash
which graciously extirpates
the base inner impurities!

997.II.38 civa-punya-t-thetram 1

Thus, the ears are asked to close themselves if those who do not wear the ash were to say anything; the nose is asked to tremble for its dear life if it were to come across the smell of the bodies of those who do not wear the sacred ash; the hands are asked not to give even as much as half a sesame seed to those who do wear the ash; the feet are asked not to enter their houses, and the mind is asked not to think of them even by oversight.

Driven to despair, our Swaamikal turns with fury, in the 39th decad, on the six passions of the Mind, kaamam (lust) kovam or krodham (anger), lobham (covetousness), moham (infatuation), matham (pride), aanavam (ignorance) and ahankaaram (arrogance) and routs them with the Sword of Grace of Civan of Otriyoor. Here are two songs out of them:

Oh witless Kaama,
perfidious slave for sale⁹⁶,
you caught hold of me
and, throwing me weeping into the deep cavern
of foolish women,
made me suffer tortures;
I am rising out of it

by the aid of devotees
who graciously have rid me of my misery;
if you will drag me again,
I will cut you down
with the Sword of Grace or Lord Civan
of Veda-s-chanting Otriyoor!
Note this for a fact!

1009.II.39 nadumozhi vanji 3

⁹⁶ slave for sale - a sort of a transferred epithet referring to loose women who sell their charms.

Oh Arrogance, my lad,
who does not know humility!
Note that He Who has sway
over all these myriads of worlds,
is even He Who actuates us.
Without realizing this,
do not delude me into thinking that
today I worshipped
the twin feet of the transcendent Being,
praised Him with melting heart,
became His servitor too,
and am ripening for mukthi.⁹⁷
I will cut you down
with the Sword of Grace
of the Consort of Uma, Civan of Otriyoor,
note this for a fact!

1014.II.38 nedumozhi vanji 8

⁹⁷ mukthi - release from the cycle of births and deaths.

After threatening the six passions with the Sword of Grace, our Swaamikal turns again to the Lord to make a declaration. He sings:

Desire I did not the status of Vishnu or Brahma;
even if they beg and say: "Please accept",
I will not accept (those status),
Oh Lord dressed in the big hide of the tusker!
I remain steadfast, hugging to my mind
only the type of life which Your devotees respect;
this is as far as my undecided mind is concerned;
now, I do not know
just exactly what Your will is

1022.II.40 avalatthazhunkal 6

He follows with a claim for age-long relationship.

Though, due to Karma,
I have donned this body,
I am a devotee
who has fallen in love with You
from days of yore;
don't You understand who I am?
You know all (my) deeds
in all my seven times seven births
as if they took place now.
I have come now and stand in Your presence
seeking relationship with You
that the sorrows which arise
from domestic life may perish.
Oh Lord seated under the gorgeous banyan tree!
Oh Lord of sacred Otriyoor!
if You declare me an imposter,
what is to be my fate?

1035.II.41 thiru vinnappam 9

The same theme is emphasized again in the following stanza from decad 45.

Oh my Father,
even if I did not adore You, saying;
“Oh great Gem on Which my eyes feast,
Oh Sugar-cane of grace,
Oh Bliss uncontainable inside me”,
nevertheless, on this earth
I am Your slave in birth after birth;
this is no delusion,
You know this in Your mind;
positively bestow Your grace,
Oh King of Otriyoor,
Oh lustrous Lamp
shining in the Hall in Thillai!

1068.II.45 Vazhimozhi vinnappam 2

The hydraheaded mind, in spite of all the exhortations, homilies, threats, is still far from having been subdued altogether. Our Swaamikal reports to the Lord his strivings against this monster. In the 44th and the 51st decad we hear him lamenting to the Lord.

“ this perfidious mind is not in my control”.

*

*

*

*

“ this deluding mind forcibly drags me away
that I may not adore You”

* * * *

I do not know what Your will is;
I have reported to You
about my mind not being in my control;
even if I do evil, Oh Civan,
to put up with me
and to protect me
that evil mighty karma
may not accrue
is Your duty;
why should I say much;
otherwise, infamy will come upon You;
note this, Oh our King of Otriyoor,
Oh Ambrosia Who dance in the Hall in Thillai!

1066.II.44 aatalamutha-p-patthu 10

This base mind of mine
instead of being in tune,
with my intentions
is bent on making merry.

1129.II.51 civaananda-p-patthu 1

Nevertheless, in the 48th decad our Swaamikal declares that his mind is with the Lord. He sings:

Oh eminent Lord abiding in Otri,
Oh Father in Thillai
abiding in the Hall of Gems.
Oh immaculate One
with an eye on the forehead,
my mind which has attached itself to You
is in Your keeping!

* * * *

You made me pay obeisance to You,
Oh virtuous One!
You made me declare
the quality of Your fame,
You made my mind gain hope,
and, placing faith in You,
made it go to Your Otri
and pour its love!

1098.1108.II.48 cannithi muraiyeedu 1, 11

This paradox of alternating desolation and faith is an inherent factor of all spiritual endeavour. But it will be clear that the journey is not as dismal as it was and is changing steadily, even though not as rapidly as we may like it to do, in favor of hope, and the end of the journey is not far off. The following stanza is a good pointer in this direction.

You went to the marriage of Sundarar –
who had a garland hugging his shoulders –
and engaged in a dispute there;
(but in my case)
You need not show any document;
if You would but be pleased to say about me,
“this man is my slave”,
I will ungrudgingly perform,
with my mind wondering
(at my good fortune),
not one piece of work but any number of them,
Oh Lord Who own resplendent Otri
girt by groves,
Oh Lord with the flag
bearing the emblem of the bull
who is the pure Vishnu!

1182.II.56 koti vinnappam 1

In this frame of mind, our Swaamikal is seized with an intense desire for a vision of the Lord. He sings in the 59th decad:

Alas it is not given to me
to see Your golden face!

* * * *

Oh Civan, Lord of the blessed mystics,
it is not given to me to see
the beauty of Your grace-surcharged three eyes!

* * * *

Oh Lord in Thillai worshipped by good men,
it is not given to me to see
the beauty of the blue-tinted throat of Yours!

* * * *

Oh transcendent Being
with the half-moon shining high
on You russet-colored locks,

it is not given to me to witness
the splendor of Your state-drive
in the streets of the city of Otri!

1222.II.59 thiru-k-kaatchi-k-kirangal 10

This is followed by a decad the burden of which is:

“ Would it be wrong
if You take pity on me,

* * * *

“if You bestow grace on me, saying;
‘Fear not’,

* * * *

“if You destroy the disease (of birth and death)
of this wretch.

* * * *

“if You offer me a shade
to shelter away from infamy,
Oh sweet Ambrosia
Who never desert,
for even as much as it takes
to think a thought,
the good people
who cherish You as the pupil of their eyes;
would it be wrong
if You destroy my delusion
with this world
which runs about
striving to get food and raiment?”

1232.II.60 thiruarut-kirangal 10

“Who owns me other than You” is the refrain of decad 67, and as a complement to this statement the stanzas of the 69th decad end with the refrain

“ there is nothing I do
other than Your will”

Again a longing comes over our Swaamikal for one more darsan of the Lord. He sings in the 70th decad.

The Lord with a form
like an agglomeration of limpid ambrosia

in the sacredness-suffused Golden Hall,
the Lord of the blissful gnosis,
the Lord Who bestows a state of bliss
on His devotees,
I saw the budding dazzling smile
suffusing His holy face;
I was (forthwith) rid of my great misery;
alas, won't I see it once again?

1340.II.70 dharisana-p-pathikam 1

I witnessed to the delight of mind
His anklet-girt feet
which perform the dance of blissful gnosis;
Won't I see my Spouse's anklet-girt feet
once again?

* * * *

Won't I see His beauty once again?

* * * *

His ambrosia-like holy face
I saw by the virtue of the well-fulfilled great thavam
performed formerly in this world
by this mean fellow;
won't I see once again the face of Him
Who is like my eyes to me?

1343.II.70 dharisana-p-pathikam 4

The ten stanzas of this decad are surcharged in this vein with an uncontrollable longing.

“ Mutthi Upaayam’ is the name of the next decad which I produce in full with pleasure and without apology here as it is a decad of tremendous significance. The meaning of the name of the decad is “Device for Gaining Liberation”, liberation from the bonds of death and birth. Here are the stanzas:

The Lord of Otri,
holding on to Him, oh my Mind,
do stand firm
to reach the state of grace.

* * * *

Note that to reach it
is not far to go;
if you bestow love (on God)
mukthi will approach you.

* * * *

Mukthi if you want,
bakthi will be needed,
this is the truth,
know this, Oh my mind.

* * * *

Oh my mind,
this is not perfidy;
Pingakan's⁹⁸ feet
is refuge indeed

⁹⁸ Pingakan - Lord Civan.

* * * *

Gain love unto Him
Who wears the bones,
and change your obduracy
that bliss may seep (into you).

* * * *

Becoming steadfast,
if You pay obeisance
to Otriyoor of the Lord of the white ash,
diseases will entirely eradicated be.

* * * *

Disease-bringing
demons many many,
to Otriyoor of the Pure One
never come!

* * * *

Note that never never
will be that thing called misery
on quickly reaching
the borders of Otriyoor.
Why talk of misery,
Oh nagging Mind,
even after reaching
the borders of fertile Otriyoor!

* * * *

Go and praise well,
Oh my Mind,
Otri, where ever abides
good prosperity.

1350 to 1359.II.71 mutthi upaayam 1 to 10

In the 72nd decad, our Swaamikal is lost in wonderment as to what thavam he had performed in order to gain the darsan of Thiyaaga-p-perumaan of Otriyoor. All his longings of years and years are now fulfilled, and he exultingly sings “What thavam have I performed?”. Let me quote the last stanza only.

I saw,
with my harder-than-stone-to-melt mind amelting,
the holy feet of Thiyaagapperumaan,
the great Lord Civan Who formerly gave
to the munificent saint of Kaazhi
the palanquin
along with the pearl-studded umbrella
and the golden cymbals;
that vision which I saw,
how shall I describe it;
Oh mother,
what thavam had I indeed performed!

1369.II.72 thavatthiram potral 10

We shall conclude this journey on the second and final lap of the Purgative Way with the stanzas of the 74th decad of the Second Book with which ends this part of the journey on the Pathway to God trod by Raamalinga Swaamikal. What miseries our Swaamikal endured on his long journey of two decades and more cannot be imagined by us howsoever many times we may read the 570 stanzas of the First Book and the first 814 stanzas of the Second Book. But I may tell you that traversing through the length and breadth of the 1384 stanzas I have felt again and again tempted to drop the research into them, for the stanzas are shot through and through with the terrible agony of a soul in torment reaching out for the Godhead that seemed to elude its every attempt to apprehend It. This particular chapter was more difficult to construct than the previous chapter as it was not at all an easy task to see in the stygian darkness the odd gleams of hope and faith which lighted and lightened the path of our Swaamikal and enabled him to make his solemn asseveration in this decad where he declares:

It has a water-logged coil of matted locks,
It has the tall Vishnu as a bull,
It has a crown
adorned by a garland of splendid kondrai flowers,
It has resplendent feet,
mental depression-eradicating thousand names
It has,
unfailing boons It confers,
such a three-eyed One

of goodness unimaginable by the great world
dwells in my mind.

* * * *

It never decreases,
It cannot be contained by the great Veda-s,
or the enemy (of man), the primeval taints,
It is never fathomed
by the thoughts of Vishnu and others,
it is unaffected by the earth and other elements,
such a One with three eyes
abides in my mind.

* * * *

It is immutable,
though many aeons may pass
it is undamageable,
it is never affected
by good or bad deeds,
Its depths can never be fathomed by anyone,
It is ineffable,
such a One with three eyes,
dwells in my mind.

* * * *

It is Grace of surpassing coolness,
It is of a brilliance like the very heavens,
It is the ultimate Finding
of the reputed Veda-s
redolent with music,
It is of a form where femininity⁹⁹ is predominant,
It has a forehead with a fiery eye
packed with power,
It is the Pupil of the eye,
It is of a state
which can never be comprehended,
such a One with three eyes
dwells in my mind!

* * * *

⁹⁹ quality of mercy.

It is unborn,
It is ineffable,
if It were to be described,

It is of a never-dying form,
If accepted, It will come into the heart,
It is Something
which those who have left ignorance behind
possess unforgettingly,
It has a Dame on one side,
It is a Kin
to those who praise it,
such a One with three eyes
dwells in my mind!

1380 to 1384.II.74 ulla-p-panchakam 1 to 5

Three features of significance should be noted about this decad before we conclude this chapter. Firstly, it has five stanzas. In other words, this decad is of as great a merit as the Five Mystic Letters. Secondly, the last stanza declares, “It has a Dame by its side”. Lord Civan was enshrined in the heart of our Swaamikal as Ammai-Appan, as the Father-Mother of all beings. Thirdly, the most important of all the features, is the fact that the dwelling place of this Being described so vividly in the five stanzas of this decad is the mind, the self-same mind which even less than ten decads earlier was obstinate, obstreperous, obstructive, obdurate. Our Swaamikal has received God’s grace in full measure and has come out victorious over his arch enemy the mind.

8. THE ILLUMINATE WAY

In the fourth chapter, we told a story about Raamalingam, a poor boy, and Murukan, the son of rich parents. In that story we said:

“One-day Murukan’s mother, Paarvathi, saw her husband, Sri Sadhaacivam, talking to her son’s friend in a gruff voice. Coming up to the door, she spoke chidingly to her husband, asking him: ‘Is this the way to talk to a child? Why do you keep him trembling with concealed fear at the door step? Why could you not bring him into the house, or, at least, ask him to go in and look for Murukan?’ So saying, she addressed the lad endearingly in a dulcet voice and taking him by the hand, took him inside the house, and, with an arm thrown around his bony shoulders, she drew him close to her as she sat on a divan and fed him with numberless questions In course of time, she led him through many chambers to the sanctum sanctorum where a lamp was burning day and night in the effulgence of the flame of which the Mother disclosed to this Son the Mystery of mysteries”.

To that Mother, the Mother of mothers, the Mother of the Universe, our Swaamikal has come and is received into Her bosom. In the 75th decad of the Second Book, our Swaamikal sings the glory of the Mother, the Mother who goes by the name of Vadivudai Maanikkam in the temple at Thiruvotriyoor. The very first stanza of this decad is sure evidence to show that our Swaamikal has left the Purgative Way and has stepped on to the Illuminative Way. He sings:

Oh Ambrosia from the sea,
Oh red Sugar-cane,
Oh Fruit of the karpaka tree of grace,
Oh Soul in my body,
Oh Experience of the soul,
Oh Light present in that experience,
Oh rare Medicine
Who have taken seat on the left
of the Lord of Otri
Who owns the rampaging bull,
Oh Flower of gnosis
whose petals are opening out,
Oh Vadivudai Maanikkam!

7386.II.75 vadivudai maanikka maalai 1

To the best of my recollection, our Swaamikal has never before used the term, ‘Oh Flower of gnosis!’. He uses similar terms in four other stanzas of this decad, terms which he has not used ever before. In stanzas 41, 59, 77 and 83 he addresses the Mother in such terms as:

Oh Lamp of gnosis

shining with a beauty possessed by none else (41)

* * * *

Oh Wealth of true gnosis
sought by devotees (59)

* * * *

Oh Tendril of the flame of true gnosis (77)

* * * *

Oh Luminous Pillar of pure gnosis (83)

All these terms of address are very significant pointers to show that our Swaamikal has begun his journey on the Illuminative Way, travelling on which he will gain illuminative knowledge of the Godhead. The darkness of his ignorance will be cleaved by the 'Light present in the experience' and the bonds of the aanava malam, the primordial taint of ignorance, will be sundered, Our Swaamikal celebrates his entry into the Illuminative Way by the one hundred and one stanzas of this decad in praise of the Divine Mother. Let us hear some of his paeans of praise of the Mother:

Oh Vadivudai Maanikkam,
what is the significance
of Your posing as a wife
on the left of Him –
the Grace who rules over me –
Who abides in Otriyoor,
You, Who, as the unique grace
of the transcendent One
Who has no one who rules over Him,
removing the primordial taint
of the soul which is ruled over by Karma,
admit it to the House of Freedom
(from the bond of births and deaths)?

1399.II.75 vadivudai maanikka maalai 14

Oh Lamp of gnosis,
shining with a beauty possessed by none else,
Who, putting up with their thousands of misdeeds,
bestow grace on those who pay obeisance to You!
Oh glittering pure Gold of highest quality
Who shine on the left of Him
Who resides in illustrious Otri,
Oh Vadivudai Maanikkam!

1426.II.75 vadivudai maanikka maalai 41

Though most of the songs in this decad are sheer paeans of praise of the Mother, a few of them contain petitions. He sings:

People say
that a mother has the greatest compassion;
but You have not made up Your mind
to extirpate the misery this child suffers.
Without any longer looking for the misdeeds
committed by this cur,
come forward to bestow Your excellent grace,
Oh our Peacock of Otri,
Oh Vadivudai Maanikkam!

1464.II.75 vadivudai maanikka maalai 79

There is a stanza in this decad which reminds us of the question Maanikkavaachakar puts to Civan in the last stanza of the 22nd decad of the Thiruvaachakam. He asks there:

“ Infinite bliss I gained
what did You gain from me?”

Our Swaamikal asks in the same vein:

All blessings are mine through You,
what is the gain to You
through me who have gained You,
Oh You Who have borne me!
Oh Perfect Gem,
dear to the eyes of our great Lord
Who, in the past, bestowed Grace on the Four!
Oh Ultimate Finding of the eternal Four Veda-s!
Oh Vadivudai Maanikkam!

1476.II.75 vadivudai maanikka maalai 91

And in the last stanza, our Swaamikal pays obeisance to the feet of the Mother in a spirit of exultation. He sings:

Hallowed be Your rosy feet,
obeisance to the lovely lotuses, Your feet,
hallowed be Your blossomy feet,
obeisance to Your cool grace,
hallowed be Your glory,
may You and Him of Otri Who delights in You
dwell in my mind,
hallowed be You,
Oh Life of my dear life,
Oh Vadivudai Maanikkam!

1486. II. 75 vadivudai maanikka maalai 101

From the 77th decad to the end of the 99th decad, all the 23 decads are cast in language of bridal mysticism. Students of the Thiruvaachakam of Maanikkavaachakar will remember that the 16 decads (7th to 22nd) dealing with the Pilgrim's journey on the Illuminative Way are cast in language of bridal mysticism. Similarly, the 23 decads of the Second Book which deal with our Swaamikal's journey on the Illuminative Way are also cast in the language of bridal mysticism. Raamalinga Swaamikal is the bride and Lord Civan at Otri is the bridegroom. These decads are characterized by a sense of joy and wonderment. The very titles of the decads, no matter who gave those titles, are redolent of love, joy, happiness. Some of the decads are conversations between the lovelorn bride and her mother, some others are conversations between the bride and her companions.

Lord Thiyaagesar of Otri comes riding in state on the streets of Otri. Raamalinga Swaamikal, our love-lorn maid, went with the rest of the people of the town to witness the procession. She saw Him and instantly lost her heart to Him. The 77th decad describes in her own words what happened to her. She sings:

Behold, I went along with the people of the town
and saw to the surging delight of my heart
the state drive of the great Lord Thiyaagesan
of the city of Otri endowed with eminent fertility;
my bra-bound breasts
swelled to the size of hills,
the bangles on my wrists became slack;¹⁰⁰
Oh companion of mine with beautiful tresses,
amazing it was how I stood transfixed
as very embodiment of desire!

¹⁰⁰ the swelling of the breasts and the pining of the limbs resulting in the bangles becoming slack are conventional signs of being suddenly seized with passionate love.

1493.II.77 thiruvarul-p-peru 1

When Thiyaaga-p-peruman of the city of Otri –
rare for Vishnu to apprehend –
was coming on a state drive,
my big infatuated mind and I
went front and back and saw Him;
thereupon I kept sighing after Him.
In spite of my mother and others dragging me,
saying: “Come away”,
I did not go with them;
Oh my companion with dark magnificent tresses,
amazing was the way I stood transfixed
as very embodiment of desire!

1502.II.77 thiru-ulaa-p-peru 10

Having been suddenly smitten by love, the next logical step is to send a messenger of love. The crane and the parrot, conventional messengers of love, are, accordingly, sent by our love-smitten bride. She bids the crane:

Oh Crane, go before Him
Who burnt the cities three of His enemies,
Him Who abides in Otriyoor,
Him Who is good to everyone, the mighty One,
Him of ever truth-uttering pure words,
and, standing in His presence, say:
“The damsel with tresses bedecked with flowers
now wears flowers no more;
she of dark tresses
is tossed about in a river of tears;
surrounded by demon-like women,
many many of them,
and slandered by them,
she fell down,
but, saying: ‘ah, this is a bed’,
she forsook it forthwith”.

1507.II.78 naaraiyum kiliyum naatturu thoothu 5

The parrots are bidden by the Bride to carry a message to her Beloved:

Oh parrots, won't you go before Him
Who is not subject to change,
Him with the golden bow,
Him of the city of Otri,
Him of ever truth-uttering pure words,
and tell Him :
“The damsel with flower-laden tresses
no longer wears flowers,
she goes and comes restlessly
and does not stay in one place,
she cries, ‘alas’,
she does not play with girls,
she does not relish food”.

1508.II.78 naaraiyum kiliyum naatturu thoothu 6

The love-lorn damsel is seized with self-pity and relates her grievances to her companion in 31 stanzas in decad 79. She sings:

A pelt which is worn as a loin-cloth has He.
He belongs to Otri,
world-praised eminent Person is He.
Other than the pleasure
of stringing a garland of flowers

and putting it (around my neck),
 He does not know the pleasure of sleeping with me;
 He does not know
 giving to me my object,
 even as much as a sesame seed,
 out of love for me;
 Oh damsel,
 to whom shall I tell my grievance?

1523.II.79 irangan maalai II

He comes on a bull,
 in Otri He abides,
 my Spouse, dear to me;
 “Come along”, He said,
 and garlanded me;
 When I came to Him,
 He would not open His mouth
 any the least;
 Oh dear companion,
 I have never consciously transgressed
 His bidding;
 Oh friend with a hand
 from which birds feed,
 to whom shall I relate my grievance?

1532.II.79 irangan maalai 20

In this state of despair, our love-lorn heroine reverts to reminiscences of what happened on the occasion when the Lord of Otri came on a state drive. The mind which was till recently a very obstreperous organ is now completely changed, much to the embarrassment of the love-lorn but modest damsel, and has become a very forward brazen minx. Our love-lorn but very modest maiden complains about this in the 80th decad called “Surprise during the State Drive”. She sings:

“The Lord
 resembling the limpid ambrosia
 of the lush clear sea,
 He with the holy name of Thiyaagar,
 He Of Otri
 surrounded by extremely cool groves,
 people mid that He is coming on a state drive.
 Before I could get up and go there
 after properly tying my sari
 which had come undone,
 my pert mind deserted me
 and ran tumbling and tripping
 to His presence!

1548.II.80 thiru ulaa viyappu 5

Dead to decad the love-play gains momentum till it culminates in the 99th decad. Many of the stanzas do not lend themselves to translation as they are couched in puns. The 81st decad, in all its ten stanzas, is full of delightful exchange of badinage between the love-lorn maiden and her Beloved, the Lord of Otri, but I am afraid none of them can be translated as the badinage depends upon the pun on words which, though spelt and pronounced in the same manner, give two widely different meanings. For instance, let us take this song, the last line of which I reproduce as it is in Tamil.

The Lord with the victory-laden battle-axe,
the Lord with the bull,
the Lord Who has Mount Meru as His bow,
the great Lord Thiyaagar
Who shines within those
endowed with minds of good quality,
He came close to me;
while all the girls around me
talked about it and laughed,
otri irum endru uraithen naan,
otri irunthen endraare!
I told Him, “Stay at a distantance”,
Otri
He replied, “I am staying at a distantance”,
Otri

1558.II.81 sallaapa viyan mozhi 5

The Pun is on the word ‘otri’. Such songs show the lightness of the heart of our Swaamikal who not long ago was singing songs of a different kind with a very heavy heart.

“Words of Joy” is the title of the 82nd decad. But the stanzas belie the name. For instance, the love-lorn maiden sings thus:

The Giver, the Giver,
the Giver of the principal called mukthi,
the Lord Who abides
in the pilgrimage centre called Otri,
He Who would not mingle in the minds
of those who would not embrace (His feet),
The Lord Who wears
the fragrance-laden kondrai-flowers,
the great Lord Thiyaagar
sought by Vishnu and Brahma,
‘Come, will He; come, will He’; thinking thus,
I kept looking forward to His coming,
but, alas, He never came!

1566.II.82. inba-k-kilavi 3

The above song is a lament, yet the decad is called ‘Words of Joy’. Jalal-ud-din Rumi, the Persian Mystic of the 13th century, comes to our help in understanding this paradox. He sings:

How should I not mourn like night,
without His day
and the favor of His day-illuminating countenance?
I am in love with grief and pain
for the sake of pleasing my peerless King.
I complain of the Soul of my soul,
but, in truth, I am not complaining,
I am only telling.
My heart says it is tormented by Him,
and I have long been laughing at its poor pretence.

“Why do you Love Him?” is the refrain of the next decad. The mother of the love-lorn damsel points out to her daughter the disqualifications of her Beloved and asks her, “Why do you love Him?”. All things that are great about the Lord are listed as disqualifications in the songs of this decad. The mother addressing her love-lorn daughter says:

He has no town of His own,
He has mortgaged it,¹⁰¹
relations He has none,
enemies He has not,
He has never been born,
nor has He died anywhere,
speech He has not,¹⁰²
equals He has not,
mother, father, friends,
or persons born with Him,
none has He;
Oh daughter of mine,
why do you love Him?

1580.II.83 inba-p-pukazhchi 7

¹⁰¹ Otriyoor - Otri = mortgaged, oor = city.

¹⁰² refers to Lord Civan as Dhakshinaamoorthi instructing the four rishi-s in absolute silence through a pose of the hand only, i.e. through the chinmaya mudhra, the pose of gnosis. In this pose, the thumb and the index finger of the right hand touch each other at the tips and the other three fingers are stretched out.

The love-lorn maiden is seized with a great desire to witness again the state drive of her Beloved. She firmly declares that she

will not sleep,
* *
will not talk to her mother,

* *
 will not lie down on the mat,
 * *
 will not tie her loosened tresses,
 * *
 will not drink even a sip of water,
 * *
 will not deck her hair with flowers,
 * *
 will not cease weeping,
 * *
 will not take even a grain of food,
 * *
 will not sing or dance,
 * *
 will not desire anything in the world,

without witnessing her Beloved coming on a state drive. Here is one of the stanzas:

Oh damsel with coral lips!
 Unless I see and praise,
 with my palms joined over my head in obeisance,
 the dear Thiyaagar residing in Otri,
 where grow in abundance coconut groves,
 at He comes on a state drive
 with the crescent moon shining
 on His plaited looks,
 I will not eat even a grain of food!

1591.II.84 thiru-ulaa-t-thiramai 8

The bride's mother who, not long ago, was opposed to her daughter's love for the Lord of Otri, is amazed at the good fortune of her daughter in gaining the love of the Lord of Otriyoor, and congratulates her in the ten stanzas of decad 85 one of which is:

Oh daughter of mine
 with lisping speech sweet as honey!
 What kind of a thavam
 the thavam performed by you
 that you had union,
 to the cool delight of your body,
 with Him Who has a deer in one hand,
 comes on a young bull,
 wears the fragrant kondrai flowers,
 wears milk-white ash,
 is the Lord of all creatures,
 is of the color of coral,
 has on his many-plaited locks
 the cow-horn-shaped crescent moon?

1598.II.85 viyappu mozhi 5

In the pangs of unrequited love, our long-lorn maiden sings thus in one of the stanzas of the next decad:

He has never known entry
into the minds of false people,
He is impossible of being seen
by Brahma and Vishnu,
He, my Sire, abides in Otri,
where the goddess of good fortune resides,
He has not yet come;
the women of the world laugh at me;
I am stunned by the arrows of Cupid,
Oh damsel of rosy face,
I do not know what I am to do!

1606.II.86 punaraa virahu porunthuru vetkaiyin irankal 3

In this state of mind, as is the case with most of us in India, our love-lorn maid seeks the aid of a fortune-telling gipsy. She asks the gipsy:

The Lord Who has Dharma as His bull,
Lord Sankaran,
the Lord of the reputed unique city of Otri,
the Lord Who confers me-pointedness of mind,
Lord Thiyaagar,
He Who owns me,
will He come today,
or will He not come at all
and forget me?
Oh gipsy damsel
who know your art,
cast my horoscope and find a sign
and tell me!

1635.II.87 kuri aaraaichchi 2

Such an anxious love-lorn damsel gets a fleeting glimpse of her Beloved and wonders whether it is a dream or a fact. In this dazed condition, she addresses her companion thus:

The Lord with shoulders
wearing ornaments not worn
(such as serpents and bones),
the Lord on the Golden Hall,
the Lord Who relished as food the raging poison,
the Lord Who dwells in Thiruvotriyoor,
the Utterer of Truth,
the Lord abiding in the age-long Four (Veda-s),

He stood here (just now);
I lost heart not finding Him standing there any more.
Oh my companion,
was it a dream or a fact,
I saw?

1645.II.88 kaatchi arputham 1

Her power of endurance of the separation is sore tested and she bemoans to her companion that she can no longer endure the pangs of separation. She sings:

He would go begging for food
to appease the hunger of devotees who worship Him,
the pure One,
the Lord with the russet-colored matted looks
with a river in it,
my Spouse Who abides in Thiruvotri.
He has not yet come
to remove the misery
caused by the moon and the strength of Cupid.
Has He deceived me?
What shall I do, Oh my companion;
I can no longer endure this misery!

1659.II.89 aatraa-k-kaathalin irankal 5

In this state of mind she finds solace in dwelling on the beauty of her Spouse:

He is the Meaning contained in words,
He fills the minds of pure people,
He lives in Thiruvotriyoor
surrounded by fertile fields,
I saw Him coming on a state drive.
If stones and trees looked at Him
with tears of joy,
Oh damsel,
how shall I describe His boundless beauty?

1671.II.90 thirukkolachchirappu 6

She fears that her Beloved will go on dallying with her indefinitely and wishes to tie Him down by the bonds of matrimony. Therefore, she consults an astrologer to know whether there is matrimonial affinity between them. She requests the astrologer:

He is the Lord adorned
by the glowing ash on His eight shoulders,
God of everyone,
my Owner,
He is the Lord wearing on His chest
the garland of kondrai flowers

in which bees hum,
He is without any perfidy in Him,
He is the Lord of Otri
surrounded by cool groves;
Oh eminent Sir with the sacred thread,
please cast our horoscopes
and see whether there is matrimonial affinity
between Him and me!

1679.II.91 sothidam naadal 4

The mother of our love-lorn damsel is very greatly perturbed at her daughter's infatuation with the Lord of Otriyoor. She tries to persuade her to give up her foolish infatuation. She says:

Oh daughter of mine!
You thought
that He is One endowed with an eye on the forehead
which will do away with taking life in the womb,
that He is impossible of being seen
by Vishnu or Brahma,
that He destroyed by His silvery smile
the cities of those who would not surrender to Him,
that He is the rich man
called the Lord of Otri
where abides the goddess of wealth;
haven't you known about His going abegging?
What will you gain
by this unceasing infatuation?

1687.II.92 thiru-arut-perumitham 2

But the love-lorn damsel replies that she will never cease loving Him. She says:

Even if He Who owns the world
mortgaged his city,
even if He of unparalleled fame
wandered about as a Kaapaali¹⁰³
even if He, Who is unique,
danced in the burning ground
along with ghouls,
Oh companion of riotous eyes,
I will not give up, even in my dreams,
my love for Him!

1696.II.93 kaathal-sirappu-k-kathuvaa maalai 1

¹⁰³ Kaapaali - a name for Civan. One who has a skull for a begging bowl.

Throwing modesty to the winds she is ready to go to the Lord of Otri and declare her love and ask Him to wed her, but she is restrained by the fear that He may reject her love. Addressing her companion, she sings:

If I, swallowing my pride,
went of my own accord
to the Otri-abiding eminent One,
Whom the god in whose honor
the onam festival is held
praises and adores,
and said: “Do embrace me in marriage”,
Oh damsel with eyes like those of a doe,
suppose He asks: “Who am you?”,
would not all mankind despise me?

1708.II.94 aatraa virakam 1

There is no parallel in the poetry of Western countries to the love-poetry of the East, particularly Tamil poetry on Love. Much is lost in the translation, and very much more when only a stanza or two out of dozens are chosen for translation. And when the subject matter of such poetry is not mundane love but love of God Almighty, then we can say with absolute certainty that no similar literature exists in any of the languages of Europe or England or America. The forward minx that is our love-lorn maid decides to force the issue. She describes the unexpected result in the 95th decad. She sings:

And when I, leaving modesty behind,
came to witness the state drive
of the Lord of the eternal four Veda-s,
Thiyaagar of Thiruvotri,
the Wearer of snakes as ornaments
snatched the bangles from my flower-like hands
and ran away
without turning back to see me;
though I ran after Him,
I could not catch up with His flight!

1718.II.95 kaathal kaatchi 1

with the next three decads - the 96th, 97th and 97th – concludes the journey on the first lap of the Illuminative Way. We can pass over the 96th and 97th decads as 36 of the 42 stanzas of these two decads are repeated in the 98th with slight and unimportant modifications. The remaining six stanzas being of very much the same tenor as the 165 stanzas of the 98th decad, they too need not be considered here. We shall concentrate here on the 98th decad which is a very crucial one in the history of our Swaamikal’s journey on the Illuminative Way. As I said before, the first lap of the journey on this Way concludes with this decad.

This decad is called Ingitha Maalai. The primary meaning of the word ‘ingitham’ is ‘sign or indication to one’s thoughts’. It is not an outright and outspoken declaration

of one's thoughts but a delicate indication by a word or phrase (or even a physical gesture) which, having more than one meaning, can be correctly interpreted only by a person in tune with the mind of the speaker. In the decad, the subject matter of such indications is love. The 'indications' are couched in terms of the greatest intimacy, an intimacy appropriate to the nuptial chamber only. We may recall to mind that this decad is one of the series of 23 decads cast in bride and bridegroom relationship (naayaka-naayaki bhaavam) and is the last of that series. Unlike most of the decads in the Thiruvirutpaa, this decad has two sub-headings. One is "'Paataanthinai'. This means learning of the fame, prowess, munificence, love etc. of a person and proclaiming them to the world. This decad proclaims the fame, prowess, munificence etc. of Lord Civan of Otriyoor. The Second sub-heading is "Section on a Human Maid Failing in Love with God". The 'Human Maid' in this case is Raamalinga Swaamikal and the God is Lord Civan abiding in Thiruvotriyoor. We will find in the stanzas of this decad our love-lorn maid declaring to the world the fame, prowess, munificence , etc. of Lord Civan of Otriyoor. We will also find her declaring her love for Him which brushes aside all barriers of reticence. At the same time the love of Lord Civan for her is declared through her recounting His love for her. Lord Civan comes to her doors as a stark naked mendicant. And she offers the usual fare of rice. He has come abegging for her love, for her uninhibited love, for her surrender, for her unqualified, unreserved and total surrender. This is the esoteric meaning of this apparently erotic decad. Let us review a few stanzas. What is quite innocuous and, in fact, sublime in Tamil with its age-long history of poetry in the bride and bridegroom tradition will turn out to be obscene in an European language. Therefore, I do not propose to reproduce here any large number of stanzas from this decad. Nevertheless, as a crucial decad in the chapter on the Illuminative Way, some stanzas must be reproduced.

There are three commentaries to this decad. The earliest of them is not available. One of the commentators raises a question as to why our Swaamikal sang this decad and answers most naively that a charge had been leveled at our Swaamikal to my that he was capable of writing devotional poetry only and was not capable of writing love-poetry and that our Swaamikal composed this decad to refute that charge. A more improbable reason than this cannot be adduced.

Then what could be the true reason? It cannot be any other than that our Swaamikal wished to place on record a deeply spiritual esoteric experience in which he heard the Lord demanding his total surrender - an uninhibited surrender, shorn of all conventional wrappings, a surrender of the soul in all its nakedness. Our Swaamikal so surrenders himself to God in this decad that he may gain the union which is bliss everlasting.

I have given this rather long and involved preface to this decad that the uninitiated reader may not be repulsed by the intimacies displayed in the stanzas of this decad. Let us see some representative stanzas. There are a minimum of two meanings to each stanza. One is the overt sense in which the words were uttered by the love-lorn maiden. There is, in addition, the covert meaning which too may have been intended by the love-lorn maid or may be attributed to her words by the bold lover. The love-lorn maid be addressing her bosom companion says:

The Owner of the sacred Otri temple,
He Who bestowed grace on eminent Vishnu,

I addressed Him thus:
 “Oh Lord Who over-powered the great beast, (the elephant)!
 Do not go away,
 but be pleased to take food today in my house
 and, after taking rest, you may depart”.
 He said “Give”;
 and when I gave,
 He says “You have cheated me”.
 What is this, Oh my companion?

1777.II.98 ingitha maalai 6

The misunderstanding, if it can be said that there was one, arose out of the phrase:
 ‘neerekalavi makizhnthu indru!

This can be taken as:

Neer	ekalavi	makizhnthu	indru
You	do not go away	food enjoying	today
neere	kalavi	makizhnthu	indru
You	union (with me)	enjoying	today

Let me cast the song as the Lord understood it.

“ Do not go away,
 but be pleased to have union with me today,
 and go after taking rest in my house.”

The Lord took it as an invitation to love-making, and it is no wonder that when mere food was served as alms to Him, He felt cheated. In this song, we see the incipient advances on the Unitive Way.

This is the advance made by the soul to God for the union that is bliss.

Let us see a few more songs:

The Thief (of the hearts of His devotees)
 Who stands here
 with (mischievous) delight in His eyes,
 He says that His native place is Otri.
 With His sacred mouth
 which had sung the strains of the (Sama) Veda,
 He asked: “Give me alms”.
 I brought it.
 But He said:
 “ This is not what damsels offer”.
 I asked: “What have You in mind?”
 He replied: “What you have in mind!”.
 What does He mean, Oh my companion?

1779.II.98 ingitha maalai 8

The last but two lines according to the original admit of being understood as:

I said: “Those words won’t cut any ice with me”.

He replied:

“ I have gained my desire in Your thoughts”.

This would mean, “though You deny with your lips, your heart has betrayed you”.

Here is another song:

The Lord with the crescent moon,
and the aaththi and kondrai flowers
on His matted locks ,
He says that His place is Otri,
He came and said;
“ Oh Lady, alms please!”.
I said: “Cow’s milk is available here”.
He says: “Oh damsel with tresses
bedecked with a beautiful chaplet,
even if one is hungry,
would desire for women forsake a person?
If you have no food,
give her to me as my wife”.
What is this, Oh my companion?

1782.II.98 ingitha maalai 11

The play on words is in the phrase “varaivin suthai ingu undu” which may mean either “cow’s milk is available here” or “an unmarried girl is available here”. The unmarried girl in this case being our love-lorn maid standing before Him, Lord Civan asked her to become His wife. Here are two more songs in the same strain:

The Dweller in Otri abounding in fields,
He came, stood, and would not open His mouth,
but folded all His dextrous fingers
and (soon) spread out two of them.
With puzzled mind, I asked:
“ What do You mean?”.
Now, folding one more finger,
He points at my beautiful form
(with His index finger).
What is this, Oh my companion?

1803.II.98 ingitha maalai 23

The folded fingers were the little finger and the ring finger. With the other two and the thumb, one can indicate a ball or any spherical object. The surface meaning would be, “I want a ball of rice”. But, when in answer to the damsel’s question, the Lord pointed at her body, it would mean, “I want your breasts”. This is one more invitation to the soul for union with the Lord.

The beautiful Lord wearing the sacred ash,
 The Deity in Thiruvottriyoor,
 on one occasion, without uttering a word,
 touched with His finger His noted wrist
 and then touched His throat.
 I said: “Oh mendicant Sire,
 speak out what You want”.
 In reply, He points at Himself
 and, with desire, points at me.

1808.II.98 ingitha maalai 37

The significance of touching His wrist and throat is to say, ‘I want to slip a bangle on your wrist and tie a thaali round your throat’. ‘Both are symbols of marriage. Thus the Lord invites the soul for the mystic marriage with Himself. We are not concerned here with the skillful play on words as such but with the mystic significance of the decad which, as I said earlier, is the longing of the soul and the Godhead for mystic union. I shall quote only one more verse to make another significant point.

He is the munificent Lord
 of the city of Otri
 where the kayal fish sport
 in the sluices (of the fields).
 I said to Him:
 “ If I approach You in the proper manner,
 when will You confer on me with fervor
 the opportunity to serve You,
 Oh Lord with the cool hide of the elephant?”.
 Saying that He thought I referred
 to an ornament found in shops,
 He is stripping me of my loin-cloth;
 what is this, Oh my companion?

1775.II.98 ingitha maalai 4

Deliberately mistaking the words “uriyeerudai” (by which she meant “the cool hide”) to mean “uriyeer udai”, “strip me of my clothing”, He proceeded to do so. This poem, which appears on the surface to be a ribald one, in reality, conveys a great truth in the Quest of the Godhead. The soul has to be stripped of all the three primordial taints of aanavam, karmam, maayai, i.e. ignorance, karma, and the matrix of all material substances. The soul has to be, moreover, freed from all thatthwa-s, -the elements in which it is enveloped during its sojourn on earth. The soul has to appear in all its stark nakedness in the bridal chamber for union with the Godhead. The reader should meditate at length and in depth on this great truth in order to appreciate the place of

the Ingitha Maalai, the 98th decad, in the story of the journey on the Illuminative Way. He will discover that this is the occasion of the betrothal of the soul to the Godhead.

In some editions of the Thiruvirutpaa this decad ends with the following stanza which in other editions forms a separate decad.

Oh Lord of fascinating beauty!
Oh Lord Who have mortgaged (Your city)!
“Have You any home?”,
I asked.
He answered:
“Women will desire an eye-filling husband
in preference to a handful of wealth;
have I one wife alone!
In truth, I have many many wives,
Oh damsel with imperceivably slender waist!”.
What is this, Oh my companion?

1937.II.99 kan niraintha kanavan 1

The pun is on the word “manai” which means home as well as wife. In bridal mysticism God is the only male, all the souls are women. He is the bridegroom and the souls are the brides. So the Lord answers: “I have many many wives.” Thus, Raamalinga Swaamikal has woven in this decad of 165 stanzas the great truths of bridal mysticism.

From here we pass on to the second lap of the journey on the Illuminative Way, which takes us on to the Third Book of the Thiruvirutpaa. It is fitting that our Swaamikal, the love-lorn damsel who has been invited by the Lord for union with Him, who has been betrothed to the Godhead, should now praise the holy feet of the Lord. The feet of the Lord are not anatomical organs made of flesh and blood, bones and nerves. In the words of Saint Thirunaavukkarasar:

They are

the knowledge learnt (at the feet of the guru),
the Content of that Knowledge,
the resonant Veda-s
of the Vedic Brahmins,
and the sacrifices.
They constitute the heavens and the earth,
the brilliant beautiful red fiery sun
and the cool moon,
they are the source and the end
(of everything).
Such are the feet of the Lord in Aiyaaru.

In 128 lines – 4 stanzas, each of 192 feet - our Swaamikal develops the content of the above poem of Thirunaavukkarasar. If any epitome was needed for our Swaamikal's

poem, nothing else than the poem of Thirunaavukkarasar will be more appropriate and comprehensive. Thirunaavukkarasar's poem is the sootram, the aphorism, and our Swaamikal's poem is the Bhaashyam, elaborate treatise thereon. Our Swaamikal praisies the Lord's feet in gratefulness for His condescending to wish for and come forth for union with Him. This is the Te Deum of our Swaamikal to Lord Civan. I must confess to inability to translate any the least part of this decad. Four lines which appear as a preface to this poem pictures to us the state of mind of our Swaamikal at this point of time in his journey on the Path. He sings yearningly.

Whether today it would come or tomorrow itself,
or it would never come, I do not know, Oh my King –
the bliss of transcending even the etherial barrier
and remaining in the sohum state,¹⁰⁴
rid of the oppressive cruel delusion
of an aanava malam!

¹⁰⁴ the state of nirvikalpa samaadhi (uninterrupted union with the Godhead) when the breath sings the silent exultant song of so-hum; 'so' means 'He', 'hum' means 'I', i.e., He is me or I am He, aham brahma asmi.

Our Swaamikal will very soon be leaving the Illuminative Way and will be crossing the threshold of the Unitive Way where God with name and form will disappear and where ultimately the worshipper and the worshipped, the seeker and the sought, the soul and the Godhead, will merge into each other, In preparation for that day, in eager anticipation of that day, Our Swaamikal gratefully recalls to mind all the pilgrimage centres with temples where Lord Civan abides in name and form, and, in a sense, takes leave of them. This is the significance of Vinnappa Kalivenpaa, the 2nd decad in the Third Book of the Thiruvartupaa. In this decad of 417 kannis (couplets), our Swaamikal calls on the Lord abiding in 279 pilgrimage centres and makes a petition to Him with this preface:

Oh Father of immaculate Kumaran,
Oh my dear Father, Oh my Mother,
Oh Pure One Who have commandeered my mind itself
as Your temple!
Oh Lord Who possess handsome eight shoulders!
Oh Lord Who possess me,
Oh Lord with bees-buzzing kondrai garland
on Your chest!
Oh Lord easily accessible
to the eyes of Your servitors to feast on!
Oh Lord impossible of being seen
even in their dreams by Rudhran, Vishnu and others!
Oh Ancient One with the golden body
Who extirpate the ignorance
of even people like me on this earth
and bestow bliss!
Oh Lord with lightning-like red matted locks
Who bestow grace

on the Three, and the deva-s and every one
 that they may not be seized by fear!
 Oh Lord Who are benevolent
 to one and all in this vast world!
 Oh Lord Who are omnipotent!
 Oh Lord Who perform the great dance
 that all the throng of moving and unmoving creatures
 may altogether merge on the doomsday
 in the haven of Your feet!
 Oh Lord Who are prior
 to all the deva-s who have been (falsely) acclaimed
 as true gods in this world!
 Oh Lord Who perform the five essential offices
 (of creation, sustenance, destruction,
 withholding knowledge, and bestowal of grace)
 in the capacity of five deities,
 assuming for the purpose
 the colors of the pure white, gold, red,
 black and grey respectively!
 Oh Lord Who, becoming the five elements,
 such as the earth et cetera,
 becoming the two orbs of light,
 becoming the soul and naadam and vindu,
 pervade everywhere!
 Oh Lord Who wear the beautiful cool white ash!
 Oh Lord with the long lock of hair
 harbouring a river!
 Oh Lord
 difficult to find however much one may search for You!
 I have a petition to make to You.
 Do not mistake me and despise me,
 I am telling You everything as it is
 without hiding anything,

1962.III.2 vinnappa-k-kalivenpaa, couplets 280 to 291

In the next 79kanni-s (couplets) our Swaamikal catalogues mercilessly all his own failings. If one were to say that in all the 570 stanzas of the First Book and the 830 stanzas of the Second Book our Swaamikal had not so far accused himself of such shortcomings, such commissions of prohibited things and omissions of prescribed things, one will not be far wrong. Dwelling on the unique invitation by the Lord of Otri for union with him, our Swaamikal is overwhelmed by an enormous sense of unworthiness to become His bride. In this state of mind, he confesses in these 79 couplets to all the sins in the calendar, Summing up his narration of his failings, he says in the 370th couplet:

What is the need of sorting them out
 and relating them severally?
 All the evils discarded by dedicated ascetics
 are my riches,

and proceeds to say that it is not proper for the Lord to enslave him. He sings:

Therefore, it is not proper for You
to enslave this cur
who, like a ghost,
is crazily fond of this world.

Though the confessions of these sins seem to resemble the confessions in the First Book and the first 830 stanzas of the Second Book, yet there is a marked difference. The former confessions were made in a frame of mind bordering on despair and despondency whereas the confessions in Vinnappa-k-kalivenpaa are made with faith and hope that the Lord will, in His unparalleled mercy, bestow grace on him. The next fifteen couplets bear incontrovertible testimony to this. Prefacing his next sentence with the word ‘nevertheless’, our, Swaamikal recounts in the next 15 couplets Lord Civan’s exploits of unparalleled grace in the past and ends his Vinnappam – petition - with a heart-rending plea to the Lord not to forsake him. He sings:

Nevertheless, in the put, taking pity
on the creatures that throng this earth
and on the heavenly ones,
You ate the inedible cruel poison!

* * *

You conferred all the choicest boons
on even the cruel giant (Raavana)
who, thoughtless of the consequences,
uprooted the bamboo-flourishing mountain!

* * *

You carried on Your shoulders
all the snakes released against You
through means of a sacrifice
performed by the arrogant cruel Rishis
of distorted minds!

* * *

Saying, “Fear Not”,
You graciously enslaved the two
who opposed You in ignorance, saying:
“We are superior to You,
we will not bow down to anyone”!

* * *

The other day,
unable to bear the misery of the piglets
which could not suck milk
at the teats of their dead mother,
You, transforming Yourself into their mother,
gave milk to them from Your teats!

* * *

You voluntarily assumed serfdom
and sold a faggot of fire-wood
on behalf of Paanan

who had given word to the Paandiyan King
to sing in a competition
(with an alien musician)!

* * *

Once upon a time
becoming a servant of Vanthi,
who had fallen into indescribable trouble,
You carried even a load of mud
on Your immaculate crown!

* * *

You went about in the streets as a syce
for the sake of Maanikkavaachakar
who was sore distressed in his mind!

* * *

Besides being pleased in Your heart
at the blow delivered (on Your head)
by the bow of the great Arjuna,
You took delight
in the stone which was flung at You
(by Saakkiyar)!

* * *

You transformed into a rich king the wicked monkey
which (inadvertently) shook down (on Your head) the leaves
from the branches of the luxuriant bael tree!

* * *

You transformed into a ruler over the three worlds
the rat which attempted to drink the ghee
in the famous lamp bowl
and (thus) accidentally trimmed the dimming lamp!

* * *

You transformed
into noble Kochchenkan Colan the spider
who, in order to get rid of an ancient misery,
spun a web out of thread produced from its mouth!

* * *

Noting the hunger which tormented Vaakeesar,
who followed the right path,
You carried a packet of cooked rice
and went after him!

* * *

You went on foot as a messenger of love
to the house of a damsel
because You were the companion
of Sundarar praised by all the ancient poets!

* * *

You took as verily good deeds all the misdeeds
done by so many persons
who, in order to gain some benefit, acted
without thinking whether their ways were good or bad.

1962.III.2 vinnappa kalivenpaa couplets 372 to 386

Having listed all the acts of spontaneous and undeserved acts of grace performed by Lord Civan in the past, our Swaamikal praises the Lord in three more couplets before making his petition. He sings:

Though there are in this world of attachments
thousands of loving mothers,
yet, Oh loving Lord,
would they ever become like You?
And though there are numberless fathers,
who with pleasure look after their children,
Oh Lord, would they match You in love?
* * *

Oh my Lord,
noted for the ornaments worn by You,
I swear by You,
there is no surer succour for me
other than You!

1962.III.2 vinnappa kalivenpaa couplets 387 to 389

Now begins his vinnappam – petition. In 27 couplets he gives voice to his petition.

I am filled with remorse, Oh Sire,
note that it will befit You
to put up with all my misdeeds!
* * *

Oh Lord with the blossomy feet
unreachable even to Vishnu
who formerly performed penance therefor!
Don't betray me to the god of death!
* * *

On this earth surrounded by oceans
where milk-white conches abound,
do not make me sink once again
in the cruel sea of bondage of birth!
* * *

Do not make me nurture my body,
going therefor to the awful houses
of people who do not stay
in the ancient path (of righteousness)
and meditate on You!
* * *

Oh Lord Who dwell in the minds of men
of well established way of lift!
Do not direct me into evil ways!
* * *

I am plagued by my foolish mind
which does not obey my words

even though I entreat it saying:
“ Do please behave with restraint here (in this world)!”
I am confounded by my mind
which, like the mischievous monkey
which ascends on the branches of the tree
on which it dwells,
ascends the (trees of the) forest
which is this deceptive world!
* * * *

I am befuddled,
having unwarily drunk the toddy called lust,
the internal foe called maayai,
incomprehensible even to the alert mind!
* * * *

Oh Lord Who are like my clear eyes!
I am enamoured
by the company of men, the scum of the earth,
who do not worship Your lotus feet!
* * * *

Having fallen into the care-ridden sea of misery,
which causes irresolute fear,
I am tossed about with no support to cling to!
* * * *

I shudder for the (fate of the) people
who talk atheism
on meeting Yom devotees
who are staunch reciters of the Veda-s!
* * * *

I, a wretch who do not know
how to live (righteously)
through sharing my food with others,
do not know what to do for my redemption, .
and am sore puzzled!
* * * *

I am wearied in my mind
thinking and thinking whether Your mercy
which is the content of the Caiva Faith
is with me or not!
* * * *

I lose heart thinking
what I shall do when the cruel lord of death,
who performs on this earth
the function of killing,
approaches me!
* * * *

I shiver in my mind
like a drop of water on a lotus leaf,
emaciated as I am by indescribable diseases
which are the fruits of past karma!
* * * *

My (hard) mind melts into water
worrying that the bounteous Lord
with a chaplet of flowers on His crown
has not yet come to bestow His grace on me!
* * * *

With despicable tears streaming down,
my mind is worn out by waves of fear
wondering what more misery will come upon me!
* * * *

I am in a fix
with no one to rescue me from the cruel prison
called the burdensome life on earth!
* * * *

I am getting worn out
with one foot in the river of redemption
and the other in the mire
called unmanageable worldly life!
* * * *

In the desert called worldly life
of delusive appearance,
I am enduring tortures,
with a raging thirst for Your water of grace!
* * * *

Caught in the trap called the five sense-organs
by the bait called delusion,
I am withering away here like a toad
caught in the jaws of a cruel snake!
* * * *

By the death-dealing eyes of women,
that resemble the eyes of the sel fish,
I am sore enmeshed
like a fawn caught in a net!
* * * *

I swirl about caught in the whirlpool
that forms in the deluge
of the mirage-like kaleidoscopic world!
* * * *

Even though, in this world,
I do not have love for You,
I, at least, keeping singing loudly a dirge
saying that I am Your devotee!
* * * *

I will not merely stop with researching
into my misdeeds;
even if I forget You, I will not forsake
the practice of wearing the sacred ash;
(therefore), do not forsake me!
* * * *

Do not discard this mean fellow
even if Vishnu, Brahma and the heavenly ones

obstruct Your accepting me,
saying, “He is a wicked fellow!”.

* * * *

Do not drive me away
even if any others come to You
and counsel You to do so, saying:
“ This fellow is tainted by the odour
of the attachment-ridden world!”.

1962.III.2 vinnappa kalivenpaa, couplets 390 to 415

Now follows the crowning petition - the petition of petitions. He sings:

Do please encircle me (with Your grace);
admit me too into Your band of devotees;
hallowed be Your blossomy feet!

Maanikkavaachakar also prayed:

Rid me (of this cycle of births)
and induct me into the fold of Your devotees.

Commenting on this passage in my book, “Pathway to God through Tamil literature, (I) through the Thiruvaachakam”, I said:

“ Sri C. K. Subrahmaniya Muthaliyaar, the peerless devotee and commentator of Sekkizhaar’s Hagiography of the Saints of Tamilnaadu, has said thus: “Admission to the Galaxy of the Servitors of the Lord is stated in Caiva Siddhaantha as the acme of Civan’s grace”.

The saints of Tamilnaadu in the past, Maanikkavaachakar and all the 63 saints in the Calendar, all of them made one and the same petition, the petition for freedom from the bonds of death and birth. The tangible proof of the conferment of such freedom is the admission to the Galaxy of the Servitors of the Lord whose essential qualities have been described in eleven stanzas by Sekkizhaar which I have quoted already in this book. A petition for such an admission is a petition for mukthi, for freedom from the bonds of death and birth, a petition for union with the Godhead. It is not strange, therefore, that our Swaamikal, who is a scion of the unbroken line of the saints down the ages, makes the same petition.

Having made this petition, he seeks for the cooperation of his mind in the next decad, the 3rd in the Third Book. He devotes as many as 703 couplets - 1406 lines - to pleading with his mind to be on his side. For the mind does not die with the body in which a soul has taken birth but follows the soul from birth to birth till it is shed by the soul when it attains mukthi. The mind is the store-house of all the experiences, vaasanaa-s, and, therefore, of all the karma, acquired by the soul in birth after birth. It is, therefore, the seat of the diathesis of the soul, i.e. of the: latent proclivities which are the result of the vaasanaa-s.

Therefore, in this long decad our Swaamikal delivers a homily - we may say that he reads the Riot Act - to his mind in 703 couplets. This dialogue with the mind is on a plane very different from the 13 decade in which he addressed the mind in the Second Book. The past addresses to the mind were bitter diatribes against a recalcitrant mind. The present address is however not a diatribe, though the omissions and commissions of the mind are elaborately catalogued here too. It is a catalogue of past misdeeds rather than of present lapses in conduct.

How shall I describe or give a sample of the grandeur of this decad. I shall try and give an abridgement – I should say, abridgement of an abridgement.

Apostrophe to the Mind (3 couplets)

Oh my Mind,
may you ever remain
resplendently unshakable
like (Mt. Meru) the golden mountain!

* * *

Oh my Mind
who never desert me
not only in seven births including this one
but in whatever other births as, well!
Remain very quiet here by me
and listen to just this one word
which I, a youngster, utter.

Description of the attributeless Brahman (53 couplets)

He Who is the unique Prime Being Who pervades all the world,	4
He Who is eternal, attributeless, unmoving, immaculate, true,	
He Who is Is-incarnate, He Who is the (36) elements,	5
He Who is the Law, arrogance-extirpating a, u, m, and Om and their content,	14
He Who is big, small, neither big nor small, rarity of rarities!	20
He is He Who, as the transcendent Dancer, stands as unsurpassed bliss in the state of utter silence which prevails when the assault of the taints has ceased to be, the body, the storehouse of the thatthwa-s has ceased to be, speech and mighty mind have ceased to be, joy which causes remorse later on has ceased to be, earth and the heavens have ceased to be,	

fleeing day and night have ceased to be,
the knower, knowledge, and the known
have ceased to be.

53 to 56

Description of Brahman with attributes:

He Who hurries into the loving minds of devotees,
He Who is devoid of cruel evil,
He Who is the Lord of everyone,
He Who is omnipotent,
He Who is the color of the sunset,
He Who is the superbly clever One
 Who disappears when the four Veda-s,
 Brahma and Vishnu seek Him,
He Who seeps into one's vitals,
He Who seeps into the sentiency of those vitals,
He Who seeps into the epicenter of that sentiency,
He Who, abiding therein, seeps forth as ambrosia,
He Who,
 spreading like the clouds,
 which pour down clear water,
 and becoming cool like the moon,
tastes sweet like honey if a person
 abandons the base false (path),
 cherishes the true path,
 gives up egotism,
 holds fast to true experience,
 catches hold of the raft
 which is the rosy lotus flower-like feet of the Lord
 that arrogance, which is blazing like a fire
 on which ghee has been poured, may extirpated be,
 wears the white ash, bathes in a stream of tears
 while the body trembles and hair prickles on end,
 melts in his bones,
 melts in his vitals,
 melts in his joy-filled life,
 melts with love,
 becomes an embodiment of love,
 abandons all hardness of heart, and
daily pays obeisance in these words:
"Oh virtuous One!
Oh Lord with the matted locks
with a crescent moon thereon,
Oh Lord with the golden chaplet of flowers!
Oh our Succour!
Oh King Who bestow grace on Your devotees
in the very manner they wish for!
Oh Ambrosia!
Oh Sea of great bliss!
Oh our Kin!

57,58

On unassayable Gold!
 Oh Gem, Oh Pupil of my eye!
 Oh Real Being
 Who delight to ride on the bull!" 121 to 129

* * * *

Yes, such a One, indeed, is our God
 Who, taking us under His service,
 will bestow on us the perfect state
 which cannot be gained by even Vishnu! 157
 He is the Lord Who owns us
 without ever forsaking us
 wherever we may be on this earth
 or wherever we may be in heaven and other places.

* * * *

If we but see the beauty of His Ganga-laden locks
 and the grand beauty of the tender shoot of the moon, 208

* * * *

If we but see the gracious beauty
 of the Mother living on one side of Him
 like emerald embedded in a perfect ruby mountain,

* * * *

If we but behold the beauty
 of His famed red coral like form,
 our hunger will disappear;

* * * *

If we but keep seeing daily the splendor
 of the golden form of Him Who has as His abode
 the minds of those who are like water,¹⁰⁵
 all misery will be extirpated;

* * * *

105 "men who are like water" – There is a Thirukkural which says: if men with the qualities of water were to speak vain words, their eminence and repute will be lost at once." Manimekalai, a Tamil classic, describes the qualities of water thus: "It is lowly (humble), proverbially cool (gracious), sweet, and always of service." Lao Tse, the Chinese philosopher, says: "The beg of men is like water; water benefits all things, and does not compete with them. It dwells in the lowly places that all disdain – wherein it comes near the Tao."

If we but stand near those who,
 becoming embodiment of service to Him,
 sing His fame in poems,
 and listen to them,
 all karma will take leave of us;

* * * *

if we say but once
 "Oh eminent Lord Who reduced to ashes without delay
 the cities of the enemies",
 all the sorrows of the world would cease;

* * * *	
No sooner than You meditate on Him for one moment saying: “ Oh transcendent Lord of Bliss Who dwell in the core of the mind which ever sings Your praises”, all evil will flee from you.	232 to 237
* * * *	
But, alas, if I tell you; “ Go unto the flower that is His dancing feet”, you retrace the step you put forward.	238
* * * *	
Even after hearing from amidst the sea of books the gracious manner of His bestowing the Sea of Milk on Vishnu who feeds the world and on (Upamanyu) the child who cried for milk, you do not bow down to Him;	
* * * *	
Is not this one instance sufficient for those with wisdom to gain love for Him?	239, 240
* * * *	
Righteous men have been proclaiming the event of the Lord carrying a load of fire-wood and hawking it about as a servant of Paanar, to the distress of his good holy blossomy feet; is not this event alone sufficient for a person to pay obeisance out of true love?	255,256
* * * *	
If the swaying elephant, the squirrel, the monkey, the loving spider, the ant, and the long snake performed worship to Civan, who would not be delighted to undertake worship (of Civan)? But slothful you, devoid of all resoluteness, do not know the love of worshipping His feet.	
* * * *	
If a crane, hearing with love the glory of our Lord with the russet-colored matted locks, desisted from taking food, and, controlling its five senses, engaged in yogic practice and sought the bliss of mukthi that it may be freed of all the perfidy of the world, whom shall I mention as people who do not seek mukthi?	257 to 261
* * * *	
Oh pitiless Mind of mine,	

you, on the other hand,
do not think of that bliss even a little while.
Amazing, indeed, is your condition!
I am everyday telling you that our great Lord
is One Who has unto you a love
greater than the love of all who love you. 262,263

* * * *

But though I prostrate at your feet
endless crores of times,
you take no pity on me
but wallow (in the mire of the world). 278

Our Swaamikal goes on to condemn at length the love of the mind forlass, lucre, and land and, after delivering a homily on the evanescence, of youth and perishability of the body, says:

When the cruel Yama, king of death,
sends his emissary today or tomorrow,
or at any time of the day,
even though we may say:
“Listen, Oh Sir, we are good people”,
he would not go away, he would not;
even if we refuse to go with him,
that will not avail us. 593 to 595

* * * *

Before that day comes,
let us seek to gain the day
of gaining the grace of the Primeval Being. 598

* * * *

“ if the roaming mind would but settle down,
all the distracting universe would vanish,
and the Feet which perform the great dance
would be attained
and thereby all blessings including mukthi
would be gained”;
thus all the Veda-s proclaim your greatness. 608 to 610
Therefore, abandon all your meanness
and seek the true joy which I tell you about.
If You ask me
what that eternal joy is, 612,613
(it is not the ephemeral joys
which the world talks of).

* * * *

It is the bliss of being immersed
in the transcendent Civan,
in the manner of fire and its heat,
after abandoning the belief
that you are the thatthwa-a
of which the embodied you are made of,
and, without getting entangled

in any of the three malamas,
 becoming poised inwardly and outwardly
 in a place where there is neither night or day
 which are ever to be despised.

620 to 622

* * * *

If you ask how this can be accomplished,
 it cannot be gained
 if you remain in the state you are.
 You have to hold on firmly to attachment to Him
 Who has no attachments.

623

The Swaamikal repeats the same means which Thiruvalluvar two thousand years ago
 said in his pithy maxim:

Cultivate attachment to Him without attachments;
 hold on to that attachment
 in order to leave other attachments.

(350)

In the next 28 couplets (624 to 651) our Swaamikal goes on to say in detail how this
 cannot be achieved and exhorts the mind to abandon its past ways of life. And after
 describing in the next 47 couplets (652 to 698) the qualities of the devotees who have
 gained this bliss, our Swaamikal comes to the crowning piece of his advice to his
 mind in the 699th to the 702nd couplets which are:

Who else other than the perfect ones
 can know the greatness of the perfect ones?
 Be rid of your misery
 and, standing in their assembly,
 praise them with rejoicing;
 find out the acts of humble service
 acceptable to their sacred feet,
 and perform them ever and ever.
 With the grace of God itself as your tongue
 chant Lord Civan's elevating mystic five letters;
 meditate on them with unceasing love,
 contemplating nothing else than the feet
 of the Pillar of Red Effulgence
 which has the thumbai flower on Its crown.

699 to 702

* * * *

He concludes the long homily with a benediction.
 Leaving the fruitless life called evil
 may you ever and ever abide with me,
 rejoicing in the life of union with the Lord.

703

Purification of the mind, abandonment of all attachments other than to the feet of the
 Lord, service to devotees, chanting the mystic five letters, and contemplation of the
 Godhead is the royal pathway to mukthi. This is the message which the Swaamikal
 offers to us in this long decad of 1406 lines.

With a mind won over to his side after this long plea, our Swaamikal can now confidently march on the Illuminative Way. From pleading with his mind our Swaamikal now turns to the Lord and pleads thus:

Oh splendors Content of the glorious Veda-s,
Oh true Brahman
going by the name of Embodiment of Gnosis,
Oh transcendent Bliss
sought for by righteous eminent men!
Do enjoin that love to You
may grow in me.

1968.III.4 civa-nesa-venpaa 1

If You make me think,
I, poor wretch, will think of You, calling on You thus:
“ Oh Crazy One, Oh Eternal One, Oh Immaculate One!”
If You later on make me forget You,
I will forget You;
Oh Lord Who begot everything!
Tell me what is in my power to do!

1969.III.4 civa-nesa-venpaa 2

Oh munificent One,
Who delighted in the honey-sweet rice-cake of Vanthi!
Is it not a matter for laughter for me to say
that I meditated on Your feet,
forgetting that,
making the sea of attachments dry up,
Your golden grace came into my mind
and made me meditate on You?

* * * *

Is it not a matter for laughter
that I should say
that I am singing about You
choosing honey-like sweet words therefor,
forgetting that You,
the effulgent Being in heaven,
in the generosity of Your heart,
graciously bestow on me
sweet words and splendid subject?

1974, 1975.III.4 civa-nesa-venpaa 7, 8

Students of the Thiruvaachakam, will recall the lines of the last stanza of the decad with which Maanikkavaachakar's journey the Illuminative Way closes. He sang:

You gave Yourself to me,
and me You took in exchange,

Oh Sankara!
Who is the cleverer of us two?
Infinite bliss I gained
what did You gain from me?

Even so, our Swaamikal sings towards the close of his journey on the Illuminative Way.

There is something to be gained by me
through You;
that You know;
what is there to be gained by You from me?
if You would please let me know it,
I shall perform it with the greatest eagerness
and be redeemed;
but, Oh my Mother,
I do not know of any such thing here!

Though our Swaamikal had not consummated his marriage and had great aversion to married life, yet he is willing to risk a marriage again, provided he can gain the grace of God thereby. He sings:

Even though You had not come
to my marriage
as You did formerly
on the occasion of the marriage of Sundarar
and forcibly took possession of him,
yet even if one member of Your band of angels
were to come for one moment
and call me away,
apart from the marriage I contracted before
I would willingly go through one more.

2019.III.4 civa-nesa-venpaa 52

Having thus declared his insignificance, his nothingness before the presence of the Lord, having thus abandoned all claims to any I-ness, our Swaamikal makes his petition, the same petition which he made in his Vinnappa-kali-venpaa, the same advice he gave to his mind in the “Advice to his Mind”, the same petition which Maanikkavaachakar made, the same petition which everyone, according to the Caiva-siddhaantha, should make to the Lord. He sings:

Oh my Father,
if You betray me to the vile ones
whom the eyes shrink from even seeing,
it will not befit Your grace;
tell the assembly of Your devotees
who seek You within themselves,
“Admit this fellow to your assembly,
he is My devotee”.”

Oh Lord with the eye on the forehead
Whom Kaanappan worshipped,
Oh our Father in the heaven of true gnosis!
Here is my petition unto You.
There are many on earth
belonging to the religious sects
who worship petty gods in heaven;
do decree that I do not join them.

* * * *

Oh Lord with the plaited matted locks
which glitter like gold!
I do not recognize anyone but You;
You are my refuge
whether You beat me in view of my misdeeds,
or You hug me to Your bosom;
I have taken hold of the raft which is Your feet!
Though, in moments of my evil nature,
I might chase other things,
yet, in moments of my good nature,
note that I cherish Your glory;
Oh wise Lord,
with Your tinkling anklet-girt golden feet,
which kicked the god of death,
as witness,
I declare I have never said
anything but the truth!

* * * *

Do graciously put up with all my misdeeds
on this earth;
note, Oh my Father,
that I have sought refuge at Your feet;
till the time comes for me
to gain Your feet on this earth,
do graciously ordain
that I keep on hearing Your glory
from Your devotees!

Forthwith, the Swaamikal breaks into a paean of praise of the Lord - of Lord Mahaadevan, for his petition has been heard and he would soon be stepping on to the Unitive Way - the Way which will lead him on to inseparable union with the Godhead. 68 out of 100 stanzas of Mahaadeva maalai, the 5th decad in the Third Book, are in pure praise of the Lord. Our Swaamikal breaks into sweet song on the glory of God even as the birds of the air break into sweet song on the glory of God every morning. I wish I could reproduce all the 100 stanzas of this decad. It will not be true if I trotted out the excuse that consideration of space and coast prevent me

from doing so. The truth is that I am not capable of translating the decad which is replete with the glory of the Godhead in a manner befitting the exalted subject. I shall therefore restrict myself to one for each of ten stanzas in the first 68 stanzas.

Oh Lord Who,
becoming the entire universe,
becoming the life therein,
becoming the Light which is the life of the lives,
becoming the visible Presence which experiences
 none of the clashing forces in the world,
becoming the good of all,
becoming the vision of true gnosis,
becoming the resplendent firmament of gnosis,
becoming the transcendent etherial state,
becoming One without an equal,
becoming boundless bliss of gnosis,
are established as sat-chit-aananda,
– Reality, Gnosis, Bliss.

2071.III.5 mahaadeva maalai 1

Oh Lord Who
become gold, gem, relish (of all pleasures),
become the externals, the internals the pure,
become earth, mountain, sea,
become the sun, the moon, and other things,
become the beginning, end, and middle,
become the whole,
and Who, becoming reverberant noise of thunder,
spread everywhere as lightning
and appear as the cloud
which pours down marvelous grace
that the flood of bliss may be created.

2082.III.5 mahaadeva maalai 12

Oh Ether,
Oh Wind that blows in the ether,
Oh Fire that originates in the wind,
Oh Lord with the form of water,
 which is latent in the fire,
Oh Earth which is latent in the water,
Oh Immobile and Mobile Life on that earth,
Oh Flesh,
Oh goodly Life,
Oh Light in the mind,
Oh Experience by the mind,
Oh Honey that seeps out of that experience,
Oh the three kinds of Fruit,
Oh red Sugar-cane,

Oh Sweetness of the sugar-cane-treacle,
Oh Lord Who are the cumulation
of the sweetness!

2095.III.5 mahaadeva maalai 25

Oh whirlpoolless Flood of the grace of mercy,
Oh Light of the lamp
that needs no trimming,
Oh Orb that unceasingly spreads its rays in the sky,
Oh unique One Who graciously bestow bliss
on Your devotees,
Oh Lord Who shine
from within the etherial region of utter silence,
remaining unknowable by the heaven-dwellers
through their eyes or speech or mind,
austerities of the body,
or any other reputed means!

2109.III.5 mahaadeva maalai 39

Oh shoreless Sea
Which swells as it fills when all the rivers
called the several seething religions
enter and mix in it!
Oh Goal Who with eyes everywhere
see everything!
Oh Tree Who, spreading its shade
for Your devotees to stay under,
get rid of their weariness
brought on by delusion!
Oh lotus-flower-filled Tank!
Oh Moon Who rise
that the blue lotus of gnosis may open out,
Oh omnipotent God;
Oh Deva Devaa! 1

2118.III.5 mahaadeva maalai 48

Oh Deva Devaa,
Who hid Himself
from those who, while many crores of aeons sped by,
stood with one leg poised on a needle
placed in the middle of a raging fire,
and controlled their five sense-organs
while the body withered without food or sleep
and the bones stood out in their bodies;
Who hid Himself
from ascetics of long yogic practice,
Who hid Himself from the immortals,

Who are blended in the minds
of holy men of ripe wisdom
as embodiment of the greatest gnosis
of all gnosis.

2125.III.5 mahaadeva maalai 55

Oh Deva with three eyes,
my life You are,
and Life of my life;
Succour to my dear life You are,
You are the mother who bore me,
and my father too,
You are my rare wealth,
and the love in my heart, as well;
You are my right conduct,
and my rightful kin,
You are my good Guru,
You are the Lover
Who had union with me,
You are my living,
You am the Chief Who protect me.

2138.III.5 mahaadeva maalai 68

After this exhaustive paean of the glory of Lord Civan, our Swaamikal expresses his grief at his being singled out for abandonment on earth. He sings:

Oh great Lord Who ride the bull,
Oh King,
Oh unique Succour to my dear life,
Oh Ambrosia,
Oh our Civan with matted locks
adorned by honey-laden kondrai flowers,
Oh resplendent Flame of Thillai,
Oh Light filling the life
which has entered my fleshly body,
Oh Lord Who own everything,
contemplating Your feet
devotees are climbing up to heaven;
I alone, a sinner, filled with delusion on this earth,
am suffering here.

2140.III.5 mahaadeva maalai 70

Students of the Thiruvaachakam will recall to mind a similar plaint by St. Maanikkavaachakar. He bewails thus:

But He bade me, this cur,
to come to His form-pervading Hall

in goodness-abounding Thillai,
and, in His grace, abandoned me here,
while, as the grace-receiving devotees,
who came along with Him that day,
each and each merged in Him,
He too, in His grace, coalesced with them.

Thiruvaachakam, decad 2, lines 127 to 131

Our Swaamikal concludes his paean of praise with this plea in the last stanza of the decad,

Oh transcendent Being of Grace,
Oh great Life of Bliss
Who dance on the Hall in Thillai,
Oh Civan Who have taken abode
in the entire lucid minds
of love-filled devotees,
Oh God Who are the embodiment
of true wisdom,
if You take into consideration
even the very least of the misdeeds
done by this fool of deluded mind,
I will never get out of the darkness-filled sea of birth;
do think of raising me out of that sea,
Oh Lord of bliss!

2470.III.5 mahaadeva maalai 100

The next decad concludes the account of our Swaamikal's journey on the Illuminative Way. It is called "Thiruvurul Muraiyeedu", "Plea for the Holy Grace". This decad of 232 stanzas may be said to be an elaboration of the theme of the last stanza of the previous decad where our Swaamikal petitioned God thus:

Do think of raising me
out of the darkness-filled sea of birth.

Enlarging this plea, our Swaamikal entreats in heart-rending terms thus:

Losing heart with doubt
(whether I will receive Your grace or not),
alas, I am tossed about
worse than a piece of straw!
Oh my Father will not Your mind
Take pity on me at least now?
What is this injustice!
Have You no cool graciousness
Only to me?
Is it that my devilish cruel karma
Comes and counsels You so?

2171.III.6 thiruvavul muraiyeedu 1

In stanza after in this long decad the refrain is in the same strain thus and thus:

Oh my Father
You have not taken pity on me;
is this befitting Your grace?
* * * *

Oh Lord Who own the Kingdom of Grace,
Grant me Your feet!
* * * *

Would even the cotton fluff,
Oft quoted as an example by people,
ever suffer the kind of misery I suffer!
If You do not ask me, “Why are you suffering?”,
and take pity on me,
what shall I do?
* * * *

Do bestow on me Your cool grace!
* * * *

When the child covers its face
With its beautiful hands
and cries for sweet milk,
does the mother cover her breast?
Do bestow grace on me!
* * * *

Oh my Father, even after seeing
the weeping face of his wretch,
You have not taken pity on me.
* * * *

Oh my Darling!
Oh Medicine that eradicates
the disease of birth!
Oh Lord with the matted locks
Who have accepted the billowy Ganges!
Oh Crown-Jewel of the immortals!
As worthy of Your pity
You should consider even me,
who, having fallen into the dark sea of family-life
and laden with the misery of cares for food and the like,
am stranded here
with my perfidious heart shrivelled thereby!

2402.III.6 thiruvavul muraiyeedu 232

On this note of heart-rending cry for the grace of God, our Swaamikal leaves the Illuminative Way and steps on the threshold of the Unitive Way. While this happens on the spiritual journey towards the Godhead, the mundane sojourn in Madras ends hem and our Swaamikal sets out in his 35th year to Thillai which had been calling

him incessantly for over a decade or, perhaps, more. On his way to Thillai, he visits various celebrated shrines of Lord Civan, such as Pullizukkuveloor, present day Vaitheeswarankoil, Thiruvaaroor, Thirukkannamangai, Pazhamalai, present day Viruddhachalam, Thiruvathikai Veerttanam, Thiruvannamalai and arrives at Karunkuzhi, a village about three miles from Vadaloor where he will remain for the next nine years of his life. He begins this stay at Karunkuzhi most fittingly with six decads of songs addressed to Lord Civan abiding in the form of Lord Ganesan at the outskirts of that village. Our Swaamikal was never a worshipper of petty deities or many gods. The Lord Ganesan he is addressing in these six decads in no other than Lord Civan going under the names of Siddhi Vinaayakar etc. The following lines from the decad of “Homily to his Mind” from which we have given copious extracts earlier in this book, will bear testimony to this. Our Swaamikal sings:

He Who is the Primeval Being
Whom the deva-s ardently worship
raining flowers at His feet
to the chant of “Hara Hara”,
He Who is Ganesan
exhibiting His greatness
in wonderful form
impossible for any deva-s to view,
He Who is Ganesan
Who all over the world bestows
all that is desired for
by those Who adore and praise Him,
He Who is Ganesan
Who bestows His grace on us
for all to see,
by removing all the obstacles that face us
that we may thrive well,
He Who is the Saami, the sea of grace,
Who bestowed on Brahma
Om, the entire content
of the glorious ancient Veda-s,
He who is Guhesan
Who extirpates the stain
of the perfidious malams
and bestows the true path,
putting an end to all disputations,
He is the God
Who, extirpating evil,
and preventing the ruin of the worlds,
added the Ganga on to His russet locks.

