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K. K. A. VENKATACHARI, Ph.D.

TIRUVĀYMOLI
ENGLISH GLOSSARY

by

S. SATYAMURTHI AYYANGAR, GWALIOR

<http://acharya.org>

TIRUVĀYMOLI
ENGLISH GLOSSARY
VOLUME II

by

(Jñāna Bhakti Bhūṣaṇa)

S. SATYAMURTHI AYYANGAR, GWALIOR

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TIRUMALA TIRUPATI DEVASTHANAMS

UNDER THEIR SCHEME

"AID TO PUBLISH RELIGIOUS BOOKS"

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VOLUME II

BOOK III

Third Centum—First Decad (III-1) (Mutic cōti)

Preamble

In the end-stanza of the preceding decad, the Ājvār had referred to himself as one possessed of a clear vision, absolutely free from doubt and despair, discrepancies and deviations. But in the very next song, that is, the first song of this decad, he seeks clarification of certain doubts and thus betrays his ignorance. Well, ignorance is of four different kinds, namely (1) *Non-comprehension*. (2) *comprehension, halfway beset with doubts*, (3) *mis-comprehension* and (4) *lapse of memory resulting in not remembering a thing previously known*. In the present case, the Ājvār is assailed by doubts and yet, it transcends the above types of ignorance to which those still relatively unevolved and in the grip of nescience resulting from Karma, are susceptible. Here it is the bewitching splendour of Lord Aḷakar which defies description and baffles correct and complete comprehension. Enthralled by the charming personality of the Lord, the Ājvār enquires of the Lord, “Sire, has the effulgence of your face expanded itself upwards into the dazzling crown and Your dazzling feet likewise expanded into the lotus seat on which they are poised?” It is the exuberance of their God-love, too deep for words, that throws the Ājvārs into an ecstatic state of mental imbalance and this only redounds to their glory.

The Ājvār who expounded the glory of Mount ‘Māliṛuñ-cōlai’ in the last decad, now proceeds to drink deep of the nectarean charm and enthralling beauty of Lord Aḷakar (The Beautiful), enshrined there.

mutic cōtiyāy uṇatu mukac cōti malarntatuvō?
aṭic cōti nī niṅṅa tāmaraiyāy alarntatuvō?
paṭic cōti āṭaiyoṭum pal kalaṅṅāy, niṅ paim poṅ-
kaṭic cōti kalantatuvō? tirumālē! kaṭṭuraiyē. (III-1-1)

Translation

May you clarify, oh, Tirumāl, if your crown aglow
Is but the upward expansion of your facial glow,

Your lotus seat, but the reflection of your dazzling feet
 And the many jewels on Your person and silken garment,
 But the reflection of the glow on your waist radiant.

Note

The above poser of the Ājvār is the result of his observation of the Lord's bewitching charm, in His iconic manifestation as Aḷakar, in conjunction with the jewels adorning Him, so well matched that the Ājvār sees the crown as but an upward expansion of the effulgence on the Lord's face. At the other end, the lotus seat on which the Lord's feet are poised seems to be but a reflection of the effulgence on the Lord's feet. Perhaps, there are no Jewels as such and the jewels that are seen are but a manifestation of the brilliant complexion of the Lord's body and the flowing silken robe is, likewise, the reflection of the lustre around the Lord's waist. In short, it is the Lord's native charm and brilliance that pervade all round and give the beholder the impression that the Lord is bedecked with numerous Jewels and donning the silken robes. Even the 'Nityās', the ever-free angels in heaven, share this stunning experience with the Ājvār who thus moves in good company. Indeed it is not too much to say that the Lord Himself is not aware of the precise extent of His charm and prowess.

kaṭṭuraikkil, tāmarai niṇ kaṇ, pātam, kai ovvā;
 cuṭṭu uraitta naṇ poṇ uṇ tirumēṇi oḷi ovvātu;
 oṭṭu uraittu iv ulaku unṇaip pukaḷvu ellām perumpālum,
 peṭṭuraiyāy, puṅku eṅṅē kāṭṭumāl; parañcōṭi! (III-1-2)

Translation

My resplendent Lord, if one described your charm exquisite,
 The lotus flower will into your eyes, hands and feet,
 Bear no comparison, the lustrous gold cannot compete
 With your complexion grand and all the eulogy
 On you heaped by men of this world, on the analogy
 Of things worldly, will be mere words, insipid and foggy.

Note

The Lord's exquisite charm can best be enjoyed only by drinking it in, with one's eyes and mind. Words are but

poor substitutes, and the comparisons, similies and analogies indulged in by us, worldlings, are much too-feeble and faulty too, and cannot, therefore, describe the Lord's exquisite features effectively.

parañcōti nī paramāy, niṅ ikaḷntu, piṅ maggu ōr
 param cōti iṅmaiṅṅ, paṅi ōvi nikaḷkiṅṅa
 parañcōti niṅṅuḷḷē paṅar ulakam paṅaitta em
 parañcōti kōvintā! paṅṅu uraikka māṅṅēṅē. (III-1-3)

Translation

Oh, Lord of splendour supreme, with none so resplendent,
 Comparison you transcend, by Your resolve radiant,
 You did the sprawling universe create,
 Oh, Kōvintā of rare brilliance, describe I can't Your attributes.

Note

Lord to the Āḷvār: “Āḷvār, I agree that the worldlings cannot praise Me adequately. But you should be able to do full justice, having been endowed by Me with knowledge, full and flooding”.

Āḷvār to the Lord: “My Lord, none in any clime can make pretensions to your unrivalled splendour. Having, by a mere resolve, created the entire Universe, you are beyond the ken of comprehension of any one. At the same time, your *Saulabhya* (easy accessibility) is astounding. Even if one could find the summit of your transcendent glory, it is well nigh impossible to sound the depth of your amazing simplicity as Govinda (Kōvinta, in Tamil) and touch the floor space. The former can be talked about while it is pretty difficult even to ponder in one's mind about the latter and much less talk about it”.

māṅṅātē ākikum, im malar talai mā ṅālam, niṅ-
 māṅṅu āya malar puraiyum tiruvuruvam maṅam vaikka
 māṅṅāta pāla camaya mati koṅuttāy; malart tuḷāy-
 māṅṅē nī maṅam vaittāy; mā ṅālam varuntātē? (III-1-4)

Translation

The sprawling world which did from your navel sprout,
 Thinks not your glory and your form exquisite
 (And worse still), many a religion is extant,
 Preaching heretical doctrines, the mind errant
 You gave them and yet if you are solely intent
 On enjoying the fragrance from your tuḷaci garland,
 Won't it be a grievous loss for this world indeed?

Notes

- (i) Brahmā, the demi-urge, emerged from the lotus stalk on the Lord's navel and created all the worlds; hence the worlds are said to have come up from the Lord's navel.
- (ii) No doubt, in the preceding song, the Ājvār confessed to his inability to describe the Lord's attributes and yet it is Lord Aḷakar's extraordinary beauty that eggs him on, to speak out his mind, deploring, at the same time, the aloofness of the world from the Lord, so sweet and exquisite. People have already no taste for God-head and it is grievous enough. Further deterioration sets in, when diverse religions expound mutually contradictory and incompatible tenets and doctrines. The Ājvār says that the Lord gave rise to all this hotch-potch in as much as He didn't correct the minds of those going the wrong way. If, in a grievous situation like this, the Lord is complacent enough and his attention gets fixed on the sweet fragrance and freshness of His tuḷaci garland, instead of being harnessed to the reclamation of the errant Subject, there is indeed no hope of redemption for this world. This observation of the Ājvār arises from his enjoyment of Lord Aḷakar's exquisite beauty and the feeling of sorrow that the world around is unmindful of the Lord, so sweet and exquisite, because of the above factors. There is also the grand poetic imagery, the poet bringing out that Lord Aḷakar's charm is so alluring that it ensnares Him as well and makes him oblivious of the imperative need to correct the world from going the wrong way

under the unwholesome impact of heretical doctrines,
propounded by perverts.

varuntāta arum tavatta malar katiriṅ cuṭar uṭampu āy,
varuntāta ṅāṅam āy, varampu iṅṅi muṅutu iyaṅṅāy!
varum-kālam, nikaḷ-kālam, kaḷi-kālam āy, ulakai
oruṅkāka aḷippāy! cīr eṅku ulakka ḍtuvāṅē? (III-1-5)

Translation

Your resplendent form you assume at your volition sweet,
The result perhaps of your devotees' penance great;
Knowledge supreme is yours with no effort,
Pervading without limits, the worlds you duly protect,
Time is at your beck and call, past, present
And future, how can I, your attributes fully relate?

Note

The preceding stanza (III-1-4) stands in isolation; in the midst of his enjoyment of Lord Aḷakar, the Āḷvār's heart leapt towards the straying humanity and deplored their failure, rather their inability to feast on the exquisite charm of Aḷakar. This song has, therefore, to be studied in continuation of the third stanza where the Āḷvār had said " Oh, Kovindā, how can I describe your attributes?" The Lord rebuts the Āḷvār's plea of inability, despite his supreme knowledge. Here then is the Āḷvār's elucidation of his limitations, despite all that massive knowledge, dowered on him by the Lord whose glory, however, knows no bounds and cannot, therefore, be fully comprehended and expressed by any one. As a matter of fact, complete enumeration of the Lord's glory, His auspicious traits etc, would be possible, only if they remained encompassed by known limits.

ḍtuvār ḍttu ellām ev ulakattu ev evaiyum
cātuvāy niṅ pukaḷiṅ takaḷ allāl piṅṅitu illai;
pōtu vāḷ puṅam tuḷāy muṅṅiyiṅṅāy! pūviṅmēḷ
mātu vāḷ māṅṅiṅṅāy! eṅ colli yāṅ vāḷttuvāṅē? (III-1-6)

Translation

My Lord, wearing on your crown tuḷaci garland,
 Set with *choice* flowers and holding on your lovely chest
 Mātu (Lakṣmī), the lotus-born! the scriptures and sacred texts,
 In the entire land, out to praise you, lag far behind,
 How indeed I can praise you occurs not to my mind.

Note

All the scriptures and sacred texts can only make an attempt to sing the Lord's praise; none of these can, however, sing His glory, *in toto*. These praises are like unto the rain drops falling on the surface of the oceanic waters without, however, swelling them up. The faculty of speech dowered on us by the Lord is indeed put to proper use when we sing His glory, however poor our capacity may be. If the tongue is, however, put to any other use, it gets defiled like rain drops falling on mud becoming muddy, unlike those falling into the ocean remaining in tact.

vāḷttuvār palar āka; niṅṅuḷḷē nāṅmukaṅṅai
 mūḷtta nīr ulaku ellām paṭai eṅṅu mutal-paṭaittāy!
 kēḷtta cīr araṅ mutalāk kiḷar teyvamāyḱ kiḷarntu
 oḷḷttu amamar tutittāl, uṅ tol pukaḷ mācūpātē? (III-1-7)

Translation

First and foremost, Nāṅmukaṅ (Brahmā) You did, by your
 resolve, raise
 And bade him create the worlds many, out of the deep waters;
 If Araṅ (Śiva) of prowess great and other devas who pose
 As the gods potent, your creatures all, were to sing your praise,
 Would it not your ancient glory efface?

Note

What does it matter how many sing the Lord's glory and how powerful and knowledgeable they are? None can indeed be more articulate than the Vedas and even they can have only a sense of participation in a scheme of recital of the Lord's glory, as distinguished from a sense of due fulfilment. Even the exalted Śiva, known for His extra-

ordinary wisdom, is no exception and fares no better. The measure of the Lord's glory is as unlimited as the capacity of even the most knowledgeable of His subjects to sing His glory is miserably limited and pales into insignificance. Any attempt on their part to exhaustively sing His glory is thus an affront to His hoary fame.

mācūṇāc cuṭar uṭampuāy, malarātu kuviyātu
mācūṇā ṅāṇam āy, muḷutum āy, muḷutu iyaṅṅāy!
mācūṇā vāṅ kōlattu amarar-kōṅ vaḷippaṭṭāl,
mācūṇā uṇa pātamalarc cōti maḷuṅkātē? (III-1-8)

Translation

Oh Lord of radiant person, immaculate!
Your knowledge flawless, full and complete,
Neither expands nor contracts,
All things you control and in you they subsist;
Wouldn't the splendour diminish of your blemishless lotus feet
Even if Brahmā, the impeccable chief sang your glory to his
utmost?

Note

Even if Brahmā who is relatively superior to Śiva, attempted to sing the Lord's glory, the result would be just the same.

maḷuṅkāta vain nutiya cakkara nal valattaiyāy,
toḷum kātāl-kaḷiḅu aḷippāṅ, puḷ ūrntu tōṅṅiṅaiyē;
maḷuṅkāta ṅāṇamē paṭai āka malar-ulakil
toḷumpāyārkkku aḷittāl, uṅ cuṭarc cōti maḅaiyātē? (III-1-9)

Translation

(It was but meet that) you went and rescued
The elephant, passionately intent on worshipping you,
Mounted on that bird (Garuḅa) and wielding the discus ever
acute;
(If instead), by mere resolve, ever alert, you did succour
Your devotees in this wide world, all over,
On your splendour great, it would indeed be a slur.

Notes

(i) The omnipotent Lord could, by a mere resolve, create this vast and wonderful universe. He can likewise achieve all things, by a mere resolve from His heavenly abode, without moving about. And then, He has such powerful weapons as the discus, ever sharp, which can be commissioned at any time, anywhere. And yet, when Gajendra the pious elephant, engaged in a titanic struggle with a crocodile, raised an alarm inviting the Lord's help, the Lord rushed to the pond, mounted on Garuḍa, without merely commissioning the discus to do the job. In fact, He had no other option. The elephant entered the lotus pond, plucked a lotus flower to be offered to the Supreme Lord, Nārāyaṇa, and, in the process, got caught by a crocodile. In the long and grim struggle that ensued, the elephant got terribly emaciated and yet, his sole concern was to offer the flower to the Lord and hence, the alarm raised by him. Unto the Lord who presented Himself before the elephant, the latter declared;

“Oh, Slayer of Madhu, I was not in the least worried about this mortal frame, bound to decay some day, but my sole concern was to worship you and offer this lotus flower in my trunk (hand) at your golden feet”. How can the aspiration of such an ardent devotee be fulfilled by the Lord, *in absentia*, by the mere exercise of His ‘*Saṅkalpa*’ (resolve) from where He is seated, like pressing a button afar, with all its mechanical efficiency? This brings us on to the purpose of the Lord's Avatārs, main and secondary.

(ii) There are three components in the Lord's motive behind His incarnations, viz,

(i) *Paritrāṇāya Sādhūnām*—Sādhu paritrāṇam or protection of the righteous;

(ii) *Vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām*—Duṣṭa nigraha or vanquishing the evil—doers,

(iii) *Dharma Samstāpanārthāya*—resuscitation and establishment of dharma, (moral standards).

(iii) A little probe into this will reveal that (1) above, is the main purpose and that the other two are merely auxiliary thereto or the ingredients thereof. Even so, would it be necessary for the Lord to assume a special form and incarnate without merely contemplating, “May the righteous prosper and the evil forces die out?”

No, this won't do, the Lord has to necessarily come down to meet the aspirations, the deep yearnings of the devout. What is, “*Sādhu paritrāṇam*’ after all? It is nothing but the fulfilment of the aspirations of the devout and the cutting out of things disliked by them. He cannot resist their deepest urges and inclinations, such as drinking in, with their naked eyes, the Lord's nectarean beauty, an irresistible longing to embrace Him bodily and so on. It is during such contacts, that the Lord's auspicious traits shine forth and it is only the contemplation of these traits, down the ages, long after He has gone back to the Celestrum, that sustains the Sādhus (the devout), down to the present day and this, in essence, is the “*Sādhu paritrāṇam*”.

maṅgai āya nāl vētattuḷ nīṅṅa malarc cuṭarē!
 muṅaiyāl iv ulaku ellām paṭaittu, iṭantu, uṇṭu, umiḷntu,
 aḷantāy!
 piṅṅai ēṅṅu caṭaiyāṅṅum nāṅṅumukāṅṅum intiraṅṅum
 iṅṅai ātal aṅṅintu ēṭta, viṅṅiruttal itu viyappē? (III-1-10)

Translation

My lustrous Lord, enshrined you are in the Vedas four
 Which (unto aliens and heretics) reveal you not,
 The worlds you did create, picked them out from deep waters,
 Ate them up (during the deluge) and then spat them out,
 You spanned them too; seen thus as the Supreme Master,
 If you are worshipped by Śiva who does sport

The crescent Moon on matted locks, Nāgmukaṅ (Brahmā, the four-headed)
And Intira, is it really any wonder indeed?

Note

Brahmā was created by the Lord and all the rest created by Brahmā. And then, it is the Lord who redeemed the worlds from underneath the Oceanic waters, sustained them inside His stomach during the period of deluge and put them back, in position, later on. He also spanned all the worlds in just three strides. It is, therefore, hardly any matter for wonder that His Supremacy is readily realised by those super-eminent personalities created by the Lord Himself, Brahmā, Śiva and Intira, and He is worshipped by them all. Nor can the Lord feel flattered by such worship by His own creatures, a mockery of worship, like unto a person setting his foot on the head of a doll of his, decorated by him and pompously declaring that the latter worshipped him.

viyappu āya viyappu illā meyñ flāṅa vētiyaṅaic
oayap pukaḷār palar vāḷum taṅam-kurukūr caṅakōpaṅ
tuyakku iṅṅit toḷutu uraitta āyirattuḷ ip pattum
uyakkoṅṅu piṅappu aṅukkum oli munnir flālattē. (III-1-11)

Translation

This decad, out of the thousand, crystal-clear,
Composed by Caṅakōpaṅ of Kurukūr, the mighty abode
Of men of spiritual fame, in adoration of the Lord,
By Vedas truly revealed, above all known wonders,
Will from rebirth rid men of this world, bound by roaring
waters.

Notes

- (i) The Lord is a marvel unto Himself. What appears to be a matter of wonder for us, with limited intellect and meagre perception, is by-no-means wonderful for Him, who is the All-powerful Lord of the entire Universe. If some one presented to another as many

as four cows at a time, it would indeed be a matter for surprise but if Lord Rāma gifted away thousands of cows to a poor brahmin (Tṛjḍar) on the eve of setting out in exile, as we read in Chapter 32 of Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa of Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa, it looks quite natural and there is nothing odd about it.

- (ii) The chanters of this decad will get elevated from the bottom-most depths, as good as non-existent, to the highest heights.

Third Centum—Second Decad (III-2) (Munnir nālam)

Preamble

We have only to imagine the pangs of a person unable to quench his extreme thirst, notwithstanding the availability of plenty of water near at hand, just because his mouth is sealed up (like Tantalus in the Greek legend). We will then be able to appreciate the most unenviable predicament in which the Ājvār found himself, suffering from the figurative lock-jaw. Here is the Lord in His worshipping form, of insatiable beauty, near at hand, and yet, the Ājvār is not able to comprehend and enjoy Him as well as He would like to, severely handicapped as he is, by the heavy limitations inherent in his earthly existence, tethered to this material body. No doubt, the Lord, in His unbounded mercy, has dowered on us limbs and sense-organs to impart mobility and put us on a career of gainful activity. Not stopping with this alone, He condescended to present Himself before the Subjects during His Avatāras and mixed with them freely. And yet, all these benefits do not currently fill the Ājvār's bill. On the other hand, he is regretting his inability to enjoy the Lord, in His 'Arcā (Iconic manifestation), *in toto*, and give the fullest expression to such enjoyment. God is limitless but the Saint has his limitations although his craving is very great.

The present agony of the Ājvār is thus due to his inability to limit the limitless, rather, the small range of the powers of his mind and the senses vis-a-vis the enjoyment of the boundless

beatific vision of the Lord. It is, however, seen that, towards the end of this decad, the Lord consoles the Āḷvār by telling him that the Celestials, shorn of material contacts, are also on the same footing as the Āḷvār and they too have their limitations. The Āḷvār is, however, beckoned by the Lord to enjoy His iconic form at Tiruvēṅkaṭam, to his heart's content. Thus consoled, the Āḷvār ends this decad on a happy note.

When Śrī Parāśara Bhaṭṭar discoursed on this song, his younger brother, Śrīrāmappiḷḷai raised the following point. "I find that the Āḷvār's distress is neither due to his longing for the heavenly bliss, right from here, nor due to his craving for the enjoyment of God in His incarnations in by-gone times. His distress seems to have arisen after the Lord was pleased to grant him the enjoyment of His worshippable (Arcā) form as Aḷakar, in 'Tirumāḷiruṅ Cōlai', when, in fact, one should have expected him to go on revelling in the enjoyment of the Lord, so sweet and exquisite. It is indeed puzzling in this context how the anguish has, at all, arisen".

The illustrious Bhaṭṭārya elucidated, as follows: "The different manifestations (Para, Vyūha, Vibhava, Antaryāmi and Arcā) of one and the same God cannot affect His Solidarity. God is immense and infinite. When His beatific vision was presented to the Saint through the medium of Aḷakar he could enjoy it only as much as his limited capacity could permit, even as one visualises the vast ocean, only as much as the eye apprehends. Here then is the tussle between the Āḷvār's limited capacity, on the one hand, and his enormous longing on the other, and the resultant mental agony".

munṇir ṅālam paṭaitta em mukil vaṇṇaṇē!
 an nāḷ nī tanta ākkaiyṅṅaḷi uḷalvēṅ,
 vem nāḷ-nōy viya, viṅaikaḷai vēṅ aṅap pāyntu,
 en nāḷ yāṅ uṅṅai iṅi vantu kūṭuvaṅē? (III-2-1)

Translation

My cloud-hued Lord, You raised this world,
 Surrounded by oceanic waters; in this body, by you dowered
 Stray do I, pursuing its (errant) ways; I know not when
 My ills will be rooted out and you I shall attain.

Notes

Ālvār to the Lord

- (i) “ I was like a wingless bird and by giving me the limbs etc., you capacitated me for a career of gainful activity. But alas! the body, so kindly dowered by you, was misused by me and I have got all miseries heaped on my head. Now that I can hardly brook any separation from you, when will my deadly sins, the impediments for my union with you, be rooted out and our union be hastened?
- (ii) Empār is said to have lamented: “ This boat of a body, dowered by you, could have been steered through to heavenly bliss but, alas! I have allowed it to be swept away by (worldly) current and capsize into the mire of sensual pleasures.
- (iii) When Saints talk of ills (sickness and pain), it is not any kind of physical malady, such as remittent fever but the pain of separation from God.

vaṅ mā vaiyam aḷanta em vāmaṇā! niṅ
 pal mā māyap pal piṅaviyil paṭikiṅṅa yāṅ,
 tol mā valviṅait toṭarkaḷai mutal arintu,
 niṅ mā tāḷ cērntu niṅpatu eṅṅāṅṅukolō? (III-2-2)

Translation

My Lord Vāmaṇā, You measured the Worlds, vast and strong,
 Caught up in the meshes of varied births and still lingering,
 When will my sins, hoary and violent, be rooted out
 And I remain stable at your lovely feet?

Note

Lord to the Ālvār

“ Well, if you couldn't go to me, I came to you, spanned the whole universe, high and low, and set my feet on one and all, with no distinction of rich and poor, Saint or debauchee, land and water”.

Āṭvār to the Lord

“Sire, it is a pity, even then, I was out of your reach. In spite of your initial help in endowing me with a body to eke out a promising career, I got myself drowned in the ocean of Samsāra. Again, when you sought me out, as Vāmana, I drifted to another part of the ocean, very much beyond your reach and failed to avail of that golden opportunity of mass benefit”.

kollā mākkōl kolaiceytu, pāratap pōr
ellāc cēṅaiyum iru nilattu avitta entāy!
pollā ākkaiyiṅ puṅarviṅai aṅkkal aṅā;
collāy, yāṅ unṅaic oārvatu ḍr cūlcciyē.

(III-2-3)

Translation

My Master! With a (mere) non-lethal horse-whip in your hand
You routed the armies in this vast land,
(Earth's wholesome burden) in Bhārat's battle great,
May you spell out the means for cutting out
My contact with this fell body, difficult to cut,
So that I do attain your lovely feet.

Notes

- (i) It is sheer ignorance to hold that the great battle of Mahā Bhārata was won by the Pāṇḍavas. Actually it was Lord Kṛṣṇa, who got Mother Earth rid of her unwholesome burden, and it was indeed the purpose of His incarnation. Barring a few, on both sides (the five Pāṇḍavas, Aśvattāma, Kṛpācārya and Kṛtavarmā), all the rest were annihilated and it was all the work of Śrī Kṛṣṇā's whip. With no other weapon in hand, the Master strategist directed and controlled the military strategy at every turn and made it possible for the Pāṇḍavas to claim victory. A mere chariot driver holding the horse whip, He ostensibly was, and yet, Arjuna thoughtfully leaned on Him, fully conscious of the basic truth that, where Lord Kṛṣṇa is, there and there, success is. On the other hand, Duryodhana who had been advised by the grand old

Bhīṣmācār to seek Śrī Kṛṣṇa's help and enlist Him on the side of the Kauravas, did make a formality of an appointment with Śrī Kṛṣṇa, but decided to give Him up, on being told that He was all alone, with no fighting force behind. The sagacious Bhīṣma regretted this fatal decision of Duryodhana and sent him back to Śrī Kṛṣṇa to extract an assurance from Him that He would not wield any weapon during the battle. The Lord readily agreed and, therefore it is, that Nammālvār says, in this song, that it was the mere horse-whip in the hand of the Divine Charioteer that proved so deadly.