1965.III.3 nenjarivurutthal, lines 131 to 137

Bracketing as he does the references to Ganesan and Guhan within the two lines at the beginning and end of the above extract, our Swaamikal leaves us in no doubt about how he looks upon Lord Ganesan and Lord Guhesan. They are nothing but

manifestations of the one and only God, Lord Civan. We may recall to mind that Maanikkavaachakar too addressed Lord Civan as:

“ Oh my Father Who remove all obstacles”.

Our Swaamikal begins his journey on the Unitive Way very befittingly with the invocation to Lord Civan in His manifestation as Lord Ganesan, that aspect of the Godhead which removes all obstacles in the path of the devotee.

9. ON THE THRESHOLD OF THE UNITIVE WAY

I have been talking of the Purgative Way, the Illuminative Way and the Unitive Way. I have also explained what they are. In the context of this chapter, I may offer a further explanation which will enable the reader to understand more clearly what these ways are. I said elsewhere that they are ways not in space but in the mind. Being so, another important feature of these ways is that they are not clear-cut ways, each standing by itself. Most of my readers will be familiar with the three gunaa-s, qualities. They are the Satwic, the Raajasic, and the Thaamasic qualities. We may translate them as the Pure or Harmonious, the Active or Passionate and the Inert or Slothful qualities. It is said that these qualities are never found in anyone as entirely and purely harmonious, or entirely and purely active or entirely and purely slothful. They are usually found mixed, and, depending on the vast predominance of any one of the qualities, a person is characterized as being satwic or raajasic or thaamasic. Similarly, in the case of these three ways as well, a man is said to be travelling on the Purgative Way or the Illuminative Way or the Unitive Way depending on the preponderance of the type of spiritual experiences he is passing through. We will not be far wrong if we call the Purgative Way as the Thaamasic Way, the Illuminative Way as the Raajasic Way and the Unitive Way as the Satwic Way. When we say that a person is travelling on the Unitive Way, we must remember that occasionally that person may slip down to the Illuminative Way or even to the Purgative Way. Till the very last moment of eternal union with the Godhead no mystic is ever confident of his worthiness for that crowning act of grace. So he weeps and laments, wails and worries, again and again. He declares again and again his unworthiness for the deservedly conferred grace of God. Thus, slipping back and recovering again, our Pilgrim, nevertheless, makes headway on the Unitive Way. We should keep this in mind when we follow in the footsteps of our Swaamikal as he proceeds on the Unitive Way.

In his case, it is a long journey of no less than sixteen years, a journey covered by Three Books, 197 decads 3248 stanzas of the Thiruvartupaa. Our Swaamikal, most fittingly, commences the journey with obeisance to the foot of the Lord, to the foot of Lord Natarajaa of Thillai, the left foot lifted in the pose of the eternal dance which actuates the universe. This is the foot under which He will gain ultimate union with the Godhead in course of time. This is the foot which was placed on his head as an accolade of conferment of mukthi, bliss everlasting. He sings:

Oh Flame which,
bestowing light on all the orbs of light
in the heavens,
fills the great etherial space!
Oh Cloud
which produces rain of true gnosis
which yields all produce
without seeds!
Oh great God with an eye in the forehead!
Oh God Who perform the dance of mercy
on the Hall in Thillai!

Oh Lord of the golden proscenium!
Oh Guru of the beautiful cohort
of merciful servitors!
Oh Lord with the lotus-like foot
lifted in dance-pose!
Which is the day
when I will arrive at the land
of grace-filled gnosis,
having crossed the forest
which is the delusion that besets the mind,
the forest where all the cruel beasts,
which are all the imaginable desires,
wander about unceasingly,
and where the soul,
enveloped in utter darkness of ignorance
without a gleam of light anywhere,
is sunk in terrifying darkness?

Do bestow Your grace on this cur
that that day may be this very day.

2572.IV.1 kunchithapaatha-p-pathikam 2

This decad is followed by a decad of obeisance to the Lord. Our Swaamikal sings:

Bestow Your grace on me You should;
obeisance to You, Oh my King!
Extirpate the darkness
that has risen in my mind, You should;
obeisance to You, Oh my Wisdom!
My mind should die,
delusion with this world should cease;
obeisance to You, Oh my Guru,
Oh Gem with the matted locks
where the moon and the river flourish!

2581.IV.2 pottri-t-thiruppathikam 1

Our Swaamikal proceeds to pay his obeisance to the Mother in the next decad. He sings:

I have desire
for the truly rich life
wherein I will praise the feet
of the adepts in the gnosis of bliss
who, wearing the sacred ash
and the bright rudraksha beads,
abide in the lofty path of Caivism,
and, well established
in the immaculate five letters,

perform the worship of Your feet,
 and gain the state of union with You
 in all its glory.
 Oh Ambrosia
 Who have a greatness
 inconceivable by Brahma, Vishnu and Indra!
 Oh Gem which sits atop the heads
 of the goddess of wealth, goddess of learning,
 goddess of victory and all other women!
 Oh Gem in Whom
 the Lord of the matted locks
 with a river in it,
 the eminent One abiding in Thillai,
 takes delight!
 Oh Uma,
 the creeper of Bliss
 embracing the transcendent Civan,
 Who have graciously borne
 all the spheres
 and the moving and unmoving creatures
 therein!

2600.IV.3 ammai thiruppathikam 10

Thus, our Swaamikal steps onto the threshold of the Unitive Way with a prayer to Ammaippan for conferment of grace to gain his goal, admission to the galaxy of devotees, which is the external sign of the internal dwelling of God within him. Thomas Merton describes this state thus:

“And here, when contemplation becomes what it is meant to be, it is no longer something poured out of God into a created subject, so much as God living in God, and identifying a created life with His own life so that there is nothing left of any experimental significance but God living in God.”

We may recall to mind the prayer of Maanikkavaachakar on a similar occasion. He sang:

The Mistress dwells in You,
 within the Mistress You dwell;
 Oh our Primal Lord, Whose being knows no end,
 if in the core of Your servant both of You really dwell,
 come forward and bestow on me,
 Your servant,
 the grace amidst Your servants to dwell,
 that my heart's purpose may be fulfilled.

Thiruvaachakam 21.1

Having thus once again reiterated his position, our Swaamikal makes his first obeisance to Lord Natarajaa in the temple at Thillai which is now called

Chidambaram. Thillai was the original name of this place. The name arose out of the fact that the city was situated in an area abounding in a plant called Thillai which grows as shrubs. Maanikkavaachakar of the 3rd century A. C. refers to Thillai as Thillai-moothoor, the ancient Thillai. The name of the temple therein is Chit-ambaram. Chit means knowledge, gnosis. Ambaram means atmosphere, sky, ether. We may translate Chidambaram as Firmament of Gnosis. The temple in Chidambaram has been in existence since prehistoric times, Whereas all other temples in Tamilnaadu are referred to as the temple at a particular place such as the Temple at Madurai, the Temple at Raameswaram, the Temple at Pazhani, the Temple at Kaanchipuram, the Temple at Thillai is merely called 'Kovil', The Temple. Such is the fame and glory of this temple.

It is commonly said that God created man in His own image, but, perhaps, it will be more true to say that man conceived God in his own image. Man, all down the ages, from the prehistoric times to the present day, has had a compulsive craving to give God form and name. Those who have slandered and ridiculed the Hindus as idol-worshippers will find, if they would search into their own hearts with self-destroying honesty, that they too are idol-worshippers. In any case, it is better to worship God in the form of a human being than to idolize men and worship them as gods which is what the entire world is doing today. The sages among the Hindus, in their infinite wisdom, have provided mankind with idols in their temples that they might proceed from the contemplation of God with neither form and name to the contemplation of God with neither form nor name. Speaking about the roles of images in Hindu worship, Rev. Fr. M. Amaladoss, S.J. said (in a paper read at a Seminar on Prayer held at Bangalore in April 1973):

“The role of images in Hindu worship is a difficult question. On the one hand, there is a deep sense of the transcendence of God in any relation to any symbols and images in worship to represent Him, and the whole process of worship is thought as symbolic. . . . The image is not a mere symbol either. It is a kind of a sacrament. It is not God; but his presence is localized there. The image is not merely the conveyor of a presence; it concretizes it in some way. This presence is no mere blessing. The God invoked comes there.”

No Hindu, in my opinion, could have interpreted the worship of God through images in any better manner. The temple at Chidambaram too has its lingam just like other temples, the amorphous representation of Lord Civan. The temple, however, derives its importance from the representation of Lord Civan as the Dancer. The form is called Nataraja, the Dancer King. This form may be called an idol. But it is an idol with a difference.

On the facing page there is a picture of Lord Civan as the Dancer, Natarajan. Maanikkavaachakar worshipped God in the temple of his heart, but on occasions when he worshipped Him externally he worshipped Him as the Dancer in the Golden Hall in the temple in Thillai, modern, Chidambaram. He does not refer to Him by the name of Nataraja but as 'Thillai-k-koothan', 'Ambalaththul Aadi', 'Ponnam- -balavan', etc., all referring to Lord Civan as the Cosmic Dancer.

Civan as the Cosmic Dancer is a purely Tamilian concept and images of Civan in the pose of a dancer are found only in temples in Tamilnaadu or in temples built under Tamilian influence in other places.

I reproduce an extract from the Art of Indian Asia by Zimmer (Vol. II, pages 122, 123) which will explain, far better than I can, the significance of God represented in the form of Nataraja, the Dancer King.

THE EXTRACT

“Civan as Natarajan, the King of Dancers, is, in His manifestation as Nrtya-murthi, the comic dancer. He is here the embodiment and manifestation of the eternal energy in five activities (pancha-kriya).

1. Creation, pouring forth, unfolding (srsti)
2. Maintenance or duration (sthti)
3. Destruction or taking back (samhaara)
4. Concealing, veiling, hiding, the transcendental essence behind the garb of apparitions (thirobhava)
5. Favouring, bestowing grace through a manifestation that accepts the devotee (anugraha).

“The God is dancing on the dwarfish body of the demon, Apasmaara Purusha, forgetfulness, loss of memory¹⁰⁶, who represents ignorance, the destruction of which brings enlightenment, true wisdom, and release from the bondage of existence, Nataraja’s upper right hand carries a small drum shaped like an hour-glass; for sound was the first element to evolve in the unfolding of the universe, sound being the characteristic of ether (according to the Indian view) which is the subtle form of cosmic matter. The upper left hand, in ardha-chandramudra (the half moon pose), bears a tongue of flame; the element of the final destruction of the universe. Thus, in two of His hands are symbolised the balance of creation and destruction.

¹⁰⁶ This demon of forgetfulness, called Muyalakan in Tamil, may be said to correspond to what Kahlil Gibran calls ‘a shapeless pigmy!’ He says: “Like the ocean is Your God-self But the God-self does not dwell alone in your Being. Much in you is still man, and much is not yet man. But a shapeless pigmy that walks asleep in the mist searching for its own awakening.”

“ His lower right hand, in abhaya mudra (the fear-not gesture) bestows protection, while his lower left hand in the gaja-hasta posture, imitating the outstretched trunk (hasta) of an elephant (gaja), points to the lifted left foot as the refuge or salvation of the devotee. This foot is being worshipped in order to gain union with God and therewith enlightenment. Whereas His right foot – planted on the demon of forgetfulness – symbolises Civan’s world-creative force driving life monad into the sphere of matter, the lifted foot symbolises their release. The two feet thus denote the continuous circulation of consciousness into and out of the condition of ignorance.

“The ring of fire surrounding the figure (prabhamandala, called Thiru-vaasi in Tamil) symbolises the dance of nature, (prakriti) which is the life process of the universe and its creatures, and within which there is taking place eternally the dance of the prime mover, the Lord God..

“According to the Hindu Caivite view, on the other hand, it is not different from the wisdom-knowledge dance, since it is itself a reflex of the transcendental being of God.

“The whole form, finally, may be read as the mystic Om or a, u, m which is the totality of the world and the psyche in the four states of awareness known as:

1. being awake
2. being in a dream
3. being in dreamless sleep
4. being reintegrated in the pure, transcendental essence of divine reality.

“Each of the four states is expressed in one of the four parts of A U M; a, u, m, respectively, and the following silence.”

Here ends the extract.

The Caiva Siddhaanthins interpret the form, in addition to the above, as representing the mystic five letters, Na ma ci vaa ya, the sthoola (gross) panchaaksharaa (five letters) and Ci-vaa-ya-na-ma, the sookshma (subtle) panchaaksharaa. Thus, says the Thiruvartupayan:

Listen, Oh Sire, to the significance of the dancing pose!

At the sought for holy foot is na,

The adjoining ma is the abdomen,

The shoulder of the extended arm is the ci.

the famed face is vaa,

And see va end in the crown of the head.

* * *

The grasped drum is the ci,

The flung out sweeping hand is vaa,

The fear-dispelling hand is ya,

If one researches into it,

The fire in the hand of the Lord is na.

Note that below the foot where Muyalakan rests is ma.

In coming to Thillai, in coming to the presence of Nataraajar in the temple, in singing the 4th decad of the Fourth Book, the Aananda Natana-pathikam, the “Decad on the Dance of Bliss”, our Swaamikal has left God Who becomes and disbecomes and has come to the threshold of the shrine of the Godhead. It is not the Godhead altogether but it is as near to the Godhead as man can reach with the help of form and name. Our Swaamikal reaches the Godhead proper much later. Standing in the presence of Nataraajaa, Raamalinga Swaamikal sings:

Oh Devadaaru Tree
 Who grow in the land
 that is the mind of devotees
 who, wearing the sacred ash
 and donning the rudraasksha beads,
 stand steadfast in the Creed of the True Path!
 Oh eternal Whole!
 Oh imperishable Treasure of great beauty
 (Who are the Power of true grace)!
 Oh undying Heavens!
 Oh universal Pure Ether!
 Oh resplendent transcendental Light!
 Oh unwritten Veda-s!
 Oh Conclusion of the Veda-s!
 Do bestow Your grace
 on this infamy-ridden sinner
 that he may become deserving of Your twin feet
 and bathe in the sea of bliss,
 that all his sufferings may be extirpated
 and that he may recuperate.
 Oh eminent One,
 with a chaplet containing therein a river!
 Oh Adept in the dance of bliss
 Who dance on the wonderful Hall of Gnosis
 along with the bejewelled Mother,
 Civakaami!

* * * *

Oh Adept in the Dance of Bliss
 Who dance on the wonderful Hall of Gnosis
 as the vast world rich in fond-grains,
 as the souls that reside in that world,
 as the munificent One
 Who, getting rid of the taint
 which pervades the souls,
 bestow on them an unheard-of grand life,
 as the God Who smiled
 that the three cities,
 which had become very strongly opposed to Him,
 may be burnt,
 as the universal Treasure of gnosis,
 as the Child wielding the spear,
 as the Son with the elephant face,
 as the God Who has assumed cruel snakes
 as ornaments,
 as the Supreme Chief
 worshipped by all the gods,
 as our transcendent Godhead,
 as supreme Religion,
 as the cosmic sound - the Om,
 as the supreme privilege of mukthi,

as delicious pure Experience,
as very form of Well-being,
and fill everywhere as Effulgence!

2609, 2610.IV.4 aananda natana pathikam 9, 10

In the ten stanzas of this decad Raamalinga Swaamikal has attempted to describe what is indescribable, to define in words what is ineffable. With this paeon of praise of Nataraja, our Swaamikal steps on the threshold of the Unitive Way. We see in this song the seed of our Swaamikal's ultimate concept of the Godhead as the Effulgence. It is the everywhere-pervading Effulgence that is the very form of mangalam, well-being. 'Mangalam' is an untranslatable word. 'Well-being' is the nearest word I can think of in English. It means "welfare, health happiness, and prosperity" according to "Advanced Learners' Dictionary of Current English". That is what God is to all the world, the very embodiment of well-being. It would not be far wrong to say that the rest of the Fourth Book, 37 decads, are cast in bride and bridegroom relationship. This is as it should be. For our Swaamikal is now on the threshold of the Unitive Way. Therefore, he sings in the 5th decad that he will receive his Behold, Lord Civan, in the night. He sings:

The Dancer of the dance of bliss,
the Lord on the proscenium (in Thillai),
the wonderful Honey,
our primeval Bridegroom,
the Lord with the russet colored matted locks
bedecked with a chaplet of kondrai flowers
buzzed over by bees,
the Lord with the bull of fiery eyes,
the, Pupil Of my eyes,
the Integration with the Self ¹⁰⁷
which those who have reached the acme
of silent contemplation gain,
the Personification of mukthi,
the Adept in granting mukthi,
the Pearl,
the Lord Who has accepted me
without considering my meanness,
I will meet Him tonight!

2611.IV.5 ethirkol patthu 1

¹⁰⁷ Sayujjiyam is the corresponding term in Indian languages.

Apparently, the love-lorn maid's expectation was not realized, for, in the next thirteen decads she entreats her Beloved not to forsake her. She sings:

If You would ineradicably in Your mind
the misdeeds done by this youngster
through ignorance,

and would not, therefore, bestow grace on me,
even the mother who bore me will ask derisively,

“ Oh over-ambitious daughter of mine,
what did you receive from Haran?”.
What would not others say?

2624.IV.6 puramozhi-k-kirangal 4

“ If You would not bestow grace on me, who else would take pity on me?” is the refrain of the next decad. She sings:

Oh our great Lord,
Oh You Who show compassion more than a mother,
though You know my mind
which, refraining from paying homage
to those who cherish gold,
holds You in great regard,
and meditates on You,
if, nevertheless, You would not bestow grace on me,
who else would look at me
and take pity on me?

2633.IV.7 thirupukazh pathikam 3

Our bride goes a step further in the next decad and charges her Beloved with betraying her. She sings:

Oh Lord with the spreading matted locks
where dwells a river!
Though You are aware
of my broken heart and delicate body,
without bestowing on me even a whit
of Your indispensable grace,
You have betrayed my heart
to sneaking Karma!

2647.IV.8 cinthai-t-thiruppathikam 7

She goes on to swear her loyalty in no uncertain terms.

Oh righteous Lord
Who, revealing Yourself to me
in my immature years,
assumed lordship over me!
I swear by You, I swear by You,
I swear by You,
that apart from repeating
Your meaningful name,
I would not relish the names of nonentities,

I would not relish at all!

2650.IV.8 cinthai-t-thiruppathikam 10

Mukthi, opulence, glory, might,
the good preceptor, learning,
impeccable audio-education,
the matchless mother, the indispensable father,
Oh Sire seated on Dharma, the white bull,
Your name, indeed, is all these!

2651.IV.9 uykai-t-thiruppathikam 1

That day, You took me for a thing of worth
and, assuming lordship over me,
bestowed gnosis on me;
on the other hand, today,
keeping in mind my misdeeds,
are You thinking of discarding me
without taking pity on me?
Even if I do a hill-like misdeed,
is it proper to enquire
into my antecedents
after taking me as Your bride?
Do enslave this cur!

2664.IV.10 aparaatha vinnappam 1

Your devotees have attained bliss,
I alone am sore distressed here.
All the people of the earth
speak many things (ill of me)
and keep laughing at me;
the night has passed
and the day is dawning;
yet You have not shown mercy to me,
Oh Hill of good qualities
who take as worthy deeds
all the misdeeds of evil people
and rejoice!

2681.IV.10 apparaatha vinnappam 19

In this Fourth Book, in these thirteen decads which we are considering at present, our Swaamikal reiterates his loyalty again and again and puts the blame squarely on the Lord. In the same manner, he reminds the Lord that He had already taken him as His slave and that it is not proper to discard him now. He sings:

Saying: “Ha! come!”,
You should enslave me,

Oh Lord Who had already enslaved me!
What will I do
if You think in Your mind
about my misdeeds?
There is no one else to call me, saying:
“Come! Welcome!”
Even by forgetfulness
I will not speak with my tongue
the names of petty gods!

2693.IV.11 kali vinnappam 9

Other than spreading out
like water flowing on to a low-lying area,
I never let my mind go even the least,
in any despicable way;
I do not say this deceitfully;
Your twin feet stand in my mind;
behold them there, Oh my Owner!

2694.IV.11 kali vinnappam 10

Once again the bride reminds her Beloved that He had enslaved her in her days of immaturity.

Oh my Guru
Who enslaved me,
in my age of immaturity!
Oh my rightful Bliss!
It seems that You have decided
to abandon me today;
alas, my Father,
will this be befitting the quality
of Your great mercy?
I will not go unto anyone else
other than You;
Oh Lord Who own me,
abiding in my mind,
You are thinking
of bringing to bear on me
the consequences of past karma;
if You have not decided
to put an end to them,
what have I to say!

2698.IV.12 atimai-p-pathikam 4

Here is another song in the same strain:

Why have I not yet gained Your grace?

Am You regretting today enslaving this wretch
by force in the past?
Oh virtuous One
Who dance in the beautiful Hall
adorned with gold,
Oh my Mother,
Oh my King,
Oh Ambrosia,
Oh Lord Who enslaved me,
do bestow grace on me!

2710.IV.73 carana-p-pathikam 6

The 14th decad has a very significant stanza which I must quote here. Our Swaamikal sings:

Oh my King,
in addition to petitioning at Your feet
to remove the obstacles
(in the way of my uniting with You),
I said the same to the Mother too;
I can no longer bear
this burden of misery;
Oh Lord Who bestow grace on Your devotees,
do show grace to me!

2722.IV.14 pothu-t-thanitithiruvepaa 7

The role of the Mother in helping our Swaamikal on the Pathway to God has been very great indeed. In fact, but for the Mother, no one can apprehend the Godhead. In the next decad, the bride pleads for a vision of her Beloved:

Oh unique red coral Hill!
Oh mellowed Fruit of blissful grace!
Oh God with three eyes!
Oh ever-youthful King Who became
the beautiful earth, water, fire,
wind and ether!
Oh Sambhu-civa-swayambu,
Who are a protecting fortress
for my dear life!
Oh Sankara!
Oh divine heavenly Tree
that grows on the snow-covered mountain!
Do bestow on me the vision
of Your coming in state
on the hefty young bull
with the Dame of highly fragrant soft tresses
on one side of You!

2732.IV.15 thani-t-thiru-viruttham 4

Here is another poem where the blame is placed squarely on the Lord.

Would it be wrong
if You bestow Your grace on this cur
that all my taint of ignorance may be eradicated,
on this cur, Who,
deeming You alone as friend, kin,
as the Lord Who stands before me
and bestows grace on me,
as mother and father,
keep chanting the illumining grand mystic five letters?

2753.IV.15 thani-t-thiruviruttham 25

We see less and less of self-accusation and more and more of praying to the Lord not to forsake. Thus our Swaamikal sings:

I have learnt that You are
my mother and father,
my true Guru,
and the God Who inquires (into each person's karma);
Oh transcendent Being
Who ride the prancing bull that is Vishnu,
have You, indeed, decided to forsake me?

2757.IV.15 thani-t-thiruviruttham 39

A few decads earlier, our bride prayed for a vision of her Beloved. It would seem that her prayer has been granted, for she now sings:

Oh my two eyes!
Who could indeed have performed in any world
the great thavam you have performed,
since two persons wandered about for a long time
without swing Him (our Lord)
and are still trying to see Him,
while you, on the other hand,
have risen (far above them) in your merit,
for you have beheld in one day the transcendent Light,
which puts to shame the light
of the twelve suns,¹⁰⁸
in the Hall where the good Kings¹⁰⁹
worship and praise Him?

* * * *

¹⁰⁸ The sun has twelve names according to its position in the Zodiacal signs. The names are Mitra, Ravi, Soorya, Bhaanu Khaga, Poosha, Hiranyagarbha, Mareechi, Aaditya, Savitaa, Arka, Bhaaskara.

¹⁰⁹ A Cola King and a Pallava King.

In the Hall of Gnosis I have beheld the vision
which the dwellers in the far-off heavens,
sages, the noble Brahma, Vishnu,
Rudran and all that band of people
have not seen;
I do not know
what kind of a great thavam,
I, a slave taking birth as a man many a time,
have performed!
All the notorious births
in which I did not cherish (my Beloved)
are not births;
this birth alone is my real birth!

2770, 2771.IV.15 thani-t-thiruviruttham 42, 43

Three decads later our bride bursts in a paean Of praise Of the Lord thus:

Oh stately Karpaka Tree
on which You grace has ripened!
Oh Hill of noble qualities
where the medicine called grace glitters!
Oh Sea which yields the ambrosia
called grace!
Oh Gem rare to gain
which radiates the light of grace!
Oh Perfect Treacle
Which yields the sweet savour of grace!
Oh unique Flower,
Oh transcendent Civan,
the embodiment of grace!

2798.IV.19 thiruppukazhchi 3

The next three decads lead on to a remarkable definition of the transcendent Being that is Civan. The three songs reproduced below are a prelude to that definition. Our bride sings:

I rejoiced on seeing
the unique Medicine of mercy
abiding in the Common Hall in Thillai –
the Medicine which,

those who have gained freedom from delusion say,
 hid itself in the region
 transcending the three states of
 wakefulness, dreaming and deep sleep
 when sacred Vishnu and Brahma
 searched for it!
 But, alas, It transcends form and formlessness.
 It is of the form of great bliss,
 It is endowed with good grace,
 It bestows good here on earth
 and in the here-after,
 It is omnipotent,
 the name is Nataraasan,
 Oh my other!

2800.IV.20 thirumaruntharul nilai 2

If You are the Enslaver
 and I am the slave,
 Oh Lord of grace,
 come this night as God of grace
 and, showing me the true nature of your Being
 Whom the tall Vishnu and others cannot touch,
 and also the entire characteristics
 of its feet and crown,
 tell me, Oh Dancer on the Common Hall of grace,
 Oh Unique Primal Being,
 Oh vast Sea of grace,
 Oh great One,
 Oh Sankara, Civan,
 thus:
 “ Oh striver in vain,
 as soon you wake up in the morning,
 get up, and, after finishing your ablutions,
 wish to know,
 and this will be clear to you!”

2801.IV.21 thiruvarul vilasam 1

It is Civa-cithambaram, Civa-cithambaram,
 that, bestowing grace on the true devotees,
 makes them translucent
 like the nelli-fruit on the palm;
 it is Civa-cithambaram
 that, bestowing gnosis on them,
 bestows the glorious bliss
 which the Upanishads speak of;
 it is Civa-chithambaram.
 that bestows on them
 the clarity which pervades.

the pure heavenly ether of gnosis
which never causes confusion;
it is Civa-chithambaram
which destroys the darkness of ignorance!

2806.IV.22 civa-cithambara-sankeerthanam 4

With the above preface, our bride gives us in the four stanzas of the next decad a definition of what is Civan, the transcendent Being. He sings:

Besides being the three qualities
(of thamas, rajas and satwa)
like Rudran, Vishnu and Brahma,
He is the Creator
Who ever and always wields sway over
those three qualities;
therefore, He is God with qualities;
but, as He is not subject
to the changes wrought by those qualities,
call Him the God without qualities.

* * * *

As He transcends those qualities
which stigmatise a person,
He is beyond qualities;
As He stands pervading
all the teeming world
He is immanent;
as He rules over that world
and causes undying good,
He is the Creator of the Universe.

* * * *

Since, as the cruel One,
He destroys the world,
He is Destroyer of the Universe;
since He is superior
to all things that are called superior,
He is the transcendently transcendent One;
Oh Immortals,
there is One thus described,
and He is the rosy Lord Civan.

* * * *

I repeat to you our Guru's command
by which you will be redeemed.
Be clear that it is our God,
the blissful transcendent Being,
Who is the crowning glory
of Caiva Sidhhaanthaa
and other similar creeds
and the Veda-s as well,
and Who indestructibly stands

as each and each thing in the world!

2813 to 2816.IV.24 civa-param porul 1 to 4

There can be no better definition of the indefinable Brahman than these four songs of our Swaamikal. It is this transcendent Brahman that our Swaamikal worships and woos in the next 14 decads of the Fourth Book in the most intimate relationship of Bride and Bridegroom. Befitting the mood, the songs go with a lilt of happiness difficult to import into an English translation. In great ecstasy the bride bursts into exulting songs which she addresses to her maids-in-waiting.

In the Hall of Gnosis He dances,

Oh my companions!

Witnessing the dance,

I fell in love with Him,

Oh my companions!

* * * *

Of the dancing rosy feet,

Oh my companions,

I became desirous and pine here,

Oh my companions!

* * * *

On Him Who dances in the Hall

as embodiment of bliss,

Oh my companions,

I placed my desire,

Oh my companions!

* * * *

He has not noted the misery I suffer,

Oh my Companions,

And yet they say that He has three eyes,

Oh my companions!

* * * *

He seduced me and made love to me

Oh my companions!

Would He abandon me today,

Oh my companions!

* * * *

Making everyone who saw me revile me,

Oh my companions,

He destroyed my virginity

and forsook me,

Oh my companions!

* * * *

I desire to see Him again,

Oh my companions,

I do not find anyone who will bring Him

and show Him to me,

Oh my companions!

* * * *

I sent the parrot as a messenger,
 Oh my companions!
 I do not find it returning
 after enquiring about Him,
 Oh my companions!
 * * * *

I desire to have union with Him again,
 Oh my companions!
 Do bring us together that we may have union,
 Oh my companions!

2820, 2821, 2822, 2827, 2830, 2831, 2834, 2837, 2846.IV.26. paangimaar kanni 1, 2, 3, 8, 11, 12, 15, 18, 27

The moon, in Indian poetry, is the love-lorn maiden's confessor, comforter and tormentor too. Out Bride seeks solace by addressing the moon thus:

To know the Self and enjoy bliss,
 Oh bright moon,
 a scheme you should suggest,
 Oh bright moon!
 * * * *

Without anyone finding it out,
 Oh bright moon,
 tell me whether
 the Grace-Dispenser will come here,
 Oh bright moon!
 * * * *

That I my turn into It (the Brahman)
 Oh bright moon!
 tell me a way of gnosis,
 Oh bright moon!
 * * * *

2847, 2853, 2860.IV.27 vennilaa-k-kanni 1, 7, 14

Our bride thinks that she has spoken and acted harshly towards Her Beloved and that it is the probable reason for His deserting her. In the 28th decad of the Fourth Book, she repents of her intemperate words and deeds and sings:

Oh Beloved,
 sweeter than an incomparably great mother!
 When I think of my sulking
 from Your cool grace
 my heart turns into water!
 * * * *

Oh You Who assure me, saying:
 "Fear- not",
 when I think with dread
 of the inexcusable words I spoke to You,

all my five senses reel!

* * * *

Oh You Who have love for every creature,
when I think of the evil slanderous words
this misery-laden creature spoke,
all my five senses reel!

* * * *

When I recall to mind
the harsh words I spoke
whenever I got angry,
they cut me like a saw!

2886, 2890, 2904, 2906.IV.28 muraiyeettu-k-kanni, 17, 21,35,37

In this remorseful mood our Bride thinks with concern about the Holy feet of her Beloved and sings:

You dance on the resplendent hall
with Your Spouse of lightning-like slender waist
looking on;
Oh Lord Who own me,
wouldn't Your feet ache!

* * * *

You dance that all might be happy;
Oh most powerful of all powerful gods,
would not Your blossomy feet ache!

2939, 2946.IV.29 thiruvati-k-kanni 1, 8

From feeling pity for the feet of her Beloved, she passes on, naturally, to declare her love for those feet in the next decad where she sings:

Oh Sire, I have bestowed my love
on the sacred feet that dance on the Hall in Thillai
in the hope that,
ridding us of desire for lass, lucre, and land,
they would bestow bliss on us!

2951.IV.30 peranbu-k-kanni 2

She calls together her companions that they may perform a clapping chorus dance in praise of her Beloved.

Clap in chorus Oh girls,
clap in chorus, with your two breasts
bouncing rhythmically.

* * * *

Seeking Him, our Ruler,
Who lives in the Golden Hall,
clap in chorus;

singing His feet,
clap in chorus,
Oh my companions!

* * * *

He is the King of the dance of bliss,
He is the effulgent One
Who graciously enslaved us,
He is the handsome One
in Whom the Damsel
of the sky-reaching mountain delights,
He is our Bridegroom,
clap in chorus

2964, 2965, 2967.IV.31 natesar kommi (1), 1, 3

Our Bride's companion asks her who her Beloved is and she replies in the next decad:

Oh Gem of a girl
with a face like the cool moon!
Who is the Husband
Who has got you as His spouse?
He is the Sire, the Ambrosia,
the handsome One
Who dances on the Golden Hall nearby!

* * * *

Oh damsel with speech tasting like candy,
and waist slender like lightning!
Who ravished you of your virginity?
He is the incomprehensible preeminent One
- of blissful mind,
Who is performing a dance
on the Golden Hall!

2971, 2973.IV.32 thozhiyar uraiyaadal 1, 3

Reminded thus by her companions, she dwells joyfully on the memory of her absent Beloved and pays homage to Him in the next decad thus:

That I made prostrations, tell Him,
Oh my companion!
That to my Sire I made prostrations, tell Him,
Oh my companion!

* * * *

Tell Him that I made prostrations
to Him Who of His own volition sprouted out
without being born from the womb of a mother,
to Him Who, without recognising caste or clan,
performs His dance,
to Him the Lord of my life (my beloved Husband),
Who, in His grace, performs worthy services,¹¹⁰

to Him Who deceives those who love Him;
tell Him that I made my prostrations
to Him my Master,
Oh my companion!

2985.IV.33 thendanitten 7

Thirsting for union with her Beloved, our Bride sings:

Haven't You found pity for me in Your heart?
Tell me, Sire, what is Your grudge against me!
* * * *

¹¹⁰ worthy services – the fivefold deeds of creation etcetera.

Though I wail
“Oh King, Oh King, Oh King,
Who dance on the golden hall in Thillai
where food is served in plenty”,
haven't You yet found
* * * *

Though I wail,
“Oh our Guru, Oh our Guru, Oh our Guru,
are there people in the world
who having taken a person as wife,
talk later of caste differences?”,
haven't You yet found

2986, 2987, 2992.IV.34 innam thayavu varavillaiyaa

The bride's mother is annoyed with her daughter and her behaviour and complains about her to the world at large thus:

She runs to the sacred Hall of Gnosis in Thillai;
saying: “Sacred Hall of Gnosis in Thillai!”,
she melts with ecstasy;
losing control over her senses,
she searches, stands puzzled, hesitates,
and cries, “Alas, my God, alas, my God!”,
she sings, she cringes with fear, she trembles,
and shouts, “Behold, I am a sinful girl,
behold, I am a sinful girl”;
she droops, she becomes confused and grieves,
the daughter whom I did penance for and bore!

2997.IV.36 nal thaai kavandrathu 2

Our Bride sings, as if in reply to her mother, thus:

Would I ever hold in regard any-one other than my Beloved
Who dances on the Hall in Thillai?
Would I forget for even a moment
His sacred form which dispels dire misery?
Though people say that He possesses nothing,
He has everything.

She boils with anger, saying:

I will nevermore falter
or resile from what I have said.

3002.IV.36 nal thaai kavandrathu 7

In this frame of mind, the Bride makes her firm, resolve in these terms after she had made one more plea to Him not to desert her.

She pleads:

You have blended with my heart,
I have blended with Your heart,
my actions are Your actions,
Your great deeds are my deeds;
this being so,
if You misunderstand
what I blabber
and think of putting the blame on me,
I will bring a great law suit against You.
You are more compassionate
than a mother to me,
You are a father to me;
moreover, as a dear Life to my dear life,
You have fully occupied me;
Oh King Who dance
on the eternal Hall of Gems,
Oh great Treasure of mercy,
do bestow grace on me
and rid me of my mental distress.

3012.IV.38 thalaimakal munna mutipu 6

and resolves:

The great Lord
Who, blending and blending with my life,
tastes sweet,
my King,
Natarajaan Who performs a dance
on the Hall in Thillai,
He married me at an age

when I did not know myself;
 now when I know myself,
 He does not wish to know me;
 neither before nor after the marriage
 have I ever committed any mistake.
 Is it befitting a magnanimous person
 to watch (unconcernedly) the pitiable state of a girl?
 If it is sugar-candy,
 can it ever have a property
 of tasting saltish?
 Having taken His measure,
 would I let Him escape,
 you watch me, Oh my companion!

3019.IV.39 vetakai-k-kotthu 2

In despair she sings:

My Beloved, Nataraajan,
 He Who is seated atop the top of the crown
 of the unique transcendent cosmic sound, Om,
 He abode in between my brows
 at my tender age
 when I could not feel
 the sweet bliss of union;
 I have not seen Him afterwards.
 To whom shall I relate
 this not untrue (past) history!
 Alas, He knows it and I know it;
 is there anyone else who knows it?
 Tell me, Oh my companion,
 would I, perhaps, find bliss
 when I abandon this separated state
 and arrive at the state of pure consciousness?

3026.IV.39 vetkai-k-kotthu 10

With this note of great longing, firm resolve, and sad despondency, Our Swaamikal stands on the threshold of the Unitive Way.

With the Fifth Book our Swaamikal concludes his pause on the threshold of the Unitive Way and, in the Sixth Book, enters into the Unitive Way proper. We are concerned here with eight out of the twelve decads of the Fifth Book. They are called the Garland of Love, the Garland of Shining Grace, the Garland of the Consecrated Offering, the Garland of Bliss, the Garland of Bhakthi, the Garland of Beauty, the Garland of Wonders, and the Garland of Forgiveness of Transgressions respectively. These titles themselves supply us a clue to the contents of the decads and their place in the spiritual journey of our Swaamikal towards the Godhead. The first seven decads are songs of ecstatic joy. He sings:

Ha! this is a marvel! this is a marvel!
 What shall I say about it!
 You made me rejoice,
 making this mean fellow
 ignorant of gnosis learn gnosis
 by showing me,
 Oh Gem with the matted locks
 on which the moon shines,
 Your feet and crown as well,
 showing me this
 and showing me that,¹¹¹
 revealing to me my state as well,
 showing me the special guile
 of the self-complacent miracle-mongers,
 showing me the state of deathlessness,
 showing me Your natural state,
 and the place where the mind,
 which resembles the rushing wind,
 melts away.
 Who has got the magnanimity of Your grace!

3038. V.1 anbu maalai 10

¹¹¹ showing me this and showing me that – this = the delusion of this world; that = the Reality.

Oh Crystal Mountain
 of the lucent color that milk Presents!
 Oh Fruit that tastes sweet
 in the state of bhakthi (devotion)!
 Oh Holy Lord of Dance,
 the delight of Civa-kaama-valli
 Who shows through the corner of Her eyes,
 which resemble the sel fish,¹¹²
 Your holy grace!
 I have nothing to give in return
 for Your mercy which
 revealed to me my delusion,
 and, not stopping with that,
 became the Wisdom of my wisdom,
 showed me the Way unto You,
 and the manner of standing firm on that way,
 showed me Your feet,
 showed me what can be seen
 by the grace of those feet,
 showed all these specially to me!

3040.V.I anbu-maalai 12

¹¹² grace is bestowed though the corner of the eye on be left which side of the body has been appropriated by Sakthi.

Oh King of the pure dance
Who are exempt from
mortal beginning and end!
Oh Gem of self-generated effulgence
Who are in the centre
of the thuriya state!
You bestowed grace on me, saying;
“Do not fear, my son,
We have pronounced a benediction on you;
play about as you like in this world;
come and witness the holy dance
which We perform on the Hall in Thillai
where rice-fields abound,
and, becoming very embodiment of love
and pure in heart,
live very happily
sporting in the flood of bliss
for endless long time.”

3047.V.1 anbu maalai 19

You bestow on me
Whatever I ask for,
Oh Lord Who are good to me!
Oh omnipotent Adept – Civa!
Besides what I ask for,
You have understood (my deeds)
entirely:
Oh Mystic!
Oh our God
with a crown of matted locks
on which You have worn the moon!
Oh Lord Who have on one side of You
the Damsel of speech of honeyed sound!
Oh Civan,
Oh Great Lord oh the deva-s,
Oh Lord Who perform a dance in Thillai
with the fame of which the welkin rings!
Oh sapphire-throated munificent One
Of great mercy,
Oh Pupil of my eye!

3048.V.1 anbu maalai 20

Oh God, by Your Grace,

I discovered myself,
and inside me. I saw You;
then, I saw both of us remaining as one
and marvelled at it;
I do not know the secret way
of getting rid of the amazement,¹¹³

¹¹³ So long as there is amazement, there are two entities involved, Civan and the devotee. This sense of separateness should disappear before union with the Godhead can be gained.

do please tell me such a secret way,
Oh Life Who perform a dance
on the Hall of Gems which will never perish!
Oh Principal of my life!
Oh Sea of transcendent happiness
Who are the pupil of my eye!
Oh never-waning cool Moon!
Oh immaculate Hill of noble qualities
on which the tendril of a creeper
called Civakaami spreads aloft!

3051. V.1 anbu maalai 23

Already our Swaamikal has begun to experience the early fruits of the union with the Godhead. He describes one of them in 100 stanzas of the second decad of the Fifth Book. All the stanzas describe in growing amazement only one item of experience. Lord Civan walked on His holy rosy delicate feet all the way and, seeking the door of the house where our Swaamikal was staying, opened the door, hailed him and placed in his hands something accompanied by loving and reassuring words. While all the 100 stanzas describe the same incident, the description of the feet and the expressions of amazement and gratefulness vary from stanza to stanza. Nowhere, however, in any of the one hundred stanzas is there any clue to show us what was the object which the Lord placed in our Swaamikal's hands. One thing is clear. It was not a flower. That was given later on; the 1st stanza of the next decad relates this. It also adds that the Lord said, in reply to a request for the sacred ash, that He had given it already on a former day. Therefore, what He gave on this occasion must have been the ash. Whatever it was, the incident made such a great impact on the mind of our Swaamikal that he sang no less than one hundred stanzas to record that incident. Relating this remarkable experience, he sings:

On that day in the past,
You came in the middle of the night
and, opening the ornamental door (of my house),
placed Your gracious blossomy feet firmly
partly outside on the door-step
and partly inside,
and, sending for me said;
"Oh son, do not grieve;
here, receive this".

And, though this mean fellow refused,
You disregarded it,
and forcibly placed a thing in my band,
and saying: “Stay here”,
You disappeared.
Today, that thing, indeed,
is most helpful for my experiencing You.
What kind of a thavam
did this cur perform!
I have no longer any misery!

3063. V.2 arutprakaasa maalai 4

Oh Ruby Who dance on the Hall of Gems!
One night on a day in the past
You came walking to the distress of Your feet,
sought for the place where I was staying,
had the door opened for You,
rejoicingly placed
one of Your fragrant flower-stalk like feet,
inside the door-step,
and calling me, said:
“Receive this”.
When I refused,
You brushed aside my protest,
and forcibly pressed the thing
into the palm of my hand,
and said “Stay here”.
Realising its merit
in the days that followed,
I rejoice.

3066. V.2 arutprakaasa maalai 7

When did this incident happen? In one stanza, the 5th, the Lord accompanies the gift with these words: “Remain here among your relatives”. Our Swaamikal sang this decad when he was at Karunkuzhi. He had no relatives there. His relatives, his mother, brothers, sisters, all were at Madras. This incident, therefore, happened, possibly, in Madras either when he was debating whether to go to Thillai or continue at Thiruvotriyoor, or, more probably, when he ran away with a friend to become a sannyasin (see page 138). In that case why did not the Swaamikal relate it in any of the decads we have quoted in the earlier chapters. Evidently, our Swaamikal did not realise the greatness of the coming of the Lord or of His gift at that time. He realised it only much later when he was on the threshold of the Unitive Way, when he had left the Illuminative Way. In fact, this realisation is the culminant climax of the Illuminative Way.

Maanikkavaachakar too was ignorant (for a time) of a rare and great boon bestowed on Him. He sings:

Oh Partner of the goodly Dame
with collyrium-glittering eyes!
After You had come and taken me into Your service,
other than as a glittering gold cup
in the hands of a lisping child,
as rare I did not consider You.

The next decad has a link with the foregoing one but it, probably, differs in the time of the occurrence of the incident related therein.

Oh Gem of a guru
Who, taking a gross form,
perform a gracious dance on the beautiful Hall!
Oh Hill of noble qualities,
Who enslaved me on a former day!
You took a holy form
and, departing (from the heavens),
arrived before this mean fellow,
opened the bag of the sacred ash
and bestowed on me
the red radiant flower;
whereupon, I, assuming a posture of humility,
went before You, bowed to You,
received it, and, addressing You, said:
“Oh Treasure of compassion Who redeem me,
please give me the sacred ash as well”.
Whereupon, You embraced me and graciously said;
“That day (in the past) we gave you the sacred ash;
today we have given you this.”

3160. V.3 pirasaatha maalai 1

In the 3rd stanza our Swaamikal again relates this act of grace and adds that he does not know the Lord's intention. He sings:

Oh Redeemer,
Who, displaying Your robe
of the pelt of the young elephant,
dance on the Hall of Gems,
in the form of embodiment of effulgence!
You assumed a sacred beautiful form,
graciously arrived before me,
and, wearing a smile of grace,
placed me in the midst of Your devotees,
graciously gave them all the sacred ash;
but, as far as I was concerned,
with Your face beaming with mercy,
You took out of Your bag
a beautiful red radiant flower
and gave it to me.

Oh my Guru,
I do not know Your intention!

3162. V.3 pirasaatha maalai 3

Our Swaamikal may not have known God's intention in conferring on him the gift of the red radiant flower, the Cenchudar-p-poo. But the Lord knew what He was about as will be seen from the very first stanza of the next decad. Maanikkavaachakar was also the recipient of a red, radiant thing. He calls it cenchudar. The absence of the syllable 'poo' need not deter us from coming to the conclusion that what was bestowed on Raamalinga Swaamikal and on Maanikkavaachakar was one and the same thing. While Raamalinga Swaamikal does not know what was the intention of God in bestowing the red radiant flower, Maanikkavaachakar is quite clear about it and gives expression to it in the following song:

Let us acclaim our clear conviction
(that it is none else than Civan)
singing how, on the transcendent Effulgence –
 Who, saving me from the hoax of birth
 that I may not sink
 into the devious ways of the no-account devaa-s,
 enslaved me –
bestowing on us the unprecedented red spark,
our I-ness perished
and we became Civan Himself!

Thiruvaachakam 11.4

But, Raamalinga Swaamikal's ignorance of the intention of the Lord was no deterrent to his being freed from misery, to his gaining a great boon, and to his reaching a great state of grace which, with the help of Maanikkavaachakar's poem, we can interpret as becoming Civan Himself.

Our Swaamikal is filled with joy at the memory of the unparalleled grace bestowed on him and he sings the Garland of Bliss. A special feature of this decad is that every stanza has a homage to the Mother, Civa-kaama-valli, as well. He sings:

With the golden anklet tinkling
on the sacred feet,
which the goddess of wealth
gently massages,
She comes walking
and, entering my mind,
She stands therein along with You;
She is the virtuous One
Who sits atop the Veda-s –
which, free of all doubts,
stand supreme (in the world) –
Civa-kaama-valli,
the great Goddess.

Oh my Master,
 Who, gladdening Her heart,
 dance on the Hall of Gems
 while the two¹¹⁴
 of matchless true love unto You
 look on and rejoice!
 I, mean fellow
freed from misery,
gained a great boon,
 and sing of You alone;
I have reached a great state of grace!

3170. V.4 aananda maalai 1

¹¹⁴ the two Patanjali and Viyaagraapaathar.

There are three statements of great import. For the first time in his life, our Swaamikal declares that he is freed from misery. Secondly, he states that he has received a great boon. Thirdly, he, declares that he has reached a great state of grace. These statements cannot but refer to his entry on the Unitive Way and his gaining the first, though tantalizing, experience of the apprehension of the Godhead. In the course of writing this book, I have been assailed frequently with bouts of doubts as to whether the Path which I surmise as having been trod by Raamalinga Swaamikal is merely a product of my delusion. In the veritable forest of songs, it has not been an easy task to see the burgeoning bud, the developing flower, the full-bloom blossom, the tiny growth of a fruit not larger than a poppy seed or a mustard seed, the developing fruit with all its rawness only too obvious to everyone, the flush of the signs of ripening on the fruit. I have struggled with my doubts valiantly and I am rewarded with this song which has proved to me by its three important utterances that I have been correct all along. The Swaamikal was freed from misery, he gained a great boon, and he reached a great state of grace. I may be pardoned if I feel a justifiable sense of exultation at the vindication of the correctness of my line of approach to this subject. My belief is confirmed by other phrases in the rest of the stanzas of this decad. He sings:

“ I have reached maturity”	3
“ I have left all my grief behind”	4
“ I am experiencing the state of bliss which Your devotees gain”	4

In the next decad, the Garland of Bhakthi, our Swaamikal reaffirms his loyalty, devotion, to the Lord. Ooran Atikal says in his remarkable edition of the Thiruvartupaa that manuscripts in the handwriting of the Swaamikal himself are available even today (1972) for all the decads of the Fifth Book except for the 11th decad. Listing the specialities about the Fifth Book, he says:

“ All the 12 decads in this book are garlands”.
 All the twelve are in the same order
 as originally written by the Swaamikal.
 Manuscripts for 11 out of the 12 decads are

available in the Swaamikal's own handwriting.
The titles for (the first) eight out of
the twelve decads are the same as given by the Swaamikal."

We are very fortunate indeed to have the original manuscripts still available from which the above specialities have been gleaned. As a result of these specialities, my interpretation gains vast support and leaves me in no doubt about the appropriateness of the lines on which I have planned this book.

To revert to the 5th decad, our Swaamikal sings:

Oh Lord of grace!
You put up with all the offence I gave
by refusing your grace
without knowing its uniqueness,
and called unto You
this delusion-ridden fellow,
and once again gladly put in my hand Your gift.
Though the unique nature of this great mercy
is clear to me even now,
without departing from my mind
and my eyes of clear sight,
yet, my mind does not melt,
even though it is impossible
for even an ignorant stone not to melt for this,
Oh unique Tongue of a flame of bliss
Who perform a sweet dance on the Hall in Thillai!

3180. V.5 Bhakthi maalai 1

Our Swaamikal's mind and memory linger longingly on the beauty of the vision of the Lord when He came to place something forcibly in his hand. Recalling to mind that beauty, he sings:

Whenever this wicked fellow
thinks of Your form which,
 along with Her,
 my great Lady of narrow waist,
 She of feet which the deva-s worship,
 Civa-kaama-valli,
shines resplendently in the Hall of Gems,
my heart softens and melts
and unceasingly trembles (with joy).
If this is the case with me,
who can describe
what was the state
of the hereditary devotees
when they beheld Your form
unintermittingly with their eyes
and rejoiced?

If anyone can do so,
they will equal a god indeed!

3196.V.6 sounthara maalai 7

It is no wonder that our Swaamikal is amazed at his most undeserved good fortune.
He sings:

Ah! 1 this is a wonder! this is a wonder!
What shall I say about it!
The Dancer, dear to unique Civa-kaama-valli,
without bestowing grace
on Brahma and others
who, having given up delusion etcetera,
were wailing for a long time,
thought of me,
a stranger to love, a mean fellow,
who, much deluded by ignorance
and lacking in wisdom,
was in a karma-permeated state,
came to me,
and bestowed on me a vision of Him
that the world might say of me too
that I am a worthy fellow!

3202. V.7 athisaya maalai 1

Our Swaamikal ends his pause on the threshold of the Unitive Way on a sober note of seeking forgiveness of all his offences in the past.

The Thiruvartupaa is from beginning to end nothing but a record of the love between the love-lorn damsel that is Raamalinga Swaamikal and her Beloved, Lord Civan. Sulking is a very important ingredient of love. It is the prerogative of any damsel in love. Writing on the 'Pleasures of the Sulks', Thiruvalluvar puts these words in the mouth of the love-lorn damsel:

“ Is there a land of the gods (which gives happiness)
equal to indulging in sulks towards those
who blend (with their beloved)
like water with the field?”

The Thirukkural 1323

Our Bride, Raamalinga Swaamikal, also has indulged in the sulks on many occasions. Now, that the occasion for eternal union with her Beloved has come, she regrets her subjecting Him to misery on various occasions and sings:

Ignorant of correct behaviour,
I sulked with Your Grace
and said some (stupid) things,

I, meanest of mean ignorant fellows.
You should graciously forgive
the offensive things said
by this fellow of erroneous ways.
Oh virtuous One,
Oh Lord of matted tangled locks
on which You wear a moon!
Oh Lord on the bull!
Oh immaculate One
Who, while people of righteous ways
were on the look out for You,
showed special favour to me.
and, on that day itself in the past,
in Your grace, very forcibly enslaved me
and extirpated my karma!
Oh our King Who perform a dance of bliss
on the Common Hall
while the five deities¹¹⁵
and the sages stand around
and praise You!

3216. V.8 aparaatha mannippu maalai 1

¹¹⁵ five deities - Brahma, Vishnu, Rudran, Sadaasivam, Maheswaran.

This decad is followed by four decads of homage to the Four Camaya-Kuravar-s, Fathers of the Faith, Thirugnaanasambandar, Thirunaavukkarasar, Sundarar and Maanikkavaachakar. In the first chapter of this book itself, I have quoted extensively from these decads and have interpreted their significance. Raamalinga Swaamikal is about to place both his feet firmly on the Unitive Way which all the above four Saints trod successfully in the past. In these decads, our Swaamikal seeks the blessings of all of them and their unseen presence to guide him over the perilous, yet most blissful, path which stretches ahead of him, the Path which leads to integration with the Godhead.

10. THE UNITIVE WAY (First Stage)

In the 408th couplet of vinnappa-kali-venpaa, the 2nd decad of the Third Book, our Swaamikal bemoaned:

I am getting worn out
with one foot in the river of redemption
and the other in the mire
called unmanageable worldly life.

But with his entry on to the Unitive Way proper, he has lifted his foot from the mire of worldly life and has set both feet firmly and untraceably on the highway which is the Unitive Way, the royal road to union with the Godhead. He celebrates this unique occasion with a paean of praise of the transcendent Brahman, Lord Civan. He sings;

Oh Mountain
Who get caught in the grasp called love!
Oh King
Who enter the dwelling called love!
Oh transcendent Being
Who lodge in one's palm!
Oh Sea
which gets incarcerated in the pitcher called love!
Oh Wisdom
that shines in the life called love!
Oh great Light
contained in the atom called love!
Oh transcendent Brahman
Who are the embodiment of love!

3269.VI.1 paraciva vanakkam 3

With this paean of love, our Swaamikal commences his journey on the first lap of the Unitive Way. This is a song of exultation, a song of vindication of the Path followed by our Swaamikal and, for that matter, by the Four-Camaya-Kuravar-s, by all the saints in the Hagiography of Saints of Tamilnaadu by Sekkizhaar, by all other known and unknown Tamil devotees of the Lord. The path is the path of love. It is called andu-neri in Tamil and bhakthi-marga in Sanskrit. This manner of apprehension of the Godhead is unique to the Tamil people. Its beginnings can be seen in Paripaadal, a Tamil classic of the 4th century B. C. Its rules of grammar were laid down by the Tholkaappiyam, the first grammar for the Tamil language, a grammar of great antiquity. The Caivaite saints and Vaishnavaites followed this path and appropriated the Godhead. The Thevaaram, the Thiruvaachakam, the Thirumanthiram and other Thirumurai-s, the Divya-p-prabandham, all these form the literature for that path. For God is Love and He can be gained by love alone. The Thirumanthiram, an ancient Tamil work on the Philosophy of Religion, says:

The ignorant say
that Love and Civan are two different things,
no one knows love itself turning into Civan;
after coming to know
how love itself turns into Civan,
through their love they will turn into Civan Himself.

Yes, devotees will, through their love, turn into Civan Himself. Maanikkavaachakar sings:

Let us acclaim our clear conviction
(that it is none else than Civan)
singing how, on the transcendent Effulgence –
Who, saving me from the hoax of birth
that I may not sink
into the devious ways of the no-account deva-s,
enslaved me –
bestowing on us the unprecedented red spark,
our I-ness perished
and we became Civan Himself.

Thiruvaachakam 11.4

Sekkizhaar, the Hagiographer of the Saints of Tamilnaadu, records that Lord Civan Himself said on one occasion about His devotees that

‘by devotion they appropriate Me’.

Thus, by all accounts, Lord Civan is Love incarnate and He is appropriated by Love.

I have divided the account of Raamalinga Swaamikal’s journey on the Unitive Way into three sections following the late A. Baalakrishna Pillai, a very devoted and able editor of the Thiruvartupaa in the fifties of this century, who divided the Sixth Book into three sections called, The Section Relating to the Early Period of Worship of Lord Civan at Chidambaram, The Section Relating to the Later Period of Worship of Lord Civan at Chidambaram, and The Section Relating to the Final period of Stay at Siddhivilaakam in Mettukkuppam. The present chapter will deal with our Swaamikal’s journey on the Unitive Way during the early period of his worship of Lord Civan at Chidambaram. The first twenty-one decads of the Sixth Book relate to this period, according to the late Sri A. Baalakrishna Pillai. In addition to these, he has a 22nd, 23rd and 24th decad. Ooran Atikal has taken the 22nd and 23rd decads as the 38th and 39th decads in the Fourth Book. Almost all the songs in the 24th decad are found in decad No. 125 of the Sixth Book in Ooran Atikal’s edition. For the purpose of this chapter, I will follow, as usual, the edition by Ooran Atikal. Nevertheless, in addition to the 21 decads (which are the same in both editions) I shall take the 22nd, 23rd and 24th decads of Ooran Atikal’s edition as the basis of this chapter.

If this book was designed as a work of comparison of Maanikkavaachakar and Raamalinga Swaamikal, quite as much as I have written so far can be written on that theme. But this is not such a book. Nevertheless, Maanikkavaachakar’s experiences

on his journey to the Godhead help us to appreciate our Swaamikal's journey far better than anything I can write. Maanikkavaachakar sings in the 34th decad of the Thiruvaachakam thus:

Oh you who are destitute of any hold
Oh you who are on the road to ruin!
If you would be free of attachments,
and, taking hold of that Hold
which has to be taken hold of,
would reach the goal that spells good,
come rushing up and join those
who, learning of the glory
of the Lord of Thirupperunthurai –
He with the matted hair
decked with honey-laden flowers –
cherish His anklet-girt feet (in their hearts).

Commenting on this decad (the 34th) I wrote in my book, “Pathway to God through Tamil Literature, (i) through the Thiruvaachakam”, thus:

“ So far, Maanikkavaachakar did not have time for you and me. He was preoccupied solely with his own problems, his war with himself His mission, his concern for the world at large, begins only in the 34th decad”.

We can say the same of Raamalinga Swaamikal, as we will see from the songs in the 2nd decad of the Sixth Book. He sings:

It is all-possessing, all-powerful,
It is everything, yet nothing of them,
It is immeasurable with any certainty
by words, or things, or wisdom arising therefrom,
It becomes That in the experience of the Adepts
who had crossed the fourth state of consciousness,¹¹⁶
but becomes rare of comprehension
when even they begin to assess it,
It is big and yet pervasive in places
where even an atom cannot penetrate.
Behold such a unique God
Who shines resplendently
in the sacred Hall of Gnosis in Thillai.

* * * *

¹¹⁶ fourth state, of consciousness – the four states are the waking state, the dream state, the state of deep sleep, and a state transcending all these three. It is in this last state that unitive knowledge of the Godhead is gained. This knowledge is consolidated and made eternally one's own in a fifth state. In this last stage the knower, the knowledge and the known we inseparably fused into one whole. These

states are called in Indian Philosophy as jaagra, svapna, suspthi, thureeya, and thureeyaa-theetham.

By nature, He has no attachments,
attributes He has none,
He is not composed of any elements,
nor has He any other artificial parts,
birth He has not,
death He has not,
He is not subject to any change,
blemishes He has none,
not the least of evil has He in Him,
covetous desires or aversions He has not,
He shines everywhere as the true Reality
and bestows Himself on us as
very embodiment of bliss
that we may be redeemed.
Behold, there is such a unique God
arisen in the Hall of Pure Bliss!

* * * *

One He is not, neither two is He,
nor one and two is He;
form He has not, nor formless is He,
He existed that day, He exists today,
He exists ever,
He has no beginning or end;
as a rare great Effulgence
He shines in the interior and exterior
of the fiery sun and the moon;
He has nothing, He has everything,
He is nothing of anything,
He stands as the Being
in which everything merges.
There is such a unique God
arisen in the sacred Hall of Gnosis!

3274, 3281, 3282.VI.2 thiruchchitrambala theivamani maalai 3,12,13

In the last song we see the budding of the concept of arut-perum-jothi, the Great Effulgence of Grace, for the first time in our Swaamikal's spiritual life. It is true that this phrase occurs here only with reference to the sun and the moon. Nevertheless, this is the first gleam of the concept of the rare great effulgence which will burst forth in a paean of praise of 1596 lines when our Swaamikal steps on to the last lap of the journey on the Unitive Way.

Pilgrims on the Pathway to God, it does not matter at what stage of the journey they are, are ever conscious of their unworthiness. This sense of unworthiness grows in proportion to the in-flow of the grace of God. In such circumstances, Maanikkavaachakar sings:

That You, indeed, are the Lord
of the four-fold Veda-s I realise,
and I, the lowliest of all, a very cur,
this too I see

Similarly, our Swaamikal who has been singing of the inexhaustible qualities of God in the last decad is so awestruck by the sense of the immense greatness of God that he is, by contrast, overwhelmed by the sense of his insignificance and unworthiness in presence of such ineffable greatness. The next several decads are sung in this frame of mind. He sings:

I am baser than the basest in righteous conduct
who commit murder with weapons
on the battle-field,
I have never known feeling the least pity
in distressful circumstances,
I am more afflictive than a boil
which has erupted inside the rhythmically working nose,
I do not observe the Faith of Civan,
I cling to the falsities of petty faiths
like a cantankerous monkey;
what can I do to please the Dancer on the proscenium?

3288. VI.3 aatraamai 6

I am far more small
than the child which, lying on its face,
cries and sobs
in a dark room that had never known a lamp;
I am the tiniest of tiny blades of grass
which had fallen in the unfathomable sea of misery
and had become worn out
through being tossed about and about therein
for a long time;
I am a fruit tree
on which all kinds of unspeakable inhumanities
have sprouted,
I am a person of ruinous intelligence,
I am a harsh fellow,
I am a rabid fellow who speaks cunningly;
alas, why was I born in this world
which does not know the way of redemption
from its sins;
Oh King of the dance of mercy,
I do not know Your intent!

* * * *

I will not perform thavam,
but I strut about

masquerading like people
 who have performed thavam,
 I remain like an insensate corpse,
 I commit sin,
 I am a base wretch
 who pours milk down a crack in the earth,
 I wallow about carrying
 a perfidious rock of a mind
 that does not know the consequences
 (of its perfidy),
 I do vain deeds,
 I do not know wisdom,
 I do not know love,
 Oh Sire, I will not help even by a whit
 those who have arrived at Your feet
 through love;
 why was I born in this world
 which ever does wrong?
 Oh King of the dance of gnosis,
 I do not know Your good sacred will!

3294, 3300. VI.4 pirappavam poraathu pethural 2, 8

From decad to decad this feeling of unworthiness grows more and more, for our Swaamikal is not seeking any ordinary boon but is seeking the unique gift of unitive knowledge of the Godhead, inseparable integration with the Godhead. No man can ever say that he has earned the right for this crowning act of grace. It is conferred out of the unbounded munificent benevolence of God. The next two songs reproduced below are sung, in this frame of mind:

I have not learnt (the way unto You)
 in the manner it ought to be learnt,
 I do not remain with delight
 in the sacred assembly
 of men of contemplation
 who have gained wisdom
 by studying what has to be studied,
 I have never stayed established
 in a state of contemplation,
 but, even better than such a person,
 I pass as one in a state of contemplation,
 I do not know how to swim across
 the great sea of long-standing lust;
 am I capable of knowing
 how to attach to my head
 the sacred feet which perform the divine dance
 on the great gem-set Hall of Gnosis?
 I am wallowing here
 doing deeds to the contrary;
 how I will enter that Hall,

to whom I should relate my woes,
what I should do,
I do not know any of this.

* * * *

I have not given up entanglement
in caste, creed and religion,
I am not free of the distress
of wallowing in the mire of dogmas,
I do not know anything
about the beginning or end of things,
I do not know how to settle down
to the enjoyment of bliss
in a state resembling a sea
devoid of waves,
I have never trod the righteous path;
am I capable of knowing
the sacred will of the One
Who dances on the Hall of Effulgent Gems?
How I will enter the world
which the enemies (of spirituality) favour,
to whom I should tell my woe,
what I should do,
alas, I do not know anything!

3315, 3319. VI.6 muraiyeedu 3, 7

The next three decads called “The Good Fortune of Devotees”, “Despondency on Account of Worry for the soul”, and “Extirpation of Desire” respectively, are very much in the same strain as the previous decads. We must, however, remind ourselves that these lamentations are far different from those we came across in the First and Second Books. We have produced in the 6th and 7th chapters of this Book some of the songs in those books which are full of tribulations unrelieved by any ray of hope. The songs with which we are concerned now are not of that type. We said in Chapter 7:

“ This is not to say that our Swaamikal will not, from then onwards, feel any despair or despondency. In the manner in which a bitterly wailing child, which had been consoled and comforted and had fallen asleep, brings up a sob and a whimper now and then, more out of memory of the past than out of immediate suffering, so will our Swaamikal sob now and then till the very end of his journey, till he has united with the Ground of all being”.

We must keep this passage in mind whenever we come across songs of lamentation and tribulation in the Sixth Book. We will see one or two songs from each of the three decads, the 7th, 8th and 9th, before we proceed to the next four decads, the 10th, 11th, 12th and 13th, which are very significant ones in the autobiographic amount of our Swaamikal’s journey on the first lap of the Unitive Way. Here are one or two songs from each of the three decads, the 7th, 8th and 9th. He sings:

“ He cannot bear to see the sufferings
 of His devotees;
 He will confer bliss,
 He is a great Sea of unebbing mercy”.
 All these words uttered by great men about You,
 Oh Lord rare to gain by tall Vishnu,
 do they exclude this wicked fellow?
 I have not found even the grace
 which the intractable wicked great evildoer found!

* * * *

I, disputatious-minded wretch,
 rejoiced in the certainty that You bestowed grace
 on evil-contemplating sinners even.
 If You contemplate perfidy
 as far as I am concerned,
 to whom shall I complain,
 whom shall I take as my succourer,
 what shall I contemplate doing?
 Alas, why did I, a sinner,
 assume this body?

3323, 3330. VI. 7 atiyar peru 1, 8

While the above two songs are in the nature of charging God with partiality and prejudice, the next decad is a reversion to self-denigration, a denigration, however, with a difference, which will be seen in the plea of the songs. He sings:

“ We have nothing to wear,
 we have eaten nothing”,
 to the penurious ones who came saying thus,
 I gave nothing,
 I have no intention of giving;
 I have never associated with good people
 of great character in the world,
 I have no desire to associate with them;
 I have not gained in this world
 a name as a good man;
 I, nevertheless, remain firm in the faith
 that God alone is my succour;
 therefore, graciously protect me!

3352. VI.8 aanma visaara-t-thazhunkal 10

The next decad strikes a new note of self-denigration Our Swaamikal accuses himself of being a gourmand and a glutton. If any confirmation was needed to the interpretation that all this self-denigration and self-accusation was not on behalf of himself but we said in a vicarious spirit on behalf of the people of the world, the songs

in the 9th decad will be ample testimony. For in this decad our Swaamikal accuses himself of gourmandise and gluttony whereas, in truth, he was most abstemious in the matter of food. We have quoted several of his songs in this respect in the 3rd chapter of this book. Therefore, the songs which follow can but be taken as vicarious in their character and context. He sings:

I never paid any heed to the words of wise men
that if a man is seized with desire for food
all the good thavam performed by him
will disappear like tamarind
dissolved in a river;
I never paid obeisance to You,
I set my heart on rice
mixed with spicy and pungent sauce,
what shall I do, Oh my Father!

* * * *

I did not like more spinach,
I liked only spinach cooked with lentils,
I did not like mere cool water,
I liked only the water
of the tender green coconut,
I boasted saying:
“Who can match me in eating food?”
Alas, if the name of this base mean fellow
is just mentioned,
all thavam will take to their heels,
what shall I do, Oh my Father!

* * * *

With my entire body as a stomach
I ate only eatables mixed with sugar;
often, I ate a huge potful
of rice mixed with tamarind sauce
and delighted therein,
I took pride in eating a vast quantity of rice
mixed with solid curd,
I grew fat on rice
dressed with the juice of lemons,
I boasted of eating
many other fanciful preparations of rice
which make one firm in sinews,
what shall I do, Oh my Father!

3354, 3357, 3359, VI.9 avaa arutthal 2, 5, 7

None of these confessions are true as far as our Swaamikal is concerned. He attributed to himself all the gourmandise and gluttony of the people of the world and confessed

to them that he may inspire such people with the hope that even for them there is hope of grace and salvation if they would but turn to God, and sincerely confess their sins and repent for them. Such a merciful person was our Swaamikal. He did not confess vicariously to gourmandise and gluttony only, which are, after all, venial sins, but to more despicable, heinous and horrible sins such as lust for women. In fact, songs of this nature abound in all the Books, and, though I have not counted them, I may confidently say that they number several hundreds. I have dealt with this matter exhaustively at the end of chapter 5 and will not repeat myself here but shall content myself with saying that our Swaamikal was never guilty of even an iota of any one of such sins, and that he confessed to them not in his own behalf but on behalf of all erring humanity.

The Pathway to God trod by Raamalinga Swaamikal bears a great similarity to the one trod by Maanikkavaachakar. An earnest student of both the Thiruvaachakam and the Thiruvartupaa can never fail to notice this. In the 10th decad of the Sixth Book we see such a similarity with the 33rd decad of the Thiruvaachakam, the Kuzhaittha-patthu. Commenting on that decad in my book “Pathway to God through the Thiruvaachakam”, I said:

“ On having these beatific visions (described in decads 30 and 31), wisdom and peace descend on the mutinously impatient Jeevan-muktha, impatient for death, impatient to shed the human body, impatient to gain videha mukthi - disembodied release from the cycle of death and birth. He is in a very much chastened mood in the 32nd decad, the Decad of Prayer. He sings:

Would it be possible, by Your mercy,
for even me, a sinner,
to truly merge with longing
in the ancient Sea of Transcendent Bliss
along with Your devotees who merge in it,
and be severed from life, body, I and mine,
with none of them excepted? 32,5.

Realising the futility of his wilfully and mutinously longing for death in disregard of the divine will, Maanikkavaachakar reaches the peak of his spiritual career in the 33rd decad, the kuzhaittha-patthu, where he surrenders totally and without reservations to the divine will. He gives up the last and the most difficult of all desires to give up, the desire to reach the haven of the feet of the Lord. Such renouncers are called veedum vendaa viralin vilanginaar, men of the proud distinction of not desiring mukthi even. In four soul-stirring songs, songs of the greatest merit in the Thiruvaachakam, Maanikkavaachakar testifies to the truth of the couplet with which Thiruvalluvar concludes the section on asceticism in his Thirukkural which runs thus:

If one would give up desire
which is by nature insatiable,
that would gain one
then and there the eternal state.

Maanikkavaachakar therefore sings:

What is to be desired, You know best;
it is You who grant entirely what is desired.
By Brahma and Vishnu, who desire for You,
You are rare to obtain;
of Your own volition You assumed lordship over me,
therefore, whatever at Your pleasure You graciously do,
the same I seek;
but should they remain in me
any trace of a trait of desiring something
of my own volition,
is not that too Your sweet will?

He goes a step further and sings:

Oh Lord eternal like a hill!
On that very day when You enslaved me,
did You not appropriate my soul,
body and belongings, everything indeed?
Oh Lord with eight shoulders and three eyes!
Can any harm come to me today?
Do You good, or do You ill,
have I mastery over this?

One more step in the shedding of desires, and he sings:

Me a cur, the basest of curs,
You took a fancy for,
and of Your own accord enslaved me.
Other than leaving in Your hands
this matter of delusive birth,
is it for me to research into it?
Is mine the authority here?
Thrust me into a body,
or set me under Your anklet-girt feet as You please,
Oh Lord with an eye on the forehead!

He reaches the acme of renunciation of desire and sings:

Oh Lord with an eye on the forehead!
I have to the delight of my eyes
beheld Your anklet-girt feet.
Henceforth, instead of contemplating them
day and night,
to the exclusion of all other thoughts,
shall I, Oh my Father, brood
on shedding this body on earth,
and on entering the haven of Your feet?
Fine, indeed, is my serfdom to You!

Maanikkavaachakar shed in the last song the very last vestige of desire, and then and there attained the eternal state, the state in which the sense of I and mine has completely ceased to exist in his heart, and God has completely occupied him. In the words of Thomas Merton:

“Here, when contemplation becomes what it is really meant to be, it is no longer something poured out of God into a created subject so much as God living in God, and identifying a created life with His own life so that there is nothing left of any experimental significance but God living in God”.

I have quoted the above long passage from my book so as to avoid a separate passage of interpretation for the four songs which I shall quote presently from the 10th decad of the Sixth Book. The reader will easily discern the parallelism not only in thought content but even in phraseology between these songs and those of Maanikkavaachakar. The title and subtitle of the thirty-third decad of the Thiruvaachakam are ‘Decad of Snuggling up to God’ and ‘Surrender of the Soul’ respectively. We can see the spirit of these two titles pervading the songs in the 10th decad of the Sixth Book of the Thiruvartupaa as well. Raamalinga Swaamikal sings:

Here and now, on this earth,
my body, soul and possessions,
I have given into Your custody;
henceforth, I do not have here
any the least right over them.
Whether You would bestow on me (in return)
the pure body etcetera
which are said to be
of the nature of the Effulgence of Grace,
or whether You would yet test me,
Oh my Father, I do not know Your divine will;
what can be done
by this lowly fellow!

* * * *

If You make me sing, I sing;
if You make me serve, I serve;
Oh my Master,
if You make me have union with You,
I have union with You;
if You torment me, I am tormented;
If You feed me any particular food,
I feed on it,
if You make me sleep, I sleep;
if, on the other hand, not allowing me to sleep,
You keep actuating me (like a puppet),
I keep on dancing (to Your tune.);
alas, what can this lowly fellow do!

* * * *

It is nothing new today for me to suffer
thinking of the great sin
called dying and being born;
since it is always there,
to get rid of this suffering
and to bestow (mukthi),
Oh Lord Who dance on the proscenium,
it is possible for You only;
and if nothing is possible by other gods,
alas, what can be done by this lowly fellow!

* * * *

Whether You bestow bliss in good measure
and place me in a state of grace
or You torment me here,
alas, what can I do about it
other than setting my foolish mind at rest
in the faith that Your grace alone
is my succour?
Oh my Love, Oh my Mother,
Oh my Father Who witness everything,
what can be done by this lowly fellow!

3366, 3369, 3371, 3375.VI.10 tarchuthanthiram inmai 1,4,6,10.

The above decad, the 10th in the Sixth Book, marks a turning point in the spiritual journey of our Swaamikal on the Pathway to God even as the 33rd decad of the Thiruvaachakam marks a turning point in the spiritual career of Maanikkavaachakar. This will be seen by the titles of the next decad in both the books. In the Thiruvaachakam, the next decad, the 34th is called Uyirunni-p-patthu, i.e. The Decad of the Destruction of Consciousness of Self. in the Thiruvartupaa, the 11th decad of the Sixth Book is called the Decad of Intermittent Experience of the Bliss of Non-duality. I may add that the sub-title to the decad in the Thiruvaachakam is. "Welling up of Bliss of Union with Civan". This experience of bliss is called Savikalpa Samaadhi Intermittent Union with the Godhead, as opposed to Nirvikalpa Samaadhi, Uninterrupted Union with the Godhead. Nirvikalpa Samaadhi it not attained till the last days of a mystic when he goes into a samaadhi from which there is no longer any return to world-consciousness. Our Swaamikal attained it on the 30th January 1874. Of this intermittent experience of the bliss of non-duality, our Swaamikal sings thus:

At the moment when I beheld,
to the eradication of all my perplexity,
the dance on the, Hall in Thillai,
the mind of this base lowly fellow blossomed
and a (raw) fruit grew therefrom.
Would it develop and ripen,
or would it shrivel and drop down,

or even if it ripens without shrivelling
 would it come to my hand,
 or would the monkey of an ignorant delusion,
 which craves to seize it, steal it,
 or even if it comes within my reach
 without the monkey stealing it,
 would I eat it
 to the eradication of my perplexity
 or would it stick in ray throat?
 What is the divine will
 of the Effulgence?
 Alas, I have not come to know anything about it!

* * * *

I am proceeding to see
 and praise the sacred Feet
 Which dance on the Hall
 set with well cut gems;
 I, lowly fellow, do not know the way
 which my predecessors followed.
 Will I find a forest trail,
 or will (good fortune) give me
 civilized path,
 will my feet feel weary,
 or will they not,
 will the path reach upto the summit
 called bliss,
 or will it leave me in a crater;
 will I gain a succour called wisdom
 or will I meet the terror
 called the hunters (i.e. the five senses)?
 Will I happen to behold
 the vision of the sacred Feet
 Which redeem a soul?
 How the divine will moves,
 alas, I have not found out
 anything about it!

3380, 3384. VI.11 advaita aananda anubhava idaiyeedu 5, 9

The reader would not have forgotten the Vinnappakkalivenpaa of the Third Book which was dealt with in chapter 8 of this book. In fact, there are many Vinnappam-s scattered through the 1st and 2nd Books. They are:

Serial	Book	Decad	Title
1	1.	9	irantha vinnappam
2	1	11	marun-malai vinnappam
3	1	13	vetkai vinnappam
4	2	1	karunai vinnappam

5	2	3	peru vinnappam
6	2	4	ciru vinnappam
7	2	4	thiru-mullai-vaayil vinnappam
8	2	13	aparaatha vinnappam
9	2	41	thiru vinnappam
10	2	43	pirasaatha vinnappam
11	2	45	vazhi mozhi vinnappam
12	2	46	cirumai vinnappam
13	2	47	aatraa vinnappam
14	2	49	irankal vinnappam
15	2	52	kaathal vinnappam
16	2	53	porul vinnappam
17	2	54	thiru vanna vinnappam
18	2	55	naataka vinnappam
19	2	56	koti vinnappam
20	2	57	marutkai vinnappam
21	2	58	kodai Vinnappam

The, 3rd Book has only one vinnappam, the vinnappa-k-kali-venpaa which is as large, perhaps, as all the vinnappam-s of the first two Books put together. Other editions of the Thiruvirutpaa have another decad in the 3rd Book with the title ‘vinnappa-p-pathikam’. This has been renamed in Ooran Atikal’s edition as ‘thiruvaaroor-p-pathikam’. We shall not consider this decad. The 4th and 5th Books have no vinnappams. The 6th has three, two of which we shall be examining shortly. The third belongs to the second stage of journey on the Unitive Way. Vinnappam primarily means a petition, a pleading. It may also be taken to mean a submission, i.e. a point of view submitted for consideration. The petitions vary from vinnappam to vinnappam, being governed by the stage on the Pathway to God at which it is made and also by the mood of the pilgrim at the moment of making the vinnappam. A sampling survey of the several vinnappam-s will not be out of place.