- (ii) The Saint laments that he had, not only missed the benefit of the Lord's incarnation as 'Vāmana' but also that of Kṛṣṇāvatāra, the proximate one.

cūlcci ṅāṇac cuṭar cḷi āki, eṅṅum
 ēlcci kēṭu iṅṅi, eṅkaṇum niṅainta entāy!
 tālcci marṅu eṅkum tavirntu, niṅ tāl-iṅaikkḷ
 vāḷcci yāṅ cērumvakai aruḷāy vantē. (III-2-4)

Translation

My Lord, your radiant knowledge surrounds
 One and all, you neither contract nor expand,
 You pervade all over, at all times; do come and tell
 How I can, thoughts other than you, dispel
 And at your lovely pair of feet dwell (and revel.)

Note

Ālvār to the Lord

“My Lord, let alone my failure to benefit by your Avatāras, as Vāmana and Kṛṣṇa. Even you, Omnipresence, and omniscience, directed towards the uplift of your subjects, have not delivered the goods in my case. It is now up to you to devise other ways of redeeming me, if need be, through yet another incarnation, wholly for my sake.”

vantāy pōlē vantum, eṅ maṅattinai ni
 cintāmal ceyyāy; ituvē itu ākil,
 kontu ār kāyāviṅ koḷu malart tiru niṅatta
 entāy! yāṅ upṅai eṅku vantu aṅukirṅṅē?

(III-2-5)

Translation

My Lord, like unto the bunchy flower red is your complexion
 grand,
 Should you persist in denying me your helping hand
 And fail to restrain my wandering mind,
 How can I, on my own, attain you indeed?
 Pray do appear before me, as you did
 (For the sake of Gajendra and Prahlād).

Note

In the preceding song, the Āḷvār requested the Lord to incarnate once more for his sake. The Lord tells the Āḷvār that, as Śrī Rāma, He was in this abode for eleven thousand years and, as Śrī Kṛṣṇa, He stayed here for one hundred years. It would be pretty difficult for Him to incarnate again. The Āḷvār, however, pleads that the Lord should incarnate for his sake, at least for a few days, and if it wasn't possible, He could at least put in His appearance, as He did for Gajendra and Prahlāda. The Āḷvār cannot brook separation from the Lord because he cannot refrain from enjoying His exquisite beauty. And by himself, he cannot reach Him and hence the request, as above.

kiṅṅaṅ, killēṅ eṅṅu ilaṅ muṅṅam nālāl;
 aṅṅa cāraṅkaḷ-avaḷ cuvaittu akaṅṅoḷintēṅ;
 paṅṅal āyiram uyir ceyta paramā! niṅ
 naṅ poṅ-cōtittāl naṅukuvatu eṅṅāṅṅē?

(III-2-6)

Translation

I did nothing good in the days of yore, nor desist from evil,
 Away from you strayed I and got absorbed,
 In pleasures petty; myriads of Souls at your sweet will
 You could animate, oh, potent Lord,
 When shall I your feet resplendent attain?

Note

Ālvār to the Lord

“My Lord, I am guilty, both ways, not doing any good that will take me unto your lovely feet and at the same time, not desisting from evil, which puts me very much away from you. I strayed away from you, doing things as I liked. Seeing what you have done to myriads of souls for their uplift, I am sure I would not be asking of you too much if I prayed that you should redeem me and make me fit to attain your lustrous feet”.

eññāṅṅum nām iruntu iruntu iraṅki, neñcē!
meyñ ṅāṅam iṅṅi viṅai iyal piṅappu aḷunti,
eññāṅṅum eṅkum oḷivu aṅa niṅaintu niṅṅa
meyñ ṅāṅac cōtik kaṅṅaṅai mēvutumē.

(III-2-7)

Translation

My mind, sunk deep in ignorance and sin
We have been journeying thro' births for ever;
Shall we ever attain Kaṅṅaṅ,
The lustrous Lord omniscient, who for ever pervades all over?

Note

Mention of the Lord's resplendent feet, in the preceding song, set the Ālvār's mind throbbing for them and now the Ālvār hastens to disabuse his mind, sunk deep in age-long ignorance and accumulated sins, of its ill-conceived ambition.

mēvu tuṅpa viṅaikaḷai viṅuttumilēṅ;
ōvutal iṅṅi uṅ kaḷal vaṅaṅkiṅṅilēṅ;
pāvu tol cirk kaṅṅā! eṅ parañcutarē!
kūvukiṅṅēṅ kāṅpāṅ; eṅku eytak kūvupaṅē?

(III-2-8)

Translation

I didn't extricate myself from sins that breed miseries many
Nor did I your holy feet worship continually;
My beloved Kaṅṅā of radiance supreme and grace in-born,
To behold you, the all-pervading, I call you out, now and again,
But you, where and how can I attain?

Note

Ālvār to the Lord

“Sire, all along, I have been providing grist for the grinding mill of my senses but little did I do for my advancement. And now, I call you out, as if I have the necessary qualification to meet you. But you are everywhere, and in me too; you make me pounce upon your auspicious traits so natural to you that they attract even a sinner like me”.

kūvik kūvik koṭuviṇait tūṅṅuḷ niṅṅu,
 pāvīyēṅ pala kālam vaḷi tikaṭṭu, alamarkīṅṅēṅ;
 mēvi aṅṅu ā-nirai kāttavaṅ, ulakam ellām
 tāviya ammāṅai eṅku iṅṅiṭ talaṅṅpeyvaṅē? (III-2-9)

Translation

Caught up in worldly life dense,
 The breeding ground for dire sins,
 I missed my track and for ages groped,
 Many a time do I call my Sire, who once shepherded,
 The cows and all the worlds measured,
 Where and how shall I get Him indeed?

Note

Ālvār to the Lord

“My Lord, as Śrī Kṛṣṇa, you protected the cows in the pastoral village of Gokula and not a drop of rain fell on them although it was pouring down with mad fury for a whole week. And then, when you spanned the entire universe, as Tṛvikrama, you set your lovely feet on one and all but I eluded you, even then. Having missed such a golden opportunity, where is the hope of salvation for me? Even so, I am not in a position to give you up, as it would be attempting the impossible, and I, therefore, keep on calling you. You will certainly hear me all right and respond too, by stretching out your helping hand. But then, I am sunk so deep that I am possibly out of your reach!”

talaippey kalam namaṅtamar pācam viṭṭāl,
 alaippūṅ unṅum av allal ellām akala,
 kalaip pal nāṅattu eṅ kaṅṅapaik kaṅṅukoṅṅu,
 nilaippeṅṅu eṅ neṅcam peṅṅratu niṅṅu uyirē (III-2-10)

Translation

Miseries gruesome, like unto yama's yoke have ended,
 And seen have I kaṅṅaṅ, my beloved Lord,
 By many a sacred text comprehended;
 My mind is steady and my soul restored,
 To pristine purity, its due stature.

Notes

(i) Śrī Nampiḷḷai elucidates the context of this song, as follows :

Finding the Ājvār in an extremely critical condition, the Lord calls upon him to enjoy His Iconic Form in Tiruvēṅkaṅṅam and sustain himself. Thereupon, the Ājvār feels greatly relieved and gives vent to his sense of relief, in this song.

(ii) Being away from the Lord is as gruesome as suffering from Yama's yoke, the tortures inflicted by Yama's hordes.

(iii) Tirukkurukaippirāṅ Piḷḷāṅ, in his commentary known as Aṅṅāyirappaṅṅi, presents the current scene of reunion of the Lord and the Saint as follows :

The Lord seems to have got frightened of His own loss of reputation when an ardent devotee, who has taken refuge at His feet, is left in the lurch, exposed to the vagaries of Yama's assistants. C.F. Śloka 25, of Saint Yāmuna's Stotra Ratna.

uyirkaḷ ellā ulakamum uṅṅaiyavaṅṅaik
 kuyil koḷ cōlait teṅ kurukūrc caṅṅakōpaṅ
 ceyir il col icai mālai āyirattuḷ ip pattum
 uyiripmēḷ ākkai uṅṅiṅṅai oḷivikkumē.

(III-2-11)

Translation

These songs ten, in the hymnal garland of thousand, Chaste
and sweet,
Knit by Caṭakōpaṇ of Kurukūr in whose orchards Koels go
gay,
In adoration of the Sovereign Master of all the worlds and
their beings,
Will rid (the chanters) of their fleshy shackles.

Notes

- (i) The Āḷvār invests the Lord and the surroundings with his own feelings. Now that he has been put back on his feet, he sees in the Lord a special aura, and His ownership of all things and souls now becomes more pronounced, with the resuscitation of the Āḷvār himself.
- (ii) Kurukūr is described, in this song, as a lovely place abounding in orchards, where koels sing merrily. When the Āḷvār was sunk in dejection due to separation from the Lord, the Koels had also lapsed into silence. Now that the Āḷvār is happy, these birds also sing sweet strains, as before.

Third Centum—Third Decad (III-3) (Oḷivu il kālam)

Preamble

The Āḷvār prayed to the Lord that his body, the material shackle, which stood in the way of his enjoyment of the Lord, be cut out. But then, the Lord pacified the Āḷvār by pointing out that this body of the Āḷvār in which the Lord eventually got hold of him was by-no-means an impediment, as he thought it to be. On the other hand, He literally coveted him, in that very body, and very much desired to take service from him, in his present embodied state. And so, the Lord beckoned the Āḷvār to serve Him in His Arcā Form at Tiruvēṅkaṭam. Against this background the Āḷvār seeks to render blemishless service unto the Lord at Tiruvēṅkaṭam in ever so many ways, without break, even as

a person, feeling the pinch of hunger and with the food packet in hand, sets the table as soon as he comes across a suitable spot with shade and water.

oḷivu il kalam ellām uṭaṇāy maṇṇi,
vaḷu ilā aṭimai ceyyavēṇṭum nām-
teji kural aruvit tiruvēṅkaṭattu
eḷil koḷ cōti entai tantai tantaikkē.

(III-3-1)

Translation

Serve we shall our Progenitor grand,
Of splendour galore, in Tiruvēṅkaṭam enshrined,
Amid roaring cascades, lovely and rapturous,
With neither break nor blemish, in attendance close.

Notes

(i) *Serve we shall*: Even the mere contemplation of service is good enough. In Śloka 4 of his 'Śrivaikuṇṭa Gaḍya', Śrī Rāmānuja stresses the need for developing, in an ever-increasing measure, the desire for Divine Service.

(ii) *The Lord at Tiruvēṅkaṭam, of Splendour galore*

The Lord in Heaven is like unto the lamp burning in broad day light, with its considerably diminished brightness. Further, His stay there is like feeding the fish with water.

The splendour of the Lord reclining on the blue ocean is literally lost on the blue sea itself, there being hardly a few beneficiaries. On the other hand, the Lord at Tiruvēṅkaṭam is like the lamp shining on the hill-top, in all its brilliance, making Him visible even to the most ignorant among us.

(iii) *Service at all times*

The Āḷvār pines for service at all times, including the days already gone. It sounds rather queer, if not fantastic, that the Āḷvār should seek service in the

irretrievable past as well. What is emphasised here is service of such a high order and efficiency, which will more than make amends for past lapses, drown the Āḷvār in an ocean of bliss and make him desist from brooding over his past omissions, rather render him oblivious of his dereliction in the past.

(iv) *Service without break*

Serving unremittingly the Lord at all places, both inside the Temple and at all places outside where He moves in ceremonial procession. Even when the Lord is screened from public worship by putting a drapery all around, the service should go on, such as tending the lamps, cleaning the vessels meant for containing the sacramental water and so on.

Tiruvarāṅkapperumāḷ Araiyaṛ who recited this song before Lord Raṅganātha, in that grand assemblage in the temple at Śrīraṅgam, is said to have gone into a trance, while reciting the first line of this song, as in the original text, and he went on repeating, "at all times". Evidently, he had got into the mood of the Āḷvār himself, whose passion for Divine Service was so great.

Service without break would also signify service, one after the other, with the same avidity with which Lakṣmaṇa served the Divine Couple, Śrī Rāma and Sītā, during exile. It would also connote selfless service, absolutely free from any tinge of egoism and sense of self-enjoyment, that is, service motivated by the individual soul's own sense of delight and enjoyment, as against service rendered solely for the Lord's delectation.

When Śrī Rāmānuja discoursed on this song, he enquired which of his listeners, in that vast assembly, would like to go to Tiruvēṅkaṭam and render unto the Lord service, as envisaged by the Āḷvār. There was but a solitary response from one Aṇantāḷvāṇ who volunteered his services and sought Śrī Rāmānu-

ja's blessings for the proper fulfilment of the sacred mission. All the others seemed to have got scared of the climatic condition of Tirumalai Hills, frightfully chill, with an unbroken succession of rains. Śrī Rāmānuja embraced Aṅantālvāṅ endearingly and exclaimed that he was the one and only male (Āṅpiḷḷai, in Tamil) in that assembly, who was really bold, ready to brave the climate of Tiruvēṅkaṭam. Thence forward, he came to be known as Aṅantappiḷḷai. He went and served at Tiruvēṅkaṭam, to the immense delectation of Lord Śrīnivāsa.

entai tantai tantai tantai tantaikkum
muntai-vāṇavar vāṇavar-kōṇoṭum
cintu pū maḷum tīruvēṅkaṭattu
antam il pukajk kār eḷil aṅṅalē.

(III-3-2)

Translation

Of endless glory and exquisite bluish hue,
Our great progenitor first and foremost, dwells in Tiruvēṅkaṭam,
Strewn with crimson flowers of unfailing hue,
Attended by the celestials from heaven and their chieftain.

Notes

- (1) To a query why he is rendering service unto the Lord at Tiruvēṅkaṭam when the final goal is service of the Lord in Heaven, the Ālvār replies that even the Celestials headed by Śrī Śēṅāpati Ālvār (Cēṅaimutaliyār) come down, in their strength, to serve the Lord at Tiruvēṅkaṭam. That is because of the twin aspects of the Lord, namely, supremacy (Paratva) and simplicity (Saulabhya). The latter can be enjoyed only in Tiruvēṅkaṭam and hence, the Celestials come down here to enjoy that which cannot be experienced in Heaven. Even so, they get swept off their feet by the Lord's amazing simplicity and the garlands, set with colourful flowers, brought by them to be offered to the Lord, drop from their hands unawares but these flowers of Celestial origin do not fade at all.

(ii) *Limitless glory*

The glory of the Lord, comprehended in Heaven by the denizens of the Eternal Land, would seem to be circumscribed, in as much as the 'Nityās' (ever-free angels) and 'Muktās' (released souls) inhabiting that region, endowed with the transcendent forms are well equipped to partake of all that bliss, emanating from the Lord. On the other hand, in this abode of ours, the Lord is revealing Himself in His Arcā (iconic) form to all and sundry, including wild beasts. His glory in this hallowed land is limitless indeed.

aṅṅal, māyaṅ, aṅi koḷ centāmaraiḱ
kaṅṅaṅ, ceṅkaṅi vāyḱ karumāṅikkam,
teḷ-ṅiṅrai cuṅai ṅiṅt tiruvēṅkaṅattu
eṅ il tol puḱaḷ vāṅavar iḱaṅē.

(III-3-3)

Translation

Our wondrous sire at Tiruvēṅkaṅam,
Holding water fed from cascades, pure and plenty,
Shines like the lustrous blue gem,
With lotus eyes and lips, red and radiant, of rare beauty;
Of countless qualities, auspicious and abiding,
He, His sway over the Celestials, is holding.

Notes

- (1) Questioned whether the Āḷvār would be able to put through the service unto the Lord at Tiruvēṅkaṅam, as contemplated, the Āḷvār says, with an air of assurance that the Lord is the Supreme Benefactor, making it possible for the Celestials and other numerous highly evolved souls to drink deep of His nectarean beauty in Mount Tiruvēṅkaṅam and He would certainly not deny this benefit to the Āḷvār. Otherwise, how can He live up to His glory as the possessor of innumerable auspicious traits, ever present in Him?

(ii) *Of wondrous beauty*

The radiant eyes, red like lotus flower, stand out foremost and what else is required to beautify Him? The Lord sheds His grace through His eyes and it is but proper that the eyes are mentioned first and next in order, the lips from which He utters words, full of affection for His devotees. Again, it is the bewitching smile on these coral lips, that attracts one and all to Him.

icaṇ vāṇavarkku eṇṇaṇ; eṇṇāl, atu
tēcamō tiruvēṅkaṭattāṇukku?
niṇṇaṇ; niṇṇaivu oṇṇum ilēṇ-eṇṇaṇ
pācam vaitta param cuṭarc cōtikkē.

(III-3-4)

Translation

Would it at all redound to His great glory
Were I to call, as (mere) Lord of Heaven, Him
That shines in all splendour at Tiruvēṅkaṭam,
And fondles me, the lowliest of the lowly?

Note

In the preceding song, the Lord was referred to as the Chief of the Celestials, granting audience to them at Tiruvēṅkaṭam. And now, the Āḷvār feels that it would be a gross understatement of His real greatness which lies in the condescending grace with which He mixes with the monkeys and hunters in Tirumalai Hills and what is even more, the profusion of love extended to one, as low as the Āḷvār. This self-abnegation assuming the lowest depths of humility (c.f. Āḷavantār's self—denunciation in śloka 62 of Stotra-Ratna) only heightens the glory of the Lord. As a matter of fact, if He were merely the Lord of the Celestials in Heaven, His glory stands circumscribed, that is, confined to that region alone. It is only here, against the background of the darkness and nescience we present, that His glory can shine in all its splendour. Not by His might and majesty, surrounded by the Angels in Heaven and unapproachable to us, is He great but by His loving grace

and great concern for us, deep down here, sunk in sorrow.
Thus and thus alone can He be God indeed.

cōti āki, ellā ulakum toḷum
ātimūrtti eṅṅāl, aḷavu ākumō-
vētiyar muḷu vētattu amutattai,
tītu il cīrt tiruvēṅkaṭattāṅaiyē?

(III-3-5)

Translation

How dare I circumscribe the glory
Of the immaculate Lord at Tiruvēṅkaṭam,
Venerated by all the worlds, resplendent and hoary,
Nectarean essence of all Vedic texts, chanted by scholars of
great fame?

Notes

(i) *The Lord, venerated by all the worlds*

The Āḷvār says that he cannot circumscribe the glory of the Lord by telling that He is venerated by all the worlds. As a matter of fact, he has not said so earlier. But it is implied by the fact that even he, the lowliest of the lowly, worships Him. When it is said that the bottom-most boy in the class has got through the examination, does it not follow that all the others above him have passed? When the swollen waters of the river have submerged the top-most foot-step, it goes without saying that all the steps below have also been submerged.

(ii) *The Immaculate Lord*

The Lord is the repository of all auspicious qualities and is blemishless. He could be free from blemish only when He makes Himself accessible to the lowliest of the lowly. In His search for one such, He could not get at any one worse than Āḷvār unto whom He has extended His grace despite all his drawbacks. A now, He keeps standing at Tiruvēṅkaṭam, ever the look-out for one even more heinous than Āḷvār, to shed His grace upon. It is this great

of the Lord that the Ājvār extols in this Song with characteristic humility.

vēm, kaṭaṅkaḷ meymēl viṇai muṅṅavum;
 tāṅkaḷ taṅkaṭku nallaṅavē ceyvār-
 vēṅkaṭattu uṅaivārkkku nama eṅṅal-
 ām kaṭamaiaitu cumantārkaṭkē.

(III-3-6)

Translation

Inclination for selfless service into Vēṅkaṭattuṅaivār (He that dwells in Vēṅkaṭam),
 Shall our past sins burn down as well as those yet to come;
 (With the dawn of favour thus conferred)
 The devout shall in such wholesome service persevere.

Notes

- (i) This song is the sequel to the first song of this decad where mention was made of rendering every kind of service to the Lord at Tiruvēṅkaṭam, without break or blemish. Asked how it would at all be possible to render such service, when the sins operate as serious impediments, the Ājvār clarifies that the mere contemplation of service unto the Lord will root out all sins committed so far as well as those likely to rear up their ugly heads in the days to come, by reason of our material contacts and ensure unremitting service, in a wholesome spirit. But then, it might be asked how the accumulated heaps of sins of ages could be destroyed by a simple gesture, as above. Śrī Bhaṭṭārya set at naught this doubt through the following illustration:

Śrī Rāma sought the help of the king of the ocean to bund the sea and cross over to Laṅkā, lying prostrate in front of the ocean, for full three days, with due austerity. When the king of the ocean failed to present himself, Śrī Rāma got enraged and was about to drive a shaft into the bosom of the ocean, threatening to dry it up. Struck with terror, the king of the ocean appeared instantly and made his obeisance. The king of the ocean

having thus capitulated and come to terms, Śrī Rāma was pacified. He not only generously pardoned the king but made the extraordinary gesture of asking him to indicate where his enemies were, so that the bow lifted against him could vent its fury on his enemies. Śrī Rāma's bow was never lifted in vain, and the arrow sped in the direction of the target, pointed out by the king of the ocean, to vanquish his enemies.

In 'Viṣṇu Sahasranāma', there are, *inter alia*, two names of the Lord, viz., 'Stavyaḥ' and 'Stavapriyaḥ'. The first means that the Lord is praiseworthy and each one of His several attributes would faithfully depict the Lord. 'Stavapriyaḥ' means one, who is pleased with the praise showered on Him, in any form or language, correctly worded or not. And so, with all our limitations, even the feeble praise from our feeble tongues endears us to the Lord, Who overlooks all our faults and sins and regards us, in an ample measure.

- (ii) Would it be necessary to do hard labour to get rid of our Sins? Not at all; all that is needed is loving service, rendered disinterestedly, befitting one's station in life and conforming to one's essential nature (*swarūpa*). Even the simple word 'namaḥ' (I don't belong to myself but to you), uttered by the devotee, is deemed by the over-generous Lord as very weighty indeed and He cuts out all the sins of the devotee and puts him on the path of unremitting Divine Service.

cumantu mā malar, nīr cuṭar tūpam koṭṭu,
 amarntu vāṇavar vāṇavar-kōṇoṭum
 namaṅṅu eḷum tiruvēṅkaṭam-naṅkaṭkuc
 camaṅ koḷ viṭu tarum taṭaṅ kuṅṅamē.

(III-3-7)

Translation

By itself, Tiruvēṅkaṭam, that august mountain
 Where do repair the Celestials with their chieftain

And worship with choice flowers, water, lamp and incense,
Shall unto us grant the blissful emancipation (the eternal
service).

Notes

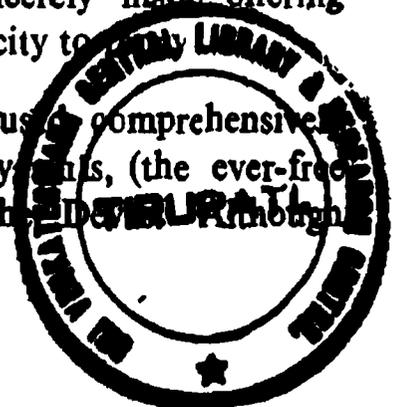
- (i) "For securing the uninterrupted service in the Eternal Land we pine for, the good offices of the holy mountain, Tiruvēṅkaṭam, will do. It would be hardly necessary for us to propitiate Lord Śrīnivāsa (enshrined there), in this behalf" says the Ālvār.
- (ii) The adjective 'Choice', in the third line, qualifies not only the flowers but also water and incense, meaning the best of each kind. The excellence of the material offered, however, lies not in its physical quality but in the devotion with which it is offered. Did not the Lord say, in Bhagavad Gītā (IX-27), as follows?

"Whosoever shall offer Me, in faith and love, a leaf, a flower, a fruit, water poured forth, that offering, lovingly made with pious will, I do accept".

The following illustration will drive home this point.

On one occasion, some princes had a desire to offer Lord Jagannātha at Pūri (in Orissa), Campaka flowers, said to be His favourite. Going to the flower-market, they found that the flowers had been sold out and there was but a solitary flower left. This gave rise to keen competition among the princes and they went on bidding till one of them staked his entire fortune and bought the flower. The flower was offered by the Prince to the Lord who appeared in his dream that night and exclaimed that the debt of his flower was indeed too heavy for Him, thereby signifying His gracious acceptance of the sincerely made offering which was even beyond His capacity to

- (iii) The term 'Celestials' has been used comprehensively so as to include besides the Nityas, (the ever-free angels in heaven), Brahmā and other



Brahmā and other Devas do not serve the Lord disinterestedly but always seek favours from Him for their own selfish ends, yet, the Āḷvār is charitable enough and invests them with his own bent of mind, painting them also as selfless, like him.

kuṅgam ēntik kuḷir maḷai kāttavaṅ,
 aṅṅu ṅālam aḷanta piṛāṅ, paraṅ
 ceṅṅu cēr tīruvēṅkaṭa mā malai
 oṅṅumē toḷa nam viṅai ḍyumē. (III-3-8)

Translation

Worship we shall Tīruvēṅkaṭam, the halo'd mountain,
 Favourite resort of the Benefactor great, who repelled the chill
 rains,
 Holding mount (Govardhana) aloft and who the worlds did
 once span;
 That's enough to extricate us from all our sins.