Here are the petitions, one stanza from each of the three vinnappam-s in the First Book.

I desire the sensual life only,
I do not pay obeisance
to Your sacred fragrant blossomy feet;
how will this base cur gain Your holy mercy
and be redeemed!

142.I.9 iranthe vinnappam 2

I, a base fellow, am vacillating
on account of a perfidious mind;
I do not seek Your mercy,
I am wandering about aimlessly,
alas, I do not have even the least wisdom,
would I ever gain
Your fragrant lotus foot
which strikes against the shoulders

of the Lord Who rides on a bull!¹¹⁷

182.I.11 marunmaalai vinnappam 2

¹¹⁷ This stanza is addressed to Child Murukan who sits on the shoulder of Lord Civan, His Father. The dangling foot of the child strikes against the arm of Civan, particularly when the child is in a tantrum.

Though You are endowed with twelve eyes,
yet You do not see all the misery
this wretch suffers,
You do not put an end to them,
what will I, a lowly fellow, do?

206.I.13 vetkai vinnappam 6

I, lowly fellow,
do not think and think
of the sweet honey
which Your rosy feet are
and melt in my heart,
I have not the least love (unto You);
that I will not hide even a bit,
for, Oh my Father,
You hide in my mind
and perceive everything.

210.I.13 vetkai vinnappam 10

It is clear that the dominant emotion in all these songs which represent the three vinnappam-s in the First Book is one of a sense of guilt, undeservingness, and despair. The Second Book has no less than eighteen vinnappam-s. It is but proper that it should be so, for did we not see that no less than 74 decads of the 103 decads of the Second Book cover our Swaamikal's journey on the Purgative Way. These eighteen as well as the three from the First Book are vinnappams made while the Swaamikal was traversing the Purgative Way. Let us examine the vinnappam-s of the Second Book. We find a unity of thought and mood in the first five of them. Our Swaamikal sings:

You separated from You this lowly fellow
who does not know any the least thing
unless he is instructed in it (by You);
how am I to know
the way to reunite with You?
Oh Lord Who wear the crescent moon on the head!
Note that my offence
is worthy of being put up with;
if suffering gnaws this forlorn fellow,
alas, does it befit Your grace

to keep looking on without taking Pity on me?

573.II.1 karunai vinnappam 3

You put up with all the big offences
committed by this poor fellow
and bestowed bliss on me;
if, alas, You would now forsake this reveller,
what will I do?

593.II.3 peru vinnappam 3

All Your devotees
sing the fame of Your grace
with songs set to music,
and bow down to You;
they look on and look on Your beauty
and, rejoicing thereat
to the satiety of their eyes
and the peace of their mind,
celebrate the occasion
with tears of joy;
thinking of the life led
under the protection of Your mercy,
they call on You,
“Oh Father, Oh Father, Oh Father”.
Oh my Father,
I alone, a sinner, wander about
on account of my perfidious mind,
alas, alas, what shall I do!

601.II.4 ciru vinnappam 1

Oh flawless Hill of noble qualities
Who dwell in Thirumullaivaayil
devoid of all evil!
Why do You treat as strangers those
who have come unquestioningly to praise You,
and remain indifferent towards them?

671.II.10 thirumullaivaayiI thiru vinnappam 9

If You seek out the offences of this cur,
a stranger to a sense of shame,
and, harbouring them in Your sacred mind,
forsake me, saying:
“ This fellow is a waster”,
Oh Civan,
what else can I do
(besides praying to You for mercy)?

697.II.13 aparaatha vinnappam 5

In these five songs we find a change from the utterly despondent mood of the songs of the vinnappam-s of the First Book. For one thing, our Swaamikal claims that he had been accepted formerly but has been forsaken lately. Thus, he speaks from a more privileged position than before. He does not harp so much on his own faults, foibles, offences, as on the apparent injustice of God forsaking him at present after having accepted him at an earlier period. From this it is evident that our Swaamikal has made certain appreciable progress on the spiritual path.

The next vinnappam too is in the same strain with, however, a significant difference. In this decad, our Swaamikal cites various precedents to prove God's unbounden mercy and asks Him whether it will be difficult for Him to show such mercy, nay, a very much smaller mercy, in his case. He sings:

To You Who transformed the cruel poison
into ambrosia,
is it impossible to enslave
this wicked fellow also?
Oh Lord Who would take a thrashing
on account of Your devotee!
Oh my Sire!
I am hurrying to become a slave
unto Your feet;
even if tall Vishnu and Brahma
did not see them,
I am confident in my mind
that I will behold them.
Oh Lord Who wear the powdery ash,
Oh Lord Who own Otri,
if You declare me a fraud,
what is the way of redemption for me?

1034.II.41 thiru vinnappam 8

In the next vinnappam, our Swaamikal places on record, in the sense of reminding Lord Civan, that he had been punished peremptorily for a particular act of transgression of the code of conduct of a devotee, and, by inference, makes a submission that the Lord should no longer hold that offence against him. He sings:

I, vile wretch,
forgetting the routine of chanting
Your name "Neelakantam" in Your presence,
had taken my food,
and, alas stood (before You) like iron before gold;
therefor, Oh beautiful Fruit
with the chaplet which outshines lightning,
haven't I been punished by You today at Otri
which shines as foremost in the world

protected as it is by the army
that is the vast ocean?

1050. II.43 pirasaatha vinnappam 4

Next follow three vinnappam-s in succession, the 45th, 46th and 47th decads of the Second Book, from each of which we reproduce one song. Self-accusations, self-denigrations are absent from these songs. On the other hand, our Swaamikal throws himself on the mercy of the Lord. He sings:

“Oh great Gem within my eyes!
“Oh Sugar-cane of grace!
“Oh Fruit which ripens in the core
of the learned mind!
“Oh Bliss uncontainable within myself!”
Though I do not adore You addressing You thus,
nevertheless I am Your devotee
come down on this earth
in the unbroken lineage of devotees;
this is no delusion,
Your mind knows this,
therefore, do positively bestow Your grace on me,
Oh King of Otriyoor,
Oh Lamp shining in the Hall in Thillai!

1068.II.45 vazhimozhi vinnappam 2

That suffering might leave me
and go away,
I do not know
whether I should stick to Otri
or go to goodly Thillai,
also called Puliyoor.
Oh Civan,
what am I to do,
I, the lowliest of the lowly?
If You desist from saying:
“Come here quickly unto Me”,
how will I gain You,
Oh beautiful transcendent Being
of Otri unapproachable to vile people!
Oh Lord who stand in the Hall in Thillai
for the sake of all who pay obeisance to You!

1083.II.46 cirumai vinnappam 7

I have seen every day
the poison which You ate
remaining congealed in Your throat
without ever leaving it;

noting and noting therein the indication
 that You are a sea of grace
 my mind blossomed with joy;
 if You forsake me,
 do I not become more wicked than poison,
 Oh Lord of the dwellers of the. (heavenly) spheres,
 Oh Ambrosia on the Hall in Thillai?
 I am straggling (away from You),
 knowing this, You are keeping quiet!

1091.II.47 aatraa vinnappam 4

Oh Being Who remove all imperfections
 and bestow goodly grace?
 Oh Lord Who own the world
 and are arisen in Otri!
 Even though I do not know
 the significance of the word 'Wisdom',
 and am not a sage,
 and even though I am a base fellow,
 yet, if I but receive
 even one-half of an atom of Your grace
 would not the immortals in heaven,
 Brahma and Vishnu
 be powerless before me!

1116.II.49 irankal vinnappam 8

It would seem that our Swaamikal is not actually confessing to ignorance of the meaning of the word 'wisdom' or to not being a sage. Most probably, he is saying so only for the sake of argument. For, actually, he lays claim to a right to receive the grace of God. Seven vinnappam-s follow in successive decads, from the 52nd to the 58th. With this lot, the vinnappam-s cease in Book Two. We shall examine one song from each of these decads before we pass on to the one and only vinnappam in the Third Book. Raamalinga Swaamikal sings:

I am possessed of a mind which is a receptacle
 for perfidious deeds,
 I am the most wicked of wicked people,
 I stand before Your presence in the temple,
 seeking refuge with You.
 If You despise me, saying:
 "He is an utterly intractable sinner",
 what will I do, Oh Civan,
 Oh beautiful Sugar-cane
 praised by Brahma and Vishnu,
 Oh beautiful Sea of mercy
 which bestows mukthi!

1139.II.52 kaathal vinnappam 1

Note that the impudence of my mind
cannot be expressed in words;
how am I to subdue it?
As a stone will take a back place
in comparison with it,
and as it is superior to iron (in hardness),
I do not know what I have to do,
Oh Flood of Bliss which seeps in devotees
who, with melting heart,
adore You day and night,
Oh beautiful Sugar-cane of Otri
with groves laced by lightning,
Oh my Treasure,
Oh blissful transcendent Being!

1153.II.53 porul vinnappam 5

Oh Succour Who bestow grace on devotees!
Oh Eminent One of Otri
Who, after eating the unparalleled poison,
bestowed grace on Vishnu!
Won't You look (with grace) on the face of this sinner
who, on account of the raging disease of birth,
is suffering, like a motherless child,
from the ancient misery?

1164.II.54 thiru vinnappam 6

Though I may commit many offences,
it is not Your intention
to declare me a wicked fellow;
I wear the sacred ash
which shines on Your shoulders
which resemble gold;
moreover, Oh Pure One,
a little love unto Your feet
has also risen (in my mind);
on these counts,
note that it is Your duty
to bestow mukthi on me.
Oh Lord Who own Otriyoor
where men of good thavam reside,
You are indeed acting a drama of gnosis!

1173.II.55 naataka vinnappam 3

A very great truth has been proclaimed in the first three lines of the above poem.
Maanikkavaachakar has said the same thus:

This lowly cur, to part from,
by even the least part (of the length)
of a millet seed,
is not the divine will of my Owner.

This statement is unparalleled by any other saying in the Thiruvaachakam except the unequivocal assertion contained in the line:

“ Behold Eesan Whom everyone is entitled to apprehend”,

In the next decad our Swaamikal sings:

Even if I were to be served saltless gruel,
I would eat it;
no sooner than You are pleased to tell me,
“ Do this piece of work conscientiously”,
I am capable of doing it,
walking on my head (if necessary);
such work which I do will never go wrong;
but if there happens to be an error in it
and You will punish me therefor,
I will not be disheartened
and fear therefor in my mind.
Oh Lord Who own Otri,
Oh Lord with a standard
of the pure bull
which is no other than Vishnu,
do show grace unto me
who am succourless!

1184.II.56 koti vinnappam 3

What shall I do,
time is fleeting, Oh Eminent One,
Oh Lord Whose code is to put up
with this slave unto Your devotees
even if I commit an offence!
Angry petty chieftains¹¹⁸ are warring with me;
I am feeling dispirited,
I feel powerless (against them),
I do not know which way to act,
Oh Lord Who own Otri
surrounded by beautiful groves,
Oh Lord with a munificent hand,
Oh Lord Who are to me like the pupil of my eyes!

1193.II.57 marutkai vinnappam 1

In spite of the Veda-s declaring
that there is no other god like You,

I do not pay obeisance
to Your golden twin feet
which are fresh blossoms of gnosis.
Where is another fool like me,
Oh Lord with the lightning-like chaplet
Who dance on the Hall in Thillai,
Oh Lord of the Veda-s
arisen in Otri!

1203.II.58 kodaimata vinnappam 1

¹¹⁸ petty chieftains - the five senses.

Thus, seven vinnappam-s follow one another in succession and conclude the series of vinnappam-s in the Second Book. In these last set of seven vinnappam-s the main theme is more appeal to the mercy of God rather than a harping on one's own shortcomings and offences. For instance, in the last vinnappam from which one song has been quoted above, all the other nine stanzas are pure praise of the Lord with no reference to one's failings. Look at these song:

Oh Lord of the Veda-s!
Oh Adept arisen on the silver Mountain!
Oh just Lord!
Oh Primal Lord Who dance
the pure dance of bliss!
Oh Lord Who have enslaved us!
Oh Lord in Whose one half of the body
the Mountain Maid has taken abode with delight!
Oh our transcendently transcendent Lord!
Oh three-eyed Singer (of the Saama-Veda)!

* * * *

Oh King!
Oh Lord with the garland of kondrai flowers!
Oh Lord prior to Vishnu and Brahma!
Oh Lord Who told that day in the past
the Dharma of the Path of Yoga to the Four!
Oh my own Lord!
Oh Lord Who accept alms!
Oh Lord Who begot me!

* * * *

Oh Sankara!
Oh Hara!
Oh transcendent One!
Oh good Mobile and Immobile One!
Oh Lord with Ganga (on the head)!

Oh Lord with the moon as a chaplet!
Oh Lord with an eye on the forehead!
Oh Beloved Who bestow grace
like a fruit come into one's hand!
Oh Lord of a hue resembling the sun!
Oh Embodiment of Gnosis
arisen in Otri!

1204,1207,1209,II.58 kodaimata vinnappam 2,5,7

These songs prove that our Swaamikal has ascended to firm ground from the Slough of Despond. For, very soon, eighteen decads later, in the 75th decad he will leave the Purgative Way and step on to the Illuminative Way. I shall review the one and only vinnappam in the 3rd Book before I examine in detail the two vinnappam-s in the Sixth Book. I have dealt with this vinnappam extensively in chapter 8 and shall therefore restrict myself to the concluding lines of this long vinnappam of 417 couplets. He sings:

Do please encircle me (with Your grace);
admit me into Your band of devotees;
hallowed be Your blossom feet!

The reader has been enabled by this short review of the vinnappam-s in the first three Books to follow the Swaamikal in his journey along the Pathway to God and to note the change in his mind from hopelessness to hope, from turmoil to peace. We shall now examine the two vinnappam-s in the Sixth Book against the background of the twenty-two vinnappam-s which have gone before them. These two vinnappam-s are called pillai-ch-chiru vinnappam, Minor Petition of a Son, and pillai-p-peru vinnappam, Major Petition of a Son. The first comprises 24 stanzas while the second comprises 133 stanzas. The first fifteen stanzas of pillai-ch-chiru vinnappam are a preface to the last nine stanzas in which the petition is made. Though our Swaamikal calls this a minor petition, in truth, it is quite a major petition. He sings:

Here on earth,
if a father punishes his rowdy son,
the mother would protect him
in the embrace of her arms;
if the mother punishes,
the father will catch hold of him
and protect him in his embrace.
Here, since You, Oh Pure One of sacred body
dusted by the sacred ash
Who dance on the Hall in Thillai,
are my accredited father and mother,
You have beaten me enough;
You should now fold me in Your arms;
Oh Mother and Father,
I can no longer bear this!

3386. VI.12 pillai-ch-chiru vinnappam 1

He follows with fourteen songs of protestations of lack of desire for anything other than God's grace. He declares:

Only those who begot the child
will know the traits of character of that child,
others do not know them;
Oh munificent One Who begot me,
Oh King Who dance on the proscenium,
Oh Lord of eight qualities,
You alone know fully all the traits of character
of this particular wicked fellow.
Even after knowing them
why are You angry with me;
do graciously cease Your anger!

3387. VI. 12 pillai-ch-chiru vinnappam 2

He goes on to declare:

I, a fellow of scanty wisdom,
had never desired (of my own accord) anything;
with You making me desire,
I desired

3388. (extract). VI. 12 pillai-ch-chiru vinnappam 3

I speak innumerable lies,
but if there is in any of them any harm (to others),
even as much as the tip of a blade of grass,
I will not utter that lie;
this is on account of the compassion
I have for others.
I desire for Your anklet-girt feet;
other than this,
I do not know of any fault done by me;
alas, Your sacred mind knows this.

3389. VI.12 pillai-ch-chiru vinnappam 4

One is reminded here of the famous maxim in the Thirukkural where Truth is defined. Thiruvalluvar lays down:

A lie too ranks as truth
if it produces unalloyed good.

It is not surprising that our Swaamikal, whose life as an ascetic was patterned upon the Thirukkural's code of conduct for ascetics, should have adopted the above maxim to govern his conduct in speaking lies. Would that we too, who speak so many lies

each day, apply the same criterion to our lies. If we do so, all of them will rank verily as truth.

* * * *
Apart from whatever work
You prescribed for me,
I have never done anything
of my own volition.

* * * *
With You providing me here
with various dishes of delightfully tasty food,
I eat them as Your tasty dishes;
of my own free will
I will never seek such food,
I have never sought such food.

* * *
I have placed no desire on money.
* * *

In this world, I do not know of any the least desire
in my mind
for pleasures of kingly rule
or for other pleasures.

* * *
I have no desire for even gaining mukthi.
* * *

3390, 3394, 3395, 3398, 3399 (extracts).VI.12 pillai-ch-chiru vinnappam 5, 9. 10, 13, 14

I have no desire to die,
I have no desire to be as I am,
I have no desire to be born any more,
I have no desire for shining in this world
with all the world calling me,
“great man, great man”,
I have no desire to perform miracles,
I have no desire to renounce the world,
I have not the least desire
to be steeped in misery
and be indolent!

3408. VI.12 pillai-ch-chiru vinnappam 15

With this long preface of denial of desire of any sort whatsoever, our Swaamikal goes on to state in the next nine stanzas what his desire is. The first fifteen stanzas of this decad form a negative submission while the remaining nine stanzas form the positive petition, vinnappam. He sings:

It is my desire, Oh my Father,
to associate with those
who are eligible for the Sat-sang,
to gain the conduct

befitting that august assembly
and imperishable goodly true mode of life,
to daily sing and dance (with joy)
about the dance on the Hall of Gnosis
and the dance on the Golden Hall (in Thillai),
and to bring joy to all the creatures
of this visible beautiful world.

* * * *

It is my desire, Oh my Father
to have union with You
in this world rife with living creatures,
to remain inseparably united with You
through aeons and aeons,
to sing about You only and dance and dance about
on this vast earth and rejoice very much,
to eradicate the troubles
when others are beset by them,
and to make them possessed of love
for Your sacred Hall of Gems!

* * * *

It is my desire, Oh my Father,
to consider the lives
of all the throng of creatures
as my very own life
and to bring joy to them,
to eradicate the troubles
which beset those creatures
and to dispel their fears,
and, becoming immaculate in heart,
to sing of Your sacred feet,
to dance chanting “Civa-Civa”,
and, with surging joy,
to remain imperishably eminent
here on earth.

* * * *

It is my desire, Oh my Father, that all
who had intimately associated with me,
beginning from the time I gained adolescence
and ending with the day
I gained gnosis of You,
who had thoughts for me only,
and who had sought my company only
but have later parted from me,
should now gather here sincerely
and live paying obeisance to You
with boundless great love!

* * * *

It is my desire, Oh my Father
to renovate, according to the rules laid down
 in the vast Veda-s and the Aagama-s
 the great temple called Chidambaram when shines
 the divinity-invested sacred Hall of Gnosis
 and to make it shine brighter
 than a fragrant flower,
to behold the hue of Your body
 and delight therein,
and to witness the spectacle of the festivals
 in this world teeming with life!

* * * *

It is my desire, Oh my Father,
**THAT I SHOULD FOUND THE SOCIETY
OF UNIVERSAL PURE TRUE PATH OF GNOSIS**
consisting of men who are verity like gold,
and rejoice thereat
**THAT I SHOULD RAISE A SACRED TEMPLE
PERTAINING TO THAT SOCIETY
THAT THE PURITY-INVESTED SOCIETY
SHOULD FLOURISH ETERNALLY,
AND THAT THIS SLAVE OF YOURS,
SHOULD SING ABOUT YOU AND DANCE
IN THAT SOCIETY TO THE DELIGHT OF MY LIMBS.**

* * * *

It is my desire, Oh my Father,
that, as very embodiment of compassion,
 I should, by Your Grace, instantly avert
 the cruel misery, fears etcetera
 which beset others,
 and bring joy to them,
that I should endeavour
 to make all the world walk
 in the path which eschews
 the cruel habit of eating flesh
 and of killing animals therefor, both of them,
that I should adore
 the famed Damsel
 Who is present at the Hall in Thillai
and that I should praise You!

* * * *

I cannot bear, for even a moment,
to see with my eyes and hear with my ears
even the least of the sufferings
which the living beings on this earth undergo;
therefore, You should bestow on me,
who think thus,
the good boon of preventing
by the strength of Your grace,
on each and every possible occasion
the sufferings which beset them!

* * * *

Apart from these, there is no desire in me
for any other thing,
Oh Treasure of great compassion
Who, along with Civai, Your Spouse,
are seated inside me!
All these are but things known
by Your sacred mind.
Though I lack thavam,
You should give me the boon as desired by me.
With You instructing me, I have learnt
that this desire is impeccable desire,
and therefore, I have expressed it,
Oh my Father!

* * * *

3401 to 3409. VI.12 pillai-ch-chiru vinnappam 16 to 24

How far our Swaamikal has travelled up the Pathway to God can be seen as much from the first fifteen stanzas of pillai-ch-chiru vinnappam where he lists the items (which include mukthi too) for which he has no desire as from the last nine stanzas of the same decad which list his desires. All his desires are characterised by concern for the welfare of humanity, and by a longing to relieve its suffering. There is one desire among all these which we should specially note. That is the desire to found the Society of the Universal Pure True Path (to God). This is the first time that such a desire is very explicitly stated. When we consider this desire, we should not fail to take note of the desire expressed in the previous stanza, the desire to renovate the temple at Chidambaram. If we fail to do so, we may fall into the error of thinking that the desire to found the Society of Universal Pure True Path (to God) and to raise a sacred temple pertaining to that society arose in our Swaamikal's mind as the result of a revolt against the temple at Chidambaram. That would not be correct. The Society and its temple (the Gnaana Sabhai at Vadaloore) were conceived in the mind of our Swaamikal as extensions of the temple at Chidambaram, as its subsidiary. The decad in which these nine desires are expressed is called ciru vinnappam, minor petition. But, in fact, it is a major petition, a petition of vast significance, a petition which all of us should try to live up to. Having made this not so minor a petition our Swaamikal

goes on to make his major petition, peru vinnappam, in the 133 stanzas of the next decad. He sings:

Oh Chief Who are the unique great Effulgence!
 Oh my Father!
 Oh God of mellowed great mercy
 abiding in the sacred Hall of Gnosis!
 Please entertain in Your sacred sweet mind
 this petition which this slave of Yours
 entertains in his mind
 and now, standing before You, expresses in words,
 and swiftly bestow grace on me;
 I will not be patient any more
 for even a little while;
 I swear this by Your blossomy twin golden feet!

3410. VI.13 pillai-p-peru vinnappam 1

In seven more stanzas, our Swaamikal addresses God in various eulogistic, endearing, and entreating terms and requests Him to lend ear to his petition. They end with the same request couched in various phrases such as:

this slave is telling You, graciously listen to this,	*	*	*	*
this slave is uttering this, graciously listen to this,	*	*	*	*
this slave is speaking to You, please listen to this talk,	*	*	*	*
please entertain this in Your ears,	*	*	*	*
please retain this in Your mind,	*	*	*	*
Oh my Father, hear the words.	*	*	*	*

For instance he sings:

Oh Being without change!
 Oh God Who are arisen
 on the sacred Hall of Gnosis!
 Oh noble-minded Lord
 Who hurry forth and bestow grace
 on Your devotees
 whenever they suffer misery!
 Oh Lord with the Dame on the left!
 Oh Effulgence of great grace
 Who dance on the vast Golden Hall!
 Oh my very own munificent Father!
 This slave is telling You,
 graciously listen to this.

3411. VI.13 pillai-p-peru vinnappam 2

Oh God Who graciously enslaved me
and put up with my offences!
Oh my Guru
Who, assuming lordship over me
in the sacred Hall of Gnosis,
told me:
“Fear not, We will bestow on you here good grace”!
Oh great Light
Who, without treating me as a stranger,
bestowed on me experience of Yourself
as You really are,
and shine inside me!
Oh Father Who begot me!
Hurry forth and receive this in Your ear!

3415. VI.13 pillai-p-peru vinnappam 6

Having thus ensured the attention of the Lord, our Swaamikal goes on to state how he is qualified to receive the grace of God. The famous Lord’s Prayer in the Holy Bible has this petition:

Oh Lord, forgive us our trespasses
even as we forgive the trespasses of others unto us.

In the same spirit, our Swaamikal prays for the grace, the compassion, the charity of God, supporting his claim to such grace by a long account of his own compassion to the people of the world.

Though a few of these stanzas have been reproduced in other contexts in other chapters, they would bear repetition in the context of our Swaamikal’s major petition. This decad is such an important landmark in the spiritual life of our Swaamikal that it is necessary to reproduce here most, if not all, of the stanzas of this decad. He is conscious that it is not necessary to tell God about his compassion and various other qualifications, for God is omniscient. In fact, he states frequently in this decad that all this is known to God.

If it is so, why does he go to the trouble of telling God all about his compassion and many other qualifications in no less than 92 stanzas. The primary reason is that, in spite of the full knowledge of God’s omniscience, an aspirant for the apprehension of the Godhead feels a compulsion to give voice to his grievances, aspirations, hopes, remorse, repentance, to all the kaleidoscopic emotions with which his heart is surcharged. It is for this reason that David sang his Psalms, that Maanikkavaachakar sang his Thiruvaachakam, that Arunagirinaathar sang his Thiruppukazh, and Thaayumaanavar his soul stirring songs. Our Swaamikal too sings for the same reason. There is probably another reason, a feeling of overwhelming compassion towards mankind, a desire to teach and guide the common man towards the Godhead, the apprehension of which is the prerogative of every man. Our Swaamikal is

compassion incarnate. It is not surprising, therefore, that he devotes no less than 36 out of 100 stanzas of this decad to claiming the grace of God on the score of his own compassion for man, beast and plant, in short, for all the creation of God.

Just like most of us, our Swaamikal could not bear to even hear about murder not to speak of witnessing one. He sings:

Oh eternal One
Who, divining his condition, bestow grace on a person!
It is well known to You
how, whenever neighbours pointed out a person, saying:
“ This person is a wicked fellow
who has committed a murder”,
I shuddered (in every fibre of my body)
as if a boiling cruel fire had been set up in my abdomen,
and ran far away, with eyes closed,
stricken with grief.

3427. VI.13.18.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ as all the songs which will be quoted in many pages which follow are out of the same decad, the name of the decad, i.e. pillai-p-peru vinnappam, will be dropped in the reference given at the foot of the songs. The name will be resumed when a song will be quoted from another decad. The first number is the continuous serial number in Ooran Atikal's edition of The Thiruvartupaa, the roman number denotes the Book, the next two numbers in arabic digits stand for the decad and the number of the stanza in that decad respectively.

Long before Gandhiji, Raamalinga Swaamikal was, perhaps, the first pacifist who, shocked by the slaughter on the battlefield, set his face against war and its horrors. He sings:

Oh unique supreme munificent Lord
Who shine on the crest of the Veda-s!
Whenever this lowly fellow heard,
to his dismay,
that those who rule the world
robbed each other of their lives
with the swords in their scabbards,
my heart sank,
and I trembled and felt distressed;
it is the nature of my heart to tremble
at the least mention of killing in this world.

3429.VI. 13-20

We, common mortals, may be shocked by murder, but death does not dismay us. But our Swaamikal's mind used to suffer on hearing of death of people and of things associated with death, or even on hearing that a person is on his death-bed. He sings:

Oh unique One Who taste sweet like ambrosia
whenever I taste You!
Oh Lord Who own the Hall of Gnosis!
Have You not known my heart quaking
whenever I heard people speaking among themselves
that, alas, of all places in this vast great world,
in this very street,
someone has died
and that people are wailing therefor?

3422. VI. 13-13

Oh Partner of Her with eyes like the blue lotus!
Oh Principal Deity!
Oh Light arisen in the Hall of Gnosis!
Does not Your mind know
my heart trembling with sudden shock
whenever I heard the cries of lamentation
raised by relatives
on the occasion of the departure of the lives of people
in the streets or other places of this world?

3423. VI. 13-14

Oh God with an eye on the forehead
Who taste sweeter than a sugar-cane
in the minds of learned men!
Oh my Father!
My heart quaked and shivered (into fragments)
whenever the mother who bore me,
friends, relatives, companions,
close acquaintances and others
severally left me and departed (from this world).
It quakes and shivers (even now)
whenever I think
of such departure?

3425. VI. 13-16

Oh my Father
Who always bestow bliss
on those who seek You!
You know that there is no limit, no limit at all
to the shock and grief I endured that day
when I saw or heard about
the departure of the life
of any one of the good people who were gathered about me
and were (always) seeking my good only;
You also know the grief I experience

when even today I think of their passing away.

3426.VI.13-17

Oh Unique One
Who fill and shine in the heart
that contemplates You!
Oh, God, You Yourself know
the way my heart burned
and the perplexity it experienced
when I heard the loud noise of the drums
which indicates the death of people in this world.
It is natural, Oh my Father,
for my heart to tremble at death
in the world which supports me.

3428. VI.13-19

Not only did actual death cause acute distress to our Swaamikal but even news of a person on his death-bed. He sings:

Oh Mother! Oh Father!
Oh my Sire on the sacred Hall of Gnosis!
Do You not know the fear
and dejection of spirit I endured
whenever it was said
that someone among those who own gold,
or among the poor, or some woman or man
is at this very moment letting go the hold on his life,
through a disease of ignorance of his (real) self?

3421.VI.13-12

Mere disease of others also distressed our Swaamikal in an extraordinary manner. He sings:

Oh my Beloved Spouse!
Do You not know
the mental depression, weariness,
surging tremor of the mind,
stupefaction,
heart-ache etcetera
which, alas, Your slave experienced
on seeing people, who had placed their faith in me.
falling victims to various diseases on this earth
and suffering thereby?
Do You not know this evil fellow's heart missing a beat,
on thinking of it even today?

3424.VI.13-15

It is possible that we, common men, may be affected by death or disease, particularly if it is that of someone near and dear to us, but we are not very likely to be very much affected by the poverty of another, even if he happens to be one's own brother. But our Swaamikal was not a common man; he was an extraordinary man, I may say he was a unique man with a heart that throbbed with pain at the misery of not only those with whom he was acquainted but of all humanity. Therefore, he sings:

Oh transcendent Being
Who graciously dance alone
up above in the unique region of the transcendent ether!
Oh rare great Being!
Does not Your mind know
how my heart trembled and broke
whenever the grey-haired, the young and others,
sufferers in the life they led on this earth
at the hands of the sinner called Distress of Poverty,
treating me as a friend,
related their respective grievances?

3420.VI.13-11

Even occasional hunger of people affected our Swaamikal in an abnormal manner. He sings:

Oh my Father of the splendid Hall of Gnosis!
Oh my God! Oh my great Glory!
Does not Your mind know
my mind getting terrified
and quaking with distress
whenever I saw in this glittering world
the hectic wanness from disease or hunger
(on the faces and forms)
of mothers, companions, neighbours,
relatives, friends, and even strangers?

3419.VI.13-10

Oh Being rare to be apprehended!
Oh God abiding in the sacred Hall of Gnosis!
I trembled in my mind with sudden shock
whenever I heard through persons connected with me
that some starving people and some hungry people
are suffering from faintness.
It is the nature of my mind to tremble,
Oh my Father, if I hear of hunger
in this world where You have placed me!

3431.VI.13-22

Even temporary weariness on the faces of people evoked the sympathy of our Swaamikal. He sings:

Oh Being rare to be known by even perfect guru-s!
Oh Reality! Oh Sire!
You know the distress of my mind
whenever I saw the weariness
on the faces of those attached to me, Your servant,
friends, those around me, relatives,
mother, brothers and sisters, neighbours,
and others of that category!

3418.VI.13-9

Oh my Father!
Looking at the faces of those who came to me
and wondering whether they were grief-stricken
or filled with joy,
and what they will say,
my generous heart became perplexed
and I forgot to welcome them;
whenever I saw people with affection for me,
I fell to wondering what was wrong with them
and became faint at heart.

3468.VI.13-59

Others' tears moved him to tears. When people hailed him suddenly, he was seized with concern for them. He sings:

Oh my Father, seeing others,
suffering in their mind
on account of cruel misery
encountered in the worldly life,
shed tears,
I too shed tears and felt miserable in my mind;
if someone approached me and called me casually,
I, imagining all kinds of unimaginable things,
became upset and forgot to ask:
“Why are you calling me?”.

3466.VI.13-57

Your holy mind knows
the heart-ache which I experienced night and livelong day
whenever the voice of the learned,
the unlearned, and others fell on my ears
and, wondering, with quaking heart,
what has happened to them or to their kith and kin,
ran to see for myself.

3331.VI.13-122

Out Swaamikal was not only affected by actual misery of others but even by omens which may portend some calamity or other for others. He sings:

Oh my Father!
Whenever the house-lizards in large numbers
gave their warning to my left or above me,
or in front of me or from other directions,
I, wondering whether they foretell
my hearing news of grief of others,
suffered in my delicate mind
and flagged in my spirits;
moreover, Oh my Father,
You know that whenever the owl screeched
I suffered like the cow of the cowherd does
on hearing a harsh word.

3432. VI.13-23

Oh my Father,
I felt perturbed when crows cawed,
my mind lost its equanimity
on hearing the harsh cry of the kestrel,
I was frightened on hearing the swooping owl
give voice to its screech,
I was rendered weak by the death-announcing birds,
I was rendered indecisive
by birds which serve as various other cruel omens,
and whenever I saw the snake replete with poison
my mind cowered with fear.

3433.VI.13-24

Oh my Father!
I felt terror-stricken
on seeing other kinds of poisonous creatures,
I become alarmed on hearing the howls
of packs of dogs in addition to their usual angry sounds;
moreover, I felt perturbed in my mind
and became sore perplexed
by other kinds of ominous beasts,
birds, creeping creatures,
evil-portending men and women,
and hurting cruel words.

3434.VI.13-25

Oh my Father!

You are aware that I lost my senses
and my mind became perplexed and my heart broke
whenever the lower part of my eyes, or shoulders,
or some other parts of my body,
or some part of my skin tensed and twitched,
fearing that, probably, they so twitched
in order to foretell the misery of someone;
moreover, on noticing my clean cloth
(inexplicably) stained,
I was seized with fear
and trembled in my mind.

3435.VI.13-26

Our Swaamikal was sore distressed at heart not only by death, disease, distress, destitution, dirges of others, and omens relating thereto, but even by such ordinary incidents as the strong oppressing the weak, or the beating of pupils by a teacher. Even petty theft at someone's house affected him very strongly and excited his sympathy and compassion. He sings:

I am not capable of telling exactly
how much my mind was perturbed
when, alas, the strong beat the weak;
Your sacred mind knows it, Oh my Father!
You saw that the fear I experienced
on seeing revellers was greater than a sea;
who knows the tremor I experienced
on learning the cruel wrongs
inflicted on the devotees by wicked people?

3463.VI.13-54

When a group of children were learning under me,
on account of anger arising
in the course of teaching them,
I lost patience with them
and beat them;
Oh Lord,
Your sacred mind knows in detail
the turmoil of mind which I experienced
at the moment I beat them.
Moreover, Oh Reality,
all the agony I experienced
when, due to excessive anger against some creatures,
I beat them,
is this not something already known by You?

3445.VI.13-36

When I saw evil in children and other small creatures,

I grieved very much
lest I beat them;
at moments when I could not control myself,
I gave them trifling punishments;
all the fears I experienced thereby
are within Your knowledge,
Oh my Father!
You know the agonised trembling I experienced
whenever I saw violent anger rising in my mind!

3466.VI.12-37

Whenever it fell on my ears
that a gang of thieves had stealthily robbed
during the night
all the possessions some people had with them,
I felt hot all over immediately
as if a fire had been kindled in my body.
Seeing one of my relatives arriving suddenly,
I have oftentimes trembled in my mind.

3464. VI.13-55

We must be on guard against gaining an impression from these songs that our Swaamikal feared for his own death, illness, misfortune or loss of possessions. Such is not the case. All his trembling, all his worry, mental suffering, agony of mind, were only for the misfortune of others, never for himself!

Our Swaamikal's compassion did not stop with human beings and their major and minor miseries. It included animals too. He hated the sacrifice of animals in the name of religion, He sings:

Sorely hurt in my mind,
alas, I trembled in my heart
seeing goats, pigs, cocks, and sacrificial bulls
being led to be sacrificed
to what are called harassing minor deities
established in our country
under many many names.
I was also seized with fear
on seeing the evil temples of minor deities
which are prevalent in this Kaliyuga.

3472.VI.13-63

Whenever I saw wicked people
begin to kill other creatures impulsively,
I was terrified;
and whenever, alas, I happened to see with my own eyes
some creature in the agony of death,

I experienced the agony in myself;
Oh my Father,
Your sacred mind knows
the way my mind shuddered
thinking (of the throes of death of creatures)
whenever I saw on this earth
the fishing net, hooks, and various kinds of traps.

3473. VI.13-64

Oh my Father,
I feared in my mind for those who,
without, alas, attempting to take to the supreme path
which is the Wise Pure True Path (to God),
had, on the other hand, setting their minds earnestly
on the path of worldly life
laid down in the scriptures,
become fond of the creed of animal sacrifice,
without realising that all creatures of the world
have a common source
and pitying them.

3477. VI.13-68

I was seized with fear
when cows and calves, which I came across, lowed;
I grew faint in my mind
when I saw proud cattle and other animals
grown emaciated;
my heart sank
when I heard the cock of variegated colours
and other birds crow;
and I grew frightened,
wondering 'what now'
when I saw good-for-nothing wicked fellows
brandishing the sword in their hand.

3469. VI.13-60

Our Swaamikal reaches the acme of his compassion when he sets down his feeling for withering crops. Even God, Who is the very embodiment of compassion, has not been described in the literatures of the world as being moved by the sufferings of plant life. Tamil literature has only one parallel to place by the side of our Swaamikal's compassion for plant life. Paari, a minor chief of Tamilnaadu, is said to have been so much moved by the agony of the tendril of a jasmine vine that he descended from the chariot he was riding on and left it by the side of the vine as a support for it to cling to and grow. Our Swaamikal sings:

Whenever I saw withering crops
I too withered;

on seeing the empty-handed ones,
worn out with unassuaged hunger
in spite of begging house to house,
fainting with hunger,
my heart shook like an aspen leaf.
When those who were suffering
from long-drawn chronic disease
happened to come before me
and I saw them, I shuddered;
I wilted on seeing the down-hearted ones
who were men of unmatched self-respect,
poor though they were.

3471. VI.13-62

“Ananda”, the author of “Spiritual Practice”,¹²⁰ writes,

¹²⁰ published by Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Almora, Himalayas.

“ All of us have heard how Sir J. C. Bose has demonstrated that plants have life and sensibilities. Sir J. C. Bose’s experiments have given us the intellectual comprehension that plants feel as we feel. But we do not yet perceive them as so feeling. To perceive them as living and feeling we must raise our consciousness to a higher and subtler level. We must acquire superconscious perception. Otherwise, the fact of plants being alive will ever remain with us a matter of intellectual conviction at best. To acquire the intellectual conviction, the manipulation of a few instruments is enough. But in order to perceive the life of plants, to feel plants as endowed with happiness and sorrow, joy and suffering, we have to acquire a new kind of perception, Therein lies a fundamental difference between intellectualism and spirituality”

“ To feel plants as endowed with happiness and sorrow, joy and suffering, we have to acquire a new kind of perception” says Ananda. Our Swaamikal had acquired this new kind of perception, which makes all the difference between intellectualism and spirituality, to such a high degree that when he saw crops withering in the fields for lack of rain (which is the visible symbol of the grace of God) he too withered as if nourishment - water and food - had been denied to him, as if the grace of God had been withheld from him. He was the nineteenth century witness to the Thirukkural maxim which said as far back as over two thousands ago that;

The ascetics, indeed are the compassionate,
since they conduct their life with compassion
towards each and every living creature.

30

To our Swaamikal plants too were living creatures. He was an ascetic, nonpareil. To put it in a few words, our Swaamikal was the embodiment of compassion. He was compassion incarnate He sings:

Whenever my mind strayed into worldly affairs

due to surging compassion towards living beings,
I got alarmed
and petitioned Your feet,
and even today petition Your feet;
assuredly, my life and my compassion
are one, not two;
if compassion departs (from my heart),
my life too departs;
Oh Unique One in my heart,
I swear this by Your feet!

3506.VI.13-97

Oh Chief Whom all the chiefs severally worship!
Even today, my mind, my deluded wisdom, and I
flourish in this worldly life
on account of compassion to living creatures;
what can I do about it?
Compassion and my life,
are not different things.
If the compassion residing (in my heart) departs,
my life too will depart;
Your sacred mind knows this.

3507.VI.13-98

Therefore, I sport about in this world
holding on to compassion;
I have never thought of sporting in this world
on account of desire for any particular thing;
It is not only now
that I have no desire for any object,
it was so even when I was young;
is this not something
already within the compass of Your knowledge?
Other than this, there is no evil in me;
what need is there for me to say this to You, Oh my Father?

3508.VI.13-99

You are the merciful and magnanimous One
Who, agreeing to let me and compassion be together,
brought me down to stay
and lead my life in this world
where is the need to tell You this?
Though I am Your slave,
yet in the role of Your child,
I tell You this, Oh my Father!
There is not even a moment
when I have not carried out here on earth

the command You uttered,
bidding me act in this manner.

3509. V1.13-100

So far, our Swaamikal has been pressing his claim for compassion at God's hands on the ground of his own compassion to all creatures. Only a highly sensitive mind tuned to a very high degree of reception of the waves of distress of others can feel such a degree of compassion as our Swaamikal felt towards man, animal, bird, and even plant. Such a highly tuned mind cannot but be extremely sensitive to harsh and hostile vibrations arising from coarseness of thought, word, and deed of others. In the stanzas which follow, our Swaamikal acquaints God with the very high sensitiveness of his mind. He sings:

The gangs of people without impartiality,
kings without mercy,
wretches of petty authority
who daily think of nothing but evil-doing,
people of the worst kind
who speak nothing but lies,
whenever I saw these, I was seized by fear;
I felt frightened, really frightened,
Oh my Father,
whenever I saw the ways of the world
which has strayed from the Pure True Path.

3474. VI.13-65

Oh unique Chief
Who own the eminent sacred Hall of Gnosis!
Oh Mother Who carried me (in Your arms)!
Oh my Father!
Oh my Guru!
Oh God Who are a treasure-house of compassion!
Whenever I thought of those people,
whosoever they were,
who were of a mind
that had forsaken You,
I got frightened in my bemused mind.
Oh my Father,
this Your sacred mind knows already.

3475. VI.13-66

Oh God with matted locks
on which the moon shimmers!
You know that I trembled in my mind
on seeing those who came to dispute with me
on matters of literature and the arts;
moreover, Oh my Sire,

You know my remorseful grieving in my mind
when I, Your slave, happened to see again
the books on the Saastra-s
which I once upon a time studied assiduously,
and how my mind was disgusted.

3451.VI.13-42

Oh my Master!
Oh gracious Lord Who perform the transcendental dance
on the Hall in Thillai!
Oh my Friend!
Oh Reality!
How I, useless like an othi tree,
once carried on several disputations
in a loud voice with others
and, for lack of wisdom, grew arrogant,
and how, later on, Oh munificent Lord, by Your Grace,
I came to my senses
and, cursing my fate, I shuddered,
all this is well known to You.

3453.VI.13-44

I trembled in my mind
when people spoke to each other loudly;
oftentimes when people loudly knocked on doors
with their hands,
I got perturbed!
The perturbation which afflicted my mind
when cries, such as,
“ Oh my mother, Oh my father, alas!”,
uttered by others intruded in my thoughts,
Oh my father, all this is well known to You.

3465. VI.13-56

Whenever sturdy people,
without looking to right or left,
strode on with earth-shaking steps,
raising a cloud of dust which hid their bodies,
I was seized by fear;
I felt frightened
when evil words spoken by them
entered my ears;
Oh virtuous One,
I have not come across the mature sweet fruit
called Your praise;
I perspired all over and felt depressed in my mind
seeing only the shattered raw fruit.

3470. VI.13-61

Thus, in no less than three dozen stanzas, our Swaamikal relates his attitude of mind towards the external world, and presses his claim to the grace of God. In another twenty-five stanzas he relates his attitude to body, food, clothing, money, sleep, dreams, women, laughter, city life, personal habits of walking, sitting, standing, lying etc., and substantiates his claim to God's grace. He sings:

Oh my uncut Gem!
You know my regret of regrets
about the filthiness of this putrid fleshly body
and my association with it,
through entering it and living therein.
Moreover, I wasted away
till even my bones shrivelled
and I fainted with quaking heart
at the sight of men who eat the tough flesh (of animals).
This wasting away too, Oh Sire, You know.

3450. VI.13-41

When my friends clothed me
in specially chosen gold-lace-bordered cloth,
all those who witnessed the dismay I felt
were dismayed in turn (for my sake),
and whenever, in the hot sun,
they held over me an umbrella,
surprised (at my going without it),
I felt disconcerted in my mind;
fearing to walk in the muddy street
swinging one end of my loin cloth
held in my hand,
Oh my Father,
I pulled up the lower hem of my cloth
and tied it round my waist.

3460. VI.13-51

Shy of walking with arms swinging,
I walked about
with my arms crossed on my chest;
hating to show my bare body,
behold, I hid my body entirely
with white cloth;
Oh my Sire, I never noticed carefully
the garb, gait, and colour
of others in this world,
and if (by chance) I happened to see them,
I was greatly seized by fear.

3461.VI.13-52

I feared to be seated on a high seat
which will expose me (to the gaze of people),
I feared to cross leg over leg,
I feared to sing in such a manner
that the song will be heard far elsewhere;
while seated on a pial
built (high above the ground),
I feared to hang my leg
down the side of the pial,
rejoicing much thereby;
and, talking while so seated
with down-swung legs,
I feared even to think of,
Oh my Father!

3476. VI.13-67

Oh Sire,
whenever I, Your slave, laughed
with delight in my coarse mind
in this great world of torment,
I shivered;
I trembled whenever I got into good vehicles
and rode about;
whenever they were driven fast, I was alarmed;
when neighbours hated me,
fearing their hatred,
Oh my Father,
I cowered and turned away from them.

3456.VI. 13-47

Thus, our Swaamikal felt about body, dress, deportment and demeanour. He felt equally strongly about food. He sings:

Whenever I saw and whenever I ate food
described as a delicacy to delight in,
I feared it with squirming mind.
And, on auspicious occasions,
when friends invited me
to partake of the feast that was served,
I excused myself with some apologetic words
and, hiding myself nearby,
was seized by fear,
Oh my Father!

3438.VI.13-29

Whenever I ate appetising food,
my mind trembled with fear
wondering what suffering will come
out of this joy,
and, (therefore) often remained
with an empty gnawing stomach.
Oh my Father,
I received whatever loving friends
gave out of love, and saying:
“ Alas, Oh God,
do not let me, suffer by these”,
I ate the things with fear in my mind
and abided (awaiting consequences).

3439.VI. 13-30

From the day on which I gained the age of adolescence
in this world which I had entered,
fearing to see the disappointment
of the mother who bore me,
I have eaten heavily on some days;
on some other days
I feared that relatives, friends,
and those who bear me affection
would become sad,
and, therefore, ate;
these occasions apart,
my mind trembled to take delectable food;
You know this.

3440.VI. 13-31

Oh Lord!
You know the perturbation of mind
which I experienced
when I ate cookies and pastries,
or when I spent my time in diversions,
or when I desired a particular woman
and willingly enjoyed her,
or when I annointed my body with oil
and had a bath,
or when I witnessed dance-performances
to the delight of my eyes,
or when I listened to music-performances.

3459.VI. 13-50

Slothfulness, sleep, and dreams perturbed our saint very much. He sings:

Oh Effulgence worthy of worship!
How can I measure the dread I experienced,
to the utter depression of my mind,
whenever I suffered from laziness;
and whenever, during the day-time,
I felt stricken with sleepiness
and, in spite of all my attempts to prevent it happening,
had fallen asleep due to its oppressiveness,
I woke up in terror, crying;
“What shall I do? What shall I do?”

3441.VI. 13-52

Oh Rare Great Effulgence on the Hall
Who have neither beginning nor end!
I do not know whether it is my kin,
day and night I know sleep only;
whenever sleep came on me,
I lay down with fear;
moreover, whenever I got up
on account of the continuing fear,
I got up saying: “Civa-Civa!”.
When will I be rid of this sleep?

3442.VI.13-33

Oh Unique One on the proscenium You own!
Oh Light Who are the life of my life!
The number of times I trembled in my waking hours
will be small in number,
but is it possible to imagine or speak of
or think of or write about
the tremblings which occurred in my dreams?
Is there a day when this toddler (on the spiritual path)
had not trembled after having a dream!

3443.VI. 13-34

Oh my Father!
Your mind knows well
the trembling of mind to bursting point
whenever I lay down at night or in the day,
fearing that the sinner called sleep would come
and that the wicked cruel sinner
of an inimical dream would come.
Is there a day
when I had not had the derisive dream?

3444.VI. 13-35

Our Swaamikal had a great dread of falling a victim to anger, lust, infatuation, arrogance and similar failings. He sings:

Oh Sire,
You know how I drooped in my spirits
fearfully wondering whether anger will assail me
or lust or wicked infatuation
of cursed obstinacy, a hindrance (to spiritual growth),
or the sinner slothfulness
or sinful covetousness
or futile envy
or fervid haughtiness.

3447.VI. 13-38

Oh Lord!
You know the way I trembled in my foibles-laden mind¹²¹
when lust, obduracy, pride etcetera
occurred in my thoughts;
moreover, Oh Sire, Your sacred mind knows this too,
how I became subdued and withdrawn like a tortoise
when I met those who had conquered
in this pleasures-ridden world
lust and other such passions.

3448.VI. 13-39

¹²¹ foibles – they are called kutram and said to be five in number, namely, ignorance, pride, desire, infatuation and anger.

Insincerity and deceit were two other things which he abhorred as much in himself as in others. Vicariously taking upon himself the guilt of these two sins, he sings:

Oh my Father!
I felt miserable
whenever I entered Your temple
with distracted mind
and had Your darsan!
Coming back with frightened mind,
I reproached myself and felt worn out.
Oh Sire!
You know how I trembled
because I did not have any fervour
whenever I worshipped You, Oh Dancer,
and how I went to bed
ashamed to see my corpulent body.

3449.VI. 13-40

Keeping in mind the commands of my mother,
I perfidiously gave evidence
in respect of another mother
that four is two,
I also set down in writing like that;
I tremble in my mind thinking of that (today);
I conspired ill towards the wives
of friends, men of pure words;
I uttered lies;
thinking of these, Oh my Father,
I am agitated in my mind.

3430.VI. 13-21

Two stanzas he devotes to his attitude to wealth. He sings:

Oh Father Who bestow grace on me!
You know the sweat I was in
when I received the monies thrust on me
by people with love unto me,
and went my way.
Your sacred heart knows also
my throwing away those deluding monies
into the gutter,
and the distress I experienced,
and how my heart trembled with fear
that my mind will be degraded
by the monies.

3454.VI. 13-45

Since the world exists by help of wealth,
I feared that
if I sought out people frequently
on account of liking them,
they might think
that I was seeking them out often
on account of desire for money,
and might fear me.
I desisted, therefore, from going anywhere;
this, Oh my Father, You know.
Moreover, whenever I thought of that wealth,
Which I shunned,
I retched with nausea;
this also You know.

3455.VI. 13-46

Our Swaamikal's outpourings are a puzzling admixture of confessions, entreaties,
now vicariously on behalf of others, now on behalf of himself. The most puzzling of

these outpourings are those regarding lust for women. There are several hundreds of stanzas on this theme, all in the first person, so that anyone unacquainted with the biography of the Swaamikal could well be excused if he took him for a libertine of libertines. I have reproduced only one of these songs at the end of chapter 5 and have provided an elaborate interpretation which the reader may again consult at this stage. Then, what is the truth? The truth is embedded in the five stanzas of the decad now under consideration which are reproduced below. They show that all the other songs have been sung in a vicarious manner on behalf of all mankind. These are the five stanzas:

Oh my Father!
You know also how,
whenever women wilfully came to me,
I trembled in my mind
thinking that if, bewitched by their charms,
I embraced them and delighted in my mind,
harm will come immediately to them who sported with me,
and that it will be harmful to me
to witness the misery of those left behind,
and that I cannot bear to let them suffer that misery,
and that the whole thing would be a shameful deed.

3436.VI. 13-27

Oh my Father! You know that
when importunately soliciting women
stealthily approached me in the street, I,
thinking that if these women saw me,
they will not let go of me easily,
and that if I enjoyed them to my heart's delight,
I shall have to tremble
on witnessing the suffering of others
hurt by my action,
felt frightened and, shrinking into myself,
hid myself and escaped by another street,

3428.VI. 13-28

I trembled in my mind
when I set eyes on shapely women;
when those single-purposed Women pestered me,
I hid myself in a neighbouring lonely house
and kept aloof.
Your sacred mind knows
the perturbation I experienced
when I heard the clamour of the quarrel
of vengeful people;
the entry of loud words in my ears
is like fire entering therein.

3458.VI. 13-49

When comely women of the city I lived in
took hold of my hands and forcibly pulled me,
made gestures,
met me in privacy,
and got acquainted with me through alluring talk,
swore false oaths and leaned on me,
and tried to persuade me
by making gifts of many things,
I never embraced them;
I trembled,
yet I never chided them.
You know this.

3462.VI. 13-53

There was only one occasion in the half-a-century of the life of our Swaamikal when he touched a woman who was not his mother, or, perhaps, sisters. This was the bride he married. Of this he sings:

Whether it is vengeful cruel karma
or an act of Your grace,
I do not know.
While I was free of any infatuation
over any one of several damsels of sorts,
I still felt inclined to touch the hand of one of them.
But, apart from touching her
who had bent down (to touch my feet),
I did not enter her.
But thinking of this even now,
I go cold and clammy (with shame).
Whenever I think of it,
my heart breaks.
What more is there to say?
Oh my Father,
You know.

3452.VI. 13-43

Such was the purity of heart of our Swaamikal that thinking a quarter of a century later of the one and only occasion in his life when he touched the hand of a woman (who was not altogether a stranger to him, being his sister's daughter and his plighted bride) he felt cold and clammy and his heart broke. "What more is there to say?" he asked the Lord. We may echo his words and say "What more is there to say?" about purity of thought, word, and deed of our Swaamikal.

It is but natural that a person of the temperament of our Swaamikal should hate the city of Madras. He sings:

Fearing that if I looked on
the extrovert life of this world
my mind would be disturbed,
I spent every day, all the day-light hours,
seeking (solitude in) the gardens
on the outskirts of the city
and wandering in other places.
Not only in the daytime but at night as well
I wandered in many many places.
What need is there for this slave to say all this?
This is nothing but what is known to You?

3457.VI. 13-48

My mind feared that if I continued to stay
in Cennai abounding in wealth,
my life will grow mean;
I, therefore, sought the small villages in the country.
Is it possible to record on paper
the weariness I endured
wandering in the forests
on the outskirts of the villages
through flint-strewn ground
and unfertile terrain?
These, Oh my Father,
are things known to You.

3467.VI. 13-58

Though the Swaamikal has pegged his claim to the grace of God in no less than three score and one stanzas, not to speak of the first eight which he devoted just to gain the ear of God, he has material, perhaps, for twice as many as sixty-one stanzas, for he sings:

If the tale of the agitation and affliction
which I suffered here in this manner
from the day I gained knowledge
of the nature of the world
to this day
will not diminish by the telling,
no matter men of howsoever much ability may relate it,
what can I say?
What I have said is enough.
Oh my Chief!
This is the most suitable moment
(to bestow Your grace).
All this is well known to Your sacred mind!

3478.VI. 13-69

Though “all this is well known” to the sacred mind of God, he says that he is telling God all this since it is his wont to do so. He sings:

Are You not my Lord
Who will never desert me on this earth
for seven by seven births even;
are You not the God
Who, having melted my (stony) mind,
entered into it
and blended with my life;
are You not my Father
Who, having baled me out of worldly life
and setting me down here,
abide resplendently in the Hall of Gnosis?
Since it is my wont to tell You,
I have told You all this.
Is there anything which You do not know?

3479.VI. 13-70

Are You not my refuge
Who have ripened inside me
much more than the fruit on my palm;
are You not the Reality
Who never forsake my body,
both in and out;
are You not the Father
Who graciously rid me of my misery?
As it is my wont to make a petition
fervently before You,
I have made this petition.
But all these are
what Your sacred mind knows already.

3480.VI. 13-71

He ends on a note of poignant despair. He sings:

In this manner,
I have been enduring fear and misery,
and am sore wearied (in spirit);
alas, since the inimical aanavam, karma, and maayai¹²²
and the enveloping lethe¹²³
say that they will not let me meditate on You
or speak about You,
what shall I do?
Oh my King!
Oh Lord Civan of the Hall of Gnosis!
Oh Ominipotent One!
Do I deserve this?

3481.VI. 13-72

After this long preface, our Swaamikal proceeds to make his vinnappam in the next sixty stanzas. His vinnappam proper is made only in the last three stanzas of the decad, the 131st, 132nd and the 133rd. Two stanzas preceding these three are in the nature of

¹²² the three taints of ignorance, fruits of action, and matrix of matter which adhere to the soul from eternity.

¹²³ enveloping lethe – this is called the thirodhaanam, one of the five acts of Lord Civan, by which He cause forgetfulness of the past in a soul. This is an act of benevolent grace.

preface to the vinnappam proper, threats to end his life if his petition is not granted. The 55 stanzas which precede these, are declaration of his loyalty. He sings:

I came here to You to gain relief
from all the weariness of mind
which I experienced from despicable fear and misery,
but what is this?
Maayai and the rest also have come along with me.
Alas, Oh munificent One,
Oh principal Being of my life,
Oh my King,
I do not know any one but You,
there is none else I can think of;
**MY BODY, POSSESSIONS AND LIFE ARE YOURS ONLY,
NOT MINE.**

3482.VI. 13-73

**THERE IS NOT A WHIT OF FREEDOM OF WILL
FOR ME HERE.**

Is it fair that, at this moment,
when I have sought refuge with You,
several kinds of miseries,
fear that oppresses me like a heavy burden,
lethe, maayai, karma and ignorance
should devour me
as though I am a tasty fruit?
I cannot bear to be a target for all these!

3483.VI. 13-74

From the day when I gained here
a little of discriminatory knowledge,
**OH MY FATHER, I AM NOT AWARE
OF EVER FORGETTING YOU,**

and in the immature early years too
I do not know of thinking of anything else;
I have not committed any other offence in the world;
even if, alas, I had committed an offence,
after having specially taken me (as Your bride)
does it befit Your hill-like good qualities,
to now point to my lineage?

3484.VI. 13- 75

Oh Sire!
IN MY years of playful **CHILDHOOD ITSELF**
turning to my good friend next door, **I SAID:**
“ My dear fellow, **I HAVE NO FANCY**
FOR THIS FALSE WORLD,
tell me, what about You” ?
He too assenting, we went away from home saying:
“ Truly we shall renounce this world”.
But on Your true grace recalling us,
we returned (to the world).
Oh Pure One, this You know in Your heart of hearts!
Oh My Father, what is there for me to tell You today?

3485.VI. 13-76

IN MY IMMATURE EARLY YEARS THEMSELVES,
crying: “Oh God! Oh God!”,
and **TAKING HOLD OF YOU FOR SUPPORT,**
I FORSOOK ALL OTHER SUPPORT!
“ Father and Guru You are”, I declared
without back-sliding;
I sang and babbled whatever came to my mind;
I never took note of others’ opinion;
I am not aware of any inconsiderate offences;
what shall I tell You here today!

3486.VI. 13-77

IN THE SAME MANNER AS I SERVED AS A SLAVE UNTO YOU
ON THE DAY I GAINED YOU AS MY SPOUSE
AND ENGRAVED (YOUR IMAGE IN MY HEART),
I AM TODAY ALSO STEADFAST IN YOUR SERVICE;
Moreover, after I had gained You
as my rightful God, Guru, True Being,
my intimate good Mother, Father, Bliss and Reality,
and had definitely known so,
Oh my Father,
tell me when I played truant!

3487. VI 13-78

**IN THE SAME MANNER I DID MENIAL SERVICE TO YOU
ON THE DAY I EAGERLY GAINED YOU
AS MY SPOUSE,
I AM SERVING YOU TO THIS DAY TOO!**

Moreover, after I knew
that You are my life, my possessions,
the union I enjoy, my wisdom, my expansive happiness,
my father, my guru, my Reality, all these,
tell me of any other thing I have done
(but serve You)!

3488.VI. 13-79

After having asserted his unswerving devotion and service and his innocence of any offensive act, our Swaamikal proceeds to ask God whether it does befit Him to harbour in His mind any offence committed by him and whether it is fair and fitting that His son should suffer all this misery. Stanzas 81 to 90, some of which we shall see presently, will remind us of the agony of Jesus at Gethsemane in the Mount of Olives. He sings:

Oh munificent One Who have on one side of You
my Mother of collyrium-laden eyes!
I have never respected
even those who abuse You out of love,
I praise those who praise You
and realise that they are people
who have been redeemed;
apart from this, I have done no other thing
to the knowledge of Your grace;
and even if I had done so,
is it fair to harbour it in Your sacred mind?

3489.VI. 13-80

Oh Cause (of all the Universe)!
Even though I know the glorious way
in which Your holy and graciously righteous rule
is resplendently exercised with immeasurable delight
over all the domain spoken of by the Veda-s
and by the numerous Aagama-s
while Vishnu and others stand by
paying obeisance to You,
is it fair that Your son
should languish here in this world
through this misery and the like?

* * * *

While You, my true Father, is there,

You Who abide resplendently in the Hall of Truth
 exercising in a glorious manner
 with ineffable pride
 Your holy and graciously righteous rule
 as a unique First Cause
 over the territories from the earth
 to the region of the cosmic sound
 and beyond and beyond and beyond,
 is it fair that Your son should suffer in his mind
 in this world girt by the vast seas,
 through fear and other things?

3490. 3491. VI 13-81, 82

Oh Father!
 Oh King of the sacred Hall of Gnosis!
 Oh Rare Great Effulgence!
 Oh unique premiermost Wise One
 Who bestow grace in abundance,
 no matter whether Your devotees call You
 a crazy fellow or a ghoul!
 Oh Treasure Who am omnipotent!
 Oh Mukthi!
 Oh Civan!
 Oh Pure One!
 Is it fair that I, Your son,
 should suffer perplexity and misery
 and become sad in the mind?

3499.VI. 13-90

In the next three stanzas our Swaamikal has the presumption to instruct God in the duties of a father. He sings:

Oh unique Father,
 Who are arisen on the sacred Hall of Gnosis
 (situated in Thillai)!
 I am not aware of committing any offence
 against You here on earth;
 even if I had committed an offence,
 You should let me know what that offence is,
 and, bestowing wisdom on me,
 You should train me in a pleasant manner.
 Don't You know that this is the custom?
 How could You behave like a stranger unto me?

* * * *

Virtue or vice I do not know!
 Since all my attention is fixed

on the sacred Hall of Gnosis,
what happened in the usual course of worldly life
is not my responsibility.
If I commit any offence against Grace,
instead of correcting me,
should You behave like a stranger?
Don't You know that this is the tradition?

* * * *

Whereas Vishnu, Brahma and the heavenly ones,
becoming perverted in will and wisdom
through the influence of maayai and karma,
commit evil deeds,
is it strange that I, a mean fellow, commit them?
Moreover, I do not know them as evil.
Instead of instructing me and correcting me,
Oh my Father,
it is not befitting the way of a Father
to behave here like a stranger!

3500, 3501, 3502.VI.13-91, 92, 93

Once again, our Swaamikal reiterates his devotion and loyalty in several verses and in several ways. He sings:

Exactly as You advised me, namely,
“ Gain the point of view of considering
mercy and bliss alone as worth while;
all the rest are ways which lead to delusion”,
I have gained and abide here;
Oh my Father,
perplexity has arisen in me
on account of the dark ways of maayai and karma;
what can I do about it.
Even though I grow perplexed
for lack of clarity,
I HAVE NEVER TAKEN TO ANY MEAN WAYS OF LIFE!

* * * *

EVEN WHEN I BECAME PERPLEXED,
Oh beautiful God of mercy on the Hall of Gnosis,
does not Your mind know that
I HAVE NEVER SWERVED FROM THE LOVE I FELT FOR YOU.
What is there for me, a fellow of perplexed mind, to say?
Oh my Master,
**I HAVE OFTEN DECLARED TO YOU
THAT THE OFFENCES
WHICH ARISE THROUGH KARMA AND MAAYAI**

ARE NOT MY OFFENCES.

* * * *

That **THE OFFENCES COMMITTED
BY MY CRUELLER-THAN-IRON MIND
ARE NOT MY OFFENCES,**

I have often submitted earnestly to Your feet;
Oh my rare God;
Oh Ambrosia of the Hall Of Gnosis!
Oh my Father!
I abide here asking You:
“What other offence have I committed here?”
What is there for me,
a fellow more insignificant than a piece of straw,
to say?
Your pure mind knows everything.

3503, 3304, 3505.VI. 13-94, 95,96,

The disclaimer of any responsibility for offences committed as a result of karma and for offences committed by the mind made in the last two stanzas shows how high our Swaamikal has ascended on the Path to the Godhead and how far he has detached himself from all his five sense-organs and their doings as well as from his mind. He has reached the Jeevan-muktha state where karma no longer begets karma, where he has freed himself of all bonds which lead to rebirth. Hindu theologians go so far as to say that if a Jeevan-muktha commits even a murder, he is not responsible for it and it does not bring in its train karmic consequences as it will do in the case of an ordinary mortal.

After four stanzas which we have quoted earlier in these pages and in which he declares that his life and compassion are not two but me, he devotes thirteen stanzas to declare that he is not like other sons in the world. He sings:

On Unique One Who avert the impending karma!
In this world,
youngsters run about, sport, wallow,
and indulge in revelries
to the disgust of their fathers;
**BUT HAS THIS LITTLE FELLOW
EVER ROAMED AND SPORTED ABOUT
ON EVEN A SINGLE DAY?
OTHER THAN DEVOTION TO YOUR SERVICE,
I HAVE NO MIND FOR CHILDREN’S GAMES.**
Your mind knows this, Oh my Father!

* * * *

To the disgust of their fathers,
children wander about talking vain gossip,

and are on wicked lust beat:

**BUT, OH MY FATHER,
HAS THIS YOUNGSTER, TO THE DISGUST OF YOUR MIND,
EVER DESERTED YOUR SERVICE FOR EVEN A DAY
AND ROAMED ABOUT LIKE THEM
DELIGHTING IN THIS WORLDLY LIFE?**

To the best of Your mind's knowledge,
I do not know of any such occasion!

* * * *

Oh munificent Lord!

To the disgust of their fathers,
youngsters in this beautiful world often pick up quarrels
with their neighbours;

**BUT HAVE I, WRETCHED FELLOW,
EVER FORSAKEN YOUR WORK,
FOR EVEN A DAY HERE ON THIS EARTH,
AND, GETTING ANGRY WITH OTHERS,
HAVE PICKED HOT-HEADED QUARRELS?**

Oh Reality, I swear by You,
I do not know of any such thing.

* * * *

Oh munificent One!

In this world, to the disgust of their fathers,
sons, forgetting good conduct,
drink toddy, gamble,
loiter at the doors of houses of lust,
utter falsehoods;

**OH REALITY,
HAS THIS SLAVE EVER DESERTED YOUR SERVICE
AND INSOLENTLY DONE SUCH THINGS?**

Oh my Father,
I swear by You,
I do not know.

* * * *

Oh munificent Lord

abiding in the delusion-free sacred Hall of Gnosis!

Sons, to the terrified trembling of their parents,
run headlong into cruel evil ways and commit
salughter of animals, rnurder of people,
and robbery in this world!

Oh virtuous One,

**HAVE I, YOUR SLAVE, FORGETTING YOUR SERVICE,
EVER DONE SUCH ATROCITIES?**

I swear by Your feet,

I do not know of any such thing.

* * * *

Oh unique great effulgence of a Father!
In this world,
when fathers try again and again with sweet words
to train their children to gain wisdom,
they run away till their legs tremble
and hide themselves;
**WHEN YOU TRAINED ME,
HAVE I EVER HIDDEN MYSELF FOR EVEN A MOMENT?**
To the knowledge of Your sacred mind,
I do not know of ever having done so.

* * * *

Oh Father without a peer to You!
In this world,
children, brushing aside the words
which their fathers, sending for them, tell them,
go where their mind leads them;
**I, YOUR SLAVE, TAKE WHATEVER YOU TEACH ME
AS SOMETHING MONUMENTAL.
HAVE I, ON THE OTHER HAND,
REJECTED ANY THE LEAST OF IT?**
To the knowledge of Your sacred mind,
I am not aware of doing so.

* * * *

Oh Pure One adored by the adorers!
Sons pester their fathers, saying:
“ Give us house, money, fine lace-embroidered cloth
and suitable jewellery
that we may live separately”;
**REGARDING SUCH MATTERS,
LET ME KNOW WHETHER I HAVE EVER ASKED YOU!**
To the knowledge of Your sacred mind,
I am not aware of any such thing.

* * * *

Oh my Father
Who love good qualities (in Your children)!
The sons of this world pester their fathers, saying;
“ Earn money, buy lands,
live in good cities,
find out a suitable girl and marry her to me;
HAVE I EVER TROUBLED YOU

**HARDBOURING SUCH THOUGHTS
EVEN THE LEAST IN MY MIND?**

Oh my Father,
I swear by You,
I am not aware of doing so.

* * * *

Oh True Being
Who came and enslaved me in this very life!
In this world,
sons, showing themselves outwardly
as subservient to their fathers,
harbour perfidy in their hearts.

**OH SIRE, IS THERE ANY PERFIDY TOWARDS YOU
IN MY FACE OR IN MY MIND?**

Oh First in the world,
I swear by You,
I am not aware of any such thing.

* * * *

Oh Chief Whose nature no one can guess!
Oh my Father!
In this world, sons abuse their fathers
with harsh words,
Oh munificent One!
Oh Medicine (for the disease of birth)!
Oh Fruition of my aspirations!
Oh my two Eyes!
Oh true Succour to my life!

**HAVE I EVER SPOKEN TO YOU
TO THE DISGUST OF YOUR MIND?**

I swear by Your feet,
I am not aware of doing so,

* * * *

Oh peerless Gem of a Father!
Sons, in this world,
hearing someone abuse their fathers in their presence
remain tolerating it in their minds;
**BUT I, YOUR SLAVE, OH FAULTLESS ONE,
IF I BEAR YOU SP N OF OTHER THAN RESPECTFULLY,
WOULD I PUT UP WITH IT?
I WOULD NOT;
OH MY FATHER, IN THE HEAT OF THE MOMENT,
WOULD I SURVIVE?
WHAT WOULD HAPPEN, I DO NOT KNOW.**

3510 to 3521.VI. 13-101 to 112

He sums up:

In this kind of a world,
Oh my Father,
I, a youngster,
have never changed in my mind,
and strayed away, forsaking Your sacred service!
And from the day of my adolescence to this day,
I have been ever meditating on You in my mind,
calling on You:
“ Oh my Mother, Oh King, Oh Sire,
Oh Ambrosia, Oh my Father,
Oh wise One dancing on the Hall of Gnosis,
Oh Civan!”

3322.VI. 13-113

In the next stanza, he declares his non-attachment to the world.

Though I am a fradulent-minded fellow,
Oh my Father,
I am innocent of the least attachment to the false world.
In order to get rid of misery,
I have been wondering at what moment
the Reality abiding in the sacred Hall of Gnosis
would fall into my hands;
but I do not know the way to fulfil my desire,
what shall I do?
I abide saying:
“ Alas, my God!”

3523.VI. 13-114

In the next ten stanzas our Swaamikal proceeds to assert his unswerving faith and devotion. In some of them he refers most poignantly to his former state of grace and his present fall from grace of the Lord. In one of them (see page 457, continuous serial number 3530), there occurs the first ever reference to a phonic esoteric experience which was most graciously vouchsafed by God. Other mystics too have had similar experience and have placed it on record. Maanikkavaachakar is one of them. These ten stanzas are very significant stanzas in our Swaamikal's heart-rending plea for grace. He sings:

Meditating on You alone
as Mother, as my Father,
and as the Ambrosia of the Hall of Gnosis,
And doing Your work in this world,
I am striving in my mind
to make Your mercy abide permanently in me.

Your sacred mind knows the delicacy of my mind,
the frailty of my body wherein it resides,
and the way I exist (here on earth).

* * * *

I keep on meditating on You
as unfailing Product (of meditation),
as the virtuous One Who dances on the Golden Hall,
as the Pupil of my eye,
as Fire unpolluted by touch of hand,
as blemishless Moon,
as immeasurable beautiful Sea of mercy,
as my God,
and abide doing Your sacred work;
Your sacred mind knows
the delicacy of my unblemished mind
and the manner of my existence (here).

* * * *

I am always meditating on You only
as the Chief Who knows no equal unto Himself,
as Mother, as Father,
as good Succourer Who holds me up,
as my two eyes,
as Life of my life,
as Savings for times of need,
as Unique One
sweet to meditate upon;
Your sacred mind knows
the delicacy of my mind You dwell in,
and the way I exist (here on earth).

3524, 3525, 3526.VI. 13-115, 116, 117

The next four stanzas refer to certain spiritual experiences which our Swaamikal had at this point of his journey on the Pathway to God.

Your sacred mind knows
the manner of my living (here) on faith
in the subject-matter of the true words You spoke that day¹²⁴
in the sacred Hall of Gnosis of ever growing felicity,
and in the content of the true words You imparted
through the Thirumanthiram,
the Thirumurai that grew in size,¹²⁵
and in the Subject¹²⁶ of all true words
which You, seated in the mind of me
who have grown from a womb, revealed to me.

¹²⁴ believed to refer to the opening phrase of Periyapuram, namely, “A Being rare for all the world to experience and expound”.

¹²⁵ at the raw, it is said, of one stanza per year for 3,000 years.

¹²⁶ God Himself.

* * * *

I believed that everything You, abiding in my mind,
were pleased to make me experience
was as eternal as a granite mountain,
and, in consequence, rejoiced greatly
with my shoulders swelling up.
Learning from various signs,
that it is a certainty
that I will apprehend in this birth itself
the eternal True Being,
I abode firm in faith in You
like the red-golden Meru Mountain.
But today, I am sore perplexed.
Both these Your sacred mind knows.

* * * *

When I climbed on the pillar
on the golden mountain
which I came across
(in my journey on the Unitive Way),
and went higher and higher up (on the pillar)
it grew more and more slender;
thereupon I, Your slave, was seized with fear;
You got rid of my fear
and helped me to climb higher still.
When I dwelt in my mind on the manner in which You did so.
I swelled up with pride into a very mountain
and, rejoicing in my mind and steeped in bliss,
danced and pirouetted about.
But now my mind is in a whirl
(through perplexity).
Your sacred mind is aware of all this.

* * * *

3527, 2528, 3529. VI. 13-118, 120

The reader would have noticed how the spiritual experiences related in the above three stanzas progressively increase in intensity. I think that translation of certain portions of a review which I wrote in 1948 on Mahaamahopaadyaaya Pandithamani Kathiresan Chettiyaar's Commentary on Thiruchchathakam, the 5th decad of the Thiruvaachakam, may be reproduced here with great relevancy. I said:

“Seven of the ten sub-sections of the decad beginning from ‘The Apprehension of the Real’ and ending with ‘Pleading for Divine Compassion’ describe the road by which a soul seeking mukthi should travel and the procedure to be adopted to perform such a journey. When we study this decad, if we imagine mukthi as the crest of a mountain, the aforesaid seven sections will represent the sections of the road before one has even a glimpse of the crest of the hill. The soul has merely heard from travellers who have trodden that path in the past that there is a mountain at the end of that road. When the pilgrim traverses the eighth section of the road called “Being Steeped in Bliss”, he sees very occasionally, for no longer than a moment, the far-off crest of the mountain when the clouds called maayai or delusion part now and then and disclose it against the background of the clear sky called “The Celestial Space of Gnosis”. The crest, now visible, now hidden, beckons him along. The pilgrim who has gained the state called ‘Brahma-vid’ during his travel on the seventh section of the long road gains the state of Jeevan-muktha when he steps on to the eighth section of the road. Just as the crest of the mountain tantalisingly appears and disappears from his vision, so also does his mind get immersed in its vision and gets withdrawn from it. The ninth section of the road is a straight road as far as the eyes can see. The vision of the crest of the mountain never vanishes. Eyes and mind of the pilgrim are fixed uninterruptedly on it. He sees nothing else of his own accord, nor will he let his mind be easily distracted by any other force. Nevertheless, he may revert to self-consciousness sometimes through influence of a strong force, but, by and large, he will always be in a state of ecstatic bliss. In the tenth and final section of the road he has lost any consciousness of himself and his surroundings and is immersed in the vision of the crest, he has disappeared in the crest, the crest has swallowed him up,”

I like to think that our Swaamikal was ascending the mountain which I have conceived in my review.

The climax of the esoteric experience described in the four stanzas under review is reached in the last of them. Our Swaamikal reveals in the stanza a very remarkable phonic experience which was vouchsafed to him by Lord Natarajaa. He sings:

Your sacred mind knows
the exhilaration of spirit I experienced (that day)
when I heard the tinkling sound of the sacred anklet,
 which Your ineffable sacred twin feet –
 deeming me a thing of worth
 and moved by compassion
 to relieve the dejection
 of this dependent youngster
 and to mitigate the power of maayai
 and the rest over me –
 raised (as they danced on the Hall in Thillai).
and today’s anguish.

The anklet is a jewel worn by Lord Civan on the ankle of His left foot, the foot of His Spouse Who shares with Him His body and occupies the left half of it. The jewel is shaped like the pod of a pea, the peas being gems or pearls loosely enclosed in the pod and creating a musical tinkle as the Lord dances on the Hall of Gnosis. On the right ankle Civan wears a kazhal, the symbol of bravery of a man. This has no pearls or gems enclosed in it and, therefore, does not give off any sound. It is given only to mystics of the highest order to hear the tinkle of the anklet, called cilambu in Tamil. It is not heard by the physical ear but by the ear of the mind. Maanikkavaachakar was one of the mystics of Tamilnaadu who heard the anklet's sweet tinkle. He records his experience thus in his Thiruvaachakam:

“ I can tell of His gracious courtesy
in sweetly arriving at Vaadavoor
and revealing the sound of the cilambu on His feet.

Thiruvaachakam, line 53 of decad 2

Let us pluck the creeper flowers
singing of the great Bliss,
which is the Lord of Perunthurai
of chariot-thronging streets,
dancing to the delight of the mind of this slave
who was filled with insatiable longing
for the reverberating sound
of the powerful cilambu
on His merit-abounding foot.

Thiruvaachakam, decad 13, stanza 18

I cannot understand the miracle
of my Lord coming as a rare Succourer –
without parting from Her, His grace –
to the accompaniment of the tinkling cilambu
on the perfect rosy foot
and enslaving me.

.....

Thiruvaachakam, decad 41, stanza 4

This decad, pillai-p-peru vinnappam, ‘The Decad of the Son’s Major Petition’ is, as has been said before, a crucial one in the record of our Swaamikal’s journey on the Pathway to God. This is the reason why all but seven out of its 133 stanzas are given in this book with detailed analytical interpretation. The last eleven stanzas of this decad permit of a division of 3-1-2-5 stanzas for purposes of analysis and interpretation. In the 123rd, 124th and 125th stanzas our Swaamikal looks forward eagerly for the coming of the Lord, the Bridegroom, into the bridal chamber which is our Swaamikal’s heart. He sings:

Your sacred mind knows how I abide here

thinking that this is the moment,
 the precise moment
 for the arrival
 of my beautiful Spouse of mercy,
 the great Gem of a pupil in my eye,
 the Ambrosia which has blended with my mind,
 the preventive Medicine against delusive ways,
 the all-powerful munificent One,
 the meaningful Bliss
 eternally abiding in the Hall of Gnosis,
 the Merit (earned by me in the past)
 Who has now enslaved me
 and has bestowed grace on me.

* * * *

Your sacred mind knows how I abide here
 thinking that this is the occasion,
 the precise occasion
 for the arrival
 of the great Bliss
 unattainable by the heavenly ones,
 Brahma-s, Narayana-s and others,
 the great Light
 Who has taken abode in the minds
 of those who have realised Him,
 the Treasure-house of compassion,
 the Unique great Father,
 the Succour to our life
 when it approaches Him,
 the Sire on the sacred Hall in Thillai.

* * * *

Oh my Ambrosia in the sacred Hall of Gnosis!
 The love bestowed on You by my mind
 is greater than the seven vast seas;
 I cannot adequately express in words
 the ardour and urgency
 with which I am filled today;
 I am looking forward to Your coming,
 and am blind to everything else.
 The (conflicting) states of mind
 in which this wretched fellow is at present,
 all of them are what Your sacred mind has already noted.

3532, 3533, 3534.VI. 13-123, 124, 125

The next stanza is a summing up of all the 125 stanzas that have gone before. He sings:

Since there would be no end to it
 if I were to recollect and relate
 all that I experienced
 from the beginning of my twelfth year to this day,
 I have related only a few;
 nevertheless, Oh Effulgence,
 Who are radiantly established
 in the interior, exterior,
 in the interiorly exterior
 and the exteriorly exterior
 of my mind,
 all of them You have known;
 why should I catalogue them for You!

3535.VI. 13-126

This stanza is followed by two stanzas of great significance. These have been commented upon in great detail at the end of the 5th chapter. Nevertheless, they are reproduced here as they show all the previous stanzas of this decad, nay, all the hundreds of stanzas sung in the same vein as the first 126 stanzas of this decad, in a new light. We come to learn from these two stanzas that it was not a private individual, a miserable man, who was pouring out all his woes in heart-rending terms in hundreds and hundreds of stanzas of the several Books of the Thiruvartupaa, but that it was the Son of God taking upon himself all the misery of humanity and pleading to God for its mitigation. He sings:

Oh Being Who are arisen in the Hall in Thillai!
 All the stark fear, obstacles, and misery
 which I have experienced so far,
 all of them are for the sake of others
 and not for this outcaste wretch.
 I have stated this
 that Your honey-seeping blossomy twin feet may know.
 There is no desire for anything for myself,
 neither is there fear,
 nor are there any mishaps,
 none there are (as far as I am concerned),
 Oh my Father!

* * * *

Even though it is not for myself,
 yet, Oh my Father,
 the fear and the mishaps I endure
 on account of compassion towards others
 eat me up alive;
 alas, if these mishaps and fears continue still,
 my life will not last my longer;
 Oh Ambrosia Who are my Mother,

my Guru, my Father,
bestow Your grace on me and redeem me.

3536, 3337.VI. 13-127, 128

We now see why our Swaamikal claimed to be the Son of God and asked God,

“ Son to You am I not,
and legitimate Father to me are You not?”

and why he took pains to say to the Lord in twelve stanzas (101 to 112) of this same decad (see pages 448 et seq.) that he was not like other sons of the world. He is a son who asked nothing for himself but interceded on behalf of all humanity and begged for forgiveness and grace for them. In the background of this declaration, our Swaamikal makes his peru vinnappam, major petition, in five stanzas. Of these, the first two stanzas end on a note of desperate resolve if God fails to grant his petition. He sings:

I cannot any longer bear to let
fear and misery,
the veil of unknowing, delusion,
attachments and karma,
ignorance, vile sore perplexity
and uncertainty
to exhibit themselves in my mind
for even a single moment.
You should make me exempt from these
and bestow true grace on me.
If You would let me be redeemed,
I shall live on,
if not, I will give up my life right today.
* * * *

Oh Sire!
Whenever I think of
the effect on me of all the fears and misery,
it seems as if a fire has been lit inside me;
I am worn out very much by these;
I have no strength to further suffer by these
on this earth;
if You would get rid of these
and let me be redeemed,
I shall live on,
if not, I will give up my life this very day.

3538, 3539.VI. 13-129, 130

The next two stanzas alone are the major petition proper; the two we have just seen may well be said to have laid the foundation to it. He sings:

You should get rid of the hold on me

of fear, misery, mishaps,
mental uncertainty,
all these enemies of mine,
and, bestowing on me
Your grace-imbued ambrosia,
which is desired by me,
You should grant,
to the amazement (of all the world),
all the things I have thought of
and sought here on earth.
This is my petition.
Consider this in Your sacred mind favourably
and graciously show compassion to me,
Oh munificent One,
Oh Life in the Hall of Gnosis!

3540.VI. 13-131

It is very fitting that our Swaamikal should pray for compassion, the one quality of his on the strength of which he has made this petition. This is the core of his major vinnappam. It is repeated in the next stanza also. He sings:

Oh Gem resplendent in the eternal Golden Hall!
Oh munificent One!
Oh Life in the Hall of Gnosis!
It is Your duty to save my life;
therefore, You should graciously accept
the petition made by Your slave,
and, getting rid of the fear
that haunts my mind
which is engaged in contemplation of You,
and the mishaps and calamities that beset me,
You should bestow on me
the ambrosia of Your grace
and fulfil my aspirations
and make me Your slave.

3541.VI. 13-132

The decad ends with a tearful entreaty:

Alas, I am unable to bear this fear,
mishaps and cruel misery;
graciously get rid of their grip on me,
Oh eminent One of the Golden Hall
Who, getting rid of the tormenting misery (of devotees),
enslave them;
Oh Partner of the Dame
with eyes streaked with mercy,
Oh munificent One,

Oh Life in the Hall of Gnosis!

3542.VI. 13-133

Thus ends the major petition, the grand petition crowning the numerous petitions of varying types which are scattered through the previous Books of the Thiruvartupaa and of which we have made a preliminary survey before trying to analyse and interpret this great petition. This petition, it will be quite clear now, is totally different from all the foregoing petitions. If the reader would take the trouble to go through the survey of all the former petitions once again, he will see for himself the distinction which makes this a major petition. As we have said earlier in this chapter, there is one more vinnappam in the Sixth Book, the last of the series of vinnappam-s in the Thiruvartupaa. But that petition is made from a totally different level of spiritual experience, and the theme of that vinnappam completely varies from the themes that inform all the previous vinnappams ending with the pillai-p-peru vinnappam. With that vinnappam begins a new lap of the Pathway to God. We shall see it in the next chapter.

I have been repeating again and again throughout this book that a mystic keeps reverting to his unworthiness, his misery, his despondency, because however much he may have actually advanced on the spiritual path, he is ever and ever acutely, poignantly conscious of his unworthiness and, therefore, gets plunged in despair and despondency. Thomas Merton said: "There is no infallible way of guaranteeing the mystic against every mistake; he can never be perfectly sure of any human technique." The next three decads are, therefore, full of doleful lamentations. In the decad which follows the Major Petition, our Swaamikal complains that the Lord, his Father, has, handed him over to the care of a foster-mother and that she is neglecting him in a most callous and criminal manner. Who is this foster-mother? Our Swaamikal calls her 'parai'. Moreover, in the 5th stanza of this decad mention is made of a daughter of this foster-mother. Who is she? These are questions to which answers have to be found before we can fully appreciate this plaint of our Swaamikal. There is no doubt that this foster-mother could be none else than that aspect of Sakthi which dynamises the inert forces, such as aanavam, kanmam, maayai - ignorance, karma and the matrix of all matter- to act on the soul. The initial effect of these forces is involvement in worldly life and the misery it stands for. Ultimately, however, these work, paradoxically, for the enfranchisement of the soul that it may gain mukthi, immediate apprehension of the Real, intuitive knowledge of the Real. What is called the daughter is also another aspect of Sakthi only. To put it in simple language, our Swaamikal bitterly complains that God has thought it fit for him to be made to be born again on this earth and be subjected to the forces of aanavam, kanmam, maayai - ignorance, action and reaction, and matter. He sings:

To my sudden surprise
You placed me in the hands of Parai, a foster-mother,
for her to bring me up;
but she would neither think of
taking me up in her arms,
nor would she let me sleep;
what shall I do!
My good Mother has not yet come

for me to suck milk from her,
nor have You come to see me,
Alas, Oh Father of unrestrainable mercy!
I despair (of redemption);
is it fair for Your son to despair!

* * * *

You gave me into the hands of a foster-mother to hold;
that mother will neither leave me alone
to sleep profoundly,
nor would she attempt to take me up
in her arms;
she is all the time thinking of perfidy only.
My eminent good Mother too has not come;
alas, I have lost heart;
If You too would not go here,
what shall I do?
Oh my Father,
does this befit Your sacred grace?

* * * *

I sneezed;
wizened, I lay in the cot,
and, weary and weak with crying,
my voice grew hoarse,
but the foster-mother,
like a curry-stone,
would not move,
she keeps still, hearing everything
with her ears;
women, gathering together,
and singing the kommi song
are making merry.
Alas, would You too, Oh my Mother,
remain unmoved
like those who would not give even a paisa
in charity?

* * * *

She is like one with a wrathful mind,
she has not the least of kindliness,
often she frightens me
with the pouncing hunters
called lust etcetera;
she thinks of me
as one of retarded intelligence;
she has never thought of me

as one endowed with unretarded divine intelligence;
Oh my Mother,
there has been enough of this matter of entrusting me
to the care of this prejudiced foster-mother!

* * * *

Oh my Mother in the Hall (in Thillai)!
Do graciously come
with Gnaanaananda-valli,¹²⁷
Your never-parting Spouse,
do away with the villainous troubles
which beset me,
take me up in Your embrace,
feed me with all the sweet ambrosia,
deign to set me in the true sphere
which soars high
without any imperfection,
and, without parting from me,
do graciously abide with me
while the heavens and the earth
hold me in high regard.

3543, 3545, 3549, 3551, 3552 VI.14 mayaiyin vilakkam 1,3,7,9,10

¹²⁷ Clinging Creeper of Blissful Gnosis. Usually Gnaanandavalli is the name of a woman, but here Swaamikal uses it to denote Lord Civan.

The next four decads, the 15th, 16th, 17th and 18th of Book VI are sung in a spirit of surrender, in a spirit of seeking refuge with God. Their very names, their refrains, are redolent of this spirit. The decads are called abhaya-t-thiran (Decad on Refuge), aatra maattaamai (Inability to Endure) vaathanai-k-kazhivu (Plethora of Misery), abhayam ituthal (Seeking Refuge). The refrain of the first of this series of four decads is “I have placed faith in You, do not forsake me”. This decad is a natural sequel to the former one where our Swaamikal bitterly complained about God having entrusted him to a callous foster-mother. He sings:

Oh Hill of refined gold set with gem!
Oh Being Who graciously enslaved me!
Oh Exposition (of Reality)
Who raise one to the Home of Deliverance!
Oh Wonder of a Light
that dwells in the Reality so expounded!
Oh my Spouse
Who got rid of all the misery
of this heart-weary youngster!
I have placed faith in You,
do not forsake me!

3553.VI. 15. abhaya-t-thiran 1

Our Swaamikal stresses his loyalty and absolute faith in the following stanzas to back his claim for being given sanctuary, for not being forsaken. He sings:

Even though I am a fellow
of a mind filled with mean desires,
even in my dreams
I will not think even the least of changing faith
or of speaking about false codes of conduct
or of worshipping any others (but You);

* * * *

I have decided to contemplate You only
in my mind and to adore You only –
without closing my eyes night and day –
with unmaimed body, unrotted mind.

* * * *

3555, 3556. VI.15 abhaya-t-thiran 3, 4 (extracts)

Even when misery tortured me
like a rod thrust into a raw wound,
Oh Lord Who have blended with my eyes and thoughts,
other than You,
I have never held in regard
any others on this earth or in the bright heavens;
moreover, I have never even associated
with those who hold them in regard;
I have never thought about anything else (but You);
I have placed faith in You alone,
do not forsake me!

* * * *

The breath this flesh receives,
the senses, love, zeal, truth,
the mother who bore me,
father, preceptor, great wealth I earn,
livelihood, good succour,
children, wife, kin,
friends whom I gain,
I live in the faith that You are all these;
do not forsake me!

3557, 3558.VI. 15 abhaya-t-thiran 5, 6

On the strength of these qualifications our Swaamikal asserts that it is the duty of God to protect him. He sings:

Ridding me of my weariness, misery and fear,
taking possession of my body, actions, life and earnings,
and, endowing me
with Your body that is mercy,
You form, true prosperity, strength,
Your all-powerful great gracious bliss,
love, and aspiration for gnosis of Reality,
it is Your duty to protect me;
I have placed my faith in You,
do not forsake me.

3559. VI.15 abhaya-t-thiran 7

With the characteristic waning of spirits following a phase of confidence, the mood of our Swaamikal changes less than half-way through this decad and he reverts to self-reproaches and self-accusations. He sings:

Like people who sink to the ground
for lack of strength to walk
though they have proper legs,
though there was an opportunity
to apprehend Reality,
I have become enfeebled very much
for lack of a desire to gain Your grace;
Oh Adept Who transform the cruel wild beast into man,
Oh Lord of the Assembly of True Gnosis,
Oh Lord of my life,
I have placed faith in You only;
do not forsake me.

3561. VI.15 abhaya-t-thiran 9

Even though I am a more wicked fellow
than the snake with the spread-out hood,
even though I am a greater sinner
than the most wicked sinner,
even though I am a person with a mind
which provides a home for evil,
even though I have not the least pity,

* * * *

even though I have studied
all the worldly literature (only),
even though I reviled those
who had studied literature
relating to Reality,

even though I am a person of harsh look,
even though I am a person of lustful glance,
even though I took to the company of false people,
even though I talked and acted
to the mystification of fools
like the greatest of great people,

* * * *

even though I ran about the world
with great avarice,
even though I sought for food and raiment
in town after town,
even though I fell into the mire of lust
and became bemused and confused,
and became perplexed and worn out,

* * * *

even though I desired
that others should get astounded and respect me,
even though I often fabricated lies only
and repeated them again and again,
even though I strutted about
saying that there is no one equal to me,
and grew haughty,
even though I entertained only the donors
and despised those who did not give
(anything to me),
even though I am a foreigner to impartiality,

* * * *

I have placed faith in You only,
do not forsake me.

3563, 3564, 3567, 3575.VI.15 abhaya-t-thiran 11, 12, 15, 23 (extracts)

The decad ends, however, on a note of strong optimism.

A fellow like a tree bereft of all its branches,
a fraudulent fellow,
a base toddy-drinker,
a vile wretch who, fond of savouring everything,
has roamed about the world,
a wicked fellow up to all evil,
no matter whether I had all these defects
in the past or not,
this day, Oh God,
through Your Grace,

I am rid of all my foibles,
and, as a purified person,
I believe in You only,
do not forsake me.

3580.VI. abhaya-t-thiran 28

We may take into consideration here a song from the 18th decad as well, called “Seeking Refuge”. In the course of reviewing the decads of the several books for the purpose of writing this book, I have often felt that some decads would be better for being shifted from their present positions to other places. One such is this 18th decad of the Sixth Book. In theme it is similar to the 14th decad and it would follow well after that decad. Our Swaamikal seeks refuge at the feet of the Lord. He cries “abhayam, abhayam”, grant me freedom from fear; in other words, grant me refuge. He sings:

Oh Lord with form!
Oh formless Lord!
Oh Light!
Oh Ether!
Give me an unceasing supply
of great grace-abounding ambrosia,
this is the right moment,
this, indeed, is the right moment;
I cannot wait any longer,
I cannot wait even a little longer;
If You will not yet come,
I will not live any more;
Oh my Spouse with a crown
in which the moon has taken refuge,
Oh Lord Who have already taken abode in my mind
as my Guru,
abhayam! abhayam!

3611.VI.18 abhayam ituthal 1.

In the 16th decad our Swaamikal declares his inability to endure the misery of separation any longer, the plethora of which he describes in a succeeding decad and seeks refuge at the feet of Lord Nataraajaa in the next decad, He sings:

Oh my King of Mercy
Who flourish here on earth
as eight manifestations¹²⁸!
Oh Treasure of compassion
Who, (formerly) getting rid of whatever was wrong in me,
waylaid me and enslaved me!
Oh God Whom people of whatever kind praise!
Oh Father! Oh King!
Note that I can no longer endure
(the misery of separation from You)!

¹²⁸ earth, water, fire, wind, ether, the sun, the mom and the soul.

Do get rid of all the perplexity
of my misery-laden mind
this very moment,
and graciously bestow on me quickly
everything in this world
according to my heart's desire;
that is not said for formalities' sake,
I have spoken the truth;
Oh Lord of mercy, Oh Father, Oh King,
note that I can no longer endure
(the misery of separation from You)!

3590.VI.16 aatra maatamai 10

The next decad is a lament on the plethora of misery. He sings:

“ The day has dawned;
I am unable to bear any the least of this misery
any longer”,
thus saying, with eyes raining tears through weeping,
I wail and wail and am exhausted.
Has this not fallen on Your sacred ears
which shut out all falsehood?
I, who resemble a bullock
fagged out after ploughing for a long time,
do not see any other succour, Oh my Owner!

* * * *

Oh great Sea of Mercy!
What will be lost
if, entirely getting rid of the perplexity
of this fellow who is baser than a cur,
You bestow Your good grace?
(If You do so),
knowledgeable people will gay of You;
“ He is one Who has, by nature, more compassion
than a mother;
He took to His bosom
even him who committed a crime,
deeming him too as one of His children”.

* * * *

Oh Mother! Oh Father Who begot me!
Oh Chief! Oh President of the Assembly of Gnosis!
Oh great One Who put up with
the great offence committed by this demon
and enslaved me!
If You Yourself would this day assume
the role of one who does not know me,
tell me whom, I, who resemble a cur,
should consider a succour,
and where I should seek refuge!

3591, 3595, 3603.VI.17 vaathanai-k-kazhivu 1, 5, 13

The last six stanzas of this decad, the 17th in the Sixth Book, reveal an incident of great significance in the spiritual career of our Swaamikal. In two of these stanzas, our Swaamikal pleads for the conferment of the Effulgence of Grace, and in the next four stanzas he sings of the fulfilment of that desire. He pleads for the conferment of the Effulgence of Grace thus:

Oh Treasure of mercy!
Oh my two eyes!
Oh Light of the Land of Clarity
Which, blended with my eyes, shines therein!
Oh Ether!
Oh true Prosperity!
Oh Crown-jewel of my mind!
I cannot bear to remain unwisely
in the world beset with darkness (ignorance);
this is the right moment,
Oh youthful One,
to bestow on me the effulgence of grace
and appear before me!

3605.VI.17 vaathanai-k-kazhivu 15

We can hear in the above stanza the echo of the second line of the famous Upanishadic Prayer: “tamaso maa jyotir gamaya”, “from ignorance lead me to knowledge.”

Come, Oh Pupil of my eye!
Give me all that I have in mind;
this is the right moment,
come.
If You delay even a little,
my life will depart;
I have informed You;
I do not speak with two tongues,
I have spoken with the one tongue
which sings Your sacred feet!

The next four stanzas sing the fulfilment of the petition made in the foregoing two stanzas. He sings!

Oh Honey!
Oh clarity-abounding Ambrosia
in the sacred Hall of Gnosis!
Oh Ether that is gnosis of Civan!
Oh Crown-Jewel of a wisdom-endowed mind!
Oh Pupil of my eye!
Oh Owner Who, entering my flesh,
have blended with my mind!
To my great delight, out of Your sweet pleasure,
You bestowed this very moment
(the effulgence of grace);
I do not know of any requital for it.

* * * *

You put up with all the offences
committed by this ignorant youngster;
Oh Symbol of the Effulgence of Grace!
You chose me to receive that blessing
and bestowed it on me;
You blended with me and filled my being
that the Creed of the True Path may spread its light;
I will not part from You for even a moment;
part from You I will not;
I have gained deathlessness,
I have attained a state of great bliss!

* * * *

Oh my Mother!
Oh the Father Who begot me!
You laid me in the cradle of great mercy
while bliss filled me;
You gave me sacred grace-filled ambrosia
that my mind may be illumined;
graciously hugging me (to your bosom)
You made my face blossom (with joy);
and, bestowing on me in full
the state of apprehension of the Real,
You made me be in the world
without ageing (at all)!

* * * *

You bestowed, You continue to bestow

and You will further bestow on me,
Oh Father of unique suzerainty,
Your great mercy.
What shall I say about it?
Before I could hardly shout,
“Do graciously get rid of the misery of my mind”,
You came and, blending with me, rejoice!
My hours are heavenly hours indeed!

3607, 3608, 3609, 3610. VI.17 vaathanai-k-kazhivu 17 to 20

The 20th and 21st decads are important landmarks in the first stage of our Swaamikal's journey on the Unitive Way. In these we find positive statements of the apprehension of the Real. He sings:

It is true that I have searched for You,
It is true that, in order to gain clarity of truth,
I have sulked with You a little,
nevertheless, have I ever thought
even the least of anything else?
I do not know of any such thing
to the best of the knowledge of Your dancing foot!
Oh Unique Great Effulgence on the Hall in Thillai,
I will never part from You,
with Whom I have had union;
my tongue shrinks from
even the mention of parting from You!

3631. VI.20 irai-p-poruppu iyambal 1

Oh munificent Lord
Who put up with all my wild actions
and enslaved me!
I do not view as mine
my past deeds and the later ones
which conflict with the former;
Oh Lord Who have united with me,
and are established as one with me,
I see them all as Your deeds,
and, after seeing so,
what more is there for me to say?

* * * *

Oh my Father,
You bestowed on me
the bliss of life here and in the hereafter
at one stroke;
what shall I say of Your glory!
I dwell in my thoughts

on the oneness
into which You and I have blended
as of right with one another
without leaving any trace of separateness
between us,
and I rejoice in the core of my heart!

3649, 3650.VI.21 kaimmarinmai 9, 10

In this state of union without a trace of separateness, our Swaamikal sings the praise of Nataraajaa his Spouse, and Nataraajaa his guru, in the 22nd and 23rd decads. Sri A. Balakrishna Pillai considers that the first stage of our Swaamikal's journey on the Unitive Way ends with the 21st decad of the Sixth Book. He classifies these decads under the title, "Poorva-gnaana Chidambara-p-pakuthi", "Section of the early stage of attainment of gnosis at Chidambaram". I feel, however, that this section would be incomplete without the 2nd, 23rd and 24th decads as in Ooran Atikal's edition, the Nataraajapathi Maalai (Garland of Poesy on my Spouse, Lord Nataraajaa), the Sargurumani Maalai (the Garland of Poesy on the Gem, my True Guru and Tarbhodha Izappu (Lon of Consciousness of the self). The first two record various spiritual experiences of great significance and the third is the fruit of the weary but joyous journey on the first stage of the Unitive Way. Our Swaamikal has lost all consciousness of 'I and mine'. He has begun to enjoy the experience of aham brahmaasmi, I am Brahman. He and the Godhead are no longer two, they are one. We may say that our Swaamikal's ministry on earth begins here, a ministry that in terms of decads and stanzas was to last 120 decads and 2099 stanzas. In terms of time we cannot be so precise, but may hazard a guess that it could not have been less than ten years. For the journey on the first stage of the Unitive Way could not have, in all probability, taken him more than five years out of the fifteen years he spent in Karunkuzhi and its environs. We shall see as many stanzas as possible of these very crucial decads. Our Swaamikal sings:

Oh Ambrosia, Who,
having blended Yourself
with my earthly body and bones,
with my love, heart, and compassion,
with my life and life of my life,
with my native character,
with my speech of sweet nature, and my tongue,
with the music that sounds in my ear,
with the pupils of my two eyes,
with the vision of those pupils,
with my experiences,
with my native wisdom
and with the wisdom of my wisdom
and, having transformed everything of these
into your own image,
taste sweet,
and swell up more and more
and fill my being!
Oh Flood of great grace

that fills everywhere!
Oh unperishing Joy!
Oh more than Joy!
Oh Treasure of Pure Bliss-laden True Path!
Oh Nataraja, my Spouse,
Oh Great Effulgence of Grace!

3562.VI.22 nataraajapathi maalai 2

Students of comparative study of The Thiruvaachakam and the Thiruvarutpaa will be reminded of the following lines of Maanikkavaachakar.

Like the waves of the rich cool Sea of Milk
and like the waters in midsea
on full-moon day,
filling the core of my mind to overflowing,
and begging all description,
ambrosia to collect in each hair root of my body
He ordained.
Within this cur's frame,
through every fibre of this wretch's carnal body,
injecting sweet honey with the aid of a kurumbu¹²⁹
He pumped streams filled with marvellous ambrosia
right to the cavities of the bones.
And, as if with my melting heart
He fashioned a new form,
an ecstasy-bubbling body He created for me.
.....
Thus, when in me, Mercy's pure honey He mixed,
in His Grace, He made even me, of lowliest rank,
surpassing ambrosia sweet.

Thiruvaachakam, 3rd decad, Thiruvandappapakuthi, Lines 168 to 177

¹²⁹ kurumbu – probably, something like a syringe, or an intravenous injection needle.

Our Swaamikal continues:

Oh Flame
Who blended with all my body, all my life,
all my mind, all my sentiency,
Who dispelled the darkness (enveloping them)
and, without any rising or setting at any time,
transformed all of them into a blaze of light,
Who, as an embodiment of the rays
Of Civan and Sakti
capable of bestowing anything and everything,
shine in solitary glory

in the middle of the Hall of Gnosis
 which is a state of bliss
 of unique experience!
 Oh transcendent Lord Who created
 all the seas, all the lands,
 the fire, the wind, the sky, all of them!
 Oh Being Who,
 while all the literature describe You as unseeable,
 came forward for my eyes to behold!
 Oh Wisdom
 Who shine inside me and outside me
 as true succour
 and Whom I can touch with my hand!
 Oh Treasure of Pure Bliss-laden True Path!
 Oh Nataraja, my Spouse,
 Oh Great Effulgence of Grace!

3653. VI.22 natarajapathi maalai 3

Having adored the Godhead as God Within, our Swaamikal proceeds to adore Him as God Without. In Hindu theology, God is conceived as present in eight forms, ashta-moortham-s. They are earth, water, fire, wind, ether, the sun, the moon and Iyamaanam, the Purusha, or the actuating Dynamic Force. Our Swaamikal devotes seven stanzas in this decad to those aspects of God except the Dynamic Force. He, probably, felt that a stanza for this aspect was not necessary as this aspect was inherent in the seven stanzas devoted to the other manifestations. He sings:

Oh Being
 Who fill the earth in its bottom and top,
 in its vast surface and in its breadth,
 in its entirety, in all its contours,
 and, filling them, give them shape,
 and becoming each and everyone of them,
 yet become a true state
 which is not each and everyone of them!

* * * *

Oh Light
 Who are present in water,
 in the reservoirs filled by that water,
 in their state of plenitude,
 in the essence of the water,
 in its flow,
 in the shimmer of the flow,
 in the shade (of the trees overhanging the water),
 in its ripples,
 in its quality,
 in its sources,
 in the salt of the water,

in the nice taste inherent in the salt,
in the waves,
in the said water's bottom, top and middle,
and give it its nature
..... !

* * * *

Oh Light Who are immanent
as the actuating intelligence
and nurture wonderfully
the auxiliary forces of intelligence
in the bright fire,
in its margins,
in its matchless brilliance,
in its sparks,
in its apex,
in its heat,
in the flickering in its core,
in its origin and its end,
in its clear colour,
in its formlessness,
in its omnipotence,
.....!

* * * *

Oh Light Who are arisen
in the blowing wind,
in its margins,
in the beginning, middle and end of the wind,
in its currents which blow
as the result of several millions of forces,
in the peace of its stillness,
in its energy,
in the many qualities born of the wind,
and, Who, giving support to all of them,
graciously lend aid to the various deities of speech
which emerge rhythmically therefrom!¹³⁰

¹³⁰ deities of speech are four, viz., sookshmai, pasyanthi, maddhima and vaikari.

* * * *

Oh Light Who are graciously present
in the ether, in the circumstances of its becoming,
in its formlessness,
in its characteristics,
in the ether's beginning, middle and end,

in its colour,
in its various aspects,
in its glory, in its eternal strength,
in its greatness of comprehensiveness!
Oh Light Who placed in it
myriads and myriads of forces and counterforces!

* * * *

Oh gracious Light
in the sun,
in the beauty of the sun,
in its form and formlessness,
in its tongues of flame,
in its flame within the flame,
in the sheaves of solar rays,
in the focused light of the sun,
in its radiating light!
Oh Light Who becoming one
with the core of the light
and the light of the light,
dance therein most auspiciously!
Oh my Sire, Oh my King
Who, on that night (in the past),
came and bestowed on me
the Light of Grace!
Oh Wise One! Oh Ambrosia!
Oh Lover! Oh Bliss! Oh Father!
Oh Gracious One!
Oh Delight to my life
which has sought You!
Oh Unique One! Oh Pure One!
Oh my Friend!
Oh Treasure of Pure Blissful True Path,
Oh my Spouse, Natarasaa,
the Great Effulgence of Grace !

* * * *

Oh Intelligence Who resplendently are arisen
in the jewel of a moon,
in its form and its formlessness,
in the form of its form,
in its ambrosial rays,
in the light of those rays,
in the light of that light,
in the ambrosia of the cool moon,¹³¹
in the sweetness of that ambrosia,
in the moon's sides, bottom, centre and top!
Oh transcendent Bliss

Who have fructified in me!

3656 to 3662 VI.22 nataraasapathimalai 6 to 12 (extracts)

¹³¹ it is believed that ambrosia drips from the cool rays of the moon, and that it is this ambrosia which ripens crops, fruit, etc.

God has spoken to man from ages past. He spoke to Moses from the burning bush, He spoke to Christ, He spoke to Mohommed, He spoke to Dayaanand Saraswathi. He has spoken down the ages to His chosen sons, to the Founders of the Revealed Religions. Even so, He spoke to Raamalinga Swaamikal who was the chosen Son of God in the nineteenth century to establish a universal brotherhood of man freed of all shackling fetters of castes and creeds, of rich and poor, of black or white, a universal brotherhood born of a sense of oneness in the eyes of God and based on compassion, on compassion alone. In six stanzas in this decad, our Swaamikal reveals the Message received by him and concludes the decad with two stanzas which reveal significant acts of grace by the Almighty. He sings:

Oh Guru Who
when I, a youngster,
weary and not knowing what to do,
was, one day, lying,
perplexed in mind, on the bare earth,
meditating on Your grace,
and had fallen asleep
oblivious to the world,
came near me in a pre-dawn hour
and waking me thoroughly said:
“Even if it is only Yoga of Gnosis,¹³²
instead of performing it,
is it proper for you to languish here?
Get up, strive to gain Your objective;
eat of the ambrosia of grace, and rejoice,”
Oh my Desire!

¹³² Yoga of Gnosis – gnaana-yoga, apprehension of the Godhead through the gnaana-marga, the Method of Intellectual Apprehension of the Godhead. By using the phrase, “even if it is only”, our Swaamikal, apparently, seems to consider it a method of secondary value when compared with the Bhakti-marga, the Royal Road of Love.

Oh my Love!
Oh perfect great Bliss!
Oh my Wealth!
Oh Treasure Who give
whatever is desired for!
Oh Joy, the produce of the art of not dying!
Oh my Spouse, Nataraja,
Who abide in vighnaanakalar-s¹³³

who are established
in a state of true gnosis (of the Godhead)!

.....

¹³³ vignaanakalar-s – Souls are classified into three categories, sakalar, piralaayakalar, and vignaanakalar, Sakalar-s are common mortals bound by all the three taints (malam-s), aanavam (ignorance), karma (action and reaction), and maayai (matter). Pralaayakalars, though having the three taints, are not under the bondage of maayai (matter). Vignaanakalars, though having the three malams or taints, are not under the bondage of karma (action and reaction) and maayai (matter). No man is every free of aanavam, the taint or bondage of ignorance, no matter how high he has ascended on the spiritual ladder. He sheds it only when he gains mukthi, release from the bonds of birth and death. Raamalinga Swaamikal was a vignaanakalar. It is said that the nature of the bondage is subtle in the case of vignaanakalars, gross in the case of pralaayakalars and exceedingly gross in the case of sakalars. We may paraphrase the term ‘subtle’ as ‘loose gross as tight’, and ‘exceedingly gross, as very tight’.

* * * *

Oh Gem Who,
when, one day, at night,
I was sore perplexed and wistful,
and tears were streaming from my two eyes
with thinking:
“ what shall I, a youngster do; what shall I do”
taking a lightning-flashing form of true gnosis,
stood out clearly for me to see,
embraced me, entered into me,
and, graciously ridding me of my misery,
were seated in me!
Oh Joy
Whom I beheld with a joy
a million times greater than the joy
which the poverty-stricken man experiences when he sees
the produce of the corn he had sown in a ‘good’ field!
Oh Being rare to gain by disputatious people!
Oh transcendent Being
Who had forcibly enslaved me!
Oh unique God abiding in the Hall of Gems!
Oh my Spouse, Omnipotent Natarasaa!

* * * *

Oh Guru,
Who, to my joy, gave this assurance:
“ All Your misery is over;
joy you have gained;
My grace has enveloped you;
enlightenment has filled you;

the right to the experience
 of the state of being established in the Pure True Path
 has become yours indeed.
 You have contemplated getting rid of all obstacles,
 preparing good paths,
 gaining a real manner of life
 and making all the creatures of the world rejoice.
 Oh my devotee,
 may you gain your wishes
 exactly as you have contemplated;
 may you sport in the world untiringly for ever and ever,
 We have given in your hand
 the power to exercise the effulgence of grace,
 We will never forsake you,
 never forsake you;
 this is our will, our will",
 and blended in me
 and willingly abode in me.
 Oh my Spouse Natarajaa,
 Who, becoming an omnipotent Intelligence,
 shine in the Hall of Gems!

* * * *

Oh my Guru,
 Oh darkness-dispelling Light
 immanent in the fire,
 Oh my Spouse,
 Natarajaa of the dance of ethics,
 Who are aloft the mountain
 of attributeless bliss
 and transcendent pinnacle of the cosmic sound – Om,
 Who told me:
 “ The creatures on earth,
 without realising
 that all the religious creeds and sects
 which are found in this famed world
 are demonically crazy child’s play,
 have engaged in controversies
 and, fighting here, there, and everywhere,
 have died and are damned.
 Hurry up and impart to them
 the creed of the Godly True Path
 which confers purity,
 show them the true Being,
 and enable them to gain
 the lofty states of bliss.
 Since you are Our child,
 We have commanded you
 to do this work;

do not think differently in your mind”.

Oh Guru

Who told me:

“ All the words which you utter
that all those who have come into this vast world
may be benefited
will be transformed into Our eternal words;
this is the truth.
Oh Our son,
do not be disheartened;
We have given all to yourself
the dancing rare effulgence of grace;
abide for ever in an unperishing state
and, through love, do sport about everywhere
and live!”

Oh my Father of great mercy

Who graciously deigned

that I may gain in my early days itself

the gnosis of experiencing You

which comes from contemplation

centred between the eyebrows!

Oh my Mother,

Oh my Friend,

Oh Bliss inhering in me inseparably,

Oh Lover,

Oh unique One,

Oh formless One,

Oh my Spouse Nataraajaa

Who, becoming ambrosia seeping inside me,

are arisen at the pinnacle¹³⁴

of the Pathway (to the Godhead)!

¹³⁴ please refer to the extract from my review of a commentary on ‘The Thiruchchatakam’, the 5th decad of the Thiruvaachakam at pages 456 ff.

* * * *

Oh Guru Who told me thus:

“ Exactly as We promised you that day
in the sacred Hall,
We have been pleased to bestow on You (now)
our great light of grace
capable of performing all miracles;
from this day onwards,
do as you have planned
and sport about (in the world) and rejoice.
Becoming eternally an enjoyer of bliss
in a state of deathlessness,
and obtaining in full accordance with your desire

the triad of iyal, suddham, etc.....
live on.

We have come and blended with you;
We will never more part from you in any way;
this is the truth;
this is Our will!"

Oh Civan Who becoming my King,
my great life and imperishable boon,
are established in me!
Oh unique God abiding in the Hall of Gems!
Oh my Spouse, Nataraajaa the omnipotent!

3674, 3675, 3676, 3677, 3679, 3680.VI.22 nataraajapathi maalai 24, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30

All these experiences are summed up with surging gratitude in the 33rd stanza of this decad. Our Swaamikal sings:

Oh munificent Lord,
Ah, what shall I say of the nature of the joy w
which arises in me
when a bliss-laden sea of ambrosia
swells throughout my mind,
boils up, and, putting an end to misery,
spills over.
Whenever I think of Your compassion
in coming near me
 when, sorely sad in mind
 and weary with thinking unimaginable things,
 I was lying asleep in a corner,
in speaking to me with Your pure sacred mouth
 while a smile played about Your sweet face,
in lifting me up with Your two blossomy-hands,
 and embracing me,
in setting me down in another place,
in joyously giving me the ambrosia
 of harshness-free great mercy,
and in ridding me of all my misery!
Oh great Being Who are established
in the etherial thureeya¹³⁵ space,
Oh my Spouse, Nataraajaa of effulgent grace!

2683.VI.22 nataraajapathi maalai 33

The last four stanzas of this decad end with an unusual refrain, a significant address to Lord Nataraaja. The refrain is this:

Oh great Being Who are established
in the etherial thureeya space!

Moreover, Nataraja, who was addressed so far as Pathi (Spouse), is now being addressed as Guru, a sort of a transition to the theme of the next decad, which is ‘The Garland of Poesy on the Gem that is the True Guru’. These endings are conclusive evidence to show that our Swaamikal has gained Apprehension of the Real, intermittent though it may be, yet true apprehension. This stage of apprehension is called savikalpa-samaadhi, a state of union with the Godhead of an intermittent character. Our Swaamikal has become a Jeevan-muktha, a devotee who has gained release from death and birth while even living in a body in this present birth, which is, however, the last. Established in this remarkable state, our Swaamikal sings a Te Deum in four stanzas. One of these has already been reproduced in the preceding page.

We would profit by seeing the other three, He sings:

Oh Unique Ambrosia of great mercy
 Who ripen all raw fruit into mature fruit ¹³⁶!
 Oh God Whom I have seen with my eyes!
 Oh wonderful Vision sew in Kali-yugam
 (the last in the cycle of four aeons
 of Hindu Cosmic Chronology)!

¹³⁵ thureeyam – the fourth state of consciousness, the first three being the states of wakefulness, dreams, and deep sleep. Intermittent Apprehension of the Real is said to be gained in this state of consciousness. The letters a, u, m which constitute ‘Om’ are identified with the states, of wakefulness, dreams, and deep sleep, respectively. Om, the amalgam of these three separate sounds, is identified with the thureeya state. There is a fifth state, thuriyaatheetham, a state transcending the thureeya state. The soundless Om is identified with this state. This is the state of nirvikalpa samaadhi, Uninterrupted Integration with the Real.

¹³⁶ The reference is to God turning immature seekers of God into realised souls.

Oh golden Mountain!
 Oh Father Who are all that a mother is to me!
 Oh unique Chief!
 As whenever I try to express,
 to think of, to assess, to know Your greatness,
 all my mouth tastes sweet,
 all my mind tastes sweet,
 all my intelligence tastes sweet,
 all the wisdom inherent in me tastes sweet,
 what shall I say of the bliss I gain thereby,
 Oh Flame Who shine
 in the state of utter purity
 producing all the joy of grace!
 Oh great Being Who are established
 in the etherial thureeya space,
 Oh my Spouse, Natarajaa of effulgent grace!

* * * *

Oh great Treasure obtained by me
 to the eradication of my depression of mind!
 Oh Gem of Gnosis
 Who have fallen in the grasp of my hand
 as an omnipotent Intelligence!
 Oh Friendship which will never desert me
 for seven by seven births!
 Oh Sugar-candy Who taste sweet inside me
 getting rid of all bitterness!
 Oh Ambrosia of mercy!
 Oh Fruit mellowed in the forest of karpaka trees!¹³⁷
 Oh Coal Who came forward for me to see!
 Oh Father Who bestow true fruit
 (of efforts to gain You)!
 Oh Mother!
 Oh Master Who got rid of all my karma!
 Oh true God!
 Oh genuine Produce that is enjoyment of bliss!
 Oh my true Kin!
 Oh my living Help
 When I experience (every moment)!
 Oh my Bliss!
 Oh State of Pure True Path!
 Oh great Being established
 in the middle of thureeya space!
 Oh Guru Who are Nataraja!
 Oh effulgent grace!

¹³⁷ karpaka tree – wish-fulfilling tree said to be in the Kingdom of Indra, the King of the Deva-s,

* * * *

Oh Sky which pours ever-increasing great (flood of) grace!
 Oh Gnosis which occurs
 in the state of union with You!
 Oh Civan risen in the middle of my heart
 with Your hundred-petalled twin feet
 well established in my hundred-petalled heart!
 Oh Spouse Who enslaved me
 at a tender age of ignorance,
 bestowing on me a special privilege!
 Oh transcendent Being
 capable of raising to the status of gods
 those devotees
 who do not tread the path of attachments!
 Oh Joy rare to be gained by those
 who argue saying: “this boon can be pined there,

nay, this boon can be gained here”!
Oh Fullness Who fill everywhere
as embodiment of bliss,
and as ether transcending even that!
Oh Succourer Who held in Your arms
this youngster who was asleep,
and, bidding me wake up,
got rid of my sleep!
Oh great Being established
in the etherial thureeya space,
Oh Guru Who are Nataraaja
of effulgent grace!

3681, 3682, 3684, VI.22 nataraajapathi maalai 37, 32, 34

“Oh Joy rare to be gained by those who argue:” This boon can be gained there, nay, this boon can be gained here”. Our Swaamikal, evidently, had in mind the people, who, misguided by self-styled religious teachers, make vows now to Murukan at Pazhani, now to Venkataachalapathi at Thiruppathi, to Krishnan at Guruvaayoor, to X or Y or Z at various shrines as if setting up the gods in competition and driving a bargain with them. Vows profit no one except the priests and the Temple Trusts. Let us say: “Oh God, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”, and abide by God’s will.

We saw in the last decad Nataraaja adored as the Guru in its last four stanzas. This is continued in the next decad also, which is cast in the spirit of thanksgiving to Lord Nataraaja for all the grace received so far. It is more than a Te Deum. It details several special acts of grace of God, all of very great significance. We would benefit by seeing as many stanzas of this decad as possible. He sings:

Oh rosy pure Gold
Who have never known any test for its quality!
Oh Ruby!
Oh colourful Tongue of a flame!
Oh great Hill of noble qualities
Who abide in the minds
of men of great thavam
whom the god of death does not know!
Oh Fruit in the Hall of Gnosis
Who make no discrimination
(of caste, race, country or language)!
Oh Guest Whom adepts in knowledge praise!
You have taken delight
in these offerings of mine
who does not know how to offer them!
Oh unique Nataraaja!
Oh Gem of a true Guru of mine!

3685.VI.23 sargurumani maalai 1

Oh my Life!
Oh Life of my sweet life!
Oh my Wisdom!
Oh Wisdom of my wisdom!
Oh dearer than a mother Ambrosia
in the Hall of Gnosis!
Oh Wonder!
Oh my Protection!
Oh my Love!
Oh virtuous Being of compassion
Who accurately placed on my crown
Your golden twin feet blossoms!
Oh State of Truth
whose nature cannot be known!
Oh unique Natarajaa!
Oh Gem of a Guru of mine!.

3687. VI.23 sargurumani maalai 3

Oh wonderful Flame
Who telling me:
“ Note this is the way this becomes
the undying head, the unburnt leg”,
and also pointing out to me
the unflowing water,
have seated Yourself very becomingly
in my mind!
Oh Thought unacceptable to unacceptable people!
Oh Joy ever acceptable to acceptable me!
Oh Free Inn
Who on being demanded to bestow love
do so bestow!
Oh unique Natarajaa,
my Gem of a True Guru!

* * * *

Oh transcendent Flame of Bliss
of great grace
Who, telling me only:
“ This is the state of ‘That art Thou’.
(tat-twam-asi),
and note that this, indeed, is the truth”
rid me of all sense of every kind of duality,
raised me to the true state,
bestowed a nature of never-dying,
and, on my gaining the miraculous powers,
made me sport in every world!
Oh Sea of Grace under the banyan tree
Who show the Silent Path!

Oh unique Natarajaa,
my Gem of a true Guru!

* * * *

Oh Flame of Reality
Who telling me categorically
“ This is the Lord,
this is the objective,
this is bliss,
you gain these this way”,
and, bestowing on me the ambrosia of bliss
along with the ambrosia of freedom from bondage,
raised me to the high state!
Oh virtuous Being
Who perform the dance on the Hall in Thillai!
Oh Medicine Who have taken abode in my mind
which is free of (eroding) sinuses (of desires)!
Oh Civan Who form the crown
on the crown of the four Veda-s!
Oh unique Nataraja,
my Gem of a Guru!

* * * *

Oh transcendent Being
Who told me;
“ This is My state,
the state you gain is this,
know both the states are one;
when you gain an earlier stage,
you may be perplexed a little;
there is an earlier state, a later state,
a whole (final) state.
Learn this state,
and, crossing thereat the seven states,¹³⁸
gain the state of ‘**AS IS**’”.
Oh King of the good state
Which is Your state!
Oh Unique Nataraja,
my Gem of a True Guru!

* * * *

Oh Lord of compassion
Who told me:
“ The Veda-s and the Agama-s
will expatiate and expound, saying:
‘ This is the cause,
this is the effect,

this is the Womb
from which cause and effect originate',
but, Oh my Son,
don't you expatiate on them.
When you gain experience
of the state of fulness,
you will learn in a trice
the state of everything in this world!"
Oh unique Nataraja, my Gem of a Guru!

* * * *

Oh my King
Who told me:
" Since a sinful Path
of religions and faiths

¹³⁸ One is led to wonder whether mention of the seven states here is a forerunner to the concept of the seven veils screening the light at symbolising the Great Effulgence of Grace in the Satya Gnaana Sabhai at Vadalore.

of multifarious creeds
had till now spread (in the world),
men of the world had not known the perfect Path,
and, dying and dying,
have gone to dense darkness;
therefore, do you go a
and, rescuing them from the vile path,
direct them into the goodly way
that is the Pure True Path,
also called the Universal Path,
which is graciously bequeathed
by the heavenly fresh Ambrosia."
Oh unique Natarajaa my Gem of a Guru!

* * * *

Oh transcendent Being of Gnosis
Who told me:
" This is the nadir, this is the apex,
this is the middle,
on top of these, this is the one
without nadir, apex of middle;
Oh My son;
you have come to know
the nadir, the apex and the middle
in this world,
know also the Being
without nadir, apex or middle.

Try to put into action
this very Path of Grace
for the eradication of evil in this world.”
Oh King under the banyan tree
Who shower grace
like the lightning-laced cloud!
Oh unique Nataraaja, my Gem of a Guru!

* * * *

Oh unique Nataraaja, my Gem of a Guru!
You told me:
“ The religious faiths
which the world has adopted are many many;
they have existed devoid of good,
some have disappeared;
people of other worlds do not know,
do not know this;
they are miserable for a long time.
That they may no longer be miserable,
you try to instruct them
that this virtue-laden sacred Religion of Grace
is, indeed, the Universal Religion;
We give you the cool Ambrosia to eat.”

* * * *

Oh True Principal Being
Who bestow grace on those
who plead for sanctuary!
You told me:
“ Fear not the least, my son,
We have given
the Great Effulgence of Grace
all to yourself,
wake up the people of the world
who are asleep,
direct them
into the True Path
which is enveloped by good alone;
there are many items of knowledge
about the transcendent Being
in the upper sphere of the True Being;
that joy may increase in the people,
expound those to them”!
Oh unique Nataraaja, my Gem of a Guru!

* * * *

Oh true Spouse of mine
Who, to the amazement

of the immortals and the sages,
having lovingly bestowed on me
the Great Effulgence of Grace,
and having elevated me
to the fragrant Path of Bliss,

* * * *

protected me
and blended with my mind!
Oh King Who told me:
“ He Who is called Yaman, King of death,
is no more, (in your case),
Oh My son,
shed all your weakness and live on!”
Oh President of the Society of Universal True Path!
Oh unique Nataraja, my Gem of a Guru!

* * * *

9691 to 3699 & 3702. VI.23 sargurumani maalai 7 to 15 & 18

Let us conclude this interpretation of the Sargurumani Maalai with two more stanzas of significance and proceed to the last of the decads is this section of our Swaamikal's journey on the Unitive Way. He sings in these stanzas a paean of praise, a potri, which, I understand, is called acathist in Russian which is one of the many forms of the liturgical hymnody of the Orthodox Church and whose characteristic is praise. Our Swaamikal sings:

Oh Fruit of the karpaka tree
(the wish-fulfilling tree)
Who, blending with the minds
of those who have transcended
all illusory thinking,
taste sweet therein!
Oh Ambrosia
Who, after enslaving me,
bestowed wisdom on me,
and graciously set me
in an unperishing state of grace!
Oh true Spouse
Who to the amazement of several worlds
set the imprint of Your blossom feet
on the crown of even me!
Oh transcendent, transcendently transcendent
Treasure of Chidambaram!
Oh unique Nataraja, my Gem of a Guru!

* * * *

Oh State unreachable
 to even the Veda-s
 which adore You saying:
 “ Oh One, Oh Many!”,
 Oh Mountain reached by me!
 Oh true transcendent Being
 Who told me:
 “ Change all the vociferous religions into one”!
 Oh God
 Whose nature is
 to bestow the great treasure (of mukthi)
 on those who have amazing love (unto You),
 and make them enjoy bliss!
 Oh King
 Who, bestowing on me the boon of deathlessness,
 protect me,
 Oh unique Nataraaja, my Gem of a Guru!

3705, 3709.VI.23 sargurumani maalai 21, 25

As a logical sequence of this great boon of the great effulgence of grace, our Swaamikal loses consciousness of his self, consciousness of himself as a separate entity apart from God. He has gained the state where, in the words of Thomas Merton, it is “God living within God, and identifying a created life with His own life so that there is nothing left of any experimental significance but God living in God”. In this unique state of being, our Swaamikal sings:

Even those who had matured
 (in spiritual life)
 in that manner¹³⁹
 did not know the least (about the Godhead),
 but I learnt a little by Your Grace, my Guru!
 I had thought to remain unknown to any one

¹³⁹ Our Swaamikal does not say in what manner those people had matured in spiritual life. In any case, it must have been quite an inadequate manner.

after having had a vision
 of the unique form
 ripened (in my mind) in the best manner.
 I do not know whether
 it is God’s natural act of grace
 or it is the act of the great maayai (ignorance)
 of that noted colour (black)
 that I,
 who had decided to remain incognito in this manner,
 was dragged into the street
 for all to know me.
 Oh dancing King of the proscenium,

behold, my mind is pacing the hall
(in great perturbation).

3710. VI.24 tharbodham zhatthal 1

The Son of Man has become the Son of God, and he who was unknown and who did not want to be known was dragged much against his will to discharge his preordained mission on earth, to commence his ministry on earth, in order to establish the Pure Universal True Path to God, a path, a religion, based on compassion towards all creatures on earth, a religion based on intense and onepointed love of God, a religion freed from the stifling influences – curses, I would say – of caste, country, race, language, conflicting creeds, petty cruel gods and inhuman sacrifices, freed from the dialectics of learned scriptures.

11. THE UNITIVE WAY (Second Stage)

Our Swaamikal steps on the second stage of his journey on the Unitive Way with a vinnappam, a petition, the last of the petitions in the Thiruvartupaa. We cannot say precisely how long he travelled on this stage of the Unitive Way; may have been four years, the years he spent at Vadaloor after leaving Karunkuzhi where he had stayed nine years since his arrival from Madras. We can say, however, with precision how many decads and stanzas of the Thiruvartupaa cover our Swaamikal's journey and experiences on this second stage of his journey on the Unitive Way. After relating in 56 decads and 895 stanzas his experiences, our Swaamikal pours forth in one decad of 1596 lines a veritable fanfare of words on the crowning experience of this stage where, in the words of Thomas Merton, "one does not have an experience but becomes Experience itself." This decad of 1596 lines sums up all the experiences of the foregoing 56 decads. I wish I could say that there is no element of doubt, despondency, denigration of oneself in the decads we are now taking up for consideration. A faint trace of such moods occurs in just one decad, a trace so faint that one may ignore it altogether in assessing the quality of the experiences in this stage of the journey on the Pathway to God, in these 56 decads. In an article called "An Introduction to the Thiruvachakam", I wrote thus about certain decads of the Thiruvachakam:

"While the 150 stanzas of the 5th and 6th pathikams (decads), the Thiruchchatakam and the Neethal Vinnappam, abound with terms of self depreciation, self-accusation, terms of despair and despondency, pleading and entreaty, the 243 stanzas of pathikams (decads) 7 to 22 from the Thiruvempaavai to Koilthiruppathikam, are singularly free from my such terms. On the other hand, the stanzas rise from subdued elation to joy, from joy to ecstasy, and from ecstasy to all surpassing bliss and end on a note of exultant achievement in stanza 397, the last in the 22nd decad, the Koyilthiruppathikam."

This description will fit on all fours the 56 plus decads which cover the experiences of the second stage of our Swaamikal's journey on the Unitive Way.

This is the vinnappam which our Swaamikal made before God when he set out on this stage of his journey. He sings:

Oh munificent One
Who dance on the Golden Hall set with gems!
Oh Lord Who taste sweet
in the minds of Your devotees
like the heavenly flavour of a ripe banana!
You should graciously receive in Your sacred ears
the petition of this poor cur;
it is that I should assume
in this wretched human birth of mine
the form of a guru (to preach) Your grace.

3720.VI.25 thiru-mun-vinnappam 1

This is only the first item in the petition. Nine more items are petitioned for in the next nine stanzas of this decad. He pleads:

You should receive in Your sacred ears the petition
of this small cur
that my body should take a form
which has a nature of luminosity,

* * * *

that this body liable to death
should turn out here and now
into a never-dying joyous body,

* * * *

that this body which drops away here on earth
should here and now become a body
that will never drop down dead,

* * * *

that this timorous body should here and now become
an unperishing eternal body,

* * * *

that this body which has happened to me
should here and now become
a body of the nature of Your sacred grace,

* * * *

that this body made up of air
should here and now become
a treasure of a body,

* * * *

that this body which torments me
should here and now become possessed
of unperishing prosperity.

3721 to 3729.VI.25 thiru-mun-vinnappam 2 to 10 (extracts)

If the reader will recall to mind all the previous vinnappams in the Thiruvartupaa which were exhaustively analysed in the foregoing chapter, he will note the remarkable difference between this vinnappam and all the former ones. This

vinnappam lays the foundation for the saakaa-p-peru-vaazhvu, the undying great life of which we will hear more as we go along with our Swaamikal on his journey on the Unitive Way.

We may call this section of the journey of our Swaamikal on the Unitive Way as the Section of the Apprehension of The Great Effulgence of Grace which is our Swaamikal's term for the Godhead which is the "immanent and transcendent Ground of all being", "the divine Reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds". The Arut-perum-jothi-akaval is an attempt to define in words what cannot be contained in words, to define the Godhead. If anyone can be said to have succeeded in describing the indescribable, our Swaamikal may well be said to have so succeeded in his great Akaval. As a corollary to this concept of this part of the journey on the Unitive Way we will find that the decads dealing with this part of the journey lead us step by step to the vision of the apprehension of the Godhead, the Arut-perum-jothi, by our Swaamikal.

The next twelve decads, from the 26th to the 37th, 132 stanzas in all, are petitions of various sorts, no matter what the titles of the decads are all of them, however, lead us step by step to the denouement that is the conferment of the Arut-perum-jothi, the great Effulgence of Grace, on our Swaamikal.

"Bestow on me a sweet way of life" is the theme of the 26th decad, appropriately called "Decad of Saying: Bestow a Sweet Way of Life". He sings:

Oh Might in the heart of the thundering sky!
Oh Lord Who bestowed on me
a power filled with the light of gnosis!
Oh Lord Who protect the great sages!
Oh God Who put up with my offences
and bestowed a boon on this slave!
Oh Fruit of truly great thavam!
Oh Lord of a nature
which the Aagama-s and the Veda-s cannot gauge!
Oh unique One in the Hall in Thillai!
Do graciously bestow on me a sweet way of life!

3730. VI.26 inittha vaazhu aru1 enal 1

Bestow on me a good way of life!

* * *

Bestow on me a good way of life!

* * *

Bestow on me a way of life
endowed with everything!

* * *

Bestow on me a supreme way of life!

* * *

Bestow on me a gnostic way of life!

* * *

Bestow on me a pure way of life!

* * *

Bestow on me a way of life free of fear!

* * *

Bestow on me a sweet way of life!

* * *

Thus ringing changes on the same petition, our Swaamikal devotes an entire decad of ten stanzas praying for a sweet way of life. This petition is not for his selfish ends but for the purposes of the mission he has to fulfil on earth.

He is seized with a great longing to gain the great effulgence grace, and, in the next decad, the 27th, he gives voice to this longing. He sings:

Is it fair that the pure ones who sing Your praises
should quail in their minds
and quiver with fear
in the very fibres of their bodies
and lose heart
whenever they hear all the perfidious designs
of the vile ones with worm-infested heads
who, having wasted all their time,
are disappointed (in their desire to gain You)?
Do thwart all those designs
by Your unique effulgence of grace
and graciously establish
the (Creed of the) Pure True Path!

* * * *

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
in the sacred Hall of Gnosis!
Oh my King!
Today itself is the (right) moment;
do deign to bestow Your grace on me
so that the unique Creed of the Pure True Path

may flourish all over the world,
 so that our people may gain the conviction
 that mercy and bliss are things that matter, and rejoice,
 so that fulness of prosperity may prevail among them
 and wisdom may shine in them,
 and that virtue may adorn their lives.
 The light of grace has risen
 over the hill – my mind,
 the dark night has entirely passed away,
 the eternal flower, my heart, has blossomed,
 auspicious bells are ringing,
 the remarkable golden-hued radiance (from my body)
 is on the increase,
 the damsels that are the (eight) mystical powers
 have come to have union with me,
 this is the reputed good moment,
 (therefore) do graciously come quickly
 that the effulgence of grace may shine in me.

* * * *

Do graciously hurry forth
 and bestow grace on me
 this very moment,
 Oh Guru of the Creed of the Pure True Path
 Who shine as a beautifully shaped Effulgence of Gnosis
 in the great Hall of Gems!
 Graciously bestow on me this boon –
 Link with my mind
 the omnipotent unique effulgence of grace
 and coalesce with me;
 do graciously effect this
 in the manner it has to be done.

3754,3757,3758,3759,VI.27 thiruvavural vizhaithal 15, 18, 19,20

In intimate terms of bridal mysticism our Swaamikal pleads for union in the next
 decad. As we proceed from decad to decad in this section of the Sixth Book which
 records the journey on the second stage of the journey on the Unitive Way, we will
 see a progressive intensification of desire for union. We will find that this progression
 is more a geometrical progression than the humdrum arithmetical progression. He
 sings:

Won't You open the sacred door
 (of the bridal chamber)
 and, removing all the veils,
 won't You show the sacred form of Great Effulgence
 Which is Your grace;
 won't You graciously bestow true experience on me
 making my body melt

and springs of ambrosia to well up in it,
 and turn it along with the mind
 into a blaze of light;
 and Oh Lord of unimaginably unique form,
 won't You blend with me
 and make me rejoice for ever
 without distinction of night or day,
 Oh King of the City of Gnosis
 Who bestow grace on those
 who never harbour pride in their minds,
 Oh Crown-Jewel of my mind,
 Oh my holy dancing Spouse?

* * * *

Like others, did I desire for clothes from You,
 or did I desire for food
 or for others' possessions?
 Oh Lord filled with love,
 I desired only that You should embrace me!
 Alas, the flood of my desire has overflowed the bund!
 I say: "Come to my side and embrace me!"
 Let the people of the world say whatever they like,
 I have abandoned all sense of shame,
 Oh Lord Who stand on the Hall (in Thillai)
 looking on the faces of those in the south !¹⁴⁰
 Oh Crown-Jewel of my mind,
 Oh my holy dancing Spouse!

3760, 3763. VI.28 thiru-arut pukazhchi 1, 4

¹⁴⁰ faces of those in the south' – this phrase may refer to the spirits of the ancestors of people, pitru-s, who we called thenpulatthaar by Thiruvalluvar, but, in all probability, this phrase then putaiyaar used by our Swaamikal refers to the fact that the image of Lord Nataraja in the temple of Thillai (Chidambaram) faces south and therefore faces the devotees gathered in that direction.

It would seem that the Satya-gnaana Sabhai has already been established by our Swaamikal at Vadaloore or that the idea of establishing such a Sabhai has germinated in his mind, for all the stanzas of the next decad end with the refrain, "Oh unique great Lord of the Satya Sabhai!". This decad (the 29th of the Sixth Book) as well as the six which follow describe the mounting intensity of the desire for union. We shall see only a few stanzas from these seven decads and hurry on to the "Decad of Amazement at the Blessings Received." Our Swaamikal sings yearningly:

Oh Sire,
 I, of perfidious mind,
 tormented by unceasing misery and troubles,
 and desirous of Your Mercy,

have come and stand before You,
You should say to me: “Fear not”,
and enslave me.
Oh Father, I do not know anyone but You,
Oh King at Vadaloor
Who bestow grace on those
who seek refuge with You,
Oh unique great Lord of the Satya-Sabhai!

3771. VI.29 ciruchabhai vilakkam 2

You helped me ascend all the steps (unto You),
You brought me to the city
where You perform the transcendental dance;
the flags-festooned temple of gem-set tiers too
You pointed out to me;
in that temple, at the gates of the entrance tower,
You opened the door without chinks
and showing me (the interior)
You shut it fast again;
You should open it again,
Oh Lord, this is the right moment,
Oh Lord Who dance on the Hall,
do quickly bestow Your grace!

* * * *

“Here, in this box, is a great unperishing thing,
receive this”, You said,
and moreover, gave in the hand of me
who do not know what eight and two make
the large key which opens it;
now, at this moment,
I am trying to open it
and take that thing;
don’t think of preventing me,
I will not wait another half-a-second;
for each half-a-second
(I am made to wait)
I will levy a million-fold interest
and collect it from You,
I swear by You,
Oh Lord Who dance on the Hall of Gems,
do graciously come quickly!

* * * *

3780, 3781. VI.30 thiruvartperu 1, 2

I, Your slave, have known

that this, indeed, is the moment
of which You told me that day;
nevertheless, my mind sinks
and repeatedly is perturbed, Oh King!
Oh Sugar-cane endowed with eyes,
that my worries, and perturbation of mind may subside,
that flood of bliss my well up in me,
and that virtuous people
may shine in this world with rejoicing minds,
graciously arise openly on the flower of my heart,
and deign to quickly bestow
everything You graciously desire to bestow!

3788.VI.30 thiruvarutperu 9

Addressing his mind in the concluding stanza, our Swaamikal sings:

“This is the moment,
this is the moment
when our Lord will graciously arrive here
to enslave us;
do not be besotted like a fly
fallen into a pot of honey,
do not droop with despair,
do not be perturbed,
do freshen up and rejoice;
it is rejoicing only from now on,
note that there will be no more my dearth of it.”
I swear by our Guru,
I swear by our great family Deity,
this is the sacred word,
this indeed, is the golden word
which the virtuous One
Who dances on the Hall in Thillai
spoke to me
at the moment of union with me!

3789.VI.30 thiruvarut-peru 10

Hungry for a vision of her Beloved, the bride, who is our Swaamikal, swears by her
Lord the Great Effulgence of Grace that she

will not look at this ephermal world,
* * *
will not eat a feast
consisting of viands of all the six tastes,
* * *
will not relish food rare to obtain,
* * *
will no more lie down on a mat,

I shall, without fail, give up my life;
 I swear this, I swear;
 may Your twin feet know this,
 Oh Lord of compassion,
 Oh true Succourer
 Who are food and drink and succour to everyone!
 Oh dancing King
 of benignantly blissful pure effulgence of grace!

* * * *

3801. VI.32 priyen endral 1

The next four stanzas on my list for reproduction are very well known songs sung by a large number of devotees of God. They are also found in many anthologies. One of them has been reproduced in the first chapter of this book, but will bear repetition in the present context. Our Swaamikal sings:

Suffer misery any longer I cannot,
 suffer I cannot, Oh King,
 all that I have suffered will suffice,
 do now extirpate my fears
 and, taking my body, lift etcetera all to Yourself,
 be pleased to give me in return
 Your body, life, etcetera – all of them,
 Oh Lord Who dwell in the Hall of Gnosis
 to the north (of Vadalloor)!

* * * *

Oh Lord!
 Am I not one of the long line
 of the holy galaxy of devotees
 who have come down the ages
 like banana shoot from banana stem?
 The how of it I know not.
 The misery this wretch suffers,
 has it the assent of Your divine will?
 I this fitting?
 Is this just?
 Is this righteous indeed?
 Oh bounteous Lord
 Who dance on the Golden Hall set with gems!
 Son to You am I not?
 And legitimate father to me are You not?
 This craven world's soul-searing grief
 I can no longer endure!
 Graciously bestow on me Your benign light;
 graciously bestow it right now!

* * * *

Will I ever forget You?
I do not know of my ever forgetting You;
if I forget You I shall give up my life;
I will not delay even a single moment,
I swear this by You.
Will You forget me?
If You forget me,
what will I do,
where will I go,
to whom will I relate (my tale of woe)?
Oh my Father!
Oh Lord more compassionate than a mother!
Even if You forget,
Your Grace (Sakthi)
Who brought forth all this universe
will never forget me;
thus thinking I abide rejoicing exceedingly.
Do not forget that this is the fit moment,
do quickly bestow on me the effulgence of grace!

* * * *

I am capering about
thinking that even if I forget Him,
He, my Spouse, will never forget me.
Though so far I have forgotten heaven,
the heavenly ones I have forgotten,
Vishnu and Brahma have I forgotten,
our Rudran I have forgotten,
my flesh I have forgotten,
forgotten have I my life,
all my sentience I have forgotten,
the world entire have I forgotten,
yet I do not know of ever forgetting You here!
Do not treat me like a too soon weaned baby,
do evince concern for me
and be graciously pleased to bestow on me
the effulgence of grace!

3802, 3803, 3806, 3807. VI.32 piriya endral 3, 4, 7, 8

“This is the moment, this is the right moment for uniting with me” is the refrain of the 33rd and 34th decads.

I have crossed all the forests;
reaching the city,
I have seen to the delight of my eyes
the sight of the golden ramparts

of Your beautiful city;
 I saw the remarkable sight
 of the entire fortress being decked with flags,
 I shed all my failings
 at the outer doors of Your temple;
 all my instruments of knowing
 (the five sense-organs),
 having lost all their mischief,
 are under my control;
 I have gained all the mystic powers,
 I am singing songs galore
 in the Hall of Gnosis;
 Oh my Spouse, this is the right moment,
 do graciously blend with
 and fill my mind
 which gives me strength!

3820.VI.33 civa tharisanam 10

Oh Effulgence within an effulgence
 in the Hall of Gnosis
 Who extirpate all misery!
 Oh God Who bestow imperishable bliss!
 Oh good Father and Mother Who begot me!
 Oh Fullness Who, becoming all love,
 have filled my being!
 Oh Eminent One!
 I cannot bear separation from You any more!
 This is the right moment to give me
 the golden condition of body;
 do graciously unite,
 do graciously unite with me!

3827.VI.34 anuboga nilayam 6

It has been said: “Knock and it shall be opened unto you. For to him
 that knocketh it shall be opened”. Our Swaamikal knocks in the 35th decad of the
 Sixth Book. He sings:

That I might eat of the ambrosia
 of undying grace and rejoice,
 Oh Nataraja
 surrounded by the King of snakes,
 Oh Only One, Oh Bhavan,¹⁴¹
 Oh transcendent One,
 Oh transcendentally transcendent One,
 Oh our Civan,
 open the door!

¹⁴¹ Bhavan – cause for the appearance of the world.

* * * *

While on this earth itself,
I desire to eat the holy ambrosia
which is in the Abode of Mukthi
on top of the Hill of Effulgence;
Oh ineffable only One,
Oh Many,
Oh Embodiment of gnosis
abiding in the beautiful Hall,
open the door!

3834.VI.34 anuboga nilayam 3, 10

Our Swaamikal knocked, and, as promised in days of yore, the door was opened to him. He sings:

Oh Father,
I called upon You, saying:
“ Haven’t You come to know all my suffering?”,
and You, without disregarding me,
came that very moment,
took me up in Your arms, embraced me,
and, touching my head, gladly said:
“ Fear not, my Son,
We will not part from you even the least,
part from you We will not;
We have given all to yourself
the large multitude of mystic powers
that you may shine in this world”.

* * * *

Me, a fellow with no peer in baseness,
You raised on high
to the amazement of everyone,
and helped me to gain a golden form,
unblemished mind,
perfect gnosis,
riches,
mystical powers capable of performing
everything one thinks of,
and great joy;
Oh my Spouse with no peer unto You,
What shall I say of Your compassion!

* * * *

Oh God,
 You said:
 “On you, indeed, We have conferred freedom,
 We have entered your pure goodly body,
 We are abiding in your warm heart,
 We have united with you with delight,
 live in an unperishing state,
 receive this gift of the great effulgence of grace,
 pay obeisance to the Golden Hall
 and the Assembly of Gnosis.”
 Oh God! hallowed be Your glory!

3847, 3849, 3851. VI.36 pettra petrinaiviyatthal 6, 8, 10

Let us read these three poems again and again and meditate on their remarkable significance before we follow our Swaamikal further on the Unitive Way. Here are some astounding statements, some unique claims which set apart our Swaamikal from the other saints of Tamilnaadu with one exception. This exception is Maanikkavaachakar who made equally remarkable statements, though of a different nature. He Sang:

Behold Eesan Whom everyone is entitled to apprehend!
 Behold Civan Whom even the deva-s do not know!
 Behold Him with the aspects of the male, the female and the neuter!
BEHOLD HIM WHOM I SAW WITH MY EYES!
 BEHOLD THE AMBROSIA WHICH YIELDS GRACE IN
 ABUNDANCE!
NOTE THAT I SAW THE GREATNESS OF HIS MERCY !
(FOR) BEHOLD HE WALKED ON EARTH WITH HIS ROSY FEET
 FOR MY SAKE !
NOTE THAT I WAS CONVINCED THAT HE WAS CIVAN!
NOTE THAT HE, IN HIS GRACE, ENSLAVED ME!
BEHOLD HIM WHO HAS HER WITH EYES LIKE THE BLUE LOTUS
 AS A PART OF HIM !
BEHOLD SIMULTANEOUSLY HER AND HIM!

Raamakrishna Paramahansa, in answer to Naren’s impertinent question, is said to have replied that he has not only Seen God but can show Him to Naren too. Centuries earlier Maanikkavaachakar said the same to all of us Narens, and Raamalinga Swaamikal, a contemporary of Raamakrishna Paramahansa, says the same to all of us in their revelations of the most secret of all secret experiences. We have only to fulfil three conditions to gain the same experience. We have to be, in the words of Aldous Huxley, “loving, pure in heart, and poor in spirit”. It seems to be delusively simple to fulfil these three conditions, but when we begin to meditate on the depth of their meaning we are seized with despair and we begin to feel that not only this present life of ours but many more lives to come will not be enough for us to succeed in gaining these three qualities in their fulness. But we need not despair, for God, in His mercy, offers us several chances to fulfil these requirements to apprehend Him.

Our Swaamikal has reached with these songs of his a very definite stage in his journey on the Unitive Way. There will be no more any reversals, any turning back, any doubt or despair. This 36th decad is, thus, an important milestone on the long long way towards the Godhead.

The next four decads, the 37th to the 40th, are in the nature of thanksgiving to God for the great boon He had conferred on him. He sings:

Oh great Life Who dance
on the resplendent Hall of Gnosis!
Oh lustrous Great Effulgence of Grace!
Oh Being shining within that Effulgence!
Receive in Your holy ear
my petition which fills my thoughts
and bestow Your grace
that this body of mine liable to decay
may this very day turn
into a never perishing gracious form.

3856.VI.37 azhivuraa arulvadiva-p-peru 5

You bestowed on me the great effulgence of grace
that no sooner than I could think in my mind
'let the dead arise'
they should rise laughing (out of the bier)
on this earth;
and, giving me a form indestructible by any means,
You seated Yourself inside me!

Oh Dweller in the Hall of Gems,
how true is the power of Your great grace!

* * * *

Was it only the power of creation;
no; all the five functions¹⁴²
my Owner Himself bestowed on me
and, saying:
"Travel all over these out-growths
of macrocosms and microcosms
and thrive there as you please,
do not worry",
gave all to myself,
the effulgence of grace,
and merged in me
that I may be filled with ardour.

3868, 3869. VI.38 perarul vaaimaiyai viyattal, 6, 7

¹⁴² five functions - creation, sustenance, destruction, veiling, and bestowing grace.

We saw in an earlier chapter our Swaamikal bitterly complaining that he had been handed over to the care of a callous and cruel foster-mother. Now, however, he sings gratefully of another wardship:

Oh Ambrosia, the great effulgence of grace!
Oh God Who, bestowing on me the ambrosia,
gave me into the hands of the wise great Mother,
Your Grace (Sakthi), to bring up!
Oh true Beatitude,
Oh Bliss Who, rescuing me from this dark great world,
lifted me high above!
Oh Guru Who disclosed to me
the great law governing all things!
Oh Being Who dance on the Hall in Thillai!

3872. VI.39 pothunatam purikindra porul 1

In nineteen more stanzas our Swaamikal sings a Te Deum for all blessings conferred on him.

In the 40th decad he bursts forth into ecstatic rejoicing thus:

I have abandoned all kinds of perfidy,
I have quaffed greatly of the flood
that is Your grace,
I see inside my mind
sights never before seen,
Oh Dweller in the famous Hall,
after gaining serfdom unto You.
I have beheld You in the dawn of my life,
I revel in bliss on the Highway of the Good Path,
I have gained the boon
of not dying on this earth,
Oh only One Who dance on thathvam,
after becoming a slave to You!

3892. VI.40 aanandhaanubhavam 1, 2

The decad has been appropriately named “Experiencing Bliss”.

Let not the reader skim through the poems reproduced above or, for that matter, any of the poems of our Swaamikal reproduced in this book; for, in this Book, I do not speak; it is the Swaamikal himself who recounts in his own words the experiences of his Journey on the Pathway to God. I merely add a link phrase or sentence or an explanatory note or interpretative para. These are not important or indispensable. So pay attention to what the Swaamikal says, meditate on his words, profit by them and walk in his footsteps on the Pathway to God. For instance, hear the two songs:

The Lord in the form of ether on the sacred Hall

where the ancient four Veda-s
and the Aagamaa-s seek Him,
He took me as His slave with delight,
He will not take note of any blemish in me,
He saw me, rejoiced,
and abode (in me), blended with me!

* * *

I saw Him Who in days of old
espoused me with delight,
Him Who has occupied the Hall in Thillai with pleasure,
I rejoiced,
I ate of the sacred ambrosia of mercy,
I gained unperishing might!

* * * *

3899,3900. VI.40 aanandhaanubhavam 8, 9

How much experience is packed into these two short songs! All this experience awaits you and me, dear reader, if we would but become slaves unto the Lord. Alas, we would be slaves to coffee tea, to food and drink, to lass, lucre, and land, but we would not become slaves unto the Lord Who waits with open arms to receive us into His bosom.

With the 24th decad of the Sixth Book (with which ends our Swaamikal's journey on the First Stage of the Unitive Way) cease all self-accusations, self-denigrations, weeping and wailing. Even petitions cease. The later decads are sheer paeans of praise of the Lord. The decads from the 41st onwards to the 80th, forty-decads in all are even more of this character than the foregoing decads of the Sixth Book. These again can be divided into two sections, one comprising 17 decads, from the 41st to the 57th and the other comprising 23 decads from the 58th to the 80th, the latter's distinction from the former being that the decads in that section are cast in the naayaka-naayaki bhaavam, the Bride and Bridegroom relationship. If the reader will cast back his mind to the several sections into which the decads of the Thiruvartupaa have been divided for interpretation, he will note that the culminating decads of each of these sections have been cast in naayaka-naayaki bhaavam. This is as it should be. Our Swaamikal sings ecstatically in lilting words, impossible to translate, about the God Who has united with him. From the cadence of the words, we will not be far wrong if we presume that our Swaamikal must have danced while he composed and sang the stanzas of the 41st a decad. He sings:

The God of the effulgence of grace!
the God Who has enslaved me!
the blissful God dancing on the Hall (in Thillai)!
the God Whom all the meaning-laden Veda-s praise!
the God Who is the acme of knowledge!
the God of the eminent Word!
the God Who dispelling darkness bestows light!
the God Who bestows on me what I have thought of
exactly as I thought of them!
the God Who turns even me into Civam,

pleased with my songs of faith!
the God, the very God
Who shines in the Hall of Gnosis!

3904.VI.41 paraciva nilai 1

Describing what the sacred feet of Nataraaja are, he sings:

Innumerable are the large galaxies of undying worlds
wherein are contained
millions and millions of worlds;
all of them, put together,
are as a millionth part of an atom
in the presence of the heavenly sacred feet
at the moment of their dance
on the resplendent Golden Hall,
so say (those who know).

3924. VI.43 thiruvadi nilai 1

* * * *

Maanikkavaachakar sang a decad on the beatific vision of the Lord which was
vouchsafed to him in Thillai. He sang:

I, cur of a serf, saw with delight
in beauty-encompassed Thillai
the sweet-tasting feet of Him
Who abides in Thirupperunthurai –
the feet of Him Who, entering me at a time
when I had not (even) taken shape (in the womb),
established Himself in my mind
and, reforming me in my embryonic state,
entered my flesh
and assumed Lordship over me out of His grace!