Note

Here again, the over-riding importance of the Sacred Mount vis-a-vis the Lord enshrined there, is emphasised. Mount Tīruvēṅkaṭam thus becomes the goal or destination of the Lord and His devotees alike. If it was Mount Govardhana during the Lord's incarnation as Śrī Kṛṣṇa that shielded the subjects of Gokula it is now Mount Tīruvēṅkaṭam that operates as the Saviour, during His Arcā (Iconic) manifestation.

ḍyum müppup piṅappu iṅappu: piṅi
 viyumāṅṅu ceyvāṅ tīruvēṅkaṭattu
 āyaṅ nāl-malar ām aṅittāmarai
 vāyullum maṅattullum vaippārkaṅkē. (III-3-9)

Translation

The shepherd (Kṛṣṇa) who dwells in Tīruvēṅkaṭam,
 Rids those, who meditate and sing the praise
 Of His Comely feet, dainty as lotus, in fresh bloom,
 Of fatiguing old age, birth, death and pestilence.

Notes

- (i) In the preceding song, Mount Tiruvēṅkaṭam was said to deliver the goods. And now, it is said that even a part of it, namely, Lord Śrīnivāsa, will do the job. C.F. Tirumaṅkai Āḷvār's reference to Lord Śrīnivāsa, in Peiyya Tirumoḷi,....., as the crest of the northern hill (Vaṭa māmalai ucci).
- (ii) The Lord enshrined in Tiruvēṅkaṭam derives importance from His association with the Sacred Mount (Tirumalai) and hence the latter is our destined goal (Āḷayirappaṭi).

vaitta nāḷ varai ellai kuṟuki ceṅṟu,
eyttu, iḷaippataṅ muṅṅam aṭaimiṇḍ!
paitta pāmpu-aṇaiyāṅ tiruvēṅkaṭam
moytta cōlai moy pūn taṭan tāḷvarē.

(III-3-10)

Translation

Better reach the sacred precincts of Tiruvēṅkaṭam.
With orchards many and a cluster of tanks,
Where stays the Lord whose bed is the serpent,
With outstretched hoods, ere your life's quantum
Draws to a close and your health badly shrinks.

Notes

- (i) The Āḷvār exhorts us to take to the enchanting Tiruvēṅkaṭam, as the final goal. The All-Merciful Lord has indeed dowered on us life and limbs to help us move about and worship the Lord in His Iconic manifestation, in the various pilgrim centres like Tiruvēṅkaṭam and render unto Him every possible service. But, alas! we dissipate our lives and energies, in several ungodly pursuits, till, one day, old age and the attendant infirmity overtake us unawares and badly impair our mobility.

- (ii) This song also stresses the grandeur of Tiruvēṅkaṭam which has attracted the Lord despite His having

Ādiśeṣa, the posh bed, highly delectable. Again, from the point of view of the devotees, it is equally attractive and if only they would care to go there ere old age catches them in its unrelenting grip, they could render service unto the Lord with great ease, absolutely free from fatigue, in that exhilarating environment.

tāḷ parappi maṇ-tāviya iṇṇai
niḷ poḷil-kurukūrc caṭakōpaṇ col
kēḷ il āyirattu ip pattum vallavar
vāḷvar vāḷvu eyti ṅālam pukaḷavē. (III-3-11)

Translation

Those that recite these songs ten of peerless excellence,
Out of the thousand sung by Caṭakōpaṇ of lovely Kurukūr,
Adoring Iṇṇai (Lord), who spanned the universe, shall acquire
World-wide fame and (everlasting) opulence.

Notes

- (i) This decad sings the glory of the Lord at Tiruvēṅkaṭam and yet, it has been made out, in this end-stanza, that the decad extols the greatness of the Lord, Who, in His incarnate form as Tṛvikrama, spanned the entire universe. Our great Ācāryas hold that there is perfect identity between these two forms of the Lord. The Lord keeps standing at Tiruvēṅkaṭam to secure all His subjects under His patronising feet and so did Tṛvikrama, setting His feet on all and sundry, without distinction of high and low, rich and poor, Saint and debauchee. The Lord at Tiruvēṅkaṭam is also quite at home with the hunters and monkeys.
- (ii) *Everlasting opulence*: This denotes the eternal service in Heaven, both body and mind being lovingly attuned to it.

Third Centum—Fourth Decad (III-4) (Pukaḷum nal oruvaṅ)

Preamble

In the preceding decad, the Āḷvār was all agog to serve the Lord, at all times and in every conceivable manner, without break or blemish. Profoundly impressed by the intensity of the Āḷvār's yearning for Divine service, the Lord very much wished to make his task easy and so threw into focus His unique faculty of omnipresence, *pervading all things, all over and at all times*. Coming face to face with the Lord's immense ubiquity in various forms, the Āḷvār was in the same predicament as the one gathering the fruits dropped down the trees in a violent gale, finding it difficult to pick and choose. The phenomenon before him was so amazing and of such astounding dimensions that the Āḷvār, who resorted to singing the Lord's glory (which is also a form of service, namely, service by word of mouth—Vācika Kaiṅkarya), just didn't know where to begin and what to say. It is the Lord's immanence that the Āḷvār attempted to sing about, in this decad.

One of the Lord's several names is 'Ananta', the endless. He is limitless and immeasurable, not being circumscribed by space and time. The unique feature about the Supreme Lord, Mahā-viṣṇu is that He is not only not circumscribed by space and time but He also abides in all, without any exception, the sentient beings and non-sentient things, one and all, constituting, as it were, His bodies. This is, in fact, the keynote of Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy. The 'Śarīra-Śarīri bhāva'. This was mentioned in passing, in the first decad of the first centum itself. And now, this is being elaborated upon, in this decad.

pukaḷum nal oruvaṅ eṅkō? poru il cirp pūmi eṅkō?
tikaḷum taṅ paravai eṅkō? tī eṅkō? vāyu eṅkō?
nikaḷum ākācam eṅkō? ṅiḷ cuṭar iraṅṅum eṅkō?
ikaḷvu il iv aṅaittum eṅkō?-kaṅṅaṅaik kūvum āṅē.

(III-4-1)

Translation

How shall I speak of Kaṅṅaṅ, (my all-pervading Lord)?
Shall I say, He is the one by all sacred texts adored
Or shall I describe Him as peerless Earth or Ocean bright?

Could I say He is fire or air or the space athwart,
Or the Sun and the Moon, rather their aggregate?

Note

The Ājvār looks on, in bewildering amazement, when the Lord presents Himself as an embodiment of the elements that have gone into the making of the universe and its multifarious contents, His auspicious qualities also shining forth, side by side. Unlike others who could see everything in its outer form only, the Ājvār discerns the Lord in each and everything, and nothing can, therefore, be eschewed by him as being disagreeable. He sees the Lord in every thing, individually and in the aggregate. What would seem despicable in the light of one's own association, becomes wholly agreeable, viewed in the light of their conjunction with the Lord. (aphorism 149, Ācārya Hṛdayam).

kūvum āṟu aṟiyamāṭṭēṅ: kuṇṇaṅkaḷ aṇaittum eṅkō?
mēvu cīr māri eṅkō? viḷaṅku tāraṅkaḷ eṅkō?
nā iyal kalaikaḷ eṅkō? ṅāṅa naḷ āvi eṅkō?-
pāvu cīrk kaṇṇaṅ, emmāṅ, paṅkayak kaṇṇaṅaiyē. (III-4-2)

Translation

I know not what to call kaṇṇaṅ, my lotus-eyed Lord,
Of qualities great and vast; could He be called
The aggregate of all mountains or the rains lovely
Or the bright stars or all that learning by the tongue cultivated
Or sweet sounds pregnant with meanings lofty ?

Notes

- (i) In this song, the Ājvār sees the Lord in the several products of the various elements, referred to, in the previous song. Thus, the lotus—eyed Lord is also seen as the mountain range. It is the earth (Pṛthvi) that hardens into mountains, providing, in turn, stable support to the former. The rains pertain to the element known as water. Pleasant to behold, the rains provide all facilities to the denizens of the world and the rain-clouds are also comparable to the Lord's complexion.

The bright stars owe their structure, composition and luminosity to the element of fire, while all that knowledge imparted by word of mouth is rendered possible by the element called air. Transmission of sound is effected through the medium of space (ākāśa). If sound is looked upon as the body, knowledge is its soul. Sound becomes worth its while only when it conveys the right meanings and nourishes the soul with the right type of knowledge.

- (ii) It only bespeaks the unlimited glory of the Lord and the immeasurable extent of His possessions, if even Saint Nammālvār, endowed with full and complete knowledge by the Supreme Lord Himself, should fumble and falter, unable to give adequate expression to the Lord's attributes and acquisitions, His flooding fame etc.

paṅkayak kaṅṅaṅ eṅkō? pavaḷac cevvaṅ eṅkō?
am katir aṭiyaṅ eṅkō? aṅcaṅ vaṅṅaṅ eṅkō?
ceṅkatir muṭiyaṅ eṅkō? tiru maṅu māraṅ eṅkō?
caṅku cakkarattaṅ eṅkō?- cāti māṅikkattaiyē. (III-4-3)

Translation

Shall I call the rare blue gem of a Lord,
The lotus-eyed or the coral-lipped
Or the one with a pair of feet, lovely and bright
Or one dark like collyrium or one that sports
The crown dazzling red or one on whose chest
Are 'Tiru' (Lakṣmī) and Maṅu (Śrīvatsam, the spiral spot)
Or one that wields the conch and the discus?

Notes

- (i) In the two preceding stanzas, the Ālvār described the Lord's universal aspect and now he describes Him, in His own exclusive form. As a matter of fact, the Ālvār could discern the Lord in both the Universal and Individual forms with the same ease.
- (ii) It is indeed interesting to study the sequence set out in the above stanza. The Ālvār begins with the Lord's

lotus-eyes which shed grace on him and befriended him; next in order is the bewitching smile of the Lord which is an even greater attraction than the Lord's entrancing looks and hence the mention of the coral lips. And now, the Subjects, attracted by the Lord's lovely looks and captivating smile, seek refuge at His comely feet; the votaries then enjoy the charming complexion of the Lord. The Lord's crown, indicative of His overlordship, does not, however, scare them off when they behold the Divine Mother, the grand Intercessor on the Lord's chest. But then, this exquisite conjunction of the Divine couple induces a sense of fear, a growing apprehension in the minds of the devout regarding the safe continuance of this glorious combination but the weapons held by the Lord in His hands, the conch and the discus, dispel this fear and put them at ease.

cāti māṇikkam eṅkō? cavi koḷ poṅ muttam eṅkō?
 cāti nal vayiram eṅkō? tavivu il cīr viḷakkam eṅkō?
 āti am cōti eṅkō? āti am puruṭaṅ eṅkō?-
 ātum il kālattu entai accutaṅ amalāṇaiyē. (III-4-4)

Translation

Shall I say that ' Accutan ' is my immaculate Lord
 Who fathered me, when forlorn and (ever afterwards)
 Held on to me, is the pure gem or the shining gold
 Or the ruby flashy or choice diamond or the eternal lamp
 Or the One of resplendent form or the blissful Primate?

Notes

- (i) Asked by a worldling for tips as to how to remember the Supreme Lord, a knowledgeable elder queried back, " Pray, tell me how to forget God ". The Lord is everywhere, stays in all things having name and form and hence the wise men always perceive the Lord's intimate contact and presence in each and everything. That is why the Lord has said in His ' Song Celestial ' (X-41) whatever is of superlative eminence contains a

special element of His all-conquering power. The Ājvār, therefore, says that, with a natural, built-in Grace, bliss and beauty, God is the very best of all good things.

- (ii) The eternal lamp that God is, He is anterior to all other luminous bodies, like Sun and Moon.
- (iii) *Acyuta, the eternal Father*: While in a forlorn state, with no attainment whatever, on his part, to attract the Lord's grace, the Lord, on His own, revealed to the Ājvār the indissoluble bond subsisting between them, the inviolable 'Father-Son' relationship and held on to him firmly thereafter.

accutaṅ amalaṅ eṅkō? aṭiyavar viṇai keṭukkum
naccum mā maruntam eṅkō? nalaṅ kaṭal amutam eṅkō?
ac cuvaik kaṭṭi eṅkō? aṅu cuvai aṭicil eṅkō?
neyc cuvait tēral eṅkō? kaṇi eṅkō? pāl eṅkēṅō? (III-4-5)

Translation

Shall I my Lord, as Accutaṅ (the steadfast) call
Or the Immaculate or high class medicine delectable
That cuts out the devotees' ills and evils
Or the nectar that came up the milk ocean fine or fix
Him as the cream delicious or the meal with tastes six
Or the honey as tasty as ghee or fruit or milk?

Notes

- (i) True to the Upaniṣadik text, depicting the Lord as very delicious, the Ājvār presents the Lord here as all those things that are juicy and appetising.
- (ii) *Cutting out the devotees' ills and evils*: The expression 'Ills and evils' is used in a comprehensive sense, covering the effective operation of both 'Puṇya' and 'Pāpa', as the former is a golden fetter and the latter, an iron fetter and thus both are impediments, seeing that a golden fetter is, all the same, a fetter. The Lord, on His part, will not confine Himself to a life of ease and peace, in the high heavens, but come down post-haste

to the rescue of His devotees, as He did in the case of Gajendra, the elephant. Again, the ills He cures are not the ordinary bodily ailments but the much worse malady of the soul. The Lord is, therefore, referred to as the delectable medicine, easy to take and absolutely harmless even if the directions for its use are given the go-by or not closely adhered to.

(iii) The Lord is indeed far superior to the nectar that was obtained by churning the milk ocean. The Lord, the non-satiate nectar, will make Himself available to His beloved devotees without undergoing the rigours of churning the ocean.

pāl eṅkō? nāṅku vētap payaṅ eṅkō? camaya nti
nūl eṅkō? nuṅṅku kēlvi icai eṅkō? ivaruḷ nalla
mēl eṅkō? viṅaiyiṅ mikka payaṅ eṅkō? kaṅṅaṅ eṅkō?
māl eṅkō? māyaṅ eṅkō?- vāṅavar ātiyaiyē. (III-4-6)

Translation

Shall I as Milk, (the Lord), foremost among celestials, call
Or as the paramount Vedās four or the Śāstras that reveal
The Vedic religion in proper light
Or as the music enchanting or as one above them all
Or as the fruits many of one's endeavour bright
Or as Kaṅṅaṅ, Māl (Tirumāl), Māyaṅ (the Lord of wondrous
deeds and traits)?

Notes

(i) The Lord is the quintessence of the vedās, the supreme authority revealing Him. The Lord has Himself declared, in XV-15 of Bhagavad Gītā, that He alone is denoted by the Vedās, in their entirety.

The Śāstras, referred to, are the sacred texts, such as Itihāsas, Purāṅas etc, which elucidate the moot points in the Vedās and serve as an effective key or guide to the abstruse vedic texts.

(ii) *The wondrous Lord*: The wonder lies in that the Overlord of the Celestials serves His devotees in the humblest

manner, such as running an errand, driving the chariot etc.

- (iii) Even as a small quantity of seeds sown produces a rich harvest of grains, the Lord showers on us a plethora of benefits, out of all proportion to the magnitude of our efforts, real or feigned.

vāṇavar āti eṅkō? vāṇavar teyvam eṅkō?
vāṇavar pōkam eṅkō? vāṇavar murrum eṅkō?
ūṇam il celvam eṅkō? ūṇam il cuvarkkam eṅkō?
ūṇam il mōkkam eṅkō?- oḷi maṇi vaṇṇaiyē. (III-4-7)

Translation

Shall I call the lustrous Sire, gem-hued, as the Overlord
Of Celestials or the God Supreme by them adored
Or the One by them enjoyed and their all,
Or the treasure inexhaustible or undying pleasures
Of *Svarkkam* (Svarga) or *mōkkam* (mokṣa), the bliss eternal?

Notes

- (i) ‘*Celestials*’: This denotes, in particular, the ‘Nitya Sūris’ in Heaven to whom the Lord is the ‘Be-all’ and ‘End-all’, the Sole Sustainer.
- (ii) *Bliss eternal*: Heaven, the Eternal Land, with its perennial scope for eternal service unto the Lord, as distinguished from the ‘Kaivalya’ type of Mokṣa or emancipation where the liberated (dis-embodied) Soul denies itself the bliss of Divine Service and gets lost in self-enjoyment.
- (iii) While the pleasures of Svarga too, are of a limited tenure at the end of which the individual is hurled down to the Earth, the Lord is referred to in this context, as the everlasting pleasure, not time-bound.

oḷi maṇi vaṇṇaṇ eṅkō? oruvaṇ eṅru ētta niṅṅa
naḷir matic caṭaiyaṇ eṅkō? nāṅmukak kaṭavuḷ eṅkō?—
aḷi maḷiṅtu ulakam ellām paṭaittu, avai ētta, niṅṅa
kaḷi malart tuḷavaṇ, emmāṅ, kaṇṇai, māyaṇaiyē. (III-4-8)

Translation

Could I call Kaṇṇaṇ, my Liege-Lord of wondrous traits and deeds,
 Sporting the floral garland of tuḷaci which honey sheds,
 Who the worlds did with delight create and is by them adored,
 As the lustrous One of sapphire hue or as Śiva, who sports
 The cool crescent Moon on matted locks and stands revered
 (By his votaries) as the God supreme or as Nāṇmukaṇ (Brahmā,
 the four-headed)?

Notes

- (i) The Āḷvār points out here that Śiva, sporting the cool, crescent Moon on his matted locks, mistakenly revered by some as the Supreme and Brahmā, the four-headed Demi-urge, also form part of Lord Viṣṇu's possessions.
- (ii) 'Liege-Lord' Viṣṇu, who put the Āḷvār on the right track and thereby made him solely worship Him, without straying into the domain of worship of the lesser deities.

kaṇṇaṇai, māyaṇ-taṇṇai, kaṭal kaṭaintu amutam koṇṭa
 aṇṇalai, accutaṇai, aṇantaṇai. aṇantaṇ-taṇmēl
 naṇṇi naṅku uṇaikuṇṇāṇai, ṇālam uṇṭu umiṇṭa mālai,
 eṇṇum āṅu aṅiyamāṭṭēṇ-yāvaiyum evarum tāṇē. (III-4-9)

Translation

I know not how to comprehend Kaṇṇaṇ, the wondrous Lord,
 The glorious Sire, Who the ocean churned and ambrosia
 delivered,
 Accutaṇ (the Protector steadfast) of glory unlimited,
 Who on Aṇantaṇ (Serpent) does repose, safe and sound,
 Tirumāl (of tender solicitude), who (during deluge) sustained
 All th worlds in His stomach and (later) spat them out;
 Indeed all things and beings He does Himself constitute.

Note

The Āḷvār who attempted earlier an enumeration of the Lord's cosmic wealth, has now given it up as impossible and rests contented with a summary statement that He is the aggregate of all non-sentient things and sentient beings.

C.F. the Lord's own declaration, in Bhagavad Gītā X-19, that there is no end to the details of things and beings under His control (the vibhūtis).

yāvaiyum evarum tāpāy, avaravar camayam tōgum
tōyvu ilaṅ; puḷaṅ aintukkum colappaṭān; uṇarviṅ mūrṭti;
āvi cēr uyiriṅ uḷḷāl ātum ōr paṅgu ilāta
pāvapai atanaik kūṭil, avapaiyum kūṭalāmē. (III-4-10)

Translation

Knowledge personified is my Lord who stays within
All things and beings and yet does apart remain
From their weal and woe, much beyond the ken
Of comprehension of the senses five; appreciate you can,
Growth and decay unto the body pertain and not the Soul
within,
Stays likewise the Lord inside the Soul (aloof from its weal
and woe).

Note

This stanza clearly brings out the fact that the Lord who has stationed Himself inside all things and beings, is not affected by their changing fortunes, weal or woe, even as the Individual Soul occupying a particular body is not affected by the biological changes of growth and decay undergone by the body. But then, it might be argued that the Individual Soul partakes of the pain and pleasure experienced through the medium of the body and on this analogy, the Lord inside all cannot also remain unaffected by such experiences. This doubt can, however, be resolved by contrasting the manner in which the Lord and the Individual Soul got inside the body. Whereas the Individual Soul has occupied the body as the medium appropriate to his or her working out the load of Karma, the Lord gets inside the soul at His volition, for the resuscitation of the subject. The Individual is the convict serving a term of imprisonment inside the prison-house, which the body is, while the Lord is like unto the distinguished jail visitor, contemplating the ways and means of welfare and rehabilitation of the prisoners.

The above is the interpretation of Emperumāṅār (Rāmānuja); the other interpretation, namely, exclusive devotion unto the Lord (Super Soul) inside the individual Soul, will enable the latter to attain the former has been brushed aside by him as a misfit, in the present context of highlighting the immanence of the Lord, where it is imperative to bring out that the Lord pervades all things and beings without, at the same time, partaking of their character.

kūṭi vaṅṭu aṅaiyum taṅ tārk koṅṭal pōl vaṅṅaṅ-taṅṅai
māṭu alar poḷil-kurukūr vaṅ caṭakōpaṅ coṅṅa
pāṭal ṅr āyirattul ivaiyum ṅr pattum vallār
viṭu ila pōkam eyti virumpuvar amarar moyttē. (III-4-11)

Translation

Those that are well versed in these songs ten,
Out of the peerless thousand sung by gracious caṭakōpaṅ
Of Kurukūr, amid blooming orchards many, in adoration
Of the cloud-hued Lord, sporting cool tuḷaci garland,
The gay resort of honey bees, will the heaven ascend
And eternal service enjoy, becoming the Celestials' favourites.

Notes

- (i) *Gracious caṭakōpaṅ*: The Ālvār's grace lies not in his seeing the Lord, in all things and beings, but in his making us also realise it, through these songs.
- (ii) The Nitya Sūrīs (Celestials in Heaven) love those that recite these ten songs. This is because of their great love and regard for the Ālvār who possesses Divine knowledge on a par with them, despite his location down below in this land of darkness and nescience.

Third Centum—Fifth Decad (III-5) (Moym mām pūm poḷil)

Preamble

In the last decad, we saw the Ālvār enjoying the Lord's immanence in quite a marvellous way. So ecstatic and love-

smitten did he become on beholding the Lord's 'Vibhūti', vast and varied, immense and interesting, defying description, that he was thrown into the rapturous state of singing and dancing. One has only to witness a Saint in his moments of rapturous ravishment in union with God, moments when his whole being thrills with love and his eyes swim with the pearls of tears of delight. This also reflects the behaviour of the exalted denizens of the high heavens, who drink deep incessantly from that inexhaustible fountain of bliss, the Lord. No wonder then, Sage Nārada and other celestial bards always dance as they sing, and sing as they dance, in the immediate presence of the Lord, completely swayed by God-love of extraordinary intensity. As a matter of fact, the hands and feet as well as the other limbs, graciously dowered on us by the Lord, can prove their worth only in this way. Naturally, the Āḷvār felt disappointed, rather distressed when he found that, barring a handful, the bulk of the worldlings around was very far from such intoxicating God-love. While he is all praises for the few kindred souls, he is unsparing in his condemnation of the otherwise. This provides the theme of this decad.

In the second decad of this centum, the Āḷvār was in dire distress but the gloom was dispelled by the joy of contemplation of unremitting service unto the Lord at Tiruvēṅkaṭam, the meeting ground of the Celestials and the Earthly men. (III-3). In the fourth decad, the Āḷvār's joy knew no bounds, as we have just seen. To the superficial observer, such alternating moods of the Āḷvār may seem objectionable in as much as they appear to come into conflict with the general principles laid down for the pursuit of the discipline, known as 'Bhakti'. Of the seven steps leading to 'Bhakti', the first is 'Viveka' and the last two are 'anavasādaḥ' (non-depression) and 'anuddharsaḥ' (non-elation). The practitioners of 'Bhakti' are prohibited from getting unduly depressed or unduly elated. These prohibitions, however, apply only to material things of the mundane world under the impact of physical pain and pleasure, commonly experienced by the Souls in bondage. These injunctions cannot contain the ultra-mundane happiness of the Saints and other Godly men resulting from their constant communion with the Lord and joyful contemplation of His wondrous trails and deeds or their grief arising from the aloofness of the worldlings from God-thirst and God-hunger.

moym mām pūm poḷil-poykai mutalaic ciṛaiṇṇaṇṇu niṅṅa
 kaimmāvukku aruḷ ceyta kār mukil pōl vaṇṇaṇ, kaṇṇaṇ,
 emmāṇaic collip pāṭi, eḷuntum paṇantum tuḷḷātār-
 tammāl karumam eṇ? collir, taṇ kaṭal vaṭṭattu uḷḷirē!