Thiruvaachakam, decad 31, stanza 2

Our Swaamikal sings three decads on a similar vision he was vouchsafed. He sings:

The Knower (of everything),
the Intellect behind the intellect (of man)
Which intellectualises,
the Great Effulgence of Grace,
the Possessor of all my love,
He Who is eminent
as the omnipotent Will,
He Who parts company with those
who take to mean ways,
the loving great Lord

Who has blended with my mind,
He Who has extirpated my cycle of births,
He Who took hold of me and enslaved me
without spurning me,
He Who is my Father,
I behold Him
and abide rejoicing therein.

3934.VI.44 kaatchi-k-kalippu 1

He Who has taken abode in me,
He Who enslaved me here (on earth)
saying: "Fear not",
He Who prevented me
from taking to mean ways,
He Who got rid of the obstacles
which stood in the way
of my taking to the great path (unto Him),
He Who, of His own accord,
gave to me His grace and His wealth (jeewan-mukthi),
He Who is of a nature
which takes all foibles as good qualities,
He Who rescued me from the pit of creeds and sects,
He Who gave me the mystic powers
to do everything,
I behold Him
and abide rejoicing therein.

3944.VI.45 kankollaa-k-kaatchi 1

The limpid Ambrosia
Which has seeped from gnosis
and has become pellucid,
the true Bliss
capable of the exercise of all mystic powers,
the unique great Fruit
ripened to proper mellowness,
the transcendently transcendent life,
my Spouse,
the Medicine grown out of the wisdom
which has not been deluded by dogma,
the great Mantra,
the God
Who, giving me a place in His heart,
has enslaved me,
I have beheld Him.

3956. VI.46 irai thiru-k-kaatchi 3

We must not forget that all these visions are visions of the God Within. This is made clear in the next decad wherein our Swaamikal gives expression to his amazement at the manner in which God entered his mind and took abode therein. He sings:

While the heaven-dwelling Brahma-s and Vishnu-s and others
performed great austerities for many many days,
and, saying: “Do graciously place Your sacred feet
on the honey-laden flower-bed
in the marble room in the mansions of gems”,¹⁴³
stood aggrieved (when You did not do so),
You forcibly entered the hut I live in,
and, besides bestowing even on me
the goodly sacred ambrosia,
You entered with pleasure
even into my hut made of flesh
and, furthermore, entered the small hut
called my mind.

3984. VI.47 ulampukuntha thiram viyatthal, 1

¹⁴³ temples which Brahma-s and Vishnu-s erected in stone, not in their hearts.

Maanikkavaachakar too is oftentimes lost in wonderment at his good fortune in the Lord vouchsafing him a grace denied to others. He sings for instance:

While the flower-seated Brahma
and he who lies on the raging sea (Vishnu)
and Indra and others waited,
You cleansed me of my faults
and, showing me Your tinkling anklet-girt feet,
said: “Take these as Your goal”,
and added me to Your band of devotees”.

.....

Thiruvaachakam, 23.8

“Who is there to prevent Him” is the refrain of one more decad of amazement sung by our Swaamikal at his good fortune. He sings:

“By sex is He a male,
or a female indeed,
or a thing of dual sex,
or a sexless thing?
Is the way of gaining Him one or two?
Is He beginningless
or has He a beginning,
what furthermore is there of Him?”
A Chief Who exists
with the Vedaantha saying like this about Him,

He took abode in the heart of me,
a fellow with a deluded mind.
Who is to prevent the munificent One?

3997. VI.48 varambil viyappu 4

Five more decads of amazement and rejoicing follow, each surpassing the other in intensity of feeling. Like the famous saying of Julius Caesar, ‘veni, vidi, vici’ – I came, I saw, I conquered – our Swaamikal ends the stanzas of the next decad with the following refrain:

“I beheld Him, I ripened, I blended with Him with delight”. He sings:

The King of grace,
the gracious Guru,
the great Effulgence of Grace,
my Mother,
my Father,
He Who enslaved me,
the Ambrosia,
my clarity-gaining Life,
the Life of my life,
the omnipotent uniquely supreme
Crown-jewel of my mind,
the great Way of Life,
the Principal of my life
Who bestowed on me every kind of prosperity,
the Medicine (for the disease of birth),
the great Gem,
the Pupil of my eye,
Kanakantha-sabha-pathi
Who performs a dance of mercy,
I saw, I rejoiced, I blended with Him!

4004. VI.49 kanden, kalitthen, kalanthen 1

Shall I call You the Ambrosia
that dances on the Hall in the Etherial Shrine¹⁴⁴
shall I call You the dear Life of this slave,
shall I call You the omnipotent Will,
shall I call You the two pupils of my eyes,
shall I call You the good succourer
Who hugs one to His bosom
if one places faith in Him,
shall I call You the great treasure I gained,
what shall I call You
Who, making this particular life of mine on this earth
a true birth,
graciously enslaved me?

4014. VI.50 aandaruliya arumai viyatthal 1

Shall I call You the Succourer
Who extirpated all my misery,
shall I call You the Effulgence of effulgences,
shall I call You the Love
Who bestowed on me all Your love,
shall I call You Mother, Father,
shall I call You the God
Who bestowed all bliss on me,
shall I call You the Ambrosia dear to my life,
shall I call You my uncut Gem, my Eyes,
what I shall call You,
Oh Spouse of my life?

4026. VI.51 iraivanai etthum inbam 3

Our Swaamikal has on many occasions prayed the Lord to graciously accept and wear the garland of poesy strung by him. He will be making this request again in some of the forthcoming decads. But, nevertheless, he records in the 52nd decad the gracious acceptance of his garland of poesy by the Lord. We have seen in past decads the record of the fulfillment of other petitions of our Swaamikal. These decads are milestones on the way our Swaamikal trod in his pilgrimage to the Godhead. He sings in venpaa metre:

The Chief of the Assembly of Gnosis graciously saying
that the garland of poesy strung by me
is a good garland
wore it –
the garland which I strung with delight
for the feet of the Good One
Who embraced the shoulders
of Civakaamasundari
of honey-blended speech.

4034. VI.52 paamaalai ettral 1

The Lord not only accepted the garland of poesy but praised it whole-heartedly. Our Swaamikal places on record the Lord's appreciation in several songs in the same decad. He sings:

With all the world knowing
that my songs were not sweet utterances,
He wore my (garland of) words as golden words.
The Lord of the Hall of the etherial shrine,
after carefully examining my words, said;
“ Your utterances equal My utterances (the Vedas);

who, on this vast world,
is capable of uttering like you?"

4037. VI.52 paamaalai ettral 4

All the garlands of poesy which I,
an ignoramus of the past or the future,
blabbered,
He bade me present (to the world in His presence),
He Who was before me,
He Who is now in me,
the Medicine of Gnosis,
the Lord of the Hall of Gnosis,
He bade me most graciously!

* * * *

"You indeed are My Son,
We will not find any fault
in your songs",
saying so, Ah, he wore my garland of poesy.
Since the virtue this cur has acquired
is very great indeed in heaven and earth,
I do whatever I have planned.

4042,4043. VI.52 paamaalai ettral 9, 10

The next decad is, of course, a decad of praise, of amazement, but with a difference. Its title gives the clue to this difference. It was said in the beginning of the previous chapter that Sri A. Balakrishna Pillai divides the Sixth Book into three sections called The Section Relating to the Early Period of the Worship of the Lord at Chidambaram, The Section Relating to the Later Period of the Worship of the Lord at Chidambaram and The Section Relating to the Period of the Worship of the Lord while staying at Siddhi-vilakka-maalikai respectively. The 53rd decad, the one we are going to consider now, is named 'Utthara-gnaana-chidambara-maalai', the Garland of Poesy Relating to the Gnosis gained during the Later Part of the Worship of the Lord at Chidambaram. In fact, the decads covered by this chapter, commencing from the 25th decad of the Sixth Book and ending with the 81st decad, all of them relate to the later period of worship at Chidambaram.

Recently, I had occasion to hear a Bishop of the Church of South India expound Christianity in a very brief talk. A very devout Christian and a great preacher, he said that the working of the Christian Faith may be divided into Justification, Sanctification and Glorification. The soul justifies its fitness to receive the grace of God by confession and repentance of its sins. There upon the grace of God descends on the soul and sanctifies it. Then it so fills the soul that it glorifies it so that the grace is no longer something poured out of God into a created subject, so much as God living in God. In a rough sense, these three aspects of the working of the Christian Faith on the soul may be said to correspond to Purgation, Illumination and Union. In Raamalinga Swaamikal's spiritual experience each of these major stages of spiritual

experience are found to be sub-divided into Purgation, Illumination and Union. The careful reader would have noted that the sections of the Thiruvartupaa corresponding to our Swaamikal's journey on the Purgative Way and the Illuminative Way respectively end in a series of decads sung in the naayaka-naayaki-bhaavam, in the Bride and Bridegroom relationship. These decads correspond to the Glorification spoken of by the Bishop and to the Unitive Way spoken of in this book. I believe that I am writing for a very thoughtful and earnest reader. I therefore expect such a reader to pay heed to my request when I ask him to refer back to some passages in an earlier chapter. For instance, the reader would do well to refer to the opening para of Chapter 9 (page 330) as also to Chapter 6 (page 188) and to Chapter 2 (pages 40 to 43). He will find how these three ways correspond to the three aspects of Christianity mentioned above. I make this observation to show the remarkable unity of experience in all the great religions of the world.

In the 53rd decad our Swaamikal sums up in eleven stanzas what Gnaana-Chidambaram stands for. At the same time, this decad records the experiences which our Swaamikal had at this stage of his spiritual journey. As he goes along the Path he garners experiences of higher and higher order. He sings:

The grace (of God) is swelling up in me,
the Great Effulgence of Grace has descended on me,
It has prevented my confusion
from gaining strength;
bestowing good boons on me,
It has enabled me
to grow rich in experience
and to live in the land of grace.
It rises (in my mind)
that clarity about the Real
may ever be in the ascendent in it.
All these are the fruits
of the Gnosis¹⁴⁵ gained by me
in the later part of my worship at Chidambaram.

¹⁴⁵ In the songs of this decad. 'Gnosis' stands for the Godhead, gnosis of which was gained by our Swaamikal.

* * * *

(The later-day Gnosis gained by me in Chidambaram)
is great in every way;
It is the One which bestowed grace on me,
It wields the power of omnipotency,
It makes the world prosperous,
It is a jewel to this world,
It is worthy of being worshipped
by those in heaven,
It raises the dead to life everywhere.

* * * *

It shows me sights which I have never before seen,
It is impossible to be gained
by those who spend all their life in vain,
It abides lovingly in the heart
which is unswayed by fierce anger.
The people of the region far above
gather together and praise It;
such, indeed, is the Gnosis
I gained in the later period of my worship
at Chidambaram.

4046, 4051, 4054.VI.53 utthara-gnaana-chidambara maalai 1,6,9

Maanikkavaachakar, after beholding the Bridegroom in all His glory, with all His special ten insignia, (cf. decad 19 of the Thiruvaachakam) asks of the Lord “What kind of a service You want from us?” He sings:

“That It is the savour of fruit,
that It is ambrosia,
that It can rarely be known,
yet is so easy of access,
even the Immortals know not;
Oh Dweller in Uttharakosamangai’s honey-exuding groves
Who have assumed sway over us
and have, out of Your grace, come hither
that we may declare:
“This is His sacred form, this here is He!”
how would You like us to serve You?
We shall pay heed to that.
Our mighty Lord,
do, in Your grace, rise (in my heart).

Thiruvaachakam, decad 20, thiruppalliezhuchchi 7

It is noteworthy that in exactly similar circumstances of spiritual experience, our Swaamikal too asks the Lord “How shall I serve You?”. He sings:

Oh Lord of the glorious etherial shrine of gnosis, ¹⁴⁶
bestowing on me unsatiating ambrosia,
and raising me to a state of bliss
through Your love,
You made me Your favourite child;
I am now endowed
with all the exquisite experiences of bliss;
do graciously choose and let me know the work
this youngster should do
in this world of never-ending (misery)!

¹⁴⁶ etherial shrine of gnosis – Chidambaram. So far I have been translating chitrambaram as the Hall of Gnosis, which is not incorrect. But a more appropriate way of translating the term will be as ‘etherial shrine of gnosis’. ‘Ambaram’ or ‘ambalam’ means, primarily, sky. atmosphere, ether. In Tamilnaadu, there are five shrines of Civan, each enshrining Him in the form of one of the five elements, namely, earth. water, fire, wind and ether. Kaancheepuram is the earthly shrine, Thiruvaanaikkaaval is the watery shrine. Thiruvaanaikkaaval is the fiery shrine. Kaalatthi (now in Aandhra Pradesh) is the windy shrine, and Chidambaram is the etherial shrine.

4065. VI.54 cey-pani-vinaval 9

As if cataloguing the qualifications which entitle him to perform service to the Lord, our Swaamikal sings in the next decad:

There abides One resplendently
in the sacred Hall in the etherial shrine of gnosis
Who is a God
Who confers all prosperity;
my form, my sentiency, body, possessions, soul,
in their entirety to Him all to Himself I gave away
with all my street as witness;
and I abode thinking that
I have nothing further to do;
Oh Lord Who are the owner of all grace,
this is what You have always known,
why should I tell this again and again?

* * * *

Whenever I thought of anything
I thought of You only;
and whenever I remained in contemplation
devoid of any volitional thinking,
I detached myself from everything
and abode in You;
I have never performed
even an iota of an act
thinking that it is my action;
I performed them
thinking that all of them are Civan’s actions;
all, this, Oh my King, is what You have always known,
why should I tell this to You again and again?

* * * *

Whenever I rejoiced
I rejoiced fully aware of Your nature,

whenever my eyes brimmed with tears
 and showered them,
 I showered them thinking of Your grace only,
 whenever I cleared the minds
 of those who surrounded me,
 I cleared those minds
 always proclaiming Your powers;
 I do not know of any other way of acting,
 Your sacred wise mind knows all this,
 why should I tell them to You again and again?

* * * *

4069, 4070, 4071.VI.55 aanma tharisanam 1, 2, 3

Two decads earlier our Swaamikal asked the Lord what service He has for him to do.
 In the 56th decad he sings what, at first sight, is another vinnappam but what is in
 reality the Lord answering his question. In eleven remarkable stanzas the Lord lays
 down an elaborate programme of work for our Swaamikal. Since our Swaamikal has
 again and again claimed that he does nothing but what the Lord does through him and
 speaks nothing but what the Lord speaks through him, we are perfectly right in
 assuming that in this decad the Lord speaks through our Swaamikal. He sings:

Oh Father,
 You should listen to what I pray for
 and graciously bestow it on me.
 I should show love
 to all the dear creatures (of God).
 To whatever worlds there are,
 To whatever stations¹⁴⁷ there are,
 everywhere I should go,
 and, my Father, proclaim the fame of Your grace;
 You should so exercise Your effulgence of grace
 that the Pure Creed of Bliss
 should resplendently reign supreme
 high up in a lofty state beyond expression;
 should I do any wrong,
 You should put up with it;
 Oh my Spouse,
 I pray as well for a state
 of never being separated from You.

* * * *

Oh Sire,
 You should listen to what I pray for
 and graciously bestow it on me,
 I should keep beholding ever and ever
 Your feet and crown
 and apprehend them in my being,

I should always speak truths
which never turn out (later) to be false¹⁴⁸;

¹⁴⁷ stations – a soul after it leaves the body goes to various stations such as Brahmapadham, Vishnupadham, Indrapadham, etc. It holds these stations or offices of heavenly life for a period determined by its karma and then is reborn on earth.

¹⁴⁸ There are relative truths and eternal truths. The former are true for a certain time and turn out false later on; our Swaamikal prays that he should speak eternal truths only.

I should practise just as I preach,
the rare to obtain effulgence of grace
 should come into my hand,
the dead I should redeem (from the jaws of death)
 and raise to life again!
I should protect the creatures
 from suffering misery,
Oh Spouse, I pray, moreover, for never parting from You.

* * * *

Oh Brother,
You should listen to what I pray for
and graciously bestow it on me.
I should gain a unique undecaying body,
I should, to the delight of my eyes, see You everywhere
 and rejoice,
I should behold visions never before seen (by anyone),
I should sing about You alone with tuneful songs,
I should dance the dance of transcendental bliss,
I should prevent the misery
 which creatures suffer in their search for food,
I pray, moreover, for a never-parting relationship with You.

* * * *

Oh Dad,
You should hear what I pray for
and graciously bestow it on me.
I should gain the great effulgence of grace
 and rejoice in my heart;
the dead I should redeem
 and raise them to life here again
 and make them devotees of the sacred assembly;
equals, superiors, inferiors,
 everyone should be united
 and lead their life (peacefully) in this world,
(Sakthi) my Mother and I should be united
 in a form indestructible by any means
 and rejoice.

* * * *

Oh King,
You should hear what I pray for
and graciously bestow it on me.
I should gain the great effulgence of grace
and rejoice in my heart;
whatever worlds there are
within the bounds of the shores of the sea
they should observe a unified code of conduct;¹⁴⁹
I should bring the dead to life again;
every creature should voluntarily desist
from the despicable ways of life of killing
and of eating of flesh, and live joyously;
moreover, my Father and I should become one
in the famous sacred form of Reality
and reign supreme for ever.

¹⁴⁹ Conduct of compassion to all creatures.

* * * *

Oh Eminent One,
You should listen to what I pray for
and graciously bestow it on me.
I should behold all the macrocosmic worlds
and the microcosmic worlds –
whatsoever mighty worlds there are;
all the deva-s, all creatures,
should reach the Pure Blissful True Path,
moreover, my Mother and I should become one
in a never-ceasing form
and reign supreme for ever.

* * * *

Oh Mother,
You should hear what I pray for
and graciously bestow it on me.
I should remain freed from aanavam (ignorance) etcetera;
the delusive thatthwa-s
should operate under my control
and be devoid of any evil;
Oh my Lord,
I should be free of desires and aversions;
I should gain the experience
of the enjoyment of unique bliss,
moreover, I should gain the state

of my Mother and I resting under Your exalted feet
and reigning supreme blended therewith.

* * * *

Oh Father,
You should listen to what I pray for
and graciously bestow it on me.
I should come to know all the six ultimate states¹⁵⁰
and gain those states of experience,
I should do good to creatures in every possible manner,
I should give joy to all those who approach me.
All the worlds should give up
all these caste and creed distinctions
and should gain the universality of the True Path.
Moreover, I pray for You, my Owner, and I
to be blended together and reign supreme
in a form devoid of limitations,
beginning or end.

¹⁵⁰ The Ultima Thules of the Veda-s, of Siddhaantha of Omkaara, of the Kala-s, of Yoga, and of Gnosis. These are called Vedaantha, Siddhaantha, Nadhaantha, Kalaantha, Yogaantha and Bodhaantha respectively. Just as Vedaantha means the Ultimate conclusion of the Veda-s, namely, the Upanishads, the other antha-s should be taken to mean the final conclusions arrived at in respect of the Godhead by their respective systems of philosophy.

* * * *

Oh Wise One,
You should listen to what I pray for
and graciously bestow it on me.
I should exercise the five functions
(of creation, sustenance, destruction etc.)
and expound the grace of God on this earth;
the insubmissive instruments knowing
(such as the mind, intelligence, will and I-ness)
should become submissive
and I should control them;
the universality of Siddhaantha and Vedaantha
should shine forth in the world;
without spurning my aspirations,
You should graciously fulfil them with pleasure;
You should give all to myself
the power to do everything;
You should blend inseparably with me
and abide in me,
Oh great Lord, I would, moreover, pray
that I should sing about You and dance.

* * * *

Oh Lord of grace,
You should listen to what I pray for
and graciously bestow it on me,
I should not get lustful or angry
even a whit,
all this deluded world
should be freed of its delusion,
and, Oh munificent One,
I should praise You in the Hall of Gnosis;
ignorance should never taint me;
all those who have sought my company
should gain joy,
all creatures should gain bliss,
and, moreover, I would pray
that You, my Owner, and I
should unite in a significant sacred body
and becoming one, should so remain
(ever and ever).

* * * *

Oh immaculate One,
You should listen to what I pray for
and graciously bestow it on me.
I should abide (in peace)
singing about the eternally dancing feet
(of Yours).
such obstacles like king of death
should never occur to me.
You should bestow on me
the power to do everything,
all creatures should gain
the qualities of forbearance etcetera,
and, falling in love with the True Path,
should rejoice in it
and praise the holy universal brotherhood.
I would, Oh immaculate One, moreover pray
that You and I should unite
in a form possessing purity etcetera
and reign resplendently.

* * * *

4079 to 4089.VI.56 suddha san-maarga vendukol 1 to 11

Though our Swaamikal seems to pray for many many things in these eleven stanzas
we most not overlook the fact that each of these stanzas end with one and the same

petition. The petition of petitions, a petition for eternal union with the Godhead. It is only while waiting on earth for this union that our Swaamikal wants to occupy himself with service to humanity. It is, of course, not as a pastime that he wishes to do this. On the other hand, it is his mission on earth, it is the mission assigned to him by God. Nevertheless, the significance of this decad lies in the fact that it is a heart-rending plea for eternal union with the Godhead.

“Would God listen to this prayer of prayers”, our Swaamikal seems to doubt for a moment. But, immediately he recollects all the blessings, boons and benefits which had been conferred on him in the past and recounts them in no less than one hundred stanzas, ending each with a plea to accept his garland of poesy, particularly the latest garland strung by him in the last decad. Seventeen of these have been reproduced already in earlier chapters, particularly, the third and the fourth. It is in this decad (the 57th in the Sixth Book) that the famous song representing God as a shade-providing tree, its shade, fruit mellowed in the shade and so on appears, a song made important by the specific mention of the day - which God deigned to enslave him. To avoid repetition I have to request the reader to refer to Chapter 4, page 140. Our Swaamikal sang this decad, probably, in his late forties, perhaps, at about his 49th year, after arriving at Karunkuzhi from Vadaloore, a very short period, not more than a month or two perhaps, before singing the famous Arut-perum-jothi-akaval, the song for which the preceding 56 decads are but forewords. Immediately after this decad (the 57th) our Swaamikal is going to revel in 23 decads in naayaka-naayaki bhavam, in the role of the bride of the Lord. We will not be far wrong, therefore, if we say that this decad sums up all the spiritual experiences of over thirty-six years, if we exclude the first nine years of childhood of our Swaamikal’s life. Of course, he did not sit down to write down in chronological order the innumerable acts of grace of God, the intimate experiences never given to others to have either in their intensity or in their variety. Moved by the spirit of God, our Swaamikal breaks into spontaneous song and sings what comes to his mind at the moment. I have attempted to analyse the 100 songs and classify them and it is according to this classification that I shall take you through this decad. There are songs of sheer praise of God too. This is as it should be. For the favours showered on our Swaamikal by God are unique and no amount of praise of the Lord can ever be adequate or too much. Our Swaamikal begins this decad thus:

Oh Lamp of Grace!
Oh Flame of Grace!
Oh Bliss of the Effulgence of Grace!
Oh Ambrosia of Grace!
Oh Plenitude of Grace!
Oh Being of the Form of Grace!
Oh Spouse Who, extirpating the darkness (of ignorance)
 have occupied the whole of my mind!
Oh my Wisdom!
Oh my Life!
Oh Kin dear to me!
Oh great Gem Who have extirpated my delusion!
Oh Gold not susceptible to any assay!
Oh Bridegroom Who dance on the Hall in Thillai!
Oh holy Lord Who bestowed gnosis on me!
Oh Lord of the Form of Gnosis!

Oh divine dancing King!
Do graciously accept the poems composed by me!

4090.VI.57 arul-vilakka maalai 1

The earliest experience which our Swaamikal records in this decad is the unique and ineffable one which occurred to him in the 5th month of his infancy. This book begins, as the reader will remember, with that incident. I will, therefore, just reproduce the stanza here and refer the reader to the opening paragraphs of Chapter I for fuller particulars. He sings:

Oh Being, my true Kin,
Who showed to me everything
as the (space and time transcending) ether (Brahman)
instead of the usual ceiling
when I, in my infancy,
along with my mother and others,
witnessed (the Mystery of mysteries)
in the sacred town of Thillai
when the veiling curtain was lifted!
Oh sweet Fruit Who have mellowed in my heart
without going through the stage of unripe fruit!
Oh effulgent Nataraja
Who dance on the Hall of Gems
while the pure ones stand around adoring You!
Do graciously wear
my (garland of) words also.

4133.VI.57 arul vilakka maalai 44

Earlier in this chapter the word “Thiruchchitrambalam” was translated as the “sacred etherial shrine of gnosis.” and a footnote explained the reason for the departure from the term so far used, namely, “sacred Hall of Gnosis”. Thillai, or, to call it by its modern name, Chidambaram, is the shrine in which Lord Civan is conceived as embodied in ether, one of the five elements. For fuller details the footnote No. 146 on may be referred to. This infant, not more than five months old, became aware or was made aware of this great concept of God on the very first occasion it was taken by its mother and father to the temple of Nataraja in Chidambaram. While other devotees then saw and today see only a niche with its ceiling of masonry or stone, our divinely chosen child saw the para-veli, the transcendental space or ether, nay, saw God in the highest possible human concept, the concept of all pervading ether. It is because the concept of God in Chidambaram is the highest possible one, that the shrine is designated by the simple name of ‘kovil’, ‘The Temple’, whereas all other temples are referred to as a temple at a particular place. There is another significant statement of very great import in this poem. Our Swaamikal addresses God thus;

“ Oh Fruit Who have mellowed in my heart
without going through the stage of unripe fruit!”

In these words our Swaamikal records a most remarkable fact of his spiritual life. In his infancy itself, in the 5th month of that infancy, even long before he had begun to cut his first tooth, he gained instantaneous and total apprehension of the Real. That is to say, he was as mature in spiritual life on that day of his infancy as he was on the 30th January 1874, the day on which he was last seen on earth in his physical body.

“Which was this day? In Tamilnaadu, religious festivals are timed to fall on full-moon days. I surmise, therefore, that this day too was the full-moon day in the month of Thai, (Jan-Feb) 1824 when the asterism of Pushyas or Poosan was in its ascendancy. It is but very natural that his parents should have taken him to the temple on the most convenient very first important festival day. They could have taken him to the temple on the day of the asterism ‘Thiruvaathirai’ which falls on the full-moon day in the month of Maarkazhi (December-January), but the weather would have been highly inclement for a baby not older than eighty days. So they probably chose the next full-moon day when he was 30 more days older. Moreover, as farmers, they would not have had much leisure in December-January.

It is a common practice of reckoning in Tamilnaadu to take incomplete months (even though only a few days old) as full months. Our Swaamikal was born on 5th October 1823, i.e. on the 21st of the month of Purattaasi, (September-October), according to the Tamil calendar. He was taken to the temple on or about the 24th of January 1824, the month of Thai (January-February). By indigenous reckoning he was five months old, i.e. he had lived during the course of Purattaasi, Aippasi, Kaarthikai, Maarkazhi and Thai, during five months, not necessarily five complete months of the Tamil calendar. The fact that our Swaamikal chose in the evening of his life the full-moon day in the month of Thai, that is the day when the asterism of Pushya or Poosam is in the ascendancy, as the day for the grand revelation of the flame of the Great Effulgence of Grace in the Gnaana Sabhai, the Hall of Gnosis at Vadalloor, lends strength to my surmise. Add to this the fact that our Swaamikal attained siddhi (mukthi) in the asterism of Pushya, on the full-moon day in the month of Thai, and we can see how great a part this asterism played in the life of our swaamikal.

The next significant event recorded in the stanzas of this long decad is the spiritual marriage, the mystical marriage of the human bride, the devotee, with the divine bridegroom, the Godhead. He devotes six stanzas to this event. In the very second stanza of this decad he sings of this marriage, and, what is remarkable, mentions the day on which this marriage took place. I have dealt with this song in great detail in Chapter 4, page 140 ff. I shall merely repeat the poem here for record and pass on. Our Swaamikal sings:

Oh cool Tree
 which offers me a chance of refreshing myself
 in the summer!
On Shade under the tree!
Oh Fruit mellowed in the shade!
Oh Water of sweet savour trilling in a brook nearby!
Oh fragrant Flower of sweet smell
 blossoming amidst the delightful water!
Oh gentle Breeze blowing on the plaza!
Oh Bliss born of the breeze!

Oh Benefit inherent in the bliss!
Oh Bridegroom Who wed me on the full-moon day in Chitrai!
Oh King Who dance, on the Hall in Thillai!
Do graciously wear my garland of poesy!

4091.VI.57.2 ¹⁵¹

¹⁵¹ as the songs which appear in the next several pages belong to one and the same decad, the name of the decad – ‘arul vilakka maalai’ is omitted from the reference given to the Book, decad, stanza, etc,

In five more stanzas our Swaamikal refers to this marriage. The date of this marriage has to be placed in the pre-adolescent years of our Swaamikal, somewhere between the ages of nine and twelve, perhaps, at the age of nine itself. This will be seen from the reference in the songs to his immaturity. He sings:

Oh great Treasure
which, to my great joy, I received
when I was in low-spirits!
Oh good Succourer Who supported me in Your arms
when I was distressed in mind!
Oh Ambrosia Who blending lovingly with me
are ever beside me!
Oh Guru Who, getting rid of all my fears,
enslaved me!

**OH SPOUSE WHO MARRIED ME
WITHOUT MINDING MY IMMATURITY!**

Oh Lord Who bestow on me everything
just exactly as I desire them!
Oh King Who dance on the Hall
for the sake of Your devotees
that their miseries may cease!
Do wear on Your pure sacred feet
my anklet of words.

* * * *

Oh great staff
gained by a broken creeper to cling to!
Oh Clarity which graciously rids the mind of confusion
when it gets confused!
Oh Dish of milk and rice found on one's way
when one was hungry!
Oh Lord Who got rid of my fears
whenever I was seized with fear!
Oh great Medicine,

Who, raising the dead, bestowed grace on them!
**OH TRUE BLISS WHO, WHEN I HAD UNION WITH YOU,
BECAME MY VERY SELF AND UNITED WITH ME!**

OH KING WHO DANCE ON THE HALL IN THILLAI

with devotees of melting minds worshipping You!
Do graciously wear with pleasure on Your anklet-girt feet
my circlet of words!

* * * *

Oh great Delight
which, ridding me of all the misery
I suffered in the dark night,
was found in the morning in my mind!

OH DIVINE BRIDEGROOM

**WHO, WEARING WITH THE GARLAND OF THE RED LILY
THE GARLAND OF JASMINE FLOWERS ALSO,
MARRIED ME!**

Oh True Being
Who, showing me Your state of bring
as effulgence of light everywhere,
shone in the interior and exterior of my mind,
Oh King Who dance on the Hall in Thillai
with great glory!
I deck You with a garland of words,
do graciously wear it on Your shoulders!

* * * *

Oh Lord Who are of a nature
that does not know Your own greatness!
Oh my unique Chief!
Oh unique Saviour
tasting sweet inside my life!
I do not know Your greatness.
Is it only I who do not know it?
The tall Vishnu, the four-faced Brahma,
and other deities know it not;
and even the Agama-s and the Veda-s
filled with love for You
do not know You;
yet those gods and those scriptures
adorn You with some words;

**OH KING WHO, WITHOUT MINDING MY IMMATURITY,
ENSLAVED ME,**

I too, like them, adorn You with my words,
do graciously wear them!

* * * *

Oh unique great Flame,
Who, with me giving away voluntarily
my life, my body, and my possessions,

received them and, later, delighted thereby,
 gave me Your life, Your body, Your possessions,
 all to myself,
 and, blending with me, had union with me!
 Oh Gem Who, becoming the Soul
 for the eternal soul, and bliss too, fill it!
 Oh my Eyes!
 Oh Principal of my livelihood!
 Oh Medicine (to the disease of birth and death)!
 Oh dancing King
 resplendent on the scintillating Golden Hall of Gems!
 Oh Lord Who graciously wear truth,
 do graciously wear my falsehood too!
 * * * *

4092, 4093, 4095, 4101, 4149.VI. 57, 3, 4, 6, 12, 60

At about the same time, or, more probably, a little later, the Lord, unable to bear the sight of His beloved going without food, graciously came in the form of our Swaamikal's sister-in-law or in the form of the divine Mother Herself and fed the child asleep on a pial. While there appears to be no word for pial in English, there is a word in Russian for it. The word is Zavalina which means a bank of earth against the front wall of the house, flat topped and used as a seat. Our Swaamikal reminisces with gratitude about these experiences of his childhood in three songs. Though these songs have been reproduced in the very first chapter of this book, yet, in the present context, in order to give a completeness to the record of our Swaamikal's experiences since his childhood, I repeat the songs here as well. He sings:

Oh Mother mine sweet to my soul
 Who, when I was lying weary with hunger on a pial,
 came with a shining basin
 containing delicious food
 in one of Your sacred hands,
 and woke me up, asking:
 "Did You go to Otri and suffer hunger?",
 and graciously served me the food with pleasure!
 Oh Mother of noble characteristics Who bore me
 and Who solicitously transformed
 all the attachment which beset me
 into attachment to Your feet!
 Oh King Who dance a great dance
 on the Hall of Gems
 with persons of noble qualities
 standing around praising You!
 Do be pleased to accept my blabberings too.

* * * *

Oh my virtuous goodly Succourer
 Who, when I was lying one dark night

on a nook and corner pial
 hungry and tired,
 came looking for me
 and, offering me food, made me eat,
 and rid me of my hunger!
 Oh Unique Gem
 Who, ridding me of the darkness of delusion
 and bestowing on me all the blessings of life,
 made me be seated on the platform decked with gems!
 Oh Bliss incarnate Who, bestowing on me
 the food of grace as well, enslaved me!
 do graciously, wear my garland (of verses)!

* * * *

Oh Light
 Who, bringing me up by giving me good food
 whenever I was hungry
 as if You Yourself were hungry,
 bestowed on me here
 the clear ambrosia of enlightenment in such a way
 that I never felt the weariness
 caused by the carnal hunger!
 Oh King of all the souls
 Who bestowed on me the boon
 that I may have all to myself
 a life rare to Indra, the King of the heavens,
 to tall Lord Vishnu,
 and to Brahma of four faces!
 Oh Fragrance of flowers laden with honey!
 Oh King Who perform the dance of gnosis
 on the sacred Hall in Thillai!
 Do graciously accept my poor words!

* * * *

We may include here another song which has reference to our Swaamikal sleeping on
 a pial but does not say that the Lord fed him. He sings:

Oh true Succourer
 Who, when this lowly youngster,
 sleeping one midnight,
 without the company of any elders,
 on a high narrow pial,
 had rolled about heavily
 and was falling down,
 held me up in Your arms
 thereby preventing me
 from falling on to the floor below,
 embraced me,

and laid me down!
oh Being Who are the fruit
of all the great thavam performed by me!
Oh Nataraaja dancing on the proscenium
Who graciously rid me of all the despondency
which I was despairingly experiencing!
Do wear my garland of melodious verses also!

* * * *

4132, 4137, 4138, 4134, VI.57. 43, 48, 49, 45

To this same period of pre-adolescence belongs the unique act of grace wherein the Lord crowned the crown of the head of our Swaamikal with His two sacred lotus feet. This experience has been dealt with in elaborate detail at the end of Chapter 1. Our Swaamikal sings of this unique experience in two songs in this decad. One of them has been reproduced in Chapter 1, yet, for record, I shall repeat it here as well. He sings:

Oh Guru
Who, when this lonely youngster
suffered a little here on earth,
took the suffering as Your own
and, unable to tolerate it even for a second,
graciously got rid of all that chilling suffering
and, saying:
“ Oh my Son,
why do you fear?”
hugged me to Your bosom with solicitude!
Oh good Succour to my soul
Who, saying sweet-tasting good words,
placed Your twin blossomy feet on the crown of my head,
and enslaved me!
Oh mellowed sweet Fruit!
Oh my Darling!
Oh dancing King Who had union with me
on the Hall of Gnosis!
Do graciously wear my thoughts as well!

* * * *

Oh my Guru Who enslaved me saying:
“ We have come to know
all the good deeds you have planned to do;
We came to see you in person”,
and lay down with intent to graciously establish
Your flowery feet on my head,
and, Who, when I haughtily caught hold of the feet
and placed them elsewhere,
laughed and asked:

“ What did you think, Oh My Son,
have I not this much right!”
Oh honey-laden sweet Treacle!
Oh Sugar!
Oh Fruit!
Oh divinely dancing King!
Do graciously accept my poor words!

* * * *

4135,4140. VI. 57-46.51.

Experiences of his adolescent life follow. In two songs our Swaamikal states acts of God's grace in regard to his sex impulses. He sings:

Oh great magnanimous Lord
Who, saying: “Oh great foolish child,
what has gone wrong?
Nothing.
This is Our great doing”,
consoled me and held me up
when I was grieved in my mind
and felt depressed saying “What have I done”,
when a woman had forcibly embraced me
and went away after having had union with me!
Oh Unique Bliss
Who, graciously making two holy women¹⁵² dance before me,
ended all my baseness by Your grace!
Oh dancing King
Who show Yourself in the Hall of Gems
with all those who had done with dark ignorance
praising You!
Do graciously wear my (garland of) songs as well!

¹⁵² two holy women – in all probability, the reference is to Paarvathi and Ganga.

* * * *

Oh Product of Grace
Who, when weariness came on me
due to walking in the hot sun,
graciously bestowed on me
profuse shade and coot food!
Oh esteemed Friend
Who made women press themselves forward
of their own accord
when I felt a little sexual urge!
Oh Lord
Who, when I felt perturbed by my helplessness

(against the forces of evil),
 got rid of that sense of helplessness
 and saved me!
 Oh Spouse Who, saying:
 “Do not have any misgivings”,
 graciously enslaved me and gave me food!
 Oh my King in the Etherial Shrine!
 Do graciously wear my garland (of poesy)!

* * * *

4136,4158. VI. 57 – 47.69

I have very faithfully translated the above two songs. I do not know how to interpret them. The ways of mystics are strange and incomprehensible. Of one thing, however, I am certain. These songs are perfectly free of any the least taint of evil. Recently, a few months before I left off reading Belles Letters from the Tamil New Year's Day (in 1974), I read a book called “The World of Susie Wong”. It is the story of a Chinese prostitute who used to have sexual relations with several men in the course of a day. But when I had finished reading the book, I was left with a profound sense of utter purity. I have the very same feeling after reading these poems and rendering them into English. I may be pardoned for recording here the reason for my giving up reading Belles Letters. I had read, studied, and digested Aldous Huxley's book ‘The Perennial Philosophy’ several times in the past quarter of a century and I cherished a belief that I knew all the passages in that book. But when, on 13th April 1974, I was turning over the pages of that book for a quotation from Eckhart, a saying of William Law, the 18th century Protestant mystic, struck me between my eye brows like the proverbial pebble of David and stunned me. This is the passage:

“Man's intellectual faculties are by the Fall in a much worse state than his animal appetites and want a much greater self-denial. And when own will, own understanding and own imagination have their natural strength indulged and gratified, and are made seemingly rich and honourable with the treasures acquired from a study of the Belles Letters, they will just as much help poor fallen man to be like-minded with Christ as the art of cookery, well and duly studied, will help a professor of the Gospel to the spirit and practice of Christian abstinence”.

I remembered at once my Caiva-Siddhaanthic grandfather who considered the Raamayana a secular book and would not give it a place along with the Thevaaram and the Thiruvaachakam on the shelf in his prayer-room. And I had prided myself on the catholicity of my mind in reading books ranging from the innocuous works of Enid Blyton to novels by Irwing Wallace. I am recounting this very recent incident in my life that others may benefit by my folly of many years.

From the experiences of adolescent youth, our Swaamikal goes on to record the experiences of early manhood. The most outstanding of these is the birth of compassion in him. He sings:

“ All those who take a life and who eat flesh

are not our near and dear kin;
 they are outcastes to us;
 help them in respect of assuaging their despicable hunger,
 otherwise do not speak to them
 words of courtesy with ardour,
 or give them your friendship here on earth
 till they join the desirable True Path".
 Oh gracious God Who told me:
 " This, indeed, is Our command",
 Oh my King of the great dance
 Who dance on the Hall in Thillai
 with men of maaya-dispelling true thavam
 paying obeisance to You!

* * * *

Oh my Guru
 Who, to my joy, told me:
 " The hard-hearted ones,
 Who, after witnessing the slaying (of a beast),
 will still at flesh
 are not, even in any the least way, your kin.
 Oh My son who are filled with love,
 so far as they are concerned,
 do assuage their hunger only,
 otherwise, do not presume to do
 any other act of grace!"
 Oh unique Mother Who bore me!
 Oh my King!
 Oh King of the pure dance
 on the holy Common Hall
 praised by men of sorrow-eradicating thavam!
 Do graciously wear (the garland of) my words also.

* * * *

" Even though those who do killing (of animals)
 and relish flesh are wicked people indeed,
 yet when a specific danger besets them,
 so long as you are on this earth,
 do not look on it and rejoice,
 but eradicate their grief,
 suffering and fear".
 Oh Guru Who solicitously bade me thus!
 Oh great Being
 Who displayed to me Your feet
 and the crown on high
 while the tall one (Vishnu), the four-faced Brahma,
 the immortals and others who are called the pure ones
 were looking on!

Do graciously wear my garland (of poesy)!

4160. to 4162. VI.57. 71 to 73

God prescribed not only a list of don't-s to our Swaamikal but gave him a list of do-s as well. The following five songs are of the latter sort. They form a sort of a complement to the above three songs. He sings:

Oh my Guru
Who blessed me in these words:
“ Except those who commit killing (of creatures),
all the rest belong, indeed, to your clan,
and you are Our pre-eminent son;
do grow (in knowledge and experience)
that the Pure Blissful Universal True Creed
may grow apace!”
Oh Eternal One
Who protect those who aspire for eternal life,
Oh Wise One
Who, out of Your grace, presented before me
all the various states of being
that they may be clear to me!
Oh King Who perform the pure dance
on the Hall in Thillai
with men of great thavam
who have eschewed killing of life
standing around and praising You!
Do wear my utterances as well!

* * * *

Oh friendly true Guru
Who told me:
“ All those who have compassion are, indeed, people
who have joined the Universal True Creed;
associate with them here on earth
and abide sporting and delighting
in the creed of grace
which spells good!”
Oh King dear to my life
that is seeking redemption!
Oh great Love arising from gnosis!
Oh Light inherent in that love!
Oh my King performing the great dance
on the Hall of Gems
Whom men of true thavam devoid of delusion
surround and praise!
Do graciously wear my garland!

* * * *

Oh true Guru
Who said:
“ Blessed be you;
all those who have compassion
are, indeed, people who have joined
the Universal True Creed,
do associate with them and flourish on earth,
sporting and delighting
in the enlightened Creed of Grace!”
Oh whole pure Bliss
of purposeful great compassion!
Oh Light which fills the six (antham-s)
commencing from Bhodhaantham
and enlightens (the world)!
Oh King Who execute the dance
on the Hall of Gems in Thillai
in order to dispel delusion
from those who are delusion-ridden!
Do graciously accept my garland (of poesy) also!

4159, 4163, 4164.VI.57 – 70, 74, 75

We may include with the above three songs the following one as well as relating to the same type of experience as stated in the previous three songs, namely, instruction in the Pure Blissful Universal True Creed. He sings:

Oh my Guru
Who, created a desire in me,
who had no desire whatsoever,
for the state of abiding in the very natural True Path
and Who, whenever I engaged in other activities,
when sense of self predominated,
placed obstacles in the way
and got rid of the obstacles
to (my abiding in the True Path)!
Oh King Who graciously instructed me
that the conclusions of whatever religious there are
are found in (Thillai) the sacred Etherial Shrine of Gnosis!
Oh preeminent King
Who dance on the Hall of Gems
with all the three worlds praising You!
Do graciously wear (the garland of) my words as well!

4142. VI.57 – 53

We see from the 92nd song of this decad that the President of the Pure Universal True Creed was no one else than Lord Nataraaja Himself. Our Swaamikal sings thus:

Oh Great Being gained by me in the dawn of my life!
 Oh Delight!
 Oh sweet Fruit mellowed in the core of my mind!
 Oh Unique Spouse
 Who on one single day
 bestowed on me in the Dharmasaalai (at Vadalloor)
 all the highly useful produce
 which accrue to a person through thavam performed
 in the past and in the present, or in one single life!
 Oh Treasure seated as the President of The Society
 (for the propagation) of the Universal True Creed!
 Oh my King of the great dance
 Who dance wearing a garland of words,
 the best among garlands!
 Do wear my garland of words also!

4181. VI.57 – 92

The ultimate findings of all religions may be found in the sacred Etherial Shrine of Gnosis, but it does not necessarily follow that all sects and creeds are therefore good or perfect. The Lord therefore instructs our Swaamikal in this matter and these instructions are recorded in five songs of this decad. These are:

Oh my Spouse
 Who instructed me that
 the congregations of several creeds
 brought together by the inter-relation
 of a plethora of karma,
 the tenets shouted by them,
 the various paths shown by those crafty creeds,
 the visions, the gods who bestow those visions,
 all these are childish play,
 and Who, adopting even me as Your child,
 named me as Your son!
 Oh King Who perform a unique dance
 on the Hall of Gems
 with True devotees who cannot be brushed aside
 standing around and praising You!
 Do graciously wear my offering (of garland) too!

* * * *

Oh True Guru
 Who instructed me
 that all the reputed cultural chronicles
 beginning with the four castes,
 the stages of life,¹⁵³ traditional observances etcetera
 are a childish game
 and that no one has seen or known
 high caste or caste by colour of skin,

and bade me: “Open your eyes and see”!
Oh true Being Who showed me everything to be seen
without my feet being worn out
by wandering in vain!
Oh dancing King
Who dance to raise to the highest category
those who had outgrown
the category of delusive castes!
Do deign to graciously wear my garland of poesy!

¹⁵³ Stages of life – brahmacharya or the life of a celibate, grihastha or the life of a householder, vanaprastha or the life of a person withdrawn from family life, sannyasin or the person who has renounced worldly life.

* * * *

Oh King Who dance
while those possessing (the kind of) knowledge
which knows nothing else (but You)
pay obeisance to You!
Oh great Gem of a Preceptor of Gnosis
Who graciously took it into Your mind
to tell me in particular thus;
“ Those who talk of the works
ranging from the Veda-s, Agama-s,
Purana-s, Itihasa-s
down to works on magic
consider the book on magic only as wizardry;
but I say unto you,
know all those works as wizardry
and look at all deeds by the light of My grace!”
Do wear my garland of (poesy).

* * * *

Oh unique Bliss
Who told me,
“ We have told you
that all the revealed Veda-s and Agama-s
are wizardry;
if you would research into the meaning
of their words and their objectives
and learn that they are false,
then the truth
about the long-established Veda-s and Agama-s
will be yours;
with the world as witness do research and know
that the Veda-s and Agama-s are lies;
We bestow on You

the exalted sacred unrighteous sceptre;
do reign all by yourself by the light of grace”,
and bestowed the same on me!
Oh great Being Who gave even me
the matchless sacred ambrosia!
Oh shining dancing King!
Do wear my (garland of) songs too!

* * * *

Oh King dancing on the proscenium
Who proclaimed to me
and bade me see this clearly
by the light of the Effulgence of Grace
that all the heads of religions
from the four-faced ones, the goodly Rudhra-s,
Naaraayanan-s, Indra-s, the famed Arukar,
Buddha and others
are just a gang of small children
who, coming from the portals of heaven
and having gained a little of gracious illumination,
have sported about in heaven and earth
as their fancy dictated
like people who have drunk (fermented) honey!
Oh dancing King in the Hall!
Do wear my offering as well!

4173, 4174, 4176, 4177, 4178.VI.57 – 84, 85, 87, 88, 89

The seventh stanza of this decad records a most important experience which had been exhaustively dealt within the 3rd chapter. We shall reproduce here the song only for continuity of record and pass on to the most important experience, the crowning experience of this long stretch of life of our Swaamikal. He sings:

Oh-Sugar-candy
Which, without dissolving away,
stays on my tongue
and gives heartily sweet taste!
Oh gracious Ambrosia
Who came rushing up
and ended all my sufferings!
Oh true Grace!
Oh Lamp that shines as Truth itself!
Oh Divine Will
Who bestow Your grace
that my body
may instantly turn into a golden body
and continue to flourish undecayingly!
Oh true Reality!
Oh King dancing on the Hall in Thillai

Who had courted and wed me!
Do graciously wear the garland of words
which I string with delight!

4096. VI.57 – 7

Though this is the only stanza in this decad in which the conferment of the golden body is mentioned, it is nevertheless an experience of very great significance as will be seen from the several extracts which have been given in the 3rd Chapter.

We now come to the last but one of the experiences recorded in this decad. Our Swaamikal recalls with amazement and joy his being elevated to a seat set with gems. There is a similarity in experience between Maanikkavaachakar and our Swaamikal in this respect. Maanikkavaachakar sings:

“ While those who were intent on gaining You
were wide awake in this world,
You graciously set a seat for me,
and to this cur showed
things never been shown (to others),
and, moreover, enabled me to hear
things never before heard (by others),
and, protecting me from being born again,
enslaved me.

Thiruvaachakam decad 5 stanza 28

In three more places in his work, the Thiruvaachakam, Maanikkavaachakar refers with awe and pride to God giving him a seat of honour. He sings:

While flower-seated Brahma and Vishnu
stood by dejected,
deeming entry into His presence impossible,
and I swelled with pride,
the Lord provided an eminent seat for this cur
and made much of me.

* * * *

Who am I to embrace the Lord's feet?
Providing a seat for me, a cur,
He has entered my carnal body,
He has mingled with my soul;
He will never part from my mind.

* * * *

Though I had not learnt the wisdom of the scriptures,
and I would not thaw and melt,
Yet I do not know any other god but You.

Through the power of Your WORD,
(the mystic five letters)
having arrived at Your anklet-girt far-reaching feet,
I am proudly abiding there.
Our great Lord,
is not Your golden graciousness to me, Your slave,
even like providing a golden seat for a dog?

Thiruvaachakam.

* * * *

We see from these utterances of Maanikkavaachakar what a great honour is this of being provided with a seat by God in His Assembly (of devotees). Our Swaamikal too had a similar experience which he records in three stanzas of this decad. He sings:

Oh Spouse
Who, bestowing clarity on this youngster
who stood perplexed
not knowing in which direction to go,
and raising him to a high seat set with gems,
made him gain the state of the grace-filled bliss
while men of good thavam
who do not know any desire
and others stood surrounding him
and rejoiced!

.....

* * * *

Oh Spouse
Who, deeming as praise-worthy deeds
all the mean deeds done
by this basest cur of the canine race
who went about barking
that all good things are evil things,
put up with them,
and Who, graciously taking as true utterances
all my false utterances, rejoiced,
and Who raised me to a great seat
possessed of all noble qualities,
placed a crown on my head
and endowed me with the skill
to perform all the five functions
(of creations etcetera)!

* * * *

Oh my Guru
Who, graciously accepting with delight

the false thavam of this perfidious fellow,
the basest of the vile clan
which does not know
even as much as the tip of the tendril
of the creeper called “Learning”,
raised me to a seat
as high as a mountain
and also crowned me
blessing me (at the same time) in these words:
“ Oh My son, do prosper in the world”!

4148 4151 4153. VI.57 – 59 62 64

Our Swaamikal is now ready for the highest of all possible acts of grace, the crowning glory of the long years of thavam. The conferment of the Effulgence of Grace. He prefaces his record of this greatest of experiences with three songs of praise of the Lord as the Effulgence of Grace. We reproduce two of them below. He sings:

Oh unique King
Who, resplendently abide in the middle
of the great etherial space
of the heavenly great Effulgence of Grace,
and create all the spheres that are there,
and all the mobile and immobile creatures
that are in those spheres,
and shine in each of them,
in their interiors, in their visible exteriors,
in the exterior of their interiors,
and in the exterior of their exteriors,
Who, having hoisted a flag of great mercy,
exercise a unique suzerainty
of cool grace (over all of them),
and Who dance on the Hall in Thillai!
Do wear my anklet (of poesy) on Your feet!

* * * *

Oh my King
Who exercise a unique sovereignty
of Effulgence of Grace
over the several millions
of cities of the Ultima Thule of Yoga
spoken of by good people,
over the several millions
of cities of the Ultima Thule of Knowledge,
over the several millions
of cities of surpassing peace
which are the Ultima Thule
of the Kalas¹⁵⁴ spoken of by those skilled in them,
over the several millions

of cities of the Ultima Thule
of the Veda-s full of contradictions,
and over the several millions
of cities of the Ultima Thule
of Siddhaantha
(which is apprehension of the Godhead)!
Do be pleased to graciously wear my garland (of words)!

¹⁵⁴: i.e. Shaanthiyaatheetham, a state of surpassing peace, The Kala-s are five. Nivriti kala, prathishta kala, vidhya kala, shaanthi kala and shaanthiyaatheetha kala. That is the art of withdrawing oneself from worldly life, the art of being established (firmly) in spiritual life, the art of gaining gnosis or knowledge of the Godhead, the art of gaining peace, the art of gaining a state of surpassing peace.

4098. 4099. VI.57 – 9. 10

The Lord, out of His munificent grace, bestowed on our Swaamikal the very power by which He Himself exercised sovereignty over all the worlds. That power is the Great Effulgence of Grace. Our Swaamikal records in the 90th stanza of this decad the conferment of that unique power on him. He sings:

Oh my Sponge Who told me
“ It is possible to know the Being
spoken of by all the reputed ultimate findings
of unfailing Vedaantha, Siddhaantha etcetera
with the aid of the Great Effulgence
which is grace incarnate
by remaining established unwaveringly
in the Pure Blissful True Creed;
it is not possible for any one to know It
by any other means;
this is My Will;
Oh My son,
you, of course, have received
the Great Effulgence of Grace:
blessed be you!”
Oh King dancing on the Hall!
Do graciously wear my offering too!

4179. VI.57 – 90

Thus saying, the Lord said” Never doubt my words, have no fear”, and blessed our Swaamikal. He records this assurance in the 91st song of this decad thus:

Oh Principal Being of my livelihood
Who graciously told me:
“ Have no doubt about it, my son:
in this very birth
you have gained whatever has to be gained,

have no fear”,
and Who, establishing me on top of the world,
crowned me with a gem-set crown,
and said: “Blessed be you”!
Oh pure blissful Ether
of pure Effulgence of Grace!
Oh Joy-incarnate!
Oh unique Spouse capable of doing everything!
Oh unique dancing King
Who showing (to the world) the way of redemption,
dance on the Hall of Gem!
Do graciously wear my (garland of) words also!

4180. VI.57 – 91

Thus ends the tale of all the major acts of grace done to our Swaamikal since his infancy by God. There are, however, miscellaneous acts of grace which have not found a place in any of the songs so far seen by us. Our Swaamikal recalls with love and gratitude all of them in fifteen songs scattered throughout the decad. We shall briefly review them before we part from this decad. He sings:

“ Oh Treasure
Who, whenever my mind was sore and weary,
appeared before me
and rid me of all the weariness
and gave me new life”

4094. VI.57 – 5

Oh Guru
Who made accessible an inaccessible state
to even me who got puzzled
if asked: “What is eight plus two?”

4111. VI.57 – 22

Oh Being of unique suzerainty
Who, rescuing me from castes, clan and creed,
raised me above them all
and bestowed on me a special sacred ambrosia!

4112. VI.57 – 23

Oh Being Who wander often
in my interior and exterior
in the shape of the Effulgence of Grace
and bestow grace on me.....

4113. VI.57 – 24

Oh great Light, called the true Kin,
Who, becoming a good friend to me
in this world where I have to sojourn,
made available to me all the things I had in mind
in one single hour,
and, filling my interior and exterior
and the exterior of my interior,
shone there with a light!

4139. VI.57 – 50

Oh Spouse
Who, bestowing on me the eternal golden form,
the mantric form, and the heavenly form,
crowned me with a crown set with gems,
bade me discharge the five functions
praised in song,
and shone most graciously
in my interior and exterior!

.....

4150. VI.57 – 61

Oh primeval unique great Light
Who graciously admired with delight
the false utterances of me, an utterer of lies,
the basest of the family of worms
on whom men of noble families
look down with repugnance,
crowned me,
graciously bade me discharge the five functions
and enslaved me.....

4152. VI.57 – 63

Oh King of Grace
Who enlightened me in the guise of verily the empty Ether,
me who stood puzzled without knowing
anything of the vastly diverse things
called religions, creeds, gospels, immortal deva-s,
the states of existence of others,
devotees who had arrived (at Your feet),
experiences undergone by them, etc.!

.....

4154, VI.57 - 65

Oh great munificent Lord
Who, making all my desires converge
on Your form of grace only,

made me abide with You,
deposited inside my mind all Your desires,
and You too abiding in me
graciously blended with me!

* * * *

4155. VI.57 – 66

Oh Bliss incarnate
Who, making all the thatthwa-s,
which were each ruling independently,
come under my sway one by one
and do my bidding,
crowned me that the previous rulers,
later rulers and intermediate rulers
may praise me and declare
that my rule only prevails
over all the macrocosmic and microcosmic spheres
one can think of
and beyond them as well!
.....

4156. VI.57 – 67

Oh great Lord
Who, when I, at a very early age,
was roaming about
playing with young boys
in the hot afternoon,
taught me the way of singing about You
in adoring meditation,
beginning the (first) line with the words:
“ Oh our Great Lord!”
.....

4165. VI.57 – 76

Oh Spouse mine, the Principal of my life,
Who set me up in the room (the human body)
lit by the bejewelled maayai,
me who was lying in the dark room called ignorance;
and, bestowing wisdom on me,
raised me to the golden story
constructed with the thatthwa-a
of long-standing friendship,
gave me plenty of the ambrosia of grace,
cherished me day and night,
bestowed on me all prosperity
that I may become exalted
and crowned me with all the world as witness!

4166. VI.57 – 77

Oh Great Life
Who, preventing the imprint
of the oft-spoken-of worldly desires on my mind
at my playful tender age
when I had been just weaned,
dispelled the delusion of my mind,
and imprinted instead therein
the Five Letters themselves!

4167. VI.57 – 78

Oh great Spouse mine,
Who, though rare to be gained by the great thavam
performed at great pains here and there
by millions of great eminent men
who had eschewed the food they eat,
had grown emaciated
and over whom ant hills had grown,
yet became available
to this youngster of youngsters!
.....

4172. VI.57 - 83

Oh Guru
Who told me:
“Civan Who shines
everywhere and in every creature
is one only;
I swear by Me, My son, two there are not;
know that combined in suitable context
with Grace, i.e. Sakthi, It is two;
do not get puzzled”.

4175. VI.57 – 86

Oh Sire
Who graciously admired and considered
the age of childhood,
when I was playing about and romping in the street,
as quite a big age,
made me take delight in the effulgence
which is Your grace,
enabled me to string a garland of sweet words
and graciously wore it!

4183.VI.57 – 94

Oh great Effulgence
Who raised me, a little fellow in every way,
to a great state
impossible for even Brahma,
Vishnu and others to ascend to,
and, abiding in me,
gave me in abundance
the sacred great ambrosia of grace
which is the real succour,
allowed me, this base cur,
to sport about as I pleased,
and graciously ordained
that the Pure Blissful Universal True Creed
should prevail everywhere!

.....

4186. VI.57 – 47

Oh great Spouse
Who raised me,
a youngster who was a nobody,
to a position of being praised
by people in every part of the world,
and bestowed on me the sacred ambrosia
to the amazement of men of great thavam,
Brahma and other divine lords!

.....

4187. VI.57 – 98

The last two songs in this set of fifteen songs which are also the last two stanzas of this decad conclude the decad with a unique statement about the conferment of a unique blessing-the blessing of integration with the Godhead, a state in which, in the words of Thomas Merton,

“ It is no longer something poured out of God into a created subject, so much as God living in God, and identifying a created life with His own life, so that there is nothing left of any experimental significance but God living in God.”

Our Swaamikal records this ineffable experience in the last two stanzas of this decad. He sings:

Oh dancing King
Who graciously accepting as good deeds
all the big offences committed by this fellow
who is a stranger to good qualities,
fulfilled all that I had in mind,
gave me fragrant blissful ambrosia of great grace,
crowned me with a gem-set crown as well,

blessed me saying: “May You Prosper”,
blended with my mind
without parting from me any more,
ordained that You and I should flourish
as one single form,
and graciously gave me the Kingship
of the Effulgence of Grace
which blends with my being!
Do graciously wear my garland (of poesy)!

* * * *

Oh dancing King
Who, removing all obstacles,
out of Your grace forcibly enslaved
this youngster who was romping about
in a wilfully wild manner,
gave me delusion-free true wisdom,
fed me with the ambrosia of grace,
made the powerful sakthi-s seek me
and embrace me,
generously willed that You and this slave
may be established completely as one form,
and gave me the Kingship
of the blossoming Effulgence of Grace!
Do wear my garland (of poesy)!

4189. VI.57 – 99. 100

Forty-one of the 100 stanzas of this decad are songs of sheer praise of God. As the reproduction of all or many of those stanzas will not serve any useful purpose with respect to our following our Swaamikal on his journey on the second stage of the Unitive Way, I content myself with quoting only one of them which is very popular with all devotees of God in Tamilnaadu. That song is this:

Oh Delight
Who graciously bestow delight
on the learned and the unlearned!
Oh Eye
Who bestow sight
on those who do not see (You)
and on those who behold (You)!
Oh Boon
Who bestow boons
on the strong and on the helpless!
Oh Wisdom
Who bestow wisdom
on those who do not esteem You
and on those who esteem You!
Oh Impartial One

Who abide impartially
 with the good as well as the wicked!
 Oh Well-being
 Who bestow well-being
 on the humans as well as the deva-s!
 Oh Bliss Who dance on the Hall in Thillai
 for the sake of all!
 Oh my King!
 Do graciously wear the song which I utter!

4128. VI.57 – 39

Two important claims are made by our Swaamikal in this decad. He claims that God conferred on him the power to raise the dead. This is a claim, which can be believed and accepted. Saint Thirugnaanasambandar, Saint Thirunaavukkarasar and Saint Sundarar, all three of them have raised the dead not merely from their graves but from their very ashes. Moreover, they raised such dead not immediately after death but after the lapse of quite a long time, and in one case several years. It is the other claim which baffles my understanding and the understanding of many others including Thiru Auvai Doraiswaamy Pillai, the doyen of commentators, and the commentator of the Thiruvarutpaa. This baffling claim is that of being given by the Lord the power to exercise the five functions of creation, sustenance, destruction, concealing, and bestowing mukthi. These are, as far as is known, the sole prerogative of God. In fact, the various schools of thought in Hinduism including the Saiva Siddhaantha are agreed that the human soul on gaining deliverance approximates to the Para-brahmam in every respect except in the matter of discharging the five functions, panchakritya-s. In any case, as far as I have been able to find out, none of the biographers have recorded that the Swaamikal ever exercised these powers or, for that matter, ever raised the dead, though there are one or two uncorroborated stories current to that effect.

I pass on reluctantly from the 57th decad, the arul-vilakka-maalai, the Garland of Poesy Expounding the Grace of God, to other decads. I would fain linger longer here, but the remaining 1729 stanzas of the Thiruvarutpaa forbid me to tarry any more here. The next twenty decads are songs of sheer exultation cast in the naayaka-naayaki-bhaavam, the role of the human Bride and the divine Bridegroom.

The conclusion of every important stage of our Swaamikal's journey on the Pathway to God has been characterised by his bursting out into exulting songs in the role of the Bride of the Lord. This second stage on the Unitive Way is no exception to that tradition. These decads are important not so much as records of our Swaamikal's journey as showing the intensity of his burning love for the Lord. The Bride's mother relates the piteous condition of her love-lorn daughter.

“ My love has overpowered me,
 what shall I do,
 Oh my Husband, do take note of me”, she said.
 “ Other than speaking Your praises
 I take delight in nothing else,
 this is the truth”, she said.

“ I, a simple girl, have no other refuge,
do graciously put up
with all the offences committed by me”,
“ Oh munificent One of great compassion!”,
she said.
Thus said she,
the daughter whom I bore
by virtue of a boon.

4190. VI.58 natraai koorai 1

In the next decad the companion of the Bride tells the Lord the virtues of her lady.
She sings:

“ If you are a devotee
of my Husband
Who is in the Etherial Shrine of Thillai,
come here,
if not, what business have you here?
Go away”, my lady says.
All her desires are centred on You alone;
do not think of her here
as the girl she was before;
if You delay,
she will instantly give up her life;
if You are coming at once,
Oh King, please graciously say so,
Oh great Lord Who abide
in the sacred Hall of Gems!

4205. VI.59 paangi thalaivi petri uraithal 6

In twenty-four stanzas the Bride bewails her lot, forsaken by companions, mother, and the Lord as well. She sings:

“ Oh damsels with trailing tresses,
if you would but let me be alone for a little while,
I could see my husband”, I said.
Whether it is for this reason,
or because I said:
“ Is not the bliss gained by me
greater than the seven seas”,
I do not know why,
my companion boiled over with anger
as gruel boils over the fire,
and the dame who brought me up
became like a frenzied devil-dancer,
and all damsels around me
slander me and laugh at me;
alas, I do not know the sacred mind

of the Pure One, the dancing King!

4227.VI.60. thalaivi varunthal 18

The Bride asks the Lord to instruct her in the truth about Him. Maanikkavaachakar too entreated the Lord to appear before him as He really is. He sang:

Oh transcendent Effulgence Who rise in my mind
and, closing the outlets of the crafty five senses
which, at cross purposes with me, delude me,
make ambrosia well up in me!

.....

Do graciously come
that I may see You as You truly are!

Thiruvaachakam decad 22 v. 1

It is noteworthy that Maanikkavaachakar addresses the Lord as “transcendent Effulgence”. Our Swaamikal too, at a similar stage of spiritual experience calls upon the Lord to instruct him in the truth about Him. He sings:

Oh my Eyes!
Oh Pupil of my eyes!
Oh my Mind!
Oh my mind’s Fruition!
Oh Heaven!
Oh Fulness of Heaven!
Oh Bliss!
Oh unique true Being!
Oh bright Moon which yields cool grace!
Oh Treasure of compassion
Who gave me to the world!
Oh inner Light
which arises in the interior (of my mind)!
Do graciously tell me the truth
(about Yourself)!

4253. VI.63 gnaanopadhesam 1

The Bride reminisces in the 64th decad with gratitude on the conferment of the ambrosia of grace on her. She sings:

Oh Red Flame that fills the heavens!
Oh internal Light radiated by the flame!
Oh coolness-filled white Moon!
Oh cool Ambrosia inherent in the moon!
Oh eye-delighting true Fire!
Oh Lover of the damsel Civakaami!
Oh Father,
You bestowed, You bestowed

grace-filled ambrosia on me!

4264. VI.64 aaramutha-p-peru 1

This reminiscing fills our Bride with a desire to see the dance of her Beloved. She invites her companion to accompany her. In this decad, great philosophical concepts are to be found with reference to the dance. For instance, the second stanza conceives the dance as interpreting the mahaavaakyam, Tat-Twam-Asi, That Thou Art. Lord Civan is conceived as appearing in the form Twam-Thou. The etherial space in which the dance takes place is conceived as Tat, That. The dance itself is conceived as Asi, Art. The Bride sings:

I desire to witness the Asi dance
which the Lord dances
in the form of Twam
in the arena of Tat.
Oh Companion mine,
will you become like-minded with me
and agree to go with me,
or will you, without agreeing,
vainly remain idle?

4277. VI.65 upadesa vinaa 2

Having invited her companion, our Bride takes counsel with her heart. She sings:

Is not the day on which we set out
to see Him Who has no day of extinction
a good day indeed –
Oh my heart
is not the day of our setting out
a good day?

* * * *

Why are You looking for an auspicious time
to see God Who has transcended time?
Oh my heart,
Why are you looking for an auspicious time?

* * * *

4287, 4289. VI.66 nenjodu nerthal 1, 3

The heart is evidently much perturbed, for the Bride cheers up the heart with heartening words. She sings:

Fear not, my heart, fear not,
fear not, my heart, fear not;
The Lord without any perfidy in Him,

will say: “Fear not”
at the very instant we begin to suffer;
see, here He is in the Etherial Shrine!
Fear not.....

4298, VI.67 anjaathe nenje 1

The Lord in the Etherial Shrine, in Chidambaram, is the dancing Lord, Lord Nataraja. Our Bride sings, therefore, of His dancing feet in the next decad. She sings exultingly:

The dancing Feet, the Feet that dance on the Hall!
the dancing Feet, the Feet that dance eternally!
the Feet sought for by the praising Veda-s!
the Feet which taste sweet to devoted devotees!
the Feet gained by seekers of great thavam!
the Feet which are the Lord of the Kingdom of Onkara!

* * * *

The Feet which bestow grace on me just as wished for!
the Feet which placed me in a never dying state!
the Feet which become the property of the virtuous!
the Feet which will never abide in the minds of the false!

* * * *

4321, 4333.VI.68 aadia paatham 1, 13

Under these Feet our Bride seeks refuge in the next decad. She sings:

Refuge, Refuge, Refuge mine they are,
the Feet which are twin,
the Feet which are my kin,
the Feet of the Lord
Who dances on the Hall in Chidambaram
Refuge, refuge, refuge mine they are!

* * * *

The lotus Feet
whose praises Naaraayanan
along with Brahma and others
chant ever and always,
Refuge, refuge, refuge mine they are!

* * * *

4338, 4343.VI.69 abhayam, abhayam 1, 6

Fulfilling her ardent prayer, the Lord comes to her, and she welcomes Him most joyfully in 104 stanzas. She sings:

Come, Spouse of Civakaamavalli
the Valli of Chidambaram, come!
Dweller in the Hall of Gems, come!

* * * *

Removing danger, and lighting a lamp in me
You extirpated my ignorance, come!
I have come here to see You, come!

* * * *

The matchless twin Feet,
You made them ascend to my head, come here!
Oh Lord without end, come here!

* * * *

That wisdom may rise in me here,
becoming a stimulating Wisdom
You Who unite with me, come here!
Oh my Enslaver, come here!

* * * *

I swear by You,
apart from You there are none dear to me, come!
Oh Lord Who have known this by uniting with me,
come here!

* * * *

Oh Lord of the Veda-s Who gave me wages,
Oh Spouse Who taught me the truth, come!
Oh Lord without beginning or end, come!

* * * *

All my thoughts are thoughts of You,
other thoughts I have none, come!
Oh Lord Who give me Your form, come!

* * * *

There is no one to ask me why;
I call upon You with love,
Oh Lord Who (in answer) ask me why, come!

Oh Lord Who bathe in the cow's milk, come!

* * * *

Wisdom I desire, grant it quickly,
I have spoken the truth, come here!
Oh Lord with a Dame, on Your left, come!

* * * *

I should embrace You and unite with You,
Oh Husband of Civakaamavalli, come!
Oh Dweller in the Hall of Gems, come!

* * * *

4354, 4364, 4374, 4384, 4394, 4404, 4414, 4424, 4434, 4444, 4457.VI. 70
ambalavaanar varukai 1, 11, 31, 21, 41, 51, 61, 71, 81,91,104

The Bride is seized with an over-powering desire to dance with the Lord. In the 71st
decad she invites Him to dance with her.

Come to dance, come to dance with me!
Oh You Who dance in the Etherial Shrine,
come to dance (with me)!

Oh Lord Whose nature
is not possible to be known by others,
come to dance with me!

Oh Lord of the unique great capital city,
come to dance with me,

Oh Lord rare to be gained
by hard-hearted men,
come to dance with me!

Oh Lord with a heart free from perfidy,
come to dance with me!

Oh Lord seated on the crown
of the ancient Veda-s,
come to dance with me!

Oh Lord Who have transcended
the thuriya state,
come to dance with me!

Oh Lord Who, putting an end to my misery, married me,
come to dance with me!

Oh my Husband,
come to dance with me!

4459.VI.71 ambalavaanar aada-varukai 1

From dancing with the Bridegroom to embracing Him is but a natural and logical
step. In the next decad, the Bride invites the Lord to embrace her. She sings:

Oh Lord Who desired me in my tender years,
 come along to embrace me!
 Oh Crown-jewel of my mind,
 come along to embrace me!
 Now is the suitable age,
 come along this moment to embrace me!
 Oh eminent Lord Who spoke the Truth,
 come along to embrace me!
 Oh Lord Who have great patience,
 come along to embrace me!
 Oh Lord of unfailing words,
 come along to embrace me!
 Oh Lord Who, preventing my death, enslaved me,
 come along to embrace me!
 Oh Husband mine,
 come along to embrace me!

* * * *

I desire to have union with You
 come along to embrace me!
 Passion is welling up in me,
 come along to embrace me!
 To the best of my knowledge I have never sulked,
 come along to embrace me!
 Oh Lord Who bestow grace when one is in misery,
 come along to embrace me!
 Half-a-second even I can no longer wait,
 come along to embrace me!
 Oh Lord like the sweet berry,
 come along to embrace me!
 Oh Husband mine
 come along to embrace me!

* * * *

4475 4481.VI.72 ambalavaanar anaya varukai 5 11

The Bride tells her companion “He will come”, and bids her go up to Chidambaram and invite Him. She sings:

Civaananda wine there is to delight the mind,
 eagerness there is in all the faithful to serve You,
 Oh Lord Who have dared to dance
 in the etherial space here,
 a greater space is there”,
 if You tell Him thus He will certainly come!

4484.VI.73 - varuvaar azhaithuvaadi 1

The Bride bids her maid say, “a greater space is there” in the heart of the devotee. For, did not the Chaandogya Upanishad aver, as far, verily, as this space (etherial space) extends, so far extends the space within the heart. Within it, indeed, are contained both heaven and earth, fire and water, both sun and moon, lightning and the stars. Whatever there is of Him in this world and whatever is not, all that is contained within it”.

The Lord has given heed to the importunate invitation and is come. Our Bride is amazed at her good fortune and sings:

What virtuous deeds, indeed, have I done,
 Oh mother, what virtuous deeds, indeed, have I done!
 “The King, my Spouse, the Lord in the Ethereal Shrine,
 has come, has come”,
 thus sound the sacred small pipes
 in my two ears.....
 what.....

* * * *

“The Lord of amazing beauty,
 the Lord beyond expression in words,
 the Lord Who dances a dance of bliss
 on the Hall in Thillai
 with all the devotees adoring Him,
 the transcendental Gnosis,
 the omnipotent Lord,
 He has come hurrying to unite with you,
 He has come”, says the voice of Onkaara!
 What.....

4488 4493. VI.74 enna punniyam seitheno 1 5

Now that the Lord is well and truly in her clutches, our Bride, typically woman-like, tells her companion that there is a great dispute to settle with Him. She sings:

Between Him and me there is a great dispute,
 a never-ending dispute;
 He Who left me that day saying:
 “I will be back presently”,
 I do not know by what objection made by whom,
 He stayed away there;
 today He comes with my bangle in His hand
 and stands here;
 close the door, let us see where He will go!
 between Him.....

* * * *

People coming to know about it
in their respective countries,
I have been slandered by them;
He Who went that day has come today and stands here,
I am ruined;
without knowing His perfidy,
I was deceived formerly,
shut this door, I will not let Him go anywhere any more!
between Him and me.....

* * * *

In my tender years He united with me with a smile,
He went away; condescendingly He has come today;
who is a match for Him?
In future how will He go away leaving me?
Run and close the door,
and secure it with a double bolt,
between Him and me.....

* * * *

4498, 4499, 4500.VI.75 ivarkkum enakkum 1 to 3

Having securely locked Him in with her in her room, the heart, the Bride tells her Lord that this is the best moment to bestow grace on her. She sings:

This is the best moment to bestow grace,
this is the best moment.
Oh virtuous One skilled in dancing on the Hall, listen,
I am not telling any lie; I am speaking the truth only;
this is the best moment.....

* * * *

All the religious practices once held in esteem are dead;
the infatuation with varnaasramam has ceased,
all the rampant worldly observances
have lost their rampancy,
killing, stealing and eating of flesh have died out,
this is the best moment.....

* * * *

The shoutings of the noted Veda's
and Agama-s have subsided
the gamboling wild monkey of a mind
has settled down to sleep,
the rabid cruel karma has burnt itself out,
the fair of the clowning cruel Maayai has dispersed,

this is the best moment.....

* * * *

The undissolving stone of a mind of mine has dissolved,
my mind is also eager for union,
my intelligence is now settled in an unwavering state,
passion which will not turn out to be false
is welling up and spilling over,
this is the best moment

* * * *

4501 to 4506.VI.76 ithu nalla tharunam (all)

With her desire fulfilled, our Bride bursts out into rejoicing. She rings:

That I may never die
and that, remaining eternal, I may dance,
the Lord Who executes the dance of bliss
gave me the ambrosia of bliss, Ah! Ah!

* * * *

That all the differences of castes and creeds
may be got rid of,
the Lord Who executes the primeval dance
bestowed on me the Effulgence of Grace, Ah! Ah!

* * * *

Getting rid of all my misery in one day,
the Lord of Love, the Lord in the Etherial Shrine,
gave me the Effulgence of Grace
that I may thrive in joy eternally, Ah! Ah!

4507 4508 4511.VI.77 aanada-p-parivu 1 2 5

Who is this who gave all this joy, all this bliss? Our Bride bursts forth in a paean of
praise of the Being Who is her Beloved. She sings:

Medicine of Gnosis is this medicine,
the joy-bestowing Medicine
that is the Lord of the Hall of Gnosis,
The Medicine of the Great Effulgence of Grace,
the Medicine that empowered me
to exercise the five functions,
a Medicine of significantly great joy,
the Medicine which had union with me
in my interior and exterior!

* * * *

Omnipotent Medicine it is,
it is the Medicine that tastes sweet inside me
without ever ceasing to do so,
it is the Medicine
whose glory cannot be assessed by words,
it is the Medicine
of Self-luminant and Great Effulgence of Grace!

4518 4519 4520 VI.78 gnaana marunthu 1 2

It is, moreover,

the Medicine which clasps on my wrist a golden bangle,
* * * *
The Medicine of the Pure True Creed,
* * * *
the Medicine easily accessible to devotees,
* * * *
the Medicine of the Kingdom
of the Ultima Thule of Om,
the Medicine that is the beginning (of everything)
and is beginningless in Itself,
* * * *
the Medicine that is my Guru,
* * * *
the Medicine that transforms me into It,
* * * *
the Medicine that removes the taint of ignorance,
* * * *
the Medicine that gave Itself to me,
* * * *
the Medicine that removes the five taints.

* * * *

The next two decads, the 79th and the 80th, are in the nature of preludes to the great orchestration that is the Arut-perum-jothi-akaval, a decad of 1596 lines, the longest ever sung by our Swaamikal or, for that matter, by anyone else. These two decads, the 79th and the 80th, are sheer paeans of praise of the Great Effulgence of Grace. Any translation by me is bound to make base lead of the pure gold that these decads are. Quite enough has been translated so far about this Great Effulgence of Grace and a great deal more will be translated shortly. I have decided, therefore, not to translate any of the stanzas of these two decads.

The 32 stanzas of the 79th decad and the 29 stanzas of the 80th decad may be said to be a precis of the great Arutperum-jothi-akaval. The Jothi, the Effulgence, spoken of

here as well as in the 81st decad, the Arut-perum-jothi-akaval, is none else than the Godhead, the Parabrahmam, conceived as Lord Nataraja of Thillai.

No translation can do justice to these two decads since their stanzas are bubbling over with ecstasy. In sheer joy our Swaamikal sings in a most exulting and exalted mood the lines of these decads. In all probability, he danced as he sang these stanzas.

That Lord Nataraja is the theme of these decads is more than evident from the Jothi being characterised in these stanzas as Chidambara Jothi which we may roughly translate as the Effulgence at Chidambaram.

The stanzas of the 79th decad end with a refrain which is transliterated below. The sound of it will give even to a foreigner to Tamil an idea of the ecstatic state in which our Swaamikal sang this decad. The refrain runs like this;

Civa-civa civa-civa jothi-civa
civa-civa civa-civa civa-civa jothi;
civa-civa civa-civa jothi.

Civa is the Tamil name for the transcendent Being, the God-head. At the same time civa means bliss, well-being. Primarily the refrain means "Oh transcendent Being Who we the Effulgence". But, unlike English, words in Tamil poetry are always interpreted in as many ways as possible, lending richness of meaning to the verses. Here too, therefore, civa-civa jothi should also be taken to mean "blissful, blissful Effulgence". The refrain of the 80th decad runs thus:

jothiyul jothiyul jothi-suddha
jothi civa-jothi, jothiyul jothi,
jothiyul jothiyul jothi.
Oh effulgence within an effulgence,
within an effulgence!
On goodly jothi, Oh Effulgence
who are the transcendent Being,
Oh Effulgence within an effulgence!
Oh Effulgence within an effulgence,
within an effulgence!

What our Swaamikal had in mind when he sang "Oh Effulgence within an effulgence" was known then, as Browning said in the case of his verses, to our Swaamikal and to God, and is now known to God only. We ordinary mortals cannot presume to interpret the mystical ecstatic utterances of mystics. Nevertheless, we may venture to think that the Swaamikal meant this, namely, 'Oh transcendent Effulgence within the effulgence abiding in the Etherial Shrine as Lord Nataraja.'

Here ends our Swaamikal's journey on the Pathway to God. He has arrived. He has become a Jeevan Muktha, a seeker who has gained what he sought, who has reached the end of his quest.

Who is a Jeevan Muktha, what is Jeevan Mukthi? Before I proceed to answer these questions, let me digress a little. In the case of every one of the five literary works

(including this) I had undertaken, I did not choose the work. It was thrust on me. In every case, I felt myself totally unworthy of doing the work. But, nevertheless, I had to do the work. I had no choice. It was as if an external force, an unseen force was, despite myself, compelling me to undertake the work, was helping me along with the work. As the work proceeded, I found much to my surprise that the reference books necessary for such works, books of whose existence I had no knowledge, were placed in my hands at the appropriate moment. Even so it is in this case. When I was thinking of our Swaamikal in the role of Jeevan Muktha, I found I had been using the term glibly without clearly knowing what it meant. I was not surprised at my ignorance, for my ignorance is colossal. I was not perturbed either about it, for I was confident that I would get the necessary help, knowledge, without effort. My confidence was not misplaced, for during a visit to a friend at Kaaraikkudi, apropos of nothing, he brought a book out of his library and said that it was presented to him by one of the former Principals of the college he was working in. I take the book and it opens at a page with a title “Jivanmukthi or Deliverance in Life”. Here was the answer to my problem. The name of the book is ‘The Concept of Mukthi in Advaita Vedaantha’. The author is Dr. A. C. Krishna Warriar. The publishers are the University of Madras, (1961). In the following pages I shall share with you the knowledge gained by me.

Dr. Warriar says that there are four kinds of mukthi according to Advaita. They are sadyogamukthi, kramamukthi, jeevanmukthi and videhamukthi. Much as I would like to reproduce here all the 24 pages of the book on this subject, I refrain from doing so lest I swell the pages of this book which already has grown very big. I shall restrict myself to what is relevant to our requirements.

In Chapter VII of his book, Warriar deals with mukthi or deliverance, and, under the heading ‘Mukthi as general concept in Advaita’, he writes:

“In the previous chapter we saw that as a result of brahmaa-kaaraavrithi, the final modification of the purged mind or agryabuddhi, the saadhaka realises his identity with pure consciousness. This self-realization has been styled turiya or the Fourth relatively to the phenomenal states of wakefulness, dream, and sleep, though as pointed out earlier, it is not a state among states, but the impartite and infinite consciousness or the Advaitic Absolute itself. This recognition of one’s integrity as pure consciousness is deliverance - mukthi in Advaita.

“The final knowledge or brahmaakaaraavritthi no doubt liberates the body-bound Self into a boundless Self-vision and consciousness of freedom. But this does not always coincide with the disappearance of the body, the erstwhile prison house of the Self. From the Super-vision of samaadhi, wherein one’s contact with the infinite is sufficient to make the illusion of all differentiated egos – our own and other men’s – disappear immediately, some return to the attenuated shell of the differentiated ego, to the world of relativity. These are said to enjoy the status of deliverance in life or jeevanmukthi.

“The main result of brahmaakaaraavritthi is deliverance of the type we distinguished above as sadyogamukthi. Ethically it entails the destruction of all karma, good and bad; for, if either survives the blazing fire of right knowledge, bondage to the results must also continue. But how can acts already performed be prevented from producing

their results? The answer is that the capacity of acts to yield their fruits is obstructed by the power of Self-knowledge. The reason why this knowledge obstructs the native capacity of acts to bear their fruits must be sought for in the nature of knowledge itself. The saving knowledge of Self reveals itself to be a non-agent, akartaa. The contents of this knowledge may be thus expressed: I have never been, and am, and will be Brahman which is neither agent nor experient. I have never been an agent or experient, nor am I such now, nor ever will be. In the light of this immediate realisation vanishes at once the illusion of all agency. So it stands to reason that karma-s, good and evil, previously superimposed on the Self should perish, and none should, in future, stick to the delivered Self. Were the agency of the Self at all was natural or real, neither it, nor the acts and their consequences could have disappeared on the dawn of knowledge; deliverance would have been unattainable.Advaita..... holds that bondage of the jeeva consists in its false assumption of agency, and, therefore, deliverance is freedom from such assumption.....

“An important distinction has, however, to be made. Not all acts and their fruits are burnt up in the fire of right knowledge.... Only such acts, performed before the dawn of the saving knowledge, will be consumed as have not begun to bear their fruits. Acts which have brought about the present life of the right knower, or vidvaan, remain unaffected. Why? By the inherent power of Brahman-knowledge, as explained above, all actions, being based on nescience only, must be abolished alike. Sankara remarks that the dawn of right knowledge can be understood only in relation to the maturation of certain appropriate karma-s of the owner. Once they begin to operate, the process must continue due to the original momentum, just as the wheel of the potter keeps revolving even after the completed pot is taken off. Nor is this an unintelligible contention. The knowledge that the Self is not an agent, doubtless, cancels the ignorant belief that it is; though thus cancelled, ignorance persists for a while due to its deep-rooted impressions in the mind, just as the false vision of the double moon, despite the right knowledge that the moon is single. Finally, this is not a matter for theoretical speculation at all; it is the truth of direct experience. One has immediate realization of Brahman, and, at the same time, for a while the body remains – the body and its workings being the visible symbol of the karma-s which have begun to bear fruit. None may dare question the fact of another’s realization of Brahman attested by his own heart. The term ‘jeevanmukthi’ is used to describe this state of continued life in the body on the part of a knower of Brahman. But we defined mukthi as state of disembodiedness, and is not, therefore, jeevanmukthi a contradiction in terms? No; for, embodiedness is not a physical state so much as a matter of false knowledge, it is the clinging, through nescience, to the body as though it were the Self or an integral part of the Self. The point of utmost importance in Advaita is that every seeker after deliverance may hopefully aim at the goal of jeevanmukthi

“Reasoning also shows that the knowledge of Brahman must immediately liberate from all future embodiments; for, if it did not, and only after death it liberated absolutely, an unseen potency or apoorva for knowledge will have to be assumed. But this will obliterate all distinction between karma and jnaana. Therefore, jnaana must liberate at once, and may not wait for the moment of death to produce its natural effect of deliverance

“The various types of mukthi.....have, on the whole, a speculative interest; but a distinction must be made in the case of jeevanmukthi. For, this provides a test of the

claims made on behalf of the supreme Advaitic ideal of deliverance on disembodiment – all these are beyond the scope of observation, and have to be taken on the strength of probability and scriptural authority. But jeevanmukthi may be studied at close quarters as exemplified by the living sages and saints; for the man liberated while living in the body is none other than a saint and mystic in one. ‘A saint is mystic, a human being looking down upon the division between the earthly and super-earthly, the temporal and the eternal, as transcended, and feeling himself, while still externally amid the earthly and the temporal, to belong to the super-earthly and the eternal’. In setting forth the nature of the Advaitic mukthi we pointed out that it is the realisation of the timeless reality of Brahman. The jeevanmuktha fully shares in that realization, and yet, as long as the body and mind persist, in the intervals of his absorption in the beatific vision he must be aware of the world in time also. Thus he fully answers to the description of the saint and mystic quoted above. We shall examine the traditional amounts of the jeevanmuktha with a view to judge how far they reveal a picture of perfection that should serve as an example and stimulus to those who accept the challenge to be perfect.

“A general view of the muktha is furnished by the Brahadaaranyaka when it enjoins: ‘Therefore let a Brahman become disgusted with learning and desire to live as a child. When he has become disgusted both with the state of childhood and with learning, then he becomes an ascetic, muni. When he has become disgusted both with the non-ascetic and ascetic state, then he becomes a Brahman. From Sankara’s commentary on the passage quoted it appears that the terms paandithya, baalya, and mauna denote increasing degrees of the knowledge of Brahman. But in commenting on the ‘sootra, anaaviskurvannanvayaat’ Sankara takes ‘baalya’ to mean the purity and simplicity of the heart of children.¹⁵⁶ In any case, the climax in this text denotes the jeevanmuktha who has fully realized the purpose of life and won the crown of perfection while alive in the body. In the words of the Bhagavadgeetaa, the muktha may be distinguished as a vijnaani. At the same time it is necessary to observe that muktha-s do not all conform to a single type. Having emptied themselves of their private egos, they have become perfect pots filled with the spirit of God which expresses itself in unpredictable ways. The recognition of this fact is necessary lest we apply a single yard-stick to all the muktha-s and fail to appreciate the unfettered spontaneity of their self-expression. Thus it has been remarked that some among them conform to established patterns of conduct and may not violate social conventions; others resemble simple rustics, children, or people possessed; yet others display abnormal powers; also among them are yogins intent on contemplation and averse to the normal activities of the world’.

¹⁵⁶ We are reminded of the pronouncement of Lord Jesus Christ that no one can enter the Kingdom of Heaven unless they came to it as children.

“How does the world of multiplicity appear to the integrated mind of the vijnaani or the muktha? In the full tide of his Brahmie realization, it is small wonder that he sees no alien world at all. Above, below, before, behind, right and left, the muktha perceives only his Self. In this highest state of realization, as often remarked before, the objective manifold does not exist for the muktha; its highest value as pure consciousness stands unveiled. The question, then, of the illusoriness or otherwise of the world would not crop up for him; because, the muktha in the nirvikalpa-samaadhi

has no awareness of objects. Such a one is, strictly speaking, not a knower of Brahman but Brahman itself. But even after the return of the muktha to the attenuated shell of the differentiated ego, to the world of relativity, the power of his integral experience remains potent. It is the firm and unshakable grasp of this deepest truth of the world that is denoted by the term ‘stithaprajna’ applied to the jeevanmuktha in the Geetaa. Amidst all his apparent activities in the world of plurality, the muktha has unbroken awareness of the integral experience. No matter what objects confront his enlightened vision, they reveal to him their essential nature as pure consciousness. The Geetaa describes this blessed state of muktha-s as ‘the day’ which is but ‘a night’ to the undelivered worldlings, meaning that the latter are shut out from the vision of the world as pure spirit of God. On the contrary, the awareness of plurality normal to common sense ‘is’ a night to the muktha-s.

“In the sense that the muktha immediately apprehends the world as Brahman, which is its highest truth, obviously he possesses truth in its highest and most inclusive form. To apprehend the world as a mere congeries of objects, detached and inert, and opposed to oneself is, in the first place, a mark of cognitive bondage. Besides, it is evidence of a false valuation, a failure to recognise that the world is not merely an effect of Brahman, but Brahman in essence. In fact, the concept of cause in Advaita is axiological, i.e. it has reference to the essence of things. To find out the cause of a thing is to find out its essence. In the experience of the muktha, the gulf between the actual world and the essence it embodies is abolished, the world’s truth as Brahman is apprehended. The muktha thus has an unbroken realisation of the final truth of Advaita, viz. that the world is an expression of divine bliss. He realises that worlds are but the waves of the boundless ocean that he is – their rise and fall do not affect him. This does not mean that, e.g. the muktha fails to distinguish between a saint and a sinner. Only, he would not treat them as irreconcilable opposites, but appreciate the one as the realization of the potentialities of the other. The saint is the transformed sinner; what is transformed is not the Brahmic essence of the sinner, but the changing circumstances of his life, the upaadhees, which for the saint has only an empirical reality. Realising himself to be the Self of all, the saint’s judgement of the sinner will be different from that of the unregenerate mind. The saint very well sees that the valuation of the world as Brahman makes no sense to the sinner just as the hundred rupee note has no immediate significance for the child. Dr. Raadhaakrishnan points out that the muktha functions in the temporal world with consciousness of the timeless infinite, He has trikaaladrsti, an intuition of time in which past, present, and future exist together in the Self-knowledge and Self-power of the Eternal. He is no more a victim of time.

“The action of the muktha is a highly controversial subject. In numerous contexts, Sankara vehemently argues that action and perfect knowledge are incompatible. For instance, in the introductory remarks to his comment on the first chapter of the Geetaa he says: ‘One who knows the truth about his Self realises ‘I do nothing’; therefore, he cannot even dream of performing action which is hostile to right knowledge’. Sankara’s main contention is that all actions fall within the sphere of avidhya, and so the muktha, who perceives no difference, not only need not, but cannot act. But Sankara’s views on the action of the muktha are not exhausted by the trends of thought of which the quotation given above is only a sample. In fact, he takes karma in a technical sense, and understands by it only such actions as are performed with the sense of egoistic agency and claims on the fruits thereof. The actions of muktha-s and

of those who, like Sri Krishna, are born with the fullest enlightenment are not egoistic, and so, for Sankara, are not properly actions at all. The position requires an explanation. On the one hand the muktha perceives non-differenced reality; on the other, he acts, though, of course, unegoistically. But the basic condition of all action is awareness of difference. Is the muktha also aware of difference? The answer has been partly anticipated above, where it was pointed out that while the muktha realises the brahmic value of things metaphysically, he is also aware of their empirical status. Not to be so aware will be a limitation of his full knowledge. Besides, the muktha, in proportion to the fullness of his realisation of Brahman, is moved by compassion. 'He hates no living thing, is friendly, and compassionate'. Urged by compassion, he seeks to promote the welfare of the world by setting up the right norm of action. In fact, Sankara has recognised that work for the welfare of the world is necessarily undertaken by the muktha. The muktha unceasingly works for the good of all beings – sarvabhoothahitherataah. It must be remembered that those remarks hold good of only certain types of muktha-s, for, as we observed earlier, the muktha-s are subject to no external compulsions and are a law unto themselves. Strictly speaking, having fully abolished their private selves or egos, the muktha-s, do not act now, but the spirit of God who uses them as his perfect instruments.

"In his activity the muktha is fully aware that all actions properly belong to prakrithi, and that the Self beyond prakrithi is never bound by them. But the Lord of prakrithi, viz. Eeswaraa, the denotation of 'tat', has been realised by the muktha as his very Self. Therefore, the muktha acts in the liberating knowledge that he is only a nimittha or instrument of the Lord. The muktha's action, again, is marked by total freedom from desires. We have dealt at length on the role of desires in enslaving the jeeva. Since all these desires of the muktha have been eradicated, his acts are not vitiated by them – kaama-samkalpa-varjitaah. He does not desire the success of the work he initiates, for such desire is impossible without egoism. As the action proceeds, he realises naiva-kimcid-karomi-ithi. 'I do nothing', Nonetheless, the work is done, perfectly, for, yoga-karmasu kausalam, yoga is skill in action. What interferes with and even spoils the successful issue of actions is the preoccupation of the agent with his own hopes and fears. Rid of all these, the muktha is a perfect channel for the unhindered flow of divine energy, and the success of the enterprise takes care of itself. As far as the muktha is concerned, only his body functions and not his will as identified with his body's interests. In truth, the muktha may be deemed krtsnakarmakrt, one who performs all actions, because he realises the Self's freedom from all interested actions, and its status as the stable support of prakrithi's eternal play of energy. There is no question of the muktha committing sin, for sin does not consist in the outward act, but in the impure, egoistic motive of the private will. And, having no axe of his own to grind, the muktha can cherish no motive for or against anyone. Since his will has been absolutely merged in the will of God, the muktha may be held to realise, alone among all living beings, the meaning of the freedom of will; he sees that nothing finite is free.

"The fact of freedom from egoism means that the muktha acts in a spirit of impersonality. 'All great souls are conscious of an impersonal force, whether love or will or knowledge, working through them; but until liberated, they are not free from egoistic reactions'. The muktha's actions, on the contrary, are tainted by no sordidness. Not that troubles and tribulations do not assail him; he has his full share of

sufferings. But he never loses his equanimity; his titiksa, ‘forbearance’, ‘endurance’, never deserts him.

“In spite of his unremitting action, there is a sense in which the muktha may be described as a sannyaasin. He has not only given up the fruits of all activities, but also is free from emotional reactions like aversions and attractions. Thus, he works as a master, not a slave for wages.

“What is the nature of the muktha’s works? As was pointed out, he has no preferences. Though, normally, deliverance in the wake of formal renunciation, it is not inconceivable that occupants of other stations of life also should be delivered. Thus Janaka and Vidhura, Dharmavyaadha the butcher, Sulabhaa a woman, are examples of muktha-s. They all discharged the duties of their stations in a spirit of detachment and impersonality. According to Advaita, it is not the nature of the acts, but the way they are discharged, that distinguishes the muktha. Without any external compulsion, he continues the customary duties of his station in life lest the masses emulate him prematurely by renouncing their duties. For, the guiding principle of the muktha’s actions is desire for promoting world-welfare. But it is necessary to emphasise that deliverance or self-realisation is not to be evaluated in terms of the benefits it confers on the world. Deliverance is not a means to improve the world – it is the supreme good. The mukta has no illusions that he is helping the world. He knows that the world requires no help from him. The muktha is privileged to serve the world. The muktha’s work is service, and, as such, it is worship of God. The muktha alone can live up to the Upanisadhic injunction ‘eessaavaasyam idam sarvam’, (all this is pervaded by the Lord); for, every moment of his life, he perceives sarvaani-bhoothaani-aathmani-eva, sarva-bhoothesu-ca-aathmaanam, (all beings in the Self, and the Self in all beings), and so does not ‘shrink from them’; rather, he serves them with joy and gratitude, being samadarsana. This seeing of all beings in the Self and of the Self in all beings is the brahmaatmabhaava referred to earlier. Only, now, his vision is that of Brahman as Eeswara. Therefore, in the knowledge that all beings are God himself in strange garbs, the muktha serves them rather than pities them. The good in Advaita, we said, is whatever eliminates division and makes for unity. The muktha’s service, conceived, and carried out in the spirit of impersonal dedication is the highest expression of such goodness. Humanitarian work, not unoften, results, in perpetuating in the beneficiaries a sense of impotence and abasement; but the muktha’s service uplifts the beings served and opens their eyes to their own worth and dignity. Regarding the services rendered by the liberated saints Philo observes: ‘Households, cities, countries, and nations have enjoyed great happiness when a single individual has taken heed of the good and the beautiful. Such men not only liberate themselves; they fill those they meet with a free mind’.

“The problem of the conduct of the muktha may be considered in greater detail. Deliverance implies deliverance also from the laws of karma; for karma binds the ego, and, in the case of the muktha, all the knots of the ego, hrdayagranthi-s, have snapped. It has been declared of the muktha: He does not become superior by good action nor inferior by bad action. Him these two do not overcome – neither the thought, ‘Hence I did wrong’, nor the thought, ‘Hence I did right’. Verily he overcomes them both. What he has done and what he has not done do not affect him. This may be misunderstood as granting a license for reckless activity. R. E. Hume, the translator of the Upanishads, compares the Socratic doctrine of the identity of knowledge and

virtue with the Upanishadic teaching that the knowledge of the Self lifts a man beyond good and evil, and remarks that, according to the latter, ‘the possession of metaphysical knowledge actually cancels out all the past sins and even permits the knower unblushingly to continue in what seems to be much evil with perfect impunity’. But this seems to be a hasty conclusion. The knowledge in question is no mere ‘metaphysical knowledge’, a matter of intellectual jugglery and assent. The Upanishads contemplate the total transformation of the Self-knower. This is clear from the words, ‘Therefore, having this knowledge, having become calm, subdued, quiet, patiently enduring, and collected, one sees the Self in the Self. One sees everything as the Self; evil does not overcome him, he overcomes evil. Free from evil, free from doubt, he becomes a Brahman’. It is clear here that we are dealing with a perfected saint, the Self liberated from the private ego. In speaking of eligibility, we showed how a thorough ethical discipline is a prerequisite for enquiry into Brahman. Discussing this question in his Naiskarmyasiddhi, Sureswara remarks, that far from being licentious in his behaviour, the muktha will reveal virtues like benevolence as though they are his second nature – so spontaneous have they become. An immoral muktha is no better than a dog turning to his vomit. Immorality springs from aviveka, lack of discrimination, whereas the muktha is what he is solely due to his viveka. Hence lack of restraint from which his conduct even before his deliverance was free cannot disfigure it after deliverance.

“The feelings of the muktha are governed by his experience of the transcendental bliss of Brahman; for, as we observed earlier, deliverance is the same as Brahman. Now, Brahman is bhooman or the plenum (i.e. infinity). The muktha, thus, is aware of the plenum which is the same bliss, in which ‘one sees nothing else, hears nothing else, understands nothing else’. The experience, of this absolute bliss also implies fearlessness. Fear is rooted in the perception of duality or difference. The integral experience of Brahman reveals it as a sea of self-contained joy. This vision keeps the muktha perpetual company throughout his activities in the empirical world. Hence the joy with which he faces all the trying situations of life. He finds both happiness and rest within. Or, he may be described as aathmarathi, delighting in the Self. This open access to the headquarters of bliss accounts for many of his unique traits. ‘People do not shrink from him, nor does he shrink from them. He is free from the passing moods of elation, resentment, fear and indignation. He is independent, anapeksha (impartial), and free from the dualities of feeling like attachment and aversion. He renounces both good and evil. He is the same to friend and foe, unmoved by honour and dishonour, impervious to external conditions. Praise and blame do not affect him. He is content with whatever he gets. He has no fixed abode, but has a steadfast mind. Above all, he is a lover – loving all with the love of God.

“In Advaita the highest value is happiness in consonance with the concept of Brahman as aananda or bhooman. The attainment of the Self, aathmaabha, is held to be the highest gain, because Aathman is Brahman, which is absolute bliss. In the case of the muktha, this aspiration is finally fulfilled through the discovery of the Self’s identity with Brahman that is bliss.

“The life of the muktha that is steeped in the peace of Brahman is of course the very embodiment of holiness. His incorruptible purity and the unbroken awareness of the divine within Himself make his holiness palpable to all who find themselves in his presence.

“The enlightened vision of the muktha sees the world not only ‘apparelled in celestial light’, but as the living vesture of God. For him only the Vedaantic doctrine of the world and its affairs being a divine play or leela makes real and full sense. That ‘on the sea-shore of endless worlds’ we have all, like children, met with shouts and dances to play, the muktha with his disinterestedness, as a spectator of all time and history, fully realises. No doubt, ‘death is abroad’, but the muktha perceives that the evil, so-called, no less than the good, comes from the divine. He accustoms himself to the vision of the divine in the terrible and ruthless phenomena of the cosmos as readily as in the beautiful and the sublime. All aversion and loathing are born of the egoistic impulse to assert oneself; when the latter is dissolved, the whole universe becomes a mighty song which reveals its central reality. This is not a merely aesthetic attitude; it springs from the depths of the spiritual realisation of Brahman as bliss, and the muktha’s ability to pierce the most appalling masks nature and life wear and see into their blissful core. The secret of his inexhaustible spiritual vitality is that he no more seeks to gain ought for himself; he lives only to give.

“Among other traits of the muktha may be noted his genuine humility which is perfectly compatible with great dignity and fearlessness. He has none of the cocksureness of the theoretical philosopher who has an answer for every problem of the understanding. He does not claim to know the Absolute, since Brahman is not an object to be known. ‘He is the perfect man whom none knows as good or bad, ignorant or learned, polite or impolite. Let him walk the earth as the blind, the ignorant or the dumb do’.

“The jeevanmuktha enters upon absolute deliverance (videhamukthi) just as the moving breeze ceases to stir”.

Here ends our long but very useful and enlightening extract from Dr. Warrier’s book. I would earnestly request the reader to go through the passages on jeevanmukthi and jeevanmuktha and to simultaneously review in his mind or, better still, refer back to our Swaamikal’s sayings in the pillai-p-peru vinnappam, arul-vilakka-maalai and other decads reproduced in this book. It will then be clear to him that our Swaamikal had indeed arrived at his goal, at his journey’s end, and that he has nothing more to do on earth than to spend the remaining years prescribed for him by praarabdha-karma in adoring contemplation of the Godhead and in loving service to all creatures.

In the course of writing this book, I have attempted to fix a date for many events which are like mile-stones on the Pathway to God which our Swaamikal trod. I have myself noticed some discrepancies. This is inevitable as I am basing my surmises on subjective evidence. However, as far as the date of our Swaamikal attaining jeevanmukthahood is concerned, I am confident that I will not be far off the mark if I put it at a date earlier than the establishment of the Satya-dharmasaalai which occurred on the 23rd of May 1867.

Romain Rolland, writing in his ‘Life of Raamakrishna’, says: “The three great orders of metaphysical thought, Dualism, ‘qualified’ Monism, and the absolute Monism, are the stages on the way to supreme truth. They are not contradictory, but rather are complementary, the one to the other. Each is the perspective offered to the mental standpoint of one order of individuals. For

the masses, who are attracted through the senses, a dualistic form of religion with ceremonies, music, images and symbols is useful. The pure intellect can arrive, at qualified Monism: it knows that there is a beyond, but it cannot realise it. Realisation belongs to another order, the Advaita, the inexplicable, the formless Absolute, of which the discipline of Yoga gives a foretaste. It surpasses the logical means of word and spirit. It is the last word of 'Realisation'. It is identity with the One Reality".

This master-craftsman of writing helps us to analyse the Thiruvartupaa and the stages in the Path which Raamalinga Swaamikal trod on his way to the Godhead. The worship of Murukan at Kandhakottam and at the Thirutthanikai Hill, and the corresponding decads of the First Book of the Thiruvartupaa belong to the first of the orders of metaphysical thought mentioned by Remain Rolland, namely, Dualism. The long period of worship at Thiruvottriyoore and the corresponding songs in the Second and Third Books of the Thiruvartupaa belong to the second of the three great orders of metaphysical thought, namely, qualified Monism. We may say that our Swaamikal spent more than two decades in this stage of qualified Monism on his way to the Godhead. And he sang no less than 130 decads/2000 stanzas during this period. The Fourth and the Fifth Books of the Thiruvartupaa represent a period of transition from qualified Monism to pure Monism, to Advaita. And in the last twelve to fifteen years of his stay on earth, he revelled in advaitic experience. The 11th decad of the Sixth Book is named 'Intermittent Advaitic Experience of Bliss'. He dwelt long in this stage of the journey to supreme truth, he dwelt as many as fifteen years. Ultimately he gained his Identity with the One Reality and sang the Arut-perum-jothi-akaval, the monumental definition of the indefinable, the Godhead. We shall now proceed to consider this decad.

This decad, the 81st of the Sixth Book was sung on 18-4-1872. It is sung by our Swaamikal from the spiritual pinnacle of Identity with the One Reality, of jeevanmukthahood. He speaks with the authority of a soul which has gained deliverance here and now while still living in the physical body on earth. It is incorrect to say that he speaks, for a jeevanmuktha does not act on his own volition. God acts through him, speaks through him. This decad ranks in this sense with the Upanishads. It describes the indescribable. It speaks of the immanent and transcendent God, and of the Godhead that has transcended conception by the mind or expression by speech. This is as much a revealed scripture – a short one no doubt – but art unmatched scripture not only in the Tamil language but in any language whatsoever. The reader should wait for four or five years for an English translation of this decad. However, an elaborate commentary in Tamil has been published just now (June 1974). Perhaps this is the first ever complete commentary on this decad. In another few years we may expect to have another commentary too. Here we shall make only a brief survey of this great work of our Swaamikal.

The first 437 couplets and the last eleven couplets out of a total of 798 couplets end with the refrain 'arut-perum-jothi', 'The Great Effulgence of Grace'.

Other couplets end with various other refrains. In the first 168 couplets our Swaamikal sings a paean of praise of the Great Effulgence of Grace interspersed with references to acts of grace done unto him by the Great Effulgence of Grace. The Great Effulgence of Grace sung by our Swaamikal in this decad abides in the etherial space

called the Hall of Gnosis. In all probability, the song was sung in the temple at Chidambaram. This decad may have been sung in the temple at Chidambaram, may be in the very presence of Lord Nataraja Himself, but it will be a sad mistake if we imagine that our Swaamikal was addressing a God-without, a God abiding externally in some actual or imagined space, etherial or earthly. The jeevanmuktha has imprisoned God in his heart, in every fibre of his body. As Thomas Merton says: “. . . here, when contemplation becomes what it is really meant to be, it is no longer something poured out of a God into a created subject, so much as God living in God, and identifying a created life with His own life so that there is nothing left of any experimental significance but God living in God”. Therefore, being God living in God, our Swaamikal sings of the God Who has exchanged His body, life etc., for those of our Swaamikal. Shall I put it this way? The Brahman is speaking of the Brahman.

It is our very great good fortune that we have the entire manuscript of this decad in the handwriting of our Swaamikal. The manuscript is written on 47 pages of half-foolscap size paper. The pages are numbered in Tamil numerals. The words, written very legibly in bold slanting strokes, reveal a personality of great firmness of character coupled with a remarkable self-assurance. No erasures or corrections mar the manuscript. This shows that the Swaamikal was writing of something with which he was perfectly acquainted and about which he had no doubts or misgivings. The decad begins with an invocation of Arut-perum-jothi, the Great Effulgence, of Grace:

arut-perum-jothi! arut-perum-jothi!
arut-perum-jothi! arut-perum-jothi!

Maanikkavaachakar also conceived the Godhead as jothi. In Civapuram itself, the first decad of the Thiruvaachakam, when he begins the paean of praise in the 62nd line, he begins with the phrase, ‘maasattra jothi’, ‘Oh Immaculate Effulgence!’ And in the very first decad of bridal mysticism, Thiruvempaavai, the seventh decad in the Thiruvaachakam, he refers to the Lord as ‘arum-perum-jothi’, ‘the rate to gain Great Effulgence’. I am tempted to imagine that the phrase was originally ‘arut-perum-jothi’, ‘The Great Effulgence of Grace’, and that in common with the fate of many manuscripts, that of the Thiruvaachakam too had suffered mutilation in successive transcriptions and that the word ‘arut’ had got transformed into ‘arum’. Moreover, in the decad called ‘Arut-patthu’, the Decad of Grace, he begins the first stanza with the phrase, ‘jothiye! sudare! soozholi vilakke!’, Oh Effulgence! Oh Flame!, Oh Lamp of Encompassing Light!, Abhiraami Bhattar lived engulfed by this very effulgence, so much so that when the king of Thanjaavoor rudely woke him up from his nirvikalpa-samaadhi and asked him what day of the month it was, he promptly replied that it was the full-moon day while actually it was the new-moon day! The greatest concept of the Godhead can be but two, the Onkaara or the cosmic (soundless) sound and the Effulgence. Contemplatives steeped in the blaze of the nirvikalpa-samaadhi, the contemplation where “it is no longer something poured out of God into a created subject, so much as God living in God, and identifying a created life with His own life so that there is nothing left of any experimental significance but God living in God”, see the Godhead as the Effulgence. This is the experience of jeevanmuktha-s, but few ever leave a record of their experience of “God living in God”. Aldous Huxley, writing in the Introduction to his book, “The Perennial Philosophy”, says:

“The Perennial Philosophy is primarily concerned with the one, divine Reality, substantial to the manifold world of things, and lives, and minds. But the nature of this one Reality is such that it cannot be directly and immediately apprehended except by those who have chosen to fulfil certain conditions, making themselves loving, pure in heart, and poor in spirit.... In every age there have been some men and women who chose to fulfil the conditions upon which alone, as a matter of brute empirical fact, such immediate knowledge can be had; and of these a few have left accounts of the Reality they were enabled to apprehend”.

Raamalinga Swaamikal is one of such few who have apprehended the Reality and have left an account of it. The arut-perum-jothi-akaval is the account of the Reality he apprehended. If nothing of the work of Raamalinga Swaamikal had existed except this decad in blank verse, even so the world would have acclaimed him as a great seer.

After the invocation, he continues to praise and thank the Effulgence of Grace which is the Godhead in 167 couplets. A significant fact comes to light in these couplets. The Great Effulgence of Grace is conceived as abiding in the etherial space which is the Hall of Gnosis. If we throw back our memory to the first spiritual incident in the infancy of our Swaamikal, we will remember that he addressed the Lord thus:

Oh Being, my true kin,
Who showed me everything
as the (space and time transcending) ether
instead of the usual ceiling
when I, in my infancy,
along with my mother and others
witnessed in the sacred town Thillai
(the Mystery of mysteries)!

This ether is the etherial region of gnosis. Several decades later, after reaching jeevanmukthahood, our Swaamikal sees the Effulgence of Grace which is the Godhead in the same etherial region.
He sing:

Oh Effulgence of Grace
Who are my Spouse of mercy-laden bliss
abiding in the grace-imbued great state
on which rests the Creed of grace-laden bliss!¹⁵⁷

2

¹⁵⁷ this number and similar numbers on the following pages of this chapter stand for the number of the couplet in the Decad of the Great Effulgence of Grace.

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
Who stand on the crown of the Veda-s
and on the crown of the Agama-s,
and soar upwards!

3

* * * *

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
 Who exercise sway over a great etherial region
 beyond conception by mind or speech
 and soar aloft! 6

* * * *

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
 Who bestowed on me
 zeal, sensibility, radiant body and wealth! 7

* * * *

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
 Who transported me over the great boundless sea
 called birth and rid me of my misery! 8

* * * *

Oh great Effulgence of Grace
 Who, raising me to a state never risen to (by anyone),
 showed to me alone the six by six ¹⁵⁸ 9

¹⁵⁸ six by six – thirty-six. This number usually stands for the 36 thatthwa-s, the constituents of a human being. Such a meaning, however, does not fit the present context. Other explanations are equally unsatisfactory.

* * * *

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
 Who enlightened me
 that You are one, two, and me and two,
 and none of these! 11

* * * *

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
 Who, bestowing on me the enlightenment
 to understand without study,
 became a support to me! 12

* * * *

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
 Who are the beginnings (of everything)
 and are beginningless in Yourself
 and Who do not take note of caste, creed, and religion! 58

* * * *

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace,
biggest of the big and smallest of the small,
and rarest of the rare! 76

* * * *

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace,
Who bestow on me here on earth
things just as my mind conceived! 96

* * * *

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
Who saying: “Blessed be you! May you live long!”
bestowed on me the signet-ring of great repute! 115

* * * *

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
Who, that I might not die (and be born again)
and thus wallow in the world,
came in the very dawn of my life
and graciously enslaved me! 145

* * * *

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
Who, abiding in my mind,
create therein an immeasurable enlightenment
that it may spread all over the world! 168

In fifteen couplets (169 to 183) the Godhead is meditated upon as immanent in the five elements, ether, wind, fire, water, and earth. The Thiruvaachakam of Maanikkavaachakar has the following lines:

Obeisance to You Who pervade the earth
as all the five elements!
Obeisance to You Who appear in water as four!
Obeisance to You Who shine in fire as three!
Obeisance to You Who delight in wind as two!
Obeisance to You Who happen in ether as one only!

decad 4, lines 137 to 141

Our Swaamikal sings:

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
Who as Ether within the ether,

as Ether amidst the ether,
intimately fill it!

* * * *

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
Who as Wind within the wind,
as Wind amidst the wind,
are supremely forceful!

* * * *

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
Who as Fire, within fire,
as Fire amidst the fire,
are famous as heat!

* * * *

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
Who as Water within water
as Water amidst water
serve as Mother!

* * * *

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
Who as Earth within earth,
as Earth amidst earth,
function to produce all those!

169, 171, 173, 175, 177

The phrase “all those” appearing at the end of the last stanza among those quoted above stands for water, fire, wind, and ether. Earth has five qualities, firmness, taste, heat, energy and pervasiveness. Water has four (other than firmness), fire has three, heat and the rest, wind has energy and pervasiveness, and ether pervasiveness only. Hence, it may be imagined that water and the rest were created out of earth. We are reminded here of Maanikkavaachakar’s poem where he sings:

Oh Effulgence of diffusive light
Who, sprouting as the earth,
the celestial world, and the entire universe,
pervade all of them!

.....

Thiruvaachakam, decad 22, stanza 8

Couplets 184 to 201, 202 to 215, 216 to 230, 231 to 246, and 247 to 256 deal respectively in great detail with the Great Effulgence of Grace pervading each of the

five elements and giving each its special quality. The central theme of all these couplets is that the Great Effulgence of Grace is indeed everything and that apart from It nothing exists. We are reminded of Maanikkavaachakar's saying:

No particular thing You are,
Apart from You, none are!
Who can indeed know You?

Thiruvaachakam, decad 22, stanza 7

The Great Effulgence of Grace is the creator of the three flames and of all the functionaries of creation, sustenance, destruction, withholding of knowledge, etc. It is the ordainer of the seas, the mountains, numbers, seeds and produce. Our Swaamikal continues:

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
Who ordained the three flames
(of sun, moon, and fire)
that the teeming spheres may get light!

* * *

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
Who ordained with the power of Your grace
the lords of creation and their domain!

* * *

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
Who ordained in the manner it should be
the lords of sustenance and their domain!

* * *

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
Who ordained faultlessly
the lords of destruction and their domain!

* * *

Oh Effulgence of Grace
Who righteously ordained
the lords of concealing and their domain!

* * *

Oh Effulgence of Grace
Who ordained the lords who bestow clarity on souls,
and their domain,
that the souls may receive grace!

291 to 296

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
Who victoriously ordained
all the seas to remain stable
without restraining bunds!

307

* * * *

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
Who ordained many riches in mountains
and ordained several creatures also
to dwell thereon without hardship!

* * * *

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
Who ordained the germ¹⁵⁹ within the seed
and the plumule¹⁶⁰ (and the radicle) within the germ!

318

¹⁵⁹ germ – portion of organism capable of developing into a new one (rudiment of animal or plant).

¹⁶⁰ plumule – rudimentary stem.

The origin of living creatures (including plants) is said to be four-fold. From the earth, from the uterus, from the egg, and from sweat. The last source of breeding needs an explanation. It was believed that vermin like head-lice were generated from the sweat of the body. He sings:

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
Who create the dear creatures,
from the earth, the sweat, the uterus and the egg!

* * * *

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
Who ordained the creatures which creep,
which fly, which remain stationary and which walk,
that they might multiply!

* * * *

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
Who wisely ordained the stationary creatures
and the several multitudes of lives
that move about!

* * * *

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
Who wisely ordained
creatures with senses of perception
ranging from one to five¹⁶¹
and six as well!

¹⁶¹ a tree is said to have only one sense of perception, i.e. touch. Cow, horse, dog, cat, all the quadrupeds are said to have five senses of perception such as touch, smell, vision, hearing and taste. Man has mind as well in addition to the above five.

* * * *

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
Who ordained them with diverse natures
to serve diverse purposes!

* * * *

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
Who ordained many many picturesque
and strange creations!

346 to 351

* * * *

For the first time in the spiritual journey of out swaamikal, for the first time in the Thiruvartupaa, our Swaamikal refers to the curtains which hide the Great Effulgence of Grace from unregenerate man. It is not some extraneous agency which places the curtains between man and the Godhead. It is the Godhead itself which does so out of infinite mercy, for no unregenerate man my look on the face of the Godhead and survive. It has been so, from time immemorial. “And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God” says the Holy Bible. Our Swaamikal later installed curtains in the Satya-gnaana-sabhai in front of the flame of the lamp which he set up there to represent the Effulgence of Grace. When I deal with the Satya-gnaana-sabhai in Appendix I to this book, I shall say more about these curtains. It is enough to say here that they represent various kinds of ignorance, self-will, I-ness etc. Our Swaamikal sings of these curtains in ten couplets in the decad.

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
Who hide Your sovereignty
with the great black curtain
of maamaayai – grand illusion –
unrelieved by any border!

* * * *

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
Who hide the dear soul
with the great blue curtain
of gigantic shape!

* * * *

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
Who hide in an awe-inspiring manner
the transcendent etherial region
by the green curtain!

* * * *

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
Who quietly hide with the red curtain
the etherial region where gnosis is gained!

* * * *

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
Who hide with the golden curtain
the etherial region of meaningful significance,
denying access thereto!

* * * *

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
Who, by the white curtain,
hide close at hand
the etherial region of the Reality!

* * * *

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
Who to the grief of the seeker
hide by the curtain of mixed hue
the experiences he seeks!

407 to 413

If and when the curtains are drawn back, the seeker after the Reality will be endowed by the Effulgence of Grace itself with a doubt and delusion-dispelling clarity in which he will see all the universe in the Great Effulgence of Grace and the Great Effulgence of Grace in all the universe. Our Swaamikal sings of this clarity in twenty-four couplets. He sings:

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
Who severing the link with maayai,
which is the cause of being born,

display out of Your grace
Your prowess!

* * * *

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
Who, rescuing me from aanavam (ignorance)
and all the rest,
show compassion to me!

* * * *

Oh Effulgence of Grace
Who bestowed on me the power
of raising the dead
at the very instant of my saying “Rise!” to the dead!

417, 419, 436

From the 440th couplet onward our Swaamikal sings of various facets and aspects of the Godhead. He sings of the Godhead as the Reality, he sings of Its transcendental nature, of Its various states such as the attributeless state, etc., he sings of It as the merciful Guru, as Mother, as Father, as the soul’s Kin, as the soul’s Friend, as the soul’s Succourer. 160 couplets cover these aspects of the Godhead. He sings of the Godhead as Sat, Chit, Aaananda – Reality, Knowledge, Bliss – in 45 couplets. In Indian thought, the Godhead is conceived as mani, manthram, oushadham – the Gem which gives whatever is wished for, the magic Formula of similar powers, the Medicine for the disease of birth and death. Our Swaamikal devotes 23 couplets to these aspects of the Godhead. Moreover, to him It is Gold which baffles all attempts at assay, It is undiminishing Treasure, It is a Mountain of Effulgent Light, It is the Sea, the Woods, the Flower-bowers, the Shade, the Zephyr. It is sweet Water, It is Coconut-water, Coconut-milk, It is the Nelli tree’s Fruit, It is the jack-fruit, It is Honey, It is Ghee, It is Fragrance, It is sweet Music, It is Song, It is one’s eyes, It is one’s wisdom. He revels, like the love-lorn Bride he is, in conceiving of his Spouse as everything in heaven and on earth, and as even things that are not there. It is the eternal light, It is the full-moon, It is love, It is the benevolent rain. It is the Effulgence of Grace. Our Swaamikal concludes this great song with these lines:

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
Whose great glory soars aloft undiminishingly,
may Your great grace prevail
(over all the universe)!

* * * *

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
Whose great glory soars powerfully,
You gave all the five functions
to me to discharge them
that the multitude of creatures on this earth
may gain the path of enlightenment!
Obeisance to Your great grace! Obeisance!

* * * *

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
 Whose great glory soars powerfully,
 You gave me a power not gained by the Trinity
 or the deva-s or the realised seers
 or men of mighty mystic powers!
 Obeisance to Your great grace! Obeisance!

* * * *

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
 Whose great glory soars majestically,
 making clear to me all the mystic powers,
 out of Your grace, You gave all to myself
 the state of eternal Reality!
 Obeisance to Your great grace! Obeisance!

* * * *

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
 Whose great glory soars majestically,
 You bade me:
**“ DO EXPERIENCE ALL THE MISHAPS
 WHICH BESET THE CREATURES OF THIS EARTH,
 THAT YOU MAY REMOVE THEM;**
 and do so remove them and rejoice;
 do gain the happy state of the Pure Truth,
 do tower over all men as the noblest of them all!”
 Obeisance to Your great grace! Obeisance!

* * * *

Arut-perum-jothi! Arut-perum-jothi!
 Arut-perum-jothi! Arut-perum-jothi!

789 to 798

“Do experience all the mishaps which beset the creatures of the earth that you may remove them.” Here, in these words, lies the key to our Swaamikal’s confessions of faults and foibles, lust and lechery, misery and mortification, passion and compassion, the key to the hundreds of songs which have puzzled me.

12. THE UNITIVE WAY (Third and Final Stage)

I am, not writing this book. It writes itself. While writing the last chapter, I went to my book-self looking for Romain Rolland's book, 'The Life of Raamakrishna'. I have forgotten why I sought that book. As is my habit, I started reading the book again with a new eye, with a new capacity of understanding. Books with which I am very familiar through constant reading still seem to me to be new when I begin to read them again. They never bore me, on the other hand, they reveal new vistas of meaning. Such was the case with this book too. When I read the chapter on "Builders of Unity" (Chapter 6), I was new to weeping with disappointment and with ire against all the Tamil scholars of the past two centuries, the period when we had come under the Western influence. Romain Rolland had not heard of Raamalinga Swaamikal.¹⁶² It is true that one T. V. Govindaraajulu Chetti had written in English about our Swaamikal, but the book was published in 1933, a meagre edition of 1,000 copies. But even though a brief Foreword had been written by a Lt. Col. Skipworth from France, the book was late by five years, for Romain Rolland's book was published in 1928! Between 1874 and 1928 no one in Tamilnadu had undertaken to introduce the Swaamikal to the English-speaking world. His Thiruvarutpaa was a sealed book to foreigners, for that matter, it was a sealed book to most of the Tamil people, and a forbidden book to some of them, for instance, to the Caivite Mutts and their followers. Raamalinga Swaamikal was a builder of unity no doubt, but, as he himself is said to have lamented, he spread his wares for sale, but there was no one to buy, so he packed up his shop and went away! A Romain Rolland should be writing this book instead of me, a poor wretched half-wit in the presence of that great savant. But this cannot be till the entire Thiruvarutpaa is translated into English, and this cannot be till the elaborate commentary for the Thiruvarutpaa which is now in hand is completed and printed. And that will be in 1980! What an irony of fate it is that the world had to wait a century to know of this contemporary of Raamakrishna Paramahansa, an equal to him in God-realisation! Acutely conscious as I am of my unfitness to write this book, I have been tempted more than once to fling my pen away and cry "halt" to my work. But, having set my hand to the work, I feel a compulsion to finish it, however inexpertly it may be. Thus, I have reached the end of my work.

¹⁶² Aldous Huxley had not heard of Maanikkavaachakar not with standing a Pope, for he does not make any mention of him in his book The Perennial Philosophy.

This chapter comprises the experiences described in the last 62 decads of the Sixth Book, from decad 83 to 144. The 82nd decad, arut-perum-jothi-attakam, eight stanzas on arut-perum-jothi, the Great Effulgence of Grace, correctly belongs to the last chapter. Like other books of the Thiruvarutpaa, this book also contains a miscellany of stanzas (161 in this case), collected in a decad, the 125th, under the heading 'thani-t-thiru-alangal', Sacred Garland Strung with Odd Flowers'. This decad does not really belong to the main theme of this section of the Thiruvarutpaa which is revelling in the bliss gained by integration with the Godhead till it is time to shuffle off the mortal coil. This is the content of the 1,000 and odd stanzas (excluding the 161 stanzas of the 125th decad). The 142nd decad, anubhava-maalai 'The Garland of Experience', is the crowning piece of this section, and within its 100 stanzas are

crowded all the spiritual experiences, all of blissful character, which a seeker has in that period of his life which falls between jeevanmukthi, that is deliverance while still continuing to live in the human body, and videhamukthi, ultimate and irrevocable deliverance on disembodiment, on shedding the physical body. We shall feast on all those 100 plates of rare fare provided for us by our Swaamikal. We shall also partake liberally of other delicious fare provided in other decads. We shall turn into gourmands and gluttons in this case, but we shall not suffer in any way thereby except that some of us may get God-intoxicated as a result of such unchecked indulgence of the spiritual appetite. Here is the buffet, help yourself to whatever dish you fancy or to all of them.

‘Enfolded in the Bliss of the Godhead’ is the title of the 83rd decad. The Bride, ensconsed in the lap of her Spouse, the Godhead, sings in a transport of bliss:

Oh Eye Who bestowed exclusively on me
the Reality-seeing eye of gnosis
that whatever Yen had in mind
may be clear to me in a moment!
Oh my Mother, Who, raising base me –
me who was roaming about like a bull
in the forest of the senses –
to a high state¹⁶³
and making all the world pay homage to me,
ordained that You and I should be one!
Whenever I bear in mind Your mercy
and meditate on it,
my heart melts and melts into water
and, joining the great stream of desire,
merges in the great flood of love
without leaving any trace of a distinction
of I and THAT!
Ah! Ah! Ah!

¹⁶³ high state – jeevanmukthahood.

4629. VI.83 irai-inba-k-kuzhaivu 3

“The Unattainable Boon” is the name of the 84th decad. A devotee of God never gets over the amazement at his good fortune in receiving the grace of God. He never thinks, even for a moment, that he got it as of right. In this frame of mind, our Swaamikal sings:

Oh my loving Gnosis! Oh Grace-laden Being!
Oh Mother! Oh my Father!
Oh my Sire! Oh my King!
Oh my Ambrosia
Who, deeming even me a worthy thing,
bestowed on me Your bliss-laden great grace
that I may propagate the True Creed

to the end that all the miserable people of the world
my forsake the evil path
and become possessed of joy!
Oh my Kin!
Oh Succourer dear to me!
You are in me
and I am exultantly abiding in You!
Who, indeed, could gain here this oneness?

4639. VI.84 peraa-p-peru 5

Having gained the unattainable boon of oneness with the Godhead, our Swaamikal is steeped in bliss of integration with the Godhead and sings:

On Great Effulgence of Grace!
That all the souls may get rid
of the taint of dark ignorance
and, perceiving the transcendent state of mukthi
here itself on earth,
live joyously,
that the deluding many many paths
may be covered over by dust
without leaving any trace of track or trail,
and that the clarity-invested Pure True Path alone
may resplendently prevail,
You made me dance in the Street of Grace
where can be seen the Assembly of Gnosis!
You are indeed my Enslaver!

4653. VI.85 civaanandhatthu azhunthal 9

In this ecstatic state of mind, our Swaamikal sings of the greatness of the holy grace of the Lord. He sings:

I called out to You:
“Oh unique One
Who, taking abode in my mind, enslaved me!
Oh Bliss Who said:
‘Bestowing on you, with all the world as witness,
the limpid ambrosia,
We will make you prosper.
Never fear in your mind!’
Oh great Treasure of Mercy
Who rid me of all perfidy!
Oh God!
Oh my munificent Lord in the Golden Etherial Hall!”
And You came and bestowed on me
the Effulgence of Grace!
Hallowed be Your magnanimity!

* * * *

I called out to You:

“Oh Bestower of boons!
Exempting me from fasts, penances, etc.,
lighting up my mind with the lamp
of gnosis of Reality,
giving me the good ambrosia of union,
fulfilling all I had in mind,
bestow on me out of Your mercy,
the capability of exercising all the mystic powers”.

And You came and bestowed on me
the Effulgence of Grace!
Hallowed be Your magnanimity!

4659, 4664. VI.86 thiruvartut-perumai 5, 10

He is filled with amazement at his good fortune and expresses it in the next decad. He sings:

I gained Him Who fills my thoughts,
I gained the pupil of my eyes,
the Lord with an eye on the forehead,
the Sea of great mercy,
the Content of the Veda-s,
my blissful Spouse,
the Sweet Fruit,
the decanted Fluid of the limpid ambrosia,
the unique One in heaven,
the Succour of my life,
the Life of my life,
the Sentiency of my life,
the God Who is Experience incarnate,
my Great Effulgence of Grace
in the Hall of Gnosis!
Ah! Ah!

4665. VI.87 accho-patthu 1

In this state of ecstatic experience of the Real, our Swaamikal sings:

What shall I say of the good karma done by me?
The Great Gem, a Product of the etherial region,
which has now come down in the Hall in Thillai,
I have It in my grasp
and have gained the noble life
(of jeevanmukthahood);
I stand here with my fleshly body
transformed into a form of light;
I have eaten of the honey-laden ambrosia;

I have beheld the holy Reality!

4765.VI.88 anubhava-nilai 1

Oh Great Effulgence of Grace!
Oh Great Effulgence of Grace
Who, blending with my dear soul, dance therein!
Oh Great Effulgence of Grace,
Who, blending with my love, shine as wisdom in me!
Oh Great Effulgence of Grace,
Who, becoming ambrosia of great limpidity,
are close to me in my interior,
Your love alone fills my interior!

* * * *

I beheld the Great Effulgence of Grace;
beholding It with my eyes, I rejoiced;
dancing the dance of bliss
that comes of experiencing Civan, the Godhead,
and dedicating to the Lord
of the sacred Hall of Gnosis
my service in this world,
I have eaten of the ambrosia of joy!
My soul thrives and soars aloft
to the great delight of my mind!

4683, 4687.VI.89 arut-perum-jothi-adaivu 1, 5

Grace He bestowed on me,
He bestowed love,
the Lord of the Etherial Shrine!
He bestowed the Reality on me,
He blended with me,
clarity He gave me!
Without carrying out any test (of my fitness),
He enslaved me!
Ah I Who, indeed, is to me like Him?

4696.VI.90 adimai-p-peru 1

Oh omnipotent Lord!
Oh You Who are more good to me
than the mother who bore me!
Oh Life of true gnosis gained by blissful seers!
Showing me the creed of non-killing,
and taking notice of me,
You put up with my evil nature!
Hallowed be Your golden feet!

4712. VI.91 ulappil-inbam 5

In this state of exultant rejoicing, our Swaamikal surrenders himself body and soul to the Godhead. He rededicates himself thus:

I swear, I swear by You,
Oh my Great Effulgence of Grace,
the Enslaver!
Oh Lord of the sacred etherial shrine!
Note this:
Abandoning my sense of shame, I say:
“Oh my Husband! I will not desert You
Who are the King of everything!
I give unto You my body, my soul,
and possessions!
Do not, in future, complain about me!
Am I not the infant
whom You took up in Your arms from the cradle,
Oh Lord Who woke me up from sleep
and bestowed true bliss on me!

* * * *

Like the people of the world,
I will not take up a drum
and proclaim to all the world;
but I swear in the beloved holy presence
of You my Spouse,
Who, it is said, is an Adept in legerdemain.
With the heavens and all the rest of the world as witness,
I have given all to Yourself
my body etcetera.
Do what You like with them,
Oh Lord Who woke me up from sleep,
and bestowed true bliss on me!

4717,4719. VI.92 mei-inba-p-peru 2, 4

The reader would have noticed even in the songs reproduced so far in this chapter a remarkable absence of agitation, anxiety, doubt, despair, despondency, All these have been left behind for ever. There is about these decads a serenity, a sense of contentment, a sense of achievement without the usual accompanying pride, a sense of bliss everlasting. The songs of the 93rd decad bear testimony to this. He sings:

Infatuated with delusive things,
people dissipate their time on earth
in ephemeral living, in procreating,
having fixed their desire on fetid flesh.
While they dissipate so,
I have fixed my desire on Your feet,

and You too have set me by Your side
in dreaming and in waking hours too!
This is enough for me.
The virtue I have accrued in the past
has borne fruit!

* * * *

I have sloughed off my difficulties,
I have forsaken worries,
perturbations I have finished with,
the Law of Birth (and death) I have torn to pieces,
sleep I have abandoned,
death and disease I have left behind,
servitude to God have I gained.
Moreover, I bear a title called,
“The true dear Son of Him
Who owns the Hall of Gnosis”.
This is enough for me.
The virtuous deeds I have done in the past
have borne fruit!

4727, 4736. VI.93 civa-punniya-p-peru 1, 10

The Thirukkural says:

Take up attachment to Him without attachment,
hold on to that attachment in order to leave attachments.

Our Swaamikal does exactly that. He sings:

I learnt the lesson of the Hall of Gnosis;
Having learnt that, I arrived at the Path of Mercy,
I gained a radiant form
which flourishes for ever without dying,
I have gained a high state,
I will not take up any other state in this world,
I will remain steadfast in the conviction
that attachment to the Bliss that is Civan
is the attachment befitting me!

4746. VI.94 civaanandha-p-patru 10

Out of the supreme confidence arising from taking up attachment to the Bliss that is Civan, our Swaamikal confidently declares that he will no longer suffer misery. He, moreover, declares: “I have become You”—‘naan thaana anene’. ‘Naan’ means ‘I’, ‘thaana’ stands for God in Tamil devotional literature; ‘anene’ means ‘became’.

Suffer misery, I will not,
not the least misery will I suffer,

nor will I feel any fear any more,
 I have grasped Your twin feet,
 I will not let go of them!
 Note that I will not be deceived!
 I swear this by You,
 I, Your slave, will not go wrong,
 neither will I listen to others' words.
 I will not plant in my mind
 anything other than You
 Who are the scintillating Light,
 the Light that performs a dance
 in the Etherial Shrine!
 I will not die;
 (for) by Your sacred grace
 I have become You!

4747.VI.95 irai elimaiyai viyatthal 1

We are reminded here of Thomas Merton's words: "God living in God" which have been quoted more than once in this book. The meaning of the title of this decad is, 'Amazement at the Affability of God'. Accordingly, the last four stanzas of this decad give expression to this amazement. Our Swaamikal sings:

I said:
 "Oh Lord with the indulgent look!
 Oh Great Sea of Mercy!
 You had taken my measure,
 You understood my pleas,
 and, delighted with them,
 You came that day and gave me an assurance.
 (Therefore, now),
 with men of wisdom and learning praising You,
 arise on the blossom which is my heart,
 and, to the delight of the Dame on Your left,
 to the delight of the great world,
 to the delight of the men in bondage
 and of the men who have gained deliverance therefrom,
 perform the leelaa (divine sport)
 of the ether-dwelling Effulgence of Grace
 while devotees stand around and praise You".
 Before I could finish saying this,
 You hurried forward and acceded to my request!

* * * * *

One day in the past,
 this meanest of mean fellows
 stood weary and weeping
 to one side of the gateway
 to the Etherial Shrine
 intent on gaining Your grace.
 I said to You:

“I kept remembering the gracious words (of promise)
 spoken by You with a smiling face
 as the fruit of the great *thavam*
 performed by me in the past.
 And I rejoiced many days
 awaiting that red-letter day,
 and my mind blossomed with hope.
 That bliss-abounding day is today,
 therefore, do bestow Your grace!”
 Before I had finished saying this,
 You bestowed it on me!
 Your love is, indeed, the greatest in the world!

4753, 4756.VI.95 irai ehmaiya viyatthal 7, 10

In the next two decads our Swaamikal reminisces with gratitude on past acts of grace of the Lord. He sings:

Oh my Enslaver!
 Oh my King Who approached me, a youngster—
 who, untying the cloth wound round the waist,
 and spreading it on the ground,
 had laid myself down thereon in loneliness,
 perplexed in mind with thinking of unthinkable things,
 and had dozed off—
 and, saying: “Oh My son, why do you fear?”,
 solicitously took me up in Your sacred arms
 and, carrying me to another place,
 set me down there and laughed at me!
 Oh Crown-jewel of my mind
 Who, wearing the garland of words strung by me,
 execute in my mind the pure dance!

* * * * *

Oh my Monseigneur
 Who enslaved me by subdueing the excited gambols
 of the monkey called my mind
 which frisked about,
 to the amazement of even the monkey of the woods,
 refusing to stop doing so
 even though I controlled my studies,
 controlled my listening to conversations
 thoroughly giving up my attachment to them,
 controlled my looking about (at things in the world),
 controlled my physical contacts altogether
 (with human beings and things),
 controlled my established taste for food,
 controlled all my taste for fragrant smell,
 controlled myself by giving up
 all the falsehoods called caste, creed, and religion,
 and controlled my laziness!

Oh Crown-jewel of my mind
Who execute the pure dance in my mind!

4762, 4764. VI.96 thirunata-p-pukazhchi 6, 8

In the next decad, too, our Swaamikal continues his reminiscing on the extraordinary grace of God bestowed on him and adores Him for the same in gratitude. He sings:

Fear-ridden and without taking food
I lay there in one corner
and, with mind tossing about
worse than a fluff of cotton (in the wind),
had closed my eyes in sleep.
With great love You came there
and, lifting me up,
set me down in another place
and gave me food !

What *thavam* have I, indeed, performed!

* * * * *

Did I indeed perform *thavam*,
was it I who rejoiced,
was it I who ate of the honey-like ambrosia
to point of surfeit?

My very flesh became radiant.
My Owner lifted me up very tenderly
and hugged me to His bosom!

* * * * *

Hallowed be the palms
which lifted me up and placed me elsewhere!
Hallowed be the omnipotent Hall of Gems!
Hallowed be the dance!
Hallowed be the Effulgence of Grace!
Hallowed be Natarayan!
Hallowed be the Gnosis of Bliss!

4774, 4775, 4776. VI.97 thiruvarut-peru 8, 9, 10

Joy, jubilation, exultation, ecstasy, characterise all the 62 decads of this last section of the Sixth Book which we are now considering. They abound in grateful references to several acts of special grace, various kinds of them, of varying significance and importance. All the stanzas of the 99th decad refer to only one act of grace, an act of grace of the highest significance, a boon unparalleled in the experience of the mystics in any country of the world, in any period of the world's history. That boon is the privilege of discharging the five functions of God, namely, creation, sustenance, destruction, withholding knowledge, and bestowing grace (*mukthi*). I have said before and I repeat that all the systems of Philosophy in India and elsewhere hold these powers to be the sole prerogative of God, powers which cannot be, have not been, and are not delegated to a human being. Yet our Swaamikal, who has made passing references to this boon in some of the previous decads, now devotes an entire decad of ten stanzas to the subject.

I have said before, and I repeat that I do not understand this; and those scholars whom I have consulted on this matter have not been able to throw light on this problem. Simply because I cannot understand this claim of our Swaamikal or because scholars cannot throw light on it, or because Systems of Philosophy hold that these functions are undelegatable prerogatives of God, we cannot rashly come to the conclusion that our Swaamikal's claim is untenable, or is the result of a deluded mind or is false. Dr. A. G. Krishna Warriar, from whose book, 'The Concept of Mukti in Advaita Vedaanta' a large extract has been reproduced in the last chapter, says with reference to those who have gained krama-mukthi, that is, deliverance by stages:

“Great as are their powers, they cannot exercise the cosmic functions of Kaarya-Brahman or Iswara”.

In support of this assertion, Dr. Warriar cites verse 17 of chapter 4 of Section IV of the Brahma-sutra. This verse and Sankara's commentary thereto deserve to be quoted here. I quote from the translation of the Baashyam by Swaami Gambiraananda (a publication of Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta).

Topic 7: Acquisition of Divine Powers

Doubt: Do these people, who attain union with God, while still having minds¹⁶⁴ acquire unlimited or limited divine powers, as a result of meditation on the qualified Brahman?¹⁶⁵ What should be the conclusion?

¹⁶⁴ Our Swaamikal is such a person.

¹⁶⁵ Our Swaamikal is speaking of the qualified Brahman only in the 99th decad of Book VI and, for that matter, in any decad where conferring of powers, grace, etc. is spoken of. For the unqualified Brahman does not deal with the soul at those levels.

Opponent: Their divine power should be without any limitation, as is obvious from the Upanishadic texts, “He himself gets independent sovereignty” (Tai. I, vi.2), “All the gods carry presents to him” (Tai. I, v.3), “They get freedom of movement in all the worlds” (Ch. VIII. i.6; VII.xxv.2).

Vedaantin: To this the aphorist replies:

17. The released soul gets all the divine powers except that of running the universe (with its creation, continuance, and dissolution), as is known from the context (which deals with God) and from the non-proximity (of the individual soul).

It is proper that barring the power of creation etc., of the universe, the liberated souls should have all the other divine powers like becoming very minute etc. The power of creation etc. of the universe can reasonably belong to God alone who exists eternally.

Why should it be so?

Since God forms the subject-matter of that topic, the ethers being far from being considered there. For the supreme Lord alone has competence for activities concerning (the creation etc., of) the universe, in as much as the fact of creation, etc. is taught in connection with Him alone, and the word “eternal” is attributed to Him. The Upanishads mention that others get the divine powers of becoming atomic in size etc., as a result of research and hankering for knowing Him. Thus they are remotely placed from the activities connected with creation etc., of the universe. Moreover, from the very fact that the liberated souls are equipped with minds, they cannot have any unanimity, so that someone may at one time want the continuance of the universe and someone else its destruction; in this way they may at times be opposed to one another. If then one should seek a reconciliation by making all other wills dependent on one will only, then that reconciler will perforce arrive at the conclusion that all other wills are dependent on God’s will alone.

18. If it is to be held (that the powers of the liberated souls are unlimited owing to direct scriptural declaration, then it is not so, since it is (the attainment) of Him (i.e. God) Who appoints others as lords of the spheres and resides in those spheres that is spoken of (in the Upanishad).

The statement was made earlier that from such direct teaching as “He himself gets independent sovereignty” (Tai. I.v.2), it is but reasonable to conclude that the liberated souls get unfettered divine powers. That has to be refuted. As to that, it is said that this is nothing damaging, “since it is God appointing others to their respective spheres and Himself residing in those spheres that is spoken of” (in the Upanishad). It is declared that this bestowing of independent sovereignty is at the disposal of God who ordains others to be the rulers of particular spheres and who resides in such special abodes as the orb of the sun. It is because of this that a little later the Upanishad says, “He attains the Lord of the mind” (Tai. Lvi.2), which amounts to saying that he attains God who is the Lord of all minds and who is ever present there as a pre-existing reality. It is in line with this that the Upanishad says still later, “He becomes the ruler of speech, the ruler of the eyes, the ruler of ears, the ruler of knowledge” (Ibid). Thus in other places also the texts are to be construed as far as possible to mean that their divine powers are attained at the behest of God alone who exists eternally”.

In view of the above Sutra and its commentary, how are we to explain the claim of our Swaamikal and how are we to reconcile it with the above passages from the Brahma-sutra-bhaashya?

Sankara comes to our help with the 23rd verse of his Civaanandhalahari. He sings:

Oh all-pervading Lord! I worship You!
If, as a fruit of that worship,
You grant me the privilege
of becoming a Brahma or Vishnu,
I shall have to assume the form of a swan
or of a boar to see You again;
and, after failing in that effort

(as I shall have to),
how can I bear the sorrow?
Therefore, grant me, Oh Lord,
without delay, eternal bliss
(of release from bonds of birth and death)!

It comes out from the above verse that in krama-mukthi or padhamukthi, that is, mukthi by stages, a soul can and does become a Brahma or Vishnu, and, perhaps, Rudhran, Sadhaacivam, Maheswaran, etc. If it becomes so, it follows that it exercises the powers of those padhams, i.e. offices. Brahma or Vishnu are not one only or eternal. They are souls promoted to those offices and they hold the offices for a period determined by the merit gained by them in past lives. We may now, without violence to the tenets of the several scriptures and systems of philosophy, interpret the claim of our Swaamikal as referring to these offices and their functions. The power of creation etc., is God's alone but He has office-bearers to whom He delegates these powers and who exercise them at His sweet will and pleasure. We may take it that our Swaamikal refers to the occasions on which he held these several offices in earlier births. Let us conclude this long interpretation with a stanza from the decad which gave rise to this dissertation. Our Swaamikal sings:

You gave me the work
performed by the Five,
Brahmaa and others;
You were pleased to give me
the sacred ambrosia of the eminent Effulgence of Grace,
and, placing me in the midst of the Assembly
of Your delusion-free devotees,
You bring me up,
Oh Lord Who dance on the Hall of Gnosis!

4799.VI.99 thiruvart-kodai 3

The 100th decad is once again a decad of gratitude. He sings:

You designated me as Your son;
having so designated me,
You gave me a place in Your mind,
and in me You established Yourself.
The dance on the Hall of Gnosis,
and the dance on the Golden Hall,
which shines like a rising sun,
both, at the same time,
You made audible to me,
and You displayed to me the dance
that I may gain immortality and bliss!
* * * * *

Oh Lord high above!
Oh Lord of blossomy feet
which perform the dance
in the Etherial Shrine!

Oh Lord with fire in Your hand!
Oh Lord with an eye on the forehead!
Oh Lord Who have on one side of You
Civakaamasundaravalli
Whom Vishnu adores!
Oh Lord of the magnanimity
by which You made me Your son!

4808, 4812. VI. 100 anubhava-siddhi 2, 6

We have heard frequently of the golden form bestowed on our Swaamikal; it has been discussed and debated upon elaborately in the third chapter of this book. I refrain, therefore, from reproducing any stanza from the 101st decad which, though it bears the title, 'The Boon of the Golden Form' has only one stanza, the 15th, in which the phrase 'pon vadivam', 'golden form' occurs.

We heard our Swaamikal declare in the 100th decad (stanza 2 quoted above) that the Lord designated him as His son. With that blessing fresh in his memory, our Swaamikal admonishes his mind to behave properly or bear the consequences. The mind goes under four names in Indian philosophy, namely, mind, intellect, will, and I-ness. These four are called collectively antahkaranam, interior instruments of knowing. The mind receives the picture or impression of a thing or happening, the intellect examines it, the will determines what it is, I-ness appropriates the knowledge. Our Swaamikal addresses all these four aspects of the mind in the 102nd decad. He sings:

You know that there is One
Who is the Lord of the great grace that confers mukthi,
Who is the Lord of the Hall of Gnosis,
Who is an omnipotent unique chief Architect,
Who has everything,
Who is the Great Effulgence of Grace
Which soars aloft
with form, without form,
with formless form,
and with none of these!
He Himself begot me through His greatness!
All great men know that I alone am His son.
Oh darkness-ridden Thattwaa-s,
Don't you know me?
All your antics won't cut any ice here!
* * * * *
Oh idiot of a demoniacal monkey
called my mind!
Beware that you do not try to scare me,
taking me to be like other people!
If you would amicably abide as I say,
fare you well!
But if you will not abide as I say,
I will not allow you to exercise

even an iota of your power!
With the world laughing at you,
I will subdue you by the grace of God
in an instant;
don't you know me truly?
Whom did you take me for?
I am the godly son
of the Lord of the Assembly of Gnosis!

4834, 4835.VI.102 thatthava-vetri 1, 2

Maan or prakrithi maayai, maayai, maamaayai, and thirothaayee, i.e. all the factors which, according to Caiva-siddhaantha, contribute to a soul being embodied and being born on earth, are threatened similarly with dire consequences unless they cease bothering him. For, as a jeewanmuktha, our Swaamikal has transcended birth and death. Sleep, fear, anger, hunger and death itself are similarly challenged and, so to say, exorcised, for is he not the Son of God! Addressing Death, he sings:

Oh great thieving great sinner of a fellow called Death!
Crossing the earth and the heavens
and other regions,
and crossing the great dark vast territory
which envelops all the above like an armor,
perish without leaving any trace of even your essence!
If you stay here another moment,
I will kill you in a sanguinary manner.
This, indeed, is the gracious command
of Him Who owns me.
I exorcise you in the name of my Guru;
run, leaving me who am well protected!
Take note, I, indeed, am the Son
who have apprehended
the Lord of the Great Effulgence of Grace!

4853. VI. 102 thatthava-vetri 20

The title of the decad from which the above poem has been quoted is 'thatthava-vetri', 'Victory over the thathhva-s', the thathhwa-s being the 24 components of which the human body is composed. These are, the matrices of the five elements, the five elements themselves, such as, earth, water, fire, wind, and ether, the five organs of perception such as the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and skin, the five organs of action, such as, the genital organs, hands, feet, anus and mouth, the four instruments of knowing, such as, mind, intellect, will, and I-ness. Though our Swaamikal reproves the last four only in the 102nd decad, we must assume that he reproved all the rest and brought them under his sway. Just as though Thiruvalluvar's maxim,

The world is intelligible only to him
who researches into the ways of the five—
taste, vision, touch, sound and smell",

speaks of the five thatthwa-s only, yet it is to be assumed to include all the other nineteen as well. With this conquest over the thatthwa-s, our Swaamikal is ready for the mystical marriage of the soul with the Godhead, of which he sings in the next decad.

“Since there is a time limit
of two and a half naazhikai-s (sixty minutes),
Oh Son, do not make yourself miserable with thinking,
but go and get shaved,
and, donning beautiful clothes,
do kindly show by your appearance
the indication that you are Our Son.”
Thus, my Father on the Hall of colorful Gems
graciously said with delight!

* * * * *

“Oh my Son,
We shall with great pleasure marry you
to the Light of Grace, the divine Damsel,
within the next two and a half naazhikai-s;
unstealthily, with all the world as witness,
go and dress yourself quickly
in the auspicious manner with gushing joy;
I have said this publicly.”
Thus said my Lord, the true Being
Who is seated resplendently in the Hall.

4854, 4859.VI.103 peradaivu 1, 6

Students of the Thirutthondar Puraanam, more well known as the Periya Puraanam, the hagiography of the saints of Tamilnaadu, will recollect that the wedding day of Thirugnaanasambandar was also the day of his deliverance, his liberation from the bonds of birth and death. We will see towards the end of the next chapter that this was the case with Raamalinga Swaamikal too. We will see in the decads which follow, the decads from the 104th to the 144th, the last in the Thiruvarutpaa, that they are sung in a state of blissful anticipation of the day of the mystic marriage, the day of final deliverance from the bondage of birth and death, in anticipation of the day of vidhehamukthi, the day of the release from the “attenuated shell of the differentiated ego”, the day of gaining the famed ‘maranamilaa-peru-vaazhvu’, the deathless great life, the day of gaining amritvam. In a similar context, Maanikkavaachakar prefaces his last stage of the journey to the Godhead with a decad of ‘taking refuge in God’. Our Swaamikal too takes refuge in God. The sub-title of Maanikkavaachakar’s decad is ‘Ripeness for Deliverance’. I note that I have concluded my note on this sub-title thus:¹⁶⁶ “We should not forget that this ripeness is for nothing less than eternally merging in the Godhead.” Our Swaamikal sings:

Oh Honey!
Oh Ambrosia!
Oh Civan in the Hall of Gnosis!
Oh Light Who have entered the flesh
of those who perform *thavam*!

Oh true Experience! Oh Ether!
Oh Lord Who transform me into Yourself!
Oh King!
Oh omnipotent Lord!
Oh Sire!
Oh Mother! Oh my Father!
I am Your protege!

4866.VI.104 adaikkalam pukuthal 3

“The Lord Comes, The Lord Comes”, announces the Swaamikal to his mind in the next decad. The last lines of several of the stanzas of the decads which follow lend support to my surmise that the last

¹⁶⁶ in my book, *‘Pathway to God through Tamil Literature*, ‘(i) through the Thiruvaachakam’.

38 decads of the Thiruvartupaa (from the 104th decad of the Sixth Book onwards) are sung in eager anticipation of the day of final deliverance. Our Swaamikal sings:

This, indeed, is the moment of our Father’s coming,
note that there is no doubt about it;
fear not, fear not;
tell that this is the truth
to all those in the world
that they may be relieved of their weariness.
Not an iota of blemish will attach itself to your words,
(for) this is the command of my Lord!
Delighting in the form
of perfect great light of holy grace,
it is certain that we will raise the dead,
with every creature, whoever they are,
in this world, in the heavens,
and in regions beyond the heavens
adoring us;
do realize this, Oh my mind!

* * * * *

I am telling you just as it is,
know this as a true statement.
Oh my mind,
that all the world may know,
state categorically
that this is the moment
of the munificent Lord’s coming,
that this, indeed, is the moment.
Broadcast this;
do not have even the least confusion about this.
This is the intimation of my Guru,
the Lord of the Effulgence of Grace.

Don't think that this is my intimation.
 Do not procrastinate, saying:
 "I will announce this tomorrow in the world."
 (For) from tomorrow onwards
 it is unceasing bliss of the dance of gnosis!
 The unique Chief,
 the Omnipotent Adept,
 the Chief of the Assembly of Gnosis,
 with Him abiding all by Himself in my mind
 and instructing me,
 I, understanding the same with a ripened mind,
 am now informing you;
 don't think that this is a tale,
 know that this is an utterance of the truth.
 I swear by the sweet Great Effulgence of Grace,
 this is the moment of the coming of the Lord,
 this is the truth.
 Proclaim this today itself
 that the trembling people of this world
 may know this and may be redeemed.
 Tomorrow is the festival
 of grace-filled transcendent joy!

4875, 4880, 4884.VI.105 irai varavi iyambal 1, 6, 10

In this state of elation, our Swaamikal sings the next decad, 'The Decad of Auspicious Rising from Bed'. Maanikkavaachakar has a similar decad in his Thiruvaachakam. It is significant that this decad comes after the 'kuyil-patthu' and the 'Thirutthasaangam'. In the first of these two decads, the Kuyil, love-lorn maid's winged messenger, is asked to go and invite the Lord to come. One of the songs is:

Oh Kuyil small that does frequent
 the grove with honey-sweet-fruit!
 Do listen to this!
 The bounteous Lord Who, spurning the heavens,
 entered the earth and made man His own,
 the only One Who, disregarding the flesh,
 entered my heart and my sentient life became,
 the Bridegroom of Her
 Who won Him with gentle eyes that excel the fawn's,
 do bid Him come hither!

Thiruvaachakam, decad 18, stanza 4

Invited by the kuyil, the Lord comes in all His pomp and glory. The parrot, the pet of the love-lorn maiden is the herald who announces Him, proclaiming one by one His ten distinguishing insignia such as His name, His country, His capital city, the principal river of His country, the mountain of His country, His steed, His weapon, His drum, His garland, and His flag.

The decad called Thiruppalliezhuchchi now follows. Let me quote what I wrote in my book, 'Pathway to God through Tamil Literature, (i) through the Thiruvaachakam' in interpretation of this decad. I wrote:

He Is Risen In Me

"Aldous Huxley quotes in his 'Perennial Philosophy' the following extracts:

'Goodness (God) needeth not to enter the soul, for it is there already ; only it is unperceived.'

'The Theologica Germanica'

'When the ten thousand things are viewed in their oneness, we return to the Origin and remain where we have always been'.

Sen T'sen

and proceeds to explain as follows:

'It is because we don't know who we are, because we are unaware that the Kingdom of Heaven is within us, that we behave in the.... ways that are so characteristically human. We are saved, we are liberated, enlightened by perceiving the hitherto unperceived good (God) that is already within us, by returning to our eternal Ground and remaining where, without knowing it, we have always been.'