(III-5-1)

Translation

Ye, men of Earth, bound by the cool oceanic waters!
 Tell me what use there can be of those creatures
 Who sing not the glory of Kaṇṇaṇ, our cloud-hued Lord,
 Who rescued (Gajendra) the elephant that stood ensnared
 By a crocodile in the pond amid orchards dense
 And leap about and dance in gay abandon, with devotion
 intense.

Notes

- (i) Unto him, who remains unmoved by the good turn done by the Lord to Gajendra, the pious elephant in dire distress, his very birth is a terrible waste.
- (ii) *The pond amid dense orchards*: In the forest inhabited by Gajendra, the pious elephant, who made history in the world of devotion, all the lotus tanks had gone dry, due to scarcity of rains. This put a grievous stop to the daily offering of lotus flowers by the elephant to the Deity and as such, empty days rolled on, the elephant grew restless and went hither and thither, in search of lotus flowers. Scenting his way through, at long last, he came up to a hill-top where he sighted a lovely pond, studded with lotus flowers, surrounded by a nice cluster of gardens. In his eagerness to pluck the flowers and resume the diurnal worship, long discontinued, the elephant just lost sight of a crocodile lying across and got trapped by the fell adversary. On hearing the alarum raised by the elephant after a titanic struggle with its grim opponent, the Lord rushed to the pond, post-haste, rescued the elephant from the spacious jaws of the crocodile and caressed the wounds on its leg.

(iii) While discoursing on this Song, Śrī Parāśara Bhaṭṭar is said to have painfully observed, as follows :

We are here, at this end, to remain unmoved by the multifarious good done to us by the Lord and He is there, at the other end, to get concerned about every little mishap that befalls us. This sets out in sharp contrast, our callous indifference to Him and His tender solicitude for us.

taṅ kaṭaḷ vaṭṭattu uḷḷārait tamakku iraiyāt taṭintu unṇum
tiṅ kaḷal-kāl acurarkkut tiṅku iḷaikkum tirumālaip
paṅkaḷ talaikkollaḷḷap pāṭi, paṅantum kuṇittum uḷalātār
maṅ koḷ ulaḱil piṅappār, valviṅai mōta malaintē. (III-5-2)

Translation

Those that sing not tunefully the glory
Of Tirumāl, who does on the Asurās goiy,
That kill and eat up the denizens of this Earth,
Bound by the oceans cool, pour all His wrath,
Tormenting them and fail to leap about and dance in gay-
abandon
Will in this sinful world get trapped, (again and again).

Notes

- (i) The Āḷvār deploras those who do not recognise the enormous good done to them by the Lord, by way of protecting them from the devilish. Failure on their part to gratefully acknowledge the Lord's benefaction will only get them consigned to Samsāra, the breeding ground for sins and the resultant miseries and involvement in the dreadful cycle of birth and death.
- (ii) By 'Asuras' is not meant those born in the Asura clan. As a matter of fact, the two broad classifications, indicated by Lord Kṛṣṇa in Chapter XVI-6 of Bhagavad Gītā, are 'Devas', the Divine and 'Asuras', the Devilish. Whosoever renders service to the Lord and His devotees or co-operates with those who render

such service is the 'Divine' while those who range themselves opposite and hate God and His devotees and obstruct the service rendered to them, are the 'Devilish'. Even Lakṣmī, who is Grace personified and knows not what it is to punish (ajñātha nigraha), is one with the Lord, in the matter of inflicting punishment on the 'Devilish'.

malaiyai eṭuttu, kal-māri kāttu, pacunirai-taṅṅait
tolaiivu tavirtta pirāṇaic collic colli, niṅṅu eppōtum,
talaiyiṅṅōṭu ātaṅam taṅṅat taṅṅukuṅṅamāyp paṅavātār
alai koḷ narakattu aḷuntik kiṅṅantu uḷaiḷkiṅṅa vampaṅē.

(III-5-3)

Translation

Those that do not spell , again and again,
The glory of the Lord who held aloft the mountain
And from the fury of stony rain saved the cattle
And leap about for ever, upside down and in joy rattle,
Are but duds destined to drudge in the dismal hell.

Note

Even remaining unresponsive to the great gesture of the Lord,
His acts of grace galore and the resultant failure to laud
Him and leap about with joy would be tantamount to
entry into hell and these are the very persons eagerly sought
after by yama's hordes for being despatched to hell.

vampu aviḷ kōtaiporuṅṅa, māḷ viṅṅai ēḷum aṅṅartta
cempavaḷat tiraḷ vāyaṅ, ciritaṅṅaṅ tol pukaḷ pāṅi,
kumpiṅṅu naṅṅam iṅṅu āṅi, kōku ukāṅṅuṅṅu uḷalātār-
tam piṅṅappāl payaṅ eṅṅē cātu caṅṅaḷkaḷiṅṅaiyē? (III-5-4)

Translation

Of what use are those born amidst the devout pure and pious,
That sing not and jump not, running riot,
Adoring the coral lipped ciritaṅṅaṅ's glory great,
His taming of the unruly bulls seven for winning the hand
Of the Bride (Nappiṅṅai) wearing the highly fragrant garland?

Notes

- (i) The Ālvār is vexed with those indifferent sinners, born in the midst of the 'Sātvik Souls' (good and pure), not losing themselves in ecstatic adoration of the glory, of Lord Kṛṣṇa who tamed, all at once, seven unruly bulls and won Nappiṇṇai, the charming bride, niece of Queen Yaśodā,
- (ii) *Coral-lipped Cirītaṅṅ*: The red lips of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, rendered all the more enchanting by His bewitching smile of victory over the unruly bulls.
- (iii) Śrī Piḷḷaiṇṇai, a disciple of kūrattālvār, drew up the following contrasting picture, to illustrate the phraseology "persons born in the midst of the 'Sātvik' (pure and pious people), used in this song.

Near the holy tank, Candra puṅkaraṇi, within the precincts of the temple of Lord Raṅganātha in Śrīraṅgam, there is the sacred Puṅṇai tree. Under the shade of this tree, the religious Pundits used to give learned discourses to the handful of devout listeners, squeezed in the little space available in the passage around, in rapt attention. There would, of course, be no objection to a further influx of like-minded listeners, keen and receptive, adding to the congestion. But see how odd and irksome it would be, if the hefty villagers with their hairy, humpy shoulders, pot-bellies and head-gears, passing along, thrust themselves in, out of sheer curiosity, and elbow the pious listeners out.

cātu caṇattai naliyum kañcaṇaic cātippatarṅku,
 āti am cōti uruvai aṅku vaittu, iṅkup piṅanta
 vēta mutalvaṇaip pāṭi, vītikaḷ tōṅum tuḷḷātār
 ḍti uṅarntavar muṅṇā eṅ cavippār maṅicarē?

(III-5-5)

Translation

Not all their learning and mumblings dry will make them
 men,
 If they dance not in the open streets, love-smitten
 And sing not the glory of the Lord, by Vedas acclaimed

As the foremost, who did in all that supernal splendour
 descend
 From the high heavens, to kill Kañcaṅ, the tyrant
 Who did the soft and pious men torment.

Notes

- (i) In the preceding decad the Ājvār enjoyed the Vibhūtis collectively, being the Lord's controlled possessions. But now he differentiates between the Lord's subjects; he is all praises for those love-drunken and love-smitten possessing enormous God-hunger and God-thirst like himself but condemns unreservedly those who are not charged with such God-love. The Ājvār has no hesitation in declaring the massive learning and ritualistic, prosaic exercises in mumblings and genuflections, palmed off as prayers by those in the latter category, as wholly futile.
- (ii) The Lord's incarnations and the herculean deeds performed by Him during those incarnations, were due to the unpardonable sins committed by Kamsa and other demoniac forces, by way of teasing and tormenting the pious and the pure, like Vasudeva and Devakī. Whereas the Lord is least mindful of direct affront thrown at Him, He gets furious when His devotees are offended and He will never exercise His proverbial clemency, in respect of such grievous offenders. Those who comprehend the Lord's enormous love for His devotees cannot but throw off all their sophistication and conventional formalities and leap about and dance like mad men, in the streets, big and small, singing His great glory. It would be appropriate to mention the following anecdote, in this context.

The king built a cluster of houses for presentation to the poor. He was, however, very much averse to Vaiṣṇavites and so, he flatly declined to hand over one of the houses to Miḷakālvāṅ, a Vaiṣṇava, when approached by the latter for the grant. The supplicant, however, wanted to know from the king the grounds,

on which the grant was negated. The king bluntly replied: “No doubt, you are worthy, in other respects, but as a Vaiṣṇava and a disciple of Śrī Rāmānuja, you stand disqualified.” So great was Mīlakālvāṅ’s love of his religion and his great Preceptor, that he exclaimed: ‘Oh, is that so? I am mighty glad, you recognise me as a Vaiṣṇava although I thought I was not worthy of being called as one. “So saying, he gathered up his garment, threw it up in the air and danced with joy.

maṅicarum maṅṅum muṅṅum āy, māyap piṅavi piṅanta
taṅiyaṅ piṅappili-taṅṅai, taṅaṅ kaṅal-cērnta piṅāṅai,
kaṅiyai, karumpiṅ iṅ cāṅṅai, kaṅṅiyai, tēṅai, amutai
muṅivu iṅṅi ēttik kuṅippār muṅutu uṅar nirmaiyiṅārē.

(III-5-6)

Translation

Perfect knowledge vests in those that dance
And sing with great joy the glory of the Lord,
The delicious fruit, candy, honey and Cane-juice,
The nectar grand, reclining on the milk-ocean broad,
Who, birthless though, did come down in many ways,
Now as man, then as Deva and so on, wondrous and peerless.

Notes

(i) The Lord is birthless in the sense that He is not, by any means, involved like us, in the inevitable cycle of birth and rebirth, eking out the results of our good and bad actions. And yet, He incarnates many times and in many ways out of His own free will, assuming the form most appropriate to the particular occasion and purpose. Those who go into raptures in contemplation of these beneficent Avatāra of the highly delicious Lord, could indeed be deemed to have assimilated the quintessence of all learning.

(ii) *Reclining on the milk-ocean*: This refers to the ‘Vyūha’ aspect of the Lord reclining on the milky ocean, the centre of creative activity, where the Lord contem-

plates the ways and means of reclaiming us all from the ocean of Samsāra—birth and bondage.

- (iii) With all their massive learning, if people are not visibly moved by the Lord's auspicious traits and do not take a deep plunge into them, they should indeed be deemed ignorant. On the other hand, those that are not conversant with any of the Śāstras but get into the region of ecstasy, entranced mentally, orally and physically, by the Lord's auspicious traits and wondrous deeds, are virtually all—knowing.

nīrmāi il nūṅṅuvar vīya, aivarkku aruḷceytu niṅṅu,
pār malku cēṅṅai avitta paraṅṅuṅṅarai niṅṅaintu āṅṅi,
nīr malku kaṅṅṅiṅṅar āṅṅi, neṅṅcam kuḷaintu naiyātē,
ūṅṅ malki, mōṅṅu paruppār uttamarkaṅṅku eṅṅ ceyvārē?

(III-5-7)

Translation

Of what use unto the devout are they
That are fat and pot-bellied, who melt not
In ecstasy, singing and dancing with tears of joy,
Meditating on the resplendent Lord Supreme Who did blot
The cruel hundred out and on (their cousins) five shed His
grace
Routing the armies and ridding Earth of unwholesome
populace?

Note

The 'Kauravas' (the cruel hundred) would just not allow their five cousins, the Pāṅṅavas, to co-exist. The Lord had, therefore, to annihilate such terribly hostile cousins of the Pāṅṅavas and, in the process, He got the Earth rid of its unwholesome burden. Crores of Sādhus would, by no means, be a burden to Mother Earth to whom they are just as light as cotton, but the sinners press too heavily on her. The Āḷvār deplores the conduct of those remaining unmoved by the Lord's enormous grace, shown to His devotees as above. These hapless men seem to have been born just to make their poor mothers suffer the pangs of labour. It is a pity such men cannot be of any use to

the devout Vaiṣṇavas at whose beck and call the Lord and all His possessions ever remain. While on this subject, the following episode will be interesting and instructive:

In the court of a Cōḷa Rājā, Periya Nampi, Śri Rāmānuja's preceptor, had to undergo mortification owing to his refusal to subscribe to the slogan raised by the King and his men, "Śiva is the Supreme God". Some of these men, however, wanted to claim the merit which accrues by cremating the uncared-for corpses of the destitute and rushed to the scene of death of Periya Nampi. But they shrank back, when they saw the illustrious Kūrattālvāṇ by the side of that great Ācārya. Kūrattālvāṇ admonished them by saying, "You fellows can hardly find a single destitute Vaiṣṇava by cremating whom you seem to be in for cheap merit. You should all know that the Lord and all His worlds are there to subserve the Vaiṣṇavas at all times".

vār puṇal am taṇ aruvi vaṭa tiruvēṅkaṭattu entai
pēr pala collip pitarri, pittar eṅgē piṭar kūṛa,
ūr pala pukkuṁ pukātuṁ, ulōkar cirikka niṅṅu āṭi,
ārvam perukik kuṅippār amarar toḷappaṭuvārē. (III-5-8)

Translation

Those that articulate, with yearning deep, the names many
Of our Lord in Vaṭa Tiruvēṅkaṭam, with its fountains many
And cool, nice cascades, pass in and out of many a town,
Singing and dancing in ecstasy like mad men,
By worldlings ridiculed, will be worshipped by those in heaven.

Note

The Ālvār extols those who worship the Lord in His Arcā form at the various pilgrim centres, like Tiruvēṅkaṭam, despite their being steeped in 'Samsāra' in an abode notorious for its nescience. These men the Ālvār would like to place in a category even above those exalted Souls in Heaven. Seeing that the Supreme Lord in His Arcā form wherein converge all auspicious attributes in unlimited measure, is near at hand, easily accessible, these men go into a trance and keep on singing and dancing with wild

joy, moving round towns and villages, completely absorbed in devotion. While the worldlings callously look on with wonder and amusement, as they do in the case of mad men, even the Nitya Sūris, the ever-free angels in heaven, adore these devotees on Earth running riot with God-love. (The episode relating to Mīlakālvāṇ, cited in the notes below III—5—5, could be recapitulated here as well.)

amarar toḷappaṭuvāṇai, aṇaittu ulakukkum pirāṇai,
 amara maṇattiṇuḷ yōku puṇarntu, avaṇ-taṇṇōṭu oṇṇu āka
 amarat tuṇiya vallārkaḷ oḷiya, allātavar ellām
 amara niṇaintu, eḷuntu, āṭi, alaṅṅuvātē karumamē. (III-5-9)

Translation

Leaving the perverts alone who deem themselves on a par
 With the Lord, in *Amarars'* hearts embedded, Sovereign Master
 Of all the worlds, it behoves the rest to meditate and sing
 His glory great, moving round in ecstasy, leaping and dancing.

Note

It is a great pity that the 'Kevalas' who develop their psychic powers and feel themselves on a par with the Supreme Lord in the final state of liberation, get lost in self-enjoyment, totally oblivious of the infinitely superior bliss of Divine Service perennially enjoyed by the '*Amarars*', the immortals, in the Yonder heaven. Leaving these unfortunate souls severely alone, the Ālvār says it is the duty of all the others to deeply meditate upon the Lord's auspicious traits, with selfless dedication, and sing His great glory all over the place, going about leaping and dancing.

karumamum karuma palaṇum ākiya kāraṇaṇ-taṇṇai,
 tiru maṇi vaṇṇaṇai, ceṅkaṇ māliṇai, tēvapirāṇai
 orumai maṇattiṇuḷ vaittu, uḷlam kuḷaintu, eḷuntu, āṭi,
 perumaiyum nāṇum tavirntu, pitarṅṅumiṇ, pēṭaimai tīrntē!
 (III-5-10)

Translation

- Shed all your conceit, sense of shame and ignorance
 And leap about, uttering with ecstatic incoherence,

The names of the gem-hued, red lotus-eyed Tirumāl, the Ordainer
Of the Universe, the deeds and their fruits, Chief of Celestials,
With a mind fixed on Him as the ' Means ' and the ' End ',
all at once.

Notes

- (i) The Lord has to be looked upon, as both the ' Means ' and the ' End '.
- (ii) As the Internal Controller of the Individuals, He enables them to perform deeds and He confers the results, reward or punishment, as the case may be, because the deeds by themselves can't grant rewards or inflict punishments.
- (iii) The Saint calls upon the people to shed their ill-conceived notions, born of conceit, which preclude them from coming under the emotional sway of the Lord's auspicious traits and the stupid sense of shame that they shall not exhibit in public their emotional upsurge and join the ranks of the illustrious devotees moving along, singing the Lord's glory and dancing in ecstasy.

tirnta aṭiyavar-tammait tiruttip paṇikollā valla
ārnta pukaḷ accutaṇai, amarar-pirāṇai, emmāṇai,
vāynta vaḷa vayal cūḷ taṇ vaḷaṅ kurukūrc caṭakōpaṇ
nērnta ḍr āyirattu ip pattu aruviṇai niṅgu ceyyumē.

(III-5-11)

Translation

These songs ten, out of the thousand composed
By caṭakōpaṇ of fertile kurukūr, adoring Accutaṇ, the Lord
Of glory great, Chief of Celestials, Protector steadfast,
Who redeems those that unto Him stick fast,
As sole refuge and enlists them in His service eternal,
Will to ashes reduce all sins, however cruel.

Note

Failure to go into raptures, in contemplation of the Lord's auspicious traits and wondrous deeds, sing and dance,

literally dissolved in Him, would, no doubt, fall under the category of 'irredeemable' sins. These ten songs will, however, destroy even this type of sin and keep the chanters beyond its mischief.

Third Centum—Sixth Decad (III-6) (Ceyya tāmaraik kaṇṇan āy)

Preamble

In the preceding decad, the Āḷvār extolled the devotees thrown into a state of ecstasy, enraptured by the contemplation of the Lord's wondrous deeds and auspicious traits, moving about, all the time singing and dancing. In the same breath he spoke disparagingly of those who do not exhibit this kind of behaviour but remain callously indifferent, unmoved by and impervious to the glory of the Lord. But then, the Āḷvār, known for his deep compassion and love for the fellow-beings, wished to bring round even those in the latter category and impress, in their mind, the Lord's extraordinary trait of tender solicitude and easy accessibility. No doubt, the Āḷvār had already expatiated on this in I-3, but that was in terms of the Lord's incarnations (Vibhava aspect). And now, in this decad, the Āḷvār expounds the Lord's 'Saulabhya' easy accessibility in His Iconic Form which is not only the most easily accessible but also the very embodiment of every known and conceivable good quality in a perfect measure, a complete enumeration whereof would be beyond the capacity of the omniscient Lord Himself. Verily, the Lord's Arcā (Iconic) manifestation is the very acme, the farthest limit of His wonderful trait of 'Saulabhya'. Nampillai likens the Āḷvār's great gesture to that of Sītā, the captive in Laṅkā, who tendered wholesome advice to the lustful Rāvaṇa who desired to have promiscuous relation with the Divine Mother, mistaking her for a mere woman. Even as the Āḷvār made no secret of his vexation, in the last decad, of callous indifference and aloofness of men devoid of God-love, Sītā too got vexed with Rāvaṇa's amorous advances and the dearth of wholesome counsellors in the land, who could bring round this fiend of a fellow, terribly love-smitten. But, being grace personified, she herself counselled him to befriend Rāma and avoid a gruesome death.

The ninth song is the crucial one high-lighting the theme of this decad.

ceyya tāmaraik kaṇṇaṇ āy, ulaku ēḷum uṇṭa avaṇ kaṇṭīr!
 vaiyam, vāṇam, maṇicar, teyvam, maṅṅum, maṅṅum, maṅṅum,
 muṅṅum āy,
 ceyya cūḷ cuṭar ṇāṇam āy, veḷippaṭṭu, ivai paṭaittāṇ; piṅṅum,
 moy koḷ cōtiyōṭu āyiṇāṇ-oru mūvar ākiya mūrttiyē.
 (III-6-1)

Translation

Know ye, 'tis the red lotus-eyed Lord, Who did once contain
 In His stomach, the worlds seven
 And created this Earth, the upper regions, the humans,
 Devas, beasts, plants and all else thro' His knowledge radiant;
 He has His abode in the heaven resplendent
 And carries out (the triple functions), standing as the Trinity.

Notes

- (i) The opening stanza deals with the Lord's 'Paratva', the transcendental glory, although this decad is intended to spotlight the Lord's 'Saulabhya', or easy accessibility. Indeed, the Lord's 'Paratva' serves as a foil against which His astounding simplicity becomes even more pronounced and amazing and hence the Aḷvār begins with this complementary role of the Lord.
- (ii) The red lotus-eyes proclaim the Lord's supremacy. *c.f.* tasya yathā kapyāsam puṇḍarīkaṁ evaṁ akṣiṇī, (Cāndogyopaniṣad). The Lord's eyes, highlight His Supremacy, as far as His form is concerned; likewise among His many attributes, 'pralayāpatsakhatva' or sustenance of the worlds with their variegated contents inside His stomach during the 'pralaya' (deluge), brings into focus His Supremacy over all the rest, the 'Container' vis-a-vis the 'Contained'.
- (iii) Of the triple functions of creation, sustentation and dissolution, the middle one is attended to by the Lord Himself, standing as Viṣṇu, while the other two functions are carried out by Him through Brahmā and Śiva

respectively, as their Internal Controller. Whereas Brahmā and Śiva were produced by the Lord, Viṣṇu, standing in between, as a member of the Trinity, is the Lord Himself Who has none above, to create Him. In the cycle of cause and effect, if we go back from effect to cause of all things and beings, we will ultimately be left with the Lord who is His own cause, the Causeless Cause.

mūvar ākiya mūrttiyai, mutal mūvarkkum mutalvaṅ-taṅṅai,
cāvam uḷḷaṅa nikkuvāṅai, taṅaṅ kaṭal kiṭantāṅ-taṅṅai,
tēva tēvaṅai, teṅ ilaṅkaṅ eri eḷac ceṅṅa villiyai,
pāva nācaṅai, paṅkayat taṅaṅ kaṅṅaṅaip paravumiṅō.

(III-6-2)

Translation

Sing the glory of the immaculate Lord,
With large lotus-eyes, who set Laṅkā ablaze and destroyed
The enemies with His bow valiant, Chief of Celestials,
Destroyer of sins, who the Devas' distress dispels.
Foremost among the first three, He does the Trinity compose
And on the broad milky ocean repose.

Notes

- (i) On being told about the Lord's transcendent glory, as in the preceding song, the Āḷvār was questioned by his listeners as to how they could at all propitiate such an exalted overlord. The Āḷvār, however, puts them at ease by pointing out in this song, the Lord's simplicity in His incarnate Form as Rāma.
- (ii) “*First and foremost, Who the Trinity composes*”: Please see note (iii), in the preceding song. Lord Viṣṇu's supremacy over Brahmā and Śiva is further pointed out here, in that He dispels their distress and among those thus relieved could be added Indra and other Devas. In order to eliminate the possible confusion by including Viṣṇu as a member of the Trinity and making others look upon Him, mistakenly of course, as on a par with the other two, namely, Brahmā and Śiva, the trinity could be taken, within the meaning

of this song, to comprise Brahmā, Śiva and Indra. Even otherwise, it may be pointed out that unlike the other two, namely, Brahmā and Śiva, Viṣṇu, standing in between, is His own cause (the Causeless Cause) as well as the Cause of the other two.

- (iii) “*Set fire to Laṅkā*: Rāma’s peerless bow played a lot of havoc and set fire to Rāvaṇa’s Laṅkā which ‘Agni’, the fire-God, as one of the several elemental forces, Rāvaṇa had kept under strict control, dared not enter before.
- (iv) “*Destroyer of sins*”: As Sage Agastya put it, the mere sight of Rāma, the immaculate Lord, with bow in hand, will destroy all our sins.

paravi vāṇavar ētta niṅṅa paramaṇai, parañcōṭiyai,
kuravai kōtta kuḷakaṇai, maṇi vaṇṇaṇai, kuṭak kūtṭaṇai,
aravam ēṅi, alai kaṭal amarum tuyilkoṇṭa aṇṇalai,
iravum naṅ pakalum viṭātu, eṅṅum ēttutal maṇam vaimmiṇḍ.
(III-6-3)

Translation

Day and night, without break, sing the glory of the supreme Lord,
Set your mind on Him, by Devas profusely lauded,
Who did (with Gopīs) tastefully dance, hand in hand,
Of superlative splendour, the Pot-dancer of the complexion
Of blue gem, reposing on His serpent-bed, in the surging ocean.

Notes

- (1) And now, the Ālvār introduces his audience to the Lord’s Avatāra as Kṛṣṇa, of unsurpassed simplicity and calls upon the folks to set their minds firmly on Him who cannot but be loved because of His loving condescension, tender solicitude, unique charm, adorability and a host of other auspicious attributes.