"Immediately on the advent of her Beloved, the Lord's bride experiences this same revelation which Aldous Huxley speaksof, and communicates it to her people. Of Him, Whom she could describe so far in vague phrases only, such as 'the flavor of the fruit', or 'ambrosia', or, 'lo, it is difficult to apprehend', or 'Oh, it is so simple', or 'even the immortals know it not', she could now, with assurance, affirm 'This is He, this is His beautiful form'. She has realized in herself the truth of the doctrine, 'tat twam asi', 'That thou art'. She has gained the unitive knowledge of the divine Ground."

Commenting further on the same decad of Maanikkavaachakar, I said on another page of my book:

"The esoteric meaning of this decad has been given on pages 67, 68 under the title, "He is Arisen in Me". If ever any further elucidation is required, the subtitle to the decad supplies it. It is 'thirothaana suddhi', meaning literally, 'Concealment, purification of'. Sri M. V. Nellaiappa Pillai explains thirothaanam as an act of Grace of God by which He hides Reality from the soul so that it can gain the experiences provided by good and bad karma in the world. When the soul is mature enough, God withdraws the veil concealing Reality.....This decad beings the bride to the threshold of the nuptial chamber."

Let us turn back to our Swaamikal's decad, 'Thiruppalliezhuchchi.' We note the remarkable coincidence with a similar decad of Maanikkavaachakar. Just like that decad, this too follows the decad of 'The Lord's Coming'. It is not necessary to labor the point that the God-Without has become the God-Within, in the most esoteric manner ever possible in God-realization. It is in this context that the following song from this decad should be understood. Our Swaamikal sings:

The day has dawned,
the delicate lotus called my heart has blossomed,
golden light has flooded everywhere;
I stand before You paying obeisance to You;
You should tell me all the work I should do.
Oh my mighty true Guru,
Oh primeval One,
Whom all the Agama-s and the Veda-s
declare as the Whole!
Oh rare Great Effulgence of Grace
impossible to portray!
Oh my Father!
Do graciously rise (in the lotus that is my heart)!

4885. VI.106 thiruppalliezhuchchi 1

God has heard the petition. He has risen in the heart of our Swaamikal. The joy of our Swaamikal cannot be restrained. He jumps with joy and sings:

Saying:
"The night is past,
the twin feet have been gained,
I praised them in song and rejoiced!"
bounce for joy!
Saying:
"I fed on the ambrosia of milk!"
bounce for joy!

Let us take note of the words, "I fed on the ambrosia of milk". What is this ambrosia of milk? It is no other than the milk that confers gnosis, the same milk on which Saint Thirugnaanasambandhar was fed by the Mother of the Universe, the same milk that gave him his name - Gnaanasambandhan, he who has gained contact with gnosis. That this ambrosial milk is the milk that confers gnosis will be evident from the various blessings which our Swaamikal declares that he has gained. One of those blessings is 'dawning of gnosis' in his mind. We will see all this from the remaining stanzas of this decad which are reproduced below. Our Swaamikal continues:

Saying:
"The day has dawned,
the golden feet I gained,
them I adored and rejoiced",
bounce for joy!
Saying:

“I became immaculate”,
bounce for joy!
* * * *

Saying:
“Sleep has vanished,
the sun has appeared,
I am rid of the aching (of the heart”),
bounce for joy!

Saying:
“I fed on the sweet ambrosia”,
bounce for joy!
* * * *

Saying:
“Misery has been got rid of,
sleep has vanished,
bliss I have gained”,
bounce for joy!

Saying:
“My ambition has borne fruit”,
bounce for joy!
* * * *

Saying:
“Gnosis has dawned,
the Onkaara is sounding,
I am rid of my grievance”,
bounce for joy!

Saying:
“I beheld the Hall of Gnosis”,
bounce for joy!
* * * *

Saying:
“The curtain has fallen,
the red flame has appeared,
the light of Sakthi is moving up”,
bounce for joy!

Saying:
“My pooja (worship) has borne fruit”,
bounce for joy!
* * * *

Saying:
“The inner darkness has been dispelled,
the inner light in me is mounting up,
I ate of the limpid ambrosia”,
bounce for joy!

Saying:
“I ate it enjoying its sweetness”,
bounce for joy!
* * * *

Saying:
“I saw my Father,

and surmounted all obstacles,
I delighted in my mind”,
bounce for joy!

Saying:

“I gained the mystic powers”,
bounce for joy!

* * * *

Saying:

“I met my Father
and got the boon of immortality,
I rejoiced in my mind”,
bounce for joy!

Saying:

“I am skilled in all the mystic powers”,
bounce for joy!

* * * *

Saying:

“Mukthi I gained,
and by that mukthi
I arrived at the FRUITION OF GNOSIS”,
bounce for joy!

Saying:

“I became a Siddhan”,¹⁶⁷
bounce for joy!

4895 to 4904. VI.107 thiruvundhiyaar 1 to 10

¹⁶⁷ Siddhan - a person who has gained his purpose, a realized soul.

I would be insulting the intelligence of my reader if I kept on commenting on all sundry matters occurring profusely in the Thiruvirutpaa. Nevertheless, I would just draw the attention of the reader to the progressively higher and higher, greater and greater blessings which our Swaamikal received as a result of feeding on the ambrosia of milk and which he has described in the above 10 stanzas.

The decads which follow, seventeen of them, from the 108th to the 124th are all sung in a mood of great exultation, I had almost said, in a mood of great frenzy. Wonder, joy, contentment, peace, characterize them. Thus he sings in the 108th decad of the great wonderful things that have happened to him.

Refrain

Wonder, wonder indeed,
wonder of a grace, wonder indeed!

.....

The feet that are gnosis,
the golden feet, their glory alone shines forth,
the festive day
of playing with the mystic powers has dawned;

stone-hard heart of mine has lost its heaviness,
the false scriptures learnt by me
were forgotten in a moment,
wonder, wonder indeed.....

The day when the dead will rise has come,
the Code of Bliss alone has sprung up everywhere,
it has enveloped all the spheres
from this earth to the heavens,
it has given me the boon of deathlessness,
wonder, wonder indeed.....

The perfidious had become afraid,
they had shut their mouths and had gone away,
but again they came and stood at the door,
“Grant us refuge, Oh Sire!”, they said;
the members of Society of the True Path alone have won,
wonder, wonder indeed.....

All those who spoke ill of me behind my back
have become men of straw,
they came again and stood below the golden step;
“We spoke loveless words,
what shall we do to atone?” they said;
they became men of mouths which said: “blessed be you!”,
wonder, wonder indeed.....

All the ignorance of caste and creed has ceased,
The Society of the Gnosis of the True Path
is firmly established,
I have learnt on this earth the art of not dying,
effulgence of true grace has come into my mind,
wonder, wonder indeed.....

4905, 4906, 4910, 4911, 4913. VI.108 arul arbhutham 1, 2, 5, 6, 8

In 32 stanzas of jubilant verse our Swaamikal describes in the next decad a vision he saw in the Hall of first quality Gold. The stanzas end with the refrain:

The sights I saw in the Hall of prime Gold
are wonderful sights, Oh mother,
wonderful sights are they!

He goes on to describe in detail the sights he saw. I omit the repetitions and refrains and give, in his own words of course, the details of the sights which met his eyes. The refrains are evidence of the irrepressible joy bubbling in his heart. He says:

There appeared a mountain of effulgence
and on that was a street.

I went along that street and in its centre there was a platform.	2
I climbed on to that platform and on that platform there was a hall.	3
When I approached the hall, on top of that hall I saw a seven storeyed tower.	4
What shall I say of the wonders that were on the seven storeys?	5
On top of the seven storeys there was a golden pillar.	13
When I beheld the pillar and climbed on it what shall I say of the novelties I saw!	14
It is not within my capacity to describe what met me as I climbed on.	15
At the several stages, Sakthi-s in thousands and thousands came.	16
They came and tried to bewitch me, but that I may not be bewitched, I gained a power of grace.	17
By that power I climbed up that pillar and spied the jewelled crest.	18
On top of the crest there stood a dome, that I saw.	19
On top of that dome there was a temple of one thousand and eight carat gold.	20
On seeing the temple, I went unhesitatingly inside the portal in the tower.	21
At the portal in the tower, there were Sakthi-s and Saakthaa-s in crores.	22
Their hues were white, red, and scarlet.	23
There, all of them asked, "Who is this man?", but I went past them.	24
I went past them,	

and there, at a sacred doorway, were five persons.	25
With them showing me the way, I went to a jewelled doorway farther up.	26
At that doorway, which I remember well, there stood two, a man and a woman.	27
With them pointing it out to me, I beheld with love welling up in me the private sacred entrance (which leads to the sacred presence of Lord Civan).	28
At that sacred door, stood Aanandhavalli, my Mother.	29
I beheld the Mother, Her grace I received, and ambrosia I partook of.	30
By Her grace which held me up, I saw the presence of Nataraajar; Oh mother, I saw the presence of Nataraajar!	31
The boon I received on going into His presence, God knows it, Oh mother, God knows it. ¹⁶⁸	32
In the Hall of prime Gold, the sights I saw, wonderful sights they are, Oh mother, wonderful sights they are.	33

(extracts from decad 109 of Book VI)

With the memory of those sights green in her mind, with the boon, which God alone knows, in her possession, the Bride of the Lord invites her companion to a game played with balls.

¹⁶⁸ Note the subtle distinction introduced here by the words “God knows it”. By this phrase, God is distinguished from the Godhead, who, here, is Nataraajar.

Play the ball, play the ball,
play the ball, play the ball.

is the refrain of the stanzas of the 111th decad. East, West, South, North, in every direction she strikes her ball and sings:

Blessed be you, Oh my companion,
 listen to my word.
 I have gained the boon of not dying.
 I face the pure direction of the East
 where the sun
 of the nature of revolving (round the world) appears.
 For aeons and aeons I shall play the game
 of the noble mystic powers.
 If you too are eager to join the game,
 I swear here on the grace of our King,
 wear the ring on your hand
 and play the ball.
 Witnessing the Great Effulgence of Grace,
 play the ball!

4952. VI.111 pandhaadal 1

In two more stanzas, facing the South and the West, respectively, she asserts that she has gained the boon of never dying, and invites her companion to share the boon. Then facing the North, she sings:

The four Veda-s, the Aagama-s and the Saastra-s,
 all of them are for study by the canaille;
 are they matter for study by us?
 In the sin-absolving Creed, the Creed of the Pure Path,
 I learnt the technique of never dying.
 I have now come to the direction called the North
 where rises the Hall of Gnosis.
 If you too desire never-dying,
 Oh my companion,
 without making this and that excuse,
 play the ball,
 beholding the Great Effulgence of Grace, play the ball!
 * * * * *

By the knowledge that Civan alone matters,
 I have gained the skill to redeem the dead.
 In a state without any comparison,
 in an absolute truth,
 where there is no question of one or two,
 I am established;
 all are performing *thavam* to witness it.
 I invite you as a special favor;
 Don't spurn my invitation, Oh my companion,
 you won't lose by it!
 Play the ball with me,
 witnessing the Great Effulgence of Grace,
 play the ball!

4955, 4959. VI.111 pandhaadal 5, 8

In sheer exuberance of joy at her good fortune, our Bride asks in wonderment, “What is the affinity between me and You?”. She sings a century of stanzas on this theme. Such is her amazement. Each stanza is followed by a refrain,

“What kind of an affinity is this affinity
between You and me?
Is this affinity an affinity
which others in the world can gain?”

She sings:

There was a high pillar
with no peer to it here on earth.
As I shinned up and up the pillar,
it tapered to the size of a thread.
When I faltered to go further up,
and was perturbed and grieved,
ridding me of my perturbation,
You lifted me up and placed me on high,
that I may be well established (atop that pillar)!
What kind of an affinity....
* * * * *
Are not my body, soul, and possessions (already) Yours?
Should I tell You today, “Please receive these”?
I think of the skill with which You enslaved me
In my early years.
On thinking of it, tears well up in my eyes,
And drench my body!

What kind of an affinity.....
* * * * *
Oh King! Desire wells up in me to embrace You.
On account of the certainty that I will embrace You,
My life lingers on.
My hand stretches forward in a hurry
To take hold of the fragrant feet.
Whenever my hand reaches it and grasps them,
Joy reigns in my mind!

What kind of an affinity.....
* * * * *
If I forget You, Oh my Father,
Will my soul dwell in the body?
Will my mind ever think about anyone but You?
With what idea did You accept me
When I offered myself to You?
Oh my Father, will You come today
To give Yourself to me?

What kind of an affinity.....
* * * * *
Up a tower seven storeys high
You enbled me to ascend and rejoice,

And You gladly bestowed on me as gifts
 The umbrella, a royal insignia,
 That serves as a canopy,
 And an esteemed apparel
 Which were found on a hill thereon,
 And in addition gave me gems and gold coins!

What kind of an affinity.....

* * * * *

Tightly have I taken hold of Your feet,
 would I ever let them go anymore?
 Would I ever touch anything else
 with the hand which has grasped those feet?
 Death, afraid to approach me,
 has run away in consternation!
 Oh King, Your gracious effulgence of gnosis
 has become mine!

What kind of an affinity.....

* * * * *

Friend and foe have become one to me here,
 the differentiation as one or two
 which I used to blabber about has vanished!
 I am rid of the epilepsy of forgetting and remembering
 which used to contort me!
 Witnessing the dance of transcendent bliss on the Hall,
 bliss wells up in me!

What kind of an affinity.....

4964, 4968, 4970, 4975, 5005, 5020, 5027. VI.112 meyyarul viyappu 1, 5, 7, 12, 42, 57, 64

The Bride concludes this decad of Amazement at the Grace of the Reality thus:

Oh just Effulgence Who forcibly enslaved me!
 Oh immaculate Effulgence Who bring me up to sing You!
 Oh righteous Effulgence Who came and protected me
 like a very mother!
 Oh Effulgence Who bestowed on me omnipotent mystic powers!

What kind of an affinity.....

* * * * *

Oh Effulgence Who taught me the art of not dying!
 Oh Effulgence Who placed on my head
 a crown just like the crown of Yours!
 Oh Effulgence Who raised me to the golden seat
 of one-pointed contemplation!
 Oh Effulgence Who bestowed on me
 rule over mystic powers!

What kind of an affinity.....

* * * * *

Hallowed be the Effulgence
 which shines that all other effulgences¹⁶⁹ may shine!

Hallowed be the Effulgence
Who is established in the middle of the turiya space,
and soars aloft!
May the perfidy-free Effulgence
of the Hall of Gnosis prevail!
May the Effulgence that dances superbly
on the Golden Hall prevail!
What kind of an affinity.....

¹⁶⁹ Other effulgences—the sun, the moon, and fire.

* * * * *

Obeisance to You, the Just Effulgence
of the Pure Blissful True Creed!
Obeisance to the Effulgence in the Hall of Gnosis
Who bestowed on me a life of joy!
Obeisance to the Effulgence
Who dances in the Golden Hall scintillating with purity!
Obeisance to the Effulgence
Who shines that all other effulgences may shine!
What kind of an affinity.....

5060 to 5063. VI.112 meyyarul viyappu 97 to 100

For sheer joy the next decad is unsurpassed. In 90 couplets our Swaamikal adores the King in the Etherial Shrine. One of the couplets, I remember learning when I was five years old. Young and old used to sing this couplet and several others with great gusto. If my memory does not play me false, one of my uncles used to cut capers while singing this song. As a matter of fact, this decad is intended to be sung so. Though this couplet is the third in the decad, this is the couplet with which extracts published in anthologies begin. For that matter, the title of this decad is taken from the commencing phrase of this couplet. We may also head our extract with the same couplet. Translation of this couplet or any other couplet from this decad will kill the very joy of it. Most of the couplets are composed of four invocative phrases. For instance, the couplet I am speaking of means:

Oh King of the Etherial Shrine! Oh rare Medicine!
Oh blissful Honey! Oh Feast of grace!

I shall reproduce in transliteration this couplet and a few others and pass on to the next decad.

ambala-t-thrase! aru marunthe!
aanandha-t-thene! arul virundhe!
pothunata-t-thrase! punniyane!
pulavarelaam pukazh kanniyane!
malai tharu makale! mada mayile!
mathi-muka amuthe! ilangkuyile!
aanandha-k-kodiye! ilam pidiye!
arbutha-t-thene! malai maane!

The first two out of the four couplets quoted above invoke Civan and the other two invoke Sakthi.

civa-civa civa-civa chinmaya thejaa!
civa-sundhara kunchitha nataraajaa!
nataraajan ellarkkum nallavane!
nalla elaam seya vallavane!
sankara civa-civa maadevaa!
engalai aatkola vaa! vaa! vaa!

“Oh Sankara! Oh Civa-Civa! Oh great Lord!
come, come, come to enslave us!”

is the meaning of the last-quoted couplet.

Every child in Tamilnaadu should be taught in its lisping years themselves, the couplets of this decad. We may search far and wide in the devotional literature of any country and any language, but we are unlikely to find such a grand song of adoration of God couched in such simple language that any child who can talk can learn and sing it. And in depth of meaning too this song will remain unsurpassed for ever. When one is young the cadence of the song and its simplicity will captivate the mind of the toddler. As one grows older and older to youth, mature manhood, and doddering old age, the richness of the meaning of this decad will unfold itself revealing new and newer vistas of meaning. These couplets will remain, in the minds of children, like slow-germinating seeds in virgin soil, and grow into a luxurious fruit-bearing tree in the later years of the child's boyhood, youth, manhood, and old age.

The next decad too is a decad of invocation. Sambo-Sankara is its title. We shall sample two of the couplets.

akara-sabhaapathi! cikara-sabhaapathi!
ananga-sabhaapathi! kanaka-sabhaapathi!
makara-sabhaapathi! ukara-sabhaapathi!
varatha-sabhaapathi! saratha-sabhaapathi!
amala-sabhaapathi! abhaya-sabhaapathi!
amutha-sabhaapathi! akila-sabhaapathi!
nimala-sabhaapathi! nipuna-sabhaapathi!
nilaya-sabhaapathi! nipita-sabhaapathi!

5163, 5164. VI. 114 sambo sankara 8, 9

Six more decads of praise, adoration, follow. The first stanza of the last of these decads is a piece of adoration of the Effulgence, the Jothi. It runs:

jothi, jothi, jothi, jothi, suyan—
jothi, jothi, jothi, jothi, paran—
jothi, jothi, jothi, jothi, arut—
jothi, jothi, jothi, jothi civam!

Civan is the Effulgence, the self-generating Effulgence, transcendent Effulgence, Effulgence of Grace. These eight decads are relevant to our purpose in so far as they indicate the joy that fills the mind of our Swaamikal, fills it to overflowing, so fills it that he cannot contain it within himself but must break out in what may be called 'blabbering', 'pithatral' as it is called in Tamil. St. John of the Cross, probably the greatest of Christian Mystics, sings in a similar context:

From today do thou send me now no other messenger,
For they cannot tell me what I wish.
And all those that serve
Relate to me a thousand graces of thee,
and all wound me the more,
And something that they are stammering leaves me dying.

"Stammering", he says, for human beings, and, for that matter, the deva-s and others can but stammer when they attempt to describe the glory of God, for it is ineffable. Our Swaamikal, though a supreme artist in words, can but stammer when it comes to describing the indescribable. Moreover, he is intoxicated, God-intoxicated. The day of his final deliverance is coming nearer and nearer every day, and he bursts out in incoherent song at the very thought of it.

The 121st decad, though one of exultation, catalogues for us the blessings which accrued to our Swaamikal. The decad is called 'Kan-puruva-p-poottu', 'The Lock at the Junction of the two Eyebrows'. It is at this junction that aspirants for the apprehension of the Godhead are instructed to focus their meditation. It is at this junction that the 'aagnyaa-chakram' is situated. It is one of the six centres, the sixth in the series, along which the kundalini, the serpent power rises from the moolaadhaaram, its resting place at a point between the anus and the genital organ, probably somewhere about the region of the prostate gland. Moreover, this 'kan-puruva-p-poottu', the aagnyaa-chakram, is the locale of one of the three 'granthee-s or knots. They are called and situated as follows. The 'brahmagranthi', is situated at the 'moolaadhaaram', the 'vishnu-granthi' is situated at the 'manipoorakam' or the area of the navel, the 'rudhra-granthi' is situated at the junction of the eye-brows. These knots, or locks as our Swaamikal calls them, have to be cut or opened before the kundalini can travel up to the thousand—petalled lotus under the vertex. It is said that, with the opening of the lock at the junction of the eye-brows, an aspirant gains the immediate apprehension of Reality, of the Godhead. The first stanza of this decad announces the opening of the lock at the junction of the eye-brows. The other ten stanzas of the decad itemize the sights our Swaamikal saw and the blessings which followed. Let us hear him itemize them.

The Hall of Gnosis and the Golden Hall became mine,
the deva-s and the Trinity talk only about me.
Why any more degradation in this momentary life?
My birth and misery, all have gone with this day!
My Sire's Reign of Effulgence has become mine,
the Veda-s and the Agama-s talk about me only.
Why any more degradation in this penurious worldly life?
All the misery of my birth has ceased with today!

* * * * * * *

A nice boat in the sea ruled over by God's grace,
 I boarded it and gained the shore,
 and there was a pavilion;
 in the middle of that luminous gem-set pavilion,
 there was a divine gem-set altar;
 immediately on seeing the light of the lamp,
 joy accrued to me!

* * * * *

On the top of Mount Meru there shines a tall pillar.
 On going up that pillar,
 I gained majestic rule over all the world!
 On arriving at its top, many were the sights I saw,
 a regular exhibition it was!
 It is impossible to describe it;
 the Grace of my Father is witness to this!

* * * * *

On top of the Thuriya Mount
 there is an effulgent prosperous country;
 in that country which appeared before my eyes,
 there was the gem-set Hall where my Sire dances.
 Clap your hands in joy saying:
 "If those who have seen the house which is visible there
 look (graciously) on the dead,
 they will get up alive!"

* * * * *

On top of the mountain
 difficult to describe in words,
 in the City of Pure Thuriya,
 is the good (Sama-) Veda-chanting omnipotent Adept!
 Sound the trumpet of victory, saying:
 "When He approaches them, the dead will rise!"

* * * * *

The Hall of Gnosis and the Golden Hall,
 both I have come to know.
 The talk of the adepts and the Jeewan-muktha-s is about me.
 What have I to do any more in this reviling world?
 All the miseries of birth and death have vanished from today!

5259 to 5265.VI.121 kan puruva p poottu 2 to 8

Elated by this spiritual conquest of the Kingdom of God, our Swaamikal orders the
 conches, the oboes, and the drums to be sounded in celebration of victory.

Blow, blow, Oh conch that He will never forsake us!
 Blow, blow, Oh conch that He is the Lord
 of the Golden Hall!
 Blow, blow, Oh conch that He made me give up the unreal!
 Blow, blow, Oh conch that my worship has borne fruit!

* * * * *

Blow, blow, Oh conch that I gave up the unreal

and moved away from it!
Blow, blow, Oh conch that I became a man of merit!
Blow, blow, Oh conch that I stood established
in contact with the Real!
Blow, blow, Oh conch that I beheld the Ether¹⁷⁰ up above

5269, 5284.VI.121 oothu, oothu, sange 1, 16

Play the oboe saying:
“The Lord of the etherial shrine is come!”
Play the oboe saying:
“He is performing miracles!”
“He bestowed on me the best reward!”
Play the oboe saying:
“The state of the apprehension of the Godhead has been gained!”

Play the oboe saying:
“I have raised the flag!”
Play the oboe saying:
“We are dancing!”
Play the oboe saying:
“We beheld the crown and the feet (of God)!”
Play the oboe saying:
“We partook of the ambrosia of grace!”

Play the oboe saying:
“He indeed I became”
Play the oboe saying:
“It is the truth, it is the truth!”

¹⁷⁰ Ether up above—Dr. T. M. P. Mahadevan in his Foreword to a translation of Brahma-sutra Bhaashya of Sri Sankaraachaarya by Swami Gambhiraananda says: “Those passages of the Upanishads where express mention is made of a Brahman or Atman do not present any difficulty. But there are other passages in which other terms are used—terms which do not normally mean Brahman-Atman. In such cases the meaning should be construed from the context. For instance, aakaasa means ether. But in a text where it is stated that all things come out of aakaasa and get resolved into it, the expression aakaasa obviously means Brahman, which is the ground of the universe.” Similarly, in our case too, ‘ether’ should be taken to stand for Brahman, the Godhead. This is what our Swaamikal, as a child of five months, beheld in the temple at Chidambaram.

Play the oboe saying:
“It entered my flesh!”
Play the oboe saying:
“(And my flesh) became luminous!”

5285, 5288, 5290.VI.123 cinnam-pidi 1, 4, 6

Beat the drum, Oh drummer, saying:
 “I became the Effulgence of Grace!”
 Beat the drum, Oh drummer, saying:
 “I gained the Kingship over grace!”
 Beat the drum, Oh drummer, saying:
 “I have given up association with delusion!”
 Beat the drum, Oh drummer, saying:
 “I have done with death!”

5295. VI. 124 murasaraithal 1

None dare doubt the claims of our Swaamikal, for as Dr. Warriar says, “the concept of jeewanmukthi is based on the self-certifying experience of saints and mystics”, and “none may dare question the fact of another's realization of Brahman attested by his own heart”. Much of the claims may, of course, be puzzling, but, considering how much earthly we are, this is not surprising. In all such cases, we should take the claims and statements on implicit faith.

The next decad of 161 stanzas is a collection of odd songs sung on various occasions and collected together in this decad. These songs, as a consequence, do not fit in with the scheme on the basis of which we are tracing our Swaamikal's journey on the Pathway to God. Nevertheless, a few of the songs can be relevantly reproduced here. They fall under two categories. In some of them our Swaamikal records for posterity the great boons and privileges he received at the hands of God. In others, he admonishes unregenerate humanity and invites it to join him in gaining and enjoying the grace of God. He sings:

I said:
 “Oh Bestower of boons!
 do graciously put up with the evils done by me,
 a fellow of paltry wisdom;
 do not get angry;
 liberally bestow on me today, right now,
 the treasure of the Great Effulgence of Grace
 and the rest!”
 * * * * *

Graciously receiving these words in His ears,
 God came and said:
 “Fear not! We have given you today
 the Great Effulgence of Grace;
 rejoice exceedingly well!
 Moreover, we have bestowed on you
 the victory over death too!”
 * * * * *

So saying, He came along and abode in my mind,
 and, moreover, He blended with my soul,
 and doing away with the worldly differentiation
 of saying ‘He’, ‘I’,
 He, the King of Chidambaram,
 performed the divine act of becoming one with me!

5309, 5310, 5311.VI.125 thani-t-thiru alankal 14, 15, 16

The forest I crossed,
the country I reached,
worry I abandoned,
and exceedingly rejoiced!
I entered the state of jeewanmukthahood
and partook of the honeyed ambrosia!
All the fruits of the Agama-s and the Veda-s
I have gained;
I read blissfully the song
on the sacred feet of the Sire
Who is risen in the Etherial Shrine
desirous of performing His dance.
I am yet reading,
I will continue to read,
just as I have been taught (by Him)!

5317. VI. 125 thani-t-thiru alanka122

Saying:
“My body, my soul, my possessions are Yours”,
I willingly gave them into Your keeping
that very day,
I have nothing else with me (today).
Oh my Owner,
not content with putting up
with all the offences committed by this straw-like fellow,
You set me up as Your equal!
Alas, what will I give today
in return for Your magnanimity!

* * * * *

What shall I say, what shall I say,
about this wonder, my kinsmen?
The immaculate Lord
Who executes the holy dance
on the Golden Hall of Gems
blended with my mind like lightning
and abides resplendently there
without parting from me!
He graciously equates in this world
my words with His words of truth!

* * * * *

I became a servitor to the dancing feet,
I gained an undying body;
seated in the midst of
the assembled members of the Society of the True Path,
I fraternize with them;
I sing the fame of the feet of the Lord, my Father,

and singing and singing with love,
I linger there.
I dance a dance of bliss;
all my ambitions are fulfilled.

5443, 5444, 5445. VI.125 thani-t-thiru alankal 148, 149, 150

The sea I crossed, the shore I reached,
the temple I beheld.
The door was opened for me;
all the sights I saw.
Partaking of the ambrosia
of a sanctity beyond dispute,
and coming to know everything
by the light of grace,
I gained a state of immortality,
transformed into a form of gnosis.
My body rejoices, my soul is exhilarated,
all my mind grows flourishingly,
I am filled with the eternal Being, just as It is.
All the harm-warding mystical powers
are in my possession in all their might.
All these are indeed the gracious act
of the Lord dancing on the Hall in Thillai
* * * * *
All the worlds have become mine,
all lives have become my life,
all gnosis has become mine,
all arts have become mine,
all enjoyments have become mine,
all bliss has become mine;
my omnipotent Father of the Hall of Gnosis,
bestowing all these on me,
is now abiding in my mind!

5449, 5451. VI.125 thani-t-thiru alanka1154, 156

Moved by divine compassion, our Swaamikal addresses unregenerate humanity more in terms of pitying sorrow than in anger and invites them to share with him all the blessing he has gained. He sings:

Uprightness you do not know,
tact you do not know,
the state you are in you do not know,
place you do not know,
route you do not know,
the reason for taking birth in this body
you do not know,
the traditions you know not;
are you likely to know

the significance of the Lord dancing
 in the Etherial Shrine
 to the eradication of the delusion by maayai?
 You know how to estrange people,
 you know how to tell canards,
 you know only to commit mistakes,
 you know how to stuff a large quantity of food
 in the cavern of a big stomach;
 odorous curry, carcass-curry, fried food,
 fricassed food, vadai-sauce, rasam,
 these you know to stuff yourself with!
 * * * * * * * * *

You feel hungry (and eat)
 to the delight of ticks, bed-bugs,
 mosquitoes and head-lice!
 For clothing, money, food,
 you wander about, village to village!
 To disease and care you lend your body and mind! Oh fools!
 You will not agree to do the work
 set by good people,
 and feed and clothe yourself
 and praise the Etherial Shrine!
 * * * * * * * * *

I said:
 “You should give me a body
 that will eternally shine
 undestroyed by wind or earth, or sky, or fire,
 or water, or sun,
 or king of death, or disease, or murderous weapons,
 or planets or cruel deeds done by others.”
 He hurried forward and, indeed, gave it tome!
 Don't think lightly of this on account of enmity,
 Oh men of the world!
 Come unto my Father,
 the God of Effulgence of Grace!
 * * * * * * *

The Great Effulgence of Grace
 without beginning, middle or end,
 has blended in the ordained manner with my mind,
 and has filled it.
 I too have become an eternal being!
 Oh men of the world!
 Rescuing you from caste, creed, and religion,
 I shall set you up in the street
 of the True Pure Perfect Creed.
 I have proclaimed the truth,
 come hurrying up!
 * * * * * * *

Oh men who talked disputatiously,
 listen to this one word!

Come and, before your allotted span of life is past,
pay obeisance to the dance at the grace-filled Hall!
Note that without thinking that you spoke ill of Him,
He will take you to His heart!
I am not talking perfidiously,
I am telling this for your good,
on the ground that you are my kin!

5328, 5330, 5450, 5453, 5454. VI.125 thani-t-thiru Ialankal 33, 35, 155, 158, 159

One of the 161 stanzas is addressed to the members of the Sanmaarga Sangam.
Hailing them, our Swaamikal sings:

Oh members of the Association of the True Creed!
I bow down to your feet and proclaim thus;
listen to me with kindness.
Please take me, a person of my own way of life,
as one among you!
Adore our omnipotent God only!
Like men of evil ways,
do not say some excuse
and get confused in your intellect.
I exhort you in His name,
I exhort you in my name,
become subjects here and now
to the one Pure Civan
Who shines as the Whole
and as the true bliss,
and as the way unto Him,
and know Him!

5452. VI. 125 thani-t-thiru alankal 157

The title of the 128th decad is “Relating What Happened (to me)”. He sings:

Rid am I of misery!
I have abandoned all fears
which are now on the run!
All obstacles have I surmounted!
I am rid of the weariness of death!
I have crossed the sea of birth!
I spoke slightingly of it!
I forgot the song of the Hall of Gnosis
which was ever on my lips!
I woke up in the transcendently transcendental region!
I hasten to sport according to my fancy!

5481. VI. 128 uttrathu uraitthal 5

The line “I forgot the song of the Hall of Gnosis” recalls to my memory Maanikkavaachakar's song, `Thiruppadaiaatchi' wherein he declares:

“I will not worship the blossom feet
not known by even the heavenly ones.”

When duality has ceased to exist, these otherwise praiseworthy acts also cease.

Our Swaamikal continues:

Hurriedly, hurriedly, I crossed the steps,
and high up there, in amazement,
I partook of the ambrosial milk.
With my mind dissolving, dissolving and melting,
with tears welling up,
with thoughts blossoming into fulfillment,
and the fragrance of gnosis rising up
and pervading everywhere,
I beheld the King of the Hall of Gems,
and shone resplendently
with my body of aged and wrinkled skin
turned into a golden body!

* * * * *

I gained eternal immortality.
Abandoning differentiation,
God came to me and blended with me,
I reached out to Him and blended with Him.
We became one!
How great, indeed, is the *thavam* performed by me!
Whoever has performed like it?
Oh men of the world,
may all of you partake of the sweet ambrosia
and be blessed, be blessed,
freed from misery!

5482, 5486. VI. 128 uttrathu uraitthal 6, 10

We should remember that our Swaamikal is singing these songs and those that follow at a stage nearer videhamukthi than jeewanmukthi. The days allotted by praarabdha karma are fast coming to a close, and the fewer they become the more intensely advaitic are the songs which flow from the heart of our Swaamikal. Thus, he sings the 129th decad called, “Suddha civanilai”, “Pure State of Bliss”, or “The State of Being Pure Civan”. Our Swaamikal is no more Raamalingam, but Civan Himself. Maamkkavaachakar bears testimony to the utter truthfulness of this experience when he sings:

“Our I-ness perished and we became Civan Himself!”

Thiruvaachakam, d. II.v.4

Our Swaamikal sings:

With my eye He blended, with my mind He blended,
with my thoughts He is ever blended,
with my songs He blended, with my soul He blended,
He blended with all these along with Mercy, (the Mother)!

5487.V1.129 suddha civa-nilai 1

It is significant that our Swaamikal states that the Lord blended with him along with Mercy. This is how it is. Maanikkavaachakar too bears testimony to this when he sings:

“Behold simultaneously Her and Him!”

Thiruvaachakam, d. 3, line 65

Our Swaamikal continues:

Mother Thirodhai¹⁷¹ moved away,
and Sakthi of Grace, in love with me, reached me.
In this life itself, I have parted company with maamaayai.
My body has become golden hued,
and never-dying state has accrued to me!
* * * * *
Did I, indeed, perform *thavam*,
Oh men of the world?
The Lord of the Etherial Shrine
came of His own accord and enslaved me!
My flesh He entered,
my heart He entered,
into my soul He entered,
thus showing mercy to me!

¹⁷¹ Mother Thirodhai—The Sakthi of Lethe. She makes the soul forget its past and the Godhead so that it may perform karma and be released from the taint of *aanavam*, ignorance.

5497, 5498.VI.129 suddha civa-nilai 11, 12

Compare the above with Maanikkavaachakar's song and we will note how unanimous is the experience of mystics. He sings:

Did I, indeed, perform *thavam*
and ci-vaa-ya-na-ma gained to chant?
Civan, the mighty Lord,
Who tastes sweet like honey and delicious ambrosia,
of His own accord He came and entered my heart,
and to me, His slave, did the gracious favor

of impelling me
to castigate my carnal life and hate it!

Thiruvaachakam, d. 38.1. 10

Our Swaamikal continues:

I realised that Civam alone is;
realising so, I stood established in that faith
and gained the state of true gnosis!
And right well I obtained all the mystic powers,
the fruits of the devotion to the Dancer
in the sacred Etherial Shrine!

5499.VI.129 suddha civa-nilai 12

In this decad of 47 stanzas our Swaamikal reveals the most privileged relationship between him and the Lord. One is tempted to reproduce a dozen or two of these stanzas. He sings:

I think, and all my thoughts, He fulfils;
I compose; making me compose,
He sings (dwelling in me);
I eat; He gives me limpid ambrosia
that my mind may become clear (of doubts);
the munificent Lord Nataraayan
takes delight in doing so!
* * * * *

All the words I utter
are words uttered by my Spouse,
they are not words uttered by me!
Oh countrymen!
Why will I utter anything?
Who am I!
Where is any special experience of gnosis
which I can call my own
if Civan had not sought my flesh
and stood established therein?

5489, 5504.VI.129 suddha civa-nilai 3, 18

It is a remarkable coincidence of spiritual experience that Maanikkavaachakar sings:

Who am I! What worth is my mind?
What matters my learning? Who would recognize me,
had not the Lord of the heavenly ones enslaved me?

Thiruvaachakam, d.10.v.2

Our Swaamikal continues:

If you think that these are lies,
go to the rear;
if you think that these are true words,
come forward!
Our Sire will perform here from this day onwards
the holy dance capable of revealing all the mystic powers!

5518.VI.129 suddha civa-nilai 32

He continues with more astounding statements:

Oh my kinsmen!
If you ask how it will be possible to raise the dead,
it will be possible by the mystic power
that is the Great Effulgence of Grace!
This, indeed, is a great patent truth!
* * * * *
If, in this world, it is said to all the dead, “Rise”,
they will rise,
with all the world paying obeisance to them!
(To do this), in this good world,
it is enough
if only those on whom the glance
of those on whom the glance
of those who have gained the holy grace
of the Lord of the sacred Etherial Shrine
has fallen
approach the dead and tell them to rise!
* * * * *
Is it necessary for me
to make the dead desire their bodies again
and bring them back to life in this world?
By the good grace of the Lord of the Etherial Shrine,
Whom the heavens love,
ah! it will be possible to do this with delight
for the shawl I wear on my back!

5523, 5524, 5525.VI.129 Suddha civa-nilai 37, 38, 39

Compassion is the hall-mark of a jeewanmuktha, and our Swaamikal is, if anything, the very incarnation of compassion. It is not surprising, therefore, that, moved by compassion, our Swaamikal devotes two decads, the 132nd and 133rd of the Sixth Book to importuning men of the world to mend their ways and seek the refuge of the feet of the Lord of the Etherial Shrine. He sings:

You follow the path of levying interest upon interest,
but you do not know the way of increasing the interest.¹⁷²
Box piled upon box you have set
and exercise proprietary rights over them.

Constantly filling up the box, your stomach,
you remain at home sticking to it;
you will not, even by chance, look at hungry people;

¹⁷² interest—benefit accruing as a result of love of God.

even if it were only stale rice water,
you will not think of serving it to them.
You live like the poison-nut (nux-vomica) tree,
You have proliferated like the kotti weed,
what kind of a succourer have you secured?
Ah! How much sin have you gathered,
Oh men of the world!
You are doing such evil deeds
as were never done before,
You are saying such harsh words
as were never said before,
You are consorting with such evil company
as were never consorted with before.
You are treading a path of conduct never trod before,
you have never known shedding flowing tears
thinking of the Lord Who protects you
like His very eye!
There will come a time when you shall have to think
of That Which you have not thought of before!
Ah! how much (sin) have you gathered,
Oh men of the world!

5561, 5565.VI.132 ulakarkku uyvakai kooral6, 10

He continues in the next decad:

Oh men of the world,
who, having cleared the forest,
and having rectified the ground,
and, moreover, having put in leaf-mould as manure,
sow poisonous weeds instead of sugar-cane
and rejoice!
When life has departed from its cage,
what will you do,
where will you live?
Alas! You do not know definitely!
You labored here,
but you do not know the result!
You wasted your time watering the weeds.
All that you have suffered is enough!
This is the moment of the transcendent Being's coming;
abandon the vain worldly cruel life
and come to take refuge with the Sakthi of gnosis;
this is the moment of my unique Father's coming,

this is the truth!

* * * * *

You do not know to throw a bund
before the river-flood comes;
you are possessed of the demon of I-ness
you know only to dance arrogantly!
What will you do when death comes?
Alas, you are not desirous of praising
the rosy feet which kicked the king of death.
Oh men of the world,
who, talking contrariously, and multiplying karma,
are wasting away,
abandon the vain worldly cruel life
and come to take refuge with the Sakthi of gnosis!
To our great rejoicing,
this is the moment of my unique Father's coming,
this is the truth!

5567, 5568. VI. 133 punitha-kulam perumaaru pukalal 2, 3

Our Swaamikal has stated in several places in the decads we have seen so far that he has gained the boon of deathlessness. But it is only now that, for the first time, he devotes a separate decad of as many as twenty-eight stanzas to this subject. “Deathless Great Life” is the name given to this decad by Ooran Atikal. Amateur and professional speakers on the philosophy of Raamalinga Swaamikal wax eloquent on this topic in season and out of season. Without being uncharitable, I may say that the more ignorant they are about what this type of life means, the more eloquently they wax on this topic. While there is an over-abundance of teachings of our Swaamikal, these orators pitch upon this particular belief of his to dilate on. When you come to think of it, his teachings will not suffer by the absence of this belief. Just as it was said that every soldier in Napoleon's army carried (figuratively) a Field-Marshal's baton in his knapsack, every man may hope to gain this life, but, perhaps, not necessarily in this life or in many lives to come. Notwithstanding this, he may follow all and everyone of our Swaamikal's teaching, and be blessed in the eyes of man and of God. Let us analyze this decad and try to clearly understand, as far as it lies in the power of our poor intellect to do so, what our Swaamikal means.

It is not clear on what grounds Ooran Atikal gave the title to this decad. It is possible that the title has been given on the strength of a particular phrase occurring in the first stanza of the decad, much in the same manner as the Isa and the Kena Upanishads got their names. Whatever the reason may be, the phrase, “maranamilaa-p-peru-vaazhvu”, appears in the 1st and in the 23rd, stanzas only. The idea underlying the aforesaid phrase, however, occurs in other forms in a few other stanzas. Thus:

“you may gain the boon of deathlessness” in stanza 4,

“we may gain the benefaction of deathlessness” in stanza 21,

“why will you not gain the great boon of not dying?” in stanza 25,

“ my creed is the true Creed that does away with death” in stanza 36.

Let me offer you the translation of all these stanzas, and you and I shall strive to get at the heart of this matter. Our Swaamikal sings:

Meditating and meditating on Him,
experiencing Him and experiencing Him,
with heart mellowing and mellowing,
with body drenched and drenched
by tears which well up as from a spring,
let us praise Him in these words,
bowing and bowing to Him:
“Oh Ambrosia of Grace! Oh good Treasure!
Oh King of the dance of gnosis!
Oh my rightful Master”.
Come along Oh worldly men!
Note that we can get deathless great life!
I am not concocting this, I am not telling lies,
I am telling you the truth!
This is indeed the moment to enter the Golden Hall,
the Hall of Gnosis!
* * * * *

Whatever we saw so far is ephemeral,
whatever we have heard is false,
whatever we have learnt are lies,
all your rejoicing are futile,
whatever you ate is filth,
however much you have acquired,
it is still inadequate,
you have not known the truth so far!
What is the use of making an outburst anymore?
Join the Universal Benevolent Creed of the True Path,
and, well realizing the true Being,
gain the grace of my Father
in the Hall of Gnosis worthy of remembrance!
You can get the boon of not dying,
You can enjoy bliss!
* * * * *

Oh men of the world!
This is a very opportune moment,
come quickly!
Let us approach the Adept,
Who, graciously taking all my evil as good
in His holy mind,
bestowed on this mean fellow
the decanted fluid of the ambrosia;
let us approach Him
Who, getting rid of our misery,
shines resplendently in the Etherial Shrine
as the very incarnation of genuine blissful experience;

let us approach the Being
Who has filled the minds of those
who have a magnificent form
of the very incarnation of compassion,
this Adept,
and gain the blessing of non-dying!

* * * * *

Do agree to join
the Sacred Creed of the Universal True Path;
you can gain the mystic powers
which are great articles of faith
of that Creed;
do think about it.
You have learnt to eat and sleep,
but you have not come to know the one clue
by which you can come to know the whole world!
Death is certain,
the sea-girt world knows it.
Nevertheless, even a piece of straw,
which we call an inert matter,
will not agree to die.
But, note that we can prevent
that approaching death.
Come and have a darsan of the unique dance
in the Hall of Gnosis!

* * * * *

Your enjoyments are not worth-while,
all of them are illusory,
where is the need for me to say this?
This is what you have perceived daily
by your intellect!
Oh men of the delusive world!
It is not fair to perish in this world of ignorance.
Come along to live the great deathless life,
come here and settle down in the status
of (a member of) the purposeful Pure Blissful True Creed!
Partake lovingly of the ambrosia of the Hall of Gnosis,
gain the power of grace,
and dance on as you please!
There will be people to join you,
there won't be anyone to prevent you!

* * * * *

Oh men of the world!
When the dead are being removed (from the house),
you raise an outcry.
Why do you not gain the great boon of not dying?
You have forgotten to do so.
Do you like disease and old age?
You have seen that the minds of good people shiver
even if they think of these by oversight.

Note that the famed True Creed alone
will prevent disease, old age, and death
from approaching you.

Know this and come on.

In this very birth which you have now taken here,
you can gain eternal real life,
you can gain quickly great bliss!

* * * * *

I am telling you what I have experienced

out of a sense of oneness with you;

I am a kinsmen to you indeed,

do not take me for an enemy.

Oh men of the world!

You see the learned and the unlearned perish!

Is death,

which comes confusing all your faculties of understanding,
acceptable to you?

My mind will not agree to this even the least;

I do not know whether your mind
is a stony mind or a callous mind.

Today this can be thwarted;

come and join me;

my Creed is the death-dispelling True Creed indeed!

5576, 5579, 5581, 5596, 5598, 4600, 5601.V1.134 maranamilaa-p-peru vaazhvu 1, 4,
6, 21, 23, 25 26

During the last thirteen months in which I have read, studied, digested, spoke, dreamed, eaten, slept the Thiruvartupaa only, I have given hours and days of thought to this matter of deathless great life. I shall not write pages on this matter. For a man speaks or writes a lot only when he is uncertain of himself, uncertain within himself of what he is talking or writing about. By the grace of God, in all humility, I assert that this phrase does not refer to any life on this earth. When a person is born, the one and only thing he is absolutely sure about is that he will die one day. No astrologer is required to predict this. Let us be clear about what death is. It is the soul discarding the body which it has assumed for a time in order to work off its prarabdha karma. According to its level of spiritual evolution, it takes another body or is not reborn. As a result of my study of the passages in the Thiruvartupaa relating to this matter of conquest of death, I have come to the conclusion that the phrase 'deathless life' refers to the state of the delivered soul in the state of vidhehamukthi. Our Swamikal, I believe, was not an Advaitist. We have seen how he pours scorn on those who claim, "I am Brahman", 'aham brahmaasmi'. According to Caiva-siddhaantha, the soul is coeval with the Godhead and is equally eternal. It was not created by God, much less is it a creature out of the essence of God. Therefore, on gaining vidhehamukthi, deliverance after disembodiment, the soul is in a state of saajyam with the Godhead. Saa=Him, ujjam=union; union with the Godhead. But this is not merging in the essence of the Godhead. losing all separate identity. Thomas Merton has very ably described this type of union. He says in his 'Seeds of Contemplation';

"God and man, while remaining no doubt metaphysically

distinct, are practically and experimentally 'one spirit'."

When our Swaamikal speaks of the boon of deathlessness, he means that the union with the Godhead will be eternal and that there will be no more births in human body and therefore no more deaths. Let us translate this phrase of our Swaamikal into Sanskrit and it will be robbed of all its confusing and confounding qualities. The term corresponding to 'maranamillamai', deathlessness, is amritvam. "Mrityo maa amritvam gamaya" says the Vedic invocation. From death lead me to immortality. Let me quote an illuminating passage from Aurobindo's book, 'Eight Upanishads' in, this connection. In a note called, 'On Translating the Upanishads', he writes:

" Again the Hindu idea of "immortality" is different from the European; it implies not life after death, but freedom from both life and death, FOR WHAT WE CALL LIFE IS AFTER ALL IMPOSSIBLE WITHOUT DEATH."

It is for this very reason that our Swaamikal lays so much stress on deathlessness, for once this is gained then there will be no life--life in this world, life in a human or other body. Therefore, if we do not want to be born again, we must conquer death, we must gain maranamilaa-p-peru vaazhvu, the deathless great life.

The 'anubhava maalai', the 142nd decad, 'The Garland of Experience' is nothing but an elaborate treatise on this maranamilaa-p-peru vaazhvu, the deathless great life. After reading it—I am concluding my research into the Pathway to God trod by Raamalinga Swaamikal with a chapter of the one hundred stanzas of that decad—no one will be left in any doubt about what maranamilaa-p-peru vaazhvu is. It is nothing but eternal union with the God-head.

In any case, to us common mortals, this matter will not be an immediate problem for ages and ages. Let us not waste time disputing about it, let us proceed to live the life of compassion, the life of freedom from feelings of caste, creed; religion, the life of universal brotherhood, not only with man, but with birds, beasts, and even plants, the life of devotion to the one and only God, in short, the life of the Pure Universal True Creed!

I shall not linger long on the next seven decads, from the 135th to the 141st, for I must hurry on to 'The Garland of Experience', the 142nd decad, the decad of one hundred stanzas describing a most esoteric experience with an assurance unsurpassed in spiritual literature. But we shall see one or two stanzas from these decads as well, for some of them must not be lightly passed over. For instance, our Swaamikal sings:

The foot of the misery-free Lord of the Etherial Shrine—
you say that He lifted it in order to dance;
I say that He lifted it in order to place it on my head!
To whom shall we go
and get this dispute settled?

5623.VI.136 san-maarga ulakin orumai nilai 10

The next five decads are cast in the Bride and Bridegroom relationship. The mention of the dispute about the reason why the foot of the Lord was lifted moves our Swaamikal to sing about the greatness of the Lord and His feet. "Greatness of the Holy Feet" is the title of the 137th decad. But only 23 of its 45 stanzas sing about the glory of the feet. And these, to my utter regret, are beyond my powers of translation. For one thing, I do not understand even the literary meaning, not to speak of the esoteric meaning of those stanzas except the last few words which say:

"Who can proclaim the greatness of the holy feet
of my Husband, Oh my companion!"

The stanzas are full of the most complicated metaphysical terms for whose meaning we shall have to wait nearly a decade when we may expect the commentary on the Thiruvartupaa by Sri Auvai Doraiswamy Pillai, the Prince among commentators, to be published.

The Bride, continuing her address to her companion, sings:

My Sire, my Ambrosia, my Lover,
my handsome Lord,
He Who came that day
and bestowed grace on me by enslaving me,
when I, in the company of girls
who were passing the time of the day with me,
was approaching the Etherial Shrine,
singing about its glory,
said to me:
"Don't talk nonsense, O Girl,
saying that the day of the marriage
with the Great Effulgence of Grace
is on some future day;
it is today!"
What is this, my mother?
He catches hold of my hand,
what is this, my mother?

5763.VI. thalaivi thalaivan seyalai thaaikku uraitthal 4

Long before, in the 'ingitha maalai', we were told that the Lord caught hold of the Bride by the hand. There is a world of difference between the act on that distant day when our Swaamikal was slogging up the Illuminative Way and the present act of taking hold of the hand. That was the occasion of the betrothal. The present occasion is that of the eternal marriage of the soul and the Spirit, the vidhehamukthi, the deliverance and simultaneous disembodiment. In the above song the Lord says: "Don't talk nonsense saying that the marriage is on some future day; it is today." The imperious call has come, the call that cannot be denied, or escaped from. Not that our Swaamikal could ever have dreamt of refusing the call or of postponing it. Since the day he attained jeewanmukthahood, he has been eagerly looking forward to this day of days, the day of the eternal, inseparable union with the Godhead. When did this paani-grahnam, the taking hold of the hand in sacred matrimony, take place? In, other

marriages, the vows are made with a time-limit, the limit being “till death do us part”. But in this marriage of marriages there is no time limit; the marriage vows are made for eternity. When did this marriage for all time take place? It could not have been any other day than the 30th January 1874. The last seven decads of the Sixth Book, and of the Thiruvartupaa too, from the 138th to the 144th, must have been sung on one and the same day after which our Bride entered the bridal chamber in the dead of night and “became completely transformed in the Beloved.”

The mother of the Bride confides in the foster-mother she tells her daughter had shared with her with regard to this marriage. She tells:

“I had union with my virtuous Husband;
the merit I had acquired (in the past)
is difficult to relate”,
she said.
“Will I ever forget His compassion
which delighted me like the ambrosia
from the cool moon”,
she said.
“Whatever I think of, He graciously gives,
Ah, Ah!”, she said.
She became transformed verily into the great Bliss
which was by her side.

5682. VI. 139 natraai sevilikku-k-kooral 3

The words, “The Bride became completely transformed in the Beloved” are taken by me from the Introduction to the book, ‘Spiritual Canticles’ by St. John of the Cross. And here in this song in the Thiruvartupaa the same idea occurs. This similarity of expression—nay, experience—goes to prove the utter truthfulness of the experience. The mother continues:

“I saw, I saw the feet which dance
on the Golden Hall”, she said.
“In the immaculate Hall of Gnosis,
the great Lord blended with my love”, she said.
“He gave into my keeping the sun, the moon, the fire,
all of them to serve me alone”, she said.
“With His hand He embraced me”,
said the only daughter borne by me
as a fruit of *thavam*!

5686. VI. 139 natraai sevilikku-k-kooral 7

Maanikkavaachakar sang:

“Think I shall not, Oh Lord
of any other god but You, Oh our noblest One!

and he further sang:

Deva-devan Whom the King of the deva-s (Indra)
does not know,
He Who creates, protects, and destroys the verdant worlds,
the primeval One
Who stands as the King of the Trinity,
the Image (of all things),
Father of my forefathers,
my Father
with one part of His body lorded over by a Dame,
everyone's Monarch,
He came and enslaved me!
We are no one's subject, nothing we fear!

Thiruvaachakam, d.5.v.30

And Thirunaavukkarasar too sang after him:

“We are not a subject of anyone, Death we do not fear!”

Our Swaamikal proclaimed his ekaagraha bhakthi, his one-pointed devotion, to the Lord of the Etherial Shrine in the very beginning of his spiritual journey, and now on the eve of his vidhehamukthi, his anthardhaan, his vanishing from the sight of man, he reiterates it just as those who had gone before him did. He speaks as the Bride. Her companion tries to persuade her to be at least civil to other gods. She replies in ringing tones that she is not a subject of any of them. She sings:

Oh my companion!
You say: “Though the dancing Spouse Who loves you
is your Husband,
yet, how is it
that you do not desire the friendship
of other deva-s
who all rejoicingly come
when some people assemble
and chant the mantra-s seeking them?”
Boon-bestowing Indra-s, Brahma-s,
Naarana-s, Kaarana-s, and others,
to none of them I am a cringing subject.
Know that I am a subject
dedicated to the service of the Feet
Which dance a dance of lordship
in the sacred Etherial Shrine of gnosis!

5692. VI.140 thozhikku urimai kilatthal 3

Concluding her address in the next decad, the 141st, the penultimate one to the greatest decad of the Thiruvartupaa, our Bride describes her unique relationship with her Spouse and bids her companion decorate the mansion against the coming of her Spouse in the morning. She sings:

His body He gave to me,
 His grace, His possessions, and Himself
 He gave to me;
 He will never part from me anymore.
 In my body He has entered,
 He has blended with my soul
 and dances (in my heart)!
 This Lord of mine will come in the morning
 and will graciously stay here.
 Therefore, quickly decorate the mansion.
 There is no doubt about this;
 my unique Chief's word
 is true, true, Oh damsel, true, true!

5704.VI.141 thalaivi kooral 1

The Spouse comes with the dawn and the Bride sings her swan-song before she entered the nirvikalpa-samaadhi, the undifferentiated union with the Godhead, for ever and ever, and was never seen bodily again!

The ineffable experience of this union is related in the one hundred stanzas of the 142nd decad of the Sixth Book. After giving the matter considerable thought, I have decided to render all the one hundred stanzas into English and present them in a new chapter without any comment. For I feel that any comment will mar the continuity of the narrative by our Saint himself of his unique experience. Moreover, any comment is unnecessary as the decad itself is free of any ambiguity. Furthermore, any reader who has traveled with me through the hundreds of pages of this book, through the thousand and one songs of our Swaamikal reproduced in this book, through the forest of comment and interpretation offered all along the chapters of this book, any such reader will not require any comment or interpretation for understanding this decad. If he does, he, who has not profited by the scores of pages of comment scattered throughout the pages of this book, is not likely to benefit by any commentary or interpretation I may offer for these one hundred stanzas. Let us therefore proceed to share with the companion of our Swaamikal to whom the decad is addressed the unique experience of the spiritual marriage of the Bride, our Swaamikal, with the Bridegroom, the Godhead. Before presenting to you, dear reader, this decad, I have a confession to make, and an apology to tender. I have said elsewhere in this book that bridal mysticism is unique to the Tamil people. Rev. Fr. Bede Griffiths, who has been kind enough to go through every line and word of the manuscript of this book and to offer very valuable corrections and suggestions, drew my attention to the 'Spiritual Canticles' of St. John of the Cross and kindly lent me the book to read.¹⁷³ While I do not withdraw anything of what I have written earlier, I humbly admit that I had forgotten the greatest mystic in the bride and bridegroom tradition which the early Church had produced. The 'Spiritual Canticles' of St. John of the Cross deserves to rank with the very best of the songs of Tamilnadu's saints who acted the role of a bride to God, the Bridegroom. The 'Spiritual Canticles' has an added merit in that the saint himself has written an elaborate commentary to it. He wrote in Spanish. An English translation by E. Allison Peers, acclaimed by the *London Times* as "the most faithful" is available as a Doubleday Image Book, Doubleday & Co. Inc., Garden

City, New York. I am greatly indebted to Rev. Fr. Bede Griffiths for correcting me and for introducing me to the 'Spiritual Canticles' and many other valuable books in the library of mysticism.

¹⁷³ Rev. Fr. Bede Griffiths, when he went through this reference to him, added that St. John of the Cross was not the only mystic in the tradition of bridal mysticism and that there have been several others before him beginning with Solomon and his Song of Songs and several others after him.

As I said earlier, I propose to render the 'anubhava maalai' into English without any comments. For no comments can, indeed, be given to those poems. St. John of the Cross, to whom I made a reference a few lines back, says with reference to his own 'Spiritual Canticles', a poem of 39 stanzas (40 in another redaction) covering not more than six and a half pages in print, and to which he wrote an elaborate exposition:

“For in as much as these stanzas.. appear to be written with a certain degree of favor of love of God, ..Whose wisdom and love are so vast that ..they reach from one end to another, and the soul which is informed and moved by Him has to some extent this same abundance and impetus in its words, I do not think of expounding all the breadth and plenteousness imbued in them by the fertile spirit of love, for it would be ignorance to think that sayings of love understood mystically, such as those of the present stanzas, can be fairly expounded by words of any kind....

“Since these stanzas, then, have been composed under the influence of a love which comes from abounding mystical understanding, they cannot be fairly expounded, nor shall I attempt to so expound them...”

If a mystic like St. John of the Cross cannot expound his own words, how can I, a mere worm in matters mystical, dare to expound the stanzas of the 'anubhava maalai'? For these stanzas treat of “the beatific state to which only the soul in the perfect state of the unitive way aspires”.¹⁷⁴ I shall therefore, give the 'anubhava maalai' in English in a separate chapter.

¹⁷⁴ See quotation from 'Argument' of St. John of the Cross to his Spiritual Canticles reproduced at the end of the author's preface to this book.

13. ANUBHAVA MAALAI

(The Garland of Experience)

The Feet-blossom Which performs a sacred dance
in the Etherial Shrine,
I have worn it on top of the crown of my head;
with love I draped it over my dear soul too.
Oh my companion!
What shall I say of the fragrance of that blossom
which is wafted from my body too!
If you bid me tell you about it,
it is not within my ability to do so.
I am not speaking any falsehood;
come near me, take off the stopper from your lovely nose
and smell and know for yourself!
The people in the countries
stretching from our beloved earth
to the region of the cosmic sound
have smelt it well
and have appreciated it saying:
“This, indeed, is fragrance!”

1

* * * * *

My eyes I will not close in sleep,
and even if I sleep,
I will dream only
about the union with my Husband
and rejoice in my heart.
Is it only in dreams?
In my waking hours too,
the Great Effulgence
that cannot be contained by thought, my King,
He keeps on embracing me only
without noticing the passing of
day or night and makes me rejoice.
“The earth may sleep, the mountains may sleep,
the encircling sea may sleep,
everything else on this vast earth may sleep,
but my daughter will not sleep.”
My mother takes delight in speaking thus.
All other girls are feeling ashamed,
alas, they have not performed great *thavam*!

2

* * * * *

The omnipotent Monseigneur married me;
Who in all the worlds are peer to me,
you tell me, Oh my companion!
Oh good girls, persons of great eminence,
Indra-s, great seers; Brahma-s, Naarana-s,
all standing up in heaven above say:
“It is impossible for us to describe the *thavam*

performed by this girl out of several (who perform *thavam*)!

And several good people say:

“She has gained the privilege of marrying
the mighty Lord Who dances in the sacred city;
this girl here is, indeed, a smart girl!”

3

* * * * *

The Lord Who can do whatever He desires to do,
He has married me;
who, indeed, has performed the *thavam* I have performed?
Listen to this, Oh my companion!
Will I think of, with my mind,
which thinks of my virtuous Lord only,
the deities of any sect whatsoever
as equal to even a piece of straw?
Think of me as a mad girl if you like!
Will I ever part from Him?

I cannot bear to hear it
even if someone talks of my parting from Him!
I witnessed the remarkable dance;
people say that if even a ghoulish witnesses the dance,
it will not have the mind to leave the place
what shall I say of the effect on me?

4

* * * * *

I donned the garland with delight
as bride to the Lord Himself
Who has no perfidy in Him;
the life without imperfections
which the Veda-s along with the Aagama-s
describe in detail
is mine;
what, indeed, is the *thavam* performed by me?
Tell me something about it.

All my mothers,
who showed me menacing faces,
now show me composed faces
and are bestowing on me great honor.
Lasses of cotton-soft feet,
all of them, seated at my noble feet,
praise me, Oh my companion,
highly desirous of my acquaintance!

5

* * * * *

You call me to take food!
Oh my companion,
but, thinking of you (all the time),
I have already partaken of the honey
from the feet-blossom of the eminent Lord
Who dances in the Etherial Shrine!
To the sweet Ambrosia
which is the grace-filled fame
of the great Chief of unique lordship

Who dwells in me,
 I added the juice of the sweet fruit called my love,
 and the treacle
 specially prepared from the sugar-candy
 which is the vision of the form
 of my unique Husband
 and partook of the confection with delight;
 (therefore) I do not feel even the least hunger
 in my mind!

6

* * * * *

People say that the gentle smile alone
 which shines scintillatingly
 on the face of my Lord Who dances on the Hall
 is worth a crore of gold mohurs.
 Is that all?
 Even if they say, “several crores”,
 will that be a proper assessment?
 Will the many many crores
 of numberless kinds of spheres
 spoken of by the four Veda-s
 which are ruled over severally by Sakthi-s and Sakta-s
 be worth that smile?
 The ambrosia of happiness
 which wells up in my mind
 whenever I think of the gentle smile
 of that Lord of mukthi
 is the worth of that smile!

7

* * * * *

When my Spouse
 Who had blended with my eyes
 linked His hand with mine,
 I did not, any more, know myself
 or my instruments of knowing.
 Today I came to know
 the stature of the Veda-s
 which say that all the enjoyments on earth
 which you can think of
 are (by comparison) but an iota
 of the enjoyment of divine bliss.
 Behold, Oh my companion,
 whenever I think of the joy I experienced
 on account of the cessation of the misery of karma
 at the moment when the heaven-dwelling Lord of mukthi
 blended with my soul,
 the great enjoyment of the bliss
 born of His blending with me
 began to engulf me (every time)
 as if it happened at the very moment!

8

* * * * *

Oh damsel with tresses

bedecked with blossoming flowers,
 at the moment
 when I joyously partook of the ambrosia of grace
 which my Spouse gave me
 at the moon-lit bower on top of the tower,
 I ceased to know me,
 I did not know the world either!
 It will be inadequate to even say
 that it resembled a mixture
 of rare-to-get sweet milk,
 delicious treacle, ghee, and honey.
 It is not possible to describe the peerless taste.
 Oh my dear,
 that ambrosia is equal only
 to the golden feet of the Lord.

9

* * * * *

My body smells, all over, of camphor;
 that, indeed, is the fragrance
 which came of embracing the body of my Spouse!
 Note that it is not a fragrance
 which fades away like fragrances of this world.
 There is a natural fragrance
 to the form of God Who fills the Fourth State.
 The people of the world
 have never seen or known
 the golden flower or the sweet fragrance.
 While I was in close contact
 with the holy form of the virtuous One,
 I found that fragrance
 all over that goodly sacred-ash-smeared form;
 I united with THAT and became THAT!

10

* * * * *

I have returned after beholding
 the color of the sacred body of my Spouse
 Who performs an illuminating dance (of gnosis)
 in the middle of the eternal sacred assembly (of devotees)!
 Oh my dear, what can I say,
 Oh my companion,
 about the nature of the color
 of that holy body!
 Shall I say
 that it is the color which will shine
 if countless crores of moons,
 suns, fires, lightning
 were to join together?
 Even if I say so, it will not be adequate!
 That color, even the Upanishads cannot describe!
 Who else, indeed, can describe the color
 of that Great Effulgence of Grace?

11

* * * * *

They say of me: “She has drunk toddy!”¹⁷⁵
 Yes, I have seen it in the Hall of Gnosis,
 I have partaken of it too, Oh my dear!
 But it is not the toddy
 drawn from despised worldly things;
 it is a toddy extracted
 from an environment of eternal immortality;
 it is not the toddy
 which, when taken by worldly people,
 stupefies them,
 it is a toddy which does away
 with all confusion of the mind!
 Oh damsel,
 if delusion-ridden people
 would come closer and closer to me,
 on them too it will bestow wisdom,
 the toddy which I have taken here!

12

¹⁷⁵ toddy – a fermented liquor drawn from the coconut palm.

* * * * *

Oh damsel!
 Will you go with me to see
 the beauty of the form of my Spouse
 Who is established in the Golden Hall?
 If it is not possible to conceive (by the mind)
 that holy form of unsurpassed beauty,
 will it be possible to describe it in words,
 or to draw it on paper?
 The Veda-s of unsurpassed fame along with the Aagama-s,
 confused between what they said before
 and what they said later,
 are writing and writing a great deal up to this day,
 unable to transcend their limitations.
 But they have not come to any conclusion,
 Oh my dear!

13

* * * * *

I fear that ‘evil eye’ will fall on Him
 if I look upon the beauty of my Spouse's holy form
 several times and rejoice,
 but, alas, my thoughtless flood of desire,
 without heeding my words,
 keeps on dragging me along
 and going frequently to His presence!
 People say that love for lass is mighty
 even in the case of those who rule the heavens,
 but note, love for lass is not mighty!
 Love for lad is indeed mighty!
 I look into my heart, and, several times, perform
 ceremonies to ward off the ‘evil eye’,

Oh my companion, just as you instructed me! 14
* * * * *

Please bring the camphor,
Oh my favorite companion;
this is the moment of my Husband's coming,
let us perform ceremonies to ward off the `evil eye'!
Just because an element (the earth)
is beneath His feet, the holy lotus,
do not think, Oh my dear,
that the feet are really down here.
Know that, transcending several regions of elements
and the region of the cosmic sound,
there is a region of the transcendental cosmic sound;
the feet are established on top of that region.
If I, His wife, perform ceremonies
to ward off the evil eye from those feet,
it will bring good
to every creature in every world! 15
* * * * *

After reaching my house,
when He embraced me on the flower-strewn bed,
I never consciously felt separate
and thought of that as my Spouse's body
and of this as my body!
If I was not conscious of myself even the least,
how was I going to be conscious of other things?
Not even a whit of differentiated feeling is in me;
how am I, therefore, going to tell you
how the Lord of mukthi united with me!
If He embraces you,
I will ask you a similar question;
then your knowledge and my knowledge
will be the same knowledge! 16
* * * * *

Oh damsel with trailing tresses!
If you would but leave me alone for a while!
This is the moment of the coming
of the Chief of the Assembly of Gnosis.
I myself should decorate and keep ready
the bed of flowers inside the Marble Room
in the Golden Hall where I gain fruition of my life.
Oh my companion,
you say: "I will decorate expertly"!
My Lord does not like it;
that I have learnt with certainty many times.
Is not the happiness gained by me
bigger than the seven seas?
Tell me what service other than this
I can do here! 17
* * * * *

The moment of coming of the unique Chief is this, leave me alone,
 and you too go and stay alone on one side.
 You will hear with pleasure the sacred words
 blended with a plenitude of sweet taste;
 that is enough for you.
 What shall I say of men, or the heavenly ones,
 or Brahma of the lotus or Vishnu or others,
 Maheswar and others too
 who are waiting on this friendly earth
 to hear one single sacred word,
 having performed a crore of *thavam-s*
 for that purpose!

18

* * * * *

Oh lass!
 This is the moment of my Spouse's arrival,
 go and decorate lavishly
 the entrances to the mansion.
 I myself will set about decorating
 with precious gem-set bright lamps
 the room with the bed of flowers
 on which the Lord of noble qualities will lie.
 If my unique Husband comes,
 it will give me never-deserting happiness.
 I will not have the least of the miseries of delusion.
 Leave unsuitable people to outside jobs;
 to the loving, give them interior work to do!

19

* * * * *

Oh bejeweled damsel!
 As this is the moment of the coming
 of my rare gold-like Husband,
 decorate all the fronts of the entrances
 with pleasing festoons, pennants,
 ripe banana bunches, fragrant kamuku¹⁷⁶
 green coconuts, and such other things.
 Set thereat thoughtfully sugar-canes,
 water-pots filled with tender shoots of paddy
 and accompanying kayal fish,
 mirrors, whisks etcetera.
 These are suitable to adoringly receive our King
 Who melts to extreme softness
 even minds which resemble stone mixed with iron!

20

¹⁷⁶ kamuku - a tall palm like the areca-nut tree whose fragrant flower-bearing stalks
 are used for decorating halls on festive occasions.

* * * * *

This is the unique moment of my Husband's arrival,
 that moment is this indeed,
 Oh my companion!
 Do not be absent-minded;

go and decorate all the sides of the tower of gems.
I am hurrying forth to decorate the diwan
in the middle of the greatly salubrious platform
of marble and gems.

The auspicious coming of the Lord
Who bestows mukthi is certain;
therefore go with delight,
fill the place with gem-set light-diffusing lamps
and place seats set with new gems of nine sorts,
thinking and thinking sweetly
about the auspicious coming of the virtuous Lord!

21

* * * * *

I think (constantly) of the coming of my Husband
Who dances on the Hall;
whenever I think of it with delight,
if my mind mellows and melts
and, tasting sweet and sweeter—

as if I have taken today
to my heart's content
the excellent cream of cow's milk
to which have been added fragrant ghee,
honey, and sugar extracted from the juice
of the best sugar-cane—

billows up and engulfs me as well,
Oh my companion,
what will be my condition at the moment
when I meet Him today in person?
Alack! What shall I say about it?

22

* * * * *

When I look forward
to the coming of my unique Husband
with Whom I have had union,
shall I say that my light-radiating mind
is on top of the high crowns of deva-s
who have gained the privilege of living
on top of (Meru) the tall Golden Mountain,
or shall I say
that it is beneath the shadow of the feet
which dance in the middle of the Hall of Gnosis
and in the middle of the Golden Hall!

Oh damsel with tresses
bedecked with blossoming flowers,
if my mind beholds the arrival of the King,
ah! who will be able to relate its condition?

23

* * * * *

Oh my companion,
this is the moment of the coming
of the Lord of grace;
light thousands and thousands of crores
of rows of lamps,

pour therein cow's pure ghee only;
 if it is any other ghee,
 it may probably cause some harm to His holy body!
 Do not ask: "Where is the darkness?
 Why is it necessary to light lamps in the morning?"
 Note that they are lighted as a mark of auspiciousness.
 Do not get confused.
 Of the brilliance of His body,
 it will not be adequate
 even if I say
 that numberless moons, suns, and ruddy fires
 have joined together!

24

* * * * *

My two-pupils-of-the-eyes-like Lord,
 the Lord of my soul,
 He Who is ambrosia to my soul,
 the omnipotent Lord,
 the Lord of the Golden Hall wearing gold ornaments,
 the Lord of the Hall of Gnosis,
 He united with me externally,
 He united with me internally,
 He united with me in the interior of my exterior;
 He is not a stranger to me.
 Oh my dear,
 He, indeed, is my family-deity,
 He is the Guru Whom I got
 by means of rare *thavam*;
 is that all?

He is my unique eternal Mother, Father.
 Moreover, He, indeed, is my children, my possessions;
 and He, indeed, is my large band of sacred kin!

25

* * * * *

Oh damsel, would you ask
 "Father, you said; Son, you said;
 Spouse, you said; is this proper here?"
 Think and find out.
 The Lord of mukthi Who dances on the sacred Hall
 is the holy Husband Who united with me.
 It was nothing else than His beginning, middle and endless
 Great Effulgence of Grace itself
 which all the spheres
 and the mobile and immobile creatures thereon saw!
 Oh dear, would I utter a lie like others?
 Know that it was no other than
 His majestic sacred body and me!

26

* * * * *

The unique Omnipotent Chief,
 the rare Great Effulgence
 Who performs a dance on the Hall,
 Oh good girl,

with the knowledge of all the good people of the country,
 He, the virtuous One, desiring me,
 married me.
 Therefore, there is no penury for me;
 I will give to every one;¹⁷⁷
 Oh my dear, what shall I say about my great wealth?
 Not only in the unapproachable spheres,
 but beyond their farthest boundaries too,
 the great wealth of Gnosis of Civan
 reigns resplendently;
 behold it and know about it.

27

¹⁷⁷ Contrast this declaration with the declaration in stanza 6 of the first decad of Book 2 where our Swaamikal declares: "I would not give anything to good people, I possess nothing" (page 244). We can see from the contrast between these two passages how far our Swaamikal has traveled up the Pathway to God.

* * * * *

The Brahma-s who created the heavens,
 Naaranar-s and others are, alas, grieving.
 Having performed great *thavam* for a long time,
 they have not witnessed the vision I saw.
 I do not know what kind of a *thavam*
 is the *thavam* performed by me,
 a mere girl, in this world!
 If the subjects who have worshipped a (mere human) king
 have no wants,
 I, who have become a subject who worships the King
 Who wields unique great sway
 over all the crores of spheres,
 have left behind all wants;
 I live happily in a unique luxurious mansion!

28

* * * * *

Oh my companion,
 the magnanimity of my Husband
 cannot be reached by even those
 who go up to the state
 of the six ultima thules¹⁷⁸
 and look down from that height.
 Can it be described taking it to be
 like one of the stories fabricated
 by the husband of Lakshmi (Vishnu)
 or the husband of the goddess of learning (Brahma)
 or others?
 Those men of paltry vision blabber in ignorance;
 like them, the famed Veda-s and the Aagama-s too
 blabber, Oh my dear!
 You are saying: "Relate your Husband's prowess".
 You had better first of all desire
 to gain the Effulgence of Grace of the noblest One!

29

* * * * *

Here are some people
 who are inviting me to take food,
 Oh my companion;
 what shall I tell them, Oh my dear?
 In the moon-lit high tower
 I had partaken with my Husband
 unsatiating limpid ambrosia
 and have satisfied my hunger.
 Oh damsel with lovely tresses,
 if I get hungry here I will tell you,
 do not quarrel with me now.
 Make this clear to them also
 that their grievance may cease,
 and that all those who are residents
 and all those who are guests
 may happily eat.

30

* * * * *

My Sire, He Who has me for slave,
 the Rare Great Effulgence,
 the Lord of the blissful form
 Who dances in the Etherial Shrine,
 the Reality,
 the unique Husband
 Who took me as wife in wedlock,
 He arrived in the moon-lit Hall
 in the thuriya space,
 and, giving me ambrosia,
 clasped round my wrist
 a bangle of pure gold as well!
 Is it possible for me to assess
 the worth of the bangle and tell you?
 Even if the world and the heavens
 are given in exchange for it,
 they would not be adequate;
 it is invaluable!

31

* * * * *

The great Chief
 Who assumes His form at will,
 Who performs a unique dance
 in the Hall of Gnosis,
 my Spouse of the Golden Hall,
 whenever I think of the hue of His golden form,
 an ineffable flood of joy
 descends into my form
 and fills it to overflowing, Oh my dear!
 What shall I say about how my mind feels?

It is not within my capacity to do so!
It will not be adequate to say
that the form before me dissolved
and that I added sugar, honey
and the three fruits¹⁷⁹ to it and ate it!

32

¹⁷⁹ the three fruits - banana, mango and the jack-fruit; these are considered delicacies in Tamilnadu and are served in feasts.

* * * * *

There are countless crores of persons
similar to me in this world;
persons better than me, there are several crores;
persons eminent in that world¹⁸⁰
are numberless crores;
while all of them are daily lamenting,
the Chief abiding at His pleasure
in the sacred Hall of Gnosis
Whom none of the people
of any world whatsoever can appreciate,
He married me here!
Oh damsel with eyes like those of a fawn,
my Lord, the sacred Effulgence of Grace,
never takes into account
whether a person is high or low!

33

¹⁸⁰ that world – the heavens.

* * * * *

The Lord of mukthi,
He Who dances on the Golden Hall
and bestows grace,
the Lord of the Hall of Gnosis,
He gave me a garland.
He with form, becoming formless,
becoming light, becoming ether,
is soaring aloft—
my soul's Succourer!
Today I have realized the greatness
of the true words spoken by those
who have realized Him,
namely, that (gaining) His great true and sacred grace alone
is, indeed, the grand life.
Whenever I think of the unsought-for grace
gained by me here on earth,
how is it, Oh my companion,
that an ineffable joy occurs to me?

34

* * * * *

The Lord of Grace
the Incarnation of Bliss,

Who dances a dance of bliss on the Golden Hall,
 He Who has me for a slave,
 the Lord of mukthi
 Who, making me clarity-minded
 at an age when I had no clarity of mind,
 married me.
 Who can describe the quality of His greatness?
 If the unconfused Agama-s and the great Veda-s,
 all of them are getting confused,
 Oh my dear,
 is it within the power of our mind and speech?
 Shame restrains me even from saying:
 “On that day when the darkness of ignorance will cease,
 we shall say something about this”.
 What shall I do about this,
 Oh my companion?

35

* * * * *

“Is it a sacred hill of red coral,
 or a ruby lamp,
 or a cluster of divine emeralds,
 or a hill of bright blue hue,
 or the brilliance of the gem
 on the crown of a snake,
 or the sparkle of pure gold,
 or a great exhibition of the colors of crystals?”
 Thinking thus, if people will say:
 “It is not in our power to say
 what the external hue of our great Lord is”,
 Oh my companion,
 how can I describe the hue
 of the President of the Assembly of Gnosis
 Who married me that day,
 saying that I am His equal?