Tradition has it that Mother Earth bitterly complained to Brahmā about the atrocious burden she had to carry, with demoniac forces like Kamsa and Śiśupāla

let loose on Earth. Brahmā and other Devas then made a bee-line to the Lord who was reclining on His serpent-bed in the milky ocean and petitioned to Him. Thereupon, the Lord came down as Kṛṣṇa and His task duly done, He went back to the Milky-ocean and rested on Ādiśeṣa, as before.

(ii) *The dance with the Gopis*: It was a classical autumn night in the bright fortnight, the unique night of unparalleled excellence when the marvel of a dance, the immortal 'Rāsa Kṛīḍa', took place. 'Śrī Kṛṣṇa played on His inimitable flute, sending out sweet strains of music in all directions with their irresistible appeal to the young damsels of the pastoral village. They all left their homes, defying obstruction from the elders and converged towards the magic flautist. And then ensued the marvel of marvels, the wonderful wonder of wonders, the circular dance in which the ubiquitous Kṛṣṇa made Himself so very pliable as to be seen in between one Gopī and another, multiplying Himself in this fashion. Oh, how astounding that the Overlord of the Celestials in heaven should come down to Earth and mingle so freely with the shepherd-folks and be quite at home with them! And to those who missed witnessing this grand spectacle, He would exhibit His physical charm right at the cross-roads as the skilful Pot-dancer.

vaimmuṇ num maṇattu eṇṇu yāṇ uraikkiṅṅa māyavaṇ cirmaiyai
emmanōrkaḷ uraiṇṇṇu eṇ? atu niṅka, nāḷṇoṇṇu vāṇavar-
tammai āḷumavaṇṇu, nāṇmukaṇṇu, caṭaimuṭi-aṇṇalum
cemmayiāl avaṇ pāta paṅkayam cintittu ēttit tirivarē.

(III-6-4)

Translation

Let alone my telling you about the wondrous Lord,
Calling upon you to set on Him your mind,
His glory and goodness are such that Indra, the Devas' overlord,
Nāṇmukaṇ (Brahmā) and Śiva of matted locks reverently
contemplate
And are in the worship of His lotus feet for ever engaged.

Chief of Celestials, free from birth and death, He owns us all mortals; the peerless one (Naraciṅka) full of fury He was And yet stood at His feet (Prahāda) the recipient of His grace.

Notes

- (i) The Āḷvār avers that He belongs to none but Naraciṅka, the incarnate Form of the Lord, who exhibited boundless love for Prahāda. To the question put to Śrī Rāmānuja, how the little lad, Prahāda, could at all approach the ferocious Naraciṅka, when He was pouring His unmitigated wrath on Hiranya, the great Ācārya replied in a homely way that even while the lion attacks the elephant, the lion cub could jolly well suck milk from the mother's teats.
- (ii) The eyes of the Lord could be red, both ways, that is, due to the wrath of Naraciṅka for Hiranya or due to His tender love for Prahāda.
- (iii) The five senses, namely, smell, sight, taste, sound and touch, which are differently experienced by the worldlings with reference to the external objects of the visible world, are all experienced in the Lord Himself by the Āḷvār, like unto the 'Nitya Sūris' (ever-free angels) in Heaven. These senses have a meaning for them only in relation to God-enjoyment.

eḷumaikkum eṇatu āvikku iṅ amutattiṇai, eṇatu ār uyir
keḷumiya katirc cōtiyai, maṇi vaṇṇaṇai, kuṭak kūttṇai,
viḷumiya amarar muṇivar viḷuṅkum kaṇṇal-kaṇiyiṇai,
toḷumiṇ, tūya maṇattar āy: iṅaiyum nillā tuyaraṅkaḷē.

(III-6-7)

Translation

If, with a mind clean, you worship the Lord,
The candy fruit, by Sages and Devas devoured,
My soul's eternal nectar, of sapphire hue, the beaconlight in
my dear soul, absorbed,
The pot-dancer, You will from miseries be completely absolved.

Notes

- (i) The Ājvār exhorts his listeners to shake off their fear of an unapproachable, distant Lord, by emphasising His easy-accessibility and enormous love for His devotees. There was indeed a time, when he too was afraid of mingling with the Lord, lest he should defile Him, but now, freed from such a complex, he is in grand communion with the Lord and his tempo goes up all the time beaming with God-love.
- (ii) The cleanliness of mind, referred to here, is freedom from doubt and despair, fear and fright, in the matter of worshipping the highly adorable Lord of loving condescension, which tend to lead one astray into the domain of sensual pleasures. Shorn of all such doubts and fears, the Ājvār exhorts people to attach themselves solely to the Lord seeking no personal gains, and thus get absolved of all their sins.

tuyaramē taru tunpa inpa vṇaikaḷ āy, avai allan āy,
 uyara niṅṅatu ōr cōti āy, ulaku ēḷum unṅu umiṅtāṅ-taṅṅai,
 ayara vāṅkum namaṅ tamarkku arunaṅciṅai, accutaṅ-taṅṅai,
 tayarataṅku makaṅ-taṅṅai aṅṅi maṅṅu ilēṅ taṅcamākavē.

(III-6-8)

Translation

I seek refuge in none but Tayarataṅ's Son,
 Accutaṅ (the Protector steadfast), the deadly poison
 Unto Namaṅ's cruel hordes, Who the worlds seven
 Did once sustain and later spat them out
 The heavenly light of splendour unique, dealing out,
 Rewards and punishments for acts, good and bad
 And yet by them, by no means affected.

Notes

- (i) The Ājvār declares his firm faith in Śrī Rāma (who incarnated as King Daśaratha's son) as his sole Refuge, in order to infuse in others a similar interest in the Lord.

- (ii) As the upaniṣads put it, the so-called rewards for good acts also operate as impediments for entry into Heaven and are thus no better than punishments undergone for bad acts. The best thing, therefore, is to look upon the Lord as the sole Refuge, the 'Means' and the 'End' rolled into one, instead of aspiring for the fruits of one's actions.
- (iii) *Daśaratha's son*: The Lord was born as Rāma, Son of King Daśaratha, totally subservient to the father, subject to any kind of treatment at the latter's will. The king would now say that he is gifting away the kingdom to Rāma and a little hence ask him to go into exile!
- (iv) Speaking about taking refuge at the feet of the Lord, there are some passages in the Iṭu commentary, which are very interesting and instructive. The Image of Kṛṣṇa, the child, fond of eating butter, was worshipped by Śrī Rāmānuja, as the household God. One day, a disciple handed over to the Preceptor an Image of Śrī Rāma. Thereupon the Ācārya exclaimed: 'Oh, He who did not impose the condition of seeking Him as sole Refuge, has come'. What was conveyed here by the great Preceptor was that Śrī Rāma was satisfied if one sought asylum in Him but once, saying that he belonged to Him. On the other hand, Śrī Kṛṣṇa laid down, "Resort to me as your sole Refuge", as a spiritual rule, so to say. The statement that no more than affectionate yielding or non-opposition when the Lord's grace is offered is needed as the price for salvation, only signifies the infinite mercy and readiness to reclaim, on the part of the Lord, as the great Redeemer of the straying Subjects. If, however, one started enumerating the positive qualifications on the part of the Individual to deserve the Lord's grace, one has to begin with 'implicit trust in, and abandonment to God' (mahāviśvāsa), which again is very difficult of attainment indeed. If a traveller on a long sea-voyage could trust himself to a mere floating wood (ship) and supplement it with a storage of food and

water for six months, all inanimate things, should we not have some such confidence at least in God as our Means of salvation, that is, crossing the much bigger ocean of Samsāra?

tañcam ākiya tantai tāyoṭu tāṅum āy, avai allāṅ āy,
eñcal il amarar kulamutal, mūvar tammullum ātiyai,
añci nīr ulakattullirka! avaṅ ivāṅ eṅṅu kūlēṅmiṅ;
neñciṅāl nīṅaiṅpāṅ evāṅ, avaṅ ākum nīl kaṭal vaṅṅaṅē.

(III-6-9)

Translation

Ye, men of the world, be not scared (of the supremacy)
Of our Lord, Chief of the Celestials, foremost of the three,
He is the Father benign, Mother and much more, you see,
Be not agitated whether He is other than the one in Image Form
(You behold here); be sure, the Lord of oceanic hue does assume
Whatever form you in your mind lovingly conceive of
Him.

Notes

(i) The worldlings, addressed by the Ālvār, expressed their difficulty in worshipping the Lord currently, either in His transcendent form or in His incarnate forms as Rāma or Kṛṣṇa. The Ālvār puts them at ease by telling them now that the Lord is easily worshippingable in any form they like, without any loss or diminution of His divine prowess and that they can, therefore, worship Him easily in His 'Arcā' (image) Form. This song is thus the key note of this decad and all the preceding eight songs have only served as a preamble.

(ii) As we see among our earthly relations, the mother is different from the father. The Lord is, however, our eternal Father as well as Mother and has an individuality of His own, being very different from the earthly parents. The earthly parents have their own limitations and are not also always dependable, their own interests super-

seding those of the piogeny. Instances of parents giving up their young ones under certain circumstances are not wanting. Further, it is our Karma that binds us to our earthly parents and this artificial link gets automatically severed with the severance of our own bonds of Karma, our relationship with the Lord is, however, eternal, being inalienable.

Further, there is scarcely a relationship which the Lord cannot assume, in regard to His subjects, being All-in-one, Father, Mother and all other conceivable relations put together.

kaṭal vaṇṇaṅ kaṇṇaṅ viṇṇavar karumāṇikkam eṇatu ār uyir,
paṭa araviṅ anaikkīṭanta paraṅ cuṭar, paṇṭu nūṅṅuvar
aṭa varum paṭai maṅka aivarkaṭku āki vem camattu aṅṅu tēr
kataviya perumāṅ kaṇai kaḷal kāṅpatu eṅṅukol, kaṅkaḷē!

(III-6-10)

Translation

When shall I behold the victorious feet of my Lord,
'Kaṇṇaṅ' of oceanic hue, by those in Heaven adored,
Like unto a blue gem, the supreme light, my Soul dear,
Reclining on hooded serpent, unto the five (Pāṇḍavas) dear,
Who drove Arjuna's chariot and did the armies annihilate,
Slaying the hundred (Kauravas) in the war of Māhābhārata?

Note

Having expounded the Lord's easy-accessibility (Saulabhya) in all His manifestations, right up to the 'Arcā' (Iconic Form) the Ājvār is now deeply absorbed in the Lord's incarnate form as Kṛṣṇa, because it was in this Avatāra that he caught the first glimpses of the Lord's amazing simplicity and went into a trance state, lasting several months. Picturing in his mind Kṛṣṇa, the Charioteer holding the whip and the reins, with the hair on his uncrowned bare head covered by the dust from the battlefield and a pair of legs dangling from the chariot, the Ājvār hears (fanciful, of course) the tingling sound of the ornaments worn on those

legs and this is enough to stir up in him a strong desire to behold the Lord's exquisite Form.

kaṅkaḷ kāṅṅaṅku ariyaṅ āy, karuttukku naṅṅum eḷiyaṅ āy,
maṅ koḷ ḥāḷattu uyirkku ellām aruḷ ceyyum vāṅavar iṅṅai
paṅ koḷ cōlai vaḷuti nāṅṅaṅ kurukaikkōṅ caṅakōpaṅ col
paṅ koḷ āyirattu ip pattāḷ pattar ākakkūṅṅum payilumiṅṅē.

(III-6-11)

Translation

Learn these songs ten out of the thousand tunefully composed
By Caṅakōpaṅ of Vaḷutināṅṅu, the doyen of fertile Kurukūr,
In adoration of the Supreme Lord, difficult to behold
But easy to meditate, Who sheds His grace galore
(Making Himself visible to one and all in this world,
In His Image Form); you will also become devotees pure.

Notes

- (i) *Difficult to behold but easy to meditate*: The Āḷvār does not enjoy the physical presence of the Lord and, therefore, regretfully observes that the Lord is difficult to behold. Out of sight but not out of mind, as his forward mind keeps meditating on Him. As a matter of fact, throughout this work, the Āḷvār's union with the Lord only connotes his mental comprehension of the Lord's vision, almost on a par with His physical presence and the Āḷvār's separation from the Lord arises when he longs for the external perception of the Lord as well and his intuitive inner vision gets cut out in the bargain.
- (ii) Chanting this decad, which highlights the Lord's amazingly easy-accessibility in His manifestation, will, by itself, engender God-love. Even as people will start a 'Treasure hunt' digging the ground deep, at the place where the sign-board "Here lies a treasure, buried" is put up, the Āḷvār expects people, in quest of God-love to chant this decad.

Third Centum—Seventh Decad (III-7)

Payilum Cūtar oli

Preamble

Despite his earlier disappointments, it was his extraordinary fellow-feeling that egged the Ālvār on, to address the worldlings once more, as in the last decad, pretty sure of bringing them round. Even the amazing simplicity of the Lord in His 'Arcā' manifestation, the sure plank, according to the Ālvār, for weaning them, made no visible impact on the unfortunate fellows wallowing in the sty of worldly life, much to the chagrin of the Ālvār. The Ālvār, however, drowns his disappointment, in this decad in the blissful contemplation of service unto the Lord's devotees, the logical conclusion of service unto the Lord, in keeping with the essential nature of the Individual soul.

In 'Periya Tirumoli' (VIII-10-3), Tirumaṅkai Ālvār has declared that, as a result of learning the eight-lettered 'Tirumantra', he became a vassal of the devotees of the Lord, enshrined in Tirukkannapuram. Service unto the Lord's devotees, as well, is implied in the middle part of 'Tirumantra', viz, 'namaḥ'. It is held by some that service unto the Lord's devotees is implicit in letter *A* of 'Prajāva' (Aum), with its discarded dative case-ending, which brings into focus the soul's dependence on the Lord; others say that the middle letter *U* of 'Prajāva' emphasises the exclusive dependence of the soul on the Lord and that the farthest point unto which dependence on the Lord could go, by virtue of His unbounded love for His devotees, would be the individual soul's utter devotion to those devotees as well. This is readily borne out by our common experience in the world of human affairs also. It, however, matters not whether this particular meaning goes with the word 'namaḥ' or letter 'A' or letter 'U' of the Prajāva (AUM). All the same, our great preceptors have thought it fit to link this concept with the word 'namaḥ' which helps to discard the rags of 'I-ness' and 'My-ness', enveloping and disfiguring the individual soul.

Śatrugna provided the shining example of unflinching service marked by extraordinary devotion to Bharata, a great devotee of Śri Rāma. Soon after the marriage of the four Princes, in Mithilā, Bharata had an invitation from his uncle, king Yudājit

of Kekaya (perhaps, modern Greece) to go with him to that country. Bharata set out on the said journey, on an auspicious day, appropriate to his birth star. The inseparable Śatrugna also accompanied Bharata, out of his dutiful love for the latter, although the former had no invitation, as such, from King Yudājit nor did the day of the commencement of the journey suit his (Śatrugna's) birth star. According to Śatrugna whose devotion to Bharata was of such a high order, there was hardly any need for all these, as he considered himself no more than a part and parcel of Bharata and not as a separate entity.

payilum cuṭar oḷi mūrttiyai, paṅkayak kaṅṅaṅai,
 payila iṅiya nam pāṅkaṭal-cērnta paramaṅai,
 payilum tiru uṭaiyār evarēlum, avar kaṅṅir
 payilum piṅappiṭaitōṅu emmai ālum paramarē. (III-7-1)

Translation

They that are with eternal wealth of God -love endowed
 Whatever be their descent, meditating on our Lord Supreme
 Resting on the milk-ocean, the lotus-eyed, of a form
 Of solid splendour and mounting sweetness, shall hold
 Me as their vassal, in all the births to come.

Notes

- (i) The Āḷvār says that all those who are steeped in the enjoyment of the Supreme Lord's auspicious traits and enthralling form, are his masters, irrespective of their parentage. These devotees have now been accorded by the Āḷvār the position of eminence attributed earlier to the Supreme Lord alone.
- (ii) *The lotus-eyed*: This special feature proclaims the Lord's transcendent glory (paratva). It is indeed a form of supernal splendour that the Lord assumes, during His avatāras, so as to enthrall His subjects; even if such an exquisite form fails to attract them, His lotus-eyes will do the job—the folks cannot but be entrapped by His bewitching eyes.
- (iii) *Mounting sweetness*: Unlike the ephemeral pleasures of the world, which are alluring from a distance but

prove disappointing at close quarters, the Lord, with His enchanting looks and enthralling form and a disposition of mounting sweetness, is an inexhaustible fountain of bliss.

- (iv) *Eternal wealth of God-Love*: Those who employ the Lord as the 'Means' for achieving their personal ends, would drift from Him, once their ends are achieved. On the other hand, those that seek Him for His own sake, as their 'Be-all' and 'End-All', will stick unto Him for ever and there is no risk whatsoever of their getting parted from Him. Service unto the Lord, as an end in itself, is the eternal wealth referred to there. Take the case of Lakṣmaṇa who, at his volition, accompanied Śrī Rāma into exile. What wealth did the youngster carry with him? With but a spade and basket in hand, the insignia of his incessant toil in his unremitting service unto the Divine Couple, he is glorified as '*Lakṣmaṇo Lakṣmī sampannaḥ*'. Again, literally hounded out by Rāvaṇa, Vibhīṣaṇa, still anchored in mid-air, sought asylum in Rāma's camp. Vibhīṣaṇa's admission into Rāma's camp was hotly debated and, in this unenviable position, when Vibhīṣaṇa was neither here nor there, he was referred to, as '*antarīkṣagatas śrīmān*'. What was the wealth in him then to be called '*śrīmān*' (the wealthy)? It was his robust conviction that he shall not get back to the evil-minded Rākṣasas, even if he were to be denied admission in Rāma's camp! And then, Gajendra, the elephant, in dire distress, was referred to as '*Satu nāgavaraś śrīmān*', the wealth, in this case, being the elephant's singleminded devotion to the Lord, utterly unmindful of his own grim struggle with the crocodile. The elephant's one and only objective was to offer the lotus flower in his trunk to the Lord, while it was still fresh. It is such singleminded devotion to the Lord that is real wealth, everlasting.

Deeply grieved over his separation from Śrī Rāma, during the long years of the latter's exile, Bharata would say that his grief would vanish only when Rāma wore

the regal crown (as Śeṣi—Master) and he wore, the crown of service unto Him (as Śeṣa—the servant).

- ‘*Whatever be their descent*’: Here, it may be added, whatever be the extent of their learning, manner of occupation etc.
- ‘*In the births to come*. Here, the Ājvār declares that he is the vassal of the Lord’s devotees, rather than of the Lord. The Ājvār who had earlier blamed the Lord for taking him through a gruesome succession of births, would now willingly court any number of future births out of sheer love of serving the Lord’s devotees in all those births.

āḷum paramaṇai, kaṇṇaṇai, āḷip pirāṇ-taṇṇai,
 tōḷum ōr nāṅku, uṭaiṭ tū maṇi vaṇṇaṇ emmāṇ-taṇṇai,
 tāḷum taṭak kaiyum kūppip paṇiyum avar kaṇṭir
 nāḷum piṇappiṭaitōṟu emmai āḷuṭai nātarē. (III-7-2)

Translation

They are the Masters that enslave me daily and life after life,
 Who do with joined palms and legs, prostrate
 Unto Kaṇṇaṇ, the Lord Supreme, the Benefactor great,
 Holding the discus, of the hue of blue gem immaculate,
 With peerless shoulders four, the reigning Chief.

Notes

- (i) The Ājvār affirms that those that are swayed by the Lord’s exquisite charm, in all its details, are his perennial masters.
- (ii) *Reigning Chief*: If the Lord’s devotees are the Ājvār’s masters, how could the Lord be called the reigning Chief? This *prima facie* contradiction is resolved by holding that the Lord’s reign over His subjects is directed towards reclaiming them and enlisting them in the service of His devotees. Right in the opening line of the first of his ten scintillating stanzas, Tiruppāṇ Ājvār depicts this special feature of the Lord.

(iii) *Lord Kaṅgaṅ*: By His devoted service unto His elder brother Balaiāma, a reincarnation of Ādiśeṣa, Śrī Kṛṣṇa has demonstrated the importance of service unto devotees.

(iv) *The Shoulders four*: The Lord doles out the four 'Puruṣārtas', the ultimate values, as elected by the votaries, with His four arms, one for each. Once, when Śrī Parāśara Bhaṭṭar happened to be in Tirukkōṭṭiyūr, he was asked by Anantālvāṅ whether the Lord is seen in His Celestium (Heaven-Parama pada) with two arms or four arms. Bhaṭṭārya replied that the 'Ekāyanas' (Madhvās) hold that the Lord has only two arms while others say four. In the temple at Śrīraṅgam, the stationary image of Lord Raṅganātha, reclining on the Serpent-bed, in the Sanctum Sanctorum (Known as Periya Perumāḷ) is seen by us, with the naked eye, as having only two arms while those, with spiritual vision, see four arms and even more. Tirupppāṅālvār has seen Lord Raṅganātha with four arms, as set forth in his hymns (Amalaṅātipirāṅ-7). Maṅḍodari, wife of Rāvaṇa, saw the ultra-mundane form in Śrī Rāma, standing beside her fallen husband and described the former as the one beyond matter, the Sustainer, wielding the Conch, Discus and Mace. Śrī Rāma was generally seen only with two arms; Hanumān, however, alluded to many arms (*bhāhavaḥ*, Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa IV-3-14). Kṛṣṇa was seen by Vasudeva and Devakī, with four arms, right at birth, and He concealed the two extra arms, as desired by His revered father. And then, on the battlefield at Kurukṣetra, Arjuna prayed that he be allowed to see Kṛṣṇa back again with four arms instead of the thousands of arms he saw in His universal Form (Viśvarūpa) a little while ago (Bhagavad Gītā XI-46). In Rāmāyaṇa, Uttara Kāṇḍa 8-26, Sage Agastya addressed Śrī Rāma, as. "Thou art Nārāyaṇa, the ancient, the four-armed". Nevertheless, one need not make a fetish of this, as four-handedness need not necessarily be a special sign of Divinity to wrest

allegiance from mankind. (It is learnt that a four-handed human form is kept embalmed in Fyzabad museum near Ayodhyā. Would it become worthy of worship? No, not at all.)

(v) *Prostrate with joined legs and palms*

Joined legs indicate immobility, ‘*ananyagatitva*’, or non-dependence on others—‘nowhere else to go’, in plain language.

‘*Joined palms*’ devote ‘*Ākiñcanya*’ or absence of any merit in the supplicant, attracting the Lord’s grace; in other words, it is only the Lord’s ‘*nirhetuka kṛpā*’, spontaneous or gratuitous grace that can deliver the gods.

nātaṇai, nālamum vāṇamum ēttum naṅum tuḷāyp
pōtaṇai, poṅ neṭum cakkarattu entai pirāṅ-taṇṇai,
pātam paṇiya vallāraip paṇiyumavar kaṅṭir
ōtum piṅappitaitōṅgu emmai āḷuṭaiyārkaḷē. (III-7-3)

Translation

Birth after birth, they my masters shall be,
Who prostrate at the feet of my Liege-Lord,
Holding the golden Discus grand and wearing a garland of
tuḷaci
Of fragrance sweet, by those in Heaven and Earth adored.

Notes

- (1) The Āḷvār declares that those God-lovers, who are lost in enjoyment of the Lord’s sinewy shoulders and the lovely tuḷaci garland adorning them, are his perpetual masters.

As a matter of fact, this fascinating combination of shoulder and garland attracts the denizens of Heaven and Earth alike. Even those who are out to denigrate God-head, get enthralled by the charming tuḷaci garland on the Divine person. Where even the tuḷaci garland fails to work, the effulgent Discus, held attractively by the Lord, has an irresistible appeal.

- (ii) The following anecdote will show how difficult it is for us to bring ourselves to adore men who, for all outward appearances, are just like other men, the common run, eating and sleeping. To discover saintliness lying hidden in the Saints, calls for more than ordinary ken of perception in the on-looker.

Śrī Pillai Āttāṅ, occupant of a spiritual gadi, in apostolic succession, sought from the great Nañciyar, instructions in 'Draṁiḍopaniṣad' (Tiruvāymoḷi). His Holiness, however, politely suggested that Śrī Āttāṅ could as well go to Nampillai (Nañciyar's disciple) and enjoy a sumptuous repast at his hands. Śrī Āttāṅ, however, demurred, on the ground that he may have to prostrate unto Nampillai in that case. Nañciyar put Śrī Āttāṅ at ease, by sending for Nampillai and ordering him to give Śrī Āttāṅ a course of instructions without subjecting the latter to ceremonious formalities. And so, the instructions went on, but when the present decad stressing the importance of veneration of Godly men even more than God, came up, Śrī Āttāṅ turned penitent and begged of Nampillai that he (Āttāṅ) be treated thenceforward as a humble disciple and permitted to make due obeisance to the learned instructor. But Nampillai declined to act otherwise than as commanded earlier by his Master (Nañciyar) and would not, therefore, be a party to this change-over on the part of Śrī Āttāṅ. The remorseful Āttāṅ sought the intervention of Nañciyar and submitted that he (Āttāṅ) be treated thenceforward as a humble disciple, now that he has come to know of the worthiness of Godly men, the living Saints.

There is yet another anecdote to illustrate that brotherhood among men is a virtue higher than even Fatherhood of God. Two favourite disciples of Nañciyar, Vīrappillai and Pālikai vālippillai, once set out on a travel on friendly terms. But when some misunderstanding arose between them they gave up talking to each other. When Nañciyar came to know of this, he admonished them, saying: " My Sons! it is

difficult to comprehend one brother being offended against another. It only shows that wealth and lust, the cause of hate and anger, have not been eschewed yet or things of God have not been felt of great worth". This reprimand made them feel truly repentant and restored their former amity.

uṭai āṛnta āṭaiyaṅ, kaṇṭikaiyaṅ, uṭai nāṇiṅ,
puṭai āṛ poṅ-nūliṅ, poṅ muṭiyaṅ, maṅṅum paḷkalaṅ
naṭaiyā uṭait tirunāraṅaṅ toṇṭar toṇṭar kaṇṭir
iṭai āṛ piṇappiṭaitōṅu emakku em perumakkaḷē. (III-7-4)

Translation

In every birth, without exception, they are unto us
Far superior indeed, the vassals of the vassals
Of Tiru Nāraṅaṅ, of charm exquisite, smartly clad
And adorned by many a jewel, the waist band gold,
Necklace, Sacred thread, the crown delectable
And many more, unto Him befitting and natural.

Note

Here the Āṭvār avers that the vassals of the vassals of the Lord, lost in admiration of His natural beauty, imparting special lustre to the numerous jewels on His person, each one of which, from head to foot, steals the hearts of the beholders, are any day superior to him not only in this birth but in all future births also.

perumakkaḷ uḷḷavar-tam perumāṅai, amararkaṭku
arumai oḷiya aṅṅu āṛ amutu ūṭṭiya appāṅai,
perumai piṭaṅṅa vallāraip piṭaṅṅumavar kaṇṭir
varumaiyum immaiṅum nammai aḷikkum piṛakkaḷē. (III-7-5)

Translation

They that do with ecstatic incoherence utter
The glory great of the Sire who once fed in full
The Devas with ambrosia, Chief of the exalted Celestials.
Are indeed our saviours grand, both here and hereafter.

Notes

- (i) *Chief of the exalted Celestials*: The *Nityasūris* (ever free angels in heaven) stand on a high pedestal of their own and the Lord, as their Chief, is higher than the highest.
- (ii) The Devas sought from the Lord the ambrosia in order to become deathless. No doubt, the Lord felt very much that the Devas should have been so short-sighted and under-evolved as to seek from Him a mere extract from the ocean instead of straightaway coveting Him, the insatiable Nectar, the inexhaustible fountain of bliss. And yet, it was some consolation for Him that they didn't seek this favour, inferior though, from any one else. How generous of Him indeed that He took all the trouble to churn the ocean and get them what they wanted! Those that are lost in admiration of the great souls who recognise and adore this act of grace on the part of the Lord, are deemed by the Āḷvār as his benefactors, the masters, who alone can salve him, here and hereafter in this land by keeping him aloof from the Ungodly and, in the yonder heaven, by putting him on to the eternal service of Lord Śrīman Nārāyaṇa.

alikkum paramaṇai, kaṇṇaṇai, āḷip pirāṇ-taṇṇai,
 tuḷikkum naḡum kaṇṇit tū maṇi vaṇṇaṇ emmāṇ-taṇṇai,
 oḷik koṇṭa cōṭiyai uḷḷattuk koḷḷumavar kaṇṇir
 calippu iṇṇi āṇṇu, emmaic caṇma caṇmāntaram kāpparē.

(III-7-6)

Translation

They shall my saviours be and govern
 In all my births, without break, that do enshrine
 In their hearts, Kaṇṇaṇ, the donor superfine,
 Of radiant form, like unto the blue gem immaculate,
 Who does the discus wield and tuḷaci garland sport,
 With fragrance full, shedding honey in plenty.

Notes

- (i) *Donor superfine*: The Lord is not merely the Donor Supreme but also the Donor Superfine in that He gifts Himself away as He did during His Avatāra as Kṛṣṇa.
- (ii) *The (beneficent) discus*: The Lord would not only give of Himself to His devotees but also give them His extraordinary weapons as He did in the case of King Ambarīṣa. The Lord's alert discus served as the King's bodyguard and went in hot pursuit of sage Durvāsa.
- (iii) No doubt, the Ājvār courted, in the opening song of this decad, future births, if he could thereby serve the Lord's devotees without break but now, the protection extended by them unto him, referred to in this song, would be by way of safeguarding him against the pitfalls leading to rebirth.

caṅma caṅmāntaram kāttu, aṭiyārkaḷaik koṅṭupōy,
 taṅmai peṅuttit taṅ-tāḷiṅaikkiḷk koḷḷum appaṅai,
 toṅmai piṅṅaṅa vallāraip piṅṅumavar kaṅṅiṅ
 naṅmai peṅuttu emmai nāḷ uyyakkoḷkiṅṅa namparē.

(III-7-7)

Translation

They are, you see, our saviours eternal, we can for our salvation
 Safely depend, that laud in profusion those vociferous
 In the praise of the Lord's grace spontaneous,
 That cuts out His devotees' cycle of births and does in them
 induce
 Knowledge true, so to enlist them in eternal service at His feet
 in heaven.

Note

The Ājvār has been spot-lighting the Lord's magnanimity in the last two songs, and he continues to dwell on the Lord's generosity in this song also, by extolling those lost in admiration of this great trait of the Lord. It is the Lord's extreme generosity that cuts out an otherwise interminable cycle of births and rebirths through which one's ethical accounts, hopelessly unbalanced as they are,

have to be settled with the ever-increasing risk of losing merit faster than acquiring it.

nampapai, ṅālam paṭaittavapai, tiru mārpaṅgai,
 umpar ulakiṅṅil yārkkum uṅarvu ariyāṅ-taṅṅai,
 kumpi narakarkaḷ ḷttuvarēlum, avar kaṅṅir
 em pal piṅappiṅaitōru em toḷukulam tāṅkaḷē. (III-7-8)

Translation

Even if they be cruel sinners fit for dastardly hell,
 They are the apostles, revered in my births, one and all,
 That sing the glory of the Lord, our haven safe,
 On whose chest 'Tiru' (Lakṣmī) does inseparably stay,
 Who did the universe ordain but is beyond the comprehension
 Of one and all, even those in the upper region.

Note

The Āḷvār avers that those adoring the blissful conjunction of the Lord and the Divine Mother, are his spiritual mentors for generations, although they might be cruel sinners either fit to be condemned to the dastardly abyss, known as 'Kumbhīpākam', or even those actually drudging there. This only shows the extreme lengths to which the Āḷvār is prepared to go in his adoration of the Lord's devotees, and it is, therefore, needless to subject it to closer scrutiny and raise doubts as to how the Āḷvār could see, from where he was, those people serving in the hell and the prospects of those suffering in hell contemplating the glory of the Lord and reciting His names and so on.

kulam tāṅku cātikaḷ nālilum kiḷ iḷintu, ettaṅṅai
 nalam-tāṅ ilāta caṅṅāḷa caṅṅāḷarkaḷ ākilum,
 valam tāṅku cakkarattu aṅṅal maṅṅivaṅṅaṅku āḷ eṅṅu uḷ-
 kalantār aṅṅiṅar-tam aṅṅiṅar em aṅṅikaḷē. (III-7-9)

Translation

They are my masters who the vassals are of the vassals
 Of those that, as His loving servitors, do mingle
 With the Lord of sapphire hue, holding the discus bright,

In right hand, albeit they are born in a down-trodden Caste,
Worse than the Caṅṭāḷa with little or no repute.

Notes

- (i) The servants of the servants of those devotees, enthralled by the bewitching beauty of the Lord holding the charming discus in hand, are said to be the Āḷvār's masters, even though the said devotees are otherwise terribly depraved, and worse than the 'Caṅṭāḷa', outside the Ken of the four prescribed, time-honoured castes. While devotion to the Lord's devotees is the Key-note of this song, there is an unfortunate tendency on the part of the superficial modern critics, with a degree of perversion, to go by the letter of the song rather than the underlying spirit. These unrelenting critics question the bonafides of those who reverently chant 'Tiruvāymoḷi' and yet do not put into practice the principles, the Āḷvār stood for and expounded in his works, e.g. this crucial song.
- (ii) Stanzas, such as this one, would, however, appear to spot-light the greatness of such highly evolved spiritual personalities as Tirumaḷicai Āḷvār, Tiruppāṇāḷvār, Nampāṭuvāṇ, either born as outcastes or brought up by outcastes, who yet belong to a world of their own and a new denomination known as 'The clan of God's servants', which has nothing to do with the conventional caste-system and classification. Of course, devotion has to be appreciated and adored wherever it is discerned, irrespective of considerations of caste and things of that sort. This love and reference for devotees cannot, however, override the prescribed norms of conduct, appropriate to one's caste and station in life. This song should not, therefore, be misconstrued as conferring unbridled authority for hammering down and brushing aside the mandates of the Śāstras, as restated by Lord Kṛṣṇa in His 'Song Celestial'—(Bhagavad Gītā, XVI-24).

aṭi ārnta vaiyam uṇṭu, ālilai aṇṇavacamceyyum
paṭi yātum il kuḷavippaṭi entai pirāṇ-taṇakku
aṭiyār aṭiyār-tam aṭiyār aṭiyār-tamakku
aṭiyār aṭiyār-tam aṭiyār aṭiyōṅkaḷē.

(III-7-10)

Translation

Vassals we are of the last in the chain
Of the vassals of the devotees of our Liege-Lord
Who as mere babe peerless did recline
On a fig-leaf, holding the seven worlds,
In His stomach, which earlier He did span.

Notes

- (i) The Ājvār affirms that he is the vassal unto those that stand last in the chain of the Lord's devotees, sure and steadfast, lost in admiration of His once spanning all the worlds in just three strides and then sustaining, in His stomach, all the worlds, during the period of deluge.
- (ii) The worlds devoured by the Lord during the period of deluge are just those measured by Him earlier and thus come up to His feet only, that is, they are no more than the size of His feet.
- (iii) A mere babe lying on a fig-leaf, floating on the huge expanse of water, containing within its stomach all the world, is indeed a wonderful achievement, beyond imagination, which the Supreme Lord is capable of, the unique blending of the incompatibles. Attracting the Ājvār by this means, He becomes his Liege-Lord and, in the process, the Ājvār wants to be at the bottom-most rung of His devotees, even as He is the top-most, with none equal to or above Him. (Mukunda mālā, śloka 27).
- (iv) Here is an important observation of Nampiḷḷai, which has to be studied in continuation of the notes below stanza 9 of this decad.

“Even if we are not able to translate into practice this lofty sentiment of the Ājvār for obvious reasons, it will suffice if we delightfully contemplate on it and are thus aware that the Ājvār thought on these lines”.

aṭi ḍṅku nūgruvar viya, aṅru aivarkku aruḷceyta
 neṭiyḍṅait teṅ kurukūrc caṭakōpaṅ kurrēvalkal
 aṭi ārnta āyirattuḷ ivai pattu avaṅ tonṭarmēl
 muṭivu ārak kaṅkiṅkil caṅmam ceyyāmai muṭiyumē. (III-7-11)

Translation

Those that learn, in right earnest, these songs ten,
 Which expound the glory great of the Godly men,
 Out of the chaste and elegant thousand of Caṭakōpaṅ
 Of Teṅkurukūr, composed in a spirit of dedication
 Unto the Lord who on the five (Pāṅḍavas) shed His grace
 And put an end to the hundred (cousins) viciously prosperous,
 Will have their cycle of births brought to a close.

Notes

- (i) This end-stanza reveals the benefit accruing to those learning this decad without skipping over any stanza. They will not have to be reborn and caught up in the unenviable meshes of worldly life militating against service unto the Lord's devotees.
- (ii) The Kauravas' advancement was at the expense of their five cousins, the Pāṅḍavas, who were, however, very dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa. The vicious hundred naturally met their doom.

Third Centum—Eighth Decad (III-8) (Muṭiyāṅē)

Preamble

While trying to sustain himself by recounting the glory of the Bhāgavatas (Lord's devotees), as in the last decad, the Lord's glorious traits and wondrous deeds were also dwelt upon, side by side, in each stanza of that decad, in view of the irresistible appeal of the latter. It may also be recalled that, in III-6-10 we could notice the Āḷvār's deep anxiety to behold the Lord's pair of legs dangling down the chariot on the battlefield at Kurukṣetra. And now, the other sense-organs of the Āḷvār compete with the eyes

in the enjoyment of God. Each one of the Ājvār's senses, limbs and faculties, would appear to have acquired intelligence, the stature of sentient beings, on a par with the Ājvār's soul, with the result that there is the competitive exuberance on the part of the Ājvār and his anatomical parts, come to life and capacitated for independent action, to get at the Lord individually and in the quickest possible manner and time. And, what is even more exciting is, each faculty aspires to transcend its functional limitations, resulting in an overlapping of functions as well. The hands would want to praise the Lord, the ears would long to drink deep of His nectarean charm, the eyes would like to offer Him fruits and flowers, so on and so forth. Each sense yearning for the delight experienced by the other senses, is a very extraordinary state of affairs indeed! Does not the snake which does not have ears, as such, see and hear through the eyes only, the eyes performing the dual function of seeing and hearing, though not simultaneously? Again, the up-grading of the senses and limbs to the stature of sentient beings can only be compared to the Ājvār being described, now and then, as melting down or getting dried up or cut into pieces, although the soul is beyond the mischief of the elements, cannot be burnt out by fire or drenched by water, or dried up by air or cleaved by weapons—vide Bhagavad Gītā II-23 and 24.

The Ājvār's plight, in this decad, is like that of the members of a family in a famine-stricken area, who try to snatch the little food that is available from each other's mouth, each one of them, driven to extreme hunger, being mindful of his or her own appeasement. And here, the Ājvār's senses, limbs and other faculties are vying with him, like unto the members of the famished family in question, for the appeasement of their own God-hunger and God-thirst. The Saint's yearning for the Lord's beatific vision is of such great depth that every moment of separation from the Beloved seems an age. His cry of anguish in this decad, melting even stony hearts has to be appreciated against this background.

muṭiyāṇē! mūvulakum toḷutu ēttum cir
 aṭiyāṇē! āḷ kaṭalaik kaṭaintāy! puḷ-ūr
 koṭiyāṇē! koṇṭal vaṇṇā! aṇṭattu umparil
 neṭiyāṇē! eṇṇu kiṭakkum-eṇ neṭicamē.

(III-8-1)

Translation

My mind thaws down, calling you, my Lord!
 As wearer of the crown regal, possessor
 Of the feet by all the three worlds adored,
 Churner of the deep sea, having on Your banner
 The bird (Garuḍa), that also conveys You, cloud-hued.
 Super-eminent among heaven's denizens and so on.

Note

The Ālvār longs for the physical presence of the Lord whose resplendent crown proclaims His overlordship of the entire universe. Knowing full well that He can't be seen unless He deigns to come and present Himself, the Ālvār's mind is, all the same, very much agitated, meditating on the various features and aspects of the Lord. The dovetailing of thoughts, as presented in this song, is indeed very interesting. Right from the crown on the Lord's head proclaiming His sovereignty, the Ālvār comes down to His lovely pair of feet, fit to be adored by one and all, high and low, good and bad, without distinction. Unto those who adore His feet the Lord gives His whole body, in between, with which He performs many wonderful, breath-taking deeds for their sake. And for those, who are unable to come and worship His feet, He moves about on His unique vehicle, namely winged-bird, Garuḍa, the very embodiment of the Vedas and grants them 'darśan'. The blue-hued Lord, on His golden mount, the Garuḍa, affords a pleasant and attractive contrast in colours and the whole contour is exhilarating. Garuḍa, holding in his palms the feet of the Lord, proclaims the supremacy of the Lord, setting at naught the doubts of the Vedic scholars, confounded by the conflicting texts, some propounding the supremacy of Brahmā, the four-headed, some pointing to the supremacy of Śiva, a third set proclaiming the overlordship of Śrīman Nārāyaṇa and so on. These conflicting claims could, no doubt, be resolved by a careful study and Śrīman Nārāyaṇa's supremacy established, beyond doubt. But here is Garuḍa, with the Lord mounted on his shoulders and holding in his

palms His feet, the sole Refuge of one and all, simplifying our job and driving home the Lord's supremacy.

neñcamē niḷ nakar āka irunta eṇ
 tañcaṇē! taṇ ilaṅkaikku iṇaiyaic ceṇṇa
 nañcaṇē! ṅālam koḷvāṇ kuṇaḷ ākiya
 vañcaṇē! eṇṇum eppōtum-eṇ vācakamē. (III-8-2)

Translation

My tongue always keeps uttering Your names, my Lord!
 As my sole Refuge, in my mind firmly lodged,
 As if it were a citadel big, the poison deadly
 That destroyed Rāvaṇa, Chief of cool Laṅkā, the midget
 (Vāmana) Who, on the sly, got hold of the worlds (from Bali).

Notes

(i) The Āḷvār's tongue prays unto the Lord.

“Sire, even as you have condescended to get into the Āḷvār's mind, pray, get into me, as well, so that I keep on uttering your names. I do hope the Āḷvār's mind has no monopolistic hold on you”.

(ii) *My sole Refuge*: The Āḷvār's tongue is well aware of the fact that it is the Āḷvār's mind that has sought refuge in the Lord who, in turn, has come into it and stays there as if it is a huge citadel. And now, the tongue gives expression to this fact, regretting very much that the Earthlings do not address the Lord likewise. The pangs suffered by the Āḷvār are in respect of his separation from the Lord driving him in frantic search of the Lord, seeking the help of even inanimate things like mountains and oceans in the process. On the other hand, the pangs undergone by even Rīṣis of the eminence of Vaśiṣṭha and Vyāsa were due to their separation from their sons, as brought out vividly by the Purāṇas.

(iii) Mahābali was not destroyed like Rāvaṇa and the Supreme Lord even went to the former seeking alms, because he had the merit of being a great donor. The Āḷvār's tongue which began by describing the Lord's prowess

as Śrī Rāma, is now completely absorbed in the Lord's diplomacy as Vāmana.

vācakamē ētta, aruḷ ceyyum vāṇavar-tam
nāyakaṇē! nāḷ ilam tiṅkaḷaik kōḷ viṭuttu
vēy-akam pāl veṇṇey toṭu uṇṭa āṇ-āyar
tāyavaṇē! eṇṇu taṭavum-eṇ kaikaḷē.

(III-8-3)

Translation

My hands grope for you, the Celestials' overlord,
The one by my tongue solely lauded,
Who, as the cow-herd (Kṛṣṇa) ate butter sweet,
Stolen from the houses, bamboo-built,
In the beam of light by your teeth lit,
Sparkling like the rising Moon bright.

Notes

- (i) The hands longing to experience the bliss, hitherto enjoyed solely by the tongue, addressed the Lord: "Oh, Lord of the Celestials! the Āḷvār's tongue praises you as well as the Celestials do. Why has this special favour been extended by you to the tongue alone and what is it that precludes you from making us also taste that bliss?"
- (ii) Kṛṣṇa, the dark lad, broke into the dark interior of the houses built of bamboo in the pastoral village of Gokula, to steal the butter stored up in huge pots. Groping His way through in the dark, when He felt, by the touch of His hands, the presence of the pots, He would feel gratified and smile. His pearl-white teeth, sparkling with the extra-brilliance of the full Moon just released from an eclipse, would then illumine the place, helping Him to get at the butter and eat it up.

kaikaḷāl ārat toḷutu toḷutu uṇṇai
vaikalum māttiraip pōtum ōr viṭu iṅṅi,
pai koḷ pāmpu ēṅi uṅai paraṇē! uṇṇai
meykollak kāṇa virumpum-eṇ kaikaḷē.

(III-8-4)

Translation

Oh, Supreme Lord, resting on hooded Serpent,
 My eyes long for the pleasure of my hands
 Which have their fill of salutation unto you and besides
 Wish to behold truly your form exquisite, with no respite.

Notes

- (i) The Āḷvār's eyes pine for the experience of the hands besides their own. They long to enjoy the bliss of worshipping the Lord, thus performing the function of the hands. They also wish to truly (physically) behold His sweet Form, as distinguished from mere mental perception so that He can be touched and embraced.
- (ii) That portion of this stanza (original) which deals with the intense worship of the Lord by the hands (repeatedly), is construed by a section of Śrī Vaiṣṇavas as stressing the necessity for worshipping the Lord several times over, as against the creed of many others, to prostrate, at a time, only once. The latter avoid the overtone or semblance of self-effort for the propitiation of the Lord, which militates against the basic principle of 'Prapatti' or loving surrender to the Lord's sweet grace. References to this very topic of worship elsewhere in 'Tiruvāymoḷi' (II-10-9 and IX-3-9), go to reinforce the latter code of discipline.

kaṅkaḷāl kāṇa varuṅkol! eṅṅu ācaiyāḷ,
 maṅ koṅṭa vāmaṅṅaṅ ēṅa, maḱiṅtu cel
 paṅ koṅṭa puḷḷiṅ ciṅaku oli pāvittu,
 tiṅ koḷḷa ḍrkkum kiṅantu-eṅ cevikaḷē.

(III-8-5)

Translation

My ears long to see Vāmaṅṅaṅ (the Lord),
 Who (from Bali) got hold of the land,
 Moving on His merry mount, (Garuḍa)
 And intently hear the sweet sound,
 Of the tuneful wings of that bird.

Notes

- (i) The Ālvār's ears long both to see and hear and, therefore, drew up a picture, as above. The Lord moving on His merry mount, Garuḍa, must be seen by the ears which should also listen to the sweet strains emanating from the wings of that angelic bird, in flight, like unto the tuneful Sāma Veda (Bṛhat and Rātra Sāma).
- (ii) As Vāmana oṁ Tṛvikrama, the Lord did not press into service His standing vehicle, Garuḍa and yet, what is intended to convey here is that the Lord would fly, here and there, to reclaim His straying possessions.
- (iii) *Intently hear*: Hearing the music of the wings of Garuḍa to the exclusion of everything else, not even the Lord or His mount. Even as the Ālvār is now seen engrossed in the music of the wings of Garuḍa, Rukmiṇī was thrilled and enraptured by the sound from Śrī Kṛṣṇa's conch (Pāñcājanya), at the crucial moment near about the Devī's temple where she was anxiously awaiting Him, the great Rescuer. And then, when Sītā was tortured into believing that Rāma was dead. Rāvaṇa holding out before her the severed head of an illusory Rāma the heartening sound came to her from Śrī Rāma's bow, right from the sea-shore, and enabled her to see through the dirty game of Rāvaṇa.

cevikāḷāl āra niṅ kirttik kaṇi eṅṅum
 kavikalē kālap paṅ-tēṅ uṅaiṅpat tuṅṅu,
 puviyīṅmēl poṅ neṅṅum cakkarattu uṅṅaiyē
 avivu iṅṅi ātarikkum-eṅṅatu āviyē.

(III-8-6)

Translation

My spirit yearns to have its ears filled, oh Lord,
 With songs that do you glory laud.
 Sweet as fruits soaked in the honey of tunes appropriate
 And enjoy on Earth with no respite,
 Your form effulgent, wielding the discus large and exquisite.

Notes

- (i) The Āḷvār's spirit either wants to grow ears or be transformed into ears to feast sumptuously on the songs singing the great glory of the Lord, the delicious fruits rendered sweeter, soaked and satiated with honey. If the songs are like unto fruits the tunes in which they are sung, sweeten them like honey.
- (ii) Hearing such melodies as Sāma Veda and beholding the Lord with His effulgent discus are experiences pertaining to Heaven and yet, the Āḷvār aspires for them, right here, on Earth.

āviyē! ār amutē! eṇṇai āḷṭait
 tūvi am puḷ uṭaiyāy! cuṭar nēmiyāy!
 pāviyēṇ neṅcam pulampap palakālum
 kūviyum kāṇapperēṇ-uṇa kōlamē.

(III-8-7)

Translation

You are my very Soul, the nectar dear,
 (Garuḍa), the bird with lovely plumes, my redeemer,
 Is your glorious mount, You are the wielder
 Of the discus resplendent, Your form exquisite,
 This sinner couldn't behold, as yet,
 Tho' many a time, my anguished mind called you out.

Notes

- (i) From this stanza onwards, the Āḷvār narrates his own woes and wants. Hitherto, those of his senses were described. This is like the king narrating the miseries of his subjects first and then talking about his own.
- (ii) It is difficult to live apart from one's life. The Lord is not only dear to the Āḷvār like his own life but is also extremely delicious, the rare Nectar.
- (iii) Once the mind is bent towards God and steeped in enjoying Him, there is no question of the woes still sticking on. Perhaps such benefits accruing to other minds are denied to the Āḷvār's mind because of his heavy

sins, according to him. While it would suffice if He is called but once, in this case, by calling Him out repeatedly, the Ājvār has contravened his essential nature (Svarūpa) and yet, the Lord has not materialised, a double loss indeed!

kōlamē! tāmaraik kaṇṇatu ōr aṅcaṇa
 nilamē! niṅṅu eṅatu āviyai irkiṅṅa
 cīlamē! ceṅṅu ceḷḷātaṇa muṅ nilām-
 kālamē! unṅai en nāḷ kaṅṅukoḷvaṅē?