36

* * * * *

If the deva-s, seers,
 eminent jeevan-muktha-s,
 skilled Civa-yogins,
 or those who have realized the perfect Being,
 or the Trinity, or the Five¹⁸¹
 or Paarvathi, the principal Sakthi, or God¹⁸²
 if none of them have understood
 the nature of my unique Chief,
 Whom we are thinking of now,
 will it be possible for me
 to understand Him and tell you?
 No, it will not be possible.
 He Who dances on the Hall of Gnosis
 while devotees worship Him eagerly,
 He knows His own greatness.
 He too does not know!

37

¹⁸¹ the five - Brahma, Vishnu, Rudhran, Sadhaacivam, and Maheshwaran.

¹⁸² God - God is different from Godhead. The Godhead is the attributeless supreme Being, the nirguna-Brahman. God is the Kaaryaeeshwarar Who is in time. He becomes and disbecomes.

* * * * *

Who can describe His brilliance
if the Veda-s and the Agama-s say
that He, becoming the Wisdom of the wisdom
of the great devotees who,
 having become slaves unto the sacred feet
 which, having taken a blissful sacred form,
 dance a sacred dance on the Hall of Gnosis, worship Him with flowers,
that He becoming the ambrosia of the bliss of Civam arising from the wisdom,
that He becoming the flavor
filling the ambrosia when it is tasted,
that He becoming the Fruition of such tasting,
that He becoming the Experience of that fruition,
fills everywhere and tastes sweet? 38

* * * * *

Of course I am capable
of uniting with the Lord of my soul,
the Lord of the heavenly sacred ash-dust laden body,
Who, dinning and dinning into me sweet words,
 which tasted sweet in every part of my mind
 as if the juices of the three kinds of fruit
 which had burst with ripening
 and the juice of the sugar-cane
 extracted with great ardor
 had been mixed,
 and thick rich milk-cream had been poured thereon,
 and honey from combs on the top of the trees
 had been added thereto,
 and all the concoction had been mixed
 with uniquely transcendental ambrosia
 and I had eaten it,
married me.
But am I capable of describing His glory?
I am not capable of it,
please note this, Oh my companion! 39

* * * * *

Oh maiden,
the Lord Who married me is the unique Lord
Who is dear to the Hall of Gnosis,
He is the Lord of the Golden Hall,
He is the Lord Who bestowed grace
on the Twelve¹⁸³ in the heavens,
He is the Lord Who created all the worlds,

He is the Lord Who protects the creatures thereon,
 He is the Sovereign Who exercises His sway of grace
 over the interior, the exterior,
 and the interiorly exterior of all the worlds
 without being apathetic towards any creature whatsoever!
 Therefore, do not take the nature of others
 as similar to my nature;
 others are people who have no love towards my Lord;
 if they have love, then think about them!

40

¹⁸³ the Twelve – the Twelve Vasu-s.

* * * * *

“Do not think of my nature
 as similar to the nature of others”, I said;
 Oh damsel,
 do not think that I said so out of haughtiness.
 I do not know of any other attachment
 than the one to my Lord.
 My acquaintances and others, my possessions,
 my exhilarated soul, my body, my sentiency,
 the happiness which the soul gains by that sentiency,
 all are dedicated
 to the sacred Hall of Gnosis alone;
 know that I am not a woman or a man or an eunuch
 (in so far as this subject is concerned)!¹⁸⁴

41

¹⁸⁴ Our Swaamikal seems to mean by this poem that he has lost every trace of a separate identity.

* * * * *

Do you think that my Lord of mukthi
 bestows His grace in return for the adoration
 He receives on each occasion He is praised by people
 who have realized the glory
 of His well-ordered unique righteous rule
 superbly exercised in the regions
 ranging from the earth
 to the country of the transcendental cosmic sound
 and farther beyond it too?
 Certainly not!
 He bestows His grace
 taking note of only the exuberant great love
 welling up from a ripened mind.
 Therefore, all those who have love unto Him
 are my choicest kin;
 I swear to this.
 You too ace my kin,
 because you have not forgotten love unto Him!

42

* * * * *

People say that the sovereignty of our Lord
 is exercised right up to the region of the cosmic sound.
 Is it only up to the region of the cosmic sound?
 Know that the sway of the gracious sovereignty
 of the Lord Who dances on the Hall
 extends to the ultima thule of learning,
 to the ultima thule of yoga,
 to the territory of the ultima thule of the kala-s,
 to the ultima thule of Vedaantha
 spoken of highly by authorities in it,
 to the etherial region
 of the ultima thule of the great Siddhaantha,
 and beyond them and beyond them,
 and beyond the ultima thule of the etherial region itself
 and beyond it too!

43

* * * * *

Whenever I think of the excellence
 of the sacred dance
 performed by the virtuous One,
 the Chief Who has entered my mind and is seated there,
 on the Hall rendering it resplendent thereby,
 I have eaten and am rid of my hunger!
 But you keep on calling me to eat food!
 Even if one sees the Hall in which
 my (Saama Veda—)chanting unique Husband dances,
 hunger will vanish!
 Not only by seeing,
 but also if one even thinks of that which is nearby,
 mental depression will cease,
 and ambrosia of bliss will seep forth!

44

* * * * *

Why should I be ashamed?
 All and sundry revile me, saying:
 “You garlanded (in matrimony)
 a Husband Who cuts capers in the Etherial Shrine.”
 All the words spoken
 by the Sakthi-s and Saktha-s and others
 in all the spheres
 and in the regions beyond the spheres
 are about the greatness of the dance of grace
 of my munificent Lord;
 they do not speak of anything else!
 The Veda-s along with the Agama-s
 expound the majesty of the sacred dance
 of the radiating Great Effulgence.
 Do they not?

45

* * * * *

Oh my companion,
 like people who have no intelligence,
 do you also say:

“You garlanded the eminent One,
the Dancer Who dances in the Etherial Shrine,
Who does not know His clan or His place (of birth)!”
Give up this gabbling yarn-spinning,
and listen to this.

Take note that if my Husband does not perform
the ceaseless sacred dance,
the Five such as Brahma, Vishnu, Haran and the rest,
and others,
the several creatures
who do not know how to escape
(from the cycle of births and deaths),
and you too,
all the coquetting and mincing of you all
here on earth
will fade away!

46

* * * * *

Oh foolish girl of creeper-like slender waist!
You referred to my Husband
as one Who cuts capers in the Etherial Shrine.
On this earth, in the heavens, in the nether regions,
in the crores of spheres
and in regions beyond them,
the illumination in all those places
is the illumination given out
by the sacred dance performed
by my Sire with His feet-blossom!
That this is the truth,
the wise Veda-s and the Aagama-s
go about beating a drum
very assertively!
Abandoning all your dejection,
listen to them and learn.

47

* * * * *

“My Lord comes to give me a blissful form,
the omnipotent Adept is coming here,
the Ambrosia Who tastes sweet
in the hearts of devotees is coming,
the Sire dancing in the Etherial Shrine is coming
with intent to turn a bony form
into a golden form, He comes!”
Thus the holy cosmic sound is intoning, Oh my dear!
To be rid of misery and to gain happiness
you too listen to that foretokening sound
standing by my side!

48

* * * * *

“The Great Effulgence of Grace
Who has transcended the Fourth State is coming
to give me a form of bliss,
the Succourer of the soul is coming,

the Lord rare to gain by the great Brahma and others
 is coming,
 the Adept Whom the Veda-s call the madman is coming,
 the Lord Who dances on the Hall of Gnosis
 which dispels fear is coming!”
 Thus the holy cosmic sound is announcing, Oh my dear!
 Oh my privileged companion,
 you too hear the foretokening sound here
 and rejoice to the destruction of the mental dejection!

49

* * * * *

I say:
 “The immanent Lord, the Chief of my soul, is coming,
 all of you please stay outside.”
 You ask: “What is wrong if we stay harmlessly inside?”
 If my Husband comes,
 before He graciously takes a seat,
 my desire making me feel no sense of shame,
 I will embrace Him and hug Him and rejoice;
 seeing that, people will be amazed
 and will ridicule me.

“She does not know any shame”, they will say;
 it is for this reason that I said so;
 I meant nothing else, Oh my companion!

50

* * * * *

“The King is coming”, I am proclaiming;
 do not have any doubt about it.
 Stand without fidgeting and listen attentively,
 Oh my companion,
 to the great clamor of the sound
 of musical instruments
 ranging from the drum, conch, veena,
 right up to the cosmic sound.
 Inspire deeply through your nose
 and sense the divine fragrance speedily wafted everywhere!
 Behold the Effulgence of Grace shining
 all along the street!
 Singing His praises,
 let us go forward and receive Him!
 Take up eagerly the camphor lamp
 and go with me rejoicingly,
 carefully sticking close to me!

51

* * * * *

Oh damsel of trailing tresses!
 You say:
 “Abandoning sense of shame and fear like a male,
 you are marching up to the Assembly!”
 Oh my companion,
 a dame externally embraced my Husband
 Who is the Way of life;
 “Vishnu” is her name,

she is armed with a discus,
on the deep sea she sleeps,
she rules in the great gem-set chamber,
don't you know her to be a male?
As a Husband, I had intimate union with Him,
His ambrosia of mercy I got.
Is it a matter for surprise that I have become a male?¹⁸⁵

52

¹⁸⁵ the soul is neither male nor female or an eunach, it has no sex.

* * * * *

You ask:
“Oh damsel with a waist like an hour-glass,
tell me, what is the reason
for this pride that has come over you!”
Vishnu, Brahma, the heavenly ones, sages and others,
having gained the privilege
of standing at the foot of the golden steps
leading to the Presence of my Husband
with sacred-ash-dust-laden form,
are filled with pride like the king of lightning.¹⁸⁶
I (on the other hand), to the amazement of all,
have ascended the steps to His Presence
and am drinking the ambrosia
seeping from the holy feet of the Chief!
What is the need to say the reason for my pride?

53

¹⁸⁶ the king of lightning – Indra.

* * * * *

You say:
“I do not understand this,
what you are looking at with amazement,
always staying here”.
Whenever you leave me and go away,
what shall I say of the kind of thing I see
at the moment when I am still
like the flame of a lamp,
a foreigner to a breeze?
A Great Effulgence,
Which the spheres and regions beyond them
have never known to appear in them,
appeared over the mountain
of the transcendent cosmic sound;
in the middle of that Effulgence
here appeared something;
Ah! THAT!
Was it of the brilliance of gold
which has never known valuation in carats,
or was it the light

graciously shed by the munificent Lord
dancing within that brilliance?
This is the reason for my amazement.

54

* * * * *

You tell me:

“The color of the holy body of the Dancer,
I shall go, and learning what it is,
shall come back and tell you.”

You do not know right or left here,
how are you going to find out
the beautiful color of my Husband
and come back and tell me?

You may not have seen
the poetic Veda-s and the Agama-s
saying: “We shall ascertain it with certainty”,
and going forth to do so, each by itself,
and their falling back stupified,
as if they had drunk a potful of toddy
at the very instant they saw the sacred color,
but have you not heard about it,
Oh my companion?

55

* * * * *

When I went in,
while all those who had clung to falsehood
were staying outside,
and, witnessing the dance on the Hall,
was rejoicing in my mind,
my Bridegroom said:
“Oh you who have apprehended Reality,
blessed be you!
Do shine in the world
that the Universal True Creed may shine therein”,
and took hold of my hand;
and I, in turn, took hold of His feet!
Saying: “Rejoice,
We will nevermore desert you,
We are garlanding you (in token of marriage)
with all the men of darkness-filled eyes
of all the world as witness”,
He garlanded me!

56

* * * * *

While all the unfit people were standing outside,
but I went in and was standing there
watching with rejoicing the dance in the Hall,
the unique Chief came deliberately near me
and took hold of my hand,
and I, in turn, took hold of His blossomy feet.
Saying: “Do not grieve,
do not get confused any more,
look, undying life has come to you alone;

with all the world respecting you,
live long with your ideas blossoming”,
He gave me a ring,
and clasped a golden bangle also on my wrist;
look at it, Oh my companion!

57

* * * * *

While all those who do not know Him stood outside,
but I went in,
and, witnessing the dance, was rejoicing
at that very moment,
the Chief, He Who has eyes
which have never been known to wink,
with a tender smile
dazzlingly playing on His benevolent face,
said while everyone was looking on:
“You have known Me”,
and took hold of my hand;
I too, forgetting myself,
took hold of the feet of the Lord.

He said:

“Becoming the very embodiment of gnosis
which does not know the burden (of care),
may you gain undying bliss
and live long.”

Note this, Oh my companion!

58

* * * * *

While all those who were filled with doubt
were standing outside
but I had gone in and was rejoicing in my mind
watching the sacred dance in the Etherial Shrine,
the munificent Lord,
in Whose mind there is no darkness (of ignorance);
came near me
and took hold of my girdle;
I too took hold of His feet.
Saying: “You are in the state of wakefulness;¹⁸⁷
keeping Us inside your body,
may you shine in the world
and may the state of the True Creed prevail”,
He clasped on my wrist a gold bangle
out of His mercy,
He Who is like a mother to me!
See this, Oh my companion!

59

¹⁸⁷ state of wakefulness – one of the four states of awareness which are wakeful state, dream state, state of deep sleep and the Fourth State which transcends the other three.

* * * * *

Jaundice-eyed people, many in number,
longed for His flower-garland,

people with eyes affected by conjunctivitis,
many in number,
wandered about to catch His fragrance,
many others,
whose entire bodies were covered over
with female genital organ-like eyes (sores)¹⁸⁸,
deluded by an arrogance of the mind

¹⁸⁸ female genital organ-like eyes – Indra, the king of the heavenly ones, is said to have been so afflicted as a penalty for lusting after the wife of a Rishi.

born of mighty darkness,
were wandering about
in a frenzied state;
yes, making all of them watch and feel ashamed,
the rare Great Effulgence desired me
and married me.

Oh damsel with tresses
decked with honeyed chaplets,
the *thavam* performed by me,
the deva-s or the Trinity have not performed!
Note this and learn!

* * * * *

60

I said: “Jaundice-eyed people,
people with eyes affected by conjunctivitis,
and people with several sores
like female genital organs”.
Yes, Vishnu, and that Brahma, Indra,
and besides them, other deva-s,
the cluster of small maayaa-sakthi-s
which are made up of atoms in eternal motion,
were these the only ones?

Sakthi-s arising from maa-maayai,
divine cluster of sakthi-s of the Onkaara,
while all these were wide awake,
me alone He adorned with the garland,
the Lord Who owns the Hall of Gnosis,
Oh my companion!

* * * * *

61

Oh dame, listen to this!
If the atoms arising from the (dust on the) surface
of the sandals worn by the dance-performing feet-blossoms
take shape
as crore crore great Rudhra-s,
as crore crore Vishnu-s holding the discus,
as crore crore flower-seated Brahma-s,
as many crores of Indra-s,
and perform various functions here,
who can describe the greatness
of our Sire's sacred feet,

Oh my companion?

62

* * * * *

Rudhra-s, one crore of them,
Naarana-s, several crores,
Brahma-s, many crores,
Indra-s, numerous crores,
other great deva-s, seers, and others,
at the least computation, endless crores of them,
all gathered here and there
and standing by the side of the steps
leading to the perfect sacred Assembly,
their minds bent on witnessing the dance,
are, alas, hesitating to enter the Hall.
But, I, a mere female,
without meeting with any difficulty,
ascended the steps,
and am watching the great dance!

My grand *thavam* is great indeed!

63

* * * * *

While the kings of the earth,
the kings of the bhuvanams,
the kings of the spheres,
the kings of the regions beyond the spheres,
the kings of the skies and other kings
were standing, uncertain of what to do,
at the bottom of the sacred steps
of undiminishing beauty,
my Lord lifted me up,
and I stood there paying obeisance to Him.
I beheld the undimingly glorious dance
of the ultima thule of yoga,
the sacred dance of the ultima thule of the holy kala-s,
the dance performed in the region
of the ultima thule of the cosmic sound,
the dance of undying fame
of the ultima thule of knowledge;
I received the holy ambrosial food also!
Great, indeed, is the *thavam* performed by me
in this vast world!

64

* * * * *

What shall I say, Oh my companion,
about the sight I saw later on!
Note that it is beyond description (in words)
or conception by the mind!
Loving dance of Siddhaantha,
and the dance of the Vedaantha,
I saw in the Hall
of the beginning, middle, and endless Effulgence!
In the unique Hall of Bliss
I beheld also that unique dance

of the transcendently transcendent
 universal great Ultima Thule¹⁸⁹
 Which, shining resplendently
 as the quintessence of bliss,
 as one, as two, as neither one nor two,
 as omnipotent,
 becomes the Godhead!

65

¹⁸⁹ Brahman.

* * * * *

“Go to sleep”, you say.
 Will I sleep?
 At this particular moment of my Lord's coming,
 will sleep come to me?
 Oh my companion,
 since you have to be alone here,
 make all my sleep your own,
 go outside without any worry and sleep.
 As soon as my Lord,
 Who is like the pupils of my eyes to me,
 has joined me, I shall have union with Him exultingly,
 and, after He and I have become one,
 I will wake you up with pleasure!

66

* * * * *

“Have no doubt about it,
 We will come in the morning,
 here is Our oath”, He said.
 Note that this is an oath of Grace!
 Darkness has gone to enter the minds of the wicked,
 night has given place to day,
 this is the moment of the arrival
 of the good flame, the Dawn.
 Oh damsel,
 as I have to be alone hereafter,
 please stay for a while in that place outside;
 after the Chief has come,
 and I have had union with Him,
 and He and I have become one,
 I will call you with pleasure!

67

* * * * *

The Owner of the Hall,
 my Husband,
 the Lord of my soul,
 the gem of a word graciously uttered by Him
 is like unto a rock in firmness,
 Oh my companion!
 The dense dark night has vanished.
 Since the light of the dust of several maayai-s
 has vanished along with the light

of maa-maayai—the moon,
 today, the Great Effulgence that is grace has dawned.
 Therefore, stay outside
 from now on for a little while.
 After I have had union with Him,
 and He and I have become one,
 I will call you with pleasure!

* * * * *

68

This is the twilight hour,
 the dawn that is grace is appearing,
 this is the moment of the arrival
 of my munificent Lord.
 Do not talk any more even a single word;
 I have to be alone here.
 Oh damsel of trailing tresses,
 do, therefore, go there
 and stay with the band of the thatthwa girls
 without talking any falsehoods
 but speaking of the glory of God as it is.
 Immediately after the Adept,
 Who bestowed fresh ambrosia on me,
 has come, and I have had union with Him,
 and He and I have become one,
 I will call you with pleasure!

* * * * *

69

I told you that my Husband will come in the morning;
 did it not reach your ears?
 You are gossiping here
 as one who has no work to do.
 It has dawned.
 Since I have to be alone,
 Oh my companion,
 go and pluck flowers in the grove, and,
 after stringing them,
 come and sit outside.
 After my Succourer has come
 and I have had union with Him leisurely,
 and He and I have become one,
 I will call you with pleasure!

* * * * *

70

The day has dawned,
 the great darkness called aanavam (ignorance)
 has vanished;
 behold, all the multitude of cruel karma
 has burned out,
 maayai's back is broken,
 maa-maayai has been got rid of,
 the concealing veil has ceased to exist,
 the great light has risen (in the horizon),
 anytime now is the moment of arrival of the Chief.

Since I must, positively, be alone,
 Oh damsel of honeyed words, stay outside.
 After the Lord has come
 and I have had union with Him
 with close bodily contact,
 and He and I have become one,
 I will call you with pleasure!

71

* * * * *

Do not say, Oh my companion,
 “It is the custom of people of the world
 to have union with their husbands in the evening,
 but you ask me to go out
 that you may have union in the morning;
 I have not seen such a strange thing”.
 Bearing in mind what is written on the palm leaf,
 you are getting confused.
 Therefore, take this clue;
 if you will stay a little while
 in the Dharmachchaalai
 and in the Society of the Universal True Path,
 you will realize the secret of this and understand.

72

* * * * *

People of the world have union
 with their husbands in the middle of the night;
 they do not know the correct procedure,
 they do not know how to be redeemed,
 they know infatuation only.
 At the moment when they stand stupified,
 having drunk toddy clandestinely,
 if they are offered a fruit,
 will they eat it and discover its flavor
 and rejoice?
 In the union which these people have,
 which is as if they have fallen into a well,
 there is no joy, Oh my dear,
 there is only misery!
 Oh my companion,
 the bliss resulting from the union
 which my Husband has with me in the morning,
 full of awareness of it,
 is not possible of description!

73

* * * * *

Oh my special companion,
 listen to this;
 do not get confused!
 At the moment when I embrace the shoulders
 of the omnipotent One, the Lord of my soul,
 note that it is the blissful state
 called the unique state of awareness of Civam.
 Do not understand this said state

as the transcendental wakeful state.
 It is the state where the transcendental wakeful state
 ceases to be.
 Remaining in a state of high enlightenment,
 understand the state I am in during union (with the Lord)
 as the great high thuriya state
 which transcends the other two states!¹⁹⁰

74

¹⁹⁰ While it is clear that the state referred to by our Swaamikal is the thuriyaatheetha state, the state of awareness transcending the thureeya state (Fourth state), it is not clear what our Swaamikal means by the phrase, 'the other two states'. Perhaps, they are the sushupti (deep sleep) and thuriya (Fourth) states.

* * * * *

Listen to the words I say, Oh my companion!
 That moment when I embrace the unique form of my
 is the state which those who have experienced it
 speak of as the heavens-praising pure awareness of Civam.
 Know distinctly that the state which results
 from blending with the taste of the form,
 from becoming the form itself,
 from becoming a light formed of good gems
 blended with the good taste
 in which honey has been blended,
 from becoming blended, without misconception,
 with the genuine blissful Civam,
 is the state of jaagraatheetham¹⁹¹
 (a state transcending the state of awareness)
 which exists beyond the said three others states!¹⁹²

75

¹⁹¹ jaagraatheetham - evidently, our Swaamikal means here the state of thuriyaatheetham, the state transcending the Fourth state, the thuriya state.

¹⁹² the said three other states - the dream state, the state of deep sleep, and the Fourth state.

* * * * *

People of this world have union at night!
 How can I describe it?
 Nevertheless, listen to this.
 They have union in the lonely hour of darkness
 in a dark room,
 without wise people seeing it even the least,
 after having drunk toddy without limit
 and with their eyes blind-folded to their misery,
 and with everything hidden from them.
 They do not find even a moment's joy.
 (On the other hand),
 who is capable of describing the bliss
 of the moment when I have union

with my Husband perfectly in the morning?

76

* * * * *

Oh damsel,

why should we hide anything like girls with bodies
which have not known the feel of the marriage string!

You said:

“Girls will feel ashamed to have union in the morning.”

Your words apply only to girls
who have not known love.

Oh my companion,

have you not known that desire knows no shame?

You do not know the joy of it,

that is why you speak like this.

Know that at the moment

of seeing the holy feet of the Lord,

nothing like misery-free morning or evening

will occur to your mind;

bliss only you will feel!

77

* * * * *

The Lord of Grace, the Lord Who owns me,
the handsome Lord Who dances in the Etherial Shrine,
the omnipotent Lord,

note that the time of His graciously coming to us
will never occur during the darkness-filled night.

If you are wondering why it is so,

I will tell you, listen, Oh damsel!

The effulgence of the holy body

of my unique Chief, the Owner of Gnosis,

transcending regions ranging from this famed world

to the world of the cosmic sound,

and transcending also the etherial region

of the transcendent cosmic sound,

and beyond and beyond,

will shine filling the interior

and exterior of everything!

78

* * * * *

Oh dear, I am stringing a garland of words.

You ask: “To adorn whom?”

Oh my companion, don't you know it?

This garland,

unless it is for my Lord in the Etherial Shrine,

whom else shall I adorn with it!

Tell me, where is anyone else

who can wear this?

You said this mean word out of arrogance!

It is to my ear, as if fire has entered it!

Your mind and your tongue

have been created out of iron

instead of by a mixture of several thatthwa-s.

Know that I have put up with you

for the sake of acquaintanceship!

79

* * * * *

Is it not due to adorning the feet dancing on the Hall
with garlands of words
according to their respective ranks
that the people of the several crores of visible spheres
and spheres beyond them,
seeking suzerainty over those lands,
are established there as long-lived deva-s,
as moorthi-s, as eternal beings?

All the songs sung by me
are for the Golden Hall,
are for the Hall of Gnosis,
Oh my companion!

80

* * * * *

I am stringing a garland.
This is only for the Lord
Who is dancing on the Hall of Gems,
this is only for His foot lifted in dance-pose,
this is only for the foot planted
(on the floor of the Hall)
which bestows grace on those
who seek refuge under it.
I bestow this
on the sacred decorative anklets
worn by those feet.
Would I give it to others?
I will take up in my hand the battle-axe, saying:
“Other than the Lord
dwelling in the Hall of Gnosis, in the Golden Hall,
there is no one worthy of my garland!”

81

* * * * *

This garland which I am stringing,
note that people of the world,
considering it a mere flower garland,
will not wear it on their heads.
But they will wear others strung by the heavenly ones,
or by the Veda-s or by the Agama-s.
All those garlands strung by them
by virtue of religion
are garlands on the shoulders of prostitutes.
But my unique garland
will not take notice of anything else
than the planted and lifted feet
which dance in the middle of the Hall of Grace.
Since it is a supreme one,
it belongs to them only!

82

* * * * *

The munificent Lord
Who dances on the Hall of Gems

bestowed by heaven (on earth),
the omnipotent Lord
plucks flowers from my mind and gives me;
I receive them and string them into a garland.
Can other chiefs wear it?
Have they the fitness to wear it?
They belong only to the sacred feet
which, tasting sweet
like the flavor given out by honey,
perform a holy dance in my mind!
Is this garland the only present I give?
Oh my companion,
I have given with willing mind
my soul, my body, and my possessions

83

* * * * *

Is it my garland only?
It does not matter whose garland of words it is;
provided it is sung
with the Lord alone as its objective,
it is a good garland.
To that garland of words, indeed,
I dedicate myself as a slave,
many prostration I make.
Oh my dear,
mean garlands (of words) many many,
people utter.
Every time they enter my ears,
like lies entering them,
they cause in me
a special kind of disease
of severe distress.
Are they fit to be heard by Him
Who dances on the Hall
to tunes sung therefor?

84

* * * * *

The rightful great unique Chief,
the Thuriyar¹⁹³,
Who exercises a unique sway
over the interior and the exterior
of the six ultima thules,
the Lord with the form of bliss
Who has transcended the Fourth state of awareness,
the Adept Who performs the pure dance on the Hall,
His anklet-girt feet, indeed, is the place
at which all the chiefs of great position stand.
Oh my companion,
do you despise this as the talk of a mere girl,
do you take it as such?
This is also the solemn deposition
which the rare great meaningful Veda-s

and the Agama-s utter!
Know that there is no doubt about this!

85

¹⁹³ the Thuriyar - the Lord Who can be apprehended only in the Fourth State of awareness.

* * * * *
Will those who dance about
possessed by the demon called pride
behold the great dance
which the munificent Lord performs on the Hall?
They think they are eternal;
alas, they do not know that they will die!
Have these people got the fitness
to learn the art of not dying?
Are these immature religious disputants
the ones who, you said, spoke slightly of me
who have been redeemed,
having witnessed the dance on the Hall of Gnosis?
The words you spoke that day,
were they not tall stories?
Go and see, today they are worshipping Him there,
uttering songs of praise!

86

* * * * *
These religious disputants,
who do not know
that this rare Great Effulgence Himself
is the God to each and everyone
in whatever worlds they are,
are talking nonsense
like the story of the miserable blind men
who saw an elephant.
They do not know the state described
by the teaching on not dying.
Oh damsel with eyes like those of a fawn,
did you say that these people spoke slightly of me?
I witnessed the dance of gnosis,
I partook of the honeyed ambrosia of Reality,
I have joined the Society
of the Perfect Universal True Creed,
those evil words too have become honeyed words!

87

* * * * *
You ask me to tell the name of my Husband,
the Lord of great overflowing grace;
the munificent One Who dances in the Etherial Shrine!
Arukar, Buddha, Aadhi, I say;
Brahma, I say;
Naaraayana, I say;
Haran, I say;
the primeval Civan, I say;

Sakthi-Civam, I say;
transcendent Being, I say;
Brahmam, I say;
transcendental Brahmam, I say;
the pure Brahmam, object of our research, I say;
the Fullness of the Fourth State, I say;
pure Civam, I say;
these are but the leelaa (play) of the Adept!

88

* * * * *

You ask:
“Will the names of gods of extraneous religions
suit the Lord Who dances on the Hall of Gnosis?”
Note that the names of the gods of later religions
are also His names.

To Him Who has got a name as 'Madman',
what other name will not suit?
Are the names of the gods of those religions only
suitable to Him?

Your name, my name, are His name,
the name of every creature is His name.

Oh my companion,
the very moment you witness
the sacred dance of gnosis
performed by my Husband
on the Hall of Gnosis,
this will be clear to you!

89

* * * * *

I learnt that the Real Being
Which, taking a natural true form of gnosis and bliss,
dances in the interior and the exterior
of every object and every creature
is Civam only.

I will explain it to you also, Oh damsel!
You are again arguing!
Why are you talking of this object and that object?
If you will only dispassionately witness
the never-before seen dance of bliss
performed by the Lord on the Hall,
everything will be as clear as daylight!

90

* * * * *

I am seeing sights never before seen
(at any time, anywhere, by anyone)!
I blended with the Husband
Who is performing a dance of mercy on the Hall,
I have gained a life
of undiminishing experience of bliss
in a never wavering great state.¹⁹⁴
I have got rid of all meanness.
Day after day, singing and singing of the dance
on the sacred Hall,

I am greatly enjoying it!
 I have gained the boon of the mortal body
 turning into a golden body!
 Note, moreover, that I gained the look of grace
 of the munificent Lord,
 Oh my companion!

91

¹⁹⁴ great state - the thuriya state, the Fourth state of awareness, in which only the Godhead can be apprehended.

* * * * *

Oh Lord, today, with You instructing me, out of love,
 the true state,
 I learnt exactly what You, dwelling in my mind,
 had instructed me in the very beginning,
 that all the theological rubbish
 which has marked out many streets in castes and creeds
 is worthless,
 and I arrived at the Universal Pure Creed
 which those who have realized it by study praise!
 I got the opportunity to behold the Assembly of Gnosis,
 and I received within me
 the King of the dance of effulgence
 Who is the Reality,
 my Spouse, the Life of my life,
 the Fullness of true bliss,
 and I rejoice thereat!

92

* * * * *

I saw each and each of the four states of sariyai,
 the four states of kriyai, the four states of yoga,
 and the four states of gnaanam,
 and understood them all¹⁹⁵
 I understood with the help of the light of grace
 the four states relating to Civa-gnaanam, (one by one),
 I gained the true state high above them.
 I understood the states of the six ultima thules
 ranging from the ultima thule
 of the rare Civa-Siddhaantha
 and of the Vedaantha.
 And by experiencing the great Civam
 Who is soaring beyond all these,
 I gained the Universal True Path,
 and here reached the immortal state.
 Note all this, Oh my companion!

93

¹⁹⁵ The word 'sariyai' is derived from 'chara', to walk, to observe. Here it has the meaning of observing the codes of righteous conduct laid down by works on ethics, such as the Thirukkural, etc. 'Kriyai' is derived from the word 'kru', to do. Here 'kriyai' has the meaning of doing physical service to God (and His devotees) such as sweeping the precincts of His temple, plucking flowers and stringing garlands for Him, serving

His devotees, etc. Yoga is derived from `yujir', to unite! Here it has the meaning of being united with the Godhead in meditation and contemplation. 'Gnaanam' is derived from the word `gnaa', to know (in all senses). Here it has the meaning of gaining immediate knowledge of the Godhead, the Reality. Each of these is said not to exist alone but to have in each an element of the other three. Thus there is a sariyai-sariyai, sariyai-Kriyai, sariyai-yogam, sariyai-gnaanam, and so on. See Appendix I for further explanation.

* * * * * * * *

Whenever I was hungry,
giving me pure food,
as if He Himself were hungry,
and ridding me of the harassing hunger,
He graciously established both His feet
in my heart replete with flesh,
and gave me sanctuary.
At the moment when my Bridegroom—
Who dances on the Hall of Gnosis,
and Who is rare for even the king of the heavens to gain—
embraced me externally,
I hugged the golden form,
which He pressed on me,
and rejoiced!
As regards the famed esoteric embrace,
is it possible to tell you its sublimity?

94

* * * * * * * *

I have experienced the state of transcendental wakefulness
which is still a subject of research to others,
I have experienced the state of transcendental dreaming,
I have experienced the state
of transcendental deep sleep,
I am experiencing the great Fourth state,
I have joined the Universal True Path,
and, gaining the embrace of my Husband
Who is dancing the dance of grace on the Hall,
I have become His form;
I live, delighting in it,
a life that has no match to it,
Oh my companion!

95

* * * * * * * *

In a unique pure wakeful state of bliss
I remained alone,
I attained the pure dream state of bliss,
I delighted in the state of bliss
of the fruitful true pure state of deep sleep,
I blended with the pure Fourth state of bliss,
and in the pure blissful state
transcending the Fourth state of bliss,
I became IT,
I became the birthless ONE,

I became everything and nothing,
 and gained FRUITION
 as the very embodiment of Civam.
 As a result of gaining
 the sweet-tasting Lord of the Hall of Gnosis,
 I gained all these
 and am with you here,
 Oh my companion!

96

* * * * *

At the moment
 when I stood embracing the golden body
 of the Chief of the Effulgence of Grace,
 the Husband full of love to me,
 gone were all thatthwa-s of the breed of dark ignorance!
 everywhere, everything was transformed
 into a great light.
 There, at the moment when He,
 ridding me of the taint of delusion,
 had union with me,
 I gained FRUITION,
 becoming transformed into the form
 of eternal bliss that is CIVAM.
 I entered along with my Husband
 the sacred Assembly of Universal True Creed
 which flourishes on the strength of gnosis.

97

* * * * *

That moment when my Husband
 had external union with me
 is the moment when I partook of the fresh ambrosia
 and exulted.
 About the joy of the moment
 when, transforming me into remarkable EXPERIENCE,
 He had internal union with me,
 how can I relate it?
 This is not a matter like other unions.
 (A flood of) great enjoyment, great bliss
 swelled up and filled everywhere.
 It is the state where,
 without any feeling of obstruction,
 I become IT,
 IT becomes me,
 We became embodiment of gnosis,
 and IT BECAME IT!¹⁹⁶

98

¹⁹⁶ IT BECAME IT – what is meant by this phrase is very lucidly stated by Thomas Merton. He says:

“And here, when contemplation becomes what it is really meant to be, it is no longer something poured out of God into a created subject, so much as God living in God, and identifying a created life with His own life so that there is nothing left of any experimental significance but God living in God.”

* * * * *

He Who has more compassion than a mother,
the unique Chief Who blended with my soul,
I gained Him by the great *thavam* I performed.
He dances on the Hall of the Fourth State,
the glory of which cannot be assessed or measured
by word or mind or great intelligence,
or by any other means.
Nevertheless, as far as I am concerned,
He, as an easily accessible person,
united with me internally,
united with me externally!
At the moment
when He had external union with me,
I received a pure light
and was transformed
into an undying superb form.
How can I say anything
about the esoteric union
which is the embodiment of bliss?

99

* * * * *

In the days of my nescience itself
He called me peremptorily
and bade me compose songs
to the dancing holy feet.
All the offences committed by this mean fellow
of a mind unfocussed on Him
He took as mere delightful frolics
and donned my garland.
The great Lord Nataraja,
Who, inseparably mingling in me, tastes sweet,
united with me in marriage.
How can I express here the degree of intensity
of that esoteric union
which the wise One Who is grace incarnate
graciously bestowed on me
that I may thrive
without attachments foreign to this union
destroying me?

100

* * * * *

Here ends the Garland of Experience. Without fear of contradiction, I dare say that there is no similar record of the Godhead in Indian devotional literature. I say 'Indian devotional literature' guardedly, for I believe that there exists a great volume of such literature in the outpourings of the Sufi-s, particularly Jalal-ud-din Rumi and in the writings of the Early Christian Mystics, particularly, St. John of the Cross.

Our Swaamikal has not described this highly esoteric experience out of any pride or vanity. It is at the express command of Lord Nataraja Himself that he has

related this experience of experiences, this experience in which the experiencer becomes EXPERIENCE itself. And God ordered him to do so out of His unbounded mercy that mankind may profit by this. Our Swaamikal places this fact on record in the following song. He sings:

I have related all this
by the sacred command of Him
Who, becoming an Illustration to the name 'Civam', 'Bliss',
performs the unique dance of bliss
on the great gem-set Hall of Gnosis
while plenty of devoted great gods
discharge all His functions (at His command),
and people whose *thavam* has borne fulfillment
pay obeisance to Him.

5814. VI 143 satthiya vaarthai 1

As I have said before, these one hundred and one stanzas and the four that follow were sung on the 30th January 1874, and concluded just sixty minutes before our Swaamikal vanished for ever from the ken of mankind. We should remember that, according to the Western calendar, a day begins at 12 hours midnight. In the four stanzas of the next decad, the 144th and the last in the Sixth Book as well in the Thiruvartupaa, our Swaamikal swears to this. He sings:

My Sire, my Monseigneur,
the Lord of my soul,
comes today and takes seat
at the place where I am.
In the two and a half naazhikai-s which follow,
He will blend with my grand body
and will abide in my heart
without ever departing therefrom.
By the strength of my great *thavam*,
I proclaim with full knowledge of what I am saying
“This is the truth, the truth indeed!”
Oh damsel with waist which resembles lightning,
my words will become clear to you
when two and a half naazhikai-s¹⁹⁷ are past!

5818. VI.144 satthiya arivippu 4

The journey of our Swaamikal to the Godhead ends here in the brahma-muhoortham, at the hour of dawn on the 30th of January 1874. And that day was a full-moon day in Thai, the first month of the uttharaayanam, the six months of the northern path of the sun, which corresponds to the period between 13th or 14th January and the 13th or 14th of July. The Bhagavad-Geethaa says:

“Fire, light, day-time, the bright fortnight,
the six months of the northern path (of the sun)
then going forth, the men who know the ETERNAL

go to the ETERNAL.”

arut-perum jothi! arut-perum jothi!
thani-p-perum karunai! arut-perum jothi!

APPENDIX I-INSTITUTIONS

Certain Christian theologians lay as much emphasis on 'works' as on prayer. They go so far as to say that a life solely dedicated to contemplation is neither desirable nor profitable. They insist on works as well. Our Swaamikal was not merely a contemplative, he was also a man of works. His three great works are:

1. Founding of the 'Samarasa Suddha Sanmaarga Satthiya Sangam,' The True (Original or Genuine) Society of the Universal Pure True Path (or Creed).
2. The establishment of Satthiya Dharumachchaalai. The True (Original or Genuine) Free Feeding House.
3. The construction of Satthiya Gnaana Sabhai, the True (Original or Genuine) Hall of Gnosis.

In these three institutions are embodied all the teachings and spiritual experiences of our Swaamikal so lavishly poured out in song in the Thiruvirutpaa's 5818 stanzas. They are the embodiment of the most sublime thoughts of the Thiruvirutpaa. These institutions were founded in the order in which they are stated above.

The Samarasa Suddha Sanmaarga Satthiya Sangam was the first to be established. It was founded in 1865, just seven years after our Swaamikal's arrival in Karunkuzhi, and two years before he left Karunkuzhi for Vadaloar. 'Samarasa Veda Sanmaarga Sangam' was the name first given to the Society. Later it was changed to 'The Samarasa Suddha Sanmaarga Satthiya Sangam'. Before we proceed further, it would profit us very much to dwell on the significance of each of the words which constitute the name of the Society. The word 'Samarasa', 'Universal', proclaims that the Society will be open to everyone irrespective of nationality, language, caste, creed or color.

Raamalinga Swaamikal wanted to establish in our land a religion shorn of all stifling accretions of castes and sects, of petty gods and propitiatory sacrifices, of the mumbo-jumbo of rituals which had lost their meaning and purpose, rid of soul-killing superstitions. And for this purpose he established the Samarasa Suddha Sanmaarga Satthiya Sangam. The word 'Suddha', 'pure' stands for this ideal.

It is 'san-maargam' we should understand next. Maargam means, primarily, path. Creed is another meaning. What is san-maargam? Are there other maargam-s? Yes, there are. Caiva-siddhaantha, and, for that matter, Vedaanta too state them as four, namely, san-maargam, saha-maargam, satputhra-maargam, and dhaasa-maargam. A poem in Civagnaana-siddhiyaar, the second most important scripture of Caiva-siddhaantha defines these thus:

San-maargam, saha-maargam, satputhra-maargam, dhaasamaargam, to gain Sankaran, good paths four are these;

gnaana, yoga, kriyai, sariyai, thus also these are called. The mukthi-s gained by these paths are of four kinds,

saalokiya, saameepiya, saaroopiya, and saaujjiya;
the mukthi gained by the aforesaid gnaana,
the learned say, is the final one;
the other three, they call padha-mukthi.

The mukthi-s gained by the respective paths have been given in the above poem in the reverse order. The line should be recast to read `saaujjiya, saaroopiya, saameepiya and saalokiya. Sanmargam means the best or true path, saha-maargam means the path of companionship, sat-puthra maargam means the path of the good son, and dhaasa-maargam means the path of a servant. A table will help to clarify the subject.

<i>Paths</i>	<i>Mukthi</i>
sariyai or dhaasa-maargam	saalokam
kiriyai or satputhra-maargam	saameepam
yogam or saha-maargam	saaroopam
gnaanam or san-maargam	saaujjiyam.

Saaujjiyam means union with the Godhead, saaroopam means a pada-mukthi or a graded mukthi where the devotee gains for a period of time a similarity of form with God. Saameepam means that the devotee gains the privilege of being close to God in His audience Chamber for a period. Saalokam means gaining a darsan of God, having a vision of Him for a certain period or being in the same world as God, just as a servant lives in a King's palace. The last three are also called krama-mukthi, mukthi by stages, or graded mukthi. Such mukthi-s are not final. It is saaujjiya mukthi only which is eternal deliverance. And this is gained by sanmaargam.

Let us have a close look at the various maargams. Of the Daasa-maargam or sariyai, the Civa-gnaana-siddhiyaar says:

Were I to define dhaasa-maargam,
it is sweeping the floor of Sankaran's temple,
scrubbing it with cow-dung water,
plucking flowers and preparing many garlands and chaplets
for the Lord,
singing His praises,
lighting lamps in the temple,
maintaining a flower garden
(for supplying flowers for the Lord's worship),
and when coming across a person
in the holy garb of a devotee of Civan,
enquiring of him, "What is the service I can do for you,
please command me", and doing such services.

The Thirumanthiram says in this context:

Lighting good lamps, plucking flowers,

scrubbing the floor with soft fresh cow-dung,
sweeping the floor with a broom,
praising God in songs, telling the beads,
preparing various kinds of cosmetics
for the bath of God's image in the temple,
cooking the offering for God,
this, indeed, is dhaasa-maargam.

About the Sat-puthra maargam or kriyai, the Path of the Good Son, Civa-gnaana-siddhiyaar says:

New fragrant flowers, incense, lamp, materials for the bath, offerings,
with these in hand go to a suitable place,
clean the place by the five processes, place a seat (for the God),
install the image of God thereon,
meditate on the form of God and the Light that is God,
invoke Him to descend and occupy the image,
worship Him with great devotion
with flower offerings and songs and obeisance,
perform with ardor the religious acts
associated with the sacrificial fire.
Those who do these acts daily
will abide by the side of the Lord.

Of the Sahamaargam, the Civa-gnaana-siddhiyaar says thus:

Saha-maargam is:
Being engaged in the contemplation
of the Whole Effulgence
by the process of
controlling the (five) senses,
obstructing the flow of the two breaths
and bringing it to a state of stirlessness,
gaining knowledge of the six centres (plexes) (in the body)
and understanding their deep significance,
passing through them to the top,
partaking of the ambrosia
from the region of the moon (within the human body)
and storing it up to the fullest extent in the body,
and other acts;
in short, going through all the eight phases of yoga.

The Civa-gnaana-siddhiyaar says of the San-maargam thus:

San-maargam is:
Learning all the arts,
the puraanaa-s, the Veda-s,
the saastra-s, the philosophies, creeds, etcetera,
learning the contents of several religions
from top to bottom,

knowing what is God, what are creatures,
what the malam-s,
seeking the good path which discloses
the transcendent Civam,
and gaining the privilege
of becoming one with Civan
without any trace of the sense of separateness
of Gnosis (Knowledge), the Thing to be known
(i.e. The Godhead) and the Knower.

Our Swaamikal claims in the 93rd stanza of the 'Anubhavamaalai ' that he went through all these four maargam-s and gained knowledge of The Universal True Path for the propagation of which he founded the Society we are now considering.

The traditional significance of the four maargam-s are:

1. Dhaasamaargam - becoming a slave unto God.
2. Satputhra-maargam - becoming a son of God.
3. Saha-maargam - becoming a companion of God.
4. San-maargam - becoming verily God Himself.

Our Swaamikal saw something different, something which he only can see, something unique as the significance of these maargam-s. To him,

1. Dhaasamaargam meant becoming a servant, a slave to all creatures.
2. Satputramaargam meant becoming a son to all living creatures.
3. Sahamaargam meant looking upon all creatures as his friend and looking upon himself as the friend of all creatures.
4. Sanmaargam meant looking upon the lives of all creatures as his own life.

These four paths do not exist solely as such; each has an admixture of the other three but is called, however, by the name of the path which has a predominant proportion in the mixture. Thus there is in the gnaana-maargam a gnaana-sariyai maargam, a gnaana-kriyai maargam, a gnaana-yoga maargam and a gnaana-gnaana maargam, namely a purely gnaana maarga. In other words there is a gnaana-dhaasa maargam and a gnaana-satputra maargam, a gnaana-saha maargam and a gnaana-sanmaargam. Of the Four Camayakuravar-s, Saint Thirunaavukkarasar is identified as one who followed the gnaana-kiriyai maargam, Saint Thirugnaanasambandhar as a follower of the gnaana-sariyai maargam, Saint Sundaramoorthi Swaamikal as a follower of the gnaana-yoga maargam, and Saint Maanikkavaachakar as the follower of gnaana-sanmargam. Another name for the san-margam is the Bhakthimaargam or the Gnaana-bhakthi maargam as some people like to call it. Gnaana-maargam, gnaana-gnaana maargam, san-maargam and bhakthi maargam are interchangeable terms. The mukthi gained by this maargam is saayujjiyam, or union with the Godhead, eternal deliverance. The Society which our Swaamikal established was, then, the Society of the Universal Pure (or Original) Gnaana alias Bhakthi True Path (or Creed) for the apprehension of the Godhead, for gaining saayujjiya mukthi, eternal deliverance from the bonds of birth and death.

The Credo of the Universal Sanmaargam is

1. There is only one God.
2. He should be worshipped in the form of an Effulgence of Light by true love (devotion, bhakthi).
3. Petty gods and deities should not be worshipped.
4. Sacrifices of living creatures should not be performed in the name of those gods.
5. Flesh of creatures should not be eaten.
6. No differences of castes, religions, sects, etc. should be observed.
7. Every life should be held in as much regard as one's own life on the basis of the principle of Universal Brotherhood, on the principle that all lives are equal in the eyes of God. Unlike the Universal Brotherhood of other societies, which sprang up in India and abroad, the Universal Brotherhood of this Society extends to animals and even plants.
8. Assuaging the hunger of the poor is the key to The Kingdom of Heaven.
9. The dead should not be cremated, but should be buried.
10. All superstitious beliefs, customs, and practices should be given up.

Our Swaamikal himself has on one occasion explained what is meant by “The Society of the Universal Pure True Path or Creed”. He said: “Understand that it is a Society of people who follow the fourth maargam which is the quintessence of the teachings of the Book of Wisdom universal to people of all religions. The afore-mentioned four maargam-s are dhaasamaargam, satputra-maargam, sahamaargam, and sanmaargam.”

It would appear that our Swaamikal either wrote or intended to write a Book of Wisdom for the Society of the Universal Pure True Creed. References are to be found to this in his own works and in the utterance of one of his disciples. It is a great pity that it is lost to us.

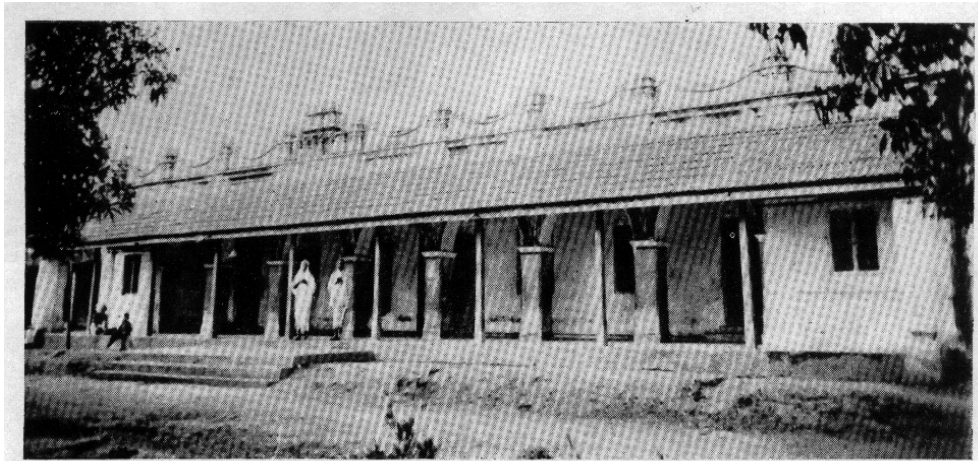
This Sangam, however, was a loose-knit organization and had its headquarters in what became later on the Dharumachchaalai. If the Swaamikal had deigned to stay in the world a few years longer it is possible that he would have established it on a footing that would have ensured its unbroken continuity. But this was not to be.

One of the items, or, rather, the principal item in the Credo of the Sanmaarga Sangam is “Assuaging the hunger of the poor is the key to the Kingdom of Heaven”. That he might become possessed of that unique Key, our Swaamikal established the Sathiya Dharumachchaalai on the 23rd of May 1867.

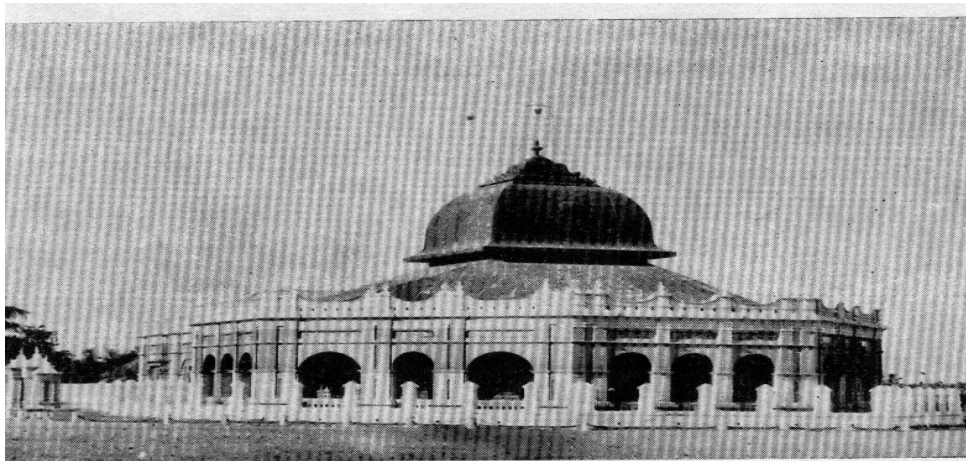
Steps were taken by the Swaamikal very early in the year 1867 to make arrangements for the opening of the Dharumachchaalai on 23rd of May in the same

year. He chose the great open space to the north of Vadaloor village as the most suitable place for the Dharumachchaalai, though he was residing at that time in Karunkuzhi. Forty people, of whom only seventeen could sign their names, donated the land for the purpose, a total of eighty kaanees of land, i.e. an area of 133 acres or 55.33 hecta-square metres. The document which was duly registered in the office of the Sub-Registrar is available for inspection even today. A most generous donation for that day and for this day too, but, nevertheless, in a sense, a widow's mite; for the donors, apparently, were not rich men. It is the poor who gave their generous support to the Dharumachchaalai that day and it is the poor who support it today. A building of mud walls with a roof of coconut fronds was built on that piece of land and the Dharumachchaalai was inaugurated on the 23rd of May 1867. It speaks very gloriously for the people of Vadaloor and its environs that the fire that was started in the kitchen that day has never gone out and that no one has been turned away hungry from the food queue.

The third institution established by our Swaamikal is the Satthiya Gnaana Sabhai. The full name of this institution as conferred by our Swaamikal in July 1872 is 'Samarasa Suddha Sanmaarga Satthiya Gnaana Sabhai'. The concept of the God-head as the Great Effulgence of Grace has been taking shape in our Swaamikal's mind since a long time and it gained its fruition in the construction of the Satthiya Gnaana Sabhai and its inauguration on the 25th of January 1872 on the full-moon day in the Tamil month of Thai (January-February) exactly two years according to the Tamil Calendar before the anarthdhaan of our Swaamikal on the 30th January 1874, the full-moon day in the month of Thai (January-February). This coincidence of dates could not have been an accident. Thrikaalagnaani, a knower of the past, present, and the future, as our Swaamikal was, he must have foreseen the second event and must have fixed the inauguration of the Light of the Great Effulgence of Grace in the Satthiya Gnaana Sabhai on the full-moon day in the month of Thai in January-February 1872. At this time our Swaamikal was staying at Mettukuppam in Siddhivalaaka-maalikai. He had fled Vadaloor nearly two years ago. He supervised the construction of the Sabhai, the House of the Light, from Mettukuppam with, probably, occasional visits to Vadaloor to see for himself the progress of the work. He renamed Vadaloor as Utthara-gnaana-chidambaram. This Sabhai was founded not as the fulfillment of a desire of the Swaamikal but at the express command of God Himself. The Swaamikal makes reference to this fact in a Vinnappam, a prose one this time, made to God in 1872. This vinnappam, petition, is one of four, the names of which are 'The Suddha Sanmaarga-ch-chiru Vinnappam, The Samarasa Suddha Sanmaarga Sathiya-p-peru Vinnappam, the Samarasa Suddha Sanmaarga Sathiya Gnaana Vinnappam, and The Samarasa Suddha Sanmaarga Sanga Satthiya Vinnappam.' Even while The Great Effulgence of Grace was taking abode in our Swaamikal's heart and the Arut-perum jothi-akaval was taking shape in his mind, the Sabhai of the Great Effulgence of Grace has taken shape in brick and mortar. All the three events were synchronous in occurrence. A picture on the facing page shows the appearance of the structure. But this is unsatisfying. Dr. C. Srinivaasan of Annaamalai University, the author of "An Introduction to the Philosophy of Raamalinga Swami" describes the structure in his book thus:



SATTHIYA-DHARUMACHCHALAI



SATTHIYA-GNAANA SABHAI

“The temple which stands on an octagonal masonry cellar-terrace resembling a full-blown lotus flower, is surmounted by a lofty cone-shaped roofing overlaid with thick plates of brass more or less after the Gothic fashion and crowned with a steeple at the top. The whole structure, exhibiting as it does, a conception and style quite of his own is a peculiar and quaint specimen of architectural beauty. It looks much like a chariot when seen at a distance, impresses the mind in a manner never to be forgotten, and commands reverence and devotion from the onlooker.”

Continuing the description in another chapter, Dr. Srinivaasan writes:

Out of absolute mercy and sheer love for his fellow beings, the Swaami wished to construct the great Temple of Wisdom at Vadalloor. It is only an external symbolic representation of what the Swaami visualized within himself.

“The Swaami has not followed any religious appellation or cult in the construction of this gnostic auditorium. The entire superstructure was sketched out by the Swaami himself. He desired that the construction should be

completed in six months. His disciples undertook the task and meticulously carried it out.

.....

“This is not a temple similar to those that abound in the Tamil country. It signifies the real nature of the human soul and its relative position in God. There is no sectarianism of any kind; nor has any code of religious fanaticism crept in. This is an external symbol of what a perfected soul of a human individual actually realizes within.

“There is a vast space at Vadaloor sanctified with an air of grace. An iron chain runs around this majestic octagonal hall. Three pathways surround the hall that is facing south. There are three main entrances apart from two on the sides which lead into a great hall. Here there are five steps leading to the door of the temple hall. There are seven curtains which conceal the light within. The first is nothing but the veil; which surrounds the individual. This is not only supposed to prevent him from having the inner awakening, but it drives him into the materialistic worldly life. When this is removed by the opening of the door, there is found a blue curtain representing, the veil that hides the very life itself. When this also is removed a green curtain is seen. This is made of two parts, the inner golden green and the outer darkish green. All these three curtains are so strong that they are directing the human beings into the worldly affairs. The next inner curtain is red which hides “the space of miracles”. The curtain behind this is of golden hue. This conceals the space of reality. There is another inner white curtain hiding the space of the Lord Supreme. The innermost multi-colored curtain is preventing the experience of the desired enjoyment. The inner four, when lifted, will lead to divine experiences.

.....

“When all these curtains are unveiled there is found a thick glass slab of about five feet in height inside which there is a bright lamp. The light illustrates the human soul in its real and natural lustre. The glass slab indicates the purity of the soul. It is said that the Swaami was keeping the glass slab and the lamp in his prayer room at his residence for about 48 days before their installation. That is the light of the soul in its true splendor.....

“In fact this Temple of Wisdom indicates how the Supreme Gace Light can be brought nearer home so as to descend in the individual if only he becomes cleansed from all the lust and shackles of all kinds.”

Thus writes Dr. C. Srinivaasan.

Dr. Sp. Annamalai in his “Life and Teachings of Saint Raamalingar” gives a table explaining the seven curtains which hide the Light which is the Great Effulgence of Grace in the Satthiya Gnaana Sabhai at Vadaloor. This is the Table.

S. No.	Color of curtain	The power represented	English equivalent for the power	Function of the power
1.	Black	Maya Sakthi	Primordial Energy	To veil the Kingdom of the

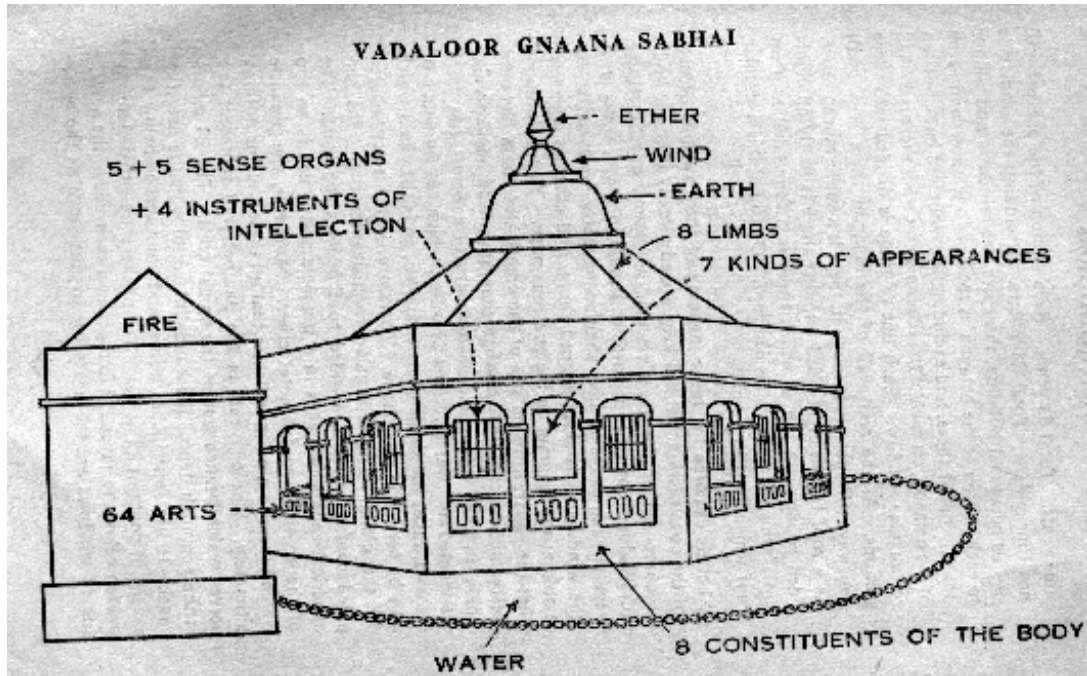
				'Self'
2.	Blue	Kriya Sakthi	Power of Action	To veil the 'Self'
3.	Green	Para Sakthi	Divine Energy	To veil the Divine 'Space'
4.	Red	Ichcha Sakthi	Power of Desire	To veil the knowing faculty of the 'Self'
5.	Yellow	Gnana Sakthi	Power of Knowledge	To veil the Truth
6.	White	Athi Sakthi	Original Energy	To veil the 'space of the Lord'
7.	Mixed	Sith Sakthi	Power of Pure Intellect	To veil the higher experiences

It is worthwhile to take some more pains to understand clearly the significance of the architecture of the Satthiya Gnaana Sabhai and its esoteric purport. Sri R. Natesan Pillai (since deceased) of Thennoor, Thiruchiraappalli, a maternal uncle of mine by one remove, a retired Police Official, a person who had received a significant measure of the grace of God, an author of an unpublished commentary on the Thirumanthiram, has written a book called "Thamizhar (Dhiraavida) Matha-ch-churukkam", a miscellany of very valuable and quaint information on 45 religious topics. One of them is on Vadaloor Gnaana Sabhai. I give a translation of this very interesting essay. He writes:

"Raamalinga Swaami had a building called 'Satthiya Gnaana Sabhai' erected at Vadaloor. In that structure, he incorporated in the shape of a building some of the thatthwa-s which exist in our bodies. A Jothi (an effulgence) has been established there, it has been veiled by seven curtains. One by one, the curtains are drawn and all are enabled to see the Jothi (effulgence). The object is to instruct us that that effulgence is, in fact, in our bodies. This arrangement has been made to teach us that, if we remove the curtains which hide it and prevent us from seeing it, we can see the Effulgence. It is not for the purpose of the people assembled there to slap their cheeks with the palms of their hands to the accompaniment of ejaculations of "Hara, Hara" when the broker (the priest) lights a piece of camphor to make us see the effulgence as each curtain is drawn back.

"If we people who are endowed with common sense will use it and look at the building attentively, we will see firstly one rectangular building and its triangular roof. Beyond that rectangle, an iron chain is strung in a semi-circular shape making it a sort of a barrier. Inside this semi-circular space, at one end of that rectangular-shaped structure, is an octagonal building. There is a verandah which goes round all the eight sides of the building. This verandah is covered over with a ceiling. Excluding the front portion of this verandah, the remaining seven sides have a three feet high parapet wall. On each of the seven sections of that parapet wall, there are nine vents. Total 63 vents. Each section of the parapet wall has four pillars. Total 28 pillars. Excluding the front side of this octagonal building, there are two windows and a door to each section of the octagon, a total of 14 windows and seven doors. Below these, and excluding the front and back portion of the octagon, on each of the remaining six walls there is a small rectangular window. Each one of these is

divided into three sections. At the rear wall of the octagon there is a small doorway. If one goes through it, there is a subterranean room. As a roof to this eight-sided building there is firstly an eight-sided roofing, on top of which there is a four-sided roof on top of which there is a six-sided roof. On top of it is a circular roof which ends in a pinnacle.



“Let us examine the inner meaning of these various aspects of the construction. It has been stated already that our body is composed of the five elements. Of them, our Scriptures of Wisdom represent the earth as square in shape, water as a semi-circular shape on a rectangular shape, the fire as a triangle, the wind as a six-sided shaped thing, and ether as a sphere. Look at the diagram on the previous page. You will notice that the square roof on top of the eight-sided room has been designated as ‘earth’ in that diagram. The semi-circular chain in the rectangular shaped structure below has been designated as ‘water’. Just as water, which has no shape of its own, takes the shape of its container, so is the chain which can be set up in any shape. Therefore, water is represented by the chain. The triangular roof denotes fire. The six-sided roof over the four-sided roof denotes the wind. The spherical roof which ends in a pinnacle and which is on top of the six-sided roof denotes ether. Moreover, the pinnacle which tapers to a point indicates that all these become nothing ultimately. The 63 vents in the parapet wall represent the nerves which branch out of the spinal cord. The 28 pillars in the verandah denote the kundalini sakthi which is near the navel. It lies four inches above and four inches below the navel. It contains 28 nerves. Ten of these are situated above and ten below the navel and four each on each side of the navel. The 14 windows are the five sense organs (such as the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin), the five organs of action (such as the hands, feet, mouth, anus and the genital organ), and the four internal instruments of knowing (such as the mind, the intellect, the will, and the I-ness). The seven doors stand for the seven kinds of births which a soul takes in its long and wearisome

journey to the Godhead, such as worms, birds, beasts, men etc. The octagonal building below indicates the eight constituents of our bodies. The eight sides on the first section of the roof stand for the eight organs of man. The six long windows divided into three sections stand respectively for the three qualities of saththwa, rajas, and thamas, for the triad of lust, anger, and covetuousness, for the three taints of aanavam, karma, and maayai, for the three kinds of karma such as praarabdha karma, aagamya karma, and sanchitha karma, for the carnal, causal and gnostic bodies, and for the triad of knowledge, knower, and the Thing known by the knower through means of knowledge or gnosis. The door in the rear wall stands for the idakalai and pingalai nerves, the cellar room stands for the sushumna nerve. The bottommost eight-sided structure, the eight-sided room and the eight verandahs, the eight-sided roof, the four sided roof above it, the six-sided roof on top of it, the spherical roof on the very top which ends in a pinnacle, these six stand for the six states of samam, dhamam, uparathi, thithikshaa, dhyaanam and dhaaranai respectively.¹⁹⁸ The curtains which are withdrawn stand for the six centres of moolaadhaaram, swaadhisttanam, manipoorakam, anaahatham, vishuddhi, and aagnyaa, the seventh curtain standing for the thousand petalled lotus which is the sahasraaram.”

¹⁹⁸ Sri Natesan Pillai has apparently mixed the six stages of samaadhi and the eight disciplines of yoga of which samaadhi is the last. Correctly speaking, the reference should be to the six stages of samaadhi which are sama (the state of the mind which, disgusted with the sense-objects, is fixed on its objective), dhama (turning away the five sense-organs and the five organs of action from sense-objects and establishing them in their respective places), uparathi (being freed of the hold which objects have on the mind), thithikshaa (enduring all sufferings without seeking relief from them and without worry or lamentation), sraddhaa (faith) and samaadhaanam (one-pointed contemplation).

This is the interpretation of the architecture of the Satthiya-gnaana-sabhai by Sri R. Natesan Pillai.

We have seen two interpretations of the seven curtains veiling the Light in the Satthiya-gnaana-sabhai. Sri A. Balakrishna Pillai has an item in the 4th volume of his edition of the Thiruvartupaa on the meaning of the curtains. It is said to be one of those gems of utterances which fell from the lips of our Swaamikal when he had converse with his disciples. He says:

“If you ask me who are you who are in this material body, I am the soul, I am of the shape of a tiny atom. This (tiny) atom has the brilliance of a crore of suns. Its seat is the forehead in the body. Its color is three-quarters golden and one quarter whitish. In order to hide this kind of a brilliance of the soul there are seven maayaa-sakthi-s. They are: the black curtain which is maayaa-sakthi, the blue curtain which is the kriyaa-sakthi, the green curtain which is paraa-sakthi, the red curtain which is ichchaa-sakthi, the golden curtain which is gnaana-sakthi, the white curtain which is aathi-sakthi, and the curtain of mixed colors which is chit-sakthi.”

Dr. Sp. Annamalai has taken his table from this authentic source. While the interpretations of others may be interesting they cannot be held to be in conformity with what our Swaamikal had in mind when he instituted the seven curtains before the Light in Satthiya-gnaana-sabhai. One thing, however, is certain from all these various interpretations. It is this. The Godhead is abiding in the heart of man ever since the creation of man. There was no time when He has not been there. But it does not mean that man was aware of it ever and always. On the contrary, for all of the time in most people's lives, for most of the time in some people's lives, and for a short time in the lives of a very few people He has not been realized as abiding in their hearts. It is only one or two like our Swaamikal who, in the course of a century, are aware of the Inhabitant in their hearts from the very moment of their dropping on to this earth from the wombs of their mothers. These are called 'karuvile thiruvudaiyaar,' people who have received the grace of God even when they were in the embryonic state in the womb.

Our Swaamikal issued a pamphlet at the time of the inauguration of the Satthiya-gnaana-sabhai just as he did in the case of the Satthiya Dharumachchaalai. In that pamphlet he invites humanity to come forward and gain knowledge of the one and only God.

The method of worship in Gnaana-sabhai as laid down by the Swaamikal is entirely novel. All those who assemble for worship should congregate outside the Sabhai and softly chant praises of the Lord. Meat-eaters should stay on the outskirts of the Sabhai and worship. They should not enter even into the area where the Chitsabhai and the Porchabhai are. This is the manner of worship in the Sabhai. No other method should be observed. No one should enter within the Sabhai. A person who has foregone the eating of flesh and the killing of animals and who has, moreover, given up the three desires of lass, lucre, and land may enter the Sabhai to renew the wick in the cauldron of the Light and for cleaning the inner precincts. There is no distinction of caste for such entry or for worship from outside the Sabhai. Musical instruments like the drum etc., offerings like cooked rice, coconuts, plantains, etc., worship by lamp and incense, distribution of prasaad like the sacred ash, none of these, which are common to other temples, should intrude into the Sabhai.

On the 18th of July 1872 our Swaamikal laid down further rules for observation in the worship conducted in the Sabhai. He says: "From this day onwards a lamp with a glass container and a tin reflector should be set in the Gnaana Sabhai. Brass Standard Lamps are not necessary, nor globe-shaped hanging lamps. When the tin lamp is put in, suitable persons of physical and mental purity should light the lamp from outside the portals of the Sabhai and send it in through a lad of less than twelve years of age or a man over seventy-two years of age, instructing him to set it down close to the inside of the doorway. Once in four days the inner precincts should be got cleaned by one of the aforesaid type of people. When going in to do so, they should take a bath, and, wrapping up a piece of cloth round the feet, should enter in and clean the floor, kneeling on the knees to do so. The same procedure should be observed when setting the lamp also. When the lamp is set or the place is cleaned, our people should stand outside and chant praises of the Lord softly. No one else should enter the precincts at any time and on any pretext whatsoever. The key of the Gnaana-sabhai should not be kept openly in anyone's hand. It should be kept in a box and that

box should be locked and deposited in the Golden Hall and its key should be handed over to the responsible watchman of the establishment.”

Such were the punctilious instructions of our Swaamikal in regard to the Satthiya gnaana-sabhai. But, alas, caste has insinuated itself (I hear, even in our Swaamikal's own time) in the form of a brahmin who is now the only permitted entrant and who is the custodian of the key. He is neither less than 12 years old nor above 72 years of age. And whether he is free from the three desires of lass, lucre, and land is anyone's guess. The evil of caste, like Satan in the form of the persuasive snake, has polluted the very place which our Swaamikal labored so much to keep out of it. Such is the third institution founded by our Swaamikal. The Satthiya Dharmasaalai and the Satthiya-gnaana-sabhai are functioning right up to this day, but the first one, the Samarasa Suddha Sanmaarga Satthiya Sangam, without which the other two are like bodies bereft of their souls, has split up into quarrelling sects and are scattered throughout the length and breadth of Tamilnaadu without unity and leadership, engaged more in disputing about tenets and dogmas than in propagating the Religion of Love, the Religion of Enlightenment, the Religion of Compassion, the Religion of Grace, the Religion of Universal Brotherhood preached and lived by our Swaamikal.

But there is a silver lining to this dismal dark cloud. In this year of the centenary of the anarthdhaan of our Swaamikal we find a Renaissance which promises to grow steadily and fulfil the aspirations of our Swaamikal in a manner never so far done. At the spear-head of the Renaissance is Sri N. Mahalingam for whose long life of good health and prosperity let all those who are interested in this Renaissance pray to the Great Effulgence of Grace that is Lord Nataraajar in Thillai.

APPENDIX II-GLOSSARY

Page 4, Footnote 6. Civanhood – Maanikkavaachakar sang:

Teaching the path of devotion to me
who was laboriously striving
in the company of cussed men
who did not know the way to liberation,
and ridding my mind of the original taint
that my ancient karma may cease to be,
and transforming me into Civam,
my Father assumed lordship over me.
Who else indeed could gain such a privilege
which my Father in His grace vouchsafed me?

The Thiruvaachakam, decad 51, stanza 1

And Thomas Merton wrote:

“Here when contemplation becomes what it is really meant to be, it is no longer something poured out of God into a created subject so much as God living in God, and identifying a created life with His own life so that there is nothing left of any experimental significance but God living in God.”

And Raamalinga Swaamikal sang in the last moments of his sojourn on earth:

“This is not a matter like other unions.
.....
It is the state where,
without any feeling of obstruction,
I became IT,
IT became me,
We became embodiment of gnosis,
and IT became IT!”

Jeeva is spelt and pronounced in Tamil `Ceevan'. When Civanhood is gained, Ceevan become Civan. This occurs in nirvikalpasamaadhi.

Page 4, footnote 7. The legend is that when Murukan was entering the audience-chamber of Civan, he failed to pay homage to Brahma who was seated there. Incensed at this, Brahma rebuked Murukan who retorted that if Brahma could give him the meaning of Om, he would pay homage to him. When Brahma failed to do so, Murukan gave Brahma a knock on the head with his knuckles in very much the same manner as a teacher punishes a dull student. Brahma complained to Lord Civan who asked Murukan if he could tell him the meaning of Om, which he did in the right ear of Civan, sitting on his shoulder.

The reference to Civan and Yama is about Markandeya, a lad of sixteen years only and a great devotee of Lord Civan. He was destined to live upto only sixteen years.

Yama, as a great favor, came personally to collect the soul of the youth. But the lad ran into the sanctum-sanctorum of Lord Civan and clung to His feet in terror. Civan directed Yama to desist, but when he insisted on lassoing the soul of the lad with his noose, Lord Civan kicked him with His left foot and drove him away, and bestowed the boon of immortality on Maarkandeya.

Page 19, footnote 19. St. Maanikkavaachakar, when he was the Chief Minister of the Paandiyan King, was sent to buy horses for the cavalry. On his way, he met a saintly man seated under a tree, and coming under the spell of that person forgot his mission and spent the money on the renovation of a temple near about the place where he met the saintly man. News reached the king of this defection, and Maanikkavaachakar was recalled, and asked to explain his conduct. In his predicament, he prayed to the saintly person, who was no other than Lord Civan Himself, and he was directed to assure the king that the horses will come in a day or two. True enough, the horses came, but when they were stabled for the night with other horses, they turned into foxes and harried and maimed the other horses. The king was enraged at this, and threw Maanikkavaachakar into prison. Lord Civan came once again to the rescue of his devotee and caused a flood to rise in the river Vaikai and devastate the town of Madhurai. Thereupon the king ordered the people to send one man from each family to raise bunds to contain the flood waters. One old woman had neither a male member in her family nor could she hire anyone, as every available man has been already engaged by others. In her plight, Lord Civan came to her as a cooly and offered to work for her provided she gave as wages the crumbs fallen off the steam-rolls she has cooked. She agreed, and the divine laborer went to the work-spot with spade and basket, and soon busied himself with loafing about the area or dozing off on a sand bank with the basket for a pillow or playfully demolishing the work of others under the pretence of helping them. The king who came on a round of inspection noticed this frisky truant, who was now bent almost double before him in feigned humility, and with his royal cane gave a cut across the back of the miscreant. And lo, the blow fell on all the creatures of the world, man and beast.

Page 36, footnote 28. Karma - This is one of three basic tenets of Hinduism. The other two are: Existence of one Supreme God, The Brahman, and rebirth. Karma or, to be more precise, fruits of karma, i.e., of deeds good and bad, go on accumulating birth after birth. It is like a savings bank account. When a soul is born, it brings with it a part of the stored karma, even as a man would take a part of the money in his bank account when he goes on a journey. How much he takes is determined by God even as the Reserve Bank of India determines how much money a man can take with him when he goes on a journey to foreign countries. This is called praarabdha-karma. The span of life of a soul in a particular birth is determined by the time taken to 'spend' this karma which it has brought with it. Sinner or saint, a person must go through the experiences of the fruits of this karma. Since a person performs deeds good or bad in his life, he goes on earning fresh karma. This is like earning foreign exchange while travelling abroad. This is called aagamya karma, and is added to the bank account. The balance in the bank account is called sanchitha karma. With the grace of God and the dawn of wisdom it is within the powers of a person not to earn aagamya karma. Easily said, but not so easily done. The key to success in this matter lies in the extirpation of desire. Act, but without desire for the fruits of action, without elation in success, without disappointment in failure. When one has ceased to earn aagamya karma, God, in His grace, wipes out the sanchitha karma, the balance in the savings.

bank account. There is no more any births or deaths for the soul which has gained this blessing. It has gained mukthi.

Page 124, footnote 58. aadhaarams - Chakrams, aadhaaram-s., centres are many names for the same subject. Exponents of yoga - the eight-fold discipline for gaining integration with the Godhead, Brahman - say that there is a latent power situated at a place called the moolaadhaara, i.e., the original or focal seat. Aadhaara means a support for something. This moolaadhaara is not so much a physical seat as a psychic seat. However, in order to assist the practitioner of yoga, the moolaadhaara is described as situated at a point between the anus and the sexual organ, somewhere on the perineum, somewhere about the place where the prostate gland is situated in man. This power is called kundalini or the serpent power. The serpent is said to lie coiled at the moolaadhaara. By the practice of yoga, this latent power is said to be roused and to travel upwards along the line of the spinal chord. On the way up, five more chakras or centres are conceived of. They are swaadhisthaanam, manipoorakam, anaahadam, vishuddhi and, aagnya chakrams. The psycho-somatic seats of these respective Chakrams are conceived to be located as follows. The swaadhisthaana chakram at the area of the sexual organ, manipoorakam at the area of the navel, anaahadam at the region of the heart, vishuddhi at the region of the throat-pit, and aagnya at a point of the junction of the two eyebrows on the forehead. It should not be imagined, however, that there are any physical locations or any physical organs. It will be, probably, more correct to say that these psycho-somatic centres are situated along the spinal column at points opposite the above-mentioned organs. The practitioner of yoga, with the help of the eight disciplines rouses the latent power and enables it to traverse up the spinal chord through the several centres, each of which can be a point of meditation. Raamakrishna paramahansa says that the lower three centers relate to the lower order of passions which are sensual in character. The higher three help to develop spiritual power. For ordinary persons, meditation on the anaahadha-chakram is recommended. Adepts in yoga, however, meditate on the aagnya-chakram. Ultimately, the kundalini-power is said to ascend to a point in the vertex of the head called in yogic parlance sahasra-dhalam, i.e., the thousand petalled lotus. When the kundalini has traversed to this region and is stabilized there, the practitioner of yoga gains samaadhi, that is integration with the Godhead. He experiences a bliss for which human vocabulary has no adequate terms of description. For further details, the reader is advised to read Lesson XI, 'The Serpentine Power' in "Practical Lessons in Yoga", by Swami Sivaananda Saraswathi.

Page 701, footnote 178. See footnote 150 on page 538.