(III-8-8)

Translation

Being lotus-eyed, with the unique complexion
 Of a dark-blue mountain,
 You are sheer beauty, Oh, Lord, Your loving condescension
 Has my soul ensnared; Time you do ordain,
 Past, present and future, you when can I attain?

Notes

- (i) To the complaint made by the Ājvār in the preceding song regarding the non-appearance of the Lord despite repeated calls, the Lord would appear to have observed that the Ājvār should wait till the appropriate time for the bestowal of His grace. But the Ājvār is quick to point out that 'Time' is also at the Lord's beck and call and He is the sole Controller of 'Time', made up of the past, the present and the future and that the plea of time-factor cannot, therefore, hold water.
- (ii) The Lord is not merely beautiful but is beauty itself. And it is not beauty alone but beauty and goodness combined. It is the persevering goodness on the part of the Lord that has enabled the Ājvār to cling to Him, overcoming his natural tendency to run away from Him, for fear of defiling Him.
- (iii) *When can I attain you?* The Ājvār prays to the Lord to specify the point of time at which he can behold and enjoy His physical presence, even as Śrī Rāma told Bharata that, on the completion of fourteen years, they will get together again.

kaḷvaṅ nāṅ, māvali! mūvaṭi tā enṅa
 kaḷvaṅē! kaḷcaṅgai vaḷcittu, vāṅṅai
 uḷ vaṅmai tira, ōr āyiram tōḷ tuṅitta
 puḷ vallāy! uppai eṅṅāṅṅu poruntuvaṅē?

(III-8-9)

Translation

Oh Lord, flying the bird (Garuḍa)!
 You did, on the sly, from Māvali demand
 Three strides of land;
 Kaḷcaṅ's plans treacherous you foiled,
 Vāṅṅai's mental attitude you dispelled
 And lopped his arms thousand;
 When do I get unto you bound?

Notes

- (i) Indra, Chief of the Devas was dispossessed of his Kingdom by Māvali (Mahā Bali), the Asura Chief. The former prayed to Lord Viṣṇu for the restoration of the lost Kingdom. But then, Mahā Bali was a generous donor, although he belonged to the Asura clan. So, the Lord had to adopt the peculiar method of seeking alms from Bali for getting back the lost domain. Not being conversant with the art of begging, the Lord, came down as Vāmana, the little lad, addressed Bali, by name, instead of the adulatory form of address, usually resorted to, by seasoned beggars. Bali didn't mind it so much, seeing that the supplicant was but a lad, but when the demand, made by the lad, was just three paces of land, the pompous donor didn't take it seriously. Looking at the indifference of Bali to the seemingly paltry demand, Vāmanamūrti reiterated His demand and compelled Bali's attention.
- (ii) Kaḷcaṅ (Kamsa) kept himself in the background and hit upon many a treacherous plan to kill Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The felon of an uncle would not indulge in a frontal attack on Kṛṣṇa, the nephew, and was hoping that one or the other of the several agencies energised by him would be able to kill Kṛṣṇa, so that he (Kamsa) might bemoan, in public, the loss of his nephew.

Alas! all his plans were thwarted by the Divine Lad, who vanquished the formidable array of His opponents and finally slew Kamsa himself.

(iii) Vāṇaṇ (Bāṇāsura), an avowed enemy of Lord Viṣṇu, was, however, an ardent votary of minor deities. The Lord, appeared before him, mounted on Garuḍa, disabused him (Bāṇāsura) of his heretical notion of God-head and revealed His supremacy, chopping off his thousand arms, like felling trees in the forest. See also detailed notes under III-10-4.

poruntiya mā marutiṇ iṭai pōya em
peruntakāy! uṇ kaḷai kāṇiya pēturu
varunti, nāṇ vācakamālai koṇṭu, unṇaiyē
iruntuiruntu etṭaṇai kālam pulampuvaṇē? (III-8-10)

Translation

My bounteous Lord, the ' maruta ' trees huge, You broke,
Crawling in between; how long shall I cry out, without break,
Unto you, words of anguish, flowing like a wreath,
Eager in the extreme to behold your lovely feet!

Note

Sage Nārada saw Nalakūpar and Maṇigṛva, sons of Kubera, the Deity of Wealth, bathing in the river naked, and cursed them to become mere trees. Tied to a mortar by Queen Yasodha, as a punishment for His many pranks, Kṛṣṇa crawled on and hit the trees in question. The trees fell down and broke, releasing the regenerated Gandharvas from within. Sage Parāśara, who chronicled this episode in his Viṣṇupurāṇa, admired Śrī Kṛṣṇa's lotus eyes, in this context. The Āḷvār's mind is, however, steeped, as usual, in the feet of the crawling Lad.

pulampu cīrp pūmi aḷanta perumāṇai
nalam koḷ cīr naṇ kurukūrc caṭakōpaṇ col
valam koṇṭa āyirattuḷ ivaiyum ōr pattu
ilaṅku vāṇ yāvarum ēḡvar conṇālē. (III-8-11)

Translation

Those that recite these songs ten,
Out of the thousand of great literary excellence,
Composed by the richly endowed Kurukūr Catakōpaṇ,
In adoration of the munificent Lord who spanned the Universe,
Will, one and all, ascend the resplendent heaven.

Note

As the Āḷvār aspired for heavenly bliss in this decad those that recite these ten stanzas are also assured of their ascent to heaven.

Third Centum—Ninth Decad (III-9) (Connāl Virōtam)

Preamble

(1) Among the myriads of the Lord's Creatures the human form is a rare gift of the Lord. Even so, the human form, thus dowered, has to be free from physical and mental handicaps. Even then, acquisition of a high degree of learning is rare and rarer still is the capacity for writing Verses. And then again, this extremely rare gift of verse-making has to be put to proper use but, more often than not, this talent is prostituted for the poet's selfish ends, by indulging in praise of the petty humans, as, for example, the Sanskrit work, entitled 'Pratāpa Rudryam'. The Āḷvār naturally deplores such misguided poets and advises them to give up their low base and elevate themselves to their legitimate stature, as the Lord's bards, soaring high, singing exclusively His great glory, in beautiful, me'rical compositions. The Āḷvār mostly bemoans his separation from the Lord during those moments when communion with Him gets snapped, for one reason or another. But now and then, he turns his attention on the worldlings around, moved by their sad plight. In this decad, he exhorts the poets to harness their literary excellence to useful purpose by singing the many auspicious traits and wondrous deeds of the Lord and not to go the wrong way, eulogising the frail humans.

(2) The Āḷvār had addressed the worldlings earlier too, but with little success. In stanza 25 of his 'Periya Tiruvantāti', he exclaimed, in sheer disgust, that it was impossible to correct the worldlings and that he would, therefore, leave them severely alone, free to do whatever they liked. But then, his fellow-feeling asserts itself; his deep compassion for the suffering humanity wallowing in worldly life, was such that he just could not be indifferent to them and abandon them to their fate. That is why he turned his attention on them, now and then, in the midst of his own mystic experiences, alternating between union with and separation from God. The reasons prompting the Āḷvār to exhort the worldlings are three-fold, namely,

- (i) the inter-relationship between Man and God is the same as that between God and the denizens of the high heaven and yet, while those in heaven partake of that perennial bliss emanating from the Lord, all the time, the worldlings are straying away from Him, bogged down in the difficult and miserable terrain of worldly life. The fundamental relationship between them and God, therefore, needs to be impressed upon the worldlings so that they may also be turned towards God;
- (ii) The Āḷvār's inability to stand the sight of the suffering humanity caught up in the unenviable meshes of worldly life and
- (iii) The Āḷvār's tender solicitude for the Earthlings overflows its continent and seeks to sustain itself by reclaiming even those given up by the Almighty Lord, as 'Incorrigibles'. (See aphorism 203 of Ācārya Hṛdayam).

(3) In the realm of God-love, the lovers' thoughts are always rivetted to Him, their lives are nestled in Him and they sustain themselves through mutual joy and enlightenment derived by talking about His great glory and listening to it by turns. The Āḷvār turns round in search of such enlightened company but he is sadly disappointed. He advises the men around, hoping to bring them round to his way of thinking, but finds that his advice has once again fallen on deaf ears. He, however, ends up this

decad on a complacent note, satisfied with his own role as God's poet, unlike the Earthlings who misuse their poetic talents.

conp al vir tam itu,  kilum colluvaᅇ; k ᅇmiᅇᅇ!
 eᅇ n vil iᅇ kavi y ᅇ oruvarkkum koᅇukkil ᅇ-
 teᅇn  teᅇn  eᅇᅇu vaᅇᅇu mural tiruv ᅇkaᅇattu
 eᅇ  pai, eᅇ appaᅇ, em perumaᅇ uᅇaᅇakav . (III-9-1)

Translation

Listen, Ye, men, let me my mind speak out
 Although it may not by you be liked;
 The songs sweet that from my tongue sprout
 Laud none but my Liege-Lord
 At Tiruv ᅇkaᅇam, by humming bees swarmed,
 My Benefactor great, majestic like elephant;
 Waste I shan't on anyone else my poetic talent.

Notes

- (i) The  lv r does not straightaway say what he intends to preach, in this decad. He begins by stating his own case, namely, that his tongue shall sing exclusively the glory of the Lord at Tiruv ᅇkaᅇam, the holy Mount and its fauna and flora. The individual Soul is as good as non-existent, when it does not turn its thoughts on God and sustain itself by singing His glory. But, here is an extraordinary situation, the Lord stationing Himself in near-by Tiruv ᅇkaᅇam in order to sustain Himself through the songs sung by the  lv r. There is, therefore, no question of the  lv r turning his attention on any one else and, by saying so, he wants the men of the world to emulate him and follow in his foot-steps.
- (ii) The  lv r is quite aware that calling upon the worldlings to desist from praising the frail humans, the so-called earthly Lords, will not be palatable to these short-sighted folks, as that would mean depriving them of the odds and ends, the petty favours they may otherwise

obtain. Nevertheless, he advises them, unable to stand the sight of their suffering, like unto the advice tendered by

- (i) Sītā, the Divine Mother to the demoniac Rāvaṇa,
(ii) Prahlāda unto Hiraṇya and the fellow—pupils
and (iii) Vibhīṣaṇa unto a terribly hostile Rāvaṇa.

uḷaṇākavē eṇṇi, taṇṇai oṇṇāka, taṇ celvattai
vaḷaṇā matikkum im māṇiṭattaik kavi pāṭi eṇ-
kuḷaṇ āṛ kaḷaṇi cūḷ kaṇṇaṇ kuṇṇukuṭi meymmaiye
uḷaṇāya entaiyai, entai pemmaṇai oḷiyavē? (III-9-2)

Translation

What use is there in composing hymns
In praise of these frail humans
Who think no end of themselves and their wealth ephemeral,
Without lauding my benefactor great, the Lord eternal,
Truly abiding in Kuṇṇukuṭi, with many a pond and fields
fertile?

Notes

- (i) The Lord's wealth and His auspicious traits are unlimited, in dire contrast to the petty wealth possessed, for a short while, by the mortals who still think no end of themselves and their so-called possessions. It provokes the righteous indignation of the Āḷvār when he finds people running after the petty men and their equally petty wealth, as good as non-existent, without turning their minds on God (near at hand, full of auspicious traits) and singing His glory.
- (ii) (a) *What to do*: The Lord Who stays in Heaven in His transcendental Form, Who reclines on the milk-ocean in His 'Vyūha' aspect, Who incarnated as Śrī Rāma, Kṛṣṇa and so on, who resides in His Iconic Form in Pilgrim centres like Kuṇṇukuṭi, is alone praiseworthy and, therefore, the few of us gifted with poetic talents should compose hymns singing the Lord's glory, His countless auspicious

traits and wondrous deeds, cosmic wealth of unlimited dimensions etc.

(b) *What not to do*: Don't debase your poetic talent by composing poems glorifying the insignificant humans, importing merits where there is none and overlooking all their faults although they are too numerous to be ignored. Here is an interesting anecdote: A wealthy man, named, Cōḷa Brahmarāya, wrote out a commentary on 'Tiruvāymoḷi' and gave it to Nacciḷyar for perusal and writing out the Foreword. The Saint did not, however, like to get involved in this, lest he should have to point out the mistakes and incur the displeasure of the glossator. He, therefore, passed it on to his disciple, Nampiḷḷai, who discreetly gave it back to the author after some time, complimenting him, more as a matter of formality, on his close adherence to Saint Nammālvār's philosophy. Thereupon, Cōḷa Brahmarāya felt unduly elated and went even to the extent of rating himself above Nammālvār on the ground that, with his superior talents, he was able to write out the commentary in the midst of the multifarious duties his high position demanded of him, while Nammālvār had nothing else to do when he composed 'Tiruvāymoḷi'. This brings to the fore the vanity of people who easily lose their heads, the more so, when they are surrounded by sycophants indulging in fulsome flattery.

(iii) 'Kuruṅkuṭi', a pilgrim centre, in the deep south in Tamil Nadu, is also known as 'Vaiṣṇava Vāmana Kṣetra'. It was due to the grace of the Lord enshrined here that Nammālvār was born.

oḷivu oṅṅu illāta pal ūḷitōṅṅu ūḷi nilāvappōm
 vaḷiyait tarum naṅkaḷ vāṅavar Icaṅai niṅkap pōy,
 kaḷiya mika nalla vāṅ kavi koṅṅu, pulavirkāḷ!
 iḷiyak karuti, ḍr.māṅṅam pāṭal eṅ āvatē?

(III-9-3)

Translation

Ye, men of learning, What do you gain at all
 By lauding the petty humans thro' songs superfine,
 Shutting your eyes to the glory of the Overlord of Celestials,
 Who shall unto you vouchsafe everlasting service divine?

Notes

- (i) In his address to the poets of the world, the Āḷvār appeals to their good sense and discriminative faculty, to discern for themselves that the Supreme Lord, served and adored by the whole lot of them in the high heavens, the repository of innumerable auspicious qualities, is alone praiseworthy and one can praise Him till the end of time and still cannot exhaust His glory. And to those who adore Him He vouchsafes the eternal bliss of serving Him. Again poetry comes into its own only when it lauds His glory and not when it is profaned by making it the medium for eulogising the worthless humans.
- (ii) And now, look at the other picture, dark and dismal. The so-called big men of the Earth these poets run after, get scent of the latter's approach and run away from them for fear of having to bestow gifts. And then, the poets overshoot the mark and make even people very much amenable to flattery suspect that they are either being fooled or the cap does not fit them. In this absurd chase for illusory gains, petty and ephemeral, the poets, far from edifying themselves, descend to the bottom-most depths of depravity, just the opposite of what they intend to achieve, all because they have chosen the wrong theme for their poems notwithstanding their literary excellence.

en āvatu-ettanai nāḷaikkup pōtum-pulavirkā!
 maṅṅā maṅicaraip pāṭip paṭaikkum perum poru!
 miṅ ār maṅi muṭi viṅṅavar tātaiyaip pāṭiṅāl,
 taṅṅākavē koṅṅu, caṅmam ceyyāmaiyum koḷḷumē. (III-9-4)

Translation

Ye, poets, how long can the wealth immense you obtain,
 By singing the praise of the mortals sustain
 You all? better sing the glory of the Lord Supreme,
 Wearing the crown resplendent set with gems,
 The Devas' Sovereign ; He will take you unto His fold,
 Besides, you will from further births be freed.

Note

To the question put by the Ālvār what the Earthly poets would gain by praising the petty humans, the poets say that their patrons do give them gifts, in appreciation of their composition. The Ālvār, however, questions them again and asks them how long the wealth, they so obtain, will last. As a matter of fact, it takes the scholar quite some time to write out a book or compose a poem in adoration of these mortals and just when he sets out to meet the prospective donor, the shocking news comes of the latter having passed away. Even otherwise, the poets themselves do not live to enjoy the fruits of their labour and if they live long the gifts bestowed on them by the earthly patrons do not last long. Is it not therefore clear that the scholars should shift their base and concentrate on the glory of the Lord of the 'Nitya Sūris' (Eternal Heroes) in Heaven? The Lord, the one and only Giver, there being no gift beyond Him, will bestow on the hymnographers the choicest gift of eternal service unto Him and cut out the material body to sustain which they went about praising the frail mortals. The Lord has the unique reputation of elevating the subjects on a par with Him—the great giver with no restraint!

kollum payaṅ illai, kuppai kiḷarttaṅṅa ceḷvattai
 vaḷḷal pukaḷntu, num vāymai iḷakkum pulavirkāḷ!
 kollak kuṅaivu ilaṅ, vēṅṅiṅṅu ellām tarum kōtu il eṅ
 vaḷḷal, maṅivannaṅ-taṅṅaik kavi colla vammaiṅṅō. (III-9-5)

Translation

Ye, scholars, that do your tongue defile
 In eulogy of the fellow-beings frail

Whose wealth is little better than a mound of filth!
 Come and compose songs lauding the one, fully worth
 All the praise you bestow on Him,
 My Lord flawless, like unto blue gem,
 The benefactor great, the donor supreme.

Notes

(i) It is indeed a deplorable exercise in futility to compose songs glorifying the fellow-beings who, far from being praise-worthy, will only have their many drawbacks exposed in the process, like unto the scrutiny of the contents of the dust-bin. Apart from not getting anything tangible and everlasting, from their mis-directed efforts, the poets lose their veracity by indulging in fulsome flattery. Thus, while there is no positive gain, there is indeed a positive loss.

(ii) *Flawless*: The Lord whose wealth is unlimited, is a flawless Giver, giving in plenty, without expecting anything in return. In His gifts there is no constraint; they are not merely abundant but exuberant.

vammiṅ pulavīr! num mey varuttik kaṭceytu uymmiṅḍ;
 im maṅ ulakiṅil celvar iṅḍōtu illai nōkkiṅḍōm;
 num iṅ kavī koṅḍu num num iṅḍā teyvam ēttiṅāl,
 cem miṅ cuṅar-muṅi eṅ tirumālukkuc cērumē. (III-9-6)

Translation

Come, ye, poets, give up eulogising the humans,
 There's none in this land big, as I now examine,
 Wealthy enough to reward you well for your hymns;
 'Tis but meet, you shall, by the sweat of your brow, earn;
 If you praise the deity of your heart, even then,
 Those promises shall reach my Tirumāl, with lustrous crown.

Notes

(i) *Come, Ye, poets*: The Ālvār beckons the poets in the same way as a person invites persons caught up in a forest fire to come and have a dip in a pond, full of water, cool and deep. The poets, however, submit that they have

to eke out their livelihood by lauding the humans. The Āḷvār emphasises that they should not debase their talents and they might as well earn by physical labour. But then, the poets, not accustomed to bodily exertion, make out that composing poems was the easier of the two and that they should, therefore, be allowed to pursue their normal avocation. The Āḷvār does not, however, mince matters and rightly points out that there is none in this world wealthy enough to reward their talents suitably and that they should not undersell themselves.

- (ii) *If you praise the Deity of your heart*: If you say that even if there be no wealthy person among the humans, Indra and other Devas could be considered wealthy and you would, therefore, compose poems singing their glory, well, whatever praise you heap on them will actually reach 'Tirumāl' (Lord Viṣṇu), as their Internal Controller, rather, it will be more appropriate to Him, being the one really praiseworthy. And, therefore, you had better praise the Supreme Lord, straightaway, instead of passing through intermediaries.

cērum koṭai pukaḷ ellai ilānai, ḍr āyiram
 pērum uṭaiya piraṇai allāl, maṅgu yaṅ kilēṅ-
 māri aṇaiya kai, māl varai okkum tiṅ tōḷ eṅgu,
 pāril ḍr paṅṅaiyaip paccaip pacum poykaḷ pēcavē. (III-9-7)

Translation

Utter I Can't damned white lies that project
 The duds on Earth as the cloud munificent
 And glorify their shoulders as mountains great,
 Praise I can only my gracious Lord of glory unlimited,
 Bearing a thousand names, my benefactor great.

Notes

- (i) In the preceding songs, the Āḷvār addressed the world around but his advice fell on deaf ears, as before. In sheer disgust he withdraws unto himself, satisfied

that he could get back from the earthly poets, uncontaminated, like unto a person clearing a dacoit-infested area, without getting robbed.

- (ii) *Thousand names*: Doesn't mean exactly thousand. Actually, it connotes innumerable names, even as His glory is inexhaustible.
- (iii) *White lies*. Abominable lies, without the slightest tinge of truth.

vēyiṅ maḷipurai tōḷi piṅṅaiṅku maṅāḷaṅai
 āya perum pukaḷ ellai ilātaṅa pāṭippōy,
 kāyam kaḷittu, avaṅ tāḷ-iṅaiṅkiḷḷ pukum kātalaṅ,
 māya maṅicarai eṅ colla vallēṅ, eṅ vāykoṅṭē? (III-9-8)

Translation

With passion deep to sing the limitless glory of the consort
 Of Piṅṅai with shoulders pretty, for a long, long time
 And then discard my body and attain His lovely feet,
 Shall my tongue praise, at all, men in mundane moorings?

Notes

- (i) Even as the Lord cut out the impediments in the way of attaining the charming Nappiṅṅai, He destroyed all the obstacles confronting the Āḷvār in attaining Him. When, at last, the material body is shaken off, the Āḷvār will acquire non-physical (*ultra*-mundane) body and serve the Lord, staying at His feet all the time. How could such a one ever think of singing the praise of the miserable mortals caught up in the mesh of mundane life?
- (ii) The Lord's glory is unlimited and it can bear any amount of lauding for any length of time. Such being the case, there is hardly any scope for turning one's attention on others. Even if the Āḷvār be inclined to sing the praise of others, his tongue would not be a party to it.

vāykoṅṭu māṅiṭam pāṭa vanta kaviyēṅ allēṅ;
 āykoṅṭa cīr vallal āḷip pirāṅ eṅakkē uḷaṅ;
 cāy koṅṭa immaiṅum cātittu, vāṅavar nāṭṭaiṅum
 nī kaṅṭukoḷ eṅṅu viṭum tarum niṅṅuniṅṭē. (III-9-9)

Translation

I am not the poet born to extol the frail humans,
 My tongue shall praise only the Lord holding the discus,
 The Donor great, full of qualities auspicious,
 Who presents Himself here in iconic Form delicious
 And grants heavenly bliss in due course.

Notes

- (i) The Āḷvār will not sing the praise of any but the extremely generous Lord. Although several Sages and Saints including the other Āḷvārs have sung the Lord's glory, Nammāḷvār's poems are hymns with a difference, of peerless excellence.
- (ii) Although the Āḷvār has expressed his abhorrence of this harrowing abode with its evil propensities, in several places, earlier, he does not mind eking out his stay here, because of the Lord's living presence, right here, in His iconic Form, a bliss which compares favourable with, rather excels, heavenly bliss. As a matter of fact, the Āḷvār asked the Lord in stanza 53 of 'Periya Tiruvantāti' whether the heavenly bliss which He grants, is by-any-means superior to the sweet contemplation of His infinite glory.
- (iii) *In due course*: Nampillai is of the view that the heavenly bliss is granted by the Lord duly regulated with regard to the capacity of the recipient, just like a person who has been on a month-long fast, breaking the fast by stages before he resumes the normal in-take of food. This theme has already been elaborated upon, in the preamble to I-9. Other commentators have, however, interpreted the corresponding phrase in the original text of this stanza as 'In due course', that is, at the appropriate time.

nirṇuṇṇu pala nāḷ uykkum iv uṭal nīṅkipṇṇy,
 ceṅṇuceṅṇu ākilum kaṇṇu, caṅṇmam kaḷippāṅ eṇṇi,
 oṅṇioṅṇi ulakam paṭaittāṅ kavi āyiṇṇṇṇku
 eṅṇumeṅṇum iṇi maṅṇṇoruvar kavi eṅṇkumē?

(III-9-10)

Translation

Would it be appropriate if I, the poet of the zealous Lord
Who with the creation of the worlds goes on, full of hopes
That His subjects will some day (sooner or later) give up
The age-long shackles of the material body and attain Him,
Sang the glory of any one else, any more?

Notes

- (i) At a time when the individual soul was lying defunct, just as inert as the non-sentient matter, devoid of the capacity to lament or enjoy, it was the Lord's boundless grace that put the Souls back on their feet, by endowing them with body, limbs and sense-organs, foreking out their progress. Against this background, the Ājvār queries how the limbs, designed for the Lord's service, can be put to any other use.
- (ii) In the ancient farm of 'Samsārā', the Lord, as an indefatigable and time-honoured Cultivator, has been raising crop after crop (world after world) hoping for a richer harvest of 'Bhakti' (devotion) every time. There are four different routes taken by the Souls when they depart from the material bodies, namely, (1) garbhagathi, (2) yāmyagathi, (3) Dhūmagathi and (4) Arcirādi gathi. Although the Lord looks forward to the subjects attaining Him through the last-mentioned ascent of 'Arcirādi gathi', they are mostly moving away from Him, through the other routes. But that does not deter Him and He gets on with His work of creation, hoping for better results, some day, sooner or later. The Ājvār says that the Lord's unremitting labour has yielded the desired fruit, at least in his case, inasmuch as he has become the Lord's poet, singing exclusively His glory.

ēr̥kum perum pukaḷ vāpavar icaṇ kaṇṇaṇ-taṇakku
ēr̥kum perum pukaḷ vaṇ kurukūrc caṭakōpaṇ col
ēr̥kum perum pukaḷ āyirattuḷ ivaiyum oṛ pattu
ēr̥kum perum pukaḷ colla vallār̥kku illai caṇmamē. (III-9-11)

Translation

Those that recite these praiseworthy songs ten,
 Out of the praiseworthy thousand uttered
 By the praiseworthy Kurukūr Caṭakōpaṇ,
 Adoring Kaṇṇaṇ, the praiseworthy Lord,
 Chief of the Celestials, will from births be freed.

Notes

(i) Those that recite these ten stanzas will not run the risk of being born again and hankering after the earthly patrons, lauding them.

(ii) The Lord is praiseworthy, as the Supreme Master of all the worlds.

The Āḷvār is praiseworthy, as the Lord's poet,
 an appellation which fits him admirably;

Tiruvāymoḷi is praiseworthy, as the 'Dramiḍa Veda', truly reflecting the Lord like a mirror and this decad is praiseworthy, in as much as it enjoins upon every one to preserve, *in tact*, the essential nature (svarūpa) by singing exclusively the Lord's glory and prohibiting the profanation of the tongue and the poetic talent, in singing the praise of others

Third Centum—Tenth Decad (III-10) (Caṅgam Palapala)

Preamble

The Lord is most eminently suited for laudation by virtue of His innumerable auspicious traits, wondrous deeds and vast possessions. And yet, the worldlings would not listen to the Āḷvār's advice, as in the preceding decad, to praise Him exclusively and desist from praising others. The Āḷvār, however, felt happy that he could at least get back from them unscathed without following in their footsteps. That spirit of complacency runs through this decad also with an extra gusto. The Āḷvār gives expression to the various benefits accrued to him through his total absorption in the Lord, namely, full and complete freedom from (1) want, (2) obstruction in the enjoyment of the Lord, (3) trouble, (4) sorrow, (5) affliction, (6) hindrance, (7) fatigue etc.

caṅmam palapala ceytu veḷippaṭṭu, caṅkoṭu cakkaram, vil,
oṅmai uṭaiya ulakkai, oḷ vāḷ, taṅṭu koṅṭu, puḷ-ūrntu, ulakil
vaṅmai uṭaiya arakkar acurarai māḷap paṭai poruta
naṅmai uṭaiyavaṅ cīr paravaṅ peṅṅa nāṅ ḍr kuṅaiyu ilaṅē.

(III-10-1)

Translation

Singing the glory of the benevolent Lord
Who took many a birth, visible unto the eyes naked
Of the worldly, wielding the sword, the mace,
The pounder bright, bow, conch and discus
And slew, flying that bird (Garuḍa), the Asuras and the fiends
Free from wants of any kind am I indeed

Notes

- (i) While the Lord incarnates as a matter of grace we are born under compulsion, as the result of our past Karmas (deeds), to eke out our load. But by the Lord's spontaneous grace, the cycle of birth and rebirth will, some day, be brought to a halt in our case, and we won't have any more births, having once reached the Eternal Land (Heaven) whence there is no returning. The Lord, however, goes on taking births assuming the Form most appropriate to His needs. While recounting the Lord's Avatāras (incarnations) carrying about His person the unique weapons of transcendent fame, the Āḷvār feels that he is above wants of any kind. As a matter of fact, only those can suffer from wants, who are either devilish (āsurik) or are running after petty men for paltry gains.
- (ii) *The fiends*: Those whose hearts are hard like a rock impervious to the exquisite charm of the Lord's enthralling Form, and who become the targets of His bow and net of His beauty.

kuṅaiyu il taṅaṅ kaṭal kōḷ aravu ēri, taṅ kōlac centāmaraiḱkaṅ
uṭaipavaṅ pōla ḍr yōku puṅarnta oḷi maṅi vaṅṅaṅ, kaṅṅaṅ,
kaṅai aṅi mūḱku uṭaip pullaik kaṭāvi, acuraraik kāynta ammāṅ
niṅai pukaḷ ēttiyum, pāṭiyum, āṭiyum yāṅ oru muṭṭu ilaṅē.

(III-10-2)

Translation

Hindrance there's none for me to sing,
 Dance and enjoy my lustrous Lord, full of fame, resting
 On the serpent-bed in the milk-ocean, full and broad,
 Closing the red-lotus eyes, in deep thoughts absorbed,
 Who came down here as Kaṇṇaṇ and destroyed
 The fell Asuras, mounted on that bird with beak bloody.

Notes

- (i) The Lord reposed on His serpent-bed in the Milk-ocean in 'Yoga niddhrā', preparatory to His incarnation as Śrī Kṛṣṇa to destroy the evil forces arrayed against the Godly men. The Ālvār recounting, as he does, the great glory of Lord Kṛṣṇa, says that He has cut out all the impediments for his continual enjoyment of this bliss.
- (ii) *In deep thoughts absorbed*: The Lord's 'Yoga niddhrā' referred to in (i) above is not the tāmasik variety of sleep but the highest form of activity, being the activation of one's energies inward. Deeply absorbed in finding out the sure solvent for winning over the straying subjects, tossed up in 'the ocean of samsāra', and taking them ashore, He visualised the enchanting form which would cast its irresistible spell on the worldlings and wean them. It was this very form He assumed and came down as Kṛṣṇa. In his inimitable diction, Nampillai observes that the Lord's tongue got parched up due to His deep mental exertion in concerting the ways and means of redeeming the worldlings and just then, this enchanting form passed before His mind's eye, like the edible camphor relieving the dryness of the tongue in an exhilarating manner.
- (iii) *That bird with beak bloody*: The blood-stains on the beak of the mighty Garuḍa caused by his slaying the opponents, has not been wiped off, there being hardly any time left for it. Far from presenting an untidy appearance, these stains seem to be decorative.

muṭṭu il pal pōkattu oru taṇi nāyakaṇ, mūvulakukku uriya
kaṭṭiyai, tēṇai, amutai, naṇ pālai, kaṇiyai, karumpu-taṇṇai,
maṭṭu aviḷ taṇ am tuḷāy muṭiyāṇai vaṇaṅki, avaṇ-tiṇattup
paṭṭa piṇṇai, iṇaiyākilum, yāṇ eṇ maṇattup parivu ilaṇē.

(III-10-3)

Translation

Mental afflictions have I absolutely none, absorbed in my Lord
Whose cool tuḷaci garland sheds honey in plenty;
Full of bliss uninterrupted, He is unto all the worlds
The peerless Master, delicious like honey and candy,
Pure milk, fruit, nectar, sugar cane and all that.

Notes

- (i) The Āḷvār declares that, attracted as he is by the Lord's extraordinary sweetness and steeped in His service, he is absolutely free from mental afflictions. Even the heavenly bliss he is having right here.
- (ii) *Of bliss uninterrupted*: Unlike the felicities of all the others, including the exalted Devas like Indra, Brahmā and Śiva, which have their limitations both in regard to the quantum and duration, the Lord is a perennial fountain of inexhaustible bliss.
- (iii) While the cool, honey-studded tuḷaci garland brings out the sweetness of the Lord's Form (Divyamaṅgala vighraha), the other 'Rasas' (tastes) mentioned in the last two lines denote the highly delicious and delectable 'Ātma-svarūpa' or attributes of the Lord.

parivu iṇṇi, vāṇaṇaik kāttum eṇṇu, aṇṇu paṭaiyoṭum vantū etirnta,
tiripuram ceṇṇavaṇum, makaṇum, piṇṇum aṅkiyum pōr tolaiya,
poru ciṇaiṇ pullaik kaṭaviya māyaṇai, āyaṇai, poṇcakkarattu
ariyaṇai, accutaṇaiṇ paṇṇi, yāṇ iṇaiyēṇum iṭar ilaṇē. (III-10-4)

Translation

Distraction there's none whatever for me,
The votary of the wondrous Lord, Accutaṇ, (the steadfast),
Ari, whose discus lovely destroys the enemies;

As Kṛṣṇa, mounted on that valiant bird, He made them all eat
the dust,
(Śiva), the destroyer of Tiripuram, his son and Aṅki, ranged
opposite,
As sworn allies of the demoniac Vāṇaṇ, in a distant past.

Notes

- (i) The Āḷvār brings out here that the lesser deities can hardly protect their votaries while the Supreme Lord, 'Accuta' sure and steadfast, will never give up His devotees. The Āḷvār, therefore, feels he is in a very happy position, absolutely safe, free from obstruction of any kind.
- (ii) Uṣā, the charming daughter of Bāṇāsura (Vāṇaṇ, in Tamil) fell madly in love with a very handsome youth during a dream, and insisted that her mate Citralekhā, of extraordinary occult powers, should arrange for the physical presentation of the youth of her (Uṣā's) dream. The figure of the youth in question having been projected on paper from the canvas of Uṣā's mind, Citralekha identified him with Aniruddha, the grandson of Lord Kṛṣṇa and managed to lift the youngster bodily, along with the cot on which he was fast asleep, and put him right in Uṣā's private apartment. With her dream realised, Uṣā was in the land of ecstasy in the company of her lover but when Bāṇāsura came to know of this intrusion, great was his wrath and he bound Aniruddha by a 'Nāgāstra', a serpent-missile. The whole of Dwāraka, Lord Kṛṣṇa's township got agitated over the disappearance of Aniruddha and when Sage Nārada acquainted Śrī Kṛṣṇa with the youth's whereabouts, the mighty Garuḍa was commissioned from Heaven. Mounted on Garuḍa, Kṛṣṇa, accompanied by a host of others, sallied forth to Bāṇāsura's citadel to recover the missing youth. But Śiva, his son, Subramanya, their attendants, Agni (Aṅki, in Tamil) and other Devas ranged themselves on the side of Bāṇāsura, having vouchsafed protection unto him. Śrī Kṛṣṇa put Śiva out of action through a missile (Jrumbhanāstra) making him yawn all the time, drove the rest away and finally

encountered the thousand-armed Bāṇāsura, lopping off his arms. A penitent Śiva then prayed to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and at the former's request, Bāṇāsura was let off with a mere four arms, as against the thousand, he had before. The grateful Bāṇāsura gave his daughter in marriage to Aniruddha and the wedding was celebrated with great eclat.

Śiva's part in this episode was indeed most unfortunate. When the milk-ocean was churned Lord Viṣṇu functioned in eight different forms. Likewise, when Śiva encountered Tripurāsuras and destroyed their flying citadels, Viṣṇu imparted the requisite strength to Śiva's bow, toughness to the bow-string, sharpness to the arrow and above all, He was within him as the Internal Controller, as ever. But when Śiva was extolled by the ignorant poets as the destroyer of Tripura, he got infatuated to such an extent that he was impudent enough to think in terms of taking up arms against Kṛṣṇa, Lord Viṣṇu, incarnate and allying with Bāṇāsura. No doubt, Siva had to repent for it, as seen from the episode cited above.

(iii) *Distraction, there is none for me:* Despite being Lord Kṛṣṇa's grandson, Aniruddha had to suffer imprisonment at the hands of Bāṇāsura, as in the above episode. But, as the Lord's ardent devotee, the Ājvār doesn't have to suffer any such indignity.

iṭar iṅṛiyē, oru nāḷ oru pōḷtil ellā ulakum kaḷiya,
paṭar pukaḷp pārttaṇum vaiṭikaṇum uṭaṇ ēṅa, tiṅ-tēr kaṭavi,
cuṭar-oḷiyāy niṅṅa taṅṅuṭaḷc cōṭiyil vaiṭikaṇ pillaikaḷai
uṭaloṭum koṅṅu koṅṅuttavaṅṅaip paṅṅi, oṅṅum tuyar ilaṅṅē.

(III-10-5)

Translation

In me there isn't the slightest tinge of grief,
Having attained my gracious Lord who delivered
The lost sons of a ' Vaidik ' back to him quite safe,

**Taking him and Arjuna in a chariot strong that covered
The upper regions, reclaiming from the Heaven resplendent
the sons (four).**

Notes

- (i) The Ājvār asserts that there is no question of his being confronted by grief of any kind, having taken sole refuge in the Supreme Lord, Who, as Kṛṣṇa, went right into Heaven, reclaimed the four missing sons of a 'Vaidik' (Brahmin) and delivered them back to him as promised.
- (ii) The 'Vaidik', referred to in (i) above, lost three sons successively; immediately they emerged from the mother's womb, the babes disappeared. When his wife conceived again, the Brahmin prayed to Śrī Kṛṣṇa to ensure the safe retention of at least the current progeny. At the time of confinement, however, Arjuna dissuaded Kṛṣṇa from disengaging himself from a ritual currently going on and undertook to look after the Vaidik's affair himself. But then, Arjuna failed miserably despite his standing guard at the Vaidik's house, blocking, with arrows, entry into the house by any outsider, not even air. The progeny disappeared as usual soon after emergence from the mother's womb.

The Vaidik bitterly reproached Arjuna but Kṛṣṇa appeased the grief-stricken brahmin, promising to get him back all the four missing children. Just in one day the three of them ascended the upper regions in a mighty chariot specially commissioned for the purpose. Detaining the Vaidik, Arjuna and the Chariot Just outside Heaven, Śrī Kṛṣṇa alone entered the dazzling Heaven and located all the four children in the company of His Divine Consorts there, who longed for seeing Him in the exquisite Form of Kṛṣṇa and lifted the Vaidik's sons, one by one, unto Heaven, in order to secure their objective. The children were thus recovered, safe and sound, and restored to the Vaidik, a grand and thrilling feat which none but the Supreme Lord could perform.

tuyar il cuṭar-oḷi taṅṅuṭai cōti niṅra vaṅṅam niṅkavē,
 tuyaril maliyum maṅicar piṅaviyil tōṅṅri, kaṅ kāṅa vantū,
 tuyaraṅkaḷ ceytu, taṅ teyvanilai ulakil puka uykkum ammāṅ,
 tuyaram il cirk kaṅṅaṅ, māyaṅ pukaḷ turra yāṅ ḍr tuṅṅam ilaṅē.

(III-10-6)

Translation

Absolutely trouble-free am I, singing the glory great
 Of my wondrous Lord, full of auspicious traits
 And devoid of qualities base, who did, as Kaṅṅaṅ, come down
 In all that splendour supernal, amidst sorrow-stricken humans
 And spread, in this world, His glory unique, attracting everyone.

Notes

- (i) Though born among humans as Śrī Kṛṣṇa, son of Vasudeva, the Lord retained His Supernal Form and traits *in tact* as He assumes the Form of His choice, unlike the bodies He dowers on us under compulsion, according to our Karma. Making Himself visible to the worldlings and mixing with them freely, He displays His auspicious traits in 'abundance'. Meditating on these great qualities of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Āḷvār affirms that he has no worries whatsoever.
- (ii) The Lord attracts the devout by His auspicious traits and the ungodly men by exhibiting His strength and prowess.
- (iii) Even while performing such functions as running an errand and driving the chariot, Śrī Kṛṣṇa displayed His transcendental glory, a rare thing indeed for the worldlings to have, right here, a taste of what obtains in Heaven.

tuṅṅamum iṅṅamum ākiya ceyviṅai āy, ulakaṅkaḷum āy,
 iṅṅam il vem naku āki, iṅṅaṅ nal vāṅ cuvarkaṅkaḷum āy,
 maṅ pal uyirkaḷum āki, palapala māya mayakkukkaḷāl
 iṅṅuṅum iv viḷaiyāṭṭu uṭaiyāṅaip peṅṅu, ētum allal ilaṅē.

(III-10-7)

Translation

Sorrows have I none, as I commune
 With my Lord, the Sportive Controller overall,

Of the Creatures many, their pleasure and pain,
Their acts, good and bad, the pleasant Svarg and dire hell.

Note

The Lord who delights in the creation of the Universe as a pastime, is in over-all control of the acts, good and bad, of His subjects, the reward and punishments therefor, the seats of enjoyment of the reward (Svarg) and infliction of punishment (Hell) and so on. Having attained Him, the Ājvār avers that he is free from sorrows of any kind, rid of the bonds of Karma, the fountain source of all sufferings, through His unfailing grace.

allal il iṅṅam aḷavu iṅṅantu eṅkum aḷaku amar cūḷ oliyaṅ,
alli malar-makaḷ pōka mayakkukkaḷ ākiyum niṅkum ammāṅ,
ellai il ṅāṅattaṅ, ṅāṅam aktē koṅṅu ellāk karumaṅkaḷum cey
ellai il māyaṅai, kaṅṅaṅait tāḷ paṅṅi, yāṅ ḍr tukkam ilaṅḍē.

(III-10-8)

Translation

I have nothing to worry, worshipping, as I do, the feet compact
Of the Lord of bliss unalloyed and beauty unlimited,
Permeating all over, who is rapturous in contact
With (Lakṣmī), the lotus-born, of radiant knowledge unlimited
By which He, the work-a-day worlds does create
Who did as wondrous Kaṅṅaṅ of glory unlimited incarnate.

Notes

- (i) *Bliss unalloyed*: This obtains only in Heaven. Even Svarg, the seat of enjoyment of the reward for one's good acts, known to be pleasurable, does not provide unalloyed happiness, as the inmates are haunted by the fear of being thrown out at the end of the prescribed tenure of their stay there. This fear gathers momentum every time a fellow-being is hurled down.
- (ii) The Lord is, no doubt, the natural embodiment of bliss (Ānanda) but it is only His conjunction with Lakṣmī of ravishing beauty that confers on Him, the bliss supreme (Paramānanda). It is this blissful conjunction, *par excellence*, that provides the necessary incentive for

His creation of the Sportive Universe (Līla Vibhūti). Although He could create the entire Universe by a mere resolve (Saṅkalpa), He came down as Kṛṣṇa and enthralled every one by His entrancing beauty. As an ardent worshipper of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Āḷvār confidently asserts that he has absolutely nothing to worry about.

tukkam il ṅāṅac cuṭar-oḷi mūrṭti, tuḷāy alaṅkal-perumāṅ,
mikka pal māyaṅkaḷāl vikirtam ceytu, vēṅṭum urrvu koṅṭu,
nakka pirāṅōṭu ayaṅ mutalāka ellārum evaiyum taṅṅuḷ
okka oṭuṅka viḷuṅka vallāṅaip peṅṅu, oṅṅum taḷarvu ilaṅē.

(III-10-9)

Translation

Fatigue have I none, having attained my Lord beatific,
Of knowledge pure and form resplendent, with tuḷaci garland
bedecked,
Who, by His wondrous prowess, assumes any form He likes and
performs
Many a wondrous deed and inside His stomach contains all
at once
(During deluge) Nakkapīrāṅ (Śiva), Ayaṅ (Brahmā) and all
other things and beings.

Note

It is only the Omnipotent Lord who can achieve the seemingly impossible and blend into harmony the incompatibles, such as floating on a tender fig-leaf over the vast watery expanse as a mere babe, holding in its stomach all the worlds with their variegated contents, all things and beings. Singing the glory of the great Sustainer, the Āḷvār is naturally free from fatigues.

taḷarvu iṅṅiyē eṅṅum eṅṅum paranta taṅṅimutal ṅāṅam oṅṅāy
aḷavu uṭai aiṅṅulaṅkaḷ aṅṅiyāvakaiyāl aruvu āki niṅṅum
vaḷar oḷi iṅṅai, mūrṭṭiyai, pūṭaṅkaḷ aiṅṅai, iru cuṭarai,
kilar oḷi māyaṅai, kaṅṅaṅait tāḷ paṅṅi, yaṅ eṅṅum kēṭu ilaṅē.
(III-10-10)

Translation

Never can any harm alight on me, adoring the feet
Of Kaṅṅaṅ, my wondrous Lord of form exquisite,

With radiance ever-expanding, who permeates at all times,
 All things, with no effort, of knowledge supreme,
 Controller of the elements five, whom the senses five can't
 comprehend.

Note

The Lord is everywhere, permeating effortlessly everyone and everything, at all times and yet, He is not tainted by them nor can He, in His universal Form, be comprehended by the five senses. Far from being tainted by the persons and things wherein He stays, His resplendence goes up all the time and His exclusive, auspicious Form (Divya maṅgala vighraha) is of matchless grace and beauty; Adoring Him of such great prowess, the Ājvār is naturally well beyond the mischief of harm of any kind.

kēṭu il viṣup pukaḷk kēcavaṇai kurukūrc caṭakōpaṇ cōṇṇa
 pāṭal ōr āyirattuḷ ivai oru pattum payiṅga vallārkaṭku avaṇ
 nāṭum nakaramum naṅkuṭaṇ kāṇa, nalaṇṇai ūrti paṇṇi,
 viṭum peṇuttit taṇ mūvulakukkum tarum oru nāyakamē.

(III-10-11)

Translation

Those that can recite these songs ten,
 Out of the thousand composed by Kurukūr Caṭakōpaṇ
 In adoration of Kēcavaṇ of undying fame,
 Will in His service be enlisted and granted by Him
 Heavenly bliss, well in sight of the men of this world,
 And made the sole *monarchs* of all His worlds.

Note

Those that can recite these ten stanzas will be blessed by the Lord, right here, with spiritual fervour of universal fame and, on their ascent to Heaven, He would invite them to rule over it.

The Centum, in retrospect (Decad-wise Summary)

(III-1)

In the opening decad of this Centum, the Ājvār, who had expounded the glory of mount Māhruṅcōlai in the immediately

preceding decad (II-10), drinks deep of the nectarean charm and enthralling beauty of Lord Aḷakar (The Beautiful), enshrined there ;

(III-2)

In the second decad, we note the Āḷvār's mental agony due to his inability to enjoy the Lord in His Iconic Form *in toto* and give the fullest expression to such enjoyment. God is limitless and to enjoy His boundless beatific vision in full, would be attempting the impossible, namely, limiting the limitless. The Āḷvār is, however, invited by the Lord to enjoy His Iconic Form at Tiruvēṅkaṭam to his heart's content ;

(III-3)

In the third decad, the Āḷvār seeks to render blemishless service unto the Lord at lovely Tiruvēṅkaṭam in ever so many ways, without break, even as a person, feeling the pinch of hunger and with the food packet in hand sets the table, as soon as he comes across a suitable spot with plenty of shade and water ;

(III-4)

Profoundly impressed by the intensity of the Āḷvār's yearning for Divine Service, the Lord threw into focus His unique faculty of omnipresence, pervading all things, all over and at all times. It is the Lord's immanence, the astounding phenomenon in front of him, that the Āḷvār attempts to sing *in the fourth decad*, with bewildering amazement ;

(III-5)

In the fifth decad, the Āḷvār extols the kindred souls, thrown into a state of ecstasy, enraptured by the contemplation of the Lord's wondrous deeds and auspicious traits, moving about singing and dancing, and condemns unreservedly those that remain callously indifferent, unmoved by and imprevious to the Lord's glory ;

(III-6)

Expounding the Lord's extreme 'Saulabhya' (easy-accessibility) in His Iconic manifestation, the Āḷvār exhorts, *in the sixth decad*, the fellow-beings out of deep compassion and love to worship the Lord in His Iconic Form and make good their lives ;

(III-7)

The Āḷvār's advice, as in the sixth decad, having once again fallen on deaf ears, he drowns his disappointment, *in the seventh decad*, in the blissful contemplation of service unto the Lord's devotees, the logical culmination of service unto the Lord, declaring that he is the vassal of those that stand last in the chain of the Lord's devotees, sure and steadfast, who are enthralled by the bewitching beauty of the Lord holding the charming discus in hand;

(III-8)

In the eighth decad, one witnesses a very extraordinary state of affairs, each one of the Āḷvār's senses yearning for the delight experienced by the other senses; in its competitive exuberance to enjoy the Lord, each faculty aspires to transcend its functional limitations. Thus the hands would want to praise the Lord, the ears would long to drink deep of the nectarean charm of the Lord, the eyes would like to offer Him fruits and flowers, so on and so forth;

(III-9)

The ninth decad contains the Āḷvār's exhortation to the poets of the world not to debase their rare poetic talents by eulogising the frail humans for the sake of petty gains, flimsy and fleeting, or the minor deities, but to elevate themselves to their legitimate stature as the Lord's bards, soaring high, singing exclusively the Supreme Lord's great glory in beautiful metrical compositions;

(III-10)

Once again, the worldlings would not listen to the Āḷvār's advice as in the ninth decad and yet, it was no mean consolation for him that he could at least get back from them unscathed, without being contaminated by them. *In the concluding decad of this Centum*, the Āḷvār gives expression to the various benefits accrued to him through his total absorption in the Lord, namely, full and complete freedom from (1) want, (2) obstruction in the enjoyment of the Lord, (3) trouble, (4) Sorrow, (5) affliction, (6) fatigue etc.